



# Baptismal Mission Forum



Volume 3, Issue 2

Summer 2015

## BAPTISMAL MISSION FORUM The Newsletter for Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission

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## FROM THE EDITOR

I’m sad to say that this is the last issue of the Baptismal Mission Forum (BMF) in the form of a newsletter. I’m glad to say that BMF will be reborn on the Living God’s Mission website.

The change was brought on by social media gurus, telling us that the contemporary public is so used to reading tweets and blogs that they don’t want to read articles of 1,000 words long(!) Hence BMF will merge as part of EBM’s new website. I promise you old-fashioned readers like me that on BMF’s section of the website, a few articles will appear that are 999 words long!

This last issue of BMF newsletter will be devoted to three articles on Christ’s mission through us in the mission field of our local community. We’ve already read articles on the home and the workplace as a site for Christ’s mission; we turn now to our communities. The first of the three articles is written by a new Christian in Taiwan, Christiana Hai. I confess that when I read her article, I was moved to tears! The second article is about a woman named Marian that moved to a new neighborhood and found that nobody knows their neighbors. The article illustrates how Marian fulfills three of her baptismal promises in response to that dilemma. The final article is about a FEMA agent, and how his calling illustrates God at work among both responders and survivors.

We will meet again on the EBM website!

## **A True Story about Christ's Mission in Daily Life at the Episcopal Church of The Advent in Taipei, Taiwan**

**Forward by Andrew C. Chang (an Episcopalian in The Diocese of Taiwan.)**

In June, 2012, the Rev. Peyton Craighill visited Taiwan and led three workshops about Member Mission, its vision, ideas, and strategies, for the Episcopal Diocese of Taiwan. After Peyton left, I've been trying to find out if this new missional model can work in our congregations in Taiwan.

The following is a witness story by Christina Hai, who is a faithful member at the Church of Advent, a vestry member, and a soprano in our church choir. Christina wrote the story in Chinese, and I did the English translation.

### **DAILY LIFE MISSION IN COMMUNITY**

**By Christina Hai**

About 10 miles north of my home in Tamsui is the small town of Sanzhi [pronounced "Sanjr" Ed.]. I heard about Sanzhi Legal Protection Center and its community service work in a prayer meeting three years ago, when Ms. Manghua Chen shared with us about her participation in its work. Besides providing legal advice and support for living to drug addicts, alcoholics, and unwed and single mothers in the Sanzhi neighborhood, Ms. Chen has been working as a missionary, sharing Good News with those who come to the Center for help. She knows that only through God's help can they be saved from the plight they are facing.

Later, in view of the need for care and support for this group, Ms. Chen sought assistance from the Rev. Huang Ming-Chen of the Taiwan Prison Fellowship. Together they started the Trumpet Fellowship in Sanzhi, and began a Bible study group, which gathered every other Friday. Two pastors and two evangelists take turns, coming all the way from Taipei to share the Gospel with them. When I heard Ms. Chen's prayers, inviting local Christians to participate in this mission, I was deeply touched and felt obligated to get involved. Since June 2012, I've taken part in the Prison Fellowship's ministry once a week, visiting families in need, with Ms. Chen and her co-worker. A few months later, I started joining with them in the Trumpet Fellowship gathering twice a month. We also started a women's self-growth class.

Over the last three years, we have witnessed the great work and love of Almighty God, our Savior, through our efforts at caring for these disadvantaged families, the poor, and the sick. We have seen the sad become joyful, the weak strengthened, and the poor receive abundant blessings. We are grateful to God for His guidance in our mission to make our community more loving and more just, and for His teaching in making us missionaries in the fields in which we are located. We need more Christians to join us in God's mission in the world!

I'm pleased to say that I always have the backing and support from my congregation, The Advent Church, and my Pastor, the Rev. Lennon Chang. Since I started my daily-life mission, we have led over 15 people to faith and baptism.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here I am; send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)

The harvest is ready. May God help us to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to care for those in need around us and to lead them to Jesus, our Lord.

## MARIAN'S COMMUNITY MISSION

By Wayne Schwab

The baptismal covenant reads:

**Celebrant:** Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

**People:** I will, with God's help.

**Celebrant:** Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

**People:** I will, with God's help.

**Celebrant:** Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

**People:** I will, with God's help

Marian realized that the women on her street didn't know each other. She had moved in over a year before and had made a few friends. As she puts it, "However, I realized I couldn't pick most of my neighbors out of a line-up!" They all needed a neighborhood group of some kind. Because Marian was introverted and blunt, she was not sure she had the social skills needed to make a change. She decided to do it, anyway, because she believed that was God calling her to do it.

Marian put a flyer on her neighbors' doorknobs (150 of them!), inviting them for a pot-luck supper. Twenty-one came. They were excited to be with each other, many for the first time. "I've been so isolated; thanks, thanks, thanks!" she heard over and over again.

They now meet monthly and have started a Neighborhood Watch program, put out a list of trusted baby-sitters, and "Have a sense of community that turns a bunch of houses into a neighborhood". A team now plans activities. The group spreads by participants talking with their neighbors and inviting them to an activity. Marian realizes she has stumbled on a mission in her local community. When a few have asked why she is doing it, she answers, "I do this because I feel God calling me to do it."

With this group effort, the Neighborhood Watch program now has all the neighbors on email. She also linked the email network with two nearby

communities. Recently, three bikes were stolen in one of the other communities and dumped in Marian's community. Many people in Marian's community read an email notice about the robbery that led to getting the bikes back to their rightful owners. Recently, Marian has formed a Bible study group, which led again to appreciation for the opportunity to connect with each other.

This past Halloween, the streets of the neighborhood were filled with children and their parents as never before. All were delighted to feel at home with each other. Marian commented: "People need community, but they don't know it. A sense of community seems to be dying in America. Community is so essential for people to feel safe and children to grow up. And that's why this Halloween was so much fun."

Marian's gift of community-building encouraged others to form the Neighborhood Watch and to celebrate days like Halloween as a community family. Moreover, Marian's sense of mission led to a "proclaiming" of the good news of friendship and helping each other. Notice as well - God gave Marian the social skills she needed to help all this to happen!

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**A. Wayne Schwab**, founder and coordinator of the Member Mission Network ([www.membermission.org](http://www.membermission.org)); consultant and trainer; Episcopal priest; and first Evangelism Officer for TEC.

## CHRIST'S MISSION IN THE COMMUNITY THROUGH A FEMA AGENT

By Demi Prentiss

My husband, Paul Prentiss, works for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This summer he's been deployed in Oklahoma City, responding to the recent torrential rainstorms and the consequent flooding and wind damage. The storms hit the state already reeling from tornado damage and recurring earthquake tremors.

Paul is part of a four-person team, charged with setting up disaster response centers (DRCs) around the state, projected to be as many as ten or twelve. Each center must be located in a place accessible to the affected community, in a building that is safe and free of hazardous materials such as asbestos. All facilities must be handicapped-accessible and must provide space for the agency responders to set up their offices, so that they can serve people in the community who are seeking help. Utilities, telecommunications, and adequate parking are all essential. Finding and equipping such places in the midst of a disaster is no small task.

The work is tiring and frustrating. (That's why they call it "work.") Break-downs and start-overs are a daily occurrence, sometimes in multiple locations, as needs and mandates collide. At least for the first few weeks of a response, nearly everyone is working 12- to 14-hour days, with no day off until "things" are under control.

Paul says, "I truly believe that each of us is put on earth to help each other". In a career that has taken him from the professional theater, to newspaper publishing, to Catholic Charities, to disaster response, Paul has come to recognize, "I'm not called to anything in particular but called to respond to people in need. I've been blessed with good health, so I'm able to do that." Paul understands that his working relationships extend beyond his FEMA colleagues into a community-wide web.

I recently asked Paul where he sees God at work in all the misery and destruction. "Everywhere," he

responded immediately, pointing to the community. "In one person comforting another among the survivors, among the responders, and responders with survivors. In the responder who risks his life pulling someone out of a river." He went on to describe the staffers and volunteers who assist people with special needs as they deal with reconstructing their lives and navigating the maze of assisting agencies. He sees God at work in the JFO (joint field office, the multi-agency command center), where employees of different agencies gather statistics and put them together to support both helpers in the field and policy makers in the state and national response offices. Even the bus drivers, shuttling people from place to place, help to make sure that everything is working to meet the survivors' needs.

"Always, the focus is on the survivor, the other person," he added, commenting that making the survivor as the first concern puts lots of details, tensions, and grievances in proper perspective.

The resulting community—survivors, emergency responders, volunteers, service agency representatives, government officials, response personnel—provides a demonstration of the body of Christ at work. "I recognize that there are people of many faiths and no faith, all working together," Paul remarked, and then added with a touch of irony, "This is truly a Christian environment. In what he asks us to do, the Spirit of Christ is here and very much alive."

"You recognize the terrible messes that all these people are having to deal with. You have to step above that, to lift people up.... You mostly just have to be there, helping them step up, and get past it."

Paul's daily-life mission in the community is realized in Christ's ministry through him in community, and bears fruit as the community comes together to minister one to another.

**THE MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN OUTREACH COMMITTEE  
OF THE RE LEE CONGREGATION**

**By Peyton G. Craighill**

**Forword by Peyton Craighill**

I'm a member of the Christian Outreach Committee of the RE Lee Congregation, located in Lexington, VA. Our usual task is to write checks for social service organizations that serve our city, our county, and the transnational missions of our Anglican Communion.

However important those checks are, we members of our community felt moved by Christ's Spirit to expand our vision more widely. This is my contribution to a wider vision of Christ's challenge to our committee. I contribute this article in the hope that it may challenge the Christian Outreach Committees of other congregations to consider what their mission is too.

Before we address the question,

*"What is the mission of the Outreach Committee?"*,

we have to answer another question –

*"What is the mission of our RE Lee congregation as a whole?"*

The obvious answer to this question is -

*"To serve our members"*.

But this raises another question,

*"How are we to serve our members?"*

The answer to this question raises a fourth question,

*"Why did Christ establish, and continues to support, our congregation"?*

The answer to that question is that -

*the Spirit of Christ is always on mission to share God's love and justice in this world that God created and is still creating.*

But –

*the Spirit of Christ works chiefly through people that are responsive to his love.*

That is the *primary* way that Christ carries out his mission.

After his baptism, when Christ began his mission, he gathered his disciples around him.

Before his ascension, he gave them his *Great Commission* –

*"Go throughout the whole world and spread the Good News to all people!"*

Through our baptism, we are inheritors of his *Great Commission*.

That is the *primary* reason that Christ established RE Lee Congregation in Lexington –

to carry Christ's mission of God's love and justice in this corner of God's world.

*As the congregation of RE Lee Church, this is our mission!*

*The mission of the Outreach Committee is to serve the mission of Christ through the members of our RE Lee congregation in Lexington (Jerusalem), Rockbridge County (Judea), among the dispossessed of our region (Samaria), and transnational mission (to the ends of the earth).*

*How are we to do this?*

1. *We begin by taking our baptismal vows seriously as the foundation stones of Christ's mission through us. (In Sunday services, we reaffirm our baptismal vows five times a year!) As a committee, we study them for inspiration (in-Spirit-ation), empowerment, and guidance in our work.*
2. *We go on to learn more about our four mission fields - Lexington, Rockbridge County, the dispossessed of our region, and transnational mission – and of the needs of the people within them, both spiritually and materially.*
3. *Finally, we develop plans on how we, as a committee, can influence our members of our congregation to live out their baptismal vows more faithfully to Christ working through them in all areas of their daily lives.*

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**Peyton Craighill** served as a missionary, primarily in theological education, in Taiwan for 21 years. After returning to the USA, he served in a number of different ministries in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. In retirement, he lives in Lexington, Virginia.

## MEMBER MISSION'S WEB SITE STORY

by Wayne Schwab

In 2007, our web site began in the usual fairly top-down form of a newsletter and references a variety of resources. After two years, pictures and videos picked it up.

Last year, we learned that newsletter and a content-centered web sites were fading away. Now, social media motivates and informs our web site. References to resources occupy only one screen. Links to the sources of the references requires only one click. A new site manager has informed and enabled both our switch and our growth.

Our site now carries podcasts, videos, stories, discussion starters, and sermons. Each time viewers visit the web site, they get a different set of resources. First seen is, "this week's life", app – how to live one week's Bible readings from the Revised Common Lectionary. It's in "street talk" - avoiding theological and ecclesiastical wording, while retaining a firm Christian orientation.

The site links to our blog on Facebook, "Member Mission Network." Furthermore, my own Facebook page is connected with 590 peo-

ple, as of this writing, and growing daily. Any item posted on our web site goes automatically to all 590+ people on my page and all on the member mission network blog.

The site also carries all of our resources: how to get our two books in print free; discussion starters; stories; videos; and session plans. Each resource is connected to its appropriate daily mission field – home, work, community, wider world (including culture, all organizations, and government), leisure, spiritual health, and church life and its outreach. You can find any one resource in its mission field or from a list of all in that category.

We are careful to maintain in our vision each baptized person on mission 24/7/365 – guided and stimulated by the Christian community, reflecting together on the biblical story of God's mission, and being empowered for mission by the bread and the cup of Jesus' table fellowship.

**RE: THE EPISCOPALIANS ON BAPTISMAL MISSION WEBSITE, LIVING GOD'S MISSION**

**By Demi Prestiss**

*Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission* (EBM) has gone digital. Living God's Mission ([www.livinggodsmision.org](http://www.livinggodsmision.org)) has been launched as a blog/website, with information about EBM and blog entries from the steering committee and fellow travelers.

To date, authors, including Peyton Craighill, Herbert Donovan, Edward Lee, Fletcher Lowe, Demi Prestiss, and Wayne Schwab—all members or former members of the EBM Steering Committee. Entries focus on the joys, pitfalls, and challenges of living out our baptismal calling, with an occasional entry exploring baptismal theology.

Site visitors are invited to subscribe to the blog, which posts entries three to six times

a month. Blog submissions are welcome and may be sent to [livinggodsmision.ebm@gmail.com](mailto:livinggodsmision.ebm@gmail.com). Preference is given to submissions under 200 words.

*Living God's Mission* is the outgrowth of this publication, *Baptismal Mission Forum* (BMF), edited by Peyton Craighill. Each edition of BMF is posted on the website, accessible from the BMF page.

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**Demi Prestiss** serves as ministry developer/administrative officer for the Diocese of Fort Worth. For more than 25 years she has worked to support and equip laity and clergy in fully realizing their baptismal callings.

Comments and questions about articles in this publication are indeed welcome. Contact information is on the first page.