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Apr 14

BALLHOOTIN



It's a new term to me. A farmer was explaining to me that ballhootin is the local term used for a tractor skidding uncontrollably down a slick, wet hill. The driver can do nothing but hope it settles at the bottom with no consequence. In many ways our ministry relationships feel like we're ballhootin.

We've gotten to know Lonz and Bessie. We've shared meals, kayaked together, and laughed loudly. We've had good conversations. Holly was able to share the good news of Jesus kindness and rescue with Bessie. She's hesitant. That's O.K. Where will those conversations lead us? We're not in control.

Zack and Jon own a brewery. I go there once a week. It's a part of my parish. It's taken a year but recently they've asked for me to play banjo and I can now purchase chips, which means, I'm considered a local (by them) and can get my beer cheaper. Believe it or not, that's huge progress. Zack recently opened up to me and told me he is not a Christian but he and his wife met because her parents were missionaries to the country from which he comes. That conversation is ongoing.

Clay is a local 6'6" three hundred pound contractor. His father left when he was young. Further, he was bullied for his size through his years of school and he is still haunted by it today. He wants to meet every week to talk. Where will this land?

Dear friends,

I love giving updates about Rural Church Development. I look out at my weeks and months before me not knowing how the Lord will work through what seem like silly and feeble efforts. I mean . . . building relationships with people by just being with them consistently and listening? How will that *produce* anything? How will Christ build and equip His Church *that* way? I look back on my weeks and months and find my mouth wide open in astonishment. Here is the latest:

Cartecay Gathering

Since Sunday, February 5, a sweet group of about 30 people have been gathering in Ellijay, GA at a community playhouse right off the downtown square. We have a steering team of five couples that are currently working through developing a mission statement and core values. It has been a delight to work with them, hear their dreams of a healthy church, and worship with them every Sunday. Yes, I am back to preaching every week until we find a church planter for this work. I haven't minded it in the least! This is our church home and will continue to be.



Interns?

Many of you know about Will Davis. He is the young, local, multi-vocational Baptist pastor who is an intern with our presbytery and taking online seminary classes. As I am typing this, a church is meeting to call him as their pastor. He has had several churches in the area interested in him as their pastor (See the story [HERE](#)). His preaching and pastoring abilities have increased tremendously as he has started seminary and we have met weekly together. Please pray for Will as he grows in his understanding of his mountain Baptist culture and how best to minister while managing one thousand homes with his waste management business.

Besides Will, there are three more young men who are interested in pursuing some form of ministry. Two of these men grew up locally. One is supporting his family of five on an assistant 3rd grade teacher salary. The other is a newlywed trying to establish his own handyman service after the family business closed. The third grew up outside of Atlanta and is currently supporting his own family of five as a manager of a toy store. We meet regularly to pray, learn, and grow together. Please pray for these young men as they discern a potential call to ministry.



Rural Church Institute

Rural places often get the least of resources. That includes theological and practical. Rural Church Institute is a certificate program that I am developing to help men and women in the area to grow in their understanding of the Bible and practice. There is a real disconnect between what it means to know Jesus and how to live out the Christian life in a healthy and winsome manner. In May we will begin our first ten-week course. The first course is “How the Gospel Changes People.” Please pray that this course will be fruitful and be a resource for coming alongside the community.



Upon finishing the ten-week course, each participant will receive a certificate. They will then have the opportunity to take the next course.

Scaling the ministry

Can, or should, what we are doing here be duplicated elsewhere? I have had several conversations with folks from around the country about how this model of ministry could potentially help them in their rural contexts. This is a unique place in which I minister, but I do believe there are some principles that can be encouraged in other ministry areas. Please pray for laborers for the harvest willing to think and pray outside our typical methodologies in small town and rural places and for the conversations that seem to be growing.

I sure could use your help

To further ministry, I need to raise a sufficient amount of funds to meet my yearly budget. That budget includes my salary and programming expenses. When I began the ministry, the target number was \$175,000/year. It still is. In the year and a half that I have been raising funds, I have reached a total of 156,000. Thankfully, I have been under budget in spending. As ministry needs increase, I'll need to be financially more consistent. If you are not a financial partner yet, would you consider it? I invite you to read through my other stories and pray toward the potential of partnering with what the Lord is doing through Rural Church Development.

Whether you support the work or not, you are a valued friend. Your interest in the ministry is a strong encouragement and continues to lift my spirits and push me to be a better pastor. Thank you!

DONATE

The Pelton's



We are all growing in the respective places where the Lord has planted us. Miller continues to spruce up Tuscaloosa as he sends out men into the community with renewed confidence. His barbering and gift of gab has provided him with a tremendous place to build relationships and minister the gospel of Jesus.

Coffee conversations are blossoming into kingdom fruitfulness as Maggie meets with University of South Carolina students. The staff of First Presbyterian in Columbia, SC are seeing growing conversions and participation as they seek to love college students. Scientific illustration is still an interest that intrigues her. Maggie frequently takes the opportunity to exercise this gift and further her interest.

Lamps, computer mouses (mice?), kayaks, and water filters have never looked so fresh as Miles is about to begin his junior year in the Auburn product design program. This summer he will be keeping Alpine Camp boys afloat as waterfront staff and counselor.

Holly takes on jobs like a dog rescuer takes on fleas. She works part time at two different design stores in downtown Blue Ridge. She is tutoring children virtually who are struggling with learning disabilities. The tutoring agency has also employed her to help with marketing organization. Lastly (I think), Greenville, SC is home to two houses for which she is staging and flipping (virtually).

Me? I sit on the porch swing and play banjo.

Thanks for keeping up with us, y'all!

MISSION VALUES >

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