

# the dotted line

ICBM Newsletter

## Retirement Announcement

*by Thomas Bleemel*

I will be retiring as President of the International Christian Braille Mission at the end of this year. Thomas Bleemel will assume my office as President.

As I have said before, the reason for my retirement is simply to assure leadership beyond the time when I would be unable to carry out my duties, due to health or death.

I will continue to be a member of the board for a time and will be available to Tom for assistance should he ask for it. However, Tom and I have worked together for four years and he knows the operation of the mission very well, and is very conscience in his work. After my retirement date, I will receive no salary from the mission, although I may be involved in things like our African Project and anything Tom wishes for me to do.



It's been incredible to see what God has done in the last 48 years. I have seen so many things happen that God has done just at the right time and I'm sure Tom will continue to experience this also.

In closing, I want to thank you for your kind prayers, interests, and financial support. I do ask that you continue to support the work as Tom, with the Lord's help, will bring it to the next level to reach the blind and deaf blind for Christ.

In Christ,  
Mike Smith, President ICBM

## Meet The Thomas Blemel Family

*by Thomas Bleemel*

Mike and I would like to introduce my family to the ICBM family. In our November 2019 Newsletter, I had the pleasure to introduce myself as I had just started working with Mike and ICBM that summer. As my work, knowledge, and experience with ICBM has grown in those four years, my family has also grown. I have had the blessing of being married to my wife, Wendy, since August of 2016. We have two sons, Joseph, and James. The greatest joy in my life is the home that God has guided us to establish with Wendy, Joseph, James and I.



Wendy and I have had many discussions and sharing ideas of ICBM's work that is being done here. Along with the abundance of support from friends, family, supporting churches, and other enthusiasts who share in the excitement of sharing God's word with the Blind/Deaf-blind community. I have been blessed for four years now to be able to learn from Mike's wisdom and knowledge of ICBM and working with the Blind and Deaf-blind community. I have met many great people in the past 4 years that have been encouraging and insightful as to the future of ICBM. Wendy, Joseph, James, and I look forward to the challenge, and blessings, that lay ahead of us as we do our best to follow God's guidance and leadership of furthering his Kingdom and Love to such a hurting and broken world. We are blessed to be working with you, brothers and sisters, to share of God's good news of His Son Jesus.

# Back to Africa

This past January I went to Liberia, Africa with a team from Psalms 82:3 Mission, and distributed audio bibles. Lord willing, I will be going back to Liberia between in January 2024. In addition to the Psalms Ministry bringing a work team, I am bringing a team to visit and to assess what we can do. Meet our team:

**Cherie Caulley** - the wife of KCU New Testament Professor Dr. Scott Caulley, will be coming to take pictures.

**Steve Hoyt** - is an orientation and mobility instructor from Pilot Dog in Columbus, OH. He will distribute and give some basic training concerning the use of the white canes that we have purchased and shipped earlier this year.

**Missy Nettles** - is my sister and is also a retired police officer. She will inspect the security of the blind village and make suggestions that will enhance their safety and security.

**Devin Otte** - is on the board of ICBM, and is certified to teach and test students in unified English Braille. He will give a report to the mission board on the African Trip. He will also be available to do some basic 1 to 1 teaching in braille.

**Mindy Shipman** - is a visually impaired (VI) teacher in the public schools. She will be able to teach braille on a 1 to 1 basis. She will also be with us when we visit the blind village, the blind school in the suburbs of Monrovia, and a blind school in Buchanon. She will be able to tell us if these schools have enough teachers, facilities and tools to teach the blind and can make suggestions on how we can help in these instances.

**Mike Smith** - I hope to be able to preach a revival at the blind village focusing on the fact that blind people are NOT cursed by God and that God loves and cares for them.

It's been amazing to watch God put this team together. This team brings years of experience and knowledge that will be very beneficial in working with the blind of Liberia. As a Christian oriented group, we are determined, along with the Lord, to know what the best way of helping the blind of Liberia to expand their skills, abilities, and grow in their personal relationship with Christ.

---

## Readers Needed!

Are you an expressive, fluent reader? Do you want to help ICBM with their mission?

Readers are needed to record Christian materials that are not otherwise available to the blind. ICBM sends out recordings of Sunday School lesson books, daily devotionals, Christian Standard/Lookout magazine, and other materials to all visually impaired people who request them.

To read for ICBM, you must have access to a computer with a microphone, and a quiet time and place in which to record. If you live near Grayson, you can come to the ICBM office and record in one of our dedicated rooms.

Readers may work on their own schedule, reading as much or as little as they are able. Support is available for installing and using the free software that is used for recording.

If you are willing to read for ICBM, please contact Thomas Bleemel at 606-474-3411.

# ICBM Represented at NFB, NCCB and ICOM Conventions

## National Federation of the Blind

In July, Mike and Thomas attended the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) convention. This is the largest gathering of blind people from all over the world and a great place to have a booth where we can share our ministry with the blind community. While we are there conversing with people, if they show interest in literature that we have on the display table, we encourage them to take the book home with them. When we go to these conventions and conferences, in general, we bring multiple copies of our catalog of books in our library. This makes it possible for the blind person to read the titles of our books and order them from us. Many of them express great appreciation that we can offer our materials for free. Needing to purchase braille materials is very expensive, especially seeing how most people during these conversations also express that they are on a very tight income situation as well. The main purpose of the NFB is to create equal living capabilities for all blind people. However, it is not necessarily focused on Christian beliefs. This really gives us a great opportunity to share about the Christian faith



---

## National Church Conference for the Blind

Another conference that we try to attend this year was the National Church Conference of the Blind (NCCB). This conference is smaller in attendance, but gives us an opportunity to interact with, and share ideas with other blind people that share in the Christian faith. At this year's conference, Mike had the pleasure to be the bible teacher which he taught on Hebrews 11:1-12:3. Mike and Thomas consistently attend the NCCB with our braille materials. In my opinion, with this conference being smaller in size it makes it much better to build more personal relationships which allows you to grow and challenge each other as the week goes on to walk closer with Christ.

---

## International Conference on Missions

International Conference on Missions (ICOM) is another conference that we attend each year. Here connections are made with other missions or people with knowledge and experiences and is a chance to get our Christian Braille material out and available to other missions as a resource that they might help someone that is blind. It is a great way to add more tools to your tool box for missionary work. This conference is where Matt Lee approached Mike about how to help the blind village in Liberia, Africa. This line of conversation and questions at ICOM led Mike to work with Matt in taking a trip to Liberia to see the Blind village personally to offer assistance. This is the first project that ICBM has been a part of that involves sending someone overseas from the mission. In the past, we have only mailed out materials overseas.