

# PastorCare

## West Michigan

*Shepherding the Shepherds & Sheep*

**October 2019**

## **Honoring Pastor Michelle Jackson**

### **Church Builders Bible Training Center**

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It has been such a blessing for me to become friends with Pastor Michelle Jackson! She is an amazing woman of God with a passion for ministering to and training those who have been hurt in the church. She lives, breathes, thinks, serves and thrives outside the box of traditional, rules-based, Christian religion. I have experienced Pastor Michelle's Bible teaching and I can testify that is a called, anointed, and spiritually gifted Bible teacher and Pastor.



## **The Best Is Yet To Come**

**By Pastor Michelle Jackson**

*When Pastor John called me to tell me he would like to feature me in this month's PastorCare newsletter, I was both excited and humbled. To be cliché, God has done so much for me I cannot tell it all. Yet, I am pleased to tell you my story and my passion for this ministry.*

*Growing up in a Midwest middle-class home, it was very clear what was expected of my older brother and me. My parents were middle-class wage earners with strong traditional Christian values that I still hold dear today. Although growing up for me was a well-rounded experience, I knew that there were many more things in the world that I had not seen; yet, I wanted to see them. So, in my young adult*

years, I began to explore those things that I had been shielded from because I had not yet decided I wanted God for myself.

I quickly realized that living in the world without God was not for me. Through looking for love in all the wrong places, God showed me that He is Love and fulfillment could only come from Him. Through this experience, I understand how bodily appetites and worldly pleasures can pull someone, sometimes against their own will, into a life that is broken, dark, lost. Take heart and only listen. God is wooing you to Himself.

This knowing was crystallized for me when I got pregnant with my firstborn at age 19. At first, I was scared and wanted an abortion. I was in college and the ROTC program, and I just knew my life would be ruined by being an unwed mother. Yet, God had a bigger purpose. I went into the abortion clinic near my college and took the pregnancy test. While I waited for the results, I heard the audible voice of God. When I tell this story, people ask me, "Did anyone else hear it?" or "How did you know it was audible?" I don't know if anyone else heard it or not. I only know that I heard it with every fiber of my being. God said, "No! Don't do this. I have a purpose for her!" So, I got my results and left, never to return. I had no idea what I was going to do next. I was scared; yet, I had a peace I could not explain. That day was the beginning of the rest of my life. That day, God was not only the God of my parents. He became my God, my personal Lord and Savior. My favorite scripture was, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present [you] faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, [be] glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 1:24-25, King James Version). God kept me from falling that day and He continues to keep me from falling. Since I had made my decision to live my life for Christ, I started a journey to know everything I could about my Savior and Lord. The more I learned, the more I wanted to serve Him, the more I wanted to know Him. Through this process of learning, God showed me Himself through His Word and filled every void in my life. By 21 years of age, I was called to ministry with no idea how to get there but thank GOD He knew exactly how to get me where I am today.

I started with the basics. I taught the children and the babies in children's ministry. Then, I sang in the choir and went out with evangelistic ministry teams singing and praying on the streets in our urban areas. I, also, worked on the prayer call lines praying for folks who would call in desperately looking for Jesus. I worked the altar, too, praying for those who were ready to commit their lives to Jesus and be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Anything I could do in the Name of Jesus, I did it with my whole heart.

At first, it seemed like God had me on a fast track. By the time I was 22 years of age, I led my first praise and worship team and managed my first church office. I continued to minister to people at the altars and let God use me whenever He willed.



At the age of 25, I got married to my darling husband. I continued to seek and pursue the call of God on my life. More praying at the altar, speaking at women's breakfasts and gatherings, and of course, leading praise and worship.

But then, my fast train stopped! About 4 years into my marriage, all my time was consumed with taking care of my husband and my children. On my 30th birthday, I cried my eyes out because I felt that I would never fulfill the call of God on my life. I could not see past the last changed diaper or made-up bed or prepared meal. Looking back, I would have taken each day slowly, enjoying the journey, instead of attempting to rush it along. I understand how it feels to think you will never reach your destiny, or to think you are too late.

By 2005, I was ready to get back into ministry. But where? How? I had no idea how to "get back on track." In my heart, I wanted to do it, but I thought it was too late for me. I thought I would just take care of my husband and raise my children believing God would pass my life assignment to one of them. But the longing in my heart to fulfill it was always there. It was only covered with household responsibilities

*and a full-time career. I understand the desire to fulfill the call of God on your life and feel like the cares of this world has consumed all your energy and time so that you will never be able to break free. You can. I know. I did.*

*I became acquainted with my mentors who took a personal interest in me, more than I had ever had anyone do. Their tender hearts, time investments, and patience pulled me out of my shell that limited me to natural household duties. They pursued the call of God in me so that I could pursue it myself, again. In addition to leading praise and worship at our local church assembly, and ministering at women's gatherings, I was being sent to lead praise and worship at other churches. I was also training to be skillful in the Word of Truth, to interpret the Word of God and rightly divide it. I was finding me! I was being who God called me to be in the beginning. I was gaining confidence and continued. I did one-on-one discipleship, itinerant preaching, and started a bible study in my home for discipling others. I was happy and frustrated—happy to pursue, frustrated at the process. Though it was tough, it went faster than I could have imagined.*

*When the time came in June 2010, God gave me His audible instruction, again. This time it was in a vision. In the place where our church was meeting, I saw what appeared to be like a high school passing time in the hallway of the building. There were people taking bathroom and water breaks between classes, talking to each other about the subject of their current class and what God was revealing to them. In my spirit, God spoke clearly, "Bible School." The open vision and the voice of the Lord were as clear as the sun on a bright shiny day. My mentors received my words and equipped me to do this work. Then, they ordained me in January 2012.*

*God showed me in this supernatural way that creating a training center is the cure for apathy and atrophy in our modern churches. This structure changes the mindset of people and tells them there is something new to learn. There is something they need to know to grow and mature. This is how God showed me to do spiritual discipleship. Through this revelation, I knew that I needed to teach in a way that would help people connect what they are learning with their hearts through experience or emotion. When they connect it to something they already know, the Word can take root in their hearts. According to the gospel of Mark chapter four, this is how the kingdom of God works. This is how people grow to maturity and produce fruit. This is how I grew in spiritual maturity. As I look back on my journey, this is how God prepared me for my life's work.*

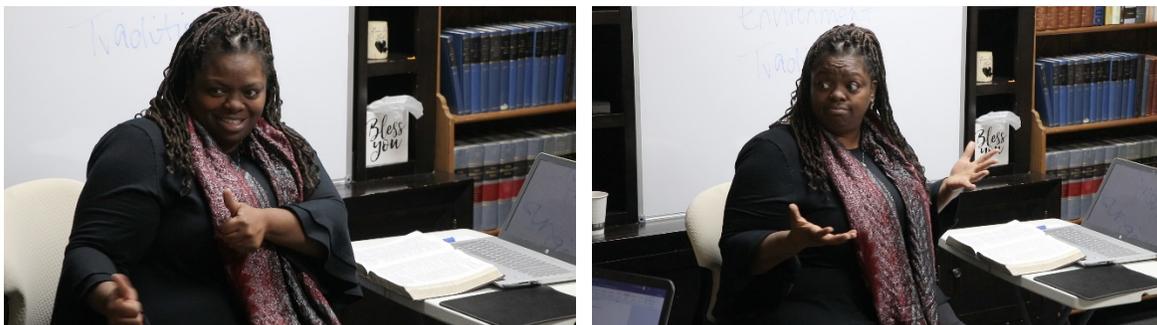
*Just recently, God confirmed this model to me. I was speaking with a fellow Chaplain about the training center. I shared with him what God had shown me so many years ago. He smiled and said, "Michelle, with all my degrees that is exactly what I learned in seminary. God showed you by the Spirit, what I paid over \$100,000 to learn." Wow! I had always believed in the supernatural wisdom of God. But his words crystalized to me the knowledge that the Spirit of God is the Teacher and He will lead you and guide you into all truth if you will yield to Him.*



*Today, our students are from multiple ethnic and denominational backgrounds and represent different churches from around the greater Grand Rapids area and the nation. Because of our diversity, we are all motivated to go beyond our cultural traditions and seek truth in the Word of God on every subject matter. Our students have found the classroom environment to be a safe place to share doctrinal differences and*

*skepticisms, discuss the Word, and apply their learning through creating ministry opportunities in the marketplace to accurately interpret the Bible and fully-functioning in their levels of ministry.*

*As the Director of Church Builders Bible Training Center, it is my passion to work with people from all denominations and walks of life and help them be a living testament in the marketplace by teaching them Biblical doctrines using Hermeneutics and practical applications of systematic theology.*



*I believe every human at every age and stage of life has a life assignment to fulfill. My passion is to help each one find it and pursue it by one on one mentoring, facilitating small groups, teaching bible training classes at our training center or any local church assembly. My heart to tear down the walls that divide the church and be an agent of blessing creating unity and community throughout the body of Christ. I serve two ministry alliances; one domestic and one abroad. I also serve on the Board of Directors for Ordained Women's Network based in Petoskey, MI. Locally, I serve as a volunteer mentor and Bible teacher for Alpha Grand Rapids. I live to serve people.*



*Today, Steve and I have been married for over 22 years. Our baby girl who changed our lives is now in her third year of law school serving as the Editor in Chief of Law Review. She aspires to be a federal judge. In total, we have five brilliant children and two delightful granddaughters.*

*My encouragement to you is life is a journey, not a destination.*

*In my early years, I could not see the forest for the trees. Looking back, I would have spent more time enjoying the process and journey, trusting God more and knowing "that He who began a good work in [me] will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6, English Standard Version).*

*I'm just getting started. The best is yet to come with courage and compassion. May the God of peace richly bless you with all spiritual blessings.*

*~~~Pastor Michelle*



*Pastor Michelle LaGrone Jackson is with Church Builders Bible Training Center in Grand Rapids. She and I met when we were both leading bible Study and were meeting on the same nights at Baker Book House, a local Christian Bookstore and coffee shop. A few months later I inquired about her training center. For the past year we have walked together in the Word and Spirit of God. I have been learning more about the gifts of the Spirit and going deep into studying the Bible. This has challenged me because I am a visual learner with childlike faith.*

*However, God has used Pastor Michelle to bring me wisdom, with deeper knowledge and understanding of what I already knew from the Scriptures. The beautiful thing when I read the Bible and I continue to see new things and that leap off the pages. I cherish those lightbulb moments. I also love participating in*

great discussions. It is wonderful to see new people join us and learn more about the Church Builders Bible Training Center.

It is a beautiful blessing to see how each one of us has a different gift and we are using our gifts to bless one another. We are witnessing God's handiwork. Pastor Michelle's heart, knowledge, faith, gifts, and teaching is like a breath of fresh air. When things don't make sense there is freedom to ask questions without feeling ignorant. The whole group participates in wonderful discussions.

When Pastor Michelle gets rolling in the Holy Spirit the place is on fire! Her laughter and smile is contagious! We feel it in our spirit and the room is full of joy and peace!

My prayer for Pastor Michelle and for every pastor who reads this is that you trust God and fully be the person God created you to be. Stand strong and courageous against the deception of the enemy. Walk in grace and truth. Be humble. God's forgiveness and grace are yours. Believe it and receive it. You are chosen by God to bring Jesus Christ to those who need to know Him and want to grow deeper. We want to shower blessings upon you! We celebrate you and the way you give life to others through the Holy Spirit.

~~~Angela Denison



I first met Michelle through her MeetUp invitation to the group "Called Out Ones: Leaving Religion Finding God." I responded to her that I personally did not want to leave religion, but that I knew others who did, and I felt called to come alongside them.

Michelle and I met for coffee, and I learned about her heart for those who have been hurt by the church. I joined the weekly group, where she taught on Bible passages and we reflected on what it means to live in the kingdom of God.

Michelle has been a tremendous resource to me in my desire to assist others. She has mentored me through navigating struggles in my own church. She is fulfilling a much-needed ministry with her heart and vision for those who have been hurt by the church. Michelle has a desire to reconnect people to Jesus and to call them back to being the church.

~~~Katie Madison

## Honoring Rev. Ken VanderBroek

It is a joy for me to honor the pastor who had the greatest spiritual impact on my life during my late teens and twenties. Rev. Ken VanderBroek became the pastor of my home church, Hope Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, in August 1969, just before the start of my senior year in high school. Pastor VanderBroek was a wonderful Bible teacher and preacher. He made the Bible come to life and he applied it to our daily lives. When I returned home after six months of training in the Army Reserves, I made my public profession of faith in Jesus Christ with Pastor VanderBroek and the Elders of Hope Church. I was received as a new member on Mother's Day, 1971.



Shortly after Pastor VanderBroek arrived at Hope Church, his second born daughter Sue and I became close friends. It was three years later when we began dating in the summer of 1972. We became engaged that fall. On August 17, 1973 Pastor VanderBroek became my father-in-law when he officiated at our wedding! We are so thankful for Dad's continued involvement in our lives and family through 46 years of our marriage. Happy 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday Dad! We love you!!



**Rev. Ken VanderBroek's 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party with all seven of his children!**

Front Row: Dad, Carole, Dave, Sue. Back Row: Marilyn, Tim, Steve, Ruth.

**Update on Sue's Health:** The doctor's prescribed medication for Sue's Polymyalgia Rheumatica "PMR" was Prednisone for 13 months minimum, if there were no flair ups (December 2018 – January 2020). The Prednisone helped to relieve the pain and the movement of her arms returned, but the strength is coming back very slowly. Sue was thankful for the relief, but she hated the side effects. In September, Sue stopped taking the Prednisone. She learned that the medication didn't heal her like she thought it would. She decided to live with the pain to get rid of the side effects. Sue is exploring alternative options for health and wellness. Working full time and working at the house leaves her tired.

We are living with friends in Hudsonville. For updates on the house rebuilding progress you may click on our **GoFundMe page**. <https://www.gofundme.com/healing-for-my-wife-and-rebuilding-our-house>

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