



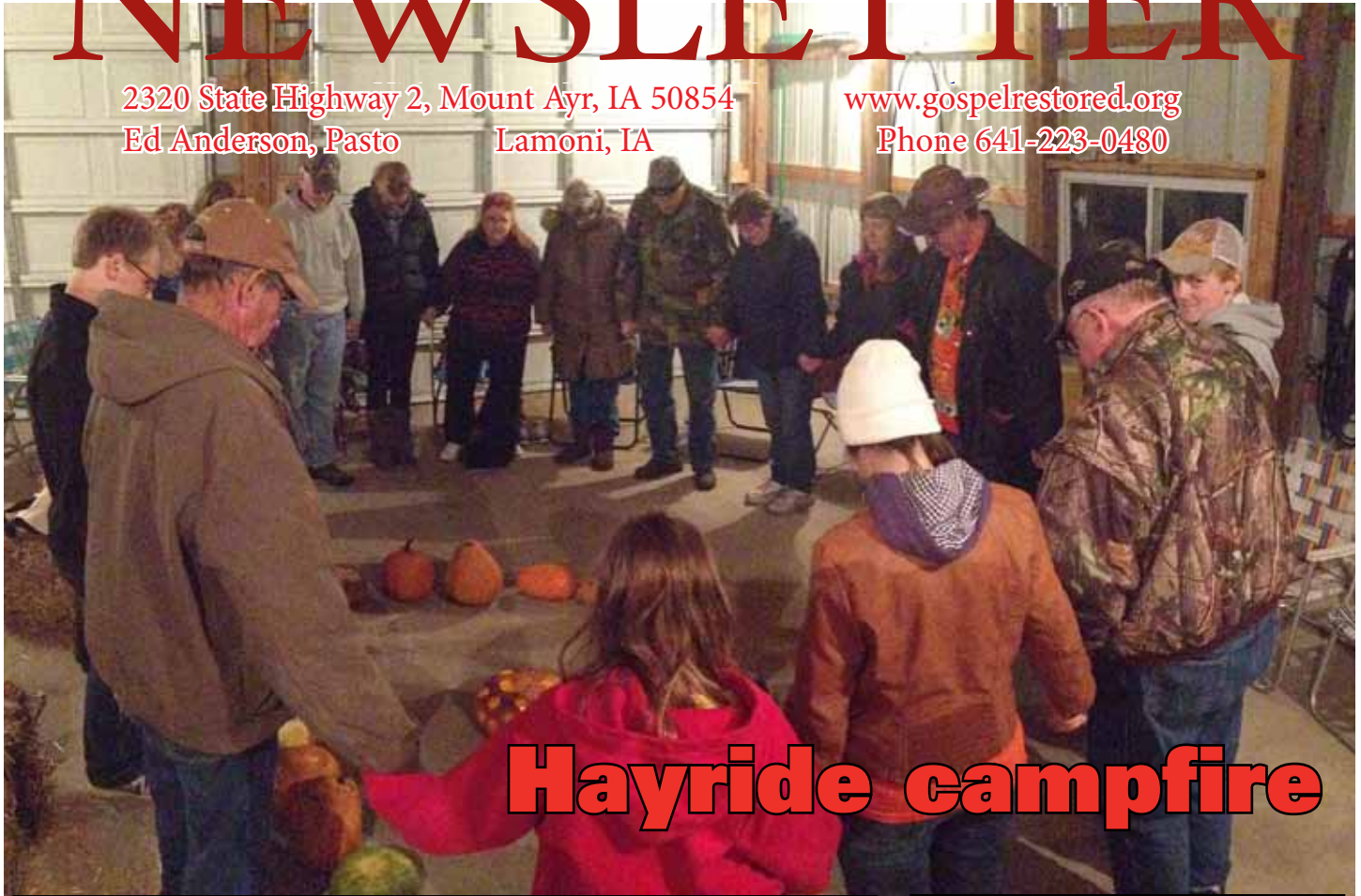
Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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Hayride campfire



News & Notes

Retreats planned

Several retreats are set at Odessa this fall. The theme for all of them is "That Your Joy Might Be Full" John 15:11'

Retreats include:

Junior Retreat Oct 4-5 with Josh & Elyse McLeod

Young Married Couples Retreat - Oct 10-12 with Erik and Amy Simmons
Senior High Retreat Oct. -- 17-19 with Stu & Milee Gage

Junior High Retreat - Oct. 24-26 with Brian and Monica Twombly

Older Youth Retreat - Nov 7-9 with Reggie and Suzanne Bendorf

For more information on the Odessa Hills retreats and to download forms or to register online, go to www.OdesaHills.com

JCRB Fall Conference

The fall national conference of the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches will be held at the Independence Branch in Independence, MO,

Continued on back page

What's inside?

News and Notes	Page 1
"Repent, Remember and Give Thanks"	
Tony Crandell.....	Page 2
Royals Game.....	Page 4
"Memories"	
Rodney Bastow	Page 5
Youth Group.....	Page 8
"We Are Free Indeed"	
Michael Jordison.....	Page 9
"Avoiding Salvation"	
Rob Rolfe	Page 13
Service Project	Page 17
October Scriptures	Page 18
October Schedule	Page 19



REPENT, REMEMBER AND GIVE THANKS

Elder Tony Crandell
Lamoni, IA
September 7, 2014

The message this morning began with a song sung by the Dixie Echoes called *Crumbs from the Table*.

Lord, bless your children who walk in perfection

Who managed to master your will.

Give them their share of sweet milk and wild honey

Provide bread of life till they're filled.

Feed the children but give me the crumbs from the table

I'll wait for them down on my knees.

I'd be ever so grateful for the crumbs from the table

For strength needed to follow Thee.

Lord, I'm not worthy to eat from the platter

For I'm just a beggar in need.

Satisfy others but when they're all finished

Dear Jesus, have mercy on me.

Chorus:

Feed the children but give me the crumbs from the table

I'll wait for them down on my knees.

I'd be ever so grateful for the crumbs from the table

For strength needed to follow Thee

For strength needed to follow Thee.

I appreciated the testimony of Sister Jordison last week because I find myself wrestling with the same thing. I don't have a testimony on the tip of my tongue. Sandra does; in fact she has many. She was confirmed in the Lutheran church and thanks to the missionary efforts of George Knotts, was baptized in the RLDS church by George - 51 years ago!! George, can you believe that? Over fifty years ago!!!

Thanks George, for your ministry!

Not only does she have a testimony about that journey, but she has another testimony with respect to the Book of Mormon.

I think it is important for you to know what I believe in. I believe in the basic tenets of the church as published by Joseph Smith in 1842, "The 13 articles of faith". (Realizing that we really don't adopt a creed as such.) I believe in a literal Zion. It is a physical place, not just a spiritual concept. I personally believe it will be centered in Jackson County, Missouri. I believe it is our mission as a church to establish the "cause" of Zion. The dictionary defines Cause "to be the cause of; to bring about."

I believe wholly in the Book of Mormon and that this church has a specific mission as found in the preamble to that book. I believe we are truly in the last day. The Lord's coming may not be tomorrow or next week but is very, very soon! I believe that Zion is our only hope and refuge. Very soon we, for our own safety and survival, will need a place to gather and support one another.

You know everyone is looking for the Mark of the Beast to signal the end....Well, "Monetary Fraud" is driving us closer to that mark. Some examples are credit card fraud which recently happened to Target. Just this week more credit card fraud happened to Home Depot customers. 3-D printing is making counterfeited money nearly impossible to detect. Is an implanted personal chip the forth-coming answer?

There is a concept that Alan and Ron will be very familiar with. On Hawaii (the big island) there is a place called the City of refuge.

In ancient times, Hawaiians lived under strict laws. Commoners could not get too close to the chief, nor were they allowed to touch any of his posses-

sions, walk in his footsteps or even let their shadows touch the royal grounds. The penalty for violating a sacred kapu (taboo) was death.

Imagine you had just broken the sacred laws, and the only punishment was death. Your only chance of survival is to elude your pursuers and reach the City of Refuge, a place of refuge. The City protected the law breaker, defeated warriors, as well as civilians. Breaking one of the ancient laws was believed to incur the wrath of the gods. Hawaiians often chased down an offender and swiftly put him to death unless he could reach the place of refuge. There he could be absolved by a (priest) in a purification ceremony, then return home with his transgression forgiven. Defeated warriors and non-combatants could also find refuge here during times of battle. No harm could come to those who reached the boundaries of the place of refuge.

We visited that place a number of years ago. As I stood there I had a vivid inspiration, almost like a vision, that this concept was not unlike what we were going to experience in the future. I was reminded of the promise of the Lord with respect to the safety of Zion. That we must flee there for our safety.

Sandra and I have attended many different churches where various southern gospel groups sing - Disciples of Christ, many, many variations of the Baptist Churches, Methodist, Salvation Army, Nazarene, Tangerine, and the Ebenezer Fellowship-Non-denominational BaptaCostal Freewill Church. I made that last one up...but my point is that in every case, wherever we go... the Lord's eminent coming is an urgent universal thread running through their spiritual being. Because of the "signs of the time" there is an overwhelming sense of urgency throughout all Chris-



tian Churches that is compelling all of them to refocus on these times.

Their piece of mind's safety valve is the rapture. They are so hungry for hope as they see the signs of a forthcoming tribulation swirling around them. I personally don't believe in the rapture, primarily because there are no scriptures that deal with the period of time from when they rise and meet Him in the air, to the second coming. Are they spiritual, or are they still physical during that period? They don't know the details, either, but they are confident they will escape the tribulation. What will they eat? Where will they lay their head? They are confident they will miss the tribulation in this unknown place in the sky. Boy, talk about faith....I don't think I have enough faith to believe in the Rapture.

Thank goodness for our Restoration scriptures! They give us hope. Zion is where we will lay our head, we will provide for one another, and the Lord will provide for our safety. It is my personal belief we will be here during the tribulation, but if we gather to Zion, we will not be part of it.

Hugh Caldwell wrote recently in—The Beacon:

“The question is more than just a matter of doctrine. The choices we make now will determine our entire outlook on life. It affects how we envision the future, how we teach our children and how we prepare for the last days. Any kind of deception or wrong thinking can leave us woefully unprepared for what we all must eventually face.”

Will the tribulation officially start tomorrow? No, probably not. But what we see going on in the Middle East should alarm us that the sleeping giant is awakening and we need to be serious about our spiritual and temporal preparation. The toothpaste is out of the tube and I don't think the government will ever get it in back in.

This last Thursday, three days ago, Rev. Franklin Graham, head of the international Christian aid group Samaritan's Purse and son of world-renowned preacher Billy Graham, said that, given all the bad news about the killing of

Christians by Muslims in some countries, and attacks on Christians by the media and the government even in America, he cannot “help but wonder if we are in the last hours before our Lord Jesus Christ returns.”

“As I read the news, I can't help but wonder if we are in the last hours before our Lord Jesus Christ returns to rescue His church and God pours out His wrath on the world for the rejection of His Son,” said Rev. Graham in a post on the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) website.

It is my personal opinion that very soon the Lord is going to yet do another marvelous work in Israel, as a sign to Israel and to the world—enough so, that it may delay and/or quell some of the carnage and expansion of the Palestinian threat...but the problem with the peace and safety of Israel is it is not going to go away permanently.

I have just a small sense of how the prophets of old felt when they anguished over the condition of civilization in their time. We all have grandchildren and some of them have no clue about what's ahead. Sandra and I anguish over what will happen if something happens to us and we are not here to impart our faith and strength to our grandchildren. Can you imagine the children growing up in un-churched families during this forthcoming event with no family or Christian basic beliefs to sustain them?

I am so thankful for my heritage in the restoration. Where would I be if it were not for the faith of my grandfather and my father? Sandra and I, like some of you, are probably somewhat apprehensive that our sons and daughters and their families are in not involved in the restoration movement. However, our faith is that when things start to happen that they will remember their upbringing and return to the fold. Under the current circumstances, Remember that old scripture Proverbs 22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

Well Tony, What's your point this morning?? I believe the purpose of the morning is at least three fold:

Number One: Repentance: To take

advantage of the opportunity to repent and to lay our sins here at the table and to start anew; to renew our pledge to Christ that we will continue to try to obey His commandments and to remain faithful to Him. This particular opportunity is very important. I hope all of us took advantage of that opportunity this morning. But it is the first of three opportunities this morning.

Number two: Remembrance: Another primary purpose in coming here is to remember the sacrifice that Christ made for us. I am 73 years old now and I am just now realizing in this late stage of my life the magnitude of what He did for us and how little we have appreciated it and praised Him for it.

Number three: To give thanks for His grace allowing us to be His friend. Not only to be just a friend...but as Jeannie Robertson would say, He is our “bestest” friend -- someone who is always ready to support us no matter what we have done. We need to give thanks for His sacrifice, for without that, we would have no hope for life beyond this earthly life.

I am reminded of what Paul would



Tony Crandell



say often in his writing of the gospels... "Thanks be to God..."

For three days, he sits in darkness, unable to see. For three days he neither eats nor drinks. But he didn't stop there, he went on to say *But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life.* 1Timothy 1:16 I like that phrase, "unlimited patience" (longsuffering in the inspired version). You might call it "mercy" or maybe "grace". Paul loved much, because he'd been forgiven much.

There is a hymn in the Celebration Hymnal where the chorus says this:

"Lest I forget Gethsemane, lest I forget Thine agony

Lest I forget Thy love for me - lead me to Calvary."

That song implies that God's gift of forgiveness can easily be forgotten if we're not repeatedly led to Calvary. (Led to the remembrance of His sacrifice) And, of course, that's why Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. Every month we gather at this table and are led back to the remembrance of His sacrifice.

Each month as we eat this bread, we remember that it represents the body of Christ that was broken for us. And each month as we drink of the cup, we remember that Jesus shed His blood for our sins to forgive us of the things we've done wrong.

When people just go through the motions of Communion without being thankful, it can be a sign that they don't realize how much they've been forgiven of. For he who's been forgiven little, loves little. But - by contrast - similar to the parable...he who has been forgiven much, loves much. That's what drove Paul to serve God so strongly and powerfully in his life.

In Romans 7 Paul writes: *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Je-*

sus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 7:24-8:2.

There is a trite phrase "crucified in Christ." It is one of those phrases I've heard all my life. I believed in whatever it was...but I didn't feel it. Picture yourself on death row; you're scheduled to be put to death later this morning. You know you're guilty; the sentence according to law is just. Oh, by the way, the method of death is going to be crucifixion, the most agonizing method known to man. You can hear the preparations outside your window. Everything is ready. All of a sudden this person known as Christ appears and opens your cell door - You're free!! He somehow, some way, has made things right. All of your rights and reputations have been restored to you.

How happy and joyful would you be? How much would you appreciate what he did for you? How thankful would you be? Would you just "like" Jesus for what He just did for you or would you love Him for it? Would you hold on to Him and hug Him and speak praises in His ear. Oh, I would!

Paul's thanksgiving began and ended with Jesus Christ because he loved Jesus.

And because he loved Jesus, his

thanksgiving was more than just a listing of his possessions and comforts. It is easy to "like" someone because of earthly things. If you truly knew for a fact that your life was going to end in an hour, wouldn't you appreciate it to the point you could "love" Him for what He did for you? Paul's exclamation was a declaration of how much God had done in his life.

This was so much so that he later wrote: *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength.* Philippians 4:12-13

"Thanks be to God!" and Thank you Lord Jesus...

Thank you for your sacrifice.

Thank you for your grace and mercy to forgive my sins.

Thank you for your plan of salvation.

Thank you for being my 'bestest friend'.

Thank you for your plan of Zion for our safety.

We come here this morning to worship You, and to praise You, and to tell You we "love You."



This group of Mount Ayr Restoration Branch rooters cheered on the Royals in a game in Kansas City September 27. See News and Notes.



MEMORIES

Priest Rodney Bastow Mount Ayr, Iowa September 14, 2014

Priest Ed Anderson read Matthew 7:34 as a call to worship. *Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock, and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.*

The scripture that I have selected for this morning is from Deuteronomy 10:12, 13. *And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?*

Earlier this summer I had a class reunion. I don't know if many of you go to class reunions. It's pretty common here in Mount Ayr. Every five years your class has a class reunion. Mine was pretty well attended. I didn't use to go to them. I don't know why. I guess I didn't want to see those people but now as I've gotten older I enjoy going to them because it brings back the memories of those days. It's good to see the people there that I use to see a lot.

This year they tried to copy Debbie's class because Debbie's class always has a Friday night get together that's kind of a social time. On Saturday they have a big meal and usually have a program with it. This year my class decided to have a program with the dinner. For this program they selected me to be the MC. I was really honored to be asked to do this. At the same time I was surprised a bit that they would ask ME.

I graduated from a class of 100 and I doubt if I was in the top 10 or 20 as far as being popular. I was never a class officer. I was never a class leader or did

anything like that. There were a lot of others who were a lot wittier than I was and there were a lot that were better at public speaking than I was but for some reason they asked me. I had a friend tell me that I was the only one that would accept the job without pay but I don't know if that was true or not.

I bring this up because I have been asked to speak here today and I am very honored and pleased to do this but as always I have to wonder why? I've read over the last Newsletter and it was full of some great sermons. We have some very talented, gifted people in this congregation. I am very impressed with the speakers that we have had the last few months. There are so many of you here that know the scriptures so much better than I do. There are so many of you who are better at speaking than I am. That only leaves one thing doesn't it?

If you are going to get anything out of today, if you are going to be uplifted in any way, if you are going to be educated in any way, it won't be because of my abilities. It will be because the Lord has blessed us with His Holy Spirit and to that end we should give God all the praise and all the glory.

My job as an MC at that class reunion was to interview several former teachers and school employees who attended. I would ask them different questions about what it was like back then, who they did or did not get along with and what the conditions were like. I wanted to stir up memories and I did. I stirred up a lot of memories, some that I didn't realize I was going to be stirring up. It's amazing how things have changed since my high school days. I sub up here a lot and taught a lot of years and things are a lot different than when I was going to school.

When I thought about what I would say today I thought we should have a class reunion. We should have people come back that I went to Sunday School and church with and bring back some of my old Sunday School teachers and pastors. We could ask them questions and

they could respond. There is one slight problem with that. Most of the people who were Sunday School teachers and pastors of mine are no longer living and so they wouldn't be able to share with us those things that we would want to ask them.

I thought about calling on some of you to share with us what it was like when you were growing up in the church but I wasn't sure I wanted to put any of you on the spot. I know some of you would have been quite willing to have shared those things with us, but others might not have wanted to do that. So I thought this morning that I would talk a little bit about what I remembered from when I was growing up.

I don't know if you realize this but RLDS church here in Mount Ayr got started back in the 1940s or 1950s which was before I was born. They were having cottage meetings and other things to get a congregation started here in this area. A lot of them that were doing this came to us from Lamoni. They came and settled here. They converted people here in this area and we got a congregation started.

Probably the leader of this effort and the person most responsible for a lot of the converts during that time was John Lane. He was the pastor of the Mount Ayr congregation for a long time, as long as he was physically able to do it. He was responsible for bringing the latter-day gospel to this area. A lot of people in this area if they had heard about the church hadn't heard anything good about it. It was John Lane who changed their thinking about that.

I read some of Ron Smith's testimonies about Africa, about sharing with the people over there the gospel of Jesus Christ and how receptive they are. I think back and it must have been like that back in the 1940s and the 1950s when John Lane was going out and sharing the gospel with others. They were looking for something like that, they were looking for something that they thought our church had to offer.



Our congregation went from meeting in a blacksmith's shop which wasn't very big. I understand they even had Sunday School classes in it. I don't know how they did that but it wasn't a very big building. They moved from there to building a church which would hold a hundred or more people. It's my understanding for a lot of years that church was filled and that there were a lot of good people who went there and who were trying to serve the Lord.

None of those people were quite like John Lane. By the time I got to know John he was in his 70s or 80s. At the time I thought he was really old. Now he seems like he was just a youngster. I got to know John fairly well because as he got older he didn't drive and so my folks would take him to activities. I remember he went with us to the state basketball tournament back in the 1960s. He went with us to Pennsylvania for my brother's wedding. My brother use to drive him on Sunday nights to his preaching services and occasionally I would go with them.

Most of you knew my mother pretty well. You knew what mom could be like. Mom had a tendency at times to get upset I guess is the easiest way to put it. It would be John Lane who would come out and tell her, 'You can't be like that. You need to be going to prayer meeting. Helen, you need to be doing this.' So I got to know him pretty well that way.

I never heard John say a bad word about anyone. He never complained about anyone and he really had a right to. I heard complaining from my mother but I never heard it from John. He had a grocery store up town in Mount Ayr. He had had it there for a while when right across the alley from him another grocery store started up. This grocery store was started by Charles Hyde and Dwight Vredenburg. They knew John and that he was a church member. They knew what their store might do to his business, but I never heard him complain.

I never met anyone who didn't like John. I talked to a cousin this summer and she and her husband got married in our church. I'd seen a picture of their wedding and I could tell that that it

was in our church. I asked her how it happened that she got married in our church. She said that her folks shopped in John's store and they knew what a good man he was. They didn't really have a church so they decided to see if John would perform their wedding ceremony in the church. Of course, he agreed because he was like that. It didn't matter if you were a church member or not, he was going to care for you.

John had a very close relationship with his Heavenly Father. He often shared testimonies of the experiences that he had had with God and what had happened with him. I believe that if John prayed for something that prayer was answered. I've shared with you before that it's because of him administering to me when I was a baby that my life was spared. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit could that have happened. It was because John was in such close touch with God that he was allowed to do that.

I loved listening to John speak because he spoke so that I could understand. The words he used were my language. He made it seem real and I liked that. Another thing I liked about him speaking was that John wasn't going to speak very long. You knew when he spoke that he was maybe going to last 30 minutes tops and that would be it. As a young person I really appreciated that a lot. The thing I remember about his speaking is that he would start out really slow and really soft and as the spirit got more and more forceful with him, he started talking faster and faster and louder and then all of a sudden he was done. John loved the Lord and he loved to serve Him. As Delbert Smith used to say, 'John talked the talk and he walked the walk.' Do you know anyone like John? I hope we all try to be like him.

Sometimes when I want to revisit those old times, the memories that I had growing up, I go back to the old church and those memories come back. They have a young man named Randy Drake who is the pastor of that church. When I heard that Tony and Sandy Crandell were going to be coming here, I was really elated and happy that they were

going to be joining us because I think they bring a lot to our congregation but I worried what would happen to that group at the Mount Ayr Community of Christ.

Randy is doing a good job and he reminds me a lot of John Lane. He is very humble, knows the scriptures really well, loves people and is doing his best to serve the needs of those people. I am just hoping that the Community of Christ world church will leave him alone so that they can continue worshipping as they want.

I was hoping Bonnie Major would be here today. I don't know her and Jim very well. Bonnie seems to like to remember the old times just like I do. I really enjoy her testimonies. She shared one with us a few weeks ago that I've thought about a lot. I'd like to share that with you now. Those of you that were there that night might have to help me out a little bit.

Her testimony was about a woman who was preparing to have prayer service in her home. She was really concerned about this and wanted everything to be just right. She wanted it to be a really special service. She prayed about it. She cleaned and made all the preparations for it. The night of the service came and she saw Jesus there. It was a really good service but toward the end of it someone made an unkind comment toward another person and she saw Jesus turn around and walk away. Do we prepare to see Jesus? Is He here with us today?

I remember growing up before I even got to know Cheryl Phipps hearing the testimony of the Creston congregation. Paul Winans shared it with us one night at Mount Ayr and he told about the congregation being visited by John the Beloved for about six months. He said that during that time there had been a great growth in their congregation. There had been many baptisms. A large percentage of them went to Lamoni Stake Reunion that year. A large percentage, practically all of them, filed tithing statements that year. They were just really feeling an outpouring of the Spirit.

Just think of what an experience



that would have been. Could it happen again? I think it could. I think it could if we walk in His ways, if we love Him and if we try to serve Him with all our heart and with all our soul. Do we try to keep the commandments of the Lord?

If we would see Jesus here today or if we feel the Holy Spirit with us here this morning, how long will it stay with us? Bonnie said that Jesus left when someone said an unkind word about another person. I couldn't help but think about that later that evening when I heard an unkind thing about another person. It was true but what would Jesus have thought and would He have left right then? So many times when I've had a really good spiritual experience something happens, someone gets angry and an unkind word is said.

From Micah 6:8 it says, *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* We are to do justly and to act equitably, to hurt nobody by word or deed, to love mercy, to be guided in conduct to others by loving kindness, to walk humbly with God and to live and act in humility and obedience.

I sometimes have trouble with my mouth. A lot of times it is accidental. Something pops in my head and before I know it I have said it. I don't realize it until I get home and I get reminded about it but I need to be more careful about that. I've spoken before at graduation ceremonies and my prayer is always that I don't say anything that would hurt someone's feelings. I never say anything that would embarrass anybody but I always pray that I don't say anything that will offend people.

I need to make sure that I think about that before I speak. Sometimes I do it on purpose. I've had a lot of trouble lately. We've had a coaching change at the Mount Ayr schools and one of the new coaches is a person who I don't think is appropriate for the job. I've made my feelings very well known on that and have been very vocal. It has occurred to me that this guy is willing to serve. He wants to do it. Maybe what I'm saying about him isn't appropriate.

Maybe I should be more careful about what I say.

I need to do more to love others. I need to share more of my time and be more giving. Most of you didn't get to know mom when she was younger but I guarantee you if someone new came to church or was added to the congregation and came to visit, mom was all over it. I remember the first time Carnie and Joyce Anderson and the boys came to church. I had never met them before but mom acted like they were her long lost friends and before long it was like Joyce was a sister to me. It was just because of the way that mom was treating her. She treated her like family.

Mom wasn't much of a housekeeper. She didn't care for that but we always had plenty to eat. She was always good about bringing others to our home and making them feel loved. If mom hadn't done that with Joyce and Carnie I might never have known that she had a sister. I might never have known that she had a sister that was a lot like she was, and Debbie and I might not have ever gotten together.

I need to be more humble and I need to do a better job of obeying God's laws. I need to avoid those things that are on TV and the internet that take me away from the Holy Spirit.

I still think about Kyle Chown a lot. What a special young man he was. I wasn't around Kyle much but I took an instant liking to him and his family. I appreciated his testimonies and the faith that he expressed. Isn't it amazing the lives that he touched. I heard a saying once that you should live so that even the undertaker is sad when you die. I believe that Kyle did that. When I think about Kyle I think about how I should live my life like he did. I think I should have the kind of faith that he had and I think about how I should love others like he did.

Kyle did as the Lord required of him. I need to do the same thing so that when my time comes I can be reunited with Kyle in the Kingdom of God. Is that important to you? Would you like to be able to see Kyle again?

Earlier this summer I made a com-

ment that I thought our congregation was dying. I was wrong. It is very much alive. We have had some new additions come and I think they are going to be of great benefit to us. To me this is very exciting. It adds life and it adds energy to our congregation. The best thing I can hear during a Sunday service is the sounds that I'm hearing right now from that little one back there. Any time we have sounds like that we know that we are alive and we know that there is hope for us. You look at Facebook at some of those selfies that are taken. They are people looking for something. They want to belong to a group. They want to be loved. I think we have what they need.

As I was looking for a way to finish up I came across the scripture from John 4:5-42. It was paraphrased. I don't know if this fits in or not but for some reason I feel led to share it with you. It goes like this.

Our passage for today deals with an unknown foreign woman at a well. In the verses leading up to our story we



Rodney Bastow



learn that Jesus is traveling from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north. He was taking the direct route through Samaria which lay in between. Usually Jews would avoid traveling through Samaria because relationships with the Samaritans had been bad for centuries. So the fact that Jesus had to travel through Samaria tells us a lot about Jesus' mission.

While the disciples go to town to get some food Jesus sits by a well. The well is in the middle of a field and it's at noon so the sun is high in the sky. A woman comes to get water. You immediately wonder why she did not go to the well in her town and why she would come at this time of the day. Is she avoiding people?

Later in the story we learn that she's been married several times and is now with a man she did not marry. A woman would have had no say in any divorce or marriage and we don't know why she was abandoned so many times but it may explain why she is away from others at this time.

When Jesus asked for a drink she is caught by surprise. Why would a Jewish man ask her this? In addition Jesus tells her about living water. The water in this well does not percolate. It stands still. She does not understand. Jesus explains that one who drinks of the living water will never thirst again. She

realizes he is talking about very special water and asks for this kind of water. At this point Jesus makes her aware that he knows about her life. She begins to realize there is more to this man and refers to him as a prophet.

Next follows the theological discussion about the mountain on which God should be worshipped. Samaritans worship God on a different mountain than the Jewish people. Jesus explains that worshipping God goes beyond the location of either mountain. It is after hearing Jesus' testimony that the woman states her belief in the Messiah who is to come. Jesus responds, 'I am the one who is speaking to you.'

Just then the disciples arrive and they are astonished to find Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman. In her excitement the woman leaves the water jar when she goes back to her town. There she shares her story and asks if this man could be the Messiah. She adds, 'Come and see.'

Next the dialogue calls between Jesus and the disciples. They want him to eat something and have just come back from town with food. Jesus explains that he is fed by doing God's will. Jesus says to the disciples, 'The harvest of bringing others to Christ is still many months away,' but says Jesus, 'Look around you. The fields are ripe to harvest. There are people who will be receptive to what we

have to share.'

Finally we learn many Samaritans in this city came to believe because of the woman's testimony. After Jesus spends two days with them they no longer believe solely on the basis of what the woman said, they heard for themselves. The fields were in deed ready to be harvested.

Back in 1835 we were said to be in the latter days. Now I've heard we're said to be in the latter hours. Section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants says, *Now, behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men, therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind, and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day; therefore, if ye have desires to serve God, ye are called to the work, for, behold, the field is white already to harvest, and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perish not, but bringeth salvation to his soul; and faith, hope, charity, and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualifies him for the work. Remember, faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence. Ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Amen.*



Youth group organizes for new year

Ten Mount Ayr branch youth participated in the first youth activity of the year to organized the group.

Events are set twice a month for the youth, who are being led by Deni and Joel Loving, Jim and Linda Barber and Bob and Jeni Rowland this year.

One of their first activities was to make a movie trailer about the group.



WE ARE FREE INDEED

Elder Michael Jordison
Lamoni, Iowa
September 21, 2014

High Priest Alan Smith read Doctrine and Covenants 95:2c-3a as a Call to Worship. *I, the Lord God, make you free; therefore, ye are free indeed: and the law also maketh you free; nevertheless when the wicked rule the people mourn; wherefore honest men and wise men should be sought for, diligently, and good men and wise men, ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these, cometh of evil. And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God; for he will give unto the faithful, line upon line, precept upon precept.*

Good morning everyone. Today's message, I guess you could say, is brought to you partly on behalf of Walt Disney. [Michael sings] 'When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are, anything your heart desires will come to you.' Well, the world wants us to think is that we can have whatever we want and it will come to us. But I've changed the words a little bit, to bring some reality to the song, [Singing] 'When you break one of God's laws, it makes no difference who you are. Any punishment incurred will come to you.'

Michael read from Alma 5:24-35. *Now I say unto you, that ye must repent, and be born again: for the Spirit saith, If ye are not born again, ye can not inherit the kingdom of heaven; Therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness; Yea, I say unto you, Come and fear not, and lay aside every sin, which easily doth beset you, which doth bind you down to destruction; Yea, come and go forth, and shew unto your*

God that ye are willing to repent of your sins, and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, and witness it unto him this day, by going into the waters of baptism; And whosoever doeth this, and keepeth the commandments of God from thenceforth, the same will remember that I say unto him, yea, he will remember that I have said unto him, he shall have eternal life, according to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which testifieth in me. And now my beloved brethren, do you believe these things? Behold, I say unto you, Yea, I know that ye believe them; and the way that I know that ye believe them, is by the manifestation of the Spirit which is in me. And now because your faith is strong concerning that, yea, concerning the things which I have spoken, great is my joy. For as I said unto you from the beginning, that I had much desire that ye were not in the state of dilemma like your brethren, (the other Nephites that were in transgression) even so I have found that my desires have been gratified. For I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness: I perceive that ye are in the path which leads to the kingdom of God; Yea, I perceive that ye are making his paths straight, I perceive that it has been made known unto you by the testimony of his word, that he can not walk in crooked paths; Neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left, nor from that which is right to that which is wrong; therefore, his course is one eternal round.

I won't make an apology, but anything that I'm going to share this morning is not going to be original. If you get anything out of today it's going to be because the Spirit carries something to your heart.

Like this Disney theme song, albeit indirectly, there are a lot of things going on in our world today that pull us away from the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The world says fulfilment in life is found in doing what we want and in doing what we will for ourselves; that believing in God is old fashioned.

It says that you need to get hip with the times and follow whatever your heart dictates and whatever dreams that you make for yourself. While there is an element of truth to that on various levels, fulfilment ultimately rests on our obedience to the will of God for our lives.

I want to talk a little about God's law today. I know that there are people in this congregation that know a lot more about law than I do. I'm not going to get into the nuts and bolts of law but I think most of us know what rules are.

Ryder, you know what rules and laws are don't you? Your mom lays down the "law" sometimes and expects you to keep it. We all know what rules are. We have rules at school. We have rules at home. We have rules at work. We have rules in our government. We have rules in the military that we have to keep. We have rules in physics, math, and English. Everywhere we look there are rules. There are rules when we play games. There are rules about driving on the road.

What would happen if we didn't have any rules? Maybe some of you younger ones could chime in here. Ryder, what would happen if we didn't have any rules at school? (He replied that 'it would be chaos'.) We went to the Royals baseball game yesterday. Tanner, you were there. What would happen if we didn't have rules in baseball? (He replied that 'you wouldn't be able to determine who won'.)

Isabel, you are about ready to get your driver's license. What would happen if there weren't any rules about driving on the road? (She replied that there would be a lot more car crashes.) Ryder I think, hit it on the head with the word 'chaos'. There would be complete disorganization, nothing would get accomplished and we would all be very sad and miserable if there were no rules.

We have rules to help us stay organized. We have rules to make sure that things are fair and that we treat each other with civility. I think sometimes, though, we have too many rules. We



get bogged down in rules and pretty soon we get confused about which rule applies and who it applies to and when to apply it. We have lawyers to 'help' us sort all that stuff out; but rules are here for us. They are for our benefit.

Some rules we change. We used to have the rules that women and black Americans could not vote. Those rules or laws were changed and now once a woman or black American (who is not a felon) reaches 18, they can vote along with white males. The speed limit on the highway has varied from time according to whatever the legislature deems is the proper speed necessary for safety or for economy.

Some laws change based on the needs of an organization or culture, such as when they need to move in a different direction. When they need to branch out into other areas they may have to change their rules in order to do that.

Last week while driving to a football game I decided to break a rule to get there a little bit quicker because we were late. I got stopped by a rule enforcer, otherwise known as the sheriff. He thankfully knocked the speed down and sent us on our way- after committing to give a nice donation to the county.

Let's look at a different kind of rule. What about the law of gravity. What if I chose not to follow the rule of gravity? What would happen if I simply said I wasn't going to obey that law anymore? Elyse, come here for a second. This is the privilege of being a parent. You get to command and order your children around. I'd like for you to jump in the air. Everybody see that? See how she got off the ground. Now Elyse, this time I want you to jump and stay in the air. You can't do that? How come? It's because of gravity. That's an example of a law or rule that we can chose not to keep but the action is going to happen regardless of whether or not we chose to obey the law. We are compelled to obey it.

I brought a couple of apples though I don't normally use props. I have one apple in my left hand and one apple in my right hand. When I add to the apple

in my left hand the one apple from my right hand, I have two apples. That's a law or principle in mathematics we call addition. Now what if I chose to disobey that law or let's say disagree with that law, and I take this apple and I take the second apple and put them together and decide that now I have three apples.

Do I really have three apples? No. I might believe that I have three apples but really there are only two. It doesn't matter how many times or how often I disagree with this law or principle, I can't change it. We could say that the word two becomes three but it doesn't change anything really.

We have laws and rules that govern our society. These we can change for ourselves. We can choose to obey them or not obey them. And we have laws and rules that govern our sciences, our physical universe. These laws we can only discover and try to understand. We can't change them. We can't change the law of gravity. We can't make an object of mass have no gravitational pull. We can only distance ourselves from the object so that its pull has no effect on us. We just are subject to obey those laws.

God gave us something called agency. Josh, we read about God giving mankind the ability to choose in class today. We all have the right to act as agents for ourselves, to decide whether or not we want to obey God's laws. When we talk about His laws the first thing that we have to realize is that God's laws are simply that. They are God's laws. They are not our laws that we choose to make up for God. They are laws that God has enacted or put in place. Let's look in the book of Romans 1:16-19.

This scripture is used by some Christians when they talk about non-Christians who haven't heard the Gospel going to hell. This is Paul speaking to the Romans. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed through faith on his name; as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed*

from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; who love not the truth, but remain in unrighteousness, After that which may be known of God is manifest to them. This is the scripture that evangelicals like to use. They say, 'Even if you haven't heard of Jesus Christ if you don't believe in him you are damned to hell because you have all of creation as a witness of God's majesty and power.' In verse 20 it says, *For God hath revealed unto them the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, which are clearly seen; things which are not seen being understood by the things that are made, through his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.*

Christians that don't believe in the prison house, who don't have an understanding of restored Gospel, will say for instance that 'those people in Africa who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, they are damned to hell if they don't confess His name and believe in Him, because they have all of creation to testify of Him to believe in God and to understand Him.'

That's not what Paul is preaching. I believe that what Paul is really saying is the same thing that Moses revealed from the Book of Genesis 6:66. He says, *And, behold, all things have their likeness; and all things are created and made to bear record of me; both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath, all things bear record of me.* Now what I'm trying to say here is that God has created our physical universe; and everything that He has created is made to bear record of Him and is made to teach us about those things that Paul called the 'invisible things' of the kingdom. We have faith in heaven. We have faith that Zion will be. Yet we do not have knowledge because it hasn't been realized for us at this time. We're not there yet. Because of our experiences that we have from our past and our understandings of what we can see, now we can begin to exercise faith in those intangible, 'invisible' things, those



things that are just outside of our perfect knowledge right now.

In context of the laws that God has put in place, such as the laws of gravity and science that He has put here for us to discover, He wants us to understand that those physical laws have a spiritual representation. Yes, we can change the laws of society or our rules on how we're going to govern ourselves, and we can choose to obey or not obey them. But we can't change the laws that God's has enacted that govern our physical universe. We have to live within their rules or scope of influence. These rules have spiritual connections.

What makes a good rule? What makes a good law? They are rules or laws that are consistent. God doesn't change His rules. He doesn't change His laws. He doesn't change the way that He works. He tells us in Malachi 3:6. For I am the Lord, I change not. . . Again we read in the Doctrine and Covenants 1:6a, . . . *O inhabitants of the earth, I, the Lord, am willing to make these things known unto all flesh, for I am no respecter of persons.* Alma 5:35 says, *Neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left, nor from that which is right to that which is wrong; . . . God doesn't change and God's laws do not change. If they did God would cease to be God. This is something I firmly believe and understand that God is subject to law.*

God has to obey laws. If you ask 'Is there was anything that God cannot do?' Yes, He can't break His law because if He did He would cease to exist. I believe that's because fundamentally God is the law. God is Law and the law in the strictest sense cannot change. A law cannot change and remain the same. You can take a law and change it but it becomes a new law. It's not the same law. If God is law and He changes then He ceases to become God and then He would become nothing- which is not possible.

In Mormon 4:82 we read, . . . *He changeth not; if so, he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God, . . .* As I thought about that this morning I thought about the new and old cove-

nants. You have the old covenant under what we consider the Mosaic Law and then you have the new covenant which is under the sacrifice of Christ. Though Jesus said that he made a new covenant with Israel, I don't believe that the new covenant is really a "new" covenant as it really is the first and only binding covenant, as it resides in the midst of Eternity.

I believe Solomon said, 'There's nothing new under the sun.' If God exists, and He does, He has to be the same today that He was yesterday. His laws today have to be the same that they were yesterday. His laws yesterday and today have to be the same as His laws tomorrow and the day after and the years after.

Elyse, why are you here today? I am going to pick on her this morning. (She said she was here to learn about God.) You know when I was your age I was at church because I had to go. My Mom drug me along. Well, maybe not 'drug'. But, I didn't have a choice, I had to go. I don't why each of you are here this morning. Maybe some of you got drug here by someone. I know why I had to be here today <grin>. Maybe you are here because you feel guilty. Maybe you wanted to be on the golf course but you were afraid that somebody would see you so you felt guilty and came to church. Maybe you wanted to worship God and thank Him for all the blessings that He has given to you in your life. Maybe you needed to be uplifted. Maybe God said, 'You know what, Sherman, you really need to hear the message this morning. You better get to church.'

There are various reasons why we may be here. But I believe that ultimately the reason that any of us is here, regardless of all the superficial reasons, is because of God's law that He laid down. Cody, God created us so that we could dwell with Him and be in His presence. He is good and He's told us that He is the ONLY thing that is good. There is nothing else out there that is good besides Him. If we can't be in His presence and in the presence of goodness then where would we be? We would be in the presence of unhappiness, evil and misery.

Just like if we think that we can choose to break the law of gravity and we find that we really can't, God's laws are the same. If we choose to go against His commandments, we cannot dwell in His presence. He can't change that. I can't change that. You can't change that. That's one of those laws out there, and like gravity we cannot change it no matter how hard we might want to. We can't do anything about. It has to be obeyed.

There has to be a consequence for breaking God's law. Now we know the Mosaic Law and the Ten Commandments that were given. We know those laws. Those are easy ones for us to pick out and identify. Jesus said that all of those laws and all the testimony of the prophets that have ever been from the beginning of time up unto that point and even beyond that point hang on two commandments. Love the Lord thy God with all thy might, and thy heart and thy strength. And the second He said is like unto it. Love thy neighbor as thyself.

When we talk about God being law, we have to consent simply that God IS. He's in the midst of eternity. He exists.



Michael Jordison



God is love. Love is. It's in the midst of eternity. We cannot change LOVE any more than we can change gravity. We are subject to His love and to His law and when we go outside of that we are found in transgression. God is Law. Law is. And punishment for breaking the law is.

I think we all here know the plan of salvation. We know that Christ came into this world for one reason only and that reason was to die. Just like I said and the scriptures teach, that God can't go against Himself - He cannot go against His law. There had to be a penalty for breaking His law and that penalty is death. He told our first parents that when He said, 'Hey, know what? You can eat the fruit of any tree in this garden except for the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Don't eat that fruit or the day that you eat it you shall die.' Well, they chose to eat it and that day they died spiritually. When we sin we die spiritually. We don't see it. Sometimes we see the effects of what sin does physically to us but we don't see the physical side of that spiritual death that happens.

It's that invisible part of the law that's out there that God wants us to understand by the other laws that we can see. He provided a way that when we transgressed that that penalty would be paid. We all know that that was through the sacrifice and the shed blood of Jesus Christ for our sins. That penalty still has to be paid. Somebody has to pay for it so Jesus said that He would take upon Himself those sins.

I know this that when we sin it's not God that goes away. It's us that withdraws from God. I hadn't thought about this until this morning, but when Adam and Eve transgressed in the garden, God didn't say, 'You know what? I'm picking up my toys and I'm leaving the sandbox, I'm going over here.' No, He cast Adam and Eve out of the garden. I think that was to help us understand that when we transgress it is we that leave; that penalty that we incur causes us to withdraw from God and to go away out of His presence. He never leaves us. God never ever leaves us and that's why He's always there for us to return to. He's

ready at any moment to reach out and grab us but it's always us walking away from Him. He's always right there looking at our back waiting for us to turn to Him.

Tanner, when I was somewhere between you and Joshua's age we made a trip out to California to see my grandparents. While we were there in the San Francisco area we went out to a place called Alcatraz Island. I don't know if you are familiar with Alcatraz. There may be some here that don't know what Alcatraz is. It was a federal maximum security prison from 1930 to 1960 something. It was out on an island in the middle of the cold San Francisco Bay so that if any prisoners would happen to escape they would have had to swim across the Bay to get to shore to freedom. Well, the water was so cold that they would catch hypothermia before they got to shore and if the hypothermia didn't kill them the sharks would.

We went out to the island. They have turned it into a museum run by the National Parks Service. We took a tour of the prison and at one point the guide led our group into this small little chamber and packed us in like sardines. He told us that he was going to close the door for just a minute and then he would open it up again. The door swung shut. You could hear the creaking. This was all steel and iron. It clang and reverberated throughout the whole chamber. Then you could hear a click where the locking mechanism locked into place. There was absolutely no light. It was completely pitch black in there. A minute is a very long time to wait in total darkness even when you know you are going to get out. This cell was what they call solitary confinement- where they put those who were difficult prisoners so they wouldn't cause any more trouble with the rest of the inmates.

That's kind of like what we do with God except we place ourselves in solitary confinement. When we transgress against His laws we are in essence saying, 'You know what, God, I don't want to be in your presence. I'm going off on my own.' Even though we might have people around us it doesn't matter be-

cause without God there is nothing. We are left to ourselves. There are days at work when I forget to call upon God and things just don't go well and I'm left to myself. I have a lot of people around me doing things and saying things and trying to help but the point is that I'm alone. I don't have God there with me because I have determined that I don't need him. I have refused to acknowledge that He's there.

Have you been in solitary confinement? I think we've all been there from time to time. It's not because God wants us to be there. He doesn't think that we are so bad or what we've committed is so wrong that we have to be put somewhere as punishment. We place ourselves there because of that principle of law. The law is that when we transgress we are going to withdraw from the Spirit. We have no choice. We become a prisoner to ourselves, which in reality is becoming a prisoner of the devil. But the interesting thing is just the opposite can occur as well.

Paul many times in the New Testament said that he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Nephi talks about being led captive by the devil, by flaxen cords. The devil speaks temptations to us. Maybe they don't sound too bad one at a time but he is just kind of throwing them out there like these really light cords that we can't feel. Once he gets enough of them around us he just gently leads us down to hell. We follow him willingly. We don't even know what's happening.

God wants to do the same thing to us. He wants us to bind ourselves to Him. He wants us to be as Paul claimed- a prisoner of Jesus Christ. When you are a prisoner you can't choose for yourself where to go. You can't decide that you are going to go to Walmart. No, you are stuck in jail. You can't decide to go to the kitchen to get something to eat. You will eat when and what the jailer tells you. The military might seem like prison in some ways too because a lot of times you can't choose where you are going to go.

But when you are a prisoner of Jesus Christ, all of a sudden your perspective changes. Now you want to do the things the jailer tells you. And Jesus is



like no other jailer. He's not cracking a whip. It's all free will.

I remember an old western where there weren't bars on the jail cell. So they just painted a line on the floor and then they splattered a little red paint on the floor to look like blood. The idea was that the prisoner would see that blood and decide not to cross the line because he didn't want to get shot. This is maybe a bad analogy but that's the way we are supposed to be with Jesus. We are supposed to want to be there,

to understand that the rules are there for our benefit, for our protection. He doesn't need to have walls. He doesn't need to have chains and bars to bind us to Him. It's a submission to Him that He wants out of us. When we submit to Him that is when we become truly free. I know that may sound really strange, but when we are bound to Christ Jesus, that is when we are truly free.

Just like in the song I sang. We are free indeed by the Son, Jesus Christ, no matter what our circumstances, no

matter where we find ourselves, when we are obedient to Jesus Christ. Any penalty to be incurred upon us will be gladly taken by our Jailer. It doesn't matter if we've just been in major transgression and all of a sudden the world is coming down upon us. If we will turn and repent and begin to follow God, He will set our spirits free. It doesn't matter what happens to us physically for we become His sons and daughters, new creatures in Christ Jesus.



AVOIDING SALVATION

**High Priest Rob Rolfe
Lamoni, IA
September 28, 2014**

As a scripture reading Brother Rolfe used Genesis 3:13-19. *And they heard the voice of the Lord God, as they were walking in the garden, in the cool of the day. And Adam and his wife went to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden. And I, the Lord God, called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where goest thou? And he said, I heard thy voice, in the garden, and I was afraid, because I beheld that I was naked, and I hid myself. And I, the Lord God, said unto Adam, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, if so thou shouldst surely die? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest me, and commanded that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree, and I did eat. And I, the Lord God, said unto the woman, What is this thing which thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*

I'd like you to imagine this morning that you are standing before God, the Father, and he has just asked you the reason you didn't build Zion while you lived on the earth. What will be your answer? This sermon will help you, because I'm going to give you a list of excuses. Chose the one you think God might accept.

I forgot.
I didn't think it was that important.
I was waiting for Jesus to return so I could ask him.

No one ever did it before.
That's the pastor's job, not mine.
It's not my fault.

If you remember the scripture I read, you might have noticed that mankind has been using excuses from the beginning of time. We use excuses to try to shift the blame from us to someone or something else. You know, when I think about mankind, at times I think we are a most pathetic lot. From the beginning of time, we have not been obedient and worse than that, we aren't willing to even to admit that we simply don't want to do what we know God told us to do. We make excuses over and over for our conduct. Most of all, however, we are just not willing to obey, so we try to justify ourselves.

Adam and Eve were taught the gospel. Did that keep them from following God's instruction? Why did they eat the fruit? Adam's excuse was the woman. God, it was that woman you gave me. Eve's excuse was the serpent. That serpent tricked me. It wasn't my fault. Like the comic, Skip Wilson, a long time ago, we claim, the "devil made me do it". But that statement is a lie. We didn't do it, or we haven't done it, because we wanted something else. As Abinadi said, (Mosesiah 8:75) *We are, in the natural man, carnal, sensual and devilish*". But we

don't like to hear that.

One excuse I find most troubling in this day and age, is the excuse(s) for why a person doesn't want to come to Christ. If you ask a person who has not accepted Christ as their Savior; why they haven't tried to obtain salvation; why they won't come unto Christ and be saved; they always have an excuse ready. Always! If they don't have an excuse, Satan will quickly be there helping them make up an excuse, right on the spot. He is very good at that and has been helping mankind with excuses for thousands of years.

I have just recently noticed how many places in the scriptures record the excuses made by people. In one of Jesus' parables, the parable of the great supper, He said what would happen.

Luke 14:16-20 says, *Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper and bade many; And sent his servants at supper time, to say to them who were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, therefore I cannot come.*

Think about this parable for a minute! This was an invitation to a feast, not a disaster, or a funeral. They were not invited to a hospital or a prison. This



was a feast. This feast was for the King's Son. This feast was for love and laughter, fellowship and happiness. All the expense of this feast were paid by the father of the Groom. There were oxen, sheep, chicken, turkey etc. slain, but they were the Masters'. The guests were to come as they were.

Consider for a moment the splendor and majesty of this feast. Yet, the feast costs no money to those who attend. (See Isa 55) (Other than the heart of Christ which was drained to pay the price for the feast).

When we invite other people to a feast, usually people arrive early to get the best seats. Why is it when God invites mankind to a feast, the chairs are all empty? Let's say they would be empty if His disciples didn't go out and compel people to come. In Jesus' parable the invitation had just gone out, when the excuses started pouring in. The text said, "and they all! with one consent, began to make excuse". They all! Began to make excuse...

To resist the justice of God may be understandable, but to ignore the generosity of heaven. What ingratitude is this? Let's stop for a moment and consider what would happen if God took us at our word and left everyone outside at that day. If every man and every woman who made the "excuse", were granted what they wished, what would happen in our world. There are many today who don't want to accept the invitation because they know they can't continue with business as usual.

Some don't want to come because they would have stop their personal activities on the Sabbath day. Some don't want to accept Christ's invitation because they think, if they do, they cannot make money fast enough. Those that were left would have to be busy burying the dead. It would be a very solemn time, if God should take men at their word, and just excuse them. BUT---Just let some terrible disease get into us, and that person immediately loses half his or her excuses at once. Every kind of excuse is given; but no person that lives can give a good excuse. My father always said, a poor excuse is better than no excuse. I don't think that is true in this instance. We would be better off

before God, saying, "I have no excuse, Sir."

Let's consider for a moment, what we would think if we had an invitation to eat with the President, or the Governor of our State, or anyone else in our world that we consider to be important. Wouldn't it be a great honor to receive such an invitation? But the invitation in this parable, is from the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. What would we give up, or should be willing to give up, so that we could be sure we wouldn't miss this banquet? This supper is going to take place! Our Father in heaven wants every one of us present. While I have missed appointments in the past, this is one that I certainly do not want to miss. But in this parable, the invited guests all began to make excuse. Every one of them! Let's go through the excuses one by one and think about what was being said.

The first man said...What was it? He had bought some ground, and he must needs go and see it. Why did he not, if he were a good business man, go and look at the ground before he bought it? It was not going to make the ground any better for him to go and look at it at this point. He had not made a partial bargain and would be able to give it back. He was not afraid that somebody might step in ahead of him and get the ground from him, and so he would lose it: It was not anything of this kind; but he says, "he had bought the ground, and must needs go and see it." Isn't it a strange time to go and see ground, just at supper time. I think the ground would have looked all the better after he had been to the feast. But the fact is, my friends, he did not believe it was a feast; and that is the trouble to-day. We, being all of those that are unsaved, do not believe the Gospel is a feast.

What about the second man's excuse? Again, a personal invitation is given by the King's messenger. He says, "My lord has made a great feast, and he wants you to come to it." What was the answer? He says; "Take back to your lord the message that I cannot be there. I have bought five yoke of oxen [for plowing], and I have got to go and see if they are any good?" Why did not he try

the oxen before he bought them? That is the time to see if they are any good; but after he bought them, let them stand in the barn. The deal is already closed; the purchase was already made; the oxen were bought and paid for. They are his oxen. He can test them at any time. Don't you think it was kind of odd to test the oxen, at supper time! He could have tested them in the morning and have been free to go to the feast in the evening.

The third man had a unique excuse. He had married a wife, and therefore he could not come. Why not take his wife along with him? Wouldn't his new bride greatly enjoy going to a feast. He could have taken her: and if she was not willing, then let her stay at home. You may smile or laugh at this, but you can see plainly what these excuses were. They were simply using what we would call a "white lie," just manufactured--to ease their consciences for refusing the invitation. Even a fifth grader can see these excuses for what they were. These people did not want to go to the feast. It would have been much more honest of them to simply say, "I'm not going". Isaiah 1:3 says, *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.*

What do you think the messenger thought when he saw the response to his Master's invitation. Astonished? Indignant? In mourning? Let me ask you, what is your most used excuse for not being a Christian or at least, for those of you who consider themselves Christian, the Christian you know you should be. Some of you might say, "I'd like to accept God's invitation. I've tried, and I found it too hard". What is actually your excuse? Are you saying that God is hard to serve? And do you then say, Satan is easy to serve? Do you then say, Satan is easier to serve than God? If you believe your Scriptures, you know that it says, the way of the transgressor is hard. (Prov. 13:15)

If you think the way of the transgressor is easy, talk to any of the convicts in prison that have been there for at least 10 years and will likely spend another ten years before they are released. Twenty years have been erased



from their life. When a convict finally is permitted to leave that cell, and leaves with the brand "convict" on him, do you think he will tell you that his way has been "easy"? If you think the way of the transgressor is hard, ask the alcoholic or drug user. Ask those that are bound hand and foot to some addictive substance if they think it has been easy. Ask them if the devil has been an easy master to serve? If we could do so, if I could do so, suppose I could take the most faithful servant the devil has, put him on the witness stand and let him testify about how easy a master he has. What do you think his testimony would be?

Jesus said, no man can serve two masters. Perhaps the best way to settle the question is find someone that has served both God and the Devil and see what they have to say. Are there any here today that served the devil before they became a Christian? When you were brought into the kingdom of Christ, did you find your Lord Jesus to be a hard master? I don't think you will find a single person who will testify that when they found Jesus that he was a hard master. He said, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. When you consider how Adam and Eve suffered when they believed the devil's lies, when you consider how Judas suffered, (this could be a long list), do you believe they found God to be a hard master? Or was it the devil that was hard? So much for the excuse that it is too hard to be a Christian.

Now, there was a second invitation to the feast, after the first. The invitation was, "Whosoever will, let him come to this feast." (Rev. 22:17) Let me say this today, to make it most clear. Saints, my friends, my family, let me say that you are invited, every one of you; and if you don't come, it will be because you will not come. It won't be because God does not want you, or has not given you the power to come. With the invitation there comes the power. When Christ said to the withered man, Stretch out thy hand. (Mark 3:5), the man might have said that Jesus didn't have the power to do so; but with the invitation there came the power. And so it is here.

Suppose I went to the Civic center

in Des Moines and asked to go in. The person at the door says you must have a ticket to go in. So I leave and go to the theater. There again, I am stopped. I say, I want to go in. The person at the door will say, you must have a ticket.

But when I arrive at the door of this Church, I see in big, burning letters, "whosoever will, let him come in." In I go. That means me! God has given his invitation in big burning letters. He will receive you into his kingdom every moment. He wants you come into the kingdom of heaven this very moment. Jesus likely said to John on the Isle of Patmos, "John, before you close the book, put in this - The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17) Could God express the invitation any clearer?

Another excuse commonly used to justify why people don't accept the invitation to be at the marriage supper is, "the scriptures are too complicated; I just can't understand them." I have never met someone who complained about how hard it was to understand the scriptures that has read them. Those who use this excuse give their opinion without reading the books. They may read a chapter here and there, and because they don't understand at that point, they say, "it is too hard". But don't the scriptures say that natural man cannot understand spiritual things? The scriptures are spiritual books and a person must be born of the Spirit to be able to understand what is said. But I want to make an important point about salvation. It is not hard. It is not complicated. It is so plain, a child can understand what is necessary to be saved. Jesus said, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved". (Mark 16:15)

But let's just suppose I sent my son Derek to kindergarten at age 5. When he comes home the first day, I ask him, "Can you read, write, spell? Do you understand arithmetic, geometry, algebra?" He might say at that point, "Dad, I'm trying to learn my A, B, C's:" Suppose I said at that point, "Well if you

haven't finished your education, you don't need to go to school any more." Lynda at that point would pronounce me insane. Isn't that what people are doing when they say, I just can't understand the Scriptures?

I made the decision early in life to read all of the scriptures. Part of the reason was, I said to myself; how can I claim to believe the scriptures when I have never read them. So, I made a commitment that I would read enough every day, to be able to turn one page. Some days it was hard. Some days I read 40 pages. It took about a year to read the Bible, six months to read the Book of Mormon and two weeks to read the Doctrine and Covenants.

The Bible was written to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psa. 119:105) to guide the way to those eternal mansions Jesus talked about in John 14:2. It never was given to God's holy men to keep us out of the kingdom of God. That is the devil's work - trying to make you believe the Word of God is not true. He knows the moment a person believes the Word of God, he has found freedom from Satan's reach. They now have in their hand a weapon



Rob Rolfe



to overcome the enemy of their soul

Think about it! Think about dying and then standing before God at the bar of justice. God then asks you why you didn't accept His invitation to His feast. Suppose you tell Him-- The Bible kept you out of the kingdom. It was too hard. You couldn't understand it, etc. It may sound very well today; you may be satisfied to give that for an excuse down here, but you will not be satisfied to give it in the Courts of Heaven; - you will not stand up in the great Judgment Day and convince the God of eternity that the Bible He gave us, kept you out of the kingdom.

There is another group with a common excuse. Some people say "I haven't any doubt about the Word of God; but the fact is, there are some people in the Church who are hypocrites; therefore I am not going to Church." I am not asking you to come into the Church - not by what I believe in the Church of Jesus Christ - but I am asking you to the marriage supper of the Lamb; I am inviting you to this feast; we will talk about the Church by-and-by. We want you to come to Christ first; then we will talk to you about the Church. But you say; "But there are some hypocrites there." So there are; and I can imagine you saying; "Oh yes - there is a man up here in the church that cheated me out of \$1000 a few years ago; you are not going to catch me in the company of such hypocrites,"

Well, my friend, if you want to get out of the company of hypocrites, you had better get out of the world as quick as you can. One of the twelve apostles turned out to be a hypocrite; and there is no doubt there will be hypocrites in the Church until the end of time. But "what is that to thee?" says Christ to Peter: "follow thou Me. "I'm not asking you to follow hypocrites, I'm asking you to follow Christ; I'm not asking you to believe in hypocrites, I'm asking you to believe in Christ. Delbert Smith used to say, "If you let a hypocrite get between you and Christ, he is closer to Christ than you are."

One other thing - if you want to get out of the company of hypocrites you had better make haste and come to Christ. There will be no hypocrites at

the marriage supper of the Lamb; they will all be in hell, and you will be there with them if you do not make haste and come to Christ. That excuse would sound strange, would it not? We very often hear men give it down here, but it would sound very strange before God the Father - a person saying, "I know You invited me to be at the marriage supper of Your Son, but I did not accept it because I knew, there were some hypocrites that professed the Gospel."

How about some of the people that use this excuse? They can say, "I know there are hypocrites. but they don't have any influence over me." If I could go to the door as you go out today, and take you by the hand and say, "My friend, why not accept the invitation to come to the marriage supper of the Son, today?" These people would say, please excuse me tonight, I don't have the time. I have got some very pressing business tomorrow morning to attend to, and I have to go home to bed as quick as possible, to get my night's rest. You will have to excuse me." And the mothers here would say, "I have to go home and put the children to bed; you really must excuse me"-- I don't have the time right now. Thousands of people in the State of Iowa say they don't have the time. Praise God, but it doesn't take time, it takes a decision.

Let me ask you this. What have you done with all the time God has given you? Your hair is turning grey, your eyes are failing, your body is wearing out. What have you done with all your years? Is it true you have not time? What did you do with the three hundred and sixty-five days last year? No time? - what have you done with it all? Have you not had time to accept this invitation of the Lord? Why, have you not become the person; to be the Christian; you know that God wants you to be. You know, people spend fifteen or twenty years to get an education, that they may go out to earn a living; or five years to learn a trade, that they may earn a living; and yet they have not five minutes to seek their souls' salvation!

You "have no time." Is it true? You know that statement really is a lie; and if you

leave this life without salvation, it will not be because you have not time, but because you won't accept the invitation. God says, Seek ye first the kingdom of God. (Matt. 6:38) That is the first thing to do. Supposing you do not get so much money tomorrow, but you get Christ, is not that worth more than money? Better for a person to be sure of salvation than to have the wealth of the world rolled to his feet!

But there is another excuse I've been given. A woman says, "My heart is so hard." Well, isn't that the very reason you ought to come to Christ? If you had not a hard heart you would not need a Savior. Can you soften your own heart? Can you break your heart? Did not God invite the hard-hearted? Did not Christ come to seek and to save that which was lost? It is just because men's hearts are hard that they need a Savior. That is no excuse at all. God invited you. Will you stand up and tell the Great King you did not accept His invitation because you had a hard heart. He invites "whosoever"; and you can come along with your hard heart.

There is a story about a minister talking to a man about the invitation of Christ. The man said, "My heart is so hard, it seems as if it was chained; and I cannot come." "Ah! said the minister, "Come to Christ, chain and all"; and he just came to Christ, and Christ broke the chain, and set him free right then and there. If you are bound hand and foot by Satan, it is the work of God to break those bonds--- you cannot break them. Thank God! He can break the fetters and set your soul free this very moment. I do not care how hard your heart is: the Lord can save you. He bids you come just as you are. Oh, this old excuse - "I am so bad!"--Away with it! Paul said he was the "chief" of sinners; and if the chief of sinners has obtained mercy there is hope for everybody else.

Sometimes the devil makes us believe that we are good enough without salvation, if he can; and if he cannot make us believe that, he says, "You are so bad the Lord won't have you," and so he tries to make people believe, because they are so bad, Christ won't have anything to do with them. God invites you



to come just as you are. I know a great many people want to come, but they are trying to get better and to get ready to come. Consider this, my friend, the Lord invites you to come just as you are; and if you could make yourself better, you would not be any more acceptable to Him then you are at the beginning.

Let's suppose you say—I feel a great movement of the Spirit here today but I do not want to be converted in that way. Well, then jump into your car, and go to some place where there is no movement of the Spirit and the church is just sitting there. I'm sure you can find such a place, if you really want to find one. Please don't give that for an excuse. How wise the devil is! When the Church is cold, and everything is dead, men say, "Oh, well, if there was only some life in the Church I might become a Christian, - if we could only just have a sign from heaven." Then when the sign does come, they say, "Oh no; we are afraid of excitement, and afraid of the movement of the Spirit. We are afraid there will be something done that won't be just in accordance with our ideas of what is right." - My friend, it is God who is working. He prepares the way.

What if you say, well, "it just doesn't feel right". Consider this text from John 5:24. Verily, I say unto you, he that hearest my word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation,

but is passed from death into life. (John 5:24) Saints, that is worth more than all the feelings that you can have in a whole lifetime. I would a thousand times rather stand on the principle in John 5:24 than on any of my feelings. I accepted Christ's invitation more than 60 years ago. This scripture was true then—It was true 2000 years ago. It is true today.

There is simply not enough time to go on with these excuses; for they are as numerous as the hairs on our heads. But if I could go on and exhaust them all, the devil would help to make more. You can just take them, tie them up in one bundle, and mark them lies - the whole of them. Not one of them is true. If your excuse is a good one, if it will stand the light of eternity; do not give it up for anything I have said. Hold it firm, take it to the bar of God, and tell it out to Him. But if you have an excuse that won't stand the piercing eye of God, I beg of you, as a friend, as a servant of Jesus Christ, give it up - let your excuses go. Let them go to the four winds of heaven, and accept of the invitation now. Or, for those that have accepted the invitation, be the Christian you know you should be. It is a very easy thing for a person to excuse themselves into the place called hell, but they cannot excuse themselves out.

Is this consideration a big deal or not? If you don't want to accept the in-

itation, then why don't you sit down and write out your excuse to the King of Heaven. It might read like this: "While sitting in church today, September 28, 2014, I received a very pressing invitation from one of your messengers to be present at the marriage supper of your only-begotten Son. I pray Thee have me excused." Would you come up and sign that? Would you take your pen and put your name down to that excuse? I can imagine you saying like in the scriptures, that you would let your right hand forget its cunning, and your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth first. I doubt whether there is a person in this room who could be made to sign this excuse: but what will you do? Some of you may stand up and leave, paying no attention to the invitation. You may not be concerned about your daily walk. I hope this will not be true.

God is a loving God, but He will not change His Word to accommodate your willful sin.

If I were to write a different reply that went like this: "To the King of Heaven. While sitting in church today, September 28, 2014, I received a pressing invitation from one of your servants to be present at the marriage supper of your only-begotten Son. I hasten to reply, by the grace of God I will be present." Who of you, hearing my voice today, would sign that reply?



Service project for Andersons

A service project was held Monday, Oct. 6, to mow the lawn at the home of pastor Ed and Diane Anderson.

Diane Anderson has been ill and was hospitalized for a few days in Des Moines.

Our prayers continue for Diane.

Helping with the effort were Adrian Rolfe, Jim Barber, Joel Loving and Alan Smith.

October 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Gen. 7:56, 57, 65, 66 I.V.	2 Gen. 25:21; Exo. 2:23-25	3 Gen. 4:4-12	4 Exo. 8:8-13
5 Num. 11:1-4 Num. 11:11-20	6 Num. 14:17-20 Num. 27:15-20	7 Deut. 3:24-28	8 Josh. 7:6-15	9 Judges 6:36-40 Judges 13:8-24	10 Judges 15:18-19 Judges 16:28-30	11 1 Sam. 1-1-29
12 1 Kings 8:22-61	13 1 Kings 9:1-3 Psa. 1:1-6	14 Psa. 4:1-8 Psa. 8:1-9	15 Psa. 9:1-11 Psa. 15:1-5	16 Psa. 16:1-11 Psa. 19:1-14	17 Psa. 23:1-6 Psa. 24:1-10 Psa. 125:1-2	18 Psa. 27:1-14 Psa. 32:1-7 Psa. 127:1
19 Psa. 50:1-6 Psa. 103:1-19 Psa. 133:1-2	20 2 Chr. 6:18-42 2 Chr. 33:18-19	21 Ezra 9:5-15 Neh. 1:1-11	22 Matt. 26:33-42	23 Mark 14:37-46	24 Luke 11:1-5	25 3 Nephi 9:8, 19; 24-25, 27, 31, 35
26 3 Nephi 9:69, 13:42	27 Moroni 3:2 Moroni 7:53	28 Moroni 8:3	29 1 Ne. 2:28-30 1 Ne. 5:206-212	30 2 Ne. 3:35-66	31 Mos. 181-185 Alma 21:40-45	3 Ne. 9:16-38

OCTOBER 2014

Sunday Schedule

Date	OCT. 5	OCT. 12	OCT. 19	OCT. 26	NOV. 2	
Speaking	Jim Barber	Steve Smith	Alan Smith	Gordon Winkler	Ed Anderson	
Presiding	Sherman Phipps	Rodney Bastow	Rob Rolfe	Jim Barber	Michael Jordison	
Pianist	Cheryl Phipps	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	
Special Music	Steve Smith	Lynda Rolfe	Sue Beck	Jim Barber	Michael Jordison	
Family Devotions	Joel Lovings	Sherman Phippses	Michael Jordisons	Gordon Winklers	Bob Rowlands	
Greeters	Tony Crandells	Sue Beck	Steve Smiths	Alan Smiths	Rod Bastows	
Custodians	Sherman Phippses	Bob Rowlands	Michael Jordisons	Jim Barbers	Alan Smiths	
Sunday Evening	Bob Rowlands	Rob Rolfes	Ron Smiths YG	Steve Smiths	Bob Rowlands	

Wednesday Night Prayer Service Schedule

Date	OCT. 1	OCT. 8	OCT. 15	OCT. 22	OCT.29	
Location	Ron Smiths	Alan Smiths	Bob Rowlands	Steve Smiths	Gordon Winklers	
Presiding	Gordon Winkler	George Knotts	Joel Loving	Rodney Bastow	Sherman Phipps	

SPECIAL EVENTS

Sunday, OCTOBER 5 -- Priesthood Meeting at 8:30 a.m., Communion Service and Potluck

Sunday, OCTOBER 19 -- Youth Group at Ron Smiths.

Happy Birthday: Michael Jordison (7), Valle Smith (8), Dkiane Anderson (21), Mary Wilson (21), Linda Barber (23), Kent Clisby (24), George Knotts, (29) and any others we missed.

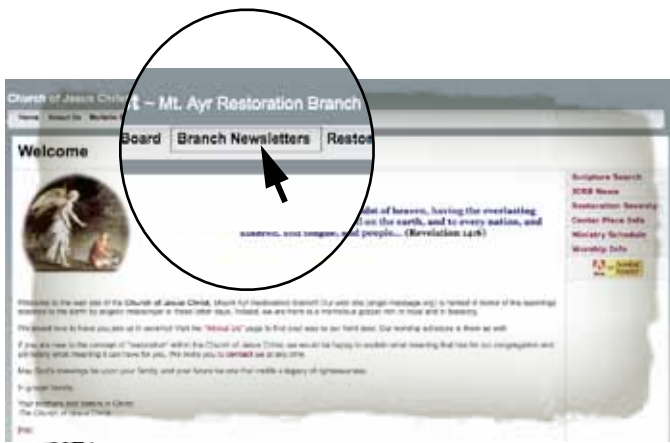
Happy Anniversary: Any others we missed.



Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

c/o Cheryl Phipps
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Lamoni, IA 50140

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CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST - MT AYR RESTORATION BRANCH

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)

MORE NEWS AND NOTES

October 9-12.

The following have been selected as delegates and alternate delegates to the conference:

Delegates: Di Smith, Rob Rolfe and Joel Loving

Alternates: Lynda Rolfe and George Knotts.

Alan Smith will be attending as the acting secretary for the conference.

Baseball trip

Several members of the branch went on an outing to see the Kansas City Royals play the Detroit Tigers in Kansas City as the regular season wound down. Saturday, Sept. 27.

The Royals fell 3-2 in the game, but we had a great time fellowshiping together.

Hayride and pumpkin carving at Barbers

Pumpkin carving, a hayride, a cookout and a campfire were held for the branch at the Jim and Linda Barber farm near Bethany, MO, Saturday, Oct. 3.

A good group attended and shared in the fun evening together.

Isabel Jordison led the campfire.

We really appreciate the Barbers for hosting this event for us each fall.

CROP Walk

The congregation raised \$325 in funds for the annual Ringgold County CROP Walk which was held September 28 in Mount Ayr.

Three-fourths of the money goes to world hunger projects and one-fourth stays for use to help with projects in Ringgold county.