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A Publication of Church Supplies & Services | November 2018



Focus

Feature Article by
Hayley Sinclair
page 17



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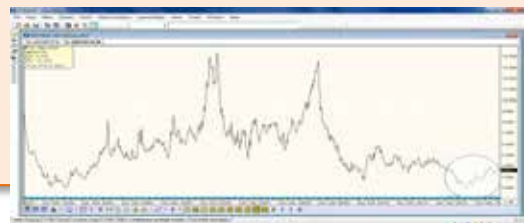
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We manage the majority of the facilities in aggregated group rates. When an electric provider sees us pricing a large load, made up of individual churches, schools and non-profits, their rates drop. Then TES starts working to create a "Bidding War" among the providers to push for a lower rate!



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Keep your contact information current. The lifeline of communication to our members is through correct contact information, i.e. key contact names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Send all updates to patti@churchco-op.org. Help us keep you informed of the latest in events and savings from our vendors.

Editor's Note: For submitting articles, artwork or comments about this publication, please contact: Patti Malott at 832.478.5131 | patti@churchco-op.org

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From the Director

While I enjoy deer hunting with a bow or rifle, my retired police officer husband prefers to hunt with a camera. Using the proper lens and lens filter enables him to capture some amazing pictures of deer and wildlife. It takes practice and patience to bring his subjects into focus to produce a crystal-clear image. He especially likes to capture pictures where the subject is sharply focused and the surroundings are somewhat blurred so that the attention of others who view his photos will also be drawn to the subjects intended.

Focus is required in every aspect of our lives, not just in hobbies, isn't it? At the very core of our being, we decide where our focus will be and we live with the results of those choices of concentration. A good example of this can be found in the lead article of this issue of *CO+OP* magazine.

Hayley Sinclair shares the experience of how the homegoing of her earthly father shifted her focus in life to her heavenly father. I remember her father well, because he and I had served on the same church staff when Hayley was just a little girl. Losing a father or loved one at any age is hard. Losing a father at ten requires a huge shift in thinking, but because her heart was right, she was able to relocate her focus. Reading what she wrote is a reminder to me of the importance of keeping our focus on the right thing. You can find her article on page 17.

You will find many articles in this issue written with "focus" in mind. Vonna Laue and Michael Martin write about Ministry-Focused Finances on page 13. Other articles include focusing on facilities, risk management, technology, service, and employee benefits.

Don't miss our two newest vendors, Mechdyne (page 41) and APS Building Services (page 40). Both organizations have already been helping churches save ministry dollars while meeting their needs.

On page 38 you will find something to talk about among your staff and friends as you read about the construction of the new Youth Development Center in Houston, where the focus is on helping children learn to read. Your *CO+OP* Vendor PlanNorth is part of that project.

Grab a cup of your favorite drink, put your feet up, and shift your focus to this issue of *CO+OP* magazine. I think you will be encouraged. Then share the magazine with a friend.

Together We Focus!

Patti Malott
Executive Director



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The CO+OP connects churches, schools and nonprofit organizations with reputable vendors and resources to save time and money on products, services and education.

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- Helping cultivate mutually beneficial relationships between vendors and members
- Providing excellent networking experiences
- Providing educational opportunities at a reduced rate through our annual Texas Ministry ConferenceSM using national and local relevant speakers
- Meeting the needs of others through our nonprofit organization

Learn more about the CO+OP at www.churchco-op.org or call **832.478.5131**.



Texas Ministry ConferenceSM

www.TexasMinistryConference.org

The purpose of the Texas Ministry ConferenceSM is to provide tools and resources for those who serve in churches, schools and nonprofit organizations. This includes people in leadership who drive the vision and those who support them such as employees; committee, lay, council, and session members; elders and volunteers.

We do this at our annual conference by offering affordable training, educational workshops, quality vendors and sponsors, networking, fellowship and encouragement.

The Texas Ministry ConferenceSM is held the third Thursday of each February.

Learn more about how you can benefit from attending this conference at www.TexasMinistryConference.org or calling **832.478.5131**.

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benefitbits&bites

by Kim Whaley

Focusing on Employee Benefits

What runs through your mind when you think of employee benefits? Are you like most employers and your eyes roll into the back of your head? Is the thought of a root canal preferable to an insurance meeting? If so, you are not alone. The most common thing I hear when I sit down with an employer for their initial meeting is how much they HATE insurance meetings.

My focus is to help you with your focus on employee benefits and make it painless. The CO+OP has a trio of agents available to meet your needs in distinctly different ways.

As a benefit specialist, my goal is to present you with affordable options (yes, it is possible) and to strategize with you to make sure we are meeting your budget and the needs of the employee. I want to present options to you in a clear, concise, easy-to-understand format and leave you with information to assist you in your decision-making process.

There are ways to offer great benefits for dental, vision, life insurance and disability coverage with quality carriers such as Guardian, MetLife, Humana, Blue Cross and many others, but at no cost to you as an employer. Health insurance does require employer contributions, but often multiple plans with varying deductibles can be offered, allowing you to set and keep a budget and the employee to choose what is best for their personal situation. I often pair a high-deductible health plan with a Health Savings Account (HSA) and if the savings are great enough, I can consider contributing some of that savings into the employee's bank account. I have a long-time client in Sugar Land and the first time we implemented this concept, we saved over \$40,000 a year in insurance premiums. With only 11 employees on the plan, the church was able to contribute \$1,000 into each employee's HSA to help offset initial claims such as prescriptions and office visits. Saving \$40,000 a year on premium and then spending \$11,000 a year to make the employee whole...the math made this one a win-win.

Dave Adams partners with me on many of my church clients by setting up pre-tax Section 125 programs. This saves the employees money, as they are taxed after the benefit payroll deductions are made, and it saves you money as an employer because your matching on the withholding is also reduced. If we look at higher deductibles to reduce the monthly premium, Dave can also assist you in implementing Health Reimbursement

Accounts as a way to offset the higher deductible and often keeping the employee's financial risk the same as it was on a lower deductible plan. Another very popular concept is the Flexible Spending Account, which allows employees to contribute money on a pre-tax basis into a savings account to use for anticipated medical, dental, vision and daycare expenses.

Churches with under 50 employees on payroll are on ACA community rated plans. This means the employee's health conditions do not count against you, but the age of the employee does. Michelle Feagin with Health Insurance Solutions is the best in the industry for consulting on Medicare Supplements and guidance through the Medicare process once an employee reaches age 65. Often, it is determined the plans and premiums for a Medicare supplement are much more favorable to the employee than the plan and premium on the group health plan. And if Michelle determines your existing coverage is best for the employee, she will advise them they should stay put.

Many times all three of us are at the employee enrollment meeting to make sure that all employees' needs are covered and they have a clear understanding of what they are signing up for and how it will benefit them. We want to bring the best all-around packages to churches and schools to save ministry dollars.

In addition, Core Benefit Services will assign you a dedicated account manager for any customer service questions regarding billing, adding or terminating an employee from the plan, or to assist an employee with a claims issue. We want to be the first and only phone call you make, and we will then work toward a resolution on your behalf with the carrier. This makes us unique in the industry because, let's face it, the only thing worse than dealing with employee benefits is dealing with an insurance company representative speaking "insurance-ese," which is a foreign language to most employers. It's what we do and for me personally, it's my mission. ✚



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Technology Pointers to Revamp Your Church

Fellow CO+OP Member Daniel Anders from Sharp Business Systems, formerly American Business Machines (ABM), talks about their recent acquisition and shares pointers on how a technology partner can help churches like yours.

Churches around the country have partnered with Sharp Business Systems to help them run more efficiently behind the scenes and give their sermons or Bible studies a modern makeover. This is a “win-win” for CO+OP members who are legacy ABM customers. Why? Because ABM, a longtime CO+OP member and premier office equipment dealer, was acquired by Sharp Business Systems in July. They were selected to join Sharp because of their pristine reputation as a true technology partner to businesses and churches alike in the Houston area. Not only will legacy customers continue to be cared for by the same technicians they’ve come to know, they will also receive exclusive CO+OP pricing on Sharp’s full array of business technology and services. CO+OP pricing is also available to all members who wish to team up with Sharp.

Now that Sharp Business Systems is an official CO+OP member, they want to share some unique ways they can serve as an extension of your team. On top of upholding excellent customer support, they also take pride in exceeding their church customers’ expectations. Here are some unconventional ways Sharp can support your house of worship.

You can focus on growing your congregation.

Churches need more than a vendor. They need a customer-centric partner that can lift the weight of technology off the shoulders of clergy, staff and volunteers. By passing along their technology challenges to this partner, churches gain more freedom and time to grow the congregation rather than getting distracted by technology bottlenecks.

Keep worshippers tuned in and attract younger parishioners.

In today’s screen-driven world, it is a must to incorporate engaging proAV technology into your services. The use of bright, eye-catching professional monitors to display faith-based passages and words to Christian hymns and songs can inspire parishioners to experience a deeper connection through sight and sound. Many young parishioners take this into account when choosing a church they can identify with.

Your Youth Pastor doesn’t have to wear the “IT hat.”

IT problems are unavoidable. That’s why many churches look for a tech-savvy volunteer, often the Youth Pastor, but that person has other full-time responsibilities. When passwords are lost, email stops working or a virus takes over, your church can grind to a halt, especially if your IT volunteer is offsite or attending to other responsibilities. With the support of Sharp’s managed IT services, such as 24/7 help desk support and data backups, you can rest easy having the proper support in place to help address issues on the spot.

Turn your church records into digital files.

Have you considered converting your hardcopy records into digital files? This digital transformation can protect your congregation’s sacred documents by turning papers into electronic files and storing them in a secure electronic library. Capturing and retrieving files is a cinch, and the ability to eliminate those old bulky file cabinets is a nice byproduct.

Print colorful church programs and flyers on demand.

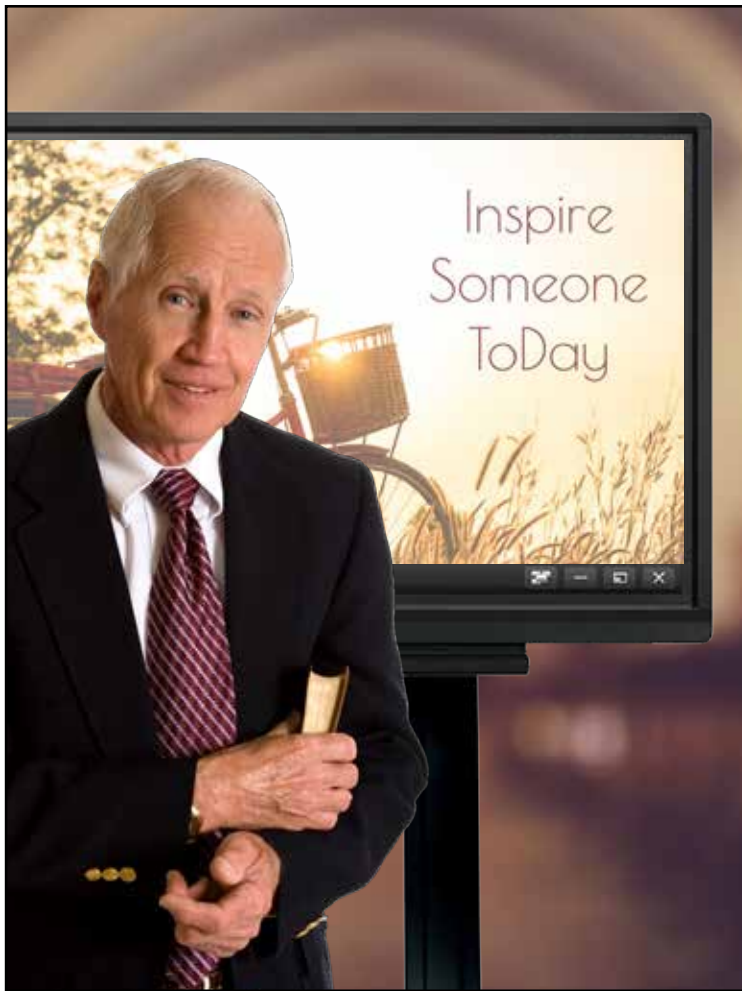
Sharp has a wide range of color MFPs and finishers that allows churches to print vibrant professional-looking materials. Rather than outsourcing print runs for church programs, flyers and posters, this can be done in house, allowing churches to make last-minute updates to flyers and programs and print however many pieces they actually need, when they need them.

We welcome you to schedule a meet-and-greet with your dedicated Sharp Business Systems CO+OP representative today, to learn more about Sharp’s ability to support your church and our special member pricing. ✦

Daniel Anders



Daniel has 35 years with American Business Machines; 21 years as co-owner. He has been assisting the Church CO+OP Members for the past 10 years. You can reach Daniel at Daniel.Anders@SharpUSA.com



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Kim Whaley has assisted CO+OP members and vendors for six years. In her role as an agent and a Registered Health Underwriter, she focuses on understanding ACA regulations and what is required for an employer to be compliant. Whether you have 2 employees or 200, Kim will work hard to design a benefits program to meet your budget and your employees' needs.

Dave Adams with First Continental Diversified, Inc., is a Core Benefits partner providing expertise in Health Reimbursement Accounts (HRA), Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) and IRS Section 125 Plans to allow pre-tax employee deductions on their employee contributions towards insurance premiums.

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cleansweep

by Robert Jacobs

Focus, from a Janitorial Perspective

Focus with any church or private school can mean a multitude of things. It can be referred to as focusing on one's faith and listening when God speaks to you. It can mean focusing on what's best for the church and congregation. In regards to facility management, focus can mean being good stewards of the church's money. This does not always mean going with the cheapest quote, but making sure the value is what the church is getting for that price. As a contractor of the Church CO+OP for the past 25 years, we at PJS are always constantly focused on being good stewards of the church's money. For PJS, understanding what each church or private school is going through, their specific needs and pains, is essential to creating a janitorial program that is unique to that facility. We must be diligent in asking the right questions and listening so we can better understand how we will be able to help. If we were not asking questions and listening, how would we be able to truly understand what the needs are? What makes us different from anyone else?

Focusing on being good stewards means developing a program to clean the facility day in and day out for health, not just a program to clean for appearance and to win the contract. Cleaning for health means cleaning the space even though it may appear to have been untouched. Sanitizing tables, touch points and surfaces. Making sure we are able to provide the safest environment for children and members of the congregation. Do you ever find yourself wondering why a room that was supposed to be cleaned the prior night was left untouched? Too often we run into accounts held by other services where there are janitorial issues that are directly related to the account's not having been bid properly. When labor is shorted to increase the opportunity to win the bid, that typically means janitorial issues will occur down the road. Churches and schools cannot be looked at the same as commercial real estate. Janitorial companies need to focus on the production rates when bidding accounts. Churches and schools run at a significantly lower production rate than commercial real estate, and extra labor needs to be accounted for when putting janitorial numbers together.

We also need to focus on recruiting the proper supervision and labor for the account. Having the proper supervision will make any good account great. We must focus on taking care of our employees, treating them like the first-class citizens they are. My mentor once told me, "Robert, if you really think about the janitorial industry, commonly the livelihood of the business rests in the hands of a \$9-an-hour housekeeper. Why wouldn't we go above and beyond to ensure they have the proper tools, training and pay in order to attract the highest quality labor?" We must focus on the individual housekeepers and allow them to be successful by doing our job prior to starting the account.

Do you ever feel frustrated with the lack of communication with your contractor? Left wondering why it is so hard for them to respond to your emails asking for issues to be resolved? Focusing on developing the contractor/customer relationship allows PJS to better serve the church or school and once again, to be good stewards of the church's money. Creating multiple levels of management ensures that the customers' needs are always getting taken care of and are at the top of our priority list. We are all humans and will make mistakes, but focusing on communicating with the customer when an issue arises, and responding quickly, gives a client comfort and satisfaction of their critical needs.

By focusing on understanding the church or school's specific needs, cleaning for health and not just appearance, recruiting the right quality of employees and taking care of them, as well as communicating with the customer, PJS is able to fully understand the needs of our prospects and customers, to bring a value to the facility, and to be good stewards of the church's money. +

Robert Jacobs



After completing his degree from Texas A&M, Robert joined the PJS team where he spent his first two months working as a janitor in one of PJS' premier accounts. Robert specializes in developing janitorial processes for churches and private schools.

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MINISTRY-FOCUSED FINANCES FROM START TO FINISH: 4 STEPS TO STAYING ON TRACK

by Vonna Laue and Michael Martin



It's so easy to get caught up in the day-to-day business of running a ministry. There are bills to pay and operational decisions to make. However, the purpose behind these tasks is greater than in most occupations. Whatever your ministry and whatever your position, don't lose sight of this very important calling!

Finances in particular can seem like such an ordinary, business-like function. There are standards and regulations that organizations are required to follow. Many people may even view this important support role as burdensome and hampering to hands-on ministry. But let's look at four ways that finances can and should reflect a ministry focus.



1. THE BUDGET: BEGINNING WITH THE (MINISTRY) END IN MIND

Any financial discussion should begin with a budget. Significant discussion should take place before numbers are established. Ministries need to develop a strategic plan (which may be referred to as a ministry plan). Leaders can then begin to put dollars around those areas of focus. A budget constructed independently of the direction of a ministry is an exercise in futility. There won't be buy-in and it won't be successful in reaching the goals that are established for the organization. This is where ministry-focused finances start.

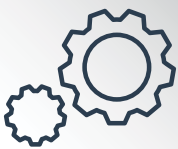
Understanding how the budgeted amounts tie in to the direction of the ministry allows staff and volunteers to work together. It also gives guidance when revenue levels aren't met and cuts are needed as well as when an excess is received and there are more funds available. The use of these dollars is directly tied to the ministry goals that were set previously. This helps reduce emotions from driving critical financial decisions and keeps the focus on the right things.



2. THE RIGHT PEOPLE: COMBINING COMMITMENT AND COMPETENCE

If we want to have ministry-focused finances, we should employ people that have both commitment and competence to perform their jobs. One without the other is a recipe for trouble. Your organization could have the best accounting manager or human resource director, but without a complete commitment to the mission of where the ministry is headed, unnecessary difficulties will occur.

Likewise, a passion for ministry is vital but must be coupled with the right skill set. The ability to write a check or make a deposit is not sufficient for all of the accounting and financial reporting needs of ministries today. There must be adequate competency to perform the necessary functions.



3. THE RIGHT RESOURCES: SUPPORTING THE SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

For employees and volunteers to be fully equipped to do the jobs that support ministry, we must provide adequate resources. Those resources may come in the form of compensation, training, staffing, or policies and procedures.

We recognize that compensation will probably not be equal to a similar job in the for-profit arena. However, if the differentiation is too great, you will not be able to hire people with the necessary level of experience required to help the ministry accomplish its desired outcomes. It is also important to make sure that an investment is being made in providing ongoing training to employees so they are current in their respective roles. Also, if the support functions are understaffed because all of the funds are used for hands-on ministry, it sends the message that the behind-the-scenes roles are not important.

All of this may also result in poor quality financial reporting because people are too distracted or hurried. Yet it is crucial that financial information be accurate and even helpful as important ministry decisions are made. Basing decisions on inaccurate information could hamper ministry for a long time into the future.

Finally, policies and procedures need to be current. This protects the ministry from legal and regulatory problems and can help people perform their jobs more effectively, all of which will help keep finances focused on ministry.



4. THE REPORTS: AVOIDING USELESS DATA

The end result of accounting is reporting of the financial information. This creates the link between finances and ministry for those individuals in leadership. It is crucial that you report information that is meaningful and simple.

Numbers alone are not effective at telling a financial story to individuals who don't understand numbers. Simply providing more pages of data will not make things more understandable. It will likely create more confusion and ultimately distract from the most significant issues.

Financial reports should be geared toward the intended audience (for example, different for department heads than for the finance committee). Those with budget responsibilities need information related to their area. Those with overall governance responsibilities need a much larger picture.

Ultimately, you want to tie finances back to the ministry that is taking place. This may be done by preparing summarized financial reports or a one-page dashboard with financial and non-financial data. Graphs represent the financial information in a way that more people can understand. It also keeps the focus on the right pieces of information. By tying the budget to the ministry plan, current information provides insight on how those goals are being accomplished.

YES, FINANCES ARE CRITICAL TO MINISTRY SUCCESS!

It is incumbent upon ministry leaders to understand the importance of finances in the accomplishment of ministry goals. Numbers should not be the only determining factor in a ministry-related decision. However, financial information should not be ignored either.

If a clear link has been established between support and direct ministry roles, people can work together to see amazing things accomplished through the ministry they serve. In the process, all staff members and volunteers can enjoy the fulfillment of realizing that God uses various skill sets to create a far better result together than any would see individually (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). ✦

Vonna Laue



Vonna serves as an Executive Vice President at ECFA. Before coming to ECFA, Vonna spent 20 years, most recently as a managing partner, with a national public accounting firm specializing in service to Christian ministries in the areas of audit and consulting.

There she served in organizational leadership as well as providing services to meet clients' various needs.

Michael Martin



Michael Martin is ECFA's Vice President of Church Relations. He enjoys helping churches and ministries maintain high standards of financial integrity through ECFA membership. Michael also uses his training as an

attorney and CPA to contribute to ECFA's many practical educational resources, including books, webinars, videos, podcasts, and more.



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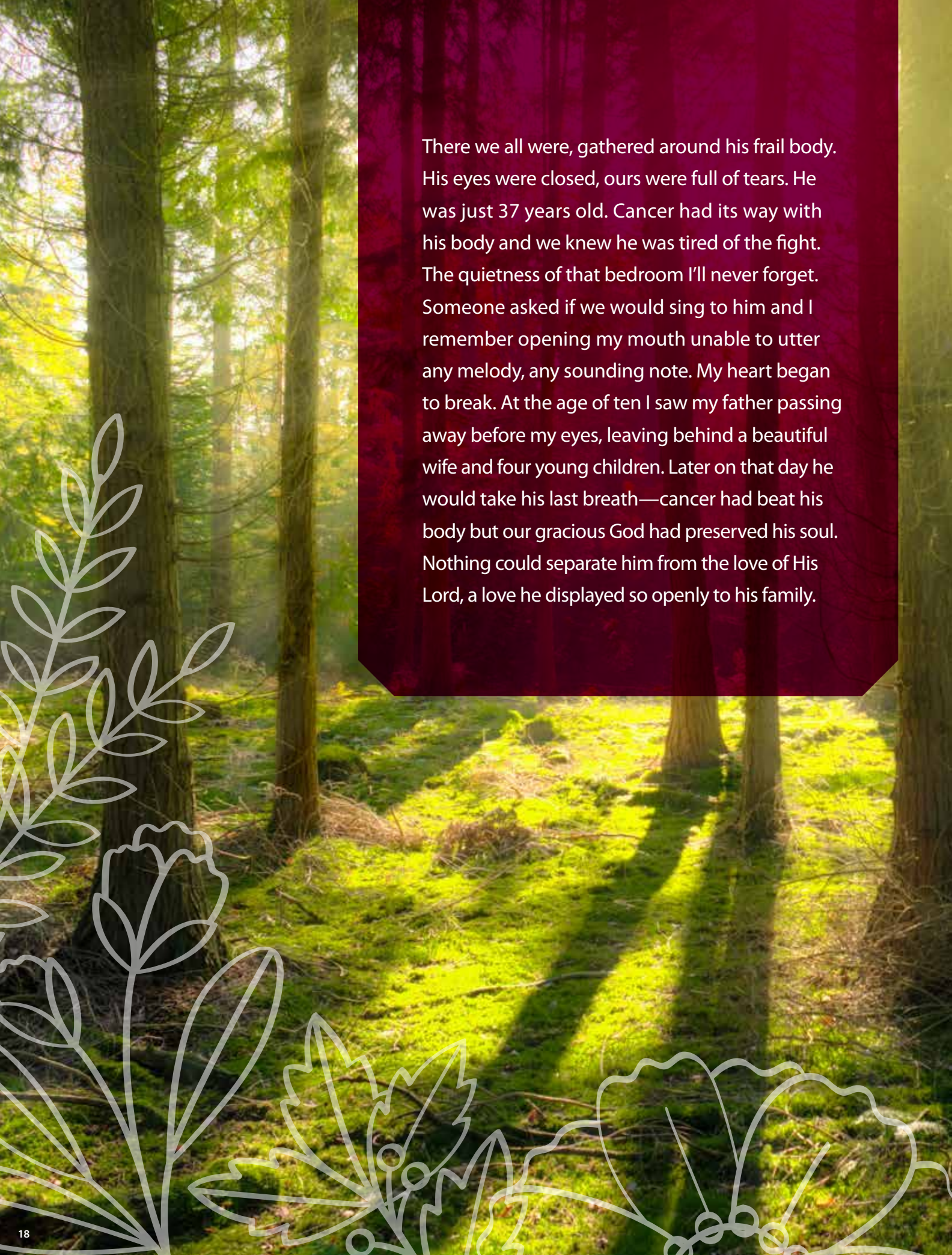
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The Privilege of Fatherlessness

by Hayley Sinclair



There we all were, gathered around his frail body. His eyes were closed, ours were full of tears. He was just 37 years old. Cancer had its way with his body and we knew he was tired of the fight. The quietness of that bedroom I'll never forget. Someone asked if we would sing to him and I remember opening my mouth unable to utter any melody, any sounding note. My heart began to break. At the age of ten I saw my father passing away before my eyes, leaving behind a beautiful wife and four young children. Later on that day he would take his last breath—cancer had beat his body but our gracious God had preserved his soul. Nothing could separate him from the love of His Lord, a love he displayed so openly to his family.

May 14th, 2003 forever changed the trajectory of our lives. I say this with the utmost honesty and vulnerability: as I consider the death of my earthly father my heart is forever thankful for the sovereign plan of my Creator, even in this. I am writing this specifically for families who are walking through this same valley of fatherlessness: wives who have just lost their beloved husband and friend, who now have been left with small children to love, lead and care for. Let me tell you, they will be okay. I want to encourage every disheartened part of you as you think of your children and what lies ahead of you. May the weight upon your shoulders be replaced with such a strong vision of the Heavenly Father that holds your children, may every fear dissolve and let faith arise in your heart to trust that every moment He is working for their good. God can use your children's loss for their gain and His honor.

God led us from Houston, Texas to a small rural town in East Texas. There awaited us a small house that would be filled with some of the sweetest days of my youth. I look back on those days and wonder how we made it and am astounded at the tangible providence the Lord poured out upon us. This is the place I would grow the most as a young girl, a place where the revelation of my Heavenly Father would provide for me such a ballast against the rising of every wave that billowed before me. I see now, this storm proved to be my salvation.

It was through the death of my earthly father that I began to understand the protection, provision, and power I could now find in a Heavenly Father. The more I grieved, the nearer was His touch. The face of my dad I would never see again here on earth, but I was now given the superior chance to behold more deeply the image of my Heavenly Father. This was grace undeserved, yet unrelenting. Little by little God uncovered the great value of knowing Him as not only Savior, but as Father. This helped me in some of my darkest moments as a young girl.

"O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more."
- Psalm 10:17-18

We are taught the most vital of roles is the one of the father, and I could not agree more. Love, comfort and security are easily felt in a godly father: this I do not deny. Doesn't the knowledge that our dad loves us, approves of us, and protects us cause our hearts to feel we can do anything? If Dad has our back, what is there to lose? There are many who have never tasted this from a broken and marred earthly father. But how great is it to have the opportunity to rely upon the perfect, mighty, faithful, loving Father who knows every hair upon your child's head and saves every tear that falls from their cheeks? The hands that held me now would not fail out of feebleness, or lead me astray from weakness. Through my fatherlessness, God carried my heart to His where I learned I could trust in Him. I love how the Jesus Storybook Bible describes this Fatherly Love, it's "Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love," and there is and will be no comparison to it. In my most fragile years, my Father taught me I could hide in Him and be safe, loved and secure. I drank deeply from His word and held tightly to His hand.

God has been faithful to me. He has been more faithful to me than an earthly Father could ever be. I have seen the roots of my faith be stretched into deep soil because of the uncertainties that surrounded me as a young girl, and now I am forever grateful. This was a gift greater than any comfort that would come from my sweet Dad. The eternal hope for my soul never rested in him or his love, and this is the case for your children as well.

Precious to me are the few memories God has given me with my father. I will always wonder what life would have been like if he had not been taken, yet I would not trade the days of dependence on the Lord caused by his death for one moment more with him. What will last, the Love that will endure, I have found: my soul is forever secure in Thee.

"The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing." - Psalm 34:10

Of course, with all brokenness comes the need to be healed. There were places of my life I never knew my father's death touched and affected. I'll never forget a few months before my husband proposed to me, my heart became incredibly unsure and hesitant to continue on in our relationship. Our relationship was built upon our love for Christ. The most attractive thing to me about my husband was his insatiable love and hunger for the Lord. So I was very confused why I was feeling as I was and did not want to leave it unattended to. As I sought the Lord, asking for wisdom, he gave me a promise:

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!"
– Psalm 84:11-12

This moment I will forever hold onto, because it was the first time I realized the lie I had been believing: God doesn't want me to have good things. I believe the root of this deception was birthed from the loss of my father. I didn't know how to articulate it, but my thought went along the lines of this: "If God took from me such a wonderful thing like my Dad, how can I believe He wants me to have anything good?"

My mistrust in God's Fatherly affection and good provision for me regarding my husband, Kris, was such a pivotal lesson for me to learn. "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." This penetrated and pierced deeply into my heart and life.

God drew me out from this thread of wrong-thinking and set my feet upon the Rock of His word. He freed me from a fear surrounding me that I never even knew was there. Yet I believe the fondness, love, and devotion to Christ and the faith in His goodness towards me would never bear the

weight it has were it not for His sovereign will to take my father when He did. Indeed, there were and have been many sorrowful days considering what life and laughter my dad brought with him—he was a joy! What outweighs this is the vibrant beauty of my Lord when I consider how He has steadfastly held me, led me, and provided for me through the years. My head knows He is faithful, but so does my heart. He has proved to be a more loving Father to me than any man on this earth, and because of this my heart will forever stand amazed at being His daughter, bought by such a costly price.

Oh, be encouraged! Presented before you is a rare opportunity for your children to experience the unshakable, sovereign governing of the Ancient of Days.

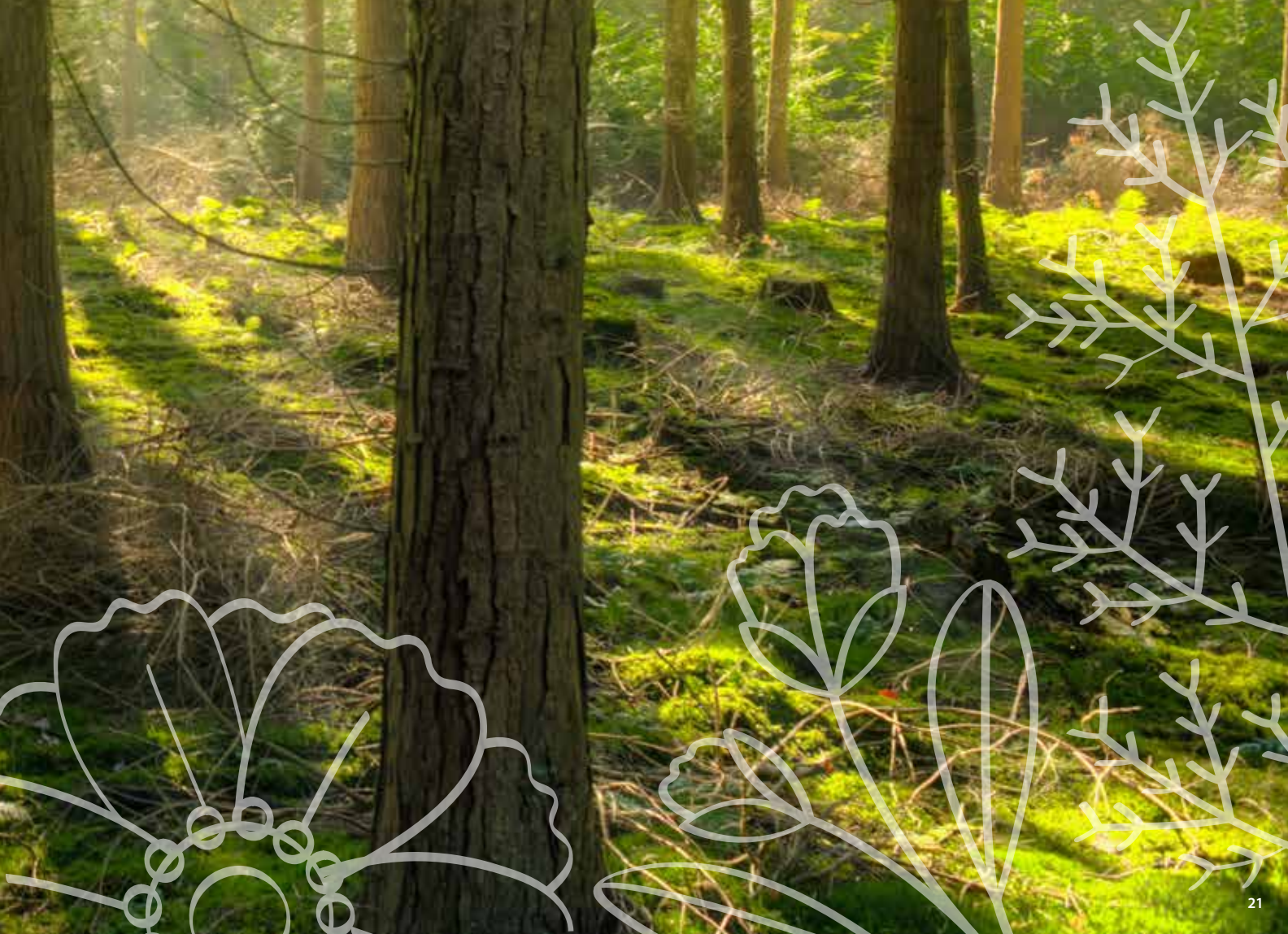
This is no new revelation, nor a new experience. Thousands of families have walked this very same road and can attest to the goodness of God in their lives. This is a reminder to myself, to my sisters, and to the world. The door to be fatherless no more is swinging open for you. Will you walk through it and take hold of the Hand who sent His very own Son to die for you? Christ stands ready to save; upon your repentance and faith in Him you are afforded the privilege to forever sit at the right hand of the Father. This Father loves to take the orphans, the needy, the broken and make them His. I can attest with all my might, this is a good gift, and it can never be taken away. ✦

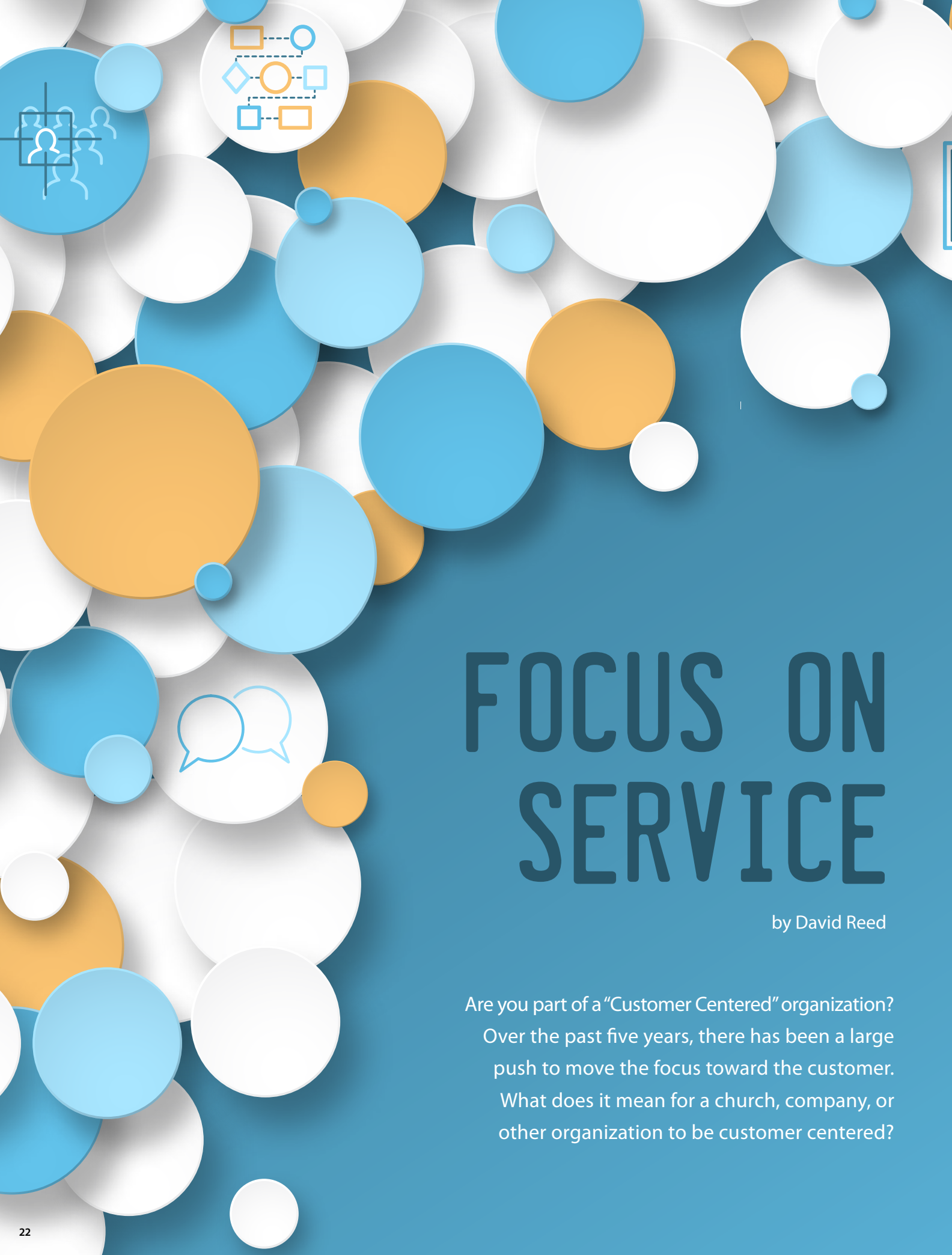
Hayley Sinclair



Hayley is a pastor's wife and mama to two little girls. Her passion is to see women love God's glory supremely, His word deeply, and each other sincerely. With Texas roots, Hayley resides in Ohio with her husband, Kris, seeking to be faithful to her Lord in every aspect of her life including marriage, motherhood, and ministry.

I say this with the utmost honesty and vulnerability: as I consider the death of my earthly father my heart is forever thankful for the sovereign plan of my Creator, even in this.





FOCUS ON SERVICE

by David Reed

Are you part of a “Customer Centered” organization? Over the past five years, there has been a large push to move the focus toward the customer. What does it mean for a church, company, or other organization to be customer centered?



First, it means that everyone's job exists to serve someone or satisfy a need of a customer. If you are in a position that primarily deals with people inside your organization instead of the outside customer, your job is to serve those who do interact with the end customer. When I begin working with an organization to improve their overall customer service level, I often start with the internally facing departments such as Information Technology, Human Resources, or Accounting. I have found that if those organizations do not lead by example and serve the other employees in the company, the outward facing team members will never become excellent at serving the outside customer.

When you are implementing a new process, system, or procedure, do you stop and ask, "How is this going to impact my customer?" Many times, organizations make changes that may make a task easier on them, but all they are really doing is transferring the effort to their customer. But in this day and age when everyone is busy and very few people have extra time on their hands, customers will do business with those who make it easier on them.

When I conduct one of my "Culture of Service" training workshops, I ask the class to list companies that are known for providing an exceptional customer experience. No matter what part of the country I may be in, I often hear the same set of answers: Chick-fil-A, Southwest Airlines, Disney, or Nordstrom. These

organizations have an excellent reputation for serving their customers because internally, their organizational structure, systems, policies, and practices are all designed to focus on the customer.

You may be serving in a church and be thinking, "How does customer service fit in at a church?" Let me give you a couple of examples. If a family with a couple of young children are visiting your church and the process to check them in for their classes is confusing or takes a long time, do you realize this impacts their overall experience at your church? Or if a single person walks through your doors, navigates through your halls and ends up finding a seat in your sanctuary or worship center without a single person saying hello or greeting them, do you think they will return? Unfortunately, those of us who have been attending the same church for years become inwardly focused. We need to try to place ourselves in the shoes of a visitor and empathize with how they might feel. Especially in a large church, it is easy for someone to slip in, attend worship, and leave without a single person acknowledging their presence.

One of the exercises you can take to evaluate how you are doing at delivering excellent service is to think about what I call the "Top 10 Customer Turnoffs." I have listed them below, and a full description of each of them can be found on my website at the following link: <https://olympia-consulting.net/blog/>



Top 10 Customer Turnoffs

1. A Long Wait
2. The Run Around or Dropping Through the Cracks
3. Hearing "That's not my job" or "We can't do that"
4. Poor Product or Service Quality
5. Hearing You Bad-Mouth Your Organization or Customers
6. Lack of Product or Service Knowledge
7. An Uncaring Worker or Leader
8. Lack of Follow-Up
9. Wrong Tone of Voice or Poor Body Language
10. Refusing to Take Responsibility for Mistakes

As an example, let's take a look at Number Three, Hearing "That's not my job" or "We can't do that."

"That's Not My Job." Have you ever made a request of someone only to hear those words, or be told that "We can't do that"? Are you ever asked to do something that is not your job? Of course. Have you had a customer ask for a product or service that you don't provide? Everyone has had that happen. The key is how you respond to those requests.

During my time working for Disney in Orlando, one of my roles placed me in an office behind the MGM Studios theme park. On occasion, I would take my lunch break and head in the back entrance to the park and grab a smoked turkey leg. If you have ever been to a Disney park, you know that all "cast members" (what they call their employees) wear a name tag with their name and hometown printed on it. It is easy to recognize a cast member. At the time I was a manager in the Information Technology department leading a team that supported a large call center, having no direct responsibility for the parks.

If a guest approached me as I was walking through the park and asked "Where is the Indiana Jones attraction?" do you think it would have been acceptable for me to say,

"Sorry. I am in IT. I don't work in the park"? Of course not. During my initial two days of training at Disney, I attended a class that all cast members are required to take called "Traditions." One of the key concepts they impressed on everyone was it is never acceptable to say "It's not my job."

At that point I would have two options in how I responded to the guest. I could either stop what I was doing and personally take them to the attraction, or I could introduce them to a fellow cast member who would then assist them. Remember, it is not your customer's responsibility to understand your organizational chart in order to do business with you. If they reach you, you own getting them to the right person.

Nothing is as bad as hearing "It's not my job," but close on its heels is when someone tells a customer "We can't do that" without taking the time to think about other options. Unfortunately, many of us are conditioned to say "No" when we need to respond with "Let me look into that" or something similar. When we are working with sales teams, one of the things we coach them on is transferring a customer's request from something you don't exactly provide to something you can help them with. If you take a few minutes to think about it and propose other options, you often will find that the customer is not set on their original request, but is willing to consider your suggestion.

Several years ago my wife, son and I went to a local pizza restaurant where we live in Frisco, Texas. We were early for dinner and were the only people in the place. It was a small location where they tried to make you feel like you were eating pizza in Italy. (A worker was right behind the counter tossing the dough in the air waiting for our order.) At that time my son was a cheese-pizza-only guy, while my wife and I preferred a good pepperoni pizza. I asked the lady taking our order if we could have a large pizza with half pepperoni and the other half plain cheese. Her response caught me off guard. "I'm sorry, sir, but our system does not allow me to do that." Thinking it was a pricing issue, I responded with "You can charge me for a full pepperoni, but just leave them off half of the pizza."



She again responded with the same answer and we left the establishment, never to return again. Several weeks later we were in a different pizza place called “Sal’s” and I made the same request. The response was totally different. “Sure. We can do that.” My guess is that 15 years ago, the two restaurants had the same system to place their pizza orders. The difference was their attitude. In this case, the worker probably entered the order as a large pepperoni and then told the person making the pizza to make half as cheese only. Same system. Different result. The difference was the attitude and their willingness to think before responding with a No.

We all have our policies and procedures to follow. I’m not suggesting you go around ignoring your company’s policies, but what I am saying is that we all need to have a bit more flexibility when handling a customer’s request. Work on saying “Yes,” or at least “Let me check into that” instead of taking the easy road and saying “No. We can’t do that.” Your customers will appreciate your willingness to consider their request, even if you are not able to ultimately meet their need. We are all given brains – use them to serve your customer with common sense.

Customer service is really all about learning to serve others. They could be co-workers, visitors, or paying customers. If you train everyone in your organization to focus on the needs of others instead of on their own interests, you will make huge strides toward becoming a customer-centered organization. ✦

David Reed



David Reed is the Chief Customer Care Officer for Olympia Consulting. David is a published author of four customer service books and his career passion has been to assist organizations in creating a culture of excellent customer service, servant leadership, and effective operations.

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Levites in Levis: The Ministry of Church Facilities Management

by Patrick Hart

Almost 30 years ago and fresh out of college, I served as Youth Minister of a small congregation along the Central Coast of California. My wife and I lived in a church-owned home next door to the church, with a detached garage that served as our laundry room as well as the storage area for tools and lawn care equipment used by the men who served as volunteer Trustees. We got to know many of these faithful servants as they came and went through our yard into the garage and back out to the church to take on various fix-it projects around

the property. Watching their frequent coming and going, it occurred to me that these men didn't just show up to fix things, but rather that they really came for fellowship and to care for one another and anyone else who happened to stop by the church. They saw the work that they were doing as a ministry opportunity, not just a task to be completed. I found myself drawn to them and often joined in their work parties and enjoyed the fellowship of their company. Little did I realize the long-term impact this would have on my life.



Many years and several career changes later, God led me into full-time ministry in Church Facilities Management. This wasn't a career path that I had ever considered – in fact I hadn't really known that such a career existed. I do, however, believe the Lord had been preparing me for this ministry my entire life, much like the Levites, who were chosen and set apart by God to fulfill their roles as caretakers of the tabernacle during the Israelites' exodus from Egypt (Numbers 1:47-53). Each clan in the tribe of Levi had specific duties related to the tabernacle (Numbers 3:14-37) as well as providing general assistance to the priests. They were truly the first church facilities managers!

Whether your church facilities are cared for by volunteers or by paid staff, I believe it is important that their work be considered as an extension of the ministry that the Lord first placed into the hands of the Levites. So how do you go about developing a successful ministry-focused facilities team in your church? Following are five keys that I have discovered over the past decade in my role as a Church Facilities Manager.

Seek Out the Right People

Often, when seeking people to fill a Facilities Management role, churches look for individuals with giftedness in a specific set of hard skills, such as construction-related trades, HVAC maintenance, project management or custodial experience. While these skills are important, I believe we should first be praying that God will lead us to individuals who are ministry-minded and who seek after God's heart. At the church where I serve, we expect our employees to be ready and able to share their personal salvation experience and testimony, faithfully attend an Evangelical

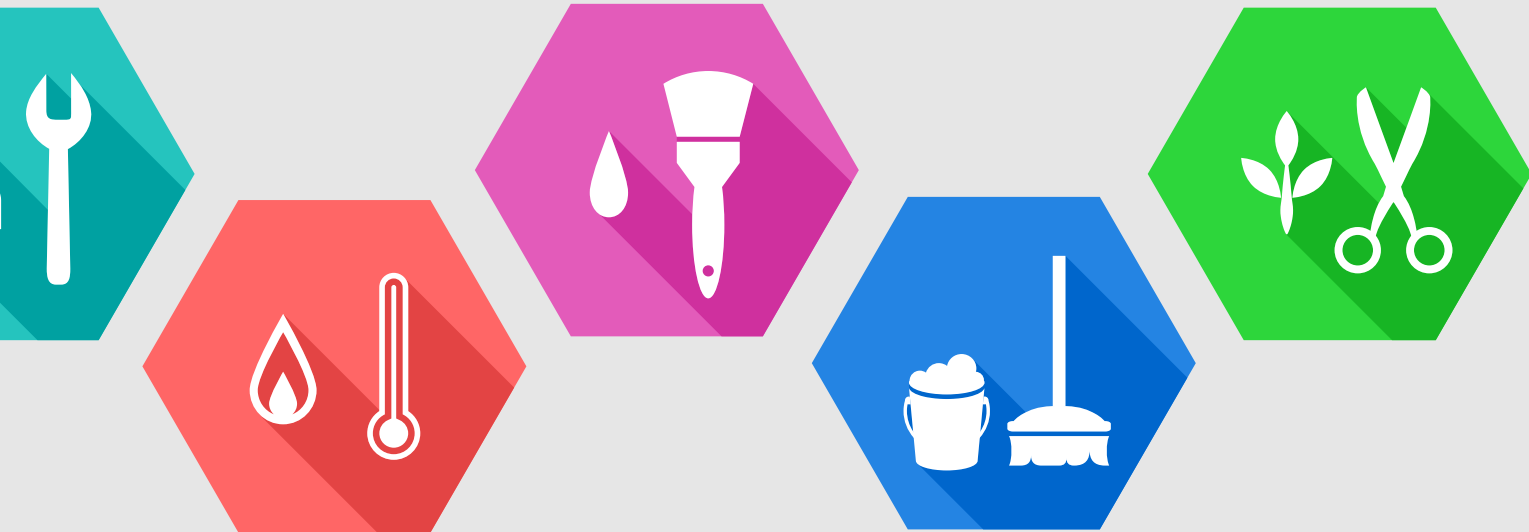
Bible-believing church on a regular basis, demonstrate a life in agreement with all statements and the spirit of our Moral Code of Conduct Affirmation, and maintain a personal devotional life of prayer and Bible reading/study in order to fuel evident and ongoing spiritual growth.

To underscore the importance of the ministry mindset, consider this: facilities team members are often the first people in your facility each day and the last to leave. People in need may find their way into your church at odd hours when pastoral staff are simply not present or available. Your facilities team can and should be able to function as ministry first responders.

Encourage Good Stewardship

For most churches, facilities costs (mortgage, facilities staffing, preventive maintenance, repairs, utilities, custodial and restroom supplies, licensing and equipment) are the largest portion of the church budget. Every church that I've ever been a member of has limited resources, both human and financial. Therefore it is imperative that you partner with your facilities team in finding creative ways to eliminate wasteful spending and encourage good overall stewardship of your facilities. Some small changes in something as simple as room usage scheduling can save cleaning time by ensuring that rooms aren't required to be cleaned repeatedly unnecessarily. Keeping evening activities zoned to specific areas rather than scattered throughout your facility can reduce not only cleaning time (labor costs) but also utilities expenses. When church staff and members practice and encourage good stewardship of the facilities, your team will feel more valued and productive in their ministry.

What if you could take this a step further and put these savings back into ministry by practicing good stewardship? According to the EPA, 30% of the energy we consume is wasted. Colby



May, Founder and President of LiT, an energy auditing company, helps churches to recapture that 30% of the money spent on utilities through no-cost or low-energy-cost saving strategies. Churches can learn to leverage energy management and sustainability principles as a means not only to fund missions (redirected energy savings), but also to promote job creation in developing nations by targeting poverty alleviation, human trafficking, holistic development and more.

Give Your Members a Place to Play

Limited resources don't necessarily equal limited opportunities for completing needed Facilities tasks. Just like the Trustees who took care of general maintenance at my church in California, your church has people with specific skills who are just waiting to be asked to help out. Perhaps they aren't gifted in childcare or leading a Bible study, but they can swing a hammer, paint, have an interest in landscaping or love to clean windows. You can give these folks a place to play, utilizing their gifts by partnering with your facilities team. Not only will they find purpose in ministry, but their shared ownership of the Facilities Ministry will energize your team.

Honor Your Facilities Team's Downtime

Your facilities team members, and in particular your Facilities Manager (if you have one), put in long and varied hours. Too often, when they are worshipping with their families, are enjoying a day off or are on vacation, they are called upon to deal with issues that could be handled by on-duty team members or could wait until later. Setting up a simple facilities work order request system or an on-call phone list will help to protect and honor their off-time, and you will not only bless them with much-needed rest and refreshment, but I believe that you'll find that they become more productive in the long term.

Show Genuine Appreciation for Your Facilities Team

Many of the essential tasks performed by your facilities team are repetitive, dirty or unpleasant. Often these duties go unnoticed by the average church member until something gets missed or distracts them from full participation in worship or ministry activities. Heating or cooling issues, missing soap or paper products in the restroom, burned-out lights or any number of other facilities-related issues are often quickly pointed out, many times in a negative tone. This may be the only interaction church members and staff have with your facilities team members. When their only interactions are negative in nature, your team members can become disheartened and lose enthusiasm for their ministry. I think this is why God specifically commanded the Israelites to take care of the Levites (Numbers 18:20-24, Deuteronomy 12:19 and 14:27-29).

Stop and encourage your team regularly, pray for them, let them know that you understand the importance of their role in the ministry of the church. It's amazing to see how excited my team gets when out of the blue someone shows their appreciation by surprising them with a pizza or a Starbucks gift card. ✦

Patrick Hart



Patrick Hart, CCFM has been serving as Facilities Director at Northshore Christian Church & Academy in Everett, Washington since 2008. He is also the President of the National Association for Church Facilities Managers (NACFM). The NACFM is dedicated to equipping church facilities professionals for the unique care and management challenges they face through continuing education, leadership development, spiritual reinforcement and peer support. www.nacfm.com



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By Michael Bernstein

From the Past to the Future – Appreciate being “Plugged In”

It is amazing to think how much the world has changed. Long before the personal computer and internet community, there were gatherings on front porches for real community. Neighbors were more than those you interacted with on the Next Door app — they were your friends. The idea of a personal mobile phone was fodder for fantasy and cartoons. In real life, families shared one phone per household and they all looked the same, factory black and rotary. People left their doors unlocked and looked out for one another. Going to church and the synagogue was not a choice. It was expected, and provided not just a place of worship but a place for community.

The world felt safer and smaller. Children would ride their bikes home from school and play outside for hours. If they were lucky, they caught the ice-cream truck as it ambled up and down the streets. It was not uncommon to see American flags flying in front of houses on these same streets. Showing this loyalty to the flag was another way to feel a sense of community and fellowship with others.

The world is vastly different today. The broader question of how the world has changed so much so rapidly is better left to experts and historians. What I would like to focus on is a little more specific and a little more personal. What change in the world has had the biggest impact on my life? I would have to say the advancement of technology. Arguably many factors contributed to the world's technological advances, but there was one catalyst that overrode the rest: easily accessible electricity.

Of course I never thought about this growing up. Only after the energy issues we faced this summer in Texas, I started thinking how difficult it would be to live without electricity. I remember the milkman coming by in the morning with milk fresh from the dairy. After

he had a few minutes of conversation with my mother, I would watch as she put the bottles in the refrigerator. She said it was so much nicer than the “ice box” she used to have.

I considered how it helped my mother in running her household. I thought about how she used to stitch up our clothes on her Singer pedal sewing machine, then wash them in the front-loading Bendix washer and dryer. I recalled her in the kitchen using her electric rotisserie and later her dishwasher. I am so grateful for all these advancements, as it gave her some free time to play with my sister and me.

Obviously, easily accessible electricity had other impacts in addition to helping 1950s housewives make their days more efficient. One impact in particular was the innovation of air conditioning units. As late as 1965, just 10 percent of U.S. homes had them, according to the Carrier Corporation. As the units became more mainstream and were manufactured more affordably, I think this became a contributing factor in the construction of bigger churches, and larger shopping malls like Big Town and North Park in Dallas.

As I have spoken on my appreciation for all the technological advancements in my lifetime, I can only begin to speculate about what is around the corner. Possibly there will be driverless flying cars, to just take us where we want to go. At the time of this writing, an expanded version of a drone is being tested at Alliance Airport by Uber and in California. It is so successful that flying cars are programmed under a nationalized agency of their own. It is hard to believe, but we may see a world in our lifetime without gasoline-fueled cars. They would be replaced with cars running on modern fuel cells, electricity through stored solar power, or Tesla-type coils with electromagnetic engines.

We can only dream of what the future holds for this industry, but the future looks really bright!

This technology has capabilities beyond cars. Neighborhood power plants may pop up with multiple sources of generation: improved solar, wind, and spinning Tesla coils with magnets.

When you think about how much the world is changing, some things won't be needed like they were before. Much as the rotary phone has retired, we are seeing a lot of coal plants retire also. I look forward to living in an age where clean coal plants will be used in regional areas for electricity in emergencies, instead of as a committed source of power.

Speaking of grids, I can only hypothesize on changes to our electric grids in the future. They might go totally underground, become wireless, or be innovated into something else completely.

Through all these conjecturings, I can share one fact. We are all experiencing these changes in technology together. TES Energy Services, LP (TES) will continue to adapt to the changing landscape in the electricity and gas industries, making creative and efficient solutions for our clients. We will continue to aggregate huge power loads with providers to achieve the lowest price possible. We will continue to assist our residential customer to find the "Best bang for their plastic buck"!

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Michael Bernstein is the CO+OP Account Manager for TES Energy Services, LP (TES). Michael possesses detailed knowledge of the energy industry, along with expertise in sales and marketing, training and development, customer relations operations and non-profit management. He covers the Houston and South Texas areas.

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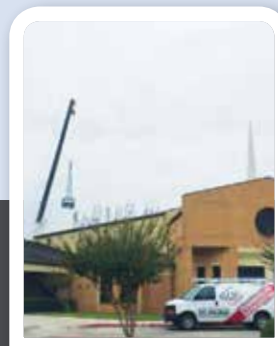
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by Gary Benson and Paula Burns

Focus On a Culture of Risk Management

Now more than ever, church leaders must recognize the importance of risk management and controlling risk. The past few years have been interesting for churches regarding safety and risk management. Hot topics include church shootings, transgender access to bathrooms, same-sex marriage, the Zika virus, sexual misconduct within the church, hurricanes and floods.

Each year seems to bring something new. While we can't build a wall around every single potential threat, an effective risk management plan should be proactive rather than reactive, focusing on risks before they become liabilities and taking the appropriate steps to mitigate those risks.

For example, we must know the risks that threaten our ministry so we can effectively control them. Here is just a sampling of some of these.

- Have a regular **physical inspection** that identifies preventable hazards such as combustibles near electrical or heating sources, walkway defects like uneven or cracked sidewalks, clogs in gutters or downspouts, plumbing defects in the baptistry area, obvious tripping hazards, etc.
- **Child/Minor sexual abuse within the church** gained the top step again for the reasons churches go to court. We must be more diligent at implementing safeguards that go well beyond just conducting background checks. Check with your agent or insurance carrier for recommendations on this important topic.
- **Crime and violence challenges** are still rare occurrences within the church, but we live in a violent world, so it's a good idea for churches to have a plan in place to prevent and respond to violent incidents. Hiring uniformed police officers remains the best alternative for any program, but just be sure to coordinate any planned responses with your insurance agent for advice on liability exposures or coverage concerns.
- Rapid advancements in technology present both an opportunity and a challenge for churches. Safety and security technology has never been so advanced, but the advancement of technology also presents threats in terms of **privacy** and the increasing amount of data that churches maintain on their members and guests. A strong **data security system**, along with consideration of **cyber liability insurance** coverage, is quickly becoming essential for churches.

Other things you can do include:

- **Insurance coverage reviews** – These should take place on a regular basis to evaluate any changes not only at your church but also changes in policy coverage and as noted above, changing exposures or risks to the church.
- **Seek resources and expertise from your agent** – Ideally agents should be well versed in churches and church exposures and as such, can be valuable assets in protecting churches, so don't hesitate to reach out to yours for advice on your event plannings, policy and procedural development, training or other general resources.

Closing Thoughts

An effective risk management program will continually focus on the various components of the church's ministries and will identify and analyze the risks associated with each ministry. Some will inherently be more challenging than others, so we must continually ask ourselves if what we are doing (or not doing) is accomplishing the goals of ministry and whether it is exposing others to potential harm. In many cases, if we critically analyze many of the things we do, that answer will be yes, so what are the steps we must take to control or mitigate those risks?

We don't always know what we will be presented with, but an intentional focus on risk management may repel the enemy's determination to destroy and will allow your church to be the safe haven we all desire it to be. ✦

Gary Benson and Paula Burns



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The Insurance One team assembled to service the CO+OP members is led by experienced agents with close to 100 years of combined experience. The Woodlands (Texas) office is led by agency owners, Gary Benson and Paula Burns.



somethingtotalkabout

by Katie Burch

A New Educational Facility for the Youth Development Center, Houston, Texas

Building Type:

Assembly/School/Library/Dining/Office/Administration

22,500 Square Feet of New Construction

Currently under construction

My good friends Harvey, Patrice, Charlie and Flo are long-time Board Members and founders of the Youth Development Center in Houston. I will never forget the morning that Flo told me the story of how YDC got its start by focusing on teaching children to read. His words when telling about those days took me back to a different time. As he described his own upbringing as a child of the 1950s in deep South Texas near the cotton farms, there was an obvious common thread to the children of Houston's Greater Fifth Ward. He believed that through mentorship, hard work, and the dedication of some very focused volunteers, YDC could make a real difference to the children of the Fifth Ward. It was 1997 when the papers were filed to incorporate the Youth Development Center.

And yet here we were, sitting in Flo's office fifteen or so years later, and the heart of YDC was beating as clear and focused as ever. The organization was a well-oiled machine as far as I could see. The concept was simple: after qualifying for the program, children in grades one through six come to YDC immediately after school, they are fed a nutritious dinner, and then they begin their studies. Reading, math, and enrichment programs are all offered to get these young people up to par with their current grade levels. At the end of the day the YDC buses take them home. To say that these children work hard is an understatement. While most of our children are at home enjoying a snack, catching up with friends or some TV or sports teams, the children of YDC work another several hours on a stringent, personalized reading and math curriculum.

The number of students that the program could serve was limited by the size of the rented church building where they currently operated. In order to serve more children, they needed more space, some land, and a capital campaign to build it.

After spending some time on the campus interviewing the teachers and the staff, I came to mentally acknowledge the courage of the Executive Director and teachers in the tiny church building where the YDC operated every week. The mountains that were moved in that little church every day were truly unbelievable. While we worked to understand what the future of the YDC spaces might look like, our friend Flo looked fervently for land nearby. It would be rare to find a piece of property in the Greater Fifth Ward capable of housing an operation like YDC. I remember the day very well when the property was found.

The acreage was in the flood plain, and we came to learn that it was adjacent to one of Houston's bayous. A series of phone calls to engineers, testing agencies and City Authorities proceeded as we went about vetting the possibility of what seemed like a "perfect" location. The property wasn't perfect by conventional standards, but YDC's vision for this property was crystal clear ... this wasn't the 'burbs, and the Board wasn't opposed to navigating through some trenches to make it work. As we considered the rest of the team, we decided to bring Darren Huckert on board. Darren is a civil engineer with experience in the Austin geographical region as well as in Houston, but more than having local experience, Darren is an "out of the box" thinker. We desperately needed someone who would continue to look at new ideas daily, and would approach the site (and the city's input) with a fresh perspective at all times. As the location of the site in the flood plain was our number one fixed challenge, the civil work was of utmost importance. Our new site was going to take some tweaking in order to house a 22,500-square-foot campus of classrooms, labs, offices, a library, and a full dining hall.

The days ahead planning and designing YDC were filled with those back-and-forth phone calls where things change daily or weekly, and then you wait ... and wait ... and wait while city officials consider and reconsider whether you've got it right. In the meantime the Youth Development Center Board and Staff worked fervently, passionately and without ceasing to raise almost five million dollars to build this special place for the children of Houston's Greater Fifth Ward.

Back in the design studio, we started to think of the site—and the building—as having its own personality and functions. We’ve never had more fun being part of a vision! One day when the tight budget and endless selections got the best of us, we decided to assign actual “tasks” and “identities” to the different spaces in the building. The Administration area became the “Protective Arm,” and we designed it as such. Where the older children came to learn, we dubbed the “Core,” as we determined that it was there that YDC’s original focus took its first breath and came to life. We called the library and dining hall the “Haven,” as it was there that we could see relationships forming to nurture these children as their basic and social needs were met. We designed a special area for the littlest children coming in: the first and second graders would meet in the “Explorer” wing. We hoped that YDC would somehow teach them that the world was a much bigger place with so much opportunity. For the spaces where enrichment and breakout sessions would take place, we called those rooms the “Encourager.” And the spaces between, the corridors and halls and changing rooms where YDC students would arm themselves with their brightly colored T-shirts and enter a different world where anything was possible, we named “The Journey.” We thought about the repetition of goodness that the new YDC building would bring to the table for these children, a day-in and day-out focus on learning and gratitude, and an appreciation for innovation and the latest technologies of the future.

Months upon months later, the primary funding and the permit for Youth Development Center were in place. As we gathered to celebrate the kickoff with a ceremonial groundbreaking, backhoes and dozers and workers flooded the site like ants behind us. The construction team, with whom we’d done many projects before, was finally in their true element. After months of tediously estimating options, providing budget numbers and meeting with our design team to strategize . . . they were finally turning dirt at warp speed. As I looked around at the team on the day of the groundbreaking, I realized that literally every person on the team had had some type of role in the project for nearly five years.

The board stood huddled together, feet on shovels and hardhats in place, as one of the founders led the group in grateful songs of praise. But in front of us, uncharacteristically quiet and in awe, sat the children of Houston’s Youth Development Center, laser-focused as we took turns at the mic, telling them of what was to come.

The new facilities for Youth Development Center are under construction and scheduled to open during spring of 2019. Fundraising efforts are ongoing and in full swing. The project

team consists of PlanNorth Architectural Company (Ken and Katie Burch, Sam White, Mandi Perez, Darcee Andras, Marissa Buckner), Civil Engineer of Record Darren Huckert, Structural Engineer Britt Gardner of CJG Engineers, MEP Engineers, LTY Consulting Engineers and Construction Manager Collier Construction.


To visit or learn more about Youth Development Center, or to donate to YDC’s facility located in the Greater Fifth Ward, you can stop in online at www.ydc.org, or contact Executive Director Mary Nell Jones at 713.861.9470 or marynell@ydc.org. ✦


Katie Burch



Katie Burch is a mom of two energetic boys, Grady and Jackson. She and her husband Ken love taking their boys to the little fishing community of Port O’Conner, and they are members of Redeemer Church Brenham. Katie serves on the Impact Houston Foundation Board and the Get Together Brenham board. She is the author of the book *Church Buildings: A Strategic Guide to Design, Renovation, and Construction*.

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APS has a dynamic family atmosphere which includes our employees' families, creating a buy-in from everyone and making for an enjoyable work environment and very little turnover, which is rare in our industry. We host regular catered lunches quarterly for employees and give away trips, gift cards, etc. We recently had a fun barbeque cook-off among our employees out in the countryside, where kids were able to compete in a fishing tournament or play on inflatables while the adults competed over the grills. This quarter we have rewarded all of our technicians with guided fishing trips that take four people at a time stretching out over a two-month period for fun, relaxation, relaxation and team bonding. We take care of every individual on our team, and the team knows that we are there if they ever need us professionally or for personal matters that they may want help with.

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APS Building Services' Northwest Houston office is located at 11050 West Little York Road, Houston, Texas 77041. The Houston office was purchased from Air Performance, located in Dallas, in 2015. Air Performance has a Dallas/Fort Worth location and a Longview, Texas location as well as locations in Austin and San Antonio. Although we are a totally separate entity now, we work hand and hand with Air Performance on certain projects and remain in close contact with them. They are an excellent resource for commercial mechanical needs in their area.

Contact: Lee Harvey, Primary Account Representative
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