He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?
Psalm 147:17
New Year, New You

The headline above is one that is often seen this time of year, and one that captures your attention. The changing of the year and other major transition events are often great times to make changes. For some of us, a "new you" may be in order. Perhaps we haven't allowed Christ to transform our lives. In this case, falling at the foot of the cross and crying out to him is a great way to start the new year, and start as a "new you".

For other readers, this headline is more attention grabbing than applicable. Years come and go. Throughout history they have been marked by wars, pestilence, disasters, pandemics, etc. It seems each year has a defining event that causes disruption in our daily lives, some more so than others. As each of these years passes and the calendar changes, we wonder what the next year will bring.

In all of this we serve an unchanging God. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We need not fear the future, but look to the one who holds it. We can trust him to be with us and bring us through no matter what defining event we face in the coming year. Perhaps a better headline for many of us would read "New Year, Recommitted You".

In Christian love,
Rick and Michelle Kaisner, Silver Lining Editors
Simon Peter: An Ordinary Believer Used in Extraordinary Ways

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.'" 2

When he answered this call, Peter was flung into the chronicles of history. Yet his biblical story began in a relatable way as a hard-working adult aiming to provide for himself and the needs of his family. So, how would you react if the Son of God called you to leave your living and follow him? As we see Peter's spiritual rebirth and subsequent growth unfold throughout the pages of Scripture, we can observe God's faithfulness in providing Peter with the tools he needed to grow as a leader and man of faith, as he sought to shepherd the nascent church of Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-7 instructs Christ's followers to, "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." As we journey through the New Testament, we observe ways that Peter's spiritual growth demonstrated this pattern.

Faith
It's unclear whether Peter responded to the Lord's call ("Straightway they forsook their nets and followed him." 3) out of rashness and zeal or a remarkable awareness of the specialness of Jesus. Regardless, his response indicates a measure of faith, which was a quality that Jesus sought in a disciple. 4 Certainly, Peter's faith wavered at times, like when he attempted to walk on water 5 or famously denied Christ 6, but each failure seemed to strengthen and reorient his faith from himself to God. 7

Virtue (Moral Goodness)
In the three years of Peter's walk with Jesus, he was surrounded by a robust accountability group led by the perfect mentor, Jesus Christ. Accountability and mentorship are still crucial for new believers to turn from former vices and cling to things that are true, honest, just, pure, and lovely. 8 While the Bible does not present an exhaustive list of Peter's virtues, we can observe the environment in which God placed him and how he was surrounded with godly people. If, out of a pure heart, we likewise allow the Lord to plant us in a spiritually nourishing environment, in the presence of solid Christian mentorship and accountability, virtue can flourish and form the foundation for further growth.

Knowledge
Peter had different tools for accessing spiritual knowledge than we have today. Not only do we have the Bible (the written Word of God) in our homes and the Spirit in our hearts, but we also have additional tools at our fingertips, such as Bible studies, sermons, and podcasts that we can stream from our digital devices. It is not likely that Peter had a copy of Scripture at home, nor did he have the indwelling Spirit until after Jesus' resurrection, and the only stream in his day was the kind that carried water. Yet, as a new follower of Christ, Peter had the most precious and beautiful opportunity to grow in spiritual knowledge by spending his days walking alongside Jesus (the Word become flesh), hearing his teaching firsthand, and witnessing his miracles. We likewise can prioritize growing in knowledge by walking with Jesus in spirit and making wise use of the resources God has provided to increase our understanding of the Word of God.

— Please turn to pg. 59
Good evening. Let’s begin our service with a prayer.

Sunday, when Bro Keith was preaching out of the New Testament, he came across a measure of distance called a furlong. I’d heard of it before, and the way my brain works is, the minute you say something like that, the curiosity in my head is like a shot of adrenaline. Immediately, I’m trying to anticipate what this length is, how far it goes, and how long people walked. I appreciated the fact that Keith knew that this unit of distance was a furlong times threescore plus something else equals about 7½ miles. The Bible was talking about this distance that these people were walking, and the writer was specific enough in not just talking about what they were doing or where they were going, but they gave a distance. I thought, “That’s very specific. Why would you need to put a distance in there?” It’s for context. It helps us to understand.

We live in time right now. If I told you I was going to drive to Prescott, would you care how many miles it is, or would you care how long it takes to get there by driving your car? In context, you’d understand time – an hour and a half roughly – but if I told you 90ish miles, there’s no context.

It made me think of something else. In construction and in drawing plans for homes, I use a unit of measure – 1 acre – a lot in residences, but do you know what the point of an acre is? How did anybody come up with an acre? Why does an acre exist? It’s not any normal specific number. Somebody watched a man, more or less, take an ox and a wooden plow and plow a field. At the end of the day, it became consistent that a man working with an ox and plow could plow the area of 1 acre a day. So, farmers out there, how many acres of land do you own? If it’s more than one hundred, imagine how many workers you’d have to have if you were trying to get your crops in. Now, you have context when you think about it. Today, if you think about size, it doesn’t mean much to you, but now if you think about what an acre means and you’re a farmer, it’s not the area of land that matters to you but the work and the productivity.

I appreciate when we’re reading in the Bible that we have context. Maybe you don’t think about those distances so much, but when we have units of measure, units of time, genealogies, and lineages, these things give us perspective. They’re not necessarily things that would have had to be written if this was going to be a great story, but they’re things that add to the information we have.

I just wanted you to think about those things as we read throughout the Bible and as you study when you key upon certain things. Remember in Greek and Aramaic, acres and furlongs didn’t exist; that was just the words they used in 1611 when they were translating this.

Now that I’m older, not old but older, I have better context when I read back through the Bible, especially when I read about mistakes people make. I know I’m a whole lot less judgmental. So much less judgmental than before. If you were to go to a very young Christian who’s maybe just been able to keep themselves on the straight and narrow at a very young age and asked them about some of these things in life, they might just think, “wow, people are messed up.” When you’re an older person, you have context, and so, you can look back at life and appreciate the mistakes that
people have made, not for what it cost them, but for what they’ve learned from it.

I’ve opened up into the book of St John. I’m looking at chapters 2 through 4. Let’s read from the end of chapter 4 and begin reading at verse 43. So, just recently Jesus got done speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well, and he discussed with her living water. Then, Jesus had revealed himself to her. The next heading is called The Waiting Harvest. Let’s read from verse 43 to the end of the chapter.

These miracles are pretty much the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, but in the book of John, it really focuses on Jesus being the son of God. Some of the other gospels have a lot of other detail, and St John just seems to go straight to the fact that he really wants to emphasize Jesus’ miracles.

It says, just jumping back to verse 43, “Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.” So, he left where he was with the woman at the well. He’s traveled now: “For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country” (v.44).

In thinking about where Jesus was from, I consider my own family. I was raised, more or less, by my mother and my stepfather. Neither one of them is saved. My stepfather was actually baptized in a Baptist church when he was a young man, a teenager, but quickly fell away because it was just a fashionable thing to do at the time. I could tell you a whole lot of stories about how I still feel like that was a blessing to me and also how God uses people and moves them around in life.

I can tell you it’s a challenge – you may know this too – to know how to sit down on the couch with my family and share the gospel. I say “how” because I have literally not figured out what the best words are. I’m their son, and when I was raised, they saw me in all my weaknesses. It’s very difficult to look at somebody who’s now in his late 40s and not still see them as a younger person. I think Jesus is being very realistic in the perspective that he’s letting people know it’s a challenge for others to accept him where he was when he was younger because they know him as the physical person, Jesus.

A lot of times you might find in life, if a person is going to get promoted to a new position in management, technically they’ll train him one place, but they’ll move him into another facility. That way, from day one, everybody recognizes that person as a manager because they never knew that person as the clerk or the cash register person or any one of those other positions. The perspective is this person is the boss. Well, Jesus is just letting everybody know a very common fact, and people understood this.

It’s a challenge that we need to know about too because when you’re in your workforce or with your family, and you’re trying to preach or share the gospel, it might be difficult. When you’re trying to go, let’s say, up from yourself – with somebody younger than me, I’d say down, but I’m talking about somebody older than me – it’s a challenge.

Verse 45: “Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilaeans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast. So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.” (vv.45-46) I can’t recall the name precisely, but if we turn back to the other gospels, this same story has some other information in it.

“When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death” (v.47). It makes it a point that it says this man was “a certain nobleman”. It was no small thing for a nobleman to come find Jesus. I think most of you have seen this. Where does a person have to get in their life when they finally give up on

— Please turn to pg. 60
Passing the Baton

Distribution Committee

Ever feel like everything is falling apart? Your five-day plan isn’t going the way you envisioned it much less your five-year plan, and you find yourself questioning if you made a wrong turn or misread a sign? How many times have we looked at social media, looked out our front doors, or even gone to church and felt like everyone else has their ducks in a row while yours are all waddling off in separate directions? Do we find hope in the pages of scripture that paint the pictures of Abraham holding a knife to his only son, Moses’ mother placing her precious baby in a basket and sending him downstream, or Mary and Joseph hearing “No room here” at the last inn? We have the benefit of turning the page and seeing how it all turns out. We have the blessing of living in the future.

That doesn’t change our here and now though. Day after day, we might have the faith to believe that God is working all things together for good, but it doesn’t change the fact that we have no idea what that “good” will look like. We don’t know if that “good” will even happen in our lifetime. What if that “good” involves a down payment of sacrifice, let downs, and frustrations?

A few months ago, at a HarvestCall Distribution Centers meeting, the comment was made that the

Daily Life getting more Difficult for Romanian Brethren

European Committee

As part of our ongoing HarvestCall support for the Eastern European brethren, aid is sent to provide for winter heat, garden seeds, medicine, medical procedures as well as farm equipment, and occasionally for church building repairs and new construction. Financial support is also given to help those in need with monthly food packages, where HarvestCall support provides the nutritional items for the packages and the Romanian brethren assemble and distribute the boxes to our brethren and the community.

When the Romanian brother responsible for purchasing the food items began to check out his large order, the person at the door who checks the product simply stamped his receipt without even looking at the pallets. Confused, the brother said, “Here are the papers, and you are welcome to check everything.” The person at the door replied, “I don’t have to check anything. You are always upright and always have been.” What a wonderful testimony to the world! This story is such a good reminder to us, that many souls are watching us, even in the little things.

“As blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways” Psalm 119:1-3
location in Bay City, Michigan was going to be phasing out of the bean bagging production that it had been handling faithfully for many years. The finished products were always distributed and accepted with grateful hearts. Without the manpower that was required for the operations however, it seemed like this ministry would need to come to an end.

Barely were the words out of the speaker’s mouth, a seemingly depressing bit of news, when a solution presented itself. The church body of Morris, Minnesota had expressed interest in taking over bean production. Not only did the demographics of the church possess the manpower, but also a younger, more energetic group of individuals. We are so thankful for their willingness!

In Paul’s various letters, he outlined time and time again how things were to be conducted in his absence, I’m sure he was well aware that things wouldn’t be run exactly as it would if he were there in person, but ensured that the gospel’s foundation was the main focus and knew that God would take care of the rest.

Sometimes it’s hard to see change, to let things go and hand someone else the reins but God might have a slightly different purpose that needs to be fulfilled. While standing firm and unwavering on the truth, God blessed us with the ability to adapt to an ever changing world, shining the gospel in a way that is just as relevant as ever.

As we as a church body serve in various ways, we get a chance to get to know each other’s stories, to be uplifted and inspired by the way God is using our lives for the good of the church as a whole. What might look hopeless to an individual might sound like an opportunity to another. As our lives take turns, sometimes in directions we would rather not go, look for the opportunities of how the gifts God has blessed us with can be used, whether on an individual or more corporate level. Those gifts may change form as the years go by and even though change might not be comfortable, it might make something more beautiful in the end.

–by Kaitlin Maibach

Please continue to pray for our brethren in Europe. The Lord is providing very well for his people, but the daily life for the citizens of Romania is getting more difficult every day, as prices are skyrocketing, much like it is here. Certain grocery items are getting harder to find on the shelves. Items such as sugar, flour, and oil are getting extremely scarce. God has provided, and we trust that he will continue to provide for his children in the future (Philippians 4:19).

–by Joel Putt
Perfection. A wonderful description of God, but elusive for us as human beings. As believers, we acknowledge the perfect holiness and righteousness of God and that He is without sin or error. It can be difficult to make sense of what perfection means for us, practically and personally, as we realize we are far from perfect. For some, Christ’s call to be fully complete and mature in Him (Matthew 5:48, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”) accidentally leads to a never-ending perfectionism cycle of trying hard to get it right, followed by the defeat and shameful feelings of never being good enough. Often, the trap of perfectionism sneaks its way into the lives of believers by taking a good motive (i.e., to be like Christ and to do everything as unto the Lord), but then cripples them through trying to achieve this through self-effort. While having high standards for our conduct, work, and effort can (and often does) bring us rewards, there comes a point at which high standards turn into unhealthy perfectionism that end up hurting us and others.

Perfectionism:
- Can lead to procrastination or avoidance of trying because of fear of failure.
- Often is a root cause of depression and anxiety.
- Often leads to a cycle of hurt emotions and strained relationships.
- Can be mistaken for spiritual devotion and can hinder and cause difficulty in one’s spiritual walk.

In 1991, Paul Hewitt and Gordon Flett published a model of three types of perfectionism that provides a helpful way to understand how perfectionism can impact us individually and in our relationships.

Self-Oriented Perfectionism
Self-oriented perfectionism describes self-imposed, very high standards that allow no room for mistakes. Individuals with high self-oriented perfectionism seek to avoid failure by trying to live up to their expectations of flawless performance. It is related to self-criticism, self-blame, very high standards for achievement, and depression. At milder levels, this type of perfectionism is often rewarded and praised because these individuals are viewed as diligent workers who are reliable, follow rules, and do excellent work. At high levels, this kind of perfectionism adds emotional pressure and stress, ‘analysis paralysis’, self-shaming, and mentally replaying of failures (or perceived failures).

Helpful Tip: Self-oriented perfectionists often need to identify and challenge a thinking error called “all-or-nothing thinking”. This thinking error leads them to conclude that anything short of perfection is a failure and there is no such thing as something being “good enough.” Consider going through the online ACCFS course called Telling Myself the Truth (https://accounseling.org/accfs-courses) with a mentor and learn how to identify thinking errors that...
often lie behind perfectionism and replace them with healthy, Godly self-talk and beliefs.

**Other-Oriented Perfectionism**

Other-oriented perfectionism is an interpersonal form of perfectionism. Individuals with this type of perfectionism tend to rigidly evaluate and criticize the behavior of others based on how well others conform to their very high standards. Other-oriented perfectionists may be highly critical of others, blaming, and controlling, however, they rarely see themselves this way. Rather, they believe they are being helpful to others by giving them “suggestions.” Unfortunately, they end up pushing other people away and harming relationships. Learning to be ‘direct with respect’ and growing in being patient and forbearing with others is key.

**Helpful Tip:** Other-oriented perfectionists often need help recognizing that the way they relate to others is as important as the outcome they are trying to achieve. Consider going through the ACCFS online course called Emotional Intelligence (https://accounseling.org/accfs-courses). It will not only help you understand your own emotions and thinking, but how to improve your ability to relate to others in a way that treats them as fellow-image bearers.

**Socially-Prescribed Perfectionism**

Socially-prescribed perfectionists try to live up to very high standards that they believe other people are placing on them. Often, these individuals are trying to meet the perceived (versus actual) expectations of others in effort to avoid disapproval and rejection. Other times, this involves trying to meet the actual, but unrealistic, expectations of others. They tend to live in a routine state of anxiety, thinking thoughts such as “I think they think…” or “What if they think…?”, which leaves them feeling insecure. They may find social situations anxiety provoking, be people pleasers, have low-self-confidence, or get depressed.

**Helpful Tip:** Socially-prescribed perfectionists need to practice identifying when they are using a thinking error called “mind reading.” They need to practice identifying when they are “in other people’s heads” and to stop basing their self-worth on their beliefs about what other people may think of them. Consider taking time to watch the brief videos describing thinking errors called Cognitive Distortions (https://accounseling.org/cognitive-distortions)

**Christian Perfection: Imputed Righteous, not Perfectionism**

In this article, three common types of perfectionism have been described along with helpful tips for addressing each. However, the most important and encouraging antidote to unhealthy perfectionism is to remember the basis of our justification by faith. Christ’s righteousness is imputed [accounted to us as our own] to us by faith (Romans 4:22-25) and so His perfection covers our imperfection. That is truly amazing grace! Being wrapped in Christ’s robe of righteousness allows us to live as the Apostle Paul described in Philippians 3:9-14, knowing that while he hadn’t achieved perfection, he was pressing toward the mark and full Christlikeness over time. This describes the progressive role of sanctification in the lives of believers. Let’s encourage one another to keep pressing forward in joy as we serve Christ and reminding each other that we don’t earn our righteousness through our own perfectionism.

ACCFS has numerous resources to assist someone who is going through a wide range of mental health issues. Each resource, either created or reviewed by ACCFS staff, is meant to help others live overcoming lives in the Lord. These resources can be found on our website at www.accounseling.org/mentalhealth. If you have questions or would like more information, please call our office at 309-263-5536.
Ashlyn Gramm-Mission
Communication Coordinator

“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

If you are on our email list or follow us on social media, you may remember all the buzz these past few months about three new minivans we will soon be getting at LifePoints. We are excited about this new development, so we created a fundraiser for #GivingTuesday, a global movement of giving back during the holiday season. Each van will cost $50,000 and features a rear-loading wheelchair ramp that will allow us to easily transport residents who use wheelchairs to and from their various activities – home visits, outings, appointments, and more! In just two weeks, God worked in the hearts of so many wonderful supporters who gave over $60,000 towards these minivans!

During that fundraiser, we saw 2 Corinthians 9:7 in action, and we are still overwhelmed by the generosity of our church body and of the LifePoints community!

The chapter continues in verse 10, saying, “which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.” That is all we can do in response to this generosity – give thanks. Give thanks to those who gave. Give thanks to those who prayed for this fundraiser. Give thanks to those who shared with others about our project. Ultimately, we give thanks to God for his generosity, mercy, and work that he is doing at LifePoints.

We have been amazed by the love and support shown through our minivan fundraiser that first week of December; however, we at LifePoints are constantly reminded of God’s love for his children whom we serve. We see the love our staff have for the residents as they walk through life with and care for them daily. We see the love of our families as they come and visit or call to check in and see how the day has been. We see the love our Board members have for this ministry as they make decisions and plan for our future. We see the love that our residents have for each other as they talk and do activities together. We see God’s love in action through the love of his children. We give thanks to God for those who so cheerfully give their love to LifePoints!

If interested in supporting our LifePoints minivan fundraiser, you still can! Checks can be made out to Apostolic Christian LifePoints with “minivan fundraiser” in the description, or donations can be made online with “minivan fundraiser” included in the special notes section.

Gateway Woods Apostolic Christian Children’s Home
Rob Parker — LARC Director

When I first met Darcey, boy did she ever leave an impression on me! Darcey had been abandoned, let down, and mistreated by almost everyone in her life. She wore all the signs of having never been loved well, but somehow retained an uncanny zeal for life. We were instantly hooked. Darcey was the type of kid LARC was created for. She lacked the relationships, resources, and opportunities she desperately needed for independence. It wasn’t long before she was connected to a mentor family and soon joined the illustrious ranks of “Gateway high school graduate”! We were all very proud of her.

You see, Darcey has a vivacious personality but also suffered the strain of trauma. This made it easy for people to drift into her life, and easy to drift back out. This often found...
her “chasing” people in an effort to hold on to them. One of these people got her to follow him far away from her home. The next time I spoke to her, she was pregnant, scared, and alone. There was significant pressure around her to have an abortion and I knew she didn’t want that, but she felt lost. I still remember that conversation vividly – there was a battle waging for this child’s life.

At that time, our WillowBridge transitional housing community was just beginning. I promised Darcey that Gateway would do whatever we could to support her and the baby and to keep them safe. It wasn’t long before we were able to get her on a bus and on her way back to Indiana. Ready or not, she was coming to live at WillowBridge. It wasn’t an easy transition, but it did end up being a beautiful chapter of her life. She delivered a healthy baby boy, and both were an important part of the WillowBridge community for nearly a year and a half.

Darcey engaged with her new church community, mentors, and those at WillowBridge. She held down a job and gained many of the skills that are serving her now in raising her son. Our people are still speaking into their life, and she is still feeling the love of her community. I believe Darcey really needed us, but as I look back, I think we really needed her as well. We are all better because of the relationship we share.

When Darcey’s son turned one, we hosted a party for them at Gateway. As I looked around at the celebration for a child who almost never was, I was overcome with emotion. I thought, “if we are never able to help another kid, it would have been worth every ounce of energy and every dollar spent just to see this boy and his mom get the chance to have a life together.”

Other young folks just like Darcey are feeling the impact of LARC all over the city and beyond. May this propel us to what God has been telling us all along: that we cannot love only in word and speech, but in action and in truth. We must keep telling people who God says they are and then show up with the message that there is hope.

**News:**
- We are excited to announce Sis. Lydia Williamson (Leo, IN) as our new Adoption Case Manager.
- Gateway Woods recently launched brand-new program called Professional Foster Care. This initiative will allow us to serve younger foster youth who have high behavioral needs and need a safe, stable, and loving home. We will be converting one of our group homes on campus to serve these children. Please pray for us and the youth we will serve as we launch this new program.
- If you want to make a Kingdom impact by sowing seeds of hope for an eternal harvest, visit gatewaywoods.org/sowers-of-hope to learn more about our newly launched monthly giving program. Sign up today to receive a special gift as a reminder to be praying for the youth you are impacting.
- We are currently looking for a Teacher, Houseparent Couple, Adoption Case Manager, Communications Administrative Assistant, GW Farms Assistant, and an Assistant Houseparent. 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.

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
Arizona, Phoenix

Marge Lindenbaum

“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Matt 4:8-9

Was this last temptation presented to Jesus a real temptation? There are teachers who contend Satan did not have authority to offer Jesus the kingdoms of the world, and that this was a deception rather than a temptation. But why would Satan offer a temptation that he had no power to make good? It seems that would be no temptation. Rather, this is possibly Christ’s greatest temptation. His mission was to save the inhabitants of the world. I don’t think it was the glitter or beauty that may have appealed to him when he was shown the kingdoms, but the occupants of those kingdoms that might have tempted him to accept this offer. If he could take back the world from the grip of Satan without having to go to the cross, would that not be tempting? Of course, the price would be to worship Satan, which would likely have ultimately given more power to the old serpent and not saved anyone. Jesus, of course, recognized that worshiping Satan would mean serving him, and he responded with the word of God, reminding Satan the only one to be worshiped and served is the Lord. Then he went on to reclaim those kingdoms in the way prescribed by his Father. Certainly not the easy way, but it earned him the right to open the scroll in Revelation 5.

In Genesis 1, God blessed man and gave him dominion over every living thing (except other men). In Genesis 3, when man sinned, in a transaction I do not pretend to understand, that dominion was either shared or transferred to Satan. God did not take back his blessing or the authority when Adam sinned, but everything was eternally changed. The serpent was cursed, the ground was cursed and man was banished from the place of communion with his God and sentenced to difficult labor. At the same time, God covered the shame of his children by shedding the blood of innocent animals and made the promise there that the woman’s seed would bruise the serpent’s head. The plan set in motion before the foundation of the world was going forward. And it will continue to be fulfilled to the last detail. Satan is defeated, and his time of holding sway over the whole world (1 John 5:19) is short. It seems he is trying to make the most of it. Let us make the most of the time we have to proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, our savior and redeemer. His death on the cross saves us from sin. His resurrection saves us from death. Hallelujah!

"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" Heb 1:3

Our Sunday school blessed us with a beautiful Christmas program, wishing Jesus a happy birthday and announcing to us the good news that the shepherds heard so long ago - Jesus Christ is born! We appreciate the service of our visiting minister, Bro. Sam Manz (Sis. Shelby, Junction, OH), and we enjoyed a presentation regarding the church at CVE in Magdalena, Mexico by Bro. Keith and Sis. Alissa Beyer. Our church had a special event displaying various Nativity sets. It was an elegant display and a beautiful evening.

We grieve with the families of Ron Bandelier, and Glenna Lober. Ron was taken from us suddenly and too soon. He was the son-in-
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law of Sis. Wilma Pulfer, husband of Monica. Glenna Lober was Bro. Wally Blunier’s sister, and will be missed by many.

Our local Relief Committee cut blankets to distribute to the homeless, and this year distributed approximately 10,000 food packets and over 15,000 pounds of rice and beans.

It’s a great time to escape the cold weather, and we invite all to come and visit our warm (in many ways) desert church.

Arizona, Prescott

Autumn Rokey

“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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Isa. 9:6

As I hold my baby turned toddler in my arms for a nap because he is sick, I think of Mary holding Jesus as a baby. The utter helplessness of our babies and children is at times terrifying. Their precious lives are in our hands, and it can be an overwhelming feeling. Yet I think of God holding us in his hands like the song and realize how hopeless we are without God. Humankind flounders around desperately trying to find meaning and purpose when it can only be found in that tiny baby laying in a manger we sing about during this season. Thankfully it’s not a made-up story to make us feel good. It is a life changing revelation if we let God into our hearts and lives. I confess after being a Christian for so many years the awe of God has worn away some. We write on Christmas cards “Remember the Reason for the Season” but the season wears off quickly. Then the next new year is ushered in, and we hope to fill our clean slates as the calendar turns. We will continue to fail unless we usher in the Wonderful Counselor and Price of Peace into our daily lives. Not just for Christmas but each day of the year. Each year pales in comparison to eternity with God someday.

Arizona, Tucson

Dean and Jackie Knobloch

May God Bless your new year as we enter 2022.

We welcome back some of our regular winter visitors. We are thankful Bro. Larry and Sis. Marvella Wickman are making Tucson their home church. We will be glad to see them year-round instead of just for the winter months.

Our Sunday school students presented their Christmas program and left us with an important message:

Joy in Eternity because he Saves Us from Sin! We are always blessed to hear about our Savior.

We are continuing our Bible study on “Sharing the Gospel”. We are meeting the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month.

Arizona, Willcox

Annie Wulf

“Oh, may this bounteous God Thro’ all our lives be near us, With ever joyful hearts And blessed peace to cheer us; And keep us in His grace, His full redemption send, And free us from all ills, Sustain us to the end.”

All Come and Thank the Lord! Zions Harp, #236

We had our first Thanksgiving service. It is always a wonderful time to come together for special services and have extra visitors as well.

We are thankful Bro. Joe Klotzle, (Sis. Sue, Altadena, CA), came in early December to share the Word with us. Whether you are just passing through or want to stay a few days, we welcome visitors.

California, Los Angeles/Altadena

Kali Sauder

Spurring us on into the new year, is the heartfelt message presented by our Sunday school this past Christmas season reminding us of the miracles surrounding the coming of the ultimate miracle, our Savior, the Word made flesh. The students presented God’s miraculous power displayed through fulfilled prophesies, John the Baptist’s birth, the incarnation of Jesus, the angels’ appearances, and the Christmas star. The earnestness of the smallest kids, eager to share their part of the story or
their practiced song, reminded me of the prophecy in Isaiah 11:10. “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious,” says the prophet, speaking of Jesus. “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” This picture of perfect peace rests on a person: the Prince of Peace. We were led by the little children to wonder at the miracle of God’s son born to us, bringing us peace.

While the past months have held some hard goodbyes as God led some of our small fellowship to other places, we are blessed to worship weekly with some new faces. Bro. Nate Moser (Elgin, IL) recently moved to Southern California to take a new job. Welcome!

Walking by faith into 2022, we can be encouraged by another miraculous message of hope found in Isaiah 11:1-2, “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;”. Because of Jesus we have access to this same Spirit, dwelling in us, empowering us by his grace. What hope is ours!

California, San Diego
Sarah Fulop

’Tis the season for putting away the old and ushering in the new. I don’t know if anyone feels like me, but it is as if I blinked and 2021 ended. I praise God for guiding us through the highs and lows of this past year.

We are so thankful for the healing of Bro. Denny and Sis. Allison’s new baby Conrad Fulop from RSV. After a scary nine-day hospital stay, the little guy is safe in his parents’ arms as he continues to gain strength every day. Maddox, Conrad’s older brother, sweetly reminded us to have a child-like trust in the omnipotence of God. God designed for Conrad to be healed. God willed that all of us have safely made it through another year. He is above economy inflations and world pandemics. He is our safe-haven and in control. It’s in our child-like surrender that we find his peace.

We are also thankful for the continued efforts of our newly minted HarvestCall crew. We enjoyed a night of serving our local homeless population as well as partnering with the global Operation Christmas Child mission to give presents to children all around the world. Seeing the giving and creative spirit of our Sunday school kids was a blessing.

Like any new year, it comes with changes. We said goodbye to Bro. Robin and Sis. Abby Karpati and their son Riley. After 18 months in San Diego, Robin and Riley were indoctrinated into our church family. We so much enjoyed Robin’s beautiful tenor voice, Riley’s charming smile and Abby’s go-getter personality. We trust that God will use each of their talents for his glory and that they will be a blessing to their Baja, Hungary congregation.

From your brothers and sisters in sunny San Diego, we wish you a blessed holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

”Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not you heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27

Colorado, Denver
Jenna Hartter, Rebekah Stoller

The Denver brothers enjoyed fellowship and time in the Word in December at their Men’s Focus Weekend. We know that God has and will continue to work through their time together. This month we also got to hear the Sunday school children share the joy of Jesus’s birth in the Christmas program.

Ministering Bro. Matthew Moore (Sis. Kristy, Athens, AL) shared a Sunday recently with us as they visited family in Denver.

We welcome Bro. Bob and Sis. Lynette Buckheister along with their son Bro. David to the Denver church family. They are joining us from Altadena, CA, and we are thankful to have them.

We said goodbye to Joyce Foster as she passed from this life.
to the next this month. We are praying for her husband Jeff and their children.

Connecticut, Rockville
Heidi Beutel, Kim Schneider

“Joy to the World!
the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart
prepare Him room.
and heav’n and nature sing.”
Joy To The World, Hymns of Christmas, #19

May we all be mindful during this Christmas season of the joy and precious gift that this world received when Christ came to be our King, our Savior, our Redeemer!

We wish to extend our love and sympathy to the family of Lillian Luginbuhl in the passing of their dear mother. We also extend our sympathy and prayers to Sis. Lynette Goric and Bro. Dan Virkler in the passing of their brother-in-law, Donald Geiger (Indiana). We grieve with the family of Chris Hansen (New Hampshire). May his wife Crystal, their children, and family circle feel the love and prayers during this time of loss and sorrow.

We wish to thank visiting minister, Bro. Justin Koch (Sis. Marcia, Washington, IL).

District of Columbia, Washington
Henrietta Meyer

It is always a blessing when we can assemble with our brethren, whether in person or virtually.

This month our ministers were Elder Bro. Ben Wiegand (Sis. Michelle, Philadelphia, PA) and Bro. Seth Hartter (Sis. Brenda, Burlington IA). We also had visitors from Rockville, CT.

While Bro. Ben was here, he shared the Memorandum with us and joined the Trustees as they took care of church business.

We extend our sympathy to Sis. Doreen Steffen (Bro. Barry) at the home going of her mother, Sis. Margaret Gudeman (Francesville, IN). We enjoyed Sis. Margaret’s many visits over the years.

If you are planning to visit Washington, D.C. area for vacation or business, please contact Sis. Henrietta Meyer at 703.217.0576, hmeyer2831@gmail.com or Sis. Doreen Steffen at 302.540.6574, or bdsteff@yahoo.com for assistance, to let us know how many to expect for Sunday services and to find out when and where services are to be held.

Florida, Fort Lauderdale
Renee Mangold

We were grateful to have a few visiting ministers this past month. Sharing God’s word with us were Bro. Eric Weiss, (Sis. Amanda, Elgin, IL); Bro. Randy Gasser, (Sis. Sue, Detroit, MI) and Bro. Todd Stoller, (Sis. Pam, Larry, OH). Our prayer is that the Lord will bless them for their efforts.

We celebrated our annual business meeting by reflecting on God’s faithfulness. We are thankful for his continued grace and mercy in our church and in our lives.

As our winter residents return, we are thankful for their offers often times to serve noon lunch. More importantly, we are thankful for the renewed fellowship we get to enjoy with them and others visiting on vacations, etc.

Praying all had a blessed Thanksgiving:
“Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” Col 2:7

Florida, Sarasota
Becky Funk

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Isa. 7:14

Our Sunday school Christmas program was held December 12. The program was an encouragement and blessing to all.

Our church enjoyed Christmas caroling on December 18 at Tuscan Gardens in Venice and Windward Isle in Sarasota. We shared wonderful fellowship and had a great meal back at the Fellowship Hall afterwards.

Our church held our new minister consecration service on November 21 for Bro. Chad Heiniger (Sis. Heather) and Bro. Ryan Stoller (Sis. Kori) and their families. We’re blessed with visiting ministers to help with the service and share the gospel. Thanks to Bro. Todd Stoller (Sis.
We enjoyed having Bro. Quinton Young and his sister Hope Young worship with us the past few months. We wish them all the best as Bro. Quinton moves to Detroit, MI and Hope moves to West Lafayette, IN.

**Illinois, Belvidere**  
**Darcy Steffen**

I was telling my Sunday school students today about the symbolism behind the gifts the wise men had brought to Jesus. The kids were amazed by this, and asked, “But how could the wise men have known that Jesus was going to be a king when they brought him gold, or that he was God when they brought him frankincense, or that he would die when they brought him myrrh?” Later, a girl came up to me and said, “I want to know how the people who wrote the Bible knew to write those things.” Before today, I have never had to try to explain the inspired Word of God to a nine year old, but it caused me to again be grateful for this living, breathing, Word of God that inspires us every day.

We were inspired by our children as they brought this Word to life in songs and pieces during our Christmas program. We are grateful to the kids and families for the time and energy that was put into this. One of my students told me, “Why don’t you have to memorize anything? That’s not fair!” I smiled and replied that I once was a little girl and had to memorize lines for programs too! After the Christmas program, we were able to do some caroling and enjoyed a meal at church together afterwards.

Sis. Deana Beyer spent some time in the hospital this past month. We are thankful that she is at home again and worshiping with us, but please continue to pray for her as she deals with ongoing health concerns. Also, Bro. Art Mueller (Sis. Marlene) is struggling with severe back pain. Please pray for him as well, and that in both of these situations, God would be glorified.

We are thankful that Elder Bro. Duane Rocke (Sis. Bonnie, Minneapolis, MN) made the effort to come down on a Wednesday night to lead a Bible study on the topic of perseverance. He was also able to meet with one of our converts. Please pray for each of our converts as they seek Jesus and turn their lives to him: Edwin, Leah, Guy, Robert, and Mary.

**Illinois, Bloomington**  
**Kinsey Dotterer, Lauren Zimmerman**

Josiah Daniel Mariani was born November 21, 2021, to Brian and Aimee Mariani (Grand Junction, CO). Grandparents are Dave and Aimee Rohrer (Auburn, CA) and Bro. Larry and Sis. Jeannine Mariani. Josiah joins siblings Caden, Ellie, Addie, and Micah.
Katarina Elizabeth Koeller was born October 25. Katarina’s parents are Chris and Marissa Koeller, and her brothers are Henry and Matthew Koeller. Grandparents are Steve and Lori (dec.) Stock and Jan and Susan Koeller (Flanagan, IL).

It’s always such a blessing to listen to the Sunday school Christmas program every year. As adults we tend to make things cluttered and confusing, so hearing the story of the birth of Jesus coming from children helps to bring the simple joy back into Christmas. “Oh come let us adore him!”

Illinois, Bradford
Becky Endress, Lena Stoller

“From heaven in the dark of night, He came and brought eternal light. Behold now how this light divine Throughout this pilgrim’s dale doth shine. Hallelujah.”
Christmas Carol, Zion’s Harp #7

We were reminded of the light Christ brought to earth when he came as a baby and then on the cross from visiting minister, Bro. Neil Stoller (Sis. Luann, Princeville, IL).

We are thankful Laura Endress has opened the door of her heart to let Christ’s light shine in, as she begins her repentance. She is the daughter of Elder Bro. Bruce and Sis. Elizabeth Endress and Bro. Nate and Sis. Sherrill Stoller. Her local great-grandparents are Bro. Gary and Sis. Ev Endress and Sis. Martha Stoller, as well as Bro. Perry and Sis. Carol Klopfenstein (Gridley, IL). Sis. Pearl Miller (Portland, OR) is Molly’s great-great-grandmother.

As our building project continues, the unseasonably warmer start to December allowed for much work to be accomplished. We appreciated both local and out-of-town volunteers who helped get the addition framed up, enclosed and shingled so that work can continue inside through the winter months.

Illinois, Champaign
Aaron Walder

We extend special thanks to our visiting ministers this month, Bro. Paul Kilgus (Sis. Carmen, Fairbury, IL) and Bro. Curt Rassi (Sis. Kathy, Tremont, IL). Our counseling Elder, Bro. Jeff Grimm (Sis. Ruth, Goodfield, IL), visited and brought forth God’s Word as well as the fall Memorandum. We appreciate Elder Bro. Jeff and Sis. Ruth’s continued service to our congregation.

We are grateful for all the young group does for our church family, including giving our young parents a break during the annual Christmas babysitting event this month.

Our usual Christmas tradition includes a Sunday afternoon Christmas program, caroling, and chili supper. This year, in place of the Christmas program, we had a reprise of last year’s walk-through live nativity presented in the parking lot. Thanks to all the parents, students, and teachers for making this happen. It is a tremendous blessing to have an active and participatory Sunday school. Following the nativity, we enjoyed outdoor Christmas caroling at Clark-Lindsey for Sis. Lorna Clauss, as well as at Bro. Sam and Sis. Pam Furrer’s home. After caroling, we returned to church for the annual chili supper.

This Christmas season, while considering our Redeemer’s
arrival as a babe in a manger, thoughts about Christ’s next appearance have often come to mind, when “…we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thes. 4:17

May we all renew our watching and praying, particularly praying for those who have not yet accepted God’s gift of salvation made possible through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of his only Son.

"The door stands wide and open, The wedding set aright; Arise, heirs of His kingdom! The Groom is now in sight. He will not long now tarry; Do not fall back to sleep! The trees their blossoms carry, See spring-time forward creep, …"

Be Prepared, Zion’s Harp, #50

Illinois, Chicago

Diana Eisenmann

We appreciated Elder Bro. Ron Messner’s (Sis. Pam, Washington, IL) visit in December.

We held our Thanksgiving service on the Wednesday evening prior to the holiday.

In early December we had our Sunday school Christmas program, “Do You Hear What I Hear?” It was a blessing to watch as the students enthusiastically portrayed the beautiful Christmas story that never grows old.

Following the program was our annual Christmas caroling event.

We had an unseasonably warm, sunny day, perfect for singing in the surrounding neighborhood and meeting some of the families that live near our church. Afterward we enjoyed a delicious chili dinner back at the church.

Illinois, Cissna Park

Denise Kaeb, Lou Ann Kaeb

After many years walking on this earth, Sis. Sal Markwalder walked into the arms of Jesus. She finished her journey on November 16 at the age of 92. We have all missed Sal since she had lived at Fairview Haven for quite a few years but it was always so good to sit and visit with her there. She would always be so positive about her situation. I always left her visits with a smile on my face. She leaves behind two daughters, Marcia Yergler (Cissna Park, IL) and Sara Ruetter (Pittsboro, IN).

We very much appreciated gathering for our Thanksgiving service. Elder Bro. Dan Moser (Sis. Ann, Elgin, IL) lovingly reminded us of the greatest blessing we have is our faith in God.

We rejoiced in hearing the testimonies of Andy Stock (retired Elder Bro. Tom and Sis. Karol) and Micah Waldbeser (Bro. Mark and Sis. Janie), and then witnessed their baptism on Sunday, December 5. Elder Bro. Tom Waldbeser (Sis. Sue, Peachtree City, GA) was here to help in the weekend. Then on Sunday evening we gathered to sing Christmas carols to various people in our church/community. It was a beautiful way to end a blessed weekend.

On Sunday, December 12 we were blessed by having Bro. Les Kaeb (Sis. Christine, Francesville, IN) gather with us. He and Christine were in Cissna Park because Bro. Larry and Sis. Jeannie Kaufmann (Christine’s parents) were spending their last Sunday with us as they are moving to Tremont, IL. Larry and Jeannie, we will miss you greatly but pray God’s grace on your new home!

As we approach the day we remember the birth of our savior, may you feel his presence in your heart and comprehend the hope he brings to our lives.

Illinois, Congerville

Tory Currier, Krista Wieland

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” John 14:2

Bro. Tom Stoller (Sis. Edie, Eureka, IL) passed from this life into eternity. May God be with his family, including his daughter, Sis. Rachel Schrock (Bro. Kevin), as they grieve his loss and look forward to a glorious reunion someday.

A special thanks to Bro. Mark Zimmerman (Sis. Cheryl, Eureka, IL) for ministering to us.

We also thank the Sunday school students, teachers, and parents for their efforts in sharing the Christmas story with us. Let us remember the great gift
of God’s Son as we enter into a new year and strive to live lives pleasing to him.

Illinois, Elgin
Amy Gasser

Congratulations to Landon Kellenberger and Ashley Gregory, who were married on November 27. Their parents are Bro. Greg and Sis. Debbie Kellenberger and Mark and Jane Gregory. We wish them God’s blessings in their new lives together.

We were blessed with many visiting ministers on Sunday, December 5, for the wedding of Bro. Ross Lanz and Sis. Ashlyn Dietz. Their parents are Bro. Keith and Sis. Tonya Lanz (Mediapolis, IA) and Bro. Fred and Sis. Shaena Dietz. Visiting ministers were: Bro. Dave Lanz (Sis. Tami), Bro. Tom Lanz (Sis. Mary), Bro. Dale Frank (Sis. Tina), and Bro. Mark Schmidgall (Sis. Sally) all from Mediapolis IA; Bro. Greg Fehr (Sis. Denise, West Bend IA), Bro. Tom Bahler (Sis. Lanae, Rockville, CT), Bro. Matt Knapp (Sis. Dana, Peachtree City, GA), Bro. Barry Dietz (Sis. Rachel, Bradford, IL), and Bro. Dean Steffen (Sis. Carol, Belvidere, IL).

Our Family Christmas Caroling was held on Sunday, December 12, followed by a chili/soup supper at the Fellowship Center. The Sunday school students presented the Christmas program that evening.

Our prayers have been with Tre Hammer, son of Rob and Jodi Hammer, who has been hospitalized in Madison, WI for treatment of a blood clot in his leg.

We are thankful for Wyatt and Hailey Schambach (Bro. Matt and Sis. Renee), who have begun their repentance.

Illinois, Eureka
Debra Blunier, Lavonne Schumacher

Our Bible class students sang the beautiful carol “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen” at our annual Christmas program. What a good reminder it brings to us during this busy time! We always love to hear the Christmas story from our youth of all ages!

“God rest ye merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Savior
Was born on Christmas Day,
To save us all from Satan’s power
When we were gone astray;
O tidings of comfort and joy”

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen,
Hymns of Christmas, #12

We are thankful for the brothers that were willing to share the Word with us this month. Bro. Kevin Schrock (Sis. Rachel, Congerville, IL) inspired us to have a thankful heart on Thanksgiving Day. Elder Bro. Randy Beer (Sis. Deb, Milford, IN) encouraged us to walk in the power of God and not of our own selves.

We bid a final farewell to our dear Bro. Tom Stoller (Sis. Edie). December 8 was the day God chose to take him home to be forever with the Lord. The Bible always provides comfort in our times of need. Our prayers are with his dear wife, Sis. Edie, and their children: Sis. Rachel Schrock (Bro. Kevin, Congerville, IL), Bro. Darrell (Sis. Jennifer, Goodfield, IL), Brenda Greiger (Michael), Sis. Paula (Goodfield, IL), Sis. Sarah Fehr (Bro. Jared), Kathryn Guth (Jonathan), Sam and Rose, and twenty grandchildren. His quiet and patient nature will be missed in our congregation.

“For the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Rev. 7:17

Bro. Pete and Sis. Holly Wettstein welcomed Augustus Mike into their hearts and home on December 16. He will be loved as well by siblings Everly, Ezra, and Georgia. Grandparents are Bro. Jake and Sis. Mary Wettstein (Goodfield, IL) and Bro. Mark and Sis. Gerri Wuthrich, (Morton, IL). Grandpa Bro. Mike Hinrichsen (dec.) would be pleased with his new grandson!

Several from our congregation spent time in the hospital this month or had surgeries: Bro. Ken Fehr (Sis. Sandy), Bro. Richard Knecht (Sis. Janet, dec.), Bro. Jack Knobloch (Sis. Nancy), Bro. Duane Blunier (Sis. Eileen) and Bro. Mike Schmidgall (Sis. Kary). We are thankful they are back home!
December 19 was the wedding day for Sis. Natalie Meiss (Elder Bro. Trent and Sis. Lucy) and Bro. Jacob Kaiser (Bro. Tim and Sis. Ruth, Tremont, IL). We rejoice with them as they became one in the Lord. Preaching the Word to us on this special day were Elder Bro. Dan Moser (Sis. Anne, Elgin, IL), Bro. Dave Huette (Sis. Susan, Tremont, IL), and Bro. Tom Bolliger (Sis. Jane, Tremont, IL).

**Illinois, Fairbury**

**Kati Meiss, Trish Steidinger**

On November 28 we were privileged to witness the wedding vows of Bro. Levi Kaeb, (the late Bro. Eldon and the late Sis. Stephanie, Forrest, IL) to Sis. Reena Moser, (Bro. Kevin and Sis. Kara). We wish this special couple God’s blessings and guidance as they walk life together. We had several visiting ministers join us for the wedding. We thank Bro. Zach Anderson (Sis. Karla, Congerville, IL), Bro. Jason Dotterer (Sis. Lynn, Forrest, IL), Bro. Arlen Leman (Sis. Denise, Forrest, IL), and Bro. Jerry Wagenbach (Sis. Bonnie, Mediapolis, IA) for sharing God’s Word with us.

On a different weekend, Bro. Dennis Rassi (Sis. Diane, Bastrop, TX) ministered to us. We are thankful every time they return home to visit.

The evening of December 12, our Sunday school students presented the story of the birth of Jesus through their Christmas program. It is always a time full of excitement and energy as the youth share the pieces and songs they have worked so hard to memorize. Our prayer is that the songs that were sung that evening touched many hearts, reminding all who listened of God’s plan of salvation for all men.

As a church family, many gathered on a Friday evening in December to Christmas carol to others from our church and community. Then the following Friday evening, the Sunday school students and their families caroled to loved ones. It’s always an excitement to gather together and sing to others, and to then share a meal at the Fellowship Hall afterwards.

We pray for our Sis. Sharon Kelson (Bro. Bud, dec.) as she had surgery and spent time in the hospital. May God provide healing to Sis. Sharon as well as many others who are struggling with their health.

Bro. Ted Steidinger (Sis. Sara) said farewell to his brother-in-law, Larry Hartzler (Luann) from OH. We pray for all who will have an empty chair at their family gatherings this Christmas.

We always appreciate visiting ministers and thank Bro. David Eisenmann (Sis. Jackie, Champaign,
January 2022 SILVER LINING

IL), Bro. Harvey Kuenzi (Sis. Jennifer, Silverton, OR) and Bro. Brian Waibel (Sis. Wendy, Champaign, IL) for sharing the word with us this month.

Illinois, Goodfield
Amy Hinrichsen, Judy Knapp

"Thank ye the Lord! Give thanks to the Lord, For He is gracious, His mercy It endureth evermore." Psalm of Praise, Hymns of Zion, #245

We are thankful, as we have once again completed a safe harvest season and the Thanksgiving holiday is a pleasant memory. Bro. Bill Wettstein (Sis. Heidi, Eureka, IL) visited us on Thanksgiving Day and we thank them for sharing the gospel with us. On December 12, our Sunday school children and young adults presented a beautiful rendition of the Christmas story entitled “Peace on Earth”. We are thankful for visiting grandparents that day and thank Bro. Tom Bolliger (Sis. Jane, Tremont, IL) for his timely message that day as they shared the day with their grandchildren. We invite both ministering brothers and their wives to visit again soon.

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” Jer. 33:3

Prayer is such a powerful tool and our church had reason to exercise the power of prayer mightily this past month as our sweet Sis. Whitney Wiegand (Bro. Brad and Sis. Karen) spent nearly a month in the hospital as the medical team tried to determine why she has seizures. They had to take her off her seizure medicine so she would have seizures they could monitor and try to determine where they originated and a possible procedure to correct the condition. The seizures leave her body exhausted. It was wonderful to see her back in church a time or two and we just pray God’s guidance for the doctors treating her. We know we serve a big God, and he is able to heal if it is his will. Prayers continue for her, her parents, and siblings, as they navigate uncharted waters with her so lovingly. Many others have ongoing struggles with health, and we lift all up to the father in prayer.

Another reason to pray is when hearts are saddened by death, and we lift up Sis. Paula Stoller and Bro. Darrell and Sis. Jennifer Stoller and their children as they said their earthly farewells to their father and grandfather, Bro. Tom Stoller (Sis. Edie, Eureka, IL). May God grant them much peace as they face a new normal in life.

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Eph. 1:7

Thankful for Tori Taufer, (Bro. Ted and Sis. Kenda), as she has found redemption in Jesus and has been reinstated as our Sis. in Christ. After much soul searching, she found that she just couldn’t do life without her precious Jesus beside her. Praise God as we welcome Sis. Tori back to the brotherhood. God has blessed Bro. Roger and Sis. Trish Gerber with 50 years of marriage. We rejoice with them and their family as they celebrate this milestone.

“And she brought forth her firstborn son.” Luke 2:7

What a beautiful miracle, the birth of a child! Even now in this busy season of Christmas, the birth of a child just slows everything down and we are more likely to reflect on the birth of our Saviour that dark night on the hillside in Bethlehem. On November 27, Bro. Zach and Sis. Amelia Zobrist have welcomed Bear Amos into their hearts and home. The little lad has 5 siblings to love on him as well as grandparents, Russ and Carey Harris and Bro. Mike and Sis. Susie Zobrist, (Congerville, IL).

December 8, Bro. Fritz and Sis. Amy Hinrichsen welcomed their third child, Bowen Michael, into their family circle. Big brother and sister, Rylen and Kaylin, as well as grandparents, Bro. Gary and Sis. Linda Folkerts, (Washington, IL) and Bro. Mark and Sis. Gerri Wuethrich (Bro. Mike Hinrichsen, dec., Morton, IL) are eager to help with this little one. May God watch over us all until next month.
Illinois, Gridley
Perry Klopfenstein

We offer our sympathies to Bro. Roger Wiegand (Sis. Kathy) over the death of his brother, Bro. Jim Wiegand, (Roanoke, IL); and to Bro. Bill Butikofer who lost his brother, Bro. Albert Butikofer (Elgin, IA). May God’s comfort and grace be plentiful.

We were thankful for visiting ministers this month: Bro. Mark Wettstein (Sis. Karen, Lamar, MO), and Bro. Jeff Leman (Sis. Val, Bluffton North, IN).

It is uplifting to hear from the pulpit the age-old and biblical teachings which are pertinent to our spiritual welfare, and for our benefit in these perilous times. While the world and nation are rife with trouble, the Lord teaches he is with us, even to the end of the world. May we pursue all efforts to be true to him.

Bro. Ben Yergler was announced to be married to Sis. Hannah Schick, (Princeville, IL) She is the daughter of Bro. Stan and Sis. Margie Schick, (Princeville, IL); and his parents are Bro. Tim and Sis. Sandy Yergler. We wish God’s blessings to this couple.

Illinois, Morton
Annette Tanner

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:11

November 20 our Young Group and many that went with them for support traveled to Chicago to deliver 800 turkeys and 800 Thanksgiving meals to those served by Mission of Our Lady of the Angels. As their goal was to share the love of God and bless those in need, they found they were richly blessed in return.

We were thankful for visiting ministers this month: Bro. Mark Wettstein (Sis. Karen, Lamar, MO), and Bro. Jeff Leman (Sis. Val, Bluffton North, IN).

It is uplifting to hear from the pulpit the age-old and biblical teachings which are pertinent to our spiritual welfare, and for our benefit in these perilous times. While the world and nation are rife with trouble, the Lord teaches he is with us, even to the end of the world. May we pursue all efforts to be true to him.

Bro. Ben Yergler was announced to be married to Sis. Hannah Schick, (Princeville, IL) She is the daughter of Bro. Stan and Sis. Margie Schick, (Princeville, IL); and his parents are Bro. Tim and Sis. Sandy Yergler. We wish God’s blessings to this couple.

Bro. Nathan Wiegand (Sis. Laura, Goodfield, IL) spoke at our December Family Worship Night on the topic “A Christmas Lesson”. The message of Jesus Christ is that God has invited you in. We are ALL welcome to his table.

Still hampered by the presence of COVID-19, our evening of Christmas caroling took on a different schedule this year. Many were able to enjoy a delicious chili supper followed by an hour of singing Christmas carols in the church sanctuary. We are thankful for live streaming to those who were not able to attend in person.

Another special activity this time of year is the Sunday school Christmas program. This year the theme was “What Child Is This?”. We were inspired by the enthusiasm of all those that told us the story of our Saviour’s birth through songs sung and scriptures read. We thank the Sunday school teachers for their efforts in helping the students prepare for the program.

As we close out 2021, we thank God for helping us through the good times and the challenging times. As we enter a new year, may we trust God that he will provide for us no matter what comes into our lives. And most important, let us take heed to the message in the following Christmas carol:

“The blessed story of the Christ,
The babe of Bethlehem,
Is worthy of our song and praise,
And stirs the hearts of men,
The fullness of God’s love divine,
surrounds the Christ so mild
Alas how many only know
The Saviour as a child.
Our saving hope is all in vain,
If here our love should cease,
For in the man of Galilee,
We find the gift of peace.
Tis not the babe, but
Christ, the man
Who walked in Galilee;
’Tis not the manger, but the cross,
That sets the spirit free.
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

Another reason for rejoicing is the birth of a baby! Hugo William Funk was born November 30 to Bro. Isaac and Sis. Elise Funk (Peachtree City, GA). Our Elder Bro. Tim and Sis. Debi Funk and Elder Bro. Tom and Sis. Susan Waldbeser (Peachtree City, GA) are the happy grandparents.

Although earthly parting brings sadness, we are thankful God has provided a way that we can leave behind the sickness of this life for an eternal home in heaven! Sis. Maria Graham passed away leaving her daughter Maria Graham. Sis. Mabelle Rauhaus (Bro. Grant, dec.), who had moved to Winchester, VA to be with her daughter, also died. She is survived by her daughter Janet Yang (Leonard) and son Gary Rauhaus (Peggy). Roy Kuykendall has left this life. His wife Pat and daughters Sis. Cathy Endress (Bro. Denny) and Karen Gama (Tony) will miss him. We wish God’s comfort and love for all these family members.

Christmas caroling and the annual church Christmas program at the Fellowship Hall were well attended. “Behold the Lamb of God” was the theme of the program. Bro. Robers Mecidor brought us the message. Certainly we can say with joy, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29.

Illinois, Peoria

Bonnie Bach, Crystal Wettstein

As I write, it is the season of joy! Our Sunday school children brought us the story of Jesus’s miraculous birth reminding us of the joy this long-awaited occasion brought to a weary world!

It is with joy we learned that our dear friends Jerry and Marie Hoerr have turned to the Lord in repentance! So many prayers have been answered as we have evidence that God continues to call and grant grace to come to him! May God be with them as they begin this journey of faith.

Illinois, Princeville

Ruth Herrmann, Cherie White

“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

We gathered for an all-church Bible study at the Fellowship Hall on November 19. We thank Bro. Mike Kaisner (Sis. Mindy, Peoria, IL) for sharing with us.

Thankful for visiting ministers who joined us in worship this past month, Bro. Gregg Rumbold (Sis. Heather, Peoria, IL), Bro. Fred Witzig (Sis. Nancy, Washington, IL), Bro. Dan Walder (Sis. Pam, Cissna Park, IL), Bro. Jonathan Hodel (Sis. Megan, Roanoke, IL), Bro. Kirk Plattner (Sis. Keri, West Lafayette, IN), Bro. Matt Zimmerman (Sis. Kim, St. Louis, MO) and Bro. Barry Dietz (Sis. Rachel, Bradford, IL).

December 5 was our annual Christmas caroling, chili supper and hymn sing. What a joy to share the good news to those in our communities! Then on December 12 our Sunday school presented their pieces and songs at our annual Christmas program.

What a blessing it has been to fellowship with Sis. Marguerite Muiruri these past weeks and bid her farewell as she returns to Pleasant Hope Academy in Kenya. May God’s work continue there and bless the academy with wisdom and support.
What a joy to welcome two new lambs into the body of Christ! Bro. Raymond and Sis. Joan Rumbold expressed their desire for repentance, confessed their sins and were baptized by sprinkling at their home. Retired Elder Bro. Jim Plattner (Sis. Marlene) assisted our Elder Bro. Craig Martin (Sis. Terri) in this work. May they feel God’s nearness as they have begun their walk of faith.

On December 12, we witnessed the vows being made of Bro. Karl Christ (Bro. Kurt and Sis. Connie) and Sis. Laura Herrmann (Bro. Dean and Sis. Dawn) to remain faithful as they were joined in Holy Matrimony. It was good to be reminded of the coming of our husband, Jesus Christ as we, the church and bride wait with anticipation to be united with him!

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” Gen. 2:18

The engagement of Sis. Hannah Schick (Bro. Stan and Sis. Margie) to Bro. Ben Yergler (Bro. Tim and Sis. Sandy, Gridley, IL) was made known unto us.

May God’s comfort strengthen our families that have lost loved ones. We will miss Brandon Graham and his pleasant personality. He leaves his siblings, Bro. Bruce Graham (Sis. Pam), Sis. Doreen Leuthold (Bro. Jerry, Indianapolis, IN), Sis. Darlene Herrmann (Bro. Roger), Sis. Deanne Knobloch (Bro. Jay), Brent Graham (Deb), Blake Graham (Rachel) and Bro. Ben “BJ” Graham (Sis. Suzanne, Indianapolis, IN).

Leaving his earthly cares is our dear Bro. Vernie Berchtold. He leaves his children, Mary Beth Wagenbach (Curt) and Bro. David Berchtold (Sis. Leann).

Sis. Maria Graham (Peoria, IL) has passed leaving behind her nephew, Bro. Bruce Graham (Sis. Pam) and nieces Sis. Darlene Herrmann (Bro. Roger) and Sis. Deanne Knobloch (Bro. Jay).

Illinois, Roanoke

Judy Sauder, Barb Schwind

Luke 2:7 - Each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus. What place will he have in our hearts in 2022?

Congratulations to grandparents Bro. Todd and Sis. Andrea Harris on the birth of Cove Brielle, born to Austin and Sammi Meinhold on November 12. May God bless this sweet family!

Our prayers are with those who have lost loved ones. Sis. Mabelle Rauhaus of Winchester, VA, passed away on November 17. She was a sister to Bro. Marv Pfister (Sis. Ila). Glenna Lober (Darrel, Sun City, AZ), went to her eternal home on November 27. She was a sister of Bro. Wally Blunier (Sis. Faye). Mary Haynes (Peoria, IL), passed away on November 26. She was a sister of Bro. Mel Hohulin. Bro. Albert Butikofer (Elgin, IA) died November 29. He was a brother-in-law to Sis. Marge Fischer, Sis. Sara Byrd (Bro. Jim) and Sis. Pat Fischer. Bro. Jim Wiegand went to be with the Lord on December 2. His survivors are three brothers: Morris (Valparaiso, IN) John (Mary) and Bro. Roger (Sis. Kathy, Gridley, IL), seven nieces and nephews and thirteen great nieces and nephews. Bro. Jim was a gentle man, who always took time for others, both young and old. Bro. Tom Stoller (Sis. Edie, Eureka, IL) passed away on December 8. He was a brother of Sis. Pat Fischer. Sis. Doris Farney’s sister, LaVerne Patterson of Washington, IL, died on December 11. May the Lord comfort each of these families.

On November 21 and 22 Roanoke church witnessed the testimonies and baptisms of Ethan Hodel (Bro. Eric and Sis. Gina), Riley Beer (Bro. Neal and Sis. Jessica) and Natalie Hodel (Bro. Jason and Sis. Rena). It is truly a blessing to have these 3 young people as our brother and sisters in Christ. Visiting ministers were Elder Bro. Ron Messner (Sis. Pam, Washington, IL), Bro. Dan Beer (Sis. Deb, Milford, IN), Bro. Brad Metz (Sis. Karen, Bloomington, IL), and Bro. Daren Metz (Sis. Rita, Gridley, IL).

On November 28, Bro. Matt Feucht (Sis. Jennifer) continued our Matthew Bible study with chapters 19-25. Bro. Matt spoke to us about the kingdom of heaven, which was brought to
earth with the birth of Jesus and will come in its fullness when Jesus returns. Bro. Matt encouraged us to have childlike hearts, depend on Jesus not wealth, serve others including “the least of these,” be willing to admit when you mess up and change, produce fruit for the Master, be responsive to God’s wedding invitation, use your talents for kingdom purposes, endure to the end and be ready for Jesus’s second coming.

Visiting ministers were Bro. Karl Steidinger (Sis. Carrie, Ft. Myers, FL) and Bro. Robert Herrmann (Sis. Mary, Princeville, IL).

On December 1 at our Annual Business Meeting, Bro. Brad Hodel (Sis. Patty) was selected as our new church trustee; Bro. Scott Leman (Sis. Erin) was elected our new Fellowship Hall trustee and Bro. Don Leman (Sis. Colleen) is our new nursing home trustee. Bro. Matt Gastman (Sis. Jana) will serve on the Nominating committee.

On December 5, Bro. Randy Mogler, (Sis. Evie, Washington, IL) was our visiting minister. He continued our Bible study of Matthew on chapters 26-28. As Bro. Randy discussed the suffering of Jesus, he recalled a Bible study led by a resident of Timber Ridge, who was an intelligent man, who had many physical challenges. The man shared, “If he could do that, we can do this (referring to living with disabilities).” Because of Jesus you can do whatever is the “this” in your life. Our annual church caroling, and supper was also held that day at the Fellowship Hall. It was a joy to share the songs of Jesus’s birth with loved ones, who have been shut in due to illness or age.

We rejoice with Lexi Hodel (Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Megan) and Annie Hodel (Bro. Jason and Sis. Rena), who have begun their walks with the Lord.

Our Bible Class offered Random Acts of Kindness on December 8. Our young group assembled and distributed bags of fruit and candy to the homes of loved ones who are elderly or have faced special challenges in the past year. Our Scripture Memory classes, HOPE (junior high girls) and ACTIVE (junior high boys) have also participated in Christmas activities. Our Sunday school Christmas program was held on December 12. We are so thankful for the wonderful young people in our church, who love Jesus and are such an encouragement to us.

“The Song of Emmanuel,” a beautiful Christmas program of song and scripture reading was presented by Prairie Choristers, a men’s choir, and a girls’ small group on December 15. Thanks to all who participated and worshiped with us.

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At his funeral service Bro. Jim Wiegand was described as a Philippians 1 Christian. He used whatever circumstance he was in to further the gospel. A farm accident 5 years earlier left Bro. Jim in a wheelchair, living in the nursing home, but he used his time there to counsel, encourage, and share Jesus with the other residents. What a great goal that would be for each of us in the New Year - to be Philippians 1 Christians!

Illinois, Tremont
Debbie Aberle, Lucy Kaiser

We recently had our Sunday school Christmas program and were blessed by the Bible verses and hymns that were brought forth. At the end of the program, we sang The Babe of Bethlehem (Hymns of Zion, #36) and were reminded that the song is not only a Christmas song, but a message of salvation that always needs to be heard. The story of Christ, the babe, is one that is "worthy of our song and praise", but “our saving hope is all in vain, if here our love should cease”. The second verse of the hymn reminds us that it is “not the manger, but the cross, that sets the spirit free” and the third verse sends forth the invitation to “open wide the door of heart and let the Savior in”. What a brilliant picture of the life of Christ and all that he has done for us so that we can have life eternal with him if we accept his loving invitation!

We were very thankful to have had two visiting ministers this month: Bro. Mark Leuthold (Sis. Lee, Lester, IA) and Bro. Barry Dietz (Sis. Rachel,
Bradford, IL). We appreciate their willingness to stand and preach the Word to us when they come to visit family.

Two couples in our congregation welcomed a new grandchild this month. Bro. Chuck and Sis. Cathy Koch welcomed another granddaughter, Ayla Rose Schick (Bro. Justin and Sis. Angie, Morton, IL) and Bro. Jeff and Sis. Gail Sinn welcomed a grandson, Von Frederick Sinn (Drake and Patience). Both families are so excited to have another grandbaby to love on.

We extend our sympathies to the family of Della Schweigert at her passing. She is survived by her four children: Clark (Janet), Don (Magdalena), Robin, all of Tremont, and Sis. Cherrie Moser (Bro. Drake, Bluffton North, IN). We also wish to extend sympathy to Randy and Wendy Fuller at the unexpected loss of his mother, Mallory Shannon.

Our prayers have been with those in our congregation that have been in the hospital recently, including Bro. Kap Koch (Sis. Gayle), Sis. Jenny Koch (Bro. Bob), Sis. Jamie Baer (Bro. Mark) and Bro. Todd Stuber (Sis. Beth). We fervently pray that God will grant them healing and that they can feel the Spirit’s comforting hand.

Illinois, Washington
Lillian Pfaffmann

“Joy to the World! the Lord is Come!”

Truly what would life on Earth be like if he hadn’t…

We are SO blest in SO many ways if he is our Savior for there is no greater gift than having Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and our Friend!

Thankfully, Sis Karen Baker (Joe) is home recuperating following a hospitalization due to COVID-19. Praying she can find complete healing!

Due to family gatherings for the holidays, we had numerous visitors! Among whom were two ministers who served us on the pulpit: Bro. Darren Plattner (Sis. Sue, Champaign, IL) and Elder Bro. Randy Kellenberger (Sis. Karen, Kansas City, MO). May the Lord bless them in all ways as he knows best!

Indiana, Bluffton
Susie Fiechter, Liana Reinhard, Olivia Steffen

Emmanuel! God with us! GOD with us! God WITH us! God with US! It’s beyond our understanding to think that the God of the universe actually came to earth to dwell among us, die for us and redeem us. Christmas is the beginning of that redemption story. Thank you Jesus! And Happy Birthday!

We rejoiced to hear our Sunday school children praise him during our Christmas program. We pray that they will each be part of that great redemption story!

Celebrating their new birth in Christ are Sis. Corinne Isch (Bro. Aaron and Sis. Rachel), Bro. Brayson Tonner (Bro. Brent and Sis. Rachelle), Bro. Brett Drayer (Bro. Joel and Sis. Erin) and Sis. Nora Ringger (Bro. Jameson and Sis. Sheena).

Bro. Clayton, Sis. Rachel, Merrick and Eden Tonner welcome Wyatt Alan into their family. Also rejoicing are Wyatt’s grandparents, Bro. Dean and Sis. Julie Tonner and Bro. Jeff and Sis. Jodi Towle (Bluffton North, IN). God has blessed the home of Bro. Jayson, Sis. Sarah, Ronan, Maeve and Fynn Grube with Archie Jay. His grandparents are Bro. Jay and Sis. Ronda Grube and Bro. Jeff and Sis. Jodi Towle (Bluffton North, IN).

We are late to report their marriage, but our love for them is just as great now as it was then! Bro. Braden Isch (Sis. Brittany, Bluffton North, IN) and Sis. Adrienne Kaehr (Bro. Keith and Sis. LuAnn), were united on October 10.

God has called Bro. Michael Yoder (Scott and Jane) of Bluffton North, IN and Sis. Liana Reinhard (Bro. Jerry and Sis. Jodi) to serve him together. May he guide them as they prepare for their spring wedding.

Bro. Nathan, Sis. Rachel, Kain, Halle, Layla and Daisy Mueller have returned to Papua New Guinea after spending several months at home on furlough. They are greatly missed by family and friends, but we are all excited to pray for their efforts to make Jesus famous among the Maliyali people. How wonderful to think
that we may someday be gathering around the throne of God with Maliyali brethren!

Even though he was not officially our Elder, we will certainly miss Elder Bro. Steve Ringger, as he is retiring. We gather with our Bluffton North congregation on Wednesday evenings, so we feel like he is partly our Elder as well. Thank you Bro. Steve and Sis. Myra!

Our love and prayers have been with the many who have had health challenges. They include Sis. Lucille Frauhiger, Bro. Dave Gilliom (Sis. Marcene), Bro. Aaron Gerber (Sis. Cassie), Bro. Jay Grube (Sis. Ronda), Bro. Tim Hollopeter and Bro. Luther Gerber (Sis. Sharon).

Rusty, Nikki, Makena, Elliana, Arabella and Zelah DeRoo mourn the loss of their father and grandfather, Roger DeRoo.

May our desire in this new year be to live out Romans 12:1-2: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Indiana, Bluffton North
Deanna Brinneman, Rhonda Maller

“But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country” Matt. 9:31.

Bro. Nathan and Sis. Rachel Mueller and their children recently departed to Maliyali in Papua New Guinea. We were blessed to have them in the Bluffton area for several months. We are praying for their gospel translation efforts and their relationships with the Maliyali people.

On December 5, Elder Bro. Steve Ringger (Sis. Myra) gave his last sermon. The Bluffton North congregation says Thank You to Steve and Myra for their many years of selfless service to our congregation! We lift up Elder Bro. Dan Pfister (Sis. Sherry) as he takes on the mantle of Elder. Thank you also to the many visiting ministers who came to support Bro. Steve.

Bro. Michael Yoder and Sis. Liana Reinhard have announced their engagement. Their parents are Scott and Jane Yoder (Decatur, IN) and Bro. Jerry and Sis. Jodi Reinhard (Bluffton, IN). We are very happy for this couple!

We mourn with Bro. Duane and Sis. Betsy Gerber in the loss of their daughter-in-law, Crystal (Liberty, IN). Please pray for her husband, Ryan, and their children, Case, and Carleigh, as they learn to navigate life without their wife and mother. Prayers for Sis. Cherie Moser (Bro. Drake), in the loss of her mother, Della Schweigert (Tremont, IL). We also come boldly to the throne of grace on behalf of Bro. Stan and Sis. Cindy Geisel who are mourning the loss of their daughter, Rochelle Gerber. Her former husband and friend, Bro. Rod, son Jonathan (Columbia, SC), sister Sis. Carissa Studabaker (Bro. Jarod), brother Zach (Miriam), grandmothers Sis. Virginia Rauch and Sis. Ellen Geisel and several nieces and nephews also survive.

“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.” Joel 2:12

We are looking forward to our annual Christmas program. The Sunday school students have been diligently practicing. Every year they bless us as they glorify our Savior in worship and praise.

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11

Indiana, Francesville
Jacki Huber, Connie Linback

When this article is printed, Lord willing, it will be January of 2022! It will be a new year with new opportunities that will bring us closer to Jesus’s coming. May we be found faithful doing the little things he calls us to do!

Bro. Jake and Sis. Melissa Tanner welcome a new blessing into their hearts and home. Hudson Allen was born on November 29 and is welcomed home by two older sisters, Emma and Ava. Bro. Jeff and Sis. Gina Tanner and
Patty Hull (Medaryville, IN) are Hudson’s grandparents. We rejoice with Amanda Schneider (Bro. Dale and Sis. Andrea) as she is looking forward to being baptized soon!

On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, with thankful hearts, many took part in Communion services. Elder Bro. Steve Ringger (Sis. Myra, Bluffton North, IN) spent the day with us and assisted with Communion. We are thankful for his willingness to share in these ways.

Visiting ministers this past month have been Bro. Neal Widmer (Sis. Kris, West Lafayette, IN), Bro. Jeff Neihouser (Sis. Sue, Morton, IL), Bro. Andy Kaufmann (Sis. Marie, Bloomington, IL) and Elder Bro. Chris Wueethrich (Sis. Carla, St. Louis, MO). May God bless each one for serving him through ministering the Word.

The Christmas season is always more special because of the events that point us to the birth of Jesus. Among the many events, the Sunday school Christmas program and an evening spent caroling are two highlights! Many were blessed by participating.

The words to a familiar hymn, “Asleep in Jesus! Blessed Sleep” (Hymns of Zion, #111) come to mind as we have said goodbye on earth to many loved ones in the past months and years.

Our dear Sis. Margaret Gudeman (Bro. Willis, dec.) went home to be with Jesus, and we will miss her steadfast example of faith. Her children are Bro. Dale (Sis. Peg), Sis. Doreen Steffen (Bro. Barry, Washington DC), Sis. Debra Nuest (Bro. Don), and Sis. Donna Pott (Bro. Mike). We give our sympathy to each one, and to her grandchildren and relatives.

Bro. Earl Anliker (Sis. Liz) also departed life on earth to be with Jesus. Bro. Earl lived a faithful and kind life of consistency and will also be greatly missed. We especially extend loving sympathy to his dear wife, Sis. Liz, and children, David (Debbie, Savannah, GA), Sis. Debbie (Indianapolis, IN), Doug (Karin, Cypress, TX) and Deann Mustard (Brian, New Palestine, IN) and to his grandchildren and other close relatives.

Indiana, Indianapolis
Edie Bollier, Valerie Kipfer

This beautiful Christmas poem was written by Sis. Gail Bradford:

O Bethlehem, you
touched the height
Of human hope now
shining bright

For on that night you became
A holy place where sin took flight.
Because of you men are free
To use that shining light to see
Because that night you became
The place where Love
turned the key.

Unlocked the prison I was in
Because of my original sin
For on that night you became
A place where I can start again.”

During this Christmas season, we were blessed to again participate in Christmas Behind Bars at the local women’s prison. Those who went to the prison on December 5 had a blessed time sharing, singing and distributing gifts. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to work in the hearts of the women in prison. God was glorified and hearts were touched.

We appreciate the visiting ministers who have come to Indianapolis to share in the Word and in fellowship. Thanks to Bro. Brian Huber (Sis. Jacki, Francesville, IN), Bro. Kent Levy (Sis. Holly, Morton, IL), Bro. Blair Neihouser (Sis. Mandy, West Lafayette, IN), Bro. Jeff Neihouser (Sis. Sue, Morton, IL), and Elder Bro. Scott Schafer (Sis. Gigi, South Bend, IN), for their time spent with us.

Our annual Christmas program was held on December 12, and it was such a blessing to hear the Sunday school sing about
Jesus! The church was filled to overflowing, as were our hearts as we lifted our voices in song to praise our great God and King!

We pray for Brian and Deann Mustard and Sis. Debbie Anliker in the recent loss of their father, Bro. Earl Anliker (Sis. Liz, Francesville, IN). May they find comfort in the Lord during their loss.

Currently, Indianapolis church Sunday schedule is as follows: 9:30 a.m. is Family Worship Service, followed at 10:45 a.m. by the second service and Nursery and Sunday school. Lunch is served after the second service. We welcome anyone in the Indianapolis area to come and worship with us.

Indiana, LaCrosse  
Meagan Frank, Sharla Messner  
Although not one of the Beatitudes from Christ’s sermon on the mount, there is a helpful saying that goes: “Blessed are the flexible”. Many of us were challenged to embrace this attitude when a wave of positive COVID-19 tests canceled family plans and church services. We are thankful to report that all affected are either recovered, or well on their way!

Even with all the adjustments, there have still been several bright spots throughout the month. The Sunday school children packaged and delivered food boxes to 9 local families in need, and then gathered for an evening of food, games, and a chance to share their experiences.

Sis. Ruth Elcock is overjoyed with the arrival of a new granddaughter! Sweet Amelia Rose was born to Daniel and Shaya Antoniello on November 27.

Elder Bro. Chris and Sis. Carla Wuetrich (St. Louis, MO) visited us on December 12. We thank Bro. Chris for his service!

Indiana, Leo  
Leanne Fischer, Jan Beer  
Bro. Ron Bollier (Sis. Edie, Indianapolis, IN) blessed us on Thanksgiving as he led us in worship and sharing God’s word together. He began with the verse, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” 1 Thes 2:13

On the following Sunday, November 28, Bro. Justin Koch (Sis. Marcia, Washington, IL) had the first service and Bro. Matt Kaufman (Sis. Rebecca, Bloomington, IL) had the second service. We thank them all for sharing a special Thanksgiving weekend with us.

Sadly, Sis. Heidi Pence along with her husband, Bro. Jason, and their three children bid farewell to her father, Bro. Myron Hackenjos, during that time. His funeral in Latty on November 28. May they be comforted knowing that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

December 12 we walked into the assembly anticipating the Sunday school Christmas program. Along with a wooden manger to remind of Christ’s birth, there were two banners. One said, in flowing script, “How Long, O Lord?” The other read “Come, Lord Jesus.” Unusual sentiments, perhaps for a Christmas program, but words that resonated in my soul as I have been feeling that way at times during this season. We are thankful for his first coming. We are thankful for his sacrifice. We long for his return. We thank the teachers and students for sharing his story with us through song and scripture.

In addition to the practices for the program other events also kept us busy this December. December 1 was our Wednesday night prayer night. We had earlier been asked to pray through each verse of Romans 12 when our Bro. Tim Wiegand preached about the persecuted church. For our prayer service themed “Peace on Earth”, Bro. Jon Gerst talked about the persecuted church around the world, and we considered each of those verses and prayed for our brothers and sisters who are suffering in ways we find hard to comprehend.

December 3 was the date of our annual Christmas caroling. On December 4 all of the couples with young children were invited to drop their children off at the Gateway
Woods gym where volunteers from the young group cared for them for the evening, providing both supper and fun.

On December 5, Sis. Sierra Young’s engagement was announced to Bro. Gabe Meyer (Bern, KS). Gabe’s parents are Bro. Richard and Sis. Joanie Meyer (Bern, KS). Bro. Nate and Sis. Stephanie Young are Sierra’s parents.

December 15 was our monthly pizza night as well as singing Christmas carols, and enjoying a concert of Christmas music performed by our own Leo choir, Bro. Jarod Steffen shared with us a possible opportunity locally to help refugees from Afghanistan.

Bro. Paul and Sis. Leanne Fischer are thankful their latest grandchild, Peregrine Atlas, was born on December 16. He arrived safely into the arms of his loving parents, Bro. Paul and Sis. Talitha Huber (West Lafayette, IN).

Note of Thanks:
Bro. Jon and Sis. Amy Gerst shared this note: “Join us in praising God for another gift of life in our family. Xander Joseph Gerst was born on December 10. Thank you for being our church family and for welcoming him as well.”

Indiana, Milford
Heidi Beer, Anne Wilson

We appreciated Bro. Warren Schlatter (Sis. Cindy, Junction, OH) coming to minister to us at the end of November. This past year has been a year of welcoming new faces into our small congregation. We feel blessed that Sis. Deb Garman, who recently moved, has chosen to call Milford church her home. God has provided us with some neat, unexpected additions in the past year and we are so thankful to be able to continue to grow our church family. Our annual Christmas program was put on by the Sunday school children earlier this month. It brings great joy to see all their smiling faces as they sing and recite the story of our dear Savior’s birth. In the chaos and hurt this season has brought to our already broken world, may the JOY that his birth brings shine even brighter. 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

Indiana, Remington
Jenni Honegger, Marcella Tyler

We were privileged this month to hear the last sermon of Bro. Dan Stoller (Sis. Deb) before his retirement as a minister after 40 years on the pulpit and also the first sermon of Bro. Joel Putt (Sis. Wendy) as he begins his ministry. May God bless them both for their willingness to serve us so humbly and lovingly.

Bro. Elmer Bahler (Sis. Marilyn) went to meet his Lord this month after a lifetime of faithful service. Although he will be missed, it is a beautiful thing to say good-bye to a faithful saint and feel confident of his reward. Please be prayerful for his dear wife Sis. Marilyn, his children Sis. Lynell Blume (Bro. Larry, Wolcott, IN), Bro. Mark (Sis. Benita), Bro. Jerry, and Bro. Tim (Sis. Lynnette), 17 grandchildren, and 36 great-grandchildren. Sis. Marilyn was also in the hospital this month as well, so please be especially prayerful for her as she recovers both physically and emotionally.

Bro. Mark and Sis. Benita Bahler are excited grandparents this month! John Charles Mogler was born to Bro. Isaac and Sis. Valerie (West Bend, IA). We pray a blessing on this dear family as we look forward to meeting little John soon.

We recently witnessed the Sunday school children reciting their pieces and singing their songs in honor of Jesus’s birth at our Christmas program. What a joy and a blessing to watch precious souls learn to praise his name! As we look forward to Christmas and the new year, may each one be drawn closer to the heart of Christ. We don’t know what blessings and challenges the new year might hold, but we can be sure they will be full of opportunities to serve him. Let’s make the most of each one!

Indiana, South Bend
Joshua Martinez

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we
beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

On December 8, we held our annual organizational meeting. We thank outgoing head trustee, Bro. Rich Gramm (Sis. Samantha), and all who helped oversee the physical and spiritual needs of our church. We appreciate the willingness of all who will continue or will assume those responsibilities this coming year.

Our prayers are with Bro. Jason Isch (Sis. Jessica) and his father, Bro. Jeff Isch (Sis. Karen), who has begun chemotherapy treatments.

On Saturday, December 11, we enjoyed Christmas caroling followed by a chili supper at church. The next day, our Sunday school children and Young Group shared the amazing gift of Christ’s birth through song and verse. The joyful efforts of the teachers and our young ones were appreciated by all!

On December 19 our Young Group gathered for a Christmas service project to help a local needy family. May the Lord bless Bro. Ed Lester (Sis. Tricia) and all who contributed to make it a special afternoon for all! We thank the Lord for the bountiful spiritual and physical provision for this past year. May the God who upholds the universe by the word of his power be near unto you in the new year!

“*The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*” Num. 6:24-26

Indiana, West Lafayette

**Abbie Gramm**

This month brought a couple of big announcements for West Lafayette. We welcome Bro. Kirk and Sis. Keri Plattner into a new role of deacon, which will commence over the next few months. We also appreciate the 20 plus years of service freely given by Bro. Neal and Sis. Kris Widmer in the pulpit ministry. We wish them blessings as they enter a season of rest as Bro. Neal retires from the ministry.

As for events, we held Communion this month. We find Communion as a time to refocus and reenergize our spiritual lives and energy, in a spirit of unity. It provides a concrete moment to step away from the humdrum of daily life and commemorate the Lord’s sacrifice and love for us. We were thankful to be able to reflect on Jesus’s death as we approach celebrating his birth.

We wish you many blessings upon your new year and hope to see you for a visit in 2022!

Indiana, Wolcott

**Brittany Gerber, Luann Gerber**

Visiting ministers this month were Bro. Harvey Kuenzi (Sis. Jennifer, Silverton, OR) Bro. Dan Walder (Sis. Pam) and Bro. Nathan Walder (Sis. Denise), both from Cissna Park., IL. We thank them for sharing the Word with us and hope they can come again soon!

Bro. Shane, Sis. Alyssa, Wren and Cora Bahler are thrilled for the arrival of Sullivan Hayes! Local grandparents are Chris and Sis. Teresa Bahler. Bro. Ezra and Sis. Rebekah Fritz welcomed their first baby, Agnes. Local grandparents are Bro. Kip and Sis. Donita Edelman.

Sis. Chloe Furrer (Bro. Caleb) had surgery this month. We are thankful that all went well and she has had a quick recovery!

Sis. Lynell Blume (Bro. Larry) lost her father, Bro. Elmer Bahler (Sis. Marilyn, Remington, IN) recently. He also had local grandchildren, Bro. Derek Blume (Sis. Theresa) and Bro. Lee Blume (Sis. Laura) that will miss him. We pray that they can feel the love and prayers that are being prayed for them and feel God’s comforting arms around them.

Our congregation and the angels in heaven are rejoicing as Lially Kendall has confessed her need for a Savior and started repenting! Lially has been coming to church for a while and we have all been praying for this! May God be near her and bless her as she begins her walk with him! Ring the bells of heaven!

Iowa, Bloomfield

**Kendra Wettstein**

We appreciated Bro. Clint Schmidt (Winthrop, MN) ministering the Word to us. May God bless his efforts.
Stetson Garrett was welcomed on November 30 by first-time parents, Lincoln and Sheridan Joos. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Gene and Sis. Lana Joos.

We extend our sympathy to Sis. Melanie Schock (Bro. Ryan) as her grandfather, Bro. Elmer Bahler (Sis. Marilyn, Remington, IN), passed away. We also extend our sympathy to Sis. Wilma Teubel as her brother, Robert Fischer (Nila, Morton, IL), passed away. May God comfort each one with their loss.

Our prayers are with Sis. Lori Wuthrich (Bro. Ken) as she has been dealing with health issues. May God be her Healer.

Note of thanks:
I would like to thank all the friends and loved ones who remembered me with cards, food, and calls since my hip replacement surgery.
- Sis. Shirley Wuthrich

Iowa, Burlington

Marilyn Anderson, Angela Steiner

“The best Christmas gift of all is Jesus!” This was recited by our young preschoolers at the Christmas program, and how true it is! This wonderful gift isn’t earned by good works, but rather freely given to all who will humbly come and accept. Our daily response to this priceless gift should be a heart of worship and obedience to the great giver!

Each Sunday school class that told the story of Jesus through songs and recitations at the program was inspiring and uplifting. It was special to have so many visitors, including Bro. Dale Frank (Sis. Tina), Bro. Mark Schmidgall (Sis. Sally), and Elder Bro. Jon Schmidgall (Sis. Julie), all from Mediapolis, IA. Thank you to all our visitors for sharing the special afternoon!

We joyfully sang many Christmas hymns together on lowly front porches and quiet hallways the night of our annual Christmas Caroling. Adding to this tradition is the delicious chili supper following. There’s hot chocolate and yummy Christmas candy for all. We are thankful for everyone’s part in putting this together.

As winter sets in, so does the season for sickness. We continue to lift those up in prayer who have been ill and unable to worship with us. May God wrap us all in his great love and care this Christmas.

Iowa, Elgin

Maria Rocke

“How shall it be when we at last returning
From weary wand’ring and from toil and strife,
Shall reach the home for which our heart is yearning
And enter into everlasting life?
When from our feet the dust of earth has vanished,
The last sweat from our brow is wiped away,
Our eyes behold what oft earth’s care has banished
And gave to us new courage on our way.”
How Shall It Be?, Zion’s Harp #146

Our Bro. Albert Butikofer laid down his spiritual armor and went on to his reward November 29, just five months after his dear wife, Sis. LaVerne was called home. Bro. Al leaves behind his children, Tom (Darla, Clermont, IA), Sis. Betty Getz (Bro. Kent), Sis. Sandy Knobloch (Bro. Jim, West Bend, IA), Bro. Jim (Sis. Diana, Iowa City, IA), Gene Butikofer, and Heidi Butikofer (Elgin, IA); as well as his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Sis. Mildred “Millie” Butikofer (Bro. Paul) was called to her heavenly home on December 13. In addition to her loving husband, she leaves behind a son, Bro. Tim (Sis. Kathy), as well as her beloved grandchildren and great-grandchildren. May we remember these two families in prayer in their time of sorrow.

We are also rejoicing as a new little daughter was born into Bro. Doug and Sis. Trisha Rocke’s family. Lucy Louise was born November 24 and was welcomed home by her siblings Eli, Emma, Nelson, Lena, Noah and Warren. Thankful for her safe arrival are grandparents Sis. Kathy Rocke (Bro. Nelson, dec., Tremont, IL) and Bro. Keith and Sis. Ida Kellenberger (Bradford, IL).

Our Sunday school children served us well through verse and song during their Christmas program. It was a joy to hear them tell the story of Jesus’s birth as well as the story of the
gift of salvation that, though written long ago, is still a gift offered to all today.

We are thankful for the many visiting ministers over the past month; Bro. Greg Fehr (Sis. Denise, West Bend, IA), Bro. Kevin Fehr (Sis. Lonnie, West Bend, IA), Bro. Kevin Banwart (Sis. Sandy, West Bend, IA), Bro. Joe Gerst (Sis. Connie, Iowa City, IA), Bro. Tim Gerst (Sis. Melisa, Iowa City, IA), Bro. Jim Butikofer (Sis. Diana, Iowa City, IA), and Elder Bro. Kent Heimer (Taylor, MO). May God bless each one for his part in teaching, comforting and exhorting through the strength of the Spirit.

Bro. Paul Butikofer’s new address is: Copper Creek Senior Living, 609 Highway 150 Room #221, West Union, IA 52175.

**Iowa, Garden Grove**

*Laura Funk*

Our congregation welcomed Bro. Adrian Strahm (Sis. Harriet, Bern, KS) who shared God’s message with us.

The Sunday school shared the message of God’s gift to the world. Praying many more can use this gift while it is available! Have you any room for Jesus?

Bro. Vern Hostetler has been ill for several weeks and spent some time in the hospital. We pray for God’s continued healing hand.

“O come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.”

**Note of Thanks:**

I would like to thank everyone for all the cards, words and gifts I received after my son, Ron’s passing and my recovery from COVID-19. I feel blessed to have a caring wonderful family. Thank you.

- Thelma Hofmann

**Iowa, Iowa City**

*Diana Butikofer*

We were blessed to hear our Sunday school children present the message to us of man’s sin and the gift God gave to redeem us from that sin. Thank you to the students and teachers for their work in preparing for the program.

We appreciated the visit of Bro. Joshua Martinez (Sis. Keyna, South Bend, IN) and family on Thanksgiving Day. May the Lord bless him for his service.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” Rom. 10:14-15

We are thankful the Lord has called Bro. Tim and Sis. Melisa Gerst and their family to serve in a special way. May Bro. Tim feel the Spirit’s presence and guidance not only as he ministers from the pulpit, but in every aspect of his life.

**Note of thanks:**

We have greatly appreciated the prayers and other support from so many following the death of our dad and grandpa, Bro. Albert Butikofer of Elgin, IA.

- Jim and Diana Butikofer

**Iowa, Lester**

*Krishi Knobloch, Lois Mogler*

Bro. Arlan Miller (Sis. Katie, Gridley, IL) was our visiting minister Thanksgiving weekend. We appreciate that they were able to be with us once again.

Despite heavy snow fall on December 10, Jeff Moser (Bro. Donn and Sis. Joyce) married Cassie Buchholz. We wish them God’s blessings and guidance in their new life together.

Bro. Brooks and Sis. Kiana Metzger had their first child, a little daughter, Jaelyn Mae, on December 3. Bro. Travis and Sis. Kathy Knoblock and Bro. Blair and Sis. Julie Metzger are her happy grandparents. On December 14 Bro. Ross and Sis. Abby Mogler, Khye, Kamden, Kian and Kora opened their arms to a little son and brother, Krew Rodney. Thankful for his safe arrival are his grandparents Bro. Brad and Sis. Teresa Kellenberger (Sabetha, KS) and Bro. Rodney and Sis. Lois Mogler. Prayers are ongoing for parents as they raise their precious children.

Loved ones that have spent time in the hospital this past month are Sis. Becky Ver Beek (Tim), Bro. Jim Leuthold (Sis. Betty), Bro. Tom Metzger (Sis. Deb), and Bro. Roger Knoblock (Sis. Janet). We remember them and others who
are undergoing treatment or have undergone procedures and lift them up in prayer.

We extend sympathy to Sis. Edith Knobloch in the loss of her sister, Mary Haynes. Sis. Shirley Nester mourns the passing of her brother, Bro. Albert Butikofer (Elgin, IA) and two weeks later her sister-in-law Sis. Mildred Butikofer (Bro. Paul, Elgin, IA). Our sympathy goes to Bro. Denis and Sis. Jill Meyer as they lost her mother, Patricia Nietert, on December 6. May each grieving heart feel God’s comfort.

It was special to have the Sunday school Christmas program again this year. How refreshing to remember Christ’s birth from the viewpoint of young children. May the timeless message of Jesus’s birth and ultimate sacrifice on the cross be with us each day.

**Iowa, Mediapolis**

*Laura Kuntz, Janet Lanz*

A large portion of our congregation traveled to Elgin, IL to witness the wedding vows of Bro. Ross Lanz (Bro. Keith and Sis. Tonya) and Sis. Ashlyn Dietz (Bro. Fred and Sis. Shaena, Elgin, IL). We extend a warm welcome to Sis. Ashlyn as she joins our local church family.

Jesse Massner (Bro. Chuck and Sis. Lois) is at peace with God and is looking forward to being baptized soon. May God guide him as he continues to learn and grow in the Lord.

Bro. Dale Frank recently gave a Wednesday night topical presentation on the subject of forgiveness. We were all challenged and encouraged as we were reminded of both the necessity and the blessing of being able to forgive others from our hearts, by the grace of God.

We were blessed to have the following ministers with us on the pulpit this month: Bro. Greg Fehr (Sis. Denise, West Bend, IA), Bro. Aaron Frank (Sis. Sharla, Elgin, IA), Bro. Dallas Massner (Sis. Christy, Burlington, IA), and Bro. Mark Roth (Sis. Tammy, Congerville, IL).

After a one-year hiatus, we were extra thankful to have our annual all-church Christmas caroling, followed by a chili supper at church. The next evening was our Sunday school Christmas program. We were all blessed to hear the children share in word and song the story of Jesus, God’s most precious gift to us. It is a story that never grows old!

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye.” *Psa. 32:8*

A brand-new year lies before us, and while we have no idea what it has in store for us, we do know that God will be right there in the trenches, guiding us. Whether we find ourselves up on the mountain top, down in the valley, or somewhere in between, the assurance that God is with us fills our hearts with peace and gladness.

**Iowa, West Bend**

*Jenny Banwart, Karen Schmidt*

As we begin a new year may each of us desire a closer walk with God. “For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” *Heb. 13:5*

We are thankful to Bro. Larry Bahr (Fort Scott, KS) and Bro. Ryan Schock (Sis. Melanie, Bloomfield, IA) who have served us from God’s word.

Sis. Patty Banwart and Mike Banwart (Marilyn) both spent some time in the hospital. Our prayers were answered as they are home again and seem to be doing well.

Bro. Isaac and Sis. Valerie Mogler welcomed their first child, John Charles, on December 3. Excited grandparents are Sis. Beth Mogler (Bro. Charles, dec.) and Bro. Mark and Sis. Benita Bahler (Remington, IN). A week later Bro. Charlie and Sis. Molly Fehr welcomed their first son, McCoy Roger. Happy grandparents are Bro. Cory and Sis. Jennifer Fehr and Sis. Chalea Knobloch (Bro. Vern, dec., Lester, IA). We wish both couples many blessings as they raise their sons.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Bro. Jim and Sis. Sandy Knobloch in the passing of Sandy’s father, Bro. Albert Butikofer (Elgin, IA), and to John and Cindy Bruellman and Brent Bruellman in the passing of their brother, Steve Bruellman.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” *Psa. 23:4*
Japan, Shioda & Tokyo
Anna Inoue, Carrie Ito, Rachel Witzig

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Luke 2:14

Thanksgiving at church gave us a special opportunity to open up the church doors to some who entered for the first time. We were so blessed to have several families from the community join us.

Many of us from Tokyo and Shioda churches enjoyed gathering to sing English Christmas carols and enjoy fellowship as the children decorated gingerbread houses in the Ito’s home. Our Tokyo church has also enjoyed singing Christmas carols in our afternoon singing service. For the Christmas ladies’ meeting, we enjoyed reading from Matthew 1:18-25 as Bro. Akito Inoue shared about the birth of Jesus.

At our Christmas program, as children sang praises to Jesus, our hearts were filled with thankfulness. What a joy to have so many people in our church that we needed to set up chairs in the back and into the hallway! We were also grateful Sis. Hiroko Utsuki could join us in person for the first time in many months. May we continue to celebrate Jesus and point others to him.

Kansas, Bern
Leigha Rokey, Rita Menold

Happy New Year to all across the miles. I trust it has been a blessed holiday season for all.

As I am writing this, it is still a few days before Christmas. This Advent season is definitely a favorite time of year for me as I study a little deeper into the coming of Christ and also his second coming. It seems that each year something new is revealed and each time I find it better than I expected. Isn’t that just who Jesus is; always better than we expect? He fulfills it all. I’m reminded of the Christmas hymn “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus” by Chris Tomlin.

“Come, Thou long expected Jesus Born to set Thy people free; From our fears and sins release us, Let us find our rest in Thee. Israel’s strength and consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art; Dear desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart. Born Thy people to deliver, Born a child and yet a King, Born to reign in us forever, Now Thy gracious kingdom bring. By Thine own eternal Spirit Rule in all our hearts alone; By Thine all sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne. By Thine all sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne”

We are excited for the engagement of Bro. Gabe Meyer (Bro. Richard and Sis. Joni) to Sis. Sierra Young (Bro. Nate and Sis. Stephanie) from Leo, IN. Our prayers are with Sis. Hannah Rokey as she serves with the HarvestCall team for the three months in Lafayette, LA. May God richly bless all the efforts and hands working together for the Kingdom.

Kansas, Kiowa
Janice Bahr, Millie Frieden

Every once in a while, a ewe will give birth to a lamb and reject it. There are many reasons she may do this. If the lamb is returned to the ewe, the mother may even kick the poor animal away. Once a ewe rejects one of her lambs, she will never change her mind. These little lambs will hang their heads so low that it looks like something is wrong with its neck. Their spirit is broken. These lambs are called “bummer lambs.” Unless the Shepherd intervenes, that lamb will die, rejected and alone. So, do you know what the Shepherd does? He takes that rejected little one into his home, hand-feeds it and keeps it warm by the fire. He will wrap it up with blankets and hold it to his chest so the bummer can hear his heartbeat. Once the lamb is strong enough, the Shepherd will place it back in the field with the rest of the flock. But that sheep never forgets how the Shepherd cared for him when his mother rejected him. When the Shepherd calls for the flock, guess who runs to him first?

That is right, the bummer sheep. He knows his voice intimately. It is not that the bummer lamb is loved more, it just knows intimately the One who loves it and has experienced that love, one on one.

So many of us are bummer lambs, rejected and broken. But he is the good Shepherd. He cares
and awe, is here! Recently, I observed someone commenting on the busyness of the schedule this time of year. Another believer responded, “But this time of year should be busy because it’s an opportunity to bless somebody else with Jesus’s love?” Obviously, there’s a balance here! We are called to be stewards of our time and talents and shouldn’t overextend ourselves but live within our human capacities. But we also shouldn’t cut out so much in the name of simplifying that we miss opportunities to serve others. Each day, let us look for the good works God has prepared for us to walk in.

Our church was blessed with the opportunity to give out gifts to clients who attend the Hartford Training Center. The joy on the faces of these dear souls at the simple pleasures of carols and gifts was a delight to us. We also enjoyed the program our Sunday school students put on to celebrate Jesus’s birth. It was heartwarming to see their enthusiasm and effort. After the program, our church had an afternoon of caroling followed by a soup supper at Sis. Mara Jean Edelman’s home. It was a special and uplifting time of sharing our Savior’s love.

Kansas, Sabetha
Leanna Hartter, Whitney Hartter
Greetings of love from our congregation! We are thankful during the Christmas season to be able to have a Christmas program and go Christmas caroling as a church family. It was a true blessing to listen to the children express their love for Jesus through song!

Our thoughts and prayers have been with Nolan Hartter (Bro. Darin and Sis. Crystal) as he spent time in the hospital.

We rejoice with Grant (Bro. Alan and Sis. Colleen) and Kourtney Meyer, Gavin and Emma (Darin and Sis. Karen Edelman) Dozier and Zach (Darin and Sis. Karen) and Caylee Edelman as they recently were married! We pray God will bless their lives together.

Our church is thankful to God for providing another minister to feed the flock. Elder Bro. Jon Schmidgall (Sis. Julie, Mediapolis, IA) assisted in putting Bro. Seth Leman (Sis. Renee) into the ministry.

We are thankful for the engagement of Bro. Benjamin Meyer (Bro. Alan and Sis. Colleen, Silverton, OR) to Sis. Elisha Snook (Bro. Jason and Sis. Colette, Silverton, OR) May God be with them as they prepare for their wedding!

Bro. Kaleb Beyer (Sis. Angela, Washington, IL), Bro. Lee Plattner (Sis. Mary, Zapata, TX), Bro. Seth Hartter (Sis. Brenda, Burlington, IA), Bro. Troy Metzger (Sis. Gwen, Lester, IA), and Bro. Adam Zeltwanger (Sis. Christy, Morris North, MN) shared the word of God with us this month. We are thankful for their willing service.
**Mexico, Ixtlán**  
*Ruth Gerber*

“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” Eph. 1:6

In all the busyness of practicing for Christmas programs, planning for family get-togethers, and trying to wrap up school before break, I looked around our house—suitcases, extra food, gifts, school supplies...I had to wonder what Joseph and Mary’s “Christmas” was like. Did they pack the right clothes, did they have meals figured out, did they know what the next step was, and was everything perfect when the shepherds arrived? It hit me. NO, I’m sure things didn’t go perfectly smoothly for them, and yet God was glorified, and his wonderful plan unfolded. So, God can and does work amid our messes to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Our Sunday school children shared a beautiful Christmas program with us all in song and verse. And again, it was some of the “unperfect” parts of the program that were more meaningful—like the boy that got nervous and didn’t think he could read his part. It was very moving to hear so many voices encouraging him and, yes, he did it well! The brother that shared the main message also felt shaken by a challenging family situation but brought us a thought-provoking message contrasting the “Christmas spirit” the world looks for as opposed to the “Holy Spirit” that works in God’s people and who anointed Jesus to bring the gospel to us all. May his name continue to be praised!

We are thankful for the visit of our Elder Bro. Mike Leman (Sis. Deb, Denver, CO) and for the fellowship we enjoyed this past month. One of the passages we meditated on was Jesus washing his disciples’ feet and what washing each other’s feet can look like in our lives. He has made us accepted in the beloved!

**Mexico, Magdalena**  
*Laura Aviña*

On November 14, we said farewell to our Bro. Seth and Sis. Jodi Gerber and their three children, Osmara, Jorge, and Raelynn. They will be deeply missed, and we pray that God blesses and watches over them throughout their transition to Milford, IN.

We were thankful to celebrate Christmas together on December 12 with a potluck meal of tamales and other traditional Christmas foods after the service.

As another year is upon us, we trust that God will lead and guide for each one. We trust that 2022 will be a year of hope, joy, and peace for each one.

**Michigan, Detroit**  
*Krista Wieland*

I heard something recently in a sermon that has stuck with me. It was a word that describes, in three letters, a picture of God. It was AWE. Do we have awe when we think of the awesome gift that was given over two thousand years ago as a ransom for us sinners? The whole story of love for us is really quite beyond comprehension when we stop and think about it. Let’s stop what we are doing, take time and ponder with awe the Trinity and the true meaning of Christmas.

We rejoice with Bro. Shawn and Sis. Kelly Curtis as they welcomed the birth of their first child, a daughter, Emily Rose. We are thankful for this new little addition to our congregation and pray that Emily will grow to love the Lord and serve him with all her soul, mind, and strength.

We pray that God will heal and provide for those who are currently facing health challenges. We especially want to remember those who have spent time in the hospital recently. We pray for Mike Schmidt (Sis. Cheryl) and Bro. Daryl Wieland (Sis. Edie) that God would provide healing and strength all according to his will.

We were blessed to be able to have our Sunday school Christmas Caroling and Program in December.

**Michigan, Bay City**  
*Sarah Knochel*

We pray that God will heal and provide for those who are currently facing health challenges. We especially want to remember those who have spent time in the hospital recently. We pray for Mike Schmidt (Sis. Cheryl) and Bro. Daryl Wieland (Sis. Edie) that God would provide healing and strength all according to his will.

We were blessed to be able to have our Sunday school Christmas Caroling and Program in December.

As another year is upon us, we trust that God will lead and guide for each one. We trust that 2022 will be a year of hope, joy, and peace for each one.

“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Col. 3:2
We would like to thank visiting Elder Bro. Nick Gutwein (Sis. Suzanne, West Lafayette, IN) for sharing the Word with us this month.

Our annual Sunday school Christmas program was a blessing to all who could attend. We had a farewell luncheon for Jacob Kujawa, who will be leaving in late December to serve in the Army. We will continue to be prayerful for him.

December 14 we had our annual Christmas baskets packing, which are distributed to various families.

Numerous people in our congregation are ill at this time and we pray for rest, peace and healing. We are thankful Becky Kujawa is home and recovering.

Minnesota, Minneapolis
Brenda Messner, Renee Messner

Greetings of love to everyone as we begin the new year!

We were grateful to have Elder Bro. Damon Knobloch (Sis. Stephanie, Morris North, MN) assist with the reading of the Memorandum, and then Bro. Art Mueller (Sis. Marlene, Belvidere, IL) ministered God’s holy word on that Sunday.

We joyfully witnessed Bro. Will and Sis. Erika Flickinger as they gave their testimony and were baptized into our precious faith! Thankful hearts appreciated Elder Bro. Ken Wuemrich (Sis. Lyn, Indianapolis, IN) and Elder Bro. Harvey Kaeb (Sis. Judy, Gridley, IL) coming to share in this special weekend.

How encouraging to see others repent and acknowledge they need our Savior and Lord Jesus! We rejoice with Kai Rocke (Elder Bro. Duane and Sis. Bonnie) and Valerie Dalman (Derrek). We pray God holds them close and will continue to bless them in their journey of faith.

Our Sunday school students retold the story of the birth of Jesus at their Christmas program. The scripture readings and verses they shared give us hope and joy in knowing how much God loves us! To send his beloved son in such a humble way, born in a lowly manger, sharing it with animals and wrapped in swaddling clothes. Simplicity at it’s finest.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:13-14

He is calling you to serve him and worship him, and wants you to have his precious peace.

We are praying for those who are sick, lonely, hurting, or grieving the loss of a loved one. Jesus hears our prayers. Jesus is the answer to having peace on earth.

Minnesota, Morris
Peg Wellendorf, Brianna Wulf

"For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Mark 9:41

We were blessed by Elder Bro. Rick Plattner (Sis. Mary, Fairbury, IL) coming to read the Memorandum with us as well as sharing the Living Water with us. May God richly bless him for his willingness to be used on our behalf!

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” 2 Cor. 1:3-4

We grieve with our friend Jeff Jurgens, his wife Steph, and family at the passing of Jeff’s father, Leon Jurgens. The funeral took place in Milbank, SD. We pray God can comfort them during this time of grief and sorrow.

It was a joy to hear the Christmas story anew out of the mouths of small children and young adults alike at our annual Christmas program! What a sweet reminder of the precious babe who came to be the Saviour for us all. May this gift be one we thank God for every day, not just during the Christmas season! We also had the privilege to sing carols to some of our elderly and other locals this year which was a blessing for all!

“Our saving hope is all in vain, if here our love should cease, For in the man of Galilee we find the gift of peace.”
'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, #26

Minnesota, Morris North

Our congregation rejoiced when Ted Nohl gave his testimony of Jesus's work in his life and was baptized into the family of Christ on December 5. His parents are Bro. Ben and Sis. Kristi Furrer (Bro. Jerry Nohl, dec.). Elder Bro. Duane Rocke (Minneapolis, MN) was helping with the baptism weekend.

We held our Memorandum evening and Elder Bro. Lowell Moser (Morris, MN) served that evening to expound on the letter from the Elders for our local congregation.

This is the time of year when we do a few activities with our Sunday school kids to package boxes and help with some of the local support organizations. We are thankful for these opportunities to teach our children to serve others, especially since we live in a world that seems to be less and less focused on Christ and what he did to redeem us.

We are looking forward to the days getting longer as the new year begins.

Minnesota, Winthrop

Ginny Stoll, Dixie Messner

Bro. Marvin Messner (Sis. Geri, dec.) went to sleep in Jesus’s arms December 5. He has waited for this moment for a long time. We are thankful for him but his daughters; Sis. Kim Moser (Bro. Todd, Morris North, MN), Peggy Jones (Dean, Owatonna, MN) and son, Dale Abrahamson (Ontario, CA) and his grandchildren will miss him.

Our friend, Russell Miller (Bro. Sam and Sis. Sandy) underwent extensive back/neck surgery. We are praying he could be relieved of his pain and have a full recovery.

We all enjoyed the children presenting the story of Christ’s birth at our Christmas program. Bro. Glen Steiner reminded the children to remember the Savior’s birth more than the little mistakes they make in presenting their pieces or songs.

We held a memorial service for Charlie McMaster (Pam) on November 20. Even though most of us didn’t know Charlie, we know his wife Pam will sincerely miss him.

Note of Thanks:
I would like to sincerely thank each of you for the get well and sympathy cards, prayers, gifts, phone calls and texts during my hospital stay and the loss of my husband, Charlie. I could truly feel the presence of the Lord. May God be your rich rewarder.
- Pamela McMaster

Missouri, Kansas City

Betty Sinn

“When upon life’s billows 
you are tempest tossed, 
When you are discouraged 
thinking all is lost, 
Count your many blessings, 
name them one by one, 
And it will surprise you 
what the Lord hath done.”
Count Your Blessings, 
Hymns of Zion, #116

As events around the recent massive tornado in the US are made known, the above hymn comes to my mind, and I thank God for the many blessings he has shared with me. I also pray for the communities impacted and the many individuals who have lost not only homes and their sources of income but have also lost friends and relatives.

May we all keep these individuals in our prayers and pray that they are also seeking God’s help and comfort at this time.

We are thankful to have had Bro. David Hartter (Sis. Beth, Sabetha, KS) share the Word with us on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. May he be blessed for his service to our congregation. It was also a blessing to have had several visitors that Sunday at our small church. With the many visitors, we all enjoyed hearing the additional voices praising God!

We were blessed with having several visitors from the Sabetha and Bern Young Groups on a recent Sunday. It was a blessed day as they joined us in worship.
and in singing. We truly appreciated the effort they made to travel to Kansas City and spend a joy-filled day with us.

We were able to have our normal Sunday school Christmas program this year, which was held in mid-December before our afternoon service. As was mentioned from the pulpit after the program, we should all be encouraged with the ‘simplicity’ of salvation when we have the opportunity to hear it from the mouths of babes. It was certainly uplifting to hear the young children recite verses and sing songs centered on Christ’s birth. After the afternoon service, we went Christmas caroling and then returned to the church dining room for our annual soup supper.

Regardless of what is going on in the world today, may we always remember the reason for our joy, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Missouri, Lamar
Leah Rokey

As we reflect on the past year, we have many reasons to be thankful! We serve a loving, merciful God and trust in his provision in the coming year!

We appreciate the service of visiting ministers, including Elder Bro. John Lehman (Sis. Carol, Bern, KS), Bro. Seth Beard (Sis. Faith, Sardis, OH), Bro. Craig Stickling (Sis. Jackie, Peoria, IL), and Bro. Larry Bahr (Pt. Scott, KS).

Our congregation was blessed by the opportunity to share the true reason for the Christmas season as we caroled to a few in our community. We also enjoyed gathering as a church family to bake and exchange Christmas goodies and enjoy fellowship.

We praise God for being with Bro. Alfred Banwart (Sis. Carolyn) during his time in the hospital and as he returns home. Trusting God will grant strength and healing for Bro. Alfred.

Missouri, St. Louis
Michelle Rassi

“'Tis not the manger, but the cross, that sets the spirit free.”

_The Babe of Bethlehem, Hymns of Christmas, #26_ 

Our visiting ministers this month were Bro. Jeremy Lehman (Sis. Shara, Forrest, IL) and Bro. Greg Rassi (Sis. Carla, Chicago, IL).

The third grade through high school Sunday school children gathered together to purchase and wrap Christmas gifts and food for needy families. An added blessing was fellowship around food and games afterwards.

The Sunday school Christmas program was on December 5. The program was ended by the whole congregation singing together, “To God be the Glory, Great Things He hath Done.” That evening we had a Christmas singing and chili dinner at church.

Missouri, Taylor
Eleanor Yackley

We have many reasons to be thankful! God has blessed us richly during the past year. We have food and drink in abundance, homes with temperature control and modern plumbing, clothing, transportation, jobs, income, health, abilities, and so much more! What have we done to show our gratitude to God?

Bro. Fred and Sis. Kathy Eberhardt welcome their granddaughter, Quinn Ruby Eberhardt, daughter of Bro. Josh and Sis. Victoria (St. Louis, MO). Quinn was born on November 9, 2021.

Bro. Cole and Sis. Tinslee Sutter were blessed with the birth of Breelyn Kay on November 20, 2021. Breelyn’s siblings are Rigsby, Bexlee, and Roegen. Bro. Rich E. and Sis. Kay Sutter are Breelyn’s grandparents.

Rhett Jameson Schaefer was born on November 26, 2021. His parents are Brad and Sis. Rita; siblings are Hadlee and Breckan. Grandparents are Bro. Joe and Sis. Jerilyn Yackley.

We were also blessed with visitors in church and visiting ministers. Bro. Mark Lindberg (Sis. Laura, Chicago, IL) was with us on Thanksgiving Day. Bro. Todd Witzig (Sis. Nicole, Gridley, IL) served us on November 28.

Bro. Aaron Adrian and Sis. Natalia Bartos were married at Windsor, Ontario, Canada, on December 4, 2021. We wish them...
God’s blessings as they establish their home in West Lafayette, IN. Bro. Rusty and Sis. Amy Adrian and Bro. Zlatan and Sis. Marja Bartos are their parents.

Christmas caroling for the residents of Maple Lawn Nursing Home in Palmyra and the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy was done remotely via Youtube on Sunday afternoon, December 5. The caroling was followed by a soup supper provided by the Sunday school.

The Sunday school presented a lovely Christmas program of verses and songs on Sunday afternoon, December 12. We missed several students who were unable to participate due to illness. Many grandparents and friends who do not normally worship with us came for the program.

New York, Croghan/Naumburg
Anna Stoller
“His star lights up the darkest night
And He is ever near us;
Protects and shields us all with might,
Shares us His help so gracious.
He seeks the missing lamb that strays;
And with His life the ransom pays
For our sin and transgressions.”
Christ in the Flesh,
Zion’s Harp, #107
Lewis County had a wind storm this month that temporarily put the power out for many in our congregation. We’re thankful that the church never lost power and we were able to have church the next day (Sunday). It was an opportunity to be thankful for light and heat!

How much more thankful we are that, even in the darkest night, the light of Christ is with us. We are so thankful to always have “something to hold on to” as we were recently reminded in a sermon. How we would despair in times of trial without the light of Christ! May we remember him this season and share his light with those around us who are hurting.

We had visitors recently who served us lunch and shared fellowship with us. The group of brothers was from various congregations in Ohio and Illinois. May God bless them for sharing with us!

Our prayers are with Bro. John Farney and Sis. Polly Farney. They both have spent time in the hospital this month. May they feel our love and prayers as they continue to face health challenges.

Ohio, Akron
Joelle Indermuhle
We extend sympathy to Bro. David and Sis. Michelle Henico in the passing of Sis. Michelle’s father, Jim Hrubik, and her grandmother, Annie Hrubik.

Jenna Gasser is thankful to have found peace with God and looks forward to baptism at a later date.

We are so thankful to have a new convert, as Tiffany Gal (Bro. Emery and Sis. Erika) has recently begun her repentance.

“I now have found the firm foundation
Where evermore my anchor grounds!
It lay there ere the world’s creation,
Where else, but in my Saviour’s wounds?
Foundation which unmov’d shall stay,
When earth and heaven pass away.”
Christ, the Foundation,
Zions Harp, #221

Ohio, Columbus
Nancy Banks
Tis the season to be merry!
The holidays are upon us and our Columbus church wishes everyone a blessed new year.

We appreciate our visitors and lift them up in prayer. Bro. Dana Indermuhle (Sis. Joy, Sardis, OH), Bro. Matt Miller (Sis. Wendy, Latty, OH), Bro. Brian Huber (Sis. Jacki, Francesville, IN), and Bro. Brett Lanz (Sis. Renee, Rittman, OH) ministered the Word to us over the past month. May the Lord bless each one.

Our church was able to go caroling and visit our dear Sis. Cheryl Gehres. It warmed our hearts to see her smile and welcome us. Others in the nursing home gathered around to sing, and it was a joy for us all. A carry-in supper awaited us afterwards at the church.
Our hearts grieve and prayers are being lifted for the victims’ families in the devastating tornados through the southern states. We cannot imagine the sorrow and grief that they are experiencing. We pray that the Lord will bring them comfort and strength as they lay loved ones to rest and begin the rebuilding of their lives.

Ohio, Junction
Karen Schlatter

We enjoyed having Elder Bro. Bruce Frank (Sis. Bonita, Cisna Park, IL) and Bro. Chet Manz (Sis. Jenny, Toledo, OH) visit us and share over the pulpit in the hope we have in Christ Jesus. There is much rejoicing as we have two new converts to encourage and support as they begin their walk with the Lord. Jason Carnahan (Danielle) and Steven Machamer have both made the decision to repent and live a life of service to our Heavenly Father.

Retired Elder Bro. Bill and Sis. Emy Schlatter welcome a new grandson into their family. August Dempsey Schlatter was born on December 8 to their son and daughter-in-law, Bro. Michael and Sis. Heidi Schlatter (Smithville, OH).

Bro. Myron Hackenjos (Sis. Lorine, dec.) has finished his fight of faith. Our love and prayers are extended to his family, including his three daughters: Sis. Melanie, Annette Nygaard (Doug), and Sis. Heidi Pence (Bro. Jason, Leo, IN). Prayers are extended to Sis. Ann Plummer and her family as her daughter, Beverly, passed away. We extend sympathy to Dalton Yenser (Staci) at the loss of his grandpa, Bruce Stauffer. Finally, we also extend sympathy to Sis. Sandi Steffen (Bro. Quinn) for the loss of her grandma, Sis. Lorene Joos (Peoria, IL).

May we all strive to count each day as a day well spent!

Ohio, Latty
Angie Klopfenstein, Carmen Stoller

Greetings of love! We pray you had a joyous Christmas Season.

Bro. Nolan and Sis. Brooke Sinn, along with big brother, Bowen, welcomed Oaklee Renee into their home. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Todd and Sis. Janet Sinn and Bro. Dale and Sis. Lavonne Schumacher (Eureka, IL).
Peter Dawson, and Katrina Beer. We appreciated Elder Bro. Gary Sinn (Sis. Paulette, Latty, OH) serving us throughout the weekend. It was a blessing to hear the testimonies of Virginia Contrascere and Marc and Elizabeth Contrascere. We appreciated Elder Bro. Lynn Fiechter (Sis. Ronda, Bluffton, IN) being here for their testimonies as well as bringing forth the Word.

Elder Bro. Duane Farney (Croghan, NY) came to share the fall Memorandum, and we thank him for his loving exhortations. Bro. Duane also gave an update of the HarvestCall efforts in Eastern Europe. As God moves and directs, let us continue with generosity and love for our brethren.

With sadness, but also with faith, we laid to rest two of our congregation’s oldest brothers in Christ. Bro. Wally Ramsier served many years in the ministry, as well as in HarvestCall, always busy serving others. Our prayers continue with his children: Sis. Karen Baltic (Bro. Pete), Darlene Enderle (Larry), Jeff (Cheri), Deb Jones (Don), Cliff (Lynn), Sis. Jolene, Brenda Herrmann (Wayne), Sis. Joyce Germaine (Bro. Milan, Detroit, MI), Carol Browne (Lonnie) and Todd (Stephanie).

We will also greatly miss Bro. Joe Pamer, who also leaves a legacy of generosity. Bro. Joe had such an inspiring, cheerful spirit in all things. His family is in our prayers: Sandra Thorburn (Thomas), Steve Sabo, Bro. Doug Sabo (Sis. Linda, Sarasota, FL), and Bro. Greg Sabo (Sis. Sharon).

Our hearts go out to Sis. Connie Domka in the death of her brother Larry Hartzler (Luann). In prayer, we trust God to comfort the hearts of all who keenly feel grief during this time.

Bro. John and Sis. Dawn Ramsey welcomed a precious new grandson Theodore, who was born to Kyle and Christine Germann. Theodore joins siblings: Leah, Miriam, Amos, Charlotte, and Ida. Elder Bro. Mark and Sis. Jeannine Masters welcomed two sweet grand-girls: Corbin and Amber welcomed baby Ella, and Bro. Aaron and Sis. Whitney, Kendon, Nolan, and Lainey welcomed baby Adalyn. To all of you who are grandparents and those who have a grandparent role, you have an immeasurable impact on our youth!

We continue praying for loved ones who have experienced illness or significant health procedures including Sis. Melinda Matuch, Sis. Jeannine Masters (Elder Bro. Mark), and Bro. Dave Eyerly (Sis. Edna).

We thank Bro. Bryon Palitto (Sis. Lisa, Akron, OH) for visiting and preaching God’s word. That same Sunday, our students told the account of our Savior’s birth through song and recitation during the annual Christmas program.

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” 2 Corin. 9:15

**Ohio, Rittman**

*Mardel Dotterer, Julie Steiner*

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whomsoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

As we begin our journey into this new year, may we remember our purpose for living.

Our congregation is rejoicing that friend Ariel Hartzler (Bro. Marvin and Sis. Sue) has begun her repentance. We also have two converts who have been announced for peace and are awaiting baptism: Christopher Schar (Bro. Nathan and Sis. Linda) and Adam Baltic (Bro. Milan and Sis. Amy).

First time parents Bro. Jacob and Sis. Bailee Blough were blessed with the birth of Beckham Alexander on November 18. Beckham’s grandparents are Bro. Brian and Sis. Beverly Indermuhle. November 22 was the birth date of Asher John Klotzle, welcomed by Bro. Steve and Sis. Brenda, and grandparents Bro. John and Sis. Cheri Klotzle. Bro. Aaron and Sis. Debra Gasser became first time grandparents with the birth of Jace Aaron Zollinger to Bro. Aaron and Sis. Charity (Smithville, OH). Bro. Nate and Sis. Becca Steiner and big sister Lillian welcomed Montgomery John into their family on December
16. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Dave and Sis. Lynn Steiner and Greg and Sis. Peggy Tieche (Smithville, OH).

Those who experienced health concerns the past month included Bro. Bobby Cochran, Sis. Kylie Miller, and Kya Csapo.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philip. 4:19

Along with joys in life, we experience sadness and sorrow, especially when we lose those we love. We extend deepest sympathy to Elder Bro. Wayne Hartzler (Sis. Camille) for the loss of his brother Larry Hartzler (Luann). Heartfelt sympathy to many others close to Larry, including his stepmother Sis. Carolyn Hartzler (Bro. Dale, dec.).

We also extend sympathy to the family of Sis. Delores Bauman who passed away on December 18. Surviving Sis. Delores are sons, Allan (Rose, Sterling, OH), Bro. Doug (Sis. Diana), Bro. Bill (Sis. Monica, Smithville, OH), daughter Kristine Hefner (Akron, OH), and her sister Sis. Sandra Franks (Bro. Denny). May God grant his comfort and peace to these dear families.

Our congregation enjoyed our Christmas program on the evening of December 19. We are so thankful for the special blessings of our fellowship and our youth at church. The past month we were also blessed by visiting ministers: Bro. Jeremy Frauhiger (Sis. Sally, Bluffton North, IN), Bro. Nathaniel Ramsey (Sis. April, Mansfield, OH), Bro. Marvin Zollinger (Sis. Pam, Smithville, OH), and Bro. Randy Gasser (Sis. Sue, Detroit, MI). May God bless each one for their labors of love.

**Ohio, Sardis**

**Matt and Dawn Brake**

"O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel."

(O Come, O Come, Immanuel, author unknown)

This song speaks volumes about what the coming of Jesus incarnate means to us as children of God. It speaks of a desperation that Israel had to be free from their chains of loneliness, captivity, and darkness. They called out to God with a yearning for him to “Come”. We too, feel those same chains and have that same desire to be set free. And God himself came down in humble love for us. Oh, the joy we feel when we surrender our hearts to Jesus! He comes in and at that moment ransoms us, sets us free, and rolls the darkness away so the glorious light can shine in! Rejoice! Rejoice!

It was wonderful to share that joy with others when we caroled to those in homes and nursing homes around our area. It really touched my heart to see the response of those listening and the light in their eyes. We all need reminded of the hope that Jesus brings!

Many prayers were spoken for Sis. Terry Zollinger (Bro. Gerry) as she underwent another back surgery and hospitalization. We are praising God that her recovery seems to be going well!

New babies bring so much joy! As they grow, they are a reminder of how we need to be as children of God, totally dependent and completely trusting in who he is. We are so very thrilled with the birth of Emily Rose Curtis, daughter of Bro. Shawn and Sis. Kelly (Bay City, MI). Emily Rose is the first granddaughter of Valerie Fisher. This new little family lives in Michigan, but spends a considerable amount of time with our church family here in Sardis.

The first weekend of December was our annual Sunday school Christmas program. The excitement radiating from the children was beautiful! It made me think, am I that excited to share the story of Jesus with others every day? The
Bible Class ended the program with this verse from Revelation: 
“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Rev. 22:17
Israel had pleaded with God to come. And now, the Holy Spirit and Jesus the bride are inviting each of us to “Come”. He will free us and fill every void in our heart! Rejoice!

Ohio, Smithville
Sharon Gasser, Marcy Stoller

“Amazing love! how can it be That Thou, my God, should die for me!”
And Can It Be, Gospel Hymns, #762

We were blessed to have Elder Bro. Wayne Hartzler (Sis. Camille, Rittman, OH), Elder Bro. Bob Dotterer (Sis. Laura, Sardis, OH), Bro. Tim Ramsier (Sis. Joni, Rittman, OH), Bro. Seth Beard (Sis. Faith, Sardis, OH), and Bro. Bob Riggenbach (Sis. Lorie, Rittman, OH) visit us this month.

We were thankful to receive into the family of the Lord, six new souls. Bro. Matt Ballard and Sis. Kelsey Ballard (Bro. Vic and Sis. Brenda Bauman), Bro. Brandon Bauman (Bro. Bill and Sis. Monica), Sis. Kaylee Bauman (Bro. Jon and Sis. Karen), Sis. Patty Sense, and Bro. Jacob Lloyd were baptized.

We were thrilled to be joined by four new babies. Bodee Reed Maletich was welcomed by parents, Bro. Phil and Sis. Mariah, siblings, Camdyn and Ezra, and grandparents, Bro. Dave and Sis. Connie Maletich and Eric and Lisa Indermuhle (Sardis, OH). Bro. Michael and Sis. Heidi Schlatter brought home a new son, August Dempsey. His brother Hugh was thrilled to receive him along with grandparents, Bro. Bill and Sis. Emily Schlatter (Junction, OH) and Bro. Tim and Sis. Joni Ramsier (Rittman, OH). Andrew Jeffrey Gasser was greeted by Spencer and Kaitlyn. Proud grandparents are Bro. Jeff and Deb Gasser. Bro. Aaron and Sis. Charity Zollinger welcomed Jace Aaron, along with grandparents, Bro. Marvin and Sis. Pam Zollinger and Bro. Aaron and Sis. Deb Gasser (Rittman, OH).

We were prayerful for those that were hospitalized, including Sis. Janette Blough, Sis. Lorene Blough, Sis. Marsha Maibach (Bro. Jay), and Sis. Marge Zollinger (Bro. John, dec.).

We were saddened by the loss of two dear loved ones. Jason and Nicole Indermuhle lost an infant son, Logan. Also mourning his passing were his sisters, Aniya and Kezra, and grandparents Bro. Dennis and Sis. Shari Indermuhle. Bro. Steve and Sis. Amy Dotterer mourned the passing of her brother, Larry Hartzler (Luann). We pray for God’s comfort in all of their lives.

Ohio, Toledo
Brooke Harmon, Sharon Rager

Throughout the Old Testament there are multiple encounters with angelic beings. References are made about “angels of the Lord”, “an angel of the Lord”, and “the angel of the Lord”. One of these beings stands out above the rest - the angel of the Lord seems to possess unique characteristics. He appeared to Hagar in the wilderness, spared Abraham from offering up Isaac, manifested to Moses in the burning bush, and emerges in many other stories. Careful observation to encounters with this being reveals important clues that point to his identity. Exodus 3 records Moses’s run in with the angel of the Lord and in this story he identified himself with God, speaks as God, and assumes the name I AM. All of this points to a theophany, which is an appearance of God in physical form.

Interestingly the angel of the Lord never again appears after the incarnation of Christ. In John 8:58, Jesus states that he was in existence before Abraham. It’s logical to assume that he was also active and manifest in the world. Additionally, Jesus declares in John 6:46 that no one has seen the Father. One thought is that it’s possible that all of this could point to the angel of the Lord being a Christophany, an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. If this is an accurate
interpretation, then not only is the whole Old Testament pointing to Jesus but he is also physically popping up all over the Old Testament!

We welcomed visiting ministers Bro. Jesse Bedolla (Sis. Bonnie, Detroit, MI), Bro. Sam Manz (Sis. Shelby, Junction, OH) and Bro. Todd Sinn (Sis. Janet, Latty, OH). We feel so fortunate to have so many brothers visit our congregation and preach the Word to us.

This past month we also had our Sunday school Christmas program. While our children may not yet fully understand the impact of the words they sang, we have no doubt that God was glorified, for “out of the mouths of babes thou hast perfected praise” Matt. 32:18.

Our Sis. Dorothy Stevens passed away this past month. She fell asleep in this world and woke up with the blessed hope of being able to see the face of her Savior. Our sympathies go out to her family as they grieve.

**Ontario, Kitchener**

*Roselynn Metzger*

“Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.” Psalm 24:8

Greetings from Canada! Reflecting on the season of Christmas, I have been reminded of the amazing gift God has given us. My mind drifts to the stable scene where baby Jesus was born, among the animals. The stable was a one-star hotel, and that was enough for the King of Glory to make his entrance. George Friedrich Handel asks this question in the world-famous Messiah oratorio, “Who is this King of Glory?” Can’t you picture the village people, shepherds and wise men gathering around Jesus asking who this baby was? There was something extraordinary about him!

As I listened to the choir singing about the birth of Jesus, the thought came to me...who is this King of glory to me? The Bible tells us he is strong and mighty in battle. He is the Lord of host. Who is this King of Glory to you? He came to us as a baby, and with him, he brought freedom from sin, peace and joy in his name. We can’t begin to understand how great he is, and yet he chose to live among us and desires a relationship with us. That, my friends, is the best gift given to humankind.

We have been blessed with visitors in person and online in the last few months. With us were Bro. Tim Weigand (Sis. Christa, Leo, IN), Elder Bro. Todd Graf (Sis. Lydia, Akron, OH), Bro. Paul Zimmerman (Sis. Loretta, Forrest, IL), Bro. Jeremy Frauhiger (Sis. Sally, Bluffton North, IN), Bro. Clint Schmidt (Sis. Magdalena, Winthrop, MN), Bro. Warren Schlatter (Sis. Cindy, Junction OH), and Elder Bro. Lucas Frank (Sis. Crystal, Detroit, MI).

On November 20, we were blessed by joining together for Communion. With us were Elder Bro. Mark Bahr (Sis. Bev, Detroit, MI) and Elder Bro. Greg Lehman (Sis. MaryBeth, Wolcott, IN).

We also were blessed to have a Christmas meal together on December 4. The next weekend, we hosted the choir from our sister church congregation (Strasburg Rd) for an evening of praise and worship to God. This month has been filled with so many blessings and we thank everyone who was a part of each of these events!

There is opportunity to cross the border again, and if you would like to visit, please reach out to Sis. Alma (elmeralma4@gmail.com) with any questions. We would love to have you! As always, our Zoom meetings are open for visitors as well. Blessings on the coming month!

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.” Psa. 24:9-10

**Oregon, Portland**

*Louisa Gallup*

On November 17, Sis. Mabelle Rauhaus (Bro. Grant, dec.) passed away at 91 years of age. She was Sis. Pearl Miller’s younger sibling. Sis. Mabelle and her husband were from Germantown Hills, IL and attended the Peoria congregation for many years. After she was widowed, Sis. Mabelle lived with
her daughter in Winchester, VA where she faithfully dialed in to the Peoria church services each Sunday and Wednesday till the day she passed away. A special person who touched many lives with her service to others. Our hearts and prayers go out to Sis. Pearl and the family during this time of bereavement.

Our prayers also continue for those who are ill and those who are working in the medical or missionary field as the pandemic is still going on.

**Oregon, Silverton**  
**Lorraine Kuenzi, Teresa Sinn**

Our congregation was blessed to listen to the testimonies of Bro. Bernie and Sis. Margaret Dettwyler. Thank you to Elder Bro. James Fehr (Sis. Brenda, Tremont, IL), for joining us for the weekend and sharing the Gospel message with us! It continues to boost our spirits when we witness baptisms and see the Spirit of God working in our congregation.

Bro. Trenton and Sis. Lori Sinn welcomed their first baby on November 30, Wyatt Thomas. Grandparents are Joe and Edna Moore and Bro. Tom and Sis. Edith Sinn.

Bro. Galen and Sis. Shannon Kellenberger, along with their children Raegan, Ashton, Dawson, Brynn and Adalyn are moving back to Kansas City, MO, this month. We send our love with them and pray for God’s nearness as they make this transition.

Jenna Schurter (Tim and Lisa) and Mason Snook (Bro. Jason and Sis. Colette) have surrendered to the Lord and begun their journey with him! We praise God as he continues to add to our congregation.

We’re excited to share the news of Sis. Elisha Snook’s (Bro. Jason and Sis. Colette) engagement to Bro. Ben Meyer (Bro. Allen and Sis. Colleen, Sabetha, KS)! We pray for God’s love to draw them close together in him.

Stephen Walder (Bro. Jesse and Sis. Kelsey) recently spent time in the hospital due to a ruptured appendix. He is healing well but would appreciate prayers for a full recovery.

Our congregation had the opportunity to listen to the Christmas story presented by the Sunday school classes. It is always special to listen to the songs and hear the story to remind us of the true meaning of Christmas. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!

**Pennsylvania, Philadelphia**  
**Laura Isch**

“Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare.” Isa. 42:9

With the new year comes the anticipation of new opportunities and new challenges. We can be so thankful we have a God who renews us with new strength and will be with us every step of the way.

On December 20, we enjoyed hearing the Sunday school Christmas program. It is always a blessing to hear our youth praising the Lord Jesus in song. We appreciate all the work that is put into this and pray it would be a blessing on each one.

We also appreciated Bro. Jerry Bauman (Sis. Martha, Rittman, OH) sharing the Word with us this month. May we each seek to apply the Word into our hearts every day.

**Texas, Austin/Bastrop**  
**Candy Meiss**

Greetings of love from Austin/Bastrop, Texas. What a beautiful time to be in Texas! We are so thankful for our visitors and for those who came to serve. We were blessed by hearing the pure word of God by Elder Bro. Gerry Hertzel (Sis. Ellen, Sabetha, KS) and Bro. Leland Plattner (Zapata, TX) as they shared the Memorandum; Bro. Greg Stieglitz (Sis. Lisa and family, Indianapolis, IN) and Bro. Joe Gerber (Champaign, IL). It was delightful to have Bro. Joe’s precious daughter Emmy with us. Bro. Joe spoke of being willing to testify of God’s goodness. May we all be encouraged to share the times God’s presence was evident in our lives, guiding us and protecting us. The church family enjoyed an evening of caroling which was appreciated so much by the recipients at the local nursing home in Bastrop. The Sunday school children told the Christmas story in song and verse during our Christmas
program in English and Spanish. We also were thrilled to have the Alex Pikalov family sing songs in Russian. What a blessing to celebrate with everyone the birth of Jesus and share in the joy of knowing the Savior.

**Texas, Dallas-Ft. Worth**

*Sheena Pelsy*

“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

Greetings and love from the Dallas church. We have been richly blessed this past year by all the visiting ministers who came to serve us. We would like to thank all the ministers, their wives, and the visitors that joined them in their travels. Your effort to join us for church services makes a big impact on our small church.

After missing out on last year’s get-together, our church family was able to have our annual Christmas dinner together along with Elder Bro. Gerry Hertzler (Sis. Ellen, Sabetha, KS). The night was blessed with delicious food, wonderful fellowship, and singing of Christmas hymns.

Looking back through this year, there have been many ups and downs in our church family; loss of loved ones, reuniting with loved ones, struggling health issues and overcoming health issues, but through it all God was present. Sometimes the suffering in this world seems too much to bear, but we are reminded through God’s word that this world is not our home and that there is a heavenly home awaiting us without pain or sorrow. As we celebrate the first coming of our Lord and Savior, let’s also ready our hearts for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Services are being held every 2nd and 4th Sunday. If you plan to visit or want to call ahead to verify services, contact Bro. Rodney Pelsy, 219.204.3106.

**Vermont, Clarendon**

*Sarah Wagenbach*

As we have commemorated our Savior’s birth in this season, we were able to assemble with our Sunday school to hear them sing songs of praise and worship. In addition to Christmas hymns, each Sunday school student read a Bible verse applying to a song they sang and a lesson or message to be taken from it. It was a beautiful day of worship together.

A couple months ago it was noted in our Silver Lining article that a presentation was given in Rockville, CT by our Elder Bro. Kevin Ryan on ways to bolster our small congregation. In that presentation an invitation was extended to friends and members who felt directed to support us by co-committing to attendance and serving here as much as possible. Several from Rockville have stepped forward to this work. We, with thankfulness, welcome Bro. Jeremy and Sis. Grace Slater, Rachel and Aly Dearborn, Sis. Nora Hany, and Bro. Kevin and Sis. Lauren Gottier and their children, Owen, Grace, and Caleb. Additionally, Elder Bro. Kevin asked Bro. Warren and Sis. Bonnie Zahner to assist in some of the efforts here. We look forward to the fellowship each one will bring and to working alongside them!

We thank Bro. Brad Wiegand (Sis. Deanna, Rockville, CT) for coming and serving in the ministry this month. It is always a blessing to have them here!
WE HAVE TRIED to incorporate the Great Commission into our regular walk of life in several ways. As a high school history teacher, Doug tries to model a Christ-like example and form positive relationships with each of his students. The students and community are aware of our Christian beliefs, and some have approached Doug for further discussion. A student asked him to read the Bible in a year with him in April of this year. Reading it on the YouVersion Bible app, they discuss themes each day and what God is telling them through the reading. Doug also started a small auto detailing business, where he hires high school students and shares the Gospel with them. He also stays connected with some of his former students, mentoring and pointing them to Jesus. To God’s glory, one student (who sought Doug’s advice on getting started reading the Bible) now has a deep relationship with Jesus, reads the Word daily, desires to be baptized, seeks a home church, and knows the importance of having a true Shepherd in his life! As an instructor for Perspectives classes in the St. Louis region, Doug teaches a class on Christianity’s history and world missions. In the summer, he also assists with Senior High Boys Camp.

Tricia has been a group leader with our local American Heritage Girls organization for the past two years. AHG is a Christ-centered character and leadership development program for 5-18 year-old girls. Meeting every other Monday, Tricia leads her group with Christ-centered instruction in the areas of service, character, skills building, and etiquette. She has formed positive relationships with the girls and has had many opportunities to share her faith and pray with them.

At home, we have tried to open our hearts and home to many people (newlyweds from church, Bible studies with our church members, community members, teachers, families, and high school students). Having them over for meals, fellowship, and game nights has been wonderful in building positive relationships with each one. We have also hosted two exchange students: a boy from Vietnam (2017) and a girl from Kazakhstan (2021). This has been a wonderful opportunity to learn about a new culture, to broaden our children’s horizons to the global tapestry of God’s design and creation, and — most importantly — to take our exchange students to church and teach them about Jesus. Both of our exchange students had never been exposed to the Gospel before; the first time they heard about Jesus was in an Apostolic Christian church. This has led to wonderful follow-up discussions about why Jesus came, the importance of repentance, and the true purpose for why each of us are here on this earth — to love and serve God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Before doing this, there were so many times when I (Doug) looked longingly on overseas mission work as the most productive and fruitful evangelism for Jesus. I wanted to go overseas so badly and wondered how I could possibly do anything here in the States for the Lord. But God has shown us that he can use us no matter where we live. The Holy Spirit’s direction and guidance have blessed us with so many opportunities here in our small, rural community to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Truly, the Great Commission is right here in our own backyards. There is no greater feeling than to serve our Lord, love others, point them to Jesus, and live with Godly passion in spreading his name to the ends of the earth!

Bro. Doug and Sis. Tricia Banwart - St. Louis, MO
SOME TIME ago, I noticed a sign over a church exit that said, “You are now entering your mission field.” I’ve often thought of that still applying to us when we are not engaged in the kind of mission activities that Paul and the early apostles were, or in the same way as some of our people are today through HarvestCall. The recent memorandum emphasized that God’s word does not change and that we “should never lightly dismiss scripture as having been only for ancient times and cultures.” So, can we fulfill the Great Commission if we rarely get beyond our local church and community where many of the people we meet are already believers? Paul observed that we have different gifts or talents, different ministries, and different ways of working, but the same Spirit enables all as we serve the same Lord (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). Later, in relating the persecutions he had encountered, he tells the Corinthians that they are “helping together by prayer for us” (2 Corinthians 1:11). We can support our outreach activities financially and in prayer, and otherwise just try to be "ambassadors for Christ" to whomever we encounter in our daily walk. **Bro. Ron Menold - Tremont, IL**

A MAN ONCE said, “We are what we think about all day long.” Thoughts become words, and words become deeds. Words and deeds can help Christ enter people’s lives. Miracles can happen through him. Prayerfully consider this poem … along with other writings for the Great Commission.

THINK

Think twice, think twice, think a third time, too. Think about what you are going to do. Will it affect some other one dear – Consequences for someone near? As we think, so it shall come. What’s in our mind, it’s just then begun. Words that are spoken will never come back. Thoughts in our mind are starting to track Down the path to become deed. Thoughts in our mind are simply a seed Scattered about far and wide, So people can find Christ by their side.

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: …” *(Proverbs 23:7a)*

**Bro. Paul Klopfenstein - Bloomington, IL**

OUR LORD Jesus Christ not only gives us the Great Commission, he gives us the opportunities and the gifts to fulfill it. “… *I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*” *(Matthew 25:36)*

A friend and I have been involved in a prison ministry for the last 15 years. We have learned several life lessons from this experience:

1. Our message to the female inmates focuses on hope and encouragement. God always has a plan for our lives, and he can use the bad things that happen to us for our eternal good.
2. As we teach the Word, we forget that they are inmates. Regardless of age, race, or life experiences, we are all women in need of God’s grace – because life wounds everyone.
3. In 1 Corinthians 3:6, Paul says, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” We can teach the gospel story with the help of the Holy Spirit, but only God does the real work of salvation in our lives.
4. We can listen and pray with them in their prayer requests for court cases, their children and those who are caring for their children, and their loved ones who are ill. This helps us to see them as individuals whom God loves unconditionally.
5. We have learned that when God calls us to a ministry, he will provide all we need to fulfill it. If it seems overwhelming, maybe he has someone in mind to help. Just ask him. He sent his disciples out two by two.

As we seek to follow Jesus in the Great Commission, we do so in his strength, by his grace, and for his glory. Then, we are blessed as we seek to bless others. **A Bloomington-Normal Sister**
S INCE BECOMING Christ’s own, I did not initially pray much that God would use me.
While getting an advanced degree, teaching English to struggling readers, supporting our Chicago church, being a wife and mother, and returning to teaching before counseling, I had daily interactions to fulfill Christ’s great commission. Eventually, retirement lessened my responsibilities. Thankful for other opportunities such as grandchildren, I still seek to determine and utilize my gifts.

An "unexpected step" was part of that journey in May 2019. With seemingly impossible circumstances, I experienced a miracle healing of Biblical proportions. Crazy itching led to an unprecedented diagnosis of pancreatic cancer at stage 1 — based on symptoms only! Exploratory surgery for diabetes resulted in removing a pancreatic tumor within three weeks of diagnosis. Reaching my 70th birthday seemed less certain with these circumstances. Yet, with loved ones’ prayers, the Lord delivered me from that beast’s jaws.

Reminded that God has me here for a reason, I see new giving and involvement opportunities with individuals he sends. When a hurting lady requested editing support for a widowhood paper based on the book of Ruth, I offered my skills as a former English teacher. Providing writing help to a student whose second language is English expanded to Bible discussions. Beyond that, I have a Jamaican cleaning lady, Australian neighbors, a former exchange student from Mexico who’s hungry for prayers, and revived interactions with former colleagues from my husband’s and my working years. Our Great Commission opportunities include recently met and reconnected acquaintances.

While our calendar begins with some items for each week or month, we eventually work in many more events and prayer reminders as needs arise. After an ACCFS women’s mentoring event, our Chicago “group” feels a special bond and a responsibility to meet others’ needs as we become aware. While housing young adults has stretched my husband and me personally, emotionally, and spiritually, our current outreach to a homeless and mentally ill man invokes much prayer as we try to avoid despair and to stay the course for him. For support, we appreciate how a sister who has “hit

the ground running in retirement” has connected with resources for his current and long-term welfare. Our role is transporting for church services — with hope of eventually being more than his storage facility.

The Moms and Ladies WhatsApp group we Chicago women started during COVID connects us with blessings locally! It’s an outlet for sharing encouragement, birthdays, anniversaries, pictures of young children and God’s creation, and updates on worse circumstances than mine ever were. Our increased awareness makes room for prayers, comments, and staying connected as “our Lord’s hands and feet.” Zoom has been an incredible addition to our church services; as well, texts, e-cards, and prayerful emails increase our ability to connect with those the Lord would have us reach. Sending letters and cards by postal mail is also part of “things that stand still,” which we can share with others at both high and low times. So many great mentors have helped and taught me, including Biblical examples, family, many from our Chicago church family, and other sisters and brothers over the years. After benefitting myself from inspiring lives in Christian literature, I often share books with others in similar situations as “bibliotherapy.”

“God, use me” is my prayer that he answers daily if I open my heart. It’s vital to be open to God’s leading and reach out to others while giving of self. The Lord will make time and deepen our gifts and abilities if only we put ourselves in his hands. Sis. Kathy Schlatter - (Chicago, IL)

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2022

**Apostolic Christian Church Services**

**Clyde Park, Montana**

Saturday June 25th
Clyde Park Community Center
3:00 to 5:00 pm Registration and Fellowship
5:00 Evening Meal
Hymn Singing in Evening

For further information or to provide a count of those planning to attend by June 10th 2022, please contact one of the following Bros.

**From Lester**
Wes Moser 712-395-2025  wesmoser58@gmail.com
Bob Metzger 712-478-4647  bobcmet@alliancecom.net
or 612-963-0089 (mobil)

**From Silvertown**
Greg Wackerle 503-873-7463  gregwackerle@msn.com
or 503-779-8803

Sunday June 26th
Clyde Park Community Center
Church Services
10:15 am and 12:30 pm

Accommodations available in or near Livingston, MT

Yellowstone River Inn & Suites
(406-222-4400) has a block of rooms available under Apostolic Christian or Bob Metzger

There are a number of campgrounds and rental homes in the area.

It is helpful if those attending can bring their own: Bibles, Zion's Harps, and Hymn's of Zion
Free will donations serve to cover meal costs and facility expenses
A day tour of the area may be organized for those interested on Friday June 24th

Online registration link  https://bit.ly/3H5uFi8
Register to Attend ALive 2022 Beginning February 1

Planning is underway for the Athens, Alabama congregation to host ALive 2022 over the Memorial Day weekend, May 27 – 30!

We’re looking forward to spending another year at the Vision retreat center in Huntsville, AL (www.visionministry.org) as we create and cultivate cross-generational relationships through fellowship, worship, and teaching centered on the gospel. Elder Bro. Nick Gutwein (West Lafayette, IN), Bro. Randy Gasser (Detroit, MI) and Bro. Matthew Moore (Athens, AL) plan to speak at this year’s event on the theme of Provision/Protection/Purpose centered on the scriptures in Romans 8:28-29.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Registration for the event will go live February 1. If you’d like more details, visit our website at www.ALiveAlabama.com, the Facebook page @ALiveAlabama, or send an e-mail to info@alivealabama.com. You can also sign up to receive future updates about ALive by subscribing to our email list on our website. Links for event registration will be available from all of these sites beginning February 1.

As the Committee continues planning for this year’s event, they ask for your prayers that ALive 22 can be an uplifting event where relationships can be strengthened, the body is unified and above all that God is glorified.

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Vulnerable youth like Rosie are waiting on YOU to make a move.

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Scan the QR code or visit: gatewaywoods.org/sowers-of-hope for more info and to start sowing seeds today!
You can find full role descriptions at harvestcall.org/missionary-openings or the Job Postings section of AC Central.

For additional details for these exciting and worthy service opportunities contact:

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

**DISCIPLESHIP & CHILDCARE**
Engaged in discipling relationships as part of a healthy body of local believers. This role will specifically be alongside Sis. Erin Davis and the care of young children at En Gedi house. - Mandeville, Jamaica

**DEAF DISCIPLESHIP**
Engaged in discipling relationships as part of a healthy body of local believers. This role will specifically be alongside of the ministry of Deaf Can Coffee and the E3 fellowship gathering. - Kingston, Jamaica

**JAMAICA**

**BUSINESS DISCIPLESHIP**
To proclaim Christ and serve others through the avenue of community interaction, using the business marketplace as the primary vehicle of ministry. Discipleship through relationships with other employees and the community. - Fatted Calf - Magdalena, Mexico

**YOUTH TRAINING COORDINATOR**
To proclaim Christ and serve others through the avenue of community interaction, using agricultural education as the primary vehicle of ministry. This role will be responsible for leading EXPO Esperanza and the Fatted Calf intern program. - Fatted Calf - Magdalena, Mexico

**ACCOUNTING-HR DISCIPLESHIP**
General accounting and administration, reach out and engage with local people, value and adapt to Mexican culture, and share the love and hope of Jesus Christ as a part of their daily lives. - CVE - Magdalena, Mexico

**HAITI**

**MECHANIC**
This position would support the HarvestCall Construction, Well Drilling, Dairy, and Hospital Lumiere projects. They will be responsible to help maintain the vehicles, generators, and construction equipment. - Les Cayes, Haiti

**ASSISTANT FARM MANAGER**
As the Dairy program continues to grow, HarvestCall is seeking a full-time missionary to assist in the efforts at Good Vision Farm. - Torbeck, Haiti

**Awareness Tours - Haiti**
If you’d like to see the ministry of Hospital Lumière and other Haiti projects in person, but do not have the time or desire to participate in a week-long work team, please consider our new Awareness Tours. These are quick trips that give interested parties the opportunity to meet our missionary families, learn more about the hospital, see the completed renovations and work in process, and visit some of the other HarvestCall projects in southern Haiti.
Upcoming trips are as follows:

Our next Awareness Tour is: TBD. To learn more, Email or Call:

Rich Bertsch, hospitallumiere@harvestcall.org, 309.467.2351
Rick Wuethrich, rick@wuethrichfarms.com, 219.863.4163

**Awareness Tours - Jamaica**
If you would like to meet the missionaries and see the ministries of CCCD, Deaf Can! Coffee and En Gedi House in person, but do not have the desire to participate on a short-term team, please consider an Awareness Tour. This is a quick trip that gives interested parties the opportunity to meet our missionary families, learn more about our Jamaica ministry as well as other outreach supported by HarvestCall. The trip will be over a weekend and include worshiping with a Deaf congregation. Our next Awareness Tour is: TBD
To learn more, Email or Call: Loren Dettwyler, lmdettwyler@gmail.com or 503-580-9629

**HarvestCall Medical/Dental Team Schedule**

**HarvestCall Team Schedule - Haiti**

**HarvestCall Team Schedule - Jamaica**

**PROCLAIM CHRIST & SERVE OTHERS**
Missionary Service Opportunities
in Haiti, Jamaica and Mexico

MECHANIC
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- Fatted Calf - Magdalena, Mexico

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To proclaim Christ and serve others through the avenue of community interaction, using agricultural education as the primary vehicle of ministry. This role will be responsible for leading EXPO Esperanza and the Fatted Calf intern program.
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General accounting and administration, reach out and engage with local people, value and adapt to Mexican culture, and share the love and hope of Jesus Christ as a part of their daily lives.
- CVE- Magdalena, Mexico

You can find full role descriptions at harvestcall.org/missionary-openings or the Job Postings section of AC Central.

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Simon Peter
— Continued from pg. 3

Temperance (Self-Control) and Patience (Endurance)
Based on what Scripture shows us, temperance and patience were not Peter’s strongest natural qualities. He demonstrated enthusiastic yet impulsive behaviors on several occasions, such as jumping into the sea upon recognizing the risen Christ and cutting an ear off the high priest’s servant. Yet, perhaps more noteworthy was Peter’s tendency to use his mouth before his head, by rebuking Jesus, or by boldly declaring that he would never deny Jesus, failing to know his own heart.

After Peter received the Holy Ghost, his decisions were guided by the Spirit, rather than fleshly impulses. The Spirit was able to transform Peter’s eager, impulsive tendencies into tempered assets that God used to grow the church exponentially. When we observe spiritual weaknesses in our own lives, we can be encouraged that the Holy Spirit is capable of transforming our struggles into areas of great strength to be used for God’s kingdom.

Godliness
While virtue denotes moral goodness—a high standard of excellence—godliness invokes a deeper holiness that is born of respect or reverence for God and is pure to the core. We take on godliness only by partaking of God’s divine nature, “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” Peter well knew that to grow in godliness requires spending time in communion with God, allowing his divine power to mold and shape our inner being. He nurtured godliness by giving himself “continually to prayer,” as we see throughout his ministry. May we too give ourselves to prayer and meditation on the Word, allowing God to give us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.”

Brotherly Kindness and Charity
As used in 2 Peter 1, brotherly kindness connotes love for the Christian brethren, while charity signifies a love for someone that is not dependent on affection, passion, or merit, but rather a choice to love deeply. Like most of us, Peter seemed to have an easier time loving his friends than those outside his circle. Over time, we see evidence of increasing brotherly love and charity in Peter’s life. For example, Peter listened to the Spirit and was the first to associate with a Gentile, Cornelius, and to welcome him to the household of faith. Likewise, when we mimic God’s graciousness and exercise charity by cultivating relationships that cross lines of age, ethnicity, gender, financial position, or other cultural factors, we are walking in the way of Christ.

Neither barren nor unfruitful
We find that Simon Peter, hand-picked by God, was surprisingly human, full of quirks and struggles. Despite his shortcomings, God used Peter to build his church. Indeed, before Peter was born God wisely created in him the specific characteristics that he knew would be needed to advance his kingdom in that precise time and place. Likewise, God has equipped us in our current context with exactly the qualities we need to further the Gospel message today if we maintain a tender heart that is willing to be molded and shaped by the Spirit into full maturity.

Endnotes
1 1 Peter 1:23
2 Matthew 4:18-19
3 Mark 1:18
4 Matthew 16:8-16
5 Matthew 14:28-31
6 Mark 14:66-72
7 John 21:17
8 Philippians 4:8
9 John 21:7-8
10 John 18:10
11 Matthew 16:22-23
12 Matthew 26:35
13 1 Peter 1:23
14 Acts 6:4
15 2 Peter 1:3
16 Acts 10
their own strength and with their own money? He recognized he heard this man Jesus does miracles and must have thought, ‘I love my family member, and I will do everything I can to save this person even if it means humiliating myself or losing my position or my authority. I love this person more.’ When he came to Jesus, Jesus makes the point to say, “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe” (v.48). I don’t think he’s saying it cruelly or mean. He’s just stating a fact. People have a real hard time just believing in faith. They just need something tangible; hence, Jesus came here – ‘God with skin on’, you might say – to be amongst us so we have some kind of context. If you say, ‘God truly loves me’, but you think of the throne room, heaven and the power, it’s incomprehensible, but when you think of a person, a man who can show compassion and love, that’s context.

“The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die” (v.49). There might have been some other conversation there, but he did call him ‘sir’. He did tell him that his child was sick and that he was afraid that his child would die. “Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth” (v.50). He didn’t ask anything from him. He just said “Go thy way. Thy son liveth.”

Jesus must be very persuasive. I can’t imagine talking with somebody who can say something like that though we do understand it’s God, the son of God. He had the faith to be able to say, ‘Nobody else can save my son. My son needs saving, and I can’t do it. Nothing I can do can do it. Nobody else around can do it.’ He was acknowledging that the world couldn’t save his son, no education, no money, no doctor, no training, nothing. But “Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way” (v.50).

How great that feeling is when I think of the times that our prayers are answered or we get to visually see something that happened or that we got to participate in or facilitate something that was transformative. It’s a wonderful feeling. This man had to feel some sort of relief.

“And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth” (vv.50-51). It’s easy to say your prayers are answered before you ask them. Is that fair? Would it be a fair statement to say this: ‘this man’s prayers were answered before he asked them’? But when did he ask them? Did he ask when he made up his mind that afternoon or that evening, when he realized he’s completely out of options, and the only thing he can do is find this man Jesus? Is that when the actual faith happened? Or was it just when he met Jesus and then Jesus actually said those words?

“They enquired of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth” (vv.52-53). So, he’s thinking of when he left, when he’s going back, and working it out in his head what time Jesus said “thy son liveth”, and he realizes that it was right then.

This is verse 54: “This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.”

I was talking with my wife a couple days ago, and she said one of the questions, I think in her Bible study, was ‘what have you been doing this week in your own strength that you haven’t turned over to God?’ I think about something like this and how much I might be mulling over something or fretting over something or really trying to work over a problem for somebody else or for myself. I’m just going through the motion of milling through this in my own strength. We each have our own strength. God gives us, as stewards, a certain
amount of responsibility, so we all do this. If somebody asks you for a specific need, and you know that that need is well within your capability both financially or time or mentally or spiritually, it’s very easy sometimes just to say, ‘yeah, I can help with that; that’s not a big problem. I can take care of that.’ But do we give God the glory? It’s just a question – do we give God the glory or do we think it’s us personally somehow that’s fixing that problem? If we’re to go back and say: ‘God has given us our mind. He’s given us our finances. He’s given us our time, then even if we’re here to help somebody, the fact that he’s called us out of darkness to life and now we’re helping somebody, is really his glory. I don’t know that every time I’ve helped somebody, I’ve stopped and consciously thought to myself, ‘this is God at work through me, and this is all his glory.’ We might just get busy helping.

By the same token, what if somebody asks something of you that is a big burden? You can do it, but it’s a huge burden. Do you get angry? Do you get mad? Do you get miffed, like ‘why are you bringing this to me? You must have a lot of faith that I can help this because this is – maybe not over my head, but it’s – more than I want to help.’ Again, same question: are we giving the honor to God? Are these people doing the same thing? By coming to you, saying, ‘I need help’, are they’re recognizing you as somebody who can provide help rather than being a conduit? We can say ‘let’s get this prayer to Jesus as fast as we can. I’ll pray with you before I offer to do any help. Let’s see what it is that God’s directing, and he might open up another path.”

I’ll share another little story and then I’ll wrap it up. One of the Bible studies that we had gone through years and years ago was talking about a woman who was living in China leading in-home Bible studies for ladies and was trying to catch a train by herself. I don’t know how many of you think that’s a big job, but being in China in the 1930s by yourself as a woman trying to catch the train was difficult. Oh, and the catch was she had zero dollars, but she went there praying. I won’t give you all the details, but she went there praying and ended up catching the train and getting to her destination. A lot of times, I feel like the blessings we receive, if we don’t think about them in the right context, get in the way of us actually seeing the amazing thing that God wants to do for us. We just help people right off the bat in our own strength, and we think ‘well, there you go. We helped them. Problem’s solved, and not too bad if I don’t say so myself.’ We take a little pride in that. That’s some of the thought I got out of this.

The scripture doesn’t necessarily lean that way, but in thinking of this man understanding, as a nobleman, that Jesus was the one that was going to save his son, we see someone going to God. It’s simple and clear, that for us, if we have an opportunity to talk to family or anybody about spiritual life or spiritual death, or if you want to talk about financial problems, the problems in this world, and so on, we should pray. Before we want to just jump in and help, my encouragement is to pray. Even if you’re in the middle of it or doing it the same time, just pray.

SAVE THE DATE:
AC Medical Fellowship meeting is scheduled for Saturday, April 30, 2022 at Goodfield, IL Fellowship Hall

Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m. and presentations at 8:30 a.m. and will continue until ~5:00 p.m. with a light breakfast and box lunch.

Spouses are welcome.

If you are on the HarvestCall Health Care Provider registry, you will receive an email in a few months with a formal invitation and registration form. There will also be a Facebook posting.
The following is a message to young service men of our church who were serving the military during World War II. It was written by minister Joe A. Getz, Morton, Illinois who later served as elder. It is dated October 15, 1943, and appears in the first issue of the Silver Lining (Vol. 1, No. 1). As young brothers and friends were mobilized to face the realities of wartime dangers, his remarks were addressed to their concerns. It will be in a two-part series.

WHAT HAS THE FUTURE TO OFFER OUR YOUNG MEN?
This message is addressed to our beloved sons, brothers, and young men in the service.

First, What Do We Owe Our Young Men?
What should we do for them? There are some things we cannot do. One is to shield them from the inescapable realities. It is of course, a great pity that our children do not have the good fortune to grow up in a stabler and kindlier world, but that is their fate. We might just as well face it, and they must make the best of it. Nor can we take them by the hand and lead them to safety. We cannot present them with a blueprint of what is to come. You will have to stand up against your own problems and face your own dangers.

God’s Purposes
Time is slowly but surely accomplishing the Divine purpose of God. With each day you are given (fresh from the Hand of God), the dawn of a new day -- clear and bright as the sun that gave birth to the morning. Each day is a new jewel from the crown of time.

Many of you have been very busy, some taking additional training in the type of work you like and gotten along very well in building up a training and education that will help you post-war.

Experience Instructs Us
Experience tells us that every good thing must be tried with fire. There are so many things that can happen to break down the things built up in our young men that we must put forth every strength and every effort to retain the good things we have learned and to follow the good things we have learned and to follow the teachings from our Christian home.

“We could wreck the Pyramids” is the slogan of a building wrecking concern. Who couldn’t? But the question still is, could you build the Pyramids? It isn’t what you wreck, but what you build, that counts in life. So it is with the character of young men -- you can build soberly and honestly for years, and some godless companion can lead you into a night of sin that may mean the wanton destruction of nearly every thing we have built up.

Treasured Verses:
“My son, forget not my law; but let think heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shall thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.” Proverbs 3:1-4

Next Issue: Part II of the Getz Article
by Perry A. Klopfenstein
Mary Knew

Although Christmas has recently passed, go back and again recall the familiar Christmas story. Perhaps you reflect on the birth of our savior. Maybe you center on a family, precarious in their circumstances, traveling at a time nearing Christ’s birth. Possibly you think of a father, full of faith, taking on more than society would demand of him. Or maybe, you consider a young girl, embarking on adulthood, embroiled in circumstances beyond her full understanding.

Have you ever imagined what it was like for Mary in her circumstances? Or imagined knowing her in her circumstances? Here is a young girl, engaged to be married to a local carpenter. She is a little different, even strange in some ways mostly because of how she has been acting lately. She abruptly left town several months ago and no one was really sure where she had gone. Then, a few weeks ago, she returned from a trip, and the talk was that she had visited relatives. However, she’s acting different. From her clothes to her manner, something is going on. The word around town is that she is expecting. At first, the rumors were that her fiancé was the father, but then someone said otherwise. It’s hard to know what to believe because her fiancé seems to be troubled as well, but the wedding is still planned. The talk around town is certainly rife with rumors of impropriety and the word ‘harlot’ has even been used.

What a challenging situation to be in for Mary. Barely past her childhood and she already had so much thrust upon her. We do not know for sure that the above situation was hers, however, it could have been. From her standpoint she had been visited by the angel of God and knew why this was happening. But could she share it with anyone? Who would have believed her? Surely anyone she told would just think she was trying to cover up her mistakes and lax morals with a wild story! She had her cousin who believed her, but she was far away, and could be assumed to be covering up for Mary too. Her fiancé was standing by her, but initially, when he learned she was pregnant, he was going to put her away. Would doubt about his love for her been present in her mind?

How did Mary navigate this period of doubt, uncertainty, shame and fear in her life? We can find the answer in Luke where she responded to the angel “...Behold the handmaid of the Lord…” You see, Mary knew who she was. She was sure of her relationship with God. She was his servant. Her faith, her experience, the message of the angel, all of it culminated and was expressed in her response. Mary knew her identity in the Lord.

Today, you as a Christian are pressured from many sides. Society tells you to be something or accept something that is not true. Or maybe the Holy Spirit led you in a way that has been questioned or judged unfairly. Perhaps you are seeking to present an image to those around you that is based on something other than who God means for you to be. Any of these influences can cause us to base our identity in something other than God and his Son, Jesus.

If Mary had placed her identity in her place in society, in the fact that she was pregnant and unmarried, or as an espoused wife, would she have been able to be the mother of our savior? Instead, she knew her identity: she was God’s servant. All else was secondary. In her example lies the challenge to us. Let us all study the word, seek God in prayer, and follow the example of Christ. Through this, we can continue to come to know our identity in God and the Son.

Authors note: A few months past, another author wonderfully addressed the topic of identity on these pages. I trust that the Spirit has brought it back to mind for us to consider it again.

-by Rick Aberle
"Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow; Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."