

Rural Church Development June 2022 Newsletter



The optimal temperature for pulling a pork butt off the smoker is right around 203 degrees Fahrenheit. Knowing exactly when the luscious and juicy slab will reach that temperature is somewhat unpredictable. Many an aspiring pitmaster (pitminor?) experiences what seasoned chefs term “the stall” somewhere around the 160-180 mark. In a panic, the pitminor will either crank up the heat or pull the butt off the smoker because the meat temp says it’s sufficiently past the trichinosis danger. If they had waited out the stall and hit the targeted 203, the succulent meat would fall apart in delicious morsels and receive high praise from the voracious audience. Didn’t wait? Polite nods and quiet chewing will occur around the table.

The stall seems like a pretty good description of what I feel like in ministry about now. We hit the ground running, made initial contacts, and created somewhat of a routine for building relationships. It’s been five months since we landed. The Lord has provided paths to relationships I never could have imagined. Yet, now it feels like a waiting game as we grow those relationships, figure out where we need to invest more deeply, and wisely determine how and when to gather people together. Like the pitminor, I’m wanting to strike too soon even though I knew going into this gig that I would probably spend my first year just getting to know people. We have to remind ourselves that it’s only been five months.

I’m finding that the stall is vastly important. It’s caused me to reflect on where I have invested my time and energy and to

delete some places that have felt unfruitful. It has pushed me into places I would not have considered . . . like hanging out at a laundromat rather than the Christian-infiltrated coffee shop or brewery. It's made me take chances at an awkward open mic night in an awkward town squeaking out banjo tunes. It's pressed me into relationships I never would have pursued otherwise. The stall has also made us more prayerful as we see our inadequacy for this ministry.

We'll press on anticipating that God is at work even when it feels like a stall. We're learning that small town church planting is like a good pink smoke ring; to achieve it, ministry needs to be low and slow. Building relationships, gathering people together, and resourcing them needs to be thoughtful and wise. I'll let you know when the ministry hits 203 . . . though I have a suspicion that'll be at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Pelton Updates

Holly is working at a local florist doing beautiful work (of course) and getting to know people in the community. Last weekend she volunteered at an arts festival in downtown Blue Ridge. She has hosted neighbors and new friends into our home on several occasions.

Miller (our oldest) lives in Tuscaloosa and is a fantastic barber at Greasy Hands Barbershop. He recently acquired a pup, Ranger, of the same breed as our Mavis. Now he'll be dealing with hair at work and the house.

Maggie is currently in Beluga, Alaska. She graduated from US of C and is doing field work on a shorebird; the Hudsonian godwit. Beginning August 1, she will be

on staff at First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC ministering to female college students.

Miles is in an intensive summer semester at Auburn in Product Design. The summer semester determines whether he can get in to the program. He seems to love it and is thriving at Auburn.

Prayer Requests

Please continue to pray for the relationships we are building and have yet to build. Every person has great worth. Pray that we will continue to know that truth and listen closely to their deep wounds and needs.

Please pray for several families in one of our target communities who are praying toward the potential of gathering together in study and worship.

Please pray for Will Davis as he begins his seminary classes. Pray for life balance as he juggles family, work, the church he pastors, and classes. Pray the church sees the benefit of his labors and is blessed by it.

We love you all dearly and appreciate, so much, your friendship and support.

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Kindest Regards,

Corey Pelton

www.ruralchurchdevelopment.com