



The Christian life is a journey.

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the “landscape” we are passing through in this trail-laced wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we’re learning and doing.

ElderTalk

Football games are always a feature of the fall season. When you think about it, it’s amazing that all those players can get organized and coordinated to do elaborate plays that counteract the opposite team’s offensive efforts. Often the players will meet in a huddle either on the sidelines or on the field before a play to declare the play and all be on the same page. They hopefully leave the huddle with a clear idea and plan of what they are going to do.

If the players never left the huddle, we would think it quite strange and the team would not proceed to play at all. In the same way, various gatherings of the church should be like a huddle from which we then go out into the world with our marching orders from God. We should not stay in the huddle any more than a football team should not. The purpose of the huddle is to encourage one another towards the goal of the team. God’s goal for all of us is that we would bring His glory to the world in which we live. His goal is for us to bear His image well before a watching world and to be testifiers to the death and resurrection of Jesus as the Savior of the world.

I Thessalonians 1:3 is our theme verse for the year. It says, “*We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*” The theme for the this year is: *Grow outward in service to God and others.* This fits the idea of breaking the huddle. Starting November 2, Adult Connect will be studying the book *Breaking the Huddle: How Your Community Can Grow Its Witness.*

Let’s all encourage one another not to stay huddled together, but to empower one another to go out into our world and be a witness for Jesus in our workplace, in our neighborhoods, in our families, among our friends and to our tribes of interest. Let’s break the huddle and grow outward in service to God and others for the sake of His kingdom.

Break the Huddle!

ERIC BYROM



The Cincinnatti Bengals breaking their huddle
(photo from Flickr by Erik Eckl)

NOVEMBER 2022

- 3** Women of Grace Bible Study, prayer, and sharing, 6:30-8:00 pm.
- 5** Table Fellowship men’s retreat here at GFC.
- 6** Elder Jadaé Fox preaching: Ps.127 and Nehemiah 6:16-7:5a.
- 10** Finance Team meeting 6:30, GFC.
- 13** Elder Jerry Mathias preaching: Ps. 128 and Nehemiah 11:1-2, 7:26-33. 🍷🥖
- 19** Women of Grace Harvest Potluck 11:00 a.m. Place to be announced.
- 20** Pastor Eric Byrom preaching: Ps. 129 and Nehemiah 13:4-14.
- 24** **THANKSGIVING DAY – Give thanks!**
- 27** Jerry Mathias preaching: Advent Week I. 🍷🥖

New 2 pound baby girl joins the Adalem family!



Manfred and Janet Adalem announce the safe arrival of Gabriella Faith born to their daughter Rachel Hoptry and her husband, Aaron, at 25 weeks. Her birthday was September 27, and she weighed 2 pounds, 2 ounces.

Gabriella was flown to the NICU at Akron Children's Hospital where she will remain as she gains weight. Her parents are staying at the Ronald McDonald House near the hospital.

Big sister, Hannah, 4, along with her grandparents, aunts and uncles, are eager for Gabriella to come home!

The latest from Japan...

ANDY BRUBAKER

Greetings from Japan!

I thank you for taking the time to read the latest edition of my newsletter. A lot has happened since I last wrote, so I am excited to share what has taken place up to now.

In my last letter I had mentioned that I felt the Lord was leading me to a different part of Japan and away from my job in Fukushima. With this knowledge, the last three months at the Wakakusa program gave me mixed emotions as we approached the end of the school year.

A lot of goodbyes were shared with different people in the area during this time, some more difficult than others. The first farewells started with the last class for kindergarten (age 4). After class had finished, I had shared with the Japanese homeroom teacher that it would be my last year. She announced it to the class, and to my surprise, one boy and one girl in the class were silently crying at this news. Nearly losing it myself at seeing this, I gave them hugs in an attempt to comfort them (which prompted a round of hugs for everyone in the class.) It was going to be a difficult time with the remaining farewells!

Many gifts were shared that I still hold onto this day. Meanwhile, teachers were always excited to hear about my transition to Kobe. All had said it was a good area to work in, and one teacher even called it "romantic," which I thought was an interesting description!

The final week of classes came, and my last day for each class was a free day where I would play my guitar for the students and we would play a final game or two together. One of my first grade classes had two girls



who took the news of my leave especially hard as they were in tears. Also, my most difficult classes, both the fourth grade classes, were silent and respectful during the last class together, wanting to hear the guitar and my last words to the students. From these experiences, I knew God had used me to touch their lives in some small way, despite having some hard times throughout the year.

The day to move out came, and I was asked by Mr. Maki to wait outside the kindergarten. Teachers from the English school, daycare, and kindergarten classes waited outside to see me off. To my surprise, my two kindergarten classes (age 5) were brought out to see me off, too, a gesture my boss made, knowing that I loved these two classes in particular. Fighting back the urge to cry, I said my final goodbyes to everyone, then was driven to the train station. Before long, I was on the bullet train, headed for Kobe and what God had in store for me next.

With the Lord: Brother Andrew, “God’s Smuggler”

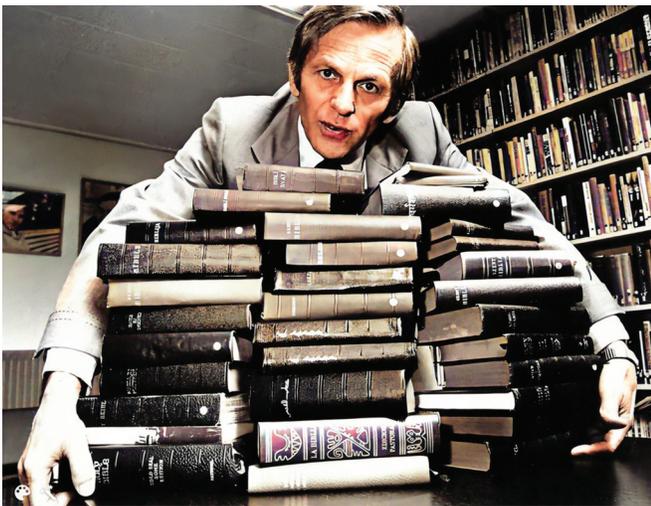
Anne van der Bijl, a Dutch evangelical known to Christians worldwide as Brother Andrew, the man who smuggled Bibles into closed Communist countries, died on September 27, 2022 at the age of 94.

Van der Bijl became famous as “God’s Smuggler” when the first-person account of his missionary adventures—slipping past border guards with Bibles hidden in his blue Volkswagen Beetle—was published in 1967. *God’s Smuggler* was written with evangelical journalists John and Elizabeth Sherrill and published under his code name “Brother Andrew.” It sold more than 10 million copies and was translated into 35 languages (but not into Dutch—he didn’t want to be considered a hero where he lived!)

The book inspired numerous other missionary smugglers, provided funding to van der Bijl’s ministry Open Doors, and drew evangelical attention to the plight of believers in countries where Christian belief and practice were illegal. Van der Bijl protested that people missed the point, however, when they held him up as heroic and extraordinary.

“I am not an evangelical stuntman,” he said. *“I am just an ordinary guy. What I did, anyone can do.”*

No one knows how many Bibles van der Bijl took into Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, East Germany, Bulgaria, and other Soviet-bloc countries in the decade before the success of *God’s Smuggler* forced him into the role of figurehead and fundraiser for Open Doors. Estimates have ranged into the millions. A Dutch joke popular in the 1960s said, *“What will the Russians find if they arrive first at the moon? Brother Andrew with a load of Bibles.”*



Brother Andrew with an armload of Bibles
(photo from Open Doors International archives - colorized)

Van der Bijl was born in the Netherlands in 1928, the son of a poor blacksmith and an invalid mother. He was 12 when the German military invaded the neutral country in World War II, and he spent the occupation hiding in ditches to avoid being pressed into service by Nazi soldiers. When famine hit the Netherlands in 1944, van der Bijl, like so many Dutch people, ate tulip bulbs to survive.

After the war, he joined the Dutch army and was sent to Indonesia as part of the colonial force. He was excited about the adventure until the shooting started and he killed people. He was shot in the ankle and started reading a Bible his mother had given him. After he returned home, he started compulsively going to church and in early 1950, he prayed, *“Lord, if You will show me the way, I will follow You. Amen.”*

He committed his life to ministry and went to Scotland to study at the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade’s missionary school in 1953. One Salvation Army officer was teaching about street ministry: *“The Holy Spirit has only prepared the heart of one person out of 1,000.”*

“Instantly my heart revolted. ‘What a waste,’” van der Bijl recalled. He determined he would ask God to guide him to the one person who was ready for the gospel. Instead of spending his time calculating and strategizing, he would follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Soon he understood he was supposed to go support the church in Communist-controlled countries and learned that they needed Bibles. *“I promised God that as often as I could lay my hands on a Bible, I would bring it to any country where God opened the door long enough for me to slip through.”*

When he would enter the border of a Communist country, he would pray, *“Lord, in my luggage I have Scripture that I want to take to Your children. When You were on earth, You made blind eyes see. Now, I pray, make seeing eyes blind. Do not let the guards see those things You do not want them to see.”* He was never arrested.

When speaking to American audiences in the early 2000s, van der Bijl regularly asked Christians if they had prayed for Osama bin Laden, leader of al-Qaeda. When US forces killed bin Laden in 2011, he expressed sadness. *“I believe everyone is reachable. People are never the enemy—only the devil. Bin Laden was on my prayer list. I wanted to meet him. I wanted to tell him who is the real boss in the world...If I could live my life over again, I would be a lot more radical.”*

**Information from CT+Weely and nederlandsdagblad 9-27-22*

The latest from Japan *(concluded)*

I am excited to share how God has led me to my current job! As I mentioned before, God had made it known to me that it was going to be my last year in Fukushima. As the year progressed, doors to Kobe in the Hyogy Prefecture appeared to be open. Taking time to visit the area last year, I had met different people involved in the churches of the area and heard of the ministries they worked in outside of education, such as an orphanage and young adult ministry. The desire to go to the Kobe area next grew, but now I needed to find a job.

Since then, I have applied for many different teaching positions. However, I was not receiving any job offers, which led to me to feeling a bit discouraged for a time.

One day in late January I received a phone call from the principal of a Christian international school, Ashiyo International School (AIS). He said that he had felt led by God to call me after seeing my resumé, and he wanted to ask if I still needed a job in Hyogo Prefecture. Before I knew it, I had a job lined up to work for AIS at the branch school on Awajii Island! God had provided a job in His perfect timing!

The first five months I was asked to stay at the main school in Ashiya to be trained for the role on Awaji Island. The job on the island called for me to teach kindergarten students in English immersion classes, but staying at Ashiya allowed me to be familiar with the, curriculum, class atmosphere, and culture of AIS to bring to the branch school on Awaji Island. I spent the first few months teaching the elementary level in all subjects using English. Classes I taught the first time included P.E. music, science, math, and social studies. At AIS, it is believed that you teach English not by teaching *about* English, but by using English *to* teach students. The students' usage of English at such young ages is a remarkable product of this teaching philosophy.

At international schools, there are not only Japanese students but also foreign students enrolled. This included a boy who was half-Japanese and half-Australian that I directly taught. I grew attached to him as the term continued onward in our interactions. He was one of the oldest students and often was flexing his strength during recess, P.E., and English classes. However, from hearing how he was before, I was quite proud of how he had grown as a student and leader within the short time I was his teacher. He ended up moving away with his family after the school year ended

in June, but the lessons learned from teaching him I would take with me to the next school.



Ashiyo International School

(Next month: Vacation Bible School and Summer School report.)

Prayer and Praise Requests:

- Continue to pray for the hearts of the Japanese people to be receptive to God's love and acceptance.
- Pray for wisdom and courage as I begin classes with kindergarten students on Awaji Island.
- Praise God for providing financial provision.
- Praise God that I completed my TEFL (*Teaching English as a Foreign Language*).
- Praise God for connection with not one, but TWO churches in the Kobe area, to serve in both churches' children and youth ministries.

Andy

Congratulations

...to Steve and Pam Phillips on their 50th Wedding Anniversary. On October 23rd they held a reception after church.



Recovering

...Al Roggio, who is now at Winchester Terrace, working to gain strength and stability in his walking.

Grace Fellowship Church

365 Straub Rd East • Mansfield Oh 44903
419-526-4699 • gracefellowship01@gmail.com

Eric Byrom Presiding Elder/ Pastor

(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month)