



BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

November 2023

Editor Janelle Daum

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“...so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.”

II Corinthians 2:7

Sometimes our past can make it very difficult to serve the Lord. A young couple we knew in one of our churches are a good example of that. He had lived a wild life. His parents were strong Christians, but he was rebellious. He found an uncle who fed his rebellious spirit and he gave up all pretense of living like a Christian. He was married at a young age and eventually they had two daughters, but he wasn't much of a father. His days were given over to drugs and alcohol and running around with all kinds of women. Finally, he found someone

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else and divorced his wife who really wanted to live for the Lord and who had fought hard to keep the marriage. The new marriage didn't change his lifestyle. He was spiraling downhill fast.

Fortunately, his story doesn't end there. The Lord started to bring conviction into his heart. Eventually he and his new wife moved back onto the farm. Then the Lord really began to get hold of both of them. They started to come to church and they began to make commitments to the Lord.

His spiritual growth was astounding. He worked as a welder. He began to take his Bible to work and during his lunch break he would find a quiet spot and read. Before long another Christian had joined him and they started praying together every noon. He withstood a lot of ridicule from his fellow workers but he just kept growing in the Lord.

Then the Lord laid on his heart a desire to serve in a short-term missions program. They were accepted by the mission board and started to make plans to raise support. That was where the problems began.

Our church was his home church. He had been raised there. Everyone knew what he had been and what he had done. He faced a lot of people who weren't willing to believe that he had changed. In spite of the growth that everyone had seen they weren't ready to forgive or forget. Many people refused to speak to him. Some were very vocal about the fact that they would never give money to help someone who had done the things he had done. Emotions ran high. It was an extremely painful time for everyone, but especially for this young couple who believed that God had called them to serve Him. The result was that they did raise the support they needed, and they did go for the summer, and the Lord blessed their efforts, and they kept growing in their faith, but it wasn't without controversy.

We have been talking about suffering in our study of II Corinthians. We have seen Paul's suffering for the cause of Christ, and we have talked about how Paul, in his integrity as an apostle, kept the Corinthians from greater suffering. Now we deal with another part of this issue... sin causes suffering in our lives. It did in that young couple's life. How do we deal with that? More specifically, what are we called to do to help those who are repentant for their sin but are still suffering from the results of sin? Do we have any responsibilities to them? Is there anything we should do to help ease their suffering or to keep them from suffering more?

Sometimes it's hard for Christians to let go of the past. We like to say that we are a forgiving people, but when it comes right down to it we can struggle to actually do it. It's very difficult to forgive someone who has made very visible and sinful mistakes in their life, and to give them the room that they need to grow and change. We have a hard time drawing the line between appropriate punishment for sin, and appropriate forgiveness and restoration. It's important that we draw that line for two reasons: because Christ calls us to do it, and because people are crying out for living testimonies of it.

When someone has repented before the Lord and the change in their lives is clear, we need to unleash the power of forgiveness. "Forgiveness helps to decrease the suffering caused by sin." Sometimes the greatest act of godliness we can perform for someone else is to agree with God, who has already forgiven them, and extend *our* forgiveness to them. The first reason why that is so important is that it limits the emotional impact of suffering.

Listen to this statement made by Marjorie Holmes: "Oh, to have an eraser that would wipe out painful memories. Not so much of the times when we've been hurt, but those stabbing memories of the

times when we've hurt others."

Those words strike at the heart of the emotional pain caused by sin: painful memories, stabbing memories, the times when we've hurt others. Sin has that effect on individuals, but it also has that effect on the entire body of believers. That emotional pain is magnified when we refuse to forgive the repentant sinner.

Look at how Paul describes the situation in vv.5-7. This passage deals with a man who apparently was opposing Paul in some sinful ways. Paul actually refuses to discuss the sin itself, in v.5 he states that he doesn't want to say too much about the sin. He is more interested in what the church should do now that the sinner has repented.

Look at the facts we can glean here. The sin hurt Paul. He talks about the distress and grief that it caused him in v.5. The sin also hurt the entire body, because all of them had been witnesses of it and all of them had seen its effects. We also know from v.6 that the church had disciplined the offender, "*For such a one, his punishment by the majority is enough...*". The punishment isn't specified, but Paul implies that it was proper. In v.7 we learned that the sinner had repented. Paul calls for them to forgive the sinner and to comfort him. The time for punishment ended with the act of repentance. It was time for the church to shift gears, and to show their forgiveness and compassion for the one who had been restored.

Now notice in v.7 why it is so important to forgive, "*...so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.*" Sin causes suffering for everyone. A lack of forgiveness after the sin has been dealt with can compound that suffering. The emotional impact can be devastating. It can actually drive the person back into sin. The word for "overwhelmed" speaks of being "swallowed up" or "drowning" in the emotional pain and

suffering. And it's caused by a lack of forgiveness. By urging them to forgive, Paul is asking them to limit the emotional impact of the sin by not adding to it. The emotional pain of sin is bad enough without adding to it by sinning against the repentant person by refusing to forgive.

Live in love. Live a life of forgiveness.

Blessings,

Pastor Randy

COMMITTEE REPORTS

TREASURERS' REPORT

We currently (October 25, 2023) have a checkbook balance of \$11,136.00 with all bills paid. Love Offerings current through September and \$3,000.00 missions paid.

Our average weekly operating expenses are about \$2,020.00.

We still have \$13,250.00 North American Baptist and Other missions to pay in our budget.

We need \$6,625.00 per month for November and December to meet these mission commitments for this year.

Thank You,

Eugene

OUTREACH TEAM REPORT

October 8, 2023

On Sunday, October 8, 2023, we had the pleasure to hear Brad Seifert, the Great Plains Association Regional Minister, share updates about the association and deliver Sunday's message to us about attitude and Christ-like leadership. What a great message and reminder! Thank you so much for joining us and we look forward to seeing you again!



2023 OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD



PACK A SHOEBOX
NOVEMBER 13-20
National Collection Week



SamaritansPurse.org/occ

MISSION AND HISTORY

Mission

“Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”

Mark 10:14, ESV

The mission of Operation Christmas Child is to demonstrate God’s love in a tangible way to children in need around the world. Through this project, Samaritan’s Purse partners with the local church worldwide to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and make disciples of the nations.

History

In the summer of 1993, Samaritan’s Purse President Franklin Graham received a call from a man in England asking if he’d be willing to fill shoeboxes with gifts for children in Eastern Europe. Franklin agreed, but figured Christmas was months away. He forgot about the promise until he received a call back around Thanksgiving asking about the gifts. Franklin asked his friend, the late Pastor Ross Rhoads of Calvary Church of Charlotte to see if he could help with the need. A Sunday shortly afterward, Pastor Rhoads demonstrated for his

congregation how to fill a shoebox with simple gifts and encouraged them to include a letter to the child as well. Within weeks, the church had 11,000 shoeboxes lining their hallways. Due to their generosity and additional gifts from Canada, Samaritan's Purse sent 28,000 shoebox gifts to children in the Balkans that Christmas. Through these gifts, we communicated to children and their families what the angel said to the shepherds about Jesus' birth: ***"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people"*** (Luke 2:10, ESV). Every year since, Samaritan's Purse has collected shoebox gifts filled with toys, school supplies, and hygiene items for children around the world. Since 1993, more than 209 million children in more than 170 countries and territories have received an Operation Christmas Child shoebox. The project delivers not only the joy of what, for many kids, is their first gift ever, but also gives them a tangible expression of God's love. Tens of thousands of volunteers from local churches around the world partner with us to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ at festive outreach events where children are surprised with these shoebox gifts.

"Every box is an opportunity to reach a child with the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

- Franklin Graham

President, Samaritan's Purse

The Greatest Journey

Seeking to follow Jesus' command to ***"make disciples of all the nations"*** (Matthew 28:19), we have trained over 1.7 million volunteers from these congregations to teach The Greatest Journey, our dynamic follow-up discipleship course for shoebox recipients. Since 2009, 35.4 million children have enrolled in this 12-lesson program to learn how to follow Christ and share Him with others. More than

17.4 million of these boys and girls have made a decision to accept Jesus as their Savior during the course. Many are now praying for and sharing their faith with family and friends. As a result of this ever-expanding witness, new churches are starting and communities are being transformed!

Behind the Scenes

This whole process is made possible by caring individuals who pack shoeboxes full of quality gifts for children in need. Many of these shoebox packers also use our Follow Your Box feature to discover the country where their gift will be delivered. More than 9,000 year-round volunteers also get the word out about the Samaritan's Purse project across the U.S. In addition, some 80,000 short-term volunteers serve in more than 4,000 drop-off locations open across the country every year during National Collection Week, the third week in November. Each shoebox collected then travels to one of our processing centers to be inspected and prepared for international shipment by 90,000 volunteers. All of this is supported by the 30,000 volunteers in our prayer network. Millions of Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts are collected each year from locations in North America and throughout the world, including Australia, Austria, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Together we are working to see ***“a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9-10).***

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR NOVEMBER AND BEYOND

EVENTS CALENDAR 2023:

Sunday's

9:30 a.m. Worship Service

10:30 a.m. Fellowship

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

Wednesday's

6:30 p.m. 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

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

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

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, November 1, Feeding SD Backpack Program

Sunday, November 5, 2 a.m. Daylight Savings Ends - Fall Back 1 hour

Sunday, November 5, International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians

Sunday, November 5, 5:30 p.m. Hymn Sing & Potluck

Wednesday, November 8, Feeding SD Backpack Program

Friday, November 10 - Saturday, November 11, Great Plains Association Annual Meeting in Milbank, SD (See poster for more details)

Saturday, November 11, Leadership Meeting

Wednesday, November 15, Feeding SD Backpack Program

Thursday, November 16, Newsletter Articles are Due

Sunday, November 19, Potluck and Annual Business Meeting

Sunday, November 19, Operation Christmas Child Boxes Due

Wednesday, November 22, Feeding SD Backpack Program

Thursday, November 23, Thanksgiving

Wednesday, November 29, Feeding SD Backpack Program

MISSIONARY UPDATES

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



October 1, 2023

YEAR #2!

“How is it going in your second year as vice principal?”

It seems that this question has popped up a lot lately! And my answer is always the same: “Great! Year two is so much better than year one...I actually know what I’m doing!”

Being vice principal is such a different workload than being a full-time teacher. I still am teaching two periods of Algebra, but that is a lot different than teaching English, like I did last year. I have a lot more time to schedule meetings with others, work on various projects for the school, and help other teachers. Doing things the second time around means I have a general idea of what is going on and also some idea of how to deal with it or improve it.

One of the highlights of my job this year so far has been helping our English Team. I have taught 8th grade English since my second year at Faith Academy, until this year. This year we have new curriculum

and three teachers teaching English who haven't taught it before in this way, so my principal asked me to head the English Team. I really enjoy this role, and I love hearing what is going on in their classes. They are all willing to try new things and want to see the kids learn and grow. They are a delight to work with, and I think that I would love doing more coaching in the future. I love helping staff talk through what they're doing in the classroom and helping them brainstorm ideas. I'm excited to see how God will continue to grow me in the future in this area of coaching.

One aspect of becoming vice principal that I was not looking forward to was having to do discipline. This year, my principal asked me to help more with discipline, as she did most of it last year. I have been doing some of the smaller aspects, such as keeping track of demerits and talking with students about them. Then, two weeks ago, my principal was absent for three days, and the afternoon before she left, there was a major event that happened that needed disciplinary action. Since the principal was gone, I had no choice but to deal with it. I spent a lot of time praying about it, talking with those involved and messaging my principal, and I was able to work through it.

We had another discipline issue come up last week, and I find that the more I deal with situations, the easier it becomes. I find that the more I do it, the more confidence I gain. I find that usually the conversations are better than I expect them to be, and often what I thought happened wasn't what actually happened. I read a book called *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Tedd Tripp, which is actually a parenting book, but it really helped me think through discipline as a principal. Tripp gave so many principles for discipline that have helped me understand my role as a disciplinarian and that I need to help the student see what is going on in their heart, not merely address their behavior.

Even though I don't love discipline, I know that it is a God-given part

of my role. I know I'm new at it, but I want to make sure that I'm consistently seeking the Lord as I deal with the students and help them discover and understand what is going on in their hearts.

Overall, I'm really enjoying my roles this year. I do feel as though I get a bit more down time on evenings and weekends than I used to, which is much needed after last year. It also allows me to focus more on the ladies at the house where Marissa and I are serving. I still have the chance to connect with students, and I also get to coach the staff at school. I love working with the Middle School Lead Team to make decisions for the middle school.

Thank you for your prayers and support as I've transitioned to this role and as I continue to serve the students and staff at Faith Academy.

Amanda

Praises

- We are only one week away from the end of first quarter! It has flown by, but I think we are mostly settled into our new routines, both at school and at home.
- I'm thankful for the ways God pushes me out of my comfort zone and changes me. I'm thankful that He is teaching me how to do more discipline at school, and that I have my principal to help guide me in this. I'm also thankful for the ways He is growing me spiritually and personally.
- Praise for our Flight group so far. I asked you to pray for this group, as we are studying Revelation. So far it has been so fruitful. The girls have had great discussions, questions, and insights. It has been a joy to lead these girls!

Prayer Requests

- On the 18th of this month, we will be having a student teacher join our house for two months. Pray that she will transition here well, that we would transition well to having her in our house, that she would have a fruitful time student teaching at FA, and that the Lord would provide for her in this time.
- Pray that I would have wisdom as I plan Outdoor Ed. I have started the processes, and we really need to find a base camp. Pray that God would give us the right place, or wisdom on what to do if we cannot find one. We have a few ideas. Pray also as more and more details get worked out.
- Pray that I would have wisdom as I navigate various relationships in my life. Pray that the Lord would lead me to invest my life in whom He wants me to invest. Pray that I would always keep the Lord as my most important relationship, and that I would clearly hear His voice and follow Him every day.

DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ



October 8, 2023

Ministry Update

Thank you for your prayers and financial support for our ministry with SEND International.

Our biggest news is that after over three years Karen is getting within weeks of graduating with a Bachelor of Science from Moody Bible Institute. Her current classes are: “Theology and Philosophy of Ministry to Women” and “Theology and Practice in the Early Church through the Reformation”. We are excited how this education will be used for the glory of God. She is passionate about helping ladies and she started a Bible study at our house that meets on Wednesday nights during AWANA and youth group. We live next to the church, so it is convenient for these ladies to come after dropping off their kids.

Darwin can use his knowledge and history of working in Japan by assisting the treasurer in Japan by serving as their temporary bookkeeper. He is also assisting the International Office by making payments to the other countries where SEND works as well as other projects that the Treasurer of SEND International gives him.

Darwin was able to attend the Missio Nexus conference in Orlando Florida September 27-29. He was able to meet his objectives of meeting other treasurers and get some skills that he can use in his ministry. There were over 1,100 missionary and church leaders in attendance. The theme was: "Shift: Rapid Social Transformation and the Gospel," where they addressed key issues facing global missions today.

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 enjoys volunteering with her church Siloam Springs Bible Church where she helps lead the soccer outreach ministry and the 5/6th grade youth groups on Wednesday nights.

Clara is a sophomore at Berean Academy in Elbing, Kansas. She enjoys art, reading, and 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:

Oct 12 Pete (our cat) gets his tail amputated after a confrontation with an unknown animal

Oct 13 Karen's birthday

Oct 16 Karen's last day of classes

Nov 2-4 Columbia International University Grand Finale: 100th Celebration – Columbia, SC

Dec 5 Darwin and Karen's 25th wedding anniversary

Please pray:

1. Pray for Anna and Clara that they would have continued growing relationships with Jesus.
2. Pray for Anna at John Brown University and studies kinesiology.
3. Pray for Clara at Berean Academy that she would seek God and make good friends.
4. Wisdom for Darwin as he serves as the assistant treasurer for the International Office.
5. Wisdom and patience for Karen as she gets near the end of her education that she is doing online with Moody Bible Institute.
6. That our supporters will continue to support our ministry as we still rely 100% on support.
7. Pray that Darwin's Japanese teacher Mr. Tsuneizumi and Karen's friend Yuko-san would put their faith in Christ.

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

Darwin & Karen Stoesz

WARRIOR 180 FOUNDATION



October 10, 2023

A pastor was preaching one day and he pulled out two pails and set them up on the pulpit for all to see. Everyone was curious and murmurs filled the room. The pastor began by speaking of his beautiful grandchildren – he was blessed by their gentle spirits and their beauty that shown inside and out. But one day a very unfortunate accident happened and his young grandson was seriously wounded in a car accident. He would never look the same – he was certainly the same young man but he was looked at by the world very differently. The pastor asked God his reason for these things.

We've all had these feelings. Why are things this way or not that way. Why has this happened and why to me or to my loved one? Why would God allow us to walk thru this life with scars?

You know God doesn't always answer us right away, sometimes he allows us time to think and ponder and find our way back on our own. Sometimes the answer is so ordinary, you could walk right by without

noticing.

At that moment the Pastor picked up the buckets and held one in each hand. One was a new barley used children's bucket and the other was a dented rusty old coffee can. "Yesterday I was out in the back lot of the church near the hills where the kids like to play. It's a funny thing about kids, you can make them clean sandboxes but they always prefer the old hill with dirt." He continued – "It's been a very dry spring so far and we haven't had to mow much out there. But last week we had a glorious rain. So, when I went out to mow, I saw several old pots and pans that the children have been playing with left in the dirt pile. And you know as I looked around, I noticed something. The perfect ones had caught rainwater and held it until it became stagnant and black. All the grass around them was dead. However, the containers that were dented and cracked had holes. They perhaps had caught the rainwater as well but there was no stagnant water in them, and all the grass around them was thriving.

"It's the same with people. It's those with nicks and dents and imperfections of spirit that allow us to flow out into a thirsty world. It is our scars that allow us to be relatable to those wounded around us."

I don't know why God allows scars (internal and external) on our loved ones but I do know that because of the dents they will be able to change the lives of those that come into their path in a way that would have never been possible if they hadn't been touched by pain.

Consider today what you would rather be, a beautifully perfect pot on the outside that is stagnant and black inside? Or an imperfect battered pot that has the ability to pour into the lives around you.

Really hold onto everything that comes your way, and be ready to pour it all out and be refilled with each new rain. Be open to the possibilities.

2 Timothy 2:20-21 (MSG)

In a well-furnished kitchen, there are not only crystal goblets and silver platters, but waste cans and compost buckets – some containers used to serve fine meals, others to take out the trash. Become the kind of container God can use to present any and every kind of gift to his guests for their blessing.

I want to update you quickly (I apologize for the distance between the last letter). Our house did not sell, we took it off the market and will wait upon the Lord. In the meantime we have been busy. We made a quick trip to Owensboro KY, we had a short trip in Aug to SC for family, and then Criss & our daughter Kayla were in KS with her mom for a few days. We had the RV/Car and a booth at the 9th annual Blast & Cast event in Carthage NC from 9am-3pm and that same day we setup the RV/Car and booth at the Carthage Firefighters Fundraiser from 4pm-10pm. We then flew to SD and filled the pulpit in one of our supporting churches. The very next weekend I as blessed to have gone to NH to share about Warrior 180 Foundation and our connecting with ABWE.

Since the last contact we have had several meetings with ABWE finishing with our doctrinal interview. We will be in PA the end of this month and go thru New Missionary Orientation. We have decided not to jump in with both feet (quit my job and take off) but we will work as much as possible (with a full-time job) on building our missions support base. As of today, I've no idea what this looks like but once we walk thru it all and understand it ourselves, we'll update you as a prayer warrior.

In the meantime – God is still opening doors of veterans, military and first responders (and families) that are looking for encouragement, help and support. We are starting our plans for 2023 Care Package

outreach – If you are interested in helping out with this, please reach out to us!!

We are thankful that the Lord is using us, bent and tattered as we are to touch the hearts of those who have scars of their own. We pray that you will be drawn to water the hurting among you.

With Humble Servanthood,

Jeff & Criss Hastings

Warrior180 Foundation

HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY



October 2023

“Your word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” Psalm 119:11

Hiding God’s Word in our hearts by memorizing Scripture is a great way to counteract the devil’s lies and temptations. Jesus quoted Scripture when He was tempted, and the devil could not stand against God’s Word! Since Jesus did it, how much more do we as His followers need to quote Scripture when dealing with a trial & temptation!

It has been about two weeks since one section of the prison was locked down because one of the officers was assaulted. I was allowed to make some rounds and therefore was in contact with some of the regular church attenders. One of the young men who I usually visited with weekly before the lockdown said to me, “I memorized one of the Bible verses you asked me to memorize!” It was Galatians 2:20 and he quoted it to me word for word. I had forgotten that we talked about memorizing that verse. Praise God that he is taking God’s Word seriously!

When I was walking to my car an inmate from Unit C approach me and asked, “There are so many religions, how do we know which one

is the right one?" I explained to him, "Only Christianity has a risen Savior. Also, Jesus did not say He was one of the ways to heaven, but that He was the only way to heaven. Only Jesus paid for our sins and only He can deliver us from our addictions." God's timing is always right!

A few weeks ago, while waiting for men to be released for the 1:00 afternoon church service, times were changed. The newly imprisoned men were released for outside rec at 1:00 which normally is 3:00 pm. Naturally most wanted the outside fresh air instead of church. I was disappointed, but some did choose the church service. There were about a dozen men who turned into the Chapel. During the service Kenny, who was several chairs ahead of me was wiping the tears from his face. He continued to wipe his tears throughout the service while Pastor Greg preached. After the service, as Kenny was leaving, I asked him if he knew the Lord. He told me, "I accepted Christ when I was a child." I told him that it was obvious by his tears that he was under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Kenny continued to wipe away his tears as I explained what it meant to accept Christ as his Savior. He said, "I guess I never really understood it the way you explained it." Then Kenny said, "All my life I pushed people away who wanted to help me. I thought I had it figured out. Now I realize I need that relationship with the Lord!" We prayed together for him to put his faith in Jesus as his Lord and Savior. When we were finished, he quit wiping his eyes and took some deep breaths. A smile came on his face, and he thanked me for praying with him. Kenny would not have been on the Chapel ring out list if they would have had a normal time for rec! PTL for His timing!

I want to thank you for all your prayers and financial support! Please continue to pray for the leadership that they have wisdom & guidance from above! Blessings, Harlan

SHAN REED - JAPAN



October 11, 2023

Hello friends and family,

I just wanted to send a quick between-newsletters-update of life and ministry in Japan and to share some prayer requests. Thank you for your faithful prayers and support.

*In August we were able to hold our first JBC-wide overnight youth camp in four years. The students loved hanging out and making new friends! For many of them it was their first time to meet in person. I got to share about God's love and how we can love each other more deeply. Please continue to pray for the youth of the Japan Baptist Conference to learn to walk with Jesus more closely, through all the ups and downs of life in this world that does not live by the same standards.

*I continue to meet monthly with the youth in the Osaka area. We are building deeper relationships with each other and with Jesus. One student is studying hard to get into an art school in Kyoto, another student is getting used to high school life, another student is preparing for high school entrance exams. Two more students, a sister and brother, are not part of our church but join occasionally. Thank you

for praying with me for these students to learn to be the light of Jesus and to not be conformed to the patterns of this world.

*In September I was able to take a quick trip to South Dakota. It was a trip full of celebrations. I celebrated my birthday with my sister and brother in law. We celebrated my niece (not biological but fully a part of our family!) who got married to her high school sweetheart. And, after four years of study and research and writing, I graduated with my Doctor of Ministry from Kairos University (Sioux Falls Seminary). Because of flight delays and changes, I even got an extra day in the Twin Cities and got to go to a St. Paul Saints game with college friends. I am so grateful for all the family and friends who have been walking this journey with me!

*On Monday, October 16, the women in our missionary community are joining for a day of prayer. We enjoyed our time together so much in June we decided to gather again. As part of the planning committee I am excited for this time of prayer and fellowship. Please pray with us for each one who attends and leads to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we praise and pray and fellowship.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Shan in Japan

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

PAUL & JANET HARKNESS - AWANA



October 12, 2023

On this rainy day in Nebraska, I welcome you to another edition of The Memo.

Since I last emailed you, I had the honor of bringing the Sunday morning message at Chalk Hills Community Church in Scotia, Nebraska. They are always an enjoyable group to which to minister.

We also traveled to our daughter's family in Iowa to celebrate our twin's 3rd birthday. Three-year-old's birthdays alone are fun to witness, but when it's twins, it brings about a new dimension. They both were very patient, waiting for the other to open a gift before opening theirs. On that trip, we also took some furniture to our daughter. One piece, a china hutch, lost a drawer along the way. So if you are out traveling, keep your eyes open somewhere between Laurel, Nebraska, and Altoona, Iowa.

We have been preparing for the last few days for the Awana Ministry Conference in Mitchell, Nebraska. That will be this Saturday, October 14, at Mitchell Berean Church, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. MT.

This week, our second great-granddaughter is due to arrive. Please pray for her safe delivery.

Next week, we will be spending a few days in South Dakota with pastor and church stops planned around an Awana Club visit to one of our new clubs at Calvary Church in Milbank.

Thank you for praying!

Paul Harkness

THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS



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

October 19, 2023 - PERSECUTION & PRAYER ALERT

UKRAINE: Churches Closed in Russian-Occupied Areas

Source: Forum18

Since pro-Russian militants seized areas of eastern Ukraine in 2014, the rebel administration has been targeting religious groups, with the exception of the Russian Orthodox Church. Amid the ongoing Russian occupation, opposition against Christians has increased and numerous churches have been closed in areas controlled by the invading army. Among the places of worship that were forcibly closed in recent months are an Orthodox Church of Ukraine, a Baptist Union church and a Roman Catholic church.

Father Serhi Moskovets is the parish priest for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in Basan, a town located in the Zaporizhzia Region. Along with recently closing the church building where he served, occupation forces filmed a video of him admitting that religious meetings had been held there without Russian permission, and that he possessed literature allegedly containing anti-Russian content. It is unknown if his confession was made under duress.

A Baptist Union church, also located in the Zaporizhzhia Region, was invaded by militants in September, making it the seventh Baptist Union church to have been seized since Russia's more recent invasion in February 2022. Although the congregants were allowed to enter to retrieve their communion supplies, the military has since taken over the building. As members of the church gathered their belongings, they prayed for those who had moved into their facility.

In Skadovsk, a city located in the Kherson Region of southern Ukraine, the Roman Catholic Church of St. Therese of the Child Jesus was searched by Russian forces on August 22nd. Breaking the windows and door of the church building, the troops claimed to be searching for explosives and drugs. They alleged that a previous parish priest was a drug lord. The building is now closed and the priest, Father Dominik Fiszer, has returned to his native Poland.

As part of a propaganda campaign, a Russian-controlled television station broadcasted a report on October 1st about the "odious sects" of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Region. Making various false claims, the report attacked members of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, as well as the country's Protestants, Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses in general. Such reports not only give Russian militants justification for their invasion of Ukraine, but they also demonstrate their intentions to enforce the same restrictions mandated in Russia.

Please continue to pray for peace in Ukraine during the ongoing occupation of Russian forces. In the midst of the violence and uncertainty, may our Ukrainian family in Christ receive courage, strength, guidance and protection as they seek to spread the hope of the Gospel among their communities. Additionally, ask the Lord to fill the many believers encountering persecution in occupied areas of the country afresh with the Holy Spirit, so they can supernaturally demonstrate His love and grace in the

face of opposition.

REPORT UPDATES

NEPAL: Appeal Denied for Pastor

Sources: International Christian Association, Eurasia Review, Church in Chains

In November 2021, Keshav Raj Acharya, the pastor of the Abundant Harvest Church in Pokhara, Nepal, was convicted of proselytising and, as a result, sentenced to two years in prison. Even though his sentence was reduced to one year upon appeal, Pastor Keshav subsequently appealed to the Supreme Court of Nepal.

Regrettably, the Supreme Court upheld the lower court's decision, affirming Pastor Keshav's one-year sentence. Responding to the ruling, the pastor's lawyer, Indra Aryal, expressed concern that the decision curtails the principles of religious liberty and freedom of expression, particularly for the country's religious minorities. Pastor Keshav conveyed his deep sadness about the judgment, reiterating that his actions were driven by faith and a desire to spread God's love and blessings.

Remember Pastor Keshav in your prayers as he serves his one-year term in prison. Though incarcerated, pray that he will be empowered to minister to fellow prisoners and prison officials, serving as a vibrant witness of God's love, grace and peace. Also prayerfully uphold Pastor Keshav's concerned family, including his wife Junu, along with the members of his church. May they also tangibly sense the Lord's comforting presence with them during this difficult time of separation. Continue to pray that believers throughout Nepal will find effective ways to share the love of Christ in a society that opposes the Gospel message.

NIGERIA: Leah Sharibu's Parents Respond to Rumours

Sources: Open Doors UK, Church in Chains

As new rumours circulate about the fate of Leah Sharibu, the parents of this young Christian woman are calling for her release from captivity. While awaiting this hopeful outcome, they ask for continued prayers on behalf of their abducted daughter. Over five years ago, Leah was kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists, along with fellow students from a school in Dapchi, Nigeria. While many of the students were eventually released, Leah was retained in captivity for refusing to renounce her faith in Christ.

Recent reports suggest that Leah had been forcefully married to one of her captors, but that he either died or they divorced. She is now supposedly married to another commander from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and has two children. However, these reports are unverified and may be designed as propaganda intended to further distress the Christian community.

In light of these unsubstantiated rumours, a statement was recently issued on behalf of Leah's parents, Nathan and Rebecca Sharibu, in which the couple expressed: "Why should we believe these local security sources? If they have intelligence on Leah's whereabouts and any information, then where are the Nigerian armed forces? Why isn't the government involved in securing her release?" Their statement continues with the following heart-felt plea: "Our family remains grief-stricken by our daughter's capture and ongoing imprisonment. We demand the rescue of Leah Sharibu and all others who are in captivity [and] in the hands of terrorists."

Whatever situation Leah is presently facing, please pray that God will sustain her with daily courage, comfort and strength. Pray that those responsible for her kidnapping would be located

and justly prosecuted, and that Leah will finally be free to return to her distraught family and Christian community. Continue to remember the many other innocent followers of Jesus who are currently being held against their wills by various militant groups in Nigeria.

CRISIS IN UKRAINE



HELP UKRAINE



October 24, 2023

From one of our seminary partners in Ukraine:

“Kremenchuk Evangelical Seminary would like to thank you for your partnership, prayers, and financial help. The donation you sent has been received and used to help people in Ukraine affected by the military aggression of the Russian Federation.

On June 6, Russian occupation forces committed a war crime by destroying the dam of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. This led not only to an environmental disaster but...also to many deaths. Thousands of people were trapped, many settlements were flooded. People had no water or food and needed to be evacuated immediately.

Our seminary, thanks to your help, also had the opportunity to join the evacuation of people from that area and to provide humanitarian and food aid to the victims in that area. May the Lord bless you all for your generosity and fill all your needs according to the riches of His goodness. Sincerely, Rector KES Ivan Ovcharenko”

Missionary Contact Info.

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Brandon, SD 57005

Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: SEND International
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Paul & Janet Harkness:

Website: highplainsawana.org

Email: paulh@awana.org

Phone: 308.730.2468

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Email: hpmoss1@Yahoo.com

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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

WARRIOR 180 FOUNDATION, INC:

Website: www.warrior180.org

Email: connect@warrior180.org

Phone: 866.225.5180

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.

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