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AROUND THE CONFERENCE

Renewal in Churches in the Mid-Atlantic Region

Chris Surber, *Pastor Cypress Chapel Christian Church and Area Representative, Mid-Atlantic Region*

It isn't true that big is always better. What woman prefers to open an enormous gift of a new lawn mower rather than a tiny box containing a flawless diamond? There are two churches in the Mid-Atlantic region that, though they are comparably small in size (each boasting around 125 in average attendance) are large in faithfulness, and therefore near the heart of God.

Nestled in the countryside of Gloucester County is a beautiful white church with a tall steeple pointing towards heaven. This little church is called Severn Church. In 2007 Severn Church was without a pastor; so they hired

Rev. William West, a local Southern Baptist preacher. At that time the church was struggling just to pay its bills, and was down to only 20 regular members. When Reverend West was hired, the theologically liberal Presbytery with which they were affiliated didn't approve of a non-Presbyterian minister with strongly conservative Biblical views. After much discussion with the church, the Presbytery graciously agreed to allow Severn Church to pull out of its denomination.

It was actually that Presbytery that suggested the Severn Church should consider joining the CCCC. This was a wonderful move for the church. Reverend West began a children's and youth program immediately upon arriving at the church, and things began to turn around. The church grew in the first two years from 20 people attending to averaging more than 100. The people began supporting the

ministry of the church with their tithes and God blessed their faithfulness. The church is now financially stable.

Today the church supports two missionaries from Severn Church in a ministry that delivers Bibles to

Africa. Severn Church is a wonderful place where everyone feels at home and the Bible is taught faithfully. The church has been called a healing place for those who have been hurt in other churches. Severn welcomes them with open arms and shows them the love of Jesus.

On the other side of the Hampton Roads region in a similarly rural setting is a church that has been at

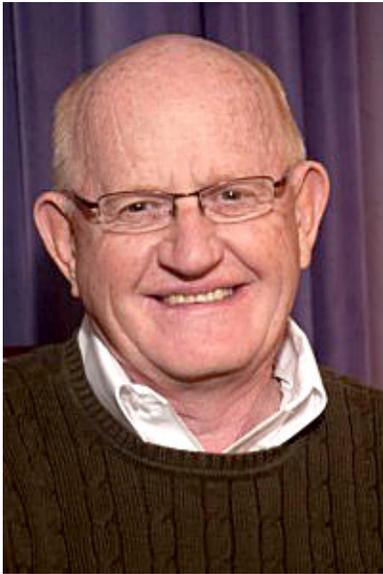


The Severn Church

CM COMMENTS

A Season of Change

Ron Hamilton, *Conference Minister*



We have entered the wonderful season of Advent and Christmas, in which we celebrate the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus the Christ. He is called, "Immanuel, which means God with us." (Matthew 1:23) The world has never been the same since the coming of Jesus; indeed, all of recorded history is dated by his coming.

This season allows us to celebrate the awesome events that surrounded the birth of Jesus. We sing carols that reflect the joy of the shepherds when they heard the angel's announcement of His birth. We give special gifts and offerings that help us remember the

gifts that the Magi gave to Jesus. Special parties and church services rekindle the joy that Mary and Joseph experienced when Jesus was born. Children's pageants convince us of the simplicity of the Gospel. It is truly the most wonderful time of the year.

While the story of the birth of Jesus is recorded in the Gospels, the impact of the coming of Christ is seen in two verses of Scripture.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

A changeless God entered a world of chaotic change to bring about the greatest change that anyone will ever experience. Our salvation is anchored in the ageless promises of God. We cannot change our lives to earn God's favor. A new life, for today and for eternity, is available to anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God and receives his forgiveness and grace.

As we recall the angel's words of promise, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests," we realize that our relationship with God is secured through our acceptance of Christ. We are reconciled with God through faith in Christ, and our lives are anchored in that reality.

This is a season to celebrate and not despair. Our celebration of Christmas changes from year to year. Loved ones die and are no longer with us. Children grow up and move on with their own lives. People are less aware of the "Christ" of "Christ-mas" in our post-Christian world. But nothing can disturb or damage our relationship with God. We are changed forever through a personal encounter with our Lord, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. ♦



MID-ATLANTIC (cont. from page 1)

its current location in one building or another since 1750. Cypress Chapel Christian Church shares in common not only a similar location but also a recent history of downturn and a more recent history of renewal and revival. After a long season of growth under the ministry of our Director of Conference Care, John Kimball, the church weathered about a four-year season of storms. After two mass exoduses of members amidst various types of conflict and turmoil, the church has now stabilized and has turned the corner on its journey as a faith community. When I arrived here as pastor in the summer of 2011, I found a people ready to commit themselves to the work of rebuilding.

Their interest ran much deeper than just getting back membership or increasing their numbers. As a people Cypress Chapel recognizes not only that they are a church with a grand history of faithfulness to God, but also the importance of being a people with a current vision for what God is doing in and through them today. The church has stabilized organizationally, reached out in love to those who departed, while at the same time closing the page on the last chapter and moving into what God has for us today and in the future.

The major thrust of renewal on the part of the church has been a focus not on numbers, but encouragement, depth and substance. One of the first things I did was to host a Christian comedy event to encourage the people, remind them to bring joy into the meeting house, and be glad. In addition to regular fellowship and worship, the church has recently been host to Dr. Elmer Towns, co-founder of Liberty University, for a two-day Bible conference. Dr. Towns encouraged us to pray and fast and seek the Lord for revival. Last month Darcie Gill of Voice of the Martyrs International delivered a substantive report of the plight of the persecuted church around the world. The Lord has been faithful. Cypress Chapel has rebounded from a season of great difficulty and not on the back of gimmicks, but on the foun-

ation of basic seeking of the Lord in prayer and in Scripture, sharing the life of Christ together, and reaching out to the community with the same. The church has baptized new believers, added several new members, and regularly sees visitors in the pews. Like the renewal that God has brought at the Severn Church, Biblical teaching and Christian faithfulness has been the catalyst for renewal.

God is on the move in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the CCCC, as is evidenced by the renewal taking place at the Severn Church and at Cypress Chapel Christian Church. Renewal is exciting, and it is wonderful to see God on the move in obvious ways. However, renewal always brings with it a hatchet. When God



Mike Ellis baptism at Cypress Chapel

brings revival He requires a severing of our love affair with comfortable habits and ideas. New seasons of growth in the Lord require the same renewed commitment to Christ that brought about the good old days. At Cypress Chapel I like to say that these are the good old days that the next generation will be talking about. ♦

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT & CONFERENCE CARE

Some Final Thoughts on Conference Care

by John Kimball, CCCC Director of Conference Care & Church Development



I have had the pleasure of serving the CCCC in two capacities since January, 2007 — as both Director of Conference Care and Director of Church Development. As of December 31, 2012, I will begin the New Year able to focus solely on Church Development and will be turning over the work of Conference Care to others.

As I reflect on the last six years, there are five critical lessons I have learned in Conference Care:

1. Most church constitutions are seriously out-of-date — While we have been intentionally addressing this over the last few years, the vast majority of our CCCC member churches have inadequate or out-of-date church documents. This is particularly true for their respective constitutions and by-laws. People don't realize the importance of maintaining a current, well-designed church constitution. Beyond ministry guidance, an adequate constitution will protect you from lawsuits and will safeguard your tax-exempt status. Leaving this unaddressed is poor stewardship. (For more information, contact our office for a copy of our new *Church Constitution Handbook*, or visit NextStep Resources at www.nsresources.com).
2. Churches in pastoral transition tend to give in to urgency — When a pastor retires or resigns, the pastoral search process can be daunting. It is in such times that partnership with the CCCC can be a great asset — and we want to be your ally. Unfortunately, this is also a time when many churches decide not to heed our advice to take the necessary time to transition your church well! I believe it is the sheer sense of urgency the congregation feels that leads them to make this

mistake. The single biggest source of consternation in our local churches is a mismatch between pastor and parish. And what is sad is that often the mismatch could have been avoided by not rushing the transitional process. (For more information, contact our office for a copy of *Transitioning Your Church*, or visit NextStep Resources at www.nsresources.com).

3. Biblical Peacemaking is a skill missing in most churches — It is certainly not unique to the CCCC, but let's face it: Church conflict is at an all-time high. Conflict comes from many seeds. But there is really only one reason it grows out of control (causing hurt and member flight): few pastors and leaders know how to successfully address conflict. Conflict must be dealt with — intentionally, intelligently and quickly. Biblical peacemaking is a skill that can be easily learned and easily taught, but it is missing from most local congregations today. The CCCC is now training and certifying biblical peacemakers. These people are equipped to help our churches first deal with conflict and then train others in the church family to do the same. Churches ignore this issue to their destruction.
4. Many pastors find their identity in their job — Perhaps the most personally distressing observation I have made as Director of Conference Care is that many of our pastors, while theologically adept, do not find their identity in Christ. Where this is true, nearly all of them instead find their identity in their pastorate — in their job. This is very American; but it can be deadly for a pastor. I have seen it time after time: (a) the pastor finds his identity in his job, (b) ministry is messy, challenging and painful at times, (c) as his job gets tough or causes him to suffer, his identity crashes with it,

NE REGION NEWS

Long-Term Faithful Service

by Terry H. Shanahan, *Northeast Regional Minister*



On a gorgeous fall day in New England, in the quaint village of Chester, Vermont, the Congregational Church of Chester held a special service to officially welcome to their church and install as their new Intentional Interim Pastor, Susan Moody. It is

not a common thing that Interim pastors are installed, but this body of believers wanted to have a service of blessing to welcome Susan into their midst and to acknowledge a covenant between pastor and church. The covenant ceremony was based on the CCCC Code of Ethics for Pastors and Churches. It signified the commitment of the church and pastor to work together to accomplish the tasks ahead to determine the direction God has for this church and this body.

The covenant first committed them to honor and exalt the Lord in all of their relations and ministries and to keep themselves from any policies or practices which might harm the beauty of the Bride of Christ and to promote unity among the members. All of our churches would do well to hold a service each year to remind themselves to first and always exalt and honor the Lord in all they do. Even better for those churches going through transition, to start on that path with a clear commitment to doing it right.

I hear from churches regularly who are going into transitions. And I always recommend that this time is a special opportunity for the church to reevaluate where they are and seek the Lord's direction as to where they are going. I recommend they employ a trained Intentional Interim to help them through this process and lead them to their next settled pastor.

In New England, we currently have about six churches following this path, and Susan Moody is one of our new interims.

There are five transitional tasks that we try to accomplish during an Interim Ministry

- Coming to terms with history – reviewing the history of the local church
- Examining leadership and organizational needs
- Strengthening denominational and external relationships
- Discovering who you are as a church – examining your identity
- Looking to the future – a commitment to new pastoral leadership and the future

Churches who take the time to work through these tasks are blessed by the fruit of their ministry when they do call a settled pastor. There is a great need for additional trained Intentional Interims, as many of our churches will be facing transition in the near future. The CCCC is known for good, long pastorates; some of those pastorates will be coming to a time of transition.

If your church is at the start of a transition, we encourage you to obtain our manual, *Transitioning Your Church: How to Bridge A Pastoral Change*. This can be purchased through the Home Office.

Welcome, Susan, to your interim call, and blessings on you and the church and the ministry there. ♦



Susan Moody

CONFERENCE CARE (cont. from page 3)

(d) the pastor either leaves the ministry, or searches for a church of “greener pastures” and then starts the cycle all over again. It’s no wonder pastoral attrition is so high. But for those pastors who have rooted their identity in the Rock — Jesus Christ — come “hell or high water,” their passion and inner fortitude wavers little if at all. This identity issue is the single, biggest reason I have become such an advocate for mentored ministry. It is through intensive and personal discipleship that comes from a loving, biblical mentor that things like identity are formed solidly in Christ. My parting prayer is that every CCCC pastor will one day find himself in such a mentoring relationship — we each need at least one Paul and one Timothy in our lives.

5. Few Christians pray consistently anymore — As I have traveled all over the country, visiting our congregations and regional fellowships, I have become convinced that there is one primary issue impacting all four of those mentioned above. The passion and practice of consistent prayer and intercession has all but disappeared in our churches. Some of our churches are bathed in prayer — and are seeing the Spirit move mightily as a result. And some of our regional fellowships have prayer gatherings that are nothing short of powerful. But alas, these are now the exceptions. While a devoted prayer warrior can move mountains, it is not the same as experiencing a prayer movement within the church. Churches that do not consistently pray, and practice authentic intercession as a part of that prayer, have forfeited something vital. A

church family that does not pray cannot remain faithful and obedient to Jesus. And pastors who do not pray and intercede cannot lead their churches to do it either. Of all the observations in this article, this one scares me most. It must be corrected — and quickly.

The job description for Conference Care goes way beyond these five items; however, these five things have consumed the most time, energy and also intercession. Regardless of the season, these five things are ever present in my life.

As a new team is developed and charged with the work of CCCC Conference Care, our congregations can take some significant steps to make their ministry more fruitful, and to see their ministries thrive. First, make a point of reviewing your constitution and by-laws in 2013, making any necessary revisions (or, if needed, working through a complete rewrite). Second, if you are a church in transition, you can allow the CCCC to be your ally and heed the collective wisdom we bring to the table for your benefit. Third, you can engage the CCCC for training and resources in Biblical Peacemaking — and work through the process if you are in conflict. Fourth, you can encourage your pastors to enter into a solid, biblical mentoring relationship — focusing specifically on grounding your identity in Christ. And finally (and most importantly), you can make prayer and intercession your personal and corporate priority — categorically refusing to let the busyness of life prevent your consistent conversation with God. And my own prayers are ever with you. ♦

CHANGES & OPPORTUNITIES

PASTORAL OPPORTUNITIES

Rockland, ID	Rockland Congregational Church (<i>Part-time</i>)*
Blue Island, IL	Evangelical Community Church*
LaMoille, IL	First Congregational Church*
Peru, IL	First Congregational Church (Independent)
Otsego, MI	First Congregational Church of Otsego *
W Newbury, MA	W Newbury Congregational Church* (Asst. Pastor – Youth and Families)
Cook, MN	Ashawa Chapel* (<i>Part-time</i>)
Inwood, NY	Community Bible Church* (<i>Part-time</i>)
Sardis, OH	St. Paul’s Church* (<i>Part-time</i>)
Vermillion, OH	Vermillion Evangelical and Reformed Church* (<i>Part-time</i> Youth Minister)
Ford City, PA	First Church of Ford City* (<i>Part-time</i>)
Reynoldsville, PA	Paradise Community Church (UCC)
Woxall, PA	Old Goshenhoppen Reformed Church (Independent)
Parkston, SD	Salem United Church of Christ (UCC)
Orwell, VT Church	First Congregational (Independent) (<i>Part-time</i>)
Hillsboro, WI	First Congregational Church*

* = Conference member

+ = In process

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

How Do You Replace a Worldview?

by a CCCC minister with a campus ministry

...but we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16b)

Choosing to become a follower of Jesus is no small decision, especially when you come from a worldview that has been constructed from sources other than the Bible.

It is very difficult to walk up to someone who has just stepped off a plane, from a culture where they know nothing about Jesus, hand them a tract, and lead them in the ABCs of the gospel. While you might occasionally find someone who is interested and ready, you will find many more who will look at you completely puzzled. As “fishers of men” we are not just called to catch the easy fish floating near the surface, but also to go after those deeper in the water.

Students come to our country with a worldview, a personal set of beliefs and values that guide their operational life. Part of that worldview is chosen, and part of it is unconscious, coming from their cultures and families of origin. If a student comes from an Islamic country, and that student is a believing Muslim, her worldview is going to include certain assumptions about God that she has absorbed throughout her life. If the student came from a Communist country and has been steeped in a philosophy of naturalistic materialism, his worldview doesn't even have “God exists” as an anchor point.

To try an American five-minute evangelistic presentation would be like asking them to trade in their entire worldview for another one, without any common reference points to guide the decision. It might be possible to get someone to pray the “sinners prayer” at the end of the tract, while in reality, that person would have no idea what he is actually praying.

So how do you replace a worldview? The western approach would be a systematic one, comparing ideas one point at a time, in an outline fashion. I have tried this many times, but found

that it only seems to be effective with someone who has already been questioning and rejecting the worldview of his home country. Most people are not like this. They simply float along with their worldview, happy to keep it intact on a day-to-day basis, without questioning it.

Worse, the systematic approach seems to have a polarizing effect. As you go, point by point, through your worldview, the other person counters, point by point, telling you what he believes. This kind of approach can quickly turn into a debate, and ends up “shoring up” his worldview, making it even harder to receive Jesus.



We have found that Jesus' own approach is the best one. Jesus often used stories. We have been teaching using a storytelling approach. We begin with creation, and tell the key stories of the Bible. After the story, we ask questions that lead the students to discover the truths about God through discovery instead of lecture. The results are profound.

One student this year began our study uncertain that God even exists. As the stories have progressed, his worldview has slowly been replaced. He has learned all the same theological truths about God by discovery, that he would learn in a systematic classroom setting, but he has absorbed them, one story at a time, without the debate and polarization. A few weeks ago, he reported excitedly that God had actually answered one of his prayer requests in our Bible study group. He had called a friend in his hometown and told him that God really answers prayer! That's a remarkable journey. ♦

How do you replace a worldview? One story at a time!

(Editor's Note: This article is published anonymously because of sensitive information, but if you would like to find out more, please contact FORESEE Editor Ken McGarvey at kmcgarvey@cccusa.com, and we can put you in touch with the author.)

WORLD OUTREACH



(Scot and Cheryl Mybr are CCCC ministers serving Chinese students in the Pittsburgh Area, working with OMF.)

Serving Chinese Students in America

After restarting our ministry in June, things really

took off with our Happy English Corner (HEC), Bilingual Fellowship Group (BFG) study of the attributes of God and family life, too.

Saying goodbye to four regulars in our Bilingual Fellowship Group (BFG) was hard. A week after American Thanksgiving, they flew back to China. We'd been averaging eight a week — would it drop to four? No, it went up to ten! The used van we bought in June seats six and the Chinese man who helped drive when we had more, had just flown home. Sheryl drove the van, I drove the car, we played a game while Sheryl finished the meal, and we had a great dinner. Later we sang, "Silent Night" and "Holy, Holy, Holy" in both English and Mandarin, then looked at Bible passages about God's holiness. It took two trips to get everyone home and as I sat at the traffic light just before arriving home, I nodded off to sleep. It had been a long night, it was worth it, but we miss the friends who left.

RESTARTING MINISTRY

Restarting the HEC after a year away for Partnership Development was a bit scary. Volunteers had run it while we were gone. The summer "Learning English with the Bible" (LEB) averaged 13 Chinese students/scholars each week. The fall "American English and culture" has averaged 28 a week, with 39 Thanksgiving week! Most are visiting scholars, most for one year, some only three months. Most are doctors or teachers/professors in universities. Thank God for helping us connect them to three English Bible studies at our Chinese church. OMF International colleagues who arrived last year lead two.

The best part? As suggested by an elder in our church, we started a new bilingual small group Bible study on Friday night and invited those from the HEC to study the "attributes of God." A few nights 14 came to our home. That's not only lots of food for Sheryl to prepare, but it's lots of people hearing what God's word says about himself! We eat, play a game, sing an English then Chinese song, look at the Bible and then pray for those who've come. From that group we've seen one man confess Christ as Lord and a few others become true seekers. We connected the returnees to Chinese Christians in their home city. Pray they will continue seeking the truth.

FINANCES

How blessed that through October, we were averaging 96% of our complete budget, which includes optional funds for our retirement plan. The special account for the used van we bought has received \$3,438 of the \$5,346 needed before the final payment next May. Thank God for providing. We believe we will finish the year at 100% for the first time since we started in ministry in 2000.

Next year's budget is larger for a few reasons. One, OMF International (U.S.) switched to health insurance with lower cost as a whole, but higher for our family. Two, our girls' schooling costs will be higher. Three, next summer we'll go to China to visit returnees and to meet with ministry leaders, and four, we have more ministry expenses related to our BFG. Please pray about our 2013 funding.

FAMILY

Praise God, we celebrated Sheryl's parents' 50th wedding anniversary and helped my parents move near my sister to a place that has more help for them as they "slow down" a bit. Pray for our parents. Pray for our girls. Esther attends kindergarten and Corrie will graduate from middle school in June.

We hope this Christmas is a special one for you. Thank God we're not traveling; so it will be our first American Christmas "at home" since 2003. ♦

HEALTH NEWS

Women and Stroke



Betty Mitchell
RN BSN,
Parish Nurse
Emmanuel Bethel
Church,
Royal Oak Michi-
gan

A stroke usually occurs when an artery carrying the blood and oxygen to the brain is blocked. Without blood and oxygen, brain cells die, leading to brain damage and death.

Men and women experience some similar symptoms when a stroke occurs, such as sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body, sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding, sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes, sudden trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance or coordination, sudden severe headache with no known cause.

It is important to know that women may have unique symptoms when experiencing a stroke. They may have sudden face and limb pain, sudden hiccups, sudden nausea, sudden general weakness, sudden chest pain, sudden shortness of breath or sudden palpitations or rapid heart rate.

Common risk factors for stroke are advanced age, excess weight, smoking, family history of stroke, lack of exercise, high blood pressure, diabetes or high cholesterol.

Women have additional risk factors that include migraines with auras, having an autoimmune disease, using birth control pills or menopause hormone therapy, being pregnant, being postmenopausal and having a waist larger than 25 inches and having a triglyceride level higher than 128.

Stroke is an emergency, and quick action will help save brain cells. If you experience any of these symptoms have someone call 911. Time is critical in getting effective treatment started. The first three hours after symptoms begin are the most important hours in which to begin treatment.

Remember these simple tests to determine if someone is having a stroke:

- **F** — Face: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **A** — Arms: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **S** — Speech: Ask the person to repeat a phrase. Is their speech slurred or strange?
- **T** — Time: If you observe any of these symptoms call 911 immediately.

If you are not sure if it is a stroke, call 911 to have the person evaluated medically.

You can reduce your risk for stroke by controlling your blood pressure and cholesterol levels, maintaining a healthy weight, exercising and not smoking.

www.stroke.org, Michigan medical report

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND READERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

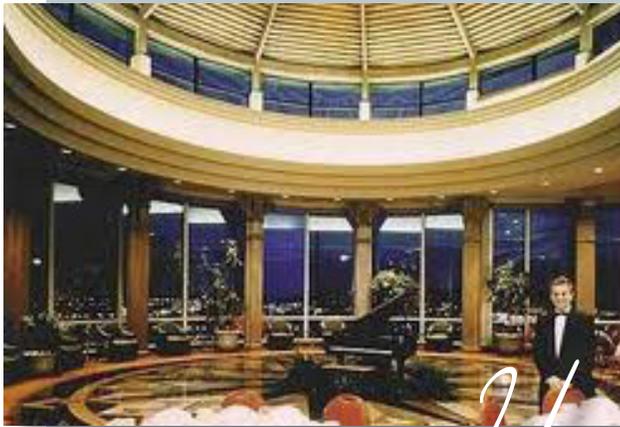
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 to our publication.

If you have comments on what you read here,
 please e-mail them to

kenandjoy@bellsouth.net.

If you have other comments or articles you wish
 to contribute, including Something to Think About,
 please send them to the same e-mail address.

The 65th Annual Family Conference



Join Us!

July 22-25, 2013
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President of the National
Association of Evangelicals.



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