



# BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

January 2023

Editor Janelle Daum

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*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

*John 1:1-5*

Jesus is the Light of the world. We always have His love and light surrounding us. That is the message of John 1:1-5. It is speaking of Jesus and it tells us that His life is what provides light for us. Because He is alive eternally, we have light eternally.

The beauty of the Incarnation is that darkness doesn't rule. That  
E-mail: [jbvbeditor@hotmail.com](mailto:jbvbeditor@hotmail.com) your article.

is the truth found in John 1:5 – “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” No matter how pervasive darkness might seem to be it is always overcome by the light. Notice the juxtaposition between light and darkness in this passage.

Jesus was born into a land that was overcome by darkness. The people faced tyranny everywhere they turned. The Romans had conquered Israel. King Herod was the Israelites' direct political ruler. He was a man whose cruelty knew no bounds, extending even to the extreme of cutting off John the Baptist's head to score points with a beautiful woman. The chief priests and Pharisees were their religious leaders. They were greedy, cruel, self-righteous men whose only goal was to hold on to their own power. They were willing to do anything necessary to hold on to that power. It didn't matter who they hurt along the way as long as they maintained their religious superiority.

At the birth of Jesus, the light of His life overcame that darkness. On a deep, dark night the sky was filled with the brilliant glory of God surrounding the multitude of the angels of heaven as they proclaimed His birth to the shepherds. A brilliant star that shone brightly in the darkness led the Magi on a several hundred mile trip to worship the Child that had brought light into the world.

The darkness was still there. Herod's insane order to massacre all the young boys, age 2 and under, was a brutal act of darkness. The Pharisee's ongoing attempts to trap Jesus so that they could arrest Him and have Him killed was darkness personified. But, even as a little baby lying in the manger, Jesus brought light that shone brightly in that darkness. The darkness could not overcome it. His power was too great. His light was too brilliant. His glory was supernatural. John 1:14 tells us, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus brought power and glory and grace and truth into a world

that is infected with brutal darkness. As we listen to the daily news we are inundated with those acts of darkness that take place around the world. While the Sioux Falls metro area is actually a very safe place to live it is striking to me how many acts of violence have been reported in this last year. Darkness is one of the primary characteristics of the world.

The world was changed when Jesus was born as a baby in a manger. He transformed it by offering hope and salvation to people trapped in the darkness. John 1:9-13 describes the effect of His light on the darkness of the world, "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Through the light of Jesus we can find salvation and eternal life, even in the midst of darkness.

The message of the Incarnation is to not fear the darkness. The darkness is a part of this world, but the darkness is always overcome by the light. Darkness provides us with opportunity. The greater the darkness, the greater the opportunity to let the light of Jesus be seen. The greater the darkness, the greater the opportunity to see the glory and the grace and the truth of God. The greater the darkness, the greater the opportunity to see the power of the Gospel change and transform lives. The greater the darkness, the greater the opportunity to let Jesus be seen in us and through us.

Remember that in this new year. Who knows what we will face as the year unfolds? We will all face a lot of different experiences and changing situations. Some of them will be very good and some of them will be the result of the darkness that sin has produced in this fallen world.

Remember that darkness is not an enemy to be feared. Darkness is an opportunity to be used to bring light into a world that is crying out for peace and safety and life. Great darkness provides us with great opportunity to give the greatest gift of all in this new year, the gift of life and light... the gift of salvation and eternal life through Jesus.

Blessings,  
Pastor Randy

# **UPCOMING EVENTS FOR JANUARY AND BEYOND**

## **EVENTS CALENDAR 2023:**

### **Sunday's**

**9:30 a.m.** Worship Service

**10:30 a.m.** Fellowship

**10:45 a.m.** Sunday School for the Whole Family

### **Wednesday's**

**6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.,** Awana

**7:45 p.m.** Middle & High School Youth Group

### **Thursday's**

**3 p.m.** Prayer & Women's Bible Study meeting in homes

**6:30 p.m.** Women's Evening Bible Study meeting in homes

### **Saturday's**

**January 7, 8 a.m.** Men's Bible Study via Zoom

**January 21, 8 a.m.** Men's Bible Study via Zoom

**Sunday, January 1,** New Year's Day

**Wednesday, January 11, 2 p.m.,** Discipleship Team Meeting

**Monday, January 16,** Martin Luther King Jr. Day

**Sunday, January 22,** Newsletter Articles are Due

**Wednesday, January 25, 7 p.m.,** Outreach Team Meeting

## MISSIONARY UPDATES

### AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



December 1, 2022

#### **THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER!**

How would you describe the best Christmas pageant? Everyone perfectly in their place? Beautiful voices? A cute baby? Beautiful sets? Everyone remembering their lines and presenting the picture that we have in our heads of what that first Christmas was like?

A couple of weeks ago, Faith Academy had our first drama production since Covid hit in 2020. Students from all divisions (elementary, middle, and high) presented their rendition of The Best Christmas Pageant Ever. This is a drama about a family of poor, rowdy kids that no one likes. Everyone loves going to church because these kids aren't there. And the Christmas pageant at this church is the same year after year. Until this year.

The church lady who usually runs the play ends up sick and unable to run it. And then this family decides to come and end up taking over the play. The rehearsals are all a disaster. These kids don't even know the Christmas story. The pageant ends up being different and

unique...and it changes the kids. It wasn't the picture of the perfect pageant that everyone had in mind, but maybe it was just a little bit more realistic.

How often in my life do I wish things were perfect? I love it when things go as I think they should, when things are all nice and neat and orderly. But life isn't like that. Life is messy and hard. But with the messiness of life comes growth. As we discover more of who God is, and He continues to work in our lives, He takes the mess and makes it new. It probably won't look like my perfect picture of what I think my life should or could look like, but it will be better, because it will be what HE thinks it should look like.

It's been amazing to also see how God uses my own story to impact the stories of others. Just a couple days ago, one of my students was crying after school. She has been through a lot in her short life, and it often comes back to her in flashbacks. She has a lot of lies she has been told about herself and a lot of lies she believes. As I talked to her, there were so many things about my own story from the past year or so that I heard in her story. I was able to walk with her and share with her the things God has taught me and the strategies He is giving me to process through those situations. I'm so thankful that God has put me here for such a time as this, and I pray that He continues to teach and grow me so that I can help others who are going through this same thing.

I pray that as you go throughout this Christmas season, that you will remember that Christ's birth wasn't beautiful. It wasn't pristine. He was born in a stable among animals, with no place but a manger. I'm sure it smelled. I'm sure it was hard. But it was a story that changed the world. Because He came, we can have grace and mercy for our own messy lives. He understands what we're going through, and He is enough for us.

Merry Christmas! Amanda

### ***Praises***

- We were able to have a drama production again! Not only that, but all of our activities are in full swing. It's been amazing (and also tiring!).
- God has been doing a great work in my heart and life. He is teaching me how to process hard things and fight lies I believe. He is showing me that He is enough for me. It's great to see Him working and then using my story to help those around me.
- God is continually giving me strength to get done what needs to get done, even with added responsibilities.

### ***Prayer Requests***

- Pray that we would finish this semester strong. We only have 2 1/2 weeks left! There is so much to do in those weeks.
- Pray that God would provide more staff for Faith Academy, even for next semester. We really need our Science teacher to come (they're waiting on the husband's passport and have been waiting all semester), and it would be awesome to get an English teacher. We also have many roles that need to be filled for the coming year.
- Pray for wisdom as I plan Outdoor Ed. The main prayer requests would be that we would get the ministry component and the jungle survival site figured out. We are in the process of selecting high schoolers to help out, too. Pray that I can get all the details in place, know when to delegate, and know what things need to be done.

December 14, 2022

### **PowerUp! Prayer Update**

#### ***Praises***

- We only have a day and a half of school until Christmas break! We all need it. We will get 3 weeks off!
- My cough is starting to go away, even though it is still there a bit.

- I had the chance to speak truth to a student who had a breakdown after my class last week. I know the Lord put me in her path at that time, as I have experienced some similar feelings as her, just not on the same level. I could speak truth based on the way I've learned to also speak truth.

### ***Prayer Requests***

- Continue to pray for my student who is struggling. Pray that she can believe the truth and fight the lies that she has heard in her life for so long through past traumatic experiences. Pray for continued wisdom as I interact with her (she is in my advisory group and my after school Bible study).
- The 8th graders are going to an orphanage about an hour from school tomorrow for a ministry day. We will be playing with children and also sharing a Bible story with them. Pray that we will serve well and be a blessing to those around us.
- I am planning to work through an online conference this weekend that I think could be challenging in many ways. Pray that I would be sensitive to what the Lord is teaching me, that He will reveal things in my life that I need to process or grow in, and that this will help me grow in many ways to serve Him better.
- I haven't slept through the night for a week and a half (since my cough started), and I haven't been able to get extra sleep due to activities that need to be done, so I'm really exhausted. Pray that I can sleep through the night and also get over this cough.

### ***Ongoing Prayer Requests***

- That God will do great things in the hearts of students and staff this year at Faith Academy. Our school theme is Renew, Revive, Refresh.
- That Marissa and I would use our house well to serve our housemate and our community.
- That God will provide all the staff we need, both for the rest of this year and for next year.

## **ARLYN & MARCY NIES - AWANA**



November 2022

**Thank you so much for helping us carry the fire of faith to the next generation!**

### **Ministry Highlights**

It has been a privilege and honor to serve the Lord and equip our churches in many ways. The Lord has given us so many opportunities. Here are just a few:

- Relationships -- Club visits, leaders meetings, pastor visits, and ministry teams.
- Events -- Awana Olympics/Awana Games and Sparks-a-Rama, Awana Quizzing and Teen Day, Scholarship Camp and Canadian Adventure, Youth Ministries Varsity USA/Summit.
- Training -- Basic Training, Awana Ministry Conferences and Equips, Commander College 101, 201, and LEAD.
- Leadership -- State Director, Regional Directors, and Senior Field Leadership Team, onboarding/training new missionaries.
- International -- Canada, USAFB Azores Portugal, Missionary-in-Training to the UK and Zimbabwe, and two trips to Ukraine.

## **WE ARE RETIRING FROM AWANA**

After 37 years as Awana Missionaries, we are retiring the end of December. It has been an amazing adventure.

### **A Look Back**

Heidi and Jeremy were in early elementary school when we became Awana Missionaries in 1985. We left a loving church and friends to come to a place where we knew no one. Now they are all grown up with families of their own, giving us four wonderful grandchildren.

We found a home church and began to make new friends. Over the years, we had the privilege of getting to know so many wonderful people across the Dakotas and northern Minnesota. Many have become dear friends. Several have partnered with us in many different ways.

As new missionaries joined Awana, we gave away parts of SD and MN. We have worked with about 350 different churches here in the Northland.

In 2009 Marcy became an Awana Missionary in her own right, which became significant as Arlyn took on more leadership roles.

The Lord also allowed us to minister with the wonderful people in Louisiana for a brief time.

It has been an amazing adventure. All praise goes to the Lord.

### **Family Update**

We are planning to be together for Thanksgiving. It has been our holiday for many years. We often call it Thankmas, as we celebrate both holidays at the same. As the grandkids are growing up, this tradition may look different in years to come.

### **Praise and Prayer Requests**

God has kept us safe as we have traveled about 1.5 million miles on the ground and many in the air. (We totaled only one car.)

He has also blessed us with good health. We have missed very few events due to illness.

We are blessed knowing and ministering with so many wonderful caring and loving adults who pour into the children's lives and make disciples. We are now seeing third-generation clubbers. Pray for someone to minister in this area. If you know someone who loves to share Awana with others and help teens and adults be disciple-makers, let us know.

### **Ministry Goals**

We look forward to new ministry opportunities. We have already made plans to participate in two service projects with SOWER (Servants on Wheels Ever Ready) in Arizona in January and February.

We are praying about how we might be able to reconnect with the Legacy Coalition, equipping grandparents as they intentionally influence the next generation.

### **From the Awana Global Headquarters**

“Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.” (Psalm 139:4-6)

Your fall discipleship ministries have kicked into high gear, resourced with midweek and weekend solutions. Your clubs are falling into a pattern of familiarity, and your leaders are motivated by their calling to help kids see and experience God as His disciples. As you disciple the kids in your ministries, I wonder, do you see yourself being disciplined too?

Leaders often share testimonies with us that go something like this:

“I needed to be at club tonight as much, if not more, than the kids I led in my small group. Seeing them study the Bible and recite memory verses reminds me of my walk with Jesus and why I commit each week to serve.”

Discipleship is ageless; God can use the littlest disciple to disciple

their elders, too. As you walk into your areas of ministry this week, we are praying for you to see your own walk with God strengthened and renewed as you engage in multi-generational discipleship!

Melanie Hester  
Community Engagement Manager

## PAUL & JANET HARKNESS - AWANA



December 12, 2022

### **Faithful Friends in 2022:**

We are thankful for your prayer support this year.

Since my last writing, I have been able to visit two Awana Clubs. The pastors at one of the clubs commented about how effective they felt the curriculum is at discipling the children. The Awana Ministry Director leading the other Club is thrilled their attendance has increased by 50% over last year. God is definitely at work.

Today we have been busy mailing out Christmas cards and a small gift to our supporting individuals. We prayed for each person as we handled every letter.

Tuesday will be our last day in the office for Janet and me until Tuesday, January 3rd. We do not have plans for any big travels since we celebrated “pre-Christmas” with our children in November. We do, however, have several projects we hope to complete on our home. We also hope for time to relax and enjoy celebrating the birth of Christ.

Beginning in January, our Awana territory will be expanding. Since 2009 we have been serving Southern South Dakota along with Nebraska, SE Wyoming, and SW Minnesota. But in January, it

will include a little more area in Minnesota and all of South Dakota. Please be fervent in prayer for us in this added responsibility.

“Oh, just one more thing,” as Lieutenant Colombo was known for saying.

Traditionally, we have been mailing out our quarterly newsletter. Due to rising costs of postage, paper, and ink, we will be sending our quarterly newsletter out via email to as many people as we can. If you want to be on the Newsletter Emailing List, you need to let us know. You can do so by email at [paulh@awana.org](mailto:paulh@awana.org)

Churches will still receive a paper copy, so they can post it if they wish.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas Season,

Paul & Janet Harkness

Serving Nebraska, South Dakota, SE Wyoming, & SW Minnesota

## HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY



December 2022

**“Behold the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.” Matthew 1:23**

“God with us”, is a great truth to think about! In Exodus 33:14 God promised Moses His presence would go before him as he led Israel. Moses replied that he did not want to go if God’s presence didn’t go with him. Without His presence we would easily give up, and His kingdom would not move forward!

On November 5, we had a one-day seminar for the men who are being processed through the prison, titled “Not A Fan”, by Kyle Idleman. There were 50 men who attended. Ten of the men are a vital part of the regular church fellowship on Thursday evenings. Two of them were at each table to lead the discussion after each video. The video by Kyle is to help people to see the brevity of life and what is important in life. The men appreciated the seminar and I know it helped them to think about their priorities and their need to get right with the Lord.

Sam, one of the men who attended the seminar asked to visit with

me. The next week we talked about his life and what kind of teachings he grew up with. He told me, "The last time I got out of prison, I tried so hard to do the right thing! I observed the church's teachings and here I am back again." I went over the gospel with Sam and explained grace and that salvation is a gift of God. I had him read Ephesians 2:8-9 out loud. After reading that he couldn't work for a gift, he began to weep. Sam started to realize that all his religious work would not earn any favor with God. Sam prayed and asked the Lord to forgive him, and invited Christ into his life to be His Lord and Savior!

Kody, who has been in prison for several months started to attend my Bible study and the PLF church services. Later I noticed Kody leave before the service started. When I inquired of him why he was leaving, Kody said, "I can't handle crowds. Before I came to prison, I was in a gang and some guys from another gang jumped me from behind. I was left for dead and when I was in the hospital, I was unconscious for some time. That whole incident left me with paranoia, so I can't be around crowds." I thanked him for sharing that with me, so I knew what he is dealing with. We prayed about it and I told Kody that God wants to set him free from the paranoia. At the next church service, he sat in the back through the whole church service! PTL!

When I did a one-on-one Bible study with an inmate the other day, he told me he was going through trials. He had become very discouraged. I told him to open the Bible to Psalm 91. He told me that a few days earlier he had talked with his mother, and she told him to read Psalm 91. He still had not read it. We read, "Because he has known My name, he shall call upon Me and I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble." God never promised to keep us from trouble, but He will be with us in trouble. When he heard that, he was encouraged and said, "That made my day!" God's Word is a great encouragement in difficulties!

Thank you for all your generous support this past year by your prayers and financially! Please consider this ministry for your year-end giving. Have a blessed Christmas and New Year!

In Christ,  
Harlan

## DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ - JAPAN



December 21, 2022

### **Merry Christmas!**

“For unto us a child is born, and He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” - Isaiah 9:6

May you and your family experience the wonder of Christmas, the joy of God’s abundant blessings, and the peace of Jesus this holiday season and always.

### **Ministry Update**

We are excited about our new ministry assignment with SEND International. We look forward to sharing this new ministry with you in January. Keep an eye on your inbox for this new information soon.

### **Family Update**

Karen finished her two classes with Moody Bible Institute: “Care of the ministry leader’s soul” and “Ministry to Women in Pain”. Clara continues to enjoy new friends from Berean Academy. She is doing very well in her classes. Anna loves her studies at John Brown University and enjoys her kinesiology classes. We are glad that she can be with us this Christmas vacation. She is looking forward to skiing for the first time in her life.

## **Year End Gifts**

We trust God to provide for our support. Our dependence is on God. We thank you for your faithful support. If you are considering a year end gift to our ministry, your gifts to SEND International are tax deductible. Please make checks out to SEND International and mail them to: PO Box 513 Farmington, MI 48332. You can also send your gift right now via your credit card and bank transfer at: <https://send.org/give/missionaries/stoesz> We thank you for being a part of our team and we look forward to a continued relationship with you.

This is the season for donors to be thinking of personal gifts for missionaries they support. We are so thankful for all of you and for your generosity. Personal gifts should not be mailed to SEND International but be mailed directly to Darwin & Karen Stoesz PO Box 33 Elbing KS 67041.

We think of you, our supporters in prayer and finances often. You have sacrificed money from your hard-earned salary to join in what God has invited us to do. Pray that we will continue to serve faithfully for Jesus is the Lamb and he is Lord of lords and King of kings!

## **Contact Information**

Our contact information for the year is:

Our physical address is 219 W 1st St Elbing KS 67041

Our mailing address is PO Box 33 Elbing KS 67041

Our main phone number for text and calling is: 316-708-0127 (Feel free to send us a text)

## **Prayer / Schedule Update**

Our tentative schedule so far is as follows. Of course, all dates are subject to change. Please pray for us especially for these events:

Wednesday's Darwin will be helping with AWANA as much as he is able despite his travels

Dec 22 Dentist visits for everyone in the family

Jan 4 Berean Academy starts up again

Jan 9 John Brown University starts up again

Jan 11 Whitewater Community Church AWANA – Whitewater, Kansas

Feb 1 Whitewater Community Church AWANA – Whitewater, Kansas

Feb 8 Whitewater Community Church AWANA – Whitewater, Kansas

Feb 15 Whitewater Community Church AWANA – Whitewater, Kansas

Feb 22 Whitewater Community Church AWANA – Whitewater, Kansas

Feb 24-26 Faith Evangelical Bible Church – Henderson, Nebraska

**Please pray:**

1. Pray that Darwin's teacher Mr. Tsuneizumi and Karen's friend Yuko-san would put their faith in Christ.

2. Pray for Anna and Clara that they would have continued growing relationships with Jesus.

3. Pray for Anna at John Brown University and studies kinesiology.

4. Pray for Clara at Berean Academy that she would seek God and make good friends.

5. Pray for wisdom as we setup our schedule of activities for home service.

6. Pray for safety as we drive many miles here in the USA

7. Pray for our new ministry assignment as we work out the details of the change in ministry.

8. Pray for our continued support needs. Many partners have been with us for a long time, and some are reaching the end of their giving ability.

Thank you for your continued partnership in our ministry.

Thank you so much for your prayers, financial support, and encouragement.

Sincerely,

Darwin & Karen & Anna (19) & Clara (15) Stoesz

# MARIJANA



November 28, 2022

Christmas camp - Celebrating Birthday!

Dear prayer people and Churches,

Thank you so much for all of your prayers and support you are giving to us!

Next few days are going to be full of fun, joy and many good moments of singing songs, making cookies, dance, joy, different workshops with the children from DP community.

Camp is from 28.11-01.12 ZZ and it is our 4th Christmas camp, when we are celebrating a Birth of Christ.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...” Isaiah 9.6

We will have guests that will help us celebrate Birthday.

Children will hear about the Christ, they will make candles, cookies (this is our traditional workshop every Christmas and children are loving it), they will learn some new songs...

Please pray that everything goes well, our travelings to the village and back every day, for our guests and their program, and for the children and community to be impacted with what we do.

This is very important as even now, just a few hours before our

first day of the camp we are experiencing some issues with one car we are using for the ministry and we need to change the car so that we can do our first day of a camp.

If you want to support this camp, or a child with everything this child will experience in next 4 days, you can send it to our webpage (on the bottom of this letter).

Thank you so much and wish you Joy and Peace in this coming times!

May God bless you, your families and Churches  
Marijana and ZZ team

## **ALPHA CENTER**



### **Angels We Have Heard On High**

#### **Morea's Story**

Morea felt conflicted about her pregnancy. Conflicted because her dreams of traveling and performing in theaters after graduating from college were disappearing. Conflicted because of the varying experiences of parenting that she had growing up in her birth and adoptive families. Conflicted because she was in a toxic work environment but felt she needed to keep her job.

Conflicted because she didn't know who the father of her baby was and wasn't sure that she cared. Conflicted because she believed there was a God but didn't feel the unity of Christianity displayed in church. Conflicted because of the loving people in her life who thought she should abort her baby, yet she knew it was wrong. Conflicted because she wanted to be a great mom but didn't know how to care for her baby.

It was in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season that Morea's mom brought her to Alpha Center. Morea knew that she needed to embrace every opportunity that was offered. Over the course of her pregnancy, she completed Alpha Center's Life Skills Class, Earn While You Learn, Birthing Class and Women's

Mentoring. While Morea appreciated all that she was learning, it was the relationships that were formed that gave her a sense of love and value.

During her time as a client, it was one relationship in particular that truly transformed her life - her relationship with her volunteer mentor, Suzy. Morea had felt lost and had alienated herself from God. However, God was still pursuing her through His unconditional love and the encouragement shown through Suzy. She came to realize how God used her pregnancy, as conflicting as the circumstances felt at the time, as a way to connect her with godly people and help her reconnect with her faith.

### **Alpha Baby Koa Grace**

Now that her precious Koa Grace has arrived, Morea is busy being a single mom and working full-time. She looks forward to growing more in her faith as she attends a local church. She even invited a couple of friends who she met at Alpha Center's Life Skills Class to attend church with her. She is passionate about encouraging other young moms in challenging circumstances because of the support she received from Alpha Center.

**“BABIES ARE BLESSINGS. NOW I KNOW THAT I WAS MEANT FOR THIS. I FEEL ENERGIZED THAT I GET TO DO THIS EVERYDAY THANKS TO THE BEAUTIFUL EXPERIENCE I HAD AT ALPHA CENTER.” - MOREA**

### **Glory to God in the highest!**

Oh, How incredible it would have been to be a shepherd on the night the heavenly hosts appeared over the plains declaring the news of the newborn King. To see the night skies radiant with angels praising God would have certainly drawn attention. However, at Koa's birth there was no grand announcement, no songs filling the open

sky. Yet, in His own triumphant way, God send this little baby to her mother and all of us with a hopeful message proclaiming, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peach among those with whom he is pleased!”

This Christmas season, we invite you to rejoice with us and continue sharing messages of hope with the women and men we serve. Your Gift of \$500, \$250, \$100 or any amount is a beautiful reflection of God’s gift of a newborn King.

For HIS Unborn,  
Leslee

## THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS



December 15, 2022

### **MYANMAR: Church Leader Arrested at Airport**

Sources: VOMC's International Ministry Contacts, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Radio Free Asia

A prominent church leader in Myanmar, who formerly served as the president of the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), was reportedly arrested at the Mandalay International Airport on December 5th. After being held overnight, Dr. Hkalam Samson was sent back to the city of Myitkyina in Kachin State where military officers rearrested him, and he has since been detained. The Christian leader was scheduled to fly to Bangkok for medical treatment when intercepted by the authorities.

On December 6th, Kachin's Security and Border Affairs Minister, Col. Aung Kyi Lin, summoned a group of KBC officials and informed them that junta officers were preparing to prosecute Dr. Samson. The colonel stated that the authorities had viewed videos of the Christian man's speeches, along with outlines based on some of his sermons. They were convinced that the pastor had committed offences for which he would be prosecuted. However, the church leaders were never told what charges have been determined for Dr. Samson's

case. At last report, the location where the accused is presently being held has also not been disclosed.

In recent years, the military junta in control of Myanmar has targeted Kachin State with air strikes and additional military action, along with other areas where paramilitary rebel groups have been fighting for independence. The KBC and Dr. Samson have no connection whatsoever to any of the rebel groups. In early November, the Kachin Theological Seminary suffered damage when a shell struck a tree next to the dormitory. A few days before that, a Baptist church building was partially destroyed by a shelling attack. For more information on these incidents, and to learn about other challenges experienced by Christians in Myanmar, go to our country report.

**Prayerfully uphold Dr. Samson and his family members as they await details on the accusations against him, asking the Lord to sustain them with His peace, provision and comfort during this time of uncertainty. Please pray that all charges against this Christian leader will ultimately be dropped. Additionally, pray for the safety of Christians and other innocent civilians in Myanmar, particularly those residing in Kachin State, who are dealing with the increased military action. May God's Word continue to spread throughout this war-torn country so that many will be reached with the message of the Gospel of Peace – including the perpetrators of the attacks.**

### **INDIA: Christians Dealing with Aftermath of Mob Attack**

Source: International Christian Concern

A small gathering of Christians suffered severe beatings during an attack on November 13th in which a mob, accompanied by a village leader, interrupted their Sunday worship service. The mob burst into the home where the believers had gathered and forcibly removed two families from the residence before brutally beating them. Since

coming to faith in Christ four months prior to this attack, these families received harassment from other villagers. They have been accused of converting to a foreign religion and luring innocent tribal people to Christianity.

The mob attacked everyone present, including women and children. One of the men fell unconscious from his injuries. Assuming that he had died, the antagonizing crowd left the scene. Thankfully, an hour later, the injured man regained consciousness. The Christians reported the attack to local authorities, but by then the mob had already gone to the police station, accusing the believers of conducting conversion activities.

Unfortunately, the chances of charges being laid against the attackers are slim. Speaking of the incident, a local pastor explained, “Though we knock on the police station all the time, we receive little or no justice.” For additional reports addressing the persecution encountered by our Christian brothers and sisters in India, go to our country report.

**While we praise God that there were no fatal injuries caused by this brutal attack, we ask that you please join us in praying for the healing of those who were physically harmed as a result of the incident. In the aftermath of the attack, may the Lord also minister peace, strength and inner healing for all the believers needing to recover from the emotional trauma. Continue to remember Christians throughout India who must daily live with hostility and discrimination. Pray that they will be filled with patient endurance as they faithfully await justice, seeking the Lord’s intervention in the interim (Deuteronomy 32:35).**

## **CHINA: Court Case Repeatedly Delayed**

Source: ChinaAid

In July 2021, Zhao Weikai, a leader of the Xuncheng (Zion)

Reformed Church, was arrested after a search of his home revealed materials the Public Security Bureau deemed to be “promoting terrorism and extremism.” For more details on the incident, a previously posted report is available [here](#).

In the many months since his arrest, Zhao’s court case has encountered numerous delays. In September 2021, the case was sent to judicial authorities of the Lvliang Intermediate People’s Court, who claimed they could not process the legal matter due to a backlog. The trial has also faced delays as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. On September 9th of this year, the court finally held a pretrial conference, but no further developments have taken place since. Zhao’s wife, Li Xin, is calling on people to pray that the trial would soon be held.

**Prayerfully ask God to grant peace, hope and patience to Zhao and Li – in addition to their friends and other family members – as they continue to wait for this long-delayed trial. Pray that Zhao’s case will not be further delayed and that justice will prevail, freeing him of all charges. In the meantime, please continue to keep this imprisoned Christian leader in your prayers, as well as the many other believers throughout China who are currently being detained under false allegations because of their faith in Christ.**

## **CRISIS IN UKRAINE**



### **From one of our church partners:**

“Winter is cold in Ukraine. Our church is buying blankets/quilts which are made locally. It costs \$9.50 to purchase one. We already have requests for 3000 blankets. The blankets help refugees who have fled from the cities that are close to the front and under heaviest attack. With the latest round of attacks on the infrastructure of even Kyiv (which provides heating in the winter), these blankets are even more needed...

Thanks to God and to you, your mission, for your participation in ministry to displaced people. We are able to serve them, handing out blankets and the even warmer Word of God. We try to encourage them. People often cry and express thanks for the love shown to them and the care. They write words of thankfulness!”

## **Missionary Contact Info.**

### **Amanda Benson:**

**Website:** send.org/benson

**Email:** oboejo09@gmail.com

**Address:** 113 E. Leighton St., Brandon, SD 57005

Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: SEND International  
PO BOX 513, Farmington, MI 48332, Missionary #169352

### **Marijana Cizmanski:**

**Email:** marijanacizmanski@gmail.com

**Address:** Sima Matavulja 24 21000 Novi Sad Serbia Serbia

### **Paul & Janet Harkness:**

**Website:** highplainsawana.org

**Email:** paulh@awana.org

**Phone:** 308.730.2468

**Address:** 1713 L ST, Ord, NE 68862

**To partner with us by your donations:**

Go to <https://www.awana.org/missionary/harkness/>

### **Harlan Moss:**

**Email:** hpmoss1@Yahoo.com

**Address:** South Dakota Prison Chaplain's Association, Harlan Moss,  
PO Box 90509, Sioux Falls, SD 57109-0509

**Phone:** 605-940-4220

## **Marcy and Arlyn Nies**

**Address:** Northland Awana Missionary, Awana  
410 Mandeville St  
Alfred ND 58454

**Email:** Marcy: 701.320.7499 - [marcyn@awana.org](mailto:marcyn@awana.org)  
Arlyn: 701.799.5280 - [arlynn@awana.org](mailto:arlynn@awana.org)

## **Darwin & Karen Stoesz:**

**Our physical address:** 219 W 1st St Elbing KS 67041

**Our mailing address:** PO Box 33 Elbing KS 67041

**Our main phone number for text and calling:** 316-708-0127 (Feel free to send us a text)

## **How To Give To North American Baptist Missionaries:**

**Step 1:** Go to the NAB's new missions webpage [nabonmission.org](http://nabonmission.org).

**Step 2:** Click on the “missionaries” label.

**Step 3:** Click on the national missionary to whom you would like to designate your support.

**Step 4:** Click on the “give to..” button on the national workers page.

**Step 5: Fill out the form.** All gifts given through the NAB are tax deductible.

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