

THE EVANGEL

JANUARY 2016

FCC
First Christian Church

NEOGA



190 E 6th , PO Box 156 Neoga, IL 62447

217-895-3930 www.fccneoga.org

'Twas The Night Before Jesus Came'

written by Unknown Author

'Twas the night before Jesus came and all through the house
Not a creature was praying, not one in the house.
Their Bibles were lain on the shelf without care
In hopes that Jesus would not come there.
The children were dressing to crawl into bed.
Not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.
And Mom in her rocker with baby on her lap
Was watching the Late Show while I took a nap.

When out of the East there arose such a clatter.
I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash!

When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But angels proclaiming that Jesus was here.
With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray
I knew in a moment this must be THE DAY!

The light of His face made me cover my head
It was Jesus! returning just like He had said.
And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth,
I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.

In the Book of Life which He held in His hand
Was written the name of every saved man.
He spoke not a word as He searched for my name;
When He said "it's not here" my head hung in shame.

The people whose names had been written with love
He gathered to take to His Father above.
With those who were ready He rose without a sound.
While all the rest were left standing around.

I fell to my knees, but it was too late;
I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate.
I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight;
Oh, if only I had been ready tonight.

In the words of this poem the meaning is clear;
The coming of Jesus is drawing near.
There's only one life and when comes the last call
We'll find that the Bible was true after all!

Ministry in Prayer

CURRENT (3 WEEKS):

Carl Burrell— stroke
Larry Wheeler— lung cancer
Lauren Monteraso— recovery
Ann Conn— surgery recovery
Andrea Wendt— health concern

ONGOING CONCERNS:

Harold & Marge Hall
Joann Hood— knee recovery
Alicia Myers
Richard Russell
Marilyn Walk— shoulder recovery
Mexico trip
4/14

FIGHTING CANCER:

Sam Bean
Ann Conn
Mel Hood
Dan Letizia
Denny Mefford
Brad Odum
Dave Sudkamp
Bob Thomas
Bob Trefzger
Lis White

IN CARE FACILITIES:

Ivan Cooper—Heartland
Carolyn Gast—Cumberland Co
Elsie Phillips—Heartland

IN THE MILITARY:

Tyler Briggerman—Navy
Shane Gephardt
Josh Kiest
Wes Letizia—Air Force
Alicia & Steve Tordoff—
Army Reserve

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

Ministries:

Elders & Deacons
Children's
Youth
College / Young Adult
Seniors
Praise / Tech Team
Community Clothesline
Small Groups
Sunday School
Benevolence
Outreach

Missions Team & Missions:

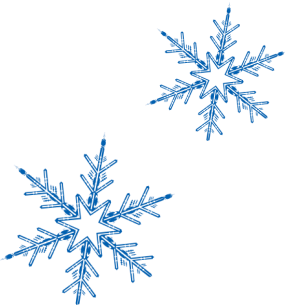
Neoga Community Food Pantry
Heartland Christian Village
Oblong Christian Children's Home
Christian Campus House,
Oil Belt Christian Service Camp
International Missions:
Ryan & Melinda Hicks

The Reality of Prayer

by E.M. Bounds,
excerpt from chapter 1

The whole force of Bible statement is to increase our faith in the doctrine that prayer affects God, secures favors from God, which can be secured in no other way, and which will not be bestowed by God if we do not pray. The whole canon of Bible teaching is to illustrate the great truth that God hears and answers prayer. One of the great purposes of God in His book is to impress upon us indelibly the great importance, the priceless value, and the absolute necessity of asking God for the things which we need for time and eternity. He urges us by every consideration, and presses and warns us by every interest. He points us to His own Son, turned over to us for our good, as His pledge that prayer will be answered, teaching us that God is our Father, able to do all things for us and to give all things to us, much more than earthly parents are able or willing to do for their children.

Let us thoroughly understand ourselves and understand, also, this great business of prayer. Our one great business is prayer, and we will never do it well without we fasten to it by all binding force. We will never do it well without arranging the best conditions of doing it well. Satan has suffered so much by good praying that all his wily, shrewd and ensnaring devices will be used to cripple its performances.



Thank you for the prayers and participation in Fleece and Thank You workshop. **50 blankets were completed.** Please continue to pray for the children and their families who receive these blankets.

Are you ready to Grow in 2016?

How are you today?

How is your relationship with Jesus? Are you growing in faith, obedience and in your service to Him? How is your prayer life? Do you make regular time to be alone with God?

If I had my wish, I would ask you personally and privately these questions with the hope that I could exhort you and encourage you to grow, to become the person God longs for you to be. *God has so richly blessed you!* He has given His son so that you could have your sins washed away and every barrier between Him and you removed. He did this because He wants each of us to have a strong, living, vibrant, and growing relationship with Him. God chose to influence and change the world through people. You are His chosen instrument and plan to manifest His glory on the earth. Nothing in creation, not even the angels of heaven, has been given the special privilege that most of us take for granted.

As you look ahead to the new year, ask yourself, ask God, what do I need to change? *Do you need to give God more time* in prayer, worship, and service? A good place to start is to make it your goal to read through the New Testament. A simple plan is included in the Evangel and available at the Welcome Center. The plan is setup for five minutes of reading per day, five days a week. All of us can give five minutes per day no matter how busy we are. Another good place to start is to sign up for one of the small groups. We have groups that meet on Sunday and Wednesday evenings. Being part of a small group is a great way to

build relationships with other members of God's family and help you feel part of the church. In addition to small groups, we have men's studies (Tuesday night), women's studies (Sunday night and Wednesday morning), and Sunday School at 9:00 a.m. each Sunday.

Growing in knowledge about God's Word through Bible studies is very important and aids in becoming more connected to the church as well. One of the most important, yet often neglected, ministries (personal and corporate) is prayer. It is a fact *that God moves, changes, and influences* our world today just as He did over 2,000 years ago when Christ walked the earth, but *He waits to be asked.* Christ said time and again to quote a few verses... "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

"The weekly prayer meeting is the spiritual barometer for any local church."
How is the temperature at FCC?

About corporate prayer it is said, "The weekly prayer meeting is the spiritual barometer for any local

church." How is the temperature at FCC? What is the level of spiritual fervor? How great is the burden and desire to see people healed, the lost saved, for Christ to be glorified? You may be thinking, I am not comfortable praying out loud or with others, or I don't know how to pray. Some of the greatest lessons on prayer are learned by praying and listening to others pray. If you know you are lacking in understanding, ability, or desire, know that you will never grow simply by acknowledging your inability. *You must choose to grow and improve*, and, thankfully, the Holy Spirit is happy to help. Make a decision to attend our weekly prayer meetings on Sunday evenings.

God equips you and me for service.

Growing in faith, in the knowledge of God's word, and in your personal and corporate discipline of prayer are keys to becoming a mature Christian. As a result of your growing relationship, God equips you and me for service. Some are called and equipped to teach, to preach, and to lead, while others are called to demonstrate mercy, to perform acts of kindness or service. We are all called to serve depending on how God has gifted us. In most cases, your calling is simply a matter of you recognizing a need in the church and being willing to meet that need. Many needs or opportunities for service go unmet.

Continued after reading plan insert

January volunteers...

	Video	Audio	Greeters	Children's Ministry	Communion	Servers
3	Matt	Aubrey	John & Reeni Letizia	<u>Nursery</u> : Cathy & Mahayla Oakley <u>Wee Worship</u> : Sheri Coen, Andrea Workman <u>K-5th</u> : Joni McClure	Paul Lake Doug Moore Monte Page Tom Tomlinson	Harry Starwalt Art Walk Chad Walk Alan Baker
10	Matt	Aubrey	Jim & Martha Wilson	<u>Nursery</u> : Joann Miller, Pam Storm <u>Wee Worship</u> : Louella Drum, Katie Hakman <u>K-5th</u> : Joni McClure	Doug Baker Barry Conn David Coen Don Coen	Jack Gilbert Bill Kenworthy Paul Lake Zach Letizia
17	Zach	Tom	Don & Denise Coen	<u>Nursery</u> : John & Reeni Letizia <u>Wee Worship</u> : Cheryll Gilbert, Penny Hess <u>K-5th</u> : Joni McClure	Doug Moore Harry Starwalt Tom Tomlinson Art Walk	Chad Walk Alan Baker Doug Baker Barry Conn
24	Jim	Tom	Jack & Cheryll Gilbert	<u>Nursery</u> : Judy Starwalt, Linda Baker <u>Wee Worship</u> : Rory & Paula Gentry <u>K-5</u> : Joni McClure	David Coen Don Coen Jack Gilbert Bill Kenworthy	Zach Letizia Paul Lake Doug Moore Harry Starwalt
31	Zach	Aubrey	Charlotte Orr Rita Stewart		Tom Tomlinson Art Walk Chad Walk Alan Baker	Doug Baker Barry Conn David Coen Don Coen

Continuation of Are You Ready...

Ministries that could be a great blessing to our church family and guests, not to mention those outside the church, are not pursued for lack of time or lack of servants. Make a decision to give more time to Christ in service this year.

Becoming like Christ. That is God's mission and goal for each of us. To mature and to serve all for the glory of our risen Savior and King! How will you respond to this encouragement to change and get more involved? Pray about it. I am, as well as many others, are praying for you. If you want to discuss your walk with Christ and need encouragement to get started, please ask for a time to meet with me or one of the elders to pray and meditate on His desires for you.

Make it a blessed 2016!

Pastor Mel

Wee Worship...

Ribbit! Ribbit! Why are there frogs in Wee Worship in the middle of winter?

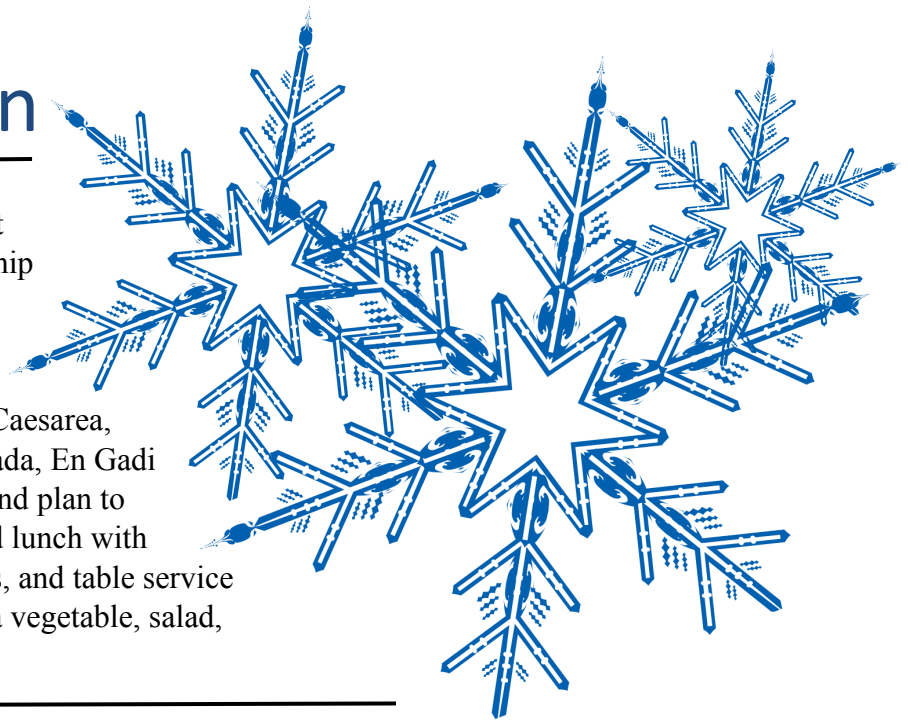
Truth...
I couldn't find dog (Depend On God) decorations for the class.



The next unit for the new year will be on Bible people who Fully Relied On God (Moses and Joseph for January & February). We will be learning what they did to trust God as they faced the hard times in their lives. Hopefully, we will learn we can fully rely on God too!

Wishing you all God's best in the new year!

Senior's Luncheon



Thursday, January 14, 2016 seniors will meet from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. During our worship time we will continue our travel with Dr. Jack Hayford and journey to the Holy Land via DVD. Some of the places we will visit include Megiddo, Cana, Nazareth, Caesarea, Qumran (location of Dead Sea Scrolls), Masada, En Gadi and the Western Wall. Mark your calendar and plan to attend and enjoy the worship, fellowship, and lunch with the staff and seniors of all ages. Meat, drinks, and table service will be provided. Each person should bring a vegetable, salad, or dessert to share.

4/14 News

What's going on with 4/14? Well, a lot actually. I have been doing a lot of reading lately and am trying to implement much of what I have learned. The three most recent and influential books are as follows: *Jesus Centered Youth Ministry* by Rick Lawrence, *Connect* by Jonathan Mckee, and *gods at War* by Kyle Idleman

In *Jesus Centered Youth Ministry*, we are challenged by these words "The movement from 'mastering knowledge' and growing students' impetus to act on that knowledge, to something that looks and sounds more like a growing romance that 'ruins' the lover for the Beloved is at the core of the Jesus-centered ministry shift." Here at 4/14 we are striving to make sure Jesus is the center of all we do with the youth placed in our care. I want to see them move from a head knowledge about Jesus to an all-encompassing passion for a Savior who gave His all for us. I like to think of it this way, we all know a bullet proof vest can save our lives (head knowledge) but it doesn't do us any good unless we put it on (passion for our savior)."

Jonathan Mckee teaches us in *Connect* that we need to be investing in the youth we have. "Relationships are powerful. Without question, the entire Bible is

really about relationships; Our relationship with God and our relationship with others." It is our job to form relationships with the youth entrusted to us and for those relationships to point towards Christ. Think back on your own faith story, was there one person who invested in you and helped lead you to Christ? Most of us can think of that person or group, and see their efforts to lead us to Him. It is our job to, intentionally, be investing in others as well. This is called discipleship.

gods at War teaches us "Idolatry isn't just one of many sins; rather it's the one great sin that all others come from." What do we place on the throne of our hearts? God belongs there, but whom have we put on it instead? At 4/14 we are going to help our youth see how God deserves the best and only seat in our hearts.

Please pray for us as we strive to implement these strategies into our ministry.

What books are you reading right now? Jesus tells us in Matthew 22:37 that we are to love God with all our mind, how are you growing yours? I would gladly suggest any of the above or the book, *Think* by John Piper.

Matt Davis
Youth Minister

Community Meal

Looking forward...

What an amazing year 2015 has been. God has truly blessed the ministries at the former elementary.

Roman 8:31 reminds us of this, *What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?!*

As we look forward to 2016 we hope to walk in Christ's footsteps and be his servants in this community. Our focus is to bring the community of Neoga together in a time when it could easily be divided.

We plan to increase our focus and outreach on the first Thursday of each month. We plan to highlight

area resources at these meals, making it easier for people to meet and connect with them. Our goal is to have a faith based "make and take" for children and even adults in which to take part. This will give us an opportunity to share our faith.

We really want God to shine his "wonderful things" during this time of confusion. If you have any ideas or want to become involved please feel free to contact Amy or Jennifer.

Jesus looked at them and said, With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
Matt 19:26

Community Clothesline

November 5th
43 Families
135 Individuals

November 19th
17 Families
40 Individuals

December 3rd
39 Families
120 Individuals

2015 has been a year of many changes and blessings for the Community Clothesline. We have moved to the former elementary school and love all the space. We now have a shed in front of the building to make donating easier. You can now drop off your donations at your convenience. God continues to open doors for this ministry and I look forward to the new year to see what God has in store for the Clothesline.

2016 Winter Ladies Bible Study

Breathe -- Making Room for Sabbath with Priscilla Shirer
(A five week study)

One of the greatest challenges among women in our culture is taking time to cease from all the activities and just breathe. We are in bondage to busyness. We constantly strive to complete the limitless to-do lists that hinder us from experiencing all that God has for us. By neglecting time for tranquility, serenity, and repose, we limit our Christlikeness and miss out on some of God's greatest gifts. In the Old Testament, Sabbath was given to the Israelites as a gift, and it is still a gift to us today. It is time

for us to breathe and build margin into our lives for God.

We will begin this study the week of January 10 and will meet in the FCC basement. This study will be offered at two different times (Sunday at 6:00pm and Wednesday at 9:30 am). We will vary our meetings to accommodate the school calendar and "all church" events. We will not meet the weeks January 17, February 7 and February 14. This study will conclude the week of February 28, 2016. To assure yourself a study book, please sign up at the Welcome Center.

Neoga Community Food Pantry

December:
46 families, 162 people served
4 deliveries
18 volunteers
39 1/2 volunteer hours

January: Mixed vegetables

February: Kleenex

January 2016



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p>Locations: Sunday prayer service and small group meet in the war room at 116 E 6th; Ladies Bible study in FCC fellowship Hall; 4/14, Community Clothesline, Community Meal and Food Pantry at 641 W 6th street in Early Childhood & Outreach Center; Wed small Group at home of Kirby and Angie Davis, College Group at home of Matt & Katy Frankie.</p>						
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5pm Prayer 6pm Small Group	Jennifer Davis 6:30pm Men's Group	5:15pm 4/14 Prayer 6-8pm 4/14 6:30pm Small Group 8:30pm College Group	5:15pm 4/14 Prayer 6-8pm 4/14 6:30pm Small Group 8:30pm College Group	1-7:30pm Clothesline 5-6:30pm Community Meal 6-7pm Food Pantry Jack Gilbert	Elsie Phillips	Kim Varner
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
3:30pm Elders' Mtg 4pm Financial Board Mtg 5pm Prayer 6pm Ladies Bible Study Small Group	Konalee Beccue 6:30pm Men's Group	9:30am Ladies Bible Study 5:15pm 4/14 Prayer 6-8pm 4/14 6:30pm Small Group 8:30pm College Group	9:30am Ladies Bible Study 5:15pm 4/14 Prayer 6-8pm 4/14 6:30pm Small Group 8:30pm College Group	11am Seniors' Luncheon		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
3pm Elders' Mtg 4pm Elder & Staff Mtg 5pm Prayer 6pm Small Group	Alex Gentry Harry Starwalt 6:30pm Men's Fellowship	5:15pm 4/14 Prayer 6-8pm 4/14 6:30pm Small Group 8:30pm College Group	5:15pm 4/14 Prayer 6-8pm 4/14 6:30pm Small Group 8:30pm College Group	1-5pm Clothesline		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
5pm Prayer 6pm Ladies Bible Study Small Group	8am Seniors' Breakfast at the Depot 6:30pm Men's Group	9:30am Ladies Bible Study 5:15pm 4/14 Prayer 6-8pm 4/14 6:30pm Small Group 8:30pm College Group	9:30am Ladies Bible Study 5:15pm 4/14 Prayer 6-8pm 4/14 6:30pm Small Group 8:30pm College Group	Lydia Frankie	Emily Coen Linda Page	Keera Beccue Betty Latch



31
 Building Fund Sunday
 5pm Prayer
 6pm Ladies Bible Study
 Small Group
 Cheryll Gilbert