

Dear Fellow Laborers for the Lord,

Fall, 2008

Thanks for your inquiry into our ministry. I will tell you a little more about us and what we are doing.

We are a family ministry whose purpose is to help pastors and churches minister to families in their churches and to spread the gospel to other families in their communities. **Our burden is to encourage families in the Gospel and in growing in unity and oneness in Christ and to be used of the Lord to turn back the tide of social evils resultant from the breakdown of the family. Our goal is to preserve marriage and families and teach through personal testimonies and music the importance of biblical priorities with respect to the family.**

Family Members

I have two older boys out of the home. David graduated from law school in the spring of 08 from Liberty University in VA. Daniel is currently there as a premed student.

Susan and Naomi have graduated with Nursing majors and Jesse and Jerry are engineering majors. We have 10 that still live at home and travel with us.

We play bluegrass/ country / traditional folk fiddle type tunes/ and of course some of the old hymns.

Songs / Music

Some of our songs that we have done are: The old Rugged Cross, I'll fly away, The best is yet to come, Paul & Peter, Power in the Blood, Lilly of the Valley (instrumental), I saw the Light, Trusting You, Wayfaring Stranger (instrumentally), I'm asking you cause you know how, In the palm of his hands, His love for you. Will I see you again someday. Etc

When we do more outreach type events we do some more "secular" or popular stuff as well as folk fiddle tunes like Whistler's Waltz, Westfallia Waltz, Fisher's Hornpipe, Cripple Creek, Apple Blossom Specail etc. We do some popular country stuff like George Strait, things like Forever and ever Amen, and Randy Travis, or Josh Turner's Long Black Train. We try to be sensitive to people's tastes, preferences and convictions regarding music. We are who we are but we also don't want to intentionally offend the sensitivities of our brethren. Although we understand that all of life is sacred and the distinctions between sacred and secular are really only of a human construct, we also recognize that there are distinctions in purpose in music as that which is truly worship in it's purest sense in terms of it's direction *toward* God, and that which is more man centered and focused in terms of testimonies or merely human interest stories, all of which should be done to the Glory of God ultimately, regardless of their themes or specifics of their content. (So much for music theory.)

Doctrinally and theologically I am conservative. Graduated of MBI an in keeping with their doctrinal statement along with BGC, or IFCA. (At least I was 15 years ago when I looked at them last) We are not charismatic or Pentacostal but play in lots of churches that are. We are 'open' in the Lord and seek to accept all whom the Lord accepts (Romans 14) as His family and allow Him do direct their spiritual paths and doctrinal understandings in accordance with His divine time schedule for each person. We do believe in the practical reality of the Holy Spirits many ministries to us today and strive to be led and filled with and by the Spirit. Although we are 'contemporary' we are somewhat old fashioned. (Having 12 kids makes one old fashioned by nature!)

Background

I was a pastoral Major at MBI and majored in Greek and minored in Hebrew so doctrine and the meanings of words are important to me. I am not contentious but don't mind 'contending' for the faith when called to do so. One of my favorite sayings is " if a thousand people say a stupid

thing...it's still a still a stupid thing." So much of what is being played upon our country as 'good' is really not so good if we evaluate it in light of Scripture. I have worked in church planting for 8 years and pastored on churches that are BGC, Southern Baptist, Independent, Christian Missionary Alliance, and was saved in an IFCA church and Married in the Church of the Nazarene. We have traveled extensively and have a broad range of experiences within the context of the Body of Christ.

Spirit

We are a "cool" family in a good sense. Our children are great athletes, excellent musicians, and are really fun to be around. We have lots of experiences and so things spontaneously flow while we minister. We are not canned or program oriented. We are very spontaneous and kind of 'wing it' in the sense that no two concerts are the same. We view it as a ministry experience where the Holy Spirit uses his vessels to minister to people and we just try to have a good time and be sensitive to His leading.

We appeal to all ages, literally. The older ones enjoy the old hymns and we do them in bluegrass style so they are appealing and not like a funeral dirge. Jesse my just turned 18 year old sings The Old rugged Cross and usually several of the older ones are in tears. He sings it just like it is right out of the hymnal while we play on the strings. The cool thing about this is that the new generation gets to see a cool young kid enjoying a great song of "yester year" and connecting with it's message. It brings the generations together in an amazing way. The young people like our sound and hearing from our kids in stories and testimonies. The musical arrangements are appealing with various musical solo's and vocal harmonies. The kids are very talented.

Family Involvement

We always bring up the little kids to do a few songs so it's both fun and funny too. We turn Austin loose on stage a little bit and get him smiling and everyone has a blast. He won't be two and a half long and so we are really enjoying him at this stage.

We do a slide show in the intermission and it lets everyone 'come home with us' for a while including home, gardening, work, vacation, etc. the point is *that "our family is the most important thing happening in our lives and should be in yours too. Life is short, make the most of it! Celebrate your most precious resources, your relationships!"*

Sound Quality and Experience

Although we have only been doing this for a short time as a full time endeavor, we have significantly improved our sound quality and ability to produce a quality sound experience in a variety of different venues, both indoors and outdoors. Our first CD which was a rushed and somewhat thrown together project, (it was done in a professional studio with a very qualified engineer), and has a fresh family spontaniety to it, has received rave reviews from lots of folks. We have since then signifcantly surpassed it's presentation in terms of our own sound and musicainship and are looking forward to putting out a higher quality recording with more original works.

Currently we are touring extensively and have grown significantly in our abilities to minister effectively on the road and in churches, rescue mission, prisons, conferences, and seminars.

Maximizing our Potential

It is our desire to truly maximize our potential and seed to effecively minister at 150 – 200 events per year. We have many open doors at rescue mission, prisons, rehab centers, and colleges and universities. These are powerful ministy events, but we also need to be before the Lord's people in churches where we can receive a financial blessing to keep our ministry going.

We really need your help because we cannot do this alone. We've got to get the salt out of the salt shaker and we can't shake it by ourselves.

Having us in your church will be a great help to us as well. We are missionaries to today's families and to churches so we need help in getting before people. We do this full time as our individual and family occupation so we need to be ministering regularly to make ends meet.

Something I thought of recently...

Music is hugely important today, like nothing else really in terms of its cultural impact. The whole iPod generation is upon us. **People live and breath for music.** Live music is done two ways, one for the world and supports bars and casino's, and the other is for the Church. Those are the choices.

More Music Ministry Theory...

Within the realm of church music we have two paradigms. The piano and organ and the 'old' style of 'church' music, which is meaningful and doctrinally sound, but often fails to connect to today's generation. Then we have the 'Contemporary' band with its worship team and perhaps electric guitars, drums, and often times worldliness associated with it. This connects but often can create other problems such as sensuality, lack of discernment, immaturity, and shallowness. (I am aware of several awkward situations recently with church band members whose lifestyles are lets say 'emerging believers' and who because of 'slip ups' and various challenges, it puts leadership in an awkward position because they realize that the person is currently not someone who should be leading anyone based on their recent lifestyle choices).. However, in church music, these are the choices. Most churches are blending between the two to some degree. The dichotomy of 10 years ago is going away as things are becoming more balanced. I see this as a good thing.

We are really a third alternative, in between the two. Because we are predominantly bluegrass we are not "popular music," ie. the type of music played on most popular radio stations. We can appeal to both generations and people who like other genres of music. We are unique and truly in between. We do a brand of 'christian country' for lack of a better term, it's spiritual music with a message and it has a great appeal to all ages.

It is crucially important that the church be involved in sponsoring musical events.

Particularly music with a message. The people who fill our pews are going to gravitate to something. It's our job to find the good stuff to present them with an alternative to the worldly and sensual music of our culture which often reinforces messages that are contrary to Scripture..

Personally I love some of the newer country music today. George Straight, Josh Turner and Randy Travis (Three wooden Crosses) have some powerful music with great messages. The problem is with some of the other stuff on their CD's of some professional musicians. Sponsoring Christian musicians like ourselves allows access to the best music with a message without perhaps some of the worldliness and wrong messaged of purely secular ie. godless music.

Life Exchange at Little to No cost to the Church

Our venue is unique too. Professional musicians play in concert halls for \$25-\$65 per ticket. They are untouchable "stars", surreal personalities. *We come to your home town, your church, not for a concert, but for a life sharing event.* We share our lives with you through song, media, and after concert ice cream social or pot luck, and really mix it up. **We spend some time with folks and this gives us time to answer questions, share burdens, pray for and with people, build relationships that people long for.**

The potential of our ministry is amazing in light of it's impact. *We do all this at little to no charge to the church.* The follow up alone in terms of contacts and leads is huge in terms of building relationships with people outside the church as well. We always have about 15-20% of visitors

present. Many of these are non churched Christians. That's right. They are conservatives and family types who come to hear us. They may be disenfranchised or fall out from the 'organized church', and they are looking for a church home. Others come from the greater bluegrass and music community. They are out there, hiding in the bushes, music people, bluegrass enthusiasts who travel 20 to 60 miles to come to this type of thing.

One Sunday night after our concert a man came up to me and he lingered and wanted to talk alone. He pulled me aside and said these words, " I see what you are doing here. You are walking right into Satan's kingdom and doing God's work." He went on to tell me how a year ago his wife of 20 years left him. These were committed conservative Christians. He taught much of his whole life in a Christian school. They raised children and even home educated them for a time. She needed some 'space' so a separation became the next step. Three months later he was served with papers. It's a done deal and the rest is history. He was hurting and living in unbelief that this actually happened. Now he is trying to put the pieces of his life back together as a divorced man at 45 with kids who don't understand what's going on. He needed a hug and someone to pray for him who maybe wasn't his pastor or fellow parishioner.

These concerts are often life changing events for several people.

OUTREACH RESULTS

Recently the churches in our community sponsored a community wide evangelistic event. All the churches collaborated together for a week long series of events. Big name bands, the power team, vantrilloquits, special speakers, trained workers, prayer teams, even brought in a special speaker for the older set. (a separate event for everyone as the church growth guru's advise) The week long event cost \$350,000.00.! I am certainly not speaking evil of these people nor their methods, but there was little to no fruit from all this! This was supposed to be a huge event with spiritual impact in our whole community for months and years to come and there is a strange silence about the whole thing now that it's over. In fact we've heard absolutely nothing about any results.) The world is not impressed with the church's entertainment and sometimes the church doesn't understand this. We cannot compete with MTV, Disney Chanel, Discovery Chanel, HBO and Showtime. **What the world is craving is genuine spirituality.** *A spirituality that works in the day in day out grind of laundry and dishes, and unemployment, and broken cars, and all the stuff that life is made of. That what our ordinary family is all about. That's why the Lord is using us. People connect and relate and say... "Shoot, if they can do it we can too!"*

What we are finding is that on a simple weeknight even, a Tuesday or Thursday with a small ad in the paper and a few flyers around town, for a free listing or a inexpensive advertisement investment, a small country church can have a successful and fun event with 130 people present with 10% un-churched and 10% unsaved present. Bigger churches will yield bigger audiences. These people are exposed to genuine spirituality and many have life changing experiences. *That's a lot of impact for a little effort. The best thing is that the church can follow up and connect with these people and allow them to see the Love of Christ in the context of a body.* Concerts at the local performing arts center can't do this as effectively.

We have a short window of opportunity to do this. I have these kids, these gifted and talented ministers for a few short prime years of their lives. They could be making fifty to a hundred grand a year as doctors, nurses, and engineers and they are taking time out of their lives to be missionaries right here in this great country that we are seeing going to the dogs literally every day. Liberal politics, no fault divorce, abortion, infanticide, physician assisted suicide, gay marriage, you name it. It's all happening RIGHT BEFORE OUR EYES, AND THERE SEEMS NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT LEGALLY, SOCIALLY, OR POLITICALLY. This is our way of making a difference. Would help us help you help America?

We need to do many ministry events per year to maximize our potential and make the most of these two years. Help us help you. Let's schedule a ministry event today.

Because the Harvest is Critical,
Brother Paul

Recent Concert Observations

Spring of 2008

"We were quite amazed at the caliber and quality of your family. It was evident in how you related to each other that you have a very genuine love for the Lord and for each other. One thing we both noticed was how well your kids did interacting with the congregation after the concert. You didn't just clump up at your own table but the kids spread out and each visited with several members of our congregation. I had a great talk with your youngest daughter which was just delightful. We had one gal who was not a regular attender but the daughter of one, and she decided on Monday morning to commit herself to rehab. I believe that decision was related to your ministry here. Another thing we appreciated was hearing a few of those hymns. I think there are some people who are hungering for some of that and we never do hear it much any more. I believe everyone really enjoyed the evening, I know we sure did." Pastor Dave & Barbara Smith Foston Baptist Church