

## Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

May 19, 2020

As the world attempts to reopen, I suppose we're all wondering what the post-COVID world will be like . . . if indeed there IS a "post-COVID" world. Our OMI leaders and our CBF leaders are busily trying to imagine how to respond most effectively and creatively to what may be ahead.



And of course, there's another "chapter change" before us, which is the "new chapter" of our congregation's life with your new Senior Pastor. Our Search Team is hard at work, and invitations to submit resumes will be forthcoming before too long. I hope that you're praying for your new pastor every day, even now!

While we can't see the "post-COVID" world very clearly yet, I think it is possible to imagine several ways in which CBF's next chapter might develop. At least six possibilities occur to me. I'll say a word about each, just so you can see what I'm thinking . . .

### **OPTION ONE: Try to meet the needs of our members and remain a going concern**

I think this one is pretty self-explanatory. I see this as an essential baseline strategy, but "maintaining body temperature" is not a very inspiring goal.

### **OPTION TWO: Continue our present focus on neighborhood youth and their families**

It seems clear to me that God has given this strategy to us, almost "in spite of ourselves," if you remember how it developed. Pastor Neville began this work. Pastor Tim kept it going. And Pastor Andrew has turbocharged it!

I find it exciting that we were able to baptize eleven teenagers last year; and we were on track to do even more in 2020 . . . until COVID hit. Even now, though, Pastor Andrew is maintaining an active and effective ministry with the youth of the community and their families, and he is developing the relationships that began through last year's outreach events.

I think we can hardly do less than to continue these ministries, "full speed ahead," but I think there may be even more we can do . . . .

### **OPTION THREE: Expand our local ministries so that CBF becomes the catalyst for transforming the Village of Oakland Mills into a community others wish to replicate**

While each of Columbia's ten villages has its own opportunities and challenges, Oakland Mills certainly has our share. For a number of months, now, God has had a BHAG (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal) rumbling around in my spirit, and this option tries to grapple with that BHAG.

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**CBF: transforming Oakland Mills into a community others wish to replicate.**

I've written in this column not too long ago about the Dominionism Movement in America, and if you remember that, you'll remember that I'm not a fan. But I do find Dominionism's "Seven Mountains of Culture" intriguing.

What might happen if CBF developed a long-term BHAG (BHAG's are long-term by definition) of becoming deeply involved in these seven areas of our community life in Oakland Mills and in Columbia and Howard County such that this lovely place that we live, work, and worship



became all that it could be, with God's help? What might happen if we had CBFers on the Village Board, on the Columbia Association, on the Board of Education, on the County Council?

Our goal would not be to "take over," as is the stated goal of Dominionism. Our goal would be to be a winsome influence for good that also builds bridges across which the Gospel might pass. What might happen? What might God do?

**OPTION FOUR: Expand the reach of our Gospel Ministry by adding an additional online service in a different style**

Like every other congregation in the nation, we're meeting by ZOOM and worshipping via YouTube and Facebook during the COVID crisis . . . but how about after that? It appears that we are reaching quite a number of people via these electronic means that do not generally worship with us in person. Will we just "drop them" once COVID has passed?

Some of our members have suggested that once we're back in the building in "normal" worship, it might be worthwhile to continue the separate broadcasts we're currently doing, perhaps in a different worship style from what we usually do; and that leads to Option Five . . . .



**OPTION FIVE: Expand the reach of our Gospel Ministry by investing in an Online CBF Campus**

The Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV), one of our ministry partners, has grants of up to \$25,000 available for congregations that create a bona fide Online Campus. The criteria for such a "campus" include providing an online equivalent for everything we do in person. Worship and Bible Study are obvious examples, but I'm sure they have other things in mind.

One of the challenging components of this vision is that to qualify as an Online Campus, a congregation has to have a designated staff person who is the Online Pastor, and that person

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cannot be the congregation's primary/Senior Pastor. That's a Big Challenge—another BHAG—but it would truly give our congregation a global reach for the Gospel; and that leads to Option Six . . . .

**OPTION SIX: Develop missional partnerships with at least one congregation in each nation our members call Home**



Another BHAG that I've been pondering for some years is the possibility of establishing a missional partnership with at least one congregation in each nation our members call Home. Such partnerships would not be "Western Imperialism," but collegial relationships of mutual encouragement that might or might not involve travel, given what ZOOM can do.

Just off the "top of my head" (lots of clear space up there), I can think of Congo, England, France, Germany, Ghana, Haiti, Jamaica, Korea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Panama; and I'm sure there are others. What might such partnerships accomplish, by God's grace?

**OPTION SEVEN: What occurs to you that hasn't occurred to me?**

Finally, after reading all this, what does God's Spirit within say to you? What other ideas might we consider?



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