

CELEBRATING NEW LIFE AND NEW CHURCH PLANTS

MOMENTUM

ISSUE #13 • OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF COLORADO BAPTISTS

[COLORADOBAPTISTS.ORG](http://coloradobaptists.org)

MOVING FORWARD FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL

PRESS ON

Colorado Baptists are "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead" in spreading the gospel of Christ through our state.

+ UNDERSTANDING GOD'S HEART FOR REPLANTING AND REVITALIZATION



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

I AM CONSTANTLY ASKED THIS QUESTION and not just since COVID. Many of us ask this question at various times in our lives. Maybe we have just finished a big project and we look around and think, “where do we go from here?” I had a friend that just finished his Doctorate of Ministry and he said, “where do I go from here?” We might be thinking about COVID and think, “where do we go from here?” I believe that this is a question we ask all the time, and if we don’t then I am concerned. I want you to know that God has the answer and he doesn’t want us to just sit, wait, and be inactive. He says that we are to press on!

“Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:13-14

As you read this passage you see in verse 13 a statement, “forgetting what lies behind.” That statement is very interesting. Can I really forget what lies behind? Well probably not, but it means to not let the things in your past control you *now*! That is easier said than done, but my God is more concerned about your today than he is about your yesterday. Let me stop and say, if you are unsaved then God does want you to deal with your yesterday and He has already paid the price for your yesterday, but He wants you to ask Him for forgiveness of your yesterday sins. God does not want you to let your past control your future. Whether that past is amazing or whether it is difficult ...



God says “press on.” I want you to know that your Colorado Baptists and Foundation staff are pressing on.

The Bible passage goes on to say, “straining forward to what is ahead.” Yes, that is what I am doing, and that is what your staff is doing here at the Convention and the Foundation. We are “straining” with all that we have to reach out to our churches and to the people of those churches. We are so excited to be a part of your *Next Step*, or to be a part of your next activity or concern, whatever that might be. I recently had a church reach out because their treasurer had passed away, they were in need and my staff at the Foundation met their need. Our staff is in the habit of doing just that, meeting needs for our churches.

As your Interim Executive Director let it be known that I am excited to come alongside of you. I am here for you and available. Contact me at any time.

I do have one request. Please be in prayer for the Executive Director Search Team. They are seeking the Lord and working diligently to lead and guide as the Lord directs. Pray for them and pray for our new Executive Director, whomever that may be. I am excited to see what God is going to do.

As I close, it is my hope that I will see you at our Annual Meeting this year! It has been way too long and I can’t wait to see you, my friends. We are so excited to be able to gather together once again and we anticipate all that God is going to do! Until then, Let’s *press on, forget, and strain forward*.

Doug B. Lohrey
Interim Executive Director



How can we serve you? ColoradoBaptists.org

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From the world's perspective, there seems to be little hope for dying churches. However, when we see the heart of God in His Word, we have much reason for hope. Hope that God will do what only He can do: breathe new life into the dry, dusty bones of churches all over the world for His glory.



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RISE+ REBUILD

COLORADO BAPTISTS ANNUAL MEETING



*OCTOBER
11-12*



HILTON - FORT COLLINS • 425 W PROSPECT ROAD • FORT COLLINS, CO 80526



SEND Network COLORADO

Our church planting leadership provides resourcing, training, and care for planters throughout our state. Send Colorado is our way of communicating that there is a network committed to planting churches everywhere for everyone.





Church plant celebrates new life and launch

City Light Fort Collins had their official public launch on Easter Sunday. They had a great turnout in their community and celebrated new life through baptism! God is building His church and we are celebrating the gospel impact church plants are having across the state!



Church 8025 rejoices over new life in Christ

Church 8025, a new church plant in Thornton, celebrated their first baptisms and are rejoicing over new life found in Christ! Join us in praying for them as they walk alongside and disciple these believers in their faith!



Journey Point Church provides backpacks in their community

Journey Point Church partnered with Send Relief/NAMB to provide 200 backpacks of food to underprivileged children in the Central Park community. We celebrate their impact as they serve and meet the needs of the community in which God has called them to and pray for more open doors to love and serve!





BY JOANNA ZUNIGA • VERDAD Y VIDA, MONTROSE, CO

JUST PASSING BY

WHEN I WAS YOUNG GIRL we would often travel to Mexico to visit my grandparents. They lived in a small town across the border south of Brownsville, Texas. At the time we lived in San Antonio, TX where it was about a 5 hr drive. In view of our safety, considering that my mother was a single mom with four children we would often travel with my uncle.

Admittedly, my mom and uncle would talk through the whole trip! In their conversations they went on and on about things such as work, family, and health. We didn't have smart phones or any other modern electronics that we could bring along to help keep us entertained. My siblings would fall asleep but I usually stayed awake. Often, I would eavesdrop on my uncle and mom's conversation.

Each time we would enter Mexico I would notice that the tone of my uncle and mom's voices would begin to change and their conversation would shift. They would begin to converse about all the violence and corruption that was taking place. Furthermore, they would talk about people being kidnapped and tortured. Homes that were abandoned, people missing, children missing. I would become terrified!

Everything that they conversed about would suddenly begin to turn vivid in my mind. I would look out the car window into the huge fields and somewhere out in the middle of nowhere I would see an abandoned home. It looked like an old neglected barn that was falling apart. I would wonder if maybe that was a house where someone might have been tortured. Or maybe a family once lived there with their children and is now missing.

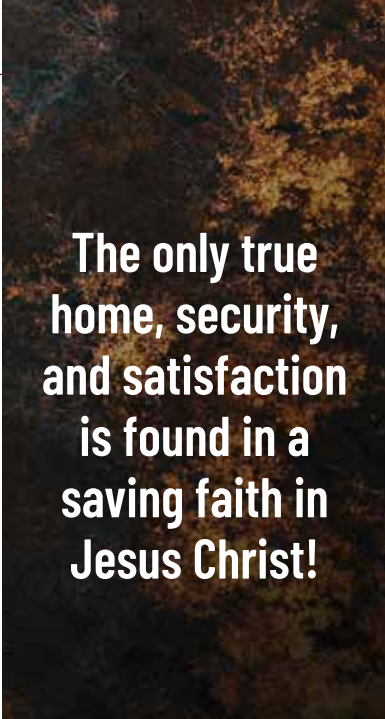
I am pretty sure my mom and uncle thought I was asleep like the rest of my siblings. But nope, I was wide awake listening in on all the details.

With my ample imagination I would envision all the violence right before my eyes. I learned to become alert and aware of my surroundings. Consequently, I became fearful of the long, unpaved, and isolated roads with open fields and silos. Often, we traveled several miles without seeing any people or vehicles. My uncle said it was extremely dangerous and because of that he refused to travel by night.

I wondered what would have become of us if our car broke down and we became stranded. Would we be kidnapped? Would we ever be able to reach home safely?

Eventually we would arrive at my grandparent's house and I would jump for joy! I felt a huge sense of relief and truly believed that no one could ever hurt us at grandpa's house. We were safe! I enjoyed being there. However, I knew we were just there for a short amount of time and it was not our true home.

Nonetheless, when it was time to go home and our driving journey began, the anxiety would return. The vivid images of violence would return. In spite of the anxiety a wonderful, hopeful, and recollected thought would always come to mind and it would penetrate my heart, "we are just passing by and we'll be home soon!" Truly, I experienced peace in my heart knowing that we were almost home.



**The only true
home, security,
and satisfaction
is found in a
saving faith in
Jesus Christ!**

The anticipation of being home calmed my anxious heart!

For all believers in Christ our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 3:20)

I have to remind myself that this world is not my permanent home! I am just passing by. The believer's true home is in heaven!

In this fallen world we will experience pain and sorrow. We may suffer loss, sickness, betrayal of friends or loved ones. Friends or family may reject us, or perhaps ridicule us because of our faith in Christ. We may hear news about corruption, war, or illnesses that are unheard of that may cause us to panic. Consequently, we may fear for the safety of our children or maybe even fear our very own safety while we are shopping.

Certainly, this world was not created to give us security or satisfaction.

Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have

overcome the world." (John 16:33)

God is mighty and powerful. He does not move or change. He is loving, merciful, holy, sovereign, all-knowing. We can trust Him. We can call out to Him. We can find Him and He will be found by all who truly seek Him! And He will make himself known. He will answer those who seek Him wholeheartedly.

He brings us out of the dark valleys and helps us when we become weak. He gives strength when we seem to have no strength, encouragement when everything seems to discourage us. He will give us joy in the middle of affliction and pain. He will guide us when we can't see. He will teach us when we submit. He will show us the way when we can't see the way. He will give us wisdom when we don't know what to do. He is a good Father!

And one day all believers will be home. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4)

The only true home, security, and satisfaction is found in a saving faith in Jesus Christ!

Romans 10:9-10 reads, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."



NO KID IS ASKING

BY TOSHA WILLIAMS

Vanguard Church, founder of Mommy Disciple Me

Should we have both titles? Should we gear this towards parents and not just moms? Or just leave it since her ministry is Mommy Disciple Me?

“Mommy Disciple Me!”

Let’s be honest—you’ve probably never had one of your kids ask you this. I’ve certainly never had one of my five kids say this phrase! Kids ask moms for a lot of things, but—“Mommy Disciple Me!”—probably not.

And yet, come to think of it, our kids usually don’t ask us to teach them how to eat solid food, how to look both ways before crossing a street, or how to navigate social media, either. There are so many truths our kids need to know that they never, ever ask us to teach them.

But we do teach them these, and so many more things, because we know how important these truths are to life.

The same is true for teaching our kids about God and His Word. As Christ followers, we know that discipleship is our calling. Jesus commissioned His followers to: “Go into all the world and make disciples...”

What better place for families to do this than with our own kids?

We disciple our children by teaching them to love God and to love others, to value God’s Word, and to live according to the way Jesus commanded us to live.

But, how exactly do we do this? How do we teach our children all this? Moms do 1,001 things every day for our kids! Our schedules are overwhelming; our responsibilities are demanding. How do we fit discipleship into our lives along with everything else? And, oh goodness, what if our kids don’t want to be disciplined?

God has had something to say about this from the very beginning. In Deuteronomy, He instructed Moses to tell the people: “Only take

care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children" (Deut. 4:9-10 ESV).

The kids and grandkids and children God has entrusted to us may not be asking to be discipled, but God wants us to make sure they know what we have learned and experienced with Him.

Discipleship is intentionally planting the seeds, tending the soil, and cultivating the roots so that our kids have the chance to grow into strong fruit-bearing trees for the faith. Discipleship isn't a guarantee that they will follow God all the days of their lives, but it does give them the opportunity to know Him better because we have known Him.

And, the truth is, even though your kids may not be asking the overt questions, they do want to know who God is to you, what He has done in your life, why the Bible matters to you, and what your soul has experienced. In the days and years of relationship, families have the

amazing privilege of making God's ways known to the next generation.

Your kids may not be asking you to disciple them, but—whether they use the words or not—they are asking you to help them understand why your family believes in Jesus and in God's Word. Every parent has the privilege of days and years to speak faith into the next generation, and every church has the opportunity to encourage parents to do this.

Few kids are going to say, "Mommy Disciple Me!" However, their lives are asking the questions.

Let's intentionally answer them through discipleship.

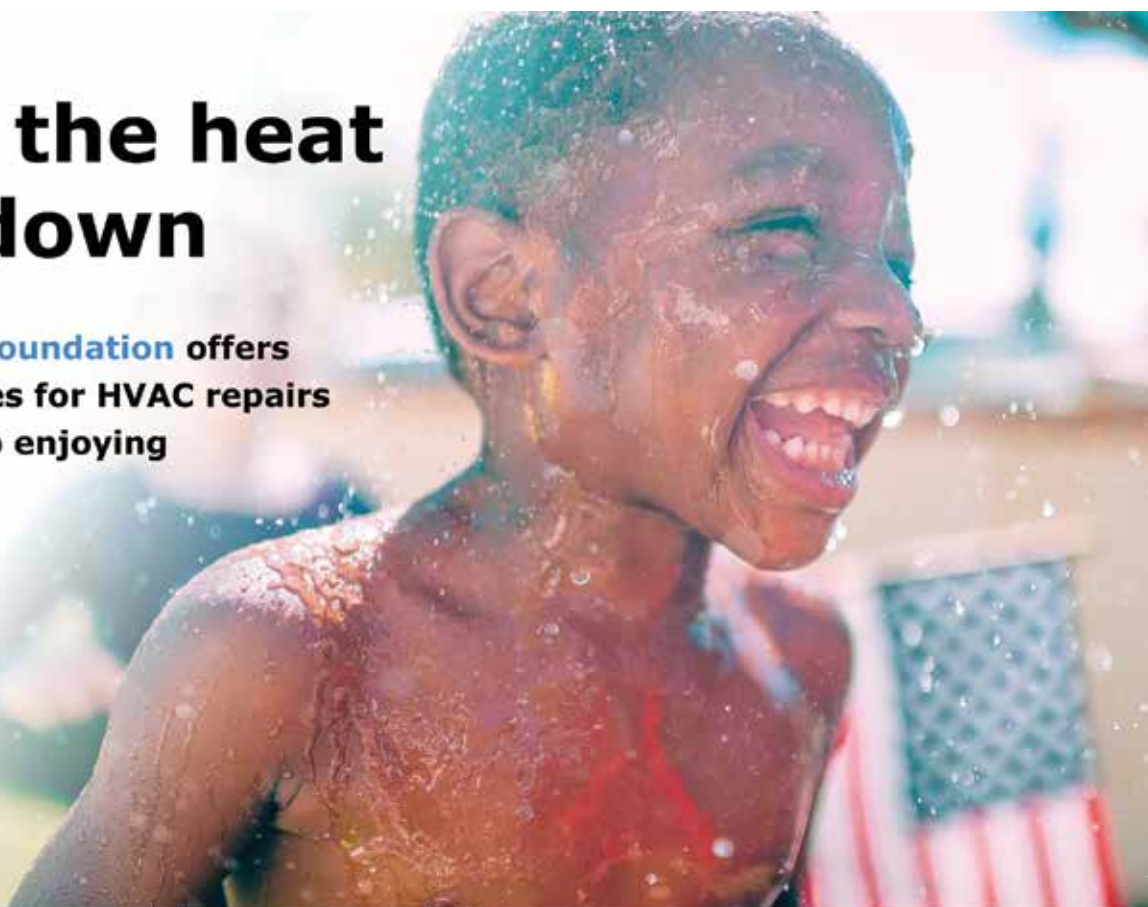
Mommy Disciple Me is a free, internet-based discipleship program for families of all ages. mommydiscipleme.org

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NEW FAITH DISCIPLESHIP



BY MARK SPENCE

Mississippi Avenue Baptist Church

HOW DO WE MAKE DISCIPLES OF PEOPLE who have no knowledge of Scripture and no background in church? This is a real problem for churches who reach those who have never been church. Once they come to faith, this group cannot just plug into church programs.

In the church I grew up in, when someone came to faith, they were baptized and then encouraged to attend Sunday School. Church involvement was understood as the measurement for spiritual maturity. The more you were on the church campus, the better a Christian you were.

Too often this measurement confused church activity with spiritual maturity.

We cannot simply plug new Christians into a small group whether it is on or off-campus. Fewer and fewer Americans are familiar with the stories of the Bible, or know how to navigate the Bible. We must take great care in plugging them into a small group where the leadership assumes

someone knows what to do when they say “open your Bible (app) to” or who even understands the reference to “Daniel & the Lions Den.” We have to develop a way to meet people where they are.

I fear you are not reaching lost people if your church is not struggling with making disciples of new Christians.

Some churches have a new believer’s class. Often the curriculum focuses on what a new believer needs to know in order to participate in church culture. This is a great tool, but I contend that it should not be the only solution as it may reinforce the church campus as the only place where discipleship occurs.

At Mississippi Avenue Baptist Church, we came up with a solution that will make disciples of new followers of Christ. This new tool is nicknamed the new believer’s backpack. It is a collection of simple tools that encourage three disciplines: prayer, reading Scripture, and evangelism. Once a Christian spends time consistently in prayer, daily in Scripture, and regularly in evangelism, they will be well on their way to becoming a mature disciple.

To develop the discipline of prayer, we included a tool called “Pray 24/7.” A brief explanation of prayer is on one side of the Pray 24/7 card and on the back are twenty-four boxes. The goal is to develop a consistent prayer life where the new Christian is encouraged to pray twenty-four times a week including seven times with someone else such as a family member, friend, or their small group.

The second tool is included to develop the habit of spending time in God’s Word daily. The goal is for the new Christian to spend seventy

days in the books of the Bible written by John, reading a chapter a day. To facilitate this goal there is a journal called, “10 Weeks in the Books of John,” a bookmark, and a copy of God’s Word.

Last, to help the new Christian share the gospel, we included an explanation of “Who’s Your One?” They are encouraged to pray for their one, read Scripture about evangelism, and ultimately to share the gospel with their one. To that end, we have included a tract and instructions on how to download a gospel app. Also, we have committed as a staff and deacons to partner with anyone who needs help sharing the gospel.

As our church shares the gospel, we have encouraged them to have one more conversation. They are to take the new believer’s backpack and explain each new discipline. While this may seem overwhelming, I have found that a new Christian knows they are supposed to pray, read

We must make disciples of new Christians. Jesus entrusted this responsibility to every Christian in the Great Commission. A mature Christian is one who regularly shares the gospel, daily reads God’s Word, and consistently prays.

God’s Word, and tell others about Jesus. They just don’t know how.

Now, don’t get me wrong. We believe the local church is crucial to the life of a new Christian. In addition to these three daily disciplines, we are encouraging the new Christian to be involved in a small group weekly. We have taken the extra step to train our leadership to meet people where they are in Bible study so as to leave no one behind.

We must make disciples of new Christians. Jesus entrusted this responsibility to every Christian in the Great Commission. A mature Christian is one who regularly shares the gospel, daily reads God’s Word, and consistently prays.

My hope for your church is to develop a system to encourage these disciplines, but we are willing to share our resources

with anyone interested.

You can contact Mark by emailing mark@mabc.church.

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GATEWAY SEMINARY
Rocky Mountain Campus



Middle row includes RMC grads (L to R) Charles Jackson, Bill Montgomery, and Aaron Wright receiving the Master of Theological Studies; Ben Fox, Master of Divinity; and Teresa Jackson, Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies.



Gateway Seminary president, Dr. Jeff Iorg (left), presents the Gateway Award in Church Planting to Ben Fox.

Back at it: Ash-out Efforts in Granby and Grand Lake

BY DENNIS BELZ
CBDR State Director

COLORADO BAPTIST DISASTER RELIEF HAS HAD A VERY BUSY YEAR even in the midst of Covid-19 regulations. We have not been able to provide any training since 2019, but this has not stopped us from our mission to bring help, hope, and healing to those in need. As you may remember, we deployed to the three wild fires in Larimer, Boulder, and Grand County last fall. We were able to complete the work in Boulder, but were then snowed out of Grand County for the winter.

Since January, I have been meeting and working closely with the Emergency Manager and other local officials in Grand County as they have requested that CBDR be their recovery team to work with them. The county is providing housing and heavy equipment for our teams. We are taking care of our own meals during this time. In our process of work, we always do an assessment of each property before we begin work and have certain requirements to meet in preparing our report forms. We were initially going to work with approximately 107 job requests but we are now completing assessments on all 300 plus properties that were damaged or destroyed. This is a huge effort that our CBDR assessment team began on May 20-30, 2021.

On June 5-August 7 the actual clean-up work began. This clean-up effort from the fire includes sifting, ash-out, loading roll-offs, and clearing the foundations and property with skid steers, mini-x, and by hand. We are being assisted by several of our SBDR partner states: Missouri, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Kansas, Nevada, Arizona, and possibly Hawaii along with our own CBDR Volunteers.



Disaster Relief Appreciation Day! Sunday, Aug. 22

If your church would like to have a speaker on Disaster Relief Appreciation Day, or even a different Sunday of your choice, please reach out to Dennis Belz (dbelz@coloradobaptists.org) as we would love to set that up. A great way that your church could show appreciation would be to recognize your members that are a part of CBDR and ask them to wear their CBDR gold shirts on that Sunday. Maybe even let them share a testimony about this ministry.

Our volunteers have been very busy, even through this time of COVID-19. Let's thank them for their outstanding service as they have given their all to Bring: Help, Hope, and Healing to those in need. As CBDR State Director, I want to thank you as churches for supporting these dedicated volunteers and praying for them as they deploy not only in Colorado, but across the country.

Tough work? Absolutely!
Dirty working conditions? Without Question!
Long Hours? Longer!
Blessed? Beyond measure!
Come join us! Embrace the hardest job you will ever love while Bringing: Help, Hope, and Healing to people in desperate need.
YOU can make a difference!

coloradoDR.org

Riverside Church, Denver Loses Church Camp in E. Troublesome Fire

During our summer deployments, we will also be working to assist Riverside Church, Denver in the clean-up efforts from the loss of their church camp. They lost all of their buildings on the camp property. We have trained some of the church members in the proper and safe way to do this work as we partner together during this time of loss.

In April, I had the pleasure of sharing about CBDR in the morning services at Vista Grande Church in Colorado Springs. It was great to see the positive response from so many members that want to be an active part of this ministry. Some of those members will deploy with us to Grand County and some shared they want to be prayer partners.



We always need prayer and volunteers. Check the CBDR website www.ColoradoDR.org for upcoming needs, training, and deployments.



THE FINANCIAL
FUEL FOR REACHING
EVERY PERSON
IN
EVERY TOWN,
EVERY CITY,
EVERY STATE,
AND
EVERY NATION

TAKING THE GOSPEL



Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

—MATTHEW 28:19

STEP INTO MISSIONS

GIVE TO THE COLORADO MISSIONS OFFERING

BY CLAUDEAN BOATMAN

Colorado WMU Executive Director

September is on its way. With it comes the Colorado Missions Offering in honor of Nicy Murphy. Miss Nicy, as she was known, came to Colorado as a young, single woman in 1955. Colorado was part of a five-and-a-half state convention when Miss Nicy arrived to serve as the first executive director of the Women's Missionary Union. She later served the Northern Plains Convention in the same role. In 1974 the state missions offering was named for her.

When she retired in 1976, back to Colorado Nicy came. She settled in Littleton and Arapahoe Road Baptist Church. She taught in Arapahoe Road's English as a Second Language ministry. She developed relationships with many internationals so she could share Jesus with them. Nicy passed away in 2012 in Amarillo, Texas, but her Colorado legacy remains.

Most people who knew Nicy have a "Nicy Story"—a moment or experience they shared with her that no one else had. Those moments were valued because Nicy valued people and knew how to show it. My own Nicy story happened in 1991. It reflects her character and grace.

The women of the Mesa Verde Association planned an overnight retreat at Hesperus Baptist Camp. Sydney Portis was Colorado WMU's Executive Director at the time. She and Nicy were going to the retreat. I was surprised to be invited to speak. Plans were made for the three of us to travel together, and I was to drive. The last thing my husband said to me as I pulled the van from the driveway was, "Don't let anything happen to Nicy."

The drive across the state was beautiful. The retreat was great. The time came to make the return trip—and I was too sick to drive. Sydney took my keys. Nicy did what Nicy did best: she served.

She made me a bed on the back seat, covering me with a blanket and folding a jacket for a pillow. She wet a damp cloth and wiped my face every little bit during the journey. She spoke gently and encouraged me to drink sips of water and to sleep. I felt like I was the most

important person in the world. Miss Nicy was taking care of me.

Later, I saw how Miss Nicy loved her Chinese students and how she encouraged the other ESL teachers. Her behavior was the same whether she was helping a sick young woman, teaching ESL, speaking at a retreat, or serving in a state convention role. She reflected the character of Jesus. She was a servant. She was an equipper. And she loved to share the Gospel.

That is why the Colorado Missions Offering is in honor of Nicy Murphy. The offering is used to help Colorado Baptists continue the work of Jesus in our state, much like Nicy did—supporting missions and equipping people. The funds are divided into seven categories:

- Associations (10%)
- State Missions (36%)
- Resort/Leisure Missions (8%)
- Disaster Relief (15%)
- Gateway Seminary, Rocky Mountain Campus (5%)
- Ponderosa Retreat Center (11%)
- Pastoral Care/Training (15%)

Consider a goal that your church could set for Colorado Mission Offering. Maybe your Bible study groups could set goals and celebrate with a fellowship when the goal is met. Create interest with prayer guides, posters, and videos. Ask a church planter, Disaster Relief volunteer, or resort minister to speak. If your area has a seminary student, invite them in. Use streaming services to allow those who can't physically be in your church to share.


Nicy once said, "My prayer is that future generations will never lose their excitement and enthusiasm for seeing lives changed, new churches started, and older churches reaching out to plant new ones. At the same time, we must keep our minds and hearts open to the necessity of reaching the millions in other countries who have never heard the name of Jesus."

Please echo Nicy's prayer that our excitement and enthusiasm for sharing Jesus in our state will grow. Ask God to help you lead your church in giving to increase our reach to the 90+% of our neighbors who don't know Jesus.

COLORADO MISSIONS OFFERING

IN HONOR OF NICY MURPHY

CONTINUING ONWARD



OFFERING SUPPORTS: Associational Missions • State Missions • Disaster Relief • Resort & Leisure Ministries • Ponderosa Camp • Seminary Students + more



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For resources, visit coloradobaptists.org/cmo



UNDERSTANDING GOD'S HEART FOR REPLANTING AND REVITALIZATION

BY MARK HALLOCK
Calvary Church Englewood

GOD DOES HIS BEST WORK
WHEN THINGS SEEM HOPELESS.

He always has. This is true when it comes to working in the lives of individuals, and it is also true when it comes to working in the lives of dying churches. God's heart is for His church, including churches that are dying. When considering the topic of God's heart for replanting, there are four biblical convictions that are critical for us to hold.

Conviction #1: God Desires to See Dying and Declining Churches Come Back to Life for His Glory.

Without a doubt, God desires to see dying and declining churches come back to life. One of the many things I love about God and Scripture is that it is so clear that in our weakness, He is strong. He's always looking for humble servants that He can use for His purposes and to bring glory to Himself. Everywhere in the Scriptures, whether you're talking David and

Goliath, or Jesus' disciples, or the Apostle Paul, the Lord always goes after and uses the "wrong" people. He chooses players on His team that you and I would never choose. He chooses the weak, the foolish, the uncool, and uses them in mighty ways.

He loves it when the world is saying, "That church is dead and done. That church just needs to shut the doors." That's when God says, "You watch. I'm ready to do my best work right here, right now." The Lord is like that, and He's always been that way. Let's praise Him for it!

In 2 Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 9-10, the Apostle Paul writes this:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

This is key to every one of us as believers and leaders in Christ's Church—that when we are weak, we are strong in the Lord. It's true as churches and congregations, as well. When a church recognizes its weakness and brokenness, it is then in a place of humility where the Lord does His best work. It is in that place that God does the impossible. It is in that place that God makes a church strong again and brings it back to life for His glory.

Conviction #2: God Not Only Has the Desire, but the Power to Bring Dying and Declining Church Back to Life for His Glory.

When it comes to replanting dying churches, God isn't sitting there wringing His hands and saying, "Oh boy, I sure wish that kind of thing could happen, but I really don't have the power to do anything about it." No, the Lord is the all-powerful, sovereign King of the universe. He not only has the desire but also the power to bring anything that is dead back to life, including a local church.

Ezekiel 37 is a great picture of the Lord bringing something dead back to life. At this point, both Jerusalem and the temple have been destroyed. Judgment has come. But God reveals Himself in this passage as a God of revitalization; as a God of resurrection.

In Ezekiel 37:1-6 we read this,

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD."

Only our God can do something as powerful and miraculous as bringing dead, dry bones back to life. He does this very thing with us as individuals and He does it with churches.

Conviction #3: True Church Revitalization Will Not Happen Unless a Congregation Returns to Their First Love: Jesus.

Dry bones won't come back to life and churches won't be revitalized unless a church returns to its first love, which is Jesus Christ. In Revelation 2:1-5, we read words that perhaps many of us in the church are familiar with. In this passage, the Lord is speaking to the church at Ephesus:

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: "The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. 'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.'"

This is a great church! This is a church that is steady and faithful. This is a church that has endured much, all the while remaining steadfast in the Lord. This is a congregation that is rock solid when it comes to understanding sound doctrine. This is a church that loves the Bible. There is much to be commended in this church. But notice what Jesus says next, in verses 4 and 5,

But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

The picture here is of a church that has its doctrine right, its missions giving is probably greater than any other in its local church association, it's doing all kinds of things right, and yet when Jesus looks at the heart of this church, He sees a people that are no longer in love with Him. They may say they are, but they aren't really. Their passion for Christ has dwindled. There's no zeal for the things of God. The study of God's Word has become simply an academic exercise. The Word is no longer setting the heart of this church on fire for evangelism and missions. Its head perhaps, but not its

heart. And so the Lord says, “If you don’t return to your first love, if you don’t do those things you did at first when you had a simple, childlike faith in me and love for me, unless you repent and turn back to me, I’m going to take your lampstand away.”

There’s one main reason why a church dies—because it loses its first love. It is when we lose our first love that we begin to lose everything. We lose our love for the truth. We lose our love for the lost. We lose everything. When we lose our love for the Lord and the things of the Lord, we increase our love for self and our own “kingdom” rather than God’s. And so we must beg God in all humility, “Oh Lord, change our hearts. Turn our hearts back toward you, that you would be the love and passion of our lives. Lord, may you be our greatest treasure in this life and forevermore!”

Conviction #4: When a Church Returns to Its First Love, Jesus, God Begins to Bring About Revitalization Through Three Types of Renewal.

When a church comes to the point of genuine humility, returning to Jesus and the Gospel as its first love, then and only then does God begin to bring about true renewal and revitalization. He does this through three types of renewal.

#1: PERSONAL RENEWAL

When a dying congregation’s leaders experience personal renewal, true congregational renewal begins. This starts with the heart of the leaders. Personal renewal means that leaders in the church recognize the need for more of the Holy Spirit. These leaders begin to grow in humility, love for people, and love for the lost. As leaders we cannot take people where we’ve never been. We cannot give what we do not have. This is why congregational renewal begins with personal renewal. And this is why our love for the Lord and His Word must be primary.

#2: RELATIONAL RENEWAL

In a church where leaders begin to experience personal renewal, relational renewal should naturally begin to follow. Relational renewal means that leaders are not only right with God, but now they are getting right with others. The leaders in a congregation are

"God loves His church. He loves His people. He loves to bring dead bones back to life. In this way, His heart is to breathe new life into dying congregations for the salvation of the lost, the joy of His people, and for the spread of His fame throughout the earth."

doing all they can to pursue peace, unity, and harmony with others in the congregation. Reconciliation marked by genuine kindness and love for other brothers and sisters in Christ should be a top priority.

#3: MISSIONAL RENEWAL

As leaders grow in their love for God and He begins to renew their hearts, it spreads out to others and results in relational renewal. This then begins to lead a congregation outside the walls of the church on mission. It’s inevitable—if the Spirit of God renews us the Spirit of God is going to align our desires with God’s desires; namely, living life on mission, seeking to reach those in the community with the good news of the Gospel.

Seeing a church get back on mission, focusing no longer on itself and its survival but on the lost and the surrounding community that deeply needs Jesus. This is God’s desire for dying churches. This is God’s heart for replanting and revitalization.

God loves His church. He loves His people. He loves to bring dead bones back to life. In this way, His heart is to breathe new life into dying congregations for the salvation of the lost, the joy of His people, and for the spread of His fame throughout the earth. From the world’s perspective, there seems to be little hope for dying churches. However, when we see the heart of God in His Word, we have much reason for hope. Hope that God will do what only He can do: breathe new life into the dry, dusty bones of churches all over the world for His glory.



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