



BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

December 2021

Editor Janelle Daum

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“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

John 1:1-5

Last December my newsletter article reflected on the darkness of living in a world defined by the Covid virus and death. It was certainly a time of great darkness and many were filled with fear. Our world

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

as we know it literally changed almost overnight. It has changed this year. The darkness has become even worse. Covid isn't the primary issue. Now we are facing new challenges. Inflation is at levels that match 30-year highs. Supplies are beginning to be limited in many places. Gas and heating costs are projected to reach record levels. Government spending has reached obscene levels. The FBI is being used to keep tabs on parents who speak out about what their children are being taught in schools. Violence is increasing throughout the country. If anything it is a time of even greater darkness than we saw last year. So I am going back to what I wrote last year because it applies even more now.

The encouragement we focused on last year is that we know that God has been with us throughout all this darkness. He is the Light of the world. We always have His love and light surrounding us. That is the message of John 1:1-5. It is speaking of Jesus and it tells us that His life is what provides light for us. Because He is alive eternally, we have light eternally.

The beauty of the Incarnation is that darkness doesn't rule. That is the truth found in John 1:5 – “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” No matter how pervasive darkness might seem to be it is always overcome by the light. Notice the juxtaposition between light and darkness in this passage.

Jesus was born into a land that was overcome by darkness. The people faced tyranny everywhere they turned. The Romans had conquered Israel. King Herod was the Israelites direct political ruler. He was a man whose cruelty knew no bounds, extending even to the extreme of cutting off John the Baptist's head to score points with a beautiful woman. The chief priests and Pharisees were their religious

leaders. They were greedy, cruel, self-righteous men whose only goal was to hold on to their own power. They were willing to do anything necessary to hold on to that power. It didn't matter who they hurt along the way as long as they maintained their religious superiority.

At the birth of Jesus, the light of His life overcame that darkness. On a deep, dark night the sky was filled with the brilliant glory of God surrounding the multitude of the angels of heaven as they proclaimed His birth to the shepherds. A brilliant star that shone brightly in the darkness led the Magi on a several hundred mile trip to worship the Child that had brought light into the world.

The darkness was still there. Herod's insane order to massacre all the young boys, age 2 and under, was a brutal act of darkness. The Pharisee's ongoing attempts to trap Jesus so that they could arrest Him and have Him killed was darkness personified. But, even as a little baby lying in the manger, Jesus brought light that shone brightly in that darkness. The darkness could not overcome it. His power was too great. His light was too brilliant. His glory was supernatural. John 1:14 tells us, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Jesus brought power and glory and grace and truth into a world that was filled with darkness. The world was changed when Jesus was born as a baby in a manger. He transformed it by offering hope and salvation to people trapped in the darkness. John 1:9-13 describes the effect of His light on the darkness of the world, "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive

him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” Through the light of Jesus we can find salvation and eternal life, even in the midst of darkness.

We still live in a world of brutal darkness. The message of the Incarnation is to not fear the darkness. The darkness is a part of this world but the darkness is always overcome by the light. Darkness provides us with opportunity. The greater the darkness, the greater the opportunity to let the light of Jesus be seen. The greater the darkness, the greater the opportunity to see the glory and the grace and the truth of God. The greater the darkness, the greater the opportunity to see the power of the Gospel change and transform lives. The greater the darkness, the greater the opportunity to let Jesus be seen in us and through us.

Remember that this Christmas season... especially this Christmas season. Darkness is not an enemy to be feared. Darkness is an opportunity to be used to bring light into a world that is crying out for peace and safety and life. Great darkness provides us with great opportunity to give the greatest gift of all this Christmas, the gift of life and light... the gift of Jesus.

Blessings,
Pastor Randy

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR DECEMBER AND BEYOND

EVENTS CALENDAR 2021:

Sunday's

9:30 a.m. Worship Service

10:30 a.m. Fellowship

10:45 a.m. Sunday School for the Whole Family
One Room Sunday School for Preschool (age 4) - 8th grade

Wednesday's

6:30 p.m. Awana Clubs

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

Thursday's

3 p.m. Prayer & Women's Bible Study at BVBC

6:30 p.m. Women's Evening Bible Study meets at various homes.
Contact Stacy Frost for location.

Saturday's

8 a.m. Men's Bible Study on Zoom
(1st & 3rd Saturdays of the month)

Sunday, December 12, Newsletter Articles are Due
Tuesday, December 21, First Day of Winter
Saturday, December 25, Christmas Day

MISSIONARY OF THE MONTH

THE JOSHUA FUND



The Joshua Fund is a charitable educational and humanitarian relief organization founded by evangelical Christian author and speaker Joel C. Rosenberg & his wife Lynn Rosenberg.

The Joshua Fund was founded by Joel and Lynn Rosenberg in the summer of 2006. The desire of their heart was to mobilize Christians to “bless Israel and her neighbors in the name of Jesus,” according to Genesis 12:1-3.

In this famous passage from the book of Genesis, the Lord promised to bless those who bless the children of Abraham and curse those who curse them. In Matthew 19:19, Jesus instructed His followers to “love your neighbor as yourself.” In Matthew 5:44, Jesus told His disciples to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus exhorted His followers to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, care for strangers, clothe the naked, care for those who are sick, and visit those in prison.

Seeking to obey these biblical commands, the Rosenbergs established a non-profit educational and charitable organization that works closely with Jewish and Christian allies in Israel and the Middle East, as well as Christian allies around the world.

MISSIONARY UPDATES

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



November 1, 2021

HOPE!

We all have them...prayers that we feel like we pray for so long but wonder if we will ever get answers to. We ask God for big things, often believing that God will answer, but at the same time wondering if it will happen, wondering if what we desire is what God plans.

And then we see God do something big and realize He has indeed answered our prayers...often in a bigger and better way than we could have imagined on our own. Sometimes these answers are clear and obvious, while other times they are more subtle and happen over time. Here are a few times I've noticed God answer these prayers.

During my first term, we had a lot of turnover at Faith Academy. People would come, stay a year or two, then leave. This is not a new thing at Faith Academy; part of the nature of having an international school staffed with volunteer missionaries is a high turnover rate. But I distinctly remember meeting with other staff members regularly and praying that God would bring more long-term staff members.

Fast-forward three to four years, and I look around at all the staff that God has brought to Faith Academy in the past year and a half. There are about 5-6 young couples and multiple singles, most of whom have no plans to leave (or if they do, it's to get more training and probably return). I realized recently that this is exactly what we were praying for! God seems to have brought in a new generation of staff members who plan to stay for a while and serve Him at Faith Academy!

As teachers (and parents and mentors), we often invest into the younger generation, praying that they would grow to have a deep faith in the Lord. Many times, we don't see the results of our investment for many years to come, if ever. We pray for these students, knowing God is doing something, but not always seeing what God is doing.

A couple months ago, the father of one of my students got Covid. I first taught this student when she was in 8th grade, and she is one I continued to connect with as she went through high school. She just graduated last year. Her father was here serving in the Philippines while my student and the rest of her family were in Korea. His case got pretty bad, and they decided to fly him to Korea to get better treatment. When he got to Korea, he had a heart attack. They did CPR for about 30-45 minutes, and then he was in a coma. Not long after, he passed away.

As I watched my student process this, her faith in God has shone brightly. As her father was struggling, she asked that God would be glorified in this situation. After he passed away, her post on Facebook and message to me were both filled with grief but also hope...hope that she will see her father again, but also that God would use all of this in her life and in the lives of those around her. What an encouragement it is to see her faith grow! Pray that her faith would continue to remain strong as she continues to process the loss of her father.

It's been a year and a half since Covid started, and we are still teaching online here in the Philippines. We are the only country left in the world still not in school. Millions of kids have dropped out of school (and that is not an exaggeration). Kids are struggling with mental health issues, as they have been stuck in their houses for so long. There have been brief periods

where kids are allowed out to exercise, but they have been few and far between. Just this past month, the president announced that he would allow a pilot program for 120 schools (out of the 66,000 in the Philippines) to try in-person school. Only about 30 schools qualified to actually do the pilot, which starts Nov 15.

However, just two weeks ago, we have learned that the Department of Education will consider international schools separately from the set pilot program schools! We have submitted our plan for approval. As we wait for potential approval, we now are working on setting our hybrid school plan in place. At the beginning of the school year, we had so little hope that things would change this year, and now, we see how God is working and may allow us to start soon!

God is always working, even if we don't see it. I love how God shows us at times how He is working, or how He has worked in response to our prayers. This gives me hope in other areas where I pray. I know that asking God for something doesn't mean He's going to give me everything I want. But I am confident that as I place my hope in Christ and not in what I want or what He can give me, that He will work. He knows and understands my needs. And really, my life is His, and He has the absolute best plan for my life and the lives of those around me.

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” ~ Romans 5:3-5

Amanda

Praises

- We have made it through our first two blocks of school! This week is a break, and I've been able to get away for a few days to the beach with some good friends. I'll spend a couple days working and then go to my mission conference at the end of the week.
- Praise for the ways God has answered prayers! I'm thankful for the prayers He has answered that I mentioned above, as well as other things

that He is showing me He is answering.

- Praise for continued strength as I have a heavy load for teaching this year!

Prayer Requests

- Pray that God would grant the approval for us to have in-person school.
- Pray for wisdom as I make some big decisions for some things for the future. Pray that God would provide for those things as He leads.
- Pray that the rest of this break would be fruitful and that we would be refreshed and ready for the last six week block of the semester.

November 10, 2021

PowerUp! Prayer Update

Praises

- I had a great rest of my break! It was productive, and I also was able to go to my mission conference in person. I haven't been able to do that since before furlough, so it was great to reconnect with all of them again.
- I've had a fairly productive week as we've gotten back into school. Pray this continues! I'm still not caught up on grading, but I'm in a manageable place right now.
- Manila went down to Alert Level 2 on Thursday without warning. This allows kids to be able to leave their houses and go to public places for the first time since Covid hit. In Rizal, where I live and where Faith Academy is, we are still in Alert Level 3, but we are hoping this changes on the 15th.

Prayer Requests

- Pray that our proposal for face-to-face school would be approved soon so that we can start planning dates and setting more solid plans for what to do.
- Pray for continued strength for staff and students. It's still a struggle for many to persevere, even with the hope of potentially being able to start school soon.
- One of my students' dad was rushed to the hospital Monday with severe covid. Pray for healing for him and also strength for my student. She is in 10th grade and is home alone taking care of her two younger siblings.

Her two older sisters are in the US. One is coming back but still has to quarantine at least 8 days before being able to be home.

Ongoing Prayer Requests

- That God will revive the hearts of the staff and students this year, that we would passionately follow after Him.
- That God will give us wisdom as we continue to navigate the Covid situation, and that we would be able to meet in person at some point this year.
- That God will lead me to opportunities to disciple students this year.

RICK & DEBBI BARDIN - CAMEROON



November 2021

GOAL REACHED FOR SLIDE SCANNER

Praises

- Slide scanner matching fund raising is complete
- Hydroelectric project is completed and now running successfully
- After an almost month of lockdown, roads have been open for 2 weeks

Prayer

- Slide scanner be purchased and delivered in working order by the end

of year.

- Hydroelectric plant to be maintained well and another person to be trained in how to maintain it
- Roads stay open and safe for patients to be able to get to hospital.

2 Corinthians 1:11

You are helping us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because God has graciously answered so many prayers ...

That steady power supply is why Rick was fund raising to purchase the slide scanner. It is so expensive and needs a reliable power source. Another BIG thanks to the ones who gave to the slide scanner fund and made it possible for this to soon be purchased.

We have been so encouraged in these last few months from all the answered prayer. You are a part of that and you can rejoice with us! It is phenomenal to have non-stop electricity 24/7! We have had steady power for over a month now and it is such a blessing. A BIG thanks to all of you that gave to and prayed for the Hydroelectric Project over the last several years. NAB was the biggest donor and we are so proud to be part of such a generous organization.

Most of September and the first week in October we were in road lockdown. No travel between cities in the NW where we live. That affected patients being able to get here, people doing business between cities, taxi and bike drivers , our market getting food from Bamenda to sell here, hospital getting supplies, etc. We are so glad that is over and the last 2 weeks have been better, although some are still hesitant to come here. During the lockdown many patients braved it and trekked through the bush to get here for their care. Some I knew of walked for up 3- 4 hours. The ones who couldn't make it we prayed God would sustain them until they could get care.

God continues to use our hospital as a light. We heard a testimony one Sunday in the chapel service we have for patients and their caregivers that showed that. She had a son who had been sick for some time and not getting well. She had tried many treatments and nothing was working. She kept having a dream and the person in the dream kept saying "Go to Mbingo".

She did not know where Mbingo was. We are really just a small village here. One day she heard from a friend about one of our CBC hospitals in Douala that some refer to as Mbingo Annex. She remembered the name “Mbingo” from her dream. She went there and after reviewing the case the staff there sent the child to our Mbingo hospital. He was diagnosed with a malignancy and chemo has been started via our Childhood Cancer Program..

In His Matchless Love,
Rick and Debbie Bardin

HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY



November 2021

“He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth, praise to our God.” Ps. 40:2-3a

Fall is a pretty time of the year! We see the colorful changes God brings about in nature. God is faithful to His Word when He said that the seasons will always come and go. It is awesome to see the beautiful changes God makes in men’s lives! As we see the seasons change, I can see God

changing men's hearts and lives!

Every Thursday I walk the tiers on the Hill and visit with the men who are open to talking about what they are dealing with, which gives me an open door to talk with them about Jesus. I asked one young man, "Do you know Jesus or do you just know about Him?" He said he thought he knew Him but had many doubts about the Christian faith. He admitted that he had not read the Bible. Then I asked, "Have you ever thought about what will happen to you after you die?" His reply took me by surprise. He replied, "I think about that every day!" This gave me an opportunity to tell him about the love of Jesus and how he could be saved. He committed his life to Jesus Christ that day!

Some of the men can get very down and discouraged while they are in long term segregation. Jason has been back in segregation for several months and he told me he was getting discouraged and depressed. He admitted that he does have some anger and bitterness in his heart. We talked about how anger and bitterness can really cause some major problems in his life.

I told him that it can lead to depression. Jason agreed that he needed to deal with those emotions. Before I left his cell I remembered an old hymn, "No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus." When I asked him if he had ever heard of it, he had not. Jason asked if he could get the words to that song. I also printed out the hymn, "What A Friend We Have in Jesus." These songs helped remind him that Jesus does love him and has not forgotten him.

Sometimes inmates have some interesting observations. One of the men who has recently come in, told me he was through with living for himself. He wants to follow Christ with his life. We talked about getting in the back seat and letting Jesus drive. He said, "A good thing about being in the back seat is that you are just along for the ride. You can also watch the nice scenery and enjoy the ride." I thought that was a great observation! If we allow Christ to be in control of our lives, it will make life more enjoyable.

It is hard to believe, but we are getting ready for Christmas sacks for the inmates. Since all the things in the bag must be prepackaged from the

factory, volunteers cannot make fudge. Therefore, the cost to make these sacks has gone up significantly! I am including a letter from the chaplains with the information on how you can help financially with the cost of filling the sacks.

I want to thank all of you for your financial and prayer support. These things are essential to this ministry! Have a blessed Thanksgiving!
In Christ, Harlan

RON & JEANNIE SECK - HUNGARY



Dear Prayer Partners,

Thank you for praying for us as we engage in spiritual warfare for the community of Boldog this week. You are truly our co-workers in this battle.

For the last two days we have divided into two teams (Feri, Juli and Hessel in one and Laci, Sandi and I in the other) and have visited over half of the families that participated in the Covid relief and Community development project last December through February. We have challenged these families with Joshua's words from Joshua 24:14-28. "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Many of those we have talked to so far have said, "we will serve the Lord," just like the Israelites did with Joshua. But this is not seen so far by their actions since the project ended last February. (Many dark things have happened since then in Boldog: divorce, family

break ups, confrontations, violence, drug dealing, a large street fight, thefts, depressions and suicidal thoughts, lack of attendance by many at the Sunday service and more.)

Tomorrow (Thursday) at 10 AM and at 6 PM we will have 2 community Gatherings and prayer meetings in the Community Center. We have challenged those who have committed to serving the Lord to be there to pray for deliverance from the bondage of sin that continually enslaves and defeats them and their community and to see Jesus and His Kingdom and true freedom come to Boldog. To do this, they must each make Jesus their King and serve Him. Please pray for the Presence of the Lord to be powerfully in our midst tomorrow; that many who give merely emotion and lip-service to the Lord will be truly born again of His Spirit and that His Kingdom will come and His will will be done in Boldog. Pray for Feri and me as we speak the Word and for the people as they sing and pray.

We will continue to visit the rest of the families that participated in the Covid Relief and Community Development project in Boldog. God has given Feri and Laci special boldness as our spokesmen. Pray that God's Word will come alive in the hearts of the people we visit. Next week we will begin to focus on the families that were not part of the project. Pray that those who choose to serve Lord will join us in visiting the rest of the village. We are planning to have another prayer meeting on next Monday night.

We are encouraged by your prayers and sense His Presence with us. Pray without ceasing for spiritual victory!
For His Kingdom Come in Boldog!
Ron and Jeannie

Missionary Contact Info.

Amanda Benson:

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Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: SEND International
PO BOX 513, Farmington, MI 48332, Missionary #169352

Rick & Debbi Bardin:

See instructions Below

Harlan Moss:

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Ron & Jeannie Seck:

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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