

THE VOICE NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 27 NUMBER 9

WWW.CGBCI.ORG

APRIL 2020

PRESIDENT'S CORNER - PASTOR JONATHAN EDWARDS



Greetings, brothers, and sisters!

Over the course of the last seven days, I have had to greatly change what I intended to write to you this month. Merely one week ago (March 11), the Covid-19 virus was still something "out there" and not affecting many Americans. Today (March 18), nearly every school in the country has closed, entire industries have ceased operations, and some cities have decreed that residents are in a "lockdown" where they are not allowed to leave their residences. I am sure that when you read this (around April 1) that we will have an even clearer picture of the scope of devastation and the length of duration of this particular event.

We must remember, brethren, that we aren't the first to endure such a fearful trial (for who likes fighting an invisible enemy such as a virus?), but it might be an exceedingly frightful battle for us who live so comfortably. As I pondered what to write to you, I recalled that Europe faced an outbreak of the bubonic plague during the time of the Reformation. Martin Luther was asked what a Christian's response ought to be, especially those who are pastors and responsible for leading God's flock. Though lengthy, I wanted to share with you an excerpt from that letter, for it gets right to the heart of the issue:

"Now if a deadly epidemic strikes, we should stay where we are, make our preparations, and take courage in the fact that we are mutually bound together (as previously indicated) so that we cannot desert one another or flee from one another. First, we can be sure that God's punishment has come upon us, not only to chastise us for our sins but also to test our faith and love—our faith in that we may see and experience how we should act toward God; our love in that we may recognize how we should act toward our neighbor. I am of the opinion that all the epidemics, like any plague, are spread among the people by evil spirits who poison the air or exhale a pestilential breath which puts a deadly poison into the flesh. Nevertheless, this is God's decree and punishment to which we must patiently submit and serve our neighbor, risking our lives in this manner as St. John teaches, "If Christ laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" [I John 3:16].

When anyone is overcome by horror and repugnance in the presence of a sick person he should take courage and strength in the firm assurance that it is the devil who stirs up such abhorrence, fear, and loathing in his heart. He is such a bitter, knavish devil that he not only unceasingly tries to slay and kill, but also takes delight in making us deathly afraid, worried, and apprehensive so that we should regard dying as horrible and have no rest or peace all through our life. And so the devil would excrete us out of this life as he tries to make us despair of God, become unwilling and unprepared to die, and, under the stormy and dark sky of fear and anxiety, make us forget and lose Christ, our light and life, and desert our neighbor in his troubles. We would sin thereby against God and man; that would be the devil's glory and delight. Because we know that it is the devil's game to induce such fear and dread, we should, in turn,

minimize it, take such courage as to spite and annoy him, and send those terrors right back to him. And we should arm ourselves with this answer to the devil:

[Vol. 43, Page 128] "Get away, you devil, with your terrors! Just because you hate it, I'll spite you by going the more quickly to help my sick neighbor. I'll pay no attention to you: I've got two heavy blows to use against you: the first one is that I know that helping my neighbor is a deed well-pleasing to God and all the angels; by this deed, I do God's will and render true service and obedience to him. All the more so because if you hate it so and are so strongly opposed to it, it must be particularly acceptable to God. I'd do this readily and gladly if I could please only one angel who might look with delight on it. But now that it pleases my Lord Jesus Christ and the whole heavenly host because it is the will and command of God, my Father, then how could any fear of you cause me to spoil such joy in heaven or such delight for my Lord? Or how could I, by flattering you, give you and your devils in hell reason to mock and laugh at me? No, you'll not have the last word! If Christ shed his blood for me and died for me, why should I not expose myself to some small dangers for his sake and disregard this feeble plague? If you can terrorize, Christ can strengthen me. If you can kill, Christ can give life. If you have poison in your fangs, Christ has far greater medicine. Should not my dear Christ, with his precepts, his kindness, and all his encouragement, be more important in my spirit than you, roguish devil, with your false terrors in my weak flesh? God forbid! Get away, devil. Here is Christ and here am I, his servant in this work. Let Christ prevail! Amen."

CONFERENCE 2020

June 26 - July 1, 2020

THE CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL

5700 28th St., SE

Grand Rapids MI 49546

Phone: 1-(877)-270-1393 or (616) 957-1770

Mention Conservative Grace Brethren Churches, International or CGBCI for the group discount!

***** REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JUNE 3, 2020 *****

For the 2020 Conference, Jonathan Edwards has created an online ticket reservation through a company called Eventbrite. He is requesting that everyone who attends Conference, whether for a day, the weekend, or the entire time, reserve a ticket. Tickets are FREE and will allow the Executive Panel to gather crucial information about expected attendance.

When you register for your ticket, you'll be asked whether you plan to attend YCON, the Children's Conference, Nursery, the Women's Luncheon (Sunday afternoon) or the Fellowship Buffet Breakfast. Your answers to these questions will help those who are planning these ministries to have accurate projected counts for food and supply purchases. It will also aid in registration for the nursery and Children's Conference since parents can digitally enter the correct contact information for their child.

You have the option to create an Eventbrite account when you sign up for tickets and we recommend you do so. When you create the account, you will have the ability to edit your ticket or add tickets to your order.

BELOW IS THE LINK TO OUR EVENT SO YOU CAN GET TICKETS! REGISTRATION IS OPEN FROM NOW UNTIL JUNE 21, 2020:

2020 CGBCI Conference: Make Disciples!

NOTE: Registering for tickets through Eventbrite DOES NOT RESERVE YOUR HOTEL ROOM(S) AT THE CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL. Please call the hotel at 1-(877) 270-1393 or (616) 957-1770 and mention CGBCI or Conservative Grace Brethren for the group discount. **The DEADLINE FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS IS JUNE 3, 2020.**

2020 WOMEN'S LUNCHEON

Since this year's Women's Luncheon is open to all Post-high Women of the Fellowship, we will be emailing a luncheon flyer to all churches during the month of April. This announcement can be printed and put in your bulletins or posted in your church to spread the word. The date of the luncheon is **SUNDAY, JUNE 28 from 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm**, and the official theme is "Women to Women Discipleship: The Benefits and Barriers." The cost for the luncheon is \$16 and it will include a chicken Caesar OR vegetarian wrap, chips, salad, coffee, iced tea, and dessert. If you would like to attend, you can RSVP one of two ways. We strongly encourage you to use the available Eventbrite registration (there is an option to choose the luncheon and wrap preference) or you can send an email to Meredith Edwards at mere.edwards07@gmail.com or call (419) 606-5537. **Please RSVP by WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3.** We'd like to save the Conference registration table for any last-minute sign-ups for the luncheon. As always, payment is collected at Conference.

Also, we are encouraging all attending women to bring one or two resources along to the luncheon, such as books or studies that have positively impacted your discipling relationships. A table will be available to display these items.

Thank you! **Meredith Edwards & Joanne Simpson**

LAKELAND CONSERVATIVE GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH - WARSAW, INDIANA

KATHRYN RUTH HIRSCHY HOYT of Grace Village Retirement Community, Winona Lake, Indiana passed away on Monday, March 16, 2020 at the age of 98. She was born on July 29, 1921 in Berne, Indiana to Esther (Sprunger) and Norman Hirsch. On August 22, 1942 she was married to Solon W. Hoyt. They shared 70 years of marriage together before he passed away on February 21, 2013. She and Solon dedicated their lives to serving the Lord as Grace Brethren missionaries in Argentina for 43 years.

Her complete obituary can be seen at <https://www.redpathfruthfuneralhome.com/fmf/obituary/Kathryn-Hoyt>

GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH - ALBANY, OREGON

In a recent business meeting, we agreed to solicit workers from our fellowship for ministry this summer (as the COVID-19 Virus subsides). Our 1948 building is in need of repairs from major things such as a new roof, to lesser tasks of painting, electrical repairs, and flooring, etc. There is also an opportunity for outreach into our community of 55,000 to spread the gospel. Thank you for your attention to these matters in prayer and potential personal involvement.

HOME MISSIONS UPDATE – MARCH 2020 – GORDY HARMON

REVITALIZE VERMONT - PASTOR BRYAN MALEY IRASBURG and LAMOILLE VALLEY GRACE BRETHREN CHURCHES

Isaiah 52:6-7 "Therefore My people shall know My name; Therefore they shall know in that day That I am He who speaks: 'Behold, it is I.' How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

The Home Missions Panel met during Mid-Year Meetings (March 10-12) at Gibsonburg, OH Grace Brethren Chapel. That afforded us a face to face and heart to heart meeting with Pastors Bryan Maley, Scott Libby, and Ethan Kallberg.

We are happy to be able to report to you that the Black Mold Issue has been fully paid for! To hear those words from Bryan and to see his face was pure joy. Thanks to all who prayed them through the trial, and thanks to all who brought relief and shared in their burden through sacrificial giving ... all those prayers and gifts are measurable and rewardable in the eternal Kingdom of our righteous King!

Also at our meeting, the Irasburg Church presented a refined "Written Plan for Revitalizing and Planting CGBCI Churches in Vermont and New England." On the financial end, they sought the approval of the Home Missions Panel to raise Pastor Bryan's support enough to adequately run a household in that part of the world. The HMP voted to approve the change which asked for an additional \$616 per month. The Revitalize Vermont support level is currently at 68%, but, Praise the Lord, there has been a flurry of gifts that have come at just the right time to meet just the right need. Please consider "signing on" as a regular monthly, or quarterly supporter of the Revitalize Vermont Work. Those regular gifts are essential, help the churches, and the Maleys keep things current and relieve the pressure of paying the bills.

Pastor Bryan came prepared to share with us as best he could how things continue to progress. He is currently feverishly engaged in the lives of sixteen people who are actively involved in discipleship. Sixteen people were discipled and some now are moving on to disciple others. They are all active in their pursuit of being Jesus imitators.

Remember the verses that caught the heart of the men of the Vermont churches ... "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." Colossians 1:28-29. What we are observing is a church-wide transformation away from typical and traditional outreach which is about programs and seeing first-time visitors which we often report has no measurable benefit. They come and they go by the hundreds.

In my sit-down interview with Bryan at Mid-Year Meetings, it seemed like every sentence he was saying discipleship, discipleship, discipleship! Typically church growth centers around outreach, which involves time, people, and money. The Irasburg Church is making a bold move away from traditional outreach which tries to bring people to them and replacing that thinking with GOING to the people! You know well the passage, "AS YOU GO... Matthew 28:19.

So, after a year and a quarter what do we have to show? Talk to Pastor Libby, a dear brother who was thinking that maybe things in Irasburg were coming to a close. The services there were regularly in the teens, now they are regularly over 50. They have not yet reached the Promised Land but they are seeing glimpses. Ask Pastor Bryan how RV has changed his viewpoint of pastoring, outreach, discipleship, and the church!

Be praying for Pastor Ethan and the saints at Lamoille Valley. Most of RV is centered upon Irasburg, but that's not to say that Morrisville has not received some benefit; they have! But hard as we try, we cannot put Bryan in two places at once. What this has revealed is that in order to Revitalize effectively in L. Valley, we need another team member, and that was also added to the Written Plan at Mid-Year Meetings. That part of the plan is yet in the future and a matter of prayer. Please pray with us!

One of the beautiful fruits of evangelism is salvation and changed lives. We are happy to report a recent conversion of a young lady named Jordon. She came to the youth group as a first time visitor, one of the five visitors that night. Pastor Bryan shared the gospel with her and she said, "Yes!"

- Pray for Jordon's growth and discipleship.
- Pray for strength and wisdom for Pastor Bryan to accomplish the work before him.

- Pray for the disciples' growth and boldness to GO and make more disciples!
- Pray for Pastor Scott Libby and Pastor Ethan and our churches.
- Pray for Leah Kallberg (Pastor Ethan's wife) who is due with their fifth child on April 2nd.
- Pray for the financial support of Revitalize Vermont.

**PLEASE SEND GIFTS AND SUPPORT TO:
GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH - REVITALIZE VERMONT
PO BOX 217, GRIMES IA 50111**

FOREIGN MISSIONS

P. N. G. TEAM #1 - CRAIG AND SARA NOYES

Wanna Pay Money To Suffer?



If the answer to the question above is "Yes" then do I have a deal for you!!! Of course, I am talking about helping build our bush houses in the tribe.

Let's talk about what that might look like. First off, when I say "bush house" Don't picture a village hut. I'm referring to a house that our family (and one for each of the other units working with us) will be living in for 10-15 years in a remote jungle village. This house will be a hybrid between the houses the villagers live in and a North American house.

If you come to help build them, you must understand that it will be an expensive, physically demanding, very remote trip in the village of an unreached people group. It most likely will involve some hiking, boating, small planes and/or helicopter rides. It will be rough living. We will be eating the same bland village food 3x a day. By the end of the trip, you'll almost certainly be happy for it to be over and will long to go back to your family. Yet, it will be exciting to be part of opening things up to get the Gospel, the Word of God and a mature church where it hasn't been!

We won't know when the trip is going to be until, at the earliest, a few months before the building starts. The earliest reasonable time for building to start would be August, but there are many variables that will affect that. We also don't know yet if we have to mill all our own lumber with an Alaskan miller or purchase lumber in town.

Ladies, if you're interested in helping during the house building process, there are PNG cultural limitations that will greatly restrict you. Due to the fact that we will be entering a tribe we do not yet know well, we must be very careful about how the people may interpret a woman's presence during a time when we cannot stay in the missionary houses. If you are interested in helping, we will need to have conversations about how/if you could help serve and in what way.

As you consider if this trip is for you, there are several questions you should prayerfully consider. Please refer to our website- <https://newfields.wordpress.com/2020/03/11/wanna-pay-money-to-suffer/>

To request a questionnaire for the PNG trip, e-mail either Craig Noyes at craigmnoyes@hotmail.com or Pastor Scott Libby at smlibby@juno.com Another method of contacting Pastor Libby is GBC of Irasburg, PO Box 41, Coventry, VT, or via phone (church) (802) 754-2363; home (802) 334-8203.

P.N.G. TEAM #2 - JOSH AND AUTUMN MILLER



Here is our latest update, explaining a little bit more about what we've been doing and experiencing the past two months! There have been so many blessings, joys, and struggles. We appreciate every single person who is part of this journey with us through giving and prayer!

I'll be honest though, there have been a lot of times since when being a "baby" hasn't been funny at all!!

To try to explain what I mean, I want you to try to imagine with me what it would be like to wake up tomorrow with only the ability to do what a two-year-old can do. Now you're not a two-year-old ... you'd still, be your age, but with the abilities of a two-year-old.

Let's see: you could walk (although not always confidently or well), you could eat (but probably not get food for yourself), you could definitely cry, you'd feel lots of emotions but wouldn't yet know how to communicate them easily, or well, or appropriately to those around you. And you'd be doing a lot of watching and exploring anything you could find. Beyond those things, there isn't much that you'd really be able to do. And there is

almost nothing you'd be "good at."

That gives you a little bit of a snapshot of what transitioning to PNG has felt like many times. **Now, before you think we're saying, "Woe is me!" I want to assure you that we consider ourselves SO INCREDIBLY BLESSED and PRIVILEGED to be here, to be CALLED to be part of the work God is doing in bringing unreached people groups to Himself! We don't HAVE to do this! We GET to do this!**

However, the process of learning to become PNG in order to reach PNG is rarely easy and often isn't "fun!"

We'd love to hear from you! Send us an email: [**JoshAndAutumnMiller@gmail.com**](mailto:JoshAndAutumnMiller@gmail.com) and let us know what you're curious about or if you have a question (or two) that we could answer in a future blog post or email.



Speaking of babies, here are a couple of PNG babies sleeping in their bilums, woven bags that act as a cradle, bed, and baby-carrier for the mamas here in PNG.



These adorable young kids (who can quickly steal a bit of our hearts) all know far more than we do about how to live and survive here in PNG, which is pretty humbling as an adult.



"The Voice Newsletter" is the communication tool of the Conservative Grace Brethren Churches International; and edited by Pastors Ike Graham, Les Vnasdale, and Christopher Knight.

REGARDING NEWS ARTICLES AND/OR MAILING UPDATES:

Please forward all info to Pam O'Kinsky at [**okinskys@comcast.net**](mailto:okinskys@comcast.net)
Snail mail to 135 Wildcat Road, Friedens PA 15541

**** Articles are requested to be received by the 15th of the month to be included in the next month's issue of the Voice Newsletter****

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!