

The Sentinel

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WE
STAND
WATCH

January, 2024
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How to Choose?

By Pastor Troy Bassham
Senior Pastor

Do not go where it is all fine music and grand talk and beautiful architecture, go where the Gospel is preached and go often.

Charles Spurgeon

A few days back, 2023 turned into 2024 and I was again made aware of how quickly the years are moving by.

The Blink of an Eye

Suddenly our household has two high schoolers. We are having regular conversations with our oldest about future plans, colleges, career, and similar subjects. Spiritual conversations are as important as ever—maybe more so.

One of the many conversations we recently had was about how to choose a church. Our kids have

attended a church that I have worked at for their entire lives. Even if ministry wasn't my vocation, they likely would have attended the same church as **Lori** and me.

Soon enough, life could take them any number of different directions. We discussed the Spurgeon quote listed above. *"Don't go to the cool church,"* I said. *"Go to the church where they preach the Bible and are following Jesus faithfully. Go to a church where you can grow in faith and knowledge and where you will be equipped to serve."*

So, HOW?

So, I decided to continue the same discussion here in this month's article.

How do you choose a church? I paused

→ Please see **"Choosing"**
on page 2.



know. grow. go.

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Deadline for February, 2024 ISSUE is:

Monday, January 29, 2024
@ 5:00 pm

Choosing

← (Continued from page 1.)

Adobe Stock

as I wrote those last few words, because it's not my desire for anyone at EBC to start looking elsewhere. At the same time, it is important for all of us to reflect on why we attend, whether that be here *or anywhere else*.

MANY Reasons!

There are lots of reasons that people choose churches: location, reputation, denomination. Some reasons should be non-negotiable: Biblical beliefs and a pursuit of Christlikeness. Other areas are important as well, such as:

✠ *Are the people engaged in ministry?*

✠ *Am I welcome to join them?*

✠ *Will I grow in knowledge and service?*

Even MORE Options!

In a country with so many options, there are so many things to consider. But I hope, should you ever move to a new community or congregation, that you are focused on what is truly important—what the Church is truly supposed to be about.

I know too many people who are more focused on reasons that are less essential. Such as:

✠ *That's where my friends go.*

This is a great reason if the church is sound. If you can follow the Savior

with your friends, that's awesome. But if you are sitting under bad teaching with your friends, not so much.

✠ *I love the music.*

Maybe re-read the above Spurgeon quote. I'm not saying music is unimportant, but placing musical preference above doctrine and mission seems problematic.

✠ *I can't go there. The building is ugly. I hate the chairs/pews. They meet in a school. They don't have air conditioning. Etc.*

Remember that the Church is the people, not the building in which they meet in. I'm all for air conditioning on a hot day and heat in the winter, but the early persecuted Christians met in catacombs. Believers in developing countries meet in the most meager of structures. Following Christ faithfully must be more important than architecture and comfort.

Know What's Important!

I could go on. I hope you get the point I was trying to make to my children before the day comes when they fly the nest. Likewise, I hope all of us consider why we go to church and what is really important.

This is a necessary conversation. Perhaps more important (*unless you are getting ready to go church-shopping*) is evaluating whether we are focused on being the type of church that we are called to be. Is our primary concern being happy, comfortable, and contemporary ... OR ... are we focused on our Savior, the Gospel, and growing in faith?

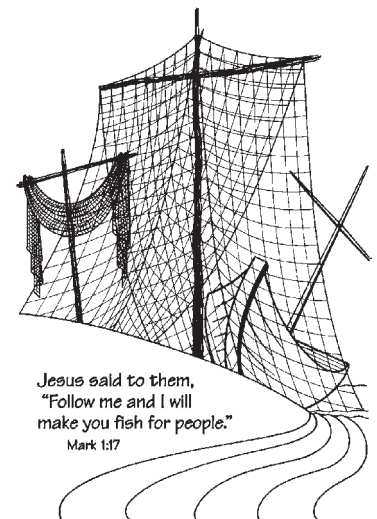
You Can Have ...

You can have things like air-conditioning and nice landscaping *without* compromising the mission. You can have a service style that is a welcome place to bring non-believers *as long as* you don't water down the message. You can have many of the secondary things that people look for in a church *as long as* you also realize that they are not essential.

Whether believers gather in a glorious cathedral or are cramped together in a small house church, Christ works through His people who seek Him first.

I'll close with this. For many years, my dad was a church planter/turnaround pastor. That means he was sent to congregations that were just starting, or that were trying not to die. In my younger years, I grew up in churches that had small numbers, limited ministry offerings, inadequate facilities, and, sometimes, really bad music. **But** it was in these places that I saw Jesus work. Congregations grew in numbers and people grew in faith. Because in these places, the church was being the church.

Looking back, it was in these messy, un-cool spaces that I learned to follow my Savior. ✠



Jesus said to them,
"Follow me and I will
make you fish for people."
Mark 1:17

Likewise, I hope all of us consider why we go to church and what is really important.

EBC Men's
Ministry

PANCAKE FEED

JANUARY 13, 2024

TICKETS
\$5.00

DOORS OPEN AT 7:30
BREAKFAST SERVED AT 8:00



EBC Annual Business Meeting

Sunday
January 28, 2024
4:00 pm

Please come and hear
important updates about
our many local and global
ministries!



From the EBC Office!

Office News and Notes

By Alison Johnson



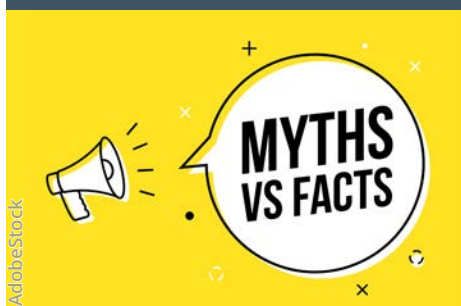
This month is full of a lot of busy work in the office. The packets for the annual congregational business meeting will be posted for two weeks before the scheduled meeting on January 28.

The annual contribution receipts will be available by January 21 for pickup on Sunday mornings or at the office. Any that are not picked up will be mailed out on January 30.

Half-Day Fridays!

The office will continue to be open just half the day on Fridays until we have filled the office assistant position. ✝





Mythbusters #8

By Administrative Pastor Mike Fast
mikefast@ebcdallas.org

God will not give you more than you can handle. At a concert shortly following the death of his son, **Toby Mac** warned the crowd about myths, like the one today.

Mac said, “A friend once told me this: ‘When you experience something like that you’re going to start reaching for things that you think are the promises of God... but maybe they weren’t things that God promised at all. He didn’t promise us that we wouldn’t experience heartbreak or pain or loss.’ But he said, ‘Make sure you find what He did promise us. And that is that He will never leave us or forsake us.’ I’m hanging onto that promise for myself and you as well as my son.”

Elizabeth Elliot had people try and comfort her with this myth after her husband was killed by the Aucas in South America. She was a young missionary widow with a 10 month old daughter, living in Ecuador.



She wrote *Suffering is Never for Nothing* (a compilation from a conference she taught) a few years before she died. In it she writes, “I’ve come to see that it’s through the deepest suffering that God has taught me the deepest lessons. And if we’ll trust Him for it, we can come through to the unshakeable assurance that He’s in charge. ... Whatever is in the cup that God is offering to me, whether it be pain and sorrow and suffering and grief along with the many more joys, I’m willing to take it because I trust Him.”

I appreciate what **Pastor Mitch Chase** wrote concerning this myth: “Christians can make the strangest claims when comforting those who are suffering. What do you say to someone whose life is falling apart? If you have but few precious minutes with a person who’s lost a job, home, spouse, child, or all sense of purpose, what comfort do you give?”

We might turn to **conventional wisdom** instead of Scripture and end up saying something like, “Don’t worry, this wouldn’t happen in your life if God didn’t think you could bear it.” The sufferer may object, head shaking and hands up. But you insist, “Look, seriously, the Bible promises God won’t ever give you more in life than you can handle.”

There it is—conventional wisdom masquerading as biblical truth.

You’ve promised something God never does.

Temptations Versus Trials

In **1 Corinthians 10:13**, the apostle Paul writes, “**No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it**” (ESV).

His discussion is specific: he’s writing about “temptation,” a snare that breaks a sweat trying to drag us into sin. Using a predator metaphor, God warned Cain that “**sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it**” **Genesis 4:7** (ESV).

Sin stalks us, **but** God is faithful. Sin desires to overcome us, **but** there is a merciful way of escape. Sin sets the bait, **but** for the believer—praise God!—sin is not irresistible.

Now if people apply Paul’s words about temptation to general sufferings, you can see where the

There it is—
conventional wisdom
masquerading as
biblical truth.

→ Please see “MYTH” on page 5.



← (Continued from page 4.)

line “*God will never give you more than you can handle*” comes from. I don’t doubt the sincerity and good intentions of those who use this phrase, but sincerity isn’t enough. Even Job’s friends meant well.

The Twin Errors

There are at least two errors in the unbiblical notion of “*God will never give you more than you can handle.*” First, it plays on the cultural virtue of fairness. Second, it points the sufferer inward instead of Godward.

1. Trials that Are . . . Fair?

If you give your children boxes to load into the car, you make visual and weight assessments that factor in their ages and strength. You don’t overload their arms and watch them crash to the ground with stuff splayed everywhere. That would be unfair. The saying “*God will never give you more than you can handle*” strikes a tone of fairness we instinctually like. There’s something pleasing about the idea that the scales are in balance, that God has assessed what we can handle and permits trials accordingly.

But there is a glaring problem with the “*fairness*” that undergirds this conventional wisdom: ***God has been unfair already, because he has not dealt with us as our sins deserve.*** He has been longsuffering,

forbearing, gracious, and abounding in love.

The sun shines and rain falls even on the unjust (Matthew 5:45 ESV).

God transcends the categories of fair and unfair to such a degree that we have no position to evaluate his actions or weigh his will. His ways aren’t subject to our culture’s standard of fairness.

2. The Power . . . Within?

Suffering doesn’t ask if you’re ready. It may come slowly or with a vengeance, but it doesn’t ask permission, and it doesn’t care about convenience. There’s never a good time for your life to be wrecked. But the saying “*God will never give you more than you can handle*” tells me I have what it takes. It tells me I can bear whatever comes my way. It tells me God permits trials according to my ability to endure. Think about what this conventional wisdom does: ***it points people inward.***

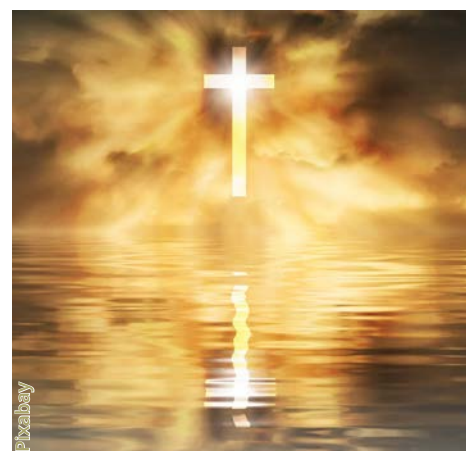
Yet the Bible points us Godward. As the psalmist says, ***“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling” Psalm 46:1–3 (ESV).***

When our strength is failing under crushing burdens, the answer is not within. God gives power to the faint and increases the strength of the weak (***Isaiah 40:29***). The power

comes from him to those who wait on him.

Where Trials Direct Us

Trials come in all shapes and sizes, but they don’t come to show how much we can take or how we have it all together. Overwhelming suffering will come our way because we live in a broken world *with* broken people. And when it comes, let’s be clear ahead of time that we don’t have what it takes. God will give us more than we can handle—but ***not*** more than He can.



The psalmist asks, ***“Where does my help come from?” (Psalm 121:1 ESV)***, and we must be able to answer like he did. We must know and believe, deep in our bones, that ***“My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:2 ESV).***

When trials come, ***trust*** that the Lord’s help ***will*** come. This news is helpful to sufferers since we’re saying something true about God instead of something false about ourselves.

Paul recalled a time when God gave him more than he could bear. In a

Trials come in all shapes and sizes, but they don’t come to show how much we can take or how we have it all together.



Please see “MYTH”
on page 6.

Annual Missions Conference

By Sylvia Thomas
Missions Committee

We are pleased to announce that our long-supported missionaries, **Steve and Mikki Schmidt**, will be the keynote speakers at our annual Missions Conference the weekend of **February 3–4**. They are the Directors of West Africa for SIM. It has always been a highlight when we have had opportunity to hear them speak. The theme for the conference will be **"We Are in This Together"**.

The conference will start with a breakfast for all ages at 9:00 am Saturday morning followed by a presentation by them. On Sunday morning, Steve will preach in both morning services. Sunday evening they will give a presentation of their work in more detail. Tuesday evening they will be speaking to the youth group and the Missions Committee will provide a pizza dinner for the group.

Background Info!

✠ **SIM:**
<https://www.simusa.org/>

✠ Steve is the SIM Regional Director for West Africa.

✠ He supervises country directors in 11 countries!

✠ Both Steve and Mikki work in SIM's Global Leader Development Program.

✠ Mikki does educational consulting work and also works in the **Paths to School Improvement** program which trains Christian school leaders throughout Africa.

Mark Your Calendars!

Mark your calendars to come out for the breakfast and the services on Sunday. The Schmidts are

inspirational speakers and will give us a glimpse of what is happening on the mission field in real time! ✠



← (Continued from page 5.)

letter to the Corinthians, he wrote, **"For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself"** (2 Corinthians 1:8 ESV).

Paul and his associates had been in circumstances that transcended their strength to endure: **"Indeed, we felt that we had received**

the sentence of death" (2 Corinthians 1:9 ESV).

Then he provides a crucial insight into his despair. Why were he and his companions given more than they could handle? To **"make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead"** (2 Corinthians 1:9 ESV).

God will give you more than you can handle so that His great power might be displayed in your life. Indeed, a greater weight of glory is still to come: **"For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison"** (2 Corinthians 4:17 ESV).

You might *not* consider overwhelming sufferings to be *light* and *momentary*, but think of your trials in terms of a trillion years from now. In the middle of affliction, sometimes the most difficult thing to hold onto is an eternal vision. Paul isn't trying to minimize your affliction; **he's trying to maximize your perspective.**

Suffering doesn't get the last line in the script. In this life, God will give you more than you can handle, but the coming weight of glory will be greater than you can imagine. ✠

In this life, God will give you more than you can handle, but the coming weight of glory will be greater than you can imagine.

Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches

News from FEBC!

By Kevin Stone
President, FEBC



January 2, 2024

Happy New Year! I am praying for your church and for what God will do through you in this new year. May we seek his face and proclaim him in our communities.

A lot has changed since we welcomed 2023. We have restructured in many ways, including selling our office to work from home, restructuring the Ministries Coordinator position to a support model, and moving toward an online magazine. While progress on the new Fellowship Focus has been slow, we are working to create the best online format we can offer on the most effective platform. Thank you for your patience.

As always, the beginning of the year is a busy time for the FEBC. The FEBC International Board of Directors meets in person twice each year—once at Connect in the summer and once in the winter. This year's winter meeting will be held February 2–3. Please pray for the directors as they consider the future of our Fellowship together, establish a budget, set vision, and wrestle with various issues.

Our annual retreats for pastors and wives are coming up very soon. These events are intended to help your pastoral couples relax and enjoy a getaway, while also connecting with peers and hopefully taking away some tools for effective ministry. Retreats will be offered in Nebraska in January, Saskatchewan in February, and Manitoba in March.

Connect24 planning is well underway, with a team of folks in Dalmeny, SK preparing to host our annual gathering and FEBC leadership working to make this an impactful and encouraging event.

I often encourage you to pray for our ministry, but I want to be very specific: This is a critical moment. We are stretching in new directions, working in a different way, changing our methods, and seeking individual support for a position for the first time. Please pray for discernment, pray for clarity of purpose, and pray for effectiveness. Pray that God will provide for the Ministries Coordinator. Pray for the FEBC. If you can, please do so regularly. God hears our prayers.



Thank you for your continued support, prayer, and encouragement!

To God be the glory!

Kevin Stone
President ✝

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Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Acts 20:28 (NIV) †



Elders' Epistle

By Nat Thomas
Chairman, Board of Elders

May God richly bless each one of us in 2024 with His presence, wisdom and comfort. For many of us, 2023 proved to be a difficult year in many ways.

Busy Times

Sylvia and I have made numerous trips to western Washington to assist her brother.

Allan went to the hospital last May with a severe foot infection and severe diabetic complications and has not left the care center since.

He needed assistance from Sylvia to maneuver through the maze of government requirements for getting Medicare and Medicaid assistance. Back in July we were required to spend down his bank account and sell his cars because of the rules and regulations of Medicaid. Sylvia spent hours on the phone and waiting in Social Security offices.

The Lord was gracious to us and she was able to help her brother get the assistance he needed. We went up to Port Orchard in the week between Christmas and New Year's to get two more government requirements out of the way and we hope that will be sufficient so we won't need to drive up to Washington so often.

As I reflect on our experiences in the last six months, I see the Lord helping us in our work and our lives *in spite of the frustrations of* weaving through the mazes of bureaucracy.



First, we want to serve Allan as a witness of our faith in God so he can see that God is gracious and loves him. He accepted Christ as a child but in the years since has fallen away from his initial faith. We pray that he will rededicate his life to Jesus.

Second, the Lord made straight the crooked paths of bureaucracy so Sylvia was able to accomplish what was needed for Allan's care.

Third, we are grateful for God's grace as we faced numerous tasks that seemed bigger than we could manage. Allan's house needed to be emptied and repaired to be able to put it on the market to sell. It took many days of work to sort out garbage and donations and haul them to the correct sites to dispose of. God guided us and gave us the strength to get it done!

Looking Forward

Looking forward to the year ahead in 2024 we can trust our Sovereign God to walk before us making the

way passable and safe. Some may be tempted to look ahead in fearful negative anticipation, some know what plans they have and others have an optimistic outlook.

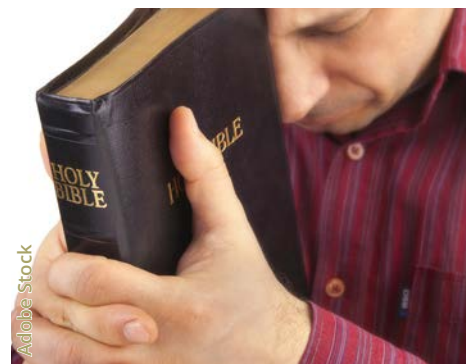
*No matter our perspective, we must look up and anticipate that our Great Master will provide and protect. Paul tells us in **Philippians 4:19 (ESV): "And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."***

Both the Old and New Testament tells us that one of the names of God is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord and Provider.

Additionally, the Bible tells us that God is our protector as described in **Psalms 121:7-8 (NKJV) "The Lord will preserve you from all evil; He will preserve your soul. The Lord will preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth and even forevermore."**

Trust, Obey, and Believe!

May all the saints of EBC trust in the Lord with all their hearts and know He will provide and protect them in 2024. ✝



.....
May all the saints of EBC trust in the Lord with all their hearts and know He will provide and protect them in 2024.

The New EBC Security Committee

What the Bible Says!

AdobeStock

By Paul Lyman

Co-chair of the EBC Security Committee

What does the Bible say about physical security in the church? How are we to respond to physical threats today?

We recognize that as followers of Christ we must hold to a Biblical worldview in all areas of life, *but what does that look like when we talk about security?*

This is the third in a series of articles examining what the Scriptures teach us about security related topics.

A prayer for the new year from the EBC Church Security Team Leadership: ***"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one"*** (John 17:15 ESV).

Calendars note the change in days, weeks, months, and years and allow us to see a progression of time, not only for ourselves, but the world



Pixabay

around us. With this new year, we will move into the active training and staffing stage of our church Safety and Security Group, and as a result you will see some subtle as well as not so subtle changes in the church building during services and special events.

Having a trained team available has already helped our congregation. Recently, one of our congregants lost consciousness during the morning service. Our team was able to provide immediate assistance to the individual. In similar circumstances, team members can provide aid, minimize embarrassment to those involved and, when necessary, contact emergency services. Additionally, we have been staffing weekly events such as AWANA and MOPS. This way entrances and exits are secure; we know where our kids are and who is in the building. These changes have been well received by visitors to our programs who have shared that they appreciate the concern we have for their children.

One of the more noticeable changes you can already see is the addition of security cameras, and automatic door locks in Activity Center breezeway as well as new front doors in the lobby. The Trustees have been very busy making changes as well as overseeing regular maintenance of the facility.

New Doors & Locks

The new doors and locking mechanisms provide a perfect segue into a topic we must address immediately, that is the physical control of entrances to the church. EBC has no less than 17 exterior doors that open to the outside of the building. The primary use of these doors is for emergency egress from the building and not as active passageway entrances during services or special events.

The team responsible for opening and closing before an event will open the doors necessary before a service or event starts. We would ask that you do not prop doors open or unlock doors of your own accord to facilitate entry for others. We understand that you do not have malicious intent and are merely trying to help with access, but it presents a larger security concern when unattended doors provide unrestricted access to the building.

Unrestricted Access Problems
Unrestricted access leads us to many vulnerabilities, such as: theft, destruction of property, child abductions, or events such as physical assaults or an active shooter within our midst. The ushers and Security Team work hard at providing a safe and controlled

→ Please see "Security" on page 11.



environment for our church services and ministries and we appreciate your assistance in this area.

Standard Options

John 15:13 (ESV): Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. A recent church shooting at Geneva Presbyterian Church in Laguna Woods, CA was an absolute tragedy. One congregant was murdered, and five others were injured in one of the active shooter attacks at a house of worship. One congregation member, Dr. John Cheng, took action by jumping into the line of fire to protect other members of the congregation. As this was happening, Pastor Chang and other congregants engaged the attacker and were able to restrain him until police arrived. Although Dr Cheng died from his wounds, his selfless act and the initiative of other congregants saved many lives. The analysis of numerous active attacker events reveals the

mitigation of loss of life, when the individuals being attacked actively respond. As we consider this fact, we must ask the question, “What action do we take?” There are a variety of actions that can be taken. We can lockdown offices and smaller rooms securing the doors and barricading them, covering the windows, and preparing to evade or defend in the event the intruder is able to access the room. Research shows lockdowns are one of the many actions effective in keeping an intruder out of an interior room. Even if an intruder makes initial entry into a room, locking the room after their departure to another part of the building keeps the attacker from reentering the room. We recognize from a variety of incidents including the Virginia Tech and New Zealand Mosque attacks, the attackers often return to a previous room.

Another option we have is to evade the attacker. Depending on the totality of circumstances there are times when evasion may be the best option. Consideration must include the physical, functional needs, and ages of those present. In a larger space that cannot be locked down logistically this option may be necessary.

The next option we have is to defend. Just as Dr. Cheng and Pastor Chang took defensive action ultimately leading to the stopping of the killing prior to law enforcements arrival we know unarmed civilians can successfully restrain active attackers.

In multiple cases, unarmed civilians defending themselves successfully stopped an armed encounter. While we recognize lockouts, lockdowns, evasion, and defending are all options when an active attack is occurring if all else fails, do something! We know an active response will mitigate the loss of life.

As EBC Ushers and Security Team move forward in our training, preparation, and service over the next few months we will continue to communicate with the congregation on the changes and areas where your assistance is also needed.



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While we recognize lockouts, lockdowns, evasion, and defending are all options when an active attack is occurring if all else fails, do something!

January 20 Workshop

Making Plans ... Before It's Too Late!

By Sherri Fobert
Healthcare Committee

Parents, have you ever thought about who would care for your children if something happened to either or both of you? Did you know what legal documents are required for parents to have any say in who the court decides will raise your children if you're unable to? Will the guardians you want to raise your children be able to care for and financially support them? Think about everything that would be needed if additional children are added to someone's family.

When a loved one passes and there are no plans or wishes to be found, what is one to do? Grief can become overwhelming and add to the

stress of making important family, financial, or burial decisions.

Saturday, January 20

9:30 am
Builder's Room

Come and Learn

Three professionals will provide you with answers to these questions and more. **Joy McMurchy**, Certified Financial Educator with WealthWave, helps families develop and review personalized plans for navigating whatever life throws

at them. **John Hemmerich**, Attorney at Myatt & Bell, will review the legal documents that are required to protect your family and make sure your wishes are known. **Bollman's Tribute Center** will cover why everyone needs to make and share their funeral plans and wishes with their family.

This seminar will be on Saturday, January 20 at 9:30 am in the Builder's room. Please sign up at the Welcome Centers, online, or calling Joy at **541.944.3093**.

Child care will be provided if needed. ✝

Missionary Christmas Boxes

By Kay Whitney



Our congregation raised **\$4,782** to give the missionaries that EBC supports as a Christmas gift. Couples without children living at home received **\$265** each and couples with children living at home received **\$531** each. Currently there are no single missionaries supported by EBC. ✝

Growth Rather Than Resolutions



By Greg Sykora

I did a quick search on Google® for common New Year's resolutions. It came up with a list of 20 items, all along the lines of losing weight, exercising more, getting organized, quitting smoking, improving finances, and so forth.

Not one of these resolutions, according to my Google® search, mentions God. **Romans 12:1–2 (NKJV)** tells us, ***“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world.”***

While the world tells us that we should make a resolution to better ourselves, the Bible tells us to focus on serving God. If we are presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice, our focus should be on living out God's will. We can *still* set goals for ourselves, ***we just need to be sure that our desires are in line with God's plans.***

Pressure!

According to a Forbes article this year, over 60% of people admitted to feeling pressured to come up with a New Year's resolution. This statistic seems to hint that the world tells us to better ourselves. Guys, for example, are known for comparing salaries and being overly focused on earning more money.

While we do need to earn a living and it's okay to try to get a raise or a better job, it shouldn't be our main goal.

Matthew 28:19

(NKJV) tells us, ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.”***

Not His Focus

Paul spent a lot of time working as a tentmaker, yet his focus was to be a bondservant of Jesus Christ. There's also nothing wrong with trying to lose weight or exercise more. We just need to keep God's will as our highest priority. **1 Timothy 4:8 (NKJV)** tells us, ***“exercise profits a little, but godliness***

is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”

No matter how healthy we are now, we will eventually lose our earthly bodies, ***but*** our work for the Lord will have eternal rewards.

God knows what we need. **Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)** tells us ***“seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things shall be added to you.”***



Adjust Your Priorities

We can still set goals for ourselves, and we can even call them New Year's resolutions too. As we think about upcoming developments in the new year, ***let's keep God at the top of everything.*** When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He said ***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”*** **Mark 12:30 (NKJV).**

Our goals, or resolutions, or whatever we call them, should focus on serving the Lord. †

.....
While the world tells us that we should make a resolution to better ourselves, the Bible tells us to focus on serving God.



EBC Women's Ministry

Ladies Missionary Fellowship Update

By Jerry Thiessen

The LMF meetings in 2023 have been busy times, accomplishing many tasks. At our **December Christmas Soup Luncheon Christine Schneider**, President, listed for us some of the items completed in 2023.

Christine gave a recap of:

✠ How many **blankets/comforters/quilts** and where they were distributed throughout the year.

✠ The **Precious Pockets** that our group made for Oregon Right to Life.

✠ The **Clothing Protectors** we made for folks at Dallas Retirement Village.



If you have questions about how to become a part of EBC Women's Ministries, please contact **Alison Johnson** at 503.623.2331! ✠

✠ Many other opportunities of service to others that our group participated in.

Christine also gave a short recap of some of the special speakers we listened to and interacted with throughout the year.

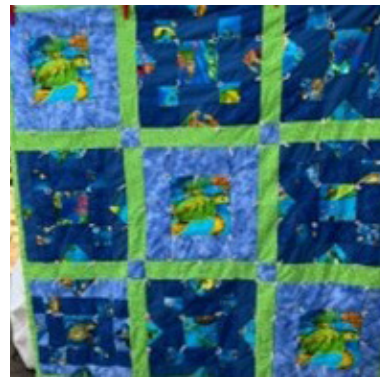
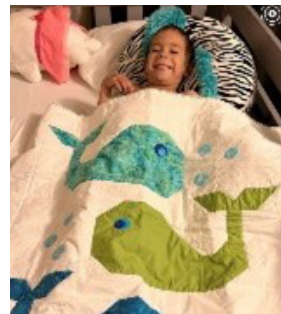
Pastor Mike Fast then shared a devotional using his father's experience and **Lora** led our time of singing carols together.

Thank You, God!

We praise God for all the ladies who come and work together to make for a successful group. Recognition and appreciation for the couples who work so joyfully to make our noon potlucks so beautiful, and fun was also given.

Special Highlight

One highlight for the group toward the end of the year was giving nine children's blankets to some little ones who lost their favorite one



in the Lahaina fire on August 8, 2023.

Whale of a Start

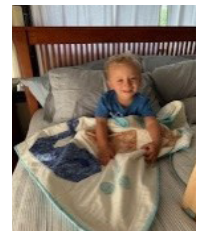
Our January, 2024, gathering got off to a fast-paced start. Projects began at 9:00 am with many in attendance.

Our program started, as usual, at 11:00 with **Kim Disher** as our featured speaker. She talked about whales and her experience serving (*along with her husband, Bob*) as volunteers for the Oregon State Parks at Cape Foulweather and the Depoe Bay Whale Center.

Then, at 11 am, the group had their first potluck of the new year with many husbands and guests joining them.

Please Join Us!

We hope that you will choose to put our Ladies Missionary Fellowship monthly meetings on your calendar. They are on the first Tuesday of each month and we look forward to you joining us to enjoy the experiences and share the joy of working together this year. ✠



From idle pondering to ...

Study with Discipline

By Gwen Griffiths

I grew up attending a small summer camp not far from my home. Each day began with flag raising; after the colors were posted, the campers were sent to have “Bible study time.” We would sit on cool sidewalks and dewy tree stumps, trying to ignore the scent of breakfast wafting over the campgrounds.

Those 30 minutes always seemed to last forever—I would read a passage of Scripture, try to write something meaningful in my camp booklet, pray...and then try to figure out what to do with the remaining 27 minutes.

In later years, the camp booklet included a few pages of Bible study guides—questions to answer and suggestions for further discovery. I am sure my parents, Sunday School teachers, and youth group leaders also attempted to instill the discipline of studying Scripture in me, but I still managed to reach early adulthood *without* a good idea of how to really study the Bible.



Discipline

As it turns out, *study is a discipline*. And like each of the spiritual disciplines, it takes time to develop.

One might ask, in this age of Google® and online commentaries and websites that translate Greek into English, *why should we study?*

The Real Goal

This question assumes that the end goal of study is to add to our reservoir of knowledge, to accumulate facts. In truth, “*We come to Scripture to be changed, not to amass information*” (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*). Study is so much more than just reading. It is the discipline of taking information in, considering its implications and effects, and applying it to our lives.

And the Real Question ...

So, instead, we should ask, *How can we know what a Christian life should look like, or what God says on any given topic, if we don't study His Word?*

It is through study that we begin to know and understand God and His heart for us—and the Holy Spirit uses that knowledge to transform us to be more like God. We see this play out in **Romans 12:2 (NLT)** as Paul commands believers to reject the behaviors of the world and instead “*let God transform you into a new person by changing*

the way you think.” This is the ongoing process of sanctification.

We display a tendency, in the human life, to depend upon our feelings. We must fight against our natural inclination to like what makes life seem easy or comfortable, to believe that which makes us most happy is the closest to truth. When we study Scripture, we learn to test every feeling against the Truth of God's Word. We must go to Scripture seeking God, not searching for platitudes or feel-good moments.

Paul later challenges us to think about things that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and admirable (**Philippians 4:8**). Our disciplined study of the Scriptures is how we go about that, and a life that honors the Lord is the result.

Soooooo ...

So how should one study? And what does the student of Scripture need? Let's look first at what is required for study, and then at the process.

Most importantly, a student of the Word must bring the right attitude—a *teachable heart*—to their study. Without a teachable heart, the truths of God's Word will never embed themselves in our heart and change the way we live.

→ Please see “Discipline” on page 16.

Discipline

← (Continued from page 15.)

A teachable heart is *humble*, recognizing there will always be more to learn and know about God. It is *inquisitive*, asking questions and seeking answers. And a teachable heart is *willing to ask for help*.

A student of God's Word will also need resources. A full listing could take an entire article, but I would recommend at least one version of the Bible, a notebook or journal, a commentary, and a website like biblegateway.com—something that will let you look at multiple translations and provide Hebrew and Greek meanings for words.

So now we step to the “how” of study. **Richard Foster** details four steps in *Celebration of Discipline* and I'd like to add a fifth.

Repetition

First, read the selection of Scripture many times. Try it in different translations. Write or type it out. Read it aloud or listen to it being read. As we ponder something, thinking about it repeatedly and in new ways, we create new paths in our brains. This repetition begins the process of renewing our minds so that our hearts and lives can be transformed.

Concentration

Now, focus on that with which you have become familiar. As you pore over the passage, watch for words or phrases that stand out in various readings. Compare words that are translated in different ways between versions. Write a summary of the passage.

In the classical method of education, teachers place great emphasis on recitation. After new material has been presented, the student is asked to summarize what has just been learned. This helps to show that the student has captured the important details and helps to store the information in the mind. When you summarize the passage, you are cementing those details into your memory.

Comprehension

Now, seek to answer questions which have come up as you focused on the Scripture. Learn all you can about the context surrounding the passage. *When was it written, to whom and by whom? What cultural factors might influence your understanding? Where does it fit in the metanarrative of the Gospel story—is it telling about creation, the fall, redemption, or restoration?* Look up any cross-referenced verses. As you study, ask God to reveal deeper meanings and truths.

Reflection

This is the time to seek to see things from God's perspective. *Why is this passage included in Scripture? What does it tell us about His heart?* Mark attributes or aspects of His character that you discover as you read.

My Addition to the List: Application

Finally, begin to intentionally put into practice any action points you discover. That may mean working to exhibit a character trait or looking at something in a new light.

Finally, begin to intentionally put into practice any action points you discover.

You may now be thinking, this sounds overwhelming! *How do I even begin?* To this I answer, take the next step. If you currently have not been studying God's Word, you could choose to read the same passage that **Pastor Troy** preaches on each week...and could even work through his discussion questions as part of your study time. You could also choose a smaller book of the Bible or a selection of Scripture and read through it once each day for two weeks.

If you've already been doing some study, but would like to venture deeper, here are some suggestions for taking the next step:

✦ Try the **SOAP devotional method**: write out a verse or passage of **Scripture**, make **Observations**, look for ways to **Apply** it to your life, and then spend time in **Prayer**.

✦ Read *Women of the Word* by **Jen Wilkin**. Never fear, men, you, too, can read this book without getting all mired up in lace and frothy pink! It lays out a process for systematic study of God's Word.

✦ Join the next **Contenders Discipleship Initiative (CDI)** class



Please see "Discipline" on page 17.



Discipline

← (Continued from page 16.)

offered at EBC. Check with **Nat Thomas** for dates and times.

✦ Many seminaries offer free courses. Try covenantseminary.edu and search their **Online Education** offerings.

✦ Take a personal retreat—12 or more hours away from the responsibilities of home in which you devote your time and energy to understanding a passage of Scripture.

✦ Complete a Bible study book. The Daily Grace Company (<https://thedailygraceco.com>) offers studies on many books of the Bible and various topics—for both men and women.

Eating an Elephant!

If you've decided to pursue the discipline of study, I'd love to hear about what you learn and discover. And, remember the old joke that asks how to eat an elephant: **one bite at a time**. The same is true with the study of Scripture.

None of us can become revered scholars of the entire Bible overnight. But as we stack day upon day and year upon year, we will discover that we know our God in a deeper and more intimate way. As Richard Foster states, *"The key to the Discipline of study is not reading many books but experiencing what we do read."* ✦



Mom to Mom Update

By **Lena Calef**
Mom to Mom Coordinator

NOVEMBER:

The Mom to Mom Steering Team wants to thank **David Rand** and **Pastor Mike Fast** for participating in our **November Dad Panel**. Our ladies enjoyed hearing their perspectives on fatherhood and appreciated them answering our questions:

1. What do you love about being a dad?
2. What is a dad guilt you have?
3. What practical things have you seen or done to help lay a spiritual foundation?
4. What is something your mom did in your life to impact you?
5. Funny memory or situation that has happened to you as a dad?
6. What is the one thing you wish all mothers understood about being a father and a husband?

DECEMBER:

For our December gathering we enjoyed fellowship time discussing Christmas Traditions and whether we liked them or not. We held our annual **Christmas Cookie Contest** and sampled different fun recipes along with making Centerpieces.

A **HUGE** shout out to **Judi Peters** for bringing in bags of pine branches and all the supplies needed. In addition to teaching our M2M moms, Judi also made centerpieces with our homeschool kids. (*Side note*, Judi should get *double kudos*, after teaching our M2M moms and kids, she packed up and taught 2 more groups for 4-H at the OSU Extension Office.)

Looking Ahead

The Mom to Mom Steering Team is looking forward to 2024. We are working on creating intentional meetings and activities that love our moms and show them Jesus. ✦



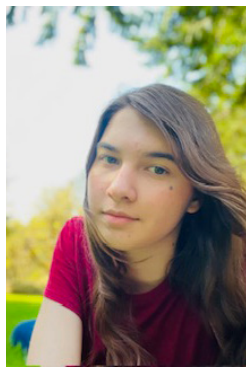
Youth Perspective

Winter Retreat

AdobeStock

By Isabelle Lovell
FORGED! Youth Reporter

At the beginning of December, our youth group—along with four other churches—traveled to Camp Tadmor for a fun and impactful weekend. We were loud and played crazy games that involved hunting and capturing Santa, grabbing bacon while trying not to faceplant into mud, and sliding down hills in garbage bags like penguins... *some more gracefully than others.*



Despite all the craziness we got into, I think we all took a step back during the sessions.

Hope in Life

What is it that we hope for the most? Well the answer to that could go in hundreds of different directions, but I think it can be broken into two categories: ***Either for something to change or for something to stay the same.*** Whatever it is, there is also a

hope behind it. We hope for a lot of things, but it's also something we all want. Hope is another one of those words that we use every day, but in most situations, it is just a nice sentiment or wishful thinking. We all hope for so many things, but when faced with reality, that hope can seem thin.

Hope vs Want

Everyone hopes for things, but chances are these things aren't exactly what we should be placing our hopes in. It can often lay in our desire to be accepted in such a big and crazy world. *But truthfully, do we hope more than we want, or the other way around? Do we really just hope things will happen because we want something?*

This isn't something I've thought much about because I've just used hope as a wishful word. In reality though it holds so much meaning and is such a powerful thing. It's not a wish or a want, it's something that gives comfort and courage to face another day.

Endless Hope

What if it doesn't stop there? Hope is only as good as the object it is placed in, *so what if hope isn't just a thing ... but a person?*



This is where the greatest comfort comes from because Jesus is very good. He is the one thing that will fill us with true hope and allow us to experience real joy and peace. While we live on this earth and make it through the highs and lows, we put our trust in things we can see and touch, but none of them will last forever. They can't love us the same way or meet all of our needs or heal us the way Jesus can. The hope He gives us goes so much deeper and will never run out.

Hope is another one of those words that we use every day, but in most situations, it is just a nice sentiment or wishful thinking.



→ Please see "Hope" on page 19.



The Need for Hope

The sad thing is that we far too often don't put enough hope in Him—or at all. The most hopeless thing to think is that we're alone and just here because of an accident.

I can't imagine living my whole life being taught that I'm here for no reason at all and that things will only get worse and that this is it. I don't understand how people can go to a place like Crater Lake or the Redwoods and think that it's only there because of mere chance. It's sad that so many people think that. *How do people find hope when they don't know God?* The need for hope is a strong one, and the faith to place that hope in something must be even stronger. I'm glad that Jesus is someone we all can place both in without fear. ✝

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old receive their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are invisible.
Hebrews 11: 1-3 (ESV)



Awana Fast Track

By Matt and Lena Calef
Awana Ministry Directors

January is the month Awana holds the annual Grand Prix. An Awana Grand Prix is a race where kids and parents create cars and race them down the track.

The Awana Grand Prix for the clubbers (*and for many of the parents*) is one of the most exciting events of the Awana year. It is a gravity propelled drag race involving cars made from a kit provided by Awana. It requires participation of both parents and clubbers in preparing the cars and racing them.

The cars are placed on a track, four lanes wide. The cars run down a slope to a long straight away to the finish line. Children usually line up beside the track to cheer the cars along.

Awards are usually given for speed and design.

Different Approaches

Some families concentrate on speed in their preparation. Some just want to participate. Others prefer to work on the design, painting, and decorating the cars. Trophies are awarded both for speed and design. We also recognize the slowest car. The atmosphere is very festive as

well. We provide snacks and decorate the tables. We make a party out of the event!

Sharing the Gospel

But the most important part of the whole day is the opportunity to share the Gospel with families that attend. We choose someone to present a short talk. During the talk, reasons for the race, character building, and the Gospel are presented. Not only are the children exposed to the Word of God, but parents, siblings, relatives, friends and neighbors also are impacted. In the past we have had former Awana Leaders and the Awana Missionary share.

New Track!

This year the Grand Prix Team is very excited—we have a new track! Immanuel Baptist Church in Klamath Falls has given us a newer aluminum track. The team has been working hard learning how to set it up along with the timer and program needed to run it. Men's Ministry

has helped us purchase a few components to help make everything work together.

We are looking forward to our 2024 event, **January 27**, all are welcome to join in the fun. We are always looking for Pit Crew and Snack help, please contact **Matt or Lena Calef** for more information. ✝



Photos from 2023 Grand Prix

Village Missionaries Paul and Leslie Lanquist

Our First Church!

Wow! We are finally here in our first church. **THANK YOU, EBC,** for being a big part of why we are here.

Here is WHERE?

Where is here? We are serving at **Tanwax Country Chapel (TCC)** near Eatonville, Washington ...

AND we love it! We have a beautiful church with well kept buildings and grounds with an incredible view of Mt. Rainier.

We have been at TCC since June 1 and have enjoyed getting to know our people.

Starting to Grow!

Since we have been here we have seen some steady growth with 12 new people who want to be members. Thus we will have a new members class in January.

On Thanksgiving Day our church served dinner for our community, we served 52 people at the church



and 42 meals to people living on the street. We also have a weekly street ministry where we go out to people and hand out lunches, give warm clothing items, toiletries, and blankets.

We had a Christmas Tree lighting party that was well attended with new faces and a number of teenagers, which was fun. Paul is teaching a mid-week class on the life of Jesus, a Sunday school class on "One Minute After You Die," and, of course, Sunday service.

Leslie has started a hiking group, weather permitting, she has two Bible studies on the book of James, and she started a Woman's ministry program in July that meets once a month.

Much Outreach

We also gather monthly to have a themed potluck for us to enjoy fellowship. In the spring we will be starting a kids/adult archery program as an outreach. We have a homeschool group of about 40 who meet at our church once a week.

Jesus



Thank You, Dallas!

We are so grateful for the time we spent in Dallas, Oregon and for the friendships we made. We are proud to be part of Village Missions. We thank you again, EBC, for your love and support.

In Christ's Holy Name,

Paul and Leslie Lanquist ✝



Stories from the FIELDS

Editor's Note: Stories from the FIELDS is produced monthly by Village Missions. They contain inspirational accounts from many of those supported by Village Missions who are currently working in the mission field.

If you would like to receive your copy directly from Village Missions or desire more information on this organization, please contact Tim Griffiths at:

tgriffiths@villagemissions.org.

Roots & Blessings

In November, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of Amy Chapel, which has roots back to the 1880s but was incorporated in 1948. The church has partnered with Village Missions for 36 years. During the service, a couple of men spoke who were previously part of our church and are now in full-time ministry elsewhere. We listened to a recorded message from former VM pastor Jake Roberts. More visitors came than expected, so we quickly set up more tables and chairs. This service was a great blessing for our church family and guests.

Dale & Suzanne Bussinger
Elk Mound, WI ✝

Pie & Praise

We formed a worship team, and we're discovering that people are more confident to help with music in general. At our recent "Pie and Praise" event, one person volunteered to sing a solo; her voice was amazing. A 10-year-old boy also led everyone in singing "10,000 Reasons." We were very encouraged by people's participation and the spirit of praise during the evening.

James & Meredith Knoop
Hokah, MN ✝

Answered Prayers

We have prayed for more people to serve in our church for several years, and God has answered. He has raised up people in the church and brought people to the church. For example, we recently welcomed a lady to our children's ministry. She moved back to our area a few years ago and has a passion for serving Jesus. Another person volunteered to help cut the next load of firewood for the church. God is so good!

Jonathan & Doralyn Elgby
Ear Falls, ON ✝

Missionaries & Ministries EBC Supports!

The focus of the Mission Committee is to follow the mandate Jesus gave to go into the world for the advancement of evangelism, discipleship and Christian education in a manner effective for the culture being reached. The committee exists to be a supportive and evaluative conduit between EBC and the work on the mission field that the congregation supports, maintaining an attitude of advocacy for missionaries and corresponding projects.

Note: EBC is committed to supporting missionaries. Some information and/or supported missionaries are purposefully omitted from this page to protect their safety in hostile political or social climates.



Dan and Judy Burke

Ethnos 360 (formerly New Tribes Missions)

dan_burke@ntm.org

- ✠ Serve in Bolivia in Cochabamba and San Borja
- ✠ Development of a discipleship center in northwestern Bolivia
- ✠ Work with the Chimane people group
- ✠ Write and produce books and commentaries in Chimane for the tribal people
- ✠ Teaching, construction, leadership development



Kevin and Jennifer Domes

IN FAITH

kjdomes.ministry@yahoo.com

- ✠ Work at Bethel Bible Camp in Wellfleet, Nebraska
- ✠ Involved in youth ministry, maintaining the camp facility
- ✠ Teach in the Awana program, lead a high school youth ministry



Tim and Mallory Brooks

Missionary Aviation Fellowship

tbrooks@maf.org

- ✠ Serving in Winema, Indonesia
- ✠ Tim is a mechanic for MAF planes on the base
- ✠ Both Tim and Mallory are studying to gain proficiency in the language
- ✠ Support for team members on the MAF base



Joshue and Diana Bulande

SIM

dianaafrica@gmail.com

- ✠ Serving in Lichinga, Mozambique
- ✠ Church planting, discipleship training
- ✠ Women's Bible training
- ✠ Children's ministry and tutoring



→ Please see "EBC Supports" on page 23.

EBC Supports

← (Continued from page 22.)

✠ Administrative retreats

✠ Jennifer also works in food preparation for the summer camps



Ivan and Mary Goossen

Avant Ministries

ivary@avmi.org

✠ Serve in Mucambo, Brazil

✠ Involved in evangelism and discipleship

✠ Administrative programs such as a coffee shop outreach

✠ Long time involvement with a Christian radio ministry



Eric and Judith Hedeem

Ethnos 360

eric_hedeem@ntm.org

✠ Serve in Papua, New Guinea

✠ Mentoring new missionaries to the field

✠ Translation work

✠ Judith works in the medical clinic and member care

✠ Leadership development among the indigenous people



Paul and Leslie Lanquist

Village Missions at Tanwax
Country Chapel, Washington

360.832.3584

pastorpaullanquist@gmail.com

✠ Developing outreach programs for the homeless in their area

✠ Starting a women's ministry program

✠ Leading the church in new directions after COVID divisions and other issues left the church without a senior pastor for nearly a year



Steve and Mikki Schmidt

SIM Missionaries

steve.schmidt@sim.org

mikki.schmidt@sim.org

✠ Steve is the SIM regional Director for West Africa

✠ Supervises country directors in 11 countries

✠ Both Steve and Mikki work in SIM's Global Leader Development Program

✠ Mikki does educational consulting work, and also works in the Paths to School Improvement program which trains Christian school leaders throughout Africa



Andrew and Jerusha (Dressel) Yount

Proclaim Aviation Ministries

andyandjerusha@gmail.com

✠ On staff with Moody Bible Institute's Mission Aviation School

✠ Learning Avionics in preparation for future Missionary pilot position ✚

Other Outreach Ministries We Support:

◆ Awana
◆ CEF

◆ Crisis Pregnancy
◆ River of Life

◆ Prison Ministry
◆ SAT-7 (Dennis & Cindy Wiens)

◆ Village Missions
◆ Weekday School of the Bible

◆ Mission Connexion
◆ The Gate

Sunday Worship Services:

9:00 & 10:30 am Sunday Morning
Worship Services

10:00 am Coffee Time!

Awana: (September through April)

Wednesdays 6:30 to 8:00 pm

**Please check the Sunday Bulletin and
the EBC website for updated calendar
items as they are announced.**

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of the content and layout of this publication are
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Text: 503.931.8239

Email: bob.disher@charter.net

The opinions expressed herein are
those of the author of the articles and
are not necessarily endorsed by the
leadership of EBC.

**Thank
you!** ✝



THANK YOU, Alison Johnson, for providing the calendar graphic.

"A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

John 16:32-33 (NIV)