

BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

July 2023

Editor Janelle Daum

Volume 21, Issue 3



“For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.”

II Corinthians 1:12

One of the early celebrity preacher scandals involved sex and a clergyman who enjoyed “the good life.” Before and after the Civil War, the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher was the most famous preacher in the land. His oratory drew crowds of thousands to his church in Brooklyn each week. Some called him “the greatest preacher since Saint Paul.” He reportedly earned the princely (and unheard of)

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sum of \$40,000 per year. Beecher enjoyed carrying with him uncut gems and openly endorsed commercial products ranging from soap to watches. Then in 1874 Beecher's friend and protégé, Theodore Tilton, accused the beloved preacher of seducing his wife. The trial was such an attraction that admission tickets were sold to the public. And the outcome? The jury failed to reach a verdict but Beecher's influence and popularity continued undiminished for another thirteen years until his death.

Henry Ward Beecher wasn't hurt by the challenge to his integrity. Others haven't been as fortunate. Integrity is a major issue, especially when we face times of suffering like the time Paul described in the first eleven verses of II Corinthians 1. When we are at our weakest is when people will attack our integrity the most.

The Apostle Paul faced those challenges. He understood that integrity is fragile. It can be easily broken, sometimes by our actions, and sometimes by the unwarranted attacks of others on our integrity. That's why he moves on in II Corinthians to answer the challenges that had been made to his integrity. The damage to his reputation was severe; but he took the proper steps and overcame it. He gives us proof that: "Damaged or lost integrity can be restored."

The first step is for us to establish what our motives are. A Peanuts cartoon showed Peppermint Patty talking to Charlie Brown. She said, "Guess what, Chuck. The first day of school and I got sent to the principal's office. It was your fault, Chuck."

He said, "My fault? How could it be my fault? Why do you say everything is my fault?"

She said, "You're my friend, aren't you, Chuck?" You should have been a better influence on me."

Isn't it fun to pass the buck? Rather than questioning ourselves and what we might have done wrong, it's so much easier to just blame someone else. That way we never have to look at our own hearts and motives. Do you see an issue of integrity there?

The question of motives is a difficult one. The first thing to determine is the purity of our motives. What are our reasons for doing what we have done? Are they right and good, or are they selfish and evil? Can we defend them, or are they indefensible?

As Paul faced this attack on his integrity he had to go through that process of questioning his motives. What he determined was that they were pure and they needed to be defended. Look at what he says about his motives in vv.12-14:

“For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand – just as you did partially understand us – that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you.”

The first charge that Paul faced was that of being insincere in what he wrote to the Corinthians. His critics charged that you had to read between the lines to get the real message he was saying, and that the real message wasn't very godly.

In his defense Paul appeals to the testimony of his own conscience and the knowledge that the Corinthians had of his conduct with them. He speaks of his proud confidence. After searching his soul he could find no instance where he did not act in holiness and godly sincerity with them. He never acted in a fleshly or selfish way. His entire ministry with them was motivated by the grace of God: *“...that we*

behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God.” That purity of action and motivation extended to his letter to them. He had no hidden messages for them. Nothing was meant to be read between the lines. He wasn’t trying to slip anything by them. He was simply ministering the grace of God to them through the message of God.

In v.14 Paul concludes the defense of his motives by pointing out that they had already begun to partially understand them. He wasn’t out for self-glory or for selfish benefit. All he wanted was for them to grow up in the Lord to God’s glory. They had seen that in him when he was with them. Nothing had changed. His hope in v.14 is that they would come to develop as much pride in him as he would find in them in the day of the Lord Jesus.

When Christ appears as Judge He is going to reveal all of the secrets of our hearts. All of our motives will be laid bare. Paul had no fear of that day. His motives had been pure and good.

When our integrity is challenged or damaged we have to start with a deep and probing analysis of our motives. If they are pure, then we need to defend them. People need to know what motivates us and drives our actions. Notice also that the best defense of our present motives is our past life. Godliness in the past helps to validate godly motives in the present.

Blessings,

Pastor Randy

COMMITTEE REPORTS

DISCIPLESHIP TEAM REPORT

JUNE 11, 2023

The discipleship team met June 11, 2023 after Sunday School with Pam, Theresa, 2-D, and Pastor Randy present. Pastor Randy opened in prayer. Discussion of summer Sunday School included material and teachers involved. Dan will continue with the adult class in the sanctuary. Mike and Pastor Randy will have the second adult class in the study office. Erica will teach the junior and high school along with the college age group in the cubby's room. Pam, 2-D, and Theresa will alternate teaching the younger age class in the fellowship hall. A series of lessons on David is available for teaching.

A tentative date for the next Sunday School social is set for July 16th.

Next meeting to be held July 11th at 2pm to discuss VBS and the Sunday School social. 2-D has agreed to place fliers to advertize VBS in the post office and Sunshine grocery store.

OUTREACH TEAM REPORT

June 11, 2023

Sunday, June 11, 2023, Amanda Benson joined us to share about her time and ministry in the Philippines. We are so blessed to have her back with us while she is on summer break. Amanda is doing amazing things at the school she teaches at over in the Philippines.



UPCOMING EVENTS FOR JULY 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

Tuesday, July 4, Independence Day

Saturday, July 8, 8 a.m. Leadership Team Meeting at Church

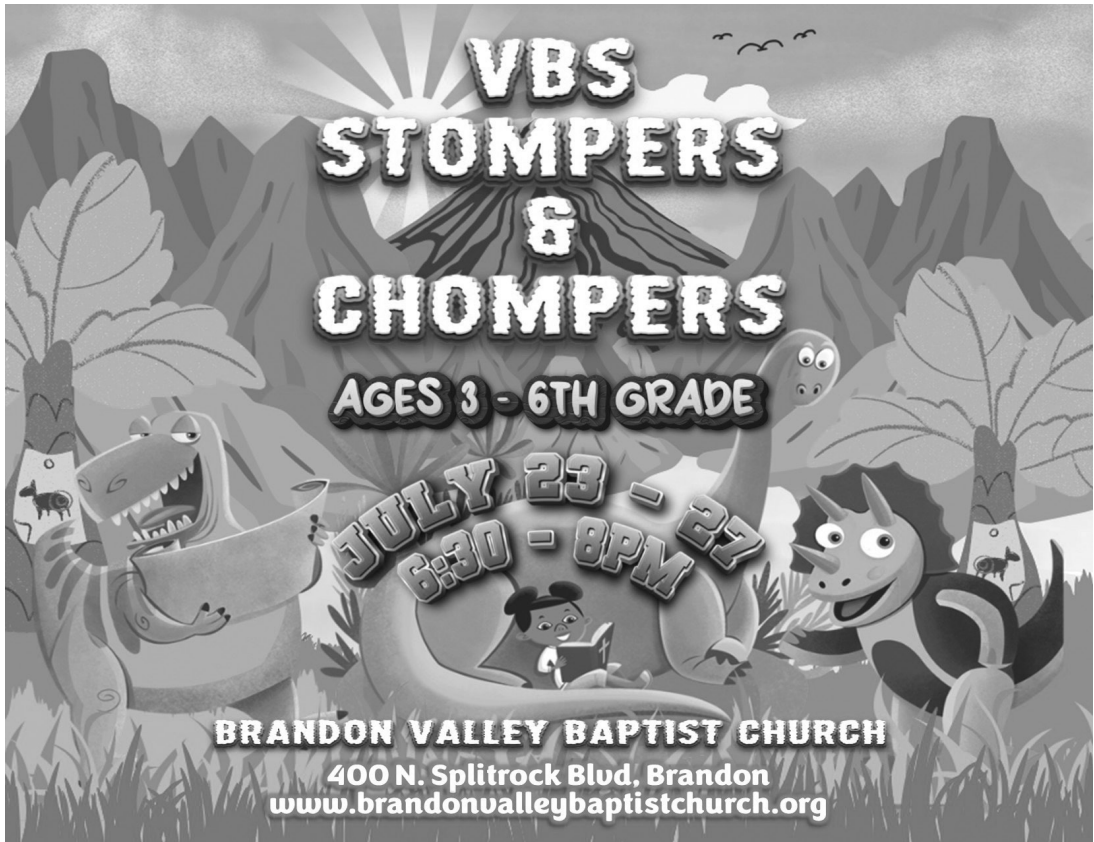
Monday, July 10, 10 a.m. All Women Welcome to watch and discuss an episode of "The Chosen" at Pat Lacey's home. Contact Jackie Kramer for more info.

Tuesday, July 11, 2 p.m. Discipleship Team Meeting at Church

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

Sunday, July 23, Newsletter Articles are Due

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



MISSIONARY UPDATES

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



June 1, 2023

WE'VE REACHED THE END!

It's so crazy to think that on Friday we'll have reached the end of the school year! It has been our first full school year in person since the 2018-2019 school year! That's crazy!

The past month has been filled with fun and chaos. We took an 8th grade retreat, where the students participated in ministry, after which we went to a retreat center. While there, the students had a chance to hear three different teachers speak (including myself) and four of their classmates speak. They also had a time around a bonfire for encouraging others, making things right with others, and praying for those who are leaving. The second day, they were able to encourage each person in their advisory group with certain characteristics they see in them. It was encouraging for both me and the students!

We also had a middle school banquet! This was our first spring banquet since before Covid! We had a blast getting dressed up and

eating together.

The details for the house are coming together! The repairs are being made. We have purchased some necessary items, and God has provided all the beds that we need! Marissa and I got to choose the colors for our rooms! We are going to be moving all our items into three rooms on June 3, but the landlords still have more to repair, so we will not be able to set up the house until we return from the summer. Please pray that it will not rain on June 3 and that we can get all the details arranged for while we are gone this summer.

I'm coming back to the US for about 7 weeks this summer! I leave here on June 6 and will return on July 24. I'm excited to get to see my family and friends! If you are free, I'll be sharing about my ministry at the following times:

- June 11 – Brandon Valley Baptist Church, Brandon, SD; 15-20 minutes during the service that starts at 9:30, then for more time during Sunday school at 10:45.
- June 24 – I'm hoping to have a time to share in Omaha from around 2-3:30. I'm still trying to determine the location, so if you think you might like to come, please let me know so I can send you the information once I have it.
- June 25 – I'll share for around 15 minutes during the service at Faith Bible Church (1555 S. 27th St, Omaha, NE 68105). The service starts at 10:30 am.

Thank you for your support throughout this year. I've been encouraged in many ways that God is indeed using me to touch the lives of my students. He has worked in their hearts throughout this year. I am currently reading narratives the 8th graders have written about how God has worked in their lives. It's amazing and encouraging to see

that He is in fact working, just as He promised.

I am excited for a break for the summer, but I'm also looking forward to seeing how God will continue to work in the coming year. Thank you for your support in this endeavor.

Amanda

Praises

- We have had a great end to the school year! It has been filled with fun and meaningful times. God has been so good this year!
- I think we have some possibilities that could fill the holes we have for Middle School for next year. I don't think everything is for sure in place, but it is encouraging to have some possibilities!
- God has been encouraging me through my students and through others to see that He is working in me and through me. It is a tough process at times, but I'm grateful for His work and His mercy.

Prayer Requests

- Pray for Marissa and I as we prepare for the house next year. Pray that we can be unified in making decisions. Pray that God would use our house to help the new ladies to adjust to their time in the Philippines. Pray also that the details of moving into a new house and then leaving the country would go smoothly.
- Pray for those who are raising support to move to the Philippines next year. Pray that God would provide for them and would bring in their support. Pray as they prepare to transition to a new country.
- Pray that my travels would go well this summer, that I would have a good time with friends and family, and that I would be able to rest and be refreshed for the upcoming school year.

DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ



June 5, 2023

Flying to Japan

We are leaving Japan on Tuesday (June 6) with mixed emotions. We are going to say “Goodbye” to Japan - a country that we love. Pray for us as we make this transition. We know that God has been leading us to this point and we are confident that God will provide. We must trust and obey God in this phase of ministry. We return to Kansas on July 11 after cleaning up our storage unit and saying goodbye to our friends – but hopefully for not forever as we do hope we can return to Japan from time to time.

Last week we moved from Elbing, Kansas to Whitewater, Kansas a total of about seven miles and we are staying in temporary housing until after July 11 when we hope to close on our house that we have been in contract to purchase for the past six months.

A little over a week ago, Darwin hit a deer on his way home to Elbing a mile and a half from home and totaled the car he was driving. Thankfully, he was not injured and no one else was in the car. Now we must settle with our insurance company regarding the vehicle.

Pray for our need for transportation after our return from Japan.

Family News

Anna is enjoying her ministry as the sport's assistant at WinShape Camp in Rome, Georgia. She oversees all the sports activities during the camp and makes 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.

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:

June 6 Fly to Haneda 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 Haneda 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

HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY



June 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

The Westminster Catechism’s first question is; “What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” When we glorify God with our lives, we will enjoy Him as well! That will be the natural result. Without God in our lives, sin naturally has it’s way. When Jesus becomes the center of our lives we can also enjoy Him!

Tom was coming down the hallway and saw me as I was waiting for the door to open so I could leave the prison. When he approached me he said, “I thought you might be a chaplain. I really want to change my life, I need to visit with you when you have time. I cannot keep living the way I am.” When I visited with Tom, he told me that his addiction to drugs had to change. We talked about the gospel and the power of Jesus Christ to change a person. Tom realized that God had not been at the center of his life. We talked about the power to overcome drugs was not through trying harder. Tom is learning that

the power is in Jesus and that transforming his mind comes through daily Bible reading and study. He has completed the Bible studies I gave him, and he attends the Christian services. One evening when Tom was scheduled to make a phone call home, he was not allowed to because of some bad actions of other inmates. Therefore no one could use the phone that evening. Instead of getting angry like many of the inmates do, he laid down on his bed and read the Bible. Other inmates asked him why he was not angry. Tom said, "God is in control and I am at peace." He was a witness to the other inmates on how to handle a disappointing situation. He has a real desire to allow God to change his life.

I go to the Hill prison on Monday mornings to visit with some of the men I know. Last week I called Bobby to the office. I have known him for over ten years, but had not talked with him for a few months. Bobby said, "I am really at a low time in my life, I have no hope. I am not guilty of the crime that was committed and no one seems to care. I don't see any light in the darkness." Bobby does know the Lord but has a problem being in crowds, so he stays to himself. Therefore, he does not have much Christian support. We talked about the hope only the Lord can give us and how He needs to become our life. The problem comes when we focus on the problem and not the Lord, the situation gets bigger in our mind. We talked about the love that God has for him and the importance of refocusing. I encouraged him to get involved in a church there. Bobby told me that the night before he asked God to give him some hope. The next morning I called him to the office to talk. When he was called to the office, he realized God did care. God is always on time with His promptings. Please pray for justice to be done for Bobby.

Ray has done a long time in prison and has lost a few family members through death. He struggles with loneliness. I tried to encourage him

to reach out to others who are going through difficulties. Lately he got a job giving out needed necessities to the incoming inmates. Ray told me that he is able to talk with them about the Lord and tell them he will pray for them. This is an answer to prayer for Ray. He now looks encouraged himself.

I thank God for you and your support. You are a blessing to this ministry!

In Christ,
Harlan

MARIJANA CIZMANSKI



June 2023

Dear prayer and supportive group of people,

May is behind us and June is here. Rainy weather is following us for quite some time now.

So many good things happened in May and I will share just a few of them:

ZZ team had our annual retreat and we expanded as a team a little bit.

We were able to rest and enjoy Serbia's beauty but also we were able to plan about the future.

We had an amazing guest, well team member Dr. Grace Lian-Bodenbah; and she shared with us why is it important to take care of ourselves and how we can take care of ourselves.

Please, pray for our team to grow even bigger and stronger!

ZZ was also able to spend a few day with ZZ coordinator and his wife, Ron and Jeannie Seck together with Hessel from Hungaria. In those

few days we were able to talk a lot about the future plans, expansion of a CHE ministry in Serbia and Balkan, make some plans for 2023-2024, visit Lutheran Church close to Novi Sad where we were able to present CHE/Community Development ministry to the congregation as the pastor is very much interested in CHE ministry, visit south Serbia for two day. What an amazing stories from those two days!

Presenting CHE in Lutheran Church. Please, pray for the expansion of the CHE within their Church.

South Serbia, Ron with Roma young man who has received Christ a year ago and is very much interested in sharing Christ with others from his village. He speaks 4 languages and is an amazing young man who want to finish school for a police officer. Please, pray for him.

Very important is that my daughter took this summer to explore and experience God guidance serving on several camps (Bosnia, Serbia and Romania) for 12 weeks in full so that she can see where God wants her in the ministry. This week she is with us, ZZ team doing summer camp in Donji Petrovci. Last week she went to Banja Luka, Bosnia to visit her friends before she leaves into a mission.

Please, pray for her as she is traveling and serving in Balkan region. But also, please pray for funds for her as she is on 50% of a budget.

Our house is still standing strong but no so much movement as Emil and I don't have spare time to work and build.

Please, pray for us to be able to put a roof this summer and close our home by the winter time.

Last but not the least, Summer camp in Donji Petrovci starts today, Monday May 5th until Thursday 8th.

A story from last week: A girl with an apple in her hands

A warm day in Donji Petrovci and we are doing our regular visit. Kids are coming, screaming because of the happiness and she is coming. Parents decided to cut her hair as she has scabs all over her head from lice. Kids are laughing to her but we are saying that it is ok, it will pass. That is giving her a bit of a comfort.

Next moment, she finds a bit apple in the grass. A bit blemish but she doesn't care. She takes it and starts to eat it.

Other children are trying to grab it from her but she is fighting back protecting her apple. Finally, she wins but she has decided to share her apple with others. She doesn't have a knife so she makes a bite and gives it to another child.

Most of the children from this village are Children in risk, children living on the street.

Please, pray for this village, for these kids, and us to make an impact on them.

Pray for our summer camp (good weather, good health, good times and changed lives).

but also pray for Youth meetings we will be starting mid June in Donji Petrovci.

May God bless you as we are serving together to make changes in many lives in Serbia and beyond!

Marijana and ZZ team

BRAD SIEFERT



June 2023

GREAT PLAINS ASSOCIATION

GPA Family,

The Church Multiplication Team was able to meet this morning for our monthly meeting. Here's the report...

MICHAEL BOYLE

As part of our church multiplication team efforts, the association was able to make a small contribution to Michael Boyle's (pastor of Memorial Baptist Church in Parkson, SD) mission trip. Here's the report that Michael provided:

I was recently blessed with the opportunity to travel to the country of Malawi with Brian Balster to help encourage pastors with African Pastoral Training Ministries. We held three 2.5 day workshops where we challenged church leaders to be faithful shepherds over God's sheep. We taught them how to use the Thompson Chain Reference Bible to develop biblically based sermons. We also showed them tools for effective communication. The trainings were very effective

and the Bibles were much appreciated. One of those who took the training said with excitement, "It's almost like I am starting my ministry all over again!"

There may be a video to share later as well. We are grateful for Michael's (and his family's) sacrifice for the kingdom!

MIKE KURREL/FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH IN ROCK RAPIDS, IA

The big report from Mike this month is that his group was able to share the gospel with a woman and she "responded favorably" and wants to start joining the group regularly. That's amazing! Mike is praising God for the many prayers that made that moment possible.

Mike and Nadia and their core group continue to work towards starting a church in Larchwood, IA. You can reach out to Mike at kurrel@gmail.com

ANDY WESNER

Andy and his wife Sarah are 2 1/3 years into planting in Montrose, CO. This month he was able to report that the 90 year old man who comes to their house gatherings brought another 90 year old to join them! That's cool!

They are sensing some momentum and are expecting a number of couples to begin joining their gatherings and are hoping a number of other couples will jump in and be a part of their leadership group. As they grow and anticipate growth they are praying about a larger meeting space and how to develop appropriate structure and systems. Also, as they are nearing the end of 3 years they are thinking about what funding will look like down the road.

If you would like to encourage Andy, reach out to him at andywesner6@gmail.com. As you probably know, the Great Plains Association is a

part of the Central Plains Region (SD down to TX and LA). We've really embraced trying to be a support and encouragement to planters across our region.

OTHER

-Our team was also able to meet with Chris Gorman and to hear about the story of West Center Baptist Church in Madison, SD planting Central Valley Community Church in Hartford, SD in 2000. Chris gave us lots of great insights into church planting. Specifically he reiterated 1) the instrumental role prayer played 2) the importance of the sending church (West Center Baptist) 3) the great help the entire GPA was 4) the need not just to gather Christians, but to reach the lost and to make disciple-making disciples. 5) the need to keep rebalancing our structure so that it supports making disciples without getting in the way of making disciples.

-We chatted about prospective planters and church planting locations. If you have someone or someplace that you think should be on our radar or that is already on your heart, please let us know!

-I hope you'll continue to pray for these church multiplication efforts and for God to send more laborers into the harvest!

-If you know someone who would like to receive GPA Church Multiplication Team emails, let me know!

-If you have a Church Multiplication effort that you would like prayer or financial or other support for, let me/us know.

Andy Wright, in behalf of the Church Multiplication Team (Brad Siefert, Matt Styles, Mike Easter, myself)

THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS



June 15, 2023 - PERSECUTION & PRAYER ALERT

NDIA: Pastor and His Family Detained on False Accusations

Sources: Morning Star News, Church in Chains, Matters India

On April 24th, Pastor Kirubendran and his family were detained for allegedly conducting “forcible conversion” activities and “insulting religion.” The pastor’s wife, Manju, was released on bail in early May, along with their 18-month-old daughter. While the toddler had not been charged, she was detained along with her mother. Despite repeated attempts to post bail, Pastor Kirubendran was not released from custody until May 24th.

The imprisoned pastor is puzzled over the charges, as he had been serving in the town of Kasimabad, Uttar Pradesh, for six years without any previous incident. In addition to leading a church, Pastor Kirubendran and Manju also provided free education to 60 impoverished children, using a government-approved curriculum. Therefore, it was a shock when a crowd of opposing community members gathered outside the couple’s home on April 23rd, hurling

accusations against them. According to a lawyer who is following the case, militant groups had compiled a list of churches in the district with the intention of filing allegations and forcibly shutting down the places of worship.

The complainant, Bupendra Singh, claimed that 50,000 rupees were offered to any villager who converted to Christianity. The Christians were also accused of promising employment and miraculous healing, along with making objectionable comments against Hindus. Though now released on bail, Pastor Kirubendran has been unable to resume services for the 90 people who regularly attend his church. The owner of the building that was being rented by church members for the services has refused to allow the Christians entrance.

According to Pastor Kirubendran, he and his family continue to remain under threat: “Those who have complained against us...are high-caste people. They are the rich and affluent. My life can get in danger; I must stay safe and keep a low profile. We will have to prove that we are not guilty, but innocent.”

The state of Uttar Pradesh heads the list for violent attacks against Christians in India, with a total of 149 reported incidents of persecution against followers of Jesus in 2022. So far, in 2023, there have already been 115 recorded anti-Christian incidents. For more information on the persecution of Christians in India, go to our country report.

Considering the extreme hostility this family is presently facing, pray that the Lord’s ministry will be experienced in their lives, keeping them safe from harm and providing for all their spiritual and practical needs. On behalf of this persecuted family, please also pray that justice would prevail in the courts, and that all charges against them will be dropped. May an amiable relationship be re-established among the Christian and Hindu

members of this community, allowing the ministering couple to continue serving the people of Kasimabad without fear of further threat or harassment.

BELARUS: Christian Man Fined for Sharing His Faith

Source: Forum18

On June 1st, a musical group of Baptist believers arranged a performance on the streets of Drogichin in southwestern Belarus. In addition to providing uplifting music, the Christians shared their faith with those who passed by. One of the evangelists, Vladimir Burshtyn, is a Christian man in his early 70s. He travelled 110 kilometres from his home in order to participate in the meeting.

Police soon intervened at the event, forcing the believers to stop their presentation. Vladimir was then taken to the local police station where he was charged for allegedly “[violating] the procedure for organizing or conducting a mass event or demonstration.” It is believed that the elderly Christian man was targeted by the authorities because he had been punished in the past for “organizing unapproved events.”

Vladimir was detained until he was taken before the judge the next day. During a closed hearing, the judge fined him 555 rubles (about \$300 CAD), which is equivalent to more than a senior citizen’s average monthly pension income. An appeal for the ruling is planned.

When the religion laws were passed in 2002, regulations governing faith-based groups in Belarus were considered the most restrictive of all the European countries. As the government is in the process of revising that legislation, with the intent of adding further restrictions, a draft of proposed changes has been released. To read more about the challenges being encountered by our Christian brothers and sisters in Belarus, go to our country report.

Pray that Vladimir will receive divine guidance and provision as he deals with the charges against him and the resulting fine. In fact, please prayerfully ask the Lord to continue meeting the needs of all believers in Belarus who are boldly sharing their faith with those around them through their vital outreaches. May the wisdom of God, which He so willingly imparts through His Holy Spirit to all who seek Him, sovereignly direct these believers so they can continue effectively spreading the Gospel message amid opposition.

CHINA: Believers Denied Access to Their Homes

Source: ChinaAid

Several members of the Early Rain Covenant Church who reside in the Languang Changdao apartment complex have been prevented from entering the building. Around noon on June 6th, families who tried to return to their homes were denied access to their apartments. When they attempted to go into the building, security guards and others assaulted the believers.

That evening, the apartment manager stopped Xu Haijun and his wife, Jin Ying, from entering their residence. As other Christians assembled to support the couple, Jin spoke to the gathering crowd, saying, "They don't allow us to live here simply because of our religious beliefs." The Christians shouted in response, "We want to go home! We want to go home!"

While the church members continued to gather, the apartment's managerial staff recruited some people to attack the crowd of believers, beating and robbing them. The injured Christians called the police to report the situation, but the authorities did not show up. Some of the believers went to the police station, seeking assistance, but they were ignored.

Church members living within this apartment complex have faced opposition for several months. In addition to being stopped multiple times, Preacher Wu Wuqing's family remains prohibited from returning to their residence. When the Christian family attempted to move some furniture on May 17th, the security guards would not allow it. In the end, the authorities threw the family's personal furniture in the trash.

On the day of this most recent incident, the Early Rain Covenant Church sent out a statement requesting prayer for the displaced church members. Within the statement, the church leaders also called on fellow believers in other parts of the world to pray about the worsening of religious freedom conditions in China: "Please also pray for Chengdu and China. If law enforcement continues to destroy the rule of law, and the government continues to abuse its power, not only Christians will suffer, but the whole country will face a dark future."

Further information on the difficulties faced by members of this church in recent years, as well as reports addressing other incidents of persecution against believers in this nation, are available at our country report.

Pray for wisdom on behalf of these ill-treated church members who are being denied rightful access to their homes. Ask God to clearly direct their next steps as they contemplate how to appropriately deal with the situation, also filling them with comfort, courage and peace. In the process, may these persecuted Christians serve as effective testimonies of the Lord's love and grace to the apartment manager, other tenants living in the complex, as well as the authorities involved in the incident. Finally, please intercede for the nation of China as a whole, praying that the Holy Spirit will work powerfully in the hearts and minds of people throughout the nation.

CRISIS IN UKRAINE



HELP UKRAINE



June 13, 2023

“Hello! My name is Suzanne, I am from Mariupol. I have two children, 6 and 14 years old.

We experienced terrible things in Mariupol. When the war broke out, we were at home. Then heavy shelling began and we went to our acquaintance’s basement. He provided us with accommodation. But when the shelling started in the downtown, we lost everything. We almost lost our cat.

When the water was cut off, it happened in the first days of the war, it was very difficult. Then they cut off the gas, we cooked outside. We burnt doors and other stuff...

After living in the basement for a month, we decided to go to the hospital because we found out that we had a chance to be taken to Russia. One night in the hospital, the three of us slept on the same bed, including our cat. Then we were taken out. I went with my two children and we were treated with bread, we were very happy. We

were glad to be in a quiet place.

We lived in Russia for two months. We lived in terrible conditions. I decided that I had to go home, because there was no civilization there. It took us around a week to get back to Ukraine, we traveled through Moscow and Belarus.

We went to Brest in Belarus, where the church helped us to go back to Ukraine. We walked 700 meters from the Belarusian post to the Ukrainian one. We were walking all in tears because we were glad to be home. We lived in Kyiv for 5 months, shelling started again. People helped us to leave for Poltava. Poltava is a wonderful city with kind people.

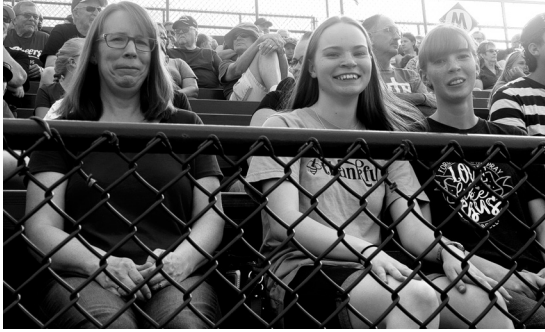
Thank you to our local church for helping hundreds of people. We are grateful to you!”

CANARIES FAMILY AND FAITH NIGHT

June 14, 2023

About 50 BVBC members, including their family and friends, gathered to enjoy great fellowship and a great game! The weather was perfect and they even won! According to the Canaries news, "The Canaries emphatically snapped a six-game losing skid on Wednesday, rolling past Winnipeg 19-0 in front of a crowd of 3,552 at the Bird Cage on Wednesday." Thank you to all that came out to enjoy the night!





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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**