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OFJ MAGAZINE

FROM FAITHFUL FOUNDATIONS TO GLOBAL MISSIONS

DON'T STOP
BEE-LIEVING

MORE THAN
WELLNESS

COLUMBUS
FOR JESUS

Ohio for Jesus Magazine

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CONTENTS



6

**DON'T STOP
BEE-LIEVING**



13

**MORE THAN
WELLNESS**



21

**COLUMBUS
FOR JESUS**



26

**GLOBAL
MISSIONS**



OHIO FOR JESUS UPDATES

Leader Development

Driver Goals

How many new credentialed leaders were added in 2022?

- 40

How many credentialed ministers do we have as of December of 2022?

- 915



Our Commitment to You

Coordinate Called Weekends at Heartland Conference Retreat Center for youth and young adults exploring ministry

- In 2022, we launched our first Called weekend at Heartland Conference Retreat Center, with more than 120 students in attendance. We continued the momentum in 2023 with 150+ middle and high school students who feel called to ministry, attending the second Called Weekend.



Establish more accessible options for OSOM

- During 2022, OSOM went through an extensive reimagining of the delivery options and curriculum offered. Throughout 2023, OSOM has debuted a new online remote platform which make OSOM accessible for people in every area of our state.



When and Then

Invest a portion of each minister's tithe into their retirement account.

- At the 2021 Network Conference we were able to announce that a portion of the minister's tithe of our ordained ministers is now being deposited into their retirement account. This will be evaluated each year as we endeavor to make this an ongoing benefit for all ordained ministers.



Allocate additional Network resources for the expanded care of ministers.

- We are continuing our partnership with Emerge Counseling Ministries, as well as making space in each OFJ Magazine for an article each quarter to make our Network aware of the resources Emerge provides, from Soul Care Sundays to individual counseling, and everything in between.



Establish localized expressions of SEU Ohio throughout the state.

- We are having strategic conversations with leadership and churches on how we can best partner to provide regionalized expressions of SEU Ohio throughout the state.



Offer varying levels of SEU scholarships to ministers, spouses, & children from HFO churches, in addition to scholarships for faithful attendees from HFO churches.

- Our SEU Ohio team is working to cultivate partnerships and develop relationships to be able to offer more scholarship opportunities for OMN students. One of the most exciting opportunities is the Church Match Scholarship where churches can partner with SEU Ohio to financially support a student attending SEU Ohio. For more information about the Church Match Scholarship, visit seuohio.com/financial.



DON'T STOP BEE-LIEVING:

How Bees are Mobilizing Speed the Light

by Tara Zimmer

During the 2022 Celebration Tour, Deven Anderson (youth and communications pastor at New Life Circleville) and I connected, and he shared with me about his new youth ministry venture, beekeeping for Speed the Light. I was intrigued. Beekeeping isn't exactly something you learn in seminary, so I was curious to know what prompted Deven to begin this endeavor.

Deven began serving as the youth pastor at New Life AG in Circleville in 2020. The youth ministry had not been able to contribute to Speed the Light in several

years, and he was determined to find a way to help the students grow in their missions awareness and increase missions giving. He wanted to help teach them the value of serving, not just giving money toward missions. So, he began trying a few projects, all of which were time-consuming, exhausting and didn't yield the fruit he hoped for – in his students or financially.

In March of 2022, Deven attended Matt Sullivan's Speed the Light breakout session at Synergy and was encouraged to hear all the creative ways that Matt and his team found success in building a missions culture for their youth ministry. That prompted



Deven to start praying about creative, outside-of-the-box opportunities that his youth ministry could sustain. He felt the Lord speak to him, “Honey bees.” He laughed because he was terrified of bugs and was hesitant to take that as a word from the Lord.

Immediately, Deven thought of all the obstacles: Expensive startup costs. Getting the pastoral staff to agree. Learning about beekeeping. Not to mention, where do you even get bees? He was concerned he would start this project and accidentally kill all the bees. He answered the call to ministry, but no one mentioned anything about beekeeping! However, the Lord had all of this worked out already. But the more he prayed, the more he felt like this was what they were supposed to do as a ministry. Their church has 27 acres of land that are only used once a year for a large outreach, so they had the space. He just had to get the support of the leadership.

With the blessing of church staff and elders, in June of 2022, they were well underway with their first season. “My wife and I just started catching swarms in the area. People would call when they saw them in their yards, and we would go get them. We’ve never had to pay for bees.” Deven has seen the favor of the Lord in offsetting each major expense as it has come their way. “One of my high school teachers retired and is full-time in Honey,” Deven told me. “He gave us used equipment to get started. Even when it’s hot, and you do get stung, it’s been so clear that God has brought us this far and provided everything we needed.”

The students at New Life help in various roles when it comes to the honey bees. While a few kids have expressed interest in working directly with the bees, that is Deven’s responsibility right now. Once the combs have been removed from the hives, students help extract honey from

the combs. They also oversee the entire bottling process, make treats like honey pops, and sell the honey in the church and community. One of the students even designed the logo and labels for the honey bottles. "Part of this process has been teaching the kids that it doesn't always mean giving money for missions; it's also giving time, talent, & gifts." The students have also learned the value of teamwork. Deven was already committed to creating a "sticky" youth ministry after reading the book *Sticky Church*. This process has taught him that "together, we can create something sticky and sweet. Once you're in [the youth ministry], it's hard to leave because people care about you." Working together has helped create that culture of belonging.

Before starting the honey project, their student ministry raised \$300-\$500/year for Speed the Light. In their first bee season, they were able to raise \$3,200, and that was starting late in the year. They expect to significantly increase that amount by the end of 2023 and to see growth each year. Right now, their most significant challenge is keeping up with demand. Last year they had 3 hives and produced 180 pounds of honey. It sold out in just two weekends. This year, they have 12 hives and an entire beekeeping season, but they are still selling out quickly after each harvest (there are three each year). They hope to continue adding hives so that they can expand this mission's fundraiser to also be a way

of connecting with their community. They want to be known as the bee church.

Now a little over a year into this endeavor, Deven wants to encourage other youth pastors, especially those who lead small ministries like his. "Start with prayer. We tried lots of things on our own. We worked really hard, and all of our fundraisers failed. We can't do this on our own. We try as humans all the time, and we fail all the time. Praying and being vulnerable with God to lead us is what got us here. Let Him give you your thing. Make sure you're swinging at the right pitches. Use what God gave you. For us, it was this property. Be obedient and let him provide the rest, even when it doesn't make sense and you can't see how it will work." As Deven sought the Spirit, he was able to identify and train student leaders, making it possible for them to see MORE THAN a 300% increase in mission giving! That is Ohio for Jesus! It may have seemed impossible just a few years ago, but with God, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE! ✦





OHIO FOR JESUS UPDATES **Church Health**

Driver Goals

How many people started their discipleship journey in 2022?

- **7,681** new conversions reported in 2022

How many people accepted the offer for disciples to be Spirit baptized?

- **1,028**



Our Commitment to You

Deliver Digital Church Health Resources to OMN churches and leaders

- We have continued updating the Church Health website to offer digital resources. We also added monthly Ministry Resource Tip video calls to help connect ministers with various resources available through their affiliation with our Network.



Encourage regional awareness of Emerge Counseling via Zoom meetings/Sessions

- Emerge continues to grow its telehealth ministry and we continue to encourage its use by our ministers. In partnership with Leader Development, we are finding ways to get the word out to our ministers on a consistent basis, and encourage use of Emerge's counseling service both in person and online.



Expand Network prayer app to enable use by area and local churches

- Our research has not found an existing prayer app that works for our purposes – We have done some preliminary investigation on finding a usable tool.



Promote regional and area prayer meetings

- With the implementation of regional drivers, we have encouraged each region, where we have a leader, to add a fall prayer “Pentecost” time.



When and Then

Increase Ohio for Jesus Church Grants to expand the effectiveness of existing churches.

- As we see our capacity for giving increase, we look forward to being able to increase our OFJ Church Grants.



Facilitate Network prayer and fasting retreats at HCRC.

- In 2022 we offered our first ever all-Network Holy Spirit focused event, School of the Spirit. Moving forward, this event will be rebranded to fit with our OFJ goals and called, Seek the Spirit. We anticipate this will be an annual event hosted at Heartland Conference Retreat Center.

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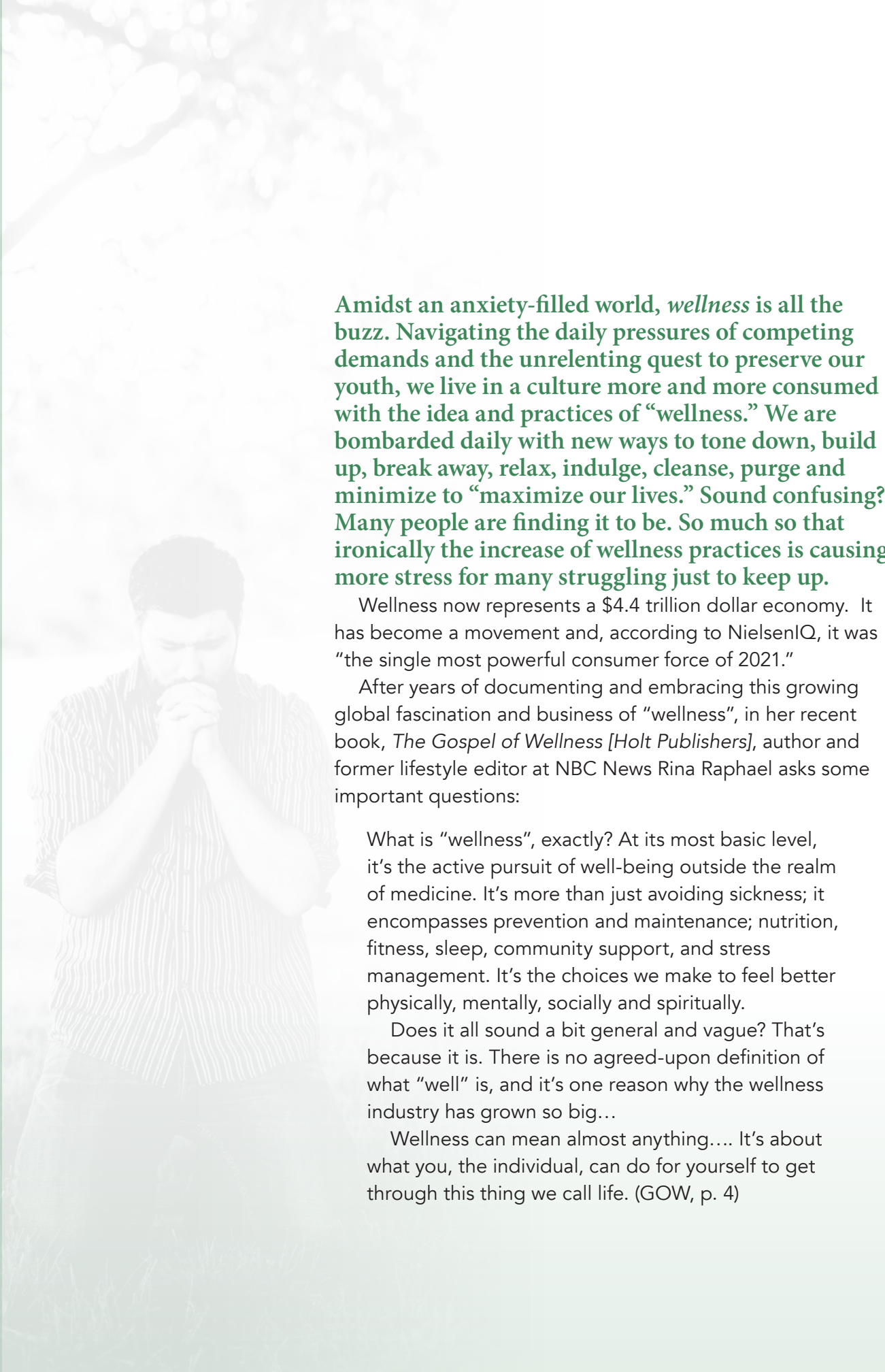
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More Than Wellness: Discover **WHOLENESS!**

by Robert Crosby, PhD.





Amidst an anxiety-filled world, *wellness* is all the buzz. Navigating the daily pressures of competing demands and the unrelenting quest to preserve our youth, we live in a culture more and more consumed with the idea and practices of “wellness.” We are bombarded daily with new ways to tone down, build up, break away, relax, indulge, cleanse, purge and minimize to “maximize our lives.” Sound confusing? Many people are finding it to be. So much so that ironically the increase of wellness practices is causing more stress for many struggling just to keep up.

Wellness now represents a \$4.4 trillion dollar economy. It has become a movement and, according to NielsenIQ, it was “the single most powerful consumer force of 2021.”

After years of documenting and embracing this growing global fascination and business of “wellness”, in her recent book, *The Gospel of Wellness [Holt Publishers]*, author and former lifestyle editor at NBC News Rina Raphael asks some important questions:

What is “wellness”, exactly? At its most basic level, it’s the active pursuit of well-being outside the realm of medicine. It’s more than just avoiding sickness; it encompasses prevention and maintenance; nutrition, fitness, sleep, community support, and stress management. It’s the choices we make to feel better physically, mentally, socially and spiritually.

Does it all sound a bit general and vague? That’s because it is. There is no agreed-upon definition of what “well” is, and it’s one reason why the wellness industry has grown so big...

Wellness can mean almost anything.... It’s about what you, the individual, can do for yourself to get through this thing we call life. (GOW, p. 4)

The Gospel of Wellness?

Raphael additionally reports wellness today as “almost an aspirational obsession for some and close to religious dogma for others. The average American believes adherence to popularized methods can overcome sickness, unhappiness, and even death. A strict overhaul of diet, movement, and thoughts is hailed as the new messiah. In wellness, it seems, we trust (p. 5).” She admits to soul struggles herself through overindulging the promises of the wellness industry. Her conclusion after years of research is “the wellness industry isn’t well (p. 11).”

As a Christ-follower, amidst a wellness-crazed culture, a couple of vital questions need to be asked: One, is “wellness” a worthy pursuit for a child of God? And Two, is there an alternative or more worthy focus that will better help us “get through this thing we call life”?

While Jesus arguably made people “well” in a multitude of ways – cleansing lepers, restoring speech and vision, and even raising the dead – the gospel accounts record more than just wellness resulting from these encounters – he also brought them “wholeness.”

To the daring woman healed of a blood disorder, “Jesus said to her, ‘Daughter, you took a risk of faith, and now you’re *healed and whole.*’” (Mark 5:34 MSG)

When Jesus readied his disciples for his departure, he said, “I’m leaving you *well and whole.* That’s my parting gift to you. Peace.” (John 14:26)

And when conveying his John 3:16 love, he said: “...no one need be destroyed; by believing in [Christ], anyone can have a *whole and lasting life.*”(v. 17)

While healing represents the removal of things harmful, things limiting or hurtful; biblical wholeness is about becoming full, complete, and replete with God’s plan, presence and purpose. Jesus said, “I have come that you might have *life to the full* ... (John 10:10).” While wellness may provide remedies, wholeness is a higher purpose. While healing is an application of God’s grace; wholeness is the realization of it.

The Journey of Wholeness

Through several years of teaching pastoral counseling, one of my favorite questions to ask students has been, “What is the goal of counseling?” Invariably, most begin with responses such as “comfort”, “healing” or “reconciliation.” While each of these have merit, the conclusion always ends up with “wholeness”. This term epitomizes our innate quest. People want and need to experience wholeness in the lives, their families, their relationships, their work – wholeness in their souls.

A definition of *well* or *wellness* would be “in good health” or “recovered from illness.” *Whole* or *wholeness*, on the other hand is about becoming “complete, full, entire” or “in one piece.”

The all-familiar blessing phrase among Jews through history is not simply “peace”, but “Shalom”. And, shalom is in essence a blessing of wholeness. While it can denote

“hello” or “goodbye”, it is all-encompassing in that it affirms making something whole, it conveys peace, harmony, wholeness, prosperity, welfare [or wellness] and tranquility.

But how does discovering wholeness occur in our lives and experience of faith in Christ?

DISCOVERING WHOLENESS begins with BROKENNESS.

While wellness is often focused on best practices and better habits in life, wholeness starts in the broken places of our lives. Wellness efforts include things such as cleaner eating, intermittent fasting, spinning, walking and mindfulness. It is often about taking ourselves to a better place in our daily practices, realizing our potential. While that may be all well and good, for the Christ-follower these practices alone are not enough.

Wellness promises to help us actualize our greater potential. Wholeness, on the other hand, is something we discover in the broken places of life. Our brokenness reveals more than merely our need for a new practice, habit, or exercise; it affirms our deep need for Christ and his presence on our lives. As Christ-followers, we believe Jesus was the one who was torn and broken on a cross to make us whole; he was completely torn apart so that our lives might be completely put back together.

It may sound counter-intuitive or paradoxical, but wholeness begins with brokenness – in our place of deep need. But how does it continue?

DISCOVERING WHOLENESS grows through PRAYER

Worry or concerns about our health often trigger our engagement into the world of wellness and its practices. The desire for a better or fuller life leads to changes in our eating habits, work-life practices, or exercise routines. Desire gets the wheels turning, but it takes discipline to keep them turning.

Wholeness happens quite differently. God meets us in the most unexpected places, in the broken places of life, right amid losses, hurts, disappointments, failures and frustrations, but through prayer he helps to keep us in a dependent place – a place of surrender to him and his will. The challenges and struggles of life and work can disrupt our lives and souls in countless ways. But the temptation to be anxious or worried serves to remind us of our need to often come to a place of experiencing God’s presence through prayer.

While brokenness shows us our need for God and the wholeness only he can bring and build, prayer is the best and highest response to that need. Paul said it this way:

“Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, *a sense of God’s wholeness*, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.” (Phil. 4:6-7 MSG)

Ultimately, God allows us to be broken in our lives not because he wants to break us apart, but rather to break us open ... open to prayer and the power of his presence in our lives. We begin to discover wholeness in these ways. But where is this process ultimately taking us?

DISCOVERING WHOLENESS culminates in CHRISTLIKENESS.

God is the epitome of wholeness. The books of Revelation and Ezekiel depict the angelic beings known as the Cherubim encircling the throne of God and proclaiming his praises. The sense is that God is so completely perfect and whole that they these heavenly beings marvel at his wholeness – compelled into a continual state of worship and awe.

The book of Hebrews says that Jesus is “the exact representation of the Father”. The Bible says that he came to “reveal the Father” to us. And, we are told that growing in godliness means being “conformed to the image of his son [i.e., Jesus](Rom. 8:29).” So, while wellness may culminate in a better or improved version of ourselves, the journey to wholeness is the gradual revealing of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Paul calls this “the glorious ... mystery.”

While the image of God is revealed bit

by bit in our lives in this journey, in the fullness of time it will be even better. Jesus promised that one day:

“...everything handed over to me by the Father [will] be completed—not a single detail missed—and at the wrap-up of time *I have everything and everyone put together, upright and whole*. This is what my Father wants: that anyone who sees the Son and trusts who he is and what he does and then aligns with him will enter *real life, eternal life*. My part is to put them on their feet alive and *whole at the completion of time*.”
(John 6:39-40 MSG)

Christ’s plan for our lives goes well beyond wellness. From the moment we encounter him in our lives as his followers, he leads us on the journey to wholeness. Through brokenness and prayer that process grows and leads to our being made “whole at the completion of time.” While engaging in the practices of wellness may be all well and good, as Christ-followers we do something much more ... we follow the “Prince of Peace.” In The Message translation of Isaiah’s prophecy, Eugene Peterson translates the Prince of Peace as “The Prince of Wholeness (Is. 9:6-7 THE MESSAGE)” and promises “there’ll be no limits to the wholeness he brings.” ✦

Robert Crosby, PhD serves as the President of Emerge Counseling Ministries.



OHIO FOR JESUS UPDATES

Church Multiplication

Driver Goals

How many churches were planted in 2022?

- 20

How many churches were planted from January 2020 – December 2022?

- 46



Our Commitment to You

Facilitate a growing number of launch trainings including CMN & Dinner Church.

- We had 2 dinner church trainings and 1 Launch Training for new Church planters.

Provide a Called Weekend Church Planting Track at HCRC for youth and young adults.

- We had our second Called Weekend and it included a Church Multiplication introduction. It helped students understand that we are all called to plant the gospel everywhere we go.



Start & develop cohorts for urban, suburban, rural, missional community, international, & Dinner Church pastors and leaders.

- In 2022 we launched a church planters cohort and a micro church cohort. We plan to continue to launch new contextualized cohorts, until we cover all of the areas mentioned above and possibly more.

When and Then



Support a greater number of church plants with Operational & Capacity Building Grants.

- We were able to provide \$167,000 in Operational Grants, \$62,000 in Capacity Building Grants, as well as \$37,000 in Dinner Church grants.



Utilize HCRC for Church Multiplication training events

- We are currently planning our first training event, that we expect to launch in 2024



Sponsor collaborative community outreach events in partnership with each area.

- Highlighted community engagement in every area during Celebration Tour. Wrote book on community engagement Launched Care Portal in 30 churches. OMN churches worked together to provide 5,000 teens in foster care with gift cards for Christmas.



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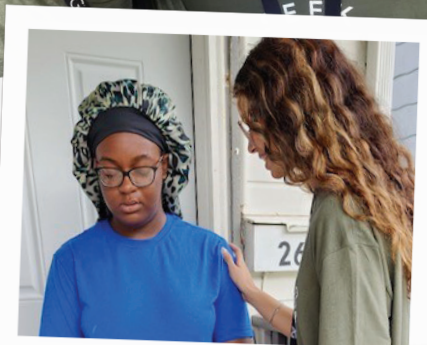
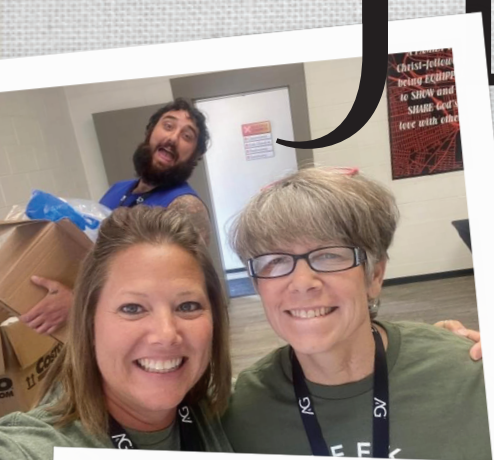
SEEK & SAVE

COLUMBUS FOR JESUS

by Al Yanno

During the week of July 24-29, 2023, people from around Ohio came together to saturate Columbus with the Gospel of Jesus through partnership with local churches, the Ohio Ministry Network, and the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The weeklong outreach included neighborhood evangelism, prayer walks, sports camps, neighborhood & park clean-up projects, anti-human trafficking ministry, church revitalization projects, and two block parties. Here are some of the amazing results that we were able to capture:

- **333** recorded engagements with individuals
- **311** people prayed for
- **143** Salvations
- **2** spontaneous water baptisms
- **252** total volunteers from 42 different churches & organizations
- **5,000** bags of groceries packed and distributed
- **1,750** people attended the block parties
- **4** local AG churches were directly impacted by this week of outreach.





Each of those numbers is a person who is valuable to God, and we celebrate them; they represent hearts impacted and lives changed. Below are just a couple of the stories our teams shared with us after Seek and Save:

One team was walking the streets and talking with people when they encountered a young lady trying to change her tire. They stopped to help her and asked to pray with her. By the time the prayer was over, there were tears in her eyes, and a team member sensitively obeyed the Holy Spirit as he spoke into her life with an anointed word and led her into a relationship with Christ.

Another team was on their way to lunch after a hot and humid morning of ministry. A truck pulled up, and a distraught woman got out. The team leader sensed this was a God moment and asked if she could pray for her. The lady was blown away as she shared that she had tried to commit suicide the night before with a gun to her

head, but it misfired. She knew this was the Lord sending that team to her because she needed hope. They talked and prayed with her, and she accepted Christ as her Savior and her whole countenance was changed as a result.

There were countless God-ordained moments, like these, all over the city. From street corners to leading people to Jesus in the middle of Walmart, God was at work. This time of ministry brought stronger unity in the Body of Christ for everyone who participated. Lifelong friendships were made, pastors were encouraged, the mayor of Columbus met with 30 of our pastors, and partnerships were forged with local organizations, law enforcement agencies, and churches. One of the most encouraging things was to see so many young people serving, helping our local pastors, and saturating Columbus with the gospel.

The end of the week culminated in a block party on each side of Columbus.



These events featured a gospel message from one of our Ohio evangelists, and many people gave their lives to Christ during those events as a result. The people we engaged with during this week of ministry were so open to the gospel, and I was brought to tears a few times watching the Body of Christ at its best – bringing Christ to the culture. The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Let us pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send laborers into the field.

Thank you to Pastor Choco DeJesus and the General Council of the AG for making this event possible. We also want to thank our site pastors, TJ Wolfe (Multiply Church) and Steven Steward (Revive Church), for their hard work in organizing each part of ministry on their side of the city. So many amazing people and churches who helped support this outreach, but we especially want to thank our churches and pastors who opened their buildings and

grounds for pieces of the outreach – Aaron DeLong (Simple Church) and Ken Keene (Trinity AG). Finally, thank you to our local coordinator, Kelly Zimmerman, for using her administrative gifts to organize the leaders and volunteers.

Columbus for Jesus! Ohio for Jesus! All things are possible! ✦





OHIO FOR JESUS UPDATES

Missions Partnership

Driver Goals

How much money was given to missions?

- Total 2022 missions giving was **\$8,300,273** which is a 23% increase since the launch of OFJ on January 1, 2020.

How many new missionaries have been sent to the field since 2020?

- There are **34** out of **164** new missionaries since 2020.



Our Commitments

Offer missions starter kits to churches who are beginning or developing missions ministry.

- The Missions Leadership Team is currently working to update and revamp the Missions Starter Kit to make it more accessible. We hope to have these ready for distribution in Fall 2023.



Provide a Called Weekend missions track at HCRC for youth and young adults/

- Completed second Called Weekend missions track in March 2023 with over 40 students identifying that they feel called to missions. Plan to provide this experience in the coming years.



Initiate, sponsor, and facilitate annual missions trip opportunities.

- In 2023, we sent short term teams to Phoenix, AZ, El Salvador, Detroit, MI, Cleveland, OH, Thailand, Vietnam, Atlanta, GA. Many of these are in partnership and leadership of Randy Young, Agora Group.



When and Then

Subsidize newly ordained ministers for a missions experiential trip.

- Each newly ordained minister in May 2023 received a \$100 voucher for their first missions trip as an ordained minister



Each appointed AG World & US missionary from Ohio will receive a supportive monetary gift each year.

- In December 2022, each AG World and US missionary received a monetary contribution toward their budget.

FROM FAITHFUL FOUNDATIONS TO GLOBAL MISSIONS

TAKING THE MESSAGE
OF JESUS FROM OHIO
TO SOUTHERN ASIA

by sensitive missionary





Top left: First mission trip; Top right: Easter with grandparents; Bottom: Bible quiz regional TBQ team. I am 3rd from the left

I grew up in rural Ohio with parents who never possessed a passport. Homeschooled in the 1980's, exposed to foreign worlds and concepts only through brief paragraphs in textbooks. I had never met a Buddhist, visited a Stupa, or read the Pali Cannon.

My parents loved Jesus, and at least three times a week the family loaded into our conversion van and drove 40 mins each way to Mansfield First Assembly. We filled the entire 3rd pew on the right. It was in that pew that I heard Pastor Tom Blair intentionally introduced our congregation to people who were living out the Great

Commission. He wept as missionaries spoke of the hopelessness of the people in the lands they served. He cheered as they shared their victories on difficult mission fields we could only begin to imagine. With his words and actions, Pastor Blair demonstrated that this work was valuable. Several times a month he would give these global workers space to open my young mind and heart to the world's, people, and religions I would otherwise have never known. Watching the images of desperate people throwing themselves prostrate before an unhearing, uncaring statue, begging it for mercy, stirred a longing within me to be used by God in His rescue mission.

I was discipled with a firm foundation of Biblical missions through diverse church ministries. I pledged my meager allowance to BGMC and my babysitting earnings to Speed The Light. In Junior Bible Quiz I “buzzed in” on the 30-pt. question, “From Mathew, quote the Great Commission”; and in Teen Bible Quiz I memorized Luke 24:46-47, planting missional seeds deep into my heart. In the third grade a missionary spoke to our Missionette class. I heard about Amy Carmichael and the Buddhist/Hindu world of India for the first time. In Fine Arts I preformed drama solos that portrayed exotic places and people awaiting the Good News.

Then, at Southeastern Bible College I committed to go! (I also committed to marry Kyle). We were called— not

just to a nation that was lost, hopeless, and desperate—we wanted to go to a place where the Gospel had never been proclaimed. To go to a people who had never rejected the gift of salvation but were waiting to hear it for the first time. We learned that most of these never reached nations were shrouded deeply—deceived profoundly—by Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. In our naivety, we believed that when the Gospel was proclaimed, the truth would be accepted with open arms in massive numbers.

We wept at our table in Sri Lanka as we filled out our first quarterly missions report— Salvations 0. Our hearts were broken, and our minds confused. Every day we drank cups of tea with new

Family photo





Ministry

friends, visited the market with a smile to buy fruits, fish, and vegetables striving to build relationships that would allow us to share our testimonies. We walked our neighborhood and prayed, even as loudspeakers boomed the chants of Buddhist monks and the heavy perfume of burning incense thickly filled the air, we

knew the Gospel was the hope of nations. Why was this island nation we loved and were called to serve not grasping hold to the hope we held out.

We began to understand the ties that bound their hands from freely accepting His great gift of salvation. Identity. It is loudly and frequently proclaimed that

“to be Sri Lankan is to be Buddhist.” It is their highest value. Sri Lanka is the oldest continually Buddhist nation in the world. Sri Lankans believe they are the chosen protectors of pure Theravada Buddhism, which they believe originated on their island. Buddhism must be preserved and protected with violence when needed and death if necessary. The teachings of Christ to love others extravagantly and find unspeakable joy in Him are in juxtapose to the teachings of Buddha. Buddhist are trying to rid themselves of all emotion. They must separate themselves of all desires, even love, joy, and hope, if they

are to ever find freedom from the cycle of reincarnation. Less than 2 percent of the population are believers of Jesus and there is a tangible force pushing against all attempts to illuminate the darkest corners and demonic presences are tangible.

The weight of the discouragement and disillusionment felt as we submitted that first missionary report will always be with me. Yet, I am sustained by the strength of the foundation laid in my life. An anchored faith has enabled me to battle against the powers and principalities of this complex Buddhist land as we proclaim the hope of the Gospel with boldness and joy. ✦

Monks and priests in Sri Lanka

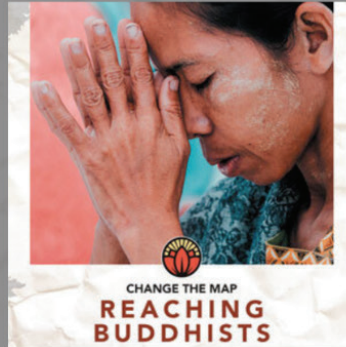




CHANGE THE MAP

A PRAYER AND ADVOCACY MOVEMENT TO
REACH THE BUDDHIST WORLD

The Change the Map initiative is to raise up **5,000 intercessors** for the Buddhist world, identify **25 new missionaries** by 2030, and raise **\$125,000** for the Jim Palmer Senders Fund.



Change the Map has created informative and powerful resources to educate and inspire you to pray, give, and go to the Buddhist world. Check out the books, videos, and more that they made just for you.

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2023 Summer Camp at Heartland Conference Retreat Center

A lot of hard work, long days, and months of preparation goes into hosting Ohio Youth Ministry and Ohio KidMin camps each year. The Heartland team, as well as OYM and OKM leaders, put in so much hard work to prepare and host students from around the state. While camp is a blast, our motivation for the amount of time and effort it takes to put these 5 weeks of camp together is that we believe it is vital to the development of future Godly leaders. The impact that is made on these students lives, and the ripples that start at Heartland will continue for years to come. What happens at Heartland really does change the world. Check out the reports below of the incredible things God did during the 2023 summer camp season!

OYM Camp

"Between the three weeks of camp, we had over 1,600 middle school and high school students running after God. Man did GOD SHOW UP. We couldn't be more thankful for every prayer that went into this camp season and covered our students." Lizz Clark, Next Gen Coordinator

- 123** first time salvations
- 437** rededicated their lives to Christ.
- 243** Holy Spirit baptisms
- 235** called into ministry.

OKM Camp

"During two weeks of Kids Camp, including four Starter Camps, and two older elementary camps, we hosted 913 kids. There were holy moments in prayer and worship where over 400 kids were silent in the presence of God. These kids heard the voice of God and moved closer to him. It was incredible to see what God is doing in the lives of these kids.

The numbers below were reported to us from our leaders as their campers shared what God was doing in their lives. I can't wait to see how God will continue to work in each camper & leader's life! With God ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE!" Meghan Boyle, OKM Director

- 36** first time salvations
- 149** rededicated their lives to Christ.
- 100** Holy Spirit baptisms
- 111** called into ministry.
- 18** reported healing in some way

OKM also has a special BGMC offering during camp. This year, the kids gave \$21,766.04 to help build the Hollis Arena in the Asia Pacific Region. Soccer gives kids in the area an opportunity to be a part of a positive group through soccer leagues and learn about and grow in relationship with Jesus! ✦



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