

# MAC

## Ready for the Fall

**Summer 2019 is almost over** and I'm ready to enter into a new season...and I believe I say this on behalf of my whole family. Unfortunately, I experienced the passing of three close friends this summer. One my father, Bob MacPherson, and the other, Ray Worden and David Garrison, both close friends. I also had the experience, along with some of my children, rescuing my father-in-law from a near drowning incident. I'm relieved to share that he has fully recovered and is back to his normal schedule.

As I've been preparing for this newsletter, several requests have been made for me to share the words that I spoke at my father's funeral. I wanted to use this newsletter to do so as it was a blessing to share the memories especially in regards to our past year together.

God has shown me how His grace is sufficient at so many levels especially when engaged with end of life conversations and how God uses those conversations to reveal Himself even more. Hope you enjoy the sharing and look forward to Fall!

### Out with the Old...In with the New!

One of my most memorable conversations with Dad that has remained on my heart for many years, and especially these past few

# News

MEN ABIDING IN CHRIST MINISTRIES  
*modeling + multiplying discipleship*

### Fall 2019



months was a conversation that took place in 2005 on plane ride to Boston for the funeral of his eldest brother, Ralph.

On this flight, I was given the opportunity to talk at length with him about a calling that I was discerning to leave my current employment and pursue a ministry that would become Men Abiding in Christ Ministries.

This conversation was important, almost important as to the conversation one seeks with a future father-in-law when seeking that father's daughter for marriage. Like that conversation, I did not want to move forward with this career change without Dad's blessings.

This conversation that took place over the course of the whole plane ride, became a catalyst for future and more frequent conversations. We spent our time discussing how to discern God's call. Neither of us would call ourselves an expert in this area, now or back then, however Dad focused on **how this**

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**ministry would be used by God** rather than get bogged down in the details of **how things would work**.

I remember Dad asked me more than once for the names of the men who were joining the Board to help launch the ministry. After pondering this list of names, he looked at me and said, "it is amazing that these men have all received the call to help launch this ministry. Each of these men exemplify strong Christian faith and a love for God." With God bringing you a team like this, "how can you NOT move forward with this ministry?"

Just like that, in my mind, the question went from **how can this be done to how can this NOT be done**...just like that, Dad encouraged me in my faith to take a leap in trusting God. This was something Dad did a lot with me. Enabling me to respond to God.

The past year for Dad has been difficult. However, for me, it has been one of the greatest blessings. Over the past several years, he and I have made time for lunch from time to time. Last year, we became intentional to spend time together almost weekly. A common visit would be picking him up from the house, going through the Dunkin' Donuts drive thru, and then spending 30 minutes or so in the car at Laurel Park talking about the Lord.

These times have been a treasure for me because it was during these times that dad would show me that we never outgrow our



Pat and Dad chillin' together in Callaway Garden

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## The Development of a Prayer Guide: An Impetus for Spiritual Renewal

by Tom Higgins

**This spring** Pat and I had the pleasure of working together on a prayer guide for our home church. The prayer guide was an idea generated by a capital campaign scheduled to launch in August. As co-chairman of the campaign team, I sought Pat out to work closely with him to help create this guide that would be distributed to the whole church.

Over the course of two months, Pat and I focused on developing a 6 week prayer guide that will hopefully grow each person who uses this guide to intentionally engage with the Lord in seeking to know Him better therefore, growing in their faith. Throughout the process, which is evident in the guide, Pat speaks to how his spiritual growth led him to establish MAC Ministries and later to improve his leadership of the ministry. I noticed that in each instance of growth, he was blessed in his walk with people who facilitated this growth. The lesson I learned is the critical need to seek and surround oneself with those who know God more deeply. To seek growth through the assistance of others requires a humility that is essential for spiritual growth. This prayer guide provides multiple examples of how this can happen and is a powerful lesson for us all.

There were several themes that Pat was intentional about sharing. One was that he helped me better grasp what it means to be a disciple. In the devotion he wrote on Disciple Growing, he poses the question: "When did the Disciples become disciples?" Pat's contention is they became one the moment they committed to follow Jesus. Pat's teaching



on this was a watershed moment for me as I had always believed that one had to go to church every Sunday, be involved in Bible study, and pray often, to **eventually** grow into a disciple. This type of thinking has led me to approach discipleship the wrong way and to believe that discipleship is focused on activities, something we only think about on Sundays or whenever these activities take place. Becoming a disciple is based upon knowing Jesus Christ, and letting the activities be a response to this relationship.

As a result of what I learned from Pat, I am much more aware of my obligation and duty as a Christian. John Stott notes in *Basic Christianity* that becoming a Christian is one thing; being a Christian (or growing as a disciple) is quite another. The insight gained from working on the prayer guide with Pat has helped me take to heart what Stott says, "Our great responsibility as a Christian is growth."

In one of the sections in the prayer guide, Pat focuses on the value of being Biblically Grounded. Understanding how Pat grew in becoming more biblically grounded has changed my approach to Bible study in three ways. First, I used to spend time in the Bible to prepare for leading Bible study groups more than focusing on learning and knowing God. I now spend time in the Bible so that I can focus on learning and knowing God personally rather than just studying to lead others in Bible study group. Second, my study has become more personal in how I apply what I learn to my own life instead of approaching the Bible as an academic study. For example, my study has sometimes been based more on understanding what different commentators say and not as much on how the Word should

guide my life. Thirdly, I seek to read Scripture as a conversation with the Lord in prayer as Pat demonstrates each day with his prayers.

The most important thing I learned in working with Pat is that I one can be involved in Bible study, prayer, and service without deepening my one's relationship with Jesus. In helping to teach me this, Pat asked me to read Watchman Nee's book, *Sit, Walk, Stand* before starting our work on the prayer guide. He did this so that our work would come from a place of response as opposed to initiative. During the section which focuses on the value of being Jesus Centered, Pat emphasizes that growth results in knowing God instead of what we do for the Lord. Our growth starts with resting in what God has already done for us. It is only by abiding in a relationship with Christ that we are able to grow spiritually, and the evidence of this growth is what the Apostle Paul calls "the fruit of the Spirit".

In spotlighting the value of being Jesus Centered, Pat challenges the reader by asking "Is our primary purpose to do something for Jesus or to know Jesus?" I am reminded is that I need to focus on growing my relationship with Jesus and live by what John 15:5 instructs: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

I believe the prayer guide will be highly valuable in the life of our church and my Christian walk. It has great potential for not only an instructional guide for individuals, but also as the foundation for study by discipleship groups. I began this project to contribute to our church's effort to keep spiritual growth at the center of the capital campaign. However, the major impact of this work continues to be a deeply rewarding spiritual experience for me. Thank you Pat!

## Chairman's Update. by Scott McLain

**In his article** on developing a prayer guide with Pat, Tom Higgins shared two sentences that really resonated with me.

*The lesson I learned is the critical need to seek and surround oneself with those who know God more deeply. To seek growth through the assistance of others requires a humility that is essential for spiritual growth.*

If you are familiar with MAC Ministries then you probably already understand that these two sentences cut straight to the heart of this ministry. I have "surrounded" myself with others numerous times in my own walk, and have served in that role for others as well. This is a critical piece to continuing forward in our walk with Jesus.

Last year I shared with you that Pat was embarking on a nine



month program of growth for himself called the Colson Fellowship Program. In May, Pat "graduated" from this Christian Worldview program in a ceremony in Washington, DC.

This year Pat is spending intentional time each month with Ken Boa. Ken is the President of Reflections Ministries, and is an author as well. Even as Pat serves to mentor and teach men and women to know God more intimately, he is also seeking to surround himself "with those who know God more deeply." Modeling behavior is a central tenet of MAC Ministries and should be a goal for each of us in our own ministry.

With whom have you sought to surround yourself?

Scott McLain, Chairman of the Board, MAC Ministries

## Remembering a Friend *by David Garrison*

*This article was originally published in the June 2010 MAC Newsletter by my friend, David Garrison, who passed away August 26. I have known David for most of my life through church when the Lord reconnected us in August 2009 at the Square Bagel. This was just prior to David's cancer diagnosis. After reconnecting, David and I spent the next 5 years meeting weekly walking with each other. As I said goodbye to my friend yesterday, I was reminded of this article and our journey together. I thank you Lord for the privilege of walking with David and the gift of friendship that you gave us. Blessings!*

**I personally** have been through a three year run most people would rather forget, or simply not have to deal with. I consider myself a little different. I consider myself very blessed. Blessed to have experienced success, love, family and friends. Even though in the last three years I have filed bankruptcy and in doing so lost 20 years worth of good business relationships, I am now divorced and I am fiercely battling colon cancer and the hellish remnants of the 6" tumor, radiation, chemo

and all of the associated love.

Pat hears times are tough because he hears it from you and me about the wears and tears of our families, pressures of our jobs, and the realities of raising kids today – you know – the ordinary pressures and pleasures of life. While we complain, or comment or brag on the normal rigors of life, we do this with Pat to seek his opinion, understanding, compassion, advice or just to have someone listen.

One of the most important things Pat does, as I see it, is that he listens to us – thus greater is the potential for influence!

Another impressive thing about Pat is his understanding of time, place and point and how important these things are when lay ministering.

In my case – I've known Pat for years. We both happened to run into one another at his office on the square – the Square Bagel. I was there talking politics and Pat was there doing his morning ritual of administering God's ministry on a willing participant. We talked briefly and decided to meet and discuss life and the struggles therein. I must admit thru

this onslaught of life changes – I had never slipped away from Christ, but wasn't effectively utilizing my toolbox for the Lord nor using the good book on a daily basis.

In his direct, but easy, individual way, Pat pursued me to open up about my struggles and boy did I. Then, while trying to catch my breath and feeling somewhat re-assured about my place within God's green earth, I found out I had this cancer – that was January 8, 2010. That's a pretty steep cliff to run up on – especially when I thought I was on the right path to the life I wanted and deserved.

Pat's compassion for people and the Lord, his Biblical knowledge and his trust in God affords him a unique ability to intervene when necessary, disciple with effectiveness, and minister without force. There's a VERY BRIGHT LIGHT ON and it's Pat MacPherson – steadily doing the tough work – the Lord's work. I'm proud to know him, to see God working through him, and fortunate to consider myself a friend to the Ministry. Mathew 28:19 says to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations" and that is what Pat is doing.

*David Garrison, Garrison consulting*

## Ready for the Fall

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need to be fully dependent on Christ. He also allowed me to journey with him as he prepared for the "big transition" and engage with end of life discussions.

At one point, Dad was sharing his concern of how much he would miss everyone. This comment led to some of the most joyful conversations especially when we looked at Scripture like Philippians 3: 21 that says that our physical bodies will be transformed. Or Revelation 21: 1 there'll be a new heaven and a new earth or Rev. 21: 4 there will be no more tears, no more death, no more mourning, no more crying, and no more pain!

As we discussed the verses in Revelation 21, we realized that in the presence of Christ, we would not be capable of **longing** or **missing**. In fact we won't experience any of those things that might bring us sadness because in the presence of Christ, we will be fulfilled to the max. We'll be overrunning with joy and thanksgiving with a never ceasing sense of worship.

Now, as the deep theologians that we are, Dad and I took liberty to add a few more things to verse 4 of Revelation 21 such as,

- No more cleaning gutters.
- Driveways that won't need to be blown.
- Pinetrees that don't shed pine needles.
- No more decay or growing old!
- No more achy joints in the morning.
- No more sunscreen!
- No more locks on windows, doors, houses, and cars.
- No more selections on drink fountains... see, in Heaven there will be just one drink... an all you can drink fountain of Coca-Cola! (*don't forget Dad retired from Coca-Cola*).

Overall, what we took from Revelations 21 is that Dad had received a long, and good, good life, but what we also found in Revelations chapter 21...it was only the beginning. As he would start to say, "out with the old, and in with the new" and that "everything is well with my soul".

In fact, the day of Dad's death was my mother's birthday. But as my daughter Rose replied, it's also Grandbob's first birthday in Heaven.

On June 6, 2019, Dad's life did not end. His

life on earth was fulfilled and as a Christian, we believe that God called him into a new life. And just as our Father in heaven claimed that Jesus' death brought glory to Him, as a follower of Christ, Dad was able to claim that same glory in the early hours of last Thursday morning when his life was fulfilled here on earth and called into Glory.

And this is our faith that "God so loved the world that He sent His one and only son Christ Jesus, and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." This is the faith gift that we've been given and it's for each person here today. If you struggle believing this verse, take the time to seek someone out to discuss further, or come one Sunday to this church or our home church at Marietta Community Church.

Dad and I often referred to John 17: 3 which reminds us that eternal life is knowing the Father and His Son, our savior. Therefore eternal life starts now, in this world, not at the time of death.

Dad – thank you for showing me, my brother and sister, and all your grandchildren the support and encouragement to know Christ and the eternal life found in Him alone. Amen.

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## A Note From Bridget's Heart by Bridget MacPherson

**In the Christian Church,** we acknowledge and accept the gift of sacraments. I've always been taught that when we celebrate a sacrament, we are witnessing a visible sign of God's grace. It's a time when the veil between heaven and earth seems to tear apart and all of God's people on earth and in heaven celebrate the glory of God.

This past summer, our family had many opportunities to celebrate the grace and glory of God through the sorrows and joys of the sacraments. Our summer began when we said our final goodbyes to my loving Father-in-Law, Bob MacPherson. From the beginning of our marriage, I have always had a special place in my heart for Bob. He welcomed me with unconditional love and always made me feel like I was a forever part of his family. His death and celebration of life allowed our family to share how we feel about the grace that God gives us each day to live our lives in His service.

Our summer plans also took us to Chicago to celebrate the baptism of my newest niece, Josephine Louise. We gathered in the same church where Josephine's parents were married almost 8 years ago. Many of the same family members and friends who bore witness to the sacrament of their marriage were there to reaffirm their faith and promises to support, teach and guide my sister, brother-in-law and their family in the love of

Jesus Christ.

Once back home in Marietta, our family mourned again when we had to say goodbye to our dear friend, Ray Worden. One of Ray's friends who spoke at the service relayed a conversation that he and Ray shared while Ray was in the hospital. Ray wanted to make sure that his small group, which included Ray and Leigh Ann, Pat and I and six other couples, knew how much we impacted his faith journey. Our small group had been meeting for a couple of years, studying the Bible and other books on Christian life. We were together when Ray and Leigh Ann discovered that Ray's cancer had returned. We prayed for healing, more time, acceptance into clinical trials, plane tickets to NYC and hotel accommodations for treatments at Sloane Kettering. We praised God for every scan that showed shrinking tumors and for all the awesome family trips that the Wordens were able to take. It was like a gift from God to hear Ray's appreciation for his time spent in our small faith community.



Mary, Bridget, Rose, Pat, Sean, James, and Liam having fun in Cataloochee, NC

I believe that God loves us so much that He creates these moments to remind us that we are not alone. We are a community of believers who depend on the presence of God to bear with the sorrows of a broken world and feel the certainty of the victory that Jesus Christ conquered death and sin forever. It is important that we remember our responsibility to minister to one another each and every day so that we can be the face of Jesus to all that we meet.

*In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."*

— Isaiah 25:9