

"I WAS A  
STRANGER &  
**YOU  
TOOK  
ME IN**"

MATTHEW  
25:35

Photo courtesy of Thomas  
Road Baptist Church



FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*Brian Autry*

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# Won't You Be My Neighbor?

“Won’t you be my neighbor?”

More than 50 years ago, a gentleman known simply as Mr. Rogers began asking that question. This year marked the golden anniversary of the famed children’s television show, *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*, being aired nationwide. Fred McFeely Rogers, Mr. Rogers, was gripped with a defining passion to teach children and families to be compassionate toward one another and to be good neighbors.

But the idea of loving our neighbors was not original to Mr. Rogers.

The Gospel of Luke (Luke 10:25-37) records the Lord Jesus responding to a question about the greatest commandment. First, Jesus responds that we are to love God with all of our being. Secondly, He teaches us to love our neighbor. When asked who is our neighbor, the Lord Jesus goes on to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan.

At the conclusion of the parable, Jesus asks, “Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who

fell among the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You go, and do likewise’” (Luke 10:36–37, ESV).

As the cover of this edition of the *Proclaimer* illustrates, SBC of Virginia churches are showing the mercy and compassion of Christ to our neighbors. We are showing the love of Christ and serving as mercy ministers to our neighbors in Virginia and Metro DC, as well as places like Puerto Rico and “to the ends of the earth.”

SBC of Virginia churches are partnering to provide smoke detectors to their local communities, support local school literacy programs, and teach English as a Second Language (ESL). This November, SBC of Virginia churches will join to “Bless Portsmouth” as we gather in Hampton Roads for our Annual Homecoming.

Thank you for loving our neighbors. As we passionately teach the Scriptures, we are serving communities with compassion. We want our neighbors to know *they are not alone*.





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# THAT HIS GLORY MAY BE KNOWN

by Karen L. Willoughby

Reprinted with permission from *Baptist Press*

HAMILTON, Va. (BP) — “When I came here, we had a lot of money in the bank, and we needed to fix that,” said Steven Carne, pastor of **Hamilton Baptist Church** for five years.

## Congregation Challenged

Pastor Steven challenged the congregation regarding financial stewardship.

“God entrusts us with His resources; not to save them for a rainy day, nor to bury them in the ground, but to utilize them to make disciples,” Carne told Hamilton Baptist. “I don’t want Jesus to return and say to us, ‘What have you done with what I have entrusted to you?’ “We don’t want to live in paneled houses while His name is unknown among the nations,” he said.

The church responded to the new pastor’s challenge by unanimously voting to invest more than ever before in God’s Kingdom work. The church began giving 35 percent of its resources to missions causes—an increase over its previous 20 percent—including 12 percent to missions through the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention.

## A Desire to Serve

Adding to a 10-year or longer commitment to missions among Native Americans in the Dakotas, the church began an outreach to southern Ghana. The church’s desire to serve is bearing fruit through a community-wide program to serve orphans, foster children, and the families who parent them.

“We believe in missions, and the Cooperative Program is part of our missions strategy,” Carne said, referring to the way Southern Baptists work together financially to spread the Gospel worldwide. “We feel God would have us send missionaries throughout the world as the International Mission Board does, to send church planters to underserved populations as the North American Mission Board does, and to train future pastors as our seminaries do. We give to the Cooperative Program because we yearn to be part of this Kingdom-building work.”

Hamilton Baptist Church, organized in 1889, is the only Southern Baptist congregation in the community of 2,000 people about an hour northwest of Washington, DC. About 300 people gather for Sunday morning worship, and many also participate in home groups throughout the week.

“We seek to create a culture of discipleship,” Carne said. “Our mission as a church is to make disciples for the glory of God. We do that by seeking God through His Word and encouraging one another towards godliness as we share our lives together.”

The church faithfully witnesses nationally and internationally but needs to improve its witness to neighbors and coworkers, Carne said. Outreaches among Native American women and children in the Dakotas include a weekend ladies’ retreat, a ministry to children, and a Thanksgiving program.

## Gospel Partnering

Eight years ago, Hamilton couple Ilhami and Ann Konur founded Windswept Academy in Eagle Butte, SD, a Christian school that has grown to include 81 students.

Through Hamilton’s pastoral training conferences in southern Ghana, the congregation planted Hope Community Baptist Church in Nsawam, a town of about 20,000.



*Hamilton Baptist Church pastor Steven Carne, at left, baptizes a new believer during a mission trip to the Republic of Ghana in Africa.*

“Through our church plant, many have come to faith in Christ,” Carne said. “Last time I was there, I baptized 10, including a repentant witch doctor and his family.”

“We consider our partners more than people we send money to,” the pastor noted. “As we see in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we understand our Gospel partnerships as reciprocal relationships. We seek to be engaged in their work—giving, praying, going—and we also long for them to be praying for us, aware of our ministries, and come and visit us.”

Hamilton Baptist every other year hosts a three-day missions conference that involves each of the church’s partners, allowing communication, worship and thanksgiving for the Lord’s work through partnerships.

“We want to grow as faithful citizens living in an alternative kingdom, God’s Kingdom,” Carne said. “As we do, we demonstrate to our neighbors and the nations who God is and what He has done. My hope is, to the degree in which we experience the Gospel, we find freedom and joy in sacrificing for King Jesus.”

## Resources for His Glory

For the past five years, all church income exceeding expenses has been allocated for missions. Surpluses are divided proportionally between local, national, and international missions, Carne said.

“We don’t want to simply write a check,” he said. “We want to use these resources to facilitate our members engaging in missions.”

Orphan care in the Hamilton community and various outreaches in Guatemala are on the church’s radar.

“God is teaching me—and I hope this faith family—that life is not about maximizing ease and comfort,” Carne said. “Instead, we’re called to joyfully sacrifice that His glory may be known among the nations and His marvelous work among all peoples.”

*Karen L. Willoughby is a national correspondent for Baptist Press, the online news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.*



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# Tornados Touchdown

## RELIEF TEAMS SPRING INTO ACTION

“ We started seeing the swirling of the clouds, and then it was like a wall of wind and water just hit.”

The local news stations in Central Virginia broke into live programming on the evening of April 15, 2018. Meteorologists shared that severe weather was on the way from North Carolina. Tornado watches quickly changed to warnings in a stretch from Danville through Amherst County. Fear rose as residents took cover and prepared for the worst.

Three different tornados landed in this storm. The first touched down on the western side of Danville along Westover Drive. One SBC of Virginia church family got a front row seat to the funnel just as their Sunday night service was getting underway.

“A couple of us were sitting on the front stoop, and we were able to see the clouds come up,” recalls Brad Childres, pastor of **Woodlawn Baptist Church**. “[We] started seeing the swirling of the clouds, and then it was like a wall of wind and water just hit.”

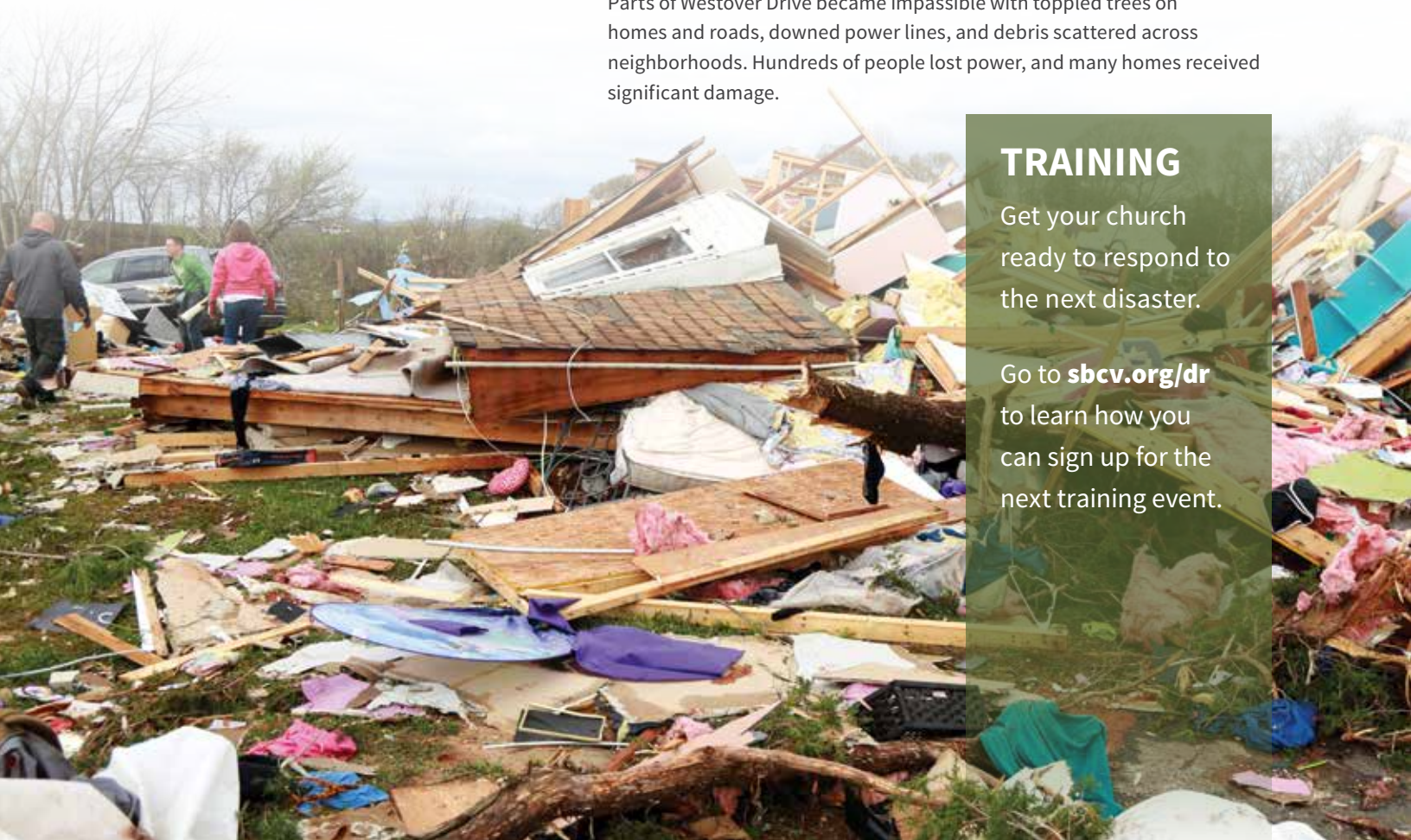
Children and families were quickly ushered to the church basement where they prayed for protection until the howling sound of passing wind subsided. “Within just a couple of minutes, it had passed over. We came out and started seeing just a tremendous amount of damage out on the houses and the roads.”

Parts of Westover Drive became impassible with toppled trees on homes and roads, downed power lines, and debris scattered across neighborhoods. Hundreds of people lost power, and many homes received significant damage.

### TRAINING

Get your church ready to respond to the next disaster.

Go to **[sbcv.org/dr](https://sbcv.org/dr)** to learn how you can sign up for the next training event.



*Pray that we have the chance to share the Gospel and the love of Christ with our neighbors. ”*

The storm did not finish there. The second confirmed tornado made a path along Timberlake Road in Lynchburg. Multiple businesses and homes were impacted with rooftops blown off and windows shattered. Many streets were blocked until emergency crews could clear trees and debris.

The tornado showed most of its strength as it dropped one final time as an EF-3 with wind speeds at more than 140 miles per hour. In the community of Elon in Amherst County, 20 homes were impacted. One home was completely removed from its foundation, as the family of seven held on to each other in the basement.

God protected each resident impacted by the storm that frightful evening. There were no fatalities reported. Families who became homeless found shelter that night as they prepared their hearts for what they would find on Monday morning.

The disaster areas became the mission field for local churches to respond with help and hope. Relief teams sprang into action in each location. One of the most impressive responses took place through **River Church** in Madison Heights. In just one day, the church coordinated more than 550 registered volunteers to provide relief in Elon. More than 100 of those were members of River Church.

“We got so much work done that day that the local authorities asked us not to come back,” says Brad Mullinax, pastor of River Church. “Our teams did an awesome job of mobilizing people.

God has prepared us for this moment, and we are really grateful to be a part of it.”

River Church decided to assist in the long-term rebuild of at least one house. They are raising the needed funds and providing volunteers in the coming days to make it possible.

The Lynchburg cleanup was led primarily by teams from **Thomas Road Baptist Church** in Lynchburg. Volunteers helped remove downed trees on personal property and from roadways.

Many Disaster Relief volunteers also helped in the Danville area. Nearly 60 came through Send Now at Liberty University and were integrated into five SBCV Disaster Relief chainsaw teams. They were able to complete more than a dozen jobs in three days with Pastor Childres to help impacted families.

“As our church reaches out, pray that we have the chance to share the Gospel and the love of Christ with our neighbors,” asks Childres. “We want them to know that our church is here to serve them and recover from the storm. Be praying for resources, wisdom for our leaders and, as we come together, that God gets the glory and honor for everything that He’s going to do.”



photo courtesy of River City TV, Danville, VA



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# Compassion Ministries

*"And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." ~ Matthew 9:35-36 (ESV)*

Christians are a Good News people and a Kingdom people, called to proclaim the Gospel. We also help provide for the needs of those around us. Churches around Virginia are stepping outside the walls of their buildings and onto the front lines to meet needs with compassion. The SBC of Virginia Mobilization Team stands ready to serve, train, and connect churches to bring many to faith in Christ through acts of compassion.

## SOME THINGS REMAIN THE SAME

Two of the primary ways that SBC of Virginia churches have been sharing the Gospel through compassion ministries have been at the center of our mobilization strategy for years: English as a Second Language (ESL) and hunger ministries.

In 2017, 112 people were trained for ESL ministry, adding to the hundreds already involved in ministries across the Commonwealth. Over 50 churches were involved in this training, and the number of trained people continues to climb.

In 2017, 48,807 people were fed through the hunger ministries of 10 SBCV churches, leading to innumerable Gospel conversations and the salvations of 117 people. Praise the Lord!

These ministries, along with mission projects that served thousands this past year (ex., Christmas backpacks for children in Appalachia), will continue to be the backbone of the SBCV compassion ministries strategy. But the needs are great, and the opportunities are endless.

Welcome SARAH DEJARNETTE to the role of mobilization associate for compassion ministries. Sarah joins the SBC of Virginia with years of experience working with the International Mission Board and the local church and is excited to work with and expand the compassion ministries footprint in Virginia.



## SOME THINGS CHANGE

Sue Sawyer, a fixture around the SBCV, retired at the end of 2017. Her dedication to serving our churches and the Gospel built a legacy and a network of compassion ministries and projects that is a testimony to her hard work and to the grace of God.

With the advent of Send Relief of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), new initiatives and opportunities are becoming available for SBC churches every day. Send Relief exists to tackle big issues and to see lives changed—and the crises are everywhere. Human trafficking is soaring; childhood and adult illiteracy is rising; 480,000 children are in the US foster care system—and the church needs to be equipped to make a healthy, lasting, and eternal difference. That's why the SBC of Virginia Mobilization Team is reorganizing compassion ministries to better partner with Send Relief and to connect churches to each other and to healthy partners for more effective ministry. Whether your church is led to stand for life with your local pregnancy resource center; provide medical and dental care in your community; serve refugees



and internationals through ESL and job training; feed the hungry; tutor school children; or install smoke detectors, the opportunities are endless, and the SBCV is ready to help.

Here are just a few of the opportunities that you and your church can explore with the help of the SBCV Mobilization Team:

1

#### SEND RELIEF

##### **Quick-Start Guides and Training –**

Working in concert with Send Relief, our Mobilization Team is making available resources and training to help churches start compassion ministries to fight poverty, reach internationals and refugees, and serve their communities. Contact Brad Russell for your quick-start guide or find more information at [sbcv.org](http://sbcv.org).

2

#### ARISE 2 READ

The national literacy program, Arise 2 Read, is geared toward helping churches adopt local schools and work with elementary-age children. This is an opportunity for SBCV churches. Petersburg City Public Schools have already adopted the program and will be working with SBCV churches for training and implementation. A statewide webinar and training is scheduled for July 31. Contact Brad Russell for more information on how your church can fight childhood illiteracy and break poverty cycles in Virginia.

3

#### BLESS PARTNERSHIPS

Our SBCV Mobilization Team has worked in Petersburg to help connect churches to each other and to the community to serve. Bless Petersburg was a one-day event that involved two dozen churches and over 400 volunteers. Bless Portsmouth will be held on the Saturday before Annual Homecoming (November 10) and will seek to build pathways to serve the city of Portsmouth. Training is available for churches who want to

partner to reach their community through compassion ministries.

#### WE ARE ALL ABOUT THE GOSPEL

Compassion ministries are another tool to be used to lead to Gospel conversations. Our desire is not just to end physical suffering but to end eternal suffering.

#### WE ARE ALL ABOUT PARTNERSHIP

If you are not sure how to get started, the SBCV Mobilization Team wants to equip you and partner you with other local churches to help you learn, plan, and implement compassion ministries in your community. The vision is to see partnerships of SBCV churches all around Virginia and DC ministering together and setting up ministry connection centers through local churches to meet the physical and spiritual needs of our neighbors. Be on the lookout for more exciting announcements and training opportunities in compassion ministries and watch for connection centers for compassion ministries coming soon!

## Bless the City

Over 400 volunteers hit the streets of Petersburg in November to serve the people of the city and share the Good News of Jesus. Volunteers worked with local schools, the fire department, pregnancy resource centers, and other ministries around

the city. But the blessing didn't stop there—it's catching on all over the Commonwealth.

**Kingsland Baptist Church** (North Chesterfield) was involved with Bless Petersburg at Robert E. Lee Elementary School, partnering with other churches to beautify the school and run a soccer camp.

Justin Beville, pastor of youth and local outreach, says,

*Being a part of Bless Petersburg began to stir our leadership team toward blessing our own community in additional ways to what we are already do throughout the year (ex., community meals, VBS, etc.). Out of Bless Petersburg, we launched an initiative called Bless Bellwood, a three-week outreach emphasis to bless Bellwood, our local community. We sent out four teams each week, directly after church on Sunday, to spend their afternoon blessing Bellwood. We had prayer teams, lawn care teams, and canvassing teams, and we hosted a basketball camp for children in the community. Throughout this outreach emphasis, we spent time sharing the 3 Circles Gospel presentation (with children through adults), and we advertised our upcoming Easter services and our upcoming revival.*

Other churches are also getting in on the blessing.

**Wayne Hills Baptist Church** (Waynesboro) has adopted the local middle school, Kate Collins. Their Bless Kate Collins initiative saw volunteers from the church working to beautify and bless the school through landscaping, cleanup, and serving the needs of the school administration. This spring, **Old Powhatan Baptist Church** (Powhatan) launched its Bless 23139 initiative, seeking to serve the community by meeting practical, everyday needs and tackling the big issues of Powhatan with Gospel compassion.

So how can your church jump in on the blessing? Bless Portsmouth is coming up on November 10 and will see churches from around the Commonwealth joining together to meet needs and share the Gospel in Portsmouth before SBCV's Annual Homecoming. Bring out your church members and learn how to take those same initiatives back to your community to bless your city with compassion and Good News.



# Receiving a Legacy

“A building is only a place to ‘house the vision’ God has given.”

Church planter Cliff Jordan remembers the day when the church was just six people gathered in his living room committed to Christ and to each other, living out Gospel community. Eventually, they gathered in a park and later began to gather on Sunday nights at a local church in Richmond, VA. Desiring to transition to Sunday morning services, **Movement Church** moved to a rented building, where it grew to two services and were reaching capacity. “We had hit a plateau and couldn’t reach many more people logistically,” says Jordan. But it’s never been about buildings for Movement Church—a building is only a place to “house the vision” God has given. So what do you do when the vision runs out of space?

Jordan prayed and asked around about potential buildings in the immediate area of where God had called them to be. Purchasing property in the vicinity would have been expensive, and few properties were available. Jordan was put in touch with Pastor Bill Nieporte of Patterson Avenue Baptist Church (BGAV).

Nieporte told him, “Cliff, last Sunday we had a meeting and we knew that we had to do something drastic, and then you called.” As the two pastors began to meet and pray together, God began to solidify to Nieporte and the members of Patterson Avenue Baptist Church that they were to offer the building free of charge to Movement Church. By God’s providence, Patterson Avenue Baptist Church is only 1.4 miles away from where Movement had been meeting.

## WHY WOULD A CHURCH GIVE ITS BUILDING AWAY FOR FREE?

One reason—to leave a legacy—to pass along to future generations something of great significance. Leaving a legacy should be the hope of every church. “Patterson Avenue’s members wanted their building to continue as a Gospel center and bring life change in this community for years to come,” says Jordan. “So they made some hard decisions to make that happen.”

The one-year process began with multiple conversations, including town hall meetings with the current members of Patterson Avenue, where Jordan was able to answer questions from the congregation. At Movement Church, there was a partners meeting to discuss the possibility of moving. There was a time of prayer and fasting, a time of Q&A, and a vote. Needless to say, the partners at Movement were ecstatic about this new location and were convinced God had granted favor for Movement to provide more than enough space to “house the vision.”

“The Sunday morning service on August 20, 2017 was the last for

*Fellowship at Movement Church’s grand opening in the new building*





*This historic Richmond church became Movement Church's "new" building.*

Patterson Avenue Baptist Church, formed in 1989 from the merger of churches with longer legacies—Park View Baptist Church, dating to 1891, and Calvary Baptist Church, dating to 1877. After delivering the morning sermon, Nieporte symbolically handed a key to the church to Ken Sorrell, associate pastor of Movement Church.” (Jordan was away on a mission trip that had been planned far in advance.) “‘It’s got the dust of our ancestors on it,’ Nieporte said as he gave the key to Sorrell. ‘Take good care of it.’”<sup>1</sup>

Movement Church held its first worship service in this historic Richmond church on April 22, 2018 and held a grand opening on May 6 with over 350 people attending. Pastor Jordan is grateful the church can gather



*April 15, 2018—Movement Church members pack up and move to their new facility on Patterson Ave.*



in one service again and have the space to reach more people for Christ. “It’s going to be energizing!”

<sup>1</sup>“Church disbands, donates building to younger congregation,” Tammie Smith, Richmond Times-Dispatch, August 20, 2017.

#### MORE INFO

Want more information? Go online to [moverichmond.org](http://moverichmond.org).



## A Lighthouse in a Spiritually Dark Community

### *Veritas City Church*

Over two years ago, God began to stir in Greg and Grace Gibson's hearts about the need for church plants in our nation's capital. They moved with their children, Cora and Iver (who were 4 and 2 at the time), to plant **Veritas City Church** in the Georgetown community of Washington, DC.

They recognized the spiritual needs in Georgetown—a community of 34,000 people with no bible-believing churches. By God's grace and in partnership with the SBC of Virginia, the North American Mission Board, Foothills Church (Knoxville, TN), and **McLean Bible Church** (Vienna, VA), the Gibsons and a team of 15 planted Veritas City Church right in the heart of Georgetown, one of the most flourishing and affluent communities in Washington, DC.

Veritas City Church officially launched in September of 2017 and already has over 50 people attending its gatherings. Since then, they have seen God produce fruit. There were 120 people in attendance for Easter Sunday. In the

last few months, they have baptized 5 people; have seen 12 come to faith in Christ; and have launched membership, ministry teams, local mission partnerships, and small groups in their community.

Veritas is now preparing to tackle one of its biggest visions yet. The church has leased a building on K Street by the Georgetown Waterfront. They plan to move there in July of 2018 to have a 24/7 home and a 24/7 Gospel presence in the community. Moving to this location will enable Veritas City Church to be a lighthouse in a spiritually dark community that desperately needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This space will continue to help the community flourish by providing services, counseling, ministry, and healthy partnerships—as Veritas City Church seeks to grow and establish a lasting ministry in Georgetown.

FIND OUT  
MORE

Much is happening at Veritas City Church. You can find out more by going online to [veritascity.org](http://veritascity.org).

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REGISTER AT [sbcv.org/sgtour](http://sbcv.org/sgtour)

# SHARING THE GOSPEL IN SOUTH KOREA



**D**uring the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea, the SBC of Virginia partnered with International Mission Board missionaries, Korean Baptists, Liberty University, and the Outreach Bible Project to share booklets that included the Book of John and the Book of Romans. These Scriptures were available in 24 different languages!

Since the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, GA, the Outreach Bible Project, under the sponsorship of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Acworth, GA, has targeted large international events for the sake of distributing Scripture.

This was the second Olympics in which the SBC of Virginia has participated. “This year, however,” says SBCV evangelism director Steve Bradshaw, “we were much more involved from the ground floor of planning and networking. And the Lord orchestrated every detail.”

## *The Lord Provides*

Through the new IMB missionary in Seoul, God provided housing at the IMB mission house as a staging area and for cross-cultural training before the team traveled across the country to the Olympic area. Dr. Timothy Chong, professor and dean of the Center for Asian Ministries at Liberty University and a leader at **701 Korean Church** in Lynchburg, introduced the team to the leadership of Korean Baptists and a network of pastors close to the Olympic Village. For the two-week trip, God provided housing at a Christian boarding school whose facilities were only five years old.

Bradshaw adds, “The Lord worked out all of these details in order that we might be on mission with Him at the Olympic Village and Park, on the streets, at the transportation stations, and in the marketplace.”

## *Sharing the Gospel*

“Pastors and Christians in South Korea had been praying for the Olympics to be awarded to their country in order that they may influence the world with the Gospel,” says Chong.

With Outreach Bible Project’s multiple teams in various locations, 155,000 Scriptures were distributed to Koreans and visitors from around the world.

“Because it’s a fast-paced society, I try to observe and find something to generate a conversation and then naturally lead into a Gospel conversation,” says Seth Peterson, pastor of **Calvary Baptist Church** in Altavista, VA. On many occasions, one could find Peterson sharing the Gospel or praying with individuals or groups. “I was even invited to have lunch with a group who wanted to hear more, and I accepted their offer—whatever it takes to share Jesus,” adds Peterson.

One family from Canada said, “We have never had anyone ask to pray for us.” A female Olympian from Mexico prayed to trust Christ under the tent of a local Baptist church (bottom left photo).

Bradshaw says, “I was blessed to share the Gospel through the explanation of the Olympic pen, and I was shocked when one young lady invited me to sit down and tell her more. So we opened the Scriptures, and I shared with her the Romans Road. I read in English, while she followed in Korean, and she prayed to trust Jesus with her life.” SBCV church planting strategist Randy Aldridge had the opportunity to share the Gospel with some of the thousands of volunteers at the Olympics.

“Being in Korea was especially significant to me because it’s where I spent my childhood,” says SBCV administrative coordinator Mindy McCord, whose parents were IMB missionaries to South Korea. “Having the opportunity to worship the Lord in Korean again while seeing Koreans, Japanese, Russians, and Americans joining together in worship moved me to tears.”

When the world convenes at one location, it is a prime opportunity to unite with other believers in sharing the Gospel. We cannot begin to know the impact this Good News has had on those who have trusted Jesus and who, in turn, will influence others as they return to their own countries.



# PRAYER for Church Planters

*"Then Jesus came near and said to them, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"*

Matthew 28:18-20 (HCSB)



**Lord & Aba Boadu**  
Church Planter  
**CALVARY LIFE BAPTIST CHAPEL**  
Gaithersburg, Maryland

## **BIRTHDAYS:**

Lord, November 16 / Aba, July 21

## **PRAY:**

- ▶ for additional financial supporters/sponsors
- ▶ for God to send more people to be a part of our mission

.....  
For more details on these church planters, go to **[sbcv.org/planters](http://sbcv.org/planters)**. You may also view and download many other church planter profiles there.  
.....



**Michael & Beth Ann Bard**  
Church Planter  
**THE WELL**  
Glen Allen, Virginia

## **BIRTHDAYS:**

Mike, March 12 / Beth Ann, May 4

## **PRAY:**

- ▶ for us to reach our financial goal for the year
- ▶ for our weekly Sunday gatherings
- ▶ for continued growth as we build a volunteer base to serve and share the message of Christ
- ▶ for the 27,000 individuals who live in Short Pump—that all would come to know Jesus as a result of The Well
- ▶ that we would have influence and places to meet people
- ▶ for us to make disciples that make disciples
- ▶ for our life groups, kids' ministry, and leadership development

# Able To Teach

**In describing the qualifications of an elder, Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 3:2,  
“An overseer, therefore, must be...able to teach.”**

SBC of Virginia church planter candidates have to navigate a robust application process, which includes several online assessments and field interviews. And the SBCV Church Planting Team has recently expounded upon the assessment of a candidate's ability to clearly articulate a compelling Gospel message. Until recently, church planting candidates were assessed on teaching ability simply through their submission of an audio or video recording of them preaching. But in the fall of 2017, a preaching lab was added to the church planting training and is required of all planter candidates.

The preaching lab is a half-day experience attached to the front end of *PLANT* training for church planting candidates. It is designed to give SBCV church planting strategists a look into yet another area of a candidate's elder qualifications. Candidates are given the task of preparing and delivering a 10-minute sermon from a chapter in the New Testament. Romans chapter 5 was used at a recent training. The candidates can select any passage from the chapter and preach it in any way they choose. The church planting strategists pay careful attention to the candidate's preparation, delivery, and content. Each candidate receives feedback and affirmation from the strategists and other candidates in the room.

Another component to the preaching lab experience is learning from experienced preachers in the state. The SBCV is blessed with not only an abundance of gifted Bible expositors, but with many who are gifted and credentialed in equipping other preachers. Dr. Mark Becton was one such pastor in our state, formerly the pastor of **Grove Avenue Baptist Church** in Richmond for 18 years. Becton has taught in two of our three preaching labs.

As he speaks to the candidates, Becton references Phillips Brooks' words regarding

preaching: “Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching.” From this definition, Becton highlights three elements of preaching as he warmly invests in the candidates.

First, he discusses the “messenger” and his place in preaching, including the impact of being called, compelled, and created by God to preach.

Next, he speaks of the “message,” highlighting the irreplaceable role of God's truth (His Word) in preaching. Becton shares, “That first means recognizing God's intent for Scripture. Then, how do we discern God's message from Scripture and shape it to help hearers embrace it?”

Finally, Becton highlights the “moment” of preaching. He discusses with the planter

candidates the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching as God's truth is proclaimed through the pulpiteer as His instrument. Related to this reliance on the Holy Spirit's enablement is the role of prayer in preaching. Becton shares with care and compassion, as one practitioner to another, these lessons that have carried him through more than three decades of preaching.

The addition of the preaching lab to *PLANT* training is not the only way in which the SBCV Church Planting Team is highlighting the importance of clearly preaching the Gospel.

In two of the recent Church Planter Network (CPN) Weekenders, preaching was also placed in the spotlight.

Dr. Tyler Scarlett has been the pastor of **Forest Baptist Church** in Forest, VA for 12 years. He is also an adjunct professor of homiletics and pastoral leadership at Liberty University. We asked Scarlett to give a preaching refresher to all of our planters at the fall 2017 CPN Weekender. The other half of the plenary session time at two weekenders was devoted to having eight SBCV planters at each event to prepare and preach 15-minute messages on specific passages along specific themes. This proved to be uplifting for those who received the Word of God and affirming for those who preached it.

The SBCV was founded by pioneers full of faith who stood up for the inerrancy of God's Word and committed themselves to expanding the reach of the Gospel in Virginia and Washington, DC through church planting. SBCV pastors and churches can take great pride in knowing that the legacy of the SBCV is being extended by young church planters who are called and able to preach the Gospel from God's infallible Word.



*Pastor Becton addresses the planter candidates.*

# GAINING MOMENTUM *with Growing Partnerships*

## REGIONAL YOUTH EVENTS

### VALLEY STUDENT CONFERENCE

Three years ago, a network of youth pastors from SBC of Virginia churches took the reins of the annual youth conference in the western part of the Commonwealth. In the last three years, the number of partnering churches and participants in the Valley Student Conference has steadily increased. Michael Hays, a high school senior who has attended the conference for the past two years, describes the impact the conferences have had on him:

*Valley Student Conference has a special place in my heart because in 2017 I actually got saved and stopped “playing church” after 17 years. VSC will always remain one of my favorite and most impactful events I’ve been to.*

Josh Griffin, a former high school pastor at Saddleback Community Church and director of Download Youth Ministry, brought the messages this year, and Liberty University’s Worship Collective led worship. Over 600 people from 24 churches were challenged,

encouraged, and equipped to continue following Jesus. Attendance was up from 500 the year before. Of course, numbers aren’t everything—it’s the impact that’s most important...and an impact was made. Taylor Overstreet, a junior from **Fincastle Baptist Church** in Fincastle, VA, was significantly impacted by the conference:

*Valley Student Conference will be marked in the history of this valley as a place where Jesus’ presence can be felt in every corridor, and its workers can only be described as God’s messengers.*

The 2019 Valley Student Conference will be held March 22–23.

### DANVILLE REGIONAL D-NOW

Getting a regional event going takes time and partners. Roger Jones of **North Main Baptist Church** in Danville, VA started working toward creating a regional youth DiscipleNow weekend in his town three years ago and has seen exponential growth in the event as other churches have joined the partnership. In

2018, 10 churches (up from 6 the previous year) joined the event for a total of 275 participants. The theme was *Abide*, based on John 15:10. Students were challenged to live out their faith in obedience to Jesus’ commands. Evan Owens from The Journey Church in Lebanon, TN spoke, and the Nathan Unger Band led worship.

What impressed Jones about the event was “the cooperation between the churches—there was not a ‘me’ in the whole thing...it was about the team of churches...and the importance of teaching our kids how to abide in Christ in a very secular world. This event is the result of the ongoing network between churches—this is not a one and done.”

The network of churches has expressed itself in other area efforts, and the potential for future partnership is even greater because of the humility of the churches and the trust they’ve built in the process of partnering.

The 2019 Danville Regional D-Now will be March 1–3 and will feature evangelist Algernon Tennyson. Additional churches have already indicated a desire to participate next year.



## BUCKINGHAM REGIONAL D-NOW

This regional event has been revived by the renewed commitment of area pastors and youth pastors to work together to reach students. In 2018, 5 churches brought 65 participants to grow in their walk with Christ. The planning for this D-Now is shared among the churches, and each church has a particular responsibility. The Arise Band led in worship this year, and Shawn Ames, NextGen director for the SBC of Virginia, challenged the students from the theme, *Noise: Tune Out, Tune In, and Transmit*. "It was great to utilize some of our former camp curriculum and graphics in this weekend D-now format," says Ames. "It was created with help from local youth pastors and the SBC of Virginia media team, and it just makes sense to save money by using it in this format."

Pastor Westly Yoder of **Mayesville Baptist Church** in Buckingham, VA, commented on the value of a partnership between churches on events like this one. "It is extremely important for the unity among believers in the community. To see us doing things together encourages us. These kids go to different churches but go to the same school. Seeing each other at this event encourages them to continue to grow these relationships and to live out their faith. It is good for pastors as well...and together we can give the kids something better than what we could on our own."

**Concord Baptist Church** in Farmville, VA will host the event in March 2019.

Details for all of these events will be shared on the SBC of Virginia NextGen page as they become available: [sbcv.org/nextgen](http://sbcv.org/nextgen).



# YEC 2018 Fearless

This year's statewide Youth Evangelism Conference (YEC) was hosted at **London Bridge Baptist Church** in Virginia Beach. It featured preaching by Brody Holloway of Snowbird Wilderness Outfitters and worship led by Liberty University's Worship Collective. Saturday afternoon included stunts by the Soar Dunk Team, evangelism training, and evangelism practice. Over 700 people from 34 churches attended. Students were challenged to take to heart the 2 Timothy 1:9 declaration, "God gave us not a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control" (ESV). Join us **January 18-19, 2019 in Virginia Beach** with speaker "Fish" Robinson, worship led by BonRay, and improv by Far From Ordinary.

**RESOURCE** Watch the highlight video and messages at [sbcv.org/yec](http://sbcv.org/yec)

## ATTENTION COLLEGE STUDENTS ...You Can Go On Mission Now!

### THREE pathways for you to go NOW!

#### 1 SBC OF VIRGINIA MISSION PARTNERSHIPS

There are spring, summer, and fall opportunities to serve in Washington, DC, Montreal, Lithuania, Barcelona, and beyond. If you are interested in joining a short-term team or even going for a month or two during the summer, contact us at [mobilization@sbcv.org](mailto:mobilization@sbcv.org).

#### 2 SEND RELIEF GEN»SEND

Do you want to spend your breaks, your summer, or even a semester serving alongside church planters in one of North America's biggest cities or among those in need of Gospel compassion in Appalachia or in immigrant communities? Apply for GenSend through Send Relief and the North American Mission Board and GO now! Find out more at [sendrelief.org/gensend](http://sendrelief.org/gensend).

#### 3 IMB STUDENTS



Would you consider giving a week, a month, or a semester overseas to serve the billions who need to hear the Gospel? Explore the limitless possibilities for students to serve as part of IMB teams around the world. Find an opportunity and jump in at [imb.org/students](http://imb.org/students).

#### CONTACT

Want to ask someone about mobilizing college students? Email [mobilization@sbcv.org](mailto:mobilization@sbcv.org).

#### ONLINE INFO

More information is available online at [sendrelief.org/gensend](http://sendrelief.org/gensend) and [imb.org/students](http://imb.org/students).

#### RESOURCE

For more information, visit [sbcv.org/nextgen](http://sbcv.org/nextgen)

# Go Therefore...

PLANTING CHURCHES AMONG THE NATIONS IN VIRGINIA

It has been described as the reverse Great Commission. The Church's marching orders are to "go and make disciples of all the nations" (NLT), but "to go" has come to mean we must go there—to the countries where people are unreached. Today the nations are in movement. "The world is experiencing the biggest displacement of people since the Second World War, with more than 22 million displaced from their home countries" (World Economic Forum). Many of the unreached people of the world now call Northern Virginia and Washington, DC their home. All but five of the nations of the world (190 of 195) have a presence in Northern Virginia.

With the movement of the nations, God is providing witnesses. The SBC of Virginia has a force of missionaries who are planting churches among many of the nations. These catalytic church planters are currently evangelizing among approximately 54 of the least-reached or unreached nations:

Dilantha Arachchilage..... Sri Lanka/South India  
Antonio\*..... Middle East  
Jody Miller..... Middle East  
Raúl Santamaría..... Latin America  
Fernando Mangieri..... Latin America  
Dao Wang..... China  
Daniel\*..... Eritrea/Horn of Africa  
Zechariah Bekele..... Ethiopia  
Ben\*..... Central Asia  
Felix Sermon..... Southeast Asia

## PARTNER

For partnership information:  
[sbcv.org/churchplanting](http://sbcv.org/churchplanting)

## MORE INFO

For information on diaspora missiology:  
[tinyurl.com/diaspora-missiology](http://tinyurl.com/diaspora-missiology)

## What Is Their Missionary Role?

A catalytic church planter (CCP) is regarded as a missionary to an affinity cluster of nationalities (ex., Spanish-speaking nations). A CCP will evangelize and make disciples among people from nations with a common or similar cultural background and language that results in churches being started that multiply.

## Partner Churches Needed!

Partner churches are needed to pray with and for these missionaries, assist with outreach ministry projects, and give to support the needs of the new churches.

### Testimony from Catalytic Church Planter Ben\*

*Tajikistan is a country in Central Asia surrounded by Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, with 8.7 million people who belong to the Tajik ethnic group and speak Tajik, a dialect of Persian. The population of Tajikistan is 98% Sunni Muslim.*

*I was praying a lot for this country, and I was always asking God to show me one Tajik person here in the US until one month ago when I met one.*

*I have a brother in Christ in Fredericksburg. He invited me to share the Gospel with this Tajik man. We had a great Gospel meeting and prayer time. This man, Victor\*, encountered Jesus four years ago in the street, when he was tired of being a drug addict. Jesus was telling him, "Trust Me."*

*I got a text message later that Victor accepted Jesus as his Savior!*

.....  
\*Name has been changed for security purposes

## LEARNING A NEW VOCABULARY

The profound changes our world is experiencing also bring new words to our missiological vocabulary. Here is your challenge: at Sunday School next week, ask your class to define these two terms (the winner should get a free lunch!).

### Diaspora Missiology

Diaspora missiology takes into consideration the increased openness to the Gospel that often results when peoples are displaced from their homeland. It takes into account Acts 17:26–27 (NIV, 1984):

*[God] determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him...*

Diaspora missiology is understanding and participating in God's redemptive mission among people living outside of their place of origin.

### Glocal Missions

Glocal (in terms of missions) is a fusion of two words—global and local—and means the reaching of the unreached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and making disciples of all nations locally and globally. One example of glocal missions is to reach Liberian immigrants in Richmond and go on mission with Richmond Liberian Christians to reach their home village(s) in Liberia.



Milton Harding  
Pastoral Relations Associate  
mharding@sbcv.org

## BROKEN CISTERNS?

Need help?  
Prayer?  
Please reach  
out to me!  
mhilton@sbcv.org

One of the consistent themes of the Old Testament that we still see today is idolatry in God's people. Simply put, idolatry is anything we serve other than God Almighty. That sin is compounded when we attempt to syncretize idolatrous ideas with the things of a holy God.

In Jeremiah 2:13, God clearly identifies Israel's condition in two ways, "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

God is addressing the sin of forsaking (leaving) Him to pursue and serve worthless idols. In this text, broken cisterns are analogous to idols created from the land or earthly wisdom. These idols, steeped in worldly values, have been far too prominent in God's Church! Idolatrous thinking has infested the Church of today with the psychology of consumerism and a strategy of sensual appeal, casting the Church as a brand of man rather than the bride of Christ. In our attempt to be trendy, we often exchange godliness for cleverness, ending up with customers of a church brand rather than disciples of Christ (Matthew 28:19). In the busyness of hewing the next big attraction, the message of the Gospel gets hidden. The methodology of cisterns of crafty attractions will draw people in, but will they find Jesus? Worship becomes a production event, and small group instruction becomes no more than a Sunday morning or weekday social feast because of the infestation of idolatry.

We're trapped in our own belief that these cisterns (idols) are so essential to people attending that we're more afraid of people not showing up than the Holy Spirit not showing up. It seems we've become preoccupied with filling seats rather than feeding sheep. My brothers, we must stand firm on what is of first importance—the Gospel!

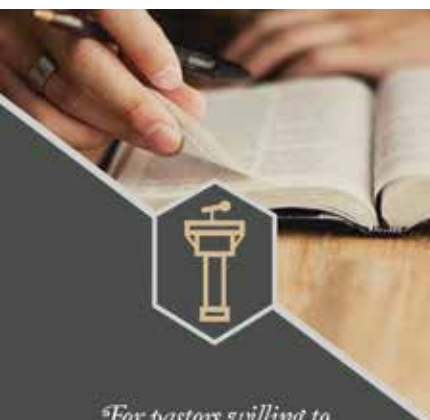
Read what the Apostle Paul says: "...I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins...that He was buried...that He was raised on the third day..." (1 Cor. 15:3-4). That's it, plain and simple! True ministry should flow from living waters of truth and, as shepherds, we are laborers in the Gospel, not architects of it; valets of the Gospel, not vision casters; entrusted stewards of the Gospel, but not the Savior—ones who must give an account.

So then, what must be our biblical resolve? First, if we're guilty of forsaking God, we need to stop right now, repent, and ask His forgiveness. God created us with a need for a divine spiritual relationship that thrives on truth. When the people abandon the living water, they die spiritually. Are we unburdened by the number of our churches dying? By pastor burnout? Are we killing our own churches with a worthless cistern mentality? The call is not to lift up our brand but to lift up the name of Jesus (John 12:32). Paul says it again in 2 Cor. 4:5, "... For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord..." There is only one place to get living water that brings life, and His name is Jesus (John 4:13-14)!

Secondly, God tells Israel that hewing broken cisterns (idols) is evil, built on self-centeredness. It's sin! The idolatrous cistern thinking in our hearts will eventually emerge as idols in our ministry to God. An even greater tragedy is the unwillingness to acknowledge and repent of methods and ministry that do not honor God—they anger Him. Our God is a jealous God and will not share His glory with idols (Ex. 20:5)! Will our arrogance in practicing idolatry invite His judgment?

Brothers, sound the alarm. It is time to closely examine what we put before God and His people as the Gospel and, with repentant hearts, come boldly to the throne of grace. Is the Jesus we present to the church and the world distorted, diluted, or deformed because of our cisterns? If so, do you hear the voice of God commanding repentance from His Church? If you do hear His voice today, repent—call your church to corporate repentance so that a time of refreshing may come (Acts 3:19). Tear down the idol-laden ways, shut down the waterless worship and the lifeless programming of ministry so that the glorious light of God and His Christ might rest and abide in our land! He stands waiting!

.....  
*All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version (ESV).*



*For pastors willing to assist in leadership transition.*

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**AUGUST 6-8, 2018**  
SBC of Virginia, Glen Allen

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International Mission Board

**FRED LUTER**

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Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

**BEN GUTIERREZ**

Liberty University

**ERIC THOMAS**

First Baptist Church, Norfolk

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**#sbcvhome**



# All to the *Glory of God*

For **Mountain View Baptist Church**, this phrase has become more than a motto or statement of faith—***it's a way of life for the congregation.***

Since 1932, the church has been led by nine pastors and has completed five building projects to accommodate its growing congregation. While building projects are nothing new to church life, the context for this particular church

helps us understand how even building projects are all to the glory of God.

Mountain View Baptist Church is a country church in a rural setting. As you make the two-mile drive off of the main highway, you take in some of the most gorgeous views that the mountains of Independence, VA have to offer. A lifelong member of the church, David Osborne serves as pastor, just as both of his grandfathers before him.\* When Osborne began his pastorate in 2000, plans were already in the works to build a new sanctuary to accommodate the growing congregation of 55 members.

## Stepping out in Faith

Stepping out in faith with only \$22,000 in savings, they signed a \$300,000 contract to build a new sanctuary and fellowship hall. The



Escape Room fun during Winter Fest 2017

construction of the new facility was a year-long process. In 2001, through the dedication and sacrifice of the 55 members, God provided \$153,000 in addition to their savings, which left them only borrowing \$125,000. They were able to pay off the loan in just over two years.

### Needs Provided

Construction began again in 2004, this time to meet the need for an education wing and an additional parking lot. With \$122,000 in savings, they signed a \$367,000 contract. By the time construction was completed, the Lord had provided \$95,000. Mountain View was able to pay off the \$150,000 loan in two and a half years.

In 2011, the church broke ground on its 20,000-square-foot family life center. The estimated cost was \$1.5 million but, due to the hard work and dedication of the church, they spent just a little over \$850,000 and only borrowed \$450,000. With the 14,700-square-foot ground level complete and the 5,500-square-foot upstairs 75% complete, they are on track to pay off the loan in five years—all to the glory of God!

### Only Half the Story

If we were to just read how God has been faithful in the growth of the facilities at Mountain View Baptist Church, we would only be getting half of the story. The building expansion has brought about community

development and spiritual growth for the church as well.

With each building project, the church members have believed the expansion was not only their commitment but also their responsibility. Each family sacrificed to give more. For the first two projects, the men contracted roofing jobs, and the ladies made and sold apple butter and BBQ chicken meals to help pay for the construction of the new sanctuary, fellowship hall, and education wing. With the new family life center, once the contractor erected the shell of the building, the men of the church went to work to bring it to completion.

### Growing as a Connected Community

The Mountain View family continues to grow spiritually through the preaching of God's Word, and they've seen their numbers grow to 200 members and over 250 in attendance each week. They are growing as a connected community, with 105 members meeting each week in Sunday School classes to grow closer together and deeper in their faith.

Their desire for community is part of what drove them to build the family life center. They wanted it to be a place where folks from the community could come and hear the Gospel of Jesus—a place where they could connect with a church family that loves and serves together, all to the glory of God!

When the family life center opened, 450 people attended the first event, where The Strength Team performed. That night, 42 people came forward to rededicate their lives to Christ or to accept Him as Savior. Since then, the church has hosted Upward basketball each winter. Every Saturday during the season, more than 500 people showed up to have breakfast, cheer on the players, and hear a devotion from God's Word. This past season, five young boys came to faith in Christ through the program.

### What's Next?

So what is next for Mountain View Baptist Church? If God opens the doors, they hope to start a Christian school in the upper level of the family life center. They have just voted to begin the planning stage for a new worship center and the conversion of the current fellowship hall into additional Sunday School classrooms for the growing congregation. It is amazing what can be accomplished when we give all to the glory of God!

---

*\*Cosby Anders pastored Mountain View from 1952–1954, followed by Troy Osborne, who pastored from 1954–1986.*

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#### RESOURCE

For more information, visit [mvp-church.org](http://mvp-church.org).

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# Petsworth Baptist Church

Customers at a Gloucester laundromat were in for a surprise one when members of **Petsworth Baptist Church** offered to cover the cost of having their laundry done. The question that quickly followed was, "Why are you doing this?" Their generous benefactors were able to share, "Because Jesus loves you and we want to serve you!"

Pastor John Pouchot recalls, "...58 members of the church, undergirded by the prayers of 30 to 40 others, went out into Gloucester County with the intent of being salt and light through various acts of good works."

The laundromat was just one of several locations that were touched during Petsworth's Community Impact Day. Teams gave away coffee and donuts at Wal-Mart and the Tractor Supply Store. Others prayerwalked through a neighborhood and engaged in conversations with those who were out in their yards. Some went up and down Main Street, giving out goodie baskets to people in businesses, the post office, the library, and first responder/law enforcement locations. With each encounter, they offered to pray, extended an invitation to visit the church, engaged in Gospel conversations, and provided encouragement to all. One team had the special assignment of visiting and praying with a young family dealing with cancer.

The teams were supported by a nursery crew who took care of their children for over four hours and by a hospitality crew who provided food for when the teams returned.

The local Chick-fil-A franchise owner, John Gordon, was so blessed by Petsworth's ministry that day, he posted the following on Facebook:

*A heartfelt thank-you to the wonderful people of Petsworth Baptist Church. Last Saturday, they came into the restaurant around lunchtime. We were running fast and hard!*

*They approached me and asked if they could take just a minute to pray for me and my team. Right in the middle of the restaurant, we bowed our heads and gave glory to God, asking for His peace and healing in the lives of all of us who work at Chick-fil-A*

## Being Salt and Light

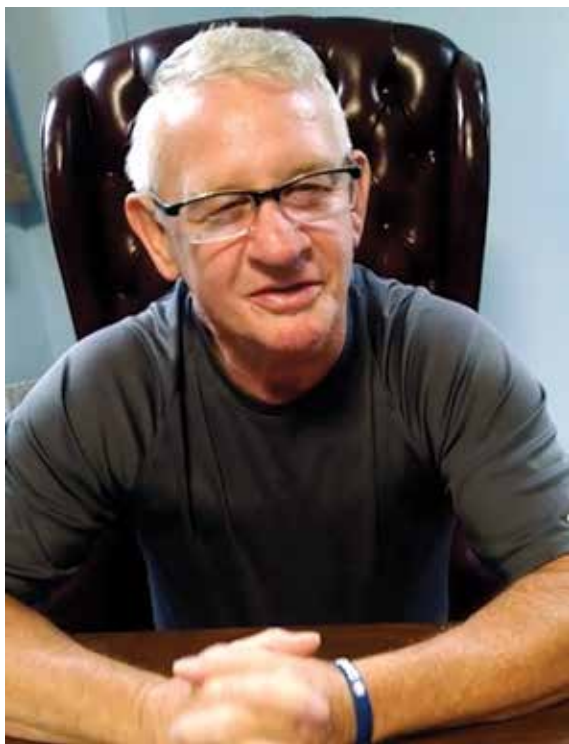
*of Gloucester. Afterward, they presented us with a generous basket of treats to share with the team.*

*I was, and still am, deeply touched by this remarkable gesture of love and friendship. Thank you, Petsworth Baptist Church, for living your faith so publicly. It is truly a leaven in our community.*

Although Community Impact Day began as a once-a-year event, the church now plans to host several throughout the year. What an opportunity as a church to be the hands and feet of Jesus to those who desperately need Him! The words of our Lord come to mind: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden...In the same way, let your light shine before others, so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16, ESV).



Petsworth's **COMMUNITY IMPACT DAY** touched Gloucester County neighbors as church members prayerwalked and gave out goodie baskets to local businesses. With each encounter, prayer was offered.



# JERRY CREASY Finishing Well

the mountains of Smyth County, where he was born and raised. Creasy has also been instrumental in gathering local pastors weekly to pray for an awakening in our country and revival in our churches.

His ministry reached beyond the local church into denominational work within SBC life. Creasy's conservative convictions led him to play key roles in making the SBC of Virginia what it is today. He has served on the Executive Board and on the Church Planting Committee. While serving on the Church Planting Committee, he became passionate about church planting. Not only has he led Falling Water to become active in church planting, he, along with SBCV church planting strategist Randy Aldridge, has been faithfully meeting monthly with a group of pastors to pray for a church to be planted in Wytheville. This has been a burden on his heart for over six years.

Creasy's retirement comes at a time in his life where the effects of his service in the Vietnam War have caused him to struggle to see well enough to preach. But for this pastor, retirement doesn't mean he's ready for the rocking chair. In fact, he is still at Falling Water, where he feels the Lord would have him be, helping find the next pastor to lead the church in its Gospel mission.

At the heart of Pastor Creasy's 40-year ministry has always been and continues to be a zeal that was placed in him when he received Christ as Savior—a desire to tell others the Good News of Jesus. He continues to walk by faith and not by sight, prayerfully seeking God's will. With the 40 years of "labor and unrest that lie between the first and last spikes" in the rails of Creasy's ministry, he hopes to be able to help other men answering God's call into ministry to start out and finish well.

With enthusiasm and vigor, we set out to answer God's call into ministry, celebrating early victories, such as surviving seminary and earning degrees, pastoring our first church and moving to a larger church. But with age and maturity, success begins to look different. Success is faithfulness to the God who has called you and faithfulness to the call He has given you. Success is also finishing well. In his book, *Nothing Like It in the World*, Stephen Ambrose recounts how investors suggested celebrations to launch several projects on the construction of the transcontinental railroad. One major financier, Collis Huntington, objected to the festivities, saying, "If you want to jubilate over driving the first spike, go ahead and do it. I don't. ...Anybody can drive the first spike, but there are many months of labor and unrest between the first and last spike." Likewise, a successful ministry is one that finishes well.

Pastor Jerry Creasy is among those to finish well. In his 40 years of ministry, Creasy has pastored four churches in Southwest Virginia. These churches are not only in the same county but also within the same association. He finished up his pastoral ministry at **Falling Water Baptist Church** in Smyth County earlier this year.

Creasy's ministry began just after he returned home from serving in the US Marine Corp during the Vietnam War. Surrendering to the call in 1978 and being ordained in 1981, his heart as a pastor has always been for the local churches in



*Falling Water Baptist Church*

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# THE CHAINS OF TRADITION BROKEN

by Brian Edwards, Pastor of  
Hope Church, Danville, VA



**No longer were we going to be restricted and restrained by tradition, but we were going to pursue being a church consumed with the mission of God for the glory of God, no matter the cost. ”**

~ Brian Edwards



**I had never known** anything other than the Independent Baptist church. I faithfully attended one nine months before I was born and virtually every day thereafter. My dad, Craig Edwards, was a popular Independent Baptist evangelist who preached approximately 50 weeks a year in over 70 churches in at least 25 states, and every one of them was Independent Baptist. That meant every church I attended, every camp meeting I sat through, and every sermon I ever heard all had one thing in common—they were exclusively Independent Baptist. As a matter of fact, it wasn't until I was in my late 20s that I heard a sermon that wasn't delivered by an Independent Baptist preacher. I had no need to hear anyone else or associate with anyone else. I believed what I frequently heard pastors say, "I'm Independent Baptist born and bred, and when I die I'll be Independent Baptist dead." That mantra became my mantra—I was fully convinced that our way was the right way and there was no other acceptable way. I was a committed Independent Baptist who planned on pastoring an Independent Baptist church and honoring its cherished traditions for the rest of my life.

## Traditions

In 1991 when I planted Blessed Hope Baptist Church in Danville, VA, that was really all I had—a series of traditions engraved on my heart and embedded in my mind. Those traditions shaped my view of the Scripture and the church. Sadly, those traditions also took center stage in the preparation and presentation of my sermons. I was nothing more than a phonograph reproducing the sounds I had heard made by the preachers I esteemed most highly. What I believed, what I preached, and who I associated with were all filtered through an unwritten collection of approved, acceptable traditions. Sure, my heritage had given me some priceless treasures—a commitment to courageous preaching, a willingness to sacrifice financially for the sake of the Gospel, a sensitivity to the leadership of the Holy Spirit,

a desire to see men and women come to Christ, and a love for passionate worship. Each one of those valuable treasures were deposited into my life through the Independent Baptist church, and I thank God for each one of those treasures. The problem was that all of the traditions that accompanied those treasures received equal reverence.

I'll never forget reading Mark 7:13 and mumbling the words, "That's me. I am the one allowing my allegiance to tradition to limit the power and effectiveness of God's Word in my life, and my ministry." That was a life-changing moment! My flawed religious foundation violently shook, and, like Paul, the stocks and bonds that held me captive were broken, and it was the truth that had set me free. God was at work in my life in a way that I had never experienced before. I was being liberated, and I loved it. He was changing me inwardly, and those changes were becoming visible outwardly. It was only a short time before I realized my years as an Independent Baptist had been a chapter in my life but they weren't meant to be the whole story. The day God made that clear to me, He required me to make a decision, a big decision that would forever change my life and the life of Hope Church. No longer were we going to be restricted and restrained by tradition, but we were going to pursue being a church consumed with the mission of God for the glory of God, no matter the cost.

## The Cost

I wasn't prepared for the isolation that would follow that decision. I didn't realize the truths that God had revealed to me would be so offensive to those whom I considered my closest friends. Almost immediately, rumors started to spread that I was a compromiser. I was abandoning the "old time way," which was considered by most of my peers to be the unpardonable sin. Virtually all of my speaking engagements were quickly canceled, and all too often I'd receive a phone call that started with the words, "I wanted to call and apologize for listening to a group of pastors gossip about you tonight." Those were dark days in my life.



Hope Church celebrates the Lord's Supper

The sheer weight of the rejection of my “friends” was unbearable, but looking back now, I realize it was unavoidable.

#### A New Identity

Over the course of the next several years, God led our church family through one change after another. Many of them were difficult and numerically costly, but they were necessary. Blessed Hope Baptist Church eventually embraced our new identity as **Hope Church** and emerged from our season of transition larger and more committed than ever to advancing the Gospel. However, we were still an island all to ourselves. We were teaching the family of Hope Church that God calls His people to live in community for His purpose, but we were only applying that message individually and not corporately. Ultimately, the increase of God's Word through our local congregation was being limited. Yes, we were one church in four locations. Yes, the six original members of Hope Church had grown to over 1,000 people meeting in three different states. Yes, we were impacting people and places far beyond our walls in ways we would have never imagined, but we were still missing the joy and benefits of connectedness with the greater body of Christ. Thankfully, God in His wisdom and sovereignty directed us to the SBC of Virginia and, in the SBCV, we have found like-minded followers of Jesus who are devoted to advancing the Gospel together.

As an Independent Baptist, I believed Southern Baptists were the enemy, but now as a Southern Baptist conservative, I have realized that misguided belief had kept me from benefiting

from and belonging to one of the strongest Gospel forces on the planet. That's why I now urge Independent Baptists to prayerfully search the Scriptures, to carefully listen to the great conservative Southern Baptist preachers who are passionately standing for truth, and to realistically consider the limitations of isolation... then make the obvious decision to partner with Southern Baptists to saturate the globe with the message that Jesus saves.

#### Not Alone

There was a season in my life and ministry when I avoided all things Independent Baptist. To be honest, I was bitter. My attitude was, Why should I care? But now, thank God, the bitterness is gone, and I care more than I ever have before. My heart is burdened for those Independent Baptist pastors who ferociously love Jesus and His church, but their fear of rejection holds them captive to their traditions. The great news is that you won't drown in the chilly waters of rejection. The SBCV will embrace you. I say that from experience. I have been lovingly embraced and spiritually encouraged by men who understand that our fellowship is in the Gospel. I was welcomed to the table in Lynchburg, VA by fellow pastors who believe the Church flourishes when the attitude of “us” prevails over the attitude of “me,” and I would have never experienced this beautiful community of Christ followers had I remained independent. I am honored to be a part of the SBCV, I am grateful that Hope Church is an SBCV church, and I believe this partnership will allow us to experience the greatest days of ministry we have ever known.

## If you happened to die today, do you know if you would GO TO HEAVEN?

**It's THE most important question of your life** because YOUR ETERNITY depends on your answer. God says that in order to go to heaven, you must be born again. He gives us a plan of salvation, how to be born again, in the Bible. His plan is simple!

#### It's as easy as A-B-C!

**A Admit you're a sinner who needs to be saved.**

*Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*

**B Believe that Jesus died for you and rose again.**

*Romans 10:9, “If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

**C Commit to accepting Jesus as your Savior and Lord.**

*Romans 10:13, “For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

**Would you be willing to pray this prayer with a heart of faith, trusting and believing what the Bible says about Jesus and His love for you?**

*“Oh, God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross for me. I believe His shed blood paid the price for my sin, and that His death, burial, and resurrection were all for me. I now receive Him as my personal Savior and Lord. Thank you for forgiving me of my sins and for the gifts of salvation and eternal life. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.”*

**Take God at His Word and claim His gift of salvation. Believe and you will be saved.**

# When One Door CLOSES Another Door OPENS

**We** have often heard the saying, “When God closes a door, He opens another.” This phrase is most often used by Christians referring to new opportunities or reflecting on God’s last assignment while awaiting His next one.

But in this case, it’s an actual door—double glass doors, to be exact—doors that opened Sunday after Sunday for 16 years as **Crossroads Community Church**. Planter and founding pastor Don Hughes, says, “We have had a vibrant ministry here with attendance as high as 125. As a matter of fact, the church had also hosted a Hispanic church that met in its facility. But when numbers gradually declined, Hughes and church leaders consulted with their SBC of Virginia regional missionary, Steve Bradshaw. They discovered through a Mapping Center demographic study that their Jerusalem community had changed. “As much as we tried different ways of outreach to new people,” says Hughes, “we were not connecting with our neighborhood.”

“I remember sitting and sharing with church leadership several options for moving forward,” Bradshaw recalls. “They could become a satellite location of another larger church; they could plant a new church within a church; they could revitalize by re-launching; they could receive help from a neighboring healthy church; or they could disband and allow the facility to be used by another church.” After prayerful consideration, the church voted to

dissolve. Based on their constitution and bylaws, in case of dissolution, the property was to be deeded to the SBC of Virginia for the continuation of Gospel work.

Crossroads Com-

munity Church closed its doors on December 31, 2017. Just two weeks later on Sunday, January 14, 2018, those double glass doors opened to 118 Hispanic believers.



*Pastor Fernando preaching in the new building.*

Behind the scenes, SBCV church planting strategist Larry Black had been assisting **Iglesia Bautista Conexión** to find a permanent building close to its demographic base.

“We had been meeting in temporary spaces and had relocated several times,” says Pastor Fernando Mangieri. “We had been praying that God would provide a permanent home closer to where our members live and where we could reach more Hispanics.”

Iglesia Bautista Conexión had the support of its partner church, **Parkway Baptist Church** in Moseley, VA, where Conexión had been meeting. As a matter of fact, “Pastor Fernando was considered part of the family and shared office space with our staff,” says Derek Futrell, lead pastor at Parkway. “We loved having them as part of our church family, and we welcomed them to the use of our building. We are going to miss them at Parkway.”

At a lunch gathering with all three churches represented, it was announced that Parkway Baptist Church was willing to pay off Crossroads Community Church’s small remaining mortgage debt so that Iglesia Bautista Conexión could have a move-in ready building for worship, discipleship, and as a Church Planting Center. Pastor Fernando has planted multiple churches in the Richmond area, and now that Iglesia Bautista Conexión has its own building, this church will be a catalyst to plant more Hispanic churches in the region and beyond.

You see, when God closed the doors of Crossroads Community Church, He literally opened the doors of Iglesia Bautista Conexión!



*Parkway and Conexión Leadership Dedication*



PASTORS, STAFF, AND WIVES

## Retreat

*Featuring Dr. Charles Lowery*

Friday, October 12 - Saturday, October 13  
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Learn more at: [sbcv.org/ministryretreat](http://sbcv.org/ministryretreat)

# A **HEARTBEAT** for *Special Needs Ministry*

by Kelly Cahoon, Children's Ministry Director, Deep Creek Baptist Church,  
Chesapeake/Portsmouth, VA



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## DC Kids Champions Club

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*This special needs ministry started in October of 2015 and is dedicated to providing hope to students with special needs and to their families.*

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does a church begin creating a special needs ministry? If you don't already have such a ministry in your church, this is a wonderful time to consider one for your community. I'm sure you are asking yourself questions like, *What could this look like in my church? How do I even begin?* If you are asking these questions, maybe God is stirring something in you to start a special needs ministry. Maybe you are the leader who will help your church become a special needs church. I once asked those questions, and God called me to be that leader.

## Looking Back I Stand Amazed

At Deep Creek Baptist Church (DC Church), our special needs ministry has grown from one self-contained room and a buddy system into its own little wing, where kids with all abilities can learn about Jesus. My first day as children's director at DC Church, I saw a little boy with cerebral palsy sitting in his sister's connect group while she took care of him. It was then that I knew I had to do something—I found my “heartbeat” for special needs ministry. When God called me to create this ministry, He was five steps in front of me, paving the way for sharing the vision with our senior pastor, recruiting volunteers, preparing training, and providing the finances and spaces needed. He had a great plan, and He continues to provide. In each step of this journey, I look back and stand amazed.

Today, it is beautiful to see families walk into our church and say they found us online or heard about us through a friend, all because they were looking for a special needs church. My heart just explodes when I hear them say this! When they say they feel blessed because they are able to come to a church that is prepared, accepting, and welcoming towards their family, I genuinely feel like our church is receiving the blessing. To deeply know these families (their hopes, dreams, and fears), to see the smiles on the faces of all of their beautiful children, to hear their screams of joy on Sunday, and to witness people getting saved and baptized—all because we have become a special needs church—I know that serving special needs families is the true blessing!

## We Show Them Christ

It took work to get where we are here at DC Church, but what we do on Sunday is simple—we love special needs families where they are in life, and we show them Christ in us. Sometimes, they are broken because they have never felt accepted in churches, oftentimes they are carrying heavy burdens, and many times they haven't yet found the love of Christ. What an incredible mission we have as the Church to tell *everyone* about the Good News of Jesus! Is it time your church found your heartbeat for families with special needs?

Any church, no matter how big or small, can be a welcoming place for families with special needs or medically fragile children. It all starts

with a simple hello and a heartfelt desire to understand each individual. Connecting to the heart of the family is truly important because hearing their stories and sharing in their struggles helps them succeed in finding a place to belong in the church. Becoming a special needs church ultimately starts when we humble ourselves and simply follow what Paul wrote, “Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Colossians 3:12, NIV).

We can start by living out these words and teaching others to do the same, but how

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**MORE  
ONLINE**

Want to begin a special needs ministry? Visit [sbcv.org/kids](http://sbcv.org/kids).

**DC  
CHAMPIONS**

For more information about this special needs ministry, go online to [godeepcreek.com/championsclub.html](http://godeepcreek.com/championsclub.html).

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# Serving Others Comes Full Circle

## THE COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP OF COLLINSVILLE

“So he got up from supper, laid aside His robe, took a towel, and tied it around Himself. Next He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples’ feet and to dry them with a towel tied around Him....*‘For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done for you. I assure you: A slave is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him.’*”

John 13:4-5, 15-16

Amy\* found herself following the example of Jesus by washing children’s feet as part of **The Community Fellowship’s** back-to-school outreach in Collinsville, VA. Only a few years earlier as a middle schooler, she had received this kind of sacrificial love from the same outreach.

More than 700 volunteers from 36 churches joined Amy in this important project, which touched 55–70 schools, from the southside to the Appalachia region of Virginia. Pastor Michael Harrison reports that more than 18,000 children and families have been served over the 11 years of this project sponsored by the church.

“Not only do we get the chance to give shoes and backpacks to kids,” says Harrison, “we have Gospel conversations by the multitudes. We have seen this reconnect our people with missions. In our congregation alone, 75% of our church is involved. In fact, everybody can get involved in some way.”

During the back-to-school outreach, children receive backpacks filled with school supplies, a new pair of socks, and a pair of durable shoes provided by The Samaritan’s Feet (a national outreach ministry). They receive free



haircuts and even have their feet washed while volunteers share the story of Jesus and His love.

This Gospel-centered ministry is a part of The Community Fellowship fulfilling its vision statement: “demonstrating the love of God to our community.” They live out this mission by reaching out to the hungry, hurting, and homeless of their area through acts of kindness. In addition to the back-to-school outreach, the church operates a transitional home for the homeless and a food pantry for the hungry. They also participate in numerous community partnerships. “It would be wonderful,” says Harrison, “if churches in our area serve so generously that we put the Department of Social Services out of business.”



Thanks to the SBC of Virginia Foundation, The Community Fellowship of Collinsville has been able to begin renovating a local building to house its vast and growing outreach ministries and to expand space for worship and for discipleship classes. Numerous construction volunteers from around the county and state have contributed hundreds of man-hours to the renovation project. More volunteers are needed to help this missions-focused congregation.

The Community Fellowship is demonstrating to the people in its community that they are not alone. Jesus put it this way, “By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Amy and others who now volunteer have been recipients of God’s love through The Community Fellowship and now serve others in the same way. May this kind of multiplication increase!

.....  
\*name has been changed

All Scripture references are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB).

MORE  
ONLINE

More information can be found online by visiting [samaritansfeet.org](http://samaritansfeet.org) or [thecommunityfellowship.org](http://thecommunityfellowship.org).



All it takes is one hour a week to help change a child's life! Learn how at:

**ARISE2READ.ORG**

For more ways to bless your community, visit: [sbcv.org/mobilizing](http://sbcv.org/mobilizing)

# WORKPLACE LIFELINE Bible Study

by Dolly Mink, member of SBCV Women's Ministry Leadership Team, and Women's Ministry Leadership Team at River Oak Church, Chesapeake

Coworkers and friends began  
to study God's Word and  
discovered that they  
are not alone!

Life as a pediatric nurse can be tough. Grueling schedules, challenging situations, and heartbreaking cases can add up, causing burnout, discouragement, and even depression. But for one nurse at Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters (CHKD), in Norfolk, VA, the battle was met with the sword of the Spirit. Stephanie Redfern decided to take her Bible to work. At the beginning of each shift, she placed her Bible in her cubby. The cubby housed the tools she used when working with her patients. "I just liked having [the Bible] there with me," she says. "It made me feel better knowing I had the Word of God with me where I needed it so badly." Redfern would read her Bible at lunch or dinner, then tuck it back into her cubby, right beside her medical tools.

Other nurses and medical personnel began to notice, and it was through those conversations that Stephanie felt led to seek God's will about engaging nurses in a Bible study. Redfern knew that there were caregivers out there who needed to read and study God's Word, and she loved the

thought of everyone working together on the same study. She wanted those nurses and caregivers to know they were not alone.

The first challenge was communicating with women who worked a variety of shifts, many of whom never saw each other. A private Facebook group was created and, even before the study started, the group began to grow.

Redfern, a member of **Alexander Baptist Church** in Chesapeake, VA and a member of its Women's Ministry Team, knew she wanted to use the Bible study, *Seamless*, by Angie Smith. She had completed it before and knew it was just right for beginners and seasoned Bible students. The next challenge was to allow class members to view the video for the study while respecting copyright laws. Kelly King, Women's Ministry specialist with LifeWay Christian Resources, was a tremendous help, providing Stephanie with the ability to post the videos to her private Facebook group.

There are currently 71 members completing the study online. Many are from CHKD, but some are from as far as California—women who heard about the study from a friend, want to study the Word, and want to know they're not alone.

This all started with a Jesus-loving nurse taking her Bible to work. How might God be calling you to be a light in your workplace?



## *Christmas Backpacks* FOR CHILDREN IN WESTERN VIRGINIA

Fill backpacks with toys  
and necessities for children  
living in poverty throughout  
Appalachia.



## *BIBLES FOR Hispanic Ministries* Provide Spanish Bibles for Hispanic church plants and other missions opportunities in Virginia and beyond.



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# Radically SAVED

**There has never been such a thing as a little bit saved,**

but when you observe salvation in a changed life from one extreme of living like the world to a life lived fully for Christ, it's a wonder to behold. One writer would call this "normal" Christianity (Watchman Nee), but our culture calls such a person radically saved.

Church planter Jefferson Hernandez and his wife give testimony to radically changed lives. Jefferson says, "From the day God saved me, there was a great yearning to share the Gospel with others, make disciples, and minister to them." Jefferson believed growing up that "only good people would go to heaven," and he knew that he didn't qualify. He was involved with his girlfriend, Carol. He knew that his relationship with her was not honoring God. Although Carol was not a believer, she invited him to church after her mother was miraculously healed of cancer. He went to church out of obligation, but the message was very convicting. Jefferson wrestled with the truth after the pastor said, "there is still hope for a sinner."



**Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines "radical" as "drastic or sweeping, resulting in extreme revolutionary change" and "saved" as "delivered from sin: redeemed." A radically saved person has been delivered from sin to live a counter-cultural lifestyle—a revolutionary change has taken place.**

Late one night, he fell on his knees in desperation and asked God to forgive him of his sins and change his life. He had come to understand that he could change his lifestyle but only God could change his life.

Jefferson was convicted about his relationship with Carol, whom he loved, so they stopped dating. He continued to go to church and grow in Christ. After months, Carol was miserable and returned to church. She saw a changed Jefferson but thought he had found another girlfriend. She asked Jefferson why he was so happy, and he said, "Only Jesus can change you."

She said she wanted the same happiness, so Jefferson told her

how to be saved. She eventually understood her need for salvation and surrendered her life to Christ.

Jefferson loved Carol but feared his flesh, so he would not date her. After weeks of seeing each other at church, Jefferson asked Carol to marry him. However, they did not date until they married two months later.

"There are no words to describe how I feel when I see another sinner near repentance and faith to God," says Jefferson. He and Carol are acting on the "passion that God gave [them] for the well-being of souls," equipping them to become like Jesus. "Now that I see the fruits, Carol and I can no longer resist the desire

to plant a church and dedicate the rest of our lives to shepherd those whom God will bring for salvation."

Jefferson and Carol are now planting **Iglesia Bíblica Campo Blanco** in Sterling, VA with the SBC of Virginia. They were sent out from their church, **Iglesia Bíblica Bautista Emanuel** (IBBE) in Ashburn, VA. Jefferson has served with Carol at IBBE as an intern over the past two years in various capacities, discipling others to become like Jesus.

This young couple is a vibrant example of the power of the Gospel to change lives. No one is beyond God's love, grace, and forgiveness.

# Drawing Near

## Prayer Summit Tour

“

We must choose to forgive.  
You are not going to be  
close to God with  
bitterness in our heart.  
You are putting yourself  
in a situation where God  
is keeping His distance.

~ Dr. Dave Earley

”

### ONLINE

To watch the sessions and download resources from the 2018 Prayer Summit, visit [sbcv.org/prayersummit](http://sbcv.org/prayersummit).



Dr. Dave Earley, keynote speaker on the Prayer Summit Tour, challenged the hearts of the more than 370 participants from over 80 churches with a message from James 4 entitled, “Draw Near to God.” At the four locations across the Commonwealth, the Spirit of God stirred a work of revival in the hearts of those in attendance. Here are a few testimonies that render evidence of what God did through the 2018 Prayer Summit Tour:

*To be honest, I went to the Prayer Summit because it was on my calendar, but God did a work in my life, and He pulled things out of my soul that I didn't even know were there! I am so grateful I was there and experienced the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in a fresh way!*

~ Rick

*I truly enjoyed and needed the recent Prayer Summit Tour. As a pastor in the midst of a church revitalization, I needed to have a chance to be reminded of the power of prayer. I walked away humbled but refocused and refreshed. I've already used the Prayer Summit resources with my church. Thank you so much for hosting events like these, and please keep them coming!*

~ Philip

*We know prayer is important, but it can be easier to talk about praying than to actually pray. This summit was especially helpful because we were given time to worship and pray. I was reminded again of the importance of spending unhurried time with God. Busyness really is the enemy's stealth weapon.*

~ Melanie

*It was an incredible time of prayer and unity. We had a sweet time of worship that I believe made the Holy Spirit feel welcome and also blessed my heart.*

~ Gianna

*We praise the Lord for these encouraging testimonies! May God continue this mighty move of His Spirit in the SBC of Virginia and beyond!*



# VISIO



# N IRGINIA

EQUIPPING FUTURE  
LEADERS THROUGH  
**INTERN SCHOLARSHIPS.**

Justin Beville's internship at Kingsland Baptist Church provided him real world ministry experience.

*Scholarships are made possible by your gifts through the SBC of Virginia Missions Offering.*

[sbcv.org/visionvirginia](http://sbcv.org/visionvirginia)



Pastors Aaron (left) and Adam (right) share the vision.

# We Can Do More TOGETHER

This is what Pastors Adam Schwenk and Aaron Evans realized when they felt God leading them to merge their two congregations in Greene County, VA. Both SBC of Virginia churches were meeting less than six miles apart with a similar vision of reaching their community with the Gospel. “The first step was praying and discerning if this [was] something that God wanted us to do,” recalls Evans. They began praying about the transition and the next steps that needed to happen.

After a series of meetings together, they asked the two churches’ leadership teams and elders to begin praying about this possibility. The leaders concluded that together more people could be reached, together more lives could be changed, and together more disciples could be made than if the two churches remained separate.

*From the very beginning, we wanted to lead in our community with authen-*

*tic love and passionate service. We wanted Gateway to be a place to serve others and love as Jesus loves. Impacting our community has always been our focus from day one. Our decision to merge with Legacy Church [was] just another step forward in this exciting journey to love and serve our community in even more ways than ever.*

— Aaron Evans, Lead Pastor of Gateway Church

As more and more churches discuss ways to better reach their communities, the idea of churches merging may become more of a reality. According to Jim Tomberlin and Warren Bird in their

book, *Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work*, “Today’s successful mergers tend to be missional in focus with one church embracing the vision and strategy of the other church.”

In July 2017, **Gateway Church** merged with **Legacy Church** to better serve the community together. “We are a family of generational chain breakers who are building Christ’s legacy for future generations locally and globally,” says Schwenk. John 17:23 states, “I am in them and You are in Me. May they be made completely one, so the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me (HCSB).” These signs of unity were seen early on in the merger process as the churches hosted a combined community sports camp.

*It’s exciting to partner with fellow Christians at Gateway Church in this new way! One of the historic signs of revival is the unity of the Christians in a community, and it’s a joy to bring two healthy churches together. Our passions are similar as we love the community in the name of Jesus Christ. We look forward to this new season of combined efforts!*

— Adam Schwenk, Lead Pastor of Legacy Church

*Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work*, Jim Tomberlin and Warren Bird.

## ONLINE

Get more information by going to [visitlegacy.org](http://visitlegacy.org)

## BOOK

*Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work*, written by Jim Tomberlin and Warren Bird



## 3 QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CONSIDERING A MERGER

*Could we accomplish more together than separately?*

*Would our community be better served?*

*Could the Kingdom of God be further extended by our merger?*

# Lesotho People

RIVER OAK CHURCH

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and I am with you always, even to the end of the age. ~ Matthew 28:19-20*

## International Mission Field

### DISCOVERY TRIPS LEAD TO PARTNERSHIP

Senior Associate Pastor Dave Velloney took several trips to determine the scope of the work that needed to be done, with a view toward considering how River Oak could meet needs and make disciples. These trips led to a partnership that has resulted in 21 teams from River Oak being sent to Lesotho.

“We have committed with the Flora family and the IMB to partnership in the Khubelu Valley of the Mokhotlong province in Lesotho,” says Kyle Totty, director of missions and outreach at River Oak. “We send 3–4 valley trips each year.”

### DOORS OPENED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

The church also sends a medical team each year. The most recent was sent in March 2018. Another 10-person medical team from the US, who happened to be there at the same time serving in another part of the country, met up with the River Oak team. They camped in a village in tents for 10 nights and were able to treat hundreds of patients who don’t have access to medical care. This opened the door for them to preach the Gospel countless times to large crowds. Many of the people treated walked several hours, sometimes days, to get to the clinic. The team was able to lead over 50 Lesotho people to faith in Christ!

**Seven years ago**, Pastor Heath Burris of **River Oak Church** in Chesapeake, VA took an SBC of Virginia-sponsored vision trip to Lesotho, Africa. “We were trying to discern where the Lord wanted us to work on the international mission field,” recalls Burris.

Burris met International Mission Board (IMB) field personnel Jim and Teresa Flora, who were serving in Lesotho at the time. The Floras were looking for churches from the United States willing to enter into a long-term partnership, and River Oak was looking to make a connection on the mission field.

The country of Lesotho is completely landlocked within South Africa. Much of the country has isolated locations that have had little exposure to the Gospel due to the difficulty of Lesotho’s mountainous terrain.

#### CONTACT

Has your church considered beginning a long-term partnership with an unengaged or unreached people group? Contact [mobilizing@sbcv.org](mailto:mobilizing@sbcv.org).

#### INFO

To learn more about River Oak Church, visit their website at [riveroakchurch.org](http://riveroakchurch.org).



from the **EDITOR**

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*Brandon*

# What Does Success Look Like?

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege to attend a pastors' meeting. As you can probably imagine, month in and month out I get to meet with pastors and church staff all over Virginia. It's something I truly love. But this meeting was unique. Why? Because I was the only Baptist in the entire group! And the topic of the discussion was, *What does success look like in ministry?* What a great question! I'm sure you've thought about that topic whether you are in full-time ministry or serve the Lord through your church or ministry in a volunteer or part-time capacity. What does success look like? How do we know when we are making an eternal difference and that the Father approves? It was so interesting to hear these men share the highs and lows of ministry and the added pressure of success.

Many metrics of success in our culture deal with numbers—how many attended, how big is the budget, how many baptisms, how many ministries, etc. It's not wrong to track those metrics—they can help us see trends that can inform how we lead, plan, and pray. If you are like me, you've probably spent many hours in front of a whiteboard or working on flowcharts to help plan strategies. But are those numbers how Jesus looks at success?

The words success and prosper appear in Scripture often. Each and every time we see those words, they deal with what some call the "deeper spiritual life." Joseph prospered because the Lord was with him (Gen. 39:2). When David was about to die, one of the last things he told his son Solomon in 1 Kings 2:3 was to "Walk in His ways and keep his statutes, commands, ordinances, and decrees...so that you will have success in everything you do..." In Psalm 1, we find that the one who is happy and prosperous is the one who delights in the Lord's instructions and meditates on them! There are many other instances in Scripture, but maybe the most well-known is when God tells Joshua that if the wilderness-bound Israelites want to prosper and have good success, they need to "observe carefully the whole instruction of my servant Moses...do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go." And if they meditate on that word day and night and observe everything in it, they will both prosper and succeed in everything!

When I look at the cover of this magazine, I see success in action. When I read the amazing stories of what God is doing in and through the churches of the SBC of Virginia, I am constantly reminded of what success looks like. It's the faithful obedience of God's call on your life and ministry. It's disciples making disciples who make disciples. It's God's people obeying what God teaches them through His Word each and every day—serving, sharing, planting. There's no denying that's true success!

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*All Scripture references are from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB).*

# ABUNDANCE

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## Calendar

view the online calendar at [sbcv.org/calendar](http://sbcv.org/calendar)

### JULY

- 4 *Independence Day*
- 5-14 Spain Trip—Science & Summer Fun Camp
- 12-15 Family Fusion, Chincoteague
- 12-21 Spain Trip—Art & Music Camp
- 16-20 Fuge Camp, Liberty University, Lynchburg
- 19-28 Spain Trip—Basketball Camp
- 23-27 Fusion Mission Camp, Christiansburg

### AUGUST

- 3-4 Women's Ministry Leadership Retreat, International Learning Center, Rockville
- 3-11 Sturgis Bike Rally
- 6-8 Transitional Pastor Training, Glen Allen
- 10-11 Church Planter Network (Statewide)
- 18 Disaster Relief Training, Cave Spring BC, Roanoke

### SEPTEMBER

- 6-8 PLANT A—Church Planting Team Training, Glen Allen
- 8 Small Group Essentials Tour, Swift Creek BC, Midlothian
- 11 Small Group Essentials Tour, Green Ridge BC, Roanoke
- 13 Small Group Essentials Tour, Nansemond River BC, Suffolk
- 16-23 *Vision Virginia Week of Prayer*
- 22 Hispanic Conference, Richmond
- 24-25 *Empowered* Conference—Southwest Tour
- 24-26 Ministers of Education Essentials Conference, The Heights Baptist Church, Colonial Heights
- 29 LifeWay Women's Abundance Conference, Richmond
- 29 Disaster Relief Training, The Heights BC, Colonial Heights

### OCTOBER

- 1-2 Executive Board
- 4 Church Planter Interviews
- 6 Disaster Relief Training, Hyland Heights BC, Lynchburg
- 12-13 Pastors, Staff, and Wives Retreat, Kingsmill Resort, Williamsburg
- 19-20 PLANT B—Church Planting Team Training, Glen Allen
- 20 Kidz Blitz, Bethel BC, Yorktown
- 20 Ride for the Unborn
- 26 The Freedom Project Tour with Jennie Allen  
London Bridge BC, Virginia Beach
- 27 Disaster Relief Training, North Bristol BC, Bristol

### NOVEMBER

- 10 Crossover: *Bless Portsmouth*
- 11-13 Annual Homecoming, Liberty BC, Hampton
- 22 *Thanksgiving*



## PROCLAIMER

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