



THE ARK

Volume 20, No. 4 News from the Akron Area Association of American Baptist Churches Winter 2021

MODERATOR'S MESSAGE



As we embrace these winter months and look forward to Spring and new life, I want to take a moment and remind you of the new commandment Jesus gave his disciples. This passage takes place at a time when Jesus was laying the groundwork for his earthly departure and just before he informed Peter that he would deny his Lord three times before the rooster would crow. I believe this is a very important foundational principle that Jesus wanted his disciples and us to get correct.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

Jesus commanded us to love one another, show kindness and express concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as for those in our world. One of the unfortunate results of Covid is the separation that many of us feel from those whom we love. Personally, I haven't been able to spend time with my own extended family as I usually would. Holiday celebrations for many of us were much more reserved this past season. Many of our churches have suspended in-person services and even when we are together we are wearing mask and social distancing. I'm sure we are all growing weary and the difficulties have been discouraging. Or perhaps I am the only

one? I don't think so.

We even recognize that our relationships within our Akron Association have been more difficult over this past year. I love getting together with our church leaders. I love the connection that we have with our sisters churches across Ohio. Isolation is never a good recipe for being able to express love for one another. This difficult season continues to put a strain on many relationships. I miss seeing others in the context of a ministry setting and I am sure you do as well. So what do we do?

Each day we follow in obedience to what the Lord commanded us. I like to think that Jesus challenged us to love. Are you up for the challenge? I know I want to do my best to follow in the steps of Jesus and I believe you do as well. So we show love and care to the people God has placed in our lives. At Canton First we are embracing the "Love Challenge." For us it is a daily commitment to take a step and do something intentionally to connect with other people and show our love for one another. The daily challenges encourage us to do one thing that day

(Please See Moderator, Pg. 7)

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Akron First Baptist News



By Deb Schmidt

In our last ARK article, First Baptist Church of Akron was focused on change—just like everyone else on this earth. Conversations began with “due to the Pandemic...” or “because of Covid-19...” and more. In order to keep up with the world, the church had to make changes. So changes were made (and sometimes re-made). Now, as Pastor Paul Jackson, III stated in our latest monthly newsletter, we have entered in to a phase of “TRANSITION.” He gave the definition “as a process or period of changing from one state or condition to another” and reminded us that “the cycle of Transition never ends and we age each day.” I believe that reminder just by looking into my 10X magnified mirror each morning! But, the message of Transition has stuck with me.

Some individuals and families have transferred to other churches. We also have had some long-time members pass away. Losses that cause not only sadness of losing church family, but also a chain reaction in opening different positions within church committees. God has helped fill those spaces with other spiritually gifted individuals to Transition. Church Trustees now are Richard Mahan as Chair along with Joseph Kist, Marsha Malone, and Casey Stack.

Another Transition is within the Food Pantry. Laura Cosentino is now leading other members to conduct a Drive-thru Food Distribution every third Saturday of every month. This team has incorporated help from the Scouts, has pre-packaged food and staple items that can be easily placed in car trunks or back seats, and more. Summit County Humane Society is now involved as well. They found many people are bringing dogs and cats to shelters because they are not able to feed themselves let alone purchase food for their pets. With that, the Humane

Society received a special grant to purchase and deliver dog and cat food to area food pantries. First Baptist was one of those Blessed recipients, so we are now able to include pet food in our distributions.

In the past, the word “ZOOM” to me was what my first daughter’s speed was, followed by my first granddaughter’s (her child) speed as well. Now, we have Zoom church services, prayer groups, and Bible Studies. We have Facebook, texts, email, U.S. Mail—almost whatever it takes to get God’s Word out to everyone. Another Transition. Praise God that He guides us to work with change. We just need to listen. Remember the saying that contains “people come and people go”? Just saw a new version—“They say people come and go. But, the truth is, people never really leave; their roles just change.” Thank you dear Lord for your guidance during change, but please help us listen to know when we need to be a part of Your Transition.

One more thing to share from First Baptist Church of Akron—we have an author in our family! Anita Stack has written a book titled, A Trip to See the King. It is available at Barnes and Noble in paperback form for \$9.99 and Kindle for \$4.99. This five-star rated book is published by Xulon and recommended for ages 9 and beyond. It is a heart-warming, funny story about a curious rabbit who goes on the trip of a lifetime. Whether you are young or young at heart, you will enjoy this story full of adventure and life lessons. And fun fact—all of the animals in the book have been named after pets that have shared their lives with the author’s extended family! Come along on the journey with Max to meet the King, and once you know Him, your life will never be the same. Praise God—Anita is using so many of her God-given talents on this earth!

**The art of love is God
at work through you.**

Wilferd A. Peterson

ABC-OHIO NEWS



Rev. Jane Gibbons

The Church Leadership Conference is coming up, but the details could change, depending on the COVID-19 situation. This is the current plan:

American Baptist Churches of Ohio Church Leadership Conference: "Strategy for Intergenerational Ministry."

Keynote Speaker - Dr. Holly Allen of Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN

Friday, April 23 - Pastors and Church Staff (*livestream only*)

Saturday, April 24 - Pastors and All Church Leaders (*livestream and in-person options*)
First Baptist Church of Newark

Cost: 2 days hybrid - \$35

1 or 2 days livestream - \$20

Saturday only in-person - \$25

Watch for registration information coming to your church and at abc-Ohio.org.

Blessings! Rev. Jane Gibbons
Executive Minister for Program and Ministry Development



Lent begins on February 17th. Lent is the forty day period from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday (not counting the Sundays in between). Even though we may not observe Lent in the way that other Christian denominations would, there are some good reasons we should consider spending time preparing for Easter.

We cannot fully appreciate Jesus' resurrection without spending time reflecting on his sufferings. Traditionally, people think of giving up or "fasting" from something for Lent as a reminder of sacrifice – like chocolate, or movies, or soda pop, or caffeine, or social media, or eating meat on Fridays. A little self-imposed hardship during the time leading up to Good Friday and Easter is supposed to build spiritual character and deepen our understanding of our faith. However, Lent isn't about self-improvement for a Christian. Lent is about what God has done.

As an alternative to fasting or giving up something, maybe we should try *adding* something during Lent. Taking on a good God-honoring habit is a way to force a positive choice. And if you add something positive to your slate, you often have to give something else up anyway to make time or room. Do something a little extra to build spiritual character and deepen your understanding of our faith. Make time for God. Focus on doing more things that encourage discipleship and spiritual health, such as devoting time to daily Bible reading, intentional times of prayer, or becoming active in a ministry at the church. Walk a mile every day to spend some quiet time with God.

How about supporting a charity more generously, or performing a daily random act of kindness? Maybe consider committing to be present at every worship

Bondage Breakers, Inc.



Like all of humanity globally, we have encountered something that we never, in our wildest dreams, could have imagined, a global pandemic. By *idleness* and BBI through the {Grk. *Exousia*} power of itself, it is a "wonder." While at the same time, in the the Holy Spirit and the faith community sprang into

midst of the "wonder" God has unleashed his action. "exousia power" in the midst. It has been a difficult time, in terms of acclimating into modernity via Zoom, Google meet, Google Classroom, Duo and other modern electronic mediums. While at the same time, it has been a "wonder" that has resulted in two-fold abundant blessings.

While the State institutions remain closed, BBI has found ways to become the "hands and feet, (and heart)," of Christ Jesus. Early on we connected with our Juvenile Detention Center and provided PPE Mask for their use. For Judge Linda Teodosio and employees, that was a "wonder" and they were extremely grateful. Bondage Breakers, Incorporated has provided mentoring ministry at Dan Street for 10 years. We remain hopeful for continuation in the future. In the meantime, we will continue the collaboration and find strategic ways to ministry to troubled youth.

Pre-Covid-19 Bondage Breakers, Incorporated has forged a beautiful relationship with Grafton Correctional Institution', "Book for Bruised Families." We were able to present our program to nearly 50 men, engaged in a question and answering session and developed collaboration with Louis Fields, the Director. They are based out of Cleveland Ohio and as such BBI rallied the troops and gathered many books from our personal libraries and sent them forward. It is another "wonder." There was a "Book for Bruised Families" Fair in Cleveland on October 17, 2020 where many books were distributed to community children. Praise God!

Fall Covid-19 2020, Bondage Breakers, Incorporated, recognized through the blessings of the One Great Hour of Sharing dollars, Akron Area American Baptist Association and various city-wide donors, was able to package and deliver to Grafton Correctional Institution approximately 500 items ... from food snacks, games, T-Shirts, to PPE Masks.

We received and heard the clarion call from Grafton Correctional Institution regarding the men's dreams, and BBI through the {Grk. *Exousia*} power of itself, it is a "wonder." While at the same time, in the the Holy Spirit and the faith community sprang into

midst of the "wonder" God has unleashed his action. We really don't have to "wonder" about the time, in terms of blessing and the magnitude of how this act of Zoom, Google meet, Google Classroom, Duo and other modern electronic mediums. While at the same time, it has been a "wonder" that has resulted in two-fold abundant blessings.

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This time of "wonder" has been a tremendous blessing. Bondage Breakers, Incorporated is blessed because of each one of you. I personally want to thank Canton First Baptist, Pastor Kevin Thomas and the First Baptist Church Community Outreach Fund. Their gift was a surprising "wonder." As we move out and into 2021, by God's grace and mercy, it is our prayer and praise to continue to be faithful stewards of God's amazing grace. *His "wonder" to behold!!*

Bless you all!

Dr. Alicia J. Malone, BBI, Inc. Executive Director



(Please See "Wonder" Addendum, pg. 5)

(Wonder, Addendum Continued)



Dr. Malone—WEWS

Just when things often begin to "mellow out," you can receive a call that really, "knocks you off of your feet, figuratively." On one of the coldest days of January, the ninetieth, to be exact, Bondage Breakers, Incorporated received a call and participated in an interview that was suggested to WEWS News Channel 5, by one of its Camper Moms, Ms. Shonda Harris. Wow, was my response.

Reflecting over the nineteen years we have sponsored camp, BBI has served at least three generations of that mothers, children. Can I say it again, WOW! It is an honor and blessing to know, that "what one does for Christ" certainly has an impact, even if it is not initially articulated. We are grateful for the journey and pray that even in the midst of Covid, that God is not finished yet.

Dr. Alicia Malone

"Touching Hearts"



Besides being the pastor of Faith Fellowship Baptist Church, I am also a hospice chaplain. The picture above is how I look some days when I'm going to see my hospice patients. I know it's important for me to stay safe but I don't feel like a very comforting presence walking into someone's room looking like that.

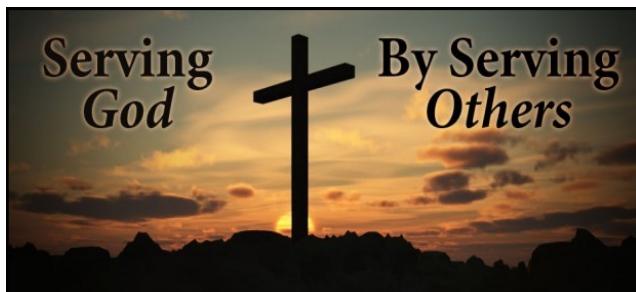
The mask, face shield and gown (and sometimes gloves, booties and hair net) seem like a barrier between my patients and I. Then I remember what it says in Ephesians 6:14-17. It talks about the full armor of God.

"14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place..." Well, maybe the breastplate is my gown and the belt of truth is the ties around my waist.

"15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace." Maybe the booties on my feet are helping me get ready to offer peace and comfort to worried patients.

"16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The face shield, mask and hair net should remind me that I am ready to extinguish the flaming arrows of doubt and concern creeping into their minds and hearts.

The gloves on my hands allow me to hold their hands and, in turn, touch their hearts. My PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) allows me to be close when sometimes their family can't be. As hard as it is somedays, I thank God that He allows me to visit with people and offer comfort and support in these uncertain times. *Blessings, Rev. Jill Smith*





THRIVING IN MISSIONS

God has truly been faithful to us all in these troubling times. The Covid-19 pandemic took us all globally by surprise. Yet God, being who He is, has never failed us. Through the international missions and the American Baptist Women's Ministry we are reminded of Isaiah 42:16 *"I will lead the blind by ways that they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn darkness into light before them and make rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them."*

Brothers and sisters, God is faithful and he has not failed us.

While we yet cry out for mercy, peace, justice and healing. It is believed that all these virtues are just a prayer away. As we view the many messages through the internet, we see that our missionary's the McCurdy's are doing well and engaged in "changing lives" through the impact of the Gospel in Mexico. Their hope is to be fully funded by the end of 2020. Their desire is to continue the work and become a part of the work that God is doing through the Baptist Seminary in Mexico City. We will continue our prayers and financial support, what a mighty God we serve!

Though we are nearing a vaccine for COVID-19, we must remember those on the frontlines. Doctors, Nurses, Medical Assistants, EMS and Firefighters are enduring a "great trial of affliction." We as American Baptist are endowed by our Creator to enter and maintain intercessory prayer throughout. As we look forward to future generations, we ask that men and women respond to the call, challenge and have the courage of engaging in Missions.

Through ABCUSA online devotional and prayer

material is available. Upcoming ministry events for 2021 include the Biennial Mission Summit. It will be an online experience beginning on June 24 and ending June 26, 2021. The theme for this year will be "Imagine." I know all of us can "imagine" a nation of health, justice and peace. We can "imagine" the cure and disappearance of COVID-19 and more.

The One Great Hour of Sharing has proven to be a mighty merciful aid to its recipients. There were two back to back hurricanes in Central America in November. The aid of this program (OGHS) emergency relief funds responded with food, clothing, blankets, water filters and so much more. We thank God for the OGHS and their efforts to respond to organizations, and catastrophic events as a result of the giving across the continental American Baptist Churches, United States of America and Puerto Rico.

Emerson and Ivy Wu are praising God as they have been approved by International Missions to relocate to Taiwan. They have finished work there and as COVID-19 forced them to "stay put" for a while working with the newly established Hong Kong National Security. God always has a perfect plan and had already led them to "a more well-pandemic-controlled place---Taiwan." (That is just like God).

Our native (Massillon, Ohio) son Tim and daughter Stacy Reese have been endorsed and look forward to working in Haiti among the Haitian migrant workers living in the Dominican Republic. They will serve in an area where the core needs, that we take for granted, are wanted, namely proper housing, schools, medical care and food. Let's keep the Reeses lifted up before the Lord in prayer.

During the Advent Season, we saw the thriving thrust in Missions continuing to be the "hands and feet" of Jesus Christ. May the missionary mandates found in Matthew 28:19, 20 and Acts 1:6-8 continue to be our mantra into 2021 and throughout.

Best wishes,

Rev. Dr. Alicia J. Malone

Missions 2021

(Moderator Continued)

such as writing a letter, texting a message, sending an e-mail, making a phone call, sharing a visit, etc. This way we can show how much we love one another and close the gap of isolation that many people feel. I want to invite you to join me in accepting the "Love Challenge" that Jesus gave us. Will you reach out to connect and encourage others in your life?

And before I go, be reminded of the reason we do this. Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." The question begs to be asked, "Would the world recognize you as a disciple of Jesus?" I sure hope so!



Rev. Kevin Thomas

Trinity Baptist Church News**By Carol Warner**

On February 3rd, 10th, and 17th, we will be continuing the video Bible Study by Rob Fuquay titled "The God We Can Know", exploring the "I Am" sayings of Jesus. This study is designed to explore each of those sayings and will help you find and form an answer to the most essential question in the Christian faith, "Who do you say I am?"

On Wednesday, February 24th, we will be starting a new Bible Study by Max Lucado titled "He Chose the Nails: What God Did to Win Your Heart". The last moments leading up to Jesus' death were not left up to chance. God chose the path; He selected the nails. Our Lord planted the trio of crosses and painted the sign. And in those details are gifts Christ provided for us. The cross. The thorns. The nails. His seamless robe. The empty tomb. God didn't have to give us all these things,

you know. The only required act for our salvation was the shedding of blood, yet He did much more. So much more. In this 5-week Easter season video study, Max will help you:

- **Experience Lent** as a time not to just give up something, but to prepare to receive good gifts from God...
- **Take comfort** that Jesus understands everything you face in this life.
- **Receive the grace** of Christ's work *for* us, and **cooperate** with God's work in us to make us more like him.
- **Stand firm** in the promise that you are forgiven, and you are welcome in God's presence, no matter what you've done.

Baby/Children Dedication:

We will be holding a Baby/Children Dedication ceremony on Sunday, February 7th. Sofia Lou Burns is being brought by her parents Dale and Stephanie Burns and Ella Mounts is being brought by her mother Tina Mounts. May God bless both of these families as they dedicate their children to be raised up knowing the Lord.

(Lent, Continued from Pg. 3)

service, either in-person or virtually, from now until Easter and hopefully get in the habit of regular worship attendance). Intentionally pray for a different person every day. Read a spiritual book or listen to Christian music. Give a dollar a day to something worthwhile. Spend more time with your family. How much different might your life be if you memorized one Bible verse a day for the next 40 days? It's not about fasting from a worldly pleasure as much as the development of our heart. It can become a time when we reflect upon our walk with Christ, and yield ourselves to the Word of God.

The **Lent** article, by Trinity Baptist Pastor Steve Cope, was printed in the February 2021 issue of the *Trinity Baptist Trends* newsletter. Reprinted with permission.

Elaine M. Jarvis
The Ark Editor
2212 Royer St., NE
Hartville, OH 44632

Winter 2021



Association Website

(aaa-abc.com)

Facebook

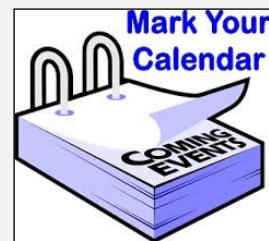
**Akron Area Association of
American Baptist Churches**

Koinonia Website

(christiancampohio.org)

**NEWSLETTER CONTACT
INFORMATION**

The Ark Editor-
Elaine M. Jarvis
2212 Royer St., NE
Hartville, OH 44632
Phone: 330-607-0226
emjarvis37@gmail.com



March 8, 2021 - Zoom ELT Meeting at 6:30 pm

**May 16, 2021 - Spring Trustees Meeting at
Goodyear Heights Baptist Church at 3 pm.**

Spring Ark Articles due by April 23, 2021

