



# BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

April 2024

Editor Janelle Daum

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*“And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written now with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”*

*II Corinthians 3:3*

As I look over the landscape of ministry today the choices are almost limitless. Between television ministries, and live streaming ministries, and network ministries found on You Tube and other mediums, you can find almost anything you want. Unfortunately most of them fall under what I would call mindless ministry. Mindless ministry is ministry based on forms or traditions, not necessarily on devotion and desire to be a Christlike servant. It's good works that have no meaning and

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no eternal purpose. It's doing what the crowd does, and perpetuating programs just because it has always been done that way, or because it's the newest and most exciting thing around. It values performance over the heart. It's dangerous to us spiritually because it swallows up our devotion and commitment in favor of conformity to standards that make us look good, rather than accomplishing things for the Lord. It can destroy our faith.

A few years ago a scientific magazine published an article concerning a certain species of alligator. Being lazy beasts, they seldom hunt for their dinner but just wait for their unwary victims to come to them. They lie near the bank with open mouths, acting as if they are dead. Soon flies begin to light on their moist tongues, and several other insects gather. This crowd attracts bigger game. A lizard will crawl up to the alligator to feed on the bugs; then a frog joins the party. Presently a whole menagerie is there; then there is a sudden "earthquake," and WHAM the giant jaws come together and the party is over!

That is the real danger of mindless ministry. It looks good and right because everyone is in on it, but it kills and destroys. Mindless ministry is not biblical ministry. As we are going to see in our continuing study in II Corinthians there are mindless ministries and then there are biblical ministries. We have many of both today. The challenge is to look at our own ministries for the Lord to determine which we are involved in. Consider the things that you do for the Lord. There is no question that they are good works, but are they mindless actions or are they biblical ministries? How do you know the difference?

As we come to chapter 3 Paul talks about how to tell the biblical quality of a ministry. He seems to be concerned that the Corinthians are going to get the wrong idea about what he is trying to say. As the early church had grown it had become common for churches to give

letters of commendation to people who had served in their area. They functioned much like letters of reference do today. When that person left and went to another area they had a letter of commendation to smooth the way for acceptance as a legitimate teacher or minister. In his defense of his own authority as an apostle, Paul feels that he has begun to sound like he is writing his own letter of commendation. He wants to dispel that notion. The two questions in V.1 are rhetorical, *“Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you?”* The answer to both is a resounding “No!” Paul’s point is that he didn’t need letters of commendation to validate his position and his ministry because he had met a higher standard before the Lord. He had living proof of who he was before God. All he had to do was to point out his children in the Lord. Active reproduction validated his ministry.

Active reproduction is a foreign concept to a lot of Christians. Consider this thought: “Unfortunately most Christians are sterile. That is to say they never reproduce themselves, when God has clearly commanded us to make disciples not just decisions. Maybe we should be more like the common house fly. The total offspring of a single pair of flies, if they survived to the end of the summer, would create a mound big enough to cover Germany to a depth of 46 feet. The next time you swat a house fly, remember the importance of spiritual reproduction.”

The proof of Paul’s ministry was the people who had come to the Lord, and who had grown in the Lord, as the direct result of his ministry. That’s what he is saying in v.2: *“You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.”* Paul had ministered there, and the Spirit of God had taken hold of their hearts, and he had turned them into a spiritual letter of commendation. It was a greater commendation than that received by the ministers of the day; it was a greater commendation than that

received by Moses as he was given the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. It was a commendation that could be seen in the change that had taken place in their lives. Jesus Christ had written Paul's commendation in the Corinthian hearts.

Active, spiritual reproduction is a distinctive of biblical ministry. Any kind of work with others can pass on knowledge or authority. Only biblical ministry passes on life. The world knows how British journalist Henry Stanley went to Africa to find the famed missionary, Dr. David Livingstone. After the two had been together for some time, Stanley saw what Livingstone endured and wrote, "I went to Africa as prejudiced as the biggest atheist in London. But there came for me a long time for reflection. I saw this solitary old man there and asked myself, 'How on earth does he stop here – is he cracked, or what? What is it that inspires him so?' Four months after we met I found myself wondering at the old man carrying out all that was said in the Bible – – 'Leave all things and follow Me.' But little by little his sympathy for others became contagious; my sympathy was aroused; seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went about his business, I was converted by him."

Biblical ministry is marked by active reproduction of spiritual life and transformation in the lives of the people it touches. It's more than a letter of commendation. It is validated by living proof. It goes beyond outward abilities and conformity to change the heart and life. Are people being changed by what you do for the Lord?

Blessings,

Pastor Randy

# COMMITTEE REPORTS

## OUTREACH TEAM REPORT

**March 17, 2024**

Thank you, Royal Family KIDS Sioux Empire, for joining us this month and for sharing with us what RFK has been up to. We enjoyed hearing all the ways your organization is impacting the children in our area. Thank you for all you do!!

About Royal Family KIDS Sioux Empire:

- Our Vision - building a world free of family-induced childhood trauma by interrupting cycles of neglect, abuse and abandonment of children in the foster care system
- Our Mission - promoting physical, emotional and spiritual healing for child victims of neglect, abuse, and abandonment through intervention programs, education and advocacy
- Our Values - transformation, security, love, belonging, and courage for every child we serve motivated by the teaching and example of Jesus in caring for “the least of these”



# UPCOMING EVENTS FOR APRIL AND BEYOND

## EVENTS CALENDAR 2024:

### **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**

**April 6, 8 a.m.** Men's Bible Study via Zoom

**April 20, 8 a.m.** Men's Bible Study via Zoom

## **Upcoming Events**

**Monday, April 1, Spiritual Team Meeting**

**Saturday, April 13, Leadership Team Meeting**

**Wednesday, April 17, Awana Grand Finale**

**Sunday, April 21, Newsletter Articles are Due**

**Tuesday, April 23, Outreach Team Meeting**

**Wednesday, April 24, Youth Group Summer Schedule Begins**

**Wednesday, May 1 - Wednesday, May 15, Meals on Wheels  
Deliveries**

**Thursday, May 2, National Day of Prayer**

**Thursday, May 9 - Saturday, May 11, Youth Group Rummage  
Sale - Your items can be brought and stored at the church anytime.**

**Sunday, May 12, Mother's Day**



# TOM ROBERTS



**March 27, 2024**

Author Tom Roberts has written eight Christmas books to benefit Children's Home Society of South Dakota. Please join us for a final book signing and sale Saturday, April 27, from noon–2 p.m. at Crossroads Book and Music, 1220 West 41st Street, Sioux Falls.

Once upon a time there was a man who wanted to share a story that would gently remind people of what Christmas is all about. He also wanted his story to make a difference in the lives of children.

With that in mind, he wrote his first Christmas tale while stranded in a blizzard at a South Dakota truck stop! And with the help of many people, he produced 'Twas the Night Before Christ, which raised more than \$52,000 that first year to help support the children and families served by Children's Home Society of South Dakota (CHS).

Now, more than two decades later, he has written eight Christmas books and one book on mental wellness. These books have sold more than 65,000 copies around the world and raised more than \$1.6 million to benefit the kids and families in the care of CHS.

It's been said that all good things, including books, come to an end.



The author has decided to retire and wrap up the book project. And so, one final book signing is scheduled so that the remaining books in CHS's inventory will find good homes.

Please join us for a final book signing and sale with South Dakota author Tom Roberts, on Saturday, April 27, from noon–2 p.m. at Crossroads Book and Music, 1220 W. 41st Street, Sioux Falls.

Books available are Christmas Reflections, On That One Christmas Eve, The Greatest Gift, Return to the Farm, and The Little Lost Sock. All books are now just \$10.00 (plus tax), with proceeds benefiting CHS.

Book will continue to be on sale at Crossroads until May 31, while supplies last. You may also purchase books online (shipping is extra) at [www.chssd.org/books](http://www.chssd.org/books)

The End.

## MISSIONARY UPDATES

### AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



**March 1, 2024**

WALKING BY FAITH - OUTDOOR ED CORREGIDOR 2024!

“The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.”

Proverbs 16:9

I spent months planning for Outdoor Ed (OE). And...things didn't go as planned (though I can't say I'm surprised). After coming back from Christmas break, I found out that the 35 person boat we were planning on using to get to Corregidor Island was not available. We started looking for other options, but they were non-existent from where we needed to leave from. The next three weeks, as we finalized everything, our boat situation was never quite settled.

The rest of the story is quite long, and I'm not going to share it all. It involves some crazy things...like me talking with the Coast Guard, writing a letter to the Philippine Navy, changing boats often, and more. Each day was a step of faith. Each day was a test of trusting the Lord

to provide and stepping out, even when I didn't know what was going to happen. I was frequently reminded of the story of the Israelites as they were told to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant at the front of the group, and they were to walk across the Jordan River. However, the river didn't part for them until their toes touched the water as they took the first step to cross.

The entire trip, we never had a clear, final solution for our boat situation. But God was faithful. We had to change schedules almost every day, but we were still able to get all of our students and supplies across to Corregidor and back each day. To be honest, there were times during the week where I thought "Why are we even doing this? Is this worth it?" Don't get me wrong...so much of Outdoor Ed was great! But the hassle of the boat situation was so consuming and frustrating that it made me question.

But then the Wednesday after Outdoor Ed, we had our Outdoor Ed Chapel. Many students stood up and shared what God had done and taught them through their OE experience. And God confirmed that it was worth it. Even if He changed one life, the whole thing was worth it! The students shared about ways they grew and things they learned that they never would have learned just being in the classroom. And I continue to see how God used OE to build relationships among the students and staff, which are bearing fruit even today.

I'm thankful for all that God taught our students, staff, and me on this trip. I pray that we would all be more like Jesus and walk more closely with Him because of these adventures and experiences! Thank you all for praying for us throughout this journey and praying for me as I planned it all!

Enjoy these pictures from our trip! You can also find more on my

Facebook page!

Amanda

### ***Praises***

- Praise God for all that He did on OE! I'll never begin to know the extent of what He did. But from what I've seen, He has done a lot!
- Praise God for no rain during OE, for protection, and for working out the boat situation so that we got to the island and back each day.
- Praise God for the rest and recovery that we have had! I am thankful for an extra day off to rest and recuperate after the hard work of planning and executing OE.

### ***Prayer Requests***

- I have a lot of big things I am praying about right now. I don't want to share all the details, but pray for wisdom. Pray that I would truly hear from the Lord and not just follow my own heart. Pray that God would work to change hearts and bring resolutions.
- There have been a few heavy situations in the Middle School in the past few weeks. Pray for wisdom as we navigate them as a team. Pray also for our principal as she carries the pressure of a lot of them.
- Pray that God would provide the staff needed for next year. In Middle School, we particularly need an English teacher and someone to do some math while I'm on home assignment.

# DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ



**February 25, 2024**

## **Missions as compared to Zwieback (In Darwin's words)**

I would like to compare zwieback to missions. I have been a missionary for couple of decades today and so this qualifies me to speak about missions, but I have never once made zwieback so please be gracious to me as I compare the two.

First comparison is that missions and zwieback are both challenging to define what exactly they are - missions is generally assumed that it is bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to a people who don't know Jesus. Not all missionaries are on the front lines bringing the good news, some missionaries support those that are on the front lines bringing the good news.

Zwieback is bread but that definition depends on where you live and your upbringing. There are varying spellings and pronunciations of the word. Some would say that Mennonites invented zwieback and others would say it is from a certain place in the world. The zwieback that I grew up with was soft, rich, buttery double buns made by pinching off

one ball of dough the size of a golf ball and then a smaller ball that is pressed into the larger ball. Karen when she was first introduced to Zwieback, she just called it a “bun with a lid on it”.

Some would demand that to be a missionary you need to cross some cultural barrier, or you need to travel to some place other than your home area to be a missionary. Others would argue that we all need to be a missionary and that we are all tasked with sharing the good news with those whom we live.

Some would demand that only people who were born in a certain upbringing can make zwieback and there are those who have never heard of a zwieback till today. They may have never eaten a warm zwieback in their life but may eat an avocado several times a week. There are people who have never eaten an avocado and there are others who have never eaten a zwieback.

There are many kinds of missionaries. Missionaries that pay missionary’s their salary and reimbursements, there are missionaries that teach other missionary’s kids, there are missionaries that are professional counsellors, there are missionaries that use camping, cooking, or horses, or teaching English as their method of telling the good news to others.

So how can we summarize this comparison between missions and zwieback? Let’s follow God’s plan for your life and be a missionary - however you want to define it and those who want to eat zwieback - however they want to eat it and whatever we do let’s make sure we are following the Word of God, and we are listening to what God wants us to do. The truth be known there are people who don’t know the good news and we are commanded to share the good news of Jesus with others. If you desire to eat bread and you call it zwieback - enjoy your bread and share your bread with others who don’t know

what it is.

\*Disclaimer: If you find some theological issues with something I said please give me a lot of latitude as it is not easy to compare missions to zwieback.

### **Family Update**

Clara continues to enjoy Berean Academy where she is a sophomore. Anna continues to enjoy John Brown University where she is a junior. Anna recently joined the JBU track team.

### **Prayer / Schedule Update**

Our tentative schedule so far is as follows. Of course, all dates are subject to change. Darwin works remotely with colleagues from all over the world and this puts him in front of the computer screen typically from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Please pray for us especially for these events:

Feb 28 - Mar 4 Darwin's family visit Kansas - sister her husband from IN and twin brother and his wife from MN

Apr 4 - 16 Darwin goes to SEND International headquarters for training and collaboration.

#### **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 Anna as she needs to decide what she will do this summer.
4. Pray for Clara at Berean Academy that she would seek God and make good friends.



5. Wisdom for Darwin as he serves as the assistant treasurer for the International Office.
6. Wisdom for SEND IO as we seek to hire a bookkeeper that will help with our workload.
7. Wisdom as Karen seeks her next ministry.
8. That our supporters will continue to support our ministry as we still rely 100% on support.
9. 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 & Anna (20) & Clara (16) Stoesz

**March 25, 2024**

**\$45.90 and the Gospel**

**(In Darwin's words)**

Last weekend I needed to get gas and so I went to a local gas station named Jump Start. I went to fill up and as I was filling gas a TV monitor turned on at the pump and normally it is some advertisement but this time, I heard a short and clear proclamation of the gospel along with an invitation to go to a big church in Wichita with a website for the church to learn more.

In the time that it took to buy \$45.90 in gas I was able to hear the gospel and I looked around and all the pumps had the same advertisement. The thing that really struck me was that here in Kansas people have access to the gospel, they can hear the Good News. My thoughts

went to places in the world where they do not even know what the real reason for Easter is, they may not even know that Easter is a holiday on the calendar.

As we celebrate Easter let's rejoice that we have access to the gospel and that others around us also have that access. Let's pray for areas in the world where they do not have access to the gospel and let's pray for missionaries and churches that are reaching out in those areas with a clear gospel witness.

When you support missionaries like us, you are a part of bringing access to the gospel in countries that do not have the opportunity to hear. Though we are here in Kansas we are a part of providing financial and administrative support to bringing good news to countries where SEND International serves. Thank you for being a part of bringing the good news to many other countries this Easter season.

### **Family Update / BIG NEWS!**

Darwin and Karen are excited to announce that on March 10 Anna got engaged to Robbie Keys! They met during their freshman year at John Brown University, and they plan their wedding sometime in August, 2024. We are excited for the two as they begin this next chapter together.

Clara continues to enjoy Berean Academy where she is a sophomore.

### **Prayer / Schedule Update**

Our tentative schedule so far is as follows. Of course, all dates are subject to change. Darwin works remotely with colleagues from all over the world and this puts him in front of the computer screen typically from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Please pray for us especially for these events:

Mar 29 Karen participates in the choir at our church's Good Friday service.

Apr 1 Karen does a Japan report to a home school group.

Apr 4 – 16 Darwin goes to SEND International headquarters for training and collaboration.

Apr 15 Visiting the SEND Canada office in Komoka, Ontario

**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 Anna and Robbie as they plan their future together.
4. Pray for Clara at Berean Academy that she would seek God and make good friends.
5. Pray for wisdom for Darwin as he serves as the assistant treasurer for the International Office.
6. Pray for wisdom as Karen seeks her next ministry.
7. Pray that our supporters will continue to support our ministry as we still rely 100% on support.
8. 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 & Anna (20) & Clara (16) Stoesz

## HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY



**March 2024**

***“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions.” Joel 2:28***

It is true that God speaks mainly through His Word, but I believe He also speaks to people in other ways that draw them to Himself and His Word. I have read that Jesus is appearing in dreams to Muslims in the Middle East. After they see Jesus in their dreams, He leads them to the people who will explain the gospel to them.

Joe has had some interesting dreams! I had not met him until the day he stepped into the office to tell me the dream he had a few years earlier. He said that in his dream, “Buildings were crumbling, and the sky became a dark gray. Then a bright light appeared coming out of the sky and I heard a voice saying, ‘I am coming soon.’ I don’t know much about the Bible, but my mom is a Christian. When I was growing up, I was continually getting in trouble, and have been in and out of prison for the last 15 years. Since I had that dream, I can’t get it out of my mind. I know God was speaking to me to get right with Him.” I had the privilege of explaining the gospel to him. Joe

told me he was ready to follow Jesus and give up his old sinful life. After praying Joe said, "Man I just feel such peace and joy. I can't wait to get back to my cell and read my Bible!" When I visited with him a week later Joe told me, "I talked with my mother the other day about all the negative things that are going on with my family. Anger started to rise up within me against my siblings for messing up and causing my mom problems. I said to Mom, 'Let's pray for them'. After I prayed with her there was silence on the phone, and I realized she was crying. When I asked her why she was crying, she said, 'Because I never thought the day would come when you would pray with me!' My old friends are asking me what has happened to me because they see me happy. They told me, 'We just can't see you with a Bible and going to church.' They can't understand why I don't want to fight anymore." Later Joe told me, "My celli (who is a Christian) is asking me why I am not picking up the Bible. I told him there just seems to be a mind block when I pick up my Bible and I don't know what it is." We talked about unforgiveness against others who hurt him in the past. I reminded him what Jesus said in Matthew 18 about how He would deliver the unforgiving person, "to the tormentors/jailors" until they forgive others from the heart. The one who has unforgiveness will be held captive by his/her unforgiveness. Joe admitted that he did have unforgiveness. He had five names that came to his mind. Joe prayed for God to forgive him for his unforgiveness, and asked God to bless them.

Joe told me, "The Bible is awesome, when I read it, it is reading me!" He meant it touched his inner being!

God is at work in the prison and it is a privilege for me to walk with these men who are beginners in the faith!

I appreciate your generosity with your prayers and financial support!  
In Christ, Harlan

## PAUL & JANET HARKNESS - AWANA



**March 25, 2024**

Greetings, Faithful Ones:

Winter has returned to Nebraska as I write today. Temperatures in the mid-twenties, winds in the mid-forties, snow on the ground, and falling from the skies. A nice day to work in the office, as I have been doing!

**THIS WEEK:** Two pastor visits are scheduled on Wednesday to talk about Child Discipleship. I am hoping to make drop-by visits as well.

Contacting churches to host Summer Awana Connect meetings. Six have opened their facilities to us. I am waiting for confirmation from four others. If you would like to register early, go to <https://missionary.awana.org/paul-harkness> then scroll down to the location of your choice.

Please also pray as I prepare an important message. I will be speaking at the Village Missions Rural Ministry Conference in Kearney, Nebraska, on April 25th.

**BORROWED:** “We’ve all observed it happening. Probably guilty of it ourselves as well. I was watching the guy at the next table during

breakfast, squinting at the menu. That's right, squinting. He either had glasses and didn't bother or denied needing them. Squinting .. crushing your eyelids together to narrow the vision so that you can bring the target into focus. That gave me a moment. There are times in my life when I have the "glasses" but refuse to put them on for some lame reason. Oftentimes, God needs me to squint so that I can see the real target and not get lost in all the other stuff around it. How about you?"



# WARRIOR 180 FOUNDATION



**March 4, 2024**

Dear Ministry Partners,

As the days swiftly pass and March arrives, it's a gentle reminder of the fleeting nature of time. In our roles as fulltime missionaries with ABWE, we stand commissioned and ready, entrusted with God's work.

This new year has ushered in change, yet amidst the shifts, our calling remains steadfast. My heart beats for people; I'm undeniably a pastor at heart. I'm drawn to the battlegrounds of stress, confusion, and heartache, armed with a mighty weapon: Jesus and His Word. This calling, this purpose, remains unchanged. However, our approach to reestablishing ourselves with Warrior 180 Foundation has evolved.

We've devoted weeks to nurturing our ministry partners and securing the necessary support, enabling us to expand our teaching and training initiatives. We are currently at 26% of our needed funding. Our hearts are open to the leading of the Lord as we respond to communities in need.

Reflecting on February, it was a month marked by purposeful journeys and impactful engagements. From training sessions in Florida to strategic planning in Ohio, each moment was imbued with significance. Celebrating family milestones in Nebraska added a precious layer of joy to our travels.

One highlight was conducting an ACT (suicide intervention) class at a local church. Like the flight attendant's inquiry to exit row passengers, our training fosters confidence in being willing and able to step in to save a life—a sobering yet vital skill.

Engaging in community service, such as the Quilts of Valor sew-in, reminded us of the power of love in action. The beauty of this organization lies in their simplicity and profound impact.

Opportunities to speak, whether at a youth night or beyond, reinforce the call to be used where the Lord needs us. We're reminded of God's promise in Deuteronomy 31:6: He goes with us, never leaving nor forsaking us. This truth strengthens us to face life's battles with unwavering courage.

As we look forward to the journey ahead, let us embrace our calling to share God's love with others. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commissions us to make disciples, promising His presence until the end of the age.

I just wanted to take a moment to express our heart felt gratitude for all the support and encouragement you've shown us. Seriously, we wouldn't be where I am today without your unwavering faithfulness. Most of you have been with us from the beginning in 2015, cheering us on every step of the way, and we couldn't be more thankful.

As we continue this journey of ministry, we are forever reminded of the importance of community and connection. If you happen to know anyone who could benefit from the work we are called to do or if you come across someone in need, we would be incredibly grateful for the opportunity to connect with them. Together, we can spread love, hope, and the message of Christ to turn lives around.

Once again, thank you from the bottom of our heart for your continued support. Let's keep shining bright and making a difference in this world!!

In His Service,

Jeff & Criss Hastings Warrior 180 Foundation

## THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS



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

### **March 21, 2024 - PERSECUTION & PRAYER ALERT**

#### **PAKISTAN: Young Girl Forcibly Converted**

Sources: Pakistan Christian Post, Morning Star News

On the night of February 11th, ten-year-old Laiba Suhail was abducted from her home in the Faisalabad District of Punjab. The Christian girl's captor has been identified as Muhammad Mohsin Shah – a man who is well known in the area for abducting and forcibly converting girls from religious minorities.

When Laiba's parents approached Muhammad, he dismissed them by asserting that she had willingly embraced Islam. In response to the incident, court officials ruled to send Laiba to a women's shelter rather than returning her home. The parents were refused any contact with their daughter during the hearing, even though the young girl was present.

The Christian family has since learned that Muhammad managed to take Laiba from the women's shelter. Her parents are now concerned that she may have been sold to sex traffickers. At last report, Laiba's family members were pursuing all efforts to regain custody, but they are extremely poor due to the ill health of Laiba's father. They are endeavouring to obtain a lawyer to file a motion with the Lahore High Court.

The plight facing Christian women and girls in Pakistan is deeply concerning. Despite court rulings that have been established to protect females of minority groups, many authorities throughout the country frequently disregard these laws. As a result, on February 28th, the Lahore High Court ordered the government to implement stricter enforcement of anti-child marriage laws. Pressure has also been applied to enact tighter regulations relating to forced conversions.

**Please uphold this distraught family in your prayers, asking the Lord to mightily intervene in the situation and ensure Laiba is safely returned to the custody of her loving parents. May God grant this young girl divine protection, healing and comfort, meeting her every need now and in the future. Pray that the laws designed to protect vulnerable minorities in Pakistan will be tightened and more strictly enforced by the country's authorities so that such incidents can be prevented from happening in the lives of other innocent victims and their families.**

### **CHINA: Another Church Ordered to Remove Crosses**

Source: ChinaAid

For more than 30 years, crosses were allowed to be displayed by Christian churches throughout China. However, as of 2014, the situation began to reverse. Beginning in Zhejiang Province, over 1,000 crosses were forcibly removed from Christian buildings over a three-year period. The enforcement of that campaign then spread to other provinces.

On March 10th, the Wangfenggang Christian Church in the Xiejiaji district of Huainan City, Anhui Province, received written notice from village administrators ordering the removal of a cross from the top of their building, as well as one that was placed above the facility's door. The notice stated that the crosses were "safety hazards."

The cross above the door has been securely in place for 40 years. The one on the roof was installed five years ago in compliance with applicable

building standards – plus, it passed a safety inspection. The claim from the village committee appears to be an arbitrary demand without basis. It is uncertain if there are any legal premises for this notice and whether the village committee has the authority to enforce such a demand.

Pressure on the country's Christians from various levels of government has been increasing throughout China as the Chinese Communist Party endeavours to take control of all aspects of society.

**Pray for wisdom on behalf of the leaders of this church as they determine their next steps of action in response to this demand. May God also guide these leaders as they continue ministering to the members of their church and reaching out to others in the community. In general, please prayerfully remember Christians throughout China who are likewise facing increased pressure to submit to the government's repressive policies, asking our Heavenly Father to sustain them with His reassuring presence, strength and peace.**

### **PAKISTAN: Christian Sentenced to Life in Prison for Alleged Blasphemy**

Sources: Morning Star News, British Asian Christian Association

On March 18th, 2022, Fansan Shahid was taken from his home in Lahore and charged with blasphemy. The charges arose after the Christian man purportedly commented on photos of suicide bombings that occurred in Sri Lanka. As the attackers appeared to be Muslims, his accuser alleged that Fansan's social media comment insulted the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

During interrogation, Fansan was coerced into confessing – something he later retracted during his trial. He further stated that the phone he used to make the comment has been lost since 2019. Despite the missing phone and his denial of any involvement, the Christian father of two was convicted and sentenced to life in prison on January 24th of this year.

In response to the verdict, Fansan's sister Sonia stated: "We are deeply shocked by the conviction of Fansan. We are praying for justice and [his]

release through appeal.” The family has been forced to relocate due to concerns for their safety.

**Please lift up Fansan before God’s throne of grace as he faces the accusations against him. Pray that his appeal hearing will be successful, and that consequently he would be released from custody. Ask the Lord to ensure the safety of this accused believer and his family, as well as any other Christians in their community who may be at risk. May the Holy Spirit work mightily within the hearts and minds of citizens throughout Pakistan – including those serving as legislators – so that the country’s widely abused blasphemy laws would be repealed.**

# SEND INTERNATIONAL

**March 22, 2024**

“From Everywhere To Eurasia” | Engage Newsletter | March 2024

Dear Outreach,

The world is a vast, interconnected web of spiritual and cultural diversity. Spreading the word about Jesus in areas where Christians are the minority can seem daunting. Fortunately, if you listen closely, God will light the way for you.

Learn about SEND teammate Grace’s journey towards spiritual fulfillment in areas that are typically hard to reach and how she found her purpose by following the path that God laid out for her.

If you close your eyes and try to picture a map of the world, you might see, in your mind’s eye, the continents of the world, the giant land masses of Asia, Africa, South America, and so on. Or maybe you can visualize a few big countries like China, Nigeria, Ukraine, India, Brazil, or France. But can your mind’s eye picture the complex interconnection of multiple cultures, peoples, and languages that make up hundreds of local communities all over the globe? What a swirling interwoven masterpiece that is! These culturally complex communities and people movements are global realities that our God sees, and that he can use for His glory.

Even in our globally-connected world, our modern eyes often cannot see the many different ethnic groups, multi-cultural societies, or people migrations that exist in hundreds of “dots” on the map all around the world. But this reality is most people’s lived experience on earth, and an experience that God is already using to build gospel bridges to places and peoples that are hard to reach with the Good News of Jesus.

This is the movement of God’s Spirit to bring the Good News of Jesus to every tongue, tribe, and nation. SEND Eurasia seeks to participate in God’s movement to send his people from hundreds of points on the globe



to hundreds of culturally and linguistically complex, local points full of people He loves.

### **When God Called Grace**

This miraculous movement of people can be seen in the story of our very own SEND teammate, Grace P. Grace's story demonstrates this extraordinary wisdom of God in leading his people from everywhere to everywhere for his glory.

Grace comes from Quezon City, Metro Manila in the Philippines. Her story begins right in her own community. She began walking with Jesus as her Savior on May 16, 1985, when she was 15 years old. As she grew in her understanding of Jesus and his love for her, Grace's heart to serve grew as well, and she began to serve his people through music ministry, Sunday school teaching, and in many other ways. Grace also grew in her desire and skill in sharing the gospel and got involved in the evangelistic outreach of her church.

Every story starts right where a person finds themselves. But Jesus always grows his children to move beyond their comfort zone. Grace soon had opportunities while she was working, after university, to minister on short-term, cross-cultural trips. Then, God took Grace to a different part of her own country, to the southern island of Mindanao. There she encountered people of a very different faith, and there she was challenged to follow God deeper into the nations, even farther away.

### **Grace Responds to God's Calling**

That experience was almost 20 years ago for Grace. Since then, God opened doors for Grace to receive more ministry and vocational training. God led Grace from a less-focused calling to a specific burden and a specific path to serve in his harvest in Central Asia. He never gave her more than a few new steps at a time, and there were challenges, reversals, and moments of stalling along the way. But she now looks back at almost ten years of adaptation, of language learning, and of relational ministry with people she loves because God first loved her, and first loved them.

God has given Grace some foundational gifts which bless her and help her bless others. She sees her own Filipino cultural heritage as a gift from God which has helped her to connect with Central Asian people, who often feel a connection to her culturally. She sees the Word of God as deep daily nourishment that she truly lives on. And she sees along the way, that God has given her mentors, trainers, senders, and teammates who have also shaped and strengthened her.

From everywhere to everywhere is not a movement of only one lone person. It is a community movement. From the beginning, the church was an intercultural team movement:

*1 Now Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius from Cyrene, Manaen, who grew up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set Barnabas and Saul apart for me to do the work for which I called them." 3 Then they fasted and prayed, laid their hands on them, and let them go. 4 After they had been sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went to Seleucia and from there sailed to Cyprus. 5 Arriving in Salamis, they began to preach God's word in the Jewish synagogues. They also had John to help them (Acts 13:1-5).*

Do a little geographical digging and you'll find that these saints came from very different local communities. Why would God throw together such a motley crew? How were they able to serve in unity?

Short answer?

**It brings him glory when his people live with one another in a way completely contrary to the world around them, and he gives us what we need.**

*14 For it is he who is our peace. Through his mortality he made both groups one by tearing down the wall of hostility that divided them. 15 He rendered the Law inoperative, along with its commandments and regulations, thus creating in himself one new humanity from the two, thereby making peace,*

*16 and reconciling both groups to God in one body through the cross, on which he eliminated the hostility. 17 He came and proclaimed peace for you who were far away and for you who were near. 18 For through him, both of us have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 That is why you are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the Messiah Jesus himself being the cornerstone. 21 In union with him the whole building is joined together and rises into a holy sanctuary for the Lord. 22 You, too, are being built in him, along with the others, into a place for God's Spirit to dwell (Ephesians 2:14-22).*

What a privilege to come together from everywhere to serve everywhere people need Jesus, and to go together where the Gospel hasn't yet gone.

Grace's team in Central Asia is just one of our SEND Eurasia teams looking for more teammates. We are praying for Jesus followers called from everywhere to serve in the masterpiece of multi-cultural communities one finds in Eurasia.

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### **How To Give To North American Baptist Missionaries:**

**Step 1:** Go to the NAB's new missions webpage [nabonmission.org](http://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**