

PROCLAIMER

2021 | VOLUME 23, ISSUE 1 | Telling the stories of *Vision Virginia*

ARE
YOU

ready?

**Multiplying
in a Pandemic**

**You Will Never
Understand
Until You Go**

**New Ideas
New Times**



*You are
not alone.*

PROCLAIMER

Spring 2021 — Issue 1

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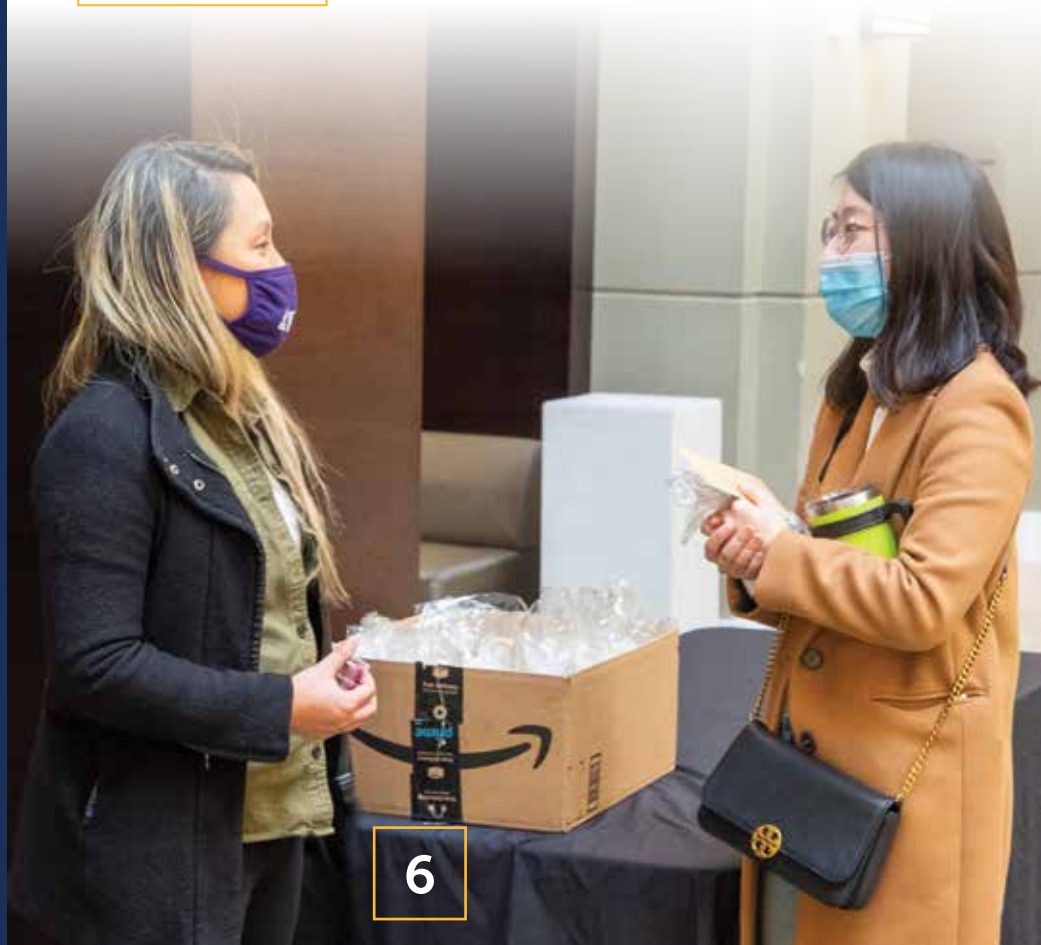
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HOW TO DEAL WITH *THE YIPS*

Executive Director's Letter

In some reading, I came across a condition I had never heard of before: "the yips." Just do an online search of "the yips" and you can read about how traumatic and life-changing it is for those who once mindlessly, successfully did a task they ultimately found debilitatingly difficult to do.

The term comes up most frequently in golf and baseball.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines "the yips" as, "nervousness or tension that causes an athlete to fail to perform effectively, especially in missing short putts in golf."

Mackey Sasser was a catcher who, after a home plate collision, began having difficulty accurately throwing the baseball back to the pitcher. Second baseman Chuck Knoblauch started having trouble throwing accurately to first base. Pitcher Rick Ankiel could not keep from throwing wild pitches, and Jon Lester, another pitcher, had trouble for years throwing the ball to first base.

The Mayo Clinic discusses this condition, which they describe as "involuntary wrist spasms that occur most commonly when golfers are trying to putt." But, as they point out, anxiety makes it worse as the athlete "becomes nervous and self-focused—overthinking to the point of distraction—that their ability to execute a skill, such as putting, is impaired."

Steve Sax, who suffered from "the yips"—the second baseman had 26 errors by the All-Star Break—would rebound to be the best defensive second baseman several years later. He credits his rebound to a conversation with his ailing father. His father told him it wasn't a mental block, rather a temporary loss of confidence—that he needed to practice being more confident and it would positively affect his play.

It makes me wonder if we don't sometimes get "the yips" in ministry. As followers of Christ, as ambassadors for Christ, and as ministers of the Gospel, the Apostle Paul shares with us that he did not lose heart. His confidence was grounded in Christ.

With 2 Corinthians 4 in mind, I would like to share three reasons we can press on with confidence as ministers of the Gospel and proclaimers of the Word.

We can have confidence because...

1. We focus our ministry on proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord.

"For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." 2 Corinthians 4:5

2. We find our strength in the surpassing power of God.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." 2 Corinthians 4:7

3. We fix our faith on the eternal future and not the moment.

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer

self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:16–18

Are you ready to press on in ministry for the Lord? Are you ready to share Christ with our neighbors and the nations? Are you ready to reach the next generation with the Gospel? Are you ready to minister to those needing help and relief? Are you ready to see the church you serve revitalize? Are you ready to send more missionaries? Are you ready to see the church multiply? Are you ready...? With our confidence in Christ, we can be!

I pray that God's Word will encourage us in these days. I pray that we will press on in the upward call of Christ. Praise God that He is our confidence!

You are not alone,

Brian Autry



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INVESTMENT IN ETERNITY

Discipling & Mobilizing Students



George Siler

George Siler has invested his life in the local church and specifically in those who are younger than him. As a faithful member of **Parkway Baptist Church** (Moseley) for the past 14 years, Siler has served as deacon chairman and as a small group leader. His passion is to see students disciplined and mobilized for the Gospel. Siler quickly began volunteering with students and, for the past eight years, has volunteered with the college ministry of Parkway under Mike Camire, Parkway's pastor for Next Generation Studentz and SBC of Virginia's Student Ministry strategist.

"[Siler's] heart for students and missions is truly contagious," said Camire. "God has used him greatly in the lives of student leaders—to encourage, challenge, and mobilize students for the mission of Gospel transformation around the world."

Siler extends his calling to his day job as student mobilization manager of the International Mission Board. Siler explained, "IMB Students is part of the bigger whole of the IMB, connecting and empowering churches to engage in the mission of God. We ask the question to churches, 'How do we help you to fulfill the mission of God with your students?'"

Siler believes that no church gets a pass. "We cannot lose sight of the Great Commission as our core belief and passion." Every church needs to be intentional about college ministry, even churches nowhere near a major college

campus. There are so many students online and at community colleges. "It simply takes an intentional investment. Churches need to be specific in their goals. Before they leave your ministry, the DNA of missional living needs to be planted in students as sent ones. If your bottom line is sending, then the smallest investment in the life of even one student can have eternal fruit."

Students can and should play a major role in reaching the world with the Gospel. "At the IMB, we are unapologetically focused on lostness...we cannot give up the footprint of evangelism and church planting. If you're not focused on those things, the other areas of ministry will lose their focus." The missionary task of entering fields of lostness through prayer and entry strategies, evangelizing, discipling believers, forming churches, and training leaders is central to the work of the IMB, and students have a major role to play.

"We need more missionaries," Siler exclaimed. "We need a pipeline of a new generation of missionaries for the next generation of missions. Every church can engage in this pipeline. A church might not be able to send a big team or a lot of money, but even the smallest of churches can send one person or be praying for who God would raise up from within their midst. Each church needs to ask how God has uniquely equipped you and your church to raise up the next generation for missions." ■

RESOURCE:

For more information on discipling, training, and sending students, contact your SBC of Virginia Mobilization Team:

 mobilizing@sbcv.org

or contact your SBC of Virginia NextGen Team:

 nextgen@sbcv.org





Pastor Kim and church members pray over the Hembrees

MULTIPLYING In a Pandemic

The word *multiplying* would not describe the average church during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet **Impact Church** in Centreville, VA saw that the power of a pandemic is no match for the multiplying power of the Gospel.

In January of 2012, church planter Brandon Hembree began praying and sharing the Gospel and asking God to start a multiplying church in Northern Virginia. “Ultimately,” said Hembree, “we wanted to multiply disciples that would form groups, and groups that would multiply more groups and eventually form a church that would multiply more churches.”

God answered prayer as people came to know the Lord and were discipled. The Impact Church family was knitted together with a vision of multiplying

disciples, groups, and churches for the glory of God. Hembree explained, “Throughout the years, we have seen disciples and groups multiplied to span through five cities in two countries. But we were still praying for God to use us to start more churches from within Impact Church.”

One of the leaders God brought to join Impact Church was Hembree’s friend, Terry Kim. In 2018, Kim and his wife, Jamie, stepped out in faith, leaving the comfort zone of their Korean-American church, to join this young, multi-cultural church plant. Hembree and Kim’s friendship grew deeper, and their hearts were connected even more when Kim was installed as an elder at Impact. They served closely together and even traveled the world to share the Gospel. The two friends have shared victories and struggles and have given each other permission to hold the other account-

able to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. Hembree affirmed, “I know Terry. I know his strengths and flaws. I see the power of God in his life in such a real way.”

In late 2019, God began to reveal to Hembree that, although he was the founding pastor, it was Hembree who should launch out and plant a new church from within Impact Church. Then COVID-19 came. Impact continued to see lives changed through baptisms and church growth. The church family embraced the call of God to multiply His Church by sending the Hembree family to plant a new church.

Hembree explained, “Everything at Impact is great. There is no reason ‘on paper’ to be leaving. There’s only one reason we would leave to do this...Jesus is alive! And He is worth losing all value in this life to see His name made famous among all nations.”

“We are excited to be a part of what God is doing...”

As Hembree and his wife, Ellen, prayed over what God was doing in their lives, they wondered, “Who will lead Impact when we leave?” But, Hembree shared, God revealed the answer. “Terry was certainly a person that I could hand leadership over to with no reservation or hesitations because I know his relationship with God, and I trust him with our vision.”

In October of 2020, Impact Church voted unanimously to call Terry Kim to be its next lead pastor. In November of 2020, under the leadership of Pastor Kim, Impact Church commissioned the Hembree family to plant a new church in Fredericksburg, VA.

Over the next 10 years, Fredericksburg is forecasted to experience over 70% growth. According to the Virginia Department of Transportation,

Fredericksburg and Stafford are the two fastest growing communities in Virginia. This is attributed to the fact that the Metro Washington, DC area continues to push south along the I-95 corridor.

Pastor Kim stated, “I don’t celebrate the pandemic; however, I do praise the Lord that amidst the craziness of this season, it has brought to light two things: the increased urgency for the Gospel and God showing that He cannot be stopped by a pandemic. What better way to fill in the need for the Gospel and act as a testimony for God’s faithfulness in a pandemic than to plant a church?”

Other churches have also come on board to partner with Impact Church to plant **Impact FXBG**. “We are excited to be a part of what God is doing through Impact FXBG,” said Pastor Adam Blosser of **Goshen Baptist Church** in Spotsylva-

nia. “We want to see the Kingdom of God advance in Fredericksburg and beyond.”

“When I started Impact Church eight years ago,” said Hembree, “I never imagined I would be the one sent out to multiply. However, God made it abundantly clear to not just me but our whole church. I am not planting Impact FXBG... our *church* is planting Impact FXBG. Fredericksburg needs Gospel-centered churches right now. The opportunity to reach influencers from our nation’s capital and state capital is exciting and a vision only God can accomplish.” ■

RESOURCE:

For more information, contact Pastor Brandon Hembree or Pastor Terry Kim:

 brandon@impactchurchnova.com

 terry@impactchurchnova.com



It's NEVER Been Better

“

*Now I want
you to know,
brothers, that
what has
happened to
me has actually
resulted in the
advance of the
gospel.”*

Philippians 1:12

*No power can stop the
hand of God, even during
a pandemic—pandemic-
baptism at Silver Lake,
VA. June 28, 2020.*

It's never been better!” This is not the typical phrase used to describe a year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, Pastor Daniel Tesfasselase truly believes that there has never been a more spiritually beneficial season for him and his church, **Emmanuel Eritrean Baptist Church** in Arlington.

Pastor Daniel is no stranger to opposition and difficulty. He came to the Washington, DC area several years ago due to religious persecution in his home country of Eritrea. Eritrea is immediately north of Ethiopia in northeast Africa. Many Eritrean refugees have now resettled in Virginia. Daniel is now able to reach more of his own people in the States than he could back in Eritrea. God has enabled him to plant Emmanuel Eritrean Baptist Church in Arlington and train future church planting leaders and groups in Harrisonburg, Woodbridge, and Washington, DC.

Emmanuel Eritrean Baptist Church has been hosting worship services by teleconference since the pandemic began. Seven of those recently baptized placed their faith in Jesus during the teleconference rather than at in-person services. While several of his church members (and even Pastor Daniel) have contracted COVID-19 at some point, all have recovered well. God even used the church's prayers for and ministry to a member with COVID-19 to draw her unbelieving husband to Christ.

“The pandemic virus will never stop God's servants from working for His Kingdom!” proclaimed Pastor Daniel. The church already has two more candidates for baptism, and Daniel believes God will give even more. He would like to say, “Thank you!” to his SBCV partnering churches for their support for him as a church planter and requests your continued prayers. ■





FEEDING THE HUNGRY DURING A PANDEMIC

SBCV Churches Feed the Hungry in Kenya

SBC of Virginia's network of relationships reaches around the world...

even during a global pandemic. In early March, Migori County in Western Kenya experienced widespread flooding. Within days, the world shut down due to COVID-19. Over the next weeks and months, food insecurity set in among the people of Migori County, and our IMB missionaries and SEND Relief stepped in alongside Pastor Oyoo Abiud of Rongo Baptist Church (Kenya) to evaluate the needs in the area. Tens of thousands of people were in great need.

In late August, Darren Davis, IMB's affinity leader for Sub-Saharan

Africa, contacted SBC of Virginia volunteer mobilizers, Pastor Pete Hypes (**Mission Community Church**, Chester) and Jim Davis (**Swift Creek Baptist Church**, Colonial Heights), with the need for support for a Send Relief Hunger project through Rongo Baptist Church. Within hours, SBC of Virginia stepped up to donate \$4,000 of Vision Virginia funds to feed hundreds of families. Each week, through our IMB missionaries and local partners with Rongo Baptist Church, food parcels of maize, beans, oil, salt, and more staples are being delivered to families with severe food insecurity.

The faithful giving of SBC of Virginia churches has supplied this need! Your gifts to Vision Virginia and hunger ministries of the SBC of Virginia make a global and eternal impact. ■

RESOURCE:

For more information on how you can help feed the hungry, visit:



sbcv.org/visionvirginia

or contact Brad Russell, SBCV Mobilization Team Leader:



brussell@sbcv.org



Darren Davis, IMB's affinity leader for Sub-Saharan Africa, talks about how missionaries continue to advance the Gospel during the COVID-19 crisis. For more information, watch the 2020 SBCV Annual Homecoming Sunday evening session, beginning at 36:16.



sbcv.org/homecomingreplay



Reach The world!

ESL

English as a Second Language

“

From one man He has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. He did this so they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us." Acts 17:26-27

In God's great sovereignty, He is moving many peoples from all over the world into the cities, towns, and communities of our SBC of Virginia churches. Many of these peoples, however, arrive with a great need: the need to learn English. English As a Second Language (ESL) ministry is an effective way for your church to get to know and minister to its international neighbors. Adjusting to life in the US is difficult, so helping these new neighbors learn to speak English is a great way to meet a real need and serve the community. ESL also offers opportunities for church members to share the love of Christ, develop friendships, and build

strong relationships within the international community. ESL can also be the ministry God uses for your church to reach with the Gospel the nations living next door.

If you would like to talk more about how to start an ESL ministry in your church or schedule a training workshop, contact Tom and Cindi Melvin, SBC of Virginia mobilization associates (804-536-2913 or tmelvin@sbcv.org).

God is bringing the nations to the doorsteps of SBC of Virginia churches. Let us be found faithful to care for them and share the hope and joy we've found in Christ. ■

LET US

Pray!

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER



May 6, 2021

If there were ever a day in the history of the United States of America that we need to pray and seek God for revival and spiritual awakening in our nation, it is today!

The National Day of Prayer (NDP) will be observed on May 6, 2021. The purpose of NDP is to mobilize unified public prayer for the United States of America. For 2021, the theme is *Lord, Pour Out Your Love, Life, and Liberty* from II Corinthians 3:17.

Since the first call to prayer in 1775, the NDP has been a vital part of our heritage. In 1952, a joint resolution from Congress, which was signed by President Truman, declared an annual National Day of Prayer. In 1988, the law was amended and signed by President Ronald Reagan, setting the NDP as the first Thursday of May. Traditionally, the current president signs a proclamation each year to encourage all Americans to pray on the NDP, and state governors and the governors of several US territories tend to follow suit with similar proclamations.

Although the 2020 NDP shifted to a virtual observance due to COVID-19,

it still carried a significant impact. Glen Lutz, Virginia's state coordinator for the NDP, shared, "The [2020] National Day of Prayer garnered 595,000 views online and had a television reach to nearly 1.2 billion households across the US, Latin America, and Europe through partnerships on a number of TV outlets. Radio networks reached just under 100 million households across the US. Despite the obstacles and challenges, [2020's] event reached more homes than ever before."

How can your church unify and mobilize public prayer for the 2021 National Day of Prayer? Mobilizing prayer can happen in your home,

your place of business, your church, a park, or a community meeting location. A national observance will take place at noon on Capitol Hill, and there will be a live broadcast from the Museum of the Bible that evening.

Build your NDP team, rally churches to gather for prayer, and begin to pray immediately for your pastor, your church, and your community to get involved.

Let's join together to seek God's face on the...

**National Day of
Prayer, May 6, 2021 ■**

For more information on how you can build a National Day of Prayer team or how you can:

- register to be a prayer coordinator
- find promotional resources
- find group studies and prayer curriculum
- post your prayer event

 nationaldayofprayer.org

To contact an NDP representative for more information, email Glen Lutz at:

 glenkay64@gmail.com

There is *hope* for your church!



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May 20 • Appomattox
May 21-22 • Bluefield

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and the SBCV Women's Ministry Team

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Our theme
**PEACE IN TIMES
OF UNCERTAINTY**

Breakout notes to accompany each session
are available for download on the website.



WOMEN'S
MINISTRY

Don't miss our in-person Equip!
MAY 1, 2021
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
DAMASCUS

Soul Care

Honoring Your Pastor

How can your church rejuvenate your pastor after 2020? One way that multiple SBCV churches have sought to honor their pastors and create a margin for reinvigoration is by providing a sabbatical, an intentional season of rest, for their pastors. **Hampton Roads Fellowship** in Newport News walked through this process with its pastor, Miguel Davilla.

Pastor Davilla recalled, “I was entering the seventh year of pastoral ministry, after first planting the church in 2013, and I was beginning to lose my joy in my calling as a pastor.” After a difficult 2019, marked by some conflict in the church and emotional burdens that continued to weigh on him, Davilla knew he needed time to rest. In the normal routine and pattern of pastoral ministry, rest does not come naturally.

To pastors feeling that they need a sabbatical, Davilla would say, “The first thing you need to do is share that with your spouse and with your fellow elders. Make sure you have their support and have them also help you design how your sabbatical needs to look and how that will be communicated to the congregation.”

The elders of Hampton Roads Fellowship rallied around their pastor. They readily expressed their gratitude for his hard work and acknowledged the need for intentional time off. With Davilla, they put together a plan for a

two-month sabbatical that turned into a three-month sabbatical.

What did he do on his sabbatical? While COVID-19 restrictions limited his options, Davilla sought intentional rest by taking care of himself. He took a trip to spend some time with a close friend in Philadelphia who took time to minister to him and his soul. Pastor Davilla reflected, “It was good to get away from the normal stress here locally, and spending a week just talking over my soul and emotions was extremely helpful.” In addition to soul care, he spent time getting back into some habits of physical exercise. Pastor Davilla’s sabbatical was originally scheduled for two months, but the elders decided that three months (90 days) would be more appropriate, an extension for which Davilla remains thankful.

If you are a church leader, consider offering a sabbatical for your pastors. Pastor Davilla would advise churches, “Please support your pastors by giving them the time off they need so they can focus on their own soul and health and, as a result, that will pay dividends in benefiting the congregation for years to come. It is far easier to give a pastor a sabbatical for a few months than it is to find a new pastor after he has experienced burnout.” ■

RESOURCE:

For more information on how your church can care for and honor your pastor, contact Jeff Mingee:



jmingee@sbcv.org



Pastor Search:

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

In the business world, those tasked with filling job vacancies typically look for the best-qualified candidate to hire. When a church finds itself without a pastor, the search committee is not typically just looking for qualified candidates. They are looking for the man whom God has uniquely called and equipped to shepherd their congregation at that given time. That is both a tall order and a seemingly overwhelming task. The dynamics of a single-staff church being without a pastor put an even greater strain on the lay leaders of the church during the transitional period.

Such was the case in September 2019 when **Island Baptist Church** on Chincoteague Island was in need

of a pastor. As he had before, deacon chairman Jimmy Holloway reached out to the church's SBC of Virginia regional catalyst, Mark Custalow, who was able to walk alongside him and the church during this time and also serve as interim pastor. The beauty and benefits of Gospel partnership ensured that the body at Island Baptist Church knew it was not alone in its time of need.

Holloway is a self-employed business owner who works 50-60 hours per week. He suddenly found himself at the helm of two entities—his business and his church. This went on for 12 months, more than half of which were during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Between ministry tasks, daily decisions, and tending to the flock, Holloway shared, "Sometimes it was a little

overwhelming. I felt that our church was just surviving, and that was all I could hope for. But I think my biggest concern was that I didn't feel equipped to spiritually lead the church. That's what I lost the most sleep over."

This was not the first time Holloway had led Island Baptist through a period without a pastor. On two such occasions, the church had interim pastors (including this time). "They freed up my thoughts and my time to know the flock was being fed and allowed me to concentrate on the search for a pastor," said Holloway. He also received trust and support from the church family, which made a significant difference.

One of the services offered by the SBC of Virginia was pastor search team training. Holloway described it as "a huge help."

“*When a church finds itself without a pastor, the search committee is not typically just looking for qualified candidates. They are looking for the man whom God has uniquely called and equipped to shepherd their congregation at that given time.*”

When asked about the top three keys to the successful selection of a pastor, he confidently noted, “Prayer, prayer, and more prayer. Without prayer, this enormous task would be impossible. God’s got a family whom He wants to serve our church, and that man and his family could be anywhere in the world. We asked our church to pray daily for our church, for each search team member, and for the man God had already picked for us.”

While Island Baptist Church was navigating its transition, God was already at work in the life of Phil and Rachel Bennicoff and their three children. The Bennicoffs had been married for 16 years and had been serving in vocational ministry for 14 years. A little more than eight years ago, God led them to uproot

and journey to Farmington, UT in the heart of Mormon country to plant LifePoint Church.

They went with the intention of never leaving Utah or the church they went to plant. However, in their eighth year, after successfully establishing a vibrant church, God began to speak to Phil and Rachel through His Word, prayer, godly counsel, and circumstances. He was preparing them for a new ministry assignment. On the job board at sbc.net, Phil found the listing prayerfully placed by the pastor search team at Island Baptist Church in Chincoteague. That was the moment God’s work through the pastor search team and His work in the Bennicoffs converged.

Bennicoff’s résumé was one of more than 70 that the pastor search team received. The work of narrowing their pool of candidates down to a single man was bathed in intense prayer. At the same time, the Bennicoffs were praying for God’s will to be revealed to them and to the search team as well. Phil and Rachel both prayerfully completed questionnaires, online assessments, and participated together in a Skype interview. They indicated that it was refreshing and assuring for Rachel to be included in the interview process. The search team believes the information they received from the candidates’ wives helped them tremendously as they narrowed their search to their selected candidate.

Once their candidate selection was made, the search team extended an invitation for the Bennicoff family to make a cross-country trek to spend a weekend on the

island. The team planned a fun few days that afforded times of warm fellowship, informative interaction, and worship.

Bennicoff shared, “We fell in love with both the community and the church very quickly.” Over the course of the weekend, Phil and Rachel, the search team, and the church body found the answer to all they had prayed for—God had called and prepared the Bennicoffs to come to Chincoteague Island, where Phil would serve as the pastor of Island Baptist Church.

Through God’s providence, a church seeking the man God had called and a family trusting God’s call found each other. Though overwhelmed at times in the process, both parties exercised their faith in the God who had heard their prayers and had ordered their steps. The Bennicoffs arrived in September 2020. Together, with the church family, they are faithfully fulfilling the mission of God in their community. ■

The Bennicoff family



NOT ALONE

PODCAST

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Conversations and stories intended to strengthen, challenge, and encourage. Made possible through the media arm of the SBC of Virginia, Innovative Faith Resources.

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:

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"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)

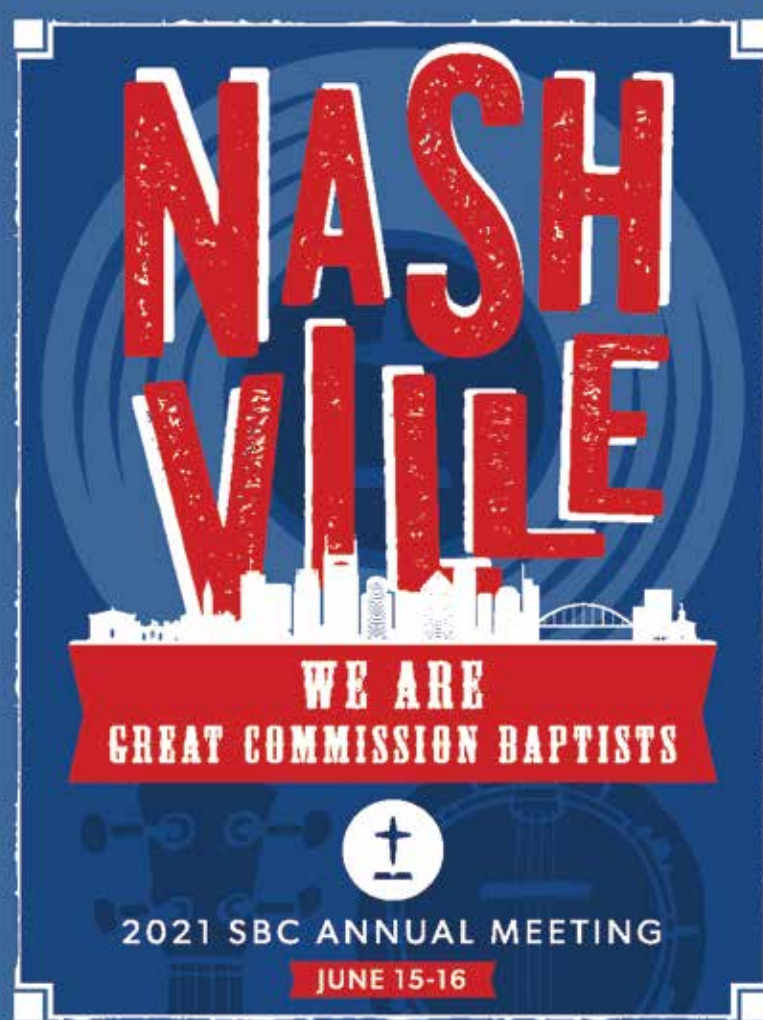
Commit to accepting Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

"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."



JAPAN²⁰²¹ MISSION

IN TOKYO, JAPAN

July 20 - August 10, 2021

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- assist with church planting
- be involved in outreach at the Olympics*

**Even if the games do not allow spectators or if they are canceled, you are still invited to be on mission in the largest city in the world.*

For more information, visit:

sbcv.org/japan2021

Not FOR THE FAINT OF HEART

Transitional Pastor Ministry

In August 2020, the SBC of Virginia hosted a two-and-a-half-day Transitional Pastor Training. This specialized training prepared experienced pastors for how to lead a church through a transition. Normally, when a church loses its pastor, a pastor search committee is quickly formed to begin the process of finding a new pastor. In the meantime, they often call an interim pastor to stabilize the church by filling the pulpit each Sunday. But there are some situations in which the church has been through a difficult time (decline in attendance, struggle with inner conflict, losing sight of its mission, etc.) and is not ready to call a pastor. This is a church that would benefit from a transitional pastor.

This kind of pastor is prepped and ready to lead the church family through a very important and strategic time. His role is not only to shepherd the flock but to guide them through a healing process—to identify specific issues that have impacted the church and help resolve them. The main objective of a transitional pastor is to prepare the church for its new pastor.

Henry Webb from LifeWay, along with Dave Bounds, Steve Bradshaw, and Darrell Webb from SBCV, led the training weekend. They emphasized that transitional pastor ministry is not for the faint of heart. This is a critical time for these churches, and they need someone who can give an objective view of their strengths, weaknesses, and changes needed. Eight pastors were trained and equipped at the 2020 Transitional Pastor Training. From that group, Leroy Davis, pastor of **Hopeful Baptist Church** Montpelier, shared this encouragement with Steve Bradshaw:

Steve, I want to say again how much I appreciated the Transitional Pastor Training this week. Dr. [Henry] Webb is so good and such an amazing individual. But the SBCV guys are no slouches. I gained a new appreciation for David, Darrell, and you... I am so proud to be associated with the SBCV. I wish this relationship would have started years ago.

Transitional Pastor Ministry is greatly needed for the revitalization of many churches. Churches that were once spiraling down due to a history of conflicts and forced terminations will reverse their direction and begin to grow again. Whether you are a church that needs a transitional pastor or a pastor/retired pastor who senses God is calling you into this ministry, now is the time to respond to the voice of the Great Shepherd! We have plans to provide access to the training sessions online this year. ■

RESOURCE:

For more information on the Transitional Pastor Ministry, contact Steve Bradshaw:



sbradshaw@sbcv.org



Mission Projects 2021

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **FOR GOOD WORKS**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

EPHESIANS 2:10

What are we *for* as followers of Christ? **Mission Projects** provide opportunities for families, small groups, and churches to engage their community and serve others *for* the glory of God.

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You Will Never Understand Until *You Go!*

On Monday night, August 31, 2020, nearly four inches of rain quickly fell in the mountains of Buchanan County. As the water from the torrential rains rushed toward the residents below, it brought with it mud, rocks, and debris. The water came with such force, it pushed houses off of their foundations, washed out roads and bridges, and left many stranded with no utilities.

"I heard the thump of a couple of rocks rolling, and as I looked, it was like a river of chocolate milk coming down the mountain," Tim Ramey said as he recalled that night. Ramey's driveway and many of his belongings were washed away, his vehicles were totaled, and his house was filled with the muck of rocks, silt, and water. There were many like him, waking up to the reality of devastation and loss. Over the next couple of days, a steady flow of people and organizations came to assess the damage and film the story. For many homeowners, there were only waves of helplessness and hopelessness.

By mid-week, SBC of Virginia Disaster Relief (DR) team members from across the state were preparing to come to

Southwest Virginia. Partnering with Pastor Shea Shrader of **Harman Memorial Baptist** (Grundy) and Pastor Eric Fannin of **Vansant Baptist** (Vansant), SBCV DR made arrangements for the relief teams to stay at Vansant Baptist Church. The following Monday, September 7, just one week after the downpour, folks in Grundy were beginning to see a steady stream of yellow shirts and long hard days of mud-out.

While the Lord doesn't send downpours or cause damaged homes to crush or destroy people, He does use them as opportunities for the Gospel and His glory to be displayed through the Church as His hands and feet.

"You see these events on TV, you see the chaos, you see what the cameras want you to see. You can walk away and say, 'That looks really bad,' and go pop open a Coke, have a burger, and not even think about it the next day. But then you come on a trip like this and see someone's life altered like this," SBCV DR team member Jeff Slaughter shared with emotion. "And when God gives you the opportunity and the privilege to be His hands and feet, to love on these people and help...you will

never understand what it is like until you go do it."

Team member Pete Covell explained that it is tough when people have an earthly disaster but that it is a joy to come and encourage and help. But the most exciting thing, he said, is being able to see folks come to know the Lord as the team shares the love and Gospel of Christ with them.

Thanks to the partnership of churches that make up the SBC of Virginia, the residents of Grundy are **Not Alone** in the aftermath of downpours and mudslides. Instead, they experienced showers of blessings.

"There have been a lot of people to come and take pictures," said Buchanan County resident Ralph Ratliff, "but your organization is the only one who has actually done anything and who cares about the people. I prayed for help, and I got help." ■

RESOURCE:

To find out more about SBCV's Disaster Relief, visit :

 sbcv.org/dr

52 SUNDAYS

Share the stories behind each dollar given through your church.

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Get a better grasp on what God is doing with giving through the Cooperative Program.



Share the stories of missionaries locally and in remote areas whom your church is supporting.



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Download resources for each story directly to your computer to share with your church. Each week offers a short missionary story plus devotions written by SBCV pastors.



Whether at a podium on Sunday or on a couch in a small group, share these stories to connect Cooperative Program giving with missionaries in the field.



Pictured are just two of the many missionaries who have been able to share the Gospel through the generous support given through your Cooperative Program giving.

Share these stories with
your congregation in 2021!

Visit sbcv.org/52sundays to get started.

New Ideas

NEW TIMES



View this Not Alone story with Randy Aldridge at: tinyurl.com/randyaldrige

Richard Bates was baptized outside of Hillcrest Baptist Church during the drive-up 2020 Easter service. He was one of many who proclaimed the decision to follow Jesus Christ during the pandemic.



“At a time when circumstances are forcing us apart, these ministries are bringing us together.”

In recent years, **Hillcrest Baptist Church** in Ridgeway, VA has dealt with many new things, bringing both excitement and concerns. But God's provision through unforeseen circumstances has ushered praise back to Him.

In the fall of 2019, Hillcrest called Randy Aldridge as its new pastor. After 15 years serving on the staff of the SBC of Virginia, Aldridge felt God reveal his desire to shepherd a local church and open his eyes to the potential at Hillcrest. “I felt called to prepare the church for the future through progress and discipleship. I believed that I could help them,” he explained. Pastor Aldridge brought his background in church planting, pastoral ministry, and evangelistic leadership to the 50-year-old church located just outside of Martinsville.

In the past few years, Hillcrest faced new but anticipated challenges. The church needed to modernize its ministry in many ways, raise up new leaders, and reach a changing community. For years, Hillcrest has served as a lighthouse of active ministry in Henry County, but the area had begun to face economic, cultural, and population shifts. And then came their greatest challenge—the COVID-19 pandemic.

Led by Pastor Aldridge, Hillcrest has risen to the occasion in exciting ways. Beginning in March 2020, the church developed a media team to record or live-stream worship services, Sunday School classes, Bible studies, and other programs and post weekly to its website and social media forums. When services had to be moved solely online for an extended period of time, the church formed a technology team to help members get online and watch services. In the process, they were able to help many in the community with various technical issues, providing a lifeline while so



many were confined to their homes. Once folks were able to get out of their homes, the church expanded its on-campus technology capabilities by modernizing the church phone and internet systems and providing internet access for each classroom. The technology team has worked diligently to make sure everyone in the church is connected.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a terrible situation,” said Pastor Aldridge. “But it has opened doors of ministry. In fact, I’m excited about the new opportunities.” These opportunities have included:

- making **face masks** for medical professionals in the area (the church discovered that home health nurses and medical facilities that were not part of a larger network had fewer resources)
- starting a **new feeding ministry**—with church members donating dozens of eggs and making soup to put in sealed containers for delivery



- low-risk members of the church helping high-risk members with **grocery store and/or pharmacy runs**, then making contact-less deliveries to them

- developing **partnerships with local schools** as resource partners

- purchasing the **Christmas wish list** items for 23 foster kids in the area

- providing complete **Thanksgiving meals** for local families in need

God is taking care of Hillcrest and providing abundantly even in this unusual pandemic season. Hillcrest has even seen a financial surplus for the year, which is being reinvested in ministry.

“At a time when circumstances are forcing us apart, these ministries are bringing us together,” Pastor Aldridge concluded. “We have a goal that the new ministries begun during this very challenging time will continue to operate once the pandemic is a distant memory.” ■

nextgen

LUKE 14:23

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

2021



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FOR FAMILIES

Family Fusion

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sbcv.org/familyfusion2021

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.



Christopher & Tiffany McCullough
Church Planter
AMAZING GRACE CHURCH

Meeting at:

To be determined

Birthdays:

Christopher (December 10), Tiffany (June 29)

PRAY:

- That God will send laborers as well as the lost.
- That those who are hurting will find courage to connect with us and that they will find hope in Christ.
- For resources to host Sunday gatherings, including children's ministry supplies, AV equipment, and print material.
- That as we prepare for our core team meeting, pray for wisdom and direction so that God may be magnified in every way.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- We are praying about and seeking financial partners as well as mission partners who can serve with us within Ivy City.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

christopher@amazinggracedc.org



Josh & Racheal Weatherspoon
Church Planter
THE WAY CHURCH

Meeting at:

The Place at Innsbrook

4036 Cox Rd, Glen Allen, VA 23060

Birthdays:

Josh (May 6), Racheal (January 12)

PRAY:

- For this church to be a disciple-making, church-planting church.
- For leaders to be raised up and equipped for the work of the ministry.
- For the Gospel to spread to the nations through this church.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- Become a key member of our prayer team.
- Invest in this Gospel-advancing work through a financial partnership.
- Become a church who partners by providing occasional resources and manpower.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

josh@thewaychurchrva.com



MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL: Interns

Has your church considered partnering with the SBC of Virginia to offer an internship within your children's ministry?

In its 10 years of ministry, **Crosslink Community Church** in Rockingham, VA had utilized interns in several ministry areas prior to 2019 but none in children's ministry. In 2019, Crosslink's student pastor, Marty Terrell, attended the ministry fair on the campus of Liberty University in hopes of identifying a summer 2020 intern for Crosslink's student ministry. While there, he was approached by student Allison Webb (now a Liberty University alumna), who was interested in a children's ministry internship. The rest, as they say, is history.

The children's ministry at Crosslink was serving approximately 150 children every Sunday. Chris Smith, pastor of family and community outreach, recalls thinking that the children's ministry could certainly benefit from an extra set of hands; however, that's not the goal of an internship. The priority for Smith was growth, "...an internship would allow [Webb] the opportunity to be challenged, to learn, and to grow while

being mutually beneficial to the ministry as we seek to minister to children and their families in our community."

Like all aspects of ministry during 2020, the responsibilities and ministry involvement of the internship were fluid and constantly changing due to the pandemic and its subsequent impact to churches around the state.

The Lord used Webb in a mighty way over the course of her 10-week internship but especially through Summer Splash, a pandemic-friendly VBS-type event developed and coordinated largely by Webb.

Jeff, a dad of two girls, told Pastor Smith at the end of the summer: "My wife and I are so thankful for Allison and her heart for pointing kids to Jesus. The love she showed for our daughter as she led her to the Lord during Summer Splash cannot be overstated. We are forever grateful for her ministry at Crosslink this summer!" His daughter was one of 22 who made decisions for Christ during Crosslink's Summer Splash event.

Reflecting on the internship, Webb shared, "This past summer, the Lord used my internship to further shape

me for the ministry He called me to and to see the lives of children changed by the Gospel. I am so grateful for the opportunity to learn from the team at Crosslink, who have a passion for the Lord, for the church they shepherd, and for the community they serve."

Throughout Scripture, God shows us the importance of partnering in the work of the Gospel as well as pouring into the next generation. When asked about the benefit of a children's ministry intern, Pastor Smith responded, "In the midst of a pandemic when everything seemed different and unpredictable, one thing is for certain—the Lord used our intern, Allison Webb, to advance the Gospel and to grow His Kingdom here in the Shenandoah Valley. I can't imagine a stronger case for considering a ministry intern than that." ■

RESOURCE:

To apply for an SBC of Virginia internship grant, visit:

 sbcv.org/scholarships

Fall term applications are due July 1, 2021.

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Throughout **THE YEAR:** First Time Ever!

By Timothy Cokes, a freelance writer and graduate divinity student at Liberty University

Much like many of the events of 2020, the 2021 Youth Evangelism Conference was a virtual livestreamed event, but this actually provided an opportunity for material from the conference to be used in a fresh way.

For the first time ever, the video messages presented at the annual NextGen conference will be packaged together and be available for SBCV churches to use as a resource at any time free of charge. The messages can be found at sbcv.org/yecreplay, and discussion questions related to each message are included as well.

The theme of this year's conference was **RE:ASON**, based upon 1 Peter 3:15 which reads... "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect."

The event was hosted by **The Heights Baptist Church** in Colonial Heights on Saturday, January 16. The conference featured worship from Red Letter Society, a group comprised of worship leaders serving in Central Virginia, and messages from speaker Ryan Fontenot.

Fontenot presented four scripturally based messages with an apologetics theme about how students can learn



to give a reason for the hope they have in Jesus Christ.

"We live in a generation of why," Fontenot said. "As Christ-followers, we not only need to know what we believe, but we need to be able to talk about why we believe what we believe...There is great evidence and reason for the hope that we have in Christ."

The four topics spoken about in the messages included the Bible, evil and suffering, Jesus being the only way to be saved, and how to share your personal testimony.

There were 50 churches who officially registered for the event as well as many more watching live on social media, and three students made decisions for Christ.

SBCV Student Ministry strategist Mike Camire said they began working with Fontenot on a theme for the conference starting in October and wanted a way for students to feel equipped to give the *why* behind their faith to a seeking generation.

"Gen Z is one of the most lost generations spiritually but also one of the most open to spiritual things," Camire said.

In addition to equipping students for evangelism, Camire said these conference events are also important because they emphasize the partnership of the SBCV and serve as a way to bless student pastors. Churches who registered for YEC through the SBCV website received a gift box of resources from LifeWay, NAMB, and IMB.

"This is our way to say, 'We recognize you. We love you. You're valuable, and we just want you to know that you're cared for.'"

"Our theme is **Not Alone**, and these events show our churches they are not alone in this...There are other churches out there that we align with and partner with." ■

RESOURCE:

To access the RE:ASON video, visit:

 sbcv.org/yecreplay

nextgen➤

REPLAY

RE:ASON

"Always be prepared
to give the reason for
the hope you have,"
1 Peter 3:15

YEC 2021



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THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

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Mobilizando a La Iglesia en Tiempos Diferentes

Dios ha enviado su iglesia a lo último de la tierra, es un mandamiento claro, pero no necesariamente fácil de cumplir. Diego Fernández es el pastor de la **Iglesia Bautista Vida Nueva Para las Naciones**, y desde hace algunos años, se han tomado muy en serio el llamado de Dios para llegar a los que no alcanzados.

El pastor Diego también es parte del equipo de Movilización Hispana, y junto con Jasón Carlisle y el resto del equipo, han estado movilizando iglesias hispanas durante años. Todos los años organizan una Conferencia donde los participantes pueden escuchar acerca de oportunidades misioneras en países no alcanzados, e incluso, tienen la oportunidad de conocer a algunos de los misioneros en esos países. Dios ha bendecido este ministerio con diferentes pastores y miembros de iglesias hispanas que van a África y Asia. Por lo general, esto sería imposible en la mayoría de las iglesias hispanas, pero Movilización Hispana ha demostrado que cuando seguimos a Dios, Él es un especialista en superar lo imposible. 2020 parecía ser un año con demasiados obstáculos para hacer una Conferencia Misionera, pero Diego, Jasón y el equipo decidieron organizar la conferencia de todas maneras. Fue así que prepararon una conferencia misionera virtual. Hermanos de todo el país y del extranjero se inscribieron para esta conferencia de tres días. Los participantes se conectaron con misioneros en India, España y Senegal. La mayoría de los asistentes tuvieron la oportunidad en años anteriores de conocer a estos misioneros y han estado orando por ellos y sus ministerios.

El fruto no termina con la cantidad de personas e iglesias que se conectaron esas noches; el fruto continúa, ya que muchas de estas iglesias han decidido establecer un presupuesto de misiones en su congregación. La iglesia del pastor Diego ha entrenado a sus miembros para que realicen viajes misioneros cortos a Senegal, Myanmar, Indonesia y Turquía

(uno de los líderes ha estado en tres de esos viajes). Según el liderazgo, los miembros que han ido a estos viajes están más involucrados en el ministerio y el discipulado en grupos pequeños. La iglesia apoya el alquiler de un orfanato en Myanmar, alimentos y algunos de sus misioneros. Están apoyando dos plantaciones de iglesias y ministerios de alimentación tanto en Argentina como en Senegal. Se habían fijado un presupuesto de \$27000 para las misiones para finales del año 2020, para Noviembre de 2020 tenían promesas de fe por \$24000 y para diciembre cumplieron la meta, este será su presupuesto de misiones para 2021. Este tipo de cosas que suceden en una congregación local son un estímulo para el resto de las iglesias hispanas, y saber que cuando seguimos a Dios en Su misión, Él puede lograr más de lo que pedimos o pensamos, de acuerdo con Su poder (Efesios 3:21).

Dios nos ha llamado a confiar en Él y a enfocarnos en Él, y no en las circunstancias. Como dijo una vez un predicador, "cuanto mayor es la prueba, mayor es el milagro". Esta es una temporada en la que podemos aprender a seguir a Dios en Su misión y verlo obrar de manera milagrosa a través de nosotros y de nuestra iglesia. ■

Mobilizing the Church in Different Times

God has sent His Church to the uttermost parts of the earth. Although we have a clear commandment, it's not an easy one to carry out. Pastor Diego Fernandez shepherds one of our Hispanic SBCV churches, **Iglesia Bautista Vida Nueva Para las Naciones** (New Life for the Nations Baptist Church). This Richmond church has taken the call to reach the lost seriously.

Pastor Fernandez is also part of a group of Hispanic churches called *Movilización Hispana*. He and Jason Carlisle, former IMB Hispanic mobilizer, along with the rest of the group, have been mobilizing Hispanic churches for years. They host an annual conference where participants can hear about mission opportunities in unreached countries and even have the opportunity to meet some of the missionaries from those countries. God has used this ministry to lead pastors and members of Hispanic churches on mission trips to Africa and Asia. This is unusual and even impossible in most Hispanic churches, but *Movilización Hispana* has proven that when we follow God, He makes the impossible possible.

Although 2020 was a challenging year to organize a mission conference, Fernandez, Carlisle, and the group decided to make it an online conference. Hispanic brothers from around the country and overseas registered for the November 5–6 conference. Participants connected with missionaries in India, Spain, and Senegal. Many of the participants had heard of these missionaries at previous conferences and had been praying for them and their ministries.

The fruit did not end with the number of people and churches that connected those nights. Many of the churches that joined the conference decided to set a church missions budget moving forward.

Pastor Fernandez's church has always encouraged its members to go on short-mission trips. Some have gone to places like Senegal, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Turkey. According to leadership, the members who have gone are more involved

in ministry and small group discipleship. The church helps supports an orphanage in Myanmar and two church plants and feeding ministries in both Argentina and Senegal. They set a mission giving goal of \$27,000 for 2020. By November 2020, they had good faith commitments for \$24,000. By the end of December, they had met their goal, which became their mission budget for 2021. These kinds of things happening in a local congregation are an encouragement to other Hispanic SBCV churches—to know that when we follow God on His mission, He can accomplish more than what we ask or think, according to His power (Ephesians 3:21).

God has called us to trust Him and focus on Him, not on circumstances. As a preacher once said, "the greater the trial, the greater the miracle." This is a season where we can learn to follow God on His mission and see Him work in miraculous ways through us and the local church. ■



Lending Library en Español

In early 2020, the Hispanic ministry of the SBC of Virginia felt God's leading to invest in training churches on how to disciple their members. When the pandemic began, several Hispanic pastors' wives asked Laura Guardia for help from SBCV to encourage other women's leaders at Spanish-speaking churches in the state. One of Guardia's roles, as leader of the SBCV Ministerio de Mujeres (the Spanish side of the SBCV Women's Ministry), is to connect with other Hispanic women's ministry leaders to mobilize women in missions and ministry.

Affirming the need, Guardia gathered a team and appointed a Hispanic women's ministry lay leader in each of the four regions of the state to be able to reach, pray with, equip, and bring resources to the church leaders. These ladies across the state are helping encourage



Women's ministry groups can see what is available, plan ahead, and borrow the studies for free!

and connect women in our Hispanic churches.


One of the most exciting developments in 2020 from the SBCV Ministerio de Mujeres was the creation of a lending library of women's resources in Spanish. Women's ministry leaders at Hispanic SBCV churches had been asking for resources to disciple and train their leaders, but many times the cost was an obstacle. Laura Guardia reached out to LifeWay, who donated more than 13 Bible studies in Spanish! Guardia worked with SBCV administrative support to get the resources added to the SBCV website, and the Spanish lending library was born! These resources are such a

blessing for SBCV Hispanic churches, providing discipleship materials that help women's ministries nurture and grow the ladies in their churches. Women's ministry groups can see what is available, plan ahead, and borrow the studies for free!

This spring, the SBCV will host its second Hispanic women's conference, Equipada: Paz en Tiempos de Incertidumbre (Equipped: Peace in Uncertain Times). We have shifted from an in-person to virtual format this year due to COVID precautions. Although these are uncertain times, we can have peace in Christ! ■

RESOURCE:

To access the lending library, visit:

 sbcv.org/biblioteca

EQUIPADA:

Paz en Tiempos de Incertidumbre:

 sbcv.org/equipada2021



A Greater Gospel Impact

"Romans," answered the little girl to the man who handed her a sack lunch from the tailgate of his truck.

The man was Pastor Ken Warfield, and his church, **Fork Baptist Church** in Scottsburg, VA, was passing out lunches at an apartment complex on behalf of the county, whose usual distribution team was quarantined due to COVID exposure.

The little girl was answering Warfield's question about what she read in the Bible he had given her the day before.

"And what did you read in Romans?" Pastor Warfield continued.

"If thou shalt call on the name of the Lord thou shall be saved!" Her answer astonished the few adults standing around.

"Did you do that?" he asked.

"Yes," she said as she took the lunch. Pastor Warfield prayed for her, and she turned to walk back to her apartment.

Simple, right? Almost too simple. If it really is that simple, why don't helping ministries lead to more spiritual conversions? From March 2020 until February 2021, approximately 48 people were baptized through the ministry of Fork Baptist Church. Forty of those were upon recent conversions. Many were from connections the church made through various helping ministries and projects.

During his five years as pastor at Fork, Warfield has identified a few keys to seeing the church's helping ministries flourish and seeing a tangible Gospel impact as a result:

The first key he identifies is prayer. "We need to pray over the people and the ministries," Pastor Warfield explained, being sure to emphasize **people and ministries**. Prayer sounds like an obvious step, but it is often overlooked.

Teaching people to do the work of the ministry is the second key. Pastors need to stop trying to do too much of the ministry themselves. "If we do it all, nobody will step up. Be patient. Help people find and use their gift," he advised.

A third key is to see every helping opportunity as a Gospel-sharing opportunity. "I don't want to do anything that is just a good work!" Warfield exclaimed.

Finally, his encouragement to fellow pastors and Christians is to **be intentional**—whether it is reading this article, doing your quiet time, or running a helping ministry, be intentional and don't just go through the motions.

Pray intentionally. Enlist others intentionally. Include the Gospel intentionally. These are the keys to giving your helping ministries a greater Gospel impact. ■



Helping Women in *Domestic Violence*

Mary Beth Burkes of **Harman Memorial Baptist Church** in Grundy, VA remembers feeling lost and hopeless as a victim of domestic violence. In the interview below, she shares how God has used her pain to help others in her role as a domestic violence advocate in her county.

How does your relationship with the Lord help in working with victims of domestic violence?

I love the story of the woman at the well found in John 4. The kindness, compassion, and concern Jesus showed to this woman are so touching—the hope He brought into her life, the Living Water. Victims of abuse are desperately looking for hope and stability. Jesus, the Living Water, provides that, and He is the Wellspring that I drink from for strength and wisdom in knowing how to respond with each victim.

Have you seen any success stories?

There are so many, which I am so thankful to have been a part of, watching Jesus work in lives. It is amazing!! There are many who have completed their college degrees,

bought their own homes, and have a new outlook on their lives and how they were created with a purpose. It is such a beautiful thing to watch someone who was so downcast and beaten down begin to know their worth.

What advice would you give someone working with a victim of domestic violence?

Be familiar with the domestic violence programs in your area. Remember, domestic violence is a cycle, and it may take a victim to leave between seven to nine times before they stay away. Keep praying for them. Help develop a safety plan. Pray, pray, pray!!! And love, love, love!!! Also, it is easy to think that only women are abused. While it is true that women are more prone to be the victim of domestic violence, men, too, can be victims. ■

RESOURCE:

If you need information in dealing with victims of domestic violence, contact:



marybethburkes@yahoo.com



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Unexpected Boys Choir

By Timothy Cockes, a freelance writer and graduate divinity student at Liberty University

When Pastor Rick noticed twin boys riding their bikes around during his church's outdoor Easter service, he assumed it was going to be a distraction but after they began listening, it became the first sign of a blessing in disguise.

Rick Ragan, senior pastor at **Forest Hill Baptist Church** in Skippers, VA, had previously been having little success inviting two twin boys, Jayden and Jorden, to visit church since they moved in across the street. When Forest Hill began holding outdoor services this spring due to COVID-19 limitations, the boys began showing up at services since they were happening outside and near their home.

The boys eventually became enthusiastic about coming to church events, showing up whenever there were cars in the parking lot to see what was going on. Ragan developed a relationship with the boys and has had many Gospel conversations with them during this year using LifeWay materials.

"If it hadn't been for the pandemic causing us to go outside, I don't think this breakthrough would have ever happened," Ragan said.

Ragan began searching for an activity for the boys to get involved with in order to meet other church members and to hopefully get their families more involved with the church.

Being a musician, Ragan started a boys' choir for some of the young boys in the church to be a part of. Ragan said Jayden and Jorden's mother has in fact come to see them sing multiple times since the choir began.

The choir started out this summer as three boys in the church performing. The choir was Jayden, Jorden, and another 10-year-old boy named Carl.

Ragan said Carl has been attending their church for three years since his mother

got saved through their witness. Carl was saved and baptized this past summer, which Ragan said has been the highlight of the ministry of the choir and he desires to see the same for Jayden and Jorden.

"My greatest desire is that these boys know Christ and be baptized and that they become disciples," Ragan said.

All three boys performed during the church's outdoor nativity service.

The surprise blessing of outdoor ministry reminded Ragan of the history of his church. Forest Hill Baptist was founded in 1918 by a small group of believers during the Spanish flu pandemic. The group met outside in a brush arbor and eventually built the original church building in 1919.

Ragan said both the faith of those believers and the faithfulness of God serve as reminders to current church members to "try to be innovative and just keep going."

"What a testimony that even during a time of fear and sickness and unknown pandemic, these people started a church. In the midst of another pandemic, these people didn't give up and they just kept pressing on." ■



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CALENDAR 2021

APRIL

- 4 Easter Sunday
- 4-5/23 50 Days of Prayer
- 8 Statewide Zoom Call During 50 Days of Prayer
- 15-16 Disaster Relief Training, ICS/IMT
- 22-23 SBDR Chaplain Training, AIC
- 26-28 Leading Change Tour with Dr. Jeff Iorg

MAY

- 1 Equip Women's Conference, First BC, Damascus
- 1 Youth Speakers' Tournament, Videos Due
- 2 State Bible Drill Sunday
- 3-4 Executive Board
- 6 Statewide Zoom Call During 50 Days of Prayer
- 14-15 Women's Ministry Conference with Jen Wilkin, London Bridge BC, Virginia Beach
- 18 Intern Training
- 20 Revitalization Summit, Liberty BC, Appomattox
- 21-22 Revitalization Summit, Parkview BC, Bluefield
- 21-22 Disaster Relief Basic Training
- 21-22 Disaster Relief Advanced Training
- 21-22 SBC Disaster Relief Basic Chaplain Training
- 31 Memorial Day

JUNE

- 14-16 Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, Tennessee
- 22-26 Student Fusion, Bristol

JULY

- 4 Independence Day
- 22-25 Family Fusion, Chincoteague
- 21-8/10 Japan 2021 Mission

AUGUST

- 5-7 Church Planting Weekend

To view all 2021 events and details
on the events above, visit:

 sbcv.org/calendar



Editor's Letter

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ARE YOU READY FOR A

Comeback?

IT'S A STORY FOR THE AGES...

ALEX SMITH, an NFL football quarterback whose leg was literally crushed under a ferocious tackle in 2018, was given no chance of ever playing again. The aftereffects of the compound fracture, as well as a flesh-eating bacteria he encountered, created a situation in which doctors considered amputating his leg to save his life. He needed 17 surgeries, multiple hospital stays, more than a year of rehab, and he missed two football seasons. But somehow, somehow this former number 1 draft pick came back to the Washington Football Team in 2020. He was just supposed to be a backup but ended up being the starter while winning five of six games and taking his team to the playoffs. What could have been a hopeless situation ended up being an awe-inspiring story of courage and comeback. In fact, Smith won the NFL Comeback Player of the Year Award. There is even some talk about naming the award after him! But he didn't do it alone. Family, doctors, specialists, therapists and many more came alongside to work with Smith to teach, train, exercise, encourage, and even pray.

I think of 2021 as a comeback year for many of us. Not that 2020, even with all its challenges, wasn't a year to praise God for all He did. For some, it was time of new ministry opportunities and growth. But for others of our SBCV





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w/index.php?curid=95161521

family, 2020 was a truly challenging time. Some lost precious loved ones. Some had to cancel services for weeks and months. Some had to amend ministry outreach. And some are just now getting back to children and youth ministries. But your detour or delay could really just be a prelude to greater ministry and Kingdom impact!

I believe looking ahead is something God wants us to do. Many times in Scripture, God reminds us that while the past may have hurt and we may even be ashamed of things we've done in the past, He wants to do a new thing. Isaiah 43:19 says, *"For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?"* I love that and need to be reminded of that all the time. While the night (or the year) may be long and dark, the morning brings new mercies and a new opportunity to see His love and faithfulness which, in turn, breeds hope (Lamentations 3:22-24).

At the 2020 Annual Homecoming, we focused on the theme, *Pressing On*. That means turning our focus from what has been and being wide open for what God will bring. It reminds me of Philippians 3:13b-14, *"... Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the*

heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us" (NLT).

What a challenge! Learning from the lessons God has taught us and looking ahead for new ministry avenues—both personally and for our churches. It's an intentional action—"I press on"—or even, "I keep pressing on." After miraculously getting back on the field, leading his team to the playoffs, and winning the Comeback Player of the Year Award, you would think that Alex Smith would be heralded as a hero by his team. Well, you would be wrong. The Washington Football Team actually released him, and now he is a free agent. That means that even after everything he has gone through, Smith's comeback isn't over. He says he has more to prove this year and wants to keep pressing on.

Last year may have put you and your church on the map—or it may have put you on the mat. Either way, 2021 is a new start, and I believe God is going to bring all of us, no matter the location or size of our church, new and vibrant opportunities to share the Gospel and serve our communities. Just one question: are you ready? ■

(below) During the COVID-19 shutdown, Pastor Tom McCracken, CommUNITY Church of Salem, held rooftop worship services. 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.





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