



The Seeker

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

January 2021

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Dear brethren,

Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The virus of 2020 had a worldwide impact on nations as well as on the Lord's Church. Many of the Gospel meetings our brethren had planned in Africa had to be canceled due to the virus. Our preaching brethren in Africa soon discovered that in large cities they could not conduct Gospel meetings but when they went to rural areas they could have meetings. So they adjusted their schedules and conducted several Gospel meetings in rural areas and villages. Many meetings were conducted and much teaching was done even though there was a virus. Most of our preacher schools were closed for a few weeks in 2020 but finally reopened. I believe that many of our preachers in Africa worked even harder in 2020 in spite of the virus. This certainly shows in our stats for 2020.

Baptisms- 3,257, restorations- 2,779, new congregations established- 106 and 75 preachers graduated from preacher schools. We rejoice as we continue to get reports from preachers in Africa. Over 500 men have graduated from these schools since September 2007 when IBTM started.

Sometimes we get discouraged and think that no one is interested in the Gospel. When I look at the 3,257 baptisms for 2020 and think that was an average of 271 baptisms per month, 62 baptisms per week, 8 baptisms per day, I am encouraged! IBTM is but one mission work effort in our brotherhood. There are many more works in Africa, India and a host of other places around the world. Only the Lord knows how many baptisms there were in the world for the year 2020. On the other hand we should not become complacent and think we are doing a great job in converting the world, we are not! The world is growing in numbers far faster than we are reaching the lost with the Gospel. This is true in the USA as well. In the 2018 edition of *Churches of Christ in the USA*, a chart is shown on page 22. This chart shows that in 1994 in the USA there were 13,013 congregations and 24 years later in 2018 there were only 11,965. This chart also shows that in 1994 there were 1,260,838 members and in 2018, 1,128,279, showing a decrease of 1,048 in the number of congregations and a decrease in the number of New Testament Christians by 132,559 for this same period. Our growth rate is not slowing down we are shrinking. In the animal kingdom this would be called an "endangered species". There is so much work to be done all around the world. Each individual Christian and each congregation should get busy to turn this around and reach the lost with the Gospel of Christ. Jesus said in Jn. 4:24 "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest, behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Let's do our part in helping with the harvest in 2021!

One of the projects we worked on in 2020 was sending \$300.00 for each Gospel meeting in Africa. These funds were used by the preacher schools for some of the instructors and students to go out and conduct Gospel meetings. These funds were used for transportation, food and lodging. Since we started this program we have had over 400 baptisms from these meetings. We plan to do several more during 2021. If you or your congregation would like to sponsor one or more of these Gospel meetings send \$300.00 per meeting to IBTM, PO Box 49494, Cookeville, TN. 38506, and mark for "Gospel meetings". There are more meetings scheduled in the next few months but we need to send more funds soon for more Gospel meetings.

Recently we received a report from one of our graduates that a man who had been a denominational preacher for over 35 years was baptized into Christ. Since his baptism he has been able to teach and baptize

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some of his family. He has also been studying with several of the members of the denomination where he preached. Another of our graduates recently had the opportunity to begin studying with 16 denominational preachers in a class that he is conducting with these men. Please keep these men in your prayers as they try to teach families and friends and denominational preachers the Gospel of Christ.

I also want to give a brief update on our current building projects. In Solwezi, Zambia we are building a much needed kitchen/dining room at the new preacher school. They have just started up with the walls. In Kalomo, Zambia the new church building there is also just starting up with the walls. In Bomet, Kenya there is a new preacher school and construction on the new building has just started with work being done on the footer and foundation.

Several of our preacher schools had graduations last November and December. School will start back at some schools in January and for others it will be February when they start back. Most of the teachers at the schools are busy now trying to requite new students. The school in Malawi has been busy meeting with men and trying to get new students. Bro. Madalisto and bro. Vinjero are trying to requite 25 new students for the new intake. We have completed the buildings there and they have the room and funds to have 25 men. Bro. Vinjero Gondwe was telling me recently of a trip he took seeking to requite new students. His grandfather who is also a Gospel preacher and 88 years old helped organize a meeting with several congregations so Vinjero could talk with these brethren about the school. His grandfather since 1961 has helped to establish 44 congregations and 35 of these congregations are still faithful to God's Word today. This is a wonderful thing in Africa and even in the USA to see brethren remain faithful to the Lord. Many congregations of the Lord's Church here in the USA that were faithful 30 years ago are no longer faithful to God's Word today.

The work in Africa continues to grow and the Lord has blessed 2020 with great results. We need your help in 2021! There is so much that needs to be done. Please keep our work in your prayers and send funds so even more souls can be added to the Lord. Help us to take the precious Gospel of Christ "into all the world".
Ronald D. Gilbert-Director, IBTM

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Websites

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Things You Helped to Accomplish

Baptisms.....	17,983
Restored.....	13,856
Congregations established.....	465
ICOTB Students.....	541
Preachers graduated.....	563