

The Lamplighter – January 2021

311 Cypress Street – Mt. Carmel, Tennessee 37645 - 423-357-7241 – www.ogbchurch.org



Dear Family and Friends of Oak Grove,

Job was confronted by his friends, who wanted him to give up and die. They were not being mean to Job; they thought they were doing him a favor. They had in their minds that Job was suffering because God must have been mad at him. He had lost his children, wife, house, and most everything he owned, even his health. He is sitting on a trash heap, scraping the sores on his body with shards of pottery. When you get to the point, your friends think you ought to give up and die; it has reached near the bottom. Yet, Job never said a bad word against God. Instead, he had something to teach his friends, a witness about how big his God is. So Job says to them,

*11 "I will teach you about the hand of God;
What is with the Almighty I will not conceal.
12 Surely all of you have seen it;
Why then do you behave with complete nonsense?"*

Job 27:11-12

I love the way he intends to teach them the truth about God. He didn't start with a tremendous theological discourse. Job began by showing them how they could see the impact of God all around them.

With this in mind, let us remind ourselves of a few places we have seen God this year. These are just a few, and there are thousands of more; I just wanted to get the ball rolling as we move into the new year together. First, we tried several new ways of outreach as a church. We have had a very successful online ministry. God started several years ago when Pastor Benny was leading. Last year the team that works with the video ministry upgraded some of the equipment. We have four cameras and a great team of people who have made sure we provided service every week this year. Thank you to Josh and to everyone who has made it possible to view services online this year.

Point two, every week, more people have looked at the videos from around the world. We have people who regularly watch from other states. We usually have 300-400 people in worship. Through the power of online service, hundreds more have been able to witness what God is doing at Oak Grove. The latest examples are the Christmas videos. If you have not seen them, please take the time to view them. They are only a couple of minutes long and will bless your heart. A few hundred would have seen our Christmas Musical. A few thousand have viewed the videos. What a great blessing our musicians have been to more and more people. Thank you to Doug and everyone who makes our music program so powerful every week.

Another powerful ministry has been our Drive-In service. Each week our parking lot greeters have arrived between 8 and 8:30 to prepare. Shannon and Rick and Shannon's boys get the stage ready, and Doug and the ministry team provide an excellent service. God has used it tremendously. We have individuals who have never gone to church sitting in our parking lot because it has been a safe way for them to experience worship for the first time. We have people who have recently moved into the area but have health conditions and are unable to risk contracting the virus sitting in the parking lot. Many families who have older members and younger members who cannot risk being in crowds can come and worship in a group, feel the connection with others, and sense the power of God during the worship service. What a blessing it has been to serve others with this service. We met every Sunday from March until the last Sunday in December, and we never missed a service because of rain. One Sunday, it was raining at 8:00. By 8:30, it had stopped and did not begin again until the service was over. You have to know God has been using that service to touch people's lives.

There are many other places we have seen God this year. Elaine Hillman taking the lead on doing an online VBS, Scott Byerley taking the lead in providing a very successful Drive through Fall Festival, and several people leading in the Drive-through Angel Party at Christmas. Over and over again, we have seen God move in new ways of doing ministry. The exciting part is that we know He is not finished. We can look forward to the new things God will do in 2021.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not share how we have seen God move in our finances as a church. When this all began in the spring, pastors and church leaders around the country were concerned that giving would drop 30%, or 40%, or maybe even more. At Oak Grove, our church family has responded. Compared to last year, our giving is only down a little over 7%. When you consider we missed 11 weeks of inside service, have had many people staying home even beyond the 11 weeks so they can remain safe, and have seen every age group affected by this terrible disease; seeing a 7% decrease seems very small. At the same time, our spending has been reduced by approximately 8% this year. That means, at the end of the year, we are only expecting to spend roughly \$8,000 more than we have taken in. Compared to what we were concerned about in March, your gifts have been nothing short of a miracle.

But it gets better. We spent \$6,000 fixing the A/C, and we repaired a leaking roof over the vestibule for \$12,000. We did not have special fundraising projects or plead for money. You, God's people, the family of Oak Grove have been faithful to give generously this year. You have sent gifts by mail, used the online giving, dropped tithes off in the new box next to the door, and even gave at the end of the Drive-In service. Thank you for allowing God to use you. Thank you for your tremendous support in 2020.

I know there are many other places we can see the handprint of God. So as we move into this new year, let us not be fearful; let us be excited about what God is planning to do with us as His church in this community. Thank you again, and God bless you greatly in this new year!!!

In Christ's Service

Pastor Todd Haley





Our Christian love & sympathy are extended to:

- *Donna Herron & family in the death of her brother, Mack Roller
- *Lisa Morton & family in the death of her aunt, Bobbie Dickenson
- *Gary Wells & family in the death of his brother, Ronald Wells
- *Shirley Williams & family in the death of her sister, Anna Bell Hammonds
- *Sheliah Estes in the death of her mother
- *The family of Terry Morris



In the event of bad weather this winter, information regarding activities and services will be posted on our website www.ogbchurch.org and our Facebook page. If we have your contact information, you will also receive a message through One Call Now, our mass communication system. If you have not had a chance to sign up for notifications, please contact the church office at 423-357-7241. As a reminder for those already participating, if you wish to receive texts instead of phone calls, please text the word ALERT to 22300.



2020 was a most unusual year! We saw many cancellations of programs, music events including our Easter & Christmas cantatas, and we were not able to have congregational singing for most of the year. We have made the best effort we could to adapt accordingly.

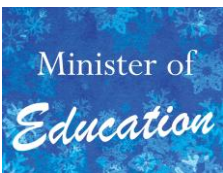
Thank you to the musicians and choirs that have been so willing and anxious to sing and play. Thank you to the Sunbeam Singers and Children's Choir leaders that have continued to work through this pandemic. I have decided for the time being to postpone having choir for everyone's safety. We will sing again when it is safe to do so.

We look ahead with hope and anticipation that 2021 will be a better year. I would like to present a challenge for 2021:

1. Let's be a positive congregation. In the midst of the negativity that surrounds us, look for the positive things in life.
2. Be available for service to God. It takes many people to run the various programs offered at OGBC. Don't count on someone else to serve, be willing to work. Jesus was King of kings and Lord of lords, but He came to serve. In doing so, He set an example for us as believers.
3. Ask yourself this question... "Is what I'm about to do or say going to benefit the mission of Oak Grove Baptist Church?"

Let's meet the challenge for 2021 and make it a great year. Happy New Year to everyone!

In Christian Love,
Doug



Wow! A brand-new year has arrived with all kinds of potential. Many people look at a new year and see it as the perfect time to lose weight, to start an exercise program, or many other things that might help them improve themselves. One of the ways that we as believers can improve is to increase our time in God's word.

God's word is one of the main ways that we hear from Him. He speaks to us through His word and it is full of wisdom. It will guide us as a lamp unto our path as we move through life (Psalms 119:105). If you are struggling to find the time to do this, there are different ways to tackle it. Let's say that you only have 5 minutes. If so, you can read the book of Jude, or perhaps one of John's epistles. If you can find 15 minutes, you can read 1 or 2 Timothy, James, or 1 or 2 Peter. Let's say that you have 30 minutes. More than 60% of people spend at least 30 minutes watching television per day. In 30 minutes, you could read many of the books in the New Testament, or several of the Minor Prophets. How does that add up? If you could spare just 12 minutes a day, you can read the entire Bible in one year.

Appropriating more time to spend reading the Word of God this year should be at the top of every one of our new year's resolution list. Losing weight is great! Exercising more, fantastic! But spending more time in the word of God will improve your relationship with God and will pay dividends not only in this life, but for eternity.

May God bless each of you this New Year!!
Eric



Upward Basketball leadership will be meeting soon to decide whether or not to proceed with the 2021 Upward season. Participants will be notified on January 5th of the decision. Thank you!



The 2021 Flower Chart is posted on the bulletin board across from the office. If you would like to place flowers in honor or memory of someone, please sign up. Arrangements are \$35 each.



We know what you're thinking... didn't we just finish with Operation Christmas Child? We sure did and God was faithful to bless this program last year through your donations, even in the midst of difficult circumstances! Our work does not stop there, it's time to look ahead to 2021 collections. By shopping year round, it makes it possible to pack more shoeboxes and send them around the world in the name of Jesus Christ. For January we are collecting toothbrushes and plastic toothbrush holders. You may leave your donations in the red bin outside of the office.



I hope that in 2021 I will be able to post events for the youth to attend. But youth is more than just attending and doing fun events, it is doing ministry together. I miss doing ministry with you all. Even though this past year was unlike any that we have experienced, I still believe that we have seen God working all around us. I pray that in 2021 you will be intentional about looking for God at work around you. If we stop and listen, we will see that He is still in control and working in our lives. I pray we will be more forgiving, more apt to show grace to others and more determined to share the gospel with others. Happy New Year!
Ramona

A Word for the Year

Every January, some people pray and ask God to provide a word for their year ahead. Friends have shared theirs with me, but I was hesitant to embrace the practice myself. I'd love to receive a word like *flourish*; then again, I might be like the friend who heard *health* and then faced many physical challenges that year.

But I tried it for 2020 and heard *prepare*. My first reaction was that the word wasn't very exciting, which possibly confirmed I hadn't orchestrated it. Indeed, 2020 ended up full of significant, unexpected change for our family, with careers, school, church and friends. *Prepare* reminded me that amid chaos, God had prepared me for each moment and continues to prepare me for what's next.

Give it a try! Regardless of the word you receive or what lies ahead, you can trust that God loves you and is ultimately in control for 2021 and beyond.

—Janna Firestone



Thanks to everyone for the cards, texts, phone calls, food and for the Bible donations from the church in memory of my brother, Mack. Most of all, thanks for loving us.

Donna & Ralph Herron, Amy, Jeff & Samantha Flippin

It is always a blessing to work with the church family at Oak Grove and this year's Angel Party was no exception. During this unusual and often difficult year, this fellowship opened their hearts and ministered to 26 families – 60 children – with Christ's love. You met their physical needs when you shared gifts with them, and spiritual needs when you shared the true Christmas story through scenes and music. We will never know the impact this ministry made in the lives of these families. Thank you to everyone who had a part in making this a wonderful blessing to so many.

In Christ's Love,

Elaine Hillman
2020 Angel Party

January

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
*Upward events & Wednesday night activities are subject to change.					1  Church Office Closed	2
3 9:30 Deacons' Meeting (Sanctuary)	4	5	6 6:30 Prayer Meeting	7	8	9
10	11 6:00 Upward Practice	12 6:00 Upward Practice	13 6:30 Business Meeting	14 6:00 Upward Practice	15 	16
17  Sanctuary of Life Sunday	18 <i>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</i> 6:00 Upward Practice	19 6:00 Upward Practice	20 6:30 Prayer Meeting	21 6:00 Upward Practice	22	23
24	25 6:00 Upward Practice	26 6:00 Upward Practice	27 6:30 Prayer Meeting	28 6:00 Upward Practice	29	30
31						