

# PILGRIM NEWS & NOTES

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# Why Me?

By Pastor Rick Jones

**I admit it.** I was wallowing in self-pity.

I was trying to pull together a choir for the Christmas program. My singers were far from professional. Most of them could not read music. Most of them could not sing parts. Most of them were there because we had picked them up and brought them to church. They were there, so we handed them a music notebook.

Our pianist played the introduction. I lifted my hands to direct. Only a few sang on cue, few were on pitch.

I looked at them. There were teens whose parents had been or were now in prison for physically abusing them. There was a young lady who lived in her small house with 13 people—2 under the age of 2. There was the straight A girl battling depression. I had heard that some had tried smoking marijuana this past year. There were gamers, screen addicts, and rap fans. Who knows how many were on anti-depressants, mood stabilizers, and medicine for ADHD. Some have been into scrapes with the law. Some were borderline homeless. Some were homeless.

Only my pianist and a few of the singers came from Christian homes. The rest were living painfully hard lives—partly due to choices they were making, and partly due to choices that had been made for them.

“Why me?” Why am I here?

I’m a 4th generation holiness preacher. I had a great raising, had come to Christ as a child, enjoyed a privileged education, loved philosophy and the world of ideas, appreciated classical music, orchestras and choirs, and now at 60 years of age I should be in a much better place.

“Why me?” Shouldn’t other people be here helping us reach these “at risk” souls? My wife and a faithful few have invested all that we have into this mission. But only a few will endure the strain, carry the load, and persist in this no-holds-barred fight for souls. In Jesus’ name we press on, but it sure would be a blessing if someone who could carry a tune would join us.

And as all of these thoughts were rushing through my mind, I was drawn to the words we were actually singing at that precise moment:

*From GOD’s Heaven to a manger, from great riches to the poor, came the Holy Son of GOD, a little Child;  
From the azure halls of Heaven, to a lowly manger stall Jesus came, and here He gave His life for all.*

*Redeeming love, a love that knows no limit; Redeeming love, a love that never dies;  
My soul shall sing through-out the endless ages with choirs extolling this great love on high.”*

And then the ever-faithful Holy Spirit whispered to me, “Why HIM?”

Reminded of the sacrifice the Savior made for me, I thought how selfish of me to even be asking “Why me?”

There could be no greater honor bestowed on this undeserving Child of the King than to “seek and to save the lost,” and to bring them to know and experience, “Redeeming love—a love that knows no limit!”

Though sent to hard places, with few resources, and fewer co-laborers, what a joy it is know “Redeeming love, a love that never dies.”

If God had not loved and given His Son, if Christ had not loved and given His life, and if the Spirit of Christ had not pursued after me I would have been lost and without hope. I certainly would not have been leading a Christmas choir.

I remember my father singing, “How can I make a lesser sacrifice when Jesus gave His all?” Indeed!

Bonhoeffer spoke out against “Cheap grace.” If cheap grace is “forgiveness without repentance,” cheap love is “passion without sacrifice.” Christ’s entire life and His excruciating death witnesses against “Cheap love.”

With “The love of God,” newly “shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost,” I led my choir, “My soul shall sing throughout the endless ages . . . ”

“Why me?” Because He first loved me.

Last year we walked on the sandy beaches of Normandy, France—the same beaches that 76 years earlier had been stained with the blood of American soldiers advancing against Hitler on D-Day. We next visited the American cemetery nearby. As we walked down the wide sidewalks, took in the beautifully maintained park-like landscaping, saw Old Glory waving in the summer breeze, we heard an American choir singing, “Oh beautiful for heroes proved. In liberating strife. Who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life! America! America! May God thy gold refine!”

As I looked over the rows and rows of crosses marking the graves of our bravest, I thought, “I don’t know one of these soldiers. I don’t know their names. I don’t know their families. I don’t know their stories.”

Eisenhower I know. MacArthur I know. Patton I know. But buried beneath these crosses were the men who paid the ultimate price for my freedom. I didn’t know them but they were the ones who had won the victory.

Over the centuries, countless thousands, and millions of Christian soldiers have carried forward the Gospel against the onslaught of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Sure we know the names of great Christian leaders but the names of those faithful shepherds who cared for small flocks, the names of the sacrificial missionaries who carried the name of Jesus to places where He was not known, the names of the committed soulwinners who have brought Christ to the lost and then brought the lost to Christ, are unknown to us.

Yet these are the men and women who for the love of Christ and the lost He came to save, have given, and sacrificed, and in many cases died so that we might know this “Love Divine all loves excelling!”



Pastor Rick Jones is the founding Pastor of Faith Community Church in St. Louis, MO. He is the editor of FAITH IN THE FUTURE.

Vickie, his wife, is a 3rd Grade Teacher in the Ferguson, MO School District. His daughter Tressa is a freshman at the University of Illinois.

You may view his blog at [www.reachingforth.blogspot.com](http://www.reachingforth.blogspot.com)





# A Woman's Perspective

By Stephanie Burley

Stephanie is married to Greg, and they have four wonderful children. She teaches at Pilgrim Christian School in Lima, Ohio, and is very active in her local church. They live in Lima, Ohio. Stephanie is a regular contributor to *Pilgrim Ness & Notes*

## Loving Through Listening

"Mo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!" Sound familiar? My youngest daughter has a habit of hollering for me from wherever she feels like it (regardless of where I am), and immediately asking whatever question is on her mind at the moment. Since I usually can't make out a word she is saying, other than the initial call, I holler back, "If you want to talk to me, you need to come to where I am so that I can understand what you're saying." In just a minute or two she will appear, usually breathless from running down the steps and around to my room at the back of the house. There she will share whatever important information she has for me, and I will see her, hear her and understand her.

"You didn't hear a word I said, did you," Greg will say, often as we are traveling down the road. He has figured out that if I am texting, I literally cannot hear anything that is going on around me! (Tell me I'm not the only one?!)

This isn't a purposeful shutting out of the most important person in my life, just a serious inability for me to communicate with two different people at the same time. He's learning not to take it personally, and I'm learning to push pause on my often lengthy texts if I hear his voice.

As a teacher, I can recall many times where I could tell my words were falling on deaf ears. Or maybe my students were hearing me, but not listening to me. Did you know there is a distinct difference?

Communication makes up a huge percentage of our day, and unfortunately, active listening is an area in which many of us are not efficient. We would rather read a text or an email than take a phone call. Why? Because we only want the information we deem critical without the effort of pleasantries and accompanying "non-essentials." The art of listening is a broad and interesting study, but for now I want to encourage all of us to realize the loving and inexpensive gift that we can give to others simply by listening. Here are a few common, yet often-overlooked ways we can practice engaged listening:

**Make eye contact** – It is so easy to be distracted by all the things around us during conversation, especially if we are in a crowded room such as a party or a church lobby. Staying connected visually helps to eliminate interruptions, and lets the other person know we are focused on their situation.

**Repeat key elements** – As a person shares, she will benefit by our response even more if it includes important words or phrases she has just verbalized. It will also help her own perspective when she hears her words coming from someone else.

**Ask leading questions** – If the other person wants feedback, we may need more information. As we listen efficiently, we can connect the conversational dots and ask questions that help bridge gaps in our understanding of the situation.

**Read body language** – This is a tool that is lost in the age of digital communication. If you're like me, you often hit the delete button just because the words on the page may convey a different message than you intend. The beauty of face to face conversation is that it allows us to focus not only on what the person is saying, but what they are feeling, and that can make a tremendous difference.

It is through effective communication that we are able to build trust and strengthen our relationships with those whom we are meant to love and serve.

*The most basic of all human needs is to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them* - Ralph Nichols



# News from around the Conference

News articles on this page have been submitted by various Pilgrim Churches. We reserve the right to edit the submissions as necessary to fit space requirements. E-mail all news to: [midwestphc@gmail.com](mailto:midwestphc@gmail.com)

## **Noblesville, IN —(by Amber Fish)**

Greetings from NPHC!

December 12th was our annual church Christmas dinner. The setting was beautiful and much effort was put into the decorations and preparation. December 16th was Christmas caroling with great attendance.



The Christmas caroling crew did a wonderful job of spreading Christmas cheer to those who may not be able to get out as much anymore and there were many laughs throughout the night.

December 23rd was Christmas Sunday. NPHC choir sang and the evening service was the closing Christmas program. If you haven't seen the NPHC Kids Christmas story, check out our FB site. It is a must-see!

January has brought some harsh weather, but God has been dealing with hearts and meeting needs already this year.

May God bless and keep you in 2019!

## **Rochester Hills, MI —(by Leah Plemmons)**

Here at the Rochester Hills PHC we look back over these last several weeks, thanking God for answers to prayer and His Presence in our services!

We all shared the burden of concern when we found out one of our board members, Pattie Hartkopf, had been diagnosed with cancer. We surrounded Pattie in prayer before her cancer surgery and were so grateful to receive the news that the cancer was gone! Jesus deserves all praise!

Our Bible college student, Clayton Plemmons, came home in November and gave a presentation on the mission work in China. He had been asked to go to China over Christmas break with his professor, Rev. Elverne Asbury. Over \$1,000.00 was raised for this cause from our little church. Our people have giving hearts!!

On Sunday, December 16th, we met at the parsonage before our morning service. *Pastries at the Parsonage* was an enjoyable time of fellowship before the Christmas holiday. Visitors included: Cheryl Sneed and Iris Sneed from Indiana, David and Kitty Richards from Whitmore Lake, and Kathy Isham from Utica.

On the Sunday before Christmas, Amber Fish was here for a Christmas piano concert, *Christmas Through the Carols*. Our congregation enjoyed the beautiful music, and was touched by little Camden Fish as he shared a song and poem in the service as well. It was great to meet the daughter-in-law and grandson (KC and Dylan) of Don and Kris Scholz. Don and Kris began faithfully attending our church in August and their testimonies have been a blessing!

We are now into the new year. May its pages be filled with God's guidance that our congregation will flourish and abound in His work for His glory!



# PASTOR TO PASTOR

Ministering to those who minister to others

## Loving Your People . . .

By Rev. Dan Plemmons

It was 20 years ago that we left a tiny town in Indiana with a population of approximately 600 to move to Rochester Hills, Michigan, just north of Detroit. Talk about culture shock!

To be fair, it wasn't entirely new to me because I grew up in this area, but it was a very new experience to Leah who had been born and raised in small-town Petersburg, Indiana.

I remember after we'd been here a few days, she said to me, "Dan, this is NOTHING like Indiana! When we drive from city to city, if there isn't a sign letting us know, we would have no idea that we have gone from one city to another . . . they all seem to run together!"

I well remember the day that I decided to take her down to a pretty rough section of Detroit! Talk about an eye-opener! We viewed scenes that day that we weren't used to seeing and to be honest, we were both more than ready to turn the vehicle north and head back to Rochester Hills.

But our ultimate reason for uprooting our family and leaving the familiar was to pastor the people of the Rochester Hills Pilgrim Holiness Church.

Rev. Ron Hartkopf had pastored this church for 37 years and it was easy to follow him because I had known him for nearly all of my life! In fact, he and my dad were dear friends of more than 40 years. Prior to me accepting this pastorate, he asked me if I minded if they still attended here and I assured him that I wanted him to remain here as part of our church. They did, and he was a tremendous asset to our congregation up until 2012 when he passed away. I was privileged to preach his funeral service.

As I think about the different people that have attended here over the last twenty years, I smile because the memories are good. The memories are good because the people have held such a special place in our hearts!!

Sure, there are days when I get discouraged, and there are Sunday mornings when I sit on the platform and wish the church building was filled to capacity, but there have also been many Sunday mornings when I sat on the platform looking out across the audience, and I said, "Thank you God for allowing me to shepherd the greatest group of people in the world."

You see, when you are a pastor, you may not acquire earthly wealth, you might not always have a life of ease. In fact, there may be times when you won't even have the money to go on a vacation, but you live this life without regret (hopefully) because God has given you the high calling of shepherding His people.

My dad used to say, "If God has called you to the ministry, never stoop to be the President of the United States of America!" And how true that is!

On any given Sunday morning as I walk onto the platform and gaze out across the congregation, I look into the eyes of different people . . .

Some are retired, some are middle-aged, and some are not yet married.  
Some live comfortably, while others work hard to make ends meet.  
Some live exemplary Christian lives while others need to seek Christ.

Yet they are my people and I love ALL of them!

When they are admitted into the hospital, I am there. It doesn't matter what time of the day or night it is, if I am made aware of it, I will be there! There have been a few times when they have said, "Pastor Dan, there is no need for you to come to the hospital because everything will be just fine!" But I still go, because they are my people and I want to be there for them in their time of need.

I love good preaching. It matters not to me if the minister is loud or soft, long-winded or short-winded. If he has taken the time to prepare his heart and mind to deliver the Word of God, I will sit there and listen to him. I'm sure you may have noticed, not all pastors are gifted in preaching, and not all preachers are gifted when it comes to pastoring. But God uses their gifts for His glory.

Back before I started pastoring, Rev. James Sneed gave me some very good advice. He said, "Dan, in your ministry, you WILL encounter problems, but always remember that how you handle it will be the key to rectifying them!"

Not long ago, I heard an interviewer ask a gentleman, "What advice would you give yourself if you could roll back the clock 30 years?" I've thought a lot about that question. How about you? What advice would you give yourself if you could roll back the clock to your early years of ministry?

May I encourage you to always live everyday with that thought in mind?

There is a southern gospel song written by Rodney Griffin of Greater Vision that speaks to that issue and I'd like to give you the words :

#### **Verse**

*May I be so honest, can I share from my heart  
You see, I'm so far from perfect that today I bear the scars  
There is no one among us that doesn't live without regrets  
So may we use the pain behind us to walk in victory up ahead*

#### **Chorus**

*Lord, help me to live like I wish I had lived in the past  
May I stay in the way of the narrow and free of regrets  
And may I surrender whatever is holding me back  
Lord, help me to live like I wish I had lived in the past*



Rev. Dan Plemmons has pastored the Rochester Hills, MI Pilgrim Holiness Church for the past 20 years. They have been in full-time ministry since 1993.

He is married to Leah and they have two children. (Amber is married to Seth Fish and they have two children and live in Noblesville, Indiana and Clayton is a Sophomore at Union Bible College)

If you would like to connect with Pastor Dan concerning this article, please click [HERE](#).

# What is #1 For A Pastor?

By Dr. Randall McElwain

In determining priorities for a new year, I have sometimes used this thought experiment: If I was limited to working on just one activity for the year, where would I spend my time? What project would be #1? That experiment helps me to focus on the most important aspects of ministry. As pastors, I hope that you can do more than one thing this year. But if you could accomplish only one task, what is #1 for 2019?

Some pastors would answer, "Preaching. The primary task of the pastor is to preach sound biblical sermons." That is a great answer; your people need to feed on the meat of God's Word. Time spent studying Scripture, applying it to the needs of your congregation, and preaching it with power is never wasted.

Some pastors would answer, "Visitation. I minister most effectively to the needs of my flock in their home." Again, that is a good answer. Your members should know that their pastor cares about their individual needs.

Some pastors would answer, "Outreach. I serve the Kingdom of God best when I am reaching unbelievers with the gospel." Again, a great answer. To paraphrase Richard Baxter, "We should preach as dying men to dying men." Souls are in the balance.

Some pastors would answer, "Discipleship training. We are called to make disciples." I agree completely. Evangelism alone is not enough; we must train new believers in discipleship.

Some pastors would answer, "Leadership. My role is to lead a team of workers to accomplish the ministry of the church. I cannot do it all. My role is leadership." Again, I agree. Effective pastors build a team that works together to accomplish God's goal for the church.

There are many other good answers, but I have come to believe that the most important thing a pastor can do for his people is to be like Christ. Of course, that is important for every Christian. But as a pastor, you must model Christlikeness to your people.

If Christlikeness is your #1 priority, it will shape everything else. Your preaching will be rooted in a deep walk with God. Your visitation will be shaped by a love for people. Your outreach will be grounded in a Christlike passion for the lost. You will train disciples as you continue to grow as a disciple. You will lead your team with Christ's servant spirit. Everything you do will be shaped by a growing Christlikeness.

So, how do we grow in Christlikeness in 2019? Not through more seminars, programs, or the latest fad. We are shaped in Christlikeness through Scripture; more than studying for Sunday's sermon, but time that is spent digging deeply into God's Word.

We are shaped in Christlikeness through prayer; (not routine) but time spent seeking the heart of God.

We are shaped in Christlikeness through fellowship with godly people; not just meaningless chatter, but a deep sharing in the things of God.



## THE SAINTS AND BACK SEATS

I visited your church on a recent Lord's Day, I'll ask a question and see what you say,  
The question that really has me beat, Is, "why do the saints prefer the back seats"?  
Weary from travel and so glad to find, A Holiness church, we'd want no other kind,  
We saw your sign, with name and time bold, your church looked so spacious, a crowd it would hold.  
The service had started as we did arrive, we heard the good singing, spirited and alive!

Just our kind of service, we thought to ourselves, we'll slip inside like two tiny elves.  
But what a surprise as we stepped in the door, we felt like we wanted to fall through the floor,  
The back pews were taken by the Saints in that place, and I must admit, I drew back a pace.  
We looked at each other with very red faces, then headed up front to all the empty spaces,  
The service was great, the Spirit was grand, but there is still one thing I can't understand.

Am I wrong in wondering, "Do they really care"? "Are they happy and glad that we chose to come there"?  
This question still troubles me and I will repeat, "Why do some saints prefer the back seat"? -Margaret McElwain

**(Continued from previous page)**

We are shaped in Christlikeness through practicing the spiritual disciplines or means of grace; not just spiritual activity, but a focused pursuit of godliness.

These things are not about "earning" God's favor. They are about putting ourselves in the place to receive God's abundant grace. These are things that godly people in all generations have done to grow in Christlikeness. These are things that Jesus himself did during his years on earth.

I'm not suggesting in any way that preaching, visitation, outreach, team leadership, and any number of other things are unimportant. But all of these must flow out of a Christlike heart and Christlike actions.

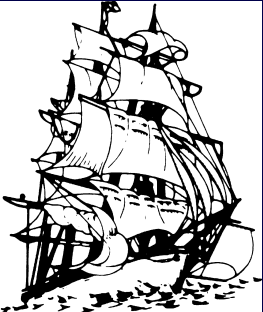
Ironically, of all these activities, growth in Christlikeness is least likely to win you a "Pastor of the Year" award in America's celebrity culture. Great preaching will be recognized by attentive listeners. Compassionate care for members is appreciated by those who value your visits. Effective outreach will be reflected in the annual attendance report. But evaluation forms rarely ask, "Is the pastor Christlike?"

If Christlikeness is your #1 goal for 2019, you will have to do it not for recognition at conference time, not for recognition in the community, but because your highest goal is pleasing God. Is that a worthwhile priority for 2019? **Think about it!**



Dr. Randall McElwain is married to Sue and they live in Hobe Sound, Florida, where he serves on the staff at Hobe Sound Bible Church as Discipleship Pastor as well as Teaching Pastor at the Palm Beach Chinese Christian Chapel. They have two grown children.

Dr. Randall McElwain is one of our very own and is a very busy person. We really appreciate his willingness to share his thoughts with us in each issue of *Pilgrim News & Notes*.



*Pilgrim News & Notes* is the official publication of the Midwest Pilgrim Holiness Church and is published bi-monthly.

*The main goal of Pilgrim News & Notes is to be an encouragement to our readers, as well as a valuable source of information to those with connections or interests in our Conference.*

*All submissions are welcome, however, we reserve the right to edit as necessary to fit design/space needs. Not all submissions will be published.*

*Please email all submissions to the editor via the contact info below:*

[midwestphc@gmail.com](mailto:midwestphc@gmail.com)

### ***Conference Info:***

**Conference President**, Rev. Don Nichols

**Conference Vice President**, Rev. Mark Arnett

**Conference Secretary**, Rev. Tim Forsee

**Conference Treasurer**, Rev. Bryan Line

**Conference Missionary Representative**, Dr. Craig Dahler

**Conference Youth Director**, Rev. John Zeigler

## MEDIA MINISTRY

**Check us out on the web!**

The Midwest Pilgrim Holiness Church strives to not only be relevant, but we want to be accessible to those who want to learn more about our Conference, as well as to those who are interested in possibly becoming a part of us!

Our Conference website has been in existence since 2004 and is updated frequently. We also have an active presence on Facebook. Check us out via the links below!

[www.midwestphc.org](http://www.midwestphc.org)



Conference Page



Missions Page



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