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Lord, Thou Creator, glorious is Thy kingdom!
Year of Change

As we look back over the articles in the past year, we see the many events that have gone by. Some mourned the loss of loved ones, while others welcomed new life. Some bid farewell to friends and family as they moved away, and others welcomed those new families in. National events caused many to pause and reflect.

Undoubtedly the COVID-19 pandemic dominated the news and turned the world upside down. While in person worship was curtailed for all, many found ways to connect in new and deeper ways. Lives were altered in ways no one had imagined they would be.

Despite all this, God remained faithful. When we became weak, faith grew strong. When we couldn’t move as we wanted, the Spirit flowed freely. When everything changed, God was unchanging.

2020 taught us to be flexible with our plans and to trust him more. As we move into 2021, may we do so, holding strong to him as our unchanging Rock. He will be faithful, and we can trust him no matter what may come.

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Prov. 3:5-6

In Christian love,
Your Silver Lining editors
Our Aspiration - A body of believers, bound together by our love for Jesus Christ and His Word, reflecting God’s love, grace, and truth.

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.1

As we aspire to become a body of believers, bound together by our love for Jesus Christ and His Word, reflecting God’s love, grace, and truth, perhaps we can learn how to achieve such a goal by looking first to the way believers lived up to the calling of Jesus in the past. As we observe the response of the earliest believers to the testimony of Jesus and his disciples, it is clear that faith in Jesus was revealed starkly and undeniably by the immense love the believers had for one another. A love for each other that removed the idea of personal property. A love for their enemies that enabled Christ-followers to willingly surrender their lives without resisting. A love that transcended social barriers in a very stratified society. The amazing reality of a resurrected Jesus led to amazing alignment with his life and teaching.

Our church vision is not new. To the contrary, it calls us forward by calling us back to the timeless vision set forth by Jesus to inspire all believers at all times. It is a hoped-for return to the kind of love demonstrated by Jesus and imitated by his followers. It is a return to functioning as a thriving church built on the absence of selfishness, in sharp contrast to the world’s assertion of the supremacy of the individual.

Are we striving to fulfill this vision of being living evidence of God’s power and love? Is our witness astonishing to those who observe us? Is it unclouded by ego, hurt feelings, entrapment in the world’s entertainments and politics, and questionable honesty? Are we functioning together as a body, coordinated by our head, the resurrected Jesus? Does our church body edify itself in love?2 Are we so free of attachment to the world that we would willingly and freely give any of our possessions to a brother in need? Do we even see the needs of others?

We know that times of trouble tug on our heart to help one another and thus bind us together. Working together to prevent flooding or cleaning up together after a tornado are examples that come to mind. Rallying around a family who has tragically lost a loved one at a young age seems natural. Why is it that such times make it easy to demonstrate God’s love without reserve? Could it be that such disasters reorder our sense of priority? If we know that someone is without a home, it is much easier to open our own home. If we know that a young mother has died, it is easier to make our wants secondary to the needs of her children. In short, there are times that it is easy to prioritize other’s needs over our own. We understand that to be the love of Jesus in action. But we also know that sinners love their friends and reach out to help in times of trouble.

The mark of the Holy Spirit’s involvement is prioritizing other’s needs even when there is no compelling and urgent reason to do so. It extends to needs that are more subtle than survival. Noting a fragile soul that thrives on encouragement gives us opportunity to reach out in quiet ways to build them up. Knowing there are families whose finances are stretched can motivate us to restrain our own spending, aware that an ostentatious lifestyle can provoke others to envy. Noticing...
Greetings to each one of you tonight. It’s another great opportunity to look into the Word. So, let’s see what the Lord has for us today.

I’ve opened up into the book 2 Kings, and I have Chapter 10 here. I see names on these pages here: Elisha, Jehu, Ahab, worshippers of Baal, all kinds of things. Remember, when we’re looking at the kings, we’re looking at history. These are historical books, and they’re telling about the children of Israel and their various kings. Remember how many good kings and not so good – and sometimes really bad kings – there were? When there was a divided kingdom, both north and south had kings. Do you remember how many good kings Israel had? They had none. The northern kingdom had none. Judah went back and forth between having some good ones and some bad ones.

Let’s just read a portion of Chapter 10, in 2 Kings, starting at verse 18. It’s talking about Jehu.

“And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much. Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice to do to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live. But Jehu did it in subtilty, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal.” (vv.18-19)

So, to clarify as we’re going in here, Jehu intended to round up the worshippers of Baal, and he was cleaning house. Jehu had been doing that. He had been slaying people, executing judgment on the idolators, and he was going to do that here.

“And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed it. And Jehu sent through all Israel: and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not. And they came into the house of Baal; and the house of Baal was full from one end to another. And he said unto him that was over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth vestments.” (vv.20-22)

So, he tells the person that was over the vestry – this place where they kept garments for various changes of clothes, – “Once you’ve got all the worshippers of Baal together, bring out the special clothes and give them to the worshippers of Baal.” This probably isn’t that good of an analogy, but I remember in gym class when you would have the one group with their gym shirts on and the other group would put these red jerseys on over their gym shirts. So, one team would be the ones wearing gym shirts and the other would be wearing the red jerseys; that way you could tell which people were on each team.

“And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only. And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him. And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, and slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of Baal. And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them. And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house unto this day.” (vv.23-27)

So, let’s think about this for a second. This is a story. As many of the stories in this time are, it would go from a time where they would serve the Lord, and then there would be a time of idolatry. Sometimes, it would just get
awful, and then there would be a judgment, oftentimes with what seemed to be a lot of bloodshed as well.

Jehu then had a plan. He brought everybody together. He packed the house and gave everybody a jersey, so to speak, so that everybody could see who was there. Then he said, “Make sure of all that are there, there are none of those God-followers in here.” They looked around, and said, “Nope, we’ve only got prophets of Baal in here.” What was he doing? He was making sure there wasn’t anybody that shouldn’t be in there, and then he told the guard there was going to be an offering of sacrifice, however that was carried out. He said, after that is done, the guard should go in, and of everybody that essentially has one of those jerseys on, to make sure that they don’t get out. He added that “If you let anybody go, your life shall be for the life of him.” After all of that, they went into the house of Baal and broke those idols.

I want you to think about an application for today, and the good news is: I don’t think it requires any bloodshed. It shouldn’t. I do want to put it this way, often when we would think about the temple in the Old Testament, we think of things they would do at the temple. The temple was beautiful and holy. Then there would be a judgment like this sometimes where there was ‘cleaning house’, if you will.

What is the temple in the New Testament? The temple is your heart. My heart. That’s the temple. God says in the New Testament that we’re supposed to take care of our temple, and we’re supposed to treat it like the very presence of God is there, because who is there? If you’re a believer, the Holy Spirit is there. The very presence of God is with you.

You know what, it’s good for us to let the Holy Spirit do a house cleaning. Sometimes, you and I all need a house cleaning. Sometimes it’s an attitude. Sometimes it’s an action. Sometimes it’s a little piece of sin that you’re letting hang around, perhaps bitterness. Maybe it’s an actual thing that you should not let into your life that you have already allowed. Maybe it’s a way that you let Satan kind of wiggle into your life.

Let’s remember here that the application for us today is that we are individually the temple of God. Right here. And the Holy Spirit wants to live there, and not only in our lives but in every unbeliever’s life. He wants to come in.

So, let’s not let any of that other stuff around. When the Holy Spirit taps you on the heart and says, ‘Hey, that attitude is not okay’ or ‘Hey, you need to be more this way or less this way’ or ‘You’re letting this other in’, we should listen. Remember, God says in another place in the Bible – using very graphic language when he talks about sin, – “if your hand offends you, cut it off; it’s better to enter into heaven maimed than to miss it altogether.” The point here is this, we shouldn’t mess around with sin. Our sin nature, our human nature, always seems to let the door open a little bit to that. Again, there’s no bloodshed required here tonight, but I just want to remind everybody, let’s make sure that our temple is cleaned out for him.

The quartet is going to sing #109 (Zion’s Harp) – Gratitude for Deliverance.

I have before me here Romans 5. We’re going from the historical book which is laying out the stories of what happened in Israel to one of the doctrinal books of the New Testament. Paul is writing here, and he is making the case for, or answering the question of, what does salvation through Jesus Christ by grace through faith look like? How does that work? Who’s can receive it? He’s making the case early on here particularly in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. He starts out by leveling the playing field, by saying in Chapter 1 that even the creation speaks of God. That takes away the excuse of everybody on this earth. That means anybody anywhere can, just by seeing a sunrise, or through seeing a baby born, know that there’s a creator, that there’s a God, but the human heart is desperately wicked. It doesn’t

— Please turn to pg. 63
Ministry Program Updates

New Year, New Harvest

Distribution Committee

There are a number of things that happened in the year 2020 that most of us would probably like to leave in the past. As Christians, we would love to have God send us down a yearly summary of all the events that happened throughout the course of the year with their corresponding “All things work together for good…” explanation. But just like Job, we don’t always get to see behind the cosmic curtain and have to rely on what we know to be true, not what we feel is true. With that mindset, we look for the silver linings, and I don’t mean just waiting at your mailbox for your magazine subscription to arrive. Even as I write these words, I look down to check my phone and see a text informing my family that a friend at our home church starting repenting, a special little reminder that God works through details and orchestrates their events down to the second. Another event of 2020 that is worth getting excited about, is the new HarvestCall Distribution Center that was constructed in Lester, Iowa. In a year where a lot of HarvestCall activities had to be canceled or at least greatly modified, a new center is like that breath of fresh air when you finally get to take your mask off.

This new center will be home to a number of projects (with more to come as operations get underway). The first is a wooden wheelchair tray which will be crafted in the woodworking shop. These trays are for a local ministry and will be distributed to the church makes it an ideal location.

Planning in Light of Scripture

Planning. What does that word conjure up in your mind? Depending on your personality, your reaction is either one of appreciation or one of disregard. Beyond our personal reactions, what do we make of planning in a spiritual sense? As children of God, we understand that it is he who guides our steps, the Spirit who gives direction, and we need to be always surrendered to “if the Lord will, we shall live and do this, or that.”

Here are a few perspectives that HarvestCall has held as we recently worked through our strategic planning process.

1. God is sovereign and in control

   The HarvestCall planning process begins and ends in full affirmation of “if the Lord will.” (James 4:15)
   The stated plans of the HarvestCall board are never intended to be pursued outside of the continued direction of the Spirit and will of the Father.

2. God gives wisdom

   In continued application of the promise that God gives wisdom (James 1:5), as well as the numerous exhortations in Proverbs, we believe that God does direct his children by granting wisdom that is used to develop and pursue plans.
Distribution Committee

New Year, New Harvest

...Where a lot of HarvestCall activities had to be deferred. Another event of 2020 that is worth getting excited about, is the new HarvestCall Distribution Center that was constructed in Lester, Iowa. In a prayerful discussion, we believe that a friend at our home church starting repenting. We are grateful for the提醒 that God works through the moments we least expect it. Even as I write these words, I look down to the silver linings, and I don’t mean just waiting around, but looking for opportunities to bless us with. This new HarvestCall Center is an opportunity for those in the Lester area for sure, but also a good reminder to everyone reading this that the fields are still ripe for harvest. Even though the harvest process might have had to adapt a bit in our ever changing world, God has work for us to do. A special thank you to all who have been, continue to be, and will someday in the future give of yourselves for his work. God bless! – by Kaitlin Klotzle

3. We are weak and needy

Individually, we often have a hard time keeping things straight. As a group, we really have a hard time. We see this in the early church and we continue to experience it today. Planning is a confession of our weakness and a tool for keeping a group of people going the same direction.

4. The Holy Spirit is always working

While there are times in which the Holy Spirit does provide very specific, timely direction, the pattern of Scripture shows us the continual working of the Spirit. In light of this truth and the gift of wisdom referenced above, planning can be a discipline directed by the Spirit.

As we dive into the year 2021, some of us may be apprehensive about the events this year might bring us. If there were one verse that could be hung on a banner, printed on a flag, set as our computer screen backgrounds, or put on a sticky note on our bathroom mirrors, would it include the words “Lean not on thine own understanding”, “Be still and know”, “an expected end”, “a very present help”, or “so loved the world”? Maybe something completely different altogether?

Something we know for sure though, is that in times like these, we need a Savior, just like we have every yesterday of the past, every single today that God gives us, and every tomorrow that he chooses to bless us with. This new HarvestCall Center is an opportunity for those in the Lester area for sure, but also a good reminder to everyone reading this that the fields are still ripe for harvest. Even though the harvest process might have had to adapt a bit in our ever changing world, God has work for us to do. A special thank you to all who have been, continue to be, and will someday in the future give of yourselves for his work. God bless! – by Kirk Plattner
Life can be hard. Stressors of life, whether minor or life altering, affect many of us in this fallen world. Traumatic events can shock or overwhelm individuals and their ability to cope. For many of us, learning what trauma is, how to cope, and what treatment is available is not something we normally consider. Yet while sources of trauma and responses to trauma can vary widely, this article will provide an overview of several keys known to help people beat trauma and even thrive despite it.

**Key 1: Learn about Trauma**
Trauma reactions are normal responses to abnormal events. Common sources of trauma include:
- Accidents (e.g., vehicles, fires, workplace)
- Experiencing a violent crime, terrorism, or combat
- Natural Disasters (e.g., tornados, etc.)
- Serious Medical Events (life threatening illness, painful procedures, etc.)
- Abuse (physical, emotional or sexual abuse; or domestic abuse)

People who have experienced trauma often have intrusive thoughts and memories of the event such as nightmares and flashbacks. They often try to avoid thinking of the event or being around things that remind them of the event. Their thinking and mood are often negatively impacted, and depression, anxiety, and shame are common. They experience retriggering of strong emotions and fight, flight, or freeze responses occur often with little warning. Trauma does not simply heal over time as suggested by the old adage, “time heals all wounds”. Often, the most natural things people do – suppressing thoughts or trying to numb the strong emotions to cope with their trauma symptoms – accidentally keeps healing from occurring and prolongs suffering. Learning about trauma and how to respond to it in healthy ways is often more than half the battle.

**Resource:** Search the ACCFS website (www.accounseling.org) for “trauma” to listen to podcasts and read articles on this topic.

**Key 2: Seek Evidence-Based Treatment**
While traumatic events have occurred throughout the history of the world, effective treatments for trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are relatively new. In the last few decades, research has shed new light on what trauma does to the mind and body and what effective treatment looks like. Effective treatment is more available today than ever and there are several treatments that research shows provide more consistent, positive outcomes. Many people who experience a trauma assume that they will never heal and that there is no use trying to seek treatment. This could not be farther from the truth. While trauma can
have deep, lasting, and even permanent effects, seeking good treatment can make the difference in a trauma victim moving on to become a trauma survivor and eventually an overcomer. There are several types of high-quality trauma and PTSD treatments that can be used alone or in combination.

**Resource:** Learn more by watching the brief videos describing various types of trauma treatment from the National Center on PTSD (www ptsd va gov/appvid/video/index asp).

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**Key 3: Get Adequate Support**

Experiencing trauma can be a very isolating experience. While some traumatic events impact entire communities (e.g., a tornado ravaging a town), other traumatic events are often privately carried by the victims (e.g., rape or sexual assault). Emotions of shame and a sense of overwhelming are common and because of this, many individuals cope with their pain alone. Our adversary Satan loves to compound the pain of trauma with isolation and shame. His cruelty in this is staggering. The good news is that it does not have to be this way. Individuals with strong support networks who feel emotionally supported are likely to recover more quickly and completely. While people differ in how much they want to talk through their personal pain with others, it is often very helpful for individuals seeking counseling for trauma to have a support person/s who participate periodically in counseling sessions and is involved to some degree in the treatment process.

**Resource:** Support people can read the article Helping Someone with PTSD to learn ways to help without hurting (www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/helping-someone-with-ptsd.htm).

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**Key 4: Body-Mind-Spirit-Social**

Trauma does not just affect an individual’s memories. It impacts their whole being. Of course, the severity of the trauma, how many times it occurred, whether they have a support network, and whether they received high-quality treatment will all combine to determine how pervasively a traumatic event affects a person over time. Because trauma can affect the whole person, the subsequent treatment and recovery needs to address all of these areas. For example, trauma often causes individuals to be hyper-vigilant and their bodies stay on high alert. This can lead to jumpiness, irritability, and difficulty sleeping. Learning skills to quiet one’s body is as important as learning how to quiet one’s mind. Trauma can leave people with beliefs such as no one can be trusted; survivor’s guilt (Why did my friend die in that accident and I survived?); or one does not deserve to ever be happy again. Learning to recognize one’s unhealthy self-talk and corresponding cognitive distortions is important in the healing journey. Experiencing a grieving process is often required for healing from trauma as well. Having supportive family, friends, and church community can be an incredible help in the recovery process.

**Resource:** Read the book The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Bessel van der Kolk to develop a solid understanding of how trauma impacts the whole person and to understand how it can be effectively treated.

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Apostolic Christian LifePoints
www.aclifepoints.org
@aclifepoints on Facebook or Instagram
Ashlyn Gramm-Mission
Communication Coordinator

“October 1, 1971, marked perhaps one of the finest hours of the church’s entire history. On this date, the doors were opened to the first residents at the Apostolic Christian Home for the Handicapped in Morton, Illinois. This intermediate care facility was built to serve the physical and mental needs of handicapped persons regardless of their faith.” This quote is an excerpt from *Marching to Zion* on the history of Apostolic Christian LifePoints (formerly known as the Apostolic Christian Home for the Handicapped).

As you make note of the date mentioned above, you might realize that 1971 was fifty years ago. We at Apostolic Christian LifePoints will be celebrating our 50th anniversary this fall, and we can hardly believe it. This past year has certainly not been what any of us could have imagined, but neither have been the last fifty years as we look back at our LifePoints’ history!

When the first two residents entered the doors to their new home with us in 1971, could any of those involved with establishing the home have known that this mission would grow to presently serve 160 residents at 17 different homes around the Morton community? Could the families of the residents we served in those early years have envisioned how this nation would grow in its understanding, acceptance, and support of individuals with disabilities? Could the 300 individuals who gathered in front of the home for its dedication fifty years ago have known that they would be the first of thousands to visit, volunteer, and work at our homes? Only God could have foreseen these changes and known that he would be glorified through them all!

In preparation for celebrating our 50th anniversary, we have been going through fifty years’ worth of photographs and articles full of history. We have also been able to interview and capture the personal histories of some of the individuals who were involved with LifePoints in those early years. As 2021 progresses, we are excited to start sharing more about our history that we’ve uncovered with you. This church has been so generous in its support of our work at LifePoints.

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour." Eccl. 4:9

The reward has indeed been great, and God has certainly blessed us these past fifty years.

Gateway Woods Apostolic Christian Children’s Home
Bekah Shaffer — WillowBridge Community Advocate

The first place Olivia drove when she left the BMV with her newly acquired license was to a little coffee shop to meet me for our first mentoring meeting. She emerged from the car a much more confident sixteen-year-old driver than I had been ten years earlier, and she approached our table with great eagerness to learn. Neither of us had ever been in a mentoring relationship before, but we both assumed we could figure it out with the aid of unlimited dollar lattes.

For the next six or so years, we met weekly, studying books and talking over those dollar lattes, and by the end of our mentorship (which was nowhere near the end of the friendship that emerged), we had both done much teaching and learning. In fact, we continue to teach and learn, across many miles now.

Working with Olivia proved to be a picturesque entry into the mentoring world. It was a great gift, because it made me want to try such an endeavor again. I quickly learned, however, that not all mentees come to the table just like Olivia. Not all of them seek out such a relationship like she had done. Not all of them have life sorted out at such a young
age. Not all of them are driven to accomplish every single plan God has for them while they walk this earth. And not every session is served up like bottomless dollar lattes in a coffee shop.

My most recent foray into mentoring actually looked opposite in every way. Though “Amanda” didn’t resist my relationship with her, our pairing was more assigned than sought. Her life was certainly not sorted and her drive for life was mostly in park with an occasional shift into neutral. And I never once saw a latte in any of our meetings. Occasionally I brought along some lukewarm fresh brew, but that was it.

I invested as thoroughly as I had with Olivia. I shared what I hoped was wisdom about life. I offered ideas that I thought she would find helpful as she searched and picked her way. I prayed, loved, and cared fiercely. Yet I watched as she often chose the exact opposite of anything I suggested.

I’d be lying if I said I didn’t consider giving up. I wanted to move on, in search of an Olivia Jr. who wanted to learn and grow.

One day, in the middle of another maddening mess of picking through the shambles of ignored advice, Amanda looked up with wide eyes and said, “Please don’t stop teaching me even when you think I’m not listening. I’m learning more than you know.”

Once again, the mentor became the mentee. Those words are burned in my mind now, in all their truth. Yes - just because it is not picturesque doesn’t mean it’s not purposeful.

**News:**
- January is National Mentoring Month, if you would like to connect with youth like Olivia contact us today: larc@gatewaywoods.org for more information.
- We currently have these openings at Gateway Woods: Assistant Houseparent, Houseparent Couples, and Gateway Farms Assistant. For more information, please see our ad in this month’s edition of The Silver Lining or visit the Careers page on our website at gatewaywoods.org/careers.
- We are searching for a Summer Volunteer Coordinator for 2021. Please contact Bro. Keith Schambach at keith.schambach@gatewaywoods.org for more information.
- We are also searching for our Summer Education Intern. Please contact Bro. Brock Williamson at brock.williamson@gatewaywoods.org for more information.
- We also have a summer internship opportunity in Gateway Farms. This is a great opportunity to work directly with residents as you plant and harvest bountiful gifts from the garden. Please contact Bro. Eric Bahler at gwfarms@gatewaywoods.org for more information.

You are an important advocate to help us spread the word about God’s work at Gateway Woods. Please continue to lift us up in prayer, check our website gatewaywoods.org and our Facebook page at facebook.com/gatewaywoods often for updates, and make sure that you are on our mailing list. If you would like be added to our mailing list, please contact us at 888.443.4283 or send an email to info@gatewaywoods.org. Finally, if you would like to receive a monthly email detailing how the work at Gateway Woods is bringing help and healing to those in need, please consider joining our Restoring Hope email list. You can do so at gatewaywoods.org/newsletter or by emailing jon.ringger@gatewaywoods.org.

**Arizona, Phoenix**

**Marge Lindenbaum**

“Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.” Isa 42:9

Things are changing so quickly. Even as this is being written, it
is unclear what our nation and world will look like by the time it is published. 2020 taught us we cannot count on our own plans coming to pass. It will be interesting to see what 2021 has for us. There are many voices speaking in our ears, telling us things we like to hear and things we dread. It is hard to know what to believe. When Jesus spoke of the time of the end, he spoke a strong caution that his followers be not deceived. Satan is the father of lies and will bring his servant, Antichrist, to power using deceit, presenting him as an angel of light. We must examine everything in the light of the Word, prove every Spirit and diligently seek Truth. God will not share his glory, so the word of any prophet who does not give all glory to Jesus Christ should be disregarded. Anyone who encourages trust in anything other than the Word and the shed blood of Jesus, likewise, should not be given credence. Another test God gives for his prophets is that every word of prophecy is true. If there is one thing that is false, then it is not of God. We must pray for discernment, listen to the Holy Spirit, and study the Scriptures diligently, so we recognize deceit and truth. We should be sounding the warning loud and often to those who might yet be saved, while it is still the Day of Grace.

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Deut 29:29

The weather here in the Valley of the Sun is (finally) cooling off, and we even got some much-needed rain. We were blessed by the service of a visiting minister and thank Bro. Dean Steffen (Sis. Carol, Belvidere, IL) for being willing to stand before us and declare the Word. Our Active group was able to gather and decorate some Christmas cookies. They are quite a talented group of decorators! They also enjoyed a presentation on the angels’ message of Joy that was given to the shepherds that special night. As this is written, we are looking forward to a Christmas Program by our Sunday school on Christmas Day. We pray and trust that the Lord’s will be done in the coming year and look forward to hearing that trumpet sound - soon, it seems!

Arizona, Tucson
Dean and Jackie Knobloch

I think we are all wondering how long all of “THIS” is going to go on. I am certain that the only sure thing in this life is Jesus Christ and him crucified. Keeping our eye on that heavenly goal seems far more productive than speculating on vaccines, travel plans and our desire to be back to normal.

We are no longer assembling on Sunday morning, but we are using Zoom. We are grateful to the ministering brothers to bring us the Word even though we cannot gather in person.

Some of our winter visitors have returned and so we have to count on virtual visiting to welcome them back for the winter months.

May God grant each a blessing for the new year and hope for the salvation of all.

Connecticut, Rockville
Heidi Beutel, Kim Schneider

Joy to the World the Lord has come! Let earth receive her King, let every heart prepare him room! We rejoice with Sean McKeon (Heather) that he has surrendered his heart to the Lord in humble repentance. We pray for God’s nearness and grace as he follows in the footsteps of our Saviour.
We extend our support, prayers, and sympathy to Sis. Charlotte Limberger and her family in the passing of her daughter, Sis. Dawn Maibach (Smithville, OH). We trust the Lord will provide for their family as they endure this season of sadness and loss.


Over the past weeks the brothers and sisters in our local congregation have had the blessing and privilege of partaking of Holy Communion. We were thankful for the exhortations, and the additional efforts it took from many to allow this to happen amidst COVID-19 restrictions. God is faithful.

May God be with each of you as we celebrate the humble birth of our Lord and Savior.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Isa. 9:6

Florida, Fort Lauderdale
Renee Mangold

We were grateful to have visiting ministers Bro. Tom Bolliger (Sis. Jane, Tremont, IL); Bro. Dan Beer (Sis. Deb, Milford, IN) and Bro. Todd Stoller (Sis. Pam, Latty, OH). Our prayer is that the Lord will bless them for their willingness to serve.

As we celebrated Thanksgiving and many could not gather together with loved ones, it was so helpful to focus on all that we really do have to be thankful for.

“When you are plagued by a persistent problem—one that goes on and on—view it as a rich opportunity. An ongoing problem is like a tutor who is always by your side. The learning possibilities are limited only by your willingness to be teachable. In faith, thank Me for your problem. Ask Me to open your eyes and your heart to all that I am accomplishing through this difficulty. Once you have become grateful for a problem, it loses its power to drag you down. On the contrary, your thankful attitude will lift you up into heavenly places with Me. From this perspective, your difficulty can be seen as a slight, temporary distress that is producing for you a transcendent Glory never to cease!” Jesus Calling by Sarah Young

We are really looking forward to our winter visitors that may soon be coming. We are delighted to have you worship with us. However, since we expect to have visitors traveling to Ft. Lauderdale from so many different places, we ask for your help to keep the church open and everyone safe and healthy. We will be limiting our Sunday services to a morning only gathering, without lunch and no Sunday school. We ask that everyone wear a mask, practice social distancing, and sit together by families. Please do not attend services if you have been exposed to COVID-19 within the past 10 days or have had any recent symptoms of COVID-19. While we may be socially distancing, we can all look forward to spiritually being closer than ever as we appreciate our health and desire God has given to come together in worship. Thanks for your understanding and support. We hope to see you soon.

District of Columbia, Washington
Henrietta Meyer

With the pandemic and the holidays, we only had one visiting minister. Bro. Adam Luginbuhl (Philadelphia, PA) had a Zoom visit with our congregation.

We are looking forward to the new year bringing a new schedule of visiting ministers with either virtual or in person visits.

Over the years, many of our visitors have asked if I was still working or retired. By the time you read this, I will be retired and waiting to see what the Lord has planned for the next phase of my life.

If you are planning to visit Washington, D.C. area for vacation or business, please contact Sis. Henrietta Meyer at 703 904-8301 or hmeyer2831@gmail.com for assistance, to let us know how many to expect for Sunday services and to find out if, when and where services are to be held.
Florida, Sarasota

Sandra Kaeb

We are blessed with so much our hearts are overflowing. As we go through this Thanksgiving Day, may we remember to thank God daily not just on this date set aside for remembrance.

As a church family we are thrilled that a new family has joined us; Bro. Zach, Sis. Abby Schumacher and their three precious children; Brynn, Gabriel, and Jace. Bro. Zach’s job was transferred from Fort Myers to Sarasota. May they feel our love as they make this transition to Sarasota.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Bro. Charles Gerber, (Bluffton, IN), Bro. Allen Schrock, (Congerville, IL) and Bro. Ernie Isch, (Bluffton North, IN) as they transitioned to their heavenly home. They have wintered in Sarasota, FL and our prayers will be with their spouses, children and families. Our prayers are also with Sis. Becky Funk as she will be having surgery.

The Sunday school students and teachers gathered at the church Saturday, December 12 to go shopping for underprivileged children of the Angel Tree Project. We had pizza and ice cream at the church then went to see lights in the neighborhood.

On December 13 the children presented us with The Christmas Story. What a joy to hear them tell it in verses and songs. May they reflect on the true meaning of this holiday in the future. Thanks to all the teachers and those who worked to put all this together.

A group plans to go caroling at the Fountains of Hope and several of our older loved one’s residents.

We ask that anyone traveling from the north not come to church or attend group functions outside of church for a 7-day period after arrival. We ask that everyone (locals and visitors) respect and follow the intent of this requirement, which is to provide protection for all those attending church services during the winter months when we have a high turnover rate of attendees.

Haiti, Bonne Fin - Hospital Lumiere

Rick and Komari Aberle

We are thankful for a new year here in Bonne Fin. We greet all who read this in Jesus name.

The past month brought Bro. Rick Aberle back to the hospital after spending several weeks in the US with his family. Bro. Tom Hitz departed in early December after spending several weeks here in support of the program.

We are grateful for the return of Bro. Danny and Sis. Sarah Bertsch and their family. They had been in the US for the birth of their son Tanner. They returned with Danny’s parents, Bro. Mike and Sis. Carmen Bertsch, who visited for a week.

While COVID-19 continues to impact the US, we continue to be sheltered by God’s hand here in Haiti. There is very little impact of the pandemic at present, although we continue to be vigilant and cautious in our work at the hospital and with our travel. Still, we are looking forward to next month, as there are several planned visits by board members, HarvestCall leadership and family members. May God protect all on their travels.

Haiti, Les Cayes

Mike and Susie Walder

Looking back at the past year, it appears only God knew 2020 would be the start of a new epoch—a new period of history—that we would enter. Some ways of doing things will never be quite the way they were, perhaps will never return to what we consider normal. At the same time, many young children will never know the difference and will wonder why that is such a big deal.

In Haiti too, old traditions are being put aside and people are realizing that change is not necessarily the worst thing. For example, many churches have additional services on Sunday, and weddings are occurring any day of the week, not only on Saturday. Funerals no longer have to be held at 4:00 in the afternoon as they previously were.

As we enter 2021, we can be certain that God never changes and is a sure foundation for us. His love, mercy and grace never fail. The promises in the Word are irrevocable. We must keep our hand steady on the plough, while we keep our heart singly focused, our ear ever attentive to the Spirit, and our gaze upward. The time is short! We never want to live in the past, but we always want to be
fully engaged in God’s work and join him in what he is doing today in the present world.

We certainly enjoyed the Bluffton construction team that was here recently! They put on a new school and church roof in one community and started another church roof in another. At the same time two brothers came to support Child Sponsorship and update our aging software program for which we are so thankful (Bro. Rich Pfister, Bluffton, IN and Bro. Rob Lehman, Wolcott, IN). May God bless you for your love and encouragement.

Illinois, Belvidere

Darcy Steffen

“No the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” Rom. 15:13

As the holidays are in full swing, I have noticed that there seems to be more Christmas lights up this year than normal. Our culture is also pushing for more positivity considering this past year and the challenges it has brought. I love pretty lights and feel good stories more than most people, but I am concerned that we as a culture are trying to put on a show. I hope that instead of just making our houses and hearts look good from the outside, that we can be filled with an internal and eternal joy. This, of course, only comes from Jesus Christ our Lord, and it is he who is asking his children to lead joy-filled lives to glorify him.

Sis. Emily Anliker (Bro. Grant) lost another grandfather this month, after losing her other one such a short time ago. Bro. Wayne Strahm (Sis. Claudia, Bern, KS) passed away. We are thankful that Bro. Grant, Sis. Emily, and Rollie were able to go visit him recently. Our hearts also grieve as Bro. Dean Steffen (Sis. Carol) lost another aunt, Sis. Lenora Steffen (Elgin, IL). We rejoice that they had a hope of heaven and look forward to seeing them again someday!

December is also the month we are reminded of Elaiah Salome Steffen, daughter of Bro. Jordan and Sis. Shayla. December 12 marks three years since she has passed away.

Death and suffering is so difficult for us to handle, but we cling to the joy that is set before us and that we can join the saints in heaven some sweet day. Please keep these loved ones in your prayers as they face these losses.

Many from Bro. Karl Braun’s (Mitzi) family were hospitalized this month due to the Coronavirus. While they are recovering, please keep them in your prayers as well.

It is with great joy that we can report we were able to have our Christmas Program this month! We called it a Jesus Program because we missed our Easter Program and therefore combined them into one. The youngest class told about the birth of Christ, the middle class told about the life of Christ, and the Jr./Sr. Bible class told about the crucifixion, death, and resurrection. It was beautiful to hear the entire account from the cradle to the grave and beyond!

Illinois, Bloomington

Kinsey Dotterer, Lauren Zimmerman

Even though the Holiday season is looking different this year, there are still so many things to be thankful for and so many opportunities to be a blessing to others. We collected items for Thanksgiving baskets for local families in need and once again participated in the Adopt-A-Family project to bless families for Christmas.

Bro. Brent, Sis. Alisha, and big brothers Silas and Rhett Wagenbach, welcomed Indie Noelle into their hearts on November 2. Grandparents are Bro. Jan and Sis. Val Gutwein (Francesville, IN) and Bro. Doug and Sis. Lillian Wagenbach (San Diego, CA.)


We mourn with the family of Sis. Alice Steidinger who passed away. We also mourn the loss of Vernon Maier and our prayers continue to be with his wife Beth. Our prayers are also with Bro. Merle and Sis. Elsie Eisenmann, Bro. Leon Kaeb, and their families during the time of
loss of their father Bro. Elmer Kaeb (Cisna Park, IL).

Our prayers also surround Sis. Jessica Leman as she and her family mourn the loss of her father Fred Basham.

We rejoice with Hudson Kaeb (Bro. Clint and Sis. Jamie) as he has given his heart to the Lord.

Our children are back in Sunday school after a short break from in-person services and are starting off with their Christmas party that usually involves practicing for their Christmas Programs. We are sad that those programs are not happening like we are used to, but we are so grateful for the Sunday school teachers for doing what they can to make the season fun for the kids.

May the peace and joy of this season be with you!

Illinois, Bradford
Becky Endress, Lena Stoller

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”

When I read this quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. recently, it made me think about the many disappointments we have faced this past year and yet how they pale in comparison to the hope we have in Christ. Since the last article, we have only been able to assemble at church a handful of times, due to the rise in COVID-19 cases in our area. We thank our ministers for their willingness to preach to an empty sanctuary and our recording room brothers for faithfully working behind the scenes so we could be fed spiritually even when we were not able to gather in person. While many in our congregation have been ill recently, we are thankful no complications have arisen thus far.

What better way to be reminded of the hope of the future than a newborn baby? Bro. Steve, Sis. Betsy, Lexi, Josie, Isla and Willa Endress welcomed Flora Kae into their family on December 7. Newborns are a beautiful reminder of Christ’s coming to earth so many years ago.

Our Christmas Program is always a blessing each year. While there were changes made to accommodate the current situation, the same message of hope was presented by our youth. It is our prayer that all the participants could someday personally experience the hope and salvation that Christ offers.

Illinois, Champaign
Brent Young

We rejoice with our Sis. Kirbi Eckerty in her engagement to Bro. Jesse Fischer (Bastrop, TX). Sis. Kirbi’s parents are Bob Eckerty and Monica & Troy Abbot. Bro. Jesse’s parents are Bro. Kevin and Sis. Annette Fischer (Roanoke, IL).

We extend our appreciation to Bro. Jeremiah Psinas (Morton, IL) and Bro. Chad Leman (Sis. Kim, Fairbury, IL) for visiting and preaching the Word. Our counseling elder, Bro. Jeff Grimm (Sis. Ruth, Goodfield, IL) also visited to share the fall Memorandum with the church.

We appreciate Bro. Jeff and Sis. Ruth’s continual service to our congregation.

Partings are always bittersweet when there are good reasons to move but empty spots are left behind. Bro. Joel and Sis. Mindy Stickling along with Leo, Abe, Tate, and Tessa will be attending the Washington, IL church as they move closer to Bro. Joel’s work. Bro. Matthew Kieser will be attending the Goodfield, IL church as he moves closer to his parents.

Our typical Christmas tradition includes a Sunday afternoon Christmas Program, caroling, and a chili supper. This year we enjoyed creative substitutions, including a boxed chili dinner to go and a walk-through live nativity in our church parking lot. Through the efforts of our Sunday school, the Christmas story came to life, reminding us that our faith is rooted in real events that happened in real time and space. As we consider the events of the first advent, we are challenged again to grasp the reality of the impending second advent as well!

Illinois, Chicago
Diana Eisenmann

Our annual holiday services and events were modified to a virtual format; we are thankful for the opportunity to worship together via Zoom during this time that we are not able to gather in person. We have also incorporated designated fellowship time following online services which has worked very well
for the size of our congregation. We held our Thanksgiving service on the last Wednesday evening in November. In December we had a Fellowship Night where many shared special Christmas memories and family traditions. Due to the creativity and hard work of Sunday school teachers, students, and parents, we enjoyed a virtual Christmas Program. The individual parts were assembled into a video that we all watched together on a Sunday afternoon in December. It was very well done and a wonderful way to be reminded that “Wise Men Still Seek Him” in this Christmas season that is quite different for everyone. We appreciate all the effort that went into these special events.

We mourn with several families who have lost loved ones during this holiday season. Bro. John Wagenbach, Jr. (Eureka, IL., formerly of Mediapolis, IA) passed away in November. He was the grandfather of Sis. Diana Eisenmann (Bro. Greg). Sis. Wilma Kuntz (Gridley, IL) passed away in December. She was the grandmother of Sis. Laura Lindberg (Bro. Mark) and Bro. Brian Vercler (Sis. Amber). Sis. Ruth Wuethrich of Francesville, IN also passed away in December. She was the mother of Bro. Chris Wuethrich (Sis. Carla, St. Louis, MO) who was previously a minister in Chicago, and the grandmother of Bro. Levi Wuethrich (Sis. Kyann) and Sis. Marissa Wuethrich.

Illinois, Cissna Park
Denise Kaeb

We were saddened this month by the passing of Bro. Elmer Kaeb, who had been residing at Fairview Haven but had returned home to Cissna Park for an indefinite time. He made his journey to his heavenly home on November 25, two weeks after he turned 95. Bro. Elmer has twelve children, Sis. Elsie Eisenmann (Bro. Merle), Paul (Joan), Sis. Linda Sinn (Bro. Don), Bro. Max (Sis. Beth), Jim (Diane), Bro. Eric (Sis. Louann), Bro. Hartzell (Sis. Denise), Elder Bro. Harvey (Sis. Judy), Sis. Darlene Walder (Bro. Russ), Bro. Les (Sis Christine), Leon, Bro. Todd (Sis. Valerie), 65 grandchildren and 138 great grandchildren.

Because of the babe in the manger, we have hope that, one day, we will be with Christ and all those that have gone before us in that beautiful place called Heaven.

Note of Thanks

The family of Elmer Kaeb would like to thank all of you for the many cards, memorials and expressions of sympathy since the passing of Dad and Grandpa. He would have been humbled by the kind words spoken of him and would have given God the glory. I overheard a “adopted” granddaughter say he told her he loved her. She thought “how can he love me, he doesn’t even know me?” But that was the way Dad was, he loved all mankind. Only God could have orchestrated the final weeks of his life and for that, we are most thankful.

Note of Thanks

A special “Thank You” to all who remembered us during the time of Joan’s illness and death. She would have been so appreciative, as we have been, for all the many prayers, cards, words of sympathy, phone calls and memorials. May God bless you for sharing your love. Mathew 5:16

- The Joan (Mogler) Rudin family

Illinois, Congerville
Mary Knapp, Erica Steffen

Even as we consider the birth of our Savior in this Christmas season, our congregation has also considered the life and death of two loved ones. Born just two days apart in 1941, cousins Sis. Nancy Schrock and Bro. Allen Schrock (Sis. Carol) went home to be with their Lord just three days apart in 2020. Sis. Nancy passed away on November 23 and Bro. Allen on November 26. Sis. Nancy leaves behind many beloved nieces and nephews in our congregation, as well as her brother, Bro. Ken Schrock (Sis. Janet). We pray for comfort and peace for our Sis. Carol as she has had to say goodbye to her husband. These dear ones will surely be missed, but oh what joy we have knowing their race has been well run!

With great thankfulness we witnessed a spiritual burial, as our new Sis. Hannah Walder was baptized on November 29. Sis. Hannah is the daughter of our Bro. Josh and Sis. Tina. May she feel the Spirit’s nearness as she continues her walk with the Lord as a daughter of the King!
**Note of Thanks:**

The Allen Schrock family would like to extend their gratitude to all their friends and family who donated to the memorials, sent meals, and shared their condolences and memories of Allen. The love and friendship from you all has been and continues to be a huge blessing. Our love and God’s blessings to you all,

- Sis. Carol Schrock, Mark (Terri) Schrock, Lori (Myron) Rumbold, Sis. Lynda (Bro. Rodney) Hinrichsen (Goodfield, IL), Mike Schrock, and families

_Silent Night_ (Elgin, IL); six grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

Sis. Lenora Steffen passed away on November 29, and there was a private graveside service on December 1. Surviving are two sisters, Gladys Kaufman (Don, Bloomington, IL) and Jeanne Stoller (Richard, La Jolla, CA); one brother, Dale Steffen (Sharon, Rancho Santa Fe, CA); one sister in law, Sis. Kathryn Steffen, (Morton, IL); many nieces and nephews plus many friends and relatives.

Elder Bro. Dan Moser read the Fall Memorandum to our congregation on Wednesday evening, December 2.

We are thankful to welcome Shalise Steidinger (Taylor, Missouri) who has moved to our area for college.

**Illinois, Eureka**

_Debra Blunier, Lavonne Schumacher_

For many years, our Sunday school students have enjoyed distributing Thanksgiving baskets to residents at our church nursing home and to residents of our community. This year, we were thankful they were still able to express a thankfulness by singing a few hymns outside of the homes of our brothers and sisters who have not been able to gather with us due to COVID-19.

“Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.” _Psa. 95:2_

We are thankful that many years ago preparation was made in the hearts of two dear souls.

Sis. Jackie Rumbold (Bro. Ron, Princeville, IL) passed away on November 16. We extend our sympathy to Bro. Ron and his family. Bro. Ron spent many Sundays in church with us after Sis. Jackie moved to our nursing home.

Sis. Sara Zimmerman (Bro. Matt) lost her dear grandmother, Lyola Ringger on November 21. We look forward to a glad reunion in heaven!

"Carried by the angels to the land of rest,  
Music sweetly sounding through the skies;  
Welcomed by the Saviour to the heav’nly feast,  
Gathered with the loved in Paradise.”

Carried by the Angels, _Gospel Hymns #389_

On Thanksgiving Day, Bro. Kent Wiegand (Sis. Lanae, Goodfield, IL), shared the Word of life. We want to thank him for his labors of love.

Sis. Edie Stoller (Bro. Tom) spent some time in the hospital this month with COVID-19. We are thankful she is now recovering at home and look forward to when she can assemble with us again.

Bro. Sawyer and Sis. Abbie Cottrell and sister Sierra welcomed Turner Riley into their hearts and home on December 17. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Brent and Sis. Darla Cottrell and Bro. Bill and Sis. Heidi Wettstein.

We were blessed to listen to our Sunday school students sing of baby Jesus on December 13.

Several days later, two of our
senior boys heeded the words in one of the Christmas hymns that was sung that evening:

"Be not content this babe to know,
Nor stay at Bethlehem,
But go with Christ to Calvary's brow,
Beyond Jerusalem.
'Tis there men learn to know the Christ,
For there He bore man's sin.
Then open wide the door of heart.
And let the Saviour in."
The Babe of Bethlehem,
Hymns of Zion #36

We are rejoicing with Konnor Wiegand (Bro. Brian and Sis. Tina) and Cade Walder (Bro. Brad and Sis. Carla) as they made the decision to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. Several weeks before, Autumn Knapp (Bro. Tyler and Sis. Tiffany) began her walk with the Lord. We are thankful for each one that opens the greatest gift that ever was given.

Notes of Thanks:
Sincere appreciation for your cards, calls, gifts, and meals during my recent hospital stay and recuperation. It meant so very much! - Bro. George Baer

Notes of Thanks:
The family of Leland Zimmerman would like to express their thankfulness for the many prayers offered on their behalf as well as the love and support they felt since Leland’s passing. May God bless each one of you.

Illinois, Fairbury
Kati Meiss, Trish Steidinger

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” IThess 5:18

This verse is convicting to me. Do I really give thanks in every thing? It’s easy to be thankful for the good times, but can I honestly give thanks for the hard things in my life? Those hard times have brought me to my knees and God has used them to mold and shape me into who I am today. If we can give thanks for the hard times as well as the good, God can use us for mighty things in his Kingdom building.

We rejoice with Tyler Steidinger (Bro. Martin and Sis. Trish) who is seeking God in repentance. We are thankful for each soul who recognizes their need of a Savior and we continually pray for more to answer his call.

Our hearts go out to those of our church family who have recently lost loved ones. We pray for Bro. Walt Edelman (Sis. Rosetta), Sis. Kathryn Fehr (Bro. Glenn), Sis. Rosalie and Sis. Ella Marie Edelman who laid to rest their brother, Bro. Albert Edelman. We also pray for Bro. Ted Steidinger (Sis. Sara) as he mourns the loss of his mother, Sis. Alice Steidinger.

Illinois, Forrest
Jessica Gerber, Marsha Lanz

We were recently reminded in a sermon to "Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Rom. 12:15. So, we rejoice with Bro. Chad Steidinger (Bro. Ray and Sis. Shelly) and Sis. Heather Jamison (Delmar and Barb Nunamaker) as they were united in in marriage on November 22. May God bless them as they start their lives together.

We also rejoice with four converts who are at peace with God and are now desiring baptism. They are, Lynette Edelman (Kirk and Myra), Alexandria Brown (Bro. Joel and Sis. Lana), Nolan Zimmerman (Bro. Adam and Sis. Rachel), and Marcus Aberle (late Bro. Mark and Sis. Laverne).

God has given us several opportunities to weep with them that weep as quite a few from our congregation lost loved ones this month. Our Sis. Velma Koehl passed from this life on November 28; we extend our sympathy to her son Barry Koehl (Sis. Rosemary) and daughter Kathy Kahle (Steve).

Our thoughts and prayers are also with Sis. Tamra (late Keith) Bachman in the passing of her father-in-law, Clifford Bachman; Bro. Kevin Coffey (Sis. Denise) in the passing of his father, Earl Coffey; Sis. Jean Rickets (Bro. Nick) in the passing of her sister, Mary Ashby; Bro. Philip Kaeb (Sis. Wendi) in the passing of his father Merlin Kaeb; and Sis. Jean Knapp (Bro. Harlen) as she is a sister to Merlin.

We thank our Elder Bro. Marvin Dotterer for bringing forth the fall Memorandum. How timely as we reflect on the year gone by! I know for myself it would be easy to write off the year as one I do
not want to remember and yet, as mentioned in the memorandum, “He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” Job 23:10. As we begin the new year, may we allow our reflections of the bygone year to provide an opportunity to grow in the likeness of Jesus, who overcame the world.

**Illinois, Goodfield**

**Amy Hinrichsen, Judy Knapp**

“We rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” 1 Thes. 5:16–18

We enjoyed having Bro. Gregg Rumbold (Sis. Heather, Peoria, IL) for our Wednesday night Bible study the week before Thanksgiving. His topic was on “unthankfulness” and we were reminded how we are called to be thankful at all times. This year has been one we will not forget and even with its many challenges, we have so many things to be thankful for. We were thankful to assemble on Thanksgiving Day. What a blessing to give thanks to God together as a church family.

We rejoice with Cale Schumacher, son of Bro. Dan and Sis. Heidi Schumacher, as he gave his testimony and was baptized the weekend of December 5 and 6. We were thankful Elder Bro. James Fehr (Sis. Brenda, Tremont, IL) was able to be in Goodfield to share in this wonderful weekend.

Our hearts are sad for Bro. Rod and Sis. Lynda Hinrichsen as Sis. Lynda recently lost her father, Bro. Allen Shrock (Sis. Carol, Congerville, IL). Our prayers are with the Hinrichsen family and the Schrock family during this time.

We are also sorry for Sis. Phyllis Rokey (Bro. Kenneth) and Madolyn Tanner as they lost their dear sister, Verna Wettstein. We pray God will comfort them.

Babies are such a miracle and we rejoice with Max and Jessica Hodel as they were blessed with a baby girl, Zailee Rose, on December 1. Thankful grandparents of this precious little girl are Bro. Jeff and Sis. Jenny Hodel (Roanoke, IL) and Bro. Mike and Sis. Jenise Wiegand.

Bro. Nathan and Sis. Tabitha Zobrist are excited to be first time parents and were blessed with a baby boy, Asher James, born on December 2. Asher is happily welcomed by grandparents, Bro. Mike and Sis. Susie Zobrist (Congerville, IL) and Bro. Dirk and Sis. Erika Koch (Tremont, IL).

Many in our church family have been sick this month due to COVID-19. Bro. Ted Taufner (Sis. Kenda) had to spend several days in the hospital for COVID-19 and Pneumonia. He is thankfully doing much better now and is home. We are prayerful for all those who are sick. It is not an easy time.

Christmas is almost here, and we are thankful to still have a Christmas Program even if it is “virtual” this year. It is a blessing to see and hear the children tell the story of Jesus born as a baby, God’s perfect gift for us. We pray you all have a blessed Christmas and New Year’s. We pray 2021 can be a year of hope for all. No matter what, God is in control and he will always provide.

**Illinois, Gridley**

**Perry Klopfenstein**

We are sorry to report the death of Bro. Elmer Kaeb, 95, of the Cissna Park church, father of our Elder Bro. Harvey Kaeb. He and his wife had 12 children, all surviving. We offer our sympathies to the Kaeb family.

Bro. Brett Fehr was hospitalized with COVID-19, and is improving. Bro. Bill Funk had shoulder surgery and is recovering.

Bro. Kevin Knapp (Sis. Dixie, Bloomington, IL) spoke on Wednesday, December 16. His topic was “Discipleship.”

Sis. Wilma M. Kuntz, 90, passed away on December 4, 2020. Bro. Clyde, her husband of 65 years survives her. Also surviving are three daughters, Sis. Sonia Vercler (Bro. Tim, Gridley, IL), Sis. Sara Garman (Steve, Tremont, IL) and Donna Kuntz, (Peoria, IL); three sons, Bro. Richard (RaeJean, Gridley, IL), Russell (Sherrie, Gridley, IL) and Rollyn (Angie, Chenoa, IL); a sister, Sis. Lillian Mogler (Bro. Howard, Lester, IA) and a brother, Bro. Reuben Luthi (Sis. Chrystol, Washington, IL); 19 grandchildren and 40 great-grandchildren. Preceding her in death were four brothers, one sister, and a daughter-in-law, Brenda Kuntz. Sis. Wilma loved the fellowship, and her kindliness and interest in everyone will be missed.
The nation, and we as individuals, deal with the realities of COVID-19. Some contract the virus, and others must guard against it in wearing masks and keeping proper distances. Such has affected the frequency and mode(s) of worship. Yet, we can still sing, “God is ever present, Let us now adore Him.”

**Illinois, Morton**

*Annette Tanner*

Even as these challenging times continue with gathering restrictions and somewhat of a slower pace for some, it seems time passes quickly. We thank God for blessing us in many ways during happy times and sad times in the past month.

On December 2, our Bro. Kent Levy (Sis. Holly) spoke at our Christmas themed Family Worship Night on the topic “Receive the God of Miracles”. He reminded us that Jesus’s name means Lord of Salvation. Peace on earth at Christmas is about Jesus coming and providing peace between us and our Heavenly Father.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 5:1

November 16, Bro. Michael and Sis. Tami Leman along with big sister Aria welcomed Jade Elizabeth into their hearts and home. Grandparents are Bro. Tim and Sis. Robyn Feucht and Bro. Tim and Sis. Joan Reinhard.

November 29, we heard the engagement announced of Bro. Jacob Feucht and Sis. Hannah Reinhard, and celebrate the joining of their lives. Parents are Bro. Tim and Sis. Robyn Feucht and Bro. Tim and Sis. Joan Reinhard.
We mourn with several families who have recently lost loved ones. Sis. Debi Funk (Elder Bro. Tim) and Bro. Tim Feucht (Sis. Robyn) lost their sister, Sharon Hopwood. Bro. Tim Roecker (Sis. Diane) had to say goodbye to his father, Bro. Ed Roecker, (Morton, IL). Sis. Carole Barnard (David) and Sis. Joanne Scholl’s (Bro. Bill) brother bid an earthly farewell to their brother, Bro. Mahlon Frank, (Tremont, IL). We pray God will comfort these families who look forward to a heavenly reunion someday.

We appreciate Bro. Bill Schick who recently brought us a Wednesday Family Night with his testimony of God’s faithfulness throughout his entire life, including his current battle with cancer. It was a powerful reminder of how the Lord provides along each step of the way and is available on AC Central for anyone interested in hearing this testimony.

The Father has given clear direction for an ordained deacon. Bro. Craig Stickling (Sis. Jacki) will graciously fill that role soon and we pray for God’s continued grace to him and our congregation.

Thanksgiving had even more meaning this year, as we gave thanks to the Father for his love and mercy among all the challenges, we have faced in 2020. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 15:57

Christmas festivities this time of year usually include caroling, Sunday school programs and parties, the annual Bible Class play, special Christmas services, choir programs and family gatherings. This year is different and maybe is God’s way of reminding us to slow down, put away the political turmoil and health crisis going on in the world around us, and worship the babe that came to bring salvation to this lost world. What wonderful hope we have in him!

Illinois, Princeville

Melinda Christ, Cherie White

“Another year is dawning,
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year for Thee.
Another year of mercies,
Of faithfulness and grace.
Another year of gladness,
In the shining of Thy face.
Another year is dawning,
Dear Master, let it be,
On earth, or else in heaven,
Another year for Thee.”

Another Year is Dawning,
Hymns of Zion #150

As we close out 2020, what have we learned this year? Have we taken our precious faith, fellowship, singing and Christian friendships for granted?

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” Philip. 3:14

Bro. Gale and Sis. Sonia Stoller are happy grandparents to Grayson Lee, born on November 16. Parents are Doug and Krista Stoller of Omaha, Nebraska. Also Bro. Rod and Sis. Cathy Stahl are rejoicing with another new grandson, Cashton Stephan, born on December 8. Parents are Kendall and Carrie Stahl.

We have had several experiencing afflictions of the body. Those who have spent time in the hospital are Sis. Bertha Jean Herrmann, Sis. Carol Baurer and Bro. Alpha Hartzler. Bro. Alpha is spending some time at Apostolic Christian Skyline in Peoria for his recovery. Our continued prayers to each one of them for a full recovery if it be the Lord’s will.

Sis. Caroline Banwart has moved to Restmor in Morton, IL. We will miss her presence in our assembly.

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o’ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.
Hark! Tis the voice of angels,
Borne in a song to me,
Over the fields of glory,
Over the jasper sea.”

Safe in the Arms of Jesus, Hymns of Zion #218

Our thoughts go out to Bro. Ronnie Rumbold and his family on the passing of his dear wife Sis. Jacqueline. Children are Bro. Brian, (Chicago, IL), Bro. Myron (Sis. Lori, Washington, IL), Tim (Toni, Galva, IL), Luke (Kewanee, IL), Taunya Scoggel (Benjamin, Goodfield, IL). Also surviving, her sister, Diane Stahl of Peoria, IL. Jackie had been residing at the Apostolic Christian Home in Eureka.

We extend our prayers and sympathy to Bro. Dennis and Sis. Renee Herrmann in the loss of her mother, Sis. Joanne Stieglitz, (Leo,
IN). We share in the loss of Sis. Alice Steidinger, (Bloomington, IL) the mother of Bro. Chris Steidinger (Sis. Carol). Bro. Harold Steiner (Sis Karen) laid to rest his brother, Bro. Richard Steiner (Tremont, IL). May we all look forward to the day when we can meet our loved ones that have gone on before us on those heavenly shores.

Illinois, Roanoke

Judy Sauder, Barb Schwind

“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” Lam. 3:22-23

A new year: we are thankful for new opportunities each day to experience God’s mercy, compassion, and faithfulness.

There was lots of excitement for the Fischer family! The engagement of Bro. Jesse Fischer (Bro. Kevin and Sis. Annette) who attends the Austin/Bastrop, TX church to Sis. Kirbi Eckerty (Champaign, IL) daughter of Monica and Troy Abbott and Bob Eckerty was announced on November 26. Sis. Alexa Fischer (Bro. Kevin and Sis. Annette) and Bro. Cody Zeller (Bro. Will and Sis. Danelle, Morton, IL), announced their engagement on November 29.

We rejoice with Seth Swartz (Sis. Joan) in his marriage to Myia Willhite (Matt and Nikki Grafelman, Secor, IL) on December 4. We wish all three of these couples God’s richest blessings in their lives together.

Our prayers are with those who have lost loved ones. Sis. Jackie Rumbold (Bro. Ron) of Princeville, IL, passed away on November 16. She was a sister-in-law to Bro. Rol Rumbold (Sis. Carol).

Sharon Hopwood, (Steven, Peoria, IL), passed away November 18. She was a sister of Bro. Randy Feucht (Sis.Carol). Bro. Mel Hohulin’s brother-in-law, Bro. Silas Knobloch (Sis. Edith, Lester, IA), passed away December 6.

Our annual business meeting was held December 2. Our new church trustee is Bro. Greg Moser (Sis. Shar). The new fellowship hall trustee is Bro. Brad Hartter (Sis. April). Bro. Todd Harris (Sis. Andrea) is our new nursing home trustee. The new member of the nominating committee is Bro. Scott Yordy (Sis. Mandy). We thank the brothers who retired from these positions for their service.

We are thankful for the birth of sweet baby, Zailee Rose, born to Max and Jessica Hodel on December 1. Grandparents Bro. Mike and Sis. Jenise Wiegand (Goodfield, IL) and Bro. Jeff and Sis. Jenny Hodel.

On December 6, Bro. Matt Feucht (Sis. Jennifer) shared some of his experiences serving as the administrator of the Peoria Skylines Apostolic Christian Home during COVID-19. He shared that even through all the challenges and difficulties, God has shown himself faithful.

A few groups went Christmas caroling on December 6. We enjoyed the beautiful singing of the young group that visited us.

On December 9, our high school students brought Christmas cheer to others by participating in Random Acts of Kindness.

The Sunday school students are earning their own money and donating it to the drilling of a well in Haiti. The Bible Class students put together hygiene kits for Loaves and Fish, a ministry in Peoria, IL.

We were blessed by the virtual Christmas Program presented by our Sunday school students on December 13. To see their enthusiasm in sharing the story of the birth of Jesus warms our hearts!

On December 16, Elder Bro. Frank Sauder addressed our church about COVID-19 related issues and questions, encouraging all to be thoughtful of others and extend grace. We are so thankful that even during this pandemic the gospel of Jesus continues to be preached.

We continue to pray for those with health issues: Bro. Nick Sizemore (Sis. Jenna), Bro. Dave Schwind (Sis. Barb), Bro. Dalton Logan, and Dave Martin of Atlanta, GA (son of Sis. Helen Martin).

We lost a friend last week. She had COVID-19 at the end but had been in failing health for a couple of months. We called her “Aunt Jean”, although we were not really related. She was one of our “Memphis angels” when our daughter Amy was at St. Jude. I remember the first time we met her over 24 years ago. Sent by her niece, one of my teacher friends, she was carrying a bag of chocolate chip cookies into the Ronald
McDonald House lobby, our home for over 6 months. She wasn’t a good baker by her own admission but she knew where the good bakeries were! She came with a big smile and a heart full of love, and we will never forget her. Whether it was standing in long lines to add to Amy’s beanie baby collection, visiting Amy and our family during Amy’s two month impatient stay at the hospital, bringing spaghetti to Ronald McDonald House, or welcoming us for a visit to her home, Aunt Jean was there for us. A retired kindergarten teacher, she loved children, especially Amy, and Amy loved her. Her caring and humorous conversations brightened our days. Our friendship continued in the years following Amy’s passing. We will miss her frequent phone calls. I praise God for people, who were the hands and feet of Jesus to us during a time we needed it so desperately! Sharing the love of Christ: a good challenge for each of us in the New Year!

Illinois, Tremont

Debbie Aberle, Lucy Kaiser

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;” Eccl. 3:1-2

Bro. Jon and Sis. Nichole Zimmerman welcomed home Tess Renee. Siblings Eli, Mya, and Abe, as well as grandparents Bro. Todd and Sis. Rita Kilgus are thrilled that she is here. Bro. Dirk and Sis. Erika Koch also welcomed their new grandchild, Asher James. He was born to Bro. Nate and Sis. Tabitha Zobrist (Goodfield, IL).

Bro. Richard Steiner, Bro. Gene Koch, Bro. Cleo Koch, and Bro. Mahlon Frank all passed away this month. We grieve with their families and rejoice in the hope of heaven that we have through Christ. Bro. Richard is survived by his wife, Sis. Ann and his children: Bro. Jeff (Sis. Jill), Sis. Ruth Kaiser (Bro. Tim), Bro. Dave (Sis. Sandy), and Sis. Sarah. Our sympathies also go out to Bro. Richard’s siblings in our congregation: Bro. Dan (Sis. Shirley), Bro. Joe (Sis. Marcella), and Sis. Barbara Wagenbach. Bro. Gene spent 101 years on this earth and left behind a legacy to his children Becky Roots (Rick), Ron (Julie), and Sis. Peggy Stoecker (Bro. Darryl).

Bro. Cleo passed away at 102 leaving behind his children: Sheryll Wingert (David), Mary Fritz (Herbert), Gary (Marlee), and C. John (Dawn), as well as his step-children: Sis. Rachel Sauder (Bro. Jim), Bro. Nate (Sis. Sandi), and Bro. Nelson (Sis. Mary). We also mourn with Bro. Gene and Bro. Cleo’s siblings, Sis. Carolyn Bolliger, Bro. Dan (Sis. Carol), and Bro. Elmon (Sis. Janice). Bro. Mahlon is survived by his sisters Sis. Joanne Scholl (Bro. Bill) and Sis. Carole Barnard (David), and his sister-in-law, Sis. Donna Frank.

Bro. Bill Knobloch (Sis. Ellie) said goodbye to his brother, Bro. Si Knobloch (Lester, IA). Ilene Hild, sister-in-law to Sis. Ruth Pflederer passed away. We pray for God’s nearness for Sis. Sara Garman (Steve) as she was in the hospital recovering from COVID-19 when her mother, Sis. Wilma Kuntz (Gridley, IL) passed into eternity. We pray that all these grieving loved ones will feel God’s nearness and comfort.

We are thankful that Bro. Dan Steiner (Sis. Shirley) is home after spending some time in the hospital with COVID-19. We pray that God will grant him a full recovery.

Illinois, Washington

Lillian Pfaffmann

On December 20, we were thankful to have ministering Bro. Mark Klaus (Sis. Rebekah, Athens, AL) and Elder Bro. Randy Kellenberger (Sis. Karen, Kansas City, MO) who were in IL visiting family for Christmas.

Washington welcomes Bro. Joel and Sis. Mindy Stickling and their children, Leo, Abe, Tate, and Tessa to our congregation. We hope they feel welcome!

Due to COVID-19, the Christmas holidays will be different for all of us to one extent or another. In our Washington church, our typical practices have been altered. Christmas caroling was cancelled and the program will be virtual. No one likes change to those things in life that mean so much to us, but sometimes we can see how their absence can work for our good. We as poor humans often take too much for granted like our health, possessions, spiritual stability, safety, senses or whatever may be personal for each of us until it is stripped away.
"So, amid the conflict,  
Whether great or small,  
Do not be discouraged,  
God is over all;  
…Count your blessings,  
Name them one by one;  
Count your many blessings,  
See what God has done."

Count Your Blessings,  
Hymns of Zion #116

Truly we know our greatest  
blessing is the gift of his Son, who  
came to Earth at Christmas as a  
babe to be sacrificed for our sins at  
Easter 33 years later.

"Tis not the babe,  
But Christ, the man  
Who walked in Galilee;  
Tis not the manger,  
But the cross,  
That sets the spirit free."  
The Babe of Bethlehem,  
Hymns of Zion #36

Indiana, Bluffton

Suzie Fiechter, Liana Reinhard,  
Olivia Steffen

"God is our refuge and our strength,  
A very present help indeed;  
He in the time of trouble sends  
His grace to meet our every need.”  
God is Our Refuge,  
Hymns of Zion, #4.

On a recent Sunday morning,  
we were challenged with several  
questions. How can we get closer to  
God? Do we even have that desire?  
Are we willing to make changes to  
make that happen? What are our  
motivations? The short answer is  
found in Psa. 46:10. “Be still and  
know that I Am God.” Be still!  
It sounds easy enough, but there  
are so many distractions. And  
Satan himself has a vested interest  
in working to make us fearful,  
disturbed and busy. The year 2020  
has been a test of our spiritual lives.  
God is calling us to himself through  
the uncertainty, quarantines,  
sicknesses, deaths and election. These  
past months, he has given many of  
us more time. Let's not waste it! To  
“be still”, we need to put away some  
things. We like to be active and busy.  
Do we love him enough to slow  
down, put away the distractions,  
be still and listen? This world has  
nothing for us! We have no security  
here! Let's trust him! Let's love him!  
He will prevail!

The Lord has called many of  
our loved ones home. We rejoice  
that their victory is won, yet we  
grieve with their families and friends  
left behind. Bro. Walter (Junior)  
Neuenschwander is survived by  
his wife, Sis. Joyce, daughters, Sis.  
Karen Isch (Bro. Jeff), Kathy Steffen  
(Scott), Sis. Kristi Curry (Bro.  
Brian); and sisters, Sis. Marilyn  
Gerber (Bro. Charles, dec.) and Sis.  
Carolyn Meyer (Bro. John).

Sis. Marilyn Gerber said  
goodbye to her husband, Bro.  
Charles. He was the brother to  
Sis. Shirley Fiechter (Bro. John,  
dec.), Sis. Nancy Honegger (Bro.  
Keith), and Bro. Roger Gerber  
(Sis. Eunice, Latty OH).

Sis. Jean Moser mourns the  
death of her husband, Bro. Phil.  
He also leaves his children, Bro.  
Lonny, Bro. Klint (Sis. Amy),  
Sis. Lyn Steffen (Bro. Tom)  
Krista Eisberg (Brett); sisters,  
Sis. Ann Gerber (Bro. Jerry) and  
Sis. Cindy Kauffman (Bro. Leon)  
and sister-in-law, Sis. Pat Bertsch  
(Bro. Lonnie).

Bro. Tom and Sis. Lyn Steffen  
have double sorrow, as his father,  
Bro. Harry Steffen (Sis. Betty,  
dec.), entered eternity. Grieving  
the loss of their dad are Sis.  
Cyndee Fiechter (Bro. Dean), Sis.  
Beth Aschliman (Bro. Kevin), Sis.  
Lori Reimischisel (Bro. Todd) Bro.  
Keith (Sis. Kay); and brother, Bro.  
Kenny Steffen (Sis. Roberta).

Bro. Dale Fiechter (Sis.  
Doris, dec.) passed away, leaving  
his children, Sis. Jeni Schwartz  
(retired Elder Bro. Ed), Sis. Gloria  
Grant (Bro. Phil, Latty, OH),  
Bro. Tony Fiechter (Sis. Peg), and  
Bro. Kevin Fiechter.

Our love is extended to Bro.  
Tom and Sis. Sue Neuenschwander  
as her mother, Sis. Marcella Yergler  
(Bro. Truman, dec, Bluffton North,  
IN) has finished her earthly journey.

Bro. Ernie Isch entered eternity.  
Surviving are his wife, Sis. Lucy,  
children, Sis. Darlene Reinhard (Bro.  
Gene), Sis. Amy Isch, Bro. Jerry (Sis.  
Linda, Philadelphia, PA), Joe Isch,  
and sister, Sis. Pat Maller (Bro. Rod).

We grieve with the family of  
Sis. Rose Frauhiger (Bro. Tom).  
Her children are Bro. Doug (Sis.  
Jill), Kerry (June), Kenny (Lynette),  
Deb Moon (Rob) and Greg (dec.).

Sis. Jan Reinhard finished her  
earthly journey. She is survived by  
her children, Justin (Kristen), Bro.  
Grayson (Sis. Tara), Bro. Braden (Sis.  
Adrianne), Sis. Jessica Fiechter (Bro.  
Todd), and sister, Sis. Carol Maller.

Our prayers have also been  
with those who have been  
hospitalized: Bro. Tom Frauhiger,
Bro. Steve Reinhard, Sis. Pat Moser Bertsch, and Sis. Mary Raber.

Along with the sadness, we have had many reasons to rejoice. Our Sis. Beth Klopfenstein (Bro. Lee and Sis. Desma, Toledo, OH) has felt God’s leading to accept the proposal of Bro. Adam Nuest (Bro. Lee and Sis. Paula, Latty, OH). We pray God’s blessing on them as they begin their walk together with him.

Ashlyn Tonner (Bro. Brent and Sis. Rachelle) began her repentance. We are so thankful God is still calling and pray that many more will hear and answer!


Elder Bro. Lynn and Sis. Ronda Fiechter and Bro. Todd and Sis. Shelly Baller embrace the gift of another grandchild, Everleigh Sue, born to Bro. Troy and Sis. Alexa Fiechter (West Lafayette, IN).

We are so thankful for the safe arrival of little Krew James, who is God’s gift to Bro. Kyle, Sis. Deonne and Decklin Gerber. We have been praying that Sis. Deonne could carry him to term and all is well. Praise God for new life!!

Elder Bro. Steve Ringger (Bluffton North, IN) assisted our Elder Bro. Lynn in reading the latest Memorandum. We appreciate their insight and timely advice!

Praise God for Godly authority!!

Bro. Mark and Sis. Barb Gerber have felt led to retire from pulpit ministry. We will have precious memories of their almost 30 years of service to us. Bro. Mark has been a wonderful teacher and often encouraged us with his habit of reading a Proverb each day. As Elder Bro. Lynn often says, “We can be sad that it’s over or thankful that it happened”. We are so thankful that it happened. Praise God for inspired ministry!!

“Safe in His tender loving care, We have no fear of what shall be. E’en though the earth should be removed, And mountains cast into the sea. While heathen rage and kingdoms move, And desolations sweep the land; The Lord of Hosts is with us still, To save us by His mighty hand.”

God is Our Refuge,
Hymns of Zion, #4.

Indiana, Bluffton North
Rhonda Maller, Tiffani Schladenhaufen

"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. 4:7-8

The past month has been a time of loss and saying goodbye for many families in our congregation. We grieve with each one and offer our sympathies. We comfort them in knowing that their loved one has fought the good fight and will be united eternally with Christ. Our prayers uphold:

Sis. Cyndee Fiechter (Bro. Dean) and Bro. Keith Steffen (Sis. Kay) in the passing of their father, Bro. Harry Steffen (Bluffton, IN); Sis. Dar Reinhard (Bro. Gene) in the passing of her father, Bro. Ernie Isch (Bluffton, IN); Bro. Jeff Yergler (Sis. Peg) in the passing of his mother, Sis. Marcella Yergler (Bluffton, IN); Bro. Tony Fiechter (Sis. Peg) in the passing of his father, Bro. Dale Fiechter (Bluffton, IN); and Bro. Clint Moser (Sis. Amy) in the passing of his father, Bro. Phil Moser (Bluffton, IN).

We also extend sympathy to the families of two brothers within our congregation who joined the heavenly choir. Bro Charles Gerber, 89, passed away November 20, 2020, at Christian Care Retirement Community. He is survived by his dear wife, Sis. Marilyn (Neuenschwander) Gerber; a brother, Bro. Roger (Sis. Eunice, Latty, OH), and two sisters, Sis. Shirley Fiechter (Bluffton, IN) and Sis. Nancy Honegger (Bro. Keith).

Bro. Walter "Junior" Neuenschwander, 76, passed away December 2, 2020, at Dupont Hospital in Ft. Wayne, IN. Walt, affectionately known as Junior by family and friends, was survived by his wife, Sis. Joyce (Schoeff) and three daughters, Sis. Karen Isch (Bro. Jeff, Bluffton, IN), Kathy Steffen (Scott), and Sis. Kristi Curry (Bro. Brian). He also leaves behind nine grandchildren, three great-
grandchildren with one on the way, and two sisters Sis. Marilyn Gerber (Bro. Charles, dec) and Sis. Carolyn Meyer (Bro. John).

This past month, we have been limited to one Sunday service, so our Christmas Program followed a different format. Following a brief message shared by Bro. Tadd Baumgartner, our Sunday school assistant superintendent, various students shared the prophecies, birth, life, death, and future coming of Christ through scriptures readings interspersed with congregational singing. It might have been a different style, but the Holy Spirit was present as always. We pray you will have a blessed Christmas and a Christ-filled New Year.

“Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Galatians 1:3-5

Indiana, Francesville
Jacki Huber, Connie Linback

The weekend before Thanksgiving, we were blessed to have Communion services. Quite a few were able to take communion from their own homes. The bread and “wine” were delivered to individual homes where this was necessary. Those who desired were able to watch and listen at home. We are thankful for technology that helps us to stay in communication with each other.

In a recent service, it was mentioned that a pandemic cannot take away the love and unity in our hearts. We are still united in Spirit! As state numbers of those testing positive with COVID-19 have increased, the annual church business meeting was done virtually. Many Christmas activities such as caroling and the Christmas Program are not taking place in the same manner as in the past, but God is faithful to give us ways to glorify his name in every circumstance. He is not limited, and sometimes we have even more opportunities to reach out, just differently.

We have had three funeral services this past month. Three dear ones have reached the end of their lives on earth to enter an eternity of beauty and everlasting joy.

Our Bro. Chris Welker went home to be with Jesus. Bro. Chris was known as a “gentle giant.” Bro. Chris was a tall man who exuded kindness and gentleness. We extend loving sympathy to his family and friends.

Sis. Ruth Wuethrich (the late Bro. Chris Lee) passed from this life into eternity, and we will miss her sweet smile and cheerful presence. She had been suffering with physical challenges, so we are thankful she no longer has earthly limitations! Our sympathy to her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren as well as many other relatives and friends. Her children are Elder Bro. Ken (Sis. Lyn, Indianapolis, IN), Kitty Gutwein (Dennis), Bro. Kevin (Sis. Connie), Bro. Chris (Sis. Carla, St. Louis, MO), Sis. Kelly Ramseyer (Bro. Mark, Detroit, MI) and Kirby (April, Zionsville, IN). Her remaining siblings are Mirian and Richard Stoller (Arlene).

Precious infant Robert Neihouser is “safe in the arms of Jesus.” We extend our loving sympathy to his parents, Ryan and Autumn, and pray that they will feel the peace and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Our sympathy is also extended to Bro. Les and Sis. Christine Kaeb and family in the passing of their dear Dad and grandpa, Bro. Elmer Kaeb (Cisna Park, IL). Bro. Elmer left a beautiful legacy of faith.

Our prayers are with many undergoing health concerns, including Sis. Juanita Norman who is currently in the hospital.

We are thankful and rejoice that Bro. Ross Huber (Bro. Gene and Sis. Sherri) announced his engagement to Sis. Emmy Stieglitz (Bro. Greg and Sis. Lisa, Indianapolis, IN). We wish them God’s blessings as they plan their wedding and share life together.

It is always a joy to have visitors, and we thank Bro. Andy Kaufmann (Sis. Marie, Bloomington, IL) for sharing God’s word with us.

Indiana, LaCrosse
Meagan Frank, Julie Rocke

We have been blessed with many opportunities to shine our lights this month, even if they were not in the “normal” way. The Sunday school was able to collect food, then deliver food baskets the Sunday before Thanksgiving. It went well, although
there was much less interaction than other years since we did porch drop-offs at many of the places due to the current circumstances. The students worked hard to practice songs and pieces and then shared those with the congregation on Sunday, December 6. What a joy to hear them tell the story of Jesus’ birth in poem, song, and scripture.

Our annual Christmas caroling took on a different look as well. We gathered at church to sing together and record several familiar Christmas hymns. CDs were then made to be distributed to those we normally visit to sing carols. They were received gladly. Even though they are not professional recordings, we are prayerful that the listeners will be blessed to hear those familiar strains in voices from young to old.

We ache for the many who have lost loved ones, and those who are seeking healing and recovery. Our prayers are with Sis. Mary Gudeman and her family as her great-grandson, Zander (Shane and Leah Moser, Bluffton, IN), is a very sick little boy. We know that God is in control, so we pray that He will bless the physicians and medical staff with the wisdom they need to help bring healing to little Zander.

We grieve with Sis. Jan Nuest (Bro. Elvin) in the passing of her sister, Beverly Berry, earlier this month. We also remember Sis. Meagan Frank (Bro. Brad) and their family in the passing of her grandmother, Sis. Ruth Wuetrich (late Bro. Chris Lee, Francesville, IN). Our hearts also ached to hear of the passing of Sis. Margene Peasley (Bro. Dave, Lester, IA) as Bro. Dave and Sis. Margene were part of our congregation for several years.

In the middle of everything that swirls around us and all the hurt and sorrow, God sends joy-bursts from heaven. Our hearts rejoice at the announcement recently that Carol Ailes has found peace with God and man, and is looking forward to sharing her testimony and baptism. What joy to know that another loved one has turned her heart to God and fully seeks to trust him in all things.

We pray each of you will seek to trust God in all things as well, as we enter the new year. May you feel his presence and guidance every step of the way.

Indiana, Leo
Jan Beer

Our congratulations and best wishes to several newly married couples. Bro. Jeff and Sis. Carla Fritz’s son, Evan, wed Kate Killen on October 31 in Ft. Wayne, IN. On November 1, Braden Beyer (Bro. Keith and Sis. Alisa Beyer) and Honor Schrock (Trent and Heidi Schrock) were also married in Ft. Wayne. Bro. Keith and Sis. Alisa were part of the Leo church family before transitioning to the mission field in Magdalena, Mexico. Honor’s grandparents in Leo church are Bro. Duane and Sis. Carol Broquard and Bro. Byron and Sis. Mary Schrock. Joyfully, Bro. Tim and Sis. Jenny Sauder’s son, Adam, and Alyssa Bennet were united in marriage on December 12 in Ft. Wayne, IN. It is a blessing to witness these dear young couples embracing the value of marriage. We pray God’s abiding grace will bless them as they establish their homes.

There are many deaths to report this month. All of these dear ones recently lost a grandparent: Sis. Brooke Nuenschwander Gerber (Bro. Mick), Sis. Kristin Koehl Slagel (Bro. Kurt) and Bro. Kyle Isch (Sis. Lindsey). Sis. Janean Gerber (Bro. Phil), lost two grandparents! We know that grandparents can hold a dear place in a child’s heart, so we pray they are comforted by their memories and God’s peace.

Sis. Tina Schumacher (Bro. Jeff) has experienced double sorrow. Her sibling, Sis. Mara Jean Edelman, lost her husband, Bro. Albert, on November 26 in Lamont, KS. Then, on December 19, Tina’s oldest sister, Sis. Dorene Metzger, was taken from this life in an auto accident in Lamont, KS. Our prayers are with Bro. Jeff and Sis. Tina and their family. May they be comforted with God’s grace and peace, and take heart that their loved ones were prepared for heaven.

Sis. Joan Stieglitz passed away December 4 after extended years of being cared for so lovingly by her family. Our prayers are with them during this time of adjusting to her absence in the family circle. Her children living locally are Sis. Marlise Stieglitz and Sis. Beth Stieglitz and Elder Bro. Lynn (Sis. Leonda). Our love is with them, and we pray they feel the peace that passes understanding that only comes from God.
Despite COVID-19 restrictions, we were deeply grateful to be able to take Communion on Wednesday evening, November 18. Our Elder Bro. Lynn Stieglitz was assisted by Deacon Bro. Jeff Waibel. The current social conditions can serve to bring us to a deeper sense of gratitude and appreciation for things we once took for granted.

Wednesday evening, December 2, Bro. Jon and Sis. Amy Gerst gave an update to our congregation concerning God’s work they have been doing in Ethiopia and now their life in the States due to COVID-19. We are grateful they are able to be among us during this difficult time, but God has put a conviction in their heart, so we pray for them and for Ethiopia.

Sadly, our annual evening of Church Christmas Caroling was cancelled. Church leadership encouraged us to be creative in finding a way to still carol. My husband and I were blessed by a small group of carolers one evening. Our comment of officially being old now that we have been caroled to, was rebuffed by a sweet comment that it did not mean we were old, just well loved! Praise God for the joy we have in him and through his children.

The Sunday school Christmas Program was also affected by COVID-19 restrictions. This year our students did a wonderful job of bringing the ageless truth of Christmas to us, but they were not able to do it in person; it was all pre-recorded. As we watched the program via streaming, someone noted that the younger children seemed more at ease and participated extremely well. Perhaps it was because they were recorded with no audience staring at them! We appreciate their work in presenting the Truth and the blessing it brought to our hearts.

It is reasonable to expect that each of us celebrated Christmas differently this year than we have ever before. The Holy Spirit led some folks to share joy by creating some entirely different ways to celebrate. My sister Barb sent each of her siblings an Advent daily devotional book by David Mathis, entitled “The Christmas We Didn’t Expect”. She also created a text thread including all seven of us and our spouses, so that we could share our thoughts each day after reading the devotion for that day. It was a wonderful way to deepen the true meaning of Christmas in our hearts and minds. It kept us all in contact with each other, we shared our joys and our weaknesses, and we interacted on a deeper level.

Although gathering together in person was not possible because of the pandemic, person was not possible because of the pandemic, one sibling noted that it seemed like we were all sitting around the dining room table sharing! Here is an excerpt from the devotional: “In his first Advent, the Word became flesh that the very joy of God—eternal, unquenchable, unshakable—might become our joy. That Word, his words, and our words about him are the greatest gifts of Christmas. May Jesus be honored in our words and may the hearts of our friends and family be enriched, rather than encumbered, by the things we say.” Another worthy goal for 2021!

Indiana, Milford
Heidi Beer, Anne Wilson

This past month we were very blessed to be able to have our annual Christmas Program put on by the Sunday school kids. It was a beautiful time for all as it brought a sense of normalcy to this Christmas season. Perhaps the most special part was when the congregation joined the kids by standing and singing together “Joy to the World.” As we usher the year 2020 to a close it’s the joy he brings that can guide us forward. It was best said by the angel to the shepherds…”Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Luke 2:10

May we radiate that joy in this Christmas season, as we celebrate and proclaim the birth of our Saviour… Christ the Lord!

Indiana, Remington
Jenni Honegger, Marcella Tyler

We are thankful to Bro. Todd Stoller (Sis. Pam, Latty, OH) for visiting us this month. May God bless you for your efforts and your love towards us!

We rejoice with the angels that Evan Getz (Matt and Heidi) has decided to repent of his sins and submit his life to Jesus’s direction! May God grant Evan grace as he learns how to walk this new path of life.

Convert Sarah Walder (Bro. John and Sis. Lisa) has shared the
good news that she feels at peace with God and man, and desires to be baptized. Please pray for Sarah as she prepares for this next step in her journey of faith.

Bro. Eldon Getz (Sis. Charlene) and Betty Vaughan (Joe) both had surgery this month. We pray for God’s healing hand to be upon them as they recover.

This year’s Christmas Program looked quite different from normal years. Thankfully the old precious Christmas story told by the Sunday school remains the same! No matter what is going on in the world around us, we can still rejoice that God became man and dwelt among us.

We want to pray for Sis. Tammy Clauss (Bro. Rex) for the passing of her mother, Mary Wiest due to complications from COVID-19. Please also pray for Bro. Rex and Sis. Tammy’s children Erica Kingman (Kerry, Rensselaer, IN), Kylie Forney (Todd, Dusseldorf, Germany), and Abby Smith (Bill, Lafayette, IN), as well as Mary’s 14 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren.

Indiana, South Bend

Joshua Martinez

“The things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

The year 2020 was marked by COVID-19 and political tribulation. However, with God’s help, we end one year and begin the next victorious! On December 9, we held our annual business meeting. We thank outgoing head trustee, Bro. Josh Steffen (Sis. Janelle), and all who helped oversee the physical and spiritual needs of our church. We appreciate the willingness of all who will continue or assume those responsibilities this coming year.

Because of the pandemic, we were not able to have a Sunday school Thanksgiving or Christmas Program this year. However, on December 12, some of our church family visited our widows and shut-ins and sang Christmas carols. Our children gathered on December 20 for a Convert/Middle School Christmas celebration at church. We’d like to thank Bro. Jason and Sis. Jessica Isch for organizing this event.

We also lift Bro. Jason up in prayer after the loss of his grandfather, Bro. Walter “Junior” NeuenSchwander (Sis. Joyce).

We rejoice with David Lester (Bro. Ed and Sis. Tricia) who has begun his repentance and walk with the Lord! David’s brother, Ben, is at peace with God and man and we look forward to his baptism sometime in the very near future!

We begin the year 2021 with the following census: 33 members, 8 converts and 18 children in Sunday School. On December 20, we found out that we will add one more family in early 2021 to our flock: We welcome Bro. Larry and Sis. Melinda Gramm and their daughters Sis. Nikola, Cassie and Jasmine to the South Bend church family. Our spiritual cup is overflowing!

“They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.” Psalms 145:7

Indiana, West Lafayette

Libby Wahl

On a calm, moderate, snow-covered day, I am grateful for Advent music. With the current unrest, uncertainty and life sorrows, there is peace in dwelling on the hope of the eternal kingdom.

Excited sisters welcomed Everleigh Sue to their ongoing ‘girl party’ on November 19. Congratulations to Bro. Troy and Sis. Alexa Fiechter on number three.

Congratulations, also, to midterm Purdue graduates Sis. Kristen Sauder (Steven), Sis. Michaela Cook, Francesville, IN and Ian Fiechter, Leo, IN.

Sis. Diana Norman’s daughter, Teresa Puterbaugh (Monticello, IN), has received a cancer clear report.

Bro. Quinton Young (Bro. Steve and Sis. April) shared his testimony and was baptized in Detroit, MI where he is currently employed.

Our sincere condolences and prayers to those who are adjusting to the passing of family members: Sis. Jan Furrer (Bro. Vernon) lost her brother, Bro. Les Isch, (Bluffton, IN) in October. (apologies, I missed reporting this) Jan’s brother-in-law, Bro. Phil Moser, (Bluffton, IN) also passed away this month. Sis. Darlene Walder (Bro. Russ) lost her father, Bro. Elmer Kaeb, (Cissna Park, IL). This is also our Bro. Cameran and Sis. Amanda Walder’s grandfather. Sis. Tianna Huber (Bro. Andrew) laid her grandmother, Sis. Joan Stieglitz, (Leo, IN) to rest. Also, Sis. Abbie Gramm (Bro. Alec) laid her grandmother, Sis. Wilma Kuntz, (Gridley, IL) to rest. What a
beautiful legacy has been left from these faithful witnesses.

“Let Israel hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.” Psa. 130:7.

Indiana, Wolcott
Teresa Earney, Luann Gerber
Erin Bahler’s expression of peace was shared with our congregation on December 20 and we look forward to her testimony and baptism in the near future.

The fall Memorandum was shared on Sunday, December 6. Many expressed their thankfulness for the clarity and direction that was shared with us this year.

Communion was held on Sunday, December 13. Our local ministers assisted in the services and our congregation was encouraged and blest by the unity and peace we felt as we partook together.

Iowa, Bloomfield
Kendra Wettstein
We continue to keep those struggling with sickness and health in our thoughts and prayers including Bro. Joel Wuthrich (Sis. Shirley).

November 29 was the wedding day for Sis. Kendra Schlatter (Ken and Pam) and Bro. Nathan Wettstein (Bro. Lloyd and Sis. Carol). We pray that their life together will glorify him.

As we begin the year 2021, let us remember that our hope is not in the New Year but in the one who makes all things new.

Iowa, Burlington
Marilyn Anderson, Angela Steiner
Do you ever wonder what God’s will is for your life, for your next decision, or for the challenge you are walking through? The answer lies in 1 Thess. 5:18 “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” Thanksgiving becomes thanks LIVING as we find thousands of reasons to praise God for. It takes our eyes off us, and turns them to God, and that’s when he is glorified! It was special to gather on Thanksgiving day and commemorate a whole service to thanking God.

On November 19, Bro. Leroy and Sis. Carolyn Wulf welcomed a new grandson, Kale Evan, born to Bro. Jacob and Sis. Hannah Meyer (Lester, IA). A healthy baby boy is a joyful reason to thank God for!

Our church family was thankful to sing Christmas carols together outside this year. We bundled up for the cold and spread “tidings of comfort and joy” to the special souls inside. Our hope is that the message of salvation in song warmed their hearts this Christmas.

We had our Sunday school Christmas Program the following week, complete with songs, recitations, Silent Night, and a traditional “candy bag” that the children always look forward to receiving after the program each year. Thank you to Bro. Dale Frank (Sis. Tina, Mediapolis, IA) for joining us on the pulpit, and also to others that came to share the day and program.

Lydia Eisenmann, (daughter of Matt and Monica and granddaughter of Sis. Elaine Eisenmann), is thankful to be graduating college from the University of Iowa. She spent four months student teaching in Aldine, Texas, and we are happy to now welcome her home.

Once again, there have been some who have walked through significant health challenges this past month.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” Gal. 6:2

May this be a calling for us as a church body to lift them up in prayer and do what we can to share their load. These difficulties can be the hardest to find thanks in, but I find inspiration and conviction in the following lyrics of the song God Wants To Hear You Sing:

“He loves to hear our praise
On our cheerful days
When the pleasant times
Outweigh the bad, by far
But when suffering comes along
And we still sing Him song
That is when we bless
The Father’s heart”

Iowa, Elgin
Maria Rocke
In December, we enjoyed the opportunity to carol to several brethren and members of our community over the phone service.

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.” Psa. 90:1

Isaac Watts studied this passage before penning the words to this beautiful hymn.

“A thousand ages in Thy sight
are like an ev’ning gone;
Short as the watch that ends the
night, Before the rising sun.
O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guide for years to
come, And our eternal home!”
O God, Our Help in Ages Past, Hymns of Zion #287
May we dwell in our Heavenly
Father, that he may dwell in us
throughout this new year.

Iowa, Iowa City
Diana Butikofer
We appreciate Bro. Bruce
and Sis. Bonita Frank’s (Cisna
Park, IL) willingness to join
us virtually on a Wednesday
evening to share the Word of
God with us and fellowship with
us afterward.
We are very thankful for
the birth of our Savior and,
as our Sunday school children
proclaimed in their program, the
Prince of Peace.
“Peace is when you’re
singing through a storm,
through the night,
Peace is when your heart is right.
Peace is when you know
God loves you so;
where Jesus is there is peace.
You’re safe within His
hand when He is near;
Jesus is the Prince of Peace.
Your heart is free to rest
away from fear,
For Jesus is the Prince of Peace.”
Prince of Peace, Author
Unknown (© Agape Force)

Iowa, Lester
Kristi Knobloch, Lois Mogler
We are thankful for the birth
of our Savior as we reflect on the
reason he came to earth. In a recent
sermon this quote was made; “Our
only contribution to our salvation is
the sin that has made it necessary.”
We appreciate visiting ministers who
brought forth the Word. We heard
from Bro. Bill Wettstein (Sis. Heidi,
Eureka, IL), Bro. Dana Indermuhle
(Sis. Joy, Sardis, OH), and Bro. Josh
Walder (Sis. Tina, Congerville, IL).
Hospital patients were Bro. Art
Metzger (Sis. Kristy), Andres Acosta
(Veronica) and Bro. Dean Meyer
(Sis. Linda). We pray for healing as
they recover at home. We remain
prayerful for others who are still
undergoing medical treatment.
We extend our sympathy to
Sis. Lillian Mogler (Bro. Howard)
in the loss of her sister, Sis. Wilma
Kuntz (Bro. Clyde, Gridley,
IL). On December 6, Bro. Silas
Knobloch gained his eternal
reward. Mourning his loss are his
dear wife Sis. Edith, daughters Sis.
Lois Mogler (Bro. Rodney), Sis.
Joyce Moser (Bro. Donn), Marilyn
Moser (Joel, Alvord, IA), and Holly
Sehr (Russ, Larchwood, IA). His
surviving siblings are Gib Knobloch
and Bro. Melvin Knobloch (Sis.
Wilma), Bro. Clyde Knobloch
(Sis. Charlene, Bloomington, IL),
Bro. Bill Knobloch (Sis. Eleanor,
Tremont, IL), and Esther Warner
(Dennis, Rock Rapids, IA).
Sis. Margene Peasley was
relieved of her suffering on
December 11. We are saddened
along with her husband, Bro.
David, and daughter Sis. Elizabeth
(Silverton, OR). Margene’s siblings
grieving her loss are Bro. Gene
Metzger (Sis. Dolores), Dale
Metzger (Sis. Chris), Sis. Eleanor
Popkes, Sis. Barb Reutter, Bro.
Bill Metzger (Sis. Charlotte), Bro.
Marvin Metzger (Jolcen), and Sis.
Jane Klotzle (Bro. Wayne, Rittman,
OH). Brothers-in-law Jim Moser and
Bro. Lloyd Massner (Burlington, IA)
and stepsiblings Sis. Beth Metzger
(Bro. Gary) and Bro. Donn Moser
(Sis. Joyce). Her many nieces and
nephews mourn her passing as well.
“And when our days
here are complete,
As brethren, we our Lord shall meet,
And be transformed before His sight
To glory and celestial light.
Hallelujah!”
Christmas Carol, Zion’s Harp, #7.
Tory Mogler (Bro. Rodney
and Sis. Lois) was married to
Megan Snyder in St. Paul, MN on
December 12. On December 13, Sis.
Dayra Knoblock (Bro. Travis and
Sis. Kathy) was announced to Bro.
Thad Indermuhle (Bro. Dana and
Sis. Joy, Sardis, OH). Bro. Thad is
attending college in the Lester area.
May these two couples feel God’s
nearness in their future together.

Iowa, Mediapolis
Laura Kuntz, Janet Lanz
“Behold, a virgin shall be with
child, and shall bring forth a
son, and they shall call his name
Emmanuel, which being interpreted
is, God with us.” Matt. 1:23
Emmanuel....God with us.
Every time I read this name of Jesus
in the Bible, it fills me with a sense
of deep stability and immense joy. To know that God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to earth to teach us how to live and love, to shed his blood on the cross for our sins, and to rise again so we can have eternal life with him. Here we are, over 2000 years later, and he is still with us! What an amazing gift!

This beautiful message of God’s great gift to us was shared through word and song at our Sunday school program this month. From the sweet little voices of the very youngest, all the way up to the beautiful strains of the songs sung by the older grades, our hearts were touched. With so much being canceled this past year, the fact that we could even have the program, albeit with modifications, was extra special.

We recently laid to rest our Bro. Johnny Wagenbach (late Sis. Marilyn). We extend our love and sympathy to his children, Bro. David (Sis. Charlene), Sis. Beth Steffen (Kent, Congerville, IL), Sis. Jerilyn Yackley (Bro. Joe, Taylor, MO), Heidi Larson (Nate, Mediapolis, IA) and Sis. Mary Lanz (Bro. Tom), as well as many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Our church is praising God that Larae Steiner (Bro. Randy and Sis. Shayla) has made the life-altering decision to follow Jesus. Our prayers are with her as she begins her walk of faith!

Bro. Regan and Sis. Tricia Lanz gladly welcome another sweet granddaughter into their family circle. Emmie Claire was born to Bro. Ashton and Sis. Raiann Fehr (West Bend, IA).

Though 2020 has been a tumultuous year in our community, country, and world, we still have so much to be thankful for. And as we reflect on Christ’s miraculous birth this season, let us rejoice that yes, God is with us!

Iowa, West Bend
Jenny Banwart, Karen Schmidt

Bringing God’s Word to us this past month was Bro. Ryan Schock (Sis. Melanie, Bloomfield, IA). May God bless him for his labors.

We welcome Sis. Deanna Fehr back to West Bend after living in Denver, CO for awhile.

Bro. Ashton, Sis. Raiann and Annie Fehr welcome a sweet baby girl to their family, Emmie Claire was born on December 5. Bro. Darren and Sis. Nora Fehr and Bro. Regan and Sis. Tricia Lanz (Mediapolis, IA) are the excited grandparents.

Our prayers go out to Sis. Verda Bruellman and Marilyn Grimm (Arlo) as they have spent time in the hospital. May God be near and provide for them.

“When a Christian dies, Precious is the prize.”
*Death of a Christian, Hymns of Zion #248*

We extend sympathy to Sis. Betty Wirtz, Becky Banwart, Sis. Marilyn Banwart, and Sis. Phyllis Banwart in the passing of their brother-in-law, Bro. Elmer Strahm (Sabetha, KS). Jim and Sherry Schmidt said farewell to Sherry’s sister, Joan Gifford (Algona, IA). Also, Sis. Dorene Metzger (Lamont, KS) passed away and she is a sister-in-law to our Sis. Phyllis Banwart.

May we each have a song in our hearts as “Another Year is Dawning.” Let us “Watch and Pray” for “He Holds the Key” and knows what is ahead. So “Count Your Blessings”, “Be True”, and stay “Near the Cross.” Let’s “All Come and Thank the Lord” for his “Blessed Assurance” and “Whispering Hope.”

Japan, Shioda & Tokyo
Anna Inoue, Marie Inoue, Carrie Ito

As we celebrate this Christmas season we wish you the everlasting love of Jesus. We rejoice that we could have a Christmas Program for the Sunday school children. We did not have as much singing as usual per COVID-19 restrictions, but we felt the joy of remembering the birth of the newborn King. A week later, our Sis. Rachel Witzig left for a 3 week stay with her family and home church in Washington, IL. We wish her much happiness as she reunites with them again.

Last month we reported that our Bro. Teruo Sanada changed his residence to another area. On December 6, we received the news before going to church that the Lord had taken him to his eternal home in heaven. His memorial service will be held later due to the pandemic.

We are not able to sing at our local nursing home this year, and are praying for the patients who are shut-in. We were able to have our monthly ladies meeting, with Bro. Akito Inoue leading us as we continued in the book of
Mark, chapter 2. We wish all the Silver Lining readers a blessed new year in 2021.

Kansas, Bern
Sheri Edelman, Rita Menold

Happy New Year! Trusting each of you enjoyed the Christmas season with those you love and in good health. As we begin a new year, we can be thankful for the promise in Hebrews 13:8... "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever."

How sweet the privilege of prayer. It is a blessing when we can offer prayer on behalf of those we love! We are thankful Sis. Helen Meyer (Bro. Leroy), Sis. Marge Edelman (Bro. Morris), Bro. Don Menold (Sis. Pat), Sis. Ramona Strahm (Bro. Edwin), Sis. Mary Strahm (Bro. Elwin), and Sis. Jenny Meyer (Bro. Dominic) have all recovered after health complications.

Our Bro. Wayne Strahm entered the realms of Heaven on November 22. While we see a void in his spot in church, our hearts rejoice at the reward he has gained. The morning after his passing, there was the most beautiful, breathtaking sunrise. I had to wonder what beauty he was enjoying in the presence of Jesus. We will continue to pray for his dear wife, Sis. Claudia, and their children Bro. Adrian (Sis. Harriet) and Sis. Camille Hartzler (Bro. Wayne, Rittman, OH) as well his grandchildren.

Our dear friend, Kathy Baumgartner, entered the presence of Jesus on December 8. Although Kathy has not been able to assemble with us at church for quite some time, she will always be remembered by her contagious smile and hearty laugh. She brought joy to all those around her, and we are so happy she is safe in the arms of Jesus free from all health afflictions. Mourning the loss of their dear sister, are Bro. John Baumgartner (Sis. Lori), and Peggy Strahm (Bro. Kyle), as well as several nieces and nephews.

God be with each of you as we embark on a new year. We never know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future, and that alone should give us peace. Love to each of you.

Kansas, Ft. Scott
Janelle Wuthrich

"Take the Bible in the morning,
But a moment if no more;
It is better than an hour,
When the trying day is o’er.
Tis the gentle dew from heaven,
The manna for the day
If you fail to gather early,
Alas, it melts away.
So in the blush of morning,
Take the offered hand of love,
And walk in heaven’s pathway,
And the peacefulness thereof."
Take the Bible in the Morning,
Hymns of Zion #62

How true it is that spending just a few moments in communion with God as we start our morning can change the entire outcome of our day. Likewise as we start this new year, may we continue to surrender it all to the One who holds this whole world in the palm of his hand.

". . . there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:1

We are rejoicing with the angels and with Bro. Tyler Banwart as his daughter, Talya, has given her life to the Lord and begun her repentance. She brings much joy to our congregation and we praise the Lord to see his work in her life.

Even though we were not able to have our normal Sunday school Christmas Program this year, the students were able to enjoy an evening of Christmas caroling followed by a pizza supper and gift exchange. Regardless of the many changes this holiday season, may we always remember the reason for our joy, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Kansas, Kiowa
Janice Bahr, Millie Frieden

"I know not what the New Year will bring,
Fortune and Fame?
Or
Heartache and Shame?
Will the Lord by Still Waters lead me?
Or
Will the Valley of Death my portion be?
Will terrorists attack causing me to cease existence?
Or
Will the Lord send His Angels to encamp around me for deliverance?
Will Iran drive Israel into the Sea to be remembered no more?
Or
Will the Most High defend Israel as the Apple of His Eye and not ignore?
Will my new neighbors worship Allah with flair?
Or
Will I befriend and entertain
Angels unaware?
Will pestilence sap my
strength as God with me on
my deathbed communes?
Or
Will God restore health to me
and heal me of all my wounds?
Will there be Souls
repent, knowing their
days are long spent?
Or
Will the very Elect fall away
and become discontent?
So…….
Shall in fear my heart fail
and my insight be blind?
Or
Shall I have the Spirit of Power,
of Love, and of Sound Mind?
Shall I keep one hand on
a weapon and a sword
strapped to my side?
Or
Should I be meek as a lamb
and harmless as a dove abide?
Shall I rail against those in
dominance and authority?
Or
Should I pray for all those in
high offices or desiring to be?
Should I frantically run to and
fro as do lost women and men?
Or should I be gathered under
my Savior's wings as chicks
under the mother hen?
But…….
This I do know
I am Redeemed through
Jesus's Precious Atoning
Blood that He shed,
And
Lo, He is with me even until the
end of the world, as He said."

The above poem was composed
by myself, Sis. Millie Frieden,
and exhibits both antithesis and
anaphora. It has a Scripture for each
line or thought, and although I did
not list each Scripture, but rather
am relying on the antithesis prose to
simulate the opposite extremes of the
world a believer now finds himself
living in. It is currently copyrighted.

Greetings to one and all,
especially as we begin 2021 in the
day of our Lord. We are hoping
for a better year than last but
know without a doubt that God
will provide.

Our Sunday school children
presented the beautiful story once
again of the birth of the Christ
child. Again, we were reminded of
the miracle of Jesus's birth through
verse and song, as well as the Holy
Scriptures telling of Christ's birth
and being read by the students.
We are so thankful for our young
people and pray for them every day
in this unsettling world we live in.

We were to have had Bro.
Justin Isch (Sis. Liz, Lamont,
KS) as our guest minister this
month, but due to an unexpected
snowstorm, we had to settle for
having Bro. Justin speak to us via
Zoom. Although we are grateful
for this technology, and we know
the Word is the same, it just does
not satisfy like sitting around the
Word in person.

We worked in small groups
to wrap gifts for the Hartford
Training Center residents and made
a Christmas caroling video to send
along since it wasn’t possible to
carol in person. Both the givers and
receivers were blessed by this!

Our hearts are weeping with
the Edelman family as they said
goodbye to Bro. Albert this month.
While the death of a Christian
is filled with hope, it is also a sad
time of parting. We especially lift
up his wife, Sis. Mara Jean and
their children, Trent (Janell), Bro.
Kip (Sis. Donita), Sis. Dora Hines
(Tony), Bro. Victor (Sis. Hope), and
Tonya Mooney (John).

We’ve been prayerful for Bro.
Victor Edelman in his recovery
from a car accident. The Lord
truly was gracious and we’re
thankful Victor is healing.

Kansas, Lamont
Maria Luthi

“A thrill of hope the weary soul
rejoices!” This little phrase from
the hymn, “O Holy Night” is so
beautiful and really does thrill our
souls as we continue to walk in
a world that is so weary. Because
Jesus is our hope, may we all find
rest in the weariness all around us
during this Christmas season.

Our church has been meeting
through Zoom and we’d like to
thank the visiting ministers who
have served us in this manner: Bro.
Jeff Fischer (Sis Gloria, Fort Scott,
KS), Elder Bro. Rick Plattner (Sis.
Mary Ann, Fairbury, IL), and Bro.
Earl Beery (Sis. Suzanne, Rittman,
OH). Their ministry has been a
great blessing to us.

We continue to keep loved ones
and neighbors in our prayers as there
are many sick and isolated people
right now. May God comfort and
heal as his will provides.
Kansas, Sabetha  
**Leanna Hartter, Whitney Hartter**

We are thankful to be back in church, after being virtual for several Sundays in November. Being apart makes our time together that much more precious!

We are saddened by the passing of two brothers, Bro. Elmer Strahm (Sis. Phyllis) and Bro. Stephen Aberle. We extend our love and prayers to each of their families. They will both be greatly missed by our church family.

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” 1 Cor. 15:19

Aren’t we each thankful for a hope beyond this life!

We rejoice with Bro. Steven and Sis. Kelly Edelman as they welcomed their baby boy, Aiden Leroy, into this world, along with siblings Sis. Maddie, Ethan, Annie, Alphia, Emily, Maggie, Mitch, Lexi, Lacey, and Avery. Grandparents are Eugene Edelman and Bro. Roger and Sis. Ilene Hartter.

It was a blessing to hear the Sunday school students present their Christmas Program, following a Sunday afternoon service. We were reminded the true reason of Christmas.

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” Rom. 15:13

Michigan, Alto  
**Heidi Kaeb, Renee Steffen**

Greetings in the name of Jesus to all of you across the miles! Despite the current challenges in our homes, congregations, society, nation, and world, we have peace through our Savior and can praise and glorify our good Father through this Christmas season.

Many from our congregation were blessed to participate in or attend the 3rd annual Live Nativity at Heidi’s Farmstand. We are so thankful to those who made it possible so that the Gospel and...
true meaning of Christmas could be shared with more than 300 attendees. The next weekend several groups of carolers were able to sing outside the windows of many of our elderly or isolated loved ones and share sweet singing, greetings, and smiles after so much time apart.

We are very thankful we can still gather during this time and encourage each other. However, there are many who cannot gather and are struggling with illness, vulnerability, or hospitalization. We pray for grace to be faithful in remembering them through prayer, cards, and phone calls. Those we lift up to our loving Father include: Sis. Jeanette Overholt, Sis. Jane Grawburg, Sis. Marilyn Byam, and Bro. Martin Blough. As they face trials and uncertainty, may they hold fast to the promises in scripture and find encouragement through the Holy Spirit and the body of Christ.

We are overjoyed to know that Michael Steffen (Elder Bro. Ted and Sis. Sandy) has made a public confession of faith making known his repentance and desire to follow Jesus. May we all come around him in encouragement and prayer as he grows in Christ. We extend our sympathy to Sis. Sandy Steffen and family in the passing of her aunt, Bev Berry.

Bro. Ed and Sis. Julie Sanders have returned home from their years spent in Haiti. We are thrilled to fellowship with them in person again, and we thank God for the gospel-centered love and service they lived out in Haiti and will continue to live out no matter their location.

Our prayers are with those who will spend the winter months in southern states. We miss Bro. Lyman and Sis. Maryann Feldman and any others who will leave after Christmas, but are so thankful they can travel and enjoy the reprieve from Michigan’s wind and low temperatures.

**Michigan, Bay City**

**Sarah Knochel**

Although 2020 brought challenges and heartache to many in our congregation, we are thankful for God’s presence and peace. We look forward to 2021 and the Lord’s continued nearness. We trust in him and leave all things in his hands.

"God is ever present! Let us now adore Him, And in rev’rence come before Him! “Holy, holy, holy!” Angel bands are singing, And incessant praises bringing! Bow Thine ear, Lord, and hear, As we in submission Offer our oblation! Make us truly humble, From the world retired, Gentle, mild, with peace inspired! As the tender flower Willingly unfoldeth, To the sunlight gently yieldeth, May we be Glad and free, Heav’nly light receiving, Thou Thy work achieving." Walking With God, Zion’s Harp, #68 We pray for Bro. Neil Ramseyer (Sis. Sharon) and Sis. Betty Wieland (Bro. Morris) as they each spent time in the hospital this past month. We pray that God will continue to provide healing all according to his will.

**Michigan, Detroit**

**Krista Wieland**

Greetings in the name of Jesus. Hoping all have been kept safe and well this past month.

You know those experiences in life where you either have to look back and laugh or you will cry? I had one a week ago. I have given the story a name: “The Chase”. So to begin, Wednesday mornings are trash pickup day so we put the trash out Tuesday night. Tuesday night I was looking for my phone but wasn’t worried enough about it that I really looked. I decided that going to bed was much more important and I would find it the next morning.

The next morning, the search began in earnest but even my husband could not find it. Our other phone’s location services app found it not far from our house so I began walking that direction. As I am unable to drive, I had no choice but to walk. But the phone was moving. Not only was it moving, but it kept changing directions! To the average onlooker, I can imagine how I looked walking down our street like a puppet, eyes glued to the screen app, as the directions would tell me to turn around and walk the other direction! I finally called my husband and told him I was convinced whomever had stolen it was just messing with me. (I’m not usually into conspiracy theories and all that). He came and picked me
up and we both realized at the exact same moment that my phone must be driving around buried in the back of the garbage truck. It only made sense. To confirm, we tracked down the exact location to find: the garbage truck. Mystery solved. What a nightmare.

The spiritual application here is that sometimes we are so busy looking at and following the changing prompts and direction of the world we live in that we are led every which way until we are exhausted, completely lost and confused, only to find out we are just chasing a garbage truck.

Our church wishes to extend our prayers to Sis. Kristen Hitz as she has spent time lately in the hospital. I would also mention that this young woman has exhibited a vibrance and positive spirit through her health challenges. She has certainly been an example to me, and I would venture to say that many others have been inspired by her attitude as well.

We extend our love and sympathy to Sis. Kelly Ramseyer (Bro. Mark) and their family in the passing of Sis. Kelly’s mother, Sis. Ruth Wuethrich (Francesville, IN). The Ramseyers have said goodbye to several parents in the last months and we want them to know in their grief they are loved and supported by our church family.

We also want to extend our sympathy to Sis. Judy Aberle in the death of her dear brother, Bro. Stephen Aberle. He also is a brother-in-law to both retired Elder Bro. Mark Bahr (Sis. Bev) and Bro. Phil Bahr (Sis. Dawn) and they have our sympathies also.

Our church had a wonderful weekend as we heard and witnessed the beautiful testimonies of faith in Jesus Christ followed by baptism of three young people: Bro. Graham Bedolla (Bro. Jesse and Sis. Bonnie), Sis. Macy Bahr (Bro. Scott and Sis. Jamie) and Bro. Quinton Young (Bro. Steve and Sis. April). Thank you to Elder Bro. Randy Gudeman (Sis. Becky, Francesville, IN) for coming to assist our Elder Bro. Lucas in this inspiring weekend.

We recently had a simplified Sunday School Christmas Program and virtual Christmas caroling.

It is always a joy to celebrate the unchanging meaning of Christmas: the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

**Minnesota, Minneapolis**

**Brenda Messner, Renee Messner**

Greetings of love and thanksgiving as we wish farewell to 2020! May God’s grace and mercy surround us, as we serve him in the coming new year.

Our sympathies are with those who lost loved ones in the past few months: Bro. John and Sis. Debbie Berglund, in the loss of John’s father; Valerie Dalman (Derek) and Seth Edelman’s grandfather, Bro. Albert Edelman, fought the good fight against Acute Myeloid Leukemia, and claimed his victory in Jesus, at the end of November; Sis. Sandy Stork (Bro. Mark) who now resides in Blooming Prairie, MN, lost her mother, Sis. Nathalia Getz, as she passed onto her eternal rest. Praying that God comforts all these dear ones and covers them in peace.

Through the continued restrictions we are grateful for the different ways to stay connected with our church family. Following the guidelines, we have been able to gather for services, wearing masks but without eating together. Zoom meetings have certainly been a blessing to minister God’s precious word, as well as getting together for Bible studies. Sunday school is also being taught both in small groups at church and through Zoom. This year the Christmas Program was even shared via a Zoom meeting. The students proclaimed the good news of the birth of Jesus, who was born in a lowly stable. We appreciate the loving efforts of the teachers and all who had a part in telling this wonderful message! Giving God the glory in all things!

Servant hearts and helping hands worked to hang drywall at Living Hope Ministries in Minneapolis.

We are pleased to welcome Jean Almonor to our church, as he relocates from Iowa City for employment.

Elder Bro. Duane & Sis. Bonnie Rocke announced the engagement of their daughter, Allison, to Cristóbal (Cris) Martínez Gómez, from Santiago, Chile. Although no wedding date has been set, Lord willing, her plan is to work in Chile at El Oasis, a campus ministry starting in mid-February. Our love and prayers go with her for God’s guidance and direction.
Minnesota, Morris

Peg Wellendorf, Brianna Wulf

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;... He hath made everything beautiful in his time....” Eccl. 3:1-2, 11

We have been very blessed this month despite the situations and world around us! We rejoiced with the angels of heaven when Craigan and Bobby Wulf turned to the Lord in repentance. We wish them God’s grace as they work out their soul’s salvation and are thankful that God is still working in the hearts of men, no matter what the circumstances!

We grieve with Bro. Jeff and Sis. Jill Steiner and family at the sudden passing of Bro. Jeff’s dad, Bro. Dick Steiner (Tremont, IL). We also keep Bro. Mason and Sis. Candace Metzger in our thoughts at the passing of her grandfather, Bro. Johnny Wagenbach (Eureka, IL). We pray that God can provide comfort to their hearts as they go through this time of sorrow.

We were encouraged and thankful for the testimonies of two dear souls this month! We were grateful for the assistance of Elder Bro. Duane Rocke (Sis. Bonnie, Minneapolis, MN) as Sis. Tess Steiner (Bro. Jeff and Sis. Jill), and Sis. Nikki Knobloch (Kevin) were brought into the fold. We appreciated their testimonies of God’s great work in their life and the time of reflection of that same work performed in our hearts. May we always keep that first love and that heart of willingness to do the Lord’s will!

Our prayers are with Jim Greiner as he fell and broke a hip which required subsequent surgery. May he heal quickly and be able to return home from the nursing home to his waiting siblings.

We enjoyed hearing the story of Christ’s lowly birth and the great salvation that is freely available to us from the mouths of children and young adults at our annual Christmas Program. What a blessing to hear from our youth that story that never grows old!

Missouri, Kansas City

Katy Frantz

This month we welcomed two babies into our congregation! It is so meaningful to hold a newborn during this season of Christ’s birth.

Bro. Mitch and Sis. Allison Manz met their baby boy, Lane Benjamin, on November 17. Proud grandparents are Bro. Les and Sis. Karen Manz (Junction, OH), Sis. Michelle Meyer, and DeVere Meyer.

Bro. Eric and Sis. Katy Frantz’s fourth child, Priscilla Ruth, was born on December 16. Proud grandparents are Sis. Cheryl Frantz (Remington, IN), Joe Frantz and Sis. Virginia Zeller (Indianapolis, IN).

Our congregation bids farewell to Bro. Greg and Sis. Kara Snyder as they move to their new home near the Taylor, Missouri congregation. We are thankful they can transition to a home closer to their sons and grandchildren.

We celebrated our Savior’s birth at the Sunday school program on December 13, followed by outdoor caroling and a chili supper. We were reminded by the children that Christ didn’t come to earth to remain a child:

“Be not content this babe to know, Nor stay at Bethlehem.
But go with Christ to Calvary’s brow,
Beyond Jerusalem.
’Tis there men learn to know the Christ,
For there He bore man’s sin.
Then open wide the door of heart. And let the Saviour in.”

The Babe of Bethlehem,
Hymns of Zion #36

Missouri, Lamar

Mindy Wettstein

With the rising COVID-19 cases locally, we have been using a combination of “normal” church services and Zoom services. Special thanks to the Lamont, KS church for allowing us to join them virtually!

We rejoice in several fellowship opportunities this month, including a Young Group bonfire, as well as Christmas Caroling followed by potluck. Thank you to Fort Scott, KS church for joining us in caroling!

Special thanks to Elder Bro. Bob Dotterer (Sis. Laura, Sardis, OH), and Elder Bro. Duane Rocke (Sis. Bonnie, Minneapolis, MN) for sharing the Word virtually!

We have missed the regularity of your visits but are grateful for other avenues of fellowship!
Missouri, St. Louis
Michelle Rassi

Our church family gathered to assemble Operation Christmas Child boxes for our monthly Harvest Call night at the end of November.

The celebrating of Christ’s birth with our Sunday school Christmas Program is always a special occasion. This year, as many things, it looked a little different (without visitors in the audience) but it was a blessing just the same. We pray that these children will remember these Bible verses and songs that they have memorized and that the words will come back to them in the months and years to come.

We extend our sympathy to Bro. Chris and Sis. Carla Wuethrich in the passing of his mother, Sis. Ruth Wuethrich (Francesville, IN). She will also be missed by her grandchildren in our congregation, Bro. Landon and Sis. Hannah Wuethrich and Sis. Cambria Wuethrich.

Missouri, Taylor
Lori Marquart, Tami Pflum

Gratitude is extended to Elder Bro. John Lehman (Sis. Carol, Bern, KS) who shared in the pulpit ministry on November 22 when visiting family here in Taylor.

Heb. 4:16 tells us to, “…come boldly (with confidence) unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Sympathy is extended to Sis. Jerilyn Yackley (Bro. Joe), whose father, Bro. John Wagenbach (Mediapolis, IA) passed away on November 17. Bro. Dave Stieglitz (Sis. Paige) laid to rest his mother, Sis. Joan Stieglitz (Leo, IN) who passed away December 4. Sympathy also to Bro. Quinton Snyder (Sis. Heather) whose grandmother, Elba Snyder passed away. Having the confidence that a parent or grandparent rests in the arms of Jesus, softens the hard reality of death.

Additionally, Dorothy (Frieden) Ellison passed away on December 14. Dorothy is an aunt, and the last sibling of her generation, to the “Frieden/Hoerr” family including Bros. Louis and Donnie, Sis. Rosie Massner, Irene Riney, and Sis. Joanne Wiegand.

Our current Bible Study of “Sharing the Gospel” led to a recent challenge from our pulpit to pause and pray before entering a store, meeting an appointment, or going about your work, to allow the Spirit to show us opportunities to share the Gospel message.

On the afternoon of December 6, we gathered to witness the baptisms of two souls who had given their testimony of faith the previous evening. Bro. Kerry and Sis. Brenda Simmons live near Taylor now, but had moved from the Iowa City area several years ago. The seed of the Gospel message was planted in Iowa by their mail carrier, Bro. Brad Eland, many years prior, and that seed sprouted and continues to grow in their hearts as they gave witness. Welcome to the family, Bro. Kerry and Sis. Brenda!

Although postponed from last Spring, Communion was all the more special during this Advent time of year. After the testimonies of Bro. Kerry and Sis. Brenda on December 5, the emblems were shared, and a spiritual new year began with each participating having the opportunity to renew their covenant with Christ.

The Sunday school presented the story of Christ’s birth on Sunday, December 13. Bro. Joe Knochel described talking about their lesson as a group that morning and having the students describe Christmas without words, “Charade” style. Although many comical gestures ensued, Bro. Joe brought the lesson back to Zacharias who momentarily doubted the angel’s promise and as a result, was prevented from speaking until the promise became reality. This account is told in Luke 1 reminding us that even when we doubt God, we must be willing to obey. Thank you teachers and students for your part in strengthening our church family.

With joy our church welcomes Bro. Greg and Sis. Kara Snyder who have moved to the Taylor area from Kansas City. Both of their children live nearby, Bro. Quinton (Sis. Heather) and Kenton (Heidi) as well as several grandchildren.

Many need our prayers for health concerns. Those who have asked for prayer recently include Sis. Kathy Haab (Bro. Paul), Doug Hoerr (Amy), Bro. Garrett and Sis. Courtney Yackley, Bro. Joe and Sis. Jerilyn Yackley, Carson Yackley, and Bro. Marvin Wiegand (Sis. Joanne).
New York, Croghan/Naumburg
Karen Farney

“O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever... O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.” Psalms 136: 1-3,26

This Psalm was read in its entirety for our Thanksgiving day service. As we think of the first three verses and the last verse, how it tells us to give thanks unto the Lord, and at the end of every verse it says: for his mercy endureth for ever. This is a very comforting Psalm, it lets us know how thankful we should be, for all that the Lord does for us, and for all the times he has shown us his mercy (compassion or forgiveness). We are thankful when we go into the house of the Lord and hold our cups out and at the end of the service it is filled for us.

At this time we are still gathering for morning services only.

Ohio, Akron
Joelle Indermuhle

Bro. Les and Sis. Judi Steidl are thankful grandparents once again, as Jude Alexander was born on December 9 to Erik and Shannon Steidl. Jude joins older siblings Joshua, Izaiah, and Anya.

“A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.” Prov. 16:9

As we go forth into a new year, what a good reminder this verse is to each of us. I believe we can say with certainty that not one of us knew what 2020 would hold. What a peace is ours to know that we can trust God, who holds the whole world in his hands, for whatever may come in the future.

Ohio, Columbus
Nancy Banks

Looking over this year’s Silver Linings, the topic seems to be the same month to month and church to church. Comments such as “we have not had face to face worship for months now..” and “the world has changed significantly” are echoed across our church population. What else can be said? We do continue to be thankful in all things.

Yes, so much has changed. We will continue to give thanks for the goodness and mercy that is available to all. Another thing that we must sincerely appreciate is the advantages of modern technology. We continue to have Sundays school by Zoom with our young class, we listen to AC Central for our church services and are currently listening to a Zoom study with Elder Bro. Mark Masters on Wednesday nights. It may not be “normal” but we are thankful for the options that are available.

We were privileged to have Holy Communion with Elder Bro. Mark Masters (Sis. Jeannine, Mansfield, OH) and also welcomed Bro. Bryan Palitto (Sis. Lisa, Akron, OH) as a visiting minister.

We are so thankful for Sis. Cheryl Gehres that she has been moved to a rehabilitation center after her hospitalization. Prayers are being lifted for her recovery and return of strength in the coming days. Sis. Julie Grimm is also recovering from foot surgery and seems to be feeling better each day. Her recovery will take several months but her family (Bro. John, Sis. Julia and Joel) are taking excellent care of her.

Ohio, Junction
Karen Schlatter

We are thankful that Ethan Manz (Bro. Scott and Sis. Sara) turned his heart to the Lord and began his repentance. As the Lord calls, may each heart be softened and yield to a life of service to him. We rejoice with each one just as the angels in heaven rejoice.

Since we were not able to Christmas carol this year, our Sunday school students made a CD for each family from our church. A thank you to those who put the work and effort into making this project happen. I think the CD will be enjoyed long after the Christmas season is over.

We certainly want to keep those who are struggling with health issues in our thoughts and prayers. We are reminded over and over again how fragile and uncertain life is.

I am sure that each one of us could make a list of things that did not go the way we wanted them to go in the year 2020. Hopefully, we are learning to readjust our focus on the many blessings we have despite the challenges we have faced. I believe God is working in our hearts and minds to refine us. May we strive daily to keep our focus on him and not on ourselves.
There are many verses in the Bible that are encouraging and uplifting. I have found these verses to be an inspiration but also a daily challenge.

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Eph. 4:29-32.

Ohio, Latty
Angie Klopfenstein, Carmen Stoller

Greetings in the name of Jesus! We pray you had a joyous Christmas season. We were blessed this month as Elder Bro. John Laukhuf read to us the Fall Memorandum. How thankful we can be for the timeless wisdom found in the Bible.

Bro. Adam Nuest (Bro. Lee and Sis. Paula) announced his wedding engagement to Sis. Beth Klopfenstein, (Bluffton, IN). Her parents are Bro. Lee and Sis. Desma and they worship in our Toledo, OH congregation. We pray God’s richest blessings on this couple as they make marriage preparations.

We welcome Elmer Zollinger (Rittman, OH) as he is working in our area and will be worshiping with us. We are thankful that he has recently begun his repentance. May he feel our love and prayers.

We have been prayerful for those in our congregation who have lost loved ones. Bro. Roger Gerber (Sis. Eunice) said goodbye to his brother, Bro. Charles Gerber (Sis. Marilyn, Bluffton, IN). Also, Sis. Gloria Grant (Bro. Phil), said goodbye to her father, Bro. Dale Fiechter (Bluffton, IN).

Ohio, Mansfield
Katie Miller

“Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand;
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,
Here came the wise men from Orient land.
The King of kings lay once in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend;
He knows our need,
To our weakness is no stranger,
Behold your King,
before Him lowly bend!”
O Holy Night, Hymns of Christmas # 34

We are saddened by the passing of Frank Graszl Jr. Our prayers will continue for his wife Ruth Ann and his son Cameron. We also think of Frank’s sister, Shirley Roberts and brother Tom Graszl. May each one feel of the Savior that “He knows our need”.

As we welcome the dawning of a new year, may we proceed as “Led by the light of faith serenely beaming”. Let us go forth with “glowing hearts”, walking with the one “born to be our friend”.

Ohio, Rittman
Maria Beery, Julie Steiner

“As we begin a new year, we are thankful for a faithful savior we can trust in! We rejoice with Bobby Cochran Sr. (Sis. Paulette) as he began his repentance and wish him God’s nearness. We were also blessed to witness the baptism of Brittany Gasser (Bro. Aaron and Sis. Deb) and Kylie Miller (Keith and Paula) at our Rittman church and rejoice with Aubrey Csapo (Bro. Matt and Sis. Darlene) as she was baptized in Peachtree City, GA where she attends.

Our sympathy goes to those who have lost loved ones this month. Losing parents were Sis. Marilynn Stoller (Bro. Steve) as her mother, Sis. Alice Steidinger (Bloomington, IL) passed away and Sis. Camille Hartzler (Bro. Wayne) as her father, Bro. Wayne Strahm (Sis. Claudia, Bern, KS) was laid to rest. Bro. Wayne was also a brother to Sis. Shirley Rufener (Bro. Darrell).

Losing siblings were Bro. Reinhardt Keiper (Sis. Betty) as his sister, Sis.
Kathy Stokes (San Diego, CA) passed away, Sis. Jane Klotzle (Bro. Wayne) who mourns the loss of her sister, Sis. Margene Peasley (Bro. Dave, Lester, IA), and Sis. Sharon Rupp with the loss of her brother-in-law, Jeff Rupp. We extend prayers to each one grieving and take comfort in the hope of heaven!

We also want to remember Sis. Martha Bauman (Bro. Jerry) as she spent time in the hospital and pray she will continue to heal.

Congratulations and God’s blessings to Eliza Winkler and Ken Wachtel as they were joined in marriage. Parents are Keith and Regina Winkler and John and Judy Wachtel.

On December 7, Bro. Bro. Kevin and Sis. Leandra Dotterer and big brother Jude, welcomed Lincoln Roy to their family. Grandparents are Bro. Gary and Sis. Sandy Dotterer and Bro. Mike and Sis. Jody Bahler (Wolcott, IN).

We appreciate Elder Bro. Vic Bauman (Sis. Brenda, Smithville, OH), Bro. Marvin Zollinger (Sis. Pam, Smithville, OH) and Bro. Randy Gasser (Sis. Sue, Detroit, MI) for serving us on the pulpit and trust God will bless them.

“I’m so glad I’ve learned to trust Thee,
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend!
And I know that Thou art with me,
Wilt be with me to the end!”

Ohio, Sardis
Renee Blough, Doris Miller

December is the month that we focus on Jesus as a babe in a manger. We can refocus our thoughts on the simple blessings of life by remembering the humble Christ child.

This year we recorded the singing of carols and reading of cards both by video and audio to be shared to those who need to stay in. Care Centers welcomed our visits outside of residents’ windows where they could see our smiles and waves, and hopefully hear our joyful noise.

“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.” Psalms 100:1-2

Our Sunday school children did a beautiful job showering us with gladness at the Christmas Program. It was recorded as well to be shared by video and audio with those not able to attend.

Just as Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (Gospel Hymns #875) proclaims “Glory to the newborn King!”, we can spread the positive message of hope and cheer this Christmas season through a call, a text, or a card. Sharing the good news with others blesses both the receiver and the messenger!

Ohio, Toledo
Anne Baumann, Rebekah Witzig

Holiday greetings from our Toledo church family. As we move through this time of year, our hearts have been filled with love and thankfulness for God’s blessings and his guidance amongst a season of uncertainty and challenges.

Our church enjoyed a Thanksgiving service together on Wednesday evening, November 25. Then, on Sunday evening, December 6, we were blessed by the Sunday school Christmas Program. The students sang songs and recited verses/poems which brought us to the manger on that first holy night. Our preschool and primary children sang the Christmas story through spelling out the letters of that same word. The older students sang about the message of Christ’s birth in countermelodies and shared a biblical version of “Do You Hear What I Hear?”. Finally, the Bible class, with support from a younger adult ensemble, presented a heartfelt arrangement of, “O Come All Ye Faithful”. Following the program, we were all treated to individual
family take-home trays of delicious goodies thanks to the efforts of our college students under the direction of Bro. Anthony and Sis. Anne Baumann, Sunday school superintendent.

The weekend of December 11-13, we were encouraged to come together in a new, yet old way, to Christmas carol for some of our brethren shut-in for health reasons and by the COVID-19 virus. On Friday evening, we caroled at Aspen Grove where Bro. Howard Harmon and Sis. Roberta Stoller reside. Then, on Sunday, the caroling continued after church, first at the Browning Retirement Community, home of Sis. Dorothy Stevens, where we walked and sang around the outside of the building, exchanging waves and smiles with the residents through the large, slightly open windows. Afterwards, we drove to the home of Sis. Teresa Rywalski’s daughter Ellie’s family, with whom she resides, gathering on the porch to share Christmas songs with Sis. Teresa and her family, while her precious little grandson giggled at us through the window.

Now, as we approach Christmas, it is fitting to remember the best beginning of the greatest story ever told.

“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given…” Isa. 9:6

**Ontario, Kitchener**

**RoseLynn Metzger**

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Luke 2:8-10

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” Matthew 1:23

Greetings of love from Kitchener! I hope this letter finds you well, resting in Gods goodness as we approach the Christmas season. When I read the verses above, I am wonderfully reminded about the nature of our God.

Nothing in our lives happens by chance. He orchestrates every moment of everyday, each with its own unique purpose. The path God has planned for us is never wrong. He doesn’t make mistakes and he won’t start now!

One thing that has stood out to me this Christmas season, is how God used seemingly ordinary people for his ultimate glory! First, the mother of Jesus was a young girl who was engaged to a carpenter. Just before Jesus’s birth, they had to go to Bethlehem to pay their taxes. They were just normal Nazarene citizens. We know that through Mary, God delivered to us His Son, the King of Kings! She didn’t completely understand Gods plan for her, but she had faith to believe and trust his timing. Also, when God sent the angels to proclaim the birth of Jesus to humankind, he sent them first to the shepherds. The shepherds were tending their sheep on the hillside. Socially, they were at the lowest rank and nobody thought much of them. But when God had something important to announce, he came to them first. He announced the special birth of an extraordinary man (Jesus!) to the ordinary. God uses regular people everyday for his amazing plan. Sometimes it is easy to feel insignificant and we wonder how we fit into this plan. I pray that the Christmas story would encourage you that God has a very special plan for your life and that you most definitely fit into his greater plan!

Over the last few weeks, we have been blessed with ministers from Missouri, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio! This is said in each article, but we sincerely appreciate your efforts. As always, we thank God for your willingness to bring the Word to us! Wishing you all a blessed Christmas season from across the border!

**Oregon, Portland**

**Louisa Gallup**

We appreciated the labors of the elder body in regard to the Fall Memorandum. We thank our Elder Bro. John Wiegand (Sis. Jane, Silverton, OR) for presenting it to us. It was a blessing to be able to listen through computer technology.

On December 11, Willem Bernson (Aleida, dec.), the father of Sis. Louisa Gallup (Bro. Mark) passed away peacefully in his sleep. He lived in the Netherlands, where the pandemic is also claiming lives daily. His nursing home had numerous cases and he
tested positive as well. The Lord was merciful and he suffered no symptoms. He was 102 and lived a full, hard working life, being a kind and Christian example to his family. He loved visiting the US, particularly Mt. Hood and the coast of the Pacific Northwest. The family would greatly appreciate your prayerful support during this time of loss.

May the Lord bless us and keep us safe as the pandemic continues. May he grant us all good health in the New Year.

Oregon, Silverton

Lorraine Kuenzi, Teresa Sinn

We are thankful to be living in this joyous Christmas season, yet we realize that many are grieving for loved ones lost or experiencing a very different holiday season this year. Many in our congregation have experienced loss and we fervently pray that they may feel God’s comfort and look forward to the day when they can reunite in heaven.

Sis. Linda Sinn’s (Bro. Don) father, Bro. Elmer Kaeb (Cisna Park, IL), passed away. We extend love and sympathy to Bro. Don and Sis. Linda. Prayers are with Sis. Elizabeth Peasley, as she also lost her mother, Sis. Margene Peasley (Bro. Dave, Lester, IA). We are thinking of Bro. Loren and Sis. Marlene Dettwyler in the passing of her brother, Merlin Kaeb (Ida Lou, Forrest, IL). Our sympathy is with Bro. Jesse Te Slaa’s (Sis. Kari) in the passing of his grandfather, Alfred Te Slaa (Phyllis, Rock Rapids, IA).

Bro. Terry Kuenzi (Sis. Ann) has spent an extended period of time in the hospital this month due to COVID-19. We are thankful that God has been renewing his strength, and he is now home. Please pray for continued healing and strength for the days ahead!

Sis. Peggy Young (Bro. Terry) also spent a little time in the hospital, and we are thankful she is home and feeling better. Praise God who is the ultimate healer!

Rosalee Kuenzi (Richard) mother to Sis. Richelle Haun (Bro. Todd), Bro. Jack Kuenzi (Sis. Janet), and Bruce Kuenzi (Stacy), recently had cardiac surgery and spent time in the hospital. Rosalee and her family would appreciate your support and prayers for a fully recovery.

Bro. Evan and Sis. Emily Schmidgall welcomed Tanner Paul on December 6. Grandparents are Paul and Kris Schmidgall, (Eureka, IL), and Bro. Mark and Sis. Elsie Sinn.

Hunter and Lori Meissner welcomed their first baby, Houston Alan on December 9. Grandparents are Ron and Michelle Meissner from the Silverton area and Bro. Chad and Sis. Megan Walter.

Bro. Loren and Sis. Marlene Dettwyler welcomed a new granddaughter, Leila Mae, on December 14. Parents are Bro. Dinold and Sis. Karla Gabriel (Smithville, OH).

We are thankful for these new arrivals and pray for God’s blessings on them!

Caleb Dettwyler (Bro. Kevin and Sis. Jill) has recently surrendered his life to the Lord and begun his repentance journey! It’s encouraging to see the Lord working in this challenging time.

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Laura Isch

"O, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant O come ye O come ye to Bethlehem. Come and behold Him, Born the King of angels O come, let us adore Him Christ the Lord!"

O Come All Ye Faithful, Hymns of Zion, #40

On December 13, we enjoyed our annual Christmas Program, even though we used a virtual format this year. It is always a blessing when our Sunday school children remind us of the wonderful gift of Christ Jesus.

Our prayers are with Bro. Jerry Isch (Sis. Linda) with the passing of his father, Bro. Ernie Isch (Sis. Lucille, Bluffton IN). We also lift Bro. Shawn Metzger (Sis. Sandy) up in prayer in the passing of his mother, Sis. Doreen Metzger (Lamont, KS). May God keep all in his loving care.

Tennessee, Nashville

Mike Fritz

We are blessed with the opportunity to worship together and are thankful for the willingness of visiting ministers to serve us. Our recent visiting ministers have included Bro.
Trent Gasser (Sis. Molly, Akron, OH), Bro. Mark Leuthold (Sis. Lee, Lester, IA), and Bro. Nathan Rassi (Sis. Michelle, St. Louis, MO). We have also appreciated the fellowship of visitors from Goodfield, IL; St. Louis, MO; Akron, OH; Portland, OR; and Philadelphia, PA.

Under normal circumstances, we meet for worship every Sunday. Please contact us ahead of time to confirm our schedule. Contacts are Bro. Jeff and Sis. Cynde Stoller, 309.530.5760, cyndelynnstoller@gmail.com; Bro. Jordan and Sis. Emily Fritz, 615.852.9109, jordanmfritz@gmail.com; or Bro. Jeremy and Sis. Jillian Bradbury, 765.993.8917, jeremybradbury1975@gmail.com.

Bro. Joe Gerber (Champaign, IL) joined us for a Wednesday evening Zoom service. Thankful for their willingness to spend time with us and share God’s love.

We rejoice that Bro. Jesse Fischer and Sis. Kirbi Ekerty (Champaign, IL) are engaged for marriage. We look forward to having Sis. Kirbi join our Austin/Bastrop church family.

“Heard my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.” Psa. 61:1-4.

Texas, Austin/Bastrop
Candy Meiss

Sending our Love and Greetings from Austin/Bastrop!

Greetings from the heart of Texas. We rejoice to celebrate the birth of the one who overcame death and the grave.

During the times that it is not prudent for us to gather at church we are thankful for virtual church services. Wherever we are, may we hear the pure Word by the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. We were blessed by hearing the Word as Bro. Dan Koch (Sis. Julie, Tremont, IL) served us this month. The reading of the memorandum was done via Zoom by our Elder Bro. Gerry Hertzel (Sabetha, KS) and Ordained Deacon, Bro. Leland Plattner (Zapata, TX).

We were blessed by hearing the Word as Bro. Dan Koch (Sis. Julie, Tremont, IL) served us this month. The reading of the memorandum was done via Zoom by our Elder Bro. Gerry Hertzel (Sabetha, KS) and Ordained Deacon, Bro. Leland Plattner (Zapata, TX).

I Know Who Holds Tomorrow

“I don’t know about tomorrow; I just live from day to day.
I don’t borrow from its sunshine For its skies may turn to grey.
I don’t worry o’er the future, For I know what Jesus said.
And today I’ll walk beside Him, For He knows what lies ahead.

Every step is getting brighter As the golden stairs I climb;
Every burden’s getting lighter, Every cloud is silver-lined.
There the sun is always shining, There no tear will dim the eye;
At the ending of the rainbow Where the mountains touch the sky.

I don’t know about tomorrow; It may bring me poverty.
But the one who feeds the sparrow, Is the one who stands by me.
And the pathway that be my portion May be through the flame or flood;
But His presence goes before me And I’m covered with His blood.

Chorus
Many things about tomorrow I don’t seem to understand
But I know who holds tomorrow And I know who holds my hand.

Heavenly Highway Hymns #78
Registration open soon for ALive2021 -- May 29-31

Lord willing, the Athens, Alabama congregation will host ALive 2021 over the Memorial Day weekend. While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to make plans unpredictable in all areas of our lives, the Committee is prayerful that the effects of the virus will run its course by May 2021 and are moving ahead with plans.

The weekend event is being planned at The Vision (www.visionministry.org), a beautiful 300+ acre Christian retreat center located in Huntsville, AL. Our weekend theme will center on the topic of “Hope” with ministering Bro. Brad Metz (Bloomington, IL) and Bro. Kirk Plattner (West Lafayette, IN) planning to speak.

Registration open February 1st on the website at www.ALiveAlabama.com. You can also learn information about the weekend on Facebook (@ALiveAlabama) or send an e-mail to info@alivealabama.com.

Plan to join the Athens, Alabama congregation along with other brothers, sisters and families for a wonderful weekend of sweet Christian fellowship.

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” Romans 15:13
WHAT DOES intergenerational fellowship involve? Anyone writing on this topic might have a different answer to that question, so allow me to share my reflections.

I have three very good friends from three generations. (Actually, there are four, but I will explain that later!) Let me start with the one that is in the lower part of my generation. He and I met about 36 years ago. When we stayed at his dad’s place on the way to a brotherhood conference, he was a young Brother who was new in the ministry. We established an immediate friendship that has lasted all through these years. Not living in the same area, our friendship never grew cold. With more free time on our hands now, we have renewed the friendship. What I love about this Brother is that we can share many experiences and comments without being judgmental. It is truly a case of iron sharpening iron (Proverbs 27:17).

I will skip to my dear friend in the youngest of the three generations. This Brother is just a few years older than my youngest grandchild. We have developed a very strong relationship. I am learning a lot about how his generation thinks, and I believe I am speaking wisdom into his life based on my experiences after walking with Christ for more than 50 years. I love spending time with him, his wife, and their young family, which includes children the age of my great-grandchildren.

I have two close friends from the generation just under me. One of these dear friends is a born-again believer who is not from our denomination. We have become accountability partners, and we are constantly helping each other grow in Christ. We respect each other’s outlook on the Christian walk of life – all based on God’s Word. As some of you may know, my second friend from that generation is an extremely good friend of mine; she is my wife of 3.5 years, Brenda! Age-wise, she is right in the middle of my three children. Needless to say, she is an absolute joy and God’s gift to me. I am learning a whole bunch from her. Occasionally, I even feel like I am teaching her something. She is keeping me young, and I am trying very hard not to make her grow old.

A gentleman once said, "Every believer needs 3 people in their life: a ‘Paul,’ someone who can mentor you; a ‘Barnabas,’ someone who will occasionally challenge you (not a yes-man); and a ‘Timothy,’ a young Christian who is willing to learn from what you can teach." In all cases, I believe each generation can learn from each other. We in the older generation are commanded to teach the young, but we do not have all the answers; God does. So, as I like to say, it is to our benefit to keep our “learner” turned on.

Bro. Jerry Messner - Winthrop, MN
FROM DIAPERS to gray hairs, a body of believers has beautiful unity when each member loves and learns from one another. It is a tremendous blessing to sit next to an older sister during the lunch hour and listen to her share of God’s faithfulness through the challenges of life. One widowed sister that I call my adopted grandmother will confidently say that she is “thankful and blessed” whenever anyone asks how she is doing. Thinking of her constant trust in Jesus and the steadiness of the older generation encourages me to remain grounded in Christ, our faithful Savior. It gives me great joy to see the energy of our youth as they pour out of their Sunday school classrooms, eager to show anyone their crafts or colored story pages. While teaching them about the love of Jesus, these young hearts have encouraged me with their innocent faith to which Christ calls us.

As I look between these generations, I see more of the body at work and growing. Newly married couples are seeking to exemplify the Gospel in their marriages. Working singles are drawing closer to Christ and focusing on His mission for their lives. Parents are juggling work and home responsibilities as they nurture their families in the Lord. Missionaries are laboring in the fields ripe for harvest. Our elder body is shepherding the flock as they guide us in a unified purpose, mission, and vision. Youth groups are studying the Truth and growing in their faith. As our cups are filled with the beautiful blessing of a church body made up of various ages and walks of life, I pray that we count it a privilege to pour out our love and service for each member and for Jesus, our Head.

Sis. Karissa Poppen - Gridley, IL

I PRAISE GOD for how fellowshipping with believers of other generations has enriched my walk of faith. One of my first memories of an older believer encouraging faith was a great aunt. Although she could not speak English, she still showed me that I was special by her kind acts of love. I would sit with her in afternoon church. There were times too when I sat with a Sister who let me hold her baby.

As I got older, I babysat for brethren from church. I witnessed experiences that I hoped I could have someday. I think these laid a foundation for my future interest in becoming a believer.

In the summer, our Sunday schools had a youth day at Camp Mack, where we fellowshipped and met young people from other Apostolic Christian churches. The singing we did in Sunday school was inspiring. We attended singings in brethren’s homes that strengthened my faith too.

The Lord further blessed me with believing parents and in-laws who worked with me and taught me much about faith. I had an aunt and an uncle who surely enriched my faith when I lived away from home and spent time with them.

Fellowshipping at noon and after church with believers of different ages has been good. I continue to enjoy visiting with the elderly as well as young people (single and married) and often feel I learn from both. Anonymous
MY WIFE, JOYCE, and I have served several years with Apostolic Christian World Relief and Apostolic Christian HarvestCall. These years have been filled with multiple generations working together. This has been the most rewarding experience of my life. It is truly amazing to mingle, watch, and work with a combination of young, middle-aged, and well-seasoned souls and see how the Lord blends them all together.

An important side note is that all these experiences involved different cultures meshing together like I’ve never seen before. People who grew up in different areas and different church cultures united around a common cause. God used them to accomplish his work in an amazing way. These interactions continue to turn people’s lives around. Such transformation occurs not only in the lives of those we’re helping, but it also serves to turn around lives among our own church family. Many people surrender their lives to Jesus. Lifetime unions come out of several of these experiences. Those who have drifted are getting refocused on “keeping the main thing the main thing.”

I have been so blessed this past year to closely associate with a high school senior. Getting to know him and sharing life and spiritual experiences has been a real blessing to me. We are now lifetime buddies because of Jesus!

We’ve had several years mentoring newly-engaged and newly-married couples. Getting to know these young couples has been a real blessing to Joyce and me. This helps us connect with a young generation that we would not otherwise get to know.

These experiences create relationships that last a lifetime. It emphasizes the fact that we are created for relationship. When our relationships span all the other generations, it just magnifies the beauty of God’s family.

Bro. Barry Kloster - Goodfield, IL

I CONSIDER MYSELF supremely blessed by all my interactions with Brothers and Sisters of the older generations during my teenage years. I will just share a few examples.

When I was preparing for baptism at the tender age of thirteen, I asked my Elder, “Do people come back to talk to you after they’re baptized?” And he said, “Not as much, but you sure can if you want to!” He soon retired from the ministry, but – for the next six years, I would keep a list of spiritual questions. Every so often, we would get together and talk through them. My own father passed away when I was a teenager, and I benefited so much from this Brother sharing his wisdom and concern for me.

The Sisters in our single group organized an activity for single Sisters and widows. We divided those who signed up into groups of six to ten people, with a few widows in each group. Every couple months, one Sister was in charge of hosting a get-together. We might have brunch or just get together to talk. Through this, I was able to see that the generational gap was really not so wide; these women had all been my age at one time. Their stories and wisdom enriched my life!

I also benefited from friendships with Sisters in my single group who were just a decade older than I was. One of these Sisters ended up becoming my mentor later on. Our relationship has been key to so much of my spiritual development. I know that her interest in my life gave me the courage to be vulnerable. I honestly don’t know where I would be at today without her friendship.

So, in general, I have learned to dearly appreciate this aspect of our brotherhood. Since my relationships with older generations have been a crucial part of my emotional and spiritual well being, I am forever grateful for how they invested in me. This has also made me eager to do the same for future generations, and I pray that this beautiful treasure of ours will never be lost or under-valued!

Sis. Laura Aviña - Magdalena, MX
I feel so grateful to be a part of such a diverse church family. I got to see how all of the age ranges provide different perspectives when our church hosted a Ladies Day that involved a panel of women, including myself. Each person answered various questions tied to their life stage, marital status, and many details in between. I wanted to share what life looked like as a twenty-something who was working full-time and had a desire to be married. We learned that day that people sometimes make comments to be complimentary or inspire hope, but these ideas can actually increase discouragement if they are not helpful to the recipient’s life at that point in time. That was a reminder for both others and myself that while God’s will does not look the same for everyone, that doesn’t mean He’s not working! This Ladies Day provided an opportunity to listen to each woman, respect the battles they are facing, and see how we have the opportunity to learn, encourage, and diligently pray for one another!

Additionally, while I was a single sister, my participation in rotating church potlucks allowed interaction and making connections I wouldn’t have experienced otherwise. Even if I was the youngest person by 30-40 years, I benefited as we shared stories of faith and how that looked different for each person. Such experiences included marriage, illness, raising children/grandchildren, and just experiencing the highs and lows of life. At one particular potluck, a man from church offered up Scripture as an encouragement to me as I waited to hear about job cuts from the high school where I was employed. I wrote a note in my Bible to commemorate that experience and have since found comfort in re-visiting those verses. On this side of that situation, my job remained, but that became the start of a friendship with that man, as he has offered kindness and encouragement ever since.

At a separate potluck, I was facing another dilemma as I tried to navigate heartache and a new job in a different school district. In a beautiful and simple moment at the dinner table, an older woman looked at me and said, “Lauren, I just felt the Spirit, and it’s going to be okay.” I started tearing up and clung so tightly to those words, which she offered so effortlessly. She was right! The Lord refined me through that move to a different place, introduced me to new friends, and exposed bitterness in my heart that needed to be healed. Ultimately, he prepared me to move back to Central Illinois and eventually accept a proposal from my now-husband. This truth didn’t happen right away, but actually in baby steps. It became such a testimony of God using the body to speak truth into our lives!

I do believe that we have such a rich heritage that places us in congregations with newborns all the way up to elderly men and women in their nineties! Some have seen a side of life that I haven’t yet. I hope that one day I can speak that same encouragement and truth to someone younger, just like they have done for me! You cannot put a price on these relationships, but thank the Lord for knowing that we need the prayers and support of those we love. We’re so blessed!

Sis. Lauren Schumacher - Washington, IL

Fellowshipping with believers of other generations has enriched my walk of faith. I recall listening to an older Sister, who sat beside me at a singing. She told me the story of how her family went through a typhoid epidemic in her young years. Among their family of fifteen children, seven of them died within a short time of each other. This included the oldest daughter, who was her mother’s “right hand help.” I tried to imagine the grief that those parents and their surviving children experienced.

Other conversations with older people taught me how privileged I am. They recalled stories of their parents coming to America with the knowledge that they would probably never again see the family that they left behind in “the old country.” This is especially relevant now when stay-at-home orders separate us and we start to express concern about our liberties being torn from us. We are especially privileged because we still have many methods of communication open to us, including real-time imaging. We need to be appreciative and thankful to our Lord for what we have!

Anonymous
News and Notices

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Bro. Jim and Sis. Deb Tilbury
Phone: (507) 281-2875

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## 2021 Team Schedule

### Mexico

- **Reynosa:** Construction  
  Jan 5-12  
  Trenton Edelman trentonedelman@gmail.com

- **Magdalena:** Silverton, OR  
  March 20-27, 2021

- **Magdalena:** Congerville, IL  
  May 28- June 3, 2021

- **Magdalena:** Washington, IL  
  June 11 - 17, 2021

### Magdalena: Detroit MI & Lamont, KS June 25 - July 1, 2021

Questions about teams to Magdalena?

Contact: Adam Kaeb - operationscve@gmail.com

### Jamaica

- **Awareness Tour**  
  Jan 8 -21, 2021  
  Loren Dettwyler 503-580-9629 lmdettwyler@gmail.com

- **CCCD - JDV**  
  June 4-12, 2021  
  Mark Lindberg 815-641-9065 lindma@hotmail.com

*If you are interested in sponsoring a team to Jamaica, contact Loren Dettwyler*

### Haiti

#### Les Cayes

- **MEBSH/Construction/Ohio**  
  Jan 8-15  
  Ron Palitto ronp@palittoconsulting.com 330-336-5373

- **HWA/ Water Aid**  
  Jan 15-22  
  Rich Kuntz rrkuntz60@gmail.com 815-848-2420

- **Haiti Trade Schools**  
  Jan 15-22  
  Andy Getz andy@getzitdone.com 574-870-5046

- **MEBSH/Construction/Alto**  
  Jan 22-29  
  Nathan Steffen nds235@gmail.com 616-308-6621

- **MEBSH/Construction/Silverton**  
  J 29 - F 5  
  Harvey Kuenzi hkloanoak@msn.com 503-932-3128

- **MEBSH/Construction/Roanoke Feb 12-19**  
  Josh Moser joshmoser92@gmail.com 309-573-6398

- **MEBVSH/Construction/Peoria Feb 19-26**  
  Wes Sutter wasutter@icloud.com 309-863-1309

- **Haiti Dairy**  
  Feb 26-Mar 5  
  Brent Hodel ht6f94@gmail.com 309-231-7467

- **Haiti Trade Schools**  
  March 5-12  
  Andy Getz andy@getzitdone.com 574-870-5046

- **HWA/ Water Aid**  
  March 5-12  
  Rich Kuntz rrkuntz60@gmail.com 815-848-2420

- **MEBSH/Haiti Support**  
  March 19-26  
  Jon Zeller jczeller1972@gmail.com 309-266-9009

- **MEBSH/Maintenance**  
  March 26-April 2  
  Jon Zeller jczeller1972@gmail.com 309-266-9009

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### TEACHER OPPORTUNITY

Hospital Lumiere, Bonne Fin, Haiti is presently seeking a teacher and teacher aid for missionary children. These positions involve full-time teaching in the multi-level classroom setting of the Bonne Fin Missionary School on the Hospital Lumiere compound. The missionary role is expected to start during the summer of 2020. These are full time missionary positions with a service term of one school year. There is opportunity to extend the term of service.

**Teacher qualifications** include being a member in good standing of the Apostolic Christian Church, a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree, preferably in the field of Education or Child Development, ability to communicate effectively with students, parents and visitors to the school, a nurturing and caring attitude toward children, and a heart and desire to serve others through service to Jesus Christ.

**Teacher Aid qualifications** include being a member in good standing of the Apostolic Christian Church, a minimum of a High School Diploma, a Bachelor's degree preferred, preferably in the field of Education or Child Development, ability to communicate effectively with the teacher, students, parents and visitors to the school, a nurturing and caring attitude toward children, and a heart and desire to serve others through service to Jesus Christ.

For additional details for this exciting and worthy service opportunity contact:  
Amber Miller - Missionary Care Director  
Email: amiller@harvestcall.org or  
Phone: 765.250.4295 x108
HARVESTCALL MISSIONARY PURPOSE
The primary purpose of a HarvestCall missionary is to proclaim Christ and serve others. In fulfillment of HarvestCall’s mission, all missionary roles are purposed toward the sharing of the Gospel, the discipleship of believers, and the demonstration of the love of Christ through deeds of compassion.

PRIMARY ROLE: DEAF DISCIPLESHIP (3-5 years)
1. To intentionally and effectively be engaged in discipling relationships as part of a healthy body of local believers.
2. The commitment of our team to discipleship within the Deaf community continues to deepen, and as such we believe there is a need for long-term growth of our missionary team. We believe that 3-5 years is necessary for cultural and language acquisition before someone is adequately prepared for discipleship roles. Therefore, the purpose in the early years would essentially be as a “training ground” although the near-term role itself might change with time as the missionary becomes more equipped for the long-term role of being engaged in Deaf discipleship.

TRANSITIONAL ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES:
1. Key Result Area #1 (first step)
   Cultural and Language Training
   a) Complete Levels 1, 2, and 3 of JSL (Jamaican Sign Language) training on island
   b) Learn the history of Jamaica and develop an understanding of the native language, Patois
   c) Complete Helping Without Hurting curriculum
      • Read the book, “When Helping Hurts”
      • Go through video series “Helping Without Hurting in STM”
2. Key Result Area #2 (near-term)
   HarvestCall Jamaica Team Role
   a) Support Sis Erin with En Gedi House ministry and child-care
   b) Assist in the distribution of material aid
   c) Possible establishment of Deaf Can! Coffee ministry in Mandeville
3. Key Result Area #3 (within 6-12 months)
   CCCD Role possibilities
   a) CCCD support opportunities (based on skill and interest)
      • Agriculture (vegetable crops and cattle as well as coffee farm)
      • After school activities
      • Construction and maintenance
      • Teaching or Interpreting (w/ ASL skills already)
      • Coffee farm (Deaf Can!)

QUALIFICATION AND SKILLS REQUIRED:
1. Interest and desire to learn sign language (past training / experience is preferred)
2. People person – willing to engage with others, particularly those different than you

For additional details for this exciting and worthy service opportunity contact:
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Email: amiller@harvestcall.org or Phone: 765.250.4295 x108
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**TRANSITIONAL ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. **Key Result Area #1 (first step)**
   - **Cultural and Language Training**
     - a) Complete Levels 1, 2, and 3 of JSL (Jamaican Sign Language) training on island
     - b) Learn the history of Jamaica and develop an understanding of the native language, Patois
     - c) Complete Helping Without Hurting curriculum
       - Read the book, “When Helping Hurts”
       - Go through video series “Helping Without Hurting in STM”

2. **Key Result Area #2 (near-term)**
   - **HarvestCall Jamaica Team Role**
     - a) JSL Video Bible translation coordinating / video editing / support
     - b) Support Deaf Can! Operations
     - c) Support E3 Fellowship gathering (small church establishment)
     - d) Assist in the distribution of material aid

3. **Key Result Area #3 (within 6-12 months)**
   - **CCCD Role possibilities**
     - a) CCCD support opportunities (based on skill and interest)
       - STM teams (support Seth for a year before taking responsibility)
       - Construction and maintenance
       - Teaching or Interpreting (w/ ASL skills already)
     - Teen Bible study

**QUALIFICATION AND SKILLS REQUIRED:**

1. Interest and desire to learn sign language (past training / experience is preferred)
2. People person – willing to engage with others, particularly those different than you

For additional details for this exciting and worthy service opportunity contact:

Amber Miller - Missionary Care Director
Email: amiller@harvestcall.org or Phone: 765.250.4295 x108
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**Hospital Lumiere - Bonne Fin, Haiti**

**DIRECTOR OF NURSING**

The nursing department within the hospital and clinic at Hospital Lumiere is staffed by Haitian nationals who are trained and certified by the Haitian medical system. Over the past 10 years, the nursing staff capability and dedication to serving the patients has greatly improved. All nursing departments are supervised by well qualified and skilled team members that are responsible for delivering the nursing services including staff assignments, scheduling, quality assurance and training. The position of Director of Nursing is to support the nursing team providing guidance, supervision and mentoring. This is not a hands on direct patient care position.

A key component of the medical program at Hospital Lumiere is hosting medical teams and ongoing training from medical professionals in the States. The DON will be responsible for establishing, coordinating and hosting nursing medical teams visiting HL.

This opportunity is a fulltime missionary position resident at Hospital Lumiere in Bon Fin, Haiti.

**DEPARTMENT QUALIFICATIONS:**
- Active member of the Apostolic Christian Church with a heart for service and desire to share the love of Jesus with the Haitian people
- Love for Haitian people and desire to work in close collaboration with Nursing Staff with a focus on relationship building
- Commitment to Ethical decision making and honesty in all decisions
- Responsibility and Accountability in all action, and willingness to support Nursing Supervisors in fostering program expectations with their nursing staff
- Willingness to adapt to necessary and frequent change
- Attitude of openness to learning and respect for Haitian culture
- Willingness to learn Creole language to effectively communicate with staff
- Willingness to work as team-player with other staff members and other members of Leadership Team including Administrator, Medical Director, Manager of Central Supply, Facilities Director, Operations Director, Finance Director and Pastors Office.
- Desire to interact with patients, families and employees while serving as an Ambassador For Christ.

**REQUIRED EDUCATION/EXPERIENCE:**
- Active Licensure as Registered Nurse in US
- 5 years nursing experience preferred

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**For additional details for this exciting and worthy service opportunity contact:**

Amber Miller - Missionary Care Director
Email: amiller@harvestcall.org or Phone: 765.250.4295 x108
MISSIONARY SERVICE OPPORTUNITY

The Hospital Lumiere team is presently seeking candidates for missionary service in a variety of roles that will fit your calling, interests and experience. Singles, Couples and Families of all ages are encouraged to prayerfully consider full time missionary service supporting the Hospital Lumiere ministry and outreach in Bonne Fin, Haiti.

There are many service and ministry opportunities at HL. The most important qualification is that the brother and/or sister is called by God to serve at the hospital. The service opportunity and placement will be developed to match the candidate's interest and experience. Potential service roles for non-medical candidates:

• Business office management
• Finance and Accounting
• Hospital Administration
• Facilities Operations and/or Maintenance
• Hospital Operations (non-medical)
• Hospital Technical Support
• Information Technology Support
• Missionary School Teacher or Teacher Aid
• Campus and Hospitality Management
• Missionary Support

Qualifications and Requirements:
• Member in good standing within the Apostolic Christian Church of America
• A servant heart, willingness to serve those in need
• Desire to engage as ambassadors of Christ with the Haitian staff at HL and the surrounding Bonne Fin community
• Relocate to Hospital Lumiere in Bonne Fin, Haiti
• Learn Haitian Creole (French language fluency is also beneficial)
• Background/experience with facilities, electrical, plumbing and mechanical skills is preferred

For additional details for this exciting and worthy service opportunity contact: Amber Miller - Missionary Care Director
Email: amiller@harvestcall.org or Phone: 765.250.4295 x108

If you are interested in Medical service, please review the Medical Professional Advertisement.
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And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

Isaiah 54:13

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BUSINESS MISSIONARY OPPORTUNITY

The Fatted Calf is seeking a candidate to serve as a Business Missionary in Magdalena, Mexico. The primary purpose of this role will be to proclaim Christ and serve others through the avenue of community interaction, using the business marketplace as the primary vehicle of ministry. In the fulfillment of HarvestCall’s mission, The Fatted Calf, principally through its majority ownership of Productos Carnicos La Mision (PCLM) and its sponsorship of EXPO Esperanza, is purposed toward sharing the gospel, discipling believers, and demonstrating the love of Christ through deeds of compassion in the context of the workplace and community involvement opportunities. Interested candidates should explore the PCLM business operations at www.thefatcalf.com/productos-carnicos-la-mision

Desired Qualifications

- Member in good standing within the Apostolic Christian Church of America
- A demonstrated heart for sharing the gospel, specifically within the workplace and community
- Significant project and team leadership experience in the workplace
- Demonstrated background in community engagement
- Experience with team building, personnel evaluation and management
- An entrepreneurial background and interest
- Strong language skills, either existing or to be acquired prior to coming to the field
- Willingness to adapt to and engage in Mexican culture
- Business management experience. Food and/or agricultural backgrounds preferred
- Strong mentoring and training skills
- Business financial skills are desired but not a requirement
- Not be afraid to “get your hands dirty” in the day to day workplace
- Willing to make a commitment for service of at least 5 years, Lord willing

General Duties and Responsibilities of Business Missionary

- The position will, in the business context:
  - Come alongside our employees to assist them in the gospel centered management of business units. Train, train, train – Disciple, disciple, disciple
  - Interact with customers and vendors to demonstrate the love of Christ through these business touchpoints
  - Serve as an active member of the local community to provide a vehicle for the sharing of our gospel centered organizational objectives – clearly demonstrating the love of Christ to the community
- To interact with summer interns to train, disciple and assist in their gospel centered experience as they come to engage with the children of CVE, CVV and the Magdalena community
- As a part of a management team, to act as the liaison between business operations and the management team and Board of Directors as needed
- To take an active role in the business operations, creating touchpoints of gospel engagement with employee teams.
- To help ensure that the gospel is never secondary within the ministry of The Fatted Calf and the operations of PCLM through spiritual training, employee engagement, community relations and business administration
- To be an active member of the Magdalena congregation
- To actively engage in coordination of the ministry with those of CVE and CVV.

For additional details for this exciting and worthy service opportunity contact:

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that a brother or sister is self-conscious about their appearance gives us the opportunity to love them by avoiding the pursuit of physical beauty.

The early church was remarkable because her actions stood in stark contrast to the society around her. The believers were noted for their commitment to honesty, even at their own expense. Their refusal to defend themselves in the face of persecution was reported by secular writers. They followed the way of the cross, even when it had a painful impact on their family loyalties and relationships. If family became an enticement to ungodliness, they encouraged each other to love every soul as Jesus loves every soul, but to count the cost and to love the Lord and His Word above all else.3 Despite the extreme cost of following Jesus, their numbers grew because their love for each other was so evident. They had no higher priority than expressing their love for God by loving each other. Martyrs died professing their love by sharing the kiss of peace one last time, to the troubled amazement of the crowd in the stadium.4

In the centuries following that first generation, few believers thought of their possessions as their own and they freely shared their time, treasure, and love across all the normal bounds of society. There was neither male nor female, Greek nor Jew, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free in the eyes of God – nor in the eyes of the church.5 Imagine the profound sense of freedom when a servant greeted his master with a holy kiss!

How can we help and not hinder our love for one another? Consider how such a diverse group of believers sustained their bond of love towards each other and fulfilled the vision that we share today. One critical factor was the way they prioritized their time with each other. The weekly assembly was motivated by love but in a self-perpetuating manner also nurtured a deeper love. One cannot easily nurture love without spending time together. This time together was of the highest priority, often even over family duties. Unconverted husbands complained of their wives spending so much time serving others. In contrast, those who neglected the assembly were exhorted to be more engaged and to receive encouragement and correction.6 They were missed in the assembly because their gifts contributed to the wellbeing of all.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: … From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.7

Believers today are no less equipped than the first-century followers of Jesus. If the Holy Spirit reigns in our life, we are empowered to love each other deeply, prioritizing the fellowship of the saints higher than all else. With such a priority, we will see the subtle needs of our brethren and willingly discipline ourselves to meet those needs. We truly can be like the earliest believers. Let’s be no less committed than they in the powerful testimony of unselfish love and obedience to the Word of God. By our fruits, we shall be known.8

Endnotes
1 Acts 4:32-33
2 Ephesians 4:16
3 Quis Dives, xxii
4 The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas
5 Colossians 3:11 and Galatians 3:28
6 Hebrews 10:25
7 Ephesians 4:11-16
8 Matthew 7:20
mater if we grew up a Jew – a full-blooded Jew – or a pagan worshipper or Greek or Roman or a legalist or a pleasure seeker; ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Now, that’s the bad news.

But the great news is that that’s not where Jesus left us, and so then, in Chapter 4, it starts talking even more about faith and how important faith is. At the end of the day, salvation can’t be bought. It can’t be gotten by our bloodline. It can’t be gotten by stacking up enough good deeds. It’s by faith. So, let’s read it here.

I would just love to finish this chapter, but we’re going to run out of time because, for these eleven verses, we need about six sermons. This is a marvelous chapter. It starts out, “Therefore being justified by faith.” Let’s define the terms as we go. Justified: to be justified means to be declared righteous by God. How are we declared righteous? By faith. It is by faith – in what? Faith in Jesus Christ. We just came through the Easter season where we thought about how Jesus went to the cross and about your sins and my sins that put him there. He took our sins. He died for them, paid for them right there, and then rose again. So, we’re justified by faith.

Then it says something very interesting: that “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.2, emphasis added). Now, I want you to think about this for a second. It says, “we have peace.” Most of the time, when we think about peace, as human beings, we tend to think about feeling peaceful. I like to feel peaceful. You like to feel peaceful. We love good feelings. But I’m going to tell you something: when we’re talking about Romans 5:1, it is not talking about your feelings. It is talking about being put at peace with God, with almighty God. Do you know that, as sinners, we are so far away from almighty God because of our sin, but because of faith and because we’ve been declared righteous by God, we are at peace with him? It is like a peace treaty has been put in place. We are at peace. That is so important because sometimes our emotions are topsy-turvy. Right? Mine are. I’m sure yours are. But it’s beautiful because we are at peace with God. It means we’re on the same team. That’s so wonderful.

Now, it says, “By whom?” “Through our Lord Jesus Christ:” – and then there’s a colon so this keeps going into verse 2 – “by whom also we have access” (v.2). How is it that you have access? It’s very interesting. Today at work, a co-worker and I were trying to figure out how to answer a question that had to do with an Illinois law, and we were trying to figure out ‘What does this mean?’ and ‘What do these changes mean?’ We were just trying to figure out ‘Who would know this?’ and asked things like ‘Well, we could talk to this person, but do they know?’ and ‘What about that person?’ We were trying to find who the right person to talk to was and how to get access. Okay? We wanted to do the right thing. It was just hard to find the right person that would know.

Have you ever tried to find a technical support line for something that you needed? It’s almost like they make it difficult to find how to contact them, but this says that we have access. We have access. To whom? Jesus Christ. The creator God of the universe. John chapter 1 says that “by him everything was made, “and without him was not any thing made that was made” (v.3). The creator God – we have access to him. Wow. “By faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Rom. 5:2). Thanks for singing Amazing Grace. We stand in grace. On our own merit? No. NO. That’s the beautiful thing. We don’t stand on our own merit; we stand on his. We stand on his merit. He lets us. He gives us access to his throne room. When he looks at you and when he looks at me, he sees his son or daughter. Isn’t that wonderful?

It goes on to say that “we stand [in this grace], and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (v.2). We

— Please turn to pg. 64
rejoice in hope. Remember, as a believer, we have a confident expectation of God’s faithfulness and the promise of life eternal.

In the New Testament, it talks about how we need faith as a mustard seed. That’s because the faith that we need here is not dependent on us to feel strong about it. It’s not like, “I’m strong.” It’s actually faith – like a mustard seed – in HE who is strong, in HE who is graceful, and in HE who is the deliverer of us all. Isn’t that marvelous? Isn’t that wonderful? We rejoice in hope. Why? Because HE is hope. We’re saved in hope. Wow.

Now, I love those first two verses. This third verse, I’ve got to work on because he says, “And not only so,” – we’re rejoicing in the hope of glory – “but we glory in tribulations also.” Uh, Lord, I’m not so sure about that one. Right? What’s he saying here? Why is it that we can glory in tribulations? The point is not that we like trials, and it’s not trying to say here, “Hey human beings, you should really like it when you go through rough stuff.” That’s not what he’s trying to say. He’s trying to say that when we go through trial, we don’t go alone and that there is spiritual fruit that can come through suffering. Now, here’s something that’s really important. Nobody likes suffering. I certainly don’t, but here’s something that a Christian worldview has, that a Biblical worldview has which the atheistic worldview does not have. When an atheist suffers in life, they suffer. Who can they talk to about it? It’s tough luck. They suffer. For us as human beings, we recognize that this world isn’t perfect and that sin has tainted this world, and so there is suffering, but hear these two things: 1. Ultimately suffering has an end because Christ is victorious; suffering is temporary, and 2. God – because he is gracious and all-powerful – can take what is not good of itself and transform it into something that can bring fruit.

What he’s talking about here is we glory in tribulations also “knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed” (vv.3-5). I think one of the things we take from this is that those of us who are younger can learn from those that are older that have walked through so much of life. When you sit down with older brothers and sisters, and they talk about what it was like to go through WW2 or whatever was going on then – how they were separated and how they handled that, how God provided for this situation, how God provided when that happened – what you find is they have learned about the faithfulness of God, not as a theory, but as a reality.

Again, as human beings, as we’re going through the trial, it is hard for us to keep that perspective. So that’s why it’s good for us to be looking at this right now. When we’re in the middle of trial, we don’t sometimes see the fruit yet, and so we’re like, “Lord, just get me out of this.” I think verse 5 is really powerful. “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” We don’t go through trial alone. If you’re feeling lonely, I certainly understand that. It’s part of a human condition; we can feel lonely. Our emotions say I’m lonely because I’m alone. The reality is God will not leave you alone. See, sometimes we feel overwhelmed and hope-less. The reality is our God is living hope. His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

Then the rest of this section that I read says this, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (v.6). Here is a scriptural principle that is so key: God took the first step toward us. He loved us first. Think about that. Powerful! What was it about us that made us earn the love of God? Zip. What was the beauty we had? What was the thing that we brought to God that could make him want to save us? The answer is his love acted first. That is grace. It is agape,
love. It is love, not based on the characteristics of the receiver, but based on the characteristics of the giver. Wow! What does that teach us? What does that teach us?

Now, agape love is something that does not come easily for us as human beings, but look at what it says. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die” (v.7). He says people won’t just go around giving their lives for other people. I understand this. I think many of us who are parents would give our life for a child or spouse or somebody else. There’re people that would do that. It says, “Scarcely for a righteous man will one die.” Think about this.

‘Hey, you want to give your life for that guy over there?’

‘Why? What’s he need?’

‘Oh, that’s not the question. Would you like to give your life for that guy over there?’

‘Yeah, but, I mean, is he in trouble?’

‘That’s not the question. Would you give your life for that guy over there?’

‘Well, I don’t know him.’

‘It doesn’t matter; will you give your life for that guy over there?’

See what happens? God decided to do that.

It says in v.8, “But God commendeth his love toward us.” He showed his love toward us “in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Now, I have a question about the application of that. When you’re in an argument with somebody… theoretically, hypothetically, right? This never happens, right? Wrong. We get into arguments. We hurt each other. Sometimes, it’s a husband and wife. Sometimes, it’s parents and child. I will tell you that human nature says this, ‘I’ll forgive after you forgive. I’ll love you after you show love to me.’ What this verse models is something that takes a big heart, a lot of grace, and the power of God; somebody has to choose to love first. Somebody has to choose to create the truce before there is a truce. Most of the time, if you’re like me, I want it to be the other person. What if God did that? Wouldn’t we be in a world of hurt?

He says, “Much more then,” – this is verse 9 – “being now justified by his blood,” – again, justified is being declared righteous because of his blood. Why is it because of his blood? Because our sins were applied to him. “We shall be saved from wrath through him.” One of the most beautiful things about this promise for us as believers is that we don’t have to go through the wrath that will be poured out on the world. That doesn’t mean we won’t go through some hard times while we’re here on earth, but wrath is for Satan and his minions and for the unbelieving world. We’re not appointed to wrath. Oh, yes, the Lord will chastise us when we get out of line; he convicts me, and I’m sure he convicts you, but that’s not what he’s talking about here with ‘wrath’. It says, “For if, when we were enemies,” (v.10). Notice how he uses the word ‘enemies’ here. He’s talking about wrath here. Remember, up in verse 1, he was talking about what? We are at what? Peace with God. How? Justified through his blood. But here he’s saying, “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (v.10). He said in one place, “Because I live, you also shall live.”

“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (v.11). Take that word atonement and break it into pieces: At-One-Ment. Okay? At-One-Ment: it just means that the penalty has been paid, and we are now at one with God because of what he has done for us.

What a marvelous chapter. I hope you were encouraged by it. I just get really excited about this chapter. There’s more to it. Please finish it, and let’s remember that God not only did this for us, but now he empowers us to be able to show it to others. May God bless you.
Remembering Our Spiritual Heritage

This issue begins a series on our church’s general history. Excerpts are taken from a booklet compiled thirty years ago entitled “Our Heritage of Faith.” It was a 24-page booklet designed, as the subtitle says, “For use in Apostolic Christian Sunday School classes.” It had the support of the Elder Body and was published by Apostolic Christian Publishing in 1990. It’s purpose? In helping Sunday School teachers instruct Apostolic Christian children about our special religious heritage, and to create a lasting consciousness of, and life-long appreciation for, the biblically-rooted doctrines and practices of the Apostolic Christian Church.

The Importance of Heritage

Heritage is importance because it provides continuity and stability. In society there are many kinds of heritages including those associated with families, governments, nations, schools, and churches. The heritage of Bible-believing and Bible-following Christianity is one that far surpasses any kind of secular heritage. As Apostolic Christians, our heritage is one of a devout, Bible-based church, patterned after the New Testament church established by the Apostles.

We recognize the Bible as inerrant and infallible, and seek grace to follow its literal messages. We view our beloved church as part of the Bride of Christ in which individual members become “perfectly joined together” (I Corinthians 1:10), and are able to exercise their faith in Christ, and observe the Bible’s teachings collectively, as members one of another.

It is important that growing children develop a consciousness of the heritage of faith that has preceded them. By learning of the faithful and steadfast spiritual endeavors of their forebears (their triumphs, setbacks, and persecutions) young children can begin to grasp the special lineage of true Christianity which they can embrace when they become accountable before God.

Teaching the heritage of a true faith and portraying a Bible-patterned life should leave a deep impression on a young person. This effort should include citing the differences between a godly and a worldly lifestyle and the consequences of both.

As Sunday School teachers clearly convey the truth of our precious Christian heritage, it will serve to sow the seeds of appreciation and admiration for sincere believers of generations past as well as for older brethren still among us.

The Word of God itself is the best historical account of our heritage. As “Abraham’s children,” (Gal. 3:7) we can look from Genesis through Revelation and find our origins described as a “goodly heritage” (Psalms 16:6), and the “heritage of those that fear thy name (Psalms 61:5).

A strong Scriptural emphasis provides for our foundation. The Bible is the final word for all aspects of our faith. The atonement of Christ, the New Testament origins of the early church, and the godly, Spirit-led and Bible-patterned life of believers over the ages provide the enduring spiritual foundation that undergirds our Apostolic Christian Church today.

Strong faith and a heavy reliance on God and His direction motivated our forefathers to establish and maintain sound churches, both in Europe and in America. The task of each generation is to keep the faith and remain obedient to God and His Holy Word. The current generation, as well, must labor diligently to preserve the faith for coming generations, so long as the Lord tarries His coming.

-by Perry A. Klopfenstein (original author)
The Light of Hope

And David Danced

“

And David danced before the LORD with all his might;” 2 Samuel 6:14

This past Sunday, I sat again in church in Haiti. Like every Sunday, we soon entered the period of song and praise. The church was filled with music, both of instrument and voice. The congregation was called to its feet by a ringing bell, and within moments all were on their feet, singing, raising hands, clapping and swaying and dancing as they praised God.

It has been over seven years since our family was led to Haiti to live and work alongside brothers and sisters who I share a faith with, but still in so many ways seem so different. I’ve attended church countless times, sang the songs, read the words, and heard the gospel shared. And even now, after all this time, as I look across the congregation, I still barely sway, only sometimes clap, but never ever dance!

Four young teenagers lead the singing from the pulpit. One song changes to another without pause. The key changes too, sometimes without warning. No books are evident, but everyone knows the words by heart. And the congregation dances.

Oh, how they dance! Across the aisle is the mother with a baby in her arms. As she sways, the baby looks on, eyes wide with wonder. In front of me, a man, too thin for the belt that wraps almost twice around his waist, sings in harmony and vigorously claps in time. Toward the front, there is the grandmother in the threadbare dress, the brightly colored and plumed hat on her head a contradiction to the rest of her attire. She is nearly jumping in expression of praise. Beside her is the lady with the white washcloth on her head in obedience to the biblical directive to pray and prophesy with her head covered. And my favorite, the blind man in the second row. He is the one that is always first to leap to his feet, unseeing eyes lifted up, with hands raised as he praises his Creator.

Those of you who have been blessed to attend church in Haiti can easily picture this scene. It is very different than our method of worship that means so much to each of us. Our way is precious to us. Just like in Haiti, our way is influenced by culture and tradition, seeking to follow the word of God. Yet, I can’t help but think how different our method of worship would seem to a Haitian Christian. A Haitian Christian may come into our church and wonder why we wouldn’t choose to give what would be their best to God in the form of making music with instruments when we can afford them.

I recall the first time I attended church in Haiti and was struck by the church praising in song and dance. I recalled the verse above, where David’s passion for his God was expressed as he “danced before the Lord with all his might” 2 Sam. 6:14. This verse has always been impactful, largely since it is so strange to the way I normally give praise to God. But haven’t you at times in your walk with God felt emotion well up within your heart, and like David, were so overcome by your desire for God that your heart danced?

The point to take away is this: There are some who dance outwardly, some who don’t. But David did. And the Haitians do. If you have or haven’t, it doesn’t really matter. What does matter is that you give your heart to God in such a way, that every day, you feel such a joy of God’s presence that your heart can dance before the Lord.

-by Rick Aberle
Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

James 1:3