“Along the river of time we glide, our Savior only our bark can guide.”
Looking Forward with Confidence

As we stand at the forefront of a new year, we may have a sense of excitement or perhaps uneasiness given the condition of our world, but aren’t we thankful to serve the One who already knows what will happen in the days ahead? What’s more, he promises to provide us the grace we need for each day. That enables us to live with joy, despite our circumstances.

Here at the Silver Lining, in 2016 we look forward to continuing to feature content sent in by you, our readers. It was a great blessing last year. Our next topic is “How has your mother influenced your walk with Christ?” Please send your contributions answering that question to editor@acsilverlining.org by February 20. We’ll publish the submissions in the April issue.

Trusting in the Lord’s provision,

Silver Lining Counseling Elders
Rick Plattner and Jeff Grimm
Walking in the Strength of Christ’s Sacrifice

“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

Sin

Sin has separated man from God ever since the days of Adam and Eve. Any disobedience towards God is sin. Contrary to popular belief, God’s commandments were not arbitrary. Nearly all actions that God calls sin hurt others, and are the result of loving oneself more than one’s Creator or one’s neighbor. We have all been corrupted by our own selfishness and weakness.

A Partial Remedy

Although the sacrifice of animals took place in ancient times to provide atonement for disobedience, those sacrifices were simply a pattern of things in heaven and could never make men perfect. In much the same way as the physical things of the Temple were to be made according to the pattern of things in heaven, the form of atonement provided by the Law of Moses was simply a pattern of better things to come. The Law defined how man sinned, but had no capability to change man’s behavior. The Apostle Paul writes that, “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.” And in Hebrews we read, “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”

The Better Sacrifice

The sacrifices given under the law could make atonement, but could never make men perfect. They had no power to convert men’s hearts and they were retroactive, only applying to sins that had already been committed. Knowing that our bodies are the temple of the Living God helps us understand that we are the “heavenly things” to which the author to the Hebrews refers. It was necessary that the heavenly things themselves be purified with a better sacrifice. In sacrificing His own life, freely giving it up and shedding His blood on the cross, Jesus atoned for sin proactively for all men in all times. Following the atonement, He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who would believe.

The strength of His sacrifice is demonstrated by the fact that Christ came in the flesh, but walked in the Spirit. He showed that man in the flesh did not need to be subject to the flesh, or more bluntly, no longer needs to be slave to sin. Scripture teaches that the converted life is no longer one in which sin has dominion—sin does not continue as if grace were license, it no longer reigns in one’s life, and it need not be yielded to when the power of Christ’s blood is present in that life. Through this better sacrifice—sin, in its various forms—can be overcome. This can never happen by a nominal faith that denies the power of Christ, but only by faith that comprehends that the power of Christ can rest upon those who believe.

Through His prophets, God spoke of the time when Jesus would provide the missing strength to consistently defeat sin on a personal level. For example, Isaiah reminds us, “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be...”
I’m thankful we can worship together this evening. I was trying to remember exactly when I was here last on a New Year’s Eve. I believe, and I could be wrong, it was 30 years ago this last happened. I’m thinking the set of faces that are here tonight aren’t exactly the same as 30 years ago, but we can be thankful for the things that are the same across time and space, the things we have that are constant and sure. We have God’s Word to look into. We have His Spirit to guide us and to motivate us and to provide for us and to trust in. So together let’s look into His Word this evening.

I was thinking about reading in Samuel, and I opened up into Samuel. It’s a pleasant confirmation. There are several thoughts for us, but perhaps to consider here on a last day of the year, marking of the time we have and thinking about how time passes for us. As we go through it and reflect back whether it’s 30 years or reflecting back over the past year or looking forward to the next year as Brother Brad mentioned, in all these things, how do we keep track of the time and understand the time as it’s transpired? Here in the time of Samuel, there were those points and places they marked. We even sang of this in Hymn #87 (Faith’s Confidence, Zion’s Harp). We talked about having an Ebenezer — a place we can look to and recognize that here was a place where God was with us.

In fact, I really appreciate the way this was expressed here. Hitherto — to help us get to this place — God has helped us (1 Samuel 7:12). He has provided for us, and He has provided for all of us here to this place this evening. We look at different situations that we encounter, and as we reflect back, we look at completing things. Maybe we look at the completion of our education. We look at completing an assignment at work. We think of achieving or encountering a milestone in our lives.

We see those as we encounter them, and we look forward to new things — maybe a new job, we look forward to a new task, we look forward to a growing family, establishing new relationships, having new friends. We see all these and can reflect on these points as we get to them, but in all of them can we step back and recognize ‘hitherto’ — in everything up till now God has helped us. That actually gives us a confidence that He’s not only helped us up till now, but it’s a reminder He’s there to help us in tomorrow. In those things and situations we haven’t encountered yet that we don’t even know about, He’ll provide for us.

Your memory is better than mine, I’m sure, but if we think of the situation that Samuel was in here when he said this, we think of the ‘hitherto’, the things that led up to here, and we reflect on what they were. They weren’t all things that we would say were great in our eyes. Battles with the Philistines before this point regularly went pretty poorly. We think of Eli. Remember him being the leader? His sons lost their lives; then he lost his life as well, and many of the Children of Israel were slain over the period of time leading up to this. But, through those difficult times and the good times that happened prior as well, God was with them, and they could in truth say “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.” (v.12)

It’s good for us to practice that we can have the same reflection and same thought that in situations we say are good, we recognize God’s help but also in those that are difficult or hard or ones we wouldn’t choose we can have that confidence in Him. He’s there for us. He’ll provide for us, and He leads us. He gives us those milestones that we can have to look on and to hold fast to and to recognize and to remember His goodness.

As I say that, a thought goes through my mind. I don’t know how you look at those milestones.
Sometimes we look at them and just think we’re getting older, but I’ve noticed at different times I look at the front side or back side of the milestone. We shared the thought of graduation. That’s kind of the ending of a phase of life, or sometimes we talk about the other side of that milestone — starting new work. We talk about finishing some task or looking forward to the next task, and we have that different perspective. We’re pretty good at recognizing the joy in both of them, in both the completion and the starting and beginning.

There are some of these milestones we have that are harder for us to appreciate both sides of because our eyes aren’t good enough yet to recognize it. When we look at our family and friends, those we know who’ve passed from this life, we see that part of the transition. That’s looking at the one side, but again, it’s like these other milestones. That’s one side but not the other — looking forward to life eternal. As we can see that which our eyes again don’t always work so well at seeing — but when we see that we can recognize it as one side of a milestone as any other. It’s a stepping forward and an opportunity to recognize in that as well “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us” to provide for us and to continue to lead us.

As we think of the milestones we encounter, the milestones are markers along the way. They’re not the place we’re ending up at. It helps it go through my mind if sometimes I think of the milestones along the side of the road. They help me track where I’m at. I don’t know about you, but I don’t make a habit of stopping at the milestone to enjoy it and reflect on it. It’s just along the way, and we keep going.

Just as it is in our life, we encounter the milestones; it helps us track the time that’s passing and the situations we encounter. So they’re good, but they’re not stopping off points by themselves. They’re along the way, and so then the question is what are we doing along the way? That’s the question for us now — what are we doing from point to point, from milestone to milestone, and beyond? What are we up to and how do we use our time? So as we ask that question we could read just about anywhere for some thoughts, but Ephesians 5 came to mind.

There are several thoughts here for us to reflect on in the few minutes we have here. We could’ve read the preceding twelve verses, but just to let our minds spend a little bit more time on the text, we read less. The first thought that’s expressed here is this acknowledgement that we want to do those things that are in God’s will and understand what He desires for us and not get involved in those things that are out of that. Then there’s this observation that things are made clear, things are made obvious by the light. They are made manifest and easily understood that we can see what is the truth when we bring it into the light.

We’re staying this week on a third floor, and we get to walk up three flights of steps to get there. The first night the second floor lights were on, but for the last two, we’ve been walking in the dark up the flight of stairs. It’s astoundingly difficult to walk up the stairs in the dark, especially unfamiliar stairs. As we go there we recognize we’re in a place where we’re uncertain. For me at least, I haven’t talked this over with everyone else, but I’m really careful. I’m holding on tight because things are uncertain. We desire to be in the light so we can see things as they are. So what is the light that we desire to be in? The Light that came among us and dwelt among us, and that’s Jesus the Christ. He is the Light. In His presence we can see, we can understand, and we can do what we need to do.

In fact, that’s what Paul shares next. He says we want to be in the light because it makes things clear (v.13). Those things that are wrong, when we compare them in the light, we recognize that’s a place we don’t want to be, and those things that are as they should be, the light reinforces. It makes — Please turn to pg. 66
Ministry Program Updates

Transitioning to HarvestCall

January marks the official beginning of Apostolic Christian HarvestCall. Regular Silver Lining readers will notice that this section has changed. Starting this month, World Relief and Mission Committee articles will be found in this HarvestCall section, reflecting the integration of those two organizations. You’ll find similar information here as before about the various ministry programs being supported by your donations and volunteer efforts, along with news about new outreaches, profiles of small churches, and an intermittent topical exhortation.

You may have or soon will notice other changes as we transition. Distribution Center signs will be changing and so will some of the brochures in your church’s information rack, along with many other items. Update newsletters will continue to be sent through the mail to anyone on the World Relief mailing list. And if you had been receiving occasional Emails from World Relief or Mission Committee you will now get them from HarvestCall. While these communications are an important part of keeping the brotherhood informed of what your outreach organization is doing, perhaps the best way to get an overall understanding of HarvestCall’s activities is to visit the new website at harvestcall.org. Just launched, this site will be changing and expanding regularly as things “settle in” at the newly integrated organization.

All of this name-change activity is to clearly signify the new, integrated approach to ministering to others physically and spiritually. Your support is appreciated and so necessary as we move forward as a church to carry out four-pillar outreach.

USA Committee

Going Beyond Shingles, Sheetrock and Lumber

When a natural disaster strikes, the hurt inflicted goes beyond the physical loss of house and property. It bruises the very existence of its victims, through no fault of their own. Tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes and wildfires are not selective in their victims. The resulting pain and despair falls on all regardless of ethnicity, social, financial or marital status. Rich and poor, young and old, male and female, wise and ignorant are all equal in the face of a disaster. None are able to stand against the amazing power of nature.

The homes we live in — whether luxurious or modest — are our safe retreat. They are the place we go to and shut out the rest of the world. When a natural disaster strikes, it destroys our place of safety. For those who have experienced such a loss, feelings of fear, helplessness and anxiety fill their heart and mind. Many become paralyzed and struggle to make rational decisions toward their recovery.

The road to recovery for many is long and difficult. The uninsured and the underinsured are totally dependent on the help of others to make rebuilding possible. These are the people that HarvestCall seeks to help. Unfortunately, the process of locating and evaluating these families is slow. Between six and nine months is typically the time period required for a determination regarding a family’s ability to recover.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus... 
– Colossians 3:17
Coming to the aid of these people requires more than shingles, sheetrock and lumber. Beyond the need for a place to call home is the need for restoration of hope. Lives have been disrupted while disappointment and frustration have driven victims to despair. With no resources to recover, families can do nothing more than wait for help to come.

The disaster rebuilding projects of Apostolic Christian World Relief, and now HarvestCall, have benefited from the work of long term recovery organizations. These groups are involved in the determination of a family’s ability to recover from a given disaster. Families who make application for assistance are required to provide financial information stating their income, assets and liabilities. The number of people in the household along with any disabilities or special needs are also factors to be considered. If there was insurance coverage, they will be required to account for any proceeds they received. If FEMA is involved and has made payments for losses sustained, an accounting of these funds is also required. All of these factors are considered in determining a family’s ability to recover.

In most cases, the families we assist are those who cannot recover on their own. As we serve these families by restoring their physical world, we have a wonderful opportunity to nurture and encourage them in their Spiritual well-being. Sharing the love of Christ that we have experienced is the medicine they need to recover from the despair and struggles they have been through. We are to be the hands and feet of the Savior as we minister in His stead.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matt. 5:16

Our efforts and labors of love are to bring glory to God. We serve as ambassadors of an eternal kingdom. Building physical homes that will soon perish is not the real goal of our ministry. We want to direct those we serve to the eternal home that is available to all. We want them to know the peace and joy of serving the living Lord and freedom from the curse of sin made possible by the shed blood of Jesus. By abiding in Him, we are heirs to a home that will never be subjected to the forces of a natural disaster. Thank you Jesus!

If you have a heart to serve and a burden for the eternal welfare of the lost, please consider participating in a disaster rebuilding ministry. For those unable to be involved in the physical activities of the ministry, please support by praying for His Spirit to direct this outreach to those God would have us serve. Your financial support enables the continuation of this ministry. To God be the glory!

- by Les Schambach

Winter Work Project Update

After much prayer and searching (throughout the country) the USA Committee of HarvestCall feels led to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of both flood and wildfire victims in Bastrop County, Texas. (This ministry will begin February 7 and continue thru April.) For more information, please visit www.harvestcall.org.
Church Establishment Committee

**Wichita, Kansas Church Proclaims God’s Love and Gospel Message**

A concerted focus has been underway and will continue in 2016 to assist our smaller church congregations to grow and become self-sustaining, thriving churches. This endeavor is in alignment with the new HarvestCall mission and the Church Establishment Committee’s mission to enable the brethren to proclaim Christ, nurture the believers and demonstrate the love of Christ through deeds.

To help the brotherhood become more acquainted with our small churches, their needs and opportunities for outreach, we plan to spotlight several of our small churches throughout the year.

We invite all to assist in efforts to bolster our smaller churches through prayer, visiting these congregations, being open to relocating as the Lord calls, building relationships with the brethren and other needs as identified by the brethren.

This month, we visit the Wichita, Kansas congregation. In driving to the church on a typical Sunday, you will go through the downtown area where an extensive revitalization is currently underway. Several buildings are being turned into loft apartments, and shops and eateries are now open in an old warehouse district. The church is located less than two miles from the downtown area and can be classified as an inner city church in the city of 500,000 people.

Once inside the church, we join approximately 14 families and 8 singles that gather on an average Sunday. The ages for adults span from 25 years on up and Sunday School aged children range from 5 to 17. As you worship and fellowship, you will feel the love from all the brethren and friends. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Brother Cory Metzger, who was recently named as Ordained Deacon, ministers to the church. Additionally one time per month, the church enjoys hosting visiting ministers, their families and others that attend with them through the brotherhood’s Minister Rotation program. On two Wednesday evenings per month, the congregation meets for a singing supper and prayer time at homes.

**Community Outreach**

The congregation keeps striving to press on in the service of King Jesus, showing the love of Christ to one another and their community. Local outreach efforts have resulted in four individuals from the neighborhood attending services. Individuals are also involved in Union Rescue Mission work serving the homeless as well as a Bible Mission to send Bibles to the Ukraine area. Twice a year the church goes to Newton, Kansas and assists the Mennonite Central committee in boxing and palletizing canned meat for distribution around the world. In addition they also put together school or health kits. Potluck events are also held for the local congregation for fellowship. Members and friends live approximately 30 minutes apart from each other, which makes getting together challenging.
Church Roots date to Early 1900’s
The church building was built in 1938. Roots date back as early as 1911 that Apostolic Christians moved to the area. Between that time and 1937, people continued to move to the area and meet for singing, prayer and Bible reading in homes (according to Marching to Zion). The church served the congregation well until 1973 when a new sanctuary was added and the old was converted into a Sunday School. Locals comment that they as well as visitors are always inspired by the excellent acoustics in the sanctuary which lend to a joyful noise being made to the Lord when they unite their voices in singing.

City Has Small Town Atmosphere
According to church members, the town of Wichita still has a friendly small town atmosphere even though it is a good size metropolis. Originally, the city was an Indian village. Cattle drives caused a boom with cattle yards, cattle barons and a railhead, which is the furthest point that the railroad was built and caused other roads and transportation routes to be constructed. The Arkansas River also runs through the city. Further, the aircraft industry centered itself in Wichita with names such as Clyde Cessna, Walter Beech, Bill Lear and Lloyd Stearman. World War 2 stirred a large production of aircraft giving employment opportunities to many.

Opportunities/Needs of the Congregation
Everyone is encouraged to pray for and visit the loving brethren and friends in the Wichita congregation. They would truly welcome the encouragement and support from brethren and friends. Please call one of the contacts listed in the church minister book so they can plan accordingly for lunch, etc.

If God would call you to move to this area, visit the congregation, talk with your elder and view resources to assist at harvestcall.org. The church especially has a need for Sunday School teachers to teach their youth. Please contact Bro. Cory Metzger (cmcustomworks@sbcglobal.net or 316.253.8507) if you are interested in moving.

– by Gwen Leuthold

Isaiah 6:8
Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying,
Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?
Then said I, Here am I; send me.
Effective listening is a skill that enhances relationships and is particularly important in the role of helping others. This ability allows us to effectively respond to people when they need guidance, comfort, advice, or to discuss repentance, confession, relationship issues, etc. The following Scripture verses help lay the foundation for the practical suggestions for effective listening below.

Proverbs 1:5, “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:”
Proverbs 18:13, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”
Proverbs 20:5, “Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.”
Proverbs 25:11, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”
Ephesians 4:29, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”
Colossians 4:6, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”
James 1:19, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

Practical Suggestions
1. Prepare to listen.
   • Listening is hard work. Lack of sleep, stress in your own life, how you are feeling, and many other factors can make it difficult to effectively listen.
   • Your posture and position influence both your ability to listen and how you are perceived as a listener. For example, try sitting in a relaxed posture, but don’t be too casual.
   • If possible, prepare by reading about the issue that will be discussed. Informed listeners can often be more sensitive and able to listen better.
   • If possible, prepare by reading about the issue that will be discussed. Informed listeners can often be more sensitive and able to listen better.

2. Paraphrase and encourage further sharing.
   • Occasionally paraphrasing or repeating what the speaker said can also encourage further sharing by demonstrating that you are truly listening.
   • Head nods, a phrase such as “uh-huh” or “tell me more about…” can encourage the other person to keep talking.
   • Attentive posture and facial expressions also show that you are interested.

3. Check your listening attitudes.
   • People are more likely to listen to what you have to say when they feel like you have listened to what they have said to you.
   • The more you listen without jumping to conclusions, the clearer your understanding.
   • Recognize that it is very difficult for some people to feel comfortable enough to be vulnerable and share their inner concerns with someone else.
   • Also, recognize the potential blessing that can be given simply by allowing someone to share their heart with someone who cares.
   • Listening requires discipline.
   • Listening is as important as speaking.
   • You don’t need to fill in every time of silence, even though sometimes it may feel uncomfortable. Often, people need time to think and compose themselves. Silence allows for this.

4. Be aware of both content and delivery.
   • How the speaker communicates is as significant as what he or she says.
   • Look for evidence of tears, trembling, posture shifts, change in voice pitch or speed, alterations in breathing rate, etc.
   • Changes in nonverbal signs often indicate that the person is talking about an especially significant or sensitive topic.
   • Remember you can think faster than the other person can talk. As you listen, reflect on what you are seeing and hearing, evaluate what you
have heard, and ask yourself what the speaker really is trying to communicate.

5. **Be aware of your own emotions and reactions while listening.**
   - Listening thoroughly and “hearing someone out” does not mean you have to deny your own emotional reaction or that you necessarily agree with what is spoken.
   - Don’t stop listening because you feel uncomfortable or dislike what you are hearing. Rather, strive to be fully present with the individual and not allow your emotions to take over your logic.
   - Reacting too quickly and rebutting a speaker’s comment is a common error to avoid.
   - Try not to interrupt.
   - When someone is sharing information that is difficult for them to say out loud, providing them with an empathetic response can help them to reveal more information.

6. **Resist distractions.**
   - Distractions can be external (e.g., what you hear or see) or internal (e.g., your mind wanders).
   - When you notice that you are distracted, make an effort to shift your focus back to the person speaking.
   - Paraphrasing or repeating back what the speaker says is a good way to help you stay “in tune” with the person.
   - If you find yourself getting distracted more easily than normal, consider possible explanations for why and try to make adjustments.
   - In order to effectively listen, it is important your top priority of the moment is understanding the individual you are with at the time. It is a loving act to listen.

7. **Listen for themes.**
   - Topics, phrases, emotions, or names that come up repeatedly may be clues to significant issues.
   - While themes usually consist of the things a person brings up in the conversation, sometimes the key themes you need to focus on are what the person does not bring up.

8. **Don’t get carried away by your own curiosity.**
   - Your purpose in listening is to understand and help the other person, not to satisfy your own curiosity or personal needs.

9. **As you listen, avoid “preaching,” lecturing, or arguing.**
   - People often shut down and stop listening in these situations.
   - When people feel they are being lectured, it is common for them to focus on formulating their own defensive response to you instead of listening.

10. **Like Jesus did, use well-placed questions to draw out information.**
    - Avoid asking close-ended questions (questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”) as much as possible since these stifle conversation.
    - Sometimes asking “how” rather than “why” is more appropriate. For example, asking, “How did you come to that decision?” rather than “Why did you make that decision?” can help the individual feel less defensive and helps them to be more open and honest.

It’s not always easy to listen – maybe we are tired, distracted, uncomfortable with the topic or unsure how to encourage someone to be open with us. However, effective listening is an essential skill if our desire is to help others. Making the effort to be a good listener builds trust and strengthens relationships. “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.” Proverbs 27:9

Portions of this paper are adapted from *How to Be a People Helper* by Gary Collins.

Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services
515 E. Highland Street, Morton, IL 61550
www.accounseling.org
Apostolic Christian Home for the Handicapped
www.achh.org

During the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons there often seems to be a heightened state of good will and kindness in the air. Sometimes this comes in small and simple, yet significant acts of blessing others. 1 Timothy 2:1 states “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.” As we bless and thank others who are near us, we reflect the love of God and have opportunities to express His love to others.

Last week staff noticed that one of our residents who operates her own power wheelchair to navigate her environment, had a chance to express thankfulness and draw attention to God in the process. She was visiting someone with staff in a building in Peoria that has a doorman at the front door. The kind doorman ran to the door, and opened the door for her as she was exiting the building. The woman turned to him and said “Bless you!” as she drove out to her waiting van. You could see a delighted and changed appearance on the doorman’s face. In blessing others he, in fact, had been blessed. The disabled women continued moving her wheelchair to the van with her head held high, knowing she had done the work of the Lord in a small, yet significant way at the time. The other observers were blessed too, as they thought about Jesus, and all He has lavishly offered us, not only at Thanksgiving and Christmas. These moments can encourage us to do His work and bless others in His name throughout the year!

You can imagine by now, holiday activities and events are well under way in all of our homes. From our homes to yours, we wish you a very blessed and praise-filled Thanksgiving and Christmas season.

Gateway Woods Apostolic Christian Children’s Home
Rob Parker – LARC Coordinator

Names have been changed for the sake of privacy.

I have had the opportunity to minister to many kids since I arriving at Gateway seven months ago. Nick was the first LARC client I ever served and we had a connection immediately. I remember after our first meeting thinking, “this is going to be easy”. I may have underestimated the level of difficulty I would encounter…

I quickly realized that Nick’s pain ran deep and that he had a tendency to self-sabotage in an effort to keep people from getting too close. He reminded me of another broken, hurting young man…me. I remembered what it was like to feel worthless and afraid, that if anyone got too close they would just run away. I met with Nick regularly and earned his trust and respect. We began working on a plan for his future and God brought people who wanted to walk along side of him.

After completing high school and a successful summer of working, it was time for him to leave Gateway. Nick had professed faith in Christ, was enrolled in college, was meeting regularly with his mentors and a family had invited him to live with them. Nick had all the relationships and resources in place to transition successfully from Gateway. But we knew that the trauma in Nick’s past made change difficult and we had to be ready for some resistance.

It wasn’t long before Nick was sitting in my office with a bag packed, ready to run. After talking it through with him and his host family, we knew some changes needed to be made. Soon after, I called the first “Nick Team” meeting. During this meeting it became clear that there was a lot of love for this young man. Once everyone’s roles in Nick’s life was defined clearly, we prayerfully structured relationships and goals intentionally focused on spiritual and personal growth and accountability.
It is humbling to see how God continues to use us to impact Nick’s life. He just completed the college semester and things at his host home are going well. He has two men and two families speaking truth into his life in different ways and he is growing. It hasn’t always been easy, but nothing worth doing ever is. What a privilege it is to have a front row seat to witness Jesus bring beauty from pain and heartache. I am thankful for the opportunity to love this man, to be a conduit for the things and people he needs in his life and most of all, to be an ambassador for Christ.

Through the LARC initiative, connections are being made, relationships built, lives touched and the gospel proclaimed. There are so many kids just like Gateway Woods Nick, each one is different, but they’re also the same. They all need love, help, and healing...they all need to feel that they matter to someone. What a blessing to be able to stand, filled with the Spirit, compelled by Christ to say, “You matter to us.”

News:

We have just completed major renovations to the Oak and Hickory House. These renovations are meant to improve visibility for the houseparents when in various parts of the house, and create a more open and welcoming feel for the residents.

Now that the Oak house renovation is finished, we have an increased need for houseparent couples. Please prayerfully consider this opportunity to serve!

We are very excited to announce the hiring of Brother Chad Heiniger (Elgin) for the position of Development Coordinator! Chad has served as a Gateway Woods rep for many years and we are excited for him to join the Gateway Woods team.

We have a need to fill three career positions at Gateway Woods: several openings for Alternate Houseparents, one opening for an Assistant Houseparent, and one opening for a Communications Coordinator. For more information please see the notices in this issue or visit the Career Opportunities page on our website at www.gatewaywoods.org/careers. We trust that God will provide qualified, mature brothers and sisters who will serve Him in a ministry that is ‘Turning Lives Around’.

Alabama, Athens Apostolic Christian Preschool
Kalla Knobloch

The themes for December were Christmas and winter.

We also sent the children home with a Butter Braid / Our Daily Bread Fundraising which was a big hit! We’ve been busy creating lots of Christmas themed crafts like candy canes, wreaths, holiday candles, Christmas trees, snowmen, and snowflakes. One of the students’ favorite jobs is helping put up our own Christmas tree. The children have been working hard to prepare for our Christmas Program. The students prepared songs to tell the story of the details of Jesus’ birth. One of my favorite parts of the Christmas program is observing the parents watch their children as they sing. Their expression of love and joy must mirror God’s expression when He watches us show spiritual fruit. The children then have a gift exchange before the Preschool presents a gift for the families to take home. We are very thankful for the dear friends that donated to make this gift possible!

We had some very special visitors stop in to see the preschool in action. We would like to welcome everyone to stop by if they are in the area. The children
love meeting new friends and we
love showing you what we do! The
Athens church has a guest house if
accommodations are needed during
your travels. The Preschool would
not be able to run as we do without
the support and donations given
throughout the year! Thank you!

Volunteer Information:
Contact me at 309.231.1755 or
acpreschool2015@gmail.com. Visit
our website at www.acpreschool.
org. The “About Us” tab will offer
information on volunteering at the
preschool. Talk to other volunteers
to see what their experience was
like. Their names are always listed
in the Silver Lining.

Alabama, Athens
Monica Price
“For unto us a child is born”
(Is. 9:6). This time of year our
thoughts go to the coming of
Jesus to this earth as a baby. In
our small congregation we, too,
are thankful for the safe arrival of
Shalome Noel, daughter of Bro.
Mark and Sis. Rebekah Klaus.
Natalie, Lexi and Samuel are very
excited about their new little sister.

“To everything there is a
season,… a time to be born, and a
time to die” (Ecc 3:1-2). Although
we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we
know that He ultimately came to
this earth to die for our sins. Sorrow
and death also has been experienced
in our small congregation. Our
prayers are with David Coulter and
his family with the unexpected
passing of his father.

This month we were able to
share a Christmas dinner with our
church family. We also had the
privilege to go Christmas caroling at
the homes of Bro. Milton Ray (Sis.
Joyce) and Sis. Corrine Thomas. It
was a blessing to both those caroling
and those listening. It was an extra
special day for Sis. Corrine, because
we were able to celebrate her 80th
birthday with her, too.

We want to thank Bro. Jedd
Rocke (Sis. Marsha, Goodfield,
IL) for coming to minister to us.
We know it is very difficult to be
away from family this close to the
holidays and we are grateful for
their efforts.

We would like to extend a
welcome to anyone who would
like to include Athens in their
travels, especially if you are
heading to the southern states for
the winter months. Please feel free
to visit us. If you would like to
stay in our guest house, please call
Rebekah Klaus at (815) 674-5411
for accommodations.

Arizona, Phoenix
Marge Lindenbaum
“My voice shalt thou hear in the
morning, O LORD; in the morning
will I direct my prayer unto thee,
and will look up.” Ps. 5:3

We need to look up and lift up
our heads. When the children of
Israel were journeying, they often
spoke against God and Moses. One
time, God sent fiery serpents and
many died. When they repented,
a remedy was given to Moses, to
create a brass image of a serpent
and place it on a pole. When
someone was bitten, they were to
look up at the image and be healed.

(Num. 21:4-9) God did not remove
the serpents, or make their bite less
toxic, but made a way for his people
to be saved, simply by looking
up at the ensign. The presence of
the serpents gave the miserable
Israelites a proper perspective, and
caused them to cry out to God.

And when they repented, they
looked up at the ensign and were
restored to health. Do you suppose,
if they continuously looked at the
brass serpent, a bite would not have
affected them at all? Not even leave
a mark? We aren’t told how high
the pole was, but it must have been
high to be able to see it from every
place in the camp. We understand
this ensign is a model of Jesus.
(Is. 11:10, 12, 18:3)

We know when Peter was
called out onto the water with
Jesus in the storm, he was fine
as long as he was looking at
the Master. When he became
distracted by the wind and waves,
he took his eyes off Jesus and
began to sink. He had to be pulled
out and carried back to the boat.
(Matt 14:28-32)

The blind man who was
restored his sight had to look up
twice before he could see clearly.
(Mark 8:22-25)

Yet, there are times when
trouble, sorrows, our own sin and
the cares of this life so overwhelm
us, we cannot see anything except
what immediately surrounds us.
It is just not within our power to
look up. David wrote about such
time, “For innumerable evils have
compassed me about: mine iniquities
have taken hold upon me, so that
seems to be harder to defeat or keep at bay. We are praying for him and Sis. Lois (Bauman) as they continue this long, difficult battle. Sis. Nancy (Knobloch) Baumgartner was hospitalized and is now doing better as she also continues her battle against cancer. Prayers continue for her and Bro. Leon. Bro. Tim Sutton has been to the hospital several times as the medical team tries to identify and address his health issues. We are lifting up him and Sis. Verene (Von Tobel) as they face uncertainty and frustration.

We enjoyed celebrating the birth of our Savior with the Sunday School as they presented their annual Christmas program. Last, but certainly not least, we thoroughly enjoyed our visiting ministers: Elder Bros. Steve Ringger (Sis. Myra, Bluffton North, IN), Tom Klotzle (Sis. Jody, Altadena, CA), John Laukhuf (Sis. Marcia, Latty, OH), Mike Leman (Sis. Deb, Denver, CO), Kent Heimer (Sis. Jan, Taylor, MO), Jim Plattner (Sis. Marlene, Princeville, IL); Ordained Deacon Bro. Frank Sauder (Sis. Kathy, Roanoke, IL); Minister Bros. Chuck Kellenberger (Sis. Debbie, Elgin, IL), Virgil Kaeb (Suellen, Sarasota, FL). Thank you for serving us, and please return as often as possible.

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Is. 45:22

Arizona, Prescott
Autumn Rokey

This past month we enjoyed having Bro. John Laukhuf (Sis. Marcia) from Latty, OH, and Bro. Dave Zehr (Sis. Vicki) from Gridley, IL. Some of our single group were also able to travel to baptisms in San Diego. It is such a blessing to be able to travel from church to church without any persecution, something we take for granted!

In Prescott, we held our annual Christmas program. The best part was the littlest children singing “Go Tell It on the Mountain” with such enthusiasm. To prepare for the Christmas season, we sang carols at a few local nursing homes and as a small church we were thankful that the Phoenix single group joined us in sharing about Christ’s birth.

Arizona, Tucson
Dean and Jackie Knobloch

We wish all a blessed New Year! December is always a busy month for most, but it is a wonderful time of the year to remember our Savior’s birth. We caroled this year at two local nursing homes and many enjoyed a wonderful evening. Our Sunday School students presented their Christmas program on December 13. We thank all the students and teachers for their efforts.

It was a privilege to have Bro. Dale Zeltwanger (Morris North) visit and preach the word on our behalf and we want to thank him for his effort. We are receiving more visitors during our winter
months and we appreciate each and every one who worships with us and our little flock.

Sis. Joan Knapp (Bro. Loren) spent some time in the hospital, but is able to assemble with us again. We are thankful to see her and continue to pray for God’s healing.

May each of us keep our focus on Our Heavenly Father and seek His wisdom in the coming year.

California, Altadena/Los Angeles

Kali Sauder

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” Revelation 22:13

Time passes so quickly. As we close another busy holiday season, turn over the calendars to a new year, we can find peace in the One who stands sovereign over time, over the regrets of the past and the unknowns of the future. Jesus, whose life on earth began in a manger, was present at the beginning of time and promises that He is everlasting. What hope to cling to the assurance that He has extended to us the promise of everlasting life!

As in years past, we sent a small group to Magdalena, Mexico, to help serve a traditional American Thanksgiving dinner to the church and community of Magdalena. Five hundred people gathered to enjoy the meal! The group shared of their meaningful experiences and new or renewed relationships with us upon their return.

We celebrated Christ’s first advent with our Sunday School program telling the story of Christmas from A-Z. A is for angels, B is for Bethlehem, and so on. Through scripture and song the kids shared the Good News: this little baby is the world’s Savior, the Servant King, the Alpha and Omega.

This Jesus is the One we eagerly anticipate! “Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Rev. 22:20,21

California, San Diego

Janelle Brewer

The weekend of December 5-6 was a true joy for our congregation! We heard the testimonies and witnessed the baptisms of three young souls. We welcome our new sisters in the Lord. They are Sisters Sarah and Abby Fulop (Bro. Dennis and Sis. Joy) and Sis. Sophia Dotterer (Bro. Clint and Sis. Rebecca). Our church was full for this occasion and we appreciate the visiting elders and ministers who served us. Elder Bros. John Wiegand (Silverton, OR) and Marvin Dotterer (Forrest, IL) helped carry out this work. Also with us were Bros. Jim Koehl (Morris, MN), Justin Moser (Altadena, CA), and Dan Cargill (Prescott, AZ). May God bless these brothers for bringing forth the Word.

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:5

On December 13, the Sunday School told us the old, old story of Jesus’ coming to earth as a lowly babe. It’s the story that never grows old and brings us hope and joy.

If anyone is vacationing in the Palm Springs/Palm Desert area this winter please feel free to contact Bro. Doug and Sis. Janelle Brewer at djbrewer2003@gmail.com or 309-256-9606. We plan to have midweek services starting in January until the end of March. Also, if you know of anyone with church connections living in the area we would also like to know about them so we can reach out to them.

Colorado, Denver

Naomi Wiegand, Tess Leman

Greetings from Colorado!

“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.”

For so many years Israel waited and longed for its Savior. Hearts yearned and ached for the One who would set them free. The wait must have seemed so long. But today, praise God, the One has come! He has set us free! He is our rest, hope and consolation. This Christmas season, may all those who have a longing heart find their desire consoled in the long expected Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our Sunday school children conveyed the sweet, sweet message of this long-awaited Redeemer at our Christmas Program. Prophecies were recited, bearing the yearning of Israel. Then the fulfillments as
Christ arrived at the scene offering hope and joy! Thank you to our children, parents and dear Sunday school teachers for the time and effort they put into sharing this wonderful story.

This past month we were blessed to have Bro. Duane Metzger (Sis. Ruth, West Bend, IA) share the Word with us. We greatly appreciated your visit!

As a new year begins, let us live ready and expectant for the second coming of our Savior. Even so Lord Jesus, come!

**Connecticut, Rockville**  
*Lauren Gottier, Sheila Gerber*


"Love of all gifts is the greatest, which the Spirit does bestow"  
*Zion’s Harp #37*

We share in the joy of Sis. Sarah Lanz (Bro. Greg and Sis. Linda) as her engagement to Bro. Stuart Kilgus (Elder Bro. Dan and Sis. Jenna, Remington, IN) from our Toledo, OH congregation was announced on December 6.

**District of Columbia, Washington**  
*Henrietta Meyer*

During the month of December we were blessed to again have caretakers. Bro. Ralph and Sis. Diane Lanz from Rittman, OH were here. We are thankful for their faithful service to our congregation over the years. If you feel led to support one of our small churches, being caretakers here would be a wonderful way to do so. If you are interested and are free to spend 3-4 weeks in the DC area, please contact Sis. Doreen Steffen at dkgsteffen@gmail.com or 302-540-6574.

Our ministers this month were Bro. Jay Knapp (Sis. Lisa, Tucson, AZ), Bro. Joe Sprunger (Indianapolis, IN), Bro. Jerry Isch (Sis. Linda, Philadelphia, PA), and Bro. Wes Moser (Sis. Esther, Lester, IA). Other visitors this month were from Rockville, CT and Lester, IA congregations.

Winter brings smaller crowds visiting DC, giving visitors a chance to see exhibits at museums at their own pace. We usually don’t get as much snow and cold as the Midwest and what we get doesn’t last as long. If you are planning to visit Washington, D.C. area, please contact Bro. Joe and Sis. Holly Bohart at jbohart@gmail.com or Sis. Henrietta Meyer at 703 904-8301 for assistance and to let us know how many to expect for Sunday services.

**Florida, Ft. Lauderdale**  
*Renee Mangold*

We were blessed to have visiting ministers this past month. Sharing God’s word were Elder Bro. Earl Ringer (Sis. Dixie, Gridley, IL) and Bro. Art Ingold (Sis. Bonnie, Rittman, OH). We are grateful for the ministers that come and support our little congregation.

Congratulations to Bro. Mike and Sis. Faye Hohulin who were blessed with another grandchild. Little Jack Prevo was born December 14, 2015 to Bro. David and Sis. Tara Prevo of Bloomington, IL. We pray that God will watch over and guide this child throughout his life.

We had our annual Christmas caroling at a local nursing home and a church supper. A blessing was experienced by all.

We will resume our Wednesday evening church services beginning in January and continuing through March.

**Florida, Ft. Myers**  
*Victor Beer*

*Hark the Herald Angels Sing,  
Glory to the new born King,  
Hymns of Zion #523*

Real blessings have come our way, as new Sunday School students join in singing the precious Christmas Hymns; some of them for the first time. We pray with the teachers, for the real Holy Spirit to fill their hearts with the real truths, for their understanding.

Plans are made for a potluck dinner at Seven Lakes Residences for those who would otherwise be alone on Christmas Day. As usual, fellowship is still the great blessing we all enjoy at this Holiday Season, with a clear understanding of Whom we are remembering, and why.

If you are considering a move to the Naples/Fort Myers area and would like to talk to someone...
about it, please call Bro. Marvin Steffen at 239-353-0508. He will help you gather information on anything from serving in a small church to job opportunities and housing in the area.

**New Beginnings:**

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh”

Ezekiel 36:26

When I think of Christmas I think of the smell of pine trees, baking Christmas cookies and presents under the tree. Throughout my life I’ve heard the Christmas story, but didn’t truly believe; I thought it was old wives’ tale or something merchants made up to sell more product. But this year there is something different.

In my past I was just so preoccupied with giving and getting gifts I didn’t understand what Christmas really meant. It wasn’t until the Lord came into my heart and changed me forever that I started to understand what it’s all about. The pure joy I start to feel when I think of a God that loves me so much that He’s willing to sacrifice His only Son to show me how much He cares. He sought me out through my darkest hours of my life to save me, someone so underserving, but He did. He saved me despite my flaws and weakness.

I understand now what Christmas is all about; it’s about forgiveness and a new beginning where we don’t have to live in our shame of a sinful past. It’s about hope for the future and knowing that God almighty Himself was willing to come into this dark world and save us from our sins. Most importantly it’s about love from a Father that loves His children so much that no matter how far they’ve wandered off, He’s willing to search far and wide for them and bring them back home.

These thoughts were written by one of the mothers at The New Beginnings. Thanks to the support of many of you, this young woman is experiencing a Christ-filled Christmas for the first time.

**Florida, Sarasota**

**Mary & Vera Martin**

Another new year is upon us and as we approach new challenges my thoughts go to a song #150 Hymns of Zion, “Another year is dawning, Dear Master let it be, In working or in waiting, Another year with Thee.” Another year brings visitors from the north who enjoy the beautiful warm weather in Florida. Our church fills with new zeal and hearts of praise as we welcome another winter of fellowship.

We enjoyed our Sunday School program. Our hearts were warmed as the students told us how the angels came from heaven to announce Christ’s birth.

The church family spent two evenings Christmas Caroling to the older folks in our church.

We want to thank Elder Bro. Art Ingold (Sis. Bonnie, Rittman, OH) and Bro. Fred Domka (Sis. Connie, Mansfield, OH) who shared their time to minister to us. We appreciate their labors of love.

**Just One Request**

“Dear Master for this coming year
just one request I bring:
I do not pray for happiness,
Or any earthly thing—
I do not ask to understand
The way Thou leadest me,
But this I ask: Teach me to do
The thing that pleaseth Thee.
I want to know Thy guiding voice,
To walk with Thee each day.
Dear Master make me swift to hear
And ready to obey.
And thus the year I now begin
A happy year will be—
If I am seeking just to do
The thing that pleaseth Thee.”

-Unknown Author

**Georgia, Peachtree City/Atlanta**

**Lexi Knapp**

Life has been busy, yet, blessed here in Georgia this past month. The first weekend of December, we enjoyed having our Christmas program, followed by caroling and our annual church soup supper. It was a beautiful weekend full of pondering the Greatest Gift of Christmas and celebrating the birth of our Savior.

Likewise, it was special to witness the wedding of Sis. Elise Waldbeser to Bro. Isaac Funk (Peoria, IL) on December 20. We pray that God will bless their marriage and that He will be glorified through their union. They will be worshipping in
Peoria and Sis. Elise will be greatly missed here in Peachtree City!

We are thankful for all the visiting ministers that worshipped with and served us this month. Elder Bro. Tim Funk (Sis. Deb, Peoria, IL), Bro. Fred Funk (Sis. Diane, Morton, IL), Bro. Darren Plattner (Sis. Sue, Champaign, IL), Bro. Tim Roecker (Sis. Diane, Peoria, IL), Bro. Darren Price (Sis. Monica, Athens, AL), Bro. Jeff Streitmatter (Sis. Lynn, Sarasota, FL), and Bro. Jeff Fischer (Sis. Gloria, Fort Scott, KS). We appreciate the service of each of them and were blessed by them all.

In October, we welcomed Drew and Ashley Pelc (Elgin, IL), along with their baby daughter Audrey. They have been a blessing to our small congregation. We are so thankful for what they add to our church.

If anyone is coming to the area, we would love to have you worship with us! Our address is: 202 Robinson Road, Peachtree City, GA 30269. However, please all ahead! (Tom Waldbeser 770.463.4788 or Richard Aberle 678.364.0507). For photos and additional information, visit our website at www.ptcacchurch.org.

**Haiti, Bonne Fin - Hospital Lumiere**

*Rick and Komari Aberle, David and Janella Zimmerman*

We were blessed by a number of ACWR board members and their wives who came to visit the ACWR missionaries in Haiti for a “support weekend” in November. The adults and school-aged children also received good instruction from those who prepared and shared topics with us.

A team from Rockville, CT came to help us in providing a dental clinic and the renovation of our pre-op/post-op area of the hospital. It is an encouragement to see the improved working environment. Also, community members were able to receive dental care that they otherwise may not have had the opportunity to receive.

Over Thanksgiving, our “missionary family” enjoyed a blessed day together. Sis. Leah Bertschi’s family came to Haiti to visit her for Thanksgiving. The Klopfenstein family was able to be home with their family in the States for a short furlough over the holiday.

We have been enjoying the approaching Christmas season, and sang Christmas carols in Creole for patients at Hospital Lumiere and a nursing home and clinic in Cayes.

We have a team here currently who is providing a cervical cancer screening, work with Physical Therapy, and a CRNA to help with our surgical cases in the OR. We have been very blessed by their work and their fellowship with us through the week.

We are very thankful for the ministers who come along on teams. This month Bro. Jon Zeller (Morton, IL), Bros. Warren Zahner and Tom Bahler (Rockville, CT), and Bro. Doug Wagenbach (San Diego, CA) all shared the Word with us.

**Haiti, Les Cayes**

*Mike & Susie Walder*

We recently enjoyed an Apostolic Missionary retreat near Cote-de-Fer and received relevant teaching from Bro. Arlan Miller and Sis. Amber Miller from ACCFS. We appreciated the visit of many members of our support teams who came for meetings and the retreat, as well as our lead minister, Bro. Jon Zeller from Morton, IL.

A special event of the Christmas season for us in Haiti was caroling in Creole at a local nursing home, Azile Dorcas, and at the local clinic. I believe the words “Noel,” “Hallelujah” and “Amen” are the same in many languages! Medical team visitors from Bonne Fin and all area missionaries enjoyed a meal together afterward at the home of Bro. Brent & Sis. Alisha Wagenbach.

Christmas is a special time of celebration in Haiti. There are many church concerts held and gifts exchanged. Although we see Christmas decorations for sale in some stores, we rarely see decorations and lights in any Haitian homes. It is actually nice to just focus on Jesus and not on things!

Bro. Brent & Sis. Alisha Wagenbach have returned to the States for a few months in anticipation of the birth of their first child! May God bless them in the special months ahead with grace and strength as only He can provide.

We are thankful for God’s faithfulness as we enter a new year. In an ever-changing world where
values and morals are constantly shifting, God’s faithfulness shines brighter and brighter. We can anchor our soul in Jesus Christ, and at the last, remain standing.

Thanks for your prayers and support here in the past year, and for your support of the ongoing mission work in Haiti and around the world in 2016.

Illinois, Belvidere
Krista Anliker, Shayla Steffen

Greetings! We welcome Bro. Curt and Sis. Larissa Wettstein along with their children Isabella, Brodie and Ebony from St. Louis to our church in Belvidere!

We had the opportunity to hear the Christmas program with two themes - Joy and Come. We later sang carols for others and then shared a chili dinner with our church family.

Rich and Amy Hanson and Jill Anliker were announced to have peace and look forward to baptism in February.

While the Day of Grace is yet available, may many more souls heed the invitation to come and experience the true joy that can be found in a life lived for the One who came, lived a perfect life and died for each one of us.

Illinois, Bloomington-
Normal
Megan Kaeb, Sarah Maurer

One of the rich blessings of our church is the community we feel with brothers and sisters who attend our churches all over the country. This month we were able to experience the blessing of this fellowship first hand as we welcomed visiting ministers from all over. Bro. Matt Knapp (Sis. Dana, Peach Tree City, GA) were with us for our Thanksgiving Day service. The following Sunday we welcomed Bro. Mark Gerber (Sis. Barb, Bluffton, IN), Bro. Tim Wiegand (Sis. Christa, Leo, IN) and Bro. Seth Gerber (Magdalena, MX) to our church.

On Thanksgiving our church was given an extra reason to give thanks with an announcement of engagement. Sis. Larissa Metz from our Bloomington congregation (daughter of Bro. Brad and Sis. Karen, Bloomington, IL) was announced to be married to Bro. Mark Wuethrich III (son of Bro. Mark and Sis. Lynn Wuethrich, Francesville, IN). We rejoice with them as they start a new life together.

We praise God that He never stops His pursuit of us. Virginia Lockwood began her faith journey this month at the age of 76. Alex Hurtado, a young man who has been worshipping with us for the past year, also began his faith journey this month. We are never too young or too old to be out of the reach of our merciful Father. We are so thankful to see the work of His love in the lives of these two souls.

We were blessed to welcome Sis. Mary Streitmatter (mother of our elder Bro. Mark Streitmatter) to our Bloomington congregation this month. Sis. Mary recently moved to town and has begun joining our worship services.

Our thoughts and prayers went out to our Bro. Paul Klopfenstein this month as he mourned the loss of his sister Patty. We pray that our God of Comfort would be real to him and his family as they say good-bye.

Throughout the month of December our church family was blessed to attend two Christmas programs. Our church choir helped set the tone for the month with their program: “O Come Let Us Adore Him” followed a few weeks later by our Sunday School Christmas program. Both gave us the opportunity to pause and reflect on the gift of Jesus as we celebrated the wonder of his birth in a stable so many years ago.

Finally, our church body once again enjoyed the tradition of Christmas caroling together this past month. What a blessing to share songs of Christmas joy with our community. We had much to be thankful for and reflect upon this Christmas season.

Illinois, Bradford
Roseann Stahl, Sandi Joos

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

We weep and mourn with Bro. Wendell Stahl, Bro. Joel, Gabe, Isaac, and Tobias in the sudden and tragic loss of their wife and mother, Sis. Linda Stahl. May God also comfort her mother, Sis. Esther Martin, and siblings: Bro. Alan Martin (Sis. Janice),
Bro. Craig Martin (Sis. Terri), Sis. Carol Martin, Sis. Denise (Bro. Tim) Kieser, all of Princeville; her mother-in-law, Sis. Charlotte Stahl; sisters-in-law, Sis. Roseann Stahl and Sis. Deanne Plattner (Bro. Dan, Chicago, IL); brothers-in-law, Bro. Weston Stahl (Sis. Jill) and Darwin Stahl (Robin), and several nieces and nephews. Sis. Linda’s love and support for her family, church, and community were very evident. Our continued prayers and love are with this family in the days ahead.

A farewell singing was held for Bro. Brandon, Sis. Sarah, and Micah Gudeman. They are relocating to Rockville, CT. We will miss their presence in Bradford and look forward to their visits.

We enjoyed listening to our Sunday school students bring to us the story that never grows old through song and recitations.

Illinois, Champaign

Dona Fehr

Greetings from Champaign!

Our annual Thanksgiving Baskets day was the weekend before Thanksgiving. This is a day in which our Sunday school students, along with some teachers and other adults, participate in the act of giving. They shop for groceries, pack them up, and deliver them to a few needy families in the area. They end the event back at church with a pizza lunch.

We enjoyed the Sunday school students’ Christmas program on December 13. It is always a joy to watch the students share the main story of Christmas. This year’s program focused on Christ as our King, and concluded with the convicting question “Have you let him (Jesus) become your King?”

Christmas caroling to some local nursing homes followed the program. Then we enjoyed a nice chili supper and some additional fellowshipping before parting ways for the week.

Even in this season of joy, some are experiencing sorrow. Our sympathy goes out to Sam and Dawn Finch and family in the passing of Sam’s father, Wayne. We pray God will provide them comfort in this time of loss.

We thank ministering Brother Marshall Heinold (Sis. Janice, Washington, IL) for ministering to us while visiting this month. We also thank Brother Arlan Miller for his presentation this month, continuing our series of studies on mentoring.

By the time we read this article, Christmas will be past. We hope you all enjoyed a blessed Christmas season! As we get back into our routine after our holiday celebrations, let us remember those for whom winter brings sorrow. There are many who celebrated their first Christmas without a special loved one this year, or who are looking forward to another year without someone they love. Let us hold them in our prayers and thoughts, and let us remember them with our actions as well.

Illinois, Chicago

Diana Eisenmann

We wish you God’s blessings in this New Year! In November we were blessed to have Elder Bro. Duane Rocke (Sis. Bonnie, Minneapolis, MN) and Bro. Dan Koch (Sis. Julie, Tremont, IL) visit and share the Word. We also extend thanks to Bro. Matt Kaufmann (Sis. Rebekah, Bloomington, IL) for visiting us to share the ACCFS presentation on “Biblical Decision Making.”

In December we held our annual Christmas caroling and chili supper event. Following the meal, we enjoyed a program presented by the Sunday School retelling the birth of Jesus Christ and how He came to be the Light of the world.

Also in December we welcomed Jacob Bowerman from Milford, IN who has moved to the Chicago area for work. At the same time, we bid farewell to Sis. Zoe Koehl as she returns home to Forrest, IL upon completion of her semester of student teaching in Chicago.

Our hearts are heavy as we mourn with Sis. Deanne Plattner and her family at the tragic loss of her sister-in-law, Sis. Linda Stahl (Bro. Wendell) from Bradford, IL. We continue to remember this dear family in our prayers.

Illinois, Cissna Park

Janie Waldbeser, Sandy Rudin

We appreciated having Bro. Dan Moser (Sis. Ann, Elgin, IL.) with us on Thanksgiving Day to share the Word of God. May God
Our Church family gathered on December 6 to sing Christmas Carols to loved ones in the area. We pray that as we sang of the blessed birth of our Lord and Savior that each heart was touched and encouraged to focus on the real meaning of Christmas.

Corryn Noel made an earlier than expected arrival into the lives of Bro. Joe & Sis. Amber Stuckel. We are so thankful for her safe arrival. May they feel God’s nearness and blessings as they nourish and teach her of His love and the plan of Salvation.

Thankful first-time grandparents are Bro. Todd & Sis. Val Kaeb.

Finishing college degrees at Parkland are Nathan Kaeb (Bro. Todd & Sis. Val) and Dana Schmidt (Bro. Wendell & Sis. Karen, West Bend IA.). We pray God can bless these graduates as they embark upon their careers and see what God has in store for them.

“Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and will be glorified, saith the Lord.”

Haggai 1:8.

We are thankful for God’s provision as we are about to begin the second and final phase of our remodeling project at our Cissna Park Church. The entire basement and the baptismal changing rooms upstairs are the areas left to remodel. We plan to begin soon after the first of the year and will be assembling in the Fellowship Hall throughout the duration of the remodeling. We pray God will continue blessing us with His peace and safety throughout the project. We are thankful for all the monetary gifts and most of all, prayers extended on our behalf.

As we begin the New Year, we do not know the future and what God has in store for any of us, but one thing we DO know is that God holds the future in His hands, and we put our full trust in Him to see us through each step of the way!

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Matt. 6:34.

God Bless you one and all!

**Illinois, Congerville**

*Erica Steffen*

Our church was blessed by several visiting ministers this month. Thanks to Bro. Rick Kaisner (Sis. Michelle, Chicago, IL), Bro. Mark Rufener (Sis. Julie, Mansfield, OH), Bro. Michael Wagenbach (Sis. Erica, Wolcott, IN) and Bro. Nathan Walder (Sis. Denise, Cissna Park, IL) for sharing God’s Word with us!

Alayna Cherie was born to our Bro. Zach and Sis. Karla Anderson in November, but I neglected to include her in last month’s article. Little Alayna joins siblings: Caiden, Laiken, Ellie and Colton at home. Alayna’s grandparents are Robert & Cheryl Kaisner of Fairbury and Jon and Cyndee Anderson of Congerville.

Our Sunday School Christmas Program was a blessing to us all as the students brought forth the Christmas story in word and song. We thank them for their efforts and pray they will someday understand the full meaning of the words they spoke.

The Christmas season is a wonderful time to share with our children, and others, about God’s plan to save us all from sin and death. This is the first year our son (3 years old) is really interested in the Christmas story. Belting out Away in Manger and playing with his own little plastic Nativity set are some of his favorite things right now. Although I have seen Mary and Joseph riding to Bethlehem in his toy garbage truck, and the Wisemen perpetually being lost on their journey from the East, one interaction I overhead warmed my heart and gave me pause to think. My son had gathered all the Nativity characters around the Baby Jesus and was asking them, “Are you taking good care of Baby Jesus?” With a smile on my face and a warm fuzzy feeling parents have for moments like this, I had to think, “Am I taking good care of Jesus in my heart?” Am I making sure that I nurture Him as I commune with Him day to day, or am I just always wanting to be on the receiving end of the relationship? It’s a humbling thought as we enter into a season so filled with distractions, yet equally capable of being filled with opportunities to give our relationship with our Lord a tune-up. May we all strive to have more zeal and rejoice even more that our
Savior has come-desiring to know us through our willing communion with Him!

“Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
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.”
Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus, verse 2

Illinois, Elgin
Amy Gasser

We thank Bro. Earl Beery (Sis. Suzy, Rittman, OH) and our Elder Bro. Brad Eisenmann (Sis. Cindy, Chicago, IL) for ministering to us this month.

We enjoyed Family Christmas Caroling on Sunday, December 6. Afterward, there was a chili/soup supper at the Fellowship Center.

Our Sunday School students presented the Christmas program on Sunday, December 13. It is always good to hear the beautiful Christmas story that never grows old.

Several from our church family have had surgery recently, including Bro. Bill (Sis. Sandy) Kinsinger, Marissa Knobloch (Bro. Brent and Sis. Michelle), Bro. Les (Sis. Alison) Schambach, and Roger (Mary Kay) Smithberg. Little Jakob Steffen (infant son of Daniel and Samantha Steffen) just had his second open heart surgery. Bro. Elvis (Sis. Marilyn) Kellenberger was a medical patient. We pray for their continued recovery.

Brian Kellenberger and Kait Papen have announced their engagement. Their parents are Bro. Daryle and Sonia Kellenberger (Marengo, IL) and Jim and Barb Papen (Wonder Lake, IL). Kurt Wewetzer is engaged to Viola Bottiliero. Their parents are Bro. Mark and Sis. Nancy Wewetzer and Geraldine (the late Michael) Bottiliero of Galena, IL. We wish these couples God’s blessings as they take this step in their lives.

Illinois, Eureka
Debra Blunier, Linda Rocke

“O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray; cast
out our sin and enter in,
be born in us today.”
Hymns of Zion #37, vs. 4

What a special time of year Christmas is, when we celebrate the incarnation of our precious Savior here on this earth. We enjoyed hearing our Sunday School children tell us that story again. Thanks to all the students and teachers for their efforts.

Sis. Jolene Wiegand was united in marriage with Bro. Pete Zimmerman from Fairbury, IL. Parents are Bro. Andy and Sis. Vicky Wiegand, and Bro. Kent and Sis. Paulette Zimmerman. May God’s blessings be upon them. Bro. Jeff Grimm (Sis. Ruth, Goodfield, IL) assisted in the service.

Other visiting ministers we had this month were Bro. Clint Schmidt (Sis. Magdalena, Winthrop, MN), Bro. Jay Steffen (Sis. Melinda, Congerville, IL), and Bro. Jason Dotterer (Sis. Lynn, Forrest, IL).

Our thoughts and prayers for a speedy recovery go out for those who have had recent illnesses, hospitalizations, or surgeries. These include Sis. Judy Cottrell and Sis. Janel Sanders (Bro. Jason). Also we remember Sis. Lois Stoller who is beginning her radiation treatments for cancer.

Illinois, Fairbury
Angela Herr, Janelle Stoller

“In sorrow and pain Thy trust do retain In Jesus the merciful Saviour.” The Best Refuge, Zion’s Harp #46, verse 1

Charles Farley passed from this life on November 22. We extend our deepest sympathy to his dear wife, Arlene, and children: James (Carla) Farley (Omaha, NE), and Julie (Greg) Bazzell. He also is survived by a sister, Mary (Robert) Cummins. Sis. Carol Virkler of our congregation is his sister-in-law.

While we weep with those who weep, we rejoice with those who rejoice. We were blessed on November 29 to witness the marriage vows of our Bro. Thane Zehr (Bro. Quinn and Sis. Joan) and Sis. Myrna Moser (Bro. Jeff and Sis. Sara). On December 13, Bro. Wes Kaeb (Leon and Sis. LeAnn) and Sis. Brenda Manz (Bro. Ken and Sis. Gwen, Junction, OH) were united in Holy Matrimony. We are thankful to have both of these new young couples in our church family.

“The Lord is nigh unto them that...
are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”
Psalm 34:18

We are thankful Renae Steffen (Corey and Sis. Beth) has turned her back on the world and made a beginning in repentance. We continue to lift each of our converts up in prayer.

Bro. Tyson and Sis. Mandy Fehr have been blessed with a new baby girl, Ezme Kay, born on November 26. Traetyn is her big brother. Her grandparents are Bro. Ivan and Sis. Cinda Fehr and John Payne and the late Sharon Payne.

Bro. Justin and Sis. Kaylee Kilgus welcomed Ayden Paul to their family on December 4. Andrew and Kate are his brother and sister. Grandparents are Bro. Paul and Sis. Carmen Kilgus and the late Bro. Eldon and late Sis. Stephanie Kaeb (Forrest, IL).

Emily Janelle was born on December 20 to Bro. Jeff and Sis. Janelle Stoller. Heidi, Natalie, and Darin are happy to have a new little sister to love. Bro. Dale and Sis. Sandra Stoller and Bro. John and Sis. Rosemary Hartman are her grandparents.

It is such a blessing to go to church with confidence that the truth will be preached. We appreciate each of the brothers who lend themselves in God’s service. May God bless our home brothers and those who have visited Fairbury, including Bros. James Fehr (Tremont, IL), Marvin Hartzler (Rittman, OH), Mark Roth (Congerville, IL), Brian Waibel (Champaign, IL), Al Schambach (Remington, IN), Jerry Wagenbach (Mediapolis, IA), Michael Wagenbach (Wolcott, IN), and Dennis Rassi (Austin, TX).

The youth in our church are such an inspiration. On Sunday, December 13, we were blessed to listen to the Sunday School children tell us the Christmas story in verse and song. May these reminders help us remember the reason for the season!

Our prayers are with those who have been battling infirmities of the flesh. Sis. Dawn Huber (Bro. Rich), Sis. Louise Zimmerman, and Bro. Tom Steidinger (Sis. Dianne) spent time either in surgery or in the hospital, and we wish them renewed health and strength.

Illinois, Forrest
Carissa Knapp, Shannon Brown

We rejoice with Henry Friedman (Sis. Marjorie) and Reuben Kaeb as it was announced that they are at peace with God and man and are desiring baptism. Reuben’s parents are Bro. Morris Kaeb (Fairbury, IL) and Brenda Mueller.


December 6 was the wedding day of our Bro. Pete and Sis. Jolene Zimmerman. Their parents are Bro. Kent and Sis. Paulette Zimmerman and Bro. Andy & Sis. Vicki Wiegand (Eureka, IL). We wish them God’s blessings as they begin a life together.

Our prayers are with our Bros. Wayne Drayer (Sis. Gloria) and Alan Gerber (Sis. Marcia) as they have spent time in the hospital. We are also prayerful for Henry Friedman (Sis. Marjorie) who is in the hospital. We continue to pray for our Bro. Mark Aberle (Sis. Laverne) as he continues his cancer treatments.

We thank Bros. Mike Grimm (Sis. Amber, Goodfield, IL) and Brian Waibel (Sis. Wendy, Champaign, IL) for visiting and sharing God’s Word.

The Sunday School did a beautiful job sharing the Christmas story with the church. “Finest of gifts for our Savior and King” was my son’s verse in the program. It was a good reminder for me that our Heavenly Father gave us His finest; His only son Jesus Christ. Jesus also gave the finest gift when He died and shed His blood for us! Are we giving our finest gifts to our Savior and King?

Illinois, Goodfield
Kayla Wiegand, Melissa Rokey

On November 24 we had a double church shower for Bro. Will Rokey (Bro. Ben & Sis. Shelley) and Sis. Jamie Wiegand (Bro. Wayne & Sis. Rosemary) and Pete Hoekstra and Jayce Hartman (Bro. Jim & Sis. Ree). We pray that God will bless these couples as they become one.

We welcomed Sis. Emily Thompson (Martin) into the
fold of Christ after witnessing her testimony and baptism on November 28-29. We rejoice to be able to greet her as our sister in the Lord. Sis. Emily’s parents are Bro. Greg and Sis. Jenny Wiegand.

On December 4 we were blessed to be able to go Christmas caroling as a church to those in our community. We were thankful for all those who came and shared in song the blessed story of Christ’s birth. We also want to thank the caroling committee for all the work that they did.

Our congregation was blessed with two more babies this past month. Emrie Kay was born November 20 to Bro. Austin and Sis. Rachel McClure. She was welcomed home by her siblings: Clayton, Sadie, and Silas. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Gary and Sis. Linda Folkerts (Washington, IL) and Bro. Jeff and Sis. Marilyn McClure (Congerville, IL).

Bro. Alex and Sis. Cassie Kneppe were blessed with a baby girl, Wren Scarlett on December 7. She was welcomed home by her brothers: Dierks, Hudson, and Crue. Her grandparents are Bro. Roger and Sis. Trish Gerber and Janet and Randy Pomeranke of Roanoke, IL.

On Sunday, December 13 was the Sunday School Christmas program. The theme this year was Rejoice! We were reminded over and over in song how we are to rejoice in the Lord. We were also encouraged not to leave Christ in the manger, but to also go to the cross and see what He has done for us. May we keep Christ in the forefront of our minds this Christmas season and remember to thank Him for all that He has done for us.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Bro. Dave Kuntz (Sis. Pat) with the passing of his mother, Maureen. May they feel God’s comfort and peace.

Our prayers go out to those in our congregation who have had physical ailments and have been hospitalized this past month. They include Sis. Joyce Hohulin (Bro. Wes), Sis. Bonnie Gerst (the late Bro. Steve), and Bro. Gary Musselman (Sis. Judy). May they each feel God’s healing hand as they recover.

We thank each of the willing servants visiting us this month: Elder Bro. Tom Hoffman (Sis. Kathy, Roanoke, IL), Elder Bro. Kent Heimer (Sis. Jan, Taylor, MO), and Bro. Tom Bolliger (Sis. Jane, Tremont, IL).

Note of Thanks:
The family of Bro. Gary Allen would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to each one of you who remembered us with prayers, cards, food, phone calls, memorial donations, and other acts of kindness in the passing of our loved one.

Illinois, Gridley
Perry Klopfenstein
As we face 2016, the times appear to be perilous. International instability and changing morals want to push aside the values and truths that have blessed the western nations. Yet, our hope is not in this world; neither is our hope in the things that are seen. We seek those things that are not seen, and which are eternal. Our hope is in the Lord, Jesus Christ. In thinking on whatever we may face, the song “Stepping in the Light” comes to mind. If we walk in the Light of Christ, our life will be blessed no matter what happens in this present world.

Bro. Mark Wettstein was a visiting minister here this past month. We thank him for his labors.

A baby girl, Nina Jo Wherry, was born to Bro. Adam and Sis. Emily Wherry on October 30. Grandparents are Bro. Steve and Sis. Donna Ringger. Nina Jo is their second child. She has a sibling, Pacey, 2.

A daughter was born to Bro. Reed and Sis. Bethany Yackley. Her name is Mavis Lu who was born on December 3. Grandparents are Bro. Curt and Sis. Norma Witzig and Bro. Elwood and Sis. Trudie Yackley of Taylor, MO. Mavis has twin siblings, Azro and Etta, age 1.

Byron Martin was in the hospital for back surgery. He is now recovering. Bro. Bob Hock is also recovering from back surgery. We pray for their healing. We also pray for our cancer patients, Bro. Orlan Miller and Sis. Mary.
Ringger. Bro. Bob Griener continues to have issues with physical weakness.

As a New Year begins we surely are prayerful for those who are in special care homes: Sis. Vi Ringger (Meadows Home), Sis. Anna Marie Reutter (Roanoke Home), Sis. Lucille Wagner (Beulah Land Home), Sis. Jane Gramm (Eureka Home), Sis. Gerry Sievers (Luther Oaks), Bro. Todd Schneider (Morton), and Tyler Gramm (Linden Estate).

Sis. Patti Klopfenstein, 57, has passed away. She died in her sleep and had been living at Sunrise Manor. She was the daughter of Bro. Carlton “Carsh” and Sis. Betty Klopfenstein, who are deceased. She is survived by Bro. Paul Klopfenstein of Bloomington and Gary (Candace) Klopfenstein of Chicago; a nephew, Joel Klopfenstein, and a niece, Laine Klopfenstein, both of Chicago. Patti is remembered as a very kindly and friendly person.

As a congregation, we are very thankful that our remodeling project is completed, and we are enjoying its many benefits. Thanks be to God that it went smoothly; and further thanks to all those who did the planning and administered the project to its completion.

**Illinois, Morton**

*Annette Tanner, Julie Bahr*

Jesus said that in this world you will have trouble. As we watch, God is tilting us toward Him. Father, help us to see how you are leading us back to Jesus, Your Son!

The Sunday School Christmas Program entitled “The Light of the World” was presented by the entire Sunday School! Do you hear what I hear? The Message was brought to us through the eyes and ears of children; the message of the Greatest Gift ever given to earth! Did you know that this whole proclaimed message can be found in one Christmas song that can be entirely played in just one octave scale on the piano? This song is “Joy to the World!”

We are thankful for the ministers who come to Morton to proclaim the Gospel. Our thanks to Bro. Greg Rassi (Sis. Carla, Chicago), Bro. Dean Steffen (Sis. Carol, Belvidere), Bro. Wes Moser (Sis. Esther, Lester), and Bro. Adam Uhler (Sis. Ann, Smithville). We also appreciated Elder Bro. Ted Witzig, Sr. for giving us our Wednesday Evening Family Worship Topic on “The Armor of God” - “The Breastplate of Righteous”. A breastplate associated with certain careers is used to protect the heart. The Christian has a life with the sole purpose to serve God and proclaim the Gospel message! This life is a battleground not a playground! Wear God’s provided protection, The Breastplate of Jesus’ Righteousness, with diligence and boldness!

Our love and sympathy is shared with our Sis. Glenda Neukomm (Bro. Jan) in the passing of her dear father, Bro. Lester Huber of Francesville.

Congratulations to Bro. Jan and Sis. Glenda Neukomm on the arrival of a new baby granddaughter, Baye Ridley. She was born into the family of Traever and Andrea, Adalai, Remy, and Thatcher Guingrich.


**Illinois, Peoria**

*Pam Fritzenmeier*

Bro. Craig and Sis. Jacki Stickling are grandparents for a second time! Bro. Devon and Sis. Leah Knobloch of Princeville were blessed with a precious little daughter, Tatum Laine. She was born November 9 and has a big sister, Paisley. Her Princeville grandparents are Bro. Keith and Sis. Lisa Knobloch.

This is the time of year for many special Christmas events. Our Bible class Sunday school students performed their yearly Christmas play for TimberRidge and the rest of our Sunday school. The annual Sunday school Christmas program was December 13. That same evening was all-church Christmas caroling.

At work one of my students wrote Merry Christmas on my white board. I had to think as I corrected her...do we all remember that without Christ there would be no Christmas?
Our sympathy and prayers are extended to Sis. Dot (Bro. John) Hoerr and family. Sis. Dot’s sister, Sis. Marilyn Roth of Roanoke, passed away November 19.


**Illinois, Princeville**

**Gloria White, Renee Herrmann**

We thank Bro. Stephen Baner (Sis. Donnalou, Gridley, IL), Elder Bro. Brad Eisenmann (Sis. Cindy, Chicago, IL) and Elder Bro. Bruce Endress (Sis. Elizabeth, Bradford, IL) for bringing the Word to us. May God reward them for their service.

Our loved ones requiring hospital care this month are Sis. Janet Martin-Joos, Sis. Jeanette Graham and Bro. Darin Blunier. Please pray for God’s healing touch in their lives.

Our Sis. Mary Lou Streitmatter has moved to Bloomington, IL to be closer to her children. We will miss her and we pray for her adjustment as she begins this new chapter in her life.

We were shocked and saddened to hear of the death of Sis. Linda Stahl (Bro. Wendell, Bradford, IL) in an auto accident on November 26. We express heartfelt sympathy to Bro. Wendell and their boys: Bro. Joel, Gabriel, Isaac and Tobias. Our condolences also go to Sis. Linda’s mother, Sis. Esther Martin and her siblings: Bro. Alan (Sis. Janice) Martin, Sis. Carol Martin, Bro. Craig (Sis. Terri) Martin and Sis. Denise (Bro. Tim) Kieser and their families. Please pray that the “God of all comfort”, (2 Corinthians 1:3b) will surround them with His love. Remember also the young man that was driving the other vehicle.

Our Sunday School children brought a reminder in scripture and song of the miracle of God coming to live among us. As you celebrate Jesus birth, may you also be reminded that “Tis not the manger, but the cross that sets the spirit free” (Hymns of Zion #36).

**Illinois, Roanoke**

**Barb Schwind, Judy Sauder**

Bro. Curt Rassi (Sis. Kathy, Tremont, IL) was our guest minister for the day on November 29. On December 13, Bro. James Fehr (Sis. Brenda, Tremont, IL) served us on the pulpit. May our Lord bless these brothers for faithfully sharing God’s Word.

Our annual Business Meeting was held December 2. Bro. Bill Leman was elected our new church trustee. Bro. Steve Bates was chosen as our new nursing home trustee. And our new Fellowship Hall trustee is Bro. Dave Schwind. We thank all those who so willingly give of their time and resources to serve the needs of our church body.

Our annual Church caroling and potluck was held on December 6. We visited and sang Christmas carols at area nursing homes, for shut-ins, and for others in our area and then shared a meal together. It was a blessed evening.

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

On December 13, our Sunday School students, Bible Class students and the Youth Choir proclaimed the beautiful story of Christ’s birth in word and song at our annual Christmas program. We thank our students for a wonderful afternoon.

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

The Prairie Choristers and our Youth Choir presented an inspiring Christmas concert of songs and scripture “A Star is Over Bethlehem” on December 16. What a wonderful way to worship our Lord in this Christmas season! We thank Bro. Phil Hodel and all those who sang in the choirs for making it a memorable evening.

On December 7, Wren Scarlett arrived to bless the home of Bro. Alex and Sis. Cassie
Knepp (Goodfield). Grandparents Janet and Randy Pomeranke are rejoicing over Wren’s arrival. We pray for our Lord’s blessing on this dear family as they raise their children in the ways of the Lord.

*James 5:15: “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;”*

We want to lift up Andy (Rebekah) Wettstein, Bro. Dennis (Sis. Rita) Schwind and others in our congregation who are dealing with health issues. May our Lord be their strength and shield.

**Note of Thanks:**
To my dear church family, a big thank you, as I was overwhelmed to be showered with so many beautiful cards for my 99th birthday. Just to say thank you seems so inadequate. May God bless you richly.

Bro. Harold Roth

**Illinois, Tremont**

_Teresa Rowell, Janice Sauder_

Visiting ministers are always a blessing. Bro. Scott Wegman (Sis. Dawn, Taylor, MO) and Bro. Glenn Steiner (Sis. Rachel, Winthrop, MN) came and preached the Word.

We welcome Bro. Jeff Wagenbach (Heather) into our church family. He gave a testimony of faith and was baptized the weekend after Thanksgiving. Our prayer is that he, and each of us as believers, step up and live lives that are pleasing in the eyes of God.

Sis. Barb Banwart and Bro. Ed Fritz (Washington, IL) were united in marriage on a Wednesday night in Washington. Sis. Barb assembled with us in Tremont on most Wednesday nights. We will miss her smiling face, but are thankful for God’s leading in her life and Bro. Ed’s.

Bro. Jerry and Sis. Marcia Kaiser are grandparents again. Brooks Daniel was born to Brett and Tessa Kaiser. Brooks’ big sister is Jocelyn.

Reid Aberle (Bro. Pete and Sis. Debbie) and Ashley Braker (Bro. Todd and Sis. Wendy, Morton, IL) have announced their engagement. We wish them God’s richest blessings as they plan for a life together as one.

Sis. Nelda Rowell (Bro. John) spent some time in the hospital. We are thankful she is better and beginning to assemble with us again.

**Illinois, Washington**

_Kendra Funk, Patricia Knapp_

We rejoice with two couples that were married this month. Bro. Ed Fritz and Sis. Barb Banwart were united in marriage on December 9. On December 13, Bro. Jared Folkerts and Sis. Megan Steffen were united in holy matrimony. Their parents are Bro. Gary and Sis. Linda Folkerts and Bro. Scott and Sis. Marvella Steffen. We pray God’s blessings upon these couples and their families.

We are thankful for the visiting ministers we had this month: Bro. Roger Aberle (Sis. LaVonne, Sabetha, KS), Bro. Jeremiah Psinas (Morton, IL), Bro. Greg Lehman (Sis. MaryBeth, Wolcott, IN) and Bro. Mark Schmidgall (Sis. Sally, Oakville-Mediapolis, IA).

Bro. Ben Ginzel (Sis. Lexi) underwent surgery this month and we pray for quick recovery for him.

We are thankful to have added several babies to our congregation this month! On November 29, Daniel James was born to Bro. Trent and Sis. Heather Barth. He is welcomed home by his two older brothers, Caleb and Silas. Loving grandparents are Bro. Jim and Sis. Julie Barth and Bro. Gary and Sis. Debbie Rassi (Morton, IL).

Jack Matthew was born to Bro. Matt and Sis. Lena Wyss on December 2. Grandparents are Bro. Ed and Sis. Kathy Wyss and Bro. Glen and Sis. Rachel Steiner (Winthrop, MN). On December 4, Silas Phillip was born to Bro. Isaac and Sis. Rachel Wofford. He is welcomed home by his four older siblings: Sam, Caleb, Grace, and Anna. Grandparents are Grant and Ava Wofford and Don and Miriam Jordan. Another precious baby boy, Titus Benjamin, was born to Bro. Micah and Sis. Olivia Pfaffmann on December 11. Grandparents are Bro. Robert and Sis. Lily Pfaffmann and Bro. Jeff and Sis. Kim Baumgartner (Bern, KS).

We rejoice with these new parents and pray that God will grant them wisdom in raising their children!

We had an all-church Christmas caroling event this month. It is always such a blessing to sing for others and we are thankful for the opportunity we had!
Indiana, Bluffton
Suzie Fiechter, Kim Meyer

“For what is your life? It is even a vapour…” James 4:14

I think this would sum up 2015? How did it slip by so fast? But now we turn to the New Year and we will have opportunities to experience God’s love, peace and faithfulness. May we use these opportunities to grow closer and more like Christ each day while reflecting Jesus to the watching world around us.

Sis. Eunice Fiechter (Bro. Gerald – dec.) taught us how to live and in the month of December she taught us how to die. She was diagnosed with acute leukemia and on December 15 she went to sleep and woke up in the arms of Jesus. We pray for her family: Bro. Mike and Sis. Teresa and Bro. Todd Earney, Sis. Jill Fiechter. We will all miss her mighty example. We also pray for Sis. Jane and Bro. Jack and Sis. Diane Schwartz have experienced the sudden loss of their grandson, Jaret Harshman. Our prayers go out to their family during this difficult time. Our church family embraces Bro. Travis and Sis. Jenna Frauhiger, Jarin, Randy and Hallie as they grieve the bittersweet death of little Marissa Lyn Frauhiger. She was born to Bro. Travis and Sis. Jenna just four months ago with several complications. Although it’s so hard to let go of such a precious bundle, we know she is in a perfect body in the arms of Jesus.

Elder Bro. Lynn Fiechter and Elder Bro. Steve Ringger shared the Memorandum with us. As we think of doing life with our individual families, we realize there are moments when we need to sit down and address some topics. It’s encouraging to see the Elder body doing that same concept with each local congregation. For myself, I pray I will be as responsive to the Memorandum as I wish my kids would be during those ‘family discussions.’

For our Thanksgiving service Bro. Vince Pfister shared a few thoughts with us on 1 Thessalonians 5:18 “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” First off, it’s the will of God that we would have a thankful spirit. And when we have a thankful spirit, we have a right perspective of who we are with God, resulting in us praising Him. It also keeps us from the sense of entitlement, which ends up robbing us of being thankful. And thirdly, we can identify with Jesus and draw people to Him. We also appreciated the visit from Bro. Randall Gasser (Sis. Sue, Detroit, MI).

We pray for our Bro. Doug Gerber (Sis. Ruby) and Sis. Jean Steffen (Bro. Craig) who each recently had a hip replaced.

Bro. Trevor and Sis. Rachel Tonner, along with Samara and Maxton, welcome Elle into their family. Bro. Dean and Sis. Julie Tonner are thankful for another healthy granddaughter. Ty was born to Bro. Tyson and Sis. Amanda Frauhiger, Dirk, Mack, and Cash. His grandparents are Bro. Kris and Sis, Ann Frauhiger and Bro. Jim and Sis. Rachel Isch. Bro. Jarin Tucker and Sis. Julie Tucker rejoice in the birth of their healthy baby boy, Brant. He is welcomed by big brothers, Rhett and Trace, and grandparents, Bro. Jim and Sis. Karen Widmer of Smithville and Jay and Julie Tucker. These precious bundles have been given so much already by just being born into these loving homes.

Indiana, Bluffton North
Corinne Stettner, Amy Moser

“When you can’t sleep, don’t count sheep. Talk to the Shepherd.”

“In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.” Psalm 4:8

Sitting down to write this month, I am faced with reporting not only the joys and blessings of the past few weeks, but also the pain and sadness. While here on this earth, we are guaranteed both, but it is also here, in both, that we find the faithfulness of Jesus. A life given over to Him can rest in His goodness and grace, in spite of the valleys we walk through.

Bro. Travis and Sis. Jenna Frauhiger are going through that valley now. After four months with them, their daughter, sweet Marissa Lyn, passed away on December 10. She is survived by siblings: Jarin, Hallie, and Randy. Her grandparents are Bro. Keith and Sis. Kay Steffen and Bro. Kris and Sis.
Ann Frauhiger. Marissa rests safely in the arms of Jesus now and is wonderfully alive with the promise of a new body. We pray that the Frauhiger family experiences an overwhelming sense of comfort and hope as they look forward to the day when they will be reunited again.

Two lives were made one this month as Sis. Rachel Towle and Bro. Clayton Tonner (Bluffton) were joyfully wed on a beautiful day in December. Bro. Doyle Frauhiger had the opening service for his grandson, Bro. Clayton’s, special day. The parents of the couple are Bro. Jeff and Sis. Jodi Towle and Bro. Dean and Sis. Julie Tonner.

We were grateful to have Bro. Seth Gerber (Magdalena, MX) home recently and share a Wednesday evening service with us, as well as Bro. Gary Sinn (Sis. Paulette) from Latty, OH on a separate occasion. Elder Bro. Lynn Fiechter (Sis. Rhonda, Bluffton) also shared time with us as he assisted Elder Bro. Steve Ringger in delivering the Memorandum.

Over the past few years, we have enjoyed coming together at Christmas and caroling as a church. This year, we were able to share the true meaning of Christmas through song at a few facilities in our community. We were blessed with many carolers and rewarded with a delicious chili supper at the end.

We will again have a churchwide Bible study this winter. We look forward to getting to know David better as we study his attitude toward God, his friends, his enemies, his personal failures, and his repentant heart.

Note of Thanks:

Bro. Brett, Sis. Cindy, and Bro. Daniel Shorb would like to express their deep gratitude for the many prayers, notes of encouragement, and the gifts for Daniel over the past few months. They would like to ask for continued prayers as Daniel begins radiation treatments.

Indiana, Francesville
Jacki Huber, Mildred Clauss

“Remembering God’s faithfulness and forgetting past mistakes will make entering the new year a time of joyful anticipation”

- Richard DeHaan
“Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead”

Philippians 3:13

Our congregation recently shared Communion Service together. Bro. Nick Gutwein (Sis. Suzanne, West Lafayette) assisted our local ministers in serving.

Bro. Les & Sis. Christine Kaeb and their daughter, Lana, were here for a few weeks visit from Haiti. Bro. Chris Wuethrich (Sis. Carla, Chicago, IL) was also a visiting minister. We are thankful for visitors and the inspiration they bring!

The engagement of Bro. Mark Wuethrich and Sis. Larissa Metz has been announced. We rejoice with them and with their parents: Bro. Mark & Sis. Lynne Wuethrich and Bro. Brad & Sis. Karen Metz of Bloomington, IL.

On December 13, the afternoon service was given by our Sunday School Students who joyfully told the Christmas Story and praised the Baby Jesus. In the evening the Caroling Groups took the message in song to numerous homes in the area after which a chili supper was served back at the church dining room.

Bro. Lester Huber has completed his life’s journey of 94 years and has gone to be with the Lord. We extend sympathy to his dear wife, Sis. Glendoris (Wuethrich), and to his family, including five sons: Maurice, Ben, Stephen, Michael, Jerrel; and two daughters: Sis. Barbara Huber and Sis. Glenda Neukomm. May the loving kindness of the Lord comfort each of these dear ones.

Note of thanks:

A heartfelt thank you to all our relatives, friends, and fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who helped in some way during the illness and passing of our dear husband, father, and grandfather, Bro. Lester Huber. We felt very unworthy of all the love, kindness and generosity. May God richly bless each of you for this support so lovingly given. The Family of Lester Huber

Indiana, Indianapolis
Nancy Pfeifer, Sandy Lichtle

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.”

Psalm 92:1

On November 22, we were encouraged and blessed during
our annual Thanksgiving program as several from our congregation participated in readings and a women’s group sang, “Wonder, Merciful Savior.” Then our annual Sunday School Christmas program was held a few weeks later on December 13. It was a joy to hear the children proclaim the wonderful story of Jesus’ birth through verses, poems, and songs.

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men.”
Galatians 6:10a

On December 2, Bro. Lee and Sis. Desma Klopfenstein (Latty, OH), currently serving at Hospital Lumiere in Haiti, shared with us their experiences and the opportunities to help the Haitian people both physically and spiritually.

“I [Jesus] was in prison, and ye came unto me. Verily I [Jesus] say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”
Matthew 25:36b, 40b

A group of us visited a women’s prison and brought them Christmas gifts and a message of hope, love, and forgiveness through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

We had the blessing and privilege of celebrating the 50th wedding anniversary of our dear Bro. Bill and Sis. Gail Bradford, along with their family, on December 9. We appreciate their love and service to our church over the past thirty years.

“Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.” Blest Be the Tie, Hymns of Zion, #156

We will miss Bro. Jon and Sis. Katherine Magnin as they plan to soon move to Atlanta, GA. Our prayers are with them as they begin a new chapter in their lives.

We express our heartfelt thanks to the visiting ministers this month: Bro. John Bradle (Sis. Jill, Roanoke, IL), Bro. Brian Huber (Sis. Jacki, Francesville, IN) and our Elder Bro. Wayne Banwart (Sis. Charlen, Champaign, IL).

Indiana, Lacrosse
Meagan Frank, Julie Rocke

“Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” Matthew 1:22-23

What an amazing thing to think on…God with us. The Door to salvation, the Lamb whose blood was shed for our sins, the Eternal one…living, breathing and experiencing life on this earth with all of the emotions, pain and joy that come with it. He was and is “God with us”.

At our recent Sunday school Christmas program on December 13, this message was brought to us clearly and plainly. From the very youngest Sunday school children with smiles and lisps to the high schoolers and single group who read and sang with beautiful clear tones they told us the good tidings of Jesus’ birth.

The evening after our program, two groups were formed for our annual Christmas caroling evening. Despite the rainy evening, both groups enjoyed the opportunity to bring some Christmas cheer to a number of friends and neighbors and arrived back at church for the traditional supper meal of barbecue sandwiches, hot chocolate, and a time to fellowship.

Working backward, on the evening of December 11, the Bible class and high school young group met for their second annual Angel Tree shopping trip. They then had dinner together and enjoyed a festive evening of wrapping gifts and enjoying their time together.

Over the course of several weeks in November, the church brought in donations for the Thanksgiving food baskets. On November 22, the Sunday school children packed the boxes right after church. Then the teachers and older students delivered the baskets to families in the three communities closest to church. All students third grade and up had a pizza night and played games afterward. With our church families spread over several school systems, it is a real blessing to see the students enjoying their time together and building relationships, as they don’t all have that opportunity throughout the week.

We appreciate the services of several visiting ministers this past month. Bro. Dean Messner (Sis. Wanda, Winthrop, MN), Bro. Lucas Frank (Sis. Crystal, Detroit,
MI) and Darren Plattner (Sis. Sue, Champaign, IL) gave willingly of themselves in the service of the Lord. May each of them be blessed as they were a blessing to us.

As the Christmas season comes to an end and a new year begins, let us each remember to welcome our Lord and Savior into our hearts and lives on a daily basis as Emmanuel, God with us.

**Indiana, Leo**

*Kirby Reutter*

Did you ever wonder what goes through the mind of a Gateway resident? Do you ever reflect on your own journey? Was the Lord faithful to you in 2015? Was He present even when He seemed most absent? Will the Lord be with us in 2016? Who can heal us from the wounds of the past? Do we know what the future holds? Or rather, do we know Who holds the future? How do we deal with the age-old issues of sin, guilt, and grief? How do we reconcile faith, hope, and promise with nagging doubts, bitter disappointments, and shattered dreams?

This is how one Gateway resident described her year. If we are honest with ourselves, I am sure we can all relate to at least one verse in this journey.

“Will this nightmare finally end?
It seems like I cannot blend in.
I try and try and try,
But it’s like trying to fly!
I just want to end this life,
But I can barely grip this knife,
As I see my life
Pass before my eyes.

Some people say I’m crazy;
That doesn’t amaze me.
When the anger fills my mind,
It seems to make me blind.
You will never find me;
I am never coming back.
So don’t bother looking;
I’ve covered up my tracks.
You say that you love me,
You say that you really care;
But now I don’t believe you;
Now I’m just scared.
Filled with broken hearts;
Filled with countless tears;
Filled with unanswered questions;
Filled with numbered years.
Filled with many mistakes;
Filled with bitter lies;
Filled with utter confusion;
That’s the world through my eyes!
I feel guilt wash over me,
Swallowing me down
Into a whirlwind of hurt;
There’s nothing left but drown!
It’s too much to bear,
Too much to think about:
Hate, bitterness, regret, grief,
betrayal—
Oh God, I just want out!
I hate the way I’m living!
I’ve been led astray!
Lord, please give me the strength
To find a different way!
As I lie here,
Staring at the ceiling,
The silence screaming in my ear
Makes me lose all feeling.
Who am I? Where am I at?
Will I ever find out?
Will I ever get back?
What happened?
I was doing so well.
Did I make a wrong turn?
Because now life is hell!

Why don’t we all just stop and think,
Stop and think for one minute:
Are you who God wants you to be?
And if you’re not—just admit it!
I feel my heart beat melting,
And the light that is shining through;
I see all the evil I have done,
And how much I have neglected you.
Though I’ve denied you in the past,
You’ve accepted me as your own.
And on the day of judgment,
I will fall to my knees,
At the foot of your throne!
‘Jesus freak!’
‘Holier than thou!’
I can only imagine
The names they will call me now.
Will they still love me?
Will they even understand?
Will they accept what I’ve become?
Or alone will I stand?
Are you here? Are you there?
Have you heard my pleas?
Have you heard my prayers?
I know you are;
You’ve always been there.
You’ve never left,
And with you, I can bear.
Your reassuring voice
Stills the storm that I’m in;
Mops up the rain,
And tames the howling wind.
Your presence wraps around me,
And calms my trembling limbs.
You gather me in your arms,
And whisper in my ear:
‘Everything will be okay.’
‘I’m here now. I’ve got you.’
They are the words I’ve longed to hear
From the lips of my Father.”

Blessings to all in 2016!”

Love, from Leo.
Indiana, Milford  
**Jodi Beer, Minnie Beer**

We are thankful for our visiting ministers recently: Bro. Daron Price (Sis. Monica, Athens, AL), Bro. Daren Metz (Sis. Rita, Gridley), Bro. Brett Lanz (Sis. Renee, Rittman) and Bro. Chris Laukhuf (Sis. Rachel, Latty). We appreciated having Bro. Scott Schafer (Sis. Gigi, South Bend) visit on a Wednesday evening to present a Bible Study. May God be your rich rewarder!

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” Isaiah 9:6.

We spent a Sunday evening Christmas caroling to our neighbors, friends and church family. What a blessing it is to fellowship together. We thank our Sunday School students and teachers for the beautiful Christmas program. We always enjoy the enthusiasm of the young children in singing and reciting various poems. May we all feel God’s love, peace and joy as we reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and what Christ has done for us.

Indiana, Remington  
**Jenni Honegger, Marcella Tyler**

We thank our visiting ministers Bro. Ryan Schock (Sis. Melanie, Bloomfield, IA) and Bro. Marshall Heinold (Sis. Janice, Washington, IL) for sharing the Word this month.

We are excited to announce that Bro. Joel and Sis. Wendy Putt have welcomed a new little girl to their home. Nora Elizabeth arrived on November 23 and she is just as precious as can be. Big brother Boden, big sister Emery, and grandparents Bro. Don and Sis. Suzie Fiechter (Bluffton, IN) and Bro. Brian and Sis. Tami Putt (Francesville, IN) are all thankful for a new little one in the family to love. We pray that Bro. Joel and Sis. Wendy will seek God’s wisdom and guidance as they raise their children to know Him.

We are thankful that Bro. Stuart Kilgus (Elder Bro. Dan and Sis. Jenna) has sought the Lord’s guidance for his helpmate and is now engaged to Sis. Sarah Lanz (Bro. Greg and Sis. Linda, Rockville, CT). We wish Bro. Stuart and Sis. Sarah every happiness and blessing as they prepare to become one in the Lord.

This past weekend we enjoyed hearing our Sunday School children recite their verses and sing their songs at our annual Christmas program. From the littlest voices in the preschool class through the reading of the Christmas story by the Bible class students, we were blessed to hear once again the story of our Savior that never grows old. Later that evening many of us participated in our annual Christmas caroling. Even though it was a wet and rainy night, it was a joy to raise our voices in praise to our God and at the same time bring some Christmas cheer to those in our community who are not able to get out and about by themselves very often anymore.

Indiana, South Bend  
**Joshua Martinez**

“The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” Exodus 15:2

We pray for our Elder Bro. Curt Frank (Sis. Lyla, LaCrosse, IN) and Sis. Sue Beebe (Bro. Bob) who are both recovering from back surgery. We are also thankful that Sis. Jocelyn Payton (Bro. Marty Langhofer’s sister) is doing well after suffering seizures.

On December 12, we enjoyed caroling followed by a chili supper. The children love the traditional ride in the White Cloud (Bro. Rich and Sis. Samantha Gramm’s white school bus). The next day, our Sunday School children reminded us through the Word and song, of God’s wondrous gift to the world of a Savior.

Our annual business meeting was conducted on December 16. We appreciate those who faithfully manage the physical and structural needs of our church. We thank our Heavenly Father for having dealt with us bountifully during the past year. May the God who upholds the universe by the word of His power be near unto you in the new year.

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Psalm 90:12

Indiana, Valparaiso  
**Sherry Meiss**

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

Our Christmas program was spent at the home of Ted and Audrey Hitz this year. There was a warm greeting with a carry-in, much fellowship and song of the season. Family and friends reaching out to each other during this time of the year reminds us of how we need to continue encouraging one another every day.

Many have gathered together for the annual Christmas caroling. Our travels took us from the town of Chesterton back thru the town of Valparaiso and down to Kouts. Visiting with Sis. Jackie Feller and Sis. Julie Bucher’s father, Norm Jacobs, and other residents at Addison Point in Chesterton, stopping in the home of Ted and Audrey Hitz in Valparaiso, to Sis. Leona Bucher’s house in Kouts. Since our souls were fed with peace and joy, we went to feed our stomachs with pizza.

Brother Tim Bucher headed up a food drive again this year and it was very successful. Many of the items were gathered from the home owners of Grand Prairie subdivision and our congregation. Everything was boxed up and went to The Housing Opportunity organization in Valparaiso. Thanks to all who participated in this way of giving to our community in need.

Last Wednesday night our congregation went to Life Care Retirement Home to sing Christmas carols for the elderly living there. There were so many of the residents that came down to the bird room to listen and partake in the joyful sounds of song. You could really feel His spirit among us.

How special to see Sis. Tasia and Bro. Logan Weiss, son and daughter of Bro. Dennis and Sis. Marsha Weiss, home for the holiday. We miss them so much, but are proud of them both as they continue their walk with Christ.

We were also blessed to have Bro. Bob and Sis. Marguerite Hoerr in church with us. How it brightens up the day when they are able to make the drive. It has filled our hearts to have the many visitor’s that came to be with us the past couple months. Thanks be to God!

Hopefully, you have been given many opportunities to reflect back on your life so you may continue to improve into the New Year.

’T thank you for the prayers of Sis. Claudia Thomas. She is doing much better and is able to get around a little at a time. Please remember to continue to pray for Sis. Leona Bucher as she goes through her shoulder surgery and recovery.

Don’t forget to pray for each other. If you are ever in the area, please know you are welcome to come and worship with us. We are just south of US Hwy 30 on IN Hwy 49.

Indiana, West Lafayette
Kris Widmer, Libby Wahl

Our dear Bro. Sam Holliger stepped from this life into eternity on December 6. He left a testimony of peace and little suffering, attributing this to the power of a praying church and the love and care of his family. Mourning his death are his dear wife, Laura, and his four children: Bro. Mike, Jim (Barbara), Kathy (Robert) Kieninger and Jeri Ann (John) Kieninger; a brother, Louis (Betty) Holliger and sister, Freidia Allen; 10 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. We will miss Bro. Sam’s cheerful, good-hearted presence! We will also miss Laura and Bro. Mike as they will be moving closer to family. We hope they will come “home” as often as they are able! We as a church body appreciate all the love and little deeds of kindness this dear family offered our young church! Bro. Sam’s funeral was held on December 11. Sharing the pulpit for this service was Elder Bro. Jeff Grimm (Sis. Ruth, Goodfield, IL).

Christmas Programs were enjoyed on two different occasions: Purdue Young Group on December 10 and the Sunday School Program on December 13. An added blessing is the participation of the PYG as they contribute to our church caroling, held December 17. Amid all the hustle and bustle of the season, may we quiet ourselves to listen for that song in the night!

“I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.” Psalms 77:11
Indiana, Wolcott  
Beckie Lehman, Erica Blume  

“Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her king;  
Let ev’ry heart prepare Him room  
And heav’n and nature sing…”  
Tabernacle Hymns, #253  

The Christmas season has arrived and we rejoice that God mercifully sent His son to earth as our Redeemer!  

Sunday, December 13 was our Sunday School Christmas parties and caroling. Due to the rain, we caroled to nursing homes rather than local elderly. We were able to enjoy a meal together afterward and a short singing shower for one of our engaged couples.  

We were thankful to have Bro. Jim Butikofer (Sis. Diana, Iowa City, IA) share the Word recently. Sis. Kim Schleman (Bro. Ryan) benefitted from surgery this month. We are thankful that all went well and she is recovering. Sis. Marge Hofstetter spent a few days in the hospital and now has returned to the nursing home.  

Sis. Teresa Earney (Bro. Todd) has said her earthly goodbye to her mother, Sis. Eunice Fiechter (Bluffton, IN). Bro. Todd’s and Sis. Teresa’s sons, Bro. Tyler (Sis. Michelle) and Bro. Trent are also part of our Wolcott church. Our hearts and prayers go out to this dear family.  

By the time this issue arrives in your home, Christmas will be past and a new year will be underway. Though we do not know how long our Father will delay the return of His Son, we know that it is promised, just as His first coming was promised to Adam.  

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9.  

We diligently pray and plead with our Father to keep calling those who have not turned to Him!  

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Iowa, Bloomfield  
Teresa Schock  

As another year starts, may we ponder this quote I saw in a local store. “We cannot start over, but we can begin now and make a new ending.”  

Sis. Deb Metzger was a surgical patient. May the Lord be ever near her. Sis. Kari Wuthrich (Bro. Ken & Sis. Lori) graduated from Illinois State University. She has a job in Illinois, teaching high school English and history.  

Presidential caucus night is coming soon here in Iowa. Politics and religion seem so similar at times. We need to be very discerning. One intimidating tactic that is used is called ‘political correctness’. Have you ever see the same tactic with ‘spiritual correctness?’ Let’s not forget the ‘simplicitly that is in Christ.’ I am so thankful for our brotherhood’s approach as to our role in this world. And that we can yet, freely and quietly, record our preferences at the ballot box. (Silver Lining, May 2004, ‘Light from the Word,’ entitled ‘Participation in Social Activism is an excellent read).  

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Iowa, Burlington  
Ivy Steiner, Monica Eisenmann  

We are thankful for our visiting ministers this past month. They were Elder Bro. Jon Schmidgall and Bro. Dale Frank (Oakville-Medipolis) and Bro. Darin Massner of West Bend.  

Our church enjoyed Christmas caroling on December 12 and our annual Sunday School program on December 13. It is so special to observe the smaller children singing with such joy in their hearts!  

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Iowa, Elgin  
Maria Rocke  

Bro. Lon & Sis. Sandy Butikofer welcomed their fourth baby granddaughter this year on December 17. McKenna Marie is the new daughter of Michael & Monica Milovancev (Nashville, TN) and joins her big brother Martyn. We wish them blessings and wisdom!  

Our Sunday school children did a beautiful job bringing forth the Christmas Story during the Christmas program. As was asked that evening, Jesus was a gift to us, now what will we do with this gift? The little children answered it enthusiastically, “Praise Him, thank Him, trust Him, and serve Him!”  

We were thankful our elder Bro. Wayne Grimm (Sis. Rose, West Bend) could join us for the evening.  

Also visiting this month was Bro. Jim Butikofer (Sis. Diana, Iowa City, IA) and Bro. Kevin Banwart (Sis. Sandy, West Bend, IA). May God bless their labors and add the increase.
Iowa, Garden Grove
Laura Funk

We are thankful for each of our visitors, especially ministering Elder Bro. Doug Schock (Bloomfield, IA) and Bro. Joe Gerst (Iowa City, IA). God bless you.

The Sunday School classes brought forth the birth, life and death of Jesus through verse and song. The younger student’s faces lit up when they said, “He is alive!”

We spent an evening feasting, fellowshipping and packaging items for local shelters at Kris and Britany Braun’s home. I had to reflect on the physical blessings we are given. We have warm homes, plenty to eat and abundant clothing. We packed a small bag of items that some folks will be very thankful for. What am I truly thankful for?

“Have you any room for Jesus, He who bore your load of sin?”

Hymns of Zion #193 vs. 1

Iowa, Iowa City
Diana Butikofer

Our Sunday School children presented our Christmas program on December 13. The theme was “The Names of God,” which include: Immanuel, Prince of Peace, Shepherd, Lamb, Counsellor, Word, King of Kings, Redeemer, Christ, Savior, and Lord. We appreciate the efforts of the teachers, students, and parents in this presentation.

Bro. Jon Pratt (Sis. Sharon, Valparaiso, IN) visited on Thanksgiving Day. Our Elder Bro. Jon Schmidgall (Sis. Julie, Oakville-Mediapolis, IA) was here on a Wednesday night. We thank them for their service to us and pray the Lord will bless them.

Iowa, Lester
Audrey Metzger, Joyce Moser

Our congregation rejoices with the angels in Heaven as another soul has come in repentance.

Mary Fagerness (Chris) has begun on the way. We pray she can feel God’s strength and nearness as she digs deep and builds her faith on the Solid Rock of Jesus Christ.

Spending time in the hospital this month were Sis. Cassie Mogler (Bro. Chet), and Bro. Willy Knobloch (Sis. Helen). We pray for the Lord’s strength and healing as they return home. Sis. Abby Knoblock (Bro. Andy) remains in the hospital awaiting their newborn baby. May the Lord be near each one that calls upon Him in their time of need.

We sincerely appreciated having Bro. Kevin Wulf (Sis. Annie, Morris, MN) share God’s Word at our Thanksgiving Day service. Also, Bro. Larry Bahr (Sis. Julie, Ft. Scott, KS) ministered to us on December 20. May the Lord bless these servants as they labor on our behalf.

Congratulations go out to Sis. LaChelle Moser (Bro. Brad and Sis. Gloria) and Bro. Tyler Metzger (grandson of Bro. Art and Sis. Kris) as they made their engagement known to the church on December 20. We rejoice with them as they make plans to become united as one in the Lord.

Bro. Tyler also recently graduated from SDSU in Brookings, SD. We wish him the best as he begins his new job in the area.

We extend our sympathy to Bro. Phil Mogler (Sis. Donna), Bro. Howard Mogler (Sis. Lillian), Sis. Leona Moser, Sis. Florence Knoblock, and Bro. Frank Moser in the passing of their sister and sister-in-law, Sis. Melva Messner (Winthrop, MN) on December 17. May the Lord be their comfort and strength in this time of sorrow.

On Sunday evening, December 20, we had our annual Sunday school Christmas program. What a blessing it is to hear the children sing and tell the story of the birth of our Savior. Every year they end the program with all 170 students singing “Silent Night” and “Jesus Loves Me”. We want to thank all the teachers and students for their efforts.

As we begin the New Year of 2016, may we keep our eyes on the cross and be always ready in the service of the Lord.

“Up and strive; Up and strive; Brethren, for the true faith strive, Fortify yourselves in Jesus; Battle for the crown of life. Strive to win the Master’s praises; Gird yourselves with might and pow’r each day, On your way, On your way.” To Those In Conflict, Zion’s Harp, #21.

Iowa, Oakville-Mediapolis
Kelsey Banwart, Tami Lanz

Many in our congregation were able to travel to Morris, MN for the wedding of our Bro.
Nathan Frank (Bro. Curt and Sis. Kathy) and Sis. Lucy Wulf (Bro. Dave and Sis. Nancy) on December 6. We wish Sis. Lucy a warm welcome as she becomes part of our church family.

Joining the family of Bro. Orrin and Sis. Christa Lanz is baby Rebecca Ann, born on December 7. Also welcoming her home are siblings: Abigail and Miles.

During the Christmas season it is a special blessing to hear the story of Christ’s birth. We sang songs about the Babe so long ago that came to save this world from our sins, as we had our annual church Christmas caroling on December 12. Our Sunday school students sang to us at our church Christmas program on December 13.

We are thankful when a soul finds peace with God and man. Siblings Nathan Sharp and Sara Sharp (Gary and Tammy Sharp) both had their peace announced on December 13, and are awaiting baptism.

Our visiting ministers this month were Bro. Michael Wagenbach (Sis. Erica, Wolcott, IN), Bro. Tony Manz (Sis. Denise, Junction, OH), and Elder Bro. Rod Bajema (Sis. Sue, Lester, IA). We are thankful they were willing to be used to bring forth God’s Word.

As we have entered into another year, a saying comes to mind that I’ve heard said over the pulpit at New Year’s Eve service: “The new year lies before you as drifts of newly fallen snow. Be careful how you tread it, for each step will surely show.”

**Iowa, West Bend**

**Yvonne Bruellman, Becky Virkler**

“When a Christian dies, precious in the prize” Hymns of Zion

Sis. Helen Zaugg has gone from this earth to her eternal rest. Cherishing Sis. Helen’s memory are her children: Roger (Joyce) Zaugg, Jordan, MN; Bro. Bill (Connie) Zaugg; Sis. Marvella (Bro. Larry) Wickman; and Beth Zaugg, Portland, OR; also her sisters: Sis. Irene (Bro. Lester) Kaiser, Morton, IL and Sis. Ruth (Bro. Jim) Bahr, Fort Scott, KS. Because of stormy weather, traveling to Sis. Helen’s funeral was not possible for all, but we were thankful ministering Bro. Larry Bahr (Sis. Julie) Fort Scott, KS could be with us.

In the month of December we were blessed with many reminders of Christ’s birth.

It is always a blessing to hear the Sunday School children remind us of Christ’s birth with word and song. Thank you to all that make this possible.

Among our visitors were Elder Bro. Curt Frank (Sis. Lyla, Lacrosse, IN), Bro. Kevin Wulf (Sis. Molly, Morris MN), and Bro. Dallas Massner (Sis. Christy, Burlington, IA). We are always thankful for those who are willing to share God’s word.

On December 13, the engagement of Bro. Braden Knobloch (Bro. Cameron and Sis. Tammy) to Sis. Kenzie Elder (Bro. John and Sis. Joleen) from Winthrop, MN was announced. We wish this dear young couple God’s blessings and guidance as they prepare for a lifetime together.

Our prayers are extended to Sis. Della Metzger and Ernie Kellenberger (Sis. Edith) as they have been hospitalized. May they look to God for their refuge and strength.

“Shew thy marvelous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them”. Psalm 17:7

Wishing all a Blessed New Year.

“Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord”. Psalm 31:24

**Japan, Tokyo**

**Anna Inoue, Marie Inoue**

“Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room.” The New English Hymnal #122

During this Christmas season our church family has been blessed to sing Christmas carols to residents at two local nursing homes. We also enjoyed a visit from Bro. Andro Kovacs (Budapest, Hungary) who was here in Japan on business.

The Sunday school students, who come to church as a part of weekday English classes, have been practicing their parts for the Christmas program. Students and their mothers joined for the annual Christmas cookie decorating and program practice. In the monthly ladies’ meeting, Bro. Akihiro Ito led as we read from several chapters in Isaiah foretelling Jesus’ birth. Our Christmas program
brought many families along with the Sunday school students. We are always blessed to have a full church. Hearing the Christmas story reminds us of our Savior’s humble birth. May we ever give thanks to God for the indescribable gift of Jesus.

**Kansas, Bern**

*Jill Meyer, Rita Menold*

First-time grandparents, Bro. Jeff and Sis. Kim Baumgartner, are thankful for the arrival of Titus Benjamin Pfaffman, born on December 11! Little Titus was born to Bro. Micah and Sis. Olivia (Washington, IL). Children are truly a gift from God!

Saturday, December 12, we enjoyed our all church Christmas caroling, followed by a soup supper! It is always a blessing to see the joy we bring to those who we can hear of Christ’s birth through song.

The following Sunday, we once again heard the Christmas story through song and verse from our Sunday school students. We also extend our thanks to Bro. Klint Beyer (Sis. Kara, Sabetha) for joining us that afternoon and sharing from the pulpit.

We rejoice with Trenton Meyer (Bro. Larry and Sis. Jill) who has surrendered his life to God in repentance! We pray that he will soon feel that perfect peace of heart that comes from God.

Sis. Jessalyn Strahm (Bro. Faron and Sis. Jana) graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in Hotel and Restaurant management. Our prayers are with Sis. Jessalyn, as she looks to God to direct her path into the work force.

**Kansas, Ft. Scott**

*Karen Kellenberger*

Our deepest sympathy goes out to Bro. Jim and Sis. Ruth Bahr in the passing of Sis. Ruth’s sister, Sis. Helen Zaugg from West Bend, IA last month.

The Sunday School Christmas program was Wednesday evening, December 15. Every young voice sang and spoke the glorious Christmas story enthusiastically from their heart. Another evening, our congregation joined the Lamar brethren to sing Christmas carols at the Lamar nursing home and enjoy a soup supper and fellowship afterward.

On Sunday, December 19h, Elder Bro. Randy Kellenberger (Kansas City, MO) filled in for our absent ministering brothers. We thank him for his ministry.

**Kansas, Kiowa**

*Millicent Frieden, Janice Bahr*

As we celebrate Christmas we need to stop and think what it really means to us as Christians. In the song, “The Babe of Bethlehem” verse 2, it reminds us that it is the man that walked in Galilee, not the babe and not the manger, but the cross that sets our spirit free.

We were privileged this month to have a very special group of young people come to Kiowa to share in our Celebration of Christ’s Birth. They caroled with us, traveled to Cherokee,
OK to package meals at Kids Against Hunger, joined us for our Christmas Program, and sang a couple of beautiful songs to end the program. The fellowship was wonderful, and we truly appreciate the effort they made to travel all those miles to give us a joy-filled weekend. May God bless each of them!

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

**Kansas, Lamont-Gridley**

**Dorene Metzger**

Sympathy is extended to Sis. Lorean (Bro. Glenn Anliker) in the passing of her mother, Grace Banes. Bro. Brandon (Sis. Maria Emch, K.C., MO) brought our Thanksgiving evening worship service to us.

The Sunday School students filled Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes. Then the evening of December 3, the students prepared 40 Care Bags of personal items for the needy who utilize Harvest House in Emporia. The rest of that evening was spent wrapping gifts for around 80 residents of Hartford, Inc. This facility for the mentally and physically challenged has been a church project at Christmas for many years.

December 7 then found the church family caroling to the Hartford, Inc. residents and passing out their gifts. It seems so appropriate to teach the young to give with a willing heart and to allow that action to become a lifelong trait in their lives to glorify Christ, Who gave His all.

Sis. Liseten (Bro. Loren, deceased) Strahm has been able to move from a nursing home back into assisted living again. Her address is: Brookdale Emporia, 1200 W. 12th Ave., Emporia, KS 66801.

Our Sunday School program was presented through both joyous news and solemn thoughts on December 6. Following church that afternoon, the students, teachers and some parents went caroling to the older ones in our congregation. A soup supper followed at the home of Bro. Ron & Sis. Jane Isch.

The all-church caroling visited four nursing homes/assisted living facilities on Sunday afternoon on December 13. Bro. Albert & Sis. Mara Jean Edelman hosted the carolers to a potato bar supper to finish the evening of fellowship.

Bro. Lloyd Luthi was a hospital patient and now is under hospice care in his home. Cards of love and encouragement can be sent to 2374 KS 58 Hwy, Madison, KS 66860.

The Christmas Season ends one year and New Year starts a new year. Resolutions seem somewhat aimless to me; our intentions to follow Christ and the Heavenly Father should be at the forefront of our minds constantly. God is always cognizant of all aspects of our lives and thoughts and actions. I pray that each of us feels Gods’ care and leading in the days to come as
we live, love and share, glorifying our Heavenly Father and His Son.

Kansas, Sabetha
Crystal Hartter, Dawn Strahm

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near;” Isaiah 55:6

The wise men diligently sought the Lord as a babe in Bethlehem and we too must seek after Him as our Savior.

We enjoyed our church caroling and soup supper on December 6. The following weekend, the Sunday school children beautifully sang the story of Christ’s birth at their program.

Visiting ministers this month were Bro. Dale Zeltwenger (Sis. Rachel, Morris North, MN) and Elder Bro. Wayne Grimm (Sis. Rose, West Bend, IA). May God bless their labors in the ministry.

Note of Thanks:

We would like to thank all who sent us cards, letters, food and every kindness after our daughter, Sonia Irwin, lost her fight with cancer. Every expression was greatly appreciated. God bless each of you. Bro. Elmer and Sis. Phyllis Strahm

Kansas, Wichita
Max and Judy Reimschisel

At Christmas time we sing songs of praise to Jesus who is our Savior and Redeemer. We sing Christmas carols that give Him honor and praise. Our Christmas program reflected praising Him as He came as a baby in the manger. Students were able to worship Him with excitement in their voices reciting verses and singing many Christmas carols.

“Oh worship the King, all glorious above, And gratefully sing His wonderful love; Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of days, Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.”
Hymns of Zion #5 vs. 1

During the month of December on each Wednesday night, our small group went Christmas caroling. It was a good reminder to them of what the Christmas spirit is about. It was a joyful and uplifting time to each of us.

We certainly enjoyed our visit visiting minister for this month, Bro. Lowell Moser and Sis. Karen from Morris, MN.

We are thankful for this Christmas season and would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please come and visit us in Wichita. We are just a small group, but we certainly love to have company to worship with.

Mexico, Ixtlán
Ruth Gerber

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who…made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant…” Philippians 2:5,7

We thank God for Christ’s example to us, beginning with His humble birth, throughout his life and even in His submission to the cross. Our Christmas program this year highlighted our Lord’s humility in both song and also in the message. Bro. Matt Gerber shared from Philippians 2:1-16 and spoke to the children (and to the Lord’s children) about the way we bring our parents (and our Father) joy through humility, selflessness, and obedience. We were blessed by the program and also by the fellowship afterward.

This year we also went Christmas caroling with our Saturday “youth group” (which includes families with restless infants and children). We visited two of our sisters who have been unable to attend church due to poor health (Sis. Maria Pimentel and Sis. Rosa Segura). It was a blessing to sing together and to know the sisters appreciated the visits!

This past month we also enjoyed a visit from our Elder Bro. Mike Leman and his wife, Sis. Deb (Denver, CO). One of the memorable passages he shared was 2 John. We were reminded of the connection between love and obedience, and also about the truth that Christ came in the flesh and overcame sin, and how that doctrine makes a difference in the way we strive against sin. We want to be overcomers.

Michigan, Alto
Renee Steffen, Shelli Oesch

“Another year is in the past And a new one is on the horizon. Did you accomplish all the goals set? Were all your expectations met? Or did you give it all to God, Knowing only He can hold tomorrow’s?”
Were you content with His will and plan?

Did you leave it all in the Master’s Hand?” ibG.res

As we approach a brand new year, let us do so with trust in the Master’s plan, faith to believe He is in control, and with sincere desire, seek to do His will.

The Alto congregation wishes to express our thankfulness to all who traveled through our area and spent weekends here with us this past year. There is such a special blessing when we can meet, greet and fellowship with those of like mind and faith from our other churches across the land.

During this time of celebrating the birth of our precious Savior, Christmas caroling, Sunday school programs and get-togethers with family and friends, let us remember to pray for those who are less fortunate, those who are struggling in body, mind or spirit, and those who are experiencing ‘firsts’ without their loved ones this year.

This past month has brought many moments of thankfulness for prayers answered, new births, healing, and another soul’s desire to serve our Lord and Savior. Bro. Wally Gerst (Donna), Bro. Wes Daniels (Sis. Sue) and Bro. Tom Schrenk (Sis. Joan) are all back home, back in church, and holding steady. Sis. Jane Grawburg is out of the hospital and recuperating. We give thanks and praise to the Great Physician for providing strength for those who have been ill.

More reason for thankfulness is the welcoming of two new babies. Eli George was born to George and Heather (Blough) Pfaller (grandparents are Bro. Martin and Sis. Michele Blough). Ruby Kay was born to Bro. Kent and Sis. Holly (Plattner) Levy (grandparents are Bro. Howard and Sis. Kristen Plattner). What joy these two darling infants have brought.

“In days of youth seek ye the Lord...” Rachel Steffen (Bro. Ted and Sis. Sandy) has made known her desire to seek the Lord. We all rejoice with her and are thankful she has made this beginning.

Our prayers of thankfulness to the Holy Spirit’s guidance to the visiting ministers who shared the Truth with us: Bro. Matthew Steffen (Sis. Deanna, Princeville, IL) and Bro. Myron Knobloch (Lester, IA).

Notes:

I apologize for not mentioning last month that we had a special presentation regarding Lifesong for Orphans. We thank Richard and Moses, two young men from the school in Zambia, as well as Bro. Luke and Sis. Natalie Gudeman, for sharing their experiences with us.

Due to quite a few inquiries, I’d like to share the meaning of ‘ibG’ that comes after the poetry often written in our Alto news. The meaning is, ‘inspired by God’.

Michigan, Bay City

Sarah Knochel

Our thoughts and prayers are with those who spent time in the hospital recently. We want to remember Norm Andrzejewski (Sis. Linda), Sis. Barb Knochel and Bro. Gene Meylan (Sis. Carol) and pray that God will be with them as they heal.

We are thankful that Bro. Jesse Bedolla (Sis. Bonnie, Detroit, MI) traveled to Bay City to be with their family for Thanksgiving. We were blessed by his service to our congregation.

On December 11, we enjoyed the opportunity to go Christmas Caroling to several homes from our congregation and to an assisted living. December 13 was our annual Christmas Program. The students presented “The Joy of Christmas.” As a congregation, we stood to sing one final song, “To God Be the Glory” and the words of the author echoed the thoughts on each of our hearts:

“To God be the glory, great things he has done; so loved he the world that he gave us his Son, who yielded his life an atonement for sin, and opened the lifegate that we may go in. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood, to every believer the promise of God; the vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives. Great things he has taught us, great things he has done, and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son; but purer and higher
and greater will be
our wonder, our gladness,
when Jesus we see.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord;
let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord;
let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father
through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory;
great things he has done."

We trust that God’s blessings
and peace will be with each one
in the coming year. It seems like
so often our days and weeks blur
together and soon months and
years pass away. In the midst of
the routine and busyness of life,
there is great comfort in knowing
who God is in our life and that
he orchestrates and designs
everything according to his will.

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

Michigan, Detroit
Manuela Denes

One week from tonight, many
of us will be celebrating the birth
of our Lord and Savior Jesus
Christ. It is a neat opportunity to
look ahead into the New Year that,
Lord willing, many of us will also
be celebrating. My thoughts turn
to events of the year that is now
winding down. New lives that
have come into the world, loved
ones who have been called Home.
All those little ups and downs that
make one’s life wonderful, yet can
also make it difficult. As we look
forward to 2016, I appreciate this
scripture from Philippians 3:13-14:

“Brethren, I count not myself
to have apprehended: but this one
thing I do, forgetting those things
which are behind, and reaching
forth unto those things which are
before, I press toward the mark for
the prize of the high calling of God
in Christ Jesus.”

We’ve been blessed with a
busy Christmas season. Caroling,
making Christmas baskets,
collecting winter clothes for God’s
Storehouse and a visit from the
Windsor Apostolic Christian
Church (Nazarean) choir to
Woodhaven were all special times
for many of us to gather together
and enjoy the spirit of the season.

A highlight for the season
is the Christmas program that
is shared by the Sunday School.
This year’s theme was “Are You
Ready for Christmas?” Joseph and
Mary were ready; the shepherds
were ready, as were the Wise
Men. The final question “Ready
for Christmas” has this response,
“Jesus is Coming Again”! A
powerful message indeed, given by
our children through the gifts of
scripture and song.

A special thank you goes out
to Bro. Doug Harmon (Toledo,
OH) who came to share the Word
to the residents of Woodhaven this
month. Accompanying Bro. Doug
was his father in law, Bro. Gale
Stoller. It’s especially appreciated
during this busy time of year!

Congratulations to Sis.
Linda Reardon on the birth of a
beautiful grandson, Liam Henry
Parker. Thankful parents are Scott
and Erin Reardon.

Our thoughts and prayers are
with Sis. Tiffany Wieland (Bro.
Steve) and their family as she
prepares for surgery in the near
future.

“We fear thou not; for I am with
thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy
God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I
will help thee; yea, I will uphold
thee with the right hand of my
righteousness.” Isaiah 41:10

Minnesota, Minneapolis
Brenda Messner, Betty Lindwall

We were blessed to hear
the testimonies and witness the
baptisms of Bro. Rick Tilbury
(Bro. Jim and Sis. Deb) and Bro.
Adrian Rocke (Elder Bro. Duane
and Sis. Bonnie) on November 28
and 29. We rejoice with these two
young men as they continue their
walk with the Lord.

Visiting minister Elder Bro.
John Wiegand (Sis. Jane, Silverton
OR) was here to assist with the
testimonies and baptisms for the
weekend. We were so thankful to
have them back in Minneapolis,
though for a short while. They are
always dear to our hearts.

Our sympathy is extended to
Sis. Diane Stewart (Bro. David)
in the loss of her sister Sharon’s
husband, Dennis Teske. He passed
away on November 25 after a
9-week struggle following surgery.
They are from Chisago, MN.

The week of November 23-28
many brothers and friends from
Minneapolis and Winthrop tore
off and replaced the roof at Living
Hope Ministries in Northeast Minneapolis. We want to thank all for their willingness to give of their time and help others in need.

On December 13, the Sunday School children performed their Christmas program titled “Go! Tell It!” We were so blessed to hear the children’s message that we are “All of Us as Messengers.”

Minneapolis college student Sis. McKenzie Elder (Bro. John and Sis. Joleen) from Winthrop was announced to be engaged to Bro. Braden Knobloch (Bro. Cameron and Sis. Tamera, West Bend, IA). We rejoice in prayer with the couple as they prepare for their wedding.

The wedding reception of Braden (Bro. Kent and Sis. Mary) and Caroline Mogler was celebrated on November 21 at the Dodge Nature Center. Braden and Caroline live in California where they are completing the medical residencies.

Minnesota, Morris
Amy Ekren, Heidi Pfaffmann

We were blessed to have visiting ministers with us again this month. They included Elder Bros. Rod Bajema (Sis. Sue, Lester, IA) and Jon Schmidgall (Sis. Julie, Mediapolis, IA) along with ministering Bros. Tom Lanz (Sis. Mary Mediapolis, IA), Dale Frank (Sis. Tina, Mediapolis, IA), Aaron Frank (Sis. Sharla, Elgin, IA), Dallas Massner (Sis. Christy, Burlington, IL), Greg Fehr (Sis. Denise, West Bend, IA), and Dale Zeltwanger (Sis. Rachel, Morris North, MN).

Each of these brothers, as well as many other guests, were here for the wedding of Bro. Nathan and Sis. Lucy Frank. It was a beautiful weekend and we’re grateful for all who could come. Parents of the couple are Bro. Curt & Sis. Kathy Frank (Mediapolis, IA) and Bro. Dave & Sis. Nancy Wulf. We wish them God’s many rich blessings as they begin their life together as one in the Lord.

Our prayers for healing are with Bro. Lloyd Fehr (Sis. Diane) as he has spent time in the hospital this past month.

A sweet little girl was born to Bro. Anthony & Sis. Amy Ekren. Aubriel Joy is welcomed home by older siblings: Alton, Annabella and Andon.

“Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.” Psalm 127:3

Note of Thanks:
I would like to express my sincere, humble thanks to each of you who have remembered me when I was in the hospitals and the extended stay at the Barrett Care Center.

Your thoughts, prayers, cards, gifts, calls, and visits were all very much appreciated by me and my family. Special thanks to our church ministers for their visits and to the singers who came to sing hymns at the Care Center.

May God’s blessings be with you for your kindness. I’m thankful to be home again.
Bro. Chris Moser

Minnesota, Morris North
Lois Schmidgall, Wanda Gramm

Isaiah 9:6 “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE. Let us reflect on the greatest gift ever given and that is the GIFT of JESUS whom came into this world to SAVE the world.”

Special Christmas events to proclaim the birth of our Savior were the Sunday School Christmas Program, Christmas Dinner, and Christmas Caroling. Our church also had the opportunity to serve the area community by participating in Santa for Seniors which is an event where food baskets are created and delivered to area senior citizens. Blessings beyond measure were felt in this community project.

We want to remember in prayer those whom are experiencing health issues. They are Sis. Kim Moser (Bro. Todd) and Sis. Josey Esterling.

Kelsey Knobloch (Sis. Brenda) has expressed that she has found peace in her heart with her God and wishes to be baptized in the Lord. We anxiously look forward to this blessed event with her.

Visiting minister this month was Bro. Glen Steiner, Winthrop, MN. We appreciate you and our local ministers for giving yourselves to further the preaching of God’s love.
Minnesota, Winthrop
Lindsay Schmidt, Becky Braulick

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 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 2:11-14

Our church enjoyed Christmas caroling in the community. Many expressed their joy and thanks to us for coming and singing for them. It is always a blessing to be able to bring cheer to each one. Carols are good reminders of the miracle and blessing of Christmas. May each one glorify and thank God for His wonderful gift to mankind. We pray that all will accept His gift of Salvation.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33

We rejoice with Sis. McKenzie Elder (Bro. John and Sis. Joleen) and Bro. Braden Knobloch (Bro. Cameron and Sis. Tammy, West Bend, IA) as they have announced their engagement. We are thankful they first sought God and we pray He will abide with them and bless them and their families as they prepare for their marriage.

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;” Ecclesiastes 3:1-4


Our sympathy and prayers go out to Vernita Messner in the passing of her sister, Verda Messner. We send condolences also to Verda’s brothers-in-law: Bros. Mike (Sis. Joyce), Marvin, and Jerry Messner; and sisters-in-law: Sis. Bernadine Messner, Idabell Witt (Don) and Shirley Demm.

The responsibility of Trustee has fallen on Bro. Jerry Messner. We pray for Bro. Jerry as he was voted in to take over these duties. We thank Bro. Michael Messner (Sis. Rachel) for his years of service.

We pray for Bro. Roy Howk as he fell and fractured his pelvis and is now in the long-term care unit in Glencoe. We also pray for Sis. Becky Braulick (Marlyn) as she recovers from gallbladder surgery, Harlan Jerabek (Patty) as he recuperates from rotator cuff surgery and little Brayden Rubendall (Vanessa Isaacson and Kent Rubendall) as he recovers from having his appendix removed. Our thoughts and prayers also continue to be with Kent Rubendall (Vanessa Isaacson’s fiancé). We also pray for God’s comfort and presence with those battling cancer and any other health concerns.

Note of Thanks:

Greetings, A special blessing to my wife, and our family for their prayers. Bless the Brothers, Sisters and Friends in the Savior’s name.

I want to thank each one for their prayers during my 5 months of treatment with cancer. I have received many get well cards from the Brotherhood (thank you). As of November 2015 I was told that I am cancer-free, Praise the Lord God, Jesus Christ and Friends. I will still need to have follow-ups with the cancer doctor.

In closing, it’s a blessing to be back in church with my Love Ones.

What Cancer cannot take from You
It cannot take away your Faith
shatter your Hope, or lessen your Love,
It cannot destroy true Friendship, invade the Soul, or take away Eternal Life.
It cannot conquer your Spirit.

In Christian Love,
Bro. Ken Messner (Margaret)

Note of Thanks:

I would like to thank everyone for their concerns, prayers, get well wishes and gifts that I received during my recovery from surgery. May God continue to bless each one of you.

In Christ’s Love,
Sis. Becky Braulick (Marlyn)
Missouri, Kansas City

Julie Webel

December 6 was our annual Sunday school Christmas program. It is always a joy to watch the students sing praises to our great God. We finished the day with caroling and a chili supper. It was a blessed day. We spent two other evenings this month caroling at various locations concluding with our monthly nursing home singing. During these busy times may we stay focused about why we are here and the true meaning of Christmas.

Missouri, Lamar

Venetta Banwart

As I think about this season of the year, I have to think of the greatest gift that God gave us and how blessed we are to be able to have a hope of heaven though our salvation in Christ. It reminds me of the song we sing: “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 vs. 3.

We have been blessed to have visiting ministers come and feed us from God’s holy word this month they are: Bro. Ed Fritz (Sis. Barbara, Washington, IL), Bro. Barry Dietz (Sis. Rachel, Bradford, IL), Bro. Dan Stoller (Sis. Debra, Remington, IN), Bro. Dale Moore (Sis. Cheryl, Elgin, IA). May God bless each one and all that came with them to worship.

Missouri, St. Louis

Kary Mangers

“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.” Psalm 100:1

We had our Christmas program and the children, who are 9 and under, did just that! As a parent, I’m glad it is over. We pray our children do their best, that they stand nicely, smile, and speak loudly and we practice over and over again. We pray that the Lord is glorified and our children’s hearts are touched. We have a mental picture of how that should be accomplished and the stress of that can rob of us of the blessing of the moment. We leave the program glad they did “well” and miss the worship of the King. The Lord knows what children are like and He tells us to be like them. The disciples had a mental picture of who should come to see Jesus and sometimes our view is different from the Lord’s too. Jesus said to his disciples, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” Luke 18:16. God is training us just as we are to be training our children to “serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing...Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise, be thankful unto him and bless his name.” Psalm 100:2&4

Thank you to those who join our joyful noise on Sundays. Special thanks to our visiting minister this past month, Bro. Dan Stoller (Sis. Debra, Remington, IN).

Missouri, Taylor

Kathy Eberhardt

As Christmas approaches, we think of all the gifts Jesus gives all year long—love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness, and more. What can we give back to Jesus in the coming year? We can give our love and forgiveness to all our families and friends. Love can be our greatest gift for all the world.

Merry Ann Maynor gave her testimony of faith before church and was baptized after church on November 29. May God grant her much grace.

On Wednesday, December 2, Bro. Tom Bolliger (Sis. Jane, Tremont, IL) came to share a Bible study on discipleship. We must come through the door, be a follower of Christ, a teacher also. He also taught us to deny self, pick up the cross daily, and follow Christ. He taught us not to be self-centered, but centered on Christ instead.

New York, Croghan/Naumburg

Hope Graves

We rejoice with several families who have recently been blessed with new additions. Ezra Brien was born to Joseph and Bernice Virkler.
on December 2 and joins Aaliyah, Ella and Andrew at home. On December 4, Breysen James arrived to join parents Brian and Danielle Graves and siblings: Mikaedyn, Bennett and Mayliana. Amos and Racheal Bush welcomed their first child, Owen Paul, on December 8. May the Lord richly bless these growing families.

Our prayers have gone out for Joseph Bush, Bernice Hirschey and Dean Greenwood who were hospitalized this past month.

The Lord has blessed us with beautiful weather for December and we have enjoyed caroling at several locations. On December 4, we joined the residents at Country Manor Nursing and Rehab Center in Carthage who greatly enjoyed sharing Christmas carols with us. December 13 we walked around the 4 floors of the Lewis County Hospital and Residential Care Facility and enjoyed gathering for pizza after. December 20 took us to Steepleview Courts in Croghan for caroling and refreshments there.

December 20 was also our Sunday School Christmas program. We were blessed with the many children that participated and the parents and grandparents that brought them to learn and share the message of Christ with each of us.

On Monday December 14, we gathered at church to assemble cheer baskets for several families. This is as much a blessing to us as it is to them. May we always remember that Christ wants us to have a giving spirit and be willing to serve others in whatever capacity possible.

“O Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray. Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell. O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.”

Hymns of Zion #37, vs. 4

Ohio, Akron
Carla Miller

We are thankful to welcome Sis. Brianna Palitto (Bro. Bryon and Sis. Lisa), Sis. Carmen Graf (Bro. Todd and Sis. Lydia), and Sis. Trina Miller (Bro. Joe and Sis. Carla) as our sisters in Christ. Elder Bros. Bruce Endress (Sis. Elizabeth, Bradford, IL) and Mark Masters (Sis. Jeannine, Mansfield, OH) willingly served us the weekend of their testimonies and baptisms. We are thankful for the ministers who also served us that weekend: Bro. Clint Schmidt (Sis. Magdalena, Winthrop, MN), Bro. Todd Sinn (Sis. Janet, Latty, OH), Bro. Tony Manz (Sis. Denise, Junction, OH), Bro. Marvin Zollinger (Sis. Pam, Smithville, OH), Bro. Marvin Hartzler (Sis. Sue, Rittman, OH), and Bro. Bob Riggenbach (Sis. Lorie, Rittman, OH).

Our thoughts and prayers are with Bro. Sandor Bako (Sis. Kathy) as he has spent time in the hospital.

Ohio, Columbus
Julie Grimm

“Break forth into joy, sing together…” Is. 52:9

This time of year lends itself to joyous singing as we commemorate the birth of our Lord and Savior. First, we enjoyed the singing of our youth as the Sunday School children proclaimed the story of old through verse and song on December 6.

Peace on earth and good will toward men was expressed on December 13, by caroling at several local nursing homes.

Our thanks are extended to the following ministers: Bros. Alan Schambach (Sis. Sarah, Remington, IN), Jesse Bedolla (Sis. Bonnie, Detroit, MI), and Tony Manz (Sis. Denise, Junction, OH). The Holy Spirit’s presence was felt as the Word of Life was brought forth once again.

Ohio, Junction
Elizabeth Manz

Greetings! This month has brought about several changes, some new beginnings, and many reasons to be thankful.

Bro. Chris and Sis. Erica Manz are thankful for the safe arrival of Quintin Bennett on November 25. Quintin joins his 6 siblings: Sis. Shana, Adrian, Ashton, Malia, Jalen, and Jordan. His grandparents are Bro. Don and Sis. Connie Manz and Larry and Joyce Wenninger of Latty, OH.

We are grateful to see that God is still working in the lives of men! Joel Schneider (Bro. Michael and Sis. Jodi) heard the Savior calling and has answered! We are thankful and pray that God will be near him as he begins his walk of faith.

A number of us from our congregation were blessed to join the Sunday School students in
Christmas Caroling to several neighbors in our community on December 6.

December 13 was a special day for Sis. Brenda Manz and Bro. Wes Kaeb (Fairbury, IL) as they were united in marriage. Their parents are Bro. Ken and Sis. Gwen Manz and Leon Kaeb and Sis. LeAnn Kaeb. We will miss Sis. Brenda in our local congregation, but rejoice to see God at work and see His children follow His leading.

Sis. Carolyn Manz (Bro. Ben) spent some time in the hospital this month. We are thankful that she is doing better now and is up and around again.

During this holiday season, we have had many visitors join us. Several ministers joined us as well, including Bro. Regg Beer (Sis. Bev, Milford, IN), Bro. Matt Manz (Sis. Deanna, Toledo, OH), Bro. Paul Kilgus (Sis. Carmen, Fairbury, IL) and Bro. Brett Lanz (Sis. Renee, Rittman, OH). We are thankful for their service to us.

**Ohio, Latty**

**Carmen Stoller, Mindy Stoller**

Greetings of love to each of you! Our prayer is that the joy and blessings of the Christmas season can remain with us through the New Year. Our annual Sunday School Christmas program was a blessing for all. We pray that the message of the songs and recitations will remain with the children throughout their lives.

We are thankful to our visiting ministers this month including Bro. Doug Harmon (Sis. Lanna, Toledo, OH), Bro. Matt Feucht (Sis. Jennifer, Roanoke, IL), and Bro. Warren Schlatter (Sis. Cindy, Junction, OH). May they receive God’s blessings for their labors of love.

Arika Nuest (Bro. Lee and Sis. Paula) has professed having the wonderful peace of God! We look forward to the time when she can share her testimony and be baptized.

Bro. Walt Sinn (Sis. Renee) has spent some time in the hospital because of complications from chemotherapy. May he feel our love and prayers.

Our prayers are with the family of Sis. Lillian Schlatter (Bro. John-dec.) as she passed away this month. May the Holy Spirit provide comfort to her children: Nannette (Douglas) Durkee, Ann (Kevin) Geiger, Penny Boyce, Sis. JaNahn (Bro. Stan) Sinn, and Kim (Tom) Sinn, along with many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**Ohio, Mansfield**

**Elizabeth Walter**

This month began with our annual Business Meeting. We are thankful for each one who is willing to help with the duties of the church. Those receiving responsibilities for 2016 include: Bro. Dave Sauder (Trustee), Bro. Dan Sauder (Head Song Leader), Bro. John Ramsey, Jr. (Usher), Bro. Marvin Beer (Treasurer), Bro. Abe Rufener (Assistant Treasurer), Bro. Nathaniel Ramsey (Fellowship Hall Trustee & World Relief Treasurer), Sis. Amber Tucker (Kitchen Comm.), Sis. Tammy Beer (Lunch Fund), Sis. Robin Beer (World Relief Comm.), and Sis. Elizabeth Walter (Silver Lining).

We are thankful to welcome Bro. John, Jr. and Sis. Madalyn Ramsey into our church family. Listening to their testimonies of faith and seeing the work of God in their lives has been an encouragement to us all.

Many were able to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas, as we listened to the songs and verses presented by the children during our Sunday School Program. We appreciate the sincerity and innocence of our youth as they present the story of Christ’s birth and the gospel message.

We were glad to hold two evenings of Christmas caroling this year. Thank you to all who were able to help bring joy to the hearts of those who are shut in.

Our sympathy goes out to Bro. Wally Ramsier and his family in the loss of his brother, Bro. Bob Ramsier (Sis. Inez, Smithville, OH). May God be an ever-present comfort to those in time of need.

We were thankful for the willing service of Elder Bro. Bill Schlatter (Sis. Emily, Junction, OH). May they be richly blessed for their labors on our behalf.

Our hearts and prayers go out to our loved ones who met with illness or injury this month. We remember Sis. Sue Sauder (Bro. Kenny), Sis. Connie Boliantz (Bro. Doug), Sis. Theresa Keiper, and Sis. Sara Rice. May each one feel God’s nearness in the days ahead.
Ohio, Rittman
Julie Steiner, Maria Beery

“Be not dismayed whate’er betide, God will take care of you; Beneath His wings of love abide, God will take care of you. God will take care of you, Thru every day, O’er all the way; He will take care of you. God will take care of you.”

God Will Take Care of You, Hymns of Zion #138

We are thankful that God has taken care of the many in our church who have spent time in the hospital. Our prayers are with Sis. Karen Rufener (Bro. Dan), Bro. Galen Indermuhle (Sis. Cheryl), Bro. Reinhart Keiper (Sis. Betty), Sis. Melva Messner, Sis. Betty Bachman (Zane), Sis. Lori Stoller (Bro. Ken), and Sis. Linda Zollinger. We trust that God will continue to take care of them as they recover.

Just as God is able to heal those who are physically sick, we know He is able to do the same for us spiritually. We rejoice with Devan Lanz (Bro. Jeff and Sis. Darlene) as he begins his repentance. We know that God will take care of him now and in the days to come.

“Thru days of toil when heart doth fail, God will take care of you; When dangers fierce your path assail, God will take care of you.”

Our sympathy and prayers are with Bro. Tim Ramsier (Sis. Joni) in the passing of his father, Bro. Bob Ramsier (Sis. Inez, Smithville). On the same day, Sis. Melva Messner (Winthrop) also passed from this life. We appreciated having Sis. Melva in our area the last few years. She lived in our Nursing Home and assembled with us when she was able.

Bro. Matthew and Sis. Gail Steiner became grandparents again with the arrival of Emma Lu. Emma joins her parents, Aaron and Holly Steiner, and older siblings: Rebecca, Silas, and Myra. Tim and Sis. Kim Hanzie welcomed another granddaughter, Kelcie Noelle. Parents are Jake and Megan Zimmerly.

We were blessed to have ministering Bro. Ed Fritz (Sis. Barb, Washington, IL) and Elder Bro. Dave Graf (Sis. Barb, Akron) with us this month and want to thank them for serving us.

“All you may need He will provide, God will take care of you; Nothing you ask will be denied, God will take care of you. God will take care of you, Thru every day, O’er all the way; He will take care of you. God will take care of you.”

Ohio, Sardis
Faith Beard, Joy Indermuhle

We extend our appreciation to Elder Bro. Vic Bauman (Sis. Brenda, Smithville, OH) as he recently helped bring the Memorandum to us. How blessed we are to have the opportunity to work together toward the Kingdom.

We rejoiced to have a new sister-in-Christ as Kelly Fisher (Bro. Dave and Sis. Val) gave her testimony and was baptized into Christ’s fold on November 29. We are thankful that Elder Bro. Art Ingold (Sis. Bonnie, Rittman, OH) was able to join us to share the Word for the weekend.

“Joined to His congregation In blest association, Washed in His precious blood, From ev’ry bold transgression I now find consolation; How kind and merciful is God!”

Zion’s Harp #222

We extend our appreciation to Elder Bro. Vic Bauman (Sis. Brenda, Smithville, OH) as he recently helped bring the Memorandum to us. How blessed we are to have the opportunity to work together toward the Kingdom.

How uplifting to the soul to witness the enthusiasm of the Sunday School children as they brought the birth of Christ to us in verse and song. They reminded us of how God came in the flesh, and of how He lived His life on this earth as human, yet perfect.

Prayers for God’s emotional healing and comfort go out to Bro. Mark and Sis. Alice Ramsier and their sons as they recently lost their father and grandfather, Bro. Bob Ramsier, from this world into eternity.

Ohio, Smithville
Kara Stoller, Millie Stoller

As we have come through the Thanksgiving and Christmas season, we are reminded that it is important to live a life of thanksgiving and service not just at this time, but always.

We give thanks that God has been with Bro. Travis Wilson (Sis. Anne). He has recovered from his hospital stay.

Bro. Seth and Sis. Casey Wenninger have adopted a beautiful baby boy, Kayden Ezekiel, born November 19. Zavier, Lexi, and Drew are excited to help to serve this new bundle of joy.

We were blessed to have many
visiting ministers this month who have come to serve us. They included: Bro Lucas Frank (Sis. Crystal, Detroit, MI), Bro. Dana Nieman (Sis. Lea, Remington, IN), Bro. Mark Ramsier (Sis. Alice, Sardis, OH), Bro. Jason Dotterer (Sis. Lynn, Forrest, IL), Bro. Randy Gasser (Sis. Sue, Detroit, MI), and Bro. Dan Stoller (Sis. Deb, Remington, IN).

Congratulations to Bethany Gasser (Bro. Ken and Sis. SueEllen Maibach and the late Bro. Greg Gasser) and Jon Rufener (Bro. Dan and Sis. Karen, Rittman, OH) as they have announced their engagement. May they plan their wedding with a thankful heart.

“Praise ye the Lord; He is king over all the creation! Praise thou the Lord, O my soul, as the God of salvation! Come and rejoice; Lift up your heart and your voice. Praise Him in true adoration.” Zion’s Harp #5

Ohio, Toledo
Deanna Manz, Jenny Manz

It is very evident that God has blessed us richly when, even in our small congregation, we can clearly see God’s hand working in the lives of our members. This month we learned of the engagement of Bro. Stuart Kilgus (Elder Bro. Dan and Sis. Jenna, Remington, IN) and Sis. Sarah Lanz (Bro. Greg and Sis. Linda, Rockville, CT). We wish them many blessings and much grace as they plan for their lives together.

December is a good time of the year to remember God’s love. On Saturday December 5, we did just that as we spent an afternoon Christmas caroling to those we love. We also heard of God’s love told through our children during our annual Christmas program Sunday evening, December 13.

May we remember to count our blessings, not only this month, but throughout the year.

Ontario, Kitchener
Johanna Fortenbacher

She will be missed, but we’re thankful that Henry (Astrid) Schlauch’s mother, Else Schlauch, is no longer in pain. She died earlier in the month, but was able to say her good byes before that.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” Psalm 23:6

Bro. Randy (Sis. Sue Gasser, Detroit, MI), Bro. Neil (Sis. Kris Widmer, West Lafayette, IN), and Bro. Harvey (Sis. Jennifer Kuenzi, Silverton, OR) were with us this month and ministered to us. We really appreciated their visit here. Now we have more friends, some new and some old. We wish them God’s blessings and grace.

Oregon, Portland
Louisa Gallup

On November 25, Sis. Barb Moser (Bro. Ray, dec.), had knee replacement surgery. It went well and although she is still recovering, she was able to assemble with us recently. We are thankful for this and wish her the Lord’s healing powers in the days ahead.

On December 9, Sis. Virginia Cooper went home to be with the Lord. She was 81 and had been in declining health for several years. She was preceded in death two years ago by her husband, Bro. Ray; her parents, Bro. Guy and Sis. Rose (Steffen) Miller; and her siblings: Elva Unsicker (Ed, dec.), Bro. Bob (Sis. Pearl), Harold, Sis. Kay Hackenjos (Bro. Glen, dec.). She is survived by her sons: Ken (Linda), Don (Shirley), Bill (Janet), David and Gary (Diane), thirteen grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Sis. Ginny moved to Oregon with her parents in 1948 from Pulaski, IA (where she was born) and married Bro. Ray Cooper in 1955. These dear ones are both greatly missed in our small church family. Sis. Ginny will be remembered for her ready smile, cheerful and generous spirit and also her love for God’s creatures, great and small. Our sympathy and prayers go out to the Cooper and Miller families.

On December 15, Debbie (Brewton) Rumbold passed away, after having suffered from Multiple Sclerosis for a big part of her life. She was 55 years old and had been wheelchair bound for almost two decades. She is survived by her husband David, daughter Nicole Hanke (Dan), son Bryce, and a granddaughter. The family has our heartfelt prayers, especially since David is currently in the hospital with serious health concerns. Debbie had a very sweet and gentle disposition and bore
her burden without complaint for many years. Our prayers go out to the family, trusting in God’s infinite grace and mercy as He takes their loved one home.

Recently, our congregation enjoyed listening to our five Sunday School students sing and recite scripture during their Christmas program. It was appreciated by all and evident that they had practiced diligently.

We thank the visiting ministers from Silverton, OR for supporting us this past month: Bro. Chris Kuenzi (Sis. Mary), Bro. Ron Jones (Sis. Liz) and Bro. Jim Zollinger (Sis. Tresa).

**Oregon, Silverton**

**Kelsey Walder, Ann Kuenzi**

We were blessed to be served, in the ministry, by Bro. Darren Fehr (Sis. Nora, West Bend, IA), Bro. Mike Leman (Sis. Lisa, Portland, OR) and Bro. Dale Wulf (Sis. Becky, Lester, IA) this month.

We are happy to hear that Jodi Roth (Bro. Jim and Sis. Deb) expresses peace with God and man. We will look forward to her baptism.

Our all-church Christmas caroling was December 6. We were in six different groups to go sing.

Afterward, we returned to the Fellowship Center for a meal and time of fellowship.

What a blessing the Sunday school Christmas program was December 13. The children did an outstanding job presenting the story of Christ’s birth.

We are sorry we failed to mention that Bro. Ron and Sis. Liz Jones are grandparents again, as their daughter and son-in-law, Bro. Calvin and Sis. Rebekah Sinn (Latty, OH) have a baby girl named Madilyn Sherrill, born November 6.

**Pennsylvania, Philadelphia**

**Laura Isch**

Philadelphia Church has enjoyed spending time together this Christmas season. We were blessed with a time of caroling at local nursing homes, followed by a meal and time for fellowship. On Sunday, the Sunday School students presented their Christmas program. It is always encouraging to hear the future church share the love of God by singing the Christmas story to us. May God bless each one with a special measure of His love and nearness this Christmas season.

**Tennessee, Nashville**

**Buck & Taunia Henry**

“Oh, Another Year Is Dawning” as we reach the platform of 2016! The words this hymn by Frances R. Havergal echo the prayer on so many of our hearts... “Another year is dawning, Dear Master, let it be, in working or in waiting, another year with Thee. Another year of mercies, of faithfulness and grace. Another year of gladness in the shining of Thy face. Another year of progress, another year of praise, another year of proving Thy presence all the days. Another year of service, of witness for Thy love; another year of training for holier work above...” Amen.

We are so thankful for the visiting ministers that traveled to serve us this month: Bro. Mark Wettstein (Sis. Karen, LaCrosse, IN), Bro. Byron Stoller (Sis. Carol, Gridley, IL), Bro. Adam Uhler (Sis. Ann, Smithville, OH), Bro. Jeff Leman (Sis. Val, Bluffton North, IN). We were also blessed with visitors from Philadelphia, PA & Elgin, IA. We are also thankful to have Bro. Buck Henry’s mother, Edith, here for the winter as she is able to enjoy the mild Tennessee winter and much valued time with her grandchildren.

We rejoice with the Stoller family as Patience Stoller, daughter of Bro. Jeff & Sis. Cynde, has found peace with God and eagerly awaits baptism.

Christmas season was joyfully welcomed with a Christmas singing and Holiday supper at the church where the children enjoyed their Sunday School program, sharing the story of Christ’s birth. Even little three-year old Moriah Henry insisted on having her own little part in the Luke 2 recitation which she performed with such delight: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” We were thankful to be joined by some from Bluffton North and Athens, along with a dear friend from the community.

At this time of year, when the festivities of Christmas can sometimes become mundane or ritualistic, it is encouraging to see
the enthusiasm of the children and recognize the joy and purity that they bring with them to this most special time--the heart of a child at Christmas is one of the most heart-warming realities. May we each share in this elation as we celebrate God’s gift to mankind. “Joy to the World the Lord has come!”

If you are traveling to or through the Nashville area, please plan to worship with us. Often we gather on Saturday evenings for fellowship, and all are heartily welcome. Please contact us to confirm the schedule. Also, we typically meet on Wednesday evenings at 7:15 p.m. for call-in services and would welcome any midweek visitors. Contacts: Bro. Buck Henry 615-920-9584 buck@forhisglorypublishing.com or Bro. Don Sauder 615-351-7734 don.sauder@juno.com.

The Nashville Guesthouse is available for free accommodations to all those traveling through; please contact Bro. Buck for reservations.

Texas, Austin
Candy Meiss

Sending our Love and Greetings from Austin!

It is another beautiful day in Austin! The sunlight is streaming through our kitchen window. The trees in their many shades of green are swaying gently in the breeze. The temperature is in the 60s. We are thankful for a gorgeous day as we plan to celebrate our son’s 23rd birthday by taking a “Foodie Electric Bike Tour” in downtown Austin. There are many enjoyable outside activities at Lady Bird Lake and downtown for all to experience when you visit.

We are also thankful for the following visiting ministers: Bro. Matthew Rassi (Sis. Bridget, Chicago, IL), Bro. Rick Kaisner (Sis. Michelle, Chicago, IL), and Bro. Randy Kellenberger (Sis. Karen, Kansas City, MO). We are looking forward to a visiting minister in the following weeks from Bloomington-Normal.

We enjoyed a Christmas Program on December 13 which included many of the children from Stoney Point. We continually pray for godly order, guidance, and wisdom as we teach these precious souls about Jesus and His saving grace. We are asking for all to pray and consider a move to Austin to help in this special endeavor to mentor/teach the many children that God has brought into our fellowship.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16.

We are so thankful for visitors and encourage everyone passing through to stop and worship!

Please refer to our minister’s directory for directions and contacts.

Texas, Dallas-Ft. Worth

Services are generally being held the second Sunday of each month at the Holiday Inn Express, 4450 W. John Carpenter Freeway, Irving, TX. There are several singles and couples who gather and enjoy visitors. Please call ahead to verify. Bros. Wayne Banwart (217-493-2383), Leland Plattner (956-265-0351), or Dennis Rassi (512-321-2345).

Texas, McAllen
Kristi Plattner

We were blessed to have the following ministers’ visit and share God’s Word this past month. They were Bro. Marvin Dotterer (Sis. Nancy, Forrest, IL), Bro. Bill Wettstein (Sis. Heidi, Eureka, IL) and Bro. Dave Graf (Sis. Barb, Akron, OH). We appreciate their willingness to serve.

We welcome anyone coming to South Texas. If interested in housing on South Padre Island or in McAllen while visiting the McAllen area, please contact us for further details.

Occasionally there is a schedule change, so if you plan to be with us on Sunday, please verify the date by calling the Plattner’s at 956-607-8329 or you may access www.acmission.org and view the updated minister rotation schedule.

Sunday services are held at 10:30 and 12:30 at the Holiday Inn Express, 1921 South 10th St. Take the 10th Street Exit off I-83 and go ½ blocks south. Please see the ministers’ directory for local contact information.

Texas, Zapata
Mary Plattner

We appreciate the efforts of
Bro. Marvin Dotterer (Sis. Nancy, Forrest, IL) that spent a Sunday evening with us on their way home from McAllen.

We enjoyed a Thanksgiving meal at church with those who are here for the Winter season.

We anticipate doing the same for Christmas. Some of our winter residents are having their families visit over the holiday season. We all enjoy having the visitors.

We wish to thank all of those who packed clothing and foods for the residents in Zapata.

One of our grade schools did most of the distributing this year to the needy families. We have worked closely with the school for several years, but this year many of the teachers became involved in the project. All of the boxes of winter clothing were appreciated and used. We also had many blankets sent to us this year. They were also distributed through the school and some of the medical clinics in town. I wish you all could have seen the smiles and heard the appreciation expressed. We will do the same in January and February when the summer clothing will be distributed.

If anyone is coming to South Texas, we would be glad to have you worship with us in Zapata.

Vermont, Clarendon

Nathan and Miriam Reutter

Last week my dad and mom came to visit us. Since my dad has a problem with high blood pressure. It was interesting to note his pressure had dropped roughly 30 points overnight seemingly from the change in scenery. Although my dad’s experience was extraordinary, it was not unique. It prompted me to do some research on the benefits of living in this state. A quick Google search netted an article in yesterday’s USA Today that ranked Vermont as the second healthiest state in the nation, and better yet, it seemed to have been either in the number one or two spot for several years in a row. A little more searching showed that the town next door to us was ranked in 2010 as the number one place in Vermont to raise children according to Business Week. In looking back over time, despite our many misgivings, God has placed us in a beautiful state and town where healthy family living is encouraged. We have learned through our experience that we cannot do better than God, and it is best for us to submit to his providences, however awkward and out-of-place they seem to us at the time. If God is tugging on your heart to support a smaller church, the benefits, if extended in this direction, will likely be more than strictly spiritual. As God prompts, please obey.

Bro. Duane Reutter (Sis. Kay, Rockville, CT) was here for a visiting minister rotation. Other ministers this month were Bro. Dan Goric (Sis. MaryLou, Rockville, CT), Bro. Jeff Gerber (Sis. Carole, Rockville, CT), Elder Bro. Kevin Ryan (Sis. Cheryl, Rockville, CT), and Bro. Justin Koch (Sis. Marcia, Washington, IL). We appreciate the consistent support of the Rockville ministers, their wives and those others, of whom it would be numerous to list, who dedicate much effort to keep us encouraged in the Lord. We also were glad of Bro. Justin and Sis. Marcia’s visit. God’s name be praised and may He bless each one.

The healthful climate and the supportive brethren of nearby and distant larger churches have been remembered among other blessings this past Thanksgiving season. Now, as we enter into the Christmas season, we have another reason to be thankful. We have the opportunity to remember the humble birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Since our older Sunday school class worked through the book of Genesis this past year, the Christmas program had the children recite verses of the prophecies of Christ found in Genesis and of their fulfillments found in the New Testament. Although there was no foresight on the children’s part, the hymns they chose to sing at the Christmas program had a remarkable accord with the prophecies and their fulfillments. We were thankful to be able to see the hand of God in it. God bless your Christmas season with a deep reflection of Jesus’ humble birth. Being poor, both in spirit and in wealth, brings us closer to the heart and life of Jesus.
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Teacher Needed – Athens Preschool

There is currently a teaching position available at the Apostolic Christian Preschool in Athens, AL. We are looking for a preschool teacher who is willing to start as soon as possible. This is a wonderful opportunity to support one of our smaller congregations.

This is a paid position with medical benefits. Church housing is available. Applicants must be at least 19 years old and be a member of the Apostolic Christian Church. Basic computer skills are necessary.

If you have questions contact Sis. Kalla Knobloch at (309) 231-1755.
You may also e-mail your resume to acpreschool2015@gmail.com.
Thank you for your prayerful consideration!
Alternate Houseparent Couple Needed - Gateway Woods

Houseparenting at Gateway Woods offers an opportunity for a couple, directed of the Lord, to come to work in a full-time ongoing ministry at Gateway Woods. Due to a change in staff, we have a need for an Alternate Houseparent couple. This position offers competitive wages and generous benefits and a close relationship with brothers and sisters whose hearts and lives are dedicated to a common mission with an eternal reward. If you feel the call to explore this possibility, please call one of the brothers listed below.

“…there is absolutely a richness in serving as a family. We have been amazed in seeing how God’s Word holds true in any situation.”

Clint Plattner
Residential Program Manager
PO Box 125,
Leo, IN 46765
888.443.4283
clint.plattner@gatewaywoods.org

Lynn Stieglitz
Counseling Elder
15417 Doty Rd.
New Haven, IN 46774
260.466.6712
lynnstieg@gmail.com

Summer Internships Available – Home for the Handicapped

The Home for the Handicapped is once again offering a summer internship program for college age students interested in pursuing a number of various careers. Possible areas of interest include social work, accounting, nursing, activities, maintenance management, and human resources. This would be a tremendous opportunity to learn more about the vision and mission of ACHH, be used in God’s service, and gain unique experience to aid in your future career. The program is flexible, so whether you are interested in investing two weeks, two months, or anything in between, we would love to hear from you. Accommodations and lodging may be available. If you have an interest, please contact:

Jeremiah Psinas
Human Resource Manager
2125 Veterans Rd.
Morton, IL 61550
309-266-9781
jpsinas@achh.org
Opportunities Available in St. Louis, MO and Austin, TX

St. Louis congregation seeks renters for home near church
The Apostolic Christian Church in St. Louis is seeking a family, couple or single(s) to relocate to the area with a heart to support a small congregation and further outreach efforts. A newly-renovated, 3-bedroom home that is located across the parking lot from the church is available to rent immediately to assist with the transition. The St. Louis congregation asks that anyone who is interested to prayerfully consider answering this call, becoming part of their close-knit church family and sharing their vision for outreach and church growth.

Sunday School Teacher Needed in Austin, Texas
Previously a need was communicated for someone (couple, family, single) to assist in the children’s ministry in the Austin Apostolic Christian Church as a Sunday School Teacher. As a result of Outreach efforts, the church has been blest to have many young people come to Sunday worship without their parents. While a family has responded to this request, there is still opportunity for a second family or singles to help fill the need. If you have a heart to sow the seeds of the gospel in young hearts, prayerfully consider answering this call and becoming part of the Austin church family.

Desired Qualifications
For both of these opportunities, the following qualifications are desired:
1. Servant Heart - willingness to serve as outlined above and support a smaller Apostolic Christian Church.
2. Integrity - demonstrate high spiritual standards and be a committed Christ-follower.
3. Support local church efforts - willingness to understand the current outreach efforts within the church and work with established brethren.
4. Receive support from your local elder.

Expressing Interest in these opportunities
St. Louis - Contact Ministering Bro. Loren Schrenk at 314.994.1944 or seeclear@swbell.net.
Austin - Send an e-mail to acscsc@comcast.net. Ministering Bro. Matthew Rassi will direct your request as appropriate.

If you are e-mailing, include your name, contact information and a brief description of why you are interested and feel that God is calling you into this work. Your response will be directed to local church leadership and brothers within the Church Establishment and Mission Committees as applicable.

Light from the Word
Now available by downloadable PDF from the Apostolic Christian Publication website: www.acpublications.org
After entering the website, click on the item located at the left hand frame entitled, “Light from the Word Reprints”. The entire set of editorials are available in a complete download (June 1987 to current).
Communications Coordinator Needed - Gateway Woods

Gateway Woods is seeking a brother or sister desiring to serve as the Communications Coordinator. This position is open to full-time applicants and offers the opportunity to use one’s creativity, organization and communications skills to further the ministry. If you are organized and able to meet deadlines, have strong communication skills, and are a motivated self-starter, please contact one of the brothers listed below for more information and a job description.

Chad Kaeb
Development Director
PO Box 151, Leo, IN 46765
888.443.4283
chad.kaeb@gatewaywoods.org

Lynn Stieglitz
Counseling Elder
15417 Doty Rd., New Haven, IN 46774
Cell: 260.466.6712
lynnstieg@gmail.com

Assistant Houseparent Needed - Gateway Woods

Gateway Woods currently has an opening for a single sister to work in a full-time ministry with troubled children. The Assistant Houseparent position offers competitive wages and generous benefits and a close relationship with brothers and sisters whose hearts and lives are dedicated to a mission with an eternal reward. If you feel the call to explore the possibilities, please call one of the brothers listed below:

Ed Graf
Executive Director
PO Box 151
Leo, IN 46765
888.443.4283
ed.graf@gatewaywoods.org

Lynn Stieglitz
Counseling Elder
15417 Doty Rd.
New Haven, IN 46774
Cell: 260.466.6712
lynnstieg@gmail.com

APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN Counseling and Family Services

515 E. Highland Street, Morton, IL 61550 Tel: (309) 263-5536 Fax: (309) 263-6841 www.accounseling.org

ACCFS has numerous resources to assist someone as they interact with and help others. Our relationships can range from more formal mentoring situations to the informal, encouraging conversations we hold nearly every day. These resources and discussion aids can be found on our website. In addition, our Mentor Training presentations can give practical skills regarding helping others. Please visit our website at www.accounseling.org/mentoring to gain access to these resources. If you would like more information, please contact Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services at (309)263-5536.
House Parenting Opportunity at CVE in Mexico

CVE endeavors to provide *Life and Hope* to emotionally wounded Mexican children within the context of a Christ-centered family campus environment.

The ministry presently is seeking married couples or singles who are willing to answer the call and share their God-given spiritual gifts in the harvest as houseparents.

Houseparents have the opportunity to live with the children, share the gospel through daily nurturing, and endeavor to help break cycles of abuse or neglect from which many have come.

As one houseparent was quoted: “To see the miracle that the Lord has done and is doing in the lives of hurting children has been one of the greatest blessings of our lives. It’s the fulfillment of our purpose here on earth, to be the hands and feet of Jesus to those that desperately need Him.”

The CVE campus is located on the edge of Magdalena, MX and offers a secured 50-acre ranch inclusive of seven homes, a school, a church, and an active agricultural operation.

Historically, many of the houseparents have been younger, but more experienced couples are also encouraged to seek direction to join the CVE ministry. Experienced parents often bring stability and a seasoned perspective.

While knowing the Spanish language would be very valuable, it is not essential. The most important is having a desire to learn, both the language and the culture of the people we serve. Language training is provided.

Please pray for CVE, their ministry to the children, and the community of Magdalena. Pray that God will raise up brothers and sisters to serve.

If you have questions or interest please contact: Bill Schick at: cvemexico@gmail.com or Kirk Plattner at: kirk@acmission.org

Bible Distribution: Sharing His Word in Love

*Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.* Psalm 96:3

Together we can provide Bibles for seeking people. This may be someone you attend school with, someone you work with, or someone God has shown you at a gas station. Bibles and approved Bible story Books are available. Carrying a New Testament to distribute can help you remember what our real task is. To order, contact:

Apostolic Christian Church Bible Distribution
651 E. Peoria Street, Goodfield, IL 61742
Phone: 309-965-2141
bibledistribution@acpublications.org
Mexico Work Teams

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year 2016</th>
<th>Coordinator</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Jan 9 - 16</td>
<td>Bruce Frank</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bfrank@convron.com">bfrank@convron.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Feb 6 - 13</td>
<td>Troy Lanz</td>
<td>tf <a href="mailto:LANZ@uiuc.edu">LANZ@uiuc.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Feb 13 - 20</td>
<td>Jon Baner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jon.baner@gmail.com">jon.baner@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Mar 5 - 12</td>
<td>Gabe Meiss</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gabe.meiss@gmail.com">gabe.meiss@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Mar 19 - 26</td>
<td>Dean Sinn</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dsinn@frontier.com">dsinn@frontier.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reynosa</td>
<td>Mar 19 - 26</td>
<td>Linc Rinkenberger</td>
<td>linc <a href="mailto:rinkenberger@adamswells.com">rinkenberger@adamswells.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Mar 26 - Apr 2</td>
<td>Greg Moser</td>
<td>Roanoke Jr/Sr Sunday School <a href="mailto:gmoser@frontier.com">gmoser@frontier.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Apr 2 - 9</td>
<td>Joe Beer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jbeer@gmail.com">jbeer@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reynosa</td>
<td>June 4 - 11</td>
<td>Chad Massner</td>
<td>taylor bible class</td>
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<td>Jun 11 - 18</td>
<td>Jeff Stoker</td>
<td>morris bible class</td>
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<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Jul 2 - 9</td>
<td>Jim Rieker</td>
<td>poinia bible class</td>
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<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Jul 9 - 16</td>
<td>Benji Knapp</td>
<td>Washington bible class</td>
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Scheduling Questions?
Contact Mike Fiechter
mfiechter@onlyinternet.net

Haiti Medical Work Teams

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<th>Project</th>
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<th>Coordinator</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>May 7 - 14</td>
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<td>Jun 11 - 18</td>
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<td>Nov 12 - 19</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:lydiabertschi@yahoo.com">lydiabertschi@yahoo.com</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

HarvestCall Work Team Information

We encourage anyone considering participating on a work team project to visit the HarvestCall website. Here you can review much content concerning upcoming projects, schedules, guidelines, waiver forms, travel and insurance information. For more information visit www.harvestcall.org/work-teams
### Haiti Work Teams - Les Cayes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Year 2016</th>
<th>Coordinator</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Les Cayes</td>
<td>Jan 2-9</td>
<td>Ron Palitto</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEBSH/Ohio</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>330-336-5373</td>
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<td>AWA</td>
<td>Jan 8 - 15</td>
<td>Maurice Schaefer</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Aid</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:schaefs2@gmail.com">schaefs2@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Les Cayes</td>
<td>Jan 29-Feb 5</td>
<td>Richard Kraft</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEBSH/Silverton</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>503-364-3103</td>
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<tr>
<td>Les Cayes</td>
<td>Feb 12-19</td>
<td>Larry Kaufmann</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Rich Bertschi</td>
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<td>Andy Getz</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:andy@getzitdone.com">andy@getzitdone.com</a></td>
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<td>Les Cayes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
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</table>

### Haiti Volunteers Are Needed

#### Medical Teams
Physicians, surgeons, anesthesiologists, pharmacists, laboratory techs, radiology techs, ultrasound techs, occupational and physical therapists, nurses and other specialists who are willing to assist with general medical and surgical care are invited to participate on weeklong medical teams. See the current schedule (including dates for 2016).

#### Construction Teams
Electricians, cabinet makers, plumbers and carpenters are needed to continue the renovations. This is an excellent opportunity to help in the work and become more familiar with the culture and Hospital Lumière campus. See the current schedule.

#### Church Ministers
The work at Hospital Lumière is more than material and the needs are more than physical. The Hospital staff and team workers understand the true objective is that all may come to know and glorify God through a new birth, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and living in obedience to the Bible. Apostolic Christian Church ministers are needed to assist in this role as they accompany medical and construction teams to Hospital Lumière. Team ministers coordinate daily devotions and provide spiritual support for the team members, hospital staff, patients and their families.

For more information contact Rich Bertschi at 309-467-2351 or hospitallumiere@harvestcall.org

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### Jamaica Work Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Year 2016</th>
<th>Coordinator</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
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<tr>
<td>JDV</td>
<td>Jun 10-18</td>
<td>Mark Lindberg</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCD</td>
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<td>815-641-9065</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:Mark.Lindberg@Hyatt.com">Mark.Lindberg@Hyatt.com</a></td>
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If you are interested in sponsoring a work team to Jamaica contact Loren Dettwyler at lmdettwyler@gmail.com

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### Haiti Lifeline Work Teams

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Neil Bahler</td>
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<td>Darren Fehr</td>
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<td>Paul Zimmerman</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:steffenstrahm@comcast.net">steffenstrahm@comcast.net</a></td>
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### Haiti Awareness Tours

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. These trips are scheduled, as needed, based upon demand, currently the **next two are scheduled for Mar. 4-9, and Sept. 24-28, 2016.**

To learn more, contact: Rich Bertschi at 309.467.2351 or hospitallumiere@harvestcall.org or Rick Wuethrich at 219.863.4163 or rick@wuethrichfarms.com
Christian Guesthouse and Worship Services in Rochester, MN

Accommodations for Mayo Clinic outpatients and families:
Three bedrooms with private baths, laundry, kitchen and family room area.

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(held monthly at guesthouse residence)
10:00 AM and 12:30 PM
For information and reservations, contact caretakers:
Bro. Mark and Sis. Sandy Stork
4733 Birdie Lane NW, Rochester, MN 55901
(507) 288-0072

**Mid-week Service:**
(held on 3rd Wednesday in Rochester area)
For information, contact:
Bro. Jim and Sis. Deb Tilbury
(507) 281-2875

For church services schedule please visit
www.acmission.org/minister-rotation

Mature Mentors Needed – The New Beginnings of Southwest Florida

Mentoring at The New Beginnings is a way for those who feel called to share God’s unconditional love with hurting single mothers and their children. The New Beginnings is looking for mentor couples who are outreach-minded and called by God to come join us in building relationships with these mothers.

We currently are looking for a couple who are in their 50’s or 60’s to serve with us in Florida. We see a massive benefit to having mentors of all ages support the moms in our program, especially those who can fill a “Grandma and Grandpa” roll to these women who’ve never had grandparents.

Please prayerfully consider this mission and helping single mothers.
Contact us for more information concerning this opportunity.

The New Beginnings
4810 Marine Dr., Cape Coral FL, 33904
Phone: 239.541.4312 | Email: thenewbeginningsofswfl@yahoo.com

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The Second Greatest Commandment [1504] This Bible study seeks to illuminate our understanding of Bible teachings about interpersonal relationships. Price: $4.50

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The Hand of God in the Life of Joseph [1505] We see the hand of God in the life of Joseph, which demonstrates how God's goodness is active in the lives of his people. Price: $4.50

For additional information and ordering visit www.acpublications.org
Apostolic Christian Publications - 651 East Peoria St., Goodfield, IL 61742

Patient Care Manager Needed at Hospital Lumiere

Hospital Lumiere is seeking a qualified person to be assigned as Patient Care Manager of the hospital in Bonne Fin, Haiti. This is a full-time position.

Description
The duties of Patient Care Manager include planning, supervising & training employees and coordinating & implementing programs of nursing care for all hospital patients.

Requirements
Applicants should hold an RN degree and have at least 3 years of nursing experience, some management capability, be able to learn the Creole language, be a member of the Apostolic Christian Church and be willing to relocate to Haiti for a term of up to 5 years.

For more information contact:
Robert Beebe
Executive Director
robert.beebe1@gmail.com
574-276-6748

www.harvestcall.org
Medical Director Needed at Hospital Lumiere

If you are a licensed physician with a God-inspired desire to provide medical care and leadership in an under-served part of Haiti, this may be the opportunity of a lifetime.

The Need
A licensed physician is needed to replace our Medical Director, Dr. Lee Klopfenstein, when his term is completed in 2016.

To fill this full-time position, one must have a U.S. medical license, be Board-Certified in some aspect of medicine or surgery, be a Believer in Jesus Christ, have experience in leadership and management, be capable of learning the Creole language, and be willing to reside with your family on the Hospital Lumiere campus for up to five years. The position involves leading a team of excellent Haitian physicians and surgeons, and oversight of the nursing, laboratory, radiology and pharmacy departments of this 120-bed full-service hospital and out-patient facility.

For more information contact:
Robert Beebe
Executive Director
robert.beebe1@gmail.com
574-276-6748

Surgeon and Medical Physician Needed at Hospital Lumiere

Hospital Lumiere in Bonne Fin, Haiti, a medical ministry operated by HarvestCall, is seeking the following:

Surgeon
A surgeon is needed immediately to provide professional and Christian oversight and management of the Surgery Department of Hospital Lumiere, and actively be involved in surgical cases in their specialty. The surgeon can be boarded in general, urologic, orthopedic or other surgical field.

Medical Physician
A medical physician with family practice, pediatrics, emergency, or other medical subspecialty experience is needed immediately to enhance the diagnostic and treatment capability of our Medical Department, provide education and mentoring of our Haitian medical providers, encourage patient-focused care and maintain our mission of quality care with Christian love.

Both of these positions are full-time, but can be adapted to accommodate a physician who is willing to reside on the campus part-time or for several weeks at a time.

Please prayerfully consider whether God is calling you to serve in Haiti.

For more information contact:
Robert Beebe
Executive Director
robert.beebe1@gmail.com
574-276-6748
Openings at Cite Lumiere, Les Cayes, Haiti

Mechanic, Construction Department Assistant

The HarvestCall Caribbean Committee is seeking to fill several missionary positions based at the Cite Lumiere compound in Les Cayes, Haiti. The specific job description may vary depending on the applicant’s interests and skills. Help is specifically needed in the following areas:

**Equipment mechanic**
An equipment mechanic is needed in the Construction Department in Haiti to maintain the vehicles, generators, and construction equipment at Cite Lumiere and Bonne Finn, Haiti and order, purchase, and maintain inventory of parts to support the HarvestCall programs in southern Haiti. This position would also involve training and mentoring a Haitian assistant to provide future mechanical maintenance. The equipment mechanic would reside in the Cite Lumiere compound in Les Cayes and report to the Construction Operations Facilitator. The applicant should be experienced in mechanical maintenance.

**Construction Dept. Assistant**
An assistant is needed in the Construction Department at Cite Lumiere as the work has expanded for the program and related ministries. This applicant could be a single brother or couple. Skills that would be valuable in the ministry include:
- Carpentry
- Mechanical experience

All applicants must be a member in good standing of the Apostolic Christian Church, willing to learn Creole and relocate to Haiti for a minimum of 3 years, and have a heart to serve the Haitian people.

If you feel led to serve or have questions, contact:
Bro. Jon Zeller
309-208-0639
Jczeller1972@gmail.com

Matthew 25:40

Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.
SPONSORSHIP: Giving Children Hope for the Future

Those in the child sponsorship program have several things in common. They are very poor, they desire to learn, and they have an undying soul.

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And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

Isaiah 54:13

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Continued Articles

Walking in the Strength of Christ’s Sacrifice

— Continued from pg. 3

weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”9

Those who wait on the Lord will experience the fullness of Christ’s sacrifice and be able to walk in strength.

Walking in the Strength of Christ’s Sacrifice

Trusting in His covenant, we will have God’s royal law of love written on our hearts and in our minds. With this transformed attitude, we are called to live as Jesus did; loving all men, forgiving those who mistreat us, and submitting our will to the Father’s will—all by the grace and power of God. Through Him we can rejoice as Paul did, saying, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”10 By faith in His name, we can be endowed with power from on high—the Holy Spirit. Through His grace, our weakness can be empowered by His strength.

Undoubtedly, many of us feel our human weakness and struggle with these concepts, feeling inadequate or unable to put such faith into practice. We struggle to love the unlovable. We tend to wish ill on our enemies instead of praying for them. We lean toward sanctioning war instead of praying for peace. We want to defend our rights instead of turning the other cheek. When the Apostle Paul struggled with his weakness, Jesus told him, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul confirmed to the Corinthian church, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”11

Whatever our weakness may be, we can freely acknowledge it, call on God to give us the power of Christ, and trust that He will enable us to overcome. We ought not to think that the power of Christ permitted Paul to succumb to the weakness that he admitted. In the strength of His sacrifice, God is able to put an open door in front of us which no man can shut. Walking in the strength of Christ’s sacrifice, we are promised the power to overcome our selfish nature and, like Jesus, live righteously to the glory of God.

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”12

(Footnotes)

1  Heb. 10:14-17
2  1 Cor. 15:56
3  Heb. 9:22-23
4  Heb. 9:11-25
5  Acts 2:38-39
6  Rom. 6:1-18
7  Mark. 7:21-23
8  1 John 1:7-2:2, Rom. 1:16
9  Isaiah 40:28-31
10 Phil. 4:13
11 2 Cor. 12:9
12 1 Peter 5:10-11
it clear. So he quoted this Old Testament Scripture, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” (v.14) So when we’re in His presence, we have light.

I guess this is the first part of us how we use our time. The most important step is that we’re awake so we can use the time as we should. What are we talking about here? For being awake, it’s being aware and being in Christ, being no longer dead but living. So the first and foremost question for all of us — are we in Him? Is He our Savior and are we trusting in Him, depending on Him, living for Him. That’s first and foremost. Are we His?

You know, this sleeping thing — and this isn’t talking about getting rest in sleep; that’s a good thing — if we’re sleeping, that can happen to believers as well. We can get into a place where we’re no longer awake and alive in Him. We’re kind of lethargic is the description that comes to mind. Whether it’s going through the motions or it’s day to day and things aren’t as they should, we’re really sleeping. We’re not in Him. The instruction here is for those of us who are His — we need to be awake as well. So the first instruction, again as we understand ourselves — am I in Christ? If not, wake up and respond!

Then to those of us as believers, awake from that lethargy and pay attention. Now that we’re awake, we’re ready to do things. That’s where we’re going to continue. If we’re sleeping, we don’t get much done. We don’t get much done when we’re sleeping. So, now that we’re ready to do things, what are we going to do? It says we’re going to walk circumspectly (v.15). We’re going to be aware of our environment. We’re going to be diligent. We’re going to be careful. We’ll pay attention, and we’ll see things. We’re not going to be foolish. We’re not going to barge into things, just rush right in without reflecting, but rather being wise we’re ready to go and do as given the opportunity. We’re going to take the time we have, verse 16, and we’re going to redeem it.

We’ll set up the context first for the second half of the verse — the days are evil. So we’re in a place and a time where things are evil around us, and we know that. That almost makes the investment, the redeeming of our time, that much more important. It gives us a greater payoff for redeeming our time and putting it to good use. How are we going to do that?

So we have the thought, and if we were doing a show of hands, we’d say ‘Who wants to use their time well?’ You don’t even have to raise them. I know everyone would raise their hands. We all want to use our time well. So how are we going to do that? We’re going to be prepared, we’re going to be in Christ, and we’re going to be ready to do and to respond to the opportunities we encounter. Redeeming time is recognizing the day or the hour, the moment we’re in, as an opportunity to let the light, Christ’s light in us, be reflected and show to those we encounter.

How often do we get those opportunities? I would assert we probably get them many times every day. Many times! Just reflecting back on our day today — many times to be a little bit more patient maybe than we’d be of our own inclination, opportunities to share a kind word or helpful thought to somebody we bump into. Maybe there’s somebody you’re corresponding with, and there’s a chance to boost their spirits. You’ve heard of someone in some difficulty, and they need something and you can provide it. An opportunity to be prayerful. Redeeming the time. It’s a good investment.

Redeeming the time — put it to good use and put it to good use now. Don’t wait for an opportunity. I’m full of advice here; you haven’t seen me enough, but I’m full of more advice than I follow myself but I intend to. I share this
with open heart. We encounter opportunities to do good things, and we see those opportunities. But, what happens to me sometimes — and perhaps occurs to you — is the opportunity shows up and it’s perhaps a little bit inconvenient. We have a different inclination in mind, a different thought of something I wanted to do that comes up, and I miss the opportunity.

The opportunity is passed, and that’s one of those things about time. At least for us, the time moves forward. Every minute we move a minute forward. It goes passed, and for us we redeem the time, that minute, that hour, that day or we don’t. Can’t back up on that, but we can redeem it or we don’t. Let’s see both sides of it. When we redeem the time, it’s a good investment. It’s valuable for us. In fact, it’s something that increases in value. We’re encouraged and we’ve helped others in it.

The thought comes to mind — the missed opportunities, what do we do about those? It’s important for us that we can both recognize our opportunity in our Lord’s service. Remember that was our verse 13 and 14. In Him. Are we grounded in Him or are we awake? We want to be in His service. We recognize ourselves. We see ourselves as we truly are because we recognize ourselves honestly. Then we can see the room for improvement, but we need to be careful we don’t get trapped in looking back because we can’t do anything about yesterday or last minute. Those are passed. So we honestly reflect where we were, but our eyes are ready to redeem the moments we have looking forward, not the ones looking back.

We do that in the following structure. As this was going through Paul’s mind, perhaps he recognized the same question because verse 17 then says we don’t want to be unwise, thinking through things on our own or in a lens of self, but it says “…but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” In each choice we make, in each moment we’re in, are we ready and open to be understanding what God’s will is for me? And are you being open to understanding what God’s will is for you because when we understand His will, when we listen to His guidance for us and His direction in understanding His will, then we’re in a place to redeem the time, to put it to good use, and to gain the value from it that He desires for us to have.

We’re focused here on time, and we continue on this thought about using our time and opportunities to use it in the next few verses. Although we are in time now in this moment, when we transition from time to eternity, time is no longer a constraint. In fact, that way of thinking about things is going to be different for us. We don’t know how because we’ve always been in time. We get a few hints in Scripture about what that transition will be like when we read the thought that was shared that says in God’s view, a day is a thousand years, and a thousand years is a day (2 Peter 3:8).

When I hear that, I usually focus on large amounts of time are as nothing. We talk about a week for us would be as if seven thousand years had passed in God’s time, or longer. Again that’s just for us to see that time is without end and time goes on and on. But, do you ever hear the other side of it and think about a thousand years as a day? The other side of it — where we think the day went so fast, and imagine having a thousand years of experiences all in one day. All of that in one day, and that thought’s being shared there as well. Again, just to give us a glimmer of what being out of time and in eternity would be like. It’s beyond our ability to really absorb and think about but we can look forward to. It’s an entirely different perspective than what we have.

We are in time. We are in time, and it impacts much of what we do. We all gathered here. We had an 8 p.m. start time, and we know

— Please turn to pg. 68
at 9 p.m. we’ll be thinking about what we’ll do next. We’ll notice at 12 we’ll have this transition from 2014 to 2015. That’s just in these hours. Then we’ll look forward to tomorrow. I’m sure again we have thoughts and plans and things we set together, and it helps us coordinate and work together and we’re in time. But, when we step out of time, when we step out of that, we’re going to be in God’s care. He is already stepped out of time. Right? He was never in that, and so without beginning or without end. Again, hard for me to fully understand, but that’s who He is. He always, in the situation, what was the right thing to do? That was our Savior in this life showing what to do in this moment, in this situation.

So how about us tomorrow? We’re going to be in a range of situations. Are we ready in the one I have, am I ready to use the time as I should, understanding what is God’s will for me? What does He desire for me to do? How does He want me to use the talents He’s given me? How does He want me to put those into use? Then the same question for you — how does He want you to put into use what He’s given you?

Some more practical instruction here — if we want to do His will, we want to be clear-thinking. Some places in Scripture talk about being sober (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 1 Peter 1:13, 4:7, 5:8). Here it says don’t be drunk (v.17). Don’t be basically full of things that disable us from being able to think clearly because we want to have that clear connection to the Holy Spirit. In fact, that’s the thought — “be filled with the Spirit” (v.17). We don’t want to be in a place where the Spirit can’t communicate with us because our minds aren’t open to that, not thinking clearly, our senses our dulled, but let’s be in a place where we’re clear-thinking so the Spirit can speak to us in truth.

He’ll speak clearly because we know it says when we’re in the light, things will be clear; they’ll be made manifest (v.13). So when we, in the light of the Spirit and filled with the Spirit, are in a place that we can discern the will of the Lord, and once we’ve discerned His will, then we can follow through. We can use the time we have in a way that’s good — good for us, but also furthering our Father’s work.

What is our mind like when we’re full of the Spirit? We can have this conversation here. Do you like that? Speaking to ourselves, boosting and encouraging ourselves with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, having our heart joyous. It says in song, in melody in our heart, and it’s to the Lord that we are His and connected to Him. We have His Word and His ways in us. We were noticing this Sunday. We were sitting there, and we had a group of Sunday School students. They were just singing away. They all had books, and the books were closer to being used as fan than as a source of the words because they knew the words. So they had the book in the hand, but they had the word in the heart.

That’s the thought here. We are going to speak to ourselves and interact with ourselves and be open to others. We’ll get to that next, but with the psalms and the hymns and the spiritual songs, we have a melody in our heart. A joy in our heart and that joy in our heart is something you can’t hold in. It comes out, not necessarily with the words we say, but it comes out through the way we use our time. In that with God’s Word and His instruction in us, we have His Spirit. We now have His Word, and we have His joy in us.

We give thanks, how? How and when? It says “…always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;” We recognize God’s goodness. We’re thankful in all situations we’re in. We’re actually not always thankful for the situation, but in all things and in all places at all times our heart is one of thankfulness because our heart
is making melody to the Lord, and it’s reflecting our connection to Him. Because of that we can be thankful for His goodness in all things, in all situations, the difficult situations, the painful situations, the awkward situations, the uncomfortable situations. In those we can be thankful.

We may be predisposed to be thankful in the ones we would call good. They may not be as good for us though. Our inclination is to be thankful for the situations we like and we enjoy, but I know for myself sometimes in those situations I find unpleasant or unchosen or difficult, those are the ones that are the best for me. They teach me something new. They help me understand myself better. They make me more ready to be open to the Spirit and to put my time to better use when I see and encounter those situations that are challenging. But, in all situations — the ones we’d call the good ones, the ones we’d call the bad ones, in all of them we’re thankful.

So now we have our heart in a good place, and we’re in right relationship with God. We’re strong there, and then we continue. We only continued one more verse, but the next verse says “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” (v.21) When we are in right relationship with Him, then we’re in a place where we can be helpful to each other, and we can recognize the value in our brothers and in our sisters. It says here submitting ourselves one to another, and another Scripture talks about esteeming one another (Philippians 2:3) and recognizing the value that the talents you have are distinct from the ones I have. The gifts God’s given you are ones I don’t have, and that means when I can tap into the things you have and recognize that, it’s a blessing to me.

Sometimes I might have something I can contribute that’s helpful to you, but collectively we can be an encouragement and a help to each other. So it’s so important here that we’re ready. First connected to the Lord, but then in our connection to each other that we’re ready to serve Him and honor Him through those interactions we have with each other. That puts us in a place where we have a body of believers, a body of believers actively serving.

A final thought on the body of believers — we want it to be ready to move. You can kind of see the way our body works. We have our bones and the various muscles and the ligaments and the tendons and the way they come together. They help us move together, and that’s the way a body fits together. It fits together not to be just a block that sits there, but a body fits together to move and to do things, to run and to serve. That’s us as a body. We need to be able to fit together to do stuff and to do things in His service.

So what’s our part in that? As we can submit to each other and we can esteem each other and we can depend upon each other, we’re now in a place where as a body together we can do His will. We can do His will. We can understand what is acceptable and pleasing and good, and collectively we can do that.

That’s a high order for the New Year. It’s more than we can do. I know it’s more than I can do of myself, but we’ve been reinforced here. We have the Spirit and the Word to guide us, and we have each other to help us along. Also, one of the helps we can provide for each other is a degree of accountability and challenge to notice. It’s good for me if someone sees an opportunity to strengthen me. That’s wonderful. That’s part of us together. So when we see the challenge, and as we reach for the expectation our Savior set for us, it’s ok that it’s a hard place to reach. In fact, it’s beyond our ability to quite reach there, but we can boost each other and depend upon our Savior. He’ll provide for us too in all ways at all times.
This is the story of an evangelistic venture in the early days of our church coming to America. Elder Isaac Gehring of Sardis, Ohio, traveled to northern Ohio near Rittman to preach the gospel. An incredible outcome of his preaching was that the first convert was Anna Steiner, the wife of the Mennonite bishop, John Steiner. This fact has been known for a long time, and is covered in “Marching to Zion” on pages 129 and 130. The Apostolic Christian reaction to this event, of course, was one of joy and appreciation. The following article makes reference to the Mennonite reaction. It is covered in a local history entitled, “CROSSROADS: From Switzerland to Crown Hill” by James O. Lehman (published in 1975).

Lehman chronicles the early work of Samuel Froehlich in Switzerland and points to the migration of some of his followers to America, and especially to Ohio (in Sardis). Excerpts from this book follow.

Growth in Ohio

“Already by the 1840’s some Neutaufer (Apostolic Christians) found their way to America. The first congregation in America organized in Lewis County, New York in 1847. By the next year, some had settled in Ohio. Rapid growth ensued due to heavy migration from Europe and aggressive witnessing. In 1855, Elder Isaac Gehring of Monroe County, Ohio, ‘who had a feeling some fellow believers could be found,’ walked to northern Wayne County. He and other brethren were able to find souls that were interested in their souls’ salvation. Very Anabaptist in their emphasis, but with a warmer piety and strong promoting of a definite salvation experience, as well as baptism by immersion, they found some listening ears in Milton and Green townships, particularly in the Chippewa congregation.”

Anna Steiner

“In 1860, Anna Steiner (1816-1882) and her sister Elizabeth (1823-1876) joined the newly emerging church. The startling thing is the fact that Anna was the wife of Chippewa’s bishop, John Steiner, and that the two sisters were daughters of Bishop Daniel Steiner. Elizabeth was the wife of Ulrich Steiner, brother of Bishop John Steiner. One can only speculate what this must have meant to those families.

Also joining the new church very early was Anna’s oldest daughter, Barbara, who married Christian Horn. Eventually, most of Anna’s sons and daughters joined the Apostolic Church, some in Indiana and Illinois. Daughter Mary married Sigman Sorg, an early Apostolic minister from Mansfield, Ohio. Lydia married Henry Dotterer. (note: a person of that era).

Daniel Steiner

Other early ones from Chippewa to join were several children of Mary Steiner (1791-1845), sister of Bishop Daniel, who was married to Christian Steiner. Son Daniel M. (1832-1900) joined perhaps as early as 1868 and became their first minister.

Very early, Apostolic services were held in his home at the junction of 57A and 108. He owned the land where he Apostolic Church now stands as well as 80 acres on the other side of 57A. Daniel, nicknamed “Black Dan” because of his black beard, was married to Catherine Burkholder, sister to Crown Hill deacon, Abraham D. Burkholder.”

-BY PERRY KLOPFENSTEIN

Next Issue: More on the early days at Rittman.
The Light of Hope

Philippians 2:3-11

Have you ever struggled with verses 3-4 or similar verses that challenge you to let go of everything, die to yourself, lose your life, love your neighbor, and esteem others better than yourself? Do you experience the disconnect between your desires to fully follow these verses and the reality of actually doing it? Do you ever sense guilt and condemnation because you can never seem to “get it”? Are you frustrated seeing the lingering pride and self-preservation that keeps beckoning you back to safe, comfortable places? Do the whispers of the fear of suffering and the worry of “missing out” tempt you to control your life rather than step out in full obedience and surrender to Jesus?

If so, you are not alone. But the questions are “how”: How do we confront and overcome the pride, selfishness and fear which hold us back so that can we boldly follow Jesus? How do we exhibit a faith that proclaims the path of self-denial and humble service truly is the wise path to joy? We find direction in Philippians 2.

Verses 3 and 4 begin the chapter with an exhortation to “esteem other better than themselves” and “to look not every man on his own things”; the very verses causing us such internal conflict. However, verse 5 directs us toward the answer of “how to”. It points us to our Ultimate Example: Christ. What follows verse 5 is a beautiful discourse on Christ: who He is and what He has done for us through the incarnation. It sets forth an example for us as we strive to sacrificially and humbly deny ourselves and follow Jesus. To be able to live verses 3 and 4, our hearts must be captured by the vision of Jesus we see in verses 6-11.

In these verses, we see the meekness of Christ as He continues to humble Himself. It begins with Jesus, “who being in the form of God”, dies more and more to Himself. He comes in the “likeness of men” with “no reputation”. He comes as a “servant”, born not into wealth, privilege, and honor; but rather, born into poverty, shame and anonymity. However, His self-imposed humbling didn’t end there. “He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death of the cross.” He gave up everything for us. He took our shame and the punishment for our sins to the cross. Instead of esteeming Himself and seeking His own comfort, He esteemed us and looked on our desperate need of salvation. The example of Jesus is one of amazing self-sacrificial love. Yet His story does not end in death, but in resurrection. Because of the “joy set before Him” (Heb. 12:2), He endured the self-abasement, confident in His Father’s desire to “highly exalt Him” and “give Him a name above every name”.

As we look at our example, Jesus, we too can step out in humble service and self-sacrifice, knowing the Father brings resurrection after death and exaltation after humbling. We do not need to fear “missing out”. The same Father who esteemed the self-abasement of Jesus will also bless the self-humbling of His children. Will we trust the goodness of our Father and His desire to bring life from death as we continually strive toward humility, meekness, and self-denial? As we step out into His path, we must remember that He is faithful to accomplish all that is lacking and more (Eph. 3:20).

-by Seth Gerber
“But with Him we secure may be, no fear, no doubt, but joy to be, floating... out on the sea of eternity”

Along the River of Time, Gospel Hymns