

# ILLINOIS FREE WILL BAPTIST      September 2024

# NEWSLETTER

A monthly publication for Illinois Free Will Baptist families

## ***A Threefold Cord Is Not Easily Broken***

*by Ivan Ryan, Illinois Promotional Director*

Am I reaching too far to compare Ecclesiastes 4:12 to our Free Will Baptist work in Champaign? It is obvious that I don't think so, since I am writing this article. You be the judge, but before you disagree too strongly, please hear me out. Scripture says, "And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12). The wise writer of this book points out correctly that two are better than one. *Encouragement* is offered, *production* is increased, and *protection* is provided. The principle that is given in this passage can be applied to any aspect of life. I see this as a direct correlation of what is being assembled in Champaign. So simple, yet so profound.

We are about to have a threefold cord of ministry in our beautiful city of Champaign! Our Illinois Mission Board, along with NAM and IM working alongside our churches and with those who answer the call, allow ministries like this to take place. Seeing the providential Hand of God at work, we can become partners in this ministry and the gospel prevails.



Tyler and Kellie Penn first answered the call to pioneer a movement working with foreign students who, in great numbers, flock to the plains of central Illinois from all over the world to attend the University of Illinois. They proclaimed their vision with this phrase, "To Reach a Community – To Reach a Student – To Reach the World." The seeds of this work are being sown and taking root in many places. This type of ministry is now being replicated at other universities. One such work is now beginning at the University of Missouri.



Ed and Rachel Goode have come to Champaign to build on the foundation of the Bridge Free Will Baptist Church. This university city is in desperate need of a strong FWB church. Ed hails from England. Rachel is from North Carolina. Their story, like everyone's, deserves to be heard. Ed's vision is clearly articulated in this statement: "Bridge Church exists to make the real Jesus impossible to ignore in Champaign and beyond." Adam and Becca Garrett, from Desoto, MO and Warsaw, IN respectively, labor alongside the Goodes in Champaign. Their support is valuable and they are expecting their fifth child this month.



The newest additions to this threefold cord are Darren and Dana Portell who are moving back to Illinois after many years of ministry with students in Taipei, Taiwan. Darren grew up in Bethel Free Will Baptist Church (Now Connect) and Dana comes from the Benton Church. While raising support, they are now calling Camp Hope home. This is where they first met when Darren was 11 years old. While there are large numbers of students from all over, there is a very strong contingent of Asian students at the U of I. As they visit our churches, you will hear them share the mission, which is "to heed the call to embrace diversity and engage in cross-cultural ministry. As ambassadors of Christ, we are called to extend His love and grace to all people, regardless of their cultural background."

## **Arnold View Church    Pastor: Adam Brown    Youth Leaders: River & Danielle Doss**

School is back in session and we're on our way to fall. We finished August with Daniel Nalley speaking as part of our August 25 morning service. Later that day, we hosted the Gospel Encounter Seminar for the community. This seminar focused on learning how to share your faith in an intentional way in everyday occurrences. Looking for opportunities to share your testimony has been a theme recently at Arnold View. On September 7, Arnold View is planning to have a float as part of Marion's annual Veterans on Parade celebration. It is always a privilege to celebrate veterans and their service. We look forward to inviting local veterans to join our float. We're also looking forward to the Adult Camp Meeting in early September. The middle of the month (Sept. 15) marks a special day for Arnold View with our Homecoming Service celebrating 108 years. Rev. Brad Ryan will be our speaker for this special service. It seems doubly special having him return to Arnold View and share with us, since he & his family are part of our heritage. Righteous Reign will be providing special music for this service. We look forward to the meal and fellowship to follow this wonderful day of worship and celebration. Our youth are planning to attend the Gospel Encounter Conference on Sept 20 and 21. Our hope is that they are encouraged in their faith along with being trained to share the message of Christ's saving grace with others. As September comes to a close, we'll host a joint service on Sunday evening (Sept. 29) with Angelville Community Church. Throughout September, we'll be finalizing plans for our 3rd Annual Community Fall Festival to be held October 20. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..." Romans 1:16*

## **Benton Church    Pastor: Phillip Kennedy**

Summer break has ended and school has started! Please continue praying for all students, teachers and faculty.

Pastor Phillip Kennedy went to the National Convention in Tampa Florida and was blessed by the fellowship and worship. James Kennedy finished up Truth and Peace and traveled home with Dad. In the Pastors absence different ones filled in. David Mishler preached on July 21st Sunday morning and Mike Thomas lead Bible study on that Wednesday night.

Summer lunch program was wrapped up and finished August 2nd.

We were blessed to have the Portells with us on August 11th in the Sunday morning service. They shared about their upcoming plans to Serve the Lord in Champaign Illinois! We had a wonderful Fellowship meal after service!

We plan to have Open Gym night in September along with Student Hangouts! Please pray for these events.

## **Blue Point Church    Pastor Ernie Lewis    Reporter Suzanne Lewis**

Brother Ernie and Suzanne were able to attend the National Association in Tampa, Florida. Besides attending business sessions and all the evening services, they enjoyed the NAM dinner, the Welch College luncheon, and Laughter and Latte. We recently held our monthly Senior Grocery Giveaway. The men held a Bible study at the home of Daryl Hargrave. Along with a devotion and discussion, they enjoyed food and some rounds of pool. Representatives from area churches met for a breakfast in our Link. They were able to discuss different ideas for spreading the gospel in our community. A group of ladies meets regularly in the Link to play pickleball.

We were kept busy during the annual Cisne Reunion festival. Many of our people volunteered to work shifts in our Taco-in-a-Bag stand. A good crowd attended 'Church Night' to hear "The Sound". Our own Emalie Matthews was crowned queen at the pageant with Hadley Walker receiving 2<sup>nd</sup> Runner-Up. Brother Ernie led the parade as the Parade Marshal with Suzanne and his sons, Ryan and Derek riding in the car with him. Our van, trailer, and many walkers also participated in the parade, giving away several items to the crowd.

We held our Annual Student Recognition on a recent Sunday morning. Prayer was held for all our students, teachers, and staff and each was presented with a small gift. Our prayer is that they will be lights for Jesus throughout the school year.

Johnsonville Elementary, our local grade school, held their Open House. Once again we cooked out hamburgers and hotdogs for all the families of the students. We also served chips and drinks to everyone.

Mike and Barbara Bozarth joined us for a Sunday morning service to present the Bozarth Scholarship to one of our college students. This scholarship is in memory of Bob and Doris Bozarth who were long time members. This year's recipient was Lauren Grace Conard.

**Crossroads Church Pastor: Jeff Pope Reporter: Tammy Boster**

On the 9th the WNAC hosted taco fiesta night, with several in attendance for tacos and games, it was a fund raiser for missions. We all had a great time of food and fellowship, and we played games.

On the 11th we had a back to school service in the morning service. All the school kids received a gift card for school supplies, then we gathered around the children and had prayers for all them as well as the schools.

On October 20th we are having friends and family day.

On October 27th Becky Lecher will be here to share her music ministry with us.

October is Pastor appreciation month, always remember to lift up your Pastor and his family in prayer

**Decatur Church Pastor Stephen Cantrell Reporter Cathie DeCicco**

Hello from Decatur! We have been super busy here getting ready for school. We have 5 members on staff at the Decatur Christian School, including our pastor and his wife. We have several students at DCS and other schools, so it's a busy time. In September, we celebrate our Homecoming here at church, and that's always a good time of fellowship. We've had several visitors that are becoming regulars, so that's definitely praise worthy. We're just praying for the Lord to continue to work in lives and our church.

**HAZEL DELL CHURCH Pastor Curtis Smith Reporter Diana Kirk**

Summer has been a busy time for everyone. On Sunday, August 11, we had a special prayer time for all our people who will be/or have already returned to school.

Bro. Curtis and Sis. Emilee traveled to the National Convention. Titus and Lydia were competing in the CTS competition and both did very well. It is such a blessing to see these young people following Jesus.

Ryker Wingo recently accepted the Lord, during a recent VBS. Praise God for his decision. He is the son of Garret and Shelda Wingo and the grandson of Charlie & Gayla Wingo.

Our condolences to the family of Sis. Joann Earnhart who passed away on July 29.

The annual Men's meeting on Thursday, August 1, was a huge success this year as 138 men came together for an evening of food and worship. Bro. Andy Lee, pastor of the White Ash Church delivered the message and Brothers and Others presented the special music.

The Master's Men group met for their monthly breakfast, worship and fellowship meeting on Sunday, August 11. There were 8 in attendance. Bro. Mike Sample prepared breakfast and Bro. Rusty Miller delivered the devotion.

September will be a busy month as we plan for our Sunday School picnic, Camp Hope meeting, and Church in the Miner's Park. *"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." Psalm 103:8*

**1<sup>st</sup> FWB Mt. Vernon Pastor Craig Smith Mary Ann Levitt, Reporter**

It does not seem possible, but school has started for another year! Let's pray for our students and teachers as they begin a new time of learning. Pray for their safety and that what they are taught will be pleasing to the Lord!

During our morning service on July 28, the Cisco family, now known as "New Chapter, New Life", blessed us with songs and testimonies. A devastating fire left them homeless and without any possessions. This family is a wonderful example to all who hear them about what it means to truly be a Christian in the world today! We would especially like to thank Lesa Morlan for inviting them, and for the work she put into planning a wonderful meal afterwards. Several in our congregation helped with the meal, too. That evening our vesper service was held indoors due to heavy rain.

We were privileged to be able to help with the Hand Up Summit on Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>. Work began days before the event. 414 sack lunches were handed out! Many of those who attended were able to receive much needed help. A big thank you to all volunteers and groups!

Mark your calendars for August 31. Our WAC will be holding another bake sale at Rural King beginning at 7:30 a.m. All bake goods sold rapidly last time, so come early!

Coffee with the Pastor was August 13. Always a great time of fellowship!

Peace begins with a smile!

Wow! August is gone and it is so hard to believe that summer break is over and school is already back in session. **Camp Firelight** VBS was a HUGE success! 139 kiddos joined us for the week and we were blessed with so many smiling faces!! We are so thankful for all of our adult and youth volunteers who helped during the week and the numerous volunteers who helped create our Camp Firelight over the past few months.

On September 7, at 10am, Marion will host a Veteran's Parade to honor Southern Illinois veterans who have served in war and peacetime. The parade will feature marching bands, floats, and over 1,000 veterans from all branches of service. Anyone interested in riding in the parade is invited to meet at the Marion High School at 9am. For more information, please visit [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com).

The 2024-2025 AWANA season begins September 11. AWANA is open to anyone ages 2-High School. Each Wednesday evening from 6:30-7:45pm the kids work on scripture memorization as well as play games and hear a lesson taught by volunteers within our church. If you or someone you know is looking for a great program to be a part of, tell them about AWANA at PFWBC! We will also have adult classes available as well. "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me... your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish." Matthew 18:5 We are praying for our schools, students, and teachers-- for their safety, purpose, focus, and more!

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and do not depend on your own understanding.*

*Seek his will in all you do and he will show you which path to take."*

### **Illinois Represented Well in National CTS Competition**

We Have CTS Winners from our recent Vertical Three Competition in Tampa. We thank Tommy Lewis for compiling this list and Allen Bigley for bringing it to the Executive Board Meeting. We are extremely proud of every participant and coach from the local level and all the way up. In Illinois we have CTS young people in all ages and we love each one whether they compete or not.

#### **Bible Memorization**

Titus Smith 2nd Place- 2nd grade

Lando Hiller 3rd Place- 3rd grade

#### **Painting**

Ava Settle 2nd Place- D cat

#### **Mixed Media**

Alba Newbury 2nd Place- C cat

#### **Photo Essay**

Lucy Dwyer 1st Place- D cat

#### **Fabric Art**

Elijah Diefenbach 1st Place- B cat

Alba Newbury 3rd Place- C cat

Layla Newbury 2nd Place- D cat

#### **Duets**

Makinley & Marlowe 3rd Place- C cat

Vocal Ensemble

Ina B Ensemble 2nd Place- B cat

Choir

Ina D Choir 3rd Place- D cat

#### **Plucked String Solo**

Coy Settle 1st Place- B cat

#### **Human Video**

Shine 3rd Place- D cat

#### **Group Drama**

Ina C Skit 2nd Place- C cat

#### **Bible Sword Drill**

Oakley Hiller 3rd Place- 4th grade

#### **Drawing**

Titus Smith 2nd Place- A cat

#### **T-Shirt/Sweatshirt Design**

Phoebe Burton 2nd Place- C cat

#### **Banners**

Hailey Diefenbach 2nd Place- D cat

#### **Sculpted Clay**

Mya Benoit 2nd Place- B cat

#### **Conceptual Art**

Joshua Lewis 2nd Place- D cat

#### **Trios**

Hiller Trio 3rd Place- B cat

God's Girls 2nd Place- C cat

#### **Woodwind Solo**

Oakley Hiller 1st Place- B cat

#### **Bowed String Solo**

Josey Settle 1st Place- C cat

#### **Individual Drama**

Darcy Jenkins 1st Place- A cat

Liam Jenkins 1st Place - B cat

Addelyn Sink 3rd Place-D cat

#### **Recorded Puppetry**

Lift Him Up B Puppets- B cat

Lift Him Up C Puppets- C cat

## A Word from Your General Board Representative

It is a true honor to represent the Illinois State Association of Free Will Baptists to the General Board of the National Association. Most of you know that we are one of the smallest State Associations in the National with only 36 churches. Yet, by God's grace, we 'punch above our weight' in many metrics. For instance, in the latest available statistical report, we gave more to National ministries (IM, NAM, Welch, etc.) than all but nine State Associations; and all of those nine are larger than ours. When you adjust giving to a per-church basis, Illinois contributed the third highest amount/church of any State Association by roughly \$3,000/church. I am thankful for the generosity of Illinois Free Will Baptists, and I am excited to think about all the ways that the Lord is using that generosity for His glory.

I urge our churches to continue their generous giving to our denominational departments. Each and every department is worthy of our support, but I'd like to highlight two areas for special consideration.

First of all, the Executive Office is the central office of our denomination. Under the direction of Dr. Eddie Moody, it is responsible for planning the National Convention and the Leadership Conference. It publishes our *Treatise*, resources our pastors, and serves our district associations and churches in a variety of ways. Simply put, the Executive Office is indispensable to the Free Will Baptist work. However, inflation means that the cost of everything has increased, including the cost of the convention. Unless there is increased revenue, the Executive Office cannot continue to operate at its current level. Thus, I encourage each pastor and church to consider giving a regular, monthly contribution (even if it is only \$5 or \$10) to the Executive Office.

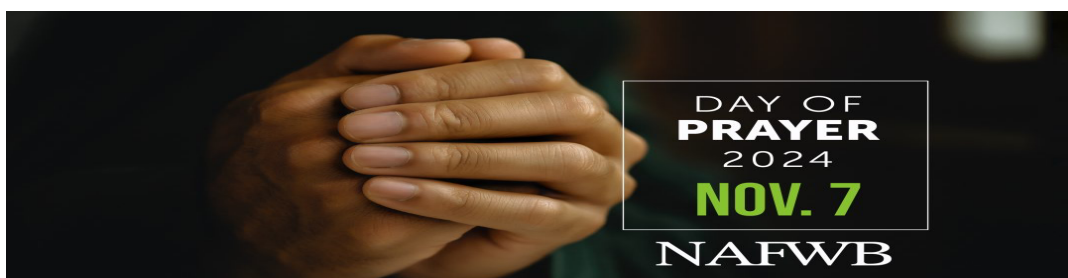
Secondly, D6 Family Ministries (Randall House) is experiencing serious shortfalls due both to the toll of Covid-19 on local churches and runaway inflation. I firmly believe that we need a denominational publisher or we will inevitably forfeit our denominational identity. So, I encourage churches to purchase curriculum and books from D6 Family Ministries, and if able, to add them to your church's giving budget.

Of course, Welch College, International Missions, North American Ministries, the Foundation, Richland Ave Financial, and Free Will Baptist Women's Ministries are each worthy of your support, too. The need is great, and we are so small. But God's grace is made perfect in our weakness; so, let's give as generously as we can and trust that God will multiply it for our good and His glory. He does that, you know?

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21).

In His Strength,

Josh Colson



**2024 Adult Camp Meeting**  
 September 8-11, 2024  
 6:30 PM Nightly

**Save the Date!**

Speaker: Jim McComas

**ILLINOIS FREE WILL BAPTIST  
 WOMEN'S MINISTRIES**

*Fall*  
**RETREAT**

Scan to  
 preregister &  
 learn more

**SOLID AS A ROCK  
 PSALM 18:1-3**

**OCTOBER 4-5, 2024  
 CAMP HOPE**

**2024 Men's Retreat**  
**September 12 – 14**  
**Camp Hope**  
 Speaker: Bro. Josh Colson

**MASTER'S MEN**  
 Free Will Baptist Men's Ministry

Illinois Free Will Baptist    September 2024

**NEWSLETTER**

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 The deadline for the September Illinois Newsletter is September 15<sup>th</sup>