



BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

December 2022

Editor Janelle Daum

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“And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’”

Luke 2:10-11

The message of the angel to the shepherds at the time of Christ’s birth was one of wonder: “Don’t be afraid... good news of great joy... a Savior has been born this day...He is Christ the Lord.” The announcement was the greatest ever made. God became man in the form of a newborn baby. He came to dwell among us. He came to die for us... to be our Savior. The promise of eternal life lay in a manger. Great joy came to us that day.

Note that he didn’t promise happiness. He promised joy. They are

E-mail: jbvbeditor@hotmail.com your article.

very different experiences. A devotional I read recently made that difference clear. It's a wonderful message for us to remember this Christmas season:

“So many things in this world promise happiness, but few things ever deliver. There are some who believe that if they could get enough money, they could be happy. Others feel that if they could lose weight, or gain more friends, that happiness would be at their doorstep every day. Have you found that your Christian life has been redirected in a quest for happiness? If so, it is time to abandon your quest for happiness and try joy... Joy is always at your disposal, and it is very much different from happiness. Happiness depends upon favorable situations. It waits until things are exactly the way they should be before it can be satisfied... On the other hand, joy does not look upon situations in order to be satisfied. It draws from one source – God. With joy, a person can gain or lose great wealth and still find contentment and fulfillment in life. Such joy is what you see when a person is sick in the hospital, maintaining a positive, jovial attitude. Such persons may not know why they are joyful, but their hearts are full of glory, honoring God, despite the precarious situations they are in... Joy does not need a reason. It is available to all who must live in this world of tribulation. It is available to you today if you choose to walk in it.” (Daily Grace, 2005, Honor Books).

Jesus didn't come to bring happiness. He came to bring joy. His joy can fill our hearts in all the seasons of our lives. His joy can help us to be overcomers in all the trials of our lives. His joy is based on the promise of joy that comes with the knowledge that we have eternal life because of Jesus and His death on the Cross that paid the price for our sins.

The birth of Jesus brought that joy into our world. Let it fill your hearts this Christmas. Blessings, Pastor Randy

COMMITTEE REPORTS

OUTREACH TEAM MEETING

10/25/2022

Members: Pastor Randy, Shawna, Jolene & Jennifer

We reviewed last meeting items, went over teams & who will be terming out & who will be staying on each team, discussed Jennifer being appointed to Outreach Team.

Went over love offerings, discussed if we should leave the amount as is or change. We did change some around to a different month to match up more appropriately to the specific purpose / meaning of the business.

It was also discussed that starting in 2023 we plan to have either a representative from each month Love Offering come in & speak about their companies purpose & why we support them, or have a video showing what they do.

We also discussed the Outreach Missions Various Offering. No one seemed to know exactly what this is for. We thought it would be a good use for when we have representatives come in to speak, we can help them with expenses if needed, hotel room, gas etc...

NAB Missions were discussed, no changes made

Other Missions were discussed – Venell Family removed
Shawna

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR DECEMBER AND BEYOND

EVENTS CALENDAR 2022:

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. - 8 p.m., Awana

7:45 p.m. Middle & High School Youth Group

Thursday's

3 p.m. Prayer & Women's Bible Study meeting in homes

6:30 p.m. Women's Evening Bible Study meeting in homes

Saturday's

December 3, 8 a.m. Men's Bible Study via Zoom

December 17, 8 a.m. Men's Bible Study via Zoom

Sunday, December 11, Annual Business Meeting and Potluck

Sunday, December 18, Newsletter Articles are Due

Saturday, December 24, Christmas Eve

Sunday, December 25, Christmas Day

MISSIONARY UPDATES

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



November 1, 2022

AM I TOO SATISFIED?

I have been asking myself this question in the last month or so. It seems that there are recently some opportunities put in front of me that could help me to grow, but they also are hard. Some of them involve significant changes in the way I think and process life. They are different from the things I have always known. When I think about what I know and how I operate now, it seems familiar and safe. Thinking about intentionally pursuing something that will change how I've always processed my life seems hard and potentially scary.

Last weekend, my devotional spoke to this topic. Paul David Tripp, in his book, *New Morning Mercies* for October 25 said,

“We’re all too satisfied. We’re all too satisfied with who we are, where we are, and what we’re doing. We’re satisfied with a little bit of biblical literacy. We’re satisfied with occasional moments of ministry.... We’re satisfied with faithful attendance at the weekend services of our churches. We’re satisfied with quick morning devotions.... We’re satisfied to be mere consumers of the work of the church rather

than committed participants in it. We're satisfied with hearts that occasionally wander and with thoughts that contradict what the Bible says is good and true.... We're satisfied.

"None of us is yet a grace graduate, but we're satisfied. We all give evidence that we still need to grow, but we're satisfied. And because we are satisfied, we are resistant to the grace that is our only hope. If you are able to convince yourself that you are healthy, even though there may be indicators that you are not, you are probably not going to go to the doctor asking for his diagnostic and curative skill.

"But here is what you and I need to remember: we serve a dissatisfied Redeemer. He knows we still need the transforming work of his powerful grace. Isn't it wonderful that, in a gracious dissatisfaction, he will not relent until every microbe of sin is removed from every cell of every one of the hearts of his children?"

God is in the business of changing us. He didn't choose us to just remain as we are. He chose us and gave us a new heart, and then he began the process of transforming us. That process will continue until He comes or calls us home.

Change is hard, especially when it involves unlearning behaviors and thought patterns. But I know that if God asks me to do something hard, He will walk with me through that. He has a purpose in it. He hasn't called me to live a safe, satisfied life. When he brings up areas in my life that He wants to change, I need to not brush them aside. I need to run to the doctor and ask Him to help me heal. He will do that because He loves me. He who began a good work in me will carry it on to completion (Phil 1:6).

And this is true for you, too. He wants to grow and change you, too. Don't be satisfied with where you are. Be willing to do something, even if it is hard, if it will make you more like Christ. He will walk with you through it.

Amanda

Praises

- Just last week, the President of the Philippines signed an executive order that masks are now voluntary inside!
- I went on a site visit for Outdoor Ed last month. We are going to move forward with that site! I'm excited that we have that settled. We are still working on one major detail, and now I'm working on figuring out who is doing what.
- I had an awesome trip to Malaysia with my friends over our October break! A good friend who works in Japan was able to join us. It was so great to spend time away and rest for work. It was also great to see God's creation in another country.

Prayer Requests

- Pray for those students (and some staff) who are going to have high anxiety with the change in the mask mandate.
- We had a four-day weekend this weekend for All Saints Day. We have no more breaks until Christmas. Pray that we would have perseverance to make it to Christmas.
- Pray for wisdom as I get things rolling for Outdoor Ed. We are going to start having squad meetings soon, and I need to figure out what needs to happen at each meeting. I also need to get all of the roles filled.
- Pray for continued opportunities to disciple my students and point them to Christ.

November 16, 2022

PowerUp! Prayer Update

Praises

- We had Outdoor Ed Chapel today! It went great! I was a bit overwhelmed in the last week as to whether or not I'd have time to organize it and the first squad meeting in time, but I had just the right amount of time (with some delegation of some tasks), and the chapel

went really well!

- We were able to have a ministry outing with our Bible study groups yesterday. It was fun to see them interact with other kids and play with them. These kids are attending a Filipino Christian school about 5 minutes from Faith Academy.

Prayer Requests

- Pray for continued wisdom on how I spend my time. I have more to do than originally I was supposed to due to unforeseen circumstances, but I know God is in control and knew this from the beginning. I felt like I was in a good rhythm and balance between work and relaxation, so it's going to be hard to have to switch that and spend more time working than I have been.

- Pray for a strong finish to the semester. We only have four weeks until Christmas break!

- Pray that God would provide staff even now for the upcoming school year. We need multiple English teachers for Middle School (everyone teaching right now is just filling in), as well as many other positions throughout the school.

Ongoing Prayer Requests

- That God will do great things in the hearts of students and staff this year at Faith Academy. Our school theme is Renew, Revive, Refresh.

- That Marissa and I would use our house well to serve our housemate and our community. Pray also that He would provide a more permanent house for us to move into.

- That God will provide all the staff we need, both for the rest of this year and for next year.

DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ - JAPAN



November 11, 2022

Ministry Update

“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good: for his steadfast love endures forever!” Psalm 118:29

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thess 5:18

This Thanksgiving we are thankful that we can be here in the USA and experience a holiday that we have missed for many years. Culture shock is when you can walk into the store and can find canned pumpkin and evaporated milk. Do not take this for granted. It is not easy in some countries to make pumpkin pie. It is also wonderful to eat pecan pies at multiple events throughout the season.

This Thanksgiving season we are thankful that we can just be here, present, and able to go visit family and to attend events that normally we would not be able to do. We can help families when they are going through difficult times.

News from Japan

Tiffany Neufeld is serving as the SEND Japan treasurer a role that Darwin was involved in, and she is doing a good job and is not hesitant

to ask questions when she has them. She is also taking Karen's position on the Christian Academy in Japan board of director position. Jon Reasoner is helping in housing and maintenance, and he seems to be keeping busy with that role as this is a role that will continue to have work items. Naito San our Japanese bookkeeper continues to do his responsibilities which he has done for many decades. Pray for Tiffany, Jon and Naito San as they continue to serve in Japan in the business office.

The exciting thing about home service is that the ministry things we thought no one else can do, can be done by others. This is a great reminder of what we are thankful for. We are thankful for missionaries who can step up to the task and continue to do ministry in Japan. We realize that we are not irreplaceable.

We heard that the 2022 Church Planters Institute (CPI) National Conference just ended. CPI's vision is to see gospel-empowered churches and disciples multiplying throughout Japan.

The Japanese yen continues to fluctuate. Around October 21 it hit the 150 yen to the USD, but today it is down to 138 yen to the USD. A year ago, it was about 114 yen to the USD. These wild fluctuations make it difficult to budget our resources that God has entrusted to us.

Family Update

Karen continues her classes with Moody Bible Institute by taking two classes: "Care of the ministry leader's soul" and "Ministry to Women in Pain". Clara enjoys Berean Academy and is helping with makeup at the school play this weekend. Anna loves her studies at John Brown University and enjoys her kinesiology classes. We look forward to having Anna home for Thanksgiving break.

Year End Gifts

We trust God to provide for our support. Our dependence is on God. We thank you for your faithful support. If you are considering a year end gift to our ministry, your gifts to SEND International are

tax deductible. Please make checks out to SEND International and mail them to: PO Box 513 Farmington, MI 48332. You can also send your gift right now via your credit card and bank transfer at: <https://send.org/give/missionaries/stoesz> We thank you for being a part of our team and we look forward to a continued relationship with you.

This is the season for donors to be thinking of personal gifts for missionaries they support. We are so thankful for all of you and for your generosity. Personal gifts should not be mailed to SEND International but be mailed directly to Darwin & Karen Stoesz PO Box 33 Elbing KS 67041.

We think of you, our supporters in prayer and finances often. You have sacrificed money from your hard-earned salary to join in what God has invited us to do. Pray that we will continue to serve faithfully for Jesus is the Lamb and he is Lord of lords and King of kings!

Contact Information

Our contact information for the year is:

Our physical address is 219 W 1st St Elbing KS 67041

Our mailing address is PO Box 33 Elbing KS 67041

Our main phone number for text and calling is: 316-708-0127

(Feel free to send us a text)

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:

Wednesday's Darwin will be helping with AWANA as much as he is able despite his travels

Nov 11-12 Clara helps with makeup at the Berean Academy Play

Nov 17 Berean Academy Elementary Chapel – Elbing, Kansas

Nov 17 Darwin visit supporters in Hillsdale, Enid, and Tulsa Oklahoma

Nov 18 Anna comes home from JBU for Thanksgiving break

Nov 22-25 Thanksgiving with Stoesz family – Mountain Lake, Minnesota

Dec 1 Emmaus Mennonite Church (Karen only) – Whitewater, Kansas
Dec 5 Darwin and Karen wedding anniversary
Dec 15 John Brown University last day
Dec 18 Whitewater Community Church – Whitewater, Kansas
Dec 19 Karen’s Moody Bible Institute class last day
Dec 21 Berean Academy last day
Dec 22 Dentist visits for everyone in the family
Jan 4 Berean Academy starts up again
Jan 9 John Brown University starts up again
Feb 1 Whitewater Community Church AWANA – Whitewater, Kansas
Feb 8 Whitewater Community Church AWANA – Whitewater, Kansas
Feb 15 Whitewater Community Church AWANA – Whitewater, Kansas
Feb 22 Whitewater Community Church AWANA – Whitewater, Kansas
Feb 24-26 Faith Evangelical Bible Church – Henderson, Nebraska

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 wisdom as we setup our schedule of activities for home service.
6. Pray for safety as we drive many miles here in the USA

Thank you for your continued partnership in our ministry.

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

Sincerely, Darwin & Karen & Anna (19) & Clara (15) Stoesz

HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY



November 2022

“Let your conduct be without covetousness, be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’” Hebrews 13:5

God is faithful to do what He has promised to do. He will never leave or forsake His people and He will give the strength that is needed for each problem or trial. We are not alone; we have the Holy Spirit to guide us and lead us until we reach our eternal home!

Some of the inmates own only what they have in their cells and are content with God’s presence. Don is one of these men who continues to grow spiritually! He has not been out of mental health hold for 20 years. This means that he is not in population, but in his cell most of the day. I gave him a Bible in 2015, and he claims that God used the Bible to help him learn to read. In the last year he has been growing deeper in the faith. I meet with him for an hour weekly for a one-on-one Bible study. Many of the men in his section are jealous of him because I have visited with him weekly and sent him Bible studies when we couldn’t go into the prison because of Covid 19. The men call Don all kinds of names when he comes to my Bible study. He continues to want to go deeper with the Lord, but it is a spiritual battle

because of all the negativity in his area. He writes gospel rap songs that he likes me to hear. The other day when he was discouraged, he felt the presence of the Lord come so powerfully into his cell. At first he was a little fearful, but then he recognized it was the Lord's presence. It was like the Lord encompassed him with His love and then he felt the presence leave. He felt the Lord gave him a song right after that, and he called it, "Running to Receive." He said we are to run to Jesus to receive His grace, love, and forgiveness. It was one of the best Scriptural rap songs he had ever written. Don went on to tell how free he feels since Christ has set him free. Others have asked him to share some of his old gang rap songs, but he tells them that is from his old life. Then other inmates ask him, "Don, what happened to you?" He tells them, "Jesus happened to me!"

Brady, who is a church member, came to me very discouraged and upset about what happened to him with the staff and other inmates. He claimed they treated him unfairly. He said to me, "I have been doing well this past year and now look at what happened to me. I try to do the right thing, and this happens!" Brady went on to say, "I gave some of my commissary to another guy. This guy promised to pay me back but never did pay me back. Then I let anger against him control me and this caused me to confront him. I ended up losing my joy, and maybe I will have longer time in prison." We talked about what Jesus would have done and how He would have handled the situation. We talked about being truthful with the Lord. I know the Holy Spirit was at work in him! Later that day at Bible Study and at the Thursday night church service he admitted in front of everyone that he had not be living right in the past few months. He knew he was doing things he should not be doing, and it caught up with him. Brady said God convicted him that he was living two lives. He asked everyone to forgive him for not living right and being a bad example of a Christian. This could only be work of the Holy Spirit in Brady!

If you would like to give for the Christmas sacks for the inmates please give online only before the 10th of November: <https://www.simplechurchgiving.net/App/Form/2b7a49e1-d3dc-43e7-a1d3-f17ebfec0df4>

I am thankful for all your prayers and financial support! Have a blessed Thanksgiving!

In Christ, Harlan

PAUL & JANET HARKNESS - AWANA



November 12, 2022

We are thankful for the good trip to and good training in Nashville at the end of October for Awana's Resilient Child Discipleship Training. We would encourage every Awana leader to attend one of these trainings.

Next week (Nov 14-18), all the Awana missionaries across the nation will converge in North Carolina for the Awana Missionary Conference at the Cove.

Pray for safe travels, health, and a little R&R during this time.

Following that week, we will see our daughter, Dora, in Virginia, then on to Iowa for Christmas with the rest of the family.

Thank you for praying!

Paul Harkness

RICK & DEBBI BARDIN - CAMEROON



November 2022

GREETINGS TO ALL IN THIS THANKSGIVING MONTH

Praises

- Health and strength, especially in a very demanding schedule for Rick.
- Opportunities to give and thank God for all He has done.
- Lockdown in August was minimal.

Prayer

- Pray for the release of the administrator of one of our sister hospitals, who has been imprisoned as a result of the conflict.
 - Pray for Dr. Mbanda to finish his project and final exams. We do not yet have a date from the Kenyan University as to when the date will be (because of the Covid setbacks, they are still catching up).
 - Building projects and fundraising still in process (radiation therapy and oxygen plant).
 - Pray for wisdom in how to help the many needy people around us.
- Let us come before Him with thanksgiving. Let us sing to Him psalms of praise.

PSALM 95:2

We are in the middle of our church's 7-week Thanksgiving

Offering and Dancing time here in Mbingo. Many are farmers here, and as we have described before, each one brings the first fruits of their harvest on their neighborhood's appointed Sunday. It's quite a festive and special time. As you see the joy and dancing, you would never know the suffering and poverty that have struck most of these people. Many have lost loved ones, businesses, land, crops, animals, and money because of the continued war situation around us. It is such a testimony to me that most still stand strong in their faith and commitment to God and give generously from what they do have! They know how to be cheerful givers!! As usual, after the service, the produce, animals, and other goods are auctioned off to the members as they bid on each item, and of course all proceeds go to the church. We have been raising money for our new church building for a few years, and we are hoping next newsletter to show you pictures of worship there. God has been blessing and doing great things even in these times of suffering and trouble. It doesn't stop Him.

Some have asked, "What's it like to live here?" This is an example of a typical day:

- Going to chapel at 6:40 am and hearing a beautiful African choir special.
- Listening to a story of hardship from the cleaner who is mopping the floor while Rick works at the microscope.
- Walking home for lunch break, admiring the beautiful, green mountain in front of us, then hearing from the man who sells apples that his account was hacked and he lost 500,000 francs (about \$800). He is a displaced businessman from a nearby town who has already lost his big business because of the war.
- In the afternoon, you get a visit from a friend who needs money for her child who has been driven from school because they haven't paid their school fees.
- That night you hear crying and wailing outside (the morgue isn't far),

so that means someone has died.

There are so many needs around us, and that can be overwhelming. Praise the Lord He never gets overwhelmed, and He gives us wisdom in how to help.

One very special activity we had last week was a visit to the school on behalf of our grandson Caleb. Caleb has a heart for missions, and he raised over \$200 one afternoon selling lemonade and cookies in his neighborhood for our Mbingo school here, with the help of some family members. His private “NGO” is called JOYICA (Joy in Africa). There are now over 500 students at our school in Mbingo!! I had the privilege of presenting the school with linoleum floor coverings for three of the nursery classrooms, soccer balls, hand balls, books for the library, wooden educational toys, and some stuffed animals for the younger ones. The kids know that Caleb loves them and so does Jesus!!

Thank you for your prayers and support over these past 12 years. We are so grateful, and they keep us going!
In His Matchless Love,
Rick & Debbie Bardin

BRANDON & MARCI JONES - BRAZIL



November 2022

REESTABLISHING RHYTHMS

Prayer

- Summer is around the corner, which means that summer church camps are, too! Please pray for the young people and the camps, as this is an important ministry here.
- For the continued development and growth of the Kairos program.
- For the country of Brazil as they transition to a different president in January.

Praises

- Our church family here, and the ways we can minister to each other.
- Brandon and Marci celebrated 19 years of marriage. God has been so good to our family.
- Next month is another seminary graduation!

May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands.

PSALM 90:17 (NIV)

As we enter our fifth month of being back in the field, we have had a chance to exhale as our unsettled life of home assignment has turned into a resettled life in Brazil.

As a family, we have been able to rejoin worshiping with Igreja Batista Central (Central Baptist Church). It has been a joy to see the people again and continue building connections there. The girls have

joined the weekly teen meetings that are on Friday nights 7:30–9:30. They come home energized and excited to share what they have learned. One of the teen leaders made a special trip to our home to encourage our girls to establish daily Bible reading and show them tools that would help them. Brandon and Marci attend the monthly couples nights and have gotten to know a few new couples this way. On November 6, our family was able to become official members of the church. This is an exciting step for us as we continue to look for ways to get connected even deeper.

Monica and Olivia have established their rhythms at school. Olivia has been adjusting to having multiple teachers. Her desire to have a best friend has also been fulfilled. She plays basketball on Wednesdays after school. Monica is adjusting well to the rigorous demands of high school. She is taking both biology and chemistry. She is also continuing her Portuguese studies and as a requirement is learning Spanish, too. We are thankful that they have both adjusted so well. In late October, we had our first parent–teacher conferences and got positive feedback from all their teachers.

Brandon has established a weekly routine of class prep and then teaching. He is teaching a Survey to the Old Testament class this semester. Even with a year in the States, he has gone right back into teaching in Portuguese. This does mean that the prep for class takes longer, but it has been a great way for him to dive back into the language. His class will wrap up around the third week of November. The seminary semester will close out with a two-week intensive class taught by visiting professor Carol Potratz, coming here from Canada.

In September, Marci began new routines as a student. She was accepted into a Master of Divinity program through Kairos University. Over the next four years, she will be working toward this goal. It is her desire that this will equip her to join in teaching the students at the seminary. She also had the opportunity to join the biannual

Baptist ladies congress. This event had over 300 ladies representing Baptist churches from across our state. It was a wonderful weekend of worship and unity among the ladies.

It is exciting to be back in the midst of what God is doing here in Rio Grande do Sul. The statewide missions campaign this fall was successful in raising funds and bringing people to pray for specific church plants across the state. Also, our church has had the opportunity to have two evangelism events. The church is located across the street from a busy mall, so there is a lot of foot traffic on Saturdays. During the evangelism events, the church sings praise from the street, hands out biblical literature, and offers to pray for people. During the last event, one of the people passing by happened to be a social media influencer. They recorded people singing outside the church and posted it. Overnight, the video got over 1 million views!

As we look to a new year, we have confidence that God will continue to be faithful both to us and to you!

Blessings,

Brandon & Marci Jones

SIMPLY GRATEFUL ALPHA CENTER

At the age of 23, Birkti felt alone when she found out she was pregnant. Not wanting to burden family members with her anxiety and fear, Alpha Center became a place of reassurance. Desiring to be the best mother possible, Birkti was eager for the pregnancy and parenting information available through the Earn While You Learn program and Life Skills Class. However, what she desired most was the relational support she found through each Alpha Center team member, especially her volunteer mentor. Birkti confided in them that her nine-year-old daughter, Omna, was still living in their home country of Ethiopia. Living apart from Omna was emotionally challenging for Birkti, especially during her pregnancy with Yemariam. Birkti found

great comfort in the encouragement she received during her weekly appointments at Alpha Center.

After five years of separation, Birkti was reunited with Omna in October. Birkti is able to teach her the parenting skills she learned during Life Skills Class so that Omna is able to help her care for Yemariam.

I wish you could meet Birkti. Her gratitude radiates through her infectious smile – even when her circumstances felt disheartening. It’s humbling to think how God used Alpha Center in so many ways to encourage her to remain hopeful – to which she would say, “I’m simply grateful.”

Through all of this, you were right there with us. Your financial gifts serve as a unique way to instill hope in the lives of the brave and strong women we serve. As you now ponder the ways God has abundantly blessed you, would you please consider a gift of \$500, \$250, \$100 or any amount so that we can continue transforming lives together. These smiling faces are a beautiful example of whom you influence through your support.

For HIS Unborn,
Birkti & Yemariam Leslee Unruh

THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS CANADA

November 17, 2022

ERITREA: More Church Leaders Detained

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Church in Chains, BBC

In 2002, the government of Eritrea outlawed every religion except for Sunni Islam, Eritrean Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism. Since then, the oppression against other religious groups has been severe. Even those within the approved faith groups have been at risk of opposition, particularly if they are perceived to be

in conflict with the country's authoritarian regime. To review previous reports on the persecution of Christians in this East African nation, go to our country report.

Recently, three Catholic clerics were detained, despite them belonging to an approved faith community. On October 11th, security agents detained Mihretab Stefanos, the parish priest of St. Michael's Church in Segheneity. The next day, Abba Abraham Habtom Gebremariam, a priest from Teseney, was also detained. Then, on October 15th, the Bishop of Segheneity, Abune Fikremariam Hagos, was detained at the Asmara International Airport after his return from a trip to Europe.

At last report, Abba Abraham was being held at the Adi Abeito prison, north of Asmara. The whereabouts of the other two church leaders are unconfirmed, but it is believed they may be imprisoned at the same facility. When the Catholic church inquired about the reported detainment of the bishop, authorities confirmed that he was in custody but they would not disclose the reason for the arrest nor his location.

While the motives behind the detentions remain unknown, Catholic bishops within Eritrea have repeatedly called on the government to end its authoritarian behaviour and govern more democratically. The ruling governmental leaders have been unhappy about these calls for political reform, which may have led to their recent oppressive actions.

Continue to prayerfully remember the many Christians in Eritrea who are presently imprisoned because of their faith in Christ, asking that each one of them will be sustained by God's strengthening presence and grace. May justice and democracy prevail in each case, including those involving the three recently detained men, resulting in their release from custody. Additionally, ask the Lord to touch the hearts of the country's governing leaders with His transformative love

so they will come to realize the importance of honouring Him and respecting the rights and freedoms of all citizens.

REPORT UPDATES

SRI LANKA: Municipal Authorities Order Demolition of Church

Source: NCEASL

The “Jesus Calls You” church in Abepradesa, Anuradhapura District, has been facing repeated harassment from local municipal council members, who claim that the church is unauthorized and therefore operating illegally. On September 23rd, the pastor received a letter ordering that all worship services be discontinued within 14 days or legal action will take place. When the church failed to comply, a different approach was taken by the officials. On October 11th, the pastor received a letter demanding that their church building be demolished within seven days. The statement warned that failure to comply will result in the demolition taking place anyway without further notice.

Following up on the threat, eight officers from the municipality arrived at the church premises on October 18th. Their intent was to take items from the church building and remove its sign. However, the pastor’s house and the church building were both locked because he and his family were not home at the time. When the officers were unable to enter the premises, they left. The pastor’s father-in-law, who lives nearby, observed what was happening and informed his daughter. The next day, the pastor lodged a complaint against the officers at the police station.

Much of the opposition that Christians encounter in Sri Lanka comes from local authorities and residents who oppose the presence of Christianity in their predominantly Buddhist nation. To learn more about the challenges experienced by followers of Christ in this country, go to our country report.

Prayerfully uphold this pastor and his congregation, asking

God to give them wisdom as they deal with opposing neighbours and governing officials. May these believers be able to peacefully and diplomatically resolve this ongoing issue, receiving the Lord's intervention and direction in the process. Please also remember to pray for the country of Sri Lanka as a whole, asking that, in the midst of the devastating economic crisis, God would bestow His provision and peace upon the inhabitants of this struggling nation.

CHINA: Imprisonment Nearing Completion for Detained Christians

Source: ChinaAid

In January 2020, Pastor An Yankui and Zhang Chenghao, along with five other Christians, travelled from China to attend a conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The conference speaker was highly critical of the Chinese Communist Party, which led to multiple arrests of all seven believers who were subsequently charged for "illegally crossing the national border"

Since the conference, the five other Christians were tried and sentenced in January 2022 to terms ranging from six to eight months' imprisonment. These believers have since completed serving their sentences (read more). Pastor An and Zhang, however, have been detained since November 22nd, 2021, even though the outcome of their cases were not determined until recently.

On November 3rd, the Fenyang City People's Court ruled that the two Christians were each sentenced to one year in prison, along with fines to be paid within ten days of the verdict. Pastor An was required to pay 5,000 yuan (the equivalent of about \$942 CAD) and Zhang was fined 4,000 yuan (approximately \$754 CAD). Thankfully, the prison sentences of these Christians included the time they have already served since the day of their arrests and, therefore, they are both scheduled to be released on November 21st.

Pray for these two believers as they approach the end of their

incarceration terms. May the testimonies they've shared remain in the hearts and minds of all those with whom they have interacted throughout the legal process. Furthermore, pray that the country's governing authorities will realize the importance of permitting religious freedom, and thus take necessary steps to ensure the oppression presently inflicting Christians in China will subside.

CRISIS IN UKRAINE



From one of our church partners:

“My name is Roman. I am a minister at an Ukraine church. Since the beginning of hostilities in February 2022, I have seen people who were forced to leave their homes because of the shellings by the occupiers, and I've realized that they need help, comfort and support.

Together with the team of church ministers, I have been taking part in helping internally displaced people: packing and handing out food kits, providing help with accommodation and with medicines. All of this was possible thanks to God's blessing in provision and selfless work of the church team.

I have seen a lot of grateful people who received help from the Church, they thanked the Lord and us with tears in their eyes. It has inspired me to minister more...

Now, in addition to material help, I minister internally displaced people with spiritual help, which is teaching the Gospel to people and

sharing with them about the Lord's teaching of the New Testament, offering prayer support to these people.

It is nice to see people who come across God's word for the first time and try to understand and accept it. And a lot of internally displaced people accept the Gospel sincerely and believe in Christ.

I'd like to add that this is not such an easy job. Because in addition to working with internally displaced people (I dedicate my Saturday for that), I have a full-time job five days a week. So I have a busy work week and I am thankful for the strength and love that the Lord Jesus blesses me with. He is faithful in His love and strength for our entire church team. People see how we minister for God's glory in love and care for them.

However, there are still a lot of needs in food, clothing and housing for internally displaced people. We hope for the victory from the Lord and for the establishment of peace by Him.”

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To partner with us by your donations:

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How To Give to North American Baptist Missionaries:

Step 1: Go to the NAB's new missions webpage nabonmission.org.

Step 2: Click on the "missionaries" label.

Step 3: Click on the national missionary to whom you would like to designate your support.

Step 4: Click on the "give to.." button on the national workers page.

Step 5: Fill out the form. All gifts given through the NAB are tax deductible.

**BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
PRESENTING A CHANGELESS CHRIST FOR A CHANGING WORLD**