



ILLINOIS FREE WILL BAPTIST

DECEMBER 2023

NEWSLETTER

A monthly publication for Illinois Free Will Baptist families

Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

BLUE POINT CHURCH

Pastor Ernie Lewis Reporter Suzanne Lewis

We hosted a Red Cross Blood Drive in October with a good crowd participating. At our October Senior Grocery Giveaway all groceries were distributed within a half hour. Our annual Trunk or Treat was moved inside the Link due to inclement weather. Numerous tables were set up in the place of trunks. A large crowd attended, received candy, and enjoyed a supper of hotdogs and chips.

The men continue to have a monthly book/Bible study at the home of Daryl Hargrave. While there they also enjoy a meal together and some rounds of pool.

A Sunday afternoon baby shower was held for Jordan and Julia Hosick. They are expecting their first child, a baby girl. Several from the church attended an Open House for John and Darlene Hosselton, recognizing them for fifty years of service as our local funeral directors. Over the past forty years, John and Brother Ernie have done numerous funerals together.

Katie Matthews organized our Operation Christmas Child project. Numerous items were donated by the church people and over thirty people gathered one evening, filling over one hundred fifty boxes.

In December, Katie and her husband, Joe, will be going on a Hannah Project mission trip to Bulgaria. On a Sunday morning, they shared about this opportunity. We received a generous offering that will underwrite the expenses for this trip.

On the Sunday after Veteran's Day, we showed a special slide show depicting our past and present veterans from Blue Point. Our four veterans present that day were each presented with an insulated coffee tumbler and a standing ovation. Brother Ernie was able to attend the Executive Board meeting in Mt. Vernon.

Our Pickleball tournament continues on Sunday nights after the evening service in the Link.

HARMONY CHURCH

Interim Pastor: Kent Dunford Reporter: Alice Barron

On October 22nd, Barry Simpson was here to preach the morning message. He also returned later in the day to explain about estate planning. Thank you, Brother Barry for being with us. After our evening worship on October 29th, we had our Birthday and Anniversary celebration and also Pastor Appreciation for Brother Kent and Sister Tedra. They are loved and appreciated very much for what they do here at Harmony.

God provided a wonderful evening for our Fall Festival on November 4th. It was scheduled for the 28th of October but was cancelled due to the rain. We had a great turnout, lots of food, a bouncy house and Randy Blades provided tractor and trailer for great hayrides. It was a time for good Christian fellowship.

Monday, November 4th was our night for skating. 24 skaters and 7 adults were there to enjoy the evening.

One of our own went home to be with the Lord Sunday evening. Charles "Scotty" Baker ended his journey here on earth. Scotty had been sick for several years but continued to be in good spirits. He was an inspiration to all of us. He will be missed here at Harmony and our prayers go out to his family, especially his sister, Cindy Brotherton and husband, Vern, who took such good care of him.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." - II Chronicles 7:14

RESCUE CHURCH

Pastor Bryant Harris Youth pastor Ryan Payne Reporter Donna Harmon

Hello from rescue. September was a very busy month. Service was dismissed on Sunday and Wednesday evening for Camp Hope. The 12th was first day of Tuesday School. The 14th and 15th Master's Men Retreat. It was dessert Sunday for missions. 22nd through 23rd Illinois ladies fall retreat. 24th standing monthly get together for food and fellowship.

A special thanks to all the ladies that donated pies for Master's Men Retreat, another special event was cake and ice cream for Brother Bryant's birthday on the 18th. October 20th, Squad 456 new identity held at church dinner, games, and Bible time. Brother Ryan keeps the children with lots of fun times. October 22nd monthly fellowship another to enjoy God and he has allowed us to grow in all our works. 27th the church had trunk or treat at Ewing school parking lot. Brother Ivan Ryan, as he takes Promotional Secretary has our blessing and special blessing to David shores for all his dedicated years. Thanks to all the veterans that allow us the freedom we have without you this could never be. Thank you, thank you.

Rusty Carney visited our church November 5th. What a great family he has and their message they gave on living in Japan was interesting. Even the children showed love and what they did was their love for Christ. Brother rusty said they are blessed to be a blessing. Have a great Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas. What an awesome God we serve!

ARNOLD VIEW CHURCH

Pastor: Adam Brown Reporter: Jodi Tanner

It's unbelievable that December is upon us and another year is coming to a close. All ages have enjoyed game nights, Thanksgiving services with the community, or a shared meal. We've been grateful for all of these opportunities to invite others, so that we might have opportunities to share the love of Christ.

The fall sessions of Good News Club ended just a few weeks ago, but the students are still on our hearts as we wait to reconvene in the spring session. Please join us in praying for those who have attended—that they'll remember the lessons, but mostly that Jesus and the Good News team love them.

We often hear it said, "Jesus is the reason for the season." We see greenery and holly berries adorn doorways and walls as a reminder. At Arnold View, seeing children come in with scripts and hearing the sweet voices singing about the birth of a Savior are signs of the time as well. Hearing and seeing the children tell the story of Christ coming as a baby should encourage all of us to tell about his coming into our lives as Savior. I read a devotion recently about Christmas lights signifying Isaiah speaking of the coming Messiah being a light for all nations. In the Israelites' time, he was a pillar of light. Today, He is our "light of life" and provider of a joy that cannot be stolen or replaced. Rather than be discouraged with all the "tangles" of the world this Christmas season, let's strive to keep finding silver linings and looking to Him for hope and light.

"...I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." - John 8:12

PITTSBURG CHURCH

Pastors: Eddie Donelson, Keith McDannel and Josh Colson Reporter: Heather Phillips

"Change what we see in 2023!"

December is already here; November flew by and 2024 is just around the corner!! Here are some updates on the events that occurred since the November newsletter...

On Thursday night, November 9, we resumed our monthly Skate Night at Emery Brothers Skating Rink in Marion. We were so grateful to be able to come together (young and young at heart) and enjoy some good ole' fashion skating again. Everyone enjoyed a wonderful time of fellowship both on and off the rink. Our next Skate Night will be held on Thursday, December 14. Everyone is invited to join us for an evening of roller-skating fun and admission is FREE!

During the month of November, especially on November 11 as we observed Veterans Day, we think of the many men and women in uniform serving our country. Whether in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, or National Guard, they work tirelessly to keep us safe and protect the freedoms that we hold dear. Many of us have a loved one in the military and worry about their safety and well-being. As a reminder to pray PFWBC put together a baggie complete with a little toy soldier and a prayer reminder. We then gave them out during our worship services. John 16:33 says, *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in ME you may have peace in the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."* We invite you to pray with us for those in the armed forces and call God's protection upon them.

As this is being written, we are preparing for our bi-annual Church Closet Giveaway. Please join us in praying for the hundreds of souls that may walk through the doors of God's house; that they would feel His presence and desire to come back and worship with us.

We pray everyone has a safe and healthy December, all while remembering the reason for this joyous time of the year...the birth of our Savior, Jesus!!

*"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')". - Matthew 1:23*

BENTON CHURCH

Pastor: Phillip Kennedy

Can you believe we are so close to the end of the year? On October 19th we had a Student Hangout and had a great time! On October 25th after Bible study we packed treat bags for our drive-through trick or treat. We had our Drive-through trick or treat on October 31st and several cars came through.

On October 28th we had our Quarterly meeting at Arnold View FWBC. Andy Lee did a wonderful job preaching for us! On November 2nd we hosted a Student Hangout and had our biggest turn out yet. November 4th, our ladies' group had a good meeting. Marci MacDonald gave a great devotion to the ladies about Deborah.

We had our Harvest Sunday the first Sunday in November. Several gave testimonies and sang songs or shared a poem followed by a Thanksgiving style meal. We also had several visitors with us!

Pastor Phillip attended the Pastors Breakfast on November 6th. On November 10th we had our open gym night. It was a great night. On November 12th we recognized all our veterans with a thanks! We also had a special prayer time over our Operation Christmas boxes going out! We have 60 boxes this year. A few from our church attended some of the New Hope revival.

Maxine Naylor, passed away in October. She had been in the nursing home for some time but was faithful to keep in touch with our church. Please pray for her family.

Some upcoming events: December 1st is Open Gym night from 6:00p.m. to 8:00p.m. Student Hangouts are December 7th and 14th from 6:00p.m to 7:00p.m.

Our Candlelight service will be on December 20th at 6:00p.m.

Praying everyone has a wonderful Christmas season with great times of fellowship and outreach!

HAZEL DELL CHURCH

Pastor: Curtis Smith Reporter: Diana Kirk

What a beautiful fall the Lord has provided for us to enjoy!

Due to inclement weather our annual hayride had to be cancelled. We still had an evening of message, food and fellowship on October 29th. Brother Gowdy Cannon and family were with us to celebrate fall. Brother Gowdy shared the evening message with us.

We participated in the Ministerial Alliance's Trunk or Treat held at the old high school gym on October 31st. On Thursday, November 9th, we handed out 100 bags of goodies to the teachers and staff at Sesser-Valier Schools to show our love and appreciation for their dedication.

The Master's Men group met on November 12th for their monthly breakfast and devotion. Brother Rusty Miller presented the devotion. Brother Rusty Miller, Brother Justin Miller and Xavier Miller prepared breakfast. There were 8 in attendance.

On November 12th Brother Mike Miller was recognized for his service to our country. Several members displayed photographs of family members who have served in the military. We would like to thank all veterans for their service.

God's blessings to all as we enter into this very special holiday season.

"Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known unto God." - Philippians 4:6

INA CHURCH

Pastor: Brad Ryan Reporter: Katie Williams

Hope everyone has been enjoying this beautiful fall! We have enjoyed a couple of Bake Sales that our Ladies Friendship Circle have hosted to raise money for our church's Operation Christmas Child postage cost. We are so grateful for our people's generosity in this area.

On October 22nd Tara Payne, Riley Pressgrove, and Logan and Madison Darr joined our church. On November 12th Tanya Lewis became a member as well. Madison grew up in our church, but the others have all come to our church in marriage. We are thankful that God is still growing Christian families.

The last Sunday in October, we had a Youth Service during our evening service. We had a special opportunity to hear from some of our Senior students and how God is working in their lives.

October 31st, we hosted a Trunk or Treat. This indoor event was a great opportunity for many from our local community to come into the church, sit and eat, and interact with our members.

On November 12th we had our Thanksgiving fellowship meal. Going into this season of Thanksgiving, our church has so much to be grateful for: for God's protection and provision, for our wonderful pastors and their wives, for a church full of people that care and pray for one another, and so much more! Give thanks to the Lord for He is good!

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Illinois State Association of Free Will Baptists
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OR CURRENT RESIDENT

**Reporters, please note: Please send all correspondence for the Illinois Newsletter to the new Editor,
Brother Ivan Ryan. His address: iryan1970@gmail.com
The deadline for the January Illinois Newsletter is December 15th!**

Note from the Editor:

I just finished laying out my final Illinois Newsletter. The deadline was only yesterday and I usually extended that date to allow for reporters who were late getting their articles into me. However, I couldn't wait any longer this month because of the Thanksgiving holiday coming up next week. I wanted to thank all those who sent in the news from their church month after month. Without checking the records, I think this is my 540th publication which means I've been typing, copying, pasting articles for 45 years. (I had some help at different times from those who did the layouts and typing for me.)

I also wanted to thank all the State Boards and officers who have served our association during that time. We have great men and women who serve faithfully to keep our conference operating as we try to serve God. Many miles are driven by these folks who love the Lord and want to help further the Gospel through the Free Will Baptist organizations. I am indebted to all of them.

Also, special thanks to Mike and Barb Thomas who get the Illinois Newsletter printed and ready for me to mail each month. They are great to do business with and I will miss their monthly help.

Free Will Baptists have been good to me. They nurtured me, educated me, prayed for me, and helped me in many ways since I became a Christian. I trust that you will cooperate with Brother Ivan Ryan as you did with me.

His address is listed elsewhere in this newsletter, but here it is again: iryan1970@gmail.com.

Thanks to all of you who receive and read the news.

My wife Pat and I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year – 2024!

May God richly bless you during this holiday season...and always.

David Shores