

**CHATHAM CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
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**Sunday Worship Service**  
**Bible School**  
9:15 AM  
10:45 AM

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Chatham, IL  
Permit No. 9

He called to let me know his fourteen year old sparrow hawk had died.

I had met Gary, or as I fondly referred to him, "Little Gary", over thirty years ago at a falconry exhibition. He apparently had some developmental limitations, but he was fascinated by the hawks. When he asked if he could go hunting with me, I said yes.

Gary joined me in the field many times, and we became friends. I learned that he was employed through Sparc, and had a gift for fixing mechanical and electronic devices. He worked on the church's VHSs several times, and started coming to church.

Before long he was bringing a friend along on our hunting adventures, and to church. Grant had been severely beaten by his father as a child, and was handicapped because of it. Eventually I had the pleasure of baptizing both Gary and Grant into Christ.

Gary became an usher at CCC, and the official filter changer. He would let me know when the furnace filters needed to be changed, and would spend the better part of a day changing them for me.

His interest in falconry kept building, and he began asking if I would sponsor him as an apprentice falconer. I was afraid he couldn't handle a Redtail, but said he might be able to fly a Kestrel, if he could pass the federal test and state inspection. After several attempts he passed the exam, and was authorized to catch a Kestrel. When he called, he told me Jack, his last bird, had died in perfect feather at fourteen.

I hadn't seen Gary for a long time. He stopped coming to church regularly because worship made him very emotional, and he was uncomfortable crying in church. Then he fell asleep one Sunday, and started snoring loudly. He was so embarrassed that he said he could never return.

I assured him it was no big deal. That I had told others I'd rather have them fall asleep in church than stay in bed at home, and that before I started standing behind the pulpit I had often fallen asleep sitting in a pew. I even told him about Eutychus falling asleep, and falling out of the window while the Apostle Paul was preaching. It didn't matter. He said he could never return.

Falling asleep can be problematic, and even embarrassing. I know. In fact, I'm going for a second sleep study tonight to see if I need to join the squadron who wear flight masks during the night. God Bless, Rick



## THE CHATHAM MESSENGER

VOLUME 47

December 12, 2018

NUMBER 42

### CHRISTMAS IS COMING

By Scott Bales

When you think of the phrase "Christmas is coming!", what sort of emotion comes to mind? It might be any one of these:

**Panic:** *I only have three more Saturdays of shopping before Christmas. I'm never going to get it all done!*

**Regret:** *Why did I say we'd host the family get-together? Now I have to straighten and scrub this place from top to bottom AND prepare dinner for everyone, as if I didn't already have enough to do this month.*

**Frustration:** *Ugh. Connor, Courtney, and Madison all have such expensive taste. I'm going to die broke!*

**Envy:** *I just drove by the Bales house last night and their lights are overwhelmingly beautiful. Why should I even bother putting lights on our house? I can't compete with Scott's exterior illumination abilities.*

So many sentiments can invade our hearts and minds. But these emotions don't stay there. Often, they weasel their way into our behavior. We appear distracted when talking with a friend. Our frustration morphs into hurry as we frantically try to get it all done. Our regret makes us a grumpy and ungracious host. Our envy leads to ungratefulness and can prevent us from experiencing the joy that should come from the whole reason for the celebration of Christmas in the first place.

Are these the attitudes we want on display during the month of December? Or should we choose the attitude reflected in the old familiar hymn, *Joy to the World*?

Joy. The emotion that ought to be deeply experienced during the Christmas season — and, in turn, displayed in our behavior — should be joy. *Psalms 13:5-6* states, "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me."

This verse declares that our reaction to the salvation God freely offers — which began when Jesus came into the world as a baby that very first Christmas — should be *rejoicing*. What a stark contrast to the emotions we usually display during the yuletide season!

But what if we tried to take our roller coaster of emotions to God, asking Him to replace them with joy instead? If we choose to consciously thank God for the indescribable gift of salvation through Jesus, perhaps we could learn to recapture the joy of Christmas. And not just to feel it in our hearts, but to go about during the season, excited to the point of levity, exulting God in the process.

(Continued inside)

## STATISTICS

Worship 175  
Offering \$4,985.00

## SERVING THIS SUNDAY-12/16/18

Greeters ..... Will & Sara Bartels  
Visitors' Stand ..... Gary & Lori Gredzieleski  
Communion Meditation ..... Paul Hunley  
Doug Marlow  
Ushers ..... Will Bartels  
Rick Polley  
Chris Luzio  
Brad Stirmell  
Scott Bales  
Duane Carell

### WORSHIP NURSERY

Toddlers ..... Shannon Higgins  
Cooper Formea  
Infants ..... Nikki & Anna Hunley  
Stacey Cantrell  
Sunday School  
Toddlers ..... Rhonda Luzio  
Infants ..... Karen Mann  
Vicki Small



--Martin and Melinda Hoover at the death of their daughter Michelle in an auto accident Monday morning.

--Kelly Donaldson and family at the passing of an uncle.



The CCC mailbox is open. Please feel free to use it to send Christmas cards to others in the church, and be sure to check it regularly to see if any have arrived for you.

## CHRISTMAS IS COMING

(Continued)

The word *exult* means "to leap for joy," and it's usually connected with a triumph of some kind. Through Jesus' birth, death and resurrection, He triumphed over death. We need not fear the future because of the miracle of Christmas. If we have responded to the gospel — the good news about Jesus offering us salvation — we too can experience a victory over the grave and dwell with God forever in heaven someday. What a reason to leap for joy!

Today, and throughout the remainder of the holiday season, let's chase down some Christmas cheer. But not just keep it to ourselves. Focusing on the truth of salvation through Jesus helps us show joy to the world during the Christmas season. A spotless house and homemade fruitcake are optional.

## AFFIRMATION OF ELDERS & FINANCIAL PROJECTION

This Sunday during the worship service everyone will be given the opportunity to affirm that Paul Hunley and Chis Luzio should continue serving as elders in 2018, and that the financial projection is in keeping with good stewardship.

This year's projection calls for \$284,000, which is slightly less than last year's, and will require a weekly offering of \$5,462. Our giving to missions will once again be approximately 25% of the projection.



## Christmas Schedule

We are planning to go caroling on Sunday evening, December 23rd, at 5:00, and our 48th Annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service will be held on December 24th at 7:00.



### Jr. High and High School

The Amazing Race Overnighter here at the church is about two weeks away! We will be meeting at 4:00 on Friday, December 28th to kick off 12 hours of activities to make this a night you won't forget. Will an underdog Junior High team come in first like what happened a few years ago? Will one of the High School teams win like last year? We will soon find out as I have been busy planning challenges and locations for you to visit as you push towards the finish line. Be ready to use your brains, outstanding coordination and ability to either consume large quantities of food or handle some very unique tastes to be declared this year's winner.

We will fill out our time together with broomball at the Nelson Center, whatever your heart desires at Steak and Shake, games at the camp and more before getting back to the church around 3am to settle in for a few hours before the sun rises. This is probably the best event of the year to invite a friend and have them get to know some in our church family and youth group. While I am still determining how to pick teams, if you do bring a friend, I will make sure you get to do the race together. That's it for now as I need to go research who serves the best octopus in Springfield!



### Kindergarten—5th grade

During our trip to Pumpkin Creek Farms, our all suggested our next group activity be a trip to Sky Zone! Let's put Thursday, January 3rd in the calendar for this event. Details will be forthcoming, but we will probably meet for lunch then go to Sky Zone to JUMP, JUMP, JUMP!



### Jr. High and High School

This Sunday evening during FUSE, it is time for our annual Christmas Party and gift exchange. We'll have some Christmas music playing and I'll provide the snacks, all you have to do is show up with the perfect White Elephant Gift for the exchange.

Here are the rules. Do not go out and buy anything! Look around your house for that outrageous item that has been taking up space for years and wrap it up! Every year, there does end up being a few gifts that are more appealing than the one you open, so there will be a chance to steal gifts as the exchange progresses. It's a fun evening as we watch the maneuvering of others and as you plan for the opportunity to grab the gift that you like best.

Then, we will have a group game to finish off the evening. It will be a challenge, but a few fortunate individuals will win some prizes which can either entertain you for hours, put a little gas in your vehicle, or help you purchase a snack when you are out and about Christmas shopping this year. I am looking forward to a great time with you all on Sunday!



The play was fantastic! Thank you very much to Rhonda, Shannon and all the kids who worked so hard to bring us the Christmas musical this year. Everyone of you is a rock star in my opinion!