



▶ CHILDREN'S QUIZZING
PAGE...2



▶ THE CURRICULUM
CONNECTION
PAGE...3



▶ FAITHFULHOMES.ORG
PAGE...6

Connection SDMI



SDMI
USA/CANADA REGION



RESOURCING DISCIPLESHIP

The 2nd Greatest Discipleship Resource...

by Larry R. Morris

Rarely a week goes by that I don't receive at least one advertisement for a new discipleship resource. The promise is typically the same – this new resource will help churches launch their congregation into a higher orbit of discipleship and ministry. It will unite families, save singles, and transform the community. Okay, I'm exaggerating a little bit. However, it is not far from the truth.

As ministry leaders, you've seen resources come, go, and return with new packaging and pricing. And still the church struggles to make disciples who, in turn, make disciples. As a result, we often become jaded, blinded to the foundational answers to the discipleship question.

The reality is that the single greatest resource to discipleship is a personal and vital relationship with God through Jesus Christ. There is no substitute for that relationship. And we know that foundational to that relationship is prayer, habitual scripture study, and communion with others who have a growing relationship with God.

Recent research points out that an often-forgotten discipleship resource that has a profound impact upon the next generation is the family - specifically parents, biological or adopted! The latest research from the National Study of Youth and Religion reveals: "Mothers and fathers who practice what they preach and

preach what they practice are far and away the major influence related to adolescents keeping the faith into their 20s."

Dr. Christian Smith, lead researcher in the study, stated that the connection between parents' faith and their children's faith is "nearly deterministic." He further stated, "No other conceivable causal influence ... comes remotely close to matching the influence of parents on the religious faith and practices of youth..."

I doubt if anyone reading this is shocked. We intuitively believe that faithful homes produce faithful children. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 expounds on that reality. And that is why SDMI is bringing in a number of family and intergenerational ministry specialists and practitioners to M15. You will want to attend those workshops as well as the many others highlighting discipleship.

Please, don't get me wrong; I am thankful for all the discipleship resources available today. This issue of SDMI *Connection* will point you to a number of great resources that you will want to research and use. However, we need to always remember that the greatest resource – well, the 2nd greatest resource – for discipleship is **you**.

Larry Morris is the USA/Canada SDMI Regional Coordinator.



PRAYER - AN ESSENTIAL DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCE

by Dr. Woodie J. Stevens



“May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10, NLT).

Jesus taught His disciples to pray for God’s Kingdom to come. But what does the prayer for God’s Kingdom to come look like? It begins with a desire for God’s will to be done. It is a profound longing for His Kingdom to rule our lives. The invitation is for the Spirit of Jesus and His Kingdom to be sovereign over us. This prayer is driven by a reordering of our lives around Him and His ways. All of our priorities are yielded to His priorities and our values to His values.

How does this Kingdom arrive in us? His kingdom comes as we make Him our Lord and Savior. It arrives in the very person of Jesus, the Christ, living in our hearts by faith. Then His kingdom life shines through us to our world by the Holy Spirit of Jesus that lives within.

The Kingdom of God within you comes through believing that communication with God makes a difference. Prayer is the action that demonstrates that we believe in the reality of God’s Kingdom on earth. Prayer triumphs over competing voices that distract from our mission and counteracts the overwhelming influence of the popular culture. Prayer positions us to hear from God and trains us to be like Jesus and His Kingdom.

Our Father, may Your Kingdom come soon as we seek Your will in all we say and do through Jesus Christ, our King.

Woodie Stevens is the Sunday School & Discipleship Ministries International Global Director.

CHILDREN’S QUIZZING - DISCOVER GOD’S STORY

by Rev. Leslie Hart



With time an increasingly precious commodity, people examine their calendars as carefully as their budgets. The days when “committed Christians” attend church simply because something appears on the church calendar are long gone. Dedicated pastors and parents alike are asking tough

questions: “Why are we scheduling this activity or funding this program? Does it really fill a need and deserve an investment of time and treasure at this time in the life of our family or church?” As stewards accountable to God and each other, these are appropriate and necessary questions; and when the subject is Children’s Bible Quizzing, the answer is a resounding “Yes!”

More than a mere program, **Bible Quizzing is systematic discipleship**, a reliable way to share the Great News with children entrusted to us. Children’s Bible Quizzing fulfills the Great Commission in our own churches and households while equipping and inspiring the next generation to “go and do likewise.”

Effective discipleship involves more than Scripture memorization. When children realize how Biblical facts, dates, names, and events fit together and apply to their lives, God’s Living Word takes firm root in their hearts.

Bible Quizzing leads children beyond facts and even knowledge into genuine wisdom through understanding who God truly is and who we are in relationship to Him and His creation. In struc-

tured, age-appropriate Bible study, children begin to identify with Bible characters in their life situations. God becomes increasingly real as they experience His presence and true character. Through the lens of love in action, the story of God’s people gradually becomes their story; they discover He is indeed with them always, through mistakes and mishaps, tragedies and triumphs.

So much more than a program, rote memorization, or a competition, Children’s Bible Quizzing is a fun way for children to learn basic Bible study methods and better understand their spiritual journey with God. If you are interested in learning more about children’s Bible study using Children’s Bible Quizzing materials, contact me at childquiz@nazarene.org. Check out our facebook page (Children’s Bible Quizzing), and get acquainted with a community who believes in the importance of helping children discover God’s Story as their story.

Leslie Hart is the Children’s Quizzing Coordinator for the Church of the Nazarene.



THE CURRICULUM CONNECTION by Dr. Merritt Nielson

“The God of nature is the God of history, and the way to know him is to do his will.” --Rabbi Abraham Heschel

Sunday School is still one of the most effective discipling enterprises in the church. Scripture is its key underpinning, and Christian faith formation is its continuing objective. Ideally, we should gather around Scripture with an intentional frame of mind—one that maximizes the potential for our thinking to be informed, our hearts formed, and our living transformed by the God who speaks to us through Scripture’s holy pages.

Further, we believe that we actually encounter Jesus as we engage Scripture together in our Sunday School classes, Bible study groups, and small Christian communities. Subsequently, we discover that those sacred texts inspired by the Holy Spirit unfold God’s will—both individually and corporately—as we seek first to do His will as it is done in heaven. Thus, we come to know in more intimate ways who God is and what His intentions are for us.

Essentially, we must approach sacred Scripture with the belief that as participants in a Sunday School class or small group, we are present to hear from God, not to listen to ourselves. It’s not that Scripture is disinterested in where we are and how we are living; but we are convinced that as we study the Bible we do so, first and foremost, to be taught, informed, inspired, challenged, and, yes, even rebuked by God through the truth of His Word.

Our settled conviction is that a curriculum for Nazarenes should provide a guided way of hearing what God is saying to us individually and corporately through Scripture and evoke an integrated response of faith that reminds us who we are and

why we are and whose we are. Thus, we have developed Sunday School and small group curricula to help us remember that we study the Bible to hear from the one true and holy God. The moment we forget that God is among us as we study the Word, what we hear will only be the empty reverberation of our own voices; we will be none the better for having read and studied His Word. On the other hand, when we gather together around God’s Word in humility and faith and experience God’s presence in our guided encounter with His Word, we discover the how and the why of being Christlike disciples.

Merritt Nielson is Curriculum Director, Nazarene Publishing House.



A FREE VBS FOR EVERY CHURCH

by Rev. G. Daniel Harris



Next March, every local church in the USA/Canada region will receive a special kit from Kids Reaching Kids. The kit will contain information about the 2015 Mission Offering Project, *In His Name: A Place for Children with Special Needs*. In addition, each kit will include a complete “The God of the

Underdogs” Vacation Bible School (VBS).

This VBS, available in English and Spanish, was developed in response to a growing need within Nazarene churches looking for a VBS that...

- 1) could be effective and lead children to Christ;
- 2) could be carried out without creating a financial burden on the church;
- 3) would retain a Wesleyan/Holiness emphasis.

“The God of the Underdogs” VBS will feature five underdogs from the Old Testament: Joseph, Esther, David, Hannah, and Daniel. On each day of the VBS, one of these characters will discover that, despite the challenges he or she faces, God remains faithful. Five other special guests - Gally Gator, Pennie Penguin, Doc Duck, Callie Cat, and Lennie Lion - will show children that

anyone who trusts in God can rise above any challenge.

Each VBS kit includes:

- Three 17” x 22” posters
- One set of character trading cards (more can be ordered from the website)
- Daily skits
- Daily Bible stories and memory verses/activities
- Daily craft, snack, and game ideas
- A daily discipleship and missions focus
- A daily student activity sheet.

Additional free resources can be downloaded and reproduced from the website. For more information about the VBS or the 2015 offering project, visit www.gotuvbs.com.

Dan Harris is the Kids Reaching Kids coordinator for Church of the Nazarene.



LOOKING FOR MORE FREE ONLINE RESOURCES?



With shrinking budgets and tight schedules, the need for quick access to free approved resources is always welcome. You now have that in the Wesleyan-Holiness Digital Library!

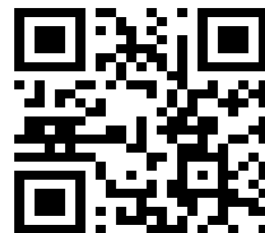
Through www.whdl.org you have a free, multidisciplinary, open-access resource of books, literature, multimedia material, and archives. These resources have been collected into a single repository initiated by the global Church of the Nazarene for you!

As financial and personnel resources become available, plans are to expand the library to include documents and resources from around the globe and across the disciplines of education. It is the desire of the Nazarene planners and developers of this digital library that other Wesleyan-Holiness traditions will see fit to join

this effort and add their own educational materials to the already rich collection.

Access is easy. Go to www.whdl.org and search for the subject of choice. While the WHDL is a fully functioning site, a considerable amount of work is still to be done. You will notice many changes occurring over the course of the next few months. Be sure and help the development of the site by adding your suggestions and requests.

The Wesleyan-Holiness Digital Library is one more way your Church of the Nazarene is providing you with resources that will help reach your community for Christ. Scan the QR code to find out more about the Wesleyan-Holiness Digital Library or go to www.whdl.org.



STICKY FAITH by Kara Powell & Brad Griffin of Fuller Youth Institute

Research shows that 40-50 percent of students from good youth groups and families will drift from God and the church after high school. As leaders and as parents, we're not satisfied with that. We suspect you're not either. In our study of over 500 youth group graduates at the Fuller Youth Institute, we uncovered three main shifts that are needed to help young people develop a faith that sticks, or what we call Sticky Faith (see stickyfaith.org):

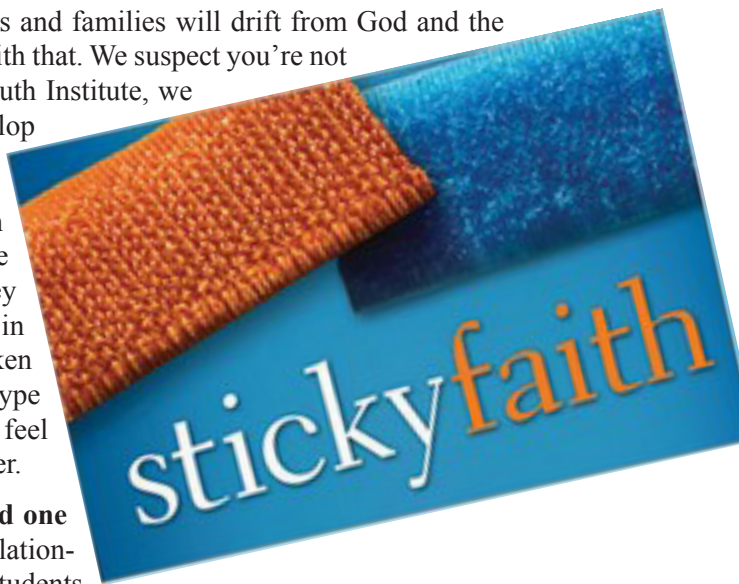
1. Shift from a behavior-based gospel to a grace-based gospel. When asked to describe what it means to be a Christian, most young people point to a list of behaviors. They believe God will like them better if they can follow a list of "Dos" and "Don'ts" based on keeping their sin in check. This type of faith is analogous to a jacket; it can be put on and taken off, but it doesn't change what's on the inside. When students with this type of faith experience some sort of failure in high school or college, they feel like they've taken off their faith (like a jacket) and thrown it into a corner.

2. Shift from a two-table church to welcoming young people around one family table. Our research shows that intergenerational worship and relationships are linked with faith that sticks. The problem is that many of our students don't know the church at all; they only know the youth group. The better we get at youth ministry, the more we tend to segregate students, much like an adults' table and a kids' table at a family gathering. While we're not calling for an end to youth ministry, we are calling for a new approach where the whole church finds more ways to come around one table as a faith family. Ideally, each young person is surrounded by a team of five adults who consistently support and walk with him or her. We call this a new "5:1 ratio" for ministry.

3. Shift from "dry-cleaner" parenting to ministry partnership. Dry-cleaner parents drop their kids off at youth group, expecting to pick them up 90 minutes later all clean and pressed. In other words, parents have learned to outsource their kids' spiritual development to the church and its leadership. Youth leaders need to imagine new ways to partner with parents in their kids' faith formation so they are empowered and equipped to nurture faith in the family.

What Now? A number of Nazarene churches are incorporating the Sticky Faith philosophy into their ministry approaches by utilizing insights from the Sticky Faith books and curriculum and free online resources at stickyfaith.org. In addition, several Nazarene churches have participated in year-long Sticky Faith Cohorts, learning labs for churches ready to deeply engage the content and process. See stickyfaith.org/cohort for more information.

Kara Powell, PhD, is the Executive Director of the Fuller Youth Institute (FYI) and a faculty member at Fuller Theological Seminary. **Brad M. Griffin** is the Associate Director of the Fuller Youth Institute, a speaker, blogger (fulleryouthinstitute.org), author, and volunteer youth pastor at Mountainside Communion Nazarene Church.



SDMI RESOURCES DISTRICT LEADERS

Lake Placid Camp and Conference Center (Lake Placid, FL) was the setting for the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International (SDMI) 2014 New District Chair Orientation.

In five sessions, the USA/Canada regional SDMI staff presented to attendees the numerous ministries and resources available through the SDMI office and affiliated ministry partners. Special speaker Greg Pressley, former South Carolina district chair and current district secretary, helped the newly-elected chairs understand their responsibilities and pointed them to some of the best practices for ministry leadership. Other speakers included Dr. Woodie Stevens (Global SDMI Director), Dr. Bob Broadbooks (USA/Canada Regional Director), Eric Bryant (NPH Director of Sales and Church Relations), and Dr. Larry Dennis (Florida District Superintendent).

The success of the orientation is reflected in comments from the attendees. One stated, “I’m excited to let my district know about all the free resources we have through SDMI. I’m looking forward to meeting again at M15!” Another reflected, “This has been very beneficial to me as a new district SDMI Chair. Thank you for putting this event together.”

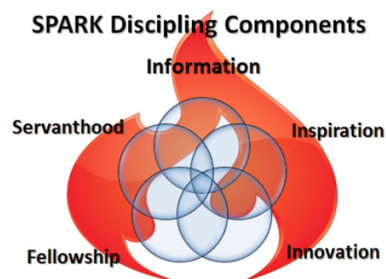
The next SDMI USA/Canada event will be held in conjunction with M15, February 9-11, 2015, in Kansas City. To learn more, go to usacanadaregion.org/sdmidlc.



New SDMI district chairs for the 2014-2015 calendar year are as follows: Tom Boese (Kansas), Tim Cruz (Hawaii), Kelly Downs (Michigan), Matt Hastings (East Tennessee), Jason Hill (Missouri), Troy Hochstetler (Northwest Indiana), April Hodge (Prairie Lakes), Bobby Howard (South Arkansas), James Leston (Wisconsin), Brad McKenzie (South Texas), Wayne Nelson (Kansas City), Kevin O’Connor (Southern California), David Pettigrew (Dallas), Ron Ray (MidSouth), Enrique Rojas (Southwest Latin America), Wayne Searls (South Central Ohio), Stephen Sheets (Alaska), and Fred Wallis (East Ohio).

DISTRICT DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCING: “SPARK”

by Rev. Michael Downs



On Tuesday, Oct. 28th, pastors and leaders from several Nazarene churches across four districts attended a gathering at Olathe Faith Journey Church of the Nazarene to discuss ways to help create a church-wide discipleship culture in their

local setting. The groups came together to reflect on the growing difficulty of discipling people in today’s ministry context and to hear about how one church has worked to overcome these difficulties.

Pastor Michael Downs shared the *Spark Discipleship Process*, which he wrote for his local church three years ago. His team explained what drove them to restructure their entire church around the model of discipling people. Since implementing *Spark*, the church has seen a surge of new people involved in ministry and taking ownership for expanding ministry. The levels of fellowship and serving have deepened through intentional times together.

The *Spark Discipleship Process* addresses the benefit of getting the entire church involved in being disciples and the need for a holistic approach to mentoring individuals. One of the key components of *Spark* is meeting in people’s homes over the month and having a variety of activities built in throughout the month.

The breakdown of the month starts with the pastor training the group leaders on what the month will entail from preaching and group standpoints. In week two, groups have a night of GROW – which is the night the groups discuss the scriptures for the month and try to find ways to challenge themselves to grow in areas discussed. Week three is GO night, where the groups go out into the community and serve together. This night has become powerful partly because children are able to serve side-by-side with their parents and other adults in their *Spark* group. The last Sunday night is GATHER, which is centered around fellowship together and reflecting on the month and where God has brought them during this time.



To learn more about *Spark Discipleship Process*, contact Pastor Michael Downs at olathefjc@gmail.com or (913) 205-5769.

MAKE THE CONNECTION WITH GOD'S WORD

Free Mobile App Offered to Church of the Nazarene at M15

by Arnie Cole

According to Pew Research 90% of American adults have a cell phone, and 58% of those are smartphones. Technology is here to stay. We can either see it as a nuisance to ministry and discipleship efforts, or we can engage it as a tool to help people draw closer to Christ.

Because of the generosity of Back to the Bible, we are excited to announce that every congregation in the Church of the Nazarene can have their own mobile app at no cost to the individual church. The mobile app is called goTandem – a free app that discovers the user's spiritual needs and then delivers personalized biblical content to help the user grow closer to Jesus.

goTandem is based on the results of a 7-year study by the Center for Bible Engagement of over 100,000 people from 20 different countries. This research showed the greatest spiritual growth among those who engaged the Bible four or more times a week. Back to the Bible created goTandem to help believers and non-believers conveniently engage the Bible on a daily basis.



goTandem users have experienced positive growth. Currently, half of new goTandem users don't engage the Bible on a daily basis; but after a few months using the app, 83% engage their Bible four or more times a week.

In October 2014, the app launched its white label, which allows ministries to have their own app powered by goTandem's logic and technology. Ministries will know where their members are spiritually, measure how they are growing, and disciple their users on a daily basis. For more information about goTandem visit www.gotandem.com, email DiscipleshipPlace@nazarene.org, or call toll free at 888-243-2767.

Arnie Cole is CEO of Back to the Bible.

FAITHFULHOMES.ORG - FREE FAMILY RESOURCES



The *Faithful Homes* website is founded upon the belief that it is time for the church to come alongside families and equip them to bring Christ into the center of their homes, making every light on the hill a Christ-centered home lighting the community for the world to see. *Faithful Homes* begins with the assumption that God is already at work in homes,

often in ways we do not immediately recognize.

Acknowledge strengths then address challenges.

Once we can find and acknowledge where God is already at work, we can then seek to form our families into more faithful households by building on those strengths and addressing specific challenges. Our hope is that every home will create a household covenant that will guide that family toward a deeper relationship with God, each other, and the community. *Faithful Homes* also seeks to connect different homes to each other and to the local churches, creating a larger, intergenerational ministry in local "households of faith" known as congregations.

The church and home relationship is crucial to spiritual life.

Faithful Homes was founded upon the belief that the church and

home share a "symbiotic" (or life-giving) relationship much like an expectant mother and her child in the womb. Congregations and families need each other for vital and vibrant spiritual life.

At faithfulhomes.org, you will discover resources in the following areas:

- Finding Your Faith at Home - resources to find grace in your household.
- Forming Faithful Homes - Ideas and practices to guide your home into increasing faithfulness.
- Fashioning a Household Covenant - guidelines to develop a family covenant for spiritual growth.
- Connecting Households of Faith - strategies that connect homes to churches, communities, and each other.

We invite families, ministers, and others to explore Faithful-homes.org to find a large number of resources that may be tailored for use in the home and the local church.



CAN YOUR CHURCH HELP SINGLE PARENTS?

by Dr. David & Lisa Frisbie

During the lifetime of today's teenagers, the number of households headed by single parents has been steadily increasing. Within your own congregation you may have children and teens who are being raised by a single parent --- while out in your community there are many more single parents doing their best to raise great kids.

Here is what the United States Census Bureau reports about today's families:

- From 1970 to 2012, the share of households that were married couples with children under 18 at home has decreased by half --- dropping from 40 percent to only 20 percent of all households.

- As of the 2012 census, there were 76 million "family households" in the United States (plus another 39 million "nonfamily households"). If we look at the 76 million family households there were 56 million households that included a married couple; there were 20 million that included either a single male or a single female householder.

Sometimes an excessive reliance on statistics can blind us to the bigger picture of family studies and family life. But here is the reality: more and more households in your community and across North America are now headed by someone who is not married to a life partner.

Using the 2012 data we find 20 million "family households" being led by a single person. Using the same 2012 data about three out of four of these households are headed by a single female, about one in four by a single male.

Here are some observations for your pastor, church board, and lay leaders to consider as you plan effective ministry and outreach to your community:

1) In every household where children and teens are being raised, "parenting" or "effective parenting" is a hot topic --- always relevant, always of interest. If you want to reach families --- teach parents how to raise kids more effectively. Bring in an outside expert or speaker, or have your pastor

(or a lay leader in the congregation who has skills in this area) teach or lead a seminar.

2) In single-parent households, there is often more anxiety about the process of raising children, since one person is carrying the load without a partner to help. Single parents may be more open to training, equipping, and resourcing --- since they already realize and admit that they need some help.

3) When planning events or programs that are specifically targeting the single parent, you should realize that financial resources are limited, emotional resources are limited, and that providing child care during a seminar is not just an option --- it is a much-needed help within your target population.

While we may tend to think of "single parenting" as a large church issue, or as an area where larger churches can do specialized ministry, the reality is that smaller churches --- with their closer personal connections and deeper levels of intimacy and togetherness --- are excellent places to carry out effective ministry to single parents and the children being raised in these homes. When your church decides to resource and equip single parents, the good news is that you are not merely blessing today's heads of households, you are also blessing and shaping the generation of tomorrow.

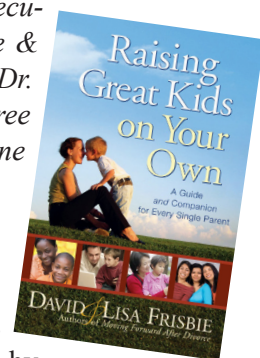
May God help you bless the generations that are yet to come.

Dr. David and Lisa Frisbie serve as executive directors of *The Center for Marriage & Family Studies in Southern California*. Dr. David Frisbie is an adjunct professor at three universities, including Southern Nazarene University.

Resource List:

United States Census Bureau, "America's Families and Living Arrangements 2012," by Jonathan Vespa, Jamie M. Lewis, and Rose M. Kreider, released August 2013

Raising Great Kids On Your Own: A Guide for Single Parents, Dr. David and Lisa Frisbie, published by Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon.



UPCOMING EVENTS

SDMI USA/Canada District Leadership Conference

February 9-11, 2015, Kansas City, Missouri
Register at usacanadaregion.org/sdmidlc

Opening event Monday, February 9, 4:30 pm
Dinner and Speaker Dr. Tom Nelson
EVENT OPEN TO ALL M15 ATTENDEES



Dr. Tom Nelson, pastor and author of five books including *Work Matters*, *Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work*. Dr. Nelson has served the past 20 years as the pastor of Christ Community Church, a multi-campus congregation in the Kansas City area. During that time he developed a unique approach to discipleship which challenges laity to minister in and through their vocation. Dr. Nelson will share his journey as a pastor and tell how he helped the laity of his church rediscover the joy of discipleship. All participants will receive a free copy of *Work Matters*.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, SPECIAL LUNCHEON PRESENTATION
OPEN TO ALL M15 ATTENDEES
DR. DIANA GARLAND
Family Ministries Author and Lecturer



Research reveals that families are the primary nurturers of faith from childhood all the way to the end of life. The question is, how can congregations help families develop “sticky faith,” faith that keeps people “stuck” to church and to one another throughout life? In two sessions at M15, Dr. Garland will present research that attempts to answer these questions about the ministry of congregations with families.

Diana R. Garland is Dean of the Baylor School of Social Work, Baylor University. She is the author or editor of eighteen books, including most recently *Flawed Families of the Bible: How God's Grace Works Through Imperfect Relationships*, *Sacred Stories of Ordinary Families*, and *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*.

M15
Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future
Mid-Quadrennial Conference
USA/Canada Region
February 9-11, 2015
Kansas City, Missouri
m15conference.org

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