

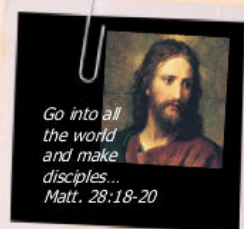
James Spruce
District Superintendent

VOL 65 NUMBER 6

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MARCH 2012

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NOT SECRET



MISSION: IS POSSIBLE!

MEMORANDUM: NAZARENES OF ILLINOIS

Greetings Nazarenes of the Illinois District.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it is to go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that Christ himself commanded. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to him, and he will be with you always even to the end of the age. Though heaven and earth should pass away, this message will never be destroyed.

If you accept this mission, please rendezvous at the following locations for briefing and training. You are responsible to gather other disciples to form your task force and join us there.

RENDEVOUS DATES AND LOCATIONS:

TEAM DAY SOUTH - SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 2012 - 9:00am
SALEM GRACE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
1900 N. BROADWAY, SALEM, IL

Other information is included elsewhere in this correspondence. For questions, please contact your Mission Strategy Director, Mark Copley, at 618-780-8888.

TEAM DAY 2012

World Evangelism Fund (WEF)

What Is the World Evangelism Fund?

The World Evangelism Fund is the cooperative genius of the mission enterprise of the Church of the Nazarene. It is based on the concept that we can do more working together than could ever be done working alone.

Why do we have World Evangelism Fund?

Missions in the Church of the Nazarene is a large enterprise. To accomplish the Great Commission—spreading the gospel and the message of holiness around the world—requires money.

In "faith-based" missions, missionaries must spend valuable time raising financial support. They conduct services, take offerings, receive pledges of support, and then pray the amount raised covers living expenses. Sometimes if the money runs out, missionaries are forced to return home.

In this type of support, churches do not always share equally in the mission work. Larger churches are sometimes visited by more missionaries than they could possibly help, while some smaller churches are overlooked.

The World Evangelism Fund was created to allow missionaries to work more effectively and to encourage all churches to support missions.

The World Evangelism Fund goes directly toward accomplishing the mission of the Church of the Nazarene, to make Christlike disciples in the nations. The World Evangelism Fund is the funding that operates the Church of the Nazarene and its entire mission effort, from the operation of the Global Ministry Center to districts and churches around the world. (Continued on page 7.)



NAZARENE MISSIONS INTERNATIONAL

Bill Brandon, District President
18 Sandstone Ct., Troy, IL. 62294
618-667-0828 E-mail csifsr30@sbcglobal.net
"That the world may know"



Nazarene Missions
INTERNATIONAL

David & Sheila Bailey are hosting their annual **Work & Witness Trip** to the Bradenton, Florida Missionary Village. They will leave Decatur on March 12, 2012 and return to Decatur on March 24, 2012. You can contact David & Sheila at: 11380 Darnell Rd., Mechanicsburg, IL. 62545-7986; ph: 217-364-9533; Dave's cell: 217-620-3485; Sheila's cell: 217-620-3297
Please contact Dave or Sheila for further information. Please pray for safety for this Team.

The following article is from NCN news staff. Paul is a good friend of mine and a traveling companion. Work & Witness can be dangerous. Paul fell from a ladder getting off of a roof. --Bill

Tragedy in the midst of service
Monday, February 13, 2012
Bleck, Haiti
By NCN News Staff

A Work and Witness team from the Fergus Falls, Minnesota, Church of the Nazarene was putting the finishing touches on rebuilding a clinic in Haiti last Saturday morning when tragedy struck.

Paul Dennis, a 52-year-old known for his love of helping others, was hurt in a construction accident and was not able to recover from his injuries. He passed away shortly after the accident despite receiving immediate medical attention from doctors who were part of the team.

Fergus Falls pastor Steven Hoffman was part of the Work and Witness team and was present to counsel team members. The group, who was in Bleck near the Dominican Republic border, conducted outreach projects later that day before returning Sunday to Port-au-Prince as scheduled.

They returned home to Minnesota on Wednesday.

Dennis recently served the Prairie Lakes District as Nazarene Missions International president and deputation coordinator. He was Minnesota's NMI district president for a year before the Dakota and Minnesota districts became the Prairie Lakes District.

He is survived by his wife Lori, who did not make the trip, and two children, Meghan (Hunter) Matt and Jeremy (Beth).

The Dennis family asked that, in lieu of flowers, contributions be made to Work and Witness, Church of the Nazarene. Prayer is requested for the Dennis family and members of the Fergus Falls team.

The plans for the **Spring Deputation Tour** are tentative but as it stands now we will be blessed by having Dave and Marquita Mosher who are presently serving in Malawi. The tentative dates are May 7 - 18, 2012. Deputation Coordinator, Sandy Stickler is presently working out the details. If you have questions, Sandy can be reached at 217-508-7265.

David and Marquita Mosher are global missionaries for the Church of the Nazarene serving in Zambia, Africa since 2008. Previous to this assignment they served in Sao Tome and Principe.

Their assignment in Zambia includes assisting in pastoral leadership training on two districts. David serves as field treasurer and Marquita assists in training children's ministry leaders.

The Mosheres began their missionary service in the Kingdom of Swaziland in 1983. They spent 10 years working at Siteki Nazarene High School. They also assisted at the Nazarene Bible College and were involved in outstation church work on the weekends.

In 1994, the Mosheres were assigned to the northern provinces of Nampula, Niassa and Cabo Delgado in Mozambique. Their ministry involved training lay leaders as well as directing church planting and training of church leaders. The main work there was among the Macua tribe, which was the largest unreached people group in Africa at that time. The Mosheres served in Mozambique until assigned to Sao Tome and Principe in 2001.

David received a B.S. from Southern Nazarene University, in Bethany, Oklahoma. He received an M.A. in missiology from Nazarene Theological Seminary in 1993. Marquita received a B.A. in religion from Southern Nazarene University. David and Marquita were both ordained in Maputo, Mozambique, in 1996.

The Mosheres have two adult children, LeCrecia and David C.

**DISTRICT SUNDAY SCHOOL &
DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL**

JIM GERMAN, District Chairman
4672 White Oak Lane, Decatur, IL 62521
217-422-1458 E-mail: jgerman48@yahoo.com



To the great Illinois District of the Church of the Nazarene.

First, thank you all for your notes of sympathy and assurances of prayer for my family and myself in the passing of my mother. As I have told those I have spoken to in the past couple of days; she isn't tired anymore, but rejoicing with my father and others of her family in heaven.


She is there because someone was faithful to invite a new family in the neighborhood to Sunday School, we went. Then the "church" (you know, the laypeople) followed up, making sure we were welcomed; inviting us back, individually, for the various activities of the church. They even called on us in our home! We had faithful Sunday School teachers (lay people again) teaching us the truth from God's word in Sunday school, NYPS (for me) and children's activities (for my little sister) while the pastor did his part in calling on us and preaching the truth. Over time I came to know the Lord, then my sister, then mom. It would take 20 years of the church and us praying for him before dad came to the Lord, even then he was led in a simple prayer of confession by a faithful layman. After she was saved mom was asked to help with and then teach children's Sunday School and work with the "whirly birds" group.

Today my sister is a pastor's wife (she has also held children's crusades over the years, taught Sunday School and Bible School) and I have worked with teens for the past 39 years. Wow, that almost sounds like what Manual Paragraph 145.2 says the mission of the SDMI is doesn't it? It reads as follows:

"To reach the largest number of unchurched people for Christ and the church, bringing them into the fellowship, teaching the Word of God effectively, and encompassing their salvation; teaching the doctrines of the Christian faith and developing Christlike character, attitudes, and habits; helping to establish Christian homes; preparing believers for membership in the church and equipping them for appropriate Christian ministries."

Ok, so I took some liberties with the "bold" print. The point is, this is what SDMI is supposed to be about. Over the next few months I hope to, along with input from others, let you know of some tools that are available to you and encourage you to fulfill this mission. After all, you never know who the next Sunday school teacher may be, which one will influence your child, pray for you or lead your family member to Christ.

In Christ,
Jim German



**Ashes
to Fire**
YEAR B

**JOURNEY
FROM ASH
WEDNESDAY
TO PENTECOST
WITH YOUR
CHURCH**

DOWNLOAD A
FREE WEEK HERE

<http://www.ashestofire.com/>

TEAM DAY 2012

**IT IS NO
SECRET...**

**Sunday School Report
January 2012**

Church	Sunday Morning	Sunday School
Anna First	119	85
Arcola First	37	26
Arcola Spanish		
Auburn	49	64
Barry		
Beardstown	90	73
Beardstown Liberty Hispanic		
Belleville Emmanuel	48	52
Belleville First		
Belleville Korean	23	1
Benton First		
Bethel Community	61	35
Carbondale New Begin. Com.	42	22
Carlinville First	38	36
Carmi	39	36
Casey	131	86
Centralia	60	51
Champaign First	100	62
Champaign New Day Com.		
Chrisman		
Clinton First	79	61
Collinsville Good Samaritan	148	70
Decatur First	642	455
Decatur Oak Grove	41	26
Decatur Parkway	70	62
Decatur Trinity		
Decatur West Side	77	53
Du Quoin		
Dupo Bluffview Christian Cnt.		
East St. Louis Rush Mem.	4	4
Edgemont Grace		
Fairfield Fountain of Life	12	9
Fairview Heights Parkview	54	48
Flora	179	116
Georgetown	50	44
Glenview	79	50
Godfrey	41	37
Granite City CTM		
Griggsville		

Church	Sunday Morning	Sunday School
Harrisburg Oasis Community		
Highland		
Jerseyville		
Laclede		
Lincoln First	39	24
Mahomet	43	30
Mansfield Community	28	
Marion First	50	31
Mattoon East Side	93	92
Mattoon Real Life Com.	34	15
Monticello	23	21
Mount Carmel	20	8
Mount Erie	32	21
Mount Sterling	25	18
Mount Vernon Faith	30	24
Murphysboro	65	37
Nebo	54	27
Oakwood	6	
Ogden	71	52
Olivet	60	40
Olney	64	49
Pana First		
Paris First	62	39
Pittsfield	258	166
Quincy Emmanuel		
Rantoul	54	37
Roxana	135	145
Royalton First	87	83
Salem Grace	446	249
Shelbyville		
Sherman	75	67
Sparta		
Springfield First	241	140
Springfield Trinity	44	32
Taylorville First		
Tuscola	41	8
Urbana Lighthouse	68	64
Vandalia		
Virden		
West Union		
Total	4,530	3,157



NAZARENE YOUTH INTERNATIONAL

Jay Bush, District President
53 Partridge, Chatham, IL 62629
Phone: Church: 217-529-6771; Home: 217-483-2480
E-mail: jayrbush@aol.com



All Adult Youth Sponsors will now be required to complete a background check in order to participate in any district-wide activity.

http://www.newweb2011.illinoisnaz.org/html/district_screening.html

Thank you!!

UPCOMING DATES:

DISTRICT CELEBRATE LIFE: MARCH 23-24 (ROXANA)

http://www.newweb2011.illinoisnaz.org/html/nyi_events.html

REGIONAL CELEBRATE LIFE: MAY 17-19 (ONU)

NOTE: CAMP DATES:

June 25-29
(Camp Table Rock)

BUDGET REPORT JANUARY 31, 2012

Church Name	District	Olivet	NMI	SDMI	NYI	WEF	P & B
Anna First	\$6,892.16	\$3,636.57	\$613.94	\$311.49	\$401.06	\$6,784.06	\$2,909.26
Arcola First	\$1,894.25	\$726.07	\$168.73	\$85.60	\$110.22	\$2,099.00	\$737.47
Arcola Spanish	\$675.34	\$373.20	\$60.15	\$30.52	\$39.29	\$1,180.50	\$178.00
Auburn	\$2,264.20	\$1,000.00	\$201.70	\$102.34	\$131.76	\$2,645.00	\$950.00
Barry	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Beardstown	\$5,873.33	\$2,665.46	\$523.19	\$265.48	\$341.79	\$6,917.26	\$2,401.79
Beardstown Liberty Hispanic	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Belleville Emmanuel	\$763.22	\$192.23	\$67.99	\$34.50	\$44.42	\$1,622.71	\$621.31
Belleville First	\$6,984.58	\$1,886.80	\$622.16	\$315.66	\$406.44	\$5,000.00	\$4,019.41
Belleville Korean	\$2,478.06	\$300.00	\$220.75	\$112.00	\$144.19	\$700.00	\$650.00
Benton	\$580.56	\$306.08	\$51.71	\$26.24	\$33.78	\$2,343.92	\$1,103.18
Bethel	\$3,490.25	\$1,404.00	\$310.90	\$157.74	\$203.11	\$5,212.00	\$1,385.00
Bluff View Christian Center	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Carbondale New Beginnings	\$940.36	\$0.00	\$83.77	\$42.50	\$54.72	\$1,014.64	\$377.70
Carlville First	\$1,531.66	\$518.94	\$136.43	\$69.23	\$89.14	\$950.67	\$622.24
Carmi	\$686.82	\$514.00	\$61.17	\$31.04	\$39.97	\$1,805.00	\$638.00
Casey	\$8,772.24	\$4,148.35	\$781.40	\$396.45	\$510.47	\$15,121.00	\$3,868.55
Centralia	\$2,516.30	\$1,047.00	\$224.14	\$113.73	\$146.44	\$2,921.00	\$1,070.00
Champaign First	\$4,621.07	\$2,151.02	\$411.63	\$208.84	\$268.92	\$5,359.93	\$1,949.09
Champaign New Day	\$58.69	\$37.00	\$5.23	\$2.66	\$3.42	\$0.00	\$0.00
Chrisman	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Clinton First	\$5,618.62	\$2,550.00	\$500.49	\$253.93	\$326.96	\$7,120.00	\$2,630.00
Collinsville Good Samaritan	\$1,336.29	\$705.08	\$119.03	\$60.40	\$77.76	\$1,792.91	\$564.06
Decatur First	\$23,332.37	\$10,784.45	\$2,078.39	\$1,054.48	\$1,357.76	\$36,606.48	\$10,298.58
Decatur Oak Grove	\$1,429.96	\$632.00	\$127.38	\$64.62	\$83.22	\$1,778.00	\$649.00
Decatur Parkway	\$6,199.81	\$2,736.81	\$552.27	\$280.18	\$360.80	\$7,415.03	\$2,562.17
Decatur Trinity	\$2,163.90	\$1,136.54	\$192.77	\$97.80	\$125.93	\$2,500.39	\$909.23
Decatur West Side	\$4,584.80	\$3,723.71	\$408.41	\$207.21	\$266.81	\$5,337.21	\$1,955.11
Du Quoin	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$300.00	\$0.00
East St. Louis Rush Mem.	\$297.71	\$160.00	\$26.54	\$13.47	\$17.33	\$345.00	\$138.00
Edgemont Grace	\$1,137.44	\$0.00	\$101.33	\$51.40	\$66.19	\$734.92	\$269.63
Fairfield Fountain of Life	\$335.44	\$0.00	\$29.88	\$15.16	\$19.52	\$1,655.04	\$728.10
Fairview Heights Parkview	\$2,394.28	\$879.73	\$213.27	\$108.19	\$139.31	\$2,922.00	\$1,396.50
Flora	\$5,038.50	\$2,628.93	\$448.82	\$227.72	\$293.20	\$9,223.46	\$2,307.48
Georgetown	\$5,534.74	\$600.00	\$493.02	\$250.14	\$322.08	\$6,500.00	\$2,342.69
Glenview	\$4,040.61	\$1,754.95	\$359.92	\$182.61	\$235.13	\$5,374.00	\$1,575.14
Godfrey	\$757.90	\$160.41	\$67.52	\$34.26	\$44.10	\$502.37	\$323.76
Granite City CTM	\$45.46	\$25.00	\$4.05	\$2.05	\$2.64	\$52.14	\$20.00
Griggsville	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
Harrisburg Oasis Community	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Highland	\$214.14	\$0.00	\$19.09	\$9.70	\$12.47	\$0.00	\$0.00
Jerseyville	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$230.66	\$0.00
Laclede	\$542.38	\$256.16	\$48.31	\$24.52	\$31.56	\$951.06	\$238.59
Lincoln	\$2,306.14	\$1,150.00	\$205.42	\$104.24	\$134.20	\$2,650.00	\$970.00
Mahomet	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Mansfield Community	\$2,493.99	\$1,313.00	\$222.16	\$112.71	\$145.14	\$2,860.00	\$1,051.00
Marion First	\$508.17	\$455.00	\$45.28	\$22.98	\$29.57	\$1,285.58	\$350.00
Marshall	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Mattoon East Side	\$3,832.62	\$1,724.05	\$341.40	\$173.21	\$223.02	\$5,564.39	\$1,494.60
Mattoon Real Life Community	\$2,287.98	\$1,069.89	\$203.80	\$103.40	\$133.14	\$3,005.03	\$1,099.91
Monticello	\$1,816.79	\$1,068.59	\$161.84	\$82.10	\$105.73	\$2,553.00	\$546.00
Mount Carmel	\$1,278.02	\$0.00	\$113.84	\$57.76	\$74.35	\$638.69	\$549.34
Mount Erie	\$1,488.18	\$635.47	\$132.56	\$67.26	\$86.61	\$1,598.49	\$585.44
Mount Sterling	\$368.56	\$0.00	\$32.83	\$16.66	\$21.45	\$0.00	\$0.00
Mount Vernon	\$653.28	\$50.00	\$58.19	\$29.52	\$38.01	\$1,120.00	\$700.00
Murphysboro	\$3,374.36	\$0.00	\$300.61	\$152.53	\$196.37	\$3,030.00	\$1,543.88
Nebo	\$2,015.55	\$804.34	\$179.54	\$91.09	\$117.28	\$2,319.46	\$848.27
Oakwood	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10.00	\$0.00
Ogden	\$3,536.29	\$2,197.39	\$315.00	\$159.81	\$205.78	\$4,194.87	\$1,535.31
Olivet	\$3,034.05	\$835.00	\$270.27	\$137.12	\$176.56	\$2,000.00	\$1,205.00
Olney	\$3,291.90	\$1,282.86	\$293.22	\$148.76	\$191.53	\$2,720.37	\$1,159.29
Pana First	\$1,179.80	\$1,108.31	\$105.09	\$53.32	\$68.65	\$2,499.22	\$908.83
Paris First	\$1,951.00	\$930.52	\$173.80	\$88.18	\$113.53	\$3,995.89	\$943.86
Pittsfield	\$13,229.74	\$6,980.81	\$1,178.47	\$597.94	\$769.90	\$15,921.05	\$5,584.45
Quincy Emmanuel	\$3,069.61	\$447.86	\$273.43	\$138.73	\$178.63	\$3,636.55	\$875.52
Rantoul	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,212.00	\$222.23
Roxana	\$12,225.03	\$5,614.18	\$1,088.98	\$552.51	\$711.40	\$14,043.23	\$5,120.94
Royalton First	\$2,498.18	\$898.00	\$222.53	\$112.91	\$145.38	\$3,250.00	\$718.00
Salem Grace	\$19,861.94	\$10,479.93	\$1,769.23	\$897.66	\$1,155.81	\$23,055.85	\$8,397.96
Shelbyville	\$9,809.31	\$3,526.47	\$873.78	\$443.33	\$570.83	\$10,634.63	\$3,902.96
Sherman	\$4,411.89	\$1,928.96	\$393.00	\$199.41	\$256.73	\$4,734.30	\$1,722.66
Sparta	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Springfield First	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$15,177.00	\$5,922.10
Springfield Trinity	\$1,598.93	\$1,025.12	\$142.44	\$72.27	\$93.04	\$2,822.00	\$1,400.27
Taylorville First	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Tuscola	\$1,683.72	\$500.00	\$149.99	\$76.09	\$97.97	\$2,910.00	\$800.00
Urbana Lighthouse	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$265.41	\$98.64
Vandalia	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Virden	\$350.26	\$44.43	\$31.20	\$15.83	\$20.38	\$372.75	\$44.43
West Union	\$1,137.13	\$0.00	\$101.30	\$51.40	\$66.17	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$221,319.86	\$95,710.67	\$19,714.68	\$10,002.59	\$12,879.07	\$293,597.12	\$102,689.93

CHURCH NEWS

The Board of Ministerial Credentials will meet May 11, 2012. If you are seeking a District Minister's License or Ordination, you need to contact Rev. Doug Haynes, revdehaynes@sbcglobal.net or 618-462-4361.



(Continued from page one.)

How does the World Evangelism Fund work?

Full-time missionaries (excluding volunteers) in the Church of the Nazarene receive a monthly paycheck based on a standard amount plus a cost-of-living adjustment.

Missionaries also receive medical insurance (see [Missionary Health Care](#)) a pension provision, and other items (such as housing and travel costs).

The World Evangelism Fund comes from the generosity of Nazarenes around the world. Each church is challenged to contribute an assigned apportionment, but many, seeing the effectiveness of the world mission enterprise, choose to overpay.

How is the World Evangelism Fund collected?

Traditionally, it has been through two large offerings a year—the [Thanksgiving](#) and [Easter](#) offerings. Some churches continue to successfully raise their entire fund this way.

[Faith Promise](#) is a plan based on mission giving at systematic intervals rather than just twice a year. Through Faith Promise, people pray about the amount they should give for missions (over and above their tithe). The amount is often given weekly, biweekly, or monthly. Over time, churches find they raise their mission support and often go over their goal through this giving plan.

The Benefits of the World Evangelism Fund

Missionaries—They receive a regular paycheck, freeing them from the added worry of raising finances. Missionaries still write letters and conduct deputation services to inform people of happenings in their field of service; however, such activities do not consume a large portion of their time on the mission field.

Churches—Regardless of size, each church has the opportunity to take part in the global mission endeavor. Also, just as individuals are blessed by God when they commit a portion of their resources for His kingdom, so churches are blessed when they allocate funds to help reach the lost around the world.

What is a Church of Excellence?

A Church of Excellence is a church that gives at least 5.7% or \$1,500 above 5.5% of current income for the World Evangelism Fund.

In an effort to encourage further giving to World Evangelism Fund, the Board of General Superintendents, at the suggestion of the General NMI Council, approved that "All moneys overpaid by the local church toward the World Evangelism Fund are used to explore and enter new world areas." (Handbook and Constitution)



Saying "YES" for Lent

"Whatever God has promised gets stamped with the Yes of Jesus. In him, this is what we preach and pray, the great Amen, God's Yes and our Yes together, gloriously evident." -- 2 Corinthians 1:20 TM

What are you "giving up" for Lent? Last Wednesday, Christians around the world began the Lenten season, many choosing to prepare their hearts during this season leading to Good Friday by fasting, or denying themselves some nutrition or pleasure. Some refrain from choice meats (have you noticed all the "fish sandwich" commercials recently?), but sodas, or chocolates are often forsaken as well. I've done some of this myself over the years -- the worst being giving up coffee last year -- and God has always blessed. Fasting for long periods of time, and seeking God in prayer, are always good things if done for the right reasons, and in faith.

But this year, God has given me a new "fast" to pursue under his care. This year, during Lent, I'm giving up "control". That is, my "right" to decide what invitations and opportunities to accept or decline. I'm committing myself to say "Yes" beforehand to all such offers.

Why am I doing this?

1. **Too often I have used favoritism in making these decisions.** *Jesus said, "If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that." (Matthew 5:46-47)* This season, I want to say yes not only to my "friends," but those who have the potential to become friends. And that means everyone.
2. **I want to be more like Jesus.** Only moments after calling Matthew, a notorious tax collector, to follow him, Jesus accepted an invitation to dine with him and his friends at his place. Of course, tax collectors and sinners have friends who are tax collectors and sinners, and Jesus said "yes" to their fellowship. I want to experience fellowship outside of my normal Christian circles, and "holy huddles." Perhaps this commitment will make those opportunities possible.
3. **I want to stretch and grow.** Spiritual growth does not come without discomfort. Lenten fasting is one example of this. In this kind of "reverse fast," I want to, by surrendering control, open myself up to uncomfortable situations where I must lean all the more heavily on Christ, and the comforter himself -- the Holy Spirit.
4. **I'm in a new situation and I need to make new friends.** My wife and I just moved to Salem, Illinois where we are now living and attending Grace Church. We are already loving and being loved by the congregation here, but we know most only "from a distance." We want to get beyond the handshake in the lobby, and hear their stories, and maybe share a few of ours. By saying yes beforehand, I won't miss any invitation to do so because I'm tempted to say I'm too busy, or too tired.
5. **I'm not "too busy."** This conviction came to me a few years ago, when I realized that saying this as an excuse to refuse invitations means, *"There are things I have to do that are more important to me than you are."* God also revealed to me the pride that lies behind saying I'm "too busy." Busyness has become a "status symbol" indicating "importance" in our society. One of the most caring things we can say to someone is *"Yes, I have time for you. I am not too busy to listen."*

Some questions you may be asking:

Will I say yes to everything? Of course not. I will not say yes to anything sinful, or anything that the Lord's leading will not allow of me. I'm also reserving the right to say no to people (mostly my Christian friends) who have resolved to "put me to the test" with silly requests. I'm surrendering my will to Christ and his Lordship, not trying to recreate the Jim Carrey movie with my life.

What do I hope to accomplish? Not much really, certainly nothing heroic or praiseworthy. What happens here is also not up to me. I just want to welcome everyday opportunities to know, love, and serve others, as Christ leads. I would love for others to try this with me. I've started a Facebook page where we can share our experiences. Go to: **"Saying 'Yes' for Lent"** on Facebook if you'd like to join me. I'll be posting there regularly.

Perhaps your church might want to enter into this season together with a new openness to God's sovereignty, to his loving leadership, and to your neighbors. Imagine the possibilities. As, in Christ, God has offered us his "Divine Yes," let us also offer ours to others.

Let your "Yes" be "Yes,"

Mark Copley

Mission Strategy Director