

March 14, 2018

Dear Praying Friends,

Greetings from the frozen tundra of the Keweenaw Peninsula. I apologize for the delay in getting a prayer letter out, but the past several months have been extremely busy in the ministry. God has opened up some exciting new opportunities for my family and me. Yet, at the same time, I can say with Paul, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me..."

Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula encompasses 3760 square miles. That's almost three times the size of Rhode Island. Yet, for all that land, there are only seven Baptist churches. Four of these churches are very contemporary in terms of music, dress, and separation. That leaves only three conservative, traditional Baptist churches of like faith and practice, including Ontonagon Baptist.

The nearest Baptist church to us is of like faith and practice, but since we moved to the area ten years ago, it has been slowly losing members. This fall, church attendance dropped to the point that the church could no longer pay its bills, and it looked as though the church would close its doors. As my wife and I prayed for this sister church, the Lord laid it upon our heart to keep the church doors open.

Just before the first of the year, the four members of Calvary Baptist Church voted me in as their pastor, and the members of Ontonagon Baptist Church voted to take on Calvary Baptist Church in South Range as a mission church. At that time, Fair Haven Baptist Church in Westland, Michigan, gave a generous financial gift that will pay the church bills for 2018. So, I now pastor two churches forty miles apart. In addition to this, the church in South Range recently voted to rename the church to North Star Baptist Church. II Peter 1:19 speaks of "a light that shineth in a dark place," and this will be North Star's theme verse going forward.

After Sunday morning services in Ontonagon, I now drive to South Range and preach an afternoon service at 2 pm followed by a Sunday school lesson. Then, I go back to Ontonagon for the Evening Service. We hold a Tuesday midweek service in South Range and have our regular Wednesday midweek service in Ontonagon.

As you can imagine, we have faced many obstacles in taking over this new ministry. Satan is always looking for ways to attack local, New Testament churches, and a church with few members and minimal resources makes an easy target. The plow truck at North Star Baptist has been a particular hindrance. It has spent more time broken than working, and we need it to plow snow for services at least weekly, if not twice weekly. Please pray that this truck makes it through this winter. We are also praying about what God would have us to do concerning plowing the parking lot next winter. As I write this, the snow depth outside the church is almost four feet.

We are excited to share that in February three new families started attending North Star Baptist Church. Our church attendance has literally doubled in the two months we've been at the new ministry, and we're excited to see what things God has for the church moving forward. These three families are composed of solid, mature Christians that have all moved to the area and come from similar churches of like faith and practice. It is our prayer that these families will join North Star Baptist and become the base for rebuilding the ministry in South Range.

The ministry in Ontonagon is moving forward as well. This coming May, June, and July, we are having some brothers and sisters in Christ come and help in the ministry. We are going to be doing a VBS as well as some other outreach programs. We also have one new couple that has been attending services in Ontonagon.

You may recall that we asked for prayer several times last year regarding putting our children in the Christian school near Houghton. God directed us to enroll our children, even though the school is an hour from our house. However, the school is only a few miles from the new church, which means that we are in the area on a regular basis and are able to make calls, spend time at the church, and get involved in the community in a way that wouldn't be possible if we were still homeschooling the boys. We thank God for his leadership and guidance in this area.

As we conclude this letter, we have much that we are praying for. Please pray for safety as we travel to North Star Baptist. It is forty-six miles from the church in Ontonagon. Also, pray that God would give me the strength and wisdom to pastor two churches. And, lastly, pray that God would give us a solid foundation of men that we can build both churches on. God's timing is always perfect. We look forward to what God is going to do, and we already greatly rejoice in the wonderful things He has done just in the past few months.

In Christ,
The Mason Family