

# Christian HealthCare

## NEWSLETTER

### MEMBER LETTERS: Healthcare Bluebook saved me a bunch on an MRI

I have been so blessed to be part of Samaritan. It is a much needed alternative to the government-run health care plans.

My need has been met and I also enjoy the helpful info in the newsletter, such as using Healthcare Bluebook to shop for quality and price. I got an MRI for \$850 when some providers in my area are charging \$5,000!

I am blessed to report a possible tumor was ruled out and I am doing much better with some supplements my doctor has recommended. Thank you Samaritan and members!

*Tina Kellogg  
Tunnel Hill, Georgia*

We are just so thankful for Samaritan Ministries. We are now able to choose our doctors! That was never possible in the past when we had insurance network restrictions. We pray that Samaritan will grow and grow, nationwide.

*Jim and Kris Simon  
Fairfield, California*

### How do we respond Biblically to the opioid epidemic?

by John Stonestreet

A recent edition of the *New Yorker* contained one of the saddest collection of stories I've ever read. The article described in detail the devastating impact of the opioid epidemic on one small city—actually more like a large town—in West Virginia.

This article literally hit close to home for me. Martinsburg, West Virginia, is less than half an hour away from where I grew up, and I still have family members who live in the area.

Margaret Talbot's article begins with a harrowing tale about two parents who overdosed while watching their daughter's softball game. While paramedics administered Narcan, "a drug that reverses heroin overdoses," other parents were livid that their kids had to witness what had just happened.

Their anger may be justified, but as Talbot makes clear, it's the kind of event more and more kids are witnessing in Martinsburg and in similar towns across America. While the opioid epidemic is usually associated with white, often rural, communities like Martinsburg, it's also beginning to spread to African-American communities in places like Cleveland as well.

In Martinsburg alone, between mid-January and early April, "emergency medical personnel responded to a hundred and forty-five overdoses, eighteen of which were fatal." And if anything, "this underestimates the scale of the

epidemic, because many overdoses do not prompt 911 calls."

Numbers like these partially explain why two-thirds—yes, you heard that right, two-thirds!—of the county's emergency medication budget is spent on Narcan. What it doesn't explain is why so many people have turned to opiates such as heroin for comfort and solace in the first place.

There's a terrible hopelessness settling over a large part of America. It isn't only seen in drug abuse. At the same time the *New Yorker* told the story of Martinsburg, the *Washington Post* ran a story about a family in rural southeastern Missouri where four generations are or have been on disability.

So what's a Christian to think and do about all of this? The first answer is pray.

*Continued on page 13*

### In This Issue...

- 3 **Free from heroin addiction because of God's grace**
- 4 **Member Spotlight**  
American Academy of Medical Ethics
- 6 **Save the Storks**
- 8 **Treat Your Own Back**
- 10 **Member chooses stem cell injections over back surgery**
- 12 **Member Letters**
- 14 **Prayer for the Persecuted Church**
- 16 **The Doorpost**  
Walking in the light

**CONTENTS**

- 7 **How do we respond Biblically to the opioid epidemic?**  
*by John Stonestreet*
- 3 **Free from heroin addiction because of God's grace**  
*by Michael Miller*
- 4 **Member Spotlight**  
Gregg and Kelly Schmedes
- 6 **Save the Storks**  
*by Michael Miller*
- 8 **Treat Your Own Back**  
*reviewed by Brian Estell*
- 10 **Member chooses stem cell injections over back surgery**  
*by Jed Stuber*
- 12 **Member Letters**
- 14 **Prayer for the Persecuted Church**
- 16 **The Doorpost**  
Walking in the light  
*by Ray King*

**CONTACT US**

newsletter@samaritanministries.org

**FOLLOW US**

On Twitter: samaritanmin  
On Facebook: Samaritan Ministries

**EDITORS**

*Jed Stuber, Michael Miller*

**ART DIRECTION**

*Dan van Loon*

The *Christian Health Care Newsletter* is published monthly by Samaritan Ministries International, a 501(c)(3) charity. Subscriptions to the *Christian Health Care Newsletter* are available to non-members for a suggested donation of \$12 per year. The information provided is for educational purposes and is not meant as medical advice.

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES:**

PO Box 3618, Peoria, IL 61612  
telephone: 309-689-0442  
telephone (toll free): 877-764-2426  
fax: 309-689-0764

**Sharing Summary from August**

Shares:	\$25,192,710	Personalized prayer requests of the members with Needs are in the Prayer Guide. Please use your version of the Prayer Guide to support the members assigned to you.
Needs:	\$25,192,812	
Unshared Needs in Negotiation:	\$ —	
New Needs:	3,681	
Total Needs:	7,594	
New Rewards:	284	
Miscarriages:	30	Member Households: 69,683
Final Rewards:	9	(as of 7/21/17)

**Contact Us: 877-764-2426 Dash.SamaritanMinistries.org**

**Questions about?**

Your medical need

Shares you are sending or receiving

Your membership

**Email**

needs@samaritanministries.org

membership@samaritanministries.org

membership@samaritanministries.org

**Phone Menu**

1 - 1

1 - 2

1 - 3

**Your Member Services Leaders**



**Rob Waldo**  
*Director*  
*Member Services*



**Cameron Easley**  
*Director*  
*Member Services*

**Remember:**



**SEND A NOTE—**

Burdens can be lightened emotionally as we encourage one another in the Lord.



**PAY YOUR SHARE—**

Burdens can be lightened physically as we do our part to financially meet others' needs as they would in our time of need.



**ALWAYS STAY ALERT IN PRAYER—**

Burdens can be lightened spiritually as we unite to call upon the God of the impossible.

## Free from heroin addiction because of God's grace

by Michael Miller

Dustin Garrett tells thousands of music fans about Samaritan Ministries at last year's Winter Jam Tour Spectacular stop in Peoria, Illinois.

**D**ustin Garrett used to lay on a cot at Peoria Rescue Mission at bedtime and look out the window at the city's Civic Center a block away.

Nearly 10 years later, the former heroin addict stood on the stage of that Civic Center as Samaritan Ministries' representative to Winter Jam Tour Spectacular, telling thousands of Christian music fans about health care sharing.

Dustin, a Membership Development specialist, shared the Samaritan message at each of Winter Jam's 46 stops last winter. He'll do the same this November on the tour's West Coast swing, and then board the bus again for its East Coast concerts January through April.

The West Coast tour will include concerts in California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington November 9-19. During each concert, after a video about Samaritan is shown, Dustin will explain health care sharing to the audience—in about a minute and a half.

The message of health care sharing is what he offers onstage, but offstage he offers even more. The 33-year-old Indiana native shares

his story of addiction and salvation freely as a message of hope to anyone he might meet or who needs direction and help.

"I'm a living, breathing testimony that God is changing lives," he says.

Dustin started down the road to addiction early, first using a mild opiate similar to codeine prescribed for tonsillitis. After experiencing that, he would steal drugs from medicine

**"I'm a living, breathing testimony that God is changing lives."**

cabinets at his friends' houses to get the same feeling. That led to more drug experimentation and "perpetual partying," resulting in two expulsions from school.

The downward spiral he was in grew tighter and faster. From age 15 to 22, "my life was dedicated to getting heroin every day."

Despite treatments and counseling, clinic visits, jail time, withdrawal agonies, and seeing friends die, "I found myself slavishly crawling back to heroin."

Finally, at one point, while lying naked on the floor of a suicide-watch jail cell, Dustin remembered who his grandma prayed to and cried out, "Jesus! Please save me." He says he knew that Christ was Who he needed, but didn't know "what that looked like in my life," meaning more time in the throes of addiction.

Finally, in 2006, at age 22, he had nowhere to go. Family members and friends had kicked him out of their homes for the last time, and he had resigned himself to being "a junkie for the rest of my life."

But his father had heard of a place in Peoria, a rescue mission, where people living in spirals of sin find a straight path in Christ.

Dustin agreed to go.

"I still vividly remember to this day the three-hour drive in silent desperation from Indiana to the Peoria Rescue Mission," he says.

Through living and working at the mission and its Victory Acres facility, Jesus answered the prayer

*Continued on page 15*

## Gregg and Kelly Schmedes

### American Academy of Medical Ethics

by Kathryn Nielson

**G**regg and Kelly Schmedes go where the need is. Earlier in his medical career, that was to Cameroon, where Gregg was a teacher and surgeon for Samaritan Purse's World Medical Mission from 2014-2016.

Now the need is in New Mexico. Gregg is the state director of the American Academy of Medical Ethics' there, leading the efforts against legislation that would allow physician-assisted suicide. He also teaches medical students at the University of New Mexico.

The aim of AAME is to protect and promote the values that have provided the foundation for Western medical care, with their focus right now on physician-assisted suicide.

Gregg has testified at committee hearings and helped to organize a caucus led by Christian legislators with the goal of explaining the danger of the bill to non-Christian legislators. He has also raised money to create a video on the topic to present to members of the New Mexico Senate.

"The Church is in a veritable David vs. Goliath battle with physician-assisted suicide," Gregg says. "The lobby that promotes this culture of death has tens of millions of dollars at their disposal each year. This allows us to rely all the more on God."

His passion to preserve traditional Western values in medical care led him to become involved in the 2017 New Mexico legislative session. He lobbied against legislation like the End of Life Options Act and in support of the Partial and Late Term Abortion Ban, Born Alive Infant Protection Act, and Parental Notification of Abortion.

"It's an absolute poison to my profession to allow doctor-assisted suicide," Gregg says. "And the Church doesn't even understand sometimes what is going on."

That needs to change, Gregg says. Personal passion isn't enough to deter the poison of physician-assisted suicide spreading across



America. The Church's involvement is of paramount importance, according to Gregg, starting with awareness as to why it is such a "grave danger to the Church and society."

"We need a better theological understanding of why God opposes physician-assisted suicide," says Gregg reminding us of 1 Corinthians 15:26, which says that death is the last enemy to be destroyed, not a means to end suffering.

"God is glorified when His people aid those who are suffering," Gregg says.

He also wants the Church to be educated not just on the subject of physician-assisted suicide but also why there is a movement supporting it.

"It all comes down to worldview," he says. "Supporters believe that humanity exists by random chance."

Guided by the principle of "ratio-



nal utility,” followers of this movement believe in population control, stating that people are the problem. Because of this, human beings are considered to have no inherent value above other life forms.

Gregg describes the movement’s rationale as: If dying people use up the majority of health care dollars in the final six months of life, we can hasten their death and redirect those funds toward the younger population. Therefore, it’s sometimes OK to kill another human if it satisfies “rational utility.”

But he explains, “The Church must uphold the truth that all life is sacred and bears God’s image.”

Though the issues are daunting, Gregg encourages every believer to work against physician-assisted suicide and abortion at some level by being good stewards of government, which God has instituted. This can be through local elections, calling state and federal representatives and senators, speaking with pastors and elders, Bible study, and—in everything—prayer.

“I never thought I’d get involved in any sort of legislative thing, but that’s the need,” says Gregg.

His current position in New Mexico would not have been possible without first going to Cameroon to teach and work. While there, he met his current boss who, at the time was on his first mission trip and just “so happened” to offer Gregg a job.

The road to Africa started on Sunday at church during his years in residency in Charleston, South Carolina. An African pastor preached on Matthew 9, which discusses a plentiful harvest but few laborers to bring it in. The pastor asked the audience to pray that God would

raise up workers to come to Africa because the harvest was plentiful.

“His comments, particularly on the piece of Scripture, were really cutting to me, very motivating,” says Gregg. “And I evaluated my life and my walk with Christ, and I thought, ‘How can I make a big career deci-

## “The Church is in a David vs. Goliath battle with assisted suicide.”

sion when I finish all my years of training if I’ve never seen what it’s like in areas where there is no medical care available or very little available?” And I decided that ‘I’ve got to go while I’m still in my training. Otherwise, I’m going to miss the boat. My career is going to steer me instead of being more intentional about it.’”

Gregg was no stranger to missions.

He had organized and led trips to Mexico as president of the Christian Medical and Dental Association chapter in medical school. But those trips were very short term and born more out of tradition than calling.

As a first step, while still in surgical training, he started planning a mission trip to Burundi, Africa, primarily to meet doctors and assess their needs. It “turned into a full-blown surgical mission trip where we operated every day.”

Following that initial trip, Gregg and Kelly went back to Africa and began planning for their eventual move there. Through the post-residency program with World Medical Mission, they and their three children ended up in Cameroon for a two-year stay, during which he would begin his career as a surgeon.

“We wanted to end up in a place like that,” Gregg says. He thought he would be “more useful as a specialist and teaching the African trainees.”

Discipleship became instinctive as he shared with patients and their families his family’s own need for a

*Continued on page 7*

### Why SMI?

Through his job, Gregg Schmedes had the choice to go with regular insurance for his family, but he chose differently.

“As a Christian physician, it’s important to me that I am partnering with the Church in health care just like I did in Cameroon,” he says.

Although Gregg and his wife, Kelly, have not had to submit a need yet, they enjoy the benefits of helping others in need.

“I could just have a premium check go out, or I could be partnering with other Christian families and praying with them for their health care needs,” Gregg says. “That was really appealing to us.”

He also believes Samaritan is more than a model for health care.

“It’s more efficient than health insurance” he says. “It fosters and encourages church relationships and partnerships. It encourages the patient-physician relationship as well.” ♦



## Save the Storks

by Michael Miller

**S**amaritan Ministries member Paul Isaacs had tears in his eyes the first time he met Joe Baker, and it wasn't because of the kung pao chicken Paul was eating.

Joe was telling Paul about Save the Storks, a Colorado-based ministry the Bakers had created in order to outfit vans with ultrasound machines and provide the vehicles to women's pregnancy centers. The idea is to give easy-access, free sonograms to pregnant women considering abortion so they can see their babies and, hopefully, decide to keep them. Joe had started the ministry a couple years earlier. He and Paul met occasionally for lunch to talk about the ministry.

At one lunch, Paul, who worked for The Navigators, wondered why Joe hadn't asked him to come onboard with Storks yet.

"I can't afford you," Paul remembered Joe saying.

**“We're trying to help the pro-life movement be seen for what it really is: a movement of love and compassion.”**

So Paul asked him, "What if I raised my own funding?"

"You had me at 'Hello,'" Joe replied.

Paul serves as Save the Storks' president while Joe is its CEO. The two also serve on the board of Storks' sister ministry, Adopt a Love Story, which supports families needing financial help to adopt.

Save the Storks has deployed 36 outfitted vans to women's pregnancy centers across the U.S. and

has nine in production. With each van costing about \$150,000 to equip, Storks funds a portion and the pregnancy center funds a portion while maintaining ownership of the van. The ministry wants pregnancy centers they work with to offer counseling, discipleship, food, clothing, formula—everything a mom needs for her baby. Storks provides training, coaching, and consultation.

Joe says that as of last year, 3,731 women visiting a Storks van had decided on life. That number, he says, is expected to hit 8,261 this year with more vans on the streets becoming operational. Save the Storks is building momentum as the process for each van goes through fundraising, outfitting, delivery, and training.

"Everything is just now exploding," Joe says. "All these buses are now online, working. We're able to save more lives this year than we have for the last five years because of that.

Next year will be the same. It's crazy."

Joe and his wife, Ann, started raising money for Save the Storks soon after their marriage in 2011 as they toured the nation with three others in a gutted Mercedes van, living on a budget of \$3 per meal (mostly peanut butter and jelly, a part of Storks culture to this day). That tour raised \$10,000. The first bus hit the road in November 2013 and saw 394 women making decisions for life.

Paul's role as president is more of a pastoral role, he says. He speaks to churches and other groups, and helps to lead the 33-employee team.

"Joe and I are like a two-headed monster," Paul says. "No decisions are made without the confidence of the other. Joe for sure is the brains of this organization."

Joe says that Paul leads the spiritual side of the ministry. "He's a pastor at heart," Joe says. "He loves people here so well. Paul is the glue that holds the Storks family together."

Save the Storks isn't just providing vans with ultrasounds to pregnancy centers, Paul says. It's also part of a "rebranding" of the pro-life movement as the ministry tries to connect with the millennial generation by telling the stories of pregnancy resource centers, "the true heroes of this movement."

"We want to kind of shine the light on them," he says, especially doing so through digital media, "telling the story of what it means to be pro-life through images, through video, through blogging."

"We're trying to help the pro-life movement be seen for what it really is: a movement of love and compassion." ♦

## **Why SMI?**

Samaritan Ministries has been "absolutely wonderful" for his family, Paul Isaacs says.

"I have had some horrific things happen to my body due to some liver issues," the president of Save the Storks says. "I faced death basically three times, and just by the grace of God I'm still here. But because of Samaritan Ministries, we're not selling our house and our kids can still have shoes.

"It was devastating, but the people of God came together," Paul says. "Receiving those checks and sending our checks to people is the way I think God wants us to take care of each other. It totally makes sense."

The only "hard part" has been the paperwork, but his wife, April, handles that side of things, Paul says. ♦

surgeon at a crucial time in their life. His oldest son, Isaiah, was born with a condition that affects the colon and required life-saving surgery at just 6 weeks old.

Blessed with being in the U.S. where medical care was readily available at that critical time fed Gregg's desire to be the surgeon someone else might need.

"God sent me a surgeon to help my son, and now God is using me in providing you a surgeon," he would tell them.

He was quick to share the stories with his wife who, as a stay-at-home mom, was not privy to the daily happenings in the hospital across the field from where they lived.

"I would come home and tell my wife, 'This is who we were able to help together,'" Gregg says.

Their two years in Cameroon proved to be a sweet time for the Schmedes as their fourth child, James, was born. By the time they left, their fifth child, Jacob, was on the way. The children adapted well to Cameroonian life, learning to love beans and rice, bathing in big plastic tubs in the yard like their Cameroonian counterparts, and bumping along African roads while jamming to a favorite African song whenever they were able to borrow the neighbor's car.

Despite the triumphs, there were challenges—cross-cultural living, the pace of life, social isolation, and language. On any given day at the hospital, for example, up to 20 different languages might be spoken. All of these factors led to considering an early departure, but they stuck it out and through the experience learned just how much they relied on cultural comforts.

"When I say, 'Lord, You alone are sufficient' do I really mean that or not?" Gregg asks.

The experience contributed to spiritual growth for Gregg, which is still paying dividends.

"I have a bigger view of Who God is—how He used us despite our shortcomings," Gregg says. "He did that with very, very imperfect people. I'm now more aware of God's presence." ♦

## Treat Your Own Back

by Robin McKenzie

reviewed by Brian Estell

**T***reat Your Own Back* by Robin McKenzie is based on an idea that seems too good to be true. An exercise as simple as lying on your stomach and pushing up onto your elbows can cure back pain.

Recently, I was bending over to put on my shoes and a familiar, debilitating pain struck. My back “went out.” It was so bad I had to resort to crawling on all fours.

I managed to make it into the office on Monday. My supervisor noticed my stooped over posture and handed me a copy of *Treat Your Own Back*. I was intrigued because I had done some back exercises years ago, and they had seemed to help.

Still, I wondered: Could simple exercises really cure severe back conditions? Was there good science to back up these claims?

I’m happy to report that I received relief the first day I tried the exercises, and the more consistently I practice them, the better I feel. Plus, the book convinced me that there is good evidence the exercises will benefit almost everyone. I only wish I had started the McKenzie Method earlier in my life.

Robin McKenzie, a physical therapist who began practicing in New

Zealand in the 1950s, often told the story of how he stumbled upon the method by accident. The end of an exam table was left in a raised position, and a patient lay on it face down, causing his spine to be bent

## Could simple exercises really cure severe back conditions?

slightly backwards. When McKenzie entered the room he was horrified to discover his patient in that position because it was considered harmful at the time.

The patient had been receiving treatments and manipulations for weeks to no avail, but he remarked how being in the prone position for a few minutes had given him relief. It was the lightbulb moment for McKenzie. The lower back does have a slightly backwards curve to it when we stand with good posture. It ought to be obvious that we should try to restore, maintain, and strengthen that posture.

McKenzie began experimenting with a variety of exercises that

would eventually develop into the world famous therapy that goes by his name. He died in 2013 but his legacy lives on. *Treat Your Own Back* has sold more than 4 million copies in the U.S. and there are now more than 4,000 clinicians certified in the McKenzie Method of Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy.

The method is based on the idea that the lower back, the “lumbar,” is the key to the most common back pain. It is the centerpiece of our skeleton, bearing the weight of the upper body and transmitting it to the pelvis and lower body.

The most basic problems we have are “mechanical.” That is, a joint somehow gets into a position where surrounding ligaments and tissues are overstretched. The vertebrae and discs in the lower back are the prime example.

Nearly everyone will deal with some degree of back pain, and there are many causes. Poor posture or improper lifting will do it. Lack of movement and exercise is another big problem. Technology and prosperity have made it possible for more and more of us to live sedentary lifestyles, in offices and in front of computer screens. And, if you haven’t experienced lower back pain yet, just give it time. We live in



The basic McKenzie Method exercises involve back extension by lying face down and pushing up. Amazingly, many patients report immediate relief from pain when they do these simple exercises. Doing them consistently, along with complementary back flexion exercises, has been shown to reverse severe back problems.



a fallen world and we're all getting older. Gravity and aging will eventually get you.

McKenzie distinguished between degrees of back problems.

"Postural syndrome" is something almost everyone deals with, and "derangement syndrome" means the problem is more serious. Derangement means that movement in the joints and tissues is restricted, the pain is greater, and the pain is radiating to other parts of the body.

According to McKenzie, 80 percent of patients suffering from back pain can be treated with exercises, and only 10 percent of those actually need any form of clinician-applied manipulative therapy to be restored. Of course, he also recognized that more serious problems such as severe injuries or autoimmune diseases like arthritis were a different category entirely, and would call for other kinds of treatment.

The exercises are quick and simple but they do require you to be precise and consistent. You must follow the diagrams closely and be willing to do them frequently, up to 10 times a day if that is what it takes to get better.

McKenzie was famous for preaching that back pain is a personal responsibility. I must confess that once the acute pain is gone, it is easy to forget about your back and the exercises you ought to be doing.

None of the exercises are complex or require specialized equipment. Some involve using a chair or doorway to get yourself into position. The book shows clear photos and diagrams of how to do them properly.

McKenzie taught his patients to recognize progress by the principle of centralization. Basically, pain radiating out from the lower back should move back toward the center and diminish if the exercises are working. Range of movement is gradually restored.

Centralization has been studied by the McKenzie Institute and others, and there is now an extensive body of medical literature on it. A secondary concept that emerged from the McKenzie Method is "mechanically determined directional preference." Once the problem area is identified, it involves stretching in a certain direction to correct the problem.

Direction is a very important concept in the McKenzie method. The exercises themselves go in one

of two basic directions: Extension increases the angle between two body parts and flexion decreases the angle.

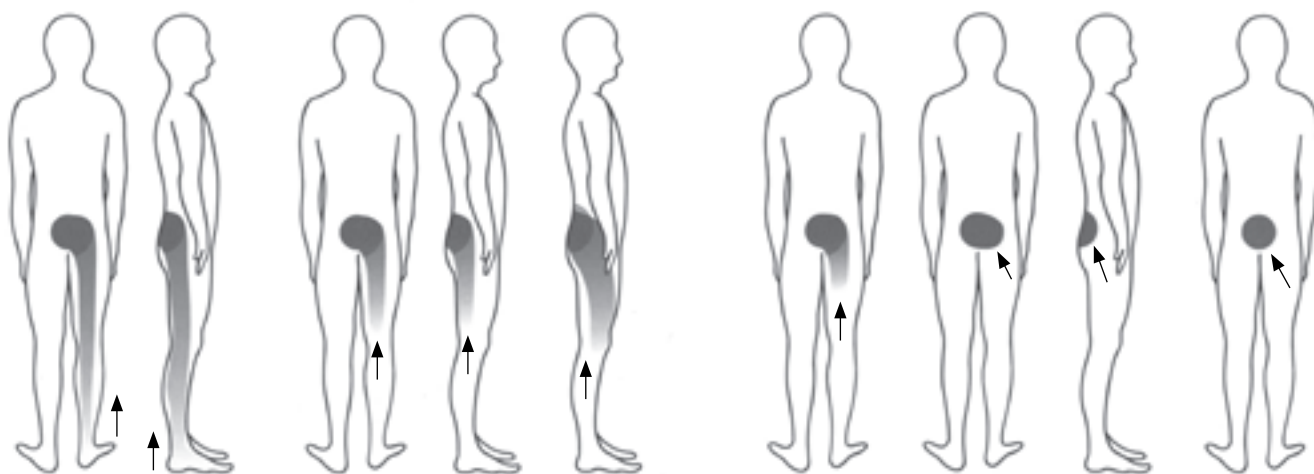
McKenzie was also one of the first to popularize the use of simple lumbar roll cushions. He urged people not to underestimate the power of this simple tool, for maintaining proper posture and support of the lower back. Again, just like the exercises, he preached that consistent use was the key. McKenzie recommended getting one that has a belt to keep it in place, and also a designed version that can be worn when sleeping.

The McKenzie Institute also publishes companion books, *Treat Your Own Shoulder* and *Treat Your Own Neck*. I appreciate the easy-to-read format with illustrations and step-by-step instructions.

I hope you'll check out *Treat Your Own Back*. It could change the way you think about posture and back pain. It could even save you from unnecessary surgery.

If you would like to find a McKenzie-certified clinician near you, visit [McKenzieInstituteUSA.org](http://McKenzieInstituteUSA.org). ♦

*This article is for educational purposes and not meant as medical advice.*



**As you exercise and strengthen your back, you should experience the healing process of centralization. Pain radiating out from the lower back should gradually diminish and move back to the center.**

## Member chooses stem cell injections over back surgery

### Second opinion led to safer, cheaper, better options

by Jed Stuber

Member Michael Ott shrugged off chronic back pain for months until it became so debilitating he could no longer soldier on.

“Surgery was not the route I wanted to take, but the pain was so great I couldn’t even concentrate, let alone move,” he says.

After an MRI, a surgeon recommended surgery to fuse several vertebrae. Michael was dismayed to learn that it was likely he would no longer be able to live an active lifestyle as a busy pastor, involved father, and Cross Fit enthusiast.

Desperate, Michael mentioned his plight to a dermatologist. Even though it was outside his area of expertise, the dermatologist suggested checking into stem cell injections. Michael was surprised. He thought stem cell therapy was new and controversial.

“Stem cells conjured up images of strange science experiments in my mind,” Michael says, “but I began down the road of investigation. I quickly learned that providers offering stem cell injections are common, but I did not have confidence to move forward until Dr. Lieber helped me understand the Regenxx methods.”

Michael says the three-hour drive across Florida to a Regenxx provider was well worth it. He learned that Dr. James Leiber had served in the White House treating senior staff before being trained by Regenxx in orthopedic stem cell therapies. Dr. Lieber explained to Michael that there were very promising treat-

ments that in many cases could help serious back problems and prevent surgery.

Dr. Leiber recommended both Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) and Regenxx stem cell procedures. PRP has been around since the 1970s and stem cell injections for about 10 years.

PRP is widely used in sports medicine. Blood is drawn and put in a centrifuge. The platelets are separated out and then injected at the point of injury.

Dr. Julian Whitaker, longtime proponent of PRP, explains how it works: “Once at the site of injury, platelets release a host of proteins, peptides, and other healing compounds. These include clotting factors to stop bleeding, inflammatory chemicals to drive the acute phase of the healing process, and growth factors to promote tissue regeneration and the formation of blood vessels that nourish new tissues.”

Michael had PRP injections at a dozen points along his back. He was very sore for a week or two, and then started feeling better and regaining mobility and strength. Most significantly, the back pain lessened.

He went back to Dr. Leiber for another evaluation, and this time had Regenxx stem cell injections. Stem cells were taken from bone marrow in his hip, and then they were injected into his back. He was even more sore this time, but again, after a week or two, started feeling better. Nine months after his last injection, he believes he’s back to



**Member Michael Ott feared back surgery would put an end to his active lifestyle, and chose stem cell therapy instead.**

full health.

“I have absolutely zero pain,” Michael says. “I could hardly believe it at first. You don’t even realize how much pain you’ve been dealing with until it’s gone. I can’t even tell you how good it felt. I’m amazed.”

On top of that, the total cost for Michael’s therapy was about \$10,000. If he had chosen spinal fusion surgery, it could have easily cost \$50,000 or more, according to HealthcareBluebook.com. Plus, the Regenxx therapy actually cost less than the estimates Michael received for other stem cell injections that are not as extensive as Regenxx’s methods (see facing page). ♦

*This article is for educational purposes and not meant as medical advice.*

## Regenexx leads way in developing orthopedic stem cell therapies

by Jed Stuber

About half of the published medical literature on orthopedic stem cell therapies references Regenexx methods and data. What sets them apart?

Regenexx often posts videos on YouTube to explain. Regenexx founder, Dr. Chris Centeno says:

“Everyone else that doesn’t do Regenexx has a separate little bedside machine. You take blood or bone marrow and put it in there. All the doctor does is shut the lid and push the ‘on’ button. It’s not real complex. The doctor can’t customize your sample to get what he needs to treat you.”

In contrast, every Regenexx provider goes through an extensive training program to learn about the latest laboratory and imaging techniques. The lab equipment allows Regenexx clinicians to count

platelets and stem cells, so the dose being injected is known. The quantity of cells is especially important for determining how many injections can be done.

Regenexx methods also capture a secondary population of stem cells in the bone marrow that most providers discard. Regenexx filed for a patent on their processes which can generate 10-20 times more cells than the simple centrifuge method.

Another important distinction is that Regenexx uses the latest ultrasound, X-ray, and thoroscopy imaging techniques. Real-time imaging helps Regenexx doctors to guide the needle to precise locations when the injections are done. Other doctors often have to put the needle in blindly, or do their best based on a static image.


Dr. Centeno says, “It’s very, very

important that doctors have training in advanced imaging techniques for the placement of needles and cells.”

Regenexx also posts the latest outcomes of their patients on their website, so anyone can see what the patients themselves are saying about how stem cells improved their conditions.

More and more patients are choosing stem cell therapies instead of surgery for all the major joint problems: knee, hip, shoulder, spine, hand, wrist, foot, ankle, and elbow. Regenexx’s goal is to make most surgeries obsolete, and transform orthopedics from a surgical speciality into a “percutaneous” (injection based) speciality.

Visit [Regenexx.com](http://Regenexx.com) to find the certified provider that is nearest you. ♦



Regenexx founder Dr. Chris Centeno explains that Regenexx uses full laboratory facilities to count and culture the cells that will be injected to the injured area. Regenexx treatments have 10-20 times more cells than the typical treatment done in a doctor’s office, which use only a bedside centrifuge.

Watch the video at [bit.ly/regenexxisdifferent](http://bit.ly/regenexxisdifferent)

**I have been** so blessed by the personal cards and notes of encouragement by the members helping me in my time of need.

I think the best part of Samaritan is the way members address both financial and spiritual needs in a personal way. The prayers from the Samaritan staff and the members create an atmosphere of care and love that not only helped me, but also my entire family.

*Brandon Pals  
Meservey, Iowa*

**The Samaritan approach** to health care worked extremely well for my need. From my perspective it is far and above better than any health insurance policy out there.

I was free to choose my doctor and the hospital for the surgery I needed. I negotiated a 50 percent discount ahead of time.

This is the way it is supposed to work. Very straightforward and simple. Thank you Samaritan for allowing me to be part of this concept.

I was in the hospital for only one night. At two weeks I was 90 percent recovered and at four weeks, I'm full speed ahead 100 percent!

*Philip Bobo  
Lascassas, Tennessee*

**Because of Samaritan** Ministries I was able to calmly walk into an ER and focus my attention on the problem at hand. I didn't have to stress about how much everything would cost, and how on earth I would pay the bills without taking food off the table. Thank you to all of you who made health care accessible and affordable to me.

*Noel Poisel  
Priest River, Idaho*

**As full-time missionaries**, we have seen God's greatness all around the world. Dealing with surgery and radiation has put us on a path that, frankly, we wouldn't have chosen. But we have seen God's love for His people through the letters, prayers, Bible verses, and encouraging words we received.

We have a wall in our basement with almost a hundred notes that have been a strength and blessing to us. We have been able to minister and witness as we have been filled with the loving thoughts of others. Our hope is to return to the field God called us to, but we will walk whatever path He guides us in.

*Robert W. and Marilyn Smith  
Walton, Kentucky*

**The Lord has** provided in many ways by leading us to Samaritan. We have greatly reduced the amount we pay for health care and are able to give more to the Church and Christian education.

*David and Amanda Rozeboom  
Rock Valley, Iowa*

**Several months ago** I sent a share to a member in Hawaii, along with a note of encouragement. I mentioned that I was from Minnesota and had never seen an ocean before.

I was surprised to get a package from Hawaii recently. The members sent me a little bag of sand, some shells, and postcard they painted of a lighthouse by the ocean. They sent the ocean to me!

I would have never known these fellow believers if not for the Samaritan connection. I was blessed, blessed, blessed!

*Jerome Erickson  
Pine River, Minnesota*

**For a few** years now I have kept a list of resolutions I read over every morning and pray over three times a day. One of them says, "Resolved, to be content in all circumstances. Whether God gives me much or little, be content. Whether in much anguish or happiness, be content. Whether faced with great difficulty or ease, be content."

In the past two years the Lord has found it good in His eyes to let me go through some very trying health problems. Yet, it is not my physical health that really matters, but my spiritual health.

I have asked myself, "Am I content in these circumstances? Am I trusting in our Savior?"

This trial has constantly reminded me that God's children are bruised reeds. Though we are bruised, He will not break us (Isaiah 42). Through the bruising God has taught me how to be content in Him. I rejoice!

Thank you for all the prayers.

*Jacob Kelley  
Temple, Texas*

**My knees are** improving with less pain and arthritis swelling after stem cell injections. It does seem to be a better solution than replacement surgery for me.

*Chris Bennett  
Keosauqua, Iowa*

**I took a** terrible fall and broke both of my wrists. As I was being wheeled into the operating room I had a moment of fear and doubt. Would it work out through Samaritan Ministries?

Six months later I am done with therapy and able to write this note of praise to our great God. My need was met, the staff were kind and

helpful, the website and new online need process was super easy, the support of members was amazing!

*Sandra Hadley  
Glen Ellyn, Illinois*

**We are just** so thankful for Samaritan Ministries. We are now able to choose our doctors! That was never possible in the past when we had insurance network restrictions. We pray that Samaritan will grow and grow nationwide.

*Jim and Kris Simon  
Fairfield, California*

**Joyce and I** are very thankful for Samaritan. Because of the faithfulness of both the ministry team and members in the past, we had complete confidence that our need would be met.

We saw God's provision and timing in an amazing way. We talked with the hospital and our \$32,000 bill was reduced to a reasonable \$4,500. An 85 percent discount. Yay God!

*Rick and Joyce Cole  
Denver, Colorado*

**We moved to** Tennessee last summer, and after getting settled in, I needed to find a new doctor. I prayed for the Lord to direct me to the right one and He did just that.

My new doctor was a godly woman and so excited when I explained Samaritan to her. It wasn't much longer and she shared with me that she had indeed signed up!

It has been such a blessing to be part of Samaritan.

*Suzanne Jewkes  
Tullahoma, Tennessee*

---

#### **How do we respond Biblically to the opioid epidemic?**

*Continued from page 1*

There's a joke I've heard, borrowing from a famous quip by Churchill, that "Christians can be counted on to pray, after they've exhausted all other possibilities."

We can't do that here. We need to pray for wisdom and guidance, not only for ourselves but for our leaders. What's going on requires right policies but ultimately it transcends policies and even good ideas.

We need to pray for compassion. It's tempting to point to people's bad choices, in part, because there are plenty of bad choices to point to. If we go that route, we may be mimicking Jesus' disciples whom, upon seeing a man who was blind from birth, asked, who sinned: him or his parents? The multi-generational brokenness described in both the *New Yorker* and the *Washington Post* articles is the backdrop for this opioid epidemic.

We should recall Jesus' reply: "This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him." We're

called to do the works of God in the midst of a hurting world. This, not assigning blame, is what restoration looks like.

**May we be like  
the Samaritan,  
willing to help  
the multitudes of  
half-dead people  
left on the side  
of the road across  
this country.**

Finally, we should pray for a spirit of gratitude and generosity. We should never forget that we are the beneficiaries of grace. For the Christian, there's no such thing as a "self-made" man or woman. As the King James Version of 1 Chronicles

29 famously reads, "For all things come from Thee, and from Thine own have we given Thee."

And pray that God will mobilize us, His people, to follow the examples of Christians throughout history who, finding themselves in times and places of significant crisis, social brokenness, and suffering, ran into the mess—not away from it.

May we not be like the priest and Levite who walked around the beaten, bloody man on the road. May instead we be like the Samaritan, willing to get our hands dirty to help the multitudes of half-dead people left on the side of the road across this country. And please, forward this commentary to your friends so that they can be in prayer, too. ♦

*Copyright 2017 Breakpoint.org. Reprinted by permission. <[bit.ly/opioidresponse](http://bit.ly/opioidresponse)>*

*John Stonestreet, the host of The Point, a daily national radio program, provides commentaries on current events and life issues from a Biblical worldview. He is the co-author of A Practical Guide to Culture: Helping the Next Generation Navigate Today's World.*

## Prayer for the Persecuted Church

*Hebrews 13:3 tells us to “Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.” Our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are being persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. We need to remember them in prayer. Each month, the Christian Health Care Newsletter will provide updates gleaned from such sources as World Watch Monitor and International Christian Concern and offer prayer points. Please use them in your personal or group prayer time.*

### **Muslims attack Christian**

A 27-year-old Ethiopian Christian was attacked by Muslim men with machetes on July 16 in his own home, World Watch Monitor reports. The Christian had been evangelizing, which angered Muslims in the area. The gang had first damaged a church building before going to the man's home. The man suffered deep wounds to the back of his head. *Pray for full recovery for the Ethiopian man, for safety for other Christians in his area, and for the Gospel to be spread in Ethiopia.*

### **Iranian Christian released**

Maryam Naghash Zargaran was released on August 1 from an Iranian prison after four years, World Watch Monitor says. She was arrested in January 2013 along with Iranian-American pastor Saeed Abedini, who was released in January 2016. Maryam was harassed in prison and denied medical treatment. *Praise God that Maryam has been released. Pray for healing of her various ailments, and*

*for safety for her and other Iranian Christians.*

### **Sudan interferes with schools**

The Sudanese government is forcing Christian schools to follow the Muslim calendar, International Christian Concern reports. That means a Sunday-Thursdays school week, interfering with the traditional day of Christian worship. *Pray that Sudanese Christians will still be able to find a way to worship with their entire families on Sundays, and that the Sudanese government will relent in enforcement of the law.*

### **Coptic soldier beaten to death**

Christians are claiming that a Coptic soldier in the Egyptian army was beaten to death because of his faith, ICC reports. Joseph Reda Helmy had just been transferred to a special forces police unit after completing training. The government said Helmy had died due to an epileptic seizure, but an autopsy confirmed the death was not natural and that the body was covered in bruises. *Pray for Helmy's family as they pursue justice in the matter, and for the safety of Coptic Christians in Muslim-dominated Egypt.*

### **Inspectors to attend church**

Officials in China's central Henan province have organized teams to monitor and inspect church activities, ICC says. Inspectors will read church materials and attend services. Earlier this summer, authorities had forbidden children from attending Sunday school or any other church activities. All believers in Henan have been ordered to join the official

Three-Self Church, although its doctrine differs greatly from Scripture and is under government censorship. *Pray that government inspectors will be converted by what they read and experience at the churches, that children will again be allowed to attend church activities without interference, and that believers will not falter in maintaining a scriptural stand.*

### **Pakistanis arrest 16-year-old**

Pakistani authorities are denying family access to a 16-year-old Christian boy accused of blasphemy, ICC reports. Police have refused to acknowledge holding Shahzad Masih since he was arrested on July 14. He is accused of making derogatory remarks about Muhammad. *Pray that Shahzad's family will be able to see him or that he will be released soon.*

### **Christians seek college access**

Pakistani Christians are demanding better access to higher education, ICC reports, asking that a restriction on the number of non-Muslim students be set aside. Generations of persecution and discrimination in higher education has had a cyclical effect, leaving each Christian generation less educated than previous generations. *Pray that Pakistan will give Christians more access to higher education and that individuals will find other access to training and education as well.* ♦

*For more information on the persecuted church, contact International Christian Concern ([www.persecution.org](http://www.persecution.org), 800-422-5441) or World Watch Monitor ([world-watchmonitor.org](http://world-watchmonitor.org)).*

Dustin had cried out in jail. By being immersed in a Biblical atmosphere, studying and memorizing Scripture, and receiving consistent Biblical counseling, Dustin began to grow in Christ.

"The life I now live free from heroin is because of God's grace and the power of the Cross," Dustin says.

After two years at mission facilities, Dustin headed to Calvary Bible College (now Calvary University) in Kansas City, Missouri, where he studied Biblical counseling and music for seven years. He had learned to play guitar at the mission, and wanted to take that further. But he also appreciated all the hours of Peoria Rescue Ministries counselors "pouring into me," and wanted to offer the same to others.

Things continued to develop for Dustin.

In 2011, he began dating Kyndra, the young woman who would become his wife. Then in 2013, he started working full time for Calvary as a field representative, speaking at churches, schools, and other venues about the school. In the process, he gained skills that would later come in handy for representing Samaritan at the Winter Jam concerts. It was during an appearance for Calvary at Liberty Bible Church in Eureka, Illinois, that Dustin heard about Samaritan Ministries. He applied for a job, and, after some Skype interviews, joined Samaritan's MD department in May 2016.

Three months later, he was asked to represent Samaritan on the Winter Jam tour, and said yes.

"As my wife and I prayed, it became clear that God had prepared us for that sort of work," Dustin says.

He and Kyndra moved down to Winter Jam's base in Nashville. Dustin would head out on the road on a Wednesday or Thursday and be back home by Monday morning. He developed close relationships with musicians and crewmembers, but, most importantly, he relayed the message of the Gospel and Christian health care sharing to hundreds of thousands of people.



Samaritan will apply what it learned as far as connecting with concertgoers to the tours this fall and winter. So will Dustin. At concerts, he had to relate Samaritan's message about health care sharing in only a minute and a half during the tightly scheduled evenings. He also had a couple of minutes to talk to pastors and youth group leaders at a meeting held right before the concert started.

He'll be applying the lessons of last winter to this year's tours.

"We're going to build on some things from last year," Dustin says. "There will be new ears, people there who have heard about Samaritan Ministries but never looked into it. And people hearing about it again."

Being a national sponsor of the Winter Jam tour "makes sense

logistically," Dustin says. It's a way to connect with thousands of Christians at once.

Dustin also made connections on the tour with Samaritan members who volunteered to staff the ministry's tables at concerts.

He says it's important as well to get the message of health care sharing out to a younger audience.

"Our department gets calls all day from people lamenting that they wish they had heard about Samaritan Ministries earlier," Dustin says. "It's our responsibility to tell people what God is doing here, especially at a younger age."

"Young people I ran into were so relieved to hear about how Samaritan works. All they know about insurance and health care is how much of a headache it is. Health care sharing is a relief for them. The organic nature of Samaritan Ministries and direct sharing is very refreshing to them and something meeting the needs of what they're looking for."

Amanda Wilton, Samaritan's marketing coordinator, says Dustin is a good fit as the ministry's representative on the tour.

"The partnership between Samaritan Ministries and Winter Jam has been an enormous team effort," she says. "It has been a special blessing to have Dustin as the Winter Jam tour rep, because he brings with him previous experience in speaking and presenting to audiences. Beyond that, though, Dustin truly loves Jesus and conveys that in how he presents our ministry to others. It takes a special person to present to thousands of people from a stage, and he does a great job!" ♦

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ... whoever hates his brother is in the darkness ... and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

1 John 2:9, 11

Throughout 1 John, the Apostle presents some indicators to determine if someone is living in the light or living in the darkness. One he mentions the most often is in this passage—hating a brother.

It is possible for someone to claim confidently to be living in the light, even appearing to live a very devout life, and still be living in the darkness. It is possible to do this without even realizing it, because of eyes blinded by the darkness. 1 John 1:8 tells us that we can fool ourselves when we refuse to see and admit our sin.

Living in the light makes it possible to avoid the things that cause stumbling. But when someone hates his brother, he is in the darkness and the darkness blinds his eyes. He does not know where he is going.

Hating a brother makes it impossible to go the right way in life, no matter how devout we may be.

For the Kingdom,



Ray King