



The Circle of Life

It's hard to believe that it's been 30 years since the Disney film THE LION KING was introduced, along with the hit song for the movie THE CIRCLE OF LIFE written by artist Elton John. If you remember, the thought behind the theme was that all of life is interconnected, and with each new generation comes a fresh chance for new cycles of life to begin. It was fun entertainment then, and still is now.

In BRBA though, we prefer to see moments when GOD orchestrates His own "CIRCLE OF LIFE" in and among our churches and with God's people. We are witnessing such a movement of God with SUMMIT TRACE CHURCH in Frederick, MD this month!

Summit Trace Church was started as a mission church plant in 2001 by then Pastor Bill Craig. The mission church was coordinated by Dave Burt (BRBA) and was sponsored by Pastor Larry Eubanks and the well-established family of believers at FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH of Frederick, MD. At that time, the church was still located in downtown Frederick, and had not yet moved to their new facility on Braddock mountain. Summit Trace started their services on Saturday nights at the Dill Avenue church, and planter Bill Craig would attend Sunday church with the FBC family. First Baptist sent resources and some people to help start the new work, which soon grew and advanced to meet in the Delaplaine Arts Center, the local college, a school, a movie theater, and then to a commercial space off of Buckeystown Pike.

Summit Trace has had 2 pastors since Craig left (he is now a church planter in Livermore, CA). Dan Housam served as pastor until a few years ago when he went to Myersville to restart a BRBA church there. Then Rob Downs stepped in and presently serves. The church (because of terribly overpriced commercial rental prices in the area) will move this month from their 24/7 warehouse rental space back to where it all got started 23+ years ago. They have signed a contract with the BANNER SCHOOL - which just happens to be in the same building that was the old FBC of Frederick!! Yes, since the church started services on those Saturday evenings in 2001, they will (for the immediate future) be right back in the old FBC sanctuary - worshiping and praising God on Sunday mornings!



The Circle of Life (continued)

In recent years, commercial rental space in Frederick County has skyrocketed in price. Two of our congregations (Summit Trace & Third Day) have faced huge increases in rent and had to leave the worship space they have been accustomed to for years, due to rental rates in the THOUSANDS per month.



Summit Trace Church - in searching for a new more affordable place to meet - found God's CIRCLE OF LIFE for them. Pastor Rob Downs says that it feels like the church is strangely "coming home" and moving back into it's roots, 23 years after it all began. They believe that God has orchestrated things so that the church could see the mighty provision from God in every circumstance, and every age.

Jesus once said: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:9-11)

Paul reminded the church at Corinth: "And my God will meet ALL of your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus"!

God's watch-care and provision for Summit Trace Church has been obvious over many years. They asked Him for guidance and direction, and He answered their prayers - bringing them full circle back to the their roots.



Summit Trace Church and Third Day Community Church worshiped together multiple times in March. Here is the group's Easter Sunday photo.

History of Memorial Day

Last Monday in May

The holiday grew out of the Civil War, as nearly 2% of Americans died in that war. Several places lay claim to being the birthplace of Memorial Day. One of the earliest accounts comes from nearby Boalsburg, Pa., (north of Harrisburg) where, in October 1864, three women are said to have placed flowers and wreaths on the graves of men who had died serving the Union during the Civil War.

Our own region is rich in Civil War history with Antietam National Battlefield, Monocacy National Battlefield, South Mountain sites and the town of Harper's Ferry being preserved for our ability to visit and reflect on that rich history. The bodies of those who died in that conflict, according to one Civil War General, "lay in almost every city, village, and church courtyard in the United States" and deserve to be held in memoriam.

For many years, the commemoration was widely referred to as "Decoration Day." But as it evolved to honor not only Civil War soldiers but all troops who had fallen serving the country in the armed forces through numerous wars and conflicts, Congress formally changed the commemoration's name in 1967 to MEMORIAL DAY. A few years later, the government decreed that Memorial Day should occur not on May 30 each year, but on the last Monday of that month.

The change was part of a broader effort to create three-day weekends, Sarah Weicksel, the director of research and publications with the American Historical Association, said, "They wanted it to be an opportunity for people to be able to gather."



Reflections on the Cross

BRBA Director of Missions, Rev. Bruce Conley

This year was a strange Holy week for me. I was finishing up a interim pastorate for one of our churches in BRBA, yet was not preaching or singing at any worship services. That's a different role for me, as I have had a lead role in every single Easter celebration in my life spanning back over almost 50 years.

I took the opportunity to be ministered TO for a change. Instead of leading worship, I participated in worship. Mary and I attended multiple services at different churches, and rather enjoyed the experience together as most newlyweds would.

I took some time to reflect on the sacrifice made on the cross for my sins, and refreshed my feeling of unworthiness in the face of the flood of absolutely amazing grace from God, my creator. To say that I am humbled by the story of the gospel of Christ is a massive understatement, because words can't express the magnitude of my sadness that He had to die such a cruel death for me.

1 Peter 2:24-25 says: He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (NIV)

Allow me a few moments this month to share what others have said about their experience in looking to the cross of Christ in their own personal lives:

There is no doctrine more excellent in itself or more necessary to be preached and studied, than the doctrine of Christ, and him crucified. John Flavel

My entire theology can be condensed into four words, "JESUS DIED FOR ME." Charles Spurgeon

To know Jesus and Him crucified is my philosophy, and there is none higher. Bernard of Clairvaux

The gentle, compassionate Jesus is also the Jesus who drove the merchant-thieves from the Temple and spoke condemnation against self-righteous religious leaders. Were Jesus as meek and mild and utterly tolerant as many think, He never would have been crucified. But His less popular qualities so outraged people that they nailed Him to a cross. Randy Alcorn



Jesus was crucified not in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves. George F. MacLeod

The crucifixion was the shocking answer to the prayer that God's kingdom would come on earth as in heaven. N.T. Wright

Though many recent writers have spoken of God's vulnerability and weakness demonstrated on the cross, we must see this truth in the context of God's sovereignty. Christ chose this "weakness." His obedient death on the cross demonstrates it. "The reason my Father loves me," Jesus said, "is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:17-18). He willingly chose to suffer as a victim. Scripture portrays a God so strong He can take on weakness to overpower all opposition and accomplish His eternal purposes. Randy Alcorn

It was not the people or the Roman soldiers who put Jesus on the cross—it was your sins and my sins that made it necessary for Him to volunteer His death. Billy Graham

The true Son left his home with the Father and went to the cross so that we who had run from the Father could be welcomed as sons. Trevor Laurence

When God sent His only Son, Jesus, to this earth to bear your sin and mine on the cross, He put a price tag on us—He declared the value of our soul to be greater than the value of the whole world. Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth

Satan's motive in Jesus' crucifixion was rebellion; God's motive was love and mercy. Satan was a secondary cause behind the Crucifixion, but it was God who ultimately wanted it, willed it, and allowed Satan to carry it out. Joni Eareckson Tada

What looks like (and indeed was) the defeat of Goodness by evil is also, and more certainly, the defeat of evil by Goodness. Overcome there, he was himself overcoming. Crushed by the ruthless power of Rome, he was himself crushing the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). The victim was the victor, and the cross is still the throne from which he rules the world. John Stott

God on a cross. Humanity at its worst. Divinity at its best. Max Lucado

Jesus knew He was being betrayed by one of His best friends at that very moment. He knew He was facing imminent arrest, trials, torture, crucifixion, and death. He bore the eternal weight of responsibility for fully completing His Father's will and redeeming mankind from sin. If ever there were multiple reasons for praise being interrupted, Jesus had them on that Thursday night. Yet Matthew 26:30 says that He sang! Anne Graham Lotz

It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit of God also touched your heart as you worshiped the Risen Lord this past Easter season!

Blessings,

Bruce M. Conley

Prayer Is Our Primary Strategy

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

The Baptist Convention of MD/DE is sponsoring a series of prayer initiatives across our 2 state convention to boost prayer cooperation between churches in all 11 of our associations. The prayer session for the BLUE RIDGE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION is scheduled for **Tuesday, May 14th, 2024 from 10:30 - 11:45 AM at SOUTH END BAPTIST CHURCH - 506 Carrollton Drive, Frederick, MD 21701.**

No registration or RSVP is necessary to participate, just show up and prepare to pray to almighty God. There will be no agenda for this initiative other than prayer. **EVERYONE** in our area is invited to join.

For pastors and leaders from our region who attend, BRBA will host a pizza fellowship afterwards at Ledo Pizza - 490 Prospect Blvd, Frederick, MD 21701
We look forward to seeing you there!



Refresh Retreat: Philadelphia April 22-24

North American Mission Board Refresh Retreats are three-day retreats designed to bring deep encouragement and strengthening to ministry couples, church staff, and lay leaders. Teaching topics include spiritual and emotional health as well as other topics like godly leadership, prayer, and evangelism.

Prices

Pastor Alone – **\$199** (includes lodging)

Pastor & Wife – **\$399** (includes lodging)

The registration price includes two nights lodging, all sessions, conference materials, and meals are covered, Monday dinner through Wednesday breakfast.



For more information or to register visit <https://www.namb.net/events/refresh-retreat-philadelphia/>



Key Bridge Disaster Relief Update

As everyone now knows in our region, The KEY BRIDGE in Baltimore collapsed early Tuesday morning, March 26th, effectively shutting down all ship traffic in and out of Baltimore harbor, and halting all traffic around the east side of Baltimore on I-95 / I-695.

Transportation police acted quickly (within a 90 second warning window) to stop all vehicle traffic on the bridge and save lives, but unfortunately a overnight construction crew could not be evacuated in time, and plummeted into the icy waters of the Patapsco River below. Please pray for the 2 survivors, and the families of all whose lives were lost in this enormous tragedy.

As is the case with many disasters and tragedies, **SBC DISASTER RELIEF** is ready to respond to assist those in need and be a witness for the Gospel while attending to people's physical, emotional and spiritual needs. WE NEED MORE TRAINED DR VOLUNTEERS to answer the call to help when things like this come up!!



Currently - volunteers and equipment are on alert / stand by status - to potentially feed workers involved with bridge debris removal in the weeks and months ahead. The bridge situation is constantly changing, so we may receive short notice to start feeding, or a few days' notice, and we want our teams to be ready when and if the call to serve comes in.

Other volunteers may also be needed (not just trained feeding unit workers) such as mechanics, Chaplains, general workers, administrative, inventory, etc. Ellen Udovich at the Baptist Convention of MD/DE is our coordinator and will be in touch with every DOM in the associations when teams are being assembled.

Pray for the BALTIMORE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION as well as the FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF DUNDALK as they begin to coordinate "Caring Skills for Crisis Situations". The goal is to equip laypeople from churches around the harbor area in daily spiritual and emotional care that will help them minister to their neighbors during this time of community-wide grief and anxiety.

Please also remember to pray for the Dali crew and pilots. Pray in the months ahead for the many employers and employees who are anxious about their income and paychecks. There is much concern about what the immediate future holds for these workers and their families.

For more information please contact BRBA Director of Missions, Bruce Conley at (301) 821-0370 or Ellen Udovich at the BCM/D at (800) 466-529 for training opportunities visit <https://bcmd.org/events>

Disaster Relief Training

Saturday, April 6: Hands-On Chainsaw: classroom + practice on downed trees

- Skycroft Conference Center (Frederick Co)
- 9621 Frostown Rd, Middletown, MD 21769

This class is open to volunteers who've completed the basic DR recovery class. No prior chainsaw experience is required.

Space is limited Hands-On Training 2024

Other upcoming training dates:

NOTE: If you need to update your badge or want to take additional classes, you can register online at bcmd.org/events — scroll to find the date you're interested in. Please also share this information with your church and friends interested in learning more about Disaster Relief!

Saturday, June 1: DR Basic Training

- Redland Baptist Church (Montgomery Co)
- 6922 Muncaster Mill Rd, Durwood, MD 20855

Saturday, June 23: Feeding Unit Hands-On Exercise

- Middle River Baptist Church (Baltimore Co)
- 610 Middle River Rd, Baltimore, MD 21220
- 9:00 am — 3:00 pm

We'll be simulating a feeding response from start to finish: setting up large canopies, rolling out and setting up the tilt skillet and convention over, setting up the wash station, preparing a meal, cleaning equipment and packing everything back onto the trailer.

This is open to any DR volunteer regardless of prior training. We especially need volunteers trained in basic DR feeding as well as mechanically inclined volunteers to assist with setting up and troubleshooting equipment.

Saturday, August 24: DR Basic Training

- West End Baptist Chapel (in BRBA!)
- 59 Winter St, Hagerstown, MD 21740
- Register online at bcmd.org/events



BCM/D 2024 Men's Conference

The Whole Gospel for the Whole Man

On April 13, 2024, Riva Trace Baptist Church is set to host a remarkable gathering dedicated to uplifting and empowering men in their spiritual journey. The conference, aptly named “The Whole Gospel for the Whole Man,” is poised to be a pivotal event for men seeking to deepen their understanding of the Gospel and its application in every facet of their lives.

This one-day conference is designed to explore the comprehensive impact of the Gospel on the male identity, addressing the spiritual, emotional, physical, and social aspects of what it means to be a man in today's world. It aims to provide men with a clearer understanding of how the Gospel speaks to their entire being.

Spiritual Empowerment and Growth: Central to the conference's theme is the idea that the Gospel is not just a part of life but is life itself. Speakers and leaders, renowned for their insight and wisdom, will guide the participants through sessions that delve into how the Gospel influences and transforms a man's spiritual life, shaping his relationship with God, family, and community.

Addressing the Modern Challenges: In a world where men often face unique challenges and pressures, this conference seeks to offer biblical solutions and strategies. From navigating personal and professional responsibilities to leading with integrity and compassion, the conference will touch on practical aspects of living out the Gospel in the 21st century.

Fellowship and Brotherhood: More than just a series of talks and workshops, “The Whole Gospel for the Whole Man” conference is a celebration of brotherhood in Christ. It provides an opportunity for men to connect with others who share their faith and values, creating a strong support network that extends beyond the event.

Physical and Mental Wellbeing: Recognizing that man's wellbeing is not just spiritual, the conference will also include sessions on physical and mental health from a Christian perspective. These sessions aim to equip men with the knowledge and tools to take care of their bodies and minds as temples of the Holy Spirit.

Making a Lasting Impact: Participants will leave the conference not just inspired but also equipped with practical knowledge and spiritual tools to impact their families, workplaces, and communities positively. It's about embracing the whole Gospel, for the whole man, for a wholehearted life.



For more information or to register please visit bcmd.org/event/mens-conference.

Heartfelt Mother's Day Ideas For Your Church

Every church has a desire to honor mothers on Mother's Day. We wanted to give you a few ideas on how your church can honor moms on Mother's Day (May 12th), 2024:

1) Have children's classes do appreciation cards for their moms. Better yet - have a poem writing contest to honor their mothers, and highlight a few in the church worship service.

2) Have children sing a song to their mothers in worship.

3) Play a special video that honors mothers.

4) Have an older child share a testimony about their mom.

5) Give gifts or treats to all mothers present at church. Honor the mom with the most children present at church with her that day.

6) Sponsor a Mother's Day tea or brunch.

7) Have a Mother's Day photo opportunity with a semi-professional background and photographer. Make the pictures available to mom as a gift thereafter.



Get creative - there are many ways we can honor our moms this year. They are definitely worth the effort!

Prayer Requests

Praying for one another within our association is like sharing a family meal; it brings us closer and strengthens our bonds. It's a beautiful way to show love and support, reminding us that, though our churches may vary in size or style, we're all part of the same spiritual family. This practice of lifting each other up in prayer not only nurtures our faith but also reinforces the unity and shared purpose that define us. Let's embrace this gift of prayer, celebrate our connections, and grow stronger together in faith and fellowship.

Please pray for the following churches:

- THIRD DAY COMMUNITY CHURCH -- without a pastor + looking for new worship space.
- VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH -- without a pastor.
- FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FREDERICK -- without a pastor.
- FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BRUNSWICK - Replanting and putting together a strategy and replanting team.

