



Eastern Michigan District
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

**Sixty-Eighth Annual
Assembly
Transformation Stories**

ACROSS THE TABLE
Revs. Mark & Cindy Riddell

She took a deep breath and said, "Well, as your friend, I think I can tell you this..." Looking across the Panera table, I felt a flash of fear. She was very serious. I braced myself. Though we'd been meeting for months, I wondered if I had stepped in too far. She'd been hurt by church people before. Was she about to let me have it?

She continued, "It's like planting a seed." I still wasn't sure if I should relax or stay on guard, but I was listening intently... "I think about you every day. And I think about our conversations. It's like you bring this seed, this Godly, holy seed..." My concern faded and my eyes flooded as I realized what she was sharing with me. "I'm one who's faith has been on the fence, but I hear you talk about God and answers to your prayers and I think about that -- and you don't judge. I think the devil tries to keep me from meeting with you!"

Mark 4:27 has become a meaningful verse for me: "Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how." We bring the seed. The Holy Spirit works behind the scenes to make it sprout and grow.

My friend's words were a gift of encouragement as we plow and plant in the rough ground of our community. Her faith continues to grow, and she has become a "partner" in friendship to other friends at Panera. She ministers to me as a friend, challenging my thinking and opening my understanding of other views. Recently she posted a quote on my Facebook page that read: "You cannot force someone to comprehend a message that they are not ready to receive. Still, you must never underestimate the power of planting a seed."

ADRIAN FIRST
Rev. David Fulks

This past year has been a good one for Adrian First. God has blessed and helped us in many ways; but the church is nothing and simply would not exist without the people who compose the church and without the Spirit's moving and working in our hearts, lives and homes.

One such home belongs to a new couple who started attending this past year. They are in their 20's and have two babies with one on the way. They have had trouble with the law and some strong habits that are not good for them.

They have family that attends regularly here at AFCON, and they started to attend looking for a change in their lives and in their family's life. They found that change! What they were doing just was not working out at all!

As the Sundays went by, they started to attend more and more regularly, participate in worship, and listen more and more intently to the messages. God is moving and working in their lives in big ways with life changes and attitude changes that others have noticed.

They are growing in their faith by leaps while God continues to shape them. Also, in the month of February they had both babies dedicated and were weeping openly as they dedicated their two babies. It was an amazing thing to see and experience! This is a life-changing and family-transforming testimony to God's grace and love! We are seeking many more stories just like this one in the coming year and are believing yet for greater things indeed!

ALLEN PARK
Rev. James Craig

God almighty has been at work at the Allen Park Church of the Nazarene as individuals have been transformed by His saving and sanctifying grace. As may be evidenced in the lives of the people who make up the congregation, people who have been released from a lifetime of sin and guilt, truly

to be transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit. And while in their senior years one person stated, "God has truly transformed me.... I now know of sins forgiven and a heart set free." Or another that has stated, "I praise God for the new work He is doing in my life, I am new."

Furthermore, this year has been the first year of having a dedicated youth director, Canaan, who is joined in ministry by his wife, Jenny. Their ministry among our youth has provided our youth with a deeper understanding of God and His word, but greater still, the commitments to God that our youth have made this year are truly earth shaking.

God has truly blessed the Allen Park Church of the Nazarene this last year; the future of this congregation is bright as we continue to call of Him and the Holy Spirit continues His work among us.

ARGENTINE

Rev. Robert Lindsay

This past year, I've had the privilege of witnessing the transforming work of God in my life, in the life of Argentine Nazarene, and in the life of our community. A transformative story that stands out from this past year is that of an inmate at a county jail in a neighboring county. Prior to his incarceration, he was occasionally attending Argentine Nazarene.

In April of 2016, I began making a weekly trek every Saturday night to visit him. For the sake of privacy, I'll call him Andrew, as he reminds me of the slightly more reserved brother of Peter. My first visit with him, in that cement block room with a glass divider, was met with some suspicion. Being falsely accused of a crime, Andrew seemed to have many questions and not very many answers. We talked about how God did not cause the untruth that put him in jail, but He did allow this trial to occur. Though we didn't understand God's purposes in this trial, he must trust God to see him through it. After our first visit, he told me I didn't need to spend my time come back every week and not to worry about him. But the Holy Spirit, and my own heart, directed me to go back. Little did I know that 47 weeks and 47 visits later, I would be spending 1 ½ to 3 hours with him every Saturday night. Had he not been in jail, the contact between Andrew and the Gospel would not have been so abundant.

Each Saturday we read from God's Word, from devotional materials and through a set of biographies of great men and women of the faith. One biography greatly stirred his interest-- that of the old Methodist revivalist preacher, Samuel Porter Jones. I ordered a copy of Sam Jones' sermons, and we began to read those when we ran out of biographies. The sermons are fiery, to the point, engaging and salvific. Through those sermons, God has spoken into my life, as well as Andrew's life.

God's grace has been doing a transforming work in this young man's life. In the first 7 months, he read the entire Bible. He was partial to Isaiah and Romans, and has reread them. He testifies to a recommitment to God and a break with his past life. He has prayer and devotions every day, and will call his own dad (a member at Argentine) to see if he has done his devotions. One day, much to my surprise, he began praying in my presence. His prayers show a definite closeness with God. Sam P. Jones said, "A conversion isn't worth anything unless it's a double conversion. A man must be converted from something to something." In the case of Andrew, he testifies to a 2 Corinthians 5:17 life--"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

ARMADA

Rev. Jeff Rolfe

When we came to Armada a year and a half ago, the church had only 2 teenagers and no youth ministry. We have seen our Lord move in a huge way in the formation of a youth ministry over the year. We now have up to 18 teens that come out on Wednesday nights and learn about Jesus. We were blessed to team up with Bethel church and take 8 teenagers to Chicago for a dare to share conference. These teens all went out on the streets and shared their faith with others. I am so blessed to be a witness to the way Christ is moving among the youth of Armada.

BEDFORD

Rev. Vince Flippo

It is difficult to face the fact that individuals can attend our worship services for multiple years and fail to experience the depth of complete freedom and forgiveness that recently occurred. May we seek and experience both the purity of the written word and the power of the Living Word as we gather in His name. God granted a depth of freedom to a dear friend in recent weeks at one of our revival services.

Let's call her "Eve." Eve graduated college some 15-20 years ago. She shared for the first time in a public gathering the tragic event of having been raped on the night of her graduation. Broken, she found herself in the ER the day after. Being prolife in her convictions, traumatized and devastated in spirit...Eve allowed herself to be convinced by the ER doctor that it would be prudent to authorize the use of meds to assure the termination of any potential resulting conception. That momentary decision has haunted Eve ever since. She has lived for years with debilitating guilt over the possibility of having aborted a child. Eve, now married and having adopted a child, has lived with the belief that her infertility is the result of God's punishment and her unworthiness to become a mother biologically. All because of the decision made on that fateful night. She has been bound by destructive lies that have seemed so real.

The presence of God was quite thick among us as we gathered in revival recently. I give praise to God for revealing Himself and creating the atmosphere such that Eve was compelled to confess and seek prayer for deliverance and forgiveness for this guilt that she has carried all these years. Eve testified that she believed God had forgiven her; however, she has not been enabled to release herself. The church family gathered around her in prayer. God responded so graciously! Eve experienced an absolute freedom from the bondage of her guilt. I have talked with Eve a few times since. She has been vibrant and continues to testify that she has never felt so good within herself. God did a transformational work in Eve that night.

As pastor, I certainly celebrate the work of God that week among our church family. I'm excited about what He intends to accomplish among us moving forward. I'm saddened to realize that this poor woman has suffered with this level of guilt under our ministry and never experienced her wholeness in many years of "church attendance." I'm seeking God in a new way. I'm asking Him to develop our church into gatherings of such ministry realities consistently, not just in revival services. He is the same Spirit with the same desire to save and sanctify systematically. Open our eyes and ears, O God, to see and hear what Your Spirit is up to.

BETHEL

Rev. Paul Mabry

What a joy to see transformation taking place in the lives of people through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. One such transformation is unfolding in Mike's life. I met him over 10 years ago when we were both at a very low point in life. I was his mentor, and while I struggled to hang onto God in my situation, Mike was hanging on in his. He may have attended Bethel once or twice when I first met him but didn't really seem to connect with the things of God. Other things turned around for Mike. He found excellent employment, was promoted several times, and kept very busy with his job. I would see him from time to time in the community but didn't sense any spiritual growth. I have prayed for him over the years, at times pleading with God to do his work in Mike's life. Over the years, he has dropped in for an Easter service a time or two, but nothing more than that. Then about a year ago he came in one Sunday and just started attending regularly on his own. What a joy to see him attending Bethel regularly over this past year, and he even brings his four-year-old grandson, J. J., with him. He looks like a different person, and I know that God is drawing him to His saving grace.

Mike's transforming journey reminds me that God's work takes some time to unfold. He isn't done with Mike, and I am encouraged to keep on praying for Mike and many more like him whom God is slowly and faithfully drawing to himself through Jesus and his church.

BRANDON COMMUNITY

Rev. Matt Bailey

For one reason or another, Jordan and Tyler had received negative treatment from others claiming to be followers of Christ and as a result had a very negative view of church and many claiming to be Christians. Loaded with that negative baggage, Jordan and Tyler started asking questions. Sometimes the questions would be superficial, and sometimes they would be more in-depth. Sometimes they would be asked in the foyer after church and sometimes in late night conversations through Facebook or text messaging. But after a while it became clear that God was working in the hearts and lives of these two people. Both attest to a growing walk with Christ, and both exhibit spiritual maturity beyond anything they had just a few months ago.

Tyler is currently going through a gender transition, and that has brought up many opportunities to discuss faith and practical theology. This couple has been very respectful of our doctrine in the Church of the Nazarene and have shown great maturity in how they are learning as well as teaching how to love one another in a faith community. God is teaching us all to love God and others in a deeper way through these two individuals. I can't wait to see what God's up to around the next corner!

I am blessed to be a part of life at Brandon Nazarene.

BRIGHTON

Rev. Ben Walls, Sr.

Christopher Relitz went to church sporadically with his mother. His mother would say a prayer some nights, and tell Christopher and his sister that Jesus loved them, but they never saw what that meant in the household. When Chris was 15 years old, his maternal grandfather passed away, and his mother wanted them to join the Catholic faith, as that was her father's religion. At 16 or 17, Chris joined the Catholic church. But at 18, he suffered a tragic loss. He became angry at God and decided he was an atheist.

Fast forward 7 years, Christopher made some really bad decisions, including a crime he committed, for which he prayed for forgiveness every day. He is now in our Celebrate Recovery and Second Chance Network for these very issues. Christopher had a mentor, who was also a volunteer at our Revelation House and invited Chris to come experience it. Chris said he was in a bad place mentally, and didn't really care either way, so he went. It was on that Saturday, October 15, at our Revelation House presentation, that Chris accepted Christ into his heart and a week later accepted Him as Lord of his life. Christopher testifies, "I am a new creation in Christ Jesus, and I have been filled with an eagerness to devote myself to the Lord". I baptized Christopher and his sister in our last Baptism service.

CARO

Rev. Paul McNett

The Caro Church has operated a food pantry for over thirty years. It has been a great outreach and bridge to our community. The finances to be able to run this ministry began to dry up in 2015,

and by May of 2016 all our funds were depleted. It looked as though this thirty-year ministry would come to an end.

I had a discussion with the food pantry director in May 2016 when we spent the last of our pantry funds. She was concerned and was certain the pantry would cease. I said, "If this is a ministry that God wants us to run, He will provide what we need." Since then, we have had three food distributions that have reach over 100 families each time at no cost to the church whatsoever. God has and is providing.

Another benefit of the food pantry has recently come to light. Because the distributions are much larger now, although not as often, we have needed more helpers. Our most recent distribution served about 120 families, which amounted to over 300 people. At this distribution, we had about 30 workers, several of which had come to help for the first time.

One man, who has been on the fringe of the church, came to help for the first time in February. He was so moved by serving others that he went home and prayed and made the decision to get involved in a small group. He said, "I was so humbled by helping other people that I went home and prayed, and now I know God wants me to be more involved. For him, service led to a deeper spiritual walk with God.

CASS CITY

Rev. Jerry Harrington

When we were asked to do this report on a transformation, I wasn't sure what I was going to write. So, I was praying and listening for the Lord. That's when He brought my wife Linda to mind. Linda has a heart for women and children, particularly with all the Human Trafficking and abuse that is going on. She's been in touch with all three counties in the Thumb about this situation, and she just became a part of the Victim Advocate Unit in Tuscola County--all of this to help the hurting. She has a calling to bring the women of the Thumb to a closeness to one another but mostly to God.

Five years ago, Linda organized a Women of the Thumb day. There were about seventy-five women, teens and kids there. It was a great function with skits and special music, and Dr. Jan Duce brought devotions for the day. The odd detail about that event was that, Linda, who suffers from Fibromyalgia and R.A., was unable to attend, but the women took over and it was a great time. Lives were touched.

With the help of Pastor Karen and Pastor Dawn, Linda started a Face Book page called Women of the Thumb. She has seen prayer requests, praises, and women just wanting to talk to one another. Linda puts scriptures, poems and uplifting sayings on there. She has offered to help churches with their women's ministries. Her goal is to have quarterly gatherings to unite the Thumb women to be a strong force for Jesus Christ.

Now you may ask, where's the transformation? It is seeing the Lord transform Linda to be able to do this with the illnesses she has, to bring the glory to Him.

CENTERPOINTE

Rev. Chad Gibbons

Last year, a couple was invited to Centerpointe by one of our church members. Though they didn't have a church background, they came one week with their kids and have attended almost every single week since. They were both immediately welcomed by our church family, and before long, they had made the decision to follow Jesus, gotten baptized, and were excited to become members. Though they had been living together for several years with their kids, I am excited to be marrying them this year. The Holy Spirit is moving strongly in their lives. Along with stories like this, I feel one of

the biggest areas of transformation is how our church is growing closer together as a family. I love to see all the new friendships begin and old relationships restored. As we continue to add new members and attenders to Centerpointe, we are all joining together to accomplish the mission God has given us as one.

CHELSEA

Rev. Jeff Crowder

R is a single mom. She was in an abusive marriage. She lives in fear of her ex-husband. She suffers from several physical disabilities and is unable to earn a living income. She has two teenage children.

This past year she needed to find a place to live. With her income, the choices were very limited, but she found a place. When she was ready to make the move, a group of men and teens turned out to rent her a truck, empty the storage unit, and help get her into a second story apartment.

A few of months after the move we found out that she still couldn't make ends meet. Tom and Cathy from our church sat down with her to look over her finances and share Biblical principles about stewardship. They discovered: 1.) The family was in debt. 2.) There were some ways to add to the very little money coming into the household each month and 3.) There were some ways to trim a little out of the monthly expenses.

A group from the church helped weatherize the small apartment in the hopes of helping to reduce the monthly utility expenses. Tom & Cathy sat down with R and her teens and put together a strategy to help them break the cycle of debt and poverty. The strategy included helping construct a budget based on Godly wisdom and helping the teens to find jobs so they could contribute to household expenses.

R Recently told us for the first time in memory she is actually "ahead" financially. The kids have started to save money! One of our musicians has been providing free guitar lessons to one of R's teens, using this as a time to do some informal mentoring. R has begun a ministry at church of sending birthday and anniversary cards on behalf of the church to everyone in the congregation. We give God the glory for the privilege of helping to form disciples and the growth we've seen in the lives and faith of this wonderful family.

COLLING

Rev. Karen Wolfe

I would like to tell you about a man who has been on a journey with God and feels led to share his testimony. I met Dennis two years ago when I interviewed for the Colling Church. Dennis was on the Church Board. My first impression of Dennis was if I was appointed to come to Colling, he would be a challenge. But as we know, the way we should think of a person isn't appearance but his or her heart. Dennis and his wife were the first to reach out to us and ask us out for dinner. He wanted to know who we were and the direction we wanted to take the church. Dennis was and is the first one to help with anything. Dennis' story is one that needs to be heard. He was raised in an abusive home, did poorly in school and joined a motor cycle gang. His story shows God's Prevenient Grace, how God revealed himself to Dennis, and the transformation that takes place in the heart when God abides in it. By the time I met Dennis, he had already broken free from the gang and had a ministry with a bike with the name Grace on it. Colling already had done several biker events. One day, Dennis prayed for Entire Sanctification after the conversations we have had. The next day when we met he asked, "What have you done to me?" I smiled and asked what he meant. He replied "I see people as lost now. My heart aches even more to share the word of God." I told him it was God that was doing a work in his heart. Dennis still struggles with old thinking of himself, but he trusts more of what God

says about His beloved Son. Over the months that have followed, Dennis has begun taking classes through The Discipleship Place; he has finished Communicating The Gospel and is currently working on the Spiritual Formation Class. This man, whose confidence was low, wondering how God can use a man like him, filled the pulpit when I was speaking at a retreat. He did a wonderful job and would like to share his story with others. If your church would like to hear his story, please contact me.

COMMERCE

Rev. Jon Hall

The story I will share describes the incredible experience Commerce had last Easter Sunday. It was one of the most spiritually moving services I have ever been a part of, and there wasn't even a sermon preached. For the service, I coordinated with our worship leader for eight songs to be sung with a congregant testimony to be given every two songs. The idea behind this service order was to create a space where, rather than hearing a sermon about the resurrection, people would hear, see, and experience the tangible results of the resurrection through individual testimonies. Throughout the testimonies, we heard from three recovering alcoholics and a woman whose life had more wreckage than she could share publicly. Each testimony ended with the common phrase, "I am a result of the resurrection." The service was raw, authentic, transparent, and beautiful. It is my prayer to see these types of stories continue to multiply at Commerce Nazarene.

CROSSWALK COMMUNITY

Rev. Dr. Garry Edwards

I will focus on the word transformation. Around Mid-September 2016, during a regular Sunday morning service, we had several impromptu testimonies following the first part of our singing worship and right before prayer. One of those testimonies came from a lady who has been attending for several years and professed salvation by faith in Christ alone since coming to CrossWalk Community.

She stated that God had been dealing with her for many weeks about an issue that was not Christ honoring. She stated that her desire was to follow Christ with all her heart but she could not continue to smoke and do that. She recognized the impact it was having by hurting her physically and spiritually. She committed it to God and wanted to give testimony to her being delivered from this habit. At the time of her testimony she had been tobacco free for six weeks. That ignited a wave of praise throughout the sanctuary.

It has been amazing to see how much she has grown spiritually going forward. About a year and a half prior to her testimony, her husband received Christ just days before his death due to cancer. That really spoke to her, and God used that reality in a powerful way, to provide a strong witness of salvation at his funeral. That was the beginning for her in a journey of transformation.

Since her testimony, she has shown great and steady faith, as she has dealt with the failing health of her mother. Along with her mother, one of her daughters was diagnosed with cancer and had surgery and complications, yet her faith did not waver. Her other daughter has had various physical setbacks that added stressors to her life, yet she remained faithful to her commitment.

Our theme for 2017 is: "Lean Into Christ." As of Wednesday evening, March 15, 2017, she once again gave a strong testimony, of her commitment and need to follow Christ in ways that clearly reflect His work in her life. "The things I used to do without thinking about, now I realize I cannot continue doing if I want to live in holy relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit."

DETROIT FIRST (HILLTOP)

Rev. Ben Walls

David was a young man beginning to attend my church last year. He was continually encouraging me that my messages were speaking to his thoughts and questions. Whenever we'd get together and meet, however, I'd find that he wasn't at peace. He was really struggling with the idea that if God was living in the people of the church, shouldn't there be greater evidence?!

David had grown up in a good home with godly parents and knew all about God. His entire life was in fact marked by boldly challenging others in the knowledge of God. But now he was in a crisis time of feeling like he knew all about God, and yet there was something missing. It wasn't just missing in the life of the church; it was missing in his life.

One day, David was venting to his dad about the state of the church and his dad said, 'David, forget about the state of the church, what's the state of your relationship with God? Are you reading your Bible daily? Are you praying continually?' That conversation convicted David that he knew all about God, but He hadn't really known God as he should.

David began to daily read the Bible for himself and pursue God for revelation, rather than just information. Over the course of the last year, I've watched David come fully alive with the love of Christ. His passion is contagious, and he's lighting others on fire as he shares all the ways God has been transforming him. David comes every day to the church to setup our rooms free of charge; he took on teaching our 4th and 5th graders every Wednesday night; he ran for the board and made it; he can't do enough for the church of the one he now loves with all of his heart. He is a contagious new creation in Christ – magnetic to others wanting to know where all the fruit of his life is coming from. Praise be to God; for those who seek, find.

DETROIT GRACE

Rev. Robert Hunter

First I would like to give praise to God for His healing power; every day my wife is with us is a miracle.

Second, if I were to give a highlight, Detroit Grace has sent out four pastors: Rev. Larry Bolling now pastors at Silver Lake, Rev. Womack is pastoring in Ohio, Rev. Ron Chapell is now pastoring in Indiana. In May of this year, Gate Way Church of the Nazarene will be organized under Pastor Glenda Fields. Pastor Fields came to Grace 15 years ago ready to serve. She has been head Steward, Children's Pastor, in which we saw tremendous growth spiritually and numerically under her ministry, and she is also teaching our Noon Women's Bible Study.

God is moving at Grace with people seeking God every week. Our mid-week prayer is a blessing. God has given me the answer to longevity as pastor and that is to pray and stay.

DETROIT NEW HOPE

Rev. John Wright, Jr.

I am so excited to highlight two of New Hope's amazing and interesting members who have been transformed and contribute in many ways to our church. They are: Angela Jorgensen and Andre Royster.

Angela has had many spiritual and physical battles and unique brokenness over the past fiscal year. She has faced negative choices, opportunities, and many oppositions. However, she has continuously renewed her intentions to be faithful to Jesus on a regular basis, not because she is unsure but because she chose to live an intentional and committed life to Christ, developing life habits

that align with Jesus and replacing those that do not. Angela bears evidence amongst the mature Christians that she is truly a transformed follower of the Lord who was made and is uniquely loved by God.

God moved in the heart of Andre Royster while he was on an interstate trip. The Lord guided him back to New Hope Church. Andre immediately got involved and has expanded his faith through action and service. God got his attention! He got involved in the media ministry. I'm reminded of Jesus' words, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*" John 10:27.

Andre heard the voice of God and believed that God was telling him what he should be doing. God knew that Andre had many talents (*musician, media, singer, youth ministry*) and that New Hope needed many of those talents. I believe God's purpose was to intersect Andre and his talents with the needs of New Hope. What a great intersection! Andre heard God's voice, listened intently and carefully, and he responded. Andre made a decision not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed through the renewing of his mind so that he might discern the full will of God. He is now an active member of New Hope Church of the Nazarene and continues to be involved in multiple ministry areas.

At New Hope, our people are coming together in the name of Jesus to connect with each other and the wider community in real ways, and to reflect on the intersections between their life experiences and the call and workings of God through us and around us through works of collective discipleship.

As we move forward I thank God for his guidance! I pray that He will keep me, our leaders, and each church member faithful to Him and the mission He has given us so that our lives may better reflect His love to all!

DEVON AIRE COMMUNITY

Rev. JoAnn Bastien

Mike and his wife started attending our faith community about five years ago. They had two young daughters and came from a Catholic background. We had a previous connection with this family, and I had been encouraging them to find a faith community. Mike and his family attended about once every few months, but they tried to participate in special events. One Sunday, Mike attended church alone. He confided in me that he and his wife had separated, and he asked for prayer. We committed to pray for his marriage over the next few months. Unfortunately, a year later, his wife served him with divorce papers. Mike struggled in his grief, but instead of pulling away, he pressed into God. He committed to being in church every Sunday and bringing his daughters each time he had custody. Mike even volunteered to help with children's Sunday School. He wanted his daughters to see his commitment to God and to them. Mike was elected to the church board this February, and he is now our head trustee. He continues to be a godly example to single fathers in our church. I am honored to pastor this young family and look forward to seeing what God will do in their lives.

EDGE

Rev. Jonathan Jaymes

You never know exactly how God is going to work! My LTG discipling group in Michigan has birthed 2 trans-geographic groups in Ohio and Tennessee. Both groups are using the Life Transformation Groups and Discipleship by Story (Ray & Becky Nue – global missionaries) format.

My cousin, Gary McGillvary, is the Nashville CMA (Christian Motorcycle Assoc.) area director and uses "Tell The Story" with his street and prison ministries preaching. Gary is a born and raised Nazarene and has the gift of healing. Gary seems to be aware of people when they are hurting,

whether it is obvious or not. He seems to know when people walk into a large room with no visible signs of illness that there is a problem his God wants to heal. Well, recently Gary and a friend trailered their Harleys to Fredericksburg, Virginia, where they stayed at a hotel. The next day they rode their bikes into Washington D.C. for the inauguration of Donald J. Trump. It was so cold they stopped for some coffee at a minute mart. They spotted a homeless man using a cane and begging for money. As they passed by a lady commented to the homeless guy, "No, I gave you money yesterday." When they got inside Gary kept hearing, "silver and gold have I none but what I have I give to you." He told his friend John that he would be right back. So he talked with the homeless guy and shared the beggars story in Acts 3:6. The homeless guy responded that he knew Christ as his Savior. He said he had no cartilage in his left knee and has had pain for 8 years. Gary prayed for his cartilage to be fully restored and all pain to go in Jesus name! So, when the homeless man became pain free, the smile he had was simply priceless. Suddenly it was not so cold anymore! To God be the glory!

FAMILY COMMUNITY

Rev. Gary Loudermilk

We have an amazing couple that joined the FamilyNaz family this past year. Steve & Kathy Ashley were drawn to the church when driving by and seeing the large tent set up for our one year anniversary service. They have since joined the church and have stepped up to do discipleship "one on one" with new Christians, using the Charles Shaver studies. We have had 17 new adult converts this past year and many within our children and youth ministries as well. Steve & Kathy have also started a life group with our senior adults. This amazing couple is making a huge impact for the Kingdom of God. Their hearts for Jesus are evident in their willingness to meet weekly with teenagers to senior citizens.

The growth of our youth leader, Brandon Hamilton, is also very noticeable. His leadership and teaching ability and style are transforming before our eyes. He is sold out to God and the ministry of bringing teens "out of the darkness and into the light." In John 8:12, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. He that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

FENTON

Rev. Ronald Sharpe, II

Jordan and Brian attended our local church for the very first time with their two-year old daughter Avaia on the first week of December. Jordan comes from an un-churched background, while Brian was raised in the Catholic tradition. Jordan and Brian made their first visit as a result of a simple invitation by our N.M.I. President, Linda MacDermaid, who cares for Avaia at set times during the week. Tears were visible in Jordan's eyes on several occasions as we concluded the worship service in her early weeks of attendance. She couldn't put words to it, but it was clear that she was experiencing the pull of God upon her heart (what we call prevenient grace). I encouraged her to make an appointment with me to talk further about what it means to know and follow Jesus. She was eager, but cautious, and told me she would tell me when she was ready to talk.

As we entered into the New Year, we concluded our Sunday morning worship service with the Lord's Supper. Following the worship service Jordan shared that she was ready to meet with me to talk further about following Jesus. After inquiring a little further, Jordan revealed that she had made the decision to receive and follow Jesus that very morning. I often make an invitation in preparation for the receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper by sharing that there is no greater opportunity to receive and follow Jesus than when we come to this moment. Jordan shared that she had responded to the call to receive and follow Jesus during the prayer time following that invitation. Since making the decision to receive and follow Jesus, Jordan has begun to meet with me almost every week to learn more about God, the Scriptures, and how to take new steps in her spiritual walk. Jordan didn't

even own a Bible until after she received Christ. In the midst of it all, God continues to do a new work in Jordan's heart, as well as in her relationship with Brian. She is hungry to grow in her walk with Jesus. We are working to connect Jordan with some of our ladies who can serve as encouragers and mentors in her new journey.

Our mission at Fenton Church of the Nazarene is to *become Christ-like disciples who live beyond ourselves and love beyond our walls*. Jordan's story is the outgrowth of Linda MacDermaid stretching to live beyond herself and love beyond her walls, and now Jordan is in the early days of responding to that very same call. Praise be to God! It is a thrill to be a part of a church that is seeking to help one another become Christ-like disciples who really do live beyond themselves and love beyond their walls!

FILION

Rev. Don Stroud

The biggest event: Matt and Amber became members of our church. Both had grown up in church but no longer attended. Even though they lived close to us and knew we were pastoring the church, they did not attend.

One night Amber woke up, thinking, "We need to get into a church." That is what they have done. Their relationship with God could probably be better, but we see good signs. All Amber wanted for Christmas was a Study Bible. Of course, we were happy to get one for her. Also, Matt has just changed jobs, where he does not have to work Sundays. What has happened to this couple is extra special: Matt is our son and Amber is our daughter in-law. God does still answer our prayers. Thank God, lives are still being changed.

On a personal, note thank you all for your prayers on our behalf.

FLINT CENTRAL

Rev. Rob Prince

At Flint Central Church we have had several people transformed by the power of the Gospel (32 baptisms give testimony this year), but this report is about a space that's being transformed.

Our Peak facility (the building across the street from our main building) has been unused in the month of July. Independence Day, summer camps and family vacations reduced the usage of the Peak to that of an expensive, empty warehouse. But that has changed and the space has been transformed.

Central Church formed a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Flint and the building came alive. Teeming with boys and girls three days a week for a summer day camp program, children and teenagers from all over Flint have a safe place for activities and learning. People from Flint Central volunteered as mentors and helpers. Friendships were formed and people valued. Transformed lives happen on a regular basis now.

This summer (now four days a week), the Peak will be alive again with activity, and we are hoping that our partnership with the Boys and Girls Club will grow into an after-school club during the upcoming school year. We are expecting more transformed lives in our transformed space, not just in July, but all year.

FLINT EASTSIDE CHURCH

Rev. Tanya Cox

This last year has once again been filled with many firsts. We had our first baptismal service, baptizing three people. I was able to hire my first staff person, Associate Pastor Matt Jennings. He

and his wife, Wendy, have won all our hearts. Together we have come up with our strategy for ministry: B.A.D.D.

Belong before you believe
Accept Christ
Develop the knowledge of God
Do it

We have been implementing this in how we welcome visitors, plan specific opportunities for the gospel to be shared in a variety of ways, digging deeper in the Word and living out our faith. This has helped us keep and get more people involved and for them to accept Jesus as Lord of their lives. This year, we have had 10 people accept the Lord. The Kingdom of God has grown. This summer, we were able to influence the teens in a huge way through Eastside Missions' Empowerment through Employment project. The kids were paid to do specific jobs. This enabled us to have many hours a week with them and teach them both Christ-like behavior and life-skills. We have just recently joined Trials to Triumph motorcycle ministry. This group brings experience in overcoming addictions through the power of Jesus Christ. Though there are so many different needs on the eastside of Flint, we have come to a sure knowledge that there is nothing like the love of Christ to empower people to overcome any obstacle that they face.

FLINT SOUTH
Rev. Robert Cattane

When Adam was growing up, he saw attending church as a chore he had to do every Sunday. He was made to go until age 16, when he was confirmed into the Catholic Church. He did it because it was expected, but he really had no understanding of who Jesus was or the sacrifice he had made. After confirmation Adam was not made to attend anymore, so he all but forgot about church. He joined the army and was deployed to Iraq. He saw many difficult things while he was over there and was injured in an IED explosion. This resulted in both emotional and physical trauma which didn't help his attitude toward God. He questioned how God could allow the kind of suffering he had seen. Adam left the army after 14 years and found it hard to adjust. He found many things about the Army lifestyle hard to shake. Many of these things were both physically as well as spiritually unhealthy. He was angry, confused, and he was drinking a lot. But GOD did not forget about him.

Adam began to work out, which made him feel better. He stopped drinking and started to really focus on his future. He couldn't see God's hand at work in his life at that time, but he sees it now. A short time later he met the love of his life. She was the best representative of Jesus and His love that Adam had ever seen. He learned about Jesus through her and her amazing family, who welcomed him in from day one.

The more Adam learned about Jesus, the more he wanted to live his life for Him. He was saved and baptized. The emotional freedom that Adam has experienced since coming to know Jesus is nothing short of incredible. Through it he has been able to not only forgive himself but also people in his life who had hurt him.

Each new day on this journey, Adam sees more of God in the world, and he hopes to share more of God with the people who live in it.

I am also proud to let you know that Adam will become my son-in-law on May 6th of this year.

FLINT WEST

Rev. Matthew Soulia

This past year has been a year of transition in the life of West Flint. The Lord is faithful and continues to work in and through our church family, as we seek to see God's Kingdom come. Transformation is the crux of the Gospel and manifests itself both in individuals' hearts and in community with each other. Often, churches have been guilty of segregating themselves based on all kinds of factors, with generation and age being major dividing walls. The church was designed by God to be intergenerational, with each age group playing an important role around the table. We need each other to be the church we were created to be.

This past year, God has been guiding us as we consider how we embrace and empower the next generation for leadership in the church. We want people of all ages to have depth of relationship with each other, listening and encouraging each other for the journey ahead. This focus has played itself out in several practical ways. One of these ways is by integrating our children and youth into the leading of our worship gatherings. Kids and youth serve as ushers on our Family Sundays, they regularly lead the congregation in the reading of scripture, serve in the kids' department, assist in the serving of communion, and lead musically. This year, one of our high school girls will be serving on our church board. Our adult Sunday school teachers are embracing our high schoolers and integrating them into their Sunday morning gatherings. These steps, among others, have helped our young people to feel like West Flint is their church home, not just their youth group. It has been said that Pastors should think of themselves as ecologists - creating environments that help the church flourish. We know that God, not us, is who brings the transformation; we are simply called to be faithful in creating space for relationships to grow and for the Holy Spirit to work.

FLUSHING COMMUNITY

Rev. Terry Bate

Flushing Community Church has experienced an incredible year of transformation as a congregation, as a staff, and personally. As a congregation, our "Building A Legacy" campaign has challenged our families to give sacrificially. We have pledged \$1,145,000 toward this mission over a 3-year period. In our first year, nearly \$700,000 was given. As a staff, we experienced the transformation of two new members: Troy Supple (youth) and Kelli Fulks (children). Our team is working hard and in unity toward the goal of providing dynamic ministry to our church and reaching our community. When I think of one person who has demonstrated personal transformation I think of Mary. Last year, she was struggling in many areas of her life, but God began to speak to her in July after experiencing a car accident. She was baptized soon after and testified about God's love and her desire to live for him. We have witnessed a great transformation in her life as she uses her gifts and talents for Him. Mary's story is what continues to drive our church toward our mission of "Experiencing the transforming love of God and sharing it with others."

FOWLerville

Rev. Gary Griffin

Joel had never attended our church before. He is a single man in his late 20's and looking as though his world was crushing him. When he came the first time, he was not very talkative and during the service looked as though the weight of his world was bearing down. He didn't stick around long after the service.

The next week he came back, and one of our lay people saw him and recognized him. He had coached him at the local high school. He saw his long face and said to him that today was his

appointed day with God. After the service, he shook his hand and said, "I will be praying for you." He collapsed emotionally in his arms and said I need to talk.

Pastor Ken and Chuck took him into the office, closed the door, and ministered to him for almost an hour and a half. It was his appointed day because he confessed his sin and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. His countenance was no longer burdened by life's cares. He had reconnected with the Savior that he had grown up knowing as a child. Praise God for watching, concerned, prepared, and obedient laymen who want to win the community for Christ.

GAGETOWN

Rev. Ben Strait

This past year, the most profound transformation I have seen is the collective transformation of individuals in our church family. I have not seen a drastic change in any one person's life, but every week I notice how people are constantly being conformed to the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

These changes did not come about through a powerful message or altar call, nor as a result of the revival service we, as the Thumb Zone churches, held in February. These changes are the result of people who have committed their lives to the Lord and serve him daily. They are the result of people who wrestle with their faith, who struggle with difficulties, and who earnestly seek to live a life worthy of the calling they have received.

There have been sad times, and joyous times. But, through it all, I am struck by the profound truth that the work of the Spirit cannot be hindered by anything, save for the refusal of individuals to respond to its great work. As for the people of Gagetown, they are willing.

The greatest transformation I am blessed to witness is the continual transformation of a church family, which is the net result of the collective transformations of its people.

HARTLAND COMMUNITY CHAPEL

Rev. Russell Greer

For this year's transformation story, I want to tell you about a wonderful lady in our church. For personal and private reasons, I cannot give you her name, but I want to tell you about her transformation. This is a wonderful lady with a wonderful heart. She and her husband were born and raised in the Hartland Community that we serve. My wife and I went to school with her daughters. Over the years, they had attended more than one place of worship in the Hartland Community, looking for a church home, looking to have a Christian relationship with the family of God. Unfortunately, they found less of a church family and more of a resort for the righteous in each church they attended. This pattern that they experienced caused heartache and burnout and helped to fracture this family's relationship with God.

On one of our many outreaches, her daughter saw our post on Facebook of supplies we were looking to collect to help someone local in need, and she responded, generously. She was excited to see a church in action and told her mom about us. Upon finding out about our small church plant in Hartland that meets at the old Historic Music Hall, her mom began actively attending our church and began soaking in the true love of a church family that accepted her for who she was. I have seen her over the past couple of years actively taking in God's word through sermons and our church Bible studies, asking questions and growing in her young faith. This lady--who was very cautious when this all started, skittish and scared of anything about sharing her faith with others--now actively searches for ways to share her faith more than most Christians I know, even calling me for reassurance that how she witnessed to somebody was right. Just the other Sunday, as church was getting out, I witnessed her look across the street at a young lady that used to be one of her students when she was a teacher at Hartland, and she ran over and invited her to church!

I see this wonderful woman continuing to grow in her faith, continuously being transformed by the Lord's transforming work. This is just one of many transformation stories I am seeing through our little church.

HARVEST COMMUNITY

Rev. Deborah Stottele

I invited a couple to church for over five years. The husband's mother is a faithful member. They occasionally came for Easter or Christmas, but could not be persuaded to come otherwise. He needed some serious surgery last summer and he asked me to pray for him. I went to the hospital to pray for him before surgery and he introduced me to his doctor as 'his pastor.' I sat with his wife and mother during surgery and greeted him afterward. From that time on they have attended faithfully!

I recently preached about finding your ministry in the church. They went to lunch with us that day and said they had prayed about it and they wanted to help with the teens! Praise the Lord! They are such a sweet, solid couple that pitches in with any job that needs to be done. They tithe, give generously to needs and are welcoming to everyone. They are such an asset to our church. We are so blessed to have them. I'm so glad I kept asking and didn't give up. God was working all along.

HAZEL PARK

Rev. Michael Kempton

Most buildings have a fire marshal sign that reads something like this: "250-person occupancy limit". At times, I wish they would put a sign like this in our church: "Only 5 persons on behavior medication allowed at any one time." Our low-income community is filled with people in need of transformation because of sin, poor decision-making, illness, and more. Jesus transformed lives in all categories. Our story will focus on illness-- mental/emotional illness, in particular. Some have argued that this falls under the category of the demonic. We will just say that Satan uses illness in his attempts to destroy, and all persons with this illness/challenge need Jesus to pass by. If the church was more like Jesus, we would be a shepherd willing to lead them to whatever transformation God is willing to do in their lives.

This brings us to Alfi (names changed to protect the innocent). Alfi was born with mental/emotional impairments and lived in a highly dysfunctional home. Deemed disabled as an adult, he receives state income. He, as well as some of his relatives, lived near the church and the children attended Sunday school. He began attending and soon testified, "I now got God in my life". This pastor has never known a more tender, transparent, Jesus follower. Anger, swearing and drinking (his old tools) are being replaced by tears of compassion. He rides his bike to church in all weather, shaming most in his faithful attendance. His willingness to serve is second to none. His prayers are so short and simple they MUST be heard at the throne. God blessed him with a helpmate (her transformational story is greater), and he now represents this people group on our church leadership.

HOLLY

Rev. Michael Graham

It has been awesome to see how God can change a life and transform a person. Jim has been attending for several years, and the church has loved him tremendously. During this past year, he decided that if he was really going to follow Jesus, he needed to take the next step in his faith journey; no more going through the motions. He saw that he and his wife needed to pray, so they have been praying almost every day together, a first for both of them. He has joined the praise team and has been doing an amazing job. He also has been the biggest advocate for Holly Naz, as he has invited

numerous people to come to church and many of them attending. God is moving in his life and is transforming him from the inside out. He desires that people come and meet the same Jesus that he knows and is going to do everything with the Spirit to make that happen. He and his wife have even joined the church after many years of attending. I am excited for what God is doing in and through Jim and can't wait to see what else God has in store for him.

IMLAY CITY

Rev. James Mellish

I have been thinking for awhile, trying to come up with what I think would be a transformation story. We have a small congregation and most have been coming here and have been involved in worship for a long time.

In October, we were able to have Dr. Bob Shepherd at our church to speak to us, and his message focused on community and compassion. Our congregation has always had a heart for others, and this was a message we took to very easily.

I think our biggest transformation this year would have to be stepping out of our comfort zone and into the community. We contacted the schools for those who needed help with Thanksgiving and Christmas. I was surprised how God's people embraced the community in need; although, I should not have been surprised--they are a giving people when the need is brought to the light. We helped 7 families with Thanksgiving meals, and then helped the same 7 families with Christmas meals and presents for 20 children who would not have had a Christmas.

Through the hearts of his people we have seen a change. We welcome anyone with open arms. We have supplied heat and electricity to those who were in need. And God has blessed us with a love that is greatly needed in our world today.

I don't know if this would be what is considered a "transformation story" but we have been transformed from an inward thinking people to an outward-thinking people. It is kind of funny--I have people all the time coming to me with suggestions on how we can reach more people this year.

Isn't it fun to do God's will? I thank Him for the opportunity to serve every day. And I look forward to what He has in store for this year.

LAPEER

Rev. Andrew Jolly

2017 has been a bitter sweet year at Lapeer. Near the close of last year, we lost several beloved members of our congregation. This year, we have seen those families rebuild their lives and find the joy of the Lord as their strength. One of the major outreaches of ministry has been my ability to serve 46 families in our community through funerals. It is a humbling privilege to share Christ's love and hope with so many unchurched families. Additionally, we have seen several unchurched families visit our church through the discipleship activities of our people. We were blessed to bring into membership 5 youth. One individual who joined the church this year came to us with a very troubled past. The transformation in this person's life has been remarkable. We have another who has been lost to Christ's church for many years but has returned home to the Father with a passion for Jesus that is contagious. God is good all the time.

LIVING HOPE
Rev. Ann Salyer

God has been at work in the life of Anna this past year. Anna is currently a member of a Lutheran church which she has attended since before she was born. She visited our church over a year ago to attend Celebrate Recovery, hoping to deal with some harmful habits that developed due to hurts from her past.

Recognizing her love for God, and her musical talent, it wasn't long before we invited Anna to head up our music for Celebrate Recovery. Sensing a spiritual hunger, I also asked Anna to join a Life Transformation Group (LTG) I was a part of. Soon, Anna was attending our Sunday School meeting after her own church service (maybe she was the reason God had us flip-flop our service and Sunday school times). Then Anna approached me about starting a prayer and worship service on Sunday afternoons (which we are still developing). Next, knowing that we did not have enough bodies for our children's ministry, Anna offered her services to assist with Friday evening Kidz Club (despite her discomfort working with children, which has long since disappeared).

Anna told me that she has always sensed a call to ministry and has tried to serve God in other ways because her denomination does not believe women are called to preach. We have had many discussions about why women should respond to the call to ministry. One night, on her way to my home for an LTG meeting, Anna was crying out to God, asking for direction. Maybe it was just coincidence, or maybe it was God's timing, but Anna's eyes were met by a sign at our local Methodist Church, which said simply: "Congratulations Pastor Anna." After a long struggle with her calling, Anna believed this to be a confirmation that she was to pursue ministry even if it means leaving the congregation she loves. Anna is currently going through membership classes, and we are planning to welcome her into the Church of the Nazarene as a new member on Easter Morning. To God be the Glory!

MADISON HEIGHTS
Rev. H. Duane Nelson

Our transformation stories could easily be found for us at the District Camp Meeting baptism service, where transformation came through a simple decision to be a Christ-follower, or a women's retreat where a young mom, crushed from the death of her infant, made a first-time commitment to Christ, which is transforming her husband and two children as well. They could also be spotted in several mini stories of children and teens coming to church without their families but growing in Christ nonetheless.

This year, though, our transformation story is more about us collectively as we transform from an attractional ministry to a relational mission. It is loving our neighbor (yes, the one who lives next door) as Christ would, taking our free time and investing it into a high school volleyball team, and creating opportunities at coffee shops by hanging out and being available for prayer. Slow, difficult, but steady.

MERRITT ROAD
Revs. Debi & Tom Humphreys

One of the greatest privileges as a pastor is to stand in the gap between a seeking heart and God and to be a witness to the transforming power as a hungry soul reaches out to a loving Savior for salvation.

John had attended church most of his adult life. He went to please his wife and family, but never showed any interest in salvation. His wife and family prayed for him for decades. Now, nearing the end of his life, he was hesitant to talk about it with them. At the request of the family, I visited him.

He was friendly but not too talkative. At the end of the visit I offered to pray with him. He gave permission.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit, before prayer I asked him; "How are things with you and God?"

He grunted a reply, "Not very good."

I pressed further; "How would you like them to be?"

More clearly this time he responded, "A lot better."

I immediately assured him that God wanted that too. I explained it was easy, and all he needed to do was to say "God I need you."

Immediately and firmly he clearly stated emphatically, "God I need you."

Sensing the presence of God and trusting that he was sincere, I prayed a prayer of affirmation and thanked God for his forgiveness and salvation. At the end of the prayer, John again stated, "God I need you."

In subsequent visits prior to his death a few weeks later, John continued to assure me and his family that all was well and he was ready to meet God. He was at peace. Less than once month from that prayer, I was privileged to preach John's funeral, and joined with the family in rejoicing that John is in heaven with his Savior.

METROPOLITAN Rev. Bob Moulding

I first met Beth in May of 2016, she arrived at the front door of the church appearing desperate and in need of help. She said she had been everywhere else and no one could help her. She was fleeing an abusive situation with her four children and had been living in her van for several days. We were able to put her up in a hotel and provide her with food as we worked to get her into a shelter for battered and abused women with children. We were able to purchase some basic necessities, for her and the kids as they had left with only the clothes on their backs. As I prayed for her when I dropped off the clothing and diapers, I asked the Lord to fill her with hope. While she smiled a polite smile, her eyes told me that she doubted if life would ever be normal again.

I lost track of Beth after that day, and after about 7 months on a Thursday morning at Pop-in-N-Play, I saw two new little boys running around having the time of their lives. They looked familiar, but I couldn't place them--that is, until I saw their mom sitting with a group of other mothers watching their kids play. I wish I could tell you that I immediately recognized her; she looked familiar, but I couldn't quite place this vibrant young woman with an infectious smile and a quiet laugh. I only fully realized who she was when another of the mothers she was talking to walked by and said "that was amazing what the church did for Beth." It was only then that I recognized her as the broken, battered, homeless woman who had come to the door of the church so long ago. I made my way over to where she was sitting and she jumped up and gave me a hug. I asked her how she was doing, and she smiled and said, "Good." There were still some challenges, but she had found daycare so she could return to work, she had moved into her own apartment, and for the first time since she ran, she had a place that she could call home. With the stability that she found, her kids have excelled in school, her oldest daughter made the basketball team for the first time and made a game winning shot in their fourth game of the season. Her younger daughter was inducted into the National Elementary Honor Society and was elected as this new chapter's first president. Her two younger boys have found many new friends at Pop-In-N-Play and BLAST. I couldn't help but smile as I listened to her talk about their future.

I can't tell you that Beth has answered all the questions about her relationship with God, but one thing that she is confident of is that there is a loving God who reached out to her when she had been abandoned. He took her broken, desperate life and gave her hope that she can't fully explain. As our conversation drew to a close, she smiled and asked, "Do you remember the prayer you prayed for me and the kids at the Days Inn?" I told her I did and had prayed it dozens more times as the Lord brought her and her family to my mind. She just smiled and said, "Thank you - God answered."

As I record Beth's story, I am overwhelmed by the amazing thought that we as the church have been invited to participate in the greatest stories of redemption and transformation that are yet to be written. Thank you, Jesus, that Your Kingdom is being manifested among us. Make us faithful, that you may continue your work through us for your glory and honor alone.

MILLINGTON
Rev. Dawn Richey

The one person that I think has made the biggest transformation is a lady that started coming to church because her sister attended. They had a falling out, but they both continued to attend. They would always be arguing with each other, even at church. The change came when she decided she wanted to be more like Christ. She started with giving up her sewing for lent; her sewing was very important to her--that is pretty much all she did all day because she had no way to go anywhere. When she wanted to sew, she would get out her Bible and read. I have seen great spiritual growth in her. Since then, she has received a large amount of money and has tithed on it. She had no income or money and was living with family. Others asked her why would she do that, and she said she wanted to give back to God. The very next day, she got another check for the same amount, to which she tithed from that one too. It is examples like this that reminds me that God is working and changing people.

Rev. David Richey

This year a lady approached us at a community event and asked what our dress code was. We let her know that we didn't have a dress code and she could come as she was. She and her son came to our church, and everybody made them feel like they belonged. They have not missed a Sunday yet after over 9 months. Her son was struggling with his identity; after a few months, he confided that he went to another church and had shared his struggle in a teen group, and they basically told him not to come back. He was very concerned that if we found out, we may ask him to leave. Our church has loved them; she now runs our sound, and he sings in our praise team. A few months ago, they joined our membership class; we discussed the biblical view of his struggle, and they both became members. Our congregation may be small, but they are awesome at modeling Christ's love for those in our community. I am blessed to have such a great group of people known as the Millington Church of the Nazarene.

MONROE
Rev. Scott Salo

In October of 2016, Larry visited our church with his family for the first time. After a couple times in our worship services he came to the altar and gave his life to Christ while the worship team sang, "He's a chain breaker!" Larry had been in other churches before. Larry had confessed his mistakes before. However, this was the first time he had confessed his sin and desired something different. This was the first time he desired God would fill the empty space that sin once filled.

Larry was an enforcer for drug dealers. Larry made sure if you owed money, you paid your debt! Larry has dealt with addiction, anger, doubt and fear. In a matter of months God has begun an amazing transformation in Larry's life in each of these areas.

Larry started attending every worship service, men's group, Bible study and event we offer. He is hungry to grow in his faith and learn more of God's word. Larry loves to pray with/for our congregation during services or meetings. He and his wife became members this year and both have requested to be baptized in a few weeks. Larry is in the process of growing and preparing for his first experience in co-teaching in our men's group and serving in other areas within the church.

MORENCI
Rev. Dusty Pauken

Prior to coming to Morenci, and a few weeks after arriving at Detroit First Church, I met Caleb. He was going into his senior year of high school but didn't really fit in with the rest of the youth group. He was a wonderful kid from a wonderful family but hadn't quite found where he fit in to the church.

His family is from Taiwan, so naturally his main interest in music is... Appalachian folk. I got him setup with a student mandolin, and we met regularly for lessons. When he found out I owned some traditional Chinese instruments, it gave him a chance to share about his heritage, which I think made him really feel valued.

In a big church, it can be hard to "break into the music scene" of paid professional musicians, lighting and sound engineers. Caleb, myself and a few others started playing live music near the cafe before each service. This gave him a chance to gain confidence as well as have an outlet to use his developing gifts of music to bless the church.

All summer he worked hard at the mandolin, banjo and harmonica. I called him with his first opportunity to play a real gig: bluegrass hymns at a community event in a barn at a cider mill. He loved it! A few months later, we added more musicians to the group and played more bluegrass hymns for a concert at the nursing home, and the event was so packed, they had to wheel in more chairs.

Every week you find Caleb with an instrument at church. He might be making smoothies at the cafe, but on his back is a banjo. He's even had opportunities to play with the worship team now.

Music was a great conversation point that led to a friendship and opportunity to serve inside and outside the church to bless God's people and reach the community.

MOSAIC
Rev. Thomas Sligh

Of his own admission, Allen was a marginal Christian. His relationship with God was cold and stale. He was preparing to be shipped overseas with his Army battalion and, while in PT one day, he collapsed. The searing pain in his back sent him to the doctor, and over a series of appointments, discovered a dangerously large mass next to his spinal cord. As a result of this journey, Allen's spiritual life was rejuvenated. The mass was successfully removed, and he and his wife are now actively involved in the ministry of Mosaic. He is a different man because of what God did through a terrifying trial. To God be the glory.

NEW BEGINNINGS
Rev. Robert Flowers

This has been a good year at New Beginnings. Two things come to the forefront when considering something that was a great blessing:

First was the addition of a young man to our church family who had just gotten out of prison. He contacted me and asked if he would be welcome to attend our church. Shane and I had worked together a few years ago and had stayed in touch. He is searching for God's will for his life and wants to learn more and draw closer to God. He is still dealing with other issues but is truly seeking God's will. He reminds us that this is the reason we are here--to reach the lost and seeking.

The second area is the finances of the church. We put the challenge to pay all budgets in full. It was met with, "Are you sure we can?" We decided to try and see what God would do. Not only were they paid in full, but we had more in the bank at the end of the year than we had the year before. This is again proof that God can if we are faithful to do.

ORCHARD RIDGE
Rev. Steven Barkey

I praise God for the story of the Khamis Family! Kristen Khamis began attending our fellowship 10 years ago because she had been invited by a fellow teacher at an area high school. Kristen was a devout Catholic who had 1 child--her son, Ricky. She had just gone through a divorce and needed more than what her church was offering. After a few years of attending, she came to our membership class and confessed to the group, "I've learned more about what's in the Bible in the past few years than in all my years faithfully attending catechism and masses." She joined. Ricky has also grown tremendously in Kids Church and now helps there as a mentor. After listening to a recent sermon whereby I talked about Jesus in the temple at age 12, Ricky called me on the phone after church with questions.

"Jesus never sinned, right?"

Yes.

"Well, if it says honor your Father and Mother in the 10 Commandments, why did he run away from them?"

I then explained the context of the story, and he understood. The point is he was listening and questioning. Awesome!

This same boy in late elementary and junior high began having severe anxiety and gastrointestinal issues. He was being hospitalized frequently. I asked Ricky on one hospital visit before we prayed, "Ricky, if God could answer one prayer for you, what would it be?" Without hesitation, he expressed a desire to become closer to his Dad. We prayed specifically for that. It was at this point that we really began to see God at work! Kristen's ex-husband and Ricky's father, John Khamis, re-entered the picture. John is Chaldean (Iraqi Catholic) and a professional cook and restaurant manager. Soon he began to re-engage with Kristen and Ricky and shortly thereafter began attending services at Orchard Ridge. At our Christmas Living Nativity, he was one of our Wise Men. We are watching God RESTORE a marriage and a fractured home right before our eyes! We anticipate a re-marriage ceremony sometime in 2017. God is not only GOOD, He does immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine!

OTTER LAKE
Rev. Louis Cook

Within the church year of 2016 we have experienced wonderful services where the presence of the Holy Spirit has led and comforted souls along the way.

As a body of believers, we experienced a terrible tragedy with the murder and death of one of our members by his mother. Yet through the love and fellowship of the body of Christ we were able to overcome and have grown stronger as a church.

This situation has been a strong reminder of the Biblical truth that our Lord is able to work through the tragedies and struggles of this world in order that our character would be made stronger.

PLYMOUTH
Rev. Jeff Cardimen

Plymouth's "transformation story" does not involve any one individual. Instead, the Lord has been orchestrating a radical transformation of our entire congregation's approach to intercessory prayer.

For years, we have published a weekly prayer sheet, which outlines the various needs of our community. As I was reading it one day, I was struck by the over-abundance of prayer requests for "physical" needs. More disconcerting was the fact that there were almost no prayer requests for emotional needs, family problems, and matters of the heart. Now it's not that I don't believe in lifting up physical needs for the Lord's healing. And He certainly DOES answer those prayers. But our prayer sheet seemed to be revealing something about how we approach intercessory prayer...and it just didn't seem deep enough. Nor did it seem real. There seemed to be a real hesitation to be honest and transparent. Perhaps even a shade of distrust and lack of faith.

I shared this observation, and my heart, with the congregation a few weeks ago. We set up a wooden box on a small table, near the altars, and filled the pews with new prayer cards. We also committed to being more intentional with "real prayer" during our family prayer time each service. And the Lord has begun a new work in us as a Church. Each week, we receive more cards than the prior week. And they ask us as a staff, in a very real and transparent way, to lift up true, heartfelt needs to the Lord...needs that go way beyond sore knees and failing vision. People are getting real! Folks are letting the walls come down! And God is honoring our trust and faith. I absolutely love it when the Lord does a transformational work in the life of an individual. But when He does a work in the hearts of an entire congregation, it is AMAZING! To God be the glory.

PORT HURON FIRST

Rev. Tim Hardyman

A couple of years ago Isaiah came to church for the first time. He had stayed overnight with a friend who attended our church, and to his surprise, the house rule was that if you stayed overnight Saturday you attended church Sunday morning. He was a little intimidated at first, but then soon realized he had found a place where he felt he belonged. He began to see things happen in his life that he could only believe that it was from God working. He was given the opportunity to go to teen camp at Water's Edge and there found other teens that were Christians. Soon after camp, he dedicated his life to the Lord. He attends our church regularly, but he has also stepped up to be a spiritual leader in the youth group. Isaiah consistently rises to challenges to go deeper in his faith and brings questions to the pastors and youth leaders about God. Every time there is an opportunity for a youth event, Isaiah is one of the first to sign up and encourage others to come too. He has participated in youth-led services and took the step to be baptized this past year.

RICHFIELD

Rev. Dr. Alan Duce

Last fall, Church member, Lou, asked Pastor Jan to visit her brother-in-law, Bob, who was in the hospital struggling with cancer. Jan visited and met Bob and his wife Carol. Over the next few months of regular visits, Jan and others developed relationships with Bob's family, including his two adult daughters, adult grandchildren and their families. Twelve family members visited Richfield on Christmas Eve. After Bob's funeral in early January, eight continue to attend regularly. His daughter, Kayleen, went to the altar January 22 and gave her heart to Jesus. She has embraced Jesus and His church passionately. She attended membership class in February and joined the church. God is continuing to powerfully work in this family because of the faithful prayer and witness of Lou.

RIDGEWAY

Rev. Kyle Boils

This story isn't as much about a person as it is about an event that has opened some eyes; hopefully it will continue to help us be transformed into the church God wants us to be to reach a new generation. Our church has held a Trunk-or-Treat at the church on the Sunday night before Halloween for several years. However, what they had done in the past was all about them. They closed their trunks 15 minutes into the event; the adults went inside and had their service while the children did their own thing in the fellowship hall. There was no outreach, no intergenerational mingling, just doing what "we" like. This year, we chose to emphasize outreach. Some people were a little apprehensive at first. They couldn't quite understand the benefit of standing out in the cold for a whole hour or canceling our regular Sunday night service. But we passed out flyers, made signs, and put out advertisements. And in order to reach out to the younger generations we had the event take place the whole hour, trunks stayed open, people went back and forth between cars and activities in the fellowship hall. It was a GREAT event. We had 65 kids and over 130 people total at an event where they had normally averaged 20 kids in past years. Several people were shocked and talked about how they didn't realize this was possible. Eyes were opened and as a result our church is beginning to see that by thinking like our community instead of being inward focused we have more influence than the people realized.

ROCHESTER

Rev. Larry Crum

I am thankful and privileged to minister at the Rochester First Church of the Nazarene. I enjoy every second of every day at this wonderful church. Recently growth has come in two distinct areas in our church. Six babies will be born before District Assembly, all within a four-month window. I'm just glad it is people from our church and not me contributing this way to our church growth!

The second is individual people inviting friends and neighbors to come sit with them during our Sunday morning worship service. There are two specific instances that come to mind. Mark and Jessica Hamilton are a wonderful couple in our church. Mark works with a man named Steve. Through this contact, Steve and his wife started attending our Adult Bible Study on Tuesday nights. Through this study and from the relationships built there, Steve started playing guitar during many Sunday morning services. What a treat and a blessing this family has been!

The next witness for the Lord is Joe Ward. He passed away two months ago. Joe was a double-amputee that lived in an assisted living home just a half mile away from the church. You would always see Joe, when he was able to come, speeding down the sidewalk to get to church in his motorized chair. I say speeding because it was all downhill for Joe on his way to the church. Just the other day, a lady came to our Sunday night service and was greeted warmly by three or four people in our foyer. She explained that Joe had invited her many times to come and visit his church. She always refused, but was amazed at his love for his church and his church family. So, one night she popped in. Today, she is involved in our Tuesday morning Ladies Bible Study. The point I want to make here is that even after Joe's death, his testimony was still moving in the hearts and lives of the people to whom he witnessed. Joe is gone, but not gone. Amen!

The Great Commission and the Great Commandment are still alive and well at Rochester Church. We had six baptized and eight taken in to membership. We have a senior in high school who feels the call upon his heart to pursue ministry. We also have one who has his District License serving in our church. We are not the largest church in the area, but at our church, you are only a visitor once. From then on, you are family.

SANDUSKY

Rev. Vernon Hazzard

This year there were 2 great things to tell you about. At the beginning of our church year a young man started coming that was deeply distressed. He had been invited by one of our people that lived in the same apartment building that he does. After coming for just a short time, he and I started having some in-depth conversations about his situation in life. I was able to explain to him that all he really needed was Jesus to guide his life and to be free from all the baggage he had been carrying. One night he called me, and I asked him what he was waiting for? Why the delay in receiving Jesus? That night on the phone he accepted Jesus as his Savior. God has provided a job for him and has made a huge difference in his life.

At the end of January, a man that I had been working with for years came up to me after church and said that he wanted to give his heart to Christ next Sunday. He said that God has been dealing with him for a while now. I said why wait? We could do it now! He said no, next Sunday. I prayed all week that God would keep him safe till next Sunday! At the end of our pastoral prayer time the next Sunday, he came to the altar, and the church gathered around him as the altar changed his life for Christ! The Word of God had been working on him week in and week out until he surrendered his will to God!

God's Word will not return unto Him void but will go forth and do that which He commands it to do!

God is alive and working in Sandusky!

SILVER LAKE

Pastor Larry Bolling

One individual comes to mind, Greg Glaslo. He came up to me after a message on Acts 10 and asked to be baptized. After visiting with him about baptism and his relationship with Jesus Christ, he realized Jesus was the reason for this desire of his and invited Christ into his heart. This salvation experience has changed him, and he continues to be disciplined by Jesus Christ. Praise God for his Salvation! Greg was to be baptized on March 12th, 2017, along with a few others.

We give thanks for Virginia Kipper, for serving faithfully in the office as Treasurer of the Silver Lake Church of the Nazarene from January 2002, to February 2016. Thank you Virginia! Thanks to Sis. "Dee", my loving wife and partner in Ministry. To God be the glory! AMEN!

SWARTZ CREEK

Rev. Lawrence Gill

The most extraordinary event of this past year for me was the funeral services of two of our WWII heroes that I had the privilege of officiating. The amazing things that they did during that time in our country's history had me in awe. They were both great Christian men. They lived and served our country and our Lord. What a privilege it is to serve our great Lord and the people who serve Him.

TAYLOR
Rev. Philip Easton

I want to thank God my Father for sending Jesus Christ into this world to save humankind from their sin.

One Sunday, as I was closing in prayer for our worship service, a woman came in. She had seen the sign of the church, and she wanted to come in for worship service. I told her that worship service starts at 11 A.M. every Sunday, and she said that she will return for worship service next Sunday.

She and her young son came the next week. She started to tell her story and indicated that her life was empty. She said that she was in a common-law relationship, and she was working at a bar in Detroit. I told her that Jesus Christ can fill that vacuum in her, and I asked if she would like to receive Jesus Christ as her personal Lord and Savior. I led her in the repentance prayer, and I prayed for her.

She is born again; she left the common-law relationship, and she left the job as a bartender in Detroit. God our Father has blessed her with a job at the American House, and she is active in worship service as well as prayer and Bible study.

TECUMSEH
Rev. Gary Miller

What an amazing year it's been here in Tecumseh! The LORD has been doing unbelievable things here in finances and people's lives. We were able to build a new picnic shelter on the property because a lady from our congregation, who is now living with Jesus, had a dream! What a blessing!

Let me share one story of transformation and how this has deepened our faith here. Wednesday night service had finished, and Pam and I had just gotten home around 8:00 P.M. My cell phone rang about 8:30 P.M., and these were the words I heard. "Pastor Gary, this is Rhyin." She is one of our children at Tecumseh. Her mother and father had just finished family devotions, and Rhyin had asked Jesus into her heart. She said, "Pastor I just want you to know I asked Jesus into my heart tonight." With tears and a smiling, full heart I said to her, "Rhyin, thank you for letting me know this, and thank you for making my day!" God always has a way of showing himself when we're weary and worn. He continues to transform and work in the lives of all his children. I'm grateful, amazed, and honored to part of the LORD's work!

THE WOODS
Rev. David Hutsko

This year it has been incredible to see resurrection stories happen right before our eyes. The good news of the gospel is not meant to simply be proclaimed but embraced and lived into and out of our lives. Here are stories about where God is on the move at each of our Woods Church campuses.

Warren Campus

One of the areas God has called us to increase our effectiveness is to families with special needs. 90% of families with special needs children don't attend church because most churches are not adequately equipped to care for their children. Charles and Colleen were this type of family. They have two children, Vivian and Charlie. For five years, they had been invited to The Woods Church by their friends, Dennis and Michelle. However, they consistently declined because they didn't think we would be able to care for their son Charlie, who has nonverbal Down Syndrome. Several months ago, Colleen took a risk and decided to contact our Kids' Leaders, Lauren and Caitlyn. After a phone conversation with Lauren, and a few less reservations, Colleen met Lauren and Caitlyn on a Thursday

afternoon to tour our kids area. Lauren and Caitlyn not only to put some of her concerns about safety and facility at ease, they also developed a plan to connect Charlie with a “buddy” who would journey with Charlie throughout the Sunday Morning activities and lesson. The volunteer buddy just happened to be Noah Hartson, the 19-year-old son of Dennis and Michelle, and a regular volunteer in our Kids ministry. For the past month-and-a-half, Charlie has been thriving in our kids ministry while his parents have been growing spiritually through our Sunday morning worship experience. I met Charles for the first time last week at our Guest Central area. With tears in his eyes he talked about the impact God is making in their lives and on their family through The Woods Church. God never ceases to amaze me when he connects us with opportunities to say yes to his ministry and mission.

Chesterfield Campus

Carl and his wife Annie had visited our campus a few times over the past few years because they had been invited by some friends that attend our campus. Both Carl and Annie had grown up attending church, but it wasn't much more than that--just attending.

I hadn't seen Carl or Annie for quite some time when I got the news that Carl had been injured in a hunting accident. While trying to get his blind set up for the upcoming hunting season, Carl had slipped and fallen some 20 feet, and his back was broken as a result. Paralyzed from the waist down, alone and unable to call for help, Carl cried out to God. He said, “I just prayed, ‘God, I just want to see Annie again. I don't care about anything else, I just want to see her again.’ “ Carl told me that he couldn't explain it, but as he lay there on the ground he knew God was with him. Carl had a lot of time to think and pray in the hours before he was rescued by Annie and another friend.

I visited Carl a few days after the accident, and what I found in that hospital room was a different man. I went in expecting a guy struggling with the thought that he would never walk again, but found a guy thanking God that he was alive--that he was able to see Annie again.

The prognosis still isn't great for Carl, but I have watched that group of friends who initially invited him to church care and love for Carl and Annie the way that the Body of Christ should. As I have met with Carl over the last several months, I have seen his faith in God grow, and I have seen such a transformation in his life. I've sat at his kitchen table expecting to encourage him, but every time I leave amazed at how much he's encouraged me.

St. Clair Shores Campus

Over the past year, God has been so faithful, and we have seen His hand at work in both the mundane and the supernatural. One of the sweetest things that I have been able to see His hand at work in is the way that He has used the faithful obedience of the leaders in our church. Over the past year, one of our leaders has been gently inviting a couple different families into their lives. Both families have no church and are far from God. In January, after literally months of inviting and prayer, these two separate families began to attend St. Clair Shores campus and get involved in the different ministries. While they have not yet accepted Christ, it is a sweet reminder of the way that God uses His Church to be the tangible expression of His love and purpose on earth.

TROY

Rev. Dennis Wegner

Last year I told the story of ‘Lori’ the server at the restaurant across the street from Troy Church. After 17 months of battling cancer, Lori went to be with the Lord. Lori's blind husband lost his eyesight due to a medical error. We were able to bless this 52 yr. old mother of two with \$7,500.00. The blessing for the Troy Church was to host the family and over 50 friends, most un-churched, by celebrating her faith by accepting Christ as her Savior. Several patrons of the restaurant thanked the church for their love and material help. We are “a light in a dark world.” PRAISE HIM!

One Sunday morning last summer, at about 7:30, I was in the sanctuary preparing for the day. A man who I call “WALKING KEVIN” knocked on the window so I invited him in. In the summer heat,

Kevin was wearing two coats, one a full-length coat with a shorter jacket under it. Both had several pockets on each side. He also had a shirt with extra pockets sewn in . . . he was like a walking file cabinet. After just a few moments in my study, Kevin asked, "Do you have a Bible?" He proceeded to place it in a 'huge' backpack. Then, reaching into a pocket Kevin gave me \$ 3.00. I told him that was not necessary. No sir, just put it in the offering. I told the congregation that morning, I think an angel stopped by the office this morning.

Well the weeks and months have passed, and once or twice a week Kevin will stop by, never a bother, ask for a book, or commentary, reach in this pocket and give some change or a few dollars. In February, Diane and I returned from a week's vacation. On my desk was an envelope. On the outside was written, "Kevin," signed by our custodian, Carol. I opened the envelope and there were 30 brand new one dollar bills. Later I thanked Carol, but she said, "That envelope was from 'Walking Kevin,' your friend."

Later that Sunday morning Kevin came to service late. I saw him in the foyer. Immediately following the service, I rushed to speak to Kevin but he only waved and walked out. For several months, Kevin would stop by, hand the usher a few dollars as say, "Tell pastor I said hi."

Now, *the rest of the story*. Recently, the service started and I saw Kevin walk in. The usher tried to seat Kevin, but Kevin sat in the back row. I think an angel was with us yesterday. I trust that he felt the presence of the Lord. Hebrews 13:2 says, "*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*"

UPCOMING EMD EVENTS:

- ❖ General Assembly - Indianapolis, IN: June 21-30
- ❖ Eastern Michigan District Camp Meeting @ Water's Edge: July 23-30
- ❖ Pastor & Spouse Retreat - Mackinaw City: September 17-20
- ❖ Thinking on Thursday: October 2017 (details TBA)
- ❖ Ministry Assessment Center - : October 20-22
- ❖ Eastern Michigan District Christmas Banquet - Frankenmuth: December 4