



# THE ARK

Volume 20, No. 1 News from the Akron Area Association of American Baptist Churches Spring 2020

## MODERATOR'S MESSAGE



*"See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come; the cooing of doves is heard in our land. The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."* Song of Songs 2:11-13

We are approaching the month of May and warmer weather ... I hope? But then again, we are in Northeast Ohio and it was just snowing yesterday. I am one who is fascinated by the forecasting of weather. I often spend more time than I should looking at local forecasts and weather maps. But there is a reason. If I know what the weather is going to hold, I can plan my activities accordingly. If I do not know, then it becomes difficult to plan even the simplest details, from what I am going to wear to where I am going to go, and what I am going to do. It is the "unknown" factor that often makes the future unpredictable.

Currently with the COVID-19 pandemic we are living into the unknown. Each day scientists and healthcare professionals discover more and more about the virus but so much remains unpredictable. None of us could have predicted that our church buildings would close to help limit the spread of the virus. Not a single pastor I know imagined that the entire landscape of church ministry would change so

quickly. In fact, we are in a season where things look altogether different than they did just 2 months ago. Change has come and churches are adapting daily to figure out how to accomplish ministry as we move forward into the unknown and trusting in God's guidance.

Even though we have been physically separated, I have been blessed to see how technology and creativity has enabled churches to continue ministering and fulfilling the Great Commission. In this newsletter, I hope you will be encouraged as you encounter ways our association churches and its members have continued to care for one another.

As I look forward to planting my yearly garden, let me challenge you with a sentiment you are likely familiar with. "Bloom Where You Are Planted!" This phrase means a person should take advantage of the opportunities they have in life and be grateful for the present situation. We may not like our current situation, but we can be grateful and thank God for the opportunities it has given us to make a difference for the Kingdom of God. We may be living into the

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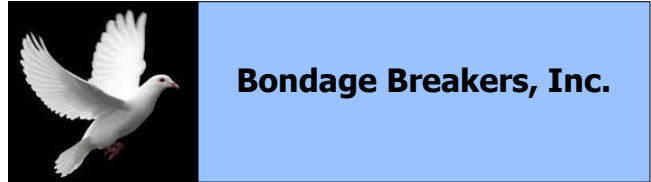
**(Moderator Continued)**

unknown, but none of this caught God by surprise. Do not forget the childhood song that reminds us, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." Bloom brightly and be encouraged as we are all in God's hands together!



Rev. Kevin Thomas

*will collaborate with church and local business leaders to help maximize their potential by encouraging innovation, business development and fellowship.*



**"First Time"**

For the first time in 37 years, we have been denied access into the state prisons. Gratefully, it is not because of something that we have done, *or not done*, but because of the Governor's orders to "stay at home!" We don't have to express how difficult this is. Fact about it, this feels kind of eerie! While I am an advocate for the Word of God and the various edicts that he gave to Israel that have trickled down to this generation, like "Be still and know...Psalm 46:10a," I must say again, this is the "*first time*" in the course of this ministry, and it feels eerie.

When I look at this from the reality view point, it is for everyone's protection. God in His providential care and concern always knows what is best. Would you join me in lifting up *nations*, in *prayer*, lifting up *prisons nationally*, perhaps for the *first time*, in prayer and believing that in God's time, he will bring this pandemic to a screeching halt, once we (the nations) have learned our lessons! As a body of believers, perhaps for the "*first time*," we are asking the critical question, "Lord is COVID-19 a semblance of your wrath and judgment?" Let us remain committed to the cause of Christ and the ministry to the least of these my brethren (sisters) ... Mt. 25:35ff. After all, for the "*first time*" many are coming home without restraint!

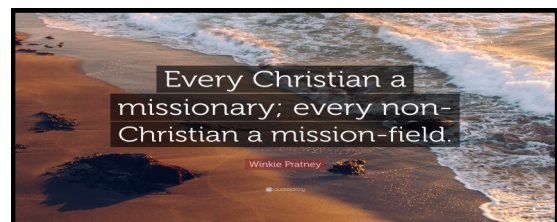
Rev. Dr. Alicia J. Malone -Bondage Breakers, Inc.

**UPDATE FROM THE REESE FAMILY**



We had to cancel all of our church visits and speaking engagements, and IM announced the cancellation of the World Mission Conference and Hear the Call at Green Lake this summer. We would ask that everyone join us in prayer for the Haitian people as COVID-19 has begun to spread throughout Haiti. With extremely limited access to healthcare and the country greatly destabilized at this time, this pandemic will severely affect the Haitian communities, nearly all populated with the already vulnerable people.

*Editor's Note: Stacy and Tim Reese are endorsed to serve in discipleship and community development with IM partner in Haiti, the Christian Association for Spreading the Gospel and Economic and Health Development. They are both passionate about discipleship through artistic expression. Stacy will serve alongside women cooperatives in building relationships, retail management, mentoring and education. Tim has a background in marketing and*





## How is Jesus Helping You?!

Jesus is helping the FBCS family in extraordinary ways during the COVID-19 pandemic. He is faithful in providing for our needs even before we know we have them. During the church's *Week to Seek* and *Annual Retreat* in January our leadership team felt compelled to articulate our mission, vision, and values during 2020. Little did we know that the timing of the teaching would be the launch of our online ministry Services. Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us that the Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts.

The congregation of First Baptist Church of Seville began investing and preparing to offer online services in 2017. Our congregation knew that Pastor Benjamin's ability to connect with audiences through worship and teaching the Word of God was unique. As a petite country church, there were plenty of roadblocks. The greatest challenge was the time-consuming editing of the recorded material and matching it with the high-quality expectations of our artistic servants. In July of 2019, after seeking the Lord for 2 years, we hired Youth Pastor, Adam Michel. Adam is a school teacher in our area. It wasn't until after Governor DeWine ordered the schools to close that we discovered that Adam had a passion for video production and owned several essential pieces of equipment. God's ways are higher than our ways. The obstacle was removed and after several weeks of climbing the learning curve, by God's grace, we're meeting our goal of hosting online services.

Truthfully, our online content is just one of the incredible ways Jesus is helping our FBCS family

during this pandemic. Before we know our need, He faithfully supplies. On Good Friday, our police department dropped off a batch of Easter lilies that we were able to distribute. Our Sunday school kids wrote letters asking for lessons on Jesus's miracles that were received AFTER the video lesson on Jesus's miracles was recorded. The Lord Jesus is helping us get through this pandemic together. Our first online service directly lined up with sharing our mission, vision, and values. We did not know what was coming, but Jesus did. We know each church of the Akron Area Association has experienced miracles and we are looking forward to hearing about them. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Eph 2:10

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Adam Michel, Seville First Youth Pastor

## BOOKS OF THE BIBLE PUZZLE

There are 30 books of the Bible in this paragraph. Can you find them? This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket, on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much, he passed it on to some friends. One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his john boat. Another friend studied it while playing his banjo, Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend judges the job of solving this puzzle so involving, she brews a cup of tea to help her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a fact. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. Truthfully, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or a scholar to see some of them at the worst. Research has shown that something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph. During a recent fund raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta Phi lemonade booth set a new record. The local paper, The Chronicle, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana humbly puts it, "The books are all right here in plain view hidden from sight." Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation that may help is that books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. Also, keep in mind, that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember, there is no need for a mad exodus, there really are 30 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph waiting to be found. God Bless.



*Editor: Published in the Massillon First  
April 2020 newsletter.*



Dear Ladies,

It is with regret that we had to cancel the April 23 ABWM Spring Rally. Our venue, a senior care center, was closed due to the spread of COVID-19.

Not wishing to risk the health and lives of any of our Akron Area ABWM members, we shall have to keep in touch via electronic means instead of face to face.

Several of you have asked about the state Conference in June. At this time, the plans are to hold Conference if the stay at home order is lifted by May 15 and, if so, at least 30 people register by May 29. Any money received by the state treasurer for registrations will be held until it is determined whether Conference will be held.

If there is any way that I can be of assistance to you or if you have questions, please feel free to contact me by phone or text at (319) 795-5140 or by email at [sknick1@hotmail.com](mailto:sknick1@hotmail.com).

Thank you for your understanding. May God bless you and keep you through this trying time.

Sincerely,

*Susan Nicholson, Acting President  
Akron Area Association ABWM*





Randy and Lori Brookes

### **"Silence at Camp"**

There is an eerie quiet that I notice as I walk around the camp. I am not sure if it is possible to have quiet break the silence but that is what it feels like as I ponder what has happened in the last three weeks. There are no camper voices lofting across the street as I work in my garden. No basketballs beating out a rhythm on the concrete court. No laughing. No singing. No shouts of joy. There is only the deafening quiet of missing campers.

Like the rest of you, Koinonia Camp is in the middle of "flattening the curve." As spring arrives it brings with it trees budding, flowers blooming and birds singing but this year it does not bring school children, weekend rental groups or church retreats. This spring we are closed, deemed to not be an "essential business" under the Governor's mandate.

Only under the circumstances currently plaguing our country and our world and our need to protect as many people as possible will I concede to the designation of "non-essential" for Koinonia Camp. I know that attending a Christian summer camp is a vital part of growing followers of Christ.

The summer camp experience at Koinonia offers five areas that encourage campers to grow in their faith. First and foremost, campers are introduced to Jesus in multiple ways throughout their time at camp. Second, camp is different from home which allows for campers to see and hear things in a new way. Third, camp gives the camper a chance to see and experience the faith of others and express their own faith in a safe environment. Fourth, from tomahawk throwing to interactive praise and worship at the campfire and everything in between, camp is hands-

on experiential learning and growing. Finally, campers have an opportunity to work out their faith while building friendships that will in many cases last a lifetime. One study wrote this as part of their final critique of what happens when campers go home from camp: "Young people are participating more deeply in their faith months after camp is over, and this continues to affect many of them for years." Right now, Koinonia Camp may be deemed "non-essential" but we all know that can only last for a short while – because we have witnessed and experienced the impact a week of camp has on a child's life and faith.

So while the unbearable silence of missing campers reminds me daily that our nation is in a battle for lives – it is, at this time, best to leave the beds empty, the ovens off and the horses unsaddled. It doesn't mean we will stay that way forever. My hope and prayer is that by May we have overcome our virus foe allowing our state and our nation to be on the road to recovery. We all know that June brings Sunday registrations with all of the noise and excitement that comes with every camper who will soon experience Jesus in a way that only happens at camp. Please pray with me for an end to this virus and hundreds of Changed Lives at Koinonia this summer.

*Randy Brookes, Koinonia Camp Executive Director*



"Praise God for his bountiful blessings toward the children of men!" Yes, in the midst of all that "nations" are going through, we still have joy. We still have a mighty remembrance that God is the God, Sovereign over all "nations." We are grateful that our missionaries like the Reeses and McCurdys are "stateside at this time." Again, we are grateful. While all believers everywhere are encouraged to continue in prayer for our first responders, for those affected by COVID-19, for families who have encountered death because of COVID-19 ... we still have both hope and joy!

Many of the churches and places of worship have now swiftly moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century of accessing Facebook, twitter, Instagram, DUO, freeconferencecall.com and other modes of media. Again, may I say I am grateful? Yes, today is a "new normal," we are now constrained to do some things that by nature or preference, we have not been accustomed to doing. "It is all good!" Why, because what the "nations" are going through has never been a surprise to God. If we can recall, Psalm 24:1ff, the entire earth belongs to God. I will say it again, "COVID-19 was not a surprise to God.

We can engage in many conjectures as to why, etc. but "at the end of each day," we need to "hear the Word of God" and "walk in obedience to that in which we hear." Be encouraged my brothers and sisters during this time of "new normal" with this short pithy but, I pray, encouraging, devotional message:

*Psalm 23:1-6 "EVEN THOUGH"...*

Most of us know this Psalms and find comfort in it. As we focus upon the 4<sup>th</sup> verse, "Yea though we walk (vs.4)" ... I want to encourage us with the words "*Even though*" ...

David was the youngest of Jesse's children, he championed the Philistine Giant, Goliath (1 Samuel 17). "*Even though*" ...

David sat on a hillside, shepherding his father's

sheep, as a shepherd he led them, guided them, and protected them.

*"Even though"...*

we are guided by the "stay at home" order we can embrace God's goodness and mercy.

*"Even though"...*

we may struggle with unpaid bills, we can embrace his goodness and mercy remembering Phil. 4:19.

*"Even though" ...*

these are turbulent times for "all nations", we are to remember God's goodness and mercy.

In the words of Oswald Chambers, "it is in the valley whereby we grow!"

Bless our missionaries everywhere, all nations and the health of our Akron Association.

*Be encouraged. Love, Dr. Alicia J. Malone*

**American Baptist Churches of Ohio News**



**AB History and Polity Workshop**

This is a one-day workshop for anyone who would like to have a better understanding of Baptist beliefs, distinctives, and practices has been rescheduled to **Saturday, May 9, 10 am to 5 pm** at American Baptist Churches of Ohio Region Office 136 Galway Drive, Granville, OH.

For additional information and to register, call **740-587-0804**.

*Rev. Jane Gibbons, Executive Minister Program and Ministry Development—ABC-Ohio*





## Drive-by Bunny

By Kensington Thomas

"Just because the world is on pause, does not mean that Easter has to be. On Saturday, April 11th, I had the privilege of being the drive-by Easter bunny for over twenty different families in the Canton area. Many children were missing the typical holiday fun that Easter brings. Candy, egg-hunts, and pictures with the Easter bunny are all things people look forward to around this time of year.

My brother drove me around while I held a sign dressed as the Easter Bunny and waved at all the kids we drove by. We stopped to take social distancing pictures, and even got out to walk to the front door of two houses. Spreading Easter cheer made the world feel a little more normal. This pandemic can change many things, but it cannot take away Jesus' resurrection.

As I drove around, I hoped these children felt love through every wave and kiss I blew, because this drive-by bunny sure had a lot of love to give."



Bunny: My human brother was driving me around!



Look Mommy... It's the Easter Bunny!



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## Spring 2020



### Association Website

(aaa-abc.com)

### Facebook

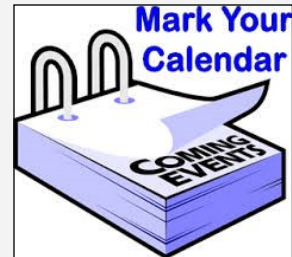
**Akron Area Association of  
American Baptist Churches**

### Koinonia Website

(christiancampohio.org)

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**Due to the current conditions in our country,  
the Association meetings calendar is on hold.**

Pastors and association trustees will be informed in early May as to whether the scheduled May 17, 2020 at Trinity Baptist Church will take place or need to be cancelled or rescheduled.

**Summer 2020 Ark articles are due by July 17.**

### **AAA/ABC 2020 Theme**



**1 Corinthians 12:12**

**There is one body but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body.**