

# Fulfilling the Call

**R**ick Bliss knows a few things about stress. After all, this Milwaukee-based attorney (and Pastors Retreat Network board member) works every day in a very high-stakes world. But Rick doesn't just practice law. He's also the managing partner of his firm—directing the “business side of the business.”

Under Rick's leadership, the firm has grown to nearly 200 lawyers spread across five separate offices—three in Wisconsin, one in Washington, D.C., and a new location in Shanghai, China, one of the world's fastest growing economies. It all makes for a very busy and very challenging professional life.

Rick also learned a great deal about personal pain in the last few years, walking with his beloved and courageous wife as she battled the cancer that recently took her life.

In the midst of all this, Rick sees his professional and personal challenges as nothing compared to those our nation's pastors face every day. “They experience the same kinds of stresses that we do—and have the added burden of being responsible for the spiritual health of so many others,” he says.

## FROM LEGAL WORK TO KINGDOM WORK

Rick has been around Pastors Retreat Network almost from the

beginning—thanks to his close personal and professional relationship with John Findley, Pastors Retreat Network's founder and chairman.

A decade ago, when John explained the ministry to him, Rick was immediately interested, because Pastors have long held a special place in his heart.

For many years, Rick's uncle pastored a small church in upstate New York. His father also spent time in full-time ministry.

Growing up in Racine, Wisconsin, Rick's family maintained very close friendships with three pastors. And today, he's happy to call all the pastors at his current church (Spring Creek Church, Pewaukee, Wisconsin) personal friends.

These individuals gave Rick great examples of healthy servants, serving God joyfully and faithfully over a long period of time. Naturally, Rick saw Pastors Retreat Network as the perfect vehicle to encourage and support even more such pastors.

## THREE WAYS TO HELP

One could say it's “easy” for Rick to support Pastors Retreat Network since he lives and works just 30 minutes



Board Member Rick Bliss

from Cedarly Retreat in Wisconsin, has a friendship with the founder and chairman of the ministry and holds a position on the Pastors Retreat Network board. But Rick feels certain he would support the ministry even if he lived a thousand miles away, had never met John Findley and was not a board member. And one of his greatest desires is to invite others who care about the spiritual health of pastors to support this vital ministry.

When asked how others can help, Rick has a very quick answer. The simplest step—writing a check—is, of course, always part of the mix. Pastors

Retreat Network relies totally on the financial gifts of caring individuals. But Rick also stresses two other ways that interested individuals can make powerful contributions: prayer and opportunities.

### BATHED IN PRAYER

The board and staff of Pastors Retreat Network are sincere when they ask for prayer.

Rick puts it this way: “This is a ministry that has been bathed in prayer from the beginning. And now, as we consider expanding our service and reach, prayer is more important than ever. Either we will be part of truly building the Kingdom, or we’ll just be wasting our time. We all believe that prayer is the difference.”

Rick and the entire Pastors Retreat Network team desires for caring individuals to support the ministry through prayer.

As Rick says, “If we are not in the center of God’s will, this ministry won’t be blessed.”

### OPEN DOORS

Today, the Pastors Retreat Network ministry consists of three centers. Tomorrow, the board and staff see a much larger national network.

Getting from here to there will take prayer, time and additional resources. It will also require a team of supporters who will help the ministry uncover and pursue the new opportunities God may have in store. Rick asks new and existing friends of the ministry to consider four possible contributions in this area:

**1. Connecting the ministry to new supporters—** Do you know some natural networkers? Could their relationships and personal skills help Pastors Retreat Network expand its reach?

**2. Introducing Pastors Retreat Network to pastors who could benefit from a refreshing, self-directed retreat experience—** Has your pastor yet experienced the gift of a retreat? Do you know of other pastors who might need the kind of experience we offer?

**3. Identifying potential full-time or fill-in retreat hosts—** Existing retreat centers occasionally need relief hosts who can step in for a few days or a week—sometimes on short notice.

Guests who have previously enjoyed a retreat or laypeople with a heart for pastors are ideal candidates.

**4. Scouting locations for new retreat centers—** There are many places where a new retreat center could be located—the board’s goal, however, is to find the *right* places. Do you know of an area that presents a unmet need, access to a group of potential supporters and a prospective retreat center site?

## Helping Through Book Donation

There’s one more need with which some friends may be able to help: new books for the retreat center libraries. Rick explains, “For many of our guests, reading is a centerpiece of the retreat experience. As a result, we have an ongoing need to keep our timeless devotional classics updated with more current spiritual books.”



*Note: The small libraries at each center are not a used-book collection center. Old seminary texts or other cast-offs that would not bring real value to retreat guests aren't helpful. So, before sending any books, please contact the retreat center hosts to see if your supply matches their needs!*

*Valley View Wish List*

*Texas Hill Country*

*Cedary Wish List*

*Wish List*

### WHY THIS ONE?

Like everyone else, Rick sees lots of worthy causes. Ultimately, the difference with Pastors Retreat Network is the fact that the ministry’s mission and greatest strength is keeping pastors healthy—not simply nursing them back to health after a crisis or failure.

It’s the same principal that Rick has seen in the legal world. The best companies seek legal advice before they get into trouble. As a result, they reduce the risk, severity, expense and damage of future litigation.

Rick Bliss couldn’t be more passionate about spreading the news of Pastors Retreat Network. And he knows that as friends of the ministry continue to pray and give and reach out, the important work of serving pastors’ spiritual health will grow. 🌱