

Fellowship FOCUS



To: Josh

From: marksoccer06@gmail.com

Me, I am blessed beyond belief (my opinion). Got to do my errands today and visit with some really wonderful people. I needed to stop at the cleaners and get my shirts for church. The young man in there is named Lucas. He asked me why I was happy all the time. I told him that I would tell him if he "really wanted to know." He said yes. I shared the Gospel with him and told him the A-B-Cs of salvation and asked him if he wanted to invite Jesus into his life, and he again said yes. I prayed and he prayed along with me and we now have another brother in Christ. WOW WOW WOW What else is there to say. I came home and reviewed some scripture and typed it out for him and I'll get it to him tomorrow. Excited, OH YEAH! I am just one blessed man. Going to make sure he gets into a Bible Study, or I'll do one with him.





Marriage and the Changing Culture



Blaine Donaldson, President, Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches

“Can we use your church for our wedding?” Pastors frequently hear this question — but what if the question comes from two women sitting in the pastor’s office? I have two concerns regarding how this question should be answered.

In both Canada and the United States, unprecedented shifts have taken place in the legal culture regarding marriage. How should the church respond to these changes? Are we prepared for such an encounter?

First, how can we conduct ourselves redemptively? Can we discover not just a way to avoid the awkwardness but to find a doorway to present Jesus?

While it is necessary that we decline the request, we need to try to turn the situation to good. If a couple approaches a church for such a request, they likely have some spiritual interest. They will find that we will not perform the marriage, but will they know that we love them? Will they know that we care about them? If we do not seize these kinds of opportunities to show them how much Jesus loves them, when will we have the chance? Before we talk about how we should protect ourselves, let us realize that our first intention needs to be redemptive.

The second concern is this: What steps should we take so that we are not liable for a lawsuit by refusing to perform marriage ceremonies that violate our beliefs based on Scripture? The cultural changes at hand encompass more than just performing marriages. They include staffing, retreats, camping, and many other areas. It is easiest to see this in the area of marriage though.

Churches can protect themselves in a number of ways. While it is impossible to protect themselves completely, there are some simple good faith steps that churches can take in order to minimize their risk.

Think through your positions and goals in advance. In our churches, we feel like we will never need to face these kinds of circumstances. It is wise to think these things through and to have

a strategy to handle a situation with excellence. Avoid inappropriately offending someone because you were blindsided.

Formally adopt a written statement defining marriage. Church bylaws or constitution should have a clear statement on marriage. This should be adopted prior to having an issue. Consider formally adopting into the church constitution some of the FEBC position papers. You certainly could rewrite them, but why reinvent the wheel? I would recommend particularly the position papers on “Homosexuality” and “Men and Women in Local Church Ministry” (See www.fellowshipforward.org/position-papers.html).

Establish a “use policy.” If you allow people in the community to use your facility, be very careful about excluding certain people. A use policy could state that the facility can only be used in a way that is consistent with the beliefs of the church and specifically with the marriage policy and the homosexuality paper.

It is important that we maintain the truth of Scripture and live according to Biblically established convictions. At the same time, may we have a posture that truly loves and reaches out to those who have surrendered to the spirit of the age. People make sinful choices and are accountable for those choices. Our role is that of reconciling people to God. That should be our primary goal as we confront the same-sex marriage question.

These issues are volatile in our nations today. It is my prayer that we be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” ☞

PRESIDENT TRAVELS

June 26 - July 4	Michigan Ministry Trip
July 12	Ministry at Dallas, Ore.
July 13-20	FEBC Convention
July 20-27	Ministry in Saskatchewan
August 3-17	Vacation
September 11-21	Ministry trip to Saskatchewan

COMMENT:

by Paul Boeker, Editor

The three churches that joined together in 1889 to form the Conference of United Mennonite Brethren of North America clearly saw the importance of an annual convention.

The first constitution established a Missions Committee, an Evangelism Committee, and a Program Committee. The Program Committee was responsible to plan the annual convention. These annual conventions were a big deal. Delegates rode trains between scattered towns in Kansas, Nebraska and Minnesota. As the Fellowship grew, distances grew until delegates were riding trains even to and from Canada. The effort and expense it took to travel made it imperative that the Program Committee would come up with a full and interesting program of worship, fellowship, learning and business. By 1903, the convention had become a five-day event. Usually one day would be devoted to a “Sunday School Convention” to share ideas and strategies for effectively teaching various age groups. Often another day would be dedicated to missions — including several sermons on missions plus reports from the fields.

This month our Fellowship meets for the 121st time. (Convention was canceled a few times because of war or the Great Depression.) In the next issue we hope to bring you some highlights of convention activities and decisions. In the meantime, look at page 15 and pray for your church pastor and delegates as they take part in the convention in Abbotsford.

Serving Christ with you,

Paul

About the cover: The simulated email on the cover was actually received by a member of our Fellowship. Names have been changed.

FELLOWSHIP FOCUS (ISSN: 1537-4203, USPS# 223-620)

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FELLOWSHIP FOCUS, 11605 W Dodge RD STE 3, Omaha NE 68154-2566

Periodicals Postage paid at Omaha, Nebraska and at additional mailing offices.

Printed in the U.S.A.

The FELLOWSHIP FOCUS is published bi-monthly by the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches, 11605 W Dodge RD STE 3, Omaha NE 68154-2566

Phone: 402-965-3860

Email: fellowshipfocus@fcbministries.org

Web: fellowshipforward.org

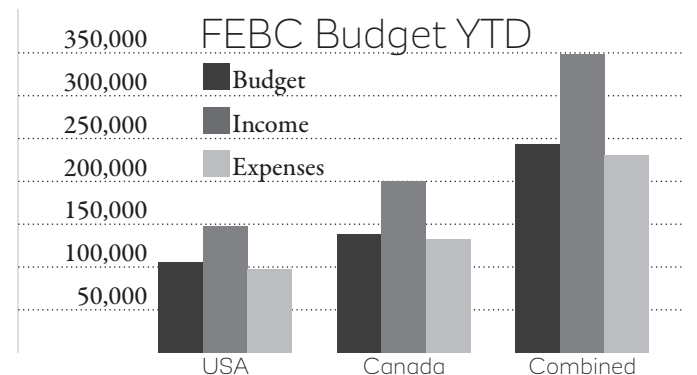
FAX: 402-965-3871

Editorial Staff: Paul Boeker, Editor; Adrianna Donaldson, Art Director



CONTENTS:

- 2 Marriage and the Changing Culture
- 4 “Dress Up” for Life
- 5 Those Positively Wonderful Negatives
- 6a Fellowship Grant Saves a Life
- 6b Patience and Prayers
- 7 The Active Ingredient in Relationships
- 8a FEBC Assists with Helicopter Study
- 8b Raise Up a Child
- 9 Chosen to Serve
- 10 Church News
- 14 The Record
- 15 2015 Annual Convention
- 16 The Power of the Gospel



"DRESS UP" FOR LIFE

by Savanna Poston

As my youth pastor makes the introduction, I step to the front of the room; all eyes turn questioningly to me. "Lord, may it be Your words spoken through me today." A month prior to this point, when I accepted the invitation to speak at Soul Food, a youth outreach event, I saw it as an amazing opportunity to share what the Lord had been laying on my heart. I felt capable and prepared for the responsibility! Little did I know, I actually had much growing to do before I was truly ready.

In the time leading up to this introduction at Soul Food, I had another chance to speak before a group. It was for our church's 5th/6th grade youth group, on a topic that I was particularly passionate about. So I studied and developed several fitting object lessons. I spent hours in preparation and was very confident of my success with the 5th/6th graders. Well, the whole thing was a flop. Feeling very frustrated with myself, the thought suddenly hit me — I had never actually prayed for God's blessing! In my pride, I had not given what I was doing for the Lord to the Lord. I believe my failure was God's way of humbling me and reminding me of who was really in control. I learned my lesson and was not going to make that mistake again.



Savanna Poston graduated from high school this spring after being part of the youth ministry of Evangelical Bible Church (EBC) of Dallas, Ore., for about six years. She will begin studies at George Fox University this fall. Savanna has attended Worldview Academy (www.worldview.org), an intense training to help teens develop a better understanding of the Christian faith and learn to share it with those of a different belief. Youth Pastor Nate Ensz reports that she has been on every mission trip the youth group has taken, plus she joined EBC's mission team to Ecuador this past December to work with Extreme Response International (See Fellowship Focus, March/April 2015, page 11).



As the date for Soul Food rolled around, my prayer was that I would not be the one doing the talking, but that the Lord would speak through me, despite myself. The plight of high schoolers caught in broken, abusive, disconnected homes had been on my heart. I see the pain and despondency towards life that these increasingly common family situations are creating for teens. I wanted to show my peers that there is hope, despite the home life, and that they have the choice to stop the downward cycle and change their family's trend. Also, I wanted to explain that I am the direct result of someone who successfully made that choice. So unlike my previous experience in preparing for the 5th/6th grade talk, I spent much time in prayer seeking God's direction and words.

Soul Food is an event held once a month by our town's local youth pastors. It takes place in the gym of a building next door to the public high school. They serve a free lunch, love on the students a bit, and often have a short, encouraging message. As a speaker, the "Soul Food" setting can present some difficulties — just trying to catch the short attention span of 150+ students, many who are just there because the lunch is better than the one being served at the school's cafeteria.

In an attempt to catch this rowdy audience by surprise, I wore a stylish formal dress and heels. My opening phrase was, "Are you going to approach life in pajamas, rolling out of bed and 'just let life happen' to you? Or, are you going to 'dress up' for life, marriage, and kids, and prepare yourself in advance?" As I began to speak, the room fell silent; every eye was turned toward me. When I had finished, my youth pastor told me that was the quietest he had ever heard that room. Only a greater power could have commanded such attention. What an honor to be used in such a way, even despite myself. I walked away from that day impacted, knowing that God had been at work through my words and actions. I had truly been privileged to be a small piece of God's greater plan, the scope of which only He can fully know. ☞

FOCUS ON THE WORD

Those Positively Wonderful Negatives

by Paul Boeker

Remember that high school English class where you learned all about figures of speech: similes, metaphors, hyperbole, and a few others that you forgot at graduation? It turns out that all those figures of speech are used throughout the Bible. Understanding them is one of the basic tools of Bible study.

One figure of speech should be firmly etched in our minds when we come to God's Word. And that is the one we probably skipped over in high school. If someone asks, "How are you today?" you will reply by saying either "I'm fine, thank you" or "Not bad, thank you." Both statements have virtually the same meaning. "Not bad" is a figure of speech in which a positive idea is expressed by a negative of the opposite. The technical term for that figure is *litotes*.

Bible authors use litotes very commonly to emphasize something very good, very large, or very important. Remember how Luke says "no small dissention" (Acts 15:2 ESV); "no obscure city" (Acts 21:39 ESV); and "no small tempest" (Acts 27:20 ESV)? He really wants us to envision a *major* argument; a *very important* city; and a *huge* storm. Litotes are one of Luke's favorite ways of adding color to his writing.

Granted, the litotes mentioned above are not theologically significant. But other litotes are. One litotes used quite often in the Bible is "not ashamed." Paul says "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ..." (Rom. 1:16). Obviously, what he wants us to hear is "I am *really, really* proud of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Peter quotes from Isaiah "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him

will not be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:6 ESV). Peter understands that Isaiah is using litotes when he writes "will not be put to shame" because in the next breath, Peter says, "So the *honor* is for you who believe" (1 Peter 2:7 ESV; italics added). Isaiah was not worried that believers would be embarrassed. He was ecstatic that they would be honored by God!

The author of Hebrews affirms that Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers (Heb. 2:11). Another litotes! The next verse shows that Christ is very proud to call us brothers! He can't wait to explain God to us. He can't wait to worship with us! He can't wait to introduce us to the angels (Heb. 2:13)! He is a proud brother!

Litotes add emphasis or power to an idea. For example in Colossians 1:9, Paul says "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you" He is not telling his friends that he has not forgotten to pray, but that he has "*eagerly continued* to pray."

As you read Scripture, watch for all figures of speech, and make sure you know what they mean.¹ But if you keep an eye out for litotes, you won't be disappointed as you see the great positives they hold out to you. ☞



Paul Boeker retired as administrator of the Fellowship in December. Besides serving as editor, he now ministers in several volunteer positions at church and works in pulpit supply, writing and editing. For this issue he is filling in for Harvey Schultz who, with his wife Anna Louise, is off celebrating their 50th anniversary!

¹Request the free guide "Short Figures of Speech" from fellowshipfocus@fbcministries.org.

Henderson Welcomes New Pastor



Faith Evangelical Bible Church of Henderson is excited to announce the hiring of Crale Swanson as our Pastor of Student Ministries. Crale and his wife Rachel come to us from Omaha, Neb. where they attended Grace University. Crale graduated with a degree in Pastoral Ministries and a Masters in Biblical Studies. Crale and Rachel have been married for 11 years. They have been attending Community Bible Church, working with junior and senior high ministries.

Rachel enjoys gardening, strong coffee, and being mom to their three children. Crale loves Husker athletics, cars, and demolition derbies. We are thankful how God has lead in the process to hire Crale, and we are eager for him to start his ministry at Faith. ☞

Fellowship Grant Saves a Life

by Paul Boeker

It is not often that a gift immediately translates into a life saved. But the Fellowship gave a grant that saved the life of an elderly woman. Here is the story:

For this summer's Convention Project, Fellowship Directors initially chose a project to help United Indian Mission Aviation (UIMA). UIMA wanted to test a helicopter to see whether it would be feasible to reach isolated villages located high in the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains of central Mexico.

For several years UIMA has encouraged Iglesia Biblica Bautista Misericordia in central Mexico. This training center has produced Huichol and Mexican pastors and teachers who have a burden to reach the people in isolated mountain villages. UIMA pilots are flying these pastors to the villages — trips of a few minutes by air, but many hours by truck and footpath. The pastors have so much more energy to teach God's Word when they fly to the villages. But would a helicopter be an even better tool to reach villages in areas where the incredibly rugged terrain prohibits building a runway? What size helicopter would be the most practical? Could it safely fly to villages perched at very high altitudes? What would it cost to operate and maintain the helicopter?

Unexpectedly, UIMA was given an opportunity to test a helicopter in April at a much-reduced cost. But they still needed funds to do this. Here is where our Fellowship comes into the story. The Fellowship had recently received a bequest from the Martha Classen Baerg Estate. Thus the directors were able to give UIMA a grant of \$2,500 to test the helicopter in April.

On the second day of the test, UIMA received a call to medevac an elderly Huichol woman who was struggling with chest pains and labored breathing. Normally a fixed-wing craft would be assigned. But the nearest airstrip was a four-hour hike away from her village! Through God's perfect timing, the helicopter was available and was able to land directly in her village. She was taken to a hospital in Tepic in critical condition, but with medical care, she recovered and was released 12 days later.

Throughout the past 50 years, people have named the Fellowship in their wills. Because of this, the Fellowship has often had resources to quickly respond to needs and opportunities. Bequests have been used to purchase land for church plants in Paraguay, establish scholarship funds in Canada and the United States, purchase literature for missionaries, fund Bible publication, provide loans and start-up funds for church plants, and even to assist with the Ebola crisis.

Is the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches one of the charities listed in your will? Have you included your church and related mission agencies? Make sure your money continues to work for the Lord after he calls you home. Your bequest could save many lives for eternity. ♡

Legacy Giving
Today's resources for tomorrow's ministries

FELLOWSHIP VIEWS

Patience and Prayer

Richer Fellowship Church is seeking a lead pastor. Pastor Ryan Rear took the position on a temporary basis last year. After much prayer and consultation with the steering committee and others, Ryan and Uma have felt that the Lord is leading them in another direction. For many, this is a disappointing outcome, but we trust the leading of the Lord. We wish Ryan and Uma God's best in their future, and trust that he will provide for them.

Please pray for the Rears and for the church. The Lord has been doing many great things at Richer Fellowship. Pray that the Lord would lead them to the man who would shepherd them. They are on the cusp of moving from "church replant" status to full autonomy.

Crosspoint Bennington, the second campus of the church formerly known as EBC Omaha, is moving forward strongly. Crosspoint Omaha seeded the new campus with less than 75 people. Well over a hundred people have been worshipping each week. Pray for campus pastor, Gary Krehbiel, as he serves in this new and evolving role. The model that Crosspoint is following could be summarized as one church, two locations. Each campus shares the same leadership structure and most non-Sunday morning programs are shared. The Scripture focus and songs are the same at each campus. The pastors of Crosspoint collaborate to plan sermons, and then the assigned pastors prepare their own messages for each campus. This is new concept for FEBC, and we are excited to see what the Lord will do through this approach.

Please pray for a successful **convention**. There are a myriad of details to prepare. Pray for safety for all traveling. Pray for Grace EBC in Abbotsford as they have a tremendous amount of work to do. ♡

The Active Ingredient of Relationships

by Sharon MacConnell

Do you ever feel like you should just do something? The urge is intense, and you need to do whatever it is that is driving the strong feeling. I think love is like that. But love is more than a feeling and can be carried out in many ways. Scripture explains that love involves sacrifice and obedience. "We know love by this: that He laid down His life for us; and we ought [are under obligation] to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16 NASB).

Ought is a word we don't always recognize for its strong emphasis. It means that we are under obligation. It makes me feel the intenseness of what I am to do. "... We ought (are under obligation) to love one another" (1 John 4:11 NASB). Love has been talked about forever. For this article, I want to narrow the focus on love for each other as children of God. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35 NASB). I am commanded to love; I am under obligation; and I want to do this. If I am a child of God, I will want to follow his commandment to love.

Remember, we are only to look at ourselves to "judge" this state of whether we are a child of God. Scriptures to look at for evidence of this are: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16 NASB). Has the

Holy Spirit been speaking to your spirit? I have to really work to find a quiet time to be able to realize the Holy Spirit is making intercession for me. "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17 NASB). I am excited when I see someone who has turned his or her life over to Christ "become new." However, there are times when I need to reflect on myself and check to see if I remember this principle that the old things have passed away and all things have become new, and to remind me not to pick up the "old self," because I am a child of God, and He loves me. He forgave me.

"Whom the Lord loves, He disciplines." (Heb. 12:6a NASB). I don't like discipline, but I know it is a sign that the Lord loves me and wants the best for me. Discipline is used to turn me a different way. "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk ..." (1 Peter 2:2 NASB). If I get to where I do not hunger for the Word and thirst for righteousness, I better look at my walk with the Lord. God has given us many good teachers here on earth. We need to take what we hear, check it out with Scripture, and spend time in prayer hearing what the Lord has to say.

We should not try to walk it alone. We need fellowship one with another. I heard the word fellowship described as "two fellows in a ship." Both are in the same "ship," going the same direction (hopefully getting along), and going to the same destination. Prayerfully consider whom you could share God's love with — the love we are commanded to have one with another. "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8 NASB). ♡

Sharon MacConnell is a member of the Commission on Women's Ministries. She ministers alongside her husband Ben at Paradise Valley Church in Natoma, Kan. Sharon is a mother to three adult sons and grandmother to four grandsons. Her ministry includes teaching Bible studies, encouragement, adult care, and music.





FEBC Assists With Helicopter Study

by Bryon Brock and Paul Boeker

National pastors in Mexico are committed to reach new villages for Christ. But in the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains of central Mexico, getting to these small, isolated villages is a challenge. Some can only be reached by a long, dangerous truck drive plus a walk of several hours. Today, United Indian Mission Aviation (UIMA) ferries pastors, missionaries, medical patients and supplies to many villages with fixed-wing aircraft (uimaviation.com). But many other high mountain villages don't have enough level land for a runway.

This challenge has led UIMA to investigate the feasibility of operating a helicopter. Most villages are within a 100-mile radius from the UIMA base in Tepec, Mexico. They can be accessed by an 8–12 hour truck ride and hike — or by a 30-minute helicopter flight.

In April, UIMA rented a Robison R44 helicopter from New Tribes Mission (NTM) to test the feasibility of operating helicopters in rugged, steep mountain terrain where safe runways would be difficult or impossible to build. The high elevations where many villages are situated pose an additional challenge. Could a helicopter be the answer to linking these villages with the Gospel?

The Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches (FEBC) had

planned to raise money for a fall test, but when a slot opened in April for a test at much reduced costs, the Fellowship helped fund the test with a grant of \$2,500 from a recent bequest. How did the helicopter work out? On the second day of the test, the helicopter helped save a woman's life [see "Legacy Giving," page 6]. UIMA's director, Bryon Brock reported, "We continued to make flights throughout the week, ferrying native pastors out to various mountain villages to minister. It was like taking them right up to the front door."

This study has helped UIMA personnel to see how God could use a helicopter to help them have a much greater impact on the isolated peoples of Mexico with the Gospel. They anticipate that opportunities to fly native and Mexican pastors would increase greatly as their vision is also expanding. Having a way for these pastors to reach villages that are further and further from airstrips will be a huge benefit.

UIMA is extremely grateful for the grant from FEBC and looks forward to partnering on other projects in the future [See "Convention Project," page 15].



FEBC VIDEO LIBRARY

Raise up a Child

If your Sunday School or small group is looking for a new study, why not consider *Raise Up a Child*, taught by Phil Tuttle, CEO and President of Walk Thru the Bible Ministries?

Designed for parents, grandparents, teachers, small group leaders, and others who work with children, this study gives practical wisdom based on the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. Principles are presented as four simple yet practical "compass points" that offer help and hope in dealing with children, guiding them to grow into responsible, loving, mature adults.

Presenter Phil Tuttle has worked with Walk Thru the Bible since 1988. He frequently speaks throughout the world in churches, Bible clubs, and Christian Education conferences. He is also deeply involved in his home church where he serves as one of the teaching pastors. Phil humorously combines biblical teaching with real-life applications so students can remember and apply what they have learned.

Raise Up a Child will train, equip, and encourage your students to better influence and guide the children God has placed in their lives. This study consists of eight sessions, approximately 25 minutes each. For more information, visit walkthru.org/store/product-categories/video-series.

To borrow a study, e-mail info@febministries.org or call (402) 965-3860.

PROCLAIMING CHRIST AROUND THE WORLD

Chosen to Serve

by Anja Gaona

Who is called to reach all the Jameses out there?

It is not a game of *tab-teh-tee* (i.e. "eeny meeny miny moe" in English-speaking circles), where we hope not to be chosen to step in. God reminds us that Jesus "came to serve, not to be served — and then to give away his life in exchange for many who are held hostage" (Mark 5:45 MSG). Before you move on to the next page because you are uneasy with this subject, remember that being chosen to serve can take many different shapes and forms. The bottom line, though, does not change. God has called us to follow his Son's example — to love other people starting with "the least of these" by proclaiming the Good News; binding the broken hearted; and setting free the captives. In short, we are all called to serve, and it starts right where we are, with those we least expect.

BE PREPARED

I used to dream that God would take me away to far-off countries, miraculously endow me with amazing talents and wisdom, and then use me for great Kingdom service. The thing is though, that the most important preparation starts at home. In my case, home is and was Paraguay, South America. Your home may be in the United States, Canada or elsewhere around the world. Point being, God speaks to us at home, frequently through plain life experiences. He promises that when we seek his Kingdom first, he takes care of the rest. When we honestly look for what he desires in his heart, and reach out to show his love to those next to us — even that family down the street having issues, or the Jameses downtown who are becoming difficult — we learn to put aside our self-focused thoughts and prejudices and start to see what God sees: someone held hostage, in need of love, life and hope.

Just as Jesus did not go out unprepared, so we also need adequate preparation to effectively meet others in their place of need. For some, that may mean simply serving under your church, within the house of worship or out in the community. For others, this may lead to more Bible training and Christian education, specific courses in a particular field of interest, or even following a certain career path. When one explores the situation of one child, teen or adult with difficulties, it becomes obvious that both surface and underlying problems are incredibly complex. This is true in any part of the world. And while God's gift of love and restoration for all is simple truth, digging deeper to understand specific human crises is often necessary, so that the message that we bring can be grasped and received.

GO OUT OR REACH OUT

The Jameses are there, waiting. Maybe you just never thought of them before, or did not see them. After all, our society has always tried to keep them out of sight. Walking in faith in the

calling God gave me, I started to notice more than just the kids on street corners, or those in children's homes waiting for family. Through missions training programs; networking with different ministries; and even studying law to work in national and international levels for child protection, I was astounded to find the huge impact one person or family can have when desiring to serve God by serving others. For example, they can open their home to receive a child in temporary foster care and effectively meet his or her physical, emotional and spiritual needs with support from their church family until the courts resolve the child's case. Countless stories of life and hope across the globe feature children with a despairing future who were restored in a godly family setting.

On the other hand, trained and equipped godly servers can be a lifeline to a youth in need of counsel and support within his or her family and community, or even when processed by the courts for criminal activity. Taking God's message of hope to more difficult places such as detention centers and prisons, as well as assisting those trying to reintegrate back into society, are part of our calling to "go out to the ends of the earth."

These are just two simple yet profound opportunities for which we are chosen — I pray God will allow you to see where you might serve Him best.



Anja Gaona grew up in Paraguay as the daughter of missionaries Benny and Esther Goertaen. She and her husband René are preparing to minister to at-risk children in Paraguay.



Church News

Fairview Bible Church,

Swift Current, Saskatchewan

Daniel J. Butt, Pastor

Vacation Bible School is scheduled for the first week of August. It has been many years since Fairview Bible Church has pursued this avenue of ministry. Of course, a lot of preparation and volunteers are needed. Please ask God to provide workers and guide our planning. God has been moving, shaping and transforming the church family over the past few months. We are excited to see what God has in store for both the church family and the VBS students in August.

Hodgson Bible Church

Hodgson, Manitoba

Since our pastor's retirement last summer, various speakers have ministered to us. For several months, Kevin Trembley has faithfully travelled from Winnipeg, at times through some very inclement weather, to challenge us to understand who our God is and to know and trust our Bible.

Please pray for wisdom and God's leading as our elders continue to search for a new pastor.

Maritta Sinisalo, Correspondent

Dalmeny Bible Church

Dalmeny, Saskatchewan

Dennis Friesen, Pastor

Youth and leaders spent three days snowboarding at Jasper, Alberta, during Easter break. Pastor Dave Cornelius drew the teens attention to the "Sermon on the Mount."

About 170 ladies attended our Annual Salad Fiesta in May. Darlene Schultz told how God has worked in her life and Ruth Bitner presented "Exploring the Wonders of Saskatchewan," a slide show.

The Ukraine Mission Team encouraged donations by manning a food booth and providing us with a Sunday noon meal. They will leave in late June.

Nicole Thiessen reported on her ministry with YWAM from September –

February. She attended the Discipleship Training School in Florida, and then went to South Africa, serving in orphanages and working with kids' programs.

The Guys Fishing Retreat at Nemeiben Lake in May netted about 45 men and boys.

Milestone: Esther Boldt celebrated 100 years of life on June 23!

New Members: One in May

Marilyn Harder, Correspondent

Faith Evangelical Bible Church

Winkler, Manitoba

Mike Comtois, Pastor

Dr. Dave Anderson presented a weekend Bible conference on "Suffering" in April. We enjoyed his insight into suffering from a biblical point of view. Dr. Anderson is the Founder and President of Grace School of Theology (The Woodlands, Texas). He has written several books including *Maximum Joy*.



Faith leaders open Bible Conference with Dave Anderson.....

Pastor Mike Comtois travels to Haiti in July to witness the graduation of several hundred pastors from the Bible Training Centre for Pastors. Our church has sponsored those Bible school classes over the years.

Beth Bickell, Correspondent

Grace Evangelical Bible Church

Abbotsford, British Columbia

Ryan Peixoto, Lead Pastor

Our youth experienced their first ever youth retreat at Camp Squeah in April. Many were hesitant to attend the retreat, not knowing what to expect. They couldn't imagine being disconnected from social media for two days. The speaker

challenged the youth to make God relevant and to grow spiritually. As it turned out, the youth had an absolute blast and can hardly wait for the next retreat.

Our ladies' coffee hour in May allowed us to hear one of our women describe the difference following Christ has made in her life. In June the women went to Fort Langley Village to peruse the many boutique and antique shops and share lunch together. Our men stayed to work after their Saturday breakfast in May and tidied around the outside of our church property. In June the men had the privilege of meeting and hearing Danny Foster, the new president of Canadian Institute of Linguistics (canil.ca).

Grace Church hired a part-time VBS director. Already she has planned two successful Pro-D Day Camps [Professional Development Day when classes are cancelled]. These camps are an effective way to reach out to parents in the community who need a place for their school age children. We hope this ministry will grow as word of it gets out to the community. Our director is also working on four one-week sessions of VBS. Needless to say, we are excited to see what God is planning to do at Grace Church this summer in our children's ministry.

Our excitement for Convention 2015 is building as we see registrations coming in. Our competent team is doing its best to put together a memorable experience for all who will attend. There is so much to see and enjoy here in the lower mainland that many will want to plan their holiday to come and stay longer. Don't miss it!!

Baptisms: Two in May

New Members: Six in May

Brenda Jansen, Correspondent

Paradise Valley Church

Natoma, Kansas

Ben MacConnell, Pastor

Forty-five people gathered at Paradise Valley on April 19 to celebrate its 10-year

anniversary. Blaine Donaldson shared how the FEBC has been there for us each step of the way. It was good to remember all the help FEBC as given as well as the gracious servants who poured physical labor on the buildings. Pastor Ben spoke about the faithful supporting churches and individuals that have made this mission work possible.

Rebeka, a past member, sang and gave testimony of how the church has blessed her and shaped her life. One man who had gone to serve in another area of ministry returned to share how the church has been a blessing through God's grace in forgiveness and healing. Lastly, a man currently attending with his family shared the future outlook and the charge to keep doing the Lord's work as a lighthouse of hope and encouragement in Paradise Valley.

Our annual Bible Conference in May was well-attended with an average of 24 per evening. The teaching was on love.

Sharon MacConnell, Correspondent

Christian Fellowship Chapel

Winnipeg, Manitoba

John Harwood, Pastor

Guest speaker Rev. Cheryl Hauer, International Development Director of Bridges for Peace (national.bridgesforpeace.com) from Jerusalem, gave an inspiring sermon on what it meant to be a disciple of a rabbi in Jesus' day.

Morgan Serger, General Director of Mid-Way Christian Leadership, explained the work that he and his wife Krista are doing in Thompson, Manitoba. Their emphasis is growing Christian leaders in Manitoba's North by discipling the ones who want to follow Christ.

Each fourth Sunday is Bag Lunch Sunday. We bring our own lunches, and sit in small groups to share with each other something of our lives to get to know one another better. We are given a list of questions, and each of us has a chance to answer each question. Examples of recent questions: "Do you enjoy yard work?" "What does it mean to be an intentional disciple of Jesus?"

All age groups are invited and included. The response has been encouraging.

A small group, including our pastor, meets weekly for CFC Prayer Time to pray for our small congregation. We come to prayer without our own agenda, wanting to hear what is on Jesus' heart, and pray for one solid hour. We read Scripture verses to inspire our praise, confession, and petitions. The presence of the Holy Spirit is tangibly sweet, and we hope that our small band becomes multiplied many times over. A recent prayer time found us asking the Lord to make us all intentional disciples of Jesus.



Muffin Breakfast at Christian Fellowship Chapel

Family Bible Hour, our "Sunday School," breaks for the summer, and we concluded with a muffin breakfast. Over the summer we plan to clean up a small park in the neighborhood of our church as part of the "Love Winnipeg" initiative.

Linda Edwards, Correspondent

Lustre EMB Church

Frasier, Montana

John Skillman, Pastor

Several members provide Sunday services several times a year at the Faith Lutheran Home in Wolf Point. This outreach has made many contacts for the Gospel over time.

The Lord's Table in Wolf Point serves meals to between 40 and 80 people each weekday. We have begun collecting food items for this ministry.

The Saturday morning Bible Study Group has been blessed by studying Behold Your God by Myrna Alexander. Our ladies have also offered their services to those who may need assistance in

housecleaning or meal preparation.

We have noticed how well our people have spontaneously been reaching out to neighbors in need. Our people have shared farm and ranch work; helped with gardens; taken special food treats to someone who has a hard time cooking; gathered firewood; and sent flowers to the ill and bereaved.

Crosspoint Bible Church

Omaha, Nebraska

Don Pahl, Pastor

Our second campus has been "up and running" since April, meeting in a school in Bennington, Neb. A core of about 75 people from our original campus are attending and providing leadership. This new campus is reaching out to this fast-growing community on the outskirts of Omaha.

Speaker Cathy Maiellaro reaffirmed God's faithfulness to 65 women at our annual women's retreat in April.

Ten youth from Crosspoint completed training to lead Child Evangelism Fellowship 5-Day Clubs this summer, and reach children with the good news of Jesus.

Our high school youth, led by Pastor Josh Klein, will travel to Trinidad July 4-18. The team of 20 will work on construction projects; lead VBS; and minister at orphanages and care facilities.

An adult mission team will serve in Guatemala July 12-20.

New members: Three in April

Sherrie Lindsey, Correspondent

Faith Evangelical Bible Church

Henderson, Nebraska

Michael Fink, Pastor

It was "all hands on deck" as we prepared for one of our biggest outreach events, Vacation Bible School, June 8-12. Our children become missionaries by inviting their friends who need to know Jesus. The SonSpark Labs by Gospel Light provided a framework to share the story of redemption in a concise, clear, and interesting presentation.

In our morning worship services, Pastor Mike has been teaching from the life of Jacob beginning in Genesis 25 with “The Birth of a Scammer.” Sunday evening Bible studies focus on what the Bible says about end-time events.

Alice Decker, Church Correspondent

Countryside Bible Church

Meade, Kansas

Chuck Finster, Pastor

Pastoral Assistant Taylor Wiens is taking our participants down to Chattanooga, Tenn., for Precept Teen Boot Camp (transformstudent.org/equip-boot-camp-2015) June 12–21. Tines Friesen will serve with Pioneers (pioneers.org) in Ghana, Africa, June 7–July 30. Rebekah Harshberger will serve under International Teams (iteams.org) in Ukraine from June 8 to July 22.

On May 17 we honored our six high school graduates by having men in leadership each give a challenge from the Word to an individual graduate.

Mary Friesen, Correspondent

Evangelical Bible Church

Dallas, Oregon

Jerry Franz, Pastor

Our 2014 Missions Conference featured a video showing the Kimyel Tribe of Indonesia receiving their first Bibles. This year Orin and Rosa Kidd, missionaries to Indonesia, told us more about this event. What an amazing sight to behold! The tribe was so honoring to their God, so thankful for his Word to be written so that they could learn. (Search YouTube® for “Kimyel Bible.”)

Anna Funk turned 101 on April 19! Many from our congregation were able to visit her, and others sent cards of love and congratulations! Anna loves visitors, and she loves the Lord!

One member began collecting Bibles to send to Bible Foundation (bf.org). Many boxes of Bibles have been collected. It is amazing how God can use one person to accomplish so much!

Concert pianist Sam Rotman gave a concert in our church. He has won many

competitions and openly shares his testimony (samrotman.com).

Our Healthcare Committee was instrumental in starting a “Caregiver Support Group.” Once-a-month meetings provide support and encouragement to primary caregivers of loved ones with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia. These have been well attended. They will continue to meet as the need dictates.

Our Youth Group led a Sunday evening service to tell us how God has been working in their lives this past year. Pastor Nate said that if he had to define this past year with one word, the word would be STAND. He went on to describe the many ways this group has stood strong in their faith, whether it was going through difficulties, standing up for what is right and making it known to others, or being open in sharing Jesus with their peers. We are so proud of the strong men and women of God our 14 graduates have become!

Women’s Ministry finished another amazing year with our May Festival, one of two major outreach ministries to the community. Guests were invited to a wonderful dinner. Our speaker, MaryLynne McCulloch shared and sang of the hope that we have in Christ. Our theme for this past year was “Whispers of Hope.”

Baptisms: One in May.

New Members: Two in May.

Vicki Kibbey, Correspondent

Stuartburn Gospel Chapel

Stuartburn, Manitoba

Mark Funk, Pastor

Fifty-eight contestants entered cars they designed and built for the Awana Grand Prix in February. Len Friesen, Awana missionary for Manitoba, spoke. Both church and community families are brought together through the ministry of Awana.

In March retired pastor James Thiessen joined us for a special men’s breakfast on Saturday morning and spoke to us in the Sunday morning service. His message on the call of Matthew reminded us that God sees the heart, and we need to look with his eyes to see the potential in the people around us.



Shaving off at Bye-bye Beard Night:
Tori Penner and Alex Koop

That March weekend also included “Bye-bye Beard Night.” In October 2014, the men shaved their heads and beards and began collecting pledges of support as they committed to letting it all grow back unrestrained. On March 22 there was great rejoicing (at least by many of the wives) in the final shave-off as many shaggy inches fell to the floor. The pledges raised money so Winnipeg’s Union Gospel Mission (UGM) (gospelmission.ca) could send inner city children to Faith Academy (faithacademy.ca). These children will be given an education that includes the importance of knowing Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. The generosity of our church family and friends provided \$5,200, allowing us to support eight students for a year! “Bye-bye Beard Night” included a short presentation about the ministry of UGM; the shearing away of excess hair; a dinner of homemade pizzas; an auction of the extra pizzas; and the viewing of a faith based movie.

Sue Hoy, Correspondent

Heartland Bible Church

Lincoln, Nebraska

Scott Hecht, Pastor

In April, Dr. Mark Christian, director of the Global Faith Institute of Omaha, Neb., spoke in a morning service. Growing up in Egypt with family ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, he had a period of spiritual wandering. Then he discovered Jesus Christ and committed his life to him. From his unique background and perspective, he led us to a better understanding of Islam.

A congregational luncheon on May 3 was followed by a question and answer time for our elder candidate, Bob Mitchell.

Members also received a ministry service form to encourage them to match their spiritual gifts with available opportunities.

The youth group, led by David Hoesch and Bob Klotz, went camping and canoeing. All returned safely — no one drowned — but oh, the sunburns.

Our annual Ladies’ Spring Brunch featured Miriam Bede who shared about her work at the Lincoln Crisis Pregnancy Center.

Missions Movie Night featured a video from Dispatches from the Front (dispatchesfromthefront.org) which took us to Singapore, Borneo, and then through Cambodia’s remote river country to show how God is at work.

Bob Michell was installed as an elder of Heartland Bible Church on May 24. We welcome him and pray God’s blessing as he uses Bob for his glory in our church.

Trudy Reimer, Correspondent

Grunthal EMB Church

Grunthal, Manitoba

Continue to pray for us as we continue to seek a full-time pastor!

Our church ladies held a “Free Garage Sale” on April 21, as an opportunity to reach out and mingle with people in our community. Many people had been waiting at the door for at least a half-hour before the sale began!

Our ladies annual “Spring Brunch” included a delicious meal, singing and a skit. Cynda, an international student, shared her story of coming to God. God is at work all over the world!

Pray that God will direct our church as we choose youth leaders for the fall!

Marilyn D. Thiessen, Correspondent

Jansen Bible Church

Jansen, Nebraska

Paul Carpenter, Pastor

Q & A Bible Studies continue through the summer with a separate study for children.

Our global workers returned from India for their son’s university graduation. On May 17 they shared their ministry opportunities with us. That evening the

Art Wrigleys, with Child Evangelism Fellowship, challenged us to consider Good News Clubs, taught at school, and 5-day clubs during the summer as possible venues to evangelize kids in our county.

Our VBS offering project provided three computers for three native Indonesian missionaries. Jeff Porter, our New Tribes missionary, presented this project (cost \$800 per computer).

The youth group, directed by Jeff and Steph Engelman, will again run the food concession at the Washington, Kansas Rodeo.

Baptisms: Four in May

New Members: Eleven in May

Tena Dick, Correspondent

Salem Church

Waldheim, Saskatchewan

Darrell Derksen, Lead Pastor

After many years of praying, planning, giving and anticipation, all generations of our congregation came together on April 12 for “Milestone Sunday” to celebrate groundbreaking for the new Christian Education wing and multi-purpose room. Our theme was “Praising God for the Past — Praying for the Future.” The workmen have been going non-stop ever since; walls were up already by the end of May.



Salem Church celebrates groundbreaking
for new CE wing.

After 11 years of gifted and energetic service to our youth, Pastor Lee Young has tendered his resignation. On June 28 we celebrated baptism, along with a farewell service for Lee and his family. This was followed by a barbecue lunch. The Youngs will be greatly missed. We are asking the Lord to show Lee, Bree and their four children a clear direction for their future ministry.

Our congregation has voted to hire an

associate pastor to fill this position, and we are trusting that the Lord will lead us to the right person to lead our congregation into the future alongside Pastor Darrell.

Some men from our congregation helped organize the Community Motorcycle, ATV and UTV ride along the trails near Big River on May 3.

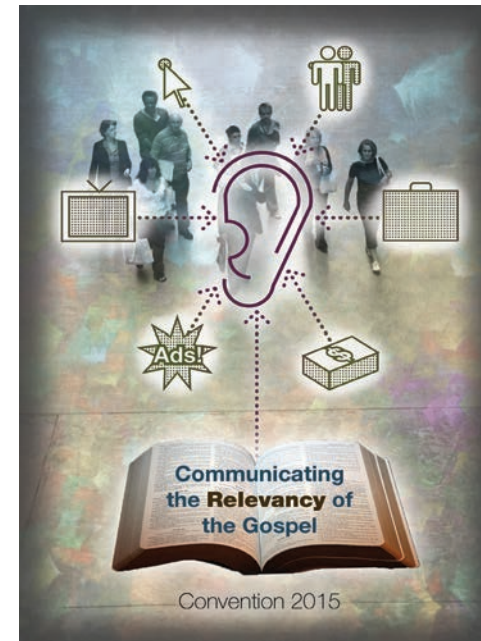
This summer Kaia Nickel is working in Global Shore Opportunities (globalshore.org), a summer student program, which enables students to become involved in Christian missions while also earning money to fund their post-secondary education. After two months working long hours six days a week at a produce packing plant, she and her teammates will head to Guatemala for July and August, where she will live with a local family and participate in various ministries in partnership with a local church.

On May 29, one of our young men, Kendrew Friesen, left for the UK to participate in Operation Mobilization’s ELCO (English Language and Community Outreach). He will complete his internship in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). After six weeks in the UK, he will take part in a Sports Leader Academy in Zambia. How exciting to support the young people of Salem who are engaging in world missions!

Brenda Wiens is joining her daughter Larissa for the July Freedom Climb in the Alps (thefreedomclimb.net). [Laura serves with OM Africa in Kabwe, Zambia. See Fellowship Focus, May/June 2015.] Brenda has been raising funds and awareness to help women and children who are at risk of exploitation. She began in early 2015 by making meals for sale. People could skip cooking on Friday and buy a “Freedom Friday” meal. Brenda also brought a team together to provide meals, cinnamon buns, donuts, and other food to sell at our town-wide garage sale. She is also strengthening her body for eight days of climbing and preparing her heart for the “mountaintop experience” with the Lord.

We heard from Pastor Daniel Barau at a Sunday evening Missions Coffee. He serves with Intercede in Northern Nigeria,

Joining *our*
hands to
**Strengthen
His Church**



CONVENTION PROJECT 2015



The Fellowship Focus is published by the
Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches
11605 W DODGE RD STE 3, OMAHA NE 68154-2566

NO ENDORSEMENT

INTL SURFACE AIR LIFT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
OMAHA NE
PERMIT NO. 922



The Power of the Gospel

by Steve Schmidt, SIM, Niger

One morning as I set out for a pre-dawn run before work, I glanced at the gate of our next door neighbors' house. That brought the question to mind that we had asked ourselves so often: "What would make a Nigerien willing to trust Christ as Savior and face the shame and ridicule that comes to the person who breaks rank with the social and religious norms?" My question deserved Jesus' criticism, "O you of little faith."

A widow with two grown daughters lived next door when we moved to this neighborhood in 2006. I met her when we went to greet after her husband passed away. We became friends. Over the years, we spent a lot of time at her house — lots of laughs and hugs. She would even call me at work and ask me to stop by on my way home to pray with her. But the truth was that the family was well-entrenched in Islam. It was part of the fabric of their identity. It seemed nothing would change that.

We had good relationships. When we traveled to the interior of Niger, we would bring back onions for the people around us. At Christmas time, we gave our neighbors a big plate of cookies

and copies of the Jesus Film in all the languages of Niger. We were close friends. But the social and religious barriers to the Gospel seemed insurmountable. Did we have any idea how following Christ would affect these people in their community networks?

In November, when I was back in the States taking care of my mom in her last days, I received an amazing phone call from my wife, Mikki. She said, "You aren't going to believe this, but Monmi¹ has given her life to Christ!" Monmi was the oldest daughter. I couldn't believe my ears! I had tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat. I thought of my little-faith question outside their gate on that early morning run. With God all things are possible! I went upstairs and told Mom what had happened. She had been praying with us for this family.

Monmi has read her Bible from cover to cover three times since December. She is faithful in her new church. She even joined the choir. On the day of her baptism, her mother told her not to go through with it. But she did. When terrorist mobs were burning the churches in Niamey on Jan. 17, the mother was afraid they would come to her house because she had a Christian daughter now. They didn't.

It has not been easy for Monmi. Her younger sister told her, "A lot of people would like to make the choice you did, but they are afraid." I can only imagine that she was talking about herself. But I've learned a lesson in all this — we just need to be a friend and be a faithful witness. God does the rest — even in the most difficult contexts. 🙏

¹Name changed to protect her identity