

# The Missouri Missionary Baptist

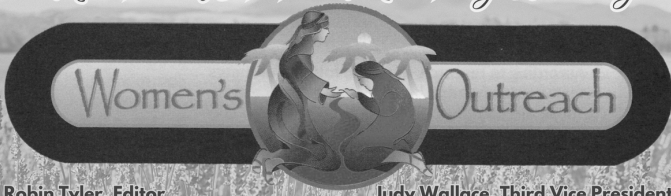
“Holding Forth the Word of Life” – Philippians 2:16

Volume LXXXVI

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Issue No. 1

*National Women's Missionary Auxiliary*



Women's Outreach

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From a recent post on the National WMA blog  
(<https://www.nationalwma.org/blogs/>)

## Hope For the New Year

Susie Edgar

What is your plan compared to God's plan for the new year?

Our world could use a little uplifting. A little more kindness, a little more compassion, love, understanding. Shall I go on? We all have our lists.

The Lord's plan for you: *My son, attend to my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them and health to all their flesh.* (Proverbs 4:20-22)

The Lord has His lists (promises) of what to do in the new year...

- *Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, Fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance even God with a recompense; He will come and save you.* (Isaiah 35:4)

- *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.* (Isaiah 41: 10)

- *But now thus saith the Lord and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.* (Isaiah 43:1)

- *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.* (Isaiah 43: 2)

- *I lift mine eyes to the hills; from where does my help come. My help comes from the Lord, maker of Heaven and Earth.* (Psalms 121:1-2) He does not say, “My pain comes from the Lord,” or “My tragedy comes from the Lord.” He says, “My help comes from the Lord.”

Our question will not be Job's question: “God why are you doing this to me?” but rather, “God, see what is happening to me? Can you help me?”

• See BLOG page 6 •

## Ponderings on the Beginning

Don Burke

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place....* (Psalm 8:3)

I'm out on the shooting range, popping clay targets with my trusty Remington shotgun. With a fresh shell in the chamber I pull the trigger, the gun responds with a resounding “Bang!” and hundreds of BB-like shot are propelled out into the sky. Then within seconds those same shot pellets lie scattered over several yards before me as gravity dragged them from their flight and pulled them crashing to the ground.

I'm struck by the comparison between the shotgun blast and the “big bang” we're told started the earth and the universe it is a part of. (Sure, it's not a direct comparison, but it's close enough on the major details.) Like the #7 lead shot in my Remington, we're told that something triggered a “bang,” and stars and planets and moons and everything else were propelled outward into a previously non-existing universe.

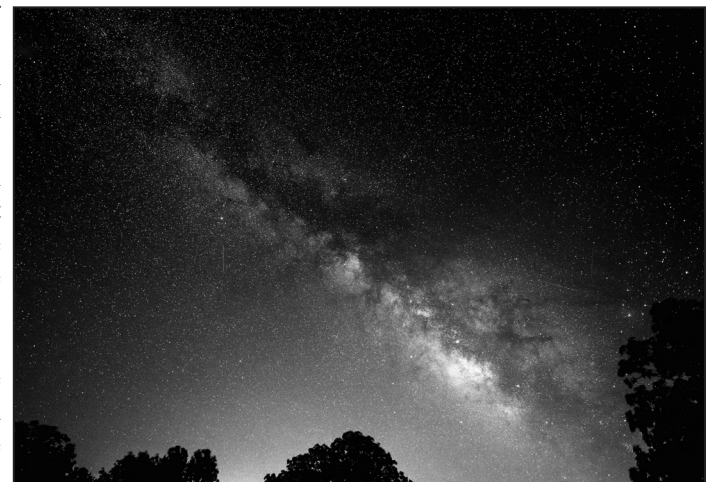
Many legitimate questions naturally arise from such a theory, such as how did the post-bang matter come from the nothingness that was before it? Or where did the unspeakable amount of energy come from to propel all those millions and trillions of colossal heavenly bodies into the farthest reaches of the universe? But at this moment a far simpler question captivates my curiosity: Where is all the chaos? Why is all the resulting lifeless disorder from the spent shotshell not mirrored in the universe?

The hundreds of lead pellets lie haphazardly scattered over yards and yards of dirt on the range, brought to a stand-still by gravity that drew the various bodies (earth and shot) together. And yet the various heavenly bodies “shot” from the big bang end up, not in a gravity-drawn clump, but in amazing delicately balanced orbits within orbits within orbits? Instead of chaos we have intricate beauty and balance.

And we're told the universe continues an ongoing outward expansion, yet for all that movement and change over (supposedly) millions of years all these bodies continue their fine-tuned harmonious dances through space without becoming a huge chaotic debris field caused by crossing paths or gravity's overpowering attraction?

And to top it all, this ongoing delicate and precision interaction by trillions of space-traveling heavenly bodies all happened by random chance?

The thought of a Master Craftsman who designed and created our universe may not be an easy concept for some to wrap their mind around – I get that. But from what I see, the alternative is not any easier when one stops to really ponder it.



*Reaching forward to what lies  
ahead...*

*Happy New Year!*

## State Missions

Dear BMAMO Churches,

I pray that you have had a good December and spiritual and fruitful Christmas and New Year's services and festivities.

We were blessed and honored to baptize Zach Bryant on December 31st. Zach has been attending for awhile. He went to our men's retreat and thoroughly enjoyed himself.

I trust your church is making plans to attend the men's retreat that is a combination of the Brotherhood and Renewal Retreat at Camp Garwood on April 26 - 27.

Diving into our study from author Thom Rainer, here is his second trait of a healthy church: "Healthy churches and their leaders seek to be relevant." (Please refer to December article for the full list of traits.)

Webster's 1828 Dictionary app defines the word "relevant" as: "Pertinent; applicable. Sufficient to support the cause." Think about this definition in relation to the church you attend or pastor. Are your services, ministries, offerings, staff, affiliations, etc. pertinent, applicable, and sufficient for the cause?

OK, so first we have to revisit "What is the cause?" *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* (Matthew 28:18-20) Are we as churches pertinent, applicable, sufficient for the cause that is commissioned in those verses? Pretty humbling, isn't it?

Now, let me quickly remind you this isn't Bro. Ben casting doubt or accusations, but instead I am asking all of us to evaluate in the light of this list and ask some Kingdom questions and look for honest answers.

In my humble opinion, if you or I think of another church first, we are missing the point. I am asking you to look just at the church you are part of and ask the question above. Are we pertinent, applicable, sufficient to the cause of the gospel, winning people to Christ, and discipling them to the point of reproduction?

The first way to answer this question is to ask another one! Is the Great Commission happening at the church that I attend? If it is not on some level, we are not being relevant to the community in which we have been placed.

There is a ton of side areas that can be added to the Commission that are by-products or side needs that we have to also accomplish to be relevant and for the Commission to be accomplished, but again, in my humble opinion, that is for each church to hammer out relative to the context of your area and locality.

One of the best evaluation questions that I have heard in relation to this discussion is the question, "Is our community that our church is in better off with us, or would they even notice if we ceased to exist?" Wow, that's a fair but potentially painful question.

I love every church in our association and I believe every church is needed and capable to reach her field for Christ. May this series help us accomplish that very goal.

May the Lord richly bless you is my prayer.

Bro. Ben

*...for the fields are white already to harvest!*

### ~ Upcoming Events ~

**Sanctity of Human Life Sunday** –  
Jan. 21

**CBC Homecoming** – Jan. 28-29

**World Missions Day** – Feb. 25

**CBC Scholarship Gala** – March 1;  
"Enduring Faith;" Antioch, Conway;  
6:00 p.m.

**MO WMA/Brotherhood Annual Meeting** – March 2; Landmark, DeSoto

**MO GMA Sleepover and Annual Meeting** – March 15-16; Kewanee

**BMA of America National Meeting**  
– Apr. 16-18; Chateau on the Lake, Branson

**Men's Renewal Retreat** – Apr. 26-27;  
Sponsored by BMA of MO and MO Brotherhood; Camp Garwood

*Send event info to [mmbpaper@gmail.com](mailto:mmbpaper@gmail.com).*

### FINANCIAL REPORT BMA OF MISSOURI MISSIONS December 2023

Checking Account:

Balance Nov. 30, 2023 \$ 7,368.07

Income:

Missions \$ 2,654.36

Ins reimb, loan fund 1,000.00

Total Income \$ 3,654.36

Total Available \$ 11,022.43

Expenses:

Director, salary \$ 900.00

Secretary, salary 400.00

Juan Fernandez, support 3,333.33

Lawyer exp / Zalma sale 750.00

Total Expenses \$ (5,383.33)

Balance Dec. 31, 2023 \$ 5,639.10

BMAMS Revolving Loan Investment:

Balance Nov. 30, 2023 \$ 115,859.46

Interest 0.00

Balance Dec. 31, 2023 \$ 115,859.46

Total in All Accounts Dec. 31, 2023 \$ 121,498.56

### Quarterly Financial Reports

#### MISSOURI MISSIONARY BAPTIST PAPER 4th Quarter 2023

Checking Acct. Balance 10/1/23 \$ 29,449.76

Offerings 3,095.32

Funds Available \$ 32,545.08

Salaries (3,200.00)

Printing & Mailing (2,385.96)

Other Expenses (103.54)

Ending Balance 12/31/23 \$ 26,855.58

#### KENNETH E. GIBSON GRANT FUND

The Kenneth E. Gibson Grant Fund remains unchanged during the last quarter. The fund balance is \$31,643.07.

#### BMA OF MISSOURI MINUTE FUND 4th Quarter 2023

Beginning Balance 10/1/23 \$ 3,924.66

Offerings 2,425.00

Funds Available \$ 6,349.66

Clerk Cmas Bonus (500.00)

Travel (84.25)

Other Expenses (18.00)

Ending Balance 12/31/23 \$ 5,747.41

### The Missouri Missionary Baptist

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## MISIÓN BELÉN (Bethlehem Mission)

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*You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds, God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.... (Psalm 65:5)*

Praises:

- Thankful for the wonderful group of ladies who gave a love offering to purchase \$120 worth of Bibles for our Hispanic families. What a privilege to be the recipient of this donation. We are so thankful – thank you very much!

- We are so blessed and had so much fun with the visit from Mr. Steve & Mrs. Deiatre, who drove all the way to our home in Illinois to bless us with their time, talents, and gift for our family! May the Lord continue blessing you guys! Also, thanks to the families at Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church and their pastor Larry Nash for buying and wrapping these gifts that filled our children with lots of enthusiasm! It is such a blessing to be recipients of your love and prayer as we seek to plant a church among our families. Thank you!

- Completed our 2023 ESL Fall Outreach. We had three students during our last evening of outreach. We also were so blessed to have Brother Larry Nash and his wife Ronda visiting us during this special evening. We enjoyed them interacting with our students, blessing them by pouring their time and talents unto these students of English. Thankful also for Mrs. Tiny and Mrs. Darlene in joining this missionary effort to reach out. These amazing loving and caring ladies watch our children Victoria and Eleanor from 6:00 to 7:30 pm. Thank you, ladies! We



are also so thankful for the commitment, effort, and enthusiasm of my wife Hannah to come and invest her time with these families regardless of their country of origin. Thank you *mi amor* for always being so supportive and caring for our families.

- Worshiping with our churches for ministry presentation and prayer! We enjoyed prayer and hospitality with church families at Matthews Missionary Baptist Church. We wanted to visit them for a long time. Finally the Lord allowed us to come and join in worship and prayer. As a plus, right after service we had lunch at Lambert's, such a wonderful time to visit with Mr. & Mrs. Magee; thank you very much. May the Lord continue blessing these efforts to be ready to share and pray for each other.

- During the next Sunday we continued visiting our families in our area, mostly to hand out invitations for our Christmas candlelight

service – the first one of many more, we pray! The Lord gathered three of our families to have a very special time of live music and Christmas carols and our prayer time with those lovely warm candles. The Lord blessed us with a delicious buffet with food from our Brazilian and Nicaraguan families, and delicious meal from my wife Hannah. Praise the LORD for this unforgettable evening.

- We also enjoyed visiting Faith Missionary Baptist in St. Charles. We had breakfast and fellowship with church family members. Then we had the chance to share about our missionary work and a message from Hebrews 12:1-2 on "The Joy to Endure the Christian Walk." Thank you for Brother Tom and Janette Auburn for the invitation and hospitality. We are anticipating more and more fellowship



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among our congregations. We can testify how blessed we are to be prayed for and blessed with church family members. Thank you, Jesus.

- Casting vision for this new year. We are so blessed to have the support and advice to begin our new outreach area. We envision new believers coming to worship in spirit and truth, the Lord opening doors for new home Bible studies and a new place to reach out our families. Thank you for continued prayer and support for ministry. We need you to continue praying as we plan this year to be a victorious year for harvest among our Hispanic families and joining the already existing BMA ministries.



Continue praying for everyday evangelism, handing out Bibles and prayer for salvation among our Hispanic families, HARVEST is PLENTIFUL.

In His Service  
Juan & Hannah Fernandez.

*The Lord make his face to shine upon  
you and be gracious to you*

# Updates from Our Churches

## Westview, Jefferson City

Greetings from Missouri's capital city!

In December we enjoyed Westview's Christmas pageant directed by Kelly Miles Easley and a Christmas Eve candlelight service.

One of our founding members, Ray Platt, passed from this life to the next in December 2023. Westview Baptist Church started in the home of Ray and Linda Platt in September 1978 and met there for over a year. We miss Bro. Ray!

We are thankful for those from our area who attended the 2023 Youth Alive conference: Ellie, Avery, Suzy, Madison, Matthew, Aiden, along with Pastor Benjamin and wife, Emma.

For three Sundays in December Bro. Michael Hearst filled in for Bro. Jim Hoffmann at Bethany Baptist Church in St. Louis.

*Benjamin Kingston, Pastor  
Rae Lynn Hearst, Reporter*

## Stony Point, Mineral Point

Hello from Stony Point!!

December was a busy month for us here. We had our Christmas program on Christmas Eve. It was entitled "What's In a Name," and we decorated our Christmas tree with names for Jesus used throughout the Bible. We all enjoyed the fellowship on this special day.

December also blessed us with a new member, Kayla Whelehan. Welcome Kayla! We are happy and excited to have you with us as we worship the Lord together.

Brother Mike Bourbon has been doing an amazing job leading us in our adult Sunday School lessons. He generously took over for Brother David Hughes, who, as you know, passed on recently and is very missed.

We also lost long-time member Rose Jarvis. The ladies prepared a wonderful meal for the family for the services.

Several members have been battling cold season, as

we are sure many of you are. Pray for us, and we are also praying for you all. The penny march is still being practiced on Sundays by our little ones and they seem to really enjoy it. We have included a trivia question on our Sunday worship bulletin and I really enjoy that and it seems as if everyone does! We have had very little snow here, just a few flurries and dustings this December!

We hope everyone has a wonderful start to the new year with lots of blessings from God and are able to get together for fellowship in his name. See you next year!

*Claude Evans, Pastor  
D. Stegall, Reporter*

## Bethel, Sikeston

Happy New Year to all!

2023 has been a very good year for us. We have had many salvations, rededications, baptisms and additions to the Lord's kingdom. All the glory goes to God!!

The whole month of December Bro. Billy has been preaching on the Christmas story. We never tire of hearing that wonderful story of Jesus. It has been such a blessing!

On the evening of the 11th we went Christmas caroling. God blessed us with great weather. We had around 16 carolers and were blessed as much as the recipients that welcomed us! On the 17th our youth did an awesome job with a Christmas program. We are so proud of our youth. Thanks to Sis. Darcee Saucedo for helping these children put the program together!

We had our Christmas party that same evening in the fellowship hall with some singing and a devotional. We had a fun time of fellowship with games and snacks. Everyone went home with a gift and a song in their heart. God is so good!! On Christmas Eve we presented our cantata during the morning service. We were thankful to have so many church members participate.

It was a time of honoring our God and Savior Jesus Christ!

Our 5th Sunday night singing was on the 31st. We had a good attendance and a great time of praising God with specials; we are blessed to have so many members step up to sing.

May God bless each one of you with a very happy and prosperous new year. We look forward to what God has in store for us this new year of 2024! Love and prayers to all.

*Billy Davis, Pastor  
Joan Wood, Reporter*

## Lindsay Lane, Florissant

Greetings from Lindsay Lane Baptist Church.

We pray that everyone celebrated our Savior's birth. We at Lindsay Lane celebrated early with soup and carols on the 10th. What a time of fellowship it was. So much food, so little time! Our praise team has led us in praise and we have enjoyed singing the traditional hymns plus a new song on Christmas Eve.

We have several folks ill and some are shut in. We thank God for Brother Curt and Sister Marley for keeping us on line. Sister Loleta and Sister Chris are recovering from knee surgery. Some have family sickness and are in need of prayer. Sister Valerie Dixon has been in and out of the hospital. Sister Shelia Parrish is homebound.

We covet your prayers as we try to serve God in the Florissant area. The Youth Alive conference was well attended, and we learned there were precious souls saved.

'Til we meet again may God bless and keep you.

*Brian Meade, Pastor  
Kathy Chapman, Reporter*

## Landmark, DeSoto

Happy New Year to all from Landmark. Hope you have all had a happy and healthy Christmas season.

We've had some sickness at Landmark, including myself. Finally improving, but sure should have bought stock in

the Puffs and Kleenex companies. Asking for your prayers that we all recuperate from a wide array of illnesses, while dealing with other church issues also. We will keep all of you in our prayers also.

We are still waiting to get back into the church building. We have reports that progress IS being made . . . just have to continue to be patient and wait on God's time. I often find that hard and want to stomp my foot like a three-year-old and shout, "But I want it NOW!" Guess I still have some maturing to do as a Christian. ~Sigh~

Until next month, may we all be diligent in watching, working, and waiting for Christ's return.

*Davis Crites, Pastor  
Barbara Williams, Reporter*

## First, Potosi

Greetings from First Baptist Church, Potosi.

December began in full swing with the Taste of Christmas with an attendance of over 350 women. The meal was delicious and the speaker, Jaclyn Rowe, shared God's Word before we went back to eat dessert. We had 70 attend Youth Alive, and three of our youth were saved.

The Christmas program presented by our #FBC Kids group was very well done, and we had a full house. The UPWARD coaches began preparing for the season of sharing God's Word through sports. Practices begin the week of January 15th. The youth group had a lock-in on December 31 to celebrate the new year together.

On Christmas Eve we baptized nine individuals who had accepted Christ as their Savior; it was a blessing to watch. And one was baptized on New Year's Eve.

We are still needing Overflow volunteers. The ones we have are wonderful and dedicated, but sometimes they cannot be there and we need people to be able to fill their spots. We had a special day in December just before break

where no limits applied to the clothing in the gym. Well over 2,000 articles of clothing were taken from the gym plus more were taken from the regular clothes closet. In addition to the clothing, 49 families were served from the food pantry. Fortunately, we have special Christians who donate food and financial assistance or we would not be able to do this. This was just one day in December and everyone who comes through gets to hear something about Jesus. It is an amazing ministry.

MOPS continues to meet with mothers and U-TURN continues weekly for those in need. So many terrible things are going on in the world today and now in some states they are allowing Satan clubs in schools. We must continue as prayer warriors for God and pray for our fellow man and our country.

Please pray for us as we pray for you. God will answer our prayers.

*Jim Ainley, Pastor  
Deborah Rauhut, Reporter*

## Oak Hill, Alton

Hello to everyone from Oak Hill!

We had a happy and blessed Christmas and hope that everyone else did too. We hope and pray that everyone is starting off the New Year healthy, blessed, and ready for what may come in the year 2024.

As of January 1, 2024, Bro. Tom Foster Sr. has preached 62 years. Our pastor, Bro. Edward Casey, was sick and not able to preach or eat with us on our fifth Sunday dinner. Thank the Lord, Bro. Tom filled in and brought an awesome message and ate with us. We also had a couple families out sick who were not able to worship our Lord and Savior with us. We are hoping and praying that everyone will feel better and be able to pray and attend services with us again.

We do not have any plans that I know of for the New

Year. Until next month, when I hope I will have some more good news to tell you. Until then we will be praising and honoring our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

God Bless!!

*Edward Casey, Pastor  
Jennifer Williams, Reporter*

### First, Matthews

Greetings from Matthews Baptist. Hoping everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

We have had several of our members out with Covid and flu, slowly recovering and back in our services. Boy, November and December were busy months for us. We had some deaths that were family related in our church. We are praying that the remaining family members that were lost will realize we are not promised tomorrow.

November 26th Kewanee and Matthews had a benefit lunch for Alyssa and Sam

Barnett and Lisa Cox for their mission trip to Peru this summer. Profits were \$1710, or \$570 for each one.

Some of our members attended the Celebrate Conference. They were excited to see several of the preachers and were blessed by the message by Bro. Dustin Wisely.

December 4th our WMA ladies had our Christmas dinner, where we exchanged gifts and revealed our secret pals. December 9th some of

our members went to Branson to see *The Horse and His Boy*. This was a great show from the *Narnia Chronicles*.

December 16th, in spite of the rain, we still had our Bethlehem Village. The rain had let up and the guy with the live animals was able to come. Because of the weather the attendance was down, but it was still a blessing. December 20th we had our Christmas dinner for the church. There was good food, and

wonderful fellowship. On December 24th we had a candlelight service.

Last, and certainly the best, our youth and sponsors attended Alive. We had one saved. It was Andy Atkins, one of the adults that attended. Goes to show you Alive is not just for the youth. Also this was the most we have had to attend in a long time. GOD'S BLESSING.

*Chris Polk, Pastor  
Ethel Adams, Reporter*



*Snapshots from  
ALIVE 2023  
Youth Conference  
(by Molly Kingston)*



• From BLOG page 1 •

The end of each year is a time to look back on all we've seen and experienced and on how God has so faithfully sustained us each day along the way. Being thankful for his blessings no matter how big or small.

Praise and thankfulness bring blessings from the Almighty. You will find God is delightful to know. What a privilege it is to know Him, and the more you glorify the Lord the more He will refresh you and deepen your experience to Him.

May God richly bless you this coming year for your good and His glory.

## My Best Friend

Jackie Ricks

As I drove home from the grocery store today, I heard a song by the Gaithers called, "Old Friends." It got me to thinking about my friends and friends in general. Having moved many times in my life as a PK, I had to make new friends every few years. I usually tried to keep in contact with the former friends by mail. (I know that's a rare thing in today's world.) However, I eventually lost touch with most of them. I was excited a few years ago when I found many on Facebook. However, now, due to someone hacking my account, I am no longer on Facebook and again have lost touch with many friends.

Friends come and go through the years. Some stay only a short while and may, actually, not be true friends. Or possibly circumstances get in the way and contact is lost. I've had one special friend for almost 50 years now. Her name is Sharla. It doesn't matter how long it's been or where we are, she and I still manage to stay in touch and it's like we've never been apart when we get together, other than the amount of talking we have to do to catch up on each other's lives and families. We can tell each other anything and not worry about whether it will remain in confidence. We also can ask for prayer without having to explain the situation in advance. I know Sharla will always be there and support me and she knows the same about me.

However, I have an even better friend than Sharla is and He's been around longer. No, I'm not talking about my husband. He's my friend, but he's not been around as long as Sharla has and definitely not as long as this special friend. No, this special friend has been there all my life, but I didn't really realize how great He was until March 9, 1957 when He became my Lord and Savior. I was excited and knew that Jesus had saved my soul, but I didn't realize at the time just how important He would be in my daily life. He really is my best friend.

The Bible says "*A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity*" (Proverbs 17:17). I sometimes disagree and maybe even argue with my actual siblings, but Sharla is like a sister to me without the arguments, but we do sometimes disagree. Even greater, Jesus loves us at all times, even when He may not be happy with what we are doing. He's better than anyone here on Earth. In Matthew 11:28-30 we learn that He will take all of our problems and carry them for us if we will only let Him.

Best friends can tell each other anything. That's how it is with Jesus. We can go to Him with any problem or any celebration. Of course, He already knows them, but He listens anyway. He is also free to tell us anything. Sometimes it comes through His written word or through the Sunday sermon. Maybe He sends us a message through circumstances. Or, He simply uses our conscience or brain to sort out what He wants us to know. We can trust Him better than any person to keep a confidence and not steer us the wrong way.

Sometimes earthly friends hesitate to tell us the truth when we have a hard lesson to learn. Jesus isn't that way. He always



## BMA Seminary Recap of 2023

Philip Attebery, Vice-President/Dean of BMA Theological Seminary

The Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary continues to be blessed as it provides accredited theological training to those interested in developing skills needed for leadership roles within varied Christian ministry contexts. In 2023, BMA Seminary completed its 66th year of operation.

Students from more than 15 of the United States and 18 foreign countries took courses during the 2023 academic year. Nineteen students graduated in May 2023 with either an Associate of Divinity, Bachelor of Arts in Religion, Master of Arts (Religion), Master of Arts (Pastoral Theology), Master of Arts in Church Ministries, or Master of Divinity degree. Graduates included students from Arkansas, Illinois, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. Graduates also came from Cape Verde, China, the Philippines, and South Korea.

Several new projects began in 2023. First, Leadership Jacksonville sponsored and completed a project to renovate the seminary's playground. Second, the seminary introduced two programs of study in disciple making that are especially favorable for laypersons: the Master of Arts in Disciple Making degree and the Certificate in Disciple Making. Third, the seminary began a capital campaign that will continue through 2024 with plans to provide much needed renovation to student housing and the seminary's main parking areas.

Those interested in developing skills and strategy essential for disciple making are encouraged to contact the seminary dean's office for more information on how to enroll in Spring 2024 classes. Those interested in helping to improve the seminary's campus are encouraged to contact the seminary president's office.

Also, BMA administrators and faculty visited countries in Africa, Central America, and South America to provide advanced religious studies for various Bible institutes. Visits to Africa will continue in 2024 for the purpose of equipping local pastors associated with BMA mission work. Financial support for this ministry is also appreciated.

BMA Seminary provides accredited theological education to qualified individuals by seeking to equip them for Christian service and leadership roles. The seminary supports the educational needs of the Baptist Missionary Association of America and other groups who share a like commitment to the authority of Scripture by offering certificates, associate, bachelor, and masters' degrees.

shows us the truth and teaches us the lesson we need no matter what. Also, friends here sometimes mess things up by giving the wrong advice or trying to jump in and figure out a solution that may not be right. Jesus, on the other hand, knows the best solution to our problems and also knows exactly how we should accomplish His will. Check out Proverbs 3:5-6. I've learned to rely on this often. In fact, a plaque hangs in my bathroom so that I am reminded daily that God is the One to turn to in every situation.

Have you discovered Jesus as your best friend? I've always known He was there and I turned to Him often. But, I didn't always turn to Him first or utilize His plans the way He wanted me to. Just as it takes a while to learn to trust a new friend, we have to learn to trust Jesus in everything. He always knows what's best for us, but we won't realize it if we aren't close to Him. That takes turning to Him first in every situation, even the simplest of things. Let Jesus be the One to give you advice and show you what to do. Don't rely on yourself or on other people. Go to your best friend first; go to Jesus. Or if you don't know Him, read some of these other blogs and learn how He can become your very best friend. Specifically, read all three "Seed Flinger" articles and the one on "Witnessing." These will give you scriptures that will show you how to trust in Jesus so that He can be your best friend, too. Or find a believer who can help you.

Scriptures to read: John 15:13; Matthew 11:29-30; Proverbs 3:5-6; 17:17; 18:24

Prayer: "Lord, thank You so much for being my Savior and my best friend. I know I sometimes don't come to You first with my problems and victories. Help me learn to come to You first so that I can remain as close to You as possible. I know that people become distant when we don't see each other or communicate. Help me to stay close so that I don't have to wonder if You want to hear from me. Thanks again for all You do for me. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Respond: If Jesus isn't already your Savior and friend, then make every effort to trust Him now. If you already know Him as your friend, then learn to go to Him on a regular basis. It doesn't have to be anything formal. Just tell Him "Hi" throughout the day and turn to Him each time you have a need. You will find that He is always there and will meet every need better than you could ever imagine!

## Reaching Your Neighbors

Larry Barker

Is your church – and are you – reaching your neighborhood for Christ? Are there any resources for how that might be accomplished, and where do you begin? There are multiple resources such as *Exegeting The Community*, *Identify My Oikos*, *25 Ways to Live Missional in Your Neighborhood*, and other excellent materials about reaching the lost. If you would like these resources and others, please email us at larry@bmaam.com or heidi@bmaam.com. The mission has not changed, and there is a multitude of creative tools to help you develop and carry out a plan of outreach. The following content is from an article I wrote ten years ago:

We desperately need a church multiplication movement here in North America, but that is the big picture from the macro level. The truth is harsh, but we must face the facts: It will never happen without each one of us living like Jesus did. It begins with making disciples, and if we are going to do so, we must engage the culture around us, striving to be the salt and light God has commanded us to be. Are we working, living, and serving alongside people who are not followers of Jesus so we might share the gospel with them?

Bob Logan writes, "Engaging culture . . . means being where the people are, living among them, getting to know them, and letting them get to know us . . . When we meet people on their turf, allowing them to really know us and our spirituality, that's when we find people who are curious about God and open to Him!" Tom Clegg puts it this way: "If you don't have friends outside the church there's something wrong with you and your version of Christianity." We are to be agents of transformation who keep company with sinners, just like Jesus!

Dave Ferguson in *Discover Your Mission Now*, a free E-book, shares five simple principles to change

the world right where you live. He uses the acronym B.L.E.S.S. (Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat, Serve, Story) to get started and give us a great track to run on. We are called to live as missionaries in our zip code in order to see changed lives, changed communities, and changed neighborhoods. I have borrowed the B.L.E.S.S. acronym from Dave Ferguson, but the content is "borrowed" from many different resources:

· **B – Begin with Prayer** – Are you praying for all the lost people in your circle of influence? Elmer Towns talked about and coined the phrase "F.R.A.N.gelism" to focus us on reaching our friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors. Do you pray every day for those you know who do not know Christ personally? How could you build a bridge to them in order to speak into their lives? Have you considered doing a prayer walk around your neighborhood asking God to open doors of opportunity?

· **L – Listen** – What are they saying? What questions do they need answered? The best way to show people you value them is listening to them. How can you build a relationship, discover their needs, and serve them sacrificially? The only way to figure out how to best come alongside others in their spiritual journey is by listening carefully and asking the right questions. Hopefully, the natural progression will be to listen to their story, share your story then tell His story.

· **E – Eat** – Find ways to get people together and build relationships. In our culture a great way to accomplish this is to have them over for a meal in your home. You can also invite them to go golfing, fishing, hunting, or some other hobby where you can laugh and do life together. Normally, people do not connect with the whole church at once, but their

starting point is a few individuals they can begin building relationships with. People are looking for "authentic" relationships, and people are never a means to an end.

· **S – Serve** – We must be willing to serve others sacrificially. Who are the people God has placed around you? What are their needs? How can you find out what their needs are and then meet them? What are you hearing God say you should do (remember: Begin in Prayer), and what actions should you take. Some people are very good at meeting physical needs while others are better at meeting spiritual needs. It takes both! Words without actions to back them up are dead, and the good news unshared is not good news.

· **S – Story** – There are a lot of nice guys in your neighborhood, at work, and in your family who will do random acts of kindness but are not born again. Bob Logan says, "Living incarnationally and missionally as followers of Jesus brings something different to the equation: the power of spiritual transformation." Romans 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Get going! Dive in and start blessing others. What are you waiting for? There will never be a perfect time, and you will make mistakes along the way. The real question is, "Do you believe in blessing others enough to take the risk?" Give yourself permission to make mistakes and realize that your effectiveness in ministering to others will improve with practice. Look around and ask God to show you who it is that He wants you to B.L.E.S.S.!

Healthy Christians and healthy churches bless others!

## Motives for Evangelism

Larry Barker

Why do you do what you do? Our motives are very important and should not be overlooked. In *The Evangelism Handbook*, Alvin Reid says, "Surely there should be a connection between our motive and our method. Why share Christ? Too much emphasis on evangelism has to do with the "how to." Christianity is a movement. The best way to know your movement is in trouble is when all you do is create how-to manuals! For people to have a lasting commitment to something as personally challenging as evangelism, we need a clear understanding of "why" before proceeding to the "how."

First, our motive should start with God. Mark Liederbach wrote, "The supreme motivation for evangelism, then, finds its genesis in who evangelism is about, and all other motivations find deep and rich grounding and proper expression from that point alone." Why would

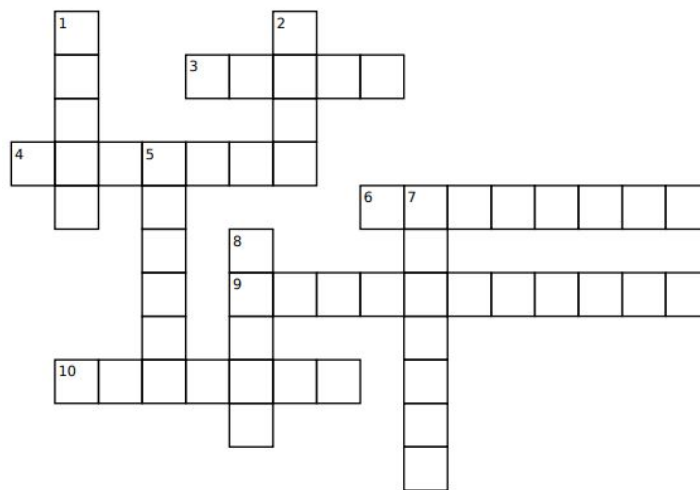
we not want to share who He is with everyone just because of who He is? Christianity is not just a faith in faith. Faith has no value unless its object is legitimate, and our God is the only one who is legitimate. Faith is not about feeling, but fact. Faith is not about what is unknown, but what is unseen (Hebrews 11:1).

It is not just about the task of evangelizing. We are not created to just be task-oriented people but to first be principle oriented. Unfortunately, you sometimes hear the remark, "I don't care about theology; I only care if it works." Everything we do is theological! The first question should never be, "Does it work, but rather, "Is it right? The right thing to do is realize that God desires all to worship Him, and because of that truth, we desire for as many others as possible to join us in that worship. We share Christ because of who He

• See *MOTIVES* page 8 •

## "Firsts" in the Bible

In this first month of the year, here is a chance to look at some "firsts" that are mentioned in the Bible. (Hints provided on page 8.)



### Down:

1. First of the 10 plagues that Pharaoh's magicians were not able to replicate
2. First recorded builder of a city
5. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the first person said to pass by the injured man
7. The church mentioned in Revelation as having lost its first love
8. First-born son of David

### Across:

3. First food God miraculously provided for His people in the wilderness
4. First martyr of the early church
6. First king of the Southern Kingdom (Judah)
9. First priest mentioned in the Bible
10. Where the disciples were first called Christians

## 5th Annual CBC Scholarship Gala

Central Baptist College's 5th Annual Scholarship Gala will take place on Friday, March 1, at 6:00 p.m. at Antioch Baptist Church in Conway. The black-tie optional event will be catered by Central Baptist College Dining Services under the direction of Chef Billie Rodriguez. The night will be a celebration of "Enduring Faith" and will feature keynote speaker, Dr. Jack Graham. The proceeds from the event will benefit the Central Baptist College Scholarship Fund which supports institutionally funded scholarships.

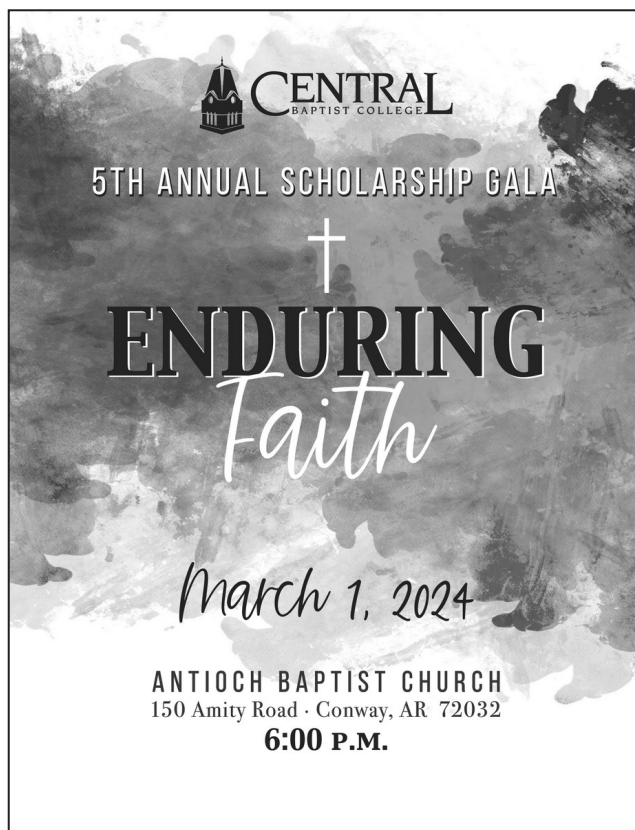
This year's keynote speaker will be Dr. Jack Graham, senior pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas. He is known for being the leader of one of the nation's largest, most dynamic congregations. Dr. Graham began preaching at Prestonwood in 1989 to a congregation of around 8,000 people. In the years since, the congregation has grown to 57,000 and continues to flourish in the North Texas region. Dr. Graham also served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention for two terms. He is married to Deb Graham and has three children and eight grandchildren.

Dr. Graham has written many books including *A Man of God: Essential Priorities for Every Man's Life*; *Unseen: Angels, Satan, Heaven, Hell, and Winning the Battle for Eternity*; *Angels: Who They Are, What They Do and Why It Matters*; *Powering Up: The Fulfillment and Fruit of a God-Fueled Life*; and *Courageous Parenting*, written with his wife, Deb. His most recent book is *Reignite: Fresh Focus for an Enduring Faith*, in which he talks about how to keep Christ in focus during dark days.

The teaching of Dr. Graham is available to people across the country through PowerPoint Ministries (his radio, TV, and internet ministry). On this platform, Dr. Graham teaches culturally relevant lessons meant to make an impact on the lives of his audience.

Dr. Graham is known for straightforward messages and powerful preaching styles.

Tickets are now available for an incredible evening of Enduring Faith. Event sponsorships begin at \$2,000. Single tickets are on sale for \$100 each. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [cbc.edu/gala](http://cbc.edu/gala) or contact Peggy Pillow at [ppillow@cbc.edu](mailto:ppillow@cbc.edu) or 501.205.8834.



## Ministers & Ministry Opportunities

Entries are published at the request of the individual or entity listed and should not be considered as an endorsement by the Missouri Missionary Baptist or the BMA of Missouri.

**Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church, Caledonia,** is seeking a pastor. If you are available and seeking God's will for a place to serve, please contact Dean Johnson at 573-210-3700 or Charlotte Cooper at 361-563-0756. (1223)

**Bethany Baptist Church, St. Louis,** is seeking a bi-vocational pastor. For information contact James Hoffmann at 314-277-8644 or [jmhoff@charter.net](mailto:jmhoff@charter.net). (1123)

Ministers and ministries must be associated with the BMA. Entries for available preachers and for churches seeking pastors or staff will be published for three consecutive months; others will be limited to a single issue. Listings may be resubmitted quarterly, subject to editor approval. Send entries, including the name of the church of membership, to [mmbpaper@gmail.com](mailto:mmbpaper@gmail.com).

## Deaths

**Rosemary "Nan" Jarvis,** 102, of Mineral Point, passed away peacefully at her home on Wednesday, December 6, 2023. She was a long-time member of Stony Point Baptist Church in Mineral Point.

**Raymon Byron Platt Jr.,** 82, of Jefferson City, passed away peacefully on December 8, 2023. Raymon and his wife, Linda, were founding members of Westview Missionary Baptist Church. The church started in their home in September, 1978, and met there for over a year. Raymon served as a deacon at Westview until his passing and was very dedicated to his church life and church activities.

## Hints for "Firsts" Puzzle

Here are scripture references to help with each clue in the crossword puzzle on page 7.

### Down:

1. Ex 8:18
2. Gen 4:17
5. Luke 10:30-31
7. Rev 2:3-4
8. 1Chron 3:1

### Across:

3. Ex 16:13
4. Acts 7:54-60
6. 1Kings 11-12
9. Gen 14:18-20
10. Acts 11:26

### • From MOTIVES page 7 •

is, and there is none other like Him. We are first called to love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind.

Second, followers of Christ are the only ones who have the real answers to why humanity is broken and how it can be fixed. Mankind has figured out many things through reasoning and science, but no one has ever figured out how to fix their relationship with God. Salvation is His plan on His terms. What a child of God has to offer to the world, no one else has to offer. We need to know what we believe and why we believe it, because Christianity is being asked the hard questions. Theology is important because we must make sure our language is precise, clear, and biblical. Do you know how to show someone how to be born again? If you don't, learn!

Third, our motivation for evangelism is a concern for those who are lost. The New Testament term "lost" is not a derogatory one. It actually denotes how valuable "lost" people are to God and the effort He gives, and we should give to find them. Just check out Luke 15! What is it about us that has so little concern for our neighbors and acquaintances who do not know Christ? It appears that many find it far easier to go on a mission trip and witness there than to witness to the people they know. Personal evangelism is not only theologically sound but also the most effective way to reach "lost" people. Evangelism is important because it is important to God.

Quoting again from Alvin Reid's book, "The Western church has too often seen Christianity as a means to personal fulfillment, a way to find your best life

now. Many believers demonstrate a lack of passion for the gospel stemming from a consumer ethic. After all, sharing Christ will bring rejection. The gospel, no matter how winsomely you share it, will be a stumbling block to some and scandalous to others (see 1 Corinthians 1:23). So if you or I are driven by a Christianity that is fundamentally about our happiness, we will hardly be motivated to be rejected, which will happen if we share Christ faithfully."

Why should we be motivated to evangelize? Francis Schaeffer said it well when asked about how to answer all the critics, skeptics, doubters, and false teachers, "We don't do it to win, we do it because our risen Savior commanded us!" Change occurs not by being told what we need to do for God but by hearing the good news about what God has done for us. Gospel change is the Spirit of God using the story of God to make the beauty of God come alive in our hearts. The focus is on believing and not behaving, so we need to share with others what it means to repent and believe.

If you are still unsure where to start, allow me to suggest taking a look at the *Good Soil* training materials we utilize with our missionaries, church planters, and several churches. Email us at [larry@bmaam.com](mailto:larry@bmaam.com), [heidi@bmaam.com](mailto:heidi@bmaam.com), or [eli@bmaam.com](mailto:eli@bmaam.com) for more information.

Zacchaeus was not transformed by a command of Jesus but by an encounter and experience with Jesus. How will you maximize kingdom leverage in the lives of those God has placed in your circle of influence? Are you intentionally focused on using your gifts, time, and opportunities to bless others with the knowledge and love of God?