

The NEW SOUTH FOCUS



**NEWSLETTER OF
THE NEW SOUTH CONFERENCE
OF THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH;
FOCUS 21; December 12, 2019**

PRAYER NEEDS

PASTOR MARK DRISKILL, our pastor at OAKDALE FMC, sends the following prayer requests. Please mention these in your personal and corporate prayer times.

He writes: "Here are my primary requests for prayer for the Oakdale church ministry.

1. Worship: I am trying to make our worship more reflective of our international congregation.
2. Leadership: I am seeking a way to have ongoing leadership training for students who want to be leaders in the church and for staff who are pursuing ordination.
3. Prayer: establishing an ongoing prayer ministry in the church.

Thanks for your prayers."

* * * *

OPENING THE FLOOD GATES OF HEAVEN

My husband does a short puppet skit every Sunday morning, and I asked him to help me present our Christmas missions project, Bibles for New Believers in Asia, with the puppets. So one of the

puppets, named Gus --no relation to our puppy and named years before Tim got his guide dog-- asked someone to look up and read Proverbs 30:16: the grave, the barren womb, land, which is never satisfied with water, and fire, which never says, 'Enough!' Then Gus asked, what else never says, "Enough"? The answer, "Ms. Lois and our money we give to missions."

Gus went on to say that even though we had collected all of our commitment money for the 3 missionary couples we support, plus nearly a \$300 overage, it was not enough. Now the challenge was to give \$5 for each Bible in the home so that new believers in Asia could have a Bible in his/her heart language.

A few days later our church treasurer informed us that a local man who no longer attends our church had given her \$6,000 to be spent in the following way: \$5,000 for the 'teacher' family we support in Asia, \$500 for whatever the church needed, and \$500 for Tim and me. Is/was there a connection? I don't know. I do know Malachi 3:10 says: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

We surely do not give so that we will get something in return, but we do serve a God Who loves the cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). May you be blessed as you give cheerfully this Christmas season!

LOIS HUFF, MISSIONS COORDINATOR

* * * *

CHRISTMAS STORIES

It can be great fun and quite encouraging to read a pertinent Christmas story to your SS class, a Bible study group, or a church Christmas party. I have found them a blessing. Here are two examples, which you may use and enjoy. In addition, these readings could also be used as a family reading

with the Christmas story of Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

STORY ONE

"A Thrilling Christmas Miracle on the Frontier by 'A Pastor's Wife'"

"I remember a day one winter that stands out like a boulder in my life. The weather was unusually cold; our salary had not been regularly paid and it did not meet our needs when it was.

My husband was away much of the time, traveling from one district to another. Our boys were well, but my little Ruth was ailing and at best none of us were decently clothed. I patched and re-patched, with spirits sinking to the lowest ebb. The water gave out in the well and the wind blew through the cracks in the floor."

Go to <https://harvestlanecottage.blogspot.com/2013/12/a-christmas-miracle-on-frontier-by.html> for the rest of the story.

* * * *

STORY TWO

A Christmas Prayer – Christmas Eve

It was Christmas Eve 1881. I was fifteen years old and feeling like the world had caved in on me because there just hadn't been enough money to buy me the rifle that I'd wanted for Christmas. We did the chores early that night for some reason. I just figured Pa wanted a little extra time so we could read in the Bible.

After supper was over, I took my boots off and stretched out in front of the fireplace and waited for Pa to get down the old Bible. I was still feeling sorry for myself and, to be honest, I wasn't in much of a mood to read Scriptures. But Pa didn't get the Bible, instead he bundled up again and went outside. I couldn't figure it out because we had already done all the chores. I didn't worry about it long though, I was too busy wallowing in self-pity.

Soon Pa came back in. It was a cold clear night out and there was ice in his beard. "Come on, Matt," he said. "Bundle up good, it's cold out tonight." I was really upset then. Not only wasn't I getting the rifle for Christmas, now Pa was dragging me out in the cold, and for no earthly reason that I could see. We'd already done all the chores, and I couldn't think of anything else that needed doing, especially not on a night like this.

Go to <http://surfersam.com/friends/cute-christmas-story.htm> for the rest of the story.

* * * *

A Christmas Prayer

by
Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father,
Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate
and open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing
which Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning
make us happy to be thy children,
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven,
for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

* * * *

Dr. Timothy L. Thomas
Conference Administrator
859-858-3846
FOCUS #21
12/12/2019