

COLUMNS

Surprise

By Tim Patterson

FENTON, MI: In just a few short days, the Christian world will celebrate the greatest event that has taken place in all of humankind's existence on this terrestrial ball. There is nothing that even comes close to the worth and wonder of what happened on that day, and has caused us to remember and celebrate annually that which changed the course of humanity.

Christmas is better than great, but if there had not been an Easter to follow then His coming at Christmas would be for naught. This was no accident. The situation did not get out of control and go so badly that a mob murdered Jesus of their own volition. Circumstances did not dictate the outcome. From the beginning of time, this has been the plan of God for the redemption of sinful and broken humanity. This did not take God by surprise and there was no plan B.

Love may have come humbly to earth on Christmas but Love arose victoriously to heaven on Easter. A glorious resurrection took the henchmen of hell by surprise. A glorious resurrection dumbfounded the calloused executioners that tormented and tortured Him. A glorious resurrection left the religious world confused and cowering in the dark corners of their black souls. Because there is an Easter, every Believer should have a hallelujah in their hearts and a loud, lingering praises on their lips.

A pastors' child, three-year-old Nicole, was as anxious for Easter to come as she had been for Christmas day. Her mother was expecting her third child in just a few weeks, and many parishioners were giving them baby gifts since this was her parent's first child in their church. Nicole had picked out a new dress and her mother had given her a new white bonnet. She and her parents stopped at a store to buy her a new pair of shoes to go with her outfit. While in the store, she repeated something she had been saying all day. She said, "I can't wait for Easter, Daddy!" Her father asked her, "Do you know what Easter means, honey?" She replied, "Yes." "Well, what does Easter mean?" In her own sweet three-year-old way, with arms raised, a smile on her face, and at the top of her voice she said, "Surprise!"

What better word could sum up the meaning of Easter! Surprise, death! You lost! Surprise, hell! You can no longer hold us. Surprise, sin! Your curse is gone. Surprise, mourning disciples! He is alive. Surprise, modern man! He is still transforming lives today! Now that is something to shout about.

On the Easter, just before he died, D. William Sangster painfully printed a short note to his daughter. A deeply spiritual Methodist, he had been spearheading a renewal movement in the British Isles after World War II. Then a disease that progressively paralyzed his body ended his ministry, except for prayer. He even lost use of his vocal chords. Nevertheless, the last Easter Sunday he spent on earth, still able to move his

fingers, he wrote: "How terrible to wake up on Easter and have no voice to shout, 'He is risen!' Yet far worse is to have a voice and not want to shout."

It is my prayer and God's desire that we truly celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. Celebrate with the voice He has given you and shout to the world! Surprise! He is alive and well and soon coming again.

No one gets through life without getting hurt

By Mike Durbin

My wife shared a verse from her devotional time that spoke to her heart and subsequently, mine. She quoted the words of Jesus in John 16:16. He says, "a little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me." Jesus is talking about his crucifixion. The reason they wouldn't see him is because he would soon be dead. He is going to be executed on a cross for our sins and His death will turn their world upside down.

The three days between the crucifixion and the resurrection were agonizing for the disciples. It was a time of crushing sorrow. They spent three days living in fear and condemnation. They tortured themselves as they went over and over all the possible, "If only's" They were living in the land of "would of, could of, should of" but it didn't change anything. They blamed themselves, each other, the Jewish leaders, and the Roman Government for what happened. Life was instantly defined by a new reality - Jesus was dead!

We look back from the perspective of history and we understand that it was only "a little while" and they saw Jesus again. Their sorrow was turned to joy because of the resurrection. The resurrection changed everything, but those days when they couldn't see Jesus were some of the most difficult days of their lives. Someone has aptly said, "A little while doesn't feel like a little while when you can't see Jesus."

The disciples weren't the only ones who experience life's "little whiles." You and I go through "Little Whiles" in life. Little whiles are times when we struggle. Times when we are going through things are difficult or confusing. We experience things that are painful emotionally, physically, and spiritually. The reality is that no one gets through life without getting hurt - not even Jesus! Jesus faced the pain, the cruelty, the injustice of the cross, and he died.

But DEATH COULD NOT KEEP HIM!

Life changed instantly for the disciples Easter Sunday. "So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you'"(John 20:19).

Jesus stands in their midst. They see Him and it changes everything. His resurrection fills their lives with hope and gives them reason to rejoice. Seeing the living Jesus changes everything. They move from one “little while” to another when they see Jesus. Seeing Jesus still does that today.

The Good News with Secondhand Faith

By Tony Lynn

(Last month, I described what I labeled as Secondhand Faith. I described its six traits or markers.)

This month, I do not want to paint a completely negative picture because there is good news. There is evidence that spirituality has grown in recent years. Bookstores have enlarged their spiritual reading sections. Music producers have created discs from all corners of the spiritual world. Mainline movies from Hollywood have been filled with spiritual themes. People have used the Internet, in record numbers, searching for answers to spiritual questions. Television and radio programs have been peppered with spiritual jargon. Pop culture and current celebrities have cast a spotlight on the latest self-improvement trend. Spirituality is on the rise.

We cannot let this moment escape us without trying to move our world from an ambiguous spirituality toward an accurate expression of genuine faith. Like the freshness date on a bottle of milk, it could be that we have a limited window of opportunity in which to transform the population before the next mood takes us farther away from authentic spirituality. We should make the most of this opportunity.

Ten Trends

I need to share what I believe are ten trends in today’s world. This phenomenon is a multigenerational trend. I have friends, who live by secondhand faith’s six markers, who are in their 20s, 40s, and 70s. I find that those who have adopted the mood of secondhand faith live by the following ten trends:

1. Are comfortable with mysteries, everything need not be explained
2. Prefer learning through interactive dialogues, not monologues
3. Like to discover things for themselves, not be indoctrinated
4. Have a bad impression of Christianity, not an accurate one
5. Focus on the here-and-now, not so much the hereafter
6. Will choose amorality over a stringent morality
7. Want to be perceived as spiritual, not religious
8. Feel insignificant, not important
9. Want community, not isolation
10. Are skeptical, not gullible

A familiar passage written thousands of years ago says, “There is nothing new under the sun”

(Ecclesiastes 1:9). While that is absolutely true concerning man’s search for meaning, it is still

profitable to analyze our current situation in fresh ways.

Twelve Effective Habits

The markers and trends associated with secondhand faith offer a quick sketch of our contemporary audience. By reviewing these lists, from time to time, I have created twelve personal habits that I follow while trying to help friends transform their secondhand faith into a genuine faith.

1. Intercede for friends, seekers, and myself through regular prayer times. I ask the Lord to open up opportunities for spiritual discussions. I have to be ready to discuss spiritual matters when the moment arrives. Those important moments often come at the most surprising times.
2. Inform people about the gospel with all sorts of media. I share creative business cards, digital images, text messages, tracts, websites, video files, audio files, DVDs, and CDs, with my contact information attached. Those materials start and continue dialogues. I attempt to fill their senses with different forms of the same message: video testimonies, music, and personal stories of conversion from those who resemble my friends. It seems that offering morsels of the message in small doses is much more effective than exhaustive explanations.
3. Initiate spiritual discussions and listen carefully. I have stopped using the word “religion” when talking with someone about his or her spirituality. Labels too often lead to misunderstandings. I intentionally use everyday language to discuss faith. I usually say something like, “Please, tell me about your spiritual journey.” This approach seems to lead to a more candid and thorough discussion. During the conversation, or soon afterwards, my new acquaintance asks about my spiritual journey which allows us to more freely discuss the claims of Christ and Christianity.
4. Infiltrate the lives of people in a respectful way. People who follow secondhand faith rarely come to church. Therefore, I have to make the initial effort by entering into areas of their lives where we can have conversations. Intentionally bridging relationships with new friends can be done through cultural, recreational, activist, and social activities. Oftentimes, I find those involved in meaningful or charitable activities more easily identify with me. I explain my concerns for ecology, world events, social injustices, and charitable events while referring to my faith. Our common interests allow me time to translate the gospel into forms they will more easily understand.
5. Introduce people to the Lord as if He is a close personal friend. This is not an effort to trivialize God. It is a way of showing God’s personal concern in their lives. People often think that God is too impersonal and far-removed from their reality. Understanding that God knew them before they were born and that He knows their thoughts and motives moves them from feeling insignificant to a more correct assessment of how God actually sees them.

6. Inspire people with the narrative stories of the Bible and current testimonies. People like to know they are not alone in their daily struggles. They find community and answers in other peoples' experiences. They are not looking for perfect people. They are looking for people who are transparent and honest about their own spiritual journeys. In reality, they want someone to show that a more fulfilling life can be acquired in this lifetime.

7. Instill a confidence in the Bible by helping people to become familiar with its contents. People want to know how the Bible relates to their daily lives. Scriptural application needs to be straightforward and practical. They will discover for themselves that much of their dissatisfaction in life comes from the fact that their lives do not line-up with the expectations in the Bible.

8. Interact in small discussion groups mixing many seekers with a couple of respected believers. Most of my friends seem to learn best through interactive dialogues and discussions. They do not seem to gain as much from simply listening to a discourse. Monologues make them feel they are being coerced with religious propaganda. They are not comfortable displaying ignorance on subjects. So, small groups allow them to express their doubts and explore their questions in a friendly, relaxed environment. This involvement with other Christians advances the seeker's confidence in genuine faith. The more Christians a seeker meets during the early stages of his or her search, the more reasonable conversion seems.

9. Invite people to attend a gathering of Christians involved in a vibrant worship experience even before they have become Christians. Seekers, involved with secondhand faith, often crave a dynamic and vibrant community. They love the mystery of worship. They find a sense of belonging and community within Christian groups often before they are ready to convert to Christianity. Our friends have often made their final step toward conversion after observing Christians in authentic, passionate worship. Figuratively speaking, I find ways to expand the entryway of our Christian groups and churches. I have to allow people to take part in our activities and to find a sense of belonging before they are willing to believe.

10. Identify prayerfully where God is at work in each person's life and customize relationships so as to join God in what He is already accomplishing. The Holy Spirit is always at work urging men and women toward the Lord. I want to take part in what God is already doing rather than control all of my relationships in a common manner.

11. Insult no one. While making comparisons between spiritual pathways, discussing morals, and encouraging those involved in secondhand faith toward genuine faith, I have to be careful to not insult, malign, or attack anyone's personal spirituality. This is important regardless of where my friends are in their spiritual journey. I can say that something is not in agreement with the Bible or is not in keeping with God's expectations without offending anyone. People learn to make their own critical comparisons as they increase their confidence in Christ and the Bible.

12. Inquire frequently, asking people to reflect on where they are in their spiritual journey when coming to Christ. People need to share their spiritual challenges aloud, as they consider the claims of Christianity. They often struggle with the exclusive claims of Christianity stating that Christ is the only way to salvation. Allowing them to wrestle

aloud with their obstacles in a secure relationship allows them to discover new spiritual insights.

Let me ask, are you and your church poised to attract and persuade those who live by a secondhand faith that Christ is the only true solution for their condition? If not, call, email, snapchat, or one of those other new ways of communicating and we will help.

A Crown for a Cross

By Mick Schatz

ROSCOMMON - Easter! Resurrection Day! Truly a time for reflection and celebration. We must reflect on the greatness of Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. He made possible that which could never be achieved through human effort - a personal relationship with the Heavenly Father.

Colossians 1:21 puts it like this - "Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds because of your evil actions. But now He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before Him." WOW! Even though I was once owned and controlled by evil and even though my attitudes and actions were wicked and vindictive towards His love, HE STILL GAVE EVERYTHING FOR ME! WOW! Forgiveness has been given, my status has changed from slave to free, able to stand holy, faultless, and blameless before the King of Kings!

What makes Easter even more amazing is its' availability. This total forgiveness and freedom is available to all who believe and confess the Lordship of Christ. Our Heavenly Father would prefer all to accept the "gift" of Resurrection Day. It is not limited to a those of a particular race, color or economic status. It's not even limited to those who are kind, good or moral. It is for ALL. As our church attendance increases on Easter Sunday it's easy to see that a lost world is desirous of something more. Something life changing, a new status, a family, a refuge to run to, an anchor in the storm, a someone named Jesus. Let's not be shy in introducing them to Him - forgiveness and freedom.

Finally, as I reflect on Easter, I am overwhelmed with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. He literally gave-up everything for me and you. He embraced suffering so I could experience joy. He embraced death so I could have life. He gave up a home in heaven so I can call heaven home. WOW! The love of Christ for us demands a response. I love to write and sing worship songs as it is my personal response to what Christ has done. This song -"A Crown for a Cross" is a feeble attempt to respond to the overwhelming, never-ending love of God!

"A Crown for a Cross"

Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, living to die,
Jesus, broken for my sin, battered and bruised, my only rescue
You saw me unclean, still You came to redeem me
You suffered my shame, still You called me by name

You gave everything, a crown for a cross,
a throne for no home, You suffered alone,
You poured out Your love, so extravagantly, You took my blame,
You gave everything, a crown for a cross

Jesus, laid in borrowed tomb, salvation had died,
Jesus, victorious over death, rose from grave, I am no longer a slave
I was broken apart, still You gave me Your heart,
I was living a lie, still You gave me new life

You gave everything, a crown for a cross,
a throne for no home, You suffered alone,
You poured out Your love, so extravagantly, You took my blame,
You gave everything, a crown for a cross

With my hands I will praise you with my voice I will shout Your name
With my strength I will serve You, all my life I will give You everything
With my hands I will praise you with my voice I will shout Your name
With my strength I will serve You, all my life I will give You everything
I will give You everything, I will give You everything

So, WHAT WILL YOUR RESPONSE BE?

STARTING

Pastor Darryl Gaddy Resigns

By Staff

– Pastor Darryl Gaddy, Church Planting Catalyst & Pastor of Victory Fellowship Community Church (Detroit, MI) has received a new opportunity of service in South Carolina.

Pastor Gaddy will serve the churches, associations, and the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Gaddy will help develop best-practices for African American and multi-cultural church plants. He will contribute to the church planter assessment process in South Carolina.

Tony Lynn, State Director of Missions – Michigan, states:

“Pastor Darryl and Miss Daphne Gaddy’s years of service in Michigan as a church planting couple, a pastor and wife at Victory Fellowship Community Church, and as catalysts among other church planters and their wives is immeasurable. They made a lasting impact in lives, neighborhoods, churches, associations, and the state. Their influence will be missed.”

Those of us at the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) and at the North American Michigan Board (NAMB) are grateful for Gaddy's service these past two years, since January 1, 2016. His presence and service here in Michigan will be greatly missed. During his ministry as Pastor and Church Planting Catalyst, Gaddy has been such a positive influence for change in the Detroit community. God has used him to reach many men and women with the Gospel in Detroit, and his leadership and service at Victory Fellowship has been both a spiritual and physical blessing to his community. As a Church Planting Catalyst, he has helped mentor and cultivate Church Planters as a part of NAMB's SEND Network in Detroit. He has also been an inspiration for many planters in Detroit as a former Church Planter himself. We know that Gaddy will have a lasting impact wherever he serves. We love our brother and pray for God's blessing upon his ministry in South Carolina. -

STRENGTHENING

5 Things I learned about depression in ministry

By Tony Rose
March 27, 2018

LA GRANGE, KY - Depression is spoken about often but seldom understood. I recently read a statement in a well-known Christian publication, "I've never met a bout of depression that a good night's sleep wouldn't fix." I can tell you the author had never met depression. Here are five things I have learned, not just about depression, but through it.

Depression is no respecter of persons. Depression is like a prowling monster looking for likely and unlikely candidates to lure into darkness. Do not buy into the lie that depression only affects the weak. Some of God's great servants faced this darkness. There are no exceptions. Everyone is susceptible to the enemy's weapon.

Depression is far worse than you can imagine without experiencing it. You cannot just snap out of depression. It can be as crippling as having two broken legs. The undue stigma associated with depression, especially for pastors, causes deep internal shame. The associated shame makes recovering from depression much more difficult. Telling someone to "snap out of it" is like hitting a man's broken leg with a baseball bat. Words of compassion will bring healing. Words of correction may increase darkness.

It can undermine a sound-minded faith. Depression cannot separate the believer from Christ. It can, however, disrupt one's sound thinking and convince the most devout believer he is no longer loved by God. In the darkness of depression, a believer can doubt every promise of God and be convinced that every judgment of God is upon him.

Those who comfort the depressed are under great strain. The demands on a pastor's wife while caring for her depressed husband are taxing beyond imagination. She will need help, too.

Remember God never wastes our suffering. The “night vision” of faith can only be learned in the dark (Isaiah 50:10-11). Depression can be the harshest, but the best teacher you may ever have. Depression taught me the depths of God’s tender mercies, the richness of His grace and my definitive need for Him. Depression taught me how to trust God in the dark while waiting for my feelings to catch up with my faith.

Pastor, are you struggling with depression? Call our Pastor Care Line for confidential help from trained, professional counselors. Call 1-844-PASTOR1 (1-844-727-8671).

About the author: Tony Rose is senior pastor of LaGrange Baptist Church in LaGrange, Kentucky. He is also an author for the North American Mission Board, SBC. Article courtesy NAMB.net

A New Ministry Opportunity for Michigan Baptists

By Staff

FENTON, MI: In 1994, the Women’s Missionary Union® held a planning meeting to discuss the development of a program to address the needs of women in poverty. There are now 200 such sites nationwide, and soon Michigan Baptists will have the opportunity to begin such a ministry, too.

The inspiration for Christian Women’s Job Corps® came as a group of women visited ladies in the Appalachian region of the United States. They discovered that when women help women by mentoring them, both experience a life change. They felt this pattern could be replicated and enlarged by a larger group of women helping women. These events led to the birthing of Christian Women’s Job Corps® sites that now span many US states with over 200 locations. The National CWJC® program was recognized by the White House in 1999 as a viable program for assisting women in transition from welfare to work. In 2004 the first Christian Men’s Job Corps® site opened in San Angelo, Texas to address similar needs of men.

From its beginning CWJC® of Madison County, AL has operated as a “Church and Community Model”, incorporating Christian churches from throughout the county as well as community organizations and facilities. We are supported by the help of a number of churches as well as health, educational, government, and business organizations throughout the county. Our four school-type sites are made possible by support from many individuals and groups throughout Madison County. CWJC® is dependent on volunteers from these support groups.

The following services are provided by Christian Women’s Job Corps® of Madison County, Alabama.

Free Job Readiness Classes

Our job readiness classes are designed to provide an array of experiences and skills that will allow our graduates to compete in the job market and create a better life for themselves and their families. We teach basic computer skills, job search skills, money management, communications, and most importantly, Bible study.

Volunteer Internship Program

CWJC® students with a high school diploma or GED participate in volunteer internships at local companies or non-profit organizations. The "hands on" experience is valuable in providing much needed job skills, an updated resume, and a good reference when the student begins her job search. The employers benefit as well from the extra help. If a company has an open position this presents an opportunity for both the employer and potential employee to determine if there is a "good fit".

GED Tutoring

Students who need to obtain a GED are able to benefit from one-on-one tutoring by our group of trained volunteers. The GED tutoring program is only offered at The PLACE Ministry Center. Students are tutored in math and English only.

Career Clothes Closet

CWJC® operates a clothes closet at our First Baptist Church site. Current and past students as well as anyone with a referral from an agency are invited to "shop" for apparel and accessories as needed. The clothes are appropriate for job interviews and daily attire for an office setting.

Computer Donation Program

Students that have graduated from our program, having completed both the classroom and mentor phase, are eligible for donated, used computers. Priority on the waiting list is determined by previous class attendance while in the classroom phase of our program. Owning a computer is important because it allows our students to continue to practice what they have learned in class. Also, if children are in the home it becomes a valuable tool for their class work.

Auto Donation Program

Some of our participants do not have reliable transportation. After graduation, each student has the opportunity to go through a separate application process to become eligible for a donated vehicle.

Cars are donated to CWJC® and then turned directly over to the graduate.

Scholarship Program

CWJC® of Madison County has set aside some funds as well as grant money to establish an endowment fund for educational scholarships for our graduates. Graduates of our program who desire to further their education may apply for scholarship money to supplement their own financial aid. If traditional financial aid is unavailable, our scholarships serve to relieve the financial cost of higher education.

Coach, captain & cheerleader

by Scott Brown

Date: March 26, 2018 - Monday

WAVERLY, TN (BP) -- The call to be a church revitalizer is a hard call and, although church revitalizers can come in many varieties and skill sets, there are three qualities we must seek in our leadership among God's people. Ecclesiastes tells us, "a threefold cord is not quickly broken." Likewise, a pastor who emphasizes the following three roles in his ministry will be more likely to find his leadership stronger, durable and enduring.

First, we are to lead from the front. Borrowing a sports metaphor, we are to be the coach of the team to whom God has called us. They have to believe we know the plays and that we not only know where we are going (that's vision), but that we can guide them there (that's leadership).

Leading from the front means that we are championing the mission of the church by dreaming, casting vision and inspiring others to follow. When I was ordained, my pastor challenged me by stating that the leader will either be a spark plug or a flat tire. My friends, be the spark plug! There are few hindrances greater to revitalization than flat tire preachers. If you are the flat tire in your church's revitalization effort, it is time to either change or be changed.

As we seek to lead from the front, we must be careful not to charge so far and fast ahead of our people they mistake us for an enemy and open fire. This is where the second prong is utterly necessary. We must lead from the middle, as a team captain working alongside the team for every victory.

I strive to never miss a work day, to arrive early and leave late, and be among my people as much as possible. There is a saying, "The shepherd must smell like the sheep," and nothing can be more important to a church revitalizer than to get dirty and work hard among their people. We must pastor without a safety net and without an escape plan. When we pastor our people well, they will follow farther and harder when they really believe you love them, and you must love them!

While we love them as their pastor, we will also take on the third prong of being the cheerleader by leading our people them from the back. Celebrate every victory and minimize every failure. Barnabas is our obvious example in Scripture as someone who leads from the back, pushing others to find their gifts and pushing them to outshine even himself.

Encourage your people every chance you get, celebrate even the smallest victories, praise God publicly for all He does. A great tool I've used is the Soul Winner's Candle. This is a candle I place somewhere that's very visible in our sanctuary, and whenever someone is saved as a direct result of our prayers, service, sharing or sacrificing, then the one most responsible comes forward to light it before the service. When we see that flame, this has served to build momentum, celebrate personal evangelism and give us another excuse to celebrate Jesus together.

If you want to see your church come alive, then you must be coach, captain and cheerleader. These three prongs together in you, as pastor, will give power to your leadership and change your church for His glory.

About the author: Scott Brown is pastor of First Baptist Church in Waverly, Tenn. This column first appeared in the Baptist and Reflector (baptistandreflector.org), newsjournal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

FBC Sutherland Springs launches building project

By Mike Ebert

“This tragic shooting moved Michigan Baptist churches to pray for the Sutherland Springs community and to re-examine the security measures they had in place to ensure a safe place to encounter God. Now, we are inspired by our brothers’ and sisters’ faith to rebuild and grateful for the leadership of Kevin Ezell to make it possible for our larger faith family to help.” Mike Durbin, State Evangelism Director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan

SAN ANTONIO — First Baptist Church Sutherland Springs, the Southern Baptist congregation whose members were targeted by a gunman last November in what became one of the worst mass shootings in US history, will begin construction of a new worship center and education building beginning in May.

Plans were announced Tues., March 27, by Frank Pomeroy, the church’s pastor. The North American Mission Board (NAMB) will accept donations for the project. If donations do not cover all of the construction expenses, NAMB will cover any outstanding costs.

“Our primary goal is to lift up Jesus in our community,” Pomeroy said. “Sutherland Springs has a certain distinction because of the enormity of the tragedy that took place at our church, but every community is touched by tragedy. Every family and every person has hurts and sorrows. We want to be a lighthouse. The light of the Gospel shines hope, even in the deepest darkness.”

Pomeroy said the new facilities will put the church in an even better position to serve others.

“We are grateful for the outpouring of prayers, for the love that we have felt,” Pomeroy said. “So many have done so much for us, and it has been a huge blessing. The purpose of these new buildings will be to serve God and serve others. That is why we exist.”

NAMB president Kevin Ezell raised the issue of a new building with Pomeroy in a conversation near the end of 2017. NAMB asked Myrick Gurosky and Associates (MG&A) in Birmingham, Ala., to lead in the development, design and construction of the buildings. MG&A has worked closely with Pomeroy and leaders of the church in developing designs. MG&A specializes in the management of design and construction and has worked on hundreds of church projects across the US.

“We are grateful to play a small part in the healing journey for our brothers and sisters in Sutherland Springs,” Ezell said. “Southern Baptists were devastated by what took place. We immediately knew that, as their Southern Baptist family, we wanted to lock arms with them, doing whatever we could to help restore hope. We know a lot of people want to help, and fortunately, our experience in facilitating and mobilizing partners, volunteers, donations and prayer support in times of crisis has prepared us well to lead in a time such as this.”

Groups, organizations and individuals wanting to donate to the project can visit NAMB.net and click “Give.” The link will take them to a special area for giving to the Sutherland Springs building effort. Donations of services and materials can be given through the web site restoresutherlandsprings.com.

“We have a lot of experience working with churches,” said MG&A’s president Scott Gurosky, “but this situation is unique. Already my team and I have been deeply moved by the faith, courage and perseverance that pastor Frank and his congregation have shown. We are excited to give them this opportunity to move forward in faith toward a new beginning.”

The planned worship center features an exterior of stone and glass. Two towers on the corners of the building will emanate glowing light. Inside, the worship center will feature seating for 250 people. A memorial to the 26 people who lost their lives in the attack will be located in space between the worship center and the education facility.

The education building is designed to host classrooms for attendees age infant through adult. Outside, a lighted, paved parking lot will also be included.

MG&A and their consultants have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars in development and design work. Gurosky said cost of the two buildings will be approximately \$3 million, but they anticipate that donations of materials and services will significantly reduce the final total.

“We have already been approached by several companies that want to help the people of this church and town,” Gurosky said. “We want to give as many people as possible that opportunity, and it’s our goal to find partners to help us complete the planned facilities so that actual cost of the work is minimal.”

Construction on the property is being split into two phases. Phase 1 will include a worship center and education building. Funding for this phase is backed by NAMB with construction expected to begin in early May and a completion date anticipated for early 2019. Plans for Phase 2 of the project include a multi-purpose community and activity center and will be funded from other sources.

To donate services or materials, visit restoresutherlandsprings.com. To donate funds, visit namb.net.

Mike Ebert serves as director of public relations for the North American Mission Board.

Jesus is the only one

By Jay Anderson

MONROE - Easter is a time for every Christian to celebrate the substitutionary sacrifice Jesus made on the cross and the proof of His victory over sin and death in the resurrection. However, let us not think of those monumental events in human history as something that simply happened in the past that we only celebrate this time of the year. The centrality of the cross and resurrection should continually guide our worship and witness throughout the year and will be the foundation for our worship throughout all eternity!

The Apostle John was given an amazing Revelation by Jesus Christ, which is the final book in the closed canon of God's Word, the Bible. In Revelation 4, John saw the centrality of God the Father and His heavenly throne. John struggled with words to describe the beauty and terror of God's holiness. He is rightfully and constantly worshiped, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Rev 4:8). In Revelation 5, the centrality of God the Son, Jesus Christ, becomes the focus.

Jesus is the only one in all creation worthy to approach the very throne of God the Father. Jesus is the only one in all creation worthy to take the scroll from the right hand of God Almighty and act to bring about all the Father's final plans for salvation and judgment (Rev 5:1-5). And because Jesus is God, He is given the same worship as God the Father. The worship Jesus receives from the angelic beings and the redeemed in heaven is intimately tied to His death and resurrection. Jesus is the Lamb who was slain but is standing to receive honor and glory and praise (Rev 5:6-14). This will be the privilege of all believers for all eternity. We will get to continually celebrate the worth and work of Jesus!

Easter provides a unique opportunity to focus on the centrality of Jesus' death and resurrection. It provides increased opportunities in our cultural context to point unbelievers to the good news that His effective life, death, and resurrection are the means for forgiveness and joy before an infinitely Holy God. He is the only source of abundant mercy and grace. Christina Rossetti captured it well...

None other lamb, none other name,
None other hope in heav'n or earth or sea,
None other hiding place from guilt and shame,
None besides thee!

Easter has passed but to be revisited again next year. May we believers find such utter joy in constantly remembering the centrality of the cross and resurrection that we are driven to speak often of the gospel in every sphere of life! It will be preparation for eternity.

About the author: Jay was born and raised and re-born in Iowa. He earned a B.A. in Marketing from the University of Northern Iowa in 1997 and an M.Div. from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2003. Pastor Jay met his amazing wife, Kristie, while attending seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. The Lord has blessed them with four active children (Noel, Deacon, Anna, Selah) who keep them very busy with

homeschooling, music lessons, and various sports activities. Before joining CrossPointe Church in Monroe in November of 2016, the Andersons served as church planters in Iowa and cross cultural workers in East Asia.

'No fear in death!'

By Steve Gaines

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP) -- As I walked into the hospital, I looked on a visitation card at the name of the man who had requested that I visit him. He was dying of cancer and wanted me to come and pray with him. I was honored to do so. When I walked into his hospital room, I was taken aback by his appearance. His body was thin. His skin was darkened. His teeth were shattered. All of this was the result of endless rounds of chemo. Yet in spite of all the doctors could do, Jim was dying.

He was on the brink of eternity. He knew he was going to heaven but he was still afraid. He said, "Pastor, I know I am saved. I know that when I die, I'll go to heaven. But I'm afraid. I've never died before. I'm afraid of what death will be like. Can you help me?" We talked about what happens when a Christian dies. We talked about how his spirit and soul would soon leave his body and go directly to God's presence in heaven. Then the Lord gave me a thought to share with Jim that I'd never shared before.

I said, "Jim, when I was young, I was afraid of the dark, especially any dark area in our house. I remember coming home at night with my family. My father knew about my fear of darkness. So, every time we came home, my dad would unlock and open the door, go inside and turn the light on. Then he'd turn around and say, 'Come on in, Steve, everything's fine.' I remember walking into our house in total peace because I knew that I could trust my father to take care of me. I didn't have to be afraid."

Then I said, "Jim, when Jesus came to this earth, He lived a sinless life so He could die for our sins. He gave His life as an atoning sacrifice for God's children and then He was buried. But three days later, Jesus walked out of that grave with the keys to death, hell and the grave itself in His hand. Jim, Jesus unlocked the door of eternity, went into the grave and turned the lights on for you. Now He's saying, 'Jim, come on in, everything is fine.'"

By this time, Jim and I were both crying. In fact, even now, I'm fighting back tears as I write this article. Jim said, "Pastor, I get it! I can see Jesus opening the door for me! He's turning the light on for me! He's saying, 'Come on in, Jim, everything is fine.' Jesus is the Light of the world! He's turned the light on in my grave! I can die without fear! Thank you, pastor, for helping me."

We prayed and I left. A few days later, Jim stepped out of this life into eternal life. And Jesus was there waiting for him with the lights on. That's all possible because Jesus died and rose bodily, victoriously and eternally from the grave. The apostle Paul said that one day every Christian will die. Each of us will shed this earthly body and our spirit and soul will enter eternity. This perishable shall put on the imperishable. This mortal shall put on immortality. At that moment we won't fear the grave any longer because Jesus has conquered it! Death is swallowed up in His victory!

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:53-57: "For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?' 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (NASB).

Jesus removed the sting of death when He walked into the grave and defeated its power. He turned the light on and says to us, "All is well! Come on in!" That's why I love Easter. It shouts loudly that because of a bloody cross and an empty tomb we can have what the modern hymn says: "No guilt in life, no fear in death!"

About the author: Steve Gaines is president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn.

Play the Ball Where the Monkey Throws It

By Jim Futral

JACKSON, MS - How many of you have thought about how often your day doesn't go the way you planned it? It may not be any earth-shaking thing that you've got in mind, and it may not be something that urgent that has to be done that day, but as you start your day or think about the day before, you probably have in mind several things that you need to accomplish. Maybe some by noon and some in the afternoon, but how many times does that get altered? You may be one of those methodical people who outlines the whole day and you have five things that you need to get done that morning and seven things that afternoon.

For me, I do have a series of things that I want to accomplish or at least address during the day. They may be meetings. They may be readings. They may be places I need to speak or people I with whom I need to talk, but almost without exception if I think I'm going to get them done one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, they end up something like four, eight, one, three, and several left over.

There are some people that just really, really become a nervous wreck because life doesn't fit in their systematic plan. They genuinely get upset by it. They live in perpetual anxiety and heartburn. Yet the fact is we do not know what a day holds. I so often think of James in his little book toward the end of the Bible where he said, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:13-14). The truth is, we don't.

For that reason, James goes on to say in the fourth chapter, verse 15, "Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'" In all truthfulness, it doesn't always come out the way we think it might. We trust God. We try to live somewhat flexible and trust the Lord to lead us because it is so easy to get upset, frustrated, ill-tempered, bad attitude, because life isn't working out like we thought that it

would or should or could. It rarely does, so get in line with the Lord and let Him help you when life isn't working out like you thought it would or intruding events or shocking changes bring you to a point where you just don't know what to do with life because it is so topsy-turvy.

A friend of mine was telling me the other day about an experience that he had while on a mission trip in Africa, a country where they were had a large city that was proud of its golf course on the edge of the metropolitan area. Though he was not a golfer, some of the folks there wanted to go play golf one afternoon. Just to have some fellowship with them, he went.

He got out on the golf course and saw something that was really strange. There were signs all over the golf course that said, "Play the Ball Where the Monkey Throws It." He asked what that was about, and later on he would find out and see what it meant. The problem was that the golf course had areas around it that had monkeys everywhere. Just regular, wild monkeys that lived in that area. The monkeys would come out on the golf course and they were fascinated with the little white ball that came flying through the air and landed near them or even went on the green and the monkeys would run out there and grab the golf ball and throw it somewhere.

The people who kept up the golf course had tried several things to get rid of the monkeys. They had even built a fence. I don't know what kind of fence it was, but they built a fence around the golf course trying to keep the monkeys out. I suppose they didn't know that a monkey could climb on a fence, but it didn't work. They had also tried noise makers to scare the monkeys off, but it had no effect at all. Many of the people who regularly played golf there got upset because where they hit their ball is not where the ball was when they had to hit the second and third time. The monkeys would run out there, get the ball, throw it to the other side of the fairway, or off the golf course.

After trying one thing after another to keep the monkeys away, they just conceded that they built the golf course in the monkeys' domain and they changed the golfing rules to accommodate what happens on the golf course. So the sign said, "Play the Ball Where the Monkey Throws It." That's what they did. It's hard enough to play golf when you just are playing against the elements or the wind or the frustrations of just trying to hit the thing fairly straight, but when you've got to deal with the monkey population, it's even more difficult. The people who played the course that day as every day would just begin with the understanding that they would have to hit their ball wherever the monkey throws it.

The fact is that for nearly all of us, life is somewhat like that. Every one of us is going down the fairway of life and suddenly realize that something has affected the steps ahead and the next shot in life. Sure enough, the monkeys have been on the course. There are some amazing things that can take place when God changes the course in your life each day. Things that can either frustrate you or bless you. Things that can change the twists and turns of your road of life and take you down a path that is filled with new sights and new joys and new people and new opportunities. Some of you may never see those things. Some of you may never come to enjoy the monkeys of life throwing your ball around on the course, but you would choose rather to just be

frustrated about it, angry about it, upset because somebody, something, some monkey pitched your golf ball off in a ditch and you can't get over it.

James reminds us that the will of God is not always fully known when the sun comes up every morning and what you plan for the day is not in God's plan and purposes for you. Things get shifted around and about mid-morning you realize, yep the monkeys in life have been at work again in my daily routine. Go with the flow. Go with God in the midst of what He has in store for you. Watch carefully and you may see a bright and shining blessing just ahead.

About the author: Jim Futral is the Executive Director-Treasurer for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

The Church Must Respond to the Opioid Crisis

By Josie Bingham

UNITED STATES—The opioid crisis is officially a national emergency. The United States is experiencing “a death toll equal to September 11th every three weeks” according to the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis. Drug overdose is currently the most common death for Americans under 50.

Bill Henard, West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists executive director-treasurer, encouraged the Church to tackle harder societal issues including the opioid crisis. “When we are all in for the mission of God, we can do more together than by ourselves,” Henard said. “Imagine what God could accomplish if we worked together, committed to radical, sacrificial generosity as a way of life, and grew as a generous people in response to Christ's generosity. “We could tackle the growing drug epidemic in our midst,” said Henard.

An opioid is a class of drugs including illegal substances such as heroin as well as legally prescribed medications like oxycodone, morphine and fentanyl according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Last year, opioid overdoses stole the lives of more than 59,000 Americans. And those numbers are believed to be underreported by 24 percent according to the White House Council of Economic Advisers.

Donnie Griggs, pastor of One Harbor Church in Morehead City, North Carolina, shared how the crisis hit close to his heart. One of Donnie's family members became addicted through prescribed medication for pain and another family member began toying with marijuana before the drug use turned to harder stuff.

“We are drowning in this as a country; everywhere I go, small towns are being eaten up with this stuff,” Griggs said. “I'm not afraid to speak against the opioid crisis from the pulpit and call out the epidemic sweeping across our community.” One Harbor Church has become a safe place of hope in their communities for people struggling with addiction. But the reality is, the opioid addiction has expanded into a national crisis. Churches must grasp the mindset that they have been positioned throughout neighborhoods and communities, both urban and rural, to become first responders and beacons of light and hope for those struggling with opioid addictions.

As the opioid crisis deepens, so must the response of the Church. “No longer can pastors and lay leaders in the church be unwilling to speak openly, honestly and continually about this subject,” said Ed Stetzer. “We must be willing to call out the abuse both on the prescription side and user side as dangerous and immoral. This must be done with compassion and care while speaking boldly and with truth.” Dave Watson is a pastor in New York where opioid and heroin deaths rose faster than any other state four years ago with a record high of 825 deaths. “We are losing a generation of young people,” Watson said. “A problem can have a solution that’s slowly implemented, but this crisis requires action now. The Church should start with a dually prophetic and compassionate approach. We must from our pulpits and programs deal frankly, honestly and continually with this issue, calling out the abuse both on the prescription side and user side. It is dangerous and immoral. But the Church can start with prevention by warning people of the dangers and help individuals to take steps not to become addicted while recovering from injuries and surgeries.

“But beyond that, we must provide recovery programs that are Christ-centered and filled with tough love and honesty.” Watson’s church has implemented 12-step recovery groups based on Christian teaching, while others sponsor clinics to support those in withdrawal. The opioid crisis is not just an urban or suburban crisis. It is a worldwide crisis. It takes from everyone. Yet, the Church—fueled by hope in Jesus Christ—can combat the opioid crisis with prevention from the pulpit and supportive community and recovery groups for those who’ve fallen or become addicted.

“This starts with the Church’s willingness to pursue and love those ensnared by opioids,” said Stetzer. “We can make a real difference—from the pulpit, by giving the epidemic a name and working with local agencies to warn people of the danger and through education and resources where knowledge brings awareness.”

What is your church willing to do during this time of dire need? For resources and information on next steps in tackling the opioid crisis, visit The Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), along with other faith-based organizations in North America, to help create, speak into, and resource North America.

About the author: Josie Rabbitt Bingham writes for the North American Mission Board and Send Relief.

The Return of the Prodigal Son

By Cornelius Roberson

DETROIT, MI - I was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. I spent the majority of my youth inside church and involved in church activities and sports. I heard the gospel of Jesus at an early age and I asked the Lord to come in my heart. I wanted to live for him. As a child, I attended Catholic School and I was infatuated with Priesthood. Although I wasn't Catholic, I boldly announced my desire to become a Priest. I remember the puzzled look on my mother's face. I was only nine years old. The Lord made his presence known in my life, and that moment would change my life for forever.

In high school, my interest was swayed from church; I eventually fell out of love with church and the people that said they were saved. I fell in love with basketball in high school and I won an athletic scholarship for four years playing basketball. I became the prodigal son and a downward spiral began. I ran from Jesus, the church and the things about God. I was trying to remove his presence from my life with alcohol, parties and women.

Not at all, praising Him for all the things he had done. I was trying to forget the priesthood, and his calling. I remember the hurt, the pain and the emptiness in my life. After college, I joined the military. While in the military, I was almost killed by a landslide in a training exercise. I was denying the Lord his rightful place in my life. Near death, I recall crying out the name of "JESUS". Now... I needed the Savior, but didn't have a deep relationship with him. I rededicated my life to Jesus. No matter how hard it would be, I knew that the Lord wanted to use my life to spread his gospel and that I'm called to deliver his message.

For the next five years, I studied the things of the Lord at Waukegan Community Church in Illinois. The church plant began in a gym, and the Lord used this experience to teach me and help me understand Christianity and the structure of the church. I left Waukegan, Illinois and moved back to Detroit, Michigan. The prodigal son returned to Detroit - where our Lord blessed me with a helpmate. My wife, Marisa; is a godly woman, full of compassion and vision. I began participating with Alcoholics for Christ ministries. Substance abuse and vices of this world could no longer be my comfort. I eventually began leading meetings and I had the opportunity to work with Alcoholics for Christ a para-ministry for eight years in different capacities.

The Lord developed additional leadership gifts with the help of churches like Great Commission and the Afro-American Mission for the next eight years. My wife and I also worked with youth and began developing Children's Church and Vacation Bible School programs. I became an associate pastor and began preaching and teaching. I enrolled in Michigan Theological Seminary (Moody Theological Seminary) to sharpen my sword to better serve our Lord and His people. I gained my MACP (Masters of Arts in Counseling Psychology) The following five years I served as Pastor of Outreach Ministries at First Baptist of Oak Park. I diligently walked the pavement to share the gospel and also directed missionary trips. It's such an honor and privilege to preach the saving grace of Christ and teach application of His Word to youth and adults. I've also partnered with Here's Life/Campus Crusade to deliver boxes of love to provide holiday meals to those in

need, and for the past ten (10) years I've assisted with the United Men's Conference at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI.

In August of 2016, my wife and I completed the North American Mission Board (NAMB) Church Planter training. This is a great calling for my family and me. I have the honor to plant a church in the city of Detroit where the crime and drug addiction rate is high and alcohol and the immoral activity are out of control. Heart and Soul Community Church is based on (Luke 10: 27) "He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself." Pray for the effectiveness of the gospel in this community and also for my supportive family as we reach the lost, revive the faint and restore the fallen. I love you, but Jesus Christ loves you more.

Types of Non-Believers, and How to Talk to Them

By Staff

Non-believers are all around us. In fact, there might be more non-believers around you in your day-to-day life than there are brothers and sisters in Christ. According to Pew Research, religiously unaffiliated people are the second-largest "religious" group in roughly half (48%) of the world's nations.

In 2014, there were approximately 56 million religiously unaffiliated adults in the United States, making the unaffiliated second in size only to evangelical Protestants among major religious groups in the U.S.

And the number is growing. Between 2007 and 2015, the percentage of Americans who identify as religiously unaffiliated jumped more than six points, from 16.1% to 22.8%.

As the number of non-believers rise, followers must learn to identify those without faith and how to talk with them about Christ in ways that will resonate with their beliefs. If we are to stem the rising tide of lostness in the world, we must first understand the hearts and minds of the non-believers before we can hope to lead them to the Lord.

WHY ARE THERE NON-BELIEVERS?

First, it might be helpful to understand some of the reasons why the unaffiliated don't identify with a religious group. Knowing why a non-believer has chosen to forsake his or her relationship with God can help us in our attempt to foster a new one. Again, information from Pew Research can help us understand some of the actual reasons non-believers give for turning away from religion.

As part of the Religious Landscape Study, Pew Research asked people to explain, in their own words, why they no longer identify with a religious group. This resulted in hundreds of different responses, but many of them shared one of the few common themes. Examples from the survey include:

"Too many Christians do un-Christian things."

"I'm doing a lot more learning, studying and making decisions for myself rather than listening to someone else."

"I see organized religious groups as more divisive than uniting."

"Religion is not a religion anymore. It's a business. It's all about money."

"I stopped going to church and never picked it back up. I was never super religious."

From these responses, we can start to shape our engagements with non-believers to address the issues and concerns they have with the idea of religion itself and not necessarily with the Creator. Bringing non-believers to God requires us to meet them where they are; not the other way around.

TYPES OF NON-BELIEVERS

So, who are the non-believers? Non-belief is an ontologically diverse community, and no two non-believers may have the same set of values or ideas. And yet, however subtle the differences may be, there are types of non-believers that the religiously unaffiliated often identify with. Understanding these types, and the differences between them, can help those who seek to save the lost.

Atheists – The word atheism, in the most basic term, translates to “no god.” However, there are further distinctions that can be made. Positive atheism asserts that a supreme being doesn’t exist, while negative atheism asserts a lack of belief in such a deity. In either case, people may identify as atheists simply because they haven’t seen any evidence that God exists, or because they fail to see the impact of organized religion in people’s lives.

Anti-theists – While atheism is defined as the lack of belief, anti-theism challenges the legitimacy of faith as a moral authority or way of knowing. In other words, anti-theists disagree with the institution of religion and assert that any belief in God is harmful to society. Anti-theism, also known as strong atheism or New Atheism, seeks to replace religion with secularism and faith with science. Anti-theists tend to be the most dogmatic and aggressive type of non-believer.

Agnostics – Like atheists, agnostics also assert a lack of belief in a supreme creator, but only because they view God’s existence as unknowable. An agnostic believes human beings simply cannot know anything beyond the physical realm, although some agnostics would say that it may be possible someday. Agnostics may also admire the life and moral teachings of Jesus as told in the Gospel, but not necessarily more than other historical figures like Socrates or Abraham Lincoln.

Skeptics – Someone who claims to be a skeptic has put critical thinking at the heart of their belief structure. They broadly challenge the legitimacy of all institutions and ideologies that are not based on evidence. Skeptics, also sometimes known as free thinkers, are questioning and doubtful by nature, but they will change their mind in the face of evidence they deem satisfactory to the question at hand.

Humanists – Humanism is the belief that mankind is the highest entity. People who identify as humanists might ascribe to the saying, “Man is the measure of all things.” They see man as being responsible for his own self-direction. Humanists may be atheist or agnostic, although some may be more open-minded to appreciating the positive influence of religion, such as offering a basis for moral values and methods for dealing with life’s problems.

TALKING TO NON-BELIEVERS

One of the biggest hurdles Christians must overcome before they can have a deep, meaningful conversation with a non-believer is to meet them on their terms and speak in a language they understand. There are obviously certain concepts that carry little meaning for those who don't share our beliefs, but research shows there might also be more "spiritual" commonality between believers and non-believers than one might think.

According to the 2014 Religious Landscape Study, a third (31%) of atheists say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being at least weekly, and a similar share (35%) often thinks about the meaning and purpose of life. And perhaps most interesting of all, the number of Americans who believe in an afterlife has risen even as religious affiliation has gone down: In 2014, 80% of Americans said they believe in an afterlife, up from 73% in 1974.

These insights provide good places to start a conversation about God with non-believers: spirituality, the meaning of life, and what comes after death. The key, though, is finding the right opportunity to bring up these topics with non-believers. That's where the art of listening comes in handy. Ask questions, show interest, and be prepared to share your faith when the opportunity presents itself. Talk about the power of the Gospel to transform lives, but most importantly talk about how the Gospel has transformed your life. To seek and save the lost, we must be examples of Christ's love and compassion so that non-believers might allow themselves to have a heart change. We can convince non-believers to a point, but only God can convict them to seek forgiveness and receive the Holy Spirit.

What Is The Best Ministry Title To Use?

by Mark Dance

NASHVILLE, TN - What do people call you at church? Does it really matter to you, to them or to God? Titles seem to be more important to the modern church than they were to the first century church. For example, consider how the Apostle Paul typically introduces himself (and his team) in his letters:

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus: To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons. (Philippians 1:1 CSB) The term servant used here could also be translated slave, which was the lowest place on the social ladder in Paul's world. For that matter, Paul wasn't even his real name. Like several of the other church leaders, they took on new names (Saul/Paul), or nicknames (Joseph/Barnabas), or abbreviated their names (John Mark/Mark). It is obvious that Paul loved the Philippians, but he wasn't lifting them up by calling them saints. Nor was Paul putting Timothy or himself down by using the term slaves.

Here are a few tips that I hope will help you navigate through the inevitable awkwardness of ministry titles.

Remember your calling. If you are grounded in your calling, you won't care so much about what you are called. God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29) No one can be a good bishop if he loves his title and not his task. ~ Augustine

Consider your context. Paul was not shy about his apostolic credentials or his seminary training, but he was apparently being missional, or at least flexible, in how he adapted to each context he served in.

I can see why it is somewhat confusing for people to hear about the twelve patriarchs and the twelve disciples, or was that apostles ... wait, I think they were actually pastors. Then there were the seven original deacons, or were they elders? Two of the deacons were actually preachers – so does that mean they were pastors?

I'm an interim pastor of a Nashville metro church. In this neck of the woods, I am usually called "Pastor Mark." For the first half of my ministry I was mostly called "Brother Mark." In 1995 I earned a doctorate, but never felt comfortable being referred to as Dr. Dance in a pastoral setting. Since I minister on several seminary campuses every year, that title is not uncommon or uncomfortable for me in that context.

Check your motives.

You likely already know that you are not the star on Sundays. It sometimes helps to get a reminder. For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants because of Jesus. (2 Corinthians 4:5 CSB) Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to first among you will be a slave to all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life – a ransom for many. (Mark 10:43-45)

Communicate your preference. My wife Janet is an avid backpacker. On a recent trek along part of the Appalachian Trail, we met several interesting "through hikers" who were backpacking the entire 2,200 miles from Maine to Georgia. AT backpackers prefer to use trail names instead of their real names. We shared campfires and food with Lux, Spoon, Silver Fox, Wasabi, and Country.

Ministry titles can be as personal as our own names and nicknames, so don't be shy about using the title you are most comfortable with. When I am introducing myself in any setting, I just simply refer to myself as "Mark." Most of the people in the church I am currently serving call me "Pastor Mark" – which is comfortable for me. It really does not bother me when someone uses a ministry title that I don't prefer, because at the end of the day, I am simply a slave.

Mark Dance is Director of LifeWay Pastors at LifeWay Christian Resources. This article is courtesy markdance.net

SENDING

5 Keys to Reaching the “Selfie” Generation

By David Allen

We all learned a new word in 2012: “selfie.”

For those of you who may still be in the cultural dark on this one, a “selfie” is a self-portrait photograph typically taken with a hand-held digital camera or camera phone held at arm’s length and then shared on social networking sites. Time magazine considered “selfie” one of the top 10 buzzwords for 2012. By 2013, the word was listed as “word of the year” and has since become commonplace.

Apparently, selfies make up 30 percent of the photos taken by people ages 18-24. Amazing!

Two years later the advertising agency iStrategyLabs produced a two-way mirror capable of automatically posting selfies to Twitter via the use of facial recognition software. Meanwhile, country crooner, Toby Keith, sings “I Wanna Talk about Me,” but apparently we now want people to see pictures of us talking about us as well.

Last year, an article in “The Chronicle of Higher Education” was all about educating the selfie generation. Some universities have adopted a curricular approach “fit for a generation of overshareers and made the courses all about the students.” Apparently more me-centered courses are on the horizon. As Elizabeth Beaulieu, dean of Champlain College’s Core Division says, “What does every 18-year-old want to talk about? Themselves.”

Actor James Franco wrote an op-ed piece for The New York Times defending his frequent use of selfies on his Instagram page. His explanation is interesting. Selfies should not be seen as an expression of egocentrism, according to Franco. Instead, a selfie cultivates a “visual culture,” because it “shows, not tells, how you’re feeling, where you are, what you’re doing. A texting conversation might fall short of communicating how you are feeling, but a selfie might make everything clear in an instant.” Interesting point.

Here is Franco’s money quote: “Selfies are tools of communication more than marks of vanity (but yes, they can be a little vain).” Yes they can, Mr. Franco.

But let him who is without vanity cast the first stone. The problem with all of us is vanity. As Al Pacino, playing the role of the Satan in the movie “The Devil’s Advocate,” said, “Vanity, definitely my favorite sin!” The film opens with defense lawyer Kevin, played by Keanu Reeves, gaining an acquittal in court for an obviously guilty client. With the help of Satan, Kevin rides the wave of success into a prestigious law firm and ultimately to the destruction of his own family. He finally sees the light and refuses to cooperate with the devil.

At the conclusion, when Kevin has been given a second chance to morally redeem himself, he is easily coerced by Satan, disguised as a reporter, and his own wife into giving an interview that, it is promised, will make him a star. The movie painfully depicts the fact that, ultimately, all Kevin craves—and the rest of us right along with him—is the same success and adulation. Hence, the famous closing line uttered by a grinning Pacino: “Vanity, definitely my favorite sin!”

In one sense, we are all “selfies.” Self-assertion; self-centeredness; self-conceit; self-defensive; self-indulgent; self-pleasing; self-seeking; self-sensitive; and the list goes on. Christians are supposed to be people who have denied self and who have died to self, according to Jesus.

So how do we reach the selfie generation?

Love them. Love them for Christ’s sake. There has never been a generation that won’t respond to genuine love.

Respect them. It’s often too easy, especially for those of us who are older, to think of the selfie culture as just too “weird.” Avoid a critical spirit.

Understand them. Focus on what makes them tick. Learn to understand their culture and ways of thinking.

Engage them. We can do the first three well but never get to first base if we don’t engage.

Give them Jesus. They will soon discover that Christ is much more interesting than they are!

About the author: David Allen is Dean of the School of Preaching, Distinguished Professor of Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served as a senior pastor of two churches for 21 years, as well as several interim pastorates. This article is courtesy theologicalmatters.org

Three Reasons Not to Discount Pastoring in a Small Town

By Rob Hurtgen

I never imagined the Lord leading me back to a small town, yet, I am so glad that he did.

I spent my elementary years living in a town so small that even the most popular fast food restaurant in the world failed. I have also lived in the suburbs and major cities. I had never thought that I would return to live, let alone pastor, in a small town. For some, the idea of living and pastoring in a small town creates vast anxieties. Yes, the small town misses some things compared to the big town. But there are also some incredible advantages to small town life and ministry. Just as big-city life isn’t for everyone, neither is small-town living. You certainly need to know yourself, your spouse, and your family, but don’t discount what God can do where it seems there isn’t much to do.

Here are three of some of the many advantages of life and ministry in a small town. Three benefits I would like to have told my younger self who didn’t want to return to the small town.

First, your ministry in a small town is both to your church and to your community. In every pastorate, you are expected to carry out ministry to your congregation. In a small

town where the sense of community runs deep, you can become a pastor to your town. Friday night football, basketball games, and the county fair all become opportunities to be a pastor for the community. In the small town, you can more easily grow into being a familiar face. As a pastor in a small town, you not only shepherd your people but can speak into the lives of many others.

I count it a privilege when people in my town, who do not go to my church, call me pastor. (I still have trouble with being called “preacher,” but I’m learning to live with this term of endearment.)

Second, life and ministry in a small town can offer some great opportunities for your family. In a small town, your children may have more opportunities to participate in sports, extracurricular groups, and even community sponsored events. Instead of watching the parade they may be able to be in the parade. A kid who is interested in a sport may get an opportunity that they might not have in a larger community. Small-town living can offer different opportunities than the big town.

Finally, ministry in a small town incorporates your whole life. Going to get a gallon of milk can become an opportunity for ministry. You may find yourself praying with a church member who just discovered they have cancer while you are in the peanut butter aisle. There’s a good chance you’ll see that church member you haven’t seen in a while the next time you go to buy a loaf of bread. Small-town living offers a great chance to practice a fully integrated life and ministry.

In every community, you have to make intentional efforts to build relationships and get involved. A small town is no different. Efforts to get involved in a small town are often simpler than a big town. Some small towns are closed off to those who did not grow up there. That is, everyone who moves in will always be the outsider. Especially in those small towns, the pastor must show that he cares as much about the town as those who live there.

Much to my surprise, the Lord led me back to a small town. I am glad he did. To quote a famous advocate of the small town, “Got nothing against the big town...but my bed is in the small town, oh, and that’s good enough for me.” Don’t discount the small town. God may do much where there isn’t much to do.

About the author: Rob Hurtgen is an author with LifeWay Resources in Nashville, TN. Rob Hurtgen is the Pastor of First Baptist Church Chillicothe, Missouri. He holds an M.Div from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree in Church Revitalization from MidWestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been married to Shawn since 1995, and they have five children.

MICHIGAN NEWS

Pastor Darryl Gaddy Resigns

By Staff

– Pastor Darryl Gaddy, Church Planting Catalyst & Pastor of Victory Fellowship Community Church (Detroit, MI) has received a new opportunity of service in South Carolina.

Pastor Gaddy will serve the churches, associations, and the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Gaddy will help develop best-practices for African American and multi-cultural church plants. He will contribute to the church planter assessment process in South Carolina.

Tony Lynn, State Director of Missions – Michigan, states:

“Pastor Darryl and Miss Daphne Gaddy’s years of service in Michigan as a church planting couple, a pastor and wife at Victory Fellowship Community Church, and as catalysts among other church planters and their wives is immeasurable. They made a lasting impact in lives, neighborhoods, churches, associations, and the state. Their influence will be missed.”

Those of us at the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM) and at the North American Michigan Board (NAMB) are grateful for Gaddy’s service these past two years, since January 1, 2016. His presence and service here in Michigan will be greatly missed. During his ministry as Pastor and Church Planting Catalyst, Gaddy has been such a positive influence for change in the Detroit community. God has used him to reach many men and women with the Gospel in Detroit, and his leadership and service at Victory Fellowship has been both a spiritual and physical blessing to his community. As a Church Planting Catalyst, he has helped mentor and cultivate Church Planters as a part of NAMB’s SEND Network in Detroit. He has also been an inspiration for many planters in Detroit as a former Church Planter himself. We know that Gaddy will have a lasting impact wherever he serves. We love our brother and pray for God’s blessing upon his ministry in South Carolina. -

SBC NEWS

FBC Sutherland Springs launches building project

By Mike Ebert

“This tragic shooting moved Michigan Baptist churches to pray for the Sutherland Springs community and to re-examine the security measures they had in place to ensure a safe place to encounter God. Now, we are inspired by our brothers’ and sisters’ faith to rebuild and grateful for the leadership of Kevin Ezell to make it possible for our larger

faith family to help.” Mike Durbin, State Evangelism Director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan

SAN ANTONIO — First Baptist Church Sutherland Springs, the Southern Baptist congregation whose members were targeted by a gunman last November in what became one of the worst mass shootings in US history, will begin construction of a new worship center and education building beginning in May.

Plans were announced Tues., March 27, by Frank Pomeroy, the church’s pastor. The North American Mission Board (NAMB) will accept donations for the project. If donations do not cover all of the construction expenses, NAMB will cover any outstanding costs.

“Our primary goal is to lift up Jesus in our community,” Pomeroy said. “Sutherland Springs has a certain distinction because of the enormity of the tragedy that took place at our church, but every community is touched by tragedy. Every family and every person has hurts and sorrows. We want to be a lighthouse. The light of the Gospel shines hope, even in the deepest darkness.”

Pomeroy said the new facilities will put the church in an even better position to serve others.

“We are grateful for the outpouring of prayers, for the love that we have felt,” Pomeroy said. “So many have done so much for us, and it has been a huge blessing. The purpose of these new buildings will be to serve God and serve others. That is why we exist.”

NAMB president Kevin Ezell raised the issue of a new building with Pomeroy in a conversation near the end of 2017. NAMB asked Myrick Gurosky and Associates (MG&A) in Birmingham, Ala., to lead in the development, design and construction of the buildings. MG&A has worked closely with Pomeroy and leaders of the church in developing designs. MG&A specializes in the management of design and construction and has worked on hundreds of church projects across the US.

“We are grateful to play a small part in the healing journey for our brothers and sisters in Sutherland Springs,” Ezell said. “Southern Baptists were devastated by what took place. We immediately knew that, as their Southern Baptist family, we wanted to lock arms with them, doing whatever we could to help restore hope. We know a lot of people want to help, and fortunately, our experience in facilitating and mobilizing partners, volunteers, donations and prayer support in times of crisis has prepared us well to lead in a time such as this.”

Groups, organizations and individuals wanting to donate to the project can visit NAMB.net and click “Give.” The link will take them to a special area for giving to the Sutherland Springs building effort. Donations of services and materials can be given through the web site restoresutherland Springs.com.

“We have a lot of experience working with churches,” said MG&A’s president Scott Gurosky, “but this situation is unique. Already my team and I have been deeply moved by the faith, courage and perseverance that pastor Frank and his congregation have

shown. We are excited to give them this opportunity to move forward in faith toward a new beginning.”

The planned worship center features an exterior of stone and glass. Two towers on the corners of the building will emanate glowing light. Inside, the worship center will feature seating for 250 people. A memorial to the 26 people who lost their lives in the attack will be located in space between the worship center and the education facility.

The education building is designed to host classrooms for attendees age infant through adult. Outside, a lighted, paved parking lot will also be included.

MG&A and their consultants have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars in development and design work. Gurosky said cost of the two buildings will be approximately \$3 million, but they anticipate that donations of materials and services will significantly reduce the final total.

“We have already been approached by several companies that want to help the people of this church and town,” Gurosky said. “We want to give as many people as possible that opportunity, and it’s our goal to find partners to help us complete the planned facilities so that actual cost of the work is minimal.”

Construction on the property is being split into two phases. Phase 1 will include a worship center and education building. Funding for this phase is backed by NAMB with construction expected to begin in early May and a completion date anticipated for early 2019. Plans for Phase 2 of the project include a multi-purpose community and activity center and will be funded from other sources.

To donate services or materials, visit restoresutherlandssprings.com. To donate funds, visit namb.net.

Mike Ebert serves as director of public relations for the North American Mission Board.

AROUND THE STATE

READ IT!

READ IT! Is a ministry of Eastside Community Church. It is a kids reading program and the children in our community love it. The program is designed to help with reading skills, especially for families with little help, no money and no time. READ IT! Focuses on getting children to read the Bible and grow in confidence both in the Word and in their reading skills. Last week 20 students attended. Eastside Community Church is providing this tool free to churches seeking ways to be part of the community. Contact Pastor Mathew Vroman for more information and to get started. Call (313) 657-1100 or emailpastor@eastsidecommunitychurch.com.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classified Ad Submission Guidelines

Baptist Beacon classifieds are posted free of charge.

All classified posts will run for 2 consecutive months. Longer or shorter times may be requested. Publication of classifieds correspond with the monthly publication of the Baptist Beacon.

Classifieds must be from a BSCM church.

Be sure to include thorough details of request, name of church, contact information as well as a point of contact.

Submissions must be made no later than the 10th of the month prior to publication.

Submit all classified ads to beacon@bscm.org

Pastoral Internship - Summer 2018

Cornerstone Baptist Church offers a 2-year Pastoral Internship to male seminary graduates who are pursuing pastoral ministry. This internship provides ministry experience, on-going training, assessment, and much hands on involvement with a well established church. The senior pastor has been at the church for 28 years and the staff, including other interns, offer multiple learning and training opportunities. The position is a full-time position and includes a salary, health insurance, and a house to use that is close to the church. If interested in reviewing a more detailed position description please contact the church (586) 445-8910 and ask for Jan Alvaro.

Associate Pastor of Worship and Discipleship

CrossPointe Church Overview: CrossPointe Church is a medium-sized church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) located in Monroe, Michigan. We offer two identical gathered worship services on Sunday mornings which include; biblical preaching, scripture reading, prayer, theologically rich music, and regular observance of the biblical ordinances (Lord's Supper and Baptism). Our music style may be considered "contemporary" as we are led by a team of musicians (piano, guitar(s), drums, bass,

vocals, etc.). Within our “contemporary” style of music, we value both old and new songs that are theologically rich and seek to glorify God (examples: Citizens & Saints, Sojourn Music, Getty Music, Sovereign Grace Music, Indelible Grace Music). Please see the following website for more information regarding CrossPointe’s doctrinal statement, leadership, history, and various ministries.

CrossPointe Church Website: www.crosspointemonroe.com

Monroe, Michigan Overview: Monroe is a city of approximately 20,000 people located on the western shore of Lake Erie. It is equal distance from Detroit (MI), Ann Arbor (MI), and Toledo (OH). Monroe offers a great blend of outdoor activities, historical landmarks, and city life.

Position Overview: The associate pastor of worship and discipleship works with the lead pastor in planning and implementing all areas of the gospel-centered worship ministry at CrossPointe Church. The associate pastor of worship and discipleship also works with the lead pastor in developing and strengthening the various ministries at CrossPointe Church.

Qualifications:

The associate pastor must be a man who humbly and joyfully desires to serve as an elder in a local church (1 Tim 3:1, 6; Titus 1:5-9).

The associate pastor should be recognized by a local church through ordination (or willing to go through the ordination process at CrossPointe) as a man qualified for the office of elder (Titus 1:5; Eph 4:11-13; 1 Pet 5:1-3).

The associate pastor should be a man who is actively pursuing holiness of life by the grace of God (1 Tim 4:7-10).

The associate pastor should be evangelical, conservative theologically, and in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

The associate pastor should be proficient to lead vocally in gathered worship services.

The associate pastor should be proficient to lead instrumentally with guitar and/or piano in gathered worship services.

The associate pastor should have experience in leading a team of musicians.

The associate pastor should have experience with audio and video technology.

The associate pastor should have experience developing and leading discipleship ministries in a local church.

Gathered Worship Service Responsibilities:

Direct the planning, organizing, and evaluating of a gospel-centered worship ministry.

Recruit, train, and schedule the worship team members (music, sound, media).

Lead and oversee weekly rehearsals for the worship team.

Additional Worship Ministry Responsibilities:

Develop and manage all church media content (website, social media).

Work with the lead pastor and ministry team leaders to actively and creatively use all media content as a tool to communicate about the ministries of CrossPointe Church.

Supervise and maintain all supplies, instruments, and equipment related to the worship ministry.

Prepare an estimated annual worship ministry budget and administer the approved worship ministry budget.

Upon request, assist in musical preparation for weddings, funerals, and other church and/or denomination related activities.

Discipleship Ministry Responsibilities:

Disciple the worship team members and worship intern(s).

Work with the lead pastor to identify and train ministry leaders.

Work with the lead pastor to develop ministry vision for CrossPointe Church.

Work with the lead pastor to lead CrossPointe to fulfill the Great Commission.

Participate in scheduled ministry team leader meetings and staff meetings.

Maintain regular office hours for focused time of prayer, study, and counseling.

Perform other duties as assigned by the lead pastor.

Compensation:

\$30,000 per year (25-30 hours per week)

3 weeks of paid vacation per year

For more information or to apply, please contact Pastor Jay Anderson:

CrossPointe Church

1675 Stewart Road

Monroe, MI 48162

(734) 457-1024

crosspointeworshipleadersearch@gmail.com

Bi-vocational Pastor Needed

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

ABOUT US

The Baptist Beacon is the official newsjournal of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan (BSCM), in association with the Southern Baptist Convention. The mission of the Baptist Beacon is to communicate with Michigan Baptists in our shared mission of punching holes in the darkness through starting, strengthening, and sending churches.

Editor: Tim Patterson - tim@bscm.org

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