

THE VOICE NEWSLETTER

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September 2020

PRESIDENT'S CORNER – Pastor Jonathan Edwards

“Avoiding Mission Creep”

Matthew 28:19-20

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Since we did not have the joy of gathering together for National Conference in 2020, the Executive Panel decided to maintain the current officers and transfer the 2020 theme of “Make Disciples” to the 2021 Conference. Over the next several months, my goal is to share with you some themes on disciple making and challenge you to keep your focus on the task at hand: making disciples according to the command of Christ.

My dear friends, if you are aware of the current events happening in our country, I’m sure that you’re outraged at the true injustices and ways that truth is being perverted. We certainly live amongst a people who call “evil good and good evil.” We can become easily frustrated and saddened by these events. Our lives can become consumed with the 24/7 news cycle, social media posts and replies, and keeping track of the “he said/she said” of the political sphere. We can even justify all the time spent monitoring the news or commenting on it by saying something like, “I need to be an informed citizen.” We want true justice to prevail and we commit to doing whatever we can to achieve that purpose.

Since we have so many freedoms and privileges as American Christians, we have a lot of resources and can put them to use for many causes. Examining church history shows us that many churches have invested in social and political causes over the years, with varying degrees of success. Many of these causes are quite noble. The question isn’t “Is this a good cause?” but rather, “Is this cause God’s cause?”

When a church or a group of Christians, or even an individual Christian, seeks to advance a cause which is not spelled out in Scripture, that is called “mission creep.” You might be asking, “What is mission creep”? It’s a term often used in business or in non-profits to describe what happens when a company or organization forgets their main purpose and branches out too much. They end up spreading themselves too thin and are unable to accomplish any of their goals, let alone their main purpose. Though we could lend our efforts to many worthy causes, as the church we must not neglect our main purpose: to make disciples.

The Christian’s purpose is not as an agent for political or social change, but rather, spiritual transformation. Many unbelievers will advocate for various social and political causes, but no unbeliever will advocate for Jesus Christ. Brethren, let us not become distracted from God’s main purpose for us. We must go, preaching the truth, baptizing those who confess faith in Christ, and then commit to the lifelong process of teaching them all that Jesus commanded. Avoid mission creep...may our focus be to make disciples!

ALBANY GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH – PASTOR DELANE MILLER

The Albany GBC had a new roof put on, the first week in September. This is an answer to prayer of long standing. We had Communion on August 2, with one first time attendee.

LISTIE GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH – PASTOR CHRIS KNIGHT

We are praising the Lord for His abundant goodness. The Lord has blessed in so many ways! We cannot thank Him enough! Since “re-opening” May 24th, we have seen 17 visitors! A number of the visitors have been faithfully attending! The Lord continues to bless the Facebook Live ministry as many tune in. In the last month, 5 people were baptized, 3 of whom recently received Christ as Savior after a “live” broadcast on Facebook. PRAISE THE LORD! There is nothing like watching God work!

MISHAWAKA GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH – PASTOR DAVY TROXEL

We had a 5-day club this year instead of a VBS. Instead of the inside the church, we held meetings outside under canopies at a subdivision, with Bible stories, a missionary story, games, snacks, and puppets and magic. Our largest one-day attendance was 16, reaching 10 different kids. We saw 4 first-time decisions for Christ during the week.

We held a fellowship meal in the pavilion with hobo stew and other food, and are looking forward to our annual picnic next month.

Three of the four home studies have started back up, and we have made improvements to our Facebook transmissions to keep in touch with the four families who can't return yet. This has been a blessing in disguise, as we have now been watched by as many as 1700+ at one time!

Our annual yard sale is scheduled for September 26th, giving us another chance to meet some new neighbors. We open up our huge backyard to anyone in the community who wants to set up a table, and they keep all of the money. This goes over well every year.

August 22 we hosted a nearby neighborhood association for their meeting. This is the second group like this that meets here. All we have to do is open the door and set up a table. We get to meet a few dozen new neighbors this way, and they also have access to our literature table! Pastor hangs around to greet them and makes sure that all goes well.

On the afternoon of August 22, one of our members who drives a mini cooper organized an area car rally. Over 70 drivers of mini coopers from the region expressed interest in coming to swap stories, swap parts, and slurp snow cones and other food.

Truly to “top things off”, we just had our steeple power washed and repainted, giving a bright new landmark for the community to see.

Our preaching themes have been a series on hope, a series on “hurts and healing” (biblical occurrences of healing, physical, spiritual, and social), Revelation (to answer those questions about covid, etc.), and a series on Barnabas just for an extra dash of encouragement, all aimed at getting us through a tricky time.

On Sunday, August 23rd, we welcomed Grace Steiner, who refreshed our missions awareness along with the videos that we were able to watch on Africa.

Keep the encouragement going out, brothers.

This is our chance to show how believers overcome! John 16:33

NEW TROY GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH – NEW TROY, MICHIGAN – Pastor Bob Mensinger

We had a memorial service for Jan Horner on July 31. She was the sister of Nancy Funderburg. We had 16 people attend and had good feedback from the service. It was nice to have Pastor Mick and Nancy join us for our morning worship service on August 2.

HOME MISSIONS

NET '20 – PASTOR DEL MILLER

We knew early on that NET 20 would be some different from other years. Looking back, it appears that the Lord provided just enough of a window of opportunity for us to have the event.

A big thank you goes to Cornerstone GBC for hosting our training week on fairly short notice. We contacted them when it became apparent that virus concerns were greater in Indiana (our original training and ministry location for NET 20) than they were in Ohio. They agreed to be the backup location, and we are very grateful for that. They did a marvelous job hosting the team.

The Lord knows exactly what happens in hearts. From our vantage point it seems that He used the team's ministry more during the "training week" than during the "outreach week." There were many factors at work, and one significant influence was Pastor Philip Moeller. He was a part of the team for 9 trips (2011-2019) and therefore has a very good understanding of team ministry. Consequently, he was able to line up a number of opportunities for the team to minister while at Cornerstone.

Of course there were formal meeting times with the Cornerstone church family. There were also some informal gatherings on porches and in living rooms. There was a cookout on Friday evening and a "hands on" work day around the property on Saturday. Before the work day several people joined us for team devotions. That resulted in one meaningful moment as I observed one of the visitors with us paying very close attention to the comments of one of the team members. She was listening very intently as the team member talked about how God's word had impacted him. We met some of the young families who have been involved recently at Cornerstone and had some good interaction with them. It is our prayer that the Cornerstone Church will continue to make good progress in the days ahead.

After our training/ministry time at Cornerstone, we were able to share with Grace Brethren Churches in Ankenytown, Galion, Gibsonburg, Westerville, and Orrville. Due to virus concerns we had a couple cancellations, but the team adjusted well and did a good job working together when the schedule had to be changed at times.

Our last service of the trip was at Orrville GBC, with almost a hundred people in the building. It was a very warm evening and we were able to streamline our presentation so that we finished in less than an hour. That was the first time in 14 NET trips that we were able to do a presentation at Orrville with the entire team present. We were glad that worked out.

We are praying that we will be able to go to Indiana for NET 21. Join us in praying that all the details can be processed and that the limitations related to virus concerns will be reduced in the coming months.

Please pray for NET 21 as we begin working on those details already.

REVITALIZE VERMONT —Pastor Bryan Maley, Evangelist - Irasburg GBC and Lamoille Valley GBC

"Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." Colossians 1:28-29 These are the verses that struck the hearts of the elders in Irasburg and Lamoille Valley early in 2019. The Lord placed within the hearts of these men a sense of urgency that moved them to ask tough

questions of themselves and their ministries. They sensed a burden and need for change knowing it would be hard, because it appeared to them that the very life of the church was at stake. They entered into times of prayer and purposed to meet together face to face and make a plan. That plan resulted in bringing Pastor Bryan Maley and his family to Vermont. It has been my job to call Bryan and report to you.

Dear brethren, what I hear and discern in Pastor Bryan is spiritual growth and zeal!! God is growing and maturing our brother. The conversations we have now are so different from the ones we had almost two years

ago. His focus has changed, his approach has changed, his theology is deepening, he is maturing. While he has not arrived yet, God is working in and through him. The other thing Bryan brings is zeal. He has incredible energy and enthusiasm. The Maleys' house and home is a bee hive of activity...constant activity!! The Lord has used those 12 acres and barns and buildings as a hub for opportunity to meet and connect with people. The goal is to share the gospel, to bring them into the church, to disciple them..."warning every man—teaching every man in all wisdom, striving, working!!"

The heartbeat of the Irasburg Church is strong, a drastic change from two years ago. They are running 55-60 on Sunday Mornings, with a bunch of children and teens. Their mode of operation has changed, they are not focused on "Outreach," but rather going out. As a result, Pastor Scott Libby has five small groups going right now at different houses. Teaching The End Times, The Christian Life, Book of John, Predestination and Election. With Home Schooling becoming more and more popular, Pastor Bryan is preparing to lead a co-op of Home School Families this fall in order to be able to tell them about Jesus. Bryan is always prayerfully seeking opportunities to connect. He continues to work on putting together a course that he wants to make available and even teach our churches. Bryan lives nearest to the Irasburg Church, so they are reaping most of the benefit of the work. Prayers please the church in Lamoille Valley. Right now Bryan is preparing to spend more time there in September and October.

Financially they are holding their own. The Irasburg Church had budgeted to give \$2,000 to RV this year and are on track to give \$6,000—PTL!! Prayers please for our pastors in Vermont: Pastor Scott Libby, Pastor Ethan Kallberg, Pastor Bryan Maley and their families. Also pray for disciples Trent and Anissa, as well as Flo and Jenna and their walk with The Lord.

Report submitted by Pastor Gordy Harmon—Home Missions Panel, CGBCI

FOREIGN MISSIONS UPDATES

MISSIONS UPDATES VIA CGBCI YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Here is the link for the CGBCI Mission Updates: [CGBCI 2020 Mission Updates](#). If you are reading this newsletter in paper form, please visit, www.youtube.com. When the page appears, type "CGBCI" in the search bar at the top. The update videos will appear with other videos from the past.

PNG TEAM #1

Hello from Papua New Guinea! As a team, we're excited to update you all on the big picture of what's happening, and how we're moving forward in ministry here in PNG!

Visit the Newfields blog for updates <https://newfields.wordpress.com/> Email craigmnoyes@gmail.com

PNG TEAM #2

For updates on PNG Team #2 – <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MillersinPNG/>

We'd love to hear from you! Send us an email: JoshAndAutumnMiller@gmail.com and let us know what you're curious about or if you have a question (or two) that we could answer in a future blog post or email.

******IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO A COMPUTER AND WOULD LIKE A PRINTED COPY OF THE MISSION UPDATES, PLEASE LET ME (PASTOR CHRIS KNIGHT) KNOW. (CONTACTS BELOW)*****

"The Voice Newsletter" is the communication tool of the Conservative Grace Brethren Churches International; and edited by Pastors Ike Graham and Les Vnasdale.

News Articles and/or Mailing Updates:

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