

“Receiving confidence through faith to lead”

Is it possible to “Receive confidence through faith to lead?” Dr. Quentin Van Meter, a board certified pediatric endocrinologist, and current president of the American College of Pediatricians, shared it is throughout the discussion he led at BELIEVES on Tuesday, December 10th on the topic.



Van Meter, a graduate of the College of William and Mary, the Medical College of Virginia, and the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, began the session sharing some background on the American College of Pediatricians (ACP) and how it was formed.

“The ACP formed in 2002 in response to things occurring within the American Academy of Pediatrics,” Van Meter said. “The AAP has 67,000+ members and is an advocacy group for kids, but became more focused on what is politically correct.”

Prior to moving to Atlanta in 1991, Van Meter had worked as a staff pediatric endocrinologist at the Naval Hospital in San Diego from 1980 to 1986 and was Chairman and Director of the residency training program at the Naval Hospital Oakland from 1986 to 1991. In 1991, he retired from a 20-year career in the Navy Medical Corps and moved to Atlanta where he joined the Fayette Medical Clinic as a pediatrician and pediatric endocrinologist.

Van Meter had joined the AAP in 1976, which at the time he said was all about kids and advocating for kids. After moving to Georgia and joining the Georgia Chapter of the AAP, Van Meter was asked to do an evaluation for the Chapter’s around all the efforts focused on kids.

“Through this work, I discerned there needed to be a ‘Bill of Rights for Kids,’” Van Meter said. “The ‘Bill of Rights for Kids’” included things like having a family from intended conception, being raised by a family, being loved and provided for, being educated, and overall being taught a moral compass.”

Van Meter said the ‘Bill of Rights for Kids’ would then call for kids to pass it along and the circle would continue.

“Kind of like how we look at our faith,” Van Meter stated.

Van Meter said the ‘Bill of Rights for Kids’ was initially called the ‘Georgia Children’s Agenda’ since it grew from efforts and dialogue in the state.

“Our district here within the AAP picked it up and presented it at the national AAP level,” Van Meter said. “In DC, I talked to Newt Gingrich – who had just become Speaker of the House – and he said if it was picked up in Georgia, he’d carry it nationally. However, when everything was presented at the national AAP meeting, it was booed, hissed, and shouted down by activist groups representing gay rights and adoptive rights. I was stunned.”

Van Meter went on to share that as things progressed, ultimately the American College of Pediatricians formed in 2002 because the American Academy of Pediatrics said that same-sex adoption was as good or better than heterosexual adoption based on case studies and that were anecdotal and based on interviews with lesbian couples. The ACP was founded to promote what is best for children based on valid science, unhampered by social fad. It has around 600 members today, and Van Meter has been on its Board since 2007.

What are the origins of Van Meter’s faith?

“I was not a cradle Catholic,” Van Meter told those in attendance. “I married a Catholic. We met during freshman year in college. Her dad was her idol. Whenever we’d go to visit, we’d go to church with him.”

Van Meter also shared his mother was Ukranian Orthodox Catholic, and his maternal grandfather had a leather-bound missal in his hand all the time, from which he silently read throughout the day.

It was his wife and father-in-law who really introduced him to the Roman Catholic faith.

Van Meter went on to say that when he was in the 2nd year of his residency at the Naval Regional Medical Center in Oakland, he and his wife decided spontaneously to start attending mass regularly. He said they had been having fertility issues.

“During this time when we were facing the fertility issues, I got a call. A baby was up for adoption and the stipulation was it had to be a Catholic family.”

Van Meter and his wife adopted the 1-month-old girl. Van Meter spent time with a priest later and became a Catholic.

So, why is Van Meter a pediatrician? He just loves kids.



“When I look into the eyes of an infant, I see God,” he explained.

The question Van Meter struggles with is – “Why can’t we preserve what’s needed for kids?”

“Sometimes it’s dysfunctional families. Many times it’s moms who don’t know how to nurture. All of this led to the ‘Georgia Children’s Agenda,” said Van Meter. The transgender movement has really troubled him. “My wife has told me, ‘This transgender issue isn’t going to be an easy thing for you, but God clearly wants you to speak your mind.’”

Van Meter said all of this shapes the position he has with kids:

I am your advocate. I respect where you are. I’m going to give you as much information as I can in pieces.

He added, “I don’t wear my religion on my sleeve. Kids aren’t initially communicative so the best thing to do is connect on something positive and then let them come back.”

Van Meter takes this position with all kids including the transgender kids he’s engaged with, which typically are as young as 4 and go until 18 – but he’s seen 18-month-olds too.

When dealing with kids and parents in his office – whether they self-identify as transgender or not – Van Meter says he asks the kids and their parents if the kids feel safe to just chat with him.

“The physical exam is always with the parent present,” he added.

If the kids feel safe then Van Meter just chats with them, or with his medical assistant present if the kid desires.

“Every transgender kid has so much dysfunction to absorb – divorce, death of siblings, sexual abuse. Surveys indicate that two out of three of such kids are wrestling with depression or anxiety.”

Van Meter indicated he actually doesn't get many patients coming to him who self-identify as transgender because people are able to search online and know where he stands.

"I won't interrupt puberty with blockers, which is often something pushed with kids in these situations when they're 10 to 11 years old. I was lucky to practice general pediatrics and not just endocrinology, so my world view is, 'Who are you as a child?' I believe this is why God led me to the medical profession."

Van Meter was then asked by one BELIEVES attendee, how many parents he encounters that come to him looking to be affirmed versus not.

"Where faith comes in is you have to weave in all the things I believe in Christian faith with any kid – whether Muslim, Christian, or other – and they are always receptive."



A different BELIEVES attendee then asked, "From the faith side, have you ever encountered a situation where you said, 'This kid shouldn't even be in this world?'"

VanMeter responded, "No."

Another BELIEVES attendee then asked Van Meter, "How do you keep going?"

Van Meter responded, "Driving home in Midtown is a living hell. I am talking to cars. On one occasion, when I was particularly frustrated with rude and idiotic drivers, I was really talking loudly to the traffic and out of the corner of my eye, I caught sight of a mentally ill homeless man screaming and shaking his fists at the sky. There, but for the lack of a vehicle was my carbon copy. God has a sense of humor."

He also said, "My wife is my savior. She literally says, 'You can't save or help everyone. Remember who is really in charge.'"

To close the session out, Van Meter was then asked, "What can we do to help?"

"Ask your own physicians to listen to you and respect you," Van Meter replied. "Medical practices are super financially stressed. The way out of this is they sell their practice to a big corporation and then they don't pay much attention in visits and just handle volumes of patients."

When Van Meter visits with a patient he says he tells them he's going to look at everything from head to toe – the mom's standing there when he says this too.

"In the field of endocrinology, we get a lot of referrals to evaluate unhappy, unhealthy kids. The Parents often say, 'It must be an adrenal or thyroid problem,' or something like that. However, what I see is all the signs of undercurrent emotional trauma, kind of like a scary, dark basement" he said.

He closed by saying, "When I encounter this, I will report back to the child's general practitioner that I found nothing from an endocrinology perspective but there may be anxiety or depression in play."