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Too Close to Where We Got In

By Tim Patterson

J. Robert Clinton of Fuller Seminary has found that 70% of leaders do not finish well. Over the past few years it has become very apparent to me and a host of others that many who begin to run the Good Race of God do not finish well. Something happens to them at the beginning, or during their race, that causes them to falter and fall. Many never finish at all. All along the course we see the bleached bones of fallen believers who have succumbed to the snares of the evil one and to self imposed failures. The path that they run is pocked with moral traps and secret sinkholes at every turn. These traps litter the road of life like so many explosive mines just waiting for their next victim.

This phenomenon is not relegated to the layman in the pew, but is sadly being seen in those whom God has called to be his pastors and prophets. The very men that God has called to live and lead exemplary lives before His people are failing at an alarming rate. It seems as though there is some satanic sharpshooter perched in a tower just above the running field who is picking off the leaders in the race as well as those who are running close behind.

It appears that not a week goes by that I do not hear of some child of God falling to some heinous sin. The lost world giggles with glee at each fallen runner as they privately and publicly use this fallen Family member as an excuse to justify their own immorality and unbelief. Many of these unbelievers ridicule all Runners, and take these defeated disciples and their stumblings and use them as nails to secure the coffin they have prepared for God.

It reminds me of an old story about a group from a local community who began to notice the almost lifeless and helpless bodies of their neighbors and friends floating down a river. They all became very alarmed at the seriousness of the situation and called together a symposium of their greatest minds and most gifted leaders.

After much discussion and analyzation, they formed teams of rescue workers to retrieve those who could be saved. One team used the human chain approach and joined hands as they waded out into the raging waters to help their fallen friends. Others used ropes and pulleys that stretched across the expanse of the waters so that the victims could be pulled back to shore. Others built elaborate powerboats that could cut through the waves and torrents to obtain access to their fallen friends.

Day and night the rescue went on. Day after day and week after week, fallen neighbors and friends were being pulled from the floods. Some even noticed that the numbers of those being rescued were growing exponentially. Every day more and more came floating down the river. One day a young man began to ponder the problem. He asked himself the very important question: "Where are these people coming from and how are they coming to be in the water?" So, the young man walked up-stream for several miles until he came to a place in the river where at one time it had been spanned by a Perfectly Unblemished Rigid and Exquisite bridge.

For some reason the bridge had fallen into disrepair. Gaping holes could be seen in several places and entire sections were missing in others. It appeared that the whole structure could fall at any moment. There he saw hundreds of his friends and neighbors blindly falling into the water. Evil forces were pushing others, and some were willingly jumping into the rolling waters. He also noticed that many of those who had been rescued earlier were again falling into the water. After surveying the situation and thinking about it for some time he had an amazing revelation and came to this conclusion: "We must do everything we can to stop our friends from falling, jumping or being thrown into the water. If we do not, the flood of fallen friends will never end and our labors will be in vain."

My sentiments are the same as that young man. Rescuing those who are fallen is important, but more so, is that we help our brothers and sisters from getting into this fallen state in the first place. We must stop the headlong rush into destruction.

It has been my observation in social media blogs and outlets that some Christians are flaunting and using the unmerited Grace of God as an excuse to indulge in acts that are more than questionable. It appears that their new-found freedom in Christ has become a license to sin. (I am sure they would argue that their actions are not sins at all.)

When I was a youth pastor in South Texas I was sponsoring a group of boys at a local summer camp. There were boys there from every walk of life. One of my responsibilities was to make sure they went to bed at the proper time and stayed in their respective bunks until morning. In the wee hours of the morning I was startled awake with the sound of a loud thud that sounded much like a melon being thrown to the ground. I jumped up and ran toward the sound. There on the floor was Juan. He had fallen from the top bunk onto the cement floor. I asked him how that could happen and he said, "Well Pastor Tim, I guess I just got too close to where I got in at."

It is my humble opinion that many Believers today are staying too close to where they got in at! Too close to the old life they left, and the sins that so easily pull them back in. There are so many Biblical principles that point us toward a new life in Christ and away from the old. Principles that teach us to be examples to other "weaker Believers" and not to use our freedoms in a way that would cause others to fall back. We must encourage one another to, "Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has set us free and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage."

We must warn those who run the race, and we must equip those who are members of the Family with the tools to live Godly lives. We must rebuild the bridges of holiness and purity that have fallen in disrepair. We desperately need the Power of Purity to flow through our members unimpeded by the impurities of this world. We must guard our own hearts, and run well the race that is set before us. The best way to accomplish this is not to stay too close to where we got in at.

Confront Conflict

By Tony Lynn

Imagine at 10:00 PM tomorrow night you open the front door to your home, and the County Sheriff's Department informs you that your dearest loved-one was in a severe car accident. Imagine that as you walk into the lobby of the local hospital a friend working on the ambulance calls out your name, hugs you, and whispers into your ears, "It's one of the worst accidents I've ever seen. If something isn't done quickly, they're not going to make it."

You stiffen-up in fear as you walk toward the emergency department. You plead with the woman at the desk to tell you something about your loved one. The woman in the pink sweater shivering against the cold air coming from the air conditioning vent sees the fear in your eyes, and she urges you to go straight to surgery-waiting. She leans-in and whispers, "Surgery was immediately ordered due to the severe injuries. Hurry. You're in my prayers."

As you come to the surgical area you check-in with the receptionist who assures you that your loved one is behind the doors in pre-op. You measure the time when you know the accident occurred, and you ask in an urgent voice, "What do you mean they're in pre-op? The accident occurred over an hour ago. I was told the ambulance arrived here 45-minutes ago. I was told injuries are life-threatening. Why isn't someone doing something, right now?" The receptionist silently gestures, with a glance of her eyes, and a tilt of her head to the medical professionals down the hall standing outside of the surgical area. You walk with a determined step toward the small group clad in surgical clothing who are talking over one another in loud, angry voices and irritated expressions on their faces. You cannot believe what you hear, coming from their mouths, as you freeze in your tracks.

1. "I'm in charge when we go in there, the patient's condition requires my attention first."
2. "No, I'm in charge, I've had surgical privileges in the hospital long before you got here."
3. "I'm tired of working with all of you. Not one of you can get along with the other."
4. "I don't know why I continue to work here. No one treats me with respect."
5. "Go ahead and quit. All you've done since coming here is change things. Leave!"

How would you feel knowing your loved one was on the brink of life or death while the medical professionals debated? What would go through your mind as you replayed their

comments without seeing them move toward rescuing your loved one from pain and death? What actions might you take listening to the medical professionals stop the care for your loved one while they argued about their preferences and feelings?

It may seem absurd to you that a group of medical professionals would delay a life-saving surgery because of their disagreements or debates. But let me ask you a pivotal question: “Does it seem equally absurd that God’s people would allow conflict over personal preferences and traditions to interfere with the life-saving message of the good news of Jesus Christ? It should.

When God’s people forget to keep the Gospel above-all and divisions are left unaddressed:

1. Lost people in the community will not hear the good news of Christ because the Christians are too busy fighting one another.
2. Family members and friends will not come to church because they hear the complaints at home.
3. Unsaved spouses will grow even more skeptical of the Christian faith, and remain far from knowing God’s grace.
4. Christians will remain spiritual babies focusing on their selfish needs because they see other Christians focused on their convenience and comfort.
5. Maturing, serving Christians will find another church to attend where they see meaningful engagements with a lost world.

Please, consider the following words from the Bible:

1 Corinthians 1:10 – I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.

Proverbs 6:16-19 – **There are six things the Lord hates — no, seven things he detests:** haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent, a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, a false witness who pours out lies, **a person who sows discord in a family** (italics added to clarify the point).

How is the health of the church you attend? Is conflict or the fear of conflict hindering the effectiveness of the church? Are you the one sowing discord in the church? Call me, Tony Lynn, if you want to talk: (734) 770-0608.

What's Your PACE?

By Mike Durbin

I recently had breakfast in a restaurant that had originally been a church building. The architecture, ornamental woodwork, and stained glass windows revealed that it had once been a beautiful place of worship. As I ate, I couldn't help but wonder what happened to the church family that met in this space. Hopefully it outgrew the building and is thriving in another location, but that's probably not the case. The reality is that thousands of churches close their doors forever every year. Buildings, once meant for the worship of our great God, are converted into art galleries, houses, and clubs.

Thom Rainer projects that as many as one out of every ten churches are on a trajectory toward death, and unless something happens they will die in the not so distant future.

Recent research by LifeWay reveals that the majority of Protestant churches in the United States are plateaued or declining. According to the study, 28% of churches have declined by more than 6% in the last three years, while 33% have stayed within 6% (March 2019). That means that it's more likely than not that you are in a church that is plateauing or declining.

Church growth is rarely a straight line. There is an ebb and flow in church life. There are seasons of growth often followed by seasons of stability. Hopefully, growth starts again. Sometimes, a season of stability is followed by decline. If something is not done to stop the decline, the church is on a trajectory toward death. That's what happens to 900 to 1000 Southern Baptist churches. They die!

Is there hope for churches that are plateaued or declining? The answer is a resounding, "yes," but there are no silver bullets. To make a declining church "vital again" takes years. It's often incredibly difficult and painful, but it's worth the effort because Christ loves the church and gave His life for her.

As I've been studying and praying about church revitalization, Hebrews 12:1-2 often comes to mind. After sharing about the great cloud of witnesses that surrounds us, the author exhorts us to "... run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith...." We are reminded that following Christ is not an all out sprint until we fall from exhaustion. It's more like a marathon that must be run with endurance as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

I like to use the word “PACE” when talking about church revitalization. It carries the idea of sustainable movement forward. A PACE must be set that endures for the long haul. Churches rarely move from health and vitality to plateau and decline quickly (unless there has been a scandal or split). In fact, churches are often plateaued for years before noticeable decline sets in. Decline doesn’t happen overnight, and neither does revitalization.

Church revitalization takes time. To borrow the imagery of Hebrews, it is a race that must be run with endurance. It’s a marathon that must be run at a PACE that lasts for the long haul. If the church is going to experience revitalization, all eyes must be fixed on Jesus.

What does that PACE look like for churches needing revitalization?

P - PRAYER: Prayer must take center stage. God’s people must earnestly turn to God for direction in prayer based on His Word. The church belongs to God and exists for His glory and His glory alone. Revitalization depends on God, and the church must desperately turn to Him for renewed life. Extended times of private, small group, and corporate prayer are held as the church listens to God. The church cries out to God for renewed life and vitality in mission and ministry.

A - ASSESS: The church needs accurate information. Churches needing revitalization often have little or no interaction with the community around them. Often, programs are shells of what they once were, and are no longer effective. Assessment tools provide information about the community and the church. Data helps the church understand the challenges that need to be addressed, and the opportunities that need to be seized.

C - COURAGE: It takes courage for churches that are plateaued or declining to make necessary changes. God’s people must radically, sacrificially, courageously love each other as some preferences change, programs are eliminated, and new initiatives

started. All eyes must be fixed on Jesus who said: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

E - EXECUTE: The church must act on what God says. The calendar needs to be updated, responsibilities assigned, and budgets realigned. The Pastor must shepherd the people through any transitions. He must cast vision, equip the saints, encourage the people, and tell the story of what God is doing over and over again. The race must be run with endurance. There may be difficult seasons. Some things may be harder than others to implement. People may become tired, wearied by the long race ahead. Spiritual battles may seem harder and more frequent. Be faithful. Remain steadfast. Run at a sustainable pace forward. Above all, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus!

Under Construction

By Mick Schatz

I think, actually, I hope as I look at the coming forecast with 80-degree weather, summer has finally arrived here at Bambi Lake. It's refreshing to hear the sound of children, teenagers and adults splashing in the lake, screaming as they fly down the Bambi Booyah water slide, or just enjoying the many activities available here at the camp. The snow is gone and the grass is growing fast! Projects put on hold during the long winter have resumed as well as new projects beginning.

This reality is actually the subject of my thoughts as I write this article. It seems as if we are always UNDER CONSTRUCTION here at Bambi Lake. There is always maintenance to be done or projects to be started or completed. Every day seems to bring with it the promise of new opportunities to repair or build. Feeling overwhelmed and frustrated at the seemingly endless projects can be a battle. Fortunately, we have a great staff who can prioritize and accomplish the tasks at hand.

So, let me ask you a question - "Have you ever experienced this in your own life?" Have you ever felt as if you were constantly UNDER CONSTRUCTION? I have felt this way and still do every day that I'm breathing six feet above the ground. The good news is that we should feel this way if we are following Christ in our life journey.

In his letter of encouragement to the believers at Philippi, Paul put it this way - "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" Philippians 1:6.

This truth should bring us great joy and encouragement each day we are alive. God is constantly shaping and molding us to be more like Him! This means we are in His process, and He loves us too much to leave us the way we are. God is continually allowing situations in our life to strengthen our character, and remind us of our need to totally depend upon Him. Growing and maturing spiritually requires constant maintenance and attention. And just like here at Bambi, sometimes deconstruction has to happen before reconstruction can begin. Out with the old and in with the new is typically the only solution. This is especially true in our lives. God has to take out the old habits, faulty attitudes, toxic sinfulness, and build something completely brand new and beautiful.

Just as being UNDER CONSTRUCTION is making Bambi a better and stronger camp, Christ is also transforming us more and more into His image through his construction on

us. It may seem endless in the moment, but Christ has promised to complete us so we are perfected for His return. As for Bambi, I know God's hand is on this camp and He is shaping and molding us to have a greater and greater impact on this world for His Kingdom. So, for now, I'm happy to be UNDER CONSTRUCTION!

Mick Schatz, Bambi Lake Director

Five tips for a new missionary

by Cyndi Logsdon

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) -- My years on the mission field were truly some the most fulfilling years of my life. They were joyful and life-giving. They were also tear-filled, stressful, and often just plain difficult. There were days I wanted to give up and move back to America. And yet, I'll never regret a single day that I and my family lived on mission overseas.

I have learned a few things along the way. If I could go back 20 years and write a letter to my brand new missionary self, I'd highlight the truths that I needed to be reminded of every day.

Here are words of counsel I'd offer to new missionaries.

Learn to be content and choose gratitude

Before you even get on that airplane, make an intentional, hard and fast covenant with God that from day one you will choose to have a heart of gratitude.

In her book, "Calm My Anxious Heart," Linda Dillow wrote of a missionary woman living in a mud hut in Africa who was one of the most content people she had ever known. When Dillow asked for her secret to contentment, the woman replied, "Never allow yourself to complain about anything -- not even the weather."

I have seen a critical spirit do more damage to missionary teams and families than just about anything else. Remember that the apostle Paul learned to be content in all situations. It's up to you to choose gratitude and contentment. It can be learned!

Your state of contentment is not dependent on functioning technology. It's not dependent on the ease or difficulty of expat relationships. It's not dependent on your level of exhaustion as a young parent. Memorize Scripture both in English and in the national language, and hide God's Word in your heart so you can cling to truth when temptation for cynicism or criticism arises. Learn to be content and choose gratitude.

Prioritize learning spiritual language

If you desire to share the Gospel clearly and accurately, expect language learning to require serious work. Commit to the work, sweat and tears required to learn spiritual language and vocabulary as early as possible.

By the end of my first year on the field, I could hold long conversations about children, cooking, or the weather, but because I hadn't learned very much spiritual vocabulary, I wasn't well-prepared to transition everyday conversations to the Gospel. I will never forget a conversation my husband and I had with a national friend. Our friend was sharing something

very important, yet I missed the context of the entire conversation because I didn't know the local translation of the biblical language.

If I could re-prioritize the time I spent learning language, I'd study basic Gospel vocabulary as early as I studied vocabulary for the days of the week and months of the year. Everyday words can be learned just through saturation in the local community. Spiritual language learning takes time and intentionality. Prioritize it early.

Don't associate all difficulties with living overseas

Evangelism isn't necessarily easier in America. Yes, evangelism in your second language is hard. It's humbling and often embarrassing, and did I mention hard?

I remember sitting with a missionary girlfriend our first term on the field, and the conversation went something like this: "I'm just dying to use my gift of teaching. That's how God made me. If I lived in America, I'd have so many opportunities. Maybe this just isn't where God wants me."

After some prayer and confession, I moved out of the "woe is me" mindset, but my girlfriend didn't. In fact, she moved back to the States.

It wasn't long after that when she humbly acknowledged that sharing the Gospel with those who have hardened hearts is truly difficult wherever you live. If you are sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in your second language, it will be hard. Yet, if you are sharing in your heart language in your hometown, it will still be hard. Don't fall into the trap of associating all difficulties with living overseas.

Focus your relational energy on those who need the Gospel

Yes, cherish and prioritize deep connection with other expats, but set limits. I'm convinced that expat relationships can be a precious, just-when-needed-most gift that God gives those who leave family and friends for the sake of advancing the Gospel cross-culturally. In fact, you may experience a level of intimacy with the international body of Christ you will never experience in quite the same way again.

Yet, realize that there really can be too much of a good thing. Hold each other accountable to save prime relational energy for those who desperately need to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Stay focused on the mission.

Don't give up

Lastly, persevere. Just don't give up. Some of my most fruitful discipleship relationships finally came after spending a decade on the field. Don't give up when other expats come and go. Don't

stop learning language when you find you have enough to function in society. You may not have tomorrow in this country. So, take advantage of today.

Learn deeper spiritual vocabulary today. Choose gratitude and contentment today. Boldly do the work of an evangelist.

There is much freedom that comes from faithfulness. Choose today to be faithful in all things. Expect God to keep his promises. Know that he really will be faithful to complete the good work he began in you. And confidently know that all things really do work together for good for those who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

131 Projects Tell the WMU Story

By Meredith Flynn

Hundreds gathered at the headquarters of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) June 10 for a journey through missions past and present. Displays throughout the building told the story of Baptist mission pioneers Annie Armstrong and Lottie Moon, and more recent WMU legends like Alma Hunt, whose admonition to Billy Graham about a much-needed haircut was the first of several artifacts revealed during the day.

Next to the historical displays, modern missionaries shared their stories of working among people persecuted for their faith, families battling poverty, and refugees trying to find a home. The day offered 131 missions projects and activities—a celebration of WMU's 131 years of calling Baptists to get the gospel to people all over the world.

It's been a couple of years since **Becky Arnett** (right) attended the annual WMU missions celebration prior to the Southern Baptist Convention. The missions leader from First Baptist Church, McLeansboro, has missed hearing from missionaries, calling it a "missions drought."

"I can't even eat lunch," Arnett said, referring to her program where she had circled the names of missionaries she wanted to hear. She ate lunch with fellow Illinoisans while **Nik and Ruth**

Ripken (left) shared about their years of mission service with the International Mission Board. The Ripkens were also keynote speakers during the first day of WMU's annual meeting.

The people they've worked with over the years, Nik Ripken said, are persecuted for two reasons: coming to faith in Christ, and giving Jesus away. Persecuted people, Ruth said, see persecution as part of their role in God's mission.

"The thing that they say to us is 'We are holding Satan hostage in our part of the world so that those in America can be free to share their faith with others.'"

"They're seeing us totally as a partnership," she said, "and I hope we can say to them, 'We're sharing our faith boldly.'"

Blaze: Youth On Fire for Christ

By Bernice Mitchell

Westland - The Michigan African American Fellowship youth group –BLAZE experience Mission Evangelism as they participated in prayer walking and the distribution of flyers in the Lemone Garden Housing Complex in Westland. It was a mission project serving One Mission Church where church planter and pastor, Antonio Wimberly, leads.

For most of the youth this was their first encounter with prayer walking, however the youth really enjoyed the mission. After the event, a number of the youth participants said, "Our personal prayer life will be enhanced because of us praying for this community." The Prayer Walking was a spiritual and service activity leading up to the Urban Youth conference that was held in May at One Mission Church. Today's youth are confronted with many distractions from the world, and are often faced with detours. They can end up feeling despair. As a result, the youth selected the theme "FINDING MY PEACE" for the central discussion for the Urban Conference. Several workshops were presented to support the theme. The conference also provided other the youth from a variety of churches within the state to come together and have a time of faith, fun, and fellowship.

When asked if the African American Fellowship should sponsor this event again next year, the response was a resounding "yes". When asked why, the response was "it allows us to learn and increase our spiritual growth in a way that meets us where we are." As a result of the feedback, the African American Fellowship plans to repeat the Urban Conference next year. President, Dr, Stan Parker said, " He is so grateful to all of the pastors who supported this event."

Bernice Mitchell has worked with youth for about 22 years and God has given her the strength, patience, and joy to persevere. Being a member of Temple of Faith Baptist Church in Detroit Michigan for 25 years has taught her to love God, and to be involved in several ministries, including evangelism.

Could ruling on cross curb hostility toward religion?

by Rachel Lynn Aldrich/WORLD

WASHINGTON (BP) -- The U.S. Supreme Court's 7-2 decision June 20 in favor of a nearly century-old memorial cross in Bladensburg, Md., appeared to some as a signal that the justices want to leave more room for religion in the public square.

The American Humanist Association sued the American Legion and local parks department to take down the 40-foot cross monument, which an American Legion post erected in 1925 to honor local men who died in World War I. A U.S. District Court judge in Maryland ruled the memorial could stay in 2015, but a three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals declared the cross a violation of the Establishment Clause found in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The case gave the justices an opportunity to clarify the court's interpretation of the Establishment Clause, which prohibits the U.S. government from establishing an official religion.

A case from the 1970s set a precedent known as the Lemon test, a multipart question used to determine whether government actions are in violation of the clause. The test, which grew out of the 1971 case *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, asked whether a reasonable observer would interpret a state action as an establishment of religion. The standard proved difficult to apply and led to contradictory rulings. In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that two framed copies of the Ten Commandments on display in a couple of Kentucky courthouses violated the Establishment Clause but a 6-foot-tall granite Ten Commandments monument on the Texas Capitol grounds in Austin did not.

"The Lemon test is what has caused all this hostility to religion by the government and all these lawsuits against nativity scenes and menorahs and crosses and Ten Commandments," said Kelly Shackelford, president of First Liberty, a law firm specializing in religious liberty cases that helped defend the American Legion and its cross in Bladensburg.

In the ruling, six justices indicated the Lemon test didn't apply to a broad swath of cases, solidifying the place of religious symbolism and practice in the public square. See related story.

But their decision still leaves some issues to be worked out in future cases. While the justices agreed Lemon doesn't work, Justice Samuel Alito's main plurality opinion was

only signed by three others -- Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Stephen Breyer and Brett Kavanaugh -- and the justices filed seven more opinions, signaling uncertainty about the new path forward. Justices Elena Kagan, Neil Gorsuch, and Clarence Thomas voted with the majority but filed separate opinions.

"They all had their own perspective they wanted to bring, so as a result you don't have one clean sort of guidepost for the future as to exactly how they're going to deal with the future cases," Shackelford said.

Those cases will decide what principles will govern the application of the Establishment Clause, particularly regarding new monuments and practices that incorporate religious symbolism. Shackelford said that Gorsuch and Thomas' concurring opinion indicated that courts should consider how long the symbols or practices have been in use in the country. But those standards still need to be worked out.

"The big thing is that the days of weaponizing the Establishment Clause to attack religion are over," Shackelford said.

Even Churches Can Get Lost

By Mathew Vroman

Eastpoine - I met Mike going door to door after he visited our church. It just happened that he did online marketing for many companies. As we were visiting, he asked me if our church showed up on google searches. I proclaimed, "Of course we do." Mike decided to test my assertion by googling our church. To my surprise, our church did not show up on a google search. Needless to say, as the pastor I felt quite embarrassed and frustrated by the lack of results. Thankfully, Mike was kind enough to provide advice on how to be found on Google.

As soon as I left his house that day, I made a commitment to make our church in the top three on a google search in our area. Today, I am happy to report that generally our church shows up in the top three on a Google search for our area. Here are steps that will increase your traction on a google search:

1. Do a general search of churches in your area. You will notice that three churches will be displayed in your area. The goal is to get your church listed in the top three. If your church is already there, don't do anything. If you do not see your church, click on the words "More places" and see where your church comes up.
2. When you see your church, click on the church's name. Under the church's address and other information look for the word: "Own this business?" It will appear if you have not claimed your business. Click on this and claim your business by providing the different information google requests. You will receive a confirmation code from Google that will allow you to finish claiming the business. This will give you the ability to edit the business account and add details to the search information. **WARNING: If you have not claimed your business anyone can!**
3. After you are able to claim the business, you are able to edit to the account. First, make sure all of the information is accurate. For example, when I checked our account, we had our old address. **Having accurate information is absolutely critical.** Make sure that your church is listed as a church. Mike also informed me that people google what kind of church it is so list the church's type (Baptist, non-denominational etc.)
4. Every church should have a basic website!!!! It is the number one area checked before a church is visited. Be sure and budget for a basic website. If your budget does

not allow for one, then use a free one or a Facebook group. **The bottom line is a church must have an online presence.**

5. Google obtains information about the business by what is in the text on the website. Start with the homepage and write the details about your church. Also, save the pictures that are used on the webpage by name and not a .jpg number. Google will also use that in your search data. For example, save them as names like “children ministry” or “Bible preaching”. Make sure that there is no outdated information.

6. If someone says they like the church, email them a link to the church’s google reviews.

Soon after I went through the process of getting our church coming up on Google, a woman named Brook called me. She came to our church on Friday, trusted Jesus Christ, and was baptized soon after that. **She found us through Google.** Souls are worth learning how to do social media! Our website is eastsidecommunitychurch.com.

Pastor Mathew Vroman is the Pastor of Eastside Community Church. He is married to Diane and they are the proud parents of Mattie (19), Betty (17), Arzu (13), and Marie (9). Additionally he serves in inter-faith dialogue and racial-reconciliation. He is presently pursuing a [Doctor of Religious Studies in Bible and Theology](#) (finished in 2020).

If You Build It, Will They Come?

By Drew Ansley

Detroit - The prevailing model of church and church planting in America seems to have a lot in common with Kevin Costner's 1989 film "Field of Dreams," where a voice tells him "if you build it, they will come," Is it true though? Perhaps the answer is yes and no. I want to use that "yes and no" to share a little with you about our church plant in Southwest Detroit.

Let's start with "no." If you build it, will they come? Much of church and church planting culture in America assumes the answer is "yes." "What is "it?" IT depends. Perhaps it's a literal church building, the best guest experience, the best assimilation process, the best worship band, the best preaching staff, or the best set of programs.

Does God use all these things? Surely. He also uses Pagan kings. By His grace He can build His church through whatever means He wants. The problem arises whenever we lean on our wisdom over God's Word, whether that be by what we do or what we refuse to do. We cannot expect what we build or don't build to rescue people from death.

Location. Location. Location. By God's Sovereign Grace, there are places that build "it," but emphasize the gospel and some DO come. On the other hand, there are places you won't likely fill a building just because you build "it." We live in one of those places, and the places that it DOES work, only some come.

Our location and our conviction demand that we GO where people will never come if we "build it." Our neighborhood will not just show up because we have a good Sunday service and somebody invites them. Our neighbors are too diverse and in need of the gospel to be satisfied with only reaching those who would.

What's the "yes?" If you build the church - the people of God, they will come. This is our only confidence. Ephesians 4:1-16 tells us how the body, the church grows: Jesus gave gifts to pastors, to build up EVERY member to maturity for ministry in Christ. The result? The body grows! That's not a very attractive schtick, and it makes church growth a crockpot, not a microwave, but it's God's design.

After four years of digging roots, sharing our home, having people live in our home, sharing the gospel, discipling and developing people, being misunderstood by some outsiders who told other people we were planting a house church, celebrated as gritty by a few and ignored by others, we began Sunday gatherings in February with a very

solid and growing core team of just 12 people. We average 20-30 people in attendance a few months in. It's not "normal" and it's a challenge. Support typically goes to places that have the three Bs - buildings, budgets, and butts in seats, and more importantly, it challenges my own heart.

Church planting is perhaps most influential on the heart of the planter/pastor. It is sanctifying and revealing of the idols of the heart. Even with deep convictions about this process, I still struggle with fear of man - the assumed expectations that others will look at us as a failure because they see how few we are, or how slow we grow, or they show up on the Sunday. Where our whole team doesn't even make it and there's an "awkward" crowd of 10-15, and the pastor plays guitar and preaches because there aren't any other musicians.

But if you build it - the church - God's people, they WILL come - the church WILL grow. This is a promise in Scripture to hang on to. Build mature disciples and mobilize them, and they will go to the people who would never come. That's exactly where we find ourselves. God is raising a few Marines, ready for the trenches, who are going behind enemy lines and making disciples. We have individuals reaching people in the community and on two college campuses. Perhaps we should re-write it: "If you build them, it will come." It's simple multiplication, and the roots of something truly exponential.

Kendrick brothers talk 'Overcomer,' identity in Christ

by Tobin Perry

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) -- Alex and Stephen Kendrick have an ambitious vision for their new movie, "Overcomer." And the vision has nothing to do with winning any awards or box-office glory.

Instead, they say, it's about helping people discover their identity in Christ.

"When the church rises up and knows who she is in Christ and knows she is forgiven, redeemed, loved and chosen, she is going to operate differently," Alex said. "We want you guys to be bold in your faith, to have the confidence to know I am forgiven because God says I am. I am loved because God says I am, regardless of my feelings and regardless of what the world says about me. That's going to impact our behavior. That's going to impact how we express our faith. That's what we want with this film."

The new movie, set to debut Aug. 23, is the sixth movie made by the three Southern Baptist brothers: Alex, Stephen, and Shannon. All three are active members of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga. Alex and Stephen shared their hopes for the new movie June 11 during a live question-and-answer session on the Cooperative Program stage during the 2019 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Birmingham, Ala.

The movie tells the story of a championship-level high school basketball coach who loses half of his team when a factory in his small-town closes and families move away. As he transitions to become the school's track coach, he wrestles with the nature of his identity and what happens when he can no longer find his identity in his work.

"Like our previous films, we went through the stage of, 'God, what should this movie be about? What theme should we focus on,'" Alex said. "After a season of prayer, He said, 'Identity in Christ. Remind my church who they are in Christ.'"

The culture today, Alex noted, is trying to redefine identity and "who gets to tell you who you are."

"We believe your Creator gets to define who you are," he said.

The Kendrick brothers talked about some of the things they do to try to keep Christ central in the creation and production of the movie. They described a process that begins with prayer and then moves on to discerning a theme for the film. They also discussed how during the production of the movie they have a time of prayer every day and have pastors share devotionals with the cast and crew daily.

The movie was filmed in Columbus, Ga., and nearly 80 churches, across racial and denominational lines, helped support the film in some manner, Stephen said.

LifeWay Christian Resources is producing 11 different resources to help churches engage the movie's content as part of their ministry efforts.

"How many times have you watched a movie that made you laugh or cry and the next day, you didn't care anymore?" Stephen asked. "It's very important to us that when the credits roll on a film -- [and] people are very interested and hungry to study fatherhood or prayer or whatever else -- that they dive into God's Word to see what He says about it.

"All of these resources are based on Ephesians," he said. "That's the undergirding foundation. We walk through what does Ephesians teach us about our identity in Christ, who we are in Him, who we were apart from Him and how we can live that out on a daily basis. That is our heart. The Great Commission is our heart."

Love Out Loud in Flint

By Stan Parker

Flint -“On April 25, 2014, a group of smiling officials in Flint, Mich., stood in front of television cameras, held their glasses aloft and toasted the switch to the city’s new water source, the Flint River. “Here’s to Flint!” Dayne Walling, the then mayor, said, taking a gulp of river water. The Flint water crisis was born that day. Almost immediately, Flint residents began telling their elected officials that there was something wrong with the water, which smelled terrible, tasted like metal and seemed to give them skin rashes. They confronted elected officials outside City Hall, hoisting bottles full of rust-colored water from their taps, only to be told, again and again, that the water was fine. The water was not fine. In Flint, the water crisis is by no means in the past. “It’s a community that’s still dealing with the trauma and the aftermath of having been poisoned at the hands of the government,” said Karen Weaver, mayor of Flint. Ms. Weaver continues to tell residents to drink only bottled or filtered water.” (Mitch Smith, 2019)

The Michigan African American Fellowship joined forces with the National Women’s Mission Union of the Southern Baptist Convention to serve our brothers and sisters in need in Flint, Michigan. During the last month over four tons of water has been distributed to the residents of Flint. Sally Thomas stated, “The water was just in time.” She had been looking to buy water, but did not have the funds due to her limited income. Stan Parker adds, “She also asked why we were doing this since we are not from Flint. We were able to let her know, first, God loves everyone, and we are an extension of his love. Second, as Christians we are to be His witnesses not just in our community, but where ever we can be.” She responded by saying she was so glad we love God and people. Parker says, “This water drive is another way in which we as Christians can “Love Out Loud”.”

Plans are underway for another water drive and distribution for our brothers and sisters in Flint. We are very thankful to the church family of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church for agreeing to be a host site for the distribution of water. If anyone is interested in joining future water drives or desires to donate to this cause, you can contact Dr. Stan Parker, President of the Michigan African American Fellowship at 517-853-9897 or email: faithfellowshiplansing@hotmail.com

Work Cited

Mitch Smith, J. B. (2019, April 26). Flint’s Water Crisis Started 5 Years Ago. It’s Not Over. **The New York Times**, p. A13.

Mandrell elected as LifeWay's 10th president

by Carol Pipes

ATLANTA (BP) -- LifeWay Christian Resources trustees unanimously elected Ben Mandrell as the organization's 10th president during a special-called meeting June 28 in Atlanta.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to lead in such an important season for LifeWay," Mandrell told trustees during the plenary session. "My first priority is to get our family to Nashville and begin loving the people at LifeWay. There is already an amazing team in place, and I can't wait to roll up my sleeves and work alongside them."

Mandrell, 42, comes to LifeWay from his role as lead pastor at Storyline Fellowship in Arvada, Colo. Two days after the June 21 announcement of his nomination to lead LifeWay, Mandrell delivered a heartfelt sermon to his congregation explaining his decision to relocate his family to Nashville.

"All through Scripture, we learn that God is a calling God," Mandrell said in his sermon. "He dials our number and we have to answer. We have to take His calls." When considering the decision to accept the search committee's nomination, Mandrell said he had "a wrestling match with God like I have never experienced before." Mandrell has served as lead pastor of Storyline Fellowship since its founding in 2014.

A 'man of character'

"This is a significant and momentous day in the history of LifeWay," said trustee chairman Jimmy Scroggins as he thanked the search committee for their hard work and commitment to the task.

"Ben is a man of character, integrity, godly strength and humility," said Scroggins, lead pastor of Family Church in West Palm Beach, Fla. "I appreciate his relentless commitment to seeing people come to know Christ and to see churches that preach the Gospel have the resources they need to advance the Kingdom."

Kent Dacus, who led the presidential search committee, said the process of finding the next CEO of LifeWay was extensive, methodical and deliberate with the team examining a diverse field of candidates from a wide variety of backgrounds.

"All throughout the process, we were focused solely on the best person for the position and for the person God was already preparing to lead LifeWay in this new season," Dacus said. "We found a man who is deeply committed to God's Word and has an incredible passion for the local church."

Dacus praised the search committee for their prayerful and steadfast effort the past 10 months. "These men and women have worked in one accord and sought the Lord's guidance every step of the way," he said.

LifeWay's presidential search committee was appointed in August 2018. The committee included chairman Kent Dacus (Calif.), Bill Langley (Ky.), Millie Burkett (Ore.), Brad McLean (Texas), Madeline Harris (Penn.), Todd Fannin (Okla.), and Luther McDaniel (Tenn.).

Southern Baptist leaders respond

When Mandrell's nomination was announced last week, Southern Baptist leaders began to share their excitement.

"Ben Mandrell is the kind of visionary, disruptive leader that LifeWay needs just at this moment," said SBC President J.D. Greear. "I am thrilled with this choice."

Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board, echoed Greear's enthusiasm. "Ben Mandrell has proven himself as an incredible church planter, pastor and innovative leader. He has a passion to connect and communicate Jesus to a lost world," Ezell said.

"Ben has invested his life in equipping new believers to grow and walk faithfully in the Lord. He has a unique ability to connect with people of all ages and will be an outstanding steward of LifeWay's future."

David Uth, senior pastor of First Baptist Church Orlando, which served as the sending church for Storyline Fellowship, described Mandrell as a strong leader with insight and discernment. [Ben] has a deep passion for following Jesus and an incredible resolve to do exactly as the Lord leads him."

Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, said Mandrell is a leader with a "compelling vision to reach all people in our generation. How exciting it is to have a pastor like Ben Mandrell called straight from the

church to lead LifeWay to assist and resource churches all around the world for gospel advancement."

A native of Tampico, Ill., Mandrell is a 1998 graduate of Anderson (Ind.) University. He also holds a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministry degree from Union University. Mandrell and his wife Lynley have been married 18 years. The couple has four children: Ava (15), Max (13), Miles (12) and Jack (11).

"I can see the hand of God preparing me for this significant moment at LifeWay," Mandrell said.

Read more about Mandrell's nomination at LifeWay.com/CEOSearch.

Mormon pageant in Utah draws 400 witnesses for Christ

by Karen L. Willoughby

MANTI, Utah (BP) -- Four hundred evangelical witnesses, including Southern Baptists, encouraged one another as they sought to share the Gospel with Mormons who attended the "Mormon Miracle" pageant in Manti, Utah, during the pageant's 53rd and final year.

The Mormon Miracle, with a cast of 900, was held the last two weekends in June, drawing 100,000 or more Mormons to the rural mountain town and its majestic Gothic/French Revival temple, located two hours southeast of Salt Lake City.

The 90-minute pageant depicts historical "moments" in Mormon history, such as the persecution they faced on their trek West in the 1800s.

Suzie Oliver has traveled from Malaysia for 18 years to cook for Christians who come to witness to Mormons on their own turf during the pageant's six-day schedule.

Oliver's noontime hot meal of ham and cabbage included several songs and an extended time of prayer on June 21 asking God to "lead these people to the members of the LDS [Latter-day Saints] who are ready for your light to shine in their lives" and to "take the fear of man and replace it with excitement for what You're doing tonight," among other prayers voiced under a sun-shaded pavilion in what has become known during the pageant as the "Christian area."

Dozens upon dozens of dome-shaped tents bordered the pavilion, including at least one Mormon family, where a man at the tent didn't want to give his name and a woman said, "We're Christian. We're LDS," while five elementary-age children listened with eyes wide open.

Part of the difficulty in witnessing to Mormons stems from the fact they use the same words as evangelical Christians but attach different meanings to them, said James Walker, president of Watchman Fellowship and a member of Fielder Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Arlington, Texas. He was onsite with a 21-person mission team from June 16-23 that spent the early part of the week in training.

The budding apologists, who came to Manti from several states to share their faith, learned from Walker and Watchman's senior apologist Brady Blevins, who used Facebook comments by Mormons to help them know how to respond when witnessing.

They also heard from Sandra Tanner, a longtime Christian analyst of LDS beliefs, and had a two-hour lunch and training time with Travis Kerns, a Send City missionary with the North American Mission Board.

And they learned about the Mormon religion by seeing the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City and by talking for several days with Mormons they encountered in Manti.

The Salt Lake temple is slated to close in January 2020 for a four-year renovation, but will be open when the Southern Baptist Convention's 2025 annual meeting is held at the Salt Palace Convention Center on June 24-25.

"Mormon leaders have made the tragic mistake of pointing their people toward a church instead of toward the Savior," Tanner told the Watchman team at her Utah Lighthouse Ministry, a Salt Lake City research center that compares Mormon and Christian doctrines.

"They claim theirs is the only true church and that all others are false and have no authority. This tends to make the people more concerned about the organization than about their relationship with Christ."

Kerns discussed starting and growing churches in a culturally-Mormon environment, noting the ups, downs and nature of ministry in Utah; the difficulty of spiritual warfare; and the need to have a strong support group "back home" praying and otherwise encouraging those God sends to Utah.

"Don't come to Utah to focus on Mormons, because you can reach Mormons everywhere across the world," Kerns told the group that included two men who said they were considering church planting in Utah. "Come to Utah because God has called you here to reach lost people."

In addition to Watchman Fellowship, several apologetics ministries like Mormonism Research Ministries sent teams to minister in Manti during the pageant. Students from at least three Southern Baptist seminaries -- New Orleans, Southwestern and Midwestern -- also were on hand to share their faith as part of various groups.

Chris Eller, associate executive director of the Baptist Convention of Iowa who was there, described the pageant as "a great opportunity for whole families to share the Gospel with a group of people who badly need the Gospel right here in our own country." A 10-year veteran of the evangelistic ministry in Manti, Eller was part of an

18-person group from First Family Church, a Southern Baptist congregation of Ankeny, Iowa.

"What we're trying to do," Walker said, "is meet people, build relationships and have Gospel conversations that last longer than just a few minutes. We've been coming here long enough that some people seek us out and pick up on conversations we were having last year. It might take seven years for someone with doubts about their religion [Mormonism] to come to a true faith in the Jesus of the Bible."

Bill McKeever of Mormonism Research Institute pulled a child's red wagon in Manti, stopping in the middle of street closed off to vehicular traffic when asked to explain the wagon's contents.

A group of about 20 listened as McKeever explained that the heavy ring-bound "book" of metal plates in the wagon was a replica of what Joseph Smith said he found in the woods prior to founding in 1830 what today is known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Smith wrote that he was accosted three times while carrying the book written by an angel-man named Mormon -- hence, Book of Mormon. According to Smith, the plates were returned to Moroni and haven't been seen since.

"If the plates aren't real, Moroni [the angel-man who protected Mormon's book] isn't real," McKeever stated. "Does it honor God to believe something that is false? Is dishonoring God a sin?"

A listener dressed in African attire stalked away after objecting vociferously to McKeever. "I believe what I want to believe," he shouted while waving his hands as if to clear the air of the words that troubled him.

Several other evangelistic groups had their own attention-drawing items for interacting with Mormons. Still others just chatted with people until they found receptivity. By the end of the six days -- two weekends of three days each, almost two dozen professions of faith had been reported, and countless seeds were sown.

"We're here to share God's unconditional love," Walker said, "with those who so desperately need to hear it."

Rodeo Bible camp: 'Christ, kids & cowboying'

by Sue Sprenkle

GARDEN CITY, Kan. (BP) -- Laughter and squeals abound as water balloons fly through the air. Boys run after girls, trying to drench them. Older teens slink off to the corner, feigning that they're too cool until a counselor is in range and they let the water fly.

The traditional water balloon fight of summer camp comes to an end with a not-so-traditional announcement:

"Time to muck out the stalls and feed the horses."

Everyone stoops over to grab cowboy hats strewn across the pavement and clomps their way to the barn, laughing and teasing along the way.

Journey to the Cross Rodeo Bible Camp in Garden City, Kan., does just what the title suggests, mixing two traditions -- church camp and rodeo -- into one experience.

The camp began 12 years ago on Randy Fisher's ranch with 12 campers and a few volunteers from the Journey to the Cross cowboy church/Christian fellowship. Now it meets on Garden City's rodeo grounds and uses the local college's practice facilities. It averages 80 students from five states per year and nearly 40 counselors.

"Our goal in the beginning was just to show Jesus in us," Fisher says. "We had three passions: Christ, kids and cowboying. So we put them together in this camp."

Campers, ranging in age from 9 to 18, sign up for teams to learn a rodeo event like bull riding, barrel racing, horseless horseman, pole bending, goat tying or cutting.

Each event team includes counselors who have often competed either in college or the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association as well as a spiritual counselor to lead Bible studies and spiritual growth. Campers have a chance to practice their events or learn a new event in a safe environment with coaching. They also do the typical "church camp" things like Bible study, worship services and crazy games.

Lakin Getz, an eighth-grader from Quinter, Kan., had no idea there was such a thing as "rodeo Bible camp" until this year.

"It's great," he says. "We have fun with friends and practice our rodeo events. The best part is that we do it all with the love of Christ."

Getz, of Quinter, Kan., signed up to learn chute dogging. This is similar to steer wrestling but cowboys start out in the chute with the steer. When the gate opens, Getz already has it by the horns as the steer tries to make an escape. A counselor holds the tail taut to keep the animal from getting too wild. Getz sets his feet wide and yanks back, brings the steer down to the ground. He jumps up and lets out a "whoop."

While pulling down the steer was a rush, Getz quickly points out that's not the best thing he's learned at camp.

"I've learned how to talk to God and get closer to Him," he says as other chute doggers nod their agreement. "We are learning to be cowboys who serve Christ."

Across the rodeo grounds, a group of barrel racers learn about following God's lead via studying horse halters and bits. The counselor, Audra Campbell of Amarillo, Texas, shows different styles of bits and how each is used. She then asks what happens when the horse trusts the rider. Campers answer that it will follow the rider anywhere. Campbell smiles and expands the analogy to encompass Christians following Christ and being properly equipped.

This transition from "cowboying" to living a life for Jesus happens naturally throughout the camp and is what keeps Brekken Hoffman coming back. The recent Sublette High School graduate learned about Jesus' love seven years ago. She was having trouble with a barrel horse and a friend suggested the camp could help with its group of rodeo counselors.

"At that time, my family didn't go to church or talk about religion. I came because I just wanted to fix my horse," Hoffman remembers. "Something bigger happened that week, though. Every night I bawled and cried because my heart was opening to Christ. I was baptized at camp in Randy's horse tank."

Most of the repeat campers say they can't remember a time when someone wasn't baptized in the horse tank after the rodeo for parents and grandparents on the last day of camp. This year, 11 made decisions to follow Christ in believer's baptism after talking with counselors and their parents.

Many of the campers compete against each other during the year and keep up via social media. Hoffman says they become a "giant group of supporters," even helping one friend through the grief of losing a grandparent last year.

"The atmosphere at Rodeo Bible Camp is all about loving and caring for people," she says. "It doesn't matter who you are. If you are in trouble, we learn to stop and help, all while showing Christ. I love it here!"

Southern Baptists respond to border crisis

by Jane Rodgers/Southern Baptist TEXAN

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (BP) -- While state and national officials craft responses to the humanitarian crisis along the Mexico border, Southern Baptist entities -- including the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention and the North American Mission Board -- are actively engaged in addressing the migrant influx.

"The crisis at our southern border is unlike anything we've witnessed before and has put an enormous strain on the existing resources we have in place," Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said.

Abbott announced June 21 the deployment of 1,000 Texas National Guard troops to assist the Department of Homeland Security and the Customs and Border Patrol. The U.S. Congress passed a \$4.5 billion border relief package June 25, while the U.S. Senate's bipartisan bill to allocate \$4.59 billion for the crisis advanced out of the Senate Appropriations Committee on a 30-1 vote the preceding week.

Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, emphasized Thursday (June 27) the border crisis "has the attention of Southern Baptists."

"I am grateful for churches and ministry groups in New Mexico, Texas and California helping in a variety of ways, such as serving hot meals and non-perishable lunches and providing other ministries of compassion as they are able," he said in written comments to Baptist Press. "The hands-on ministry being done through local churches working in partnership with one another and in their associational and state networks is what Southern Baptists are all about."

Floyd noted that at last year's SBC annual meeting in Dallas, Southern Baptists "formally called on elected officials, especially those who are members of Southern Baptist churches, to do everything in their power to advocate for a just and equitable immigration system."

"In the meantime," Floyd said, "we urge Southern Baptists and other Christ-followers to be the hands and feet of Christ to those in need."

The border crisis is nothing new to Southern Baptist churches in the Rio Grande Valley, as West Brownsville Baptist Church senior pastor Carlos Navarro explained. See related report.

Navarro has been involved in ministry to migrants since his arrival in the Valley a quarter-century ago, when he took over weekly teaching at a Brownsville detention center. After the closure of that facility in 2006, he began ministering at Southwest Key's Casa Padre center. More than 1,500 young men and boys voluntarily attend Navarro's weekly Bible teaching at Casa Padre, and recent weeks have seen the numbers of decisions for Christ soar from 150-200 to 200-250.

The church formed Golan Ministries -- its name a reminder of the pastor's support of Israel -- "where my Lord and Savior will one day return," in April 2018 after the Mexican Consulate in Brownsville contacted Navarro for help with that summer's migrant crisis. Since then, Golan has provided water, clothing, food and Spanish Bibles to migrants on both sides of the border. The SBTC donated 1,500 Bibles to that effort.

In late April this year, West Brownsville Baptist began serving as an overflow respite center when the city's two other emergency shelters, operated by the Catholic Church, reached capacity, and the mayor and city commissioners approached Navarro for help.

Navarro said yes and West Brownsville members converted Sunday school rooms and other spaces to shelter migrants.

"Today is the 59th day," Navarro said on Wednesday (June 26). "We have served over 1,600 migrants in two months." Numbers have ranged from 75-100 per day initially to 35-50 daily now.

"They are sending us the most vulnerable, moms and dads with children, and single moms with children," Navarro said, noting that migrants from South and Central America, India, Pakistan and Africa have sheltered at the church after clearing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

While the city of Brownsville has financed efforts at the other respite centers, West Brownsville Baptist has received no city funding and has relied upon donations, including significant grants from the SBTC and NAMB. The Red Cross donated 1,000 toiletry kits, some blankets and 20 cots.

Navarro says that, besides funds for supplies, West Brownsville Baptist needs adult, infant and children's t-shirts and underwear from sizes small to large, disposable diapers, flip flops or Crocs in all sizes, personal hygiene wipes and disinfecting wipes.

"We go through a bottle and a half of Lysol a day to keep things sanitary," Navarro said.

He also needs Bibles -- preferably the revised Reina-Valera 1960 Bible with black covers -- because West Brownsville is addressing both the spiritual and physical needs of the migrants. Navarro shares the Gospel. Some 900 of the shelter's 1,600 guests have reportedly professed to trusting Christ as their Savior to date.

Scottie Stice, SBTC disaster relief director, confirmed that a DR shower and laundry unit would soon be deployed to West Brownsville Baptist to assist the church's efforts.

In addition to the work of churches like West Brownsville along the border, SBTC DR volunteers have teamed with the Salvation Army in El Paso and Del Rio this spring and summer to serve migrants who have passed through security, been vetted by the border patrol and undergone medical screening before arriving at temporary shelters.

In Del Rio, small SBTC crews have rotated in and out to man a shower/laundry unit. The SBTC's DR bunkhouse has also been on site, housing Salvation Army and SBTC volunteers. SBTC shower and laundry operations were suspended in late June and will resume after July 4.

Since May 5, disaster relief volunteers have helped prepare and serve from 600 to 1,400 meals per day in El Paso.

The Del Rio and El Paso relief efforts mark a "renewed partnership with the Salvation Army," Stice said.

Also see other related reports on how Southern Baptists have responded to the crisis [here](https://brnow.org/News/January-2019/Former-N-C-pastor-answers-plea-for-help-at-Tijuana) and the Biblical Recorder's report at <https://brnow.org/News/January-2019/Former-N-C-pastor-answers-plea-for-help-at-Tijuana>.



SEND Detroit Update - June 2019

2 More Churches Launched!

So far for 2019, four (4) total churches have launched! Hear the highlights of what God is doing in the two newest churches of Send Detroit!



Palm Sunday April 14, was the big Sunday for a new church in Waterford. Pastor Seth Springs led the Transformation Church team to plant a much-needed church in Oakland County that hasn't seen a new Southern Baptist Church in years! They have a heart to see other new gospel preaching churches started throughout the county.

Mile City Lyon

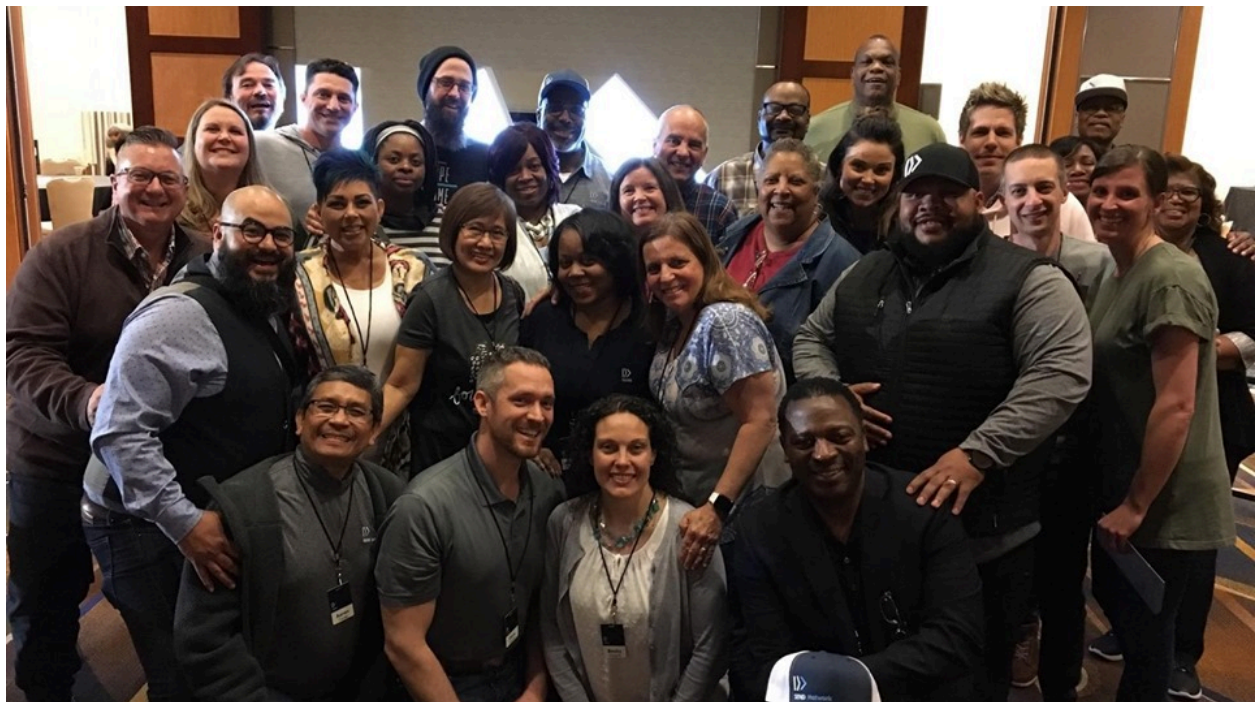
South Lyon, MI

On March 17, Mile City Church launched a second campus in addition to its Plymouth location. They sent a team out of their church to meet in an old recycling center that has become a community sports and rec complex. Watch a highlight video here. (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1690258391120827>)



Send Network Gathering in Chicago

April 29 through May 1 church planters, spouses and team members from the Midwest region gathered in Chicago for equipping, encouragement and refreshing. The theme of the gathering was "Take care of yourselves, take care of your flock, take care of your wolves," based on Acts 20:28-29. A total of 37 came from Detroit!





Pastor Wayne Parker is the SEND Detroit Missionary. He is the Lead Pastor of Merriman Road Baptist Church in Garden City, Michigan.