



# Newsletter

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## THE BRIDGE CHURCH

**Pastor: Jamie Lee**

Hello from Champaign, Illinois. The times we are facing are very challenging. Shortly after the tragedy of George Floyd took place in Minnesota in May, Champaign was hit with rioting and looting. Our city was on lockdown and within 1 minute of where we live the Dollar Store was broken into. There were threats the rioting would move into the subdivisions on the outskirts of town; thankfully they did not. This is probably not the start of a newsletter you were expecting, but what it does is let all of our supporters know this is the time we live in and we as the Bridge Church are in the front lines desiring to bring peace.

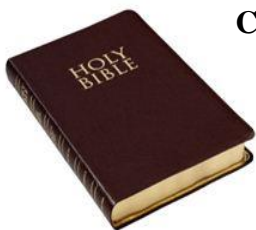
The picture to the upper right of our newsletter is of Pastor Andre (Restoration Church - Urbana) and myself. The Tuesday after the looting took place we met up. After we embraced for a few seconds I told him, "I am proud to call you my friend." You see, about 6 months ago he drove by our office and noticed our sign. He decided to stop and get to know us. From that time on, we hang out and talk quite a bit. What is amazing about Andre is he stood in front of Target and told people who were trying to break-in and steal to turn around and go home. He is my brother in Christ!

We had a family vacation already in the works at the end of June and we enjoyed our time in Florida (picture upper left). We had a lot of time to relax, recharge, and refocus. We spent a majority of our time on the beach, in the pool, and making memories. We had such a great time together, one to be remembered for years to come. The young lady in the picture is from Mount Vernon, IL where we lived for 7 years. We met her about 5 years ago and she became like family. It was a blessing to have her join us.

We continue to serve the community and our people. We are still discipling and training around 10 people on a regular basis. We currently are having services online. As you know, restrictions are slowly being lifted but we continue to abide by state and county regulations. It hasn't been easy by any means, however, we constantly strive to love our community and share the truth of the Gospel, with them. The AMC 13 Theater is still shut down here in Champaign which brought us another challenge of building location. We are currently looking and by the time you receive this letter we will more than likely have a temporary contract signed.

God has been teaching me so much during this time that by the time this is over I will be completely reshaped. While on vacation I read a book called, "Acres of Diamonds." The book came at the right time as the author talked about that God is working even when we don't see it. I would like to give you some one liners from the book that brought encouragement to me because I do think, even during this pandemic and chaos God is refining lives!

**1.** Asking God for something is not just about Him giving you what you ask. It's about Him preparing you to be able to handle it **2.** Satan knows your potential, and his greatest fear is that you will discover who you really are, what you're worth, and where you're really headed. **3.** Your purpose does not change in a storm. **4.** It's not what happens to you, it's what happens in you that makes the difference. May God richly bless you all! Be encouraged today!



**CAMP MEETING**  
**September 13 – 16**  
**CAMP HOPE**  
**Ewing, Illinois**



**DR. EDDIE MOODY**  
**Executive Secretary.**  
**National Association of Free Will Baptists**  
**Evangelist**

## **ARNOLD VIEW CHURCH**

**Pastor: Ivan Ryan Assistant Pastor: Adam Brown Reporter: Buddy Parks**

Brother Jamie Lee shared a timely devotion on our Wednesday Evening Conference Call on July 1. Donald Fluck, 83, passed away on July 6. Condolences to his family. Brother Adam Brown brought the Morning Worship Message on July 12. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

Congratulations to Dylan and Sarah Pyron on the birth of River Keith Pyron on June 25. Also, congratulations to Robby Clark-Stokes and Katie Damron-Stokes on the birth of Madelynn Jo Ann Stokes on June 26.

Average Morning Worship attendance for June was 74. The youth group enjoyed an outside social on June 17. Special thanks to Adam Brown for planning the event. We are utilizing Zoom, Google Meet and Conference Call for Sunday School Classes. Also meeting on Wednesday Evening Bible Study on Conference Call, while the teens are meeting on Wednesdays via Google Meet. The teens will be taking part in Impact Hometown on July 18. Gerald Morris, 73, died in an automobile accident on June 25. Condolences to his family. Brother Adam Brown brought our Morning Worship Message on June 28. Our Morning Worship Service is put on YouTube and Facebook a few hours after the actual service. *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." – Phillipians 4:13*

## **HARMONY CHURCH**

**Pastor: Bruce Thurman Reporter: Cody Alstat**

Hello from Harmony. We hope everyone is staying safe and healthy during these times that we are facing. We met back for the first time for our Masters of Men and Sisters of Strength meetings on June 9<sup>th</sup>, we are planning on meeting again this month and have a Fish Fry on July 18<sup>th</sup>. We honor the graduates on June 31<sup>st</sup> during our morning worship, we wish each one of them as they continue their journey. We are planning a church yard sale on July 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> with the proceeds going to CTS for next year. Please keep Jeff and Dawn Hartwick in your prayers, Dawn was in a bad accident while on vacation in Arkansas. She was airlifted to Springfield Missouri. Although she is doing better at this point she has a considerable road ahead of her, be much in prayer for her and Jeff.

*"I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." - John 8:12*

## **OAK VALLEY CHURCH**

**Pastor: Richard Brown Reporter: Marie Rutger**

Greetings to all our fellow Christians.

We have kept busy during the past 3 months or so. Brother Richard called us and gave us a good scripture each day and we called each other. Several services were on line for those who could get it on phones too. Then we began gathering in the parking lot and listened in our cars, then in the back yard under the shade. Finally we were in the church June 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. It is real good to back to the church even if we have to stay apart. We pray this all goes away soon, but it looks like it may even get worse before it gets away.. God can heal us all and I believe He has a hedge around His children.

Brother Richard keeps the Geff Hope Ministry going each 3rd Saturday of the month, and helps about 150 families or so. Thank you Lord for Brother and Sister Richard Brown and all they do for our church and the Hope Ministry. Bless them real good. We hope to go to the nursing home at Cisne and Brookstone again soon.

*"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not." – Proverbs 4:5a*

## **SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT ASSOCIATION "Time to Reconnect" AUGUST 1 - 9:00 AM**

The District Association of Free Will Baptists will be held Saturday, August 1, at the Pittsburg Free Will Baptist Church. Our business session will be as brief as possible. Instead of a guest speaker for our worship service, we ask that the pastor or a representative of each church share a short testimony of how the Lord has worked in their congregation or community during the pandemic. This will be a special time of sharing praise and prayer needs. No meal will be served.

The host church's social distancing guidelines will be observed. For more information, please see the South Central's Facebook page.

## **JCity Church**

**Pastor: Keith Fletcher**

We've had another busy summer feeding children at Lunch Bunch, but this, our 11<sup>th</sup> season, has been like no other. Because of the pandemic, we delivered meals to children's homes with our church bus, by volunteers in cars, and by parents picking up meals at a drive-through at the church. We served over 4,300 meals in June alone and are considering serving meals through the middle of August. We include craft activities for the kids each day based on a new Bible story each week. God has also provided a large amount of food and financial support enabling us purchase new freezers and another commercial refrigerator. July 6-10, Lunch Bunch hosted a 5-Day Club with two Child Evangelism Fellowship student missionaries. About a dozen children ages 5-12 spent 90 minutes each afternoon learning the Bible with songs, memory verses, games, and stories.

Because of our church's ongoing community ministry ("outside the box"), we don't feel that we ever really closed. We only stopped meeting in person in our auditorium for a time. We resumed those in-person gatherings June 7 with social distancing guidelines in place, and we continue to livestream our services each week on Facebook. Every Sunday more of our regulars return to worship in person, and guests have joined us most Sundays

## **HAZEL DELL CHURCH**

**Pastor: Curtis Smith Reporter: Diana Kirk**

Congratulations to Brother Curtis, Sister Emilee, Titus and Lydia on the arrival of the newest addition to their family. Miss Abigail Marie was born on June 30<sup>th</sup>. She attended church for the first time on Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, so Brother Curtis could introduce her to the congregation. What a blessing from God!!!

Our Sunday morning worship service, with Children's Church ministry is up and running on schedule again. Sunday evening services are also being held, with our children's group meeting for their study time. For those still uncomfortable with attending in person, Brother Curtis is making online services available. Sunday mornings are being broadcast on the radio as well for those wishing to remain in their cars for service. We are not having Sunday School at this time. As of now, we are holding off on inside Wednesday evening prayer meeting. This is online as well.

Thank you to all who donated food, money and assistance in preparing/delivering the Senior meals. This was a much appreciated ministry during the uncertain times we were experiencing. Praise God that things are somewhat "normal" again. Take care and stay safe.

*"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." - Psalm 122:1*

## **BLUE POINT CHURCH**

**Pastor: Ernie Lewis Reporter: Suzanne Lewis**

On a recent Saturday evening there was a wedding shower for Rebecca Smith and Nicholas Eckelberry held at the church. Although it was planned as a drive-by outdoor shower, rain forced them to relocate into the Link. The couple had decorated the gym beautifully and served some delicious refreshments. They received an assortment of nice wedding gifts.

We hosted the East Central District meeting. Lots of missionary news was shared. Craig Smith of the Mt. Vernon Church brought the morning message. Our ladies actually served the noon meal with their gloves on.

In the month of July we have held two in-person services each Sunday morning: 9:30 and 10:45am. We are enjoying our newly renovated auditorium with white walls and new carpet. Our new worship chairs will be coming soon. Brother Ernie has also put a service online each week. He continues to post daily devotionals on Facebook and our website. We hope to resume our regular schedule in August.

## **MASTER'S MEN RETREAT At CAMP HOPE SEPTEMBER 17-19**

**Details and Schedule will be announced soon.**

## BAKERVILLE CHURCH

**Pastor: David Mishler**

In the words of the prophet Joel, **“Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?”** These have been trying and unusual times, but we can rest assured that our God knows all about it and He is in control! Keep the faith and share the joy with others for God has not changed!

We here at Bakerville had several weeks of “Drive-In” church and even had some visitors during that time, but we were all quite thrilled to start back with our 10 a.m. service inside the building on June 21<sup>st</sup> and even more excited on July 12<sup>th</sup>, when we started our Sunday School and Sunday Evening service. By the time you read this, our Bakerville family should be back in full swing with plans to add back in some of our other activities soon! (*Psalm 122:1- “I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go into the house of the Lord”*). While social distancing does prevent the hugs and handshakes, we are just blessed and thrilled to be able to see and talk with our friends and church family.

Congratulations to our graduates; Brylie Brands-8<sup>th</sup> Grade; B.J. Overturf-High School and Wesley Kash-Law Degree. Also please keep Wesley Kash in your prayers; in June he was in a farming accident and had to be air-lifted to St. Louis. God certainly watched over Wesley and we give God the praise that Wesley was able to return home a few days after the accident and is now in the process of recovering. One of our members, Brother Jake Howell, went to be with his Lord and Savior on June 25<sup>th</sup>, after suffering a massive stroke. He will be greatly missed.

We honored our Mothers and Fathers with a gift on each of their special days and while the Mother’s had to celebrate from the parking lot, and the fathers got to go inside the church building, we still distributed the father’s gifts from the trunk of a car, just to be fair! LOL

Just a word of THANKS to all of those here at Bakerville who give of their time and money to be sure that God’s house is well maintained. Just like home, there are yards to mow, repairs to be made, dinners to cook, cleaning to be done and technology to be operated and updated. And just like home, everyone must do their part to get it all done. Never think that what you do is petty and unappreciated, for it takes everyone working together to make it happen! You are appreciated and God sees every act of kindness and sacrifices made. And that is a ditto for all churches!!!!

*“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” – Colossians 3:23-24*

## AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM BRIDGE BUILDERS FOR THE CROSS

For a number of years food shortages in Cuba have continued to worsen. The economy of Cuba has continued to decline from a number of factors including the deteriorating economic and the social decline of Venezuela and the embargo enacted many years ago.

With the 3 trips I have made in the past year, undoubtedly the biggest complaint I heard was the shortage of food. In March of this year we were told that if we wanted coffee to drink, we would need to bring it! Cuba has always been a big coffee producer! Wikipedia reports, “As of 2015, Cuba imported about 70–80% of its food and 80–84% of the food it rations to the public.” We feel the situation has declined considerably since then.

With all of this said, *Bridge Builders for the Cross* has decided to be proactive and ship several containers of food items to Cuba to be distributed among the Cuban Free Will Baptist Convention. The first one will be all rice. That is a Cuban staple. We hope and pray the containers thereafter will be a mix of rice, beans, cooking oil, etc. Canned meat is prohibited. We have been in conversation with Ramon Sanchez, president of the Free Will Baptist Convention in Cuba and he is going through the process of authorization.

We are talking of approximately \$25,000 per container which will include the products and shipping from point of pick up in the US to Havana, Cuba. We appreciate your prayers! Certainly, any monetary donation towards this project to help feed our fellow Christian brothers and sisters in Cuba is more than appreciated!

-Gary Curry

**Note:** Bridge Builders for the Cross was founded by Jim Dycus and Gary Curry and is a partner with our FWB IM Board. You may send donations for this project to:

**Bridge Builders for The Cross, Inc.**

P.O. Box 2623 Ada, OK 74821

or you may telephone Gary Curry at (580)320-1473



## FIRST CHURCH – MOUNT VERNON

**Pastor: David Shores Associate Pastor: Craig Smith**

After an outdoor Homecoming Service on June 7<sup>th</sup>, we began having our services in the church sanctuary on June 14<sup>th</sup>. The two Sunday morning services meet at 9:00 am and 10:30 am, and we decided to meet for the Sunday School lesson on Wednesday evening at 6:00 pm and our teachers scheduled to teach on a rotating basis. With this process we get to hear all our teachers! We are continuing to post our services on Facebook and sending out a telephone conference call.

Some of the ladies in the church bake pies, cakes or cookies to help with the Solid Rock Soup Kitchen in Mount Vernon. Because of Covid 19, the folks who were being fed had to take their meals with them, but recently the kitchen was allowed to let them come back in and eat at the table. They all said that a great part on this ministry is the fellowship they enjoy eating and visiting with one another.

Many of our readers know Sister Esther Edwards who was a very active member of our congregation. Because of a fall she suffered a fatal injury. Her funeral was conducted at our church on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Esther was very busy at our church in many ways and was alert and healthy as she was approaching her 87<sup>th</sup> birthday. She will be greatly missed. We pray for her family during this time.

Another person who had attended our church for about one year went to be with the Lord on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. Ralph Nunley was a gifted artist, avid Bible student and loved to help people. His family also needs your prayers.

Pray for our congregation as we take steps to get back to a full schedule of services. This writer is reminded of when Israel was experiencing a very difficult time and God intervened and helped them, the Bible says:

*“Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.” - I Samuel 7:12*

## THE COMMITTEE ON DENOMINATIONAL RESEARCH: ORDINATION

The Committee on Denominational Research is conducting a survey regarding the Ordaining Committees in our local associations. These go by many names. However, they are generally responsible for examining candidates for ordination to the ministry as well as the ratifying the credentials of ministers who transfer to their association from another FWB association or denomination.

We would love to have someone from each FWB local association to fill out the survey. This can be anyone who is familiar with the committee's policies and practices. We would rather have more than one response from an association rather than none.

Here is the link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FWBordination>

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Danny Baer, Chair

Committee on Denominational Research

*Editor's Note: This is a letter I received which I wanted to share with our readers. It was sent out to leaders across the denomination, but Illinois did not have any response to it. If you can supply some information, please go the link provided and help this committee*

## 2020 Free Will Baptist Leadership Conference

The 2020 Free Will Baptist Leadership Conference returns to Nashville Airport Marriott December 7-8. Pastors, church leaders, and denominational leaders from across the country will gather to explore the theme “Refresh,” with an emphasis on church health.

Monday and Tuesday evening keynote sessions will feature Dr. Thom S. Rainer, founder and CEO of Church Answers, an online community and resource for church leaders. Prior to founding Church Answers, Rainer served as president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources. Before his time at LifeWay, he served at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for 12 years, where he was the founding dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism. Rainer is a 1977 graduate of the University of Alabama and earned M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Rainer is regarded as one of the leading voices in church health and revitalization,” notes Executive Secretary Eddie Moody. “We are glad to welcome him to the Leadership Conference, and we encourage all Free Will Baptists to take advantage of this opportunity to hear him speak.”



# newsletter

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**Note to Newsletter Reporters:** The deadline for the September Newsletter is August 15. Please send articles for publication to: [davids@mvmfreewillbaptist.org](mailto:davids@mvmfreewillbaptist.org). or to 25 Edgewood Road Mount Vernon, Illinois 62864

**Note to Quarterly Meeting Clerks:** In last month's issue, a letter was printed which had been sent out by the Historical Commission asking for each quarterly/district clerk to send a copy of the minutes of your quarterly to our NAFWB office so a record of our business sessions could be preserved.

**Note:** Brother Ernie Lewis and Brother David Shores represented Illinois at the 2020 National Associational Meeting in Nashville July 20-21.

Every board and commission had their reports, although some to report online because of the Covid restrictions in their area. We hope to have a full report in the September issue.

David Shores has copies of the Digest of Reports for the convention and you may have a copy upon request. Send a note by phone, email or by mail to the address listed above and a copy will be mailed to you