

and outreach, in education, in special programs, in youth and family. With ladies' days, men's days, benevolence, and work improving and maintaining our facilities where we work and serve. The goal is to give everyone regardless of their strengths and gifts an opportunity to serve. **Which ministries will you join in?**

AP: Every week, this building will be open—and not just for Bible study. Every day, there will be ways we can strengthen one another and strengthen our community. We want this body to be a place where people know they can go to meet His People and learn His Word—*“These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,” (AC 17.6)*

CONCLUSION

MEDICINE/Eye Exams/LogMAR Chart

Of course, there is always room for human improvement in human matters. We will struggle, we will falter, and we will seek help from our Brethren here. But we can take confidence that God's church will always be His Bride, victorious. All that remains for us is to continue: to remain!

GL 6.9 ~ *And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*

Brian and I are ready to work. But we're seeking help. Help from you all as we seek to press forward, sowing the seed, and building something that will endure beyond this year and beyond us. God has brought us this far. And God is not done with us yet.

INVITATION

The invitation today is twofold: If you need to obey the Gospel — come. If you are part of this family — commit to the vision. Serve. Pray. Give. Love. Help us shine the light of Christ in Blackman.

CS 3.23-24 ~ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

QUESTION: What is the vision for the Blackman church of Christ in 2026?

TRN TO EH 3

INTRODUCTION

MEDICINE/Eye Exams/Herman Snellen

I've taken many a vision test in my life—and Lord willing, I'll take many more! For they are important: providing focus and direction—making it possible for me to see where I'm going.

Today's lesson has a similar goal—to provide focus and direction for the congregation in the year ahead. Brian and I have spent time talking and planning—looking forward to how we can look at 2026 as a new opportunity for the congregation in Blackman. And ultimately, our goal is simple: to see the Blackman congregation united as **One Family**.

EH 3.14-19 ~ *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

It is our intention, this year, to help create a congregation—a people—that are united in purpose and in vision. That we are, all of us, seeking to head in the same direction together as members of the body of Christ.

BACKGROUND (RM 12.9-13)

Core to that vision is the verse printed on the front page of the church's vision document: **RM 12.9-13** ~ *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*

These aren't just words: they are a calling—a calling for us to be the kind of church that Paul is describing here: a church shaped by true and genuine love, active goodness, patient endurance, constant prayer, and full-hearted and open-armed hospitality. I don't know about the rest of you, but that's the kind of church I want to call home—and I firmly believe it's the kind of church that the Blackman community needs and wants to be a part of, as

well. But before we discuss where we are headed, we need to talk about where we've been.

BD1: Where God has Brought Us (AC 2; 2CR 4.17-18)

The Blackman church of Christ is not new. It didn't come about by accident or chance. Rather, the congregation here has a powerful history wrought by the power of God.

The congregation here began in a schoolhouse—a handful of Christians in the late 1800s who began their meetings in the Blackman Academy. They didn't have a parking lot, LCD sign, or even a building. But what they did have was faith: faith in the God who founded the church back with the *sound like a mighty rushing wind* nearly 2000 years prior: a wind that *filled the entire house where they were sitting* (AC 2.2). They met with confidence that they weren't starting something new—but continuing something ancient that God, Himself, had founded all those centuries ago.

When a different kind of wind came in 1913, a tornado wrecking the building they finally did build, the congregation scattered. But they stood up again in spite of struggle. *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* (2CR 4.17-18)

They didn't let the name of Christ remain unclaimed in the Blackman community. Instead, three men, Burgess, Reeves, and Hartman, gathered the church, again, within a one-room schoolhouse, where they remained until they built the building that serves as the bones for the building in which we currently meet.

AP: Brethren, the history of the congregation here is like the history of the church, universal: resilient against struggle. Determined against those who would strive to defeat us. And faithful to the God who has called us.

2TM 1.8-10 ~ *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,*

BD2: What God has Done Through Us in 2025 (RV 3.8-9)

And 2025 was a year where we've been called to accomplish great...and difficult things. It was a busy year, full of impactful things, welcomes, and goodbyes. When we look at this last year, we see it as a year **where God has done great things through us**. It was a year spent seeking to build momentum.

This year marked the first time in many years where there were Elders leading the Blackman congregation. It was a difficult journey, but it's born fruit. We began a partnership with **Jeremiah's Promise**: a special-needs ministry allowing for adults to build daily relationships, serving one another, and providing a mutual blessing—them to us, and us to them. We saw the renewal of a Bible Bowl team for the first time in many years—in partnership with the Leanna church—where we've placed 4th, then 3rd, and then 3rd—in hopes of better placements to come! But more importantly, our kids are in the Word.

We've reached out to and partnered with the community, as well: through our blessing box, providing needed food and bedding to those who are going through struggles. We had our first community prayer vigil, and our second Thanksgiving feast. We continued our hat-looming ministry, and two fish fries—reaching over 90 visitors each!

And we helped with our sister congregations—providing support to Winrow as well as opportunities for leading in worship, supported ongoing missions works all over the globe, and deepened our studies of the Word—even in more difficult topics like Revelation and different Bible interpretations by denominational groups.

AP: These are all the signs of a congregation fighting to connect: fighting to work the work of the One who sent us. We may have *“little power”*, but we can take comfort from the words spoken to another church with a little power: *“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹ Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you.* (RV 3.8-9)

BD3: How God Will Work Through Us in 2026 (EH 3.14-19)

How will God work through us in 2026? For that answer, we return to **EH 3.14-19** ~ *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*

Our goal is to provide opportunities for everyone—all of us—to serve. For all of us to have the opportunity to allow God to work through us. Look at our vision packet. Contained within, you'll see the ministries we seek to grow here at Blackman. In our worship, in our fellowship, in our evangelism