

# Backyard Missionaries

## *Staying Put with Purpose*

August 24, 2014



Welcome to a place where we're finding the courage to open our eyes to our God and our neighbors. Several His Place moms and dads and kids and friends enjoyed the pool this week! *Three years in the making!*



There's *still* work to be done, but our ministries have been using it all summer, it's *finally open*, free-of-charge, to *you*, and we're having baptisms in it *today!*

***So many of you have done so much so well, that I think it's actually necessary to remind ourselves why we've invested in such a seemingly extravagant pool!***



It speaks to our history and heritage, our calling and identity, and our principles and purpose and mission. In other words: ***why we do what we do the way we do.***

The pool came with the property. *(That's a photo of the first baptisms, back in 1983)* Then we got used to it: baptisms, youth nights, kids' camps, family swims. Then it wore out. Then we found out what it would cost to fill it in, cover it with concrete, and install a baptismal tank!



Do you know how much churches *spend* on *baptistries*?! Do you know they're called *baptistries*? Several thousand dollars gets us a basic Series 6, slip resistant, double entry, with a hand rail, plumbing package, heater, viewing window, and drip landing.



Keep in mind that does not include installation, onsite plumbing, overflow drainage, and changing rooms!



***My goodness, just give me a cow trough!***

Three years ago, pool installer and plumber, Jack Burns offered to *donate all* his labor, and to supply all the equipment and materials at cost. And, *he has!* He not only stepped up to the plate, he *followed through*, for *three years*, for the Lord, for this church, and for *you*.



***So that your kids can associate summer and swimming and fun with a loving Father who enjoys us enjoying His world. And, so that you can invite your unchurched friends to come to your church just to be blessed and refreshed.*** I want to read from our Membership Manual.

## FINDING A FIT

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This booklet wasn't written to talk you into joining His Place! Membership is all about interlocking with like-minded believers to grow and work together toward a common goal.

Every Christian church exists for the purposes of worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism, but the strategies and approaches to these purposes differ significantly from church to church.

Therefore, the fundamental question isn't, "How do I join?" but, "Are we a fit?" And to answer that, we'll begin by taking a close look at the mission our members share.

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**"EVER-DEEPENING DEVOTION":** We chose words like *pursue* and *ever-deepening* because they reflect the fact that **devotion isn't a destination, it's a day-to-day cultivation.** As we nurture a healthy, intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father (through His Spirit, His Word, and His people) our attitudes and actions will increasingly reflect the fruit of His Spirit.

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The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. – Galatians 5:22-23

The Apostle Paul labeled these proofs (of His presence and power) as "fruit" because they naturally grow in the hearts of those who faithfully nourish their roots in the soil of God's love, grace, and truth.

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Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. – Philippians 2:3

Did you notice that joy was *second* on the list of the fruit of the Spirit? By definition, the Gospel is *good news!* And **people who possess good news share it with enthusiasm, energy, and enjoyment.**

The joy of the Lord is your strength. – Nehemiah 8:10

If we're going to spread *authentic, joy-filled passion,* our approach can't be unnatural or contrived. It must be anchored in authenticity and flowing with genuine joy.

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## “MODELING JESUS”

The Bible wasn't written simply to be memorized and quoted. It was written to be modeled – after all, “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14).

Jesus is the highest example of intimacy with God, obedience to God, and love for all mankind. He supplies both the pattern to follow and the power by which we are transformed.

**Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ... – Ephesians 5:1**

Imitating means more than merely looking the part; as disciples we're called to be role models, not fashion models! Our goal is to be transformed – inside and out – into what Jesus would be as a spouse, a parent, a child, a student, or a clerk, or carpenter, or computer analyst.

All elements of our mission (*transformation, training, and rescue*) are achieved by modeling Jesus. And success isn't measured by the size of our church, but by how fully we love with His heart, speak with His grace, see with His eyes, and care with His hands.

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## “A RELEVANT FASHION”

We're called to build bridges, not barriers. If we're going to relate to our community in a *relevant fashion*, we must make every effort to be contemporary without compromising the truth.

Jesus used the parable of The Wineskins to help John the Baptist's disciples understand that forcing a fresh work of God into old religious forms and rituals will ultimately destroy both.

**[No one] pours new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved. – Matthew 9:17**

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INTRODUCTION ◀

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## “IN SKAGIT VALLEY”

Isolating ourselves from the world is just as misguided as imitating it. When Jesus took on flesh and blood, He didn't hide in the temple; He entered a corrupted culture and embraced a fallen people.

We see ourselves as “backyard missionaries,” called to embrace and respect the people God has strategically placed around us – the folks who live *in* and around Skagit Valley.

There are critical questions missionaries ask about the people they serve; such as, “What is their dialect?” “What types of music do they relate to?” “How can we minister to them according to their needs?” and “What negative experiences have they had with prior missionaries?”

A culturally ignorant missionary will have little or no positive impact. And there is certainly no excuse when the missionary is one of the natives!



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I'll stop here, because ... *that's you*. **You are a missionary.**



**We tend to think of the mission field as anywhere outside of our own zip code, when actually that's the *exception* to the rule. We're called to the mission field that surrounds us.**

**Open your eyes, acknowledge the fields white unto harvest, and recognize your significance on *this corner* of God's kingdom. God will gladly receive whatever you'll offer, and do a mighty work in your own backyard.**

Do you know where you are right now? You're in *my* backyard. *Literally*. I grew up in the Youth House. My parents put that first pool in when I was eight, in 1970.

Your backyard might not be your *literal* backyard.

**Your mission field is anywhere genuine relationships grow and provide you with a natural opportunity to share your life and love and faith. Open your eyes! A person who calls themselves a Christian, but doesn't care if others come to Christ is either a counterfeit, a coward, complacent, compassionless, or at best, a contradiction.**

**You are in the center of a mission field preordained for *you*.**

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders ... – 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12a NIV

Paul sees such significance in the normal ordinary. *Do you?*

**Some are called to go. But, if you aren't called to go, I guarantee you're called to stay.**

So, stay put. With purpose.

Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you — although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman ... – 1 Corinthians 7:20-22a NIV

**Even if you're enslaved, and can't find freedom in this world, you can show this world the freedom you've found in Christ!**

You can remain. And remain faithful.

And relate to those entrusted to you. And shine. And bless. And share.

Right in your own backyard.