

Report for Recent Months

Germantown, MD | November 1, 2023 | John Pollard

Brothers and Sisters,

I hope this report finds you all doing well physically and spiritually. My wife and I express our gratitude to you for your prayers, love and support of our work in MD. We appreciate it greatly. If you have questions about the information in this report, please feel free to get in touch with me.

The end of the year is quickly approaching and while the days are very busy, there is so much to be thankful for. God's word continues to work in powerful ways in the kingdom all around the world. His people continue to grow and be transformed by the Spirit in everyday living. Our suffering and trials continue to draw us closer to Him and to each other. Not a day goes by without having so much to be thankful for.

We are thankful for you, our brothers and sisters, many of whom we have never met. We are thankful for the way that you have seen fit to support us, extend your love and fellowship toward us and for the many times we know you pray and think about us and our work here in Maryland. How blessed we are to share a common bond with one another. How blessed we will all be to share resurrection existence with our Lord and Savior in the end. Thank you for your love and faith and for your constant care and grace towards us.

State of the congregation

The Northwest church is faring very well. Sylvia and I have been a part of the group a little over 3.5 years now. Over that time, with many trials in between, the Christians here have really come to develop much closer relationships with each other. We have had some move away due to work or family situations and the Lord has brought others our way that have joined the group to become one with us. This ebb and flow, so to speak, has been a pretty common place situation here in the over 17 years or so existence of the Northwest church and this is also true for many of the churches in our broader region.

We have always averaged about 20-30 members at any given time which gives us the perfect opportunity to develop intimate relationships with each other, to be vulnerable with each other and to use these things to become mature in the Lord together. Little things such as having longer conversations with how we can help one another spiritually overcome our trials and struggles or brethren being more active and knowledgeable in Bible classes are some indications that God's grace continues to work and be at work in the midst of His people.

Of course, there is much room for growth yet to come. There are more opportunities to shed Christ's light unto one another and Satan is always active trying to disrupt such things and such success so we ask for your prayers and we ask that you remember us in your prayers that we would continue to main our unity, our bond and our love for another as we continue to live for Christ and His Gospel here.

Many of our members have received tremendous answers to prayers. One older member has been recently seeing remarkable improvement from debilitating mental and physical issues that he has been dealing with for decades. This has, in turn, led to his much more active participation in our services and other such opportunities where he testifies about his battles and the spiritual things he has learned from them. Our God is good and continues to be good in all aspects and we are thankful for the way He has blessed our church family and caused to grow into His grace and knowledge. By His grace, we are doing well.

Bible Class

Over the last few months, we have been studying in our Bible classes the problem of suffering. We have been taking specific biblical texts and talking about the various elements of trials, suffering or temptation that we see in them and seeking to unpack the ways God works in these and through these and how we can find empathy, growth, comfort and resolution in these. We just wrapped up our lessons from the Old Testament and now we will begin looking at the New Testament with lessons that will unpack suffering related to Jesus, the church and how God puts all of this right in the end.

I have taught a number of different Bible classes over the years but none have garnered more attention, input and questions than this class. I suspect that a large part of this is due to the widespread experience that everyone suffers to some extent and people are always asking questions about suffering, lamenting about suffering or wondering where God is in suffering. So from that point of view, the class has already been tremendously helpful in many ways.

We have learned lessons that not all suffering is bad. We have learned how God is disposed to give grace in the midst of suffering rather than to move us to more comfortable circumstances. We have seen that it is good and godly to lament and wrestle with God in the midst of darkness and pain. Not everyone's pain and circumstance is the same yet the class has been able to cover many aspects that can offer spiritual strength and fortitude to everyone regardless of their circumstances. These classes are all posted on our website if you would like to listen to them or share them with others who could benefit from them.

New additions/Visitors/Recent Interests

In my last report I mentioned Linda Dovel. Linda has become a new addition to our group in recent months. She was converted many years ago but has only recently started to delve back into spiritual things and a relationship with God. This is due, in part, to her having lost her husband last year. Her suffering and grieving has caused her to think more deeply about God and Jesus and she has decided to renew her relationship with Him.

I am personally so encouraged by her. She has many hard days as she continues to grieve and process things. She faces many physical challenges but she expresses interest and participates in many of our Bible classes when she is present. I am thankful that Julia, another one of our members, brought Linda over to get to know the group and now she has become a part of us. She is still learning so much and

indeed growing as we all are but we are thrilled for her and excited to see how God will continue to transform her and bring much fruit from her story.

Sister Beatrice Acquah recently came to the US from Ghana. She lives with her son in Olney, MD which is about 20 minutes from where we worship. She began looking for a church to meet with and she came across our Facebook page. We began connecting and talking on Facebook and she is now our most recent addition. Her son is not a Christian and for now does not want anything to do with Christ. Beatrice grieves over this but we are praying that God will soften his heart and we ask that you join us in that prayer. We are thankful to have her in our midst and for the possible doors for her son and other members of her family that could become open.

Every Thursday, we continue to have a “meetup” Bible study. In recent months, we’d have a few visitors come our way. One visitor, Luis Padilla, showed some promising interest. He is a single, middle aged man who wants to know what the “truth” is but his past religious experiences have led him to believe or be more inclined to a form of religion that is based on feelings and “highs” rather than the transforming message of God’s word. He also some experience with the Catholic church. He has attended a few studies and come to worship with us once.

I have not heard from him in a couple weeks but I would ask that you pray for Luis for his heart to be open and that God’s word would take fervent root in him.

Hispanic Brethren

In my last report, I mentioned that I had learned about a group of Spanish speaking Christians who meet nearby in the home of one of their members. Since then, I have been able to preach for them and get to know the members even better. Now, we are on the cusp of having them share our current meeting space. We are excited about this particularly because that area in which we meet is predominantly Hispanic.

Their meeting there would possibly open up a lot of doors for the Gospel to reach the Spanish community in the area. Though there has been no discussion about this at the present, who knows if in the future this could present an opportunity for both groups to merge as one. Hector, the preacher of the Spanish congregation, and myself have only briefly talked about that as a possibility but it would likely require a fully bilingual minister or two who could work hand in hand with both groups. While I do know some Spanish and Hector knows some English, neither of us are currently able to do this comfortably enough to consider it a serious possibility among other aspects.

If you know of any men who might be interested in doing Spanish/bilingual ministry specifically, please let me know. We ask for your prayers concerning these new relationships, possible future opportunities and especially that God would be glorified as we all seek to spread His wonderful Gospel.

Update on Paige and Medical Status

In recent months, Paige has continued to fare fairly well thanks be to God. We are so thankful for the rich ways God has blessed us and allowed us to care for her with different medical equipment and vital medicines. Over the last month or so, Paige has been having a bit of a rough time due to some upper respiratory issues that have made things pretty hard on her and us but she is getting back to her normal baseline now and we are especially thankful that we have been able to stay out of the hospital so far.

God has blessed us with a wonderful team of health care professionals that provide amazing support for Paige and us week in and week out. Every week, various therapists, nurses and/or doctors come to the house to work with Paige and see how she is doing. In addition to kingdom work, our days are often busy with seeing to her needs and attending these appointments. We have various hospital appointments for which we take her in, on average, every other week.

I wish I could tell you if there was some “gauge” by which we could know if she was improving or worsening. The doctors Paige sees are world renown specialists who are generally the head of their respective Pediatric divisions. Often when we see them, we spend 1-2 hours discussing patterns we observe hourly, daily, weekly etc. We discuss her “episodes” and things we do that seem to work or not work. It’s very much a trial and error team effort at the end of the day.

We are always humbled whenever we have these appointments because for all that we have been able to learn and advance in as humans, there is still so much we don’t know and so this forces us all to continue to rely on our great God and not on human strength. For this we are thankful. In the last couple months, the AHC family lost two of its warriors after their heroic battles. One was young boy, Mason Bailey, 4. Mason’s dad was the very first person I talked to after we learned that Paige was diagnosed with AHC. Their son recently developed rapid complications which ultimately took his life. They have been a blessing to us and still continue to be a blessing to so many. Please pray for Matt and Brittany Bailey who grieve their precious son.

We continue to be reminded daily of the vapor that this life truly is and yet we have so much to be thankful for even now. Paige brightens our days and warms our hearts every single day and we are so happy and blessed by God for the wonderful little soul that she is. She has already touched so many lives and we pray that His will would continue to unfold as we care for her and seek to bring glory to His name through these times. As Paige gets older (she will be 1 at the end of November), she will likely begin to tell us more about what symptoms may become more significant and what others may lessen.

One of the most concerning symptoms that AHC kids have which can often lead to complications and death is seizures. Paige, as far as we know, has not had this so far. She has had sub-clinical seizures in the past but those are not as worrisome of other types. So as with all things, time will tell but she is able to do so much right now the highlight of which is going to Sunday services with us. It is the one time we are able to be together as a family other than doctors appointments. God is good and we continue to thank you for your prayers for her and for us.

Update on Possible Move to Texas

I mentioned in my last report that we had made the decision to begin making plans to relocate to Texas. We are still planning on this but the actual timeline of our relocation will largely depend on when we are able to locate a church family to work with in the Houston area. So far, I have come across two possible opportunities which I am waiting to hear more on. Even so, we are grateful that we are able to continue to labor with our brethren here in MD until God sees fit to lead us into our next endeavor. Please pray for us that doors could be opened for a move to Texas in the near future and that His will be done.

God is good and we thank you once more for your willingness to support us in these endeavors. The brethren here greet all of you and we pray for the work and the brethren in your respective locations.

Thank you for reading this report and may God bless you.

Please enjoy some recent photos of Paige below. Her good days continue to be more than her bad ones. God is great.

