

PROCLAIMER

2020 | VOLUME 22, ISSUE 3 | Telling the stories of *Vision Virginia*

PRESS ON!



Three Launches

New church plant sees growth amid pandemic.

Traveling Church

Outreach goes local and gets creative.

Deep Water

A flooded community is not alone.



You are not alone.

PROCLAIMER

Winter 2020-21 — Issue 3

PUBLISHER &
SBC OF VIRGINIA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Dr. Brian Autry

SENIOR EDITOR &
SBC OF VIRGINIA ASSOC. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Brandon Pickett

EDITOR &
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Ishmael LaBiosa

COPY EDITOR
Christina Garland

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Bobby Puffenburger

LEAD DESIGN & PRODUCTION MANAGER
Patti Spencer

DESIGNER
Jordan Stroud

SBC OF VIRGINIA

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*You are
not alone.*

Executive Director's Letter

Press On!

World champion marathon runner Robert de Castella said, "Running well is a matter of having the patience to persevere when you are tired and not expecting instant results. The only secret is that it is consistent, often monotonous, boring, hard work. And it's tiring."

My good friend, Doug Echols, runs marathons (I don't, but I am supportive of my friends who do!), and one day I referred to a marathon as "26 miles" and was gently reminded that a marathon is "26.2 miles." Any marathoner will tell you that the extra 0.2 is make or break. Races are actually won or lost in those last 385 yards.

According to runnersworld.com, at the 2017 Tunnel Vision Marathon, Devon Bieling stopped, dropped in a controlled manner, crawled, and then rolled—yes, rolled—across the finish line.

I know ministry over these past few months has been like a long marathon. Our Christian walk and corporate worship have faced myriad challenges. Today, I want to reflect on a Scripture passage that tells us to "press on!"

Press On In Humility

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. (Philippians 3:12)

Paul states—twice—that he is far from perfect—not that he had already obtained it; already been made perfect. He admitted he had a lot of growing to do. He had not arrived. Chuck Swindoll wrote, "We ourselves are imperfect,

living in an imperfect world, surrounded by imperfect people, who continue to model imperfections on a daily basis." If a Christian leader and servant like Paul could admit it, I should too.

"Be humble or you'll stumble." –
Dwight L. Moody

Press On With Intensity

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13–14)

Paul pressed on with intensity from his past glories, griefs, grudges, and guilt. Glories—Paul had done great work. Griefs—beaten, shipwrecked, scorned, left for dead. Grudges—betrayed, lied to and about, sold out. Guilt—blasphemer, persecutor.

Paul pressed on with intensity by keeping his eye on the goal, the finish, and the prize.

Most of us would rather say, "many things I do," and it would be true because we are fragmented people. But Paul (who was the consummate man of action) could truthfully say, "one thing I do."

Paul focused intensely on knowing Christ, the power of Christ, and making known Christ and His powerful Gospel. Lord, help us to press on with that intensity.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. (1 Corinthians 9:24)

Press On Toward Maturity

Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. (Philippians 3:15–16)

The challenges we encounter, the trials we suffer, and the opportunities we receive can all serve to make us more like Christ. Maturing in Christ is the goal. I haven't arrived and, in fact, it seems that I have a long way to go. I am thankful we can run this race together.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1)

Let's keep pressing on together!

Your brother in Christ,

Brian Autry



bautry@sbcv.org



brianautry.com



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EVERY CHURCH HAS A MISSIONARY

Affinity Stateside Associates (ASAs)

This spring, the International Mission Board (IMB) did something that may at first seem counterintuitive. Eight missionary families, one from each of eight global affinities (North African and Middle Eastern Peoples; American Peoples; South Asian Peoples; Central Asian Peoples; European Peoples; Sub-Saharan African Peoples; East Asian Peoples; and Southeast Asian Peoples), packed up their belongings and moved to Richmond for a new assignment as Affinity Stateside Associates (ASAs). They came off the mission field to help facilitate a more intentional effort on the part of IMB missionaries to relate to Southern Baptist churches.

Send and Serve

The IMB is driven by the biblical vision of a multitude from every language, people, tribe, and nation knowing and worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ. The IMB recently retooled its mission statement, now touting a desire not just to send but to serve Southern Baptists in carrying out the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. And every Southern Baptist church has a part to play in this mission of global disciple-making.

Connect with Missionaries

For years, churches have often said, “We

don’t know any IMB missionaries.” But with the help of the ASAs, new initiatives are being put in place to connect your church with your IMB missionaries. The ASA for South Asia, *Greg Cargill, has been partnering closely with SBC of Virginia churches for the past two years from in the field. He and his family have now accepted the call to help reconnect missionaries to churches and churches to missionaries. Cargill said, “The IMB ‘sent ones’ are an extension of the Southern Baptist church, reaching into the far corners of the earth with the Gospel. It is imperative that the ‘sent ones’ not be disconnected from the larger body to which they belong. To operate in this way is to limit our effectiveness as Southern Baptists, both at home and abroad.”

While the ASAs will not themselves be your church’s primary contact with the mission field, they are working within the IMB to train and equip IMB missionaries to reconnect with churches back home. The results are already being felt. The ASAs started their assignment just as COVID-19 began to shut down the world. Many missionaries were displaced, and many came back to the States for a time. This has accelerated the process of reconnecting with churches. Right now, about 10% of IMB missionaries

have received a list of churches with whom to connect. Missionaries will be making phone calls, sending emails, and writing letters to churches. So don’t be shocked if a missionary calls your church to pursue a relationship with you!

Relationships Are Built and Strengthened

Over the next 18 months, the goal is for every Southern Baptist church to be contacted by one of your 3,700 IMB missionaries. The ASAs want your church to know that your IMB missionaries are praying for you, that they appreciate your continued support through prayer and giving, and that they are committed to keeping you updated and building relationships with your church. And as relationships are built and strengthened between IMB missionaries and SBC churches, they commit to celebrating with you as God’s glory spreads to the nations. ■


**Name changed for security purposes*

RESOURCE:

To connect your church with a missionary, visit:

 imb.org

or contact your SBCV Mobilization Team:

 sbcv.org/mobilization

Three

Launches

In the fall of 2019, church planter Josh Weatherspoon was fully engaged with his core team—gathering around tables, looking at charts, meeting with his SBCV church planting strategist, and dreaming about what God wanted to do in Short Pump, VA. Any successful church planter understands the importance of a plan and a timeline to keep the team on track. For over a year, Weatherspoon and his team planned for **The Way Church** to open its doors to the public.

In the meantime, 8,000 miles away, there was talk of a virus that was spreading. By early January, the first case of COVID-19 hit the United States. Weatherspoon continued planning for a March 1, 2020 launch date at Godwin High School in Henrico. The launch went well, attendance was great, and a new church was now meeting for public worship services.

After three worship services together, Governor Ralph Northam closed Virginia schools. Church plants that were meeting in schools now had nowhere to meet. Immediately, pastors and church leaders all over the world began networking to figure out what to do next.

The Way Church began an online presence almost immediately, broadcasting through Facebook Live and other social media outlets. Weekly community groups went virtual.

As the governor's office began to communicate guidelines to keep people healthy, Weatherspoon began planning a drive-in service that would allow people to come to church by staying in their cars. The message would be transmitted over an FM transmitter and also through speakers on an ordinary sound system. The response was phenomenal, and The Way Church began to see steady growth at its drive-in service.

"Essentially," said Pastor Weatherspoon, "we had three launches in one month: our public launch, our online launch, and our drive-in launch."

Looking back, Weatherspoon acknowledged how COVID-19 opened doors to do ministry that may not have been opened otherwise.

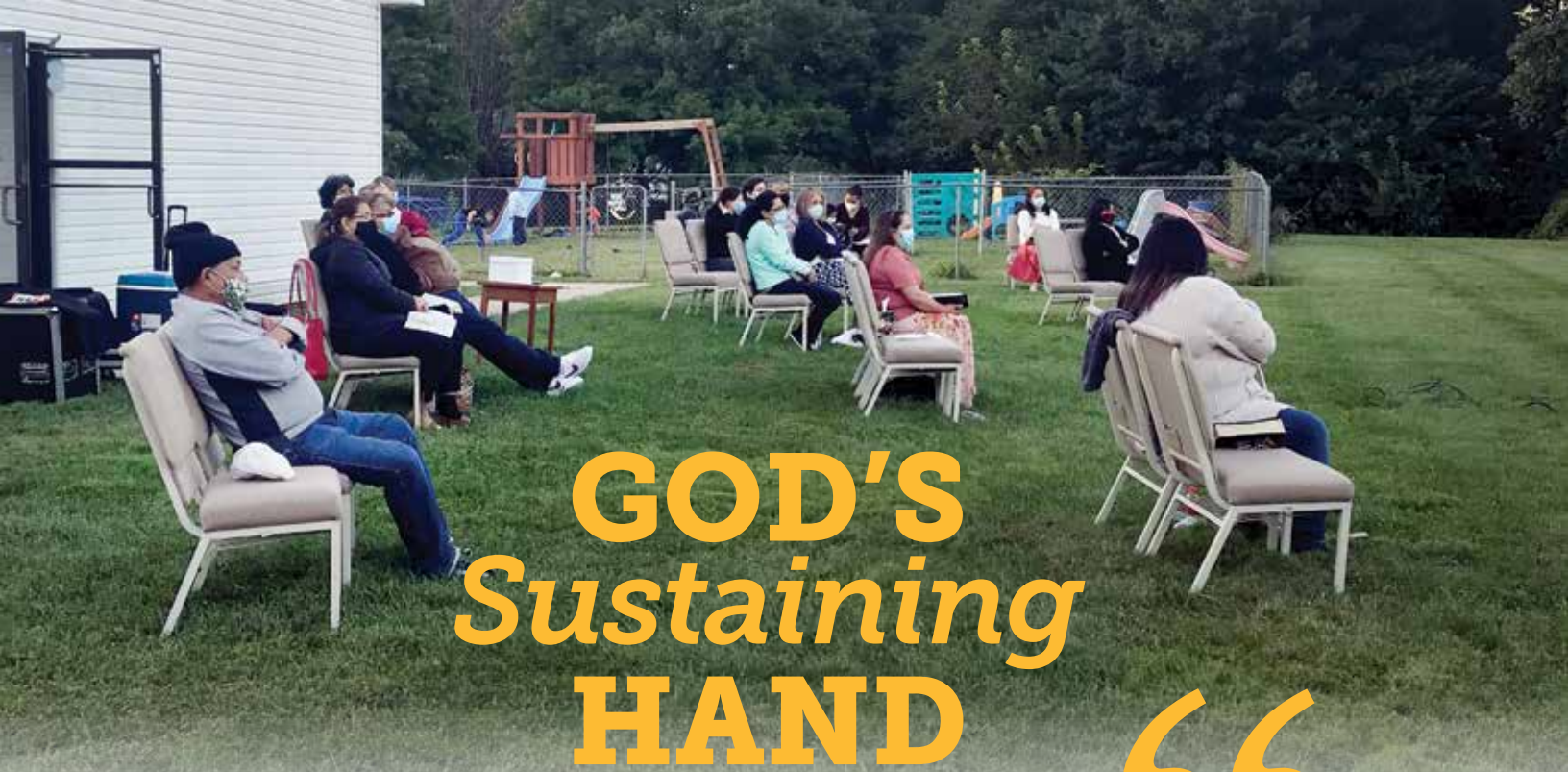
"In the middle of this pandemic, God opened a door for us to provide meals and food for some of our frontline workers. It's been a good season, in the midst of a difficult one. We have reverted back to phone calls, texts, and simple ministry." It works!

Many church leaders are identifying with Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:9, when he said, "...a wide door for effective work has opened to me...."

While many public meeting spaces have had to close, God has opened doors of opportunity around the world. ■

A family attends church from their car





GOD'S *Sustaining* HAND

Giovanny Ortiz was born in El Salvador and raised in a Christian home. As the son of a pastor, his first memories are riding in the back of his dad's pickup truck heading to church with his family. Growing up in a Christian home and having a pastor for a dad helped create the character he needed to walk in the same calling as his father.

Pastor Ortiz, his wife, Priscilla, and their son, Nicolas, are planting a church in Leesburg, where the Hispanic population has seen tremendous growth. The church plant, **Iglesia Bíblica Bautista Emanuel Leesburg** (IBBE Leesburg), is located in Northern Virginia, where COVID-19 infections have been among the highest in the entire state, especially among Latinos.

Being immunocompromised due to an underlying condition makes it even harder for Ortiz. Six-year-old Nicolas was born with a respiratory condition, so COVID-19 could be especially dangerous

for him too. Priscilla works on the front lines at the hospital treating people with COVID-19. To minimize their risk, the family decided to live separately for two months. Pastor Ortiz and Nicolas moved into their grandparents' home. "It was really hard for us as a family, and seeing my son crying and asking me why he couldn't kiss or hug mommy was even harder," said Pastor Ortiz. "A couple of weeks later, I lost my job. I felt bad, but this allowed me to do what I love full time, which is to preach the Gospel and help my community." He added, "Even though I was risking my life being among people with me being immunocompromised, this was the only thing that kept me going."

Financial stress came, but the Ortiz family continued seeking God's will for their family and ministry. The Lord used Pastor Jared Huntley of **Pillar Church DC** to bless the Ortiz family financially through the hardest moments. "I'm so grateful for him and his church and our partnership with SBCV," Pastor Ortiz shared.

“
Financial stress came, but the Ortiz family continued seeking God's will for their family and ministry.”

Doing ministry in this pandemic has been challenging for the Ortiz family, but they have seen God's hand sustaining them through it all. God is also at work in the church plant. Iglesia Bíblica Bautista Emanuel was able to reopen July 12, and Pastor Ortiz testified, "We are seeing new people come to Christ!" ■

THE *Traveling* CHURCH OF THE PANDEMIC



In March 2020, **CommUNITY Church of Salem** began displaying a banner on the columns of its now silent worship center reading, “The Church is not closed, it’s deployed.” We rejoice to report that this has not merely been a slogan but an apt description of the creative outreach of the church and its pastor, Tom McCracken, during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have mobilized for numerous creative ministry efforts in the spring and summer of 2020 — but this has been the mark of the church through the years.

Aiding the Community

The church began immediately ministering to the needs of the medical community and first responders locally. The SBC of Virginia was able to provide masks for distribution at several locations around the state, and CommUNITY Church became a distribution center. These face masks were given to hundreds who needed them in the area. The church even began delivering masks to additional areas of need.

Aiding the Public School System

When it was announced that the local public school system was planning a hybrid schedule (which meant children would be home some days each week doing online schooling), Pastor McCracken jumped to the aid of the school board. Having formerly served as an elected member of that school board, he knew the challenges of this plan for parents. McCracken volunteered his church to help and eventually was appointed as co-chairman of the Roanoke County Public Schools Community Day



“The Church is not closed, it’s deployed.”

Care Task Force. This task force, in conjunction with the SBCV and other non-profits, secured numerous local churches to serve as host locations for day programs, including daycare, tutoring, and weekday activities to help local families.

Creative Roof-Top Worship

When churches began outdoor drive-in services, CommUNITY tried a creative approach: roof-top worship. The physical layout of its property allowed the church to put a team of musicians and a preacher on the roof while the parking lot filled with people in cars hearing the Gospel being proclaimed. Families who lived nearby could also hear and, “each Sunday,” said Pastor McCracken, “several of the church neighbors would sit out on their porch, Bible in hand, and listen in. One of those neighbors told me that her stepdad began listening on the porch despite the fact that she had ‘tried for years’ to tell him about the Gospel.”

Restaurant Revivals

When the pastor heard that local restaurants were struggling, he decided this could be a Gospel opportunity. CommUNITY began a series of “Restaurant Revivals,” where they would go to a local restaurant, provide outside worship (with music and preaching), and order meals delivered to everyone’s cars. The group would even take up an offering, which was presented as a gift to the restaurant workers.

For testimonies of their outreach creativity, look no further than the front page of the *Roanoke Times*. In April, Dan Casey wrote about “The Traveling Church of the Pandemic” (Dan Casey, April 29, 2020): “Tuesday I attended the most peculiar religious service I’ve ever observed. It was outdoors, in the heart of downtown Salem. Congregants listened to the sermon over their car radios, like patrons at a drive-in movie. Meanwhile, gloved-and-masked restaurant workers scurried car to car

across a parking lot, taking orders and rushing take-out lunches to the faithful and hungry. A trio sang praise songs and each time they wrapped one up a chorus of honking horns burst into the air. Near its conclusion, a deacon in a polka-dotted face mask accepted donations from drivers, who deposited them into an overturned cowboy hat. All the proceeds of the collection—nearly \$1,000—went to workers at the Mac and Bob’s Restaurant. Welcome to the Traveling Church of the Pandemic.”

“One of the purposes,” said Pastor McCracken, “[was] to inject some sort of financial resources into these struggling restaurants. We can do a lot more than sit at home and lament that we’re hurting.” CommUNITY ended up doing six such Restaurant Revivals and has been a continual blessing in the area.

Perhaps a better name for the church would be “The Mobilized Church of the Pandemic.” To God be the glory! ■



Is the *Light* on in Your Home?

Since learning about Bless Every Home at the 2018 SBC of Virginia Annual Homecoming, Larry and Sue Mason, members of **Salem Baptist Church** in Crozier, have embraced this outreach ministry tool. Residents of a rural community in Goochland County, the Masons “adopted” their neighbors through Bless Every Home. Larry and Sue signed up as “lights” to receive daily prayer prompt emails with lists of neighbors in order to broaden their reach and pray for more families.

Larry explained, “Bless Every Home helps us to be much more intentional about keeping up with our neighbors. We now look for specific ways to pray for each family/individual and opportunities to minister to their needs in such a way

that it will lead to Gospel conversations. Our heart is to see God work the miracle of salvation in the lives of each one of our neighbors.”

For the Masons, blessing their neighbors was and is not always easy. It certainly requires a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit’s leading, their obedience and sometimes sacrifice, and stepping out of their comfort zone by showing consistent, genuine care. Sometimes Larry would ask his wife to drop him off some three miles away so that he could walk and pray for his neighbors all the way back home. He would simply pray, “Lord, these people need You!”

The Lord has certainly been faithful and blessed their persistence. Read the Masons’ testimonies of how the Lord has been at work in three of their neighbors’ lives.

THE ANNOYED NEIGHBOR:

One neighbor became annoyed with us because our dog was barking during the day while our shift worker neighbor was trying to sleep. The confrontation was

Larry and Sue Mason



considerably heated, and I was led to speak the truth in love. Of course, I was concerned that this would be a roadblock to us ever talking to him about spiritual matters. So, I kept walking by his house and would pray, "Lord, he needs You!" Several months later while the neighbor was mowing his lawn one day, he motioned to me to come closer. He shared with me that he was saved and recently baptized and was attending another local SBCV church. We have been friends since and help each other out when needed.

THE SICK NEIGHBOR:

We knew a couple on our Bless Every Home list as acquaintances and had invited them to join us at church several times. However, there was a definite wall against attending church or talking about spiritual matters. The husband was a quiet and gentle man, but the wife was much more guarded. When the husband was diagnosed with neck cancer, it was a time for us to reach out to them. I readily identified with him because I had experienced the same type of cancer seven years earlier. We knew firsthand the journey the couple was beginning. So, through weekly visits and telephone calls, we walked with them on their journey. During each contact, we prayed for the opportunity to share Jesus with both, but the wife was not interested and would say so. The day before his surgery, I called to see if I could visit, and I told his wife this was a visit to talk about spiritual matters. He was heavily medicated, alert but not talking. I told him I came to pray with him before his surgery and he nodded, "Yes." I prayed and

he seemed to be more at peace. I learned at the time that he was saved and a member of a local SBCV church. During this visit, his wife mentioned nothing about her church experience. Following his surgery, he was in the hospital and nursing home. He lost his ability to talk and eat. With his wife by his side, Sue and I cared for them by taking care-baskets weekly to the nursing home and, with two other neighbors, we took care of their yard and property. Sadly, he passed away. His funeral was held in his home church, and I was asked to give the benediction. Our friendship with his wife has become more like family today. In this growing relationship, she has shared about the wall she had built up against the church and God. In her previous marriage, her four-year-old daughter had died of leukemia and she could never understand why God had allowed such a tragic thing to happen. She never had more children. But with tears and prayers, she is beginning to heal. She has started attending the church where her husband was a member and has gotten involved by preparing food for church activities. Praise the Lord!

THE SAD NEIGHBOR:


We had been friends with the neighbors directly across the street for some time, but it was more of a surface friendship than a spiritual kinship. We talk about the Lord openly and often, so they knew our beliefs and spiritual disciplines. Each morning I get up at 5:00 AM to read my Bible and pray in the front living room. As I turned on the lamp in the front window one morning, my phone rang, and it was my neighbor

from across the street. She said to me, "Larry, I was waiting for your light to come on." My husband passed away during the night, and I was wondering if you could go with me to the funeral home to help make arrangements. Of course, I did, and we took the opportunity to minister to yet another widow neighbor. Her health also began to decline, and the Lord called her home too. An alcoholic daughter had come to live with her mom and now remains in the house. This was a situation we were not thrilled about, yet the Lord would have us to minister to her too. Sue will make and take her soup and transport her to the doctor and the grocery store. When we heard a knock at our front door, we were surprised to find that she had managed to cross the street and was excited to tell us that she had stopped drinking a month ago. Our prayer is that she will be able to withstand this addiction with the Lord's help.

The Masons are a lighthouse in their community. Bless Every Home has led them to be more fervent in prayer, to be willing to care for neighbors when needs arise, and to have an urgency to share the Good News of the Gospel. What an example they are for us all! But the real question we must ask ourselves is **how many of our neighbors are waiting for our light to come on? ■**

RESOURCE:

Learn how to become a lighthouse in your community, just like the Masons. Visit:

 sbcv.org/blesseveryhome



May 10, 2020, marked the 175th Anniversary of Southern Baptists establishing the Foreign Mission Board, now known as the International Mission Board (IMB).

Since 1845, almost 25,000 Southern Baptist missionaries have shared the Gospel, made disciples, planted churches, and planted their lives in 185 countries around the world. *Southern Baptists have had an uninterrupted witness among the nations for 175 years. No war, famine, or global pandemic has or will stop the Gospel from spreading to the ends of the earth or disciples from being made among all peoples, tribes, and nations. But Southern Baptists must not rest on the laurels of such a profound history. At the beginning of 2020, Dr. Paul Chitwood, president of the IMB, presented five new benchmarks, new goals to push the work of the global Gospel witness forward to the year 2025. Your church plays a vital role in this continuing work.



1.

Mobilize 75% of Southern Baptist churches by prayerfully and financially supporting the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® (LMCO) by 2025. Only about 50% of SBC churches report giving to the LMCO (100% of gifts going directly to the mission field). **Your church can GIVE.**



2.

Send an additional 500 fully funded missionaries by 2025. IMB missionary team leaders from around the globe say this is the number needed to fill the gaps and to push the work forward. With attrition rates (end of terms, retirement), this would mean that the IMB needs to appoint about 400 missionaries each year and needs about 1,600 people in the pipeline to go. **Your church can SEND the called out from among you.**



3.

Mobilize 500 global partner missionaries on IMB teams. These partners from around the globe will not be funded by the IMB but will be sent out *from* the nations *to* the nations and will be embedded in IMB teams. This will exponentially grow the missionary force. **Your church can PRAY** for the Lord to send out workers from the harvest back into the harvest.



4.

Engage 75 global cities in comprehensive strategies. Projections are that 80% of the world's population will be urbanized by the end of this century. Global cities are strategic in their global reach and connectedness, often as global business and commerce hubs. **Your church can GO** to reach the nations.



5.

Increase LMCO receipts 6% annually to sustain the 500 additional missionaries, or \$10 million growth per year for the next five years. "While that seems like a lot of money, it will only require that every one of the 16 million Southern Baptists increase their Lottie Offering by \$0.63 per year," Chitwood said in his January 2020 presentation. "Dividing by the number of Southern Baptist churches, every church needs to give an additional \$200 per year. No matter how you do that math, the point is, it can be done." **Your church can start now to GIVE, SEND, PRAY, and GO. ■**

Our vision is
more attainable than ever.

2020 GOAL

\$175
million

imb

LOTTIE MOON
CHRISTMAS
OFFERING®

imb.org/lmco

SBC OF VIRGINIA'S GOAL: 3.7 *million*



**MISSIONARIES
TO PRAY FOR,
POINTS
TO PONDER.**

*A weekly challenge to pray
boldly for missionaries
across the globe.*



Support your missionaries in prayer, visit

sbcv.org/52sundays

Compelled to Walk Inside

The Hill Church, launched just a year ago in 2019, is an ethnically diverse church plant currently meeting for worship in a borrowed space in downtown Roanoke. For its COVID-19 re-launch of in-person Sunday morning worship services, Pastor Charles Wilson had no idea how many people would come. After all, August 9 had started out like any other COVID-19-season Sunday morning for The Hill Church.

Across the Commonwealth and beyond, many church members have not been able to reconnect in person, much less invite visitors to church. But on this particular Sunday morning, God had plans to bring one young man into The Hill's worship service without even being invited.

Paul had just moved to downtown Roanoke from California days before and

barely knew a soul. Having felt drawn there for some reason, little did he know that God had a plan—a big reason! On his way to the gym, Paul walked past the building where the Sunday morning worship was taking place. Less than an hour later, he passed it again going the other way.

Paul says God pulled him back and he felt an inexplicable “compelling” to walk inside to see what was happening. There, Paul heard the Gospel and responded to the call of Jesus for the first time!

The next day, he met with Pastor Wilson for coffee and listened to the Gospel one more time. He completely understood and was resolute in his decision. Pastor Wilson spoke with him about obedience in baptism and what it looks like to be a growing disciple of Christ. Paul couldn't wait to be baptized, so a quick call went

out on social media for the church to gather the next night (Tuesday of that same week) at the Roanoke River for a baptism service!

In the weeks following his baptism, Paul would text Pastor Wilson regularly to ask when the next Bible study would meet. He has already gotten involved in several Bible study groups and is reading his Bible and learning more every day. Pastor Charles Wilson and The Hill Church are celebrating God's work with each guest and with each person who is saved! Pray for Paul as he begins his new life in Christ, and pray for many more to be drawn to hear and respond to the Gospel. ■



nextgen

BLOCK OFF
SOME

summer time

FOR THESE 2021
NEXTGEN EVENTS!

STUDENT
FUSION

**JUNE
22-26**

Bristol

FAMILY
FUSION

JULY 8-11

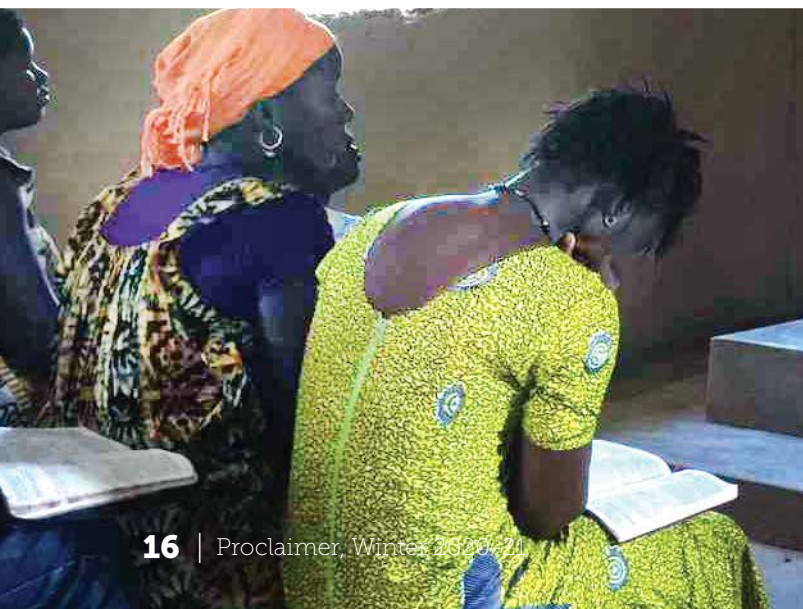
Lynchburg

JULY 22-25

Chincoteague

STAY TUNED FOR
MORE DETAILS:

sbcv.org/nextgen





Raised Up & Sent Out

Six-and-a-half years ago, on January 31, 2014, three missionaries from **The Camp of Faith Church (TCOF)** in Stephens City left their homeland to meet an unreached, unengaged Islamic people group in West Africa. Since that time, this church of about 80 members has sent 20 teams to reach this people group with the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the means of oral storytelling methods.

Spiritual Eyes Opened

Despite many challenges, God has revealed Himself by opening the spiritual eyes of a people group held in spiritual darkness for hundreds of years. Since 2014, 20 people have put their trust in Jesus Christ, a church was started in a neighboring people group, and the power of God has been shown. Demons have fled; old Muslim men have come to faith, and one has been baptized; deep, kindred friendships with Muslims have formed; and the name of Jesus has been proclaimed to people who had never heard.

A Passion to Reach a Beloved People Group

The Camp of Faith is now sending Whit and Kathy Case* and their children to serve full-time through the International Mission Board (IMB). Whit remembers as a little boy sitting in church thinking, “God, I will be a missionary, but never send me to Africa.” In His infinite omniscience and humor, God has sent Whit and his family to Africa. Kathy has had a passion for serving internationally since she was 12 years old, fueled by God’s Word and several international trips. Whit and Kathy have a passion to see the vision of Revelation 7:9 fulfilled—every nation, tribe, people, and tongue worshipping the Lamb around the throne.

After Whit and Kathy got married, they led TCOF to reach the church’s now beloved people group. At the same time, God continued to move their family towards full-time international missions. Whit and Kathy started the application process in 2016. They worked on seminary requirements and IMB requirements; had two children; remained active

in the church; led missions at TCOF and Africa trips two to three times a year; and worked to pay off their student loans. Through what can only be described as a miracle, in August 2018, the Cases sold their home and became 100% debt free! They never want to forget how God provided in every step of the process.

The Local Church

Whit and Kathy are passionate about the local church reaching the nations with the mission of indigenous church planting. The core of their family’s calling is reaching unreached Islamic people groups with the Gospel. With their time in West Africa and their love for Africans, it seemed natural to choose a job in Sub-Saharan Africa to serve full-time. The vision for their mission in South Africa is for healthy, reproducible indigenous churches to be started among the diaspora. Initially, they will be learning language, mapping the city, and forming strategies for how to reach the diverse people groups. They hope to equip and exhort the local African church, as well as serve the local churches in the States, as God uses us all to see disciples making disciples until Jesus comes back.

Preparation and Prayer

The Case family says, “Thank you!!” for your giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Cooperative Program! They thank God every day for your giving and His provision.

Please pray for God’s wisdom and discernment for the Case family, and for logistical things that must be done with visas and open borders. Pray for their family as they transition. Whit and Kathy are forming a network of prayer partners and would love to connect with you. Thank you for sending workers into the harvest! ■

**Names changed for security*

RESOURCE:

To learn more about partnering with the Case family, email:



dwebb@sbcv.org

FOR THE NATIONS

NOV -
DEC

Remember MISSIONARY FAMILIES

The holidays provide a unique opportunity to minister to international missionaries as they are often separated from loved ones. During this season, consider how your family, small group, or church can care for our sent ones.

Mission
Projects **2020**

sbcv.org/missionaryfamilies



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100% of your gifts support
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**North American
Mission Board**

If you happened to die today,
do you **KNOW** if you
would go to heaven ?

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—in the Bible.

It's actually very simple:

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

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

Believe that Jesus died for you and rose again.

"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." (Romans 10:9)

Commit to accepting Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

"For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

Claim His gift of salvation. Believe, and you will be saved. All that's left for you to do is to receive Jesus into your heart as your personal Lord and Savior. If that is your sincere desire, then talk to God from your heart. Here's a suggested prayer:

"Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and do not deserve eternal life. I believe You died on the cross for me. I believe that You shed your blood to pay the price for my sin, and that Your death, burial, and resurrection were all for me—to make me a new creation and to prepare me to dwell in Your Presence forever. Jesus, please come into my life, take control of my life, forgive me of my sins and save me. I am placing my trust in You alone for my salvation, and I accept your gift of eternal life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

A RETURN to Ministry

The pandemic is dragging on much longer than expected and is demanding much more of churches than we ever dreamed it would.

Since mid-May, Virginians have been able to gather for in-person worship at 50% capacity with proper adherence to CDC and state guidelines. Carrying out ministry in this mode has proven a challenge. Two questions churches are struggling with are (1) how to clean meeting facilities in a way that is efficient and sustainable for cost, time, and manpower; and (2) how to restart children's ministry.

Solutions

Coastal Community Church in Yorktown has developed solutions that are both sustainable and reproducible by most churches.

Coastal Community was planted in 2002 by Pastor Shaun Brown and a team of faithful co-laborers. Currently, it meets on three campuses in three cities with multiple services at two of its campuses. Jeff Frye (director of operations) and Michael Bard (associate pastor of family ministries) have both been central to Coastal's ability to operate well.

With three campuses and multiple services, many surfaces need to be cleaned every Sunday. All hard-surface, high-

touch items are manually wiped down by a team of volunteers. Their cleaning process is efficient enough to disinfect the worship and ministry rooms due to electric fogging machines (found on Amazon for around \$200). Their large worship center can be fogged in 10 minutes. With another 10 minutes for the room to "rest," it's ready to be used again.

In order to quicken the drying process and reduce wet surfaces, foggers were chosen (instead of misters). Trained volunteers and small group leaders have been trained in how to use them. Several battery-operated Ryobi foggers were also purchased to use in church vans and buses.

A hospital-grade, peroxide-free disinfectant is used by the church that leaves a pleasant citrus smell. HALT is the brand they use. Made by Spartan Chemical, it requires 2 ounces per gallon of water. Frye explained, "a church can use any disinfectant, based on their own needs and circumstances."

In-Person Worship

Coastal was among the first churches to resume in-person worship once it was permitted by the governor's order. The church exercised due diligence in complying with the state guidelines and recommendations in each reopening phase. They determined that not coming

back together as the body of Christ would have been more detrimental than any effect of COVID-19.

Children's Ministry Reopened

In July, Coastal began to offer nursery and preschool care for infants through five years old. This was made possible in part by the rigor and efficiency of their cleaning processes. It was also made possible by volunteers.

Bard and church leaders created a procedure manual before the children's programming resumed in order to train volunteers regarding the new processes for cleaning, health, and safety.

In August, first through third graders were welcomed back and met together in a large room, where they resumed LifeWay's Gospel Project video and teaching curriculum. In September, fourth through sixth graders returned.

Serving One Another

In the face of the pandemic, church leadership has modeled responsible action and church members have, in turn, responded with fellowship and a commitment to continue the church's corporate mission of serving one another and their community.

Helping Other Churches

Frye has helped over a dozen churches and ministries in the Hampton Roads area find solutions for their virus-related cleaning needs. If you would like more information about Coastal's cleaning process or about reopening a children's ministry, you can contact Jeff Frye or Michael Bard (see below). ■

RESOURCE:

For more information on the disinfecting and cleaning process at Coastal Community Church, email:



jeff.frye@gocoastal.org

For more information on reopening children's ministry, email:



michael@gocoastal.org



Worship Together and celebrate **WHAT GOD HAS DONE!**



November 8-9

Sunday - Monday

Details are subject to change



**The Heights
Baptist Church**

South Chesterfield

There are two ways to attend:



In-person
OPTION:

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Online
OPTION:

For those who cannot attend in person, watch the livestream! Pre-registration will provide the online option for viewing. Please note, there will be no voting for the online audience.

SPEAKERS



Paul Chitwood

President • International Mission Board



Danny Akin

President • Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary



Charles Billingsley

Teaching Pastor • Thomas Road Baptist Church



Bruce Frank

Lead Pastor • Biltmore Baptist Church



Allen McFarland

President • SBC of Virginia; Senior Pastor • Calvary Evangelical Baptist Church



Brian Autry

Executive Director • SBC of Virginia

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ANNUAL HOMECOMING

2020



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with a Christmas backpack.
sbcv.org/backpacks

Boxed lunches will be provided to all registered messengers and guests on Monday.

General sessions and select group sessions will be interpreted for the Deaf.

Due to restrictions, childcare will not be provided during Annual Homecoming.

Register today!

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Sharing THE LOVE OF CHRIST

A Year of Challenge & Triumph

2020

has been a year of challenge and triumph.

Although churches haven't been able to meet and minister exactly as in the past, the challenges have been a wake-up call for churches to get creative and do ministry in multiple and different ways. In Galax, members of **Midway Baptist Church** chose to focus on their mission rather than obstacles brought on by a worldwide pandemic. Their desire was for the church to serve as a light on the hill and to be a beacon of Christ's love and hope for the world and their community. But how could they do that when everything they knew was no longer an option?

Pastor Myron Dalton and members of the church quickly decided to go to online and parking lot services. Social media became a quick way to share sermons and communicate with the congregation and community. In addition, the church recognized there were

ongoing needs in the surrounding area and wanted to discover ways to meet those needs.

For the past three years, the church has served approximately 300 people once a month at the local soup kitchen. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, they were no longer allowed to continue this ministry. Knowing the food insecurities of their community, the folks at Midway decided to offer drive-thru community meals. They consulted with the local Virginia Department of Health to ensure they were complying with state mandates and serving safely.

The church wanted to share Christ's love and hope for the community through this ministry. Under the Virginia Safer at Home recommendations from the governor's office, they had to limit the number of volunteers for that first drive-thru meal. While the church could only have 10 volunteers on the feeding team, the rest of the church served by providing all of the food and supplies needed.

Their first drive-thru community meal was served on April 22, 2020, feeding 270 people in this rural community.

Midway has become a shining light of hope through the meals and through their generosity to the community. As schools prepared to open in Carroll County, Midway Baptist Church began organizing their own efforts to collect the school supplies that would be needed. They filled 200 backpacks and set up online registration for pickup to coincide with the August drive-thru meal. In this small Galax community that was already struggling before the pandemic, these school supplies were needed more than ever.

For Pastor Myron Dalton and Midway Baptist Church, they know and believe that these ministries are not only opportunities to shine the light and love of Christ—but these are opportunities to share the most-needed hope, and that is the Good News of Jesus Christ. ■



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)



To download prayer cards or to get more information on SBC of Virginia church planters, visit sbcv.org/planters



José & Andrea Mazariego
Church Planter
IGLESIA BAUTISTA GRACIA ETERNA

Meeting at:
Swans Elementary School
17700 Swans Creek Lane, Dumfries, VA 22026
Birthdays:
José (January 13), Andrea (January 3)

PRAY:

- That the Lord will send a pastoral partner.
- For my family and our health.
- That we can start a family network of churches.
- That the Lord will bless our plans and activities.
- That the Lord will give us wisdom and patience to understand His timing.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- We are in need of people who believe in the work we will be doing and who will decide to join our team.
- We need people to do outreach with us.
- We need people and churches to support us financially.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

ibdumfriesva@gmail.com



Charles & Tranay Wilson
Church Planter
THE HILL CHURCH

Meeting at:
434 Church Avenue SW, Roanoke, VA 24016
Birthdays:
Charles (April 7), Tranay (February 2)

PRAY:

- For our leadership team to grow in unity as we serve our city.
- For continued leadership development, specifically for elders to be raised up.
- For a strong worship team.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- Because of the economic challenges in the NW part of our city, we are in need of financial partners who understand the reality of planting churches in difficult places.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

thehillchurch.com
life@thehillchurch.com

A poster for the Blitz Christmas event. The top half features a photograph of three children in a wooded area; one child is blindfolded and holding a stick, while two others look on. The bottom half has a dark, textured background with the event title in large, stylized letters.

BLITZ CHRISTMAS

*An Interactive Family
Evangelistic Event*

December 12
GLEN ALLEN

December 13
YORKTOWN

sbcv.org/blitzchristmas



EQUIP YOUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADERS **THIS SPRING!**

A FREE training event with LifeWay
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over 60 breakouts equipping
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- SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH CHILDREN
- CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TIPS
- EQUIPPING VOLUNTEERS
- VBS TRAINING
- AND SO MUCH MORE!

MARCH 6, 2021
Midlothian

MARCH 13, 2021
Roanoke



SBCV.ORG/KMC



MOVING FORWARD: Finding Hope in Jesus

This summer brought many challenges to children's ministry, but it also fostered amazing creativity! When bringing children together became difficult and unsafe, our churches' summer event plans came into jeopardy.

One church that began rethinking summer children's ministry was **Staples Mill Road Baptist Church** in Glen Allen. *Moving Forward: Finding Hope in Jesus* began as a planning thought, which turned into a reality on Saturday, July 18. Families were invited to pile in their cars for a 45-minute drive-thru experience that focused on finding hope in Jesus during uncertain times.

The drive-thru trip included an entertaining skit, a missionary message, the opportunity to participate in family-fun music, and the presentation of a Bible-centered story. The Vacation Bible School leadership team, led by children's pastor Dustin McElduff, focused on showing Jesus' love and compassion to the families who came.

Laura Anderson's family helped serve by providing the Bible study portion of the drive-thru. According to Laura,

"This children's ministry event was a wonderful time for my family to serve together. In light of the uncertainty and hardships that are currently facing our nation and our world, working together to provide a message of hope through Jesus Christ is exactly what our hearts need."

The children of Staples Mill Road Baptist Church also served with their families in this Gospel opportunity. VBS team member Meghan Atkins shared it this way: "It was such a blessing to see families come together to serve the church body. I loved seeing kids participate in the skits and mission presentations as well as joining in to bring the lesson to life. It meant a lot to be able to provide an in-person event for our kids and remind them that we can place our hope in Jesus when we're faced with disappointments. I missed the hugs, but I hope the bubbles, cheering, and smiles from our volunteers warmed the families' hearts."

Although the weather was sunny and hot, the warmth of the Savior's love became the focus. Rachel Bryant, whose family participated in the event, gave



accolades. "What a wonderful morning of celebrating our Savior! Thank you to everyone who worked so hard (and in the glaring sun) to make this event happen. Our kids loved all of the different stations."

In the midst of a pandemic, SMRBC found a creative and safe way to allow children to come together with their families and see the Gospel in action. ■



Prayer & Fasting

Making Room for God's Presence

by Westly Yoder, Senior Pastor, Maysville Baptist Church

We would all say that prayer is powerful and, hopefully, we all want it to be a main focus in our churches, but I don't think I really understood the power of prayer until I went to the mission field. During my 10 years of service in South Asia, I learned a lot about the power of prayer. Surrounded by masses of lost people and seeing the zeal of other believers, the Lord helped me learn more about the power of prayer. I saw a greater desire to pray and greater devotion to prayer and fasting, and the many answered prayers that came from it. It totally changed my heart and devotion to pray.

The Lord called our family from the South Asian mission field in 2016 to serve as the senior pastor of our home church, **Maysville Baptist Church** in Buckingham County. I wanted to apply what I'd

learned about prayer on the mission field to pastoring my home church.

7 Days of Prayer and Fasting

In January of 2019, we felt the Lord leading Maysville Baptist Church to pray and fast for seven days. This was not something we had done before, and why it was for seven days, I can't tell you. In the first 24 hours of this focused prayer time, members of the body signed up for a specific hour so that we prayed together for 24 hours continuously.

Our focus last year was very broad. We set up seven prayer stations, starting with a focus on our personal walk with the Lord, then our work with the Lord, the church body at Maysville, our community, our state, our nation, and the world. Each station was filled with specific facts and statistics and prayer requests for how to pray accordingly. We then committed to pray together for

a week using a prayer guide. To break the fast, we joined together in a meal of celebration and excited expectation of joining God in what He was doing.

Answered Prayers

As we prepared to have another time of prayer and fasting in January 2020, we looked back and realized that God had answered many of our prayers. God allowed us to see spiritual growth in our lives, more love for each other, and greater unity in the body.

The Lord opened a door for us to minister in our community through the Good News Club at our local elementary school. He also gave us many other new opportunities to share the Gospel with people in our community. We were able to partner with other SBCV churches and lead out in reaching UUPGs (unreached, unengaged people groups) in South Asia.

“

We had no way of knowing a pandemic was coming, but the Lord knew, and He was helping us prepare for it.”

A More Narrow Focus

As we prepared for 2020, it was with great excitement and expectation for how the Lord might lead us. But this year, God led us to narrow our focus to our community. We only had four prayer stations this time that focused on our walk, our work, the church body, and the county of Buckingham. We either met personally with or talked directly to our local sheriff's office, county administration, health department, social services, school superintendent, and the principal of each school. This gave us the opportunity to get real-

time prayer requests from those in our community who face hard issues daily.

The statistics we acquired helped us to really see the issues that our community deals with and gave us a greater heart of love and compassion for them. We learned that our county has the highest rate of reported child abuse among the surrounding counties. This gave us great insight into how to pray.

We had no way of knowing a pandemic was coming, but the Lord knew, and He was helping us prepare for it. The time of prayer and fasting made us aware of

the issues that might be heightened during this time of crisis. It gave us better awareness of how we can pray and serve our community.

The time of prayer was also a time of renewal of the mind and revival of the heart. This helped Maysville Baptist stay strong during this time of not having a life-on-life community with the body. It has helped us to be flexible as we look for other ways to grow strong in the Word and reach the lost in our community. ■

95%

of all Christians have never helped lead someone to Christ.

17%

of all Christians know the meaning of the Great Commission.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”
Matthew 28:19a

Effective Prayer

“Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises.”
James 5:13

Maysville's Vision... to see a multitude of all peoples from Buckingham and beyond come to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

Maysville's Mission... to be used of God to raise up and deploy equipped, mature, and fully devoted followers of Christ for the sake of family, community, and global transformation.



A Passion Fueled by God

Donielle Yoder is a mother, grandmother, and pastor's wife who has a passion to help women in their time of need. That desire took her to the Pregnancy Support Center of Southside Virginia. God used her passion by fueling it into a mission that has impacted her whole community.

Recently, the SBC of Virginia was able to connect with Donielle to ask her about her ministry.

SBCV: What gave you the desire to work for the Pregnancy Support Center of Southside Virginia?

YODER: *I didn't come to faith in Jesus Christ until I was a married, parenting adult. My heart aches for my 18-year-old self who was newly married, had a daughter, desperate for connection, and who needed to hear the Gospel. God has used that heartache by turning it into a passion to meet and minister to others in their time of need.*

SBCV: What has impacted you the most since being at the Pregnancy Support Center?

YODER: *The people. I have a greater understanding of the people who make up my community. That understanding allows me to pray for them and to minister more effectively.*

SBCV: What challenge would you give to SBCV churches?

YODER: *I encourage churches to not only support Pregnancy Support Centers financially, but to consider getting involved through volunteer service. God's greatest desire is for us to love Him and love others, and Pregnancy Support Centers give us access to love those in our own communities. ■*

Donielle is the wife of Rev. Westly Yoder, senior pastor of Maysville Baptist Church in Buckingham, VA.



PEACE IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

FEATURING NICKI KOZIARZ
SPEAKER & BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

FIND OUT MORE AT SBCV.ORG/EQUIP

JAN 30
CHESAPEAKE

FEB 27
RICHMOND

MAY 1
DAMASCUS



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20 DE MARZO
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**London Bridge
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Virginia Beach

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and register at
sbccv.org/jenwilkin*

Visión y Propósito: Mantenerse Conectado

Vernig Suarez es el pastor de la Iglesia del Camino, el ministerio hispano de la Primera Iglesia Bautista en Norfolk. Como la mayoría de las iglesias hispanas, la congregación del pastor Suárez tiende a cambiar cada tres o cuatro años debido a la inmigración. La iglesia también se encuentra en una zona portuaria, lo que provoca aún más cambios con las personas que van y vienen. Sin embargo, Dios ha usado a Suárez para ayudar a hacer crecer la iglesia a una asistencia promedio de 130 personas.

El otoño pasado, la Iglesia del Camino experimentó un crecimiento espiritual y numérico. Estaban emocionados de ver a Dios trayendo nuevas familias con más personas participando. Cuando comenzó el COVID19, el Pastor Vernig sabía que necesitaba asegurarse de que su congregación permaneciera segura. Rápidamente cambiaron a una presencia en línea a través de Facebook Live, grupos de Facebook y reuniones de Zoom durante la semana. Pero el pastor Suárez pensó que la congregación necesitaba verlo y “estar” con él. Entonces, visitó a los miembros, los llamaba desde la entrada o el estacionamiento, salía de su auto para que pudieran verlo y luego oraba por ellos por teléfono. Pequeños gestos como este significaban mucho para los miembros de la iglesia.

“***Durante COVID-19, tuve que cambiar de método, pero no la visión y el propósito.***”

Los grupos de discipulado de la iglesia durante la semana tuvieron una asistencia constante y, lo más importante, los miembros participaron en compartir en sus plataformas de redes sociales lo que habían aprendido. Debido a los sistemas de discipulado que ya estaban en su lugar, explicó el pastor Suárez, “la iglesia ha estado unida y esperando estar junta nuevamente. La clave ha sido permanecer enfocados en la esperanza de la visión que Dios ha dado”.

“Queremos ser una comunidad de discípulos comprometidos con Él y Su Reino desde Hampton Roads hasta los confines de la tierra”, dijo el Pastor Vernig. “Como líderes de la iglesia, esto es lo que tenemos en nuestras mentes y corazones, y para eso trabajamos. Queremos que nuestros miembros regresen a Dios y se conecten con Él y lo obedezcan. Durante

COVID-19, tuve que cambiar de método, pero no la visión y el propósito. Por eso era importante ir más allá de Facebook Live y estar conectado por teléfono y a través de grupos.

La iglesia se hizo consciente de las necesidades de la comunidad. “Teníamos un grupo de personas que oraban intencionalmente por estas necesidades todos los días al mediodía, oraban por las personas que estaban infectadas con COVID-19, etc., y vimos a Dios respondiendo nuestras oraciones con gran poder”, dijo Suárez. “La oración ha sido la clave para llegar a la comunidad”.

“También hemos servido a nuestra comunidad. Hemos utilizado nuestras instalaciones para realizar pruebas de COVID-19 para la comunidad hispana en dos ocasiones diferentes”. La iglesia ayudó al Centro de Recursos Hispano, que trajo enfermeras del Hospital Sentara a principios de abril. Se hicieron pruebas a unas 150 personas y muchas familias que habían perdido sus trabajos recibieron cajas de comida. Hubo una segunda feria de salud a fines de Mayo y otras agencias de salud vinieron a explicarle a la comunidad los beneficios que podrían recibir. ¡Más de 400 personas asistieron!

Los sistemas de discipulado en la Iglesia del Camino ayudaron a los discípulos a conectarse con Dios y entre ellos, y las actividades de alcance los conectaron con la misión. El pastor Suárez cree que todo lo que ha sucedido es gracias a la oración intencional, y esta es su mayor inversión. ¡Financieramente, la iglesia solo tuvo que usar \$30 de su presupuesto para todas estas oportunidades de alcance! Dios proveyó a través del centro de recursos y las agencias de salud.

La cuarentena ha sido un momento para sembrar. Cuando la Iglesia del Camino abrió los servicios nuevamente, llegaron cuatro nuevas familias, personas que habían estado trabajando en las agencias y vieron cómo la iglesia servía a la comunidad. Otros visitantes vinieron porque habían sido atendidos por la iglesia durante la pandemia.

La Iglesia del Camino es un hermoso ejemplo de una iglesia que se ha mantenido enfocada en su misión durante esta temporada. Se han mantenido conectados con Dios y entre sí y han sido intencionales en servir a su comunidad para alcanzar a los perdidos con el Evangelio. ■

Vision & Purpose: *Staying Connected*

Vernig Suarez is the pastor of **Iglesia del Camino**, First Baptist Church of Norfolk's Hispanic ministry. Like most Hispanic churches, Pastor Suarez's congregation tends to change every three or four years due to immigration. The church is also in a port area, which leads to even more changes with people coming and going. However, God has used Suarez to help grow the church to an average attendance of 130 people.

Last fall, Iglesia del Camino experienced spiritual and numerical growth. They were excited to see God bringing in new families with more people getting involved. When COVID-19 began, Suarez knew he needed to make sure his congregation would remain safe. They quickly shifted to an online presence through Facebook Live, Facebook groups, and Zoom meetings during the week. But Pastor Suarez thought the congregation needed to see him and "be" with him. So, he visited the members, called them from the driveway or parking lot, got out of his car so they could see him, and then prayed for them on the phone. Little gestures like this meant a lot to church members.

The church's discipleship groups during the week had a steady attendance and, most importantly, the members were engaged in sharing on their social media platforms

“During COVID-19, I had to switch methods, but not the vision or purpose.”

what they had learned. Because of the discipleship systems that were already in place, explained Pastor Suarez, “The church has been united and expectant to be together again. The key has been to stay focused on the hope of the vision God has given.”

“We want to be a community of disciples committed to Him and His Kingdom from Hampton Roads to the ends of the earth,” said Suarez. “As leaders of the church, this is what we have in our minds and hearts, and that is what we work for. We want our members to come back to God and connect with Him and obey Him. During COVID-19, I had to

switch methods, but not the vision or purpose. That's why it was important to move beyond Facebook Live and to be connected on the phone and through groups.

The church made itself aware of the needs of the community. “We had a group of people intentionally praying for these needs every day at noon, praying for people who were infected with COVID-19, etc., and we saw God answering our prayers with great power,” Suarez said. “Prayer has been the key to reaching the community.”

“We have also served our community. We have used our facilities to do COVID-19 tests for the Hispanic community on two different occasions,” he shared. The church helped Centro de Recursos Hispano (Hispanic Resource Center), who brought in nurses from Sentara Hospital in early April. Around 150 people were tested, and many received boxes of food because they had lost their jobs. There was a second health fair at the end of May, and other health agencies came to explain to the community about the benefits they could receive. Over 400 attended!

The discipleship systems at Iglesia del Camino helped the disciples connect with God and to one another, and the outreach activities connected them with the mission. Pastor Suarez believes that everything that has happened is thanks to their intentional prayer—their greatest investment. Financially, the church only had to use \$30 of its budget for all of these outreach opportunities! Instead, God provided through the resource center and health agencies.

Quarantine has been a time to sow. When Iglesia del Camino opened services again, four new families came—people who had been working in the agencies and saw how the church served the community. Other visitors came because they had been served by the church during the pandemic.

Iglesia del Camino is a beautiful example of a church that has remained focused on its mission through this season. They have remained connected to God and to each other and have been intentional about serving their community to reach the lost with the Gospel. ■

Inspire

A word of hope, support, and encouragement

“

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” Colossians 3:2

A SET MIND: Being Rooted In Christ

The greatest hindrance to the body of Christ is the failure to have a “set mind” that is being rooted in Christ and the promises of God’s Word. We become a stumbling block to the work of Jesus, ourselves, and others when we fulfill Satan’s priorities and not God’s. This was evident when Jesus pointed it out to Peter, one of His own, as he fell into the trap of fleshly thinking and behavior (Matthew 16:23). Mindsets, be they heavenly or earthly, drive our behavior. One Old Testament believer, I think, who exemplified God’s expectations of a true believer, was Ezra (Ezra 7:10). Ezra was a student of God’s Word. A true disciple is one whose mind is set intentionally on being taught, intentionally on living what is taught, and intentionally on teaching what is taught.

Some key behaviors of Ezra’s walk were:

1. To set his heart (mind) on **studying the Word**—“study” here means to seek and spiritually consult with God for understanding.

2. To **practice the Word of God**—this is where too many believers deceive themselves. We may get the knowledge of the Word but fail to experience the supernatural work of the Word made manifest in our spirit. It’s a hallmark of the progressive sanctification process (John 17:17).

3. To **teach the word of God**—this is directly related to the call of the church today to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). We are to teach others about the marvelous works of God from His Word and from real-time testimonial occurrences. Teaching the Word of God is not a classroom setting per se, but “washing with the water of the word” (Ephesians. 5:26). We are to teach intellectually, interpersonally, and interactively with boldness and with complete dependence on the Holy Spirit (Acts 14:3).

Brothers and sisters, I pray that you will take heed of the call to get your “mindset” right with God and that His

mind be found in you, “...for we have the **mind of Christ...**” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Prayer: Dear Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. In Jesus’ name, Amen. ■

Love you all!



Milton Harding

Pastoral Relations Associate

✉ mharding@sbcv.org

FOCUS

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WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

virtual

HELPING LADIES REDISCOVER THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THEIR EYES ON JESUS AS THEY SERVE AND LEAD

This has been a very different year for everyone, including the SBC of Virginia Women's Ministry. Because of a global health crisis, the SBCV Women's Ministry was forced to do ministry differently, beginning with moving the leadership conference to a virtual format. Videos aired each Thursday night for multiple weeks. The theme was *Focus*, and our desire was to help ladies rediscover the importance of keeping our eyes on Jesus as we serve and lead.

We are beyond excited to tell you that each session is available online by visiting the SBC of Virginia's Women's Ministry webpage. There you will have access to over 18 videos (including some in Spanish!) with varying themes that will equip you to rediscover the importance of keeping your eyes on Jesus. We have also included handouts and teaching notes for you to use alongside the videos to equip the women in your ministries.

Here are testimonies from several of our women's ministry leaders:

SHIRLEY MURPHY

Women's Ministry Leader, Oak Grove Baptist Church, Virginia Beach

I count on Thursday night conferences as one of those blessings. The conferences have been on target, useful, and just what I needed. They have helped me to be a better leader in these changing and challenging times. I love that they are on Facebook, allowing me to watch them more than once.

SHARON PINKSTON

Women's Ministry Team Member, Kempsville Baptist Church, Virginia Beach

The virtual leadership conference has really helped me stay focused on what the speaker is saying. It's like having my very own conference at my home. Because it is virtual, I am able to go back and recap anything I may have missed.

VALERIE MCKEE

Women's Ministry Director, Alexander Baptist Church, Chesapeake

What a blessing it is to be able to view ALL of the planned workshops and to share these teachings with others! It would have been easy to set aside the hard work of these presenters; thankfully, that was not done. As a result, the Word is going forward! Thank you for continuing to find new and creative ways to pour into and encourage women leaders.

RESOURCE:

To view the sessions, visit:



sbcv.org/focus2020

SBCV's vision for women's ministry leaders is to offer training that will equip them to lead women on their teams. We pray Focus accomplished that purpose! ■

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Deep Water

by Marc Brooks, Pastor of Gethsemane Baptist Church, Richlands, VA

“This wasn’t a far-flung part of the country. This was my hometown. ...We desperately needed help.”

Like many pastors, I had some Disaster Relief (DR) training, solicited multiple special offerings for disasters in other parts of the country, and faithfully prayed for those affected by natural disasters. Deep water was about to shake everything I thought I knew about DR.

Rising water is not an extraordinary occurrence in this part of our state (Southwest Virginia). Water would often rise and subsequently fall. But on this particular day in February, the water rose and left parts of Richlands underneath the Clinch River.

This wasn’t a far-flung part of the country. This was my hometown. This wasn’t a line on a prayer list. These were my people. We desperately needed help.

The next two weeks were filled with many challenges and an uncertainty I had never experienced before as a local church pastor.

The first call I received was from Brandon Pickett with the SBC of Virginia. The discussion was about the overwhelming destruction of my hometown. I’m sure we discussed many different challenges and topics. We had only been a part of the SBCV for about six months. The only thing I remember about that call was the end. Pickett said, “Marc, you guys are not alone.”

SBCV’s DR coordinator at the time, Mark Gauthier, arrived in Richlands from Lynchburg. As we began to survey the damage, he was giving encouragement and guidance to our local leaders overwhelmed by disaster. He asked to pray with everyone involved from our mayor to a random man standing in the street pondering his next move.

We prepared to host teams of volunteers who had volunteered from all over the state to help us. A huge man named Ron Steele grabbed me and introduced himself as the team leader. He had an enormous smile, and his grip engulfed my entire hand. He said, “We are here, and we’re not leaving until the job is done.” I believed him.

I spent hours with the team at meals, devotions, job sites, and interacting with our community. Their positive and encouraging spirits were contagious. The team dealt with homeowners with compassion and their belongings with care. These families were not just projects to be completed but sufferers who needed love and encouragement.

Team members shared the Gospel with sincerity, prayed with homeowners, offered assurance, listened to their stories, and met their families. The team even went to the lengths of making sure one small girl whose home was flooded received a

Valentine’s gift. The presence of the yellow shirts was truly embraced by our community and celebrated by our church family.

Our soggy hometown slowly began to dry out and return to a normalcy we could not imagine at the time. The teams returned home and equipment moved to the next disaster site. Our church was left grateful for our partners and thankful to God. The support and investment into our community continued, thanks to the generous gifts of SBCV churches to our *Vision Virginia* Missions Offering.

I do my best to keep up with families who were impacted by the floodwaters. I try to remind them that they are not alone. We share a tie to a disaster and a love for those people in yellow shirts. My prayer is that we would also share a heavenly home because of the completed work of Jesus Christ. ■

PHOTO: The receding Clinch River retreats from Orange Street homes in Richlands, VA after two days of rain. Photographer, Andre Teague/Bristol Herald Courier

RESOURCE:

For more information on Disaster Relief and how you can get involved,

 sbcv.org/dr

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23 
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with **Dave EARLEY**



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CALENDAR 2020

NOVEMBER

- 8-9 Annual Homecoming, The Heights BC, South Chesterfield
- 28 Thanksgiving
- 29-12/6 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering & Week of Prayer for International Missions

DECEMBER

- 12 Blitz Christmas, Staples Mill Road BC, Glen Allen
- 13 Blitz Christmas, Bethel BC, Yorktown
- 24 Christmas Eve
- 25 Christmas Day

2021

JANUARY

- 15-16 Youth Evangelism Conference (YEC), London Bridge BC, Virginia Beach
- 28-30 Church Planting Assessment Retreat, SBCV Ministry Support Center, Glen Allen
- 30 Equip Women's Conference, Bethel BC, Yorktown

FEBRUARY

- 2 Young Pastors' Summit
- 23 Prayer Summit
- 27 Equip Women's Conference, Staples Mill Road BC, Glen Allen

MARCH

- 6 Kids Ministry Conference, Swift Creek BC, Midlothian
- 7-14 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and Week of Prayer
- 11-12 Church Planting Team Training
- 13 Kids Ministry Conference, North Roanoke BC, Roanoke
- 20 Equipada Conferencia de Mujeres, Richmond

APRIL

- 4 Easter Sunday
- 4-5/23 50 Days of Prayer
- 7 Walk for Life, Richmond
- 15-16 Disaster Relief ICS Training
- 15-17 Church Planting Spring Weekend
- 26-28 Leading Change Tour with Dr. Jeff Iorg
- 28-29 Until Every Child Is Home Tour



Editor's Letter

BRANDON PICKETT

✉ bpickett@sbcv.org

📘 facebook.com/brandon.pickett

🐦 [@brandonpick](https://twitter.com/brandonpick)



Reporting What God Has Done

From the very first time I did the announcements in junior high, I knew I wanted to be a news reporter or anchor. I really enjoyed reporting the highlights, announcements, and news of the day. This continued throughout high school, college, and into my first career. I didn't really see how this could translate into anything spiritual until a Bible verse jumped off the page during a time I was struggling with a call into ministry. I read Acts 14:27, "*Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and **reported** everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too.*"

What? There were reporters in Bible times? Oh, yes! Whether prophets or apostles or missionaries, God has used and continues to use ministry reporters all over the world. I love reading that when Paul and Barnabas got back to Antioch or arrived in Jerusalem, they "reported all that God had done with them" (Acts 15:4). I realized when I read these verses (and others) that I could move from reporting the day-to-day news of the world to the incredible, encouraging news of what God is doing. And this year may be one of the most incredible times of reporting I've ever been a part of.



“It has been amazing to hear and be able to relay to you story after story of God’s power, protection, and encouragement in the midst of one of the hardest and strangest years any of us can remember.”

It has been amazing to hear and be able to relay to you story after story of God’s power, protection, and encouragement in the midst of one of the hardest and strangest years any of us can remember.

In March, rather than focusing on the discouraging stories, we decided to highlight the “something good” stories. It was truly remarkable that when we turned our focus, God stories were everywhere! In fact, by the time you read this, we will have produced around 100 Not Alone Stories from pastors and church leaders all over Virginia—not including training, resources, and networking opportunities through Zoom and in person almost every week of the year.

I know that this year will probably always be remembered as the year of COVID-19. But for me, I will never forget how many times and in how many places God moved mightily and opened up new ways where there seemed to be no way (Isaiah 43:19). I’m so glad you have shared these stories with all of us, and I pray you will continue to let us in on what God is doing in your ministry.

RESOURCE:

Make sure to read the 2020 SBCV Ministry Report for many more stories of what God has done—and is doing!



sbcv.org/ministryreport

To view the many Not Alone videos and stories, visit:



sbcv.org/notalonestories

photo above: Dr. Autry shares with a Northern Virginia fellowship group some Not Alone Stories of what God has done.



*You are
not alone.*

PROCLAIMER

4956 Dominion Boulevard
Glen Allen, VA 23060

804-270-1848

www.sbcv.org

proclaimer@sbcv.org

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is producing
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weight of glory.”

2 CORINTHIANS 4:17, CSB