

THE BOZEMAN REPORT

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

Greetings once again from Bozeman! It is difficult for me to believe, as I sit to write this report, we have been in Montana for 8 years! As I evaluate the work here, it is very much what we anticipated when we decided to make the move. It has been a very hard area to till the soil, but as we look at the good that has been done we believe the Lord has blessed our efforts, even if there are not a lot of numbers to show for it. We have been able to, and continue to have opportunity to spread the gospel message here in an area where 8 years ago there was no group of God's people meeting. We continue to have interaction and impact on our community, and those who have joined us have zealously done the same.

Over those 8 years, I have been blessed to see 3 of my children obey the gospel and grow in the faith. Last night, I was up until late into the evening having a follow up discussion with my oldest son, Jacob, about a point we were discussing in our evening Bible study. It is in moments like this that I am able to see fruit in our own family, and I know he is taking what he knows and learns and doing what he can to share with those he comes in contact with.

We have had the Phillips family join us several years ago, and one of their sons has also obeyed the gospel during that period of time (two of their older children were already baptized believers). We continue to see good spiritual growth among all. They have always been zealous in evangelism, and continue

to work diligently with those they have had (or made) opportunity to come in contact with.

Joey Stagner was restored to the Lord a few years back, and has been on fire in his service and dedication to the Lord. Recently, when both Justin and I were out of town, Joey stepped up and presented lessons for the congregation. He is also assisting in teaching a class for the teenagers.

Recently, Brandon and Lauren Hawk moved to Billings, where he is working as a travel nurse. They drive about 140 miles one way to worship with us on Sunday, and join via Zoom when their work schedule does not leave them the needed 2+ hours to make it on Wednesday evening for our Bible study. They called ahead before making the decision to take this appointment, to make sure we were meeting in Bozeman, and did not hesitate at all to commit to the drive. They have jumped in to the work quickly!

We have had some who have been with us for short periods of time and then moved on, which we believe have been benefited by their time with us, and who had served as great encouragement to us. James and Jonna Winburn were most notable, as they only worshiped with us a few months but have had a lasting impression and have formed lasting relationships.

We have never thought of ourselves as any kind of "vacation church," though we do live in a significant tourist area. We have, however, reaped the benefit of faithful Christians from all over the country who seek us out to worship with us when they visit our general area. We are still about an hour and a half from the areas most people stay when they vacation here (closer to or in Yellowstone National Park), so those who come to be with us on the Lord's day make a significant effort. We've had visitors drive as much as 5.5 hours on a Sunday morning to worship with us! What an encouragement they provide! Unfortunately, we also know that many make the easier, more convenient decision to not make an effort to worship with us. I often wonder if they understand what kind of encouragement they had opportunity to give to a small congregation such as ours? We would hope that we would also provide encouragement to them!

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Average Attendance:

Sunday: 20

Wednesday: 17

our way across the country with stops in Memphis, Nashville, and Tusculumbia to enjoy some musical history. We finally ended up in Russellville, AL, where we take our kids to the Rustic Youth Camp hosted by Jackie and Bunny Richardson. We had a very enjoyable trip, and got to visit with so many friends and family it would be impossible to mention them all.

Along the way we got to visit with several local congregations, and a couple that support me in the work here in Montana. It was good to get at least most of the family to visit with the brethren in Collierville, TN, just outside of Memphis. I also was able to visit with the congregation at Westview in Athens. Other congregations that we had the pleasure of visiting with were in Albuquerque, NM, Sherman, TX, Anderson, AL, and Belgreen, AL. I also had the pleasure of speaking in Albuquerque (short exhortation) and Sherman. I always enjoy running into people who have visited with us in Bozeman when I visit these congregations. Sometimes I know where they are, and sometimes it is a surprise!

Normal Notes...

I know this report is a bit different than most that I send. I hope it is encouraging to you as it has been to me to think back over the last several years. While I won't go into great detail, I will say that things continue to go well, and our studies that I usually mention are continuing to progress. The busyness of the summer season in Bozeman has hampered our studies a bit with those of the community. I think it is hard to get people to sit down and study at a reasonable hour when the sun doesn't set until 10 PM or after! The culture here is very outdoors oriented, so many people take advantage of the long summer days for those endeavors. This doesn't cut down on our ability to talk with people though, and we continue to plant seeds and hope for the opportunity to have more in depth studies.

We appreciate you all so much. I know there are many who pray for our efforts often. There are many who help support us financially. There are many who send us encouraging cards, letters, and emails. Every kind of support you send is of great value to us! Thank you for all you do!

I hope that you will forgive my reminiscing over the work here. As each year here passes, we evaluate whether this is where we think we should be, where we believe the Lord wants us to be. As such, it brings up these memories, and we see the benefit of our efforts in this area. While I know that there are some who have judged our work differently (we don't have the numbers produced that they think we should), we are still confident that this is a worthy work. We will continue to work hard to spread the good news, and trust God will continue to provide increase in His time.

Recent Travels

I believe I mentioned in my last report that we were planning a pretty extensive trip. My oldest daughter, Skylar, graduated from High School this year. We have, now with our oldest 2 children, allowed them to plan a bit of senior trip that we take as a family to celebrate their accomplishment. This year, Skylar chose a "musical" route, as she enjoys music so much. We did start with a visit to Cynthia's parents in Albuquerque, NM, with some "off theme" choices by Skylar. But then we made