

September 16, 2021

Dear Praying Friends,

This is not our official prayer letter. You should receive that sometime in October. This is just a personal update to keep you informed of what's going on in the ministry for which you pray and which many of you support financially.

Mount Hebron Bible Baptist Institute in-person classes began on September 1 with a substantial increased enrollment over last year. We have a great group of young men and women who are serious about being prepared for God to use them. We are so thankful for the men and women God has given us to teach and mentor these young folks. Please pray for Pastor Jonathan as he oversees this vital ministry.

We are in Bartlett, Illinois teaching a modular course on Baptist church history in Fires of Evangelism Institute with my good friend, Bro. Elmer Fernandez. When the week ends tomorrow night, I will have taught and preached 24 times since last Sunday morning. I have enjoyed it immensely. I thank God for the health and strength He has given my 75-year-old body and mind. Well, not so much the mind!

The Bible Institute where we are teaching this week is a ministry of Bethel Baptist Church in Bartlett, IL, pastored by Bro. Elmer Fernandez. It is a Spanish church. Last Sunday, in remembrance of the events of September 11, 2001, the Christian school students presented a very moving musical and video tribute to the first responders who participated in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. It was impressive to see how these folks, whose roots are in many Latin American countries, love America and have as much of a patriotic heart as any natural-born American. They love this country. Bro. Fernandez, who was born in Cuba, and lived through the communist takeover there, wisely keeps his people aware of where they are and how blessed they are to be in this country. God bless America!

Emily spent time this week with the Susana Gonzalez, the Christian school administrator here in Bartlett, helping her evaluate students who had come from the public school system. Emily has almost 30 years' experience in Christian education. She was a blessing and help to Mrs. Gonzalez. She would be a blessing to any Christian school who would want to use her expertise.

We go from here to Williamsburg, KY, where we will be with my dear friend, Pastor Darrell Hurst, at Mount Zion Baptist Church. I believe this is the 31st year I have preached their missions conference. I have told those dear, patient people all I know about missions and I've made up some stuff 😊. It is always a joy to be with Bro. Hurst. He is a great host and has as big a burden for missions as anyone I know. Please pray for God to use the meeting to be an encouragement to that church.

After Williamsburg, we are scheduled to go to El Salvador where we will be in a Fires of Evangelism Pastors' and Workers' conference where my daughter and son-in-law, Tammie and Henry Gonzalez, have served as missionaries since 1997. Please pray that pastors and people will respond to the challenges they will receive in the area of soul-winning and Christian service.

We should arrive home on Wednesday, October 6. We are to be in a missions conference in Iglesia Bautista Betesda in Monterrey with my good friend, Bro. Juan de Dios Garza, October 7-10. This church was founded by my dear friend, Bro. Danny Jones, who has recently started a church in McAllen, Texas. Bro. Danny and I attended the same school as children. His family had been in Monterrey since 1955. They were a great help to us when my family arrived there in 1960. His father, C. L. Jones, now in heaven, was a great missionary and established several churches in the Monterrey area. Please pray for that meeting. It is a great missionary church.

God has protected us from the virus. I've lost count of all the airplanes, airports, hotels, restaurants, and church services we have been in. Please pray for continued health and strength and that God would use us to be a blessing and challenge to churches and pastors.

You may have noticed that I have used the terms "dear friend" and "good friend" four times in this letter. That was not an oversight. At this point in my life, my greatest treasures are my immediate family, and the good friends God has given me. I thank God for them.

My son, Stephen, whom many of you know, has a successful wholesale fishing tackle business. His lovely wife, Ruth, is a public-school teacher. They and their three children live 5 minutes from our house. Emily and I asked Stephen, who is a great fisherman, to help us take three of our grandsons, Jonathan, Jr., Tommy II, and Lucas, fishing last week. Stephen found a great spot on a lake that's less than 10 minutes from our house. He brought his 9-year-old daughter, Sarah, as well. Stephen provided the bait and gave the boys some pointers. We didn't catch anything, but we had a great time. I am so proud of Stephen. He has a good heart. He is a good father and a great son.

Thank you for all you do to keep our ministry going. We pray for you.

Bro. Tommy and Emily Ashcraft