



# Outreach Newsletter

A Publication of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church  
Board of Outreach North America



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## ONA Can Help

By Rev. Clint Davis, Chester ARP Church, Chester, SC

Recently three of us younger ministers asked ONA Director Alan Avera to help us address some questions, concerns, and fears.

**Question: How can we lead our congregations in a more outreach oriented direction?**

Alan gave some great insight on the development of a vision for outreach. He explained that since it is really God's vision that we want, that vision is discerned rather than created. Prayer is a crucial part of the discernment process as we seek to understand how God wants to use our church, in our community, in our time. One of the suggestions he gave was to review the church's history to see where God's mighty hand of blessing has been on our congregation and where his hand has not been so obvious. This can help us better understand the identity of the church, the DNA, as well as ways God has providentially guided the congregation. Understanding the characteristic ways God has worked through this church in the past can provide insight on how God might work in the future. A review of the history might also identify a sin in the past that is holding the church back because the sin was covered over rather than being confessed and reconciled.

The other key point I gained from Alan in this process was to make sure we get the leadership in the congregation on board with the future plans for outreach. The people must take ownership in any development and implementation of an outreach vision.

**Concern: Where does a pastor go to meet non-Christians, especially when he has the responsibility of preaching and caring for the congregation?**

Alan gave us two great suggestions. One, intentionally seek to build relationships with men, women and children who we come in contact with in the community. Two, find opportunities to intentionally follow-up with the non-Christians that we meet. For example, if someone tells you his son just made the baseball team, make it a point to follow up in a few weeks to ask how baseball is going. Look for ways to build the relationship.

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### From the Director

Dr. John Kimmons  
Director of Evangelism and Care

Evangelism begins when we hear God call our name and commission us for His purposes. Our manual is God's Word, our coach is the Holy Spirit, and Jesus leads our team. "Those possessed of genuine love have God's life in them and are well acquainted with Him. Those who are not have no knowledge of Him, for God is love." (1 John 4:7-8, paraphrased)

We want to be with those we love and tend to fall in love with people we are with. The non-Christian is in desperate need of the love of Jesus, and God has sent us to be His messengers of this love. People who discover Jesus to be the "Lover of their soul" often get the message through a friend. Each of us is uniquely gifted to minister to those God "plops" in our life. We must determine to spend time with them so they see the love of Jesus in action.

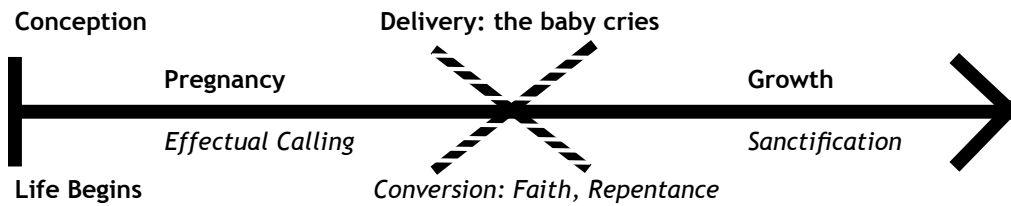
Often God brings visitors to church, and as we follow them up, the Spirit gives us a growing desire to help them find their joy in Christ. Words prompted by the Holy Spirit seem to come at the right time from past training in the Scriptures, and some become His disciples. Evangelism involves falling in love with Jesus and His Word, and being guided by the Holy Spirit. Sharing your faith seems to be a matter of being where God desires with the words He gives.

Eagle Scouts have learned to be prepared for rain, emergencies and blessings. Christians stay prepared by praying that God will lead them to people He is preparing to hear the message with open hearts.

# Spiritual Birthline: An Invaluable Tool

## Physical Birth

Based on John 3:1-8



## Spiritual Birth- Regeneration



By Dr. Alan J. Avera  
ONA Executive Director

As a busy pastor, I appreciated tools that helped me apply the Word of God to people's lives. The spiritual birthline diagram is a tool I have used in my pastor's class, a class for helping potential new members prepare to take the vows for church membership. This has been such a helpful tool to me, that I now ask Steve Smallman to explain it to the students taking the evangelism course each summer at Erskine Theological Seminary.

In *Spiritual Birthline: Understanding How We Experience the New Birth* (Crossway, 2006), Stephen E. Smallman writes: "The simple concept of comparing physical and spiritual birth has stood the test of time and has proved invaluable in helping people understand the teaching of Jesus about the new birth." In John 3:1-8 Jesus tells Nicodemus, "I tell you

the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

- Spiritual birth, just like physical birth, is fundamentally a process. It is clearly understood to be the result of something that took place earlier followed by a season of gestation (pregnancy). The process of coming to a conscious faith, once the work of God has begun, is what could be thought of as spiritual pregnancy. Theologically we call this effectual calling.
- God uses the prayers of others, the witness of friends and family, the preaching of the Word, and even suffering to bring us to this place. But once we finally come to a vital faith, we can look back and see God's hand at work long before we believe.
- The birthline diagram makes the obvious point that one who is alive grows up. Growth is a slow process, with many starts and stops, but the day of delivery is the beginning of a new phase in the overall process. Theo-

logically we call this growth sanctification.

- The birthline diagram helps people think about where they are in the overall process, and it helps a pastor understand better how to function as a "physician of the soul" in the person's life.

### Using the Birthline Diagram By Stephen Smallman

The birthline diagram is useful in helping believers sort out their own conversion experience, but I have also found it helpful in conversations with those who seem to be on the way to Christ. I will get to know them (or perhaps I have come to know them through repeated visits to the church or as neighbors or family members), but I ask questions to learn about their background and spiritual influences. I then explain that I see the term, "born again," as a picture of how God works in the heart, and draw out the "birthline" as a simple timeline with a dotted "X" through the middle, representing the time of actually coming to faith, or conversion. In almost every instance, the timeline opens the way for a person to describe their own journey, and from that a conversation about the Gospel itself will flow naturally.

The key, in my experience, whatever "tool" we use, is to learn to listen with genuine interest, and try to ask insightful questions. The Spirit is the one who must change the heart, but we want to be his instrument.

If you want to know more, go to the website: [www.birthlineministries.com](http://www.birthlineministries.com).

## Opportunities

By Rev. Rick Anderson  
Tri-State Community Church  
Chester, WV

We believe that sharing the Gospel starts with prayer. We drive around and pray for the residents in our community asking for opportunities. We are also working on building and utilizing a prayer team. I send notice to our team a few days before we go out and then upon return I send them a report. The ministry really affects the prayer team—they look forward to seeing how God is answering prayer.



God gave us an opportunity at a Saturday flea market. We approached both shoppers and vendors. I introduced myself as the pastor of Tri-State Community Church and said, "I find that I not only need to study Scripture, but I also

must be out talking with people in order to preach. Do you mind if I ask you a couple of questions?" Praise be to God that almost without exception everyone was pleased to talk with us, in fact some thanked us for talking with them!

The first person we talked with was a woman named Tina. I asked her if she believed that Jesus could save her from her sins and she said, "No! I am too bad!" We told her about the forgiveness that we have found in Christ—forgiveness available only by trusting in Jesus.

Next we spoke with a musician and I asked him, "If you die today and God asks you why he should let you into his heaven, what would you say?" He smiled and quickly said, "Lord, you should let



## Birds in the Tree

By Dr. Bob Illman, Connections Presbyterian Church, Huntsville, AL

One of my favorite parables in the New Testament is the parable of the mustard seed. Church plants, like that seed, start out small, but grow into useful trees that, Jesus tells us, attract birds. At Connections Presbyterian I suppose we have been successful in bird feeding evangelism. Our converts have found us, coming with broken “wings.” They are unmarried couples, those who are believers in God but not resting in His Son for salvation, and those who have what appear to be insurmountable family, legal, or financial problems. All of those birds have found shelter in the branches of God’s church. We have been able to share the Gospel in word and deed until they undergo an amazing transforma-

tion. Those birds become branches!

There are lots of evangelism plans out there, but Jesus said that the growing church, providing rest in His name would be how the Kingdom would advance in this world.

While none of our members consider themselves great one-on-one evangelists, all take joy in the way God has used us together as His tree. As a church planter, I suppose that I had in mind what kind of birds God would bring. I could not have been more wrong! God did not send the healthy, beautiful, sweet singing birds of my imagination. Instead He sent us birds from rehab, unmarried households, and bankruptcy courts. They all needed a tree where they could be transformed into branches.

## ...ONA Can Help

Continued from page 1

**Fear:** How do you transition from a normal conversation to one about the Gospel?

Alan was very clear and simple with his response to this fear. Be yourself and let the conversations naturally flow from the relationships you are building. This took a lot of pressure off of me. Sometimes I need to hear, “Just be Clint.” That sounds so simple, but it is a necessary lesson to learn, or, at least, be reminded of.

**Question:** What about evangelism

me into your heaven because I have been a faithful musician and I have made people smile. I want to play with all of your great musicians!” We small talked about music for awhile, then I said, “If we could get to heaven by being a good musician who makes people smile, then what is Christ doing on the cross?” He said, “Aaaah! I knew you were going to get me. That is a good point. I never thought of that.” I said, “are you ready to repent and trust solely on Christ for your salvation?” He said, “I am. I am.”

One of the last guys we spoke with was exceptionally broken. He had a church background and knew the truth. He had only seen his wife one time this year and had not been going to church. I invited

**training for the congregation?**

Alan provided samples of two resources: *Christianity Explored* and *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. *Christianity Explored* is just what its name implies, the exploration of Christianity. It uses the Gospel of Mark to help present the Gospel to both church members and non-members. *Becoming a Contagious Christian* is a resource for training church members to share their faith.

Alan has invited us to get together with him again in the fall to follow-up. Note: The ONA staff is available as a resource to pastors and churches.

him to Sunday worship. He said he had to work. Then I invited him to a Thursday Bible study and he said, “I am not up for going to church.” I responded and said, “See, when folks say they do not have time to go to church, there is almost always much more going on than the time factor. You know that you need to get back under the Word.”

These are just some of the people we talked to. Please keep all of their precious souls in your prayers, along with the several others that I did not mention.

**Pray that God would give you opportunities.**



## Marion's Story

By Dr. Jan Sattlem  
ONA Board Chairman  
Good Shepherd ARP,  
Houston, TX

Marion is a grandmother. She came to Bob and Pat’s house because they had been friends over the years and now they were hosting a Bible study. They had become genuine Christians last year and were invited to our church after one of our “bringers” overheard them discussing their search for a church at a Halloween party. Bob had been raised in the church and had not graced the doorway in over thirty-five years. He finally got it and the Holy Spirit got him.

Bob and Pat brought others. Sully and Mary came. They met the Lord. Pam P. came. She had recently rehabbed from a near fatal stroke and knew she was here for a purpose. She met the Lord. Jane came. She knew the Lord but was not being fed where she was. John and Pam were invited by Bob and Pat and they met the Lord too. Sometimes, Bob and Pat’s friends fill two rows at church!

Recently, they hosted a *Christianity Explored* study in their home, and Marion had heard about Bob’s transformation and wanted to experience it first-hand. Marion sat each week in the study and silently wished that her faith had Bob’s fervor. She wondered, “If God could work so powerfully and strongly in someone like Bob, could He also do it in her?” Marion had attended a large church in our area, but Bob’s faith alarmed her. She knew she did not have that.

One Sunday I said, “There may even be someone here today who is hearing me talk about this genuine faith and they know in their heart of hearts that they don’t possess it. Won’t you come and talk about it with me?” Marion and I met a few days after that. I had the distinct privilege of introducing her to Bob’s God. Soon Galen, Marion’s grandson, will be leading our worship team.

Here is what is instructive for me—these folks are almost all over fifty, most are over sixty, and some in their seventies. Generally I start by handing them the pamphlet *Your Spiritual Journey*. I say, “Why don’t we get together

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# Inmate Comes to Faith

By Rev. Moises Chan, Havana ARP Church, Havana, AR

During my days off I visit a prison in Little Rock where a friend and I have been sharing the Gospel with one of the inmates. When I first started visiting him, all he could do was cry because he was sorry for what he did and how he let down his family. We have built a friendship with him and given him a Bible.

I recently received this letter from him: "I am happy to report I finally understand... the only way to be free from this black wounded heart is to have a relationship with God. I have spent 45 years of my life in a fog. The Bible is the instruction manual for everything if I only read, understand, and obey. I know now I am here for God's purpose. I am starting to see things clearer, slowly but surely."

He is excited about his faith and has given away three Bibles as he begins to share about God's love with other inmates. We are thankful for ways we can share the hope that comes through faith in Jesus Christ!

## Continued from page 3 ...Marion

and talk some time about your spiritual interests? Here is a pamphlet that can help us diagnose just where you might be on this journey. Why don't you fill it out, give me a call and we will get together?" God does it all, doesn't He! At any age, sometimes the best thing we can do is ask.

# News and Notes from the Field

**Communion Presbyterian in Irvine, CA** pastor Kent Moorlach was invited to host a radio program this summer. The shows were on the "Dead Sea Scrolls," and a show discussing, "Christian Manipulation."

**SonLife Church in Jacksonville, FL** sent their first short term missionary to Haiti in June for 12 days with Literacy for Haiti ministries. They are also partnering with the First Coast Women's Services in support of young women with difficult pregnancies. This fall SonLife will be involved with the Downs Syndrome Association of Jacksonville's "Buddy Walk."



**Riverside Presbyterian in Prattville, AL** had a work day at a home on June 28 with the purpose of serving the community and being an incarnation of the body of Christ. (right)



**Hope Chapel in Greensboro, NC** did a week-long (July 17-24) community outreach called "Our GSO." They invested almost 700 volunteer hours serving in schools, neighborhoods, refugee communities and with other organizations. View a video recap at [www.ourgso.com](http://www.ourgso.com).

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