Vol. 9, Issue 1, January 2020

Connect



COUNTER CULTURAL LIVING

Living in a way that goes against the grain

HOW TO WAIT

Learning to find patience in waiting



7thPrayer Meeting | 7 pm Renaissance Room (FLC)

12th "Savor the W<u>ord"</u>

This new Life Group provides effective methods of memorizing the Scriptures. It is a 7-week course on Sunday evenings (beginning Jan. 12) in room L109. To find out more or to register, call Vicky Tardy at 304-544-6231.

14th

First Responders
Outreach Meal Day

11am-3pm & 4-8pm Ebenezer

*find out more on pg. 10

15th

Quarterly Business Meeting | 8:10 pm
Auditorium (WC)



Wednesdays

LKC@FLC (ages 3 - 4th grade) | 7 pm FLC Gym & 2nd Floor

Wednesdays

Lit (5th-6th grades) | 7 pm FLC 2nd Floor



22nd

Glow-in-the-Dark Party
7 pm
Gym/2nd Floor (FLC)

Our glow in the dark party is a fun-filled evening in "the dark"! The children will be given lots of glow-in-the-dark sticks, necklaces, and bracelets.



15th

One Chip Challenge 6:45 pm SMB 2nd & 3rd Floors

17-19

D:NOW Weekend

Sign up by visiting Imbc.org/refuel-students

26th

Worship Together
Weekend | 10:45 am
Auditorium (WC)



Calendar Key:

Red = LKC

Orange = Refuel

WC = Worship Center FLC = Family Life Center SMB = Student Ministry Building

2020 is almost here and that means it's time for a new Bible reading plan. Those of you who have finished your Bible reading for 2019, don't forget to turn in your punched ticket for your gift. Gifts will be available the first Sunday in January, and there are several to choose from.

The key word for the Bible reading plan for 2020 is "simple." We start in the beginning and read to the end. The plan will start with Genesis 1:1 and systematically take you to Revelation 22:21. The length of reading each day will be based on verses, however, remember that some verses are longer than others. Eighty-five verses will be the average number you will read each day. You will have a few days off throughout the year, but only a handful so plan to stay on track. As in past years, your monthly reading assignment will be in the Connect or on the LMBC app.

This year, our desire is to make the Bible reading more interactive, and so we will be adding a weekly podcast. Here's how it will work. Before you begin your reading for the week (a week starts on Sunday and goes to Saturday), a podcast will be uploaded a few days beforehand. The design of the podcast is to help you better understand what you're reading and how you can daily apply the truth of God's Word. During the podcast, we will go over the reading for the week, point out key words and thoughts to pay attention to, recommend resources to further help in your Bible study, answer any questions about certain passages or verses, and encourage you to stay on track. We will also have some special guests throughout the year that will add their insight, help, and encouragement. You can sign up to receive the weekly podcasts by emailing **biblereading@Imbc.org** and saying "I'm in" (please include name and phone number) or there are signup sheets in the church lobbies.

20/20 BIBLE READING

Follow this month's daily Bible reading plan below to refocus in 2020.

1st Gen.1:1-3:24

2nd Gen.4:1-7:10

3rd Gen.7:11-10:32

4th Gen.11:1-14:16

5th Gen.14:17-18:15

6th Gen.18:16-21:34

7th Gen.22:1-24:67

8th Gen.25:1-26:34

9th Gen.27:1-28:22

10th Gen.29:1-31:21

11th Gen.31:22-33:20

12th Gen.34:1-36:43

13th Gen.37:1-38:30

14th Gen.39:1-41:46

15th Gen.41:47-43:34

16th Gen.44:1-46:4

17th Gen.46:5-48:22

18th Gen.49:1-50:26

19th Exo.1:1-4:17

20th Exo.4:18-7:25

21st Exo.8:1-10:20

22nd Exo.10:21-13:16

23rd Exo.13:17-16:36

24th Exo.17:1-20:26

25th Exo.21:1-23:13

26th Exo.23:14-25:40

27th Exo.26:1-28:30

28th Exo.28:31-30:38

29th Exo.31:1-34:35

30th Exo. 35:1-37:29

31st Exo.38:1-40:38



everal weeks ago, while waiting in line at the grocery store, I was making small talk with the man in line behind me when the conversation turned to my job. "What kind of work do you do?" He asked. From prior experience, I knew that my response could prompt a variety of colorful comments, so cautiously, I answered, "I'm a youth pastor." It turns out, the man in line with me was a follower of Jesus himself. As the conversation progressed, he lamented the changes that have occurred in our culture during his lifetime, observing, "I feel sorry for our youth today, and the world they have to grow up in. Things are so much more anti-Christian than they were when I was younger."

I can certainly understand his sentiment. The breadth and rate of change in our culture over the past decade are certainly unprecedented. Following a lengthy, comprehensive research on the faith of today's emerging generation of teens and college students, the Barna Group found Generation Z to be "The Least Christian generation in American history." Thirty-five percent considered themselves atheist – almost twice as many as the Millennial generation that preceded them, and only 4 percent admit to holding a biblical worldview. The Christian faith is no longer the default position in American culture, and the effects of our secular drift can be found in today's media, political climate, and family life.

The culture shift in our society is perhaps no more evident than in the digital arena. Through social media, culture tells us how we should think, talk, dress, act, and react. Culture tells us who we should be. One researcher has labeled the new cultural landscape "Digital Babylon." When wave after wave of Jewish captives were forced to migrate from Judah to Babylon between the years 607 and 586 B.C., they were met by a secular culture that bore little resemblance to the homeland of their parents. The Babylonian Exile, as recorded in the Bible, shares interesting parallels with the massive culture shift we have experienced in recent years here in the U.S. Pluralism has replaced monotheism. An accelerated, daunting pace of life has taken the place of the simple life. Institutional loyalty has given way to a self-serving ethos.

Is everything lost? Should we resign ourselves to the idea that the emerging decade is a terrible time to live? By looking at Scriptural accounts of some key characters in the Jewish exile, we learn of the impact and joy that comes from living a counter-cultural life for the glory of God. Consider integrating these five counter-cultural practices as you begin the new year.

#1 - Navigate change by clinging to the one who never changes. Read about it: Jeremiah 32:1-7

Poor Jeremiah. Does his nickname, "The Weeping Prophet,"

clue you in on what his life was like? God spoke powerful words to Jeremiah, and his job was to deliver God's Word to the nation of Judah. Specifically, Jeremiah's job was to warn the people of Judah that the Babylonians, who had surrounded their capital city of Jerusalem, would prevail in their siege, and carry many of them off as captives. In short, the exile was coming. Needless to say, Jeremiah's message was not well received, especially by Judah's King, Zedekiah. Outraged, the king imprisoned him because of his message. If we were honest, we would admit that there's a little bit of Zedekiah in each of us. We hear of the changes in our culture but refuse to believe it's true.

The prospect of being in the minority can be frightening to us, but when we pull our heads out of the sand, our eyes are clear to see the promises of God. By tuning out God's Word spoken through Jeremiah, the people of Israel missed out on the assurance that comes through hearing the promises of God. God did, and still does, have big plans for Israel, even though times were culturally tough at the moment. The same is true of us as believers today. Times are changing, but God never changes. Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 NIV).

#2 - Engage the culture.

Read about it: Daniel 1:1-21

As the Babylonians prevailed, they took back many of the "movers and shakers" in Judah as captives to Babylon. One of those captives, Daniel, was forced to undergo a cultural immersion program in Babylon, with the goal of turning him into someone who looked, talked, and acted like a Babylonian. They even went so far as to change his name from Daniel to Belteshazzar – a Babylonian name! The final straw came when they required him to eat non-Kosher food and gratuitously drink wine, which violated God's law for the Jewish people. When confronted with cultural expectations that went against God's expectations, how would Daniel react?

Daniel wisely reasoned with his immediate supervisor, earning an opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of God's way compared to the Babylonian way. For ten days, Daniel and his Jewish partners ate according to God's law, while the other Babylonians ate according to their cultural norms. At the end of the trial run, Daniel and his men were healthier and better looking by a large margin! Through his willingness to engage the culture and by God's supernatural blessing of favor in the sight of his chief, Daniel got to stand before the King of Babylon as an advisor.

Just as Daniel and his compatriots faced a cultural immersion program, young believers today find themselves enveloped in a massive cultural immersion program. With the average person in the U.S. spending an average of 6 hours and 43 minutes per day in front of a screen, media is the de facto cultural immersion program of the twenty-first century. Who will be willing to enter this sphere and, like Daniel, respectfully, and graciously, engage the culture with the timeless wisdom of God?

#3 - Pick your battles.

Read about it: Daniel 3:1-30

Some things just aren't worth fighting for. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah can attest to that. As Jewish exiles in Babylon, they stood beside Daniel in being subjected to the cultural immersion program of a godless empire. You may know these three men better by the Babylonian names given to them while in exile: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their own names? Not worth fighting for. Learning the literature and language of the Babylonians? Not worth fighting against. Through their willingness to engage the culture, they were given a prominent place in the government, and they used their position as a platform to honor God.

Later during their time in captivity, however, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were asked to worship the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon. As the music played, the "worship service" began. Every government official bowed in worship to the golden image, every official, that is, except for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. There they stood, alone, to the horror of everyone in the congregation. Why did they choose to fight this battle? The answer is simple. There was



And who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14 ESV)

more at stake than their preferences or their own names: the name and honor of the one true God. the King of kings, was at stake.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced certain death in a fiery furnace by dishonoring the Babylonian King in such a manner. When confronted about their civil disobedience, they courageously declared, "He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden images that you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18 ESV).

A hidden blessing of the recent culture shift is that Christians have been put in a position in which we must coalesce around what's important. With a laser-focus on developing a faith that withstands the cultural immersion program of digital Babylon, our traditions, preferences, or social standing among others aren't so important anymore. However, there's absolutely no room for compromise when it comes to the glory of God, and its pinnacle in the gospel of Jesus.

Pick your battles, but know that it may cost you something. Like these three exiles, we must be willing to sacrifice our prominent positions, our honor among men and women, and our very lives, to give God the honor He is due through our testimony. The good news is, just as Jesus walked through the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we, even in the year 2020, don't stand alone. Jesus promised, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

#4 - Embrace the moment.

Read about it: Esther 4:16

After the Babylonian empire fell to the Persians, some Jewish exiles were allowed to return home. However, most of the exiles never returned, preferring the comfort and convenience of life outside their homeland. Against this cultural backdrop we find Esther, a Jewish orphan living in exile. Esther, raised by her uncle Mordecai,

experienced a meteoric rise to prominence in the Persian empire. Because of her beauty, she was selected by the king to become his wife. The Persian culture did not afford the new queen anything close to an equal relationship with her husband, as simply entering his presence without an invitation could lead to her death!

God's plan for Esther is obvious. All of the seemingly disjointed and bizarre events that led to her becoming queen make sense when coupled with the discovery of an insidious political maneuver that would lead to the killing of all Jewish exiles in the Persian empire. Esther, a Jewish person herself, was made for this moment. God provided her with beauty to win the favor of the king, a wise mentor to see the evil politician Haman for who he really was, and a strong, courageous will to risk life and limb by approaching the king.

Esther, following her Uncle Mordecai's sage advice, embraced the moment she was made for, resolutely declaring, "I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16 ESV). Talk about countercultural living!

What about you, teen, college student, or young adult? All of the seemingly disjointed, confusing events of your life are no accident. God is bringing them all together - good and bad and turning them for your good and His glory among a new generation. You were made for this moment. God has sovereignly engineered you for this "post-Christian" era of history. Will you shrink back into the shadows of culture, or will you courageously embrace who God made you to be for such a time as this?

#5 - Be a mentor.

Read about it: Esther 4:14

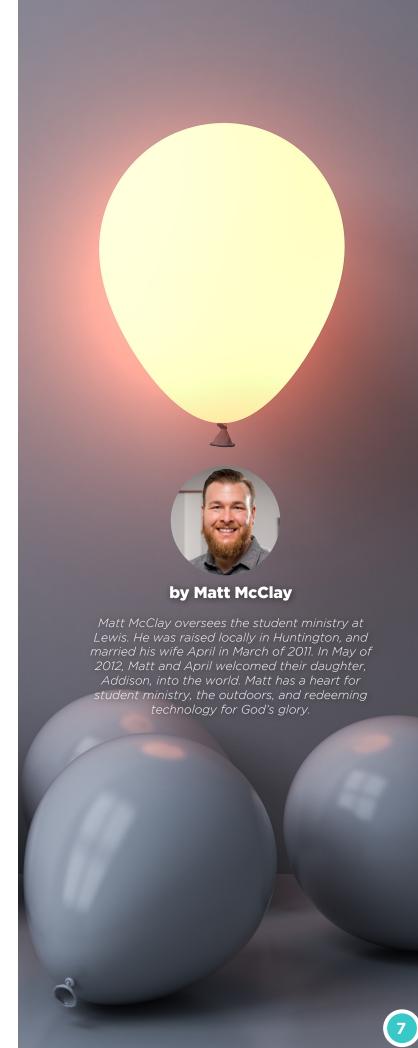
Turn your attention, now, to Mordecai. Do you ever feel like an old shoe: worn, past its prime, cast aside, and unneeded? Thousands, maybe millions, of Jewish exiles were probably very

thankful that Mordecai didn't feel that way. It seems, through a good reading of the book of Esther, that, in the Persian culture, youth and beauty were revered, much like in today's culture. Mordecai was not young, and likely not beautiful. But, he had something that was, apparently, in short supply among the Jewish exiles in Persia: Cultural discernment.

Mordecai, through his lifetime of experiences, and, most importantly, by the sovereign hand of God, was blessed with the wisdom to see the power plays going on in the palace, uncovering the plot to kill all Jewish exiles. He was also wise enough to see the hand of God on Esther in her rise from orphan to queen. However, perhaps the wisest move by Mordecai was his mentoring of Esther into the leader who God created her to be.

Today, thousands of young Christians throughout our land are desperate to hear Mordecai's words coming from seasoned Christians: "And who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14 ESV)? Who will you mentor in 2020? It may be an orphan like Esther. It may be the teenager you see across the auditorium at church. It may be a son, daughter, grandson, or granddaughter. Give them the gift of your time, look deep into their eyes, and help them embrace this moment for which they were made!







When we find ourselves in a season of waiting, we don't quit, we serve.

discouragement and depression after the holidays have ended. The winter seems long and the daylight seems short. To some, the long months between Christmas and the first signs of Spring feel like an eternity. Waiting may be one of the hardest tasks for both young and old. Waiting for Spring, waiting for an answer, waiting for healing or waiting for the next thing. The dictionary defines waiting as: the action of staying where one is or delaying action until a particular time or until something else happens. It's the only action that requires you to not act. If you could calculate how many hours in your life are spent on waiting compared to how many are spent in actual decisions the waiting would outweigh the decisions.

Many times in the Scriptures we read stories of God's faithful people who were asked to wait. Some waited their whole lives for what God had to reveal to them. Two such people are found at the end of the Christmas account but are often forgotten.



by Rebekah Shaffer

Rebekah is the wife of Pastor Jeremy Shaffer and the mother of Grace and Luke. She is the Children's Ministry Director and leads the Daughters of the King Life Group.

Luke 2:22-39 records the story of Simeon and Anna:

"And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said.

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

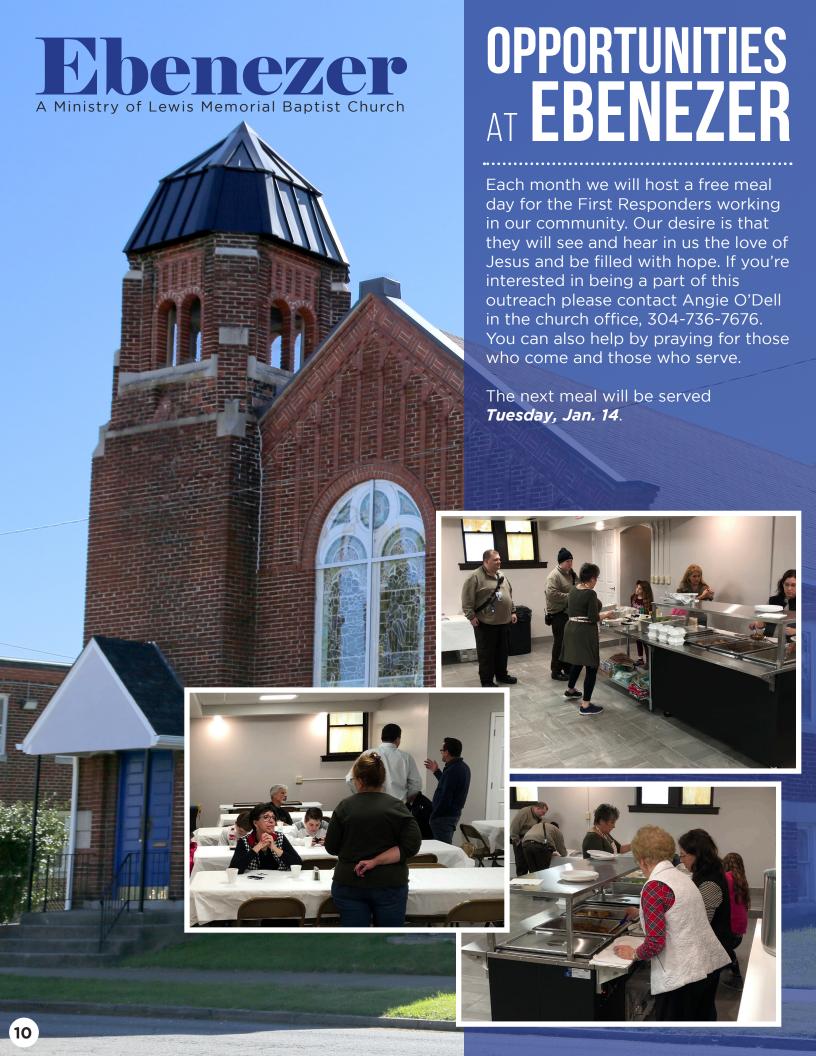
a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem".



There is much to be learned from these two individuals. The account depicts two believers who were waiting. Both had been waiting for their whole lives to see the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Messiah. Simeon had the gift of knowing that his waiting would be fulfilled before his death, yet it is not indicated that Anna had that privilege. Either way, we can learn from them how to wait. The resounding truth in their waiting is simple, they kept serving. When we find ourselves in a season of waiting, we don't guit, we serve. Simeon was told he'd see the Messiah and so he could have propped his feet up and just waited for Him to come, yet he didn't, he kept serving. Anna didn't know if her waiting would ever be fulfilled this side of Heaven and vet she kept serving, she didn't quit. The hardest thing to do when you are waiting is to keep serving in your church, in your community, and in your ministry, but you must not stop. What is it that you are waiting for? Some are waiting for Spring, for a job, or for a test result. Let me encourage you in this lull after the holidays to keep serving as you wait. Keep looking with anticipation for Jesus in every day serving, in the waiting.



JOIN OTHERS WHO ARE STRIVING TO BE

DIFFERENCE MAKERS

God called us to be salt and light to the world. This page is dedicated to efforts that help illuminate the darkness by shining the light of Christ. Will you be a difference maker?

A SPECIAL NOTE OF THANKS

... To everyone who donated money and gifts throughout the year, and for those who gave your time in packing and receiving boxes during the OCC season and during collection week. With your help, we packed over 1200 boxes as a church and shipped more than 22,500 as a distribution center; we also received more than \$7,700 in monetary donations throughout the year for this ministry.

... To those who helped serve the first responders in our first official outreach project at Ebenezer, LMBC's new outreach center. We served 105 responders and look forward to serving even more in the months to come. Check out page 10 to see how you can become a volunteer.



HELP IMPACT THE LIVES OF OUR **TEENAGERS**

Refuel's annual D:Now Weekend is January 17-19. They need host homes for teens on Friday and Saturday nights. For details, contact Matt McClay.

DUE TO YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS

We recently received a note of thanks from someone who came to the LifeBridge Food and Clothing Pantry for help. She wrote, "You will never know how much you blessed me by your kindness. I had plenty of food on my table ... and in turn I was able to take your blessing and pass that blessing on to a couple who had nothing and had just had a baby 20 weeks early. - God bless each and every one of you and those sweet ladies who let me pick out dresses for church."

If you would like to know more or want to become a part of this amazing ministry call the church office at 304-736-7676. If you would like to donate to the ministry, your gifts of food and gently used clothes and shoes may be left on the upper or lower porch of the LifeBridge House.



Brogan Dominican Republic



Chad & Wendy Justice Dominican Republic



Miguel & Noemi Mercedes Dominican Republic





Benji & Kerri **Dryden** Haiti



Hale Dominican Republic

Jason & Sarah Sykes Now serving in the **Dominican Republic**



Jake & Elizabeth **Delich** Puerto Rico





It has been a joy to visit several of our supporting partners in recent months. We are so appreciative of the encouragement and prayer as we launch into this new facet of ministry and life in the Dominican Republic. We are overwhelmed by the stories of churches and individuals who faithfully prayed for us, especially when we were in Venezuela. I cannot tell you how much that means to us. You genuinely have no idea how many times God answered your prayers. I have plenty of stories to report about the crazy and dangerous moments we faced. I also have plenty of stories to tell you of how God protected us in those moments because we had faithful folks back here in the United States praying for us.

It is exciting to being this next step of our missionary journey. It is also a blessing to see how God is blending our Venezuela experience with our Dominican Republic ministry. We have already made several casual contacts with Venezuelan families who have fled Venezuela and are now living in the Dominican. Although we currently cannot minister from within Venezuela, it is encouraging that we can still influence by evangelizing and discipling Venezuelans within the Dominican to share their faith with their friends and family.

The gospel is multicultural and not hindered by geographical boundaries. I love how this philosophy was shared with me while we were recently in the Dominican. It is not about the national or the gringo, black or white, rich or poor. We all need the gospel, and we all need God's grace! Regardless of nationality, we are excited about this new opportunity to be stewards of the gospel.

There are a couple of ways you can be a blessing as we move into this next phase of ministry. We

need to raise some additional support. One of the best ways to do this is through referrals. Most of you who are receiving this letter know us either from our ministry travels of from college life. Would you consider taking some time to help connect us with people that are missions-minded and who may be interested in partnering with us? Allow me to put your mind at ease. We realize that every contact will not turn into a partnership. We are looking for missional relationships. As a missionary, I don't like the "ask" part of my job. It is uncomfortable. The only thing that has made it more palatable is the realization that I am not asking for me. I am asking because God has called me to do something for His kingdom. With that said, I can easily trust that God will provide the necessary partners to get the gospel to the Dominican Republic and the surrounding Latin American world. We each have an essential job in the process, and I am merely asking that you ask God to show you how you can be involved.

I always want to make gratitude a part of every correspondence. Without faithful partners we cannot do what we do. The spiritual fruit produced as a result of your investment is fruit to your account and fruit to our account. Thank you for being faithful.

Be an encouragement! Here's how you can contact this missionary family:

Jason & Sarah Sykes 671 CC Road Whitwell, TN 37397 423-290-2706 sykes2dr@gmail.com sykesfam.org



TAKE AT LOOK AT THE LATEST **FAMILY NEWS**

Births

Shepherd Bashore to Ian & Ariel Bashore

Bereavements

- Carlton Bailey, Becky Napier's father
- Edward Hodge, Richard Hodge's brother
- Frances Stephens, Eddy Stephens' mother

Baptisms

• Nathaniel Brewer (New Member)

New Members

• Evan & Allison Butcher

Staff Birthdays

Tim Yates (22nd)



HOW TO JOIN OUR FAITH COMMITTEE COMMITTEE

Are looking for a church home? Would you prayerfully consider whether God may be leading you to our family of believers? If you are ready, follow these simple steps:

> 1st Baptism



Trust in Christ and follow Him in believer's baptism.

2nd Contact



Complete an information card during a service or contact us so we can ask you a few simple questions.

3rd Meet



Meet the pastors for **Starting Point** in the HIS Way Cafe (SMB) **on Sunday, March 8**

4th Preparation



Complete **The Journey**

a two-week group
Bible study of
orientation to LMBC.
Offered in the weeks
following Starting
Point.

DID YOU KNOW?

We all have sinned against God. Rom. 3:23

"For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God."

Our sin has a penalty. Rom. 6:23

"For the wages of sin is death ..."

Jesus Christ died for you. Rom. 5:8

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

You can be saved through faith in Christ. Eph. 2:8-9

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

OUR PASTORS

¹⁷ Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit. **Hebrews 13:17 NIV**



Tim Yates *Life Group & Outreach Pastor*



Matt McClay
Student Pastor



David LemmingSenior Pastor



Jeremy Shaffer
Executive Pastor



Bill Blankenship Hospital Visitation Pastor



Nathan McClay Worship Pastor



Phil NewberryMembership
Pastor

Connect is the monthly news and informational publication from



Making disciples who live and love like Jesus

5385 W. Pea Ridge Rd. Huntington, WV 25705 304-736-7676 Imbc.org Emergency pager: 304-691-0633

SUNDAY WORSHIP 9 am, 10:45 am & 6 pm

Nurseries are available during all services on Sunday and on Wednesday evenings from 6:45 - 8:15

Read previous editions of Connect at Imbc.org.

GODNEWS

GOSPEL ETERNAL LIFE



connect