



Winter 2017

School of World Missions opens pastors' eyes

By Kurt Smith

On Nov. 3-4, 2016, I had the joy and privilege of attending the ARBCA School of World Missions, hosted by Trinity Reformed Baptist Church in Jackson, Ga.

The school is led by Pastors Jerry Slate and John Miller, with ARBCA Coordinator Steve Martin. The giftedness, wisdom, experience, maturity, passion, and personalities which these brothers bring to the subject of this schooling is well-balanced in making attendance for this event worth anyone's time and effort.

The school covers two days with seven messages and a panel discussion that closes the entire conference.

Pastor Jerry Slate opens up Day One with two messages on what he calls, "The Theological Foundation of World Missions."

The fact that this schooling for World Missions begins with the theology that undergirds it, should tell you immediately that this is not a stereo-typical missions conference. For me, it was refreshing!

Far too much talk about missions in broad evangelicalism has nothing to do with theology but only centers on the activity itself. Or as Pastor Slate put it: "So much of what is carried on as missions today is a-theological."

This is why Pastor Slate expressed,



Jerry Slate speaks at the ARBCA School of World Missions.

that as Reformed Baptists, "We believe in world missions – but we also believe in biblically robust world missions, we believe in theologically robust world missions, we believe in confessional reformed world missions." In other words, it is our confessional theology of what we believe the Scriptures teach that drives everything we understand and carry out in world missions.

This means, therefore, as Pastor Slate so aptly put it: "Missions is not something we tack on to theology, but it is an integral part of it." And from this declaration, Pastor Slate unpacked what he called, "The Theological Foundation for World

Missions." This foundation covered seven aspects: God, Covenants, Revelation, Culture, Worship, Spirit, and Glory.

Of these seven, the first on the doctrine of God, was what I believe is the most important. Under this heading, Pastor Slate made it clear that God is the motivation, proclamation and goal of world missions. For what other reason would we be involved in world missions, if it were not to make known to the nations the glory, majesty, and splendor of the Triune God (see Psalm.. 67)? As one writer said it so well: "Missions exists because worship

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ASSOCIATION OF REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA

The Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America is a nonprofit organization registered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The purpose of this association is to advance Christ's kingdom by providing a fellowship in which churches of common confession may find mutual encouragement, assistance, edification, and counsel, and may participate in cooperative efforts such as home missions, foreign missions, ministerial training and publications — all of which are often beyond the scope of one local church.

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Commentary: Christians, politics and focus on priorities

By Steve Martin

In the spring of 1968 I was going door to door soliciting votes for Sen. Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota for the Democratic nomination for president of the United States.

I was beginning to see how many problems our nation had and the daily news only intensified my awareness – an unpopular war in Vietnam, the inner cities burning, campus riots over the war and the draft and the “military industrial complex,” drugs leaving Skid Row for every corner of the nation, free love and open marriage, sex as a recreational sport, the liberation of minorities, women, homosexuals, the movement to save the environment; on and on it went.

One day, while soliciting votes, I was asked by an elderly woman why “nice young people” like me were going door to door for this candidate. I could only mumble a few words about “the war and the draft” and a few other catch phrases. But I was not clear about the larger issues and fine details of the issues separating politicians and political parties.

Then Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated that spring and the Democratic Convention in Chicago that summer was a chaos of rioting and police brutality. The issues that divided us were coming into sharper focus.

Students in France challenged the government and barricaded the streets of Paris. Things were heating up in the West. There was talk of a revolution and the music began to echo the calls for change. All of this had my attention while I tried to go to classes and not skip them for nearby campus demonstrations (I went to them in the afternoons instead of to the library!).

But little did I know that God was at work in me. I began to see the local, national and worldwide events with a different perspective.

As an English major in a liberal arts college, we used the two large bookend volumes, “Norton’s Anthology of English Literature.” Before we read excerpts of the great writers of our English heritage, there was a biographical sketch of each author to digest. I was moved by how miserable so many of the authors were and how their lives were ravaged by alcohol, sex, drugs, insanity, and man’s inhumanity to man.

As British historian Paul Johnson would later write in his tour de force, “Intellectuals,” before we listen to a man or woman who wants to tell us how to live, we need to see how they treated their family and their friends. I was appalled by how few writers had good friends or treated their friends well nor had anything approaching normal families.

I had to conclude that this world was a “messed-up place.” It was a sobering and dark time in my life.

But soon my life was to become more sober and more dark when, one day, it hit me that whatever it was that was messing up the world was in me too! I was part of the problem; I was a carrier of the common disease.

It slowed me down but, sadly, it did not end my personally and culturally destructive behavior. But my conscience was



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

An anti-war protest in the 1960s.

growing more and more raw as I realized that reasonably six-plus billion people like me were ruining the planet and each other. And I knew of no one in history who could put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

Who had the power to change the human heart? Whose walk more than matched their talk? Who could I follow? Who could I listen to? Who had the answers?

In November of 1968 I had a blind date with a girl from a neighboring campus who was a clear-minded Christian. While attempting to fend off her witness to me, I had to admit that what she said made real sense and the message of Christ and the gospel spoke not only to me but our national condition, our world’s condition – our human condition.

In early January of 1969 I listened to a message on how Christ alone could go to the heart issue – sin – and cure us of its penalty, power and one day presence.

While students were becoming “radicalized,” it was shown to me that we were not radical enough. Radical comes from the Latin word “radix,” which means “root.”

Man’s solutions for change were not radical enough; they did not go to the root of our problems: our sin.

The Bible’s diagnosis of an anti-God, anti-man virus (sin) that infected everyone lined up with reality. While taking philosophy and psychology classes, I saw that philosophers and psychologists interpreted and described the problems but none could cure it. Politicians could rearrange the deck chairs on the deck of the Titanic that was my nation, but none could change or cure the human heart. If the Bible was indeed the Word of God, then disaster and judgment, shame and condemnation awaited me and the whole human race.

This message I listened to showed me the facts about Christ, His claims to deity and humanity, His power to heal and forgive,

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IRBS: Sitting at the feet of Gamaliel? Yes, Gamaliel!

By Dr. James M. Renihan

The Apostle Peter makes an interesting statement about the writings of his colleague Paul. In chapter 3 of his Second Letter he says:

“And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures (verses 15-16).”

Paul wrote profoundly. Peter recognized this fact, and knew that Paul had received a great deal of wisdom. When one Apostle says that another Apostle’s writings can be difficult, we need to take notice, and perhaps take comfort in the fact that Peter had to think hard to understand Paul.

Here’s a question you may have never considered: From where did the Apostle Paul gain his deep and thorough knowledge of Scripture – especially of the Old Testament?

The immediate and perhaps obvious answer might be “from the Holy Spirit; after all, he wrote his epistles under the Spirit’s inspiration.”

While it’s true that all of Paul’s writings preserved for us in the Bible are fully the product of divine inspiration, this answer is too simple. We need to dig a little deeper.

Inspiration does not rule out the possibility of obtaining information in the process of writing God’s Word. Scripture itself speaks of the use of sources by its writers (Luke 1:1-4) or alludes to and cites non-inspired literature (Acts 17:28, Jude 14-15).

In these cases, authors made use of existing material in their compositions or presentations. We should not be surprised by this. In fact our doctrine of inspiration requires us to acknowledge that the Lord, in his providence, prepared the authors of Scripture for their task. Paul is a great

example of this.

When Luke narrates the journeys of Paul and his companions, he frequently includes eye-witness details of events. In Acts 21 he recounts the visit to Jerusalem, an episode that would define the nature of everything that occurs through the rest of the book.

Upon arrival in the capital, Paul and his companions are welcomed by James and the elders, and instructed to demonstrate to the watching eyes that they were not undermining the cultural principles of Judaism when they preach the Gospel to Gentiles. The company consents, but unbelieving opponents incite a riot, with Paul at the center of the maelstrom. They want to murder him.

Roman soldiers intervene, and Paul is taken away. He protests to the officer in charge that he is a citizen and asks for the opportunity to address the crowd. The tribune agrees, and Paul ascends a flight of stairs to speak to the throng. The scene as described by Luke is very dramatic.

Paul motions with his hand – a sign that he has something important to say, and a great hush descends.

Moments before, there was an uproar, now the same people, red in the face and sweating, pause to listen. The Apostle speaks in Hebrew, and Luke says that they became even more quiet. Paul is seeking to reassure them that he is not evil by reminding them of his credentials.

In 22:3 he says, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.”

It is important to think through Paul’s purpose and the words he speaks. In this case, he is making an apology for himself by means of presenting his qualifications to the audience. It’s as if he says, “I am one of you, born in the diaspora but raised in this city, and I had the privilege of studying under the best and most highly respected religious tutor, Gamaliel.”

This is an important element of Paul’s

self-defense. He learned the Old Testament at the most prestigious rabbinical school of his day. This was Paul’s seminary – and he presents this fact to his hearers in order to persuade them that the charges against him were false. Paul is glad to count himself a graduate of the school of Gamaliel.

In “The Form of Church Government to be used in the Church of England and Ireland” published by the Westminster Assembly in 1645, we read: “A Teacher or Doctor is of most excellent Use in Schools and Universities; as of old in the Schools of the Prophets, and at Jerusalem, where Gamaliel and others taught as Doctors.”

This is the first hint I received to think about Gamaliel’s place in Paul’s life. In another little-known work appointed by the Westminster Assembly, “Annotations Upon all the Books of the Old and New Testament” (1645), we read these comments on Acts 22:3:

“At the feet of Gamaliel. Meaning that he was a continual and diligent hearer of that grave Doctor Gamaliel: he alludeth to the posture of teachers standing in high places, and auditors sitting below them. See Deut. 33.3 [AV] Luke 10.39.”

The Annotations are correct. This line of thinking points us to an important fact. While those who serve Christ in the ministry are enlisted by divine calling (Phil. 3:4-9), there is a place for training and study. Paul’s ministry was divinely given; nonetheless, we must not neglect what he said in Acts 22:3. While it is true that only Christ made him a minister, Paul was grateful for the education he had received at the foot of his master.

Listen to John Gill’s comments on 2 Cor. 11:18:

“I will glory also; for he was of the seed of Abraham as well as they, of the stock of Israel, and tribe of Benjamin, circumcised the eighth day, and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; but these are not all the things he could, and would, and did glory of; he gloried of these, and of others besides them, which the false

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RBMS missions around the world



The peace talks between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are now history.

An agreement was signed, and the process of implementation of the agreement has now begun. The agreement has become part of the Colombian constitution.

Amnesty is being granted to practically all of the some 7,000 guerrilla combatants, and crimes against humanity committed by some of these seemingly will be cared for with symbolic punishment. The philosophy and goals of the agreement are decidedly leftist socially, politically and economically.

But peace is not yet complete. There are two more guerrilla groups that continue operations, and there are a number of organized criminal bands that defy attempts to suppress them.

What is our response? It is the same as has been our responsibility until now.

We must confess that, until now, we have not done all the Lord has required of us, and now we must assume our duty and privilege with greater energy and faithfulness than ever.

That means preaching the Gospel, praying and presenting the fruit of the Gospel both individually and corporately, and declaring all the counsel of God concerning all things related to life and godliness – that is, to everything.

We're not saying anything new; we're simply reminding ourselves as to why we're here, and why the Lord has shown us mercy.

The church, every member, needs to "grow up into Christ" in the ways of Eph. 4. As the Lord has given some in the past as pastors and teachers, we ask Him for one (or more) for the church in La Alborada (Bogotá), now that Pastor Augusto will be leaving with his family for Canada Feb. 13.

Pray for our deacons (Danilo, Henry, Mauricio, and Sergio) who are also qualified to be elders, that they may be

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filled with the Spirit, and that other men of the church would be recognized (or become recognizable) as elders or deacons.

This is the need of our sister churches as well (between 15 to 20 now in Bogotá, including the congregation in the barrio of San José de Bavaria associated directly with us).

Some time in the month of March (I don't have the details yet.), the seventh annual national Reformed conference will be held in Bogotá.

The speakers are expected to be Sugel Michelén of the Dominican Republic, and Samuel Waldrom and two others from the United States. These meetings for three days, held last year in the city of Medellín, drew 800 attendees and a much larger place is being rented for this year in Bogotá.

May we see the Reformed faith fully and faithfully reasserted, powerfully preached, and carefully applied. May we be preserved from the temptation to modify or add to this faith. May we thus be united and consistent in our commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.

The churches in the department (state) of Santander, that of Curití and that of the capital city of Bucaramanga, are also part of our concern for the church in response to the probable changes now being introduced into national life and policy.

The annual meetings sponsored by the Curití church were held there Jan. 3-6. This was about the 40th consecutive year for this event.

Of the 80 who attended, only perhaps

30-35 were from Santander.

The others were from sister churches in Bogotá. We pray constantly for the growth of the Curití church, even smaller now than it once was.

The church plant in Bucaramanga has grown some under the care of the two pastors from Curití. The financial support of these two men is fragile.

Sadly, the church in Curití is alienated from the Reformed church (also small) in San Gil (just 15 minutes from Curití), and there is no contact between the Curití church plant in Bucaramanga and another one sponsored by the church of San Gil.

We ask for much prayer and wisdom, please!

Efforts continue in Medellín and Bogotá to prepare as pastors men sent from the churches.

Approximately 75 men are enrolled. These efforts, as well as similar ones made by the individual churches, experience all the weaknesses and pressures of almost every such endeavor. The Lord has blessed in spite of these and in some measure overcoming them.

The Christian School in Bogotá is still short of the number of students needed to pay expenses for this new school year beginning the first part of February.

Ideally, the school, too, is a potentially important contribution to the national needs.

Unfortunately, the visible spiritual fruit from this ministry, now over 20 years old, has been feeble.

We continue to pray.



RBMS missions around the world

Greetings to all our sister churches, for whom we are so thankful to our God!

How good it is to serve such a majestic God who so graciously revealed Himself to our hearts so that we may walk in submission to the Scripture.

I like the way Wilhemus À Brakel puts it in "The Christian's Reasonable Service," vol. 1, p. 69: "Reason must surrender itself to the Word; the Word must never surrender itself to reason. Reason is to Scripture what Hagar was to Sarah; it is servant and not master". And he continues on p. 73 "The Word of God... is a brook from which a lamb may drink and an ocean in which an elephant can drown."

What a privilege to minister such a Word!

Here are some updates on our work:

Quebec City, Église réformée baptiste de la Capitale: We have been saddened by a few events lately; first, a family left the church for obscure reason; the man was our church treasurer and he was doing a good job at Sunday school as well.

Though they left in good terms, we are concerned by the possible reasons behind the decision. They have decided to join another church in the area.

The other difficulty comes from a man who left his wife for another woman at the beginning of December. It is a man who had a good testimony in our assembly so that it has been a shock to hear the news. As I am writing these lines, we (the three elders) are planning a last meeting with him before putting him under discipline. His wife is devastated.

Every other Sunday, we still have a lunch together at church after worship and it is followed by an afternoon teaching. The response has been very positive and the participation has been encouraging.

Pastor Pelletier continues to hold Tuesday night meetings on the south shore of the St-Lawrence river and the group is stable. At the moment, they are studying

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The Aylmer congregation gathers on a recent Lord's Day.

the epistle to the Hebrews.

Montreal: Our church plant in Montreal brings many encouragements as we have people visiting quite regularly, especially young people.

For instance, on Dec. 18, we held our Christmas service. Among the 30 people in attendance there were three visitors. Three young men keep coming regularly. One of them is calling me about every week to ask questions and clarifications on the scriptures he is reading.

I am also greatly encouraged as two of our men are planning to take courses, using the distance program of CBTS.

They are not necessarily contemplating the pastoral ministry, but they could be good candidates for eldership.

On Dec. 25, since our rental room was not available, we gathered at the home of one of our families. Christophe Bernard, one of our men, brought the message. It was a real blessing, a good Word. Thirty people were there. The worship has been followed by a meal altogether. It was a wonderful time.

On Jan. 8 we had a guest preacher, Guillaume Bourin, from France.

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Perrons

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Guillaume spent time in Mansfield, Texas as he was completing his master's degree at Southern Baptist Seminary. During his time there, Guillaume was mentored by pastor Larry Vincent and his two elders.

He has often participated in our radio programs with Pascal Denault, so he is well known here. Pray for him as he prays for the Lord's direction in the ministry.

We are most thankful to God for my co-elder, Denis Pepin, and his wife as they are so dedicated to the forward progress of the Kingdom of God. We keep praying for the Lord to send a teaching pastor to replace me in the short future, as I am thinking about retiring in October 2018, God willing.

I am still preaching on the gospel of Luke and once a month we have a meal together after the worship service, We follow this with a Bible study, with a survey of church history. Every other Tuesday we hold a prayer meeting.

In the coming weeks, one of our men plans to put our church on Facebook; apparently, it is a must nowadays.

Aylmer: As you likely know, our church plant in Aylmer has enjoyed some additions lately as two people were baptized. Another exciting moment for that church plant took place on Nov. 20 as our dear brother André Pinard was ordained.

Four pastors of our association were present and I had the privilege of preaching on the occasion. It has been a blessing to see the enthusiasm of the group there as well as the incredible energy our brother André.

Rouyn-Noranda and Lac Mégantic: These two churches keep going forward after the move of pastor Marcel Longchamps from Rouyn-Noranda to Lac Mégantic.



Pastor Andre Pinard, here with his wife, was recently ordained to the ministry and is leading the church in Alymer.

Pastor Jean Lépine is now the only elder in Rouyn-Noranda.

On top of having a new pastor, our church in Lac Mégantic also inaugurated their new church building.

They were renting a hall for many years but for different reasons, it became more and more complicated; in God's providence, they have been able to acquire this new building in which they are now gathering.

Prayer requests: Allow me to finish with a few prayer requests:

Five young people who are gravitating around our church plant in Montreal in recent weeks..

My preparation for preaching many times in Texas and in Louisiana in March.

I have been invited by a group in Africa

who would like to form an association of Reformed Baptist churches; they also would like me to go there to teach.

Micaël Beaulieu, our intern in our Acton Vale church, as he works full-time, takes courses at CBTS, and preaches and teaches at his church in addition to taking care of his wife and two children.

Christophe and Christian, the two men of our church plant in Montreal who are interested in taking courses at CBTS.

My son Jonathan, who came to church with us at Christmas time.

"Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

"Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!" (Ps 90:17)



RBMS missions around the world

Greetings from Perth, Australia!

We want to, first of all, give thanks to the Lord for his mercy and kindness during this past year of transition to a new country. Our family and church have both experienced a relatively smooth beginning in Perth and we believe that your many prayers on our behalf have been answered.

We arrived May 5, 2016 and I began preaching on May 15. Since that time our family has not had any major illnesses and as a church we have held uninterrupted worship services right up to the present time. This is not an accident and we thank God that He has allowed us to become more and more stable.

The first Sunday of the New Year saw our fellowship meeting outside for worship. In God's providence, a miscommunication with the rental hall facilitators kept us from obtaining the key to the premises so we walked across the street and had our services in a park gazebo. Many individuals and families walked by as we sang hymns, preached God's word and prayed. It was a beautiful day, although a little hot as time went on, and was a good reminder that our God is gracious and causes the sun to rise on the just and the unjust. How much more thankful should we be for his Son who finally and fully reveals all of God's perfection!

The first Saturday of the New Year saw our fellowship engaged in a morning of prayer and fasting. We spent a couple of hours praising God's glory, confessing our sins, asking God to bless the nation of Australia and also to bless our own church plant.

Hopefully, this time of concentrated corporate prayer will become a regular staple of our life together as a church. Previous to our time of fasting we noted that three sins in particular are known for their ability to destroy a church fellowship. These are the sins of unforgiving and bitter hearts towards our brothers and sisters in Christ, pride and love of this world.

We observed that the Scriptures witness

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to the fact that fasting aids the believer and the church as a whole in defeating all three of these sins. So, as we begin this year we trust that the Lord will graciously keep us from fracturing as a result of pride, bitterness or love of the world.

Some of our church goals for 2017 include constituting with formal church membership, providing a children's Sunday school class during the adult Bible study hour and beginning a mid-week Bible study geared towards unbelievers.

In pursuance of the first goal, we hope to finish our study of the confession and then work through adopting a church constitution. So far, we have had good unanimity in discussing doctrinal matters. But of course, when we get down to the practical matters of exactly how the church will function constitutionally, we may experience friction.

Please pray for our progress in this area.

Our second goal will also be a challenge since we do not currently own our own building nor do we have storage on the premises we rent. This means that materials for the children will have to be stored in people's homes and brought each week to church.

Although this may not seem to be a big problem, we are already squeezing in two worship services, a Bible study and a church luncheon within five hours. Of course, chairs and tables must be set up and torn down during this time as well as a period of cleaning up.

So, our difficulty lies in trying to

provide spiritual training for all of our children while at the same time not making the Lord's Day a day of stress and fatigue for those who attend. Humanly speaking, our third goal ought to be the easiest of the above goals to implement. At the moment, we have only one mid-week prayer meeting but a second meeting held closer to the homes of our members living farther away might make it easier to invite their friends or neighbors for evangelistic purposes.

Please continue to pray for our fellowship. Pray that the Lord will allow the regular preaching ministry to continue. Those who have committed themselves to this means of grace have grown more hungry and more satisfied at the same time. It is the Holy Spirit who creates this inner thirst for Christ so pray that his blessing will not be removed.

Pray for the conversion of the children in our congregation. It is a wonderful problem to have so many young people in need of instruction and it is a great responsibility. Not many profess faith in Christ, so pray for young lives committed to Christ instead of wasted on sin.

Continue to pray for employment for two of the men in attendance. Steven and Israel are both actively looking for work but so far haven't been able to find a position.

Pray for the four young people going back to college in the fall (March). Pray that this semester would be a time when they walk closely with Christ.

Pray that the Lord will raise up leaders

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RBMS missions around the world



We want to take the opportunity of thanking you for your prayerful support of the work of the gospel here in New Zealand, and the expressions of love and interest that we receive from time to time by way of cards and emails.

We are particularly grateful for your prayers for our children: Both of them have been asking thoughtful questions at family devotions and bed-time prayers, and we are encouraged by the evident interest they are showing in the well-being of their souls. We would ask you to continue to pray that the Lord will turn this interest into genuine repentance and faith – such a difficult thing for parents to discern in the hearts and lives of children.

Would you also pray for other children in the church, some of whom have recently been showing a similar heightened interest in spiritual things.

In December we had a half-day seminar on the topic of baptism in which we experienced the grace and blessing of God as we focused our attention on covenant theology and its implications for our understanding of the nature of the church, membership in the covenant community and the place of baptism.

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NEW ZEALAND



These are big themes and our studies were fairly basic; but they were also revolutionary in the minds of some of our congregation who come from a paedobaptist background, as well as those from our own ‘tradition’ who have not thought much about the theological framework that undergirds our practice of baptism and church membership.

Thank you for your prayers for those studies, and please continue in prayer as some of the young people continue to think through the implications of what they learned.

With the year well under way already, my thoughts turn to the Theological Studies Camp in India. This year it will be held during the last week of April rather than the

first week of May, so I will be in India while your messengers gather at the ARBCA GA.

At the time of writing this update I have yet to decide on a topic and the book that will form the basis of our studies.

Please pray for my preparation, and that the Lord will work in the hearts of the young men who will join us: they come from a range of churches and social settings, and it is a privilege to encourage and help them to grow in their knowledge of and love for God and his people.

Thank you once again for your interest and support, we assure you of our love for you and our prayers for the churches of ARBCA and the work you are engaged in for the glory of God and the good of his people.

Missions

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doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man." And Pastor Slate left us in no doubt concerning this ultimate reality about world missions.

Following "The Theological Foundation for world missions," Pastor John Miller then introduced us to "The Calling of the Missionary."

I have to admit that this message was the finest I have ever heard on the subject. I know that may sound very sanguine and possibly plunging into hyperbole – but, for me, it's a fact! I have heard so many messages on this subject that have either left me feeling guilty that I was not being

"radical" enough to sell everything I had to preach Jesus to the pygmies in deep darkest Africa; or such messages have left me wondering if I'm even saved!

How welcoming, then, it was to finally hear a pastor give meaning to the biblical call of the missionary. Pastor Miller outlined his teaching under three headings: the context, content, and consideration of the calling of the missionary.

The context of this calling, as Pastor Miller labored to show, comes within the context of the local church, worshipping Christ, burdened for His glory and the expansion of His kingdom. What Pastor Miller especially highlighted in this point

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Beardmores

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from our number who will be able to eventually become elders and deacons for our church. The election of officers is still a long way off but gifted men who can come alongside and help in the organization of the church and ministry of the word would be of great benefit in advancing Christ's kingdom.

Thank you for all of your prayers. The whole earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD and it is with that promise before us that we labor by faith.

Missions

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was the centrality and importance of the local church as it connected directly to the missionary call.

In fact, he declared quite pointedly, “You cannot have someone to go as a missionary if there is no church to send.”

What a counter-cultural statement to world missions in broad evangelicalism. With so many popular books in the last 10 years that have centered the entire call to be a missionary on the individual minus the local church, Pastor Miller’s statement would probably bring a host of so-called “missionaries” back home!

But if we’re going to be biblical about the call to be a missionary, then we cannot be discussing such a call without the objective confirmation of the local church (see Acts 13:1-3). This is why Pastor Miller plainly stated: “The call of the missionary comes from Christ by the Holy Spirit to the church to send. There is no such thing as a self-appointed missionary.”

Well, how does one know if they are indeed called to be a missionary? Or to be more precise: called to be a church-planting missionary? Pastor Miller closed his message with the following helpful questions: Am I a Christian? Am I being a godly Christian – in the home, local church, workplace, etc.? Do I have the gifts and graces to be a pastor/elder? And where am I called to serve? Obviously, there was more to these questions (and the message as a whole) that Pastor Miller unfolded than what my cursory sketch has given.

But suffice it to say, this teaching on the calling to be a missionary is a keeper!

ARBCA Coordinator Steve Martin closed the first day of the school with a message on “Missions and the Sending Church.”

Again, the centrality and importance of the local church in world missions was held forth with unmistakable clarity. Steve began his message by laying down three things about the missionary church-planter and their sending church: commendation, accountability, and close-communication with the sending church.

From this, Steve then took us on a tour of the Book of Acts to see what the early



Pastor John Miller, above, and ARBCA Coordinator Steve Martin speak on missions.



sending churches were doing with their sent-men.

Sketching this out, Steve showed us from the book of Acts, that the churches were sending their best men to plant churches; they recognized and confirmed the gifts and graces in these men they were sending; they confirmed the subjective call of these men with the objective call of the congregation; the men they sent were men they could heartily commend to other churches; they sent men who were recognized and held accountable to their local church; these churches sent men with a plan and a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit to change their plans; they sent men who were reliant on the Holy Spirit and the prayers

of the saints; and lastly, they did not send men who were “rock stars” or demigods, but sinful men, saved by grace, filled with the Spirit, preaching Christ.

What obviously stood out in this entire teaching, was the fact that when we’re seeking to understand world missions by the rule and revelation of Scripture, we see men called and confirmed in their calling by the local church.

There is no such thing as a “mission agency,” working outside of the local church, run by a board of directors, who set the qualifications needed to be confirmed and supported as a missionary.

Such an organization like this finds no support biblically, no matter how sincere and zealous the people are for world missions who are responsible for running it.

In coming away from Steve’s teaching on “Missions and the Sending Church,” there was this clarion call for world missions to return to its rightful place under the authority of the local church.

The local church has, sadly, taken a back seat, if having any seat at all in the matter of world missions – but in the ARBCA School for World Missions, the local church returns where God placed it to be: at the center for world missions! And

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Commentary

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His impeccable life record, His clear teaching and challenges.

The religious information I had gleaned growing up in a liturgical church about Christ's death, burial, resurrection and ascension now made sense. He had to die to take the place of guilty sinners. But the message also exposed my anti-God rebellion and pride and cosmic treason.

I was what the Word of God calls a "sinner," unable to change myself, hopeless to be someone different, and in the chilling words of Eph. 2:12 I was "without hope, without God, in the world."

But the Bible says Christ loves to save sinners (review Luke 15). I cried out to this living Savior and He heard my cry and saved me from the wrath to come. He fully atoned for all of my sins for all time. He can take sinners and make them into beloved and cherished children of God. He gave me His Holy Spirit, the Bible, the church, the promise of heaven and eternal life.

I had gone from abject spiritual poverty and moral bankruptcy to being a child of the High King of Heaven! Jesus was alive to be my Savior, Lord and Prophet, Priest and King. I could follow Him whole-heartedly!

As I turned my gaze back to the world, I saw the poverty of its solutions, the ashes of its vain attempts to change the hearts of men, its failed "five-year programs," its naïve plans for a "Great New Society," the true reprobate status of the mindset that would give us a "Thousand Year Reich."

Men's attempts to change their fellow man founder upon their own depravity and moral blindness. Christ's warning about "the blind leading the blind" falls upon deaf ears. My interest in politics and political solutions for mankind's problems almost entirely disappeared.

Only Christ can change the human heart, one at a time or thousands at a time during a great awakening.

Not surprisingly, I dropped my political focus and quickly developed a spiritual one. Changed lives change the

world.

When the preaching of Paul and Silas upset the status quo of Thessalonica, the locals said: "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too!" (Acts 17:6). I threw my energies and studies into witnessing, Bible study and church. And politics faded into the distant background.

I saw men and women, boys and girls, relatives and strangers, friend and foe become Christians and saw their lives change forever. Christian marriages were begun while failing marriages were repaired. Parents and children were reconciled. Drunks and the immoral became sober and paragons of morality. Thieves became honest, returned what they stole and worked hard so that they could generously give to others. Slackers now repented of their laziness and lived and worked for God's glory in their labors. God became the eternal reference point by which our moral compasses were set. Holiness was now the first item on our daily Job Descriptions.

Sex was beautiful and a giving aspect of Christian marriage. Abortion went from being a form of birth control to an abomination, which it always was. Prayer was a holy privilege and the Lord's Day a welcome respite from the world.

But one malady remained and seems to be still going strong among so many professing Christians. It seems that so many get more worked up and energized by politics than they do by Jesus Christ and the building of His Kingdom.

Every four years for many years, Christians are galvanized to get out the vote, elect Christians to the White House and Congress, get Christians named to the Supreme Court, put Christians into office on the state and local levels. The underlying attitude seems to be that if the right "princes" can be put into office, all will be well, the nation will be set right, and the golden era of American history will be at hand.

But if one but looks at the three greatest needs facing each person are taken into account, only Jesus Christ should have our unqualified allegiance and zeal. We believe that the right men and women in office will fix our most important problems

but that is a lie for many reasons. Let me name three quickly:

First, Only Jesus Christ can save us from the wrath to come.

Rev. 6:15-17 gives us a painful glimpse of Judgment Day.

Not only do the dictators, kings, princes, generals and "mighty men" face judgment but everyone, every slave and every free man cried out to the rocks to fall upon them and the mountains to crush them rather than face the holy gaze of God the Father and the risen Lamb. "The great day of their wrath has come and who can stand?"

Indeed, who can stand before the great throne of Christ, risen from the dead and ascended back to the place of glory at the Father's right hand, with legions of holy angels seated as witnesses as each person must give account of their life? The president, the prime minister, senators and congressmen, the Democrats and the Republicans, the Libertarians and the Socialists are not even going to think about you on Judgment Day.

How can they? They have their own sinful life to account for.

Imagine standing before a Judge who is holy, holy, holy and is omniscient, knowing everything about each life. How can anyone stand before Christ? Only those who have humbled themselves, repented of their sins and trusted in Christ alone as their substitute will pass muster.

Having punished the believer's sins on Christ, God is not going to require punishment again at Judgment Day. So Paul can boast in Romans 1 that he is not ashamed of the gospel. Ashamed!?! He is proud of the gospel; he boasts in the gospel. Why? Because "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes" and only Jesus "saves us from the wrath to come" (Rom. 5:9).

Shouldn't our focus as believers be on Christ and the coming judgment and the plight of a fallen world?

Thinking, working and acting like civil government is the be-all and end-all of our existence is foolish.

Second, Only Jesus Christ can make us a new people, a new

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Commentary

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man in Christ.

For millennia, rulers have wanted their kingdoms to prosper.

Over the centuries government has sought to get help from religion (Alexander the Great came up with the idea of keeping one's religion while uniting the empire under one over-arching religion), education (citizenship used to be a staple class in every nation's educational system), and science (governments have used science to medicate, elongate and otherwise manipulate the human condition of their subjects) to bring order and prosperity to their people.

False religion has ruined the world and made their devotees unfit for judgment. Education is not the cure, for why did the most educated nations on the planet promulgate World War II and kill 85 million people? Germany, England, France, the USA, Canada, Australia, Japan and Russia were not backwards banana republics, but the leading nations of "cultured civilization."

Science has often been hijacked by governments to carry out experiments upon its willing and ignorant masses. Scientists with white coats go into laboratories carrying the seeds of their own failure in their sin-polluted hearts.

Radicals and revolutionaries have sought to burn down the establishment, destroy the past and somehow believe they are going to usher in a utopia of mutual love and peace and harmony and prosperity.

In America alone, historical exhibits of failed social experiments in Massachusetts, New York, Ohio and Indiana (to mention a few prominent locations) show that man cannot build a Utopian community.

But what is impossible with man is possible with God. After my new birth and conversion in college, I later went to one English professor who claimed to work with the Black Panthers.

With a raised and clenched fist he said he was into the revolution because he knew of no way of changing the human heart. I politely listened and told him I

once believed that but that I had experience a supernatural new birth form above, from God and I was a new man. Old things had passed away and new things had come.

He listened politely but didn't believe it.

What is the church of Jesus Christ but a new community, a new nation of changed people, living in exile all over the world and growing into the new man Christ intended us to be?

I could bring countless witnesses before you to testify that Christ changed their life and made them new creations. So I wonder why Christians still give so much time, energy and angst to politics (Priority No. 26) while not giving more and better attention and energy and prayer to Christ and His Kingdom (Priority No. 1)?

Third, only Jesus Christ can bring us to God and help us find out why God made us.

The Bible teaches that mankind was created to know and to glorify God forever. But that through man's disastrous fall into sin, access and intimacy with God is gone.

Instead of daily talking to God in the Garden, asking questions, finding out the ways of the Almighty for Planet Earth, and learning who we are in relation to our Maker, we are now born estranged and alienated from God.

But the Fall into sin of our first parents also brought with it alienation and estrangement from others, from ourselves, and from the environment. Disorientation and confusion was complete. How could we find our way back to God again?

How could we find out who we are, why we were created, what our purpose is in life, why we are here?

All the questions we ask ourselves (or bury under playing trivia, or medicate with drugs and alcohol, or suppress under our personal growing mountains of sin) cannot be answered by government.

Communism taught that we existed to serve the state and that our lives individually are meaningless. American education has bought the lie of secular philosophy and science, that our lives are but a chance configuration of items, that all meaning and beauty and nobility and

purpose and honor and a sense of destiny are but illusions.

If followed faithfully, modern science and philosophy and the American education system teach us that our lives are no more meaningful than that of a gnat.

No wonder despair, suicide, drug taking, drunkenness, and escapism are so rampant. Too many have "drunk the Kool-Aid" of our cultural context.

So we are taught that our lives are going to be short, meaningless and ugly – and then we die!

But thank God that He exists and has sent His Son to rescue us from both the wrath to come and the misery of a Christ-less life. I can remember the day when someone told me that Christ said "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." Really, is that in the Bible? Let me see that! Christ came to save us from the wrath to come and to save us from a life without love, beauty, meaning and purpose, right and wrong, honor and dignity, joy and contentment.

In coming to know Jesus Christ, I had been introduced to God's Master Builder. He was the Grand Architect; the Bible was the Divine Blueprint, and God the Holy Spirit made it all work out together.

What joy and contentment comes when a person is right with God. There is therefore now no condemnation in Christ, our future arrival in heaven is assured, God is our Father, Christ is our Lord and Savior, and God the Holy Spirit keeps us!

One evening after my new life began I was returning from an evening class and stopped on a warm spring night to behold the stars, a spreading oak tree before me, and the goodness of God's creation.

"The God who made and sustains all this is my Father. I am His child." My wonder and joy led to tears of gratitude for my new life in Christ.

To sum up, Christ must always be at the center of our focus, the chief among our interests, the cause above all others.

Politics should have a place, a small place, in our hearts and lives and energies.

But Christ should always have the pre-eminence in all things. To Him be the glory!

Church Planting: Work in Longview, Texas proceeds

By David Randall

May the Lord Jesus Christ prosper your souls in greater awe of His pre-eminence, greater intimacy of His love, grace, and mercy, and greater usefulness in His kingdom in this New Year!

It has been a while since our last newsletter and we have many new friends added to our distribution list; therefore, let me recap our work briefly.

We began this work with Bible study (Ephesians) and prayer on the first Wednesday in August 2016 after moving to Texas on the previous Saturday. We started with 12 in attendance.

We have engaged our community through social media, outreach at the Gregg County Fair for nine days, radio, newspaper, and two public informational meetings. We have had several families visit us once and one family return once.

The Lord has been pleased to preserve the 12 souls who started with us and add one more to our number, who is also our church musician.

We commenced evening worship in my home on Sunday, Oct. 23 with preaching from the book of Jonah and have continued to meet on Wednesday nights also. On Christmas Day, we moved our worship from evening to morning and will continue to meet in my home until later this spring (D.V.).

On Jan. 1, we began a Sunday School class after the worship to review our new church covenant. In February, I will finish Jonah and begin three to four years of preaching through the gospel of John.

Sunday School will split into two classes, with adults being led by my planting partner Ryan McCubbin and the youth led by myself.

We also plan, once per month, to have fellowship meal after worship in lieu of Sunday School. We covet your prayers for us (1 Thess. 2:9).

Here are some prayer requests:

■ May the Head and Bridegroom of the Church be loved, adored, obeyed, and proclaimed in all that we do as His body.

■ Beseech our faithful Father in heaven to cultivate among us perseverance and faithfulness to Him, His Word, and to one another.

■ Petition the Lord of the Harvest to draw the underfed, misled, and spiritually dead to hear the preaching and testifying of the gospel.

■ Inquire of the most wise Lord of Providence to open doors and direct our paths in building relationships within our community whereby we may give a reason for the hope that we have in Christ.

■ Ask the Spirit of Truth to abide with our church planter/pastor in his ministry of the Word and prayer.

■ Pray for the Lord in His perfect timing to knit together a core group to constitute as Covenant Reformed Baptist Church.

Check us out at www.covenantrbc.com www.facebook.com/crbclongview or www.sermonaudio.com/crbclongview and www.reformation-tx.com.



David Randall, center, is formally installed as church planting-pastor of Covenant Reformed Baptist Church during the morning worship at Heritage Baptist Church in Shreveport La., his sending church, I was formally installed as the church planting-pastor of Covenant Reformed Baptist Church of Longview, Texas. From left are: Pastor Earl Blackburn of HBC Shreveport; Pastor John Miller of Covenant Baptist Church of Clarksville, Tenn.; Elder Mitch Axsom of First Baptist Church of Clinton, La.; Jeff Saxton, a member of Heritage Baptist Church of Shreveport; and Pastor Paul Haines, of Heritage Baptist Church of Shreveport.

[reformation-tx.com](http://www.reformation-tx.com).

Pledges and funding are still needed. Checks may be made payable and mailed to ARBCA, P.O. Box 289,

Carlisle, PA 17013, and noted for Covenant Reformed Baptist Church of Longview. If you would like to contact us, we can be reached at crbclongview@gmail.com or (903) 231-3317.

2017 ARBCA General Assembly April 25-27

► At Epworth by the Sea Christian Conference Center, St. Simons Island, Ga.

► Hosted by Trinity Reformed Baptist Church of Jackson, Georgia,

► www.arbca.com/2017-arbca-general-assembly

Church Planting: New Arizona church ordains elder

By Frank Urquidez

Greetings from San Tan Reformed Baptist Church.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I join with Paul in his letter to the Philippians in expressing thanks to all our ARBCA Churches for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

We have just celebrated our first four months of serving our King in San Tan Valley. We have been encouraged by what the Lord is doing in our midst. Since our first Sunday morning service on Sept. 4, we have had 26 first-time visitors come into our midst. We praise God that on Jan. 8 we had our largest number in attendance since our first Sunday morning service – 50 souls were in our midst.

Many of the visitors have come for a few weeks and then departed, but we praise God for encouraging our hearts with so many people.

We continue to see an average of 40 on Sunday morning and around 30 plus in the evening for our prayer service. We praise God that one of our young adults has professed his faith in Christ and is desirous to be baptized. Please pray for Issac Lockmer that he would grow much in grace.

I have begun baptismal classes with



Robert Holmes

him and hope within the next few months to have a baptismal service at our sending church. We also praise God that three newer families have shared their desire to join our congregation.

In addition to these wonderful things I have already mentioned, as I write this we are looking forward to our sending church's annual business meeting on Feb. 5. We have the privilege on voting to elect Robert

Holmes as elder. I am excited to see our brother serve STRBC as an official elder. Please pray that the vote would affirm our brothers calling to the service of our King and that we would all experience great unity during our congregational meeting.

God has been so gracious in sustaining a few men who have been regular attendees. Steve Jackson and Patrick Logan have been through a bout with cancer.

Patrick has recently received a good bill of health and appears to be cancer-free but recently had a setback with valley fever. Steve is still recovering and has experienced some ups and downs with his recovery. He will find out this month if chemo or another surgery is required. Please pray for God's continual healing upon these two men.

Please continue to pray:

- For wisdom and protection of the leadership;
- For continual unity of the body;
- That preaching would go forth with unction from on high
- That visitors would not only visit but remain;
- That sinners would be saved; and
- That saints would be built up in the faith

Thank you for your continued prayers and support as we seek to further His kingdom here in San Tan Valley, Ariz.

New Lookout Mountain work 'slow but steady'

By Nathan White

Greetings from beautiful Lookout Mountain to all our brothers and sisters in Christ!

We continue to make slow but steady progress in our efforts to minister the gospel in this community.

Our attendance continues to grow, but most of this growth continues to be students from nearby Covenant College. While this is tremendously encouraging, we are still praying that the Lord would bring more established families into our midst.

One answer to our prayers in this regard came this past December when Cem and Eileen Brinckley moved to Chattanooga and became a part of this church. Cem was a longstanding deacon in our sister church, Sycamore Reformed Baptist Church in East Moline, Ill., and their presence among us has already tremendously encouraged our people.

Please pray for the Brickleys to settle in after this transition, and that the Lord would use their gifts to strengthen and edify the body of Christ here.

While our attendance hit record lows

during the Christmas season, as many of the students and professors from Covenant College were out of town, we were blessed to see an increase in local visitors during this time. The Lord added His blessing to our services, small as they were, and our people here were greatly encouraged.

Also, right before the holiday break, my wife Courtney and I hosted a church Christmas party in our home. It was wonderfully attended, and it helped all of us to get to know one another a little

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Lookout Mt.

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better.

Looking ahead to the early part of 2017, we are beginning an Adult Sunday School series on the church and church membership. We have a core of four families, plus a significant number of college students who have expressed a desire for church membership. Additionally, two young people in our midst have made a profession of faith in Christ and have expressed a desire to be

baptized and received into membership as well. So please be in prayer as we seek to instruct them in sound doctrine.

Furthermore, we are also about to begin a ministry in the local assisted living home here in Lookout Mountain. On Sunday afternoons, we will head over to the home for a time of singing, prayer, and preaching to those who are too sick or elderly to attend church. We would also appreciate your prayers for this endeavor, in that the Lord would use our efforts here to minister to the weak.

Finally, with spring and warmer weather nearly upon us, we are beginning

to do more in the way of advertising and evangelism in an effort to reach the community with the gospel.

Five months in, we have not done any advertising, as all our growth has come via word of mouth.

So please pray for our efforts here, and that the Lord would be pleased to use our proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of sinners and the expanse of His kingdom here on earth.

We thank God for all of our sister churches, and brothers and sisters of like-minded faith. Thank you for your continued prayers, support, and encouragement.

IRBS

From page 4

apostles could not, and thereby proved himself to be superior to them, even in external things, of which they bragged so much.”

Gill had it right. Paul had all the advantages of Jewish training, and in the right context, could even glory in them. William Perkins’ comment on Gal. 1:12

is helpful: “he learned the gospel not by the teaching of any man, as formerly he learned the law at the feet of Gamaliel. ... There be two ways whereby Christ teaches those that are to be teachers. One is immediate revelation; the other is ordinary instruction by the means and ministry of man.”

Paul benefited from both when he served as Christ’s well-prepared minister. The foundation of learning obtained from Gamaliel, sanctified by his conversion,

growing faith in Christ and prayerful meditation (Gal. 1:10-17) provided a well-rounded platform for his years of service. The providence of God is evident when we consider his life as a whole.

Why is this important? It reminds us of the importance of preparation and training. The Lord used the school of Gamaliel in the life of the great Apostle. For pastors in the making, years of careful study under experienced teachers bring great benefit to the Lord’s people.

Missions

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Steve’s closing message on the first day of this school holds this truth in bold relief.

The second day for the ARBCA School for World Missions carried three messages. Because of the remaining space I have for this article, I must be more condensed in what I report here. First, Pastor John Miller returned with a message on “The Work of the Missionary.” His outline covered seven points, memorably alliterated with the letter “p”. One of these “p” points was the peculiarity of the work of the missionary – in which Pastor Miller explained that the “missionary” is not an office in the church, but a church-planter who must be qualified as an elder/planter.

However, what makes this church-planting pastor-missionary “peculiar” in his work, is that he sets out to plant churches, but not settle down in the churches he’s planted. He is always seeking to work his

way out of a job, so to speak; that he may go on to plant other churches.

Steve Martin came back to give a half hour teaching on the role of “Reformed Baptist Mission Services and the Missionary.”

And the biggest takeaway for me from this teaching was that, “RBMS has never sent out a missionary.” And here again, we are back at the central place and role of the local church sending out church-planting missionaries.

Lastly, Pastor Jerry Slate closed the formal teaching courses of this school with a heart-warming, deeply convicting, Christ-exalting biographical of Samuel Pearce (1766-1799). How fitting it was to have a school for world missions end, with seeing all that was taught, fleshed out in the life and labors of a fellow-pastor whose heart burned to make Christ known to the nations.

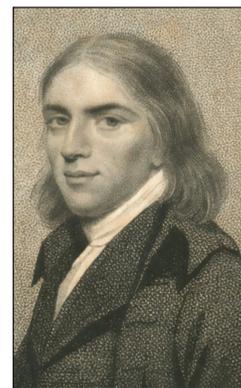
But the surprise in this biographical, was that Samuel Pearce never went to foreign fields to plant churches – but stayed

at home to pastor one local church and support the work of missions abroad.

The critical importance of pastors and their churches “holding the rope” for those who have been sent is one of the greatest lessons that Pastor Slate expounds so well in this message.

Needless to say, The ARBCA School of World Missions, in my humble opinion, is a much-needed course to be attended by all pastors in our beloved association.

Moreover, I hope that these gifted men who lead it will seriously consider putting their oral teaching in written form. This school needs to be put in print! Just saying, of course.



Samuel Pearce