



ILLINOIS FREE WILL BAPTIST JANUARY 2025
NEWSLETTER

A monthly publication for Illinois Free Will Baptist families

Cold Water in Christ's Service

by Ivan Ryan, Promotional Director

Our Illinois Newsletter is unique in that it is mainly designed to keep us connected to each other. It's not the news you look to every day for the current events that affect our nation, but rather it lets us know that we are not alone.

I am very pleased to announce that the Oak Valley Church near Geff has a new pastor. You can read more about that in their news report in this issue of the Illinois Newsletter. It is also good to read the Heritage Church report from Springfield. They have been experiencing a revival of interest and attendance recently. I would also urge you to read a little of the history of the Angelville Church, our newest member of the State and National Associations.

I would love to get this message to each individual in our churches: You are not alone. We are Better Together. Your participation is important. Your service is seen, even if not necessarily by this writer or by large numbers of the general public. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 10:42 that anyone who gives a "cup of cold water" with the right heart will be rewarded. The cup of water is important because it represents service to others; the idea that even a small act of service or kindness is remembered by Him. Always remember that He is the one we are ultimately serving.



In almost every church service I have attended this past year there are special drives going on in addition to the regular, week in and week out, budgetary needs. A family has lost their home in a fire. An unexpected death has shaken the community. Newly diagnosed diseases occur daily within our fellowship. A family is in danger of losing their power or water or their home. Each of you understand these things. I am so proud of our Free Will Baptist family. You often respond before anyone has the opportunity to ask. The recent response to our friends in eastern Tennessee and North Carolina serves as a great illustration of this. Hundreds and hundreds of Samaritan Purse Christmas Boxes go across the world from our folks in Illinois, and it is a blessing to see many of our International Missionaries participating in their distribution. Need knows no boundaries, and I sometimes get to witness firsthand your generosity. It is genuinely impressive.

Responses come in a variety of ways. When a prayer request goes out, I hope you take the moment to whisper a prayer and then revisit it until the need is met. Sometimes we can do a little more. I have known Free Will Baptist people who immediately run to their kitchen to prepare a pie or plan a meal for a needy local situation. Some immediately reach for their wallet or checkbook. What does your "cup of cold water" look like?

I want to be a better disciple in 2025. How about you?

Angelville Pastor: Josh Colson

We are delighted to submit this first report as a member of the Illinois State Association of Free Will Baptists. Many of you are already familiar with Angelville Church, but for those of you who are not, allow us to introduce ourselves. We were organized as a church in 1959 when a group of believers began meeting in the former Central Schoolhouse in Crab Orchard. The name Angelville was derived from an adjacent store building that was once operated by Bill Angel.

Though Angelville was organized as an independent congregation in 1959, we have always been one in doctrine and practice with Free Will Baptists. We have always used Free Will Baptist Sunday School literature, supported Free Will Baptist missionaries, agreed to the Free Will Baptist Church Covenant, and called Free Will Baptist pastors, including Wayne Warren, Dink Phelps, Jason Jean, David Milburn, and Josh Colson. After sixty-five years of independence from any association, we voted to join the South-Central Quarterly which, in turn, voted to receive us in October. We are thankful to be a formal part of the Free Will Baptist work in Illinois!

The past few months have been filled with joy and excitement. To begin with, we were able to host two of our missionary families: César and Luz Quiroz and Billy and Sunni Champion. Angelville has a relationship with the Quiroz family going back six decades, when we began supporting Ella Rae Jones (Free Will Baptist missionary to Ecuador). It was under Jones' ministry that Luz came to know the Lord and visited Angelville on one of Jones' trips back to the states. Angelville has been supporting Luz in her own missionary work ever since. Our relationship with the Champion family is a new one as they are only now preparing to serve as missionaries in Japan through IM. We are grateful to partner with them in prayer and support as they go.

The church celebrated its 65th Anniversary in October with special music from the Jason Jean Family and a fellowship meal after the morning service. We were also glad to fellowship with the Arnold View and Pittsburg Churches for a Fifth Sunday Night Singing in September as well as with several area churches for a Community Thanksgiving Service in November.

While all of these things are exciting, the most joyous occasion was when a young man in our congregation named Troy Benedict surrendered his life to Jesus and was baptized. What rejoicing there was here on earth and in heaven that day (Luke 15:7)! We are praying for the Lord to continue saving souls in our community and in yours. To Him alone be the glory!

Arnold View Pastor: Adam Brown Youth Leaders: River & Danielle Doss Reporter: Jodie Tanner

The hustle and bustle of December was a bit of a blur. We enjoyed the children's Christmas program and some special songs by the choir. Our candlelight communion service also included a dramatic reading. Several of our youth enjoyed the Xtreme Winter Conference in Branson, Missouri between Christmas and the New Year. Many of our Sunday School Classes shared times of fellowship or joined to work on projects. We've also enjoyed some of our youth sharing musical talents throughout the season as well. It is such a blessing to see those abilities used to sing praise and bring God glory.

The lights and the tree may be stored away, but the enthusiasm the Christmas season evokes remains. January 5th marks the beginning of a twelve-week class for those seeking to join our church in membership and anyone interested in learning more about what it means to be a member of a local church. Our youth are planning to attend the In Pursuit Youth Rally on January 19th. It is wonderful that students from various local churches are able to worship together at Rescue FWB Church for this event. Throughout 2025, we want to keep our focus on spreading the message of God's love to those we encounter in deed and word.

Benton Pastor: Phillip Kennedy

Hope everyone has had a great Christmas and that God will bless our New Year!

The Saturday after Thanksgiving we decorated the church for Christmas! We had a good crew show up! On December 11 we had Pizza with the Pastor during Wed Night. We had lots of goodies along with the pizza and we also had a time of trivia. On December 12th we had a Student Hangout Christmas Party at the Parsonage. Everyone had a great time! David Shores preached on December 15th while Pastor Phillip and Sister Jackie were away celebrating their anniversary.

James Kennedy has been accepted to E-TEAM St Croix and Truth and Peace. He has begun traveling to churches on Sunday nights to share about this summer and raise funds.

May we glorify God in all we do this New Year!

Blue Point Pastor Ernie Lewis Reporter Suzanne Lewis

In the past month we have hosted a Senior Grocery Giveaway and a Red Cross Blood Drive. A group min the Link to prepare a Christmas mailing for Shane and Joy Davison of France. Sam Edmison gave his heart to the Lord right before a recent Sunday evening service.

Congratulations to recently married couples Harrison and Haleigh Walker and Derek and McKenzie Bradham.

Brother Ernie was able to attend a Pastor's Breakfast in Mt. Vernon. He also attended the Leadership Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. He stayed an extra day for the National Executive Committee meeting. Several of our ladies enjoyed the Matthew West Concert at the Central Christian Church in Mt. Vernon.

The Kingdom Builders Sunday school class held their Christmas Breakfast on a recent Sunday morning before the service. We hosted a very special 'Quilts of Valor' ceremony. One of the veteran recipients was Caleb Gifford, raised in our church, but presently a member of the Decatur FWB Church. The quilt presented to Caleb was made entirely of material from his mother, Vicki's, fabric line.

We have begun our annual Pickleball Tournament. It is held on Sunday nights, after the evening service.

The Junior High Sunday school class used the offerings they had received to purchase items for the Christmas Food Boxes to be given out in the community at Christmas. After enjoying a meal out together, they purchased items that children would like.

Crossroads Pastor: Jeff Pope Reporter: Tammy Boster

On the 10th the WNAC had their Christmas party in the home of Mike and Mary Altgilbers, with 13 in attendance. Mary served a wonderful meal. Sister Robin led us in games and read a poem. We had a gift exchange.

On the 11th a benefit with a silent auction was held at the Stewstrause High School for Roy and Kathy Bartels, a sweet family from this Church, Bro. Roy had a lengthy stay at Barnes Hospital, praying for him as he continues to heal.

On the 15th the children will be performing their Christmas program in the morning service. We will be doing Christmas trivia that evening.

On the 19th Bro John Hollis will be preaching in the morning service, always a blessing to have Bro. John and sister Vicky with us.

On January 26-29, Brother David Crowe will be with us preaching a Revival. Everyone is welcome to come join us. I encourage everyone to pray this simple prayer, that God will lead you where somebody needs you.

Hazel Dell Pastor: Curtis Smith Reporter: Diana Kirk

Our youth have been busy preparing for our Christmas program to be held on Sunday morning, December 22.

The Ministerial Alliance sponsored the Five Loaves Meal on Thursday, November 28th. Hazel Dell organized this event with the other churches in town helping to prepare and deliver the meals. We were able to serve over 200 meals that evening. Thank you to all who helped in any way to make this ministry a success.

The community Thanksgiving service was held at Sesser First Baptist Church on Tuesday, November 26th. Bro. Mark Rich, pastor of the Valier First Baptist Church was this year's speaker.

Sis. LeeAnn Miller has been assisting with the Sesser-Valier School to help give students a happier Christmas. Thank you to her and to our members who purchased items for the students.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

*"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*

Heritage Church Interim Pastor: Steve Wease Reporter: Tom Hay

Happy New Year and the Hope your Holidays were Joyous! Heritage has been busy by reaching out to the Community! We now have our Blue Church Bus operational and put it to good use with the help of a Volunteer Driver! Pray for us that some of our members will be getting a CDL License and others will serve as Bus Captains to ride along.

In November, we hosted a 3 Day Revival with Pastor Wease bringing a Fiery Salvation Message and entertainment with our own Paula Irby and guest Derrick Stapleton the 1st night and the Wanda Mountain Boys on days 2 & 3! It was well received and 8 souls came forward to accept the Lord as Savior.

We also served a Special Thanksgiving Dinner just prior to Thanksgiving for Homeless, Veterans, and Seniors that had no Family. A full Turkey Dinner was enjoyed by over 70 in the Springfield area.

We are set bring in Christmas with our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service—highlighting Jesus, Our lord and Savior with Song and Celebration!

"For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says The Lord, thoughts of Peace and not of evil, to give you a Future and a Hope." —Jer. 29:11

Ina Pastor: Brad Ryan Youth Pastor: Jason Janus Reporter: Katie Williams

Hello everyone, hope you all are staying warm! November 24th, we had our Community Thanksgiving Service with our local churches, as well as a time of fellowship afterwards. December 1st, Logan and Faith Payne dedicated their sons, Wesley and Owen, to the Lord.

December 8th started our Christmas activities with Bro. Brad's annual story. It is always a special time. Our Ladies Friendship Circle met on December 11th for their Christmas Party. They had fun exchanging gifts and eating yummy snacks! December 12th, the Adult Bible Sunday School Class enjoyed a Christmas outing to "Christmas at Our Place", a dinner and show in Salem. Our youth group's Christmas Party was on the 14th.

December 15th was a big day for our church! The choir performed the cantata "Gloria...The Wonders of His Love", and did a wonderful job! That evening, the Junior Church performed their Christmas play, "The King and Me". It is always such a blessing to see the kids on stage telling the story of the birth of Christ!

It is a busy season, but there is much to celebrate! Thank you, God, for sending your Son!

Mt. Vernon

Pastor: Craig Smith

Reporter: Mary Ann Levitt

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year from all of us at Mt. Vernon First!

We have been praying for five souls to be saved by 2025. As of this writing we have had two accept the Lord into their life!

Our church collected Christmas Child shoeboxes. We would like to thank Cheryl Goree for all the hard work she put into organizing this project. And a big thank you to those who filled a shoebox.

Our Wednesday evening Bible study has been doing well as we continue to ask and answer questions from God's Word about today's issues.

The WAC sold 2025 wall calendars as a fundraiser. Coffee with the Pastor was December 10th.

Sunday, December 29th will be our 5th Sunday singing followed by the birthday and anniversary social.

The East Central district's quarterly meeting is being held at our church on January 11, 2025.

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior this Christmas and gather around the tree to open presents, may we never forget that the greatest gift we ever received was on the day we accepted the free gift of salvation!

"For unto us a child is born—Christ the Lord"

Oak Valley

Pastor: Marty Smith

Reporter: Tonya Smith

The last few months have been a whirlwind at Oak Valley! In October, Oak Valley got a new Pastor! Pastor Marty Smith and his wife Tonya. Marty grew up in Johnsonville, Son to Coreena and Dale Smith. Tonya grew up in Mt. Erie, daughter to Nancie and Dennis Taylor. Marty is the chaplain to the Christian Motorcyclists Association (CMA) chapter out of Fairfield, Illinois Tonya will become the Secretary for the chapter the beginning of 2025. Marty and Tonya both got their Chaplaincy Certifications last February and are living in Johnsonville

A few things that Oak Valley has done the past few months... In October, we had our homecoming that Ethan Keyser preached, and there was food and fellowship to follow. We also set up for the Trunk or Treat on the Cisne Square, where we themed our "Trunk" as "Nobody loves you SMORE than Jesus!" and we handed out smores kits and bracelets to the kids.

November... A couple of the ladies participated in the Ladies Bible Study at Blue Point and were very blessed by it! Pastor Marty and Tonya went and delivered post cards to quite a people in the area to introduce themselves to people in the area. We also scheduled our Holiday Meal in December.

December... We got together and decorated the church for Christmas and prepared for the Holiday party. Which was SO fun to eat and fellowship with everyone. The sound of the kids running and playing. There just isn't any better sound! We are also donating to "Shop with a Biker". Shop with a Biker is a program where students were selected from local elementary and Middle school, who are in need and the Christian Motorcyclist Association (CMA) Chapter will meet those students, and take them shopping at the local Wal-Mart. They will each be allowed to pick out \$175 in clothes, shoes, coats, and any other clothing associated items. Then they can pick out a toy or fun thing for \$25.



Deacon Lawrence Pennington welcomes Bro. Marty and Sis. Tonya as members (11/3/24).

Mark Your Calendars!

The annual meeting of our State Association at the Arnold View Church (March 20-21, 2025), and the annual convention of our National Association in Kansas City (July 20-23, 2025) will both be here before you know it. Make plans to be involved!

At right are some reasons to attend our National Convention recently posted by the Executive Office. Reasons for attending our State Meeting are virtually identical albeit on a much smaller, more local scale.

This year's state meeting will be hosted by the historic Arnold View Church in rural and scenic Creal Springs. This will be Arnold View's first time to host a State Meeting, and their hospitality is sure to be a blessing!

Other Upcoming Events Include:

- East Central QM → January 11 at Mt. Vernon FFWBC
- Rend Lake QM → January 18 at Mt. Zion FWBC
- South Central QM → January 25 at Alexander FWBC
- Metro East Association → TBA
- Fox River Association → February 1 at Hoopston FWBC
- Auditing Committee → February 8 at Hazel Dell FWBC

WHY GO TO THE CONVENTION?

WORSHIP with thousands. Pray, sing, and hear preaching together.

FELLOWSHIP with friends renews us to serve in difficult situations.

EQUIP through 90+ seminars to help us minister more effectively.

CONDUCT BUSINESS. Approve budgets, hear reports, and make decisions regarding our future.

REJOICE as believers come together from around the world.

NAFWB

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