

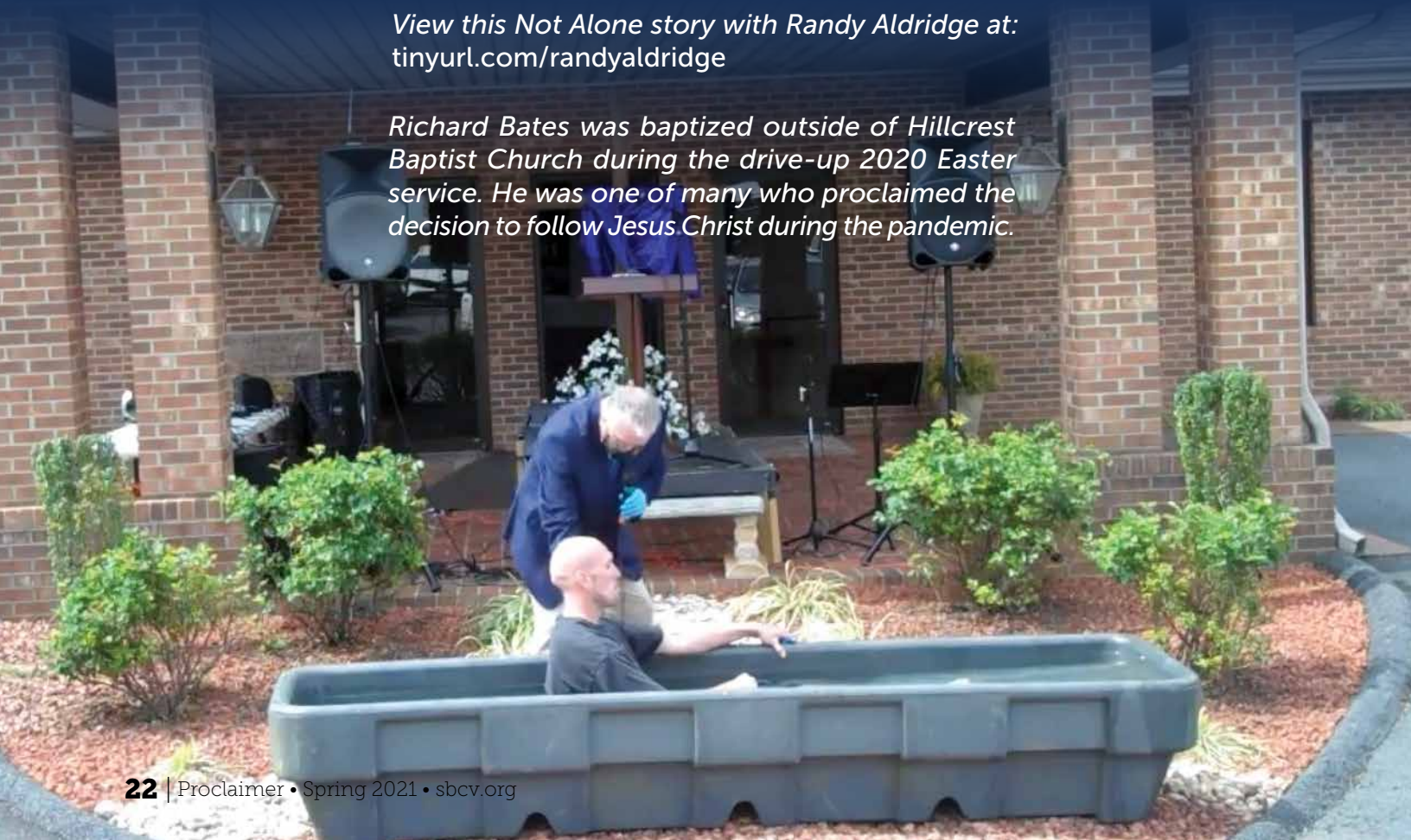
New Ideas

NEW TIMES



View this Not Alone story with Randy Aldridge at: tinyurl.com/randyaldrige

Richard Bates was baptized outside of Hillcrest Baptist Church during the drive-up 2020 Easter service. He was one of many who proclaimed the decision to follow Jesus Christ during the pandemic.



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In recent years, **Hillcrest Baptist Church** in Ridgeway, VA has dealt with many new things, bringing both excitement and concerns. But God’s provision through unforeseen circumstances has ushered praise back to Him.

In the fall of 2019, Hillcrest called Randy Aldridge as its new pastor. After 15 years serving on the staff of the SBC of Virginia, Aldridge felt God reveal his desire to shepherd a local church and open his eyes to the potential at Hillcrest. “I felt called to prepare the church for the future through progress and discipleship. I believed that I could help them,” he explained. Pastor Aldridge brought his background in church planting, pastoral ministry, and evangelistic leadership to the 50-year-old church located just outside of Martinsville.

In the past few years, Hillcrest faced new but anticipated challenges. The church needed to modernize its ministry in many ways, raise up new leaders, and reach a changing community. For years, Hillcrest has served as a lighthouse of active ministry in Henry County, but the area had begun to face economic, cultural, and population shifts. And then came their greatest challenge—the COVID-19 pandemic.

Led by Pastor Aldridge, Hillcrest has risen to the occasion in exciting ways. Beginning in March 2020, the church developed a media team to record or live-stream worship services, Sunday School classes, Bible studies, and other programs and post weekly to its website and social media forums. When services had to be moved solely online for an extended period of time, the church formed a technology team to help members get online and watch services. In the process, they were able to help many in the community with various technical issues, providing a lifeline while so



many were confined to their homes. Once folks were able to get out of their homes, the church expanded its on-campus technology capabilities by modernizing the church phone and internet systems and providing internet access for each classroom. The technology team has worked diligently to make sure everyone in the church is connected.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a terrible situation,” said Pastor Aldridge. “But it has opened doors of ministry. In fact, I’m excited about the new opportunities.” These opportunities have included:

- making **face masks** for medical professionals in the area (the church discovered that home health nurses and medical facilities that were not part of a larger network had fewer resources)
- starting a **new feeding ministry**—with church members donating dozens of eggs and making soup to put in sealed containers for delivery

- low-risk members of the church helping high-risk members with **grocery store and/or pharmacy runs**, then making contact-less deliveries to them

- developing **partnerships with local schools** as resource partners

- purchasing the **Christmas wish list** items for 23 foster kids in the area

- providing complete **Thanksgiving meals** for local families in need

God is taking care of Hillcrest and providing abundantly even in this unusual pandemic season. Hillcrest has even seen a financial surplus for the year, which is being reinvested in ministry.

“At a time when circumstances are forcing us apart, these ministries are bringing us together,” Pastor Aldridge concluded. “We have a goal that the new ministries begun during this very challenging time will continue to operate once the pandemic is a distant memory.” ■