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GREAT
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CHANGING LIVES

ONE LIFE AT A TIME

By Mary Knox



Matthew and his father, Byron

Matthew Anfinson is a college student at Bethel University in St. Paul, MN. Matthew is Haitian, and the adopted son of Byron and Heidi, founding members of the Urban Refuge.

Matthew was adopted at 18 months old when his adoptive mother was pregnant with their 2nd son Ben. Heidi and Byron

raised their sons as twins, with two daughters (the youngest also adopted from Haiti). Matthew was raised in church, where he served as drummer with the worship team and was active in youth group. There were blessings and trials to being raised by white parents. When the family moved from a suburban area to an urban area, Matthew faced some culture shock. "A lot of my tendencies were 'white and dorky,'" said Matthew. "But I eventually viewed growing up with white parents as an opportunity, to see myself as a bridge between whites and blacks, by being more dimensional."

In 2011 Matthew's birth brother found him on Facebook. Matthew found out about his Haitian family—brothers, sisters, his parents, and relatives in Canada. "I discovered my lineage goes beyond Minnesota. I have another family," said Matthew. "I started dreaming about how to intertwine the two." In 2014, Matthew went on a mission trip to the Dominican Republic. That trip gave him a deeper desire to see what God had for him in Haiti.

This summer, Matthew was offered an Act Six scholarship to Bethel University. "They take leaders and pump them back into the community, to see them make a difference in their worlds," said Matthew. The AS scholarship could be a vehicle for him to go to Haiti, accompanied by his adoptive dad and church friends, with dreams of impacting lives, possibly, eventually church planting, and even pastoring, making a difference and fulfilling the requirements of the Act Six vision. Pray for this young man, that he would see his dreams come to fruition.



Rob, right, and a friend at
UNC-Charlotte

FROM BOREDOM TO ADVENTURE

By Rob McAlister

For much of 2014 the way I would describe my life was "boring." I was thriving at work, enjoying friendships, and with a ministry team at my church. But something was still missing that had the power to satisfy my deepest longings and fulfill my true potential. Instead of a vibrant, intimate relationship with Jesus defined by the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc...), it felt like I was trudging through thick mud... so bored.

I am so thankful for God's grace. Through a number of divine appointments, including attending a great new year's conference, God called me to a new adventure with Him. Less than two weeks into 2015, I got an email from Tom Short saying that they were still looking for one intern to travel on his spring semester team. I felt the Spirit prompt me to reply. At first, I resisted. "You mean you want me to give up my great job, my new relationships, and even this new ministry I'm leading in?" The answer was, "This is the great adventure I have called you to." I couldn't resist. Only two weeks later I was in Ohio preparing for a 3 month trip to over 20 college campuses to preach the gospel.

Traveling with Tom was life-changing. I had been starved to see the power of God in action. Romans 1:16 says that the gospel is the power of God to everyone who believes. Seeing God at work changing someone's life who previously was either skeptical or oblivious was incredible. I thought, "Why can't this be the case all the time? Students back home are hungry for the power of God too!" This led me to enter full-time ministry to help reach college students in Columbia, SC. The transition has been challenging at times, but life beholding the gospel at work is an adventure and is NEVER boring!

MISSION USA

PNEUMA CHURCH PLANT

By Jordan Cooke

Over the last three years, our parent church, Grace Community Church in Raleigh, has more deeply embraced a longstanding vision and strategy that is both simple and grandiose. The “simple” part, at least in word, involves teaching and equipping people to be disciples who make disciples who make disciples. The grand part entails many things, including seeing people from Grace sent into every people group in the world to spread the gospel.

That’s a task that, no doubt, will be impossible without the Lord’s help. But by His grace, we’ve been making strides in various ways. One of those ways has been sending teams of friends to new areas to labor together in the gospel

and “start from scratch” a local church body that will help people become emotionally, spiritually and relationally healthy followers of Jesus Christ.

It’s this mission that led a team of four of us – three from Raleigh and one from Oak Ridge Community Church in Maryland – here to Wilmington just six months ago to start Pneuma Christian Life. We want to see this city won over with the gospel, starting with the campus of UNC-Wilmington.

This campus, filled with some of our next generation leaders, is in desperate need of Christ. Drunkenness and sexual promiscuity are rampant and, in some cases, openly advertised and promoted. Many here struggle with depression and even suicidal thoughts. People here are



broken in many ways. But God is moving, and He’s healing people, starting with their souls.

We rejoice that in our first six months we’ve seen over 20 salvations, baptized two new believers, and prayed for over 1,000 students and faculty. God has already added two more committed laborers to our team. The Lord is good and faithful, and we are excited to see how He will continue to restore hearts and build His church!

TEEN CONFERENCES

By John Meyer

Most of the teens in our churches come from our own families, and our most important disciples will be the children God has entrusted to us. Reaching teens is also important because they are passing through a season of life that is very impressionable, from good and bad influences.

Summer teen conferences have been an essential part of many of our church calendars for years. These summer events have been life changing for hundreds of young lives.

Most teens have the opportunity to go to four or five conferences throughout their high school years. It can be challenging

to produce an exciting and spiritually dynamic event for those who have been numerous times. For the Mountains West teen event (called Discipleship Training Camp) we have decided to implement a four year rotation, covering different topics and a different atmosphere each time.

Our rotation of topics begins with Christian Identity. This is the foundation for developing a healthy adult Christian life. Year two is about understanding gender, God’s plan for male, female, marriage and morality. This past summer was our year two topic, and for the first time DTC was split into separate programs for boys and for girls, at different camps.

Next year will cover evidences for our



faith, looking at reasons to believe in God, to believe the Bible is God’s Word, and reasons to understand that Jesus really is the world’s Savior and Lord. This event will be held all together on a community college campus – a more academic environment.

Finally, year four will cover Jesus’ great commission and the venue and activities will orient around evangelism and making disciples.

So far the fruit of this plan has been very positive, giving us both a freshness and a sense of direction as we make disciples of the teens God has given us.

INTERNATIONAL



OUR GOAL IS TO REACH 20,000

By Kees Boor

In the late 1970s, I heard about the Great Commission Church movement from Nelson Guerra, as we attended Florida Bible College together. I joined Nelson's church in Miami, but with their messages in Spanish, I moved to Gainesville in 1981 to join Gator Christian Life.

I have spent quite a bit of time in Bolivia, because I have volunteered with several churches there. After seeing missionaries Mike and Sue's impressive house church planting work in India and Nepal, I decided to move to Bolivia to start house churches through a discipleship/training process called T4T (Training for Trainers). T4T emphasizes evangelism to many and to find those willing to evangelize and be trained in small groups, which should

develop into other small groups and eventually house churches.

We have developed a method of sharing the Gospel, where within 30 seconds of conversation people will ask us to share the Gospel with them. We've trained a lot of new believers on how to do this and hundreds are receiving Christ as Savior every month. We have found that the most open to the Gospel are the young, especially children, and the poor. Our goal is to train these people to reach all of Bolivia with the Gospel and then to duplicate this in other countries in South America.

In 2015, we shared the Gospel with 24,055 people and 4,175 have received Christ as Savior this year! We surpassed our goal to reach 20,000 people this year



Kees Boor, center, with a mission team in Bolivia

and have started many training groups.

I am so thankful for the many GCC members who support this effort with visits to Bolivia, especially Matt Gordon and Gator Christian Life, and Mike and Sue for ongoing training and encouragement, but above all to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is worthy of all.

IN THE WILDERNESS

By Frank Apisa

My wife Pam and I moved to Milano from Torino in 2009, feeling God had called us to this needy city to share His love and good news.

Through English clubs at the University, we have reached many students and their families with the love of Jesus. One of our key believers, Ottavio, was saved through the witness of a believer in the Torino church, then joined us in Milano. He has a passion for reaching the lost, discipling new believers, and being discipled as he grows in his faith.

In the early years, we saw many young people come to know the Lord. Some moved back to their home countries and some never really got knit into the

church. In the last couple of years, while there have been some new believers who have joined our fellowship, we have lost more people than we have gained.

Particularly this past year we have been "in the wilderness" as we have struggled with many trials. My mother-in-law passed away in November last year. Then one of our co-workers passed away unexpectedly in January of this year. This summer we went through a series of reconciliation meetings with another co-worker after communication had broken down, endangering our unity in the Body of Christ. Praise God that we were able to work through it, with the help of other pastors, and come to unity and understanding at a deeper level!



We continue to go deeper in our relationship with God, believing that He will bear fruit from the many seeds that have been planted. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:24)

INSIDE GCC



BRIDGE BUILDERS CONFERENCE

The annual International Student Ministry conference will be May 27-29, 2016 in Omaha, NE.

Are you interested in cross-cultural ministry to international students or immigrants in the US, or in doing ministry overseas? Come be inspired, informed, encouraged and equipped, and rub shoulders with missionaries, pastors, and church planters fulfilling this vision.

For more details visit: gcbridgebuilder.com

MEET A GCC PASTOR

THIS EDITION:
BOB VALTMAN

Bob met his wife Angie in Jr. High. They dated through a long distance college relationship and were married in August of 1975. Bob was raised in a church until high school when he stopped any regular church attendance. He came to a real relationship with Christ at 30. Bob and Angie have 3 children and 9 grandchildren.

Bob and Angie came to Columbus in 1985 and began attending Linworth Road Church in 1989. Bob sensed a calling to ministry in the early 1990's, but God had not finished preparing him for his role in ministry at that time.

Bob was ordained in 1999 after working 24 years in the secular world. It is there that God prepared him for the position at Linworth. He was moved several times in his secular position from logistics to operations to finance and finally IT. Those were the roles that prepared



him for what he was to do in his ministry position at Linworth. Through volunteer positions and meeting with the elders as well as much study and prayer Bob was equipped to be a pastor. Recently Bob retired from full time ministry, but is still on staff at Linworth overseeing finances.

One of Bob's memory verses is Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart oh God and renew a right spirit within me." Bob said "I need to remember this verse often because without God working within me I am afraid of what the world would see."

RAISING UP FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

JOHN HOPLER - DIRECTOR, GREAT COMMISSION CHURCHES



"And He gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ." Ephesians 4:11-12

This passage from Ephesians will be our focus as an association of churches in 2016.

Jesus Christ has poured His grace and His Spirit upon the church. That grace is manifested by gifted leaders who equip all church members to do the ministry, so that the whole body is built up in love.

God loves to take ordinary people and turn them into extraordinary ministers for Christ. Through our weaknesses His power is demonstrated. And as a result, God gets all the glory.

This newsletter is filled with testimonies of normal people like you and me whose lives were transformed by Jesus Christ. And God has worked through these same people to do ministry that is having an eternal impact.

This year, my prayer is that God will work through you and your church to do exploits for God—through His power, through His Spirit, through His grace, and for His glory.

So, step out in faith—and watch God do mighty works through you in 2016!



NAE | National Association of
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