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# WORDS FROM THE WILDERNESS

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Establishing a Prayer Team To Share God's Heart to Reach the Lost

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## Church Planting - A Two Pronged Strategy!

As we get started in ministry here in Ocean Springs, we are focusing deeply on two areas, two simultaneous directions, two parallel, concurrent strategies: 1) Trying to connect with and start with a core of believers who will believe in and share a biblical vision for what Jesus wants His church to be and be about, and 2) Building bridges to lost people for relationships leading to evangelism. I am going to spend this newsletter talking about our starting out efforts in the former, and, Lord willing, will tell stories of what God is already doing in the latter in my next newsletter.

## So what does Jesus want His church to look like in Ocean Springs?

First, allow me to make this disclaimer: Jesus already has His church and His people in Ocean Springs. Never trust a church planter who says, "There was nothing before, but THANK GOD, now we're here, to finally get it right!" Jesus is already at work. He loves His people. He loves His bride. And although we have come to Ocean Springs because of the incredible need and potential for the gospel here, I in no way want to give the impression of, "Thank you, citizens, we'll take it from here."

However, in an age where the church can be marked by selfish agendas or programs of our own creation, part of my prayer is that church planting will afford us with the chance to start with a biblical foundation, and a healthy beginning "DNA," through asking questions like, "What does Jesus want to find in His church?" And hopefully that can lead to these kinds of discussions....

- What would it look like to be a church that celebrates the gospel, the news that Jesus died for sinners, not just for salvation, but for its radical impact, hope, and power for every aspect of life?
- And for that to lead to a community of people who recognize that we need that gospel daily, so we remind each other of it daily, not just on Sundays? A community who does real life together, and who is not afraid of getting messy, involved, and real with each other?
- And what would it look like to be a church of people who don't just sit under a sermon for the thousandth time because it makes us feel better, or prouder, or more informed. Not because it helps us be "15% happier and holier".....But because we desperately need the Word of God and its inspired perfection in every area, every crack and crevice of our lives?



- And if we are all in need of grace, then what would it look like to be a community of believers who are not afraid of bruises and brokenness, or hurts and heartache; who are willing to embrace the wounds, and shed the tears...and then walk with each other to the One whose wounds make all things new?
- And a people where any question, and any questioner are welcome. A people who, in the safety of being real with each other, take the questions and run after truth together — And who believe that truth can be found and known. Because Truth is a person — Jesus Christ, who said He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6) , and who invites all who are weary to come to Him and find rest for their souls (Matthew 11:28-30)!

## **That is why half of what we are doing here at the beginning is trying to connect with people who believe in - and will help build - that kind vision, that picture of what church is supposed to be**

It is easy today to point out what is wrong with the church, and all of her imperfections, and to make that an excuse for either wanting a church that caters to our interests or to give up on the church all together. But that is not biblical. Jesus Christ is passionately in love with His people, the church. Jesus pours out His heart and vision for the church. He poured out His blood for her. And in His word, He describes the holy and worshiping bride that He desires for His church to be.

So we are busy trying to connect and call people to be that kind of church. We are working to meet and get to know the stories of people who were part of the original church plant that Phillip and Lori Sealy started here so faithfully several years ago, before Phillip got sick and passed away. And we are meeting new families, people who may be new to the area (Ocean Springs has a ton of new people moving here) and who may be called to be part of a church with this vision.

Together, we are not trying to “put a pin on the map” and just fill in a gap where there hasn’t been a church before. Rather, we are hoping, and praying, and working toward the day that God will build His church into a healthy community, a Biblical bride, and a Lighthouse out into the darkness, that people in Ocean Springs will see a group of believers who they will look at and say, “See how they love one another,” and who will be drawn in because we are about the word of Jesus, in the way of Jesus, and the message of Jesus, with the manner of Jesus.



Such is a huge undertaking. And it won’t be accomplished in our perfection, but rather through our weakness, by His grace. But Jesus has indeed promised, “I will build my church, and even the gates of hell will not prevail against it!” (Matthew 16:18)

## So please pray for us this month — And beyond

- Like I wrote last month, this church plant is a marathon, not a sprint. We are praying to plant with health and with Kingdom vision, not with speed. What is done quickly is often done in man's strength or for man's agendas. We are praying for a long-standing church built by God Himself.
- Pray for Stephanie and me as we meet new, believing families. Pray for us to listen well and get to know their stories. And to then share the vision we believe God has for this church — That He will call the people He wants to be involved in building her here in Ocean Springs.
- Pray also for us to find the right house to meet in — With this kind of vision for a church, the house we buy will be vitally important, not just for our family's home, but for a place to welcome believers into worship, discipleship, and community. **Stephanie and I think we have found that house** — Please pray for us as we put the finishing touches on a contract, inspections, etc to make it ours!!
- Would you pray about joining our support team as a partner and an investor? New people are joining our team every month — We would love for you to be part of what God is already doing here. Any amount is needed and will make a difference. And we are especially looking for monthly donors, Lord willing!
- To give, use the QR code to the right, or visit <http://give.pcamna.org/to/1749>
- Checks can also be sent payable to "Mission to North America"  
PO Box 890233  
Charlotte, NC, 28289-02333.  
Please write "Mark Horn, Ocean Springs Church Plant" on the memo line.
- And finally, more information for all of this and updates on our Ocean Springs journey can be found at our website: [www.PlantHopeOS.org](http://www.PlantHopeOS.org)!



**Thank you friends, prayer supporters, and financial partners. We truly thank God for you. And we believe that God is going to use you and you being part of this team to build His church and to make a difference in eternity itself !!**

### **A closing encouragement:**

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"Heaven have mercy on us all, presbyterians and pagans alike, for we are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head, and sadly need mending."  
— Herman Melville