

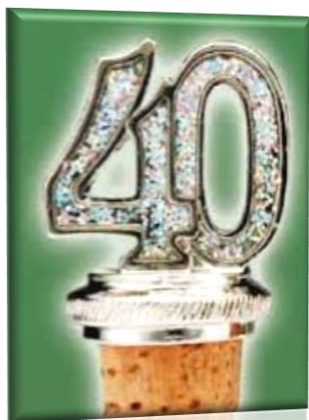
## From Dave's Laptop

Tuesday, April 2, 2013

Our four Holy Week services were all quite special, and each was blessed by God. Our SonRise service on Resurrection morning was especially so, with the baptisms of six adults: Miguel Cabassa, Larry Davis, Chisom Ebinama, Chizoba Ebinama, Nesa Herring, and Ken Ndiang. This was the largest number of persons I've ever baptized in one service, and I believe it was also the largest number of persons ever baptized at one time in our congregation as well. THANK YOU, LORD!!!



The Big News this week, of course, is our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Just in case you've mislaid the schedule, here it is once more:



**Saturday, April 6**

**5:30-7:30 p.m.** *Hors d'oeuvres, displays, and visiting with friends* in the OMI foyer and quads! Tickets are not required for the reception, so whether you're coming to the dinner or not, please come for the friendship time!

**7:30-9:30 p.m.** *Celebration Dinner* (catered, by reservation) in the Worship Center

**Sunday, April 7: 9:30 a.m.** (please note the earlier beginning time!)

*40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Worship* with **Jim Hamblen**, our Founding Pastor, preaching

While we'll have a number of old friends and former pastors and staff here for the weekend celebration, I suspect the award for traveling the greatest distance to the party will be William and Annika Hauswald, who have come from Germany! Tomorrow night (Wednesday evening), William and Annika have kindly consented to be part of our "Christians around the World" series, and they will take us on a short tour of **France & Germany**. Dinner is at 5:30, and their program will begin about 6:15!

I hope you've accepted the invitation to connect to our new CBF online media library at [rightnow.org](http://rightnow.org). If you've lost your invitation email, just let me know and I'll send you another one.

One of the many opportunities that will follow from being connected to RightNow Media is that we can upload our own video content *without limit*. This means that the classes offered in our "Monday Night Seminary" can be uploaded and made available for viewing at your leisure, 24/7. Before very long, I'll have uploaded the six sessions of our **Survival Kit** study currently underway, and I'll also upload **CLASS 101** at some point during the next several weeks.

You may remember that "the Saddleback Model" on which our church has been organized for the past ten or twelve years (remember "the baseball diamond"?) includes four introductory





classes, of which the first is, naturally enough, CLASS 101, having to do with a general overview of the whole enterprise. **The idea is to have every church member and participant go through these courses so that we are all “on the same page” with respect to congregational purpose, organization, and functioning.**

I’ll be offering CLASS 101 in our Monday Night Seminary three times before our summer adjournment. The class itself takes two hours, and I’ll be presenting the same content three times, on April 22, April 29, and May 13. After



that, the class will be available in our media library online. Please make it a priority to participate in CLASS 101 either on one of these evenings in our Chapel, or later online. You’ll be glad you did!

As we get close to the conclusion of the first phase of our Spiritual Strategic Journey, some have wondered what will happen at the **Prayer Triplet Reporting Session** from 9:30-11:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 20.

The basic idea all along has been for the sixty or so of us in prayer triplets to be listening together for signs of God’s activity among us and indications of God’s direction for the future.

On that Saturday morning, each triplet will have the opportunity to share any thoughts, ideas, inspirations, persistent impressions, etc. that may have emerged from your seven prayer sessions together. We’ll then take that information and begin to work with it and continue to pray through it as we seek God’s leadership for the next 8-10 years.

Along that line, I read an interesting online article just this afternoon written by Dr. Bill Wilson, the president of the [Center for Congregational Health](http://Center for Congregational Health) in Winston-Salem. Bill’s “Vital Signs” column appears regularly at [ABPnews.com](http://ABPnews.com). This article is called “A Corvette Kind of Church.” I think you’ll recognize the possible connections . . . .

“Like automakers, churches must face the quandary of remaining true to their loyal customers without losing relevance for a new generation.

“One effect of growing up in 20th century America is that I love cars. Early on, I got the fever. I played with them as a kid, worked on them, collected them, admired them and dreamed of them.

“I’ve owned around 25 cars of multiple sorts. Started with a ’64 Chevy Impala and moved on to: VW, Mercury, Jeep, Honda (11!), Toyota, BMW, Plymouth, Volvo, Dodge, Oldsmobile and one lovely ’77 MGB.

“I was talking about congregational life recently with my friend Dock Hollingsworth. Dock is one of the bright lights in the world of clergy and congregations. He teaches at McAfee School of Theology, and effectively helps many churches and ministers. He mentioned to me that a layperson at the church where he is interim pastor had recently shared with him a powerful analogy for the struggle for relevance that established churches face.

“The analogy grew out of hearing an NPR story regarding the efforts of Chevrolet to re-invent the Corvette automobile. When I [listened](#) to the story, I had to agree that, remarkably, traditional churches and Corvettes have several things in common. Could the Corvette have something to teach us about our future?

“At the Detroit Auto Show in January, Corvette rolled out their new model of the classic American sports car. It helps to know that sales of Corvettes were at an all-time low last year. Those sales peaked in 1979 and have declined since. Over the last few years, in the face of rising fuel prices and the Great Recession, sales have plummeted. Last year, they bottomed out at 12,000 cars sold.



“The Corvette faces a well-known dilemma. Its 60-year-old iconic brand evokes great nostalgia and loyalty among a dwindling crowd. Thus, any changes in the vehicle produce strong reactions and pushback from devotees.

“To stay alive, it must change and upgrade to meet higher fuel-efficiency standards and rising competition. The designers face the classic quandary of how to remain true to their traditional heritage, while striving to be relevant for the next generation of customers.

“Sound familiar? Dock and I agreed that the analogy holds for many established churches who face a very uncertain future. What might our fellow pilgrims at Corvette teach us?

“In their struggle for survival, the designers and makers of Corvettes have been forced to go back to the essence of identity and purpose. First, they had to decide what they were not willing to do.

“Tadge Jeuchter, the chief engineer at Corvette, says the hardest part is bringing the car into the 21st century while making it look like a Corvette. ‘We don't want to do retro,’ Jeuchter says. ‘We don't want to go back and do like some manufacturers [and] go relive the glory days.’

“It is very tempting, when we are under pressure to produce results, to revert back to what worked before. Many congregations find themselves longing for the glory days of a ‘churched culture’ that funneled people into local churches and produced high-water marks of attendance and participation in traditional programs.

“Some congregations, when confronted with plateau and decline, double down on programmatic models of ministry that depend upon elevated levels of loyalty and high frequency of attendance. It seldom works.

“The Corvette team decided to accept the new reality and challenged their engineers to find ways to maintain their historic style while fully embracing the new. They used aluminum and carbon fiber to make it lighter and quicker. The new car shares just two parts with the outgoing model. The over-riding mindset was to ‘respect our history, but advance it.’

“Healthy congregations balance the respect of our programmatic history with a full embrace of the missional model of ministry. When we fail to manage that polarity and live exclusively in either extreme, we run the risk of losing relevance with both our past and our future.

“Eric Gustafson, the editor of *Corvette Magazine*, loves Corvettes as much as anyone, but he says he's part of a devoted but aging and dwindling crowd. ‘The big challenge is to find new customers,’ Gustafson says, ‘and not only new customers now, but new customers that are going to buy the car in 10 years.’ Healthy congregations go about our ministry and work with an eye toward what will be, not simply what has been.

“This Corvette is known as the C7, or seventh generation of the brand. This means that, on average, every 8½ years a major redesign is initiated. My experience is that a healthy congregation

needs to undergo an extensive refocus and redesign at least once a decade, if it is to remain relevant to the context in which it exists.

“I came away from my musings about the new Corvette convinced more churches need to follow its lead. I hope Corvette will find new life, reinvent itself, and avoid the fate of now-deceased names like Packard, Edsel, Pontiac and Oldsmobile. I pray we will, too.”

While I certainly wouldn't mind having a new C7, I'm much more interested in what the “new CBF” for the next decade might be like. I wonder what God is up to . . . .

Dave

