Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

James 5:8
Are we blessed?

The Bible has some wonderful thoughts to share on the subject. Psalm 1:1 says, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” We quickly learn that the blessings of God are experienced in what we do as well as in what we don’t do. We don’t walk in ungodly counsel. We don’t stand in sinful causes, and we don’t sit and engage ourselves in the world’s attitudes and attributes.

Verse 2 gives a little more direction on the blessed man. “But his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” What wonderful direction. May we delight in God’s word and think on His counsel.

Although blessed, we do live in a challenging world. What have you learned about experiencing peace in an unstable world? That’s our next special topic. Please send your thoughts on this question (< 600 words) to features@acsilverlining.org by February 15.

May God bless us in this new year.

In Christian love,

Rick Plattner and Jeff Grimm, Counseling Elders
The Faith of Abel

Theme verse: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

Abel, the second son of Adam and Eve, is the first person mentioned in the ‘roll call of faith’ contained in Hebrews 11. Though at first it might seem that relatively little has been recorded about Abel in the Bible, we can gain much from studying his example: “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings (firstborn) of his flock and of the fat (choicest) thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.” Both brothers made a decision about what to bring as an offering, but unlike Cain, Abel’s choice was made by faith. He believed God, and it was through faith that Abel recognized the principle of giving the best he had to Him. By this, Abel’s gift was a foreshadowing of the type of sacrifice that God truly desired.

Several other differences will be noted in the decisions of the first brothers in their gifts at the altar. First of all, Cain evidently brought some of the harvest from his tilling the ground, while Abel brought a sheep from his flock. Because they were of different occupations, it seems natural that each would bring something to the Lord from that which he had readily at hand. There was nothing particularly wrong with Cain’s choice of gift, since later on the Israelites were commanded to bring meat or food offerings at the various feasts. These “meat (or grain) offerings” were always without blood since nothing was killed, and the purpose was generally that of thanksgiving. On the other hand, Abel’s offering involved the shedding of blood since the lamb or sheep had to be killed. The purpose of this type of sacrifice was that of a sin offering. In either case, whether a meat or a sin offering, only the best was to be given. “All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.” God expects no more from us than what we have, but it gives Him pleasure when by faith we recognize our sin and offer ourselves completely to Him. Abel understood this principle by faith. He acknowledged his sin to himself first, obeyed God from his heart and brought a genuine sacrifice, offered it in faith acknowledging his sin to God, which resulted in bringing delight to God. In like manner, the choices we make should be driven by a deep faith in the high level precepts of His Word. By doing so, our actions will also not only bring pleasure to God, but will increase our own joy. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

We read further in the Genesis account the main reason why God was not pleased with Cain’s sacrifice. “And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.” In other words, God expected Cain to be an overcomer of sin, rather than allowing sin to have dominion over him. Having committed sin was bad enough, but Cain obviously tried to hide it from God instead of confessing and revealing it. “The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?” The lesson for us is clear: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” Further, we can be sure that God is a reader of our
Greetings to each one of you in the name of Christ this morning. As we break the bread of life, we do it with a certain amount of trepidation, because so often we see and experience our own weakness and we realize our own inadequacies. So, it is in this morning that we again break the bread of life in the spirit and the power of your prayer. It is the prayers of the church that bring peace and confidence, that we can put ourselves aside and be led by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible has opened to Psalm 142. When I see this, I think about the life of David. What he experienced and his ability to express his heart to God. Let’s read Psalm 142 together.

So often I think of how we as men with finite minds really struggle to understand the fullness of God’s will for our lives. For a moment, let’s consider what David was dealing with in his heart. Here is a young man who was content to be tending the sheep, but God saw in this young man a heart that was willing to be led and to be taught. So, David was brought from that place and he was anointed to be king of a nation. The greatest nation in the world. Because of that, the king at the time, Saul, hated him and desired to kill him. Here is David in this cave, in a place of hiding, crying out to God because of the injustice he was suffering. We can see as we read through scripture why God allowed this to be, and why God needed this to be for David. Think of everything that followed in his life. He wasn’t persuaded by the people at the time to move, to fall, or to draw back into a place of idolatry as the leader of a nation. His heart was towards God always. Here, David was experiencing something that I believe all of us at some point in our lives experience, and it is loneliness. It is a place we get to where we convince ourselves that no one cares and no one understands. Have you ever been there in life? This week at home our verse was Psalm 46:1 where it says, “God is our refuge. A very present help in time of need.” Here is David pouring out his heart and saying, “Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.” When we find ourselves in a place of injustice, a place that perhaps we have not chosen, where is our refuge? Let’s be thankful that we can be pointed to the only refuge, which is God.

I know that David’s heart was yearning there in the cave. He was yearning for a kingdom that was a kingdom of peace and righteousness. I think all of us have that longing in our hearts. Hymn number 147, Yearning for Home, is opened before us. I think all of us express it in different ways, but we all desire to be at rest and peace. Let’s sing this hymn together.

As I think about David and his desire for this kingdom that was promised him, I think of when you ask someone how their day is going and they say, “Oh, it’s just another day in paradise.” Have you ever heard anyone say that? I had to stop one time when someone said that to me and ask them, “What do you mean when you say that?” Is this paradise? Is this world paradise? Is that our only expectation and hope, the paradise of this world? I think, as believers, we need to think about that, and we need to take that as an opportunity to encourage each other that there is a far greater paradise than what we can experience here. The temporal paradise of self-fulfillment that the world thinks is great, is so fleeting. Let’s be encouraged to be patient in believing that our paradise is to come.

The book of James is opened here this morning. There is so much practical teaching in the book of James, and it really speaks clearly to our hearts as temporal man. There are three chapters here in James, let’s begin in chapter one.

Knowledge is pretty easy, isn’t it? It is pretty easy to know. It is pretty easy to talk, but it says, “…be ye
doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” (v. 22) It is a challenge for us isn’t it. It is a challenge for us to remain in a place where we speak the truth into our own hearts. Think about David. When we talk about speaking the truth into our own hearts think about David in the cave. Think about all of the ways he must have justified his own actions based on what he had experienced. And yet, God brought him to a place where he really couldn’t get away. He couldn’t get out so to speak. I think God brought him to that place to realize the truth. That, yes it was and is David’s rightful place to be on the throne, but not until he understood his own heart. Not until he understood this place of penitence that God wants us all to understand. Sometimes that can be difficult, so let’s consider this word of James and think about it in the context of not deceiving our own hearts or our own selves.

It is easy to do, isn’t it? To hear the word, to think about it and to agree with it. But James says to do that and to not apply it is like looking into a mirror and as soon as you look away, you forget what you looked like. So, let’s be encouraged this morning to think about that.

In the beginning of the chapter what does James begin with? “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” (v. 2) Why? We are going to take this word from knowledge, to action. How are we going to do that? “… the trying of your faith worketh patience.” (v. 3) So, when our faith is tried, do we respond, do I respond, by immediately trying to justify why we have done whatever it was? I do respond this way. Think about David, when he fled from Saul. I’m not saying I have all of the answers, but when he fled, he lied to the priest about what he was doing. That sin resulted in a consequence. Perhaps it took that time in the cave, or in this place of loneliness, for David to really come to grips with that truth. That was the trying of his faith, and it was working within David a patience.

What is patience? We can get so frustrated by our inability to either have righteousness or to fix things that we know are wrong. “…let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” (v.4) So, in order for us to have patience, we must believe what? What did David come to and believe? He knew the promise from God that his heritage would sit on the throne of Israel forever. What is the patience that is being worked within us? It is that although we may suffer injustice today, the patience that our temptation and the trying of our faith brings forth, should help us to believe that Christ will return, and when He returns, He will bring justice. He will be the King of Peace. And how He accomplishes this is He will punish the wicked. He will destroy wickedness. It will not be a part of His kingdom. So, the patience that we possess today confesses our faith. Being patient in tribulation confesses the truth that we believe that we are not the king, but Christ is.

Again, that is easy to say and talk about, but think about doing it. It takes grace, doesn’t it? How is your patience today? How is my patience today in that faith believing that Christ will make all things right? That He will reconcile everything to Himself. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (v. 5) I just want to stop a minute before we go on. There is an acknowledgment here by James that we all need to recognize. That if the trying of our faith is necessary for our benefit, we are all in need. We are all in need to be changed. We are all in need to be improved upon. We are all in need of the work of Christ within us. It is something that is common to us, so he moves on and says, if any of you lack wisdom. It is interesting that James asks, if any of you lack wisdom. I can’t imagine if we went around the room and asked, do you have enough

— Please turn to pg. 66
Ministry Program Updates

Haiti Construction Program – More than Buildings
Caribbean Committee

As the sun begins to rise, a team of eager HarvestCall volunteers climbs into the Construction Department truck and several utility vehicles to drive to a work location in southern Haiti. This team has traveled to Les Cayes, Haiti to participate in building a roof on a school or church in a remote rural village several hours away from the Citi Lumiere depot and guest house. The route to the job site is much more rugged than US travel, as Haiti has few bridges or improved roads, and fording streams, bouncing over bumpy terrain, and perhaps changing several flat tires along the way are all part of the experience.

When they arrive in the village, they are greeted by a group of cheerful children, neatly dressed in their school uniforms and eager to see their school completed. A local pastor welcomes the team and shows them the work site and accommodations. The women of the village are already hard at work preparing the meals for the team. The Haitian villagers have constructed the walls of the buildings (sometimes taking years due to limited financial resources) which are now ready for roof construction.

It is an important, memorable day in the village as the awaited time has arrived for their completed school or church to become a reality.

Soon the materials are unloaded from the truck and team members get to work cutting wood members for the roof trusses, preparing roof purlins, and with the help and assistance of young men of the village, begin building walls. In another area, other members of the team members as they return home.

Missionary Heart
Missions Support

In the middle of Galatians 4, Paul takes a short break from his long explanation regarding our justification by faith to make a personal plea to his readers. He explains God’s providence in using his infirmity to create an opportunity to minister to them on a previous visit and then uses their relationship from that visit to plead with them to listen.

He refers to them as his “little children,” he reflects on their care of him such that they “received him as an angel of God,” and he compares his work of ministry among them as “travail” that Christ be formed in them. These are beautiful pictures of a missionary heart that is reflective of a relationship that portrays the fullness of the gospel. As we think about caring for our missionaries, consider the following thoughts:

1. Ministry is hard and the work can feel like travail. Even as Paul is writing to them in reflection on his time with them, he is clearly desperate for them to not miss the main things he was trying to share with them.

2. It is all about relationships. This reality is evident as Paul makes very personal references and exhibits their shared need for each other.
the roof trusses, preparing roof purlins, and with the help and assistance of young men of the village, begin assembling and staging roof trusses to be lifted on to the building walls. In another area, other members of the team set up cots in existing buildings or homes, as the work requires several days and an overnight stay or two. They then began assembling pre-cut school desks or church benches and when complete, paint the desks or varnish the church benches.

In a day or two, the roof is complete and the team returns to Citi Lumiere. However, the construction work performed is only a part of what is accomplished. Team members spend several days in cross-cultural fellowship, and the relationships formed with the Haitian believers in the village leave a lasting impression on hosts and visitors alike. While on the team visit, volunteers have the opportunity to visit, sing, and worship together with the Haitians, and experience a bond of Christian friendship that will last long after the visit. After several days together, the time of parting comes, and smiles, hugs, and farewell tears at the event remain with the team members as they return home.

For over 30 years, HarvestCall (formerly World Relief) teams have been supporting the Haiti Construction Program in expanding the number of churches and schools in southern Haiti. Construction of the schools enables many Haitian children to receive an education and break the cycle of illiteracy that is commonplace. Construction of the churches enables Christians in Haiti to assemble in a common place of worship and provides a spiritual center for believers to proclaim the gospel message of salvation in their community. Teams build approximately 25 roofs per year and have constructed or repaired hundreds over the course of HarvestCall involvement.

If you are interested in joining a team and participating in this rewarding experience, see the HarvestCall website or Silver Lining schedules and contact one of the team coordinators. This program also needs prayer support and financial support. Contributions can be made online or to HarvestCall with Haiti Construction in the memo line. For further information, contact Bro. Jon Zeller at jczeller1972@gmail.com

– by Rod Wieland

While he may have been discipling them in the gospel, he also appreciated their ministry to him.

3. The ministry of the gospel is long-term. This little diversion in the middle of Paul’s larger purpose for this letter reiterates that he is in this for the long-haul.

4. Ministry requires intense honesty and truth. It is evident in this exchange that Paul knew he had to be direct and to the point in sharing his heart and in pleading with them to stay true to the fullness of the gospel.

While there are certainly other principles woven between these lines, it is encouraging to see Paul’s heart for those he was serving. These truths are evident whether we are ministering in another culture or in our own home or neighborhood, to the glory of God. – by Kirk Plattner
ANXIETY is part of the human condition. Ranging from mild apprehension and worry to crippling panic, anxiety touches each of our lives in some way. To help make sense of this common experience, this article will consider three types of anxiety:

1. **Spiritual Anxiety** – anxiety we feel when we are not putting our trust in God to deal with our circumstances.
2. **Situational Anxiety** – a normal response to threatening situations.
3. **Anxiety Disorders** – a commonly occurring category of mental-health disorders and conditions.

### Spiritual Anxiety

The Bible specifically addresses worry that manifests in lack of trust in God. It is a result of incorrect thinking and perspective in that we focus on our circumstances rather than focusing on God’s ability to deal with our circumstances. Often, we believe we are trying to fix something that is beyond our control. Spiritual anxiety can result when we project our minds into the future (i.e., future tripping) and we focus on fearful outcomes instead of God’s ability to provide. Also important to consider is that while unbelievers live with the very real fear of the judgment of God, God’s children are encouraged to have reverential fear and not anxiety toward Him.

Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” It follows then, that if we are thinking anxious thoughts (“Oh, no. What if I fail?”, “What do they think of me?”), then we are going to experience anxious feelings. Our responsibility is to shift our thinking. Note David’s response to stressors in his life and how he turned toward God while fears and distress were occurring.

Psalm 56:3-4 “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.”

Psalm 118:5-6 “I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?”

Matthew 6:25-34 records the longest section of Jesus’ teaching about anxiety. Note that five times in that passage He gives instruction about one’s thought life (e.g., “take no thought”). Truly, worry is a battle in the mind.

v. 25 “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”

v. 27 “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

v. 28 “And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:”

v. 31 “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”

v. 34 “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.”

### Situational Anxiety

Everyone feels scared and is anxious at one time or another. God designed the nervous system of our bodies with two branches: (1) an alarm system that
helps us respond to threats and stressors and (2) a calming system which helps us to relax and quiet our bodies and minds. Anxiety involves a response of both your body and mind to an actual or perceived stressor. It is helpful when it is a short-lived response to a stressor or threat. Think of the following examples: (a) You see a young child walk into the road, notice a car is coming, and run to the aid of the child. (b) You are walking in a park and see a rattlesnake and freeze in place so as not to get bitten. (c) You are in a store, hear a gunshot and duck for cover. In these cases, anxiety is a God-given, natural response to a situation or stimulus your brain interprets as threatening.

Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety becomes problematic when it is not related to realistic fears, becomes a chronic pattern, or when it interferes with normal functioning. When a diagnosable anxiety disorder is present, an individual wishes he or she could stop the anxiety but cannot. Some common anxiety disorders include:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Panic Disorder
- Social Anxiety Disorder

All of these conditions are manageable with proper treatment. If you are experiencing an anxiety disorder, you are not alone. Don’t let shame and isolation keep you from getting help. It is important to recognize anxiety disorders are afflictions. Just like you would have compassion for someone with a physical illness or malady, it is important to have that same type of compassion for individuals (including yourself) dealing with anxiety disorders. For more information about anxiety, go to the ACCFS website at www.accounseling.org/mentalhealth or call ACCFS to talk with an ACCFS counselor.

ACCFS has a host of resources available to encourage parents in their responsibilities. We continue to conduct Parenting with a Purpose seminars and other presentations as requested. In addition, we develop and refer to many other helpful resources on our website at www.accounseling.org/parenting. If you have requests or would like more information, please contact ACCFS at (309)263-5536.
For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.” Romans 14:8

Death is rarely an easy topic to address, but it seems fitting that in the dead of winter, we take some time to reflect on the role death plays in our mission here at LifePoints. We have recently experienced the deaths of a handful of residents, and the loss of their daily presence in our lives has been deeply felt by our workers and their families.

As our Executive Director, Ron Messner, wrote in his Director’s Corner article, “Sometimes people forget that when you take care of adults, it means all that life includes. This of course, means death also.” As we work with these residents day in and day out, we can often forget what a blessing it is to have them with us here at LifePoints. We are privileged to be invited into the lives of each of our residents, to love them and care for them, however long that time may be. We often do not recognize how great a privilege this is until that one day arrives when they are no longer around.

When death does come to those we love, as it will for us all, our eyes are opened to the reality that these loved ones were first and foremost loved by God. It is good for us to mourn their loss, to remember them, and to come together for healing. But we need not despair, especially when we think of what Paul writes to the Romans regarding death and life. We are the Lord’s, whether we live or die. Our loved ones are the Lord’s during their time on earth with us, and in their passing. The residents here at LifePoints are the Lord’s – before they came to live with us, during the time we have to serve them and love them, and when they are made new in heaven. And for this truth, we praise God.

We ask that you would pray for the families of those residents who have recently passed away, as well as for all of our staff, that they would see the gift of God in both life and death.

Gateway Woods Apostolic Christian Children’s Home
Julie Maibach — LARC Coordinator

So you go out with your new friend, and over coffee, you discuss the terms of your friendship—how often you’ll meet, what sort of activities you’ll do, and when your friendship will end. You discuss how you’ll know if it’s a successful friendship and the ways to achieve that.

What?
You don’t start a friendship like this?
Of course not. Me either!
Everyone knows that friendship happens naturally. It develops as people spend time together and get to know one another. No one puts an end date on their friendship or measures it for success.

Then shouldn’t it be the same with mentoring?
Unfortunately, many people are unclear about what it means to be a mentor. They think it means they have to set all kinds of guidelines, be the perfect role model, and have all the answers. They worry about whether they’ll be “successful.” They think they are ultimately responsible for the development, improvement, or even the salvation of another person.

Mentoring is none of those things.
Mentoring should be natural and fun—whether it’s a formal relationship where two people are matched or an informal one that develops organically.

So then what really is expected of a mentor?
A mentor needs to show up. Just consistently show up. This might seem obvious and easy if a relationship blossoms quickly, but if it builds slowly, it is important to be consistent over time. You may feel like you aren’t making a difference at all or that the relationship is going nowhere. Be patient and keep your commitment. Showing up builds trust. Showing up says “I care,” and “You’re worth it.”

When you’re with your mentee, live out your faith in word and deed, just like you normally do. Treat your mentee with respect and confidentiality. Be present—give your focused attention. (Hmm, maybe that means putting your phone on ‘do not disturb’.) Be honest. Don’t be fake. Be willing to say “I don’t know” if you don’t. Model what God says and does for us, “I’m here for you”. “You matter to me.”

A mentee may ask you to speak into their life right away or it may take time to earn that right. If it takes time, be patient. Whenever you do share your thoughts and insights, speak with humility and respect, remembering that you have not walked in their shoes. Give continual assurance of your love and care, no matter what. It doesn’t mean approval of every idea or decision, but it means you will always care for them. Remember, it is only by God’s grace and the power of His Spirit that we can speak with wisdom.

So there you have it. Anyone who is willing to show up consistently, live out their faith, and speak words of kindness and encouragement can be a mentor.

So now when you hear the word, “mentor,” think trusted ally, champion, encourager.

And when you hear the word “mentoring,” think friendship on purpose.

Think natural and fun!
Coffee anyone?

News:
January is National Mentoring Month, if you would like more information on becoming a mentor or just gathering information. Please contact Rob Parker: rob.parker@gatewaywoods.org today.

We are thankful to announce the hiring of Bro. Dustin Hodel, from Roanoke, he will be joining our Fundraising Team and will be working remotely from home.

We currently have these openings at Gateway Woods: Assistant Houseparent, English Teacher, Math Teacher, LARC Coordinator, Houseparent Supervisor and a Houseparent Couple. For more information, please see our ad in this issue or visit the Careers page on our website at 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’.

We are searching for a Summer Volunteer Coordinator for 2019. Please contact Bro. Clint Plattner at clint.plattner@gatewaywoods.org for more information. This is a great opportunity to impact the lives of the children on our campus!

We are also searching for our Summer Education Intern and Top Quality Coordinator. Please contact Sis. Janice Anliker at Janice.anliker@gatewaywoods.org for more information. This is a great opportunity to gain some experience while impacting our residents!

We are also have a summer internship opportunity in Home Based. This is a great opportunity to go into the community and work directly with families in their homes. If you are looking to go into social work this would be the position for you. Please contact Bro. Jeff Waibel at jeff.waibel@gatewaywoods.org for more information.

You are an important advocate to help us spread the word about God’s work at Gateway Woods. Please continue to lift us up in prayer, check our website gatewaywoods.org and our Facebook page at facebook.com/
This past month has been full of many festivities. The kids enjoyed an evening out buying items and assembling boxes for Operation Christmas Child. The kids also did a fantastic job in their Christmas program this year. Thank you to our marvelous Sunday school teachers and parents who put in the time to plan and ready the children for the program. We had our local Christmas dinner, which is always a time of fellowship and commemorating baby Jesus. We have also enjoyed many evenings of caroling.

This past month has also been one of many life blessings. We rejoiced with Bro. Nathan and Sis. Brenda Robbins as they welcomed their third son, Kingston Nathan Robbins, into their family. We also celebrated with Kerwin and Sara Edelman (Athens, AL) and Bro. Jeff and Sis. Karen Isch (Bluffton Country, IN) as their two families are being united by the marriage of Bro. Jason Isch (South Bend, IN) and Sis. Jessica Edelman (Athens, AL). We wish Bro. Jason and Sis. Jessica many blessings during your engagement and over your marriage!

The committee charged with planning Memorial Day Weekend, now termed ALive, has been working hard at planning this coming year’s event. We are opening registration for the event on February 1. The event will take place at Vision Ministry in Huntsville, AL. Lodging is available on site, and registration opens January 1. For more information, please see the Facebook page Tennessee Fellowship Area. We are looking forward to this uplifting weekend of fellowship and encouragement, and hope to see y’all there!

As always, we would love to have y’all visit, even if you’re traveling through for the evening! For our guest house accommodations, please call Sis. Rebekah Klaus at (815) 674-5411.

**Arizona, Phoenix**

**Marge Lindenbaum**

“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” 2 Cor. 12:8

This verse has caught my wondering mind on many occasions, most often when there is something important I am bringing to the Lord. It seems to suggest to me that three is the number of times we should pray before we trust God to answer and leave off praying. In truth, there are things I have prayed for many more times than three, and still feel compelled to pray for them. When I have looked at this question before, I have found God does not weary of our bringing petitions and concerns to Him, if our prayers are earnest. He does discourage rote prayers, or “vain” repetitions (Matt 6:7), but I don’t find anywhere that He rebukes someone for praying too often or instructs us to limit our prayers. He even seems to encourage us to insistently bring our requests to Him, as in the parable of the man asking at his friend’s door for bread for his visitors, telling us that friend, “because of his importunity” got out of bed to fulfill the request. (Luke 11:5-8) Also, the parable of the unjust judge in Luke 18 tells us persistent prayer can bring speedy results. So, it is somewhat puzzling when Paul assures his readers he prayed three times about his thorn in the flesh.

Recently, I was reading in 1 Kings 17, about the widow in Zarephath, who made a cake of bread for Elijah from her last bit of meal and oil, and so saved herself and her son from starvation. Her son later became ill and died. When she told Elijah, he took the boy and carried him up into the loft and laid him upon his own bed. “And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s
soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.” 1 Kings 17:21-22. Elijah prayed the same prayer three times in a row, before he received the answer.

Jesus, also, prayed the same prayer three times in a row in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26 and Mark 14), first asking his disciples to pray with him, then after the third time allowing them to sleep, accepting that the time of his betrayal was come.

I wonder if Paul meant he prayed three times in a row for his thorn to be removed. I did some research and found no confirmation that this is what was meant. There are a lot of references to the Jewish practice of praying three times per day – at the third, sixth and ninth hours. There is some information about praying three times per day, before meals. I did not find anything to support this theory. I am led, nevertheless, to surmise there may be some additional power in praying the same thing three times in a row. If so, it seems like this is reserved for very special circumstances – possibly even once in a lifetime – and certainly not something that would be done routinely or for just any request. If there is something “big” that needs a special dispensation of grace, mercy, or healing, it certainly can’t hurt to bring it to the Lord three times in a row. If this is what is meant, clearly it does not guarantee a “yes” answer, but it does seem possible this is a way to bring God’s favor or focused power to a particularly difficult matter.

“Not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Matt. 26:39

We enjoyed a visit from Bro. Wayne Hartzler (Sis. Camille, Rittman, OH) and appreciate his willingness to serve us.

The month was filled with many activities. The Sunday School Christmas program was a very special time as our children lent their talents to praise and celebrate the birth of Jesus. We also enjoyed our tradition of Christmas caroling; the men participated in a special service at the Phoenix Rescue Mission, and families joined together in appreciation of each other and of the most wonderful Gift that was ever given. May your New Year be bright and filled with worship and praise, and all the good gifts from the Father of Lights.

Arizona, Prescott
Autumn Rokey

As the dust settles from all of the holiday gatherings, Christmas parties and family get together, we sit and take a breath. The joyous season seems to always bring extra busyness no matter how hard we try to not let it overwhelm us. Maybe it is not even a joyful time as some realize that the next year brings changes in life not welcomed like the loss of loved ones or new challenges to face. But as we sit in the now quiet home or at least a quiet hour for some, we can take the hope that the birth of Jesus brought to the world and let it usher us into the next year; a new year that God goes before. A new year that will bring surprises and excitement. A new year that will bring trials and tears. A new year that gives again a chance to start anew, a marking point to remember that our God is great. He is good. He is present, ever in our hearts and lives. Calling us toward Him in a relationship that is sometimes hard to grasp, making us a new creation daily.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 2 Corinthians 2:17.

Arizona, Tucson
Dean and Jackie Knobloch

We are welcoming in the New Year, grateful for God’s mercies and the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

Our visitors in the last month include Elder Bro. Ben Wiegand (Philadelphia) and Bro. Jim Koehl (Sis. Hildy, Morris). We are thankful for the word preached on our behalf.

We were able to meet with Bro. Ben and discuss the ongoing church mission statement and the “planting” that is in progress for the Tucson church. We look to God for His grace and guidance.

We were blessed to celebrate Sis. Iz Bauer’s 100th birthday. Her family was here and made the day special to our church family.

Our congregation caroled at two of the local nursing homes and our students presented the
Christmas story to us. We never tire of hearing about Jesus and His humble beginning.

On Sunday December 9, Bro. Curt Kaufman had his final service before retiring from the pulpit ministry. We wish to thank him and his wife, Sis. Caroline, for their efforts on behalf of the Tucson church. An all-church reception was held. We were grateful for the many visitors who came to be with us that day.

May your new year be blessed and may God be near you each day of 2019.

Our townhouse is being occupied from January thru March. If anyone is visiting from April on, it is available by contacting Bro. Dean Knobloch at 309-231-8428.

California, Los Angeles/Altadena
Kali Sauder

JOY! was the theme of our Christmas program this year as the Sunday School students shared the message of Immanuel’s coming. The angel assured the shepherds, “Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Luke 2:10

The songs sung further declared the joyous news as the climax of God’s plan began to unfold through the baby Jesus’ arrival. It is always a delight to hear the message of the gospel from the mouths of our children, but this year’s theme of joy spoke volumes as we were drawn to worship this Baby in the manger, the Savior of the world! It’s our prayer that this message of joy rings true and continues with us into the start of a new year!

California, San Diego
Sarah Fulop

Happy Holidays! Tis the season for laughter and joy and a little too much family. We all have so much to be thankful for. Most importantly we get to celebrate the most important gift ever given to us, JESUS the son of God.

Our Christmas program was a huge success despite laughable missteps. Thank you to all the teachers and students who put in countless hours of practice. It was an amazing night where the joy of salvation was shared.

The New Year is rapidly approaching and we all have the opportunity to reflect on the blessings as well as the challenges of this past year. We are fearfully and wonderfully made in His image. Every experience refines us and shapes us to be vessels for His glory. We thank God for the safety and health of our church body and are eagerly looking forward to what the New Year will bring.

“‘For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.” Matt. 1:49-52

Colorado, Denver
Tess Leman

Greetings of love!

Yet again, the Christmas season is upon us. A phrase I’ve run across several times lately is from the song, O Holy Night. “A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices…” And what a thrill of hope Jesus brings to our sin-weary world! There is truly no greater delight in all the world, though many seek that fulfillment elsewhere. Is Jesus thrilling your heart this Christmas?

There was bustle of joy and excitement as Bro. Tim Troxel and Sis. Bonnie Lackey were united in marriage. It was a beautiful weekend, full of the sweetness of love, the support of family and friends, and the blessings of the Lord. The couple is settling in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. We thank Bro. Josh Johnson (Sis. Bethany, Wichita, KS), Bro. Ron Palitto (Sis. Lynell, Akron, OH) and Bro. Joel Troxel (Sis. Amy, LaCrosse, IN) for sharing in this special weekend.

With sadness we announce the passing of Jim Schrock, age 82. Jim had lived in Colorado since 1971 (originally from Burlington, IA). We enjoyed seeing him when he’d visit. Our prayers are for the grieving family at the loss of a dear uncle and brother.

“A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!”
**Connecticut, Rockville**
*Heidi Beutel, Amanda Virkler*

“For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Acts 1:5

We are thankful for Matthew Moser (Bro. Steve & Sis. Janis), Kaylee Bahler (Bro. Steve & Sis. Lori) and Rebekah Gerber (Bro. Dale & Sis. Mary-Ann) as they were announced for baptism. We look forward to hearing their testimonies and witnessing their baptisms on the weekend of January 26 & 27.


We rejoice that a Heavenly victory has been won for Sis. Shirley Luginbuhl. We extend our prayers and sympathy to her many friends and family members.

We continue to keep Sis. Joyce Hunt (Bro. Harry), Sis. Alma Skipper (Bro. Joe, dec.) and Marie Garrow (Bro. Bernie) in our prayers as they have been hospitalized this month. We are thankful that they are doing better and are all in recovery.

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

This month we did not have caretakers so when it was our turn for lunch we also did the cleaning. Yard work was done whenever someone had some free time. 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. Jedd Rocke (Sis. Marsha, Goodfield, IL), Bro. Nick Waibel (Sis. Sandra, Francesville, IN), Elder Bro. Randy Beer (Sis. Deb, Milford, IN), and Bro. Jeff Gerber (Sis. Carole, Rockville, CT). We are thankful for visitors and for them letting us know they are coming.

With the start of the New Year many young people and others are considering what they will do when they finish school. The D.C. area is no longer home to just the government and government contractors. While that is still a large portion of employment opportunities, there are also many hospitals, a wide variety of educational institutions (from preschool to universities), research facilities, lots of construction (needing labors, trades, and construction/project managers) and other professional opportunities. Please prayerfully consider the Washington, D.C. area.

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

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

We were blessed to have Elder Bro. Ted Witzig, Sr. (Sis. Cindy) Morton, IL; Bro. Preston Kaehr (Sis. Wendy) Bluffton North, IN and Elder Bro. Lynn Fiechter (Sis. Ronda) Bluffton, IN visit and share God’s word. We pray they will be blessed and rewarded for their efforts.

*Isaiah 55:11 “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”*

Bro. Tim Troxel (Ft. Lauderdale, FL) and Sis. Bonnie Lackey (Denver, CO) were married in Denver on December 9. We wish for them God’s richest blessings in their future.

Our church went Christmas caroling at a local nursing home and back to the Fellowship Hall for a winter dinner and warm fellowship. A blessing was had by all who could participate.
Florida, Fort Myers

Mary Masters

We would like to thank our visiting ministers this month for their service. Elder Bro. Paul Messner (Sis. Jan) Winthrop, MN. and Bro. Kevin Schrock (Sis. Rachel) joined us in our sunny state. Our Sunday school Christmas program was small, but well received and guided by Sis. Amber Vanwy. The visual for the carol they sang was a substitute Mary holding the baby Jesus as they sang about why there is “Joy To the World.” Their enthusiasm made up for a lack in number of participants.

Our deepest condolences go to Sis. Edna Moser in the passing of her dear husband Bro. Gene, and to Sis. Sharon Kelson in the passing of her dear husband, Bro. Bud. We will greatly miss the fellowship that we enjoyed with these loving brothers in winters past.

The New Beginnings

Our residents are enjoying some time off from school with Christmas vacation. At one of our meals recently, the question was asked, “Why do you think that Jesus was born in a lowly manger?” The answer that came from one of our residents was that she thought it was because God wanted to make Himself available to everyone no matter what their resources or station of life may be. How would you answer that question? Have you ever thought about who is likely to accept the gospel of Jesus most readily? Is it the rich and famous or is it those who are of a low estate?

We are privileged to experience many meaningful discussions with those who have not been exposed to God’s truths earlier in their lives. It is very encouraging to hear their enthusiasm when they experience the God of the Bible and hear of the many patriarchs who weren’t perfect, but were made perfect through Jesus’ shed blood on the cross.

Florida, Sarasota

Sandra Kaeb

For Thanksgiving, my thoughts went to what an elder many years ago shared with me. Being a new babe in Christ, his advice was to always remember the words in our Hymns of Zion #116 (Count Your Many Blessings). When life gets hard and difficulties come, replace the chorus from “Count your many blessings name them one by one”, to “Count your many obligations see what the Lord wants done”. He said by doing this it has helped him tremendously throughout life and doing service has surely helped him be thankful.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Sis. Beulah Funk from Morton, IL. She, along with her husband, Leo, who passed away a number of years ago, were such wonderful supporters of our church family. They always gave so much love and support to all of us. She was preceded in death by her husbands, Richard Rumbold and Leo Funk. Our deepest sympathy goes to Sis. Aldine Martin as she was her sister-in-law; son, Gary Rumbold (Mary Kay, Morton IL); and two daughters, Sis. Kayleen Heiniger (Bro. Ronald, Normal, IL) and Sis. Debra Wells (Dennis, East Peoria, IL); two step sons; two step daughters; and one step daughter-in-law; 11 grandchildren, 46 great-grandchildren and many step grandchildren. May they all find comfort through our Lord and Savior.

We are praying for our Sis. Jean Earley as she had knee surgery and Sis. Erika Furj as she hasn’t been able to worship with us due to some physical pain. Prayers were asked for Bro. Ralph Kuntz (Sis. Marge, Gridley, IL) who suffered a heart attack and needed three stents put in. We are thankful to hear he is doing well.

Our Sunday school children had the Christmas program titled, Happy Birthday Jesus. As they said their little parts and sang together, our church family was blessed and reminded of the gift the Father shared with us, His only begotten son sent as a babe in the manger.

May God bless our young families who raise these precious little ones and our Sunday school teachers for their labors.

We enjoyed going Christmas caroling to those who can’t worship with us and some older ones from church. After caroling Saturday evening, we gathered at the fellowship hall enjoying soup and snacks.

“Christmas is not in tinsel and lights and outward show. The secret lies in an inner glow. It's
lighting a fire inside the heart.
Good will and joy a vital part. It’s
higher thought and a greater plan.
It’s glorious dream in the soul of
man.” - Wilferd Peterson

Haiti, Bonne Fin -
Hospital Lumiere
Rick and Komari Aberle

Greetings in the name of our Savior Jesus! December is a busy time in Bonne Fin, just as it is in our home churches and communities in the United States. The end of a year brings many events and tasks within the hospital in addition to our activities as a missionary family. It is a blessing to sit in the morning devotions at the hospital and frequently hear the references to the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

The hospital received an orthopedic team during the past month. We were also visited by past missionaries to Bonne Fin, Bro. Eric and Sis. Jami Hartzler, who led a cervical cancer screening team. We were blessed with a visit from some members of the Hospital Lumiere Governing Board, including Bro. Bob Beebe (South Bend, IN) who shared the word with us.

The past month also brought Nussbaum family visitors here. The Aberle family and Sis. Carrie Stoller were able to spend some time in the United States as well. Sis. Brooke Kilgus and Sis. Pat Banwart also were able to travel home for the holiday season.

The months of November and December saw political unrest escalate in Haiti. This caused the cancellation of several travel plans for both the missionaries and visitors during this time. We ask for continued prayer for the country of Haiti during the holiday season.

In closing, the verse from Isaiah that foretells the Lord’s birth gives us comfort in the political situation in Haiti: 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.”

Haiti, Les Cayes
Mike & Susie Walder

One warm and sunny Sunday afternoon a good-sized group went Christmas caroling to a local clinic as well as a local nursing home we support. As I led some of the songs we attempted to sing in either French or Creole, I saw others also fanning themselves and wiping sweat off their faces and arms. Following the caroling, we traveled to the dairy farm in Torbeck where the Kaebs and Knoblucks had prepared a wonderful meal for us to share.

Christmas here can often feel quite different. While the heat is the most obvious difference, we notice that the extreme poverty prevents many from decorating or buying much. Stores generally don’t have fancy seasonal displays although we do see some here and there. Haitians will share what they have, so we do too.

Every year our family enjoys inviting our house help and their families for a holiday meal, handing out gifts and playing games together. Gifts are simple and necessary things like flip flops, tooth brushes, towels, soap, or food. A sweet boy stopped by today asking for a little job so he could buy his mother a gift.

Many Haitian churches will have programs to celebrate Christ’s birth. It is pretty obvious it really doesn’t take materialism to be happy or to celebrate better. It is a heart attitude of thankfulness, love for your neighbor, and good cheer.

Bro. Isaac and Sis. Brittany Steiner and family recently enjoyed a wonderful first-time visit from grandparents, Bro. Dave and Sis. Lynn Steiner from Rittman, OH. It was a blessing for Bro. Ed and Sis. Julie Sanders to be able to visit their children, grandchildren, and home church in Alto, MI this Christmas.

As we come to a new year and then begin to turn the months of the calendar quickly aside, may we be always aware of the Lord’s soon coming. We have been reading through Revelation recently at lunch. We came to chapter 16, verse 20 that says “every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” Someone said, for sure Haiti will be no more! We all laughed, but while here we do not have a continuing city, we can...
trust that He holds our moments and our days until we do.

Illinois, Bloomington-Normal
Wendy Zimmerman, Sara Anliker

“Long lay the world in sin and error pining, til He appeared and the soul felt its worth.” O Holy Night, Gospel Hymns #876

With the busyness of the Christmas season, it is easy to get sidetracked by activities, shopping and lists. Thankfully, we’ve had many special events that helped remind us of the true reason of the season. A group traveled to Sunset Gap, TN over Thanksgiving weekend taking food packages and serving a Thanksgiving dinner. Starting off the Christmas season, many in our church family enjoyed an evening of Christmas caroling and a chili supper. Always a highlight is the evening program performed by our Church Choir, as well as our Sunday School Christmas Program. What a blessing to hear the Christmas story told through song! We were also given the opportunity to pass along the blessings that we have received with others, by collecting and passing out Thanksgiving baskets and Christmas “adopt-a-family” baskets in our community.

We extend our sympathy and prayers to Sis. Kayleen Heiniger (Bro. Ron) at the passing of her mother, Sis. Beulah Funk (Morton, IL).

This month we were blessed to have Bro. Tim Wiegand (Sis. Christa, Leo, IN) and Bro. Doug Wagenbach (Sis. Lillian, San Diego, CA) visit and share the gospel message.

As we welcome in a New Year, we say a prayer of thanksgiving for all that we have been given, especially for the gift of Jesus!

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Illinois, Bradford
Becky Endress, Lana Wiegand

“Hosanna to the Son of David!” When the chief priests and scribes complained, Jesus defended the children’s praise, “Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” Matthew 21:15-16 As we listened to the old, old story of Jesus’ birth recited and sung by our Sunday school students, our hearts were warmed. Earlier in December, many of our church sang carols to shut-ins in nearby towns and received a Christmas blessing ourselves.

After enjoying many winters in Florida, Bro. Loris and Sis. Lottie Stisser are spending this one in a lovely apartment in Bradford at 100 Courtyard Estates. Bro. Tyler and Sis. Leah Endress have moved their little family to a home in the country. Their new address is 58 Elm Lane, Bradford, IL 61421. Many of Sis. Leah’s family came to help them move and then assembled with us on Sunday. We thank Bro. Nathan Rassi (Sis. Michelle, St. Louis, MO) for bringing us the Word. Another visitor, ministering Bro. Scott Schambach (Sis. Hope, Elgin, IL) also served us that day.

“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.” Proverbs 18:22

Sis. Leah Kaeb (Bro. Les and Sis. Christine, Francesville, IN) became the bride of Bro. Graham League (Richard and Vanessa) on November 28 in Francesville. A marriage in the Lord blesses not only the bride and groom, but also their families, their church, and their community. Bro. Graham and Sis. Leah are at home at 1380 County Road 900N, Lacon, IL 61540. We welcome Sis. Leah to our church family!

Illinois, Champaign
Brent Young

We sorrow with Sis. Linda Kupferschmid (Bro. Chad) after the passing of her sister and our friend, Susan Blunier. We continue to pray for Bro. Dennie Mangers (Sis. Cheryl) after his recent surgery and hospital stay.

We are grateful to Bro. Craig Stickling for bringing us a message on the spiritual gifts of ‘Service, Helps, & Mercy’ and to Bro. Andrew Rassi for a message on ‘Practical Helps to Study God’s Word’.

Our Sunday school presented ‘Christmas Chronicles’, telling the Christmas story in reverse order.
They began with the wise men, shepherds, and the incarnation, proceeded back to the birth of John the Baptist, and on to the promises of God all the way to the fall in the Garden of Eden. It was a wonderful re-telling of the story, emphasizing the original sin and high-lighting God’s many promises (to Eve, Abraham, David, and Mary) to restore His people to Himself. We were reminded again how Jesus’ birth was so clearly promised and prophesied, and inspired that we can trust completely in the assurance of His return!

**Illinois, Chicago**

Diana Eisenmann

We were blessed to have ministering Bro. Fred Witzig (Sis. Nancy, Washington, IL) visit on Thanksgiving weekend.

Our annual Christmas program was held in December. The Sunday School children presented the message “Rejoice” and reflected on the joy we have as a result of Jesus coming down to earth. Following the program, we went Christmas caroling at several local nursing homes then returned to church for a delicious chili dinner. It was a blessing to fellowship together and share the wonderful news of Jesus.

Bro. Matthew and Sis. Bridget Rassi, along with two of their children, Manna and Nicodemus, traveled to Haiti for two weeks as part of the adoption process for two new daughters, Maylove and Djessica. We continue to pray with their family as they trust God in this journey.

**Note of Thanks:**

Our family thanks you for the love, prayers, and expressions of sympathy we received during the loss of our dear sister, Anna May Getz (Morton, IL). May God bless each of you.

-George and Velda Foxe

**Illinois, Congerville**

Mary Knapp, Erica Steffen

The dawning of a new year is such a time of reflection and renewed zeal to be of service to our Lord. As we closed out this past year, four souls testified of what God had done for them and rose to newness of life in baptism. On November 25, we welcomed Bro. Simon Wiegand (Bro. Dwight and Sis. Deb), Bro. Josh Wiegand (Bro. Joe and Sis. Myra), Sis. Marie Steiner (Bro. Dave and Sis. Sandy), Sis. Molly Steffen (Bro. Jay and Sis. Melinda) into the family of God and trust that God will continue to guide them through their life’s journey. Elder Bros. Steve Sauder (Sis. Mary, Tremont) and Jeff Grimm (Sis. Ruth, Goodfield) assisted Bro. Rick with the testimonies Saturday night and the baptism service on Sunday. Bros. Tony Manz (Sis. Denise, Junction), Dan Walder (Sis. Pam, Cissna Park), and Bill Wettstein (Sis. Heidi, Eureka) also labored in the Spirit on Sunday. May these brothers and their precious helpmates be blessed for their service.

Bro. Jeremiah Psinas also shared the Word of Truth this month. We appreciate that Bro. Jeremiah spent the evening with us. May he be blessed for his efforts in the ministry.

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

This month also brought the sudden passing of our Bro. Ed Miller. As was shared at his funeral service on December 15, Bro. Ed might have been a quiet person, but we don’t have to be an extraordinary personality to be of service to our Lord and precious in His sight. May his sisters and brothers who remain here feel the peace of the Heavenly Father as they grieve. What a glorious hope we have that this Earth is not the end. Our Lord Jesus is coming! We have a real expectation to see our brother and all departed believers again in Heaven!

**Illinois, Elgin**

Amy Gasser

We thank Elder Bros. Ron Messner (Sis. Pam, Washington) and Brad Eisenmann (Sis. Cindy, Chicago) and Bro. Ted Schock (Sis. Heidi, Belvidere), for ministering during the past month.

Little Scarlett Rose was born to first-time parents, Brian and Kait Kellenberger, on November 25. Her grandparents are Jim and Barb Papen of Wonder Lake, IL and Bro. Daryle and Sonia Kellenberger.

We are prayerful for Bro. Greg (Sis. Debbie) Kellenberger, who had...
another eye surgery, and for Sis. Cora (Bro. Bill) Schambach, who is recovering from a recent fall.

Our Family Christmas Caroling was held on Sunday, December 9, followed by a chili/soup supper at the Fellowship Center. The annual Sunday School Christmas Program was on Sunday, December 16.

“The blessed story of the Christ, The babe of Bethlehem, Is worthy of our song and praise, And stirs the hearts of men. The fullness of God’s love divine, Surrounds the Christ so mild Alas how many only know The Saviour as a child. Our saving hope is all in vain, If here our love should cease, For in the man of Galilee, We find the gift of peace. ‘Tis not the babe but Christ, the man, Who walked in Galilee; ‘Tis not the manger, but the cross, That sets the spirit free. Be not content this babe to know, Nor stay at Bethlehem, But go with Christ to Calvary’s brow, Beyond Jerusalem. ‘Tis there men learn to know the Christ, For there He bore man’s sin. Then open wide the door of heart, And let the Saviour in.” The Babe of Bethlehem, Hymns of Zion #36

Illinois, Eureka
Debra Blunier, Linda Rocke

As you are reading this, the New Year has begun. We all wonder what is in store for us in the days ahead and how God would want us to spend our time. This excerpt from the daily devotional Joy and Strength has some thought-provoking advice: “…Do something worth living for, worth dying for. Is there no want, no suffering, no sorrow that you can relieve? Is there no act of tardy justice, no deed of cheerful kindness, no long-forgotten duty that you can perform? Is there no reconciliation of some ancient quarrel, no payment of some long-outstanding debt, no courtesy, or love, or honor to be rendered to those to whom it has long been due; no charitable, humble, kind, useful deed by which you can promote the glory of God, or goodwill among men, or peace upon earth? If there be any such deed, in God’s name, in Christ’s name, go and do it.”

-By Arthur P. Stanley

We rejoiced in the baptisms of two dear souls into the “family of God.” They are Bro. Andy Blunier (Bro. Kurt and Sis. Livy) and Bro. Andrew Zimmerman (Bro. Mark and Sis. Cheryl). Elder Bro. Rick Plattner (Sis. Mary Ann, Fairbury, IL) joined Bro. Trent in this important work.

We are thankful for our visiting ministers we had this month. They were Bro. Kevin Schrock (Sis. Rachel, Congerville, IL), Elder Bro. Randy Beer (Sis. Deb, Milford, IN), Bro. Don Manz (Sis. Connie, Junction, OH), Bro. Brian Huber (Sis. Jacki, Francisville, IN), Bro. Kent Wiegand (Sis. Lanae, Goodfield, IL), and Bro. John Bradle (Sis. Jill, Roanoke, IL).

Bro. Pete and Sis. Holly Wettstein were blessed with a new baby girl on November 20. Georgia Wells is welcomed home by Everly and Ezra. Grandparents are Bro. Jake and Sis. Mary Wettstein and Bro. Mike and Sis. Gerri Hinrichsen of Goodfield.

Our thoughts and prayers are extended for those who have had recent surgeries. They include Elder Bro. Trent Meiss (Sis. Lucy), and Sis. Charlene Schumacher (Bro. Bob). May they continue to heal and gain in strength.

Illinois, Fairbury
Janelle Stoller, Trish Steidinger

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” 1 Cor. 13:13

God has worked in the hearts of our dear Sis. Sadie Moser (Sis. Julia and the late Bro. Doug) and Bro. Karl Christ (Bro. Kurt and Sis. Connie, Princeville, IL) and they are now looking forward to a marriage in the Lord. What a blessing to commit our future to the Lord and allow Him to give us what He knows is best!

We are also rejoicing with our Bro. Wayne Fehr and Sis. Carol Virkler as their engagement was made known. May God provide for them and their families as they join together.

Our Sunday School students presented the annual Christmas program on December 9. We pray the children can feel our love for them, and much deeper the love our Father in Heaven has for them. May the message they
brought us bring conviction and purpose to their lives.

We are deeply saddened by the passing of our dear Bro. Bud Kelson on December 20. He was such an example and will be missed in our congregation. We offer our sympathy to his wife, Sis. Sharon, and children: Bro. Paul Kelson (Sis. Sherri, Forrest, IL), Mike Kelson (Jacque, East Peoria, IL), Sis. Carol Kafer (Bro. Ben), Robert Kelson (Christy, Danvers, IL), and Betty Metroz (Jeff). We also offer our sympathy to his sisters, Sis. Jeanette Bahler and Joan Merrill (Naperville, IL) and brother, David Kelson (Somerset, KY). Many thought of Bro. Bud as an avid fisherman, but I believe even greater than his desire to cast a fishing pole was his desire to draw souls to his Lord and Savior.

We also extend our sympathy to Sis. Nancy Bachtold (Bro. Lloyd) in the passing of her sister, Sis. Eileen Getz (Remington, IN).

Our thoughts and prayers are with Bro. Kevin and Sis. Kara Moser as they have suffered a house fire. We don't understand why God allows certain trials in our life, but we look to Him to provide grace for the day.

We thank our visiting ministers Bro. Brian Waibel (Sis. Wendy, Champaign, IL), Bro. Dennis Rassi (Sis. Diane, Austin/ Bastrop, TX), and Bro. Todd Sinn (Sis. Janet, Latty, OH). We always enjoy having these brothers come and minister to us.

Sis. Carol Bazzell (Bro. Donnie) has been in our prayers as she deals with health concerns as well as Bro. Jerry Kaisner (Sis. Donna) as he continues his battle with cancer. We pray God will grant both of these dear couples grace and nearness as they go through this difficult time.

**Illinois, Forrest**

**Carissa Knapp, Marsha Lanz**

We thank Bros. Mark Klaus (Sis. Rebekah, Athens, AL), Matt Zimmerman (Sis. Kim, St. Louis, MO), Michael Schneider (Sis. Jodi, Junction, OH), and James Fehr (Sis. Brenda, Tremont, IL) for sharing God’s Word this month.

We rejoice with Bro. Reagan Mueller (Bro. Ron and Sis. Vicki) and Sis. Faith Blunier (Bro. Dave and Sis. Kara) of Fairbury, IL on their recent engagement. May God bless them as they plan for their life together.

A new baby girl, Alyssa Marie, was born to Bro. Waylon and Sis. Ashton Knapp. Welcoming her home is big brother Bretton. Grandparents are Bro. Troy and Sis. Kathleen Lanz and Bro. Harlan and Sis. Jean Knapp.

We say farewell to Bro. Colin and Sis. Lynelle Steidinger and their children as they move to Ft. Myers, FL. We pray for safe travels for them, and may they feel God’s nearness as they settle in their new home.

Our prayers have been with Bro. Harry Johnson (Sis. Til) who underwent shoulder surgery and is back home recovering. Bro. Ted Bachtold (Sis. Teresa) also spent some time in the hospital this past month.

We certainly do not know what the New Year holds for each one of us, but we can rejoice and be thankful that we can look to Him, and put our full trust in Him, as the New Year unfolds.

“Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;” 1 Chronicles 16:9-12

**Illinois, Goodfield**

**Judy Knapp, Amy Hinrichsen**

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

We are very thankful to announce that Rachel Roberts and MaryBeth Wiegand are at peace with God and man and desire baptism. Rachel is the daughter of Bro. Roger and Sis. Becky Roberts. MaryBeth is the daughter of Bro. Nathan and Sis. Laura Wiegand. We plan to have testimonies and baptisms for Rachel and MaryBeth on January 5 and 6.

We are so thankful when someone turns their life over to Jesus. Diane Gregory has answered the Lord’s call to repentance. May she feel God’s nearness and grace and the prayers of our church family.

Bro. Randy and Sis. Roxy Blunier are rejoicing as they were
blessed with a baby boy, Tristan Robert, born on December 10! Tristan is happily welcomed home by his siblings: Katherine, Nadia, Nicholas, Rachel, Zane, and Jesse. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Roger and Sis. Wendy Blunier of Eureka and Bro. Art and Sis. Pam Wiegand.

Goodfield had a nice invite-a-friend gathering on November 18. We were thankful to have Bro. Mike Kaisner (Sis. Mindy) from Peoria visiting to share God’s word that day.

“Oh come let us adore Him!” The Christmas Program was held on December 9. We were blessed to hear the children bring forth the story of Jesus coming to this earth as a newborn baby. We were thankful to have Bro. Tom Bolliger (Sis. Jane) from Tremont as a visiting minister that day.

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matt. 1:21

During this Christmas season, we are so thankful for God’s perfect gift, His Son, Jesus Christ, who has given us eternal life! May we all treasure this amazing gift our Father has given us! And as we end this year of 2018, may we take time to thank God for all the blessings and gifts in our lives. We wish everyone a joyous New Year!!!

Illinois, Gridley

Perry Klopfenstein

Sis. Miranda Schlipf was married to Bro. Tyler Haerr of Taylor, MO. Her parents are Bro. Jake and Sis. Amy Schlipf. He is the son of Bro. Shon and Sis. Peggy Haerr of Taylor, MO. We wish them very best wishes as they establish their home in the Taylor, MO area. Elder Kent Heimer, Taylor, was here for the wedding. Other ministers here on that Sunday were Bro. Craig Stickling, Peoria, and Taylor ministers, Bro. Tim Lehman and Bro. Scott Wegman.

Bro. Louis John and Sis. Leslie Slagel welcomed their new son on November 1, 2018. He was named Declan Louis. His siblings are Branson, 7, Colton, 4, and Amandrea, 3. He is the grandson of Dennis and Lorene Slagel, Fairbury, and Leonard and Cheryl Schurter of Silverton, OR. May God grant grace to the parents in training up this new child.

Bro. Virgil Kaeb, Sarasota, FL was a visiting minister on December 9.

Our annual Sunday school Christmas program was held on Sunday afternoon, December 9. We thank our students and their teachers for their messages of Christmas. On Wednesday evening, December 12, the Gridley church participated in Christmas caroling followed by a lunch in the Fellowship Hall.

Bro. John Schlipf had surgery for cancer on December 18, and we pray for good results. Bro. Orlan Miller, also a cancer patient, had a recent test that revealed improvement over the past 6 months. He, too, has our prayers.

Sis. Sandy Schneider had a second knee replaced, and is recovering. Sis. Joyce Ferneau was a patient at a Chicago hospital for a liver concern, and continues to deal with her condition. Sis. Barb Harris was in the hospital for a pulmonary embolism in her right lung. May the Lord help her, and all those afflicted with bodily ailments. The Lord is the great healer, according to His will.

A New Year now beckons. Life brings both joys and sorrow. Many deal with health and social concerns, but at the same time the Lord Jesus can offer comfort and solace. He remains a comforting presence if we seek him with our whole heart, and trust Him and obey Him.

Illinois, Morton

Annette Tanner, Julie Bahr

As we look back on the past month, we have experienced a wide range of emotions.

On Thanksgiving Day, our Bro. Ted Hirstein (Sis. Joyce) preached his last sermon as part of our pulpit ministry. His official retirement was December 1, exactly 25 years from the day he preached his first sermon in our Morton church at the Jefferson Street location. We thank Bro. Ted and Sis. Joyce for forty years of service to our congregation. We wish them God’s richest blessings as they continue to serve us in other capacities.

We thank the visiting brothers who taught us from God’s Word: Bro. Greg Rassi (Sis. Carla,
Chicago, IL); Bro. Nathan Rassi (Sis. Michelle, St. Louis, MO); and Bro. Scott Schafer (Sis. Gigi, South Bend, IN).

Our Family Worship Night was held on December 5. Our Bro. Jon Zeller (Sis. Christie) spoke on the topic “Wise Men Still Seek Him”. As the wise men followed the star in the east seeking to find the young child Jesus, we need to keep seeking Jesus every day and be ready to be a witness for Him.

We welcome Bro. Ray Haerr who has moved to Morton and is worshiping with us.

We extend our deepest sympathy to four dear families who have said farewell to loved ones.

Sis. Anna May Getz (late Bro. John) passed into eternity on November 14. Surviving are her children: Karen Getz of Windsor, CA; David Getz of Tempe, AZ; Janet (Stephen) Getz Fischer of Morton, IL; Carol Getz (Michael Pizzi) of Tempe, AZ; and Sheri (Dennis) Frank of Bloomington, IL; and one brother of Morton, Kerwin Lanz.

Sis. Lois Allenbach (Bro. Ron) of Kiowa, KS passed away unexpectedly. She is a sister to Sis. Geneva (Bro. Gerry) Sullivan of our Morton congregation.

December 2, Sis. Beulah Funk (late Bro. Leo) went to rest in the Lord. She is survived by one son, Gary (Mary Kay) Rumbold, Morton; and two daughters, Sis. Kayleen (Bro. Ron) Heiniger, Normal, IL; and Sis. Debra (Bro. Denny) Wells, East Peoria, IL.

On December 7, Alan Fischer, son of Bro. Jim and Sis. Joann (Bauer) Fischer went to his Heavenly Home and to his best friend Jesus. He is also survived by two sisters, Sis. Diane (Bro. Fred) Funk, Morton and Rebecca (David) Hall of Madison, AL. We thank Bro. Jeff Fischer (Sis. Gloria, Ft. Scott, KS) for participating in the funeral service for his cousin.

Our congregation has also enjoyed activities relevant to this Christmas season.

On Sunday, December 2 many were able to go Christmas caroling to several nursing homes and shut-ins, followed by a delicious chili supper.

Sunday, December 9 we were blessed to hear our Sunday School students enthusiastically share the Christmas story in verse and song. The title of the program was “The Light of Christmas”. We were not only reminded of Jesus’s birth, but also the reason he came to earth.

St. John 8:12 “Then spoke Jesus again unto them saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

As we celebrate the ending of 2018 and look forward to a New Year, let us never forget that our God is in control of everything, and He will provide.

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

Illinois, Peoria

Crystal Wettstein, Bonnie Bach

Time passes so quickly! Thanksgiving has passed and as I write, Christmas is almost here. Soon we will be entering a new year, 2019. As we read in James, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” James 4:14.

May we remember the words of the Psalmist, “ But I trusted in Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God, My times are in Thy hand...Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.” Psalm 31:14,15,24.

Our Sunday School children presented us with a beautiful Christmas program to remind us of God’s greatest gift to mankind, our dear Lord and Savior Jesus. From the prekindergarten to the young adults we see how God lets us grow and develop talents for His praise and glory! One Sunday evening we joined together to sing carols to the shut-ins and others in the community. We felt blest to bring the gift of song to others!

Visiting us and ministering was Bro. Brad Bauer (Sis. Sandy, Tucson, AZ). How good that we can travel over the miles and share this blessed faith!

On Wednesday December 5 after a light meal at church, young and old gathered for family night. We learned about manna that fell from Heaven in the wilderness. Let’s remember God will provide as we trust in Him!
Those needing prayers for healing have included Bro. Fedi Davidovics, Sis. Linda Miller, Sis. Linda Leathers, Bro. Allan Herman, and Bro. Gary Schmidgall. We are so grateful we have a loving God who hears our cries for help!

**Illinois, Princeville**  
**Renee Herrmann, Melinda Christ**

“Yield not to temptation, For yielding is sin; Each victory will help you, Some other to win; Fight manfully onward, Dark passions subdue; Look ever to Jesus, He’ll carry you through.”  
*Hymns of Zion #166*

Our congregation was blest by having Bro. David Huette (Sis. Susan, Tremont, IL) come and share on the topical Bible study on Temptation.

Visiting ministers include Elder Bro. Ted Steffen (Sis. Sandy, Alto, MI), Bro. Nathan Steffen (Sis. Susan, Alto, MI) and Bro. Gregg Rumbold (Sis. Heather, Peoria, IL). We appreciate these brothers bringing the inspired Word of God to us.

We extend our sympathy to Bro. Devon and Sis. Leah Knoboch on the passing of Leah’s grandmother, Sharon Wykoff at the end of October. Also we share in the grief and loss to Bro. Kyle and Sis. Heather Plattner on the passing of her Uncle Alan Fischer of Morton, IL.

Those experiencing the afflictions of the body are Bro. Tim Wagenbach (Sis. Tricia).

“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.” *Proverbs 18:22*

We heard the engagement of Bro. Karl Christ, son of Bro. Kurt and Sis. Connie, to Sis. Sadie Moser of Fairbury, the daughter of Sis. Julia and the late Bro. Doug.

Our church family enjoyed an afternoon of Christmas caroling to those of the community and shut-in brethren. After caroling we gathered for a delicious meal at the fellowship hall followed by a Christmas song service.

“While Jesus whispers to you, Come, Sinner, Come. While we are praying for you, Come, Sinner Come. Now is the time to own Him, Come Sinner come. Now is the time to know Him, Come Sinner Come.”  
*Hymns of Zion #103*

We rejoice that Daniel Feucht has surrendered and begun in repentance. He is the son of Mark and Sis. Paula Feucht.

Another precious grandbaby is welcomed into the family of Bro. Stan and Sis. Margie Schick. They are happy grandparents to Levi Arron born on December 6, son of Andy and Victoria Schick. Big sisters Ava, Emma and Olivia are happy to have a brother.

On December 9 in the evening, our Sunday School students told us the old, old story of Jesus, His humble birth through song and verses.

“The blessed story of the Christ, The babe of Bethlehem, Is worthy of our song and praise, And stirs the hearts of men. The fullness of God’s love divine, surrounds the Christ so mild. Alas how many only know the Saviour as a child.”  
*Hymns of Zion #36*

Bro. Ray and Sis. Betty Wagenbach have moved to Apostolic Christian Skyline apartments. We wish them well and continued health.

**Illinois, Roanoke**  
**Barb Schwind, Judy Sauder**

“Another year is dawning, Dear Master, let it be, On earth or else in heaven Another year for Thee.”  
*Hymns of Zion # 150*

We thank visiting ministers who have served our church: Bro. Matt Oesch (Sis. Shelli, Alto, MI), Bro. Jeff Leman (Sis. Val, Bluffton North), Bro. Darren Plattner (Sis. Sue, Champaign, IL), Elder Bro. Kent Heimer (Sis. Jan, Taylor, MO) and Bro. James Fehr (Sis. Brenda, Tremont, IL).

Please pray for Wally (Sis. Marilyn) Leman, Sis. Pat Sauder, and Bro. Jeff (Sis. Jodie) Sauder, who are recuperating from illness or surgery.

Bro. Jim & Sis. Marge Braker celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in December. Bro. Gene and Sis Evie Hangartner celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary in January. We appreciate the faithful witness of love and commitment shown by both of these couples.

Susan Blunier of Champaign, IL passed away on December 2. Her survivors include her parents, Bro. Wayne & Sis. Marjorie of
Roanoke; a sister, Sis. Linda (Bro. Chad) Kupferschmid of Mahomet, IL; brothers: Mark (Cathy) Washburn, IL & Bro. Greg (Sis. JulieAnn) Blunier of Pekin, IL. Susan was a kind person and talented knitter, who enjoyed her cats and family gatherings.

Carol Whitten (Bro. Gene deceased) of Roanoke passed away December 5. Carol is survived by a daughter Ella (Dan) Waldschmidt; 2 sons: Dennis (Chris) Fett and Bro. David (Sis. Lori) Whitten, all of Roanoke; 8 grandchildren; 9 great grandchildren; 3 sisters: Shirley Smith, Karen (Joe) Kesti, Joyce (Lyle) Cherry all of Wisconsin; 4 brothers: Elmer (Janet) Mullard of Michigan, Paul (Joyce) Mullard of Wisconsin, Alvin Mullard of Chicago, Ronald (Susan) Mullard of Alabama. Carol enjoyed caring for others, crocheting, coloring and collecting bells.

Sis. Arlette Fehr passed away on December 17. Sis. Arlette is survived by her husband of 72 years, Bro. Walt. She is also survived by 3 sons: Tom, Mike, and Curt, all of Roanoke; 2 daughters: Mary Jean (Tex) Streitmatter of Syracuse, UT, and Linda (Mike) Dwyer of Secor; 3 grandchildren; 5 great-grandchildren; one sister, Sis. Wilma Teubel of Bloomfield, IA; and 4 brothers: Robert (Nilah) Fischer of Morton, Bro. Jim (Sis. Joann) Fischer of Morton, Leroy Fischer of Washington, and Elias Fischer of Washington. Sis. Arlette had a servant’s heart and enjoyed volunteering for Meals on Wheels, our church nursing home, the Mennonite Relief Sale and serving as an election judge. Sis. Arlette also helped in the office at B.J. Fehr’s Blacksmith Shop, the family business. Our prayers are with all of these dear families who have lost loved ones.

On December 2, our church went caroling and enjoyed a meal together at the fellowship hall. Also on December 2, Elder Bro. Frank Sauder spoke on Gen. 1:27 “God's Design in Gender Distinction”.

December 5 was our church business meeting. Bro. Harold Sauder is our new church trustee. Sis. Lydia Bertschi was elected our new nursing home trustee. Bro. Rich Lindberg was chosen as our new fellowship hall trustee. We thank them for serving and also thank the brothers who have retired from those positions.

On December 9, our Sunday School presented their Christmas program. What a joy it was to hear our children praising Jesus!

We rejoice that Elly Sauder (Bro. Brad & Sis. Jill) has begun her walk with the Lord.

On December 19, our church family and many visitors enjoyed a beautiful evening of worship, “Back to Bethlehem”. Readings, congregational singing, and our church choirs told the story of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bro. Kent Heimer encouraged us to “…teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Psalm 90:12. This is good advice as we begin a New Year.

Illinois, Tremont
Debbie Aberle, Anita Koch

“Lord bless these, Your dear children, As side by side they stand; May Your love ever lead them. As they live hand in hand.”

We rejoiced with Sis. Rachel Koch (Bro. Phil & Sis. Diane) as she was united in marriage to Bro. Tracy Leman (Bro. Scott & Sis. Phyllis, Eureka, IL). On the pulpit that joyous day was Elder Bro. Trent Meiss (Sis. Lucy, Eureka, IL), Bro. Zach Anderson (Sis. Karla, Congerville, IL), and Tracy’s uncle, Elder Bro. Jeff
Grimm (Sis. Ruth, Goodfield, IL) who had a portion of the wedding service. We also appreciated the visit of Bro. Jedd Rocke (Sis. Marsha, Goodfield, IL). We were reminded to “Be still and know that I am God.” May God bless each minister who serves to feed us God’s Holy Word.

Bro. Cleo Koch was granted his wish of reaching 100.

“Oh what is hundred? This age to few is e’er allotted; O man do strive for virtues pure, And lay thy treasures up in heaven And make your own election sure!

Hymns of Zion #131

God sometimes chooses the young and the innocent to complete His bouquet...Joel Frederick Steiner spent a short three days here in this earthly life. Our love and prayers were expressed to Bro. Todd and Sis. Val, and their children: Sis. Victoria (Bro. Paul) Baer, Bro. Trent, Bro. Corbin, Bro. Philip, Bro. Thad, Faith, Joshua, Lydia, Emma, Timothy, Micah, Leah, and Ethan.

“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Isaiah 40:11

Prayers have been been offered for those who have been in the hospital, had surgery, or are receiving treatments. This month we have remembered Sis. Linda Koch, Bro. Richard Steiner (Sis. Ann), Sis. Wilma Pulfer (Bro. Les), Sis. Janice Sauder (Bro. Howard), Sis. Jamie Baer (Bro. Mark), Sis. Trudy Bolliger (Bro. Dean), and little Baylor Huette (Bro. Galen & Sis. LeaAnn.) May God grant healing according to His will!

Our Samaritan newsletter shared some interesting thoughts, a few ways you can focus on God’s redemptive purposes in the life of a suffering person. Pray: That God’s name would be glorified in and through your friend’s circumstances. For perseverance to have its perfect work in them. For opportunities for them to minister and testify to others (doctors, nurses, other patients, etc.). That their faith would not falter, but rather increase because of adversity. That their physical limitations would open up time and space for a deeper relationship with God. For daily moments of joy. For fresh hope when the journey makes them weary.

Congratulations are in order to Bro. Jason and Sis. Anita Koch as they are welcoming Jamie Nicole into their hearts and home, along with grandparents, Bro. Dan & Sis. Julie Koch and Elder Bro. Bill & Sis. Emily Schlatter (Junction, OH.)

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matt 1:21

The Sunday School children blessed us with an evening of singing Christmas songs and reciting Bible verses. May God richly bless us, go with us all as we close another year, and march onward toward that Heavenly Goal!
has been with Bro. Jason Isch (Bro. Jeff & Sis. Karen) of South Bend as he was led to marry Sis. Jessica Edelman (Kerwin & Sara) from Athens, AL. We rejoice with their engagement!

Additionally, several families have felt the presence of God through the blessing of marriage this month. Bro. Aaron Steffen (Bro. Wayne and Sis. Jeanne) married Sis. Gretchen Moser (Bro. David and Sis. Sheri). May God be with them as they start a new stage in life. Bro. Drew Rinkenberger (Bro. Linc and Sis. Catrina) was married to Sis. Annie Walter (Bro. Chad and Sis. Megan) in Silverton, OR. We extend a warm welcome to Sis. Annie as she makes Bluffton her home!

Our thanks goes forth to our elder body as they prepared a memorandum which was shared on December 2. We know that the Holy Spirit is working in mighty ways through our leadership. Furthermore, we are thankful for the ways that God has used Bro. John Reinhard (Sis. Pam) through the pulpit ministry for the past 34 years. We thank him for his service and trust God to continue working in him as he retires from the pulpit.

Sis. Denise (Bro. Ed) Steffen appreciates prayers as she battles health issues and has been hospitalized. Also, Bro. Steve (Sis. Renee) Reinhard needs our prayers as he was admitted to the hospital after a fall. Bro. Dennis (Sis. Carol) Klopfenstein has been diagnosed with lymphoma. May God be present with them in the midst of their trials.

Several grandparents are rejoicing with the birth of a new grandchild this month. Bro. Mike and Sis. Carmon Bertsch welcome Everly Grace Bertsch, born to Bro. Ryan and Sis. Jessica of Bluffton North. Little Esther Elaine was born to Bro. Matt and Sis. Tiffany Drayer of Wolcott. Bro. Daryl and Sis. Peg Aschliman are local grandparents. Also, Bro. Don and Sis. Suzie Fiechter rejoice with the arrival of Lilly Marie Reinhard, born to Kris and Heidi. Bro. Tim and Sis. Suzie Tonner lovingly welcome granddaughter, Elizabeth Louise Tonner, born to Bro. Troy and Sis. Andrea.

God being with us is truly the most wonderful gift we could ever receive!

**Indiana, Bluffton North**

**Tiffani Schladenhauffen, Corinne Stettnner**

“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 9:5

As we come into the Christmas season it can be a busy time of year. We want to make sure that we do not forget the gift that was given to us in Jesus. We had the privilege of listening to our Sunday School students share in song about the gift of Jesus in our annual Christmas Program. It is so precious seeing our young ones singing their hearts out for Jesus. We also got to share in song at a couple of our local nursing homes, when our church went Christmas Caroling and then met back together for a chili supper. The songs of the season are a great way to share about Jesus to those who may not otherwise listen.

We are so thankful that Zane Schaden has decided to surrender his heart to the Lord and started repenting this month. Zane is the son of Bro. Jeff and Sis. Kim. We are prayerful for him as he grows in his walk with the Lord.

The Memorandum was shared with us by our Bluffton Church Elders. Many good points of personal application were given, and we were really encouraged to pray for the elder body as they lead our church into the future.

Our Sis. Mary Ann Gerber passed away this month. She leaves behind two daughters, Tina (David) Gaddini and Mariah (Matt) Hartman; a son Mitch; three sisters, Sis. Ruth Baumgartner, Sis. Lois (Bro. Jerry) Drayer, and Sis. Elaine Kipfer; and four grandchildren. She will be missed, but we are thankful that the confusion is now gone, and she can have a clear mind in Heaven. Also going to his heavenly home was our Bro. Aaron Kipfer. He is survived by two sons, Floyd (Cynthia) and Tony; and by his sister, Sis. Eunice Steffen. We are also grieving with our Bro. Mike (Sis. Mona) Craighead at the passing of his mother, Clarice. Goodbyes are never easy, but we...
have so much to look forward to. As some families were saying goodbye to loved ones, others were welcoming in new life. Bro. Ryan and Sis. Jessica Bertsch welcomed little Everly Grace into their family. She joins siblings: Elly, Tate, Oaklee, and Kendall.

We were also excited this month for our Sis. Kailey Kershner as her engagement was announced to Bro. Brockton Tonner of Bluffton Country. The parents of the happy couple are Bro. Dan and Sis. Jacki Kershner and Bro. Dean and Sis. Julie Tonner. We pray for them as they prepare for their wedding and their life together.

Some of our loved ones spent some time in the hospital this month. Our prayers are with Sis. Marcia (Bro. Brian) Brewster, Sis. Bev (Bro. Bob) Jolloff, Sis. Delores Maller, and Bro. Gene (Sis. Edna) Moser. We pray they get the rest they need and feel the Lord’s peace in this time of need.

**Indiana, Francesville**
*Mildred Clauss, Jacki Huber*

“Our loss is heaven’s gain” is a quote we are familiar with—and it rings true as we think of little Tirzah Gutwein, dear infant daughter of Bro. Stan and Sis. Andrea Gutwein (Remington, IN), as she is safe in Jesus’ arms. We extend our loving sympathy to the entire family—Dad and Mom, brothers, sisters, grandparents and extended family. We thank the Lord for Tirzah’s gentle, but profound touch on many lives.

We are thankful that the Lord is able, and does, guide our steps and leads lives together in marriage. We have witnessed this in the lives of Sis. Leah Kaeb (Bro. Les and Sis. Christine) and Bro. Graham League (Richard and Vanessa League of AZ) as they were united in marriage on November 25. We were thankful to have many visitors on that day. Sharing on the pulpit were Bro. Brad Gudeman (Sis. Teresa. Bradford, IL), and Elder Bros. Bruce Endress (Sis. Elizabeth, Bradford), and Marvin Dotterer (Sis. Nancy, Forrest, IL).

Other visiting ministers have been Elder Bro. Dan Kilgus (Sis. Jenna, Remington, IN) and Bro. Chris Wuethrich (Sis. Carla, Chicago IL). We always appreciate their visits!

Our dear Sister Shanna Rayburn has taken employment in Raleigh, NC. We will miss her presence here, but wish her the Lord’s nearness and blessings in her new home.

Three of our loved ones have undergone surgeries or have been hospitalized this past month. We pray for renewed health and strength for Bro. Larry Pfledderer (Sis. Dar), Sis. Rosella Bucher and Bro. Marty Neihouser (Sis. Angie).

**Indiana, Indianapolis**
*Edie Bollier, Kaylin Bollier*

“We have so many reasons to be thankful! In our Thanksgiving program we heard testimonies of God’s faithfulness and His work in people’s lives. We were reminded of God’s gifts to us in our Galatians study as well as our study of Ephesians which we are walking through as a church.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places and Christ.”

Ephesians 1:3

We have shared in the joy and sadness of life and death as Sis. Ginny Zeller’s granddaughter was able to bring her family joy for a short time. We weep with Bro. Stan and Sis. Andrea Gutwein and their family in their loss, but praise God for the promise of eternal life and our home in heaven. The obituary for Tirzah read: Tirzah Elisa Gutwein blessed her family with joy for three weeks before she returned to be with Jesus on Thursday, December 6, 2018. She was born on November 14, 2018 in Lafayette, IN to Stan and Andrea (Zeller) Gutwein. Although Tirzah was born with Trisomy 18, her family was privileged to have known her and loved her. They will always cherish each memory made while cuddling her and looking into her beautiful eyes. Tirzah brought out tenderness, self-sacrifice and generosity in those who loved and cared for her. She was heaven’s angel disguised for us to see, to teach us the power of weakness, trust and humility.

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Hebrews 13:2
On Sunday December 2, we had the opportunity to share the gospel in a special Christmas program at a Women’s prison in Indianapolis. Over 700 women were able to receive gift baskets with food and hygiene products as well as celebrate the birth of Christ with us. We pray God continues to work in the hearts of those that heard His word.

We were thankful to have our retired Elder Bro. Wayne Banwart (Champaign, IL) and Bro. Scott Schafer (Sis. Gigi, South Bend, IN), both grandparents, visit for our Christmas program. The Sunday School shared a beautiful summary of Jesus’ life from the cradle to the cross to the crown. The songs and hymns of Christmas have so much deep meaning and draw us to worship our dear Savior. “Oh come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.”

Indiana, LaCrosse

Meagan Frank, Julie Rocke

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matt. 11:28

As the bustle of Thanksgiving whirls into Christmas preparations, rest isn’t usually the first thought on our minds! But our monthly ladies’ FAITH Coffee Hour gave us a much-needed reminder that the Lord does indeed bid us to find rest in Him. We enjoyed a special potluck-style Christmas brunch before exploring the many ways we can be restful, even during busy seasons of life!

We were blessed with two visiting ministers this month: Bro. Marshall Heinold (Sis. Jan, Washington, IL) and Bro. Kevin Fehr (Sis. Lonnie, West Bend, IA). We thank these brothers for giving of themselves while visiting family over Thanksgiving weekend!

There was so much joy felt on December 9, as Bro. Tim Troxel married Sis. Bonnie Lackey in Denver, CO. Several from our LaCrosse church traveled to Colorado for the wedding. Those who remained held the dear couple and Bro. Tim’s parents, Bro. Ed & Sis. Carol, up in prayer. Bro. Tim & Sis. Bonnie have already been a blessing to us on their visits home. We pray God will continue to bless and guide them.

Our annual Sunday for Christmas Caroling is always a much-anticipated event. From nursing homes in town to farmsteads in the country, the trail of singer-laden vehicles eventually wends their way back to a warm church building, greeted by the aromas of hot chocolate, sandwiches, and other goodies. This special evening reminds me that we are more blessed by giving than receiving. May those who received our singing feel as abundantly blessed as we did! Many thanks to our song leaders for their efforts and organization, and to those who helped prepare the delicious meal.

Due to different scheduling conflicts, our Sunday School Christmas Program was held on a Wednesday evening instead of a Sunday afternoon. In the ambiance of a dim church, with only a glow on the young singers, we were reminded of the star over Bethlehem on that Silent Night. The miraculous story of our Savior’s birth was told through song and verse by our students and single group. Each one seemed to give their best effort and made the rafters ring with their beautiful harmonies. We thank each one, including the teachers, for their hard work, and for reminding us of the story that truly never grows old.

Indiana, Leo

Jan Beer

My sincere apology for totally forgetting to report the news from Leo last month! Hopefully, you will still find interest in our “old news”.

On October 21, Sierra Young, Nathan Klopfenstein and Reed Maibach were baptized after giving their testimonies the evening before. Bro. Gary Maibach (Sis. Mary Ann, Smithville, OH) and Bro. David Maibach (Sis. Larisa, Smithville, OH), Reed’s grandfather and uncle, served on the pulpit that day. Our newly-ordained deacon, Bro. Jeff Waibel, assisted our Bro. Lynn Stieglitz with the testimonies and baptisms. We heartily welcome these dear young people into the Apostolic Christian fellowship.

Our thanks to Bro. Preston Kaehr (Sis. Wendy, Bluffton North, IN) for serving us from the pulpit on October 28. Wednesday evening, November 14. Bro.
Matt Steffen (Princeville, IL) gave a LifePoints presentation to our Leo fellowship. Bro. Justin Koch (Sis. Marcia, Washington, IL) brought us the message from the Living Word on Sunday afternoon, November 18. The day of the Sunday School Christmas Program, December 16, Bro. Brian Huber (Sis. Jackie, Francesville, IN) and Bro. Bill Waibel (Sis. Carol, Bay City, MI) served us in Leo. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” Romans 1:16-17. Thank you, brothers, for not being ashamed to preach the truth of the gospel.

November 8 was the finalization of the adoption of Jaxon Storm Myers into the Tim and Kari Stoller family. Jaxon was born in September 2016, and has been in foster care with the Stollers for quite some time. We are thankful for this reminder of our own adoption into God’s family, and ask Him to bless Bro. Tim, Sis. Kari, Kasee, Ashlyn and Brock as they welcome Jaxon as a member of their family.

Bob Conrad, 86, of Dallas, TX desired restoration of his membership in the Apostolic Christian Church. He and his now-deceased wife lost their Apostolic Christian Church membership in the 1960s when they went to the mission field in New Guinea with Wycliffe. He has attended the Dallas Apostolic Christian gathering with the aid of Sis. Heather Steiner, a student in that area. He is related to a relative of Bro. Lynn Stiegeltz’s, so he expressed this desire for member restoration to Lynn. After approval from church leadership, Bob gladly was interviewed by Bro. Lynn before Communion Service on Saturday, November 17. He enthusiastically testified of his joy in the Lord and his thankfulness for God’s provision. We welcome Bob Conrad as a Brother in the Apostolic Christian Church.

With rejoicing, we received the news from Bro. Lynn Stiegeltz that he received a visit from Josiah Kaeb, son of Bro. Chad and Sis. Kristy, who wishes to walk in fellowship with us as part of the Apostolic Christian Church. Our love, support and prayers are with Josiah as he continues to grow in faith.

On November 20, our Bro. Jason Kilgus submitted to knee surgery, a result of his injuries from the Mission Trip accident in mid-June. He commented on how he has been reminded in these past few months that God is in control of his life, and how little control he has over his own life! Bro. Mike Klopfenstein has had a couple more surgeries or procedures since the accident. Bro. Joe Beer II is extremely grateful to have been delivered from a possible knee surgery. All three of these men and their families have had an extraordinary journey since the day of the accident. All will testify of God’s provision and sufficiency through all the pain, the uncertainty and the satanic attacks. It is truly a miracle from God that these three men, just six months after the horrific accident, are back to their normal professions with minimal restrictions. May God’s name be lifted high, and His praise continually be on our lips!

December 1, our dear Megan Gutwein (Bro. Alex & Sis. Lorelei) graduated from Fort Wayne International Business College with a degree in Medical Assisting. She was honored by her peers and faculty as being an outstanding student within her program, and was asked to deliver the graduation address. God’s blessing on her as she continues to follow the Lord wherever He leads her.

The Family Hymn Sing Committee has incorporated testimonies of encouragement into our hymn sing evenings. On December 2, Bro. Shane & Sis. Stef Beer spoke of God’s faithfulness to their family through Shane’s journey with cancer, which also happened at the same time as their 2-year old son was having ongoing seizures with extremely high temperature and as they were awaiting the birth of their twin babies! Today Reeve is a healthy six-year-old, with no ill effects from the seizures. Sylvia and Sullivan are adorable four-year old twins. Shane’s routine check-ups show no sign of cancer. It was not an easy road, but God supplied the sufficient grace to them to overcome it all. He chose this family to testify of His faithfulness to them and as an
encouragement to us. We praise, honor and glorify our great God in heaven!

At our quarterly Wednesday evening Prayer Service on December 5, the focus was on prayer in regard to the marriage relationship. We thank the newly-married couple, the couple in the midst of child-rearing and the older couple who spoke on this topic, with each brother finishing their segment in prayer. It was very evident that in all stages of life, prayer is extremely important.

We are thankful that Bro. Todd, Sis. Kara Strahm and their three little ones (and a baby on the way) will continue to be part of our Leo church family even though they have left their position as House Parents at Gateway Woods. Todd has secured local employment, and they have moved to a home in Ft. Wayne. We are excited to see how God will have them use their talents in our congregation.

The “revolving door” at Gateway Woods has exited the Strahm family, but has brought Sis. Cordin Gerber into our fellowship. She is from Bluffton and possesses a servant heart. In speaking with her recently, she testified that she had been in a good place before coming to Gateway, but now God has her in the best place for her at this time. We are thankful for her obedience to the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The Sunday School Christmas Program was presented on the afternoon of Sunday, December 16. From the youngest student to the oldest, each joyfully participated in re-telling the story of Christ’s birth and reminding us of our need to respond to this most marvelous Gift. One song was hand-signed by the children. They asked us to repeat the song with them as they taught us the sign language and meaningful lyrics: “Jesus, the Son of God, born to be our Savior. Jesus, the Son of God, born to be our Lord. Bow down and worship Him, worship Him, worship Him. Bow down and worship Him, worship Jesus, our Lord.” May that be our heart-felt response in this Christmas season.

That evening, at the monthly worship service at Ft. Wayne Rescue Mission, the Leo choir presented the Christmas story in song. It was amazing to see how the familiar seasonal hymns affected so many of the Mission patrons. The power of a humble little baby named Jesus still draws hearts to God. “Glory to God in the highest...”.

Indiana, Milford

Carol Haab

We were blessed with several visiting ministers this month. Our thanks to Bro. Daron Price (Sis. Monica, Athens, AL), Bro. Daren Metz (Sis. Rita, Gridley, IL) and Bro. Chris Laukhuf (Sis. Rachel, Latty, OH) for their willingness to share God’s Word.

Bro. Fred and Sis. Pat Beer welcomed a new grandson. Jaxon was recently adopted by Bro. Tim and Sis. Kari Stoller (Leo, IN). Congratulations to all of them.

Please keep Sis. Norma Terrazas and Bro. Matt Pamer in your prayers. Both are struggling with health issues. Prayer is so powerful and is a wonderful way to help others.

We bid farewell to Phil Beer. He is survived by his wife, Lisa, and nine children and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. May God’s loving comfort enfold his family.

Love is the heart of the Christmas season which is now behind us. As this New Year begins, may we all continue to feel and show that same love, through Christ, to others for the entire year.

Indiana, Remington

Jenni Honegger, Marcella Tyler

We want to thank our visiting ministers this month: Elder Bro. David Graf (Sis. Barbara, Akron, OH), Elder Bro. Curt Frank (Sis. Lyla, LaCrosse, IN), Elder Bro. Greg Lehman (Sis. Mary Beth, Wolcott, IN), and Bro. Tim Drayer (Sis. Gwen, Bluffton North, IN). We were blessed by each one and pray they will in turn be blessed for their willingness to serve.

We are blessed to be able to welcome Bro. Kenny Graf (Bro. Todd and Sis. Lydia, Akron, OH) and Sis. Chloe Getz (Bro. Jason and Sis. Sara) as brother and sister in the faith after their baptisms this month! It truly never gets old to hear how God has worked in the heart of a believer, and each
story is so unique and precious and encouraging to hear. We are thankful for their testimonies of faith and for their desire to become members of Christ’s body here on earth. Please pray for Bro. Kenny and Sis. Chloe as they each begin this new step in their journey of faith.

Please pray for surgery patients this month: Bro. Rex Clauss (Sis. Tammy), Sis. Arleta Waibel (Bro. Harold), and Sis. Diane Isabell (Bro. Phil). May God grant His healing power to each one in their need.

We heard our Sunday School students proclaim the precious truth of the Christmas story during our annual Christmas program this past weekend. The details may seem rather mundane or routine to us after so many years of hearing them, so I pray that our ears could be opened to the miraculous circumstances that surrounded Christ’s birth and which began the story of our redemption. Many of us also went Christmas caroling that same day to various people in the community. This tradition was a blessed time of fellowship and service as well. As we look forward to the New Year, we pray that each one of us is able to renew our dedication to the One who came as a babe in the manger and went to the cross as a man.

Indiana, South Bend
Joshua Martinez

“O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.” Psalm 95:1-3.

We are thankful that Bro. Bob Beebe (Sis. Sue) was able to travel and return safely from a trip to Hospital Lumiere, Bonne Fin, Haiti.

On November 30, there was rejoicing in Heaven because our dear Sis. Arlene Kaehr went on to her Eternal Reward. We are thankful she is at peace and with her loving Savior.

On December 2, our children gave thanks to the Lord through verse and song for the many blessings throughout the year. We thank our Sunday School students and teachers for a wonderful program to encourage us to be thankful and grateful to God for all things.

On December 12, we enjoyed our annual organizational meeting. We thank outgoing head trustee, Bro. Garrett Kupferschmid (Sis. Bethany), and all who helped oversee the physical and spiritual needs of our church. We appreciate the willingness of all who will continue or will assume those responsibilities this coming year. We thank the Lord for the love and friendship we share as a church family.

On Saturday, December 15, we enjoyed Christmas caroling followed by a chili supper at church.

We received joyfully the engagement announcement of Bro. Jason Isch to Sis. Jessica Edelman of Athens, AL. May the Lord bless this young couple as they make wedding plans and preparations in the coming months.

We thank the Lord for the bountiful spiritual and physical provision for this past year. May the God Who upholds the universe by the word of His power be near unto you in the new year.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Jer. 29:11

Indiana, West Lafayette
Libby Wahl

We are so very uplifted to share of four young converts who are looking forward to being a part of our fellowship. Testimonies and baptisms are currently scheduled for February 23-24 for the following: Kellie Furrer (Bro. Brian and Sis. Lorene), Mia Bahler (Bro. Ed and Sis. Annette) and Allison and Caden Gerber (Bro. Corey and Sis. Erika).

Bro. Troy and Sis. Andrea Tonner welcomed their first born, a girl, Elizabeth “Ellie” Louise, born November 26.

Our December college graduates are: Sis. Sydney Leman (W. Lafayette), Sis. Tianna Huber (W. Lafayette), soon to-be-wed Bro. Kevin Schlipf (Milford, IN) and Seth Neihouser (Francesville, IN).

2019 - here it is! Perhaps this is a good time to look back at 2018 with gratefulness and a time to look forward with the ‘wide angle lens’ of trust.
“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” Joshua 1:9

Indiana, Wolcott

Erica Blume, Teresa Earney

This has been a very blessed month for our congregation.

We welcome Rachel Blume (Bro. Brent and Sis. Erica) and Emma Blume (Bro. Derek and Sis. Theresa) as sisters in the Lord. It was a joy to hear their testimonies of faith. We send a big thank-you to the following visiting ministers. Elder Bro. Tom Stock (Sis. Karol, Cissna Park, IL) came to assist Bro. Greg with the testimonies and baptisms. Bro. Ryan Schock (Sis. Melanie, Bloomfield, IA) willingly preached the word and Bro. Jim Butikofer (Sis. Diana, Iowa City, IA) taught the Bible Class that day.

Thadd Edelman (Bro. Kip and Sis. Donita) has peace with man and God and is looking forward to baptism in the future.

Ron and Donna Kyburz have attended church for many years. Their recent repentance has been an answer to many prayers.

Bro. Matt and Sis. Tiffany Drayer and their children: Hannah, Naomi, Stacy, Tabitha, Isaiah, Amy and Keith welcomed little Esther Elaine to their family. Grandparents are Bro. Derryl and Sis. Peggy Aschliman (Bluffton, IN) and Bro. Jerry and Sis. Lois Drayer (Bluffton North, IN). Bro. Greg and Sis. Mary Beth Lehman welcomed another grandson. Silas John was born to Bro. Jim and Sis. Maria McCormick (Alto, MI). Silas has a brother Calvin and a sister Adeline.

Our sympathy goes to Bro. Kurtis Allie in the passing of his grandmother, Sarah Fields.

Sis. Sasha Kyburz (Bro. Phillip) had an orthopedic surgery on her arm. A successful surgery is always a relief.

Bro. Jeff and Sis. Heidi Bahlers’ daughter Abbie is engaged to Justin DeJong. They are planning a fall wedding.

We always look forward to our church programs. The Sunday School students blessed us with a lovely Christmas program on Friday, December 14. They took us on the journey to Bethlehem and the birth of our Savior through songs and recitations.

Sunday, December 16 was the date for our church-wide Christmas caroling. It’s so wonderful to gather as a church family and go out into the community to sing Christmas songs and spread the Joy of Jesus to our neighbors.

Christmas time is a busy time for all of us. I’ve been reminded that I should find Joy in each day, rather than making my life a check-off list.

Iowa, Bloomfield

Kendra Schlatter

Prayers are with Bro. Mark Hilty as his grandma, Sis. Margaret Fortenbacher from Kitchener, Ontario passed away.

Thankful Bro. Brad Funk (Sis. Laura, Garden Grove, IA) came to visit family and to share the Word.

Iowa, Burlington

Marilyn Anderson, Elaine Eisenmann

Greetings to One and All as the New a Year approaches.

On December 2, we witnessed the marriage of Sis. Hannah Steiner (Bro. Michael and Sis. Ivy) and Bro. Andrew Schulz (Bro. Gary and Sis. Melody). Elder Bro. Jon Schmidgall (Sis. Julie, Mediapolis), Bros. Aaron Frank (Sis. Sharla, Elgin, IA), and Myron Knobloch (Lester, IA) were visiting ministers for the day.

Other visiting ministers this month were Bros. Tom Lanz (Sis. Mary), Dale Frank (Sis. Tina), and Mark Schmidgall (Sis. Sally) all of Mediapolis.

Our sympathy is extended to Sis. Lois Wiegand in the passing of her brother, Jim Schrock of Aurora, CO. May her precious memories sustain her.

We have a college graduate to congratulate as Madelaine Eisenmann (Matt and Monica) graduated from Iowa State in Ames. She is the granddaughter of Sis. Elaine Eisenmann of our church and attends here.

We were blessed with the Sunday School Christmas program. Singing songs, reciting their verses and scripture readings will be a long time memory for them.

We uplift in prayer any who have health issues at this time.
**Iowa, Elgin**

*Maria Rocke*

Bro. Kent and Sis. Katie Schupbach were blessed with another boy, Liam Frederick, on December 12. Liam’s siblings are Ava, Ella, Brody, Brynly and Jace. Thankful grandparents are Bro. John & Sis. Janet Schupbach. May God bless this dear family as they welcome little Liam into their hearts!

Bro. Kevin Fehr (Sis. Lonnie, West Bend, IA) was with us one Sunday this past month. We trust God will bless him for his labors.

The Sunday school students shared the beautiful Christmas story through poems, hymns and Scriptures. What a wonderful way for us to pause during this busy season and bring our focus on the Prince of Peace. It’s always a joy to see the excitement and enthusiasm the children express before, during and after the program. We send a special thank you to the faithful teachers who made the effort to put it together.

As we face this New Year before us, may we simply trust God, knowing that our life is in the hands of our Creator.

“Along the River of Time we glide,
Along the River, along the River,
Our Saviour only our bark can guide,
Our Saviour only, our Saviour only,
But with Him we secure may be,
No fear, no doubt, but joy to be Floating, floating, out on the Sea of Eternity!”

Gospel Hymns # 264 Verse 3

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**Iowa, Garden Grove**

*Laura Funk*

Greetings from south central Iowa.

Visiting ministers this month include Bro. Dan Walder (Cissna Park, IL), Bro. Tom Lanz (Mediapolis, IA) and Elder Bro. Doug Schock (Bloomfield, IA). We appreciate all those who travel to fellowship with us.

The Sunday School children shared “The Story That Never Grows Old” in verse and song. Thank you to the Sunday School teachers who give of your time and talents to teach the truth to our future church.

We enjoyed an afternoon of caroling to the shut-ins/elderly and gathered back at church for a soup supper and fellowship.

**And There Were Shepherds**

“In the grass-covered hills of Judea,
Shepherds, watching their flocks by night,
Heard the sound of heavenly music
And their awe-stricken hearts filled with fright.
The glory of God shone about them
While the wonderful story was told,
‘Born to you in the city of David
Is the Christ who was promised of old.’
‘This is the sign given to you—
A manger will be His bed.’
Then a chorus of heavenly voices
In praise of the Savior said,
‘All glory to God in the highest
And peace be on earth among men!’
Like a dream, angels came and vanished.
Shepherds listened amazed at the scene.
From the grass-covered hills of Judea
They hastened to find where He lay.
Angels brought them a special message
And a star would show them the way.”

-Brenda Leigh

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**Iowa, Iowa City**

*Diana Butikofer*

Our visiting ministers this month were Bro. Jon Pratt (Sis. Sharon, Valparaiso, IN) and Bro. Joel Troxel (Sis. Amy, LaCrosse, IN). We appreciate their willingness to visit us and preach the Word.

Our Sunday School children presented the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in their Christmas Program December 2. It is precious to hear even the three-year-olds sharing their verses to tell the story. What a blessing they have in learning the truth at such a young age.

May the Lord bless and keep each of us as we look to Him to guide us in the new year ahead.

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**Iowa, Lester**

*Audrey Metzger, Kristi Knobloch*

“Strive aright, when God, in mercy
His compassion turns to you,
That your soul, so long o’erburdened
Freed from sin, might live anew.” Zion’s Harp #47
Our hearts are filled with rejoicing when a tender heart surrenders their life to their Savior. We are so thankful that Shayna Popkes (John and Sis. Karmin) has seen the need for God’s leading in her life. We pray for His continuing grace and mercy as she “strives aright.”

Our Sunday School program on December 16 always makes me feel that true spirit of Christmas as we hear the blended voices of the students of all ages (all 157 of them!) join in singing “Joy to the World” and “Jesus Loves Me” to conclude their program. These two truths---that God sent joy into the world through His Son, and that He truly loves us enough to be our Savior---embody the meaning of Christmas. “O, Come let us adore him…”

We extend a warm welcome to Tyler and Felicia (Fehr) Schmidt who were united in marriage on October 27 and are now making their home in Lester. We hope they feel at home here among relatives and friends as they establish their home together.

Our congratulations go out to our dear Sis. Addie Meyer (Bro. Denis & Sis. Jill) as she became the bride of Bro. Carson Wirtz (Bro. Chuck & Sis. Trela, West Bend, IA) on December 9. We hope God will bless their marriage. We will miss Sis. Addie’s sweet nature here in Lester, but know she will be an asset to the West Bend congregation.

Several ministers visited Lester for that wedding, including Elder Bro. Wayne Grimm (Sis. Rose), Bro. Darren Fehr (Sis. Nora), Bro. Kevin Banwart (Sis. Sandy), and Bro. Kevin Fehr (Sis. Lonnie), all from West Bend, and Bro. Quinton Schneider (Sis. Heather) from Taylor, MO. In addition to that weekend, Bro. David Lanz (Sis. Tami, Mediapolis, IA) gave himself in service on our pulpit on Thanksgiving weekend. We thank them all for their labors in the Lord’s name.

We are also looking forward to the upcoming marriage of our Bro. Blain Knobloch (Sis. Chalea and late Bro. Vern) to Sis. Ashley Sharp (Gary and Tammy) from Mediapolis, IA. We are thankful God has drawn them together and that they sought God’s leading in their lives. Congratulations to them!

A little baby girl, RaeLynn Mae was born on December 4 to Bro. Alex and Sis. Kendra Ita. First-time grandparents here are Bro. Dwight and Sis. Donna Mogler. May God bless this young family as they lovingly raise their new little one to know and honor Him.

Our prayers and concerns are with Molly (Scott) Bowman, who spent a few days in the hospital. We hope God will bless her with renewed health.

We extend sincere sympathy to Bro. Mike & Sis. Mavis Schmidt and their daughter & family, Sis. Alice & Bro. Alvie Meyer after the loss of their mother and grandmother, Sis. Evelyn Schmidt (West Bend, IA). She was also the grandmother of Sis. Kayla (Bro. Nedd) Knobloch, and Tyler (Felicia) Schmidt of Lester. May God’s comfort be with them as they miss her, while rejoicing that she had a hope of spending eternity with her Savior.

Sympathy is also extended to Ron Banwart and his family on the loss of his sister-in-law who lived in Florida. May God provide comfort in their loss.

Iowa, Mediapolis
Janet Lanz, Tami Lanz

We were thankful to have visiting ministers on Thanksgiving day. Bro. Greg Fehr (Sis. Denise, West Bend, IA) and Bro. Phil Shulz (Sis. Kelli, Burlington, IA) shared a Thanksgiving message from God’s word. We appreciate their willingness to serve.

Several in our church have had family members pass away this past month. Bro. Norm Frank (Sis. Mary Ann) lost his sister, Sis. Evelyn Schmidt (West Bend, IA). Sis. Evelyn was also grandmother to Bro. Jason Banwart (Sis. Kelsey). Sis. Ada Banwart’s brother, Jim Schrock, also passed away. We wish all of them God’s comfort in their loss.

We are happy for Sis. Ashley Sharp (Gary and Tammy) as her engagement to Bro. Blain Knobloch from Lester, IA (Sis. Chalea and late Bro. Vern) was announced. May the Lord bless them in this step of faith.

We were thankful to hear Emmalee Lanz (Bro. Reagan and
Sis. Tricia) has found peace with God and man and is awaiting baptism. What a precious thing to have that peace of heart and mind!

Our church enjoyed getting together for our annual church Christmas caroling and chili supper. We also had our Sunday School Christmas Program. What a special time of year, to be reminded of our Savior’s birth and how He came to earth to be our Savior. May we carry the message of Christmas in our hearts all year long.

**Iowa, West Bend**

**Becky Virkler, Jenny Banwart**

Sis. Evelyn Schmidt was called into eternity, “Where the roses never fade.” Our prayers and sympathy are with her children: Janece (Jay) Schwartzkopf, Stuart, IA; Bro. Michael (Sis. Mavis), Lester, IA; Sis. Beth (Bro. Kent) Banwart; Bro. Ted (Sis. Kelly); Bro. Frank (Sis. Dawn); and Bro. Wendell (Sis. Karen) and their families. Prayers and sympathy also go out to Sis. Evelyn’s siblings and brothers and sisters-in-law which includes Bro. Jerry and Sis. Judy Schmidt from our congregation. May God comfort each one in their loss. Among the visitors who attended Sis. Evelyn’s funeral were ministering Bros. Dale Frank (Sis. Christine, Mediapolis, IA) and Bruce Frank (Sis. Bonita, Cissna Park, IL). May God bless them for their labors in the Lord.

Following hospitalization, Kurt (Lou) Metzger and Bro. Larry (Sis. Carol) Fehr are home recovering. May God’s healing hand be with all who are struggling with medical issues.

The home of Bro. Ashton & Sis. Raiann Fehr has been blessed with their newborn daughter, Annie Jean. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Regan & Sis. Trisha Lanz (Mediapolis, IA) and Bro. Darren & Sis. Nora Fehr. May God’s blessings warm the hearts in this family circle.

Bro. Carson Wirtz & Sis. Addie Meyer have been united in Holy Matrimony. We warmly welcome Sis. Addie and ask God to bless this union of hearts. Parents of this couple are Bro. Denis and Sis. Jill Meyer, Lester, IA and Bro. Chuck & Sis. Trela Wirtz.

Preparing for their wedding are Bro. Kurt Banwart & Sis. Kaylee Lanz. Parents are Bro. Monte & Sis. Kelly Lanz, Mediapolis, IA and Bro. Kent & Sis. Beth Banwart. We also ask God to be with them and bless them during their betrothal.

"Oh God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come; Our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home."

*Hymns of Zion* #287

Let us rest in God’s promises throughout the New Year.

**Japan, Tokyo**

**Anna Inoue, Marie Inoue**

“. . . there shall be no more death, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain…” Rev. 21:3, 4.

This and other scriptures were considered at the Memorial Service for our dear Bro. Yoshio Yamazaki on December 2. Our 3 young ministers gave the message: Bros. Akihiro from Shioda, commented on the above verse, while Bros. Kan and Makoto also mentioned Sunday School experiences with Yamazaki-san as their teacher. The time always went fast when he was the teacher, he told them, “When you feel the call to repent, you should repent.” Bro. Akito served as the announcer. We miss this dear brother but are very thankful he is safe in the arms of Jesus.

Prophecies in Isaiah and Micah, and Matt. 1:18-25 were taught to us at our ladies meeting this month by Bro. Akihiro from Shioda. One lady asked the question, “I can understand God, but how does Jesus fit in to the picture?” We are thankful the Word gives us answers for these questions.

The Sunday School children and some of their friends had a blessed evening of practicing for the program, frosting cookies, and eating curry rice together. A week ago the SS lesson was about the prodigal son. Why this lesson was included close to Christmas might seem unclear as we usually study the angels or the shepherds. In considering this, Jesus’ desire is that all repent, and the father’s attitude in this story is one of welcoming His wayward son home with special joy as the son confessed his wrong doing. The older son did not understand the love of his father toward his brother. It was a special Christmas message, after
all, to remind us of the wonderful love of God that He sent His Son to redeem us. May we in turn show this love to others at this blessed season.

Kansas, Bern
Sheri Edelman, Tiffany Menold

“Children, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong? What the gladsome tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song?”
Gospel Hymns #873 vs.2

What a joy it brings our heart to listen to our Sunday School children sing of the birth of our Savior!

Thank you to all the teachers who poured their efforts into the children for our annual Christmas program! Our prayer is that each child who sings about Jesus, will someday come to Him in humble adoration and repentance.

On December 13, our dear friend, Les Baumgartner, left this earthly home. Our prayers of comfort are with his family: Bro. John (Sis. Lori), Jan, Sis. Peggy Strahm (Bro. Kyle), and Kathy.

May each of you have a blessed 2019!

Kansas, Fort Scott
Maria Bahr

“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

Originally performed during Easter, but now during the Christmas season, George Friederich Handel’s 260-page Messiah was composed in just 24 days and draws its power from God’s eternal Word, recounting in three sections the prophecy of Jesus Christ’s birth, His crucifixion, and His resurrection from the dead. The beloved oratorio has been performed continuously since 1742 and ends with Revelation 5:12-13, reminding us of Christ’s purpose in coming to us as the Babe of Bethlehem:

“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

The Fort Scott and Lamar congregations also sang of the birth of our Savior, as they caroled in the Lamar, MO area for hospital patients, nursing home residents, and Sis. Bonnie Braker. The Fort Scott Sunday School also recounted Christ’s coming to earth, sacrifice, and resurrection in our annual Christmas program. As the song “The Babe of Bethlehem” reminds us:

“Tis not the babe, but Christ, the man, Who walked in Galilee; ‘Tis not the manger, but the cross, That sets the spirit free.”

Kansas, Kiowa
Millicent Frieden, Janice Bahr

And so it was, the woman was busy planning a party. She wanted very much to have a celebration of her nearly 80 years here on God’s earth. She asked her children, grandchildren, sisters and brothers-in-law to save the weekend prior to Thanksgiving. What a glorious time to reminisce and give thanks to a marvelous God for her blessings of 80 years! The plans came together. The events were orchestrated down to the day and hour. Her God was not only a marvelous party-planner, He was also an omniscient God; He was all-knowing. 1 John 3:20 tells us that “God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things”. He, in His infinite wisdom, knew that the weekend before Thanksgiving would be the last weekend that Sis. Lois Allenbach would be here on earth. None of the party guests suspected a thing (“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons...” Acts 1:7), but in 5 days’ time, Sis. Lois would be meeting her Lord and Savior face to face.

The funeral of our dear Sis. Lois Allenbach was held with many family members, relatives, friends, and brethren from surrounding churches in attendance. Bro. Matt Schupbach and Bro. Jeff Bahr officiated at the service, assisted by Elder Bro. John Lehman at the cemetery. Sis. Lois leaves to mourn her passing, her beloved husband of 58 years, Bro. Ronald Allenbach; 4 children.
and spouses; 12 grandchildren; 6 great grandchildren; 4 sisters and spouses; and 1 sister-in-law. Sis. Lois’ legacy of always serving others in a Christ-like manner will long overshadow the sadness felt by our Kiowa Church and community.

Not to be outdone, our dear friend and “chief carpenter” of the church, Bud Murrow, also laid down his earthly burdens and joined family and friends who were waiting for him at the Gates of Heaven. Bud’s earthly career of carpentry is now over and he sits at the feet of the Master Carpenter and is again reunited with his beloved wife, Sis. Helen Roth Murrow. Bro. Matt Schupbach and Bro. Jeff Bahr also conducted the service for Bud. Mourning his passing are his 3 daughters: Gayle, Sis. Janet, and Sis. Lynne, who were devoted in caring for their dad; 2 sons-in-law, 6 grandchildren; 15 great grandchildren; 6 great-great grandchildren; and 1 sister.

A reason of great celebration was held this month for Erline Farney, at the occasion of her 95th birthday. We can fully believe the Preacher in Ecclesiastes 3:4 as he tells us “A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.”

Christmas Caroling was the highlight of one Sunday afternoon. The Sunday School children and sponsors visited shut-ins, rest homes, and retirement centers in Kiowa and surrounding communities. There is always a blessing when one sees the recognition and the joy in the faces of the loved ones being sung to!

We want to thank all the visiting ministers who were here to minister during the month: Bro. Larry Bahr of Fort Scott was a welcome visitor, as well as our dear Elder Bro. John Lehman of Sabetha. We thank all who made the effort to assemble with us, whether it be to mourn with us at the loss of our loved ones, or to visit Kiowa Church for pleasurable reasons. You are all appreciated!

“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 angels to encamp around me for deliverance?
Will Iran drive Israel into the sea to be remembered no more?
Or will the Most High defend Israel as the Apple of His Eye and not ignore?
Will my new neighbors worship Allah with flair?
Or will I befriend and entertain angels unaware?
Will there be souls repent, knowing their days are long spent?
Or will the very elect fall away and become discontent?
So…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’ 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

“Our song of praise to God ascend, and there with angels’ voices blend. The day of gladness now is here; Sing hallelujah with good cheer. HALELUJAH!”

Zion’s Harp #7

Often at Christmas, we do for others in the spirit of love and goodwill. Why should we limit that spirit to Christmas only? May it be a daily GIFT to our Heavenly Father and His Son,
not quenching the Spirit, but exercising our gratefulness each moment of each day.

We assembled as a church family to wrap Christmas gifts for Hartford Inc. Then on December 3, we caroled to the residents before passing out their gifts. The residents are so excited and can hardly wait for their very own gift. Aleah Hines, daughter of Tony and Sis. Dora, rolled her car during inclement weather as she was coming home from school. How thankful we are that God protected her from serious injury. Bro. Albert Edelman (Sis. Jeannie) has been receiving good reports from his doctor, but will continue his chemo regimen. Sis. Dorene Metzger had an unsuccessful cardioversion.

December 9 was our Sunday School Christmas program and caroling. We finished up the day with a potato bar at Bro. Doug and Sis. Judy Kraft’s home. One part of the program had two children meeting someone new and presenting Christ and a Bible to their new friend. It brought tears to my eyes. May that enthusiasm never wane, even from tender hearts.

That same Sunday, Bro. Roger Aberle (Sis. LaVonne, Sabetha, KS) and Bro. John Baumgartner (Sis. Lori, Bern, KS) were with us. They ably presented the message of Christ. We thank them.

Our all-church caroling to area nursing homes was held December 16. What a joy the residents’ faces express as they join in, some vocally and others silently mouthing the precious event of the birth of Christ, our Redeemer. Bro. Albert and Sis. Jeannie Edelman opened their home to us for a sloppy joe supper.

Our sympathy is lovingly extended to Sis. Maria Luthi (Bro. Aaron) in the loss of her dear grandfather, Les Baumgartner, of our Bern congregation. May they and their extended family feel God’s loving arms around them at this time.

Kansas, Sabetha
Brenda Nenadov, Leanna Hartter

Another bundle of joy was added to the home of Bro. Steven and Sis. Kelly Edelman when Avery Ilene was born on November 29. Siblings that enjoy showering her with love are: Maddie, Ethan, Annie, Alphia, Emily, Maggie, Mitch, Lexi and Lacey. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Roger and Sis. Ilene Hartter and Eugene and Judy Edelman, all of Sabetha.

Our prayers are with Sis. Cheri Metzger as she had back surgery this month. We pray for her healing and that she can feel God’s love and strength during this time.

Sunday, December 16 was our all-church Christmas Caroling. It is a blessing not only to those we carol to, but to us as carolers to visit the nursing homes, retirement villages, hospital and those in their own homes and sing of Christ’s birth. Afterward we gathered at the Fellowship Center for a soup supper.

As we enter a New Year, may we commit to walking more fully in our spiritual journey as we strive toward our Heavenly reward!

“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.” Phil. 3:13-14

We were thankful to hear the testimonies and witness the baptisms of Isaac Edelman (Darin and Sis. Karen) and Laura Edelman (Bro. Loren and Sis. Jeanne) on December 15 and 16. May they feel God’s nearness and our prayers as they continue their walk with Him. Elder Bro. Brad Strahn (Sis. Michelle, Bern, KS) assisted Bro. Gerry in this special weekend.

Sis. Laura Edelman will be going to France in January to study abroad for four months. We will miss having her assemble with us, but pray she can feel the love and prayers of her church family and be enveloped in God’s grace and love during this time.

Our Sunday School Christmas program was held December 9. The children presented a thought-provoking message of Christ’s humble birth through song, scripture and memorized verses.

We thank Bro. Seth Hartter (Sis. Brenda, Burlington, IA) for sharing God’s word this month.
Kansas Wichita

Debbie Frieden

Our guest ministers in November were Bro. Tim Roecker (Sis. Diane, Peoria, IL) and Bro. Jerry Meeks (Sis. Christy, Sabetha, KS). We appreciate those who travel to share the word.

Our dear Sis. Emma Miller passed away on December 1 and has gone to meet her Lord and Savior. She taught Sunday School, also wrote for the Silver Lining for many years. Sis. Gayle Grimm’s sister, Rachel, also passed away this month. We pray for those loved ones left behind.

December 16, the Sunday school gave a wonderful Christmas program. A beautiful story was told as the reason for the season. Jesus was born to save us from our sins. We had a very nice chicken noodle dinner after the program and many good deserts.

We must ask ourselves how can we share the amazing gift of Jesus with others today?

Mexico, Ixtlán

Ruth Gerber

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” 1 Tim. 3:15

Last month our church was blessed by the visit of the School Board. It really is a protection for any godly endeavor to have a multitude of counselors, and we are thankful for each of the brothers that serve and for their wives’ support as well! Bro. Joe Klotzle (Altadena) shared the Word at our midweek service and made an analogy between the sycamore tree that Zacchaeus climbed and the church. He asked, “Are our branches low enough so that someone ‘short of stature’ would be able to climb them when they are seeking Jesus?” That was a thought-provoking question. We hope to be accessible to all true seekers, while standing firm on truth.

December 20 was our Christmas program. It brought quite a few visitors to our normal gathering. A high percentage of the visitors were children – perhaps some of those “short of stature.” One of the littlest ones shouted “ganamos!” (we won!) after they finished singing their songs. We pray that these little ones will come to know God’s love and one day add to the strength of the church here.

México, Magdalena

Laura Aviña

We were blessed with many visitors the end of November as brothers and sisters traveled to Magdalena for board meetings and others to prepare a Thanksgiving meal for the Casa Vida y Esperanza annual Thanksgiving event. May God bless all those who share in the work here.

On November 21, we gathered to partake of the Lord’s Supper and spent some special time in fellowship. May God bless our Bro. Mike Leman (Sis. Deb, Denver, CO) and Bro. Tom Klotzle (Sis. Jody, Altadena, CA) for serving the supper.

With rejoicing, we welcome Bro. Julian Armenta of Washington, IL (son of Sis. Bertha) and Bro. Benjamin Avila into our church family. They gave their testimonies of faith and were baptized here the weekend of November 24 and 25. Sharing this joyful occasion with us was our Bro. Ron Messner (Sis. Pam, Washington, IL) as well as Bro. Mike and Bro. Tom.

In early December, our Christian Fellowship Group spent an evening Christmas caroling for several families. Also, for the last several Sundays our Sunday school classes have been practicing for our Christmas program which will be presented on December 23.

Some of us look out into this world and see the pain and brokenness. It makes our heads ache and our hearts hurt so much, we say, “I can make a difference!” Then we work and fret and relieve needs until brokenness overwhelms and smothers us and we stumble under a burden too great for any human to bear.

Some of us look out into this world and see the pain and brokenness. It makes our heads ache and our hearts hurt so much, we say, “I can’t fix these problems!” Then we pursue success and diversion and remind ourselves every once in a while that we didn’t have the answer anyway.

Some of us look out into this world and see the pain and
brokenness. It makes our heads ache and our hearts hurt so much, we look right back up to God and say, “Thank You Jesus for being the answer!” Then every day we keep thanking Him, praising Him, crying out to Him, and loving all those around us with the love that He brought to this broken world.

As we went through the Christmas season, may our hearts be thankful that our Lord Jesus Christ not only offers peace, joy and hope for Christmas time, but for all eternity!

**Michigan, Alto**

*Renee Steffen, Heidi Kaeb*

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” Psalms 46:10

It is for certain that this time of year brings much exaltation for our Savior Jesus Christ who was born in that lowest of means so many years ago. As we take the ‘still’ moments to reflect on His humble birth and know He is God, it thrills our souls as once again Christmas is celebrated in honor of our King!

This month has been full of moments of joy, grief, waiting and rushing. The joy we share is in the birth of Silas John to Bro. Jim, Sis. Maria, big brother Calvin, and big sister Adeline McCormick. Seeing this beautiful baby boy at Christmas time gave me a new perspective on how fragile and small our King was when He was born.

Moments of grief and sorrow have touched all of us with the passing of our precious Sis. Melva Oesch (Bro. Joe). Our prayers continue to lift each of the family in prayer: her dear loving husband Bro. Joe; children: Bro. Fred (Sis. Donna) Oesch, Bonnie (Dave) Stouffer, Sam (Randi) Oesch, Ken (Denise) Oesch, Jeff (Brenda) Oesch, Bro. Tom (Sis. Michelle) Oesch, Sally (Don) Meyer; 25 grandchildren; 56 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-granddaughter. Sister Melva will be missed by all.

Time of waiting came as we prayed for those having medical tests, those who were hospitalized, and news of the outcome of surgery on baby Aurora, who we are thankful is stable again. And then there’s the rushing which hit’s big time in preparation for caroling, Sunday school program, shoe box packing, shopping, baking, practicing, traveling, work parties and many other reasons that need to be squeezed in at the last minute. Our prayer is that we all keep Jesus and the Good News as the reason for our activities!

It was a blessing to really make this a priority as young and old from our congregation presented a live nativity at the farm-stand. The story came alive for the hundreds who passed through as they listened to those who were impacted by the Savior’s birth and enjoyed interacting with the animals and a sweet swaddled infant.

“From our families to yours, we’d all like to say, may God bless you this Christmas in many special ways. And then as this year comes to a close, our prayer is that each will serve the Master not the foe.” -ibG.res

**Michigan, Bay City**

*Sarah Knochel*

We appreciate the efforts of Bro. Nathan Hodel (Sis. Jamie, Roanoke, IL) and Bro. Jeff Waibel (Sis. Margo, Leo, IN) as they visited and ministered to our congregation over the Thanksgiving holiday.

The Sunday School Christmas Program was held on December 9. It is always a blessing to see the eagerness of the youth as they share the Christmas story.

Our thoughts and prayers with Jennifer Curtis, Bro. Mike Ruegsegger (Sis. Nancy), and Randy Wackerle (Jane) as they recover from surgery and hospitalization. We trust that God will provide healing all according to his will.

Our hearts are saddened to hear of the passing of Sis. Margaret Fortenbacher (Kitchener, ON). We especially want to remember her daughter, Sis. Carola, and Bro. Jay Schlatter from our congregation.

“O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” Psalm 34:8
Michigan, Detroit
Carrie Ramseyer

The word quickly spreads around the room: it is almost midnight. Conversations momentarily cease, and people look up from their various games. For several seconds, the group collectively anticipates what is about to happen. Three...two...one...Silently, the two hands on the Woodpointe dining room clock align precisely on XII. Friends and family turn to each other, wishing each a “Happy New Year”!

The dining room is soon cleaned up, and each individual will return to their own homes, thankful to have spent the early hours of 2019 with those they loved.

This anticipation is our life as Christians. One day, the clock will strike midnight, and our Savior will return - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:52). We will then all go to our real home in Heaven, ready to begin our new life with our God and Father (Rev. 21:3).

The Sunday School reminded us of the wonderful plan of salvation this past December during the annual Christmas program. “Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies! With angelic hosts proclaim Christ is born in Bethlehem!” (Tabernacle Hymns #523) Praise be to God that we will one day sing with the angels, praising our God forever more.

Congratulations are in order for Bro. Adam Gleichman (Bro. Alan and Sis. Pam Gleichman). This past December, he graduated from Michigan State University with a degree in Electrical Engineering. May God bless his next steps!

Amanda Williams (Denise and Paxton Williams) recently became engaged to Javier Contreras-Uribe. Congratulations to Amanda and Javier, and may God bless their union!

Thank you to Bro. Doug (Sis. Lena) Harmon for ministering to the residents of Woodhaven last month. We would also like to thank Bro. Scott (Sis. Dorine) Aberle from Washington, IL for visiting us Christmas weekend.

Prayers are requested for Sis. Karen Martin as she heals from a recent surgery.

Prayers and sympathy are with Bro. Russ Rambeau with the passing of his Uncle Tom Krizan. Bro. Ernie and Sis. Mary Weigele mourn the passing of Mary’s sister Sis. Lois Allenbach of Kiowa, KS. Please pray for them and for Lois’ family. Prayers are also requested for Sis. Melinda and Todd Lanski and family as they grieve the loss of Todd’s father Arthur Lansk.

Minnesota, Minneapolis
Brenda Messner, Renee Messner

Sharing our love and greetings as we begin the New Year! Some might think they need to make a New Year’s Resolution: to lose weight, exercise more, get more sleep, eat healthier foods or drink more water? We do tend to eat too much and indulge. Most of us have way more than we actually need. And most certainly that was the case for Solomon, when we read the book of Ecclesiastes.

“Vanity of vanities; saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.” Ecclesiastes 1:2

More importantly, we must think on Paul’s words in 2 Peter Chapter 3.

“Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” 2 Peter 3:13-14

With the humble birth of our precious Jesus, fresh in our minds, we are called to “Come, and adore Him” to strive and live for Him!

Our resourceful Sunday School teachers guided, our dear children, in their Christmas Program, that was titled, ‘Immanuel – True Man Yet Very God’. From the small to the tall, our dear ones compared the distances and places in the story of Christ’s birth, to our Minneapolis area, helping them understand the journey that Mary and Joseph had to make. Then asking the question, who is Jesus? A baby born in the flesh, yet God’s Son, a compassionate teacher and Christ our Savior!

Using many references in the beautiful gospels: Jesus is the Bread of Life, the Light of the world, the Good Shepherd, the True Vine, the Way, the Truth, the Resurrection and the Life! After a delicious lunch, and fellowship, the good news of
Jesus birth, was shared through the singing of Christmas carols, to some neighborhood assisted living residents.

Praise God, for His wonderful gift of Jesus, and His plan for our salvation!

**Minnesota, Morris**

*Ashley Knobloch, Brianna Wulf*

We were blessed to have Elder Bro. Doug Schock (Sis. Clara, Bloomfield, IA) for the Memorandum and then to minister on Sunday. Also, Bro. Dean Messner (Sis. Wanda, Winthrop, MN) was with us this month to bring forth the Word. We appreciate their labors on our behalf!

Also, there have been several in our congregation who have been in and out of the hospital for procedures and we are thankful for God’s nearness to each one and offer prayers on their behalf.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.”

*Psalm 103:2-4*

**Minnesota, Winthrop**

*Julie Schmidt, Ginny Stoll*

We are thankful Michael Stoll (Bro. Ed and Sis. Ginny) graduated from Army Basic Training on November 21. He is now at Ft. Sam Houston, TX for AIT.

“Joy to the world the Lord has come!” It is always a joy to sing Christmas carols and celebrate the birth of our Savior. On December 15 the Sunday School children gave precious recitations and shared scriptures about Jesus birth, but reminded us all to not forget the most important gift of all - Jesus went to the cross and freely gave the gift of HIS life.

It’s always good to have Elder Bro. Ron Messner (Washington, IL) and Sis. Pam come “home”. We thank him for his labors of love on the pulpit.

We are thankful Bro. Josh Eberhart has completed his chemotherapy. We pray God grants strength and healing.

“Beyond the sunset, O blissful morning,
When with our Saviour heav’n is begun.
Earth’s toiling ended, O glorious dawning;
Beyond the sunset, when day is done.”

*Hymns of Zion #172*

Our heartfelt sympathies

**Minnesota, Morris North**

*Kay Feuchtenberger, Natalie Feuchtenberger*

We have had a wonderful month and we are so thankful for a wonderful 2018. For every hard moment, there has been double the joyful moments. Our number one reason for joy is the celebration of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

We are praying that you have had a Merry Christmas, and jump into the New Year with eyes set on the cross.

“If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

*John 8:36*

**Missouri, Kansas City**

*Julie Webel*

The Sunday School students have once again provided us with a wonderful Christmas program and blessed us with their beautiful voices. Let us keep Jesus close to our hearts during this season and every day. May we remember the gift of His birth and how after a very short life on this Earth, Jesus gave his life for us on the cross. There could be no greater gift! Thank you to all our visiting ministers this past month including Bro. John Rowell (Burlington, IA), and Elder Bro. Brad Strahm (Sis. Michelle, Bern, KS) who were both with us on Thanksgiving. Also thank you to Bro. Justin Isch, (Sis. Liz, Lamont-Gridley). May you all be blessed for your help in the ministry!

**Missouri, Lamar**

*Mindy Wettstein*

As always, we have been blessed by an abundance of visitors and visiting ministers from our body of believers.

November 11, Bro. Brett Kellenberger (Sis. Roseanne and family, Sabetha, KS) preached the word.

November 21, Bro. Duane Rocke (Minneapolis, MN) was willing to bring us a Thanksgiving
Eve service, and that weekend, Sis. Bonnie and their family were able to join us for worship.

November 25, Bro. Jeff Fischer (Ft. Scott) guest-served lunch. We missed the presence of his dear wife, Sis. Gloria, however she was serving lunch in Ft. Scott! We appreciate you making us a part of your busy schedule!

November 30, (Friday) we enjoyed a Christmas cookie bake and exchange at the fellowship hall. It was extremely entertaining to watch how much icing and sprinkles went on the cookies decorated by the young children!

December 2, Bro. Dale Frank (Sis. Tina, Mediapolis, IA) were our willing visiting ministering couple. Bro. Byron and Sis. Anita Fehr and their family were in Branson for the weekend, and joined us for Sunday worship and blessed us by providing lunch. Our Ft. Scott KS brethren boosted us by joining us for Christmas caroling in place of the typical hymn sing. We enjoyed extra time of fellowship with potluck following.

December 7, again this year, we had the opportunity to ring bells with the Ft. Scott youth at Wal-Mart for the Salvation Army bucket, and in place of bell ringing, we sang Christmas Carols. It amazes me of the depth that the true carols have in sharing the gospel story.

December 9, we enjoyed another rotation taken by Bro. Dave Huette (Sis. Susan, Tremont, IL). This dear couple also blessed us by guest-serving! I think it’s so neat when we get repeat ministers on rotation- although I wasn’t home when they were here, I greatly enjoy opportunities to maintain the friendships of our visiting ministers!

Our dear Sis. Edith Hohulin has experienced “highs” and “lows” this past month. She spent a week in the local nursing home to receive some extra care, and is thankful to once again to be in her own home. On the exciting end, we congratulate her on the safe arrival of a great-granddaughter!

Missouri, St. Louis

Victoria Stoll

Tis the season to be joyful and remember our Savior’s birth. The congregation enjoyed our Sunday School program and their storytelling of Christ’s birth and how our King came to earth. From the preschoolers joyfully singing Little Drummer Boy to the solemn readings from the sacred Word of God, it was evident that we all are so thankful for His birth.

As we near the close of 2018, we are prayerful and so thankful for all the changes and growth we’ve experienced as a church family. May we all look forward to the New Year with refreshed faith and joy in our Lord.

Missouri, Taylor

Lori Marquart

Wedding bells were ringing in Gridley on December 2 for Bro. Tyler Haerr (Bro. Shon & Sis. Peg), and Sis. Miranda Schlipf (Bro. Jake & Sis. Amy, Gridley). Their invitation stated they were “in awe of God’s faithfulness.” Trusting in God’s faithfulness day by day gives us confidence in God’s promises for the future.

“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

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.” Psalm 92:1

Thankfulness is expressed to God, and to His servant Bro. Brian Waibel (Sis. Wendy, Champaign) for bringing God’s Word to us on Wednesday, December 5.

Prayers (and praise!) is requested for these recent medical patients: Sis. Colby Steffen (Bro. Josh), and Autym Bryant (Travis & Sarah, grandparents are Bro. Rusty & Sis. Amy Adrian). As 2019 begins, it is a great time to renew our desires to serve the Lord with our whole heart, mind, and soul. Review David’s instructions to Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28. Verse 9 reads, “…for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee…”

New York, Croghan/Naumburg

Karen Farney

Our thoughts and prayers go out to two families as they said farewell to their loved ones. Sis. Polly Farney’s sister, Suzanne
Cobb, passed away November 16. Sis. Lois Virkler passed away November 18. She is survived by her children and their spouses: Cathy and Clifford Lehman, Steven and Yvonne Virkler, James Virkler, Chris and Susan Virkler. Also surviving are nine grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

Sunday November 18 Rockville, CT came and served us lunch. We thank them for all they do for us. As the winter months are upon us and we are noted for getting accumulations of snow, they will be taking a couple of months off.

As the Christmas Season is approaching, we have been Christmas caroling and gathering to do cheer baskets. Sunday December 9, we Christmas caroled at Lewis County General Hospital. Afterward, we gathered in the family room and had refreshments. Friday December 14, we went to Meadowbrook Terrace to carol. Many of the residents came out and sang with us. They all so much appreciated us coming and singing for them.

Not only this time of year, but every day of the year, let us remember where our gifts come from.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.” James 1:17

Ohio, Akron
Joelle Indermuhle

It seems that often when sitting down to write the Silver Lining article, I am reminded of the cycle of life and times of rejoicing amidst times of sorrow, as there is often a wide variety of news to report. This brings to mind the verses found in James 4:14-15 “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.” Let us use the time we have today to follow the nudging of the Holy Spirit and say a prayer, write a card, make a phone call, or do whatever He may be asking of us.

Sis. Dianna Bako is rejoicing in the birth of her granddaughter, Naomi Elizabeth. Her parents are John and Vanessa Bako.

Bethany Gal has answered God’s call to repentance. Thankful parents are Bro. George and Sis. Tina.

Joel Schar has found peace and is awaiting baptism in the future. His parents are Bro. Tim and Sis. Joanne.

December 9 was the baptism of Bro. Kenny Graf (Bro. Todd and Sis. Lydia) in Remington, IN. It was a quiet Sunday for those of us who stayed home, as many traveled to join in witnessing this special event.

Sis. Lydia Graf (Bro. Todd) and Sis. Rosanne Graf (Bro. Dan) recently bid farewell to their dear mother, Sis. Margaret Fortenbacher from Kitchener, ON. Her life of faith was an example to all of us to continue pressing on under all circumstances.

We also extend sympathy to Bro. Glen and Sis. Joan Greenbank in the passing of their sister-in-law, Pat (Ron) Greenbank of Chandler, AZ.

Ohio, Columbus
Nancy Banks

Holidays are almost upon us and if you didn’t have the Christmas spirit, the Sunday School Christmas program and smiling children’s faces helped us feel the “reason for the season”. We enjoyed the students emphasizing the word JOY in the readings with a twinkle in their eyes and an awakening in our hearts! A nursing home Christmas caroling followed and we took delight in the residents who sang along and one beautiful soul who chose to lead our choir. Again, the JOY was felt by many that afternoon.

Our congregation welcomed many visitors this month: Elder Bro. Mark Masters (Sis Jeannine, Mansfield, OH), Bro. Tim Ramsier (Sis. Jonell, Rittman, OH), Bro. Ron Bollier (Sis. Edie, Indianapolis, IN) and Bro. Ron Palitto (Sis. Lynell, Akron, OH). We were also thankful for Bro. Bryon Palitto’s (Sis. Lisa, Akron, OH) Thanksgiving message and the large group of young people from the Akron, Rittman and Smithville congregations who visited that evening.
We wish you the Peace, Love and JOY of our Lord and Savior in your hearts this holiday season and the coming New Year!

**Ohio, Junction**

*Elizabeth Manz*

Elder Bro. Bill and Sis. Emily Schlatter were blessed with another grand-daughter, Jamie Nicole, born on December 11. Jamie’s parents are Bro. Jason and Sis. Anita Koch from Tremont, IL. Every child is a precious gift and we rejoice with their family.

We are thankful that our convert, Skyler McCullough (Bro. Jim and Sis. Julie) has found peace with God. We look forward to her testimony and baptism in the near future, Lord willing.

The holiday season has brought a number of visitors to our congregation. Among them were Bros. Jim Butikofer (Sis. Diana, Iowa City, IA), David Maibach (Sis. Larisa, Smithville, OH), Bruce Frank (Sis. Bonita, Cissna Park, IL), Matt Manz (Sis. Deanna, Toledo, OH) and Chet Manz (Sis. Jenny, Toledo, OH). Many thanks to each one for their ministry.

**Ohio, Latty**

*Angie Klopfenstein, Carmen Stoller*

We were thankful to hear the wedding engagement of Sis. Autumn Nuest (Bro. Lee and Sis. Paula) to Bro. Kory Schlatter (Bro. Eli and Sis. Janel). May God bless this couple as they make marriage preparations!

Thank you to Bro. Dale Wulf (Sis. Becky, Lester, IA) and Bro. David Maibach (Sis. Larisa, Smithville, OH) for sharing the Word this month.

**Ohio, Mansfield**

*Elizabeth Walter*

We were blessed to have two visiting ministers this month. We thank Bro. John Grimm (Sis. Julie, Columbus, OH) and Bro. Sam Schlatter (Sis. Linda, Junction, OH) for their labors of love.

Our thoughts and prayers have been with Bro. Fred Domka (Sis. Connie), Mark Rau, and Sis. Luci Baumann (Bro. Dave) as they have dealt with health challenges and surgery. May God’s healing and comfort touch each one.

The closing of another year always brings changes in administration at our annual Business Meeting. We are so thankful to each one who served in various roles over the past year(s). We are also grateful for those who willingly accepted new responsibilities: Bro. Greg Sabo (Trustee, Rittman Nursing Home Board), Bro. Archie Tucker (Trustee), Bro. Roger Miller (Sunday School Assist. Superintendent), Bro. Trent Beer (Usher), Sis. Tammy Beer (Kitchen Committee), Sis. April Ramsey (Kitchen Committee), Sis. Robin Beer (Harvest Call Committee), and Sis. Katie Miller (Silver Lining Correspondent).

May each one serve in a way that brings glory to God!

It brought us joy to listen to the Christmas story as told from the lips of the Sunday School children at our Christmas Program. Their sweet words and voices always touch our hearts. We sincerely thank all those who put time and effort into helping them practice, as well as those who provided a snack for the evening.

We were thankful to enjoy an evening of all-church caroling. It is a blessing to bring glad tidings to those who are sick or lonely. We appreciate the efforts of each one who participated!

We express sympathy to our Sis. Janet Beer (Bro. Al) and her family in the loss of her sister, Carol Selman. May precious memories of the past bring peace and comfort to each one.

**Ohio, Rittman**

*Julie Steiner, Maria Beery*

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

Our courage is renewed as we witness souls answering God’s call. We are thankful for our new convert, Kaitlyn Hoffman (Bro. Nathan and Sis. Mary).

Our sympathy and prayers are with Sis. Anita Riggenbach in the passing of her husband, Bro. Ed. Bro. Ed will be missed by his children: Sis. Karen Rufener (Bro. Dan), Bro. Bob (Sis. Lorie), Chad (Denise), and Bro. Corban (Sis. Jessica); as well as his siblings, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. We want to remember Sis. Wanda Hilty (Bro. Roscoe) and Sis. Barb
Zollinger (Bro. Arlyn) as they laid to rest their mother, Sis. Margaret Fortenbacher (Kitchener). After 98 years here on earth, our Sis. Rowene Howell took her last breath. She leaves behind 4 children: Rodney (Kathy), Douglas, Annette Lorentz, and Darla (Mike) Ferguson; a brother, Bro. Nelson Ramsier; a sister, Sis. Marie Gasser and many grandchildren and other relatives. We trust God will strengthen the hearts of these families as they put their hope in Him.

We, also, want to remember Bro. Bob Dotterer (Sis. Mardel), Bro. Dale Pelfrey (Sis. Beth), Bro. Dale Hartzler (Sis. Carolyn), and Sis. Sara Steiner (Bro. Jim) in our prayers as they spent time in the hospital this month.

We rejoice with Bro. Neil Stoller (Bro. Jeff and Sis. Millie, Smithville) and Sis. Anna Bauman (Bro. Jerry and Sis. Martha) as they were united in marriage on December 2. Sis. Anna will be missed in Rittman and we wish her the best as she joins Bro. Neil in Smithville.


We want to thank Bro. Barry Dietz (Bradford), Bro. Todd Stoller (Latty), Bro. Jerry Isch (Philadelphia), Bro. Matt Manz (Toledo) and Bro. Don Manz (Junction) for visiting our congregation and serving us on the pulpit.

**Ohio, Sardis**

*Renee Blough, Doris Miller*

Thanksgiving Day brought visitors, including ministering Bro. Tyler Joos (Sis. Tonya, Bradford, IL). Also serving us on the pulpit recently was Bro. Nathaniel Ramsey (Sis. April, Mansfield, OH). We appreciate their willingness to bring forth God’s message.

Bro. Eric and Sis. Jami Hartzler, along with their daughter Leah and Sis. Faith Beard, were able to return to Haiti for a week at Hospital Lumiere with the focus being cancer screening clinics in the area. Our thoughts and prayers go to the missionaries who perform acts of service and proclaim the gospel in foreign countries.

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21

It is good to focus on the Good News for a time as we are blessed by many annual Christmas activities such as the Sunday School program, basket packing, caroling in homes and care centers, and a “spaghetti” supper. The special time of fellowship that we experience in each of these activities makes me grateful anew for the church family that He has placed me in. May we always stop and marvel at the humble birth of Jesus and take time to ponder His purpose in coming to the earth for all mankind.

**Ohio, Smithville**

*Renee Blough, Doris Miller*

“But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” Matt. 20:26, 27

The Smithville church would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Bro. Mark and Sis. Sue Steiner as Bro. Mark retires from the ministry. We have been blessed by their servant hearts and pray that God would be their rich rewarder for all their sacrifices over the last 28 years.

We would like to express our gratitude to the visiting ministers who shared the Word this month. They were Bro. Lucas Frank (Sis. Crystal, Detroit, MI), Bro. Marvin Hartzler (Sis. Sue, Rittman, OH), Bro. Bob Riggenbach (Sis. Lorie, Rittman, OH), and Bro. Todd Graf (Sis. Lydia, Akron, OH).

Anita Fetzer (Bro. Andy and Sis. Elizabeth) and Jeremy Pawlak (Ed and Michelle) were united in marriage on November 17. Bro. Neil Stoller (Bro. Jeff and Sis. Millie) and Sis. Anna Bauman
(Bro. Jerry and Sis. Martha, Rittman, OH) chose December 2, to say their wedding vows before God and men. We wish both of these young couples God’s blessings as they begin their lives together.

Bro. John and Sis. Janice Rufener are excited to welcome a new grandson, Titus Loren, into their family circle. Titus’s parents are Bro. Jordan and Sis. Jenny Miller (Latty, OH). Likewise, Bro. Mark and Sis. Sue Steiner were thrilled with another grandson, Watson Ezra, born to Steven and Alyson Steiner. Little Watson is privileged to also have great-grandparents, Bro. Jim and Sis. Dorothy Ramsier to love him. Shiloh Michael Stoller came to bless the home of Bro. Doyle and Sis. Naomi, Josiah and Lilly. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Scott and Sis. Charlene Stoller and Mike and Barb Ursu, of Kitchener, Ontario.

We extend our sympathy to Sis. Janice Rufener (Bro. John) in the passing of her sister-in-law, Pat Greenbank (Ron) of Chandler, AZ. Bro. John Zollinger (Sis. Marge) has spent some time in the hospital this past month. Our prayers are with him and hope that he can feel God’s healing soon.

Ohio, Toledo

Brooke Harmon, Alisia Schlatter

What a wonderful time of year! Christmas time is a busy time, but a joyous time too, as we remember Christ’s birth and the reason for all of our activities! Our children were excited to share the joy of Jesus’ birth at their Christmas Program. A highlight for all of them was singing a verse of “Silent Night” in German.

We have several who continue to struggle with health concerns. Our Bro. Gale Stoller was hospitalized after a stroke and continues to receive care at Toledo Hospital. Bro. Joe Croy sustained a fall, breaking a hip and collarbone. After surgery he was moved to Elizabeth Scott Community rehab facility where he and Bro. Bob Stevens are blessed to share a room while they each receive long term care. Kurt Rager was also treated at the hospital for pneumonia this month. Our prayers continue to go up for each of them and their families.

Ontario, Kitchener

RoseLynn Metzger

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” Psalm 23: 1-3

To begin this address, on November 16/17, Bro. Warren Schlatter (Sis. Cindy, Junction, OH) came to help us move forward with our church bolstering project. We thank them for their efforts! The following weekend we had a morning call-in service, and for the afternoon service, we listened to the conference CDs. On Saturday, December 1, we had a potluck Christmas dinner, which was followed by our Sunday School Christmas Program. We had some visiting local children as well as visiting children from Indiana join in with the singing. Bro. Tim Wiegand (Sis. Christa, Leo, IN) served us on the pulpit.

On Sunday December 2, our dear Sis. Margaret Fortenbacher was united with her Savior, age 87. She was a great example of a God-fearing woman to all who knew her. Her family will especially miss her stories of Neu Pasua, her laugh, and her generous and forgiving nature. She will be sadly missed by her twelve children: Astrid (Henry Schlauch), Aron (Tamara McCarty), Carola (Jay Schlatter), Lydia (Todd Graf), Wanda (Roscoe Hilty), Ingrid, Rosanne (Dan Graf), Magdalena (Clint Schmidt), Waldemar David, Johanna, Barbara (Arlyn Zollinger), and Miriam (Nathan Reutter); her 30 grandchildren; and 7 great-grandchildren. To our church family, she was a mother to all, a strong woman of faith that showed love to everyone she met. Her delightful presence will be missed, but we are comforted that she is at home in Heaven. Elder Bro. Mark Bahr (Sis. Beverly, Livonia, MI), and Bro. Randy Gasser (Sis. Sue, Livonia, MI) performed the funeral service on Thursday, December 6.

Bro. Randy (Sis. Sue), returned to serve us the following weekend. We appreciated their support throughout the week. In conclusion, Bro. Todd (Sis. Pam)
Stoller, Latty, OH, came to worship with us on December 15-16. We wish everyone a joyful and blessed Christmas season!

**Oregon, Portland**  
**Louisa Gallup**

We thank Elder Bro. John Wiegand (Sis. Jane, Silverton, OR) for conducting our annual Communion Service recently. The labors of our elder brethren and ministers are appreciated very much and even more so for a special time like Communion.

The Sunday School students, with the support of our small young group, presented the Christmas program, which was followed by a potluck meal. As always, it was a pleasure to listen to the children and young people sing and read the Christmas story and then have a time of fellowship.

We are grateful for this past month’s visitors and song leader help. Visiting ministers from Silverton, OR were Bro. Ron Jones (Sis. Liz) and Elder Bro. John Wiegand (Sis. Jane). May God bless them all for their willingness to support us.

**Oregon, Silverton**  
**Lorraine Kuenzi, Teresa Tribbett**

Thank you Bro. Brent Kellenberger (Sis. Beth, Kansas City, MO) for sharing the Word on Thanksgiving Day. May God richly bless you and your family as you continue to be a light for Him!

Kiana Walter (Bro. Kyle and Sis. Trisha) along with her family would appreciate your prayers as Adalyn’s siblings include Raegan, Ashlyn, Brynn, and Dawson. Grandparents are Gary and Tammy Dettwyler from Silverton, OR, and Bro. Randy and Sis. Karen Kellenberger from Kansas City, MO.

Thank you to the Sunday school classes for sharing the beautiful Christmas story with us December 9 through songs and readings from the Scriptures. We are thankful for your many weeks of practice in preparation for the evening and recognize the courage it takes to stand up in front of the congregation! To God be the glory!

Bro. Mike Leman (Sis. Lisa) from Portland, OR, shared the Word December 12. We were reminded that because of our faith in a great God, we have access to power that can move mountains. Don’t let the evil one sow seeds of doubt in your heart.

As a congregation, we had the opportunity to visit several retirement homes and older couples and sing Christmas carols. The joy of the season was reflected on the faces we sang to and reminded us again of the true reason of the Christmas season. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!

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**John 14:27**

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.
Pennsylvania, Philadelphia  
Laura Isch  
“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!”  
Joy to the World,  
Tabernacle Hymns, #254  
When we reflect on Christ’s birth, it is sobering to realize how earth did “receive her King”. Our heavenly King was born in a stable, lived a life of poverty, was rejected and spat upon, and, eventually, went to a horrible death on a cross. How do we receive Christ as individuals? Do we let Him reign in our hearts or do we, too, reject His love and mercy?  
We always enjoy hearing the Christmas story from our Sunday School! We enjoyed our annual Sunday School Christmas program on December 9. May God bless each child for raising their voice in His praise!  
Philadelphia continues to be blessed with many volunteers to work on our remodel project. We are truly grateful for each one who comes to serve us. We are also thankful for ministering Bros. Clint Schmidt (Sis. Magdalena, Winthrop), and Todd Graf (Sis. Lydia, Akron) for preaching the Word.

Tennessee, Nashville  
Mike Fritz  
We want to thank our visiting ministers, who so capably and willingly serve us, sharing God’s Living Word. Our recent visitors have been Bros. Byron Stoller (Sis. Carol, Gridley, IL), Ned Stoller (Sis. Heidi, Alto), and David Hartter (Sis. Beth, Sabetha). Additionally, we have been encouraged by visitors from Roanoke, IL; Bern, KS; Morris, MN; Latty and Toledo, OH; as well as some local visitors.  
If you are traveling to or through the Nashville area, please plan to fellowship and worship with us. We meet for worship every Sunday, and some Wednesday evenings, and we also welcome other opportunities for fellowship. Please contact us ahead of time to confirm our schedule. Contacts are Bro. Jordan & Sis. Emily Fritz, 615.852.9109, jordannmfritz@gmail.com; Bro. Mike & Sis. Monica Fritz, 615.866.5543, fritzmb.family@gmail.com; or Bro. Jeff & Sis. Cynde Stoller, 309.530.5760, cyndelynnstoller@gmail.com.

Texas, Austin/Bastrop  
Candy Meiss  
Sending our Love and Greetings from Austin!  
Today as I sit at my kitchen table, I see our home decorated in anticipation of celebrating Jesus’ birth with family and friends. The word “Joy” is on a candle arrangement in the window, bright glittery red in color. Looking inward, it seems my joy is somewhat faded in comparison to the sparkly and bright “Joy” as I recover from knee surgery (3rd day post-op) and think of the preparations needed for Christmas. Suddenly my quiet devotional time is interrupted by the insistent ringing of the doorbell. I limp to the door as fast as I can and to my surprise there is a kind man with a beautiful flower arrangement from my children. What a joy and a boost to my day, such a wonderful reminder that God is with us and we have much to be joyful about, especially that He gave us His only Son to live and die for us that we might have eternal life!  
“Joy to the World, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King.  
Let every heart prepare Him room and Heaven and nature sing!”  
We have been blessed from the Word by the following visiting ministers: Elder Bro. Gerry Hertzel (Sis. Ellen, Sabetha, KS), Bro Leland Plattner (Zapata, TX), Bro. Dan Koch (Sis. Julie, Tremont, IL) and Bro. Darren Plattner (Sis. Sue, Champaign, IL).  
We heard the Christmas story in verse and song through our Sunday School during our Christmas program. We are thankful for all those who took part in organizing and telling the precious story. “Joy to the world, the Savior reigns, Let men their songs employ. While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy.”  
We are so thankful for our visitors and encourage everyone passing through to stop and worship with us!
Please refer to our minister’s directory for directions and contacts.

**Texas, Dallas-Ft. Worth**

**Sheena Pelsy**

“For unto us a child is born.”

*Isaiah 9:6*

Before a few of us flew back home for Christmas, we were all able to join together and enjoy a Christmas dinner and caroling. Joining us that weekend was Bro. Gerry Hertzel (Sis. Ellen, Sabetha, KS). What a joy it was to fellowship and celebrate Jesus Christ, our King and Savior. For services the next day, Bro. Gerry read from Daniel 7:1-14 and preached about the kingdoms mentioned in scripture. The message God was showing Daniel in his dream was that all these earthly kingdoms would continue to be conquered by a more powerful kingdom, but ultimately, the eternal kingdom will have victory over all. What a great reminder that we should not be fearful of man, but a fear of God. As we begin this New Year, let’s be intentional about maintaining a thankful heart and be shining lights in a dark world.

The Dallas church would like to welcome Bro. Gerry and Sis. Ellen as Gerry will be Dallas’s new elder. We are very blessed as we look forward to a year full of visiting ministers and families as we move up to two church services a month.

Services are being held every 2nd and 4th Sunday at the Holiday Inn Express, 4450 W. John Carpenter Freeway, Irving, TX. If you plan to visit or want to call ahead to verify services, call Bro. Adam Graf (330-590-7086).

**Texas Zapata**

**Mary Plattner**

We appreciate that Bro. Dennis Rassi (Sis. Diana, Austin, TX) came to Zapata for a weekend to share the Word.

We have been having visitors from various parts of the Midwest and certainly appreciate the special effort to come to Zapata.

Our church family will have Christmas Day services followed by a Christmas dinner at church. Any one coming to South Texas is most welcome to visit Zapata in their travels.

**Vermont, Clarendon**

**Nathan Reutter**

The children in Sunday school have been practicing their songs and verses for the Christmas program. We have, as a congregation, been singing Christmas hymns. We had a blessed time at Bro. Bob and Sis. Lynette Goric’s cabin in Woodford, VT this year, like other years, singing the old carols and having a wonderful time of fellowship. It has really become a yearly tradition. As Christmas approaches, the wonder of it all begins to rise in our hearts. Yet with all the trappings inherent in the rush, a doubt grows as to whether it is all so necessary, and if it shadows the reason of Christmas itself. Let’s choose to make ours a Christ-centered Christmas.

Looking forward to the joys ahead helps us to alleviate the loss of a loved one recently. Bro. Nathan and Sis. Miriam Reutter and their family wish to thank the many known and countless unknown people who prayed on their account and comforted them in the loss of Sis. Miriam’s mother, Sis. Margarethe Fortenbacher of Kitchener, ON. The support has strengthened and encouraged us.

Bro. Brent and Naomi Walder, Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Amy Zahner, and Bro. Brad and Sis. Deanna Wiegand, all from Rockville, CT, ministered to us. We were thankful for their sound and timely teachings. We appreciate the efforts they make to encourage and instruct us in righteousness.

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**1 Chronicles 16:8-11**

Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people.

Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.

Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually.
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Isaiah 54:13

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For more information on Hospital Lumiere positions, contact: Robert Beebe. Email: robert.beebe1@gmail.com, or Phone: 574-276-6748

HOSPITALITY MANAGER
Opening at Hospital Lumiere, Haiti

Seeking to fill this full-time paid position at Hospital Lumiere in Haiti.

Position Description: Responsible for the overall day to day management and coordination of the Hospital Lumiere Hotel, Guest House and Work Teams. Reports to Hospital Lumiere Administrator

Qualifications include: Organization, planning and communication are key skills required for this position. This person will be the face of the Hospital team with full time physicians, visiting medical professionals and work team members. Must organize and schedule work team calendar, staff assignments, hotel housing assignments, meal planning and manage finances for the guest house & hotel. Ability to lead and manage people, be a believer in Jesus Christ, willing and capable of learning the Creole language and Haitian culture, willingness to reside in Haiti (with your spouse/family if applicable) for minimum of 4 years.

Terms of Service
• Full time residing in Haiti for a minimum of 4 years
• Housing on Hospital Campus provided adjacent to other brethren and missionaries
• Initial year of service requires a significant period of time studying Haitian Creole and culture.
• Training will be provided prior to placement in the field. It is also desired that time will be allowed for a three month minimum transition period between the new Hospitality Manager and the existing, to allow for a successful transition.

Candidate selection, preparation, training, sending and supporting will be conducted using HarvestCall’s established Outreach Policies and Procedures.

For more information on Hospital Lumiere positions, contact: Robert Beebe. Email: robert.beebe1@gmail.com, or Phone: 574-276-6748
DIRECTOR of OPERATIONS
OPENING at Hospital Lumiere, Haiti

Seeking to fill this full-time paid position at Hospital Lumiere in Haiti. Qualifications include: knowledge and understanding of business administration including financial control and accounting, general knowledge of human resource management, business work processes, ability to lead and manage people, be a believer in Jesus Christ, willing and capable of learning the Creole language and Haitian culture, willingness to reside in Haiti (with your spouse/family if applicable) for minimum of 3 years, willing to learn and manage other areas critical to a successful hospital — such as security, data systems and IT and labor law.

Terms of Service
• Full time residing in Haiti
• Housing provided adjacent to other brethren and missionaries
• Initial year of service requires a significant period of time studying Haitian Creole and culture.
• Training will be provided prior to placement in the field. It is also desired that time will be allowed for a three month minimum transition period between the new Director of Operations and the existing, to allow for a successful transition in leadership.

Candidate selection, preparation, training, sending and supporting will be conducted using HarvestCall's established Outreach Policies and Procedures.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR OPENING at Hospital Lumiere, Haiti

Seeking a licensed physician to fill this full-time position at Hospital Lumiere in Haiti. Qualifications include: a U.S. medical license, Board-Certification 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 three 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.

Terms of Service
• Full time residing in Haiti
• Housing provided adjacent to other brethren and missionaries
• Initial year of service requires a significant period of time studying Haitian Creole and assimilating into the Haitian culture.
• Training will be provided prior to placement in the field.

Candidate selection, preparation, training, sending and supporting will be conducted using HarvestCall's established Outreach Policies and Procedures.

For more information on Hospital Lumiere positions, contact: Robert Beebe. Email: robert.beebe1@gmail.com, or Phone: 574-276-6748
Seeking caregivers, single or married, willing to provide a Christ-centered family-like home for children who have been removed from their biological families. A caregivers qualifications include: Member in good-standing; dedication and love for children and young people; good communication, teamwork and conflict management skills; openness to learn, self-motivation and flexibility; ability to speak or willingness to learn Spanish.

A caregivers responsibilities include: Providing spiritual leadership and training for the children; provide for the daily physical, social and emotional needs of the children; continual pursuit of personal emotional and spiritual growth; continual professional growth as a caregiver; administer discipline in love and using biblical principles in accordance with CVE policies; grow in cultural knowledge and sensitivity.

Terms of Service

- Live on the CVE campus in the homes of the children being cared for.
- Language, culture and caregiver training will be provided.

Candidate selection, preparation, training, sending and supporting will be conducted using HarvestCall’s established Outreach Policies and Procedures.

For more information on CVE positions, contact: Keith Beyer. Email: CVEmexico@gmail.com, or Phone: 260-627-0525

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Seeking caregiver assistants, single or married, willing to support a caregiver in our Christ-centered family-like homes for children who have been pulled from their homes due to circumstances out of their control. A caregiver assistant qualifications include: Member in good-standing; dedication and love for children and young people; good communication, teamwork and conflict management skills; openness to learn, self-motivation and flexibility; ability to speak or willingness to learn Spanish.

A caregiver assistant responsibilities include: Support or provide spiritual leadership and training for the children; support the caregiver in providing for the daily physical, social and emotional needs of the children; continual pursuit of personal emotional and spiritual growth; continual professional growth as an assistant; administer discipline in love and using biblical principles in accordance with CVE policies; grow in cultural knowledge and sensitivity.

Terms of Service

- Live on or near the CVE campus, may include living in the home of the children being cared for.
- Language, culture and caregiver training will be provided.

Candidate selection, preparation, training, sending and supporting will be conducted using HarvestCall’s established Outreach Policies and Procedures.

For more information on CVE positions, contact: Keith Beyer. Email: CVEmexico@gmail.com, or Phone: 260-627-0525
Seeking short-term missionaries willing to live and serve at CVE for one year to support a variety of activities around campus.

Short-Term missionary qualifications include: Member in good-standing; dedication and love for children and young people; good communication, teamwork and conflict management skills; openness to learn, self-motivation and flexibility; ability to speak or willingness to learn Spanish.

The responsibilities could include: Support the caregiver in providing care for children; accounting support; drive church and/or school routes; prepare meals and support meal prep for work teams; work with livestock; teach work related skills to the children.

For more information on CVE positions, contact: Keith Beyer. Email: CVEmexico@gmail.com, or Phone: 260-627-0525

Terms of Service

- Housing provided on or near the CVE campus
- Language and culture training provided

Candidate selection, preparation, training, sending and supporting will be conducted using HarvestCall’s established Outreach Policies and Procedures and the CVE Short Term Missionary Procedures.

Seeking an energetic, self-motivated, responsible Believer to fill the position of Medical Department Intern at Hospital Lumiere in Haiti for a term of 6 months. Responsibilities include helping the Medical Director with staff scheduling, communications between departments (Nursing, Pharmacy, Radiology, Lab), monitoring inventories and medical supplies and various other responsibilities. Lodging, food and living expenses are provided. A medical background is not required, but is helpful.

If you are seeking an exciting opportunity to serve God and others, have a servant’s heart, appreciate new horizons and challenges and have six months to devote to furthering the Lord’s work in Haiti, please contact Bro. Robert Beebe, Executive Director, Hospital Lumiere for a complete job description and details of the internship.

For more information on Hospital Lumiere positions, contact: Robert Beebe. Email: robert.beebe1@gmail.com, or Phone: 574-276-6748
Construction Leaders Needed for Winter Rebuilding Ministry
Hardin County, TX - January 7th - March 30th, 2019

Previous construction experience required.

• Must be familiar with all aspects of new construction
• Must be able to direct a team of volunteer workers
• Must be a team player – able to work in cooperation with other construction leaders
• Must be willing to commit to three or more weeks of service
• A stipend will be offered for four or more weeks of service
• Room and Board are provided.

Those interested should contact Tim Slagel: slagelachc@gmail.com OR Cell: 309-208-0846 ASAP.
Haiti Awareness Tours

If you’d like to see the ministry of Hospital Lumiere 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 Awareness Tours. These are quick trips that give you 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 ministries in southern Haiti. The 2019 Awareness Tours are scheduled for March 23-27 and Sept. 28-Oct. 2.

To learn more, contact:
Rich Bertschi at 309.467.2351
or hospitallumiere@harvestcall.org
Rick Wuethrich at 219.863.4163 or rick@wuethrichfarms.com

Jamaica Awareness Tour

If you would like to meet the missionaries and see the ministries of CCCD, Deaf Can! Coffee, and En Gedi House in person, but do not have the desire to participate on a short-term team, please consider our new Awareness Tour. This is a quick trip that gives interested parties the opportunity to meet our missionary families, learn more about our Jamaica ministry as well as other outreach supported by HarvestCall. The trip will be over a weekend and include worshipping with a deaf congregation. The next Awareness Tour is scheduled for Jan. 17-21, 2019.

To learn more, Email or Call: Kent Mogler at 612-360-4361 or moglerkent@gmail.com

PROCLAIM CHRIST & SERVE OTHERS

Mexico Medical / Dental Teams

**YEAR 2019 PROJECT CAPACITY**

Mar 9-15 Juarez FULL
Todd & Teresa Earney 260-273-9528 Email: tearney@adamswells.com

**Mexico Construction Teams**

**YEAR 2019 PROJECT CAPACITY**

June 7-14 Magdalena Mike Zobrist
Construction Email: zobfam@gmail.com

**QUESTIONS FOR MEXICO TEAMS:**
Reynosa: Kevin & Sadie Gerber Phone: 260-417-5272 kevgerber@yahoo.com
Magdalena: Daton Kuperschmid Email: Datonkup@gmail.com

**Jamaica Teams**

**YEAR 2019 PROJECT CAPACITY**

Jan 7 - 14 CCCD - Kingston 25
Rodger Stoller 309-275-5722 Email: rstoller@gridcom.net
Jan 17 - 21 Awareness Trip 15
Kent Mogler 612-360-4361 Email: moglerkent@gmail.com
May 31 - June 8 CCCD - JDV 40
Mark Lindberg 815-641-9065 Email: lindma@hotmail.com

**QUESTIONS FOR JAMAICA TEAMS:**
If you are interested in sponsoring a work team to Jamaica contact Loren Dettwyler at lmdettwyler@gmail.com

**Jamaica, Bonne Fin Construction Teams**

The Hospital Lumiere renovation program continues to restore and improve the facility to an environment that honors God and provides an atmosphere that contributes to the wellbeing of the hospital staff, our patients and their families.

Hospital Lumiere has an ongoing need for maintenance and/or construction teams and especially for skilled electricians. Rather than listing predetermined dates and asking people to fit into them, if a team, or individual, is interested in coming, they should contact the Hospital Administrator to discuss possible dates and available projects.

Hospital Administrator Bro. Rick Aberle
Phone: 011-509-4222-1004 or Email: komarick@sbcglobal.net
Are you looking for more purpose?

Consider working at Gateway Woods. A day will not pass where you will wonder if God is using you for His kingdom. There is a lot of brokeness in the world around us and we have realized that God uses our broken lives to help the broken lives of others.

We currently need an Assistant Houseparent, Houseparent Couple, Math Teacher, English Teacher, LARC Coordinator and Houseparent Supervisor. We are looking for willing hearts like you to come serve in a growing and vital ministry.

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   Bro. Randy and Sis. Brittaney Lehman
   4733 Birdie Lane NW, Rochester, MN 55901
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For information, contact:
   Bro. Jim and Sis. Deb Tilbury
   Phone: (507) 281-2875

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   Letters
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   (815) 848-5113 • printedsermons@gmail.com
Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls... Jeremiah 6:16
The Faith of Abel
— Continued from pg. 3

hearts: “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.”

Clearly Abel had at one time or other committed sin as well, since “there is no man that sinneth not”. However, unlike his older brother, Abel’s heart was evidently pure when he brought his gift to the altar. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.”

The concept of freeing oneself from sin on the way to the altar was reinforced by Christ. “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Confessing our faults and praying for one another go hand in hand and will strengthen our relationships. “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

How much better would have been the outcome if only Cain had made this his choice!

Lastly, but certainly not least, Abel was slain by his older brother in a fit of envy. “And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”

Christ later recognized Abel as being a righteous man who became the first martyr, “That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.” Certainly, it is difficult for anyone to look forward to suffering, even when done for Christ. However, should this become our lot, we should not fear, “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

In summary, we have learned much from observing Abel’s life. His faith was not only deep, but it was visible to others. In turn, God was willing to give testimony of Abel’s righteousness and gifts with the intent that these lessons would endure to future generations. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

Endnotes:
1 Hebrews 11:4
2 Genesis 4:3-5
3 Numbers 18:12
4 Hebrews 11:6
5 Genesis 4:6-7
6 Proverbs 21:27
7 Proverbs 28:13
8 1 Chronicles 28:9
9 Romans 6:17
10 Matthew 5:23-24
11 James 5:16
12 Genesis 4:8
13 Matthew 23:35
14 1 Peter 4:13
15 Hebrews 11:4
— Continued from pg. 5
wisdom, that any of us would say, of course I have enough wisdom. Why would I ask God for that? James is expressing here that we should be in prayer with God asking for what we don’t know or understand. Think about how David’s heart was really an expression to God asking for wisdom. Asking for understanding in something he doesn’t understand.

“…let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (v. 5) I have experienced the power and the beauty of asking for wisdom from God. I’m sure all of us have. But I have also experienced my inability to continue to ask. In the book of Revelation, it talks about Satan as the accuser of the brethren. We are dealing with the accusation against us continually, and it can start to bring us down, but look what it says about truth. Let’s replace the accusations against us with this truth. The truth that God gives liberally and without question.

“For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable – in all his ways.” (v. 7,8) I can imagine that all of us at some point come to a place where we doubt that our faith wanes in God, and here James is really encouraging us to be firm in what we believe. To be sure, too have confidence in what we believe. It is okay if we need to be reminded. The word tells us we are forgetful people, but let’s have confidence and remind ourselves often of the truths of God.

I think the first eight verses really bring commonality. They bring a common union to all of us. Because, we can say commonly that we experience these things. It is common to us, and I think James go on in this chapter to bring unity or commonality to us. Let’s think about it in that way. “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted” (v. 9)

We all have our perceptions of other people, and how we look at them. It is beautiful to just step back, and look at this brother in Christ, his words here, and the encouragement he is to us. To think about it differently. To have a shift in our minds of how we look at each other, because there is this problem that we have. The problem where we see with our eyes and not with our hearts. James is encouraging us here to stop and to see with our hearts. “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted” (v. 9) Is there a more beautiful place than together at the foot of the cross? Is there a more beautiful place than being in a place that is common, where we can understand each other? And here he says, “although the man of low degree.” It is interesting that he expresses it this way. Perhaps a peasant in that time, or however you look at it, as compared to a master. But, he says, “Let this brother rejoice.” Why? Because he is a brother to Christ also. Because God has
reconciled him, just like He has reconciled each one of us. “But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.” (v. 10-11) So we understand this, don’t we? That both the rich and the poor will die the same. Commonality. It is our common dwelling here, so let’s not allow some sort of status of this world to get in between our commonness in Christ. This common union that we have. Let’s take hold of these truths knowing that all of us will soon enough perish, and that we will all stand before the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings.

He goes on to say, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (v. 12) I think a trap that Satan gets us into and divides believers over is something that we struggle to really articulate and to express, faith and works. I just want us to think about this verse and what that means. What does it mean, “blessed is the man that endureth temptation?” This is a man that doesn’t give into or doesn’t fall prey to the temptations that we feel. So, how do you do that? How does that happen? What does that practically look like? And, why is it important? Because this person, “he shall receive the crown of life, which God has promised to all those that love him.”

So, the believer coming to faith, as Paul expresses it, they press into the kingdom. I like to think about it this way. What is our response? We understand that we cannot pay for our sin debt. The question then becomes, what is our response to the truth that our sin is paid for us? What is our response to that? Here James is saying one response should be enduring temptation or the resistance of evil. Why? Because they will be given the crown of life. So, if we are unfaithful and we fall back into a place that is living and dwelling in sin, we will not inherit the crown of life. I think we should be careful not to lose hold to that truth. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” (v. 13-14)

As hard as it is for us to say this, or maybe as easy it is for you to say this, however you want to look at it, the reality is it is our own fault. It’s not God’s. How do we respond to that? That we are the ones, not God. And I think the response is the telling piece, because Christ has come and redeemed us so that we do not need to be down on ourselves, but rather we can come to this place of refuge. In the presence of the accusation that Satan brings against our souls, that we can come to that place of refuge and confidence believing that He is the one who has experienced everything. He has experienced every temptation known to man, so He is the one that can understand and can lead us away from temptation. He can give us a way of escape. It helps us, doesn’t it, to know that God doesn’t tempt us. One of the verses that stood out to me in reading this week was in Corinthians where it talks about our warfare. We don’t wrestle against flesh and blood, we wrestle against Satan and his powers. Again, let’s be brought back to Christ and move towards Him in this place of temptation confessing that we are weak, because when we are weak, He is strong.

James goes on and helps us understand this law of sowing and reaping, which I think sometimes in the world today it is not easy to understand. And he says this, “…when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” (v.15) So, when we follow the

— Please turn to pg. 68
temptation and when we entertain
the temptation in our minds,
it grows and it brings forth sin.
When we act upon the temptation,
it brings forth sin. When it brings
forth sin, and sin grows in our
hearts, we dwell in sin and the end
of sin is death. It is a simple truth
and I know we can all understand
it. Let’s go back to the Garden
of Eden and think about Eve’s
sin against God. Did she lose her
physical life the instant she sinned
against God? No. I think this
same principle applies today. The
principle where it is hard for us to
see that every choice we make of
dwelling and living in sin leads,
not necessarily immediately, but to
a place of death. It is destructive.
It is degenerate. And so, while
men can seemingly live in sin for
long periods of time, and we may
never see that result of death, it is
real isn’t it? A degrading life to a
place where the ultimate end of sin
is eternal destruction. Let’s not be
deceived into believing that God
doesn’t punish sin, because when
Christ returns it will be punished.
James is warning us to think about
that as we experience temptation.
James is saying don’t believe lies,
believe the truth.

“Do not err, my beloved
brethren. Every good gift and every
perfect gift is from above, and
cometh down from the Father of
lights, with whom is no variableness,
neither shadow of turning.” (v.
16-17) And so, let’s hold these
truths close to our hearts. I
would encourage us in the world
today, to think about things very
simplistically. Is it good or is it
evil? Does it promote life, or does
it promote death? Those things
should help us to simply measure
what we do, what we say and how
we act. “Every good gift and every
perfect gift is from above.” We can
think about this Father of lights.
It is a mystery to man today of the
most brilliant minds of how light
came into being. Think about
all the benefits of light, and
the truth is that God created it,
and this God is never changing.
Have you ever experienced being
around someone who is always
changing? It seems like there is
never any consistent pattern or
path. That is not our God. His
purpose and will for our lives has
never changed from the time He
created us. It says, “Of his own
will begat he us with the word of
truth, that we should be a kind of
firstfruits of his creatures.” (v. 18)
We should not come to a place
of pride, but we also should not
compromise the truth of our God,
which is that we were created
by Him to bring forth His glory
first. Humanity is the crowning
achievement of God’s creation.
That doesn’t need to bring us into
a prideful place as Satan would
accuse us, but it should bring us
into a place of humility knowing
how much love God has bestowed
upon us. He wanted it. It said
God willed it that we should be
created. It is God’s will that we are
here and we should have life. It is
not an accident.

So, because we were created
to be His firstfruits, “… let every
man be swift to hear, slow to speak,
slow to wrath: For the wrath of
man worketh not the righteousness
of God.” (v. 19-20) It is not always
easy, is it. Let’s think about how
many times David was tempted
to take Saul’s life. At least two
that we know of physically. We
don’t know how often he was
tempted in his mind, but we
know in a very real sense that
he had the ability to take Saul’s
life twice and he did not. That
is the testimony of the spirit of
God in him, because that is not
man. It is not easy for us to just
sit and listen, because we have
answers. It is also not easy for us
to be wrong, because we want
to be right. Let’s be encouraged
to think about how we present
our vessel. Let’s be encouraged
to think about when a brother
or sister brings a burden to us,
we don’t have to figure out how
to fix it. I am convinced that it
is less about how to fix it, and
more about simply being willing
to understand and to bear that burden together. Just listen. Just understand. There doesn’t need to be a response of, you should be doing this, or you should be doing that. “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” I don’t know if you have experienced this, but I have experienced it. It is a truth that we should embrace and that we should acknowledge and confess. It is a truth for men, and I think it can be a weakness for us. So, let’s be encouraged to think about it. I just appreciate that challenge that James brings to us as mankind, and I trust that as we think about the words of James, that we can be doing them and not just hearing them.

Announcing ALive 2019 - Memorial Day Weekend

Join the Athens, Alabama congregation and many others across our brotherhood to kick off the first annual ALive 2019 event during Memorial Day Weekend (May 25-27, 2019). This event replaces the former Athens/TN Fellowship weekend. The weekend has been renamed to ALive because the event will be held in a new location called “The Vision” and will feature a new schedule of exciting activities. The new name also coincides with a new vision statement where the goal of the weekend is “to create an environment of rest and revival where relationships are strengthened, God is glorified and the body is unified.” For those who have been coming to the event for years, you can still expect some of the same favorites that everyone has come to love including singing (special groups / congregational), fellowship and worship through topical speakers and church services. These favorites are further outlined in the new mission “to create and cultivate cross-generational relationships through fellowship, worship, and teaching centered on the gospel.”

Ministering Brothers Matt Knapp (Peachtree City, GA) and Mark Reinhard (Bluffton, IN) plan to come and speak on the weekend topic which will be centered on “All Things New”. Included will be recognizing and hearing God’s call to do something new, answering the call, and then the journey of faith to fulfill the call.

Online registration for accommodations, meals, activities for the weekend will begin February 1. In the interim, check out “The Vision”, a local Christian retreat, conference and ministry center at www.visionministry.org. More details about the weekend including an activities schedule will be available on the Tennessee Fellowship Facebook page and through other communications including pulpit announcements, emails, etc. FYI, if you do not want to stay at the conference center, a block of rooms at a local hotel will also be made available.

We hope you will plan to join the Athens congregation for this exciting, inaugural event to be renewed and made even more ALive in your spiritual journey and walk with the Lord.
Union City, New Jersey

In the research for the church history, Marching to Zion, in the early 1980s, files were prepared for each local congregation. Since only so much data could be allowed for each local congregation, there are files left today with much corollary information that is still of interest. In this column we are including information from articles placed in the Silver Lining from reporters August Mueller (in the September, 1963 issue) and from Minister/Elder Ed Aeschleman in the October 1969 issue pertaining to Union City.

The Union City church building was built in 1892. This comes from information from Bro. August Mueller. He was a long time Silver Lining reporter. He came to America from Switzerland and lived in Union City for over 60 years. He died on September 12, 1969 at age 84.

Lumber for the new church in 1892 came from Brother Jacob Ringger and a Bro. Freiberger (whose first name was not listed). They were in the lumber and moulding business. Before the church was built members from Union City went to Brooklyn for services. They also met in Bro. Ringger’s home. Bro. Mueller indicates that when he came to the area in 1904 the church was filled “from end to end.” Bro. Mueller indicates that in about 1906 or 1907 there “were many faces not seen with the assembly anymore,” including a Bro. Zeugg, who was a minister with Bro. Walter Wartman. A group separated to become a part of the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean). This left Bro. Walter Wartman alone for many years. He also led the singing for a long period of time.

The church recovered from the “first split” and more members and friends came from Europe, some from out west, and some returned from the separation. In 1917, the church experienced a joyous time as twenty-one souls were added to the fold, including August Mueller. The church had a fair amount of members since many came to the area to work at a silk mill called Schwartzenback and Huber. It was a large plant covering almost two square blocks, and employing nearly 2,000 persons. The firm went broke during the Great Depression. Its collapse was likely one of the reasons the Union City Church began to decline.

Bro. Walter Wartman preached alone awhile and finally two co-workers were chosen: Bro. Charles Kaegi and Bro. Charles Ballasy. And later still, Bro. Charles Kroszner was placed into the ministry.

August Mueller wrote, regarding minister Walter Wartman: “I cannot think of any that did as much for a church as Bro. Wartman did. Many years he fired the furnace, heating the church. There was no electricity in the church. He had to light the church with gas lights. He made all the repairs for the church at no charge. Besides that, he served (lunch) three times per year for many years. One time he told August Mueller that his only concern was the congregation. He died in 1951 at age 91.

In 1954, Bro. John Diggleman, 60, was placed into the ministry. He served into his 80s, and was a brother of zeal and enthusiasm. He served alone a long time, and would have help in preaching duties when Elder Ed Aeschleman of Philadelphia would make his monthly visit.

It is interesting to note that at one time the Union City congregation had over 200 members. Over time, numbers declined and the doors were shut.

-by Perry Klopfenstein
Ye Know Nothing

In the Gospel of John, chapter 11, after the Lord Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, the Pharisees were very concerned that all men would soon believe on Christ and cause trouble with the Roman Empire which occupied Israel. It was at this time that the high priest, Caiaphas, spoke up saying, “Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” John 11:49,50.

The Bible further explains that Caiaphas did not say this of himself, but as the high priest he prophesied concerning Christ.

I came upon this recently in my Bible reading and was struck with the accuracy of the statement, “Ye know nothing at all.” Compared to what there is to be known, what God knows, I know nothing at all, and to be told that rings a bell with me. I think to myself, “How did someone find out that I don’t know anything.”

Another Bible verse which helps us understand our own inadequacy is Luke 17:10. “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” There are many commandments in the Bible beginning with the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20, followed by the greatest of commandments that we should love God and our neighbor, as well as all the many commandments in the New Testament given to the church. With great emphasis on what Christ has done for us, and rightly so, we are tempted to excuse ourselves and put our reasoning above what God teaches. He teaches us to obey.

The Apostle Paul was a very learned and well educated person, but he writes in 1 Corinthians 2:2, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Here Paul states that there is one thing he knows and that is that Christ was crucified for him and the whole world, or words to that effect. However, he didn’t know that until Christ told him on the road to Damascus. It then follows that we of ourselves know nothing except what God tells us. That we know, but it is not to our credit, it is a gift which God has bestowed on us because we are humble enough to admit that we don’t know anything about eternal things by our own strength or worth. We better get off our high horse.

“God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble.” James 4:6.

The Lord tells Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Two verses later Paul says, “For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.” Here he says that he is nothing which is even more inclusive than to know nothing. It reminds me of the hymn, “Oh, To Be Nothing.”

All these teachings about knowing nothing and being nothing remind me of an experience my wife, Lois, and I had in 1956 after we completed the building of our church at Shioda. We were told that we must visit all the neighbors near the church and introduce ourselves. It’s the custom. One of our friends from Tokyo took us around. To our surprise, he dressed in a suit and tie and we were told that we also, must wear our best clothes. Our friend did most of the talking, but Lois and I were to bow very low and say in Japanese, “I beg you please.” Our friend was very nervous about this ritual and he told each household that we didn’t know anything and couldn’t do anything but that they should please help us and accept us into their community. We never forgot it. “We don’t know anything and we can’t do anything but please take care of us.” If you have trouble with pride, move to rural Japan.

-by Willis Ehnle
By the breath of God frost is given:
Job 37:10