

THE BOZEMAN REPORT

May/June 2020

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Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." (Mark 1:17)

Greetings, brethren, from Montana! I hope that your summer is going as well as can be expected with the current pandemic impacting the country. We continue to be blessed with a relatively low impact of the illness in our area. We have had less than 1600 confirmed cases thus far, but the numbers are going up now due to the number of tourists that have come to the state. Montana loosened restrictions on June 1st, and so now people are allowed to enter the state without the previous 14 day quarantine. While these consequences were expected, it is clear that it is unreasonable to think that the virus was simply going to disappear, and the goal never was to keep every person from getting sick. Like most places, our medical facilities are doing well, and not threatened to be overrun, so it appears that things are as well as could be possible for now!

Good News...

Recently, I have mentioned some of the folks we have been studying with. One of those, Bridgette, has been very zealous in our studies. Last week, she made the decision to be baptized into Christ. Most of the congregation was able to meet at the Gallatin River and rejoice with her. We are happy to have Bridgette with us, and look forward to seeing her growth in the future!

Larissa, another lady who has been studying with us regularly for a few months, ended up moving to San Diego, CA. She continued to study with us over Zoom for the next few weeks. Recently, Mike received a text from her saying that she had moved to Charleston, WV. Because of the time difference and her new job schedule, she would not be able to study with us regularly. We were able to put her into contact with the brethren in Huntington (where I was working before moving to Montana) and they have been able to connect to study. I had been trying to find someone who was willing to study with her down in San Diego, but had not yet found someone, so it was providential for her to find a job near the good brethren in Huntington. I pray they will be able to continue to work with Larissa, and that she will choose to submit to God's will!

I have been studying with my friend Jim's father and step-mother over zoom for a while. Recently, I contacted Dale Pennock, a friend and gospel preacher in Vermont (where the Leaches live) in hopes that they would be able to get together and study in person. Dale has been joining in on our regular Zoom study on Friday mornings, and has been a good addition to that effort. I have enjoyed these studies immensely, and pray for continued benefit from it.

Other studies continue to go well. We have several contacts that we have regular opportunities with, and remain hopeful that they will open their hearts to the gospel message. We are thankful for the doors of opportunity that God has opened to us, and pray that we are able to do our part in sharing His word with them!

5 Years...

Yesterday marked 5 years since we arrived in Bozeman to start the work here. I mentioned a while back that we had made the decision to stay here, as we believe that good things are happening here. We began with 9 people in the congregation at that time. Now, we regularly have 20 or more. We knew, when we chose to come here, that the work would most likely be slow. We are, however, convinced that being here has been profitable in many different areas. We have been in the right place at the right time for several people.

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Sunday: 17

Wednesday: 15

here in Bozeman for the foreseeable future. Bozeman is the fastest growing town in America, and has been for the last 3 years. This provides an ever changing group of people for us to be working among. As the group grows, we will have more reach into the community. This has already been seen, and we believe that will only increase as we find those who are willing to heed God's call.

Traveling...

The travel plans of most of the people here have been interrupted by the virus shutting down pretty much everything around the country for a couple months. This, unfortunately, made it work out so that several were traveling to visit family all at the same time. Justin and his family, as well as the Philips family were traveling for a while last month. That did impact our numbers for a couple of weeks! It was certainly good to have them all back home safe and sound.

Encouragement...

I have received several notes, in mail, email, messenger, and text over the last couple of months. I want to say "THANK YOU!" Those notes have meant so much to me and my family. Sometimes I do get discouraged by various things that happen in the nature of this work, and the notes you send help to boost the spirit! I received a phone call from a friend from many years ago a few days ago, and it came at a time I really needed some encouragement. She reminded me of things we had done many years ago to help encourage her, and said she and her husband wanted to help us in the work here. She may never know (because I cannot adequately express) just how wonderful her call was, at a time that I needed to be encouraged! Each time I receive one of these calls or notes, I cannot help but think...How wonderful God's people are! So thank you all for your encouragement!

Perhaps this group will never be a large congregation; not every place produces that kind of numerical growth. But, it is well on its way to being a strong body of God's people in a spiritually desert area. We will continue to trust the Lord to do His part and provide the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6) in His time. Sometimes, we become impatient, thinking that "success" is measured in certain statistics. When I start thinking like that, I realize that the emphasis is on me, rather than where it should be, on God. This way of thinking presumes that I am somehow in control of the fruit, when in fact it is truly God who provides the increase. We are thankful for every person who is a part of this work, and are pleased to be able to work together to spread the gospel in this part of the country. We are thankful for what God continues to do with and through us in this community!

We are not setting another time frame on the work moving forward. Of course, we realize that circumstances could change, but as we evaluate the work today, we see no reason to think of the church here as anything other than "established." Therefore, we are planning to continue to work