

HIGHLIGHTS

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My Family
Principles & Values
to Learn From

Our Family
Celebrating in Midst
of Disagreements

A photograph of a church interior during a service. The stage is lit with warm lights, and a band consisting of a guitarist, a drummer, and a pianist is performing. A large, glowing blue cross graphic is mounted on the wall behind the stage. The congregation is seated in blue chairs, and many people are standing, some with their hands raised in praise. The overall atmosphere is one of active participation and worship.

THEME
CELEBRATING OUR FAMILY



Photo by Judith Lynn Maxwell

Theme: Celebrating Our Family

As I look back at the recent Annual Convention Meeting in Kaiserslautern, Germany, I believe that we truly reached the goal of our theme: Celebrating Our Family. The feedback has been predominantly positive – both what was received at the conclusion of our meetings as well as conversations and emails from those who attended online or in person. “I have never had so many conversations at an ACM. It was wonderful!”, said one pastor. This comment reflects how much the relationships that we have in the IBC mean to so many of us.

The ACM is a business meeting but it is also a time of worship. God is faithful. We celebrated His work in the IBC, and we also spent some time discussing some issues to address without breaking fellowship with one another. Whether you were present with us or are now able to read the stories and reports, I hope that you will be encouraged by all that was presented. Because I have an idea of how much effort went into preparing the ACM, I am grateful that the hard work paid off and thank the staff, the presidents, the entire ELT, and Faith Baptist Church for their good work! To God be the glory!

Tim Faulkner
General Secretary

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 Am Dachsberg 98, 60435 Frankfurt/Main, Germany
 Phone: +49 (0) 69 9540 8505
 Email: admin@ibc-churches.org
www.ibc-churches.org
 Tim Faulkner, General Secretary
 Judith Lynn Maxwell, Editor
 Cover photo: Victoria Aleksandravicene

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General Secretary's Report

Celebrating Gains, Recognizing Gaps, and Receiving Grace

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such confidence we have through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Corinthians 3:1-6 ESV).

These verses remind us that God's servants find their credibility and confidence in the context of God's greater work. When faced with an examination of the results of his efforts, and apparently feeling the need to defend himself, the Apostle Paul found comfort in knowing that God's work was evident in the lives of people who had been transformed by the gospel as a result of his ministry.

In 2 Corinthians Paul compares his ministry to the ministry of Moses. Paul was able to assert that his ministry was not only credible, it was more glorious than Moses' ministry. Why? Because Moses' ministry was written in letters on stone (3:7), and Moses' face was covered with a veil (3:12). Moses would come from God's presence with a radiant face that no one could look at for more than an instant. That radiance, however, would gradually fade away.

Paul's ministry, on the other hand, was written on tablets of human hearts and was a ministry which removed the veil, allowing men and women to gaze on God's glory. Their lives were changed forever (3:14-18). What an encouragement to know that God is doing His work in all the circumstances of life and through people like us! Paul says it this way: *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."* (4:7).

In all sorts of times God's servants find their credibility and confidence in the context of God's greater work. This is a great encouragement as we are coming out of a COVID year. This may not be the best year for cheerful reporting, but as we account for spiritual goals we are able to celebrate gains, recognize gaps, and be reminded of grace.

GAINS TO CELEBRATE

Like Paul, we can look back at our recent ministries and celebrate gains. The past year has reminded us just how much we depend on the Lord and each other. As we begin to meet in person again, we are reminded of how much we appreciate being together.

At the end of August the Executive Leadership

Team finally came back together for a face-to-face meeting. In a normal year we would do that twice, but we have become accustomed to the life on Zoom. After having been physically apart for a year and a half, it was a joy to be in the same room for a meeting and around a table sharing a meal again. I appreciate the work of the core strategy directors (David Fresch, Scott Corwin, Barry Cole, Judith Lynn Maxwell, and Darryl Evetts). They are dedicated servants and seek to come alongside IBC leaders and churches in our mission to "mobilize and multiply disciple-making churches."

I have tried to step into the GS role with a desire to pick up where Jimmy Martin left off and to move us forward. I was not the only new member of the team. Barry Cole transitioned out of Strengthening Churches and we welcomed in Dan Maxton. We are also anticipating a change of leadership in the Building Connections core strategy. I am grateful for the work of the Nominating Team (the three presidents along with Carsten Lotz, Gilbert Van Beuren, and Dina Dreessen) in examining worthy candidates and narrowing down our choice to one who fits well with the rest of the ELT.



by Tim Faulkner
General Secretary





The presidents (Nick Howard, Nathanael Fawcett, and Erik Nielsen) are the Personnel Committee of the IBC. They help make decisions about the roles and responsibilities of myself and the rest of the staff. They are also my closest confidants and share with me some of the leadership responsibility. The calls that they make each month to IBC pastors allow pastors to know how important they are to us.

I cannot estimate how valuable it is to have the opportunity of sharing my outlook and experiences with a close group of trusted advisors and friends. The ELT offers perspective, and they also offer themselves.

The staff, Lorraine Stringer and Judith Lynn Maxwell, are highly competent co-workers in daily service to our IBC family. They are also a wealth of information and always ready to serve for the sake of God's kingdom. I appreciate the strength that they provide in support of the work of the ministry taking place in our churches.

I want to make sure that I do not fail to thank the IBC Finance Team! Bob Hnat is the leader but team members Joyce Geerts and Joseph Meijs alternate with Bob and Judith Lynn to examine the finances each month. Thanks to their thorough service to the IBC we can feel confident about our stewardship of God's resources to fund ministry.

As COVID regulations have loosened I have been able to increase my travel. I have enjoyed the challenge of sharing about the IBC in a way that helps our churches to feel connected. I also have had some timely visits in churches that were facing some challenging times with conflict, discouragement, and/or leadership transition. Some churches met for many weeks online (75 straight weeks in Wiesbaden), but ministry continued and, in some cases, new small groups were started and more people joined prayer meetings that had moved online.

Because churches adapted well to a new online reality, I was able to preach from my office in Frankfurt in churches located in places like São Paulo, Dubai, and London. I also met with pastor search committees who were able to find their next pastor during a worldwide pandemic. Out of 11 churches who were seeking pastors, seven have called their next leader.

Interim pastors blessed many different churches this past year. In some cases, these were pastors who had relocated but continued to serve. In other cas-

es, they were pastors who had been called but were unable to move physically until border restrictions lifted. For example, some would get up in the early hours in the U.S. to preach in a service in Europe. A few couples were able to relocate to serve as interims. The number of interim pastors who serve IBC churches in transition continues to grow. We are truly blessed! I am encouraged by the love and dedication that is shown for IBC churches.

2021 provided several examples of our commitment to raise up future leaders from within our churches. In the spring of 2021 the Aquila Initiative (www.aquila-initiative.org/about) launched. Several of the IBC's core strategies continue to offer opportunities to develop future leaders. B.H. Carroll classes are offered to both leaders and members of our churches. We are also seeing a good response to the residency program in various churches. I am grateful for all of the efforts being made to develop leaders in IBC churches.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the gospel remained unfettered. One IBC pastor was able to baptize a man on the first Sunday that the church reopened. They had met while working out in a fitness studio prior to the COVID lockdown and then discipleship continued online. The man made a decision for Christ, and his baptism was a strong reminder that God had never stopped working.

GAPS TO RECOGNIZE

While in no way diminishing the gains, failure to reach goals was also a reality in the past year. Obviously, I did not visit all of the churches that I had hoped to visit. I also only completed half of the CORE groups that I had hoped to lead and did not call all of the pastors that I had hoped to call. A consolation with these unfulfilled goals was the benefits of technology that I had not used before. In addition to setting up calls with pastors, the Calendly tool allowed me to spend time with pastors who had proactively scheduled time with me.

Our CSDs and ministry teams also experienced difficulty in meeting their goals and objectives. Until recently travel was out of the question. We had to cancel the Ministry Leadership Conference, and the men's, women's and youth conferences were moved online. I am grateful to all of our ministry teams for their ability to flex and offer alternative opportuni-



ties for those who desired to participate. Next year we look forward to getting back to in-person conferences, starting with the men's conference in January. The MLCs will also return in 2022, both in Europe and in Latin America.

GRACE TO RECEIVE

I am still settling into my new role of ministry. Therefore, for one more year I will renew the objectives as I shared them when I became GS.

Improve our leaders

In my desire to make it easy to remember my objectives I chose the word "improve," but I realize that this did not effectively communicate the relationship that I desire to have with IBC leaders. Simply put – I don't like to watch them struggle. When leaders are struggling God's people are also struggling. Jethro reminded Moses of this when he was trying to accomplish everything by himself (Exodus 18:17-18).

I will continue to engage our leaders with phone calls, Zoom meetings, and visits to IBC churches in Germany and beyond. I will offer to coach and mentor groups of pastors and lay leaders. Most importantly Jacki and I will continue to pray for IBC pastors and their families. I recognize that as life begins to return to "normal" our pastors are aware of the toll that COVID ministry has had on them personally. I desire to be the first line of defense in helping leaders who struggle to keep going or are thinking of calling it quits.

Increase our capacity for disciple-making through multi-generational focus

With few exceptions, churches are either growing or dying. If they are dying, they may be a generation away from extinction. I will continue to encourage us not to give up on God's vision for leaders to be equippers. I am available to assist those who would like to create a pathway outlining how they will help every disciple to become mature and many of those to become leaders in a way that fits our context.

Increase our capacity for disciple-making through widespread participation

In his book *Wooden on Leadership*, John Wooden, one of the winningest coaches of college basketball in the U.S., said, "The star of the team is the team."

John had superstars on a few of his teams, but he recognized the important contribution of every member when they were motivated and prepared well. Church leaders make the church the star as they equip God's people who in turn edify the church. I will be a champion and cheerleader of disciple-making in the IBC, as I see our churches develop more and more disciples to make disciples.

Innovate in an agile mindset in the ELT

Having a chance to meet in person again was very important for us. We are working to increase the amount of collaboration among the core strategies.

Innovate as a social media "influencer"

The video interviews at this year's ACM are a small sample of what I hope will result in many, many videos celebrating what God is doing in the IBC. I will be traveling with my iPhone ready in the coming months.

Finally, would you please let me know how I might serve you?

- Prioritize shepherding your own soul and let me know how we might support and challenge you!
- Share with me and with others the disciple-making principles and practices that are effective in the IBC setting!
- Find people who are making disciples and hide their identity if you need to, but capture their stories for us to share.

The IBC is a wonderful family of people who are committed to the gospel. Like Paul in the first century, we today have the privilege of seeing the work of God's Spirit in the people whose lives are transformed. These are the results that we seek from our ministry and our efforts are focused in the same direction; we desire to see more and more disciples making disciples in the year ahead.

I love doing ministry with Jacki. We are a team and share the same passion for disciples, leaders, and churches. We look forward to hosting our leaders in Frankfurt and to being able to go and visit our churches in their context. We look forward to what God has in store for all of us in the year ahead! 🌍

Convention Welcomes New Church

The International Baptist Convention at its hybrid 58th Annual Convention Meeting, held 25-27 October, at Faith Baptist Church, Kaiserslautern, Germany, celebrated the family of churches it is and rejoiced at being able to meet again in-person. As part of the three-day meeting, messengers and guests enjoyed a celebration dinner, welcomed a new church, approved a €359,327 budget for next year, and heard reports from General Secretary Tim Faulkner and the five core strategy directors.

Rome International Church was welcomed as a full member in the convention. RIC had been a church plant of one of the convention's LEAD teams a little more than five years ago.

The convention just completed its first year with the new fiscal year of October-September. Finance Team Leader Bob Hnat reported that giving for the year was at 85% of the budget. The €359,327 approved budget for 2021/22 was a 1.5% decrease from the previous year.

The convention also approved a \$50,000 Type 4 grant of the IBC Endowment Fund to the IBC Residency Program. This program has had success for the past two years in helping to train and develop new pastors and church planters. The grant will allow the convention to give grants to churches to help with their resident program. The convention also approved a \$20,000 Type 4 grant to provide funds for outsourcing specialized work. During the course



Tim Faulkner prays for new pastors and wives.



IBC welcomes Rome International as a new member church.

of the year, the convention has awarded matching grants to Bridges International Baptist Church, Brasilia, Brazil, for renovations and repairs to its existing buildings.

The convention also heard presentations from the general secretary (see article on page 3) and each of the strategy directors concerning their strategy and plans for the coming year. Darryl Evetts (multiplying churches), Dan Maxton (strengthening churches), David Fresch (empowering leaders), Scott Corwin (building connections), and Judith Lynn Maxwell (developing resources) shared their goals for 2021/22.

The Executive Leadership Team of the convention also presented a statement on women and men in partnership for the gospel and answered questions on the statement. There was no vote. The ELT will continue to answer questions and discuss this topic during the coming year.

During the final business session, Roland Eskinazi, pastor of the International Baptist Church, Brussels, Belgium, was elected as the third president. He joins Nick Howard, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Wiesbaden, Germany, and Erik Nielsen, pastor of the First International Baptist Church, Copenhagen, Denmark, on the Presidential Leadership Team.

Sixty-six messengers from 34 churches as well as more than 20 guests participated in the meeting. 



Roland Eskanazi is new president.



My Family

Principles and Biblical Values for the IBC Family

Editor's Note: The following two articles are based on sermons preached by Tim Faulkner and N. Erik Nielsen at the IBC's Annual Convention Meeting, 25-27 October, in Kaiserslautern, Germany.

I count it a privilege to serve this convention as one of its presidents and bring this message to the Annual Meeting. But I was hesitant. What could I teach a group of pastors and ministry leaders as yourselves? At my church we are currently preaching an expository series on Romans, but would an expository sermon be what is needed for us today?

So, as I thought about this being a kind of family reunion and how you are my fellow pastors and/or ministry leaders, I thought I could encourage you, either as an individual who is responsible for your own family or a minister to others. God has granted me and Kim the privilege of building a family together and, like many who start out on such an endeavor, we had no idea what we were about to embark on when we started.

Some of you still have young families, and you are currently in the throes of raising your children, so I hope you will find this useful. Others of you aren't raising a family, perhaps you're enjoying the emptiest nest like we are or perhaps you are enjoying the children who belong to other parents. But I believe that the principles I intend to share are relevant for the family we call our church, and even the family of churches to which we belong, the IBC. So, I hope that you can relate to what I am about to talk about and can apply it in your families, the ministries or churches that you lead, and to the relationships we have as the IBC family.

Kim and I knew we wanted our children to be well-behaved, kind to each other, respectful of authority, do well in school, and generally be decent human beings. But not just because we wanted to be a healthy and loving family. We wanted our family to glorify God and our children to follow in the footsteps of Christ. We hoped that if any unbeliever saw our family and watched our children, they would ask questions and that would give us permission to talk about God's Word and our faith and ultimately introduce them to our Savior.

So, it was important to us that other people liked having our children around. Sure, you like being with your children, but would I like being with them? Would your neighbor like being with them? Thankfully, we had the Scriptures to guide us, the Holy Spirit on our side in this endeavor, and some really helpful, biblically based parenting materials to help us know what to focus on and how to teach, reprove, and encourage our children to live in a way that honored God.

I'm going to share with you three biblical values that we tried to exemplify in our family and what we did to instill them in our children. Since we are a family of churches – churches who hopefully exemplify biblical values and seek to honor Christ – I'll also try to create a parallel which I hope will still be a biblical principle we could apply to a family of churches. But not just because we all want healthy and loving communities to be a part of. Ultimately, we want our churches to glorify God. We want our family of churches to honor and exalt Christ. And, if anyone were ever to ask about our church or our IBC family, we would have the opening we need to talk about God's Word, share our faith, and introduce them to Jesus Christ, the Lord of our church.

1. WE TRIED TO CREATE A CLEAR AND STRONG FAMILY IDENTITY.

The world is a difficult place to raise children. The Bible reveals that the world is influenced heavily by the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Our children would often be influenced by their friends and naturally expect us to have the same values as their friends had. If their friends would be allowed to watch popular movies, our children would ask us why they weren't allowed. Their friends would play video games and computer games that involved violence, theft, gore, mayhem, and demonic themes. We didn't buy those games, and we didn't allow them to play them.

Our children grew up alongside children who often had two sets of parents. One set was their mother and her new boyfriend/husband's family. The other set was the father and his new girlfriend/wife's family. As a child caught in the middle, wrestling with the conflict, they were often spoiled by both sides trying to soothe their pain and win their affection. So, they were allowed much.

Divorce was so common among our children's pre-school friends, our son actually asked Kim one day, "When are you and Dad getting a divorce?" Kim made it clear to our young child that we were staying together.

Whenever we had to explain why we were different, why some things were not permissible or why we didn't compromise on some things, or why they had to treat each other in a certain way, we always brought it back to our family identity as Christians who honor Christ.



by N. Erik Nielsen
IBC President and Pastor,
First International Baptist
Church, Copenhagen,
Denmark

We would always keep reminding them that we are Christians who love and follow Christ, so we were not like the rest of the world who has yet to know Him. *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome”* (1 John 5:3).

Principle: Be imitators of God ... as dearly loved children (Ephesians 5:1)

Being a Nielsen, a member of this family of Nielsens, means being someone who imitates God and lives in such a way that honors Christ. So, we don't fill our minds with the same things the others do, we don't participate in some of the same activities, we don't treat others like some do, because those things wouldn't honor Christ.

We knew that they would always be under peer pressure because the influence of the world was always present. They were taught in schools where teachers were not Christians. They had school friends with whom they spent a lot of time who were not Christians. They had sports teammates who were not Christians. There is one thing we understood about peer pressure: peer pressure is only as strong as family identity is weak.

It was important for us to include family activities and habits that kept reinforcing that identity – church on Sundays, family night on Fridays, monthly memory verses, story time, and intentional conversations about values and beliefs.

We did what we could and we were intentional, but I can't say we were completely successful in helping our children fully embrace our family identity. Those of our children who were the most social and who had the most Danish friends were also the ones who struggled the most with their family identity – the identity we tried to instill in them.

Any church should also have a strong identity that is centered on Christ Himself. It should go without saying that any church should have a clear and strong family identity that is centered on Christ. Yet, it's astounding how some churches can actually be associated, famous for, or perceived with an identity that isn't even Christ-centered: a celebrity pastor, a scandal, the ornate and gaudy decorations. Whatever the distraction may be, a church is liable to lose its purpose of glorifying God and proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

As a family of churches, we should have a strong family identity.

I think that there is a similar principle for our family of churches: The stronger we sense a common family identity, the less influence the Enemy will have on us to divide us and weaken our influence on the world.

What are our churches best known for? Being English-speaking? Being an ethnically diverse congregation? Being a place of friendly and warm “fellow-

ship”? Those may be true, but do we really want our common identity to be centered around those qualities? Are they really the values that bind us together?

Or is the value that our churches are best known for, and this family is known for, is that we exemplify the character of Jesus Christ and we are faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The Apostle Paul identified himself as “a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1). He had a singular purpose with his life when he was first captivated by the risen Christ; he became “a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name.”

Our churches are not all the same. We don't all have the same membership structure. We don't have same requirements for individual membership. We don't have the same requirements for leadership. We don't teach from the same lectionary. Because we are not a franchise of churches.

But I would like to think that anyone who regularly attends a church, one that is a member in the IBC, can expect from any one of our churches a clear presentation of who Jesus Christ is, what His cross means, and the gospel of God's grace poured out for sinners. I would hope that all our churches would not hesitate to call sinful deeds “sinful,” the consequences of which are death and eternal condemnation, and that salvation can be found in no other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Wouldn't it be great if anyone who knew that our church belonged to the family of churches called the “IBC,” they would know that the central common denominator, the clear and strong family identity, would be that we are “not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16)?

As with the need for a clear and strong family identity in our homes, could we not make a case that a clear and strong family identity in our family of churches will help us withstand the attempts of the Enemy to divide us and weaken our commitment to each other?

The Enemy is interested in dividing us and hindering us, but that pressure is only as strong as our family identity is weak.

2. WE TRIED TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO APPRECIATE HOW PRECIOUS PEOPLE ARE TO GOD.

Sin has affected all of us in way that is so easy to see in most children: we are selfish. When couples first become parents, the child very quickly becomes the center of all their attention. To a certain extent, it must be that way; newborns are needy, their survival can be a fragile balance between health and all the things that threaten their health. What many couples don't realize, however, is that children can too easily become the center of the family, which they should never be. Becoming the center of the fami-



Kim and Erik Nielsen



ly only feeds a child's already self-centered view of him/herself that is a result of the Fall.

What the Bible reveals is that the primary relationship in the family is the husband/wife relationship and all other relationships in the family are dependent on that relationship. When God created Adam and Eve as the first family unit, there were no children present. When children are added to the family, ideally, they are welcomed into the family. But the husband-wife relationship should always be the center of the family, because the entire family is dependent on the strength of that relationship, not the strength of the father-child or mother-child relationship.

So, we always tried to help our children visibly see that Kim and I loved each other. We were committed to each other, and we made our affection obvious. We would go on dates and leave them with a babysitter and if they wanted to come along, we'd tell them they couldn't. "Why?" they would ask. "Because we love you" we would say. "But, if you loved us, you would take us along" they would protest. Of course, they couldn't understand at a young age, but because we loved them, we gave them the greatest gift we could give: the security that their family was not going to fall apart.

But, teaching them and treating them like they were part of the family and not the center of the family, was also critical to them developing a sense of "others." The world didn't revolve around them. What many children grow up thinking about themselves, is that they are the only ones who really matter.

Parents treat them like the family revolved around the children. Parents catered to their needs, and all schedules were adjusted around them. It's easy to fall for that because it sounds so "noble" to put children as the highest priority. The truth is that while our children certainly matter to God and they are deeply loved by God and their parents, other children and other people also matter to God just as much.

Each of us are created in the image of God and every human being, great or small, rich or poor, well-dressed or poorly dressed, is precious to God who made them. Therefore, we must love people and treat them in ways that are not based on our own estima-

tion or emotional attachment to them, but God's estimation of them and His love for them.

We had a lot of our conversations and teaching moments that would often come back to this biblical principle:

Principle: People are precious to God.

The preciousness of others is simply a healthy preoccupation with those behind, before, and around us. We treat people based on their value in the eyes of God. It's easy, and it is tempting, to treat people based on how interesting they may seem to us, how attractive they may be to us, how beneficial they have been or could become to us, or how likable they are.

To us, a person may be nothing more than the annoying driver of the vehicle in front of us or the person hogging the armrest or the 18 people waiting in the queue in front of us or the busboy or the carpet cleaner.

But to God, who made them and to whom they belong, every one of them, they are worthy of the precious gift of the blood of His Son. *"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:6–8 ESV).

As God's love transforms us, it transforms us to become less and less selfish and more and more "others oriented." Some may require a greater transformation because of how they were raised by their parents, as the center of the family where everyone catered to them and they had no responsibilities to the others in the family. But, as God transforms us into His image, He develops in us a healthy preoccupation with and a sensitivity to the needs of others.

As a family of churches, we should have a love that treats people as precious.

Again, I think there could be a similar principle with regards to the prevailing sentiment in our churches. Is the Christian community in each of our churches characterized by a genuine, God-inspired love for people, regardless of ethnic background,

race or color, age or youth, wealth or poverty, well-dressed or poorly dressed? Do we treat people as precious to God and love them like He does?

As pastors and ministry leaders, what do we demonstrate to our people, and how well do we exemplify the gospel we preach by our love for all, even the “weak,” the “ungodly,” and the “sinful”? While each of us would not be wrong to take care of our individual needs, do we also demonstrate a healthy preoccupation with and sensitivity to the needs of others?

Wouldn't it be great if what people experienced in one IBC church, of Christ-centered selflessness, God-inspired love for others, would be what they could expect in any other one of our churches? Of course, that would depend on how well we who are pastors or ministry leaders are doing to cultivate that kind of godly spirit among our people and how well we demonstrate it before them.

It ought to be evident when we gather at our annual meeting, conferences, and meetings that we as the pastors and ministry leaders of the IBC churches are living examples of this gospel we preach in our churches. Because people, whoever they may be, are precious to God, they are loved by Him even though they may be difficult to love.

3. WE TRIED TO BE MORE INTERDEPENDENT THAN INDEPENDENT.

Children are expected to grow up very quickly. I don't know if one could say that such an expectation is greater today than it has been in the past. But it certainly does seem so – what they get exposed to of evils, what threatens their innocence, the information that is available to them at their fingertips, the young age they must adapt to a broken family, how early they are given freedoms. It seems they must learn to avoid dangers, exercise self-control, guide themselves, and sometimes even earn their own keep, at a younger and younger age.

Some would say that that's a good thing because we esteem independence so highly. We value resilience, strength, self-confidence. We highly esteem those people who have done something great without anyone else's help. Somehow, we value independence more than interdependence.



As a result, many children are already looking outward, away from the family, eager to leave the bonds of family. Today's teenagers look more downward to look outward, as their lives are centered around their social connections available on their mobile phones.

What we tried to encourage and instill in our family was:

Principle: Be more interdependent than independent.

We would require that they participated in the chores and duties in the home, without paying them for it. They had to help with cleaning, setting the table, clearing the table, doing dishes, keeping their room neat. As they got older, they helped with food preparation and when they reached 18 they did their own laundry. We didn't want them to leave home without the ability to cook their own meals and do their own laundry.

Even as children, they were needed in the home, and they had to learn to do their part in a well-functioning home. Of course, there were some tasks that they could earn a little money for. We used that sometimes as an incentive. We used that to teach them to save up. We used that to teach them that value for some things is based on “sweat equity,” work and effort. But as a general rule, we all had to pitch in because we all belonged to the same family and we were dependent on each other.

We like to use the illustration of a circle to represent the family. As children are added to the family the circle grows bigger and bigger. To convey the idea that children are not the center of the family, the circle includes them but they are not at the center. To convey the idea that the family stays together when mom and dad love each other, mom and dad are still holding each other's hand as the circle grows bigger with each additional child. This was also reflected in the way we sat around the table for meals.

In the circle, all of us are looking inward toward each other, not outward. If we were all looking outward, that would represent each of us having our own interests outside the family. We might still be connected to the family, but as though the family was actually keeping us from what we really wanted to do and where we really wanted to be.

As a family of churches, we should be more interdependent than independent.

Again, I think there is a principle that we can apply to our family that is the church and our family of churches. God made us for relationships, with Him primarily, but He also placed us in a community called a family and that should also teach us to become an actively functioning part of the body of Christ. *“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another”* (Romans 12:4–5 ESV).

Everything in 1 Corinthians 12 teaches us a way to move away from independence and towards interdependence. Although we may be individual members, we are parts of one body so we “all suffer together...all rejoice together” (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Our churches ought to also be characterized by being a place where individuals are encouraged to belong and be active members. Of course, we’ll have to teach new believers about belonging and being active because our “untransformed” selves, who imitate the world, will have a tendency towards independence.

Considering our family of churches that is the IBC, I also would hope that we who are pastors and ministry leaders, also value interdependence more than independence. That’s especially difficult for Baptists, who traditionally are all about independence and autonomy. But while we esteem that value highly, perhaps more as a reaction to the papacy and controls of the state, I think that cooperation and association are also traditionally very “Baptistic” too.

But cooperation and association can still be a long way from interdependence. Just like in a family, it takes a conscious effort to encourage interdependence and maintain the relationships we have in the family of churches like ours because we would have a tendency to think we don’t need other churches.

There are member churches in our convention who, for whatever the reason, choose not to participate in the activities of the convention and do not contribute to the cooperative program of the convention. Could that be a sign of such independence over interdependence? No church and its pastor/leader should be allowed to feel unneeded by the others, and no church should be unwilling to actively engage in the cooperation. It would be like a child who said they don’t need their family, and the family that said that that didn’t matter to the rest of them.


As imperfect as we were in raising our children and building our family, we did try our best to make certain values characteristic of our family:

- We had a family identity as followers of Christ.
- We valued people as precious because we knew they are precious to God.
- We encouraged interdependence more than independence.

We spent much time in prayer over our children, and we continue to do so even as they are adults today.

If you are a parent who is raising children, I hope that you find this message encouraging as you also teach your children these biblical values. But I also see how the family shares a lot of qualities that a family of believers, and even a family of churches should have:

- We should have a strong family identity centered on the gospel of Christ.
- We should be characterized by God’s unconditional love for people as precious; (if we are supposed to love even enemies, then we should certainly love friends we don’t agree with.)
- We should encourage interdependence more than independence.

God’s children are an ornery bunch aren’t they? Just look at us. But by God’s grace and His Spirit in us, God children can become a God-honoring, Christ-imitating bunch that lives out His truth and displays His love. Hopefully, that’s what people associate with churches in the IBC. 

Our Family

Celebrating in the Midst of Disagreements



by Tim Faulkner
General Secretary

A common reaction of many people to Baptists is that they can much more quickly tell you what you can't do than to tell you what you can do. It is a common perception.

Some people hear "Baptist" and think "no fun there." Others recognize a tradition that takes seriously the application of Scripture to life. Unfortunately, sometimes we allow this seriousness in our approach to God's Word to break apart our communities.

Long before there were Baptists of any kind, the Apostle Paul was challenging some negative tendencies that he was seeing in the Galatian churches. I believe his final remarks are helpful for any group of churches as they wrestle with their differences.

As we consider the theme of "Celebrating Our Family," let me ask, "How do we celebrate our family when we disagree over some important issues – issues that some consider as central to the gospel, but that others see as secondary?" As I was preparing for our Annual Convention Meeting and broaching a highly charged topic, I was trying to remember where in the New Testament it talked about biting and devouring each other, a context where brothers and sisters in Christ might be tearing each other apart like wild dogs, and what the Scripture teaches. Let me offer three commandments from Galatians 5-6, and then paint a picture of what that might look lived out.

FIRST COMMANDMENT: LOVE (GALATIANS 5:13-16)

"For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another" (5:13 NET).

For much of this epistle Paul has been dealing with legalism, which is clearly in contrast to freedom in Christ. We don't add our work to Jesus' work for salvation. But here, Paul makes another contrast. Freedom is not libertinism. Freedom does not mean that you can just treat people any way you feel like just because they do not agree with you.

Over the years I have never forgotten a quote that resonated with me back in my days studying at seminary. In a leadership magazine interview, Brian McLaren said, "There is a reality that many pastors secretly acknowledge but seldom verbalize: that too many of our most 'educated' Christians are some of the meanest. They may know more information about the Bible but are the least Christ-like. Too of-

ten there seems to be a direct correlation between knowledge about theology on the one hand and arrogance, contentiousness, and an uncharitable spirit on the other." Most of us have to admit that we have seen this sad reality.

The freedom Paul commands here is not freedom to devour but freedom to love. It is love that is the ultimate expression of the fulfillment of the law in us (5:14). Jesus taught love as the greatest commandment and because of love, Jesus volunteered for the cross.

SECOND COMMANDMENT: LOOK FOR GOD'S SPIRIT (GALATIANS 5:16-26)

"For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ... If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another" (5:17-26 ESV).

Paul has shown us that liberty is an opportunity for the flesh, but it is also an opportunity for God's Spirit. Galatians 5:16 follows the formula of a commandment with a promise: "But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh." The encouragement that I find here is to look for evidence of God's Spirit in one another.



THIRD COMMANDMENT: CARRY EACH OTHER'S LOAD (GALATIANS 6:1-5)

"Brothers and sisters, if a person is discovered in some sin, you who are spiritual restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness. Pay close attention to yourselves, so that you are not tempted too." (6:1 NET)

When I was a teenager, I earned money by delivering newspapers in my neighborhood. I also collected baseball cards, so I don't know how much money made it into my savings account. Often upon completing my newspaper route I would stop at

the pharmacy and buy my baseball cards (and chew that special gum that was inside). The pharmacy also contained a magazine rack and on part of that rack, behind a cover, were the pornographic magazines. Whenever I have read this passage, I have imagined walking into the pharmacy and “a person is discovered in some sin.” At that moment, I have a great opportunity, by the grace of God, to gently lift that brother or sister out of a sin that they might have continued to persist in, had it not been for God putting me there to catch them.

Paul does not specify what kind of sin he is thinking about. There is obviously much broader application than pornography. Consider how the application could extend even to the way that we treat one another as we wrestle with issues. *“Carry one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Let each one examine his own work. Then he can take pride in himself and not compare himself with someone else. For each one will carry his own load.”* (6:2–5 NET). Here we see both corporate and individual responsibility as we encourage each other to be obedient to the Lord.

The bottom line is that gospel-found freedom preserves God’s church and produces godly disciples. Let me offer some suggestions for application in our convention in the form of horizontal and vertical lines:

Young disciples need to become mature, and mature disciples can act immaturity.

When Paul confronted Peter in chapter two, he called him a hypocrite, not an apostate. Peter’s salvation was not in question. Peter was a mature believer, an apostle, but this was not Peter at his best.

In preparation for our discussion of the difference of views about women and men in partnership for the gospel, one pastor told me how surprised he was to discover that a fellow pastor held the opposite view from him. At the same time, there was greater empathy in the discussion because of the depth of Spirit-filled living and disciple-making results that were evident in this brother who held a different position.

Regarding infant baptism, one pastor said that he doesn’t like to offer associate membership to those have not been baptized as believers. Rather than offering an alternative option to membership, he wishes people would respond to baptism. Yet if he does not offer people an opportunity to belong, they may leave. By focusing on discipleship instead of membership, people stay and as they mature and desire to obey Christ many request to be baptized. This is a horizontal line issue because we are all on a journey of maturing as disciples.

Bridges, not walls, open us up to grow from each other.

Consider a second horizontal line, a continuum, and on either end are you and me. The extreme sides of the continuum represent two sides of an issue that we are wrestling with. In between you and me are other people, some line up closer to you and others closer to me. Let me suggest that these verses encourage us to build bridges and not walls.

One IBC pastor said, “It bothers me that R.C. Sproul could not have been a member of my church. I am so grateful for Sproul and his teaching, but we believe that the Scriptures very clearly teach baptism by immersion and it is a membership requirement.” What we do with membership, especially, with the diversity of church backgrounds in our congregations is a big challenge. That is why it is so important to work this out on a local-church level. If we can discuss issues that we disagree on in a way that God blesses, then we build bridges and not walls. We offer each other an opportunity to grow instead of letting our disagreements divide us.

As we journey with each other we must not overlook the opinion that counts most.

The last line is a vertical line. It represents our relationship to God. As we examine difficult issues against the Scriptures, we cannot simply dismiss conviction as a difference of opinion, not even between well-meaning mature disciples. There are issues for which we must give an account before the Lord, and ultimately “each one will bear his own load” (6:6 NET). As one pastor said, “Show me what I am not seeing. I am ready to change if someone can point out to me what I am missing. This is a matter of conscience.” The question of horizontal-line relationships cannot exclude the vertical relationship. God’s opinion matters most.

When the local IBC church joined our Italian church in Naples, they were 30 people. Not one of those came from a Baptist background and yet they requested that we remain in the IBC because for them being Baptist meant being part of a church that faithfully taught the Word of God.

Baptists are people of strong conviction. There are various issues in the IBC that could break apart our community. At the same time, IBC churches welcome people from three quarters of the nations of the world. The people in our churches are diverse. In conclusion let me ask you, “How do you maintain the horizontal lines while being faithful to the vertical line? How do you preserve the church while producing godly disciples?”

Paul was dealing with a problem that threatened the gospel and yet he called us to love, to look for God’s Spirit, and to lift one another up with a goal of a reconciled relationship with God. The apostle concluded that gospel-found freedom preserves God’s church and produces godly disciples. May the Lord lead us to do the same!



GMO 2021 to Declare His Glory among the Nations

The IBC's 2021 Global Missions Offering will go to help people in three different nations – Brazil, Rwanda, and Haiti. In doing so, we will help to “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples” (Psalm 96:3).

IBC MISSIONS: TOUCHING LIVES IN RWANDA



Forty percent of the offering is for IBC Missions, and this year is going towards touching lives in Rwanda. This project, led by Pastor Richmond Ofori of Hope International Bible and Missions Church in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, focuses mainly on helping single parents who are survivors of the 1994 genocide, now living in Butare, Rwanda. Assistance is provided in agriculture, bakery training, children's education, and the local hospital. The project's vision is that the people, mostly women, will cultivate self-reliance and provide a better future for their children and community. Since the beginning of the project in 2017, nearly 90% of the 53 women attend their local churches instead of worshipping other gods – a very common practice especially when families are experiencing hardship. For more information, see ibc-churches.org/gmo-rwanda.

IBC AID: STAND WITH HAITI



Thirty percent of the offering is for IBC Aid, and this year it is going to some of the people of Haiti – hit first with the August 2021 7.2-magnitude earthquake, followed only days later by torrential rains

from Tropical Storm Grace. All of this is happening in a politically challenging context in which the nation's president was assassinated only a month before. Nevertheless, Haitian pastors and leaders are resilient, working tirelessly to assess damages, procure food and shelter items, and to provide pastoral care in their communities. The IBC is helping to support the Baptist World Alliance's aid efforts in the country. For more information, see baptist-world.org/haiti.

PARTNERSHIPS: EBMI PROJECT: POMERANIANS



In the bleak part of the mountainous area of the state Espirito Santo, Brazil, live approximately 120,000 descendants of the German Pomeranians in great poverty and with no perspective. They are heavily influenced by superstition and the occult. Up to today, they speak their Pomeranian dialect, and some of them hardly speak any Portuguese at all.

Valério and Sandra Kurth, of Pomeranian descent themselves, are passionately working to reach their own ethnic group. The Kurths and three other pastor couples have formed a network to strengthen the church planting and to make it more effective. They want to plant churches in still unreached places in creative ways. They are sharing the good news with people through the radio and by spreading DVDs and CDs with evangelistic movies and messages in their own language. This initiative is proving quite effective.

The Pomeranians are a closed group and do not accept new things easily. When people do find faith in Christ, their lives are being changed completely and radically. And people see the changes in their lives and begin to ask questions about their new life.


For more information, see www.ebm-international.org/en/2018/06/06/mission-work-among-people-of-pomeranian-descent.

Bratislava, Slovakia

ON THE WEEKEND of 15 October, we at Bratislava Faith Community were able to attend a church retreat at the Berea Christian Centre in the Modra region of Slovakia. This was a blessed time as we spent time together as a congregation face-to-face. It has been a long time since we have been able to meet some members in person as we have a restricted number who can meet in our in-person services. We were blessed with beautiful weather and a wonderful time of fellowship. It was a refreshing and challenging time as we got to know our new pastor Nicholas Gagnon better as he shared about how we as a church can be discipling others.

For 20+ years, Pete Miller has faithfully served our church in the role of administrator. We thank the Lord for how he has served the church. He truly is an amazing example of servant leadership. As Pete retires from this position, we wish to thank

him for his tireless work and sacrifices.

God is doing some exciting things as we have new council members who were voted in after our AGM at the end of October. We look forward to seeing how God uses our little church to reach the internationals in Bratislava and beyond. 

Nikki Seiler



Photo by Zlatko Sebesta

Thank you gifts given to Pete Miller


Darmstadt, Germany

WE WEREN'T VERY FAR along in the pastor search process at Converge International Fellowship, Darmstadt, Germany, before Covid-19 and lockdown hit, forcing the process on-line. In February 2021, almost a year later, we called Chris Horn to be our new pastor. But, how was he supposed to come with his family from South Africa to Germany when there is a travel ban between the countries? In faith, the Horns and CIF started the process of applying for visas and work permits so that when the ban would be lifted, we would be ready.

Three months later the ban was still in place, and Chris had left his previous

church. To provide the Horn family with some financial resources, Chris became our freelance remote pastor. We didn't know how long it would be before the travel restrictions were lifted. But, it was good to have a pastor again, if only on a screen.

Three months later, the travel ban had been lifted and Chris and his family had arrived in Darmstadt. On Sunday, 8 September, the Horn family were out of quarantine, and we could celebrate the "physical" installation of Chris Horn as our pastor. Even with the Covid-19 restrictions, there was a good attendance including a number of pastors from surrounding IBC churches who came to welcome Chris into the family of IBC churches. Tim Faulkner, IBC General Secretary, prayed over Chris and his family as they started their ministry in Darmstadt. The message at the installation service was given by fellow South African Keith Lategan, pastor of IBC Stuttgart.

Just over two years after founding pastor Bob Marsh had left, Converge International Fellowship could celebrate the arrival of their new pastor. God continues to be faithful in every situation. 

Stewart Maxwell



Photo by Aliph D.

The Horn Family

In Memoriam

Sympathy is extended to the families of:

MINDY TARLETON

Pastor's Wife, Budapest, 2018-2021
Born: 28 April 1969
Died: 12 June 2021

MANFRED SCHWARTZ

IBC Council of Trustees, 2010-2021
Born: 15 September 1941
Died: 5 October 2021

PETE BOURNE

Pastor & Interim Pastor, Stukeley,
2013-2016, 2011-2013
Born: 7 October 1938
Died: 14 May 2021

JEAN LEEPER

Pastor's Wife, Bamberg, 1962-1966
Born: 15 May 1937
Died: 7 September 2021

JIM LEEPER

Pastor, Bamberg, 1962-1966
Born: 18 October 1936
Died: 14 February 2021

BOB BRADLEY

Pastor, Rome Baptist, 1998; Munich
1999-2002
Died: 29 December 2020

GLENN TOLER

EBC/Arkansas Partnership
Coordinator, 1996-1997
Born: 19 February 1932
Died: 27 October 2020

Members of our IBC churches who died this year.

Berlin Germany

NEW HIVE church planting in partnership with IBC Berlin

Are we a church only when we are awake and active at Sunday worship services? Could our everyday lived-out experiences – our wake and sleep – altogether also be part of us being church and at worship?

There are nearly 400,000 international students in Germany (2018/19). A report in 2019 revealed that approximately 41% of those drop out. Being an international student or a young professional in Germany is a mixed bag of joy, hope, fear, challenges, and strivings. At the same time, while many churches seek to be

reach out to the international students and young professionals in the city. There are three ministry aspects of NEW HIVE: *intercultural pastoral care* (disciple-making and nurturing), *missionary work* (bringing the good news to people), and *church planting* (establishing a physical presence as a church).

What does NEW HIVE stand for?

'NEW HIVE' is an acronym of the vision and its expressions that is *nurturing, empowering, worshipping* as the vision and *hospitality, incarnational, visionary, experimental* as the expression and means to the vision. At NEW HIVE we all serve as

cup of coffee is not just a drink, but it represents many things – availability, hospitality, fellowship, lifestyle, and community building. A cup of coffee is a way of lowering the barriers of entry to organic relationships and to start going to church. A cafe is a place of order and creativity. It brings out the artist, the poet, and the preacher of a person. It also opens the door and empowers congregation members to be able to serve with us as missionaries.

Where do we discern the Lord at work?

In September 2020, my wife and I began as church planting residents at the International Baptist Church, Berlin, Germany. There, we were given the opportunity to serve among young adults and international students. We began by starting small groups, and currently, we have three weekly small groups. There are approximately 40+ people from various backgrounds (including non-Christian friends) connecting with us through the groups. We have the privilege to witness five of our small-group members baptized recently. Today, the weekly small groups are led by new leaders emerging within the groups, while my wife and I come alongside to support them and invest our role in pastoral care, teaching, and building relationships in planting a church.

How can you participate?

Without having a physical place of our own in the marketplace, the vision and functions of NEW HIVE are thwarted and incomplete. Day after day, new people are introduced, and more and more friends step up to serve, but we do not have a place yet to welcome them.

There are several ways that you can support our work. We still need financial support for the café start-up (renovation costs and inventory such as an espresso machine and tables and chairs). We are also looking for those who wish to join us as a missionary or to help support a missionary working with us.

If you are interested in more information about NEW HIVE, please contact us at suanlian@newhive.de



available on Sundays to minister and bring hope, many people are not coming to churches to benefit from it. A report in Berlin (2019) also revealed that at least 300 people died in loneliness in a year, and sometimes bodies remained unnoticed for weeks in their apartments.

Is it time for us now, as a church, to talk about bringing the church out to where people are – in the neighborhood and the marketplaces?

This is where NEW HIVE church planting comes in!

NEW HIVE envisions bringing church into the marketplace. We aim to be physically present as a café-like church and

missionaries and ministers of the gospel; encouraging, empowering, and promoting one another to present and represent the gospel of Christ using our professional skills, passions, and spiritual gifts.

Why a café?

It could be anything – a fitness studio, restaurant, or bicycle workshop, for example. It is not only about 'what we are doing' or 'how we are doing ministry', but also about 'why we are doing this ministry.'

It is all about incarnational – being church and doing church – by coming alongside people where they are. Much of our pastoral care and missionary work at NEW HIVE occurs over cups of coffee. A

Suanlian Tonsing