



# BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

February 2022

Editor Janelle Daum

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“Barak said to her, ‘If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.’ And (Deborah) said, ‘I will go with you.’”  
Judges 4:8-9a

Several years ago a woman was standing on a ledge on the fifty-fourth floor of a building in New York City, ready to jump to her death. The police were on hand but at a loss what to do. She didn't fit the profile of the standard suicide in her expensive dress and her dignified appearance. Every attempt to convince her to come down from the ledge failed.

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One of the police officers finally called his pastor to come to the scene to pray with the woman. The pastor arrived, and after appraising the situation, asked the officer in charge if he could get close enough to talk to the woman. He was given permission and started walking toward the woman, but she screamed at him, “Don’t come any closer or I’ll jump!” He took a step backward and called out to her, “I’m sorry that you believe that no one loves you.”

That got her attention – it was such an unusual thing to say. He continued, “Your children and grandchildren must not love you. Apparently they never give you any attention,”

The woman thought about that for a moment and took a step toward the pastor and said, “My children do love me. My whole family does. My grandchildren are wonderful. I have eight grandchildren.”

The pastor took a step toward the woman and said, “Well, then, you must be very poor, or you wouldn’t want to take your own life.”

The woman, who was obviously overweight, said, “Do I look like I go without meals? We live in a very nice apartment outside of Central Park. I’m not poor!”

The pastor took another step and was now only three feet from her. “Then why do you want to kill yourself? I don’t understand.”

The woman thought for a moment and said, “You know, I don’t really remember.”

This true story ended with the pastor escorting the woman off the ledge. She eventually became a volunteer in the city’s suicide hotline,

helping others to choose life.

Sometimes we can't do it alone. There is strength in numbers. That's true when we strive to live by visionary faith. Sometimes the vision is so huge, or so far out of our comfort zones, that we just can't do it alone. We need each other.

Barak is a good example of that. He is mentioned to us as a man of faith in Hebrews 11, but he also shows us how a man of faith sometimes needs others to help us live by faith.

In Judges 4 the people of Israel are under attack by Jabin, the king of Hazor. Sisera is the commander of Jabin's army. The army was huge, including 900 chariots. Sisera was known for his cruelty and brutality and his complete lack of mercy.

Deborah was a prophetess who acted as a civil judge for the people of Israel. As a prophetess the people were certain that she spoke the words of God. In vv.6-7 she told Barak that God had called him to take an army of 10,000 men out to Mt. Tabor, and that God would give them a complete victory over Sisera. It's a simple vision and a simple promise. The horrible brutality of Sisera would be over if Barak simply obeyed God.

Barak's inner struggle was that he wasn't ready to exercise visionary faith, even though the outcome of the battle was guaranteed. So he leaned on Deborah: "If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me I will not go." He didn't have the inner strength to step out in faith on his own. He needed the strength of Deborah. If she had enough faith in God to go to battle with him, then he would exercise faith also.

For Barak the result of his limited faith was that his usefulness to God was also limited. The military leader in that day was usually given the privilege of killing the opposing leader. But, because of his unwillingness to exercise faith his blessing was reduced. He would still receive honor – he is remembered as a man of faith in Hebrews 11 because he did go out against a vastly superior army and trusted God to fulfill His promise – but the greatest honor was given to a simple housewife who killed Sisera and is remembered forever for that courageous act.

How many times do we limit our usefulness to God because we are afraid to exercise visionary faith? Barak was willing to lead the people, but he needed greater security than just God's promise. He didn't have the conviction of things not seen. He needed assurance that he could see and touch. He needed a flesh and blood spokesman for God to go along with him so that he could feel secure. The result was that he gave up some of his blessing.

There are two issues in this passage. The one issue is that we need to understand that when we act on visionary faith it always results in God providing the promised victory. The results will always be amazing when we act on God's vision.

The second issue is that of honor and blessing. Our approach to visionary faith determines the level of blessing and honor we will receive. If we step out in unswerving conviction of things not seen and act in God's way we will see the fullness of God's blessing.

The key is to exercise visionary faith, and to live by faith... by whatever means necessary. Sometimes we need other people, and their perspective and their strength and faith to help us do that.

I love this story about the great Baptist pastor Donald Grey Barnhouse. As his wife drove home from the hospital after his passing she experienced one of the lowest points of her life. The man she had loved for her entire adult life was gone. She was overwhelmed by the changes she was facing. She wasn't sure how she would go on. That changed as she arrived home. The grandchildren heard her coming and came crashing down the stairs, shouting wildly: "Grandma! Have you heard the news? Granddaddy's in heaven! Grandma, he's talking to Abraham, and David, and Lazarus, and Mary and Martha, and Peter and John and Andrew. Grandma, he can SEE Jesus!"

The faith of her grandchildren changed her perspective. Their excitement and enthusiasm resurrected her struggling faith. At that point in her life she needed the faith of her family to help her through.

Whether we take the steps alone or with others, God will honor all of our steps of faith. The key is to exercise visionary faith – faith that believes God for the impossible. It's what God expects. It's basic to our Christian walk. Whatever it takes, live by faith.

Blessings,  
Pastor Randy

# UPCOMING EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY AND BEYOND

## EVENTS CALENDAR 2022:

### YOU'RE INVITED

**To:** Valentine's Dinner

**When:** Monday, February 14, at 5:30 p.m.

**Where:** Brandon Valley Baptist Church

**RSVP:** [bvbaptch@alliancecom.net](mailto:bvbaptch@alliancecom.net)

Dinner Served 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The dinner is being put on by the Youth Group as a Fundraiser. Meal includes spaghetti and meatballs; garlic bread; salad and dessert. Please RSVP with your arrival time to the church email address through

**Friday, February 11th.**

### 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)

**Monday, February 14**, Valentine's Day  
**Sunday, February 20**, Newsletter Articles are Due  
**Monday, February 21**, Presidents' Day

## **MISSIONARY OF THE MONTH**



Rick and Debbie Bardin

Dr Rick and Debbie Bardin are missionaries in **Cameroon**. Our church is proud to support them and the loving care that they are bringing to people on the other side of the world. They are examples of the hands and feet of Jesus and we continue to lift them up in prayer.

**Address:** NAB, 1219 Pleasant Grove Blvd., Roseville, CA 95678

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**Website:** [nabmission.org](http://nabmission.org)

# MISSIONARY UPDATES

## DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ - JAPAN



January 23, 2022

### **Ministry Update**

We are now almost at the end of January, and we feel like this month has really gone fast. January is the coldest month in Japan. We are thankful for a warm home.

Darwin is busy in the business office as now is the time that we decide how much each of the Japan missionaries need to raise to continue to serve here in Japan. It is nice that the Japan yen vs. the US Dollar has recently made our US Dollars go farther, but it also makes people who have money in yen not go as far when compared to US Dollars. Last year we used 105 yen to the USD and this year we are using 112 yen to the USD.

Karen who serves on the CAJ board has been busy as they have been working on many complex issues as well as completing a head of school search. There is a new head of school that has accepted

the position and is scheduled to begin this summer. Karen is charged with the challenge of trying to fill empty position on the school board for next year. This can be challenging as the Japanese government puts a lot of restrictions on who can and cannot serve on the board.

We were blessed this weekend when SEND Japan could join for a day of prayer for various ministries that SEND is involved in all over the world. SEND International has thriving teams in about 20 countries in Asia, Eurasia, North America, and Europe.

Darwin is currently also serving as the guesthouse manager and because of the borders being closed due to COVID-19 the five apartments were mostly empty so SEND took advantage of this emptiness to get four of the apartments painted, new wallpaper put on the ceiling and new lighting. The project was finished just in time before guests started arriving. The SEND Japan guesthouse is now open and can serve the missionaries in transition for hopefully many more years.

### **Home Service 2022-2023**

Our home service is scheduled every four years and this June 2022 is when our home service is scheduled. We plan on living in Elbing, Kansas from June 2022 to June 2023. The last time we lived in Elbing was in 2007-2008 when Clara was born. Elbing, Kansas has a population of about 300 people and no traffic lights. Berean Academy where Clara will be attending is a school of about 300 students and has a 40-acre campus. Christian Academy in Japan has about 450 students on a 4-acre campus. Anna will continue to study at John Brown University, which is about four hours away. Pray for our plans for home service regarding transportation, packing up our house here in Japan after 8 years in the same house, and then as we pray about what we want to do after home service with SEND International.

## **Thank You!**

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

## **Family Update**

Anna was able to get her driver's license during Christmas break and is now in her second semester at John Brown University. She is getting good grades and is in generally good spirits. Clara is enjoying soccer and being with her friends. CAJ is going to distance learning this week as the incidences of COVID are getting higher and higher here in Japan. Karen really enjoys feeding the many birds that are coming to our backyard, she often cares for her birds before she even drinks her first cup of coffee in the morning. Darwin enjoys going to the gym where he gets to greet everyone there and tries to make conversation.

## **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:

Jan 24 Clara goes on a trip with her friends to go ice skating

Jan 26 Darwin gives a business report to Japan Council

Jan 29 Darwin is scheduled to go on a walk with Kanazawa-san

Jan 31 Darwin is involved with five water heaters at the SEND guesthouse that are getting replaced

Feb 3-6 Karen helps lead and attends the SEND Women's Retreat at Okutama Bible Chalet

Feb 14 Karen attends a CAJ Board Meeting

Feb 14 Darwin hosts a Super Bowl Party in the morning

Feb 24 Darwin gives a business report to Japan Council

Mar 21-25 Anna JBU Spring Break

Mar 26 – Apr 2 Stoesz Family trip to Yamanaka Chalet  
Mar 30 Darwin gives a business report to Japan Council  
Apr 1-2 SEND men work trip at Yamanaka Chalet  
Apr 16 Anniversary of our first date between Darwin and Karen  
Apr 27 Darwin gives a business report to Japan Council  
May 6 Anna last day at JBU  
June 10 Clara last day of CAJ  
June 16 Stoesz USA Home Service begins

**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 wisdom for decisions that need to be made in the SEND Japan office and at Christian Academy in Japan.
3. Pray for wisdom as CAJ looks for a new Head of School starting in 2022.
4. Pray for Anna and Clara that they would have continued growing relationships with Jesus.
5. Pray for Anna at John Brown University and studies kinesiology.
6. Pray for Clara at Christian Academy in Japan that she would seek God and make good friends.

Thank you for your continued partnership in our ministry.

Thank you so much for your prayers, financial support, and encouragement so that we can stay here in Japan.

Sincerely,

Darwin & Karen & Anna (18) & Clara (14) Stoesz

## HARLAN MOSS - PRISON LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY



January 2022

**“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” I Cor. 1:18**

As we begin another year, it is a good idea to have a goal to get closer to the Lord! We see so much instability in society and the world. But we as Christians are not to put our trust in man or anything in the world, because the world is passing away. Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.” Staying focused on the Lord and His Word is always the answer to peace of mind!

A young man who came in a few months ago told me that he wanted to meet with me. He told me he committed his life to the Lord in the county jail. This is his first time in prison, so he had a lot of questions. The chapel orderly is a blessing because he gave his input on how to deal with daily life in prison. It is great to see this young man grow spiritually. In our meetings together he has many questions about the Bible and how to live the Christian life. God does

use time in prison to get their attention, and those who are listening come to know the Lord.

I first met Jade at the seminar which was held last November. The men were divided into groups of five at a table for discussion. The name of the seminar Pastor Greg held was called, "Goliath Must Fall." We listened to a talk by Louie Giglio and then discussed the questions. Jade was very interested in learning more about living the Christian life. I visited with him a week later and he was really serious about following Christ. Then he was transferred to Unit C (the minimum unit). A couple of weeks ago I filled in for Pastor Greg who does a weekly church service at Unit C. Unit C is like a barracks with bunk beds three high in a long row. After the service Jade said, "I have no desire to watch television, but my main desire is to read the Bible. I want to get to know Jesus more and more. As I was reading the Bible in my bed, I felt the Holy Spirit telling me to get on my knees beside my bunk. If I get on my knees the men around me are going to harass me. How do I get boldness to do what the Spirit is telling me?" We talked about how boldness comes by praying for it and stepping out in faith. It is great to see how God is working in this young man!

Our Christmas service was really a blessing. Volunteer Jordan Volk and his daughter Rachel led us in worship, accompanied by two of the residents who played their guitars. After the service one of the visiting volunteers said to me, "I wish we could record the men's singing this evening!" The residents did not hold back in giving praise to our God through their singing! A week later a young resident, said, "I had been feeling sad and depressed during this Christmas season. My sadness lifted during the Christmas service and I had peace!" When we focus on Jesus, He will lift our spirit!

God is at work behind the walls. It is great to see the more mature believers encouraging the younger believers!

Thank you for your prayers and financial support! In Christ, Harlan

## AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



January 1, 2022

### FACE-TO-FACE

Excitement filled the faces of most of our students as they heard the news that we would be able to be in school face-to-face again in January. They can't wait to see their friends and teachers in real life and not just on a screen. A couple of students have seen me at some events recently, and their faces light up when they say hi and talk about being to school in person.

Our staff are also excited! We want to be able to teach our students in person. We are looking forward to building relationships in a way that can't happen on a screen. We can't wait to be able to help students in real life instead of over email, chat or video call.

As the year ended, I read Revelation 21:1-7. This gives a beautiful picture of what life will be like once evil has been ultimately defeated and we will dwell together with Christ. God will dwell with His people, and His people will dwell with Him. There will be no more pain or sin or death. All things will be made new. And those who know Him will

see Jesus face-to-face.

As I've been contemplating the anticipation of seeing my students face-to-face for the first time in almost two years (and actually longer for me, as I was on furlough the year before Covid hit), I've been connecting this idea to the anticipation I also have to seeing my Savior face-to-face. This current season has been a time of connecting in a different way; we aren't in person, but we still can communicate and connect and build relationships. However, this is not really the way things were meant to be. We were meant to be together in person.

The same is true of our relationship with God. We can know Him and connect with Him. But we also are not meant for only that. He designed us to dwell with Him forever—to be face-to-face with Him for eternity. What a joyous eternity that will be!

Teaching face-to-face after being online for so long is going to be a huge adjustment. Along with our excitement comes some trepidation and anxiety. We don't know how students will adjust to being back in school. We don't know how we'll manage hybrid teaching. We don't know if things will change and we'll have to stop doing face-to-face. But, all that anxiety will not be present at all when we see Jesus face-to-face! It will be pure joy.

I can't wait to see what God will do in this new year. I know that there will be struggles and trials along with joys. I am excited to see what God will do that will allow me to share His story with others. I am excited to see how God will continue to grow me and mold me more into His image. I'm excited to see how He will carry me and also how He will use me in this coming year. And I am filled with hope that all that I do is leading me one step closer to seeing Him face-to-face.

May this year be filled with joy and hope as you trust in Him, through the trials and the joys.

God Bless,  
Amanda

## **Praises**

- I had a great finish to the semester, even though it was stressful. I was able to get everything done by the due date and was able to also have fun with friends and staff members.
- I have had a wonderful break so far! I got to spend Christmas with four of my friends, and then we went camping with a group of other staff members from Faith Academy! We still have a week left of break, so I'm planning to start getting ready for school this upcoming week.
- God has brought me through another year! He has done some great things and has grown me in many ways!

## **Prayer Requests**

- Pray for us as we begin hybrid teaching on January 10. Pray for the staff members as we adjust to this new style of teaching. Pray for the students as they adjust to being back in school.
- Pray that God would use this coming year to draw me closer to Himself. Pray that He would do mighty things in this coming year.
- Pray that this last week before break would be refreshing and productive.

January 19, 2022

## **PowerUp! Prayer Update**

### **Praises**

- I am done with quarantine and am feeling great! I am thankful that my symptoms were mild and I am past it. I'm also thankful none of my friends I was in contact with got sick.
- I am thankful for the lessons I've learned through my time in quarantine (2 1/2 weeks!). I love that God doesn't waste our time and molds us more into His image.

### **Prayer Requests**

- Pray that I would finish getting caught up on my work. I'm actually in a much better place than I thought I would be, but I still have some

work to be done and have a busy weekend.

- Pray that cases would go down soon so that we can start face-to-face school. It was definitely God's timing that we didn't, but we still would like to as soon as possible.
- Every day we are getting emails that more students are sick. Pray that they will not get too sick, that God will give them rest and strength, and that He will use this time to draw them closer to Himself.

### **Ongoing Prayer Requests**

- That God will revive the hearts of the staff and students this year, that we would passionately follow after Him.
- That our transition to hybrid learning would go smoothly. Pray for the staff and students as we adjust and continue to process the residual effects of the last 20 months of being online.
- That God will bring the staff members that we need for the next school year.

## **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:**

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**Darwin & Karen Stoesz:**

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Saitama Ken, 352-0032 JAPAN

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**