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CARING FOR SEXUALLY-HURTING PEOPLE IN JESUS' NAME

THE NEW REALITY: Ministry in a Changing Culture

John Freeman and
R. Nicholas Black

STUDENTS: Sexual Sufferers, Not Just Sinners

Cooper Pinson

LIVING FAITHFULLY WITH OUR BODIES:

IT STILL MATTERS
BUT THE CHURCH MUST HELP

R. Nicholas Black



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HARVEST USA brings the truth and mercy of Jesus Christ by:

- Helping individuals and families affected by sexual struggles
- Providing resources that address biblical sexuality to individuals and churches

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

PARTNERING WITH CHURCHES TO HELP SEXUAL STRUGGLERS

The good boy-who-would-be-pastor, so respectable and humble, was living a double life. While on the prowl for sex, he didn't care what anyone thought. What mattered most was finding what he felt he needed. But deep inside he feared greatly what they might think.

What did he fear from the church? From his family? Mainly, he feared their anger and rejection. He had so few relational anchors that he didn't dare risk these. It would be devastating if he failed in their eyes. So, he was careful to live a flawless life, at least the part they could see. But the pain just kept increasing.

The person above was me, more than 20 years ago, before I sought help at HARVEST USA. It took a long time to make that decision. But what might have made me seek help sooner was if my church had said that the body of Christ was a safe place to get help.

I didn't hear that message. What I heard spoken about sexual sin was that it was the worst kind of sin. That made me more determined not to confess to anyone how desperate and despairing I was, how trapped and hopeless I felt, living in constant fear of exposure.

One major passion we have at HARVEST USA is to help churches become safe places for sexual strugglers. One way to do that is by speaking openly about the reality that everyone struggles to live faithfully in these sin-broken bodies. To say that God is not shocked by our sins, but that he sent his Son to cover our shame, forgive us of our guilt, and begin the amazing grace-fueled process of growing and changing. As the psalmist says, "God is... a very present help in trouble." (Ps 46:1)

When church leaders admit the truth that Christians struggle with sex, then the church starts the journey toward helping strugglers. It becomes a "one-anothering-we're-in-this-together" community. As the main article in this issue of the HARVEST USA magazine says, "A healthy church is not one without problems; it's one where problems are addressed openly, with the gospel."

The Lord has put us together to walk with one another in learning how to obey him and live lives worthy of him. Not to look good, but rather to be honest about our struggles and sin, while believing the gospel that God loves us in spite of who we are. When we live this way, experiencing his power that works in and through our weaknesses, we grow, we change, and we find increasing freedom to live joyfully.

HARVEST USA can help your church learn how to help sexual strugglers. Look at the article on **Partner Ministries** on page 14, and read the testimony of one church that has become a community of grace to those who used to live in fear of exposure. We'd love to help your church.



Tim Geiger
Executive Director
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Living Faithfully with our Bodies:

IT STILL MATTERS
BUT THE CHURCH MUST HELP

R. Nicholas Black

Standing in front of a crowd of young Christians at an urban church, John Freeman, HARVEST USA's President, talked about the need for believers to live with sexual integrity according to the Scriptures. A young man interrupted him: "You must be kidding! You can't expect us to live like that today! It's not possible!"

While taken aback by the interruption, John thanked him for his honesty and proceeded to tell the crowd, "Yes, God expects that from you. He will give you what you need to live like that. Your life will be much richer for it."

Two thousand years ago, the apostle Paul stood before a group of believers and delivered much the same message. His letter to the church in Thessalonica hints that Paul received similar pushback.

No one escapes
sexual struggles and sin
by dealing with it alone

¹Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. ²For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you... ⁷For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, ESV)

If the church today is going to help her people live faithfully, we need to follow Paul's example in two ways. First, we must not retreat from proclaiming the importance of living within God's design for sexuality. Second, we must go beyond proclamation to actively teach people how to walk in sexual integrity. Both of these must go together, or the church will fail in her duty to be a redemptive community where men and women grow into the character of Christ.

Paul proclaimed that **how we live with our bodies matters, and our struggle to live faithfully in these bodies is a battle God wants us to fight.**

The importance of living with sexual integrity is stressed seven times by Paul. Seven times he says, in essence, that our sexual behavior reveals our spirituality—that how we live sexually is a barometer of our faith.

Verse 2: *For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.* Here Paul reminds the church of his past instruction to them, instruction that was not mere personal opinion.

Verse 3: *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality...* Here Paul links personal growth in faith with sexual integrity.

Verse 4: *...that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness...* Paul hints here at how hard this can be, and that we need to learn to do so.

Verse 5: *...not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles...* Paul exhorts them to not live like those who base their relationships and life on fleeting and changeable desires and emotions.

Verse 6: *...that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things...* Sexual sin can deeply harm another person, and the Lord will not ignore selfishness and injustice.

Verse 7: *"For God has called us...in holiness..."* Sexual integrity is a specific call for all believers.

Verse 8: *...whoever disregards this, disregards... God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.* Again, Paul says this is not his personal opinion, and that God has given us help, the Holy Spirit, to enable and empower us to live faithfully.

Paul's emphasis counters cultural messages we hear about sex today. We hear that sex equals life, that a life lived without sex is tragic, and that our sexual identities define the core of who we are as human beings. But even for those who resist this cultural siren song, just living in this sexually-saturated world makes sexual integrity incredibly difficult.

Does it encourage you to know that this was difficult for first-century Christians also?

The situation in Thessaloniki existed at other churches as well. In his first letter to the Corinthian church, Paul addressed incest, prostitution, sex outside of marriage, sexual promiscuity, distorted views of sex within marriage, and same-sex attraction. But in the face of stark cultural differences (and, yes, probably protests from newcomers to the faith), Paul upheld the gospel on this matter. He didn't flinch in saying how important sexual integrity was, even as he saw them struggle to attain it.

But Paul was not merely reinforcing the Old Testament moral law about sexual behavior, nor adding new rules to the early church. Yes, God's moral law was not overturned in the new covenant, but now there is a far bigger picture to comprehend in Christ: Jesus has brought about a new creation through his life, death and resurrection. Living in increasing holiness demonstrates that we are a part of this new life; we are part of a new creation bringing about God's Kingdom on earth. Therefore, God wants us to see something in this struggle for sexual integrity. He wants us to depend upon the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus has given to us, to empower us to fight this battle, and he wants us to know that he embraces us even as we struggle.

The New Testament tells us there is no ideal, pure church. A faithful church will be one where strugglers are present, because Jesus came to save sinners. The church is where Jesus invites us to take his yoke and learn from him (Matt. 11:29). Learning takes time, progressing through stages of growth and maturation, with numerous detours of struggle and failure. But change and growth will come as we more fully grasp in our hearts the message of the grace and truth of the gospel.

But we will never get beyond this reality: A healthy church is not one without problems; it's one where problems are addressed openly, with the gospel.

Today, some use ever-present sexual struggles as evidence that we need to rethink what the Bible says about sex. But what is unpopular now was unpopular then. God is still calling his people to holiness with their sexuality, according to his design. We are to pursue obedience even when we struggle – especially as we struggle. It has always been a fight worth fighting. To ignore this part of shepherding God's people is to ignore what the entire New Testament thought was important—that how we live with our bodies matters.

But Paul goes beyond merely telling us that this is important. We need more than just words of expectation and exhortation.

So, beyond just telling believers that they need to live in a certain way, we see Paul willing to step into their struggles. **Growing in sexual integrity requires the church's involvement with strugglers.**

Paul hints at this in the first verse when he introduces the subject of fighting for sexual integrity: *Finally, brothers, we ask and urge you... that as you received from us...*

Do you notice something in Paul's appeal? This is not the language of command or a rebuke that says "Just stop it!" He does not simply tell people to do the right thing. Instead, he uses relational language. Paul addresses them as brothers and then appeals to them, *We ask you and urge you*. Why is Paul speaking this way?

We find the reason for his approach two chapters earlier.

But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, ESV)

For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2: 11-12, ESV)

You see, Paul knew these people. He loved them like a parent (like a mother and a father!). He knew his children because he spent time with them. He knew the fight was not easy, so he was willing to share his life with them. His presence with them went beyond just talking; his presence patiently walked with them as they learned to control their sexuality in order to honor their Savior.

The way to fight is in relationship.

No one escapes sexual struggles and sin by fighting this battle alone. Sexual struggles and sin live in secrecy; they are killed by openness. Sexual sin lives in fear of other people; it dies when we are honest with God by being honest with someone else about our struggles.

The church becomes a presence with strugglers when she acknowledges that no one has it all together. The church becomes a place of safety and hope when it is honest about the struggles Christians face and about the love and tenderness that Jesus has toward broken people. There are four ways a church can cultivate and live out that truth.

One, we need to be real about all of our struggles with sex and sexuality.

Let's get honest. The church, like all of us, works hard to look good on the outside. When church leadership doesn't specifically name the struggles people wrestle with, then people stay hidden, and no one receives the crucial help they need.

A woman once told a HARVEST USA staff person that she was visiting a church where everyone dressed up and looked good. They weren't a bit like her; she came from a tough background. She had struggled for a long time with addictions, both sexual and substance abuse. But just as she began feeling like she was wasting her time attending this church, she came across a notice in the church bulletin: "Do you struggle with sexual sin of any kind? We want to help and walk with you as you find increasing grace and freedom in Christ. We all need help with these struggles. Call _____ to speak in confidence."

The simple honesty of those words captivated her. She decided to stay at that church, because their honesty about the Christian life displayed their dependency upon God for the grace to live openly.



Two, we need to become un-shockable about our struggles

As John Freeman writes in his column in this newsletter, “Yeah, we can handle that,” the attitude a church takes either invites or hinders openness. Steve Brown of KeyLife Network says this beautifully: “I don’t care where your mind has gone, what you’ve watched on the Internet, with whom you’ve slept, what direction your desires have gone, how hard you’ve struggled and failed, whom you’ve hurt or how ashamed you are. The good news is that, first, you haven’t surprised the God who gave us (this) ‘jet sex engine’ and, second, he’s not angry at you but will show you a way to live in the light.”¹

Being un-shockable means that we don’t shame people to motivate change. That doesn’t work anyway. Being un-shockable means that we aren’t surprised by the depth of people’s sin, either. If Jesus called Paul to himself, a man who decades after his conversion still called himself “the worst of sinners,” then we can also call men and women, no matter the depth of their sin, to find grace in Jesus as they live in our churches.

Three, we need to speak more of the “why” than of the “what” of sexual faithfulness

We need to go beyond merely saying *what* Scripture says: we also need to clearly articulate *why* God’s design for sex is good, why it makes sense, why it really is good for individuals, families, and for society. Simply knowing what the sexual boundary lines are is not enough—we need to articulate why we should live within these boundary lines.

This is the way to answer the young man who said sexual integrity was impossible. We’re not saying it’s easy, but we are saying learning to live within God’s gracious boundary lines—even when that might mean a celibate life—has profoundly good reasons for doing so, and yes, even joys in that kind of life.

Four, we need to be lavish givers of mercy

Sexual struggles can go deep and persist for a long time. I love the story in Luke 7, where Jesus eats at the house of a religious leader who is shocked when “a woman of the city, who was a sinner” (a prostitute) stood behind Jesus, weeping, and covered his feet with her tears and poured a jar of expensive perfume over his feet.

The Pharisees were shocked that Jesus allowed this sexually sinful woman to draw near to him, to even touch him because she was so defiled.

Jesus wasn’t shocked or offended. He did something that shocked the Pharisees even more—he forgave her and honored her embrace of him. Jesus understood that her embrace came as a result of her experiencing forgiveness, of being shown undeserved mercy.

Only when the church ministers out of brokenness and forgiveness can we love others mercifully. God’s forgiveness of us levels the playing field. Helping one another toward sexual integrity then becomes a shared experience of grace.

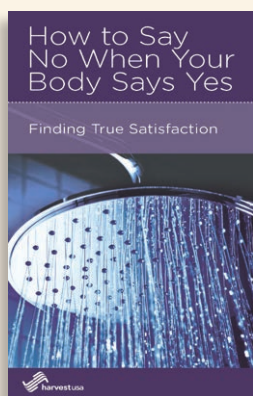
One more thing about this story. Jesus was honest about this woman’s struggles: “her sins are many.” That’s a challenge to the church. Many of us don’t like to get our hands dirty with people who have a long history of sexual struggles. But if we increasingly love like Jesus, then we’ll see more strugglers in our churches *and* we’ll love them well.

When the church is real about sexual struggles, when she calls people to biblical faithfulness, and when she steps into the battle with strugglers, then the gospel will shine even brighter to a world which so needs it.

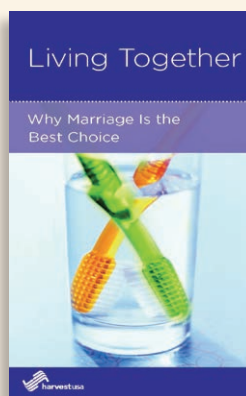
1. Steve Brown, Foreword to *Hide or Seek, When Men Get Real with God about Sex*, by John Freeman (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2014), xii.

If you want to comment on this article, you’ll find it on our blog at harvestusa.org. You can also contact Nicholas at nicholas@harvestusa.org.

TWO NEW MINI BOOK RESOURCES FROM HARVEST USA



Dan Wilson, coordinator for the Student Outreach, has written an easy-to-understand primer for young men and women on why they should say “no” to premarital sex, and then Dan walks them through the key steps to take to make sure their “no” sticks. No moralism, no difficult rules to follow, just a gospel-infused discussion on turning away from what’s hurtful toward God’s best plan for couples.



Ellen Dykas, Women’s Ministry Coordinator, explains that marriage is about more than just a husband and a wife. It’s a picture of the enduring relationship God has entered into with his people. By grasping the wonder and beauty of this, Ellen discusses why casual sexual relationships and living together is so far less than what God wants for a couple, and how a relationship based on promise and commitment reflects the deep and enduring love we all want in our relationships.

Get these new resources for your church, youth group, and singles ministry at www.harvest-usa-store.com

ON THE ROAD:

ADDRESSING SEXUAL STRUGGLES IN ASIA

In January, Ellen Dykas returned to Taiwan to teach a two-week course entitled “Biblical Sexuality and Ministry to Strugglers.”



I was going back to Taiwan to speak to twenty-nine students who all spoke Chinese. Back to China Reformed Theological Seminary in Taipei, to help train men and women preparing for ministry. They came from Taiwan, main-land China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Canada, and Australia. I had been there before, in 2013, and I was eager to return. I hoped to meet up with some students who I taught three years ago. As a teacher, you always wonder if anything you said or taught made a difference.



Upon arriving, I learned that Taiwan was considering legalizing gay marriage. The news dismayed my students, and I gave them insight into what Christians in the USA faced when the Supreme Court legalized gay marriage last summer. We found common ground as Christians living so far from each other: as sexual sin outside of God's design becomes the norm, standing firm for biblical truth may cost us more than it has in the past. We agreed that ministry would need to be more strategic and nuanced than ever before in order to speak into the culture.

But we also concurred that ministry still needs to be relational and personal, appropriately caring for each individual. I met up with one of my students from 2013 and heard her story of parenting her gay-identified daughter. She expressed fresh sorrow over her daughter's life, but shared with me new insight about the faith to which God is calling her as she loves her daughter in a new way. She recalled my teaching from three years ago, that telling her daughter to "Stop!" would not lead to true repentance. She began learning how to engage her daughter relationally while also holding true to God's design for sexuality and relationships. It is so good to know that God uses even my words to strengthen his people!

How does the church in Asia deal with sexual issues? Much the same as we do, but with one very big difference: in Asia, the church hardly talks about sexuality at all. A powerful culture of shame encourages hiding and silence on an even a deeper level than what we see in churches in the USA. And the silence from church leaders is much "louder" than here, compounding the confusion and despair of Christians struggling alone.

But by offering courses like the one I taught, China Reformed Seminary is beginning to change that culture of silence. What the Asian church needs now are solid biblical resources translated into their languages.

I have one more memory to share: The seminary partners with a local biblical counseling ministry. On Saturday, between my two weeks of classes, the counseling ministry hosted a community lecture at which I was the featured speaker. You can imagine my surprise when I realized that the lecture made the front page of the Taipei Christian newspaper! Serving with HARVEST USA has certainly led to many unexpected adventures!

Also, here is one last prayer request: God is expanding HARVEST USA's influence outside of the United States, and it's exciting! I will have the opportunity to teach on biblical sexuality at a national women's conference in Columbia this coming July, but I need some special funding to make this happen. I need to raise \$1500 to cover the costs, so that Columbians will be able to attend. Tax-deductible donations may be made by check to **Colombia Reformed** (please add a note that this is for Ellen Dykas, but do not write that on the memo line!) and mailed to: **Colombia Reformed**, P.O. Box 102, Lovettsville, VA 20180. Thank you!



STARTING DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS FOR WOMEN

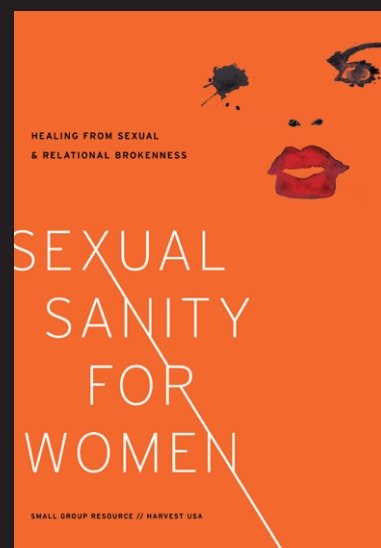
May 25th, 7:00 to 8:00pm EDT

How do you setup and run a biblical support group for women in your church who may be struggling sexually? Safe and confidential biblical support groups are a tremendous help for women who struggle sexually.

HARVEST USA Women's Ministry staff will coach you on the process of promoting, interviewing and running a biblical support group using HARVEST USA's workbook, **Sexual Sanity for Women: Healing from Sexual & Relational Brokenness.**

Have questions? Contact Brooke Delaney at brooke@harvestusa.org.

Interested in registering? Go to our Eventbrite page: <https://groupsforwomen.eventbrite.com>.



GO TO OUR WEBSITES TO FIND MORE GREAT RESOURCES TO HELP YOU AND YOUR CHURCH!



www.harvestusa.org



<http://live-husa-tso.pantheon.io/>

WOMEN'S MINISTRY AT HARVEST USA:

Ellen finds a teammate!



Since her arrival nine years ago at HARVEST USA, Ellen Dykas has been the sole women's ministry staff person in Philadelphia. During her time here, she has built up and expanded the ministry to women beyond our hopes and dreams. Although a few women intern every year, she has never had another woman serving as staff alongside her—until now. We welcome Anna Carini to the women's ministry staff part-time.

Anna, where are you from, and what brought you to Philadelphia?

I'm from Indianapolis. I attended Wheaton College where I met my husband, Joel. We both studied music and philosophy and love theology, so we decided to attend Westminster Theological Seminary. We are both pursuing Masters of Divinity degrees and hope to graduate in May 2017.

How did you find out about HARVEST USA?

During college, Joel and I listened to a talk by Ellen Dykas and Men's Ministry Coordinator Dave White for a CCEF conference. We were both amazed at their ability to bring the gospel to bear on such a difficult subject like same-sex attraction. We learned so much from their sharing their work experiences with same-sex attracted people and appreciated their compassionate approach. Then we met Dan Wilson, the Student Outreach Coordinator, who invited us to work with the ministry.

What made you want to work in the women's ministry at HARVEST USA?

While listening to women's struggles, I grew in compassion as I watched God grow them. He used their suffering to shape them into even more beautiful Christians. I also see the commonality between their sins, desires, and need for a savior and my own, which pushes me to my need for Christ.

As you join Ellen, what will you be doing?

Women's ministry consists of four main things: meeting individually with women for direct ministry; leading support groups for sexual strugglers and wives of sexual strugglers; teaching at and partnering with churches; and developing resources for the church in

areas of sexuality. I really appreciate participating in all of these because it helps me to better minister to people and share with the broader church what I'm learning.

Where do you think you will be stretched the most in your ministry here?

I think I'll be stretched in learning that ministry is not about success in an outward sense, but it's about faithfulness to God and dependence on his work. Especially as a musician, I think it's easy for me to be performance-oriented and desire good feedback. But, in ministry, I'm realizing that we can only depend on God to work and use us as faithful instruments, and we might not even see the fruit of our work.

How do you see churches replicating the women's ministry at HARVEST USA? What are some practical things a church can do to make this happen?

It's always encouraging to hear of compassionate women in churches who offer a safe place for other women, confessing sins to and praying for one another as outlined by James 5. These "safe women" might not be in official ministry positions and are often behind the scenes, but they are crucial for helping other struggling women come into the light and fight sin.

It's also encouraging to see support groups or book discussion groups that address sexual struggles form at churches. Women gain so much from realizing they're not the only ones struggling! The women's ministry intern, Morielle Stroethoff, and I are leading a discussion group on sexuality for college-age girls at our church. These groups foster the openness needed to fight temptations and develop an understanding of God's good design for sexuality.

What do you do when you're not serving at HARVEST USA?

I grew up in a sports-loving family, so I love being outside and being active. We enjoy our seminary community and our church in Glenside, Calvary OPC. I also teach cello lessons and like performing when I can.

If you are interested in getting involved in our women's biblical support groups (one for women struggling with sexual issues and one for wives of spouses), or if you want to know more about how HARVEST USA's women's ministry can help the women in your church, please contact Ellen at ellen@harvestusa.org and/or Anna at anna@harvestusa.org.

Special People in HARVEST USA's Life

HARVEST USA FALL BANQUET FEATURING

Dr. Rosaria Butterfield



Saturday, September 24, 2016, from noon to 4:00pm in Lancaster, PA

The author of *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* and *Openness Unhindered: Sexual Identity and Union with Christ* will be our main speaker.

Location: Calvary Church, 105 Landis Valley Road, Lancaster, PA 17601

A full lunch will be served and an offering will be taken.

Check our website for information for buying tickets as we continue to finalize the event:
www.harvestusa.org.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF Tom & Anne Taylor

On March 2, 2016, one of HARVEST USA's longest-serving volunteers, Tom Taylor, went home to be with the Lord. Eighteen months earlier his wife, Anne, passed away. Together, they served with HARVEST USA for 30 years. HARVEST USA has been blessed to have so many dedicated volunteers over the years, and of all of them, Tom and Anne had a special place.

Tom and Anne started and led a Parents and Family Group for about eight years. They were a deep encouragement to parents with an adult child who had embraced a gay identity. Learning how to navigate new paths in this parent-child relationship while remaining true to biblical convictions about sexuality is a challenging endeavor, and Tom and Anne had to learn and grow a lot along the way.

The Taylors also volunteered in our office for most of their 30 years here, performing any office work that was needed. One of Tom's greatest impacts was his role of Chair of the HARVEST USA Board of Directors for six years.



Drawing upon his considerable organizational and administrative skills, Tom was invaluable in assisting us to grow our mission and form a strategy to broaden our ministry partner base.

But we think more than what they did for HARVEST USA was their close relationship with our staff. They opened up their lives and hearts to us, and we saw first-hand their deep love and commitment to Christ through their lives and struggles. It seems fitting that on the morning of March 2, Tom called us to ask who was in the office so that he could stop by and catch up with us. Shortly after he entered, he sat down on a couch complaining of dizziness, and within minutes he slipped away, peacefully, at the age of 84.

Our words are inadequate to convey our deep love and gratitude for Tom and Anne. We miss them! They were gifts from the Lord, and they both modeled for us for 30 years how a lifelong desire to walk more closely with Jesus will beautifully shape love and life itself.

The New REALITY

MINISTRY IN A CHANGING CULTURE

R. Nicholas Black and John Freeman



As the church steps into the trenches of the sexual struggles with which her people are wrestling, it is encountering new challenges in how to do faithful ministry. As the culture continues to push into the church, the following “givens” impact how Christians are thinking about sexuality:

- Increasing cultural acceptance of homosexuality, especially among millennials
- Growing acceptance of a gender-fluid and genderless society
- An awareness of Christians who experience same-sex attraction (SSA) and how to help them
- Legalization of gay marriage
- The encroachment of pro-gay theology and its inroads into the evangelical church
- The trend toward casual sexual relationships and co-habitation
- The ubiquity of pornography and the steady erosion of biblical sexual ethics

All of the above signals the need for churches to think strategically about how to “do ministry” as the culture continues to push into the church. John Freeman has spoken to church leaders and presbyteries, helping to bring awareness of the pressing issues that need attention. John highlights four things churches must address.

1. Leadership—insuring everyone is on the same page

While leadership certainly means your key leaders – pastors, elders, deacons, etc. – it also includes your leadership volunteers like women’s leaders, youth leaders, Sunday school and adult teachers, small group leaders, and so on. The importance of all leaders being on the same page, theologically and pastorally, has never been more critical. Asking the following questions will (hopefully) result in dialogue and clarification.

Do you know your current leaders’ views on sex and sexuality?

Considering the “givens” listed above, how do you approach your leadership in determining what they believe, and where they might be feeling pressure to change? We used to take it for granted that leaders would adhere to biblical sexual ethics, but some are changing their views and remaining silent about it. How do you get everyone on the same page?

As the church steps into the trenches of the sexual struggles her people are wrestling with, it is encountering new challenges in how to do faithful ministry

Do you know if your leaders are struggling here?

As important as what they believe, do you know if some of your leaders are struggling here? People, especially leaders, hide sexual struggles. How can you call them to be honest, and in what ways do you help them? We know that when leadership falls sexually, it deeply injures the church and how people see Christ.

How will your leaders approach sexual issues pastorally?

Key leaders have the greatest influence, so it’s more important than ever to make sure they believe fully in what the Scriptures say and will speak that compassionately to those who struggle. Sometimes that’s not easy to do, but true compassion is grounded in speaking God’s truth, not in defining truth as we wish it to be.

How would your church address a leadership candidate who experiences same-sex attraction?

As we call believers to openness and honesty about their sexual struggles, we should expect to find men and women who live with same-sex attraction and are living faithfully according to Scripture. When they pursue leadership roles in the church, what help and assistance do they need?

2. Membership—confronting complex issues

The culture greatly influences church members. Confusion is growing as pro-gay theology, rooted in secular thought, influences believers who know too little of Scripture. How will your church address some of the following scenarios?

What if someone identifies as a gay Christian?

Is this a private matter known only to some, or is this becoming public? Do you know what this person means by adopting this identity label?

What about someone who supports gay marriage and homosexuality?

Again, is this a private opinion or an advocacy position? What is a pastoral approach to members whose views are in opposition to Scripture? What if someone with these views wants to join your church?

Are you talking about sex and sexuality to prospective members in your membership classes?

Do you approach the issue from a discipline angle, or first from a Christian worldview perspective? Or do you not mention the topic at all, and if so, why not?

What if a same-sex couple comes to faith (one or both)?

What if they are legally married? How do you approach the complex situation of pastorally shepherding a family, particularly when there are children, when the parents are legally married?

What about church discipline?

While recognizing the complex issues involved with sexual sin, where might church discipline come into play as someone is being shepherded through the ups and downs that go with this struggle? Is there an approach that is more helpful, or less so?

3. Church Culture—what kind of church culture do you want to nurture?

Do you have a sense of the culture in your church in how it relates to the culture “out there?” How does your church address sexual issues that are prominent in the culture? How do you speak of them publicly, from the pulpit, in Sunday school classes, in the things your church writes? There is a big difference between churches that speak harshly about sexual issues and those that say hardly anything at all. The first approach leaves people hiding, and the other leaves people in confusion. That we need to talk about these issues has never been more critical, but the words we use (or do not use) are equally important. How do you speak to those who are opposed to God’s ways; and to those who are confused about what Scripture says; and to those who want to obey but struggle to submit to the Lordship of Christ in this area? Our approach, our words, our faithfulness to Scripture, and our presence with those who struggle are the many ways we show who God is to them.



4. Policies and Procedures—possible dangers ahead

Two seismic changes have transformed the landscape for ministry: the legalization of same-sex marriage, and the use, or threat, of non-discrimination laws and regulations, known as sexual orientation and gender identity ordinances. Churches with a history and tradition of opening their doors to the community for weddings and receptions, local community events, outside groups that use the church to meet—all of these connections may become problematic in light of the increasing use of anti-discrimination ordinances.

These new laws and court rulings mean that churches must carefully think about ministry in three key areas.

1. Weddings. While this issue gets a lot of press, the reality is that the First Amendment seems quite solid in protecting ministers from performing same-sex marriages. However, the matter is more uncertain if your church has been open to hosting outside weddings and receptions. What steps can your church take to remain open to traditional weddings while not hosting wedding events that oppose biblical truth?

2. Building usage by outside groups. Apart from weddings, building use for other outside events might become more difficult, particularly for churches that rent their facilities or allow them to be used by the community. The challenge for churches that want to remain invested in their local community is to determine how to both invite and define that involvement, in ways that will avoid potential lawsuits.

3. Staff behavior. Anti-discrimination laws regarding employment are increasingly stepping on religious turf. Churches that discipline ordained staff for misconduct are again protected by the First Amendment. But addressing non-ordained staff behavior is not so clear. What if a staff person comes out as transgender, or a staff person legally marries someone of the same gender? Gender fluidity and sexual orientation are major battlegrounds for employment law today. The area of employment law for religious groups seems to be entirely up for grabs today. How churches will be affected is not yet clear, but they should now find ways to try to protect themselves while also shepherding staff who are struggling in these areas.

We’ve just scratched the surface on a few of the crucial issues churches are facing with these new realities. HARVEST USA can help! We can help you think through these issues and conduct a healthy conversation among your leaders.

Contact John Freeman at john@harvestusa.org to get the conversation started.

IS YOURS A “YEAH, WE CAN HANDLE THIS” CHURCH?

By John Freeman

As a seminary student, the influence of two professors changed the course of my life. Jack Miller, Professor of Practical Theology and Evangelism at Westminster Theological Seminary, was one of them. The other was Harvie Conn, Professor of Missions. Along with Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, they led me to begin what is now HARVEST USA. One day in 1983, Harvie said to our Missions class, “We’re going to talk about a different kind of mission field today. We’re going to talk about ‘unreached people’ and ‘hidden people.’”

Harvie explained that the largest ‘unreached people’ in our culture was the gay and lesbian community, at the time the fastest-growing people group in America. He talked about how their numbers, influence, and impact was only going to grow. Wow—how prophetic! It seemed that the organized church wanted nothing to do with this community and kept an arm’s-length attitude—basically, the church didn’t know what to do with “them.”

Harvie then defined the even larger ‘hidden people’ group. This group brought all the shame, baggage, unresolved conflicts, sexual temptations, struggles, and sin into their walk with Christ and into the church. But because the ethos in most churches was silence and an outlook of “we don’t talk about that around here,” many men and women sat in our pews paralyzed, isolated, and often in despair, not knowing how the gospel applied to their struggles.

Boy, the culture has changed a lot since then—and not for the better! The impact of both the gay movement, especially the “gay Christian” movement, and the availability of Internet pornography has deeply and severely impacted many men, women, teens, and families who sit in evangelical, conservative pews today. How could it not, when you realize that carrying around a cell phone or laptop is like having an adult bookstore right in your home or pocket. Saying “no” to looking at that is a challenge! You could take the truth of what Harvie said in class and multiply it by one hundred to describe what is impacting people today.

So, reader, how is your church set up to deal redemptively with the mess of sex and sexuality in the lives of people today? And how are you going to declare the glory of sex as God intended it to be?

Think about it. Is yours a church where the hope and help of the gospel is readily available to the multitude who feel stuck, isolated, wounded, and defeated by sexual brokenness? What messages do your leadership give about the ability, not only of God, but of your church, to help with such problems? How are you conveying “Yeah, we can handle that around here,” so that people can get the gospel-help they so need?

Many churches either don’t know what to do or convey a judgmental attitude when it comes to the struggles that men and women have with sex and sexuality. The church is often the last place these people feel they can be honest and genuine about sexual matters that are impacting their own hearts and lives. This simply ought not be!

Do you have a simplistic fairy tale view of the gospel when it comes to sexual brokenness? The gospel is powerful and effective, but it isn’t magical. We often fail to see struggles as an ongoing part of the Christian life, dispensing Bible verses without walking with people through their suffering. (E-mail me to request my article, “Sex and the Silence of the Church: How It’s Crippling God’s People.”)

We must work hard to shape our churches into places of hope and help—places that readily seek to assist people and recognize their struggle with sin. But making our churches visible vehicles of truth and mercy in this area—well, it doesn’t come naturally. It must be intentional and calculated.

But it’s never too late! Every church has to begin somewhere. As we call others to faith and repentance and jump into the trenches with them, part of our own repentance as leaders may be admitting our oversimplification of deep spiritual issues and strongholds, as well as our hesitancy to get involved in the [messy] healing process of our people.

In my early days of reading the Bible as a new believer, I was struck by the amount of time, attention, and affection that Jesus had for the sexually broken and the sexual ‘outcasts’—those either labeled as such by others or who thought of themselves that way. Ask the Lord to give you that same heart for the broken and begin to think of ways your church can become unafraid and boldly willing to move into the scuffle of ministry. This is where we help the local church excel. The staff at HARVEST USA stands ready to help!



John Freeman
President, HARVEST USA
john@harvestusa.org



STARTING A HARVEST USA PARTNER MINISTRY IN YOUR CHURCH

The need to address sexual sin in our churches has never been more important. If you've read the main article in this newsletter, you know why a whole church commitment is needed to help sexual strugglers. Good theology, to be effective and powerful, must always move into people's lives. As was said in the main article, "something more than words of expectation and exhortation are needed." What is needed are brothers and sisters coming alongside and helping strugglers walk in God's truth. This is why HARVEST USA has developed a program called **Partner Ministries**. Increasing freedom from sexual sin cannot happen outside the body of Christ, and we want to equip and train churches to be that body that graciously and compassionately comes alongside strugglers with the mercy and truth of Jesus Christ.

Our **Partner Ministries** team seeks to do exactly what our name describes. We want to partner with churches in ministry to sexual strugglers. We recognize this is a hard area of ministry and that more specific training is often necessary, and that is what we can provide.

What does a Partner Ministry with HARVEST USA look like?

Unlike our other seminars and training events, establishing a **Partner Ministries** connection with HARVEST USA is an ongoing relationship. We want to be a resource for your church that you can access to continually improve your own ministry to sexual strugglers. How does this relationship develop?



1. We meet with your key pastors and leaders to discuss what your church needs for establishing a ministry to sexual strugglers and develop with you a ministry plan.
2. Before we come to your church for training, we'll prime the pump with your key volunteers by sending you some of our resources to help get them thinking.
3. We come out to your church and do an intensive weekend training where we will equip your people on how to do sexual brokenness ministry, from understanding how sexual brokenness develops all the way through how to set up and run biblical support groups for men and women.
4. After that training, your church has ongoing access to our latest resources, including print and video resources, along with quick access to one of our ministry staff if your church needs a quick answer or is dealing with a crisis situation.
5. We'll also keep in touch with you periodically to see how things are going, provide feedback, and be available to come back to your church for further teaching and training.

Interested? Got questions? Email Brooke Delaney at brooke@harvestusa.org, and she will send you our Partner Ministries booklet to get you started.

A NEW MINISTRY OF HARVEST USA

Churched kids struggle to reconcile the flood of sexual and relational misinformation that comes from the Internet and media with the eye-dropper drips they get of biblical teaching on sex and sexuality. The **STUDENT OUTREACH** is passionate about equipping youth leaders and parents to help youth grow in sexual integrity.

The **STUDENT OUTREACH** has two day-long seminars:

Gospel Sexuality: Raising Sexually Healthy Kids for Parents

We know that it's tougher than ever to be a kid and a parent today! We want to help parents learn to disciple their kids and nurture their faith as they grow up and face the sexual chaos of their world.

GOSPEL
SEXUALITY:
STUDENT
MINISTRY
TRAINING



Gospel Sexuality: Student Ministry Training for Student Ministry Workers (youth pastors, campus ministers, youth ministry volunteers, etc.)

Students live in a culture that is twisting sexuality into ever-evolving forms, and it's no wonder they are confused and falling into sexual struggles and sin. We help those in student ministry to ground their students in the Christian worldview of sexuality.



Contact Dan Wilson, TSO Coordinator, to find out more: dan@harvestusa.org

PARTNERING WITH HARVEST USA: ONE CHURCH'S EXPERIENCE

By James Sutton,
Associate Pastor, Christ the King PCA, Raleigh, NC

We've long known sexual brokenness was an issue in our church, even though nobody talked about it. We're happy to confess pride, fundamental forms of idolatry, destructive anger, jealousy, etc. However, invite us to shine a light onto our sexual brokenness and we get a little sheepish. Doesn't everyone?

But the Bible reminds us that it's pretty clear those struggles are going to be there. It even anticipates that we're going to do our best job of convincing each other and ourselves that they aren't there. In general, we lived up to that prediction. For a long time, our church's culture was like a mutually agreed-upon conspiracy of silence.

But something amazing happened a few years ago. Some of our members began pointing flashlights in the direction of their hearts and, in particular, the scary sections hiding their sexual struggles. Some of them just didn't have a choice, but many did. Some of them were doing it because they actually believed the gospel that their pastors were preaching.

At first, it was as difficult as you might imagine. As we were shepherding our church, we kept running into all kinds of fallout from porn addictions. Then, we'd start developing leaders in our church only to discover they were engaged in some disqualifying sexual sin or another. There were things that we wanted to do, but so many of our potential leaders were being taken out by these sins.

But even though it was hard and frustrating at times, it was also beautiful. Slowly, quietly, we found ourselves with a group of guys who wanted to meet regularly to talk about some of their deepest, darkest sins. They were eager to apply the gospel to each other's hearts, to brainstorm about how to help each other, and to pray for one another because they trusted that Christ could do miracles. They didn't want to live in darkness anymore.

God provided for us by introducing us to HARVEST USA. A group of men began to go through Dave White's workbook, *Sexual Sanity for Men: Re-Creating Your Mind in a Crazy World*. We had a biblical counselor in our church who

volunteered to meet with these guys on a weekly basis. This counselor also took the time to meet with the guys one on one. All kinds of fruit began popping up in their lives.

Not long after, we had a men's retreat, led by HARVEST USA. At that retreat, another group of guys started to open up about their sexual struggles. Encouraged by the fruitfulness of the

first group, we started discussing the need to have something similar to the book study on an on-going basis. The trouble was, the counselor who had been working with them moved and was living on the other side of the country.

We decided that the fruit we were seeing wasn't just the work of this counselor. We decided to operate like it was the Holy Spirit at work, bringing the gospel through the body of Christ.

So we stepped up our game, so to speak. We needed additional help, and that meant training for the men who were already leading. We contacted HARVEST USA and were delighted when they informed us of their **Partner Ministries** training.

They sent us some basic materials, and then we set up a time for their staff to video teleconference with our group to talk through a suggested model for how to set up a standing group. A lot of their practical suggestions were soaked in wisdom and would've taken us years to figure out on our own. They were incredibly encouraging, and we organized a weekend for one of their staff to meet with our core group.

The training included a full complement of helpful tools as well as some great tailor-made advice on how to apply those tools. Like us, they believed the beautiful fruit we were seeing was the work of the Spirit, and so they taught in a way that drew us to seek him more.

It's encouraging for our group to have an experienced staff "on call" whose wisdom they can draw from when they encounter particularly challenging situations. God uses their experience, their humility, and their training to help empower our church to continue to shine the Spirit's light on the dark places we all have in our souls. Overall, it's one of the most exciting things God has done in our church.

Slowly, quietly, we found ourselves with a group of guys who wanted to meet regularly to talk about some of their deepest, darkest sins. . . They didn't want to live in darkness anymore.

STUDENTS ARE SEXUAL SUFFERERS NOT JUST SINNERS

By Cooper Pinson

It's easy to go on idol hunts. Do you know what I mean? A student might be sitting in front of me, talking about how hard life has been for him, how sexual sin just keeps dominating him – and I'm on the prow! I'm hanging on to every word, thinking, *That smells like worship! Is that an idol!?*

To be an idol-maker is to be a sinner. And for many of us, the sinner category is the only category out of which we operate when we minister to students. I'll confess: I tend to love both quick fixes and be the "fixer" of people. And when I'm operating from the sinner category, it's easy to call students to simple repentance and demand quick change.

But simply emphasizing this category results in conversations like these:

"Dude, repent. You just need to stop this. It's destroying you."

These conversations often result in impatience and frustration for both me and the student I'm trying to help. But, like all emphases, the category of "sinner" doesn't give us the total picture. God gives us another category, one that nuances and deepens our ministry to students.

Sufferers. Not Just Sinners.

The Bible tells us that our students are not simply sinners; they are *sufferers* as well. In fact, the Scriptures make suffering a stipulation for sharing in the coming glory of Christ: "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, their heirs—fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Romans 8:16-17).

Paul says, "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake..." (Phil. 1:29). Doesn't a large part of our suffering as believers have to do with the "passions of the flesh" that "wage war" against our souls (1 Peter 2:11)?

All of us are walking battlegrounds, hosts to the war between flesh and spirit. As new creations in Christ, we bear the scars. The very presence of the "old man" waging war against our new selves means that we are sufferers.

What are some sufferings that students might face? For a student who struggles with same-sex attraction, her gifts and personality might not match up to the particular cultural group in which she lives. Feelings of isolation, shame, and being out of place might result from not living up to a certain societal ideal of what it means to be a woman.



She didn't choose her gifts! And she didn't choose to have a peer or parent say, "What's wrong with you? Why don't you like to do X like the other girls?" Her gifts that don't correspond to cultural norms or those comments made by peers or parents are not sins on her part; they are her sufferings.

For a student who struggles with pornography, his home life might be an absolute mess. His mom and dad might constantly fight. Perhaps he perceives porn as his only escape and refuge from life's storms. But he didn't choose his home life! It is a part of his sufferings.

What difference does this make?

While students who struggle sexually need to hear the call to repentance that comes from the sinner category, they also need the compassion, empathy, patience, and oftentimes listening ear that come from the sufferer category.

The way we talk to a robber and the way we talk to someone who has been robbed differ drastically. We would usually be stern with the robber. But how would we speak to the one who has been robbed? We would be gentle. We would be compassionate and empathetic. We would be patient as they work through feelings of insecurity and fear. We might simply be quiet, letting our presence do the talking. As sexual sin rears its head, students, many of whom are new creations in Christ, are simultaneously the ones robbing themselves and the ones being robbed of the joy that Christ brings.

Sometimes we need a firm hand to guide us. Other times we need a gentle hand to sustain us. Sometimes we need to hear about our need to rest in our identity in Christ. Other times we need to be told to pick up our tools and start working. The truths we give to students shift depending on the situation.

The category of sufferer provides our students with the truth that, though they sin, they are not defined by their sins. They can cry out to the Lord for help in the very moment that they are being assaulted by sin and temptation. This category also helps students draw near to the Lord who knows what it is like to suffer. He willingly suffered in their place and is with them now in the valley.

We might not operate out of the "sufferer" category every time, but when students are so beaten down and broken over their sexual sin that they can't find the strength to move, this can be a useful tool. This category will help students find the helping hand of Christ who is God With Us and gives us, as ministers, godly and nuanced patience, compassion, empathy, and love for the students under our care.

A DAY AT HARVEST USA

Many people who know about the mission and work of HARVEST USA don't know where we get the funds to do our work on a daily basis. In short, those funds come from people like you. In fact, in 2015, approximately **80% of all of our income came from individuals**, sending in checks or making gifts online. About 16% of our income came from churches, and the remainder came from fees that we charge for events.

Many people also don't know how much it costs to operate HARVEST USA on an average day. Just to pay for our offices, staff and websites on an average workday costs us **\$5,320**. That's **\$665** an hour. A one-hour conversation with a sexual struggler costs an average of **\$39**. A typical biblical support group with two staff members on a weeknight costs **\$228**.

That is a lot of money, but the Lord is using the work we do to change lives in the forms of real growth in faith, real repentance, and reconciled relationships with God and others.

Would you consider making a gift to pay for an hour of operations at the HARVEST USA office? Or perhaps, for an entire day? Even underwriting the cost of a one-hour direct ministry conversation with a struggler helps—since we don't charge ministry recipients for the valuable ministry we provide to them.



NEW MINISTRY PARTNERS NEEDED!

What About You?



You could even pay for an hour, a day, or a week of support groups by making a monthly pledge of support. If you can pledge \$25 per month, paid through automatic debit from your checking account or credit card, then you'll be sending us \$300 over the course of a year—enough to pay for seven individual meetings with strugglers. A \$100 per month pledge would pay for five biblical support group meetings over the course of a year. A \$200 per month pledge pays for over three hours of operations. That may not sound like much, but it covers one essential part of the whole ministry...and is greatly appreciated!

We could certainly use your help to maintain and expand the ministry of HARVEST USA. Would you consider making a gift of support, or a monthly pledge of support today? Use the response card and envelope included in this newsletter, or go to our website at harvestusa.org. The total process takes less than three minutes and is totally secure.

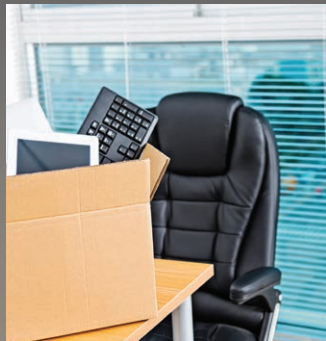
Thank you so much!

In the Lord,

Tim Geiger
Executive Director

WE'RE MOVING! CAN YOU HELP?

THE HARVEST USA OFFICE RELOCATION PROJECT



Our office. It's where hurting people come and often hear the gospel for the first time, or just reestablish themselves in God's word in the midst of their struggles or crises. It's where we host seven support groups each week. It's where men, women, and couples often pour out their hearts in their pain – and also where they begin their journey to wholeness and freedom. Not long ago, one staff person said, "Boy, if these walls could talk! With all of the stories they've heard over the years, and all of the breakthroughs that people have had ..."

Now, we need your help with a very pressing need — and opportunity. Our current lease ends in June 2016, and we have to move 17 rooms of furnishings and equipment! After looking at dozens of properties over many months, the Lord has led us to sign a ten-year lease for a new office building. This new office meets our needs now and for the future. We believe this building is the absolutely best one for us, as well as the least expensive of all those we investigated! However, the transition and moving costs to get us into the building are quite substantial.

We're asking God's people, who believe in the ministry and mission of HARVEST USA, to come alongside us with a special gift to help cover these costs. Here is a breakdown of the costs associated with our new office:

• Security deposits and advanced rent required	\$ 17,000
• New telephone system for 17 desks	\$ 14,000
• New office wiring and network connections	\$ 14,000
• Hiring a moving company (break down, move, set up)	\$ 8,000
• Additional furnishings, including kitchen appliances	\$ 7,000
• Reprinting new address on key materials (card, brochure, etc.)	\$ 5,000

Total Office Relocation Cost	\$ 65,000
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There are two ways you can give to this project:

- 1) Return the enclosed envelope and write "Relocation / Move Fund" on the outside.
- 2) Give online at www.harvestusa.org at the donation page site and choose the "Office Re-location Fund" option.

Gifts of any amount are welcome! Please call us at 215-482-0111 or contact John Freeman at john@harvestusa.org if you need more info or have any questions.

Beginning July 1, 2016, you can go to our website, www.harvestusa.org, to get our new address!
(But don't worry, the post office gives us six months to forward mail.)