

The Seeker

"Seeking the Souls of Men and Pointing Them to Christ"

January 2020

Volume 9, Number 1



Dear Brethren,

Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2019 was a very busy year for us at IBTM and a very productive year in the work for the Lord.



One of the almost 3,000 baptisms last year.

We were able also to build new school buildings in Lilongwe, Malawi for the new preacher school there. In Malawi we have built 3 buildings and purchased land to build a new church building and start a new congregation on property that joins the preacher school property. We hope to be able to raise funds in 2020 to build this new church building in Malawi.

We reported 2,928 baptisms, 1,530 restored, 82 new congregations established, 17 preachers graduated from preacher schools in Africa and 4 graduated from ICOTB and 4,583 new students were enrolled in our BCC program. We had over 150 baptisms in our BCC program. These stats are taken from our mission trips and from our preachers who have graduated from preacher schools. We only get reports from a small percent of our students.

2019 was a great year for our building projects. Thanks to supporters we were able to build a new preacher school building in Solwezi, Zambia in the Copper belt, Western province.



The new building at Solwezi is almost complete.



2 of the 3 buildings built in Lilongwe.

The students at Malawi preacher school have been on break for a little over one month and just returned back to their classes. They reported that during their break they baptized 92 into Christ and had 122 restored back to the Lord. This was wonderful news to hear. They had a busy break!

We usually start our fundraising in January each year for our mission trip to Africa in August. Here is our budget for this year:

Printing & shipping 200,000 Gospel tracts.....	\$ 10,000.00
Books for preacher schools, mainly shipping.....	5,000.00
Printing & shipping BCC lessons.....	10,000.00
Travel, taxi, hotels, food, and fuel.....	2,000.00
Air fare, travel insurance, Zambia and Malawi.....	6,000.00
Benevolence for preacher schools, extra help for teachers.....	3,000.00
Bibles in local languages.....	3,000.00
Bikes for preachers.....	3,000.00
English Bibles to ship.....	4,000.00
Preacher schools extra help, food , supplies, cooking gas, ink, office supplies, maintenance at schools.....	2,000.00
Miscellaneous expenses for van & truck repairs.....	<u>2,000.00</u>
	\$ 50,000.00



Some of the more than 2 million tracts shipped to Africa by IBTM since 2007. Tracts are a wonderful tool for evangelism overseas.

As you can see we hope to do many things to help reach the lost in Africa with this mission trip. Please consider helping with this mission effort. Please make checks to Ronald D. Gilbert-Mission Fund, and mail to Rock Valley church of Christ, PO Box 49494, Cookeville, TN. 38506 and mark for "Africa Trip". We will send a financial report to those churches and individuals who help with this trip.

Churches of Christ in Tennessee and Kentucky are aware of the Comer Trust Fund where a brother in Christ has planned to divide his estate among the congregations in these 2 states. We have sent out letters to several congregations in these 2 states requesting that they consider giving a portion of their Comer Trust Fund gift to our mission work efforts. We have a few more preacher school buildings and staff houses to build in Africa and a few church buildings and wells that are needed so there will be clean water at the preacher schools. We would also like to ship more Bibles, tracts and BCC booklets to Africa. We would greatly appreciate your help when you receive these funds.

IBTM has shipped more than 63,000 English Bibles overseas, plus purchased more than 1,000 Bibles in local languages for our brethren.



We are still hearing of great results from the Gospel meetings we are sponsoring in Africa. For \$300.00 we wire these funds to preacher schools in several different African nations and the teachers and some of the students go out in their areas and conduct Gospel meetings. The funds are used for travel expense, food and hotels when necessary. There have been around 150 baptisms from these Gospel meetings during the last 6 months of 2019. If you or your congregation would like to sponsor a Gospel meeting in Africa the meetings are \$300.00 each. Please make checks to IBTM and mark on your check "Gospel meeting-Africa".

For many years we have hoped that we could send a container to Livingstone, Zambia but thought it was not possible. However we have learned that we can send a container. We hope to ship our first 20 foot container to Africa the end of March or the first of April. I know that many of you who get our Newsletter that do not live near Cookeville, TN. and you may not be able to help unless you are planning to come through our area or you want to ship items to us. We have many books we plan to send to Livingstone, Zambia. There are 4 preacher schools in Zambia that we work with. We will be sending many library books, text books, song books, Bibles, Gospel tracts and several BCC booklets. We are looking for the following items:

- Communion trays that hold the fruit of the vine only, we do not need the bread or offering plates
- New plastic communion cups, they come in boxes of 1,000
- Paper back and hardcover Webster Dictionaries
- Bible Dictionaries and concordances
- A few good song books in English, call before you send, we only need a few
- Men's suits, ties, long sleeve dress shirts, dress shoes, belts, dress socks, small to medium sizes are best
- Sets of Gospel Advocate commentaries and other good books by our brethren
- Children's clothing, shoes, socks, baby clothing - no diapers
- Men, women and children's T-shirts
- Ladies long sleeve shirts, sweaters, shoes, if dresses are sent only send dresses to the ankles
- Boys and girls toys, nothing large it needs to fit in our boxes
- Soccer and volley balls, we will let the air out and put them in boxes

No food items, no liquids, no clothing that is camouflage. We would like to have all items to us by the middle of March so we can box it and fill out the forms on each box to ship.

I believe that 2020 may be our best year ever! Please keep our work in your prayers and help us as you can to take the Gospel of Christ "*into all the World*".

In Christ,

Ronald D. Gilbert

Director of **IBTM**

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Things You Helped to Accomplish



Baptisms	14,726
Restorations	11,077
Congregations Established	359
Schools of Preaching Begun	7
BCC Students	47,352
ICOTB Students	496
Preachers Graduated	492

Office News

What can I say about 2019? Working in front of a computer screen most of the time doesn't sound very exciting, but I am pleased when I record statistics like those above. I especially like that several of those new congregations were begun by online BCC students who learned the truth, then turned around to teach others.

But there are more things in my stat book than the items above. Things like, in 2019 IBTM:

- Provided 40 bicycles to local preachers
- Shipped 3,437 Bibles overseas
- Received visits to our websites from people in 223 nations or principalities

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2019 also gave me a graphic lesson in the power of advertising. For several years now IBTM has maintained online advertising of our Bible correspondence courses so that prospective students searching for a place to study could find us easier. It helped tremendously in the early days to make us more visible on the major search engines, but I really wasn't sure how much impact it was having now . . . until our new BCC enrollments dropped dramatically this fall. Periodic fluctuations are not unusual so I didn't pay too much attention at first. When things continued off I began to worry that I had caused the drop when I added the security SSL certification to the websites. But I repeatedly searched the Internet for ways to fix it only to conclude it was unrelated.

When the slowdown stretched into more than a month I was definitely concerned but still at a loss on the cause. I finally decided to revamp our online ad that typically runs on 2 search engines. I quickly discovered that 1 of those engines had dropped it in September with no explanation other than the ad was no longer approved. That was confusing since they had been running it for several years. But I switched all advertising to the other engine and new student enrollments immediately returned to normal. Now I wish I could double the budget!

I look forward to the surprises – and growth - 2020 will bring.

In Christ,
Linda Hill