

December 2016



SAFE HARBOR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# BEACON

to encourage...to inspire...to inform...



## *The Irresistible Church*

When God looked down upon the earth and saw the bitterness and futility of life, the shameful distance we had put between our Holy Creator and us, his rebellious creation, the misery we had brought upon ourselves by the weight of sin and it's guilt - all amplified by the pain and misery of life and death; God acted. He put into motion a plan he had devised before time began to demonstrate his love and justice, a plan to save us from our own sinfulness and bridge the gap between heaven and earth. This bridge is His Son. God sent his Son into the stream of human history to make a way for us back to Him, a way that would cost Jesus his own life, and would mean His taking upon himself, our sin and its guilt and penalty. God built a bridge of love, and by that bridge, Jesus Christ, we are saved, and by that bridge we are to continue that saving work in the world.

According to Robert Lewis, the Author of *The Church of Irresistible Influence*, The first century church was persecuted, marginalized, and outlawed, yet grew at better than a 40% growth rate per decade because it "was a community of people who built a bridge of living proof of a loving God to a lost, yet watching world". Lewis goes on to point out that in our post-modern world, what those outside the church are looking for is real proof that having God in our lives makes a difference - and the most convincing proof is demonstrable love. Those outside the church need to see Safe Harbor as a loving, caring fellowship that is a force for good in the community. Your elders understand this and have been praying and working for over a year to steer the church in this direction.

One of the great hindrances to building bridges of loving action into our community is the tendency to see the church as existing for us. We pour our time and money into this organization, we've vested ourselves by years of service and so we want to have influence on how the church is to be run, and we want to be able to select the elements of church life that we like the most. While there is a certain logic to it, it's upside down and inside out, and completely cross-threaded with God's purpose for the

church in this world. When we focus on ourselves, or as John Miller calls it, become an "in-grown church", we focus our energies, activities and financial resources on the Christians already gathered under the roof every Sunday, and it goes far beyond lobbying for the style of music in worship services that pleases us most, it is, as George Barna, church researcher puts it, "a toxic self absorption that repels the unbelieving world". Barna goes on to say, that in many evangelical churches the leadership of the church "basically functions as the board of directors of a social club. They are godly, biblically astute, very serious and well intentioned, but they have created a social structure that exists solely to care for the Christians that are members of their church. The irony is that for these evangelical leaders in an evangelical church, the notion of real evangelism seems like a distant goal, or an unreachable luxury."

In many ways Safe Harbor has elements of the "irresistible church" woven into her. How could you deny the bridges being built into our community when you hear Sandy Wiscott report on all the homes that have been furnished, food provided, and clothing donated - in fact, Safe Harbor has the reputation throughout our community as a force for good. Even Queen Anne County Social Services directs the lost, confused and needy to our church.

Our outreach to the Hispanic community and the resulting church, Fuente De La Vida (Fountain of Life), that meets here at Safe Harbor throughout the week is another concrete example. While we may have some compelling ingredients that make Safe Harbor interesting, if not intriguing to the lost around us, we are far from the perfect church. Robert Lewis concludes that the most compelling ingredient in the "Church of Irresistible Influence" is authentic, transparent, spirituality. The ability to live openly and honestly before the watching world, and not have our actions contradict our professed faith. For Safe Harbor to be truly irresistible, at least as far as the irresistible grace of the Gospel call goes, Safe Harbor needs to remove the stumbling blocks of selfishness,

pretentiousness, self-righteousness, bitterness, frustration, complaining and all other self centered and ingrown tendencies. So how do we become an authentic, selfless, honest, joyful, self sacrificing, outward focused church? Discipleship in community. We need to be discipled in how to die, by the one who surrender his life on the cross for us. We need to die to ourselves and live as Christ in the world, as Christ is formed in us as we grasp God's great love for us we need to connect in love in community. As we grasp this great love and grace together, it should propel our yearnings and desires to extend his work into our world at the expense of our comfort and preferences and through the vehicle of loving relationships. We need to build the bridge of the Gospel ministry into our community by meeting people where they are and stretching toward them, instead of inflexibly demanding that they meet our standards before we'll have anything to do with them.

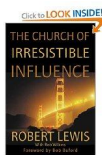
So what does all this mean when we talk about multiple Sunday services, the style of music we select on any given Sunday, the philosophy of our youth ministry and Christian education, men's ministry, women's ministry, missions and all other ministries at Safe Harbor? Everything. It has everything to do with all of these things. Because of this the Elders have been praying fervently for over a year to grasp how we might do this better. The elders gathered for a retreat this past April to evaluate who we are, and what are the main things we should be about. This spawned two sub-committees, or teams – a vision crafting team and a vision implementation team. These teams need your prayers, the vision crafting team is coming to the final stages of its work and the implementation team is ready to take that product and knit it into the fabric of our church. So I'm asking you to pray. Pray for our elders as we consider the Gospel implications for all these things. Pray that we will be the au-

thentic Church that Christ has called us to be effectively building bridges of living proof of God's love into our community. Pray for our vision team to hear God's voice and craft a description of His unique calling for Safe Harbor to be a church of irresistible influence. Pray for our implementation team to practically and thoroughly implement that vision into the daily life of our church and into our daily lives as well. Pray that you'll be responsive to the vision and its implementation and its implications and be other interested and outward focused. Pray for flexibility and patience to be part of the changes that enables Safe Harbor to marshal her resources and set her priorities to build bridges, to grow disciples and be a light in the darkness.

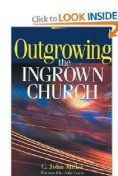
Praying with and for You,

Pastor Todd

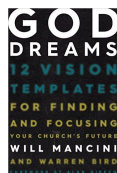
For further reading, try the following:



<http://www.amazon.com/Church-Irresistible-Influence-Robert-Lewis/dp/0310239567>



[http://www.amazon.com/Outgrowing-Ingrown-Church-John-Miller/dp/0310284112/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1235754603&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Outgrowing-Ingrown-Church-John-Miller/dp/0310284112/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1235754603&sr=1-1)



[https://www.amazon.com/God-Dreams-Templates-Finding-Focusing/dp/143368845X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1480603524&sr=1-1&keywords=god+dreams](https://www.amazon.com/God-Dreams-Templates-Finding-Focusing/dp/143368845X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1480603524&sr=1-1&keywords=god+dreams)



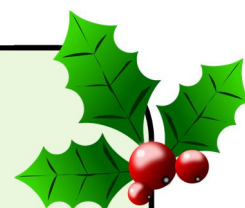
## ***Safe Harbor's Annual Christmas Party***

**Sunday, December 4th at 6:00pm**

**Italian Theme Potluck & Musical Entertainment by Safe Harbor members  
and the PWT**

**PLEASE SIGN UP IN THE NARTHEX ON SUNDAY IF YOU PLAN ON ATTENDING. WHEN YOU SIGN UP, PICK UP A RECIPE CARD FOR THE MEAL ITEMS AND WE WILL PROVIDE THE REST!**

**IF YOU CAN VOLUNTEER TO HELP ON THE DAY WITH EITHER SET-UP OR BREAKDOWN, SERVING OR WHATEVER IS NEEDED, PLEASE CONTACT CARLA THOMAS AT 443-286-3610.**





Pantry Needs for December:

- Peanut Butter and Jelly
- Cereals
- Powdered Milk
- Rice

The shelter is open now through March! Many hands are needed so if you feel led to help out with this ministry, please contact Sandi Wiscott if you would like to get involved.

**MEN'S BREAKFAST:**

**Saturday, December 10th  
at 8am**

**Hilton Garden Inn, Grasonville  
Speaker will be Dustin Carpenter**

***Annual Congregational Meeting  
Sunday, December 18th at 11am***

*This meeting is for our members to attend as we will be reporting on what God has done at Safe Harbor this year as well as electing new officers. Snacks and coffee will be served.*

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12-22-2014

WHAT DO YOU BUY THE GUY WHO HAS EVERYTHING, MADE EVERYTHING, AND HAS GIVEN US EVERYTHING?

Thought for the season:

"Advent, like its cousin Lent, is a season for prayer and reformation of our hearts. Since it comes at winter time, fire is a fitting sign to help us celebrate Advent...If Christ is to come more fully into our lives this Christmas, if God is to become really incarnate for us, then fire will have to be present in our prayer. Our worship and devotion will have to stoke the kind of fire in our souls that can truly change our hearts. Ours is a great responsibility not to waste this Advent time."

- Edward Hayes, "A Pilgrim's Almanac"



**December 11th at 6:30pm**

*Please join our children as they re-tell the Christmas story through a courtroom as Judge Trudy resides over the mystery of Simon Shepherd!*

*Fun characters and dialogue, and upbeat and traditional songs will entertain you.*

*Dessert reception to follow.*

## "The Gift of Commitment and the Local Church"

I had a roommate in college who was the proverbial "chick-magnet." He had it all: looks, physically fit, virtuous godly character, and a winsome personality. This guy had women falling all over him in their attempts to curry his favor and, perhaps, if lucky, they might get asked on a date.

My other roommates and I were envious – yet, as much as we wanted to dislike him for winning the genetic lottery, among several other lotteries - he was simply a great guy and a good friend.

Bummer.

And yet, despite his legions of adoring, fawning female fans, he was perpetually single. Neither he, nor his jealous roommates, could figure it out. He often wondered why he could never "pull the trigger" and pursue one woman above all.

Then one day it occurred to me: my friend was simply a commitment-phobe. Think of it: In order to choose one woman, he would have to foreclose all other options. And, for a man with seemingly endless options, how does one simply decide to negate infinity?

Thankfully, I have never been forced to deal with such mysteries of existence.

I share this anecdote because, while light-hearted, it gets at a fundamental problem of modern life: we are all commitment-phobes, often terrified of committing to doing anything good for fear of missing out on something better.

We want to keep our options open.

Yet, in our age obsessed with individualistic self-fulfillment, Christians follow a Lord who asks His people to deny themselves:

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me [Matt. 16:24]."

And, yet, oddly and unexpectedly, the Lord promises to those who trust Him in this way:

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it [v. 25]."

Strangely, the way of self-denial in serving Christ ends in true self-fulfillment – discovering that real life is found only on the other side of faithful commitment to the Lord Jesus and His call on the lives of His people.

I had a conversation once in which someone claiming to be a Christian said he only really began to grow in his knowledge of God once he gave up on the church.

I was told that the church is simply full of hypocrites and phonies who just slow down "real believers" spiritually.

And, yet, New Testament Christianity constantly speaks of our faith getting worked out in and through others!

Whether it is the call to edify others, warn or admonish others, pursue reconciliation with others, or bear with others, these biblical commands flow out of Christ's call to love one another.

If our lives as believers are not visibly and meaningfully linked up with other believers, as we follow our Lord together, we are simply self-deluded as to the real nature of Christian faith.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: 'Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another [Jn. 13:34-35].'"

A "maverick Christian" is a contradiction in terms. One simply cannot love in the manner of Christ by practicing some kind of a church-less, "lone-ranger" faith. To be a Christian is to be united not only to Christ, but also to His people, the church.

This is reflected in our baptisms, as the scriptures tell us:

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit [I Cor. 12:13]."

God's intention for you and me is that we would grow, more and more, into the likeness of Christ, and God's design for this to happen is in His covenanted community, the church.

Pastor Mark Dever, of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. issues the challenging biblical call:

*"It simply will not do for Christians to be self-centered, even in the name of Christ. God is not only concerned about the length and regularity of your quiet time each morning; He is also concerned about how you treat others – and that includes how you treat others with whom you have nothing in common except for Jesus Christ. That's why you need to invest your life in others and allow others to invest their lives in you. Being a member of a church should inculcate in you a committed concern for others. Growing as a Christian is not merely an individual matter; rather, it is a matter for the whole church [Mark Dever, Nine Marks of a Healthy Church (Wheaton, Ill.; Crossway, 2004)]."*

Toward the end of resisting the individualistic, consumer mentality that is the spirit of our age, the leadership of our church family is steadfastly working on a fresh vision statement that captures the particular call that God has placed on our church.

We are in the midst of some very exciting, Spirit-led conversations - the fruit of which I believe the Lord will use to renew your own passion for God's church and the ministry to which He is calling you!

In the weeks and months ahead, please be in prayer for our church leadership as we seek to be faithful to the Lord's call for this particular family of faith that the Lord has given us to shepherd.

It's an exciting time to be a church member! The Holy Spirit is on the move here at Safe Harbor, and my heart and prayer

for you is that you would experience more and more of the abundant life of Jesus, even as you find it in laying down your own desires and agenda for His!

In conclusion, let's remember and give thanks for the great privilege of church membership:

*"It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God's Word and sacrament. Not all Christians receive this blessing. The imprisoned, the sick, the scattered lonely, the proclaimers of the Gospel in heathen lands stand alone. They know that visible fellowship is a blessing. They remember, as the Psalmist did, how they went 'with the multitude... to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday (Ps. 42:4)...' Therefore, let him who until now has had the privilege of living in common Christian life with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: it is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren."*

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (New York: Harper & Row, 1954)

Tony Lombardo

## WINTER COAT DRIVE

LCA is joining with The McArdle Center to collect winter coats for children to be distributed at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Recreation Center in West Baltimore.

Please bring new or gently used winter coats and jackets to the school or church, on or before Friday, December 9th and put a warm smile on a child in need.



## MAKE THE SEASON BRIGHTER!

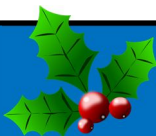
Can you help a family in need with some gifts this Christmas? We recently found out that a gift giving program was recently discontinued at a local church, and 10 families had already signed up.

If you can help, please see Sandi or contact the church office.

Thank you!

"We make a living by what we get but we make a life by what we give"

- Winston Churchill



*Our Christmas Eve services this year will be at 6pm and 8pm, and both will be candlelight services.*

*There will be a Sunday service on Christmas Day at the usual time of 9:30am.*

*There will be no Sunday school on December 18th, and it will resume in the New Year on January 8th. Watch for info on new classes.*

# Mission Corner



## From Rebecca with "Little Hands of Hope" in El Salvador

Hi Everyone,

We hope you all enjoyed your Thanksgiving! Here there was a festival for Saint Catarina complete with marching bands and fireworks and even earthquakes (everyone is okay :).

Our Christmas celebration is scheduled for December 7th and the children are so excited! Becky has been shopping with us and can hardly contain the excitement. She was ready to give out the toys a couple of days ago since she understands that the toys are for the kids. The exciting thing is that we are just about 7 baskets short of our goal, so only \$280 more to go! If you still want to donate, you can write checks to: Little Hands of Hope, Inc. P.O. Box 92, Riva, MD 21140 or donate online: [www.littlehandsofhope.org](http://www.littlehandsofhope.org). We are so very thankful for all of your donations and your prayers for our celebration. You are helping these children and their families to feel loved!

The children are preparing some Christmas hymns in English to sing at our party and we are working on some games for the kids and getting ready to order large amounts of cheese, corn, cabbage, and tomatoes for pupusas!

We will be in the States for the last half of December and a good part of January. If you would like to hear from us or have us speak to your Sunday school or Bible study or just a small group of your choosing, please let us know and we will try to schedule a time. We would love to update in more detail about what is going on with Little Hands of Hope.

Finally, please pray with us for Javier, one of our older students. He is about to go off to high school and we had a long discussion about God being loving and involved with His creation. Long story short, Javier believes that God created a bacteria and let it take off and start the world and is just standing back letting it go. After our discussion, I think Javier was having second thoughts, but we are praying that God will touch his heart with His love.

Thank you all for your love and support! We wouldn't be here without you.

Love, Becca

A percentage of your purchase made at Amazon can now go to Little Hands of Hope! Go to [www.littlehandsofhope.org](http://www.littlehandsofhope.org) and click on the Shop At Amazon Smile link and choose Little Hands of Hope, Inc. as your charity. A percentage of purchases made from this link will go to help children in El Salvador at no additional cost to you!



Friends at Safe Harbor,

We would like to say a big THANK YOU for supporting the mission of Young Life in the Bay Area! Your prayers, financial support, and continued encouragement makes a huge difference! We are so grateful for you and your partnership in the gospel!

In Christ,

Bay Area Young Life Committee

Thank you for helping to change lives in El Salvador!



Global Youth & Family Ministries is about to **celebrate 10 years on mission** to the nations & the next generations with the good news of Jesus Christ!

Over the past decade, our ministry has developed into an international team of cross-cultural MTW missionaries called to **serve the Church**...an extensive network of pastors, teachers, families, churches, and **advocates for the next generation**...and a growing, worldwide movement centered on engaging young people **for the sake of the Gospel**. In light of this growth & change within GYFM, we have decided to **change our name**

**from GYFM to Next.**

Moving from a simple **description of what we do to an embodiment of our call & vision** for the next generation, Next begins to open up a sense of **who we are and what we long for**.

Next is **forward-looking, hope-filled, and active** in its anticipation of and participation with God's ongoing work in the world and among his people.

So no worries about trying to remember a 4-letter acronym anymore! Our heart, our hope, and our battle cry is the same...**we are Next, for the nations & next generation!**

For more information, check out our updated website: [www.nextconnect.org](http://www.nextconnect.org).

**Our mailing address is:**

Next  
1600 North Brown Road,  
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

Rams Head On Stage Presents.....

**Todd and Cindy Bauchspies in concert**

**Saturday, December 17th, 2016 at 1pm**

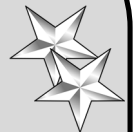
Join the Bauchspies as they bring back their Christmas Concert, this time to a completely new venue! **The concert will be a matinee show at the Ram's Head On Stage** - a local concert stage/listening room right in downtown Annapolis.

*For ticket information, go to:*

*[www.toddbauchspies.com](http://www.toddbauchspies.com)*



## SAFE HARBOR



### ANNUAL LADIES CHRISTMAS DINNER

**Thursday, December 15th at 6:30pm**

**Come and hear stories of the angels that are among us.**

**Be an angel and bring a non-food item to donate to Bountiful Blessings**

**Enjoy beautiful harpist music as you enjoy a delicious meal and fun fellowship.**

**Cost: \$5 in advance / \$10 at the door**

**Babysitting available**

