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GREAT
COMMISSION
CHURCHES

CHRISTIANITY IN

action

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CHANGING LIVES



IT'S NOT OVER 'TIL IT'S OVER

By Martha Maxwell

We're blessed with days on earth to figure out why we're alive now and what our "mission" is. After nearly 7

decades of living, I feel some compulsion to review my legacy as well.

I grew up in Kansas and moved to Colorado where I got married and raised a family. Blessed with good health, I supported my special needs children as they took root and made their way in life. When my mother died in 1989 I realized that I was at the end of my youth, fast approaching retirement. What did living really count for?

The answer came when I was directed to a group of believers who were learning about and establishing personal relationships with Jesus. That was over 20 years ago. Today I know "whose" I am, where I'm going, what's important in this life and how the end will play out for me. I can state unequivocally that LOVE has been the ministry in every case. Jesus and His gift of redemption to us through the cross, His resurrection and promise of heaven... these are the true LOVE gifts of God to His children. It has served me well in the sunset of my life. I've had the opportunity to "serve" others as a mother, grandmother, teacher, student and friend.

Today I work with an international group of Colorado State University students that meet for Sunday breakfast at Summitview Community Church. Our time includes a Bible study, read faithfully in English, Chinese and Vietnamese! Over 40 students and graduates gather to learn and share the LOVE and encouragement of Jesus Christ. I sit in this circle and realize I'm witnessing the very work of our Lord in the midst of all peoples on earth.



A LIFE GROUP ADVENTURE

By Bob Hearon & Mike Kearns

A while ago, our life group had a conversation about how to be a deeper community of believers living out our faith. Thus began a wonderful adventure started by trying to reduce the separation between us, and ending with treasures from living and laboring together in the work of ministry.

The Rock Community Church, about two hours north of us, loves its community but is strapped for resources. In an economically depressed and racially divided section of Cleveland, each summer they host three camps for children in their community. When registration opens the phones start ringing, parents anxiously press to get their kids in, and they always reach capacity.

Our life group volunteered to run one week of summer camp. We served according to our individual gifts and personalities: Joan and Angie, natural planners, organized the curriculum; Dan the engineer, created a water bottle launcher that was perfect on hot summer afternoons; Brian the science teacher wowed the kids with small explosions, smoke, and fog; Bob the man-child led sports and games and had as much fun as the kids. Our daughters and granddaughters led singing and skits while our boys joined in activities with the campers. Kitchen volunteers held us together with good food and coffee.

Days started with devotionals and breakfast together. Campers arrived around 9:30 and the days were full of activity until late in the afternoon. After camp, we ate dinner together and shared fun activities. We spent our nights with members of The Rock, most of whom live within a few blocks of the church.

We grew closer together in many ways as we sweated during outdoor sports, grew in love and patience dealing with difficult children from broken homes, and labored together for the work of the Lord. Driving home, we felt exhausted, but also had a rare sense of spiritual accomplishment that will never be forgotten.

MISSION USA

DISCIPLE MAKING IN CHARLOTTE

By Berk Wilson

When Matt Gordon, Robbie McAlister, and Berk Wilson, pastors in the Southeast, began praying for God to saturate the region with disciple making churches the Holy Spirit began doing great things. Leaders Impacting Nations for Christ (LINC) was launched where young men and women learn character development, doctrinal truths and ministry skills. They learn leadership skills among their peers by sharing the gospel with strangers, bringing them into their community and helping them grow in their relationship with the Lord.

Three years ago Keegan and Amy Rice, Daryn Williams and Bekah Maier sat down with John Hopler, Robbie and Berk to discuss moving to begin a church plant at the University of North Carolina

in Charlotte. Each of these saints had attended LINC. The leaders agreed that they had truly caught the vision and understood what it took, with the Holy Spirit's help, to reach out to strangers and unbelievers and see them come to know and grow in the Lord.

In 2013, Keegan, Amy, Bekah and David and Renee Johnson moved to Charlotte. As they shared the gospel at UNCC, people began to accept Christ and be baptized. These new believers began to share their faith with their friends. As these disciples made disciples, Niner Christian Life began. This January, three more saints, including Daryn, moved to join the original group. Faithful to share the gospel on campus and disciple those they meet, each of these men and women have begun a new group with other believers and unbelievers where they are effectively



Bekah Maier, Shannon Beamon, Renée and David Johnson, Keegan and Amy Rice, Daryn Williams, and Lauren Olney.

building spiritual truths into them. Niner Christian Life's vision is to make disciples who make disciples. Because of Jesus Christ they are developing a network of learning communities that exalt Christ and empower people to be spiritually, emotionally and relationally mature in Christ so they serve their community and the nations.

BOLDLY PROCLAIMING CHRIST ON CAMPUS

By Tom Short

Campus evangelist Tom Short has developed a new way of making Jesus the talk of the campus.

For over 30 years, I have been publicly presenting the claims of Christ, answering the questions of seekers and the objections of skeptics on campuses throughout the US. Now I and my son, Tim, have created a series of large banners that catch the attention of students on the 30+ campuses I will visit this year. Although skeptics and atheists like to distract from the presentations, my message expressed both verbally and through the banners is

simple: God is real, the Bible is true and Jesus Christ is the only way back to God.

The campuses of America have long been a focal point of spiritual conflict. Great Commission Churches traces its early roots to reaching college campuses. Many of us fondly remember our college days as a time when Jesus really formed our lives. But for many, college was a time when their faith was undermined and even destroyed. Christians often feel very intimidated and alone when on the college campus. My bold public presentations are not only designed to reach the lost, but to encourage, inspire, embolden and educate a new generation of Christ-followers.



Recently a Christian professor at Miami Dade College told me that not once in his 35 years on campus had he ever seen a strong, clear and appealing presentation of the Christian faith like he saw that day. He did, however, lament that every week for years he had seen the GLBT group aggressively promoting itself. Let's keep college ministries in our prayers and get behind them in any way we can. To see the banners or for more information on me and my ministry, visit www.TomthePreacher.com.

INTERNATIONAL

REACHING THE UNREACHED IN PAKISTAN

By Ken Young

Ken Young pastored GCC churches in the US for 25 years but now works with RUN Global, reaching the unreached in South Asia.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14

Pakistan lies at the heart of the unevangelized world. The knowledge that 1.7 billion Muslims in the world are without Christ prompted me to go to predominantly Muslim countries and reach out with the gospel. In both 2012 and 2013, I traveled to Pakistan and partnered with Pakistani pastors training groups in disciple making and teaching believers to reach their neighbors.

Less than half of Pakistanis can read, so we distributed audio bibles (Mega Voices). Omar was so hungry for God's Word that he listened to his Bible throughout each day, alone or with others. His delight in the Word motivated him to learn to read. Now he owns two books about theology and the Bible and wants to become a pastor. What a story of the power of God's Word!

In Pakistan, it is dangerous for a Muslim who becomes a Christian. Several Muslim background believers told of beatings and threats to their lives at discipleship training events. Many participants repented of their fear of reaching out to Muslims and determined to reach the 96% of Pakistanis who are Muslim.

After considering the dilemma of how



to disciple Muslim converts, we plan to start safe houses. These will provide refuge for persecuted Christians who must hide from families, extremists or government authorities angry because they have turned to Christ or are sharing Him with others. While in a safe house, they will receive pastoral care, discipleship and support until they can return home or relocate to another area to continue their ministry.

HERE WE GO

By Steve and Debi Ogle

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you..." John 15:16

Since committing our lives to Jesus Christ in 1977 we have had hearts to serve the Kingdom of God through the local church. In December 2012 God gave us a new vision and passion for serving as full time missionaries in Milan, Italy.

While I (Steve) pastored at Grace Point, a GCC church in Columbus, Ohio, we joined a group from Ball State University on our first mission trip to Italy. When we returned we were surprised that God had placed within our hearts a passion for ministry to college students at the University of Milan, Bicocca. He opened our eyes to the spiritual need and lack of hope in so many of the students' lives.

Like many without Christ, they continue to try to fill the God-sized hole in their hearts with temporary things. They need to experience the love, joy, peace, and grace that only God can give.

God is calling us to impact these students as we join the mission team already in place. We will connect with students through English clubs, discipleship, Bible study and simply living Christ in their presence. As of this writing, I am setting up a weekly Bible study with one of the students in Milan through Skype. (Got to love technology.)

Debi and I cannot wait to join the team and be involved with these students. What a blessing to go where the need to experience the love of God is so great, and be used by God to help change the lives of students from all over the world,



who in turn will change the lives of many others. There is no doubt that God chose and appointed us to this ministry, one which will only be accomplished through His grace and power.

INSIDE GCC

MOSAIC

JUNE 6-8, 2014
GRACE UNIVERSITY
OMAHA, NE

Mosaic 2014 International Student & Cross-Cultural Ministry Conference

Mosaic: A pattern consisting of numerous small pieces fitted together.

Who: For anyone who is interested in cross-cultural ministry to international students or immigrants in the U.S. or doing ministry overseas.

What: A conference to inspire, inform, encourage and equip individuals to become more effective in various kinds of cross-cultural ministry. Special guest speaker: Robbie McAlister

To sign up & for more details, visit ISM.CandlewoodChurch.org.

MEET A GCC PASTOR

THIS EDITION: DAVE BLUM

Vanessa and I met at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in 1975 shortly after beginning our faith journeys with Christ. As students we became very involved in the Great Commission church there and started putting our faith into action by sharing the gospel on campus, building into the lives of other Christ-followers in the church and learning to serve people the way Christ did.

In 1985 we responded to a call and invitation to help plant a church in Newark, DE. This was truly a life-altering adventure!! While planting that church, I caught a vision to become an elder and, eventually, to get into full-time ministry as a pastor. To this day we continue to follow Christ as I pastor Evergreen Community Church in Manassas, VA, while contributing in GCC Regional leadership and the Faithwalkers East conference each year.

We have five adult children and one grandson... all of whom keep us young and



even more motivated to pass the baton of faith to the next generation!

"Let us run with endurance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross." Hebrews 12:1-2

Our spiritual race is a marathon, not a sprint. The circumstantial waves and winds of life get VERY stormy and scary... but keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. He is running the race WITH us and He is also cheering us on!!

ENCOUNTERING THE LORD JESUS

JOHN HOPLER - DIRECTOR, GREAT COMMISSION CHURCHES



"Were not our hearts burning within us...?"
Luke 24:32

The disciples on the way to Emmaus had a wonderful encounter. They encountered Jesus Christ who had just risen from the dead. After conversing with these two men, the Lord vanished from their sight, and they said, "Were not our hearts burning within us...?"

How do you know that you have had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ? Very simple: Your heart will be burning within you.

This newsletter tells of many people who have had an encounter with Jesus Christ. Their lives

have been forever changed by meeting the One who died on the cross and rose again from the dead for us. The people in these articles now have devoted their lives to telling others about Jesus Christ. Some have taken a mission trip or planted a church within their state. Others are doing ministry with people in their cities. Some are doing work on college campuses. Still others are traveling to other countries to bring the gospel to those who otherwise would not know about the Savior.

Have you had an encounter with Jesus Christ? Is your heart burning within you? If so, join up with your church to advance the gospel of God's grace, so that more and more people may have an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.



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