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## Truck stop ministry continues via radio

by Sarah Vaughn/Arkansas Baptists, posted Wednesday, April 01, 2020 (26 days ago)

MALVERN, Ark. (BP) -- There's a truck stop along I-30 just north of Malvern, Ark., known as JJ's. It's been there for years, and some might notice a small, white building on the edge of the property at the end of the parking lot.

For more than 20 years, that building, known as the Traveler's Chapel, has been a refuge for truckers who work long hours and may be away from their families for extended periods of time. Central Baptist Association sponsors the chapel, which is run by Chaplain Vince Perkins and a group of dedicated volunteers.

With the ongoing pandemic, the chapel has had to suspend services, but that hasn't stopped Perkins and the volunteers from ministering to those who are crucial to keeping the country running.

Ernest DeSoto, associational missionary for Central Baptist Association, said he and Perkins started searching for solutions to keep reaching truck drivers during this time of uncertainty. He noticed that some churches were turning to FM transmitters for drive-in services to minister to their people, so he ordered one, thinking the airwaves would be a place to minister to truckers even while unable to meet face to face.



For more than 20 years, the Traveler's Chapel has been a refuge for truckers who work long hours away from home.



A Gospel message stored on an iPhone is being broadcast on a continuous loop 24 hours a day via a short-range FM transmitter.

He collaborated with Perkins to create a message of hope and appreciation on an iPhone to run on a continuous loop 24 hours a day. The message would be broadcast within range of the truck stop parking lot. They talked to the truck stop owner, with whom they've had a close relationship over the years, to ask if they could post signs and distribute flyers with take-out meals to advertise the station.

By broadcasting over the radio to drivers who have stopped to rest, fuel or eat, they're still offering a Gospel message of hope. Even though face-to-face meetings have stopped, ministry continues through the airwaves.

"We've seen the need over the years," DeSoto said. "We get calls on a regular basis from truckers."

He noted that many of them are away from home for extended periods of times and now their workload and time away might even have been increased, creating added anxiety. Supplying a way for them to hear a biblically-based message of encouragement is very important.

DeSoto has teamed up with Crossgate Church in Hot Springs to create a video with a QR code in it to be sent to truck stops across the state so other drivers can hear the message. A card with the QR code and Chaplain Perkins' phone number is available so drivers can access the video and have someone to talk to 24 hours a day.