

# Report for April and May

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Germantown, MD | June 1, 2022 | John Pollard

Brothers and Sisters,

I hope this report finds you all doing well physically and spiritually. My wife and I express our gratitude to you for your prayers, love and support of our work in MD. We appreciate it greatly. If you have questions about the information in this report, please feel free to get in touch with me.

I have several updates to offer regarding recent contacts and studies. I would like to begin with Don Allen. In my last report, I mentioned that Don and I had been studying together for the last several months now (via zoom) and he had been joining our services via zoom. Don and I have never met in person. While everything is fairly back to “normal” in our area, Don has always maintained this distance and to be honest, I don’t really know why. Back in February when we were initially talking, he stated he was not comfortable coming due to COVID concerns. I did not want to place pressure on him so I did not press it beyond that although I did say that it would be really encouraging to have him join us in person sometime soon and that our doors are always open.

About 5 weeks ago, he mentioned that he was still not comfortable with being in public spaces where singing was happening. On May 22, I preached a listen on the importance of togetherness. I spoke about God’s pattern for the church in the New Testament and how he designed the church to be together as much as possible. Since COVID, I have noticed a reliance on virtual mediums in our area for religious activities and some of this has crept into our own group. There is certainly room for sickness and other exigent circumstances but some have become comfortable with the virtual mediums in place of in person togetherness. I was largely preaching this lesson as a reminder to our own local group but Don was tuning in that day.

Later that week, he did not join our mid-week Bible study. I reached out to him and he told me that he appreciated the lesson. He also told me that it challenged him to think about his current spiritual state of affairs and that he was going to take a step back to evaluate things. I believe Don is genuinely concerned with trying to do the right thing according to God’s word but he has also learned some “hard truths” recently that he may not have heard before. His background is primarily evangelical in nature though he doesn’t speak much on it. He has been baptized for the forgiveness of his sins but he is still learning a lot. He is married with two kids and he is 59 years old. Please pray for Don that the truth will work to soften his heart and that he will work through his concerns so as to draw closer to God and His truth.

My second update is pertaining to Randy and Karen Hemmig. The Hemmigs are neighbors of some of our members. They had come to us from a large community church where they felt abandoned and out of touch with the people there. They visited with us for the better part of 10 weeks. Over this time, they were exposed to Bible classes, sermons and other such encouraging spiritual activities that challenged their thinking and spiritual paths. We recently had a gospel meeting that touched on church history, how we are saved and what makes us distinct from other religious organization and denominations.

After the first two lessons on Sunday that dealt with church history and how we are saved, the Hemmigs did not join us for the remainder of the meeting. At first, I thought perhaps they were busy. However, they later informed us that they had, after prayer and discussion, decided to keep looking at other churches. We were disappointed to hear this news but not surprised. We cannot be certain what ultimately led to this decision but it may be due to what they heard on the Sunday of our gospel meeting concerning salvation and church history. The church history lesson focused on how the Lord's church was mutated by man into various denominations over time and as a result, we have so many religions and man-made organizations such that individuals can pick and choose as they desire.

We are praying for them that the truth they heard would work on their hearts. Something that could play a crucial factor in the future is the familial connections they experienced in our small group. They commented on that quite often and noted that they "felt at home." We maintain open lines of conversation with them and we will see how things go from here on out. Please pray for the Hemmigs and the word sown in their hearts and minds. Pray that they would be willing to sit down with us to talk about our differences and open the scriptures to learn God's will for all of us.

My third update concerns Nancy Brooks. Nancy is in her late 60's. She and I have been studying together since January of this year. She is learning a lot of the basics and steadily increasing in her spiritual knowledge. She is such a good encouragement to me. She takes care of her elderly mom who lives with her at home since she struggles with numerous health issues. Nancy and I are currently halfway in Mark's Gospel. We recently took a trip to the Bible Museum in Washington DC and she was overwhelmed with the evidence we saw in favor of God and His word. It greatly helped to bolster her growing faith in God and the biblical world. She is getting ready to move to Columbia, SC in a few months from now. We have talked about churches in that area she can be a part of and she's excited. Please continue to pray for Nancy's spiritual journey.

As I briefly mentioned earlier, we recently held our Spring Gospel meeting (May 15-18). We were privileged to have brother Jeff Smith come speak to us. He currently works with the Haymarket COC in Gainesville, VA. Jeff did an excellent job for us speaking on the distinctiveness of Christianity and Christ's church. The lessons included: Church history, What saves us, Let us cleanse ourselves, the how and why of holiness and what is that in your hand. We were blessed with a couple visitors from the community and several Christians from nearby churches. One visitor spoke only Spanish but she came in because she saw that preaching was happening. Her name is Elsa. She lives nearby and stated she would return but she hasn't as yet.

Every Thursday at 7pm, a small group of the members of our local church go to Panera bread and we have a Bible study. We host this via our meetup app. We just finished the Gospel of Mark and now we are studying Hebrews. We have had a handful of visitors come and go in the last 5 months since we have started this. Some have come multiple times while others came just once. We read a chapter of the book we study and spend some time discussing the main points. It is always a very beneficial time.

About 5 weeks ago, we had two visitors join us by the name of Chris and Reva. Reva is Chris' mom. Following our study that night, we told them about where we worship and they decided to come and worship that Sunday. They came back the following Sunday. They came right as we started and left

right after the closing prayer so we did not get much time to visit with them. She texted my wife following that second visit and told her that they wanted to get on the duty roster and that they considered themselves members.

I followed up with Reva by asking a little bit about her religious background and things of that nature. She told me that she came from a Protestant church (she did not specify) and that we worshipped with Protestant churches for over 30 years. I asked her about her beliefs concerning matters such as baptism for salvation, instrumental music and several others. She did not respond. Later, we learned that they decided to keep looking for another church. I figured that maybe they disagreed with some of our practices or our views concerning them. I offered to have a Bible study with them to talk about our differences and to have an open but amicable conversation. She did not respond.

I wish those who disagreed with us would come to us to talk about their concerns and study about it from God's word. By no means are we perfect but we do our best to follow God's word and His patterns. We always try to stress the need to study more and rightly divide God's truth. I wonder if it's become easier for some to go look for another group that fits their belief system or their likes rather than opening up their Bibles to see what God wanted for His people. Bible study is hard-work. Please pray for Reva and Chris.

On May 29, I preached on Evangelism Guidelines. Lord willing, in the coming weeks, I will present a couple more lessons on evangelism in order to reinforce our mission and to offer some tips on how to be better reapers for the harvest. This coming Sunday, I am planning on preaching on mental health. We have several members in our group that suffer with varying kinds of mental illnesses. I ask for your prayers concerning this lesson that it would be beneficial for our group and perhaps lead to some further assistance for those who need it.

On the whole our local church is doing really well. We have about 20 in this local church and we are all striving to serve God and spread the Gospel in this area to the best of our ability. We have had two members restored to the faith in the last year or so and we have additional Christians coming our way to be a part of our group from other locations in the coming weeks/months if all goes well.

My wife and I are excited to let you know that we are expecting our first baby. She is currently 13.5 weeks along and both she and the baby are doing really well. We ask for your prayers as we go throughout the remainder of the pregnancy. Lord willing, the due date is late November.

God is good and we thank you once more for your willingness to support us in these endeavors. The brethren here greet all of you and we pray for the work and the brethren in your respective locations.

Thank you for reading this report and may God bless you.