



PastorCare

West Michigan
Helping Pastors Soar

August 2013

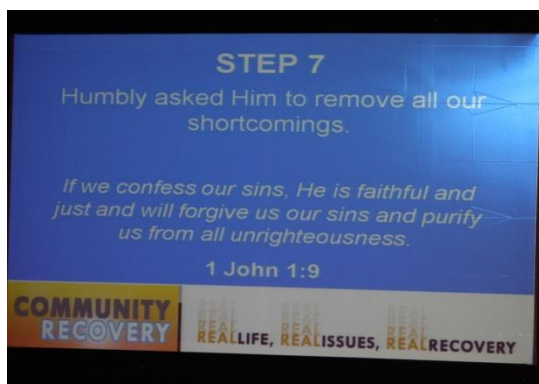
It was a cloudy, weekday morning in October of 2002 and I was sitting in my office at New Community Church. The phone rang and the caller introduced himself as Pastor John Smith. He proceeded to tell me how he had resigned his senior pastor role at New Life Community Church in Long Island, New York and that he had just arrived into Grand Rapids; he had nothing but his wife, two sons, and a lot of faith in God's leading.

John proceeded to add to his story that he needed support, direction and help in understanding where God was taking him. He said that since Celebrate Recovery® was such a blessing back at New Life, that he felt God leading him to seek out a church that did Celebrate Recovery® in Grand Rapids as well. That's how he found me.



As an Associate Pastor of New Community Church and as founder of Community Recovery International (a ministry similar to Celebrate Recovery®), I felt John's need deeply. In 1991, my father and founding senior pastor of New Community Church (of whom I pastor with to date) had been unjustly ousted from Sunshine Church without support from anyone. Those who went with him to form New Community Church stood with him in this new ministry. It was a major move that transformed him and brought many new blessed beginnings. Similarly, John needed support, yet he knew that leading a church was no longer a healthy option for him. I walked with John from the first meeting through today, eleven years to date, encouraging and supporting him in prayer, discussion, and coaching.

The irony is that John became my coach in the process. Community Recovery International as a ministry and non-profit began as a group of 25 people weekly. It grew swiftly into over 300 people a week from 1999 to 2004. By mid-year in 2004, Community Recovery came to a brief stand still; our budget was too large and we had to cut costs and ministries that we had established. I went to John for wisdom. What next? How do I transition Community Recovery into a stronger organization? Help!



As my coach, John sat and listened over hot chocolate and helped me to talk things out. As I approached 2005-2008, it became apparent that it was going to be a tough go. Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, directs us to have "the right people on the bus." The shifts in leadership and followership were brutal. For example, I had people who stole from the ministry who I thought were trustworthy. I also lacked the finances to pay for any competent administrative assistant; I felt alone. Other examples were that I had leaders who seemed competent in doing ministry; however, lacked the needed skills. It seemed that even if I even tried to teach them how, it would not have worked (I even tried; and, at that time, it did not work).

God continued to guide through the mistakes and the victories and led me and trustworthy core leaders through a tough reframe of the recovery ministry. All the while, John stood with me using his sharp listening skills and excellent networking gifts. Because of John and PastorCare, I was able to go confidently in Christ through the needed changes. Today, I am happy to report that God has rebuilt Community Recovery International into a healthy world mission organization. After a long wait, God provided the "right" people to be on "the bus" and has strengthened our competent core leaders who have been with Community Recovery for over 13 years.



If you are a pastor reading this and think, "This is so typical; so what?" I hear you. The truth is that God wants to shape, mold and heal you in community; never do it alone because God never leaves you; NEVER. If you are experiencing pain, betrayal, sorrow, or cynicism, you might think, "This seems phony and I hurt too much!" I understand and in being there (and at times revisit) I asked God to help me. Every time I did, God reminded me that He and John were THERE. With God's help and power I made the call, the appointment, saw John almost immediately, and he would BE ALL THERE to help.

Even when things were going well, I needed that time with John. There were many times when I felt as though God was leading me elsewhere; each time this happened, God used John to clarify what was truly going on.

Overall, this exemplifies how pastors need a pastor to help them through their struggle, pain, successes, joy and sorrows. John and PastorCare are deeply committed to seeing you move forward in God's power. In Jeremiah 29: 11, it states, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." The term "prosper" in the Hebrew means to give "peace" as opposed to "physical wealth." God therefore is promising peace in you and your ministry whatever that may mean. Jesus will be there and I pray that God will use John and PastorCare to help you through anything that comes. He will do something great! Look for it! **Dr. Mark Vander Meer**



Pastor John and Sue Smith

Sue and I are dependent on God moving in the hearts of His people to financially support our ministry. We hope the Holy Spirit leads you to become a **Financial Partner** in this strategic Kingdom ministry. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Mark 6:21

No contribution is too small to make a difference. Checks can be made payable to **PastorCare West Michigan**. Our mailing address: **1632 Waterbury Dr. SE Grand Rapids, MI 49508.**

Blessings!

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