

# harvestupdate

October 2020

Dear praying friends,

Pastor Austin Gardner's story (below) from the very edge of the shadow of death demonstrates how the *harvest* ministry will work when operational—stories that demand our attention, thrill our souls, and inspire action. This is the first time in history that we have been able to reach out globally, in real-time, to gather news from the daily lives of missionaries, and tell of their miracles large and small, on mobile platforms. In a new and compelling way, we can “lift up our eyes” (John 4:35) to look on God's harvest fields.

Pastor Gardner's amazing survival tale—“they think I recovered 10 times faster than anyone thought possible”—will be expanded and developed on our new story-based website when it launches next year.

In an always-on world of instant publishing, there is no such thing as a single story. The one-version story is so 15 minutes ago.

Good writing has power in a day of constant motion and distractions, because we can “interrupt the interruption” with stories that run for longer, and have bigger hearts.

And so we shall reveal on our new site more about the man and his plans, as Bro. Austin seeks to dramatically expand his ministry.

I can't wait to launch the new site and keep the updates rolling as I continue on deputation.

Thank you for your prayers!



Thomas Liddle, *media missionary*.  
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## PHOTO

*Pastor Gardner preaching after several days of home rest. Inset: With wife Betty in intensive care.*



October 1 2020 | Alpharetta, Georgia | By Austin Gardner, *Vision Baptist Missions*

## Nearer my God to thee: Covid-19 pastor's story

They stuck holes in my face for the tubes—they weren't too worried about it because I wasn't expected to live. Eighty-eight percent of Covid-19 patients on ventilators die, and I was in palliative care, basically end-of-life: “Keep him comfortable until he kicks the bucket.”

I don't remember going to the hospital, I don't remember getting into the ambulance, or checking in. I was doped up and drugged. I can't tell you how alone I felt. I couldn't talk to my family. I couldn't see faces. Everyone's heads were covered. All I could see were their eyes. No one touched me without one to two layers of gloves. I felt humiliated. I wasn't even wearing underwear, and I couldn't walk. They just prodded and poked me.

So I lay there, and God worked in my life. I couldn't read my Bible, so I just said, “OK Lord, I've got to control my thinking.” I began to meditate on scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. I put things together. The Bible became so real to me. So I would lie there day

and night, outlining the Bible and seeing world evangelism on every page.

I couldn't get Genesis 1:1 out of my head: “In the beginning God created ...” I thought, “It's his world, it belongs to him, he created it for his pleasure, he created me for his pleasure, and so he has every right to tell me to do anything he wants, because it's his world. He owns it.”

I wanted to die. I thought, “I am 65, soon to be 66—I'm an old man, so why is he letting me live?” The fact that he has, tells me beyond a doubt that God has something special he wants to do.

While I do not know in detail why he has left me here, I want to live even more in a way that fulfils his purpose for me.

We live our lives flippantly, but when you stare death in the face, and survive, you know that God expects something of you. He is so good, and he has a purpose for us all: to carry the gospel to the world. So find out what you ought to be doing, and where you fit. What would he have you doing right now?