



THE ARK

Volume 20, No. 2 News from the Akron Area Association of American Baptist Churches Summer 2020

MODERATOR'S MESSAGE



"I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"
Psalm 91:2

As we enter the month of August, I pray this newsletter finds you well and trusting in God as we continue to seek Him as our place of refuge and our fortress during these difficult times. The reality of our current situation forces us to think about how we effectively communicate the gospel to a world that faces a host of challenges. How can we as ambassadors for Christ help provide the spiritual strength for the struggles people are facing? How can we be that beacon of light and hope in an often dark and lonely world? How can we point people to the God of refuge?

By now we recognize that because of Covid-19 the church faces the biggest fundamental shift in ministry in perhaps more than a century. Churches, including those within the Akron Association, are using their creativity and innovation to provide ministry in new and different ways than we have in the past. Many have quickly updated or added a digital platform for streaming the worship service, conducting Zoom Bible studies, or connecting through social media. This current situation is transforming our faith habits. For me, it has been a unique time to tune in online and see what many of our sister churches within the association are doing. It is my hope that many of the things we are doing can be

highlighted and shared in our newsletter. This will hopefully inspire and encourage one another to "keep pressing on" as Paul states in Philippians 3:14.

As we think about Association life, it has been good to see us continue to promote and support Camp Koinonia as they have been able to open and provide a summer camping experience for our children. The pastors and leaders of the association have continued to meet online all summer long with our Executive Minister Rev. Jane Gibbons through the "GoToMeeting" platform. In addition the Association Executive Leadership was able to meet during the month of July and conduct some of the normal business.

With much thought and consideration to follow the challenge of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 where he says, "Love Protects," the ELT has decided there will be no Fall Association Rally this year. We recognize the difficulty that Covid-19 has caused and the challenges we face not knowing what restrictions will look like come October. The ELT decided that protecting our church members and especially many of our senior members who would attend was of utmost important. We will attempt to have a Fall

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Trustees meeting which will involve fewer individuals and we can practice social distancing and have other safety measures in place. Trinity Baptist in North Canton has agreed to host the meeting and Lord willing we look forward to being together.

Let me leave you with a word of encouragement. This time we are living through should be bringing us closer to God as we spend time praying and being with Him as he brings us comfort. After all, turning to our faith to weather life's storms is an important tool to help us cope with the stress of life. Faith in God has been helping people get through hard times for thousands of years, just read the Psalms and you will see that it is all about people turning to God during troubled times to find our protection, our refuge and fortress.



Pastor Kevin K. Thomas,
Association Moderator

Full Devotion - FBC Canton



A new digital sign has been acquired at Canton First. We are very thankful to our FBC family and friends for their generosity in making this purchase possible. As we communicate with our community, it is our prayer that we will have an even greater impact with our words and actions.

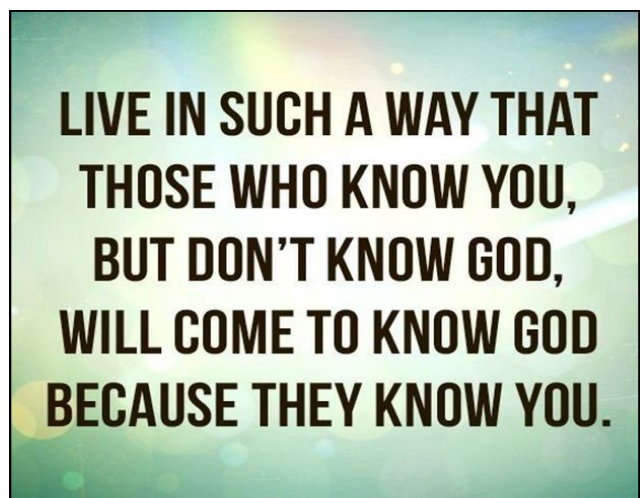


It was with sadness that we had to cancel both our Spring Rally and our Day of Spiritual Renewal for this year. However, we continue in our work for the Lord. Monies are being collected to help with the Ohio ABWM State Project. This year we are raising money to help buy another second-hand bus for Dayton Christian Center. Our State White Cross Chair is currently gathering information for White Cross quotas and hopes to have them to the association chairs soon. The quotas will be out to each Akron Association ABWM group as soon as possible.

As a reminder, we are looking for someone to take the position of Missions/White Cross person for our association. If you are interested, or know of someone who might consider the position, please contact me as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Susan Nicholson, Akron Area Association ABWM
President
319-795-5140



ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY POSITION OPENING



After many years of service in the ministry of Jesus at the **First Baptist Church of Massillon** as our Director of Administration, Wendy Blanda has requested to restructure her position. Wendy will move from full time to part time. She will no longer be administering the church office and directing other ministries of the church. Wendy will continue her dynamic teaching ministry with women and continue to work with the finances of the church, the benevolence ministry, the mission ministry, the email prayer partners, and Impact Massillon ministry.

Wendy has served the ministry of Jesus' Kingdom faithfully, compassionately, and lovingly. She has often provided many people with a listening ear, a prayerful spirit, and direction as a spiritual counselor. Her poise has set many at ease, her heart to share Jesus' grace and the Holy Spirit guidance has impacted many. Her support, encouragement, and guidance to all the staff has been amazing. In one form or another she has been interconnected with all staff in helping them function at peak performance. She has been the main conduit of knowledge, organization, and direction for our ministry.

One could go on and on about her impact on our ministry and this world. We thank God for Wendy Blanda.

She is remaining in her current ministry position until we find an Administrative Secretary that will take over the other parts of her position. This new position will require one to handle the daily operations of the facility, maintain our databases, proficient with computer skills and office equipment, create a welcoming and hospitable environment, be responsible for maintaining and implementing communications,

maintaining the church calendar; acquire, maintain, and publish all church documents; maintain the church website, assist in marketing ministries for Ministry Directors, maintain Protection Policy records, assist in assimilation ministries, and discipleship ministries, process van drivers, assist Ministry Directors with office work, recruit and instruct volunteer office assistants, attend staff meetings, and any other duties assigned by the Senior Minister, and keep the Senior Minister in line.

There is a job description available in the office and the hours are 9 AM – 3 PM except for regular Staff Meetings every 2 weeks. Obviously this person needs a depth of spiritual maturity, relational capacity, and a heart for Jesus and the Kingdom of God. If interested please contact the office. If you know someone you think would be a great fit for our staff, please contact the office at 330.832.1234 or firstbaptistoffice@gmail.com.

Seville First Baptist News

2020 has been nothing short of challenging. And it's in these times of strife when our faith is tested. But we have seen the Lord's faithfulness again and again through this season. Our church family has stayed strong in the Lord and continued to lift one another in prayer and support one another as each has a need. We've also been able to help others in our community with various needs that have come up in this unprecedented time of pandemic. We've even seen the church grow through our online presence and regular visitors to our Sunday morning services who've never been to our church, and yet now regularly "attend" each week. Jesus is using us through this time to do something new. Same gospel truth - with new ways of engaging the people of our community. All of this is to the glory of the Lord. Galatians 6:9 "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." *Reprinted from the Seville First newsletter with permission.*

Bondage Breakers, Inc.



A Second Pandemic

Who would have thought another pandemic would enter into this world over the last 3 and ½ months of what we have gone through globally? Yes, I am reminded of Dr. Marvin McMickle's book *Be My Witness*, wherein he details a witness as one who *sees something and suffers based on Acts 1:6-8*. Pandemics are global and we have been facing the COVID-19 for quite a long time. Just as the governors are beginning to release sanctions and try to get us back to a state of normalcy, or the "new normal," here comes another pandemic, of a different sort. **The** atrocious end of life to George Floyd is seen in my eyes and spirit, as another pandemic. While it is easy to play the race card, and believe me it is very real, very prevalent, and always will be and never dissipate, there is something deeper. There is systemic, pervasive sinister, devilish and demonic presence at its core. It is the sin of hatred, the sin of arrogance, and is the sin of injustice *by peace officers no less...* it is the sin of blatant murder to say the least.

Hebrews 13:3 states to "*Remember those in bonds...*" in essence "*enter in*" as you yourself were in bonds/prison. The global mayhem shrouding the world now is the voices, the actions of those who are "*entering in*," sharing their emotional pain, relational pain, cultural pain, ethical and ethnicity pain. The first Amendment allows us to do just that.

Our hearts go out to George Floyd and his family. As his own brother stated, "destruction of properties, etc. will not bring George back." While it is understood the pain is real, what may not be understood is whether or not this "new pandemic," has been

initiated by some vicious underground plot. There are many questions, speculations and concerns. Each one may indeed have some legitimacy.

During this second pandemic, author James Cone would ask: "where do we go from here?" In any institution, family, schools, churches, we are aligned with the heads of state. We have at our head, situations that are either contrived by the hand of men and women or ordained of God. With a closer look one must conclude on their own behest. This second pandemic from California, Minneapolis, and Columbus, Ohio all the way to London, we must not forget "two wrongs do not make a right."

Business owners are suffering the damage of properties. In the end, we all will suffer. Taxes will of necessity be raised in an effort to compensate and cover insurance premiums etc. We will have to pay. My heart goes out to the family. My tears continue to fall. The outward cry says: "Lord are you coming now?" "Lord would you hear your people, now?" "Lord, would you stay your hand against the plight of the enemy?"

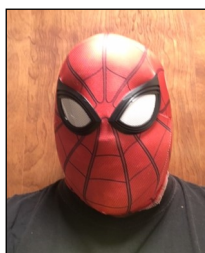
While I am fully aware that nothing surprises God, whatever occurs is not a mystery to God." God knew the "George Floyd" incident was coming. Other incidents will come. God is crying out to us in retrospect: "*If my people who are called by my Name would humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I forgive their sin and heal their land*" 2 Chron. 7:14."

We need a healing in this land. We need a spiritual healing in this land. Faith has one name attached to it. It is not Episcopal, Lutheran, Baptist, Catholic, Shinto, Nation of Islam or Latter Day Saints ... faith has One name to it. We must trust in God. God will hear us and God will heal this land. When will we learn that *oil and vinegar does not mix*? There is another Way.

Rev. Dr. Alicia J. Malone

Bondage Breakers, Inc. Executive Director

KOINONIA CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER



"How I Feel"

It's 4 pm on Friday and most everyone has left for the weekend. The sun is beginning to slip down the sky and once again the sound of silence takes control of the camp. As I pause, to reflect on a summer that almost wasn't, I begin to realize just how physically and emotionally drained the last five weeks have left me. And my eyes want to close and rest but I know there is much writing left to be done. Words will not come easy – not because there is nothing to say – but rather they will be difficult because of the times in which we now live.

As I sit writing sentences and then deleting paragraphs, I realize that no matter what I type, no matter how cautious I am with my choice of phrases, no matter how neutral I try to stay there will be some who are offended. And offending others is exactly what I do not want to do. So a few hundred words of my thoughts on the summer with Covid-19 looming, is taking hour upon hour to pound out on my computer. In fact, this is at least the sixth start to this article. And I want to apologize to any who read this and find offense – please believe me when I say I would rather be selling ice cream this summer than making decisions and leading a ministry.

First and foremost, let me express that this summer was by far the most draining of any summer that I have ever experienced at Koinonia Camp. Maybe because I am still in the middle of the season but more likely because of the ever changing landscape of requirements and the many added safety precautions that have been taken - my emotions are raw and my body worn.

Second and close behind, I would not change the fact that we did camp this summer even if I could.

(And this has not always been my thinking.) While difficult, this summer has been filled with great blessings and amazing rewards. Maybe the greatest blessing I have experienced comes from working with some amazing teenagers and young adults. I have seen eighteen and nineteen year olds who are getting up early to read scripture and pray together of their own accord. I have watched fifteen-year-olds step up and move out of their comfort zones to share their faith by serving in uncomfortable and difficult circumstances. I have served all summer with a twenty-six-year-old who has not received even the first paycheck. He has served not for glory or recognition but because he believes that Jesus works through camp ministry. This staff is one of the most well-rounded that I have ever had the privilege of serving with at Koinonia Camp.

Early in the spring, I called and talked with seven of the staff members. The conversations were all pretty close in nature. I told them the situation and outlook for the summer: The fact that campers may or may not be coming to camp, that there may or may not be any money with which to pay them. They were also told that campers or not, money or not; camp would still have needs that must be met and they were needed. Their response was an overwhelming, "I don't do this for money." "I am coming no matter what." These are the young men and women I have served with all summer.

As a staff we have had many conversations about all of the guidelines, requirements, and safety protocols that have been thrust upon us during this very strange summer. The most important thing I can share with you, from those discussions is the response of the staff. No matter their opinion, or feeling, no matter how physically demanding or physically uncomfortable each new rule made them, they responded by doing what needed done to make the ministry happen. They didn't demand their own way, they didn't refuse to wear a mask in the blistering hot sun, they didn't post negative comments on social media ... They simply did what was necessary so that

"A Matter of the Heart!"

Summer, as we have known it, has been a time of outdoor gatherings, church picnics and camp activities coupled with loads of sun and fun. Today, globally, we have been backed into a corner and by necessity, must find ways to continue to do the "work of the church," missional minded. American Baptist Home Missions society has found a way to "stoke the fire" of missions and keep the fire "alive."

In an effort to do good, minister, care and share, in the words of Paul Nixon (*Fling Open the Doors*) "In order to do good and daringly articulate *our* faith" *"we must passionately, daringly kick open the heart of the body of Christ so that followers of Jesus can get out ..."* Praise God, COVID-19 has not stopped missions from moving, taking place in God's vineyard. With that we are extremely grateful.

International Ministry continues to support our missionaries. Pete and Sarah McCurdy's endeavor to raise funds for their next chapter, journeying to Mexico from Costa Rica is being favored by God. They are a third of the way. It is *a matter of the heart*, wherein they serve God by serving others through self-less, surrender and sacrifice. Let us continue giving in these difficult times and continue in prayer for it is a *"matter of the heart."*

We thank God for the Reese's ministry service at Camp Koinonia amidst these challenging times, and again, we know that it is a *"matter of the heart."* Children need to witness Christ being "fleshed-out," by the tender love and affection, support and stability that comes from the heart of servants, like the Reese's! Praise God for your service.

COVID-19 has done its damage, and as the body of Christ we pray mightily for those who have lost loved ones, however, we are to continue to maintain our faith and hope in Christ. The ABHMS COVID-19 Recovery: Renewing Hope and Service, One Great Hour of Sharing has initiated an enterprise on behalf

of American Baptist Churches USA to provide assistance to those who are in need, which includes churches, pastors and ministries. In addition, the "You Are Not Alone" Space for Grace Retreat, which I attended," ushered in peace, and hope during this difficult time.

Sitting in the comfort of our homes, we can continue to be "mission minded," because the Lord has made a way through modern technology to get the Word out, enjoin in community and for "us" to be the "hands and feet" and might I add, *"fingers"* of Jesus Christ, because it is a *"matter of the heart,"* that we do so!

Bless you all!

Dr. Alicia J. Malone

Akron Association Missions



("How I Feel", Continued)

Like masks or hate masks, believe in social distancing or don't believe in the need to social distance – think this entire thing is a big farce or believe this pandemic might end civilization as we know it – the true answer is how do you show others Jesus love today. I have many personal opinions about all of this and to be honest many of them are still in flux but the need for people to know Jesus as Lord and Savior has never and will never change. The staff this summer has done nothing short of an amazing job of demonstrating His love to all.

I thank God for allowing me to serve through this difficult summer, with some amazing people. My prayer is that you find your peace, in the love of Jesus and you find a way to serve others in love, no matter if you agree with their opinions or not. And that you find a way to smile through all of it. Even if you find yourself wearing a super hero mask to make it happen.

Eyes on the Prize,

Randy Brookes

Koinonia Camp Executive Director



What is HAPPINESS?



Charlie Brown said, "Happiness is a warm puppy!"

Everyone has many reasons for which to be happy in spite of the perils that we face throughout our lifetimes. We have met with floods, tornados, loss of jobs, loss of friends to various diseases, etc., and currently the invisible virus COVID-19. In such times, it behooves us not to dwell on problems of which we have little or no control. Instead, it is beneficial for our on-going good health to make a "Happiness" list for our churches AND also for each one of us individually and for our home.

To mention a few items from our Happiness List at First Baptist Akron: (1) In July, we were happy via face book, phone and cards to wish "HAPPY BIRTHDAY!" to our devoted Pastor Paul and capable secretary Deb; (2) To hear, via our website, a weekly sermon from Pastor Paul and two messages from one of our Deacons. (3) To see our Scout Troop #1 meet daily for a week on the church grounds in lieu of a week at Camp Manatoc which was closed and to attend their Court of Honor. Recently earned Merit Badges are presented and the Scout-of-the-Year, Neil Knott award is announced which pays the entire summer camp fees for that scout. (4) To learn that (so far) none of our members have had COVID-19. (5) To have Valerie Becker volunteer to be our new Webmaster. (6) ... and the list goes on!

Abraham Lincoln said, "A person can be as happy as he makes up his mind to be." To help make this true for any of us at any age, at many times of the day, just sing the song from our childhood, "Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so. Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me ..." For Christians, Happiness is His love for us and ours for Him!

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice!
Pass it on!

Jo Claire Knott
Akron First Baptist

Greetings from Goodyear Heights!



It's been a tough time for all of us with the COVID-19 shutdowns. Our church has remained open, using precautions and social distancing. We have also tried to remain an outreach to the Goodyear Heights community.

We have a few things that we are excited to have here at our church. On Thursdays from 9:30 to noon, we have our "Clothes Closet". This is free clothing to those in need from infants to adults. We also have shoes and some household items, such as blankets and housewares.



On Wednesdays from noon to 4:30, Pregnancy Solutions and Services bring their mobile ultrasound bus to our parking lot. They offer free ultrasounds to women in our area.

Sandy Lewis, Secretary



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Summer 2020



Association Website

(aaa-abc.com)

Facebook

Akron Area Association of
American Baptist Churches

Koinonia Website

(christiancampohio.org)

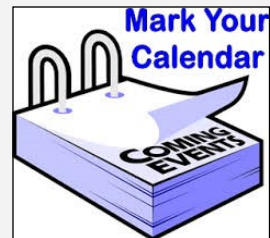
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1 Corinthians 12:12

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



**October 11, 2020 - Association Trustees Fall
Meeting at Trinity Baptist Church - 3 pm**

**Note: The 2020 AAA/ABC Fall Rally has been
CANCELLED.**

**November 9, 2020 - ELT meeting ... FBC
Canton - 6:30 pm**

2020 Fall Ark articles TBA