

south shore fellowship

"it's all about relationships"

bridgman, michigan



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Greetings from "yes, it's still winter in Michigan"!
*"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord.
"They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."* Jeremiah 29:11

In 1972 a new show aired on television. It centered around 4 men who served in a commando unit together. They were accused of a crime they did not commit and sent to a maximum security, military prison. They escaped and spent every waking moment on the run from the government. They were also good guys and became soldiers of fortune. "If you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you can find them....maybe you can hire 'The A-Team'.

George Peppard played the character known as Hannibal and he was the master-mind behind the unit each week. Every week it looked like they would get caught as they put their freedom and lives in danger to help someone out. Toward the end of the show, as things started to work out for their good, Hannibal would smile his lazy smile and say, "I love it when a plan comes together."

Over the past 31 years of ministry Jack and I have had many occasions to see God working in our lives. At first, it may not seem that He was there...or that there was even a plan... but when it became apparent to us that there was, we'd just, step back, relax, look at one another, smile and say, "I love it when a plan comes together." 😊



SSF Thursday evening Bible study at Jack & Maree's

February 2009

December 2001: A couple from the mainland decided to take a trip to Hawaii. Their names are Dave and Christina Cowan. On Sunday they find a church that meets near their hotel in Waikiki. They decide to go and are quite surprised by what they encounter.



Dave & Christina Cowan

photo: Alley Erkelens

"What kind of church is this?" is what Christina is thinking as she notices the worship team. One guy is wearing combat pants, combat boots, and a muscle t-shirt and he's playing the guitar. The other guy is strumming an ukelele and wearing an Aloha shirt, shorts and bare feet! She can't believe her eyes. The worship starts and she enters in. As the pastor gets up to preach he mentions the man in the Aloha shirt has on his Hawaiian Nikes. Christina doesn't get it! "What is he talking about? That guy is obviously bare footed!" she thinks.

The pastor goes on to announce a "board" meeting. She realizes he is talking about surf boards! After the service she tells her husband that she thinks they should move to the islands and help out at this church. A few weeks later she gets a newsletter in the mail from Hope Chapel South Shore and a note from Pastor Jack and Maree Nordgren.

Fast forward a few years to 2003. The Cowans have moved to Michigan...the last place Christina thought they would ever live! They have been involved in several church plants in the Foursquare denomination. Now it is spring 2008.

Dave and Christina are looking for a Foursquare church and find South Shore Fellowship's website. She calls our number and we talk on the phone. There is an instant "something" between us. During the call I tell her we have just moved here from Hawaii....the last place I thought I would ever leave! The next Sunday they join us at Weko beach and Christina is nearly jumping out of her seat as she realizes that Jack and I are the people she met way back in 2001 in Waikiki.

Dave is our business manager, power point tech, teaches a Bible study, and together they minister to so many each and every Sunday. Christina has been an answer to prayer for Maree. We are enjoying such a special friendship. I love it when a plan comes together!

March 2005: Bill and Melissa Erkelens are sent out with a team from their church (Homewood) to help out at the Easter sunrise service in Waikiki. They are 10 in number but their eagerness to serve & to embrace all things Hawaiian make them seem like hundreds. Again, there was an instant connection with these people...especially the Erkelens.



Melissa & Bill Erkelens

photo: Alley Erkelens

They return to Chicago and we stay connected through emails and phone calls. We all hoped that one day they could return to Hawaii and minister with us once again. Well, they never made it back to Hawaii....but now Bill, Melissa, and their five beautiful children are a vital part of South Shore Fellowship in Michigan!

For awhile now, they have been making the hour and a half drive on Sunday mornings just to be a part of us. There is even an hour time change so the kids have to get up even earlier to be here by 10 a.m.

Months ago Bill was in need of work and began looking up here for a job. He got a good one! In a matter of days now the whole family will be relocating to Michigan where they can finally use their gifts and talents and big hearts of service to help So. Shore Fellowship grow. I love it when a plan comes together.

June 2008: A young man named Chris Dewey stops in at the surf shop in New Buffalo to look at surfboards. He doesn't have a lot of experience but he has a passion to learn. On his way out of the shop he glances at a bulletin board and notices a flyer announcing a church that meets on the beach! He thinks to himself that he really wants to check that out! He's very involved at his church but he figures he might drop in one Sunday. He doesn't stop to see where it's located. A few days later he's in the parking lot at Weko beach, unloading his surfboard. Another surfer comes up to talk. His name is Jack.

Chris asks him if he knows anything about a church that meets at the beach. Jack points to the beach house and tells him he is the pastor. Fast forward 6 months to January 2009. Chris Dewey has come on board as our youth/young adult pastor. I love it when a plan comes together.



Billy, Chris & Danny

photo: Alley Erkelens

Maybe you are in a place right now that seems hopeless. Maybe you feel 'stuck'...without a vision or motivation. Maybe you are overwhelmed and can't see past anything. God has a plan. I know he does. The Bible tells me that he does. His plans are good. The verse following Jer. 29:11 says, "In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly you will find me." I love it when His plan comes together.

SSF Updates:

Sunday, March 1st, 6pm – we will be watching session #2 from "Keys to Loving Relationships" by Gary Smalley. Call 269-465-6264 for more info. SSF Youth group will meet at the same time. Call Chris at 269-465-7295 for more info.

Aloha Ke Akua,

Jack & Maree

