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**RURAL CHURCH
DEVELOPMENT**
SOUTHERN APPALACHIA



Thank you for praying for us and loving us well. If you are not, would you consider partnering with us financially? This ministry is dependent on your generosity as the Lord is at work through you to Southern Appalachia.

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I am learning that church planting is very experimental and investigative. Here are a few discoveries that I am growing to appreciate more and more as the Lord is actively growing me in His grace.

Questions are Important

Being inquisitive is a fantastic ministry gift that anybody can learn to utilize. It not only begins to break down barriers but it can also make us wiser and more compassionate people.

I am discovering that many people do not ask meaningful questions but are starving to be heard. I will sit in a social space, ask a variety questions to the people around me, and often no one will ask me anything.

I'm asking myself how to ask good questions. This week can I ask a stranger a simple open-ended question (one that cannot produce a yes/no answer) and see where it leads?

Here are some samples:

What is something on your bucket list?

What is something that has been at the forefront of your mind lately?

What would your perfect day look like?

Where is a place you have visited that you would never want to return to?

What musical artist did you listen to the most in high school?

If you won the lottery, what would be your very first purchase?

An easy follow-up statement to any of these could be. "Tell me more about that."

I am trying to learn to be a better question asker and the results are really astonishing. When people know that you care enough to get to know them, over time it builds relationship. In fact, it accelerates relationship.

Please be in prayer as we learn to ask good questions, develop relationships, and have opportunity to share the rescue story of Jesus.

Food is Powerful



click on pic for a very brief video (sorry you can't smell it!)

Tennessee Valley Presbytery received funds to help its church planters. They approved the purchase of a smoker for Rural Church Development through these funds. The purpose is twofold: to raise funds for a local non-profit I have started to serve these mountain counties in tangible ways; and to build and deepen relationships. Soon after I lugged it up from Macon, Georgia I bought 14 whole chickens to try it out and to season it. I set it up in my driveway, and texted friends, acquaintances, and neighbors. "Friday at 5:00 you can come pick up a chicken." It cost me \$100.00 and five hours tending the smoker. The benefit was much more than I ever expected. A couple who was visiting our church in Ellijay stopped by. While they were there, they met one of our neighbors. Will Davis, our young pastor friend also stopped in and met them. Another neighbor we had not met walked by with his dogs. "Do you want a chicken?" The next week we went to dinner together.

Currently, I am taking orders for Easter hams as a fundraiser. The majority of the advertising has been on a local Facebook page. I have communicated with them over Messenger. When they pick up the hams Easter weekend, I will have the opportunity to meet them face to face . . . and ask them questions.

The funds raised will go to help support a 13 year old dirt track driver. As I get to know him, his family, and experience the adrenaline rush at our local track, I've got a LOT of questions to ask.

Please pray that the Lord would use hospitality to build relationships in our communities.



New Things are Worth Trying

I am not a farmer. I have always wanted to be, but I am not. I am now a card-tote'n board member for Fannin County Young Farmers. It started with Holly and I asking questions of a couple at a pizza joint.

The husband works at a tractor dealership and the wife was a dietary specialist for the area high schools. They both are very active in Future Farmers of America (FFA) with their children. The next morning they invited us to the local arena to watch kids show goats and pigs. We went.

This winter Rural Church Development helped a high schooler afford his hog by purchasing half of it. Meet Graphite. Graphite is no longer with us (sort of). The kids learn a lot about animal husbandry and the food service.



Through this involvement I was asked to do a “Blessing of the Farms” at the largest orchard in North Georgia. Before you picture me wearing druid garb and donning a white dove on my shoulder while spreading fairy dust on the land, know that it was a great privilege and opportunity to tell the story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation . . . the good news of Jesus restoring all things. Plus, I got to eat a fried pie with a state representative.

Please pray that we would never lose the desire to be inquisitive and try new things for the sake of the gospel.

Community Adoption is Possible



As I work with Tennessee Valley Presbytery as a resource for other small town ministry opportunities, we have a goal to find five PCA churches in our presbytery willing to begin praying for a neighboring small town. Along with prayer, we are asking those churches to seek out someone from their congregation that they can incentivize to visit that small town at least once per week. As an encouragement, I will coach their found representative toward places to meet people and ways to build relationships. We are praying for the potential of new church planting efforts in these towns. Would you join us in praying?

In Other News

Cartecay Gathering, our church body in Ellijay, GA, has been meeting for worship for just over a year. As of January, we are now a Mission Church in the Presbyterian Church in America. That is good news indeed!

We are seeing more visitors as our core group has consistently met together. Two weeks ago we held our first new members class with 24 participants.

Would you consider praying for Cartecay Gathering? An immediate goal is to find a pastor who will love and minister well to these dear people. Leadership training is also of vital importance to becoming a fully organized church with qualified officers.



Two weeks ago I had the privilege of marrying Miller, our oldest, to Emma Knight. You *know* there were tears shed. It was a fun, beautiful, and joyful weekend in Corinth, MS with family and friends. We are so, so proud of them as they live and work together in Tuscaloosa. He is barbering and she will be a dentist come May.

Prayers for their new marriage together would be much appreciated!





My beautiful bride is tutoring several children with learning disabilities. She has enjoyed having her first in-person and local student while she continues online with others. Please pray as she helps these children develop.

Holly has enjoyed a local book club, work friends (she works part time at a local design store), and her new yoga class where she gets to decompress. Probably on account of me.

We were able to take a few days away and spent time in St. Augustine together. What a fantastic city and the breather we needed.

Please pray for our continued sustenance in the grace of Jesus.



Friends, you are so appreciated. We love you and miss you.



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