

In The Pastor's Study

an interview with Min. Robert Brantley of BridgePoint Virtual Clergy Church

SAY SO!: Before we get started, I just want to take a moment to thank you for your commitment and dedication to the Faith Forum and to Say So! Magazine as a whole.

Min. Brantley: Thank you for your faithful service to the body of Christ through Say So! Magazine. Your family has demonstrated great stewardship in this endeavor, and my wife and I are grateful for the opportunity to apply the Word of God toward the edification of God's people through the Faith Forum column. To God be the glory!

SAY SO! Now, let's talk about BridgePoint Ministries. BridgePoint is a "virtual clergy church" and your brochure clearly states that it is "an unincorporated web-based global assembly." What do those terms mean exactly?

Min. Brantley: BridgePoint Ministries is a sponsored program of The Universal Peacemakers Foundation, where Jesus is upheld as the "universal peacemaker." Our family established the Foundation more than a decade ago as a conduit for the "kingdom business" efforts of our family enterprise, The Brantley Group (part of the BAM "Business as Mission" movement that is exploding worldwide as the next great wave of evangelism.) BAM companies are more than examples of Christian capitalism; the business itself is a means to spread the gospel and to plant churches. The Foundation is a Maryland-based non-profit tax-exempt corporation that sponsors and hosts BridgePoint Ministries at Near Haven, a beautiful 3-acre private estate that serves as the "home office" for our family enterprise.

As an unincorporated sponsored program of the Universal Peacemakers Foundation, BridgePoint Ministries: Where Clinicians and Clergy Connect to Provide Counseling Services to the Body of Christ, has three major program thrusts. Our first thrust is

direct services to clergy, primarily through our International Center for Clergy Coaching. Our second thrust is direct services to Christian clinicians through our Institute for Christian Clinical Supervision, which is headed by my wife, Dr. Astra P. Brantley, an internationally-known Christian licensed clinical psychologist. Our third thrust, for nearly two decades, has been direct "Christian Management and Mental Health Services" to God's people, including Christian individuals, couples, families, churches, and other organizations. The fourth, and latest thrust of BridgePoint Ministries, is the launch of the BridgePoint Clergy Church as an "unincorporated web-based global assembly" of Ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The church is "virtual" in that it is not a distinct corporation as most churches are today, but rather a "gathering of believers" who happen to be God's ordained clergy. It does not have a single identifiable worship edifice but instead, meets locally in small groups at various places; and it uses the Internet to facilitate the regular voluntary corporate assembly of clergy worldwide. We share clergy-relevant information and clergy-only praise and worship over the Internet. We use the Internet as a platform for initiating comprehensive clergy care that is Bible-based, Christ-centered and Spirit-led.

SAY SO!: What clergy needs or problems will BridgePoint address?

Min. Brantley: Clergy have many problems—personal, physical and emotional health, marital, family and others. They often suffer the pain of stress, loneliness, depression, anxiety, doubt, fear and addictions to food, drink, drugs, pornography, pedophilia, pandering, etc. They tend to be private people because they cannot find enough privacy in their lives. They are under constant public scrutiny; and they dare not make an errant step; or appear to be out of control in any manner. When they do fall, they cannot "just get up." To fall is to fail.

Clergy in leadership suffer. When their leadership leads them to the end of their

rope; when those whom they serve put them in need of service; when they are ready for a refreshing trip back to their inner peace; BridgePoint Ministries at Near Haven is a private and safe place where they can relax, resolve and renew, under the power of the Holy Spirit and the care of Christian professionals.

SAY SO!: Pastors tend to be very private people. How do you intend to get clergy to understand the importance of being involved with a ministry like BridgePoint?

Min. Brantley: Every clergy person with whom I have shared the BridgePoint vision has affirmed that clergy, worldwide, need centralized clergy information, corporate clergy worship and comprehensive clergy care. For nearly two decades, The Brantley Group, and now BridgePoint Ministries, has earned its reputation for providing private and confidential care to God's people, including clergy. Our services are Bible-based, Christ-centered, and Spirit-led. We have always trusted God to send His people to us for His purposes.

SAY SO!: What about the corporate fellowship? What will that be like?

Min. Brantley: We will use every Internet technology available to us to facilitate global corporate worship. We will also supplement that effort with other media technologies including radio streaming, cable TV, cellular, and audio/video tape and CD/DVD technology. Corporate fellowship will also take place around the world "on the ground" so to speak in small clergy gatherings in various places. As the visionary and current lead servant in this ministry, I will be hosting small clergy gatherings at Near Haven as we continue to plan the establishment of Near Havens across America and around the world with the help of God's "angel investors."

SAY SO!: Tell us about your background and what qualifies you to be a clergy mentor or even a pastor of pastors, so to speak.

Min. Brantley: It is important to understand that I am not trying to be a pastor of pastors, but rather a servant of pastors. Every pastor or clergy person should have

a pastor and a mentor. Pastors oversee and look out for your soul. Mentors teach you ministry and how they do ministry. This is not my role. I am neither pastor nor mentor to pastors. I am a servant and a "clergy coach." As a clergy coach, I "hold the light on the path" so that each clergy client can use both hands to do the work that God has ordained to be done.

As a university and seminary educated ordained minister, trained in Christian coaching, certified in biblical conflict resolution, and broadly experienced in the area of pastoral counseling, church consulting, and clergy care, the son and sibling of pastors, the father of a minister of wellness and future pastor and the 40-year spouse and ministry partner of a powerful woman clinician of God who serves clergy couples, I am uniquely qualified to serve clergy through BridgePoint Ministries.

SAY SO!: Will the ministry be financially supported by tithes and offerings?

Min. Brantley: No. Tithes and offerings belong to the local church (and through the church to home and global missions.) As a sponsored program of The Universal Peacemakers Foundation, BridgePoint Ministries receives its financial support primarily through tax-deductible gifts to the Foundation. Those gifts may come from individuals, corporations and even churches or other ministries. Participating clergy will certainly support BridgePoint as the Spirit leads. Please be certain of this: we need financial support from the Body of Christ. We are standing faithfully on the promises of God. We believe that His "angel investors" who have been blessed by Him with the spiritual gifts and financial resources for giving to Christian ministry and investing in "kingdom business" will be led by the Spirit of God to financially support and endow this important ministry. BridgePoint Ministries is a "sound ministry investment."

The Brantley Group | 410-625-2900
14821 Hanover Pike, Upperco, MD 21155
email: Brantley@BrantleyGroup.com
web: www.ExperienceNearHaven.com

Clergy Only Website:
www.BridgePointClergyChurch.com