

I would just like to take the time and share with you my experience of the last 10 months of a 1-year residency program offered by the International Baptist Convention. I am currently serving as Pastoral Intern at Immanuel Baptist Church, Wiesbaden, Germany. My main responsibilities are the building of Missions, centered around serving others, and the building of Life Groups, bringing members together for small fellowship groups to study God's Word, to share experiences, and to live out life with one another. I have also had the privilege and honor of being able to share God's Word on several occasions with my church family.

I can honestly say that each task God has allowed me to participate in over the last 10 months has challenged me to step out of my comfort zone. Each time I stepped out in faith and left my comfort zone, I found myself sometimes dealing with feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and fear. Sometimes feeling and saying to myself, "Did I do that right?," "Why didn't I say this or say that?," "I could have done that better!," or "I should of done this instead of that!," and the list goes on. In those moments I found myself sometimes second-guessing myself, which led to feelings of frustration and disappointment. Looking back now, I can truthfully say, I did and said exactly what God wanted me to do and say in each of those moments. God has been with me every step of the way.

I have a strong drive and passion to share the love of Jesus Christ and to serve others. This last year God has allowed me to witness so many wonderful experiences, each leaving me with a feeling of how amazing and loving our God is. God has blessed me with a new-found confidence, courage, and strength to be able to answer the calling I feel He has placed in my heart.

A year ago, I did not know exactly what to expect upon entering the residency program. It has given me the opportunity to experience first-hand the calling and path God has placed me on. My relationship with God has grown and become more intense over this last year. God has given me direction and clarity for my life that I did not have at the beginning of the program. If I were to have to describe my experience from the last 10 months, I would describe it with one of my favorite Bible verses, John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing". Apart from God, I can do nothing.

I still have a lot to learn and I know at times I will face difficulties, but by focusing on Jesus Christ and seeking God's will, I will succeed for His glory and His name's sake. Through God's love, grace, and mercy, I will be where I am supposed to be and doing what He has called me to do.

Many Blessings,

Phillip Vandergrift