



Ministry Newsletter

May 2023

A "Practice Run" for Changing Atlas Leadership



Dave

When Tonya was hired as the Atlas Ministry Director, it was with the full intent that we would work as much as possible as co-directors of the ministry, with the goal of her becoming my replacement when she was 'ready.' Neither of us could fully commit to that arrangement but both of us fully committed to the experiment. That experiment began on September 19, 2022, and is now a full eight months completed. The experiment is working very well, far beyond either of our wildest imaginations.



Tonya

We will embark on a full practice run when I leave the office for hip surgery on May 25 and a six-week restriction from office presence during my recovery. I will not abandon her but will be fully available by phone and video chat. The practice run will be that Tonya will be asked to actually make all of the ministry decisions for that period of time. I will offer my opinions for her to consider, but the responsibility will shift fully to her shoulders. As I drafted this newsletter, Tonya was not even aware that this might be happening. She has responded willingly and the experiment is on.

One of the years my kids were in little league, I served as an assistant coach. The head coach suddenly got called up to National Guard duty, and I was thrust into his role of **Head Coach**. The decisions that were so easy from the assistant end of the bench carried a completely different weight when I actually had to make those calls instead of just second guessing them. It was a life lesson for me.

Tonya is a remarkable servant of Christ, and I am looking forward to watching how God will use her in this role of increased responsibility. She is fully capable of handling the added responsibility, but if you happen to think of her during this time, I know she would appreciate any prayers you may offer.

What if Atlas Had a Theme Song?

As I have grown in my relationship with God over the years, I have often tended to go through spiritual cycles that, although often very different from each other, added to my ever-growing understanding of the Heavenly Father. One such period was my "Casting Crowns" phase. I found Mark Hall's music to be amazing but it paled in comparison to the lyrics of the songs he wrote and performed with the group of youth workers from a Southern Baptist church in McDonough, Georgia. The lyrics were quite edgy when compared to traditional church teachings and often challenged the church and/or the Christians walls who demonstrated the sinful nature of man inside the walls of the church building.

In 2012 the song "Jesus, Friend of Sinners" was added to the latest of this group's dozens of hit gospel songs. I was immediately captivated by the clever lyrical references revealing how many Christians fail to be what God would like them to be while sharing His love for others. That song touched me then and each time since and has become a better way to care for and relate to others. If we recognizing that

Our Mission:

Changed Lives Through  
Christian Love and  
Advocacy

Our Vision:

Fostering Community  
Awareness, Concern, and  
Response to the Needs of  
Area Residents

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For your Prayer, Ministry,  
and Financial Support

all people are equally created by God, we are more able to truly care for them individually, to meet them without judgment where they are, and be a part of their growing relationship to God. As we help others in the critical needs of their lives, we are also changed as we experience the joy of lives changed for Christ.

One day as Tonya and I sat in my office after an amazing two-hour intake session with a new Atlas client, I asked her if she could think of any song that might serve as a theme song for Atlas, telling the story of how people who are called to help others might experience a deeper way of serving Christ. None came quickly to mind for her, so I told her that I had one that, if not for Atlas, certainly was for me: Casting Crowns' "Jesus, Friend of Sinners." I pulled it up on You Tube, located the song, and we began to view it together. As the song played, she looked down and I watched her face as she listened to it. As I listened for maybe the hundredth time, tears slowly streaked my cheeks and dropped onto my shirt. Tonya was not looking at me so I didn't need to use the well-taught male trait of suppressing tears as I listened to those words that had convicted me often before and continue to convict me of my human failure each time I hear them again.

If a theme song can ever express the underlying hope of a ministry, then this song establishes an attitude for serving the crisis needs of others as they face their lives crumbling around them. Please click on the link below and listen for the clever scriptural references that place us on the wrong side of serving Christ yet provide hope for finding a better way to allow Him to use us for His glory. As you listen, I am fully aware that each of us travels a unique personal spiritual journey. This song will hit each of us in a different way. My hope is that it will at least cause you to think about how you may be called to help others in a new way. Click on the following link to listen: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY6VAy9y\\_iQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY6VAy9y_iQ) .

### **Leadership Changes at Atlas of the Lakes Area**

#### **Board of Director Changes:**

Atlas of the Lakes Area in its two-and-a-half-year existence has been blessed with wonderful board members with broadly diverse backgrounds which have made each of their contributions to the ministry of great value. The three initial board members have been the leadership anchor that have not only charted our direction but in fact built the ship. There have been seven additional board members, three resigning due to special personal reasons and four currently serving.

Those original board members, Neil Heiser, Roland Schmidt, and Sandy Krout, filled the officer positions. Neil has served as the initial president of the board. When we began, he accepted the one-year term but then was willing to continue when that term ended. Neil recently resigned from the board for personal reasons. He and I are the same age although I am 9 days older. We consider ourselves "twin brothers from different mothers." Atlas appreciates Neil's service to the ministry and thanks him for his role in the creation of what exists today.

Vice-president Roland Schmidt was elected president at the last board meeting, and new board member Clay Norris replaced Roland as vice-president. I look forward to the continued growth of the ministry under their leadership as we move from a founder-driven ministry to a board/director led ministry.

#### **Staff Change:**

We have also experienced our first staff change with the resignation of Jodi Wollmuth from her part time position which had evolved into a wide ranging "do anything needed" role. From the first day she was hired, she would rather have been a volunteer than an employee. Jodi intends to continue with her job, only now as a volunteer. Her contribution is sharing her love for Christ and the Atlas ministry with the many people that she meets daily. She guides both clients and volunteers to meet with us to learn more about the ministry, how we can help them, or how they can be a part of helping others. She also continues to be involved with select clients, serving as their advocate as she utilizes her experiences to help them grow in their lives and faith. We miss her office presence but maintain our shared close relationship on a less regular basis. We love you, Jodi.

### **Prayer Requests for Atlas:**

- Pray that the Atlas clients will be served well during this short season of altered ministry.
- Pray that Tonya will not assume the weight of added ministry responsibility, but to trust God to shoulder it in the same way we allow Him to do that now.
- Pray that Dave's home ministry will be productive and yield new ministry opportunities.