

The Seeker

“Seeking the Souls of Men and Pointing Them to Christ”

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Dear brethren,

Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord. We have had a great year here at IBTM. Each year we try to contact as many of our preacher school graduates and students as we can and ask them to report on their work for the Lord during the year. In the past few weeks we have heard from many of them. At this point here is what they have reported for 2018:

Baptisms . . . 3,122
Restored . . . 1,252

New Congregations Established 105
Men to graduate from Preacher Schools . . . 114

We rejoice to hear of the many souls that have obeyed the Gospel of Christ and been restored back to the Lord.

We are currently involved in 2 building projects. These two new preacher schools are being built in Africa to train faithful Gospel preachers. The one in Solwezi, Zambia, and the other in Malawi are both under roof now. The brethren in Lilongwe, Malawi recently suffered damage and deaths due to high winds and floods. In an area that faces hunger because of droughts they also from time to time suffer damage floods. There was some damage by the winds at the new school building with some walls being blown down. There is still a need for funds to finish and furnish these 2 new preacher school buildings. If you wish to help the one in Solwezi you can send funds to the Algood church of Christ, here in Cookeville, TN. They sponsor this school. If you wish to help the one in Malawi you can send funds to the Jackson Heights church of Christ in Florence AL. They are the sponsors for that school. Or you can send the funds to us here at IBTM as we are doing the wire transfers for both schools.

We are preparing for another mission trip this spring to Malaysia. We hope to visit with 6 congregations and work with them while on this trip. We always enjoy visiting our brethren in Malaysia and working with them. These brethren face many difficulties.

Each year in January we begin our fundraising for our Africa trip in August. There is much to do before we depart in August. We have printed 100,000 Gospel tracts in English and are printing another 100,000 in Tonga, Luo and Kiswahili. During the past few weeks we have shipped 48 boxes of text books with some Bibles and BCC booklets to the different schools in Africa. We sent 1,493 pounds of materials at a cost of \$5,942.14. Our thanks to Garland Robinson the editor of Seek The Old Paths and preacher for the Leoni church of Christ in Woodbury, TN. For the past several years he has helped with our printing and has been such a great blessing to our work. We have printed 1,000 sets of our BCC booklets, 12,000 booklets, and are getting them ready to ship to Africa. Our BCC booklets are reaching many lost souls in Africa. During the past few months we have heard of over 300 baptisms from our BCC students in Africa. We are currently printing 1,000 more full sets to send to Africa also.

Our budget for our 2019 Malawi-Zambia trip this August is as follows:

Printing & shipping 200,000 Gospel tracts	10,000.00
Books for preacher schools, text books & library books	5,000.00
Printing & shipping BCC booklets	10,000.00
Travel, taxi, hotels, fuel, food	2,000.00
Airfare, travel ins. Malawi & Zambia	6,000.00
Benevolence, helping schools, teachers, needy	3,000.00
Bibles in local languages	3,000.00
Bikes for preachers, at \$100.00 each	3,000.00
English Bibles to ship to Africa.	4,000.00
Ink, office supplies, maintenance at preacher schools, cooking gas	2,000.00
Missl. expense, repairs to vehicles	2,000.00
Budget for 2019	\$50,000.00

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These funds help so many different congregations in several different nations in Africa each year. Please help us reach our goal of \$50,000.00 this year. Please make checks to Ronald D. Gilbert-Mission Fund and send to Rock Valley church of Christ, PO Box 49494, Cookeville, TN. 38506 and mark for “Malawi-Zambia Trip”. We always send a financial report to those who help.

As our work continues to grow and more souls are being brought to the Gospel of Christ our need for more funds grows as well. Please consider putting IBTM in your 2019 budget. We receive donations each month from individual Christians and we are so thankful for each of these. As an individual Christian please consider sending a donation from time to time to help us in this most important work of taking the Gospel of Christ *“into all the world”*. Thanks brethren for your prayers and support.

In Christ,

Ronald D. Gilbert, Director of IBTM

Things You Helped to Accomplish

Baptisms	11,798
Restorations	9,547
Congregations Established	277
Schools of Preaching Begun	7
BCC Students	42,463
ICOTB Students	481
Preachers Graduated	475

Tales from the Field

Learning that more than 300 of our BCC students in Africa put on Christ in baptism in 2018 was a thrill! It also brought back images of many other baptisms over the years. Here in America we hear the word “baptism” and picture the clean, heated pools waiting behind the pulpit, but for many places in the world that is not the case.

I remember a few years ago one of our BCC students in Malawi wrote to us requesting baptism. My husband, Jimmie, was having trouble locating someone to do it because the student lived in a remote village and there were no members of the church anywhere close. Jimmie

contacted a friend, Isaac Banda, several hours away and he was willing to make the long drive, but there was another problem. The area was experiencing a drought. The creek had dried up, so there was no water source big enough. Jimmie suggested they dig a hole in the ground, line it with a tarp and create a baptismery that way. In the meantime, our BCC student had been busy teaching others what he had learned so when Isaac arrived there were 12 waiting on immersion – and a new congregation was born.

The most startling baptism I ever attended was on my first foreign campaign to Ghana in 1983. It took 2 men to baptize – one to do the immersion in a muddy, little pond surrounded by brush, and another man to stand guard on shore with a rifle to protect those in the water from crocodiles. I had to wonder if I would have been willing to enter the water under such conditions.

Another baptism when we lived in American Samoa had me worried for a similar reason. There we immersed in the ocean and on this Sunday night the entire congregation had traveled to the Pala Lagoon near Nu'u'uli because a woman had requested baptism. Usually the still water in this lagoon was a good location, but reports on the news recently said a couple of sharks had been spotted in it so I was concerned. The woman and the brother doing the immersion stepped into the water hand in hand since the coral and rocks underfoot made walking difficult. They had to go out a long ways to get to water deep enough so progress was slow. I kept scanning the water for shark fins, but with only the stars for light it was difficult to see. While this was taking place those of us on shore sang hymns in Samoan. Finally, our new sister in Christ returned to shore, but before the baptizer could step out of the water another man stepped forward requesting baptism, and the trek began again. And again. Each time a new Christian came back someone else stepped forward. I believe we ended up with six baptisms that night. Standing there in the dark singing hymns while the starlight overhead danced across the open water of the lagoon – they were definitely the most beautiful baptisms I have ever seen. It is one of my most cherished memories of the mission field.

Linda Hill

We CAN evangelize the entire world in OUR lifetime . . . if we work together!