



# NEWS AND NOTES WINTER 2024

BBC Long Prairie

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, & MARCH

Pastor Matt

## Wow, where did 2018 go... oh NO! This is the end of 2023 / beginning of 2024?!

To quote Bill the Cat, ACK!



Where did 2023 go?  
What did I do with it?  
Alright, so January to March had a  
lot of wrestling.  
As churches, we were working  
diligently towards the merger.

In March I was also able to help host the MCMA Spring Rekindle conference  
“The Skunk in the Pew” dealing with Conflict in the Church” in Bemidji. It was a  
solid event drawing people all the way from the Canadian border!



In April, Katie and I ran out to the west coast of Oregon to  
visit Shane and Hope.

Then in May I did the first of two trips out to the EAST Coast! The first trip was for  
Katie’s College Graduation, then just a couple of weeks later, back to VA for Luke  
and Lezley’s wedding! Well, that will make for a quick couple of weeks for sure!



In July, Paul and I returned to Byron Bible Camp where I was able to  
share Jesus with the Lakota (Sioux) children. In 2022 that was a tough  
struggle. This year, on Thursday morning we had around 8 to 12  
children indicate that they had accepted Jesus as their Savior! That’s  
time well invested.

Late summer gave me a second opportunity to travel to OR to assist  
Shane and Hope Skinner in their move to Long Prairie. What a trip!  
and hmmm... yeah that was where the Chronic Wasting Disease (okay,  
technically *Rhabdomyolysis*) came back this year.

In September we moved to doing joint worship services every week.

**Man, that has been exciting and fun!**

Then we were able to bring in Doug Seest for a day of introductory training in Biblical  
Counseling. Doug did a great job of introducing the 30 plus attendees to the idea of  
Biblical counseling, showing how it is different from regular and even Christian  
counseling, and inviting people to consider additional training. *For those who attended,  
have you thought anymore about taking it to the next level?*



**What in the World is  
Biblical Counseling?**

Saturday, September 30th 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**  
LONG PRAIRIE

401 4th St S, Long Prairie, MN 56347

Life has Problems...  
God's Word has Answers!



At the start of October, before that big old 50 thing hit, I was able to be a part of organizing and executing the MCMA Engage conference in MSP. It was again a great event, with solid teachers.

Then there was the work at Selah.

One doctorate class in January to April. A bit of hunting.

The trips to see Ted. A little bit of wood working.

Oh. That's what I did with the time....



It's easy enough to stay busy.... In the midst of all that busy and doing, I needed to put off the doctoral program with Dallas for the time being. Too much to do, and only so much of me to do it. It's pretty easy to get caught up in all of it, and forget the priorities... like sabbath, silence, time with my wife, time with my kids.

Sure, I get to preach around 48 sermons this year. We finished up 52 Verses for Life, tackled the topic of suffering and then jumped into the New Testament postcards: Philemon, 2nd John, 3rd John and now we are on a slow scenic drive through Jude. OH! And we started the 5th Sunday "Q&A" time, that was fun!



## That is what we DO. Add it to the list of "done's".

But have I joined the pharisees in missing the mountain for the mole hill? How did Jesus put it? Luke 11:42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others."

Have I put ministry above family? Church over Kingdom?

## Two lessons God has taught me in 2023 -

First, He impressed on me to learn what it meant that He was willing to leave the 99 to go and find the 1. What does that look like in real life? What does that look like in my life? If I am going to be like Jesus, how am I to live that out?

That kind of question will upset the delicate balance of your quiet and comfy settled life!

Second - in the midst of the mental conundrum that put me in, I found myself praying 'God I have been busy doing for You for years! And I am okay doing, but where is the fruit? You promised that if I abide in You, and You in me, we will produce fruit! I have been trying for all I'm worth, which ain't much, but You knew that before You called me! Where's the fruit God? Not the busy-work that looks good on paper. Where is the Kingdom fruit You called me to help harvest? Lord, I want to be able to see the fruit that You are producing through me!'

## Guess what God has been showing me?

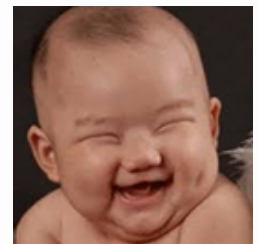
What are you going to do with 2024?

What are you going to prioritize?

What place will Jesus get in your busy life?

What is He wanting to show you?

What is He asking you to learn?

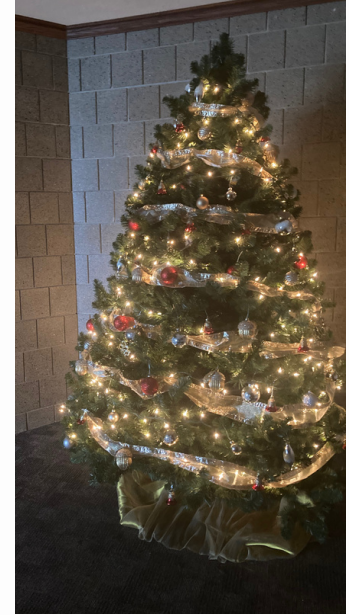


This I can pretty much promise, 2024 will disappear faster than 2023 did. Guess we ought to be pretty intentional with what we do with it. That way next year at this time we can honestly say, "That was a year well spent!"

# Deacon's Corner

Rodd Gustafson

Well, looking back (which we're not going to do much of) the guy many people know as Scrooge (me), has written News and Notes for the Deacons in December now three years in a row... Anybody who thinks God doesn't have a sense of humor is kind of missing the boat. *Of course* I'm grateful for our Savior's birth that likely wasn't in December, which is immaterial anyway. He's the *greatest* gift any of us will ever receive. I'm just not so fond of many of the Christmas carols and all the fuss made over the commercial side of Christmas. 2023 was about change, as is every year, really. We welcomed the Reynolds family into the First Baptist family and are in the process of becoming one larger family all within the much larger family of God.



It seems to me life is more about looking ahead than looking back. I absolutely don't think we should *forget* any of our history, but we don't need to dwell on it, either. It's a road map to help us not make the same mistakes in the future. Some people in this world have tried to tell us the Holocaust didn't exist. As absolutely *horrific* as the Holocaust was, who would ever try to forget that an evil man facilitated the murder of 6 million Jews? We remember a lot of these things so we can be aware of signs if behavior starts to go along such lines in the future, but we don't need to keep rehashing every wrong we've ever experienced either. I don't believe God is prompting us to do that, Satan is. He loves to divide and conquer. It's a great strategy for completing tasks and Satan's task is to *destroy* the church, the family, and the Christian community. We have to be aware of that and resist that.



**What can we do to build God's kingdom together as First Baptist and Reynolds as one?**



Looking forward in the New Year of 2024, which may be started by the time you read this. What can we do to build God's kingdom together as First Baptist and Reynolds as one? How can we look for things we have in common with members of our church family, whether they're new to us or not, instead of what we don't see exactly the same? We all agree that Jesus is our Savior. He died on the cross to save our sins and all we have to do is trust him. Our goal is to make sure everyone we know understands that. Of course it's best received in a way that isn't offensive to them, when they're ready to hear it. Clearly if we're not sure the time is *not* now, then God may be saying the time *is* now to talk to that friend, or relative, or stranger on the airplane, about him.



## Deacon's Corner

We as deacons, pastors, trustees, church members, regular attenders, first time visitors, etc. don't know what 2024 will bring to First Baptist/Reynolds/Unity Baptist/Prairie Bible/God's Church of Sinners/The Baptist Church/Church of the Lord's (Trying to be Humble) Servants/Thunder Baptist/insert the name of your choice here. We don't know how some of our families, or jobs, or even our country may change in the next year, but we *know* the Lord's in control. We *know* that in spite of us and our human failings he can accomplish great things through us if we let him. If he wants to bad enough he can accomplish things through us even if we refuse. Did Jonah obey readily? Don't think so. Do I personally always, or even often exemplify that? Not hardly.

As a deacon board, and I'm sure a pastoral staff, we want our church to be God's church and what *He* wants it to be. We're all likely going to have at least slightly different ideas on what that looks like. Please: let's all work together to try to see what that *actually* looks like.

Looking forward to the ride, or at least most parts of it....

For the deacon board, Rodd Gustafson

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# Student Ministries

## Jackson Standafer



In this edition of the Student Ministry News and Notes, you can expect a brief update on our ministry areas, and a quick devotional, looking at the name of Jesus. I pray that these updates will help you stay connected to our ministry, and that the devotional will help you maintain a fierce focus on Jesus as we go into 2024!

As I think about how to update you all on this past year, I am just SO thankful for all of the volunteers who have joined our kids and youth ministries. We currently have around 25 individuals who are serving with our Quest Kids ministry on Wednesday nights, along with 3 Sunday School teachers on Sunday mornings! And who can forget the more-than 50 (FIFTY!) person volunteer team who came together to serve our local families at this summer's Vacation Bible School. We also have 8 adults who have been serving weekly at our Youth Group gatherings, and more who have joined to help teach lessons at Youth Group and Sunday School. Add to all of those groups the many generous church family members who have supported these ministries by helping prepare meals or donating baked goods, and you really start to get a picture of just how big of a "team" we have working together here in Long Prairie. Thank you Lord for these wonderful people to work hand-in-hand with for the glory of Your Name!

Sunday School, Quest Kids, and Youth Group continue to be valuable ministries where we are seeing spiritual growth in the lives of our students and their families. Please continue to be in prayer for these ministries, and the many volunteers who serve.





## Student Ministries

This past week at Youth Group, in preparation for Christmas, we read Matthew 1:18-2:12 and learned about the meaning of the name “Jesus.”

**“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name **Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins”**

(Matthew 1:21, ESV)

Intrinsic in the very name of our savior is a clear and concise description of the Gospel which He brought to the world. The name Jesus (in Greek - Ἰησοῦς) is a word of Hebrew origin. It is the Old Testament name Joshua (in Hebrew - יְהוֹשֻׁעַ). Very simply and beautifully, the name “Jesus” means “Jehovah is salvation.” If you’ve never studied the name “Jehovah” before, it really is quite interesting, but for lack of time and space, I will simply say this. It is deeply important that we recognize that whenever we see the name “Jehovah” it is referring to the personal name of God. Simply put, the name Jesus declares that God is Salvation.

Over the next couple of weeks I’m sure each of you will read the Scriptural accounts of Jesus’ birth, and sing Christmas song’s celebrating baby Jesus. Many of you will watch the kids in our church tell the story at our Christmas program, and at some point most of us will gather with family to celebrate this special holiday. As you do all of those things, you hear the name “Jesus” many times. I invite you, every time you hear, read, and sing His name, recite the meaning to yourself or to those around you.

### Jesus - Jehovah is Salvation

Blessings,  
Pastor Jackson  
Student Ministries

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**To pray is to enter the treasure-house of God and to gather riches out of an inexhaustible storehouse.**

**C.H. Spurgeon**

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# January, February, & March

## Birthdays and Anniversaries

### January Anniversaries

01/07 Dave & Lynell Blanchard

### January Birthdays

01/01 Margaret Halverson  
01/05 Dave Blanchard  
01/06 Ron Hibbs  
01/09 Gretchen Hibbs  
01/10 Lori Larson  
01/10 Lori Stacey  
01/12 Jessica Arenson  
01/17 Seth Hibbs  
01/18 Makenna Koltes  
01/20 Levi Hibbs  
01/25 Bernie Dolezal  
01/25 Sally Hanson  
01/27 Audrey Stevens  
01/28 Benjamin Larson  
01/28 Mary Beth Miller  
01/30 Jackson Standauer

### February Anniversaries

### February Birthdays

02/02 Zackary Larson  
02/02 Dorothy Park  
02/03 Dennis Anderson  
02/03 Tony Reinbold  
02/04 Ray Miller  
02/07 Carla Mindeman  
02/09 Megan Lentz  
02/09 Faith Petersen  
02/10 Lisa Wright  
02/10 Abby Barnhart  
02/11 Sofia Kemper  
02/18 Sierra Larson  
02/20 Tracy Kemper  
02/21 Josie Stacey  
02/21 Rosie Stacey  
02/23 Snookie Noble  
02/28 Jonathan Kemper

### March Anniversaries

03/02 Steve & Mary Beth Miller

### March Birthdays

03/01 Alaina Wright  
03/07 Raelyn Miller  
03/11 Jennifer Meagher  
03/12 Dan Stacey  
03/15 Alison Wright  
03/16 Nathan Hibbs  
03/19 Heidi Puck  
03/22 Darla Peterson  
03/25 Carol Moulton



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H	O	B	T	W	R	E	M	Z	O	S	O	D	E
O	S	C	E	L	S	N	O	W	Z	F	D	K	Y
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A	W	D	C	A	I	Z	S	W	G	O	A	G	E
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### Winter Word Search

Snow  
Skates  
Hot Cocoa  
Coffee  
Turkey  
Cold  
New Years  
Blizzard  
Ski  
Christmas  
Frost  
Sledding

