

Baptist COURIERS FOR CHRIST

PASSING THE TORCH

by Don Stertz

"My times are in thy hand...." Psalm 31:15



How many times have you heard someone say (or maybe you've even said it), "My, how time flies!" As I get older time certainly seems to go faster. I can hardly believe that it's been over 44 years since the Lord directed me to start Baptist Couriers for Christ, a local church ministry out of the Wyldewood Baptist Church in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. My, oh my, the changes that I've seen in this ministry over all those years!

During the 1980s we smuggled Bibles; then the wall (Iron Curtain) came down and opened the door in the 1990s to start shipping sea/land containers of scriptures into those once closed communist countries (to date Couriers has shipped 123 containers of gospel literature). In the 2000s Couriers began holding scripture distribution/church planting campaigns throughout Europe and beyond. To keep everything operating smoothly requires a great amount of behind the scenes administration, which I have directed since the ministry's inception.

My wife Laura and I have been praying for some years now for the Lord to raise up a man with a dedicated heart for ministry who could take the directorship of Couriers for Christ. We wanted God's choice.

Our elder son Joshua joined our ministry in 2019 as a representative and had just started deputation when COVID brought everything to a halt. Once the restrictions were lifted, Josh and his wife Kelli then raised their personal support in just over two years and have since continued to raise support for

ministry operations. They have done a marvelous job at representing Couriers for Christ.

Without any of my influence, the Lord was already working on Josh and giving him a desire to become more involved with the integral nuts and bolts of this ministry. He brought valuable input and insight during our staff meetings so I began grooming him by giving him more responsibilities in the administration of the ministry, which he has handled extremely well.

The Lord eventually impressed upon my heart for Joshua to be the next director and take the ministry to the next level. On April 14, 2024, Joshua was commissioned by Wyldewood Baptist Church to officially become the next director of Baptist Couriers for Christ. Our pastor, the Couriers staff, and I all have complete confidence that Joshua will do a tremendous job of helming this ministry.

I will no longer be orchestrating the ministry operations. Please reach out directly to Josh with items pertaining to the direction of the ministry. As per Josh's wishes, I will be in the official role of assistant director.

PLEASE NOTE: I AM NOT RETIRING. It is my desire to continue traveling as the Lord gives me strength and health, and this includes campaigns, taking updates to supporting churches, presenting Couriers for Christ in new churches for support, and raising funds for ministry projects.

Thank you for your prayers and continued support, which enables Couriers for Christ to get the word of God to those who do not have it!



PASSING THE TORCH *continued...*

by Joshua Stertz

For my whole adult life I have been asked this question, “When are you joining your dad’s ministry?” The answer has always been, “I’m willing to do whatever the Lord wants me to do.” In 2019 God changed my ministry from youth pastor to missionary, and we joined the Baptist Couriers for Christ in November. Knowing that God desired for this ministry to continue, we also knew that would eventually require someone else to take the leadership role.

My dad has been the capable and qualified director for almost 45 years. Under his leadership Couriers for Christ has successfully navigated many changes in technology, culture, and worldwide politics. Don Stertz, Ken Stertz, and Larry Ingalls have been the team God used for almost four decades to get God’s word into the hands of Eastern Europeans. Now another generation has been called to join and continue this work.

On April 14, 2024, Wyldewood Baptist Church celebrated the passing of the torch from father to son. The evening service was dedicated to recounting the faithfulness of God and casting a vision for the future of the ministry. The congregation sang hymns focusing on missions, and our men’s trio sang several special songs. During the service a video was played to honor my dad and tell some of his story to those in attendance. The story of a farm-boy from Omro, Wisconsin, who said YES when the Lord called was inspiring to all. Uncle Ken recounted what it was like to watch the Iron Curtain crumble and open wide the opportunity to send containers of scripture into the once closed countries of Eastern Europe. Both Dad and I were able to make some remarks to the church family about their involvement over the years and what a blessing it has been to have them partner with us through prayer, financial support, and love. Pastor Emeritus Randy King preached from 1 Corinthians 16, exhorting the church in Corinth to follow the leadership of Timothy, Apollos, and Stephanas. As each one had different gifts and backgrounds, each style of leadership varied, but the Lord gave to each man the qualities he desired for each group.

The message was followed by a time of prayer and laying on of hands. The congregation gathered at the front of the auditorium to beseech the Lord for his direction and wisdom as we make this official transition.

Colossians 4:12, ***“...always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”*** The service concluded with an a cappella verse of “Victory in Jesus” led by Larry Ingalls, which is a Couriers’ campaign tradition.

Following the service was a sweet time of fellowship with snacks and a “Pass the Torch” cake. Our family was so blessed as many in the church used their gifts and talents to make the evening so special.

It has been an honor to serve under my dad and work alongside him in many physical projects over the years. He has taught me so much and has been more than a mentor, a father, a teacher. He has also been one of my closest friends. We have enjoyed serving our Lord together more than anything else. Please pray for this new season of life as we continue to serve together but with reversed roles. I earnestly desire God’s wisdom and guidance for the upcoming challenges ahead in this new chapter of life. As King Solomon implored God for wisdom to lead the nation of Israel, I am imploring God for wisdom to lead this ministry, I Kings 3:7 and 9, ***“And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”*** I know that on my own I will surely fail, but as the Lord has led my father, I pray that he leads me, and wherever he leads me--I will follow!



Josh with Hungarian pastor Laszlo Fortin and family on Josh’s first mission trip (April 1993)





Campaign Testimony

by Olivia Navratil

I had the privilege of attending the Couriers trip to South Tyrol, Italy, in 2023, and I'm so excited to be gearing up to go to Croatia with them in April. Before going to Italy with Couriers I had never been on a mission trip, so I wasn't sure what to expect, but it quickly became an experience during which I gained a deeper understanding of ministry, created many happy memories, and grew closer to Jesus.

I must compliment the Stertz family on their aptitude for the task before them. Their organization, communication, and general good humor greatly impressed me as they wrangled 30 of us in 5 different vehicles across several cities in a different country--not an easy task, but you would've thought it was by how they handled it! It was especially meaningful to have three generations of Couriers on the trip together and to hear the many stories of how God has worked through the ministry since it was founded.

As I reflect on my time in Italy, I greatly miss the fellowship of my teammates. Despite having a wide range of ages and being from various states and churches, we quickly grew close, and the group was a huge encouragement to me and my walk with the Lord. We also just had so much fun as we worked and explored Italy. One of my favorite parts of the trip was the team meeting each morning where we gathered together and went over the game plan for the day, shared testimonies and prayer requests, sang a few hymns, and heard a brief message from the men on the team (I am also pretty sure we consumed the majority of the hotel's coffee supply during those meetings). I miss starting each day by seeing everyone!

The trip was structured so that we might hand out as much scripture as possible but also simultaneously experience Europe in the time we were there. I enjoyed the distribution aspect of the campaign, as it allowed us to take walking tours of several small towns in the Dolomite Mountains. They were the most picture-perfect towns, many of which included a castle that was several hundreds of years old. The Couriers do ensure we get to try the native cuisine by finding local restaurants for lunch and dinner, and they did not disappoint. I was able to try quite a bit of the Italian and German food common to the region. We also made a gelato trip just about every night after dinner--when in Italy, right?

For me, though, there was a huge contrast between what these Italians have materially and what they have spiritually, and it put into perspective the opposition that missionaries face. While we might not have been exposed to poverty like we would have been on a third-world mission field, we were exposed to the spiritual poverty of a nation that has been enslaved to Catholicism for generations. The spiritual darkness was very evident, and the people seemed closed to the gospel. It was eye-opening to witness the unique set of challenges the missionaries face on this type of mission field.

If you are debating whether or not you should sign up for a trip, I strongly encourage you to do it! If your experience is anything like mine, you will gain friendships, memories, and a new perspective on missions.



Now in progress!

Together 4 Split Campaign

Split, Croatia

April 29-May 11, 2024

This campaign will assist a church plant that is currently underway in that city and region. It is tourist city located in the southern portion of Croatia, right on the Adriatic Sea. Please pray for safety in travel and health for our team members, and most of all that souls will come to know Christ!



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Opposed to all forms of compromise and deviation from God's Word.



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