



BAPTIST COURIERS FOR CHRIST

EST 1979

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Partnership for the Furtherance of the Gospel

by Joshua Stertz



*Don Stertz with
Dr. Charles
Keen in the early
1980s with 5,000
New Testaments
published by Bearing
Precious Seed
and distributed by
Couriers for Christ*



*Dr. Charles Keen is a
visionary within local
church Bible produc-
tion and distribution
ministries, and a dear
friend to Couriers for
Christ.*



*Don observing the
printing operations
of Bearing Precious
Seed of Milford back
in the early 1980s*

Kelli and I had the privilege of attending the Bible Publishing Summit organized and hosted by First Baptist Church of Milford, Ohio, last month. Often Bible-believing Christians are guilty of spending far too much time arguing over their differences rather than working together for God's glory. This annual summit is a great picture of Psalm 133:1, **Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!** Couriers for Christ has enjoyed a long working relationship with Bearing Precious Seed of Milford, Ohio. It began when Don Stertz was invited by Dr. Charles Keen to present the Couriers ministry at the church when BPS was located on Center Street in Milford back in 1980. Throughout the decades the Lord has seen fit to grow the outreach of the Couriers ministry along with many other ministries associated with Bible publishing and distribution.

It was a tremendous blessing to hear the reports of many ministries involved in scripture publishing, including Shannon Lemmon of Bible Literature Missionary Foundation, Tim Carpenter of Bearing Precious Seed--Oshkosh, Dave Darling of Campaigns for Christ, and many other pastors/missionaries who take part in this great endeavor. The preaching messages were convicting and encouraging, the time of food and fellowship was beneficial for discussion of current and future endeavors, and getting to spend time with friends is always rewarding. One common theme that resonated with me was the fact that there is so much more work to be accomplished. We are rejoicing in all that God has allowed us to do in the past 45 years as we have labored to get his word to the regions beyond, but the population continues to grow (it has nearly doubled since 1975). There are more opportunities to place the word of God into the hands of folks who don't have it around the world today, but we still lack the manpower and the funds to accomplish the task.

I love to reflect on all that can be accomplished for the furtherance of the gospel when like-minded believers work together for that common goal, not caring who gets the credit as long as the Lord is glorified. The ability to produce and distribute the scripture is there, but we each need to do our part to fulfill the Great Commission. I saw many of my heroes of the faith in ministry at the summit. Seeing them reminded me that as they are reaching the twilight of their ministry, we need young people who will surrender

Continued on center page...

HISTORY

Highlight

Opportunities
granted...
opportunities
taken



Cara with a group of kids outside the apartment complex where we stayed for the summer



The Larry Ingalls Family (Larry, Cheryl, Heather, Christi, Alan, Jeremy, and Katrina) plus Joshua Stertz and Cara Christensen

by Joshua Stertz



Josh wheeling a load of soil from hole to the back of the property



Jeremy Ingalls and Travis Decker using the lift to move more soil

The sun was high in the sky as I plunged the shovel into the hard red clay and turned over another shovel full of dirt. The hole in the ground that I was digging with my fellow team members was about neck deep at this point but still needed to go twice that far down to reach our objective! Each shovel full felt like we weren't even making a dent. It wasn't just the digging--it was the hauling of all the soil to a separate location about 75 yards away. We used a wheelbarrow until the tire failed, and then it was time to construct a simple "bucket" suspended by wooden arms that could be carried between two team members. This wasn't the 1700s--so why weren't we using a backhoe and dump truck? Because we were in a small village outside of Minsk, Belarus, on a mission trip in July 1995, and those pieces of equipment weren't readily available to us. The work needed to be done, and we had the manpower, basic hand tools, strong backs, and a clear directive.

As I write this article, it is hard to believe that 30 years ago I was with the Larry Ingalls family in Minsk for the summer serving with nearly 70 other believers from across the USA on a short-term mission trip. I had just graduated from high school the month before. That summer could have been spent doing what "I wanted to do" instead of digging an 8'x10'x10' septic system by hand for a small village church (as well as many other physical and spiritual projects throughout the summer), but I wouldn't go back and change it for anything. It is hard to describe all that that summer in White Russia offered to us as young people looking to serve our Lord together. We got to unload containers of scriptures and humanitarian aid supplies; we got to turn a house into a church building in a village; we got to organize and participate in several VBS outreaches in various cities; we got to work in hospitals and public buildings; we got to help repair vehicles to bring kids in for Sunday school. We got to share the gospel with folks wherever we went. We learned what it was like to ride various modes of public transportation to get wherever we needed to go. We got to play with the neighborhood kids every evening since we lived in an apartment flat, and then we gave them gospel tracts. We got to experience what a life lived in service to the Lord looked like first-hand.

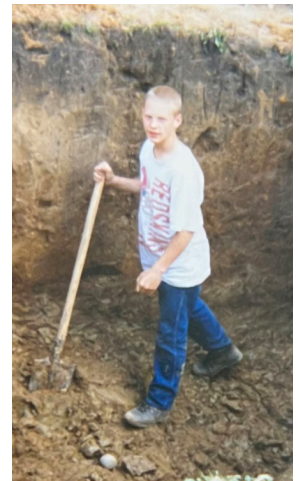
It was a summer of service that shaped much of the next two decades of my life. I am so thankful to missionary Mark Rose for making the opportunity available to all of us, and to Larry and Cheryl Ingalls for welcoming me as an “honorary Ingalls” that summer. I have many memories that still warm my heart as I reflect on the goodness of God and the privilege of serving him even in my youth. If there is a young person reading this that is struggling with serving God now, don’t wait! Follow the Lord’s leading and get involved serving him today. I don’t know where the last 30 years have gone, but I will never be able to recapture lost time--and neither will you. Adults, look for young people within your churches that are eager to serve the Lord and make opportunities for them to serve alongside you. Treat them with the same respect that you would offer another adult; be patient with their inexperience; and tap into their energy and fervor. I am so thankful for the adults on that trip who afforded those blessings to me. I am convinced that part of the reason why I am in full-time ministry today is because of believers who helped me by letting me help them along the way. **And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.**



The village house that we converted to a church building

II Timothy 2:2

Eventually, the septic was dug, the tank was set, the drain field was plumbed, and the church had a functional bathroom other than the outdoor one. We were privileged to take part in these opportunities even though it meant blisters, sweat, ingenuity, tenacity, and just plain good old-fashioned hard work. Couriers for Christ has offered mission trips not only to help missionaries in their evangelistic outreach but also to provide opportunities for believers from the USA to experience the foreign mission field firsthand. I pray that you would consider taking a mission trip if your health will allow you to do so. You never know the impact that serving the Lord, whether at home or abroad, will have on your life until you take the opportunity offered....



Jeremy in the septic hole when it was about 2/3 dug



Partnership for the Furtherance of the Gospel

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their lives to the Lord’s service. I am sure that each one of the ministries at the conference could use young representatives and servants to dedicate their lives to the work of the ministry.

Lastly, I am so thankful for the camaraderie and singleness of purpose not only that I saw evidenced at the summit but also that I have experienced over the past couple of years with these ministries. I have watched the Lord work in miraculous ways through the publishing and distribution of scriptures, and I have seen examples of souls saved and lives changed through this partnership of missions. Pastor Barclay, First Baptist Church of Milford, closed with a poignant message from James 5. Reading from verses 7-9, he made two important points: the coming of the Lord is near (we don’t know how much time we have left); and don’t hold grudges against one another (work together with unity expected of believers). We are likely in the time of “latter rain” and we desire to see the fruit of precious souls coming to know Christ as Saviour.

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. James 5:7-9

Pastor Edward Barclay of First Baptist Church of Milford preached several challenging messages to continue evangelizing the world through the publication of God’s word.



Kelli and Josh with the Espersens (newly commissioned BPS missionaries from Oshkosh) and the Carpenters.





- Containers to arrive safely in Brazil
- The Lord to raise up future representatives for the Couriers ministry
- Safety in travel and spiritually powerful meetings for representatives
- God's power and protection as we prepare for the Hope for the Valley Campaign
- God's guidance for upcoming campaigns and scripture outreaches
- Open hearts in southern Brazil to receive the gospel at our hands



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