

SOMEBODY CARES

A true witness rescues lives (Proverbs 14:25)



2015 MID-YEAR REPORT

Cultivating A Life of Doing Good •

The Power of Joel 2 • What's Next For Baltimore?

Prayer, Politics & Prosperity in Pampa

Will Your Church Be Ready? • The Time Has Come!

CONTENTS

Cultivating A Life of Doing Good by Jodie Chiricosta	1
The Power of Joel 2 Moments by Elizabeth Ennis	4
Prayer, Politics, and Prosperity in Pampa by Gloria Robbins	6
What Time Is It? Preparing For Transforming Revival Begins With Me by Rick Torrison	8
The Lion of Lyons Avenue by Susie Wolf	9
What's Next for Baltimore?	10
Building Lives!	12
Will Your Church Be Ready? by Vickie Gaskins	14
Disaster Relief Update	15
Modeled Well: A TPMI Testmony	16
A Tribute to Pat Lackey	17
A Catalyst For City-Wide Evangelism by Susie Wolf	18
New Assignments by Lisa Stringer	19
The Time Will Come! by Doug Stringer	20

On the cover:

A neighborhood youngster gets a boost during sports camp hosted last summer by Somebody Cares New England at their new church facility. See story on page 12.

This publication was produced by Somebody Cares America/Int'l.

Office address:

PO Box 925308, Houston TX, 77292

Phone: 713-621-1498

www.SomebodyCares.org

Somebody Cares America/International is an affiliate of Turning Point Ministries International and a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

Donations to SCA/I and TPMI are tax deductible.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

@_SomebodyCares @DougStringer



As we look around us today, it's easy to become discouraged. Our complex, chaotic world seems to be spinning out of control with violence and unspeakable atrocities perpetrated by those who see Christianity as their enemy. We have an increase in earthquakes and other natural disasters. Our nation and our Church are both in a critical transition as we face the consequences of eroding social and moral values. We have a border crisis, and we've experienced the pain of riots sparked by racial tension and frustration.

2 Corinthians 2:14 tells us: *"Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph or victory in Christ, and then through us diffuses (or manifests, dispenses) the fragrance of the knowledge of God in every place."*

God is saying not to fear because He will always lead us to victory so that we can help others—so that we can dispense or manifest the fragrance of God every place we go. With so much tragedy, it's more important than ever for the church to respond as a tangible expression of Christ.

That's why I am so encouraged as I read the pages of this magazine. The underlying theme of each of these stories is one of ***prayer, worship, and compassion evangelism*** yet the over-arching theme is one of ***RECONCILIATION***.

Just as God reconciled us to Himself through the beautiful gift of salvation through His Son, so are we to be instruments of reconciliation to the hurting world around us.

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

As we pray corporately at church gatherings around our city or in state-wide stadium events with governmental leaders, we are praying for our Church to be reconciled with one another and, with a heart of repentance and humility, with God.

As we act with compassion toward those experiencing crisis through a natural disaster, racial tensions, or personal crisis, we are reconciling them to each other and to God's love by reaching out as the tangible expression of Jesus.

And as we share the Good News through an evangelism crusade or personal interaction, we are reconciling the lost or wayward back to the Truth of the Gospel.

From New England to Texas to the South Pacific, from Baltimore to the Middle East to Nepal, I am so proud of all of our chapters, centers, and other friends who are daily diffusing the beautiful fragrance of God every place they go.

You, too, are an integral part of something so much bigger than yourself as you partner with us to make this possible. I pray that you are encouraged and inspired, as I am, by these good reports. As we continue to labor together, we can be assured that God will always lead us in triumph!

Thank you for caring!

J. Doug Stringer
Founder and President



Life Cultivating a of Doing GOOD

BY JODIE CHIRICOSTA

“Learn to do good; seek justice; rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.” (Isaiah 1:17)

Hope’s life seemed hopeless. She had endured heavy doses of anger and abuse from her father, which she tried to escape by going away to college. Drowning her sorrows by drinking got her expelled from school. She was haunted by her past, and her life was in shambles. Tormented by suicidal and self-destructive thoughts, Hope turned to relationships, alcohol, and psychiatric medication. Soon she found herself homeless and living in a shelter.

That is where Lori Jane found her. As part of a Christian Coffee Posse that served up coffee and prayers in front of the shelter at 6:00 every Thursday morning, Lori Jane became familiar with Hope’s anger and mockery. Each week, Hope scurried past the coffee crew as quickly as possible.

After a few weeks, she began to speak with them, but only to taunt them and mock God. Undaunted, the Coffee Posse from Somebody Cares New England and CCF Street Church persisted in both prayer and compassion, and God used them to draw Hope to Himself.

“I pretended I didn’t want what those Christians had, but I really did!” she confesses now. “The Wiccans and atheists were all cooped up in the shelter, chronically homeless and plagued with sickness and depression. But the Christian Coffee Posse had true JOY and PEACE! Still I hid and ran from my issues—I didn’t have the strength to deal with them.”

Tragically, two days before Thanksgiving in 2006, Hope was sexually assaulted. The staff at the shelter knew she needed more than they could offer so they sent her to a crisis-response facility. Hope shared, “On Thanksgiving Day, Lori Jane showed up and loved me as I was: broken, beaten, and battle-worn. When she invited me to CCF Street Church, I was so impressed with her compassion that I went. Everything from the worship music to the message filled me with HOPE and encouragement and fueled my empty soul. I accepted JESUS as my

Savior—and EVERYTHING CHANGED!”

Eight years later she continues to grow in the Lord. Hope shares that God healed her mind and cleansed her of her sins. She finished college, has her own apartment, and works for a newspaper now. And she continues to volunteer with Somebody Cares New England whenever she can. In fact, she is now helping a formerly homeless friend get back on their feet.

God met Hope through the faithful prayers, compassion actions, and Gospel witness of that small group of Christians in Haverhill, MA. He wants to reach others like Hope through every Believer. That type of life, however, doesn’t come naturally to us. As Isaiah declares in chapter 1, verse 17, we must “*learn to do good!*”

In the busy-ness of life and the crush of increasing crises, it is easy to anesthetize the nudges of the Holy Spirit with a quick prayer, a small donation, or an internal promise to do something later. In fact, in our pressed lives, it is even easy to overlook the needs of friends and co-workers who are devastated by personal crisis and searching for answers. It is sinful human nature to focus on our needs, wants, and desires with little regard for others.

This is the same struggle Christians have had throughout time. But as Believers we must put on a new nature, God’s nature, which teaches us to live differently. We no longer look out for our needs alone, but also for the needs of others.

The Apostle Paul addresses this clearly and repeatedly in his letter to Titus (Titus 2:7, 11-14; 3:1, 8, 14) as he explains to Titus that Christ wants us to “*long to do what is good*” (Titus 2:14B NIRV). In his closing Paul writes, “*Let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful*” (Titus 3:14 NIV).

Paul understands the struggle between our flesh and the Spirit of God. So, he says, we must practice doing good; we must practice meeting pressing needs! We must cultivate a life of doing good. If we don’t, we will be unfruitful.

To do that requires that we intentionally re-order our lives. We must prepare ourselves to be available for God’s use on a

daily basis. If we do, we will see fruit in our lives that we never imagined possible.

Of course, with the increase of natural and man-made disasters that is predicted in Scripture and is playing out in the headlines every day, Christians must be ready to be God’s witness during times of corporate crisis, too. Cultivating a lifestyle of doing good will better prepare us for God’s use when larger crises occur. In Luke, Jesus taught His disciples that wars, natural disasters, and every kind of human crisis “*will lead to an opportunity for your testimony*” (Luke 21:13). If we are not ready for the opportunities, we may miss them.

So what should we do?

The beautiful and challenging thing about the Body of Christ is that everyone has a unique role to play. There is no “one size fit all” answer!

- Lori Jane and the Christian Coffee Posse served coffee, prayed for the homeless, and shared Jesus every Thursday morning in Massachusetts; and people came to Christ.
- Samantha volunteered in jail ministry in Virginia for a season, where God gave her a deep love for women suffering from the same addictions and brokenness that plagued her own mother. She prayed for them, loved them, and told them the love and forgiveness of Jesus; and women were freed from spiritual bondage.
- Mike serves as chaplain for a professional basketball team. He prays with them, counsels them through personal crises anytime of day or night, and shares God’s Word with them without ever trying to manipulate them for personal gain; and lives and families are being saved.
- Several Christian men in Texas started a business together based on and committed to Biblical values. As a company, they leave margins in their budget to support God’s work. After Hurricane Katrina and the Haitian Earthquake, Somebody Cares needed a quick way for assessment teams and immediate relief items to get to the disaster zone. Massive infrastructure damage eliminated commercial trans-

portation. They made their company jet available for those teams, free of charge, and countless lives were impacted with the tangible expression of God's love.

- Dorothy moved from Canada to Haiti a number of years ago to care for AIDS orphans. When the earthquake struck, God spared her compound, which she opened for families who lost homes in the quake. She provided them a safe place to stay with their children, food, water, and most of all the Good News of Jesus. She literally saved hundreds of lives physically and brought many more to Christ!
- Barry, an attorney in Virginia, raised resources to create a child-friendly waiting room in the courthouse for children who were victims of crime or abuse so going to court wouldn't be so scary. His action was a testimony to those working in the legal system in his city and has opened doors for sharing His faith.
- Mark in Texas and Mike in Minnesota have ordered their lives so they can take weeks away from work and family responsibili-

ties following each major U.S. disaster to provide hot meals on-site for survivors and first responders. They have built a mobile catering grill to pull behind a pick-up truck, and they are usually one of the first groups to arrive and start serving in communities that have been devastated. In addition to giving disaster survivors a delicious hot meal, they also share the Good News of Jesus and connect people with local churches. Desperate people find hope again.

- Terry, a retired civil servant from Colorado, went to Texas following Hurricane Ike to offer administrative and logistical support for relief efforts. He connected with Somebody Cares and played a critical role in our housing rehabilitation projects, while sharing Jesus with those struggling to recover from the storm. Lives were changed.

The opportunities to make oneself available to God are endless. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that *"we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

God already has some good works that He created each of us specifically to fulfill. Will you be ready to do them?

If you truly desire to be one God can use to minister to hurting people who need Christ, here are a few things you can do to insure you are available and listening!

LEAVE MARGINS IN YOUR SCHEDULE.

This isn't a new thought but it sure is an important one. If your schedule is jam-packed full, how will you have time to respond when a need arises? Of course there are some responsibilities and appointments you cannot shirk, but if your entire day and night are filled with "must dos" there is no opportunity for ministry. Order your days so you have room to reach out when the Holy Spirit leads. And be realistic about what really is a "must do." Coffee with a friend may be prime ministry time, or it may be a convenient way to fill an hour so you don't have to listen to the Lord.

LEAVE MARGINS IN YOUR BUDGET (IF POSSIBLE). Times are tough, people are out of work, and not everyone can make ends meet. That is understandable. But if you have enough income to cover your basic needs with some left over, consider carefully what to do with the left-over. Of course tithing is non-negotiable. Beyond that, can you set some aside each month to help others in need or participate in a ministry or mission trip?

PRACTICE DOING GOOD. Like Paul tells Titus, learn to do good by meeting pressing needs around you. Ask God to give you eyes to see and ears to hear needs around you. Ask Him to give you a heart to respond. Think of creative ways to help with needs on a regular basis according to the passions and gifts God has placed inside you.

- Recruit friends to raise money for a cause dear to your heart. Use social media, host an event that highlights the need, or come up with some other creative way to educate others about the need and engage them in meeting it. The Pipers' five children set up a lemonade stand after the Japanese earthquake and raised over \$100 to help the survivors through Somebody Cares.
- Offer to make and deliver meals to families in your church or other group who are dealing with serious illness or a death.
- Participate in Toys for Tots, Angel Tree, Operation Christmas Child or other holiday outreaches in your community.
- Volunteer at a local rescue mission, after school program, food pantry, or other local ministry.
- Really listen when friends are going through a hard time and see if there are practical ways to help. Offer to clean house or run errands for someone going through radiation or chemotherapy. Provide free babysitting for a couple struggling to make ends meet or whose husband or wife just returned from military deployment so they can have some alone time.
- Do basic car maintenance for those on fixed incomes – or major car repairs if you know how!



Donna (top, left) from our Somebody Cares team with Dorothy during a Haiti relief trip; Terry (left) helps with donations for the annual Somebody Cares Houston holiday outreach.

- Anything else you can think of to bless others when they need a hand.

SPEND DAILY TIME WITH THE LORD.

To be most effective, good deeds must flow out of love; love for God and for people. If you run dry spiritually, your good deeds can quickly become wearisome chores and just be one more burden for you to carry. Seek God, read His word, open your heart in prayer, and listen for His voice so YOU will find refreshment for YOUR soul.

PREPARE YOURSELF. Sometimes crisis or disaster strikes close to home. If the stores are closed, electricity is out, gas pumps have run dry, and banks are shuttered can you care for yourself and your family? Is your church ready to be a beacon of light in your community when things go wrong? If you are not personally prepared to care for yourself should crisis or disaster strike your community, you cannot reach out and help others. There are numerous books, resources, and seminars that can help you prepare personally and as a church body. Some of those resources can be found on SomebodyCares.org in the e-store.

GET CONNECTED. When you are facing a difficult ministry situation or times of tough crises come, you want to know whom you can trust. Develop relationships with others who are like-minded, those who are reaching out, the ones who are also cultivating a life of good deeds. Connect with a church that actively supports outreach or with a local city-reaching group to impact your neighborhood or community. Connect nationally with networks like Somebody Cares, either personally or through a partner ministry, so when the next crisis occurs you are in the loop and everyone knows what you have to offer.

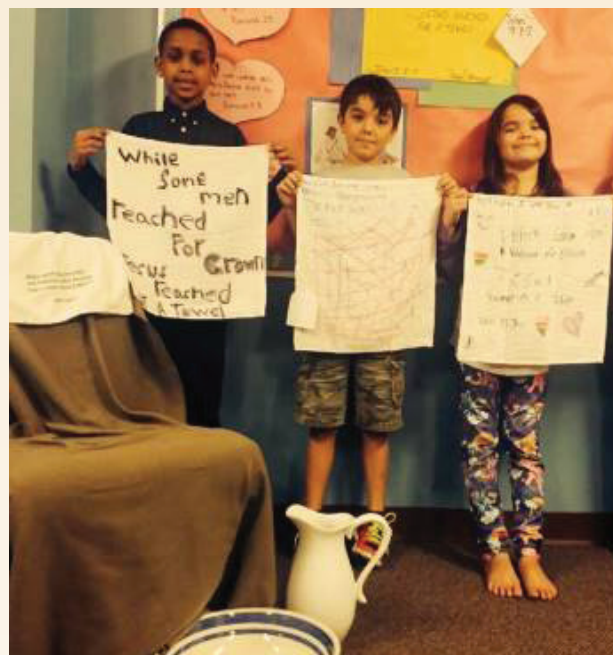
If you want to be used by God, you have to be intentional in your choices. Those who cultivate a life of doing good, out of deep love for Christ, will see great fruitfulness in their life and in the Kingdom.

*Somebody Cares America is partnering with Mission America in their Love 2020 initiative: an effort to mobilize every Christ follower to embrace a prayer, care, share lifestyle so every person in American can be loved by at least one Christ follower by year-end 2020. To find out how you can join, visit Love2020.com.

Jodie Chiricosta is Vice President of Somebody Cares America/International. She also speaks, writes, and consults on a variety of ministry topics.



Giving back: Hope (far left in photo above) joins Sandy and Paula as they prepare to volunteer for an outreach with Somebody Cares New England, the ministry that reached out to Hope in her time of need.



Learning early: Children from Christ's Church in Clear Lake TX (right) learn about "doing good" through the act of washing feet, using a quote from Doug Stringer as their inspiration. Part of the project was designing and decorating a towel. Teacher Melody Bryan said: "It was their towel to take home to remember what mindset Jesus walked with. The kids loved this activity!"

"While men reach for thrones to build their own kingdoms, Jesus reached for a towel to wash men's feet." Doug Stringer

"Doing something awesome to impact the world doesn't require genius—but rather passion, prayer, and perseverance." Mark McClendon

"We do good deeds, but God works in us in the doing of them." Augustine

"Here lies the tremendous mystery – that God should be all-powerful, yet refuse to coerce. He summons us to cooperation. We are honored in being given the opportunity to participate in His good deeds. Remember how He asked for help in performing His miracles: Fill the water pots, stretch out your hand, distribute the loaves." Elisabeth Elliott

"We ought to be people of compassion. And being people of compassion means we deny ourselves, and our self-centeredness." Mike Huckabee

"The Christian that is bound by his own horizon, the church that lives simply for itself, is bound to die a spiritual death and sink into stagnancy and corruption. We never can thank God enough for giving us not only a whole Gospel to believe, but a whole world to give it to." A.B. Simpson

The Power of Joel 2 Moments

BY ELIZABETH ENNIS

WE'VE SEEN BETTER DAYS.

Headlines across America reflect despair, tragedy, and anguish. The heart of this nation founded on Biblical principles no longer waves the flags of morality and godliness. Perhaps our founding fathers would say these are our darkest days, reminiscent of the days of the prophet Joel.

Joel was alarmed at the state of his nation. He was alarmed that the people of God seemed oblivious to the events around them. Maybe they were stunned to inactivity, or overwhelmed by the devastation. It could be they were in a spiritual stupor—asleep, unaware, and immune to the judgment ahead. Regardless of how they arrived at this point, Joel knew there had to be a serious wake up call—a thundering call to move a nation out of slumber into soberness, a call rooted in humility and holiness. Only a desperate call would seize the heart of the people to pursue the heart of God.

OH, THE HOPE OF REPENTANCE!

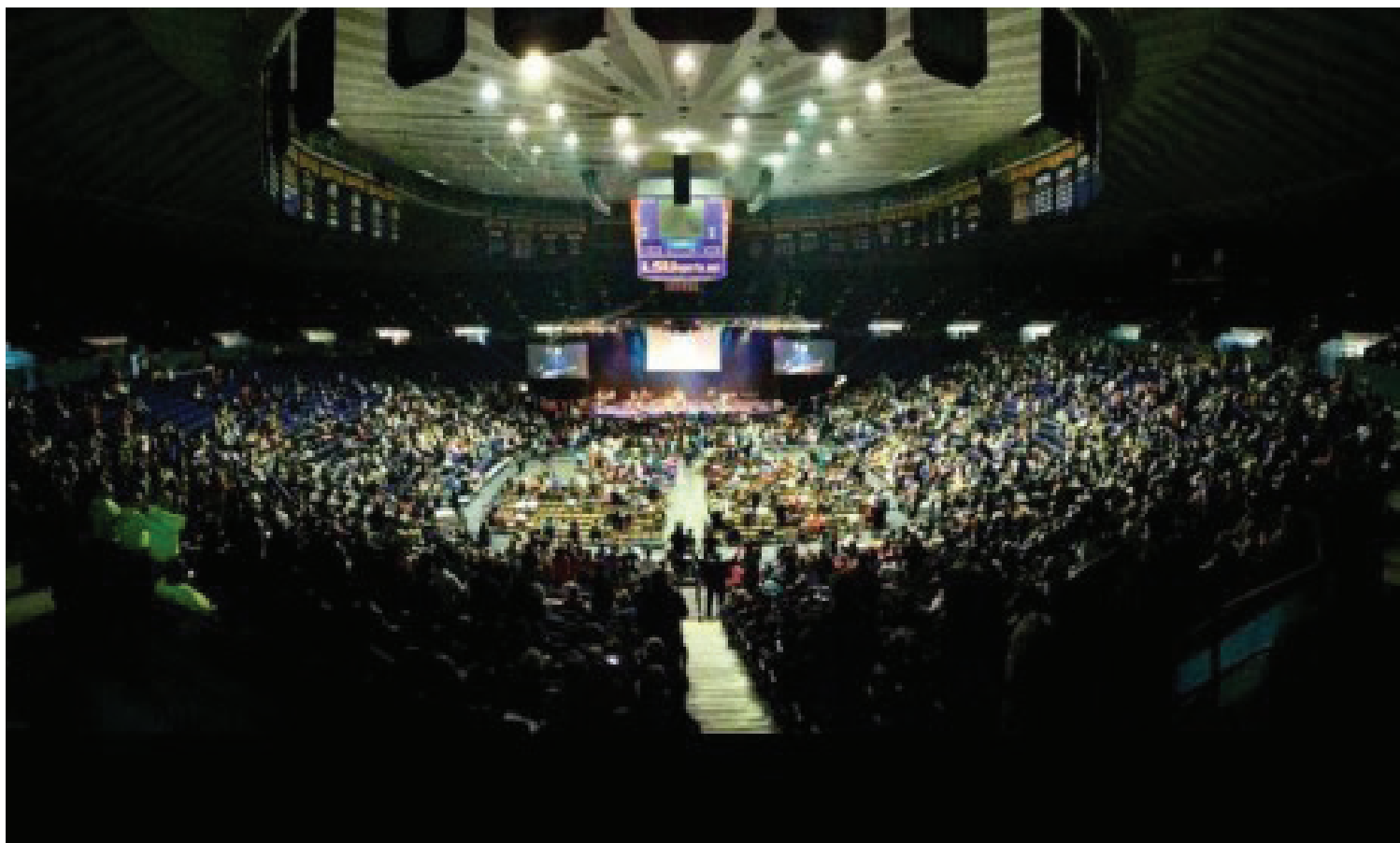
“Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him.” (Joel 2:12-14)

The uniqueness and power of a Joel 2 call to repentance is something that our generation is really just starting to understand and experience. Such a repentance by God’s people for the sins of the land has deep, lasting spiritual impact. Trumpeted by a leader or leaders whose first charge to fast and repent is to the elders of the land and extends to every person in every season of life, a united appeal to God of this magnitude turns both the heart of the nation and of God Himself.

PRAISE THE LORD FOR GODLY LEADERS.

Seeing the direction our nation is heading and believing in the power of a Joel 2 call to pray, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal followed the courageous example Governor Rick Perry set in 2011 by making a clear, directive call for the Church to fast and pray on behalf of his state and our nation. In response, Doug Stringer, facilitator and coordinator of *The Response: Louisiana*, along with other local and national church leaders, organized a sacred and solemn prayer gathering with the focus on fasting and repenting for our nation. Thousands from Louisiana and across the nation gathered at The Response to pray for six continuous hours on January 24, 2015.

The significance of this is astounding! In an era where many politicians keep their faith private in an attempt to be “politically correct” and when lawsuits have been



filed over the name of Jesus being spoken in public prayers, it is encouraging to see public officials who not only stand for what they believe in, but also are willing to be a catalyst to reset the heart of America.

From the start of planning The Response Louisiana, the prayer themes of the day were personal and corporate repentance, reconciliation, revival, reformation, and refreshing. This was a day for the Church to get back in proper realignment with the Lord through a posture of humility, repentance, and holiness.

REPENTANCE.

Repentance with humility is essential and was the initial focus that set the tone and heart for the rest of the day. In a planning meeting for the prayer themes for The Response, Doug Stringer emphasized, “If we gather to pray without the right posture of personal reflection and repentance, and corporate reflection and repentance, all of our prayers will go nowhere. We have to move beyond our proclamations to the tangibility of the incarnate presence of God. I believe this is only obtainable through corporate worship, corporate prayer, and corporate fasting.”

RECONCILIATION.

Understanding that repentance and reconciliation go hand in hand, the next focus of The Response was reconciliation both in the Body of Christ and between generations. In stressing the importance of reconciliation, Doug so beautifully instructed, “Even in our differences we must be intentional in being reconciled together so that we can bring healing and reconciliation to the land. We then not only go before Him as ministers of reconciliation, but also take on the spirit of John the Baptist in declaring the way of the Lord, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord God through His Son, Jesus Christ.”

As we prayed for racial reconciliation, Bishop Harry Jackson briefly taught on the importance of healing the racial divide. During this powerful segment with worship led by Josh Lopez from San Antonio, Pastors Paul Tan and Khanh Huynh—both of Asian descent—led the stadium in prayer. How beautiful it was to see the Body of Christ standing in unity and so well represented!

One of the most moving segments of the day was when Mike May, pastor of Pipeline Church in Humble, along with two young students honored and blessed great



leaders of the faith, Larry Stockstill and Denny Duron. One attendee captured the significance of this moment when she said, “Honoring the former generation and blessing the younger generation is a powerful synergy that makes ready a people for the coming of the Lord.”

REVIVAL AND REFORMATION

With hearts aligned and the spirit of unity present, the day of prayer turned focus to revival and reformation. During these segments, many local, state, and nationally elected officials prayed to see God heal our land. Gov. Jindal shared about his search for God as a young man and his powerful conversion. He ended this time leading the stadium in prayer.

Jay Johnston, the National Day of Prayer Coordinator for Louisiana, stressed that he was particularly moved when Gov. Jindal prayed for President Obama and the Executive Branch of our government.

Marlene Yeo, of Somebody Cares New England, captured the significance of this reformation segment when she shared, “Church and government praying on behalf of the people brings natural and supernatural authority together for the blessing and well-being of the citizens of the community. When the gatekeepers and the watchmen link hearts, hands, and prayer together, it puts the enemies of that region to flight and brings the blessing of peace upon the people.”

REFRESHING

Refreshing can then come as a result of all the others—a celebration of our response of getting properly aligned and in order with the Lord. Having soberly walked through the other prayer themes, the stadium concluded the day by praying

2 Corinthians 2:14, “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.”

GOD’S RESPONSE

The latter part of Joel 2 shows that after hearts are cleansed, God pours out restoration and blessing on His people. It is the context of humility and holiness that Joel 2:28-30a refers, “And afterward, I will pour my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams; your young men will see visions. ... I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in heaven and on the earth.”

As with most spiritual movements, the lasting impact is not gauged by numbers or tangible systems. Each response to repentance, each submitted heart, and each bended knee, is significant. The Church’s humble repentance paired with intercession for God’s mercy can turn a nation.

MORE JOEL 2:15 MOMENTS AHEAD

God is creating opportunities for us to be key participators in the Spirit of God sweeping across our nation, as governmental leaders from at least three other states have expressed an interest in hosting The Response. The heart of The Response is to leave a lasting impact in these states and to spark a corporate return to prayer. Jay Johnston’s family, for one, has embraced this lifestyle and says, “Prayer for us is not an event, but it is a way of life for us.”

Elizabeth Ennis has served as an assistant to Doug Stringer and The Response team as well as platform manager for The Response in Houston, Baton Rouge, and Charleston. For more information on The Response South Carolina on June 13, visit www.TheResponseSC.com.

PRAYER, POLITICS & PROSPERITY IN PAMPA

BY GLORIA ROBBINS

Stretched out on the plains of the Texas Panhandle lies the rural community of Pampa, Texas. Known for farming, ranching, and later, oil and gas production, Pampa had for the most part enjoyed significant prosperity since its inception in the early 1900s.

The largest city in the eastern Panhandle, Pampa had at one time been dubbed the Queen of the Plains and served as the hub for that region. All of that changed in the mid-1980s when the bottom dropped out of the oil market. A once vibrant economy gave way to economic stagnation. Population dwindled from 28,000 to 17,000. Community pride was replaced with a negative outlook, and hope for a bright future seemed lost.

All of that, however, was about to change because God had a plan for Pampa. And He was going to use a most unlikely candidate to set His plan in motion.

Lonny Robbins had pastored Pampa's Trinity Fellowship Church since 1992. A board member of Somebody Cares America and head of Somebody Cares Pampa, Lonny and his wife enjoyed pastoring and loving on people. Their church was growing and many good things were happening; yet, what was occurring in their church was not reflected in the community. The economic situation continued to steadily deteriorate. Everybody had negative things to say, but no one was coming up with solutions.

In 1998 Lonny and Gloria travelled to Argentina on a ministry trip. While there, he had a chance to interact with community and church leaders and local church bodies. Lonny saw how those church leaders had taken on the task of making a difference in their city situations with many positive outcomes.

As a result of that trip, Lonny felt like he was to proactively encourage his congregation to be a part of the solution in Pampa rather than part of the problem. It is interesting to note that Pampa was actually named after the Argentine pampas, which

is the Spanish word for plains. It seemed as though the Lord was taking this pastor back to the beginning for the city of Pampa.

When Robbins returned home, he began to preach the importance of the Church engaging in the community, and he encouraged his people to get actively involved in the city, whether it was to run for the school board or a city office or to participate in any type of civic group. He wanted the people to have a presence some place on a regular basis so they could be a positive influence.

The economic downturn and other problems in Pampa had caused the city some real budget issues. Robbins tried to persuade believers to run for different city boards and offices. He continued this for a couple of years, to no avail.

Then one day a group of people from his church came and said, "You've been encouraging us to do something about it. Why don't you do something about it?"

He assured them that his call was to be a pastor, a minister. They kept insisting and offered to run his campaign if he would run for mayor. After much prayer and the blessing of the church elders, Robbins entered the mayoral race. He felt, however, that the likelihood of his becoming the mayor was very slim. His opponent, a six-year incumbent and a retired military colonel, enjoyed much status in the community.

After a hard-fought campaign and to the surprise of many, Lonny won the election and became Mayor of Pampa in May 2001. The battle, however, had only begun. Many people were very disappointed that a minister had been elected the mayor of their community. Some held the erroneous belief that a pastor holding government office violated the much-misunderstood separation of church and state.

In addition, there were major issues in the community. One problem was the public's negative perception of the Economic Development Corporation (EDC). As a result, within six months of Robbins taking office,

Pampa became the first community in Texas to vote out its EDC.

Other difficulties also loomed on the horizon. The new mayor did not know much about city government and how to solve all the problems, but he did know how to pray.

If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face...then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Robbins called Trinity Fellowship Church to pray, and they had different times and seasons of prayer. They had specific times of prayer for specific areas of the community, especially the city government. Things did not improve overnight, but the church continued to pray diligently and continued to believe that Pampa would see the goodness of the Lord once again. Other churches in the city prayed as well.

They prayed in the midst of circumstances that no one had the ability, wisdom, or knowledge to solve. Lonny told some of the city commissioners that the Lord needed to give them wisdom.

Although the first five years of Robbins tenure as mayor had much opposition, God continued to strengthen and give favor. Over time, the composition of the city commission and city personnel changed. The city began to see some real economic upswing. The city commission was able to persuade voters to reauthorize the Economic Development Corporation. Greater unity was evident between the mayor and the commission.

One year for the National Day of Prayer, Somebody Cares Founder Doug Stringer issued a declaration of repentance and invocation of God's blessing to be prayed over cities. On that particular National Day of Prayer, as the citizens of Pampa gathered on the street between city hall and the county courthouse, Mayor Robbins prayed those specific declarations over the

community and asked God to bless and to restore Pampa's economic foundation. God honored those prayers. Sparks of life came back into the community.

About this time, Pampa's Trinity Fellowship Church hosted some key intercessors from around Texas, as well as Dr. Jay Swallow of the Southern Cheyenne and Sioux nations. Dr. Swallow led prayer over the region where injustices likely occurred during the Red River wars. The church also prayed repentance over different areas where the community had been marked and scarred as a result of sin. Much intercession took place through the years. And the Lord was faithful.

In addition to economic improvements, God also was changing hearts of leaders in the community. Prayer was offered before every one of the commission meetings. The city directors, who led different departments of the city, started to begin every Monday director's meeting with prayer. To everyone's knowledge, this had never happened before.

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice...Proverbs 29:2a

The atmosphere among city employees began to change, too. Things were more positive, with many of them commenting that this was the best unity and most enjoyable time they had ever had during their employment there due to the teamwork that developed.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord...Psalm 33:12a

Positive changes continued. Businesses started opening in the community. The EDC began to flourish. Sales tax revenues increased from \$2.9 million in 2001 to \$4.9 million by 2011. Sales tax revenue has con-

tinued to increase and reached \$5.9 million recently.

On top of that, the city's net assets rose seven million dollars. Property values even rose by \$200 million, a significant increase. Unemployment remained below state and national averages.

Even when one of main industries in the community shut down in 2009, God provided. This industry was a very large tax base for the city and a big employer of area residents. It had a massive facility that could have stood vacant. However, in 2010 the EDC purchased all their old property, and four major businesses relocated to that site. Instead of decreasing the tax base and employment rate, they both increased.

The hotel/motel tax revenue steadily increased as well, as people and businesses came to town. Those facilities today operate at a much fuller capacity. People are spending their money in Pampa, and the city has once again become the bustling hub for the northeastern part of the Texas Panhandle.

One of the board members of the EDC told Robbins that he believed the economic success surrounding those deals was a direct result of the many prayers that were prayed on behalf of the city during his tenure as mayor.

Robbins served as mayor for five two-year terms, stepping down in May of 2011 with the distinction of being the longest tenured mayor in Pampa's history. While he experienced really strong opposition during the first three elections,

God opened doors that no man could shut. As he and other Christians persevered in prayer, things turned around for the city.

During the second half of his mayoral tenure, the city was very unified. City leaders were able to get things done. Attitudes changed. There was a positive feeling about the community. Hope had returned to Pampa.

Did all of their problems go away? No. There were still major challenges, but the positive changes that took place brought Pampa back from the brink of ruin. The hand of the Lord was in that.

His experiences in both the political realm as mayor and the spiritual realm as pastor served to solidify his belief that pastors and Christians need to be involved in their local communities and in government. He has seen how God is faithful.

Robbins says, "If we believe we are to be salt and light, then God will give us wisdom. He will bless us. We will begin to understand that it is not about our abilities. It is about our being willing to be instruments in His hands to give testimony to His faithfulness."

Gloria Robbins and Lonny are retired from pastoring but still serve their community through the work of Somebody Cares Pampa TX. Lonny also continues to serve on the Somebody Cares America/International Board of Directors.



What TIME is it?

Preparing for transforming revival begins with me!

BY RICK TORRISON

In the Sentinel Group's newly released Journey to Transformation promotion video a simple question is asked: "What time is it?"

Luke 12:56 reads, "*Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?*"

Do we know what time it is?

Could we be like the frog in the pot? The heat is being turned up, and the water is beginning to boil; yet, we are swimming around like we are in a hot tub.

As a child I remember the old, creaky, padded rocking chair that sat in the corner of the room in my grandmother's house when I was a young boy. Looking back, it did not seem to fit the décor of the room or the style of our home, but it was my favorite piece of furniture in the house because I would sit in my grandmother's lap in that old rocking chair for what seemed like hours. She would quietly sing a lullaby as she rocked me to sleep. I don't remember being tired when I crawled up in her lap, but it wasn't long before I was asleep. It was a place of peace, comfort, and safety.

There is a similar experience happening across the church today, but it is not a place of peace, comfort, or safety. We are being lulled to sleep, but the difference is the lap we are crawling into is not the lap of the Lord, but rather the lap of the enemy who is quietly singing lullabies while a slumber is falling over the Church.

We hear things like, "It's not that bad!" "You're over reacting!" "Everything will be ok!" But what if it is not?

Do we know what time it is?

As a Church, we seem to either be a distracted, complacent, and silent people, or else we are loud, aggressive, accusative, and condemning of both the sinner and the sin. This may sound like a harsh word, but when you look around at the condition of the land, we see an all-out, frontal assault on morality, families, children, and even God's Church. In the past, this was a subtle process, but today there is nothing subtle about it. The water is boiling and the frog in the pot is The Church—and we are about to become soup!

We must wake up from our slumber, recognize the true condition of the land and the Church, repent, and grab the hem of Jesus' garment.

Do we know what time it is?

One of the first steps in preparing the way for the Lord to come to our lives and com-

munities in transformation and revival is to recognize what time it is. We must be honest and recognize our personal need and the true condition of the land. A transformational catalyst in a local community who has seen transforming revival come to his community challenges us that the condition of the land is directly related to the condition of God's people in that land.

The time of pointing fingers and blaming the darkness (sin, government, drugs, media, etc.) is over. What if we, like Nehemiah when given the report about the true condition of the city of God and the people of God, would rend our garments, throw ash and dirt upon our heads, and cry out to God in repentance, taking personal responsibility for the condition of the land? What would happen to the darkness if the light were truly turned on in a community? We, the Church, are called to be light; if this is true, how can the darkness survive?

In several communities we work with in Houston, we have churches on one corner and a crack house across the street. As the people of God go in to church on Sunday morning, lost and broken people are walking out of the crack house. We enter the church, sing songs of praise for God's saving power and goodness, and complain about the drug dealers and pimps across the street. But if we are truly the light, then how is it that the darkness can exist? Is the issue the darkness or the lack of light?

Do we know what time it is?

Maybe it is time to become like Nehemiah: "*...I said, 'I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and loving-kindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses...'*"

The first step in preparing for transforming revival is to recognize our true condition and cry out in repentance. The issue is not sin and darkness – it is the lack of light.

Transformation and revival comes when we are able to say from the place of humility,

like Nehemiah, *It is I, Lord...*

If we are going to awaken from our slumber let me suggest three things we need to do.

First: Get out of the water! Do not judge your current reality and the condition of your community or nation on the opinion of men or on what we can see with our natural eyes. We must have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:15). Right now, ask the Lord to give you a true assessment of your personal condition. Ask Him to examine your heart and hands as David did in Psalm 139. Repent of anything that is getting in the way of your relationship with Him, then ask Him to give you a true picture of the condition of your land or community.

Second: Choose to walk in humility and a lifestyle of repentance. Psalm 66:18 is clear that if we regard iniquity in our hearts He will not hear us. We need God to hear us! The motivation for a life of repentance is His love, a jealousy for relationship with Him, and removing everything that will hinder that love.

Finally: Prevail in prayer until God speaks and moves. What does that look like? I can't tell you, but you will know when you are there. Don't worry about being presumptuous, God wants to come, He wants to move on your behalf.

Now is the time, and today is the day.

Rick Torrison is Prayer and Transformation Coordinator for Somebody Cares, President/Founder of Revival Rivers, and International Coordinator for The Journey to Transformation.



The Lion of Lyons Avenue

BY SUSIE WOLF

For over three decades, Doug Stringer and his ministries have been stirring the winds for transforming revival, gathering believers from across the Greater Houston area and beyond. In the summer of 2014, the Lord spoke to Doug's heart that it was time to seek the Lord throughout the city. Calling on the relational network of Somebody Cares Houston pastors and leaders, three weeks of prayer gatherings were scheduled, consisting of 21 Days in 21 different locations, from December 1-21. Below is one of many highlights from this time...

Once known as Houston's "Bloody 5th" Ward due to violence, the area is indeed covered in crimson. The Blood of the Lamb's presence is marked through the faithful citizens and ministers who have stood the ground and the test of time.

This community has survived the ebbs and flows from segregation to desegregation, from big industry such as Brown & Root/KBR to small business owners, and remains home for predominantly African-American, Hispanic, and immigrant populations. Housed within the 5th Ward are long-standing community-based churches, and among them is a pillar. Housed in what was formerly one of only two movie theaters where "people of color" in Houston were allowed prior to the Civil Rights movement is Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church, where Bishop Roy Lee Kossie, Jr. has been the senior pastor for over 50 years.

Saved during an A.A. Allen meeting, Bishop Kossie and his family have persevered, endured, and withstood the test of time. While others have moved to the suburbs, Bishop Kossie and his late wife, Barbara, stayed. Choosing to serve and invest in their community, they raised their children, who are also serving the Lord and successful in the eyes of man and God.

"From university professors, community development and media, to ministers, the Kossie family has established a legacy," Doug Stringer says.

As we entered this House of God on

December 2, 2014, for the second venue of our city-wide 21 Days of Prayer, it was as if we could hear the echoes from the balcony.

"I hear a sound," Doug said from the pulpit. "I see a great cloud of witnesses who have filled these pews and balcony seats." We could almost sense them cheering us on! It was fitting that Doug affirmed and honored Bishop Kossie and his congregation for their years of faithfulness.

A DREAM FULFILLED

Years ago, one of Bishop Kossie's daughters, Karen Kossie-Chernyshev, had



a dream in which she saw a multi-ethnic crowd coming down Lyons Avenue to the church. There was much praise and camaraderie, and they gathered in the church for a time of worship. On the platform she saw an Asian man leading the way. She did not know what to make of this but stored the dream away as a promise from the Lord.

Later, Bishop Kossie came to know of a young minister in Houston named Doug Stringer who had a deep passion and calling to see the Body of Christ rally together to reach their city. In time, prayer gatherings and pastoral coalitions occurred, each with a common thread of "unity with a purpose."

When Doug called a diverse group of people from across the Greater Houston area to join him on December 3, 1999, at Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church for

a gathering he called "Digging the Wells of Revival," he had no idea it was the fulfillment of a promise. With the ministry's worship band, known as the Coat of Many Colors, leading in song and Doug Stringer behind the pulpit, Dr. Karen realized His promise was now reality and was occurring right before her eyes!

A TIMELY RETURN

Now, just one day shy of 15 years after that historic evening, again Doug Stringer stood behind the pulpit, gathered with like-hearted and ethnically/denominationally diverse believers from across the Greater Houston area. The "Father of the House" sat stoically and quietly on the platform, but as Doug asked Bishop to pray, the room reverberated with strength, conviction and faith. Bishop prayed, and prayers became songs, and songs became declarations of God's mighty power and grace!

As a symbol of honor, Doug laid at Bishop Kossie's feet to pray for him. Later he presented Bishop Kossie and the church with a flag which has become known as the "Appeal to Heaven" flag. Doug retold its history dating back to George Washington. An appeal to heaven for an awakening within the Body of Christ today is what brought Stringer, his family, and team to LDDR Church that night.

Bishop Kossie understands the call, the charge, and the cost of Awakening. He's paid the price and led thousands to Christ. A leader of leaders, he provides oversight to ministers and tens of thousands who journey with him across the world. Though you may not hear his name on the evening news, his impact is known in the Kingdom.

Truly Lyons Avenue has One continually watching out for her people. There is a sense that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has made Himself right at home. He has found a people hungry for His presence and resolute in their stand for Him. And even greater things are yet to come!

Susie Wolf is a long-time member of the Somebody Cares staff/network and director of Seniority Services, an affiliate of Somebody Cares America.

Prayer, Presence & Compassion in Baltimore:

A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR RESTORATION & RECONCILIATION

In February 2007, Doug Stringer began meeting with pastors, ministry leaders, and city officials in Baltimore who had a desire to see the spiritual transformation of their region. In 2010, he was invited to be part of the official launch of Somebody Cares Baltimore, working in the areas of human trafficking, homelessness, foster care, at risk teens and violence, addiction, HIV/AIDS, and crisis preparedness.

“As we celebrate five years of God’s goodness in Baltimore, we reflect on the many experiences we have had and the stories of life change that have taken place,” says Matt Stevens, director of the Baltimore chapter.

Somebody Cares Baltimore creates opportunities for outreach by connecting and mobilizing people and organizations to serve their communities together.

A THREE-FOLD CORD

Knowing a three-fold cord is not easily broken, the SCB strategy has been to bring together churches, local businesses, and the police department to bring lasting change. As part of “The Transformation Team,” their efforts have helped the notorious East Baltimore experience their lowest violent crime rate in 40 years.

“We ask ourselves, ‘What would it look like to have a generation with no recollection of the hardships their parents and grandparents faced?’” Matt says. “Daily we are reminded that the needs of our community and residents are beyond one organization or one agency’s resources. That is why we work to connect and mobilize multiple churches, businesses, and agencies to bring a transformation to individuals and their communities. Our desire

is that through prayer and compassionate acts, we will be able to sustain the hope that inspires change.”

COMPASSION IN ACTION

Throughout the year, SCB coordinates catalytic events and projects that serve tens of thousands of people.

ServeFest is a day when churches partner together to invest in their own neighborhoods by completing service



projects such as painting, pulling weeds, and planting. Having mobilized more than 4,500 volunteers each year, the greatest impact comes from churches connecting with their neighborhoods and expressing new levels of compassion.

Going to the most violent and impoverished areas, **Days Of Hope** has mobilized thousands to serve more than 16,000 residents in 14 different Baltimore city neighborhoods. Kids play games and jump on moonbounces while their parents receive free groceries and visit with service providers, from doctors to bankers. They can get their blood pressure checked, learn how to avoid foreclosure, and receive information on programs that

can help set them up for success. At the prayer tent, which is manned by local churches, people receive prayer and learn about Jesus.

“The events of the day draw people in, but we desire to see ongoing life change for these people as they learn more about Jesus and discover tools to help them,” says Kristen Hoover from the SCB office.

SCB also serves 300 members of the homeless community each Christmas at the **Code Blue** holiday celebration, named after the program that is activated in Baltimore whenever temperatures fall below 15 degrees Fahrenheit—any shelter that has available space opens their empty beds to anyone who is homeless. Somebody Cares will visit one of those shelters before Christmas to serve brunch and perform a Christmas program, where they sing carols and share the Gospel. They also give out Bags of Hope, filled with donated toiletries, socks, and washcloths.

PRAYER & PRESENCE

Two core elements driving every outreach opportunity are prayer and presence. Long before and after any event or project in a community, team members prayer walk the neighborhoods and connect with the residents there.

“In prayer, we are gaining God’s heart for the community. Our communities have experienced pain, but they are comprised of great people truly needing to experience the tangible love of Jesus.”

Each Day Of Hope event includes a prayer tent with an average of 237 commitments or recommitments to Christ

per event. In July of last year, SCB partnered with LifeSource to plant a church the day after Day Of Hope in Sandtown, targeting those who prayed in the tent. That church is still going every Sunday and continues to grow. Lives have been rescued, bodies have been healed, relationships have been restored, and addictions have been overcome. Another church will be planted this year.

“Our team believes wholeheartedly in the need for ‘presence ministry’; we have the presence of Jesus in us so that we can bring Christ to the community with our presence there,” Matt says.

PREPARATION PAYS OFF

Building on this foundation, SC Baltimore’s pastors have learned that what they can do together far outweighs what they can do alone.

This was especially true during the recent riots that followed the death of Freddie Gray while he was in police custody. While tempers flared and emotions raged on the streets of their beloved city, pastors linked arms and marched the streets, in direct contrast to the violence. SCB and area churches helped coordinate volunteers to be on hand early the next morning to help with clean-up from the evening’s damages, and just to love on people.

“It’s definitely the existing infrastructure of unity and relational equity that has helped us and will continue to bring hope and healing,” Matt said during that time, noting that the existing unity grew exponentially in the middle of the crisis. More leaders than ever came together to help each other and plan together for the long process of restoration.

“You often hear people say that the church is asleep,” he added. “But in a time



Baltimore pastors mobilized for street clean-up (opposite) and prayer (above) during the recent riots; Lt. Col. Melvin Russell of the Baltimore Police Department (left in photo at right) and Matt Stevens from Somebody Cares join other pastors and city leaders in prayer for the city; and in a beautiful picture of reconciliation, a young boy offers bottled water to one of the many police officers who stood watch for long hours to help keep peace on the streets (bottom).



of crisis and desperation, the church in our city came together.”

On Tuesday morning of that week, Bishop Angel Nunez helped host a meeting where over 100 pastors and bishops from all denominations and ethnic backgrounds came to pray and intercede.

“We have been working for four to five years to establish a prayer network with about 400 churches in the mid-Atlantic area,” he said. “The answer to hate is love—God’s love. We need to release His glory, release His love.”

WHAT’S NEXT FOR BALTIMORE

Tensions remain high in the city, weeks after the Freddie Gray riots. But many of those who love and serve the city agree that the violence was not caused by one tragic event; it was an explosion of frustrations that have built up over the years with roots of poverty, inadequate education, and economic and social challenges.

“My initial response to the question, ‘What’s next’ is that an army will continue to bring waves of compassion and kindness to wash away the toxicity that has been spewed out,” Matt said, quoting Amos 5:24 “Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.”

“The ground of desperation has now

been plowed,” Matt said. “It is time for us to sow truth, justice, love, hope, compassion, and kindness for the days ahead.”

As Doug Stringer encouraged many of the church and community leaders in the area, he said, “We will always outlast our adversaries and adversities when we stay true to the characteristics of Christ.”

Doug also believes the plumb line of righteousness and peace in this tumultuous and volatile situation is the Church of Baltimore, a Church that is intentionally working to cross relational and denominational lines to meet together at the cross.

“I’ve been to Baltimore on many occasions, even before our Somebody Cares chapter was started five years ago,” Doug said. “A strong foundation of unity and a network of relationships has already helped them break down many barriers and see much fruit from their labors.”

He continued: “It’s God’s heart to work through the Church to bring His manifest presence. A strong, healthy church in Baltimore can be an instrument of hope, healing, and lasting transformation.”

Matt agrees. “If this is what the Lord desires for us to do, we are certain that He will provide whatever it takes to turn our region around.”



BUILDING LIVES!

Our Somebody Cares chapters and centers are praising God for providing buildings we can use to restore communities and rescue lives!

When Marlene Yeo launched Somebody Cares New England in 2003, she never dreamed of planting a church, nor did she want SCNE to have the high overhead of owning property. Yet, she realized, "There was so much more we could do if we just had our own building..."

The people who were coming to Christ through the ministry needed a church to call home; they didn't feel welcomed or wanted at most of the churches where she had tried to connect them. SCNE was also constantly trying to secure different venues for outreaches.

When she started attending Community Christian Fellowship in Lowell, Mass., Marlene shared her burden with Pastor Rafael Najem. She had a vision for a church that was not afraid of the distress and brokenness of those coming off the streets. After much prayer, they launched CCF Haverhill in 2005.

"We used borrowed space for several years and then moved to store fronts," she says. "After six years we were out of room. The church had grown with not only the homeless but families, elderly, business people, and children. We had no parking and no nursery."

A realtor friend suggested that she look at a building less than one mile from the storefronts. "I wanted to stay in the city block where we had labored since 1999," she explained. "I never imagined while pastoring a low-income, distressed population that we would own a building by September 2011...BUT God!"

The Lord had been speaking to people about the ministry and giving toward a building. One woman gave over \$30,000 toward the down payment, and another woman who was once homeless and living in the SCNE discipleship house broke through her situation and gave \$1,000. Somebody Cares America helped provide the deposit.

The building was a run-down former funeral home in a high crime part of town. It took several months and thousands of dollars to complete the renovations, but all debt is expected to be paid off by the end of this year. Today, she says, "The building that was once known for death has become a beacon of light and stronghold for life. We serve City Hall with neighborhood meetings, host outreaches with the local police and hospital, offer youth and children events, and house a community food pantry that serves over 300 families, elderly, and disabled monthly."

The newest SCNE initiative in September will educate, train, and minister to church lay leaders, equipping them to minister deliverance and healing for the soul.

We rejoice with Marlene and SCNE for God's provision, and with our other chapters and centers as well!



SCNE hosted a free summer basketball camp in the back parking lot of their church building (top); inside, the facility is host to a number of events, from church services and women's events (above, top) to sorting and packing food, toiletries, and other items for Bless the City outreaches (above).

DAILY BREAD/SOMEBODY CARES CENTER, SAN ANTONIO

Daily Bread Ministries and director Seth Keuhn have developed exciting plans to open the Liberty Center, a safe, one-stop community resource where nonprofits partner together to feed, educate, train, mentor, and build up the Eastside community. They desire to offer a place where the physical need for food can be met so that relationships can be established, deeper needs uncovered, and opportunities for a hope-filled future explored. Plans include:

- A commercial kitchen for hot meals, culinary job training, and nutrition classes
- Computer lab
- Fitness center and game areas
- Meeting rooms and classrooms
- Music venue and theater

Since beginning in 1996, Daily Bread Ministries has quietly become a major supplier of rescued food to the poor and often underserved population in San Antonio.



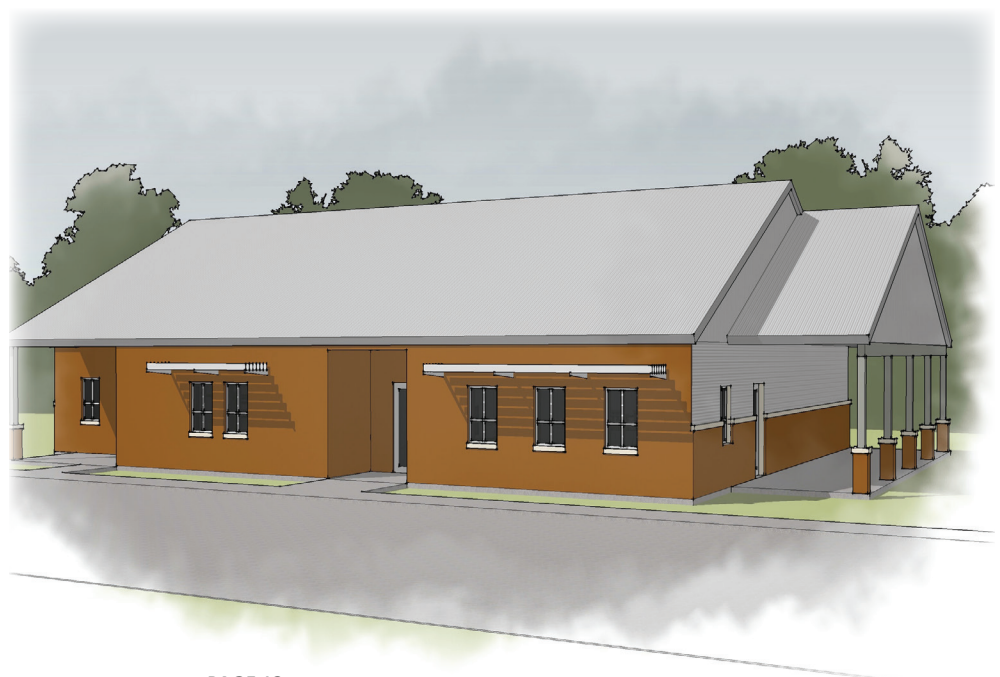
RISE TO THE TIME/SOMEBODY CARES CENTER, DENISON TX

With the help of 25 Boy Scouts, Rise to the Time was able to complete their community garden, which opened in May. In less than one hour, these young men weeded beds, spread weed barrier, added soil that was donated by Home Depot, and spread mulch through out the garden, said Vickie Gaskins, founder. The work night was befittingly held in conjunction with the 85th birthday celebration for Vickie's mother, who donated the former general store to the ministry. Vickie says they have now raised all of the funds needed for completion of the building's interior, which will be used as a prayer room, training center, and office for mobile disaster relief outreach.



SOS MINISTRIES/ SOMEBODY CARES CENTER BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION, TX

SOS will be relocating and expanding their men's discipleship and work program with the opening of the Ted Wyatt Residential Discipleship Home, a 3,400 sq ft living facility with the capacity to hold up to 12 men for the 9-12 month program. "The men are not only given a place to stay, but they are disciplined and taught how to study the Word of God, to work hard, and to manage finances," says J.J. Ramirez, SOS founder. "Most important, they are introduced to Jesus and shown how to be a Godly man, husband, and father." SOS has currently received over \$955,000 pledged toward the \$1.3M campaign. "We are waiting until we have the funds in hand before we break ground," J.J. says.



WILL YOUR CHURCH BE READY?

BY VICKIE GASKINS

Every day we read about another confrontation with ISIS, violence against Christians, or a natural tragedy in some part of the world. Financial doom has been predicted; racial tensions are at their highest levels since the civil rights movement; the weather has grown more and more unstable spawning “Biblical Proportion” storms.

For years, Doug Stringer and the Somebody Cares “NET That WORKS” have been preparing and inviting others to prepare with them for the times we live in today. Desperate cries for revival and healing transformation before trouble comes have been heard all across this land by intercessors and others burdened for what they have seen in the news and by the Spirit of the Lord.

Somebody Cares partners have increasingly heard the cries not just for intercession but presence-based compassion ministry. Knowing that relationships define our destiny it has created strategic partnerships through community prayer and outreach initiatives that give synergy to preparedness and being a tangible expression of Christ in times of need.

After praying with others in their community’s city-wide Church, Marlene Yeo of Somebody Cares New England and Lynn Saffie, Somebody Cares Lowell, introduced the Preparedness Peace curriculum and disaster preparation to their city in the fall of 2013. Approximately 50 people attended.

During that weekend, a roundtable was held regarding “next steps.” As a result,

Pastor Rafael Najem of Community Christian Fellowship decided that their piece of the puzzle in the community disaster response effort was to host volunteer teams if the need arose. They met with their local City Emergency Management team and as it turned out, this was the place where a gap existed in the city’s own preparations. Divine partnership was born!

In the last year and a half, SCNE and SC Lowell have facilitated trainings for CERT, CPR, and other courses. Now they are certified hosts, working alongside their local government officials.

As a part of the CCF strategy, a team of volunteers from the church was formed. Called the Disaster Preparedness Task Team “DPTT,” individuals have taken ownership of different parts of preparation. They decided to address disaster preparedness from three different directions.

1) How the church is to function while housing volunteers. Plans are being developed to address everything from house-keeping to communication.

2) Personal preparation for as many members as possible. Their first Preparedness Peace class began in April. Not only did Community Christian Fellowship members participate, different churches in the area sent representatives to learn about Preparedness Peace and took the information back to their members.

3) A citywide database has been created detailing members’ expertise and interests should they be needed.

As the citywide Church of Lowell and Haverhill continue to develop relationships this way, they have also been reaching out to the community through ServeFest and other initiatives. Once again, hope is being planted in the hearts of those least able to endure times of crisis.

This type of relational collaboration was key after Hurricane Sandy in 2013. When the “Superstorm” Sandy hit Staten Island’s shores, the community was in a shambles—and almost immediately, the Church went to work.

Pastors came together in record numbers and began to divide the damaged area into “sections.” Each church took a section of the city and adopted it for aftercare; and in each section a church was designated to serve as the POD (Point of Distribution) for goods.

Some churches fed volunteers; some found work and oversaw volunteer teams that gave hundreds of hours to help those in need; some fed residents who were displaced; and others sent out teams that prayed with and encouraged residents who were struggling with their losses. It was a collaborative effort that deepened relationships in the community and brought synergistic energy to a crisis from which it will take years for the Staten Island community to recover.

The times may be uncertain, but one thing is for sure, as believers who have been created for such a time as this, we need to know the times...make the most of them, recognize our own personal need to prepare, and recognize our role to help others prepare so that when the need arises it WILL BE an OCCASION for our TESTIMONIES!

WHERE TO START:

Somebody Cares is available to facilitate training for churches that are interested in bringing their community together through advanced preparation. **Church Disaster**

Vickie Gaskins helps lead a Preparedness Peace course hosted by Somebody Cares New England.



Preparedness seminars have been used to facilitate training that provides an overview of what is necessary after disasters helping churches to develop an informed plan for disaster response.

Preparedness Peace is a curriculum developed to help individuals and communities prepare for disasters. Courses are often kicked off with a full or half-day seminar, which can include response drills. Just as the government prepares in advance by hosting drill exercises, some churches have chosen to do the same. The Preparedness Peace drills aid churches and individuals in understanding how response should and should not be handled when a disaster occurs.

Contact the Somebody Cares office or visit www.SomebodyCares.org if you would like to host a training.

Vickie Gaskins is Founder and President of Rise to the Time, a Somebody Cares Mobile Outreach for times of disaster.

PREPARING YOUR CHURCH TO BE A WITNESS

1. Encourage members to prepare personally for disasters so they are available to help others in times of crisis.
2. Determine what role your church can fill in a time of community crisis.
3. Prepare your church to fill that role with extra training, planning, and the purchase of necessary supplies.
4. Know how to communicate with congregants during times of disaster, especially those who may need assistance (shut-ins, elderly, physically challenged, single parents, etc.).
5. Connect with city or county emergency response officials as well as other churches to develop relationships before a crisis occurs.

Additional Resources:

[Available at SomebodyCares.org E-store](http://www.SomebodyCares.org)

Preparedness Peace materials

Are You Prepared for the Next Disaster? A Church-based, Christ-based Disaster Preparedness Manual

[Provided Free in Most Communities through Fire Departments CERT training](#)

[Provided Online by FEMA](#)

DISASTER RELIEF UPDATE: RESTORING HOPE TO A WORLD IN NEED!

In Luke 21, Jesus encouraged His disciples to let disasters, wars, and even persecutions be occasions to share the Gospel. Because of friends like you, that is exactly what Somebody Cares has been doing for over 30 years! In the past few months alone, we've brought help and hope to thousands, through the tangible expression of Christ.

Our partners in Nepal sent this email following the recent earthquake that wiped out entire villages: *"We are living outside in a tent with a thin plastic sheet. Yesterday night there was rain and cold. No good drinking water, no electricity, shortage of food. We will be outside in a tent probably until next month. Thank you very much for the support for emergency relief fund to get food, tents, etc., for those who have become homeless quake victims."*



Relief and recovery efforts will continue for months and even years to come. With your help, we will continue to undergird these faithful servants who are reaching out to others in the midst of their own loss.

Tropical Cyclone Pam was one of the most powerful storms to ever to make landfall, with 155 mph winds that left massive destruction across the 65 islands of Vanuatu. Homes were flattened, hospitals destroyed, communication and power systems taken out, and debris scattered as far as the eye could see. Somebody Cares Fiji had a team on Vanuatu helping with relief and recovery efforts right away.

"Our team is in Vanuatu now helping the people and conducting a needs assesment," said Pastor Suliasi Kurolo, our Somebody Cares Fiji director. "We have been working in Vanuatu for the last 30 years, and we are well established there." Thanks to you, we were able to send funds for much needed relief supplies.

Partnering with ministries working on the dangerous frontlines of the Syrian and Iraqi refugee crisis, we helped provide food, blankets, propane heaters, shelter, Bibles, and other Christian materials as well as crisis and trauma counseling to men, women, and children who escaped the horrors of ISIS and the Syrian war.

We also provided some of the initial funding they needed to open two safe houses for women who were brutalized by ISIS but escaped. Here they will find a place to be cared for while they heal physically, emotionally and spiritually.



When tornadoes hit the Midwest in the spring, the town of Fairdale, Illinois, was almost completely leveled. People lost homes, jobs, and were fearful of the future. Somebody Cares and our network of ministry partners connected to provide hot meals to survivors and provide other urgent assistance. And ***when riots broke out in the streets of Baltimore***, our local Somebody Cares chapter coordinated street clean-up crews, prayer gatherings, and relief for first responders. These are people who are committed to continuing the ministry of reconciliation for the long-term in the city they love.

To be part of our continuing relief efforts visit www.SomebodyCares.org. Thank you for caring!

Modeled Well

A TPMI TESTIMONY

“My name is Kelly (Fritch) King, and years ago you were obedient to a call that God put on your life when you founded Turning Point Ministries (TPMI). Your act of obedience profoundly changed my life (and the lives of those I love and have met along the way) forever.”

Doug Stringer received the email from Kelly in April 2015, as she recalled her history with Turning Point Ministries in the 1980s and how it has shaped her life and ministry today.

Each week, Doug and other Turning Pointers would visit the Montrose area of Downtown Houston, during the drug using and prostitution riddled nights, to reach out to street kids through witnessing.

“One evening you met Sean, my boyfriend at the time. He was living on and working the streets, and I was staying with my grandmother, where I had fled after being beaten violently by a drug using ex-boyfriend. When Sean met you, the first thing you did was help to meet his practical needs by getting him into Covenant House.



Shortly after that he gave his life to Christ and was on fire for the Lord. That was nearly 30 years ago. “

After about a week of hearing about, ‘Jesus this and the Holy Ghost that,’ Kelly thought Sean was following a cult, so she set out to investigate and put a stop to his ‘nonsensical holy roller’ ramblings.

“Having been raised in an abusive, alcoholic and atheistic home, I had no knowledge of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit,” she explains. Her plan was to investigate by stealthily attending one of Doug’s home prayer meetings. “Little did I know my life’s course would be forever altered. I gave my heart to Jesus that very night.”

Kelly slipped back into the world pretty quickly, but now went into those old worldly friendships and places with a new companion: the conviction of the Holy Spirit. “I suddenly had a conscience that I’d never had to deal with before,” she said.

A few years, several horrible choices, and a lot of bad behavior later, Kelly fell into a clinical depression and found herself at the altar of a church begging God, “Lord if You’re real, YOU have to do something, because I won’t make it another day.” She was suicidal, pregnant, and the single mother of a seven-year-old little boy. “I didn’t want to die and leave my small son an orphan, but I could not bare the emotional pain another day either.”

Thankfully God stepped in and did what only He could do...He answered her prayer. “God healed me from clinical depression that very day! This relief from depression was something that had eluded me for over

a decade even after years of doctors, prescription medications, and trips to an inpatient psychiatric ward. God did it in one



Kelly celebrated her college graduation the same year son Josh graduated from high school (top); she leads prayer with friends from church before delivering gifts for a Friendswood TX pregnancy center (left).

evening at an altar of a church!”

When her newborn baby, Joshua, became chronically and severely ill, Kelly found herself with no choice but to walk closely with God. Joshua was in and out of Texas Children’s Hospital for the first three years of his life, and Kelly was told he may never be able eat solid food. “It was terrifying to be on constant alert because your infant might forget to breathe; always monitoring his heart rate and oxygen blood levels; and so much more. Jesus carried us through and eventually God healed my son when he was almost three years old!”

Eventually, though, Kelly started giving in to old temptations, then the shame kept her from pursuing fellowship with God for a very long time. She began justifying bad behavior. “I had one foot in God’s kingdom and one foot in the world,” she says.

On the way home from a night of drinking and dancing with friends, she was in a car accident and suffered a broken neck and spinal cord injury. One of her doctors suggested she call anyone to whom she wanted to say goodbye; there was a high probability she would not survive the neurosurgery on her neck. Then, after waking from the surgery, she was told she may never walk again.

Kelly not only survived the accident and the surgery, but within two weeks had taken her first step. Her recovery advanced tremendously within two years, but there were still many challenges.

“I was on a walker, in a wheelchair, or using a cane for the next 11 1/2 years,” she explains. “I lived in excruciating pain 24 hours a day.”

She also lost her parents to alcoholism, her oldest son became an addict, her brother became estranged/missing, and her adopted sister took her own life. She lost her friends and found herself feeling hopeless, helpless, and stuck. She started spiraling into depression with suicidal ideation.

“This time I had finally come to the end of me,” Kelly says. “I was obese with a spinal cord injury and needed help bathing, dressing, and cutting up my own food. The physical pain was unbearable; the emotional pain was absolute and relentless torture. I was so utterly broken that I was willing to try anything to get relief.”

After wandering into an Al-Anon meeting, the veil of denial that had shrouded Kelly for a lifetime began to be lifted. She was nudged to find the gifts that God had given and to look at things differently than she ever had before.

"I realized I had used martyrdom to feel accepted; self-righteousness had become my self-worth; and so much more. I started checking my true motives to make certain I did not do things for self-seeking purposes. Most important, I drew closer to God. I asked Jesus to be Lord over my life, and I welcomed the true power and comfort, the Holy Spirit, to dwell within me."

Kelly soon began reading and studying the Bible. She joined a small group, became a member of a local church, and began fasting, praying, serving others, tithing, and giving offerings.

"I was persistently pressing in, constantly renewing my mind with the word of God and choosing to fellowship wisely. It is in that 'sweet spot' with God that I found true peace that surpasses all understanding."

Today, Kelly is 130 pounds lighter and no longer uses a walker, wheelchair, or cane.

Her spinal cord pain and nerve damage pain are, for the most part, nonexistent. She walks a few miles every other day and recently even jogged a quarter of a mile for the first time in over 12 years. Her son recently celebrated sobriety, gave his heart to God, shared his testimony at church, and is becoming rooted in a small group.

Kelly has led others to Christ and serves faithfully in her community. She leads a small group called the Iron Maidens (based on Proverbs 27:17, "*Iron sharpens iron, as one man sharpens another*") as well as a Christian-based sexual abuse recovery group. She serves at a crisis pregnancy center, has completed an Associate's Degree in Psychology, and is a certified Christian Life Coach through the American Association of Christian Counselors. Last year, she launched a photography company to capture milestones of happiness as a way to bring balance to the heaviness she sees as she walks with other women.

"All of the above and much more is possible because I was introduced to Jesus through your obedience to a call Christ put on your life. So many lives have been touched because of your obedience to our God. You may never get to hear all the stories while on earth, but those are your treasures in heaven!" Kelly wrote in her email to Doug. She concluded:

"I thank the Lord often for men and women just like Doug and the others who served with TPMI. They have modeled well what serving God looks like."

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF PAT LACKEY A TRUE CHAMPION OF FAITH, LOVE, AND COMPASSION

Pat Lackey, missionary to Botswana, Africa, and long-time friend of Turning Point Ministries, passed away on November 28, 2014, surrounded by her loving family and over 100 friends and staff from Love Botswana Outreach Mission who gathered at her home in Maun to say goodbye. She had served with Love Botswana Outreach Mission for 23 years, which was founded by her son Jerry and his wife, Jana. Pat had a love for Christian education and pioneered schools in Kentucky and Texas before becoming co-founder and founding principal of Okavango International School. She also taught courses at Love Botswana Bible Institute.



Known for her gift of working with children, "Ms. Pat" served as children's pastor at Maun Village Church for many years and authored a book of Bible stories set in Setswana culture. She was known most of all for her love of musical theater, and for many years produced musicals with singing, puppets, and drama. In her last years, she spent her time teaching remedial reading for students and caring for the children at Lorato House Rescue Centre.

"We want to join in sending our heartfelt condolences to Jerry and Jana Lackey and family," said Doug Stringer in a video tribute. "We also give tribute and celebrate the life of a true champion of faith, love, and compassion."

The Lackeys were friends with Doug and the ministry while still living in Houston, and Doug was involved in the launch of Love Botswana. Today, he serves on their Board of Directors. Pat was a licensed minister with Turning Point Ministries International and, in 2008, Doug officiated her ordination ceremony in Maun.

"I had the pleasure of seeing first-hand the depth and breadth of Love Botswana's fruitfulness over the years, of which Pat was an important contributor," Doug said, then continued:

"Only eternity will reveal the vastness and import of Pat's life and what a precious gem she truly was. Many untold souls will have been the beneficiaries of her love, service, and obedience to the calling of God to the beautiful people of Botswana and beyond. The life she lived before she entered the portal of heaven's gates will leave a lasting legacy for generations to come. It truly has been an honor to have known Pat for nearly three decades, served in the service of our Lord together, and called her a friend. We will miss you Pat! Thank you for your love and influence in my life personally."



Doug joined Jerry Lackey (left) to officiate Pat's ordination ceremony in Maun, Botswana in 2008.

A Catalyst for Citywide Evangelism

BY SUSIE WOLF



A pre-crusade prayer rally at New Life Church in Houston

“Houston Shall Be Saved,” reverberated throughout the BBVA Compass Stadium.

As Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke made this declaration, hearts of believers were stirred with confidence. Through intercession and intervention, the Church of Houston continues mobilizing to reach her city. What began in homes and houses of worship decades and even generations ago continues today.

The Bonnke team came to invest in and serve the city at their own expense, and what a blessing they were. With fresh vigor and vision, the Bonnke Crusade, held at the BBVA Compass Stadium February 20-21,

multi-ethnic, and multi-denominational, the Church worshipped and cried out together for souls.

Doug also felt inclined to call the Body together in December 2014 for “21 Days of An Appeal to Heaven for an Awakening” (see *The Lion of Lyons Avenue* on page 9 for one of many highlights from this initiative). Churches across the Greater Houston area as well as believers in other cities and countries joined in agreement. Various churches held subsequent 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting in January 2015.

There was a stirring

before and in anticipation of the Crusade.

When time for the crusade arrived, more than 27,000 men, women, and children gathered those two nights, in spite of rain and threatening storms, and over 2,700 people gave their lives to Christ! Rededications and testimonies of healing attest to the restoring hand of God in hearts and lives. Yes, there is a harvest, and it’s continuing.

Many recognized that the Crusade served as a renewed catalyst for the Church in Houston to unite in prayer and in reaching the city. Collaborative cross-denominational prayer networks and evangelistic networks are now strategizing together.

“It’s beautiful to see how the Body is coming together to pray and reach out. This kind of unity is one fruit from the crusade,” shared Stephanie Vigers. She and her husband, Pastor Donnell Vigers, were instrumental in presenting the opportunity for the Bonnke Crusade to the city’s pastors and ministry leaders. They are also encouraging churches across the area to participate in Celebration Sundays on the fifth Sundays during the year, with the focus on an evangelistic/salvation message as church members pray for friends and family and invite them to the service.

The momentum from the Crusade is continuing and building upon the foundations laid in Houston by many churches, ministries, and believers through the years. Ministries such as YWAM Houston, which is part of the Somebody Cares Houston network, are weekly reaching out to those in the Lower Westheimer area through Street Church, leading the lost to Christ and building on the foundation laid years ago by Turning Point and Somebody Cares in the 1980s.

Churches and ministries like these serve their communities continually. Through



2015, has spurred the Body of Christ in Houston to reach out even more.

Doug Stringer, recognized for his years of investment in the city, was asked to serve as local chairman of the Crusade Committee. Leading up to the crusade, 400 churches encouraged participation as four citywide prayer gatherings were held throughout the Greater Houston area. Believers from across the city joined together in prayer. Trans-generational,

service at local schools, with area police and sheriff's departments to the business sector, evangelistic efforts are again increasing.

Chris Gamez, coordinator of a citywide evangelism network called "Houston Shall Be Saved" that grew out of the Bonnke Crusade, states: "The goal is for evangelism to become a way of life. We're targeting regions of the Greater Houston area for community-wide impact. Working through the neighborhood schools, area churches and prayer initiatives, we will host functions and festivals. We will serve them as a demonstration of Christ's love. When people respond to the Gospel, they will be encouraged to become part of an area church so they can grow in Christ," Gamez states.

"PrayHouston" is an initiative based on 2 Chronicles 7:14 calling believers across the city—from small groups meeting in homes, lunchrooms, churches, retirement homes, wherever gathered—to pray based on this foundational scripture. Weekly, monthly, or as the group decides, the goal is to engage in prayer. This is one of several groups who are seeking the heart of God for a Spiritual Awakening.

The Prayer Team for the Bonnke Crusade coordinated by Ps. Gabi Soltau continues to meet and undergird citywide prayer and evangelism initiatives. "The team consists of leaders and pastors from around the city. Each is serving their community, and the collaborative efforts are impactful. It's an honor to serve alongside them," Gabi shared.

Reinhard Bonnke felt a strong inclination for Houston, Texas to be one of the host cities for crusades across America, and this crusade has had the largest response to date. And, as Evangelist Bonnke shared, "America shall be saved."

"Because Houston was recently named the most ethnically diverse city in America, and with the diversity of industries, what happens in Houston has global implications," Doug Stringer has stated at various gatherings across the region.

As the city continues on the journey to community transformation, impacting the various sectors of city life, we will persevere in prayer, worship, service, and sharing the Gospel. At the core is a driving belief that the Lord wants to visit not only Houston but also America again, producing a spiritual awakening that leads to salvation—one that will have rippling effects throughout the world!

Susie Wolf is a long-time member of the Somebody Cares staff/network and director of Seniority Services, an affiliate of Somebody Cares America.

NEW ASSIGNMENTS

BY LISA STRINGER

Life has been full of assignments, and we are often surprised and humbled at the doors the Lord ushers us through. I am ever grateful for all He allows us to participate in, and what He allows us to witness. We have seen many give their hearts to The Lord, prodigals return home, healings take place, and many set free from addictions. As Doug often says, it is a privilege to serve the Lord.

We ended 2014 with a fruitful trip to Japan and began the year witnessing two major prayer gatherings in our nation. The Reinhard Bonnke Crusade in Houston, for which Doug was the Honorary City Chairman, drew tens of thousands of people and saw thousands give their lives to Christ. The Response Louisiana, for which Doug was the director and coordinator, saw thousands coming to pray in Baton Rouge and tens of thousands joining from around the country. Both gatherings drew people who are hungry to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

We are living in a time when believers are realizing the need to seek after God with a holy hunger to see our nation return to its biblical foundations if we are to leave the next generation with hope.

With 2016 being an election year, we have seen the Lord open doors for us to minister to leaders of all kinds. We find ourselves in private meetings with people who influence and make legislation. The wonderful news is that many are seeking prayer and unashamedly recognizing they need God's grace and direction. I've heard Doug say often, "For the sacred to influence the secular, we must have the heart of our Savior for the souls of men." There are far

too many lost souls who need the revelation of who Jesus is and who He can be in their lives. James 5:16 reminds us, "*The fervent prayer of the righteous avails much.*" We believe we are in a season where prayer and fasting is a must if we are to see our nation healed.

1 Corinthians 16:9 (NKJV) says, "*For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*" God is touching the hearts of government officials and citizens alike. If we make ourselves available to the elected who oversee the laws of the land, then perhaps God can use us as His vessels to sow seeds of truth, and we can see a change in the "land of the free and the home of the brave."

Those of you who follow Doug on social media are aware that he is constantly on the go. I am often asked, "Where is Doug at today?" Sometimes I can't keep up! Doug inspires me to keep on keeping on, to finish the race that we have started, and to keep our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

1 Corinthians 16: 13-14 says, "*Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.*"

Doug loves people too much to see them miss a life of eternity with the King of Kings. He loves people to Christ, from the poorest of the poor to the ones with limitless opportunities. He loves what he does and to whom he ministers. Our prayer is for health, strength, and means to continue to be a tangible expression of Christ to a world in need. The need is great, but God who directs our steps makes a way where at times it seems impossible.



Doug and Lisa meet with Cecilia Abbott, who holds the distinction of being the first First Lady of Texas of Latin American descent. Doug serves on the Ministers Advisory Team for Gov. Abbott.

A man in a light-colored short-sleeved shirt and blue jeans is kneeling on one knee at a podium. He is holding a microphone and has his eyes closed in prayer. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and what appears to be an outdoor event.

For the time will come!

by DOUG STRINGER

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NKJV)

We are living now in the time Paul speaks about above. That time has come. We continue to see the escalation and acceleration of human depravity and crisis. There seems to be an increasing disregard for the love of truth. In fact, the Apostle Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 that some would be given to an unrighteous deception because they did not receive the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Paul also addresses this with Timothy after giving him a very strong charge and challenge to his ministry.

Paul was deeply concerned that even amongst those who professed to know the truth, many no longer had a love for the truth. In 2 Timothy 4:5, he encourages us to make sure we are not disheartened or discouraged from keeping our focus:

"But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

Be watchful in all things

In other words, be morally alert, be sober, and have self control.

Endure afflictions

We must persevere through whatever challenges or hardships may come our way. We need to keep our vision of hope and our eyes on the destination of the Lord. Circumstances should not dictate who we are, because we know who we are in Christ.

Do the work of an evangelist

For the sacred to influence the secular, we must have the heart of our Savior for the souls of men. We may not all have the office of an evangelist or be called like a Billy Graham, but we are all called to do the work of an evangelist. We are all called to let the Lord's light shine in our lives in such a way that it directs others to Him. Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

I love this quote from the late Leonard Ravenhill: "Could a mariner sit idle if he heard the drowning cry? Could a doctor sit in comfort and just let his patients die? Could a fireman sit idle and let men burn and give no hand? Could you sit at ease in Zion (as a Christian) with the world around you damned?"

There is such need in the world around us today. Shall we sit back on the beach of ease and comfort, when so many are still shipwrecked in a sea of despair and destruction?

A.W. Tozer said, "The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too

Doug Stringer prays in downtown Houston on National Day of Prayer, May 2015.

bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.”

We need to wake up from our slumber, quit pushing our snooze buttons, and awaken to the call to be good messengers in a world of bad news.

Fulfill Your Ministry

The Amplified Bible says, “Fully perform all the duties of your ministry.” We are all called to steward the ministry God has entrusted to us. At Somebody Cares, one of our core missions is reconciliation across racial, ethnic, and denominational lines. We have been reconciled to God through Christ Jesus, and now all of us have the ministry of reconciliation. This is so important during these times in which we live, to be ambassadors and bridge-builders in the natural as a beautiful picture of what God has done in the spiritual.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2 is a reminder not to lose heart lest we have a tendency to mishandle the Word of God through deceitfulness. We should rather manifest the truth to others.

We can only manifest the Truth if we ourselves have the love of the Truth. Too often we turn our ears away from the truth because we raise up our own “golden calf,” so to speak. We set up our personal preferences based on our own perceptions, thus disregarding the truth where our sacred cows are concerned. As I’ve said often, “Perception is not necessarily the truth, but it is the truth to the one who perceives it.” If we are not careful and discerning, we can filter our worldview through our personal preferences or experiences, rather than through the Word, character, nature, and Spirit of God; whereby, we create our own world and personal kingdoms based on our own perceptions. May our eyes be opened with discernment, and our hearts return to Him.

The Apostle Paul begins his challenge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1 with this: “*I CHARGE you...before God and the Lord Jesus Christ...*” The inference is, “as if in the very Presence of God Himself.”

Verse 2 says: *Preach the word! Be instant in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*

Here we see some key exhortations:

Preach the Word:

The writer of the song *Amazing Grace* was John Newton (1792-1875). He was a former

slave ship captain who had an encounter with the Lord and later became an Anglican clergyman. I love this quote of his that really does give us a picture of what our preaching of the Word should do. “My grand point in preaching is to break the hard heart, and to heal the broken one.” Powerful!

I also love this quote from another popular English preacher, Rowland Hill (1744-1833): “I don’t like those mighty fine preachers who round off their sentences so beautifully that they are sure to roll off the sinner’s conscience.”

Or, how about this quote from the late A.W. Tozer from his teaching on “The Gift of Prophetic Insight,” which he wrote about religious leaders who lack understanding of present conditions:

“Religious leaders who continue to mechanically expound the scriptures without regard to the current religious situation are no better than the scribes and lawyers of Jesus’ day who faithfully parroted the law without the remotest notion of what was going on around them spiritually...

“The Prophets never made that mistake nor wasted their efforts in that manner. They invariably spoke to the condition of the people of their times. Today we need prophetic preachers; not preachers of prophecy merely, but preachers with a gift of prophecy... We need the gift of discernment again in our pulpits. It is not the ability to predict that we need, but the anointed eye, the power of spiritual penetration and interpretation, the ability to appraise the religious scene as viewed from God’s position, and to tell us what is actually going on.”

Today, we have some of the most gifted orators and well trained communicators and pontificators, but what we need are those who have also been in the Presence of the Lord, who can hear from Him and communicate His heart to a desperate world. We need to be those who love God and the people He has called us to serve more than we love ourselves.

As 1 Corinthians 9:16-18 says, “*For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me: yes, woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.*”

Be instant in season and out of season:

The Amplified Bible says it this way: “*Keep your sense of urgency... be at hand and*

ready, whether the opportunity seems to be favorable or unfavorable, whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether it be welcome or unwelcome.”

In other words, to “be instant” means to be at hand, to stand by, i.e., to be prepared, ready, keeping your sense of urgency. Notice that to be instant in and out of season may not always be favorable, convenient, or welcomed!

Reprove:

The Greek word *elenxon* also means to convince or correct.

Rebuke:

This word also means “to censure.” Censure is an expression of strong disapproval or denouncement, an official reprimand. Wikipedia says, “Censure is a process by which a formal reprimand is issued to an individual by an authoritative body.” We have seen this at times over the years with leaders who have misused their office or position.

Both “reprove” and “rebuke” infer to challenge, correct, and discipline. The Lord corrects to guide and instruct those He loves. Likewise, our love for others moves us with deep compassion to do the same.

Exhort:

The Greek word *parakaleson* can be translated either exhort or encourage, depending on the context in which it is used. It also means to bring edification and comfort.

Yes, the time has come for us to be lovers of truth and sound doctrine, and to be sensitive and discerning of the times. May we recognize the hour in which we are living and heed the call of the Lord as His Church. As in the days of Noah, we are seeing many disturbing and atrocious things, yet by divine warning Noah built an ark that served as a vehicle of salvation and preservation in the midst of judgment. Likewise, may we become a spiritual ark for others to find refuge, salvation, preservation, and deliverance.

Together, may we be able to say like the apostle Paul:

“I have fought the good fight... I have finished the race... I have kept (persevered) the faith!”

Revised versions of this and other articles by Doug Stringer can be found in various printed and online magazines, as well as www.DougStringer.com.