

## Monthly Support Report

July 31, 2017

Dear elders,

I pray that this monthly report finds you well. We're doing fine. Our health is fine. It is my prayer that this report finds all of you doing well and with good health. It has been a nice month of July for us and I pray that it has been a good month for all of you.

We have been gone for a little over two-weeks out of this month of July, so I'll warn you ahead of time that my report will possibly be shorter than usual due to our time away. I'll not bore you with the details of our vacation away, but I will tell you it was nice to get away for a few days (weeks). It's always nice to get away and relax for a time. I now feel much more refreshed. It's been a long time since we have gotten away for a long period of time. Aside from getting away for rest and relaxation (including sight-seeing), I did get to spend some good time with my mother who is approaching her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. She is in reasonably good health except for her eyes and hip as she approaches her 90<sup>th</sup> year. I'm thankful for her good influence over the years. She is the one who led my father to the Lord prior to his death 15-years-ago. And she has been the steady influence for good and right in our family for a long-long time. I'm thankful for her long life. I just pray for her continued health. It is my prayer that as long as she lives she will experience a reasonable amount of good health.

So, I had the opportunity to spend some time with my mother and visit a sound congregation with some really good preaching. You might also gather from my statement that it was nice to sit and hear someone else preach a couple of lessons. As a gospel preacher, I don't get that treat very often. So, it was nice to do so.

The work at the congregation here is going well. Like most congregations we have a number of our own members who are taking their family and going away on vacation, which means our numbers have been down. But, in their absence we have been blessed with a number of visitors of our own. In my absence, while my family and I were away, we had some visitors from out of town who were passing through. I'm thankful that they came our way during this month. July is normally one of the better months out of the year when we get visitors from out-of-town. All of our visitors encourage us. We are very thankful to have them with us and usually we'll have a few moments after services to get to know them a little better. Sometimes we're blessed to be able to spend a lunch with them and ask them about the work of the Lord where they attend on a regular basis. I always like to hear about other congregations and the work they are doing for the Lord. That's encouraging to hear.

We have been blessed with a new family to our family here at this place. This new family is a great encouragement to us and we are very thankful to have them. I guess when you are a smaller group of Christians working and worshiping in an area that doesn't see too many new families moving into your area, when a family does, it's an exciting day. We're confident that we will be blessed to have them, and it is my prayer that we can be a blessing to them.

As I have mentioned on a number of occasions in my reports, we are a congregation that prays for growth and for open doors. In many ways, our prayers mimic the words found in the scriptures that speak about open doors. We trust that God hear and answer our prayers and that we will have open doors of opportunity to teach and preach His word. Plus, we're confident that as our prayers are supported by a willingness on our part to do what we can to help others know more and grow in their faith, that the Lord knows the sincerity of our hearts and that He will provide us with those opportunities. So, rarely is there a service that passes that one or more of the men will petition the Father in heaven through the avenue of prayer and not request an Open Door of opportunity to do His will in teaching. That is so encouraging to hear and I'm thankful that our men have taken it to heart to appeal to God for those opportunities.

Our DBR (Daily Bible Reading) continues to add to readers other than our members. It's amazing how a Daily email that contains a chapter of the Bible can grow in popularity. While a person might sensibly think a person could easily pick up a Bible for themselves and read any chapter they wanted to read, there's something about belonging to others and doing what they do that apparently helps promote that daily reading. Regardless of their motivation, I'm just thankful that an email that contains a chapter each day can motivate them to read. Clearly there is power in that written word, and I'm blessed to be able to share it whether it's in a Bible class, in a home Bible study, or via an email that I send out on a daily basis. We can do marvelous things with the internet and email today and we're doing what we can to take advantage of this wonderful technology.

Yes, our Sunday Bible class continues to study the parables of Jesus. And yes, it has been and it continues to be a great study. We do occasionally milk a given parable for all that it's worth. However, as I was teaching yesterday concerning the Parable of the Lost Sheep, I reminded the class of the purpose for this parable that is found in both Matthew and in Luke, and it appears that it was used by the Lord on 2-distinct occasions – we must be careful to not make the parable say more than the Lord intended it to say or teach. A close examination of Matthew's account and of Luke's account will demonstrate this point very clearly. Jesus had a reason to use this parable on these two separate occasions, and His purpose or design on each occasion was somewhat different. It's the context and who Jesus was speaking to that seems to make the difference. When we take the time to discern such things that always helps us with our study and understanding. While our Bible class Sunday focused on Luke's account, we took the time to also discuss the first few verses of Matthew 18 so we could understand why the Lord used this parable again.

My lesson Sunday morning was about the Faith of Caleb. Caleb isn't spoken of very much in the Bible. But, he was apparently a remarkable – faithful man. Lord willing this coming Sunday my lesson will be about his friend, and the other spy with a positive report about the Land of Promise and their ability to go in and possess it. That man of course is Joshua. I'll also be talking about his faith. I suppose I could use 2-3-Sundays to discuss Joshua and his faith. And, I may do just that. But, this coming Sunday will be a focus on his faith and how he demonstrated it. Let me take just a minute to share with you the comment that many made after the lesson this past Sunday. It was something like, I knew about Caleb, but I didn't know that there was so much depth to his story and to his faith. Those are the kind of comments I love to hear. I like being able to add something to the knowledge and understanding of the folks who are listening. I've done my job pretty well when I can do that and then also stir folks up to the point of following a good example. Caleb, and his example of faith is a good example that we would do well to mimic.

Well, word wise I suppose I have already exceeded what I thought would be in this report. And while at times it's very difficult coming up with things to write about (although I do keep a journal of the things that happen here). This time it was just nice to be able to share with you and talk to you about some of the positive things that are taking place here and to tell you that the attitudes of everyone seem to be alike when it comes to what we're attempting to accomplish for the Lord in this place.

My health is good and the health of my family is good. That's always so nice to report that to you. My prayers are generally filled with the names of those who's health isn't as good. I wish that weren't the case, but it is. I know that many of you, if you don't have your own health concerns that you're praying about, that your prayers are filled with the names of others who do. I guess that's the way of life here upon this earth. And while I wish it were not that way, the scriptures assure us in heaven we will have escaped sickness and death. I like the sound of that and that's one of many reasons I've set my sights on heaven. I trust that you have as well. It is for certain brethren, that we don't want to miss heaven. And that there shouldn't be anything here on earth that's worth missing out on the glories of heaven and being with the Lord. Let's all agree to make heaven our goal and to do the Lord's will so that heaven will someday be our eternal home.

Thank you for your support. I hope you always know how much it helps and how much I appreciate it. And I appreciate you and your willingness to give to the Lord so that you can help and have fellowship with me in the work here through your support. Thank you and may our God richly bless you.

God bless.

Randy