



Northwest FOCUS

God at Work Through Northwest Independent Church Extension

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A Furry Tool in the Toolbox!

Pastors often refer to using "every tool in the toolbox" to share the gospel and fulfill their call to the ministry. Our NICE missionary pastors certainly do that! But NICE missionary pastor, Mark Organ has a unique kind of tool ... a furry, four-footed tool name Milo!

Mark had previously served in the Marine Corps, doing three combat tours in Iraq as a Gunner on a Light Armored Vehicle. When he returned Stateside, he served as Deacon and then Elder at Nehalem Valley Bible Church in Vernonia, Oregon. The pastor at the church, NICE Board member, Gary Taylor began mentoring Mark for possible pastoral ministry in 2013. With



Nehalem Valley Bible Church

additional guidance and input from his father, his wife Rachael's father, and NICE Director Bob Rodgers, Mark was ordained to the Gospel Ministry in 2019. He became the Senior Pastor at Nehalem Valley Bible Church in 2021 when Gary and Diana Taylor retired. Gary now serves as the Assistant Pastor, continuing an ongoing partnership in the ministry. Mark and Rachael also joined the NICE Family, commenting, "Perhaps the biggest contribution that NICE has made in my life was the involvement of Roy Sprague, Bob Rodgers and several others in my ordination board panel in 2019. Roy especially was particularly kind during this process and guided me through it. Being a part of NICE has been a wonderful blessing - especially Bob's work with the young pastors group and his wife, Katherine's work with the pastor's wives! They have done much to encourage both Rachael and myself."

Due to some residual issues from his time in the military, Mark felt he could



Mark and Milo

better carry out his pastoral ministry with the aid of a service dog. The Lord provided, and in 2021, Milo, an Aussie Doodle mix, joined the Organ family. Milo went through over 360 hours of training, and then Mark was required to go through 5 weeks of training in how to work with the dog. Mark explained, "Milo is a medical alert dog and he alerts under certain conditions, such as when my behavior is different than my baseline." He went on, "He helps me in two ways: primarily as an ice breaker, which is very helpful



In the pulpit on Sunday

in doing evangelism; but secondly, by reducing tension during any discipleship or challenging counseling situations. It is easier to hear difficult words with Milo around."

The church family have responded well to the dog, who accompanies Mark to the pulpit each Sunday, and lies on the floor behind him. Mark is pleased that the dog has not proved to be a distraction from the ministry of the Word. Milo has also opened doors of opportunity beyond the church body. A few weeks ago at the State Fair with his family, Mark was approached twice by older ladies who asked about the dog. Mark was able to turn both conversations to spiritual matters, and discovered that both of them knew and loved the Lord. Mark said, "A big benefit to having him is to initiate conversations with strangers for evangelism ... it's great to have another tool for the toolbox!"

In another sense, you are a tool in the NICE toolbox for planting and strengthening churches! Thank you for your interest in NICE; we are blessed!



Mark and Rachael Organ with their children, Sunny Day, Gunner, Tiger Lily, and Justice

REMINDER: You should always ask before reaching out to pet a service animal while they are working. It could add difficulty or distraction for both the animal and the handler.

So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. I Corinthians 3:7