

Lee Elkins
June 2019 Report

Long overdue update is one way to put it. I admit that I should have burned more midnight oil in order to stay up to date regarding how things are going here in Monticello. I apologize for not keeping up with the emails as I should. I hope and pray that this letter finds you all doing well.

We have been doing well for the most part these past three months. It seems as though all three of our boys are in growth spurts. The easiest way to describe this to be true is that they never stop eating and they are not even teenagers yet! With it being summer, it has been somewhat tough to keep our older two boys occupied as they get bored easily. The most amazing thing happens when I suggest that they help pick up sticks in the backyard, they are no longer bored. Our youngest son, Caleb, is now 6 months old. There is so much I could say about him. He is such a wonderful baby. To put it plainly, we thought we knew what we were doing when we had Nathaniel because he was our second child. He threw us a major curveball because he was completely different from Logan. When we had our third child, Caleb, we just knew that we had everything under control. Then he comes out with a broken arm. Now that we are at 6 months, it feels like we are coasting. He healed up within 3 weeks of his broken arm and he has not slowed down since. He is in the beginning stages of figuring out crawling. He scoots sideways and goes backwards. Of course, he does not make it very far before he gets frustrated from doing tummy time, but we are excited for the new adventures that he will bring us. Logan and Nathaniel are both doing well. They are enjoying their summer break, but we can tell that they miss school. Sarah and I are thankful that they both enjoy school. Logan has been keeping up with practicing his soccer and archery skills all summer. There is no doubt in my mind that if he keeps putting forth effort that he will do great things. Nathaniel enjoys playing all sports. He did take off this past spring from soccer so he could play baseball, but he has already said that he wants to play soccer again in the fall, along with flag football and basketball when it starts up in November. Nathaniel definitely keeps us busy with everything that he wants to do. We do not want to discourage him too much, but we have been working on teaching him that sometimes having too much to do can be a bad thing. I know that I have experienced this as a former player and coach. When I was in high school, I remember the transition period from football to basketball would cause me to miss games in basketball if we were in the playoffs in football. Then the transition from basketball to baseball would do the same thing as well. As a coach, I had the same thing happen when I would coach soccer. Soccer season around here is always the same time as baseball season and the majority of the time, I would have a player who would miss our practices and games for baseball practices and games. That is just part of it anymore unfortunately. Overall, I am thankful that my boys enjoy sports because it allows me to stay more active by practicing with them. Sarah is doing well, other than being outnumbered by a bunch of stinky boys. It is amazing at how much she does with all three of our boys and then somehow has enough time to keep up with the house, bible study, and other things that I have failed to mention. She tries to take the boys to the library at least three times per week. I wish that I would have developed a better reading habit when I was growing up as a kid, but I love the fact that our boys enjoy reading books. Nathaniel tends to lose interest if he gets to a book where he struggles with the words. He definitely gets his patience from me. The more practice he gets, the better he will be with reading. Again, trying to keep our boys busy this summer is definitely a full-time job within itself. I am very thankful that I have such a wonderful wife who puts up with all our mess.

In other news, we had a leak in our bathroom which was causing water to go underneath our floor into Nathaniel's bedroom and our hallway. I'm not familiar with all the terminology regarding plumbing and what not but it was our shower that was leaking. We rent our home, so we were not out any money to fix the leak. Our landlord does a good job in fixing his properties when something goes wrong. We were displaced for only one week while they were working on fixing our shower. Thankfully, we were able to

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go stay at my mother's house in White Hall. Also, during the past six weeks, I was attending the Arkansas Department of Correction academy for training as a correctional officer. I have previous law enforcement experience with the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department so luckily enough for me, I know what type of environment I am walking into. I would be lying if I said that I was not at first concerned about passing the academy since my time with the Arkansas Fire Academy was plagued with a hamstring injury which kept me from finishing that academy. After that mishap, I decided that I would better prepare myself for the Department of Corrections academy. After much preparation, the six weeks of training went by and I graduated with academic honors. I had the second highest grade in my graduating class.

In other news, some of our family has been dealing with health issues recently. Sarah's mother and father have both been dealing with illnesses. Her mother has been battling an aggressive form of breast cancer. Her final projected chemotherapy treatment is in August if I am not mistaken. This would finish up her second round of chemotherapy. We are hopeful that this will be her final round of chemotherapy for a while. Her father has been dealing with major issues of his own as well. He started becoming ill several months ago and when they began running different tests, they realized that his liver enzymes were extremely high. They attempted treatment for him, but nothing was helping. They eventually determined that he needs a liver transplant. For the past two months, he has been waiting for the call from the doctor saying that they are ready for him to come in. Unfortunately, it is just a wait game for him. My mother is also dealing with health problems as well, but she is finally getting answers and possible treatment options. She has blockages in her aorta and carotid arteries. Due to other issues that must be addressed, normal surgery options for addressing blockages was not available. They have a hard time finding and keeping up with her blood pressure. She is scheduled for a CT scan in order to address this issue so that surgery can be scheduled, and they can start working on clearing up her blockages.

There have been high points and some low points over the past few months with the local church. I will start with the low points and finish strong with the good news. We were forced to withdraw from one of the sisters here. It was Lauren, the girl we took into our home after we left Vera Lloyd and became her independent living sponsors. She was doing well but then her attendance began to be sporadic. We would always pick her up since she does not have a driver's license or a car. Her attitude and behavior began to take a downward spiral towards Sarah and I over the past few months. She would come around when she wanted something but if she did not want something, she would disappear. The easiest way to put it, she was attempting to manipulate us. We were patient with her, but we kept giving her warnings that she needed to be more responsible and treat people the way she wanted to be treated. Her behavior continued to get worse towards us as she would only message us and say, "I am not coming to church for an unspoken reason". I did not understand that, so I reached out to her saying that I had enough of her deceptive and manipulative behavior and that she needed to be honest with us. Of course, she did not respond until about a week later and said that she was bi-sexual so she would no longer be coming to church nor did she want to be a member of the church. To spare you all the confusing details, she is engaged to a young man who I have spoken of before regarding bible studies, she states that she is faithful to him but that she is bi-sexual. She is unwilling to talk about anything and does not want to be bothered about it. Another family, Jonathan and Scarlotte Ashcraft, were having struggles as well. Their attendance dropped for about 3 months. They showed up maybe once per month. Sarah and I decided to meet with them to see what was going on. Typical struggles of life had overwhelmed them. After meeting with them and talking with them, they have started coming back and been more attentive. Although they have hit another snag as they have a large family and their main vehicle is having engine troubles. They do have another vehicle but it is only an extended cab truck that

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can only seat 5 people and they are a family of 6 when they have all of their kids with them, which is the majority of the time since they both have full custody of their children. They are also in the process of having to move their mobile home off of the land that it is on and to another piece of property because the property owner is wanting his land back. A friend of mine is trying to work with them with the moving of their home because their budget is very tight. Some recent good news for them though is the fact that Scarlotte's boss recently pulled her aside and said that she is getting a \$1.50 per hour raise. Jonathan is still waiting on his disability to kick in and for the military to "buy out" his back injury from his service in the Army. Once all these things take place, they will not be struggling as much but they are definitely in need of prayers and are requesting that everyone prays for them.

Our building is having a make-over done to it which is very exciting. The landlord is in the process of putting up stucco and will be replacing all the windows. Once everything is finished, I will be sending pictures to show you all. It already looks 100% better than it did before.

I am scheduled to preach two nights during the first week of August at the Hepburn Avenue Church of Christ in Pine Bluff. I will be speaking August 6th and 7th which will be Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Tuesday evening's lesson will be "The Work of a Local Church: Edification". Wednesday evening's lesson will be "True Love Admonishes". For those of you who are in the area, I would love to see you all on Tuesday if possible. The other two speakers for the meeting will be brother James Hamilton from the Highway 5 Church of Christ out of Benton and he will speak on Sunday and Monday. Then the other speaker will be brother Zach Redmon from Saratoga Church of Christ and he will be speaking on Thursday and Friday. I am very humbled that I was asked to speak with such a great group of evangelists. I will also be preaching at the Fairview Park Church of Christ on September 22nd. I am looking forward to being there again. I have not picked a lesson yet, but I have narrowed it down between two lessons. One being "The Silence of Mary" and the other is titled "God, Where Art Thou?".

Once again, I know that it has been too long for an update. With everything going on, I have been utilizing too many excuses for not burning enough midnight oil in getting this done. I am very thankful for all of your continued support and I pray that all is going well.

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