



SET FREE BEHIND BARS

DAMIEN BRYAN

As I sit in prison for 28 years for two deaths that occurred during a car wreck, I thank Jesus for giving me freedom from an eternal prison. People sometimes ask me how I can be so happy and content and always be so optimistic, and I say, *"Because I'm free. King Jesus has given me that freedom."*

My name is Damien Bryan, I'm 50 years old and live in a maximum-security prison, but I'm right where God wants me and needs me. I was brought up with two loving parents, who are still married. My dad is a civil engineer who owned his own firm and worked 100 hours a week and my mom taught special education until she retired at the age of 65. I had a good childhood. I didn't want for anything. I got in trouble a lot for fighting and being obnoxious. I was first arrested at the age of 12 for the destruction of property, which led to a long life of criminal activity.

I had a connection to church for as long as I can remember. My mother and father took us to church until I was about 8 years old, then I didn't go back until I was baptized at age 14. That's when I started drinking.

I was arrested several times as a teenager and drank every weekend. I graduated high school and went to the University of Missouri for engineering. I was in a fraternity and played rugby for the university. My drinking and drug use were out of control. After two years, I moved back to Jefferson



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and got married. That didn't last but six months and I got divorced because of my drug use. It ruled my life. Satan had ahold of me.

My 20's and 30's were filled with drug addiction and arrests. The only good thing was the daughters that I had and the love of my parents, and the love of my Father in Heaven. In 2011, I got in a car wreck that killed two people. I was convicted of two second-degree murders and a DUI. It was my 4th DWI, so I fell under the felony murder law. I was sentenced to 28 years in prison. I was sent to Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron.

After realizing that I needed help and reading my Bible daily in the year and a half I was in the county jail, I finally got somewhere I could go to church.

START

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

RESIDENCY BUILDER I>> SEND Network

On April 21, Ryan Johnston led a Residency Builder workshop with attendees from 10 churches in the Network. Dallas Powell (Lincoln area CPC) and Brad Brisco (Wichita area CPC) attended as coaches. The goal of the day-long workshop was to help ministers create a personalized Residency Syllabus for their own church to use as they raise up leaders with the DNA to plant churches.

Attendees began the day with a time of personal reflection of the people, experiences, books and activities that shaped their own leadership style. This was followed by a short time of sharing with others in a small group. Groups were then led through discussion topics as they began to create a specialized

Residency syllabus for their own church. The day was broken up into teaching times, discussion and collaboration, and included two interviews: Bob Burton (Sending Church Coach and Pipeline Specialist with NAMB) and Clint Clifton (Senior Director of SEND Network resources).

They will all gather again on May 19 for a follow-up session via Zoom.



TO ALL THE NATIONS

This winter, Emmaus Bible Church had the distinct privilege of commissioning Josh Storey for the work of overseas missions to Africa. We are finding that it's hard to send people to the mission field. It's hard because we love them and are intimately involved in their lives, but this is the mission that Christ has given us. A key component to fulfilling the great commission is raising up, sending, and funding missionaries for the work of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. So, we send them with tears and rejoicing!

Our process of sending the Storey's consisted of pastoral training and congregational assessment. Josh and his family went through a year-long process of

pastoral oversight, training, church assessment, and a subsequent congregational vote. We model this process from the principles found in the book of Acts. When the Apostle Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their first missionary journey, the church in Antioch sent them out. Luke clarifies it was the Holy Spirit who set these men apart for their journey and confirmed their mission through the affirmation of the church (Acts 13:1-3; 14:27)..After coming back from their first trip, Paul and Barnabas gave a missionary update to the church in Antioch and were immediately sent by the church in Antioch to be delegates at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:3). In this way, sending missionaries is a church effort!

This is the first missionary that we have sent with the IMB, but we pray it won't be the last! Our church is grateful to God for the partnership of other SBC churches who faithfully pray and give toward the cooperative program for the sake of the gospel.

Continued on Page 9

CONNECT

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

ANSWERING THE CALL

The Heartland Church Network celebrates God's calling of these men to serve and their obedience in following His leading!



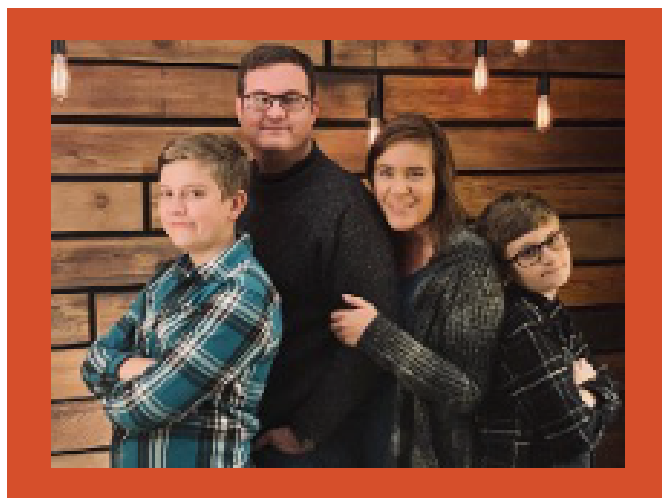
Heartland Church

NORFOLK, NE

Pastor Rick Bradley announced it was time to retire as senior pastor of Heartland Church in Norfolk. But he said he was willing to serve until the church called a new pastor. The chaotic world of COVID made the transition season significantly longer than he had anticipated. Sunday, May 2nd was his final service. Rick faithfully served Heartland for twenty-four years—the past six and a half as senior pastor. Pray for Pastor Rick and his wife Cindy as they move into a new season of life. We praise God for his willingness to stay faithful until God identified a new pastor.

On Sunday, May 16th Heartland will welcome Ty Wozneck and his family to Norfolk as he begins serving as senior pastor. Ty is married to Kelly and they have two boys Jadon (going into 9th grade) and Gavin (going into 7th Grade). They are moving from the Flint, MI area where Ty served Life Fellowship Chapel of Davis for eight years. In 2019, Ty led the church to merge with the River Church—a multi-site church.

Ty holds a Master of Divinity and a Bachelor of Science in Bible from Baptist Bible College in Summit, PA. Prior to that, he earned a One Year Bible Certificate at Word of Life Bible Institute in Schroom Lake, NY. Previous ministry experiences include Intern/ Director of Christian Education at Faith Baptist Church in Cortland, NY; Intern Pastor at Evangel Baptist Church in Taylor, MI; and Children & Family Pastor at Silverdale Baptist Church in Bremerton, WA..



WOZNEK FAMILY

Comments from members of the Pastor Search Committee include:

"Pastor Ty notably values accountability for himself and others. He communicated with the team an eagerness to embrace a collaborative style of leadership. Pastor Ty seemed to genuinely like the Norfolk area. I sense he's a visionary with great plans to move forward and grow. He presents himself as one willing to work hard to achieve this. He's a straight shooter. Conflict doesn't seem to bother him. I think he sees it as a challenge to grow and be better. He seems to genuinely like people."

"I felt Pastor Ty was the right choice by abandoning personal impressions and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide my thoughts on what I heard. Ty has a no-nonsense approach to things and from the start had some gut feelings about our situation that I felt were correct, i.e. identifying strengths in people and helping them plugin where they could best use their gifts. This will necessitate an outlook change among our body and he saw that. This will take some time and he recognizes that."

Continued on Page 4

CONNECT

"Heartland Baptist's second 25 years begins May 2021 and there's no better way to commence a new chapter in our church's history than by bringing on a new young pastor with fresh ideas in reaching the lost. I felt an unusual sense of peace - a surprising calmness - after our first interview with Ty. Yes, he was definitely God's choice! Prayers are asked for God's wisdom and the church members' unity and patience in the upcoming months during this transition phase."

As our team prayed for God's will to be done during our search, we found assurance as a team in that everyone saw Ty as a great candidate. Ty put in the effort from the beginning to show the team he was willing to step into our situation and



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

BELLEVUE, NE

On Sunday October 18, First Baptist Church of Bellevue extended a unanimous call to Michael Lusk to serve as their senior pastor. The search committee did a great job of communicating to the church Michael's background and why he was a good fit for FBC. They also scheduled a weekend with multiple opportunities for leaders and church members to connect in both formal and informal settings with Michael and his family.

Michael's wife, Kati, grew up attending Westside Church in Omaha, and they have three children: Liliahna (13), Aleah (10), and Cason (. Michael and Kati met while students at Ouachita University in Arkadelphia, AR. Michael received his Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies with a minor in Economics at Ouachita in May 2001 before moving to Fort Worth to attend Southwestern Seminary. Michael and Kati were married in August 2002. Michael completed a Master of Divinity with Biblical Languages from SWBTS in May of 2005. While they were in the metroplex area, Kati graduated from Dallas Baptist University with a Bachelor of Music and Music Education degree.

Michael ministered to youth and families for 15 years at churches in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Texas, before he began to serve as Minister to Students at Vista Grade Baptist Church in Colorado Springs, CO where he has

partner with us for the good of our church and community. Ty talked about establishing a clear mission of the church and starting with the basics, which gave our group and our church body a sense of excitement and ownership in the process of establishing what our church was going to look like going forward."

*Search Committee Chairman John Cahill said, "I personally ask that folks **pray** for our former senior Pastor Rick Bradley and his family as they transition on to new things as well. **Pray** for peace for them as they enter into a new season of life. **Pray** for our church body as we begin the transition. **Pray** for Pastor Ty and his family as they transition to Norfolk, especially their boys."*



served for the past six years. Michael's statement to FBC was, "As a pastor, I feel God has called me to faithfully preach and teach His word, to make disciples who make disciples, to develop leaders, to model servant leadership, to shepherd God's people with love and grace, to equip God's people to serve Him, and to guide the church to embrace the vision of what God wants the church to be. Ultimately I desire to see people begin and grow in an intimate relationship with Jesus by providing opportunities to be actively involved in worship, discipleship, ministry, outreach, and missions. I desire for God to use me to help people experience the forgiveness, grace, freedom, love, hope, and abundant life that is found in Christ."

Continued on Page 7

CULTURAL SHIFT

MARK ELLIOTT

So far I have discussed how the political shift in the traditional SBC states and our growing ethnic diversity have fed some of the tensions we are currently experiencing in SBC life. Today I want to briefly address the broader cultural changes that are impacting Christianity in America. History has often been described as a series of cycles, or some have used the image of a pendulum swing as we constantly move from one extreme to another. The book of Judges provides a classic picture during a 400-year period of Israel's history. The book describes what happened to the twelve tribes as they constantly moved through a clearly defined cycle: spiritual health and national vibrancy, a failure to pass along a God-focused spiritual legacy from one generation to the next and a slow but perceptible turning away from God, God's hand of blessing is removed and life becomes very difficult, people finally cry out to God and God raises up spiritual leaders, then spiritual health returns, and the cycle is repeated (Judges 2:7-19).

As a nation, we have very few remaining from what is called the Greatest Generation (those who lived through the Great Depression and WWII). As a Baby Boomer, I have experienced SIGNIFICANT changes in my life as we have moved from a time of spiritual vitality driven by the adversities faced by our parents and grandparents to a period of unparalleled prosperity. Our affluence was generated to a great extent by their sacrifices, the Protestant Work Ethic they instilled in us, and the Divine blessings that come with obedience. However, that affluence has generated a high level of self-sufficiency. We are reminded of Jesus' words:

"it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God"

Matthew 9:24.

Slow and subtle spiritual shifts have taken place, yet over time they have become clear and evident. These changes have begun to accelerate in recent years. One very simple and widespread example I hear regularly is related to youth sports. There was a time when Wednesday night and Sunday mornings were set aside for church. Today, active church members regularly choose sporting events over church attendance. Sports have become gods for many in our nation. But, my goal in this article is not to rail against the darkness, but to hopefully shed light on the harsh realities of where our nation is in the spiritual life-cycle I just described, and to awaken us to the fact that a typical American church looks more like our culture than we look like Jesus.

Communication changes have deeply impacted church life. The invention and expansion of the radio and television quickly come to mind. They formed the foundation upon which our current information age has been built (internet, smartphones, social media, etc.). One blessing we have received has been the opportunity to hear great preachers. History has always had great preachers, but the ability to hear one live was extremely limited. Today, even if you miss a live broadcast, you can listen to an archived copy, or you can even choose to listen to a sermon preached by one of the great pulpiteers of the past. Subtle shifts began to take place in church life as high-profile orators became the center of attention. Inspiration and information became the focus of Christian discipleship.

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CULTURAL SHIFTS

CONTINUED

The idea that an individual didn't need to "go to church" to be a good Christian was reinforced. Pride began to creep into the heart of some high-profile pastors. Consumer Christians were created as families shopped for the church with the best programs. Denominational names became irrelevant—theology began to take a back seat. Two times a month Sunday morning Christians became the norm. COVID19 didn't create our current challenges it merely put a spotlight on where the American culture is today.

For older Baptist Baby Boomers we can remember a time when Sunday meant you were in Sunday School, morning worship, discipleship training, and evening worship. Monday was a visitation, and Wednesday meant prayer time. For Southern Baptists, you could throw in the two-week spring and fall revivals as well. In that cultural context, Christian discipleship focused on providing the right Bible information within a relational context that provided the opportunity for God's Spirit to produce genuine life transformation in those who had accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Transportation advances combined with our affluence have provided us with almost unlimited opportunities and options. Who would have dreamed about having a "Destination Wedding" during the 1950s? Prior to COVID19's restrictions, the pace of our lives seemed to be on an annually accelerating trajectory. I personally believe that God has given us the opportunity of a lifetime to slow down, to be still, and to know that HE is GOD! (Psalms 46:10) The ball is in our court.

I believe the challenges we are facing in Southern Baptist life, for the most part, have been created by self-inflicted wounds. From a sports analogy perspective, we are constantly committing unforced errors. This reality tells me that we are in the world AND of the world more than we want to admit.

My prayer is that we use this gift of reflection and rest to take an honest look in the mirror and ask God to let us see ourselves from His perspective. Or we can glance in the mirror and then use this time to recharge our batteries so we are ready when restrictions are removed and the "rat race" begins again.

“ *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.* (James 1:23-25)

We get to choose how we spend our time!

Yours in Christ,
Mark Elliott

MARK'S INSIGHTS

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

CONNECT

Columbus First Baptist Church

Christ. Grace. Community.

At the annual meeting of Columbus First Baptist Church, held on November 18th, the church unanimously called Rev. Thomas B (Bucky) Erwin, IV as their senior pastor. Pastor Erwin is currently serving as senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Georgia. He is married to Colbye Patricia (Branch) Erwin (as of May 22, 2004). She has a Bachelor's degree from Louisiana College in Psychology (2005). She has worked in a variety of school settings, most recently being the Girls Basketball Coach at White Creek Christian Academy where their children attended for three years. She currently home-schools the four oldest children. They are the parents of Ryleigh (12), Thomas Graceson (10), Piper (7), John Butler (5), Ava Reece and Avery Ella (3), and Ember Joy (7 months).

Rev. Erwin, a Louisiana native, graduated from Louisiana College with a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Education in 2004. He also completed a Master of Arts in Christian Education from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in May 2013. Previous ministry positions include Pastor of Hebron Baptist Church in Soso, MS (March 2010 - July 2014); Student Pastor at FBC Kentwood, Kentwood, LA (February 2008 - March 2010); and Minister to Families at Simpson Baptist Church, Simpson, LA. (May 2005 - January 2008). He believes that a Biblical Vision for the Church is that of "a Healthy Body and Holy Bride." Keys to achieving that vision are Expository Preaching, Biblical Theology, The Gospel, Conversion, Evangelism, Church Membership, Church Discipline, Discipleship (Individual, Family, Groups, Corporate Worship), and Biblical Leadership (Plurality of Elders)

Pray for the Erwins as they sell their home in Georgia and find the right home in Columbus, NE.



ERWIN FAMILY

FBC Bellevue

CONTINUED

The Lusk family enjoys outdoor activities and Friday night pizza. Michael enjoys men's softball, golf, racquetball, watching sports (especially the Texas Longhorns and Texas Rangers), reading, a good cup of coffee, and deep conversation.

Pray for them as they continue to settle into this area. Michael will be the Youth Pastor for the upcoming Life Changer Missions week in Sioux City, IA.

SET FREE BEHIND BARS

CONTINUED

Church at Crossroads was ok. I got sent to the hole in 2017 and wrote a letter to a good friend of mine named Dave and he said that his uncle John, which was really like his little brother, started a ministry in Springfield. John and I were good friends on the streets, so I was happy to hear this, but that's about as far as it went.

Well, I got out of the hole and went to work for the chaplain at Crossroads and God really started to show me some grace. In 2018, I got caught up in a riot while eating in the chow hall. The amp went on lockdown and this really lasted from May 12 to when I left in December of 2018. I still worked for the Chaplain and we were essential workers.

In December 2018, I got moved to South Central Correctional Center and that's where the Blessing Abounded. The first thing I did was sign up for church. I went to a Baptist and Christian general service. One was a study and one was a service. I met many good brothers. One of whom I live with now.

This brother, Davy Montgomery, had a book that an old friend of mine had written, yes, that was John Stroup. Well, I read John's testimony which was all true and through this common tie, Davy and I have become best friends. Something you don't find in prison.

Now, the knowledge and learning about God became real. See, Davy holds people to the Word of God and even though I was walking the walk, I was not giving it my all. Well, Davy kept asking me to keep doing this Discipleship Course from

“
I needed help...
 ”

Freeway and I kept making excuses. You know, "I'm finishing my degree," or "I'm starting my Master's Program." I'm doing this or that.

Well, Davy is persistent if nothing else, and one day I was walking past his cell and he said, "It's time to quit running." And I did. It was the best decision of my life.

In May of 2020, I rededicated my life to Christ. I have finished my discipleship course and have even taken on two disciples myself. One has graduated and one will be finished in February 2021.

This new walk has really been great. I am now the representative of our Christian service and on the elder board of our church with Davy. I have started my Master's Program at Louisiana Baptist University in Christian Counseling and am happy to be able to help wherever I can.

I just want to thank God, John, Davy, Rick, and all the people who never give up on God's people because it's our responsibility to follow what Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 28. "Go and make disciples of all nations." Well, thanks be to God because that's what we're doing here at South Central Correctional Center one inmate at a time. Amen.

Love your brother in Christ,
 Damien Bryan

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Philippians 1:12-14

START

To All the Nations

CONTINUED

In thinking about the Cooperative Program, one Scripture that comes to mind is 3 John 1:6-8, "You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth." May we partner together for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ. May our churches raise up, train, and send out many missionaries into the harvest. And may God bless us in the endeavor as we seek to be faithful with what He has entrusted to us. Josh Storey is a physician, trained in Family Medicine, who spent 7 years in the U.S. Air Force. He desires to use the gifts God has given to share the gospel with unreached peoples. Rebekah was coerced into marrying Josh 14 years ago, and 5 boys later, she's stuck. She has a passion for hospitality and discipleship. The boys keep Josh and Rebekah on their toes and provide infinite opportunities for sanctification. The Storey's covet your prayers and encouragement as they move to Africa.

PASTOR FELLOWSHIPS

Looking to connect with other ministers?

Attend one of the Pastor Fellowships!

LINCOLN OMAHA IOWA NORTHEAST

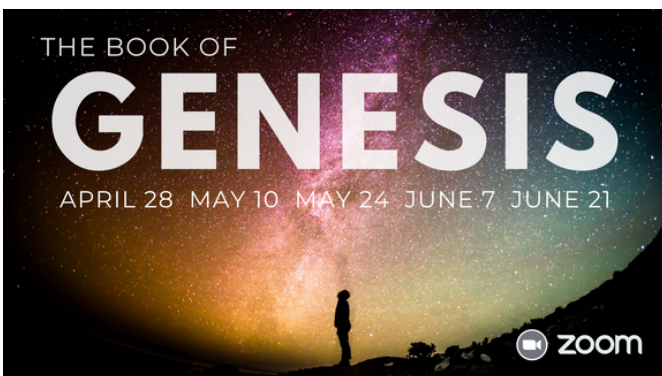


Go
Paperless

Trying to go paperless?

Let us know and we can add you
to our digital newsletter.!

HEARTLAND BIBLE INSTITUTE



The course has begun, but you can still join if you're interested in an overview of Genesis. Zoom only. Email us for the information.

Contextualized Leadership Develop (CLD) courses will be offered again this Fall. Spurgeon College and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary offer credits for each of these courses. Watch Facebook and our website for information in the coming months.

SUPPORT

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

JULY 19-23, 2021



WHO

Students who completed 2nd - 6th grade

WHERE

Good Shepherd Camp, Louisville NE

REGISTRATION

\$90 includes a T-shirt, meals, lodging, and TONS of FUN!

DEADLINE JULY 1

DISASTER RELIEF



The Disaster Relief team of Terry and Sherry Lust with Harold Eucker hosted a Show and Shine May 1 training people to use a chainsaw. We also now have badges for those who attended the October training. For those who have attended past trainings and need your badge still - let us know.

A reminder that everyone needs to be recertified every three years.

Interested in DR or wondering about the status of your badge?

Send us an email at HCNDR@heartlandchurchnetwork.org

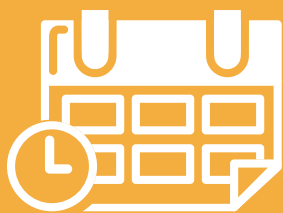
BLOCK PARTY TRAILER

The Block Party Trailer is a ministry resource provided by the Heartland Church Network.

Block parties and community events provide a great opportunity for churches to

minister to their communities! Now reserving for Summer 2021!

Call our office to make a reservation, 402-551-0608



LOOKING AHEAD

PIVOT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The annual PIVOT Conference will be held Sunday, August 29, 2021, a change from our usual Saturday event. Dr. Leo Endel will be the speaker and registration will begin at 3pm .

A CALL TO PRAY

The challenges of our current culture demand an elevated focus on prayer. HCN has begun to schedule one-hour times of prayer. Through a host church, we will provide both a COVID compliant, in-person as well as an online-zoom option for those who are able to join us. We still need volunteer host churches for the following times:

- Thursday, May 20th (anytime)
- Friday, June 4th (morning or mid-afternoon)
- Tuesday, June 22nd (anytime)
- Thursday, July 8th (anytime)

Please email Mark@HeartlandChurchNetwork.org to volunteer as a host!

SBC CONVENTION



Register Online: <http://register.sbcannualmeeting.net>

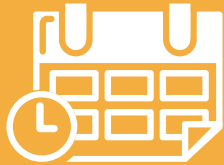


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UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE

- 8 Northeast Pastor Fellowship
- 13-19 Life Changer Missions
- 15-16 SBC Convention, Nashville

JULY

- 13 Northeast Pastor Fellowship
- 17-23 Children's Camp

AUGUST

- 29 PIVOT Conference

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