



LAKWOOD CHURCH PLANTING



ANNUAL REPORT

19-20

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



JOHN MORRISON

Executive Director, COR3:6 Network
Pastor of Theological Training, Lakewood Baptist Church

The 2019-20 year for COR3:6 has been filled with reminders of God's faithfulness. By his grace, we as a network have been able to partner with three gospel-proclaiming churches in their efforts to exalt Christ in their communities and around the world. Two of those are new church plants in some of our key partner areas, and the other is a revitalization with great potential in southern California. We also had the privilege to host our first-ever COR3:6 Conference. It was such a joy to be able to bring our network pastors and their wives to Gainesville to experience the love and care that Lakewood has for our partner churches. This weekend was a great encouragement for our network pastors, and it also helped bring into focus for our own church the importance of planting and revitalizing churches.

For me, our time together at the conference cemented in my mind what I had already sensed: the people of COR3:6 are our greatest asset. We are blessed by a network to have a

ministry team that is committed to seeing the gospel go forward through faithful churches. This is a team committed to pray for our partners, to encourage them, and to seek God's wisdom for how best to move forward with planting and revitalization. We are also blessed tremendously by the people of Lakewood Baptist Church. Their love and affection for our partner pastors and their wives was on full display at the conference, and it is God's grace through their generosity that makes the financial support of this network possible. We have also been so incredibly blessed by the pastors the Lord has allowed us to partner with in their efforts of church planting and revitalization. God has been so kind to us with the partnerships he has given to us. Our network is filled with godly pastors who love the Lord. They are blessings to their churches, to this network, and to Lakewood.

My appreciation, respect, and, often, awe of the pastors within COR3:6 has shaped this issue of our annual report. As we have faced a myriad of challenges this year from COVID-19 to racial injustice, I wanted to hear from pastors I know and love about how they are pastoring through these challenges. These articles are just a sampling of the pastoral wisdom and heart of the pastors in our network. I know you will be blessed as you read and consider their words.

Through his Word and by his Spirit, Christ will continue to build his church to the glory of God the Father. *Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*



2020

COR3:6 Conference

February 20-23
Gainesville, GA



THE COVID REVOLUTION:

Missions and Evangelism During Times of Global Crisis



BY JAVIER CHAVEZ
Pastor, Amistad Cristiana,
Gainesville, GA

Exactly a year ago, my two teenage kids, Joshua and Abigail, and I were enjoying the beautiful views of Charmey Gruyère, Switzerland. Our ministry, Amistad Cristiana International, partners with a small Hispanic congregation in Geneva and every summer we celebrate a joyful church camp. What made that experience so memorable was that during those three days, a beautiful South American young woman married to a Muslim man, who had convinced her that the Islamic faith was the “real deal,” decided to come to Jesus. We were so happy to witness the power of Gospel in action. She promised to bring her husband to the 2020 Summer Camp, and I had been praying for almost a year to lead him to Jesus this year. But then

in March, COVID-19 emerged, and it changed our plans and our lives.

I am positive that one year ago, you would have never imagined in your wildest dreams that a global pandemic of apocalyptic nature could hit so hard our way of life, our economics, and change the dynamics of our human relationships. But the question now is, how do we continue our propagation of the gospel? This question is especially challenging during these times when all seems to have become so impersonal. Christianity in itself preaches and encourages the development of a personal relationship with God and with our neighbor. The Great Commandment (Matt 22:36-40) embodies a call for personal relationships (with God, neighbor, and self), but is it possible to accomplish that during times of online church, zoom meetings, virtual interactions, and social media relationships?

Let me suggest to you three areas in which we can continue in mission and evangelism during times of COVID-19.

1. ENGAGE

The first thing I would suggest to any serious Christian committed to the extension of the gospel is to engage with the tools we have in front of us. Let's engage our technological devices at home. We can certainly use our smartphones, tablets, and personal computers to send a short voice or video message to someone we love and want to lead to Christ.

I frequently encourage Amistad Cristiana, my congregation in Gainesville, GA to share the devotionals, video clips, and messages the church presents on our Facebook and Vimeo platforms. However, sharing is much more than hitting the share button. Sharing is personally dedicating a few words to a single individual. In two or three sentences, we can share so much: I love you. I'm praying for you. Christ is always there in times of crisis. I know it is easier to tag a “bunch of people” on Facebook or Instagram, but in times like these, we want to make sure people know that they are loved for who they are on a personal level. By doing this simple step, we have had people responding positively to the Gospel.

Another area of engagement in learning how to use some virtual platforms like Skype, Zoom, or Google Meet. Sometimes we have made these platforms a “churchy tool” for our ministry activities; nevertheless, this is also a good way to connect with friends and family anywhere in the world. As the son of former missionary church planters, I grew up in different Latin American countries, and, as result of that, I attended different schools and made all kinds of friends. Well, for the last three weeks I have been engaged in Zoom calls with friends in San Jose, Costa Rica where I finished elementary education in the late 1980s. I had not seen these friends for years, but COVID-19 made us engage in weekly conversations where I have been able to

share my faith with them and lead two of my friends to the Lord.

I believe it's not only a matter of engaging people, it is also a matter of engaging the tools we have in front of us. Technology is here to stay and as in anything in life, we either adapt to it and use it for our common purpose to communicate our mission to the world, or we simply see how Gospel opportunities fly right by our eyes.

2. EMPOWER

The second recommendation for a church that copes with the challenges of COVID-19 is to empower our laity for service. This global pandemic has proven to us that it will take a long time until we are able to get back to our regular gatherings. In fact, some speculate that there will be a “new normal” coming out of all this. The reality is this, as our ability to worship corporately has been diminished and seriously challenged. More than ever before there is a need for the development of small home groups. But who is going to lead that effort? I believe it will be the heads of the households (Acts 16:31).

For years, many families have given total jurisdiction of their spiritual lives to the church and to the different ministries a church offers to a family (children, teens, youth, men, women, couples, etc.). I have seen far too many parents become passive in the spiritual formation of their children. It seems to me that many of our church members are simply letting the church “do their thing” while systematically disengaging with what is their biblical responsibility as shepherds of their own family (Deut 6:7-9). Interesting to notice that while this spiritual disconnection is taking place in our homes, our churches keep hiring more staff to offer more solutions to many inactive church families. In fact, I would propose to you that if we as parents do not go back to the basic demands of God's plan for our families

as shown in the Word of God, we will not have a church in the next years.

Churches must empower dads and moms to do their jobs as the first line of spiritual defense for their kids. We must go back to the “ministry of the family altar,” and dads and moms should see themselves as the spiritual leaders of their homes. This is definitely going to require parents to pray and study the Bible daily, but at the same time it will empower them for service. Our “new staff” and our new “small groups” at the very basic level will take place in the homes of our church. Let us give them the tools.

3. EXTEND


The final recommendation I have for those I call “concerned Christians” is to commit wholeheartedly to the extension of the gospel. I understand that right now international travel is somewhat restricted due to health reasons, and even domestic traveling is not encouraged. In fact, as international director of Amistad Cristiana International, I am a frequent traveler. Last year out of 365 days I was somewhere else in the world for 250 days. For people like me so used to connecting the word “missions” with travel, COVID-19 has put a stop in my plans. However at the same time, it has made me assess how to keep extending the gospel to all nations.

First of all, I extend the gospel by praying earnestly and systematically. Each day I pray specifically for a nation asking God not only to open doors for the gospel but also for God to raise national leaders that love their country and seek to plant churches, disciple new believers, and keep extending the gospel among their own people. I believe I know what I am talking about. I came to the US at age 19, went to college and seminary and then returned to my home country of Peru to do ministry among my own people. It would have been easy

to stay in America in the year 2000 after my education was finished and several ministry opportunities came my way. But God put a passion in my heart to reach my nation with the gospel. As a result, my wife and I spent 13 years of our lives ministering in Peru before returning to America in 2013. Foreign missionaries need to train national leaders to do the work of the gospel after they leave.

Second, we extend the gospel by giving sacrificially. I understand that one of the outcomes of this pandemic is economic distress. Many people have lost their jobs, others have been furloughed, and even small businesses are struggling to survive. The reason I know this is because as a pastor of a local church, our income has been significantly affected. We have cut other expenses, but one thing our church decided firmly was not to discontinue our giving to missions. Many missionaries have remained on the field, and they are willing and eager to keep communicating the gospel. Our task is then to honor their proactive approach and keep supporting them to the best of our abilities.

Finally, we extend the gospel by “going virtually.” In the last two weeks, I have given a virtual conference to Chile to hundreds of pastors, officiated a virtual funeral in Mexico for one of our dear pastors who passed away due to COVID, and officiated a virtual wedding for a couple in which the groom committed his life to Christ during the ceremony. Surely, I long to be there physically and minister to my brothers and sisters personally, but a global pandemic will not stop the call God has placed on our lives.

Just as COVID is a global pandemic, our Great Commission is a global responsibility, and just as COVID is spreading fear and anxiety to the world, Christians need to spread the good news and hope to the world that are only found in Jesus Christ. 

JESUS AND JUSTICE



BY GAVIN FELIX
Lead Pastor, New Springs Church
Coral Springs, FL

The past few months in our nation have been some of the most tumultuous in recent memory. When weighed against the totality of human history, nothing we have seen is really out of the ordinary yet, combining a global pandemic with racial and political unrest in our technological age it has felt as if the world is on the verge of explosion at times. The news of the deaths Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd tread familiar grounds for our society and have brought uncomfortable conversations to the surface. We have been taught as a society that religion and politics are taboo subjects, best left for private

conversations or avoided altogether to keep the peace. Bringing these topics to light creates friction, therefore we should avoid them.

However, as Christians, should that be our stance? Furthermore, is categorizing racial justice as political even correct?

Why Race is an Important Discussion

It is true that any discussion about race is inherently uncomfortable. The color of a person's skin is not merely a discussion of facts, but emotions are also deeply intertwined, and when we poke at an individual's emotions it can sometimes feel like we are rattling a lion's cage. Yet, for at least four reasons, I believe race is an essential discussion that must be had in our churches.

1. Racial Justice is biblical.

"Race," itself, is a social construct of history and not a biblical category. For example, "white" is an ambiguous category. People with white skin may be American, Canadian, German, Cuban, or a whole host of other nationalities with little in common other than skin color. The same goes for black, Asian, and Latino. Being from South Florida, confusing a Puerto Rican with a Colombian is as cardinal a sin as is mistaking a Jamaican with a Haitian, and so on. In each case, skin color

and facial features are similar, yet the cultural expressions and experience are much different. Therefore, using a person's skin color as a "catch-all" term can, and often does lead to destructive generalizations and even oppression, both individually and systematically.

The category the Bible uses most often is "ethnos," which is most like our word for ethnicities, a combination of race, nationality, and culture. The Bible is quite clear that the variety of ethnicities we have in the world is a thing of beauty. Jesus came as a light to us all (Is 42:6), and the new heavens and earth will include every nation, tribe, and tongue (Rev 7:9). Furthermore, it is significant that Jesus sums up the entirety of the Law in two commandments: love God and love neighbor (Matt 22:34-40). Love of neighbor includes various Old Testament commands that commanded care for the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner (think "immigrant"). Jesus's famed example of what it looks like to love a neighbor highlights a man belonging to the marginalized Samaritan race doing justice and mercy (Micah 6:8) to a member of the privileged Jewish class as those who were the picture of religious faithfulness walked by, too busy and lacking the compassion to engage ("Good Samaritan" parable, Luke 10:25-37). This example occurs amongst

several, particularly in Luke. Racial justice was clearly important to Jesus.

2. Fighting for racial justice pushes the church toward greater unity. Much of the hesitancy in talking about race stems from the fear that such a discussion will create division. The fear is that in pointing out the racial disparities in America and in the church we are unnecessarily creating fissures in an otherwise unified relationship. Statistics, however, suggest that there remains a substantial racial divide in churches in America. In other words, the current discussions on race seem difficult not because they create division, rather it is because they reveal divisions that already exist.

Transparency is a vital component of any relationship. The ability to be open and honest in a relationship deepens it, whereas hiding and internalizing is unhealthy. There is a subtle reality to the experience of many minorities in predominantly white churches. We have felt the pressure that as long as we conform culturally, we will be okay. But pains, disparities, and perspectives specifically related to our skin color are not always welcome discussions. Over time you learn to suppress that part of you, feeling the racial division but never speaking about it. Has authentic unity been achieved when one party in the relationship does not feel that the space is safe enough to be open? The church must deal seriously with the question, “Have we perpetuated a racially biased church culture in which it is okay for minorities to be a part of the church so long as they suppress their experience?”

When we are willing to go there – to have that difficult conversation with an abundance of love, listening, and understanding, true unity can be had. To be known fully is scary, but to be known


fully and, yet, still loved is what all of our hearts long for. It’s what only Jesus Christ can provide. Yet, through his church, he distributes a measure of that kind of love to each of us through one another. If we truly seek unity, we have to be willing to go deep.

3. The world, especially our youth, are watching. Modern media is completely saturated with cries for justice. It’s in TV, music, movies, sports, and even in our news outlets. One approach is to cross our arms in disgust, another is to exercise wisdom and discern the times. Jesus commands us to be “wise as serpents, and innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16). As Christians, we must be gifted at nuance. The response toward the “Black Lives Matter” movement and peaceful national anthem protests have caused many Christians to recoil in disgust. Believers who reject BLM typically do so because they are rejecting the unhealthy Marxist ideologies mixed into BLM rhetoric or the unbiblical approach to tolerance. However, in outright dismissing the organizations and protest, you may also be perceived as guilty of dismissing compassion. And that is a dangerous dish that young people, especially, can smell a mile away

Young people are watching how the church responds in these times. They want to see if the church will affirm the sanctity and dignity of all lives – especially black ones – or will their suspicions of a self-serving institution be confirmed as they watch the church defend its own political clout and way of life. Justice is important to modern young people. Such concern does not arise out of unchecked emotions or youthful naivety; rather, it is a recognition of the heart of Jesus himself. Justice is not a novel idea for modern people releasing themselves and society from the shackles of the past; it is a biblical idea to which the entirety

of human history points in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

4. Fighting for racial justice is deeply embedded in the gospel. Finally, we must communicate clearly what the Bible communicates: Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the gospel and of the Kingdom of God. Somewhere along the way, popular evangelical Christianity became entirely about personal conversion. With that approach has come a disproportionate focus on personal sin and a natural marriage to conservative politics, which make a similar emphasis. However, Jesus talks most often about the coming of the “kingdom.” Personal conversion is immensely important, but it is only a part of what Jesus came to do. In fact, your heart transferring from death to life is evidence of the eternal resurrection that the Kingdom of God brings. Jesus, by his incarnation, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension is bringing about the renewal of all things. A new heavens and new earth is coming where sin and death are no more, a new world in which justice is perfect.

So, while we exist in this world as Jesus’s representatives, we are to be about what Jesus is about: preaching the gospel and doing what it says (James 1-2). The same way it is insufficient to tell a homeless person about Jesus but not provide anything for the well being of his body, it is insufficient to call the black and brown community to repentance without acknowledging the unjust structures that perpetuate inequality. God made all of mankind in his image, meaning that we all have dignity as God’s image-bearers. Therefore, it is important for us to fight for the dignity and eternal well being of one another by preaching the good news and doing justice and mercy. Don’t miss this opportunity to be a light to the world! 

NEW PARTNERS

2019-2020



Matt Funk

Aspen Grove Church, Parker, CO
Kristin (Sam and Drew)



Justin Paslay

First Baptist Church Pacific Beach, San Diego, CA
Erin (Will, Aubrey, Jace)



Danny Slavich

Cross United Church, Lighthouse Point, FL
Laura (Adalyn, Judson, Olivia)



BY THE NUMBERS

As of July 31, 2020

7

Years

29

Current Partners

35

Total Churches Supported

7

States and Guatemala

\$1,802,686.76

given directly to church
planting and revitalization

In addition to church planting, Lakewood also focuses its missional efforts in reaching the unreached with the gospel. In recent years, the church has adopted the Uyghur people, and we pray that in the next several months, we will be able to send out a team to begin proclaiming the glories of Christ among this people. I sat down with Benji Lavender, the Associate Missions Pastor at Lakewood, to help us understand who the Uyghur are and how Lakewood is hoping to be part of taking the gospel to them.

JM: Who are the Uyghur and where do most of them live?

BL: The Uyghur are an ethnic people group who reside predominantly in Northwest China (11 million) and Southern Kazakhstan (300k), although there are also smaller populations of Uyghur elsewhere. There are around 12-13 million Uyghur in the world, and 99% are Sunni. Therefore, they are considered “unreached.” Since the majority of Uyghur live in northwest China (Xinjiang), they have limited access to the gospel. As you may have seen in the media, the Uyghur are heavily oppressed by the Chinese government.

JM: How did Lakewood come to adopt the Uyghur?

BL: Without a doubt it has been a work of the Lord. Through previous contact with Uyghur in XJ, the Lord led some LBC staff members to regularly pray for them over the course of several years. We prayed for their salvation and how the Lord might use LBC to reach them with the gospel. The Lord has given us opportunity to teach our members about least reached/unreached peoples and places and the necessity of reaching them with the gospel. The Lord

provided strategic conversations with LBC executive leadership and led us to consensus that “adopting” the Uyghur is something our church should do. From that point forward, we began to communicate more broadly with LBC about this new church-wide emphasis. Long story short, it has been a process and continues to be.

JM: What does it mean that we've adopted the Uyghur?

BL: Essentially all we mean by using the word “adopted” is that we, as a church, are actively choosing to set

Practically, adopting the Uyghur means that we, as a church family, are choosing to pray for them, learn about them, go/send to them in order that churches might be planted. “Adopting the Uyghur” is a long-term commitment to be faithful to participate however the Lord wills—while leaving the results to him.

JM: Can you tell us more about the team that is going to Kazakhstan?

BL: Currently there are 7 “units” on the team. This includes 4 married couples, 3 singles, and 10 kids all under the age of 7. They are not “Navy Seal,” adventure-seeking Christians. The team consists of ordinary people who simply love God, love their neighbor, and are compelled by the Spirit to go. They have and are still in the midst of counting the cost (i.e. leaving jobs, family, comforts, etc.) of following Jesus toward Kazakhstan. The team is currently in the middle of preparing and training for the field and hope to deploy over the next year.

JM: How could COR3:6 churches partner with Lakewood in adopting the Uyghur?

BL: One of the greatest ways we can all partner together is in prayer. I say that in all seriousness, without fearing it may sound cliché. We can plan, strategize, and do all we like, but unless the Lord builds the house, we labor in vain. How amazing would it be to have a network of churches all interceding for the Uyghur? The Lord can do more than we ask or think. Additionally, we can partner together as a network of churches by sharing resources, learning from one another, uniting together as missionary teams on the field, and coordinating support trips for missionaries. 🌳



our attention and affection on the Uyghur for their good and God’s glory. There aren’t many, if any, things that connect us to the Uyghur. Different cultures, religions, languages, and locations would seem to divide us, but based upon what we see in Scripture—that Christ died for them (Rev. 5:9), commanded us to disciple them (Matt. 28:18-20), and taught us to see and love them as our neighbors (Luke 10:25-37)—we are simply making a choice to pray, go, send, or do whatever else the Lord would have us do in order that they may be reconciled to God in Christ.

GATHERING FOR WORSHIP



BY TIM SOOTS
Rector, Trinity Anglican Church
Littleton, CO

Why is gathering for church so important? Why do we need to gather together to worship God, when God is not bound by space, or time? Can't reading my Bible and praying at home be enough? Today I would like to briefly look at Acts 2:42 as a helpful image of why corporate worship is so important in the Christian life.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
Acts 2:42

First, we see that the early church "devoted" themselves to the life of the church. The life of a devoted follower of Christ and the life of devotion to God's church cannot be separated. If we desire to have a long and steadfast walk with Christ, we also need a long and

steadfast relationship with his gathered body. Sadly, we have lost this picture in the Evangelical movement. We often do not know our own historical roots, the impact of Pietism and Modernism in our Christian lives, and fail to see the Church as central to our walk with Christ.

I remember a man in my early ministry who never had a church home. Every church engagement ended in conflict. Every time he sought to submit to spiritual authority, he ended up in rebellion. Deep into middle age, he still had not found a church home, and his spiritual life suffered. Like a serial adulterer, he did not know the deep joys of long-term devotion, and as a result he could not mature in Christian love.

We are called to be a people of devotion to the church as a way of growing us to have the heart of Christ. While the Bride of Christ, the church, may be hurtful, difficult and obstinate, Christ still loves her. As Christians we are called to love what our Savior loves, and he loves his church so much that he calls her his bride. First, devotion to corporate worship forms our hearts and our affections to love what the Lord loves.

Second, we see that the early church devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles.

Now this teaching was not some randomized teaching on social, political or mathematical problems. Rather, the teaching referred to here, is the proclamation of God's Word.

As Christians we believe something incredible goes on in preaching. We believe that God chooses to speak through his apostles and prophets. When you hear a sermon faithfully expositing God's Word, you are experiencing a divine act in which the Word himself, God the Son, is speaking directly to his church.

If someone ever asks you "Do you believe in prophecy?" the correct answer to that is. . . YES! Prophecy is simply God speaking to his people through a divinely appointed agent. Preaching is an act where God chooses to prophetically speak his words of grace, love, and repentance to his children. Preaching is a place where the gospel is proclaimed again and again to God's people, by Christ himself, through his divinely appointed prophet. While it may just look like a person holding a Bible and speaking in circles, God is actually at work to bring his word of unconditional love to his people.

Third, we see in Acts 2:42 that they devote themselves to fellowship.


What a beautiful image! The church is not only a place where we love God but also a place where we love one another. In our throw away culture, we often forget that the church ought to be a place of devoted fellowship, where we know one another, care for one another, mourn together, celebrate together, and worship together. When we ask the question "Why should I come to church?" we often think about ways that church impacts us: I need to be fed, I need an encouraging word, etc. And

while those realities are true, you also need to be at church because you are needed at church. The minute we walk into the gathering, we are all ministers of the gospel. We are all people who are called to encourage one another, pray for one another, point one another to the grace of Christ, we all have a voice in the choir, we are all priests in the kingdom of God who have the task of representing Christ to one another.

I was so encouraged by a church member the other week. My dear friend Donald Nwankwo was visiting while he was on vacation. A brand new member of the church noticed that he was new, and walked over and greeted Donald and his family. I immediately thought, "Here is a disciple!" A brand new person in the church already seeing themselves as part of the fellowship! When we come to church we come together to be devoted to fellowship, which means we are all

Fourth, the early church devoted themselves to the breaking of bread. Now you could read this as saying that they enjoyed potlucks (which they did). However, this more likely means the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Each Sunday God's people gather together to feast upon the provision of God. In this celebratory meal, Christ speaks to us, "My body was broken for your redemption, my blood was poured out to cleanse you of your sins." Each week when we celebrate the Lord's Supper we are reminded of the gospel of Jesus Christ: that our Lord died on our behalf to give us new life and that he feeds us with the life giving bread of heaven. When we are devoted to the breaking of bread, we recognize that Christ's atoning life, death, and resurrection, is the food of true and eternal life.

Finally, the early church dedicated themselves to prayer. Not only does God speak to us, but he invites us to speak back. He invites us to lift one another up in prayer, pleading for mercy and provision in this life of sorrow. He invites us to pray for the lost. He invites us to lift up thanksgivings for his provision. He just invites us to speak with him.

Why is corporate worship so important? It teaches us devotion to the church and forms our hearts to love what Christ loves, his bride. In corporate worship, we receive God's word where he proclaims his gospel of redemption and new life in Christ. In corporate worship, we experience the fellowship of believers and find true family. And in corporate worship, we are invited to pour out our hearts before God, offering up prayers and supplications to our Lord who cares and responds. Corporate worship is a gift of God to his people. 



CHURCH PARTNERS

Georgia

Amistad Cristiana - Gainesville | Javier Chavez
Autumn Ridge - Ellijay | Davis Lacey
Casa Connexion - Gainesville | Francisco Romero
Good Shepherd - Athens | Clay Werner
Phoenix Church - Gainesville | Jeff Bagwell
Pozo de Esperanza - Gainesville | Jose Delgado
Sola City - Gainesville | Alex Gailey
The Branch - Dahlonega | Gabe Dodd
The Branch - Milledgeville | Kyle Worthy

Guatemala

Belen Mission | Hugo Mendoza
El Camino | Saul Perez
Elim | Jaime Perez Aguillar
Escuintla | Carols Mucia Aju
Patzun | Jorge Perez Aguillar
Restoration | Carlos Mucia Aju
Xenacoj | Bartolome Carino

North America

Aspen Grove - Parker, CO | Matt Funk
Christ Proclamation - Hartford, CT | Steve Thiel
Crosspointe - Jupiter, FL | Brian Sullivan
Emmaus Church - Kansas City, MO | Josh Hedger
First Baptist Church Pacific Beach - San Diego, CA | Justin Pasaly
Legacy Church - Coconut Creek, FL | Steven Lee
Living Stone Community Church - Mesa, AZ | Whitney Clayton
New River Fellowship - Ft. Lauderdale, FL | Mike Veitz
New Springs - Coral Springs, FL | Gavin Felix
Trinity Anglican Church - Littleton, CO | Tim Soots

PASTOR OF THE CROSS



JOHN D. MORRISON, PHD
Pastor of Theological Training, Lakewood Baptist Church

It is a particular grace of God to be called into pastoral ministry. It is a privilege to be entrusted with the stewardship of the gospel and to serve the Lord and his people through the ministry of Word and prayer. Yet, with this particular privilege comes particular temptations. We are tempted to replace the worship of God with the worship of serving him. Pastoral ministry can become a way to seek our own glory rather than the glory of our one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The gospel itself is exchanged for gospel ministry. In Martin Luther's theology of the cross, I believe we find a helpful guard against such temptations.

Theology of the Cross

On October 31, 1517, Luther famously nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. The following spring, he was called to defend his views before his fellow Augustinian monks in Heidelberg. In what has become known as the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther presented his theology in a series of 40

theses. In theses 19-21 in particular, Luther develops his theology of the cross:

19. That person does not deserve to be a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened.

20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

Luther's theologia crucis proves to be grace-centered and Christ-exalting. God does not reveal himself in the way the world would expect. He is not found in the wisdom and power of the world but in the suffering and shame of the cross. Such is Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians

1:17-2:16. The cross is the wisdom of God that seems folly to the world. As Luther elaborates, "God can only be found in suffering and the cross." Luther's contrast between a "theologian of glory" and a "theologian of the cross" provides a framework for viewing our pastoral calling in a more biblical manner and guards against the temptations of pastoral ministry.

The Cross Alone is Our Ministry

The nature of our God should shape the way we pastor. Our God has chosen to reveal himself in Christ crucified, and this wisdom of the cross can only be known as the Spirit reveals it. If we are to serve in a manner worthy of our calling, our ministry will be shaped by the cross.

Jesus himself points to the cross to reorient the disciples' understanding of what it means to lead in his kingdom.

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their

great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matt 20:25-28).

Leading within Christ's kingdom is cross-shaped service. Pastoral ministry formed by the cross will look like serving, even slavery, and like giving up one's life for the glory of God in Christ.

Luther said, "The cross alone is our theology," and so, I suggest, we can say, "The cross alone is our ministry." The cross must form the foundation of our ministry. The cross must shape our approach to ministry. The cross must be the message of our ministry. When the cross is the foundation, approach, and message of our ministry, we will be "pastors of the cross," rather than "pastors of glory."

1. The cross forms the foundation for our ministry.

Luther's theology at Heidelberg is radically grace-centered. He goes on the attack against the theologians of the late medieval *via moderna* who taught that salvation begins with doing what lies within. In essence, they taught, "Do your best, and God will take care of the rest." Luther inveighed against their notion that one could earn any merit from God. Instead, Luther said that all must be received as a gift of God's grace.

Thus, he argues in thesis 18, "It is certain that a man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ." He elaborates further in thesis 25, "He is not righteous who does much, but he, who without work, believes much in Christ." Righteousness before God comes

through faith in Jesus Christ.

A pastor of the cross must himself be rooted in the grace of the gospel. A pastor of glory finds his identity in ministerial success and thinks he earns favor with God through his pastoring. A pastor of the cross finds himself in the finished work of Christ. A pastor of glory falls more in love with the work of ministry than the God whom he serves. A pastor of the cross seeks the love of his God, not in works, but in the cross of Jesus. To pastor well, we must remember that ministry does not save; salvation comes through Christ alone.

2. The cross shapes our approach to ministry.

We serve a God who will be found at the cross. He makes himself known in the weakness, foolishness, and shame of the cross. As Luther explains, "True theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ." This is our God who emptied himself, took on the nature of a servant, and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. The reality of who God is must shape the way we serve him.

In thesis 21, Luther avers, "A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is." He continues: "This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore, he prefers works to suffering, glow to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and in general, good to evil."


How true this is for pastoral ministry! How tempting it is to prefer busyness over affliction, glory over shame, power over weakness, wisdom over foolishness, and the good life to the life of the cross. How tempting it is to try to hide our worldliness underneath the name of pastor, and in the end, we are calling good evil and evil good for the sake of influence, prestige, and respectability.

The cross undercuts the idols of ministry. A pastor of glory seeks power, influence, and prestige. A pastor of the cross loses all to exalt Christ. A pastor of glory longs for respectability, but a pastor of the cross shares in the reproach of his savior. A pastor of glory desires security and stability in his work, but a pastor of the cross finds his security in Christ, our rock and our refuge.

3. The cross is the message of our ministry.

With Luther, we know, "God can be found only in suffering and the cross." The cross alone is our message. In his emphasis on the cross, Luther harkens back to the model of the first-century church. Paul reminds the church at Corinth, "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:1-2). Such a message is the height of folly and weakness to the world. Yet, it is the straightforward proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ that God uses to save sinners and usher them into the kingdom of his Son.

A pastor of glory calls attention to himself, but a pastor of the cross proclaims the glory of Christ crucified. A pastor of glory speaks with wisdom, power, and persuasion, offering techniques for a better life and a list of do's and don'ts. A pastor of glory in all his various forms preaches a law that damns. "The law says, 'do this,' and it is never done. Grace says, 'believe in this,' and everything is already done." A pastor of the cross proclaims the free grace of Christ and him crucified.

The ministry of the cross like the message of the cross is foolishness to the world. Yet, the cross alone must be our ministry, for only at the cross does God bring life to his people. 

TRINITARIAN UNITY IN THE CHURCH



BY DANNY SLAVICH, PHD
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What thoughts pressed on the heart of Jesus just hours before he was betrayed, arrested, convicted, and crucified? What was he thinking about? What was he praying about? Among other things, he was thinking and praying for and about us. Specifically, his longing for the unity of his people burdened his heart. In John 17, what we often call Jesus’s “High Priestly Prayer,” we hear the Lord’s heart beat out in longing prayer for us, his church:

I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in

you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.
(John 17:20-23)

Jesus could have thought and prayed about anything, yet here we hear him praying for his church, his bride, his beloved people. Praying for unity—“that they may be one.” Praying for unity with a purpose—“that the world may believe”

COR3:6 RESIDENCY AT

COR3:6 offers a two-year residency designed to prepare future church-planters to succeed where the Lord has called them. The program takes a holistic approach to this preparation by offering rigorous training in biblical and theological studies, fostering the spiritual formation and personal development of residents and their spouses, and providing practical ministry experience. The residency takes place at Lakewood Baptist Church in Gainesville, GA and offers a stipend. Residents prepare to plant and to pastor in the context of a local church where they will gain hands-on ministry experience and glean practical support from seasoned planters. Additionally, residents will have the opportunity to earn credit through the residency toward a Master of Divinity at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. For more information, contact John Morrison at jmorrison@lakewoodlife.org.

Seth Harvey

Seth is married to Kali, and they have two children: Graham and Amelia. Seth earned his MDiv from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary through Lakewood’s Gospel Training Center. After his call to Pine Grove Baptist Church in Gillsville, GA, Seth joined the residency to focus on pastoral development and church revitalization.



(17:21) and “know” (17:23) that the Father sent the Son.

This verse so captured my heart that I wrote an entire doctoral dissertation to expound its riches. I wanted to explore the way this verse connects specifically to our churches in this place and time. How does Jesus asking the Father for a united people connect to the church I am called to plant and pastor, Cross United Church? How does it connect to other local churches, like Lakewood Baptist Church or the churches in the COR3:6 Network? What is Jesus asking the Father for in this prayer?

Scripture has convinced me that when Jesus is asking the Father to grant the local church unity in the midst of its diversity and that ethnic unity in diversity is central in his concern. God the Son asks God the Father to grant the (local) church a unity that can only otherwise be explained by the unity of the Trinity itself: “as we are one.” Jesus Christ, God the Son incarnate, asks for unity in the church that is so otherworldly and so inexplicable that the only possible reflection to consider is that of God’s own triune life. This longing for unity aims, then, toward the world in witnessing the work of the Trinity: that the Father sent the Son. The

unity in diversity of the church reflects the triune life of God in order to point the world toward the triune work of God in Christ, the gospel.

And, in light of the rest of Scripture, especially somewhere like Ephesians 2, a crucial (literally, “cross-centered”) aspect of the unity in diversity Jesus desires is ethnic unity in diversity. Ephesians 2 is one of the best chapters in the Bible. Here Paul the apostle explains that God has in Christ reconciled people to himself, vertically, by making them alive, by grace, through faith, apart from works (2:1-10). This vertical reconciliation then becomes the basis for Paul’s explanation that the same gospel that reconciles us to God also reconciles us to one another:


Christ made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death.

(Eph 2:15-16)

Here we see that reconciliation across lines of difference, including and not

limited to ethnic difference, is not a side-benefit of God’s gospel-work. It is built into the purpose of God in the gospel. In the gospel, God is irreversibly intending to bring people to God and to bring people together through the cross of Jesus Christ. Thus, ethnic unity in diversity for the church is not an option but part of the “base model,” from the factory of God’s grace.

Jesus prayed for and God wills for our churches to look like the gathered bride in heaven from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation (Rev 5:9, 7:9). When we ignore our opportunity to pursue multiethnic ministry and membership, we are missing out on a big part of our purpose, and we might even be misrepresenting the life of the triune God himself.

But take heart. Just as our Christian lives are not yet as they should be and God is still working on us, still sanctifying us, so he is still working on our churches. My 18-month old toddler church is not yet what God longs for it to be, but I am confident in his work, that through the cross we will be a part of bringing people to God and bringing people together in a church that looks increasingly like heaven itself. 

LAKEWOOD 2019-20

Brandon Knox

Brandon is married to Jessie, and they have three children: Ava, Graham, and Clara. During his career in the Army, Brandon was called to ministry and began preparing for that call. During his final year at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Brandon began the residency to continue to develop as a pastor and to discern where the Lord would have him serve.



Kip Wright

Kip is married to Rachael, and they have one son, Everett. Kip grew up at Lakewood and moved to Louisville, KY to pursue his MDiv at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Upon graduation, Kip began the residency. He and Rachael are considering opportunities to plant or revitalize a church in Utah.





LETTER FROM THE **COR3:6 MINISTRY TEAM**

This has been a challenging year for many of our church planters as they've had to contend with the new challenges of quarantine, shelter in place, and social distancing. Yet God in his grace, mercy, and his sovereign purpose has faithfully provided for the COR3:6 ministry through the prayers and support of our Lakewood family.

I am reminded of Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 3:1: "Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord will speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you." The phrase "pray for us" literally could be translated "pray around us." It means 'surround us with prayer.' What a great injunction that is—surround me with prayer! It's also present tense: 'continually pray, continually surround me with prayer.'

Our church planters and their families need our intercession. The life of a church planter is difficult. It is solitary in many ways. They often preach to people who don't want to hear what is being proclaimed. They are called to areas where Christ followers are in short supply, and they can only succeed in the power of the Lord. That power is often granted to these ministers in the course of answering the prayers of his people.

People often ask, "I'd like to pray for COR3:6, but what do I need to pray for?" Pray that the Word of God, when preached, may spread rapidly and be honored. Not that it will just land randomly, but that it will penetrate effectively. That was Paul's prayer. He wanted the saving, sanctifying Word to move swiftly like a strong runner over the land without hindrance, making rapid progress. We, too, long for the Word of the Lord to sweep powerfully through the hearts of people, to run as far and wide as it can go, and to be honored by those who hear it. That's our prayer. That everywhere it goes the response would be the way it was with you.

Let us pray to that end as well. Join with our COR3:6 ministry team as we pray constantly, regularly, and faithfully for our church planting partners that the Word of God will go forth rapidly and be honored, believed, and obeyed.

Andrew Beccue, Member
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