

WORDS FROM THE WILDERNESS

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

Church Planting - The Second Prong!

Last month, I wrote about our work and prayer to see what God is doing in Ocean Springs to lead to a new church here in Ocean Springs. A church built around the gospel, reminding each other daily of our need of a Savior, and how God has provided that Savior - And how that changes everything about how, why, and in what power we live as Jesus followers.

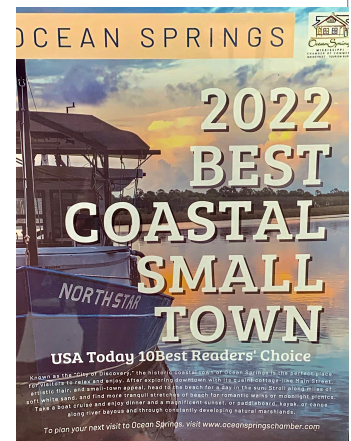
But even that “coming alive” to a new love and a new identity found in the gospel is not an end in and of itself. Yes, God saves us from our sins individually - But then He makes us part of His church. And the church is His agent to see His gospel spread to every corner and His Kingdom come to all people - so that, one day, His glory “will cover the earth as the water covers the sea.” (Habakkuk 2:14).

Which brings us to the second “prong” of why we are here, ministering in Ocean Springs: We are praying that God will assemble a church, a team, a people, who are consumed with a passion for seeing God use them, together, within their various gifts - for one purpose: To see the Great Commission fulfilled and many lives changed for eternity in this town!

What Lies Beneath

My friends, the need here is so great, so deep, so profound. Yes, Ocean Springs is a fun town. A “beach town.” A town filled with music and musicians, art and artists, and festivals one right after another. In fact, USAToday recently named Ocean Springs as the “Best Coastal Small Town” in all of America. But, if you ask the Lord to give you spiritual discernment, and if you look with different eyes, you will see...

- People filling the streets and dancing in the restaurants because they are restless, wandering, and lost... They don't want to be still, where the emptiness of their lives can catch up to them
- People hanging out in bars, and listening to music, because there is something about the music that touches and resonates with their brokenness, and the bar is a place where they can go and feel welcome, at least for a little while, as they try to find a drink that will finally satisfy their thirst...or numb it.
- And people who move to a coastal town, to the land of Jimmy Buffett, because they are trying desperately to escape the voices from their past - echoes of failure, of loss, of mistakes they can't forget, and brokenness they can't outrun.



But that brokenness is also the Great Opportunity

When Stephanie and I tell people about Ocean Springs, we often sum up the town this way: People here know that they are lost....They just don't know that there is a Savior! And the spiritual need here, the darkness that is in dire need for the light of the gospel, is unmistakable and tangible.

But into great darkness, an even Greater Light can shine! Since we moved here in April, it has been amazing to see how God has opened doors, over and over again, with people we are meeting. On the street, in the Government Street district where the musicians and artists hang out, or just around town. And it's not like we are doing anything really profound. But simply by taking the time to listen, and then the time to listen some more...We are finding that the people here are incredibly open to conversations, to sharing their stories, and to engaging with someone, anyone, who takes the time to ask and to demonstrate care. They truly are "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd," and they are almost literally crying out for anyone who will listen to their stories.

As we listen, as we try to demonstrate the care and compassion of Jesus, the Lord is leading us to connections and conversations with people like:

- **Corey** (names are changed), who is as big as an NFL lineman, but who was singing at open mic night in one of the local bars. When he was done, the Lord led him to sit right next to me, and I asked him one question - I said, "Corey, it sounds like there is a lot of pain behind your songs; Can you tell me about that?" And from that one conversation, he spent half an hour pouring out the heartbreak, the anxiety, the depression, the divorces, and the suicide attempts he has been through.
- And **Les**, who grew up in the church, but who has left his faith, and his job as a lawyer, and in his early thirties has moved to Ocean Springs, where he is working as a bartender. But when I met him, he spent two hours pouring out his story, and his questions, and his doubts to me. And then he asked if we could meet again. So we did...and he spent another two hours pouring out his life as a prodigal and the questions he is taking to a God whom he wonders is even there...but whom he hopes does exist. A God he hopes may not have given up on him.
- And **Ms. Grant**, an elderly black lady, who used to work as a seamstress in New York, then she worked making costumes on Broadway, and then she was the costume designer for Saturday Night Live, and now she is making art in Ocean Springs. She is delightful, and spiritual.....and lost.
- And then **Driftwood Pete** (that is his real name), whom I hope to write more about in an upcoming newsletter. Driftwood Pete is a fisherman by trade, but he spends his spare time going in a boat around the delta at the mouth of the Pascagoula River, from which he snorkels into the river...and pulls out old, lost, abandoned wood. Which he then reclaims, fixes up, and turns into something beautiful for the sake of art. He doesn't realize it...but he is modeling the gospel!



These are just some of the many people God is leading Stephanie and me to in Ocean Springs. There have been lots of first conversations. And some of those are leading to second conversations. And we are praying that they will be part of a path and a journey that God puts together for us to be able to be part of people's lives, to love them, to listen to them, to invite them

into our home and to our table...That God would then open up a doorway for us to share the reason that we have hope: The gospel of the love of the Savior, Jesus Christ!

So, more than ever, will you pray for us and with us

- Pray that God will lead us to more “**divine intersections**” with people in whom He is already working, preparing them to receive the gospel - before they are even aware that He is at work!
- Pray that we will be sensitive to the Spirit, and protected from the enemy, and that we would “always be prepared to make an explanation to anyone who asks us for a reason for the **hope** that is in us; and that we would do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). Stephanie and I are committed to this for the **long game** - and we count it a privilege to enter into people's lives and be part of their story....that God would make it a story of leading them home to Himself!
- And as you pray for us, please pray that God will **raise up a church** of fellow believers who are learning to embrace the brokenness that leads them to the gospel in their own lives - That God would then use them to reach others who are lost and in need of the good news. They may not be called to go to Government Street with me and into the bars with me (although they might be). But pray for this church to be filled with people who are committed to seeing grace grow in them - that it would then flow through them - to the people God has placed into their own parishes and circles around each of them.
- And as you pray - Let me share a **huge praise report**: God has led us to a house, and we are supposed to close on it by the end of this month! God did amazing things in providing us this house, even below market value. And most of all, we believe it is going to be a house marked and set aside by Him as a **house of refuge**, and hospitality, for believers and non-believers alike to come and be welcomed, and to feel safe enough to ask real questions and find real answers in the person of Jesus Christ. Pray with us that this will be a house of life-changing ministry!

Thank you - Thank you for your prayers! Even here at the very beginning...God is answering them!

We believe God is going to use the prayers of His people, your prayers, to make a difference for eternity and to save souls here in Ocean Springs!

As you come along with us, if the Lord leads you to also partner with us financially, here is how you can 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.
(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!



Thank you. Thank you! God is at work. Aslan is on the move! The Father is running down the road. And we believe with all of our heart that He is going to use the prayers and partnership of people like you to change the very horizon of eternity itself! Grace and peace to you!



A closing encouragement:

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"And I know this thirst will not last long, but it
will soon drown in a song not sung in vain"
– Rich Mullins