



INTERNATIONAL TRAINING & EQUIPPING MINISTRIES

Transforming churches one pastor at a time

March 2023

Dear ITEM Partner,

A saying that we, as followers of Christ, use from time to time is “It was a God-thing,” meaning what happened seemed to be a direct work of God, a providential move of God. One such act of God, I truly believe, was how Chris McMillan became the man who is moving into my role by year’s end. You may have heard this story but it is worth repeating.



I was in Bangkok, Thailand in 2015 for an International Pastoral Training Conference. I was glad to be there but on the surface nothing significant was gained by being there. But God was at work behind the scenes. Chris was pastoring a church in Virginia, he had been on mission trips where he had worked with pastors, and was looking for opportunities to be more involved in that kind of ministry. He ran across the list of the organizations that were present in Thailand and from the long list he chose to contact us. He did, we talked, he went on a trip with me, and there was immediate synergy. After making some trips on his own, he later asked what I would suggest he do to get more deeply involved. Then when the time came to seek my future replacement, Chris seemed like a logical choice. When I asked him about it, without hesitancy he answered with an enthusiastic, “Yes!” That seemed to be a prime example of “A God-thing!”

There was one of those recently. This time Chris was the receiver. Here is his report.

“I just had a great discussion with Jared David. He is an associate pastor at Columbus Bible Church in Columbus, Michigan. He said he was visiting someone in hospice care and the nurse was telling him about how excited her pastor was about ITEM. So he went home and looked us up online and wants to become an associate trainer ... The best part is that he is also full-time as a software engineer but has ample time to devote to annual travel and intends to be self-funded. He has served in the military but has also served on the mission field in Taiwan and China ... just wanted to keep you in the loop.”

As our teams continue to equip pastors through seminars and mentoring, we get feedback like this. Steven Mzungu has a heart for the coastal region of Kenya. He sent this report recently after attending the Baptist Convention meeting of the Coastal Region.

“This included the 30 association leaders, pastors, and department leaders. It was a very productive interaction as we presented the ITEM opportunity, and all I heard from many of those who participated was, “this is what we have been lacking ... we are glad our own can get something that can help our churches and has come back to us with good news,” and, “we look forward to discussing more about this and how we can incorporate this in our churches and associations for God's glory.”

One final encouraging report came from our Zoom meeting with many of the country coordinators. The coordinator, from Malawi, one of our newest countries, reported that our notes are now being used in a Bible school.

We thank God for allowing us to participate with him in equipping pastors who, by His grace, are becoming spiritual examples, disciplers/equippers, and expositors, those who can “rightly divide” and teach the Word of God.

We also thank you for making this possible through your prayers and financial gifts.

EXPANSION UPDATES

- A second team went to India in January.
- A second trip to Benin will take place soon.
- Our first trip into the Dominican Republic and Ethiopia is on the horizon.
- One of our board members, a pastor with ties to the Philippines, was there in January and part of his agenda was introducing this ministry to his contacts there.
- Sandee Cnossen completed her first “fact finding” trip for the Women’s Ministry recently and next steps are being discussed.
- I led two apologetics seminars in January. Both were in Kenya either in or close to Nairobi.
- I will be speaking at a second round of apologetics seminars in other parts of Kenya will take place in early May.
- Other apologetics seminars that will take place in Rwanda and Nigeria are in the planning stages. They will take place during my July trip.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

I put this in a category of its own to be sure it sticks out. A man who has been following ITEM for years has been offered the position of Director of Operations with ITEM and things seem to be moving forward steadily. We’ll leave his name out for now since he is still employed. We expect to be able to give a full report on this very soon.

TRANSITION UPDATE

As we move closer to the date when Chris McMillan will take the final steps completing our transition to his leadership of the ministry, as you can imagine, I have mixed emotions. On the one hand, this has been “my baby” since 2003 and giving “your baby” to someone else is an emotional challenge. But let me take the analogy a step farther.

ITEM is still considered a small “mom and pop” organization. By God’s grace, we have achieved amazing things for such a small, but growing, organization. But it is time for the “baby” to grow up. It is time for “mom and pop” to grown up, executive level organization and Chris has a network far beyond what I ever had and I believe is the man to take ITEM to the next level. He already has other pastors planning on going on trips with him. He has an attorney contact who is considering joining our board, who would assume the position of Board Secretary. This may sound to some like we will be moving from a small organization that must rely on God every step of the way to a larger ministry that can do it on their own. It will be up to Chris and the board keep that from happening. That is a priority!

WHAT ABOUT “STEVE?”

Lord willing, I am not going anywhere soon. I am highly motivated to grow the apologetics ministry I’ve started under the ITEM banner. Interest is growing and as long as I am able to do what I am doing, including traveling, I want to keep going.

The board has made it very clear that they see this transition as a way to free me up to do what I am most passionate about. Since 2003 my role with ITEM has been fund raiser-administrator not teacher that I am gifted for. I’ve told people that I am the CEO, “Chief Everything Officer.” Now, with Chris soon taking over the director’s role, I will be able to focus most of my time doing what I love and what God has gifted me for. That excites me and makes me look forward to every day.

2023 ITEM LEGACY BANQUET

The date for this year’s banquet has been set for Saturday, November 4. This year we will be celebrating ITEM’s 20th Anniversary and officially handing the directorship to Chris. We would love have you come and celebrate with us!

By His grace,



Steve Van Horn
Founder/President