



Illinois Free Will Baptist December 2015

Newsletter

NEW HOPE CHURCH – Rural Ina

The spirit of the Lord is flowing here at New Hope! As August began summer came to an end, the kids went back to school and life got busier. Our “Back to School Supply Drive” went great! We had kids from all around the surrounding area. On August 12 Kyle and Christina Kiefer welcomed Vaida Erin Kiefer into their family. Big sister Azlyn is very proud!

On August 28 Massey Curtis Fowler entered the world. He is the great grandson of Curtis and Brenda Fowler. Big sister Hadleigh and big brother Harpoole are overjoyed! Of course Shannon and CW think he’s pretty special, too! We participated in the Ina Fall Festival parade in September. We had a big group passing out church fliers, chips and water. On September 27 Steve Ladd ministered to us in song. If you ever get a chance to see him you will be blessed! He has a powerful testimony as well as a wonderful gift of music. As October rolled in we were busy planning for our Annual Harvest Festival. On October 10 we had a huge crowd, BBQ and all the fixings, great music with the Worthing10’s and Polly Launay, giveaways and a hayride to wrap up the evening. It was a great evening, enjoyed by all. All proceeds from the pie auction and donations were divided between Camp Hope and Camp WeWoSeJe.

On October 8 Colton and Becky Poole welcomed Aaiden Michael Poole to the world. He is the great grandson of Brother Raymond and Sister Jackie Capps. On October 24 the family of Fred Fowler threw a huge Birthday Bash for his 80th birthday. November began business as usual with the Women’s Auxiliary meeting on November 1. With nine members in attendance, plans for Christmas began! Brother Raymond and Sister Jackie Capps and Curtis and Brenda Fowler attended the Quarterly Meeting at Camp Hope.

November 15 was a great day at New Hope! Brother Michael Neal and Brother Adam Pierce were ordained as deacons. It was a wonderful service. The church was full of family and friends to witness this special day. We will have Thanksgiving Dinner on November 22. December will be here before we know it! We are planning on going caroling, a Christmas service and of course Christmas goodies to eat! We wish you all a wonderful holiday season. We pray for all the lost, those in pain, one another, our country and those in need.

Pastor: Craig Smith

Reporter: Tonyia Neal

BEAR POINT CHURCH – Rural Sesser

Merry Christmas to all and may you enjoy the season as you celebrate the birth of our Savior with family and friends.

Larry, Judson, Ursula and myself attended the combined district meeting of the Rend Lake and South Central districts on October 24. We heard a good message from Brother Matt Pension and a good time of fellowship.

We celebrated our 144th homecoming on October 25. Brother Ivan Ryan brought a good message and the Gospel Messengers shared in song.

We had several young people and adults who went to Harrisburg to the Judgment House on October 29.

We participated in the trunk or treat on October 30 at the Miners Memorial park in Sesser. There were more than 600 trick or treaters who came through.

We have our monthly bake sale for our youth the 3rd Sunday of each month. The proceeds are used for activities, mission trips and going to the National.

Our prayers are extended to the family of Sister Geraldine Eubanks. Sister Geraldine passed away on October 30. She was a faithful member of Bear Point until her health kept her from being able to attend.

Our annual Country Store was held on November 7. We thank each one who came and supported this event. We cleared over \$2500 and proceeds will be used for our WAC projects.

Our prayers are extended to the family of Gerome Grob. He passed away on November 12.

Pastor: Larry Cook

Associate Pastor: Judson Phenicie

Reporter: Linda Cook

HAZEL DELL CHURCH - Rural Sesser

Happy Fall everyone! What a beautiful time of year the Lord has given us!

Congratulations to Garrett and Shelda on the birth of their son, Liam Ryker Wingo, who was born on October 13th. Proud grandparents are Charlie and Gayla Wingo.

Our annual Trunk or Treat was held at the church on October 25th. A good time of food, fellowship, costumes and candy was enjoyed by all.

WAC and Men's Prayer groups met for their respective meetings on November 1st.

Congratulations to Hannah Miller who was baptized on November 1st. She is the daughter of Doug and Melinda Miller. We are so happy for Hannah and her family on her decision to follow the Lord.

Three of our church family lost loved ones recently. Our condolences and prayers go out to them in their losses. Brother Rusty Miller's sister, Vickie Wilson, Brother Eric's cousin, Landon Ross, and Sister Bonnie Ezell's son-in-law, Jeff Tindall passed away recently.

A special thank you to all who contributed to the Sesser Food Pantry, Operation Christmas Child Project and the Sesser Student Assistance Project again this year. What a blessing to be able to give to these worthwhile projects!

A big Welcome Home to Brother Brian Lewis and Brother Eric on their return to Sesser, IL. Brother Brian has returned home from Houston, Texas after six weeks of treatments. We pray for the Lord's healing for him. Brother Eric has returned home from his Mission Trip to Israel. Looking forward to hearing about this trip in the near future. A special thank you to Brother Harl Ray Lewis for taking over services while Brother Eric was away.

Trusting that all will have a happy and safe Thanksgiving!

"O Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." - Psalm 107:1

Pastor: Eric Drake

Reporter: Diana Kirk

FIRST CHURCH - Benton

God's paintbrush gave us beautiful colors for too short of a time, now those leaves are falling which means winter is close behind. Did you ever think of how even the trees know when it is time to change or how the birds know when it is time to go to a warmer climate?

Many of the church family attended the adult camp meeting and enjoyed the messages and music immensely. We were privileged to have Brother Roger Bennet speak at our church the following Sunday and bring us word of the college. Some of the men attended the steak supper at Hazel Dell and appreciate the invitation they receive every year. Several of them attended the Master's Men Retreat and enjoyed all the programs.

On November 1, Harvest Sunday was celebrated with the Victory Boys and a pot luck following the morning services. It is always a joy to hear them sing and visit with them later.

Brother Marty Leffler is recuperating nicely from his surgery, Brother Gary Simpson has been having some issues since his heart surgery and Brother Wayne Samuels is having some chest problems. Please keep them on your prayer list. Others who need prayer are the mothers of Harold Combs, Ray MacDonald, Linda Erwin and Janice Page and Mike Thomas' father Bill. It seems like our prayer lists get longer every day, but we know God's hand is on them if we just whisper their name. We need to be in prayer for our country now more than ever. A new president must be elected next year and we need guidance to select the right one. Pray too for France and the people of Paris who have been attacked in such a devious manner.

The children have packed their Operation Christmas Child boxes and they will be delivered this week. Such devotion from children and their leader Marci MacDonald with help from the Wednesday night Youth Group and their leader Alisa Leffler who helped by packaging candy for the boxes. It looks like a colorful rainbow of the colored plastic boxes on display. Each goes with a blessing for the child that receives one. They look forward to hearing which country received their boxes. Master's Men will soon be packing Christmas treats and Women's Aux. have an open house planned at the Parsonage on December 13 before evening services. God bless you all.

Pastor: Kent Dunford

Reporter: Barbara Spencer

PITTSBURG CHURCH - Pittsburg

Wow! December...really is it December?! How did that happen? Another year has come and gone, and a brand new one is just around the corner. Hard to believe!!

As of the time of this writing our fall Church Closet Giveaway is 2 days away. It is scheduled for Saturday, November 14th from 7am to noon. We are completely done with set up ahead of schedule and ready to give all of the donated items away! We have had a great amount of volunteers this time around to help with set up, which was amazing and much appreciated! One of the most common question asked concerning the Closet is why we don't charge or sell items to make money. The answer simply is because Jesus gift of salvation is free and so should the items donated be. There isn't a whole lot in this world anymore that is truly free. More importantly, there is no way to earn salvation or buy it. It is a gift and blessing to those who are willing to receive it. This is why we open our doors to whosoever should come and allow them to leave with whatever they would like to have. The blessings are magnified for them and us if there is no charge. Countless people who attend the Closet ask us each time, why we do it? Why do you give it all away? To show them Jesus loves them and cares for their needs. They usually say thank you and leave speechless. Our rally cry for 2015 was "To find ways to make Him seen in 2015!" Each Closet this is our aim: To make Him seen and shed light on His goodness and grace.

We pray that the Church as a whole around the world would desire nothing more than to shine the light of Jesus the Messiah in the darkness, especially during this holiday season. Showing the world that He is still on the throne and never left! Blessings to you and yours during the most wonderful time of the year!!

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." - Isaiah 9:6
Happy Birthday Yeshua HaMashiach!

Pastor: Eddie Donelson

Pastor: Keith McDannel

Reporter: Christina Wilcox

HERITAGE CHURCH - Springfield

These past months have been very active for us at Heritage.

Our youth had a Harvest Festival on October 28th where they were dressed as bible people. In addition to hot dogs and chili, Christian fellowship was enjoyed with their peers.

Saturday, November 1st the Decatur and Heritage Master's Men held their meeting at our church, then went to Golden Corral for fellowship.

Our youth group is growing. We have a van driver, in addition to teachers. The youth sing for us during Children's Moment.

Saturday, November 8th, after services at Heritage, a group of us went to Calvary Church to join in celebration of Silas Johnson's 30th year anniversary. We came back to Heritage for the Vespers service at 6:00 pm.

The Pastor and others have been attempting to plant bulbs for flowers in the Spring. Unfortunately, they have been getting unwanted assistance from neighborhood cats who seem to be more active in destroying the Pastor's efforts.

Sunday, November 22nd, we held our Thanksgiving service.

Remember: Always have an attitude of gratitude.

"He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty." – Proverbs 22:16

Pastor: Marcellus J. Leonard

Reporter: Marilyn Guthrie



NEW LIFE CHURCH – MACHESNEY PARK

Pastor Kenneth Henley reports that Brother Denver Hugh Dingus, deacon and Sunday School Teacher at New Life Free Will Baptist Church in Machesney Park passed away October 13th. His love for God, his wit and charm, compassion and kind ways will be missed dearly by everyone that had the chance to know him.

Please pray for his wife, Laura, his family and his church during this time of loss.

BLUE POINT CHURCH – Rural Cisne

On a beautiful Sunday evening a large crowd attended our annual Trunk or Treat. We had numerous decorated trunks and lots of candy was distributed. Hot cider, hot chocolate, punch and cookies was served on the front porch with many enjoying their refreshments and fellowship as they sat around on various bales of straw. We also served free hot chocolate at the Cisne Halloween parade. Trick or Treat bags and mini frisbees with a Christian saying on them were also given away.

We took many of the teens to see the Christian movie “Woodlawn” when it was playing in Mt. Vernon. Several of our youth had the leading roles in the Cisne production of “High School Musical”. Brother Ernie took Jon Hill from our church and Emma Guthrie of the Bethel Church to Welcome Days at Welch College. The Junior High Sunday school class prepared wound care kits for The Hanna Project. They used their recent Sunday school offerings to buy the various items for the kits.

We recently held a special service in which Kevin Bowen was ordained as a new deacon. Many of his family members were able to attend this special service and we had a celebration fellowship in the basement afterwards. Another special service recently involved the baptisms of six young people. Junior Church youth Gavyn Harrell and Cooper Bowen, high school student Caleb Fox, and college students Steven, Courtney, and Whitney Pogue were all baptized. The church was full as many gathered to witness these baptisms.

Brother Ernie and Suzanne enjoyed a recent trip to Arizona. They were able to be at The Springs Church for a Sunday morning service and help out with their Trunk or Treat. Guest speakers at Blue Point were Dennis Slater of West Frankfort in the morning and Bryan Peters of Fairfield in the evening.

We offer our congratulations to Eric and Megan Spitzner on their recent marriage.

Great progress has been evident on our new building. Kitchen cabinets have been installed, the basketball goals are in place and a lot of painting has been done. We are constantly praying that once it is completed this building will be used to further God’s kingdom.

Pastor: Ernie Lewis

Reporter: Suzanne Lewis

THE ILLINI INITIATIVE – Champaign/Urbana

It has been a great fall semester so far with the international students here at the University of Illinois. We have had one of our biggest groups at the English Corner. We have had on average 40 to 50 students for our Thursday night large group gatherings. We have nearly 150 international students signed up in small conversation groups throughout the week. We have been thrilled with the consistency we are getting from these students on their attendance to our events. It is amazing how fast one can go from a complete stranger to a friend.

I had the opportunity last month to take a couple of students bungee jumping off a bridge at 250ft. The jump was in Kentucky near Lexington. I know some people would ask why in the world would you do that. I participated in this for one main reason and that was to have the opportunity for gospel conversations over a long car ride. This trip did not fail. One of the best days of sharing about Jesus came on this trip home with a young man from India and a girl from China. Paul said he would do whatever it takes to win some for Jesus. I guess it may take jumping off a bridge at 250ft ha, ha.

One of the most exciting things to happen this semester is my Wednesday conversation group. I had 6 people signed up, but only one has come consistently. I think it was a God thing. The one who is coming is a non-believer with a Buddhist background. She really asked a lot of questions about God and wanted to understand the bible. So our conversation group turned into a bible study on the book of John. I can remember during a sermon that I once mentioned, “I want to teach people about Jesus who know nothing about Jesus.” I am so thankful for the opportunities God is bringing our way.

The Thanksgiving holiday is soon approaching. We are so thankful for all of you who pray for us, and for those of you who give towards our ministry here. We all play a role in making God’s name great among the nations. I am so thankful for the role we get to play. – **Tyler Penn, Missionary to International Students**

THANK YOU! We would like to thank those who participated in the coat drive this year for Second Chance Church in Joliet. Stephen and I took the items to Joliet on October 22nd. We literally had the items shoved in the van - top to bottom - front to back. Pastor Cliff ministered to about 150 people on the following Sunday. Thank you again for your support. – **Brother Jamie Lee**

RESCUE CHURCH – Rural Whittington

Merry Christmas to everyone! Let us remember Him and all His teachings that reminds us to remember those who are less fortunate than us. There is nothing like remembering a child at Christmas and the blessing we receive from it. Our church has a big box that we fill with gifts and present to the Ministerial Alliance to help bring Christmas to several hundred children. It is a blessing to be a part of that each year.

Here are some dates to remember:

December 10 at 6:00 pm – Tuesday School Christmas Play.

December 20 at 6:00 pm – Church Christmas Program.

Let me take time to thank you for praying for my husband, Ted, who is now home. Please keep us on your prayer list. Congratulations to Pokey and Melinda Squires on the birth of a baby girl, Haizley Sue. She was welcomed home by her two brothers, Jevan and Broxton.

Our condolences to the family and friends of Brother Byford Baltzell. The church honored him with a dinner for his family. He will be missed by everyone at Rescue Church. *“What an awesome God we serve.”*

Pastor: Bryant Harris

Reporter: Donna Harmon

FIRST CHURCH - Johnston City

Merry Christmas everyone! Unfortunately, Reba Ritter is no longer our reporter for the Johnston City Free Will Baptist Church. She has gone on to write for the Review paper in Marion, Illinois and therefore does not have the time to write for our newsletter.

Our church family has kept quite busy these past few months! We participated in Back to Church Sunday on September 20th, with several members of the community attending.

During the weekend of October 18th, Pastor Keith participated in a fund raising hike for BENCHMARK Adventure Ministries and completed a 45 mile section of the Appalachian Trail. This hike raised funds to minister to military chaplains and their families. While he was away, we had the pleasure to have a special guest speaker, Buddy Walters, to lead the service. Brother Buddy is ministry leader for Celebrate Recovery at the Christian Covenant Fellowship in Cartersville.

We celebrated Pastor Appreciation with a delicious soup potluck after Pastor Keith's sermon on October 25th. We would like to say thank you to Keith and his wife Sarah for everything they do for our church and our community!

With the holidays coming up quickly we have begun choir practices for our Christmas program. Also, our Community Thanksgiving service will be held on November 22nd at 6:00 p.m., followed by a pie social.

We hope everyone has a blessed and stress free holiday season. We would also like to recognize all of our veterans who have served our country, thank you!

Pastor: Keith Fletcher

Reporter: Caiden Randolph

OAK VALLEY CHURCH – Rural Geff

Blessings of the fall season to everyone. We are staying busy and glad everyone had time to harvest crops.

Our Harvest Party was well attended on October 31 with games, food, and fellowship in our church fellowship hall.

We went to the Brookston Estates for service October 28th and Cisne Manor November 1st.

Bro. Marvin McCormick was at our church Sunday morning, Nov. 1, to tell of his upcoming missionary trip to the Philippine Islands. We pray he has a good trip.

Sunday evening, October 24th, we dismissed evening worship time and went to Mt. Vernon to see the film 'Woodland' and enjoyed fellowship at Steak and Shake. It is a good film.

Several of our members are attending a Bible Study on Tuesday evenings from 6- 7 PM. with Melissa Garrison teaching the lessons.

I'm sure several Christmas activities will come to keep us busy in the holidays.

We want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Good New Year 2016.

Pastor: Richard Brown

Reporter: Marie Rutger

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Merry
CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY
New Year

Note to Reporters: The deadline for articles to be published in the January edition of the Illinois Newsletter is December 15.
Please send all articles to: David Shores . 25 Edgewood Road . Mt. Vernon, Illinois 62864 or e-mail to: davids@mvfreewillbaptist.org

REVIVAL MEETING at the WALTONVILLE CHURCH
December 2 thru 5 7:00 pm each evening
Evangelist: Curtis Smith Pastor: Harrel Hungate

ARNOLD VIEW CHURCH – Rural Creal Springs

Average Sunday School attendance during October was 89. Some members attended FCA Night at SIU. The Salukis defeated Missouri State, 73-26. The Women Active for Christ meeting was held on October 14. Arnold View hosted the WAC District Meeting on October 17. The theme was "I Surrender All". Guest speaker Janet Sapp shared about the ministry of Celebrate Recovery. Our Fall Fellowship at the home of Steve and Robbie Dwyer was on October 16. Barbara Schuetz, 69, passed away on October 17. Condolences to this family. Tyler and Kellie Penn were with us on October 17. The South Central District - Rend Lake District joint meeting was held on October 24 at Camp Hope. Dr. Matt Pinson, President of Welch College, was the speaker. Brother Jason Jean brought the morning worship message on October 25. There was a Pastor Appreciation fellowship that evening. Pumpkin Carving and Trunk or Treat events were held at our church. Revival services were held at Arnold View on November 1-4, with a different speaker at each service. Brothers David Shores, Curtis Smith, Bryant Harris and Brad Ryan brought challenging messages. "Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord." (1 Chronicles 16:10)

Pastor: Ivan Ryan

Reporter: Buddy Parks