



AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2021

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

There are several opportunities for church members to serve vulnerable senior citizens living alone and in need of assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Baptist Convention of Maryland /Delaware and their partner Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) member organizations have received the request to provide hundreds of volunteers across the state to support “Caregivers Service Corps” (CSC), a new initiative.



This new caregiving program is designed to help senior adults living alone, especially those whose normal family caregivers are unable or reluctant to come into their homes for fear of spreading the COVID-19 virus to their loved ones.

The caregiving program is spearheaded by the Maryland Department of Aging, in close cooperation with the state and county health departments. Trained medical volunteers from the Medical Reserve Corps will be making home visits to provide medical evaluations and determine if other supportive services are needed to keep that senior adult safe and well at home. BCM/D will be providing the volunteer management for the many volunteers from VOAD partner organizations who will be mobilizing to supply some of those other “supportive services.”

There are two types of Volunteers needed for this outreach:

1. Support volunteers who will remain outside and provide deliveries of food, prescriptions, etc...
2. Support volunteers who will distribute PPE kits (personal protective equipment) to medical volunteers serving senior adults

If you wish to volunteer, sign up at dart-md.communityos.org.

Showcase of UPCOMING Events...

AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
8: Student Evangelism Sunday	1: Pastor & Staff Fellowship 8:00am <i>Bob Evans Frederick, MD</i>
8: Blackwood Quartet 10:45am <i>South End Baptist Church, Frederick, MD</i>	5: Single Adult Sunday
15-22: Worship Music Week	11: Yard Sale - Rock of Hope Ministries <i>(see In The Churches)</i>
22: Disaster Relief Appreciation Sunday	12: Baptist Sunday
26: Teaching Roundtable 5-9pm <i>Cornerstone Baptist Church, Dover DE</i>	12-19: State Missions Offering & Week of Prayer
27: Teaching Roundtable 9-1pm <i>First Baptist Church, Waldorf, MD</i>	18: Breathless Women's Conference 9 - 12pm <i>Online (see article)</i>
28: Teaching Roundtable 9-1pm <i>Covenant Baptist Church, Shepherdstown, WV</i>	October
	1: BCM/D Church Revitalization 1:30-4pm <i>(see article)</i>
	11: BRBA Annual Meeting 6-8pm

From your Director of Missions

My estranged wife went home to heaven on June 17th after a 18 month long struggle with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). ALS is a terrible disease that slowly takes away one's ability to do things that we take for granted like eating, sleep, swallow, breathe. My kids and I literally watched her slowly waste away...it was terrible.

Even though she insisted on a separation 6 years ago (not what I wanted) - I loved her dearly and never got over my love for her. I tended to every need that she would allow me to as her earthly body slowly broke down and promised to take care of her estate and wishes after her death. She wanted her body to be donated to science and research in the hopes that someone might someday find a cure for ALS and she hoped that her death might bring someone else a cure so they never would have to experience the pain and suffering that she did.



My father taught me to be a strong person in times like these. When things got tough in his life, he always went to work doing whatever he could to help fix the situation. Since the apple doesn't fall from the tree that's what I do too. When she walked away from being my wife, I pushed through. When she got sick, I offered to take care of her to the end just as I promised to do when we married in 1982. She asked me to be her patient advocate and financial power of attorney, I got right to work. There was much to coordinate near the end with part of her body going to the ALS research center in Georgetown and other parts of her to the Anatomical Gifts Registry in Baltimore. Now I am neck deep in paperwork and red tape to settle her estate and handle all of her affairs. I planned her memorial service that took place at our old home church in Bowie, MD on July 10th, it was a wonderful tribute to her life.

I've been so busy being strong and accomplishing tasks, I hadn't taken time yet to grieve. Then, last week it hit me. I was casually talking to a very close friend and tears started gushing uncontrollably down my cheeks. I was overwhelmed with emotion that had been dammed up in my heart, mind and spirit and it all poured out uncontrollably. I was SO busy being strong, that I hadn't taken the time to release my grief.

The Bible says when you go through a season of loss, the **first** thing you need to do is release your grief. Personal tragedy always produces strong emotions of anger, fear, depression, worry and sometimes guilt. These feelings are scary to us, especially men, and we don't know how to handle them. When we experience a major loss, these enormous feelings bubble up within us. If we don't deal with them sufficiently and early, it will take us far longer to recover. Some people never directly deal with grief in their lives, they stuff it, push it down, pretend it's not there or play like it doesn't exist. This is why they're still struggling with emotional stress from losses that occurred 20 or 30 years earlier.

God doesn't want you and I to walk around like everything is okay when it's really not! In fact, Jesus taught the exact opposite in Matthew 5:4, when he said, "*God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted*" (NLT).

It's okay to grieve. When the loved one we lost is a Christian, we know they will go on to Heaven, so there is cause for celebration. But what we grieve about, with such soul depth, is we're going to miss them in the physical realm and feel we can no longer enjoy good times together, be able to speak with them or enjoy an embrace. The fact that their physical presence is now missing seems almost unbearable to us.

In the moment that I burst into tears, I could no longer repress my feelings or stuff them deep inside. I released them and finally gave them to God that night. If you want a good scriptural example of this, read through the book of Psalms. SO many times David spills his heart out to the Lord and says, "God, I'm in a tough time right now. I am really, really hurting." You and I must cry out to God, just like David did.

Psalms 62:8(b) says, "*Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge*" (NLT). If you are going through a loss right now, please understand that if you don't release your grief, it will pour out eventually. Feelings that are pushed down fester and eventually they explode all over you and the friend that happens to be sitting nearby.

Folks, my advice is for you to release your grief, whatever grief you are holding onto, so that God can begin to heal your tender broken heart.

***Blessings to you all,
Bruce Conley, DOM***

IN THE CHURCHES



North Valley Church ~ As part of our pursuit to build relationships in the community of Myersville, we treated the summer staff at Myersville Elementary School (MYES) to lunch.

Buck Valley Christian Church ~ New additions to the property are a fire pit and a Gaga Pit for the children to play. The church has been hosting weekly fellowships around the fire pit. Many thanks to the families that helped make these two things happen! On August 15 is our Back 2 School day; the congregation is asked to bring in school supplies and a blessing prayer will occur over the items. On September 5, we will start our Children's Church program, during church service, for ages 4 - 3rd grade. There will be two Sunday's a month this will occur.



Rock of Hope Ministries ~ Our church is hosting a Free Yard Sale on **September 11th** so that we can minister to the youth and young parents in our area. We are collecting clean serviceable clothing for ages "infant-5th grade. We are asking that churches in the BRBA please help us by donating what they can by September 1st. We would gladly pick up donations or arrangements can be made to drop them off to us. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Bob Miller 301-730-9389 pastorbob@rockofhope.net.



Pleasant Valley Baptist Church ~ sponsored a Wilderness First Aid and CPR class. Church and family members attended on how to serve others in need. Brother Clayton and Ron Pitts attended as well to enhance capabilities within the Disaster Relief work.



Hagerstown Church ~ This past June, just after the second anniversary of the mission church, they commissioned **Tim and Jill Wilkerson** for church planting in Baltimore. The Wilkersons were instrumental in the planting of Hagerstown Church and HC believes that God is going to use them in big ways to help shine the light of the gospel in Baltimore. To God be the glory!

First Baptist of Thurmont ~ We have Fall 2020, Spring and Summer 2021 (Explore the Bible) and VBS 2021 (Destination Dig) curriculum and various copies of magazines, available to share with any church that may need it. Please contact Jan Jones janjones0626@gmail.com 301-471-9898.

Heaven Opened It's Doors

Pastor Todd Heishman, formerly the pastor at Valley Baptist Church in Jefferson, MD, has gone home to be with the Lord. The family would like to thank all those who have prayed and walked with their family throughout this journey. Your prayers have been felt and much appreciated during the battle against this cancer growing within Todd's body.

Romans 15:13 tells us we have a God of hope who gives us joy and peace as we trust Him.... I am so thankful for His peace as we trust Him in this next journey without Todd. We know that we serve a God that heals, He has chosen to heal him on heaven's side. We are so grateful for the days that we were given with him.

While our hearts may be broken, we rejoice in the fact that he is no longer in pain and he will be feasting in the presence of our Lord.

Psalm 73:25-26 - Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.



Prayer Request

How can we pray for you?

** Please continue to pray for The Heishman family in the passing of Pastor Todd.*

** Please continue prayers for The Conley family in the passing of Linda Conley.*

** Please pray for First Baptist Church of Hagerstown while they search for a new pastor. Rev. Bill Miller is now interim at FBC.*

** Please continue to pray from Pastor Jim Goforth, New Life Church in Inwood, WV who had surgery to remove multiple cancerous tumors.*

** Please pray for Adamstown Community Church as they also seek a part-time bi-vocational pastor.*

** Please pray for the family of Al Caho, BRBA's Disaster Relief Coordinator. Al's father, Bob Caho passed away on July 24th and was 95 years old.*

** Please pray for the children, teachers, staff and the administration starting school.*

CONGRATULATIONS Buck Valley Christian Church

Congratulations on celebrating **150 years** of reaching out to your community with the gospel of Jesus Christ! A wonderful celebration was gathered on June 26th with pictures shared below. The church was organized in the year 1850 by the Reverends' John Smith and James Pennel with a membership of 20 men and women, with the building and property acquired and dedicated in 1871. Since its beginnings, the church has held several different denominational affiliations, including the Congregational Christian Church and the United Church of Christ. Currently the church ministers to around 100 individuals each Sunday and retains its independent, Bible-believing character, through its affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention.



**Celebrating 150 years
Of doing life together
In Buck Valley**



The Teaching Roundtable brings pastors and teachers together to hear from local and nationally-known preaching leaders for teaching and dialogue to strengthen preaching skills in various genres of Scripture. Join us on **August 26-28** as guest lecturer Dr. Adam Greenway discusses Teaching & Preaching with an Apologetic Focus. Registration is now open on the BCM/D website under Events.



BRBA STORAGE SPACE

We are excited to share with you our NEW storage space held in West End Baptist Chapel! In this area is where we house our small rental items such as A/V equipment, games, Bible Studies, reading literature, etc. After our Annual Meeting, you will have the opportunity to take a tour of the gracious space we have!

If you are interested in checking anything out for your church use, please contact our Vehicle / Equipment Manager Dave Hays at 301-991-2084 dave@blueridgebaptist.org.



CPR and First Aid certification for Church Volunteers + Staff



CPR / First Aid training at North Valley Church in Myersville, MD on September 11 from 8:30 - 5:30pm. This course includes the basic CPR course and a provider specific basic first aid course. Provider specific in that we tailor the first aid portion of the course to meet your organizations specific

needs. This course assumes normal emergency medical response and resources are available. This course is perfect for Church safety and emergency teams, nursery workers, children, youth, and senior adult program leaders. Pre-registration is required and NO WALK-INS are allowed. The cost is \$45/per person and to register, please visit this site <http://wmscoutsafety.org/>. ANYONE from any BRBA church that wants the training but cannot afford the \$45.00 fee can ask BRBA to help financially and we can reimburse them for a portion or all of the pre-registration on a case-by-case basis.

BRBA will host the Pastor and Staff Fellowship Breakfast on **Wednesday, Sept. 1st at 8:00am**. The location will be **Bob Evans in Frederick**.



BREATHLESS Women's Conference - ONLINE



Breathless is a free conference for women who desire to serve Christ and His Church. This conference is **September 18th from 9-12pm** and brings a holistic approach to women's

work in churches and assists women in becoming more effective in their various ministries. This year guest speaker is the founder of Imagine Me Ministries, Pascha Lee, native of West Baltimore, MD. Pascha is fully aware that all the education in the world cannot compare to the importance of having a love relationship with Jesus Christ and she is grateful that the Lord has allowed her to receive degrees from the University of Maryland College Park, Johns Hopkins University and a Master of Arts in Christian Care from Capital Seminary and Graduate School. The Guest Worship Leader is Janet Allen and Company with Emmanuel Church in Huntingtown, MD. There is an option **To Provide a Gift to the Maryland/Delaware WMU Touch Tomorrow Today (TTT) Endowment by viewing the registration site.**

RENOVATE Church Revitalization Series

Join BCM/D in their series on Church Revitalization **"Dealing with the Critical Issues that are Killing Most Churches in Decline"**. RENOVATE is a movement of church revitalizers committed to learning, growing, changing and leading change! This church revitalization conference is designed to connect, inspire, equip and challenge church leaders and pastors. Participants will enjoy Inspiring times of worship, Encouraging key note presentations and Equipping times of break-out. This event is for pastors, staff and all local church leaders. **Pre-Intensive Offered (Friday, October 1st 1:30PM – 4:00PM Cost is \$5.00 at the Door)**. This pre-conference intensive is designed for the church revitalizer who seeks to identify and understand the most prevalent key critical issues in church revitalization and renewal. Space is limited. Those pre-registered will receive 1st seating.



REPLANTING a Legacy

by Daniel Housam

The story of North Valley Church (NVC) in Myersville, Maryland, a replant of Myersville Baptist Church (MBC), is a God-sized story with His fingerprints clearly all over it. I am blessed that God saw fit to give me a small role in that big plan.



I was the lead pastor of Summit Trace Church (STC) in Frederick for over 11 years. All was good, but several years ago, I had a nudge in my spirit that said I was not the best person to be leading STC. I shared my thoughts with my leadership team at the time and they were not received well. So, I stayed the course. I did not know it then, but God had plans way beyond my awareness, and this nudge was just one small piece of a larger picture that God was working on. And it would be in God's timing.

In December 2018, STC moved from being a "portable church" to a permanent home in a commercial space. While the rent was more expensive, everyone saw God's hands at work in opening doors to make it a financially viable move. We started worshipping there in March 2019 and it felt like home. We knowingly moved in the new place expecting to have a financial shortfall of nearly \$10,000 — and that was with faith built into the budget. As we went into the spring, giving exceeded expectations and we were in the black. STC was in a new home and we were financially stable. Praise God!

Getting on the right bus

But then the nudge returned. As I surveyed STC, we were in a very healthy condition, and my associate pastor, Rob Downs, was exercising his leadership gifts. I felt he was ready to lead. Looking back, I can describe it using the leadership metaphor of a bus. I was on the wrong seat of the bus. Rob needed to be in my seat. Continuing the analogy, I was actually on the wrong bus. If I could get out of my seat and give it to Rob, other people would start moving around in their seats. Jesus was at the wheel of STC and ready to do some musical chairs. So, I stepped down from STC. This piece of God's larger picture was in place. The new bus was MBC.

As pastor of STC, I made it a point to reach out to other pastors and church leaders and build relationships, friendships, and partnerships. MBC was one of those churches. STC helped MBC financially and assisted with ministries, and I helped fill the pulpit when the pastor, John Sumpter, who served the church for seven years, needed help. We were friends and got together regularly.

As I felt called to leave STC, I was also becoming aware something was going on at MBC. I heard they were not having a good summer. In fact, it seemed like they were on life support. Through the heroic efforts of Bruce Conley, the Blue Ridge Baptist Association's director of missions, the church was surviving. I felt drawn to see if I could help and, in September, offered to preach. I quickly became a candidate for pastor. Bruce was thrilled.

God arranged the rest very quickly. Rob was ready to step into the lead pastor role at STC and there was a unanimous vote for me at MBC. All six members agreed to call me as pastor.

This is the piece that God knew about in His larger picture, which none of us could have ever expected to happen.

A faithful sending church

Praise God, I didn't just leave STC: they sent me. They even opened the opportunity for families who wanted to transition with me to help replant with MBC, and they are continuing to support us financially. They are parenting this effort.

I invited the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware's SEND Network Director Michael Crawford into the conversation about what to do for MBC. It started to look like the best next step for the church was to replant. After plenty of opportunities for questions, discussions, and healing for everyone involved, MBC voted to become NVC on November 17, 2019. We spent our initial season bringing the original MBC people and the STC Restart Team together. We were about 14 people who needed time to share stories and fellowship and to get to know each other.

REPLANTING a Legacy cont.



As a group, we sat in a circle doing Bible study, praying, and excitedly implementing the 2020 strategy to grow into a healthy church.

Unexpected developments

But 2020 didn't turn out the way we anticipated. In March, COVID-19 kicked in and everything changed. Like others around us, we had to navigate through the restrictions. God worked through the COVID-19 struggles. Several Christians discovered I was replanting Myersville and felt called to help. They began attending and serving, including my Executive Director, Grant Cregger.

When we had our first public service in June, we had 48 people, quadrupling our original group of a dozen.

We did a lot of outreach — providing Frederick Rescue Mission with supplies, starting a life skills small group, and helping local families. We also had a Trunk or Treat in October. In addition, we utilized Skycroft, which is very close to us, meeting outside and then eating boxed lunches and swimming. It has been an amazing ride.

One of our highlights is our children's ministry. Almost one-third of our folks on Sundays are children. We renovated three rooms on the lower level, and they've already outgrown them. Now we're moving on to a fourth room.

People are having a good time. And folks are getting saved and growing in the Lord. We've had four baptisms so far. The church has been blessed immensely.

We have been relying on partnerships with various churches, organizations, and people to accomplish what we believed God was calling us to do. Those partners have been fueling our work through their prayers, participation, and provision. Our replant partners are another piece of the picture God had been working on to bring NVC to fruition.

It also never ceases to humble me to know that I am standing on the shoulders of the saints of MBC. We are preserving their spiritual heritage as NVC moves forward.

I am blessed that God saw fit to give me a small role in that big plan. As I work through this season with NVC, I wonder how many other churches might be ready to benefit from replant or revitalization work. My prayer is that more churches and pastors dare to prayerfully ask God what the best next step is. God may have a big plan that you cannot see from where you are. Our only option is to seek God and obediently do our part.

He puts the pieces together for His bigger picture.





BRBA's **Annual Meeting** will be on **October 11, 2021** (Columbus Day). Thank you **West End Baptist** for hosting this year's meeting. We are still planning specific details for the event. Please check your email for updated information and documents for the meeting.

If you are on a committee, you will be contacted individually about meeting with Bruce to prepare for the meeting presentation.

CONCERN ABOUT LOCAL MISSIONS FINANCES

The BLUE RIDGE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION has seen a financial downturn the last several years and COVID -19 added to our financial stress. Recently we had to make the tough decision to let Phil Graves go after 19 years of technical service to our churches. Likewise, we cut our administrative assistant's hours in half. For 2 years now, there has not been enough funds available to pay the DOM's full budgeted annuity. At the end of 2020, we made other severe cuts to our budget to try to withstand the shortfall, but it doesn't appear that the extended cuts are having the desired effect alone.

We realize that in most of our churches, this is the time of year that you start working on your church budgets for next year. We also realize that many of our churches are already supporting local missions in BRBA the very best that they can during these difficult times. We are extremely grateful for all that you are doing to help the cause of local missions in our region.

As you prepare your budgets for 2022 and beyond though, I am compelled to make an appeal. If you can give more to support local missions next year, please do. If your church gives much higher percentages to the *Cooperative Program* than they do to support local missions, then please consider balancing out those numbers a bit more in the years ahead. In the last 8-10 years, local associations receive NOTHING from other Baptist missions organizations, with one exception - our State Convention. They do award us small grants and assistance from time to time. If your church was to give **equal** percentages to your local association as you do national SBC work, it may just be the lifeline that bolsters what we need to accomplish yearly to help churches and leaders locally. We are wholly 100% supported by contributions from our local churches. So as your local missionary, I ask simply, if your church can do more, please consider it.

As your Director of Missions, I realize that too many of our church members really do not know what a DOM does or how much the association does to provide help and assistance to our local churches. For that reason, I have a sermon that I have prepared called "**WHY LOCAL MISSIONS?**" that gives a snapshot of the many facets of missions and ministry work in Blue Ridge. It can be very informative and shows the importance of what we do. I would very much like to bring this message to **every BRBA church** in the next 6 months or so. *Would you be so kind as to invite me to speak at your church, so that every member can know the importance of your church actively supporting local missions work in BRBA?* I'd love to schedule a date to come to your church with this vital information!

Once again, let me express my immense gratitude as your local missionary for all that you do to support the work of Christ through BRBA. Psalm 50:10 makes reference to the fact that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. In fact, he owns EVERYTHING. I know in faith, God will provide everything we need in the years ahead. He has never failed us yet and He never will.

Rev. Bruce M. Conley, BRBA Director of Missions

STATEWIDE MISSION OPPORTUNITY

BRBA has a local church that is interested in pairing up with another local church to do a stateside mission trip / project this Fall. If your church would like to pair up with a sister church for such a mission endeavor, contact Bruce Conley, Director of Missions 301-821-0370 bruce@blueridgebaptist.org!

