

BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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Editor Janelle Daum

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“But I call God to witness against me – it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.”

II Corinthians 1:23-24

Certain events are etched into all of our minds. Many of us can remember where we were and what we were doing during tragic events. For example, people can still tell you where they were when Kennedy was shot. Most people can tell you what they were doing when the World Trade Center buildings went down. When the space shuttle Challenger lifted into the sky and blew up 73 seconds into its

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flight, we faced one of those events that we can never forget. Most of us remember the videotape of that terrible moment. We can re-create the picture in our minds of a deep blue sky marked with twisted trails of smoke and large chunks of metal plummeting toward the ocean. And we know, as we recall the grim specter of the explosion, that among the falling pieces were the bodies of some of America's finest men and women.

What we don't remember is that the investigations into the cause of that tragedy pointed out some serious shortfalls in human judgment and materials management. The New York Times put it bluntly: "The ultimate cause of the space shuttle disaster was pride. A group of top managers failed to listen carefully to the warnings of those down the line who were concerned about the operational reliability of certain parts of the booster rocket under conditions of abnormal stress. The people in charge were confident that they knew best and that they should not change the launch schedules. They were wrong."

The issue is integrity. I would guess that if we had been able to question each of those top-level managers before that disaster we would have found that, to a person, they would have claimed to be people of integrity. Yet few would agree with that assessment now. Their integrity was thoroughly discredited in one explosion that rocked the nation. It does no good to claim to have integrity if the claim is not followed up with actions that display it to others.

Last month we saw Paul defending his claim to be a man of integrity. The claim had to be followed up with action. That is what we find as we continue on in II Corinthians." Integrity is displayed most vividly in our compassionate acts towards others." Paul understood that we have to do more than just talk about integrity: we have to show it. Our acts of compassion show it more clearly than any other works.

So in II Corinthians 1:23–2:4 Paul goes on to talk about three of his acts of compassion toward the Corinthians that proved his claims of integrity.

Paul begins by talking about acts of servanthood. A man was struggling to get to Grand Central Station in New York City. The wind blew fiercely, and the rain beat down on him as he lugged his two heavy suitcases toward the terminal. Occasionally he would pause to rest and regain his strength before trudging on against the elements.

At one point he was almost ready to collapse, when a man suddenly appeared by his side, took the suitcases, and said in a strangely familiar voice, “We are going the same way. You look as if you could use some help.” When they had reached the shelter of the station, the weary traveler, the renowned educator Booker T. Washington, asked the man, “Please, sir, what is your name?” The man replied, “The name, my friend, is Roosevelt. Teddy Roosevelt.”

The greatest essence of servanthood is found in someone who is strong reaching down to help someone who is struggling. There is no greater compassionate act of integrity.

What we find in vv.23–24 is that the apostle Paul, who arguably held one of the strongest positions in the church, willingly put himself in the position of being a servant to the Corinthians because of his integrity toward them. The important thing to remember is that Paul knew what it meant to suffer. In v.8 he described a time of suffering that was so severe that he believed he was going to die. He had endured pain and stress that he would not wish on anyone else. That experience of suffering had a great effect on his actions toward the Corinthians. He didn’t want to have to put them through anything close to the suffering he had experienced.

The charges had been made that Paul had vacillated in his travel

plans. In I Corinthians he had given them one itinerary. Later, he had given them other plans. Then his final journey did not look like either one. Paul's critics claimed that he did this because it was not in his best interest to go to Corinth at the time. Paul turns that around and shows how his change in plans had actually been an act of compassionate servanthood.

His discussion hinges around the phrase: "... *To spare you I refrained from coming again to Corinth.*" Don't forget that Paul was an apostle. That office carried with it some unpleasant duties, one of which was rebuking and chastening backslidden believers. He made that clear in I Corinthians 4:21 when he asked them, "*Shall I come to you with a rod or with love in a spirit of gentleness?*" He follows that question up in I Corinthians 5 with an illustration of what it meant to use the apostle's rod. At times an apostle was required to wield the rod of discipline. This was another one of those times.

The Corinthians had made a lot of progress in their spiritual growth, and they were continuing to make a lot of progress. But there were some major issues that they had not dealt with completely. There were still some very evident sins within the body that needed to be cleansed. They were working on it, but they had not made it yet.

Here is Paul's dilemma. Those areas that the Corinthians were working on so slowly were significant. If he went to Corinth he was bound, as an apostle, to confront those problems with a rod of discipline. That would bring suffering into their lives, and he was very sensitive to that fact. If he stayed away, they could continue with their present action. The fact that they are dealing with their sin is emphasized in v.24 where Paul says that they are standing firm in their faith.

What swayed his decision was his servant's heart. He could have gone in and taken over and dealt with the sin in the church. But that

would have only established him as a dictator over the church. The people would not have grown because they would not have to make the hard decisions about right and wrong. Paul would be making those decisions for them. Paul wasn't in the business of maintaining a nursery. His desire was for the Corinthian church to grow into a body that was spiritually mature in Christ. He didn't want robots, he wanted people who were mature enough to minister and serve the Lord on their own. The greatest service he could perform for them was to delay his visit and give them room to grow. That is why he lays out his heart in v. 24 and tells them that he did not want to lord it over them, he wanted to work with them. He didn't want to order them around, he wanted to help them grow.

His change in travel plans was not vacillation, it was an act of compassionate integrity. One of the most important goals of Paul's ministry was to see others grow into maturity in Christ. As a servant he did all that he could to promote that growth. By staying away from Corinth, he allowed that growth to continue. He chose to serve them rather than to oppress them as a dictator. It was a compassionate act that clearly displayed his integrity as an apostle. Next month we will look at the two other acts of compassion that proved Paul's integrity.

Blessings,

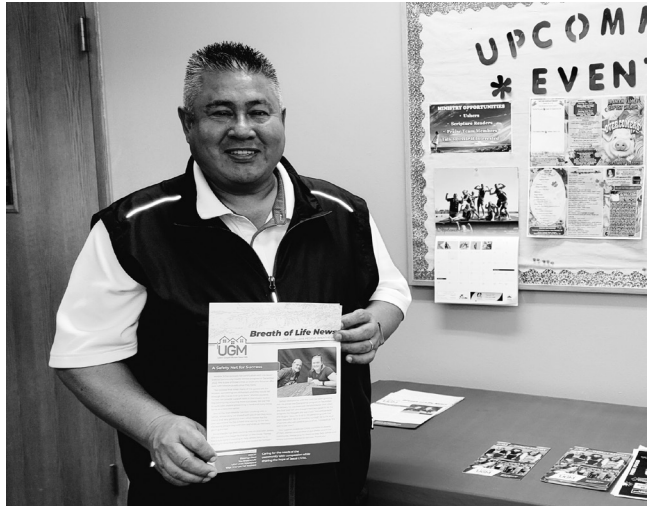
Pastor Randy

COMMITTEE REPORTS

OUTREACH TEAM REPORT

September 17, 2023

Sunday, September 17, 2023, Eric Weber, CEO of the Union Gospel Mission joined us to share the updates and more about the ministry. What an eye opener! Thank you so much for taking the time to be with us.



UPCOMING EVENTS FOR OCTOBER AND BEYOND

EVENTS CALENDAR 2023:

Sunday's

9:30 a.m. Worship Service

10:30 a.m. Fellowship

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

Wednesday's

6 p.m. AWANA Supper; **6:30 p.m.** Awana Ages 3 - 8th Grade

7:30 p.m. Youth Group 9th - 12th grade

Thursday's

1 p.m. Women's Bible Study at Various Homes

4:30 p.m. Women's Bible Study at Various Homes

Saturday's

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

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

Upcoming Events

Sunday, October 8, Brad Seifert with Great Plains Association
Presentation

Sunday, October 22, Newsletter Articles are Due

MISSIONARY UPDATES

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



September 3, 2023

A FAMILY'S MINISTRY

Faith Academy (FA) was started to support missionary families in Southeast Asia. This has always been the vision of FA throughout the years, though what that has looked like has changed significantly in the last 10 or so years. In those years, our number of Filipino students has significantly increased, now making it one of our students' top three ethnicities. Many of the Filipino families are not missionaries, though many of them are in Christian ministry. This past month, I had the privilege of attending a seminar, put on by the parents of one of my new students, where they shared all about their ministry/business.

One of the family's ministries is called LeadOut Coaching & Consultancy. LeadOut is designed to help organizations guide their companies with integrity and on the foundation of the gospel. One message that was shared loud and clear was that we are not to separate our faith from our everyday lives. As we follow Christ, it should be intertwined into everything we do, including our work. The head of a famous sports company in the Philippines, Toby's

Sports, shared his testimony of working with LeadOut and how their company wasn't originally founded as a "Christian company," but they are working to change that now. It was amazing to think of how my student's family and their company is working so intentionally with so many influential people in the Philippines to spread the gospel to their employees and build workplaces based on the gospel.

I was really struck by this conference, as usually I think of the missionaries that I am supporting while working here and how what I am doing here allows them to be on the field doing what God has called them to do. And being here most definitely does that. But the Lord showed me how me being here also allows Filipinos to continue the work that God has called them to do in their home country. It reminds me that all believers are called to serve the Lord wherever we are at. We don't have to go overseas to do that, though some are called to. But even those who are not called to go overseas are called to be intentional about spreading the gospel and growing in Christ each and every day.

I'm so grateful to be here and to be able to serve not only the missionaries, but also the Filipinos who have chosen to send their children to Faith Academy. I love so much that I get to be a part of teaching them what it means to follow Christ, through good and bad. And I'm also thankful for everyone of you who is a part of this mission through your prayers, financial support, and encouragement.

I can't wait to see what God is going to do this year, not just in and through me, but also through the families of the students I teach. He has some great things planned!

Amanda

Praises

- Praise for a great start to the school year! Things were really busy the first two weeks, but they were manageable. It's been nice to be in my second year as VP, as I actually know what I'm doing!
- Praise God for the ways He continues to grow me and challenge me in my life and in my walk with Him. I'm thankful for a friend who is helping me process a lot of my life and continually speaks truth into my life. I'm thankful that in this season, the Lord has been very near and present.
- In the past month, the Lord has renewed my vision for helping others, particularly new staff members. It has been a source of joy as I have been able to do that. Though member care isn't my job here, it is definitely on my heart, and I'm thankful for ways I can serve our staff, even without an official role.

Prayer Requests

- Pray for our school year. Our theme is Complete Harmony. Already I have seen ways that this has played out, both in good times and in hard times. Pray that as a school, we can seek to have harmony. Pray that the Spirit would help us in this process so that we can glorify His name.
- Pray for wisdom for my co-leader and I as we lead the 8th grade girls Flight group. They have chosen to study Revelation, which we're both a bit nervous about, but we pray that it will be good for all of us. Pray that Jessica and I can help the girls to really look at Scripture and ask good questions, even if we don't get answers.
- Pray that I continue to process well the various personal experiences that I have. I've learned a lot in the last year or two about myself and how to better process my life, and it's a continual journey. Pray that I would be open to what God is teaching me and be willing to grow, even when it is hard.

DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ



August 27, 2023

Ministry Update

What an encouragement it is to be able to be so involved in getting the good news of Jesus Christ all over the world. We get to hear from missionaries from all over the world. We don't get the stories firsthand, but we see how missionaries are getting reimbursed for their expenses and Darwin with his new role as assistant to the International Office Treasurer gets to help process these reimbursements to missionaries so that they can get reimbursed in a timely fashion. It is great to not only continue to help Japan missionaries, but also the leaders that serve with the International Office as well as other countries that SEND International serve. SEND International has a little less than 500 missionaries worldwide.

Pray for missionaries that you know, send short emails to them and encourage them that you are praying for them. Remember their birthdays and send them small gifts of encouragement to them. I can tell you that the financial support that you send is very appreciated and it is only through the sacrificial giving of God's people all over the world that missionaries can continue to share the good news.

In my last newsletter Darwin shared the following principle. Monday morning after sending that he found out he said it in the wrong order. He will share it again.

Incorrect: “Income into your bank account is a credit and expenses out of your bank account is a debit.”

Correct: “Income into your bank account is a debit and expenses out of your bank account is a credit.”

Pray for Darwin that he may have wisdom as he figures out when to enter a number as a credit and when it should be a debit.

An attempt at some humor: An accountant is having a hard time sleeping and goes to see his doctor.

“Doctor, I just can’t get to sleep at night,” he says. “Have you tried counting sheep?” inquires the doctor. And the accountant replies, “That’s the problem - I make a mistake and then spend three hours trying to find it.”

Karen has started her last two classes (“Theology and Philosophy of Ministry to Women” and “Theology and Practice in the Early Church through the Reformation”) with Moody Bible Institute. She really enjoys them and thinks that she will be able to use what she is learning in her future ministry.

Family News

Anna is back 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. She has the same roommate for the third year in a row and just really enjoys her classes and being back with her friends after a long summer away.

Clara is back at Berean Academy where she has many of her same friends, but new classes in different rooms. She enjoys biking around Whitewater with her friends who live in the area.

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:

Aug 31 Anna Birthday

Sept 2-10 Darwin will be in Mountain Lake, Minnesota with his parents and working from the basement (Pray for Karen and Clara who will stay in Kansas)

Sept 6 Karen will start leading a ladies Bible Study from her home

Sept 27-29 Missio Nexus - Annual Mission Leaders Conference – Orlando, Florida

Nov 2-4 Columbia International University Homecoming 2023 – Columbia, South Carolina

Dec 5 Darwin and Karen's 25th wedding anniversary

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

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

9. 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 Stoesz

RICK & DEBBI BARDIN - CAMEROON



August 2023

WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY!

Praises

- THE LONG-AWAITED PRAISE!!!!!!! Dr. Mbanga has completed his exams and is now a full-time pathologist here at MBH!
- The hospital vehicles have been allowed to make the trip to Bamenda and back to pick up and take back patients, even in a 2.5-month road lockdown.
- Debbi has been able to work some days in the clinic these past 3 month, and a big praise for Violet who after many years of coming has decided to follow Jesus.

Prayer

- Pray for Dr. Mbanga to start well and learn quickly under Rick's mentorship.
- Pray for open roads and open market (we have been in lockdown for 2.5 months).
- Pray for our administration to have divine insight and guidance as

to how to keep the hospital going, especially financially and keeping needed supplies in stock. The water tank and Radiation Therapy Center are on hold for now due to supplies not being able to reach here.

Men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. [. . .]

They lowered the sick man down through the roof in front of Jesus.

LUKE 5: 18 – 19

These last 2 and a half months were probably some of the hardest months, and yet months of many blessings in ministry. We have been in a lockdown of roads and market for most of the last 2 and a half months. Praise the Lord our hospital vehicles have been allowed on the roads and have brought patients from Bamenda each day, usually two trips each day. We have 2 buses donated by Samaritan's Purse and another by Smile Train. There is a long line to get on a bus every morning in Bamenda, we are told. The other way patients have gotten here is by walking, and we even had one come by wheelbarrow pushed by friends. It reminded me of the friends that hoisted their paralyzed friend down through the ceiling of where Jesus was preaching for him to heal!

The next story is about a young man named Diligent, who had very painful keloid scars from where he had been burned when he fell into a fire in their outdoor kitchen when he was younger. He couldn't sleep due to the pain. He recently had surgery to remove the keloids and had a full-thickness skin graft to fill the gap. This was on the back of his leg right below his buttocks. Not an easy place to heal. He had a good outcome. We got to know him since he was in our hospital for over a month. He and his mother came to visit in our home after his discharge. Diligent comes from a needy family, and they were not able to afford this type of surgery and long stay. It was through our

supporters that we were able to help them out. We want you to feel a part of Diligent's success story!

The next great story is about one of the youths in our church, Bernice. She needed a sponsor to send her to Youth Evangelism Camp. We had the privilege to help her be able to go. She attended a training in the capital city and then was sent out to another city to lead VBS groups in different neighborhoods for the summer. She grew a lot spiritually and got to see how the Lord worked in many children's hearts through her. They reached 759 children during their VBS weeks, with 55 making decisions for Christ.

Then there is Sam, the little boy who survived 2 CPR resuscitations when he was suffering from a serious pneumonia. After Sam had been in the hospital for almost 2 months, he was still oxygen dependent. He needed an oxygen concentrator that didn't require constant electricity, because where he lives they often don't have it. So, Debbie researched and found one company that made a rechargeable portable unit with 2 batteries that would last up to 12 hours. Dr. Koch, a volunteer ENT surgeon, was able to provide the unit and brought it to Mbingo last month. Because of this, Sam was able to leave the hospital and is now at home!

Hellos and Goodbyes

A big welcome to Dr. Mbanga, who has completed his studies and now has joined Rick as the first Cameroonian pathologist at MBH, and throughout the CBC!!! And then there were no other expat missionaries on the compound! But praise the Lord, Jackie came yesterday and 3 others to follow next month.

In His Matchless Love, Rick & Debbie Bardin

HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY



September 2023

“But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” Matthew 13:8

The Good Shepherd goes after the one lost sheep and brings it into His fold! We do not know who will trust Christ as their Savior. Our part is to sow the seed of the gospel, not knowing if the seed is falling on good soil or stony ground. Hebrews 4:12 tells us of the power of the Word of God, which touches the very heart of our being! Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God put eternity in everyone’s heart. How awesome is our God!

I had the privilege of filling in for a pastor who usually does the Thursday afternoon Bible study at Unit C (minimum unit). I knew one of the men who attended from three years ago when I stopped by his cell in Administrative Segregation. He was not interested in Christianity, but sometimes he would take some Christian literature. Now he is excited about Jesus and studying the Bible! He said, “I can’t believe how my thinking has changed from how I used to think, but I have a long way to go.” What a change from when I knew him before. Isaiah 55:11 says, “So shall My word that goes out from My

mouth, it shall not return to Me empty.”

I had the opportunity to visit an inmate in the hospital several times. The first time he was not responsive, so I said a prayer for him before I left. The second time he was more responsive, and told me how much he appreciated my prayers and visits. The third time he told me, “I know it was the prayers and God’s timing in getting me to the hospital on time that saved my life. When I get back to the prison, I will be telling everyone how God saved my life, through the prayers that were prayed for me. Thank you so much for visiting me and praying for me!” God shows His power in many different circumstances!

Joe was really depressed as he thought about his life of 50 years. Joe was born into a difficult situation. His mother was a prostitute, and he did not know his father. When he was seven years old his mother was murdered in a tragic way. He went into foster homes until he was 15, when his uncles picked him up and told him, “You are old enough to come with us and help us with our business.” Their business was dealing drugs. From that time on he was in a lot of trouble and saw many bad things happen. Joe stated, “I should not be alive, and I do not understand why God kept me alive. I cannot understand why God would allow anyone to go through all the bad things I have experienced in my life. I have no doubt there is a God, but I don’t understand Him.” We talked about sin and the bad things it causes people to do. We conversed about how God works in our lives today, and that God had protected him many times from death. Joe acknowledged that he had to surrender it all to the Lord. Joe prayed for God to forgive him for all the sins he had committed. He said he felt like a burden was lifted from him. Praise God for His sustaining protection, and the power to change lives!

Please pray for more prison staff to be hired. Thank you for your prayers and financial support! You are a blessing! In Christ, Harlan

MARIJANA CIZMANSKI



August 2023

Dear family, family in Christ, prayer supporter and partners in the ministry, this month we are focusing on our project that we are in the process. For this we are using our web page where you can read a bit more about it.

<https://wordmadeflesh.networkforgood.com/projects/200072-zz-serbia-car-project-2023H>

Every donation counts as we are 50% already closer to the goal.

Thank you all who prayed and supported Martina while she was gone for 6 weeks from home serving as a volunteer at the summer Christian camp at Boračko lake, Bosnia.

After this experience she is still asking for God's guidance as she would like to be full time in the ministry. She is praying for the right place, her calling and right circumstances.

Thank you all who are praying and asking about my mom. Unfortunately, I don't have good news. Since yesterday she is at the hospital as her health is going down. Her kidneys are failing, she is taking oxygen as she doesn't have enough in the blood and she has

some heart issues. All of these things are very new since she didn't have any of these problems until few days ago.

Things to pray for:

- ZZ plans for Sept-Dec - starting youth meetings after summer break
- starting home visits in DP (Roma community)
- CHE Gathering in Albania (I will be driving, 4 days of fellowship and learning new things)
- a Vision seminar in South Serbia (In October), and training around 50-60 Roma people
- preparing a second CHE conference in November, Novi Sad, Serbia

...and many more every day life activities, ministry activities.

We are working very hard on the house by trying to put a roof by the end of this year. Every weekend, and in between Emil, Marko and I are working hard toward that. Next weekend we will have a big activity by pouring concrete into a roof construction.

Phillipians 3.14-15a - I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things.

This is my prayer for me these days, and may it be an encouragement for you as well.

September News



Dear all,

Thank you so much for all of your prayers and support you are giving to me and my family.

I would say that most of you know, if not all of you about my mom health situation.

It seems like my mom is in her final days of running a good race.

She still is a great exaple of a person that never gives up. She gave me and my sister so much as a singl parent.

From a bit more then a month moms health progresed into acute leukemia but from 2 days ago she has agresive leukemia.

Every day we see something New.

She is at the hospital, in bed, not able to walk, eat, nurses are serving her for everything, she is in a lot of pain receiving strongest medication for pain.

From last night she is really bad.

Please pray for her, for this situation she is in, so that she can have joy in the mids of this troubled times, a great song of worship,

encouragement and peace.

Also, please pray for me as I am in Malta at the Geštalt Congress which is part of my education and I am coming home on Monday.

I was supposed to travel to Albania on Wednesday next week for CHE Gathering but I don't know if I will go due to all of this.

Blessings and much love and appreciation for all of you that are standing together with me, my family and ministry hand to hand.

Blessings,

Marijana Čizmanski

PAUL & JANET HARKNESS - AWANA



September 8, 2023

Greetings, Everyone!

The Horizon Music Festival (Christian) went well for us. We had some good conversations at our Awana booth.

The days ahead: Tomorrow, we will be heading north to South Dakota. Sunday morning, I will bring the message and give a ministry report at Grace Bible Church in Gettysburg. It will be nice to meet more Awana folks in our new area.

Monday, we'll be on to Rapid City for our ninth and final Awana Summer Connect Meeting. Pray for a good attendance at that event.

Please pray the Lord will grant good health, good travel, and good connections.

Please also pray for our son and family in North Macedonia. The government there messed up on the visas. If this isn't resolved soon, Our son will have to stay in the country while his wife and three children will need to leave once again. There are big issues, but we have a big God. Please, please ask Him to be at work in this situation.

Serving you, Paul Harkness

September 19, 2023

Thank you for praying for the visa situation of our son and his family in North Macedonia. We thank the Lord that He has taken care of the situation, and now they can move ahead.

Our final Awana Summer Connect Meeting in Rapid City went very well. Thank you to the folks at First Wesleyan Church for their fine hospitality. And thank you to all the host churches for welcoming us for the Connect meetings held there.

This week, I will be attending Awana's national Child Discipleship Forum. The gathering will be held this Thursday and Friday in Nashville. I will be attending virtually at a local church.

Sunday, we will be at Park Lane Baptist Church. I will be sharing God's Word Sunday morning and evening. Park Lane has a growing Karen Church that meets in the afternoon.

Serving you,

Paul Harkness

THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS



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

September 7, 2023 - PERSECUTION & PRAYER ALERT

PAKISTAN: Pastor Shot in Jaranwala

Sources: Kross Konnection, UCA News, Daily Pakistan, Morning Star News

On August 16th, protests by thousands of angry Muslims in the Christian colony of Jaranwala resulted in damages to hundreds of homes and over 20 churches.

While the intense violence has been quelled, tensions persist throughout the region, and the anti-Christian sentiment which fueled the violence remains. Eleazar Sidhu serves as the pastor of the Myong-Sang Naserth Church in Jaranwala, which was one of the many churches attacked in the riots. On August 28th, Islamic slogans were painted on the wall of the church building, including a curse against Pastor Eleazar. This vandalism was reported to the police and the writing has since been painted over.

A few days later, a group of people intercepted Pastor Eleazar and threatened to kill him because he had removed the writing. On September 3rd, the church leader was returning to his home when two

unidentified men approached him. Pulling out a pistol, one demanded that Pastor Eleazar recite the Kalima (the Islamic declaration of faith). When the pastor instead began reciting the Apostles' Creed, the man shot him in the upper chest and then fled.

Pastor Eleazar was taken to the hospital, where doctors were able to remove the bullet. While he lost a lot of blood, the pastor is now considered to be out of danger and, thankfully, recovering well after surgery. The incident has led to renewed concerns regarding the safety of Christians in the area. Police guards have been deployed at churches, but there is scepticism about whether this will be an effective means of protecting worshippers at risk.

Pray for the complete healing of Pastor Eleazar, asking that this Christian leader and his family members will tangibly sense God's comforting presence throughout his recovery. Praise the Lord that there have been no reported casualties due to the ongoing religious tensions in Jaranwala. Please pray for the Lord's protection over His people in this troubled city, as well as those residing in other areas within the nation of Pakistan. Also ask for His intervention in the affairs of the country so that the blasphemy laws, which are so commonly abused, will be revoked.

NIGERIA: Pastor Killed in Kaduna State

Sources: Morning Star News, Vatican News, Legit Nigeria, Punch Nigeria

Violence perpetrated by various terrorist groups has been continuing unabated in Nigeria, particularly against Christians. Even with increased security measures in place, Islamic militants continue to conduct deadly raids on Christian communities. A report released in April indicated that over 50,000 followers of Jesus have died and over

18,000 churches were set ablaze since the Boko Haram insurgency began in 2009. Those numbers continue to rise, particularly with the increasing attacks by Islamic Fulani groups.

On August 23rd, Pastor Jeremiah Mayau from the Tawaliu Baptist Church was shot and killed by unknown assailants while he was working in his agricultural field. At the time of publishing this report, details surrounding the attackers' identities and motives remain unknown. Rev. Joseph John Hayab, who serves as the chair for the Kaduna chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria, refers to the attack as "barbaric." In his statement addressing the incident, Rev. Joseph called on security agencies to exercise greater vigilance to halt this type of activity in the state.

May God provide greatly needed comfort to the loved ones, friends and church family of Pastor Jeremiah during this time of mourning. Pray that the members of the Tawaliu Baptist Church will remain steadfast in their faith, receiving strength, vigour and encouragement from the Lord as they faithfully reach out to the members of their community with the message of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Additionally, pray that Nigerian authorities would not only bring those responsible for this attack to justice, but that there would also be increased vigilance among the country's security forces in providing protection to our vulnerable Christian brothers and sisters.

CHINA: New Laws Tighten Grip on Churches

Sources: Release International, AnglicanTV Ministries, UCA News

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has released new religious restrictions which took effect on September 1st, bringing added concerns in a country already experiencing increased repressive measures. The new rules require religious venues to submit to the

leadership of the CCP and its plans for the “sinicization” of religion.

According to the State Administration for Religious Affairs, all religious activities will be limited to official venues only and religious symbols must not be displayed outdoors. In recent years, more than 1,500 crosses have been torn down from officially recognized churches in the Zhejiang province alone. It is expected that such enforcements will increase under these new rules.

The new regulations also put further stipulations on the preaching taking place in government-approved churches. For example, pastors’ sermons must now reflect China’s politics and the values of President Xi Jinping, demonstrating their full support for the Communist Party of China and its socialist system. Any clergy members refusing to comply face disqualification from preaching.

While such regulations are specifically aimed at the official Three-Self churches, the policies will undoubtedly be used against underground churches that have refused to be placed under government control.

Prayerfully uphold those who are seeking to share the message of the Gospel in this increasingly repressive nation, asking the Lord to grant them wisdom and discretion. Please also remember our Chinese brothers and sisters in Christ who currently remain imprisoned for their faith, praying that they will be granted divinely appointed opportunities to minister to others around them. Finally, pray that God will work mightily in the hearts of China’s leaders, including President Xi Jinping, leading each one to repentance and a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

ERITREA: Imprisoned Christians and their families in Eritrea!

Eritrea’s totalitarian regime specifically targets Christians and often imprisons them indefinitely. VOM contacts in Eritrea have reported

police raids on church meetings. Christians who dare to ignore government warnings and gather with other believers are taken to prison. Not long ago, 17 Christians were arrested for gathering to pray. Then, a week later, 25 more believers were arrested. And this time the news was even more heart-rending: Eight of those arrested were children. Today, almost 400 Eritrean believers are being held without charge in prisons, underground cells or metal shipping containers. You can be the hands and feet of Christ, serving our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. Our Christian brothers and sisters in Eritrea, a nation in East Africa governed by a totalitarian regime, urgently need our prayers and help. Churches that are not among the government's approved religions must meet secretly. Christians who worship in government-banned congregations are regarded as enemies of the state and face imprisonment. There are thought to be more than 350 Christians in prison in Eritrea. The conditions inside these "prisons" are some of the harshest in the world. Christian prisoners are provided meager rations and held in shipping containers in extreme desert conditions - searing heat by day and bitter cold by night. Others have been held in underground cells without light or ventilation. Some who have refused to renounce their faith in Christ have been kept behind bars for more than 15 years. Christian prisoners are held without charge and without trials, and they are forbidden from seeing their families. When prisoners are released, they are blacklisted by the government. They are unable to get jobs and are watched constantly. These faithful brothers and sisters in Christ often need extended physical and emotional help. And their family members may also lose opportunities. After years of relentless persecution, Eritrean Christians are in desperate need of prayer.

CRISIS IN UKRAINE



September 19, 2023

From one of our church partners in Ukraine:

“Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This summer was very ‘hot’ in the good sense of the word. Our church was able to participate in three camps for families of fallen soldiers—three children’s camps in different regions of our country and several camps for teenagers and children. A special blessing for all of us was the stationary children’s camp, which took place from July 31 to Aug 8, 2023 at our base in the village of Baranne, Dubno district. Without your financial support, we would not have been able to organize this camp!

Thank you very much for your donation. It has caused great praise to the Lord among all of us, especially among the children and their families! The pandemic and the war did not allow us to hold stationary camps for a long time. This year, God’s miracle happened, thanks to you, among other things! The beautiful nature, favorable weather,

wonderful spiritual and emotional atmosphere, and good preparation of our team—all this influenced the children so much that no one wanted to go home, but asked for a continuation.

The total number of children was 93-20 of them were from disadvantaged families and 10 whose parents were killed in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Every evening, pastors from our church came to preach and talk to the children about the topic of the day. Our youth music group...inspired the kids to praise God in a special way! When I arrived on the last evening, 7 boys (ages 12-14) came up to me and confessed that they had repented of their sins and wanted to testify to it publicly. At the final meeting, they were greeted with applause by the whole camp, and a fervent prayer of praise to God for the wonderful event was offered. Our sisters and brothers also worked in the kitchen, so the camp had home-cooked, high-quality food and a friendly atmosphere. After the camp, the children continue to come to Bible studies and weekly clubs held in our church!

Dear friends, servants of God, we are immensely grateful to you for the tremendous financial support of our church's ministry in the time of war! May God reward you a hundredfold for your sacrifice and glorify his name even more in our joint work for him! May God bless you, your team, your families and churches!

Pastor Ihor Levtsenyuk

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To partner with us by your donations: Go to <https://www.awana.org/missionary/harkness/>

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

Our New Address:

101 S Cottwonwood St,
Whitewater, KS 67154

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**