

Lee Elkins
March 2018 Report

To the brethren

I hope that this letter finds you all well. We have been extremely busy over the past three months, but things are going well for us. I am very appreciative of the prayers and supports you all have been giving. For my family, we are working on adding a new addition to our family. Over the past 9 months, we began to develop a relationship with a young lady that lives at Vera Lloyd children's home in Monticello. Due to the nature of some of her past, I am not able to fully explain all the details of why she is placed in the children's home here in Monticello, but I can give some general information regarding her. Her name is Lauren, she just recently turned 18 years old in January, and she was placed at the children's home when she was 15 years old due to being sexually abused and environmental neglect. Prior to her being placed there, she was living with an adoptive foster family where the abuse and neglect took place. In other words, she has lived within the system all her life. She has never had a true, steady home life. To make sense of what we are trying to do for her that makes the most feasible sense in regard to DHS, we are doing what is called "Fictive Kin" placement. We are doing this because this will allow Lauren to live with us while she finishes up high school and we will be able to give her more normalcy for her. Living in a group home setting is extremely difficult. Lauren is already set to attend the University of Arkansas-Monticello (UAM) and will be living on campus. Now some people find it odd that we are going through all this process just for Lauren to live on campus in the dorms. There are a lot of factors that many do not consider. Our ultimate reasoning was to make Lauren part of our family. When we first met Lauren, she said something that has stuck with us. She said "I just want to have a family that I can call my own. I have never been able to call anyone mom or dad". We have been able to teach the Gospel to her because of the relationship we have developed with her and we are praying that she will respond. There are many other reasons, but I will list a few others just to give you an idea of how much help she is needing because living in a group home has not prepared her for anything outside of living in that home. Lauren is 18 years old and has never been able to take the written driving test to get her driving permit to learn how to drive. She does not know how to balance a checkbook. There is paperwork that she must fill out for DHS and other programs that assists her, but she has never been taught how to do these things. Another major reason is because she literally will have no where to go once she goes to college. When school is out, she does not have any family to stay with. She would have to receive special permission to stay in the dorms and even then, that is basically all that is provided. She would have to provide her own food, etc. She does not have any transportation and is not able to get any because she is not legal to drive. There are so many things that this young lady needs that has not been provided to her because group homes are not able to provide those types of services. They are supposed to provide those services but realistically, they do not provide those services. We began the process of becoming fictive kin for Lauren back in March and we are hoping to hear something soon regarding her being able to transition to live with us while we oversee all her medical and financial processes until she graduates from college.

The rest of us are doing well. Logan and Nathaniel are both doing well in school. Logan is in the G&T program in school which allows him to work on other projects outside of regular class work. Logan and Nathaniel are both involved in soccer, but Nathaniel is also playing t-ball as well. We are staying busy running back and forth between baseball and soccer fields. My wife, Sarah is doing well. She is working part time at a local business called The Marketplace. I have been doing great as well. My health has improved over the past six months. I am now no longer on blood pressure medicine and am working on not having to take any medicine for my diabetes because I have been losing weight. I was recently offered a fulltime position with the Monticello Fire Department which has been wonderful. With Monticello being such a small department, they do an excellent job working with their firefighters because most of their fulltime firefighters work secondary jobs aside from the department. We only

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work two days out of the week unless an extreme emergency occurs. I will go to the Fire Academy in January 2019, so I have all year to prepare for the academy.

The local church has been doing well. I put together a 52-lesson series for Sunday morning sermons regarding the Christian's attitude. In doing so, I utilize Sunday evening to further discuss the things that I preached on that Sunday morning. That may seem redundant, but I have received positive feedback regarding this process. The brethren enjoy it because it allows us to go deeper into the subject to allow for a question and answer period. I have also utilized it as an opportunity for the other men to teach as well. Most of the time I am teaching but I do encourage the men to pick a Sunday night so that they can teach too. In our Sunday morning Bible study, we are currently in 1 Corinthians 11 and once we finish the book of 1 Corinthians, we will move on to 2 Corinthians. Our Wednesday evening study is currently in Exodus 29. In the recent weeks, we have had some visitors. One was a member of the Locust Bayou Church of Christ that is located down in Locust Bayou, AR. I do not know the history of that church, but she usually attends on Wednesday evenings. She is a college student here at UAM, so she goes home on the weekends. A few other visitors were from the community who I met while I was working for the Fire Department. We responded to a house fire a few weeks ago and unfortunately a total loss. The Fire Chief here communicated with the family that I was a local preacher in the area. After we were done with the fire, I visited with the family for a while. I gave them my contact information and our times of service. They have shown up a few times but nothing regular yet.

I ask that you pray for us as we attempt to transition a new addition into our family and that you pray for the efforts of the local church here in Monticello. I am thankful for all the support you all have been giving me that has allowed me to continue to preach the Gospel. I pray that your efforts are going well and that you continue to grow not just in number, but spiritually.

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