

BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

June 2023

Editor Janelle Daum

Volume 21, Issue 2



“Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.”

II Corinthians 1:7

The following letter was received by a pastor in Texas:

Dear Pastor,

In reply to your request to send a check, I wish to inform you that the present condition of my bank account makes it almost impossible. My shattered financial condition is due to the federal laws, state laws, county laws, corporation laws, mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and outlaws. Through these laws I am compelled to pay a business tax,

Email your article: jbvbeditor@hotmail.com

an amusement tax, a head tax, a school tax, a gas tax, a light tax, a water tax, and a sales tax. Even my brains are taxed.

I am required to get a business license, dog license, truck license, not mention a marriage license. I am also required to contribute to every organization or society which the genius of man is capable of bring to life: women's relief, unemployment relief, disaster relief, every hospital and charitable institution in the city, including the Red Cross, the black cross, the purple cross and the double cross.

For my own safety I am required to carry life insurance, property insurance, liability insurance, burglary insurance, accident insurance, business insurance, earthquake insurance, tornado insurance, unemployment insurance, old age insurance and fire insurance.

I am inspected, expected, disrespected, rejected, dejected, examined, reexamined, informed, reformed, summoned, fined, commanded, and compelled until I provide an inexhaustible supply of money for every known need, desire or hope of the human race.

Simply because I refuse to donate something or other, I am boycotted, talked about, lied about, held up, held down and robbed until I am ruined. I can tell you honestly that had not the unexpected happened, I could not enclose this check. The wolf that comes to so many doors nowadays just had pups in the kitchen. I sold them. **HERE IS THE MONEY!**

Do you get a sense of hopelessness in that letter? Suffering can do that to us.

We have been looking at Paul's encouragement to the Corinthians regarding the purpose and the results of suffering. The first purpose he identifies is that it draws us to praise. In v.3 he leads us in that praise:

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

In v.6 he also identifies ministry as a purpose for salvation:

“If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.”

The last purpose he identifies for our suffering is that it gives us hope:

“Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.” v.6

The great explorer, Sir Francis Drake once returned from one of his globe-encircling voyages and anchored his ship in the little river Thames. A dangerous storm arose and it looked like his ship might be run aground or even sunk. Someone standing near the old weather-beaten seaman heard him say through gritted teeth, “Must I who have escaped the rage of the ocean be drowned in a ditch?”

That was a rather hopeless statement from someone who was helpless in the face of extreme circumstances. If his ship sank in that river he could do nothing to stop it. A lot of people feel that same way in the midst of suffering. They feel that there is nothing that they can do to stop it or to change it so they lose hope. I have seen vibrant, lively people brought down to the depths of depression by suffering.

What Paul tells us in v.7 is that one of the primary purposes of suffering is to teach us to hope in the right things. Note that he says that his hope for them is firmly grounded. Paul had learned that it didn't do any good to hope in laws, or companions, or earthly authorities, or even in his own reputation. If you count on those things you are destined for failure. Our hope needs to be grounded in the promises and in the practical ministry of God in our lives. That's what Paul was looking

to for strength. Everything else had failed and when he had been brought all the way to the bottom of the pit he looked up and saw the promises of God reaching out to him to raise him up in victory over his severe affliction.

Paul knew the direct ministry of God that was the basis for his hope for the Corinthians, “knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.”

Suffering draws us to hope. It causes us to learn to let go of all of our false hopes here on earth, to hope in God and to rely on His promises. In that sense it purifies us and gets our eyes back where they should be... on Him.

After a tree fell on his garage the Rev. Ray Lanham was asked by his neighbor if there wasn't something wrong when a man of God suffers from an act of God.

Rev. Lanham told him, “I wouldn't know. I'm in sales, not management.

When we are suffering and we want to know, “Why, Lord?” we would do well to remember that fact. God is in management. He knows what we need and He knows what will be achieved by all of the circumstances of our lives. We aren't here to run the show. We're here to advertise the product, the Gospel, and we're here to make sure that everyone we meet has the opportunity to receive that Gospel. We're in sales. Suffering is one tool used by God to help us get that message out.

Suffering has purpose. It develops new qualities in us that we can't get any other way. It enhances old qualities and gives them a new look and a new appeal. It draws us to praise God in new ways. It draws us to minister to others in ways that we never thought possible. It draws us to hope in the only true hope to be found in this world.

“Why” is the wrong question. A Christian who in very difficult

circumstances fell on his knees in despair to cry to God, “*When* am I going to get out of all these trials?” But by a slip of the tongue he actually prayed, “*What* am I going to get out of all these trials?”

That should be our cry to God. Sufferings always have purpose. They are growth tools for our faith. So the next time you suffer, or if you are constantly suffering, ask yourself the question that sustained the Apostle Paul during his time of extreme suffering, “Lord, what are You building in my life, and what are You teaching me, and what are You preparing me to do for Your glory?” When we find the answer to that, then we will know the answer to the question, “Why?”

Let your suffering build your faith!

Blessings,

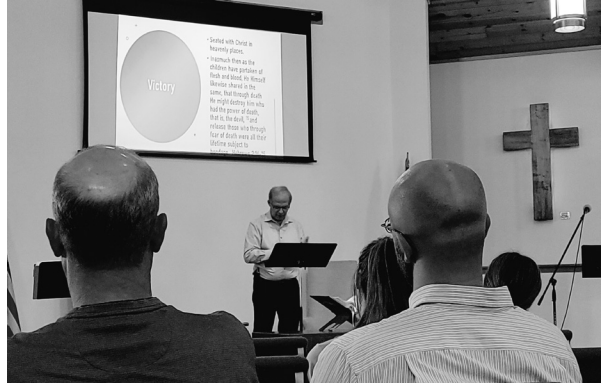
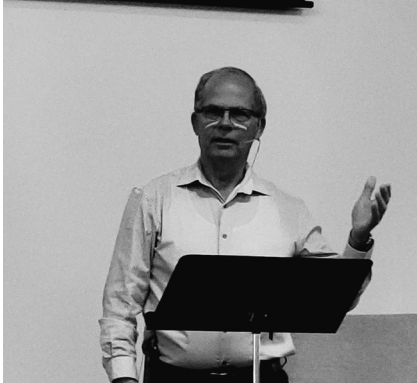
Pastor Randy

COMMITTEE REPORTS

OUTREACH TEAM REPORT

MAY 21, 2023

Sunday, May 21, 2023, we had the pleasure of having Pastor Harlan Moss of Prison Outreach join us to share with us some inspirational prisoner stories and deliver us a wonderful Sunday Sermon on LOVE – John 3:16-17; Exodus 33:13-14. It's always a joy to have Harlan join us! Below is his May Newsletter where he tells more of what has been happening in his ministry.



HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY

May 2023

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God is making His appeal through us, we implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God. II Cor. 5:20

God would have that none should perish, and all should come to Him in repentance. We are His ambassadors to spread the good news of salvation. Our responsibility is to share the gospel, and it is up to the Lord to save their souls after the good news is shared.

It was a blessing to be able to baptize Max and Henry, (the two men I wrote about in the April newsletter), on Easter morning at the 5:30 am sunrise service! Pastor Greg gave the message, and both gave their testimony of how Jesus changed their lives. They are thankful to Christ for their new lives! Max will be getting released soon and with that comes some anxiety. We have been talking about how the Lord will take care of him if he keeps his focus on Christ, and not his difficulties. Please pray for the Lord to put Christians in Max's pathway.

Henry continues to grow in the Lord. Wednesday Bible study is comprised of men who are just coming into the prison to be processed. There are about six general population men who attend as well. I go over a Bible passage then we divide up into six groups, and GP men are the leaders of these groups. Henry is one of the leaders. It is great to see him grow in the Lord. They are truly being ambassadors for Christ!

The men who work in the laundry room are mostly Christian men. A few weeks ago, one of the Christian men asked if I could call Ben into the Chaplain's office from the laundry room. The guys there had been witnessing to him for a while. Ben told me that the Lord had been working on him for the past year. He will get out in about six months, and he did not want to go back to his old sinful life. Ben told me he was in Juvenile detention when he was 12 years old. His father wanted to take him to church, but he did not want to go. So he was put in lock down at the detention center for refusing to go with his father. Ben smiled as he said, "I was a stubborn kid, I would rather be in lock down than go to church." He did not know much about the Bible. After I explained the gospel to him, Ben wanted to invite Christ into his life and trust Him as his Lord and Savior. While we were praying, it suddenly got noisy in the hallway outside the office. After

the prayer Ben told me that he felt the devil was trying to distract him during his prayer. I told him, "That is very good insight to recognize the devil's devices." When he was getting ready to leave the office I opened my Vita Minutes jar, (slips of paper with Bible verses on them) and asked him to take one. Ben picked out a verse randomly, and it was not by accident! It was Isaiah 1:18, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." What a perfect verse for Ben who had just trusted Christ as his Savior! When he walked out of the church service last Thursday evening Ben said to me, "I just realized this evening as we were singing that I have not felt alone since we prayed two weeks ago!" PTL!

Please pray for those in authority. Many things seem to be uncertain for us as volunteers. I am thankful though for the favor God has given me with the staff! I have been able to go cell to cell during count if the officer in charge allows it, and they have allowed it! That has been a blessing! God is truly at work in these uncertain times!

Thank you much for your blessings of prayer and financial support!

In Christ, Harlan

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR JUNE 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

1 p.m. Women's Bible Study meeting in homes

6:30 p.m. Middle & High School Youth Group

Upcoming Events

Monday, June 5, 10 a.m., All women are invited to Pat Lacey's to watch and discuss one session of "The Chosen". Reservations aren't needed. Contact Jackie Kramer if you have questions.

Saturday, June 10, 8 a.m., Leadership Meeting at Church

Sunday, June 11, Amanda Benson Missionary Presentation

Tuesday, June 13, 2 p.m., Discipleship Team Meeting at Church

6:30 p.m., Faith and Family Day at the Canaries Baseball Game

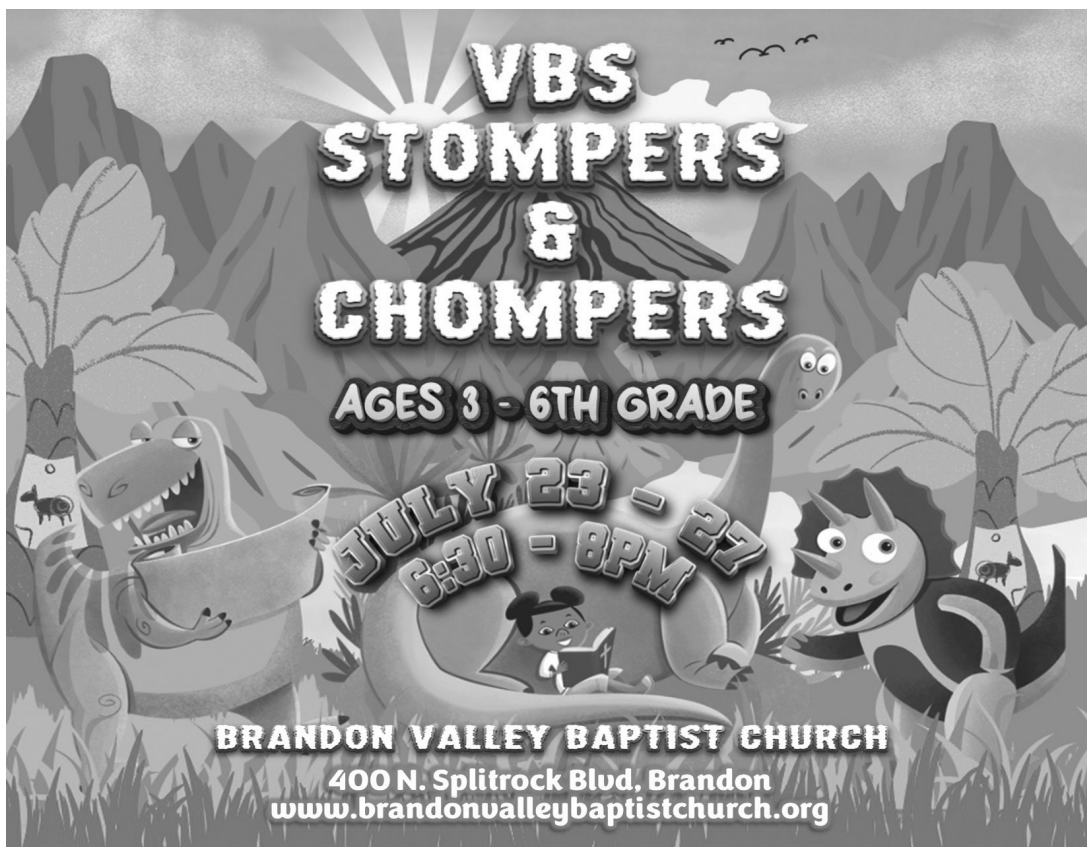
Sunday, June 18, Father's Day

Newsletter Articles are Due

Tuesday, June 27, 7 p.m., Outreach Team Meeting at Church

Sunday, July 16, Tom Robert's Children's Home Society
Presentation

Sunday, July 23 - Thursday, July 27, 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m., Vacation Bible School – Stompers and Chompers

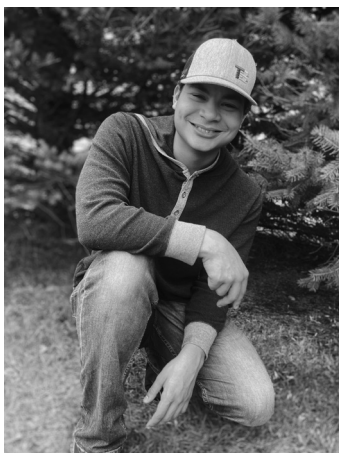


CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2023

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES!!

"Commit your work
to the Lord, and your
plans will succeed."

PROVERBS 16:3



NOAH FEAL

Homeschool

Post Graduation Plans:

Christian Leaders College

Majoring in Ministry/Business



GARRET JAMES

Brandon Valley High School

Post Graduation Plans:

Working at Nordstrom Auto



MADDIE POSS

Cornerstone School

Post Graduation Plans:

Flight Attendant



MAEGAN QUESTAD

Washington High School

Post Graduation Plans:

Going to SDSU in Brookings

Majoring in Mathematics with Teacher
Specialization

Minoring in Music

MISSIONARY UPDATES

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



May 1, 2023

A LITTLE FAITH

I have a confession to make. It was really hard for me to send out that email two weeks ago letting you all know we had a house. I very rarely sit on an email (I almost always send it right away or schedule it to send), but I had a hard time with this one. I just saved it and came back to it the next day. And even when I pushed send, there was still doubt in my heart. What if the contract fell through (even though there have been no indicators that it would), and I had just sent out an email telling everyone we had a house? What if I asked for gifts and none came in?

You see, last year as we were looking for a house, it felt like every time there was a possibility, it fell through. We would get our hopes up, only for God to say no. But God still provided. In His perfect timing, He provided us a house that was what we needed for this one year, and He provided the funds we needed to purchase some items we needed. And yet, I found myself back in that same place again this

year as we were again looking for a house. Two or three came up, but this really was the only true possibility...and was the ideal option.

As time went on, we weren't sure if we would get the house. Would the couple living there actually move out? Would we get the contract from the landlady? Would we be able to move in at the right time? Would we have the money to furnish the house?

But this year, things have been different. God kept opening the doors. The couple that was living there are parents of one of my former students who just graduated. I decided to message my student, but I didn't think it had amounted to anything. However a couple weeks later, a coworker messaged me and asked if I still wanted the house of my student's parents. We were then able to get in contact with the couple, find out when they were moving, and ask if we could purchase items from them. They were so happy that their house and their items were going to Faith Academy teachers, and when we went over Thursday to finalize everything before they moved out, she kept showing us things we hadn't purchased and said, "Free for you, since you're my daughter's teacher!" She was so nice and was a huge blessing to us as we get ready to move in.

And God continues to provide. Within a week of sending out that email two weeks ago, we had enough money to purchase everything we needed by the end of April when the couple left, as well as for much of what we need to purchase before other people move in with us this July. When I found that out, I was so overwhelmed with amazement at who God is and was also filled with humility at my lack of belief. He is so good, even when I doubt. And yet He doesn't fill me with shame, but rather lifts my head and kindly says, "You asked me to help you in your unbelief, and that's what I'm doing right now. I've got this."

Faith is a journey. There are times we doubt and there are times we

have great faith. God rewards great faith, but He also helps us in our moments of weakness. When Peter got distracted by all of the wind and waves, he called out to Jesus when he started sinking, and Jesus immediately took him by the hand and brought him into the boat (Matthew 14:22-33). And He does the same for me. And for you. We are human and we fail. But we can cry out “Lord, help my unbelief!” And I firmly believe that He is just waiting to answer that prayer.

He has for me. And I know He will continue to do so in other times when my faith falters.

As I watch God put all the pieces into place for this house, I know that He must be up to something grand. If He wasn't, why would He provide so abundantly for this ministry? His provision isn't based on me--it's completely based on Him. If He wants it to happen, He will make it happen.

Thank you so much for being a part of this ministry and this journey with me, in whatever way that is. Thank you for being used by God to help grow my faith. I know many of you pray regularly for me. Many others give regularly. Others encourage my students, coworkers, and me. All of these things are so important to the amazing work God is doing here in the Philippines and at Faith Academy.

Amanda

Praises

- God's great provision for our furnishings for our house, as well as for the house itself!
- For God's kindness and how He continues to teach me and mold me more into His image.
- For the ways God is providing for next year. We have some staff members that are going to be new!
- We had such a great time with a student teacher staying with us the last two months. It's been awesome to have a full house and reminds us of what this ministry is about!

Prayer Requests

- Pray that we are able to move into our house by June 3. The landlady has hired someone to make repairs on the house, so they need to be completed before we move in. However, we both are leaving for the summer, so we really would like to move by June 3 so we don't have to move our things after we get back at the end of July (and also find somewhere to keep them until then).
- Pray that God provides the staff we need for next year. We still are in desperate need of a 7th and 8th grade English teacher. Our elementary division really needs 2 more teachers, and our high school division needs a math teacher. These are our most urgent needs.
- Pray for a strong finish to this school year! There will be a lot going on this month, and we finish school on June 2.

DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ



May 19, 2023

Transitions

We often think, “What were we doing a year ago?” A year ago, we were gearing up for our return to the USA by packing our house up, not sure what our future was. Now we are a year later, and we know where God is leading us. We now are looking at a task of going back to Japan and cleaning up our stuff that we left behind in Japan. We think about the 18+ years of living in Japan and we feel blessed. We know that God provided for all our needs for those 18 years, so we can also trust God with our finances as we step into the future with God as our constant and in whom we put our trust.

Pray for us as we move out of our home this last year in Elbing. Our landlord, Berean Academy, is letting us store our stuff in the garage in our current house for the 35 days that we will be in Japan. We plan on moving into a house that we are in contract to purchase when we return to USA after July 11. The specifics of our purchase of our house have not been finalized at this point.

As we depart our missionary home here in Elbing, Kansas we

are going to move 6.8 miles to Whitewater and move into Karen's parents house for the few days before and after our trip to Japan. We are thankful that we have family that we can temporarily live in this transition.

We are also looking forward to meeting with people and going to places that we have gotten to know in our many years of ministry in Japan. We also know that it will be challenging as we leave Japan with sadness as it is a country where we have called home for many years.

Preparation for new ministry – Detroit, Michigan

Darwin had a week of training at the SEND International USA headquarters this month. It was a great time to meet with the SEND missionaries and staff that Darwin will be working with starting August 1st. He left very encouraged as he is really looking forward to his new ministry opportunity with SEND International as he serves as Assistant Treasurer for the International Office. He saw how this new opportunity will help all SEND International missionaries get to their fields of service and remain there for as long as God enables. Pray for Darwin as he learns a lot of skills that are necessary for this new ministry.

Two more classes completed

Karen finished two classes that is getting her closer to her bachelor's degree from Moody Bible Institute. She is excited to say that she only has two more classes remaining to getting her bachelor's degree. Once she has graduated, she will be actively pursuing a definition of what her next ministry assignment will be. She is excited to see how God will use her as she has a passion to using her gifts in a way that brings glory to God.

Family News

Anna is working as the sport's assistant at WinShape Camp in Rome, Georgia. She will oversee all the sports activities during the camp and make sure they run smoothly. WinShape is a Christian camp owned by Chick-fil-A with the goal of sharing the gospel to kids during the summer. In the Fall, Anna will return as a junior at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas where she is majoring in kinesiology with an emphasis in sports medicine and a minor in general science and psychology.

Clara just completed her freshman year at Berean Academy, and she will go to Japan with her parents. Christian Academy in Japan where she has attended is still in session so she will be able to see many of her friends that she has known since kindergarten.

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:

May 31 Move out of Berean Mansion in Elbing, Kansas

Jun 1-6 Live in Whitewater, Kansas as we prepare to go to Japan

June 6 Fly to Narita Airport in Tokyo, Japan via Dallas Texas

June 7 Start going through our storage unit in Japan

June 18 Nishibori Christ Gospel Church Farewell Sunday

June 26-30 Yamanaka Chalet at the base of Mount Fuji

July 4-7 SEND International Japan Family Conference at Okutama Bible Chalet

July 11 Fly to Wichita, Kansas from Narita Airport via Dallas, Texas

July 29 Darwin Birthday

July 30 Anna return from Georgia

Aug 1 Darwin to begin role as International Office Assistant Treasurer

Aug 9 Clara Birthday

Aug 16 Berean Academy First Day

Aug 31 Anna Birthday

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 our continued support needs. Many partners have been with us for a long time, and some are reaching the end of their giving ability.
6. That Anna and Clara will be able to adjust well to this significant change.
7. 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.
8. Wisdom for Darwin as he begins training for this new position.
9. Wisdom and patience for Karen as she gets near the end of her education that she is doing online with Moody Bible Institute.
10. 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.

11. 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

RON & JEANNIE SECK - HUNGARY



May 2023

THE “JUST-A-SECK” JOURNAL

Prayer

- Pray that the new Roma leadership committee in Boldog will keep their commitments to be trained in CHE and lead their village development projects.
- Pray for the new “seed” project in Apc of restoring the building the mayor gave us to use.
- Pray that God will plant the seed of the Gospel in the hearts of the children and parents who attended the recent Easter Camp.
- Pray for Ron and Jeannie, who will return to Hungary on May 10 to meet with CHE teams throughout Central Europe and the Balkans.

Praises

- The exciting Easter Camp in Donji Petrovci, Serbia.
- The building given to MEK Hungary by the Mayor of Apc.
- Food, supplies, and the Gospel delivered into Ukraine at Resurrection

Season.

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

LUKE 18:22 (NIV)

Greetings to you, co-laborers with us to reach the poor of Central Europe,

April provided many open doors for ministry for our Central Europe CHE teams. Please delight in what the Lord is doing . . .

Food and Medicine Becomes Spiritual Food and Medicine

Except for Hungary, most Eastern European countries celebrate both Orthodox and traditional Easter. This gives increased opportunities to share about the death and resurrection of our Lord and His great love for people.

Hungarian MEK’s efforts this month included Leonard Hanykovics’ use of the generous NAB donations for the purchasing and delivering of desperately needed food and medical supplies to hundreds of Ukraine’s war-displaced families and individuals.

These people are being cared for and sheltered by some faithful Ukrainian churches. While they are receiving the generous help, they are also hearing about the Lord who loves and provides for them.

God is answering prayers with amazing stories of safe-keeping and people coming to know Jesus. One woman shared her personal experience. She told of a Russian rocket landing in her yard but did not explode! Then another one landed beside it but again did not explode. She is seeing this as God’s powerful hand in her life.

We praise God for how He is working in many hearts during this devastating war.

Leonard and his wife gathered the supplies and traveled more than 2,000 km to deliver \$12,000 worth of lifesaving medicines and food to Odessa. We are very thankful to have this experienced missionary and his wife as part of the MEK team. They and other team members have also been very busy caring for and sharing Christ with displaced Ukrainians in Hungarian communities.

A Roof Opens Doors!

When an old roof caved-in on a Roma family's home in Boldog, Hungary, it brought together concerned men from the community. Working with our MEK team and a local lumberyard that supplied materials at vastly reduced cost, they rebuilt the roof and helped the devastated family remain together.

This provided an unexpected opportunity for Laci Daróczi-Csuhai's team to grow relationships with the formerly disinterested Boldog men. Discussions about the Bible and future community development projects have followed.

A Mayor Opens a Building to MEK!

Wherever we begin a CHE project in Central Europe, finding a place for the community to meet is a huge challenge. MEK has been at work in Apc, Hungary, now for almost two years, and the mayor is liking what he sees. Last month he suggested to the local board that an empty building could be used rent-free by MEK and the Roma residents if they repair and maintain it.

This will allow the MEK team to hold community meetings, Bible studies, prayer meetings, youth gatherings, and more. We thank the Lord for opening the mayor's heart, and we pray for willing Roma to

help clean up and make the building usable.

Easter Camp Draws 40 People, Age 2–20, In Donji Petrovci, Serbia

The first day of Easter camp, it snowed! The second day, it rained. The third day, it was beautiful . . . just like Jesus' resurrection!

For the ZZ Serbia team, led by Marijana Čizmanski, and for the many children and parents who attended, it was both an enjoyable and deeply spiritual time.

Because of the three unseasonably cold days, they all “camped” in the community house, where they heard about the love of God shown through Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection for them. By means of puppetry, clowning, artwork, crafts, and storytelling, the wonderful Good News was given to this mostly illiterate village. Next on the schedule: start a youth leadership team!

Ron & Jeannie Seck

SHAN REED - JAPAN



May 2023

FELLOWSHIP

Praises

- Praise God for creating us out of the fellowship of the Trinity for fellowship with him and each other.
- Praise the Lord for fellowship with the youth of the Japan Baptist Conference and at Komyo Christian Church.
- Praise God for fellowship with the women who attend the ladies' seminars around the Japan Baptist Conference.
- Praise God for sweet times of fellowship at Komyo Christian Church around the tables after Sunday services.

Prayer

- Pray for God's work in and through Komyo Christian Church, that we will shine the light of Jesus to those around us.
- Please pray for me as I continue learning the importance of fellowship with my brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Pray for the youth of Komyo and Kongo churches, as well as the whole JBC, to learn to trust Jesus with their whole lives.

- Pray for the women who attend the ladies' seminars to grow in fellowship, not only within their own churches but also with other sisters in Christ.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

ACTS 2:42 (NIV)

Fellowship is an important part of our lives as Jesus followers. It is a place for us to share our joys and sorrows, to encourage and teach one another.

Since the world shut down in 2020 because of the global pandemic, I think we have gained a deeper appreciation for and an awareness of the importance of fellowship. What a joy it has been to be able to fellowship with our brothers and sisters at Komyo Christian Church and throughout the Japan Baptist Conference (JBC).

In my last newsletter, I mentioned the youth who were taking entrance exams. At Komyo Church, we got to celebrate with one young lady who graduated from middle school and passed the entrance exam for the high school she wanted to attend. The group of older ladies at church were faithfully praying for her and loved getting to celebrate her accomplishments. One of the benefits of the fellowship of believers is the building of intergenerational relationships.

March is the end of the school year here; spring vacation is usually the last two weeks of March and often also the first week of April. This gives the youth a chance to gather for a spring camp. Although we have not yet been able to have an overnight camp, we did have a great time of fellowship, one day with the university students and young adults and one day with the junior and senior high students. Since we have students in both groups in Osaka, I got to attend both days. This year at the youth gathering the students spent time

designing a T-shirt together. It has been over five years since the last design was made. The other adults and I sat back and watched the students work together, talking over designs, type of fabric, and color of fabric for the shirts. I am looking forward to seeing what they came up with! The youth also are learning the importance of fellowshiping with their peers for encouragement and fun.

Yuri and I had the privilege of leading a ladies' seminar at one of the churches I served fresh out of language school. It was their first experience with a seminar. We enjoyed time catching up and studying God's Word together. We were encouraged by their vulnerability with and kindness toward each other. What a joy to fellowship with the ladies throughout the JBC as we learn from each other about walking with Jesus daily.

What a delight it was to fellowship with the missionary community at our Kansai Christian Women's Conference in March! It was truly a privilege to teach from God's Word and spend time together in fellowship and prayer. For some of the women, this is one of the few times they get to worship in English during the year. On the feedback forms, many women were grateful for and asked for more fellowship/small group time. Additionally, once a month several of these ladies and I gather for a time of fellowship. We call it "Bagel Breakfast" because we first started the meeting in a bagel shop. Even though that shop has closed, and we have had to move twice since then, we still have bagel breakfast once a month! Fellowship in one's heart language is also of utmost importance.

The first week of May, the JBC held its 60th annual "Deeper Life" conference. What fun to meet with our brothers and sisters from around the region as we fellowshiped, worshiped, and learned together. The speaker is the head of the only Christian university in Japan and encouraged us through his teaching and by fellowshiping

with us. The theme was “Abiding in the Lord Together.” One of the statements he made that has stuck with me is, “We abide in the fellowship of the Trinity. There is no greater grace.”

Thank you for your prayers and support of me and the ministry in Japan. I pray that you also are experiencing the great grace of fellowship within your church, with family and friends of all ages, with Jesus followers around your neighborhood and city, with people who speak the same language, and with people who do not.

Shan Reed

BRANDON & MARCI JONES - BRAZIL



May 2023

LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS

Prayer

- For safe travels for Daniel, who will come to Brazil this June.
- For wisdom on whom to admit to our second group of Kairos Brazil students.
- For a strong finish to our fall semester at the seminary.

Praises

- God has used Lyndell, our field director here, for over twenty years!
- All three kids are doing well at their schools!
- Marci and Brandon are able to communicate well in Portuguese!

Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.

PROVERBS 3:3-4 (NIV)

This fall has reminded us of our mission's focus on theological

education. Our goal is to come alongside what God is already doing here in southern Brazil and equip those he brings to us so they can continue to proclaim the good news of his kingdom.

At the seminary this fall, Brandon has been teaching the second half of systematic theology, which focuses on the doctrines of Christ, atonement, salvation, and the future. We have around twenty students enrolled in the course, and it has been a joy to see them work through what can be complicated issues.

Just this week, while Brandon was grading papers on the atonement, he was thrilled to read about a student's journey, pondering the many-faceted aspects of the atonement, using conversation partners from church history, such as Ireneus, Abailard, Anselm, and Martin Luther. Every week the students work through knotty issues in groups as well, forcing them to grapple with the unknown depths of the amazing faith we all share.

Our church invited us to become Sunday School teachers, which kicked off with a combined class in February. Since then, we have been working through the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy with the young adults' class. This has been such a unique opportunity for us, as this class is made up of many people who are originally from other parts of Brazil and even out of the country! We have one class member from Ecuador who is working on her medical residency in our city.

Kairos Brazil will soon produce its first two graduates from the program, and we will open enrollment to our second group of students by the middle of this year. We have already had several prospective students contact us this past year, so we are praying God will bless this second group.

Marci is also continuing her studies with Kairos University, and, as

part of her module on biblical exegesis, she guest taught a class on biblical authority and theological themes in the book of Job for our seminary. The students responded well to the material and assignments.

On the homefront, we have been so proud of Daniel, Monica, and Olivia with their efforts in school. Daniel has excelled as a student and worker. Monica and Olivia both have had excellent grades too, as they have been pushed rather hard given they are working on their first years of high school and middle school respectively.

For the last half of April, we were able to enjoy something a little different. The vice president of International Missions for the NAB, Kerry Bender, spent a couple weeks here in Porto Alegre. He taught a two-week class on homiletics, and on one of the Sundays he was here he preached at our church. It was a joy to get to know him more deeply, as we were able to host him for some meals. And he even cooked a couple meals for us!

On the last night of his visit, he joined us and many others to celebrate our Field Director, Lyndell Campbell-Réquia, who has now been serving in Brazil for over twenty years! We spent a Saturday evening worshiping God in both Portuguese and English, focusing on Lyndell's favorite verses from Proverbs 3:3–6.

Verses 3 and 4 are lesser known, but they talk about the importance of love and faithfulness for anyone who wants to be a witness for God. May our family also be marked over the years for our love and faithfulness. And may you be marked that way too!

Thanks again for your support and prayers!

Blessings,

Brandon & Marci Jones

RICK & DEBBI BARDIN - CAMEROON



May 2023

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK

Prayer

- Rick to be completely caught up with cases (two-week turnaround).
- Dr. Mbanga's written and oral exam schedule to be set, and his successful completion, then return to Cameroon.
- Debbie to get back to work in the clinic sharing Scripture with clients at least part-time.
- Continued excellent progress on the Cancer/ Radiation Therapy Center.
- For a stable water supply for the hospital and living quarters.

Praises

- Have had many weeks of peaceful roads in our area, patients able to get here.
- We had 17 volunteers come to Mbingo in the last three months, the most we've had in a LONG time!

- Praise the Lord for Dr. Koch, who brought tissue processing solution donated by the lab at his hospital and helped the processing move forward again!
- Dr. Mbanga presented his research project/thesis successfully after the delay!
- Rick's two new microscopes donated by SWMC Foundation finally arrived safely.

Practice and work hard on these things; be absorbed in them [completely occupied in your ministry], so that your progress will be evident to all.

1 TIMOTHY 4:15 (AMP)

We are learning the lesson that sometimes we lose ground or are delayed before we can go forward again. But we just keep pressing on, working hard, and trusting God for the progress.

These last three months have been particularly busy because we have been catching up from the one month away we had at the beginning of the year.

Rick is still trying to recover from the backlog of cases that he met on returning. Turnaround time on cases still needs to improve. Tissue processing was slowed down due to inferior solutions provided by local suppliers. He is more than ready to have Dr. Mbanga, the pathologist being trained in Kenya, join him. As you have been aware, Dr. Mbanga was finally able to present his research project/thesis. We are now waiting for the oral and written exam schedule to be posted at the University of Nairobi where he has been studying. Pray this gets set, he passes the exams and gets back to Cameroon as soon as possible. We did have a lovely surprise last week. Dr. Mbanga appeared in the pathology lab! He decided while waiting for

his exams, which will hopefully be set in June, he would take time to visit his family whom he hasn't seen in over three years due to COVID and visa problems. He worked with Rick in the lab for a few days, which was great!

For Debbie, as of September of last year, she took on a new job for her HIV outpatient department. She has been responsible for submitting claims for all the patients' charges so that the hospital can be reimbursed by the HIV Free program. These expenses involve registration fees, lab charges, files, etc. She also lost ground and has played catch-up until now. Her prayer request is for someone she can train to help and eventually take over this work, so she has more time to share Scripture and pray with her patients.

The exciting news these days is the Cancer / Radiation Therapy Center project is making progress. The bunker to house the linear accelerator is well underway. An engineer from Canada is involved and has been making several visits to ensure things go well. Pray this project is completed well.

Also, please pray for our water supply. This dry season has taken its toll on our water table, and we are having regular water shortages, even with the rains coming last month. Pray the maintenance team can solve the problems and there can be enough water to supply our hospital and living quarters around.

In His Matchless Love,

Rick & Debbie Bardin

THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS



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

April 20, 2023 - PERSECUTION & PRAYER ALERT

BELARUS: Seven Young Christians Fined

Source: Forum18

A court in Minsk has fined seven young Christians the equivalent of two months' average wages each. The charges were laid against the believers as punishment for talking to others about the meaning of Easter on April 15th, the day before Orthodox Easter Sunday.

The young people were charged for organizing "a demonstration or mass event," even though they were merely speaking with individuals on the street. When governing officials were asked to explain the reasons for the arrests and fines, they refused to comment. The Christians were fined the maximum penalty allowable under the statute. It appears that the believers have chosen not to appeal their sentences.

Five of the seven Christians who received charges are members of the New Life Church, which has faced repeated incidents of persecution over the years and was sealed by the authorities in February 2021.

Pray for God's provision on behalf of the young believers

who have been fined for sharing their faith. May He give them wisdom, courage and peace as they face the charges, as well as the strength required to continue carrying out Christ's call to spread the Gospel message. In general, pray for the ongoing ministry of other Christians throughout Belarus who are also encountering ongoing hostility from governing officials. Ask the Lord to bring conviction to those who oppose His Word so their hearts will be stirred towards repentance and the need to receive His eternal salvation.

REPORT UPDATES

IRAN: Christian Couple Acquitted

Sources: Article18, Middle East Concern

Homayoun Zhaveh, a 64-year-old Christian with advanced Parkinson's disease, and his wife, Sara Ahmadi, have thankfully been acquitted by an Iranian court and released from prison. On April 9th, it was reported that their application for a retrial had been accepted. On May 9th, the appeal court judge found no evidence that either of these Christians had acted against national security, as initially accused.

In his ruling, the judge stated that gathering with people of one's own faith is "natural," and that having books relating to Christianity is "an extension of their beliefs." However, many of the Christians presently in Iranian prisons are there because of their participation in house churches.

Sara and Homayoun were arrested in June 2019. Sara was initially sentenced to 11 years, which was later reduced to eight years in December 2020. Yet, both of them were allowed to remain at home until August 2022, the time they were summoned to Evin Prison and subsequently detained. Sara and Homayoun were finally released

the evening after the recent court announcement.

Praise God for this very positive outcome! Pray that the recent court ruling will serve as a precedent in determining the outcome of cases involving Christians still imprisoned in Iran. May the ruling also result in the general ceasing of governmental oppression towards followers of Jesus throughout the country. As for Homayoun's health concerns, please pray that he will experience God's healing touch; and that, during his recovery, Sara will be strengthened while assisting with his medical needs.

NIGERIA: More Chibok Girls Rescued

Sources: International Christian Concern, Open Doors, Daily Trust, The Guardian, Punch, BBC, CTV

In 2014, a secondary school in the predominantly Christian town of Chibok, Borno State, was attacked by members of the militant Islamic group, Boko Haram. During the raid, 276 girls were kidnapped. In the nine years since that time, some of the girls have been released, while others either managed to escape or were rescued by governmental forces. Although the exact number of students who remain missing is unknown, it is estimated that approximately 100 of them are still in captivity.

Over the years, as the families continued to hope and pray for the recovery of their missing girls, at least 38 parents have died without witnessing their daughters' safe return home. Others are left wondering whether their abducted loved ones are still alive and, if so, where they are located.

In a recent announcement, Nigerian authorities were pleased to present two more surviving girls, Hauwa Maltha and Esther Marcus, who were rescued in April. Hauwa, who was over eight months

pregnant when she was recovered, has since given birth to her baby on April 28th. During captivity, Hauwa was forcibly married three times to different Boko Haram members.

When announcing the return of these two young women, the military commander stated that a total of 14 girls have been recently rescued. Although he gave the names of each one, no further details on the recovery of these students were released. It is assumed that both Hauwa and Esther became mothers while in captivity, as they were seen with children after their rescues.

The homecoming of the 14 recently rescued young women brought joy to so many; yet, at the same time, it also created a renewed sense of pain for the families whose girls have not been recovered to date. “It has made the memories fresh for the parents [whose] children are still missing,” states Hassan Chibok, a local Nigerian leader.

Added Note: In a separate report just released this week, it was announced that yet another missing schoolgirl, Saratu Dauda, was found on May 6th by Nigerian troops. Regrettably, Saratu’s three children remain in the custody of her former captor, Abu Yusuf, the Boko Haram member she was forced to marry while in captivity. Abu serves the terrorist group as an explosives expert. The country’s officials have stated that they are endeavoring to rescue Saratu’s children, along with any others they locate.

Saratu was taken to the hospital for treatment and has since been released. She is planning to complete her secondary and university education with the support of the state government. During the announcement of her rescue, Major General Ibrahim Ali proclaimed: “We thank God for rescuing Saratu Dauda. This will enable [her] to have a better life with [her] parents and other families in [the] Chibok community.”

Along with the rejoicing families and friends of the recently rescued students, we can give thanks to our Heavenly Father that these girls are now safely home. Pray that each one of them will receive God’s ministry of healing – both physically and emotionally – from the aftermath of the kidnapping and subsequent captivity. Ask the Lord to also provide guidance to these young women and their families as they endeavor to integrate back into their communities, some now having to raise the young children who were fathered and born in the terrorists’ camps. Last, but not least, please continue to pray for the rescue and well-being of Chibok schoolgirls who remain missing, along with other kidnapped victims presently being held hostage by militant groups across Nigeria.

CRISIS IN UKRAINE



May 23, 2023

From one of our church partners in Ukraine:

“Hello, my name is Liliya.* I am 55 years old. I’m from Donetsk region. I was forced to leave home urgently due to the artillery shelling, aerial bombardment and the approach of Russian invaders and occupiers to the village on March 11, 2022.

First, I left by the evacuation train to Lviv region, then on September 1, I moved to Poltava. My heart had been filled with fear, anxiety, and despair, because I was left without a home (which was completely destroyed by a missile), without any property, and without a job...

After I had found out about a local church, I turned to them for help and was pleasantly surprised to meet friendly, benevolent volunteers, and church ministers there.

A big thank you and a low bow to your friendly, sensitive, warm-hearted church family and foreign benefactors for the psychological and humanitarian aid (food, hygiene kits, medicines, clothes, shoes).

I would like to express my special thanks to our young, intelligent, and friendly mentor for teaching us, interpreting the Word of God for us, and for arranging pleasant and interesting conversations.

Thanks to you, I have found peace of mind.

Thank you for your support. May peace and God’s blessing be given to all of us!”

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See instructions Below

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How To Give To North American Baptist Missionaries:

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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**