

Tohono O'odham Baptist Outreach Missions



Billy, Julie & Madison Ford
Winter, 2024

PLEASE DO NOT SHARE THIS PRAYER
LETTER ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Dear Praying Friends,

Psalm 22:24-25

“For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from him, but when he cried unto Him, He heard. My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation; I will pay my vows before them that fear Him.”

While the last 5 months have certainly been one of the most; if not the most challenging times in our family and ministry since arriving on the field in 2016; we have no doubt that it has been a time of allowing God to remind us of our total dependence upon Him and Him alone for every aspect of our lives. As many of you already know, we traveled back East in July to visit family and soon after our arrival home in early August to quickly jump into our Back-to-School ministry on the reservation; Julie began a deep descent into a very complex series of health issues that were very worrisome for us and quite literally knocked her off her feet. At first, we thought that her early symptoms were a result of traveling cross country. But our initial doctor visit indicated that she had a simple sinus infection and the pain in her hands and feet were from dehydration. Despite being on antibiotics, her symptoms spread like wildfire and within a couple of weeks she had lost her ability to walk and use her hands. Despite being seen by a total of four doctors, the symptoms continued to worsen, and she was running on virtually no ability to sleep. Over the years we've experienced situations that have driven us to a deeper level of prayer, but this was so intense that the Lord drew us into not only very deep and sincere prayer, but a level of awareness in His presence and grace than we've ever experienced before. Our family was stretched to the very brink of what felt like was the



breaking point and Julie was in a very intense battle physically, mentally, and spiritually. Finally, in September, the Lord directed us to a very special doctor in the Phoenix area who does not follow the standard medical culture that our society has fallen into. After seeing several other doctors prior and having multiple tests run with no answers at all; this man was able to bring a noticeable level of relief very quickly and started Julie on the road to recovery. Since then, she has continually improved, but still has a lot of ground to go for a full recovery. Her doctor has settled on a diagnosis of Long Covid as the primary culprit with neuropathy in her hands and feet. A second doctor has been added to help with treating to ongoing health issues this has caused. We certainly want to praise the Lord for answered prayer, for directing us to the right doctors for Julie, and for all those who have taken the time to contact her and pray with; and for her so consistently. Please continue to pray for Julie as she continues to receive treatments.

THANKSGIVING MINISTRY:

This year's Thanksgiving Ministry looked very different than in past years as the services were tailored for each village we served. In North Hikiwan, we elected to continue with giving Thanksgiving food boxes to our attending families. In South Hikiwan, we chose to host a Thanksgiving meal for those that attends our services there. We cooked a full Thanksgiving meal and served it in the recreational center. This was the first time that we held a Thanksgiving meal in South Hikiwan, and we were grateful for the opportunity. For many of our kids this is the only Thanksgiving meal they will have. They will ask us questions about when Thanksgiving Day is and what it is. We utilize these opportunities to share the Gospel and to teach the lesson of being thankful to the Lord. We had a wonderful group in attendance as well as some of our teens from North Hikiwan came.

CHRISTMAS MINISTRY:

We were blessed to serve around 85 people in four villages in this year's Christmas Ministry. We had good attendance at each event and felt freedom in sharing the Gospel. Additionally, both parents and children were grateful for their gifts. Kids were able to come into the mobile mission trailer and choose a toy of their own as well as receive a blanket, water bottle, stocking shoebox and snack bag. Unfortunately, we did not provide Christmas meal boxes for our families this year as we did not have sponsors for that section of the ministry. Overall, at the end, our family could say this was one of the best years of the Christmas ministry we had seen since pre covid years. We have so many beautiful memories that we will treasure for many years to come.

Room where our Thanksgiving meal was held at the recreational center.



Our family was thankful that Julie was able to fully participate in both ministries. We would like to thank everyone who gave to both ministries whether it was through donations of supplies or funds. We simply could not provide any of this without you. We are asked by attendees how we do this, and we share about those from all over America that has given so that O'odham children can know Christ's Love through Christmas.

MADISON:

Please pray for our daughter, Madison, as she starts her third semester at the University of Arizona this week. We've enjoyed having her home during winter break. She was a huge help during our Christmas Ministry, especially with Julie's health limitations. Madison had a wonderful Fall semester that allowed her to start having more field experience. She was able to shadow a biologist with Arizona Fish & Game department in projects such as dove counts and trapping deer to gain data for testing. She finished successfully with a 3.9 GPA and received word this week that through the Lord's provision and her hard work, her tuition is completely covered through scholarships and grants again this semester. Praise the Lord!

PLEASE PRAY:

In early November our HVAC system began to give us problems when we switched it over to heat mode to warm up the house in the mornings. After speaking with a professional HVAC friend back East we made the decision to shut the system down until we could afford to get a proper diagnosis. I then contacted the same contractor that installed the system a couple of years ago and have made arrangements for him to send a technician to get it figured out and hopefully back up. His crew will be traveling quite far outside of their normal service area to get here and while they will be more expensive than other contractors, we are very confident in their ability to get it repaired properly. We'd like to ask that everyone pray that the Lord would provide the funds to get the repairs done before the hot Sonoran summer sets in mid-April. We are not sure what the total cost will be as the parts (should) still be under warranty and we will be responsible for the travel/labor fees. Hopefully that will not be more than \$1200.



A NEW YEAR, A NEW FACEBOOK:

Our family created an open Facebook page in 2013, when we became missionaries. Through the years, we have enjoyed sharing day to day updates concerning our ministry. Recently, we have felt that due to various reasons, what we share needs to be private. Unfortunately, our current page cannot be changed to private, so we created our new private group, Tohono O'odham Baptist Outreach Missions. To be a member of this group, you must be invited by one of us. To receive that invitation please text or email us and we will get that out to you. We are excited about this new page as we feel it will be more secure and we will be able to share more with you.

FINALLY:

We are so pleased to share that through the generosity of God's people, we reached the funds needed to purchase a car. In late December, we were able to locate a 2020 Honda Pilot that is in excellent condition and fit within our budget. We want to thank everyone who gave. We appreciate you and praise the Lord for His provision in this way.

During our Christmas ministry, we were in a village and Billy was approached by an O'odham man that he had never met before. During their conversation the shared that he was currently on drugs and his behavior showed evidence of that. However, what was more surprising about this encounter was when the man asked Billy "are you a Christian?". On the reservation, where everyone is steeped in Catholicism, that is a question we rarely get. When Billy answered him "yes", the man shared that when he was a little boy a Christian missionary (who has since passed away) would come to the village and teach the Bible. This man moved from the village and went on to become in his words "a Presbyterian". The went on to have a really good conversation. But the encounter left us a reminder that day as to why we are where we are, in the remote villages. The ones that are not so easy to get to. God has called us here because of men like this one who recalls a time when the Bible was taught but is no longer. A man that satan has trapped in drugs but can still remember those who have come to point him to the One who offers his only hope of escape. Please pray for this man.

As we start a new year, we want to thank each of you who has prayed, given sacrificially, and encouraged us. You made this encounter possible and may God bless you for that.

In Christ,

Billy, Julie & Madison Ford

Missionaries to the Tohono O'odham Nation

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