

## 2017 Annual Report for Eric Belz

### Africa Director of Pathways Pastor Training - EFCA/ReachGlobal

1. **Your Ministry:** *Explain your ministry in one sentence for a lay person.*

My ministry is to train African pastors and church leaders to study, obey and teach God's Word well, equipping them to pass this training on to others, and at the same time to equip US pastors to assist in this endeavor.

2. **Strategic Value:** *Tell why your ministry is important or strategic and how it fits into the "big picture."*

This ministry is important and strategic because most pastors in the majority world do not know how to teach their people and grow healthy, Christ-honoring churches. Over 90% of majority world pastors have received no formal training, so they slide into on false teaching such as prosperity theology, syncretism and working to earn salvation, which hurt the cause of Christ. The training we offer grounds them not only in the truths of Scripture, God's revelation of Himself and His will for us in Christ, but it also gives them tools so that pastors can study and teach God's Word well and grow their churches on a biblical foundation. This will lead to healthy ministries based on the Word, God's kingdom will grow authentically, and disciples will be made of all nations (Matt.28:18-20), all of which honor and glorify Christ, which is the "big picture." The series of nine Pathways workshops we offer over three years is effective for long-term change on a trajectory for exponential growth. The trainings are reproducible and sustainable because they are "owned" and driven by nationals. The multiplication of the trainings to other pastors is embedded in the DNA of the training, so hundreds and thousands of pastors can receive much needed training.

3. **Scriptural Basis:** *Give one or two Scripture verses and explain how they undergird your ministry.*

Obviously, there are MANY passages I could reference, but a couple which are fundamental for our ministry are Ezra's commitment as he "set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel." (Ezra 7:10) We long for pastors and church leaders to grow strong spiritually by studying God's Word and obeying it (2 Tim.2:15). The Bible is our foundation and what we base our lives on, "so the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim.3:17) Beyond this, we are raising up movements of leaders who can preach/teach the Word well (2 Tim.4:1-5), giving the understanding of its meaning to God's people (Neh. 8:8), for God's Word is our authority and the substance of our message. Finally, we strive to equip leaders who will pass this training on to others, as Paul tells Timothy in 2 Tim.2:2. We desire that solid, exegetical study and expository preaching of the Word would be spread and multiplied to every tongue and tribe and nation, to the glory of Christ through the work of His Spirit.

4. **Motivation:** *Why do you continue to do what you do?*

I cannot imagine a more fulfilling calling than to bring glory to God by equipping leaders to study, obey and teach the Word well. Lives are transformed and movements are launched which impact communities, regions and nations for the Gospel. The needs are so profound globally and national leaders are so hungry for our training. God has shaped me through my energy level, ministry experience, past training and skill sets in such a way to connect well cross-culturally with pastors and leaders, to develop them so they embrace the truths of Scripture, to empower them to obey His Word, and to release them so they preach His Word with truth and power, and train others to do the same.



Pastors and leaders are learning the Gospel, in some cases for the first time, congregations are being transformed, authentic Bible-preaching movements are spreading, and God is being exalted. What could be more rewarding? The flow of testimonies from global pastors who testify how they and their ministries have been changed continues to inspire me. The work is challenging and eternally significant, and I'm grateful to be a part of what God is doing.

5. **Priorities:** *How do you decide what ministry activities to do and what not to do?*

This is a real challenge. There are so many opportunities globally for us to give this training to leaders, and we want to be strategic and guard against spreading ourselves too thin. For example, next year, I'm hoping to launch new Pathways networks in Zambia, Tanzania, Ivory Coast and perhaps in Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda and Liberia, as well as maintaining existing networks. For this reason, in addition to training pastors overseas, we also train pastors and church leaders in the US, so they can be mobilized to train leaders globally. In this way, we can reach far more pastors than just our Pathways team members could. Also, we work as part of a team (the Global Equipping Team in ReachGlobal / EFCA) and with ReachGlobal Africa Division to determine where the fields are the "whitest" and leaders are the most ready and in need of our training. Before launching any new network, I work closely with national leaders in each country, carefully selecting the network coordinator and master trainers, and setting up a detailed plan for how multiplication of the training will happen. All is brought before the throne of God and we submit to the Spirit's guidance. Personally, I also am accountable to my team leader and make sure that my wife supports the work I'm doing, and I'm not stretching myself too thin. I'm proceeding well through my demanding but rewarding doctoral studies which will be of great assistance to our team and many others in offering insights into hermeneutical training for pastors globally.

6. **Successes and Challenges (Results):** *What are some of the encouragements you've seen this past year and what are some challenges?*

**Successes** - I have been encouraged in many areas this year.

A. Team - I am a part of a very healthy, mature team of like-minded missionaries/pastors who are passionate about God being glorified and His kingdom growing.

As our vision statement says, we do this “by equipping reproducing leaders globally for kingdom transformation and expansion.” It is a joy to serve along with them, and they completely support my leadership of Pathways Africa. Our team website is: [www.pathwaytrainers.com](http://www.pathwaytrainers.com)

- B. Indigenous church and leader transformation - We occasionally hear from church members of the pastors we train who share about the transformation that has occurred in their pastor’s preaching and ministry since beginning Pathways. However, we regularly hear from the pastors themselves about the growth they and their ministries are experiencing as a result of implementing training we offer them. Recently, Pastor David from Zambia shared with me, *"This training is essential for grounding in God’s Word. It must be taken to other provinces. We will be able to gather many other pastors who are eager to receive this training. There are so many diseases in preaching today – we need this training!"* For more testimonies, [CLICK HERE](#).
- C. Growth and Reproduction - The deepest encouragement is not what we hear from people, but what we see in their lives. Pastors embrace and implement this training in their ministries, and we evidence the growth in how they preach in our workshops. They also are passionately passing the training on to others they know. The things we most value, we share with others. Nearly every pastor I regularly work with overseas (over 200 pastors in locations all over Africa and globally) is training other groups of pastors and church leaders in their regions. In this way, we estimate we may be reaching 2000+ pastors just in the continent of Africa. Although I continue to assist with funding the first-generation trainings, there is a strong sense of ownership by participants as they prepare for trainings, raise funds, and pass trainings on.
- D. US pastors - I’ve also been encouraged to see the receptivity of our Bible training among US pastors, many of whom are motivated to help train overseas. I have brought several pastors with me, and in some cases, they are now fully facilitating trainings. These US pastors share how Pathways training is helping them even in their own weekly preaching, sharpening their skills.

**Challenges** – Some of the difficulties we have faced are:

- A. Growth Pains – There are far more venues waiting to be launched than we are able to follow through to completion, and so we guard against over-commitment. While I try to train US pastors to join us, it can be difficult to mobilize them to the point where they are joining us annually.
- B. Tracking Progress – We try to keep track of all those we are training and how they are progressing, but it can be challenging to determine what their perception truly is, not only of the training but also of expository preaching in general. Also, it is difficult to track with any precision what the pastors are doing with the trainings we give them, since we attend neither trainings they offer nor the services in their churches where they preach. How do oral-preference learners implement textually-driven hermeneutical Bible training? I am planning to research these issues more fully as I continue my doctoral studies.

- C. Multiplication and Funding – We are finding that in some of the locations where we launch networks, while the master trainers eagerly receive and use the material, the multiplication goals we set with national leadership are not fully met. This is oftentimes due to cross-cultural issues (e.g. younger pastors can't train older ones), funding challenges, busy schedules, denominational resistance, and the like. Indigenous pastors have very little money, struggling to feed their families much less pay for first or second-generation trainings. While trying to guard against unhealthy dependency upon western funds, we try to guide them to locally-driven solutions and offer subsidies to offset training costs, transportation, translation of material, etc. While we have seen some growth in these areas over the past year, this will be a primary aim for progress in 2018.
- D. Few stateside preaching opportunities – Because I am traveling quite a bit, and in general pastors in America tend to hold tightly onto their pulpits, I don't get many opportunities to preach when I'm stateside. Although I'm certainly willing, I leave this to the Lord, and when opportunities come along (as happened four out of six weeks at the end of 2017), I joyfully embrace them.

7. **Growth:** *How are you growing and what are you learning from God and Scripture?*

As I prepare for and deliver messages from the Word, whether in Africa or stateside, growth is inevitable. As I frequently tell our pastor-trainers, we give to our people out of the overflow of what we receive from God through His Word. As I prepare for and give messages and train others to do this, I am finding my own hermeneutical and homiletical skills are improving as I apply the tools we teach to pastors. I am learning that what we are doing is not just preaching the Word, but we are training an army of faithful preachers of the Word. As this work grows, I am convinced that this ministry is not about me, but it is all about God, His Word, and empowering others to handle His Word well (2 Tim.2:15). Some of my greatest growth is through my doctoral courses, and in passing this learning on to my team and others, as I did in our annual meeting last August. In January and through Spring, I will be taking my final courses which will lead into the research phase for my dissertation. The workload is heavy, with thousands of pages to read, papers to write, projects to prepare, etc. But the result is worth it as I'm growing in many areas toward becoming more effective in my work, and helping our team become more effective.

8. **Future:** *What ministry goals and plans do you have for the next year?*

In our team, I am directing the trainings and networks for the continent of Africa, and so I am pouring myself into growing our training ministry in all regions of Africa. I am hoping and praying in God's time I will find a colleague who can be my partner in directing this work in Africa – it's a big continent after all! As I shared previously, by God's grace, I have set an ambitious target to launch new training networks in 2018 in Zambia, Tanzania, Ivory Coast and perhaps in Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda and Liberia, as well as maintaining existing networks in Togo, DR Congo, two networks in Kenya, and maintain connections and coaching with several completed networks. I will be making about ten training trips internationally in 2018, and also several

other stateside trainings, mission conferences and meetings in the US. Since I live in the Pacific Northwest, I have trained a group of pastors in this area as well as trying to train other pastors throughout the West. I hope to develop a team of US-based pastor-trainers for Africa allowing me to launch new locations and support our existing ones. I will also continue coaching pastors in each of our international training venues, encouraging them to pass the trainings on to others. I will also be available to our other Pathways team members and Global Equipping team members for assistance in their global trainings as well as helping with various team tasks. In addition to all this, I will be continuing my doctoral work, which can be quite consuming.

9. **Finances:** *What are your financial needs to accomplish your ministry?*

We are very thankful for the many partners, both individuals and churches, who give sacrificially so I can continue training pastors internationally. We cherish the relationships we share, and pray they continue long into the future. By God's grace and through the faithful, generous partnership of our support team, we have a bit of margin in our ministry account, although this balance is decreasing due to the following factors:

- a) As the ministry expands, the number of trips I make and ministry-related expenses are increasing. I work hard to book the cheapest travel and stay in low-cost accommodations, but rising expenditures are inevitable.
- b) As the ministry expands, the needs of the African pastors with whom we work also expand, and I must help subsidize their costs to come to the trainings, covering translation costs, food, transportation, etc. We encourage the pastors to take ownership of the trainings, and yet they have very little, so as a team we have decided some subsidizing from our personal ministry accounts is appropriate. For example, in our Congo network, in addition to my personal expenses, for each training I have to pay \$200 for the translator and \$200 for food subsidy for the sixteen trainers, and also \$400 for transportation particularly for one pastor from a distant region who passes our training to many pastors throughout his area.
- c) Some of our regular donors have decreased or stopped their giving due to a variety of reasons, such as loss of income, economic hardships, increased health problems, etc.
- d) In addition, on the personal side, we have recently entered a relationship with a world-renowned naturopathic doctor who believes he can help Holly and Alyssa with their intense health struggles, and so far, there seems to be some improvement. However, his testing, appointments and treatment (costing thousands of dollars) are not covered by insurance, so we are stretched thin.

At present, we need about \$1200/month more support to meet our expenses. As all of you who know me are well aware, I am a very frugal person, so rest assured that I'm seeking every means to cut costs. Please pray that God will provide the funds necessary to meet these needs. At the same time, we are trusting Him and confidently moving forward in ministry.

10. **Prayer Requests:** *What are your biggest ongoing prayer requests?*

Personally, we would continue to ask for prayer for complete healing for Holly and Alyssa (13), both of whom are still struggling with health issues that leave them very low in energy, feeling sick and miserable, with toxicity, parasites and dysfunction in their organs, etc. Alyssa is in an online academy which provides flexibility in her daily schedule. Both Holly and Alyssa are making slow improvement and so we continue to pray. Since I travel quite a bit, please pray that the family will not just survive but will thrive while I'm away and that we will stay connected as a family even though we are physically apart. Adam (18) and Andrew (almost 17) are doing well, becoming much more independent with the "revolving door" in full swing. Pray for Adam as he tries to determine where to go to college next year, and explores career options. Praise God all the kids are walking with Christ.

In ministry, please pray for wisdom in launching new training networks, and God's Spirit and energy in continuing with existing ones. Pray for US partners to help us facilitate trainings, and that our African trainers will be faithful to pass the trainings they receive on to other pastors and leaders. Praise God with us for the wonderful work He has been doing, and we eagerly anticipate and depend upon His continued activity.

Submitted with appreciation for our supporters and gratitude to our awesome God.

*Erin R. Baly*

