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# New Hope

The Voice of Pastor-in-Residence

*A church-centered program of care and restoration for ministers in crisis.*

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Fall 2008

## "Take Care"

We have said it many times as we say goodbye. It has been said as parents watch their children leave. It expresses love, perhaps a little healthy anxiety. It means - be careful, watch what you do and where you go. The Bible states it this way: "...be very careful how you live. Live and love like Christ loved us" (Eph. 5:1-2).

"...each of us should be careful how we build and how we exercise our freedoms" (1 Cor. 3:10; 8:9). "Watch yourself, or you may be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

We are at times surprised, too surprised, by what happens to us. We are referring now to forced resignations from vocational ministry. Nearly 1 in 5 pastors faces this heart breaking encounter. Scripture clarifies the verb expressions - "Be watchful" and "Be Careful". To take care means:

**1) It is the care of forethought and provision.** Pastors seldom think about the loss of ministry. Everything seems to be going fairly well. Seminaries say little about the possibility of forced exits. Provisions like personal finances, maintaining good denominational connections, as well as preserving good emotional and physical health are given little or no attention. *Taking care* is thinking about the possibility that we may suddenly be without ministry and salary.

**2) It is the care of diligent and earnest thought.** It is not merely being awake but the watchfulness of one who is intent and knowledgeable. It is more than casual thought, Monday morning self-talk based upon a bad Sunday. A pastor must not be paranoid and pre-occupied, anxious and distracted by "clergy-killers" who send critical emails from time to time. Vigilance and diligence are essential in this wicked world.

**3) It is carefulness that is exact and accurate.** We do not haul out past suspicions. We will not look for convenient scape-goats upon which to lay guilt. We accept personal responsibility. We dare not seek to satisfy our wounded ego. *Taking care* is asking "what really happened anyway?"

**4) It is spiritual awareness and vigilance.** Carefulness is keeping your heart strong before God, your walk with Him unsullied, your humble confession quick and to the point.

Strengthen your sense of God's call. Be on your guard and stand firm in the faith. Be men of courage, strength, and love. (II Cor. 6:13) Devote yourself to prayer, self-control and be thankful (Col. 4:2). Our enemy, the devil, seeks to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith (1 Pet. 5:8).

As a brother pastor, I say to you and myself - *Take Care.*

### New Hope Staff

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles A. Wickman".

Dr. Charles Wickman  
President of PIR

*A Financial Statement is available upon written request from the Office of Consumer Affairs.*

# From Sinking Sand to Our Sure Salvation

By Rev. David Hillis

A visit to our costal beaches or national sand dunes reminds us of Christ's warning parable of building a house upon the sand. The storm comes and the home collapses because of the unstable and shifting foundation. These are unstable days - nationally, financially, and ecclesiastically. Many enter the ministry feeling a security based on the fact that the "gates of hell will not prevail" when out of nowhere the church closes or the leadership is dismissed. ***What does a pastor do if his church dies or if he is asked to leave?***

A carefully organized family budget is of little value if there is no salary. The major bills and daily needs continue to require funds but there is no reserve. Many Americans and clergy are in serious debt. A frugal spending plan

excludes everything but the bare necessities; but what can we do when the kitchen pantry is bare, the car has no gas, and the mortgage and health premiums are due?

1) Guard the little \$ you have and stop using credit cards as a safety net. According to the popular Christian financial guru, Dave Ramsey, we tend to spend 12-18% more with credit use rather than paying cash. Separate needs and "wants". Pay off small debts and make sure you make the minimum monthly payments on credit cards on time or you face stiff penalties. Paying interest is making someone else wealthy.

2) Revised monthly budgets must include some funds for unexpected expenses - car repair, quarterly taxes,

school fees and clothes, and infrequent premiums. The networking of friends and use of wholesale Costco warehouses help reduce living costs.

3) Prayer is critical in managing personal finances. Praying and talking together remind us of times when God showed Himself in very practical ways and carried us through fiscal ambushes. God is the ever present Faithful One who called us and will help us. He is the Provider of every good and perfect gift. Even while our nation goes into record national debt and thousands of families are facing bankruptcy, God is moving His plan and people toward a future harvest of millions of souls. Our Savior is the Rock of our Salvation and the Foundation of our Hope.

## How is Giving to PIR Unique?

- 1) We give because we love the church and wish to advance its unity and effectiveness in the world.
- 2) We understand that the pastor is key to the advancement of the church in the world. Scripture is clear as to the respect that is to be shown to God's leaders and the financial support they are to be given (Luke 10:7).
- 3) PIR provides spiritual, relational, vocational, and practical resources to wounded leaders and their families that many churches do not or cannot provide.

"Knowing God without knowing our own wretchedness makes for pride. Knowing our own wretchedness without knowing God makes for despair.

Knowing Jesus Christ strikes the balance because he shows us both God and our own wretchedness.

Wretchedness induces despair.

Pride induces presumption.

The Incarnation shows man the greatness of his wretchedness through the greatness of the remedy required."

Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662

## Who We Are

Pastor-in Residence, Inc. networks grace-based churches and their pastors with churchless pastors for the sake of their renewal, restoration, and possible return to vocational ministry. We seek to be a resource to the church and an advocate for displaced servants of God. We gratefully acknowledge that our Almighty God loves to use ordinary people who are:

- Alarmed by the growing trend of forced pastoral resignations in our denominations.
- Grieved over the church devastation and division caused by carnal agendas and bitterness.
- Committed to helping pastors resolve conflicts and ill-will directed to their congregations.
- Wanting to promote understanding and respect for leaders and members of local fellowships.
- Helping exited clergy return to ministry, if that is the will of God.
- Aware that nearly a fourth of all trained and experienced pastors suffer a forced resignation.

## Moses: "In the Wilderness"

By Dr. Willis Dowling

In the Disney movie, "*The Prince of Egypt*," Moses, who was that prince, kills the Egyptian and trudges across a wind swept desert, dragging every step of the way. The Scripture does not elaborate on these dark moments in Moses' life, but you know that he must have had some desperate feelings about himself. We, who know the story, can see the big picture. We might tell Moses his future: his glorious Exodus mission with all of its hardships and triumphs. We may wish someone would explain a few things to us about our lives as well.

Correlating Moses' story with that of exited pastors has struck a chord with many readers of this newsletter. You may be experiencing some pretty perplexing times. You may be in a forced exit. It seems that life can be grossly unfair.

Rather than to project 21<sup>st</sup> century psychology onto Moses to determine how he must have felt about his life, I think it would be best to hear what he had to say. Psalm 90 is the best text to meet that demand. It deserves some contemplation. The following verses are instructive to us.

*Lord you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.* Before we moved into the

parsonage or the manse, You, O God, have been our dwelling place. You, O God, are the homeplace where we have lived and will always live.

*Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.* Before there was ever a church and a pulpit to preach in; committees to try to work with; denominations to report to; difficult people to contend with—**You, O Lord, are God.**

*You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning—though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered.* You can almost feel the desert wind blowing on your face as you read that. Life is so short. We have to forgive in order to be forgiven. Don't let bad ministry experiences sabotage your peace with God. Time is short.

*We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. You have set our iniquities before you, our*

*secret sins in the light of your presence.* As we prayerfully search our own hearts, we find that we are not without guilt. We may have been wronged and we may not deserve to be exited. But God knows our secret sins. Even Moses acknowledged his secret sins and found forgiveness. We should too.

*All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. "Come on Moses, has it been all that bad?"* But then we read the Bible and realize that Moses would relate to our troubles.

*Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.* He is right. We shouldn't test God's wrath by a wrong response to ministry hardships. God still has more for us to do to serve Him.

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## **News Flash!**

### **You Are Invited to Meet Dr. Jim Krames Executive Director of PIR**

**He will be visiting churches and friends of PIR. He will be speaking at Norfolk Garden Baptist Church on Wednesday September 17th at 7:15pm. On Thursday evening September 18th he will be speaking to friends of PIR at Kempsville Presbyterian Church at 6:30pm. On Friday September 19th local pastors are invited to a luncheon at New Life Providence Church in Virginia Beach. If you would like to attend any of these events please RSVP - Dr. Cal Frett - 481 6485 by noon on Monday September 15th.**

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*Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. May your deeds be shown to your*

*servants, your splendor to their children. God has compassion on His children. His love is unfailing. We can be glad again. We can sing and praise and worship God. God can restore us and make us laugh again and be happy. We can be healed.*

*May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish*

*the work of our hands. While we may have had troubles and hardships, God's favor is there to rest upon us. God can take the meager efforts in ministry that we thought had failed and make them succeed in the years to come. His word does not come back empty.*

*May God give you the strength to endure your wilderness. There will be better days ahead.*