

The Tozour Times

News from 2021

The Rearview Mirror



We all thought last year was crazy with the coronavirus pandemic, but 2021 proved to be even wilder. The virus continued to dominate the headlines, while a turbulent change in the White House has completely flipped this country. A wide-open Southern border threatens our security, while government-imposed mandates threaten our liberties. Gas prices and inflation are skyrocketing, while trust in our national leaders is plummeting. Churches have been affected by the fearmongering and government overreach. Considering the turmoil, it is a great time for a ministry like ours. Local church evangelists are finding an eager ear among people looking for hope, answers, and perspective.

Knowing that the annual itinerary included Hawaii and California, I wondered last January if the virus would prevent us from holding meetings in these states. Well, here we are looking in the rearview mirror. Thankfully, we were able to keep all our meetings except for a few cancelled due to vehicle problems or my mother's failing health. All told, we ministered in thirty-one churches in seventeen states this year.

Roads Oft Traveled

We are often asked how many churches we return to year after year. The Lord has been kind to give us a rotation of churches that we frequent on a consistent basis. We love getting to know people more deeply through repeated visits.

But we relish making new friends, as well. About a third of our churches are regulars, a third are visited every three or four years, and a third are brand new contacts to us. We are so grateful to preach Christ and His Word nationwide.

Most of our weeks are multi-day revival meetings in churches. I also enjoy getting to preach in camps (This year, we did three camps for Ohana Baptist in Hawaii. In the teen and junior camps, we saw ten young people trust the Savior! Our daughter Heather, served as a counselor at Ohana's junior camp and was able personally to lead one of her young campers to Christ!) Preaching a parenting conference in Edinburg, VA, and doing a virtual college chapel and later a winter retreat for Southland Christian Camp rounded out the variety of opportunities this year.

The highlight of meetings was a **10-day revival** with Angela's brother, Michael Wessberg (our long-time partner in ministry) and the people of Faith Baptist in Raymore, Missouri. The meeting demonstrated the potency of God's Word ministering to hearts nightly for over a week.



Vehicle Breakdowns and Diverted Destinations

Every year's itinerary has its intentions and then its diversions. We have learned to say, "**If the Lord will**, we shall live and do this or that" (James 4:13-15). This year, like most others, had its times of "re-calculating" (as the GPS used to say).

August was one of those key times of redirection. Just back from Hawaii, I headed off to Ft. Collins, Colorado, while my family prepared for a two-month trip to the West. Angela had our van's tires looked at three times while I was gone. What turned out to be a brake rotor issue had the van in the shop for new brakes and rotors the very morning we were supposed to make a 10-hour drive to Wyoming.

That trip did not happen that day. There were problems with the front jacks of the trailer. I tried all day to resolve it. Our pastor joined me at 9:30 p.m. and we worked till after midnight in thunder, lightning, and a driving rainstorm!

The next morning (Saturday), we embarked on our 640-mile trip to Cheyenne, Wyoming. About two hours into our trip, I heard that too-familiar "Boom!" Ugh! A trailer tire had blown, and the tread had done damage to the fender skirting.

I have learned when these things occur to thank and praise the Lord for the problem. Within an hour, I had the tire replaced with the spare. Inspecting the undercarriage, I discovered a leaf spring equalizer that had been torn apart! This sturdy metal coupler was not among the spare parts I carry. That meant our trip was over for the day. We limped to a rest area a mile away and scrambled to adjust our plans. I had to cancel our upcoming meeting in Cheyenne. Then we had to decide where to stay. After all, the trailer is our home, and it wouldn't be going anywhere!

Michael (Angela's brother) invited us to stay with his family and promised to take Monday off to help me repair the trailer. We left our truck and trailer at the rest area and drove our van to the Wessbergs' house. We ended up replacing four of the trailer's six tires, installing the new leaf spring equalizer, and replacing a set of brake shoes. It was over 100°F on the pavement! We worked over four hours doing all the repair work.

Michael and I left the rest area around 5:30 p.m. About an hour into our return trip, his truck suddenly died! (We would find out later that the engine had blown!) Seriously? As we drifted over to the shoulder and waited for his father-in-law to pick us up, we took a few minutes to pray, sing "Count Your Many Blessings," and thank God for the breakdown, the successful repair on my trailer, and the safety we had experienced.

The theme of diversions would again play out when we finished our western swing in California. My mom has been battling cancer throughout many of her internal organs for over eighteen months. My sister Jen and her family have been staying with her, but Mom took a turn for the worse in late October. I decided I should shorten one meeting and cancel two others and begin the 5-day cross-country trip to Florida to help Jen.

Western Wanderings



Knowing this might be Heather's last trip out West with the family, we decided this autumn to take advantage of visiting as many national parks as possible. Since some of our meetings only went Sunday through Wednesday, we had some extra days available to sightsee. We made visits to Rocky Mountain National Park (CO), Mount Rushmore (SD), Yellowstone (WY), Grand Teton (WY), and Glacier (MT). We saw bears, buffalo, and elk as we toured!

An unscheduled week between Montana and California afforded us time to visit several parks we had never seen. We were in awe of the beauty of Bryce Canyon National Park, Zion, and Arches. My sister Lauren and her family met us in Utah, and we enjoyed some awesome hikes together in the three parks. "The Narrows" in Zion was a family favorite hike—highly recommend! Heather and I trekked Angel's Landing in Zion. What spectacular views!

After Utah, we went to California for meetings. While there, we went to one of my favorite parks—Yosemite. We finished up our tour of the parks seeing the sequoia trees in Kings Canyon. All together, we were able to visit ten national parks in two months! What a great family time together with some very special memories.

We are currently in Pensacola helping care for my mom. It is a privilege to take care of her just as she cared for us as kids during our youth. My two sisters and I were so grateful to have a blessed Thanksgiving Day with Mom and family.

As we end this year, we can say, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15)