

## Ponderings From the Pastor

By Brad Taylor, Pastor

### Year-End Giving

As the year draws to a close, year-end giving is on the minds of some. If you desire to make a year-end contribution to Oak Grove Baptist Church, it must be given by Dec. 25 to show up on your 2023 giving record for tax purposes.

Year-end giving helps Oak Grove meet general budget needs. Also, for those that would like to give towards specific needs, we would like to asphalt the new portion of the driveway into the church.

We also need to replace one of the vans. If you would like to give to any of these desig-

nated items, please write on the offering envelope what you would like the gift to be



designated towards (general fund, driveway, van, etc.).

### Mailbox for Missions

Make use of the Mail-

box for Missions to send Christmas cards to other church members. The Mailbox for Mis-

get to check for Christmas cards that have been placed in the Mailbox for you.

Finally, make a donation for the amount you would have paid in postage, and this money will be applied towards the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Included in this newsletter is a prayer guide for "A Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions." Use this guide during the first week of December to help guide your prayer time for International Southern Baptist Missionaries. Oak Grove gives 10% of our budget to missions through the Cooperative Program.

sions is located in the Welcome Center.

Cards should be placed in boxes according to the recipient's last name. Then don't for-



# The Meaning and History of 'Little Drummer Boy'



Submitted by Mindy Taylor, Worship Leader

Drummers have been used in battle since the age of Genghis Khan's 13th-century Mongol Hordes, right up to the early years of the 20th century, when modern warfare relegated them to the status of ceremonial use only.

The icon of the "drummer boy" emerged, in its romanticized form, around the time of the US Civil War (1861-1865). Drummers were used on the battlefield to keep time, and regulate and maintain the marching of troops, as well as to provide different combinations of drum beats in military camps to communicate specific messages.

Their role demanded that they be at the front of the military action unarmed, so they were required to be incredibly brave and incredibly vulnerable.

Military drummers were not always young, but the stories of younger ones tend to stand out in the history books, simply because their strikingly young ages serve to make them all the more memora-

ble. In fact, many drummers that became famous served very young. A small Johnny Clem ran away from home at the age of nine to serve in the Union army, and rose up the ranks to become an officer, and then a general, after the US Civil War.

And another young drummer, Robert Hendershot, was dubbed the "Drummer Boy of the Rappahannock" when he was made famous for serving heroically at the Battle of Fredericksburg and capturing Confederate soldiers, generating a piece of Union morale-boosting news from the front.

The Little Drummer Boy in the Christmas carol of the same name seems to carry the same brave and earnest attributes of the drummer boys romanticized by the US Civil War in the 19th century.

This drummer, though, is not an explicitly military character. In fact, the carol's lyrics suggest he is a young drummer marching onwards to attend the birth of Jesus

Christ. He is too poor to be able to present a gift to the son of God so, before the newborn's mother, Mary, the young drummer continues to drum instead of giving a material gift.

"I played my best for Him, Then He smiled at me," the lyrics say as the drummer gives the gift of his music. (R. Pantreath Dec.21, Classic Fm)

"The Little Drummer Boy" was written by American composer Katherine Kennicott Davis in 1941. It was first published with the title "Carol of the Drum," and described as a "Czech carol freely transcribed by C.R.W. Robertson" (C.R.W. Robertson being a name Davis published under).

The Children and the Praise and Worship Team will be presenting our annual "Little Drummer Boy" on Dec. 3 at 10:45 a.m. sharp.

Please bring your friends, family and neighbors to help us celebrate the coming of the Messiah!

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## Children's Church News

December is an exciting time to learn more about the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ!

**Dec. 3** — John and Cindy Tittle will share how the "Prophets Told of

Jesus' Birth" based on Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 11:1-5; Micah 5:2, through a hands-on activity.

**Dec. 10** — David and Margaret will be revisiting the story of the an-

gels visiting Mary and Joseph based in Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-24.

**Dec. 17** — Charles and Gayla will continue with Luke's story of Mary

and Elizabeth's visit and Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem.

**Dec. 24** — Church Candlelight service

# A Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions

## WEEK OF PRAYER: DAY 1

### We will reach the lost through obedience

Lostness around the world is growing every day. In fact, 59% of the world's population remains unreached. This means there are less than 2% evangelical Christians within their people group or nearby. Unless something changes, they have little to no chance of hearing the gospel in their lifetime.

Your missionaries are a steadfast presence among the lost. You pray, give, go and send. Together we are committed to reaching the lost. In obedience, we will follow the Lord's command to go into all the world.

Many of the unreached people groups live in hard-to-reach places, like remote areas around the world. But did you know that Europeans are now considered unreached? Europe has 800 million people, and only 1% are evangelical Christian. Though the continent has a historical presence of churches, many have turned away from faith of any kind. Europe's top five unreached peoples — Russian, British, French, Italian and German — make up 55% of the European population.

Consider this picture of lostness from Belgium. A big blue bear sits

on a park bench, arm extended to the side as if inviting people to come and talk. Writing on the bench does just that, invites passersby to sit and talk because "Warme William listens."

While people sit and talk to the inanimate bear, International Mission Board missionaries Don and Pam Lynch park a bicycle cart, start a generator and turn on an espresso machine.

The missionaries are also ready to listen. Through offering a cup of coffee, the Lynches and team members have a chance to connect with people, start conversations and open doors to the gospel. When people share their struggles, the missionaries can actually hear, build relationships and, most importantly, introduce a loving Savior.

A government initiative in one region of Belgium led to the creation of Warme William to address rising numbers of depression and suicide among teenagers and young adults. Sadly, without belief in a personal Lord, people resort to talking to the bear.

"When 99.5% don't know the Lord, then they have no hope for the future and there's no consequences for anything," Don said. "If you have no hope for the fu-

ture, you don't have anything to look forward to. Life is either a great adventure or a slow death."

In addition to a regular coffee cart ministry, the Lynches hosted volunteer teams this summer during Belgium's Ghent Festival, one of Europe's most popular cultural events. Volunteers engaged with visitors of the festival and offered a listening ear and a prayer to a God who listens.

## WEEK OF PRAYER: DAY 2

### We will reach the lost through innovation

Michaela Knippers grabs the bulky virtual reality goggles off the desk and tightens them onto her head. Her husband, Justin, is already strapped in and waving his hand in the air to scroll through different maps he sees through the goggles.

As new International Mission Board missionaries to Osaka, Japan, they've been studying Japanese all day, and their brains need a break. For these 20-somethings, that means jumping into the virtual world — a video game simulating reality that, for them, is both relaxing and their place of ministry.

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The couple finds a spot to chill in a virtual backyard that resembles countless real ones — neon tiki lights, Texas-sized mosquitos buzzing around, potted plants and multi-colored flowers. In the back corner, Justin spies some friends around a fire pit and presses his controller forward to walk over. Within minutes, the missionary shares an insight from Scripture.

“Virtual reality evangelism isn’t really any different from regular evangelism,” Justin says, explaining how it works. “You find a common point, build a relationship and draw the conversation to the gospel.”

Unlike most video games, VRChat is all about socializing. No one “wins.” The whole point is to connect and talk to people. Michaela adds most in the game are lonely and looking for a solution to their problems, just like she was years ago in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Virtual reality seemed like the perfect fit for her as an introvert. You can be anything you want online without ever leaving the house. This severe social withdrawal, anxiety and reclusiveness is so common in Japan that there’s even a Japanese word for it — *hikikomori*.

Justin was the first Christian Michaela met who spoke about Jesus in the virtual world. It didn’t

take long to see the solution to her greatest problem — spiritual lostness — was the gospel. The now-married couple teams up to be a steadfast missionary presence through digital innovations. They recognize their unique interests and skills in the gaming world means they might be the only ones to share the gospel with those in the virtual world where they serve.

“Virtual reality is just one of many tools missionaries use to reach out to the lost around them,” Justin says. The missionary points out it is important to find someone “in real life” (IRL) to follow up and disciple the new believers. This is why they study Japanese — so they can relate at a heart level in the tech capital of the world.

### **WEEK OF PRAYER: DAY 3**

#### **We will reach the lost through research**

Planes, trains, buses, motorcycles, cars and boats will get them as close as possible before setting off on foot to find hidden people groups. International Mission Board missionaries are going the extra mile, quite often literally. Why?

“We’re going to the deepest part of lostness, the place where nobody is looking for these folks, to

be able to make sure they have the opportunity to hear the life-giving good news that Jesus saves and can move us from perishing to life everlasting,” IMB Vice President John Brady said.

It will take a lot of research, something IMB already conducts at the highest possible level. The IMB is committed to finding and engaging people so far off the map that not much is known about them and their exposure to the gospel. Earlier this year, the IMB launched a new initiative, Project 3000, to engage 3,072 unengaged and unreached people groups. Of this number, 784 groups have no Scripture in their heart language.

New missionary explorers will be journeying into the unknown to find out where they live, learn about their culture, discern their literacy, develop ministry strategies and find people to partner with in the task.

Ray Henry Holiday is in the pioneering group of Project 3000 explorers.

The Tennessean travels with a national partner to remote areas in South Asia for six weeks at a time to live among one of his 10 people groups. Once they arrive in the general area, they find transportation and accommodation.

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Holiday compared his job to how Jesus sent out the 72. He'll go with minimal supplies — “carrying my home on my back.”

He collects as much demographic information as he can and builds relationships. While he uses a translator, he also takes time to study the people's language.

During his university years, Holiday served in Central Asia with the IMB's Hands On program. He thought he'd be headed back to the Central Asian country, but when he heard the Project 3000 job description, it was an echo of a burden and prayer the Lord placed on his heart three years ago.

As a high school student, Holiday prayed from [Isaiah 6:8](#), “Here I am, send me.” The verse was shared at an IMB job conference when the Project 3000 assignment was presented. It further confirmed his calling.

“It's a hard job, and that is part of the reason why I felt called to it. I feel like I have the gifting and ability,” Holiday said. “There is a great need. There is no one going to these folks.”

## **PRAY**

Pray for these partners as they seek to take the gospel to areas previously untouched by the good news of Jesus Christ.

## **WEEK OF PRAYER: DAY 4**

## **We will reach the lost through partnerships**

Prison ministry. Sports ministry. Developing national missionaries. The dreams discussed around the table were big. International Mission Board missionaries Matt and Gretchen Clay saw the passion rising as the group of pastors and lay ministers figured out ways to introduce their North African neighbors to the gospel. But the Clays didn't have the resources to invest at the deep level needed by their brothers and sisters in Christ.

They knew who could, though. The missionaries called their partnering churches in Florida — Fruit Cove Baptist Church and Aspire Church — and asked for help in mentoring and empowering these believers to multiply and plant new churches.

“I think the direction we are going to see global missions moving is to partner more with the global church to mobilize workers and increase momentum,” Gretchen explained about the need for help in this ripening harvest field of North Africa. “Using U.S. fellowships along with national partners is a way to multiply the work force.”

This trifacta partnership — the IMB missionaries, two Florida

churches and church leaders in North Africa — was decades in the making. A collaboration of churches in Jacksonville, Florida, began praying for this area of the world back in the late '90s. They sent short-term teams through the years to do everything from Vacation Bible School at meetings to ministry in the villages. This newest request, however, was different.

The North Africans didn't need someone to come “do” prison ministry; in fact, Americans aren't even allowed in the facility. They needed someone with experience, like Fruit Cove, to listen to their ideas and step in as mentors. They wanted to be trained as a healthy, multiplying church.

“We have a robust prison ministry here [in Florida] and it only makes sense for us to share knowledge,” Tim Maynard, Fruit Cove's senior pastor, said, noting that each of the Florida churches has different expertise to offer. “This partnership is more about discipling believers who want to go to areas where there are no believers. They need encouragement and training.”

Just thinking about how much the national churches have matured and grown through the

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years gets Gary Webber, the Aspire Church senior pastor, excited. He remembers when no one in this area was even interested in Jesus, let alone sharing the gospel. To see churches request training and be equipped to multiply and reach the lost is something they've prayed to happen for years.

As the decades-old partnership naturally morphs into a new era, the Clays sit back and watch the excitement grow among the Americans and North Africans. They know that church planting and multiplication lead to local ownership of God's mission.

## **WEEK OF PRAYER: DAY 5**

### **We will reach the lost through church planting**

It was just a normal meeting of some Zambian pastors and a few workers from Christian organizations. When Randy Windham stood up and handed a sign-up sheet to the person next to him, they had no idea that ministry as they knew it was about to change.

"I've been to a training on how to plant churches," the International Mission Board missionary told them. "I'd love to share this knowledge. If you are interested, just sign up and we'll set a time for training."

Teaching Zambians to plant churches and transform lives with the gospel is Randy and Kimberly Windham's passion. Seventeen new churches have started in and around Lusaka, Zambia — five in the last six months.

From that very first training session to the one they hosted very recently, the couple is always on the lookout for a pastor or church member to mentor. To them, it's just natural to keep the training cycle going. Your gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering allow them to walk alongside local believers as they train them in a four-step process.

Randy explained the first step is gospel access or entry into a community. During this entry phase, they pray for God-prepared people — ones whose lives God is already working in — to enter the picture so they can train them to address the world's greatest problem of spiritual lostness.

Step two is all about evangelism. The Windhams teach Christians how to share the gospel. Everyone uses this skill immediately for door-to-door evangelism.

"We want everything reproducible," Randy said. "We teach everyone — including teams from the United States — to draw the plan of salvation using a stick in

the dirt. That can be done anywhere in Zambia as a visual aid."

As people make decisions to follow Christ, the church-planting team moves into the third step, discipleship. In a country where false prophets and cults are common, this is important. New believers grow in their faith by studying Scripture.

As this group grows spiritually and in number, they move seamlessly to the final step — healthy group and church formation. Not every group grows into a church, but those who choose to follow this route learn the 12 characteristics of a healthy church. This step alone can take three to four months.

Churches never look the same from the outside. They might meet under a shade tree, use a room at a school or have their own building. However, at their core, all have biblical teaching, fellowship, worship, service and evangelism.

Now, it's the new church's turn to train and help start another one.

"You just continue to do the same thing over and over again," Randy said. "We never stop training and planting churches."

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## **WEEK OF PRAYER: DAY 6**

### **We will reach the lost through relationships**

Rose had a passion to reach a people group situated in the Horn of Africa. Accessing them was another question altogether. She knew she couldn't do it alone.

Rose is a member of a church in Mexico and a teacher by trade. As she grew in relationship with church leadership, they pointed her to the mission field. However, they couldn't afford to send, equip and sustain her work as a missionary alone. They soon realized they didn't have to be on their own. Her pastor recruited 15 other churches across Mexico and Panama and cast a vision for them to financially support Rose.

These Latin American churches are determined to see Africans come to know Christ. Recently, a small group from her church traveled to Africa to see how the Lord was working.

"My pastor told me to remember that when I'm on the field, I need to be focused on what I'm doing there," Rose explained. "He said their work and ministry as a church is to share what the Lord is doing among nations through me, and how [God's] calling the church to work together."

On the other side of the world,

Rose partnered with IMB workers Thomas and Lori Beth Bain's team as a Global Missionary Partner. Before arriving, she worked on learning English, knowing if she wanted to partner with a team of Americans, she'd probably need to speak their language. Providentially, Thomas was fluent in Spanish. This helped Rose's language studies greatly as she also had to learn the local language.

Rose's language lessons paid off, and missionaries describe her as a true asset to the team. This is a relationship that is advancing the gospel in a hard-to-reach part of the world. Even though security issues have forced her to relocate with the IMB team multiple times, she's remained laser-focused on reaching the diaspora of her people group. Her contributions to the team have been invaluable, the Bains shared.

Rose's Mexican passport allows her greater access to a hard-to-reach people than her American partners. The people she has been called to are farmers and tend livestock. They have no running water or electricity. Lately, their shepherds have replaced their staffs with rifles, as their land has been under attack.

Conflict and arid land aren't the only hostile things among them. Their hearts are hostile to the

gospel. Those who do come to faith among them, Thomas likened "to the cactus where they produce fruit even in desert climates."

Rose is dedicated to being out in the community, wherever she goes, making connections with these people God has laid on her heart.

## **WEEK OF PRAYER: DAY 7**

### **We will reach the lost through discipleship**

International Mission Board missionary Paul Yount sits just outside a crowded cafeteria. Inside the room, chairs squeak across the floor. A cacophony of voices mixes. Forks scrape plates. The ice in the drink machine crashes to the bottom of an empty glass.

He hears none of it.

More than 71 million people worldwide are Deaf, like Paul. Most culturally Deaf people have almost no access to Scripture in their heart language. Very few have ever had the gospel shared with them. Most of the Deaf around the world have never seen Jesus' name signed.

This IMB missionary connects easily with other Deaf. He is uniquely equipped to disciple them because he experiences the world in much the same way they do.

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The commonalities between Paul and Joseph, a Senegalese believer, have helped Paul disciple him more effectively.

When Paul met Joseph, he was already a believer, but Joseph was hungry to know more about God's Word. While he had a basic understanding of the gospel, he couldn't fully connect with the truths of written Scripture.

As a deaf student, Joseph needed to see the Word, not just read it. Seeing is

how he connects with the world. Paul understands this need to learn visually, and, along with StoryOne Camps, he teaches the Bible in a way Deaf can understand — through storying.

Paul disciplined Joseph with three sets of Bible stories that rely on sign language mnemonics which help commit the stories to memory more effectively. This visual presentation of Scripture resonated with the new believer.

After attending the first

StoryOne Camp, Joseph was sold on this storying method. When another was held, he returned. "He felt so moved and so inspired, and we were excited for him to experience that," Paul said.

Now, because Joseph was given access to the Scripture in his heart language, Francophone African Sign Language, he's passionate about sharing the gospel with those like himself who need access to the gospel in a way they can understand.

His faith has come at a great cost for him. He is disowned by his family, but he hasn't backed down. He's now working in a Deaf church, discipling other believers through this mnemonic storying method.

Leading out in a Bible translation project, in partnership with Paul and Deaf Pathway Global, a ministry organization, is another way this growing disciple is fulfilling the Great Commission.

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## December Sermon Calendar

Dec. 3 — Fools and Wise Men; Matthew

Dec. 10 — The King Fulfills Prophecy

Dec. 17 — Testifying to Jesus

Dec. 24 — Candlelight Service

Dec. 31 — Matthew Shepard

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## December Daily Bible Reading Plan

Dec. 1 - Mic 6, Luke 15

Dec. 2 - Mic 7, Luke 16

Dec. 3 - Nahum 1, Luke 17

Dec. 4 - Nahum 2, Luke 18

Dec. 5 - Nahum 3, Luke 19

Dec. 6 - Hab 1, Luke 20

Dec. 7 - Hab 2, Luke 21

Dec. 8 - Hab 3, Luke 22

Dec. 9 - Zeph 1, Luke 23

Dec. 10 - Zeph 2, Luke 24

Dec. 11 - Zeph 3, John 1

Dec. 12 - Haggai 1, John 2

Dec. 13 - Haggai 2, John 3

Dec. 14 - Zech 1, John 4

Dec. 15 - Zech 2, John 5

Dec. 16 - Zech 3, John 6

Dec. 17 - Zech 4, John 7

Dec. 18 - Zech 5, John 8

Dec. 19 - Zech 6, John 9

Dec. 20 - Zech 7, John 10

Dec. 21 - Zech 8, John 11

Dec. 22 - Zech 9, John 12

Dec. 23 - Zech 10, John 13

Dec. 24 - Zech 11, John 14

Dec. 25 - Zech 12:1-13:1, John 15

Dec. 26 - Zech 13:2-9, John 16

Dec. 27 - Zech 14, John 17

Dec. 28 - Mal 1, John 18

Dec. 29 - Mal 2, John 19

Dec. 30 - Mal 3, John 20

Dec. 31 - Mal 4, John 21

# December 2023

**Sun**

**Mon**

**Tue**

**Wed**

**Thu**

**Fri**

**Sat**

					<p><b>1</b> Keith Hardison bday; Adult Game Day, 11am</p>	<p><b>2</b></p>
<p><b>3</b> Youth/Kids Christmas Worship; Special Business mtg, noon</p>	<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>7</b> Rogers Baptist Assoc. staff Christmas party</p>	<p><b>8</b> Debbie Capps, Rick Kibbe &amp; Sharon Lee bdays  <b>Nativity 6-8pm</b></p>	<p><b>9</b></p>
<p><b>10</b> Council mtg, 5pm</p>	<p><b>11</b> Audrey Brannon, McKenzie Hahn &amp; Toney Robbins bdays</p>	<p><b>12</b> Murray Schoen bday</p>	<p><b>13</b> Carmin Henry bday</p>	<p><b>14</b> Crafty Christians, 10am</p>	<p><b>15</b> Pastor's Class Christmas party</p>	<p><b>16</b> Barnabas Class Christmas party</p>
<p><b>17</b> Old Time Family Christmas; Business mtg, noon</p>	<p><b>18</b></p>	<p><b>19</b></p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b> Barbara Clark &amp; Angela Owen bdays</p>	<p><b>22</b></p>	<p><b>23</b></p>
<p><b>24</b> Candlelight Service, 11am</p>	<p><b>25</b> Jess Newton bday</p>	<p><b>26</b> Jimmie Foster bday</p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b> Crafty Christians, 10am</p>	<p><b>29</b> Kari Collier, Dylan Henry &amp; Wade Metzinger bdays</p>	<p><b>30</b> Katie Gerhard bday</p>
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# OGBC Youth News

Submitted by Matt Shepard, Youth Leader

In November, 412 Youth Group had a great turnout at our Youthsaving Feast! I would like to thank everyone who made a dish or two, as well as those who helped serve and clean up!

On Sunday, Dec. 3, the youth will sing a couple songs during morning worship service to help kick off the CHRISTmas season. Later in the month, Dec. 17, 412 Youth will have our OH HOLY NIGHT Progressive Dinner. We will start at the church at 4:30 p.m., and parents/guardians can pick up their students back at the church at 7:30 p.m.

## Upcoming events:

Dec. 3 — Youth and Children Special during Morning Worship

Dec. 17 — Oh Holy Night Progressive Dinner (4:30 - 7:30 p.m.)

Dec. 20 — No Awana or Youth (Winter Break)

Dec. 27 — No Awana or Youth (Winter Break)

Oak Grove Baptist Church  
P.O. Box 1358  
307 South 273rd East Ave.  
Catoosa, OK 74015

