Team seeks new ways to help widows and orphans

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." James 1:27 (NIV)

For the past year and a half a group has met periodically to pray, plan and dream of new ways Highland Park could help widows and orphans within the church – and beyond.

Called the 127 Initiative after James 1:27, the group was initially brought together by Pastor Brent Slater and his wife Inell after Brent preached a series from the James passage. The group hopes to create a church culture that radically loves orphans and widows.

"My desire is that helping orphans and widows will become a core passion of our church. We are supposed to love those He loves," said Brent.

While the group is new, already it has helped energize or oversee:
- Several widows in the congregation getting help through the Deacon Board with a new roof, stair lift and electric wheelchair.
- Setting up an information table on foster care and adoption that regularly appears in the foyer after services.
- A partnership with the 127 Initiative at Kampala Baptist Church in Uganda to provide medical care for orphans who otherwise wouldn’t receive it.
- A team of Christian doctors there identified and ranked four orphans who need medical procedures. Plans are underway to help the first child receive life-saving care.

And there’s more. The Initiative hopes to hold bi-annual information sessions where social workers provide an overview of what a family must do to foster or adopt a child. And the Team is investigating ways to help children who age-out of the state’s foster care system. (see pastor’s article page 2). Currently when a foster care child turns 19, that child is on his or her own. The Initiative would like to show Christ by matching the teenagers with volunteer families who could guide them through life decisions, provide a place to go for Christmas, or be like godparents, providing loving, adult influences through life.

The Initiative also wants to help families who are in the process of becoming foster or adoptive parents by coming along side them to pray and encourage them along their journey.

Creating an adoptive community at church is also a goal. Within the next couple months the Initiative hopes to bring together church families who have already adopted. They hope the families will meet, encourage one another and show their children that many at church were also adopted.

"Not everyone is going to foster. Not everyone is going to adopt. But five years from now I hope that everyone in our church would say this is something we as a church value," said Brent.

The Andras’ share secrets to 73 years of joyful marriage

Theodore and Mary Andras, both 95, recently celebrated their 73rd wedding anniversary with a night out for dinner with family.

The Andras’ met at church when they were 13, but married at age 22. The secret to their long-lasting love: Their Lord Jesus Christ.

"To begin with, you have to have God as the head of your home. Without Him, you can’t do it," said Mary.

"Claim His promises when you pray," added Theodore. "Always praise Him and thank Him every day of your life."

The Andras, who live in Beverly Hills in their own home and who still drive and get around independently, said they begin every morning they can together with prayer and devotions. They also enjoy singing Christian hymns as they come to mind throughout the day.

The Andras have three children, and after

Foster care birthday parties great way to help

If you are interested in helping orphans as part of the church’s 127 Initiative, one choice is the foster care birthday party ministry.

The ministry holds birthday parties, complete with pizza, cake and presents, for children who live in residential facilities in the state’s foster care system. The children, who often were removed from their parents because of abuse and neglect, have few possessions. Many have never had a birthday party.

"It is a pretty simple but very effective ministry," said Darin Schick who coordinates the parties with his wife, Katie. "We get to celebrate the kids’ lives and make them feel special."

Whenever a care group, Sunday school class or group of friends want to hold a birthday party, they contact the Schicks. The Schicks then call a non-profit organization called Big Family, which contacts several foster care facilities in metro-Detroit.

Each party typically has two birthday children and each child invites 10 friends. The parties are always held on a Saturday at the church. Several birthday gift suggestions are provided beforehand.

On the day of the party, the church group shows up early to decorate. When the guests arrive games are played, everyone eats pizza and cake, birthday presents are opened and the gospel shared.

Please see Birthday on page 2

The Andras and Mary Andras celebrated their 73rd wedding anniversary Jan. 28.

73 years of marriage, they’ve experienced their share of ups and downs. It saddened them when they see young people giving up.

"If you have any problems, take them to the Lord in prayer. You’re not big enough to handle them alone," said Mary.

"Never give up," said Theodore.

"And always remember," said Mary. "The Lord is on your side."
Pastor prays church will help widows, orphans

For this is our Father’s heart; let’s make it ours

Two years ago I preached a series on God as Father. We discovered that when God refers to Himself as Father He does so, most often, in the context of being a Father to widows and orphans. We called that series “Spittin’ Image”, because our desire is to be like our Father. As an outgrowth of that desire, we have begun what we call the 127 Initiative (see article on front page).

As our church becomes more and more involved in living out this area of our Father’s heart, agencies and ministries around Michigan who care for orphans and foster children have noticed. In March, Inell and I were invited to a luncheon put on by Michigan’s Department of Human Services (DHS). Governor Snyder was the keynote speaker, together with DHS Director Maura Corrigan. They are reaching out to churches, asking us to help them give children a future by changing one life at a time.

Additionally, our 127 Initiative Team is aware of thousands of children in Michigan in need of foster care homes. Our desire, like that of our Father in Heaven, is to offer love, compassion, and hopefully to enable some of them to find forever families through being reunited with their biological families, or adopted by a family that can embrace them as their own.

Could it be your home where the Lord would place one of these children? My prayer is that we will see at least five families respond during this year with a resounding, Yes! Whether it means adoption or foster parent- ing, we want to be like our Father. Will it be easy? No. But the best things in life often are not. Will there be times of joy? Yes, along with times of tears. There are other ways you can get involved as well, such as through mentoring children in the foster system. You can count on this - our Father will be with you. If you feel God speaking to you about further involvement, we, as a church, would like to walk alongside of you. Please call the church office and ask them to put you in touch with the 127 Initiative Team, and someone will contact you, pray with you, answer your questions and walk with you as you pursue His heart. Part of our HPBC mission statement is to transform the world. We must begin here at home and in our homes. I pray that we will be a church that responds, “Here I am” when we know what He desires us to do.

Birthdays, continued from front

Jeanne Fowler, president and founder of Big Family, said Highland Park is the only church in the area that has faithfully held these parties through the years. And the ministry, she said, makes a difference.

“Our children have only seen the worst side of the world. So when somebody comes forward to do something just because they are a child and no other reason, what an awesome gift that is,” said Fowler. “They get to be just a child, and for once have a whole day that is all about them.”

Betsy Thomas, of Farmington, said she has helped with several parties.

“The first one I did, which made me want to do more of them, the kid was 9 or 10, and I overheard him say this was the first birthday party he had ever had,” said Betsy. “By the time I was that age, how many birthday parties had I had? He was so excited. That sort of thing stays with you.”

Michigan had 17,723 children in foster care as of January 2011, according to the Children’s Defense Fund. Foster care children in residential homes typically live in cottages with about 10 other children and rotating shift workers.

Darin said he remembers one birthday boy who really wanted a bicycle and he got one at his birthday party. When the party was over Darin helped walk the beaming boy, who was about 7 or 8, to his car with his new bike.

“I’ll never forget it. The boy said, ‘This is so great! This is the best day of my life!’” said Darin. “I’ll never forget the impact that gift had on him.”

To help, contact Darin and Katie at kjplatkj3@yahoo.com or dscichick@twmi.rr.com or call 248-752-1777.

Church calendar highlights:

April 6 – Good Friday Service with Communion – 12:00noon
April 6 – Good Friday Secret Church Simulcast – 7:00pm
April 23 – Parent workshop on Creationism with Answers in Genesis – 7:00pm
April 25 – HPBC Annual Meeting – 7:00pm
April 29 – Global Missions Fest Combined Worship Service with Guest Speaker Dr. Billy Kim – 11:00am
Missionary life workshops begin at 9:30am. No ABFs this morning.
April 29 – Korean Children’s Choir in concert – 6:00pm
May 5 – Global Missions Fest Discovery Night – 6:00pm
June 20 – Family Fun Fair – 5:30-8:30p.m.
June 22-24 – Student Ministries Orange Weekend
Aug. 22 – Family Fun Fair – 5:30-8:30p.m.

HPBC asks: What are some ways your family celebrates Easter?

“’To celebrate the fact that Christ was the Passover lamb, we roast a leg of lamb. We also celebrate a family Passover at home and celebrate with a friend who is Jewish.’”

Elizabeth Kohler, Bloomfield Township

“We have a tradition on Easter to dress up together in the same festive color. The color this year is blue. We usually take a nice family portrait. Then on Easter we enjoy a nice meal with all the things like sugar or fried food that we gave up for lent.”

Raphael Davis, Sr., Detroit

“We do the usual things: We go to church and get together with family. When the kids were young we put eggs in the backyard and would go find them - sometimes still finding them two or three months later.”

Bob Perry, Beverly Hills

“When I was growing up in Scotland, we would boil eggs and paint them. Then on Easter morning we would go outside to a hill and roll them down the hill until they broke. The rolling eggs would represent the stone being rolled away.”

Jennifer Schoon, Farmington Hills

“Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the solitariness in a home;”

Psalm 68:5-6
Children’s leader eager to follow God

When Sue Reddyypogu’s youngest son, Joshua, entered kindergarten last fall, the Farmington Hills mother of three started to pray, asking God to show her if there was any job, outside the home, that He would want her to take.

Sue had left a successful career in computer programming a few years earlier to stay home with her children. Now with Hannah, Sarah and Joshua in school full time at Southfield Christian, she sensed God calling her to something, but was not sure what.

When New Year’s Day came Sue spent a good deal of time praying about this. Then that very night Dave Borror, Pastor of Administration, called to ask her to pray about considering the church’s children’s ministry director position because Laura Atkinson, who had held the spot for about 1 ½ years, was moving out of state.

Dave said Sue, a regular volunteer in the elementary program, came to mind for the job for several reasons, including her servant’s heart, spiritual maturity and strong people skills.

“We have clearly sensed the leading of God in providing Sue as our director of elementary children’s ministry,” said Dave. “We are confident of her strong gifts, ministry passion and the Christ-like character she brings to that position.”

Sue was born and raised in Hyderabad, India in a Christian family. She studied engineering at a predominantly Muslim university in India. Christians had to meet in a college room, versus a separate building, yet it was in this setting that, at the age of 18, Sue’s faith became real. After graduation Sue’s parents introduced her to Sam, her husband now of 16 years, who lived in the United States. They had an arranged marriage, which pleased Sue because she had been hoping to come to the United States to attend a university and continue her studies.

After graduation Sue’s parents introduced her to Sam, her husband now of 16 years, who lived in the United States. They had an arranged marriage, which pleased Sue because she had been hoping to come to the United States to attend a university and continue her studies.

At first things went great. Sue’s parents, after retirement, moved to the states and helped watch her children while Sue worked. During this time Sue’s career flourished, but as their family grew, stress reigned at home. Too often Sue’s job came before family, she said. She tried to switch to part-time, but in her very demanding field, she still was overseeing several projects and it didn’t work well.

Then crisis came. When Joshua was 2 ½ years old, Sue’s mom urged her to take him to the doctor because something was not quite right. Sue did, and was shocked to learn their son’s blood sugar levels were in the 600-700 range — a number dangerously high. Joshua was rushed to the hospital, where he spent three nights. He was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Doctors told the family his blood sugar levels would need constant tending.

Sue knew what that meant. “God was speaking to me through my kids, saying your kids are more important than anything else and you need to be taking care of them,” Sue said. “So right then I knew what I had to do. I re- signed from my job.”

Sue is stepping into her new role at a time of change. This summer there will be no Kids Camp program (see story below) but instead two family outreach events. The curriculum the elementary has used for the past three years written by John McArthur’s Grace Community Church is ending. A curriculum committee is reviewing three new programs and a decision is expected soon. Also, summer is coming, a time when many are on vacation making finding workers for the second and third hours a challenge.

But Sue said she knows she is where God wants her.

“I never expected God would use me in this way. But I feel such a joy serving in this position here,” she said. “It is a different direction for me, but a good change.”

Family Fun Fairs to replace Kids Camp

This summer the church will hold two family fun fairs designed to reach out to the community, especially to those who do not have a church home — yet.

Designed to replace Kids Camp, the first summer Fun Fair will be June 20 and will include carnival games, picnic food, live music, inflatable’s, cotton candy, face painting and some water games. The August 22 fair will have many of the same things, but with an old fashioned picnic theme, including pony rides, a petting zoo, and three-legged races.

Both events will run from 5:30-8:30 p.m. and will target families with children through middle school age. By having the second event at the end of summer, it will be a natural tie into fall children’s programs.

“We thought this was the year to try something fresh and new, somewhat innovative for us as a church,” said David Borror, Administration Pastor.

David said the hope is these events will attract people who do not attend church onto the church’s property, in through the doors, and eventually into a relationship with Jesus.

In recent years Kids Camp attendance has dropped from a high of 500 to 275 last year. While Kids Camp was designed in part to bring new families to church, it happened when kids programs were on summer break so if new families were to come they did not get to see all the church offers.

Volunteers will be needed for the two summer fairs to register families, run games, distribute food and connect with visitors. Look for more information in the weeks ahead.

Core beliefs taught in new, 5-week class

Potential church members are now required to attend a five week course exploring the 10 statements of faith foundational to Highland Park Baptist Church’s beliefs.

These statements range from believing that every word of the Bible is inspired by God and without error, to one day there will be a bodily resurrection and Jesus Christ will return.

The five week class explains the Bible verses behind the church’s beliefs, digging into why the 10 statements are true.

“Leadership feels it is very important for new members to spend a little more time understanding what we believe and why we believe it,” said Gordon Ainsworth, Shepherding Pastor.

Previously this material was included in one, 3 ½ hour class that also included dinner, and topics like discovering your spiritual gifts and getting plugged in. Now, by requiring a five week course on the church’s doctrine, the final class can focus on the other topics.

Walter and Tammy Marshall, of Southfield, are in the first membership group to include the class and said it has been helpful.

“We really like the church’s value in educating us about the Christian faith and not just seeking more members,” said Walter.

“I like the emphasis on Jesus Christ. He is definitely the core, the integral part of this church,” said Tammy.

Walter and Tammy first started attending the church last fall, and said they have also appreciated the church’s team teaching, governance system, expository teaching and diversity. The Marshalls are among 26 people expected to be officially introduced in April.

To view the church’s statements of faith visit http://www.highlandparkbaptist.com/about-us/what-we-believe
Global Missions Fest Celebrates Good News

Highland Park’s weeklong Global Missions Fest begins Sunday, April 29th with world-renown speaker and evangelist Dr. Billy Kim along with the Korean Children’s Choir, and ends Sunday, May 6th with Dick Gascho of Greater Europe Mission.

New this year will be four missionary life sessions anyone can attend, a combined 11:00 am opening service and a Saturday evening program featuring topics like human trafficking and feeding the homeless.

More than 25 percent of the church’s budget supports 67 active and 23 retired missionary families. Thirteen of those missionaries will be featured this year. The weeklong event is held annually to celebrate what God is doing around the world, giving church members a chance to meet missionaries up close, and challenging the congregation to spread the gospel themselves.

“We are celebrating the Great Commission – spreading the gospel to all nations,” said John Christie, Mission Board Events Committee Chairman.

Because one service is kicking off the weeklong event, there will be no ABFs – or adult Bible classes - on April 29. Instead everyone can meet missionaries and learn about their work before the service in four workshops called, Bread Water and the Word, Cross Cultural Ministries, Life on the Mission Field and Leadership Development.

Opening speaker Dr. Billy (Jang Hwan) Kim will have the 40-member Korean Children’s Choir sing during the service. The choir will also hold a separate concert Sunday night. Dr. Kim, 77, is often called the Billy Graham of Korea. He founded the Central Baptist Church in Suwon, South Korea in 1960 with 10 members. The church has 15,000 members today and Dr. Kim serves as Pastor Emeritus.

The Saturday night program is called “Discovery Night: God working through People like You,” and will feature the missions work that our students do, including teaching and raising money to fight human trafficking. Also Brad McCarthy, a senior at Lawrence Technological University, will discuss a community BBQ program he’s involved with to feed the homeless in downtown Detroit.

“The idea is to highlight what some of our people are doing in missions here,” said Dave Kuntzman, Business Manager, of that night’s theme. Also young children will get to mingle with the 13 missionaries and play in the high school gym where inflatable’s, cotton candy and snow cones await.

Answers in Genesis visit to defend creationism science

Ever wonder if evolution could coincide with creationism? Then you don’t want to miss the upcoming visit by Dr. Terry Mortenson of Answers in Genesis.

On Sunday April 22 Dr. Mortenson, from Answers in Genesis, will be the guest speaker on why the creation vs. evolution debate should matter to Christians. Dr. Mortenson will meet with the church’s student ministries on Sunday, parents Monday night, and Southfield Christian School students Monday and Tuesday.

His visit is sponsored by Southfield Christian School, and paid for by a donor. He’s coming to teach students how to better articulate why Creationism stands up scientifically, said Margie Baldwin, Southfield Christian Superintendent.

“We have been very concerned that we are equipping our students with Biblical truth that allows them to go into the world and say what they believe,” said Margie. “When they go off to college, this is a major issue that trips up a lot of Christians.”

Answers in Genesis is a Christian, non-profit creation apologetics organization that publishes science material and sends scientists out to defend creationism science. Dr. Mortenson has a doctorate in the history of geology. He’s expected to welcome questions, getting into topics such as the earth’s age, how did Noah fit all the animals of the world on the ark, why dinosaurs do fit with Creationism and carbon dating.

A free seminar for parents will be held Monday at 7:00 pm. During Monday and Tuesday Dr. Mortenson will speak at length with SCS students including taking them on a trip to Cranbrook’s Institute of Science.

“We want to make sure that we’re imparting Biblical truth,” said Margie. “We want our students to be equipped with Biblical responses to this whole topic.”

For more information contact Betsy Warren at bwarren@southfieldchristian.org or 248-357-3660 ext. 270.