



## THE CENTRAL CONNECTION

### From the Regional Director

#### *"Managing Conflict and Empowering People the Sequel"*



I met with a pastor last week that has been serving the Lord in ministry for thirty-seven years. He said to me, "The possibility of being able to serve in ways that might help and encourage churches in our region is invigorating . . ." Like my friend and colleague, all of us have been called to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and serve in the church to help her become spiritually healthy. We have dedicated our lives to the task of supporting the church to make committed followers of Jesus Christ. Part of that mandate involves the responsibility of helping the church understand the nature of conflict, so the presence of

unity and the bond of peace can be seen in the core of its spiritual health.

"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Ephesians 4:1-3

What do we do when we see disunity characterize the church? Human conflict is one of the dreadful consequences of sin entering the world. Because of sin, all human relationships are a struggle and are prone to conflict. In my thirty years of ministry experience as a pastor, I have learned to be smarter when it

comes to handling conflict. Last month I shared some conflict management principles I have gleaned over the years.

- Don't agree with conflict, if you don't.
- Disagreement can be healthy.
- Conflict is unavoidable and not necessarily bad.
- The problem is not the problem.

Here are a few more . . .

**Always Look Behind the Issues** - To cultivate relationships that enjoy the freedom of healthy disagreement, we need to develop an understanding of unseen motives. Seriously! How many of us have done some sort of counseling with one of our church members and we soon discovered that the reason they came in to talk was not the heart issue at all? Properly managing our conflict at church is much the same way. I have seen that surface issues in a conflict are like the tip of an iceberg. Underneath are unseen motives that can be destructive. I recently met with someone who was unhappy about the direction of their church. The person said that they were concerned for the heart and souls of lost people in the community. I sensed anger. After a few minutes of asking questions, I discovered an "unseen motive". I asked, "What is the one thing you want accomplished as we attempt to resolve this conflict?" The answer was honest, but not surprising. "I want the pastor fired!" James had it right when he spoke into the life of conflicted members in chapter 3:13-16. Unseen motives such as envy and self-seeking ambition are hidden issues that deter truth. However in 2 Timothy 2:24-26, Paul shows us that if our motives are right, then something can follow and that is repentance. Clearly if the motives are not correct, then our faith is of little value in the eyes of God. Yes, we have to deal with surface issues and the presence of unseen motives, but did you know we also have to identify the underlying beliefs of a conflicted person? I love what A.W. Tozer said in his book, "The Knowledge of the Holy". He said, "What comes into your mind when you think about God, predicts with certainty the spiritual future of that man." These beliefs about what we think about God shape not only why we are disagreeing in conflict, but also how we disagree. Don't forget to look at what people believe about God while in conflict.

**Watch for Signals** - I learned this lesson the hard way and with failures. I often saw the heat of conflict like a red light flashing at an intersection. Believe it or not there are other traffic signals to observe.

1. The YELLOW light in early conflict could be the need for self-protection. I am not saying that an effort to protect oneself is wrong in conflict. I just see that some are clearly out to protect themselves without regard for the needs and interests of others. Didn't Paul say in Philippians 2:3-4, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."? Wounded pride can drive a person to do some pretty unusual things in conflict. Watch for the yellow blinking light.

2. This next one is easy for me to recognize and that is the RED light. In my experience the red light is anger and it is an urgent warning demanding immediate attention. I have heard something like this statement so many times over the years, "I am angry, but Jesus was angry also." Really? Let us not be fooled. Anger is not just an expression of our emotions or a natural prerogative of a God-given attribute because He showed anger. Not buying it! Why then did James say, "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-21) Watching a brother lose their temper is a sure signal that something is wrong deeper than the conflict. It is normally an attempt to protect themselves against further hurt. It signals an unrecognized weakness in a person which usually tracks back to the core of their belief in God. When we ignore the yellow light of self-protection and the red light of anger, things happen in conflict.

3. I just love this last one and I look for it in every conflict mediation opportunity that God puts me in. It is the GREEN light of God's Wisdom and Peace. All too often I see people signal the yellow or red light and then just leave the church hurt. Occasionally I see people flash the green light of confession, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and ultimate peace with God and others. The green light is that wonderful path that Jesus followed when He confronted conflict. Did we see Him retaliate in anger? Did we see Him strike out to hurt others? Did we see Him run away? I think James saw it in his own brother when he said in 3:17-18, "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." We are promoters of peace within the church and when seen, it is a green light that can bring healing for all who live in His church. The green light of wisdom encourages the art of gracious disagreement. Like iron sharpening iron, it holds people accountable to the standards of God's Word when conflict arises. It moves people in the church to become the initiator in conflict that Jesus outlined in Matthew 18:15-17.

Don't misunderstand. We don't become children of God by mediating broken relationships. We become His children by trusting in the one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus prayed that His followers in John 17:21 would be one so that the world would believe that He was sent from God. May we be answers to His prayer.

*Pat Phinney, Regional Director*

## There's Still Time - MOODY PASTORS' CONFERENCE

### **Theme: "re/FOCUS"**

-Moody Bible Institute has a burden and passion for pastors. Each year the campus is host to one of the premiere conference events for pastors from a variety of denominations and from all over the globe. Through some of the most gifted communicators of God's Word, powerful worship, skilled breakout session leaders and fellowship with over 1,000 fellow pastors, this conference is a week that can transform your entire life!



For more information on registration, schedule, cost and more [click here](#).

## **Pastor's Wives . . . Just for You**

### **"The Power of God"**

*Easter is that time of the year when we are reminded once again of the POWER of God. The POWER to raise Jesus from the dead. The POWER to forgive our sins. The POWER available for us to live a life that is pleasing to Him. As I have been thinking about that resurrection POWER, I thought this would be a great time of the year for us to pray that our husbands would*

experience that *POWER* in their daily lives. Here are a few verses to get us started .....

I pray that in all things my husband is more than a conqueror through Jesus who loved him.

Romans 8:37

I pray that my husband will see the exceeding greatness of Your power, God, toward he who believes, according to the working of Your mighty power.

Ephesians

1:19

I pray, O God, that You are able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that my husband asks or thinks, according to the power that works in him.

Ephesians

3:20

I'm sure many of us are in those last days of planning for Easter weekend. There are the extra services at church, possibly overnight guests and of course Easter dinner. I thought I would share an idea for an easy centerpiece.



You will need 2 vases. The inside vase could be just a jar as you really don't see it. Depending on the space between the vases you can fill it with a variety of things - M & M's, Peeps, colorful cereal, etc. A small bouquet of flowers is really all you need to make a really cute centerpiece. I think this would be fun at a baby shower in pink or blue. There really

is no limit to what you could do with this idea.

*Before the next newsletter comes out Mother's Day will already be over. As I think of my own mom I realize what a wonderful influence she was on my life. She died in 1992 and I am still being influenced by the things she taught me. What an amazing privilege and responsibility God has given to all of us who are moms. I want to take this opportunity to wish all of you moms a wonderful Mother's Day!*

*Karen Phinney, Wife of Regional Director*



## Thoughts From A Cluster Leader

### "I Chose to be Connected. . ."

I would like to take a moment to speak to my fellow pastors. I have been thinking about this article for the past couple of weeks. During that time, two thoughts continually came to the fore. The first is the jadedness we can develop when we constantly see the same cycles, needs and issues being replayed in people's lives and in the church. The second was the question: "Will people contribute to the solution or will they just complain about the problem?"

I was recently interacting with some peers over ministry issues and I was surprised at the cynical tone of our conversation. It was kind of a same themes, different setting, here we go again conversation. When I was younger, I did not understand that cynical response. I just knew that I needed to press forward and I was frustrated with those "older guys" who seemed to have surrendered to these pressures and had stopped pressing forward. The truth is that this constant pressing that we experience in ministry wears us down. Two things have really helped me when I am inclined to surrender or get cynical & jaded.

[To read more click here.](#)

*Pastor Andrew Brown  
First Baptist Church, Toms River, NJ  
formerly First Baptist Church, Long Prairie, MN*

## **Dear Friend of First Baptist Church of Pekin, IL,**

We just wanted you to know that First Baptist of Pekin has a home here in the heart of central Illinois that we have renovated, whose primary purpose is to be available for extended stays for missionaries on home assignment (3 months minimum, 1 year maximum) or other ministry people in need of housing. It will be occupied by visiting missionaries for the summer of 2014, but will be available for occupancy by Sept. 1, 2014.



The house is on the NW corner of the church property. It is a 2 story, with 3 bedrooms up and a full bath on each floor. It has a dining room, living room, den, and full kitchen on the main floor. It is fully furnished. We would want the occupants to pay for the utilities for their time in the home. And since it is a ministry house, if they wanted to contribute anything to its upkeep, that would be appreciated but not expected.

If you know of anyone in ministry who would be interested in such accommodations, please let them know about this home and have them write me and let me know of their interest - the earlier the better obviously. And tell them to mention YOU when they call or write.

In His service too,  
Pastor Mark Friday  
First Baptist of Pekin, IL  
309-347-5965



## Church Development Fund, Inc.

"For nearly 60 years Church Development Fund has provided financing for the expansion, building and growth of churches and ministries all across the United States, thanks to thousands of individuals who have invested approximately \$650 million. CDF also supports the church planting ministry of Stadia through annual grants from their multi-million-dollar church planting fund."

Church Development Fund is a valuable resource for church financing. To get more information about your church's possible eligibility for a low interest loan [click here](#).

## Federal Government Files Latest Brief in Clergy Housing Challenge - April 3, 2014

*Argues District Court Was Wrong to Declare the Law Unconstitutional*

*The lawsuit by the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) challenging the clergy housing exclusion proceeded this week as the government filed a brief in the Seventh Circuit defending the constitutionality of the law and arguing that FFRF lacks legal standing to bring the case. [Read more here](#).*

## Church Law & Tax

### ***Addressing Church-Paid Medical Insurance Benefits***

*How the Affordable Care Act views the tax treatment of these payments. - Richard R. Hammar [Click here to read more](#).*

### ***2013 Child Abuse Reporting Laws for Churches***

*Every state has a child abuse reporting law that requires persons designated as mandatory reporters to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of child abuse. Ministers are mandatory reporters in many states. Some states exempt ministers from*

*reporting child abuse if they learned of the abuse in the course of a conversation protected by the clergy-penitent privilege. Ministers may face criminal and civil liability for failing to report child abuse.*

- Richard R. Hammar [Click here to read more.](#)

## CB North Central Pastoral Cluster Groups

### **North Dakota/Northern Minnesota**

Thursday, April 17, 10am - 12pm

Skype

Steve Daggett, Cavalier Baptist,  
Cavalier, ND 701-265-8989



### **Central Minnesota**

Monday, May 12 10am - 12pm

Steve Schoenwald, River of Life  
Church, Hastings, MN 651-437-3965

### **Southern Minnesota**

To Be Determined

Doug Noonkester, First Baptist Church, Sibley, IA 712-754-3310

### **Wisconsin**

Attend the CBNC Annual Mtg/2014 Moody Conference May 19-22

Cluster Groups are on break.

Planning Mtg will be in August with Group Mtgs up and running in September.

Calvary Baptist, Eau Claire, WI

Wade Duroe, Crossroads Church, Chippewa Falls, WI 715-723-1054

### **Iowa**

To Be Determined

Jay Jentink, Calvary Baptist Church, Cedar Rapids, IA 319-396-3233

### **Illinois**

Tuesday, April 29th 10:30am - 1:30pm

Meeting at Bethany Baptist Church, Edwards, IL

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

## Michigan

Monday, April 28th 10am at First Baptist Church, Spring Lake, MI  
Mike Wetzig, Ravenna Baptist Church, Ravenna, MI 231-853-6021

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 - Bradford, IL
- First Baptist Church - Streator, IL
- Delavan Baptist Church - Delavan, IL
- First Baptist Church - Elmhurst, IL
- First Baptist Church - Whitehall, WI
- First Baptist Church - Long Prairie, MN

### 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



### CONGRATULATIONS

#### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, PLAINWELL, MI

Pastor George Osborne has accepted the call of pastor for First Baptist Church in Plainwell, MI. Pray for this church as well as Calvary Church at Village Green in Moorhead, MN welcoming Pastor Ben Killerlain this month. God bless these churches as they cultivate new relationships.

**CB North Central**

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Stay Connected

website: [www.cbnorthcentral.org](http://www.cbnorthcentral.org)

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