

Michigan Missions

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Fishers of Men



Lindsay Nowaczyk (left) baptized on Feb. 2nd and Caleb Vance (right) baptized on Feb. 23rd are now members of the campus ministry!

Now it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen. And lo, there were many fish in the waters all around. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes filled with fish. And the fish were hungry.

Year after year these who called themselves fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, the abundance of fish, and how they might go about fishing. Continually they searched for new and better definitions of fishing. They sponsored costly nationwide and worldwide conferences to discuss fishing and promote fishing and hear about all the ways of fishing.

These fishermen built large, beautiful buildings called "Fishing Headquarters." The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish. One thing they didn't do, however; they didn't fish.

They organized a board to send out fishermen to other places where there were many fish. The board was formed by those who had the great vision and courage to speak about fishing, to define fishing, and to promote the idea of fishing in faraway streams and lakes where many other fish of different colors lived. Also the board hired staffs and appointed committees and held many meetings to define fishing, to defend fishing, and to decide what new streams should be thought about. But the staff and committee members did not fish.

Expensive training centers were built to teach fishermen how to fish. Those who taught had doctorates in fishology, but the teachers did not fish; they only taught fishing. Year after year, graduates were sent to do full-time fishing, some to distant waters filled with fish.

Further, the fishermen built large printing houses to publish fishing guides. A speaker's bureau was also

provided to schedule special speakers on the subject of fishing.

Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded, and were sent to fish. But, like the fishermen back home they never fished.

Some also said they wanted to be part of the fishing party, but they felt called to furnish fishing equipment. Others felt their job was to relate to the fish in a good way so the fish would know the difference between good and bad fishermen.

After one stirring meeting on "The Necessity for Fishing," a young fellow left the meeting and went fishing. The next day he reported he had caught two outstanding fish. He was honored for his excellent catch and scheduled to visit all the big meetings possible to tell how he did it.

So he quit his fishing in order to have time to tell about the experience to the other fishermen. He was also placed on the Fishermen's General Board as a person having considerable experience.

Now it's true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. Some lived near the water and bore the smell of dead fish every day.

They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen's clubs and the fact that they claimed to be fishermen yet never fished.

They wondered about those who felt it was of little use to attend the weekly meetings to talk about fishing. After all, were they not following the Master who said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men?"

Imagine how hurt some were when one day a person suggested that those who didn't catch fish were really not fishermen, no matter how much they claimed to be. Yet it did sound correct. Is a person a fisherman if year after year he never catches a fish?

(This article can be found at <http://www.gospelweb.net/InspirationalNotes/fishermen.htm>)



Angela Thompson (left) pictured with Shann Perkins after Angela was restored to God on March 30.

As we all know, Jesus has called us to be fishers of men. Let us continue to grow, not just swell, so we can reach our goal of having 340 disciples by the end of the year! This will allow us to be in a strong position to send out a mission team to Kalamazoo in 2009. Our overall goal is not "a few baptisms" every month, but the evangelization of Michigan and the world in our lifetime! To assist in this vision, we will change the name of our monthly newsletter to reflect our mindset. Starting with this article, "Michigan Missions" will

replace "Motown Minutes."

To truly be fishers of men, each of us needs to ask ourselves the following: "Is my heart and are my actions totally aligned with God and his purpose?" For us to truly be "Bent on Conquest," we need to be totally committed to God and his dream that everyone be given the chance to respond to the gospel.

To keep us focused on this task, we held a church-wide leaders meeting on Saturday, Feb. 23. Brian Perkins and Tim Sherrill delivered the lessons. Brian gave us a charge to be totally committed disciples and keep our focus on our ministries and the lost. Brian also shared about the trip his wife, Shann, took to visit our sister church in London, England. The London church is now working as a cohesive body and will soon be in a position to help us better support the mission efforts of our brothers and sisters in India. Following Brian's lesson, Tim delivered a lesson on the importance of Biblical instruction in our ministries.

The title of Tim's lesson was "The Basis for Biblical Instruction," and one of the key scriptures shared was Ephesians 4:11-16 about the need for everyone to be involved in the work of God. Tim shared that this is the "secret" to church growth. When everyone is involved, there are more "workers" for God's harvest. Furthermore, with everyone involved, we all have a vested interest in growing God's church (cf. John 4:1-2). This participation allows everyone to share in the victory! In turn, this allows the entire church to be built up. Let us never depend solely on our church leader, region leader, and house church leader to "make things happen." Let us make sure that everyone is participating in winning Michigan for Christ and maturing those who are already disciples.

In "Nothing to do but Save Souls," John Wesley gave the following charge to his ministers: "You have nothing to do but save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those that you want, but to those that want you most. Observe: It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord."



Karen Finch (middle) and some of her friends joyfully celebrate after her baptism on March 12! Karen's mother, Rita (far right), was so excited to see her daughter now become her sister-in-Christ!

The two aspects – making disciples and building them up – need to be foremost on our hearts and actions if we are to make impact in Michigan! Perhaps, a review of our past shows that we indeed made disciples, but perhaps we did not effectively "build up" the disciples God helped us make. Maybe you have been in the Detroit church for many years and you might think your spiritual age constitutes your "maturity." Maturity is defined by Hebrews 5:12 as someone who can teach others. Have you been teaching others the gospel in 2008? If not, we need to ask ourselves if we are really mature. Let us reflect on the parable above; if we are not fishing for men, can we really call ourselves fishers of men? Perhaps we are deceiving ourselves into thinking we are something we are not. This can easily change; this year can be a year of repentance! We can become fishers of men by simply having deep faith in God and a heartfelt love for the lost. Christi Tracey is a great example to the church. Christi is married to David and they have an adorable

daughter, Courtney. Christi also has a full-time job as an engineer in the automotive industry. Despite all her responsibilities, Christi has continued to focus on God and she recently helped her co-worker, Sheila Wheaton, become a disciple. Despite our schedules, we too can put God first and be “fishers of men (and women).”

An example of someone who is being “built up” and growing is Winsome Morris. Winsome was baptized July 27, 2007. As a young disciple, Winsome wanted to get involved and start a new ministry, a ministry to reach out to the sick and shut in and encourage them. This new ministry that Winsome helped start is supported by the mature women’s ministry (Betty Towner and Barbara Causey) and is called “Sonshine” (not “Sunshine”). As we have come out of the darkness and into the light, we need to help shine light of Jesus on the world and on our brothers and sisters that may need our help. March 16 marked the official start of this ministry! Please keep this ministry in your prayers as it continues to meet the needs of the body. Everyone in Detroit is asked to participate in a ministry. Are you actively participating in a ministry? If not, now is the time to get involved. Becoming involved in a ministry allows you to be built up, to truly participate and build up God’s church!



Christina Hurst (second from right) after her baptism on March 12 and some of sisters who studied the Bible with her. Christina and Karen are spiritual twins!

Many of us have been praying for the evangelization of Michigan. The next exciting step in seeing this accomplished is the “birthing” of the church in Kalamazoo in 2009! To accomplish this will require much prayer, fasting and hard work! We will need to “hold up the arms” of the disciples already in Kalamazoo. Even now, some should be preparing to go and be part of this mission team. If you were asked to go on a church-planting in Michigan or somewhere else in the world what would you say? Is your heart still as zealous for God as it was when you were baptized? Let us remember that when we were baptized, we made the commitment to give up everything (Luke 14:33). If we have drifted from the conviction that the scriptures teach, we need to get back to this commitment and we need to call those in our house churches back to that same commitment!

Each house church is encouraged to speak to Brian Perkins to see when their members can visit Kalamazoo to help with the mission. We have also begun working on a new Kalamazoo web site that will provide times and locations where Bible talks will be held and other ways we can get involved in this great work.

Let us never fall into the mindset of just coming to church and just living a “moral life.” Let us have soft hearts that reach out to the lost and earnestly work to bring God’s word to Michigan and the world in this generation! Let us always have a heart willing to “go anywhere in Michigan, anytime, to anyone.” And let us have this attitude all the time! Let us truly be fishers of men!

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