

The Gospel News

The Pinetop Tent Meetings Made an Impact

By Sister Michelle Watson

IN THIS ISSUE:

Thanks & Giving

Blast From The Past
Page 2

Word Up
Page 3

Editorial Viewpoint
Page 6

GMBA News
Page 7

Ladies' Uplift Circle News
Page 8

Children's Corner
Page 9

Question of the Month
Page 11

Blessing Bits
Page 12

What's the key to a successful outreach event? We, the members of the Pinetop Branch in Arizona, have found the secret, and today, we are letting you in on it.

It's hot dogs. Lots of them—Just kidding!

Hot dogs played quite a role in the tent meeting event that we hosted at our branch from June 15 to 21, 2026, and we'll tell you about that, but we'd also like to tell you about the beautiful and lasting impact that the tent meetings had on our branch.

The theme of the week was "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus. No Turning Back." The Youth in Action, along with many church members from far and wide, came to support the outreach. We spent the early part of the week setting up the tent and canvassing the reservation. Thursday through Sunday, we hosted nightly church services and a Vacation Bible School.

If you've ever helped with a big outreach event, then you know there is always a lot of planning and preparation that go into it ahead of time. Then, as the event approaches, there is a buildup of excitement and anticipation of blessings. Then, the event arrives, and it's all hands on deck, spiritually and naturally, because outreach is active, not passive.

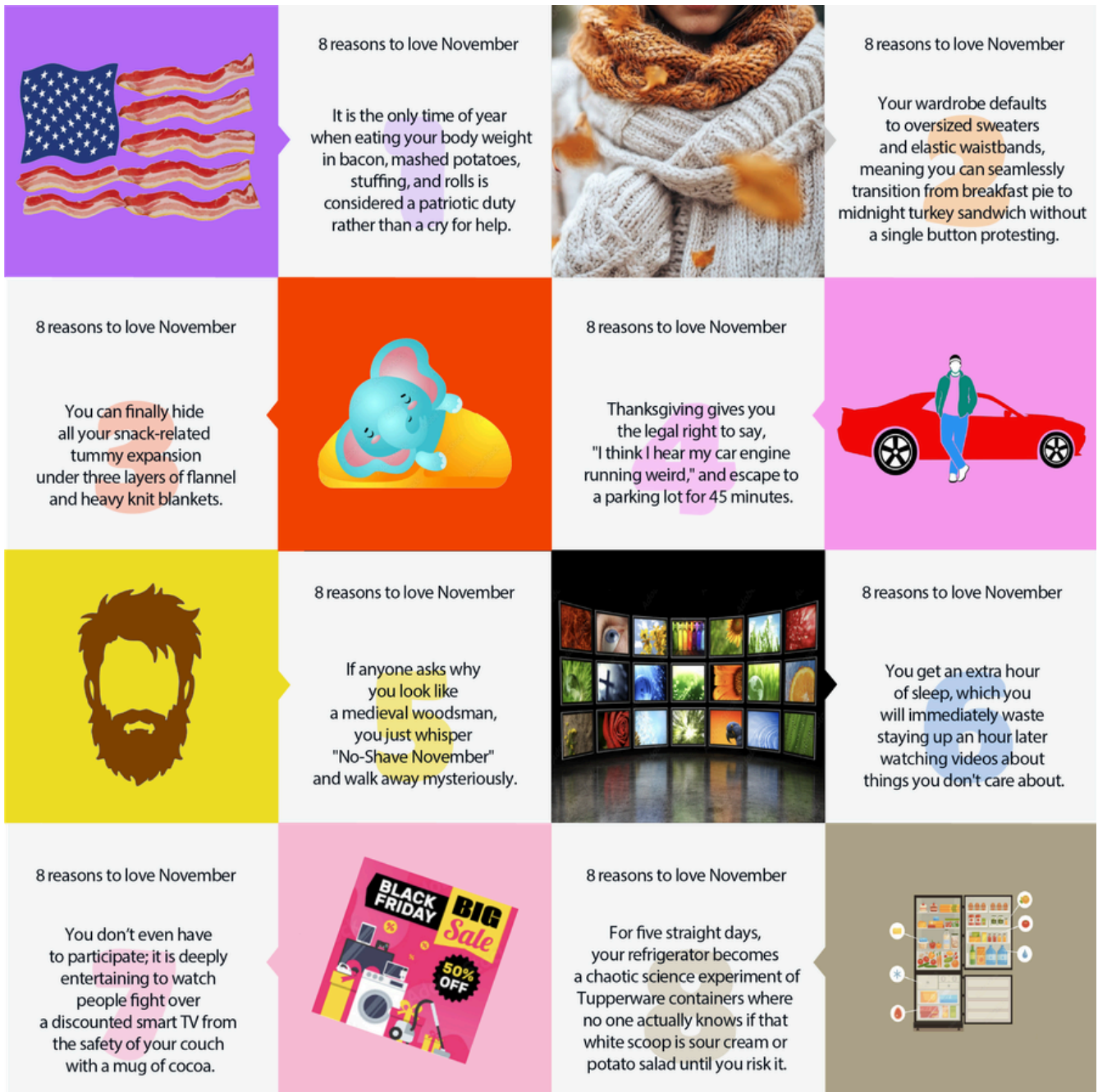
The tent meetings required a mighty effort, but the saints stepped up to answer the call. It took three days to get the tent off the ground and equipped with sound, video, lights, seating, stage, etc. Right around 40 kids participated in the Vacation Bible School, and dozens of new faces showed up at our night meetings.

Where do the hot dogs come in? We gave away around 1,500 free hot dogs over the course of the week, as we invited people from the reservation to come to the tent meetings, to receive prayer for their needs, and to get right with God.

It was a week devoted to service in all its forms.

Youth-in-Action participant Brother Zac Griffith said it this way: "One significant thing I took away [from the tent meetings] was to be ready to serve and step out on faith! Sometimes when

(Continued on page 4)



BFTP Blast From The Past

By Brother Daniel Stone

Detroit Branch No. 2 Baptisms

It had been the fathers and mothers of a generation before who pioneered the Gospel from New York to California. But for many of their children throughout the Church, 1956 would prove to be the pivotal year in which they would come of age. For Detroit Branch No. 2, it was the November GMBA Conference in New Jersey that set in motion a handful of baptisms. Alex Gentile – whose struggle was witnessed throughout the Saturday services by the entire congregation – would finally ask for his baptism that night after the sixth time he received prayer from the ministry. A recent college graduate, Roseann Batalucco (Wood), would come to the point where she saw baptism as the next and necessary step leading into her marriage the following year. Upon returning home, both were baptized on Monday night, November 12th, in the Detroit River. For Frank Morle – who had ridden with Brother Alex to conference and back – it was not until Tuesday while taking a bath that the spirit of repentance fell upon him. Then, upon hearing of Frank's request for baptism, a young 14-year-old Jim Cotellesse – who had admired Frank like an older brother – recounts that "the Holy Spirit came over me in such a way that all I wanted to do was find the telephone number of Brother Joe Bologna, my presiding elder, to tell him I wanted to be baptized, too." Frank and Jim were baptized that Tuesday night. Years later it was explained by Apostle Paul Palmieri – also baptized during this period in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania – that "(our) parents had gone into mighty fasting and prayer on behalf of their children, and it wasn't long before they began to reap a bountiful harvest."



Roseann Batalucco (Wood)



Frank Morle, Jim Cotellesse, and Alex Gentile

Purpose Statement

- To fulfill the plan of God by bringing salvation through Christ to all people.

Mission Statement

- The Church of Jesus Christ will teach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things commanded by Jesus Christ, while working to draw Israel to Christ through efforts focused on the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America

Vision Statement

- Living and worshipping in unity and righteousness will result in the fullness of God's Spirit and power among the Saints, culminating in continuous growth of the Church and fulfillment of Christ's promises concerning His Kingdom on Earth.

THE CHURCH OF
Jesus Christ

Wordup



"Appreciate Your Surroundings"

By Brother Doug Obradovich

"Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, 'Father, I thank thee...' - John 11:41

There is a powerful request in The Word that is rational, wise, and beautifully simplistic. Yet, it presents a natural reaction: resistance.

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Gratitude should never be conditional. Thankfulness is an attitude, a way of life, and a mindset. God models unconditional through His love for us. None of us, in our personal walk with the Lord, based it on deservedness. And yet, gratitude is difficult when not conditional. Looking thankfully to the heavens on a cloudless day offers little challenge. Turning heavenward during a heavy rainstorm rarely elicits the same response. Maybe Alexander Pope intended to say, "To complain is human; to praise divine." Appreciation is born in spirituality. Whining comes quite naturally.

"In every thing give thanks" is founded upon faith in, trust upon, and submission to God. After Paul and Silas were falsely arrested, beaten, shackled, and imprisoned, they prayed and sang praises to God in the middle of the night, when things were darkest in every measurable way. They did this because they appreciated their surroundings, despite

their surroundings. God's reward? He changed their surroundings "suddenly," resulting in a miraculous turnaround "immediately," and a divine conversion of their enemies "straightway" (Acts 16:26-33). God's positive reinforcement of their behavior involved earthquakes, buildings ripped apart, chains broken, cell doors flung open, and hearts changed. Because Paul and Silas appreciated their surroundings. Unconditionally.

It is easiest to assess surroundings as physical environments, but they are much further reaching. Consider emotional situations, familial elements, workplace politics, health conditions, spiritual challenges, etc. Any can be the catalyst for denial, disappointment, discouragement, and devastation. All are subject to "the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning" each of us to "give thanks." Everything is possible if we override our natural view, and see things through God's viewpoint, utilizing His Holy Ghost.

No easy task. No easy ask.

But doable. Else God would not demand our unconditional appreciation. So, survey your environment differently, your life with a new perspective, and see if you won't exclaim, "I've never noticed how beautiful this ride is."

We came around the curve and turned northeast on Flagler Drive in West Palm Beach, Florida. Looking out at the Intercoastal Waterway, my father said sweetly from the passenger seat, "I've never noticed how beautiful this ride is." Minutes later, we turned off Flagler onto Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard and pulled into Good Samaritan Hospital. My father had one overnight stay scheduled for some tests and checks. Candace and I never had any idea Dad would never leave the hospital. He passed away nine days later. I wonder if he already knew. In that mindful moment, he fully appreciated his surroundings. In that mindful moment, he taught us to see the beautiful.

He had been a 40-year resident of sunny, sparkling South Florida, a 1957 transplant from Clairton, Pennsylvania (a Pittsburgh suburb). Leaving his smoggy hometown, surely, he had been taken by such pristine scenery as that waterfront curve near Southern Boulevard. But somehow, in the rush of life, he had been too busy to notice; too fast-paced to take in the spectacular backdrop. It can happen to any of us, and maybe it does with all of us.

(The Pinetop Tent Meetings Made an Impact - continued from cover)

there is work to be done, we need to put ourselves out there and try to serve and help out the best we can. Even though we want to enjoy the blessings of sitting back and taking it in, there is an even greater blessing of service and supporting the work effort. God will bless us for our efforts! Stepping out on faith is a big thing when canvassing or inviting people to the meetings, because we don't know what the outcome will be. We may be nervous to talk to them or share a testimony, but we need to trust that the Lord will pave the way no matter the outcome!"

As I'm writing this, it's been about a month since the tent meetings came to a close, and you might be wondering what we have to show for all that effort.

Praise God, we have had five baptisms, and approximately 85 people are attending church on Sunday, with around 55 attending on Wednesday nights. We now drive a 15-passenger van and 21-passenger bus to bring people from the reservation to Sunday and Wednesday services. Our branch congregation makeup is roughly 50 percent visitors and 50 percent members.

Youth-in-Action participant and Pinetop member Brother Robby Palensar said, "One thing that I took away from this experience was that many hands make light work. It was such a help for our branch, and we were able to do so much more with all the help from the Church. We have visitors from the tent meetings regularly coming to church, and people who were not as strong in the Church now come regularly."

Pinetop presiding elder Brother Emil Palensar said, "Before the tent meetings, some of our old regular visitors had started to decrease in attendance, but once they found out about the tent meetings, they returned with new energy and have been faithful at attending ever since. It was a ton of hard work, but I feel that the work brought us together, not just as a branch, but with many others throughout the Church. (I mean, who can say that they got to grill a gazillion hot dogs with the president of the Church?!)"



The Pinetop Branch would like to thank everyone who came to help with the event and the General Church for allowing us to use the tent. We would also like to thank the Youth in Action for their wonderful support. Above all, we thank God for providing the increase!

Yes, we put forth a lot of effort, but our efforts are nothing without God. Our efforts only go so far. A hot dog might bring a visitor, but it won't keep one. Many of our members loved the T-shirts we ordered for the weekend, but guess what? T-shirts wear out. All of the talented musicians went back to their branches, and now it's just our regular congregation singing away. But that's okay, because we know that church is more than food, clothes, and entertainment. God has more to offer. He offers His power, His love, and His Spirit! Power to break addictions and change lives. Love to fill the void. The Spirit to guide and direct. We hope and pray that our visitors come to realize the wonderful things that God has for their lives.

If you think of us, please pray for our branch that we can show the House of Joseph the love of Jesus, as it is the best and most precious thing we could possibly give. Way better than a hot dog.



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THE GOSPEL NEWS

(ISSN 0279-1056) is a monthly digital publication published by The Church of Jesus Christ, World Operations Center, 110 Walton Tea Room Road, Greensburg, PA 15601-9998, 724-837-7799.

DONATIONS TO BE SENT TO:

25565 Gibraltar Rd.
Flat Rock, MI 48134

Giving Thanks for Our Future

By Brother Mark Kovacic

Since the mid 1800s we, as a nation, have celebrated Thanksgiving. As the years have gone by, we can see that celebrating this holiday is not only beneficial to us but also shows our reverence to God. We could simply say we're thankful and leave it at that, but we feel it is much more than a simple thank you, it's an attitude of gratitude every day.

Thanksgiving seems to be the one holiday that everybody enjoys, whether you were born and raised in America or immigrated here from another country (2 Nephi 1:4-7). As we look over our history there are things that we are more thankful for than others. Some examples are the opportunities to achieve small and great advances in finance, social care, medicine, and especially technology.

While visiting America, one of our Kenyan ministers pointed out that we have a lot of nice things in our country, but then he added, "You pay a high price for them." Setting these "nice things" aside, we still have much to be thankful for, particularly as we focus on our great hope for the future. We thank the Lord for bringing us to the threshold of a great and mighty work that must be completed by the people of God in America, including the building of a New Jerusalem.

The workers will consist of the House of Joseph, the House of Israel, and the Gentile nations brought to America (3 Nephi 21:1). This work will be accomplished by the Word of God as He promised in the scriptures (Zechariah 4:6). So, let's thank the Lord for bringing us together and our opportunity to participate (Ether 13:6) in the Lord's divine commission.

Songs of Zion #116. THE NEW JERUSALEM

(Jeremiah 31:12 "Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord..." ~

Hosea 2:18 "And in that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven and with the creeping things of the ground..."

Hear the crying of the thousands, and then of thousands more,
But the crying is for gladness and the teardrops are for joy;
And they're running to that city called the New Jerusalem,
Where the gates swing wide and welcome all the weary trav'lers in.

There's a dawning like no other, there's a brightness like the sun,
There's a meadow filled with flowers where the little children run;
And where God has made a covenant so the animals lie down,
And all eyes are filled with wonder at the scene upon the ground.

There's full and watered garden, there's a free and flowing stream,
And the beauty of the morning is like a lingering dream;
Where the Lord has washed the mountains with the early morning dew,
But it will not fade nor vanish for the prophecy is true.

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Finding Time to Lock In

By Sister Sydney Lovalvo

Recently, I was blessed to attend the Great Lakes Area MBA Camp as well as the Penn Mid-Atlantic Area MBA Camp. First of all, it was so wonderful to spend time in fellowship with so many brothers, sisters, and friends! Also, I felt thankful for each of the themes and messages that were heard from both weekends.

The theme of GLAMBA Camp was “Locked In,” with Moroni 10:4 being the associated scripture. The verse reads: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.” The theme of PMA Camp was “Give the Lord Your Best,” with Colossians 3:23 being the verse, which reads: “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”

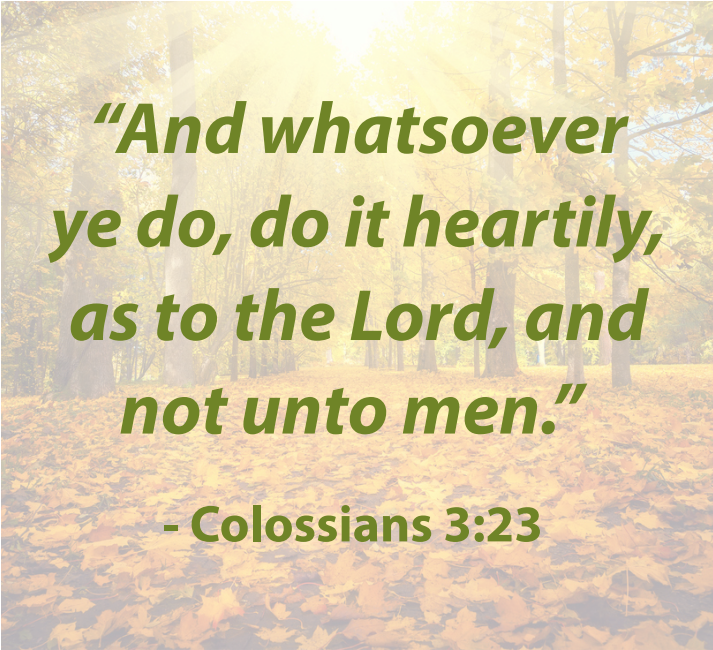
After attending both weekends, I felt that the two themes complemented each other so well! At GLAMBA Camp, being “locked in” was described as being completely focused and committed to something. It means having no distractions and having a clear focus on Christ. With PMA Camp, I felt the two themes connected because in order to give your best to the Lord, you need to be fully focused and locked in on Him.

I remember when I was a young person (I still feel like I am, but there is definitely a wonderful new generation rising in our Church), I was (and still can be) hard on myself for the amount I focus on and give attention to the Lord. Life is busy, especially with work, school, and other responsibilities when you are growing up and starting your life. Even now, in my seminar at PMA, we broke into small groups and I happened to be in a group with parents. They are managing careers, raising kids, and still trying to figure it all out. And we were still hard on ourselves! Our conversations had a lot of dialogue like “Well, I read every day, but I could read more.” Or “We go to church every Sunday and Wednesday, are still so busy, but feel like we could do more.” Personally, of course I feel like I can do

more and give my best to the Lord, but I also realized that we can be really hard on ourselves, and sometimes even when we feel like we could give more, we are doing all we can in that moment, and I believe God sees us, hears us, and understands we are trying our best.

I want to encourage you all to think about these themes and try to incorporate them into your life as you continue to build your life. Find time to lock in, whether it is morning prayer time before a class, or reading before you go to bed. When I was in nursing school, I wrote an article about how I was trying to make more room for the Lord in my busy season of life. On my way to work or school, I would listen to music or the GMBA podcast, which helped me have time dedicated to Him and locking in. By doing that, I felt like those moments were me giving my best to the Lord. Start small and gradually build up until it becomes routine. I felt greatly blessed by going through that time in my life, and I felt like the Lord truly saw my efforts.

Life is full of things that take our time. But as I’ve learned recently, let’s try to take a few moments to lock in and give our best to the Lord!



***“And whatsoever
ye do, do it heartily,
as to the Lord, and
not unto men.”***

- Colossians 3:23

Stones of Remembrance

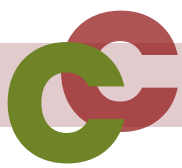
By Sister Doreen Dino

On a beautiful, sunny day in May, the Sisters of the Mount Laurel Branch Ladies' Uplift Circle met for a time of fellowship, food, and crafting. After enjoying a delicious brunch and a time of fellowshiping with each other we prepared to start our craft. The craft consisted of taking a stone and decoupageing (gluing) a decorative napkin onto it.

Before we began, Sister Lynda Sgro stated that as she prayed to the Lord that week to bless our day, the Lord had inspired her with the scripture found in Joshua 4:1-7. It is the account of Joshua and the Israelites crossing over the River Jordan. The Lord cut off the waters of the river so the people could pass over on dry land. After the people had crossed over, the Lord instructed Joshua to take twelve men, one from each tribe of Israel, and instruct them that as they passed over before the ark of the Lord, they were to each take one stone from the midst of Jordan and carry it on their shoulders. Once they had crossed over, they placed the stones where they lodged. The stones served as a memorial to their children to remember how the Lord cut off the waters of the River Jordan so the ark of the covenant of the Lord could pass over on dry land. These stones are sometimes referred to as "Stones of Remembrance."

Sister Lynda stated that as the children of Israel looked upon these stones and remembered what the Lord had done, we will look on the stones we created that day and remember the blessings of the Lord in our lives and the blessing of a day spent in fellowship with one another.





Remember Who You Are

Dear Friends,

I am guessing that if you are reading this, you are a person that has been blessed to be raised by someone who knows there is one living God in heaven, our Creator, who loves us, has laws to make us safe, and many blessings to lead, guide, and direct us in everything we do. You have been blessed to know Him and have faith in Him. God has protected and guided you and your family. But not everyone does know this fact!

I recently flew home from Canada seated by a good man from a country who was raised to believe in only praying to many statues. Now, think, can a piece of wood or hunk of clay hear you? What if it was carved in the shape of a person? Could that statue hear you? I think not.

My new friend was scared when the plane took off, shaking a lot. But I kept talking to him. We talked for hours about God and doing good. I even explained the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses and that I follow to this day. I mentioned the second Commandment that teaches us, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shall not make any graven image (carved) of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: You shall not bow down yourself unto them or serve them" (Deuteronomy 5: 7-9).

After we talked, he thanked me for keeping him calm by our kind conversation. He said it was the first time he ever flew that he did not brace himself by holding onto the seat and armrests and being very afraid. I told him that God, the one true Creator, hears our prayers and protects us. I told him not to fear. Plus, my Church family and I had prayed and asked God for protection on this trip. And he could also do this!

I knew he was not raised to reach out to the one, true, living God. I told him he could still pray and just say, "I know that Jan from Michigan believes in you, God. I am asking you to help me as I fly!" He is an important man whose job requires him to fly constantly from one country to another. I can pray he will remember. There was a peaceful, good spirit in all of our talking. You can do this too!

Years ago, I worked as a Camp Counselor, and a huge storm was coming. I was in charge of twenty campers who were the youngest there at ten years of age. We all had to put on

rain gear and leave our tents to go lie flat in a small open amphitheater. We held tarps above us as fierce winds whipped and the rain beat down. I was praying as hard as I could. I told my kids, "We will be all right. God will take care of us. But a lot of the other campers may get frightened and start screaming. If you can, reach out your hands for each other and help be calmers. Tell those girls we will all be fine!" They believed me and reached out for others while the fierce storm and high winds passed over us. No one was hurt! Wet, yes, but not hurt. Plus, my twenty young ones did great! They stayed calm and helped others. You can do this too!

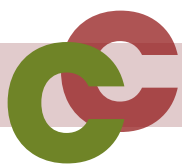
There will be many times in your lives when your quiet prayers can change things for others. Life holds many storms. Not all have rain. Maybe you will be praying quietly to yourself, or maybe you will pray with or for someone else. Remember who you are and what you know! Remember, we do truly serve the one, true, living God! He loves us and will help us. He has all the power!

Sometimes, God puts us in situations where our faith can be a blessing to someone else. We may not always know why we are sitting beside someone on a plane, standing in the middle of a storm, or simply talking with someone who needs encouragement. But God knows. Our prayers, example, and willingness to speak about Him can give someone else peace when they are afraid. We may be the person God uses to remind someone that they are not alone.

Sister Jan

With love,
Your friend and Sister in Christ,
Sister Jan





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What are you thankful for?

"As the years go by, I find myself thankful for everything! All things work together for good, so I am thankful for trials and the good days. Jesus is my all-in-all, and when I keep my focus on Him, I find so much to be thankful for each day!"

– Sister Cathy Genaro, Forest Hills, FL Branch

"I'm thankful for the family and friends that I have in The Church of Jesus Christ."

– Sister Kimberly Orozco, San Diego, CA Branch

"I am thankful for my family and having had the joy of teaching my children and now grandchildren about our Savior."

– Sister Kathleen Natoli, Detroit 1, MI Branch

"I'm thankful that God provided me a husband to serve Him with, and a family who puts Him first."

– Sister Charity Rose Lombardo, Metuchen, NJ Mission

"This month we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary since God bestowed the gift of The Songs of Zion on His church. I'm thankful for that."

– Brother Jeffrey Buffington, Imperial, PA Branch

"All! Because of Jesus Christ I can endure and know that He knows best."

– Sister Diana Vetor, Muncey, Canada Mission

"I am thankful and grateful to God, for opening my eyes and calling me into this beautiful church. I'm really grateful for the Lord calling my husband to follow me and the both of us walking and growing our relationships with God! My husband will be ordained in a couple of weeks. I wanted to take a moment to thank God for hearing and answering my prayers on behalf of my husband, Brother Joey Johnston. Our lives have completely changed so much, in a matter of a year and half of being baptized. We are forever thankful to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!"

– Sister Laura Johnston, Treasure Coast, FL Branch

"I'm thankful to have and know the gospel, for the gift of salvation, for the Godly love I've seen and felt in my life, for my family, for my friends, for my education, and for the gift of simply being alive."

– Sister Angelica Risola, Forest Hills, FL Branch

"I am thankful for the life God has given me. A life with food, water, and a family that I wouldn't change one bit. I am also very thankful to be a part of His Church, and how He has shaped and changed me over time dramatically. I am thankful for all His blessings and His safety."

– Brother Gabe Moore, Columbus, OH Branch



BB How Can I Ever Sufficiently Praise Him

In April, on the way home from the General Church Conference, I fell asleep behind the wheel of my car. While my car was totaled, I am so grateful that no other vehicles were involved, and I walked away from the accident without injury. The Lord sent angels to help me, and the following week my steps were ordered as I worked through the insurance process and secured a replacement vehicle. In June, I was subsequently diagnosed with breast cancer. Once again, the Lord was gracious to me by directing me to the right surgeon and follow-up care. My cancer was caught extremely early. The risk of it returning is very low and, at this point, I do not need further preventative care. "How can I ever sufficiently praise him - for the great things he has done for my life." There simply are not enough words.

-Sister Ruth Gehly,
Erie, PA Brach

BB God's Touch

This summer my family camped near The Grand Tetons. It ended up being very cold and rainy. Fortunately, we had a wood-burning stove inside the tent to keep us warm at night. However, despite my best efforts, I could not get the wood in the stove to ignite. The kindling was dry, there was good air flow, I even used fire-starting fluid...all to no avail. My eight-year-old daughter watched me struggle to light the fire and said a silent prayer, asking God to light the fire. After a while I gave up, and told everyone to just stay tight in their sleeping bags as I got into mine. After about 15 minutes in the cold, dark, quiet tent, God lit the fire in the stove, and it immediately roared into a crackling blaze. No one was near the stove. My daughter exclaimed, "Jesus answered my prayer! I prayed and asked Him to start the fire, and He did!"

-Brother Bruce Williams,
Wasatch, UT Mission ROC

BB God's List

As a branch, we created a list of all those who were once a part of the Imperial, PA Branch as part of the Reclaim the Inactive Program of the Church. We had little success following up with former members. One Sunday, two unrelated former children from forty years ago who we hadn't remembered to add to our list, returned and have since been baptized! God has His own list.

-Brother Jeff Buffington Sr.,
Imperial, PA Branch

Send us your Blessing Bits by contacting Sister Elizabeth McDonnell at eksanchor@gmail.com.

(In approximately 150 words). Send answers to Question of the Month to gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org.

*Got a blessing?
Share it here!*



Question for this month:

What is one Christmas tradition, memory, or song that never fails to center your heart on Christ?



Answer from last month:

What are you thankful for?
Turn to page 11 for answers.