

## NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

November 11, 2018

A1:8 Innovate

Various

**Heather Zempel** - In Genesis 1:28 God gave the man and the woman a command, be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth and to govern it. He gave them in the very beginning a role and responsibility. See, before there were talking serpents or temptations or sins or curses, God gifted the man and the woman with a calling, with a vocation, with a job description. Their ability to create and to lead and to produce to work was a reflection of the divine image that had been breathed inside of them. You see the heroes of the Biblical narrative or not primarily religious leaders; they're kings and poets, craftsman and politicians, fishermen and farmers, they're educators and doctors and commanders. They were normal people who were reverencing and referencing God in their normal everyday walking around lives. Reverencing God meaning that they saw their work is a divine calling and the way that they worked as an act of worship, that in every conversation, every decision, every action, every reaction, there was an opportunity to declare and reflect something of the character of God, his goodness, his faithfulness, righteousness, justice, kindness, humility, integrity, and referencing God, meaning that they sought his perspective, his guidance, his voice, and his heart on all the matters that stood before them on a daily basis.

Here at National Community Church, we recognize that there are seven primary spheres of influence in society; family, economics, government, education, media, religion and celebration. And as we walk in the character and the ways of God in those spheres of society, they changed the culture and that transforms lives and that changes history. Dr Jack Hayford set it this way, that the division in the mind of God is not between the sacred arena and the secular arena. The division is between the light and the dark. There is darkness covering the whole earth and the Lord seeks to fill all of it with sons and daughters of light. Whether you are an executive or an entertainer, a biologist, or a Barista or a politician or a plumber, what you do matters to God and the way you do it can spark a light of hope in a dark world. Imagine for just a moment every NCC'er reverencing and referencing God in all they say and do, of being on mission with him walking into character and the ways and the mission of Jesus, every day.

A few months ago, we gathered 12 NCC'ers from across all of our locations across spheres of influence and asked them to just share their story of what it looked like for them to partner in God's redemptive mission on earth and the work they were called to. We're going to show six of those to you today. Now, these aren't prescriptive, they're not formulas, but hopefully they paint a picture, they will give us a glimpse of what it can look like to be on mission with God. Whatever you do, whatever your sphere of influence is, I pray that their example would inspire you and may God open our minds and our hearts and even our imaginations to see his kingdom come and his will be done on the little piece of earth that we work every day as it is in heaven.

**Brooke Perry** was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest and currently serves as the Associate Youth Pastor at NCC. She is passionate about pouring into the younger generation...

So I work with our middle school and high school students all across the DMV area. But I would say that my mission is very much more with them than it is to them. I would argue that we cannot actually do mission well unless we are choosing to consistently see through the eyes of other people and the eyes that I have found to be some of the most convicting and compelling are the eyes of this next generation. The Prophet Joel penned something that we hold tightly to for our young people. And in Joel 2:28, God speaks through the Prophet and says ...

*"That in those days I will pour out My Spirit on all people; Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."*

Now, there is something very important that we must pay close attention to in that first, and that is that God saw it fit to give our young people visions. Now, we were designed to actually work together, and this is not just a spiritual thing, but we were designed physically to work with young people. Now, if you'll hang with me for one second, we have a part of our brain that is called the prefrontal cortex, and this part of our brain is actually designed to help us understand how to regulate emotional expression, how to make decisions, how to make judgments. And this part of our brain is also not fully developed until we're 25 years old. Now, for those people who are under 25 years old, this most likely means that you are much more willing than I am to actually take risks, to live with abandon and to jump into situations without really thinking first about what people are going to think or what the results are going to be. And now this can result in some negative outcomes from time to time. But this was no design flaw on God's part. He actually designed our minds to not only be working in that way, but to be developing on that timeline, which means that within the right context, this is actually a very powerful trait that for you and I who are over 25, we have to work very hard to hold onto this and to remember it and yet it comes so naturally to our young people.

And I'll share one story of many I could share, but this one comes from our mission's trip that we took our students on this past summer to Jackson, Mississippi. We took a group of middle school and high school students down to Jackson to mostly learn from and to also serve a community that has been dismissed and overlooked by their society for far too long, honestly. And one day we were on a prayer walk and we were walking and we were talking and we were praying with people experiencing homelessness. And I looked over and I saw one of our young middle school boys, Connor, and he was praying with a man who is experiencing homelessness, living on the streets of the bus station. And there were other students around him praying, but he was literally curled up around this man's arm with this head kind of on his shoulder while he was praying for this gentleman. Now, if we're honest, I think that you and I would probably make a lot of excuses with a fully developed prefrontal cortex as to why this was not a good decision. But Connor, he not only saw this man for who he was, I believe he saw this man for exactly what he needed. Who knows the last time that this man had been embraced with such innocence and with such love.

Now it's interesting that it's potential that the low expectations that we have honestly placed on this next generation and the dismissal that they have inevitably felt from some of those around them has actually started to become a superpower of this next generation. It's like they've been given this x-ray vision into other people's lives to be able to see people very clearly who have experienced similar dismissal. And we have a lot to learn from that. So if I can be as bold as to

just give a couple of challenging questions in closing, I would love all of us to constantly be thinking on our everyday mission; who are we bringing in alongside of us? Who are we inviting into this? Whose vision are we allowing to compel our own? And who are we asking to come alongside in order to model what great mission in the Kingdom of God actually looks like. Thank you.

**Jared Scott** is from Norristown, PA and grew up around the barbershop. He started His Grooming Barbershop on Capitol Hill.

I've seen a lot of people start businesses, very humbly and it can quickly become about you. I always wanted to keep myself in check, and so I said, I'm not putting my name on it. I'm putting His name on it. I grew up in a traditional barbershop. If you've ever seen the barbershop movie, that was basically where I worked, what I grew up in and my dad took me and my two brothers to the barbershop every two weeks. I used to go to the barbershop and just love it. I used to think to myself, if these guys get to just cut hair and enjoy one another all day long. And there were a lot of things that happened in the barbershop that we're not edifying to the man. And so, I felt the Lord tell me that this is what I want you to do, is to create a space where I can strengthen these men because if I can strengthen these men, they'll strengthen their homes and their homes will become strong, families will become strong, their towns, their community, their city, and it'll expand from there. So, I do believe that the barbershop can change the world. Now, what I didn't know is that God wanted me to stretch across the color lines, had no idea. I grew up, like I said, in the traditional black barbershop. And, when you are always in this space, you know, the barbershop and the church are the most segregated places in America.

And because of NCC, when I connected with NCC, I found that space to be really synonymous to what it is that I was trying to do, really congruent. Because at NCC, it's about the spirit of God, right? It's about Christ. There is no male or female in the spirit, so there's definitely not race or any of these other constructs that we create. So in the barbershop is just about hair. And so God allowed me to grow in my education, to understand different kinds of hair. It's just fabric; it's just different kinds of textures. And what was exciting about that for me is it created an opportunity for me to begin to talk to anybody and everybody. When you're constantly that close to someone you can't help but trade energy, and so I've always taken that very serious that I need to give very positive, a very intentional energy. And Christ, when he fills you, when it gives you that replenishing fountain that is on the inside, you see how God can transfer his spirit, his knowledge into believers and unbelievers. It made the barbershop a whole different thing for me. So, when I get here in the morning, I try to get here before everyone else and I make sure that I create a moment for me and God however long it is. I create a moment for me and God and I just listen to whatever he wants me to do.

My craft is important to me. But what's even more important is the fact that when you touch people, I mean it's, we're very intimate. We got 45 minutes together, every x, every two weeks, four weeks, six weeks, whatever. I see people more than they see their moms and dads and they can share, they can tell me things they don't want to tell anyone else. What are you gonna do with that information? How do you create that space with people in your life? Is it the guy on the bus that you see? Is it the bus driver; same route every x, opening yourself up to the moments of life that are screaming at you to better yourself so that you can better that moment. God has

definitely shared with me that this place is a beacon. They need a hope that they don't even know about. They need something that touches the innermost piece of who they are. And most people just know it when they see it, they know it when they feel it. I felt that at NCC, first time I went, first time. I knew that there was something happening at NCC and there was something happening at NCC. There's something like happening and I needed to be there. And it's one of the same kinds of feels for me here. So the good news looks like everyone has a problem with their hair and we have a solution to the problem with your hair and the problem with your hair creates a problem with yourself, your image, your, all this stuff. So when we can fix the problem with your hair, there's a happiness and a peace that happens and we like to try and marry the two.

**Interviewer:** So for you the hair is the gateway to the heart?

**Jared:** We heal people through their hair.

**Lucas Brown** and his wife Natalia, leads one of the Family Friends teams within NCC's Refugee Care ministry.

I'd like to talk a little bit about A1:8 Refugee Care and how my team's relationship with a refugee family has really transformed over the past year. So, I first got involved with refugee ministry through NCC a little over a year ago. I heard about at some NCC event and I decided to go do an informational meeting. Now, they asked for volunteers to be team leads and I'd like to say that I felt like a deep stirring in my spirit to be a team lead but I think when there was a lot of silence, I just kind of panicked and put my hand up. But a few weeks later we got paired with a Syrian refugee family and it came time to make our initial introduction. I was a little nervous, I wanted to make a good impression and so we arrived at the apartment and I closed my car door and I immediately realized I just locked my keys in my car. There was another Syrian refugee who was a friend of the family who was there that night. And through the interpreter, he told me that he had experience getting into locked car. Now, I didn't want to be like rude and ask follow up questions. So I just assumed something got lost in translation and so I accepted and five minutes later he came out in the pouring rain with my car keys.

Now, not a great start but we learned that night that everyone knows everyone in the Syrian refugee community in this area. And while they do have the strong network they want to plug in with Americans, they want to get integrated into America. So, while we didn't have a smooth start, we just kept coming week after week. We added members to our team and everyone has different skills and abilities and over a few months we learned their story and the family's given me permission to share a little bit of their story with you tonight.

So, the families from Homs, Syria and in 2012 Homs received pretty heavy bombings on a routine basis. Now the family who had spent time sheltering in basements but eventually it became clear that they had to flee for their lives. So they left Syria and eventually we resettled in Jordan. The father worked odd jobs trying to make ends meet. The mother took care of the four young children. Unfortunately, the two older children did not have a school to go to. After five years in Jordan, they were told congratulations that you can come to the United States. They landed that Dulles and they cleared customs, but now it was time for them to rebuild. That's where my team is trying to step in. Now, at first it's kind of hard to know how do you serve a

community like that. But what we found is some stuff that's easy for us is actually very useful to the family. For example, we helped the kids with homework. Now the seventh and eighth grader's homework, I'm a little embarrassed to say it's a little more complicated than I want to admit on a recording. But I normally have my wife come do that and then I go help the kindergartener with his homework. And it's a lot easier to come up with words that start with B. But we also have someone on our team who helps with English classes. We have people who schedule and transport them to various appointments.

Now during all this time, we've just grown a lot closer as a family. They have us over and they treat us like family and they don't see us as resources. Now, this past year has had some difficult times, but it's also had some great answers to prayer. For example, the two older kids that didn't have school in Jordan, we've seen them make the honor roll here in the United States. Two members of our team have hosted a Thanksgiving dinner and we all got to go around the table and say what we're thankful for. Someone in the family asked what is Thanksgiving? And I gave her like a Hallmark version and a one of the hosts is a history teacher and so he gave like the straight version of what happened, and the family did not ask a lot of follow up questions.

So through this all, I've learned just a few things. One, being in it for the long haul is impactful. Two, skills and abilities that I don't see as valuable can be used in service to others. And most importantly, don't lock your keys in your car. Thank you.

**Dayna Matthew** JD, Ph.D, is a Professor of Law and Civil Liberties and Human Rights at the University Of Virginia School Of Law. She is a Senior Scholar at the Brookings Institution, is the author of *Just Medicine: A cure for Racial Inequality in America Health Care*.

So my story about faith and justice comes in four parts. Part one; moving day. I was scheduled to move to Charlottesville, Virginia on August 11th, 2017, that is true. As you know, my welcome committee was not very welcoming. It was a group of kids with Tiki torches who were yelling things like Jews will not replace us. Blood and soil, as you recall, is a Nazi cry that essentially was the rallying cry for people who wanted to take this country back for whites and whites alone. So my moving truck driver said, no, we're not going there. In fact, he refused to take me on August 10th, on August 11th and on August 12th; I did not get to Charlottesville until August the 14th

Part two; the welcome was a group of faculty who had zeal beyond measure. We are so glad you're here. Welcome. Thank God that is over. Those people are gone. I am so glad Charlottesville has returned to its peaceful, quiet, bucolic, normal. Well, it turns out...

Part three; that peaceful, quiet Charlottesville is only peaceful and quiet for the people who were welcoming me. It turns out that in 1912, Charlottesville was divided by the city council into four quadrants, one for the university, one for the white population, one for the business, and the last quadrant was for the black population. At that time it was 33 percent of the population, now it's about 20 percent of the population. And guess what? Those lines, they still hold today. The same neighborhoods that were divided in 1912 when the Charlottesville city council explained that blacks were from the jungle and therefore should be isolated are the same city lines that outline

10th and Page, Fifeville and the other black neighborhoods in Charlottesville today. And guess what?

Again, Part three, the reality, black babies die two and a half times more frequently in those neighborhoods than they do if they're white in the rest of Charlottesville today. Guess what? Moms die three and a half times more often in childbirth in those neighborhoods than they do outside of those neighborhoods in Charlottesville today. And we still can look at the differences in achievement gaps right in the halls of in the shadows of the University of Virginia, which is one of the finest learning institutions in the country. This should not be!

Part four; the call. I feel the call on my life comes from the scripture that says you are an ambassador of reconciliation because as a matter of fact, in Charlottesville, there really are two cities of Charlottesville. There is the black city of Charlottesville and the white city of Charlottesville, and that should not be. My brother earlier said that the most segregated hour in the United States was not only in church but also in barbershops. And I'm here to tell you that right under our noses in our midst; there are people who are living an entirely different reality than the ones that we live. They are more afraid. They are less hopeful. They are less likely to succeed, and this is just because of the color of their skin. So what I love about NCC and my call to this community is similar to what many others have said our service, our love, our caring, but also that this scripture in John is true, that everyone will know us by this, that we love one another. And when we do that, we do that, we show the world that indeed Jesus is Lord. We show the world that being a follower of Christ means something more than just our happiness. It really is true that we will lift Jesus up and all men will be drawn to him. Thank you.

**Teresa Casale** is currently a Policy Advocate at the International Center for Research on Women, where she leads the organization's portfolio on women, peace and security. She also leads NCC's peacemaking efforts to Israel/Palestine.

My faith informs my call as a peacemaker because I believe that's part of my identity in Christ, that he said blessed are the peacemakers and it's our job to carry that out. You know, the Psalms also said that we need to seek peace and pursue it. And so that informs kind of the method of how I try to go about being a peacemaker because it means to seek something, and pursue something means you go out of your way to find it. It's not just going to come to you. I think that peacemaking is a skill set or a spiritual discipline, just like any of the other disciplines that we engage in as Christians and just like any other skill set though; it's not going to show up on its own. I work at the International Center for Research on Women and I'm on the policy and advocacy team and I have two issue areas that I work on. One is women's economic empowerment and the other is women peace and security. So as a lot of folks at NCC know I've been pursuing what it means to be a peacemaker through a faith lens for a number of years now. And that has looked like leading trips to Israel/Palestine through peacemaking lens and leading small groups on the issue of peacemaking. There is something special about the skills a woman has to bring peace to our communities and that often they're the ones in protracted situations of conflict that are going out of their way to make peace. But what changed me was understanding the evidence base that the biggest indicator of a country's peacefulness is actually how empowered women are in its society. The more that woman's voices are heard, the more power they have in legal systems across society, the less likely a country is to be involved in violent

conflict. I think that there are a lot of misconceptions around the fact that because women are nice, because they are nurturing, because they're kind and peacemaking is the soft stuff that naturally women make better peacemakers. But I've known plenty of women who aren't that nice or nurturing or soft and I have still seen them use remarkable power in their societies to bring peace. And as anybody who's involved in peacemaking knows, it's not actually the soft stuff at all. It's quite intense and has a lot to do with getting messy in the midst of conflict. I would argue that it actually has a lot more to do with historically being left out of traditional power structures that we've had to go around the things that stand in our way and be more creative and innovative about bringing peace in our societies and the wellbeing of everybody than just the people who are historically at the negotiating table. And essentially it's really simple, the fact that when it comes to problem solving, if you leave half of the population of your society out of it, you're only going to get half a solution. But unfortunately there's only about two percent of current negotiators around the world, conflict negotiators that are women and only about eight percent of mediators. So there's a huge gap between what we know we need to do and what we know works. It is seeking to build a bridge to where the other person is not where I want them to be, but where they are and speaking their language as much as possible. Listening to understand so that a bridge can be built to wherever that person is I think is the most important starting step and can be used in any topic no matter what the conversation is about.

I think it's very important to be having a conversation as a church right now about women peacemakers, women in peacemaking, but that shouldn't come at the cost of our relationships with men. But I think having men in the room is just as important but it can be really easy to lose sight of that, particularly right now as emotions are so high and we feel farther apart from each other than we ever have, which is why I want this message in particular to be one of unity. We need to do it altogether and men have a special role to play as well and if we combined forces we'll get there together and we'll get there faster.

**Keri Hope Richmond** - Keri's passion for vulnerable youth stems from her own story overcoming adversity as a foster child. Her advocacy has led her to Washington, D.C. where she continues her work to improve the broken foster care system.

I was five years old and I had been in foster care since I was born, bouncing between my birth father's home and foster homes. When one night one of my mom's asked me if I wanted to accept Christ into my heart, I excitedly said yes, and we prayed together. That night when I fell asleep, I had a dream that I was sleeping on this big, puffy white cloud when it started to thunderstorm, suddenly a hand scooped me up from one cloud and brought me to a new cloud. And the new cloud was covered with this beautiful rainbow umbrella that had every color imaginable on it. The next morning I woke up and I ran downstairs and told my foster mom about my dream and she explained to me that rainbows are a sign from God after a storm, a sign of hope, a sign that things are going to be better a sign to never lose hope.

For me, my storm was foster care. The truth is we live in a broken world and sometimes our earthly parents can't be the parents that we need, but thankfully our heavenly father is perfect. When I got to college, I found my voice and I started advocating for other youth who are in the position that I once was in. Today I am so blessed that in my professional capacity, I get to advocate on Capitol Hill for youth in foster care, for an improved foster care system, for better

policies, for youth to be heard and seen. During the Mountains Move series at National Community Church I was praying that I would be saturated in the father's love. In fact, it is my particular prayer for every foster youth that I meet.

After one of the sermons, I walked up to someone on the prayer team and I asked her if she would pray for me. I didn't know her and she didn't know my name, but as she prayed, she said to me, God does not want you to carry those burdens. God wants you to carry hope. Carry hope. I had to laugh because my birth mother named me Keri Hope. That was such a significant moment for me to realize that not only am I a child of God, but that's what he wants for his children. He wants us to cling to hope, to rejoice in hope, to never lose it.

Romans chapter five, verses two through five reads...

*<sup>2</sup> "Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> More than that we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."*

I think back to that dream I had as a little girl and I rejoice in my sufferings knowing that nothing can snatch us from the hand of God and that God will bring us through any storm with a rainbow waiting on the other end of it. When I work with foster youth, I get so excited about what God is going to do in their life and how he will empower them, but how can you and I empower foster youth? Well, it starts with listening to them and not just listening to them, but making sure that they are heard, it takes encouraging them, it takes pouring love into them. It takes a caring adult who will stick with them consistently. When that happens, we empower them and when we empower them, we redistribute power. We give them a voice back and not only do we give them a voice back, but we give them the opportunity to one day stand up and be a voice for other kids who were in the same position they were one in. That ladies and gentlemen is faith and justice.