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Greetings from the Southern Appalachian mountains!

I want to thank you all for your faithful prayers and generosity of support toward Rural Church Development. Holly and I see your kindness toward us and this mission very tangibly through the manner in which you have supported us. The Lord continues to prove faithful through you to the people and culture in which we are serving.

Here are some various ways in which the Lord is at work:

Consistent Proximity

I have written in the past about how consistent proximity with longevity is something I believe the Lord will use to build relationships. In my latest blog post I share how going to the same places consistently over the last year is building relationships.

My consistent weekly breakfast spot sees a single mom and server trust me enough to ask if I can sit with her young daughter until her grandmother arrives to pick her up. It's a busy morning and the sitter fell through. She is overwhelmed and needs to wait on customers. It has meant a listening ear for a retired gentleman as he tells me he is agnostic "but I tell ya', I'll be praying a lot on my death bed." Being present has meant another single mom who's oldest is in juvenile detention confide that much of her thought life is about what purpose she even serves being here on earth. A local contractor, shares with me his deep struggles of insecurity, lack of assurance of salvation, and haunting past.

These relationships are important. For those I meet it means someone is willing to listen . . . To be sort of a person they can trust to be themselves without judgment or shame. For me these relationships melt my heart and help me to listen, pray, and tell them how much they are loved by me and more so by the One who created and sustains them.

Rural Church Institute

In May I started a certificate program to come alongside locals involved in ministry to help them grow in their understanding of the gospel. At our first

several classes we have had 4-6 men and women learning how the gospel changes us. We meet once per month at Hot House Baptist Church. These classes serve to both equip people with a robust understanding of the Scriptures as well as see who the Lord might raise up as potential leaders in the future. Our conversations have been fantastic.

Cartecay Gathering

Our church plant in Ellijay is progressing well. We are deliberately moving slowly to help build a foundation for growth. Our steering team has developed a mission statement and is currently working through core values that will help direct future ministry. Since February we have worked through Jesus' parables in Luke and have just begun a series in Jonah. This last weekend we set up a tent for a local Back to School Bash to serve the community by offering a kid's craft and teacher's gift baskets. It was a great opportunity to get to know people in the community.

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Beyond RCD

An encouraging bi-product of being involved in this ministry are the conversations the Lord has provided with others either currently in rural and small town contexts, wanting to be in a small context, or trying to figure out how to bring ministry into their rural setting. Last week a pastor friend brought a Scottish pastor to Blue Ridge because he is thinking through revitalization works and church planting in his country. Over lunch we discussed the similarities and possibilities of ministry in the southern U.S. as well as Scotland.

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To help equip and communicate small town and rural ministry to others and encourage potential future works, I'm working to create podcast and video cast interviews with pastors currently planting or pastoring churches. You can hear and watch them from our website. I would also encourage anyone interested to read the stories I tell under the "stories" drop-down in the website menu. These

stories are often my reflections on ministry in general encouraged by my time and relationships here.

I am hopeful for these communities. I am encouraged by the reception of us and our crazy theology which tells of a gracious and kind God who seeks to save and renew a people for Himself and transform this geographic area with good news, Thank you for sharing yourselves in this ministry.

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Kindest Regards,

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