



BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

April 2023

Editor Janelle Daum

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“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.”

II Corinthians 1:3

Why do we suffer? What’s the purpose? Is there any purpose?

Allen Redpath offered an answer to that question: “You never lighten the load unless you have first felt the pressure in your own soul. You are never used of God to bring blessing until God has opened your eyes and made you see things as they really are.” That’s the challenge we face... to see things as they really are. That insight is the pathway to finding meaning and purpose. It may seem senseless

to us at the time, but there is purpose in every occurrence of life.

The Apostle Paul was an expert at seemingly senseless suffering. The letter of II Corinthians is where he opens up his heart and pours out the wisdom that he has learned over the years of his ministry that helped him to remain strong in his faith. To those who were questioning God, Paul offers words of comfort and encouragement. Suffering has purpose.

Kristine Wyrzten wrote a song called *The Fire* that clearly shows Paul's view of suffering:

"I've been through a fire that has deepened my desire, to know the living God more and more.

It hasn't been much fun, but the work that it has done in my life has been worth the hurt.

You see, sometimes we need the hard times to bring us to our knees, otherwise we do as we please and never heed Him.

For He always knows what's best and it's when we are distressed that we really come to know God as He is."

In 1:8 Paul mentions a severe trial that he had just endured in Asia. We are never told what the trial was, but Paul describes it as being excessively severe, beyond his strength to manage, and that he came to the point that he even despaired of life. He was forced to rely on God's strength to carry him through. Paul would clearly say that God always knows what's best *"and it's when we are distressed that we really come to know God as He is."* Through that time of suffering Paul had met God in a brand-new way, and this letter is filled with the emotion of what he has been through. Every word and every thought have been through the crucible of fire and they offer comfort and encouragement to the Corinthians who are going through their own

turmoil and suffering caused by false apostles who had infiltrated their fellowship.

It's instructive that Paul begins this letter with praise:

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” vv. 1-2.

This is a normal greeting for Paul, except for the fact that he places special emphasis on one particular point that he doesn't always include in his greetings. He calls himself an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. He didn't choose to be an apostle. God chose him for the position. God had placed him where he was, and God had led him into, and through, his time of severe affliction. God was in control.

He writes to the church of God which is at Corinth and throughout Achaia. They were a church only because of the will of God. God had placed that church where they were and God was leading them through this time of affliction and trouble. So there is a strong emphasis on the truth that they belong to God and that they owe their position and all they have to God. That is probably the most basic fact to remember when facing suffering and trials. It's not about us. It's all about God.

Paul reaffirms that fact in v.3 where he shifts away from his normal pattern of introduction. Normally he would follow up the salutation with a statement of thanksgiving. Here he focuses completely on God and offers praise for God's comfort and encouragement: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.”* Paul is preoccupied with the severe affliction he has just endured, but instead of bitterness and anguish he has been drawn to praise. His mind is filled with God's character and the

way that God had ministered to him during that time. He praises God for His mercy and comfort.

Mercies is actually a word that speaks of pity. It's an emotional word that describes how God's heart was broken with Paul's suffering, and it tells us that God reached out in pity and carried Paul through it, offering the depths of His grace to him. Corrie Ten Boom describes it this way: "If God sends us on stony paths, He provides strong shoes." When we suffer we come face-to-face with Jehovah-jireh, the God who provides.

One of the primary purposes of suffering is to draw us back to praise. As God shows His mercies and compassion to us we learn to look beyond circumstances to see His love and His power. When you suffer God wants you to learn to praise.

Blessings,

Pastor Randy

COMMITTEE REPORTS

DISCIPLESHIP TEAM MEETING UPDATE

MARCH 14, 2023

The discipleship team met Tuesday, March 14th at 2pm. Present were Pam, Pastor Randy, 2-D, and Theresa. Pam opened the meeting in prayer. Plans will need to be made for summer VBS. The dates have been set for July 23rd through July 27th from 6:30 to 8pm for preschool age through middle school. Erica will be invited to our next meeting to discuss VBS curriculum. There will be no Sunday School on Easter Sunday. Therefore, on Palm Sunday during Sunday School the high school age group and younger will meet altogether with Pastor Merv presenting an Easter lesson. Following the lesson, a fun time of egg hunt and prizes will occur. Pam and 2-D will look into obtaining the prizes for the event. Also on April 2nd palm leaves will be placed in vases during the am church service while the initial hymn is being sung.

Next meeting scheduled for April 11 at 2pm

STEWARDSHIP TEAM MEETING UPDATE

MARCH 5, 2023 11:30AM

Present: Kyle, Noah, Carlos, Paul, Dan, Randy, Eugene

Noah opened with prayer.

Maintenance report: Gene reported a notification has been set up so we will be notified by email if our electrical usage for the geothermal is over 250 kwh for a day. This should warn us that we are using resistant heat and we need to check all units and the pump. We can adjust this notification to a different usage on this or either meter. It could also go to a phone.

The Following Items Need To Be Fixed:

- Door latch in kitchen Needs to be replaced. Dan will plan to take care of this.
- Window seals should be renewed through building this year. We will plan to look into this in the spring when we can check out the weather-stripping details.
- Waste shed needs fixing/replacing due to damage from wind last summer. We had some discussion on this. The condition looks like replacement might be the best answer. We also discussed moving the location due to the severe ice buildup in the middle of the sidewalk. We need to have a balance between convenience for us, Marv's Sanitary Service and aesthetics. A couple different shed concepts were viewed on internet.
- Garage trim brickmold around doors needs to have some pieces replaced to prevent further damage. Paul plans to check this out and others will help fix this.

- Bathroom towel dispensers: Plan to replace 2 as funds become available. Paul plans to work on this.

New Items:

- Union leak on Fellowship room unit flow valve needs to be monitored and needs a service call for maintenance. Gene will contact Steve's electric.
- A suggestion was made to put up an eve trough from the front corner to past the kitchen door to prevent the ice buildup on the sidewalk. Dan will check on the details on this when weather warms some.

Other Items:

- Light in cubbies room was reported flickering. We viewed it and it appeared the bulb needed to be replaced. Ends were black.
- The need for a smoother lawn was brought up. Gene will check with John Parker about this. Gene checked with John and he suggested rolling the general lawn when the soil has appropriate moisture. Ruts need to be filled with soil if they are the problem. We should be able to rent a roller that will pull behind a lawn tractor.

Dan made a motion we adjourn. Gene seconded the motion.

Report submitted by: Eugene, Secretary

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR APRIL 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 - Ends April 5th

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

Summer Schedule Begins April 12th at 6 p.m.

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

March 4, 8 a.m. Men's Bible Study via Zoom

March 18, 8 a.m. Men's Bible Study via Zoom

Upcoming Events

Sunday, April 2, Palm Sunday All Youth Special Sunday School

Wednesday, April 5, Awana Grand Finale

Friday, April 7, 6 p.m., Good Friday/Seder Service & Potluck

Sunday, April 9, 7:30 a.m., Easter Sunrise Service

8 a.m., Easter Breakfast

9 a.m., Easter Worship Service

Wednesday, April 12, 6 p.m., Youth Group Summer Hours Starting

Sunday, April 16, Crystal Springs Presentation

Sunday, April 23, Newsletter Articles are Due

Monday, May 1 - Monday, May 15, Meals on Wheels Delivery

Thursday, May 11 - Saturday, May 13, Youth Group Rummage Sale - Your items can be brought and stored at the church anytime

Sunday, May 21, Harlan Moss-Prison Ministries Presentation

Sunday, June 11, Amanda Benson Missionary Presentation

CRYSTAL SPRINGS CAMP



**SIGN UP FOR A
SUMMER CAMP
TODAY!**

True North - Guy's Session.....June 1-4
True North - Girl's Session.....June 7-10
Junior High Camp.....June 19-24
Family I Camp.....June 30-July 3
Junior Camp.....July 5-8
Intermediate Camp I.....July 9-13
Family II Camp.....July 14-16
Senior High Camp.....July 17-22
Intermediate Camp II...July 31-August 4

WWW.CSBCAMP.ORG

MISSIONARY UPDATES

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES

March 1, 2023



OUTDOOR EDUCATION SUBIC 2023!

Finally, after four long years of waiting, I was able to go on Outdoor Ed again!

This year, we embarked on a journey with our entire middle school to Subic, and this was also a new journey for me. One of my main roles as vice principal has been to plan Outdoor Ed-something I asked for and was SO excited to do, as it has always been my favorite week of the year.

Planning for Outdoor Ed (OE) started back in July before school even started. Since we hadn't had OE in so long, we decided to revisit our purposes and goals, as well as our activities to make sure we were heading where we wanted to be heading. The first quarter was filled with picking a location and finding spots for us to go. Our biggest hurdle was finding a base camp, as our previous base camp had a year-long military contract. The Lord provided a place that was workable, even though it wasn't as convenient or as nice.

Second quarter was filled with all of the details: signing contracts, finding and placing staff members, choosing high schoolers to join, planning squad meetings, finding a bus company and so much more! Who knew there was so much to figure out?! Everything seemed to come together smoothly.

January held our last four weeks before the advanced crew left for OE on February 4, followed by the students on February 6. These weeks were jam-packed for me. I wasn't sure how I was going to survive them while also teaching three periods a day. I was at max capacity, working during almost every spare moment I had to get all the details finalized. And then in the middle of that, I found out that my 11-year old nephew was diagnosed with brain cancer.

The next three weeks were so hard and heavy. I was trying to get everything done with no time to really process what was going on back in the US. For the first time since moving here, I just really wanted to be in the US with my family. But God gave me strength and surrounded me with a community who supported me (and He is giving me the opportunity to travel to see my nephew for my upcoming March break). Our theme for OE this year was "Source of Strength," and God definitely was that for me during that month in ways I hadn't experienced before.

On Friday, February 3 (the day before advanced crew left), I got an email from our bus company saying that the bus couldn't take the planned route through a town due to a bridge problem, and the only option was a two-hour detour. This was shocking news, especially since the bus needed to take that route twice each day to transport our students to their different locations. We prayed and talked to people but found out there really weren't alternate routes if we couldn't take that one. We decided that the bus taking the advanced crew would go down there after dropping us off at base camp and find out what

the situation was. The bus driver and one of our staff members talked to the people there and determined that the bus could cross, as long as all of the students got off and walked across the bridge due to a weight limit. Though it was inconvenient, we thank the Lord for this provision and that we didn't have to completely rework the plan or the routes due to this bridge!

That was our only major hiccup in this whole planning process, for which I am grateful. Our advanced crew had a great time and got everything set up smoothly. One of the days, I walked into the kitchen and was just watching all of these ladies work so hard to get the food prepped and ready for the nearly 200 people that would be coming the next day. I was just in awe at all the hard work they put in and weren't getting anything in return. When I told them that, they were like "you are doing that, too!" But in my heart, it was different. It was like they were doing something for me for which I could never repay them. And in fact, there were so many people who did that. I think this was the first time in my life I have truly, deeply felt that I could not have done something without all of the people who helped and planned and did their parts. And it was a beautiful picture of the Body of Christ-as we each do our part, the whole Body will function. If even one part doesn't do their role, then the Body will not function properly or other parts will need to work extra hard to make up for it.

On Monday, the students showed up! I met them at Zoobic, the Zoo in Subic. I was a squad leader, and I spent the rest of the week with my squad of 8th grade girls as we trekked through the jungle, served children from a nearby village, and learned about and released baby sea turtles. I loved watching the relationships between my students grow. I loved when one girl said "I don't even miss my phone!" I loved hearing what they were learning and how God was shaping them. I loved that my girls just wanted to hang out and have deep

conversations.

The Wednesday after OE, we had a chapel where students could share what God had taught them during OE. And student after student went forward to share. One of my girls mentioned how she never goes without music, and now she was forced to go without music the whole week. But in that time, she learned that quiet was OK, and that it is easier to hear the Holy Spirit when it was silent. Another girl shared that she had never really tried to make friends since moving here this year, but now she had friends. And others mentioned that they realized how blessed they were for the things they had, like a soft bed and air conditioning.

I sat in awe of what God has done. And looking back on OE, I still do. I don't know all the ways that the Holy Spirit worked during OE, but I know He did many, many things. I know that all the work that was put in by so many people was not wasted. And one day, we may just see all the things that God did through OE 2023. Praise the Lord!

Amanda

Praises

- Praise for an awesome Outdoor Ed - that we could go, that the planning went fairly smoothly, that He provided for the bridge/bus situation, that He worked in the lives of so many students!
- Praise that God has given me strength to persevere through this tough season of life.
- Praise that He has given us a new roommate! Kathrine is going to be staying with us for the next two months while she student teaches. We praise God we had a space for her to stay with us!

Prayer Requests

- Pray for my travels to the US. I leave March 8 and return March 21. I'll be missing a few days of school, so pray that I can have the energy to jump back in when I return. Pray that everything can get finished in the next week (particularly the 40 essays I have to grade and the prep I need to do to be gone). Pray that I would stay healthy, as we need to be careful not to bring any sickness to my nephew. I also am traveling on two separate itineraries (one to the US, then one domestically to Memphis). Pray that none of my flights are delayed.
- Pray for a smooth transition and a great student teaching time for Kathrine. Pray that we would host her well while she is here.
- Pray that God would provide a more permanent house for us. We aren't sure how long we'll get to stay in our current place and would really like something bigger, closer to school, and our own. Pray that the right house would come up at the right time at the right price.
- Pray that God would continue to grow me. There has been a lot of personal growth opportunities, and sometimes it's really hard and overwhelming. Pray that I would trust the Lord in and through the process and that I would come out more like Him and better able to be used by Him.

DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ

March 3, 2023



Expanded Scope / Same Mission / Location Change

Greetings from Elbing, Kansas where we can watch the freight trains come through town approximately 6-8 times a day. We never know which direction they will come from, how many engines are pulling them, but we certainly can hear their loud horns about a mile away. Some of the details of our new ministry location here in Kansas like transportation, setup, and housing are a bit unknown, but God still knows, and He is providing in His timing not ours. We must patiently wait to see how God will provide. He has provided for our needs in the past, so we can know that he will continue to provide in the future. Philippians 3:23-24 says, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."

In early January we announced a change in our ministry assignment with SEND International. Darwin has been appointed as the Assistant to the International Treasurer giving him the opportunity to help all SEND International missionaries get to their fields of service and

remain there for as long as God enables. We are excited to see how God uses Darwin in this expanded role with the same mission to send God's people to the world He loves. You can learn more about what SEND International is doing at: <https://send.org/about>

Faith Promise Update

We have a challenge. Can you help us get to 100% in faith promised support by this summer? We need faith promises for about 5% by August 1, 2023. This can be accomplished by the following possibilities:

1 person or couple at \$100 / month

1 person or couple at \$88 / month

1 person or couple at \$66 / month

1 person or couple at \$44 / month

5 people or couples at \$22 / month

8 people or couples at \$14 / month

Where might God have you fit on our team?

We are thankful for our current team of ministry partners including 8 churches and 108 individuals. We thank God for your faithful prayers and support over these last twenty years.

If you feel God leading you to join us through a faith promise donation it can be done simply by going to the following website:

<https://send.org/give/missionaries/stoesz>

What is a faith promise?

Faith Promise is exactly that. By faith you promise to support us financially for \$___ per month. A faith promise of \$110.00 a month provides approximately 1% of our total monthly support. \$55.00 a month provides ½ % of our total monthly promise. What if you can't continue with your faith promise? A faith promise is a promise between

you and God and if you can't continue with your promise there is no contract stating that you have to continue to do so.

Transition trip back to Japan this summer

We have purchased tickets for Japan to go and say "goodbye" to our many years of ministry there and to settle our affairs. The dates that we will be in Japan are June 6 to July 11.

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

Mar 4-5 Heartland Bible Church – Lincoln, Nebraska

Mar 5-6 Omaha, Nebraska

Mar 11-13 Visit Anna at John Brown University

Mar 13-17 Berean Academy Spring Break

Mar 20-24 John Brown University Spring Break

Mar 21 Karen's class starts up again with Moody Bible Institute

Mar 22 Newton Bible Christian School Chapel Service

Apr 15-16 Hebron Bible Church – Hebron, Nebraska

Apr 16 Jansen Bible Church – Jansen, Nebraska

Apr 21-23 Crosspoint Bible Church – Omaha, Nebraska

May 5 John Brown University last day

May 8-10 SEND International Headquarters for Darwin training – Farmington Michigan

May 18 Berean Academy last day

June 6-July 11 Trip to Japan

Aug 1 Darwin to begin role as International Office Assistant Treasurer

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 during these winter months
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.
9. That Anna and Clara will be able to adjust well to this significant change.

10. Our goodbye trip to Japan this summer would be able to accomplish the goals of saying goodbye and at the same time go through in a few short weeks all our items in storage.

11. Wisdom for Darwin as he begins training for this new position.

12. Wisdom and patience for Karen as she gets near the end of her education that she is doing online with Moody Bible Institute.

13. Pray for our housing for us as we would like to live in the Whitewater community, once we get housing pray that we would find the furnishings required to make our house a home.

14. Pray that we would find suitable transportation for our long-term in Kansas.

15. That our supporters will continue to support our ministry as we still rely 100% on support

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

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

HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY

March 2023



“My God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen” Phil 4:19-20

Sometimes we forget how our God supplies all our daily needs. Day by day we receive so many blessings from God for which we don't thank Him. Someone once said, "If God would take everything away from us for which we do not thank Him, how much would we have left?" God will give us what we need every day, because He will never leave us or forsake us! Thank the Lord!

Ty has been locked down in segregation for over a year. I have been talking with him regularly. He told me, "I know God is a great God, but I wondered if He cared about the details of my life. One day after I ate my lunch, I said to the Lord, "I sure am hungry yet. It would be great if I could get some more food." A few minutes later an officer came with several extra trays of food! I know the Lord cares about my needs!" God is able to do more than we ask or think!

Jake has poor health, and came into the office in a wheelchair. He has many health issues and much emotional pain from losing his brother in a

car accident a year ago. Jake felt he was at fault for his brother's death because he gave him the keys to his vehicle so he could buy some alcohol. On the way back from buying alcohol he was killed in an accident. Jake has really beaten himself up for his brother's death. Our chapel orderly heard him talk about his loss. The orderly comforted him because his own brother had died from suicide.

He felt if he had been there for him, he would not have committed suicide. The orderly was doing what II Cor. 1:4 tells us to do, that we should comfort others by how we have been comforted in our difficult times. I asked Jake where he was in his relationship with the Lord. He said, "I know I need Jesus, my life is a mess, and I'm a mess." After explaining the gospel to him, he was ready to trust Christ. After the prayer, his expression changed from being depressed to one of joy. Jake said, "I feel lighter and have peace!" Pray for him in his new journey with Christ. Coming to Christ will not make all the problems disappear, but Jesus will give Jake strength to deal with them.

Even though there have been more restrictions for chaplains, the positive side is that more men who are being processed are attending the weekly Bible study. Last week there were fifty men present. There was good interaction with the men during the Bible study. We talked about spiritual warfare from Ephesians 6:10-18. The men were very attentive to hear how the devil deceives us. One of the men who talked with me a week earlier asked me after the study, "What do I need to do next?" I asked what he meant by next. He said, "After you receive Christ into your life." That is a question I liked to hear! I gave him a little booklet of the book of John and a New Believer's Bible study.

The Holy Spirit is at work changing men's hearts and minds! Your prayers are making a difference! Continue to pray for men who are released from prison. There are many requirements, restrictions, and bills to pay for some of them.

I am also thankful for your financial gifts! Blessings! In Christ, Harlan

PAUL & JANET HARKNESS - AWANA

FEBRUARY 22, 2023 – THE MEMO



Dear Friends,

Thank you for your patience in receiving another edition of **The Memo**.

Janet spent three weeks with our daughter in Des Moines. Lucretia was in the hospital with some pregnancy issues, so Janet was needed to corral a 4-year-old and 2-year-old twins. She learned that twins are more like four children than two. But Janet is home.... recuperating.

Since our last Memo on January 20th, I/we have conducted three Awana Club visits, made an Awana presentation at a church considering starting Awana in the fall, conducted our Understanding Kids training, had a display at the Berean Conference in Mitchell, Nebraska, and gave the morning and evening messages at a church.

Miles driven from January 15 through February 15 - 4,500.

We are blessed beyond measure, and so are you! - Ephesians 3:20

RICK & DEBBI BARDIN - CAMEROON

MARCH 2023



Greetings Team,

We wanted to let you know that there have been several delays with Dr. Mbanga being able to present his research project. But he finally has a date. He is scheduled for Wednesday, March 22, to present his research project, and defend his thesis. We still need to pray for the setting of dates for his written and then oral exams, and his passing of both. We will keep you posted.

An answer to prayer is that Rick just received today the 2 new microscopes that were donated by SWMCF!! His old microscope was on its last leg and had been repaired multiple times. Pictures to follow in our next newsletter.

Thanks for your support in prayers,

Rick, Debbie and Dr. Mbanga

CHILDREN'S HOME SHELTER FOR FAMILY SAFETY

MARCH 2023



WHAT DOES SOUTH DAKOTA OWE CHILDREN?

An interview with Deb Soholt

Deb Soholt served in the South Dakota Senate for eight years, representing District 14 in Sioux Falls. She was Chair of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and led the Jolene's Law Task Force for six years, which eventually funded the Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment (CPCM) to end child sexual abuse in South Dakota. A registered nurse, Soholt was the Director of Women's Health at Avera McKennan and a Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing. Currently she heads up InfluentialSHE, which includes podcasting and working to help women accelerate their influence. She is a Children's Home Society board member and has served in numerous leadership roles in the community.

Q: Families care for their children. But when they can't, for whatever reason, whose responsibility is it?

Deb: The issue with kids is-they're everything. They're our complete and total future. Sometimes we might think that it's just the kids who

come from really solid family structures where there isn't a lot of vulnerability, but it's really all the kids, even those who are in difficult situations through no fault of their own. It has to be a state and private sector partnership. And so, what does that look like? And what are the obligations of the taxpayers of South Dakota in relationship to nurturing and lifting up the most vulnerable? It's not just because they're vulnerable, but because of what they represent. Without them, we're nothing. So, it really needs to be an infrastructure of shared responsibility. And that requires defining what is the state's role, what is the people's role through their taxpayer dollars? And then, what is the role of private partnership?

Q: Let's start with the state's role.

Deb: As a legislator, you're very focused on what's happening right now. When you look at trying to balance a budget every year, you have to take a strong look at what's before you. Everybody wants better for our kids. It's just that there are so many competing variables for precious tax dollar appropriation. And then, to think 20 years, 30 years ahead, what will be the return on investment? Are we going to invest in children's well-being, or do we just watch child abuse, drug abuse and juvenile crime continue to increase? We're talking about culture shifting; we're talking about shared responsibility shifting. How does the health of people improve? How do we have less vulnerable children? How do we have less domestic violence? Because these aren't tangible outcomes that we can really wrap your arms around today, it's difficult to arrive at a shared vision of the future.

Q: What is the role of the private sector? Does that also include charity and nonprofits?

Deb: Yes, and so often, we think that philanthropy should just take care of children-churches, organizations and people donating their money. That's good, but it can't be depended on and it means children

are not a priority, which I don't think any of us believe. What we know now is based on epigenetics and what happens during pregnancy. Stress upon the mom in pregnancy and the early vulnerabilities in children when they're under high stress, particularly in the first couple years of their life, become embedded at the cell level. I think that's one of the things people don't understand. We think, "Well, you should just be able to pull yourself up from your bootstraps." And yes, you can, but someone with a childhood marked by trauma will have to overcome many, many hurdles. So, it's the responsibility of everyone in South Dakota to provide a framework in order to punch through all of those things that are embedded in these children-through no fault of their own. We're at a point in time now where we really have to level set what is that primary obligation on behalf of the state in relationship to these children.

Q: Can you tell us about the Medicaid funding issue that the state's youth care providers are facing?

Deb: Well, I'm familiar with the challenges that Children's Home Society (CHS) faces in that regard, so I'll use them as an example. This is where kids come that have psychiatric issues, that have safety issues within their family. They have decades upon decades of lifting up these kiddos who just need the most help possible. This year, CHS is requesting that the Medicaid rate-what the state pays for the care of the children-be increased. Right now, there is a large gap between what the state pays and the actual costs of caring for the children. The current Medicaid rate is based on data from 2016. What's happened is that providers like CHS are forced to use philanthropy dollars for day-to-day operations. Any other Medicaid support provider-hospitals, nursing homes, community service providers-would be astounded if they had to use philanthropic dollars for 31% of their operational cost. No one else receiving Medicaid is being asked to do that.

Q: What happens if organizations like CHS cannot continue caring for these children?

Deb: Well, what will happen is what's happening right now. The children are being sent out of state at a very much higher cost to the state of South Dakota. In 2022, the state spent \$9.4 million sending children to out-of-state providers. This is significant because we do have enough beds in South Dakota for those kids. But it's the domino effect: the state doesn't pay enough to cover care, so the providers cannot keep fully staffed, so beds can't be filled. In the end, the answer is that if youth care providers are not doing this work, it lands right on the doorstep of the state because, ultimately, South Dakota is responsible for these children.

Q: Is it difficult work?

Deb: It is. Think of the hard work of taking care of kiddos who are having psychiatric issues as a 24/7 proposition, and then think about the lesser pressure of working at a fast-food restaurant. You just do not have the same emotional engagement. Yet, I would counter that the work is soul searching, and it is work that has meaning and allows you to see tangible outcomes. But you can't expect that people will sacrifice better wages to take care of children. That's just unreasonable. And again, who do we want caring for vulnerable children? Should they have the same qualifications as fast-food workers? Should we be willing to pay more for a certain level of experience or education? We are looking for the state to catch up with what is a reasonable payment platform, especially when CHS takes care of children nobody else does, the four-to-nine-year-olds. In addition, CHS is Joint Commission certified, which means meeting very high-quality standards.

Q: Do you think the drive for rebasing the Medicaid rate fairly will succeed?

Deb: I hope so. Now, when I say that, I don't mean the legislators don't care; they care deeply. It's just difficult with all of the different funding priorities, and it's not as exciting or interesting as some other business propositions. Yet it makes such a difference in outcomes for these children. And it's the only way to ensure that we have the proper quality, safety and non-retraumatization of the children. These are kids. They are not adults who can make decisions for themselves. It's up to us to stay committed to a reasonable infrastructure based on our current market, our current workforce, and our current situation with these children. It's up to all of us to stay focused on the infrastructure needed to make that happen.

Q: Any additional thoughts?

Deb: Just that the more I'm involved in the direct day-to-day with CHS, I'm just so incredibly impressed with the caliber of leadership all the way through the organization, the caliber of commitment and the caliber of outcomes. These are measured and are tangible, for all to see. What an amazing organization CHS has been, is, and continues to be as they grow and change for the future. It's incredible.

ROYAL FAMILY KIDS SIOUX EMPIRE

MARCH 12, 2023



In March, Brandon Valley Baptist Church enjoyed a wonderful presentation about Royal Family KIDS Sioux Empire from congregation member and Royal Family KIDS volunteer, Ginger Nelson. What an amazing organization we partnership with! Thank you for sharing with us!

About Royal Family KIDS Sioux Empire:

- **Our Vision** - building a world free of family-induced childhood trauma by interrupting cycles of neglect, abuse and abandonment of children in the foster care system
- **Our Mission** - promoting physical, emotional and spiritual healing for child victims of neglect, abuse, and abandonment through intervention programs, education and advocacy
- **Our Values** - transformation, security, love, belonging, and courage for every child we serve motivated by the teaching and example of Jesus in caring for “the least of these”

Confronting Abuse and Loving Kids!

Annually, 3.6 million cases of child abuse, neglect or abandonment are reported in America. One of these victims dies every six hours due to that abuse. In South Dakota in 2010, there were 15,228 referrals for child abuse or neglect. Of those, 3838 were referred for investigation, finding 1435 children victims of abuse or neglect needing to be removed from their home.

But we are making a difference — through your support of Royal Family KIDS

Royal Family KIDS Camp is a week-long overnight summer camp for children ages 7-11 who have been or currently are in foster care. Our Sioux Empire chapter serves children in Southeast South Dakota in Minnehaha and Lincoln Counties. At Royal Family Kids Camps our campers receive one on one attention from safe, caring adults modeling a non-violent, positive way of life as an alternative to many of the negative, abusive situations which children of abuse and neglect have faced. For one week, instead of operating in survival mode, they can just be kids. With tea parties, crafts, woodworking, birthday parties, music, dress up and much more, these kids can feel “normal” and once again dream, believe and find new hope for their future. Activities recognize the specific needs of children in foster care and are purposefully designed to be non-competitive and non-threatening while allowing children to experience success. God’s love is modeled consistently, through the games, sports, activity centers, bible stories, drama and quiet times the campers share with their counselors. The Sioux Empire camps serve 35-52 campers each week and are staffed completely by volunteers who give a week of their summer to invest in the lives of these children. These camps are provided at no cost to the child, the foster care family or the State and are purely funded through private donations and grants. Donations

and gifts are tax-deductible, as allowed by law.

RFK 12.0 Camps

Recognizing the unique needs of 12 year olds, in 2023 we are expanding our traditional camp to include RFK 12.0, specifically targeting the tough transitions of the tween years. We host two RFK 12.0 Camps, one for girls and one for guys. These camps take place at the end of summer as the campers prepare to enter middle school. After RFK 12.0, campers are able to be a part of our Come Back mentoring program throughout the school year. Will you be a RFK 12.0 Camp Sponsor at \$1,000, \$5,000 or \$10,000? Contact Anita at changelives@siouxempirekids.org or call 605.582.2409 and help guide our campers on a positive course as they enter their teen years!

Come Back Mentoring

At Royal Family KIDS Camps, we fall in love with our campers and look forward to walking through life with them. We love to see the campers Come Back throughout their teen years at our monthly Come Back events. These opportunities provide us opportunity to check in with the teens, have tons of fun, speak life and truth into them and walk alongside them in their journey. Mentors must have volunteered a week at Royal Family KIDS Camp and be in good standing with a local faith fellowship. To host a Come Back event or be a Come Back Sponsor at \$150-\$500, contact us at changelives@siouxempirekids.org or call 605.582.2409!

WARRIOR 180 FOUNDATION

FEBRUARY 5, 2023



Dear Church Family,

Proverbs 3:5-6 is a familiar passage to many: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.” Verse 5 offers us a pair of commands. First, we are told to trust the Lord and then, not to trust our own understand. Those two things are mutually exclusive. In other words, if we trust in the Lord, we cannot also depend upon our own ability to understand everything God is doing.

The Message reads “Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for GOD’S voice I everything you do, everywhere you go; He’s the one who will keep you on track. Don’t assume that you know it all.”

We as humans are allowed to only see part of the picture God is painting. If we are truly trust Him, we must let go of our pride, our programs, and our plans. Even the best-laid plans cannot begin to approach the magnificence of God’s plan.

Yesterday was a great example – I had studies that needed my

attention, but Tigger was whining, something he just doesn't do (like ever). So, I opened the back door to let him out and there were two dogs running by our fence, the owner in the distance. I approached the dogs and young lady, and her first question was 'so what are you doing today?'. I told her I was working on my schoolwork, and she asked what my study was – and to my amazement her grandmother, grandfather, and her father were all Christian Counselors – and not just that, grandma is known in the circles of Christian Counseling worldwide – as well as written several books. Mind blown here! So, in my small mind I had a task to accomplish but wasn't tuned in to the Lord – so he used the dog to get my attention, get me out in the yard for a face to face meeting. I rejoice in this amazing connection, and I trust that the Lord has a plan and door that I need further down my journey – but understand? Not yet.

Our limited understanding can easily lead us astray. When we choose to direct our lives according to what seems right to us, we often reap disaster. Every culture has tried to get God to approve of its definition of right and wrong, but God never changes, and His standards never change. Each person must decide whether to live his or her life according to personal preference or according to the unchanging Word of God. We often will not understand how God is causing "all things to work together for good" but when we trust Him with all our hearts, we know that He is and that He will never fail us. How amazingly grateful that we don't walk this path of life alone but with a God who sees all, knows all and is directing us (if we let Him) to give HIM and HIM alone the glory.

As a Christian ministry, Warrior 180 Foundation is not willing to wavier on this point. We have had people tell us we would be open to so many grants if we'd drop the 'faith based' belief from our ministry. No thank you. God will provide, he always has, and we have faith he will

continue. As of this week we are seeking a place to rent to hold our suicide training on a monthly schedule advertising for people in the area to sign up. We thank you for your support and prayers as we open this door. We feel confident that God has a plan.

Your partnership in this ministry allows us the continued opportunity to bring the light of Jesus Christ to so many hurting and struggling people. Thank you so much for your faithful support.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and He will show you the right path.” Proverbs 3:5-6

Rev. Chaplain Jeff Hastings

Executive Director/Warrior 180 Foundation

WINDSWEPT ACADEMY

MARCH 15, 2023



Dear Friends and Family;

What is 'your word' for the year? Ours is THANKFUL! Thankful for the Lord...Thankful for our prayer warriors and donors...Thankful for our students and families...Thankful for the amazing mission of Windswept Academy and those that the Lord has led to come alongside us...Thankful for our teachers and staff...the list goes on and on. Let us never forget to look up and be THANKFUL.

As we dive into the New Year, we praise the Lord for His provisions, steadfast love and faithfulness. There is a lot of work to do and we are thankful for His guidance, wisdom and strength. After almost two years of patiently waiting, we are overjoyed for the blessing of 2 new vans to transport Windswept Academy students. We are thankful to our donors for contributing to this purchase and to those who volunteered to drive the vans from Virginia to South Dakota. We are also blessed to have received 15 new laptops for our high school computer lab! It takes more that a village to raise up children!

Time seems to pass quickly with only 3 months left of school.

Teachers, staff, and students are diligently working towards a successful completion as weather keeps us alert...snow days have piled up and the occasional virtual classes are necessary. We are 'present and future' focused as we diligently prepare for next school year as well. Windswept Academy is seeking 3 high school teachers – Math, English, and Science; and 1 elementary school teacher beginning August 2023. We ask our donors and prayer warriors to please spread the word to their church, friends, and family; and to lift us up to the Lord.

We continue to need financial support to pay our wonderful teachers and staff. We need to raise funds for rising food costs and gasoline; for curriculum and students supplies; and, for maintenance on our buildings and housing units. We need additional churches and individuals to come alongside us and sponsor a child.

Blessings,

Ilhami Konur

President of Windswept Academy Board of Directors

“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber.” Psalm 121:1-3

THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS

MARCH 16, 2023 - PERSECUTION & PRAYER ALERT



The **Voice**
of the **Martyrs**

“In the cross, in the cross Be my glory ever, ‘Til my raptured soul shall find Rest beyond the river.”

~ Lyrics in “Near the Cross” Hymn Written by Fanny Crosby

BENIN: Church Building Destroyed on National Vodun Day

Source: VOM USA

Considered the birthplace of the ancient tribal faith of vodun (commonly referred to as voodoo), many residents in the West African country of Benin continue with religious practices that commonly involve animal sacrifices and talismans to ward off evil. These practices are so widespread in Benin that January 10th is celebrated as National Vodun Day. When local Christians residing in a small town of central Benin refused to participate in the national celebrations, a group of vodun followers burned their church building to the ground. In the aftermath of the attack, the church’s pastor requested prayer, asking that: 1) the people of the village will be set free from their bondage to vodun, 2) the church would be strengthened, and 3) his congregation’s destroyed house of worship would soon be rebuilt.

Let us prayerfully lift up the Christians residing within this predominantly vodun nation as they continue sharing the Gospel message with villagers caught in the grip of spiritual darkness. Despite the adversity facing these ministering believers, may they consistently serve as conduits of God's shining light by conveying the "Good News" of His salvation and deliverance. Ask the Lord to empower them with His Holy Spirit, so that many more villagers will experience freedom from darkness and the assurance of eternal life. May these believers' courage and conviction in the Gospel message be used to mightily transform this land and its people. Also pray for the provision of resources needed to rebuild their church facility.

SRI LANKA: Church Under Investigation for Worship Services

Source: NCEASL

The Pentecostal Assembly congregation in Dodangoda, Sri Lanka, is made up of about seven families who regularly meet in the home of their pastor. On February 12th, while the Sunday worship service was in progress, approximately seven police officers arrived at the home. They informed the pastor that local monks, who had issued a complaint about the Sunday services, claimed that the meetings were being conducted illegally. The next day, the pastor and another church member went to the local police station where they were met by seven monks, along with other villagers. One of the monks stated that because theirs was a Buddhist village, all Christian services must be discontinued. The monk continued by explaining that while the pastor is permitted to pray with his own family, he must refrain from conducting services involving other villagers. The pastor replied that no one was forced to join in the church meetings, further stating that he is the legal owner of the property. Shortly after the incident at the police station, plans were made for another church meeting to take place

on February 17th. On that scheduled day, however, approximately 50 villagers gathered around the pastor's house, demanding an end to all worship activities. In addition, they threatened the pastor if he continued. Because of the antagonistic nature of this demonstration, police were called to the scene. However, by the time the officers arrived, the crowd had dispersed. The commissioned officers then asked the pastor to inform them of any future incidents. Opposition from local Buddhist monks is common, particularly in rural areas of Sri Lanka. For more information, and/or to review previous reports, go to our country report.

On behalf of the Christians facing opposition in this predominantly Buddhist nation, pray that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard the hearts and minds of the pastor and congregants in Dodangoda, as well as those in Sri Lanka's other Christian communities. May these believers consistently demonstrate God's love to fellow villagers – including those who oppose them – so that many will readily receive His wonderful gift of salvation. Pray that the issues of concern being experienced in various areas of country will be resolved, and that there will be no further incidents of intimidation or violence.

CHINA: Early Rain Church Faces Violent Raid

Sources: Early Rain Church, ChinaAid

The Early Rain Covenant Church has been a target of Chinese Communist Party officials since the church was raided in December 2018 (read more). The church's lead pastor, Wang Yi, was sentenced to nine years in prison and other members have faced detention and pressure. Despite ongoing intimidation and arrests, the ministry of the church has faithfully continued, though generally online or in small groups. In January of this year, the church decided to resume meeting as a larger group. However, the authorities had them evicted

each time, forcing them to move to different venues. On March 12th, police once again forcefully raided the church. At 8:50 a.m. that day, one church leader, Jia Xuewei, was violently removed from the meeting and then beaten when he failed to show identification. As the service began at 9 a.m., the supply of electricity was abruptly shut off to the room where their meeting was being held. Despite this interference, the service continued anyways with preacher Wu Wuqing leading. An hour later, several officials stormed the pulpit and shut off the computer that was being used for the live broadcast. Other officers began seizing cell phones, and pushing some of the worshippers to the ground, resulting in several injuries. Throughout the violence and mayhem, the choir quietly sang the hymn, "Near the Cross." While the almost 100 believers in attendance left peacefully, they then gathered downstairs to continue worshipping. Some of the leaders, along with a group of church members, were taken to the police station. Other church members gathered outside the station to sing hymns and provide water and food to those who had been arrested during the recent raid. Thankfully, the detained congregants were released later that evening.

Please remember the leaders and congregational members of the Early Rain Covenant Church in your prayers. Although the members of this church continue to be targeted by governing Communist officials, may they persist in seeking ways to gather together for worship. Pray that God will further strengthen Pastor Wang Yi and provide needed guidance to those who are faithfully leading the ministry of the church despite ongoing oppression. May the actions, words and attitudes of the persecuted church members be a powerful testimony to all the officials opposing them.

CRISIS IN UKRAINE

March 2023



From one of our partner churches in Ukraine:

I am Katya*. I'm 38 years old. I have a husband and two children (a 13-year-old son and a 3-year-old daughter). I don't have a job. We are a family that had to flee the war twice and became internally displaced people. We got under shelling's twice. We moved from Donetsk to Kharkiv in 2014, and then from Kharkiv to Poltava in February. We arrived with two bags (mostly children's things). We left our home, all our belongings, our jobs...We were invited to this local church to the meetings with internally displaced people, where we received very important help for us which included food kits, hygiene items, medicines, baby food, diapers, clothes, and shoes, and most importantly, we received moral support and faith in God and hope.

Thank you for these meetings and for your support!"

*Names changed for privacy

Ukraine Impact Report:

Since the Ukraine Crisis started over a year ago on February 24, 2022, SEND and its global partners have worked tirelessly, generously, and effectively to send relief funds. Donations to Help Ukraine have funded a wide range of relief efforts. Most of these projects also

include gospel proclamation through literature, church services, and the witness of volunteers.

Tirelessly

- Relief funds were put to **immediate use**, arriving in Ukraine just 11 days after the start of the invasion
- Every day, more funds are **sent**
- SEND **will continue** to help when the time comes to rebuild

Generously

- Over **\$3.4 million** raised*
- Over **\$2+ million** disbursed*
- An average of **\$50K a week** is currently being distributed for relief

Effectively

- **462** relief efforts funded
- **333,000+** people helped*

**As of February 23, 2023 – these numbers grow daily*

All relief funding has been disbursed through relationships built by SEND Ukraine missionaries and their partner churches. Who has received relief funds:

58.5% Churches (*Your giving has bolstered local churches' ongoing ministry of evangelism, regular worship gatherings, and caring for the community.*)

21.9% Families

19.6% Other (*seminaries, ministry partners, nonprofits*)

Thank you! Your generous gifts have made these relief efforts possible! Because you gave, people across Ukraine have received help and hope. Please continue to pray and give to Help Ukraine.

Missionary Contact Info.

Rick & Debbi Bardin:
See instructions Below

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

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

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.

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.

**BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
PRESENTING A CHANGELESS CHRIST FOR A CHANGING WORLD**