

# BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

August 2023

Editor Janelle Daum

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*“As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No.” II Corinthians 1:18*

Last month we began to look at how the Apostle Paul began to deal with challenges that were made to his integrity. 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 in II Corinthians 1 he answers 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.”

Golfer Chelsee Richard, of Bloomingdale High School in Brandon, Florida, gives us a good example of how to maintain integrity. She lost her chance to win the 2004 state championship—by being honest. In the qualifier for the state finals, Chelsee hit her tee shot on the second hole into the rough. Without knowing it, she played another golfer's ball out of the rough and finished the hole. On the third hole, she realized what she had done. The rule is that a golfer must declare the wrong ball penalty before putting it in the hole where the infraction occurred or be disqualified.

Drawing strength from her favorite Bible verse, Philippians 4:13, Chelsee reported her error, a painful ending to her senior season and her dream of going to state. She later said: "With my faith and with God, being honest was the most important thing to me, and that's what is going to advance on throughout my life, being honest and making the right choices."

The first step Paul took was to establish his motives. From there he goes on to put the actions being attacked in context. The second accusation that Paul faced was that he vacillated... he said one thing and did another. That is one of the more crucial tests for integrity. In I Corinthians 16:2-8 Paul had laid out a tentative plan to visit them. His scheduled route was from Ephesus to Macedonia to Corinth and then possibly on to Jerusalem. In between the letters of I and II Corinthians he had contacted them with a new schedule. In vv.15-16 he had changed his plans to include another stop in Corinth. He now planned to go from Ephesus straight to Corinth, then to Macedonia, back to Corinth, and then on to Judea. When he actually made the trip it had changed again. He had gone from Ephesus to Troas to Macedonia (his location when he was writing this letter).

His critics made all of these changes an issue of character and

integrity. Paul responds to their attacks in v.17, *“Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say ‘Yes, yes’ and ‘No, no’ at the same time?”*

The claim was that he would say anything to make people happy, but when it came right down to it he would do whatever was the most beneficial to him at the time. They interpreted his motives as being selfish and his actions as being vacillation with no concern for the problems or needs at Corinth.

When integrity is attacked in that way it is important to interpret events for people so that they can understand what took place. Paul has already defended his motives as being pure in the grace of God. His actions were the result of that motive. If Paul were acting in the flesh then the charge of vacillation might be valid. He had obviously made plans and then changed them. But the changes weren't the result of selfish desires and interests. In v.18 the faithfulness of God becomes Paul's witness that he didn't vacillate or give them an ambiguous message' *“As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No.”*

The consistent factor here is Paul's submission to the will of God. All human plans should always be subject to change according to God's plans. The problem was that Paul's detractors wanted to take each of his plans as absolutes when in reality they were only tentative, subject to change if God led in a different way. Paul was far from being selfish and vacillating. He was humble and submissive to the Lord. It was an important lesson for the Corinthians to learn.

When integrity is questioned, the critics will interpret actions and events according to their own agenda. To restore integrity, actions must be interpreted according to the existing context and motives. In Paul's case he had to explain why a change in plans was actually

consistent. That went beyond the actions to the greater commitment he had made to be submissive to God's will at all times. In that context the questions of integrity were completely put to rest.

When issues of integrity arise that focus on our actions it is important that we let others know why those actions were taken. When actions are explained and put into context they begin to take on a different look. When integrity is attacked it's crucial that people understand our actions and why they took place in the way that they did. That is what Paul did in these verses and his explanation restored his integrity, which was going to be crucial for the rest of the message in this letter. It is just as crucial for all of us to maintain integrity through contextualization of our actions. Next month we look at one more step for maintaining our integrity.

Blessings,

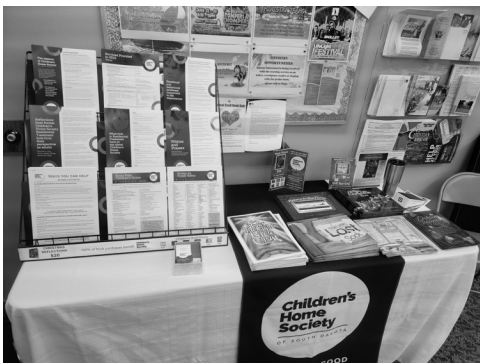
Pastor Randy

# COMMITTEE REPORTS

## OUTREACH TEAM REPORT

**JULY 16, 2023**

On Sunday, July 16, 2023, Tom Roberts from the Children's Home Society joined us to share about the ministry, needs, and history. He also blessed us with his wonderful story telling voice and an amazing story he wrote about a broken-down home and how it was brought back to life with the right support, tools, and love. He explained how the children of the Children's Home Society inspired him to write this beautiful story. I think we all would agree, that "Tom" was in disguise, and it was really Santa Claus that was telling us the story!! Thank you so much Tom for all you do for the children and for taking the time to share your story with us!



# **UPCOMING EVENTS FOR AUGUST 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**

**Sunday, August 6,** Hymn Sing and Potluck

**Monday, August 7, 10 a.m.** Ladies Study of "The Chosen" at Pat Lacey's Home

**Monday, August 7, 6 p.m.** Spiritual Vision Team Meeting

**Tuesday, August 8, 2 p.m.** Discipleship Team Meeting

**Sunday, August 13,** Paul Harkness with Awana Ministries Presentation and Sermon Message

**Sunday, August 20,** Newsletter Articles are Due

**Friday, August 25 - Saturday, August 26,** Youth Rummage and Baked Goods Sale



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**Festival Schedule: Noon-11PM**

## MISSIONARY UPDATES

### AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



**July 1, 2023**

#### WATERING SEEDS

*Last week, as we always do, we again encouraged Ami\* to focus not only on enjoying & graduating Faith Academy but find what you want to study further in college and what you want to do for a living, because Ami mentioned what you have shared in OE that you loved to stay in the Philippines and you loved your job, and how blessing it is to have a job/meet a purpose in your life like that.*

*She said she was now interested in becoming a teacher like teachers in Faith Academy because she realized she enjoys teaching in ministry opportunities in Faith Academy and Faith Academy teachers always amazes her like there is a person like this existing. Teacher's responses and reactions are always beyond expectations and she is always impressed by what seem pretty normal things for them (teachers) to do.*

*It reminds me of 1 Cor.3:6, I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.*



Ami was a new student to Faith Academy this last year, and she was a part of my advisory group. Her parents are missionaries, and she had previously gone to a different local school in the Philippines. She had a lot of struggles in her previous school, and when she started at Faith Academy, she brought a lot of trauma with her. She had frequent breakdowns during the day, and she also was questioning if God was even real.

We spent a lot of time working with Ami. I sat with her many times, helping her breathe, giving her tissues, praying with her and speaking truth into her life. It was amazing to see her grow through the year. God really worked in her life, providing her friends and a caring environment. By the end of the year, she was excitedly participating in our ministry days, and she even planned to share the message for a group of 3rd graders in Tagalog. She made many friends and hardly had any breakdowns. Though I'm not sure if she has given her life to Christ or not yet, she has definitely grown in her understanding of God as she asked questions and saw God displayed through the lives of students and staff at Faith Academy.

I was so humbled and encouraged by the email her mother sent me earlier this month (at the beginning of this letter). It is amazing what things we say to kids that sticks with them, things that we just say in passing that we really don't think much about. And we also never know what aspects of our lives God will use to lead others on the path that He has for them. I also love the verse that Ami's mom shared at the end. I know that God has placed each student in my life for a reason and for a season. Sometimes I get to plant seeds. Many of these students already have many seeds planted, and I get to water them. But I know that either way, God is the one who is ultimately working in their lives to make those seeds grow.

I love getting to be a part of this. I love that I get to plant and water

seeds in the lives of the students at Faith Academy. And the amazing thing is that you also are part of this planting and watering through your prayers, encouragement, and financial support. I hope that once we get to Heaven, God will show us all the ways He used us to impact the lives of others...and we'll want to do nothing but fall down at His feet in worship, giving Him all the glory for what He has done.

Amanda

\*Name changed to protect the student.

I was able to share at my church on my first Sunday back in the country.

### ***Praises***

- I had a safe and smooth trip to the US and have greatly enjoyed my time with friends and family.
- Praise God for the ways He has used me in this past year and will continue to do so as I serve at Faith Academy.
- I have had a very restful and refreshing summer break so far.

### ***Prayer Requests***

- Pray for continued safety as I travel with my family in the next couple weeks, as well as when I return to Manila on July 23.
- Pray that God would prepare me for the year ahead. Pray that this upcoming school year would be one where He draws me even closer to Himself, uses me in the ministries He has for me, and brings glory to Himself through my life.
- Pray for God's provision for the needs we still have at Faith Academy, as well as for those who are about to transition to the Philippines for the first time.

# DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ



**June 29, 2023**

## **From Japan**

Thank you for your prayers for us. We arrived safely in Japan, and we did not waste any time cleaning out our storage unit. By 7 a.m. the next day we started sorting through our stuff, deciding what to send to the USA and what to give away.

A week later we invited our missionary friends to our place and within hours most of our furniture and items were gone. It was a blessing to see our friends again and a huge blessing to see how things disappeared and we no longer had to look at it.

Thanks for praying for us as we were able to determine the best way to send stuff to the USA and hopefully before Christmas we will be reunited with our stuff.

We had a great farewell service on June 18th with Nishibori Christ Gospel Church. It was a very meaningful time for us as the church goers shared how we made a difference there.

We have met or planning to meet many friends in the next two weeks, pray that these times together would be meaningful and that we would

point people to Christ in these talks.

We are currently at Yamanaka Chalet, a SEND owned retreat center near the base of Mount Fuji. It is important for us to say goodbye to this place as well as it has been very life-giving place to us through our many years of ministry here in Japan with SEND International.

Next week we will go to Okutama Bible Chalet from July 4-7 where we will get to meet many of our SEND International colleagues who are also our friends.

Pray for our housing after we arrive back in Kansas on July 11. God orchestrated a house for us right before we left for Japan. Pray that we will be able to close on the house when we get back. Pray for us as we need to fill this house with furniture that will meet our needs. It is important to get the office setup before August 1 as this is when Darwin will be starting to serve SEND International as the assistant treasurer to the International Office.

### **Family News**

Anna continues to serve 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 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. Pray for our transportation needs as we need to purchase a vehicle soon after arriving in USA.

12. 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



**July 2023**

***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” Romans 1:16***

Some people become a Christian soon after they hear the gospel and commit their life to Jesus Christ. Some have gone through many difficulties in life before they realize that Jesus is their only hope of change. Many in prison have made wrong choices that will often bring them to the end of themselves and without hope. From the beginning of my prison ministry my desire was to bring hope to those who had no hope.

I met Rick as I was leaving the prison. He is from Unit C, which is a minimum facility where some of them have jobs on the grounds. Rick asked me, “Are you a pastor?” I told him, he was right. “I feel the need to talk to you.” He went on to tell me, “I really don’t know where to turn in my life. My wife died a year ago and I got angry with God. I made bad decisions after that happened. In fact, I don’t know if there is a God. I don’t know where to turn and what life is all about. I told him the reason I became a chaplain was to bring people hope when

they feel there is no hope in life. Then I explained the gospel to Rick and told him that he was loved dearly by God! Rick said, "You are very passionate about what you are telling me aren't you?" I told him that is because Jesus changed my life, and He would do the same for him. I had the opportunity to pray with him. Afterward he told me how thankful he was that we had talked. I informed him that Pastor Greg has a church service in unit C on Monday evenings, and Greg would love to have him come to it! God's timing is always right! I met Rick a few days ago and he told me now he has cancer and might die from it.

I plan on following up with up Rick. Pray that he will be open to the gospel!

James is familiar with the prison. He has been through the system several times. Every time I visited him in the past, he told me he was saved. This time when I talked with him, he told me that things were different. James said, "I thought I knew the Lord before, but now I realize that all the Bible knowledge I had was just head knowledge. I wanted people to think of me as really knowing the Bible and I was proud of that knowledge. The Lord has shown me that there was no power for me to overcome drugs with all my head knowledge when I didn't know Him from my heart. This time it is different because I know Him with my heart!" James' testimony reminded me of what Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life" (John 5:39). It is all about knowing Jesus, not just knowing about Him.

Some of the men who attend church also attend the Native American sweat lodge. Most of them have been encouraged to attend by friends. It is a covered area with heated rocks, and the belief is that they sweat out their sins. Ron is one of the men who I have met with weekly with for over a year. Others were trying to persuade him to

attend the sweat lodge. He told them, "How can I do that to my Lord and Savior? Jesus paid for my sins on the cross and sat down at the Father's right hand showing His work was complete. There is no other sacrifice for sins, other than Jesus'." I told him that was a great answer, and I was proud of him for standing strong in the Lord!

Praise the Lord for the freedom we have in the U.S., and the freedom we have in Christ! Thank you for your prayers and financial gifts!

In Christ,

Harlan

# TBN 2ND CHANCE

## RESTORING HOPE TO INMATES



2ND Chance ministries from Hendersonville, Tennessee, performed at the prison on June 30. They have been partnering with TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network) to make a greater impact on a national scale. They have performed in many prisons in 32 states doing evangelistic concerts.

There were 50 inmates who attended the performance on June 30. All who attended heard the plan of salvation through music and testimony.

Praise God for people like the 2ND Chance Ministries team who have a heart for inmates across the nation!

## THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS



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

**June 13, 2023 - PERSECUTION & PRAYER ALERT**

**LIBYA: Imprisonment for Leaving Islam**

Source: VOMC Contacts

Over three months ago, at least ten Libyan Christians were arrested for converting from Islam to Christianity. Two other believers, one from Nigeria and one from Pakistan, have also been arrested because of their association with these Libyan converts. All twelve arrested believers are being held on charges of proselytism (considered “instigating division” by governing officials) which carry a maximum sentence of death.

Islam remains the dominant religion in Libya and forms the basis for the country’s legal system. While there is no law explicitly prohibiting religious conversions, some Muslim leaders have argued that leaving Islam is an act of apostasy, which happens to be punishable by death.

***Please pray with us that these believers will be released from custody and set free of all charges. Ask the Lord to touch the hearts of the officials responsible for their arrests – as well as those representing the country’s other levels of governance –***

***bringing about a favourable outcome for these faithful followers of Jesus and others facing similar charges. May God direct Libya's leaders, leading to a political and legal system that provides all believers protection from unjust accusations and grants them the freedom to gather for worship without the threat of imprisonment and life-threatening sentences.***

## **CHINA: Churches Mandated to Promote Communism**

Source: ChinaAid

On July 3rd, a banner displaying the Communists' symbolic 'hammer and sickle' was raised next to the Shinian Christian Church in Zhejiang province, China. According to a pastor in the area, the Taizhou Religious Affairs Bureau sent notices to local churches mandating that all religious venues must put up large signs with the following wording at their entrances: "Love the Chinese Communist Party, love the country, and love the religion," as well as "Uphold the principle of developing religions in the Chinese context."

What is unusual about this demand is the fact that the notified churches are not part of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and thus there is no legal grounds for displaying the signs. However, according to a local pastor, officials are implementing religious persecution as a means of gaining political influence and promotion.

Since Christianity is flourishing in Zhejiang province, governing officials are increasing measures to control it. This has brought about demands that religion must "develop in the Chinese context," an ideology also known as "Sinicization." Christians who do not adhere to this process by adapting their beliefs to socialist values frequently encounter harsh persecution. Due to current trends, it is anticipated that religious oppression in the region is likely to escalate over the next few years.



***As the church leaders in Zhejiang province deal with the increased expectations being placed on them, pray that they will receive God's divine wisdom and guidance. In spite of attempts by CCP officials to Sinicize the Christian faith, may the Gospel message remain untainted so many more people throughout China will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Please also remember the many believers who are presently suffering for their faith, asking the Lord to grant each one of them the strength and grace to continue faithfully serving as His courageous witnesses.***

### **INDONESIA: Seal Removed from Church Building**

Sources: Morning Star News, VOI, Kilat.com

Christians in Ciracas, East Jakarta, were jubilant when local officials removed the seal from the door of their church building on June 26th, three months after it was forced to close. The officials had claimed earlier that the congregation's legal permits and other requirements were incomplete, leading to the closure of the GKI Palsigunung church building on March 20th.

During the month of March, just prior to the closure, the church was forced to move to a new area after flooding drove the congregants from their previous worship site. Upon finding a new location, they obtained the required number of signatures from nearby residents – a government prerequisite for establishing a place of worship in the community – and applied for the necessary permits. However, because the local neighborhood leader, as well as the head of the Citizens Association, refused to sign the application, the church building was forcibly sealed.

Apparently, some officials had understood that the building was to be used as offices and not as a place of worship. Now that the

authorities have reopened the church, one provincial leader stated that concessions will be made to allow worship in the building while the final paperwork is being completed. It is hoped that the revisions to the application will be completed soon, allowing the building to be legally used as a place of worship. One member of the church expressed her hopes that the church will not be forced to close again.

Places of worship in Indonesia frequently encounter obstacles when attempting to conduct services, particularly from local governments. Strict permit requirements are in place for churches, and the arduous permission process can take years to complete. Sometimes local officials also attempt to ban religious gatherings in local homes.

***Praise God that these church members have gained access to their new building! Pray that the permit process will be completed promptly and efficiently, allowing these believers to resume their worship activities without encountering any further difficulties. Continue to pray for the many other churches in Indonesia that are experiencing opposition from local groups wanting to prevent the advancement of the Gospel, asking the Lord to minister renewed strength, peace and encouragement to His persevering followers.***

## CRISIS IN UKRAINE



**June 18, 2023**

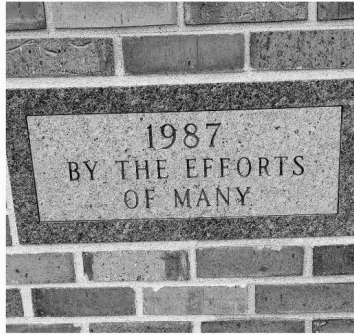
From one of our church partners in Ukraine:

“From the bottom of my heart and in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, I send you greetings,

We, the whole church, are grateful to you for your financial help in order to fix our vehicle so we can minister to those serving in the war. We believe and we see that this is a time when the church needs to minister to our soldiers and to their families who are experiencing tragedies involving their sons, daughters, and husbands because of this horrible war!

May God Himself bless you, and your ministry and return 100-fold to you.

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Christ for a changing world.*



## BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH



EST. 1978

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[brandonvalleybaptistchurch.org](http://brandonvalleybaptistchurch.org)



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**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**