

# East Balsam Beacon

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2022

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Thanks to  
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for the pictures

## Index

P. 1-3—Pastor's Corner  
P. 3-4—Coming Up  
P.4-5—Church Happenings  
P.5-6—Missions

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## Pastor's Corner

What are some words that appear in the Bible that don't get much attention in American churches today? I would be interested to hear what words people come up with. One of the words that comes to my mind is "member," and that's the topic I would like to discuss in this month's "Pastor's Corner." Specifically, I will attempt to answer the question, "why should anyone become a church member?"

It's tempting to think that membership in a local church doesn't matter. After all, if we believe in Jesus, then we are already members of His body and the "universal church." Further, if we attend church regularly, it is likely that other people who attend the church already think of us as part of their church family. So, is church membership necessary? I think so. God didn't put the concept of church membership (and the word "member") in the Bible for no reason.

So, what follows are ten reasons why you should become a member of the church if you haven't already. I'm sure that there are other reasons why church membership matters, but these are the reasons that I have learned, or thought of in the process of writing this article.

First, membership helps the pastor and church leaders know who they are responsible for. This is important, because pastors and elders are commanded to shepherd the flock of God, and they will be held accountable for how they shepherd (1 Peter 5:2-4). Membership helps church leaders know who their "flock" is, and who they are accountable for. Pastors are not responsible for every single person in the surrounding community, or even every person that walks through the church doors. They are responsible for the flock. Are you part of the flock? How do you know? Does your pastor know? Is just showing up on Sunday enough to make that clear?

Second, church leaders are commanded to practice church discipline, and the last step in church discipline (if a believer doesn't respond to earlier steps and repent) is excommunication (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). How can a church remove someone from fellowship if there is no such thing as membership? This is a practical reason why many clubs and gyms require membership. If a member violates their responsibilities as a member, then they are removed from membership. Without membership, the gym would have no way to regulate its membership or discipline its members. The same is true in the church.

Third, membership helps members know who they are supposed to submit to (Hebrews 13:17). Church goers are not required to submit to every pastor in their local community, or to pastors they listen to on the internet. Instead, they are required to submit to *their* pastor, and *their* leaders. By becoming a member, you formally commit to submit to the leadership of a particular church, which is helpful for you, and for them.

Fourth, becoming a member not only allows church leaders an opportunity to formally commit to leading you, and allows you an opportunity to formally commit to following them, but it also allows the other members of the church an opportunity to formally commit to caring for you. Again, are the members of the church required to care for every person who walks through the church doors in the same way, and to the same degree? I don't think so. Membership helps us to know who "my people" are. Membership helps us know who it is that we are commanded to love, serve, support, pray for, teach, admonish, and care for.

Fifth, just as becoming a member allows others in the church to commit to caring for you, it also gives you the opportunity to formally commit to caring for them. In other words, church membership is mutually beneficial for everyone. It brings clarity to the relationships in the church. It helps us know who we are responsible for, and who God is going to hold us accountable for.

Sixth, membership gives us assurance. The process of becoming a member of a church typically involves sharing your testimony so that church leaders can be sure that they are admitting born-again Christians to their membership. One way to think of it is that the process of becoming a member of a local church confirms who is already a member of Christ's body. When a person becomes a member of a church, many other believers are affirming that the new member is indeed a follower of Christ. So, if you become a church member, it gives you another reason to have confidence that you are saved.

Seventh, membership gives the church a reason to celebrate. It is a joyful thing to welcome new members into a church family. It is a wonderful thing to be welcomed and embraced. Just as the membership process gives you confidence that you are saved, it also gives the church confidence that the Spirit continues to work, and the gospel still has power. When people choose not to become members, they deprive the church of this joy.

Eighth, membership helps to ensure that the church can continue carrying out its ministries, and that the work of ministry is shared and not just placed on the shoulders of a few leaders. There are many offices and roles in the church that can only be filled by members, and rightfully so. By choosing not to become a member, you make yourself ineligible for such roles. In that case, both you and the church suffer loss. You suffer the loss of joyfully using your gifts to serve the Lord, and the church suffers the loss of benefiting from your gifts and service.

Ninth, church membership helps to distinguish Christians from the rest of the world, which also strengthens our witness. Someone with no ties to a church can go around claiming to be a Christian, but should anyone trust that person to be a faithful representative of Jesus Christ? No. Sadly, many people with no church ties make a bad name for Christianity all the time. But that doesn't mean church membership is meaningless. In fact, it makes it even more important. Those who have made a public profession of faith in Christ and a public commitment to a local church have the great honor and responsibility of representing their savior and their church well, with the goal that others will see our good works and give glory to God (Matthew 5:16).

Tenth, membership makes it harder to leave a church (or at least it should). This is one of the reasons why many people are intimidated by membership. We value the freedom to choose and the freedom to come and go when we please. But is that really freedom? There is tremendous benefit to putting down roots, committing to one group of believers, and sticking with them for the long haul. When difficulty and conflict arise, the temptation is to leave. But staying and working through differences is much healthier. It is better for the individual, and for the church. Reconciliation is a difficult road to travel. It requires patience, grace, and humility. But the destination is

joy. Of course, there are times when reconciliation is not possible, and there may be good reasons to leave a church. But leaving too quickly before honest attempts have been made grieves the Spirit who knits us together in unity, and it robs the church of opportunities for deeper intimacy and increased joy.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage those who are members to take the responsibilities of membership seriously, and to be thankful for the many privileges of membership. If you are not a member of the church, then I also encourage you to think about these things. Think about what you are missing, and what others are missing. Most of all, I hope that you will study God's word to see what it says about church membership, and that you will pray for the Holy Spirit to lead you in this matter. And of course, I would be happy to discuss church membership with you, whether you are a member or not!

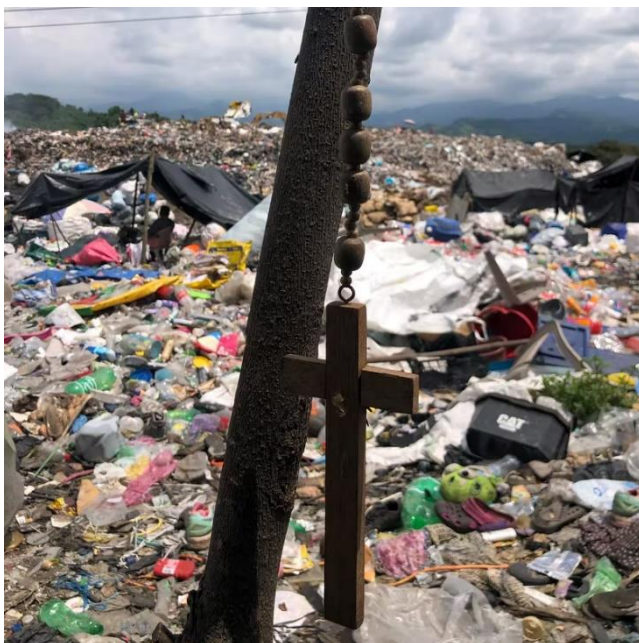
## COMING UP

Hello everyone.

Well, my second trip to Guatemala is close. I am excited to get back down there and see what the LORD has for me. This excitement is not the happiness of the problems and situations we will be dealing with. Rather, the excitement is one that comes deep within. This excitement is that the LORD is working in and through me.

I can go back just a few years and say I would have never thought my life would be impacted the way it is today. I asked the LORD to open doors and that is just what He did.

I asked what the people's biggest need is, and their need is for over-the-counter medical supplies. The plastic tub is filling up with things you have brought from the list in the bulletin. I pray that these items will



reach the people in need and will bless them.

My future plans are, God Willing, to take another trip in October or November with one or two young men, and again in January for Jackie and me. I ask for prayer for Hope for Home Ministries that they can keep working and bless the needy in Guatemala.

Thank you for all your support. May God Bless each and every one of You!

John and Jackie Larson

## **Vacation Bible School**

**Zoomerang-Returning to the Value of Life** is the theme for VBS this year. The dates are June 6th - 10th. If you plan on attending and haven't filled out the form, contact Kathy Thull. Plus, if you want to be involved with VBS, let Kathy know.

## **CHURCH HAPPENINGS**

### **Youth—A Message from Sarah**

For me personally (Sarah), this past year has been one of great struggle, growth, and strengthening in the Lord. From the loss of my father and grandfather to this story I am about to tell you regarding our youth group - God has been very near to me through it all.

In the last few months of 2021, I felt the Holy Spirit was prompting me to dig into my leadership role within the youth group. Where I was fully supported by our church leadership in this position, I felt compelled to look into it more. I dove into scripture, searching for God's heart behind his desire for women in leadership and his specific plan for me. I listened to podcasts. I read blog posts. I prayed, and I struggled. I talked about it - a lot - with Travis.

As we inched closer to 2022, the conviction rose to a point where I couldn't ignore it. I was fully supported and encouraged in my position, yet the conviction I felt by the Spirit would not go away.

On our Senior Celebration trip, I heard the Lord speak the verse in Isaiah that talks about him doing a new thing. I remember writing, "Lord, show me this new thing you keep telling me about." He wasted no time.

We returned from Passion, and that conviction sat right below the surface of my daily life. I was diligently seeking the Lord's desire and could not find clarity on what that would be. I struggled as I thought about the following Wednesday's youth group. It just didn't feel right.

It was on that night Charlie O'Brien brought something to me. He had heard a sermon preached at another church and wanted to know my take on it. It's focus was on 1 Timothy 2:11-12 (I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.). He was curious and felt led to ask for my thoughts. I was stunned by God's relentless pursuit of my heart and Charlie's obvious connection with the Holy Spirit.

I heard the Lord loud and clear.

I went home that night and talked with Travis. I was confident (and a bit broken), that I was not to be leading youth group.

Now, let me say - it wasn't because I think women shouldn't be leading youth groups. I don't believe these circumstances were surrounding an issue of broken biblical laws but of God's specific plan for my life.

After discussing with Travis, we agreed that my leading wasn't God's plan - but we weren't sure what was. You see, we love this youth group. We love these kids as if they were our own. Supporting their parents as we lead them to Christ is one of our life's greatest joys in this season. Stepping away would have been a hard choice.

After talking with the leadership, an encouraging conversation with a friend, and tons more prayer, we were clear on the path we needed to take.

Travis was to step into the youth group's teaching role, and I was to step back.

That was January. Since then, Trav and I have been learning what it looks like to lead the group in a more unified manner. Travis has been learning how to step into leadership and lead 30+ youth each week to the feet of Christ (no small feat). I have been learning what it looks like to step down and let someone else lead (again, no small feat). We have been growing, learning, and doing our best to follow the Lord on this new path.

I can't speak for the youth if they've noticed how the Lord has used this on Wednesdays or in their life – you'll have to ask them yourself.

What I can say is this:

Jesus has a beautiful path for each of us to walk, one that may not look like the rest of the world expects it to. It will not always line up with what we expect. Yet, in the daily walking with him – step by step – He directs our paths and does what only He could do.

God had a beautiful gift on the other side of our obedience.

Since that decision was made, we have found freedom and a breakthrough in an area of our marriage that has been a struggle for its entirety. Prayers we've been praying for 17 years have been answered. Issues we've tried to resolve in a hundred different ways, costing thousands of dollars and innumerable heartache, were cleared up in a moment by the very hand of Jesus.

It feels like the two are unrelated – our marriage and leading the youth group. It took a while for Trav and me to see the connection. Today, we firmly believe God's delivering us of this battle was directly tied to our obedience at youth group.

This is not a story of how good Travis and Sarah are, or how if you do 'x' then you can expect 'y' to happen. This is a story of a daily walk with Christ. This is an encouragement to follow His voice above all else. This is a reminder that our God is still in the business of healing, delivering, and bringing freedom in miraculous ways.

Stay tuned friends...I believe the Lord has only just begun.

Submitted by Sarah Bowers

## MISSIONS

**Bruce & Candice Beatham**—Wycliffe Bible  
Translators in Mexico

Hello from hot, sunny, and dry Tecomaxtlahuaca (teh-ko-max-tlah-OAH-kah), Oaxaca, Mexico!



Blessings from the Lord on our family at EBBC! We are so thankful to God for His faithfulness to us over the many years we have served here in Mexico. We thank you for praying for us and supporting us all those years!

A young man, Alex, has joined our translation team. He is from the US and loves linguists, already knows several languages and is eager to dive into learning Mixtec. He was here with us for the past two weeks, living in a small house with Ernesto, our dear, Mixtec-speaking, co-translator. They have been getting along swimmingly and have eaten most of their meals with us so we can get to know each other and develop friendships and a good working relationship. I have been teaching Alex a Cross-cultural Living Internship course for a couple of hours each day and we have had some social outings with the whole team, including Valentín's wife and two little ones.



This past weekend, we spend a long couple of days traveling to our friends and fellow translators' village (6 hours away) to help them pack up and leave the village in which they work because the town authorities decided that they didn't want them living there. We are so sad with them, but grateful to God for allowing us to come alongside these fellow servants in their time of need. They are settled in their apartment in a larger town and considering how they can continue to translate from afar.

Please pray for us as we have just a few days left in our house to pack up and leave to go to Mitla and then to Tucson for Bruce to attend meetings and then fly to Minneapolis for maybe six weeks to receive Nathaniel after his four years of service living in Japan. We hope to support him in whatever ways we can as he starts his life in the US for the first time ever. Right now we are tired and needing God's strength to get us through. We know He's faithful.

Blessings!

Candice, Bruce and Abby

## **Gabe & Melonie Brennan—Church Planting**

Gabe reports that they are in the eighth month of their church planting residency and at 70% of the needed funds. They are looking to plant a church in the Northeast Metro (South White Bear Lake Area). They hope to launch the church in the fall of 2022. Please pray for this church planting endeavor.

If you wish to contribute financially, you can mail a check made out to Christ Redeemer Church to

Church Planting Residency  
c/o Christ Redeemer Church  
P.O. Box 25854  
Woodbury, MN 55125.

Or, you can go online to [NEWCHURCH.SQUARESPACE.COM](http://NEWCHURCH.SQUARESPACE.COM) and click on "GIVE", then select fund: CHURCH PLANTING RESIDENCY.

## **John & Lori De Cleene—Mobilization Associates, Converge**

Praise the Lord for eleven new Converge Appointees! Three are going to Japan, three are going to a country we can't name, two are going to Germany, two are going to Estonia, and one is a new team member to Mobilization specializing in Internships. Please pray for another group as they prepare to be trained in July - not sure how many yet, but, could easily reach double digits again!

Praise the Lord two families have reached 100% of their team building efforts! One family is moving to Europe to work in the post-Christian world. The other family is moving to Thailand—six weeks after they have their fourth child in May (so, a possible July departure).

And, praise the Lord, our eldest, Lee, and her family, who are in Kazakhstan will be visiting for a couple weeks in May! Then, in July, Lori will join them back in Kazakhstan as they welcome their third child, first girl.

Please pray for our first ever: "All Converge Appointee Zoom Meeting" on Monday May 2. Each time appointees run into each other at churches or conferences, they're so encouraged to meet people "in their shoes." Also, there is some new information we need to get to them, and, this is the best way to get the same material to everyone quickly and accurately.

Please continue to pray for wisdom for Lori and I as we encourage and lead the almost 60 Converge appointees as they seek to build their teams so they can labor for the harvest in their fields.

## **Steve & Carol Jean Gallagher—Wycliffe Bible Translators-Florida**

Together with you at East Balsam, we are continuing to work toward eradicating Bible poverty.

In February Steve finished consultation with the Etulo team in Nigeria on their book of Hebrews. During the consultation, he also mentored three consultant trainees, two of whom are Nigerian pastors. He has also recently completed checking the translation of Luke and Romans for the Saliba team in Papua New Guinea.

Steve is planning a six-week trip to PNG in September to check Scripture for two more languages - the Malei book of Psalms and the Yamap gospel of Luke. Ensuring the quality of the translation of these books will take months of preparation. Working with the Yamap will be a milestone in Steve's career as a consultant. It will be the 50th translation team that he has worked with to ensure the quality of their Scripture! Steve hopes to pay a brief visit to the Bariai people during this trip to PNG. He continues to serve as an author for the Translators' Notes on the book of Exodus.

Wycliffe's mobilization team that Carol Jean works with is resuming in-person events encouraging people to consider joining the ministry of Bible translation. They also continue to host online courses and webinars. (They were recently featured in a webinar. You can find a recording of it here: <https://www.wycliffe.org/events/events-details/explore-wycliffe-live-from-watermelon-to-taro-bible-translation-from-start-to-finish>.)

Praise God for:

- the newly checked Scripture in the Etulo & Saliba languages.
- contacts that Wycliffe is making with potential new workers for Bible translation.

Please pray for:

- the Etulo team and community as they print, record, distribute, and use their newly checked Scripture portions.

- good progress on Translator's Notes for Exodus.
- preparations for Steve's upcoming trip to PNG.
- Wycliffe's mobilization team as they plan and conduct various events and that more people will join the Bible translation movement.
- more people to join our under-staffed mobilization team, as well as the work of Bible translation in general.

We deeply appreciate the faithful ministry partnership of East Balsam through your prayers and offerings to reach people with God's Word.

Steve & Carol Jean Gallagher

### **Gil & Norene Zinke**—Training Leaders International (TLI)

No update on Gil's activities. Please pray for Gil as he continues to train pastors in Ethiopia and other countries. Gil and his team members travel in countries where it is not really safe.



East Balsam Baptist Church  
1816 – 108th Street  
Balsam Lake, WI 54810

Sunday Worship – 9:00 A.M.  
9:30 A.M. – Children's Church  
Tuesday – 9:00 A.M. - Women's Bible Study  
Wednesday – 5:45 P.M. Youth Group  
Saturday, 7:00 A.M. – Men's Bible Study  
Other meetings and activities announced in the bulletin & on web site

[www.eastbalsam.org](http://www.eastbalsam.org)

To get to livestreaming,  
our YouTube address is [youtube.com/eastbalsambaptist](https://www.youtube.com/eastbalsambaptist)

OR

on the church website,  
scroll down to SERVICES, move your cursor right and click on YouTube.

Send Prayer Chain requests to [east.balsam.baptist.church@gmail.com](mailto:east.balsam.baptist.church@gmail.com),  
or contact Val Rowe at 715-268-7424 or  
Joan Michaelson at 715-405-4055