



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HEARTLAND CHURCH NETWORK

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MAN YOU MARRIED WAS NOT
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ONE MAN'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE CURRENT STATE OF SBC LIFE

MARK ELLIOTT

These reflections come in the midst of me leading another small group through Henry Blackaby's study *Experiencing God*, and my attendance at the February 2021 SBC Executive Committee Meeting in Nashville as our state convention's trustee. As I share my thoughts, I do so with some major disclaimers. First and foremost, you need to know that these are MY PERSONAL thoughts. I am not speaking in any formal capacity, nor on behalf of any other Executive Committee member, nor for anyone on the Executive Committee staff. Second, I share them with humility knowing that where you have three or four Baptists gathered together you have at least five or six opinions on any given topic. Chances are I could read this next week and wonder what kind of a nut wrote that! I also share them knowing that my reflections are an extremely simplistic way of viewing some very complex and integrally intertwined issues.

During the Nashville Executive Committee meeting, Dr. Ronnie Floyd recast his Vision 2025—a clear and compelling vision that was to be approved at the 2020 SBC meeting in Orlando, which was canceled due to COVID. Dr. Floyd's passion was bolstered by the fact that we could hear him in person, and that we have the expectation of meeting in person for the 2021 convention this June in Nashville. Having a clear vision is "Good News!" However, at that same meeting, we had to deal with several issues that fall into the "Bad News" category. Those issues are significant enough that even a clear and compelling vision can be drowned out by the cacophony created by unrecognized and unaddressed conflicts. That reality reminded me of an old Hee Haw skit that Archie Campbell did. In the routine, he contrasted the "Good News" and "Bad News" that can arise out of any given situation.

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START

EXISTS TO EQUIP, ENCOURAGE, AND SUPPORT CHURCHES THAT MAKE MATURING, REPRODUCING, OBEDIENT DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST

SHARING HOPE IN A BROKEN WORLD

In the Fall of 2020, Omaha's Freeway Ministries celebrated the grand opening of their Women's Discipleship House. The women's house serves as a safe haven for women who have been broken down by this world. The house does not simply serve as a physical shelter for women but is a home where women are introduced to Jesus.

Freeway Ministries believes freedom from your past and the success of your future is only found through a relationship with God.

The Women's Discipleship House can serve up to eight women, and the number of women in the house changes regularly. The women walk through a discipleship course, attend classes on job skills, and learn about finances. Please join us as we celebrate and praise Christ for this ministry and the light it is to our community.



TO LEARN MORE VISIT:
WWW.FREEWAYOMAHA.COM

NEW CHURCHES

NORTHRIDGE FALLS CITY

Charles Musil, Lead Pastor

Falls City, NE

<https://www.northridgefallscity.com/page>

NORTHRIDGE PERU

Zach Robson, Lead Pastor

Peru, NE

<https://www.northridgeperu.com/page>

NORTHRIDGE HUMBOLDT

Ryan Weaver, Lead Pastor

Humboldt, NE

<https://www.northridgehumboldt.com/page>

RESTORATION CITY CHURCH

Dan Coke, Lead Pastor

Lincoln, NE

<https://www.rcclincoln.com/>

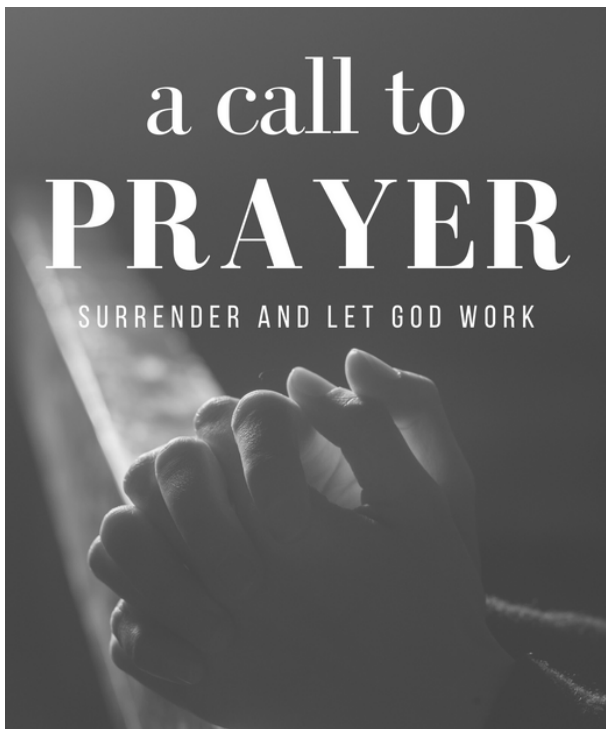
SEND Network

On Wednesday, March 17th over 60 pastors and leaders from all over our region joined together at LifeSpring Church to consider Gospel Saturation in our region, Spiritual Multiplication in our churches, and a Revival of Prayer for Laborers.

The Heartland Church Network in partnership with the SEND Network, asks that you join in praying for our region.

CONNECT

EXISTS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATIONS, CONNECT MINISTRY LEADERS BETWEEN CHURCHES, AND TO ASSIST CHURCHES TO MORE EFFECTIVELY CONNECT WITH THEIR COMMUNITY



PRAYER

HCN is encouraging seasons of prayer for our pastors, churches, and nation. We will have both COVID compliant in-person and zoom options. The first prayer session was hosted by International Church Christ Built and Pastor Vernon McMorris on March 11th.

As we prepare to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ, let us extend a challenge to join us in seeking times of specific and focused prayer akin to what Joel called for in his day.

Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord.

Joel 1:14

SPOUSE RETREAT

Here are a few guidelines for who can attend:

1. Full-time ministry staff and their spouse.
2. Bi-vocational ministry staff (must be paid position) and their spouse.
3. Pastoral Apprentice (one per church), this must be someone that the pastor is intentionally investing in / apprenticing with the goal of appointing them to leadership in ministry in the next 2 years.

SINGLES EVENT

HCN would like to host an event for singles within the network to have an opportunity to fellowship and encourage one another. If you'd like to help lead or plan an event, please let us know. Call or email the office 402-551-0608 or emily@heartlandchurchnetwork.org.



THE HEARTLAND CHURCH NETWORK
WOULD LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO THE ANNUAL

Minister & Spouse Retreat

Sustaining a Prosperous Soul

April 16-17, 2021

Lied Lodge Center

*2700 Sylvan RD
Nebraska City, NE 68410*

\$25 per couple

RSVP BY APRIL 1, 2021

(402) 551-0608 OR

EMILY@HEARTLANDCHURCHNETWORK.ORG



CONNECT CONTINUED



Pastor's Wife Appreciation Month is a time we have set aside to encourage, honor, and love these women.

This year we asked a few women to share about their role as a pastor's wife.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN THE MAN YOU MARRIED WAS NOT A PASTOR/MINISTER AND NOW HE IS
DORRIS LASSITER, MOUNT MORIAH BAPTIST CHURCH

My husband and I attended a church that I was a member of prior to our marriage. We both were busy in corporate America and led very busy lives... we were living and working "our" plan until God apparently wanted us to have an "Abraham and Sarah" moment. Our sons were 22, 21 & 17 years old. We were grandparents and God in his infinite wisdom gave us an unplanned surprise... a daughter. Life-changing for sure.

Four years after the birth of our daughter, I noticed that my husband was not his "usual" self. He appeared restless and had difficulty sleeping. I asked him if everything was ok at work. He announced the following Sunday not to me but to the church family that he had been "called" to the ministry, I was completely in shock!!! So much so I asked my husband if he was sure. My words were these: "I sleep with you every night and if God had called you, I would have heard Him. My husband replied... You could not hear Him because HE did not call you... HE called me." Lesson Learned and my perspective from scripture: **Ladies, God did not call you as Pastor nor Co-Pastor. God has a very special calling for wives but pastoring is not it.**

I read a research paper written by D'Jana Chantel Pittman. The title: Helpmeet: The African American Pastor's Wife as an Extension of the Pastor in Pastoral Care and Counseling - A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study of the Ministry Helping Experiences of Black Pastors' Wives in Predominantly Black Churches. The author published several opinions from the wives of African American Pastors.

These opinions may have been from African American wives but I think you will find them certainly applicable no matter your race or ethnicity. She reported that through divine design, a wife is a helper. The word helper has a built-in delineation that revolves around the facilitation of help, "support," and "assistance" (Rebuli, 2009, pg. 104). When God speaks to the role of the wife in the garden, Eve is instructed to help the man tend the garden and the earth as a whole (Rebuli, 2009). She was left at the side of the man to help him carry out his purpose

However, the pastor's wife's role of helping is not just a divine requirement but a source of pressure. Inclusive of their divine mandate to assist their husbands as wives, there are many other expectations of the pastor's wife as she works alongside her husband. According to Davis (2007) and Taylor-Smith (2009), pastors' wives, in general, tend to put a great deal of pressure on themselves to be super-women. Pastors' wives have also noted having felt added pressure from their husbands and the members of the churches pastored by their husbands (Davis, 2007; Taylor-Smith, 2009).

From my perspective, the author's paper revealed what we learn from scripture and **it is soothing knowing that God is there with you and will always be there with you and your husband. God will get you through the pressures of life whether you are a pastor's wife or not.**

Prayer is so critical. So pray for your husband constantly... pray for your marriage constantly and pray for your church.

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SUPPORT

EXISTS TO PROVIDE QUALITY LEADERSHIP TRAINING, TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE, RELEVANT RESOURCES, AND COOPERATIVE PROJECTS TO SUPPORT CHURCHES.



LIFE CHANGER MISSIONS

VISION 2021 "Answer the Call" *Isaiah 6:8-9*

The Heartland Church Network is excited to announce our partnership with Life Changer Missions (LCM), a nonprofit missions organization that focuses on equipping and leading service teams in meeting the physical needs of others all with the aim of ministering and sharing the gospel.

VISION: Sharing the gospel and serving families one home at a time.

MISSION: LCM exists to glorify God by equipping teenagers for Christian missions through home repair and personal witness.

2021 THEME: "Answer the Call" Isaiah 6:8-9

LCM partners with local churches and city governments to guide volunteers in meeting the needs of those in their community such as performing small home repairs, painting, building wheelchair ramps, replacing widow and siding, and more.

LCM has created a pre-package missions guide that helps facilitate a weeklong adventure for high school students and adults to serve the community through hands-on mission work and ministering to the spiritual needs. They have truly established an all-encompassing tool to equip students and leaders in going out and being the hands and feet of Jesus!

Please join HCN in supporting Life Changer Missions by attending their inaugural missions event **June 13-19, 2021 in Sioux City, IA**. LCM will be partnering with *Heartland Community Baptist Church* to serve the local community and invites you and your youth group, students 6th -12th grade, to them join in a week of a life-changing hands-on mission!

REGISTER NOW

HEARTLANDCHURCHNETWORK.ORG



**SATURDAY
MAY 1, 2021**

8:00 AM -4:00 PM
*Registration at 7:30 AM
Lunch Provided*

HEARTLAND CHURCH NETWORK

**2100 S 51st St.
Omaha, NE 68108**

SHOW & SHINE

The Heartland Church Network's Disaster Relief team offers training to equip volunteers, so they are able to respond during times of disaster. Each training offers necessary instruction for volunteers to respond with other Southern Baptists around the world during times of disaster and crisis. The training is practical and allows anyone, 18 years and older, to serve with confidence.

PASTOR FELLOWSHIPS

LINCOLN

Monday, April 26
11:00 AM
Pizza Ranch
8420 Lexington Ave
Lincoln, NE 68505

OMAHA

Monday, May 3
11:00 AM
Pizza Ranch
3010 S 84th St,
Omaha, NE 68124



THE HEARTLAND CHURCH NETWORK

in partnership with



Contextualized Leadership Development

Fall 2021

*Be on the look out for
more information on
the upcoming
semester!*

The Heartland Church Network offers accredited Bible college classes in partnership with Spurgeon College and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Earn a Diploma in Christian Studies or a certificate in:

- Biblical Studies
- Pastoral Ministry
- Christian Studies

PASTOR'S WIFE CONTINUED**PASTORS AND WIVES DO NOT ALWAYS AGREE - YES HE IS HUMAN BUT SO ARE YOU**

When things get a little strained in your marriage as they sometimes do and you don't believe the listening ear is really listening, you've prayed and prayed and you do not feel the problem has been resolved. Who do you talk to? Who are you going to call? May I recommend that you call the church office. Yes - call the church office and make an appointment with the Pastor to discuss your husband. It's amazing the great advice your husband in the role of pastor will give to you about himself and how quickly the problem is solved.

Clear and effective communication is critical in all relationships... with your husband, your children, and members of the congregation. Pastor Lassiter and I teach marriage and relationship education classes and teach a communication approach called "The Speaker Listener Technique" which brings to life James 1:19-20 that tells us that " Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires".

SHOULD A PASTOR'S WIFE PUBLICALLY SUPPORT A CAUSE - TAKE A STANCE?

After working as a national account executive for a major insurance corporation that required too much travel for my premature child, God allowed me to work as Director of a Maternal and Child Health program that focused on eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities among babies associated with infant mortality. You see Black babies in Omaha were dying in their first year of life at almost 4 times the rate of other babies. The cause was prematurity. God allowed me to take 15 years of corporate business knowledge coupled with being the mother of a premature child to develop a new community integrated health service delivery system for mothers (of all colors) at risk.

It meant developing funding proposals, working with representatives of Congress, seeking support to obtain funding, testifying before the legislature, challenging the current health care delivery system, and becoming a strong community advocate. When God is in the mix, you must charge forward. This set the stage for the next 29 years of advocacy and policy development on issues related to racial and ethnic health disparities associated with many issues including systemic issues.

I believe this is my God-given work and in the course of this work, I make public statements, am asked to speak at press conferences and health symposiums but this I do as a result of my personal work. I make no statements on behalf of our church regarding any public issues without discussing it first with my husband who must approve everything regarding matters of the church.

We must be so very careful in expressing our opinions to the press, on social media, our personal Facebook, twitter, etc. as it might impact our husbands and members of our church. Social media is being used as a formal way of communication these days and unfortunately, words can be misunderstood and hurtful. Please note that everyone on Facebook is NOT your friend ... but we do have a friend in Jesus who will never unfriend you, leave you, nor forsake you. We only need to trust HIM to provide just what is needed to be a pastor's wife.

May God bless you and your marriage.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Doris Lassiter is married to Pastor Ralph Lassiter of Mount Moriah Baptist Church. They are parents to Eric, Ralph Jr, Scott, and Elizabeth and grandparents of eight. She is President and CEO of Nebraska Center for Healthy Families, a project of Doris Lassiter Consulting, LLC. www.necenterforhealthyfamilies.com.

ONE MAN'S PERSPECTIVE CONTINUED

As I began to reflect on the Good News-Bad News contrast, I thought about the slogan General Motors used in their 1988 campaign to re-energize the Oldsmobile brand: "This is not your father's Oldsmobile." Stop and think with me for just a minute about some of the huge changes that have taken place in SBC life in the last fifty-plus years:

- Southern Baptists were transformed from being a regional convention of churches into a national body with churches in every state.
- Southern Baptists became the most ethnically diverse convention of churches in America.
- The southern states, where the majority of Southern Baptist churches are still located, shifted from being single-party states (Democrat) to two-party states and have consistently supported Republican presidential candidates in recent elections.
- All conventions and denominations in America have been deeply impacted by the growth of the mega-church, decline in denominational loyalty, as well as advances in communications (i.e. television) and technology (i.e. internet).

The changes mentioned above, and I'm sure you could add to my list, contain some "Good News," but the "Bad News" is that they have also created tensions, fissures, and polarization. If we are honest with ourselves, we look more like the culture in which we live than we do the model of unity we are called to emulate as described in scripture (John 17:20-23, Romans 14:19, & Ephesians 4:1-6). Unless we address these challenges, my fear is that Southern Baptists could go the way of the Oldsmobile. The last Olds rolled off the assembly line on April 29, 2004; however, there are still Oldsmobiles on the highway. I have been around church life long enough to know that there will be Southern Baptists in the world when Jesus returns. The question is "Will we be a thriving growing healthy body of churches or will we be merely surviving?"

Before I suggest how the "Good News" in the changes I mentioned above are at the core of some of our "Bad News," let me suggest some principles that can help us generate "Good News" in any setting.

KEEP YOUR FOCUS ON THE MAIN THING.

Some of our differences are caused by our focus on minor issues rather than major issues. Paul's admonition in Romans 14 has direct application for us today—particularly verse 19 where he says, "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." An old cliché comes to mind here: "We can't see the forest for the trees." We can become so consumed with minor issues that it is as if we are dissecting the underside of a leaf on a bush in the corner of a giant forest. And when we do that, we begin to lose all perspective. I listened to one individual during a break in my Nashville meeting who was consumed with what I would describe as a minor issue when compared to the huge issues facing one of our entities.

USE YOUR EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS TO CREATE HEALTHY DIALOGUE.

Often times we have relationships or existing venues that can provide a natural connecting point during times of confusion and conflict. If leaders are willing to use them, they can generate honest healthy dialogue. However, if we don't take advantage of them, we will invariably create frustration resulting in deeper division and disengagement. The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 is a great example of men willing to use existing relationships to create an environment for honest dialogue. Nothing is ever accomplished by ignoring the elephants in the room.

LISTEN WITH THE GOAL OF UNDERSTANDING.

This requires us to actually LISTEN to one another. In the normal course of the conversation, we get distracted as we formulate our response to the first thing the other person says. We do this rather than listening intently until they are finished. What makes it worse is we have bought into the misconception that we can multi-task. When we attempt to, we will always lose focus and miss key statements and concepts. Before we respond with "our ideas," it is always helpful to restate or rephrase what we think we heard. There are times when we get corrected and hear, "That's not at all what I meant." We need to be willing to LISTEN until we truly understand both the words and the meaning of what they said. One example of our poor listening skills comes from my seminary classroom experiences.

CONTINUED

I lost count of the times when a professor would open the last few minutes of class up for questions. Invariably the fourth or fifth question would be one that had already been asked and answered. Somewhere in our disciple-making process, we need to teach one another how to listen.

IMPROVE YOUR SELF-AWARENESS.

The reality is that wherever I go, I'm there. As I navigate life in a very diverse world, I will constantly misunderstand people around me if I don't realize that I bring my unique personality, passions, and perspectives into each situation. There was a day when being Southern Baptist could be clearly and narrowly defined even to the point of knowing what would be on the table at a potluck dinner. My perceptions are my realities, but my realities are not always truth. And yes, there is a knowable truth, and His name is Jesus (John 14:6). Need I remind you that you are not Him?

REALIZE THAT YOUR CONFLICTS WILL HELP YOU CLARIFY YOUR PASSION.

What hills are you currently willing to fight, bleed, and die on? Are they really Biblical or are they personal passions? Are they culturally based or are they Biblical? Are they really big and important issues or are they trivial issues? Have you honestly discussed the issue and listened with humility to someone outside of your circle? Remember, "The first one to plead his case seems right until his neighbor comes and examines him" Proverbs 18:17.

ADMIT YOUR PARTIAL BLINDNESS.

Because of a detached retina, I have limited peripheral vision in my right eye. And because I was born and raised in Wyoming, moved to Oklahoma when I was sixteen, and have served as a pastor and Director of Missions in Iowa and Nebraska for the past thirty-five years, my view of Southern Baptist life is limited by my experiences. At the meeting in Nashville, I visited with a very sharp fellow trustee whose perspective of SBC life is very different from mine. In fact, as I briefly described national issues that are impacting my world, he seemed to be completely unaware that they even existed.

These six principles can help us generate "Good News" in the midst of trials.

In the coming weeks, I will begin to address the impact of how the changes I mentioned at the opening of this article are at the heart of most of the "Bad News" issues we are facing today as Southern Baptists. Until then, let me encourage you to find ways to apply the principles above. As you do, God can and will provide Romans 8:28 results to transform "Bad News" into "Good News."

YOURS IN CHRIST,
Mark R. Elliott,

Please visit www.heartlandchurchnetwork.org or call the office, 402-551-0608, to subscribe to Mark's weekly articles.

Reminder

Each year we ask for statistics for the Annual Church Profile. Please keep track of the following for that report.

Average Weekly Worship Attendance
Average Small Group/Sunday School Attendance
Total Baptisms
Total Receipts

If you need help creating a spreadsheet or system to track this, don't hesitate to contact the office.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL

- 13 Northeast Pastor Fellowship
- 16,17 Minister & Spouse Retreat
- 26 Lincoln Pastor Fellowship
- 29 HCN Executive Board Meeting

MAY

- 1 Disaster Relief Training
- 3 Omaha Pastor Fellowship

JUNE

- 13-19 Life Changer Missions

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