



Zion's

A D V O C A T E



*G*lory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
—Luke 2:14—

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"And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost...." 1 Nephi 3:187

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CCEG

The Church of Christ Email Group is a church member-only (and spouses, even if not a member) email communication group existing to keep the general church membership informed about prayer needs, blessings, and more. It does not have officially elected management (member volunteer only), although it regularly functions for the Church of Christ for missionary news and various announcements, like state rallies and reunions.

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Apostles' Corner

Teach All Nations

The Council of Apostles would like to report their missionary efforts in Poland. It began about a year ago. A contact came to our webpage from a man in his mid-twenties who was interested in the church. He had previously received and read an LDS copy of the Book of Mormon. He believed in the Book of Mormon but was not satisfied that the LDS doctrines were all scriptural so he began looking, which led him to the Church of Christ. Apostle Smith Brickhouse reached out to this man and was eager to help him learn more about our history, doctrines, and how we differ from other churches. The man was very receptive and had a great desire to be baptized.

Apostle Brickhouse passed the information on to the missionaries in charge of Europe. Apostle Brian McIndoo made vir-

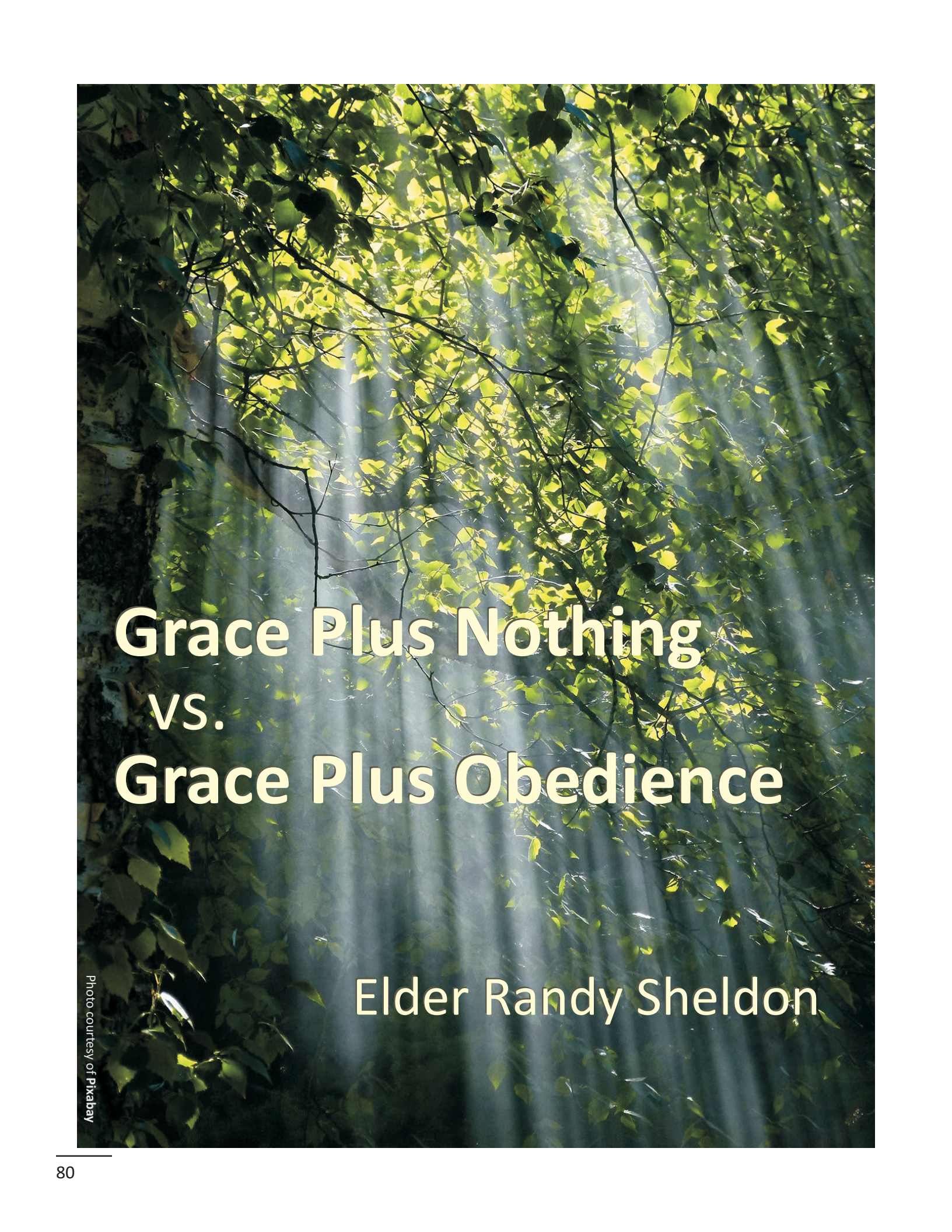
tual contact and arranged a trip to meet the man in person and perform a baptism if deemed appropriate.

On August 29th, 2023, Apostles Duane Ely and Brian McIndoo set forth to Poznan, Poland. From there they would take a train to the town of Gorzow Weilkopolski, where they would meet with him. Without knowledge of Poland, its train system, or its language, this trip at times could be defined as Apostle Paul spoke of his travels recorded in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, *"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair...."*

Having God's blessings and answers to their prayers in times of perplexity, they arrived at the determined location and had a few enjoyable days with the man. He exhibited the faith and

desire to be numbered among the believers who are firm in the truth of God's written word. A baptism service was planned for Sunday, September 3rd. Unfortunately, the man is a member of their armed forces reserves and was deployed without notice. He remained away for the balance of the time the missionaries were there. Hopefully, a follow-up visit will bring forth the fruit all who were involved desired. ■





Grace Plus Nothing
VS.
Grace Plus Obedience

Elder Randy Sheldon

Photo courtesy of Pixabay

Today in the evangelical Christian world there is a doctrine that preaches that the **grace** of Jesus Christ comes with no demands, requirements, or **works**. We come under the umbrella of Christ's grace simply by Jesus' unmerited favor. The "grace plus nothing" creed says

There are the works of man, the works of Moses, the works of the devil, and the works of God.

there's nothing we can do to gain **grace** from Christ. However, that belief also says we've got to make a profession of faith and believe in our heart that Jesus is the son of God and then we'll obtain that **grace** and salvation.

If you have to pray the Sinners' Prayer, if you have to believe in your heart that Jesus died for you, and if you have to make a proclamation of faith—then you are doing some kind of work to satisfy the demands of grace! Obviously, there is more to grace than grace only. If nothing is required you shouldn't have to believe, confess your sins, repent, or be baptized. If nothing is required, heaven would be full of people who never repented, changed, or sought the Lord!

The confusion might come from Romans 11:6—a favorite verse of the "grace plus nothing" doctrine. It says, "*And if by grace, then is it no more of **works**: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*"

To better understand the word "**works**" we are going to examine the several different kinds of "**works**" spoken of in the Bible. There are the works of man, the works of Moses, the works of the devil, and the works of God.

The Works of Man

Here are scriptures that reveal the **works of man**:

Matthew 7:21-23: "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.** Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful **works**? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.***"

When men think they have the power to do the **work** themselves—trouble begins. The scripture says that those who do the will of God enter the Kingdom of heaven—not those that do their own **work** or do iniquity.

Acts 8:13-20 is another example of the **works of man**. It says:

"Then Simon himself be-

lieved also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.... And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

This is an example of **man's work—man's way—not God's way**.

Matthew 23:5 says, "*But all their **works** they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments.*"

The **works of men** motivated by pride, money and evil are unacceptable to God.

The Works of Moses (the Law)

Here are some verses concerning the **works or laws of Moses**:

Exodus 18:20: "*And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and **the work** that they must do.*"

Leviticus 11:2-4 is an exam-

ple of the **work** they had to do:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beast which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever

works that are connected to **grace** in the New Testament. In other words, there are valid **works** mandated by Christ, such as repentance, love, forgiveness, and obedience.

devil’s work! Jesus obeyed God—as we should.

James 3:16 says, *“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every **evil work.**”*

Galatians 5:19-21 gives a thorough list of the devil’s works:

“...Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envy, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Sin separates us from God and His grace.

Sin separates us from God and His grace.

*parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, **that shall ye eat.** Nevertheless **these shall ye not eat** of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.”*

There are more examples of works done in the Old Testament that are not required by God in the New Testament after Christ. One example is in Genesis 17:10-11:

“This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.”

Galatians 5:6 explains, *“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”*

The works mentioned above are dead works—they are futile now. However, there are

Galatians 3:24-25 says, *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under the schoolmaster.”*

Moses was the superintendent of the law and we are no longer under the dead works of the schoolmaster.

The Works of the Devil

The devil is the father of lies and evil. Here are some examples of the **devil’s works**:

Genesis 3:4: *“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:”*

The devil works hard to get his way and when he gets us—he wants us to do works for him.

The devil tried hard to tempt Jesus in Matthew 4:3 and 9 saying, *“If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.... All these things I’ll give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”* Of course, Jesus did not bow down to Satan and refused to do the

The Works of God

Righteous obedience to the demands of heaven must be followed. Jesus was under the supervision of His father and obeyed the Father in all things. In John 9:4 Jesus said,

*“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can **work.**”*

We must work, too. Mark 13:34 says,

*“For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to **every man his work,** and commanded the porter to*

watch.”

Even though Christ was sinless, he showed the example of obedience by being baptized. Matthew 3:16 says,

*“And Jesus, when he **was baptized**, went up straightway **out of the water**: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the*

pool of water, and they were also baptized with the Spirit by the laying on of hands.

Acts 19:5-6 tells us, *“When they heard this, they were **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**. And when Paul had **laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them...**”*

***the will of his father?**”*

The son who actually did the work is the one who really **obeyed and followed the Lord**—not the son who just spoke the words and did nothing. Obeying the Lord is doing His work.

Other lessons concerning **works** are found in the second chapter of James. James 2:14 and 20 says,

*“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead?**”*

James 2:21-22 and 24 continue to explain the importance of righteous works:

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? ... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”

Do the scriptures say it is grace plus nothing or do **works** and **faith** (or **grace**) go hand in hand?

There are several verses in Revelation that show obedience to the commands of God is vital to our place in eternity. Revelation 20:12-13 says,

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was

... Obedience to the commands of God is vital to our place in eternity.

Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:”

In John 3:4 we read,

“Nicodemus saith unto him (Jesus), How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” In John 3:5 Jesus answers, *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he **cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**”*

Jesus is saying we must do the required **work** of baptisms to **enter** the Kingdom. Some denominations teach that being born of water is referring to the breaking of the womb, when water comes flushing out. Nothing could be sillier than for God to command, “You must be born of your mother’s water or you can’t enter the Kingdom.” The New Testament is full of people who obeyed Jesus’ injunction. The Bible says they were baptized by being immersed in a

We must do what is mandated and follow after Christ. If we don’t follow and obey—we are not a child of the King. Jesus said in John 14:15, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”*

Luke 19:13 says, *“And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, **Occupy till I come (that’s work).**”* Verse 27 says, *“But those mine enemies, which **would not** that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.”* It is a severe infraction to refuse the work that heaven demands!

Matthew 21:28-31 tells us, *“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, **go work** to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and **went (did the work).** And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain **did***

*opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works**. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man **according to their works**.”*

knocking at our door, and follow the Lord in obedience, enduring to the end—we are going to be saved!

Also consider the injunction found in Matthew 6:15, *“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, **neither will your Father forgive your trespasses**.”* We have to read the small print and do the demanded work of forgiving others.

gift that no one deserved—grace. Without Jesus “our righteousness is as filthy rags” because it is only through His name that we can be saved. His grace is the first step on the path to eternal life, and the next step is for us to receive that grace by repenting and obeying Him for our entire life.

In conclusion, the Bible reveals that God connects grace with obedience—not the works imagined by man, not the dead works of Moses, not the evil works of the devil, but the righteous works mandated by God. In the finality of it all, Jesus will say,

Be assured, we can't be saved without Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made of taking our sins on the cross.

Revelation 21:8: *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”*

We can think we are saved, but if we are engaged in sin, without the work of repentance and without departing from the vice of wickedness, we are not saved! But if we repent and respond to the Master, Who's

Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, *“I have fought a good fight (worked hard), Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.”*

Saul (Paul), an enemy to the church, repented, changed his life, and **worked** to defend and serve God until he was martyred.

Be assured, we can't be saved without Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made of taking our sins on the cross. He gave a

*“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every **man according as his work** shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. **Blessed are they that do his commandments (works)**, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city”* Revelation 22:12-14. ■



Image by Miroslav Stuk from Pixabay

Light, Protein Synthesis and Natural Selection

Elder Glenn Gill, PhD

Photo by Gerard of Pixabay

Albert Einstein proposed a simple formula that expressed something philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists had tried to deduce for many centuries. The main reason they had failed to reach the

explanation of creation. In Genesis 1:2 we see that the earth was, *“without form and void.”* And there was no light. Verse 3 reports that God said, *“Let there be light: and there was light.”* Light is the most basic energy in

(see Genesis 1:20).

On the third day God created plants. Then on the fourth day God caused the land to “bring forth” plants. So, plants were designed and then grew out of the soil. Plants were provided with CO₂ from the atmosphere, water (see Genesis 2:6), soil to nourish them, and light from the sun and moon filtered through the water above the atmosphere. Thus, food sources were made through photosynthesis: CO₂ + H₂O + light = H₂O + O₂ (carbon dioxide + water + light = water + oxygen).

On the fifth day God created animals of many types and sizes. Their existence was possible because oxygen, water and a sustainable food source were available. Then on the sixth day God created man. *“...Male and female created he them.”*

It was a perfect plan, each

“And God created great whales, every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good” *Genesis 1:20-21.*

conclusion Einstein reached is that the whole thing is so simple that they could not believe such a conclusion.

Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity, **$E=mc^2$ (energy=mass multiplied by the speed of light squared)**, simply says that energy and mass are different forms of the same thing.

With these things in mind, let’s take another look at Moses’

the universe. In our solar system light emanates from the sun through its action as an atomic furnace. Thus, mass becomes energy ($E=mc^2$), and the sun sends that energy to the earth providing light and warmth.

On the second creation day God caused the firmament to form between two layers of water. So at this point there was both light and water available

step providing the needs of the next, leading to the creation of man, a being capable of observation, analysis, reasoning, and oversight under God's Spiritual supervision.

God has given man the ability to discern how life-giving activities function, and to study those activities right down to the molecular level. In such studies, scientists have identified biochemical and structural sequences in reproduction, and growth that must be complete before they can function to the benefit of the species. These structures and processes are referred to as **irreducibly complex**. They could not be formed in an accidental sequence of events by Natural Selection. While still incomplete they would be selected out because of giving no functional advantage to the organism. However, as part of an intelligent design they would be completed, and then become functional.

When the DNA molecule was decoded in the 1950s it was found to be the source of information for assembly of every part, and initiation of every process necessary to life for each animal or plant species.

In cells, amino acid molecules derived from digestion of proteins in food are combined to form new proteins as needed in the cell. Protein molecules are needed for structure and function in every part of our bodies. Their production in every cell requires specific irreducibly com-

plex machines.

This is how it works: DNA in the nucleus of each animal or plant cell is made up of two strands of RNA bound together. Along the RNA strands are codons that can attract specific amino acid molecules. If brought together, a specific series of amino acids will form a polypeptide, precursor to a protein molecule.

The synthesis of new protein molecules in living cells is known to proceed as follows:

- 1 A section of the DNA in the nucleus of the cell is opened, exposing a series of codons that match codons for the specific series of amino acid molecules, that make up a specific polypeptide, that can become a needed protein.
- 2 That part of the opened RNA (gene) is copied to a memory RNA (mRNA). The mRNA molecule finds and enters a molecular machine called a ribosome where it is stretched out in a line. There are many ribosomes in each cell.
- 3 Codons along the mRNA stimulate transfer RNA (tRNA) molecules to seek complementary amino acid molecules in the cell.
- 4 Amino acid molecules are brought to the ribosome by tRNA molecules and lined up along the mRNA in a sequence corresponding to the

codons on the mRNA molecule.

- 5 The amino acid molecules link together in the sequence shown by the mRNA, forming a polypeptide molecule.
- 6 The polypeptide is escorted from the cell nucleus through a molecular machine called the gateway (a protein that changes shape when the polypeptide approaches.)
- 7 The polypeptide is folded, or attached to other peptides, then folded in the endoplasmic reticulum, or a molecular machine called the Golgi apparatus. There it becomes a protein molecule shaped for use in some place where it is needed: part of a membrane, connective tissue, or many other possibilities. A frenzy of such activity is constant in each cell.

Genesis 1:20-21, "And God created great whales, every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good."

To reproduce "after their kind," each species had to have its own map or design, specific to that species. The map or design must be able to copy itself. DNA can do that. It can replicate: form an exact replica of itself. This makes it possible for each species to reproduce "after its

kind.” This explains how amoebas and elephants can look and function the same, generation after generation. But how did the first generation come about? Intelligent design is the most plausible answer.

In his famous book, *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin wrote this statement:

“If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”

The mechanism for evolution of plant and animal species proposed by Darwin is Natural Selection. Natural Selection would require the existence of an original or precursor from which the present species of each kind of animal or plant species has evolved. The belief is that present species are a more complex descendant of a simpler line. The believer in evolution by Natural Selection is left searching through fossil remains for possible missing links to the modern species in the hope of tracing back in time to identify who evolved from whom.

There are questions Natural Selection can not answer. How did it all start? How did the DNA of one species change to the DNA of another? Satisfactory answers have not been found in evolution. However, things like drastic change in climate, loss of a food source, or interference by

man have led to extinctions, or appearance of varieties.

Dogs and cattle provide examples. Many and varied sizes, colorations and behavioral traits have been selected and propagated by man in dogs, but none of this has isolated one type of dog genetically, making a new species. If that were to happen, it would be a result of intelligent design, because of man’s involvement. Likewise, with cattle, man has meddled with genetics, but this has not caused a new species to appear.

The evolutionist who denies God’s work of creation is forced to believe that the original kinds of animals and plants just appeared by accident. It is clear from the story of creation as Moses told it that there was a period of planning or design involved in each creation day before the result was revealed. There is plenty of room for variety in the appearance and habits of the “kinds” of animals God created.

We speculate on what Adam and Eve may have looked like. I argue that they were brown skinned and quite large. Now we humans are of many different appearances but all still carry the same original DNA.

Then there is the question of how life itself came to be. The evolutionist looks for an accidental combination of chemicals in a primordial sea. All attempts to duplicate such an event have failed. Some say DNA can be changed by mutation so much

that a new species is created. Many mutations have been studied and even induced, but none have yielded an advanced species. All are deleterious to the species in which they appear. Even if new species could appear in this way there would have to be an original creature to start the line. How would it come about? Design by an existing intelligence answers this question.

Some scientists have been busy developing their own theories about how life could have begun on earth through some chemical accident, or what kind of missing link connects a current species with some long extinct fossil. Their speculations are found in many books and scientific journals. They seem to enjoy giving their theories astute-sounding scientific names.

“O the vainness and foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsels of God—but to be learned is good, if they hearken unto the counsels of God” (2 Nephi 6:58-61).

Even the original of any species line would require a DNA genome too complex to have just happened by accident. It is more reasonable and more scientific to explain the beginning of life on this planet or the beginning of the various kinds of living things as part of God’s original design. ■

Coping with Grief

Joyce Lee

Photo from Pixabay

God's Promises

Psalm 42:11: Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within thee? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Psalm 31:24: Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.

Psalms 130:5: I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

Psalm 33:22: Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

Psalm 25:5: Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

Psalm 119:114: Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

Isaiah 40:31: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Micah 7:7: Therefore, I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

Romans 15:13: Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Romans 5:3-4: And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope.

Ways to Remember

- Set a place for them at the table, and/or leave an empty seat.
- Drink coffee/tea from their favorite mug, or wear their favorite sweater.
- Hang their stocking and invite friends and family members to put notes or memories inside.
- Make memorial ornaments or wreaths in honor of your loved one.
- Serve their favorite holiday food at a family gathering.
- Give stories and memories as Christmas gifts!
- Play their favorite music while you decorate the tree (even if it's not holiday music).
- Visit the gravesite/place of rest and leave a poinsettia, wreath, or other holiday item.
- Watch a holiday movie or TV show that they loved.
- Go around the table and share funny (holiday) memories of your person.
- Write in a journal about your feelings, memories, traditions; or write to your person.
- Make sure to include kids/grandkids in remembering!

Holiday Planning Worksheet

TRADITION <i>Who, What, When, Where</i>	CONTINUE <i>Why is this important to keep?</i>	CHANGE <i>How are you changing?</i>	STOP <i>How will it help to stop this?</i>

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a green patterned dress and a white apron, is hanging laundry on a line outdoors. She is standing on a grassy lawn, reaching up to adjust a white sheet. A large white sheet is hanging on the line, and a basket of laundry is on the ground next to her. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage, with a white house visible in the distance. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

The Plan of Redemption Revealed in a Load of Laundry

photo by Dziana Hasanbekava of Pexels

Laura Gill

It never ceases to amaze me how the Lord whispers His redeeming love through all aspects of creation. He spoke life into being and in so doing, signed each living cell with His loving grace and the map to guide us home.

During a church service awhile back I was struck by the beauty of the plan of redemption that is revealed in a chore as pervasive and mundane as doing laundry. Laundry—a necessity in life so common it becomes the white noise of daily activities. Always happening in the background and rarely given a thought, yet holding within its pedestrian folds a truth of redemption so beautiful it figuratively took my breath away.

Let me ask you: What is the best natural bleaching agent that exists? One that works every time, doesn't damage the fabric, doesn't use harsh chemicals, and doesn't leave any residue in its fibers? Would you believe the answer is sunlight and time? That's it. Long before mankind determined what chemicals might lift a stain God designed sunlight with UV rays that would naturally lift stains without damaging the fabric or leaving a residue behind. All it takes is to give the process two of the items we humans do not like to give away ... control and time.

You see, to remove the stain UV rays must penetrate deep into the fibers of the fabric where the stain has taken up residence and break up the mole-

cules of the substance, a process which converts its chemical structure, releasing it from the fibers of the fabric. This process takes time, between one and three hours, depending on the fabric and the type of stain. For centuries, and possibly millennia, this is how fabrics were refreshed and stains lifted. Fabrics of all shapes and sizes would be laid across bushes and in yards on laundry day, left in the full sun and given the necessary time for those precious mysterious rays to do their work of purification. An inexplicable and yet evident cleansing that worked with reliable precision without human intervention.

Then somewhere along the way in the wisdom of man we decided this process was too time consuming, too far beyond our known parameters. Surely we could find a way to make it more efficient and just as good without having to rely on the time-consuming process of sunlight that we had no control over. We found a way: chemicals that would penetrate the fabric and remove stains. Of course it meant there were times the chemicals did the job poorly, left residue in the fabric that caused skin problems, removed color in the fabric that the owner didn't want removed, caused damage to the plants around the area where laundry was done ... but there's always a price that comes with advancements, right? Either way, we loved the saving of time enough to make a swift

switch and within a couple generations the art of releasing stains in the sunlight was all but lost to history.

Lost to history or not, the reality of the cleansing power of light remains whether we choose to use it or ignore its existence. This reality hit my consciousness that day while sitting in church and contemplating the grace of Christ and His desire for us to be made whole. So how do these two thoughts connect, you may ask? Hold on to your hats; this is where things become wondrous.

All the way back in time to Isaiah's day the salvation of God and His coming Son were referred to in terms of light. In Isaiah chapter nine we are told:

"² The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined...⁶ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.⁸ The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel."

In these verses we are told that there is a light coming for those living in the shadow of death and that light will come in the form of a Child who will bring an unending kingdom filled with

peace, justice, and judgment. Now, sometimes we read the words justice and judgment and have a negative response because we are thinking of the human forms we know, which are corrupted and fallible; but if you do some digging into the root words in Hebrew you will find those words have their origins in the concept of charity, which does not exist without grace. If when you read the words justice and judgment your mind is filled with terror or fear, that is not the justice or judgment of God. His is a justice and judgment that is anchored in charity and grace. It holds no fear for any who seek His face. In other words, Isaiah is painting a picture of the light of God coming down to earth and establishing a kingdom filled with His peace, charity, and grace; open to those who would choose to come out of the darkness of the shadow of death and step into His redeeming light. One might even say the stain of sin and death is removed by the light of His presence in that holy kingdom that only He can establish.

Because God always provides multiple witnesses to His truth, let's move forward to an account from John. John begins his book in the first chapter with these words:

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²The same was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made by him; and without him was not any

thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life; and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.... ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. ¹¹He came unto his own, and his own received him not. ¹²But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

As a beautiful echo of Isaiah's words spoken about Christ, John shares that this light of Christ is life itself. Through our coming to Him we are given that light and life; we are redeemed.

Just to establish a record of three witnesses for you let's pop on over and see what Luke had to say on the topic. In Luke chapter 2 we are given the story of Simeon. Simeon is described as a just and devout man who believed on the words of God. He is told by God that he will not see death until he is able to see the Christ who was promised to come into the world.

²⁷And he came by the spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, ²⁸Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: ³⁰For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, ³¹Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; ³²A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

Simeon had spent time seeking God and knew of the promises of light and life to come

into the world. When he met Christ as a baby, he recognized that light and its holy purpose ... to bring salvation and redemption to mankind.

There are so many times we mortals think we will find our own solution when God has already placed in motion the perfect solution. I sat in that church service struck with the simple grace, power, and glory of an omnipotent God who literally designed sunlight to work on a physical level as a reflection of the way His Son heals and restores all who come to Him. The process is not of our own making; it requires only that we give up control to Him and step into the light of His presence, allowing His light to do its work of restoration and redemption. The work is His and the glory is His alone. My small effort is to stop trying to make my own solutions, give Him control and wait in His presence for His work to be completed in me. I am the fabric sitting helplessly in the sunlight, waiting on a miraculous work in my very fibers freeing me from the stains of sin and death. As Isaiah says in chapter 60 and verse 1 it is time to "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

I invite each of you as I have been invited to step into the light of His presence and allow the life in His light to make you whole again. ■



The early months of the year in Phoenix are most often quite nice. This year was no exception. Phoenix saw more rainfall this January than it had seen in the previous six years. We are so thankful for God's blessings.

The local held its election of officers and as usual the local offices were filled with dedicated people willing to give their time and talents to benefit the church.

February 2023 brought some exciting changes for us. After some consideration and conversation we decided to try a new date for the Phoenix reunion. It took place during the 3rd weekend in February. Even with the short notice so many of our brothers and sisters took the time to join us in worship and fel-

lowship. We hope to see an even larger turnout for our February 2024 reunion. Come join us!

Summer is a very busy time for everyone here. Vacation Church School is always a good week. We are so thankful we have a great group of volunteers who, each year, make this event a fun learning experience for our kids. Many of our members travel to the reunions hosted by others locals. This year the Phoenix Local had about fifteen of our teens travel to the Church of Christ Teen Camp, and several of our adults attended as counselors and instructors. The Arizona Scripture Camp marks the end of our summer events. This year's theme was taken from 1 Peter 1:5-9:

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith

unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

Chris Moser

Collins Local News

It's turning fall here in our little area of Missouri. I've been watching out my window here at work and I see the pelicans swooping about down by the river inlet and getting ready to continue their flight to someplace in the south where it will be warm for them through the winter months. I also saw several buzzards getting up and catching the wind currents to carry them off somewhere. I see those ugly birds as somehow rather comical and I enjoy watching them sail round and round in the sky. I'm silly, I suppose, but I see the purpose of a lot of God's creatures and just marvel at their seemingly unbothered existence.

We have a couple hummingbirds still buzzing around the feeder on our front porch and waiting for just the right moment to head south with their friends—until next year. I enjoy their funny little ways of dive-bombing one another and chirping as they head for a leaf to sit on and observe their portion of God's world. Isn't it amazing how all of creation (to me) shouts God's existence and might and power and exquisite love for all He has made—that includes us, ya know. The older I get the more I feel a sort of "calling" and wonder what it will be like when Jesus comes back to gather his people. I'm thinking it will be a kind of "joy" that we have yet to experience.

Our Brother Larry Beem is still in need of your prayers. He has so much trouble getting around and still has a treatment or two to take for his eyes. Jewell has a few chickens in their back yard that she fusses over and enjoys a great deal.

Brother Tim and Sister Sharon Harris have taken a little jaunt to Mackinac Island in Michigan and will also be visiting Sharon's brother, Wayne, while in the area. They are enjoying

their time together and doing quite a bit of outdoor work there at their home, with only minor injuries—Tim fell out of a tree with his chainsaw in hand! God protected him in his testimony. Happiness makes you smile doesn't it!

Sister Shawna Herd drove to Dallas, Texas, with a couple ladies to the big Mary Kay Convention. She even had an award which required her to walk across their stage! Nice! Dale took care of all their homey things—garden, etc.

Sister Sheala Herd's friend, April (and Trey), that I mentioned last writing, is plagued with migraine headaches and suffers so much. We have been praying for her. We have a family get-together on Monday nights at Shawn's and when Allen was ask-

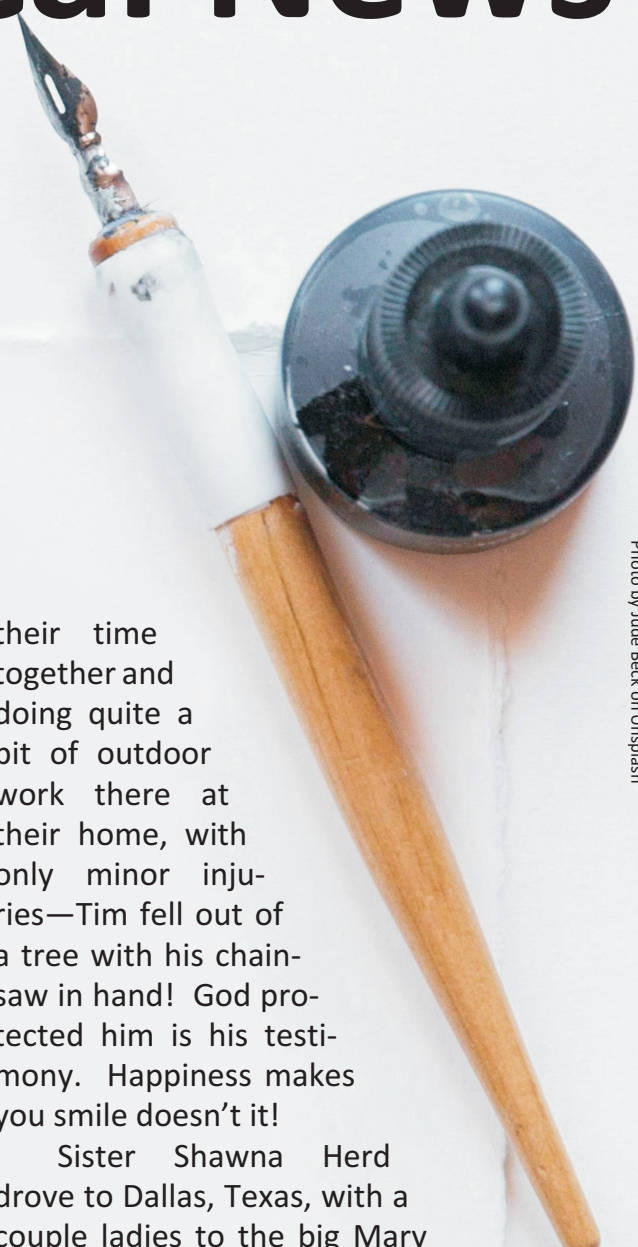


Photo by Jude Beck on Unsplash

ing the blessing that evening, he particularly prayed for April. I really haven't heard anything since, but hope she is better.

Our Sister Betty Dunning is doing better with less anxiety and blood pressure issues. She still doesn't trust herself to drive all the way to Collins, but we slip up her way and enjoy good visits with her—and her favorite feline, Mesha, who looks after Betty and keeps her company.

I talked to Marjory Routh one day a couple weeks ago. I think she remembered me and said she was doing fine—then kind of dismissed me after a minute or two as she said she had some “things to do.” She sounded real good. I also visited a minute with her son, Jimmy Routh, who is always light-hearted and was looking after Marjory that day.

Sister Kelli Anderson and her girls (from the Nixa area) came to church and we got to visit with them over lunch a couple weeks ago. Always good to keep in touch.

Also Vicki Pitts is so very faithful to come and share her talent with us, as well as her understanding of the scriptures.

Last time I wrote I mentioned a young-ish fella that is interested in the Church, but hasn't returned for some reason. We have visited with him a time or two when he was walking by our house and he says he will be back, but had some issues—I think of a personal nature.

I visit some with Kalen Meredith, who has had another surgery and is recovering from that for now. She also comes to church when she can. She helps take care of her grandmother, Berniece Martin, wife of the late Donald Martin. Kalen is Marjory Routh, Betty Dunning and Helen Kidd's niece, who was in a terrible accident some time back and has a beautiful testimony of her survival.

I have some sermon quotes to share with you:

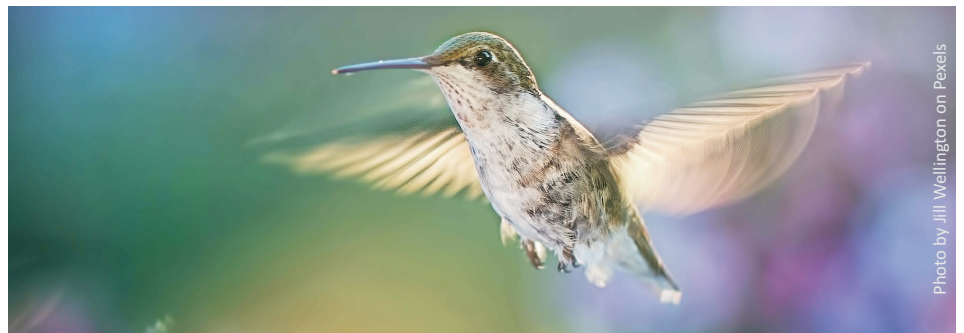
- *What would you do if you knew when Jesus was coming?*
- *God is God ... and He is NOT powerless!*
- *Darkness will not overcome darkness—only light can do that.*
- *Hatred will not overcome hatred—only love can do that.*
- *He is worthy of praise—in good and bad—He is worthy!*
- *We had a debt we could not*

pay and He paid a debt He did not owe.

- *God requires that we “act” like what we say we believe.*
- *It's not about your “comfort”—remember Jesus on the cross.*
- *He doesn't NEED us to glorify Him, but WE need to glorify Him.*
- *It's not the Lord leaving us, but us walking away from the Lord.*
- *Thank God for the privilege of serving Jesus Christ!*
- *There is resistance against God's word.*
- *Satan will attack our weaknesses.*
- *Church doesn't end on Sunday!*

Thank you for your consideration of these things. Until next time.

*Your reporter,
Czerna Kauffman*



Temple Lot Local News



Greetings from the Temple Lot Local in Independence, Missouri. As the local's reporter, I apologize for waiting until the end of my elected year to write. As I look through the notes I've collected, I thank God that I am part of this active local, serving with dedicated brothers and sisters. Like other locals and missions, the activities that fill our church calendars are planned to strengthen our spiritual walk in the gospel—from the youngest child to our oldest member, and for the visitors who frequently join us.

Our pastor this past year has been Brother David Rudd. With his assistants, Brothers Cody Fann and D. A. Vogel, several different activities have been added to our worship life.

Pastor David was preceded by Brother Dan Lawrence, who served years as pastor. Brother Dan faced the challenging years of leading the

local through the pandemic and the merging of the East Local with the Temple Lot.

Brother Tony McIndoo has been our Sunday school superintendent, and Brother Joe Olson was his assistant. We have four children's classes, a teen/young adult class, plus three classes for adults. There are sweet moments each week during the closing presentations. The children's classes go up front to share what they've learned. It is a moment when the congregation can bond with them, become familiar with their names and personalities, and become supportive of the teaching going on downstairs.

"Grow Good Fruit!" Galatian 5: 22-25 was the theme of this year's vacation church school, held on the weekend of June 2-4. Fifty children, ages 3-14, attended; and forty adults volunteered to make it possible, all under the leadership of VCS

Coordinator Becky Sheldon.

Our Young People's Christian League (YPCL) is active, usually meeting four times a month. Their adult sponsor is Sister Cynthia Lawrence. Examples of weekly activities: studies, fun activities, service projects, fundraisers, plus participating in local activities that occur on Saturdays. We all look forward to the YPCL's annual "Riverfront Café," where the young people prepare, take orders, and serve the meal.

For children 5-12 there is Jr. YPCL. They meet once a month with their coordinator, Pamela Olson and volunteers. The pictures from their activities will make you smile. One of their favorite annual events is their January 1 costume party.

Like most Church of Christ locals, music is an important part of our worship. Brother and Sister Dan and Manon Lawrence continue to open their home to children and

their families every other Friday night during the school year for choir practice. Sister Manon works with the Jr. Choir and the Teen Choir, preparing them to sing for the local. They also go caroling to some of our older members before Christmas. Manon also encourages the adults and teens to sing in the annual choirs at the Christmas service and Easter/ Conference time.

This past year we've had some changes in our regular church service schedules. The second Sunday of the month is our "potluck Sunday." Now, potluck is followed by a second preaching service at 2:00 PM. That service replaces the traditional 6:00 PM preaching.

In addition, one Wednesday night is a supper/study. We enjoy a prepared supper, then the teachers for that night present the topic they've chosen. They usually involve the attendees in the study. The attendance has been high and the people excited to participate.

Our monthly prayer breakfast is new this year, also. It is on the third Saturday of the month at 9:15 AM. All are welcome to come and pray. So far, there has been a common focus announced the week before. We've prayed for our young people, our missionaries and personal outreach, our older brothers and sisters in the church, our rally and conference. I feel hopeful, encouraged, stronger when I leave the chapel—all because of this quiet time to talk to God on a busy Saturday morning. Breakfast and fellowship follow.

Our United Workers meet once a month; and as the generations of women who began and continued the group discovered: a strong bond grows among women over years of serving together. They

plan and serve dinners for those who have lost loved ones. They also reach out to the community, and to sisters scattered who need to know they are not forgotten.

On Tuesday mornings, at 11:00 AM, a small group meets to read the scriptures together. Presently, we're reading aloud through the New Testament. We read a chapter, then discuss the verses that stood out to us and touched our hearts—maybe for the first time. It is not an intense study, just a read-through which leaves us hungry for more.

The 2022 Women's Retreat was held on September 30th and October 1st in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. It was a joyous occasion to those present as there had been no retreat since 2019. Forty-one women attended. Mark your calendars for this year's retreat September 29-30.

We enjoyed two days of worship, discussion, and learning during the Temple Lot Rally, held February 11-12. The weekend focused on God's purpose for each of us in His kingdom, and how we can glorify Him as a body of believers. We're looking forward to the 2024 rally.

We praise God for the recent baptisms we've had in the local: Amelia McGhee on June 11; Joel Berwick on June 11; Liam Housknecht on June 21; Lillian McGhee on June 25; Olivia Olson on July 29; Marjorie Katamura on July 27; and Guillermo Katamura on July 27.

We are so thankful for the little ones that have been blessed this year: Henry Frank, son of Trevor and Jenny Fann, blessed on January 22, 2023; Hazel Grace, daughter of Trenton and Avery Oldham, blessed on May 28, 2023; Molly Christine,

daughter of Derick Morris, blessed on May 5, 2023; and Landon James, son of AJ and Charity Berwick, blessed during Conference 2023.

Along with our joy, we've faced losses. Sister Carolyn Fann passed away on June 29, 2023; and Sister Caroline Hedrick passed away on August 17, 2023.

One last thought ... sometime between the end of our Christmas Service last year and the following morning, a water pipe froze and broke inside the wall between the downstairs entry doors and the doors into the visitor center. Sister DiAnn Hedrick showed up early and immediately called for help. And as the word spread, the people came—all ages, even children. The water had soaked the visitor center, then traveled towards the dining room, entering into each carpeted room as it passed. Some brothers and sisters hurriedly removed furniture from the rooms while others used shop vacs on the carpets. Several directed water to the bathroom floor drains, as others squeegeed the tile floor in the dining room. After days of humidifiers and fans, the insurance adjuster declared his meters showed no mold under the carpet or behind wall board. He told Brother Jim Case that if he had not seen the pictures of everyone working together, even the children, he would have questioned the reported amount of water.

*Praising God together,
Debbie Vogel*

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” —Luke 2:10-11

One of the joys of the Christmas season is hearing all the scriptures relating to the birth of Jesus. We love to recite the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah, Nephi and Alma. We wonder how Mary must have felt at the visitation of the angel Gabriel. We’re touched by the kindness of Joseph. Through the ages these passages have been put to song, poetry, prose and pageant.

When the angel of the Lord appeared to the humble shepherds that night, his few powerful words summarized the entire message of this sacred literary panorama. The long-awaited Messiah had arrived that all men might be freed from the bondage of sin brought about by our first parents in the garden of Eden. The great joy of life eternal had become a reality to those who would follow the Saviour who was born that day. ■



Days of
Christmas

Elder Dan Lawrence

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