

# The Missouri Missionary Baptist

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

Volume LXXXVII

St. Louis, MO • December 9, 2025

Issue No. 12

*Merry Christmas  
and Happy New Year!*

*– Don & Pam Burke*

## Shoeboxes & Seeds: Sharing the Gospel in Guatemala

Last month, the jungles of Petén, Guatemala – once home to longtime BMA missionary Marvin Loyd – were alive again with the sound of laughter, joy, and gospel hope. This joy and hope came through Everlasting Smiles Shoeboxes, the ministry that began years ago in this region and continues to bear fruit for the glory of God.

BMA Global’s Regional Coordinator for Central America, Bro. David Marroquín, is leading renewed efforts to invest in this area, building on the foundation laid by faithful servants like Bro. Loyd. What began decades ago with pastor training and church planting

is being strengthened again through partnerships with local pastors who are reaching their communities in fresh ways.

As shoeboxes filled with gifts and gospel tracts were distributed, more than 1,000 people heard the message of Jesus Christ. For many children, these colorful boxes were the only Christmas gifts they will receive this year, treasures to be kept for years to

come. Yet each distribution carried a deeper message: “This gift is free; you do not have to work for it or pay for it. It is given out of love, just like the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.”

Angela Rice, who served alongside Bro. David and a team of volunteers, described the experience as both joyful and humbling.

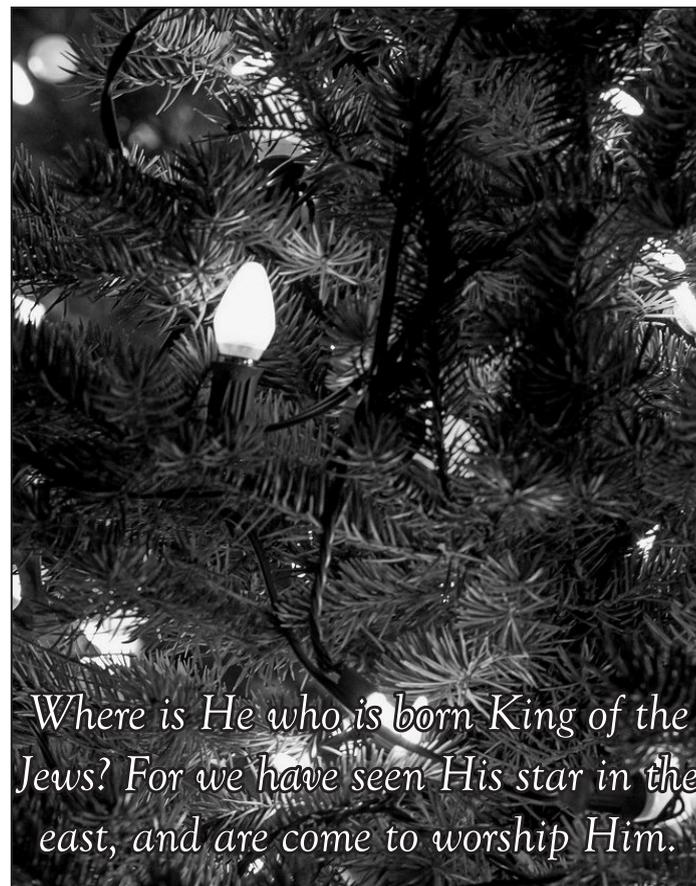
“It was such a blessing to serve with our pastors in Petén,” she shared. “Each morning, Bro. David reminded us to serve with joy, and what a wonderful reminder that was as we visited schools and met so many precious children.”

Now, the work continues. Pastors in Petén are following up with the students and families who heard the gospel, inviting

them into local churches and helping them grow in faith.

Please continue to pray for the pastors and leaders in Petén, for the children and families who received shoeboxes, and for lasting fruit from the seeds planted in these communities.

“Distributing shoeboxes is just the beginning,” Angela said. “We believe God will use every one of these gifts to open hearts to the greatest gift of all – Jesus Christ.”



*Where is He who is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.*

## ALIVE STUDENT CONFERENCE

December 29-31  
DoubleTree, Chesterfield, MO

### Speaker

Mike Strong  
Church Planter and Pastor  
North Minneapolis, MN



### Registration

\$85 per person after December 1  
\$60 New Church Discount

(churches attending Alive for the very first time)

Payable to Alive Ministries

c/o Jim Ainley • 10479 State Road P • Potosi, MO 63664

### Hotel Reservations

Contact: Almira Selimovic at (636) 667-6646  
or [aselimovic@doubletreechesterfield.com](mailto:aselimovic@doubletreechesterfield.com)

Registration forms and more details are available  
at [bmamissouri.org/alive-student-conference/](http://bmamissouri.org/alive-student-conference/).

See page of this paper for conference schedule.

## State Missions

Dear BMAMO Churches,

Today is December 2nd, the year of our Lord 2025! I truly hope you are doing well and that 2025 has been all that you had hoped and, more so, what the Lord intended for you.

One of my pet peeves is the saying, "Well, you know if it's the Lord's will, it will be done." Nothing could be further from the truth. Things would be so different if the Lord's will was always done, but I do believe if you and I obey and follow the Lord He will see and make sure His will comes to pass for His glory.

Now that was just for free – it is not what I want to share this month. Instead, I would love the opportunity to just think out loud about an inspiration that I got from a video short this week in comparing Nick Saban and Brian Kelly's approach to coaching. Before that, however, let me give some context.

First of all, many of you know Bro. Larry Sikes who preceded me as pastor here at Bethel 28 years ago. He has four wonderful children: Phil, Joe, John, Shannon. Bro. Joe Sikes is the pastor at First Baptist Church in St. Clair. John Sikes is our St. Clair Police Chief and a member at Bethel along with his wife, Robyn, and their children. Shannon Banderman is the Lonedell Elementary School principal and member at Bethel along with her husband Brad (Bethel's youth pastor) and their children.

Three Thursdays ago, Amanda Sikes (Joe's wife) had a brain aneurysm, and it has been touch and go since then. She is 45-ish. Her sister is Brian Kingston's wife, Erin. John's wife, Robyn, is a dear friend to Amanda, and of course Brad and Shannon are brother- and sister-in-law. I could go on with how connected Amanda is to Dawn and me and to Bethel and St. Clair. To say she is influential would be like saying the South likes football.

So, what am I saying? Once again, I have been reminded of our mortality and the truth that

we have one life to live and soon it will pass and only what's done for Christ will last. Please pray for a full recovery for Amanda. She has gotten good news as of late.

Secondly – and with that as the backdrop – we have had in the college football world a shake-up, to say the least, with Lane Kiffin leaving a playoff team in Ole Miss to go to a downtrodden LSU team. I am not here to litigate that decision as much as to lovingly point out an obvious truth along the way. One of his reasons for going was he "prayed about it," and then proceeded to make some (in my opinion) biblically questionable decisions. Which reminded me that God will never lead you to do something His scripture strictly speaks against.

Thirdly, the short video that I referred to earlier juxtaposed Nick Saban's approach to coaching against Brian Kelly's, who was the former LSU coach. And what was that approach? Nick Saban was not happy with a win if the process of carrying out the fundamentals of the game were not followed. Brian Kelly was just concerned about the win.

So here ya go, all three points summarized into this conclusion: Life is short, even for the good ones. Prayer is only good when obvious obedience is displayed. And a victorious Christian life is steeped in process! What is that process? I am so glad you asked. See you next month with the answer. Here's a clue: it starts with a relationship with Jesus Christ!

May the Lord richly bless you.

Bro. Ben



**MISIÓN BAPTISTA BELÉN**  
(Bethlehem Mission)  
Serving Hispanic Families • St. Louis Metro East  
Juan Fernandez  
pastorjuanfernandez@gmail.com • (618) 581-8056

*The angel addressed them, stating, "Do not be afraid; I bring you news of significant joy for all people. Today, in the city of David, a Savior has been born, identified as Christ the Lord."* (Luke 2:10)

Luke 2:1-20 is the Bible reading we have been practicing for our Christmas celebration. Each one of the families we are in contact with have been invited to come and join us at 920 Lindsay Lane in Florissant at 11:00 a.m. on December 21 to celebrate Christmas special fellowship! Be our guest, be in prayer, be on fire. Many people's hearts are softer during these holidays.

We are praising the Lord for you and your family, your church and small groups in our wonderful BMA churches who have reached out to me and my wife with presents, cards and notes filled with the love of Christ. These are such encouragements and blessings amid our daily evangelism and connection with existing and new contacts.

We are thankful for our Missouri Missions Director, Bro. Ben Kingston, for always keeping us in your prayers. Your prayer request shared with us really touched our hearts as a missionary family. We enjoy knowing that our service and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ is not in vain and never done alone. Thank you for always giving us the sense of belonging you extend to each one in our church families.

We ask for you to continue praying for the families in the Florissant area. We are reaching out through the ESL class to three to five families every week. We pray as we invite them to join our discipleship process and join us in weekly worship service. We are going to start promoting our public worship and fellowship services via Facebook and other social media in 2026. We are going big this year! It is the year we have been preparing for, establishing of our core team ministry and the training for local leaders to reach St. Louis for Christ – one family at a time!

We are preparing our family in Chesterfield to invite their contacts to a Christmas program on Sunday, December 21 at 11:00 a.m. This family has invited three other families to come together with their children. Our local sending church and pastor have prepared a Christmas giving tree with names of these families. We pray as we prepare that the message, the music, the meal and everything we do will lead these families to join what God is doing among our ministry, and they will become faithful laborers for the kingdom. We are preparing three songs for this Christmas service to be done in English by the kids, then in Spanish by the adults who have been invited.

Please be in prayer that this will become the beginning of many more gatherings for worship and fellowship. We are planning to continue to gather during the weekdays at homes then

• See BELÉN page 8 •

### Financial Report BMA Of Missouri Missions November 2025

<u>Checking Account:</u>	
Balance Oct. 31	\$ 17,132.65
<u>Income:</u>	
Missions	\$ 2,487.03
Garwood Ins Reimb	<u>6,000.00</u>
Total Income	\$ <u>8,487.03</u>
Total Available	\$ 25,619.68
<u>Expenses:</u>	
Director, salary/bonus	\$ 450.00
Secretary, salary/bonus	200.00
Juan Fernandez, support	2,333.33
New Testament – Hillside	<u>600.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$ <u>(3,583.33)</u>
Balance Nov. 30	\$ 22,036.35
<u>BMAMS Revolving Loan Investment:</u>	
Balance Oct. 31	\$ 124,239.38
Interest	<u>0.00</u>
Balance Nov. 30	\$ <u>124,239.38</u>
Total in All Accounts Nov. 30	\$ 146,275.73

## The Missouri Missionary Baptist

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## Excerpts from Hillside, Union, Newsletter

Dear BMA Supporting Churches,

God is doing an awesome work in Union, MO.

The last couple of months have been very busy getting ready for our soft launch of the Union church plant (Hillside Baptist Church). During this time of preparation, I have noticed a little eye discomfort. I had an appointment with my primary doctor on Wednesday, November 19, for an annual checkup, and she said, "you have gotten worse." I told her I have sharp pains in my eyes, and my vision was getting worse. I thought I would just get over it. She ordered an MRI that day, which I had on Friday. The report came back as no new lesions but indicated I had MS symptoms related to optic nerve inflammation. Sunday night the doctor called and sent me to the ER where they began to give me high doses of IV steroids for the next three days. This was followed by a prescription of 15 days of oral steroids. Currently, most doctors specializing in MS are scheduling patients 6-11 months out. God worked it out, and I have an appointment in December. Vision is a scary thing to lose, and I covet your prayers.

Striving together,  
Bro. Chuck Tedrow, Church Planter

## Camp Garwood

Season's Greetings from Camp Garwood. We praise the Lord for His blessings and have many reasons to be thankful.

We were blessed to receive support from the sale of Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church in Sikeston, MO. While the support is a blessing, it breaks our heart to see another church closed. We continue to pray for her former members.

At Matthews we are kicking off the Advent season with our Bethlehem Village – our annual live nativity. We have multiple booths set up to enhance the experience. There is an inn keeper with no vacancy, a seller of fine linens, a pottery shop, a beverage shop and bakery/café. This year a musical shop has been added. The sheep stables are always popular, as well as the camels that hang out around the manger. There are Roman soldiers wandering the main street randomly checking for tax papers. The village is extra crowded this year because of the new tax decree.

Our nativity is usually a chaotic scene. We try to use kids because they are cute. The downside is, they are kids and they get impatient, cold, restless. You never know

what they will say or do. One year Mary and the angels were fighting over who gets to hold Baby Jesus. We'll let you know how this year turns out!

I know – that's not camp news. But there isn't much camp activity this time of year. The hunters have come and gone. We have the water drained and ready for winter. I'm working on a list of to-do's for 2026.

We have the Master's Builders coming from April 27th through May 8th. Sis. Bea Evans is organizing the meal plan for those days. Please get with her if you can help with a meal or two.

The Builders will be working on the tabernacle along with a few routine repairs, replacing fencing, and if time allows they will build some new recreation areas.

Whatever you do this season – whether it's shopping, decorating, cooking or if you find yourself refereeing a fight between Mary and Gabriel – remember the reason we are celebrating the season is bigger and better than the situation you find yourself in.

Merry Christmas from the Polk family on behalf of Camp Garwood!

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## Alive Student Conference

December 29-31 • DoubleTree, Chesterfield

### Monday, December 29

5:00-7:00..... Check in at DoubleTree ..... Hotel  
5:00-7:00..... Registration (Sponsors).....Ballroom Entrance  
6:45-7:00..... Prayer Time ..... Ballroom/Lobby  
7:00-8:30..... General Session #1 – Michael Strong ..... Ballroom  
9:00-12:00..... Recreation ..... Kokomo Joe's

### Tuesday, December 30

10:15-10:30..... Prayer Time ..... Ballroom/Lobby  
10:30-12:00..... General Session #2 – Michael Strong ..... Ballroom  
12:00-1:30..... Lunch ..... Off Campus  
2:00-3:00..... Break Out Session ..... Ballroom  
3:00-6:45..... Free Time and Dinner ..... Off Campus  
6:45-7:00..... Prayer Time ..... Ballroom/Lobby  
7:00-8:30..... General Session #3 – Michael Strong ..... Ballroom  
9:00-??? ..... Entertainment – Bob Smiley ..... Ballroom

### Wednesday, December 31

9:00-9:45..... Pack Up ..... Your Room  
9:45-10:00..... Prayer Time ..... Ballroom/Lobby  
10:00-11:30..... General Session #4 – Michael Strong ..... Ballroom

*...and they shall call His name*

*Emmanuel,*

*which means God with us*

## ▪ Updates from Our Churches ▪

### **Kewanee, New Madrid**

Greetings from Kewanee Missionary Baptist Church. We hope everyone enjoyed a very blessed Thanksgiving with family and friends. I am still trying to get back into the swing of being off Daylight Saving Time. I know it's only an hour, but I feel like it adds at least three more hours of darkness to each day!!

Our pastor enjoyed a well-deserved vacation this month. He went deer hunting and came back with a 12-point buck and a doe. I would say that was a very successful deer season!

Sis. Terri Adams led a special veterans program on November 9th before worship service. All of our veterans that were present that day were recognized with special words, a video of veterans past and present, and special music by Rhonda Bickerstaff. We are so thankful for their service, and to all veterans that chose to join the military and put their lives on the line to serve our nation, also.

Our youth have begun their Christmas program practice for 2025! They put so much work and love into this each year. Can't wait to see what they have in store. We are praying for the kids and their leaders as they prepare for this program in December.

Until next month....Remember the reason for the season-

*Dan Wisely, Pastor  
Debbie Nowell, Reporter*

### **Bethel, Sikeston**

Greetings to all from Bethel, Sikeston. I hope everyone had a blessed Thanksgiving with your family and friends.

Our sympathies go to our pastor and wife as Sis. Donna's sister left this world Thanksgiving Day to go to her heavenly home after a long battle with cancer – no more pain or suffering. She will be sadly missed by her family and friends. Please keep them in your prayers.

Some of our ladies are working with our youth on a Christmas program. We are so thankful for these ladies and our youth.

Our plans are to go Christmas caroling again this year, but we plan on going to the nursing homes instead of house to house. You are welcome to join us for this joyous occasion.

On the 30th Sis. Laura Little came forward, gave her testimony and requested to join the church by statement. She was accepted and given the hand of fellowship and lots of hugs. God is so good all the time!!

We pray everyone has a blessed, merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year!! We look forward to souls being saved and saints being revived in the year 2026! May God bless you all!

*Billy Davis, Pastor  
Joan Wood, Reporter*

### **Lower Doe Run, Ellington**

Greetings! November, the season of special thanksgiving! We know that every day and every season is for giving thanks to our Almighty God. As Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:18: *In everything give thanks for this is the will of God...* Our gratitude should spill out in our everyday living. Do our acquaintances know the source

of our thanksgiving? Jesus Christ came to die for my sins. "With His blood He has saved me, with His power He has raised me. To God Be the Glory."

We are so thankful for visitors who have come back four weeks and indicate they will join as members soon. Ron and Quannah Fears have moved back to the old homeplace in Ellington. Their son, Stacy, and his family visited from near Beebe, AR, one Sunday. We are enjoying their fellowship. Brother Ron has pastored in Missouri but the past few years has been pastoring an ABA church in Arkansas. If anyone wants to contact him to preach at your church his number is (501) 206-6574.

The Children's Church on Wednesday evenings continues to be a blessing with a few faithful kiddos. Ladies Bible Study on Wednesday afternoons continues to be a blessing as we study the life of Jesus through the Gospel of Luke.

The Helen Morris family held their Thanksgiving dinner at our fellowship hall on the 22nd. Helen is not able to attend services every Sunday and we miss her. Frieda Williams comes from the home in Piedmont every week with Janet Howard. God has truly blessed them at the Clark's Mountain Home with more opportunities to minister.

*Melvin Meade, Pastor  
Carolyn Meade, Reporter*

### **Landmark, DeSoto**

Hello to everyone from Landmark, DeSoto! Sorry I missed last month's deadline. I was distracted by the after-

math of a suicidal deer hitting my car (I REFUSE to say I hit the deer; that deer hit me!) on October 29th after Wednesday night Bible study. Both the deer and my car were killed. But PRAISE THE LORD, I walked away from the accident with just very minor bumps and bruises. Ain't God good? Yes, He is!

Attendance has been up over the past two months, for which we are very grateful. Three people were baptized in October – Wahoo! These are the first baptisms we've had in a while. One of our members (possibly Bro. Dale Hawkins?) thought we could make it even more special by putting goldfish in the baptistry, but no one remembered to buy the goldfish. We have several more "regular" visitors, and we're praying they will also decide to officially become part of our Landmark church family.

Bro. Len continues to feed the flock with inspired messages from God. For some time now, we have been broadcasting the Sunday morning sermon live on Facebook, and we've gotten positive responses from as far away as India and Africa. It's such a blessing to be able to share God's Word globally.

Past news: Our October hot dog roast was well attended and I was told everybody had a good time of fellowship. (I wasn't able to go due to a prior family commitment.) In November, we hosted a free community meal on Thanksgiving Day. Several members

attended along with quite a few DeSoto residents. HUMONGOUS thank-yous to all the people who helped prepare the meal. Couldn't have been done without that team effort!

Our deepest sympathy goes out to Joan Graham, Waylon, Mystie, and family on the death of Jimmy Graham. We pray that God will fill them up with His peace that passes all understanding.

Many of our members are dealing with health and other issues. We ask for your prayers for us as we keep on lifting you up in prayer also.

Upcoming news: We're working on a Christmas program but haven't set the exact date yet... Running just a tad bit behind (duh!). BUT we'll post the details on the Landmark Baptist Church Facebook page very, very soon!

In the meantime, hope all of you have a wonderful and joyful Christmas season with heaps of blessings throughout the coming year!

*Len Young, Pastor  
Barb Williams, Reporter*

### **Oak Hill, Alton**

HELLO to all from Oak Hill! We hope and pray that everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving, as we did.

November was not a good month for Sis. Margaret Grammer because after she fell and broke her hip then she fell again and broke the femur in her other leg. She is doing well staying in West Vue nursing home receiving physical therapy. Bro. Tom

## ~ Upcoming Events ~

**Alive Youth Conference** – Dec. 29-31;  
DoubleTree, Chesterfield  
**CBC Homecoming** – Jan. 16-17  
**World Missions Day** – Feb. 23; "The Gospel Changes Everything"  
**CBC Scholarship Gala** – March 6;  
Antioch, Conway, AR

**MO State WMA and Brotherhood Annual Meeting** – March 7; Stony Point, Mineral Point  
**BMAA National Meeting** – April 21-22;  
Antioch, Conway, AR

*Send event info to mmbpaper@gmail.com.*

### **Bethany, St. Louis**

After 93 years, with 55 years at its current location, the curtain is coming down on Bethany Baptist Church. The late Bro. Jim Hoffmann was the last pastor at Bethany and there were a few who remained faithful to the end: Darlene, Jean, Evon, Tiny, Mary, and Ted & Ella. Bro. Michael Hearst of Westview Baptist Church of Jefferson City filled the Bethany pulpit from time to time for the last 26 months. Bethany's property on Midland Blvd. in St. Louis is being sold to Living Faith Baptist Church on December 5. Bro. Blade Sbisá will be leading the Living Faith congregation. All proceeds from the sale of the property will go to the BMA of America.

*Michael Hearst, Reporting*

is still having some back problems, and his health is not always at its best. Aunt Earlene is having some good days and bad days with her health. Carstyn has one more test this week and hopefully it will tell the doctors what needs to be done, if anything.

We did not have our fifth Sunday dinner at the end of November because of people having company over, and we did not want to have everyone rush, but enjoy their Thanksgiving meal with family and friends.

As far as I know, we do not have any plans for Christmas. We would like to wish everyone a very merry and blessed Christmas. We want to wish everyone a blessed and happy New Year!

Until next month I hope I will have some more good news to tell you, but until

then we will be praising and honoring our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! God Bless!!

*Edward Casey, Pastor  
Jennifer Williams, Reporter*

### **Mount Olive, Salem**

Hello from Mount Olive in Salem, Missouri.

Bro. Keith Adkins was saved in our May revival. He later made the decision to join our church. It was a wonderful service as we gathered together at the riverside for Keith's baptism in July.

We had a great time at our annual progressive dinner at Regine's Restaurant in Salem. Our fun waitress joined in the fun and laughter with us. We are so thankful that she felt like she was a part of our group!

Bro. Steve Gillam attended the State Brotherhood fishing tournament. It is always

a time of fun and fellowship with brothers in Christ. We had our annual chili cookoff in September. Our workday at the church house was a success! We have had two visitors attending for several Sundays now! We are so blessed by their attendance.

Our WMA ladies have been busy reaching out to our community. It is a blessing for all of us at Mount Olive as the WMA ladies spend time giving gifts, snacks and meals to businesses and families in our community! A special thanks to Bro. Jim Rayfield for being our delivery man when needed!

Sunday morning, October 12, we honored our pastor Bro. Larry and Sis. Rhonda for Pastor Appreciation Sunday! That evening we were blessed to have our missionary Bro. Charlie Costa with

us. We enjoyed a great time of fellowship with him after he presented his mission field information. The following Sunday our pastor shared the Lifeword video before worship service. Saturday, November 8th, we had our Thanksgiving meal. It was a great time of thanksgiving, food and fun fellowship.

On November 16th missionary Bro. Precios from Haiti (son of the late missionary Bro. Francois) was in our service. It was a blessing to meet him since his father had presented the Haiti mission field information at our church too. It was an emotional time for Bro. Precios and Mount Olive members as he shared with us about his father's unexpected death and how the mission field is doing in Haiti after his father's death. Sis. Deiatre Gil-

lam sang and dedicated the song, "My House is Full" in memory of Bro. Francois and the mission field in Haiti.

We are busy now working on our Christmas program to be presented on Sunday, December 21st, at 11:00 a.m. Everyone is welcome! We will have our Christmas party December 13th at 3:00 p.m. in the fellowship hall.

We have many Mount Olive memories to look back on in 2025. We will ring the New Year in on December 31st at our watch night service and fun fellowship. Thank you for your prayers in 2025! We look forward to what God is going to do at Mount Olive in the new year! We are going to keep on keeping on for Jesus! Bring it on, 2026!! We are excited and ready!!

*Larry Nash, Pastor  
Deiatre Gillam, Reporter*

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## **Fully Exonerated by God's Grace and Power**

Michael Goodwin, EIM President/Program Director

*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. (Isaiah 54:17)*

This was the verse God brought to my heart on Thursday evening, October 30th. For nearly sixteen months, our family has walked through the darkest season of our lives. Many of you know that in May of 2019, we buried my mother. Ten months later, we buried my sister Mitzi. We thought that valley might be the deepest we'd ever face. We had no idea that an even darker one lay ahead.

On August 15, 2024, State Police arrived at Dad's door and took him in for questioning. By nightfall, he was in handcuffs and taken to jail, accused of nine counts of possessing child pornography on a laptop found in his home. Three months prior, a search warrant had been served for all electronic devices in his home and EIM office. We were concerned, yes, but we truly didn't believe anything would come of it. That changed dramatically on August 15.

After posting bail, Dad was released. In September 2024, we had our first court date, where he was arraigned and formally charged. It would take thirteen long months before he finally had his day in court. As we reviewed the evidence, or lack thereof, from the State, and compared it to the evidence we had, our confidence grew. We believed Dad would be found innocent. But during those twelve months of waiting, we also believed God would intervene before the trial ever began. We prayed for dismissal, for resolution, for deliverance. Yet God, in His sovereignty, chose to take us through the trial.

Throughout this season, we clung to the truth that God has the final say. For twenty-seven years, I've preached that God is sovereign over all things, that He works all things for our good and His glory, even when we don't understand. It's one thing to preach that truth; it's another to live it.

Another verse that sustained us was 2 Corinthians 12:9, where God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient." We found ourselves learning to live in that all-sufficient grace. My dad has preached the gospel for sixty-three years. There are few verses I could quote to him that he didn't already know, believe, and understand. But as we often said during this journey, "It's one thing to believe it; it's another thing to live it."

I watched my dad draw closer to God than ever before. A man who had preached for three-quarters of his life was now hungering for the Word in a new way. I saw an 87-year-old man age before my eyes. I saw him weep often, discouraged and beaten down. But praise God, I never saw him fall. He may

have bent, but he never broke.

This was a man who had buried his wife of sixty years and his precious daughter Mitzi, whom he called his prayer warrior. I saw him cast down but not destroyed. And I didn't know if this time he would survive. My prayers shifted from asking for justice to asking for his survival. He was sleeping only two to three hours a night. I often wondered how much more he could endure. But every time he reached his lowest, God would raise him up and deposit fresh grace into his spirit.

Then came October 30, 2025. After two days of hearings, the jury entered deliberation. I'll be honest, it's terrifying knowing your father's future rests in the hands of twelve people. But I also knew that on October 29th and 30th, thousands of prayers were bombarding heaven.

At around 6:45 p.m. Thursday evening, after just ninety minutes of deliberation, the jury returned with a verdict: innocent on all counts. The courtroom erupted. Hands were raised, voices lifted in praise, tears flowed freely, and hugs were exchanged. And Isaiah 54:17 rang true:

*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn...*

The State acknowledged that the laptop in question was compromised by viruses and malware, which had infected the device through Bro. Rocky's Wi-Fi modem, casting further doubt on the integrity of the digital evidence. They could not prove he was present in the home when the alleged offenses occurred, and the defense showed he had been traveling out of state on multiple occasions.

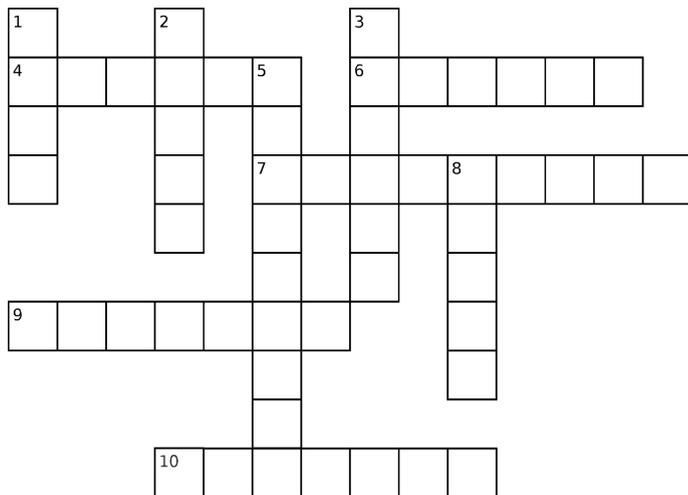
We at EIM understand the seriousness of these charges. Evangelistic International Ministries will not allow anyone to work for us or even travel with us who has been convicted of such deplorable behavior. We believe nothing is more serious and sinful than exploiting children in any way.

To all who stood with us these past seventeen months, thank you. To the churches who continued supporting EIM, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Your texts, calls, messages, encouragement, love, and especially your prayers carried us. Many of you never wavered in believing in Dad's innocence. You remained faithful in your monthly support, allowing EIM to continue reaching the world with the gospel. Through it all, we only lost a handful of churches. We praise God for that. Many of you could have pulled your support, and we would have understood. But you didn't. And because you didn't, EIM had a fruitful year, seeing souls come to Christ.

• See FULLY page 6 •

## Who Said? – Christmas Edition

Can you identify who said each of the following in events related to the Christmas story? If you get stuck, there are hints provided on page 8 of this paper. (Feel free to make copies of the puzzle for sharing.)



### Down:

1. How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?
2. Seek out the young child and return that I may worship him also.
3. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.
5. Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing the Lord has made known to us.
8. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord

### Across:

4. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
6. My eyes have seen your salvation.
7. At the sound of your greeting the baby in my womb leapt for joy.
9. You are highly favored; blessed are you among women.
10. We have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him.

*She gave birth to her firstborn son  
and wrapped him in swaddling cloths  
and laid him in a manger*

### • From FULLY page 5 •

Dad has now been reinstated as CEO of EIM and is excited for what lies ahead. As I told him after the trial, “Hey Dad, let’s go finish well.” That’s our desire, to get back on the road and do what God has called us to do.

Some have asked if Dad is okay financially. While he hasn’t struggled, this journey came at a cost. His legal expenses were significant, but he covered them himself. For the past seventeen months, he has not drawn a salary from Calvary Baptist Church or received his housing allowance from EIM. Yet through it all, God

has proven Himself faithful.

In closing, let me leave you with this: *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.* (2 Corinthians 12:9–10)

Please know how deeply we love each of you.

Until He comes,  
Mike Goodwin



## My Memorial Candle

Cindy Allen

When the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River, God instructed Joshua to have 12 men gather stones from the middle of the river and build a memorial to the event on the other side. When people questioned the stones, they were instructed to tell them of the wondrous thing God had done here.

I have a memorial in my life. It is not near as grand as a stone monument but it reminds me of a specific prayer God answered at a time I really needed an answer. It is a gold birthday candle, and I have had it for 20 or 25 years. Way back when, I taught a lesson on prayer and I really don’t remember the lesson or what the candle had to do with it. But we prayed and God heard my prayer and answered it in a way that caused something good to happen at my church and in my life. So, I held on to that candle as a reminder.

Tonight, I was sitting at my desk praying and I saw that candle. My prayer was very heavy; I have a big burden I really need God to fix. I have prayed this same request for almost a year. I have friends who are praying with me. Despite all of this, God has not “fixed” my problem. He is answering my prayer with the ever frustrating “wait.”

I don’t know how long that candle has been on my desk; but tonight, of all nights, it caught my attention. Tonight, I was able to tell God He was enough even if my problem did not turn out the way I want it to. Tonight, I feel like He has given me words that need to be spoken into the situation and I am going to speak; and I feel a peace about that. Tonight, I really noticed the candle. It kind of resembles how I feel about this situation. It is a little bent, a little scraped up, a little worn. But as I held my little candle – that 20-plus year old candle – I was reminded that God is faithful and just and loving. He hears my prayers and He answers them. Not always the way I want them answered, but always for good.

My friends and I discussed this just last week. God’s good doesn’t always feel good. But we view good through human, earthly eyes. He views good

through perfection, through the lens of drawing me closer to Him, molding me in the image of Christ. I heard a quote just yesterday from a woman who grew up in an Amish household. She said, “Early in my life I thought life was good and God was harsh. But I have come to realized life is hard but God is good.” Tonight, I feel like that peace has settled into my heart.

I pray my problem comes to a good end. But tonight, I am reminded, more than a “yes” to a human, earthly prayer, what we truly need is to see the faithfulness of God. He isn’t missing in the “no” or “wait” answers to our prayers; He is still there. He is ALWAYS there. We are never promised ease of life; in fact, Jesus promises quite the opposite. But we are promised God *will never leave us nor forsake us*. And do you know who he made that specific promise to? Joshua. Right before he led the people into the Promised Land, across the Jordan River.

Maybe you need to look around for a monument in your life. It may be something tangible, like my candle, or it may just be a memory. If it is a memory, write it down and put in your Bible. In a way only God can work, it will probably show up again at just the right time, to serve as a memorial to God’s faithfulness. And when it does, do what God told the children of Israel to do, let others know the mighty work God has done.

*Prayer:* Lord, so many have heavy hearts for so many reasons. Satan is working overtime to create chaos in the beauty you created. Help us, help me, to trust you – to look to you for answers but also for faith and growth and peace. Lord as we wait, help us to be reminded of your faithfulness. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

*Scripture Reading:* Joshua 4; Psalm 36; II Timothy 2:1-13

*Response:* Thank God for answered prayers and ask Him to give you the faith to truly believe He still can and will work for your good. If you see a brother or sister struggling, share your experience with them.

# The Gospel Changes Everything

BMA Global

## How God Turned My Doubt into Faith

Manar's story (Middle East)

My name is Manar. I'm a pastry chef, a mother of three – ages 10, 11 and 12 – and a widow for eight years. When my youngest was still a toddler, my husband became a believer in Christ. I, however, wanted nothing to do with it. In fact, the more he talked about his faith, the more resistant I became. I dug in my heels and eventually declared myself an atheist.

After he passed away, I decided (only to honor his wishes) to take our children to Sunday school at a church I'd heard about. While they were in class, I would sit through the main service, but not to listen. I took notes on what to argue against. I wanted to prove the preacher wrong, to show that this whole thing was an illusion. I even joined the ladies' Bible study, not to learn, but to challenge and snap back at anyone who spoke up. My heart was hard, and my face showed it. I carried anger like armor.

But something happened that I never expected. Week after week, as I sat in that BMA church, I started to notice something different. The people there showed me a love I couldn't explain. The

Word of God began to cut through my defenses. And little by little, God revealed Himself to me – through their kindness, their patience, and His undeniable grace.

Last November, I was baptized.

Through a women's ministry that many of you support here in the Middle East, God completed the story He started years ago. I found Jesus. I found a church family that loves and disciples me. And I found a way to use the talents He gave me for His glory. I bake bread for communion, make sweets for fellowship, teach kitchen courses, and even open my home each week for a Bible study. The same woman who once argued against believers is now serving them with joy.

My name, Manar, means "a source of light." Today, by God's grace, I finally understand that name. He has turned my darkness into light, and now I want to shine that light as brightly as I can, for His glory.



## Morteza's Story

(Afghanistan)

I was born into a Muslim family, and as a teenager, I was required to follow all the rules of Islam. At first, I wanted to obey those rules because I wanted to be like my parents. But after years of trying to do everything that was expected of me, I realized I had no real relationship with God.

I was doing everything I was told to do, yet I still felt empty. Questions began to rise in my heart:

Why do I have to pray five times a day?

Why do I have to follow all these rules?

Why do I have to speak to God in Arabic when I don't even understand it and my language is Persian?

I wanted to truly know God. I asked many people for answers, but no one could give me a response that satisfied me. They only said, "We must follow these rules because they will take us to heaven." But I kept wondering, "Where is God in all of this? How can I really know Him?"

Eventually, I decided to stop following Islam because I couldn't find God in it. I told myself, "There is a God, but I don't know where He is."

Years later, I came to Greece as an immigrant. Life was very difficult. One day, a friend invited me to church. I remember that first time vividly – everyone there was praying for me, and I felt something I had never experienced before. I felt that someone was telling me I was no longer alone and that He would always be with me.

After that, I wanted to keep coming to church, even though I didn't fully understand why. One day, I asked the people there why they were so kind and

## Healed Where It Mattered Most

Maria's story (Philippines)

My story begins in one of the hardest seasons of my life. I was battling stage 4 breast cancer, and I was full of anger and bitterness. My life had been hard, and now this diagnosis felt like the final blow. I blamed God for everything – my pain, my struggles, and my cancer. I didn't want to hear about Him, and I didn't want anything to do with church or the Bible.

It was during my treatments at St. Luke's Hospital that I met Rita. She came often to talk with cancer patients, and for some reason, she seemed especially drawn to me. At first, I didn't know why. I wasn't easy to get along with... I had built a wall of bitterness and hatred around my heart. But Rita just kept showing up. Week after week, when I went in for chemotherapy, she was there. She didn't push me; she just listened. Slowly, little by little, my heart began to soften.

I started noticing something different about her. There was a peace, a joy, that I didn't have. Eventually, I let her share about Jesus with me. But one day, right in the middle of our conversation, my treatment ended, and I had to leave. She hadn't finished telling me what she wanted to say. Later, she began sending me text messages to explain more about salvation through Jesus Christ. I remember reading her words, questioning, responding, and asking if I understood. And then, through those messages, something incredible happened – my heart surrendered. I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior, right there with my phone in

my hand.

The next time I saw Rita, I was a completely different person. While receiving my chemotherapy, I couldn't help but raise my hands and praise God. I had joy I had never known before. My children were amazed, and they couldn't believe the change. The same mother who had once forbidden them to read their Bibles or go to Bible studies was now encouraging them to do so. The woman who used to be harsh, bitter, and angry had become gentle, loving, and full of laughter. Jesus had made me new.

That change didn't stop with me. Soon, we began a Bible study at Rita's apartment with my family, other cancer patients, and others from the building. God even used me to lead my sister, who was also a stage 4 cancer patient, to Christ. I was able to share the gospel with my nephew and several other family members as well. My children already knew the Lord, but through my testimony, even more lives were touched. Honestly, I don't know how many people came to Christ through my story, but I do know this: when Jesus changes your life, people can't help but notice and want what you have.

*Maria and her sister have since gone to be with the Lord, but they left this world with joy, peace, and hearts overflowing with love for Jesus. Maria's life may have started with bitterness and anger, but it ended with hope and a legacy that will live on in her family and in every life touched by the grace of God.*

.....

helpful to others. They told me, "Because Jesus Christ loves us, and that's why we love others."

That answer touched my heart. I began reading the Bible, and for the first time, I found the answers I had been searching for all my life – answers about what it means to worship and who God truly is. As I read, I came to know Jesus Christ more deeply and began to see how great He is.

One day we read Ephesians 2:8-9: *For by grace you have been saved through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.* I remembered how in Islam, we are taught that we can go to heaven only through our good works. But here, I read that salvation is a gift from God, through Jesus Christ. That's when I said to myself, "This is the truth I've been searching for all these years. Jesus is my path."

## Homecoming 2026: A Celebration of Mustang Spirit!

As the fall semester winds down, excitement is already building for one of our favorite weekends of the year. Homecoming is almost here! Mark your calendars for January 16–17 and make plans to return to campus for two unforgettable days of fun, fellowship, and Mustang pride.

We're starting our homecoming festivities at 11:00 a.m. on Friday, January 16, with our annual Chili Cook-Off, a CBC favorite that always brings the heat. Several campus departments will compete for the top spot, and students will also join in on the fun. Alumni are invited to form their own teams, so grab your apron, perfect your recipe, and register online to serve up your best bowl of chili. It's sure to be a deliciously good time!

Join us Friday at 6:00 p.m. in the A.R. Reddin Fieldhouse for an evening filled with laughter and memories. One of our favorites and best-attended events is our Homecoming Carnival, complete with hot chocolate, funnel cakes, games, and inflatables for all ages. It's the perfect way for alumni, students, and families to reconnect and celebrate the CBC community together.

Saturday kicks off with our Generations Breakfast at 9:30 a.m., honoring families who have shared the CBC experience for more than 50 years. We encourage all generational families to join us for this special time of stories, fellowship, and celebration of our shared legacy.

At 11:00 a.m., join us in the Dining Hall for the annual Alumni Luncheon, where we'll recognize this year's Alumni Award recipients, enjoy a great meal, and give away some fun door prizes.

Then it's game time! Make plans to be in A.R. Reddin Fieldhouse at 1:00 p.m. as the Mustangs and Lady Mustangs take on Columbia College. Stay for the Homecoming Court presentation between the women's and men's games, a tradition that is always one of the biggest highlights of the day.

Don't miss a moment of the fun! To register for the Chili Cook-Off, CBC Generations Gathering, or Alumni Luncheon, visit [cbc.edu/homecoming](http://cbc.edu/homecoming).

For more information, contact Mallory Guyton, Alumni and Digital Communications Coordinator, at (501) 205-8875 or [mguyton@cbc.edu](mailto:mguyton@cbc.edu).

We look forward to welcoming you back to CBC for Homecoming 2026, where every moment reminds us that you'll always be part of the Mustang family.



## Exciting Courses at BMA Seminary

David G. Hellwig, Vice President/Dean

Time is flying by fast! By the time you read this article, the Fall 2025 semester at the BMA Seminary in Jacksonville, TX, will be nearing completion or already completed. That means we are getting geared up for a brand-new Spring 2026 semester. In addition to the typical three-credit-hour courses we offer for degree seekers and non-degree seekers alike, we will be offering one-credit-hour courses that will be one-third of the price of our regular classes. For just \$325 (plus a small library and online fee), you can earn one-credit hour at the seminary. These mini courses will only require about four to five weeks of your time!

These classes are designed for those who might want information about a particular topic but do not have the time to invest in a 15-week course. You might be a pastor or Sunday School teacher wishing to enhance your knowledge in a specific area. You might be a believer wanting to learn more about the Bible, missions, or counseling. Below is a list of the one-credit-hour courses that will be offered in the Spring 2026 semester:

- Introduction to Missions and Cross-Cultural Church Planting

- Paul's major letters (Romans; 1 & 2 Corinthians; Galatians)
- The General Epistles (Hebrews; James; 1 & 2 Peter; 1-3 John)
- Poetic Books of the Old Testament
- Inductive Bible Study
- Biblical Understanding of Prayer
- Biblical Understanding of Worship
- Biblical Crisis Counseling and Intervention

We also offer a free class every Spring and Fall semester. The free class for Spring 2026 will be focused on evangelism. This course will emphasize two things: (1) understanding what the gospel is and (2) learning how to share its truth. Those taking the course who may not yet be saved will definitely hear the gospel. Those who are already saved and interested in learning how to share the gospel will observe a clear, reproducible presentation of the gospel.

If any of the above topics interest you, give us a call at (903) 586-2501 or email your inquiries to [bmats@bmats.edu](mailto:bmats@bmats.edu). Those desiring to engage with the free course can fill out an inquiry at <https://bmats.edu/free/>. We would love to hear from you!

## 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.

**Johnny Beardsley, Jr.**, has recently been licensed to preach by Lower Doe Run Baptist Church of Ellington and is available for pulpit supply. He can be reached at (573) 300-8460. (1225)

**Ron Fears**, is available for preaching. 768 CR 608, Ellington, MO 63638. (501) 206-6574. (0226)

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).

### Who Said?

Here are scripture references to help with each clue in the crossword puzzle on page 6.

Down:

1. Luke 1:34
2. Matt 2:7-8
3. Isaiah 9:6
5. Luke 2:15
8. Luke 2:10-11

Across:

4. Luke 2:13-14
6. Luke 2:28-30
7. Luke 1:41-44
9. Luke 1:26-28
10. Matt 2:1-2

### • From BELÉN page 2 •

on the second Sunday of the month to bring these families together to celebrate corporate worship. To Him be the glory.

Prayer

- Salvation for each one of our families we have been reaching out to since December 2020.
- Training for our core team members, that each one understands the paradigm of following Jesus and his disciple's teachings.
- For new homes with open doors for the gospel among our target cities: Florissant and Chesterfield.
- For our family, joy to serve the Lord and the sense of being supported – not only financially, but also making known that we belong to a family of families for the expansion of the kingdom.
- Each place of worship we gather to be a safe, comfortable and inviting place where our new friends can be welcome and be born again.
- For baptisms this year. We are praying that the Lord will bring conviction to each one in the families we are reaching out to so there is no doubt of God's calling to repentance and a profession of faith.
- For my studies at BMA seminary; it has been a major challenge.

In Him, His service and His grace,

Juan Fernandez

P.S.: Wishing you and your church family a *Feliz Navidad* and *Prospero Año Nuevo 2026!*

*For unto us a  
Child is born,  
unto us a Son is given*