

# BAPTIST TRUMPET

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## Celebration 2023 Boasts 400 Attendees

By Allan Eakin, Associate Editor

Celebration 2023, formerly known as the National Senior Adult Conference, featured concerts, worship music, preaching, a Sight and Sound Theater presentation, giveaways and lots of fellowship. Lifeword Executive Director Donny Parrish, who also serves as

the director of conferences for the BMA of America, kicked off the event by welcoming the 400-plus participants.

The conference featured two concerts. Redeemed Renuion! — a trio of Mike Goodwin, Rick Talley and Penny Tally — sang during the opening session. They sang at one of the first National Senior Adult Conferences and were asked by Parrish to reform the group for a reunion concert. The second musical group featured during the Wednesday morning session was The Erwins, a nationally recognized southern gospel group. Having just completed an extended recording session in Nashville, Tenn., the group arrived in Branson at 4:30 a.m. for a 9 a.m. concert. Although weary, the group ministered to Celebration 2023 participants amazingly well.

The unofficial theme of the conference was the goodness of God, which included a worship song, “Evidence” by Josh Baldwin, introduced by Drew Russell, worship pastor at First Baptist Church in Magnolia, who led worship at the conference, that included video testimonies from church members about God’s continued goodness during really difficult times. The conference speaker, Dustin Wisely, the church’s pastor, challenged the

conference participants throughout the conference from John 13-17, Jesus’ time with the disciples in the Upper Room. In each session, he encouraged attendees to love others like Jesus did. His final appeal was for Senior Adults to recognize the need and the unique opportunity they possess to invest in younger generations of adults in their own church.

The Branson show included in the event was Queen Esther at the Sight and Sound Theater. Conference participants enjoyed the dramatic presentation of the story of Esther as described in the Bible.

Several BMAA departments, sponsored ministries and two BMA of Arkansas departments served as vendors, treating guests to giveaways, information and door prizes. The *Baptist Trumpet* and Central Baptist College were the two Arkansas departments that participated.

“Wow, what a great conference! I appreciate all who came and gave us a great attendance this year. Bro. Dustin and Bro. Drew were used by the Lord to lead us into great worship sessions. And the fellowship was tremendous. Many have said that this was one of our best conferences ever, and I would have to agree,” said Parrish.

A special offering was taken during the conference to help BMA Missionary Charlie Costa and the Women’s Ministry in the Middle East. Attendees gave \$16,200 was given toward this important ministry.

Celebration 2024 is set for Nov. 12-14, at the Chateau on the Lake Hotel and Resort in Branson, Mo.



## Coming to you: The Kfarshima Center for Women

By Shadi Saad, ChangeMaker in Lebanon • BMA Global

Because knowledge and improvement are the rights of each woman, and because we’re trying, as a ministry, to reach every lady, we pushed the “place” boundaries and left the only place we have served for over 16 years. Full of experience and passion, we go out and spread our mission to every woman across our country — to take care of women in everything they may need.

We begin by helping them understand their own value through vocational training and education and by encouraging them to play a positive role in their own lives. We provided courses in many fields so ladies can run a business with what they have learned or simply have a new professional hobby. Like in the beauty field, for example, we provided courses in makeup, nail care, skin care, etc. In other areas, like manual skills, we offered art courses such as crafting, painting, candle making, soap making, cooking and much more.

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## Discipleship: The Lost Treasure of the Church

By Charlie Costa, MENA Regional Coordinator • BMA Global

I often find myself questioning whether discipleship is a necessity or a choice. Is it merely a program, a curriculum or a way of life? As I reflect on the Great Commission, I realize the numerous struggles faced by the church in the Middle East. While there is a hunger among churches and Christian organizations to expand God’s kingdom in all directions, we still grapple with theories and models of growth across the world.

Over the past six years, I have been burdened to follow Jesus’ model of discipleship — life-to-life discipleship — without undermining any other approach. I have learned essential principles of discipleship from various models, starting in 2013 when I began discipling a young man. Together, we navigated through his struggles and failures, witnessing God’s transformative grace at work within him. Witnessing the impact, I desired to see this model grow further, recognizing the great need in our communities for

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## CENTRAL BAPTIST COLLEGE PROFILE

### Central Baptist College

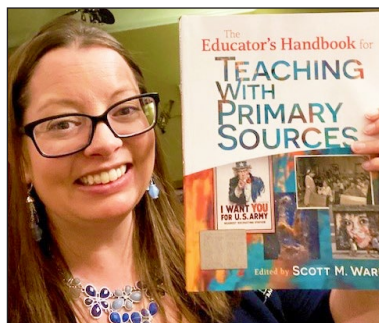
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Terry Kimbrow  
President

## CBC Faculty Member Contributes to Book

Here at CBC, we take great pride in our faculty and their impact both on campus and outside the classroom. One of our professors recently got the opportunity to contribute to a book from Teachers College Press. We are very excited to congratulate and commend Melissa Starkey for her work on this and provide a snapshot of her work at CBC and throughout her entire career.

Starkey is CBC's associate professor of Education. Before this, she was the program advisor for Social Studies at the Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. She received her B.S.E. in Social Science from Henderson State University and her M.S.E. in Teacher Leadership and EdS in Educational Leadership (History) from the University of Central Arkansas. She is currently studying for her PhD at UCA. Starkey has experience teaching history at the middle and high school levels and has taught AP and concurrent credit history courses. This has all helped prepare her for her current position at CBC, which she has held since August 2021.



Starkey has a passion for social studies and education, and her role at CBC allows her to share this enthusiasm by preparing education students for their future teaching careers. Through her position, she advocates for social studies education, prepares and supports teachers and provides professional development opportunities for teachers throughout the state.

Her recent contribution to the Teachers College Press came in a chapter she wrote for *The Educator's Handbook for Teaching with Primary Sources*. Her chapter is "More Than Words: Strategies for Close Reading with Primary Sources." This chapter is a culmination of her work and experience in the K-12, state and college levels of education. The chapter is written to help guide teachers in engaging methods of document analysis using art, objects, photos, documents and more.



## Sports News

By Erik Holth

### Men's Basketball

• **Columbia, Mo., Nov. 30** — Opening the American Midwest Conference (AMC) portion of their schedule, CBC took on the #23 ranked Cougars of Columbia College (CC) inside the Arena at Southwell Complex. CBC (8-2, 1-0 AMC) never trailed, leading by as many as 28 at one point in the second half, while fighting off a late charge to beat #23 CC (6-2, 0-1 AMC) 80-70. **Kyle Harding**

led five Mustangs in double figures scoring, while **Jonas Carlisle** paced the team in rebounding and **Devin Foster** led the way in assists. CBC shot 47% from the field and 39% from deep, while holding Columbia to 43% and 36%, respectively.

### Women's Basketball

• **Columbia, Mo., Nov. 30** — Playing for the first time in 12 days, CBC opened the AMC portion of their schedule against the Cougars of Columbia College (CC) inside the Arena at Southwell Complex. CBC (0-5, 0-1 AMC) trailed by only one after a quarter, but allowed CC (7-2, 2-0) to outscore

## WOMEN (Continued From Page 1)

This past year, IAW ministries launched our new project and began reaching many Lebanese regions. The goal of this project is to give our experiences in both beauty and art fields to as many women as possible in the different regions of our country.

Another goal is to help local churches reach a great number of ladies nearby and build deep relationships with them. So as a team, we asked a local church to welcome us and the ladies so we can give them three courses per day for over six weeks. Of course, our courses are free of charge, so ladies do not have to worry about payments, and we give to each lady all the necessary materials she needs for the course. In each meeting, we have a little break time in which we teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our vision is God's vision — to be an instrument through which God can communicate to Arabic women, showing them divine love and mercy so they can spread it in their families and societies.

Currently our team of four ladies has visited seven different regions in Lebanon, reaching almost 300 ladies. All these ladies did not just learn something new, but also knew the gospel of Christ and the importance of having God in their lives.

They were also given a Bible. The ladies we reached came from different backgrounds, so not only Christian ladies were involved, but also Druze, Muslims and other religions.

Each lady we met became a member in our family, so we're always in contact with them on social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Some ladies have begun to run their own businesses with what they learned and ended up with great success. As for the women who were unfamiliar with the churches, they became engaged in the churches' activities.

We hope that, in the near future, we'll be able to reach more and more women in different Lebanese regions so we can make a change in their lives. We also hope to make this project available in other countries as well because each woman deserves support. We believe our role is to give the two loaves and the five fish, and let the Lord use it for the glory of His name.

them 28-9 in the second before falling 90-51. **Aliya Grotjohn** led the Mustangs in scoring with eight off the bench while **Taryanna McNary** paced the squad in rebounding with four. CBC shot 33% from the field, 35% from three and 77% at the free throw line.



Dan Carson  
Director

## Student Ministry Matters

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## CHURCH VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION IDEAS

## Celebrating Your Team

In 2015, I was privileged to go through the Coaching Mastery Course with Dr. Keith Webb in the Seattle area. I learned a method of coaching others and many other great things. One of those was the great importance of celebration in our work and ministries. Unfortunately, it is something that we often neglect. We avoid it for fear of neglecting to mention someone, so we simply don't do anything. I don't think that is the solution. While pride has no place in our ministries, it is important to highlight those who help you and impact the ministry. God highlighted people for their faithfulness in His Word. We need to do the same for the men and women who serve with you as you minister to students.

One of our biggest questions about this subject is, "How?" How do we properly celebrate the work of those serving with you in student ministry or any other area of ministry? It can be a challenge, but it is one that we don't need to neglect. Here are some suggestions for making it a priority:

• **Start with private words of affirmation.** Private words of affirmation can be incredibly powerful. They can be said person to person, through text or a card/letter. Celebrating your team starts with a simple "Thank You." If you are worried about others that serve but aren't thanked becoming jealous, private words of celebration are a great approach. While electronic forms of communication are suitable, there is nothing like sending a handwritten note in the mail. During the holiday season, adding a note of thanks to a Christmas card is easy.

• **Share public words of affirmation.** While private words are an important place to start, we shouldn't stop there. If you write a weekly article for a worship guide or a monthly newsletter, highlighting your team's work is easy. The biggest challenge is simply being intentional. You can also mention your team on social media and thank them in that public arena. Celebrating your team from the platform on a Sunday is always an option as well, but it is one that you need to discuss with your lead pastor.

• **Consider small gifts of appreciation.** A small gift of kindness can really make the people on your team feel loved. Do they love coffee? A gift card to a local coffee house will make them feel cared about. Do they not like coffee? (Yes. There are some of us out there.) Then, don't give them the same gift card as you give those lovers of the bean. Try Sonic or something else that you know they love. Just remember that they need a gift card large enough to cover at least one drink. Don't give them a \$3 gift card when a drink is \$2.99 plus tax. Think about how they will spend it as you make the investment. Also, consider gifts to help them grow in their spiritual walk. Don't simply give them Jesus junk. Put some thought into what you are sharing with them.

At my coach training, I really struggled to celebrate. Their approach was cheesy to make a point during the seminar, and I wasn't comfortable with it. However, that didn't make it wrong. You may struggle to celebrate your team consistently. Use a holiday, like Christmas, to step into the process and genuinely thank them for the work that they do.

How do you celebrate your youth volunteers? Join the conversation at facebook.com/groups/StudentMinistryMattersCommunity.



## HEALTHY CHURCH SOLUTIONS

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## God Speaking to You

Paul writes the book of Titus to a young man left on the island of Crete to lead and organize the new churches that had been started there. Paul had a dual focus on starting new churches and strengthening the churches that had been established. He left Timothy in Ephesus, primarily with the same calling as Titus, and then accompanied Titus to the island, where they evangelized and disciplined new believers. Most likely, the gospel first came to the island of Crete through those who repented and received Christ on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Now, Paul was encouraging Titus in this work.

Paul and Titus had an ongoing relationship that included Titus joining him on his third missionary journey. He referred to him as “my true son in our common faith” (Titus 1:4 NIV). In Titus 2:1, Paul admonishes this young man to proclaim things consistent with sound doctrine.

Charles Swindoll stated, “How seriously do you consider your beliefs about God in the overall scheme of your life? The book of Titus reminds us that our beliefs about God impact every decision we make.” This story on the island of Crete and the book of Titus became a reality because God clearly spoke to Paul about what He had called Him to do.

Paul heard from the Lord on the road to Damascus, and then in Acts 13, the Holy Spirit told the church in Antioch to “set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” In Acts 16, Paul had a strategy for the next phase of this calling, but we are given a great illustration of how all church planting and church strengthening journeys should begin and continue — from God’s mind and heart to you. Jim Carpenter stated, “As Paul and his team traveled in Asia, revisiting churches that had been established in a previous journey,

the Holy Spirit would not allow them to continue to preach the gospel in Southern Asia.”

Jim continued, “Then they tried to travel north, but again the Holy Spirit prevented them. Perhaps a bit confused by the Spirit’s restrictions, they headed for the seacoast town of Troas, and during the night, God communicated with Paul through an amazing vision. Paul saw a man of Macedonia ‘standing and begging him to come over to Macedonia and help us.’ This is how the gospel was carried into Europe because Paul listened to the voice of the Lord.” What was Paul’s response? Acts 16:10 says, “After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

Vision comes from God’s Word and God the Holy Spirit. When Paul listened and obeyed, the gospel jumped continents and came to Europe. Churches were planted, and people became followers of Jesus because God communicated His vision to His man. God is a visionary God, and He has dreams that include an extraordinary plan for you and your church (Eph. 3:20-21). God’s better future for us and His church is meant to be discovered and expressed. This future-oriented, vision-driven direction of God is seen in Titus 1:1-2, which gives Titus this progression — faith in Christ, knowledge of truth and the hope of eternal life.

Vision is a part of being human and how God designed us. Are you planning a vacation? Are you thinking about building or buying a home? Are you completing school soon? Are you preparing for a job change or career move? Are you considering how you build up those in your church and strengthen them in discipleship and multiplication? The reality is that God designed you to be future-oriented and even

though you live in the present, you think about time, plans and the dreams in front of you. With very few exceptions, you have things you look forward to in the here and now, not only in eternity.

Vision is essential to life and ministry. It is not optional but is a gift from a gracious God to be able to look forward to something. There are a couple of things to notice about vision:

- **Vision serves your spiritual walk.** It enables you to look forward to what God wants to happen. In our training, we teach principles based on the Word of God. The Nehemiah Principle teaches that God’s vision must lead to prayerful planning, resulting in a comprehensive task list set out upon a timeline. What needs to be done, when does it need to be completed by and who is responsible for making sure it happens?

- **Vision is for all of us.** Every believer and every church should strive to hear His voice, follow His direction and obey His every command. Vision does not require some super gifting or special skill set. God has a vision for you and your church. Paul was committed to finding and following God’s vision. Your role is not to forge your own vision but to wait upon God for His. Psalm 32:8 (KJV) says, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.” This emphasizes that vision is not only for everyone but also for every day. Just as we breathe, eat and sleep, you also pray, seek Him, hope and dream.

- **Vision also brings joy and makes the journey exciting.** It enables you to look forward to something with a smile on your face, knowing God has a better plan and a better way. Knowing that all things work together for good enables us to endure the more difficult and most challenging seasons of life and ministry. Hebrews 12:2 says this about Jesus: “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...” He had a vision of what His death, burial and resurrection would accomplish. Vision makes you a better servant of the Lord. When you imagine things better, it makes you better because you have faith and hope.

- **Vision is ongoing, connecting you to God in a mysterious, supernatural way.** Vision is always moving, progressing, evaluating and recalculating. Vision is a never-ending, ongoing conversation between you and the Holy Spirit. God’s vision is intimately connected to the needs of real people. The vision Paul saw was of a man begging for help. His purposes and ways are often mysterious, but it’s clear His heartbeat

See SPEAKING, Page 8

## Just Thinking...

By Dr. Tom Mitchell

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## Thanksgiving at Christmas

I was just thinking about the “holiday season.” Our nation has recently observed a time of thanksgiving in step with what our forefathers began 400 years ago. While secularism has impacted the perspective, showing gratitude for God’s blessings remains the focus. Of course, many reject the idea of such a holiday!

### Transitioning the Season

We have less than three weeks until Christmas day. I think, though, that in the days ahead, Christians should continue the attitude of gratitude into the Christmas season. I propose there are several reasons we should express our thanks to God this season. I share with you only three of many:

- **Provision to Position** — May each of us realize that from God’s gift of provision that we focus on at Thanksgiving, we can transition to a focus on our position. We once were on the outside looking in, but because of our salvation, we have been placed on the inside — **inside** God’s family. Paul reminded the Ephesian church of that truth: “Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:12-13 NIV).

- **Condemnation to Celebration** — Every believer knows they stood condemned before trusting Christ. Not only were we in awful positions, but we faced a horrible future. Yet when Christ came to live a sinless life, die on a cruel cross and leave behind an empty tomb, those who believed in Him left behind condemnation and were given a reason for celebration. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:1-2). That, dear friends, is our reason for celebration and thanksgiving at this season and every day we live!

- **Discouragement to Delight** — The knowledge of being in a bad position and facing God’s condemnation can certainly affect a person’s feelings — clouds of discouragement can set in. That then sets off changes of emotions — doubt, disappointment, delusion and even disgust. However, to the person whose position is in Christ, one who celebrates the gift of everlasting life, the Holy Spirit changes discouragement to rejoicing — delight if you please! The psalmist wrote: “When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy” (Psalm 94:19).

### Christmas is a Time for Thanksgiving

While to some, Thanksgiving has passed, it hasn’t. The national holiday has, but the need for believers to give thanks has not. When Christians focus on why God sent His son to be born in a cattle stall, die on the cross and rise again — that is the real reason during the season to express thanks to God who gave us His Gift.

“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (I Peter 1:8-9).

This Christmas season, may all of us give thanks for what the Heavenly Father has done in giving us Jesus. “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift” (II Cor. 9:15).

### A Personal Note

I wish my faithful and loving wife, Karen, a very Happy 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We were married at Antioch Baptist Church in Conway on Saturday, Dec. 7, 1968.



## Key Cost Areas for Estimating Future Retirement

By Steve Crawley, PhD, Executive Director • BMA Financial

The ultimate variable in knowing how much you need to save for your future funded ministry — *i.e., retirement* — is having a good grasp on your future expenses.



Daniel May, a Certified Financial Planner, shares about **five key cost areas to focus on when estimating your living expenses in retirement:**

- **Healthcare** — According to Fidelity, an average single person retiring in 2023 will need approximately \$157,500 saved, after taxes, to cover all their medical expenses in retirement (for a married couple, the number is simply double, \$315,000). This estimate assumes you retire at age 65 and are eligible for Medicare coverage. More importantly, it does not cover health-related expenses like most dental services and long-term care.

- **Long-term care** — Paying for long-term care can potentially be one of the costliest expenses in retirement. The average stay in a care facility is around 22 months, and, depending on the amenities and level of care provided, the average cost ranges from around \$5,000 to \$10,000 per month. If you do the math, long-term care could easily end up costing you hundreds of thousands of dollars in retirement. What's so frustrating about estimating long-term care is just how drastic differences in costs can be. It is estimated that one-third of 65-year-olds today will never need long-term care, however the rest will; and 20% of all 65-year-olds will need care for longer than five years.

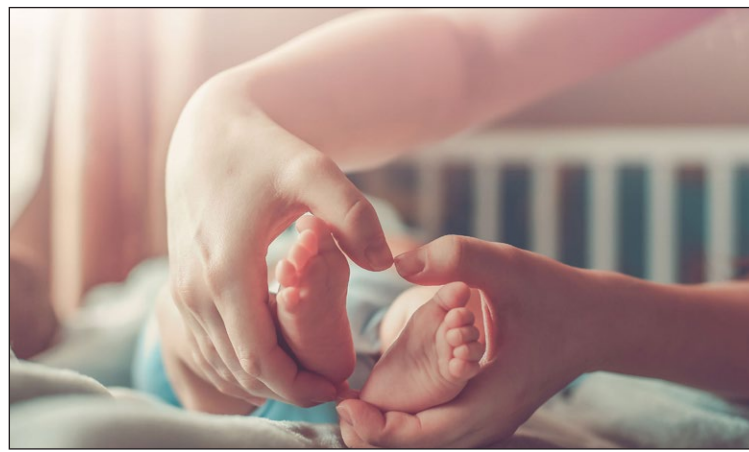
- **Housing** — We like for everyone to enter retirement debt-free, but you may be renting, and even if you own your home, you have other housing-related expenditures. These shouldn't be extremely difficult to estimate if you have an idea of where you'll be living in retirement. If you own your home, housing costs are even more fixed and increase only as your property tax, utilities, homeowner's insurance and other housing expenses go up. Historically, rents increase about the same percentage as inflation overall.

- **Taxes** — Just how much will your assets be taxed in retirement? Will your Social Security income be subject to taxation? If most of your assets are in pre-tax retirement accounts such as an IRA, what you end up with, after taxes, could be significantly less. Conversely, if a large percentage of your assets are in tax-free accounts like Roth IRAs and HSAs, your taxes in retirement may be very low. If you are participating in the BMA America 403(b)(9) retirement plan and are a licensed or ordained minister, **you qualify for tax-free housing allowance distributions** that can greatly minimize your tax liability.

- **Other living expenses** — Housing, healthcare, long-term care and taxes are some of the greatest "unknown" expenses in retirement, but there are plenty more you need to be thinking about. They can vary greatly from person to person: How much do you want to travel in retirement? Do you plan to eat out often at restaurants or do you like cooking at home? Do you have hobbies (or anticipate developing hobbies) that might be costly? Do you want to leave money to relatives or charitable causes?

Estimating what your expenses will be in retirement is daunting, more so the further away you are or the longer you plan to be retired. Let us know how we can help on your retirement plan journey! Read the full article, *How To Estimate Future Expenses in Retirement* at [fyi.moneyguy.com/p/how-to-estimate-future-expenses-in](http://fyi.moneyguy.com/p/how-to-estimate-future-expenses-in).

**Do you have questions?** We are here to help you with this subject as so much more, contact us today at [bmafinancial.org/contact](http://bmafinancial.org/contact) or (844) 262-8637.



## FC Urges: Don't Deny Funding To Pregnancy Resource Centers

By Jerry Cox, President • Family Council

Family Council (FC) submitted public comments to the federal government opposing a federal rule change that would prevent pro-life pregnancy resource centers from receiving federal funds under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Under TANF, states receive blocks of federal tax dollars they can award to organizations and programs that:

- Assist needy families so children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives,
- End the dependence of needy

parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage;

- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies;
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families; and

Currently, some states award TANF funds to pregnancy resource centers and similar organizations because these organizations help meet some or all of TANF's purposes. However, in October, the Biden Administration quietly rolled out a rule change that could stop states from giving these federal funds to pregnancy centers.

Family Council submitted formal comments to the U.S.

## Revivals

**Pine Crest, Fordyce, Dec. 10-13; 5:30 p.m. Sun., 7 p.m. Mon.-Wed.; Jim Moss, evangelist; Everette Smith, pastor.**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Gospel Concert, Dec. 10;** featuring By His Grace; 10 a.m. Sunday School; 11 a.m. Worship; noon meal; 1:30 p.m. concert; Russell, Russell.

**Christmas Concert, Dec. 14, 7 p.m.;** featuring Master's Voice; Landmark, England.

**Christmas Concert, Dec. 24, 11 a.m.;** featuring Dylan Brock; Center Grove, Cord.

**CBC Homecoming, Jan. 12-13;** Central Baptist College, Conway.

**World Missions Day, Feb. 25.**

**CBC Gala, March 1;** featuring Dr. Jack Graham; Antioch, Conway.

**BMA of America Annual Mtg., April 16-18, 2024;** Chateau on the Lake, Branson.

**SOAR 2024, July 3-5;** Live! By Loews Convention Center; Arlington, Texas.

**Student Ministry Workers Retreat; Sept. 14;** Central Baptist College, Conway.

**BMA of Arkansas Mtg., Nov. 7-8;** Central Baptist College, Conway.

## Opportunities For Service

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

Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families opposing the rule change and urging the Biden Administration not to make blanket policies excluding pregnancy resource centers from the TANF program.

As Family Council's official comments note, the federal government is trying to withhold funding from these good organizations simply because they help women after they become pregnant rather than focusing on pregnancy prevention. The truth is many pregnancy resource centers provide everything from ultrasounds and pregnancy tests to maternity clothes, diapers and formula — typically free of charge. There is no doubt these organizations provide actual, measurable assistance to women, children and families. The rule change would make it more difficult for these families to find and receive assistance in their communities. It's ridiculous for the Biden Administration to rewrite its rules to exclude these good organizations from the TANF program.

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# Spotlight On Missions

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## Brandon & Brittney Lingle • Thailand

Recently, we went up into the mountains to Jen's village. Here we are in their tribal dress. It was a joy to witness a wedding there and spend time with friends who are like family to us. Here are some recent highlights from our lives and ministry:



• **Rebuilding a Member's House** — A dear sister in our church hadn't told us for about two years that part of her house was unlivable. After some of the members and I went to look at it, we decided we wanted to help tear it down and rebuild it. Seeing the church come together to support her and her family was good. After a few months, the house was finished. P'Pay (church member and house owner) asked us to make a sign and hang it on the house. The sign said in Thai, "Count Your Blessings." I'll never forget her tears of joy as we were singing praises that day. It was hot and crowded, but it was such a precious moment. It's a joy to be the church.

• **Missing Judah — Celebrating His One-Year Birthday** — Our fourth child, Judah, was born Sept. 2, 2022. Even though he lived only five hours, he changed our lives forever. We celebrated his birthday together as a family. A sweet family from our church came over that night and sang hymns with us. It was the same songs we sang at Judah's funeral. We are thankful for God's grace and comfort during this time. The kids won't forget him either, and we look forward to the day we can see him again.

• **Church Attending a Wedding Together** — A couple who has been regularly attending our church recently got married. Being with our people and celebrating God's good

gift of marriage is always special!

• **Going to a School with Orphans** — We visited a school with some orphans to stock up on some snacks before we went to the school. From what I could understand, it's like a boarding school, and 80% of the kids are orphans. It was a very hot day, but getting to know these kids was worth it. We ate together, shared stories and played games. We hope to go back to visit them soon as a church.

The highlight for me was when each group formed a line in front of their leader, then we were given the opportunity to talk to each of them individually and give them a "blessing." One little girl stood out to me because she was crying

when I got to her. I could see sorrow in her eyes. I started to share the good news of the hope in Jesus with her. It was easy to fall in love with these kids. I really hope to go back and see them soon.

• **Baby John?** — Will that be his name? That's what we keep calling him. He is due around Christmas time. Brittney was diagnosed with gestational diabetes, so she has been having to watch her diet. She's doing great, and baby J#5 seems to be doing well. We are excited to see him! Joy says she can't wait to kiss him.

• **Sharing the Gospel** — I (Brandon) started physical therapy again recently. (Some of you know I have battled with chronic back pain for years. Nothing new or alarming.) Instead of driving myself, I have been taking taxis whenever I can to talk to the drivers. Recently, I witnessed to a man around my age. I was so

excited he asked for a Bible when he dropped me off at my house. He also got our church contact information. He seemed to be in awe about our Creator when we were talking. I told him he could know more about Him because He has made Himself known through His Word.

Please join us in praying for the following: Brittney and the baby, Jay (new intern for the church plant) and Tee (from the village of the new church plant), as we plan to move to an area that has very few Christians and churches and for unity and growth among North Bangkok Church members.

Join us in praising the Lord for leading us to a new area and people to go with us. We also praise God for being with us in our times of suffering and being everything we need. May many more come to know His grace and goodness.



• **Visit From the Missions Office** — We enjoyed some company all the way from Arkansas. John and Holly Meriweather (our regional director and his wife) came with Ted Thomas to visit us and see and learn more about the ministry here. The highlight was taking them to the location we plan to move to next year to start a new church.



## Arkansas BMA Pastor Dies

Richard Martin Britt, 75, of Magnolia, passed away Nov. 27. He surrendered to the ministry on April 9, 1961, at First Baptist Church in Taylor at the age of 13 and was ordained on June 13, 1968, when he was called to pastor Spring Branch in Taylor, which he also came back to pastor later in his ministry. Other pastorates include Antioch West, Magnolia; Ridgecrest, Jonesboro; and First, Emerson.

He was also a dedicated teacher, coach and administrator at many public schools in south Arkansas and served as the superintendent for Columbia Christian School, a ministry of First, Magnolia. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Education from Southern Arkansas University, a Master of Science in Education from East Texas State University at Commerce and a Doctor of Education from Texas A&M University at Commerce. Dr. Britt served six years as a Central Baptist College Board of Trustees member in the early 2000s.

Survivors include: his wife of 57 years, Melba Britt; two sons, Bill (Michelle) Britt of Magnolia and Brad (Melissa Rhea) Britt of Conway; and eight grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Dec. 1 at Lewis Funeral Home Chapel, with David Watkins officiating. Interment followed at Harmony Cemetery under the direction of Lewis Funeral Home, Inc.

Memorial donations may be made to Southern Arkansas University Foundation, P.O. Box 9174, Magnolia, Ark. 71754.

## DISTRICT CALENDAR

**Jonesboro Dist. Brotherhood**, Dec. 12; Cathedral, Jonesboro.

**Mt. Vernon Youth in Harvest**, Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m.; Fourth St., West Helena.

**United Dist. WMA**, Jan. 6, 10 a.m.; Denver Street, Greenwood.



## The Epic Foundation Of the Story of Truth

This is my 98<sup>th</sup> article — I'm shocked you guys have let me stick around. Most of those articles dealt with the "stand firm" part of Stand Firm & Live Epic, so it's probably about time to touch on the "live epic" part. The two aren't separate, but it's another way to look at the same biblical truth.

I've become rather partial to the word "Epic" — we relaunched Turner Street Baptist in Springdale with the name Epic Church, and the new church plant in Pea Ridge is called Epic Life. In my head, at least, I view the word epic as dealing with something big or incredible, and it carries the idea of an adventure and journey. The idea is that following Jesus is a big, incredible journey — the most significant endeavor that can be tackled in life. When using epic in the church name, it was never meant to refer to the church, but rather the epic story of truth we proclaim and the epic journey of following Christ we're invited into.

I have found in helping people stand firm, helping them see how "big" the Bible and Christianity are, helps them hold on. This is especially true with children and youth raised in Christian homes and churches. After several years of research and application, my leading conclusion for curbing the number of Christian children and students leaving the faith is that we give them a bigger story. We don't have to make the story bigger, for it is that on its own. Unfortunately, we don't tell the full story nor present the living out of an all-encompassing faith in following Jesus.

The prophecy and the Israel articles I've written aren't meant to be a separate section of the Bible or Christianity; they're just parts

of the story we often leave out. Everyone truly wants to give their lives to something that matters, and that is bigger than themselves, but somehow, we have let the world show that saving the planet and whales are of greater value than actively following Jesus.

Over the next several articles, we're going to walk through the epic story of the Bible, just as we do in our foundational Bible Study for Epic Life called the Live Epic Dare. However, it is important to remember just how epic the Bible is. There is nothing in literature that compares to the archaeological evidence and support to the validity of the Bible — nothing.

The Bible itself claims to be the Word of God. In II Timothy, Paul wrote that Scripture is God-breathed. Peter writes in his first epistle that the biblical writers were "...carried along by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21 NIV). Nearly 2,000 times, the Bible directly uses the phrase "thus say the Lord." We often say the Bible is God's Word to the point that it can become routine for us, but we make such a huge claim when we say it is God's Word — one I undoubtedly agree with. Even more so, when one examines how it has been supernaturally written and preserved, it really leaves no doubt.

Miraculously, the Bible was written over 1,500 years by 40 different authors. There was no general editor matching up the writings, either. I've written a few books with others, and it is an impossible task to match content with just two people living in the same time period and in the same similar walks of life, but not only did these 40 authors spread out across 1,500 years, they came from all walks of life. They were on

three different continents and wrote in one of three languages. Yet, the Bible matches together flawlessly.

We do not have the original copies of the Bible, whether that be the parts written on clay tablets, papyrus or animal hide. This may shake some people up, but we must also realize that we do not possess any other ancient writings we were taught in school or that have shaped our society. Yet, from all the other writings we take as fact today, there is no comparison to the number of ancient manuscripts we possess. Until the advent of the printing press in the mid-1400s, every literary work was recopied by hand. That is how books were preserved. As one copy wore out, scribes copied another. If there were multiple copies, there had to be multiple ones copied by scribes. Like how books are reprinted today, additional copies were done by hand. It is those "reprints" we have as evidence today.

When it comes to ancient writings, there is no comparison to the amount of ancient manuscripts of ancient books. Here are the top five:

- New Testament — 24,000 ancient manuscripts
- Old Testament — 14,000 ancient manuscripts
- Homer's Iliad — 643 ancient manuscripts
- Writings of Demosthenes — 200 ancient manuscripts
- Writings of Aristotle — 49 ancient manuscripts
- Bonus — Writings of Plato — 7 ancient manuscripts

This blows me away. Our understanding of history and philosophy of the Greeks come from Homer, Aristotle and Plato, yet there are so few manuscripts in comparison to the Bible. This alone should show how supernatural the Bible truly is and how reliable it is.

Another way of examining the reliability of ancient writings is by looking at which has the shortest span from the reproduced copy we have to the original writings. Here are the top five:

- New Testament — 25 years from original to oldest copy that still exists
- Old Testament — 200 years from original
- Writings of Livy — 400 years from original
- Homer's Iliad — 500 years from the original
- Writings of Pliny the Younger — 750 years from original
- Bonus — Writings of Plato — 1,200 years from original
- Bonus — Writings of Aristotle — 1,400 years from original

Regarding which manuscripts are the oldest, only a copy of Homer's Iliad is older than the Old Testament and New Testa-



## Music in Church

With Christmas right around the corner, hymnals are being directed to the sacred music of the Advent season. My family had been jamming to festive music long before it was reasonable. Fortunately, we have evaded the debate about when it is genuinely acceptable to start celebrating my favorite season by limiting it to our car, home and office. Now that we are securely into December, we can safely discuss how Christmas music keeps my gears spinning.

• **There's deep theology in Christmas music.** As is the case with all music, sacred and secular, not all Christmas songs are created equal. I'm confident Mary knew. Contrary to "Away in a Manger's" celebration of Christ's divinity, I know He was also fully human and that the Bible is silent on whether or not the infant Messiah cried. Despite some exceptions, most traditional Christmas music proclaims profound truths about God's nature, work and plan that the Bible affirms. "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" is one of my favorites. Try unpacking "God and sinners reconciled," and you'll realize why.

Theology in corporate singing gets me excited about serving in ministry. I know only 20% of the sermons I prepare and preach are retained by those who hear them. There are some Sundays I am thankful for this reality. Contracting an earworm from the church's gathering and time of praise is a long-lasting byproduct of singing together. Knowing that the truth about God is being replayed in an individual's brain is a salve to my worrying pastoral heart.

• **Christmas music prepares the way for gospel conversations.** The Scrooges that insist Christmas music should be limited to an "appropriate time of the year" usually appeal to the persistent presence of Christmas music wherever they go as their justification. More than any other time of year, we'll surely hear Christmas music playing over the speakers in our shopping centers, restaurants and public squares. If the humbugs could convince me that sacred music being prevalent was a bad thing, I'd be tempted to join their cause.

In 2021, I started keeping a record of gospel presentations and spiritual conversations on my phone to keep myself accountable and more effectively follow up with people I met. Just looking at the data, in the past two years, I have had three times as many opportunities to present the gospel and five times as many spiritual conversations in December compared to the average of every other month throughout the year. The same is only just beginning for 2023. That alone is enough to keep my gears spinning.

• **Christmas music evokes the past and points to the future.** There is an undeniable nostalgic element to Christmas music. People from all backgrounds have memories tied to various melodies and lyrics from the holiday season. The best Christmas music does more than draw upon personal memories, though; it reminds us of God's purpose in sending the Son to dwell among man. One of the reasons we should avoid Christmas music with vanilla lyrics is to keep the main thing at the center of our worship.

The season of hope is not limited to reminding us of the first advent. It points us to awaiting and anticipating the second advent that is yet to come. When memories of my past trials and failures are conjured to the forefront, I'm grateful for the promise of a future in Christ. My gears keep spinning when I hear Christmas music as I rejoice in the promise of seeing Christ return to this earth. Christmas music has a particular propensity to cause me to realize that my life is not removed from the miraculous events of Scripture. In the present chapter, I'm among those waiting for His glorious return, and I have work entrusted to me while I wait.

ment copies. However, that copy is still 500 years from when Homer wrote the original.

The Bible is truly miraculous. It should show us that we belong to something more epic than we often think when considering the

supernatural composition, unity and preservation of the Bible.

— Jake is a state missionary and would love to share about the work in Northwest Arkansas and encourage your church to stand firm. (standfirmministries.com)



**BMA OF ARKANSAS**  
**STATE MISSIONS**

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Visit with Dear Friends

I was privileged to share the Word with Big Creek Valley Baptist Church, south of Jonesboro. It was good to see Jimmy Thompson and the rest. This was the home church of Missionary Bill Gibson, who served our association most of his life. It was also good to see his dear wife.

From Our Missionaries

**Misión Creciendo en Cristo (Growing in Christ), North Little Rock:** Juan Carlos Posadas writes, "This Sunday, we had the now-traditional party "The Birthday of Jesus."After an advertising campaign through the Community Assistance Program's network of contacts and social media, we managed to gather 55 children and 6 parents to share the gospel with them.

"We had been praying for this event for a couple of months in our Friday meetings. During the week, the volunteers shopped, cleaned the building, decorated it and prepared for the given day.

"Sixteen volunteers were present and worked in harmony so that the objective of the meeting was fulfilled, and the Lord was glorified with our service. We are clear that the next generations will honor the Lord if we teach them to do it now, while they are children.

"Unfortunately, I could not be there as I am recovering from recurrent inguinal hernia surgery. But at the morning service, I was able to attend, we had the Lord's table and began a series of studies around the events surrounding the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, based on the book of Luke. On this occasion, we studied the annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist.

"I loved that in the service we included the first Christmas songs.

It brings back such beautiful memories. Christmas is a very special time, and in my family, we live it intensely. Please pray for this work in North Little Rock. We made a lot of contact with the community in December, taking advantage of the Christmas atmosphere. Pray that God will guide us, and we will do everything to expand His kingdom, honoring and glorifying Him."

**Ebenezer, West Little Rock:** Ruben Isturiz writes, "An Ecuadorian arrived in Ebenezer this week. His name is Henry, and he had to flee his country because of drug trafficking threats to his life. He was a lawyer in his country and visited Ebenezer for the first time. I had the opportunity to speak with him after our Celebration service. We talked for an hour, and I see in his life a spiritual thirst. Pray that we can present the gospel to him and that God will prepare his heart.

"On Sunday afternoon, I had the opportunity to pray for the opening of a business. In the group of Venezuelans that we met, I visited with Vanesa. She has intentions of opening a clothing business in Plaza Frida, a mall of Hispanic stores. When she found out that I was a missionary, she asked me to pray at the opening of her store. It was an excellent opportunity to get to know the Hispanic community a little more and build bridges of friendship.

"I ask you to pray for Neymar Lopez, a child of our congregation who was diagnosed with leukemia. It is a new challenge of faith that we have as a congregation. This week has been a constant in my prayers. My prayer is for the family, for peace, for their faith not to waver, and, above all, that God be glorified.

"Thank you, brothers, for your support for the missions. The glory is God's!"

**Faith Chapel, Flippin:** Johnny Shew writes, "We had another great week at Faith Chapel! We had several families out traveling this week, but we still had a very good number, with five first-time visitors, and four of them were kids! So, even though some of our kids were out, their class was still full, and we do love having them.

"This time of year is so busy for everyone, with so many traveling, it is hard to get everyone together for a special fellowship, but we are planning a Thanksgiving/Christmas fellowship on Dec. 16. We are looking forward to just being able to get together and enjoy each other's company in a relaxed atmosphere, praising God for what He has blessed us with. He has so blessed us!

"The refrigerant lines are complete inside, so we are ready for dry-wall. This is one of the few things we are not doing ourselves, and our contractor is extremely busy. We know he will get us scheduled and completed as soon as possible; please pray that he will. The Lord will work it out, and we know that!

"I want to thank you all for your support and especially for your prayers. Please continue. God is

answering them and blessing us in so many ways! I stand amazed in His presence."

**Faith Journey, Benton:** Bryan Clay writes, "The holidays are fast approaching, and we are feeling the Christmas spirit at Faith Journey. We look forward to gathering a few gifts for several folks at the facilities we are ministering to. We hope to provide some warm, cozy outfits and a few special things they will enjoy during the season.

"Faith Journey has the privilege of coming alongside one of the local nursing facilities we visit and helping them begin their own prayer ministry within their building. The residents desire to be a part of praying for others who are living there, but also want to expand to pray for their local community. They feelled to continue serving the Lord, and praying for others is a way to show God's love to others in their lives."

**Misión Gracia Soberana (Sovereign Grace), NWA:** Roberto Marcelletti writes, "We are very excited to inform you about the work we are doing in the cities of Rogers, Springdale and Pea Ridge. How beautiful to see people come to Christ and hear their testimonies of transformation as it inspires us and fills us with joy.

"On Dec. 3, we celebrated our anniversary — our first year as a mission. The brothers were very cooperative and committed to organizing the anniversary activities, decorating, feeding and serving guests. We were visited by Michael Hight, who preached. We were also visited by Dana Williams and his wife, Kimberly, Wes Hulvey and Tommy Ward and his wife, Karen

from Epic Church. Following the sermon of Bro. Mike from Luke 9:59-62 on commitment in service to the Lord, guest pastors prayed for us and sang birthdays. We then went into the fellowship hall to end a very special time with a meal and fellowship."

**Epic Life, Pea Ridge:** Jake McCandless writes, "The Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons are proving to be challenging, but the special events in town allow for lots of opportunities to build and continue connections in the community.

"Our groups continue, with one group studying John and the other working through our foundational discipleship tracks.

"This Sunday, we will have our December Worship Night. Pray for us as we make plans for the first of the year and reach out to potential leaders."

**El Faro #2 Hispanic Mission, Cabot/Jacksonville:** Michael Hight writes, "This week has been a busy one. We continue to make contacts and prepare for an outreach on Dec. 17.

"The weekend was a special blessing as I celebrated the first anniversary of Gracia Soberano in Springdale. I had a wonderful time preaching in Spanish and English, and then we shared an excellent meal provided by the mission.

"Roberto and Patti are doing a wonderful job as missionaries. Please continue to pray for them. There is a church that will vote to extend an arm since their mother church is closing. All this is in the works, and I am working hard to make sure they don't lose any momentum in the process of transition."



(L/R) Dana & Kimberly Williams, Wes Hulvey, Patty & Roberto Marcelletti, Michael Hight and Karen & Tommy Ward.



Misión Creciendo en Cristo (Growing in Christ), North Little Rock hosts "The Birthday of Jesus" celebration.



Misión Gracia Soberana (Sovereign Grace), NWA celebrates one year as a mission.



## Middle East Missions... From My Perspective

By Charlie Costa, MENA Regional Coordinator •BMA Global

### Perception

Okay, let's start from the beginning: Missionary life is fun. Missionaries live in exotic places far away. They eat exotic foods, visit fun places and at the end, they tell us they are suffering for Jesus. Or are they?

### Reality

How about reality — living with no electricity, no running water, no proper bank services, long lines for gasoline and bread? To make matters worse, trash bags litter the streets. This is the reality for many missionaries around the world and especially for some in the Middle East.

Are we looking for pity? No. We are looking for prayer. The prayer we need is a prayer of intercession: entering the throne room of God to intercede on our behalf. This is a serious undertaking instead of the generic "God bless our missionaries" prayer. The prayer we need is for **perseverance**. Under such circumstances, it is easy to give up, to throw in the towel. It is easy to feel tired and unappreciated. Then I am reminded of William Carey, the father of modern missions, who was ridiculed, and then, after going to the mission field, he had to wait seven years for his first convert while losing members of his family to illness in the process.

The prayer we need is for **protection**. We marvel at the number of times God has sent his angels to protect us on the mission field. I can almost assure you that the number we know of is much less than the number we don't. Danger and risk are part and parcel of our work. Gunfights flare up in seconds for unknown reasons and from unknown assailants. These dangers don't have to be for the sake of Christ as much as they are for the sinfulness of man. Yet dangers persist and can be extremely cruel if they are for the

sake of Jesus. It subjects our families to untold dangers.

The prayer we need is for **provision**. Yes, money matters. Our work on the field cannot be done without the funds made available through the churches by faithful people. Supporting workers on the field is important to get the harvest. This may take years of persistent work and therefore support. There is no room for "giving fatigue." Serious mission-giving is intentional and purposeful. It is not controlling but requires accountability. While projects and ministries are the target, the needs of the missionary and his family are not ignored.

### Mission Giving

Are we planning for growth? If we are not, we have little faith. The saying goes, "If you are praying for rain, you'd better take an umbrella with you when you walk outside the house." Churches and individuals tend to keep their giving at the same level, not taking into account the potential growth of the ministry. Think again. Is it a matter of faith, not funds?

### Tidbits from the field

Did you know that, in the last 30 years, the Lord blessed BMA Global with 36 churches planted around the Middle East?

Did you know that, in the last year, more than 300 people were baptized?

Did you know that we have four new church plants in progress and one church just launched as a fully functioning Baptist church?

Did you know that God is still at work in the Middle East despite all of the adverse circumstances?

Did you know we need **you** to join our team?

### Mission Leadership

Luke Skywalker famously said, "If it's not too much of a cliché,

take me to your leader. If it is too much of a cliché, take me anyway." (Luke Skywalker and the Shadows of Mindor, 2008).

Earlier this year we saw leadership at its finest from the president of BMA Global. It was not leading from behind or by proxy but from the front and by design. Weeks of preparations went into the lengthy bike ride Dr. John David Smith took along the Natchez Trace Parkway to raise funds and awareness for our work. I wonder how many will respond to such faithfulness and commitment. Never in the history of the BMA have we seen such selflessness. What I love about it is that the funds raised will go to an endowment that will fund church planters (ChangeMakers) for years to come. That's forward-thinking leadership. That's a leader I want to take our churches and pastors to.

## TREASURE

(Continued From Page 1)

dedicated followers of Christ who are willing to work with individuals. They should not be overwhelmed by numbers but ready to invest in others and embrace the cost of life-to-life discipleship.

Discipleship is fundamentally a relationship and a life journey where we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, transforming us to become more like our Lord Jesus Christ. What a privilege and honor it is to be called Jesus' disciples!

As the years passed, spanning from six years ago to today, I have had the opportunity to disciple many individuals and share my vision with them. Personally experiencing God's grace and love, they have come to understand the purpose of their existence and now live in accordance with their faith in their daily decision making. They have also felt a calling to help others within their network

by engaging in the same discipleship process. By God's grace, I now witness a second generation of disciples who are living for God's glory. These individuals have established a genuine relationship with him and are partnering with God in making new disciples. To date, the disciples I have had the privilege of mentoring have collectively impacted the lives of 225 individuals.

Six months ago, we took a leap of faith and rented a place in Kfarshima, located in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon. We spent time crafting our vision, mission statement, core values and action plan. Three months ago, we commenced weekly meetings with a group of disciples comprising 25 individuals from Muslim and Druze backgrounds. Our intention is to form a community of Jesus' disciples who are committed to developing a personal, deep and intimate relationship with God, resulting in a daily partnership to advance His kingdom. Together, we study the core values of such a community, apply them in our families and navigate the challenges of everyday life.

Our mission encompasses raising awareness about discipleship among churches, believers and new disciples. We aim to create new discipleship relationships with individuals from diverse religious backgrounds, both believers and non-believers alike. Furthermore, we seek to model, equip, send and provide ongoing support to disciple makers, all with the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission.

To accomplish our mission, we have begun presenting workshops and training sessions that address disciple-making movements with various ministry groups. We plan to expand these efforts in the future.

Additionally, we are focusing on reaching the younger generation with the gospel through sports. One of our disciples is leading a soccer academy and making a positive impact on the lives of more than 130 children and teenagers, as well as their parents. We see significant growth potential in this area, as one-on-one discipleship meetings and gatherings of 30 teenagers have been initiated to address inner development, such as teamwork and character building.

Our goal is to establish stronger connections with the surrounding communities, utilizing the center

## SPEAKING

(Continued From Page 3)

is for wayward people, living in the darkness of their sin. He wants you to reach them, and He has a plan for you to help. What is your vision to reach the people in your neighborhood and your zip code?

The Lord communicates His vision to His leader. Whether through a startling vision, a quiet inner voice or a gradual, settled sense of conviction, the Lord wants to communicate His vision for your church, and He wants to communicate it to you.



**Antioch East, Magnolia** added two by baptism; Ron Owen, pastor.

**Bethlehem, Greenbrier** gained three by letter; Dr. Martin Jameson, pastor.

**First, Cave Springs** received one by baptism; Michael Battenfield, pastor.

**Old Hickory, Hattiesville** reports one by statement; Blake Martin, pastor.

**Russell, Russell** witnessed one by baptism; Randy Zinn, pastor.

**Zion, Fordyce** welcomed one by letter and one by statement; Scott Smith, pastor.

in Kfarshima as a space for fellowship and holistic support — physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Lebanon, as you are aware, is currently facing severe economic crises, with families and individuals struggling to meet their basic needs. Consequently, we are eager to initiate a weekly service where we provide two meals for 25 individuals. Through this act of service, we aim to demonstrate the love of Christ, initiate discipleship relationships and repeatedly witness God's transformative work in their lives, as well as in their families and communities.

As Jesus quoted from the book of Isaiah when He began His ministry, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"* (Luke 4:18-19 ESV). Our prayer is to have a similar ministry, bringing glory to our beloved God.



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