Buffalo Bound!  
MEET CBM’s NEWEST CHURCH PLANTERS

Our long-standing prayer request for the Lord to send forth laborers into the North American harvest field was answered in part on October 10, 2019, when Nathan & Christie Robbins were approved by the CBM board to serve as church planters with Continental Baptist Missions. Sent out by Faith Baptist Church of Camo Point, IL, the Robbinses’ sights are set on Buffalo, NY, taking the light of the gospel to a city once known as “The City of Light.”

Nathan and Christie met while both were students at Appalachian Bible College. Following graduation from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary, Nathan was called to pastor Sutter Salem Bible Church in Warsaw, Illinois. After five years of pastoral ministry, the Robbinses sensed the Lord’s leading to engage in church planting in Buffalo.

Nathan and Christie, along with their three children (Amelia, Margaret, and Haddon), began active deputation ministry in early 2020. After a little more than a month of deputation, however, the coronavirus that caused upheaval of daily life in America certainly changed the deputation landscape for a time. Early in the pandemic period Nathan wrote, “Everything about our pre-field ministry is changing, but our focus remains the same. We are striving to build relationships, communicate our burden for Buffalo, and contextualize with the purpose of sharing the gospel.”

As many churches resume in-person meetings once again, the Robbinses have seen their deputation calendar begin to fill, and interest in their anticipated ministry of church planting in Buffalo has remained vigorous. You can keep up with their ministry by visiting their Facebook page: Robbins2Buffalo

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CBM missionaries are by no means immune to the challenges of ministry during days of uncertainty, ‘stay at home’ orders, and navigating life in America during an unfolding pandemic. But God continues to work!

Facing limitations on the size of public gatherings as well as concern for the health of their congregation, Church Planters Daniel & Aja Long, serving at Grace Baptist Church in Orem, UT, shifted gears and began streaming Sunday and Wednesday services live on Facebook, adding ‘sound booth tech’ and ‘videographer’ to an ever-growing list of church planting skills. Aja shared children’s Sunday school lessons and activities on her YouTube channel, At Home with Aja, with a heart to encourage and equip the young families of Grace Baptist while they were apart. The church is eagerly anticipating ministering to their community through Vacation Bible School in August.

Church Planters Bill & Tamra Branks (Common Grounds Baptist – Detroit, MI) were able to use online meeting spaces to continue Bible study and fellowship with their church family. Pastor Bill shares that their time online has resulted in new viewers and some have asked to continue the live streaming. Pray for this unique ministry of having online Bible studies recorded and readily available to anyone who might be interested in the Common Grounds ministry. The Branks rejoice to be gathering together again in their storefront facility for Sunday morning small group worship.

CBM Church Planter Dan Benton, serving with his wife Vicki at Berean Baptist Church in Watertown, CT, was asked by a local newspaper to contribute an article for publication. He wrote about “Surviving the Great Pandemic” and drew on passages from the book of Romans to share the Gospel in print with over 10,000 families who receive the Watertown Town Times. He also shared the article online. After being contacted by several fellow pastors and friends for permission to repost his content, Dan sensed God intended for this message to reach a broader audience. Connecting with the organization, Moments with the Book, he submitted the article as an idea for a gospel tract. Typically, a response is received within 2-3 weeks; a proof copy of the tract arrived within 48 hours! The tract is available at www.MWTB.org and has been
a featured title for several weeks. The Bentons also hosted ‘parking lot praise services’ as an alternative to indoor gatherings as the weather in the northeast permitted. They, too, rejoice in returning to in-person services after many months apart!

Newly appointed CBM Church Planter, Nathan Robbins, shares in an update letter to supporters about the impact of the virus on his family’s life and ministry: “The last few months have been like none other in my life. Every aspect of our lives has changed in drastic ways. While Covid-19 changed our daily life and ministry in many ways, it has also been a time of tremendous blessing.

When this year began we thought we would be neck deep in pre-field ministry visiting churches every weekend and investing in individual partner relationships throughout the week. We never could have guessed that after less than two months everything would grind to a halt in less than two weeks. While nothing about our ministry looks like what we thought it would, God has continued to bless during this time.

It has caused us to reevaluate everything in our lives and ministry and we have only grown in our assurance that God is leading us to Buffalo, New York, and has continued to provide despite the unforeseen circumstances. We have gained several new individual partners and have seen our support level rise to almost 15% despite the circumstances.

We have been able to minister via Facebook with devotionals and Scripture reading, we have worshiped alongside hundreds of brothers and sisters in Christ via the many Facebook live and YouTube services we have been able to participate in, and we have been involved in discipleship and fellowship via Zoom and other video messaging services.

While we are rejoicing in what God has done, please pray that we will be able to fill our calendar for the rest of the year. Our heart is filled with the burden we have for the city of Buffalo and desire to share this need with everyone we meet! The city is yearning for hope, especially in light of the pandemic and riots of the past months.”

CBM missionaries Ed & Dorothy Woods (ESL Coordinators – Newfield, NY) devoted their time under a ‘stay at home’ order in New York state to refining a missions-focused Sunday School curriculum intended to equip and encourage churches to think creatively about missions. Ed and Dorothy also faithfully minister to and maintain connections with a number of their ESL students, many of whom are far from their home countries and families.
There are many more stories than space allows, but we hope that these testimonies serve as a repeated reminder of the apostle Paul’s statement in Philippians 1:12 – “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.” While we would likely not have chosen to face the turmoil brought on by the coronavirus, we rejoice in the doors of opportunity God is opening during this unique time!
The Lord’s Doing!

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS MARVELOUS WORK—

“If I had to sum up our new church building project in one verse, I could not think of one more fitting than Psalm 118:23—‘This is the LORD’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes,’” says Pastor Jon Anderson of Faith Baptist Church in Oconomowoc, WI.

“Everything about this building project has been marvelous and of the Lord. First, God’s timing has been perfect for this project. We have patiently waited on the Lord for many years until He unmistakably opened the door for us to build. One of the key moments in the process was having 100% of our church members vote to move forward in a step of faith to begin construction. I vividly remember that instance and could not help bursting out in tears because of the clear sign of God’s moving in people’s hearts.

Second, working with CBM’s building team has been beautiful. I can’t imagine building a church any other way. All the builders have become like family to us. Being able to serve with them in ministry makes such an impact on keeping the focus of our church on ministry rather than on a new building. We are so thankful for them! Having fellow brothers and sisters in Christ come alongside of you and help you build a new tool for ministry just makes so much sense! Not only has partnering with CBM allowed me to keep my sanity as a pastor and allowed our church people to keep their focus on ministry, but God has actually begun the process of giving us a greater burden for making disciples and helping one another grow unto Christlikeness—and God did that in the middle of a building project! I don’t think this renewed focus for ministry would have happened without CBM. Praise the Lord!

Third, God has shown Himself faithful over and over again. This experience has been such a faith-building journey. We did have to take a step of faith to begin this building. We didn’t have all the funds available when we started. But God has overflowed in His blessing and has provided a way for our new church building to be constructed debt-free! This is the Lord’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes! I am excited to see how God will use Faith Baptist Church moving forward, now with a new building—a new tool for better doing the work of the ministry for His glory!”

Progress on the project slowed briefly during the early stages of Wisconsin’s response to the pandemic. However, in April, with social distancing measures in place, the CBM build team was back in the swing of things and put the finishing touches on the worship center by early May. The Faith Baptist church family arranged a special drive-thru ‘farewell’ to say their goodbyes as the CBM builders moved on to a new project in Gilbert, MN. Construction of a 2,660 sq. ft. multipurpose worship building for Lakeland Baptist Church is currently underway!
Every morning the home office staff meets together to pray for the CBM family. We lift up the needs of our missionaries, fellow staff members, those serving on our mission board, and even donors who have asked for prayer for personal concerns. Early on in my ministry, Terri Jenkin and I reflected on the amazing fact that God guides our steps. This conversation prompted me to ask God to guide my steps as I prayed. If the day I planned was interrupted by something, I knew God had a purpose in it. As I planned events, processed payroll, made phone calls, responded to emails (and the list could go on), I had the confidence that each task had been given to God. I believe I have even used this as an excuse for when I turn down the wrong road!

This spring God began to press on my heart that I needed to move on from CBM. This was an incredibly hard decision; I have been with the Mission for over 13 years and everyone is like family. As I prayed for God to direct my steps, it was clear. So, while it is with great sorrow that this is my last Contact article, it is also with great joy because I know HE guides my steps.

It is also very clear to see how God guided the steps in finding my replacement. It was through the very providence of God that I ran into an old friend at the store. She was there because her softball game had gotten rained out and she had driven past where she originally planned to stop. God’s timing is impeccable! Minutes either way and we would have missed each other. So, let me introduce to you the newest member of the CBM family, Michelle DeJong. Michelle is a hard worker, loves the Lord, and comes to CBM with plenty of experience. I am so excited to see how God will guide her steps on this new journey.

As I end my last article, may I encourage you as God guides your steps, to take some time to review your will to be sure it reflects the path God is leading you on. It is also a great time to include a legacy gift to CBM. If you would like to talk to someone about estate planning, connect with Michelle in the Donor Services department—she’ll be very happy to serve your giving needs.

Thank you for your faithful partnership with CBM over the years!