

The Silver Lining

Brethren be ye not affrighted;
God is yet among you here;
You are still with Him united,
And His grace is ever near.
His corrections prove His love,
Showered on us from above.
Let this be your consolation!
Why despair in tribulation?

Zion's Harp

38. COMFORT IN DISTRESS
166, 197.

1. Breth ren be ye not af fright ed: God is yet
2. Though the waves of life's great o cean Har ass us from
3. Rocks and moun tains may be scat tered Though so firm
4. Though the tears and sor rows oft en Be thy fond

January 2010

Sermon by Bro. Walter Rager, Toledo, Ohio

Exodus 32:1-24 and Acts 8

As we opened in the Old Testament to the story of Moses coming down from the mountain, this story has always intrigued me. It reveals unto us how short our memories are. Where the children of Israel had no longer gotten out of the bondage they were in, when they began to forget the God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt.

It isn't like their faith wasn't tested. It was. God told Moses to go up on the mountain and you will notice it says, we don't know what has become of this Moses (Exodus 32:1). After all, he may have died up there and we are waiting here for nothing. Doesn't God test all of us in some way, some how? That doesn't give us excuse, does it, to turn our mind and attention away from the truth?

They began to complain to Aaron. Aaron had been chosen to be a leader. It appears to me, as I look upon his leadership, that he was failing in that position. He should have been telling the people, look, we can't do the kinds of things you are asking us to do. They said, make us idols. Make us a golden calf. They singled that out, I think, because that is what they were worshipping in Egypt. To think that they could break off the earrings that were upon them.

I always wondered about the children of Israel. Having been in slavery in Egypt, coming out of that slavery and coming into a land that they hadn't known, how could they make it? They didn't have anything. But at the last moment in Egypt, what did they tell the Egyptians? Break off all the gold and all the silver and all the jewels that you have and give them to the Israelites. They gave them freely. (Exodus 12:35,36) They gave them freely to the Israelites. They wanted them to get out of their land just as fast as they could go because they were afraid they were going to die. So you see, God made those provisions for the children of Israel. They carried all that

gold and silver with them.

But isn't it sad, when they get into a land where they experience their freedom, that they use everything that God had provided for them for their sustenance when they got there, to make a dumb golden calf? They couldn't do anything. It seems so pitiful to us, doesn't it? Yet, I suppose when we think about some of these things, maybe in our own lives we make some dumb decisions too. Maybe we put too much weight on some of the things of this world. Maybe we don't value God enough. Maybe we don't read His Word enough.

When Moses was up on the mountain with God, God saw all of this. It tells us there that God repented that He had made the people. He said, I am going to do away with them, Moses, and start over with you. (Exodus 32:7-10)

Now we see a true leader come into play. Maybe God was testing Moses to see if he was up to the job of taking the children of Israel into the promised land. That was not going to be an easy thing to do. He said, I am going to start over, Moses. Wipe the slate clean. I am going to start over with you.

Moses said, how can you do that? What are the Egyptians back in Egypt going to say? You brought them out of Egypt. Brought them into this wilderness. They are going to look at that and say, that God was not able to deliver them. He let them perish. (v.11-13) Moses made that argument with God. It tells us, God listened to what he had to say. It says, God repented (v.14). He changed His mind concerning what He was going to do to them.

We ask ourselves, does our intercession with God, do our prayers for individuals and for others make a difference sometimes? God tells us it does. Here is an example of that. Moses prayed for these people and

Sermon continued on page 40

Cover Verses

Front: Zions Harp #38, 1st Verse

Back: James 2:26

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*"Prove all things; hold fast
that which is good."
(1 Thes. 5:21)*

Light From The Word



Writings based
on God's Word

January 2010

Discernment

"Rightly dividing" or interpreting the Bible requires discernment. (2 Tim. 2:15) Proving all things and determining what is good or evil requires discernment. (1 Thes. 5:21) We are living in a time when the amount of information and influence which impacts all of us is unprecedented. Individual believers, families as well as the church must depend more than ever upon the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised will "...guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Let us examine what the Scriptures teach us about how this very critical matter of accurate discernment of biblical truth was accomplished in the early church.

Acts 15 tells us that there was no small dissension within the church regarding the Old Testament rite of circumcision. We must acknowledge that there have always been issues that caused differences among God's people. One can go back into the 50's and 60's, into the 1800's, the 1500's, and 500 AD, and this has always been the case. There is no idealistic era when there was easy consensus found on critical issues, but always the need to "search the Scriptures" as the noble Bereans of old, to learn "whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). Let us keep in mind that it doesn't make any difference what you and I think, but it matters greatly what the Scripture says.

How the church should stand on circumcision was a big issue, and it was stirring up the believers, with many of them taking sides. Then and now, when there are issues of doctrine and practice that are weighty and affecting many lives, it is appropriate that they come to the church leadership, because that is the order which God has established. When the elders and apostles came together to seek direction, they too were of varied opinions. The first thing they did was demonstrate that they loved each other enough to openly declare the issue and then be free to express themselves with mutual respect. It is recorded that there was "much disputing" (Acts 15:7) as they began to address the issue. Disputing as used here means that in spite of many differing thoughts, there was a desire to

understand what is right.

When we reason together and seek answers from the Holy Spirit, we must be humble and have the mind of Christ. Peter declared, "And God, which knoweth the hearts," (knows the needs of His church, and of the lost)—"bare them (Gentiles) witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did to us" (Acts 15:8). We must be quiet enough to hear the Holy Spirit (Psa. 46:10) and what He says on the issue, and then be willing to submit to Him. After Paul and Peter and others had spoken, James, the elder at Jerusalem, was inspired to draw upon Scriptures (the words of the prophets) which settled the matter. James was the leader of those who would have been most convinced that circumcision should be required. Yet, he did not depend upon his own intellect, nor was he moved by the pressure of man's opinions—he rested his case on the Word of God.

It is very instructive to observe the conclusions which came forth from this meeting to be delivered to the churches. "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well" (Acts 15:28-29). The most compelling issue addressed at this meeting was handled by a decision to "trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God" (Acts 15:19) by the ordinance of circumcision. This was left to the individual as a matter of conscience. In deference to the sensitivities of those of Jewish background, several of the long established dietary standards were retained, none of which should have been burdensome. Finally, a clear statement prohibiting the immoral practice of fornication was included in this communication to the churches. One could easily argue that either more or fewer details, specific examples or decrees (instruction) could have been given, but this is what was seen as right and good to the Holy Ghost and the assembled church leaders at that time. This order of ordained church leadership was established by God (Heb. 13:7, 17), and its counsel should not be taken lightly. How wonderful that the

message was received appreciatively by the multitude, who "rejoiced for the consolation" (Acts 15:31) that sound instruction was being given.

There is yet among us today a wide range of views as to how much detailed instruction should be given by church leadership. There are those who by nature or circumstances desire a great amount of direction with regard to the day to day issues of life. For those who are babes in Christ, it is important to teach them the basic precepts of the Word to help them face the challenges of a new walk of life, as new creatures in Christ. For all believers, the most important thing is that we live by a faith in Christ that transforms our hearts and minds (2 Cor. 3:19; Rom. 12:2) and enhances the spiritual growth needed for discernment. We are not to remain as babes in Christ. (Heb. 5:13)

Discernment is something which is learned over time, as we grow and mature in our walk with Christ. "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). Whatever our level of responsibility may be, we should have the humility of Solomon when he prayed, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people" (1 Kings 3:9). Parents, teachers, ministers, church leaders and all who have opportunity to influence others (essentially all believers) should pray for an understanding heart of spiritual discernment—a heart that listens to God and to faithful brethren and takes counsel: "in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 24:6). We are instructed that "him that is taught in the word (should) communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6). It is good and healthy when we can reason together in a constructive way, with love and mutual respect. Coming to a place of peace and unity when there are differences requires submission to one another: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21), and above all, obedience to the whole counsel of God.

An editorial committee of elder brothers is preparing articles for this section of the Silver Lining to address some of the special needs of our times.

Suggestions for subjects are welcome and can be sent to:

Silver Lining Editorials, 1377 County Rd 1600 N, Roanoke, IL 61561 or by e-mail to cleman@mtco.com



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN Mission Committee

...The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. Matthew 9:37-38

Apostolic Christian Publications

It is the mission of Apostolic Christian Publications to promote spiritual growth and religious training by developing, publishing and disseminating Christian materials relating to the needs, purposes and functions of the Apostolic Christian Church of America.

Scope of services

- Provide retail distribution for Christian materials sales.
- Maintain inventory for the Apostolic Christian brotherhood's needs.
- Preserve availability of doctrinally sound materials.
- Review potential additions to materials offered as directed by the Communications Committee.

There are numerous items available for purchase including Bibles, songbooks, Sunday school materials, dictionaries, concordances, VBS materials, and various other material like the statement of faith, *Church Welcome* booklet, etc.

Website

In 2006 a website was developed to make items more accessible to members in other states as well as worldwide. You can order online using a credit card or submit the order and pay by check. There are a few items that can be downloaded at no charge. Some examples: The complete "Light From the Word" articles, (kept up to date thru the current month), various formats of our statement of faith, *Church Welcome* booklet and various other items. The website address is: www.acpublications.org

Imprinting

In February of 2007 an imprinting machine was donated and now AC publications offers imprinting on many books and Bibles.

- We only imprint items we sell at Apostolic Christian Publications
- All items that are able to be imprinted are shown as such in the listing on our website
- The charge is \$4.50 per line, with limit of 2 lines to imprint
- The imprinting is in block style and uppercase lettering
- Customers may call to place an order, and then must fax or email the typed imprinting instructions in CAPITAL LETTERS including spaces and punctuation
- Orders can also be placed on the website. Select 1-line or 2-line imprinting (the cost of the item with the imprinting will be shown), and then type your imprinting instructions into the properly labeled text boxes. Be sure that you put text for the top line into Line 1, and text for the bottom line into Line 2
- A book previously purchased from Apostolic Christian Publications can also be imprinted.

Sunday school materials

A complete set of Sunday school curriculum and supporting material is available, starting at the preschool level and continuing on through high school. Work books and teachers guides are available up to the 4th grade. Commentary/study guides are available for the Hurlbut's Bible story book. Curriculum guides are available for 7th through 12th grade.

Vacation Bible School materials

A complete set of workbooks and teacher's guides is available for Vacation Bible School from nursery school through 8th grade.

The Children's Harp CD

This CD or cassette was created by brothers and sisters enlisting children from many of our churches. It is a great tool to teach children the songs from the Children's Harp song book. It is professionally done and is pleasant to listen to.

Song books

Eight different song books are available at the bookstore.

- Zion's Harp
- Hymns of Zion
- Tabernacle Hymns
- Gospel Hymns
- Zion's Melodies
- Hymns of Christmas
- Hymns of Zion/Tabernacle Hymns combined book
- The Children's Harp

The Hymns of Christmas has been recently updated to include all Christmas songs from our other song books. The Hymns of Zion/Tabernacle Hymns combined book is now available for use in homes/Sunday schools and fellowship halls.

Contact info and hours

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805 W Cruger St, PO Box 52
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Phone and fax: 309-467-3611
Website: www.acpublications.org
E-mail: office@acpublications.org
Hours: Monday thru Friday
8:30am - 11:30am (CST)



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN
World Relief

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men,
especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

Farm Machinery Needs in Ukraine

Basic agriculture has sustained the inhabitants of Eastern Europe down through the centuries providing both food and commerce. Today, numerous Nazarene brethren continue to support their families and their faith by farming the fertile river valleys and rolling hillsides of southern Ukraine. For many individuals and families, growing their own food through crops, gardens, and livestock continues to be their only option for survival in the corrupt and unstable circumstances in which they live. Despite many obstacles and hardships, the ten Nazarene Ukrainian congregations continue to grow, blessed with numerous young families with many children, thus holding the faith of their fathers.

Since the fall of Communism twenty years ago, Apostolic Christian World Relief working through the European and Mission Committees, has provided support to our Eastern European Nazarene brethren with monetary assistance for the aged, destitute, and infirm. Support has also been given for new and renovated worship facilities, food, heating and self-help loan programs. In Ukraine, assistance with basic farm machinery has proven to be of great value for these brethren as they meet their present needs, and also provide employment opportunities for the coming generation.

Shared farm machinery

Ukrainian brethren involved in agriculture have embraced the concept of sharing machinery to reduce labor, working together to allow basic tractors and implements to

be used by multiple families. Funds donated specifically for this purpose by faithful brethren in the West have provided reliable Belarus 82hp front-wheel-assist tractors to most Ukraine congregations along with an assortment of basic implements. Specific brothers are assigned responsibility for scheduling, upkeep, and care of these machines. Ukrainian brethren cover the cost of fuel and expendable items such as oil, filters, and parts for minor breakdowns.



Bro. Tanasoi, a widower with a large family, from the Ostrita, Ukraine congregation, is responsible for this aging combine.

These Ukrainian brethren's farms are quite small, ranging from approximately 5 to 75 acres and growing corn, sunflowers, small grains, and alfalfa, part of which provides feed for their animals. Over the years, Communist oppression, isolation, and economic instability have stifled progress. As a result, crop production methods and lack of technology are contributing to lower crop yields and performance. It's not uncommon to see centuries-old farming methods of hand labor and animal-drawn machines working side-by-side with tractors and implements. Our brethren are thus extremely grateful for the assistance which improves their quality of life by reducing the strain and drudgery

of basic farm work, thereby encouraging their youth to stay on the land and within their families and faith.

Farm machinery needs

On our recent trip to Ukraine we received requests from several congregations for funding assistance to purchase needed implements including cultivators for weed control, disc harrows for spring tillage, and a planter and sprayer. In addition, there is need for three basic small hay balers which have great value to our brethren in labor savings allowing more livestock to be supported on limited acreage.

Today, Ukrainian congregations have four small combine harvesting machines, which are quite old and have become troublesome and unreliable. Combine breakdowns during harvest contribute to stress for the brethren and crop losses in adverse weather. As the Lord would provide funding, these machines should be replaced with newer but used, more reliable versions.

Even though channeled through the WR European Committee, machinery funding assistance flows solely from those who contribute specifically for this purpose. In summary, the needs in Ukraine total approximately \$150,000 for eighteen pieces, each representing excellent value. The Eastern European brethren express their gratitude for blessings past and present, first to God and to those who faithfully support them. If you are led to support this need or would like more information, please contact:

Peter Aberle
European Committee Secretary
25104 Augustin Rd.
Tremont, IL 61568
dpabfrms@hotmail.com

**APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN
HOME FOR THE
HANDICAPPED
www.achh.org**

As is probably true with most of you, December is always a very busy month but one that is filled with fun activities and many opportunities to reflect on the birth of our Savior. In a tradition that has gone on for many years, we were again blessed to attend a Christmas dinner and play put on by the Peoria church high school students. They do a great job serving our residents and making sure that everyone has a wonderful evening. We appreciate the efforts they go to each year.

As we start a new year and reflect on 2009, we can see that God has blessed us through the many changes that have occurred. The most obvious one was our rightsizing project that involved decreasing the number of residents at Timber Ridge and moving more individuals into community homes. So far we have opened four new homes in Morton where four to six individuals live. We are in the process of remodeling our fifth house and plan to open it in late January. This is the last home in our rightsizing project so we look forward to adjusting to a new "normal" in 2010.

As always, we thank you for your continued prayers and support and invite you to read updates and get more information on our website www.achh.org.

**GATEWAY WOODS
APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN
CHILDREN'S HOME**

Jarod Steffen

This afternoon I sat at the counter sharing an orange with my son, Miles. As I was peeling the orange and anticipating it, I noticed Miles trying to eat the peeling that I had just taken off

the orange. Of course, I smiled at his face when he realized that this was not the sweet fruit that he was anticipating.

As I looked at him, and thought about the joy that this little boy brings me, I thought about Jesus as a boy and imagined Mary and Joseph smiling at him and loving him just like I do with Miles. Then my mind went to the thought of Christ being both man and God and what that means, and how that little boy named Jesus grew up and took on the sins of the world, and died for us on a cross. The story of Jesus is nothing less than amazing, and we continue to find joy in sharing this incredible story and the real meaning of Christmas to the residents at Gateway Woods. Christmas can be a lonely, hard time for a lot of the kids with whom we work at Gateway; however, it gives us a great opportunity to show them love and to explain how this baby boy that was born long ago can give them peace and joy that they long for and that every believer has experienced.

All the different programs here at Gateway Woods continue to rely on your prayers as we recognize daily that we can't do this work without help from our all-knowing God. This New Year may we all feel the common unity that comes with knowing Christ as our Savior. And, let us be thankful for all that God gives us, whether it's love for one another, peace in our salvation, or just the simple joy of sharing an orange with a child.

News:

- We rejoiced with Bro. Shane and Sis. Stefanie Beer as they celebrated the birth of their daughter, Olivia Lynne, on November 30, 2009. Olivia weighed 7 lbs. 8 oz.

- We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Bro. Zach

Bertsch for his 2+ years of employment at Gateway Woods. Bro. Zach felt led to accept the position of Administrator at Christian Care, the Apostolic Nursing Home in Bluffton, IN. Bro. Zach will be working closely with the Executive Director, Bro. Leon Gerber. Bro. Zach and Sis. Jenny Bertsch and their family plan to move to Bluffton. Please pray for them as they adjust to these changes and face new opportunities. We just received word that Bro. Mark Maibach of Atlanta has been hired to take Bro. Zach's place as our Business Manager. We thank God for Bro. Mark and his wife, Sis. Julie, and their children and welcome them to our team.

- Before we get too far into 2010, we would like to take a moment to reflect on God's blessings during 2009 and to sincerely thank you for your ongoing financial support, prayers, encouragement and involvement. Your gifts last year allowed us to help facilitate the placement of more orphans and foster care children in Christian homes, provide structured education and nurturing group homes for troubled teens, and most importantly allowed us to share God's love and His Word with all of them!

We were privileged to provide services to over 320 children and families in our various programs. The economy is taking its toll on society and thankfully Gateway Woods is there to help. Few are immune and the economy has affected our donations as well. Our Auction was down 15% and our individual donations were down 10%. All of this while caring for more children than ever in our 33 year history. In response, we have taken measures to tighten our belts and do more with less, but there are limits.

Another concern for Gateway Woods are the fees that we receive

from the State for providing care for most children. In December 2009, we learned that the State is cutting the rates of all of our services by 6% - 23%. That could amount to more than a \$150,000 decrease in the first 6 months of 2010 in our operating budget. These cuts, along with the decrease in our donations, put us on our knees before a gracious loving Father who will provide for us.

As we move ahead in this New Year, we need your help as we strive to make a difference in children's lives. Please prayerfully consider a donation toward the Operating Fund to support our five current Christ-centered programs. We also need your prayers for changed hearts and for expanding our adoption services into Illinois. We depend on your support to achieve our mission: "To honor and obey God by providing help and healing to troubled children and families who then may bless others."

- We are very thankful that God continues to provide us with the right Staff. We currently have one career position open at Gateway Woods for IL Adoption Manager. Please see the notice in this month's edition of The Silver Lining for more information. We trust that God will continue to provide us with qualified, mature Brothers and Sisters who will be able to serve Him in a ministry that is 'Turning Lives Around'. Perhaps this includes you!

- 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 www.gatewaywoods.org often for updates, and make sure that you're on our mailing list. In an effort to be as efficient as possible we are gathering as many email addresses as we can for our E-Post. Please send a message to mail@gatewaywoods.org.

APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL Athens, AL Sarah Hodel

Is it really that time of year again? As I type this, we are all getting ready for our Christmas break. It seems as though we just got back from the last one! We have spent the month getting ready for our Christmas play. We practice and practice and practice with the kids but you never can tell how it's really going to go until that night. We had a couple kids freeze up with stage fright and a couple more forget their lines. One little girl forgot what to say and instead got a case of the giggles which snowballed into everyone getting the giggles! Overall though, it went pretty smooth and everyone had their oohs and ahhs over how cute the kids were. They really did a good job. The day of the play we were talking to one of the wise men and he informed us that he did not want to be a wise man. We told him it was a little too late and that's just what he was going to have to be. "But," he said, "I want to be a snowman!" As nice as it is to have our break, it's reasons like that that make us miss our kids while we're gone. We love our kiddos!

ALABAMA, ATHENS Louise Hall

We wish to thank our Elder Bro. Andy Stoller for making a quick trip down here to read us the Memorandum. Last month on one Sunday we had three girls start their repentance and by Tuesday, Bro. Andy had a plane ticket and was willing to come that quick. Thank you for your efforts and your flexibility, Bro. Andy! We also want to thank Bro. Duane Reutter for coming to share the Word with us this month. Bro. Duane has been here a number of times and it's a blessing to be able to get to know him

and his wife a little better each time.

We have had many people in our congregation visiting the doctor lately. Sis. Mae Haggenmaker (Bro. Doug) and Bro. Milton Ray (Sis. Joyce) have been in the hospital. Others have had surgeries and doctor appointments. Sis. Corrine Thomas, Sis. Doris Moore, Bro. Mike Moore, Luke Moore, Roslyn Coulter, Sis. Barbara Coulter, Bro. J.R. Hall and Bro. Tim Hall have all been to the doctor and we are thankful they are all okay.

Our hearts and prayers go out to Jim and Bessie Haggenmaker as Bessie's grandma passed away. We pray they can feel the Lord's nearness during this time.

We rejoice with Lee and Ashley Green in the birth of their son, Dawson Lee. Excited older sisters are Kasey and Cassey. Dawson is the grandson of Jeff and Janice Flanagan and the great-grandson of Bro. J.R. and Sis. Louise Hall.

We were blessed to have our Sunday School Christmas program. Bro. Jerry Bauman (Rittman) and his family were here to preach that weekend and we were able to gather up a few extra voices for our program!

We are in need of someone to come live in and be caretakers of our Tennessee Fellowship center. It is located one half hour north of Athens. There's plenty of room for a family to live there! If you are interested, please contact Bro. Mike Moore. ALM38@aol.com, (256)729-0260 or (256)777-3390. Please consider joining our small and loving congregation!

ARIZONA, PHOENIX Heather Hinrichsen

We thank Bro. Neil Bucher (Bluffton North) and Bro. Nick Gutwein (W. Lafayette) for their willingness to share with us God's Word.

Several of our congregation either

spent time in the hospital or underwent medical procedures this month and they are Sis. Katherine Laukhuf, Bro. Charlie Baugartner, Sis. Emily Freed, Bro. Joe Greenbank, and Bro. Leon Baumgartner. Sis. Kathie Labudde was placed on hospice care and the family covets your prayers.

December 5 was the wedding day of Eric Greenbank and Amanda Baczek. We wish them God's blessings as they establish their home here in Phoenix.

"...pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

James 5:16

ARIZONA, PRESCOTT

Denise Steidinger

We are so thankful for the willingness of ministering brothers to come share God's Word with our small congregation. This past month, we were visited by Bro. Herbie Knochel Jr. (Sis. Laurie and family, Phoenix), Elder Bro. Ron Schambach (Sis. Nancy, Elgin, IL) and Bro. Chris Huber (Sis. Sharon, Francesville).

The Sunday School children bought Christmas presents for other needy families through Angel Tree Salvation Army, and we enjoyed a pizza party and gift-wrapping evening together. Saturday, December 12, we went Christmas caroling to a nursing home and our Bro. Glenn Furrer's home and Sis. Elena Kornja's home, followed by a chili supper. We are so thankful that Bro. Chris and Sis. Sharon Huber joined us. Sunday, December 13, was the Sunday School Christmas Program following services. The children all did a wonderful job singing and recounting the story of the birth of Jesus.

Sis. Gayle (Bro. Ed Jr.) Schambach spent time in the hospital this past month. We are continually lifting her and her family up in prayer as she recovers.

ARIZONA, TUCSON

Lisa Knapp

Christmas is almost here and as we hear of snowstorms in the Midwest and on the East coast, we are having a beautiful sunny day with a high projected to be in the 70's. We will get a little (and I do mean little) taste of winter by Christmas on Friday as a cold system moves in and will bring mountain snow. We'll have a white Christmas - but it will be on the mountain tops!

We have started welcoming our winter visitors back as we head into the holiday season. We were saddened to hear that Bro. Ted and Sis. Mary Staker headed back to Illinois a little earlier than planned, as they heard of the death of Sis. Mary's mother in Morton. Our prayers are with them at this time of sadness and adjustment.

We have enjoyed our annual Christmas caroling at local nursing homes and our Sunday School program, too. We need to thank everyone who worked so hard to make both a success. In a little church, everyone has to play an active part, from singing to baking to teaching or songleading, and sometimes all of the above!

CALIFORNIA, ALTADENA

Daniel Luthi

Our congregation hosted the National World Relief Board meeting here during the first weekend of December. It was a good weekend of fellowship, and encouragement to continue to support and pray for the good work that World Relief carries out. We were well blessed with a full

church with many visitors, and appreciate everyone's contributions to the logistics of the weekend.

Many thanks to our visiting ministers this month. They included Bro. Bill Schick (Magdalena, Mexico), Elder Bro. Dan Kilgus (Remington, IN), Elder Bro. Kent Heimer (Taylor, MO), Elder Bro. John Laukhuf (Latty, OH), and Bro. Frank Sauder (Roanoke, IL). We appreciate their efforts in traveling and bringing forth God's Holy Word to us.

Our Sunday School brought us their annual Christmas program again this month. It always is a blessing to hear the story of our Savior's birth brought to us by our youth. We appreciate and thank our Sunday School teachers and the kids for their efforts involved in planning it.

We continue to pray for Bro. Clarence Graf and Bro. Bob Crockett. Both were hospitalized this month. May God bless them and help them to recover quickly.

CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Yasmin Koehl

As winter continues, our church pews become fuller! What a joy it is to be able to greet brothers and sister from various congregations across the land! We thank our visitors for taking time to worship our Lord and Savior with us. We also extend a warm welcome to all!

Amongst our visitors was ministering Bro. Chuck Kellenberger (Sis. Debbie, Elgin, IL) and retired Elder Bro. Willis Ehnle (Sis. Lois) with his family. We thank these brothers for their willingness to be used in bringing forth God's Word. It is our ardent prayer that the Holy Spirit ever be present in all who share the Gospel across our pulpits so that the truth would always come forth pure and clear.

It's with much warmth and love

that Lilliana Yen was joyously welcomed into the arms of her parents, Casey and Anne-Marie. Her siblings, Cassandra, Kinoa, Rayna, Kale'a and Annalina, excitingly anticipated her arrival. As a congregation, we extend our love and continuous prayers that the Lord's nearness and grace be present amongst them.

COLORADO, DENVER **Ann Gonglach**

There are lonely hearts to cherish,
While the days are going by;
There are weary souls who perish,
While the days are going by;
If a smile we can renew,
As our journey we pursue,
Oh, the good we all may do,
While the days are going by.
There's no time for idle scorning,
While the days are going by;
Let your face be like the morning,
While the days are going by;
Oh, the world is full of sighs,
Full of sad and weeping eyes;
Help your fallen brother rise,
While the days are going by.
Gospel Hymns, #578

The days (and years) seem to go by rather quickly. Let's remember "the good we all may do, while the days are going by".

We celebrated the Christmas season together with our annual Christmas caroling at local nursing homes (followed by the annual chili supper), and the Sunday school Christmas program. We appreciate all who work to enable us to have these special times.

Bro. Nate and Sis. Yvonne Lehman have been blessed with a new grandchild, Simeon Grey, born to Bro. Andrew and Sis. Natalie Gerber (Grabill, IN) on November 16.

We appreciate Bro. Jeff Bahr (Sis. Janice, Kiowa, KS), who was with us again and preached the Gospel to us.

Bro. Dan Leman (Elder Bro. Mike and Sis. Deb) was joined in marriage to Sis. Tess Gutwein (Bro. Jan and Sis. Val, Francesville, IN) on December 13. We're excited to welcome Sis. Tess to our congregation.

Sis. Tara Huber (Bro. Eric and Sis. Marcel) has received her degree in elementary education. May the Lord continue to guide Sis. Tara as she looks for a teaching job.

CONNECTICUT **ROCKVILLE** **Laura Virkler** **Bonnie Bahler**

Now it is accomplished! I'm no longer mine;
Lord, I will forever and always be Thine,
For thou has created and purchased me too,
Baptized with Thy spirit, Thou makest me new.
Zion's Harp #209, vs. 1

Our congregation has been blessed on two special weekends as we were privileged to welcome six Brothers into the fold. On the weekend of December 5-6, we heard the testimonies and witnessed the baptism of Bro. Jason Reutter (Bro. Dean and Sis. Miriam), Bro. Philip Schneider (Bro. Ralph and Sis. Tina) and Bro. David Beutel (Bro. Gene and Sis. Lynne). We want to thank Elder Bro. Charles Sauder (Tremont, IL) for being with us and helping in this special weekend. On the weekend of December 12-13, we were again blessed to hear the testimonies of Bro. Kevin Luginbuhl (Bro. Rick and Sis. Sue), Bro. Louis Lipton (Jeff and Joanne) and Bro. Patrick McMann. How thankful we were to hear how the Lord worked in their lives and be able to greet them all as Brothers in Christ. We want to extend our appreciation to Elder Bro. Duane Farney (Sis. Karen; Croghan, NY) for his

willingness in helping Bro. Kevin and Bro. Warren in this work.

We rejoice with Mark Eastwood (Nancy) who has turned his back from the world and began seeking the Lord in repentance. We pray that he can feel the nearness of God as he makes this most important step in life.

We continue to pray for God's nearness and healing to Sis. Alma Luginbuhl (Bro. Ed) and Bro. Ken Willis (Sis. Nancy) as they recover from surgery. May the Lord add His healing hand in the days ahead.

We want to extend our heartfelt sympathy to Sis. Charlotte Trench (Jim) in the passing of her sister, Grace Partelo. Also we give sympathy to Bro. Steve Viens (Sis. Dorothy) in the loss of his stepfather, John McNair. May the Lord be their Comforter.

December 4 was the wedding day for Kurt Bahler and Jessica Townsend. We wish them many blessings in their new life together. Their parents are Bro. Dan and Sis. Carole Bahler and Bob and Tammy Townsend.

Two couples have recently announced their engagement. We wish Jeff Luginbuhl and Kim Browne our best wishes as they plan to wed in January. Their parents are Bro. Chet and Sis. Pam Luginbuhl, and Marion Browne. Looking forward to a fall wedding is Erin Dombek and Michael Benedict. Parents are Bob and Sis. Lorraine Dombek, and Andrea Benedict and Peter Robustelli. May God bless these couples as they make plans for their life together.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA **WASHINGTON** **Henrietta Meyer**

Our caretakers for the latter part of November were Bro. Jeff and Sis. Gloria Fisher and family from Fort Scott, KS. Both of our caretaker fam-

ilies for November were families that had been here before — we are so blessed to renew the acquaintances.

Visiting ministers this month were Bro. Jeff Fisher (Sis. Gloria, Fort Scott, KS), Bro. Shawn Metzger (Philadelphia, PA), Bro. Brad Strahm (Sis. Michelle, Bern, KS), and Bro. Greg Lehman (Sis. Mary Beth, Wolcott, IN). We sometimes don't realize what sacrifices ministers and their families make to serve us. It was the Metzger's turn to serve lunch, so Sis. Sandy and three of the children stayed in Philadelphia; while one son accompanied Bro. Shawn on the trip down to serve us. Other visitors this month were from Rittman, OH, and Minneapolis, MN.

We celebrated Christmas by caroling to some of our shut-ins and at a near-by rehabilitation center.

Directions in the Ministers' Book are good for those coming from the north or west. For those coming up I-95 from south of DC or from the eastern part of the area, you need to take I-95/495 to Exit 28A (New Hampshire Ave) for approx. 2 miles to Rt. 29 North. Go about 3 miles to Fairland Road and follow the directions in the Ministers' book.

If you are planning to visit Washington, D.C. area for vacation or business, please contact Bro. Joe and Sis. Holly Bohart at jbohart@gmail.com or Sis. Henrietta Meyer at (703) 904-8301 for assistance and to let us know how many to expect for Sunday services. If you would like to get together on Saturday evening, please let us know that as well. We would be happy to have an evening of fellowship and/or singing.

**FLORIDA
FORT LAUDERDALE
Renee Mangold**

Our visiting ministers this month were Bro. Steve Baner (Sis. Donnalou, Gridley, IL), Bro. Ron

Jones (Portland, OR) and Bro. Jerry Bauman (Sis. Martha, Rittman, OH). We want to thank them for their willingness to come and share the Word during a busy season of the year.

Our first service in our remodeled church was held on Thanksgiving Day, and although we have a few more weeks before we are completely functional, we are feeling blessed. Lord willing, we plan to have our dedication service on January 24, 2010, and would invite anyone who can attend.

As the calendar turns once again, we are reminded how temporal this earth is and how we should look forward to eternity.

Sis. Lisa (Geisler) Tortoriello has re-located to the North Florida area and will be worshiping at the home of Bro. Lloyd (Sis. Carol) Kellenberger in Gainesville, FL. The Elgin, IL, services are listened to live every Sunday and Wednesday evening. If you are travelling through or stopping by Gainesville, FL, area, please stop to worship with them. For directions and more information, contact Bro. Lloyd Kellenberger at 352-264-7900.

**FLORIDA
NORTH FORT MYERS
Victor Beer**

The wonderful Christmas season has just blown through us, bringing lots of joy and thankfulness from His children. One of the great blessings is the return of many that own properties or rent places here in southwest Florida.

Many of us were blessed to have a spot at a local department store to sing the worshipful hymns of Christmas. Since several of our church folks were bell ringers for the Salvation Army, it just seemed natural to do the job right. Our objective was to "herald the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" to all that would listen. Many young children were the most attracted to our efforts, but one returned to ac-

company us with his guitar. Could this be evangelism? We were greatly blessed by the effort anyway.

The very low cost of homes in our area is attracting many to invest here. We've never imagined prices so low. With the economy so slow, we are surprised to see so many escape the northern cold.

The North Fort Myers Apostolic Christian church welcomes one and all.

GEORGIA, ATLANTA

As we reflect on the year of 2009, we have been blessed so much! Four baptisms and three births! It has definitely been a year of learning to love God's comfort, joy, and strength.

Our church family is thrilled to announce that Annalise Hope West entered this world on December 22! Her parents, Bro. Brad and Sis. Stephanie, have been blessed with a gorgeous baby girl. Annalise's proud siblings, Cody, Haley, Abigail and Ashlynn, are absolutely delighted!

December was a very busy month for us. It was wonderful to be presented with an opportunity to serve others! There is a small group that goes to a local jail to lead Bible studies for the inmates, so we wanted to do something for the children of those people. We decided to make them Christmas bags. In these bags we placed things like diapers and wipes, Bible story books, tracts, candy, small toys, games, coloring books and crayons, markers, Bible comic books...etc. We made a total of 59, which were all numbered and divided between us all to deliver. As we delivered the bags, we saw all kinds of different people. They were all thrilled to receive a gift for their child. Seeing how many people live in meager homes, just miles from my own house, definitely got me in a "grateful

for what I have" mood.

Our annual Christmas caroling Sunday was once again a great blessing. After our wonderful Sunday school program, we piled into our vehicles, and rode to two nearby nursing homes. As we walked the halls, we sang many familiar favorites. After caroling, we headed to Bro. Tom and Sis. Sue Waldbeser's home for a time of fellowship and dessert. Many fantastic memories were made!

This past month, we have been blessed with the ministering heart of Elder Bro. Chuck Sauder (Tremont). May the Lord bless you, for your dedication to serving Him.

Elder Bro. Steve Gutwein shared the Memorandum with our congregation the first weekend in December. We greatly treasure the time we have shared with Elder Bro. Steve and Sis. Linda.

We pray for God's comfort to surround Bro. Chuck and Sis. Marie Kieser as they bid farewell to Bro. Chuck's mother, Sis. Esther Kieser (Knobloch). Our prayers are also with Bro. Chuck's dear siblings: Marge (Jack) Zimmerman (Morton, IL), Delores (Don) Duckworth (Bradford, IL), Nancy (Robert) Wieland (Laura, IL), Randy (Brenda) Kieser (Wyoming, IL).

ILLINOIS, BELVIDERE

**Jenn Johnson
Doreen Moser**

God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Savior was born
on Christmas Day,
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray,
O tidings of comfort and joy.
God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

We were blessed to watch the Sunday School Christmas Program on December 13. It's always refresh-

ing to hear the story of Christ's birth through the mouths of our youth. That same Sunday, we also went Christmas caroling as a church and then had our annual Chili Supper. It was a wonderful time of fellowship with our church family. We are thankful for the service of Bro. Gary Anliker (Sis. Edie) from our Elgin congregation as him and his wife gathered with us to watch their grandchildren in the program. May the Lord richly bless you in the New Year!

ILLINOIS BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL

**Jacki Masters
Alissa Kieser**

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Isaiah 7:14

We are in the midst of the holiday season and have had many opportunities this month to share the love of God to those around us. Our congregation once again participated in putting together and distributing Thanksgiving Food Baskets to those in need in our community. We also were able to provide Christmas gifts along with daily necessities to several area families through the Adopt-a-Family program. We once again were able to praise God and share the spirit of the season with others as we participated in our annual evening of Christmas caroling.

We were blessed to witness the wedding of our Sis. Amanda Wenger to Bro. Nic Rassi (Tremont). Sis. Amanda is the daughter of Marv and Rita Wenger. Bro. Nic is the son of Bro. Curt and Sis. Kathy Rassi (Tremont). We wish you God's blessings as you establish your new life to-

gether. Along with Bro. Curt, we were blessed to have Bro. John Rassi (Sis. Heather), Bro. Steve Sauder (Sis. Mary) (both of Tremont), and Bro. Dennis Rassi (Sis. Diane, Austin, TX) minister to us on that special day.

Congratulations to Sis. Rebecca Maurer and Bro. Joe Marquart at the announcement of their engagement. Sis. Rebecca is the daughter of Bro. John and Sis. Emily Maurer and Bro. Joe is the son of Bro. Dave and Sis. Lori Marquart (Taylor, MO).

Congratulations to Bro. Jaron and Sis. Marla Huber on the birth of their son, Tyler Robert. Ty is welcomed home by big brother, Aiden. The happy grandparents are Bro. Dave and Sis. Debbie Huber (Bloomington) and Bro. Darl and Sis. Cindy Schieler (Indianapolis, IN).

ILLINOIS, BRADFORD

Philip and Donna Nenadov

Day by day, and with each passing moment,
Strength I find, to meet my trials here;
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,
I've no cause for worry or for fear.
He whose heart is kind beyond all measure
gives unto each day what He deems best—
Lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure,

Mingling toil with peace and rest.
Every day, the Lord Himself is near me
With a special mercy for each hour;
All my cares He fain would bear, and cheer me,
He Whose Name is Counselor and Pow'r.
The protection of His child and treasure
Is a charge that on Himself He laid;
"As thy days, thy strength shall be in measure,"
This the pledge to me He made.
Help me then in every tribulation

So to trust Thy promises, O Lord,
That I lose not faith's sweet consolation
Offered me within Thy holy Word.
Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble
meeting,
E'er to take, as from a father's hand,
One by one, the days, the moments
fleeting,
Till I reach the promised land.

As we enter a new year, the song above, written by Karolina W. Sandell-Berg in 1865, seems to fit the way we should enter each new year. We can be thankful for the Lord's protection through trial and tribulation as well as His blessings that we should know Him at the beginning of this new decade.

We were thankful to have Bro. Scott Schambach (Sis. Hope, Columbus) with us on the Sunday after Christmas. We wish the Lord's blessings upon him in his ministry.

Desiring God's will in their Lives, Bro. Adam Endress (Bro. Larry and Sis. Becky) and Sis. Brittany Streitmatter (Bro. David and Sis. Crystal, Princeville) wish to make known their marriage engagement. We seek God's blessings on this couple as they make plans for their future life together.

Our sympathies are extended to Sis. Delores Duckworth (Bro. Don) in the passing of her mother, Sis. Esther Kieser (Princeville).

How can it be said that there is no God when we can see His beauty of His creation each time we hold a newborn baby in our hands? God has richly blessed us, Bro. Philip and Sis. Donna Nenadov, with a son, Jadon Philip. He was born on December 29. Baby Jadon's sisters, Larissa and Kaitlyn, were excited to see him when he came home. Grandparents are Bro. Paul and Sis. Marilyn Nenadov and Bro. Gerald and Sis. Wilma Kieser, all from the Bradford congregation. May the Lord continue to give

all of us parents the grace to raise our children in the fear of the Lord.

God be with you 'til we meet again.

ILLINOIS, CHAMPAIGN Jackie Eisenmann

Sunday, December 13, our Sunday school children presented their Christmas program to our church. It was entitled "We Wish You His Christmas Presence". It was refreshing to hear the children tell of the "presence" of Hope, Comfort, Patience, Love, Peace, and Faith, at a time that we can all get caught up in the "presents" of the season. We thank the students who so willingly said their pieces and sang so beautifully! It was a real blessing to be there. It gives our congregation the presence of Hope.

The presence of Comfort: Our Sunday school students met on Saturday, November 21, to purchase, assemble, decorate, and deliver Thanksgiving food baskets to several families that need some extra help. We know that God will bless all those involved in bringing "God's comfort" to those in our community.

The presence of Patience: We thank Elder Bro. Bruce Endress (Bradford, IL) who came and helped our Elder Bro. Wayne Banwart read the Memorandum to our church. It is always good to hear our Elders' encouragements. We thank Bro. Bruce for being used on the pulpit that day also. May God bless him and all of our Elders who give of their time so willingly on our behalf.

The presence of Love: Andy and Kim Travis and their children, Kaylie, Zachary, and Aubrey, have a new baby to love. Sydney Louise was born December 11. We wish this family many blessings! I know our church will be blessed by another baby to love, too.

The presence of Peace: We want to

thank Elder Bro. Tom Stock (Cissna Park, IL) and Bro. Ed Sauder (Roanoke, IL) who came on Wednesday evenings this past month to speak God's Word to us. It is the blessing of the peace we can have as we hear the Word through different instruments, but God's Word never changes. It is always the same, God never changes. We thank each of these Brothers for their ministry.

The presence of Faith: Bro. David Eisenmann (Sis. Jackie) has been put into the ministry in Champaign. Bro. David and Sis. Jackie along with their children, Sis. Sydney, Cortney, and Mackenzie, have appreciated the prayers and support they have received. Elder Bro. Ted Witzig (Morton, IL) was here on Sunday, December 5, for the installation service. Thanks to Bro. Ted for his work for the Lord.

ILLINOIS, CHICAGO Julie Eisenmann

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

Matthew 1:23

What a wonderful and joyous season of the year when we are reminded of the birth of our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our church family had the privilege to sing Christmas carols at various nursing homes, followed by a delicious chili supper and fellowship. Throughout our Sunday School Christmas program, the dear children reminded us of the only gift worthy enough for our Emanuel, our heart.

We wish to extend our gratitude to Bros. Scott Wegman (Sis. Dawn, Taylor, MO), Howard Plattner (Sis. Kristen, Alto, MI) and Dennis

Kaufmann (Sis. Bonnie, Bloomington-Normal, IL) for their willingness to serve us in the ministry.

It is with sadness that we bid farewell to our dear Bro. Glenn and Sis. Nancy Pfeifer, as they move to Indianapolis. They have been such a blessing to our church family all these years; may God continue to bless them.

It has been a joy to witness the Lord's handiwork in two hearts, as the engagement of Bro. Troy Blunier and Sis. Carrie Stoller was announced on December 6. We are rejoicing with them and their parents, Bro. Dennis and Sis. Eddis Blunier (Goodfield, IL) and Bro. Curt and Sis. Carla Stoller (Gridley, IL). May they feel God's nearness as they take this step of faith.

ILLINOIS, CISSNA PARK

**Vickie Maul
Janie Waldbeser**

November 20 was our World Relief Family Night. It was a blessing to work together in helping those in need. An added blessing on these evenings is the fellowship we share among ourselves. May we always cherish these blessings!

We lifted our voices together on December 6, as we had opportunity to sing Christmas Carols to our loved ones in their homes or in nursing homes. It was a blessing to see their faces light up and sing along to familiar Christmas hymns.

Bro. Ben Rudin and Sis. Joan Waldbeser spent time in the hospital this month. We pray God will provide healing according to His will. As the saying goes, health is not valued till infirmity comes.

Bro. Dennis and Sis. Sharon Walder are thankful for another healthy granddaughter. Lainey Noelle was born to Bro. Curt and Sis.

Amber Wiegand (Congerville).

We laid to rest our friend, Jeanne Knapp, of Hoopeston. She was the beloved wife of Bro. Charles Knapp. Also surviving Jeanne are her three sons, Vernon and Kathie Knapp of Cottonwood, AZ; Fred Knapp of Phoenix, AZ; and Donald and Pam Knapp of La Canada-Flintridge, CA. Also passing away this month was our dear Sis. Twylla Beer. Surviving her are four sons, Jerry and Jane Beer of Williamsburg, VA; Ron and Cara Beer of Stillwater, OK; Joe and Connie Beer of Phoenix, AZ; and Scott and Debora Beer of Woodworth, IL; three daughters, Betty Wilson of Champaign, IL; Sonia Zbinden of Morton, IL; Shally Stickles of Thomasboro, IL. She was a sister to Bro. Gerry (Sis. Geraldine) Farney, Sis. Loretta Baumgartner, Sis. Laverne Farney, Sis. Myra Farney, and Sis. Nancy Hauptli, all from our Cissna Park congregation. Also surviving are 17 grandchildren, and 31 great-grandchildren. We will surely miss Sis. Twylla's kind disposition.

If you should find me in my bed and I
have no more breath
If you should find me cold and still
wrapped in the shroud of death;
Weep not for me with bitter grief for
I'll be just asleep
To wake in heaven's blissful shore so
see you need not weep.
But out of love, I know you'll cry when
I have left this shore;
But, children dear, I'll wait for you
where partings come no more.
The tender chords that bind our souls
are wrapped around each heart,
To sever them it needs to hurt, when
death, its pain impart,
But in submission meekly bow though
tears their course demand,
Just clasp the loving hand of Christ,
I'll clasp His other hand.
I'll wait for you inside the gate, I'll
leave you in God's care.
My precious, children, serve the Lord
in faith, in praise, in prayer.
—Twylla Beer

Note of Thanks:

How overwhelming it was to get so many special birthday wishes. Each card, wish, the flowers and greetings were appreciated so very much! Thank you and God bless you all!

Sis. Gladys Knapp

ILLINOIS, CONGERVILLE Holly Zobrist

"For my ways are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:8-9

By now, harvest has finally ended for the farmers,...and it's January. Dealing with the rain and late harvest this past year has been a good reminder to all of us Who is in control. The Lord does provide. However, sometimes, it's not in our time, but His perfect time. This truly is a comfort.

Lena Miller passed away this month. Our thoughts are with her children, Carolyn Carter (Jerry) and Sue Harmon (Dwain).

We rejoiced with two families as there were two new births in Congerville. Lainey Noelle was born to Bro. Curt and Sis. Amber Wiegand. Older sisters and brothers include Olivia, Braden, and Mallory. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Rick and Sis. Sue Wiegand and Bro. Dennis and Sis. Sharon Walder (Cissna Park).

Ellie Kay is the first daughter of Bro. Zac and Sis. Karla Anderson. Her older brothers are Caiden and Laiken. Thankful grandparents include Bro. Jon and Sis. Cindy Anderson and Bro. Robert and Sis. Cherie Kaisner.

Sis. Suzanne Hoerr (Bro. Max) was our hospital patient this past month. We're thankful that she is recovering okay.

Note of Thanks:

I would like to thank each loved one from across the miles for the cards, prayers, and expressions of love in obtaining eighty years. They were appreciated and may the Lord bless each one of you.

Bro. Andy Virkler (Sis. Maxine)

ILLINOIS, ELGIN

**Amy Gasser
Miriam Gasser**

I am not skilled to understand
What God hath willed, what God hath
planned;

I only know at His right hand
Is One who is my Saviour!

Gospel Hymns #510

We thank visiting Bros. Ken Dietz (Bradford, IL), Alan Schambach (Remington, IN), and Mark Schmidgall (Eureka, IL) for ministering to us in the past month. May God bless them for their labors.

Sis. Lyla Schock (Bro. Richard) is healing at home after a fall that broke some vertebrae in her neck. Sis. Cindy Hann (Jerry), Sis. Joan Scheitlin (Bro. Al), and Matt Steffen (Natalie) are each recovering from surgery.

On November 25, Bro. Todd and Sis. Pauli Schambach announced the birth of their second son, Nicholas Todd. Christian will be glad to have a playmate! Bro. Bob and Sis. Jeanne Schambach are the paternal grandparents.

Our family Christmas Caroling was December 13. There was a blessing in joining together to bring cheer to the less fortunate. Following the

caroling, a soup and chili supper was served at the Fellowship Center.

We look forward to the Sunday School Christmas program on December 20 and hearing the old, old story retold once more. It is the unchanging nature of our God and His Word that provides an anchor for our faith in these unstable times. What a comfort!

ILLINOIS, EUREKA

**Dee Baer
Jodi Blunier**

Katie Wettstein (Bro. Jim and Sis. Dianne) is in our prayers as she has committed her life to the Lord in repentance. There is no higher standing than to be a Lamb of God.

Welcoming Charles Robert into their hearts and home are Bro. Jake and Sis. Janell, Ernie and Lester Fehr. Grandparents include Bro. Ken and Sis. Sandy Fehr and Bro. Tim and Sis. Donna Carr.

Prayers for the sick have included Bro. Dean Martin (Sis. Becki), Sis. Clara Huber, Sis. Wilma Blunier, Sis. Connie Hoerr (Bro. Norman) and Sis. Becky Bauman (Glen).

We are thankful for the labors and visits of Bro. Paul Gasser (Akron, OH), Bro. John Wiegand (Silverton, OR) and Elder Bro. Duane Rocke (Minneapolis, MN).

ILLINOIS, FAIRBURY

**Angela Herr
Anna Schmidgall**

Our congregation rejoiced with our new brother, Derek Chang, and two new sisters, Britney Kafer (Bro. Ben and Sis. Carol) and Tess Zehr (Bro. Quinn and Sis. Joan). It was encouraging to hear how the love of God does shine through His people and draw souls to Him. Elder Bros. Tom Stock (Cissna Park, IL) and Marvin Dotterer (Forrest, IL) assisted our Elder Bro. Rick in this work.

We thank our other visiting ministers that served us this month: Elder Bro. Jim Plattner (Princeville, IL), and Bros. Dennis Rassi (Austin, TX), Paul Gasser (Akron, OH), Dewayne Dill (Minneapolis, MN), Jerry Wagenbach (Oakville, IA), Brian Waibel (Champaign, IL), Al Schambach (Remington, IN), Jeff Thames (Washington, IL), Jim Butikofer (Iowa City, IA), and Kerwin Edelman (Athens, AL).

We praise God that Verla Davis (Bro. Wayne) could answer His call and has begun her repentance and walk with Him.

We were privileged to hear our Sunday School students as they once again shared the Christmas Story with us through verse and song. May God bless them as well as all the teachers that give of their time and talent to teach our youth.

Bro. Derrick and Sis. Joslyn Steidinger welcome their first daughter, Cora Anne, born on December 2. Her big brothers are Nathan, Jonathan, and Benjamin. Thankful grandparents are Dave and Deann Steidinger and Dan and Marcie Grosshans.

Our prayers are with Sis. Dianne Steidinger (Bro. Tom) and her family in the loss of her mother, Elizabeth Schick. We also remember Sis. Jane Meiss (Bro. Carlos) and her family in the loss of her father, Bro. Arnold Metzger (West Bend, IA).

God's work in the lives of our Bro. Denver Rassi (Bro. Dennis and Sis. Diane, Austin, TX) and Sis. Sharon Kaeb (Morris and Brenda, Forrest, IL) was made evident as their engagement was recently announced.

Note of Thanks:

God's blessings to everyone for making my 90th birthday so special.

In Christian love,
Sis. Thelma Slagel

ILLINOIS, FORREST

**Jill Wenger
Lisa Aberle**

We appreciated the ministry of several visiting ministers this month. They were: Bro. Joe Dotterer (Bloomfield, IA), Bro. Paul Gasser (Akron, OH), Bro. Brad Gudeman (Bradford, IL), and Bro. Mark Steiner (Smithville, OH).

How we delight in hearing the news of a soul who is repenting! We are happy to report that Nathan Kuntz (Bro. Rollyn and Sis. Brenda) is seeking the Lord in repentance.

November 22 was the wedding day for our Bro. Nathan Bachman and Sis. Heidi Dotterer. Their parents are our Elder Bro. Marvin and Sis. Nancy Dotterer and Bro. Larry and Sis. Donna Bachman.

Bro. Gary Leman (Bro. Phil and Charlotte) and Sis. Betsy Steidinger (Bro. Glen and Sis. Holly) were recently announced to be married. Also announcing their engagement are Bro. Denver Rassi of Fairbury, IL (Bro. Dennis and Sis. Diane, Austin, TX) and Sis. Sharon Kaeb (Morris and Brenda Kaeb). Whether newly married or engaged, may these couples look to God for wisdom and guidance.

Our Bro. Brian Ricketts (Sis. Marie) is undergoing cancer treatments in Mexico. Shortly before he is scheduled to come home, Bro. Fred Leman (Sis. Brenda) will be traveling to the same center to receive treatments. We don't know the future, but we can trust in the sovereignty of our Lord.

Elmer Roth (Fairbury, IL) passed away recently. Our prayers are with his siblings, Sis. Leona Leman (late Bro. Harvey) and Leonard Roth (Marilyn), of our congregation.

ILLINOIS, GOODFIELD

**Donna Wyss
Rita Bauman**

Our church family was blessed with precious baby girls this month. Bro. Nate, Sis. Emily, and Haley Sauder welcomed Brookelyn Ann into their hearts on December 7. Joe, Abbie, and Brennan Tabor were thankful for Natalie Ann born on December 9.

Love of all gifts is the greatest
which the Spirit doth bestow.

Zion's Harp #37

Bro. Denny and Sis. Eddis Blunier and Bro. Curt and Sis. Carla Stoller (Gridley, IL) are excited that their children will become one in the Lord. Bro. Troy and Sis. Carrie, both from our Chicago congregation, are planning a March wedding. Sis. Laura Wirtz and Bro. Tyler Hoerr were announced to be married. Their parents are Bro. Mike and Sis. Lila Wirtz and Tom Hoerr (Peoria) and Dave and Becky Fuelberth (Dunlap). May the Lord bless both of these couples.

Two of our brothers have been hospitalized with bodily afflictions. We pray for God's healing hand to be upon Bro. Tony Monfre (Sis. Deonne) and Bro. Richard Hartter (Sis. Verna).

We had four visiting ministers serve us in December. They included Bro. Justin Koch (Sis. Marcia, Washington), Bro. Darren Plattner (Sis. Sue, Champaign), Bro. Stephen Baner (Sis. Donnalou, Gridley), and Bro. Keith Hinrichsen (Sis. Tammy, Phoenix, AZ). May God be your rich Rewarder.

"For Unto Us A Child Is Born" was the title of our Christmas Program. We would like to thank our Sunday School teachers and students for telling and singing to us the story that never grows old. God's blessings to each one.

ILLINOIS, GRIDLEY

Perry A. Klopfenstein

As we noted in last month's report, Gridley-area farmers along with farmers in most states struggled through a long harvest extending well into December. But their persistence and patience paid off, and the crop is now — with God's help — under roof, and ready for further marketing as time unfolds. Surely God stood by and assisted all those who asked for support while enduring the rain, mud, and other troubling aspects of harvesting.

The Christmas season was a wonderful one, as it always is. The birth of the Lord Jesus is always an inspiring account to hear about and ponder on. To me, one of the most noteworthy precepts of Christmas is the song, "The Babe of Bethlehem". And one phrase in that song stands out as powerful, "It's not the manger, but the Cross that sets the spirit free." That 12-word phrase is very telling, and powerful! It is all the more inspiring when one considers it was written by one of "our own", Bro. Henry Beer of Milford, IN.

Twins were born to Bro. Steve and Claire Witzig Hodel. They were named Rory Scarlett and Simone November. Grandparents are Bro. Irv and Sis. Sharon Hodel (Peoria) and Bro. Jerome and Sis. Mary Witzig (Gridley). We wish this couple much grace as they rear these loved one up in the fear and nurture of the Lord.

Sis. Carrie Stoller was announced to marry Bro. Troy Blunier. They both attend the Chicago congregation. Their parents are Bro. Curt and Sis. Carla Stoller (Gridley), and Bro. Dennis and Sis. Eddis Blunier (Goodfield). They plan to be married in Chicago.

Our Sunday School presented the Christmas story on December 12 to an overflow crowd. Thanks to the students, and to the teachers, and es-

pecially to Bro. Richard Kuntz, this year's superintendent.

On December 19, Sis. Marissa Witzig was married to Bro. John Hill. Her parents are Bro. Curtis and Sis. Norma Witzig, and he is the son of Larry and Stephanie Hill of Minonk. We surely extend our sincere best wishes as this couple looks to God for happiness in their marriage.

Visiting ministers were Bro. Brace Wieland (Leo, IN), Bro. Mark Wettstein (LaCrosse, IN), Bro. Daren Price (Milford, IN), Bro. Curt Rassi (Tremont, IL) and Bro. Ed Sauder (Roanoke, IL).

Sis. Carla Stoller had outpatient cancer surgery, and is receiving treatments.

As a new year dawns, the true believer in Christ Jesus has a high duty to reflect His teachings and values. Living according to the directions of Christ and the Apostles (using God's marvelous grace and power) offers a bright light that others can see Christ in us. Of ourselves, we are nothing, but the power of God within us empowers us to walk on the narrow way, and to glorify God. All we are able to do in our Christian life accrues to the glory of God, who empowers us.

ILLINOIS, MACOMB

Norm and Janis Rechkemmer

Another year is coming to an end and we look back with joy at all of our blessings. We want to thank all of the ministers who so willingly came to our Wednesday evening services. The last service for the year was on December 16 with Bro. Bob Pfloderer (Sis. Ellie) traveling here to lead our small group in study. It was a wonderful evening to be still and reflect on our Lord's birth and the events surrounding that blessed time.

Our small group has grown this past fall and we look forward to meeting again next fall. We would like to

know of any students who will be attending Western Illinois University next year or anyone moving into the area. Please contact us at 309-231-0098 or e-mail at janorm67@yahoo.com.

ILLINOIS, MORTON

Annette Tanner Julie Bahr

As we enter a new year, whatever situation we may face, let's consider Philippians 4:19 and John 15:13. We must yield ourselves to an Almighty God, knowing that each situation can be faced with the confidence that He will supply us with our needs from His riches in Glory; and that unselfishly we must look out for His children, all because of what Jesus Christ did for us!

We are thankful for our visiting ministering brothers: Bro. Dean Steffen (Sis. Carol, Belvidere), Bro. Greg Rassi (Sis. Carla) and Bro. Matthew Rassi (Sis. Bridget), both of Chicago.

Bro. Bob Pfloderer (Sis. Ellie) gave us our Wednesday evening Family Worship Topic, "Christmas - The History and Meanings; How Do We Prepare for Christmas?" What enlightening wisdom was gleaned. We are thankful!

Our sympathy is with Connie (Roger) Kahler in the loss of her dear mother, Sis. Lorene Maibach (Bro. Ben), of Detroit. Sis. Lorene was also a sister to our Bro. Bob Belsley.

Our sympathy also to Bro. Stan Schick (Sis. Carol) in the loss of his mother, Elizabeth Schick of Fairbury. Sis. Opal Rocke (Bro. Wayne) is in grief over the loss of her brother, Lloyd Gregory. Sis. Mary Staker's mother, Sis. Pauline Sauder (Tremont), won her heavenly crown after many earthly years. We extend our deepest sympathy to these dear families.

On December 20, baby boy Jesse Theodore was born to Bro. Todd and Sis. Wendy Sauder. Thankful grandparents of baby Jesse are Elder Bro. Ted and Sis. Cindy Witzig Sr., and Bro. Bruce and Sis. Becky Sauder (Tremont). Siblings to welcome him home are Caleb, Tori, Savannah, and Colt.

Baby girl Livi Grace entered the home of Sis. Julie and Bro. Chad Herman. Bro. Jan and Sis. Glenda Neukomm and Bro. Greg and Sis. Beth Herman (Peoria) are the thankful grandparents.

ILLINOIS, PEORIA

Pam Fritzenmeier

Bro. Steve and Sis. Claire Hodel were doubly blessed with twin daughters born November 11. Rory Scarlett and Simone November entered this world quite a bit earlier than expected but are doing reasonably well in a local hospital's neonatal care unit. Please pray for their continued progress. Mallory is their big sister and grandparents include Bro. Jerome and Sis. Mary Witzig (Gridley) and Bro. Irvin and Sis. Sharon Hodel.

We appreciate our recent visiting ministers, Bro. Erik Givens (Sis. Deb, Princeville) on November 29, and Bro. Fred Funk (Sis. Diane, Morton) on December 2. May God bless you for your willing service.

Our sympathy is extended to the family of Jim Meister, who passed away December 5.

On December 13, our congregation heard the wedding announcement of Bro. Tyler Hoerr (Tom Hoerr and Becky Feulberth) to Sis. Laura Wirtz (Bro. Mike and Sis. Lila, Goodfield). We rejoice with them.

The Sunday School students enjoyed the annual Christmas pizza party and play, performed by the Bible Class students on December 5. On

December 13, the students told the story of Christmas so beautifully in word and song during their Christmas program. Our thanks to the teachers for their dedicated service to our youth, the future church. That evening was our church Christmas caroling, another opportunity to bless others by singing the real Christmas story and reminding us of the reason for the season.

Bro. Tim and Sis. Joan Reinhard and family, serving in Haiti, report they are living "one day at a time, sweet Jesus" as they adjust to a new normal. Please keep them in your prayers along with Jonathan Aupperle, serving in Magdalena and Bro. Bob (Sis. Betty) Miller, suffering from health issues.

ILLINOIS, PRINCEVILLE

**Linda Joos
Connie Christ**

Our dear Sis. Edith Martin passed from this life on November 23. We will miss her but are thankful her earthly trials are over. She knew many trials but also knew where her help was and trusted in her God. She leaves one son, Greg (and Sandy) Martin. May God comfort and provide for them. Bro. Charles Hemmer (Peoria, IL), her nephew, was willing to minister to all of us at her funeral service.

Our visiting ministers have been Elder Bro. Mark Streitmatter (Bloomington, IL), Bro. Ken Schneider (Remington, IN), and Bro. Brad Eisenmann (Chicago, IL). We thank them for ministering to us and welcome them back.

Bro. Alf Streitmatter (Sis. Ginny) and Bro. Ray Wagenbach (Sis. Betty) have both been hospital patients. May God be near them and care for them in their physical afflictions.

Note of Thanks:

We want to express our sincere thanks and appreciation for the many prayers and kind deeds that were extended to our family. God bless you all.

The Duane "Sonny" Elsasser Family

ILLINOIS, ROANOKE

Jamie Hodel – Judy Sauder

Psalm 127:3: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord:" Bro. Gary and Sis. Elna Wettstein became grandparents again on November 13 when Isabella Leah was born to Bro. Curt and Sis. Larissa Wettstein (Gridley). Bro. Larry and Sis. Lori Wiegand (Goodfield) are Isabella's maternal grandparents. Brookelyn Ann Sauder arrived on December 7 to bless the home of Bro. Nate and Sis. Emily Sauder (Goodfield). Big sister Haley and grandparents, Bro. Loren and Sis. Rhonda Zeltwanger (Goodfield) and Bro. Bob and Sis. Jan Sauder also welcome Brookelyn home. Then on December 11, Katie Jill was born to Matt and Jodi Gordon of Morton. Older brother and sister, Alli and Tyler, as well as grandparents, Bro. Steve and Sis. Jill Aeschleman and Rich and Sharon Gordon of Normal, are thrilled with the new arrival. We pray for God's blessings upon these dear families as they raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Ephesians 5:20: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;" Our annual Thanksgiving singing was held on November 22 at the Fellowship Hall. It was a blessed evening of worship.

Romans 10:10: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Josh Moser (Bro. Greg and Sis. Sharlene) has be-

gun his walk with the Lord. We are so thankful for the Lord's redeeming work in the hearts of men.

St. Matthew 5:4: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Elizabeth Schick of Fairbury went to be with the Lord on November 29. She was the mother of our Sis. Eva (Bro. Dennis) Rocke. Other survivors include daughters, Sis. Dianne (Bro. Tom) Steidinger (Fairbury), and Sis. Lily (Bro. Robert) Pfaffman (Washington), and sons, Ronald (Marilyn) and Bro. Stan (Sis. Carol) of Morton, Calvin (Connie) of Bloomington and David of Atlanta, GA. Also surviving are a brother, David (Elaine) Schmid of Fairbury, 20 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren. We extend our love and deepest sympathy to this dear family and pray for God's peace and comfort upon them.

Galatians 5:13: "...but by love serve one another." On December 2, our annual business meeting was held. Bro. Bob (Sis. Marilyn) Ott was selected as church trustee. Bro. Ray (Sis. Wendy) Blunier was elected nursing home trustee. Bro. Russ Leman and Bro. Steve (Sis. Linda) Pfister were chosen as fellowship hall trustees. We thank all those who selflessly give of their time and resources to serve our congregation.

On December 6, Bro. Jaye Rinkenberger (Goodfield) was our guest minister. We thank him for his willing service to us. Later that day, our annual church caroling and supper was held. It was a blessed opportunity to sing for individuals at their homes and also at area nursing homes and residential care facilities.

Revelation 11:15: "...and He shall reign forever and ever." On December 13, our annual Christmas program was held. Our youth proclaimed the story of Christ's birth in scripture and song. We thank our Sunday School students for a beautiful after-

noon.

Lindsey Deets of Chicago and Andy Pfister of Skokie are happy to announce their marriage engagement. Parents of the couple are Norm and Marti Deets of Milledgeville, IL, and Bro. Steve and Sis. Linda Pfister. We pray for God's blessings upon this dear couple as they look forward to being united together.

Isaiah 7:14: "...Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." On December 16, the Prairie Choristers presented a beautiful evening of songs and Bible readings commemorating our Savior's birth.

We continue to pray for healing for Bro. Rich (Sis. Janet) Knepp, Sis. Helen Leman, and Bro. Brent (Sis. Marge) Hodel who are facing health issues.

Note of Thanks:

A special thank you to all for the cards, flowers and gifts I received for my 91st birthday and for Christmas. May God bless each of you.

Sis. Doris Bowald

ILLINOIS, TREMONT
Teresa Rowell
Janice Sauder

As we sing those beautiful Christmas carols during this season, let us never forget that the story does not stop at the manger. We must continue our journey to the Cross. Our Sunday school children did a wonderful job singing the story to us during our annual Christmas program. We love to watch them as they sing with such enthusiasm.

Two families have welcomed new babies into their midst this past month. Rubie Ann was born to Bro. Nathan and Sis. Sandi Koch. Rubie's siblings are Gabriel, Josiah, Charity, Promise, Alexander and Justus. Her grandparents are Bro. Cleo and Sis.

Nancy Koch, and Bro. John and Sis. Patsy Stoller (Leo, IN). Sage Jacob was born to David and Inga Lelm. His siblings are Patrick, Laurence, Alainna, Naulon, and Caiden. His grandparents are Bro. John and Sis. Ingrid Buster (Burlington, IA).

Our visiting ministers this month were Bro. Ken Dietz (Sis. Mardell, Bradford) and Elder Bro. Ron Messner (Sis. Pam, Washington). We thank them for their willingness to preach the Word.

Bro. Nic Rassi (Bro. Curt and Sis. Kathy) and Sis. Amanda Wenger (Bloomington); and Bro. Jason Slagel (Washington) and Sis. Debbie Bolliger (Bro. Tom and Sis. Jane) were united in Holy Matrimony. Bro. Rollin Aberle (Bro. Pete and Sis. Debbie) and Sis. Suzanne Baer announced their engagement. We wish these couples God's richest blessings as they begin new lives together.

Sis. Pauline Sauder was relieved of this world's suffering and has gone on to her reward. Elder Bro. Charles Sauder, Bro. Howard and Sis. Janice Sauder, Bro. Dave and Sis. June Koch and a host of grandchildren and great-grandchildren mourn her passing, yet rejoice with her as she has won the Victory.

ILLINOIS, WASHINGTON
Nancy Leman
Linda Folkerts

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

Luke 2:10

With joy and wonderment at the miracle of Christmas, we have thoroughly enjoyed the celebration of Christ's birth through our many Christmas activities, especially our Sunday School program and church

caroling.

We extend our sympathies to Bro. Mike and Sis. Judy Mangold and family. Sis. Judy's father, Bro. Clyde Waibel (Sis. Mary Sue, Remington, IN) passed away after a battle with cancer.

We continue to lift up Sis. Marty Schlatter in prayer as she has recently been ill and hospitalized.

Bro. Jason and Sis. Debbie Slagel were married on December 13. Along with their parents, Bro. Tim and Sis. Barb Slagel and Bro. Tom and Sis. Jane Bolliger (Tremont, IL), we pray many blessings on their new marriage.

Rachel Folkerts (Bro. Gary and Sis. Linda) recently announced her engagement to Austin McClure (Bro. Jeff and Sis. Marilyn, Congerville, IL). We wish them God's blessings as they plan their upcoming wedding.

Recently visiting our congregation to share the Word were Bro. John Baumgartner (Sis. Lori, Bern, KS) and Bro. Roger Aberle (Sis. LaVonne, Sabetha, KS).

Note of Thanks:

We want to express our sincere thanks and appreciation for the many prayers, kind deeds, cards, visits, food and rides for Louise to the hospital. May God bless you all.

Your least ones in faith,
Edward and Louise Teubel

INDIANA, BLUFFTON
Kim Meyer
Grace Gerber

"And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS"
Rev. 19:16

This verse is so powerful especially when being sung in Handel's famous "Hallelujah Chorus". In the

Christmas season, it is so tempting to place Jesus back in the manger where He becomes less offensive, less kingly and so simple and not convicting. Yet, let us pray that this Christmas season we would indeed rejoice in God's gift to us, but also remember that Jesus is no longer an infant! He is King! He is Lord! He is resurrected and reigning from on high! Praise God for this wondrous gift!

It's been a very busy month for the Bluffton congregation. God is just moving in fantastic ways around here, and we glorify Him for His faithfulness! We're happy to announce two engagements! Bro. Spencer Lewis and Sis. Hannah Kaehr (Bro. Jon and Sis. Julie) announced their upcoming marriage, as well as Bro. Matt Widmer (West Lafayette) and Sis. Tamara Raber (Bro. Bruce and Sis. Mary).

We were also blessed to hear the testimonies of four converts. Their baptism was truly a blessing to witness. Bro. Shane Fiechter (Bro. Doug and Sis. Jill), Sis. Lindsay Grube and Bro. Lance Grube (Bro. Lonnie and Sis. Vicki), and Bro. Bart Frauhiger (Bro. Kris and Sis. Ann) all shared their hearts with the Bluffton congregation. We thank God for how He has worked in the lives of these brothers and sister.

It is always wonderful to have visiting ministers with us. This month, Bro. Gary Maibach (Sis. Mary Ann) graced us with his presence. We truly appreciated his willingness to let the Holy Spirit use him.

In this Christmas season, we as a congregation were reminded about the love and gift of God as our Sunday school students put on our annual Christmas program. To see the passion and sincerity as the students sang was a conviction and joy to experience! Earlier in the season, we were privileged to come to church for Thanksgiving Day services. How

truly thankful we ought to be!

Five little babies came into the world this month. On November 23, Layla Raine Mueller (Bro. Nathan and Sis. Rachel of Leo) was welcomed by her happy grandparents, Bro. Jim and Sis. Jan Schwartz. Andy and Jenae Schmit were excited to see Chloe Elain Schmit on November 25. They are friends of our Bro. Todd and Sis. Jessica Fiechter. Daniel and Amanda Clem are glad to announce the birth of Nella Grace. Grandparents, Walt and Sis. Sherry Snodgrass, welcomed her on November 30. Jay and Barbara Werling greeted Rachel Marie on December 3. Sis. Jeannie Baumgartner (Bro. Ralph, dec.) are the grandparents. Bro. Kyle and Sis. Kyann Schwartz of Bluffton North received Delaney Rose on December 8. Bro. Scott and Sis. Patty Schwartz are the joyful grandparents. We exalt God on high for His goodness in bringing these little ones safely into the world.

Not only has God blessed us abundantly this month, He has also given us numerous reasons to pray and petition for His grace. Bro. Mike Leye (Sis. Becky) recently suffered a heart attack. We earnestly lifted him up to God for healing, and He has been faithful. Rick Klopfenstein (Holly), the son of Bro. Dennis and Sis. Carol, has been going through some health complications, and we pray for his healing. Our Sis. Millie Schladenhauffen had surgery. Vince Everett (son of Bro. Dick and Sis. Rita) was deployed for his second tour to Iraq. We ask that God would protect him and use him in a very needy nation. Bro. Joel Drayer (Sis. Erin) has been in Mexico receiving cancer treatments. The Bluffton congregation has not ceased to pray for them, their children and family members.

Nora Aguirre (mother of our Bro. Doyle Weil) passed on this month. We pray for Bro. Doyle (Sis. Lisa) and

their family in the face of their loss.

Let us rejoice that God is not only doing His work and fulfilling His purposes here in Bluffton, but also all over the world as He establishes justice, righteousness and love to the ends of the earth. May God go with us all as we earnestly strive for His glory!

**INDIANA
BLUFFTON NORTH
Jessie Longenberger
Amy Moser**

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

Luke 2:11

Greetings in the Lord!

We listened to the Sunday School students tell us the story of Christ's birth on December 20 at the Sunday School Christmas program. We thank the students and teachers for all their hard work in preparing for it and reminding us what the season is really about.

We rejoice with Bro. Dave and Sis. Terri Mueller as they welcome a new granddaughter, Layla Raine, born on November 23. Parents are Bro. Nathan and Sis. Rachel Mueller (Leo, IN), and she joins a big brother, Kaine and a big sister, Halle. Bro. Kyle and Sis. Kyann Schwartz were blessed with a girl, Delaney Rose, on December 8. Her grandparents are Bro. Dan and Sis. Jacki Kershner. Sis. Diane Mason is the grandmother of a new grandson, Quinnton Michael. Quinnton was born December 8 to parents, Aaron and Anna Mason. Big sister, Joselyn, is happy to have a little brother.

Continued prayers requested for Elijah Sonnigsen, son of Tyler and Heather, grandson of Bro. Joe and Sis. Jan Schwartz. Also, Sis. Becky Ringger (Bro. Sam) spent some time

in the hospital this month. May they feel God's presence and peace.

We were blessed to have Bro. Allen Stoller (Sis. Sue, Bluffton East) as a visiting minister this past month. In addition, Elder Bros. Steve Ringger and Phil Stettner shared the Memorandum on November 29.

Note of Thanks:

Thank you for the prayers, cards, and gifts of love during our father and father-in-law, Elmer Roth's, illness and passing. It was most humbly appreciated.

Sis. Carol and Bro. Dale Gerber

May the Lord Jesus be with each of us in the coming year and remind us to make the most of every minute that He gives to us.

**INDIANA
FRANCESVILLE
Jacki Huber
Mildred Clauss**

Be still, my soul; The Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend,
Thro' thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

The words to this song have been going through my mind, and it is a comfort to know that we can "be still", knowing that whatever circumstances are around us or in the world, we have the assurance that the Lord is on our side and will lead us to a joyful end as we trust in Him.

Bro. Wayne Putt had surgery on his shoulder this month, and our prayers are with him as he is in therapy. We pray that he has a smooth recovery.

Ryan and Betsy Riley, who are living in Doha Qatar, welcomed a precious baby boy, Clive Denver, into their lives on September 26. Our Elder Bro. Steve and Sis. Linda Gutwein, and Ken and Linda Riley of Colorado Springs, CO, are Clive's grandparents.

On November 12, a sweet baby girl, Kinsley Marie, was born to Austin and Stacy Metzger. Two brothers, Colton and Logan, are glad to have a new little sister. Bro. Dave and Sis. Arlene Metzger and Danny and Kris Johns of Rensselaer, IN, are Kinsley's grandparents.

Dustin and Sarah Wuethrich were happy to welcome a new little boy into their hearts and home on December 15. Cash Patrick's grandparents are Bro. Rick and Sis. Judy Wuethrich, and Pat and Karen DeWees of Rensselaer, IN.

As I write this, the Christmas season is obvious all around us. We are always blessed to sing Christmas Carols around the community, as we did on Sunday, December 6. We were also blessed as we watched and listened to the Sunday School children share about Christ's birth in the annual Christmas program on Wednesday, December 16.

We were blessed with quite a few visitors this month. Among them were ministering Bros. Neal Widmer (Sis. Kris, West Lafayette, IN) and Warren Schlatter (Sis. Cindy, Junction, OH).

We also had visitors on Sunday, December 13, for the wedding of Sis. Tess Gutwein (Bro. Jan and Sis. Val) to Bro. Dan Leman (Elder Bro. Mike and Sis. Deb) of Denver, CO. Bro. Mike assisted Elder Bro. Steve Gutwein (Sis. Linda) in conducting the marriage ceremony. Also sharing the day in the ministry were Bro. Dan's Grandpa, Bro. Tom Leman (Sis. Marlene, Denver, CO), and Bro. Ed Sauder (Sis. Bonnie, Roanoke,

IL).

On New Year's Eve we look forward to being together for services and a program to welcome in 2010. May your year be filled with the blessings that come from a life surrendered to and trusting in Christ.

**INDIANA
INDIANAPOLIS
Gail Bradford
Sandy Lichtle**

We rejoice with Bro. Bert and Sis. Karen Aeschliman as their son, Jason Aeschliman, and Lauren Mortensen (Eric and Susan Mortensen, Evansville, IN) were united in marriage on November 28 in Evansville, IN. We wish them God's blessings upon their new life together and as they make their home in the Indianapolis area.

We sincerely welcome Bro. Glen and Sis. Nancy Pfeifer from Chicago, IL, to our congregation. It is a joy to have new families move to our area and worship with us.

Our heartfelt sympathy and prayers are with Bro. John Waibel as his father, Bro. Clyde Waibel (Sis. Mary Sue, Remington, IN), went to be with the Lord on December 10. Also mourning the loss of a loved one are Bro. Bert and Sis. Karen Aeschliman. Bro. Bert's sister, Lynne Beer (Ken, Milford, IN), was called to her eternal home on December 13. Our thoughts and prayers are with these families, and we trust that God will be near them and grant them His perfect peace and comfort.

December 11 was a special day of rejoicing for Bro. Darl and Sis. Cindy Schieler as their grandson, Tyler Robert Huber, was born. Welcoming Tyler home are his parents, Bro. Jaron and Sis. Marla Huber (Bloomington, IL), and his big brother Aiden.

Our Sunday school Christmas program was held on December 13. It

was a joy and blessing to hear the children tell the wonderful story of Jesus' birth through verse and song. On December 16, we enjoyed a chili supper at church, followed by Christmas caroling in the community.

We want to thank Bro. Brian Huber (Sis. Jacki, Francesville, IN) and Bro. Scott Schafer (Sis. Gigi, South Bend, IN) for sharing the Word with us. We appreciate their willingness to be used in the Lord's service.

INDIANA, LACROSSE

Bethany Johnson
Julie Rocke

Another harvest season has drawn to a close, finally. This fall was wet and the weather was not conducive to harvesting the crop in a timely manner. However, we give thanks to God for providing a crop again this fall.

Our Sunday School children collected food items to deliver to twelve families in the area just before Thanksgiving. It is always a good reminder that there are needs all around us to be filled and that while we are instructed to be thankful for what we have been given, we need to strive to help others as well.

Megan Heinold (Bro. Glen and Sis. Sandy) underwent an appendectomy the evening before Thanksgiving Day. She has recovered quickly and we are thankful to see her up and about.

Elder Bro. Ron Messner (Sis. Pam, Washington, IL) visited us one Wednesday evening to share a presentation on the work that goes on at the Apostolic Christian Home for the Handicapped. His talk was very informative and many of us appreciated gaining a deeper understanding of just what goes on there, how God has provided for them, and what we can do to help.

Other visiting ministers this

month were as follows: Elder Bro. Ted Steffen (Sis. Sandy, Alto, MI), Bros. Dean Messner (Sis. Wanda, Winthrop, MN), Ned Stoller (Sis. Heidi, Alto, MI), Jim Butikofer (Sis. Diana, Iowa City, IA), and Dan Stoller (Sis. Deb, Remington, IN). We thank each of them for their labors of love on our behalf.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Bro. Elvin and Sis. Jan Nuest and their family in the loss of Bro. Elvin's father, Bro. Lester Nuest of Francesville, IN. Ministering Bro. Greg Leman assisted our ministers in the funeral service.

It was with great joy that we heard the announcement of the engagement of two of our young people. Bro. Brendan Messner (Bro. Dean and Sis. Wanda, Winthrop, MN) and Sis. Sharla Heinold (Bro. Eugene and Sis. Evie) have followed God's leading by faith, and are looking forward to a February wedding.

Sunday, December 13, was a busy day as the Sunday School children presented our Christmas program. They each did a wonderful job. Many thanks go as well to each parent and teacher who put forth the efforts to help the children learn their pieces and songs. That evening, we gathered back at church to go Christmas caroling. We were able to send three groups to various sites - Parkview Haven in Francesville, two nursing homes in Valparaiso, and a good number of homes in the area. We enjoyed the time of singing and fellowship with those we sang for and then came back to church for supper and hot chocolate.

Sis. Judy Gudeman will be taking the place of Sis. Cathy Nuest as Sunday School teacher for the preschool class. Thank you to each of them for their time and effort with the children.

May you each be blessed with love, joy and peace as the winter months

settle in, with God's promise of spring keeping our hopes warm.

INDIANA, LEO
Elizabeth Schrenk
Abigail Schrenk

"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

Luke 2:19

When was the last time you pondered the remarkable things of God? This Christmas may be follow Mary's example and continue to contemplate the goodness of God. May we never forget the gift given to us for the salvation of our souls.

This month we have experienced many new births. We want to offer congratulations to Bro. Andrew and Sis. Natalie Gerber on the arrival of little Simeon Grey on November 16. He is welcomed home by big sister Violet. November 23 brought the arrival of Layla Raine to Bro. Nathan and Sis. Rachel Mueller. Kaine and Halle are now the proud older siblings to little Layla. Bro. Shane and Sis. Stefanie Beer had a baby girl, Olivia Lynne, on November 30. Little Gavin is now a big brother. We want to congratulate these families on the safe arrival of these added blessings. May they experience God's wisdom and guidance as they raise their children to know Him.

Everyone enjoyed our Sunday School program on December 13. Our teachers and children always do a good job of reminding us about the awesome gift of Jesus ... the fulfillment of prophecies down through the decades of time.

Our sympathy extends to Sis. Deane Stoller as Bro. Ernie Stoller passed away after an extended illness. We rest knowing that Bro. Ernie is worshipping Jesus.

Also this month we were blessed

to have visiting ministers: Bro. Darren Plattner (Sis. Sue, Champaign, IL), Bro. Gary Anliker (Sis. Edith, Elgin, IL), and Bro. Brian Huber (Sis. Jackie, Francesville, IN). We are thankful for these brothers who so willingly give of their time to minister God's Word to us.

INDIANA, MILFORD

**Carol Hurd
Pam Beer**

On Sunday, December 13, we enjoyed having our Sunday School children bless us with their singing and reading of Scripture and poems at our annual Christmas program. We appreciate the teachers who give of their time to teach them the songs and pieces, and it always brings a smile to the congregation to see the children performing with joy. Later that afternoon our Milford congregation gathered at the fellowship hall and divided up in groups to go Christmas caroling in our various neighboring communities and to our older church members. A blessing is received by those who are caroled to and to those who carol. Afterwards, we all meet back at the fellowship hall for chili and snacks.

Prayers have been answered for Sis. Carol Hurd (Bro. John) as she had surgery on her hip. The surgery was successful and we look forward to when the weather improves and she can be back assembling with us all the time.

A special thank you goes out to our three visiting ministers this month. They were Bro. Steve Frauhiger (Bluffton North, IN), Bro. Gary Sinn (Latty, OH) and Elder Bro. Bill Schlatter (Junction, OH). We, as a smaller congregation, so appreciate them and their wives being willing to take time out of their busy schedules and coming to bless us with God's Word.

INDIANA, REMINGTON

**Jenni Honegger
Marcella Tyler**

Elder Bros. Lynn Stieglitz (Sis. Leonda, Leo, IN) and Bill Schlatter (Sis. Emily, Junction, OH) were with us one Wednesday evening and we are thankful for their time spent with us. We read from Luke 15 and heard about the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son. How thankful we can be that God is still looking for those who are lost and that the angels rejoice in Heaven over the one that is found!

Our dear Bro. Clyde Waibel went home to be with the Lord on December 10 after a long battle with cancer. We extend our sincere sympathies to his wife, Sis. Mary Sue, and his children: Lee (Jodie) of Wolcott, IN; Sis. Judy Mangold (Bro. Mike) of Eureka, IL; Neil (Jill) of Cranford, NJ; and Bro. John of Greenfield, IN; as well as several grandchildren. The day of Bro. Clyde's visitation was a bitter-sweet one. That very Sunday afternoon we had heard with joy our Sunday School children recite and sing enthusiastically about the birth of our Saviour in their Christmas program. It was somewhat of a contrast to then go to Bro. Clyde's visitation with sorrowful hearts for the grief of his family that same evening. However, the following poem was displayed to read as we went through the line that really combined the two feelings very well. What a blessing for Sis. Mary Sue and the rest of the family to have this hope in the midst of their sorrow! We will continue to uphold them in prayer and ask that you do the same.

I see the countless Christmas trees
around the world below,
With tiny lights, like Heaven's stars,
reflected on the snow.
The sight is so spectacular, please
wipe away the tear -

For I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.
I hear the many Christmas songs that
people hold so dear,
But the sounds of music can't compare
with the Christmas choir up here.
I have no words to tell you, the joy
their voices bring,
For it is beyond description to hear
the angels sing.
I know how much you miss me, I see
the pain inside your heart,
But I am not so far away, we really
aren't apart.
So be happy for me, dear ones, you
know I hold you dear,
And be glad I'm spending Christmas
with Jesus Christ this year.
I sent you each a special gift, from my
heavenly home above,
I sent you each a memory of my undying
love.
After all, love is a gift more precious
than pure gold -
It was always most important in the
stories Jesus told.
Please love and keep each other as my
Father said to do,
For I can't count the blessing or the
love He has for each of you.
So have a Merry Christmas and wipe
away that tear -
Remember, I am spending Christmas
with Jesus Christ this year.

INDIANA, SOUTH BEND

**Joshua Martinez
Rachel Langhofer**

On December 6 we enjoyed a Christmas program by our Sunday School. A special thanks to the teachers and children for all the work they did.

We enjoyed visiting ministers this month: Bro. Dan Beer (Sis. Deb) come at noon from Milford on November 22 to assist Bro. Bob Beebe who was alone on the pulpit; and Elder Bro. Tom Stock (Sis. Karol, Cissna Park, IL) and Elder Bro. Curt Frank (Sis. Lyla, LaCrosse, IN) read the Memorandum on December 12. We were greatly appreciative that Bro. Tom Stock stayed for Sunday services. As

a small congregation, we love visitors.

On December 16 we held our annual organization meeting. A special thank you to those who have completed terms and our prayers are with those who are taking their place.

INDIANA, VALPARAISO **Marguerite Hoerr**

The last week of November was our turn to serve the Fellowship lunch at church. Just as the congregation was entering the dining room, I had the misfortune of turning my ankle, losing my balance and falling flat on my back. As the first of December came and went, I discovered I had fractured a vertebra and needed to have it repaired. This was successfully done and since then I've had an ongoing recovery. We haven't been back to church since that Sunday. Phone calls and cards have abounded from family and church friends and members. To find oneself being on the receiving end of prayers is indeed an amazing experience.

During the time just previous to my surgery, we were privileged to have Bro. Willis and Sis. Lois Ehnle and Bro. Jim Hoerr visit us. They were on their way to Sis. Lorene Maibach's funeral in Detroit and brought Bro. Wilbur Hoerr (Bob's only sibling) so we could have a visit together. They picked him up again on the way back to Peoria. He was able to go to church with us one Sunday while he was with us. The blessings flowed as we visited with each other. The love that came and went through our home at that particular time does need to be noted.

It was reported to us that our Sunday school students and teachers gave our little church a profound blessing as they presented the life of Christ from the prophecy that foretold of His coming to the miraculous birth of His arrival. The songs and

readings were presented individually and ably by each student. Those who were privileged to hear it told of the blessings they received from these six young men and women, as they told the story of their Savior and King, who came to earth a lowly Babe. In our Valpo church the young people take such an active part Sunday after Sunday and we can't appreciate them enough. Following the program we had a delicious roast beef dinner provided by our dinner committee. We can't thank them enough for the time and effort spent in providing us with such a delectable meal. We ask God's blessings on each participant in the program and each teacher and each member of the food committee. Everyone worked together to make it a beautiful day.

Our dear Mindy Greenfield and her husband, Brian, were saddened this month by the unfortunate accidental death of his father. We feel deep sympathy for them and will remember them in our prayers.

Sometimes life brings amazing gifts our way. I can only think this one was led by God. One of my co-workers at the library where I work part-time asked if anyone would like to have an electric organ. I answered "yes" immediately and told her I wanted to buy it. Her answer was, "I don't want a thing for it. I need it moved out of my home." We arranged to have it moved from there to our home and we have both been so blest by this gift. Bob plays hymns on it most evenings and I listen and marvel at the gift we were given. Christian music is such a balm for the soul.

Have you ever been privileged to sit through the singing of the "Messiah" that was written by George Frederick Handel in 1741? It's about the prophecy and coming of Christ and of His crucifixion and resurrection. It's a very moving experience. This was written during an intense

24 days in the life of the composer and when he finished he said, "I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the Great God Himself." All of the scripture references, referring to His life are put to song in this inspired work. The last chorus of this musical story is called "The Resurrection" because it reveals the wonder of the ages. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing. Blessing and honour, and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Rev. 6:12-13

Please come visit us at our Valparaiso church. Remember we're just 2 3/4 miles South of US 30 on SR 49. We feel a warm welcome for visitors, who find their way to our congregation.

INDIANA **WEST LAFAYETTE** **Darlene Walder** **Hollie Meister**

Our church family was blessed to have several opportunities of good fellowship this past month. Our first activity was to come together on the first Saturday evening of December and enjoy a nice meal and silent auction to help fund the PYG on a trip to Magdalena as well as a group of 18, including Bible class students, parents and other church friends and brothers and sisters, on a trip to Argentina to do the Lord's work for a week. We pray God's blessings on their travels and work done in His name.

On the second Saturday, the Sunday school classes had their annual Christmas get together to practice for their upcoming program and do other related holiday activities. The older students had the privilege of shopping for a local family so that they could have a memorable Christ-

mas. The best part of all was that a Bible was given to them and it was the first Bible that they had ever had in their possession. That is really hard for many of us to comprehend.

December 20 was our annual Christmas program and we enjoyed many visitors that came and worshipped with us and watch our young people share the news of Jesus' birth.

Elder Bro. Akito Inoue and Bro. Gary Anliker were some of our visiting ministers and we thank them as well as any others that came and served on our behalf.

We congratulate Bro. Matt Widmer (Bro. Neal and Sis. Kris) on his engagement to Sis. Tamara Raber. We welcome her to W. Lafayette and wish them God's blessings on their plans.

We also want to congratulate Chet Gutwein (Bro. Nick and Sis. Suzanne). He was wed to his lovely bride, Dana, and we wish for them the Lord's best on their marriage.

May the New Year bring love, peace, and joy sent to each of you from our Father in heaven.

INDIANA, WOLCOTT
Donita Edelman
Lynell Blume

Eric and Marissa Bahler have added a precious little boy to their family. Elliott Keoni was born on November 28 in Hawaii where they are living for a time. Thankful grandparents are Bro. Mark and Sis. Shari Schwab and Chris and Sis. Teresa Bahler. Bro. Mark and Sis. Shari also have another grandchild. Little Olivia Lynne was added to the home of Bro. Shane and Sis. Stefanie Beer (Leo, IN). Also welcoming another grandchild are Bro. Allen and Sis. Connie Furrer. Their son James and Sara had a little girl, Ava, this past month. May God grant each of these couples wisdom to raise their little

ones in the fear and knowledge of our Lord.

Our congregation has been blessed in the past month with visiting brothers to share the Word with us. We are thankful for the visits of Bros. Ron Isch (Sis. Jane, Lamont-Gridley, KS) Dale Banwart (Sis. Missy, Congerville, IL) and Ron Palitto (Sis. Lynell, Akron, OH). May God be their rich rewarder for giving of their time and talents.

Ring the bells of heaven, there is joy today! We have another soul that has decided to follow Jesus. Daniel Wagenbach (Bro. Michael and Sis. Erica) has made the choice to turn his back on sin and the world and follow in Jesus footsteps.

We extend love and sympathy to those in our congregation who have lost loved ones. Sis. Verna Lehman's (Bro. Gene) father, Bro. Lester Nuest (LaCrosse, IN), has gone to his heavenly home after a lengthy illness. Bro. Lester was also the grandfather of Sis. RuthAnn Lehman (Bro. John), Bro. Greg Lehman (Sis. MaryBeth) and Bro. Rob Lehman (Sis. Beckie). We pray the Lord will comfort them during this time.

During the Christmas season it seems there are so many ways we can help others and bring cheer to one another. We enjoyed the time we as a church spent Christmas caroling. What a joy to be able to spread the word of Christ's birth and His love for each of us. We also spent a very enjoyable time listening to our Sunday School children bring forth the Christmas story with songs and poems. Also, many thanks to the Sunday School teachers for the effort they put forth with the children.

IOWA, BLOOMFIELD
Christy Wiegand

"To every thing there is a season,

and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted."

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

Sunday morning, November 22, we heard of the passing of our dear friend, Joe Dean Wells. That morning in church the scriptures opened to Ecclesiastes 3 and we were comforted. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. Our sympathy is extended to his wife Georgia and his four children, Dennis, Sharon, Don, and Daryl and four grandchildren. May the Lord comfort each one.

We really enjoyed listening to our Sunday school children sing about our Lord's birth at our annual Christmas program. Their enthusiasm is a good reminder for all of us where our enthusiasm should be, too! Thank you to the Sunday school teachers and parents who worked with the children.

Elder Bro. Doug Schock suffered a mild heart attack, and had two stints installed. Our prayers are with Bro. Doug, Sis. Clara and their family that the Lord will provide healing. We are very thankful to report that he is recovering very well.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Proverbs 3:5-6

IOWA, BURLINGTON
Dixie Messner
Karla Gerst

God oft gave beyond all expectation
More than heart had wished for to behold;
Should not this give us new inspiration
To await what His Word has foretold?

Ne'er a word of God was uttered
vainly,
Although its fulfillment seemed afar;
Noble things take time, though prom-
ised plainly;
And the very best we find in God.
Zion's Harp #244, vs. 6-7

Once again we are at the season when we set aside time to remember the very best gift of God – His Son, whose birth was foretold and awaited by the prophets. Elder Bro. Jon Schmidgall, and ministering Bros. Dale Frank and Tom Lanz (all of Oakville, IA) were among the many visitors for our Christmas program and shared the Word with us. Retired Elder Bro. Ed Lanz had the short message afterwards. May God richly bless each of them for their part in His service. We also had a visit from Bro. Dale Frank earlier in the month. It's always good to see them in Burlington.

Bro. Ken Massner (Rose) was in the hospital this month for a procedure. May he feel God's nearness and blessing of healing.

The Lord at all times chooses
The time His gifts to share;
He sends a ray of solace
To banish grief and care;
He pours His gentle blessing
Into the with'ring heart,
And leads thru gloom and sadness
To bright ways heavenward.

Zion's Harp #83, vs. 4

IOWA, ELGIN Maria Rocke

"And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

Romans 10:15

We appreciate Elder Bro. Wayne Grimm (Sis. Rose, West Bend, IA) sharing the Gospel with us this month.

Our home brethren, friends and children spent an evening together singing carols to those of our community and assembling encouragement baskets. It is always a blessed time of fellowship and encouragement for our congregation.

We were blessed to hear from our youth in their annual Christmas program. They brought "good tidings of great joy" to our hearts in sharing the story of Jesus' birth and also the message of the hope of salvation.

IOWA, IOWA CITY Diana Butikofer

We are thankful to have Bro. Kris and Sis. Dixie Messner assembling with us again since a job change brought them back to our area.

Our prayers are with the Snodgrass family following the death of Bro. Wayne's (Sis. Becky) mother, Darlene (Gary) DeVault. We pray for God's comfort in their time of grief.

On December 13, the Sunday School children presented the Christmas story to us. We thank the children and teachers for their efforts in reminding us of the significance of this blessed time of year.

We pray each of you have a blessed New Year!

IOWA, LESTER Gloria Moser Polly Metzger

We enjoyed an "Indian Summer" here in November, aiding our abundant but slow harvest. God is always faithful, and we can't be thankful enough for all His blessings.

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Bro. Chuck and Sis. Coralee Knoblock and their family in the loss

of her sister-in-law. Margaret Garretson passed away on November 19, only a couple months after her husband. May God comfort them in their loss and sustain them in their sorrow.

First-time parents, Bro. Drew and Sis. Maria Metzger, welcome Elsa Jo into their home on November 21. We wish them God's blessings as they raise their daughter. Elsa's grandparents are Bro. Stan and Sis. Sue Warner and Bro. Marvin and Sis. Jolene Metzger.

Open the wells of grace and salvation,
Pour the rich streams deep into my
heart;
Cleanse and refine my tho't and affec-
tion,
Seal me and make me pure as Thou
art.

Hymns of Zion #171

The weekend of November 21-22, Ross Mogler (Bro. Rodney and Sis. Lois) was proved and baptized. Elder Bro. Wayne Grimm (West Bend, IA) was here to assist Elder Bro. Rod Bajema. We pray Bro. Ross will feel God's nearness and His "wells of grace", in his walk of faith.

We rejoice in the news of repentance for our friends, Luke Rufener (Bro. Dave and Sis. LeAnn, Rittman, OH) and Grant DeSmet (Bro. Bob and Sis. Shirley). May they look to God for help each step of the way, and feel His abiding love and mercy.

Along with Elder Bro. Wayne, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Bro. Kent Mogler (Minneapolis, MN) and Bro. Pat Zaugg (West Bend, IA) for sharing God's Word with us. May God continue to bless them.

We want to remember our graduates, Michael Leuthold (Bro. Bob and Sis. Cindy) and Maggie Metzger (Bro. Mark and Sis. Audrey). May God bless them as they pursue their careers.

Those hospitalized this past

month were Bro. Kevin Knapp (Sis. Cari), Bro. Ezra Knobloch (Sis. Marie), Sis. Emma Knobloch and Sis. Angie Metzger (Bro. Brian). Bro. Don Metzger's wife, Mary Jane, has entered the Hospice cottage. We need to remember all these dear souls, and so many others, with a prayer that God's mercy and healing hand will be with them.

IOWA, OAKVILLE
Sharla Wiegand

On Thanksgiving Day, we were thankful to have three visiting ministers: Bro. Scott Wegman (Taylor, MO), Bro. Gary Endress (Bradford, IL) and Bro. Michael Wagenbach (Wolcott, IN).

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Luke 4:18-19

IOWA, WEST BEND
Sue Schneider
Janet Fehr

We want to thank Elder Bro. Curt Frank (Sis. Lyla, LaCrosse, IN) for being here and sharing the Living Word with us on Thanksgiving Day. We appreciated his words of thoughtfulness.

Our sympathy is extended to Sis. Verda (Bro. Don) Bruellman and her family. Sis. Verda lost her brother, Leo Kellenberger.

December 5 was the wedding day for Dustin Fehr (Jeff and Beth) and Lauren Wiederholt. We wish them God's rich blessings.

Trevin Patrick Montag joined the

family of Bro. James and Sis. Sarah, Katelyn, Megan, Colin, Landon and Addison on December 6. May God be near this family as they strive to raise their children to know Him. Thankful grandparents are Ed and Luann Montag and Bro. Pat and Sis. Julie Zaugg.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

II Cor. 13:14

May that grace, that love and the Holy Spirit draw us all closer to our Heavenly Father and to each other throughout the year of 2010.

JAPAN, SHIODA
Carrie Ito

We are enjoying a visit from Sis. Jana Baer (Bradford) as she came to spend about a month with her daughter (Sis. Wanda Kinsinger) and her family. We all went together to a childrens' home about an hour from the church and sang some Christmas carols and gave a small gift to the children there. They seemed to enjoy it and would like us to come back! We pray that the words of the carols could reach the childrens' hearts and bring comfort and hope to their sad situations.

JAPAN, TOKYO
Jana Klaus

After such a busy November, December brought somewhat less action. However, of course with the Christmas season, we did have our annual Christmas service and program. As always, it was held on the closest Sunday before Christmas day, which this year was December 20. The morning service focused on the true meaning of Christmas, with the readings being from Isaiah (telling of

the prophecies) and then in Luke chapter 2 (of the fulfillment). How amazing it is when you count up all the miraculous happenings that occurred in the story of Jesus' conception and birth. It is always such a joy to share with the people in this land the true meaning of Christmas since Japan has mainly picked up on the fun and glitter of the holiday. I was rather pleasantly surprised however, a few weeks back while I was shopping in a drug store, when in the midst of the regular Christmas music being played, an explanation of the colors and signs of Christmas came on (in Japanese). It included some of the true Christmas story, like of gold being brought to the baby Jesus and the star being a sign that led the wise men to worship Him. That was the first time I had heard such an explanation over the speakers in a store! May God mercifully draw these people to the Truth!

Getting back to our Christmas Sunday, in the afternoon, we had our usual Christmas program with many of the adults participating in addition to the Sunday School children. This year, because of sickness and traveling, there was a smaller crowd than usual, but it was still greatly blessed and we felt the Lord binding us together in love as we spoke and sang of the wonders of our Saviour Jesus' birth. We were thankful for a new Sunday School kindergarten student, Takuya Fuke, and his mother and little brother, who could join us for the first time.

Perhaps one of the greatest blessings of the day was going to sing at a nursing home that just went up last year and is within walking distance of the church. They graciously allowed us to come and sing Christmas carols, even asking if we could sing on all three floors (the original plan was just to sing on one floor and to keep it short). Many of the residents were

visibly touched, some even joining in on the singing. The crowd of us who sang ranged in age from 4 up to mid 60's, and that alone was a touching sight. Those who went, came away feeling a special blessing and thankfulness to God for this opportunity, and we pray the door will remain open for future opportunities. We continued on after that with a delicious supper and singing of the Hallelujah Chorus before parting our ways.

We truly missed our Elder Bro. Akito and Sis. Marie Inoue who were with family in the States at this time, but were thankful for them to be together there. We also sorely missed our dear Sis. Shizuko Urushino who is still hospitalized. Our prayers continue with her. However, Bro. Yoshio Yamazaki (80 years old) was looking very good and able to be with us the whole day, even doing the Bible reading for the afternoon program. Thank you for your prayers for the churches of Japan in this last year and we ask for your support again in this coming new year. God bless you all!

KANSAS, BERN
Sheri Edelman
Jill Meyer

"While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Genesis 8:22

Although this fall and winter has been an unusual one and challenging to many farmers, what comfort there is in God's promises! Even as the seasons of the calendar vary, so are the different seasons of life being made evident in our congregation.

We are thankful to welcome two new babies to our fellowship! Much excitement was brought to the home

of Bro. Ryan and Sis. Tiffany Menold as Lanie Grace was born, joining her brothers, Kellen, Nate and Kade. Grandparents are Bro. Joe and Sis. Kathy Rokey and Bro. Brad and Sis. Teresa Kellenberger (Sabetha). One day later, Lyndsey Ruth was born, bringing joy to her parents, Bro. Terry and Sis. Dayra Menold and her siblings, Norea, Madison and Lucas. Grandparents are Bro. James and Sis. Lou Menold and Bro. James and Sis. Karol Meyer.

Sharing the Word of Life with us were Bros. David Hartter (Sis. Beth; Sabetha), Kerwin Edelman (Sis. Sarah; Athens), Jerry Meeks (Sis. Christy; Sabetha) and Roger Aberle (Sis. Lavonne; Sabetha). May God bless you for your willingness to be used in His service.

Our prayers and deep sympathy is extended to Fremond and Ruth Meyer on the loss of their 31 year-old grandson, Abe Meyer, in a vehicle accident. May God comfort them and also Abe's parents, Don and Marianne Meyer, as well as his wife, son and expected daughter. What a tragic reminder that our life on earth truly is "as a vapor" and that we must be ready at all times.

The Sunday School youth presented the Christmas program on December 13, followed later by an evening of caroling and a soup supper. We cherish these times of fellowship and the sharing of the Lord's birth. May we remember, not only at Christmas, but at all times that "tis not the manger, but the cross that sets the spirit free!" How grateful we are for God's gift to us!

KANSAS, FORT SCOTT
Martin Hohulin Sr.

We are happy to have Sis. Lucille Schurter assembling with us again after being in the hospital. She is now living at the Fort Scott Manor nurs-

ing home.

On December 10, two of our young ladies received their Registered Nurse degrees from Fort Scott Community College and Mercy School of Nursing. They are Alyssa Banwart Arnold and Kimmy Byler Leek. Alyssa is the daughter of Bro. Don and Sis. Aleta Banwart. Kimmy is the daughter of Tom and Jan Byler. In their graduation remarks, both gave praise to God and Jesus Christ for the divine help they received in their studies.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to Bro. Rick and Sis. Karen Kellenberger at the passing of Rick's older brother, Leo Kellenberger, from Sabetha, KS. My memory goes back to the years of 1934-1940 when we lived in that area. Leo was a year behind me in a one room school for two years. His other brothers, Galen and Bro. Gene, also attended the school. In 1945, Galen lost his life on the last day of World War II. Bro. Gene, his wife, Sis. Marion, and several children are members of the Sabetha church. These Kellenbergers are children of Bro. Art and Sis. Marie (Steiner) Kellenberger. Sis. Marie was a cousin to my stepmother, Lydia Steiner, who raised me from when I was two years old. In the 1930's there was little money for toys and entertainment. Sundays were spent at relatives for supper and visiting. Children played outside and in the barns. I recall many pleasant memories at the Kellenberger farm. Galen, the oldest, was born in 1926 and the twins, Rick and Randy, were born in 1951. Bros. Rick and Randy are doctors. In addition, Bro. Randy is a minister in Kansas City. Bro. Rick married Sis. Karen Geyer and Bro. Randy married Sis. Karen Wyss. As you can tell, this family holds a special place in my heart.

KANSAS, KIOWA
Janice Bahr
Jenny Stewart

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
 and a light unto my path.”

Psalms 119:105

We have the blessing of listening to the Conference tapes the last few months on Wednesday evenings. The words that are spoken speak to our hearts. God speaking through man to admonish, correct, and warn us, but also to teach, uplift, and comfort us. What a blessing!

Bro. Matt and Sis. Courtney Schupbach have been blessed with a precious baby boy, Hudson Matthew. Emma Ann loves having a new baby brother at her house to play with, cuddle, and love. Hudson Matthew was born on December 22. Bro. Kent and Sis. Darcy Kisling are his paternal grandparents, and Larry and Sherri Garrouette are his maternal grandparents.

KANSAS
LAMONT-GRIDLEY
Ester Knobloch

O list to the story that never grows
 old,
 Its tidings of joy repeat,
 The Saviour is come by the prophets
 foretold,
 To Bethlehem's quiet street.
 The miracle star shines in splendor
 above,
 The stable so dingy and worn,
 So humble a cradle for One who is
 Love,
 And there Jesus Christ is born.
Gospel Hymns #865, vs. 1

The Sunday school students reminded us of the miracle of Jesus' birth during their Christmas program. It is always precious to hear the account through poems and songs from these innocent voices. We ap-

preciate the effort the students, teachers and parents put forth to prepare.

KANSAS, SABETHA
Carrie Grimm
Rebekah Beyer

“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 rejoice with our converts, Abby Kellenberger (Bro. Brad and Sis. Teresa) and Darin Hartter (Bro. Dennis and Sis. Beth), as they were announced for peace on December 6. We look forward to their upcoming testimonies and baptisms. May the Lord continue to guide them as they look to Him.

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

Psalms 27:1

Our thoughts and prayers have been with Opal Steiner, Bro. Frank Hertzell (Sis. Ruth), Sis. Phyllis Strahm (Bro. Elmer), Bro. Rodney Grimm (Sis. Arlene), Sis. Irene Lehman, and Sis. Cynthia Fehr (Bro. Todd) as they have all spent time in the hospital. May all who have had recent conflicts of the flesh feel God's nearness and gain strength through His power.

We extend our sympathy to Bro. Gene and Sis. Marian Kellenberger as their brother, Leo Kellenberger (Betty), passed away on November 21.

Bro. Kevin and Sis. Nita Grimm welcomed a precious granddaughter into their family circle on November 9. Sophie Marie was born to Bro. Seth

and Sis. Renee Leman (Forrest, IL). Bro. Brad and Sis. Teresa Kellenberger also welcome a little granddaughter. Lanie Grace was born to Bro. Ryan and Sis. Tiffany Menold (Bern, KS) on November 22. Bro. Keith and Sis. Carol Kaufman have another grandson, Silas James, to fill their hearts. Silas is welcomed home by his parents, Philip and Kelly Kaufman, and big brother Rob of Newnan, GA. We pray the Lord will direct these parents as they raise their children in Him. We also pray the Lord will direct the grandparents as they play such an important role in the lives of these dear little ones.

We appreciate the visiting ministering brothers that share with us. Elder Bro. Wayne Grimm (Sis. Rose, West Bend, IA) and Bro. John Baumgartner (Sis. Lori, Bern, KS) labored on our behalf this last month. We continue to ask the Lord to bless and uphold all ministering brothers throughout the lands.

We enjoyed Thanksgiving services on Thanksgiving Day. We also enjoyed Christmas caroling on December 6 and the fellowship and supper following. The Sunday School Christmas Program was December 13. What a blessing to hear the children tell the old, old story of the birth of our Saviour!

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:7

KANSAS, WICHITA
Emma Miller

Our visiting minister for the month of December was Bro. Tim Zimmerman and his wife, Sis. Barbara, from the Lamont-Gridley congregation. We appreciate their sacrifice of personal time for our be-

half.

The work day at the Mennonite Central Committee workshop in Newton was cancelled because of the inclement weather. The next work day is scheduled for late January, weather permitting.

Wednesday evening mid-week services were cancelled for the month of December. This gave time for those who were able to join forces and go caroling at the homes of our dear loved ones who no longer brave the elements to gather for mid-week services.

We are looking forward to the Sunday School Christmas program which is planned for the Sunday before Christmas. Our children all seem to understand that Jesus is the reason for the season. If they were to compare Jesus with Santa Claus, they would tell us that Jesus offers health, help and hope while Santa can only offer Ho! Ho! Ho! Santa may bring gifts for under a tree, but Jesus is our gift and He died on a tree.

KENTUCKY, LEXINGTON Barb Huber

“Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.”

Psalm 119:111

We have been encouraged again through God’s Word. Visiting ministers, Bros. Wayne Wiegand (Sis. Rosemary, Goodfield, IL), Tim Gerber (Sis. Wendy, Mansfield, OH), and Larry Wenninger (Sis. Joyce, Latty, OH), came and faithfully shared the wonderful Words of Life. We thank you, each one, and pray the Lord to bless you richly for all your efforts to further His kingdom here on earth.

Just as the Apostle Paul was bound in chains, we may suffer dis-

couragement and the trials of this life. But, he continued to expound and testify of the kingdom of God to all, persuading everyone concerning Jesus. Some believed and some did not. He did not give up, however. He told the church at Philippi: “Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again, I say, rejoice.” (Phil. 4:4) As we begin another year, may we be fortified with the power of the Holy Spirit and may His testimonies be the rejoicing of our hearts as in Psalm 119:111 above.

We extend a warm welcome to come and visit us in Lexington. You may contact Bro. Lester Huber (859) 745-2541. Church services are held at 3938 Becknerville Rd., Winchester, KY. Directions to the church are: **From Lexington:** I-75 exit #110 (US 60), east about 6 miles to Road #1923 (Combs Ferry Rd.), right about 5 miles to Road #3371 (Becknerville Rd.), left approximately one block on the right. **From Winchester:** Road #1958 (Bypass) south to Road #1927 (Colby Rd.), west about 3 miles to Road #3371 (Becknerville Rd.), left 2 miles on the left.

MEXICO, IXTLAN Matt Gerber

“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.”

John 16:21

The always-special Christmas season was made even more meaningful this year for several church families. Bro. Matt and Sis. Ruth Gerber became parents to Caleb Alan Gerber, born December 22. Then on Christmas Day, Sis. Rosie AviZa (husband Javier) gave birth to a baby boy. The conception and birth of a

baby is certainly a miracle—how much more then, the incarnation and birth of God’s Son, Jesus! Our finite minds cannot fathom the mystery of the eternal God taking on human flesh, but we believe that He did. He is Emanuel, meaning “God with us”. Yet the greatest mystery is not the incarnation, but the cross, where the sinless God-Man died for our sins to make us right with the Father. May all worship, praise, attention, and glory be given to Him and Him alone this Christmas season, and through all the ages without end!

The Sunday school children and young group whole-heartedly sang the songs they practiced for the Christmas program. During the devotional message the children were asked why Jesus was born. They responded correctly—for us, in order to die for our sins. Later, everyone shared a potluck meal together and broke piZatas, a favorite Mexican tradition. On the last day of classes at the grade school, the first graders enjoyed a special Christmas celebration, performing a nativity play, singing songs, and sharing food with the parents, and breaking more piZatas of course. It was a unique opportunity to share the biblical account of Christmas with the parents and help them understand the meaning of Christ’s birth.

MICHIGAN, BAY CITY Sarah Knochel Janelle Ramseyer

Several from our congregation traveled to Smithville for the wedding of Bro. Josh Steffen (Bro. Derrell and Sis. Sue) and Sis. Janelle Bauman (Bro. Steve and Sis. Connie). We trust that God’s guiding hand will be with this dear couple in everything they do.

Our prayers are with those who have been sick or spent time in the

hospital in the past days. We want to remember Sis. Della Erisman, Bro. Robert Knochel, and Bro. Eugene Meylan (Sis. Carol). We trust that the Lord will provide healing strength to all according to His will.

We again were blessed to have visiting ministers in our congregation. Bros. Jesse Bedolla (Sis. Bonnie, Detroit, MI) and Jeff Waibel (Sis. Margo, Leo, IN) were both here visiting family and we are thankful for their willingness to serve on our behalf.

Another year is dawning,
Dear Master, let it be,
In working or in waiting,
Another year for Thee.

Another year of progress,
Another year of praise,
Another year or proving
Thy presence all the days.

MICHIGAN, DETROIT
Manuela Denes
Kay Rauhe

“But now saith the Lord that created thee...He that formed thee...Fear not: for I have Redeemed thee, I have called thee by name; Thou art mine.”

Isaiah 43:1

Our entire congregation was deeply saddened by the death of Sis. Lorene Maibach (Bro. Ben) on November 25. Our heartfelt sympathy, continued prayers, and love to her adoring husband, Bro. Ben, and to her wonderful children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren and their entire family as they are entrusting the Lord to ease their deepest burdens and hurts during this most difficult time ... who better to put our faith and trust in ... the only One who can really give comfort and healing. It was so wonderful and comforting to have so many visiting min-

isters, accompanied by their wives, come for the weekend and “to serve the Lord with gladness.” Psalms 100:2. Bro. Virgil Kaeb (Sis. Suellen; Sarasota, FL) had the morning service on Sunday, and Bro. Don Gudeman (Sis. Mary; LaCrosse, IN) had the afternoon service. On Monday, November 30, the day of Sis. Lorene’s funeral, we were blessed to have Elder Bro. Dale Eisenmann (Sis. Judy; Chicago, IL) conduct the main part of the funeral; retired Elder Bro. Wendell Gudeman (Sis. Marcella; Francesville, IN) had the second part of the funeral service; retired Elder Bro. Aaron Steffen (Sis. Loretta; Alto, MI) had the cemetery part of the funeral service; and retired Elder Bro. Joe Braker (Sis. Shirley; Morton, IL) read the obituary. Also saddened by a death in the family, Sis. Kay Rauhe (Bro. Warren) learned of her aunt’s recent death, Sis. Betty Steffen (Bro. Harry) from Bluffton, IN, who has now been released of all of her suffering and pain. We think of Bro. Ben and Bro. Harry at this time of loss, and may they both find comfort in knowing that the wonderful women they loved so much are now with the Lord and will be missed and fondly remembered. “I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.” John 14:18.

Amidst all of this sorrow, as we celebrated Thanksgiving, we needed to remember to be really thankful to God for all He has provided, the greatest is His gift of salvation ... total forgiveness of sins and eternal life. appy

“Pray without ceasing.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17

We are so thankful for answered prayers as Bro. Ernie Weigele (Sis. Mary) has recuperated from hip surgery, and we are so glad to see him worshipping with us once again. We are happy to hear that Sis. Kathryn

Losiewicz is out of rehabilitation and now back to her apartment where she is recuperating, and we will continue to pray for her. We were also encouraged to pray for Bro. Randy Gasser’s (Sis. Sue) sister, Sis. Pat Rufener (Bro. Jim; Rittman, OH) as she is having brain surgery, and please continue praying for an upcoming kidney transplant after she has recovered from the previous surgery.

We were privileged to have Bro. Doug Harmonas and his wife, Sis. Lanna (Toledo, OH), with us and appreciated Bro. Doug conducting a church service at Woodhaven on December 1, and retired Elder Bro. Willis Ehnle (Sis. Lois; formerly from Shioda, Japan, and now living in Illinois) had the Wednesday Thanksgiving service on November 18 at Woodhaven. We certainly appreciated their willingness to share the Word and to “serve the Lord with gladness.” Psalms 100:2.

The Sunday School, along with the congregation, collected coats, gloves, hats, socks and other items to donate for Christmas to God’s Storehouse. What a wonderful way to show God’s love through our spirit of giving!

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

We are grateful for the blessings of God’s grace in Luke Knochel’s (Bro. Dana and Sis. Beth) life to begin his repentance. We pray daily that God will bless him with strength, peace, and great joy as he lives his life for Christ.

As we set aside time this season to remember the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, our congregation always looks forward to the Sunday School Christmas program. Sunday,

December 13, was a wonderful and blessed evening as we listened to the children as they recited their pieces and sang to God so wholeheartedly and with glowing, smiling faces ... just knew that God was looking down and smiling at all the love and thankful that we are celebrating because we know that He is the reason for the season.

Another Christmas activity that we enjoy is assembling Christmas baskets filled with food for those in need. It's a special way for our congregation to share the love of Jesus within our community.

"...If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us."

I John 4:12

Note of Thanks:

At this very difficult time in our family's lives, words cannot express our gratitude for the love, kindness, support and prayers from throughout our beloved faith worldwide in the passing of my dear wife, our children's mother, grandchildren's grandmother, and great-grandmother, Lorene. What more can we say than that God bless you all for what you have done for our family.

Most humbly with love and gratitude,

Ben Maibach, Jr. and family

**MINNESOTA
MINNEAPOLIS
Mary Mogler**

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

As the Sunday school students brought news of the birth of a Saviour through our annual Christmas program, we were again touched by the wonder of His miraculous birth and the gift that was given. The birth of this baby so many years ago brought hope to mankind. May this Christmas season be a time of reflection about where our hope is placed. Is it in the world or in Jesus?

It was a joy to those who could share the news of Christ's birth through song as many joined together in Christmas caroling at a local nursing home and to Sisters Katie Blunier and Viola Aupperle. As we miss these two dear sisters in our Sunday worship, it was an added blessing to spend time with them.

Our thoughts, prayers and concerns have been with our dear Sis. Viola Aupperle as she fell and received serious injury. She is currently living in a nursing home and receiving rehabilitative therapy. We pray for her continued healing, and also for her daughter, Sis. Arletta, who spends many hours caring for her.

We rejoice with Claire Dill (Bro. Dewayne and Sis. LaRae) as she has sought and found Jesus at the cross as her Lord and Saviour. It brings a special joy to her family, our church family and to the angels in heaven. We pray that God will grant her blessings, teachings and encouragement as she builds upon the living rock, Jesus, who promises living water to all who drink.

We were blessed by the visit of Bro. Doug Wagenbach (Sis. Lillian) and appreciated his God inspired message on Sunday, as well as the opportunity for fellowship with their family. We are thankful they were willing to leave the warmer temperatures of San Diego to enjoy the snowy Minnesota outdoors.

Congratulations and God's blessings to Laura Stewart (Bro. David

and Sis. Diane) upon completion of her degree at St. Thomas University in St. Paul. We are happy that Laura has found employment locally and will be staying in the area.

**MINNESOTA, MORRIS
Susie Wulf
Sheila Reuter**

We are thankful for the visiting ministers that shared God's Word with us this month. They were Bro. Galen Rokey (Bern, KS), Bro. Darren Fehr (West Bend, IA), Bro. Tim Gerber (Mansfield, OH), Bro. Jim Koehl (San Diego, CA) and Bro. Kent Mogler (Minneapolis, MN).

Thankful for the safe arrival of Henry Alan are Todd and Jamie Nohl and grandmother, Sis. Bonnie Nohl. Also Scott and Allisa Wulf are thankful for the arrival of Allison Mae. Grandparents are Bro. Dennis and Sis. Judy Wulf. May the Lord bless them as they raise their precious children.

Bro. Levi Koehl and Sis. Anna Schmidgall were united in marriage. Their parents are Elder Bro. Roy and Sis. Jenell Koehl and Bro. Paul and Sis. Shawn Schmidgall. We wish them God's richest blessing as they became one in the Lord.

We would like to wish a warm welcome to Sis. Victoria Stoll from Winthrop, MN. She is attending college here and pray that she will feel at home in our congregation.

We wish Bro. Michael and Sis. Jennifer Feuchtenberger the best as they make their home in Fairbury, IL. May God be with them and bless them.

Our prayers are with Bro. Floyd Schmidgall as he has spent time in the hospital. We pray the Lord will be with him and bless him.

MINNESOTA, WINTHROP

**Julie Schmidt
Lindsay Schmidt**

“Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
In whom the world rejoices,
Who from our mother’s arms,
Has blest us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.”

Zion’s Harp #236, vs. 1

As we went through another Thanksgiving holiday, it was good to be reminded of all things we should be thankful for, our country, our family and friends, and most of all, our God. We should be thankful we live in this country where we have the freedom to worship God. We should be thankful He surrounded us with our family, friends, and church. But most importantly, may we also remember and thank God that without Jesus shedding His blood on the cross, we would have no hope of salvation.

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

Zion’s Harp #236, vs. 2

“... Thro’ all our life be near us, ...”

November is the time of our annual Business Meeting. At the meeting it was revealed that the position of Trustee has fallen on Bro. Michael Messner (Sis. Rachel). Bro. Michael is filling Bro. Dick Schmidt’s (Sis. Mary Lou) term. Bro. Dick has also retired from the Head Song Leader position. We want to thank Bro. Dick for his many years of service and give support to Bro. Verl Schmidt (Sis. Jamie) as he will be assuming this position. May God bless him for his willingness

to use his talent in service for Him. Each willing and serving heart is a blessing.

“... With ever joyful hearts...”

On November 29 the engagement of Bro. Brendon Messner (Bro. Dean and Sis. Wanda) of LaCrosse, IN, to Sis. Sharla Heinold, also of LaCrosse (Bro. Gene and Sis. Evie) was announced. We rejoice with them and their families with this news. May God be with Bro. Brendon and Sis. Sharla as they begin to plan their life together.

“... And free us from all ills...”

We are thankful that although many of us have endured seasonal ailments, we have been spared of major health concerns this month. May each one of us be thankful to God in times of illness and health and remember that He is always near us and will provide grace and strength for each step of the way.

“All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be given,
The Son and Holy Ghost,
Who dwell in highest heaven,
The one eternal God,
Whom earth and heav’n adore,
Who is and shall survive,
Now and forevermore.”

Zion’s Harp #236, vs. 3

“... Whom earth and heav’n adore...”

Our church has had the privilege of caroling to our local Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Centers. As we lift our voices in singing adoration and proclaiming the story of Christ’s birth, may we be mindful of the reason Christ came to earth. Let us not get too caught up in the bustle and rush of the season to remember to thank God for sending His Son to earth to save us from our sin.

MISSOURI, LAMAR

**Dana Kellenberger
Rebecca Dotterer**

We are thankful to report the birth of two baby girls. The first is Ellie Kay Braker, born on November 27 to Bro. Evan and Sis. Crystal Braker. Grandparents are Bro. Greg and Sis. Jill Stoller (Forrest, IL) and Bro. Jerry and Sis. Carol Braker of our congregation. On December 6, Katie Ann Leman was born to Bro. Brian and Sis. Kristen Leman. Also welcoming her home are siblings, Brett, Andrew, Quinton, Abby and Kara. Katie’s grandparents are Bro. Terry and Sis. Shirley Leman (Eureka, IL) and Bob and Sis. Janice Stoller of our congregation. May the Lord grant much grace and wisdom to raise these dear children in His ways.

We extend our sympathy to Bro. Larry and Sis. Marcy Schmidgall on the passing away of his sister-in-law, Terri (Dwayne) Schmidgall, of St. Louis Park, MN.

MISSOURI, ST. LOUIS

Meagan Wuethrich

Bro. John and Sis. Rosemary Hartman (Fairbury, IL) and Bro. Leland and Sis. Mary Plattner (Zapata, TX) served us in the ministry this month. We greatly appreciated their presence among us, as well as the company they brought with them, and the other visitors who have come these past few weeks.

Our dear friend, Berniece Stuber, passed away early in December. She will be greatly missed by our little congregation, along with her husband, Harold, who is now being cared for by one of their daughters. Berniece had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer this past summer, so we are thankful that she is now relieved of the suffering afflicting her earthly body.

God’s richest blessings to each of

you this Christmas time as we rejoice in that our Lord's birth made His death, resurrection, and our salvation possible.

"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

MISSOURI, TAYLOR

Kathy Eberhardt

As we start 2010, we were asked several questions. How are you running the race? Are you running it alone or with Jesus? Are we living our lives to their potential? Do we need to change any of our ways? It gave us much to try to improve with our families and friendships in 2010.

We rejoice and wish God's blessings on the engagement of Bro. Joe Marquart (Bro. Dave and Sis. Lori) to Sis. Rebecca Maurer (Bro. John and Sis. Emily, Bloomington, IL).

We welcome a new little boy, Max Dawson, to our Taylor church family. He is the son of Jesse and Amy Heimer. We wish them God's blessings on their bundle from heaven. Grandparents are Bro. Rodney and Sis. Barb Heimer and Randy and Debbie Lipper.

We extend our sympathy to Bro. Quinton and Sis. Heather Snyder in the death of her grandmother, Sis. Lorene Maibach, of Detroit, MI. We also extend our sympathy to Sis. Charlene Sutter in the death of her sister, Shirley Koch. Another couple that lost a grandmother was Bro. Dan and Sis. Tina Sutter. Her grandmother was Inez Beard. May all these families feel our prayers in their time of sorrow. We are so thankful for the healing hand on our hospital patients

this month, Bro. Louis Hoerr, Sis. Kathy Haab, and Bro. Arnie Gerst.

We wish God's blessings on all our brothers, sisters, and friends in the New Year.

NEW YORK CROGHAN-NAUMBURG Hope Graves

We have been blessed with many opportunities this season to spread the news of Christ's birth. Christmas caroling began with Karcher Estates on December 4, followed by Lewis County General Hospital on the 18th, and concluded with Steepleview Courts on the 20th. The children always enjoy the chance to sing and did a beautiful job with their Sunday School Christmas program on the 20th. We also spent time together on December 14 putting together and then delivering cheer baskets.

Our prayers go out to the families of Bro. Gerald Lehman who passed away on December 10; Everett Greenwood, father to Dean (Joyce) Greenwood, who died on December 17; and Everett Mattoon who is a brother to Sis. Lois Virkler (Bro. Clyde). May the Lord comfort these three families in their losses.

May God's healing touch continue with Sis. Bernice Hirschey, Penny Farney and Meaghan Bowers who have all had surgery this past month.

Our prayer is for God's love and peace to shine in each heart throughout the new year of 2010.

Correction: Bro. Jacob and Sis. Brooke Kuntz's new daughter's name is Katelyn Rose.

OHIO, AKRON Mara Henico Rachel Pamer

O bind together fully
With love's devotion holy
Thy people, dearest Lord,

For whom Thy blood was given
To ransom them from heaven.
O, hallow them and keep them, Lord!
Zion's Harp #207, vs. 10

We keep those who have lost loved ones in our prayers. Sis. Mary Ellen Saylor (Bro. Bill, Rittman) recently passed from this life. She assembled with our congregation for a few years, and we have many precious memories of her time here. Bro. Paul Gherian (Sis. Sharon) also was taken. May God bless and strengthen his dear family. We also trust that God will be with Bro. Tim Zarkovacki (Sis. Angie) and his family as his grandmother, Louise Seidl, recently took her last breath and was laid to rest. Our prayers are also with Bro. Mark Palitto (Debbie) as his father-in-law, Del Smith, also recently passed from this life.

We are thankful for our Bro. Hans Heib's restored health. After being hospitalized with pneumonia, it is good to see him back in church! We have been enjoying our new converts, Brad and Amanda Gasser (and little McKenzie), and welcome them to our Akron Church. We pray they feel God's love and ours, too.

We've been blessed with visiting ministers this month. Bro. Clint Schmidt (Sis. Magdalena, Winthrop) and Bro. Jerry Bauman (Sis. Martha, Rittman) were able to be with us and serve us. We trust God will be their rich rewarder.

We rejoice with those who have welcomed little boys into their family circles. Bro. Justin and Sis. Lisa Gherian and Reagan welcome Cole Steven. Also, Bro. Don and Sis. Carol Gasser had a new grandson. Caleb Andrew was welcomed by Phil and Dawn Gasser.

OHIO, COLUMBUS Julie Grimm

The Sunday school presented the

precious story of the birth of our Lord Jesus in verse and song at our annual program. Afterwards, a sister commented on what a blessing it was to see so many children standing together at the front of the church and reminisced on the year there were only two. The children are such a blessing to our congregation.

The Sunday school students and teachers also enjoyed a morning of shopping for the needy, followed by lunch at church.

It is a blessing to share the joy of Christmas with others. We were blessed to be able to carol at a couple of nursing homes and enjoy a meal and time of fellowship following.

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Psalms 119:105

We are thankful for those who traveled to assist our home ministers in sharing the Gospel. Serving us were Bros. Art Ingold (Rittman, OH), Dana Indermuhle (Sardis, OH), and Ben Manz (Junction, OH), along with our Elder Bro. Mark Masters (Mansfield, OH). May the Lord richly bless them for their labors.

Several of our congregation have journeyed through the illness and death of loved ones. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Jonathon Curry (Jennifer) in the loss of his mother, Rhonda Curry, and to Sis. Becky Sauder (Bro. Bill) in the in the death of her sister, Ruth Ann Markley. May they feel our prayerful support and the comfort of the Lord.

OHIO, JUNCTION

Vicki Boroff

We would like to thank Elder Bro. Ted Witzig, Sr. (Sis. Cindy, Morton), and Bro. Bruce Frank (Sis. Bonita, Cissna Park) for bringing the Word to us. We appreciate the efforts of our

home and visiting ministers.

We pray for His healing hand upon our hospital patients and those that are ailing.

Our love and prayers go to the family of Bro. Paul Gherian (Sis. Sharon, Akron). Bro. Paul and his family attended our congregation for many years, and recently moved to the Akron area. We also extend our sympathy to the family of Richard Gerber (Eleanor). We wish both families the Lord's comforting hand during this time of grieving at the loss of their loved ones.

OHIO, LATTY

**Amanda Wenninger
Carmen Eisenmann**

“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 was a joy for our congregation to hear the Sunday School classes sing praises during our annual Christmas program. Our prayer is that all would come to know Jesus as their personal Savior and experience the true joy of this season.

Our prayers and sympathies are with Sis. Pam Stoller (Bro. Todd) as she experienced the death of her mother, Sis. Mary Ellen Saylor (Rittman, OH). May God provide comfort to the family during this time of loss.

OHIO, MANSFIELD

Esther Baumann

Precious little Shiloh Jeannine Walter was born on November 20. Thankful for her safe arrival are her parents, Bro. Curt and Sis. Elizabeth; siblings, Jayden and Raya; and grandparents, Elder Bro. Mark and

Sis. Jeannine Masters and Bro. Charles and Sis. Karen Walter (Silverton, OR).

Continue to remember our recently hospitalized loved ones in your prayers: Bro. Al Beer (Sis. Janet), Sis. Lydia Chant (Bro. Jake), and Sis. Luci Baumann (Bro. Dave).

Sis. Betty Beer passed away on November 24. We miss her encouraging smile. Our sympathy and prayers to her family including her son, Robert (Debra); her brother, Clifford Linn; and her grandchildren, David (Elizabeth) Beer and Elizabeth (Robert) Gordon-Hancock.

Special thanks to Bro. Sam Schlatter (Sis. Linda, Junction, OH) for his service to us in the ministry on Thanksgiving morning.

Our annual business meeting was held in December. Bro. Dan Sauder's (Sis. Pam) term as Trustee expired; he has been replaced by Bro. Chip Hill (Sis. Sieda). Bro. Ron Rufener's (Sis. Kay) term as Fellowship Hall Trustee is complete; Bro. Dan Sauder (Sis. Pam) replaces him. Re-elected for their respective positions are: Bro. Nathaniel Ramsey (Sis. April) as World Relief Treasurer; Bro. Mick Hill (Sis. Delores) as Head Song Leader, Sis. Elizabeth Boliantz (Bro. Eric) on our Local World Relief Committee, and Bro. John Ramsey Jr. as Usher. Sis. Jolene Ramsier takes over the position on the Kitchen Committee as Sis. Tammy Beer's (Bro. Chuck) term expires. Sis. Tami Griffey (Bro. Chad) replaces Sis. Esther Baumann as Silver Lining Correspondent. We thank all for their service this past year.

On the evening of December 13, we delighted in hearing the voices of our Sunday School children in their annual Christmas program. We pray for each of these precious tender souls.

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” Psalms 23:1. Most of us

learned this verse in Sunday School; some of us later in life. It is a powerful verse to continue to remember and totally trust in as the year 2010 unfolds.

OHIO, RITTMAN
Heidi Rufener
Laurie Winkler

“Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Psalm 16:11

The angels in heaven are rejoicing as another world-weary soul turns his heart to the Lord in repentance. We are so thankful to hear the news of Luke Rufener (Bro. Dave and Sis. LeAnn) beginning his walk with God. Luke has been living in the Lester, IA, area and is worshipping with our church there.

Lincoln Isaac made his appearance on December 1, joining the family of Bro. Matt, Sis. Lynn, and big brother, Drew Baltic. Grandparents are Bro. Dan and Sis. Betty Baltic (Columbus) and Bro. Steve and Sis. Janee Rufener. Cole Steven was born on December 10 to Bro. Justin, Sis. Lisa and older sister, Reagan Gherian (Akron). Cole's grandparents in Rittman are Bro. Steve and Sis. Janee Rufener.

We recently witnessed the testimony and baptism of three precious souls. Sis. Jenny Rupp (Bro. Ken and Sis. Carol), Bro. Nathan Steiner (Bro. Jim and Sis. Sara) and Sis. Kendra Hartzler (Bro. Mark and Sis. Natalie) were all welcomed into the fold.

Two dear couples have announced their plans for marriage. Bro. Chad Beery (Bro. Walt and Sis. Lynda) and Sis. Katie Ramsier (Bro. Tim and Sis. Joni) feel God has drawn their lives together. Bro. Jesse Rufener (Bro.

Jim and Sis. Pat) and Sis. Laura Sinn (Bro. Thomas and Sis. Edith; Silverton, OR) have promised themselves to each other. May God richly bless them as they plan for their lives together.

We were saddened by the passing of Sis. Mary Ellen Saylor (Bro. Bill) on November 21, but are thankful she can be relieved of her pain. Sis. Mary Ellen's children are Bro. Joe (Sis. Ann) Gerber, Bro. Tom (Sis. Laura) Gerber, Sis. Pam (Bro. Todd) Stoller (Latty), Sis. Terry (Bro. Marvin) Ramsier, and John (Deb) Gerber. We also extend our sympathy to Dave and Sue Plahuta on the passing of Dave's father, Kenneth Plahuta, on December 7. May God comfort and strengthen the families who are grieving a loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with those in our congregation who have spent time in the hospital recently, including Sis. Jennifer (Bro. Dan) Hartzler, Sis. Martha Walder, Bro. Ike (Sis. Verna) Rufener, Sis. Joyce (Jim) Thompson, Joe Zollinger, Bro. Dave (Sis. Eileen) Emch, Bro. Rudy (Sis. Polly) Zollinger, and Bro. Neil (Sis. Donna) Gasser.

Sharing God's Word with us this month were Elder Bros. Steve Ringger (Bluffton North) and Andy Stoller (Smithville), and ministering Bros. Don Steidl (Akron), Steve Pamer (Akron) and Ted Luginbuhl (Smithville).

OHIO, SARDIS
Faith Beard

I place myself in Jesus' hands
 And there abide forever;
 No griefs, no joys, shall loose the
 bands,
 Nor yet our union sever!
 In these dread days When earth de-
 cays,
 Who stays in Him and thus obeys
 Shall be preserved forever.

And let Him do with me His will,
 What He will do shall please me;
 I cleave to Him with strong faith still
 And hope that He will bless me.
 He must be blest Who loves Him best,
 And on His Word does firmly rest;
 Lord, with this truth impress me!

Zion's Harp, #177, vs. 1, 3

The hymn, Confidence, had special meaning to our new Sis. Alysha Figel (Bro. Andi and Sis. Cyndi) during her testimony and baptism on the last weekend of November. Elder Bro. Dave Graf (Sis. Barb, Akron, OH) was here to help our Bro. Ken with this work. Also sharing the pulpit that weekend were Bro. Doug Harmon (Sis. Lanna, Toledo, OH) and Bro. Matthew Rassi (Sis. Bridget, Chicago, IL). What a blessing to witness the change that the Lord can make in the life of a soul willing to submit themselves to Him and His will.

Also sharing God's Word with us this past month were Bro. Scott Schambach (Sis. Hope, Columbus, OH) and Bro. Bill Dotterer (Sis. Sharon, Lamar, MO). We thank all these brothers for lending themselves in our service.

As we enjoy the worshipping and caroling and gathering and eating and gift giving that generally goes with the Christmas season, we remember the True Gift that we celebrate every year at this time, the only Gift that really matters. Who of us are willing to leave behind all that He asks of us and follow that Gift in obedience? During our Sunday School's Christmas program, the children reminded us of this:

There's a star in the east on Christ-
 mas morn,
 Rise up, shepherd, and follow,
 It will lead to the place where the Sav-
 iour's born;
 Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

If you take good heed to the angel's
word,
Rise up, shepherd, and follow,
You'll forget your flock, you'll forget
your herd;
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

(Chorus)

Leave your flocks and leave your
lambs,
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
Leave your sheep and leave your rams,
Rise up, shepherd, and follow.
Follow, follow, rise up, shepherd, and
follow.

Gospel Hymns, #855

OHIO, SMITHVILLE

**Lydia Stoller
Ruth Gasser**

Thus united and in concord,
Let us walk the path of life...
Zion's Harp #237

On November 29, Bro. Josh Steffen and Sis. Janelle Bauman were joined in Holy Matrimony, making vows of life-long faithfulness. May they feel the presence of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide as they establish their home. Parents of the couple are Bro. Derrell and Sis. Sue Steffen (Bay City, MI) and Bro. Steve and Sis. Connie Bauman. Ministers attending and supporting this special occasion were Elder Bro. John Jackson, Bro. William Waibel (Bay City, MI), Bro. Jeff Waibel (Leo, IN), and Bro. Dan Stoller (Remington, IN).

We wish to thank those who give of themselves to share the Gospel. This month we were also blessed by the efforts of Bro. Todd Graf (Akron, OH), Bro. Mark Ramsier (Sardis, OH) and Bro. Tim Ramsier (Rittman, OH).

We want to remember in prayer those who are sick and suffering, some who we know, many are unknown to us. Thankfully, Boyd Nieman (Teri) is able to assemble

with us again. Bro. David Zollinger (Sis. Mary Ann) was hospitalized in Florida, where they spend winters. Sis. Betty Dotterer is recovering from surgery and in need of prayers.

Christmas is a time of joy for many, but in an imperfect world, a time of sadness for some, especially when family circles are broken. Our prayers are with James and Barbara Carmany, as his mother has passed from this life.

Bro. Kenneth and Sis. Jane Hartzler rejoice with an addition to their family, as Keith and Sally Hartzler became first-time parents of Amelia Jean on November 15.

Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,

And take us to heaven to live with

Thee there.

Hymns of Zion #38

OHIO, TOLEDO

**Teresa Rywalski
Rebecca Beard**

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior. We wish you a blessed new year.

Joining us on the pulpit this past month was Bro. Daron Price (Sis. Monica, Milford, IN) and Elder Bro. Bill Schlatter (Sis. Emily, Junction, OH). May God richly bless them and their families.

OREGON, PORTLAND

Renee Angstrom

Our visiting minister this month was Elder Bro. Bruce Endress (Sis. Elizabeth, Bradford, IL). Visiting us from Silverton was Elder Bro. Art Metz (Sis. Betty), Bro. John Wiegand (Sis. Jane), Bro. Harvey Kuenzi (Sis. Jennifer), and Bro. Christopher Kuenzi (Sis. Mary). We are always thankful for the support of the Brethren from Silverton and always welcome the beautiful Word that is

shared across the pulpit.

We were blessed with sharing in Holy Communion this past month. Elder Bro. Art Metz (Sis. Betty) was assisted by Elder Bro. Bruce Endress (Sis. Elizabeth, Bradford, IL). We appreciate Bro. Bruce's service.

Our Sunday School children presented their Christmas program last Sunday. What a beautiful job these young children do in sharing the wonderful story of Christ's birth.

Our prayers continue for Bro. Ray Cooper (Sis. Ginni) as he remains hospitalized following his heart surgeries. We miss Bro. Ray and Sis. Ginni and take comfort that God is watching over his care.

OREGON, SILVERTON

**Deb Roth
Kris Luthi**

"Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."

Psalms 39:4

We extend heartfelt sympathy to Sis. Linda Hari (Bro. Harold) in the sudden passing away of her mother, Betty Beckner. Bro. Ryan and Sis. Regina Hari and their young children, Carissa, David and Grace, are also grieving this loss in their family. May they feel their Savior's comforting Spirit and the love of the brethren.

"And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger...And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

St. Luke 2:16,20

We were blessed once again to hear the Sunday School children and

young adults bring to us the Christmas story in verse and song. Much time and effort goes into the learning of the verses and the songs and we appreciate this. We hope and pray that these words can be deeply imprinted on each of our hearts and that the Sunday School youth will carry these teachings with them wherever they go in adulthood.

We want to thank our visiting ministers for serving us so ably. We were blessed to have Bro. Dale Wulf (Sis. Becky, Lester, IA) here. We also were thankful to have Bro. Wayne Fehr (Sis. Kathy) and Bro. Ron Jones (Sis. Liz) visit and minister to us from our Portland congregation.

We were glad to hear the wedding announcement of our Sis. Laura Sinn (Bro. Tom and Sis. Edith) to Bro. Jesse Rufener (Bro. James and Sis. Patricia, Rittman, OH). May they look to their Father in heaven for direction in their lives together and may He bless both their families.

Bro. Kurt and Sis. Koreen Metzger and their 10-year old son, Jacob, have been in our prayers. Jacob's burst appendix, surgery and resulting complications have been an ongoing trial for him. We hope that he regains his health soon and is able to rejoin the other children in Sunday School.

PENNSYLVANIA PHILADELPHIA

As with gladness, men of old
Did the guiding star behold
As with joy they hailed its light
Leading onward, beaming bright
So, most glorious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to Thee.

As with joyful steps they sped
To that lowly manger bed
There to bend the knee before
Him Whom Heaven and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek Thy mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
At that manger rude and bare;
So may we with holy joy,
Pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heavenly King.

Holy Jesus, every day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds Thy glory hide.

Hymns of Zion #14

We were blessed again to hear the beautiful Christmas story from our Sunday School students this month. It was heartwarming to see them help each other tell the story through verse and hymn, reminding us of our responsibility to encourage and help each other as our lives point all to Jesus Christ. May the gladness and joy that each of the children expressed as they told the Christmas story be likewise expressed in our lives.

TENNESSEE, NASHVILLE Mike and Monica Fritz

We are thankful for our recent visiting ministers and the Living Word which they brought to us. These visiting brothers have been Bros. Tom Bahler (Sis. LaNae; Rockville, CT), Daron Price (Sis. Monica; Milford, IN), and Justin Koch (Sis. Marcia; Washington, IL). We have also been blessed by the precious fellowship of brethren and friends visiting from Rockville, CT; Eureka, Tremont, and Washington, IL; and Milford, IN.

If you are traveling in or through the Nashville area, please plan to worship with us. The following churches are scheduled for services in the near future: Lester, IA (1/24); Milford, IN (1/31); Princeville, IL (2/7); Bradford, IL (2/14); Latty, OH (2/21); Tremont, IL (2/28). Often we gather on Saturday evenings for fel-

lowship, and all are heartily welcome. We also usually meet on Wednesday evenings at 7:15 p.m. and would welcome any midweek visitors. Contacts are Bro. Mike and Sis. Monica Fritz, (615) 866-5543; and Sis. Gwen Leuthold, (615) 356-5755.

TEXAS, AUSTIN Serenity and Jasmine Ringger

In a recent sermon we were reminded that when the twelve spies returned from the promised land, only Caleb and Joshua believed God when He said that He would help them conquer. Modern day theology says that it is impossible to be holy. Do we not believe that God will help us be holy? He said, "Be ye holy, as I am holy." His grace is sufficient. The Bible did not record the names of the other ten who did not have faith and courage, but people today name their children after Caleb and Joshua.

Our visiting ministers were Bros. Scott Schafer (Sis. Gigi, South Bend, IN), Rich Gramm (Sis. Samantha, South Bend, IN), Ken Schneider (Sis. Bernice, Remington, IN), Leland Plattner (Zapata, TX), Elder Bros. Rick Plattner (Sis. Mary, Fairbury, IL), Art Metz (Sis. Betty, Silverton, OR). Other visitors were from Bluffton, Bloomfield, Oakville, Indianapolis, and Minneapolis.

The following is the minister schedule for February: (7) Morris; and (21) Lester. We extend a warm welcome to anyone who may be in the area to worship with us, on Sundays or mid-week. Please call ahead to help us plan for serving lunch. Also, because visitors add much to our local fellowship times, it helps if we know about your visit well in advance, so that we can accommodate you more readily in our weekend gatherings. In addition to the contacts in the minister book, you may also contact our local minister, Bro. Dennis (Sis. Diane) Rassi at 309-275-7775.

Directions to our church are these: from the intersection of Hwy 71 and 21 on the west side of Bastrop, go east on Hwy 71 about 1/2 mile and take the first exit (by the Ford dealership), proceed on the east-bound frontage road about 4/10 mile. The church is on the right. It is located about 18 miles east of the Austin airport. The address is 1025 W. Highway 71, Bastrop, TX 78602. It is a one-story building with a limestone façade, and the church sign in the front. Quite a few people have tried using the GPS system to find the church; but they found out that GPS took them to the east side of town, rather than west. We advise following the directions herein instead of GPS.

In the church, there are two furnished bedrooms for the ministers to use when coming for services. When you contact someone about coming for services, please let them know if you would like to use the bedrooms during the time you are here.

TEXAS, McALLEN

Aaron Kipfer

Greetings to all in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We thank our visiting minister, Bro. Greg Stoller (Sis. Jill, Forrest, IL), for taking time and effort in expounding to us the written Word of the Lord. May God continue to richly bless them. We also thank our visiting brethren from Goodfield, IL, and Rockville, CT.

We would like to encourage those who plan to come south for a winter vacation to consider the valley for a Sunday of worship and/or making the valley your home while you are in

Southern Texas. We are small in number and are happy to have visitors come and spend some time with us.

The following churches are scheduled for services: (Jan. 24 - Sabetha, KS); (Feb. 7 - Washington, IL); (Feb. 14 - Smithville, OH); (Mar. 7 - Wolcott, IN); (Mar. 21 - Goodfield, IL).

Our address is: Holiday Inn Express, 1921 South 10th Street. Turn 1½ blocks off the Expressway on 10th Street. Services will be held at 10:30 and 12:30. Please see ministers' directory for local contact information.

TEXAS, ZAPATA

Mary Plattner

The winter season is something we look forward to each year as it brings many visitors to our small congregation in Zapata.

We had Thanksgiving service followed by our Thanksgiving meal with those who have traveled to Zapata for the winter. We have appreciated all the visitors that have come this fall to visit us in Zapata. Anyone coming to South Texas is most welcome to worship with us.

VERMONT NORTH CLARENDON/ NORWICH

Nathan and Miriam Reutter

From heaven, in the dark of night,
He came and brought eternal light.
Behold now how this light divine
throughout this pilgrim's dale doth
shine.

Hallelujah!

Zion's Harp #7

We are looking forward to celebrating the birth of Christ in this season! How thankful we can be that He came to earth a humble babe to be our light in this dark world. Many thanks to our dear ministering Brothers and their wives who have come to serve us this past month. They were: Bro. Dan Stoller (Sis. Diane), Bro. Duane Reutter (Sis. Kay), and Bro. Tom Bahler (Sis. LaNae), all of Rockville, CT.

If you are interested in fellowshiping with us here in Vermont, and would like information about service locations and dates, please contact Bro. Chad and Sis. Jenny Virkler (802-293-2724). We love to fellowship with believers, whether it is during the week or on the weekend. Please let us know if you are planning on being in our area so we can accommodate you. Service times are as follows:

Mid-week services

(Contact local brethren)

Sunday Morning Service

10:10 AM

Sunday Afternoon Service

12:15 PM

Sunday school is held during the morning service.

If anyone is interested in purchasing beautiful head-coverings handmade from our dear Sisters in Ixtlan, Michoacan, Mexico, please contact Sis. Areli Reutter at Home: 802-862-0830 or Cell: 860-878-9346 or by email at asreutter@gmail.com. Inventory is available upon request. This is a wonderful opportunity to support those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).



Opportunity to help in Bastrop, TX

Winter Work Project for 2010

The USA Committee of World Relief is planning a three month winter work project in Bastrop, Texas. This community was hit by a wild fire in February of 2009 that destroyed twenty-eight homes and twelve businesses. Many had no insurance.

The Austin Apostolic Christian Church is located in the community of Bastrop, approximately twenty miles east of the city of Austin. Local brethren have been active in providing assistance with small jobs and have seen the need for a full scale building project to provide housing for the needy of this community.

The plan is to build modest two bed-

room homes. The project will run January through March. Operations will be based at the church property. Two existing buildings will be converted into dormitory style housing for volunteers. A small RV park will also be set up. The church kitchen and dining area will be used for preparing and serving meals.

Work teams needed

Work teams of 30 to 40 volunteers will be needed each week. There will be need of skilled tradesmen as well as kitchen helpers and general laborers. There will be a job for every willing heart and a blessing to go with it!

The World Relief website www.acworldrelief.org is the source for more information regarding this project. Work team scheduling and

registration is available online.

Please be prayerful that this project can be a blessing to all who receive as well as those who give. May all praise, honor and glory be to our great God and our Lord Jesus Christ. For more information, please contact:

Les Schambach
USA Committee Administrator
630-247-5271
usa@acwr.org

To register for a work team or learn more about this project, go to:

www.acworldrelief.org



Give a Child Hope

Child Sponsorships

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



The goal of this program is to provide an education to help these children

learn life skills to improve their standard of living, and also to provide spiritual training to address the true need...the need for a knowledge of and a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. Isaiah 54:13

To sponsor a child

To sponsor a student fill out this form and send to the office. A student will be assigned to you and you will be sent further information.

Name _____

Mr. Mrs. Miss

Spouse _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Home Ph _____

Cell Ph _____

Email _____

Please check preference:

- Haiti Guatemala
- Mexico Jamaica
- Wherever needed

If possible I would prefer:

Boy - Age _____

Girl - Age _____

No Preference

Cost: \$25.00/month

For details: www.acworldrelief.org

Send to:

ACWR Child Sponsorship

PO Box 36

Morton, IL 61550

Phone: 309-266-6080

Fax: 309-266-5281

E-mail: childsponsorship@acwr.org



www.acworldrelief.org

Sermon continued from page 2

God heard. He changed His mind. We see this when we see how Moses pleaded for the people.

We can take that to the New Testament, can't we? We can understand how Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, having with His own blood brought an atonement for our sins, gave unto us an opportunity, that we, too, can be retrieved from a death sentence. That was by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, operating as a mediator, just like Moses did here. Kind of an analogy.

Then as we go to the New Testament and the Acts of the Apostles, as we were talking about that Jesus, we are pretty early in the Acts of the Apostles here, where the Lord commissioned them to establish His church. Jesus had ascended into the heavens. He commissioned His apostles and many of the disciples and said, go ye and preach the Word to all nations (Mark 16:15). Here we see them doing that.

While Jesus was still upon the earth, He mentioned to those that were His followers, it is not going to be easy for you. As they have hated me, they are going to hate you (St. John 15:18). So He was preparing His church, not for an easy time, but for a tough time.

So when we come to chapter 8, we see a couple personalities involved here. One is Saul, later to be called Paul. Another, Stephen. Another is Philip. We see how God moves forward, using people in different ways. We have to understand that God uses us in different ways too. We can't say, I want to be like he is or like she is. We have to say, how does God want us to be in His own way?

Sometimes what God wants us to be may not feel all that good to us. How can we say so when we come to this chapter and we realize that Stephen here, is being persecuted? And, Saul was here standing by, one of God's chosen vessels, but he didn't know that yet. It says, Saul was consenting unto his death (Acts 8:1).

Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles. By the time he wrote this, undoubtedly he knew who Saul was. Probably had communicated with him a great deal. It may even be Paul who encouraged Luke to put these words in here as a matter of shame to himself. I think Paul was ashamed of this situation. It says, he was there, standing, holding the cloaks of those who threw the stones at Stephen, consenting unto his death.

Paul would later on tell us that he was the greatest of sinners (I Titus 1:15). I believe that this was one of the reasons why Paul felt that way. Because he was instrumental in bringing the death of one of God's faithful servants.

It tells us in the chapter before, that Stephen rehearsed the history of Israel before the scribes and the Pharisees. They were patient until the end of that chapter when he lays the charge for Jesus' death at their threshold. Then they could bear it no more. (Acts 7:52-54)

Isn't it interesting that at one time, the children of Israel would have said of Jesus Christ, let His blood be upon us and upon our children (St. Matthew 27:25)? When Stephen came to them and said, here it is, they wouldn't receive it.

It says, at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the Apostles (Acts 8:1). It was mentioned this morning that we have a changing environment in our world. We don't know where it is going to go, economically, socially. We don't know where the thinking of man is going to take our nation. But some things are getting a little bit clear. There are alternate life styles in our world and this world is asking us to support them. Even in one of our newspapers, which is difficult to take sometimes, it says, the attitude toward some of those alternate lifestyles comes from the prejudice of Christians. I had a problem with that. I had to an-

swer that with a letter. But it gives unto us a flavor of how our world is changing. It may not be obvious to us what kind of consequences that might have. But when you read that Congress is trying to pass hate laws and you put the two things together, pretty soon you can start to see how Satan is trying to work this thing to put us in a defensive position.

I say that only because, how have we prepared ourselves to face that? In this chapter Stephen faced it with his life. Towards the end of the chapter Philip was used in a different way. He was used as an evangelist to carry forth the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If in our world, if God has asked us to stand fast in those things that we have believed and stand fast on the Word that we read, are we willing to stand fast like Stephen was willing to stand fast? Sometimes it is just easier to maybe change our minds about some things. How anchored are we in what we believe, in the things that the Scriptures teach us?

I had one experience, quite a number of years ago, having been called to serve on a jury in the city of Toledo. As is the case, you sit in the big jury pool which is not unlike the assembly we have here today in number. From that they pick a number to take off to a certain case. Then you are interrogated by the lawyers to see if they are willing to let you sit there or not. If they are, then they let you sit on the jury. That was the case with me.

After that, the courtroom came into session and was in order. The judge said unto the jury, will the jury please rise and be sworn in. I hadn't anticipated that. I wasn't prepared for it. I knew I could not forswear and I guess, just like the thinking of some is, you try to evaluate really quickly, is it really that important? Should I just say nothing and go through with it? Then I decided I couldn't do that. For a few moments, I tried to decide, how am I going to deal with this issue? Finally, in a court that was in session,

I called out and said, "Your Honor, I request the right to affirm instead".

As you might expect, there was no small stir in the courtroom, as the Bible would say it. The judge didn't even know what I was talking about. He looked to the bailiff and the bailiff said, "Yes, I think there is something in my drawer". He shuffled through a bunch of papers and said, "Here it is". The judge said, "Let me see that". The bailiff took it up to him and he read it and said, "Okay you sit down". He swore in the rest and took my affirmation afterwards.

After the trial was all over, a young man came to me and said, "A group of us were discussing what you did in the courtroom. We were wondering why you did that." He said, "We finally concluded that you must be an atheist". I said, "No. Quite the contrary." I mentioned to him why I believed as I did. That the Scriptures tell us we should not forswear ourselves but let our yea be yea and our nay be nay (James 5:12). The young man said to me, "If that ever happens again, I am going to do the same thing".

Did it happen for the sake of one person? I don't know. Hopefully he went back and told the rest - I don't know who they were - that their conclusion was not right. Hopefully he passed that information along to his own children and their children. Maybe that way it could get around. But we have to live according to God's instruction to us. Not say, well maybe this isn't important because it is inconvenient for me. Believe me, it was inconvenient for me. I didn't feel comfortable doing that. I wasn't even sure that I wouldn't be called out of order. But these are the kinds of things that you can confront.

I had to think of Stephen here in that context, standing here before the scribes and the Pharisees, telling them the history of Israel. He could have said, I know how aggravating this last part is going to be. Maybe I ought to just leave that part off, because I know how it is going to

inflame them. But Stephen said, no, I can't do that. It all has to be there. So he carried through with that.

I think he knew what the consequences were going to be. In today's world, are we willing to face the consequences of what it means to hold fast to God's Word? I think for so long, we have lived under the rule of law and order, that we believe we have the right to be there all the time. If someone wants to cross our path, we say, I have a right. I have a constitutional right to have my opinion. Some places in the world they don't have it. What is the guarantee that we always will if our world continues to change like it does?

The Brothers, in the exhortation they gave unto us from the last conference said, Daniel purposed in his heart. Brother Lynn mentioned that God is holy. Holy, holy, holy. Daniel purposed in his heart. What did he purpose? He purposed that he would not go against the will of God. He said he would continue to pray. He continued to pray towards Jerusalem. (Daniel 6:10)

I don't know how they were able to see in his window to see what he was doing in there. Maybe his window was at ground level. Maybe he didn't care. But they knew that he was praying in there and they complained about that. Daniel was taken to the lion's den and that is where he spent the night. (Daniel 6:12-23)

Daniel could have said, I know what praying is going to continue to do for me. Maybe in the next several days, until that image is gone, when we don't have to do that anymore, maybe I can stop praying until that time. Therefore I won't have to face this situation. Daniel couldn't see it that way. He purposed in his heart that he was going to be faithful to God no matter what. That is having a conviction, isn't it?

There are some who say, within the law, when you say that you have a conviction about something, you have to defend that to the death.

That is when you have a conviction. If it falls something short of that, then you only have a preference. So how about us? When you look about our faith today, do you have a conviction that we are going to walk according to God's will no matter what consequences we have to face as a result of it?

Stephen faced that. What we have to face today is pretty simple, isn't it? The things that we are asked to do are not that great. They are not life threatening. At least not at this point in time. But how many times do we consider them too objectionable? They make us look different. They make us feel different.

Do you think Stephen didn't feel different here when he was identified? Do you think Daniel didn't feel different when he was found to be praying when he was not supposed to be doing that without permission? And his three cohorts, to whom it was said, here is the fiery furnace. If you don't bow down to this image, that is where you are going (Daniel 3:15). They purposed in their hearts, too.

I remember when the king was so disappointed in them, if I could put it that way. He said, maybe you did not understand my commandment. I will give you another chance. Unheard of from a king. That simply tells us how much respect he had for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He was willing to give them another chance. At that point, it must have been very tempting to say, maybe we can just not do it this time. Maybe just this time.

But no, they purposed in their hearts, like we have been counseled to do. They told the king, we don't know whether God will deliver us from that furnace you have there or not. But one thing we know is, we will not bow down to that idol. (Daniel 3:17,18)

Remember the wrath of the king towards them? It says that his anger was so hot that he commanded that the furnace be heated 1/7th hotter

Sermon continued from page 41

than it was supposed to be (v. 19). At one time I thought that was seven times hotter. But that just cannot be. I don't think anything can take 700 % more than what it was designed for. But the 7%, I would believe that. It isn't like, when you look at a fiery furnace - and I worked in a refinery so I know what they look like; they are red inside and the metal inside there is glowing red - you know that if it is that hot, 1/7th more or 1/7th less, doesn't make any difference at all. It would be just as deadly one way or the other. But the king was trying to make a point, wasn't he? He was simply trying to get them to realize his anger at them. He was trying to set the stage for anybody else that would dare to do something like this.

So they threw them in. To the king's amazement, he looks in there and he says, didn't we throw three in there? Now I see four. So not only weren't they burnt up, they multiplied. He says, the fourth one looks like the Son of God. (v.24,25)

But these men purposed in their hearts. Have we purposed in our heart? Have the things that we have to bear as God's children today, are they too tough for us to carry, when we think about the things that our forefathers have had to carry?

I've got a book called *Martyr's Mirror*. Perhaps some of you have it too. It is at least as big as this pulpit Bible. But on the cover of the book is one of the stories that is in there. It shows a man running back to a frozen pond to pull somebody out that fell through the ice. When you go read the story, it is touching. The man was running away from a persecutor who was going to punish him for his faith. He was an Anabaptist. He was fleeing and the man that was chasing him, broke through the ice and fell in. That should have given him a chance to be long gone. But when he looked back and saw the man that had fallen through the ice, he said, I can't live with myself unless I go back and help him out of there. He

turned around and helped him out of there and after that he was put to death by the same person. What kind of faith do we have?

If our faith was tested like some of our parents and some of our forefathers, could we make it? Not all have been tested like that. It is God's prerogative how He is going to use us. If some of us have to stand like that, are we willing to stand? If some of us are called like Philip was called, he was called to be an Evangelist. It tells us that he left Jerusalem. That was the city that was being persecuted. All of the Apostles were still in Jerusalem and they were being persecuted there. It tells us, because of that persecution, they were scattered abroad, going everywhere, preaching the Word (Acts 8:4). Scattered everywhere preaching the Word.

Satan thought that if he could just break up that nucleus at Jerusalem and scatter people, that he could begin to crush this Christian movement. What he didn't realize was it spread it instead.

I worked in a refinery, as I said. One of the things you learn early on, if you are fighting fires in a refinery, is you don't take a fire hose and start shooting it into gasoline that is burning. Unless you want burning gasoline everywhere. I always remember that because when I read this, it comes to me that they thought they could put the fire out and what they did was scatter it everywhere. It says they were scattered abroad and went everywhere, preaching the Word. So instead of putting the fire out at Jerusalem, they scattered the fire and fire started breaking out everywhere and made it all that much more difficult for Satan to put out the fire.

Philip went down into the city of Samaria (Acts 8:5). I've always had difficulty when you talk about going down. For me, directions are like a globe. Going north is up. I always hold my maps north up. But the Bible is consistent with some others who don't think like I do. It says he

went down to Samaria. That is actually going north to Jerusalem. He preached in Samaria. He preached the Word of God.

Remember, this is a time of great persecution. What happened at Samaria? Those who saw the things that Philip did, which were casting out unclean spirits and they cried aloud with a loud voice and came out of many that were possessed, cured many that were taken with palsy and were lame, and were healed, it says, they heard him and they were converted by Philip's preaching there. (v.6,7)

It says, Simon, a sorcerer, was observing what Philip did. It says, after a while, he was convinced too. (v.9-13) We have to be careful, once we believe, what we believe. It says, the sorcerer believed but he kept looking at Philip and he kept thinking, how is Philip doing that? When Philip began to baptize, it says, they sent Peter and John to help him with the work. When Simon saw what they were doing, baptizing them and the Holy Spirit being given unto them, Simon said within his heart, can you give me that power? And he offered them money. (v.14-19) Isn't that sad? That having come so close, he thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money. The love of money is the root of all evil, isn't it? (I Titus 6:10)

Finally when the work is done for Philip at Samaria, the Spirit says, now go down to a desert place. (v.26) Philip had just worked in the dense metropolis of Samaria. And the Spirit says, go down to a desert place. I have to believe he said, a desert place. What can be in a desert except nothing? But the Spirit knows better, doesn't it? He got down there and it says, behold an Ethiopian, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of Ethiopia, who had charge of all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning and sitting in his chariot, read Isaiah the prophet (v.27,28).

I take notice that when the Spirit took Philip down to the desert to intercept this eunuch, that he wasn't just sending him to somebody who had never heard anything, who had no faith - not that that is bad - but when people are searching for the truth, the Spirit of God is not going to let them down, even if they are out in the desert. That is what I want to point out.

Sitting in his chariot, he read Esaias the prophet and then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near and join thyself unto him. Then Philip ran thither to him and heard him read the prophet Esaias and said unto him, do you understand what you have just read? He said, how can I except somebody should guide me? It says, Philip got up there and explained unto him this Scripture. (v.28-31) Explained unto him Jesus Christ and what Jesus Christ had done for us. How he had died and how the prophet had spoken of that.

"In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I

pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." Acts 8:33-35.

This is not just a moment in time that this man's heart was changed. It tells us, he went to Jerusalem to worship. I have often said, if you have a heart that says, I don't believe, I am not going to believe and I intend to stay that way, then God is going to leave you that way. You at least have to give God a chance. Just like this eunuch. We at least have to say, I am neutral in the matter. If I can be convinced, I will listen and I will respond. The eunuch was in that way.

So today we ask ourselves, how committed are we? Which one of these characters that we read about today could we represent? Are we willing to be the one who God says, I am going to let you give yourself all the way to death? Are we okay with that? We're not real sure, are we, sometimes.

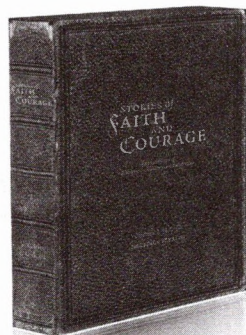
I have often wondered, what is grace like that allows somebody to

live like that? I thought to myself, I would like to have that kind of grace. But you know what? If you don't need it, God doesn't give it to you that way. He gives you the grace you need to carry through with the responsibilities He's given you. Just like Tyndale, the one that translated the Bible into the English language so we could read it today, do you realize how much he was hated for doing that? We are told that he was burned at the stake for doing that and that was his only infraction. It says, a few years after that, they were still so angry at him that they dug up his bones and then buried the remnants of his bones. His infraction was translating the Bible so that others could read it.

I have often wondered, what is grace like that allows you to do that? I think until we need it in that fashion, we won't find out. But are we willing to put ourselves in a position where God can give us the grace to do even that?

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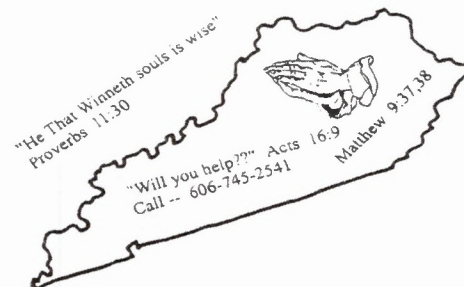
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Lifestyle: It's A Choice

"Lifestyle" is a fairly new term, having been coined in the first part of the 20th Century. It is that group or set of behaviors and habits which identify us within our social structure. Our lifestyle is indicative of our beliefs, attitudes, and values. The very essence of who we are is evidenced by what we buy, what we wear, how we conduct ourselves in various situations, with whom we associate, where we go, and how we entertain ourselves; hence our "style of living." Even our view of the world (socially, geographically, and spiritually) depends largely upon the lifestyle we've adopted.

Except for financial constraints and health considerations, most of the behaviors, attitudes, and values that make up our lifestyle are voluntary. We make choices every day based upon this collection of preconceived notions which have had their genesis somewhere in our past and have been continually influenced and shaped by subsequent experiences and processed information.

Variations in lifestyles can often be a cause for conflict in relationships, particularly in marriages when two potentially very different lifestyle backgrounds are meshed into one. Conflicts because of lifestyle differences can also occur in the workplace, in social circles, and in the church. We are warned in God's Word that making comparisons between ourselves is unwise. A good approach is to examine our own lifestyle first, comparing it against the Bible, and then encourage one another to lifestyles that bring forth love and good works.

2 Corinthians 10:12 "...but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

Romans 14:10-12 "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

1 Peter 4:5 "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and

the dead."

Hebrews 10:24 "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:"

Since the way we choose to live our lives has its foundation in our past and the resulting decisions we make are likely habitual, it is often difficult to realize that lifestyle is indeed a choice. Acknowledging that it is a choice is the first step in accepting the responsibility for biblical stewardship and our way of life. The Bible instructs us to be holy in every area of our lives. Our lifestyle must not be in violation of God's Word.

1 Peter 1:15 "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;"

Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

As our parents have "trained" us and our histories have shaped us, so likewise we have the potential to mold the lives of our children, the pattern of which will continue on into their adulthood and so be passed on, probably with some modifications, to their children. This continuity is often evident as we observe extended families exhibiting similar traits and behaviors.

We mentioned earlier that financial constraints have the potential to greatly alter a predefined or preferred lifestyle. Perhaps some of the comforts or luxuries which were available to us at one time are no longer an option due to the lack of finances. However, occasionally certain of these "luxuries" may still be indulged in at the expense of more basic needs and, depending upon individual circumstances, these indulgences have the potential to cause hardship in families. This is particularly so when communication isn't adequate and purchases are made independently to satisfy the needs of one or a few regardless of the needs of the whole family unit. There have been those situations where because of an unwise purchase the family suffered even to the point of not having enough food and clothing.

Philippians 4:11 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be

content."

1 Timothy 6:6 "But godliness with contentment is great gain."

1 Timothy 6:8 "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

Although we've established that, for the most part, our lifestyles have become part of us through time, peer pressure can cause discontentment such that because of envy, people can be driven to make purchases far beyond their means to the detriment of others. God's Word teaches us to be content with whatsoever we have.

Hebrews 13:5 "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have:..."

In today's world with the bombardment of advertisements through a variety of media, we are constantly being made aware of: things we supposedly need, food we could be eating, vacations we must take, and the list goes on. Also, in today's "liberated" society, we are encouraged to participate in "alternate" lifestyles that are clearly an abomination to God. Therefore we do need to realize that our whole conversation, as the Bible calls lifestyle, must be free from sin with moderate appetites and ambitions that we might live at peace and one day be found blameless before God.

Philippians 4:5 "Let your moderation [appropriate behavior] be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand."

2 Peter 3:10-14 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 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."

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HAITI

Data updated from the Apostolic Christian World Relief web site as of January 14th, 2009 -www.acworldrelief.org/work-teams-caribbean/

Project	Year 2010	Coordinator	Capacity				
La Romana - D/R Lifeline Construction	Feb 2-9	Ted Steidinger 815-867-6452 tsteid@route24.net	12	Les Cayes MEBSH School Roof	Mar 19-26	Rich Bertschi 309-467-2351 lemangm@mtco.com	12
Les Cayes SEED Agriculture Aid	Feb 5-12	Dale Frank 319-766-3661 dtfrank@louisacomm.net	12	Les Cayes MEBSH Haiti Support	Mar 26-29	Rich Bertschi 309-467-2351 lemangm@mtco.com	12
Croix De Bouquets Lifeline Constr/Medical	Feb 9-16	Neil Bahler 815-692-2370 nbahler@gmail.com	12	Les Cayes MEBSH Maintenance	Mar 26-Apr 5	Jon Zeller 309-266-9009 jzeller@mtco.com	12
Haiti Palm Grove Construction	Feb 12-20	John Aberle 785-459-2423 jraberle@hotmail.com		Les Cayes AWA Water Aid	Apr 23-30	Troy Stuber 309-925-2603 troystuber@verizon.net	4
Les Cayes MEBSH School Roof	Feb 22-Mar 1	Randy Kieser 309-695-6340 kieser84@geckoct.com	12	Les Cayes MEBSH Medical	May 7-14	Keith Knepp 309-467-4691 kknepp@mchsi.com	8
Les Cayes FRW Vocational School	Mar 3-12	Rick Wuethrich 219-567-9488 rick@wuethrichfarms.com	4	Les Cayes FRW Vocational School	Jun 4-11	Rick Wuethrich 219-567-9488 rick@wuethrichfarms.com	4
Les Cayes FRW Simone Orphanage	Mar 12-19	Rick Wuethrich 219-567-9488 rick@wuethrichfarms.com	12				

Haiti and Jamaica Work Team Code Definitions

CCCD = Caribbean Christian Center for the Deaf

MEBSH = Missions of Evangelical Baptists of South Haiti

Palm Grove = Mission of Haiti

S.E.E.D. = An Agricultural School & Extension Service

TBA = To Be Announced

Palm Grove = Mission of Haiti

A.W.A. - B. = Apostolic Water Aid/Bluffton

A.W.A. - FRW = Apostolic Water Aid/Francesville, Remington, Wolcott

A.W.A. - T = Apostolic Water Aid/Tremont

(*) = Changes or additions since last issue

()** = Spring Break Timeframe

USA World Relief Committee

For area work or disaster projects, please contact the following USA committee member:

* Bro. Kent Heimer	<i>Counseling Elder</i>	Taylor, MO	Cell# 573-248-5701
* Bro. Paul Kaeb	<i>Chairman</i>	Bern, KS	Cell# 785-547-5269
* Bro. Chuck Kellenberger	<i>Sec/Treasurer</i>	Elgin, IL	Cell# 224-629-6531
* Bro. Les Schambach	<i>Administrator</i>	Elgin, IL	Cell# 630-247-5271
* Bro. Bill Leman		Roanoke, IL	Cell# 309-241-0257
* Bro. Tom Neuenschwander		Bluffton, IN	Cell# 260-307-6026
* Bro. Ray Slagel		Fairbury, IL	Cell# 815-848-3714

JAMAICA

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Project	Year 2010	Coordinator	Capacity				
Jamaica Deaf Villg CCCD	Feb 27 - Mar 6	Brian Huber 219-253-8304 bwhuber@urhere.net	40	Jamaica Deaf Villg CCCD	Jun 11-19	Ted Hirstein 309-266-8769 hirstein@mtco.com	40
Kingston School CCCD	Mar 20-27	Roger Stoller 309-747-3228 rstoller@gridcom.net	40	Knockpatrick Schl CCCD Mansfield SS	Jun 26 - Jul 3	Peter Webel 419-564-5691 wpw47@aol.com	40
Kingston School CCCD Peoria SS	Jun 5-12	Dean Thomas 309-243-2216 dathomas@mtco.com	Peoria Bible Class Only				

MEXICO

If anyone is interested in leading a team to Mexico, contact Bro. Mike Fiechter at 260-597-7330 or mfiechter@onlyinternet.net
Data updated from the Apostolic Christian World Relief web site as of January 14th, 2009 -www.acworldrelief.org/work-teams-mexico/

Location	Year 2010	Coordinator					
Magdalena Construction	Feb 6-13	Mike Zimmerman Congerville/Eureka 309-467-5464 mzimmerman004@gmail.com		Magdalena Construction	Mar 27 - Apr 3	Curt Hodel Roanoke Bible Class 309-923-8091 cjhodel@juno.com	
Agua Prieta Construction	Mar 6-13	Kevin Gerber 260-565-3313 kevgerber@yahoo.com		Reynosa Medical	Apr 7-14	Cheryl Herrmann cherrmann@verizon.net	
Magdalena Construction	Mar 6-13	Adam Adrian/ISU Illinois State University 573-231-6433 adam_adrian@hotmail.com		Magdalena Construction	Jun 5-12	Stan Schick Princeville Sunday School 309-243-9281 schickfam@juno.com	
Magdalena Construction	Mar 13-20	Sam Kaufman/Purdue Purdue University 260-494-8733 sjkaufma@purdue.edu		Magdalena Construction	Jun 19-26	Benj Knapp Washington Sunday School 309-467-5274 benjknapp@homewayhomes.com	
Reynosa Construction	Mar 20-27	Tristan Herrmann/U of I University of Illinois 309-712-6902 tristanherrmann@gmail.com		Magdalena Construction	Jul 17-24	Blake Stahl 630-740-7461 bcstahl@aol.com	
Magdalena Construction	Mar 20-27	Linc Rinkenberger Bluffton Senior Class 260-565-4155 rinkfamily@adamswells.com		Magdalena Construction	July 24-31	Scott Bahr Detroit Bible Class 248-924-7547 spbahr@yahoo.com	
Agua Prieta Construction	Mar 20-27	Aaron Beery 330-927-6926 beeryaaron@embarqmail.com		Reynosa Medical	Oct 6-13	Cheryl Herrmann cherrmann@verizon.net	



REMEMBERING

Our Spiritual Heritage

This begins a series on the funeral of Elder Bro. Noah Schrock of the Oakville, Iowa, congregation. His funeral took place on April 8, 1976. This is not a transcript of the funeral comments. Rather, it is a written account of the day and lists the principals who conducted the funeral. With the passing of this church leader, a deep spiritual feeling enshrouded the sanctuary and the entire day. The following was an attempt to record the sense of brotherhood that Bro. Noah, and all of us, treasured so highly. It was written a few weeks after the event took place, and is now being published.

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Assisted by:

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Elder Bro. Leroy Huber, Eureka, Illinois
Elder Bro. Joshua Broquard,
Fairbury, Illinois

The Funeral

A diligent, tireless servant in the Lord's vineyard was laid to rest on April 8, 1976, near Oakville, Iowa. Bro. Noah Schrock, Christian stalwart, defender of the faith, for years the doctrinal leader of the Apostolic Church, and — most important of all — a humble child of God finally went the way of all flesh. Last respects were

accorded him in services held at his beloved and picturesque country church nestled in the bluff near the mighty Mississippi River — and his remains were buried in the little church plot located a few minutes away on the hill above the church.

After performing ministerial duties over a span of many decades, the time of parting was at hand. A host of brethren from many states journeyed to this quaint church to say "farewell" to this dear brother in Christ who was esteemed and loved from church to church throughout the land. In addition, his devoted wife, Sis. Hattie, and his children and grandchildren, as well as many other close relatives were in the throng. In all, 27 Elders from 8 states were able to attend these last rites along with a sizable number of ministering brethren and a large gathering of lay members of the church from far and near. The church was filled to overflowing. In death, as in life, Bro. Noah Schrock was in the midst of a large assembly of believers.

The passing of this devout man of God was, perhaps, a poignant reminder that, amid a rapidly changing world, his presence and counsel would be missed. And that his demise — and his silence — was a clarion call to those left behind to strive diligently for the preservation of the faith and to "strengthen the things which remain." No doubt, a concern he carried to his grave was that the church he loved so well — and lent himself to so forthrightly — would not become lukewarm, fall asleep, or grow blind to the subtle and apostate devices of the adversary against whom this effective soldier always fought. One of his main hopes in life was that the

church he embraced so resolutely could indeed be adorned as a bride who awaits her Bridegroom (Christ Jesus).

From a physical standpoint, it seemed the day was very appropriate. The sun was shining brightly. The sky was cloudless. The crisp, lean, spring-time air was fresh and mellow. A peaceful quality ensued. The order and perfection of God seemed to reverberate through the atmosphere. A tranquil feeling reposed upon the heart, and the presence of God was evident. The "order" which Bro. Schrock advocated in the church seemed to be symbolized in the near-perfect state of the weather that day.

Along with such order was the presence of the Elder brethren who were seated in the cross benches in a front corner of the sanctuary during the funeral services. Bro. Noah toiled many long years with these brethren as advocates of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. As they stood by him in life (and he by them), they were at his side at his hour of death. It all seemed so fitting and in good order. Thus, in his last visit to his Oakville congregation, the "order" he believed in was everywhere. In the skies, in the church, and in everyone's hearts.

By: Perry A. Klopfenstein

Next Issue:

A continuation of this service

Please note:

This writing will be available in printed form. Please watch for ordering information in the next issues of the Silver Lining.

The Light Of Hope

“Church Leadership”

Retired Elder Bro. Willis Ehnle, formerly of Shioda, Japan

An Elder in our church once said to me, “We didn’t write the Bible.” I believe we had been talking about the Biblically based traditions of our church. This statement indicates to me that this Elder did not believe he should be blamed or criticized for what is plainly written in the Bible. It further indicates to me that church leadership has the responsibility of teaching and exhorting what the Bible teaches, not what the leaders may think themselves, as if they were writing the Bible.

Another question that arises in my mind is, “How much authority should an Elder in a church have?” If you want a pure democracy, the leader would need to do and teach whatever the congregation requests. A democracy means rule by the people. In our country we are officially called a republic, not a democracy. We elect people who represent us and make our laws. Please correct me if I’m wrong.

Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, it is written, “He taught them as one that had authority.” (Mark 1:22). I believe this means that He spoke with great certainty that what He said was true. He and the Father are one. Christ is divine so He could be certain and authoritative. Church leaders also have divine authority so long as they teach what

the Bible says, what the Father says. They personally are one of the congregation, for the Bible says, “All have sinned and come short of the kingdom of God.” (Romans 3:23). However, God has ordained that someone must take the leadership position.

Titus 2:15 reads, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority.” Hence, the Bible commands church leaders to use their authority, that is, the authority of their office. What they say is for themselves, too, first of all. Their authority is to teach God’s Word, and where the Bible rebukes, leaders should rebuke.

I have been thinking about the safety of group leadership. When decisions must be made about something that is not precisely taught in the Bible, it would appear that there is safety in having more than one leader involved in the decision. Proverbs 11:14 reads, “In the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

The Lord Jesus Christ sent out his disciples two by two. Mark 6:7 “And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two.” Evidently, it is much better to have someone with you to caution you, if necessary, and to share in the responsibility for what you do and say.

The early church had to make some decisions about controversial matters. In Acts 15:6 we read, “And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.” The matter which they considered is whether or not it was necessary to keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. Verse 5, “Command them to keep the law of Moses.” Peter spoke first, then Paul and Barnabas, and lastly, James, who put forth a proposition that they all accepted, some, no doubt, reluctantly. However, there was group leadership, and the matter was considered very carefully. James suggested what they should write in a letter to all the churches, stating church policy for everyone. Someone had to make a decision and that decision was made with no one person taking responsibility. It was a group decision and the responsibility rested on the group, not on any one individual.

In our church today, an Elder often consults with one or more other Elders about a matter in his church. We have an Elder Committee consisting of five Elders, which makes decisions that are subject to the Elder Body as a whole. There is safety in group leadership. Let’s rejoice and encourage our church leaders, in 2010.

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