

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21

There is a 33 mile stretch of road, WV Route 7, that runs from Hundred, WV, west to New Martinsville, WV on the Ohio River. I say west but the reality is that at any given moment you could be facing west, north, south, even east, and every compass direction in-between, all on your westward journey. It's the type of road that even us locals are prone to say: "You took route seven?!?!" if someone travels that road.



But amidst all the twists and turns, corkscrews, plunges and rises, there is one place that stands out. As you come up out of one dive you crest a hilltop that has been cleared. It is just high enough to afford a view beyond the immediate road ahead. For just a brief moment you gain a broader view to the left and right, of where you've been, and even where you are headed, before you plunge down another hill more suited for the giant slalom than vehicle travel.

What does this have to do with Fairmont, the kingdom of God, and ministry here? For us, and I suspect beyond us, life can very much feel like route 7. I'm grateful I survived the last hairpin turn without losing too much luggage out the back of the truck but I don't really have time for reflection because there's another blind curve at the bottom of this hill I have to figure out how to navigate and guess what I think the brakes just went soft...and so it goes. We push from one good thing to the next in our context. There is never a shortage of opportunities. As I write this I can see the 5 page document on my desktop of unfinished projects for folks in the church, the community, and our community ministry partners. And that doesn't include all of the other connections and opportunities that don't involve saws running and drywall mud.

Personally, I enjoy most aspects of the journey. Most days the daily grind is more of a groove than a grind for me. But I also need a glimpse of the bigger picture. I suspect most of us need those moments where God allows us to crest the hill and, ever so briefly, look back, look around, and look forward and go "Wow, this work is so much bigger than I will ever see, imagine, or understand." It reminds me that we serve a God who truly does more than we can ask or imagine, precisely through the daily grind of the life of the church. And it is precisely through that daily grind of life as the church that He reveals His glory, advances His kingdom, and brings redemptive hope, healing and help to His world.

When are the times that the Lord gives me this glimpse? Ironically it's often during our busiest time of the year, our summer ministry season. For seven weeks this past June and July we had the privilege of hosting 580 people from 35 different churches. These ministry teams served 73 homeowners in our community. Through Bible Clubs in parks, apartment complexes, and small churches in old coal mining communities, over 150 children were served, touching over 100 families, many of them multiple times. Teams also ministered in the nursing homes to our large, underserved nursing home community, bringing hope and encouragement in places very much in need of Jesus' touch.

I say "we" had the privilege but, more accurately, it is through the ministry of Dayspring Camp and Conference Center. But when you pause and realize that the Project Director, Community Engagement Coordinator, Kitchen Coordinator, Logistics Coordinator, Camp Director, Grill Master, and Dayspring Board Treasurer all live in this community and are part of our Sunday gathering, it can be hard to distinguish where one ministry ends and another begins. In the summer context, I have the daily opportunity to see these church members serve the teams as they serve the community. Every Friday night, homeowners and teams share testimony of the Lord's work during the week. Tears flow. Smiles beam across faces as people from very different walks of life share how they have been profoundly changed through a week of intense discipleship. Returning team members speak of how this week in Fairmont has changed their life in important and ongoing ways. As one adult first time team member said this summer, "This has been the best week of my life."

Below are some glimpses of what I get to see the Lord doing through some of the people that the Lord has gathered up here in Fairmont to serve not only this community but the broader church.



“Seven weeks of service” is actually a misnomer. The Lord gives us opportunity to serve the community and the broader church year round. Here Mike, Hannah Keith and Lydia Kuehnert are working hard mapping out the summer weeks, pairing staff with ministry teams well before anyone has torn out the first chunk of plaster in a home. Whether it is Lydia organizing logistics in the dead of winter, Hannah opening and prepping the cabins in the spring, Myra making sure the kitchen is ready for summer, or Mike keeping the facility in good condition (sometimes with fun rental toys to play with!), all of these mostly unseen and unheralded efforts are used by the Lord to strengthen churches from Connecticut to Florida, from the Chesapeake Bay to beyond the Mississippi River.



The local church fills many roles that encourage, equip, and enable ministry teams to both serve our community well and to experience their walk with Jesus in new and renewed ways. Recently, the board hired Lydia to serve as Camp Director, in addition to her work handling all logistics, assisting teams with projects, serving in the kitchen, as well as a variety of other roles that make the camp experience flow. Board treasurer, Hannah, also serves in a myriad of ways at the camp as well as assisting teams with projects and working with her husband, Mike, coordinating projects. Sarah Butler serves not only as the community engagement coordinator but also serves in the kitchen as well as helping lead music some weeks.



Bible clubs do more than bring the hope and healing of Jesus to much needed places in our community. They also profoundly touch the hearts and strengthen the faith of the team members who lead them. Here are a few of the many moments that change lives which are facilitated through Sarah’s year round work making connections in our community.



Sometimes the Lord gives us a glimpse of some of the many things He is doing all at the same time. This summer a team from Florida had a complex painting job they were pushed to finish. A team from Pennsylvania had some extra hands, so they partnered with them at the end of the week to finish the work. In the process, both teams were encouraged by one another. The Lord strengthened His church in Florida and Pennsylvania through shared ministry in West Virginia.



This particular project was made possible because of the faithful service of countless teams over the past 30 years. “It just so happened” that Lydia and I were at the Fairmont City permitting office when this couple was also there. One of the city inspectors walked out of the office with them, saw us, and said “Those are the folks that you need to talk to right there.” The faithful witness of ministry teams over the years has been salt and light to the city of Fairmont. This project offered a profound glimpse into just one of the larger works the Lord is doing. It makes me wonder how many other ways the Lord bears witness beyond the immediate moment.

To return to my opening metaphor, I hope that my attempt to bring you along on the journey has also given you a glimpse into a few of the ways in which the Lord is working beyond what we often see, ask, or imagine. I’ve also asked a good friend of mine, Gene Wilson, from Aimwell Presbyterian Church in SC, to offer his thoughts on how the Lord works through the summer and year round ministry in Fairmont to broaden his own vision of the Lord’s work. Gene and his wife Susan (pictured here with Lydia on the last night of summer ministry this year) have both served as summer staff for many years. After circumstances required them to take some time away, they were able to return this summer as support staff for a week.



“Susan and I have experienced firsthand the impact that Dayspring has in the Fairmont communities and it has been a blessing to our lives to be able to participate in this ministry. We see the importance of the year-round outreach in many ways including physical, relational and faith and how it allows the summer ministry to continue to flourish. We, along with our home church, support Dayspring and Rev. David Eades and we encourage everyone reading this to consider supporting the church plant ministry and the continual Dayspring ministry because of the Christ focused impact to people’s lives and to the Kingdom. So thankful the Lord is moving in these ways.”

My hope is that you have been encouraged with a glimpse of how the Lord reaches far beyond Fairmont and builds up the broader church through your gifts to the ongoing ministry here. If you or your church has a little room in your missions giving, please consider if the Lord would have you invest those resources here. It is the gifts of the broader church that enables us to, in turn, serve the broader church. To give, you can use the link [here](#) or contact me directly (919-675-7270), if you would like more information.



Lastly, and I think most importantly, I hope that this attempt to give you a glimpse of how the Lord in His unfathomable kindness and mercy does more than we can ask or imagine has encouraged you where you are. May the Lord use this to enable you to lift your eyes along the journey and see that God loves you and is doing far more good for you and through you than you can ask or imagine and may that strengthen your heart as you continue the journey with Him.