

Empowering Through Evangelism

■ by Karen Pearson

“Let your heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.” These words, spoken by Pastor Dwight Nelson in a sermon at Pioneer Memorial Church six years ago, have profoundly impacted the lives of many AU students—and in turn, have resulted in an ongoing community outreach.

Following the sermon that Sabbath afternoon, a carload of students left campus, looking to see if they could find anything that would break the heart of God. They didn't have to go far to find it. Economically depressed and burdened by crime, Benton Harbor provided unending opportunities for these committed young Christians to share Christ—opportunities that continue to this day.

I recently found myself sitting across from AU Chaplain Tim Nixon in his comfortably cluttered office, listening as he told me about the Benton Harbor evangelistic cam-

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To date, 284 individual streets in Benton Harbor are being prayed for specifically by 146 students and members of the Pioneer Memorial Church. Homes on a third of these streets have been receiving visits for the past four

months. Literature is shared, prayer is offered, and relationships are being formed. Teams of young people have

been enrolling people in Bible studies, and maintaining contact for the past six weeks. Chaplain Tim says it has been a transforming experience for many of those involved. While there were some initial fears regarding racial and cultural differences, everyone has been cheered by the warm, welcoming reception they have received from the people of Benton Harbor.

Since the first of the year, Andrews seminary student Divine Ayivore has been meeting each Sabbath at New Plant—a new church plant—in Benton Harbor. He and his friends started with a group of about fifteen worshipers and have seen it grow to between 75 and 100 people who meet each week for Sabbath School, Church and a potluck lunch. New Plant will form the nucleus of the new church in Benton Harbor and will become a satellite of Pioneer Memorial Church, with Andrews seminary students providing staffing and leadership for the new church.

I ask Chaplain Tim about his own journey into the ministry, and specifically about his passion for evangelism. He laughs and tells me that originally he went to Oakwood College to study business administration. He had chosen to attend Oakwood, even though he had won a full scholarship to study business at Baruch College in New York.

After being at Oakwood for only one week, he found



Chaplain Nixon discusses student spiritual life with Clara Alcantara, co-director of AU out-REACH, at the Campus Ministries Leadership Retreat.

campaign slated for August 28 thru October 2. Initiated largely by AU students, this campaign will run five nights a week with Chaplain Tim as the speaker. The preparation for the campaign—begun many months ago—is impressive.

himself questioning his choice of degree. "I decided I was going to fast and pray, and not quit until the Lord had shown me what He wanted me to do." He smiles at the memory. Soon after, he switched to theology, and has never regretted it for a moment.

After graduating in 1981, he joined the Northeastern Conference and served as an associate pastor in New York for two and a half years. He studied for his MDiv while with the Northeastern Conference, and then in 1990 traveled across the country to work for the Southeastern California Conference. Like so many young people who sign up to be part of the great Advent movement, he moved again two years later, this time across the country to join the Allegheny East Conference, where he worked for four years in the Washington D.C. area.

Chaplain Tim has always been invigorated by spending time with young people. One of the things he finds the most attractive about working with youth is their "endless ability to surprise one." So, when he received a call to serve as campus chaplain at Andrews University in 1998, he accepted without hesitation, and moved here with his wife, Sandria, and children, Michael and Camilla.

Today, he wears many hats. As administrative chaplain, he serves as campus pastor, leads out in premarital and couples counseling, is sponsor for the New Life Church, coordinates the student-missionary and task-forces ministries, is sponsor for BRANCH (a student spiritual-life organization), teaches in the Seminary and is on the staff of the Pioneer Memorial Church, where he participates in many areas, including small-group ministry.

I ask him to share his vision for the work he does here at Andrews. He speaks warmly of wanting to develop a multigenerational ministry. "Each generation is called to

win their generation," he explains. He wants to empower young people for this ministry, training them to intentionally focus on sharing the good news, the essence of evangelism.

There is one question I have been waiting to ask. "Who has had the greatest influence on you as an evangelist?" His answer takes me by surprise. While I expect to hear

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Pastor Tim Nixon is looking forward to the Hope in Christ revival series in Benton Harbor.

him recite the Evangelist's Hall of Fame, he reflects for a moment before saying that "the single greatest impact that shaped my pas-

sion was growing up in a church that had an 'evangelism mind-set.' The local church elders consistently engaged in outreach."

In closing, I ask Chaplain Tim what one thing he most wants to convey to the students he works with. Without hesitating he says, "Fall in love with Jesus. Once you do, your life is never the same again." And students across the campus, through all disciplines, are doing just that.

This fall, our young people are on a mission. Not to a far-away foreign field, but somewhere closer to home. They have heard the cries of the broken in Benton Harbor, and along with the leadership of Pastor Skip MacCarty and the involvement of Pioneer Memorial Church members, they are moving ahead. With Chaplain Tim Nixon as speaker, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, they will work to bring the good news that in Christ, the lost are found, the homeless find shelter and the hurting are healed.

There is no telling what can happen when you allow your heart to be broken by the things that break the heart of God!

Karen Pearson works in the office of University Advancement. A pastor's wife for over twenty years, she has a passion for prayer ministry. Her deepest interest is in the area of healing prayer.