



UISBC eNews

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2017

Focusing on the Landscape... Across Utah and Idaho

Happy New Year! Hard to believe it is 2017 already. I pray that the New Year has started off with a fresh touch of the Lord. I have several things to report this month and a request for your assistance.

We finished 2016 with Cooperative Program giving over budget for the year! This is the first time in more than a decade we can say that has happened and only a few times in our history. Thank you for your faithful giving to the Cooperative Program. As a result, we will be able to pass on 50% of the overage to the Southern Baptist Convention.

December Cooperative Program Giving was: \$43,943.23 which was below the monthly budget of \$52,955.38. But for January through December 2016 giving was \$658,749.89 with a budget for last year of \$635,465. So we ended the year above Cooperative Program budget by \$23,284.89! Can you give a SHOUT OUT TO THE LORD!!! We will be able to forward an additional \$11,642.45.

The York-Dillman State Missions Offering this past year was \$73,356.95 with a goal of \$95,000. So we fell below the goal by \$21,643.05. The State Missions Offering funds stay 100% in Utah-Idaho for Vision 2020 ministries, collegiate ministries and Disaster Relief ministries. I don't have the final total but the first six months of last year we had helped 45+ churches with outreach projects through the State Missions Offering.

Paul Thompson pastor at Eastside Baptist Church, Twin Falls and Moderator of Magic Valley Baptist Association reported that since the start of this year there has been a fresh movement of God through

UISBC Cooperative Program Report

December 2016

Cooperative Program giving	\$43,943.23
Cooperative Program budget	\$52,955.42
Over/Under CP budget	-\$9,012.15
York-Dillman Offering given	\$6,798.21

January - December 2016

Cooperative Program giving	\$658,749.95
Cooperative Program budget	\$635,465.00
Over/Under CP budget	\$23,284.89
York-Dillman Offering given	\$73,356.95
York-Dillman 2016 Goal	\$ 95,000
York-Dillman Under Goal	-\$21,643.05

Lee cont. on page 2

Lee cont...

prayer in several of the churches in the association that led to a Prayer Weekend January 22 with John Franklin. May we continue to see an outpouring of the Holy Spirit across our two state region in our churches!

In January, your pastor received a letter sharing a concern that we, as a State Convention, are losing several of our trustee positions at the national Southern Baptist Convention level. This is due to the fact that our Annual Church Profile (ACP) reports do not reflect the required benchmark 20,000 members in our churches. This is of concern since the trustees of our Southern Baptist Convention agencies are the ones who oversee their ministries and provide accountability for the use of Cooperative Program and special offering funds. The last ACP year, 2015, only 60% of our churches provided their report to the state convention. Please talk with your pastor and church clerk to see that your church's report is turned in by February 28 for the 2016 church year. If we receive all of our reports, we will potentially be close to the membership threshold.

If we, your State Missionaries, can assist you, please let us know. We look forward to assisting you as your church advances the kingdom across our two state this year.

God Bless,

Rob Lee

DR Training

Child Care Class at First Southern Baptist Church in Hurricane, Utah : Saturday, March 11 at 9 a.m. - the class is 5 hours. Training booklets will be free of charge for those that will be deploying to serve at the National SBC in Phoenix beginning June 10.

There will also be an Introduction to Disaster Relief Friday, March 10 at 6 p.m., let Patty know shirt size if you're planning to attend.

Patty Christensen,
Area Disaster Relief Director
patty_christensen@yahoo.com
(435) 467-1961

U & I Praying Together

Pastorless Churches

- Priest River Southern Baptist Church, Athol Baptist Church filling pulpit
- Sevier Valley Baptist Church, Richfield
- First Baptist Church, Vernal, Buck Buchanan, Transitional Pastor
- University Baptist Church, Boise, Ron Lloyd, Transitional Pastor
- Calvary Baptist Church, Boise, Rod Moerer, Transitional Pastor
- Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, Pocatello, William Beard, Interim
- Bear River Valley Baptist Church
- First Baptist Church, Mt. Pleasant
- Falls Southern Baptist Church, Idaho Falls
- First Baptist Church, West Valley City

Welcome New Pastors

- First Southern Baptist Church, Twin Falls - Dan McAtee
- Jackpot Baptist Church - Zach Hunter and wife Holly
- Nampa First Southern Baptist Church, Nampa - Butch Schierman

Prayer & Praises

- Pastor **Curt Stackpole**, FBC Cedar City, lost his mother last week. The family also learned recently that Curt's brother, whom they had lost contact with, passed away 14 years ago.

- Pastor **Nathan Simmons**, FBC Centerfield, cancer responding to treatment dealing with some anxiety issues and for churches finances to improve
- **One Focus** Regional Evangelism Conferences, February 6-11, with David Burton
- Pastor **David Kite**, UISBC Convention President and Cowboy Church planter, continued recovery from knee replacement surgery and stroke. Please pray for pastors and others who have stepped up to fill in at the five church plants David leads. We are so thankful for them!
- Praise report from Pastor Paul Thompson at **Eastside Baptist Church**, Twin Falls – he shares there is a growing movement of prayer with a fresh touching of the Holy Spirit since first of the year.
- Paul Thompson reports that three of the Magic Valley Association churches have been praying and fasting since January 8th. And, pastors from Eastside, NorthRidge, Hagerman, Jackpot, and Gooding are praying each week via phone conference calls.
- Update on **Jimmy Stewart** (AK Director of Evangelism and Church Development): 1. Pray for Jimmy's continued healing of his "new" skin, improvement in his range of motion, and for increasing mobility in his hands. This next phase of healing (skin & scarring) is likely to be 1.5 years. 2. Pray for Jimmy's strength and stamina to improve as he continues in rehab and returns on a limited basis to work.

First Provo sends out four church planters

By Karen L. Willoughby

PROVO, Utah – First Baptist Church of Provo can't afford to send out church planters willy-nilly into "Mormon country." There's too much at stake, says Pastor Russ Robinson.

"When a church plant fails in Utah the unintended side effects often affect many people," Robinson said. "The gospel witness in the city is often compromised as church plants become 'expected' to fail by the community. The planter and his family often struggle to regroup after the plant has failed and the people in the church plant often struggle to find a new body of believers to engage with."

Nonetheless, First Provo is sending out four church planters this winter, three of whom the church recently ordained, to various cities in Utah County, which has more "Mormons" – members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) – than does any other county in the state.

However, First Provo, a congregation of 65 members, and perhaps 100 in Sunday morning worship, doesn't have the financial resources to start one church plant, much less four. "But God put all this together and we're trusting Him," Robinson said. "We're depending on Him to raise up partners and to provide for the needs as they occur."

"We're very much invested in proclaiming the gospel in Utah County and to the ends of the earth," Robinson said. "We're a small church but we think we can do a whole lot more and make a bigger dent evangelistically in Utah County over the long term by church planting."

The church's commitment to church planting starts with its commitment to raise up church planters. That's why, when men gravitate to the church where they sense God's working, after being vetted for an intimate walk with the Lord, the spiritual health of the others in their family and their overall readiness to enter ministry, they are put to work at the church for at least 18 months before being sent out to plant a church.

"It has taken all our [church planter] guys 18 months to two years to acclimatize to the area," Robinson said. "There's a lot to learn to get comfortable with the culture, to navigate it."

The LDS culture is one with distinct beliefs on gender, lifestyle and good works. Mormons – nicknamed that because of their adherence to the Book of Mormon, written by Joseph Smith and published in 1830 – are taught that God was once a man, and that man can become a god. Numerous other doctrinal teachings – such as salvation – deemed essential to Christians are different for Mormons, Robinson explained.

Words that mean one thing to Christians and

First Provo cont. on page 4

Teachers for Hope

This past Thanksgiving season Hope Church in Sandy, Utah, prepared and delivered over 150 Thanksgiving dinners to families throughout Salt Lake City in a partnership with Teachers for Hope, a non-profit created by teachers attending Hope Church. With a great turnout of helping hands and baked goods, an assembly line for not only food, but hope, provided dinner for many families in need.

As members of Hope Church tried to identify ways to use their jobs to build relationships for gospel conversations and service to the city, leaders noticed an unusually large number of educators. As educators have access to the needs of students without compromising privacy concerns, teachers are in a very strategic position. These individuals joined up and created a non-profit organization to connect needs in the schools with outside resources. Teachers for Hope was born.

A teacher's job is often restricted to facilitating high standards and necessary resources for students to achieve academic success. However, as disciples, T4H members want to facilitate more, give more, love more, share more. They want to show brotherly love to students in practical ways, such as providing basic necessities and services. Traditionally, students attend school with the prospect of receiving merely their education, but elements for success are not solely cognitive. Factors in the home, in the neighborhood, and in the heart affect a student's growth as well. Teachers for Hope wishes to support these distinctive influences by promoting educational growth, advocating life skills, and supporting individual students by uniting families and schools with community resources outside the schools.

Teachers for Hope members reach out to accessible networks nearby, including neighboring non-profits, community resources, and like-minded churches to provide needed materials and resources for future generations and their families. T4H conducts local drives asking for donations ranging from backpacks, school supplies, clothing, shoes, books, food, and more.

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7) Hope Church and Teachers for Hope are excited for growth in the future, and are continuously looking for students in need.

If you would like to participate in any way, please contact Josh Reimann at jreimann22@gmail.com.



something different to Mormons add to the difficulty in reaching Mormons with the gospel.

“People from that culture, they come with a lot of baggage,” Robinson said. “There’s a social dynamic related to leaving that culture. Almost every person who comes to us out of Mormonism has a great load on them.”

Therefore, a thorough grounding in rockbed Christian beliefs, scripture memorization and Mormonism is essential for church planters wanting to reach Utahns with the gospel.

Robinson has an additional reason for keeping prospective church planters at First Provo for at least 18 months.

“We want to love on these [church planter] families so well they never feel isolated,” the First Provo pastor said. “We want that even if their church plant fails to thrive, we’re minimizing the damage to their lifetime ministry. We want them to know they have a home where they can regroup before starting anew.”

During their time at First Provo, the prospective church planters serve at the church in a variety of roles that fit their giftedness – teaching, preaching, worship and the like – and their areas of age-level interest from babies through senior adults, as well as regularly participating in whatever evangelistic thrust is taking place at First Provo.

All receive a thorough background check. All have several in-depth interviews with the pastor before being identified as a prospective church planter, including the readiness of the family for its part in church planting.

In addition to one-on-one discipling of other church members, the prospective church planters meet at least twice a month privately with Robinson or one of First Provo’s other elders. They also fast and pray each Wednesday with First Provo’s pastor, elders and other men from the church, and together meet as a group of church leaders Wednesday evening.

This is when the men share prayer concerns, ask difficult

questions, and be accountable to each other. “We do lots of praying for each other,” Robinson said.

Once a month, the prospective church planters report on the book they’ve been assigned to read that month “to help us think and strategize,” the pastor added.

In his mentoring conversations over time with his prospective church planters, Robinson emphasizes several points:

Continually feed your soul spiritually.

Pray and fast with desperation for the lost.

Prioritize your family.

Passionately share the gospel with everyone regularly.

Manage your time as carefully as you manage your budget.

“The turnover rate of pastors is high here,” Robinson said. “We want to minimize that. ... Everybody has to be ready to be bivocational. That’s had to be our approach until God shows us another way.

“It takes a long time for a church in Utah to be self-sustaining,” the pastor continued. “We need tentmakers; I’m always teetering on the edge of that. If our planters want to be fulltime pastors early in the work, they’ll have to raise support.”

The four planters being sent out this winter from First Provo all are from the South and each sensed a specific call from God to serve Him in Utah.

Caleb and Rebecca Murdock – names changed to not hamper their ministry – with five years’ experience in Baptist Collegiate Ministries, are planting a church in southeast Provo, an area with many college students and young families.

“We are missionaries in an area of Provo that is unreached,” Murdock said, adding that the ministry they’re doing is in pre-plant mode. “We’re doing this under the accountability and the care of First Provo. As the Lord sees fit to bring a harvest of new souls, then we’ll be there to plant a church out of First Provo.”

Church planters cont. on page 5

Childcare Unit to deploy to SBC in Phoenix

We have an exciting opportunity coming in June. We have been asked to bring our childcare unit to the national Southern Baptist Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. We are partnering with the New Mexico State Convention.

The dates will be Saturday, June 10, 2017 (arrival day) through Thursday, June 15, 2017. The travel days may or may not be included in these dates.

We need as many volunteers as possible. Clara Hohmann and Lynda Porter will each be overseeing different age groups. It would be exciting to say we have enough volunteers to cover these two classes.

Please check with your volunteers to determine if they are available. I will be willing to come and train volunteers for a big enough class. {Note: also see an already scheduled training in Hurricane, UT, on page 2}

Please let me know of volunteer availability or if a class is needed.

Thank you for time and service,
Lynda Porter

preciouslamb2@gmail.com

Church planters cont...

Kirk and Kathy Shull, with their five homeschooled children, moved to Springville, south of Provo, nearly two years ago to build relationships. They anticipate starting a weekly home Bible study in January.

“The important principle I learned is that people need a connection they trust, in order to feel comfortable to attend [a church,]” Shull said. “We have been trying to create relationships and live among the people in Springville to try and do just that. That takes a ‘baking in the oven’ philosophy, not a ‘microwave’ mentality.

“This has happened by being hospitable and working in the community where we would like to see a church started,” said Shull, active in coaching community soccer and other sports. “We have had and are having individual evangelistic conversations.”

Zach and Courtney Thompson with college friends Timothy and Hailey O’Day are co-planting the first of many, they believe, churches in northern Utah County.

“We envision a network of small churches that will partner together for the growth of the Kingdom and provide gospel witnesses and community throughout the valley so that the

sheer number of churches can facilitate the kind of growth we are praying for,” Thompson said. “We are working toward planting, trusting God will indeed give that growth.”

Thompson and O’Day meet twice a week with the three interested people they have found so far. Sundays they’re going through the book of Mark. Thursdays they’re “intentionally talking about what it means to live together as a church,” Thompson said.

The most-established church plant is Gracia Sobre Gracia (Grace Upon Grace) Bautista Iglesia, which First Provo and Joe Concepcion started earlier this year. The first baptism was in September; two more are anticipated by the end of the year.

“We started with one family, and now we are eight families in the church,” Concepcion said. “We want to reach the Hispanic people with the gospel in Provo and Orem in Utah County. ... We have been fasting regularly and have been intentional in knocking on doors and sharing the gospel with anyone.”

Concepcion is fully funded by the North American Mission Board. Thompson and Shull work bivocationally. Murdock is in the process of raising support for 2017.

Moose Ridge Ministries to announce 2017 retreat dates

Dear Friend,
2017 is off and running and I hope that this note finds you well!!!!

It has been a while since I last updated you. We spent the last four months ironing out details for our retreats and we are proud to announce our retreat dates for 2017:

May 15-19

June 26-30

July 31-Aug. 4

IMB Soul Care Retreat September 4-7 (for IMB personnel only)

Each of the retreats will take place at Sherman Creek Ranch in nearby Kingston, Idaho.

If you are interested, I have a program overview document that you might use to share with others who might need one of our retreats. Please let me know if you would like a copy and I can email it to you separately. Please help us get the word out. Our website also contains quite a bit of information about our ministry and pictures of Sherman Creek Ranch.

We know that there are so many church staff members and missionaries that might benefit from one of our retreats.

We appreciate your encouragement and support

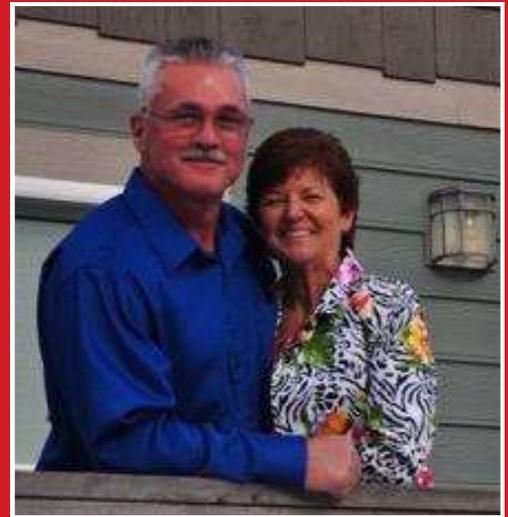
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Blessings,

Dr. Rhonda Kitchen, President

Moose Ridge Ministries | 901 North Division, Pinehurst, ID 83850

mooseridgeministries.org



'Tis the season for soul-winning for SBC president

JANUARY 6, 2017

By Will Hall, Message Editor

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – While Christmas means a lot of things to a lot of people, the president of the Southern Baptist Convention sees it as an opportunity to put the exclamation point in “Jesus is the reason for the season!” by soul-winning, and this year that means 400 new believers are professing “Jesus is Lord!” because of a Christmas program.

Steve Gaines, pastor of the historic Bellevue Baptist Church in the Cordova area of Memphis, Tenn., is quick to credit others, with special praise for the tradition of soul-winning at his congregation to the leadership of former long-time pastor Adrian Rogers, as well as the vision for the presentation of the “Singing Christmas Tree” to former music minister James Whitmire.

Still, under Gaines’ leadership this flagship congregation continues to use every opportunity, especially Christmas, to reach others for Christ, and the evidence is in the results.

During 2015, the church averaged more than 7,000 in worship attendance and witnessed almost 600 baptisms – that is a per capita average of one baptism resulting for every 12 people who are active attenders (or 12:1). For the Southern Baptist Convention, the ratio is about 19:1 for established churches and even SBC church plants only achieve a 14:1 relationship (The smaller the proportion, the better. It means it takes fewer members to reach more lost people).

Moreover, Gaines is adamant about engaging the new believer for discipleship.

“We really try to ‘conserve the fruit,’” Gaines told the Baptist Message.

He used the “Singing Christmas Tree” outreach as an example.

“I share the Gospel at the end and lead them in a time of prayer and decision making. Then I tell them we have two gifts for them, a new Bible and a booklet, ‘Now That You’re Saved.’”

“It tells them the main things they need to do, now that they’ve given their hearts to Christ,” Gaines said, describing the resource as an outline of the basic spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, worship and such.

The gifts are distributed at several tents where spiritual counselors engage the new believers and begin the process of involving them in discipleship, which results in many of the converts being baptized.

Mark Blair, the minister of music who now directs the “Singing Christmas Tree” evangelism event, said the effort is very thorough.

“We have a team of people who follow up with every person who made any kind of decision,” he said. “The

Soul-winning cont. on page 7

WMU Foundation makes HEART Fund grant to aid Hattiesburg tornado victims

(BIRMINGHAM, Ala.) — Jan. 26, 2017 — In the aftermath of storms that swept through the southeastern United States Jan. 21-22, national Woman’s Missionary Union and the WMU Foundation have awarded a \$5,000 grant from the HEART (Humanitarian Emergency Aid for Rebuilding Tomorrow) Fund to assist international students and the children of missionaries (MKs) attending William Carey University in Hattiesburg, Miss.

“My first thought after witnessing the vast destruction in my community was that the HEART Fund was there for just such a crisis as this,” said Linda Donnell, WMU Foundation board member and Mississippi regional coordinator for Christian Women’s Job Corps/Christian Men’s Job Corps, a ministry of WMU.

The tornado touched down in Hattiesburg on the morning of Jan. 21, killing at least 4 people. The violent storm crossed several counties including Harrison County where William Carey University is located.

Donnell said she was particularly concerned for the international students and MKs attending William Carey University who are so far from home.



Cindy Townsend spent time with a few of the MKs and international students who will receive assistance through the HEART Fund grant.

“I am hoping that attention can be directed towards their needs,” Donnell said.

The HEART Fund grant will be used to purchase gift cards for each of the 30 MKs as well as the international students affected by the storms.

“This grant will have a huge impact on their lives,” said Dr. Cindy Townsend, executive director of Mississippi WMU and member of the WMU Foundation Board of Trustees.

Linda Cooper, national WMU president, stated, “My prayer is that the lives of those affected will see the love of Jesus in our grant, for He is the source of our every need.”

In the midst of the destruction, Donnell hopes the victims will not get discouraged.

“I pray that they will not lose hope for a better tomorrow,” she said.

The WMU Foundation is accepting donations to the HEART Fund for disaster relief online at wmufoundation.com or by mail to WMU Foundation HEART Fund, 100 Missionary Ridge, Birmingham, AL 35242.

information is shared with Life Group leaders and ministers, and every contact is followed up on in the next week.”

Gaines said they now use this same system at Easter with great results, saying the unusual circumstances of these special services drives the process.

He said in both cases “most lost people come with family or with friends. So they don’t really have the ability or the luxury of staying behind and talking a long time that particular time.”

“We’ll have 200 or 300 people get saved every Easter,” he continued, “where before we were seeing three or four, maybe 10 at the most get saved.”

Blair said one of the special aspects of the “Singing Christmas Tree” effort is that it involves nearly 500 students from 4th grade through college – a signature feature of Whitmire’s former leadership.

Blair said what is special about these young people is the spiritual focus they embrace, starting with rehearsals which begin as early as August.

“We talk about it every rehearsal,” Blair said. “In some way, in every rehearsal from Labor Day forward, we’re talking about the ‘why’ and not the ‘what.’ We talk about inviting unchurched people.”

Gaines said that is the DNA of Bellevue Baptist.



Steve Gaines, SBC president and pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., prepares to baptize a young girl on Jan. 1. She is one of 50 new believers he baptized that day. Gaines hopes to re-invigorate soul-winning as “the main thing” among Southern Baptists.

“I don’t care what it is – funeral or wedding – we are reaching out to the lost,” he said. “We don’t do anything without sharing the Gospel. It is just part of who we are.”

He wants the same thing for the Southern Baptist Convention.

“I can’t make anybody do anything,” he said. “But, I can lead by example and inspire people.”

“People are going to Hell and we don’t have time not to make sharing the Gospel the main thing.”

Gaines closed his conversation with the Baptist Message by giving an example of the results of Bellevue’s emphasis on soul-winning at Christmas.

“A family came up to me this year and shared they were from somewhere in New Jersey,” he recalled.

“The wife told me, ‘We came down here two years ago and my husband prayed and asked Christ to come into his life, and I want you to know he’s a brand new man.’”

The best part, Gaines said is that now the wife is saved, too.

“‘We both were baptized,’ she told me, ‘and now we are in church.’”

‘Tis the season for soul-winning!

7 Things We Are Praying for America

1. Father, we cry out to You alone: Give America a nationwide spiritual awakening, resulting in millions coming to Christ.
2. Father, we cry out to You alone: Wake up and revive Your Church in America, beginning with waking up and reviving our church.
3. Our God, we cry out to You for a safe and orderly transition of power between the administrations of President Barack Obama and President Donald Trump. Lord, please protect President Obama and his family, Vice President Biden and his family, President Trump and his family, and Vice President Pence and his family in these days of transition and in the future.
4. Lord, as we have prayed for you to raise up the leader You desire for us to have over the next four years, we thank you and pray today for our President Donald Trump.
5. Father, give President Trump wisdom in his choices for America’s leadership and grant Vice-President Mike Pence and both houses of Congress the wisdom to assist the President in these decisions.
6. Lord, grant our nation unity. We must come together. In Jesus’ name, we pray against division and disorder, asking for unity in America.
7. Father, grant mercy upon the United States of America.

Prayer list written by Ronnie Floyd

5 Keys to 40 Years of Marriage Together

By Dr. Ronnie and Jeana Floyd

On December 31, 2016, we celebrated forty years of marriage together. While the years have gone by so fast, we have experienced some long days.

We are both very committed to pouring into the lives of others. While reflecting on our forty years together, we thought that sharing some of our journey might encourage others.

We want to highlight five keys to our forty years of marriage together.

1st Key: COMMITMENT

Marriage is based upon a commitment to God and one another. It is not based solely upon the emotion and expression of love. For us, it has always been a commitment to God that has moved us forward through marriage.

While we have gone through the transitional storms of marriage through the years, we have never considered giving up, walking away, or having another relationship.

Our commitment to the covenant of marriage before God far exceeds any personal struggle we have faced together.

2nd Key: RELATIONSHIP

We have refused to be two people who just live in the same house and had little to no relationship with one another. There have been moments this could have easily occurred, but our commitment to the marriage covenant demanded more from us.

We both believe the most important relationship in life is not the one we have together, but the individual relationship we each have with Jesus Christ. For years, we have believed that the closer each of us personally gets to God, the closer we will be to one another.

This is a major reason each of us begins every day with God. Our personal time with God is a non-negotiable in our marriage.

3rd Key: PARTNERSHIP

Due to our maturing relationship together, we have lived life as partners. We have not gone our separate ways and then met up every now and then. We have lived life together. We do not have "his days" or "her days", but "our days."

We have been partners not only through marriage, but also in parenting our two

children. While our schedules may have taken us apart most days, we always prioritized our marriage and family time together. In our life today parenting has changed, but we now walk through the fresh new challenges of grandparenting our seven grandchildren.

We also partner together through ministry. For the past thirty years, we have served the same church together. While at times, Ronnie may be referred to as Pastor, Pastor Ronnie, or Dr. Floyd and Jeana as Miss Jeana or just Jeana; the people of Cross Church mostly refer to us as Pastor and Jeana. They do not see us separately, but together.

4th Key: TRANSITION

Transition is inevitable in life and marriage. No one and nothing ever stays the same. We have gone through the transition that all couples go through in learning to live together. While that may have seemed larger than life when we first married, looking back, it was quite simple.

In our forty years together, we have had to navigate through the transition of many things, a few of which are:

- Parenting two children and grandparenting seven children.
- Parenting and pastoring full-time churches, driving back and forth to seminary, and Ronnie earning both his masters and doctoral degrees.
- Jeana diagnosed with cancer at 35 years of age, having surgery and ongoing treatment for a period of time.
- Experiencing the victories, defeats, disappointments, and setbacks of local church ministry and leadership through forty years of pastoring, with thirty years being in the same church.
- Jeana lost her Dad and Ronnie has lost both his Dad and Mom to death, but all three are in heaven with the Lord.
- Jeana caring for her almost 93 year-old mother, working diligently now to see her transition from Texas to Northwest Arkansas.
- Ronnie serving in all kinds of leadership capacities well beyond his pastoral duties at our church, from matters in our nation to serving as the President of the Southern Baptist Convention.

This list could go on and on, but we have highlighted only a few of these transitions. Yes, transition is an ongoing part of life. We have handled these transitions well due to our commitment to our covenant of marriage, our relationship to God and one another, and our ongoing partnership in marriage, life, family, and ministry.

We have discovered that we cannot stop transition or even deter it. The only thing we can do is respond to it as it comes our way.

5th Key: INTIMACY

We belong together. Even with our unique tendencies and definite weaknesses, it is more than obvious to each of us that God has willed us to be together. Marriage is not always intimate among couples, but our marriage is an intimate relationship we only share together.

Years together has not ensured our intimacy. But we are both convinced that our life-long commitment to live life together has soared our intimacy with each other through our forty years of marriage.

This is why we can share with you that after forty years of marriage; we are more in love with each other today than ever before. Each trial, setback, disappointment, struggle, and challenge we have ever experienced in our marriage has never been greater than our love and forgiveness practiced toward each other through the years.

We love marriage and we love being married to one another. As we have celebrated our fortieth marriage anniversary together, we have done so in humility before God and others, knowing that we are what we are and we are where we are by the grace of our great God.

He has seen us through. He can also see you through.

By Grace,

Ronnie and Jeana Floyd

Love bears all things,
believes all things, hopes all
things, endures all things.

Finding Home

By Ed Jordan

Christmas is probably the holiday that we most associate with going home. When I was a college student, and did not have a road-worthy car, my pastor loaned me his own car so that I could make the 906-mile journey from Reno, Nevada to Safford, Arizona, where my parents were living. My pastor wanted me to be able to be "home" at Christmas. It took almost 16 hours driving straight through. Yet for that particular Christmas, home was being with my parents, despite my lack of familiarity with the town.

Many years later my wife and I, along with our small children, were preparing to leave home in America to move 6000 miles to the other side of the planet, to a culture that we did not know, to a people who did not speak our language. We would need a new supportive home when we arrived. As we were preparing, a missionary friend advised us to redefine "home." Many people think of home as a geographical location, and the result is that if you are not at that geographical location you are not home, and likely will experience homesickness. He told us to redefine home as being wherever you and your mate and children are together.

This was a very useful concept for us. Home became any place where loving relationship was shared over time. Our home was in Hungary for almost eleven years. Over that time, we experienced many new cultures and traditions and expectations, as we lived in a very international, cosmopolitan city and traveled into many diverse countries and cultures. So whenever we were together, life was good, and we experienced the mystical comfort and reality of being "home." Home is the people who make it, not the size of the house, or how modern it is, or where it is located.

Home is a relational concept, not a geographical one. And it reappears every time the family is together, even if they live thousands of miles apart geographically. There are certain times of year or celebrations that have deep memories for us, and those memories are derived from sharing our lives together. Home is the comfort of connectivity, produced when people with whom we can just be ourselves and spend time together sharing conversation, food, beverage, and life. Our concept of home involves memories, but it is not just about the past. It is also memories created by love and relationships that are shared when together.

While this concept of home is very helpful, we must also face the reality that home is not a static, unchangeable experience. As children become adults, they establish a "home" for their own lives. Whenever they return for a visit, or we go to visit them, home is experienced, but the people who make up "home" change. Homes change as people experience the death of a loved one, or a divorce, or an empty nest, or by adding new members.

When our children were young and lived with us, home was the four of us. When our kids graduated from college and each began to create a home of their own, our home returned to what it was when we started out, just the two of us. When one of us departs to be

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Five Reasons You Should Use Goal Setting for Evangelism

"It's human-centered, not God-centered."

"It's another attempt to transfer a secular methodology to the church."

"It's not dependent upon God and prayer."

Those are three of the most common objections I've heard to goal setting in the church, particularly for evangelism.

I get it. You can indeed make goal setting a human-centered endeavor. But the reality is that most any effort in the church can become prayerless and not dependent on the Holy Spirit.

But I want to suggest that goal setting for evangelism can truly be used for God's glory and Great Commission obedience. To be clear, I advocate *lead metrics* for goal setting more than *lag metrics*. We commonly set goals for conversions, baptisms, professions of faith, salvation decisions, or similar nomenclature. Those are lag metrics. I suggest, however, your church use lead metrics along with lag metrics.

Lead metrics are acts of obedience that, in God's power, result in the lag metrics noted above. They include goals for sharing the gospel; writing letters or emails to non-Christians and unchurched persons; meals or coffee with people without Christ or a church home, or flyers about the church left at homes. Those are but a few examples of evangelistic efforts or pre-evangelistic efforts.

I argue that churches that set lead metric goals for evangelism will actually see greater evangelistic fruit. Here are five reasons why:

1. Goal setting makes us intentional about the Great Commission. Our natural inclination is to be inwardly-focused. But if we are regularly focused on reaching outwardly through goals, we are more inclined to do so.

2. Goal setting is a statement about church and individual priorities. Do you think it helps your marriage to have a goal to have one date night a week? For certain. That is a statement of the importance of your marriage relationship. Likewise, goal setting for evangelism is a statement that the church is serious about the Great Commission.

3. Goal setting is working in many churches. Yes, there is a pragmatic reality here. I know of a church of 130 in attendance that had been plateaued for five years. That church set a faith goal of "1,000 in One Year." The 1,000 goal noted was the church's way of using lead metrics. They counted gospel presentations, visits with unchurched persons, and the delivery of hanging invitation brochures (an invitation to the church that can be hung on the door handle or knob or a home) in the 1,000 total. At the end of the year, they had exceeded the goal of 1,000 with 1,700 contacts! The church attendance increased by nearly 50 percent to 190, and the church saw 24 people become believers in Christ through the efforts, the highest number in two decades!

4. Goal setting is a constant reminder to the church members to be outwardly focused. The church noted above kept a running total of the evangelism contacts before the church and reported every week the growing number. It was a clear statement the church and the members were to be outwardly focused.

Evangelism cont. on page 10

Ten Major Trends for Churches in 2017

For those who read my blog regularly, you know I do a “trends post” every year early in January. This next statement sounds totally immodest, but I’m pretty good at predictive trends.

Now let me tell you the whole truth.

I’m pretty good at these predictive trends because I have been following developing patterns for the past year. In other words, I’m really not that bright or prescient. The best I can say is I’m pretty observant.

So what are the ten major trends for 2017? It’s a mixed bag of good news and bad news.

- 1. Renewed emphasis on evangelism.** Many church leaders want to know how their churches can better reach the non-Christians where they are. This emphasis on the “Jerusalem” of Acts 1:8 will result in more intentionality in evangelism and, thus, more people becoming followers of Christ.
- 2. Renewed emphasis on practical ministries.** Many of our churches have gone through a period of theological recovery for which I am very grateful. Now the leaders want to know the “how” along with the “what.” They are looking for practical solutions built on biblical truths.
- 3. Increased frequency of allegations of child sex abuse in churches.** Sexual predators see churches as places of vulnerability and opportunity. Too many churches are not prepared or equipped to deal with these issues. Please see my recent post on this topic.
- 4. Increased financial fraud in churches.** Once again, some of those with ill intent see the church as a place of opportunity to commit theft. I will address this issue more fully later. I am an advocate of outsourced church financial ministries like MAG Bookkeeping to do payroll, bookkeeping, and financial records. It takes the burden and liability off the church. Indeed, I could have added to the list an entire trend of churches moving toward more virtual workers through organizations like MAG Bookkeeping and eaHELP.

5. The multi-site movement becoming a neighborhood church movement. I have written about the multi-site movement many times at this blog. The next extension of this movement is an intentionality to start or acquire campuses to reach and minister to residents of specific neighborhoods.

6. An acceleration of church closures. The death rate of churches is sadly increasing in America. I do not see that trend abating.

7. Church acquisitions becoming normative. I am surprised how quickly churches and denominational entities have become strategic about acquiring churches that are declining and dying. While the trend of church closures is not encouraging, it is encouraging that more churches are becoming intentional about saving these churches from total extinction.

8. Worship center downsizing becomes normative. This trend was easy to predict. The Millennials are leading the way to attend worship services that are small to mid-size. As a consequence, the huge worship centers have lost their attraction. Church architects and design/build firms will be busy downsizing worship centers.

9. Longer pastoral tenure. This trend is being led by Millennial pastors. These younger pastors do not desire to climb the ladder to larger churches. They are more desirous to stay and make a long-term difference in the community.

10. The remarkable shift toward continual learning. Our research is showing that pastors and church staff tend to have greater success in their roles if they are intentional about continual learning. Some go the path of greater formal education, but more are receiving coaching and intentional programs of continual learning like the ministry we developed called Church Answers. An ancillary trend to this one is the increase in number of mentors and coaches for pastors and staff.

These trends are relatively easy to predict, but that does not make them less important. Think how they might impact your church.

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Finding home cont...

with the Lord, then what? For a believer, the person who remains is not alone. Home becomes where the person is spending time with God. Indeed, this being at home in sharing life with God will never diminish, nor depart. On the day believers depart to literally be with God, they can confidently say (see Psalm 116:7 NIV): “Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.” Home is where you are at home with God, and He is with you.

Think about this quote by G.K. Chesterton: “There are two ways of getting home; and one of them is to stay there. The other is to walk around the whole world till we come back to the same place; and I have tried to trace such a journey.” We long to get home. If our home consists of only other people, it will continuously be disrupted and reshaped. But if being at home means to be at peace with God and continually interacting with His presence, home can be wherever, and whenever, we find ourselves with God.

During this New Year I wish you the daily experience of being at home in the presence of God, wherever you may be.

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Evangelism cont...

5. Goal setting leads to church unity. The greatest reason for church conflict is members who have an inward focus. They think church membership is all about getting their own way. When they don’t get their way, they become frustrated and even combative. Evangelism goal setting keeps the focus on the “other” instead of “me.”

Goal setting, when used in a gospel-centric effort, can truly be an evangelistic instrument for the church. What lead metrics can your church use to engender this Great Commission focus? How would you engender accountability? Let me hear from you.

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