



ILLINOIS FREE WILL BAPTIST JANUARY 2024

NEWSLETTER

A monthly publication for Illinois Free Will Baptist families

Note from the Editor:

Almost every month of my adult life I have had access to The Illinois Newsletter. I have read almost every copy or at least I have browsed my way through them. Some of the articles from the churches can be somewhat repetitive but reading about a church month after month and sometimes for years I have found myself becoming familiar with some of their unique events. There would always be some news of upcoming events or details perhaps about Quarterly Meetings or State Association News. I would look at it and then toss it aside. In other words, I would take it for granted. Believe you me, those days are over for me. Today I assume the responsibility of arranging this newsletter and distributing it to you. You can read it lightly and toss it aside but I will do my best to make it something worth reading and hopefully you may find informational, at least and perhaps uplifting at times.

By the time this Newsletter arrives in your email or your mail you will be fully engaged in the Christmas Season and planning for the new year. We are no different, so let's take a glimpse into the future. As a State Association we are looking forward to our State Association Meeting in March which will be hosted by the Victory Church. The theme for this year's meeting, ***For Such a Time as This***, will be developed by our three speakers. As you read about them in this issue, take some moments to pray for each of them.

Please remember that news and notes from our various churches has been and will continue to one of the main components of our Newsletter. Thank you to the eight churches who sent in reports for this issue. A brief, concise report of ministry highlights is a way we become more "Together" and we will be better acquainted and understand better ways we can pray for one another. We would love to continue hearing from our churches each month. Try to get it submitted by the 15th of the month. Send me your news at iryan1970@gmail.com, give me a call at (618) 922-2634 or contact me at 10667 Route 166 Marion IL 62959.

So as one year ends and a new one begins, let the Lord renew in your heart a fresh desire for His will in the paths He leads you. May goodness and mercy follow you throughout 2024.

We are pleased to announce the speakers for upcoming State Association Meeting March 14-15, 2024

Bro. Paul Boyer has served as Associate Pastor at Victory, our host church, for 16 years. He was saved while he was serving in the Coast Guard and came to Victory in 2006. In 2008 he was ordained as a deacon. After attending St. Louis Christian College he was ordained as a FWB minister and has served faithfully since then. He and his wife of 47 years have two adult daughters and seven grandchildren.

Bro. Kevin McNeely was saved at age 28 and answered the call to preach about three years later. He has been the pastor at the Grange Hall FWB Church south of Marion for 32 years. His goal in this life is to see people Saved, then to Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Jesus Christ. He and his wife Carla of 37 years have one adult son.

Bro. Sam Ramdail: A convert from Hinduism, Dr. Sam Ramdial has been a missionary, evangelist, pastor, college professor, and General Baptist denominational leader for 51 years. He now serves as pastor of Alexander Free Will Baptist Church in Thebes, IL. He and his wife, Sharon, reside in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. They are the parents of two children and eight grandchildren.

Bro. Jeff Nichols will be speaking at the Christian Education Board Seminar on Thursday evening. He is the State Director of Child Evangelism Fellowship of Tennessee since 2020. He has been in the ministry for over 30 years, having served as an associate at The Donelson Fellowship for 25 of those years. He and his wife, Debbie, have two adult daughters and three grandchildren.

BAKERVILLE CHURCH

Pastor: Robert Craig | Reporter: Jo Ann Craig

Greetings to our Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

I'm not sure what happened, but somehow, I failed to submit the newsletter for Bakerville for Sept, Oct and Nov. Hopefully I can get back on track! SHAME ON ME!

Now, let's see.... what has been occurring at our little church since the last report???

Each month started with our monthly visit on the 1st Tuesday of each month to Countryside Nursing Home for our Nursing Home Ministry. We enjoy our time of sharing God's Word and His love in song with the residents and usually have a few encouraging words from our Pastor Robert. It is such a blessing to see the smiles on their faces.

Each month ended with our congregational singing night, Sept 24th, Oct 29th and Nov 26th. Once again, a great time of singing and fellowship was had by all. We look forward to what, and who, the next month will bring. Come join us if your church doesn't have Sunday night services, I'm sure you will be blessed!

September 10th was our homecoming. Voices of Praise, from Stonefort, IL were our special singers and Bro David Shores brought the morning message. Both the group and Bro. David delivered God's word in song and message to those who attended (I believe we had 71 present for the service). Both did a great job! A delicious meal followed with great fellowship. The evening services were cancelled.

And October has come and gone! Fall is my favorite time of the year, I think. I love the coolness of the morning, the leaves beginning to change from their green covering to beautiful colors that only the great artist, OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, can create. The picture he paints is one of true magnificence. I guess I'm excited for the time of year and this season in our lives and at Bakerville! We had our first "Hymn Sing" on October 13. WOW, WOW, WOW. What a great time for all who attended. We will have these more often, just haven't set a time yet. Stay tuned for more info!! 🤗 Our WCS (Women Caring and Sharing) ministry meetings were held on September 9th, October 14th and November 11th with games, devotional/special speaker, special singing and, of course, good food and fellowship as always! Ladies, if you don't have anything planned, feel free to join us, we'd love to have you visit with us. The December meeting will be held on Saturday, December 9th from 10:00 am – 11:30 am.

October 29th was our monthly Congregation Night accompanied by Pastor Appreciation. Once again, a great time of singing and fellowship was had by all. We look forward to what, and who, the next month will bring. THANK YOU ALL FOR THE GIFTS, THE WORD'S OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND THE LOVE AND SUPPORT WE FEEL FROM OUR CHURCH FAMILY!

November, too, has come and gone. We had our Thanksgiving/Christmas meal on November 12th following our morning church service and dismissed evening services.

Prayer is not a back-up plan. **Prayer** is a battle plan! There is **POWER** in prayer. ***Special prayer request: PRAY FOR ISRAEL!***

Prayer: "May you be blessed in the Lord and may you be a blessing! ***Remember: "Jesus loves us just as we are, but HE loves us too much to leave us just as we are!"***

Arnold View FWB Church

Pastor: Adam Brown Reporter: Jodi Tanner

January...Some say it with pleasure anticipating the potential of "a clean slate." Others, however, say it with disdain for the snowy cold or even a dread of the unknown that may unfold. Throughout this month, we want to continue to remember the students of the Good News Club and their families. We also want to remember those within our community facing uncertainties or feeling overwhelmed. Our hope to reach those in our community in need of hearing and knowing God's gift to them.

A few weeks ago, I read a devotion paralleling the song, "Waymaker." Regardless of the weather season or life season, we can rest assured that God is making a way, forging paths, opening doors, and fulfilling His promises. In Isaiah 55:8-9, we're reminded that God's thoughts and ways aren't the same as our human ones. We know that our God has a history of creating paths through a sea, plentiful sustenance in the wilderness, and plentiful water in the desert. In every situation, God is capable of making a way.

"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:1

PITTSBURG FWB CHURCH

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

Greetings from PFWBC! We hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas season and were able to *take* a moment to reflect on all of your blessings since last *Christmas*! Our prayer is that as we face another new year we resolve to pray continually, live faithfully, and love deeply. Whatever comes, we know that God's grace is sufficient and His love is steadfast. Our heavenly Father has a plan and a purpose for each one of us. Let us begin the New Year by thanking Him for all of His blessings and praising Him for His amazing grace. Let us strive to serve Him and only Him in the New Year.

Looking back in December... our Wednesday night AWANA Club ended the 2023 year with a Christmas Party, including games and PIZZA!. We are so excited to have so many children learning about Jesus each week and digging more into God's word together! Our AWANA Club meets every Wednesday from 6:30 to 7:45pm and will resume on January 3. All ages from pre-school through High School are invited to come join in on the fun!!

On Sunday, December 10, we had our annual kids Christmas program featuring kids ranging in age from birth-5th grade. It was a beautiful evening as we worshiped the newborn KING by song, instrument solos, choir singing, and scripture readings! This is always a favorite service of many. After the program, we had a fellowship of cookies and a visit from a special guest in a red suit.

On Thursday night, December 14 we ventured out to Emery Brothers Skating Rink in Marion for our monthly skate. What a fun time we had skating and hanging out with our friends and church family! Thanks to all who came, it was such a great time of fellowship. Our next Skate Night will be held on Thursday, January 11. Everyone is invited to join us for an evening of roller-skating fun and admission is FREE!

On December 19 our ladies gathered together to enjoy a time of mingling and jingling with their Sisters in Christ while celebrating the Christmas Season. We had a packed full of fun evening with a cookie exchange of favorite Christmas treats, songs and games. What a fun night and such a blessing to get together and celebrate the birth of our Savior!

The calendar tends to slow down after the New Year at PFWBC, but we are looking forward to planning for 2024!

But the Lord is the one who is marching before you! He is the one who will be with you!

He won't let you down. He won't abandon you. So don't be afraid or scared! Deuteronomy 31:8

Benton Church

Pastor Phillip Kennedy

May God bless and pour out his blessings on the new year. It certainly has been a very busy time. On November 16th we had a student hang out. We sure hope everybody had a wonderful Thanksgiving! The Saturday after Thanksgiving we gathered at the church to decorate for Christmas. On December 1st we had an open gym night with a record attendance. On December 2nd the ladies of our church met for a time of devotion. For the month of December we had student hang outs on the 7th and the 14th. We have other activities scheduled for this month and are looking forward to the new year.

On January 5th we will have our Next Open Gym night from 6p.m. to 8p.m. Everyone is welcome!

We are hosting the South Central Illinois quarterly meeting at our church on January 27th. Ed Goode will be the Speaker.

We hope everyone has had a very merry Christmas and will have a very blessed New Year!

One More Exciting thing is that James Kennedy was accepted to Truth and Peace and is Excited about this opportunity to learn and Serve! Please Pray for him.

Ina Church

Pastor: Brad Ryan Reporter: Katie Williams

Greetings from Ina FWB Church! Towards the end of November our church was able to donate over 100 boxes to Operation Christmas Child. We look forward to doing this every year and love supporting this cause!

On November 26th, Cora Sink was baptized by her grandfather, Bro. Larry Clyatt, and our Bro. Brad. Then all four of the Sink children joined our church as members. We are thankful for the Tyler & Bethany Sink family and all they do for our church!

On December 4th, we lost a lifetime member of our church, Sis. Voris Adams. At 93, Voris left behind a legacy with many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was always faithful to our church and served in different ways throughout her many years. We are happy she is home with her husband, but will be greatly missed!

Our Ladies Friendship Circle had their Christmas party on December 6th. It is always a wonderful time of fellowship and fun. We also revealed who our Secret Sisters have been for the past year.

Later that week we had our annual "Christmas on Elm Street". This year, we helped some families in our community with groceries. It can be tough for many this time of year, finding ways to get all the extras around the holidays. God bless you all!

"Now to the Lord sing praises, All you within this place, And with true love and brotherhood, Each other now embrace, This holy tide of Christmas, All other doth deface"

Blue Point News

Pastor Ernie Lewis Reporter Suzanne Lewis

In November we held a combined quarterly business meeting and a fellowship on a Sunday evening. At the recent men's bible study, they enjoyed a catfish supper to begin the evening. Brother Ernie attended the Leadership Conference in Nashville. Keynote speaker Mark Clifton did an excellent job speaking on "Reclaiming Glory" in our churches.

We recently hosted another Senior Grocery Giveaway at our church. The American Red Cross held a blood drive in our Link. As we continue our pickleball tournament, Hope Walker and Connie McGrew won the championship in the women's doubles. Some remodeling is going on at the parsonage. The two bathrooms, laundry room, and furnace room have all received updates.

Our decorating crew did a magnificent job making ready our church and the Link for the holiday season. Everything looks beautiful. Another crew has set up our nativity in the Cisne Park. The Kingdom Builders Sunday school class held their annual Christmas breakfast with many in attendance and delicious food devoured. The 2nd through 6th grade Sunday school classes presented a program at Heritage Woods in Flora.

We have served as the headquarters for the North Wayne Ministerial Alliance Christmas food drive. We have sorted, boxed, and delivered many boxes of groceries that were donated by area churches and organizations. We have also had a crew working on a mailing for Shane and Joy Davison to their supporters. They have printed and folded many letters and labeled the envelopes in order to send out Christmas greetings to those who support this couple in France.

**Reporters please note: The deadline for the February Illinois is January 15,
Please send all articles for the Newsletter and other correspondence to Ivan Ryan
<iryan1970@gmail.com**

HARMONY CHURCH

Interim Pastor: Kent Dunford Reporter: Alice Barron

We here at Harmony pray that all our sister churches had a blessed Thanksgiving. And now Christmas is right around the corner.

November has been a busy month. On the 14th we had Masters Men and Sisters of Strength Meeting. Thanks to Sister Di Brown for bringing the devotion for SOS. Jennifer Meacham prepared 20 Holiday baskets on the 15th and was delivered by several of the ladies on the 16th.

Bro. Everett Blades went home to be with the Lord on November 20th. Bro. Everett was 84 and a longtime member of Harmony Church. Our prayers go out to his wife, Betty, and his family. He will be greatly missed. Faith Simpson came home from college for Christmas and talked about her plans to go to Japan.

And now comes the time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. On December 10th, our youth had their Christmas party and then a Christmas program was given during the morning service. Sherry Stewart directed the singing for the Christmas Carols and then they performed "Away in a Manager" on the bells. Malorie Malone sang a special song and Hailey Defenbach read a poem. What a blessing this day was. We are so proud of the children's performance.

Masters Men and Sisters of Strength met at Bonnie Cafe on the 12th for their Christmas party. A total of 28 met for games, eating and fellowship. Thank you Randy Blades for the devotion. And now we wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. May the Lord be with us all. Until 2024!

"O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation." Psalm 95:1

Johnston City First

Pastor: Randy Carney Reporter: Doug Hancock

Looking back...2023 seemed to pass by so quickly. And in the grand scheme of things, our church was richly blessed by all the events that occurred since our last posting.

Let's begin with Hometown Christmas at the end of November, when both J-City Church and our Center for Hope and Renewal passed out goodies for hundreds of children and spoke to their parents. The seventh edition of Arrow News, our town's only local newspaper, and a service of the Center, distributed throughout Johnston City for free...with more people grabbing a copy than ever. Shortly thereafter, a podcast from the Arrow, featuring the editor Keith Fletcher, was broadcast— and it's about time for the January issue to hit the streets.

Our church was blessed one Sunday morning by the Glory Gals, our ladies SS class, that sang a lively tune called "Joy ". Two weeks later, the GG's did an encore since the 3rd week of Advent is "Joy ". And our church is growing! Attendance crested over 50...first time since Covid...and we praise the Lord for the increase. Another young man, an 8th grader named Jaden, accepted Jesus as his Savior...plus Scott, a gentleman who prayed the sinner's prayer and was baptized on the 17th... and we are praying for more.

Our town's ministerial alliance meets at the Center monthly, and we did our part to fill our share of 80 boxes of food for needy families. There was a candlelight communion service on Christmas Eve night, with attendees from other churches joining us. A Christmas break VBS, titled "All Things New" was just completed, telling elementary kids about how they can be made new with Jesus. Marta Phillips is the director of VBS. Finally, we are making plans to participate in a 5th Sunday Sing in January...check your calendars (?).

We are growing closer like a family as we gather for prayer, praise and preaching. Our prayers are for your churches to be blessed the same.

We received the following letter this past month. As I read the message I was reminded of Paul's vision while he was in Troas conducting his 2nd missionary journey. As recorded in Acts 16:9, "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."

I am the pastor of the First Free Will Baptist Church in Salem, Oregon and I am also the Promotional Director for the Northwest Association of FWB (Oregon, Washington, Montana). Bro. Roy Thomas called me one day just over 35 years ago to ask me about churches

needing a pastor out west. He told me during that conversation that he was having a hard time getting men to move west of the Mississippi River and north of the Mason-Dixon Line. He asked me if he could give my name to several churches needing a pastor out west. Since I had just completed a term as interim pastor for the First FWB Church in Florence, SC, I said yes and the rest is history.

The Northwest Association has a history filled with churches closing because of the inability to secure a pastor after praying and waiting an extended period of time for God's man to come and shepherd the church. I have been at my church now 35 years and my time here is drawing to a close. I am writing to seek your help in finding an associate pastor for us here in Salem with the intent to transition into the role of senior pastor after a time of adjusting. My wife and I intend to move back east to be closer to our children. I don't want to see this church close after a long history of involvement in the city and of sharing the Gospel in a spiritually dark area of the country (the Salem church was a Home Missions work of the late 1970's).

I have listed our church's need on the NAFWB website and have included in the qualifications the ability to go long periods of time between fellowship with other FWB pastors and attendance at denominational events, conferences, and gatherings (Distance makes fellowship with other FWB difficult). I have also included the ability to withstand our rainy season from November through April and the reduced sunshine that goes along with it.

We also have a church in Eugene, OR looking for a pastor. This church is on the verge of closing after the founding pastor Mike Criswell retired after 35 years as well. It has been nearly two years since he retired. Eugene is the home of Oregon University and an hour south of Salem and two hours south of Portland on the I-5 corridor.

Would you keep us in mind as you go about your duties and I pray God will bring to mind our need at the appropriate time as you speak with others. Thank you. Here is my contact information.

Pastor Terry Motte

503-559-3684

tm1390@msn.com

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Illinois State Association of Free Will Baptists
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