



THE CENTRAL CONNECTION

From the Regional Director

"The Gift That Keeps Giving"



About fifteen years ago, Maurice Wright, a British farmer, bought a large painting from a neighboring farmer for less than four dollars and hung it in his barn. After collecting cobwebs for several years, the painting was noticed by the farmer's tax accountant. He wondered what it might be worth. Curiously, he took a color photograph and sent it to Christies, the well-known London auction firm. He learned that the painting might be the work of Thomas Daniell, a highly acclaimed nineteenth century artist. It turned out to be an 1808 Daniell. Art critics had been aware of its existence, but it had come to be known as the "Lost Daniell". Wright sold the painting at an auction for more than \$90,000. Imagine finding something like that in your barn! What if the tax accountant had not noticed the painting in the farmer's barn and considered its possible worth? It probably would still be hanging there.

At Christmas, we are faced with the challenge of buying gifts for family and friends. What will we get them and where will the money come from? Like farmer Wright, every one of us has riches to share with others and we don't even know it. We get so caught up in the commercialization of Christmas that we overlook the most valuable gift of all. The gift of ourselves.

Much of our giving is done because it's a Christmas tradition. We don't take time to ask why, we just do it. Sometimes we give only because someone else bought a gift for us and we feel obligated to buy a gift in return. Even worse, some of the gift giving in our society has strings attached and becomes a way of controlling or even seeks to "buy" another person's love.

Note to self. Some of the early Christians in the New Testament were written about because of their generosity. I'm sure the reason their story was included in Scripture was because "they first gave themselves". That is what it says in 2 Corinthians 8:5, "And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will." Their monetary gifts were a natural expression of their having first given themselves. I would say this is the secret for all true giving.

But how do we give ourselves this Christmas? We do this by becoming open and transparent. I was speaking at a church in our region and when I was done, I noticed something unusual. A young man in his twenties was standing in the back corner of the church by himself. He was all alone and he kept looking at me. It was if he was giving me a silent invitation or maybe even a dare to come into his world. People were all around and inviting me into meaningful conversations, but still I saw the silent invitation of his eyes. I beckoned to his call and I soon discovered that his mother had just died and he needed someone to talk to. What a blessing I had in hearing his heart and encouraging him to look to Jesus.

God is going to bring into our lives this Christmas hurting people who need to receive the best gift ever. It is the gift of a loving and listening heart. When they come, let us give them our understanding, acceptance, and unconditional love. I say this to you because forty years ago this Christmas someone obeyed the Lord and came into my world while I was serving in the military during the Vietnam era. My broken world led me down the road of self-destruction, depression, and eventually the contemplation of taking my life. A young Captain saw my hurt, shared the Good News of the Gospel and led me to a relationship with Jesus Christ.

To love is to give yourself and is that not the whole point of Christmas? God loved us so much that, to save us from our self-destructive sins, He gave Himself by giving His only Son, Jesus Christ. He in turn gave Himself for us and should we not do the same?

"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

This Christmas please keep this thought in mind. God's gift of divine love and the gift of yourself are of more value than all the expensive treasures of the world. They are free. They are already yours and mine. We just have to discover them.

Karen and I wish you and your family a wonderful Christ-filled Christmas. It has been a joy to serve you and your church the last three years as Regional Director. We look forward to serving you and

our Lord for many more years. Merry Christmas!

Pat Phinney, Regional Director



A Note From the Office at CB North Central . . .

Please make note of the **NEW INFORMATION** for the CBNC office. There have been a lot of changes and we want to make sure we keep in touch with each of you in the New Year. Also, the CBNC office will be closed the following days.

CBNC OFFICE CLOSED

Tuesday, December 24

Wednesday, December 25

Monday, December 30 thru Friday, January 3

I want to take a moment to thank my predecessor, Jean Wright, for all her hard work in the CBNC office over the previous years and all the help she has given me since I have taken this position. Thank you Jean and Merry Christmas to you and yours.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to wish each of you a Merry Christmas. Like everyone, I know that each of you are very busy, but my hope and prayer is that you have a wonderful Christmas celebration with time tucked in with your families and time to reflect on the gift of Jesus Christ.

Wendy Jonasen

Administrative Assistant

CB North Central

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Office Phone: 763-205-9330

NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS:

www.cbnorthcentral.org

NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES:

CB North Central Office: wendyj@cbnorthcentral.org
Pat Phinney, Regional Director: patp@cbnorthcentral.org
Pat's Home Office: 952-322-7173
Pat's Cell: 952-500-3743

Historic Tornadoes News Update

The Past 60 Hours

Posted by Daniel Bennett

"It is now Tuesday evening, a little after 11:00 PM central time. It has been about 60 hours since the tornado struck our town. This is the first time I've had the opportunity to turn on a computer and write down my thoughts. Let me share a few of them with you and give some updates on what is happening in our church and community."

[\(click here to read more\)](#)



Leadership in a Crisis

Posted by Daniel Bennett



"As we hit the two-and-a-half week mark post-tornado, I thought it might be useful to answer some questions people have asked me about leadership during this crisis.

I've been a little bit hesitant to write this article. To write an article entitled "leadership during a crisis" sounds a bit arrogant. It implies that the author feels he or she has successfully exercised leadership in a crisis and is now in a position to share thoughts with others-whether they want those thoughts or not!

So, let me start with some caveats." [\(click here to read more\)](#)

How Will Obamacare Affect YOU?

Articles written by Jon LaCasse of JKL & Co, Objective Insurance Broker

The Affordable Care Act has been one of the most controversial pieces of legislation of the past several decades.

One thing that everyone can agree on is that no matter what you think about Obamacare, it's going to have a widespread impact on you in many different ways. As a consumer of health care, you'll see the changes Obamacare will make in the way you get the medical care you need, as well as the way you get insurance coverage for your health care and how much you pay for it.

[\(click here to read more\)](#)

To find out "KEY POINTS TO KNOW ABOUT OBAMACARE" read another article by Jon LaCasse.

[\(click here to read more\)](#)

Just For You . . .



Coming in 2014 we are adding a special section just for Pastor's Wives. This contribution to the CBNC newsletter will come from Karen Phinney, wife of Pat Phinney, Regional Director. She has some great things in store and you'll definitely want to check this out. Pastors, if your wife does not already see this newsletter please forward her email address to us at

wendyj@cbnorthcentral.org.

Thoughts From A Cluster Leader

"Encourage One Another"

Yesterday the Lord brought to mind a pastor friend of mine from the East Coast. When that happens I often feel compelled to make a phone call and see what's going on in that person's life. When my old college buddy didn't answer, I left a voicemail requesting he call me back when it was convenient. About an hour later the seagulls on my ringtone started squawking. The area code, number, and profile picture informed me it was my friend returning my call. I closed my office door, sat down on my couch, and swiped my phone.

"How are you doing," I asked him?

"It's been a rough six months," he replied.

"What's happening," I probed.

This seasoned pastor responded, "I have been falsely accused and just went through an investigation by church leadership!"

[\(click here to read more\)](#)

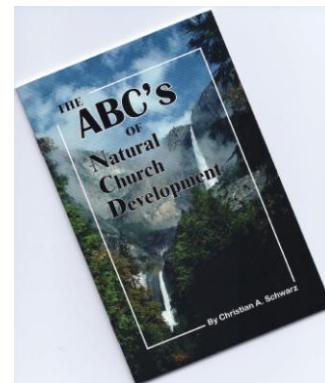
Pastor Jay Jentink

Calvary Baptist Church, Cedar Rapids, IA



Natural Church Development

Most pastors and leaders want to lead their churches to be healthy and vibrant. They want to have a great impact on their communities, but do not know where to begin. How does a leader make the best choice to advance the health of his church? Consider Natural Church Development.



NCD equips church leaders to accurately assess church health; refine vision, goals and strategies; revisit essential values; focus resources appropriately; and produce lasting health and growth in their churches. The NCD resource for a church has been \$250 for many years. Because of increased expenses from NCD, **the cost of this valuable resource from our office will now be \$300 as of January 1, 2014.** Desired coaching from a trained NCD consultant is additional.

There's still opportunity to save on this valuable tool. Call the CBNC office at 763-205-9330 to order before January 1st.

God's People Working Together

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:25

- Steve Hornbrook from Edwards IL, reports on the work day at First Baptist Church in Bushnell, IL.

Our workday at Bushnell concentrated on building repairs associated with a basement flood from a backed up sewer system that I believe happened this spring. The group also installed a security light and trimmed out some windows upstairs. Our group consisted of:

- Bushnell: Pastor Dave Eden, Larry & Andy from,



- Dallas City: Pastor Joe Stewart
- East Moline: Pastor Ron May
- Peoria: Pastors Lyall Sutton & Steve Hornbrook, Barry, Roger, Don, Doug & Bill

We were able to hang and mud some drywall after installing 3 new receptacles which were wired into two different circuits. We also installed 4 doors replacing doors that had been water damaged.



Dave provided lunch which Lyall served with a smile. We had a lot of laughs and good fellowship. Dave was very appreciative, he said it would have taken his church months to accomplish what the team knocked out on Tuesday.

I have attached a couple of pictures, we didn't ever get a complete work group picture, but we did get all the pastors in one place at one time.

*Steve Hornbrook
BFC Global Outreach, Edwards, IL*

From Church Law & Tax

- Just before Thanksgiving, a federal judge in Wisconsin ruled clergy housing allowances unconstitutional. Richard Hammar offers [key points](#) regarding the ruling.
- [Citizen Link](#) also provides an article regarding the clergy housing allowance - [by Bethany Monk](#)
- One Key, End-of-Year Task Every Church Should Do - [by Michelle Dowell](#)

Providing simple reminders can help ensure tax deductibility of donations for churchgoers



CB North Central Pastoral Cluster Groups

Illinois

Tuesday January 14 9:30am - 3:30pm

Wildwood in East Moline

Contact Mark Friday, First Baptist Church, Pekin IL at 309-347-5965

Michigan

Monday, January 13 10am - 12pm

Bethel Baptist Church, Jackson, MI

North Dakota/Northern Minnesota

Thursday, January 16 10am - 12pm

Skype

Central Minnesota

Monday, January 13 10am - 12pm

River of Life Church, Hastings, MN

Wisconsin

Saturday, January 25 9am - 1pm

Calvary Baptist, Eau Claire, WI



For a Pastor Cluster Leader in your area, [click here](#)



Please Pray For the Following Churches in Transition:

SENIOR PASTOR

- Mason Township Baptist Church - Cassopolis MI
- First Baptist Church - Plainwell MI
- First Baptist Church - Bradford IL
- First Baptist Church - Streator IL
- Delavan Baptist Church - Delavan IL
- First Baptist Church - Elmhurst IL
- Calvary Church at Village Green - Moorhead MN
- First Baptist Church - Whitehall WI

STAFF POSITIONS

- Bethel Baptist Church - Jackson MI DIRECTOR of FAMILY MINISTRIES
- First Baptist Church - Spring Lake MI ASSOCIATE PASTOR
- Oak Grove Church - Golden Valley MN ASSOCIATE PASTOR



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website: www.cbnorthcentral.org