

Ancestry.com for the church

40 years ago, in August of 1978, 15 adults and 8 children moved to Alliance OH to plant this church. Many of you know a little bit about our coming from Alaska, so I thought I'd share a little of the story...but as I was thinking on it, I began to wonder, how did Dick Benjamin get saved, and how did the man before him get saved and on and on.

Christianity began with a slim chance for success...11 guys and some doubted

Mat 28:16-20 NIV Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but ***some doubted***. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore ***go and make disciples of all nations***, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. ***And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.***"

- Slim chance for success naturally speaking
- But ***"I am with you always"*** made all the difference in the world

The baton of the spread of Christianity was handed off by Jesus Christ to a group of young fishermen and tax collectors, who had spent 3 ½ years with Jesus, and who at the end **"some still doubted"**. It seemed like such a fragile group that was meant to go out and change the world, but Jesus sent forth the Holy Spirit to empower them, to remind them, to teach them, to guide them.

John Hus born 1369 - a belief in something he was willing to die for

John Hus was heavily influenced by the teachings of John Wycliffe who had come to regard the **scriptures as the only reliable guide to the truth** about God. He once said, **"Trust wholly in Christ; rely altogether on his sufferings; beware of seeking to be justified in any other way than by his righteousness."** He believed every Christian should have access to Scripture in his own language (only Latin translations were available at the time), he began translating the Bible into English.

Teaching these things ultimately led to his being **burned at the stake in 1415**.

- ★ By 1457, followers of the ideas of John Hus organized and formed the Unitas Fratrum (Unity of Brethren). They grew quickly and by 1517 **(within 60 years) they numbered at least 200,000**

In the year 1620 there was a persecution that rose against them and all but wiped them out. But by the 1720's God had raised up a man to help provide a place of refuge for those fleeing persecution - his name was **Count Zinzendorf. More about him later.**

Henry Scougal - The importance of raising your children in God's ways

- Henry Scougal born in 1650 in Scotland - He became a theologian, minister and author.
- **From his infancy, Scougal was raised with religion.**

A tiny seemingly unimportant decision

- Henry Scougal wrote **a private letter of spiritual counsel to a friend regarding Christianity...Scougal allowed it to be published in 1677**, a year before his death.
- It has become a short classic entitled "The Life of God in the Soul".

The spiritual oversight of a mother, the value of a friend

- **Sixty-eight years later**, in the spring of 1735, **Charles Wesley** (1707-1788), whose mother Susanna had commended it to her sons, **gave a copy of this little book to his friend George Whitefield** (1714-1770). Upon reading it, Whitefield was convinced: "I must be born again, or be damned." Whitefield testified that he "never knew what true religion was" until he read this book.

The friendship of George Whitfield and John & Charles Wesley

GEORGE WHITFIELD - born Dec 16, 1714

AMAZING WORK OF GOD: His conversion took place because a friend gave him a book...a book that HIS mother had given him...it was a book that was originally a letter written to a friend...and was only permitted to be published 1 year before the author's death...
WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THE LETTER HAD NOT BEEN WRITTEN?
OR IF THE BOOK HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN?
OR IF JOHN AND CHARLES AND GEORGE WERE NOT FRIENDS?

- ★ At the age of 24-26 he went to America in 1738-1740 and his preaching was instrumental in First Great Awakening
- ★ In his lifetime, **he preached at least 18,000 times to perhaps 10 million hearers.**
- ★ His final sermon during this time was in Boston, He preached to 23,000 people without a microphone.
- ★ **He helped John & Charles Wesley spread the Methodist movement**

Let me talk about Zinzendorf before I talk about JOHN WESLEY

He was born in 1700 in Dresden, Germany

In school he met a missionary who **"ignited in him the fire to "live among the peasants and win their souls for Christ"**

But instead of pursuing this dream, he was sent to Wittenberg by his parents to **study law**.

One day, while in an art museum; he saw a picture of Jesus hanging on the cross. Below the picture were these words, **“All this I did for you, what are you doing for me?”**

In May 1722, Zinzendorf, who was now 22 years of age, bought the German town Berthelsdorf and induced an expansion of the property: the construction of the new village Herrnhut (“The Lord’s Watch”), close to it. Zinzendorf had especially desired the city to be one of refuge for the Moravians, whom had been under intense persecution by the Catholic Church at that time.

During its first five years of existence the Herrnhut settlement showed few signs of spiritual power. By the beginning of 1727 the community of about three hundred people was **wracked by dissension and bickering**... an unlikely site for revival! Zinzendorf and others, however, covenanted to pray and labor for revival. On May 12, 1727 revival came.

Count Zinzendorf encouraged them to keep the discipline of the Unitas Fratrum, and **he gave them the vision to take the gospel to the far corners of the globe**. August 13, 1727, marked the culmination of a great spiritual renewal (**a three month revival**) for what became known as the Moravian Church in Herrnhut, and in 1732 (**in five years**) the first missionaries were sent to the West Indies.

AMAZING WORK OF GOD: He went to school at his parent’s bidding, but met a missionary who set his heart on fire.

What if he had not gone into the museum that day and saw the painting with the words.

What if he had given up when the community was caught up in dissension? - He prayed and fasted.

Description of the Moravian awakening

On August 13, 1727, the Moravian community was overwhelmed and filled with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at their communion service.

- ★ There was a sense of the nearness of Christ given to everyone present, and also simultaneously to two members of their community working twenty miles away. They left that communion at noon, hardly knowing whether they belonged to earth or had already gone to heaven
- ★ We saw the hand of God and were all baptized with His Holy Spirit. From that time scarcely a day passed but we beheld His almighty workings amongst us.
- ★ A great hunger after the Word of God took possession of us so that we had to have three services every day (5am; 7:30 am; and 9pm).
- ★ Everyone desired above everything else that the Holy Spirit might have full control.
- ★ Self-love and self-will as well as all disobedience disappeared and an overwhelming flood of grace swept us all out into the great ocean of Divine Love
- ★ The Herrnhut congregation (**which never exceeded 300 people**) started an around-the-clock prayer meeting, **and it went on for 100 years.**
- ★ This was the first Protestant church body to begin missionary work.

- ★ **In the 25 years following the outpouring of the Spirit on the congregation** more than 100 missionaries went forth from this village. **This was more than what the whole Evangelical church had done in two centuries.** They went to nearly every country in Europe, but also to many indigenous tribes in North and South America, Asia, and Africa.
- ★ By 1791, 65 years after the beginning of the prayer vigil, **the small Moravian community had sent 300 missionaries to 10 different countries.**
- ★ Today the Moravian church has about 1,100,000 members around the world

26 Moravians go to America (and John Wesley)

- October, 1735, on a ship carrying 80 English colonists and 26 Moravians
- One of the English passengers was JOHN WESLEY
- Although he was striving for righteousness something was missing. Before his American voyage, he wrote: **"My chief motive is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen."**

A terrible storm

- John got to know these Moravian Christians, appreciating their radiant joy and deep devotion. This was especially apparent one night just as the Moravians had begun their evening psalm-singing. The wind-swept sea lashed at the ship, ripping the mainsail and pouring through the decks. The English passengers were screaming, but the Moravians kept singing.
- "Weren't you afraid?" he asked one of the Moravians after the storm was over. "Weren't your women and children afraid?"

A "LIVED OUT" Christian faith

- The Moravian gently responded, "No. Our women and children are not afraid to die."
- After the ship landed, Wesley continued similar conversations with a Moravian pastor named Spangenberg, who launched some challenging questions of his own. **"Have you the witness within yourself?"** the pastor asked John. **"Does the Spirit of God witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?"** Wesley didn't know what to say. **"Do you know Jesus Christ?"** the pastor pressed. **"I know he is the Savior of the world."**
- "True," the Moravian responded, **"but do you know he has saved you?"**
- John Wesley was clearly a very religious man. He had not only trained for the ministry, but he formed a club devoted to finding new levels of righteousness. He was not only an Anglican minister, but a missionary, traveling across an ocean to spread the Christian faith. But what was this Christian faith he was spreading? Was it merely a matter of seeking righteousness? Or was there more? What was it that gave those Moravians such confidence in the face of death? How could they sing joyfully when others were shrinking with fear? Whatever they had, John Wesley feared he didn't have it. . . . ***I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay,***

and believe myself, while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain!'

An invitation to a church service - born again at the age of 35

- John kept in touch with some of the Moravians he had met on his trip to America. **At their invitation, on May 24, 1738, he attended a religious meeting on Aldersgate Street in London** and heard someone read from Martin Luther's Commentary on the Book of Romans. He felt his heart "strangely warmed." Suddenly he knew that Jesus had saved him from the law of sin and death. "It pleased God," he wrote later, "to kindle a fire which I trust shall never be extinguished."

AMAZING WORK OF GOD:

What if Zinzendorf had NOT challenged the Moravians to take the gospel to the 4 corners of the earth? (they would not have been on this ship)

What if they were challenged but unwilling to go?

What if there had not been a storm? - that brought fear into the hearts of some but magnified the life of faith in others.

What if John was unwilling to acknowledge his lack of confidence in his salvation?

What if the Moravian had not invited him to church on that glorious evening?

John Wesley, his brother Charles and George Whitfield went on to form the Methodist Movement - Their focus was the spreading of the gospel

- ★ At the time of Wesley's death in 1791 (a total of 53 years of ministry) there were over **500 Methodist preachers** in British colonies and the United States, and total membership of the Methodist societies in Britain was recorded as **56,000**.
- ★ In 1836 - there were 360,000 (in those 45 years - they added 304,000 - over **6,755 per year**)
- ★ In 1851 - there were 1,463,000 (in those 15 years - they added 1,103,000 - over **73,533 per year**)
- ★ From 1850 to 1905, **(a period of 55 years)** American Methodism averaged planting more than seven hundred churches per year. **38,500 churches**

Someone shared the gospel with him at age 15

- William Booth was born in Sneinton, **Nottingham, England** in 1829. **When Booth was about 15** he heard about **Methodism and the message of salvation**. He became an ardent convert and embraced the religion wholeheartedly

AMAZING WORK OF GOD: What if someone had not been willing to talk to him about the message of Salvation?

What if William Booth had allowed pride to keep him from surrendering to the LORD?

- ★ In his life **he traveled and preached in 58 countries**.
- ★ By 1904 there were more than 7000 corps. Though the founder died in 1912, rapid growth continued; 4600 new corps came into being during the thirteen years immediately following his death.
- ★ Today there are 14,527 corps and 1,182,100 soldiers

- ★ William Booth's son came to America

Ballington Booth went to America to help set up Salvation Army like ministry

- Ballington Booth was born July 28, 1857 - He and his wife arrived in the United States in **1887** and started the Volunteers of America

WH OFFILER - Born 1875

Bethel Temple and Outreach

- "When I was a boy of sixteen," he said, "I was in a vast meeting in **Nottingham, England**, and in that meeting was John G. Paton. John Paton went down to those South Seas and transformed those tribes into beautiful Christians and now you can't find a cannibal on those islands, but you can find lots of churches there. "In that meeting in England, the Lord Bishop said, '**Is there anyone that wants to consecrate his life as a missionary?**' and I stood up.

JOHN G PATON

The first two missionaries sent to these islands (The Hebrides) were killed and eaten by cannibals on the island of Erromanga on November 20 of that year, only minutes after going ashore.

Eventually missionaries like John Paton made it into the lives of the people and preached the gospel...He says, "On our own Aneityum, **3,500 Cannibals have been lead to renounce their heathenism . . . In Fiji, 79,000 Cannibals** have been brought under the influence of the Gospel; and **13,000 members of the Churches are professing to live and work for Jesus**. In **Samoa, 34,000 Cannibals have professed Christianity**; and in **nineteen years, its College has sent forth 206 Native teachers and evangelists**. On our **New Hebrides, more than 12,000 Cannibals** have been brought to sit at the feet of Christ, through I mean not to say that they are all model Christians; and **133 of the Natives have been trained and sent forth as teachers and preachers of the Gospel**. (p. 265)

This is the testimony of a man who sailed for the New Hebrides (via Australia) with his wife Mary on April 16, 1858, **at the age of 33**. They reached the island November 5, and **in March the next year both his wife and his newborn son died of the fever**.

He was eventually remarried and In the next fifteen years, John and Margaret Paton **saw the entire island of Aniwa turn to Christ**. Years later he wrote, "I claimed Aniwa for Jesus, and by the grace of God Aniwa now worships at the Savior's feet"

AMAZING WORK OF GOD: What if the missionary had decided to stop sending missionaries when the first two were killed?
What are the chances Offiler would be in the meeting the night this missionary spoke?

- I was placed in the Sudanese Missionary Society for a course of study. But before that four years was over I got an itching in my feet and so I left over there and **came to America and found myself in Spokane** and there God opened my eyes to a new thing. After fifteen years he sent me to Seattle and I have been doing missionary work ever since in my way."

THE SALVATION ARMY

- By 1899 (age 24) he had left Canada and settled in Spokane, Washington, where he experienced what he believed to be his first real conversion to the Lord. As it happened, **Offiler one day passed by a street meeting being conducted by Captain McClellan and the Volunteers of America.** His interest aroused, **he followed the Christians to their mission, where subsequently he went forward to the altar.** He both committed his life to Jesus and experienced a marvelous, instantaneous deliverance from the tobacco habit.

What if the mission society had not gone through with the mission because of danger?
What if Booth was unwilling to send people? Offiler would not have heard.
What if the people working with Ballinger Booth were unwilling to go out and sing and preach?

The importance of not giving up after a failure

WH Offiler - heart was stirred because of a street meeting in Spokane Washington

- Bethel Temple was led by a man named WH Offiler. **William Henry Offiler was born in Nottingham, England**, on December 20, 1875. William Offiler was stirred in his heart as he walked past a ***Salvation Army street meeting***. He went to the service, went forward and committed his life to Jesus in 1899 (24 years old).
- First pastorate in Spokane...failed. He said he wanted to support the ministry in any way that he could, but **he didn't want to become a preacher again.**
- Eventually God showed him that he was to be a pastor and he accepted a call in 1914 to be the pastor of the Pine Street Mission in Seattle

Sending out missionaries

- ★ In 1922 the church began sending missionary teams to the Dutch East Indies, first to Bali and then to Java. They set up Bible schools throughout Indonesia, raising up locals to do the work of the ministry in their homeland.
- ★ In about 1922 it moved to a new location because of growth...the name was changed at that **time to Bethel Temple.**

Don't give up after backsliding

- ★ Hugh E. Rounds and his family were sent to Alaska from Bethel Temple in 1946.
- ★ **He had backslidden for several years** after getting saved
- ★ But he returned to the Lord with his entire family in 1944.
- ★ He was sent to plant a church in Anchorage
 - Dick Benjamin went to help him
 - Dick eventually married Hugh Rounds daughter Carol
 - Dick eventually (1959) started Abbott Loop Christian Center

AMAZING WORK OF GOD: What if Offiler had given up because the first church failed?
What if Hugh Rounds had given up or not considered himself worthy after he backslid?
There would be no Abbott Loop, or Alliance Christian Center today

- ★ Bethel Temple had at one time 32 outreach churches
- ★ Their missionaries were instrumental in the establishing of the Pentecostal Church in Indonesia which today claims 500,000 converts in Indonesia.
- ★ They also reached **China, Japan, New Guinea, Celebes, Manado, Palestine, Mongolia, the British West Indies, Africa, Columbia, Italy, Formosa.**
- ★ From Indonesia, workers went to **Holland**, where they are credited with establishing **twenty churches.**
- ★ The congregation supported as many as **thirty missionaries at one time.**
- ★ More than seventy went into the foreign fields directly from the church.

Bethel Temple - and Dick Benjamin

- This is where Dick Benjamin became a Christian in 1945. He received his early training under pastor, W.H. Offiler.
- There was a man named Hugh E Rounds who was sent by Bethel Temple to Alaska in 1946 to start a church. Dick Benjamin was also raised up in Bethel Temple under the ministry of WH Offiler, and went to Alaska to help Hugh E Rounds. (who later became his father in law).
- Dick Benjamin started Abbott Loop Christian Center in 1959 at the age of 34 with 3 families
- ★ Over the next 14 years, the church planted three other churches in Alaska, and one of those three planted an outreach church of its own.
- ★ In 1973 Dick was ordained as an apostle and in the next three years (1974-76), (Colorado Springs Christian Center was sent out in 1975) **Abbott Loop sent out 354 men, women, and children on 22 church-planting teams.**
- ★ The bible college began in 1972 with 25 students. 1973 saw 50 students, then 100 in 1974, followed by 300 students in 1975.

Ed Abernathy got saved in 1969 in Unalakleet Conference in Alaska

- Dick Benjamin sent him to pastor a group of people that were getting saved at a coffee house ministry in downtown Anchorage.
- Ed was 35 his wife was 27 - they led the church

Mike Premo had gotten saved...25 year old evangelist - held a music concert in the park - FREE FOOD

- Kirk and Ruth went to that concert, and the next morning walked into C-Street Christian Center on Aug 25 1974 and gave their hearts to Jesus
- A year later we helped a church plant in Colorado springs
- 3 years later we came to start the Alliance Christian Center
- Mike and Karen came to Alliance and went to East Liverpool

What is the point of the story?

- 1) **The next 40 years will be much the same** - close calls, chance meetings, responding to the Holy Spirit - and where God takes us is wholly dependent on where you let him take you
- 2) God has been at work since the beginning of time
- 3) We are one link in a chain -- and now it must go beyond us
- 4) There were men who took a risk, trusted God, and saw the LORD work
- 5) It is by miracle after miracle, a small decision here, a chance encounter there, that ultimately led to the creation of Alliance Christian Center
- 6) We hold the baton now....let's take it forward.

These chain of events led to millions of people knowing Jesus...and now we stand and the baton is in our hands...where will we go.

It will happen in incidental ways. It will happen with every day events. It will happen because we are focused on the Great Commission. It will happen if we are willing to be used. It will happen if we don't give up.

Every day, incidental ways

- A mom raises her son to know the LORD
- A friend who writes a letter to another friend about how to become a Christian
- A friend giving a book to someone who doesn't know the LORD
- Not letting dissension rule the day, but pray and fast and trust God to work
- A 100 year prayer meeting
- A storm at sea
- A testimony of your faith that causes others to wonder about theirs
- An invitation to a church service
- A commitment to the Great Commission
- A chance encounter on the street, a salvation army and playing, and a man is stirred to go to church and gets saved
- A man not giving up because of hardship, the death of a spouse or a child, the failed church, a backslidden man, each of these were restored by the LORD
- It is helping your father-in-law
- It is stepping out into new territory (whether a new country, an island with cannibals, or the wilderness of Alaska) - or just stepping out of your comfort zone
- 24, 25, 33, 71, 81 age doesn't matter...He said if you do my work I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS TO THE END OF THE AGE.

We Must Remain Focused on the Great Commission

- -THIS IS WHERE JESUS IS WITH US

Focus on Children - 4-13 Window

Regional Relational Church Planting



Small Groups



1 Peter 4:8-10 Above all, **love each other deeply**, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9 **Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.** 10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to **serve others, faithfully** administering God's grace in its various forms.

Missions

- Guatemala (building) Fund work in Guatemala
- Latino Outreach - Salem
- Plant a church in Canton (Latino)
- Ecuador (David and Susu)
- Iglesia de Cristo la Palabra Viva (Xenacoj, Guatemala)