

March 2025

The Lighthouse

Shepherding Groups

In Acts 20, Paul met with the Ephesian elders and he exhorted them: *“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”* (Acts 20:28, ESV)

And Peter writes in his first letter:

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:1–3, ESV)

In an effort to obey these commands to “pay careful attention to the flock” and “care for the church of God” and “shepherd the flock of God... exercising oversight”; the session has divided the church into shepherding groups. Each elder has a group of church members and regular attenders that he is praying for, contacting, relating to, caring for, etc. These groups are loosely arranged according to geography; and in some cases, other practical reasons.

Theologians through the centuries have asked the question, “What makes a church a true church? What are the marks of a true church?”

The Belgic Confession devotes a chapter (Article 29) to the "Marks of the True Church" and lists them as follows: The true church can be recognized if it has the following marks: The church engages in the pure preaching of the gospel; it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them; it practices church discipline for correcting faults. In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and holding Jesus Christ as the only Head. By these marks one can be assured of recognizing the true church-- and no one ought to be separated from it.

So, preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments biblically, and practicing church discipline are the marks of a true church. Shepherding the flock is part of the third mark; church discipline. However, I would say that church discipline is much more than correcting faults. That is certainly part of it - the “negative” side, if you will, when necessary. The positive side is teaching, encouraging, exemplifying, etc. Think of disciplining a young child. If you want a child to be disciplined, the first step is to positively teach, encourage, and exemplify good behavior. Correction comes after the expectations have been presented, taught, and encouraged. I use that example to make a point. It is not the best example because I don't want anyone to think that the elders thinks of church members as children! As Peter exhorted *“not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”*

Shepherding groups are focused on being an encouragement and giving care to the people of God in our church. Your elder/shepherd is there as a resource for you. We will be publicizing those groups soon, so be on the lookout!

Grace & Peace,
Tim



Grow
in Christ



Shepherding List

Aaron Smith/John Chaney	David Allen/Mike Clark
Smith Family John Chaney Vanderkooy Family Nick Clark Freeman Family Pizzari Family Carol Roch Margaret Fore/Tammy Turney Marilyn Kooienga Phil Pennington Willson Family Dean & Lynne Rydbeck Warren & Linda Brookhart Blakeney Family	David Allen Mike & Kim Clark Andy Bagby Norman & Fran Bagby Frank Genzer Jim & Elizabeth Mosely Kay Pringle Dandre Washington Glidewell Family Eloise Gryder Anky Delarie Tal Braddock Nancy Marvar
Regular Attenders	Regular Attenders
Mike McMurray & Zandra Walker Barber Family	Libby Jordan Maria Smith Victor Allen Dan & Christine Garrett Mike & Elaine Dent
Ken Pennell	Ben Bowden/Jeff Harrison
Scott Malthaner Ben & Julia Bowden Phil & Vielsa Harding Jim & Janet Misner Harvel & Megan Jackson Charlotte Rhett Rachel & John Roach Joan & Tricia Gauthier Harriett O'Malley Horn Family Venning Family Sue Faircloth & Cathy Davenport	Ken & Pat Pennell Diane Bowden Ken & Joan Gosnell Jeff & Katherine Harrison Melba Sipriano Fran Handel Greg Mann Rosemary Bailey Steve & Michelle Lustig Kathleen Edwards Kayleigh Clark Vince Giordano Josiah Lamont Michael & Amy Conaway Chris & Natalie Calmes
Regular Attenders	Regular Attenders
Johnny & Maria Gonzalez Pat Shaw Barry Fancher Bryce & Gayle Hicks	Glenn & Susan Collins Manuel & Ashley Diaz Family Sharon Parker Hall Family

Updated
 March 4, 2025



NEWS
— from the —
MISSION
FIELD

Prayer and Praise

Jody Collinge

February 23, 2025

"For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth."

Psalms 71:5 (ESV)

Prayer and Praise:



Malawi ministry.

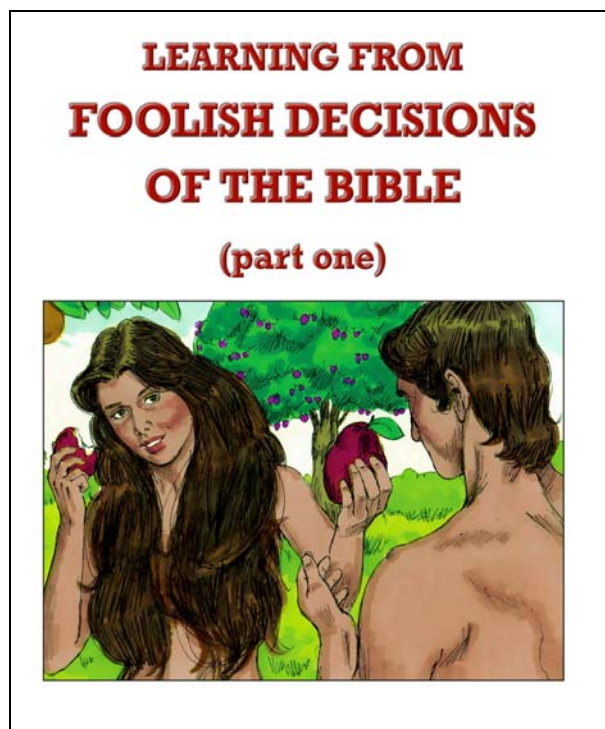
1. We have been collecting stories of the impact of Children's CHE in different countries. Rhodess and Janet from Malawi wrote, "Before we received CHE training, we would not value our children. In many ways, culturally, we would think to wait for them to grow up and start trusting them. After CHE training, we saw that our children are also more important and to start now trusting them because they can also bring a change many lives in the society. Now we are teaching them to reach their friends and families. Good things are happening that these children are changing their families holistically." Thank God for how He is working!

Pray that we may also develop strong ministries of CHE with Youth. Please pray that the children and youth may continue to grow in Christ and reach out to their families and friends. Pray that we can work with and encourage CHE trainers and leaders around the world, and give strong follow-up to those who have received CHE training.

2. I also enjoy our Zihuatanejo children's ministries--especially when they surprise me with a birthday celebration! Pray that their families may come to know Christ.



3. Our online Bible study of *Women of the New Testament* is going well and will finish in a few weeks. In April, we will begin a new study of *Foolish Decisions of the Bible*. Let me know if you would like to join us. Pray that we may learn how to not to repeat their mistakes! In the meantime, I am starting to write a new study of *Children of the Bible*.



4. My apartment is getting emptier as I downsize! Thank God for providing good homes for the books, Greek books, medical books, household supplies,

furniture, and clothes. And thanks to all the friends who are helping. In late March, I will be moving to the cabin at the [Christian Health Service Corps](#) base in Texas, and will spend part of the year in Texas and part of the year in Zihuatanejo (in addition to my other wanderings). Pray for the Lord's help with all the practical details. Pray that I may be able to take part in and encourage ministries in both Zihuatanejo and Texas.

¡Muchas gracias!

Thank God for his protection and care.

And many thanks to you for your prayers, encouragement, and support!

Let me know how I can be praying for you.

Dios les bendiga. (May God bless you.)

Jody

Send donations to:

Global CHE Network

200 W Frontier St., Suite Q

Payson, AZ 85541.

Please designate that they are for my support. Thanks!



WORDS FROM THE WILDERNESS

Establishing a Prayer Team To Share God's Heart to Reach the Lost

“I Rode a Donkey Drunk”

Those words were spoken to me while talking with three men outside of the Government Street Grocery. It had already been a good night. Before I even left my house, **Cory**, a musician who is very lost, but with whom I have established deep trust and sharing (and who will probably be the subject of an upcoming newsletter), had reached out to me to say, “Are you coming to the bar tonight? There is something I want to share with you.” Then, not long after I got to the Grocery (bar), he sought me out and said, “I have this new song. I haven’t played it before a crowd yet. Can I play it for you?” I sensed there was a great honor and a great trust in that, so of course I followed Cory outside where he could play his song. Cory is a gifted songwriter, and this new song was about the broken trust and broken pieces he was trying to pick up and put back together following his second divorce. It was truly a heart-breaking song. As I have said many times here in Ocean Springs: “The people here know they are lost.... They just don’t know there is a Savior.” But then, after Cory finished playing, the sacredness of that moment led to something even more amazing:

I found myself in a group of three other guys, talking about some of the things that Cory was singing about, and that they had overheard. Actually, at first, these guys, all lost and in need of the gospel, went to the tropes and standard fare that guys at bars often talk about - Stupid stories and bawdy jokes. Tales of times they were “So wasted, you won’t believe what I did.” That was the setting for the line I began this newsletter with: One guy trying to top the others by saying, “I was so drunk... I tried to get home by riding a donkey” (he was saying that in the context of “At least I didn’t try to drive!”).

But then, as they talked and I stood there with them, listening, the conversation started to turn. They began to discuss the raw emotion and pain Cory that was in Cory’s song they had overheard. And they began to identify with it themselves. In this group, there was **Roy**, who is the prodigal son of a local business empire. He spoke with great shame about the experience of having his father very publicly take the mantle of the family business and give it to someone else, not him. The second guy, **Jack**, is a navy seabee. He takes great pride in the “we can build anything” nature of his work, but is hurting at how his family has fallen apart. And then there was **Cory**, the broken poet.

As we stood there and talked together, and as they began to share more personally, the conversation turned again to their questions they want to ask God. One of them said, “Mark, you’re a Christian right? A pastor?” And so their questions began to flow. Freely. “Why does God allow us to be born into such a broken, messed up life...and then hold us responsible for what we do in it?” “Isn’t it just a bait and switch, that God calls us sinners, and that we have to go to Him to get out of it?” And all centering around their one, main question: “If your God is as good as you say He is... Why is my life so hard, so messed up, and so full of pain?”

And so it was on. They threw it all at me. Some things I had answers for. Some things I had to say, “That’s a great question, and it’s hard to know the answer.” But in all things, I got to talk to them about the heart, character, and truth of a God before whom we may not know the answer for all of our circumstances or suffering, but who promises that He is good, and that He has provided a rescue and a reclamation through the blood of His own Son, Jesus. And the questions and the conversation just kept coming and coming.

Eventually, the bars around us all began to shut down. The music inside stopped. Closing time had come, and the crowds had all begun their lonely migration home. The bartenders were all sweeping up and cleaning up around us. And yet still we stood there, the four of us, until late into the night. Talking. Laughing. Crying. Questioning. And in the middle of it, I had the sacred, profound privilege to offer, explain, and testify to the simple, unchanging truth and beauty of the gospel and of God's offer of salvation and hope through the Great Exchange His Son makes with us – "For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). I told them of a Father who loves prodigals so much that He runs to them, even to the point of getting their own mud and filth on Himself, that He might bring us home to Himself and robe us as His own sons. And I promised them that, no matter what, they were not too far gone for God to love them and save them.



It was an incredible example of what Stephanie and I were hoping for when we took this call to missionary church planting in Ocean Springs. To stand there with three other men who were broken and who knew it. And to get to tell them of the hope of the Savior. And it didn't stop there. Eventually, Jack had to go and wandered off into the night. But Cory and I are drawing closer and closer. He is so lost. But he is sharing his life with me. And the very next night, Roy texted me with more questions about God and about the gospel – Could what I was saying really be true? Could it really include him? And so we texted back and forth, again until late into the night. And as I write this, he and I are supposed to get together again in person so that he can share more of his story and his pain and so that, Lord willing, I can share more of the gospel with Him.

Taken together, it was an amazing experience. And an exciting night. And I drove home that night praising God for what He did. Him. And Him alone.

Because there is something else you should know about that night

I almost didn't show up. You see, that morning, one of the waitresses that Stephanie and I have befriended. And whom we have welcomed into our house multiple times. And who has shared her own story with us and with whom we have been able to pray and bring her before the Father – That morning, her two year old daughter had major skull and brain surgery in Jackson, 2 1/2 hours away. I knew she was scared (what parent wouldn't be), so that morning I drove to Jackson to surprise her and sit with her and her boyfriend during their daughter's surgery. I had the privilege to be with them and to pray with them until they got good news.

And then I drove back home. But by the time I got home, I was spent. Not just from the day, but from the effect of the last six months. You may recall, in my last newsletter, I shared about how in August my mom fell. And in September, we thought she was going to have major surgery on her back, only to find that she was going downhill too quickly. So in October, she went on hospice. And in November, she passed away, two days after my brother-in-law also passed away after his own journey with cancer. Those experiences came quickly, and they came relentlessly. The holidays gave a respite and wonderful time with kids, but not time to process nor recover. And then in this new year, Stephanie's mom has had her own health issues, and two surgeries so far, and Stephanie has spent ten days away with her in the hospital. So, in all of this, we have been wrung out, distracted, and feeling very weak. Running on mental and emotional empty. That is what I was feeling that night: As weak as a kitten, and as dry as a cactus. Whether from ministry exhaustion or spiritual warfare, I was barely able to show up and be there at all.

And yet God showed up in His grace and power

As I was debriefing from that night outside the Grocery, I shared the story with **Steve Lanier**. He listened to my story about the night, and about how I was barely able to be there, but also of “Wow, look how God showed up and what He did!” Steve listened, and then pithily replied, “Maybe that’s the whole point. Maybe God doesn’t need you at all. Maybe He wants to use you in your weakness, so that it is clear that He gets all the glory.” And of course, I knew my friend was right.

I am coming to think **that may be the point to this entire ministry and this entire story God is telling in Ocean Springs**. Sometimes I am prone to run ahead. To strategize. To make big plans. And to work harder, ever harder. And yet, in these last six months since August, I have been running more and more on empty. My own resources are depleted, my emotions are spent, and my fuel cells are drained. It’s always the case, of course – What can any of us really do in our own strength to reach one soul or change one reality in the spiritual realm? But times like this season lead me to see it once again. And it is a good seeing. God does not need us at all. But He invites us to simply show up. To be “empty vessels” through which He can show His incredible grace and power, and so that it is abundantly clear, beyond any doubt, who alone gets the glory when the eternal breaks into this world and lives are changed forever. As Paul says it in 2 Corinthians 4, “We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed...For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.”

That alone is my singular hope for this ministry. And I hope it will encourage you as a witness in your own sphere of influence where God has placed you. Hope out of weakness. Yet it is a sure hope. For God is the Great Lion, and Aslan is on the move!

It is the Great Hope we are praying for this year

We are praying for three main areas and three main goals in this evangelistic church planting ministry for this year – Plus one thing personally. Will you join us in praying:

1. For our **core group**. We have been meeting for over a year now with a group of families who come together every Sunday night for worship and for bible study. It is a good, sweet group that is learning to love each other well in Christ. This year, we are praying and working to lead this core to transition into a **launch team**, toward the further establishment of a healthy, growing, and deepening **new church**. This will involve helping the group to step up and out into the use of their spiritual gifts for ministry. And it will involve the discipleship of men to step up into leadership in their homes – And, Lord willing, office and leadership in the church. And it will involve continuing to welcome, enfold, and minister the gospel into new people God is bringing to our team.



2. For our **evangelism into Government Street – and to all of Ocean Springs**. To God’s glory, there are over 120 people that we are in regular, ongoing relationship and conversation with toward the gospel. Some of them are new in the trust and in the process. Some are like the men I stood with that night, early in getting to know them and their stories, but open to me sharing the gospel. And some are far along, having established deep trust and sharing, and even asking questions about Jesus and who He is. Our main goal with this latter group is to

Create a New Meeting this year, something in the line of Francis Schaeffer and L'Abri: A time of gathering, questions, conversations around faith, and, Lord willing, leading to new birth in Christ as God calls lost people to Himself.

3. For the **establishment of new internships and residencies** in this ministry. A doorway through which we might bring seminary students or interested people from other churches – To train them in evangelism and in connecting with the lost. So that they might go back and encourage their own churches in such a ministry. And so that some of them might be called to plant other churches for the spread of the gospel on the gulf coast – A field that is ripe for harvest in the Kingdom of God!
4. And finally, would you **pray for Steve and Sherry Lanier, and Stephanie and me in this work?** Steve and Sherry are becoming dear friends, and a dear brother and sister to us in this ministry. We are so thankful that God has led a couple with such deep experience in ministry and in evangelism to see what He is doing here – and to partner with us in the work. They have become a means of grace and encouragement to us personally, and their gifts and their availability multiply the reach and the impact of the gospel here. It is an exciting time. And a spiritual battle. And life gets long, weary, and hard. Please, pray for us. That we would rest in Christ. And that through us and through our weakness – Our God will receive all the glory!

Finally, would you consider being part of our financial support team? Through a one time or a regular gift, would you give toward what God wants to do save many souls on the coast in 2025?!

- Use the QR code to the right, or visit <http://give.pcamna.org/to/1749>
- Checks can also be sent payable to "Mission to North America"
PO Box 890233
Charlotte, NC, 28289-02333
(Write "Mark Horn, Ocean Springs Church Plant" on the memo line)
- More information for all of this and updates on our Ocean Springs story can be found at our website: www.PlantHopeOS.org
- And remember: The Facebook page for our livestream of our Bible studies and photos of our meetings can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/613907074215025>



Thank you, Dear Friends. Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your giving and your support. And thank you for believing with us that God is going to do a great work for the gospel through Jesus Christ!

A closing encouragement:

.....
"Everything sad is going to come untrue, and it will somehow be greater for having once been broken and lost."
– Tim Keller, drawing from JRR Tolkien

BIRTHDAYS for MARCH

James Moseley 3rd

Eloise Gryder 9th

Michelle Lustig 10th

Jonathan Blakenzy 12th



Pat Pennell 15th

Lenny Glidewell 20th

Gabbie Bowden 24th

Jim Selig 26th



Dates to Remember for March

March 1 Men's Breakfast at 8:00am in the Fellowship Hall

March 2 Communion



March 3 Men's Bible Study at 6:30pm. in the church parlor

March 5 Ladies' monthly circle meeting at 9:30am in the church parlor

March 8 Deacon's having a workday at 8:00am, they will be working on the grounds

March 9 Monthly luncheon after the worship service, please bring a dish to share



March 9 Daylight Savings Time begins. Set your clocks forward 1 hour on Saturday night

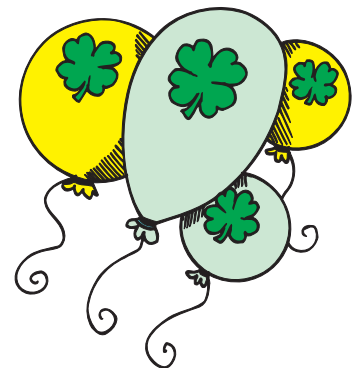
March 12 Women's Leadership team meeting at 5:30pm in the church library

March 17 Men's Bible Study at 6:30pm in the church parlor

March 17 Deacon's Meeting at 5:45pm at the church



March 25 Session Meeting at 6:00pm in the church



GAME NIGHT: Join us for a family game night at the church in the Fellowship Hall Friday, **March 21st** from 6 to 9pm. Pizza will be served. If you can bring a snack, dessert or drinks. Bring your favorite board game with you.

