

7 Commitments of Renewal for a New Year

Churches:

- Argenta
- Arthur
- Atwood
- Boody
- Calvary
- Emmanuel
- Fellowship
- Findlay
- Forsyth
- Galilee
- Hammond
- Heyworth
- Lincoln
- Lovington
- Mt. Zion
- Shiloh
- Sullivan
- Summit Avenue
- Tabernacle
- Tri-Valley

Mission Statement

Central Baptist Association exists to foster relationships among churches in order to assist them in fulfilling the Great Commission.

The Vision of CBA is to see churches collaborating together to build the Kingdom of God.

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By Thom S. Rainer
 Bah. Humbug.

I admit it. I used to hate New Year resolutions. They seemed so contrived and short-termed. I've probably had resolutions to lose over 2,000 pounds over the course of my life.

Obviously, my resolutions have lacked staying power.

Still, I see the New Year as a time for recommitment and re-focus. And though it is simply the changing of the page of a calendar, it is still a good time to be reminded about those areas that are most important in our lives.

With that in mind, I have seven suggestions for church leaders. Consider these seven resolutions to be statements of renewal. Ask others to keep you accountable. Above all, ask God for the wisdom, strength, and perseverance to move these commitments of renewal to reality.

1. A commitment to move beyond the inward drift in our church. It does not take long for a church to lose its outward focus. It does not take a long time for the tyranny of the urgent to replace the priority of the important. It does not take a long time for most ministries and activities to be focused inwardly instead of outwardly toward the community we serve.

2. A commitment to renew our attitude. Leading a church is tough. Church members can be critical and demanding. But God has called us to serve in the messiness of life and people. We all can use renewal of our attitude toward others and towards our life situation.

3. A commitment to become a more grateful leader. It can be natural to focus on the negative, the naysayers, and nitpickers. But we need to turn to prayer and ask for supernatural help in focusing on all the blessings God gives us. A review of Philippians 4:8 would be helpful as well.

4. A commitment to be a leader of greater faith and courage. Again, this commitment cannot be realized in our own strength and power. But we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

5. A commitment to be the leader who realizes our family is our first line of ministry. We seek not to fall into the trap of putting family in opposition to church. First Timothy 3:5 is a clear reminder that our families are our first line of ministry. We can't be blessed in the totality of our ministry if we are lacking there.

6. A commitment to clear the church of clutter and activities. By clutter, I mean all the ways we keep our members busy. We are often expecting our members to participate in so many activities that we implicitly discourage them from caring for their families, their health, and their ministries.

7. A commitment to be an Acts 6:4 leader. If we are not giving focused attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word, we need to get out of vocational ministry. Ministry has become human-powered rather than God-centered.

I remain an obnoxious optimist about the local church. I see God working in so many great ways. I have no reason to believe 2017 will not be a great year for our congregations, especially if our leaders are willing to make these commitments of renewal.

Happy New Year.

Prayer Pointers

Evangelistic Praying

From Thomas E. Miller

Most of us are familiar with the story of the rich man and Lazarus found in the Gospel of Luke 16:19-31. You'll remember that the rich man died in spite of his wealth and was buried. Lazarus died too, and was carried to Abraham's bosom. We're not sure he had a decent burial. But death was not the end of either man. It was a new beginning of a whole new existence in another world. In the KJV it says of the rich man: "and in hell..", NKJV: "and being in torments in Hades..", NIV: "in hell, where he was in torment." For all unbelievers, death means to be separated from God's presence and in torment. C.S. Lewis was told about a gravestone inscription that read, "Here lies an atheist—all dressed up and no place to go." Lewis quietly replied, "I bet he wishes that were so!" Mark 8:36 says, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" I think we can say the rich man prayed after he was in Hades. But he was still self-centered, because he prays for his own comfort and the safety of his family. Hades and hell are not hospitals for the sick; they are prisons for the condemned. The rich are not condemned because they are rich, nor was Lazarus saved because he was poor. The rich man trusted in his riches instead of the Lord God.

When the rich man asked, prayed, and even begged, the Father to send Lazarus to warn his five brothers so they wouldn't come to

this place of torment, he was told, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rises from the dead." Just as the rising of Jesus from the dead proved this true.

Darrell Robinson reminds us, "Christ is the Head of the church, His body. When He is lifted up, His life permeates the body with vitality. The saints within the church are equipped through the fellowship of the Christ-life within the body. Evangelism is the natural result of a Christ-filled body, alive and functioning within the community. Evangelism is NOT an EVENT, a meeting, or an activity. It may include all of these, but evangelism is more. Evangelism is the Outflow of the Overflow of the Christ-life in a church body. (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21-23; Matt. 28:18-20)

We are the church. We need to pray. We need to believe. It has been said that the difference between quickly throwing up a few prayers when you have a moment, and spending a quality devotion time with God is the difference between buying fast food and dining in a fine restaurant...Many Christians have only had spiritual fast food in their lives; they've never experienced the banquet God has for them. (John Maxwell).

Are you satisfied with spiritual fast food? Don't be.

Fighting Evangelism Erosion

By Pastor Kirby Ownby-FBC, Royalton, IL, Franklin Bapt. Assoc.

Adrian Rodgers once said these words, "We ought to be living as if Jesus died yesterday, rose this morning, and is coming back this afternoon." Brothers and sisters, I agree whole-heartedly with Dr. Rodgers statement, but I do not see the majority of Christians in our association as living with this sort of kingdom-focused intensity. There has been and evangelism erosion in our churches, and if we are honest, in our hearts. I don't mean that to sound insulting because the truth is most churches in our association struggle in this area. However, I do not believe this is the way we want to stay. If we lived the way Dr. Rodgers mentions, what a fire and urgency we would have for evangelism! Time is short. People need to come to Christ in repentance and faith not later, but right now! Some may not consider this a priority, but I believe most of us sincerely desire to see the lost come to Christ, to see our churches grow, and to see our association have life again. Many of us have spent the majority of our lives in service to God and his church, so the questions is clear: what should we do? How can we make personal evangelism a priority again? Since I am a faithful Southern Baptist and proud of it, I would like to suggest three actions and I promise I won't conclude with a poem.

First, if every pastor and church member wants to get serious about evangelism, then we need to realize there is a problem. According to Dennis Dunn, founder of the *Every Believer a Witness* program, 95% of all Christians will never in their life lead one person to faith in Jesus Christ. You heard me correctly, not even one. Ninety percent will never even try. Friends, that should break our hearts. Just think of all the people you come in contact with every week that don't know Jesus. These souls have to answer to God, but it is my belief that it is our responsibility to reach them for Christ. So the truth is I must first recognize the problem and repent from not engaging enough in personal evangelism. It starts with the Pastor, and we must set the tone for our churches. We must show them the burden we have for the lostness that surrounds us.

The second action is also quite simple. We must be intentional about evangelism. Now, the word "intentional" has become a sort of buzzword with no meaning for many people. What I mean is that individual churches and our association as a whole must develop specific strategies for evangelism in our area. What works in one area of the country may not work here. We must find a method of evangelism, develop a strategy, and lead our churches in the pursuit of lost people we know. It doesn't matter if it's the *Three Circles of Life Conversion Guide* or the Old Roman Road, we must highlight evangelism again and again and again so that it becomes part of our churches DNA. If it is not made a priority, then guess what? It will never become one on its own.

The third action is one that is most difficult. Everyone needs to have accountability in the area of evangelism. Pastors, our being constantly surrounded by believers is not an excuse. I don't know what you do, but to hold myself accountable, I begin every Deacons and Elders meeting in our church by sharing who I have witnessed to in the past month, and then ask my men how they have done in this area. It must be an expectation, and we must be accountable if evangelism is ever going to become a priority. I would also say that a part of being accountable about evangelism is celebrating when it happens! Give opportunities for people to share their testimony about witnessing, and when you can, let the entire congregation hear it!

Brothers and sisters, all the actions I have suggested are great, but I would remind us all that each of them must be supported by one overarching strategy. We have to wear out our knees in prayer, if we want to see the lost saved. Jesus said in Luke 10:2, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." We must pray for the lost, and pray that God will move in our hearts and the hearts of our churches for the lost.

May God bless each of you, our churches and our association.

CBA Pastors, Staff & families...

January



Birthdays

7-Hudson Baker (Heyworth)
9-Shannon Garrett (Mt. Zion)
11-Sam Jones (Tabernacle)
11-Jennifer Ferguson (Argenta)
15-Dee Leischner (Boody)
25-David Marshall (Mt. Zion)

Wedding Ann.

8-Will & Jennifer Ferguson (Argenta)



Church Ann.

1987-David Marshall (Mt. Zion)
2011-Tracy Smith (Mt. Zion)
2015-Randy Johnson (Tab)

CBA Church Relations Team Meeting
January 23rd at 6 PM
Emmanuel/CBA office

Pastor David Marshall's 30 years of Ministry Celebration on January 15th, 2017

You are invited to celebrate Pastor David Marshall and Vicki's 30 years of ministry on the 15th of January at First Baptist Church, 720 W. Main St., Mt. Zion, IL. David has faithfully served as an Associate Pastor at both Tabernacle and First Baptist Church of Mt Zion, in Macon County, Illinois.

In 30 years of ministry David has touched the lives of thousands of men, women and children. His tireless devotion to the gospel, and Christ-like character have enabled him to be a cornerstone for others to lean upon during difficult times. He has served as a mentor, counselor and confidant for countless pastors who have had the privilege and honor to serve with David. So we are going to celebrate what God has done through David and Vicki's ministry. We will recognize David during the morning service at 10:15 AM and follow that with a finger food reception immediately following the morning service at approximately 11:45AM.

I would like to invite you to share any stories or pictures that you might have of David and also ask you to share this event with others who may be interested in attending.

Pastor Tracy Smith

Send pictures to: FBC, Box 137, Mt. Zion 62549

SBC Call to Prayer

Southern Baptist leaders are calling churches to give at least one hour a week to prayer in January. The 2017 Call to Prayer is organized around the five specific "seasons" of prayer correlating with the month's five Sundays.

The emphasis utilizes resources created by PrayerLink, a network of Baptist state and national prayer leaders. Each Sunday, or season of prayer, has an overarching topic:

Season 1: Myself and My Family

Season 2: My Community and Friends

Season 3: My Church Ministers and Ministries

Season 4: My Country and Its Peoples

Season 5: My World and Its People Groups

Within those topics, PrayerLink leaders encourage prayers to follow a "10-20-30" model: 10 minutes of Scripture reading, public leadership, and worship; 20 minutes of sharing prayer concerns related to the focus area in small groups; and 30 minutes of guided individual, group, and corporate prayer.

SBC President Steve Gaines said, "The Southern Baptist Convention needs to be a people of prayer. Only then will God send the power we need to fulfill the Great Commission."

**CBA Missions
Celebration**
Meet the Nations
January 29th, 2017
5-7 PM
**at Tabernacle Baptist
Church**



**Four ethnic church planters from Chicago are
coming to share about their work.**

**We will have light refreshments
following the program.**



***Sanctity of
Human Life
Sunday is
Jan. 22nd,
2017***

Support your local Crisis Pregnancy Center



NEWS from the Pews!

our church. I'm asking you to pray for our congregation and our committee while we are searching for a pastor. Thanks to Bro. Dale for being there for us and keeping our spirits uplifted.

FBC, Mt. Zion-BLOOD DRIVE MONDAY, JANUARY 16, FROM 2-7 PM IN THE FIRESIDE ROOM. To schedule an appointment sign up at the Welcome Center.

PANCAKE/SAUSAGE BREAK-FAST FUNDRAISER FOR PANAMA MISSION TRIP, JANUARY 28- ALL YOU CAN EAT Pancake & Sausage Breakfast. \$5 per person, 12 & under \$3; from 7-10 am.

Children's Ministry Day-This is a great opportunity for kids in 1st-6th grades to experience mission work they can do locally! We will be serving by doing garden work, painting, ministering to ER workers, making projects for nursing home residents, and more! The cost is \$15 and is not due until the day of the event on March 11. **Pre-registration deadline is January 15.** Registration forms can be picked up in the church foyer. If you would be interested in helping with this event, please email Mallory at mmcdevitt@fbcmzion.org. This event is sponsored by IBSA.

Atwood-First Baptist Church is praising God for a good 2016 and looking forward to what He would have us do in 2017. Our Elders have been putting together a Vision Strategy and have asked that each of us pray that our church will accept the challenge and increase our mission to *Love God, Love People and Share the Good News*. At our Annual Members' Meeting we voted to support Bryan and Marci Coble who are planting a new church in Chicago. We will have them with us early in the new year to talk about the work. As the LORD allows, we will take at least two weekend trips up to Chicago in 2017 to help them with the ministry there.

Lincoln-Our Christmas dinner was delightful. Many people were away for different reasons but our gathering with family and friends with all the good food was joyful.

We are looking forward to 2017 with a prayer in our heart that God will uplift us and help us not to become dishearten. I'm sure all of you know that we are looking for a pastor. We, the pastoral committee, have spent many hours, individually and as a group, in prayer asking God to help us find a pastor. Bro Ken has been an inspiration to me in the work he is doing for



Mark Your Calendar

January 2017 Call to Prayer Month

Sunday, 1st-HAPPY NEW YEAR

NOTE: CBA Office open Jan. 3rd-5th

16th-MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

19th (11:30-12:30) Pastor's Gathering Lunch at Emmanuel FH

22nd-Sanctity of Life Sunday

23rd-at 6 PM-Church Relations Team Mtg. at CBA office

24th-25th-Illinois Leadership Summit at IBSA Bldg.

29th-CBA Missions Celebration *Meet the Nations* at Tabernacle

February 2017 True Love Waits Emphasis

8th-14th-CBA office will be closed while Chris is on Vacation

9th-iConnect at IBSA Bldg.

10-11th-Illinois Baptist Women Associational Training at IBSA

10th-11th-Rekindle the Call at Streator Camp

12th-Lincoln's BD

13th-19th-Focus on WMU

14th-VALENTINE'S DAY

14th at 10 AM-Sr. Adult Valentine's Day Event at Tabernacle

18th-Church Tech Conference at IBSA

19th-20th-Rekindle the Call at IBSA Bldg.

20th-PRESIDENTS DAY

25th-VBS Clinic-Central at Emmanuel, Carlinville

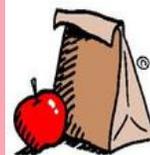
The Next Pastor's Gathering Lunch will be January 19th

11:30-12:30

Topic: Effective Communication

Lunch provided, if you contact Chris at CBA

office or Randy at randy@tbc.church, by Jan. 18th.



FOCUS FUNNIES

MY LIFE BROKEN DOWN INTO SEGMENTS



CartoonChurch.com