Cultivating Meaningful Relationships

David Little

When I pastored, I wondered, Will visitors feel welcome here? Are regular attenders or members introducing themselves to the visitors?

What We Need to Know

I knew that as a church we needed to make a good first impression. I read a book which told me that visitors will decide within 15 minutes if they plan to return. Did someone welcome them and direct them to the auditorium, restrooms, or the nursery / children's ministry? Even a pastor's first words and demeanor are critical in those first minutes.

Each year, Maranatha Village has new residents. Some have leased or bought into the village, while others are looking into possibly living here. I wonder what their initial impressions are. Did someone come up to them and say, "Welcome, I don't think I know you. What's your name?"

Maranatha Village's "mission is to provide a faith-based, church related Christian community where seniors of Baptist faith and practice may *worship and serve God together, cultivate meaningful friendships and care for one another's needs* 'til Jesus comes."

How We Can Live Out This Mission

I'd like to camp on the words "cultivate meaningful friendships." Most people find it hard to walk up to someone they do not know and introduce themselves. I've had people ask me, "What do I say?" Let me give you a couple of ideas.

Be friendly and welcoming

When introducing yourself, say, "Hello, I'm [your name]. What's your name?" Continue with questions, which are easier than statements. Don't forget—most people are willing to talk about themselves. Why? They know themselves better than they know anyone else. Here are some easy questions: Where are you from? When did you arrive? How'd you hear about our village?

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Kathy and I traveled for ministry and occasionally experienced uncomfortable situations. For example, we would stand around in a church foyer (we were always early) while people came in and ignored us; not one person came up and welcomed us. On one occasion, Kathy sat down in a pew only to have a woman tell her she was in her seat. Kathy laughed it off, of course, and moved, but a local visitor might have been offended. How nice it was when someone came up and directed us and became our welcoming committee. We could tell within ten minutes if a church was cold or warm. We'd leave some churches saying, "We'd love to be a member here," but others, not so much.

Inform others about things to know

Every organization and fellowship has their ways of doing things. For example, Friendship Acres Golf Course (not everyone has clay greens and tees up for every shot). Did you invite someone to play golf and explain the way we do it?

Our hotdog roasts, which are well attended and include pies—oh, I know you shouldn't bring cream pies (although they are my favorite)—but who really cares and what does it matter?

Or village dinners. Do the new folks know how they work? How sweet when we inform new residents and get them to participate.

At our bonfire fellowship each year, Kathy and I meet new people and hear new testimonies that are thrilling. What a fellowship we have at Maranatha!

All of us here should be part of the welcoming committee for new residents and visitors. Who knows, we might be meeting one of our dearest friends.

One day, Kathy and I were talking about our friends in the village. Both of us feel our lives have been enriched by the friends we have made here.

How We Can Meet Our Neighbors

If you are a new resident, let me give you a word of advice. The best way to get to know people in the village is to volunteer. Every year the village holds a job fair for volunteers, letting residents know little things they can participate in to make the village run efficiently. Visit the fair, sign up, and get involved. In so doing, you will get to know people and develop friendships.

Back to my initial question. Are people being welcomed into our village? Maybe the answer is found in answering this question: What new resident did you get to know this year? ■

Follow Maranatha Village on Facebook! Enjoy photos of special events and share so your friends can see our wonderful community!

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Joy Spieth

Judy Meyers

"I've had a great life," says Joy Spieth, who spent most of it in Brazil. To her, missionary life *was* life—"There was no other way." And Brazil was home.

Her School Years

Joy first went to Brazil at the age of two when her parents became missionaries with Baptist Mid-Missions and went to Manaus, located near the Negro and Amazon rivers.

In tenth grade, Joy moved to Long Island, New York, to live with the Kintner family, and became a sister to the four Kintner brothers. That relationship continues, and you can find Joy sitting with her "brothers" at Maranatha Baptist Church on Sundays.

After high school, Joy attended and graduated from Baptist Bible College and Seminary in Johnson City, New York. It was during this time that she learned to cook. "Mom" Kintner had serious surgery and was confined to her bed. From there she instructed Joy on how to prepare meals for the family.

Joy next became a nurse. However, when she arrived in Brazil, she was required to take an additional nursing course. The final requirement was to deliver forty babies!

Her Ministry in Brazil

Joy spent 53 years in Brazil in varied ministries. She led children's Bible clubs and loved working in Bible camps. She also served in the Manaus Bible School, teaching courses such as music and health. Joy also played the piano and the accordion for church services. She even took young people to jungle towns on Sunday afternoons to help establish new ministries. They would go door-to-door, inviting people to a service that followed. Throughout the years, Joy participated in the planting of about 40 churches in the Manaus area.

Her Life Today

If Joy is not a "familiar face" to you, perhaps that's because she lives at Maranatha Manor now. Of course, you are always welcome to stop by the manor to introduce yourself and make a new friend.

Today Joy's biggest dream is to visit her many friends in Brazil. "The Brazilians are such loving people," she emphasizes while affirming, "I've had a happy life." ■

Tim Edem

Jeff Bailie

Get to know Tim Edem: read about what God has done through the years to prepare him for his role in our village and remember to pray for him.

Tim Edem grew up in East Syracuse, New York, and met Vicki in their church youth ministry. Before long, their interest in one another developed and Tim, having already graduated from high school, proposed to Vicki the night before her high school graduation. Shortly thereafter, they married. God blessed them with three sons, and now eight grandchildren have rounded out the family roster. Tim and Vicki celebrated 50 years of marriage in 2025.

Tim attended community college before going on to graduate from Syracuse University. A lengthy career in the USAF followed, resulting in the Edem family moving often, experiencing various homes, churches, and schools. Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio accounted for two of those stops, and the area became home after Tim's retirement. In addition to Maranatha Village, the Edems consider Beavercreek, Ohio, their home base.

Tim had the privilege of growing up in a Christian home, and at the age of five, he asked Jesus to save him. As is often the case when someone that young accepts Christ, he prayed often to be sure. At the age of eight, Tim was assured of his salvation. So, with godly parents and a Christ-centered home, he grew in his walk with the Lord. Serving God in churches wherever the Air Force sent him, Tim taught Sunday School, worked with youth ministries, taught new members' classes, and served as a deacon.

Tim counts two verses of Scripture as key in his life: Isaiah 40:31 and 2 Timothy 3:7. He also cites Joshua 1:9 as his family verse.

When asked about his goals for Maranatha Village, Tim listed finding a new village administrator and improving/updating the village water and sewer systems. He was also quick to point out the idea of moving Maranatha Baptist Church to the open land on Arbuckle Creek Road, which would provide essential visibility and the opportunity to expand the church's ministry to the community.

On a lighter note, Tim also mentioned the idea of adding a "lazy river" around the village swimming pool!

Twice retired and now back at work, Tim and Vicki are key parts of our village and its future. It is a blessing to have them here!

Retired Pastor Retires Again

Judy Meyers

Norm Freeburg came out of retirement to pastor Spring Lake Baptist Church. After eight years, he has retired again.

Norm and Ruth Freeburg retired to Maranatha Village eight years ago and began attending Spring Lake Baptist Church. Within two months, Ruth was asked to be the church pianist, and Norm volunteered to become the church's pastor. Ruth also took responsibility for the children's ministry.

Loving the Lord, Loving People

That was not, however, Norm and Ruth's first time in pastoral ministry. They have always enjoyed spending time with people and leading them to the Lord. This love motivated them through many years of ministry, which often began with home Bible studies. In the 1970s they planted a church in Norway.

After returning to the States, they responded to the pleas of a Canadian friend who challenged them with the need for churches in Canada. In Vancouver, they planted Hickory Baptist Church, which is still going strong. Norm and Ruth then made their home base in Ottawa as they represented International Partnership Ministries.

In his early forties, Norm developed a blood disorder that continues to plague him. He and Ruth eventually settled in the Minneapolis area, making many trips to nearby Mayo Clinic. And Ruth, a licensed attorney, took on full-time employment to provide for their family of two sons and a daughter.

Loving Life in "Retirement"

Now in Florida, Norm continues medical treatment at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville. This year he felt the need to retire from pastoring. The Spring Hill church honored him and Ruth with an appreciation dinner, cards, and gifts. David Conrad began serving as the church's new pastor on February 1. ■

Memories from the Manor

A Love Story

Linda Peacock

One of the joys of living at Maranatha Village is the privilege to know faithful servants of our Lord. Beverly was one of those servants that spent many years of her life ministering to children. Because of her love of children and years spent ministering to them, she faithfully prayed for the children's ministries led by Maranatha residents.

Parental Love

Beverly was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Her family lived in the city, but when she was 14, her parents noticed some neighborhood influences were leading her in the wrong direction. So, they moved to a new location that had a good church and better influences.

Christ's Motivating Love

Beverly was saved at a Billy Graham crusade and attended Moody Bible Institute.

Being certain that God wanted her to minister to children, Beverly became a missionary with Child Evangelism Fellowship in Venezuela. She first went to Costa Rica for language studies and became fluent in Spanish. (She enjoyed speaking with Nelson, one of the cooks at Maranatha Manor.) She instructed children and CEF missionaries and workers for 40 years.

While in Venezuela, Beverly would attend missionary conferences and Vacation Bible School, where she would teach the missionaries' children. Bert Johnson's children were part of that group.

When Bev returned to the States, she first lived in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and continued training CEF workers and missionaries.

Shared Love for the Lord and Ministry

Beverly never dreamed she would marry, for by that time, she was in her 70s. But God had other plans. After her father died, she moved to Missionary Village in Bradenton, where Bert also moved. They started dating by going to a Spanish church. Bert says that as he watched her with the children, he thought she could be his wife. When Bert's son David learned Bert's plan to marry Beverly, he responded, "I remember her Bible lessons; she is already a part of our missionary family."

Bert and Bev were married on July 8, 2006, when she was 74 years old. They traveled together for about 10 years, ministering at camps and in VBSes.

Bert also had a Spanish radio ministry in Sebring, which led them to leave Bradenton and move to Maranatha Village. They began at 6 Jude and later moved to 12 Daniel. They took care of each other with advancing health issues, and in 2023 they moved into Maranatha Manor.

I gathered these "memories from the manor" before the Lord called Beverly Home on March 16. Bert continues in the manor with great gratitude for the care he receives. He is thankful that God gave him and Beverly almost 20 years together. ■

Summer Volunteers

Linda Pyche

Year-round Residents

In the heat of late spring and early summer in Florida, volunteering takes a lot of effort, particularly if it involves outside activities. But at Maranatha, residents are used to serving when asked. And when our winter residents return north, many remaining residents volunteer for additional jobs.

One of these jobs is to clean the fitness center. Six ladies rotate cleaning it. Thank you, Pauline Dark, Jan Jeffers, Delores Sorrells, Karen Tackeberry, Sue VanderWerf, and Annette Williams.

Our laundromats are maintained by three volunteers. They often help the "boutique volunteers" keep the tables clean. And Donation Day volunteers Shell and Addie Old work year round. Thanks to all those who volunteer.

The board of directors' Beautification Committee also volunteer year round to maintain the outside of village buildings. This includes landscaping around the promos and empty villas. Thank you, Ruth Watterson, Deb Kershaw, Elaine Haines, Vicki Ivester, and Wendy Schittone.

In cooler weather, bike riding is an enjoyable form of exercise. Greg & Pam Kruger and Steve & Dona Kintner maintain the village bicycles.

Teens & Seniors Together

"When I grow up and get old, I want to live here," said Sarah, a teen volunteer from Naples, when she saw 90-something Jan Burgess riding her bike.

This July, the boys helped lower the awnings on vacant homes and trimmed the vegetation around them. A few girls, along with Addie Old, removed roadside flags and cleaned them. And a number of girls, with their leaders, Tina and Beth, washed the outside of *all* the manor's windows.

When the teens were asked for volunteers to wash buckets and sponges, Shiloh, a football player, stood and said, "Let's lead by example." And four teens stood with him to help in the kitchen.

The funniest comment came from Quinn, who was helping with the awnings: "Coming here is great, especially when they let you learn to drive a golf cart (accompanied by Scott or Zach, adult leaders) and feed you such great muffins."

If you add on the jobs of picking up garbage, trimming, moving furniture, and carrying supplies, the teens accomplished a lot more than expected. We hope they continue the ministry of serving others. After all, here in Maranatha Village we understand what that's all about. ■

Relatively Speaking ...

The Kintner Clan

Linda Pyche

Retired pastor Lauren Kintner came to Maranatha in 1992. Then his son David's in-laws, Garnet and Fern Trimble, retired here too. After being spread out for most of their adult lives, three of the sons also retired to Maranatha.

Mr. & Mrs. David Kintner

David and Grace Kintner acquired a villa here as a future home for themselves or for others to use. In the meantime, they ministered at EBI, at Missionary Acres, and in Brazil. For many years after they moved here full-time, they drove residents to the airport or in town running errands. David was a deacon at Maranatha Baptist Church, and both he and Grace still sing in the church choir.

Mr. & Mrs. Paul Kintner

After having served in Peru, Ecuador, and a Spanish work in North Carolina, Paul and Elaine came to the village in 2013. For many years until the COVID pandemic, they volunteered at EBI. Paul also served on the village board and as a deacon at MBC. He currently serves in a prison ministry. Elaine passed away this year and was joined in Heaven by the wife of the fourth brother, Phil, whom the three "Maranatha brothers" would like to persuade to move here.

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Kintner

Stephen and Dona came in 2017. Steve is known for his work repairing bikes and helping with the local Civil Air Patrol. Besides taking care of family, Dona helps at the church library and with meals for election volunteers on voting days.

But there's more "family" connected to the Kintners: Grace's brother, Mark Trimble, and his wife, Beth, moved here. After Mark's Homegoing, Beth married Fred Trimble (no relation). Then there's Joy Spieth. The brothers view Joy as their sister (see page 3). She lived with the Kintner family while she attended high school and college, and she served with them later in Brazil. ■

Seasonal Guests Welcome!

Would your friends or family enjoy a month in a villa here at Maranatha Village? Several villas are available for short-term visits. It's a great way to experience life in our wonderful community.

* Board approval required for 2+ weeks' stay
* Reservations required
* Contact Carole Vawter at cvawter@maranathavillage.org for applications and information

What to Know Before You Go

Mexican Train

If you are a newcomer, a visitor, or an "old-timer" who has never been to a Mexican Train game night in the village, here is what to know before you go.

1. Sign up at Maranatha Baptist Church. Sign-up sheets are at the sign-up desk along the wall near the church's main entrance.
2. Bring finger food. While plates, beverages and cups, and napkins are provided, utensils are not, thus the need for finger foods only.
3. Although Earl Barton usually serves as a "spare" for someone who comes without a partner, it is better if you have a partner lined up before you arrive. Sometimes there is no one to play with, and you may end up going home. But sometimes a table will elect not to compete, but to play with too few players. (You must have six players and play five games to be eligible to receive 1st- , 2nd- or 3rd-place prizes.)
4. Mexican Train is held the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m. in Hamman Hall. As you enter, look for a little table with someone to help you choose the table you'll play at. It's best to arrive at least 20 minutes early to get set up, to pray together, and to start on time at 6. ■

Guess Who

Who taught herself how to play the piano and plays the clarinet as well as sings? attended language school in Costa Rica? played a pump organ in spite of arthritis in her knees? spent 23 years in Peru as a missionary? retired to Texas, where she worked with Baptist Church Planters, served as a secretary at the Rio Grande Bible Institute, and played her clarinet in the McAllen Symphonic Band? Of whom did Muriel Casas say, "_____ has always been willing to step in to fill any need, and she has faithfully served in whatever she was asked to do"?

Find the answer on page 11.

Village Dinners—Have You Attended One Lately?

Barb Henderson

I *love* attending Maranatha Village fellowship dinners! Why?

Well, there's the delicious food, of course. The fellowship is great. And I appreciate the after-dinner programs.

Fellowship & Fun

Some programs are informative, and some are just fun. For example, we have had Highlands County agencies such as Seniors vs. Crime and the Highlands County S.A.L.T. (Seniors And Law Enforcement Together) Council. Other months we have had safety talks dealing with protocols for hurricanes and natural disasters, updates from the village board, or guest speakers addressing a pertinent health theme. We have also had fun nights featuring skits, a ventriloquist, a patriotic program, and singing.

The dinners are held in Hamman Hall. When all the snowbirds return, it gets crowded, but the dinners are still so much fun. The village dinner is also a wonderful time to get together with those who attend churches other than Maranatha Baptist.

Food Aplenty

Maranatha Village dinners have some of the best selections of food! I have attended church dinners that repeatedly offered the same dishes, with spaghetti and baked beans being the norm. But not at Maranatha! We always have a good variety of dishes from meatloaf to chicken-and-dumplings to pot roast to casseroles. Everything is always delicious. And the desserts are plentiful too—so many wonderful crisps, cakes and pies, and even homemade fudge! No matter how many people attend, there is always plenty of food.

Cleanup & Fellowship

At our dinners, I cannot help but notice and appreciate the way people work together to prepare and then to help with cleanup. Everyone pitches in—wiping off tables, putting salt and pepper away, bagging the garbage, cleaning dishes, and the like. The camaraderie is evident, and participants often have fun cutting up with one another.

So, if you have never been to a village dinner or have not attended for a while, do yourself a favor: find a friend or two, sign up, and discover for yourself what there is to love about our fellowship dinners. ■

Date & Time: Dinners are usually held on 3rd Thursdays. Check the monthly newsletter for specifics.

Sign-up: Drop by the church to sign up. Your signing up helps organizers plan appropriately. Barb has offered to sign up those who don't attend MBC.

Miscellaneous: Usually paper table settings are provided by the village, though some residents bring their own.

Answer to Guess Who

Carol Ciocca (left) has lived at Maranatha Village since 2017 and now resides in the manor.

Gone to Glory

Between April 28 and August 7, 2026

Linda Byers, May 3
Richard Garver, May 7
*John Olson, May 17
Ron Whitehouse, May 17
Elaine Kintner, June 3
Sharon Boerema, June 18
**Jim Mitchell, June 19
Mary Pyle, June 20
Ethel King, July 1
Dan McCarthy, July 24
Jim Pinkerton, August 7

Former resident

***Missionary supported by Maranatha Baptist Church*

—Submitted by Marie Moore

Interim Administrators
Tim Edem & Gary Little

Business Manager
Jerry Wells

Office Manager
Kathy Withers

Director of Marketing & Development
Carole Vawter

Director of Operations
Bill Katka

Volunteer Coordinator
John Pyche

Chairman of the Board of Directors
Dennis Byers

Maranatha Memories

Friday night fun in Hamman Hall—Marble Chase!

Joyce Eaton, Annette Williams, and Connie Carlson celebrate on July 4.

Left: Bob Watterson faithfully distributes the *Trumpet* through email.

Right: A teen volunteer from a youth group in Naples, Florida, works in the mobile home park.

Joy Spieth is still enjoying “a happy life” (see the article on page 3).

Lucio and Muriel Casas get decked out for our Hawaiian-themed village dinner.