

# The Messenger

A Congregational Methodist Publication

Renew your spirit, in that ground which is “Good”



*But that on the good ground are they,  
which in an honest and good heart,  
having heard the word, keep it, and  
bring forth fruit with patience.*

*Luke 8:15 KJV*

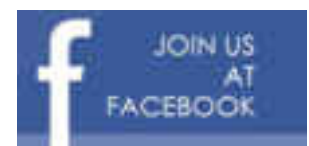


Spring 2011

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The Congregational Methodist Church

# RENEWAL IN THE CHURCH

By Reverend Cregg Puckett, President CMC



It is interesting how renewal sometimes occurs. Many times it is something as simple as the calendar. The New Year brings about a new attitude filled with anticipation of new opportunities. The old year with memories of difficulties and challenges gives way to a new and exciting spirit of enthusiasm. We grow weary of the old. We get excited about the new!

Or maybe it is the new Season: new blooms, new grass, and new leaves. The air even smells different. It is fresh. There is the realization of new growth. Spring has sprung and life is good!

**"Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body. But rather, to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming... WOW what a ride."**

**-Mark Frost**

New life and new beginnings pour forth from the heart of God. He is the Author and Creator of everything new. He wants to do a new thing. He wants us to have new life. He wants us to sing a new song. He wants us to experience renewal!

There is a sense of renewal in the life of the Congregational Methodist Church. A new day is beginning to dawn. A renewed sense of wonder, curiosity, enthusiasm, and unity is on the way. The sun has set on the previous day, night has passed and the sun is beginning to rise. I believe we are awakening from our slumber (or maybe our restless night) to embrace a day replete with new and exciting possibilities.

You can even see it in this edition of the Spring Messenger. God is at work in our midst. Notice some reports related to local church activity. A Youth Action Team is meeting to discuss events and ministry among our teens. A new Endorser for our military chaplains has been appointed to give leadership and pastoral care for those who serve. Missions continue to make a mark and move forward. A pastor's retreat is set for May providing a wonderful opportunity for our pastors to experience renewal. Church Ministries continues to work with a number of our churches to



maximize health in the local church, providing discipleship curriculum, assisting churches and pastors in placement and printing and distribution of The Messenger.

Inevitably, with these possibilities comes certain challenge. As Mark Frost said, "Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body. But rather, to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming... WOW what a ride." While there are hurdles to overcome, it is an exciting adventure!

And maybe I can suggest a few biblical principles that lead us down the path to renewal:

- **RETURN**

The Lord says in Jeremiah 24:7 (KJV), "And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." This is always central to our path of renewal. Return to the Lord with our whole heart.

- **REST**

Focus on the Family's pastor to pastors, Dr. H.B. London will be our special guest at this year's CMC pastor's retreat in May. He speaks of the perils for pastors when he said, "Pastors are going to be fatigued most of the time. That is a reality." Fatigue is an enemy of our soul. If we are to remain creatively engaged in a culture that is by and large opposed to Christianity, we must experience rest as is intended by God (Matthew 11:28). A wise man once told me, "Sometimes, the most spiritual thing we can do is take a nap." Get some rest.

- **RETREAT**

We must come apart before we come apart! In conjunction with your daily time with the Lord, make it a priority to get away for a day or maybe more. Get alone with God just like Jesus did (Luke 6:12).

All churches should send their pastors to the CMC "Pastor to Person" Retreat May 2-4, 2011 in Florence, MS. I guarantee your pastor will thank you and will be a greater blessing to your church!

- **RECEIVE**

Renewal is a promise of God. Many times, we simply need to receive it. Accept that you are loved by the One who will never leave you nor forsake you. Accept that He welcomes you (Matthew 11). Allow Him to heal your broken heart and strengthen your weary soul (Psalm 34:18).

Renewal is here my friend. Let us receive it together as we strive diligently to serve the One who sustains us by His love.

***An awakening is ready to burst on the dismal scene  
when Christians have a deep, profound Spirit of prayer  
for an awakening.***

—Lewis Drummond



PASTOR

TO

Person

**What:**

**"Pastor to Person"**

Spiritual Renewal  
for People  
who are Pastors

With Special Guest  
**Dr. H. B. London**

**When:**

**May 2-4, 2011**

**Registration:**  
**May 2, 3-5 pm**

**Where:**

**Twin Lakes Retreat  
Center**

**Florence, MS**

**Contact: Janet Woods 601-845-8787**

# God Wants Every Church to Grow

By Dr. Benny Tate



I love to tell the story about the lady who goes into a pet store one day.

"I'm really lonely," she says to the clerk. "I need a pet to keep me company." "Well," replies the clerk. "How about this nice parrot? He'll talk to you." "Hey, that's great." She likes the idea and she buys the parrot and takes him home. Next day: Same lady comes back to the pet store. "You know, that parrot isn't talking to me yet," she says. "Hmmm, let's see," says the clerk. "I know! You buy this little ladder for his cage. He'll climb the ladder...and then he'll talk." "OK." So off she goes with a newly purchased ladder. Next day: Same lady comes back to the pet store. "Hey, that parrot still hasn't said a word," she says to the pet store clerk. He thinks a minute. "How about this little mirror?" he says. "You hang it at the top of the ladder. The parrot will climb the ladder, look in the mirror and then he'll talk to you." "OK," she says, and buys the little mirror, and goes home. But the next day that same lady is back in the shop. "Well, I'm getting a bit discouraged," she says. "That parrot STILL won't talk to me." The clerk scratches his head. "Let me think....AHA! Try this bell. You hang it over the mirror. That parrot will climb the ladder, look in the mirror, ring the bell, and then he will surely talk to you!" "Well, all right, I'll give it a try," says the lady. And she buys the bell and takes it home. The next day the same lady comes back to the pet shop, and she is mightily distressed. "What's wrong?" asks the clerk. "My parrot...well, he died," was the quiet reply. "Oh no! I'm so sorry for your loss!" exclaimed the clerk. "But I have to ask you, did the parrot ever say anything to you?" "Oh yes, he said one thing, right before he died," she replied. "Well, what did he say?" asked the clerk. The lady replies: "He said, 'DOESN'T THAT STORE CARRY ANY FOOD?!?!?'"

The reality is everything that is not growing is dying and many churches across America are dying. The sad truth is seven churches a day in our country close their doors. The hope for every church is growth. Yes, it is God's plan for every church to be healthy and this will result in growth.

## **The Growth Journey of your church will include...**

**The Small Church Zone.** Real Ministry doesn't happen unless the pastor does it. A group of deacons called their pastor on the carpet because the grass was extremely high at the church and they were upset. They explained his predecessor had always cut the grass. The new pastor responded, "Yes, I have contacted him and he doesn't want to do it anymore". One is too small a number to multiply!

**The Awkward Zone.** The pastor must do ministry and equip people. This, in my opinion, is the most difficult zone and many pastors never get through it. I believe there are five things that are necessary to break through this zone.

1. Time. Yes, keep visiting the sick, preaching the funerals and conducting the weddings. Remember, they don't remember what you say, but what you do.
2. Courage. Everything nice has a price. It will take courage to change yourself.
3. Conviction. Make sure your motives are right. Be sure you want to grow for the right reasons. I assure you, with growth comes a great price and greater sacrifice.

4. Help For Other People. To grow you must lead the leaders in your church. A few people in every church will get the direction for that church. You must influence and impact them. You cannot move forward alone.
5. Leadership Skills. Someone said all you need is a dream. I have a Greek word for that, Bologna! If your dream does not match your skills, you will be a frustrated individual. It takes a leader to know a leader, show a leader and grow a leader.

**The Growth Zone.** The equipped people minister and the pastor leads. I believe this is God's ultimate plan for every church. The pastor must give the people and the people must give up the pastor.

I would like to encourage every small church with the fact that all great churches were at one time small. I love what Walt Disney said "Don't be afraid of a small beginning. Remember this whole thing started with a mouse." Yes, start small but think tall! See your church as a big church. I assure you Pastor; it must be big in your heart before it will be big anywhere else. Small isn't bad and large isn't good. The key is health which results in growth. It's not all about numbers, but numbers do always tell a story. No matter how small or large the church, the three core elements for a healthy church are the same:

Prayer

Evangelism

Teaching AND Obeying the Word of God

Every church can do these three components and every church will grow.

## **REV. THERMAN "PET" HAYES TO SERVE AS CHAPLAIN ENDORSER**

The Congregational Methodist Church (CMC) currently endorses three military chaplains. Chaplain (Captain) Brandon Parker serves on active duty with the United States Air Force. He is currently attending clinical pastoral education (CPE) training in San Antonio, Texas. Chaplain (Captain) Doug Henley currently serves on active duty with the United States Army stationed at Fort Polk, Louisiana. Chaplain (Major) Cregg Puckett serves with the Mississippi Army National Guard.



There are also individuals serving in various other roles in chaplaincy ministry. Rev. Rudy Ross serves as a chaplain with the Georgia State Guard. Reverend Pet Hayes (sheriff's department) and Reverend Bill Ross (Missouri Highway Patrol) serve as chaplains in law enforcement. These are to name a few.

A letter from the General Conference Council on behalf of the Congregational Methodist Church was recently delivered to our military chaplains communicating the support of our Church in light of the recent repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell" (DADT). It was communicated to the chaplains that the CMC supports all chaplains as they promote biblical standards communicated in love to members of their ministry community.

Reverend "Pet" Hayes has been appointed by the General Conference Council to serve as the Endorser for the Congregational Methodist Church. Brother Pet served our military as a veteran of the Vietnam War and has a great heart to serve those who serve as chaplains. Among his many responsibilities in this important role, Pet will be responsible for recruiting new chaplains, ministry to current chaplains, and reporting on behalf of the chaplains. Pet will also serve as chairman of a chaplain committee that is to be developed.

We are grateful for Pastor Hayes' willingness to serve in this important capacity as we prayerfully promote the mission of the chaplain ministry.





## BECOMING TRANSFORMATIONAL CHURCHES

BY KEITH MERRITT

It's time for a new scorecard.

The old scorecard is church absorbed. I'm talking about the church, pastors and laity rating the effectiveness of their church by how many people they gather, how much money they bring in and how many buildings they have built or are building. Don't get me wrong. I agree with the **reality** that *healthy things grow*...but how we measure growth needs a second look.

The old scorecard is self-absorbed with an inward focus and is program driven. Decade after decade, year after year, month after month, week after week we search for the quick fix- "What's hot now?" We perpetuate our efforts towards success without really considering a new scorecard.

Every church is different. We have the same purpose – to bring glory to God. The mission is different and is manifested differently. The new scorecard is about men and women's lives being changed. The new scorecard is about:

- Each individual church determining how it will measure its success
- Each church recognizing their unique existence
- Each church evaluating qualitatively and quantitatively
- Each church making baptism/conversion a primary focus
- Each church emphasizing hope for the individual, the church and the community.

Leadership begins by defining reality. Not in a critical way but with a constructive and honest view.

Church Ministries is now certified in assisting your church in an assessment that will give the local church a self-discovery process in determining an action plan to move towards being a transformational church.

Closely working with the pastor, we will facilitate the assessment with the participation of the congregation. This is followed by a four hour retreat/discovery workshop. From the investment in time with the pastor, the assessment results and the discovery retreat we will



coach the leadership team of your church with an action plan that God is leading you to follow.

The Transformation Church is based on:

- DISCERNING
  - A Missionary Mentality
- EMBRACING
  - Vibrant Leadership
  - Relational Intentionality
  - Prayerful Dependence
- ENGAGING
  - Worship
  - Community
  - Mission

During the months of March and April we have already scheduled and will be leading four or more churches through this process. If you would like further information or are interested in participating, please call me at 256-283-8034.

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## Where did Transformational Church come

- Research-based
- Not antidotal or prescriptive
- 7,000 churches contacted
- 250 church pastors interviewed
- Characteristics uncovered
- TCAT developed

- Research based
- Statistically proven
- Doctrinally sound



## FRIEND DAY

Spring is a great time for FRIEND DAY. Order you packet from Church Ministries today.

Call 601.845.8787 extension 3. Start planning now to double your attendance.



# Stinsons on Deputation



Rev. Davy Fenton  
Director CMC  
Missions

Over the next few months, Jimmy and Kitty Stinson will be taking some time to visit our churches to share the story of their tremendous ministry with World Radio Network. It's a ministry that uses the medium of radio to share the good news with millions of people.

For the last several years, we've been a part of the Stinson's work in their ministry of World Radio Network as technical director and business manager. And by helping them, they've allowed us to share in the opportunity to have a greater impact than we ever thought possible. With 14 stations, and a potential listening audience of up to **14 million people**, we have an opportunity to be a part of sharing the good news of Jesus with more people than any of us could ever meet in many lifetimes! What an amazing opportunity!

Every day, World Radio Network produces Christian programming that includes music, Bible teaching and preaching. And so, everyday, someone has a chance to hear about the good news. An example was a listener from California who was on his way to Nogales, Arizona. By chance he tuned to one of their stations and was impacted by a song. He called from the road and wanted directions to the local station. The next morning he visited the radio station and wanted to talk to someone about God. One of the staff talked to him for about an hour and he committed his life to the Lord. This is just one example of the many lives that have been changed by God through the ministry of WRN.

World Radio Network also operates the *Christian Academy of the Air* (CAA), a non-profit, all Spanish, Bible teaching ministry aimed at helping leaders of the Christian church learn about God's Word and the Christian life through in-depth study. The ministry encompasses a daily 15-minute radio program and a correspondence school offering 22 courses using 19 textbooks. Students complete the coursework at their own pace and send the exams to CAA headquarters for grading. There are currently over **3,500 students** in the correspondence school and it is growing steadily.

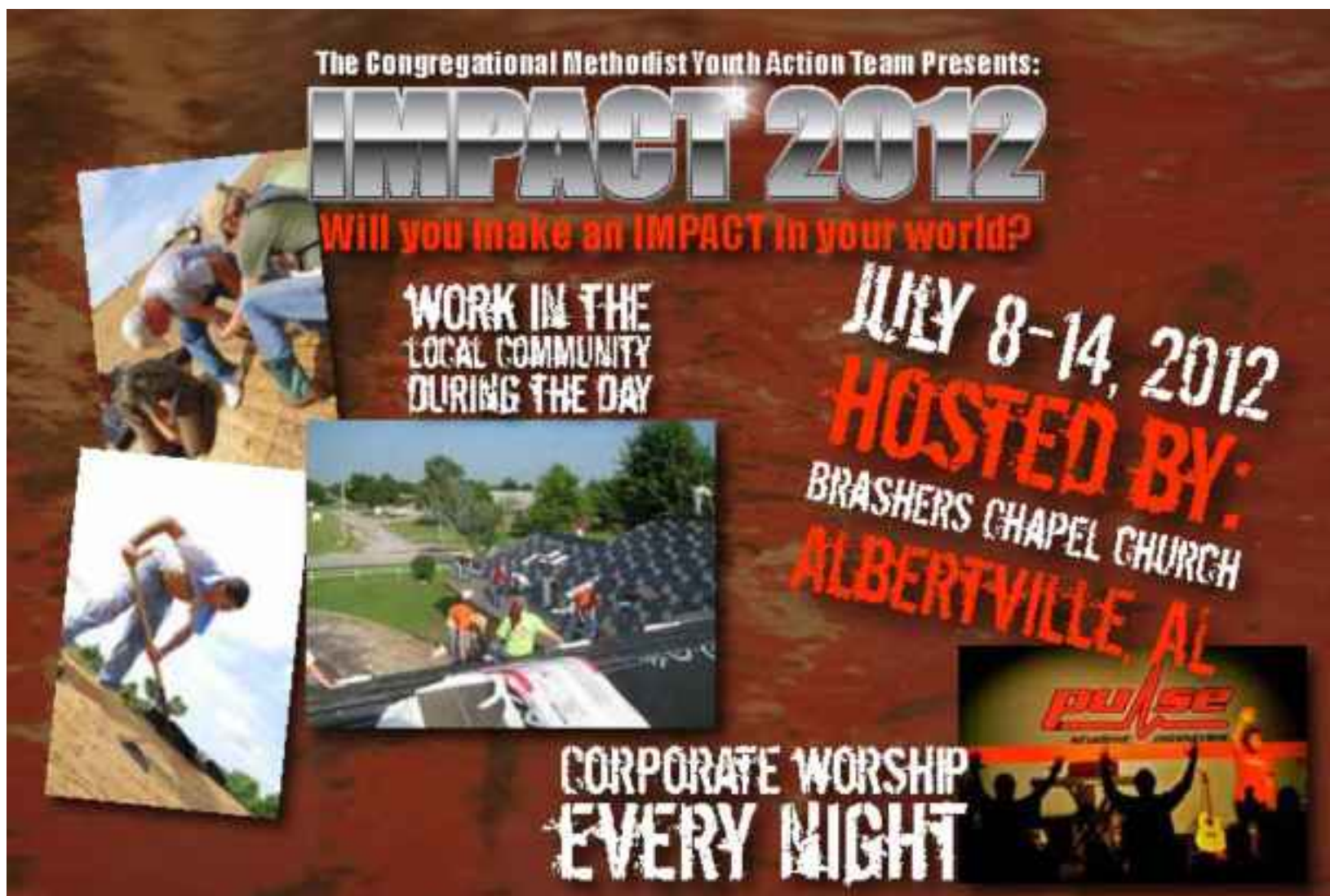


It's encouraging to know that we are influencing many, many people because of the privilege we have to serve with the Stinsons!

Thank you for your continuing, faithful support!

*"The greatest reward for doing is the opportunity to do more."*

Jonas Salk



The Youth Action Team was formed in October 2010. The objectives of this team are:

1. Bring students together across the CMC for the purpose of developing the next generation of leaders.
2. Bring youth leaders from the CMC together for equipping (yearly events).
3. Develop relationships across the CMC denomination.
4. Create a culture in the CMC that is energized and expectant in terms of God's reality in our lives.

This will be an effort that will include all of our youth leaders and youth workers that are on the front lines with our children and teens. Our goal will be to unite the CMC for generations to come with the unchanging message of our hope in Christ.

The second meeting for our team was in Albertville, Alabama in January and again in February at Rock Springs Church in Milner.

Two big events have been scheduled. The first is a winter retreat, WINTER BLAST, December 28-31, 2011 in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. The cost is \$105 per person, four to a room, at the Vista Hotel.

The second big event is IMPACT 2012 in Albertville, Alabama. The dates are July 9-14, 2012.

Teams of youth will be roofing, painting, general repairs and yard maintenance.

The YAT encourages the local church to support the summer camps in our respective conferences. We encourage getting on board – This train is moving out!



# CMC YOUTH ACTION TEAM



Hannah Windham, Jacob Windham, Benton Ingram,  
Michael Gerald, Michael Matthews,  
Mike Williamson

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# Potential Presidential Candidate Herman Cain Speaks at Rock Springs Church

**MILNER, GA.**



Pastor Benny Tate and nearly 1700 members and visitors enjoyed an insightful message from Herman Cain on Sunday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at Rock Springs Church. Herman Cain hosts talk show, "The Herman Cain Show," on Atlanta's WSB 750AM / 95.5 FM. He also serves as a regular contributor on several broadcast networks and as the keynote speaker at conferences and events around the nation. Recently, he spoke to more than 11,000 conservatives at CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington D.C.



Herman has already formed a Presidential Exploratory Committee in order to assist him with a possible Presidential Nomination for the 2012 Election. Mr. Cain has served as an executive with Coca-Cola, Pillsbury, CEO and President of Godfather's Pizza.

The night began with a special Meet & Greet Reception to raise funds for Rock Springs Maternity Home, Melba's Manor. Since April 2010, the lives of four precious babies have been rescued from abortion through this vital ministry.

Herman Cain was happy to assist with this special fundraising event. He concluded the evening by encouraging the congregation to find something they are passionate about, rely on God for strength, work hard and become whatever they dream to be.

Pastor Benny Tate was thrilled with the successful evening and grateful for Herman's support of Melba's Manor Maternity Home.

[www.rockspringsonline.com](http://www.rockspringsonline.com)

[www.melbasmanor.com](http://www.melbasmanor.com)



# FULFILLING THE VISION

Alma, GA.



Sunday, January 9, 2011, was an exciting day for *New Vision Congregational Methodist Church* in Alma, Georgia. The sanctuary was full of enthusiastic worshippers as the Church gathered to celebrate a monumental accomplishment. By God's grace and for His glory, New Vision Church has completely eliminated one million dollars of debt in an eight year period. This amazing accomplishment is a testament to the faithfulness of God and His people.

Rev. Therman "Pet" Hayes, pastor, led the ceremony as various leaders, representing the church, assembled on the platform to "burn the note". There was a great spirit of enthusiasm as the church gave thanks to God for His blessings.



New Vision Church operates a daycare serving over a hundred children and families in the community of Alma. They had also paid off thirty-six acres of land available for future expansion.

One highlight of ministry is the dramatic presentation of "The Sacrifice" during Holy Week each year which traces the events of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. It is a major event in the community of Alma as hundreds have given their lives to Christ as a result of this ministry. The event is preceded by weeks of prayer and preparation. It is one glimpse of the church's desire to glorify God and reach people for Jesus.

New Vision Congregational Methodist Church is being led by a pastor and leaders with vision. The church is focused on the future as they fulfill the biblical principle that "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV). The Congregational Methodist Church celebrates God's blessings with New Vision and applauds their efforts as they strive to fulfill God's vision for His Church!

*"Where there is no vision,  
the people perish..."*

*Proverbs 29:18*



# **CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL METHODIST CHURCH**



Rev. Wayne Reed

There is much to thank and praise God for. Often, we in the Church, miss the stunning acts of God's mercy and blessings. We relish these stunning acts of God's mercy and blessings.

Our congregation got its start in conflict. We came from United Methodism where it seemed to us that the sacredness of Jesus Christ had been replaced with other titles, people and acts. We braved the popular current and left in 2008 to form Snellville CMC. We met in a Senior Citizens Center and finally leased space in an office building. For some who came - it didn't seem like 'church' without the steeple, choir and pews. Jesus didn't have those things - He had mountainsides, olive groves, market places, individual homes, the stern of a fishing boat, and the steps of the Temple in Jerusalem. So here's our beginning...

The growth pains are real in a new church start. We bathed those pains in prayer and diligence. Instead of growth we saw our numbers shrink. We celebrated our first year and breathed out prayers of thanksgiving. We incorporated the church and changed her name to Christ CMC. Into year two we found the struggles were even greater as our efforts



to announce our presence and offer Christ to the world went unnoticed. We persisted and sought prayers from the CMC.

In May 2010 we moved to a new location as we sought better exposure and a more welcoming location. One locale was available for sale but we couldn't afford it and we found a renovated house in which to worship and be Christ's church gathered.

Suddenly things began to change. In July a friend of the congregation asked me, "If you had your druthers, where would you like to be?" I told him wherever God placed me. He persisted, "That place that we looked at is a foreclosure and we can get the price right." I reminded him that we had no money. He said it was his mission from God to find a way. I shut up and let God work. We prayed and prayed and prayed while our friend worked - him and God. Challenges seemed to be at every turn yet we prayed on.



On Sunday December 12<sup>th</sup> Christ Congregational Methodist Church worshiped for the first time in our new facility. Being patient and quiet while God works is not a human quality. We are humbled by God's mercy and His grace. On Christmas Eve we celebrated Candlelight Communion in the honor and glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!! We covet your prayers and thank you for joining us in prayer as our ministry grows.



# Henrietta Congregational Methodist Church

Converse, LA.



From left to right: Sarah Price, Irma Smith, Dianne Clark, Jerry Smith, Joe Ann Hill, Sarah English, Anna Ebarb, Betty Springer, Lisa Perkins

The Henrietta CM Church has been blessed and as a result they have been able to make additional improvements to their church campus. Additional concrete sidewalks have been poured, a new handicap with hand-rails is under construction and new Former pastor, Rev. Weymon Rodeheaver, conducted a revival in fall of 2010. The church had a week of renewal with life decisions made that



Pastor -Rev. and Mrs. Charles Clark, (Diane)

resulted in changed lives. Rev. Rodeheaver recruited HCMC to assist in a special project of making quilts for two orphanages he is partnered with in Mexico. Within six weeks the church had completed twenty two quilts. The ladies under the leadership of Irma Smith. Jerry Smith leads the Men in Action. This fine group of men recently returned from a trip to the border. They joined other workers in building a church "stateside."

## Liberty Hill CMC Pastor Don Henley Presents

### License to Preach

Heflin, AL.

Pastor Don Henley along with Alabama Annual Conference Chairman, Rev. Bobby Jones and



Bro. Mulkey, Rev. Henley

Director of Church Ministries, Rev. Keith Merritt formally presented Mr. David Mulkey with the License to Preach on January 2, 2011. Brother David preached with passion prior to being honored by the church with the framed license and a generous love offering. David is a graduate of Cleburn County High School and is now attending University of Alabama Birmingham, where he is majoring in Biology. He will be applying for medical school and aspires to be a pediatrician. He was called to preach at age 13 under the minister of Rev. Henley. Having held the Exhorters license for one year, the license to preach in 2010, David was granted renewal of the License to Preach at the 2011 Alabama Annual Conference. In addition to his college studies he is working on the ministerial courses offered through the President's Office of the CMC. We congratulate David and more importantly support him with our prayers. David's parents are Neal and Theresa Mulkey.



Liberty Hill CMC congregation



Rev. Keith Merritt, Bro. David Mulkey, Rev. Don Henley, Rev. Bobby Jones



# CARING FOR THE AGED BY H.B. LONDON

## (FOCUS ON THE FAMILY / PASTOR TO PASTORS)



In my reading this week, I ran across an interesting statistic. Here it is: in 2008, the population in the United States of those 65 and older totaled 39 million, or 13%. By 2020 the number of older people will increase to more than 72 million, or 20%. That represents a whole lot of people.

As a pastor, I always said there are three things you can count on with the senior adult: **1)** They are most always on time for an event. **2)** They are faithful to pay registration fees. **3)** They usually say "thank you" for any attention they receive. Now you understand, my findings are not scientific, but come from a lot of years of experience. I also know that those age 55 and above helped to underwrite a great deal of my church's budget. That is true for us at Focus on the Family.

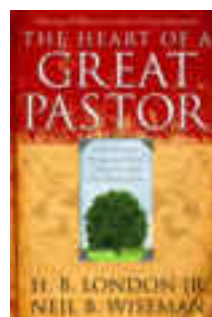
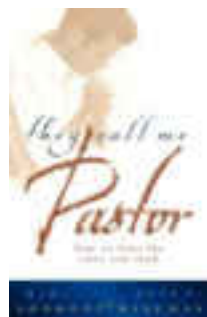
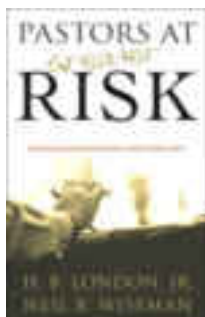


Yet, many senior adults that I talk with feel overlooked, undervalued and at times taken for granted by those in church leadership. I hope that is not the way you view the "seniors" in your church. If you do, you are making a huge mistake. Those 55 and older can help to validate the success of your ministry or, in many ways, they can destroy your ability to lead.

I know the marketing world lives in the 18-48-year-old demographic, but the church is different because its very existence is founded on those who have prayed, paid and stayed for decades. They have remained faithful through the good times and bad.

**A simple suggestion:** provide for your senior adults. Ask them to volunteer, create a mentoring program, have a monthly lunch in their honor, provide transportation for them to medical appointments. Whatever you do, please do not forget those who are literally captives in nursing homes and retirement villages.

Last week while in California, I visited a 93-year-old colleague of mine. He had recently suffered a stroke. The few minutes I spent with him brought joy to his life and encouragement to mine. As I walked the halls of that place and looked into the eyes of patients in wheelchairs, I wondered if they had a pastor or belonged to a church who would remember to pay them a visit. I am hopeful that they did.



***"Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness"*** (Prov. 16:31).

<http://www.parsonage.org/info/hblbooks.cfm>

# Navigating Life Transformation

By Dr. Chris Lohrstorfer

God's grace is transformational. This is the foundation to what became the Wesleyan Revival. God is moving each of us to a reflection of His Son, and that is likely to be a painful transformation. That is why the Christian life is not the easy way, or the comfortable path. How should we then prepare ourselves for change, and how do we insure that we experience the life-change that God wants to bring to us?

You have no doubt heard of a mid-life crisis – that phase of life when change meets the reality of our pride and stubbornness. It is as much a crisis as you make it. Some counselors like to call it “life transformation.” They will tell you “change is natural; it is even good if you respond correctly to it.” The same is true about grace-driven change. Let me give you the steps to react to life-transformation in a way that will make it the most profitable for you.



## Accept That Change is Coming

I was nearly offended several years ago when one of my students had the nerve to identify me as “middle aged.” There is something I wanted to resist about that. The problem with age and the changes it brings is that it comes with loss. Loss of dreams, loss of prospects, the loss of image. I think one of the reasons we often resist the change that grace brings, is that we fear loss. How do you deal with this reality? Look yourself squarely in the mirror and admit that it is time for change. Your Christian experience cannot, and really should not stay the same. The sooner you accept the reality that you need change, the easier it will be to spot it and receive it. There will be loss. Your status quo will be ravaged. Your pride will be challenged.

## Release Your Own Comfort and Support

There is something in the human mind that automatically resists change. We gravitate toward comfort. We will search out a comfort zone at every turn and cling to it. If you are to get the best out of change, you have to release your comfort zone. Turn loose of any support system you are using for a crutch to tell yourself you are OK. The fact is we often don't trust God as much as we think we do. It is easy to say “I trust you with my life” and more difficult to let loose and allow Him to move you where he wants you to be. Maybe we should daily take account of where we are, say out loud those things we know God is transforming, and concentrate our hearts on trusting Him to bring us to a different place.

## Witness Your Own Life

One of the final stages of dealing with life-transformation is to see it happening. Let God's work be seen in your daily life and in the testimony you present to those around you. The transformation God brings will be to make you more like Jesus. Where is that evident? How are you letting that shine in your life and in your ministry? At this time of change, ask God to give you new ways to display His grace. When you see it in action, you will know it was the best thing for you.

***“Let your light so shine before men...”***



## CMC PEOPLE AND PLACES...



FROM TOP LEFT TO RIGHT-Brashers CMC Children AL; Rev. Mark Mills TX; Rev. Cregg Puckett & Rev. Dan Rhodes TX; Rev. Puckett & Rev. Bobby Roberson MS; Melissa Puckett, Rev. Bobby Bentley, wife Angie and son Justin AL; Rev. Raymond Robbins, wife Linda, Rev. Puckett, Brian McCarthy, Rev. Ned Chipley Rev. Dan Rhodes, wife Jan, Rev. Bob Whitehead, wife Diane TX; Dr. Benny Tate, Rev. Puckett GA; Youth Blast TN; Dr. Wilton Fowler TX; Rev. Charles Thomas, Rev. Ben Gerald, Rev. Edna Fowler TX, Missionary Joe Kunkle, Pastor Billy Harrell, Rev. Puckett MS; Young's Chapel CMC MS; Kittrell Sanctuary MS; Weaver CMC AL; Eastridge Park CMC TX; Kittrell CMC MS; Daniels Chapel TX; MT Vernon CMC MS.



# THE RHYTHM OF GOD'S TIME

By Matt Garrett

In my kitchen there is a sound that is ever present. It is low, and it never varies in tone or volume. Sometimes I notice it, but most of the time I don't. It is the sound of refrigerator hum – constant, never fluctuating, and boring. Now and then I will play music while I am in the kitchen, which is quite a differing sound than refrigerator hum. The music has beats and rhythms. There are melodies and patterns that make the sound more interesting and enjoyable. Two sounds in my kitchen – refrigerator hum and music from my iTunes playlist.

Time is a lot like sound. Sometimes life seems like a refrigerator hum. We wake up. Brush our teeth. Get dressed. Eat breakfast. Change diapers. Commute to work. Do laundry. Go to class. Eat lunch. Pick up kids. Go to soccer practice. Cook dinner. Pay bills. Clean house. Go to bed. And then do it all over again the next day. Same old thing over and over, never ending, never varying, it is the refrigerator hum of life.

Now God did not intend our lives to be like that of the refrigerator hum. How do we know? Because God gave us Sabbath. Six days we are to labor and do all our work, but the seventh day we are not to do any work. Without the Sabbath day life is work, work, work, work, work, work, and work. But according to God's design life is six, one, six, one, six, one, six, one, six, one. Do you see the rhythm? Can you feel the beat? God is a God of the groove, not the refrigerator hum.

Our Creator knows how we are wired; He knows what we need. God knows that time, like sound, is better when it is broken up. This is why God gave His people the weekly Sabbath and the yearly festivals. The early Christians understood this, and they developed what has become known today as the Christian Year or the Church Calendar.

The Church Calendar is designed around the life of Christ. Each year, the Church observes the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ, celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit, and anticipates Christ's coming again. The Christian Year does this by the observance of seasons, blocks of time dedicated to reflecting on the implications of Christ's saving acts. Because one day is not enough time to reflect on the implications of God coming into the world as a man, there are Twelve Days of Christmas. And because one day is not sufficient enough to ponder the significance of the Resurrection, there are fifty days of Easter.

There are three major seasons in the Church Calendar: Advent/Christmas, Lent/Easter, and Pentecost. The Christian Year begins with Advent, a four-week season of anticipation and preparation for the coming of Christ, followed by Christmas, the twelve-day period celebrating the Nativity. Lent is a forty-day period of repentance and preparation for the death and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost is celebrated fifty days after Easter; it is when the Holy Spirit came, and the Church was born as described in Acts 2.



The season that we are currently approaching in the Christian Year is Lent. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (this year it falls on March 9), seven weeks before Easter. On Ash Wednesday, we are reminded of our sins and shortcomings and the resulting consequence—death. The pastor places ashes on our foreheads with the words, “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.” With the words of God to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:19), we are reminded of our mortality. Ashes are a sign of mourning in the Bible as seen in the lives of Job (Job 2:8), Mordecai (Esther 4:1), and many others. The ashes are also a sign that we are truly sorry for our sins and desire to repent.



Lent is also a time of fasting. Many give up sweets or television during the season, and others add something to their life such as visiting the sick, giving to the poor, or more prayer. The Gospels teach us that after His baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness and fasted for forty days. This is why Lent is a forty-day period of fasting and preparation for the death and resurrection of Jesus. The final week of Lent is known as Holy Week. Beginning with Palm Sunday, Holy Week takes us through the final days of Jesus leading up to His crucifixion. On the day of Jesus death, Good Friday (the Friday before Easter), many churches have Good Friday services reflecting on the events of Christ's death and remembering that it was for us that He died.

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew, a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:2-8

The season of Lent is a sober time, but like Ecclesiastes teaches there is a time for everything. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance. Life is like that; it has its ups and downs. We are not always on the mountain top, and the Church Calendar reflects that. If Lent is the season for crying and mourning because of our sins and the death of Jesus, then Easter is the season for laughing and dancing because of the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ. Easter is the longest season of the Christian Year lasting fifty days. The Church takes extra time to celebrate what God has done in the world through the resurrection of Jesus. We do not fast during the season of Easter because it is a time of celebration for our Savior is risen! This is the time to preach the implications of the resurrected life. Easter ends on Pentecost Sunday (this year it falls on June 12). It reminds us that we cannot live the resurrected life by our own power. We need the Holy Spirit in us, which is what Pentecost is all about.

For many of us, Easter Sunday sneaks up on us and catches us by surprise. This is partly because Easter occurs at different times each year. The significance of the Resurrection is so great that its celebration should not catch us unaware. The early Christians understood this therefore creating a forty-day time of preparation for Resurrection Sunday which became Lent. If we choose to observe Lent and ready our hearts and souls for the Resurrection of Christ, we will find our celebration of Easter a more meaningful experience. It is only after we go through the wilderness, betrayal, suffering and death with Jesus that we can truly celebrate the Resurrection.

***Easter is the season  
for laughing and dancing  
because of the resurrection  
of our Savior Jesus Christ.***



**Easter spells out beauty,  
the rare beauty of new life.**

**S.D. Gordon**

# Catch the Trade Winds



By Jan Rhodes

*"...Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.*

*After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.*

*When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land,  
buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.*

*During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.*

*When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.*

*But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! I AM. Don't be afraid."*

*"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."*

*"Come," he said.*

Years ago, Mark Twain said, "...throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

When our children were growing up, my husband and I taught them to navigate independently...and then they took those skills and sailed right out of our home. And a part of me hated the outcome of that healthy process.

Early one morning, in line at Java Jacks, an acquaintance half-jokingly remarked, "How dare my daughter grow up and start a life of her own and have children and live so far away!" Honestly, I'd never even liked the woman until that moment—then I felt like we were sisters.

When Dan and I completed our family with just two children, spaced 19 months apart, it seemed like a good idea at the time; but after April married and Joshua left for graduate school the same weekend almost four years ago, we wondered just how smart we'd really been. Then, two years later, when Joshua's truck rolled down our driveway toward a whole new life apart from us, we cried and wondered again.

We know we're blessed. Both kids have living relationships with the Lord, strong work ethics, fun personalities, and have enriched our family with an amazing son-in-law and a wonderfully sweet daughter-in-law. We're positive they'll accomplish more in life than we ever have.

*And yet...when they left, I was so incredibly sad.*

That early June morning, after the taillights rounded the pond's levee bend, and sounds of the old Dodge had faded away, Dan and I went back inside our still house. I lay down to toss and turn. It was already 4:30 and I knew the alarm would soon sound. And then, when it did, Kenny Chesney sang to me, "...don't blink...life goes faster than you think."

*Lord, that is not funny!*

Life is confusing. How could the childhood days of parenting crawl, but the later years dance away so quickly? How could I feel so connected to the past, yet be so separated by time?

I got up and tackled the piles of stuff left behind after a boyhood room is finally vacated. Joshua and Jessie, his then future-wife, had sorted unwanted things into bags for Goodwill and trash; but when I saw bottle rockets poking through one bag, I decided to do some resorting.



They'd discarded enough old unexploded fireworks to blow our trash collectors to kingdom-come. I pictured a bold headline: **Local Pastor and Wife – Suspected Terrorists in Garbage Truck Attack**. I figured, even with a good attorney, we'd still never find anyone willing to collect our trash again.

I have some pictures, taken earlier that summer, of Joshua deep water-soloing the Arch—a stunning natural limestone bridge. It's located just off the isle of Mallorca, Spain and towers 65 feet over the sparkling sapphire Mediterranean Sea. Deep water soloing means climbing rock structures, over deep water, using only hands and feet—no ropes, harnesses, or protective gear. It's easy for me to understand why the Europeans call the sport Psychobloc. My son, however, assured me he'd had no problems—it was completely safe because he was over water—and he'd only fallen 3 times from about 21 feet up.

And my thought was, *“And what if you'd hit your head when you tumbled down?”*

I'm pretty sure his climbing skills were born on a Little Tyke's tree house. One morning, when he was less than two, I heard several loud thumps from his bedroom. Every time I'd investigate, he'd grin at me from the small raised platform, and I'd go back to work. Finally though, I caught him and watched as he jumped from the roof of his tree house, sailed across three feet of floor, and landed on his bed...slamming his small body and the mattress into the wall.

I rearranged the furniture and didn't hear any more thumps, but did walk by just as he leaped from the tree house roof to the middle of the bedroom floor. The threat of a spanking finally convinced him to retire from climbing and jumping.

*But, he eventually outgrew spankings.*

After both kids had left home, my feelings would swirl together...joy and sadness...laughter and tears...sometimes it was hard to tell exactly where one ended and the other began. I liked the words of old King Solomon, “What has been...will be again, what has been done...will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 1:9) First we come and then we go.

I've always prized independence, and so, in love, I choose to be proud of their independence and adventures. And most days I agree with theologian William Shedd, from back in the ocean-faring days of the nineteenth century, “A ship is safe in harbor, but that's not what ships are for.”

Ultimately, I desire their lives to be amazing voyages that finally sail back to the shores where they began—the arms of God. One of my son's favorite quotes is from C. S. Lewis, “If I find in myself a desire...which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is...that I was made for another world.”

With apologies to Henry Van Dyke, who, years ago, penned the original verse:

One day my loved one will stand beside me upon the  
seashore.  
At just the right moment, I will lift my white sails to the  
morning breeze...

And start for the blue ocean.

I will be an object of beauty and strength.

And he will stand...and watch me...until...at length...

I hang like a speck of white cloud...

Just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each  
other.

Then someone at his side will say:

“There, she is gone!”

“Gone where?”

Gone from his sight...

That is all.

I will be just as large in mast and hull and spare...  
as I was when I left his side.

And I will be just as able to bear my load of *living freight*  
to my destined port.

My diminished size will be in *him*, not in me.

And just at the moment when someone on that shore  
behind me says:

“There, she is gone!”

There will be other eyes watching my coming,

And other voices ready to take up the glad shout:

*“Here she comes!...”*

*Here she comes....here she comes.*

(And that is dying)

Revival begins in the individual's heart. Let it begin with you on your face alone before God. Turn from every sin that might hinder. Renew yourself to a new devotion to the Saviour.





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