

VOLUME LXXVII
December 2017

THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF



The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23:1 ESV



*And the angel said unto them,
Fear not: for, behold,
I bring you good tidings of great joy,
which shall be to all people.*



YOU SAID IT!!!

Submit your comments to our Editor, Jacquie Hinton, about "The Shepherd's Staff;" and, any other thoughts you might have about the publication that you feel will be constructive or interesting to our readers. You may do so by emailing us at:

newsletter@pahrupcc.com

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Another Year

Can you believe it's December????!! Decorations and goodies have been out in the stores for over a month already.


Many activities, much shopping and preparing for the holiday season have already begun. It's important to keep our focus on the REASON for the season as we look forward to a bit of a change of pace.

As we consider the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, our family realizes it has been a monumental year and next year promises to be quite unique.

Most of you know the major highlights of the Walkers' life. In March, Kim's mom went home to be with the Lord. Then in June my dad succumbed to a brain tumor. We put my mom in a nice facility to care for her as she endures Alzheimer's. We were thrilled to see Caleb and Amy get married!! What a wonderful blessing Amy is to our family—especially to Caleb. Then in July, we added David to our family through adoption for Katie Ellyn and Justin. It has been quite a year. We are indeed thankful for all the Lord has provided us.

Next year will bring several "firsts". Lauri and Sam will have their first child in February. I will turn 60 in March. (Hard to believe even though many of you would say that's still young!) We may have two more adopted children added to our list of grandchildren in the early months of 2018. Then in August Kim and I will celebrate our 40th anniversary! We are looking forward to a dream we have had for many of those forty years—we plan to visit Alaska and enjoy the beauty of that state we have never seen before.

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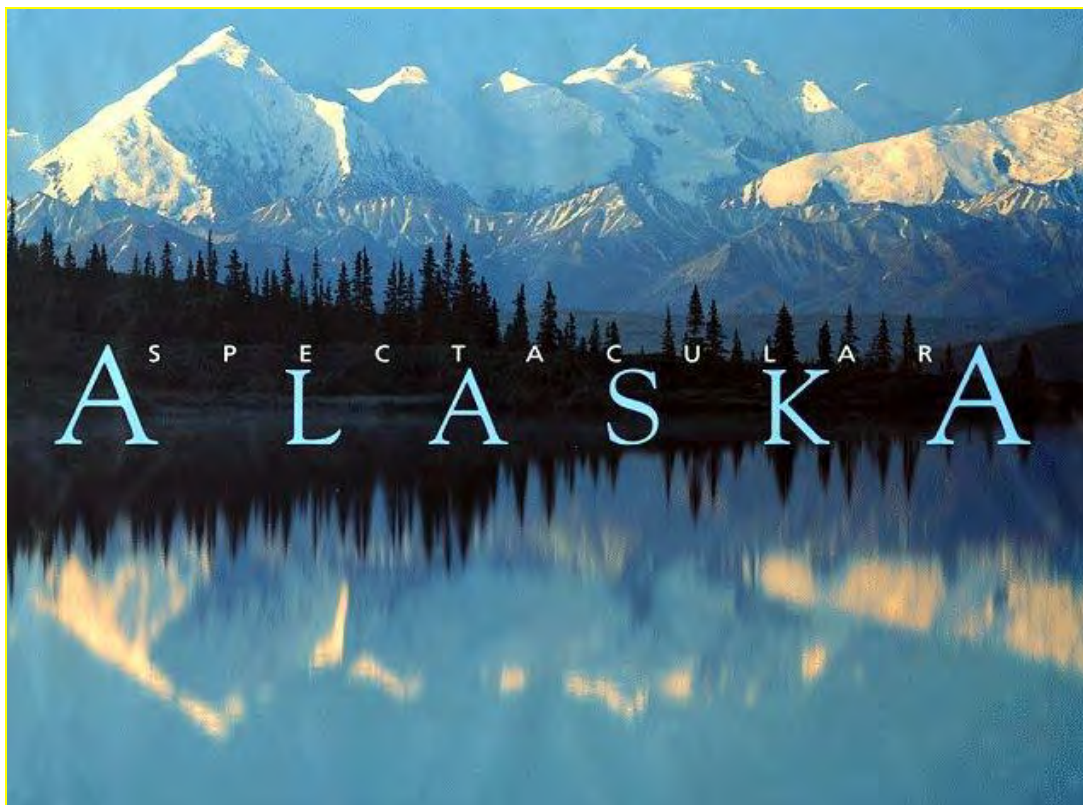
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We don't know for sure what else may be in store. The Lord will provide. As we look forward to the holiday season and the new year, we are trusting His faithfulness.

May you and yours enjoy good health and times of happiness and pleasure as you celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Merry Christmas!

Serving the Savior,
Pastor Keith



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A Christmas "Therefore"

Upwards of forty theatre adaptations, nearly twenty film adaptations, around twenty-five television adaptations and roughly as many radio adaptations, at least four operas, and a Batman graphic novel. Wikipedia may not be the most reputable source for information, but it references scores of versions of Charles Dickens' 1843 classic *A Christmas Carol*. While I have tentative plans to read the original work this year, at this point I can only boast to being familiar with two of the adaptations. One was from my youth: *Mickey's Christmas Carol* was a little unsettling for me when I was a child (what wasn't?), but I enjoyed watching Scrooge McDuck play his namesake on the big screen. The second adaptation is one that I revisit each year. As I previously mentioned, I've not read the original work, but I have no doubt that this film marvelously captures the nuances and brilliance of Dickens' short story. The actors are perfect in every role and the blend of creepiness and redemption shines. I am, of course, talking about *Muppet Christmas Carol*.

Sure, I'll defend *A Charlie Brown Christmas* with fervency and I'll be glad to watch Crosby and Kaye ham it up in *White Christmas*, but casting The Great Gonzo as Charles Dickens is a stroke of yuletide genius! For those of you particularly fond of the real *A Christmas Carol*, please grant me some leniency with my article this month. I know I'm going to be making a point based on an offshoot of the original work. While that's not my preference in most cases, I'll allow myself this exception (since it's December, and all).

A Christmas Carol is a good, moral story. It teaches us about the consequences of our actions (not even pigs will come to your funeral if you don't treat others nicely) and about the need to share what we have with those less fortunate than we (if Dr. Bunsen and Beaker come to your door asking for Christmas donations, I'd recommend taking them up on it). It's not an overly Christian story in that it teaches far more a "salvation" (if you will) based on our actions rather than on God's grace. At the same time, it is still appropriate to internalize the need to love our neighbor (which is a decidedly Christian teaching whether it comes from the mouth of Michael Caine or Donald Duck's uncle).

For this year's annual Christmas-themed Shepherd's Staff article, I want to take one of my favorite scenes from *Muppet Christmas Carol* and flip it a little bit. Amy and I were in Ezekiel last night (of all places) and it got me thinking about this scene with Bob and Emily Cratchit and Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge has undergone his own ghost story with the spirits of Christmas past, present, and yet to come. He awakens Christmas morning a changed man. Though he had begrudgingly given Mr. Cratchit Christmas morning off the night before, he is now going to the Cratchit home to bless the family of his kind-hearted and good employee. When he arrives there (with a small bunny carrying a turkey bigger than he is), he pretends to still be upset and the bitter miser he was previously.

Scrooge: "You, sir, were not at work this morning as we had discussed."

Bob: "Oh. But, but Mr. Scrooge, sir. We did discuss it! It's Christmas Day. You gave me the day off."

Scrooge: "I? I. Ebenezer Scrooge? Would I do a thing like that?"

Bob: "No. I mean... yes. But, but you did!"

Scrooge: "Bob Cratchit, I've had my fill of this."

At this point, the faithful Miss Piggy barges past her frog and lights into his boss.

Emily: "And I have had my fill of you, Mr. Scrooge!"

Bob: "Emily! Emily! Mr. Scrooge..."

Scrooge: "And therefore, Bob Cratchit..."

Emily: "And therefore, you can leave this house at once!"

Scrooge: "And therefore, I'm about to raise your salary."


Emily: "Oh! And I am about to raise you right off the pavement and out... Pardon?"

Bob: "Pardon?"

Scrooge: "Yes, Bob. Raise your salary... and pay your mortgage on this house."

"Bob Cratchit, would you and your family care to join us for a little turkey dinner on this fine Christmas Day? Merry Christmas!"

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Can I get a collective Christmas “Awwwwwww”? Gets me every time, y’all.

This is the scene that was playing through my head as Amy and I read through Ezekiel 39. Certainly it’s not a direct parallel, but the emotional punch is similar. Look at what the prophet says in Ezekiel 39.21-24:

²¹ “And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. ²² The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward. ²³ And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. ²⁴ I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.

If you’re familiar with the prophets, you’ll recognize language like this. The whole reason for Judah and Israel going away to Babylon and Assyria is their repeated and egregious rebellion. Consider God’s holiness, His purity, His love, His majesty, His power, His graciousness, His compassion, and His kindness. Contrast that with the way God speaks of His people in these verses: iniquity, treachery, uncleanness, transgression... God hid His face from them from all of their wickedness. This is only reasonable. When people sin against us, we can sometimes start to feel the vileness of evil. God sees the depths of depravity in ways we’ll never be able to due to His absolute righteousness. Ezekiel 39.25 starts like this “Therefore thus says the Lord God...” Again, if you know the way things typically work in the prophets, you’ll be expecting more judgment. Judgment is appropriate, merited, just, and just plain sensible. When people sin, something must be done. “I am sending you away to the Babylonians.” “I will bring upon you the disaster that befell the land of Edom.” “I hid my face from you and you continued to scoff.” This would be expected, but we get something else entirely.

“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name. ²⁶ They shall forget their shame and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid, ²⁷ when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations. ²⁸ Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. ²⁹ And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.”

“You have rebelled. You have acted wickedly. You have not done what I commanded. You have spurned me. You were unclean. Therefore... I will make you new.”

Did you hear that?!? This is the God we serve, brothers and sisters! Every warm fuzzy feeling we experience from Rizzo and Staler and Waldorf, every happy feeling we get from Hallmark specials, every “Christmas miracle” we enjoy through our holiday stories are nothing compared to the wonder of Christ’s birth, life, and resurrection. I don’t think it’s too much of a stretch to say that Ezekiel’s prophecy is a Christmas one (though it’s far more than that, certainly). It is of a Gift that is more than we will ever deserve and more than we could imagine. It is a Gift of salvation... the Gift of a Savior.

This is God’s “therefore.” In the midst of our brokenness, our wickedness, our sin, God will have mercy. Merry Christmas indeed.

By God’s grace,
Pastor Caleb

			
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Mike & Karen in Europe - Thanksgiving 2017

NAVIGATOR MILITARY CONFERENCE



Driving in eastern Germany



Rusty, Mike & Karen, Scott & Meagan, Dennis & Beate, John & Sarah

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful."

Colossians 3:15

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Colossians 3:16

"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

Colossians 3:17

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Mike & Karen in Europe - Thanksgiving 2017 (Continued)



Thank you for supporting us as we hosted and visited Navigator Military staff (top right). We teamed up to teach and encourage US Army and Air Force singles and couples at two major installation areas in Germany. Photo above is in our home in Landstuhl. Dennis and Beate will move to Graf to minister as Scott and Meagan move on. Rusty, John and Sarah came from the USA, while Don and Sue visited on their way back to the USA from two French African countries.



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Mike and Karen Kotecki are Navigator Missionaries out Church Family Supports



Guy Piersall
Development Partner US
Global Hope Network, Inc
(503)697-8888
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Here is a brief report on our trip to Phoenix and Flagstaff earlier this month:

(We really appreciate prayer for energy, wisdom, and safety while we travel)

PHOENIX:

Our primary focus was to go back to Praise and Worship Church to get an update on their fundraising plans for the well in Kenya. We had hoped to meet with Pastor Dale, but he was just a few days out of the hospital after having heart surgery (two stints put in). I did have two good phone conversations with him.

We met with Peter Klemens to discuss possibly representing GHNI in the Phoenix area to call on churches, service clubs, businesses, and schools. He is excited about GHNI after having traveled to Kenya orphanage earlier this year. We've put him in touch with our direct supervisor in Florida for follow up.

We also met with Tim Gercke, who went on the Kenya trip. He is a very well education man who might offer some skills that would benefit GHNI. We've also put him in touch with our direct supervisor in Florida for follow up.

We met with Mary Jo West (retired lead TV newscaster in Phoenix) again to see what she might be able to do to help promote GHNI in Phoenix. She would be a great asset, but is very busy even though she is retired. Hopefully she will have a good video of the Kenya trip to send you by the end of the year. She is willing to help us in a limited capacity.

We had hoped to meet with two churches I knew while we were there. We were able to meet with Leisa McDonald, assistant to Matt Nutter, Director of Global Outreach at Central Christian Church. Central is a large, church with 3-4 campuses scattered around the Phoenix area. Leisa was very interested in GHNI and will share the info with Matt. I will follow up with him. The other church missions leader was leaving for a mission trip to Mexico and could not meet with us.

We attended church at Praise and Worship on Sunday. I had ask for and received permission from Pastor Dale to set up a display table in the back of the worship center. Probably 10-15 people stopped by before the service and we were able to talk with them about GHNI and give them literature. At the end of the service Pastor Dale had us stand (we were sitting back near our display) and acknowledged us and encouraged the people to come back by the table and visit us. We probably had 40-50 people come by to visit and pick up literature.

While in Phoenix, I called three Rotary clubs to introduce ourselves and see if we might be able to visit their meeting. No one ever called back. We ran out of time and did not visit any of the clubs this time.

FLAGSTAFF:

We called the pastor before we left Phoenix and let him know we were coming. I also emailed Wes B. to let him know we were going to visit the church and say hi to his supporters while there. I received a very encouraging email back from Wes thanking us for our visit. At the church on Sunday, we were able to meet Pastor Bob before service. The church is a small church of maybe 50-60 people. Pastor Bob had us stand and acknowledged us. then after service everyone goes downstairs for snacks and drinks. We went down and had the opportunity to meet a few of their members, including Cynthia Lovely and her husband, who supports Wes.

In addition to the AZ trip, we have followed up by phone with a few contacts in Oregon and Las Vegas.

We seem to be developing some good relationships in Phoenix and hope to return there and to Flagstaff early next year.

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	Below are two pictures from the AZ trip		
#1 is Jan and I at the display table.			



#2 is Jan with Judy Verbosky, who is heading up the well fundraising drive.



Guy and Jan Piersall are Global Hope Network missionaries our PCC family supports. The Piersalls are members of our church and reside in Pahrump.



THE AGRE FAMILY NEWS

"Serving with the Navigators"

The Navigators' calling: To advance the Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom into the Nations through spiritual Generation of laborers living and discipling among the lost

PSALM 46. 11... "Be still and know that I am God" PSALM 63.1 "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you..."

May the Grace and Peace of Our Lord and Savior be with you. September 10-17th Marie Claire and I had the privilege of attending the international forum of the Navigators in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We attended this forum just a week after a team of 6 volunteers (eye doctors and nurses) visited us in Abidjan for a major medical project where more than 100 patients were treated for cataracts and glaucoma. It was a special and busy project. Our lives have always been busy and we feel like we run from one project or activity to another. "Be still and know that I am God," was a verse which came to us as a word from God to stop and spend quiet and quality time with God. Friday used to be a day I put aside to read, reflect, pray and rest on a weekly basis but since the beginning of the year I have not been able to keep this habit. It is a reminder to start again this. Like David, our desire and prayer is..v2 "I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory."



The picture on the left is a picture of the French speaking participants from Africa at the International Forum in Malaysia.

The picture on the right shows—from right to left: Mutua and Stephanie Mahiaini, the International President of the Navigators; Jeremie Agre, Patrick Cote, Student Ministry leader; Sess Cote, D'Ivoire Country Leader; and Cisse Andre, a missionary in Niger



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FAMILY NEWS

Grace Emmanuella just graduated from high school and is now applying for college admission. Her plan is to study Chemical Engineering. Unfortunately, she was not selected in the only school which offered this program. She was admitted to the University of Ottawa (Canada). We submitted her application to study in Canada to the Canadian embassy.

We thank God for his faithfulness and your partnership over the years. Thanks so much for your involvement with us in this work. We greatly appreciate your friendship and support. Please pray for a life habit of focusing on God and listening to Him in prayer. Pray also for God's favor as we are going through the process of immigration.

With deep appreciation for your partnership in the ministry of advancing the Gospel.
LA FAMILLE AGRE

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If you wish to financially support the Agre's ministry, please send your gift to: The Navigators, Account number 191478. The Navigators PO Box 6079 -Albert Lea, MN 56007-6679

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**Johnson Canyon and Hungry Bills Ranch, Death Valley National Park, CA.
By Bob Jacobs**

CAUTION: This trip is only for those that have a high clearance, 4-wheel drive vehicle with experience in off road driving and have a lot of patience.

The Johnson Canyon road starts off bad and gets much worse as you enter the wash. That being said, this area is very remote and not visited by most people. However, with its mile-long stream, three springs and lush oasis of grapevine and willows; Johnson Canyon is one of a kind. William Johnson started a ranch in 1873 in the upper canyon, which was later named after him. Johnson built terraces and irrigation channels, and planted gardens of beans, squash, melons, and corn; plus, a fruit and nut orchard. His harvest was hauled over the rugged pass to Panamint City, which was located on the other side of the mountain. He made a profit on the vegetables; but, the trees hardly had a chance to mature before the Panamint City boom was over and Johnson left the area.

A popular hike once you reach the trailhead at the end of the Johnson Canyon road is the historic remains of Hungry Bill's Ranch. A Shoshone Indian named Hungry Bill took over Johnson's abandoned ranch. Hungry Bill was a quiet, 6'4" giant with an insatiable appetite. The ranch was abandoned soon after Hungry Bill passed away in 1919. Now, after almost a century of neglect, the few trees that still bear fruit only feed the coyotes. The old ranch sprawls on both sides of the wash, just past the head of the second spring. What's amazing are all the monumental stone walls, which give this area an unexpected rural flavor. They are several feet high, as much as 6 feet thick and hundreds of feet long. These walls are a work of art. Although they are not mortared, they are extremely sturdy and still intact. There are a few smaller stone enclosures with doorways suggesting living quarters; although the Shoshones lived here in wickiups well into the 1900's.

Hiking up to the ranch there is only one problem. Difficult to reconcile with the sparsely vegetated Death Valley; the canyon is so dense it is almost impenetrable. Unless you like trekking through jungles, you will want to avoid the wash and follow the higher trails along the gorge's rims. These trails are not the best and they are steep and rocky, they tend to split or to sneak back to the creek if you're not paying attention. To minimize frustration, stay on the south side, which has the most continuous trail system. The exception is the sharp jog in the canyon, where the creek must be crossed twice in close succession. Also, don't take the cairns too seriously, as they seem to indiscriminately point to good and bad trails. Even with this information it will be slow going but is still a great hike, overlooking the green ribbon of shrubs, grapevines and trees winding down the gorge, within earshot of the hidden creek.

Johnson Canyon road is off the West Side Road in Death Valley National Park and is 10 miles long and ends at the Hungry Bills ranch trailhead. If you plan on going on this trip see the Park Rangers at the Furnace Creek Ranger Station and get maps and information of the area.



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**Some of the many stone walls that are still remaining at
Hungry Bill's Ranch.**

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	<p>EDITORIAL PAGE</p>		

IS EVERYBODY HAPPY???

My Dad had his favorite radio programs which he programmed in his head by week, by day, by time, by hour and half-hour. And, those were the moments/days/times/hours when the whole household was required to remain distanced from his Den. **Note:** *I understand the “den” is now referred to as the “Man Cave.”* Some of his favorites were the “Ted Lewis” special broadcasts. Ted Lewis was a bandleader who also played the clarinet. He had no weekly broadcasts; but appeared, ceremoniously, and was hailed enormously by other famous radio personalities. For instance, such as Paul Whiteman who did have a weekly radio show.

I really don't know if Daddy liked Ted's somewhat mix of “Dixieland” and Jazz; or, simply because Ted was extremely popular during the “depression” era with his continued announcement of “Is everybody happy?” And, his proverbial reply “Yessir!”. His popularity and upbeat greeting continued into the late 1940's even after the end of World War II.

Daddy used Ted's expression often as his greeting when he only worked half days on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Entering the house with a tin of Sardines in oil and a box of saltine crackers; the screen door would open and his hat would sail through the air and land on the kitchen counter. He would then formally announce: “Is everybody happy?” Promptly replying to his own question “Yessir!”

I went grocery shopping this week and I wanted so much to get in the holiday rhythm and mood; but, somehow, the spirit was willing but the pocketbook was weak. As I walked down the aisles, I realized I didn't even know what I wanted to shop for. When the cupboards are bare and the pocketbook even barer, what can you buy? As I pushed my cart grudgingly past stocked shelves, the couple in front of me, abruptly stopped and the woman said to the man: “So, do you want this or not? I want to go home.” And, the most startling words came to mind – “Is everybody happy?” And, you know what? All of a sudden, I had to laugh and I was happy! I know. I know. That seems weird? Huh?

But, I guess it was the irony of the situation. Here we were standing midst a Christmas atmosphere and acting like a bunch of “Ebenezer Scrooges.” I continued down and through the aisles, and when I spotted a tin of “sardines,” that brought even a bigger boost to my growing and glowing Christmas attitude and aptitude. I thought: “Is everybody happy?” “Yessir!!”

You know, I think I will make that my “2018” theme – not a new year's resolution. Who ever keeps those promises?!? I will use it as my morning and evening declarations even when I don't feel happy. Because somehow, just the question and the corresponding affirmation makes me happy.

So, I hope as you push your carts around doing your Christmas shopping, you will remember to greet each other with the holiday phrase and question: “Is everybody happy? Yessir!”

And,

*“So, I close with this phrase in broad daylight;
Merry Christmas to all and to all in my sight!”*

(Oh, give me a break- I never said I was a “Shakespeare.”)



PRISON MINISTRY
November 2017

It doesn't feel much like November here in Pahrump. Many of our days have been in the 70's, one day in the 80's. Even the roses are blooming in our garden. Traveling to the locations of our ministry are like a great Spring-time ride. It's hard to remember that the big news here is Thanksgiving! However, I will not miss the opportunity to wish you a HAPPY THANKSGIVING BLESSING. Hope you enjoyed a great "Turkey Day" dinner with family and friends. We did!!!

On the last Monday of this month we received a phone call from the Boot Camp informing us that our meeting would be cancelled (for one evening only). The reason was because of extremely windy weather. It would have been difficult to carry in all of our equipment (amplifier, instruments, and other materials) in that severe wind. There is a high mountain (Mt. Charleston) between us. On the West side (Pahrump) we had blue sky and gentle winds; but, on the East side (Indian Springs) there was a violent wind storm; and, we would not have been aware of it until we had taken a 40 mile trip through the open range and around the mountain. It is encouraging that the prison administration people are always watching out for our safety. Needless to say, we are happy that we can carry on our ministry next week.

The name they have given us is "The Singing Church" and we certainly do sing. We allow the men to choose the songs. At the beginning of each service we ask them to call out their song numbers and do our best to fit them all into the service. Our Song Book contains Gospel songs and some of the very new "smile creating" music. One of them is "The Turkey Song":

"If God can love turkeys, God can love you.
You are a turkey, but I am one, too."

They sing it as they point to each other with lots of

smiles. Another smile producing song is:

"This Train – This train is bound for glory, this train –
Don't carry nothing but the righteous and holy, this train.
- This train don't carry no rustlers, Side-street walkers,
two bit hustlers. - This train is bound for glory, this train
(Toot, Toot)."

Their favorite song is Amazing Grace Behind Bars. This is the original Amazing Grace into which we have added three verses written by a prisoner more than 20 years ago, his gift to our ministry:

"Inside these lonely walls at night –
The pain invades my heart –
I want to set my life aright –
But don't know how to start.
Inside this pen I'm doing years, -
But Jesus gives me life. –
His grace is here through all the tears –
And pain and lonely strife.
By Jesus' death upon the cross -
God gave his grace to me -
Though I'm confined with freedom lost -
My heart can still fly free."

Music is a very joyful part of our ministry. God loves it, too. Just look at all the Psalms in the Bible.

We are now starting to plan for Christmas gifts for the prisoners. At both the Jail and Boot Camp, we must receive approval for contents, purchase the items, get everything ready, pack individual gifts; and, give them to administration for checking prior to presentation. This is not a new thing, we do it every year to insure that no contraband is included in our gifts. It takes time; and, it is worth every minute we spend on it. It is our special way of remembering them at Christmas; and, it is a real joy to all concerned. We are so thankful to each of you who help us with your support and your prayers. It keeps us going!!!

God bless you,
Irene Hunt, Chaplain

STATISTICS FOR NOVEMBER

MATERIALS GIVEN

Total Services—19
Total Attendance— 283
Total Team Hours — 68
Total Ministry Miles— 399

Bibles—14 Pocket Bibles—12
Books—24 Writing Materials—79
Daily Bread—80



It's Time!

Join us for the Annual Pahrump Community Church Christmas Dinner!

Saturday, December 9, 2017

5:00 PM

Multi-Purpose Building

Food, Laughter and Fellowship!

Note!

Sign up Required

Contact Charlene Rex or Call Church Office

Other Questions????

Contact Charlene Rex

775-751-4723