

**Lee Elkins**  
*January 2020 Report*

To the brethren

I am thankful that I am finally able to finish this letter and send it out. My original intent was to have it sent out at the first of January but my hard drive on my computer died so I had to order a new one. Luckily for me, I had most of my stuff uploaded to a cloud drive, so I was able to recover all my important files. One of the major issues was being able to get everything completely updated. Every chance I was able to start up my computer, it would take double the amount of time just to get it booted due to "installing updates" and then the same would go for when I would have to shut down my computer. There would be "updates" to install which would take quite a bit of time. I really appreciate you all being so patient with me during these past six months regarding these updates and I pray that you continue to remain patient as things are not slowing down for us as I will try to explain in short below. I hope this letter finds you all doing well.

As I have mentioned previously, my father-in-law has been very ill. I am not going to drag this out but just to give you all an idea as to some of the things going on, his treatment team has now been consulting with the Center of Disease Control (CDC) in order to figure out how his treatment plan should go since he is being placed under a case study since what he has is extremely rare. He has been in the hospital for well over 60 days. With his disease being what it is, the doctors have been very up front with letting the family know that they have no idea what might happen. This has been a very stressful time for us as we have three young children, but we try to make sure that we are available just in case anything happens. Lots of unplanned miles are being put on not just our vehicles, but our bodies. Being tired is simply an understatement but again, all we can do is continue to do what we have been doing. Sarah and I have both come to the realization that eventually, Dave's body is going to give in because he has no immune system. The fact that he was relatively healthy before all of this is what has kept him going for so long. So again, we sure could use all the prayers possible.

Quick update on my mother and her procedures. She recovered well from her first surgery and so they went ahead and performed the second procedure in December so that it would be covered 100% by her insurance without having to meet another deductible. This procedure was to address her carotid artery blockage. So far, she has been doing very good. She is in more pain this time around, but she is very pleased to get all of this out of the way.

The work here is having an up and down trend regarding our attendance. Illnesses have plagued several of our members but luckily, nobody has been diagnosed with influenza or strep throat which has been going around in our area. One of the young men here, brother Ashton Wilson, has been asked by 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Church of Christ in Pine Bluff, AR to preach for them as they search for an evangelist. The preacher there, Randall Elrod moved back to Oklahoma. His plan is to preach there about twice a month which he started back in December. I am glad that we have men who are capable of teaching but since we are a small group, it is very noticeable when people miss. That is not our overall concern as in many instances with small groups, many do not have enough men who are capable of teaching. Of our five men who are faithful in our work, four out of the five are ready and willing to teach at any given time. The other one has stated that he is not ready to teach a Bible class yet, but he is working towards being able to fill in if ever necessary. This has been one of my primary focuses in our Bible studies on Sunday mornings. Our previous studies have been in Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians. We then transitioned to 1 and 2 Timothy and we are now in Titus. I decided to make this transition because it shifted the focus from letters to local churches to letters to individuals, Timothy and Titus. It seemed like a good time to consider our own personal work that we are doing and to make applications for

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ourselves. In doing so, we have focused heavily on the importance of being able to stand firm in the faith. Being able to be prepared and ready to give an answer for questions that are asked of us. Being able to understand Bible authority in not just the local church, but our lives as well. Our Wednesday evening Bible study is continuing in the book of Isaiah with brother Robbie Baughn teaching the class. What makes the study so fascinating in Isaiah is that we can go through not just the Bible and see all of history being fulfilled through what it says, you can see it play out in secular history. One of my favorite books in the Bible is the book of Daniel because of that very point. Sometimes long books such as Isaiah and Psalms can seem very monotonous simply because of the amount of time spent in studying these books. The realization that I have come to is the fact that 35 to 45 minutes is not much study time but keeping the attention span of others can seem difficult after roughly 30 minutes unless you have discussion along with the teaching.

My sermons the past few months have been series based. For the month of November, I taught primarily on the things that we are thankful for and things that we should be thankful for. The holiday season can be a stressful time for people and that should not be so for the Christian. Some of our members have had to deal with the loss of loved ones, the anniversary of the loss of loved ones, and having to address issues dealing with family who at one point in time were faithful in the Lord's church but are no longer faithful. I have found that I have been having a better study habit when preparing lesson plans in a series. In December, I focused heavily on the life of Jesus. We are all aware of how many people view Christmas time, so we simply approached it from a Biblical perspective. We are taught to remember the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. I don't know of anyone who denies the birth of Jesus. If he was not born, then of course he would not have died and been resurrected. In January, I have utilized a series of lessons by brother Mark Copeland titled "Why We Need...". I always work on my own outlines as time permits but as I was studying for other lessons, I stumbled across those particular lessons off of his website and thought to myself that those lesson plans would be an excellent start to the new year.

We have continued our services at Chapel Woods Nursing & Rehabilitation in Warren, AR every first Sunday of each month. Warren is about 20 minutes away from Monticello (for those who are not aware of the location). This has been an on-going meet up for over three years. Getting additional time inside their chapel hall has been difficult. I do not want to sound like I am complaining because I am very thankful for the allotted time we have been given. I just wish that we would be given additional time each month. The attendance fluctuates depending on the time of year. During the colder months, some of the residents there are somewhat hesitant to get out of their rooms because of illnesses but the ones who do miss try to come the next time we meet. Many of them suffer from dementia, Alzheimer's, and other illnesses that make it difficult to function. For the most part, they really enjoy the singing. Because of this, we start out with singing, have a short class, followed with more singing.

In November, I came across an article on a college university's website (they claim to be Church of Christ) that addressed an issue taking place at a local church in Searcy, AR. Without going into all of the details, essentially it said that the leadership there was going to allow women to have "bigger roles" in the church. This no longer surprises me due to the fact that many local churches are failing to address doctrinal issues because of social change or as one of the quotes from the article says, "We live in the midst of both great and rapid socio-cultural change,". This, my friends, is no excuse for deliberately disobeying God. God does not change nor does His Word change. Due to seeing this, I reached out yet again to the other local preachers in the area that continue to "fellowship" with these groups. I had good discussion with one of them and the other one, not so much. The truth eventually came out when the comment was made "you are anti everything" which led me to say, "I am anti-sin" and the

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conversation eventually ended on a somewhat “decent note”. The other preacher stated that this was something that their congregation is beginning to struggle with because it “goes beyond what they ever thought this would lead to”. From my understanding, this preacher used to be sound many years ago but somehow got caught up in all the “hoopla” of institutionalism. I believe he is beginning to see the light on these issues and that this trend will not stop. These alleged “church of Christ” who continues to stray from God’s word are not true bodies of Christ nor do they represent it. Anyone can slap a name on a sign, window, or billboard. Just because you see “Church of Christ” does not mean that it is sound.

On a side note regarding my preaching schedule for the year 2020; my preaching schedule is open. Usually I preach one gospel meeting per year, but I have not heard of anything yet. If this is something that anyone is interested in, please let me know so that arrangements can be made. In the past, my schedule was extremely flexible but now that my father-in-law is ill, I will need a little bit of time so that I can work it into my schedule because we always try to travel as a family if possible This of course is all based on the Lord’s will.

With this, I will close. I ask that you all continue to pray for my family and the work here at the local church in Monticello.

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Lee Elkins