

Living Faith Messenger

2022 Winter Edition

From the Pastor's Desk

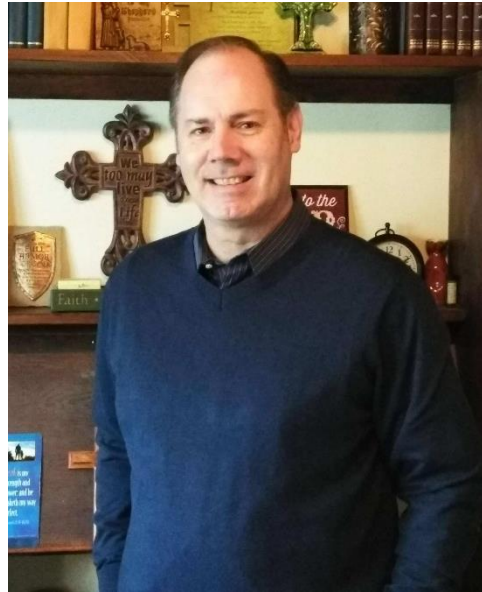
By Pastor Troy Billow

"The Wonder of Christmas"

December 2022

Christmas can be such a busy time of year for everyone and sometimes we can lose track of its true meaning and specialness. We can see in the real-life story of Mary and Joseph as recorded in the Gospel of Luke chapter 2 that this young couple had a lot on their minds too and were facing very difficult challenges that significant week. Joseph had to lead Mary on a donkey cross country to register his family in his ancient hometown of David because of an empire wide Roman census right at the time when his young wife Mary was 9 months pregnant and expecting any day. Imagine now on top of that kind of stress, when they did arrive in Bethlehem, Joseph could not find a room for his beloved Mary, and it was starting to get dark and cold real fast. Joseph had to go into hero mode. This Christ centered, destiny driven, prophecy fulfilling couple fully understood stress and busyness.

After giving birth to God's son, Mary and Joseph began to experience the presence of God and heard stories of angels as local shepherd began showing up and telling of heavenly host singing about this very night that Christ was born. It



says in the text **"All who heard about it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them concerning this child."** (v. 18) Now at this point in the account it says something very significant **"But Mary treasured up all these things told to her and pondered them in her heart."** (v.19) *This response is the true meaning and spirit of Christmas – remembering the preciousness of this moment when God's son Christ was born.*

Dear ones this is what's truly important for us too. After everything this young couple had gone through leading up to this historical night, when the moment finally arrived, Mary understood in her heart that Jesus God's own son had come into the world in the package of this little Hebrew baby with eternity shining in his eyes. My hope for all of us this Christmas, maybe more than ever before, that we would capture the specialness of Christ birth in our hearts, and ponder it, and treasure it. Try to slow down and come and worship with us at Living Faith celebrating Christ birth. I pray that when at home this year with your family you will tell your children the story of Jesus birth and help them to understand the true wonder and meaning of Christmas.

====//====



====//====

Bible Study

Ezekiel's Connection to Us Today

By Rob W. Case
December 13, 2022

Upon reading the Old Testament, one thing that you will find very clear, if you choose to study it, is how it, particularly as a history, resonates with and connects to us today. What do I mean by that? A number of years ago, the Holy Spirit showed me how living in a post Christian world is really a return to the ancient order of things. In seeing things in that light, so many more things begin to make sense, particularly when you study prophecy and where things are going as we move further in the end times.

Ezekiel's Calling:

Ezekiel was the son of a Priest in Jerusalem, raised to become a Priest himself, but the calling that he was preparing for his whole life was disrupted when the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem and Judah a second time, causing him to be exiled in Babylon. In Babylon, God revealed His glory to Ezekiel by the River Chebar and commissioned Ezekiel to preach repentance to a nation that for years didn't care about what God had to say, hardened their hearts to Him, His Word, His chances to turn back to Him, and His warnings, and were exiled as a punishment for their sins, which were exceedingly great (Ezekiel 9:9). Despite their rebellious state, God in His grace commissioned Ezekiel to give the exiles another chance (something God frequently does with us today) to repent and be a part of the great plans He has for His people, should they choose to submit to Him and want to take part in His plan.

When Ezekiel's status was changed from "priest" to "prophet", a calling that did not have the fringe benefits, nor the prestige and honor that normally came to a priest in that time period, Ezekiel's place in world history would be determined by how he simply obeyed what God had commanded him to do, be where God called him to be, and do things (that would have great symbolic meaning) that would cause Ezekiel to connect with God emotionally, and get people to ponder on the actions that were observed.

Today our culture/environment has many striking similarities with the culture/environment of the 6th century B.C. In the book of Jeremiah, we see in deep, meticulous detail, what caused great offenses to God to the extent that they aroused His anger and provoked His wrath upon them, using the Babylonians as His instrument for judgment. As Jeremiah continues to focus on matters where he is geographically (Judah), the book of Ezekiel branches off and begins in Babylon, amid a community of exiles, where Ezekiel now lives, and must serve as an instrument to God's message of repentance, hope, and bright future prospects for them, or face further judgment, wrath, condemnation, and feel His hand work against them because of their sin, pride, hardened hearts, and rebellion.

Where this leads for us today:

Since the Bible is indeed a history book, we need to come to terms with the fact that modern day equivalents to these ancient behaviors that made God so angry in the 6th century B.C. are once again resurfacing exponentially on a global scale as we move further and further away from God. What's fascinating to see is that God still exists, and the Bible shows us how He feels about things, what makes Him happy, and reveals to us what will arouse His wrath globally (via the Book of Revelation). All we have to do is discern them, care about them, and obey God as He commissions us to bring the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to the whole world.

What I also find fascinating is that in God's grace, He made it so much easier for us to turn to Him by simply believing and trusting in His Son, Jesus Christ to bring us in the presence of God and fulfill the very things that God's own people could never do. This is why the gift of Jesus is so powerful and important to ponder on, particularly as we celebrate the Christmas season. And we are privileged to be reconciled with God because of Jesus and have a living relationship with Him. That gives us an edge today that many in the ancient times did not have. In that, God also made it easier for us to have immeasurable access to the Holy Spirit, who reveals truth and provides us with a well-rounded view of where we are personally, where the world is

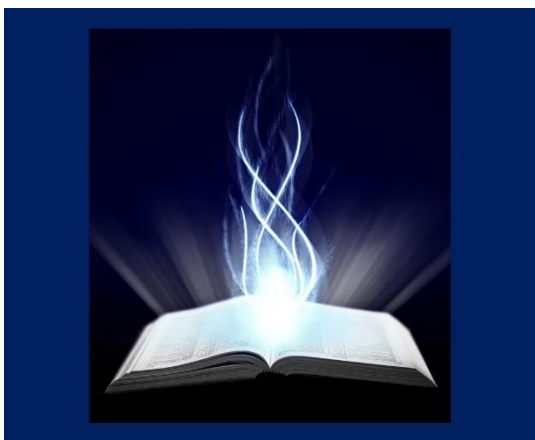
culturally and morally, where God is (and how He still feels) in all of this, and the direction that everything is headed, which happens to be exactly what God revealed to us in His Word in advance.

So, I invite you to join us on Thursdays at 7pm to look at all of these dynamics interchangeably and in rich detail, as we thoroughly study the book of Ezekiel and what it means for us today. And I also invite you to take in the previously posted podcasts of our series on Jeremiah, accessible through the top of the homepage under “Bible Study (Podcasts)” at

<https://www.livingfaithchurch.org/home> to get the back story that leads to the events discussed in the Book of Ezekiel.

The Book of Ezekiel Bible Study will also soon be posted as a podcast series on the Living Faith website, so please stay tuned.

====//=====



====//=====

Living Faith Youth Group

By: Megan Bustamante

As one year comes to close and another one starts it is always a fun time to look back at what God has done and look forward with anticipation for what He will do. The year 2022 was a year of growth, learning and fun for the youth of Living Faith. It would be impossible to summarize the whole year but there are a few things that really made this year amazing.

During this last year we saw many new faces during both Sunday school and Youth group. Some of our new friends quickly became regular

attendees and have brought many new perspectives and energy to our time together. With new people the dynamic of the group is bound to change but I am happy to say that these kids have embraced each other in new ways this year and have really grown closer as a group too.

This last year we have been able to focus even more on learning and spiritual growth. On Sundays we have stayed the regular path with the goal of strengthening Biblical knowledge. We have studied creation, Moses, King David, the Psalms, Prophets and the miracles and parables of Jesus. On Thursday evenings we take a different approach and focus more on what it means to be a Christian in today's world and how we can grow in our faith. This year we dove into some long series including the 10 commandments, the Fruit of the Spirit and what the Bible says about certain things vs. what our culture says. Some of the highlights of the year for me have been seeing the kids start to remember and retain things we have talked about and make connections between our Sunday morning lessons, Thursday evening discussions and their everyday life. The learning and spiritual growth that has happened this year has blown my mind and is a true testimony to how God works.



Looking back at our year would not be complete without a mention of all the fun we had together. This was the first year we were able to get out and do activities and the kids loved it. We had some friendly competition while bowling, explored during our trip to the zoo, served while we packed shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child, and

built friendships and learned during 5 Day Club. We had a handful of other events but finished 2022 strong with a fun Christmas party.



As I reflect on what God did in 2022 I am once again left speechless by his work and power. This past year gives me even more motivation and excitement for what is to come in 2023. I know God is just getting started with these amazing kids and he has even bigger plans than I do, and trust me, I am already planning big for what is to come!



Welcome to our newest addition



Emilio Alexander Bustamante
Born Tuesday, December 13, 2022
6:01 pm, 8 lbs. 13 oz.

Congratulations Chucho & Megan

Birthdays

December

David Skowronski	Dec. 8
Derek Thompson	Dec. 14
Robert Thompson	Dec. 14
Virginia Beehn	Dec. 18
Sarah Houdek	Dec. 19
John Billow	Dec. 21
Luci Houdek	Dec. 24
Joyce Skowronski	Dec. 25

January

Jackie Gehle	Jan. 4
Lisamarie Williams	Jan. 4
Allyce Beechy	Jan. 16
Tom Heinrich	Jan. 21
Terry Zappa	Jan. 30

February

Rob Case	Feb. 4
Ron Robison	Feb. 6
Keith Jacobs	Feb. 18

====//=====

Kingdom Women

This fall, Kingdom Women (formerly Circle of Sisters) kicked off the year with a 6-month DVD study by Tony Evans called “Kingdom Woman.” Tony and his daughter Chrystal Evans Hurst have been teaching us how to align ourselves and operate under the authority of God in every area of our lives, and how that process can unleash new purpose, power and possibilities in both our lives and the ones we love. Women are challenged to live as true heirs under God’s covenant with his children and are also affirmed in their identity as valued daughters of Christ.

In addition, on October 29, Kingdom Women held a “Day of Spiritual Strengthening” at the church. Twelve women attended this half day

retreat and pizza luncheon. Our guest speaker by zoom was Kristen Joy, a Board-Certified Mental Health Coach and Certified Biblical Life Coach.

The women participated in two sessions with Kristen:

Taming Your Dragons, where we learned to recognize the areas of woundedness within our hearts and how God helps us with the process of healing and walking freely again.



Hang-ups & Hiccups: Dealing with the Difficult People in Your Life, which pulled back the covers on the many reasons why people can be difficult and how we and/or those we love can get stuck in negative patterns of relating and reaction and how God helps us with specific Biblical tools to thrive and enjoy relationships again.





It was a powerful day of healing and prayer for the women in the church.

Moving forward, we would love and welcome all women to join us in our study, fellowship, and growing together in our faith.

God bless you.

Sharon

====//====

Kingdom Warriors

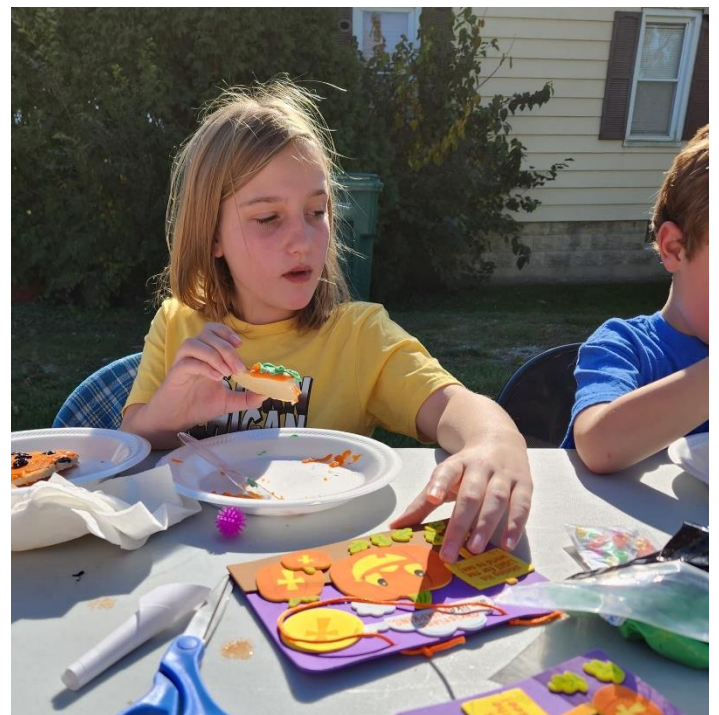
The year of 2022 for Kingdom Warriors (formerly known as God's Warriors) had its share of tough trials, but we finished the race. We know the Lord uses all of this; the good and the bad, for His good purposes, perfect will, and to help us grow more into His image. So, it really has been a privilege to serve this year. We started out the year in helping out with "Marriage Night" for those wanting to strengthen their marriage and give practical principles for the day-to-day journey of marriage. Then, in May we began a new spiritual training event called the "Night of Truth" which focused on Spiritual Warfare. Our goal is to ultimately strengthen the faith of Living Faith Community Church through our Outreach and Events. The third event we hosted was an outdoor game night, cookout, and bonfire devotional. We had an excellent time and were united in prayer together as a Church. A good reminder is that God gave laughter, fun and joy. Christians should express that with God's gift of life through these types of things. We can be filled with God's Spirit and enjoy bonfires, play games, and eat food as

much as anyone, knowing this is all the Lord's for our enjoyment. If Christ is the foundation to these things, we know then everything else will fall into its proper place under the creator and be used for good for humanity. The last two events we saw came with great testing and even spiritual warfare from the enemy. I won't go into detail, but many felt the resistance from the enemy of our souls in preparing for our big festival. It was a great learning experience, and the Lord blessed our endeavors. We want to thank everyone for helping out for this event and being a part of it. It was a great pleasure. Our last event was carefully decided upon by one of my brothers and leaders of Kingdom Warriors, Tom Heinrich. He chose the film by David Barton called "The Influence of the Bible on America". It was our Thanksgiving Event. We try to present a good historical event on Church or American History. We learned the deep foundations that led to America because of courageous men like William Tyndale, John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, the Pilgrims, and the founding Fathers. They fought to put the Bible first and get it into the hands of the common people. This brought great change in the world because the Bible was now being dispersed throughout the world. Seeds landed providentially greatly in America because of the Christian influence from the Bible. The founders used the Bible in almost 40% of their writings or at least referenced it. The Founders and America has certainly had its own sins and faults like all humanity, but regardless, God has used America to spread Christianity throughout the world. The video really encouraged those who attended of how blessed we are in America. So, where do we as Kingdom Warriors go from here? With the new year ahead, I strongly urge you to begin to pray for yourselves, our Church and leaders, the congregation and those who might be a part of our fellowship, and especially Kingdom Warriors. We really want to make an impact in our community and Church, and we will need all your prayers and involvement. If you have any interest in being involved in the coming year please contact John, Allyce, Tom or Katy. We need extra hands and also those who want to use those gifts and ideas. We welcome more people to join our ministry and

be actively involved in our Events and Outreach. The Lord can and will do great things through this ministry. May you prayerfully consider committing to being a part of Kingdom Warriors.

Thank you,
John Beechy

Harvest Fest, 2022







Elsie's Pantry

God continues to bless our pantry year after year. In May, 2023 we will celebrate our 23rd year in operation. Since then we have served over 125,000 people. The blessings keep coming. I can envision one day having another Elsie's Pantry in our church. Maybe someday, God willing. Elsie's Daughter, Jacquelyn Pyle and her group called Compassion and Justice donated \$500 worth of dog and cat food and treats in November. Not only were the animals happy in November, so were their owners. The Greater Chicago Food Depository gave us 80 turkeys and 45 hams for Thanksgiving along with stuffing, potatoes, onion, canned vegetables and fruit. 197 Families were served that day. We opened an hour early so we wouldn't have a five-block backup like last Thanksgiving. On December 22nd we anticipate the same amount of families coming for their Christmas hams and turkeys, and we are ready for that. Please pray that the Lord continues to provide the means to serve those in need for the next 23 years! Thank you all for your prayers and support.



The Hills Chamber of Commerce



Donation from Compassion & Justice

====//====

Thank you Ladies of Lilac Ministry, for volunteering to be in charge of Hospitality and decorating. Your hard work is truly appreciated!

====//====

*Megan and Katy's Church Baby Shower
November 5, 2022*





Thank you, Lisamarie Williams, for the beautiful cakes and cupcakes!



Thank you, Edith Thompson, Terry Zappa and ladies of Lilac for decorating the Fellowship Hall. It was so beautiful!

====//=====

Living Alternatives Banquet

October 27, 2022



====//=====

**Christmas Candlelight Service, 12/23
at 7 pm followed by a Cookie Social**

Christmas Service, 12/25, 11 am-12 pm



*Please find the
Sign Up Sheet
in the back of the church!
Please join us after the
Candlelight Service!*

====//=====

Living Faith Community Church

380 High Road Lockport, IL 60441

Dated Material
Address Change Requested

Stamp

Living Faith Community Church Messenger

The Quarterly Newsletter Of
Living Faith Community Church

380 High Road, Lockport, IL 60441

815-838-6018