



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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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.

