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Missionaries to Transition Back to the United States

Big News — As you know, we came home on furlough in March in hopes of returning to the Philippines in August. Due to travel restrictions

set forth by the Philippine government we are still unable to return. It has been nearly 11 months and at this time we feel that God has closed the door on a possible full-time return to the Philippines. We will continue to stay involved in a logistical support with the work there and I (Jimmy) plan to travel back and forth a couple times a year. While this was not our plan when we returned home, this was the Lord's plan, and we trust that He is working all things out.

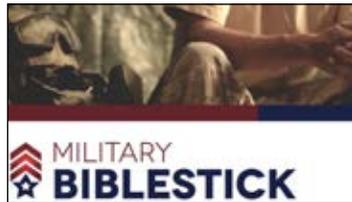
A little over three and a half years ago our family said yes to God's call "to go." While we had a location on a map, we had no idea the adventure that God had ordained ahead of us. We could not have dreamed or imagined all that we would get to be a part of! As we prepared to go, there were four primary areas we felt the Lord had called us to be a part of:

- **Setting up a model of discipleship.** Julie and I were able to disciple around 65 future pastors and church planters. This was a 13-month process of meeting weekly. Not only were we teaching them what it meant to walk with Jesus daily, but we were also able to show them how they were to disciple others. Many of them are already

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Greetings Arkansas BMA!

By David Powell

Blessed, happy, safe and healthy new year ahead! I wanted to acknowledge your participation in the Military BibleStick (MBK) outreach in 2020. It was a challenging year on so many levels and yet you continued to provide God's Word to our nation's military and Veteran communities. Thank you, on behalf of the Chaplains, the troops and Veterans. An Army Sergeant wrote "As a reservist, it is difficult to leave my civilian life and deploy. I am a pastor, and it was heartbreaking to leave the flock. The MBK has been amazing and has kept me grounded in the Word daily. I have given many Audio Bibles to fellow soldiers, and they love them."

A little bit of history — Faith Comes By Hearing was founded in 1972 and has partnered with hundreds of organizations to translate, record and distribute audio and video Scripture in over 1,400 languages. The majority of the recordings are available at www.Bible.is and at the Bible.is app. The app is an excellent tool for personal Bible listening and viewing, as well as for evangelism.

In 2008, Military Chaplains approached FCBH with a request for an Audio Bible they could distribute to the troops. The average military member is in their early 20s and may have never attended church! They are tech-savvy, having grown up on the Internet and with smartphones. How do you meet them where they're at with God's Word?

With the chaplains' assistance, we developed the MBK. It is a dedicated listening device that has been pre-loaded with the dramatized audio New Testament and 65 minutes of selected Psalms. To date, 1.4 million MBKs have been distributed! BMA churches have funded over 11,000. It is an amazing testimony of folks pouring out for others!

What lies ahead? The MBK outreach and our worldwide Scripture

See MBK, Page 5



Lifeword and the Mission of God

By Holly Meriweather

Editor's Note: In future issues, content from lifeword.org will be featured under this header.

Four years ago, when the Lifeword Cloud was being conceived and implemented, Executive Director Donny Parrish gave team members their roles in its development. It was an exciting time for all of us, and we prayed for God's guidance and favor as His plans became a reality. Thankfully, Donny is not just a vision caster; he's also a "pray-er," and pray we did!

Looking back at that time period of the unknown, we can see how God worked in incredible ways, including the addition of a team member, Director of Internet Broadcasting & Digital Strategy Jon Dodson, who had many years of experience in marketing, website management and digital strategy. He brought many new ideas to the table and knew that the success of a ministry included both video and print content. That meant someone would need to manage the daily blogs published on lifeword.org.

With guidance and advice from Jon and the Lifeword team, I am honored to be that person. There was a lot to learn in the months before Lifeword went live in September of 2018. So, I began assembling a talented team of people that includes more than just professional bloggers and writers. That team also includes ministry leaders, stay-at-home moms, pastors, church planters, retirees, missionaries, BMA staff members, counselors and high school and college students. Currently English-only, Lifeword's blog will soon include more languages, meaning more people will be reached with the gospel.

Jon said, "God has truly blessed Lifeword.org with an amazing team of writers

See LIFEWORLD, Page 5



World Missions Day 2021

Have you registered your church for World Missions Day 2021 on Feb. 28? There's still time to let us know you're planning to celebrate global missions on that day (or any day you choose). When you go to bmamissions.org/worldmissionsday to register your church, we will send your pastor a free BMA Missions polo. You can also order or download posters, bulletin inserts, a promotional guide and a World Missions Day video featuring four of our more than 500 ChangeMakers from around the world.

On the website, you can also order **Go.Disciple.Plant.Repeat.** T-shirts. That's our theme for this year, and it is God's global mission for His church. This theme defines who we are and what we do in BMA Global Missions. We send missionaries to make disciples and train leaders to plant churches in their own countries. Serving in over 72 countries around the world, these ChangeMakers are national church planters and missionaries who have dedicated their lives to that mission.

Please join us on World Missions Day as we **celebrate** God's global mission, **pray** for the ChangeMakers who **Go.Disciple.Plant.Repeat.**, and **give** to the Jerry Kidd Missions Offering on World Missions Day.



CENTRAL BAPTIST COLLEGE

PROFILE

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Men's Basketball

• **Hannibal, Mo., Jan. 28** — Coming off a defensive win, CBC returned to American Midwest Conference (AMC) play with a trip to the Mabee Sports Complex to face Hannibal-LaGrange. CBC (11-4, 6-1 AMC) used a 20-8 run at the end of the first half to lead by 11 at the break and cruise to a 91-57 win over HLGU (3-13, 2-6 AMC).

• **Conway, Jan. 30** — Looking to sweep the season series, CBC hosted the Eagles of Williams Baptist University in the homecoming game for the Mustangs. CBC (12-4, 7-1 AMC) led by 12 at the half and took care of the basketball in the second half, escaping with an 86-77 win over the Eagles (6-8, 4-4 AMC).

• **St. Louis, Mo., Feb. 1** — For the first time this season, a CBC men's basketball player has been named AMC athlete of the week. **Zach Hudson** was named the men's player of the week.

Wrestling

• **Batesville, Jan. 28** — Hitting the mat for the final time in a dual this season, CBC was in the Becknell Gymnasium, taking on the Scots of Lyon College. CBC earned four victories, but it wasn't enough as they fell to Lyon 24-20.

• **St. Louis, Mo., Feb. 1** — For the third time this season, a CBC Mustang wrestler has been selected as AMC Athlete of the Week. **Christian Richer** was the recipient of that honor this week, joining **Alejandro Mas**, who was selected twice earlier this season.

Women's Basketball

• **St. Louis, Mo., Feb. 1** — Playing their first game in 16 days, CBC took on the Eutectics of the University of Health Sciences and Pharmacy in St. Louis in an AMC contest at UHSP Gymnasium. CBC (5-2, 0-2 AMC) trailed by 12 after the first quarter and never recovered, dropping a 79-68 contest to UHSP (9-6, 5-5 AMC).

Men's Soccer

• **Conway, Feb. 1** — CBC director of soccer Lance Gordon has announced another addition to the men's soccer team for the fall of 2021. San Antonio, Texas native **Mario Ceballos** will join the Mustangs this fall.

Alumni Association: Join or Renew Today!

Calling all CBC alumni! Now is the time to join the CBC Alumni Association or renew your existing membership. When you join the CBC Alumni Association, you are supporting activities such as Exam Treats for current students and providing support to the Kenneth Brown Endowed

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Student Ministry Matters

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Dan Carson
Director

BMA of Arkansas Youth Department
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Four Ways to Encourage Students to Look Outward

"Circle the wagons!" In many ways, that is what 2020 felt like. Many of our ministries had to scramble to quickly move to online worship, online giving and online groups. Now, almost a year later, we still find ourselves in a circle. Unfortunately, some of our people didn't make it into the safety of the circle and we haven't seen them in our group since. Our churches find themselves in a weird state — and I'm not referring to Texas! I'm referring to the state of limbo. We want to return things to "normal," but know we can't because of COVID-19.

The early pioneers "circled the wagons" when they faced threats. However, they didn't stay in those circles. If they had remained huddled in one spot, starvation and death would have soon followed. I believe it is time for us to break formation and begin the journey again. It is time for us to turn our eyes outward to the lost and hurting all around us. This is incredibly important in the area of student ministry. There are students all around us that don't have parents or a church family to point them to the Father during these difficult days.

I am not saying this shift is going to be easy. When I recently visited an elementary school to deliver something to the principal, I wasn't allowed inside. Getting on campus is not a possibility right now. Even trying to go to volleyball and basketball games has proven to be difficult. Many of the "normal" ways we support our students and reach out to others are not currently possible. So, what do we do? How do we think and move in an outward direction when the world has said, "Not today!"

I believe there are definitely things that we can do as student ministry workers to encourage an outward vision:

• **Teach on the Great Commission.** I know that seems obvious, but we often forget to focus on the most important items. Making disciples was at the top of Jesus' list during His time here on Earth. It should be at the top of our list as well. However, our students won't embrace that concept if they don't understand its importance. Teach on Matt. 28:18-20. Have your students memorize it.

• **Don't give up on digital and online opportunities for ministry.** I became very discouraged by trying to have Zoom meeting with my students. The younger students were unwilling to join in, so it became a very small group very quickly. We set it aside and decided to try some different avenues. Currently, we teach an online Sunday School lesson for our students on Facebook and have created our own Instagram account for our student ministry to provide a weekly one-minute lesson called "The Word for Wednesday."

We may go back and try a few other options, but until we return to in-person meetings, this is a way for us to reach out to our students and others. In addition, your posts provide content that your students can easily share. Online platforms like Canva.com and license-free photos from sites like unsplash.com make the process of creating content relatively simple.

• **Reach out to schools.** With students having to set aside so many "normal" things in high school (proms, concerts, games, etc.), there may be ways your church can show love to them. Students need to know they aren't forgotten during these difficult days. Perhaps give a gift to all seniors or members of a chosen organization within the school that you want to bless (sports, cheer, band, choir, drama, etc.). This shows students that the church and God care about them.

• **Ask your student what they are doing to reach out.** Your students need to understand that they are responsible for reaching their friends with the gospel. Knowing about the Great Commission is one thing, but being held accountable for it is quite another. Talk to your students regularly about how they are living out their faith in school.

God's "Plan A" for reaching the world is the church. There is no "Plan B or C." He wants to use you and your students to impact the world. Are you encouraging your students to step in that direction or have you "circled the wagons?"

Homecoming Queen Crowned

The 2021 CBC Homecoming Court was presented in a private ceremony in the AR Reddin Fieldhouse on Friday, Jan. 29 at 6:30 p.m. Madelyn Jameson was crowned the 2021 Homecoming Queen by President Terry Kimbrow and the 2020 Homecoming Queen, Olivia Farris.

Madelyn Jameson is a senior Biology major with a Chemistry minor from Greenbrier. She is the lab coordinator for the CBC Science Department, participates in the Medical Professions Society and is a member of Student Orientation Staff. Madelyn's future plans include attending medical school and starting a family. She is the daughter of Dr. Martin and Jennifer Jameson and attends Bethlehem Baptist Church.

During the Homecoming Court ceremony, Madelyn was escorted by her father and Andrew Krisell, a junior from Greenbrier who is majoring in Bible with a minor in Christian Care. Andrew is the son of Scott and Becky Krisell.



—Photo by Donna Evans Photography

2021 Homecoming Queen Madelyn Jameson and Central Baptist College President Terry Kimbrow



—Photo by Donna Evans Photography

2021 CBC Homecoming Court — Back Row (L-R) Mallory Sullivan, Allison Mantooth, Abigail Herring, and Elizabeth Riley; Front Row (L-R) Sierra Burrow, Ashanti Williams, 2021 Homecoming Queen Madelyn Jameson, Jordan Wilkie, and Cora Lentz

Other members of the Homecoming Court and their escorts were:

• **Sierra Burrow**, a freshman Psychology major from Quitman, was escorted by her uncle, Jerred Cooley and Gabe Walker, a sophomore from Walls, Miss.

• **Abigail Herring**, a senior Marketing major from Maumelle, was escorted by her father, Jeff Herring and Matthew Guyton, a senior Business Administration major from Conway.

• **Cora Lentz**, a senior Health Sciences major from Vilonia, was escorted by her father, Lee Lentz and Zac Tyson, who is from Conway.

• **Allison Mantooth**, a sophomore Kinesiology major from San Antonio, Texas, was escorted by CBC faculty member, Jim Turner and Ade Oshikoya, a senior Health and Exercise Science major from London, England.

• **Elizabeth Riley**, a junior Communications major from Sherwood,

was escorted by her father, Zack Riley and Keegan Conway, who is from Amarillo, Texas.

• **Mallory Sullivan**, a junior Communications major from Bryant, was escorted by her father, Chuck Sullivan and Andrew Guyton, a senior Worship Arts major from Conway.

• **Jordan Wilkie**, a sophomore Elementary Education major from Rison, was escorted by her father, Richard Wilkie and Noah Pratt, a sophomore Bible major from Hot Springs.

• **Ashanti Williams**, a freshman Elementary Education major from Jonesboro, was escorted by Griffin Smith, a junior Biology major from Damascus and Dylan Burnham, a freshman Health and Physical Education major from Benton.

A special thanks to Student Services Coordinator Mariecca Ashworth for organizing the presentation of the Homecoming Court.

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Senior Pastor Transition

Paul is exhorting Timothy (II Tim. 4:1-5) in an excellent example of a minister of the gospel handing a ministry off to another minister of the gospel. Passing the baton is critical to winning relay races. Success or failure depends not only on how fast the runners run, but how well they transfer the baton. If the transfer is mishandled or dropped, at best, valuable time will be lost and, at worst, the race will be lost. Paul spent intentional time where both he and Timothy were racing together and an indispensable overlap of mentoring occurred.

Every church will make this transition at some point, and you will not be the only pastor of your church unless Jesus returns soon. The best time to plan for a transition is now because you have to develop and detail what a transition process will look like. A poor transition can greatly hinder or even destroy the church, and that is why the best time to think about a transition is now. Someone has correctly said that every position and every job is an interim because it will not last forever. Build a team where everyone knows who will step in when needed.

Leadership requires you to focus on working yourself out of a job. The point is not “get ready to leave” but instead prepare for the day when that will occur. What would happen if God called you home tomorrow? What will your church do if this Sunday your pastor announces he is leaving and will not be back? A good transition to the right leader can result in significant ministry health and growth! John Maxwell has stated this well, “There is no success without a successor!” How you leave is even more important than how you start!

A successful transition depends on much prayer, preparation, planning, a process and it is the work of God. In the book *The First 90 Days*, Michael D. Watkins covers “proven strategies for getting up to speed faster and smarter.” There should also be a book for pastors and churches entitled “*Your Last 90 Days!*” or better yet, “*Your Last Two Years!*”

If it is possible for there to be an overlap with the pastor who is leaving

and the one coming in, it can be very positive and productive. The knowledge of the pastor who has sacrificially served would be priceless.

Here is the reality — everybody needs a succession plan. The pastor will not live forever, or he may be called to another position or location. It has already been stated, but worth repeating that every role is an interim position. It is only a matter of time until your church will find themselves in one of the following situations — you could have a 2-year plan (very few do) where one leader decreases while the other leader increases or you could find yourself without a pastor, but you have a simple process in your church constitution and polity in place, just in case.

However, most churches find themselves looking, and there is no process with any depth or intentionality. To be honest, it is a scramble and a little chaotic as you work feverishly to develop a plan. The biggest thing to know here is that there needs to be intentionality to transition well. Why? Because most churches do not have the luxury of a two-year plan much less even a six-month or even a three-month plan. If an overlap is possible, I believe it is the healthiest plan for the church and there are great examples of this happening in healthy churches.

The greatest challenge in an overlap is for the outgoing pastor. He feels the tangible process of his phasing out and the focus of the love and respect of their new pastor increasing. A man of character, integrity and who is comfortable in his own skin will welcome this shift. He is slowly letting go of something he has invested his life in through much prayer and labor. Harold Hodges lived this out and modeled it at Southgate Baptist Church in Moore, Okla. by sitting up front during worship for the first six months to show his confidence in his new pastor, Doug Brewer, to the congregation.

The baton-passing imagery is huge here because, at first, the baton passer and the baton receiver are both running as fast as they can; but then one

CBC

(Continued From Page 2)

Scholarship Fund. Each year, a qualified student is chosen to receive this endowed scholarship for the academic year. Individual memberships are \$35 per year and a membership for a couple is \$50 per year. Visit cbc.edu/alumniassociation to join today!

Alumni: Update Your Contact Information

We want to stay connected with our alumni! If you have moved, switched jobs, earned a new degree or added to your family, we want to know! Update your information at cbc.edu/alumni-update.

Save the Date: Homecoming 2022

Don't forget to mark your calendar for Homecoming 2022. It is a big year for Central Baptist College as it marks the 70th anniversary of the institution! Be sure and make plans to join us Jan. 28-29, 2022.

slows down and the other speeds up. Recent research has even shown that an intentional overlap works the best. The pastor coming in can begin leading and learning under the one who has already run the race well. Yes, announcing it early and transitioning presents unique challenges, but the challenges are even greater when it is announced abruptly and the church did not see it coming.

That is why there needs to be a plan that is pre-determined with a lot of prayer. If possible, it should involve the pastor who is transitioning out, the church and their leadership and the pastor who is transitioning in. We want to recommend a resource that will help you through this transition. It is our new free booklet entitled, *Senior Pastor Transition Checklist* that our team at Healthy Church Solutions has put together for you.

This resource has sample questions to ask the church, the candidate and much more. They will be printed soon but you can receive the electronic version by emailing heidi@bmaam.com. Please know that we are praying for you and want to help you anyway we can!



Bi-lingual Preaching Lab, Feb. 5-6; South City, Little Rock; \$20; Contact Michael Hight for more information at michaelhight@hotmail.com.

World Missions Day, Feb. 28; Jerry Kidd Offering for BMA World Missions.

Ministry Connections Workshops, Mar. 23, 10 a.m.; Cross-Roads Church, Rowlett, Tx.; Sponsored by Baptist Progress.

CBC Scholarship Gala, June 5, 6 p.m., Conway Expo Center.



Trailblazers Who Were Not Preachers

In the course of the past year, I have written a number of articles focusing on pastors and leaders who were definitely trailblazers of the BMA of Arkansas. I was just thinking a few weeks ago that we also have had some truly great servants of the Lord, trailblazers if you please, who were not preachers.

Some do not like the term, but we usually refer to such men as “laymen.” Webster defines a layman as a person who is not a member of the clergy, one who does not belong to a particular profession or is not an expert in some field. I take exception to that last part. Many of the laymen I know are certainly not novices in the service of the Lord, and while they do not belong to the “clergy,” they are certainly ministers for Christ in their own right.

I do not need to remind any of you that the ministry of the church is not limited to a pastor or preacher. Just think, in the average BMA church of 100 people, only 1% are not laypeople! That means the work of the ministry in the areas of serving, teaching, evangelizing, discipling and influencing their communities is done by laymen.

Truthfully, the BMA of Arkansas would not be where it is today were it not for dedicated trailblazers who were not preachers. In this brief article, I will mention one whom the Lord used in various ways, and I will likely write about others in later issues of the *Baptist Trumpet*.

Thomas Oran Tollett immediately comes to mind. T.O. Tollett, as he was best known, was a businessman who had a zeal for the Lord. He was instrumental in preserving the former *Temple Trumpet* and giving of his own resources to fund what later became the *Baptist Trumpet*.

Additionally, Bro. Tollett served as business manager for the publishing arm of the BMA of America, the Baptist Publications Committee. He oversaw the day-to-day ministry of the old Baptist Bible and Book House, the official bookstore of the national association with locations in Little Rock and Texarkana. An astute manager, Bro. Tollett worked hand-in-hand with editors of the publishing arm of the association, ensuring that scriptural and well-prepared Sunday School, Baptist Training Service, Vacation Bible School and study books were prepared and available to the churches of the association.

Bro. Tollett was a devoted deacon, serving Temple Baptist Church of Little Rock most of his adult life. He was a strong supporter of the school he dearly loved and sent his children to Central Baptist College, an entity of the BMA of Arkansas.

While the printed page was of utmost importance to him, so was the work of worldwide and state missions. He advocated missions, promoted missions and financially supported missions until he received his heavenly promotion. Not only was he a supporter of missions, he was a devoted supporter and board member of Lifeword Ministries — a ministry he helped get off the ground and one he truly loved.

A rather soft-spoken man, Bro. Tollett served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He was a proud veteran who loved his country. A native of Nashville, he returned to his native south Arkansas and resided in Texarkana.

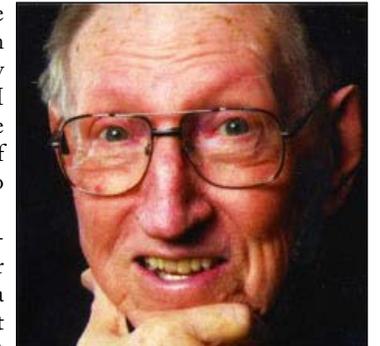
It was in Texarkana that this “layman” found a place of service for his Lord, along with his wife of 49 years, Eloyce. Bro. Tollett served the churches of the association from 1952 until 1987. I first met the man in 1964, when I was a freshman at Central Baptist College. I was honored to call him my friend from that time until his death. T. O. Tollett received his heavenly promotion on Dec. 18, 2009, and I am certain that this trailblazer heard the words from his Savior, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Contact Amy Reed for more info at areed@cbc.edu.

National Galilean Camp, June 25-28; Stoneridge Baptist Camp, Smithville, Arkansas.

Fresh Grounded Faith Women's Event, Aug. 6-7, 7 p.m. Fri., 12:30 p.m. Sat.; Antioch, Conway.

Ark. Ladies Retreat, Sept. 25, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.



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Honduras Makes Abortion Ban Permanent

The Honduran National Congress strengthened pro-life laws last week by amending the national constitution to declare that unborn babies have the same rights as born human beings under the law. Breitbart reports lawmakers passed the reforms Thursday in response to growing international pressure on pro-life countries to legalize abortions. They amended the Honduran Constitution to read: "The unborn shall be considered as born for all rights accorded within the limits established by law. It is prohibited and illegal for the mother or a third party to practice any form of interruption of life on the unborn, whose life must be respected from conception." They also passed legislation increasing the vote threshold to 75% for congress to repeal unborn babies' constitutional right to life. "All human beings have a right to life from the moment of conception," said Mario Pérez, the lawmaker who sponsored the legislation.

The South American country was spurred to action after Argentina legalized abortions in December. Lawmakers said they wanted to create a "shield against abortion" in Honduras, where most people support unborn babies' right to life.

Pro-abortion groups expressed hope that Argentina's decision would prompt other South American countries to do the same, but now they fear — and pro-life advocates hope — the opposite will be true. After the vote last week, international pro-abortion groups and agencies, including the United Nations and European Union, slammed Honduras for protecting unborn babies. Other critics included Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Oxfam, according to the report.

Most Central and South American countries protect unborn babies' right to life, but they face growing pressure from the United Nations and other international groups to legalize abortion on demand. Abortion advocacy groups, backed by some of the richest men in the world, hope the vote in Argentina will prompt neighboring countries to legalize abortions as well. (lifeneews.com)

Poll Finds Americans Oppose Publicly Funded Abortion

A recent Marist/Knights of Columbus poll shows most Americans support restrictions on abortion in the U.S. Pollsters surveyed 1,173 adults earlier this year. Among other things, the survey revealed: More than three quarters of Americans (76%), including a majority who identify as pro-choice, want significant restrictions on abortion; 77% of those polled either "oppose" or "strongly oppose" using tax dollars to support international

abortion — this is up from 75% who answered similarly each of the past two years. (Democrat/55%, Republican/95%, Independent/85%)

Only 19% of Americans either "support" or "strongly support" funding abortions outside the US, while another 4% are unsure. Even among those who identify themselves as "pro-choice" in the current poll, over six in 10 (64%) say they are opposed to using tax dollars to support abortion in other countries. A majority of Americans (58%) oppose using taxpayer money to fund abortions within the United States. (Democrat – 31%, Republican – 83%, Independent – 65%)

The findings come as President Biden rescinds U.S. policies preventing taxpayers from funding organizations that support abortion overseas and has recently made statements opposing the Hyde Amendment that prohibits taxpayer-funded abortion at home. (familycouncil.org)

J&J Vaccine Prevents COVID-19, But Less Than Some Others

Johnson & Johnson's long-awaited vaccine appears to protect against COVID-19 with just one shot — not as strong as some two-shot rivals but still potentially helpful for a world in dire need of more doses. J&J said on Jan. 29 that in the U.S. and seven other countries, the single-shot vaccine was 66% effective overall at preventing moderate to severe illness, and much more protective — 85% — against the most serious symptoms. There was some geographic variation. The vaccine worked better in the U.S. — 72% effective against moderate to severe COVID-19 — compared to 57% in South Africa, where it was up against an easier-to-spread mutated virus. These are preliminary findings from a study of 44,000 volunteers that isn't completed yet.

The company said within a week, it will file an application for emergency use in the U.S., and then abroad. It expects to supply 100 million doses to the U.S. by June and a billion doses globally by the end of the year. J&J wouldn't say exactly how much could be ready to ship as soon as U.S. authorities give the green light. (baptistpress.com)

Conspiracy Theories Prevalent in Churches

While Americans have been caught in a whirlwind of conspiracy theories the last several months, many pastors say they hear such unfounded claims from their church members. A new study from Nashville-based Lifeway Research finds 49% of U.S. Protestant pastors say they frequently hear members of their congregation repeating conspiracy theories they have heard about why something is happening in the country. Around 1



Broadway Ave., Bay rejoiced over five by baptism; Rick Jensen, pastor.

Cathedral, Jonesboro added one by statement; Ken Beaver, pastor; Rhonda Pruitt, reporter.

First, Cave Springs gained four by statement; Michael Battenfield, pastor; Gaylene VanHook, Clerk.

First, Gurdon welcomed two by letter; Randal Murphy, pastor.

Kingsland, Kingsland reported two by letter; Rick Bolin, pastor.

New Hope, Wynne witnessed one by baptism; Drew Hibbitts, pastor; Phyllis Latham, reporter.

Shady Grove, Piggott rejoiced over two by baptism; Robert Gunnels, pastor; Debbie Pollard, reporter.

West Race, Searcy added one by baptism; Chad Brandon, pastor; Glenda Kelley, clerk.

in 8 (13%) strongly agree their congregants are sharing conspiracy theories, defined by Merriam-Webster as "a theory that explains an event or set of circumstances as the result of a secret plot by usually powerful conspirators."

Another 47% disagree, including 26% who strongly disagree, saying they do not often hear church members sharing such ideas. One in 20 (5%) are not sure. "Christian churches resolve to be places focused on the truth," said Scott McConnell, executive director of Lifeway Research. "Yet, half of pastors hear the spread of assumptions about plots often. This is a startling disconnect." Pastors of churches with more than 250 in attendance are the most likely to agree (61%). White pastors are also more likely than African American pastors to say they frequently hear their church members repeating conspiracy theories (50% to 36%). Pastors 65 and older are the most likely to disagree that they hear those ideas in their church (59%) and the least likely to agree (34%).

"While conspiracy theories may be embraced by a minority of churchgoers, the larger the church the more minds and mouths exist to be misled," McConnell said. "At this time, it appears more of the theories are traveling in politically conservative circles which corresponds to the higher percentages in the churches led by white Protestant pastors." For Christian apologist Mary Jo Sharp, the widespread sharing of conspiracy theories within churches is a worrisome trend, as it can reinforce negative stereotypes about Christians and hamper efforts to share the gospel. (baptistpress.com)



Don't Let Unemployment Fraud Trouble You This Tax Season

Tax season is upon us, and, unfortunately, this year many Arkansans have the added stress of dealing with fraudulent unemployment compensation claims when filing their taxes. Victims of unemployment fraud may have income wrongfully reported in their name that could add to their tax burden. Many consumers have been rightfully concerned about the safety of their personal and financial information due to this type of fraud.



"Con artists who try to steal from taxpaying Arkansans will be caught," said Attorney General Leslie Rutledge. "I will always hold these criminals accountable to the fullest extent of the law."

Attorney General Rutledge offers the following tips for Arkansans filing their tax returns who have encountered unemployment fraud:

- Be sure that you have contacted the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services' fraud hotline at (501) 682-1058 or completed the secure fraud reporting form online at dws.arkansas.gov.
- After filing the initial police report, send a copy to the Department of Workforce Services to stop the fraudulent income from being reported to the IRS.
- Do not report the fraudulent earnings as your own or file an amended return.
- Independently contact the Social Security Administration (SSA) to review your earnings for accuracy. This step could take several weeks for the SSA to update their records.
- Review the IRS Guide to Employment-Related Identity Theft at www.irs.gov.

Additionally, consumers can also protect their identity and personal information by contacting the three credit bureaus. For more information about unemployment fraud contact, the Attorney General's Office at OAG@ArkansasAG.gov.

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Stark, Dr. Duggar's Daughter, Dies

Lily Mae Stark, 80 of Little Rock, passed away on Dec. 20. She was the daughter of the late Dr. John & Maxine Duggar. Dr. Duggar, who passed away in 1998, served the BMA in many ways, including pastoring churches, as missionary to Brazil and as president of BMA Theological Seminary, where the library annex was named in his honor.

Mrs. Stark retired from the State of Arkansas Social Security Disability office after over 30 years of service. She was always active in her church, teaching, playing the piano and in many other capacities. She loved sending cards for every occasion, and her favorite activity was reading books, especially the Bible.

Survivors include: a granddaughter, Krystina Stark; a sister, Lucy (Don) Burns; a nephew, two nieces and many great-nieces and great-nephews.

Funeral services were held Dec. 31, and interment was at Pinecrest Memorial Park under the direction of Roller-Drummond Funeral Home. Memorials may be sent to South City Church, 10710 Interstate 30, Little Rock, Ark. 72209.



Lyman Lester Norment, 71 of Magnolia, passed away Jan. 30. He was a member of College View Baptist Church.

Ila Huett Davidson, 85 of Plummerville, passed away Jan. 29. She was a member of Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church.

Claudette Carmen Marlar, 83 of Magnolia, passed away Jan. 29. She was a member of First Baptist Church in Waldo.

Mary Lois Herring Clark, 94 of Conway, passed away Jan. 28. She was a member of Central Baptist Church.

Cedric "Junior" W. Tapley, 81 of Greenbrier, passed away Jan. 24. He was a member of Springhill Baptist Church.

Patsy King Adcock, 81 of White Hall, passed away Jan. 20. She was a member of Lemonwood Baptist Church.



Joyce Misenheimer, Minister's Wife, Dies

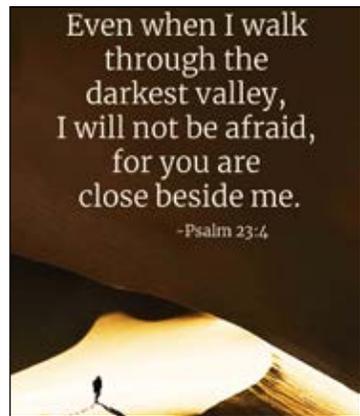
Dr. Joyce H. Misenheimer, 84 of Fayetteville, passed away Jan. 22. For 66 years, she was the wife of BMA Minister Phil Misenheimer, who pastored churches in Arkansas, Texas and Louisiana, served as an interstate missionary in Florida and as a chaplain at Washington Regional Medical Center in Fayetteville. Dr. Misenheimer also was the previous president of the WMA of the BMA of America.

Dr. Misenheimer attended Jacksonville College in Jacksonville, Texas; Valencia College in Orlando, Fla.; and Henderson State University in Arkadelphia. She is a graduate of University of Arkansas at Little Rock (BSE) and the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville (MEd and EdD).

She taught kindergarten in Orlando, Fla. and second grade in Bryant and Springdale. She was assistant principal at Parson Hills Elementary School in Springdale and served as a professor at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., John Brown University in Siloam Springs and the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

Other survivors include: two children, Cindy (Mark) Cady of Rogers and Greg (Sandy) Misenheimer of Springdale; five grandchildren and three great grandchildren; five step-grandchildren and two step great grandchildren.

A private family service was held and interment was at Mars Hill Cemetery in Stamps, under the direction of Nelson-Berna Funeral Home of Fayetteville. Memorials may be made to Gideons International, Willard Walker Hospice Home or the church or organization of your choice.



Satan is Like A Wart!

By Jeff Knowlton, Pastor
Little River • Manila

I was in a counseling session a few months ago, and was asked, "How do I keep Satan from oppressing me?" That is a good question, and God gives us the answers we need in His Holy Word.

First of all, we have to recognize that Satan as our adversary. Satan hates God and His children and has fought against every man of God. Just a few, for example, he fought against:

King David — "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chron. 21:1).

Moses — "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 1:9).

Job (the one we read most about) — "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (Job 1:6-8).

Remember, as a born again Christian, we belong to God: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

In 1 Peter 5:6-9, we find what we must do in order to keep Satan at bay: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

If we give our all to God, He will give us the strength to resist the devil. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Satan = Wart

Satan is like having a wart. As a child, I had a wart that really bugged me until one day Mom bought some Compound W. She applied it daily, and that wart slowly became unnoticeable and didn't bother me as much.

Like Satan, the wart never completely went away; but I no longer spent all my time worrying about that it.

We need to apply God's Compound

W (which is His Word):

W — His **W**ill for our lives

O — Our **O**bedience to Him

R — Biblical **R**epentance (turning away from sin and turning toward Him)

D — **D**efense against the adversary

We will find all of this in his Holy Word. Continue in Prayer, God's Word and putting on the whole armor of God, as Paul speaks of in Eph. 6:13-19.

(Many times, preachers skip over verse 19 when preaching about the whole armor of God, but it is important. Why? See what Paul says — putting on the whole armor of God with prayer gave him what he needed: "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.")

Being led by the Holy Spirit, walking in the spirit and turning away from the flesh relying on Jesus — if you do these things, Satan will have no ammo to fire at you. And if he tries, you will have everything you need to withstand the fiery darts of Satan.

Apply God's WORD to your life daily.

MBK

(Continued From Page 1)

recording and distribution strategies have merged into **Vision2033** (V2033). Visit cutt.ly/V2033 for a video that explains how churches are reaching our nation's military and Veteran communities (our Jerusalem!) with MBKs as well as providing audio Scriptures and gospel films to the uttermost parts of the earth as part of V2033.

Visit cutt.ly/MBKstart for a quick start outline that gives a strategy for participation. Pastor, please communicate with me if you would like to invite your congregation to participate and we will coordinate a plan. As a V2033 partner, you will receive quarterly updates and have access to free resources (cutt.ly/V2033resources), including solar-powered Proclaimer Bibles and MBKs.

Our nation's VA chaplains have been instrumental in getting MBKs to veterans, but they were hindered from doing so last year because of COVID-19. The military experienced cases similar to the rest of the United States but maintained low fatality rates due to their strict containment measures. Unfortunately, these measures also limited the chaplains' ability to distribute MBKs to Veterans.

The church has become the major avenue for distribution to the veteran community. Their "sphere of influence" includes veterans who attend church and extends to neighbors, friends, family members, to VFW and American Legion Post members and to other veteran support groups. I am encouraging my pastors to "deputize" their congregations to help. The MBKs are available right now. Just let me know what you need.

Once again BMA, thank you for serving our nation's military and



What Is Your Gift Worth?

One of Ripley's "Believe It or Not" items pictures a plain bar of iron worth \$5. The same bar of iron was made into horseshoes it would be worth \$50. If it were made into needles, it would be worth \$5,000. If it were made into balance springs for fine Swiss watches, it would be worth \$500,000. (And these are 2005 figures; today's prices are 32% higher!)

The raw material is not as important as how it's developed. God has given spiritual gifts to every believer, and to Him, the worth of the gifts is dependent on how we develop them.

What are you doing to develop the gift God has given you? What is your gift worth? (Oct. 12, 2005 Baptist Trumpet)

LIFEWORD

(Continued From Page 1)

that daily produce gospel-centered content. Blogging has allowed Lifeword.org to publish content daily that search engines absolutely devour, and visitors continue to love to read more and more.

"Of the 574,000 visitors to Lifeword.org in 2020, the main blog page at lifeword.org/blog was the number two most visited page in the website. Given current trends, Lifeword.org will receive over 1.5 million visits in 2021, and the blog articles will undoubtedly continue to deliver glory to our God and the good news of the gospel to our visitors."

Spreading the gospel couldn't be more critical right now, and the purpose of all Lifeword blogs is to point non-believers to Christ and encourage believers to action. Our BMA state papers have begun including Lifeword's blogs in their publications, and we appreciate their help in promoting them.

"Your Lifeword team desires to equip you to minister online to your friends," Jon Dodson said. "Help Lifeword.org spread the gospel and share the amazing content — blogs, video, audio, Bible study lessons and much more — that God is allowing us to produce. To share Lifeword.org blogs on your social media accounts, simply go to lifeword.org/blog and click on a blog title then on any of the social share buttons you'll see below the blog title to start sharing now. All of us at Lifeword.org hope the blogs are a blessing to you and to your personal ministry online as 'We Tell The Story' together."

veteran communities and for your partnership in the gospel. It has been a privilege and a joy to serve with you!



Tales from the Potter's Wheel

By Martha Brock
inolnewspaper@tds.net

In Business with God

Business is an honorable word. Everyone must have a business, occupation, job or responsibility. That is what the word means. See, it is an honorable word.

Sometimes people forget that their "business" is a way for them to put their talents to the best use while taking care of the material needs of their family. They make "business" top priority.

I guess you wonder what I mean? Remember Adam? His business was taking care of the animals and of the Garden. It was a good job. Everything grew just right. The animals were his friends and worked with him to keep everything in order.

Adam had a partner. Adam and his partner would meet at a specific time to discuss how things were growing and what changes needed to be made. Adam's business partner was God and the Garden of Eden was a great success until Adam forgot his priorities.

Now let me tell you about another businessman.

In Nazareth there was a carpenter shop. It was a family affair. Joseph & Sons was a respected business that put out good work on a timely basis. Mr. Joseph had several sons, so it looked like the business would continue to prosper. Then Mr. Joseph died and his boys were left to run the shop.

The oldest, Jesus, was a natural, and, just like Adam, His partner was God. Things were really humming. Business was good. Joseph & Sons was probably taking orders from all over Galilee. Jesus knew the best wood. He could talk to anyone. When He was in the shop, the tools seemed to plane the wood to a satin smoothness with no effort from the Joseph brothers, or perhaps the effort was so much fun it didn't seem like work.

Jesus spent as much time as He could teaching His brothers everything Joseph had taught Him. James would argue and say, "But Jesus, you can talk to those people better than me. You could sell those housewives a new chair every day. The farmers like to come in and talk to you about the crops. You could easily sell them more plows if you tried."

Jesus would laugh and say, "But my Father taught me to work with them and give them the best product for their needs. I can't take advantage of their trust. Joseph wouldn't want us to do that." Sometimes the brothers would grumble and someone would mutter under his breath "Well, that's just business."

Then one evening Jesus laid down His tools and looked toward the red sky. He smiled at His brothers, hugged

each one and said, "Tomorrow I am going to hear our cousin, John preach. I won't be back for quite a while."

"Is he going to baptize you?" joked a little brother. The answer was "yes."

Jesus did not return to the carpenter shop. He had taught His brothers everything they needed to know, and they would have to continue until His return.

For 40 days and nights, He attended a learning convention with his Business Partner. I guess they spent the time discussing The Plan. But maybe (I think so) Jesus always knew He had a different destiny than His brothers. If not, I am sure His Senior Partner, God, made it clear to Him what was coming.

A rival had been spying on the "God & Son" partnership. As soon as he thought he could sneak in, Lucifer started making offers. "Quit that firm, there isn't anything for you there. It's all sacrifice and no fun. Forget the straight and narrow. Whoever heard of doing business that way?"

Jesus called fun "joy," and He has told me that working in partnership with our Father brings satisfaction other firms can't touch. He has laughed and said that the ones who choose any path other than the straight and narrow usually have a wreck or never reach the goal.

See what I mean? The right business, with the right partner is full of success, any other way is failure — money or not!

Friends, do you want a pattern for success? Look at that young man, Jesus. His voice, His manner and His magnetism called forth the best of His companions. The secret is to choose a worthwhile goal and then pursue it with all sincerity and faith.

Jesus' family came to hear Him preach and take Him back home, but He said to them, "Why is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). The God Partnership, just like any good business arrangement, calls for responsibility and diligence.

Jesus told a story of a man who left his house (business) for a long trip. He told his partners to keep things in order until his return. I think that means keep on working; keep on showing a profit.

Jesus gave us a contract. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by not pass away" (Luke 21:33).

What will He pay? "And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon me... that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30).

WALKER

(Continued From Page 1)

making disciples today!

• **Establishing a 1st-12th grade academy.** In August of 2019 this became a reality with the beginning of a first grade on our college campus. In August of 2020 a second grade was started, and the plan is to continue adding a grade each year until we reach grade 12. From the beginning, it has been our desire for the academy to be run by the Filipinos. Today they are in full control of the daily operations of the academy.

• **Helping the BMA Bible college to be more financially self-supportive.** While this process is not complete, things have been set in motion for this to happen over the next several years. For now, it is vital that funds from the US continue to come to support the Bible college. The new academy will eventually underwrite around 40% of the college's operating budget. 40% will continue to come from the US through student scholarships and the remaining 20% will slowly be taken on by the Filipino churches. Last month, one of the Philippine churches gave over \$1,000 to the college — the largest gift ever received from one of our churches there!

• **Helping plant new churches.** We have had many opportunities to help and partner with new church plants in the Philippines, but we have worked directly with two of them regularly. It has been encouraging to see Pastor Genesis and Pastor JR grow to love the community they are working in, and God is doing an incredible work through them even in the midst of a pandemic.

Throughout our time in the Philippines, we have seen God do some extraordinary things! Many have placed their faith in Christ, disciples have been made, churches have been planted and a new grade school began. We give God all the credit for the work that has been accomplished.

We also want to thank you for your prayers and financial support during our time on the field. Through your willingness to be used by the Lord, souls have been saved and lives have been changed. Without you, we would not have been able to do the things we were able to do! You have truly made a difference to the uttermost parts of the world.

So, we are asking that you continue to give through April as we officially end our full-time missionary status in June. (If you want to continue to support mission work in the Philippines there are several areas of need. I'd love to talk with you further about how you can help.)

I'll continue my teaching responsibilities at the college, remotely, through this spring semester and finish in June. We pray that you will continue to be involved in missions. As for the future, we are praying through that right now and covet your prayers for next steps for our family and ministry. (bmabcphilippines@yahoo.com)

Spotlight On Missions

Send offerings to BMA Missions

P.O. Box 878 • Conway, AR 72033-0878
501.455.4977 • www.bmamissions.org



Michael with Seth and Laura Beth with Samuel

Michael & Laura Beth Strong • Minneapolis, Minn.

The year is starting out in a pretty busy way. Our family has been impacted beyond presidential elections and COVID vaccines. Around the end of the year, I learned my last living grandmother had lung cancer.

While we were sorrowful about Grandma, we had two surprises. The first was our son, John Michael came to Christ! He had been praying about following Christ for some time. We celebrated this joyous occasion, and I held it in my heart as I wrestled with the reality that now both my son and grandmother would someday be secure in heaven.

Then came the second surprise. On Sunday, Jan. 17, my father's birthday, I launched a new Bible study group. Prior to heading out to Bible study, I asked a friend of our family to sit with Laura since she was having more issues with the pregnancy and struggling to get around. She was 33 weeks pregnant at that point. After Bible study, I rushed home and found that Laura was definitely in labor. We rushed to the hospital and they decided to keep her. That night we welcomed our twins (Samuel Malachi and Seth Ryder) into the world!

I have been reminded all week of how undeserving I am of such abundance of wealth, such riches of grace. God truly is merciful beyond measure and mighty to save, is He not? To say I was a screwup is to give myself credit I do not deserve. I was a sinner, sick with pride and corrupt to the core. I had been hurt and I hurt others. My sin was what was wrong with this world, and God is right to judge it as wicked and to condemn me, to destroy me and send me off to Hell or some unknown corner of the earth to never to see the light of day again. I deserve that. I know it. But that is not what God has done. He has been gracious and merciful to me, and He sent Jesus to pay my debt for all my sin — it is paid in full!

That is a reminder of why we do what we do in missions. I was a wreck. I was a lost cause, and I am no different than all those other sheep Jesus is sending us after. There are so many people like you and me that Jesus wants to pour His magnificent grace out upon. He wants them to experience the love of God and be moved from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light! He wants them to see the beauty and grace in life and death and spiritual birth and natural birth. He wants them saved from the second death. I want to see them saved from that, and I'm sure you do, too.

I will be starting the Bible study back up from scratch soon, and I am still leading Bible studies at FreedomWorks and had the opportunity to preach there recently. We will be baptizing John at a local church in a few weeks, and I will preach and have a service. I could use your prayers as we look to honor God with the service and call others into a commitment with the church plant through formal membership.

For those that haven't been to our site in a while, come check it out at www.nccmpls.com.



Free E-Trumpet

Any active BMA military personnel is eligible to receive the Trumpet free. Please send their name, address or email address to P.O. Box 192208, Little Rock, Ark. 72219; or editor@baptisttrumpet.com.



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PAUL WHITE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Urgent Need!

"But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (1 Peter 3:14-17).

The gospel message is the good news, so why do we find it so difficult to share such an amazing message with others? It seems to me we can tend to acquire a defensive stance (dormant). We find ourselves hanging out with people who are like-minded, knowing there is a feeling of safety and acceptance among our peers. Please do not misunderstand me, there is nothing wrong with fellowshiping with fellow believers, but there are few converts witnessed in that setting.

The fear of rejection and isolation holds us back from taking an offensive stance (active), causing many to fall into a state of complacency. It is as though while we believe the good news of Jesus — his birth, death, and resurrection and the fact that there is no other name given among men whereby we might be saved, along with all the other wonderful promises to a child of God — we are failing to share it in an effort to reach others.

I firmly believe that Satan does his best to make every good area of service difficult and way over complicated. I read this quote the other day: "Keep it simple and keep it real. The more basic we see our connection to God and His Spirit, the easier it is to feel like you're a part of it." (Jim Fargiano)

Sometimes the best and the toughest examination is a self-examination. Ask yourself, when was the last time you shared your faith with someone else? When was the last time you handed someone a tract or invited someone to church? When was the last time you made a big deal out of what God is doing for you and your family by posting it for others to see? Before you think I am finger-pointing know that I am not. Witnessing is a discipline and one that I need to work on.

My pastor, Missionary Chad White, shared a message that hit home — in the day and age we are living in, people need to hear **the** Good News. It is my prayer that each of us will begin looking for and not avoiding opportunities to share the gospel as a part of our daily routine. After all, it is the best news ever shared!

From Our Missionaries

Connection Point, Brookland:

Chad White writes, "God blessed us this week at Connection Point. Our Wednesday Night groups are really doing well, almost too well. We are struggling to find the room to social distance and still be able to meet. It is what you would call a good problem.

"Sunday was a great day. We had a good attendance in person, with the house looking full. We enjoyed a great worship service, had good offerings and even some first-time guests with us.

"We are excited to have Alex White join us as our Silas Connection partner. He will be helping with our Student Ministry as well as working to improve our online and streaming capabilities. We also look forward to investing in him and his future ministry."

The Mustard Seed, Cain: Jim Tollison writes, "Our mission is going through quite an experience with COVID-19 of late. We have some who are recovering from the virus and some who have it now. We had several out Sunday due to quarantine restrictions.

As far as we know, none of our people were infected at the mission, thankfully.

"It is so difficult to plan ahead when you are facing the uncertainty of this virus. We are still trusting God to see us through these unfortunate setbacks.

"Thanks so much for your prayers and support."

Misión Creciendo en Cristo (Growing in Christ), North Little Rock:

Juan Carlos Posadas writes, "We thank God for His provision for the North Little Rock community with the food distribution program. Tuesday and Friday, 195 bags of food were delivered, for a total of 390. We picked up an order Wednesday at City Serve, which allowed us to continue supporting families in need of furniture, diapers, bedding, kitchen utensils and other household items and give us the opportunity to create relationships in order to share the gospel.

Three weeks ago, Sayra began discipleship meetings with Angeles, a young lady who is a beneficiary of the community assistance program. She has a sister named Lupita who is

going through some family difficulties. Angeles recommended that she speak with Sayra and shared her personal experience as a result of having received Christ, and her participation in the discipleship meetings. Lupita told Sayra her need and her interest in knowing about Christ. On Thursday, the three of them met and Lupita decided to receive Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior!

"Glory to God for His work in the lives of these sisters. For about a year we have had the opportunity to serve them and now we see them coming to the feet of the Lord and joining a discipleship group. We thank you for praying for Aracely who has also been invited to join that discipleship group. Let us pray that their Catholic background does not prevent them from growing in the knowledge of the Word and that their relatives will not reject them because of their decision for Christ.

"Another reason to thank God is that Karla brought her 11-year-old son, Christopher to the feet of Christ. What a privilege we have to see this daughter of God being used by the Father to take her family to Christ. Glory to God!

"In our Sunday meeting we studied about false teachings and the love of money, based on 1 Tim. 6:3-10.

"We thank God for you for supporting this work and giving us the opportunity to serve Him."

Life Journey, Fort Smith: Darrin Smith writes, "We enjoyed a great worship service this past Sunday. Many are still out for different reasons, and we are not seeing the visitors as we once did.

"There are several of our members who are stepping up. It is exciting to see them growing in their walk with the Lord.

"Pray for us as we continue to serve in the community."

Grace, Green Forest: Carter Pearce writes, "After church this Sunday, we had our monthly luncheon, followed by games and a chance to spend time together as a church family. We enjoyed fresh grilled cheese sandwiches, loaded potato soup and the best posole (a Latino soup) I have ever eaten.

"If you read my Facebook post, you already know about the quad-berry cobbler we had for dessert! I don't share about our potluck just to make you jealous of our congregation. I share about it to show how families who are quite different join together to make a difference in our community. We all have similarities, but each family is unique. What really



When Alexa Isn't Helpful

By Ricky Smith • Baptist Press

Like many, I've been trying to bake more while spending more time around the house. More than once, I've shouted out to "Alexa" to help me convert cups to tablespoons. While convenient, it also helps me realize how often I ask questions and go to a tech source for answers. Don't you love using YouTube as a training source for all of your DIY projects? It's amazing!

What I am humbled to see is how the speed with which I turn to technology for answers eclipses the speed with which I turn to God for life answers. In questions of life, we tend to rely on ourselves and keep our questions inside. We are living in a season that certainly raises significant questions — ones we should not keep inside. The challenge is not that we have questions, but rather where we turn for answers.

John 21:1-19 describes a season in the life of Peter when he felt guilty for rejecting Jesus, lonely without a leader and hopeless without a sense of direction. Interestingly, we find him regressing to his old way of life. He instinctively went fishing again and took others with him.

We do this as well. Stress and anxiety can cause one to start smoking again or old habits to creep back into one's life. The hope is that, like Peter, Jesus is with us, preparing our next step. Look back at John 21 and notice what Jesus is doing. He is one step ahead of Peter and guiding him back in right relationship.

You can trust the presence of God regardless of your past. You can trust the peace and forgiveness of God regardless of your sin. You can trust God's purposes no matter your "now," because He desires to use your "now" to lead you into your "next."

Rather than looking at your current circumstances and swirling in questions of doubt, consider a deeper question: How is God going to use your "now" for your good and His glory? How can He use your situation to teach you more about Him and more about yourself? How can you grow in the moment?

Alexa can't help you with these questions, but I assure you the King of Glory will!

unites us is our love for God and our desire to see those around us come to know Christ. We eat together each week on Wednesday evenings and at least one Sunday a month. We sit with different individuals each time, so we get to know each other better. We spend time with the children to teach them and with adults who are younger Christians to disciple them.

"In all that we do, we grow closer to one another and closer to God. As we grow, we reach others."

Ebenezer, West Little Rock: Ruben Isturiz writes, "Last Sunday, we visited the last home to pray for them. Every home has been a great blessing to be able to carry the blessing of Num. 6:22-27.

"I praise God for His protection in January on each visit. We are in good health and, with great joy, we

continue serving God and His people. Every week, I pray to God that amid this pandemic He will introduce us to people with whom to share His Word, to whom to give a word of encouragement or to connect them with the things of God.

"I am being intentional with my new barber to invite him to seek God. I see a little interest. His name is David Romero. Please pray for him to be touched by the Holy Spirit, only God can make a change in his life.

"This week, we will be starting the Berean Group (cell) in Chenal on Monday and with the Vidal family on Wednesday. On Friday and Saturday, we will be attending the BMA conferences, which will be a great blessing.

"Thank you, once again, so much for the prayer partners in ministry. To God be the glory!"



What is America's Hope?

By Dr. John Adams, Executive Director

What is America's hope? We must claim God's promise of healing. God says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chron. 7:14). We must meet several conditions before healing can come:

- **God's people must humble themselves before a holy and righteous God.** We must become broken in our souls and spirits in order for our Father to renew us.

- **We must pray.** We must renew our daily fellowship with the Father. Our Father desires to spend time with us, but do we desire to be in His presence? Prayer is essential.

- **We must turn from our sin.** How can we do this? Dr. Adrian Rogers said

that we must "name it, nail it and forsake it." We must identify and confess our faults to the Father. John said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

- **We must not carry our guilt around.** Every believer must "nail" his sins to Christ's cross. They have been paid for by Christ's blood, and they will not be held against us. Paul declared, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14). The songwriter wrote: "My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin not in part, but the whole; is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul."

- **We must "forsake" wickedness.** When we forsake a wicked life, we

literally run from it. Paul told Timothy, "Flee also youthful lusts..." (IITim. 2:22). Are we willing to forsake the worldly lifestyle and embrace righteousness? Will we let Jesus lead us?

When these conditions are met, our Father will forgive us. He will wipe the slate clean and give us a fresh start. He will fellowship with us and bless His children again. Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). Glory! Our American and Christian hope is Jesus, God's only Son.



Mt. Vernon District Brotherhood, Mar. 8, 6:30 p.m., Central, Hughes.



Bradford Baptist Church in Bradford is seeking a full-time pastor. Resumes may be sent to the Pulpit Committee at P.O. Box 16, Bradford, Ark. 72020 or bbcbrofordar@gmail.com. For more information, call (501) 344-2414.

Immanuel Baptist Church in Nashville is seeking a full-time worship pastor/media director. Resumes may be sent to: Search Committee, P.O. Box 212, Nashville, Ark. 71852 or brent.thompson@myimmanuel.com.

Meadowside Baptist Church in Pittsburg, Kan. is seeking a full-time pastor. Contact Greg Hardister at (620) 704-6860.



A Valentine Form (Or From?) Jimmy

By Jim Elliff • Baptist Press

Valentine's Day brings back some strange childhood memories for me.

I'm especially haunted by the fact that after signing my batch of Valentines the night before the classroom exchange I would invariably inscribe some with "form Jimmy." I hated that. I knew the difference between "form" and "from," but my hand seemed destined to make this mistake at least some of the time. This was alright if the card went to someone with "cooties," but heart-wrenching if it went to some of my favorite people.

We all know that Valentine's Day is more likely designed by the card manufacturers than by God. There's nothing in the Bible about such an event. But it doesn't hurt to think about love on a cold February day. After all, it's part of the definition of God Himself.

Here is the way Jesus laid it out. He said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). But why is the commandment called new?

The initial standard of love for others was based on our love for ourselves — "Love your neighbor as yourself." But here Jesus ups the standard and makes Himself the measure of love — and this is brand new. Our love for ourselves is uneven, incomplete and sometimes distorted. But Jesus' love for people is pure, sacrificial and unconditional. There is no higher standard to be found.

Throughout the New Testament, then, you find this standard placarded before us. We are to forgive as Christ forgave, bear burdens like Christ did, give as Christ gave, accept others as Christ accepts us.

For instance, Paul said, "Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7).

It might help to place in front of your mind that person who is most disagreeable to you — that cantankerous, obnoxious, or overbearing person, or maybe that person who gets all the breaks, all the attention.

Do you accept that person like Christ accepts you? Is it possible? The source for that love is the Spirit within us. But the way that love begins to show up in the believer often corresponds to our perspective on His acceptance of us.

We are professional sinners, committing thousands of sins in our lives, so what right should we have to reject someone else? The fact that we really know better makes our sins even more grievous, but Christ accepts us unconditionally. Can we really shun someone else when we're thinking about that amazing fact?

Love doesn't mean that you like everyone equally, that you spend the same amount of time with everyone or that you give in to everybody's desires.

Love is deeper than "like." But you must not shun the difficult people. You must not be exclusive in spirit. You must welcome the difficult people from your heart as much as Christ welcomes you. You must be ready and inclusive when God brings them to you.

A friend of mine was the chaplain for the University of Arkansas football team. He serves as pastor of a church that has attracted many college students. Years ago on the practice field — at the very time he was talking with a player about Christ — up walked a man named Tommy. "Hiiiiiii, Pastor!" Tommy blurted out. Tommy was one of those people who was too loud and always had wrong timing. He was a slow learner. And he became a real irritation to this pastor.

When considering this nagging problem, God brought this potent thought to this pastor's mind: "Remember, you are my Tommy."

He got the message. Do you?

Christ accepts His family without condition. He did not accept us because we are something special. He accepted us in the same way we are to accept others, cooties and all.

And Valentine's Day — whether it is in the Bible or not — is as good a starting place for that kind of love as any other day.

Spotlight on Missions

is a column that highlights the ministries of our BMA missionaries.

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