

THE BROTHER'S KEEPER

FIRST CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN—LIGONIER

FEBRUARY * MARCH 2021



GRACE: God's' Redemption At Christ's Expense



While we are only about a month into the new year, it doesn't seem that long ago when we welcomed the year 2020 with a lot of hope and enthusiasm. While the events of 2020 may have placed a damper on some of our hopes and enthusiasm, they haven't phased our Lord in the least. He remains the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, and that "sameness" includes His love and care for us no matter what the world throws at us or what we do to ourselves.

Think about it. If our God loves us "no matter what", how can we turn our back on Him? The answer is we can't or at least we shouldn't. While 2020 was not the best year for several reasons, including the pain and suffering experienced by so many, none-the-less it was a year of new experiences. We learned to use our computers a little better, in that it was one way to worship the Lord while confined to our homes. We learned to communicate in ways that were not face-to-face, but did show others that we still care for and about them. Little acts of kindness were, in the final analysis, not so little. And, it was interesting to experience the varied and creative ways people all over the world "did church."

What all of that says to me is that we can't suppress the purposes of "church" even if we don't gather as a church family every Sunday.

To be sure, we enter 2021 with face masks but with the hope of an even brighter future. The vaccine may be part of our hope, but the real hope is in Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul, when commenting on the thorn in his flesh, says that three times he pleaded with the Lord to take away that thorn, but He (the Lord) said to me, "***My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness***" (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). Is God's GRACE sufficient for you?

Pastor John

"Grace, Grace, God's Grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within. Grace, Grace, God's Grace. Grace that is greater than all our sin!"

THE SPECIAL OFFERING IN FEBRUARY, SPONSORED BY THE WITNESS COMMISSION IS HEIFER PROJECT INTERNATIONAL-

AL Heifer International is a global nonprofit organization working to eradicate poverty and hunger through sustainable, values-based holistic community development. Heifer International distributes animals, along with agricultural and values-based training, to families in need around the world as a means of providing self-sufficiency. Heifer International started as Heifers for Relief in 1944. Its founder, an Ohio farmer named Dan West, was a Church of the Brethren relief worker during the Spanish Civil War. Working with Quakers and Mennonites, West directed a program where hungry children were given rations of milk. In 1938, West was ladling out milk to hungry refugee children and wrote later that he thought, "These children don't need a cup [of milk], they need a cow."



sharing resources. changing lives.

THE SPECIAL OFFERING IN MARCH, SPONSORED BY THE WITNESS COMMISSION AND OUR DENOMINATION IS ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING.

“And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.”

II Corinthians 9:8 The theme for 2021 continues to be “Sharing Brings Joy” with a focus on sharing joy with others. Be watching for more information or go to www.brethren.org/oghs.com.

RITA’S CLOSET is a ministry of our church organized by Darlene Rummel to help others. She has received many donations of clothing for men and women, and there is also a table for children, that includes toys, books, and clothing. **This ministry is open on Monday from 10am—1pm and 4pm—6pm.** Stop by and visit. Darlene has put her time, energy and her heart into this much needed ministry in our community. If you would like to make a donation of clothing or help with Rita’s Closet is open, please see Darlene. *“Because I have been given much, I too, must give ... I shall divide my gifts from Thee with every brother that I see Who has the need of help from me.”*

**People need people and friends
need friends,
and we all need love, for a full
life depends
not on vast riches or great
acclaim, not on success or
worldly fame,
but just in knowing that some-
one cares
and holds us close in their
thoughts and prayers—
for only the knowledge that
we’re understood makes every-
day living feel wonderfully good.**
By: Helen Steiner Rice

NEWS FROM THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN NEWS SERVICES REGARDING THE EYN CHURCHES (EKKLESIYAR YAN’UWA A NIGERIA) ...

At least 12 people have been killed in recent attacks on EYN churches. Among those abducted was a Pastor/Evangelist. This violence happened the day before and the day after Christmas. The attackers invaded Garkida on Christmas Eve, burning several churches including EYN Ghung, EYN Sangere, and Living Faith Church, Garkida. “The church said they spent Christmas Eve in the bush and that some houses were selectively burned.” Also burned were road construction facilities on the Biu Road. In another Christmas Eve attack, Pemi village was stormed by Boko Haram. According to church officials, seven people were killed, an EYN Church and many houses were burned and one Evangelist named Kulus Yakura was abducted. At least three more communities along the Biu Road were attacked the day after Christmas. Three more churches and many houses were destroyed in the towns Tushan Alade, Kirbitu and Debiro . The renewed attacks are coming almost on a daily basis in different ways, resulting in killings, kidnapping and destruction of properties. (NOTE: The Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN) is an Anabaptist Congregation with one hundred thousand—plus—members.) “Our hope is that Christ was born to save us from all these pains and give us peace,” Mdurvwa wrote. “Apart from the above insecurity, COVID-19 is surging in the second wave. Nigeria is recording above 1,000 new cases of COVID per day. Despite our troubles, God is our comforter and our source of help.” **PLEASE INCLUDE THE PEOPLE OF NIGERIA AND THE EYN CHURCHES IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS.**



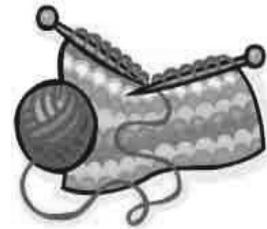
WE HAVE A VERY ACTIVE PRAYER CHAIN. If you have a prayer request, please contact Paul Shumaker who will put your prayer request on our phone prayer chain. Our congregation has many, many prayer warriors who are ready to lift prayer when needed. And guess what? Prayer does work!

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed. The motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast. Prayer is the simplest form of speech, that infant lips can try; prayer the sublimest strains that reach the Majesty on high. O Thou by Whom we come to God, the Life, the Truth, the Way. The path of prayer Thyself hast trod; Lord teach us how to pray.”

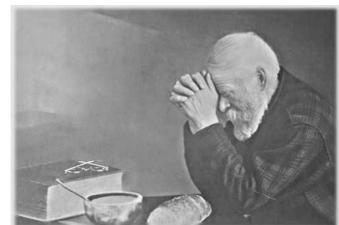
Hymn “Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire” (Brethren Hymnal #285)

COME JOIN OUR
BIBLE OUR BIBLE
STUDY group
meets on
Wednesday
evening at
6:30pm in the
Fellowship Hall. Beginning in the fall, we started our study time with the Book of James. We then moved on to the Study of Isaiah. Isaiah was an 8th—7th century BC Prophet. His ministry spanned as many as 64 years. As of the writing of this Newsletter, we are in Chapter 6 of Isaiah. We hope you'll join us as we study God's Word. We're an informal group who meets to learn more about God's Word and what it can teach us today. Pastor John prints study sheets for each of us to follow. Following our time of study and discussion we have a time of fellowship and snacks (what we Brethren do best!!). We hope you'll plan to join us for this time of study, prayer and fellowship. Bring your Bible!

THE HAPPY STITCHERS continue to meet on Thursday morning at 9:30am until 11:30am in the Fellowship Room. We make prayer shawls in various sizes, prayer blankets, baby blankets and chemo caps. This past month we donated 51 prayer shawls, 4 were baby shawls, and 36 cancer caps. Please see any of the ladies who help with this ministry and let them know if there is someone who would like a prayer shawl or cap. They don't have to be a member of the church to receive one. The Happy Stitchers thank the church for their support of this ministry—both with your prayers and monetary donations.. Please keep the stitchers and this ministry in your prayers. We hope to see you some Thursday morning in the fellowship room! Sit and visit and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea and a snack! If you want to learn to crochet or knit, we would be glad to help you.



THE MENS' FIRST PRAYER BREAKFAST was held in the Church Fellowship Hall on Saturday, January 9th. Frank, Doug, and Jeremy prepared a delicious breakfast that all of the men enjoyed. The Guest Speaker was Jeff Hawkins, who is the owner of Hawkins Heating & Air Conditioning in Holsopple. More important, Jeff is a good Christian, family man who loves the Lord. He shared his experience of suffering from a stroke and how that time in his life drew him closer to the Lord. This is going to be a monthly event—the next breakfast will be Saturday, February 13th. Please join us at 8am (February only). All other months we'll meet at 9am). All men and boys are invited to attend..



See you Saturday, February 13th at 8:00am. for the next Men's Breakfast!

LAST MONTH WAS THE FIRST EDITION OF THE BROTHER'S KEEPER that we (Pastor John and Susan) worked on. You might have noticed it looked a little different and there were some mistakes (we're sure)! On several pages the complete article that we typed didn't show up at the bottom of the page when it was copied. We apologize for that. So we are going to repeat a few of those articles that got "cut off"! If you would like to submit an article please place it in our mailbox, give us a call, or send us an email. Thank you.

WE HAD A THANK YOU TO ALL IN THE CHURCH WHO WORK SO TIRELESSLY for the Church and God's Kingdom. That was an important part of the Newsletter as many, many people work and give so much to the ministry of the Church ... so,
THANK YOU!

Congratulations

ANOTHER REALLY IMPORTANT ARTICLE was one from Debbie McInchok. She is so proud of her nephew Shepard Soisson — Here is the article as she wrote last month: "Debbie McInchok is the proud Aunt of Shepard Soisson. Shepard is a senior at Northern High School in Dillsburg, Pa., where his soccer team went undefeated this year. Shepard also scored 100 points during his high school career. Shepard will attend Juniata College in the fall to play soccer. His parents are Tim and Dr. Erin (Boyd) Soisson. Carol Boyd is Shepard's "Baba". God Bless Shepard as he looks forward to his graduation this year and thank you Debbie for sharing.



VALENTINE'S DAY
SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 14TH

"I pray for you on Valentine's Day
That God will grant to you
The happiness you so deserve
Today and always too.
And may He keep you in His care
Through every future day
And fill your heart with blessings
In his tender, loving way."

"SOMEBODY LOVES YOU"

**This is all I ask ... Lord, show me
the way I can somehow repay the
blessings YOU'VE given me.**

**Lord, teach me to do what YOU
most want me to and to be what
YOU want me to be.**

**I'm unworthy, I know but I do
love YOU so -**

**I beg YOU to answer my
plea ... I've not much to
give but as long as I live,
may I give it completely
to THEE!"**





WOMEN'S FELOWSHIP UPDATES

The Women's Fellowship met in the church social room on Monday, November 15, with 15 ladies and Pastor John present.

President Kathy McMaster opened the meeting by stating we would be dedicating our meeting tonight in memory of Dorothy

“Toots” Fish and Thelma Jones, who were very active in our group for many years and recently went to be with their Savior.



MINUTES from the April meeting were read. Kathy stated that we had two successful cleaning days on Saturday, October 17 and 24. We had a bake-less bake sale with \$843 donated to date. We decided not to have a fall Bazaar due to the Corona Virus,, but might consider having one in the spring. We made 150 pints of apple butter on October 24 and al of it has already been sold! Becky Kwak made and sold cloth pumpkins and she turned in \$45 as proceeds from the sale. Pastor John and Sue purchased two new coffee pots and Lee Rummel purchased a new commercial can opener for the kitchen.

NEW BUSINESS: It was agreed to purchase food supplies for dinners from Loyalhanna Provisions in Greensburg. Two names were selected from the McMaster's Shop in Ligonier for a boy and girl. It was moved by Stacy, seconded by Colleen to spend \$50 on each gift. Kathy will take care of getting them and will display them in the Social Hall. It was suggested that we might think about making Ham Loaves in the future (with some help from the men!).

ELECTION OF OFFICERS will be held at the December Christmas Party.

Pastor John suggested that we each tell what we are thankful for. There were many responses with Church and Family being mentioned many times. He read a verse from I Thessalonians 5:18 which says, “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's Will for you in Christ Jesus.” Pastor John also distributed information entitled “10 Day Thankfulness Challenges to Prepare Your Heart for Thanksgiving.”

We had a delicious snack and conducted our Silent Auction and made \$236. A very special evening with Pastor John and Sue and 15 great ladies.

Submitted by: Jeanne Boyd





FOOD COLLECTION PROJECT DURING LENT

SPONSORED BY THE WITNESS COMMISSION

—The Witness Commission is asking each family to collect food during Lent, which begins Wednesday, February 17. The food will be distributed after Easter either through the Ligonier schools or the local food bank. More information will be following, but here is a

snapshot of this planned program:

* A list will be provided which will include the different food items for each week during Lent.

* Collect and keep all items at home until Easter Sunday. (Back-up Sunday will be the Sunday after Easter.) Strong bags will be available for the food collected.)

* The Witness Commission will distribute the food items once it is brought to the Church.

REMEMBER ... Lent is often considered a time to “give up” something (usually a bad habit!!). This year we are asking that you give to those in need in our community.

If you have any questions, please see Debbie McInchok or any member of the Witness Commission.

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13TH WE WELCOMED THREE NEW MEMBERS INTO OUR CHURCH FAMILY,

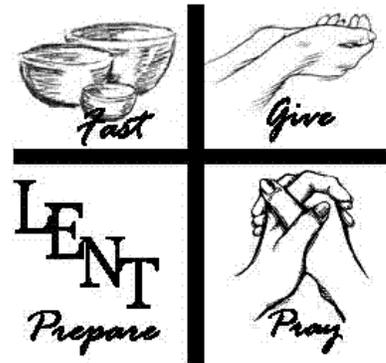
These folks have been worshipping with us for some time and you might have thought they were already members! Please welcome Joe and Roseanne Ometz and Jeremy Peiffer into our church family. They stood at the front of the sanctuary with Pastor John, recited their vows of membership and ”officially” joined the Ligonier Church of the Brethren. We all welcome them warmly into our church family.

“If my people will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land.” II CHRONICLES 7:14



WHERE ARE THE BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY LISTS ... you may be asking??!! Work will be starting on a new updated Church Directory, and it is planned that birthdays and anniversaries will be part of the Directory. In the meantime, the Women's Fellowship has a birthday and anniversary booklet that can be used. Be watching for the updated Directory!

THE SEASON OF LENT ... begins with Ash Wednesday, February 17th. Lent is a time of preparation, repentance, reflection, outreach and prayer. It is a time not only to "give up" something, but also a time to give — to give to God some time in prayer and learning His Word and to give someone else a thoughtful deed of love for Him. God gave His very best for us. Let us give our very best to God and His Kingdom. During the Lenten Season, we praise God for His righteous Son who perfectly kept all of God's commandments for us and paid the full price of our disobedience. Let's use this time to praise Him with hearts filled with Christ's spirit of obedience.



LENT ... To search our souls, to meditate will not suffice for Lent. To share the cross, to sacrifice—these are the things God meant."

"THE JOURNEY OF LIFE" is our Lenten Sermon Theme this year. We hope to walk this journey together to Easter as we search our souls and draw closer to Jesus, who gave His all for us. This 40 day journey toward Easter has a purpose, and that purpose is spiritual preparation: To reflect again on the actions of God for the forgiveness of the world and the renewal of our lives in Christ Jesus. Join us each Sunday during Lent on **"THE JOURNEY OF LIFE"** as we praise Him with hearts filled with Christ's spirit of obedience.

PALM SUNDAY - MARCH 28 * GOOD FRIDAY—APRIL 2

EASTER SUNDAY—APRIL 4—CHRIST IS RISEN!

NEW AND IMPROVED! Tracy Black, under the leadership of the Trustees, has been working hard to improve our electronic/automation capabilities within the Church. Upgraded computers have been purchased and are being installed in the Church Office, the Pastor's Study, and at the sound board in the Sanctuary. A new and improved WIFI service has already been installed. On the horizon:



- 1) Camera capabilities should we want to record our Services for distribution via the internet (or other modes).
- 2) New software to enable our prayer chain messages and other announcements to be sent via phone, email or text and be initiated at locations other than the church, and
- 3) Expansion capabilities for additional flexibility. Thanks to Tracy for all his behind-the-scenes hard work.

NOTE: in the next edition of the Church Directory, we plan to include—at your discretion—email addresses and cell phone numbers so we can provide prayer concerns and other messages in the form that is most convenient for you. Details at ELEVEN!!!

SOMETHING FOR THE KIDS ... AND ADULTS !

THE JELLY BEAN PRAYER

RED is for the blood He gave;
GREEN is for the grass He made;
YELLOW is for the sun so bright;
ORANGE is for the edge of night;
BLACK is for the sins we made,
WHITE is for the Grace He gave
PURPLE is for the hour of sorrow

**A bag of Jelly beans,
So colorful and sweet
Is a prayer, is a promise,
And a very special treat!**



First Church of the Brethren

405 Route 271

Ligonier, Pa. 15658-9245

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**LIGONIER (FIRST) CHURCH
OF THE BRETHREN ...**

**is a community of believers who
seek to walk passionately with
Christ by reaching out in His
name, preaching and sharing
His Gospel, and teaching all to
love Him.**

PLEASE JOIN US

Sunday School—9:30am

(Classes for ALL ages)

Worship—10:30am

Adult Bible Study

**Wednesday Evening—
6:30pm**

Happy Stickers

Thursday—9:30am