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Dr. Mac's Minute

It's a Comma, not a Period!

Passage: Romans 6:22-23

I confess, I'm a bit of a grammar nerd. I'm one of those stubborn old geezers that even proofread my text messages several times to make sure there are no spelling errors, dangling participles, or dreaded split infinitives. And, of course, all punctuation must be correct. Think of it as my small contribution to creating a modicum of cultural civility.

Besides . . . at times, a little punctuation can make a big difference.

Last month I was driving home from eastern South Dakota. It was a beautiful day and westbound I-90 was (mostly!) free of the remnants of the recent snowstorm. I was listening to a football talk radio station when a billboard caught my eye. Its' message was short, simple, and to the point:

For the wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6:23)

It was one of those signs to which most evangelicals would read, smile, punch the air, and shout out, "Amen! Take that, devil!" We might even

daydream about some lost soul driving by, seeing the sign, pulling over to the shoulder of the highway, and crying out: “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.” No doubt, that is the intent of the creator of the message.

As I drove by, however, I was immediately struck by a thought that something was wrong. It wasn’t the wording. You will, in fact, find that phrase in the Bible. It wasn’t the “address.” Romans 6:23 is where you will find it.

So, what was the problem? Actually, it was something quite small . . . it was the punctuation! Here is what Romans 6:23 says: “*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” It is a comma, not a period! Do you see the difference? If it is a period, we are without hope.

Throughout the sixth chapter of Romans, Paul speaks of the devastating consequences of sin. Sin enslaves. Sin separates us from God; and sin’s end result is death. God’s holiness demands this, and He has revealed this truth to all generations of His creation, from the days of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:16-17) through everyone walking the earth today.

Complicating the problem is the reality that, “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). Sin’s deadly effect taints all of us and we are condemned without hope. That is . . . if it’s a period.

The beauty of the gospel, however, is that Romans 6:23 does not end where our billboard evangelist ends it. It’s a comma, not a period. Just as all hope seems lost, the apostle inserts a comma and adds, “BUT.” The just wages of sin are death, BUT in the midst of our darkness, God’s hand extends a lifeline, an undeserved opportunity for grace and mercy. God offers eternal life. Don’t make the mistake of forgetting the comma. As you share the tragic truth of sin’s consequences, don’t leave out the glorious message of hope.

By the way, there’s another grammatical mistake to avoid (you knew I’d have to find more than one!). Don’t forget the “prepositional phrase” that wraps up God’s message of hope. Many in our day simply want to slide the period a few words to the right after the word “life.” That would make the billboard read:

**For the wages of sin is death,
but the free gift of God is eternal life. (Rom. 6:23)**

Do you see the problem? While replacing the comma with a period removes the hope of the gospel, misplacing the period gives a false hope. God’s gift is offered on God’s terms and those terms are, “*in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

There is a dangerous false teaching that “all roads lead to God,” that someday, in some way, everyone is going to heaven. That is like saying all roads lead to my house. Actually, some roads lead away from my house. In fact, if you follow that philosophy to get to where I live, you will eventually reach a dead end.

Jesus was unequivocal. He said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me*” (John 14:6). Jesus’ death on the cross paid the wages of sin. His resurrection conquered the curse of sin and makes eternal life possible. We experience God’s forgiveness of sin and receive His gift of eternal life when we “*repent and believe the gospel*” (Mark 1:15).

In fact, there is a great irony here. If you remove Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection from the pathway to God’s free gift you are left with this contradiction: God’s Law demands death for sin, but He gives everyone eternal

life. Without the truth of, “*in Christ Jesus our Lord*,” these two statements are irreconcilable. If God is holy and must judge sin, He cannot simply declare that everyone will live. If, however, He does say, “I’m going to give eternal life to everyone,” then He is not the God of holiness that must judge sin. Jesus HAD to pay the price of sin, conquer the curse of death, and establish the pathway of repentance and faith. Without it we are left with either no hope or a false hope. Either way, the end result is the same . . . death, eternal separation from God.

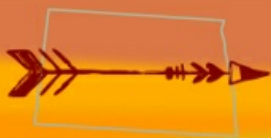
If you are overwhelmed by sin’s hopelessness, receive God’s free gift of eternal life by calling on the name of Jesus as Lord and Savior (Rom. 10:13). If, on the other hand, you have been counting on the lie that, “all roads lead to God,” receive God’s free gift of eternal life by calling on the name of Jesus as Lord and Savior (Rom. 10:13).

And . . . if you share God’s message of salvation with someone (which He commanded us to do!), be sure to use the right punctuation in the right place. Tell your story of how Jesus changed your life. Tell His story of how He died for sin and rose again. Then invite your friend to have their own story of God’s grace by responding to the truth:

**For the wages of sin is death,
but the free gift of God is eternal life
in Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 6:23)**

Dr. MacDonald's Tentative February & March Schedule:

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| February | 7 | Fort Worth: State Exec Dir's Meeting |
| | 14 | Vacation |
| | 21 | OPEN |
| | 28 | OPEN |
| March | 7 | Yankton: Restore Church |
| | 14 | Phoenix: Evangelism Meeting |
| | 20 (Sat.) | AM: Badlands Association Meeting PM: First Nations Association Meeting |
| | 21 | In Ft. Totten for W. Robertson Memorial |
| | 28 | OPEN |



Around the Dakotas



Christ Church Ordains Chris Orr

Christ Church held an ordination service for Chris Orr on January 3, 2021. Bob Thyren led the



congregation in singing some of Chris' favorite worship songs while Les Ellis and Pastor Josh Bonner read some of Chris' favorite Scripture. Charges were presented by Pastor Garvon Golden and Pastor Larry Johnson, a mentor of Chris from his time in Minnesota and the ordination prayer was led by Pastor Joe Hammer.

*Ordination prayer led by Pastor Joe Hammer
Seated are Chris & Laura Orr*

First Nations Baptist Association Upcoming Meeting

The First Nations Baptist Association is having a meeting at Dakota Baptist Church in Fort Totten, North Dakota, beginning at 1 pm on Saturday, March 20th. If you are a part of the association and would like more information, you can contact either Steve Osage (srosage@cablelynx.com) or Paul Young (youngdakotamissions@hotmail.com)

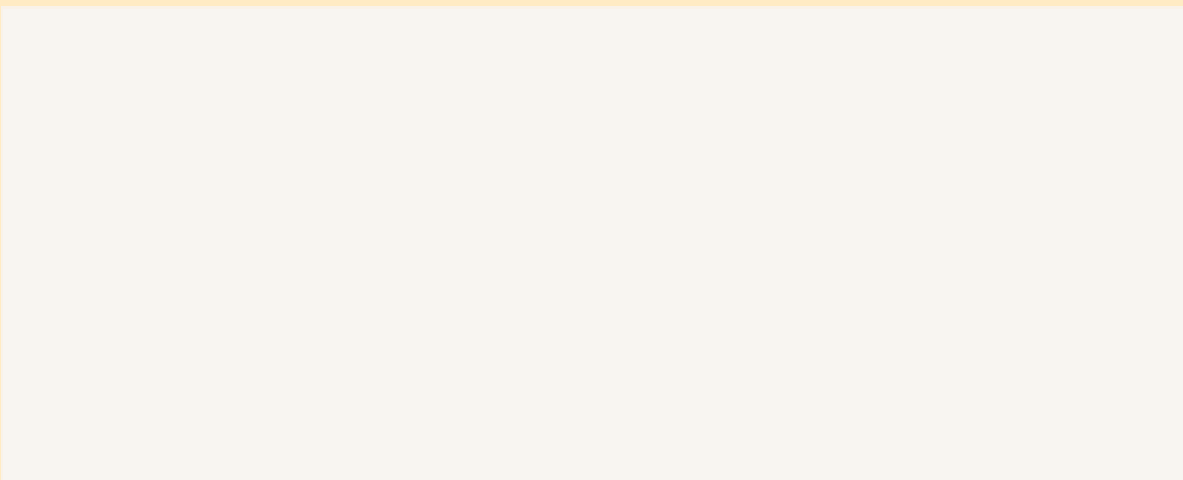
Memorial Service for Wilbert Robertson

Wilbert Robertson went to be home with the Lord on November 25, 2020 at SK Living Center in Roslyn, SD. A memorial service will be held at Dakota Baptist Church (602 Baptist Church Rd, Fort Totten, ND) at 11 am on Sunday, March 21st.

Wilbert was instrumental in laying the ground work for quite a few Native churches and starting the First Nations Baptist Fellowship.

Condolences can be sent to Judith Robertson PO Box 422 Waubay, SD 57273.

The below article, from the New York Times, gives more details about the life and ministry of Wilbert Robertson:*





Rev. Wilbert Robertson, Native American Pastor, Dies at 86

A veteran of the Korean and Vietnam wars, he established Baptist congregations in the Dakotas. He died of Covid-19. This obituary is part of a series about people who have died in the coronavirus pandemic. Read about others here . The Rev.

Read more

www.nytimes.com

**Please note that inclusion of this article is not a recommendation of the New York Times, but an opportunity for you to learn more about Wilbert Robertson.*

Chankü Wastè Medical

by Matt Hadden

Pastor of Creator's Fellowship

Chankü Wastè has been working on a permanent medical clinic here on the camp property to serve the Lakota people in their community. God has been so faithful to make this vision become a reality. We are hopeful to have our first week of dental service in March but for now it was exciting to see one of our volunteer dentists helping set up the equipment and taking advantage of doing some exams while he was here last week.



Chankü Wastè is in need of some specific dental and optometry equipment as well as volunteers of professionals in these areas to help fill their calendar. You can contact me at **mhadden@gmail.com** to learn more.

Creator's Fellowship

Manderson

by Matt Hadden

Pastor of Creator's Fellowship



January 17, 2021, was Creator's Fellowship Manderson's second Sunday service. We had a good attendance of the believers in the community along with a couple of folks that came by just to check it out. Pastor Jeremy had the privilege of baptizing a young man that just recently put his faith in Jesus. The following Sunday, January 24, the church baptized a young lady. What a great way to start out! The church plant feels it has been well-received in Manderson and is grateful and excited to see what God is going to continue to do.

Hope City Church in Bismarck

by Chris Wallace

Church Planter and Pastor of Hope City Church

Hope City Church in Bismarck, ND, held its first worship service January 17, 2021. They had 20 worshippers in person and about 15 online. The church is excited to continue building a core team of people to help them reach Bismarck.



Fred & Denise Travel in February

Fred and Denise will be out of the state for two weeks in February. From February 7-12 they will be at the State Executive Directors meeting in Fort Worth. After that they will be gone for the next week to Louisville and St. Louis to visit a new grandson and other family members. If you need anything during this time, you can contact Paul O'Dell at the DBC office.

Orientation and Training Held for New CRMs

The DBC began implementing its new staff structure in January with a time of orientation and training at the convention office in Rapid City.

Sean Donnelly, Everett Hornbostel, and Jeff Musgrave were selected to serve as the DBC's first three Church Relations Missionaries. The three Dakotas pastors are tasked with the responsibility of relating to pastors, churches, and associations in geographical regions of the Dakotas. Donnelly will be serving in the Black Hills and in the Badlands area of North Dakota. Hornbostel will serve in the Heartland and Siouxland areas of South Dakota. Musgrave will serve in the remaining parts of North Dakota.

Each man will also have a statewide assignment to help facilitate and promote the cooperative activities of the churches of the Dakotas.

The first day of the orientation and training opened with current Executive Director Fred MacDonald giving a "big picture" of the role of the CRM from its inception by the State Staff Study Task Force over the past two years. That evening former DBC Executive Director Garvon Golden gave a history of the DBC from its early days connected with the Arizona Baptist Convention through its current identity as the Dakota Baptist Convention. He shared what makes the Dakotas unique and some of his personal experiences throughout 35+ years in the Dakotas as a pastor, Director of Missions, State Evangelism Director, and Executive Director.

The middle day of the training revolved around several Dakotas pastors and leaders sharing their experiences and suggestions on relating to Dakotans. John Flowers spoke on relating to pastors on a personal level and dealing with conflict. Steve Ford led a session on spiritual leadership coaching. Paul Young talked about connecting with Native American churches. Stephen Carson shared about relating to church planters. Buck Hill introduced several tools and resources that could be helpful as the CRMs work with churches.

DBC office manager Paul O'Dell led much of the final half day session, covering logistical details of the CRM role. The session wrapped up with a time of planning, discussion, and prayer with the men on getting started in their new role.

The CRM strategy was adopted last August by the Executive Board and introduced to the messengers at the annual meeting in October. A letter will be sent to each Dakotas church in early February introducing to pastors and congregations the role of the CRM and which man will be serving them for the coming year.



Sean Donnelly



Everett Hornbostel



Jeff Musgrave



***It's not too late for your church to order
Annie Armstrong Easter Offering Materials.***

[Order Now](#)

The below article is being presented at the request of the North Dakota Human Services department to help pastors who may be faced with reporting suspected child abuse and neglect

North Dakota Launches New Child Protection Services Intake Process

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services and the state's 19 human service zones announced the launch today of a statewide toll-free child abuse and neglect reporting line that is part of a new child protection services (CPS) intake process.

Beginning today, Jan. 4, individuals who suspect a child is being abused or

neglected in North Dakota should call 833-958-3500, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Central Time (7 a.m. – 4 p.m. Mountain Time) to make a report. If a child is in immediate danger, people should call 9-1-1.

The department's Chief Operating Officer Sara Stolt explained that the change is part of the ongoing collaboration between the state and local partners to provide human services more efficiently and effectively.

“During this latest social service redesign effort, we created a new statewide centralized intake unit staffed by a dedicated team of 12 specialized CPS intake workers and two supervisors who live and work across the state in the human service zones,” Stolt said. “The CPS intake workers will ask focused questions, gather needed facts, work with supervisors to triage reports and provide a complete intake referral to local CPS professionals when reports meet criteria.”

She said this will allow local CPS professionals to act more quickly to protect children while devoting more time to strengthening and supporting families while they are still together, which will help children remain safe in their family homes. This aligns with a key department priority: building stronger families.

Having a specialized intake unit will also ensure more consistency and should reduce the need for call backs. If one intake worker is busy, the line will roll to another.

“The safety and well-being of children remain our top priorities. Redesigning this process will provide consistent, high quality and timely responses,” Stolt said.

Children and Family Services Division Director Cory Pedersen explained that local child welfare professionals will continue to provide child protection services locally.

“Law enforcement and health care professionals who need a CPS worker to respond to their location immediately will continue to call their local human service zone office directly. However, supporting documents should be faxed to the new centralized CPS Intake Unit at 701-328-0361,” Pedersen said.

He said the CPS Intake Unit will log reports consistently into the state's FRAME child welfare case management system, using a new intake form to assure needed details are gathered as quickly and completely as possible, and will request records such as medical or police records if appropriate.

Cases will be transferred to the local CPS supervisor in the county where the child is located when the report is made. The supervisor will assign the case to a local CPS worker. The local CPS supervisors and workers are responsible for notifying law enforcement of potential criminal situations.

Information about North Dakota's child protection program is online at [**www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/cps**](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childfamily/cps).



NEW N.D. Child Protection Services (CPS) Intake Process

IMPORTANT
If it's an **EMERGENCY** and a child is in **imminent DANGER**
CALL 9-1-1 NOW.



To report suspected child abuse or neglect, Call North Dakota's new toll-free

Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Line
1-833-958-3500

NEW Statewide toll-free Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Line
1-833-958-3500

Available 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Central Time (7 a.m. - 4 p.m. MT), Monday - Friday, STARTING Jan. 4, 2021.

Key Benefits:

- A dedicated team of specialized CPS intake professionals will gather all needed facts so CPS workers can act more quickly to protect children.
- Ensures consistent quality service.
- Reduces phone tag because intake workers are available to take your call.
- Uses a NEW enhanced intake process with focused questions to better target actions.
- Allows local child welfare professionals to devote more quality time to strengthening and supporting families to keep more children safely at home.

Law Enforcement or Medical Personnel:

- If you need a Child Protection Worker to respond to your location immediately, continue to call your local Human Service Zone office directly.
- You can provide supporting documents to the CPS Intake Unit by fax: 701.328.0361.

[Download new CPS intake fact sheet](#)



The Dakota Baptist Convention Office will be closed Monday, February 15, in honor of President's Day