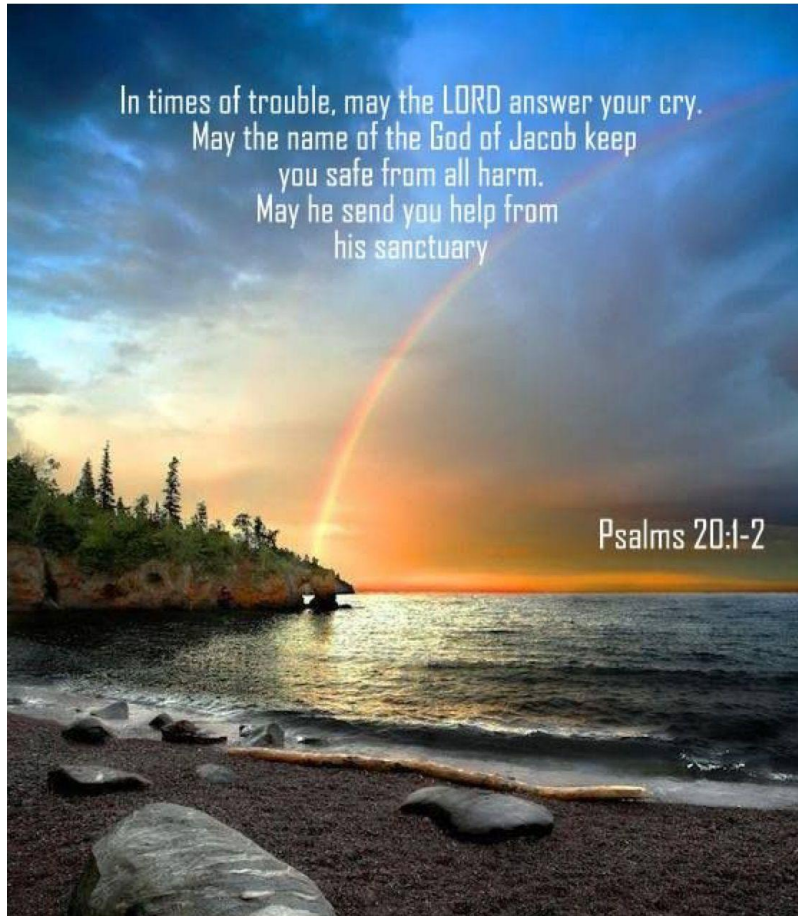


# THE ENCOURAGER

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF HUDSON CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## God Bless You



Photos courtesy of Pinterest.com

It's been a long time since we popularly believed that sneezing was a sign of someone's body trying to rid itself of evil spirits. Yet our response has stayed the same. "God bless you!" And what a wonderful thing to say to another person! I'll take whatever reminder I can get to speak blessing into each other's lives. We are commanded to bless, and not curse, even those who persecute us. Scripture also restricts our speech only to that which builds up. And while there are many ways to encourage and strengthen others through words, the direct blessing is one that can feel the most awkward to sincerely say, and yet the most powerful to the heart of the one whom it is said to.

Psalm 20 is a beautiful example of a straight blessing. This is David, who later in the psalm expresses his own confidence that God hears and delivers him. From that confidence flows this desire to bless all the people with that same confidence. So, he pronounces his blessing over the people assembled to worship in this song:

- 1 May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble;  
 May the name of the God of Jacob defend you;
- 2 May He send you help from the sanctuary,  
 And strengthen you out of Zion;
- 3 May He remember all your offerings,  
 And accept your burnt sacrifice.
- 4 May He grant you according to your heart's *desire*,  
 And fulfill all your purpose.
- 5 We will rejoice in your salvation,  
 And in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners!  
 May the Lord fulfill all your petitions. (Ps 20:1-5)

What a beautiful picture of our Great King who stands before us and sings his blessing over us. How it fills the heart to serve such a joyful, loving King! Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Whatsoever our hand finds to do, he prospers! He has promised to grant whatever we ask in the name of Christ. He has become our Strong Tower, our Refuge, our Rock of

Defense, and we will never be shaken. And we are eternally welcomed into his presence, with our bodies being presented to him and accepted by him as living sacrifice in spiritual worship.

Ultimately, we are people who bless others, because we serve a God who blesses us. As we learn to be imitators of Christ, we follow him in this business of speaking blessing into everyone who crosses our path. Sometimes a simple “God bless you,” and at other times something very specific according to their need, “May God give you wisdom in this decision,” or “May God give you peace as you walk through this,” or “May God show his power to you by solving this in a way only he can.”

We close every Sunday with me standing up front pronouncing a blessing over you all that comes right from Scripture. We don’t do that because I have some kind of special role, or ability, or authority to pronounce a blessing as a pastor. We, together, are a royal priesthood. Each with the authority and responsibility to pronounce blessing over one another!



When we bless one another, what we are doing in a comforting and clear way is expressing our love for one another. We are expressing that we desire good to flow from God into the individual’s life. I know for certain that you care for me when you declare that you want God to take care of me!

However, a blessing is far more than just an expression of good-will. It is a real prayer. A blessing is a prayer to God spoken directly to the person we are pronouncing a blessing on. In other words, they are not just nice, empty words! They are a petition to God! They are us standing as intercessors, going before God on their behalf to seek his favor in their life. Blessings are also confident prayers. We speak them as people who are certain that God honors our blessings and fulfills them. James informs us that we “have not because we ask not.” He is saying that our prayers make a difference in our provision. So our prayers of blessing over others makes a difference in their lives. God brings good into their lives that was not coming into their lives until we blessed them. (We can look at the God’s-eye view of this as God determined to bring good into their lives by moving us through the Spirit to pronounce a blessing that he would fulfill to his glory.)

What a privilege to be a conduit of God’s goodness into another person’s life! But we need practice in this area. It can feel very awkward to speak an intentional blessing into someone’s life beyond the often vainly spoken, post-sneeze “God bless you.” As people whose culture of the flesh is steeped in selfishness and cut-downs, this can feel like a totally alien thing. Like when Westerners try to clumsily bow to an Asian, or forgo the bow and try to grab them for a parting hug. (I have done this and believe me, it was A-W-K-W-A-R-D!) But if we are going to learn to be citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we need to immerse ourselves in its culture. And the culture of heaven is blessing.

So, the next time you are gathered at church, grab someone you know well by the hand, lock eyes with them, and say, “May God bless you with a deeper enjoyment of Himself.” You can both grin, know where that came from, laugh, and yet enjoy it. The more practiced we get, the less uncomfortable it will become. The result will be a deeper fellowship in the love of Christ, greater encouragement through one another for living in this world of trial, and greater blessing from God flowing into all of our lives.

May the grace of our Lord be with you!

- Pastor Brandon Current



# living|alternatives

## pregnancy resource center

### Mission of the Month

#### Living Alternatives Pregnancy Resource Center

**Mission Statement:** Living Alternatives Pregnancy Resource Center is committed to saving the lives of unborn children by promoting life-affirming options and providing practical assistance, while sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed, and to minister restoration to those who have been wounded by the trauma of abortion.

Living Alternatives advertises as the Pregnancy Resource Center with free testing and confidential counseling. Most women come into the center because they are in crisis. Help is offered in all types of situations – abortion-minded and not abortion-minded. Other services including parenting classes, providing baby clothing and other needs, abstinence education and post abortion counseling.

The Pregnancy Resource Center (PRC) is located at 303 Landmark Dr. in Normal and in the next few months the Mobile Medical Unit will be arriving. This will give the PRC opportunity to reach into the community with pregnancy related medical services.

Upcoming events this year include the Walk for Life on April 13, the Fall Banquet on September 12, and Deeper Still Retreats in April and October. The Walk and the Banquet are the fundraisers that support the PRC and events that everyone can support. The PRC also accepts donations of a variety of baby items that are new or like new. Volunteering for even an hour or two each week is also a great way to support this ministry. For more information on the ministry at the PRC, go to [www.hopeforafuture.com](http://www.hopeforafuture.com).

Current prayer requests include the following:

- \* Pray that we will continue to reach clients in need
- \* Pray as we proceed with our Mobile Medical Ministry that we will find the right staff and volunteers to work on the Unit
- \* Pray that God will lead the right person to fill an open staffing position
- \* Pray for God's protection for the ministry

Jan Wills is our HCC coordinator for PRC. This month's article was written by Karen Brown.



# Tell Me The Story... "Christ Arose!"

Both the words and music of this hymn were written by Robert Lowry, author of "Shall We Gather at the River?" He also composed many hymn tunes, including "One More Day's Work for Jesus," "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," "We're Marching to Zion," and "Savior, Thy Dying Love."

Robert Lowry was born in 1826. A graduate of Bucknell University, and an honored Baptist pastor in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey, in 1868 he succeeded William B. Bradbury as editor of Sunday School hymn books for Bigelow and Main Company.

Strange to say, Dr. Lowry deprecated much mention of his hymns and tunes, though he could not deny their success. An active Christian from 17 years of age, through his early pulpit service, his professorship in belles-lettres at Bucknell, and the long pastorate in Plainfield, New Jersey, closed by death in 1899, he considered preaching to be his supreme function as it certainly was his first love. Music to him was a "side issue," an "efflorescence," and writing a hymn ranked far below preparing and delivering a sermon. Yet more than a century later his hymns remain a potent force in many churches.

Today, we sing this hymn triumphantly at Easter and throughout the year celebrating our Risen Lord and Savior- Jesus Christ!

**Christ Arose**

Robert Lowry Robert Lowry

***Christ Arose!***

Low in the grave He lay—Jesus my Savior!  
Waiting the coming day —Jesus my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;  
He arose a Victor from the dark domain  
And He lives forever with His saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose!  
Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Vainly they watch His bed—Jesus my Savior!  
Vainly they seal the dead—Jesus my Lord!

Death cannot keep his prey—Jesus my Savior!  
He tore the bars away—Jesus my Lord!



**Robert Lowry – 1826 -1899**  
Images and Photo Courtesy of Hymnary.com



## Summary of the Deacons & Elders Meeting March 14, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 5:41 p.m. The members present were Brandon Current, Dave McGraw, and Larry Dowden. The meeting was opened in prayer by Dave McGraw. The meeting minutes of February 14, 2019, were reviewed and approved. The financial reports were reviewed and approved.

### Team Reports:

- **Worship** – Some songs are being added to the rotation for the Sunday worship service.
- **Education** – no report
- **Building** –
  1. Baptistry – We are ready now for the plumber.
  2. Parking lot – We are waiting for information from Brown's about purchasing their lot. Two members have offered to help with the process of developing the parking lot plan.
- **Missions** –
  1. Ecuador mission trip is scheduled for September 7-14, 2019.
  2. LGCA annual meeting was held March 12, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. Brandon and Larry attended. The dining hall is progressing well, and it is expected to be in operation for the 2020 camping season.
- **Food Pantry** – March food pantry was March 9, 2019, with 37 families being served. There were 3 new families. This month was the first one without receiving our food from Midwest Food Bank as a preload.

Pastor Brandon gave a report of his activities. John Walsh has proposed an initial men's meeting and gauge further interest after that. The HCC website has been updated to be responsive for any device. Upcoming sermons will finish Matthew. After that, Brandon will begin a series on elders and deacons.

### Old Business:

- Ladies Aid – there is a meeting scheduled tonight, Thursday, March 14, 2019.

### New Business:

- We will be dropping the Wednesday night prayer meeting for a lack of participation.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:16 p.m. and closed in prayer by all.

### Wednesday Night Bible Study

**Bible Study class starts as 6:00 p.m.**

Bill Brown is leading a Bible study on several interesting topics this winter. Our study time together will uncover God's guidance about the Holy Spirit and more!

**Please come see what God has to say about it in his Word!**

Our mid-week Bible studies are one of our primary avenues of discipleship here at HCC. I hope you all will arrange your schedules to not miss out on this opportunity for God to shape our hearts!

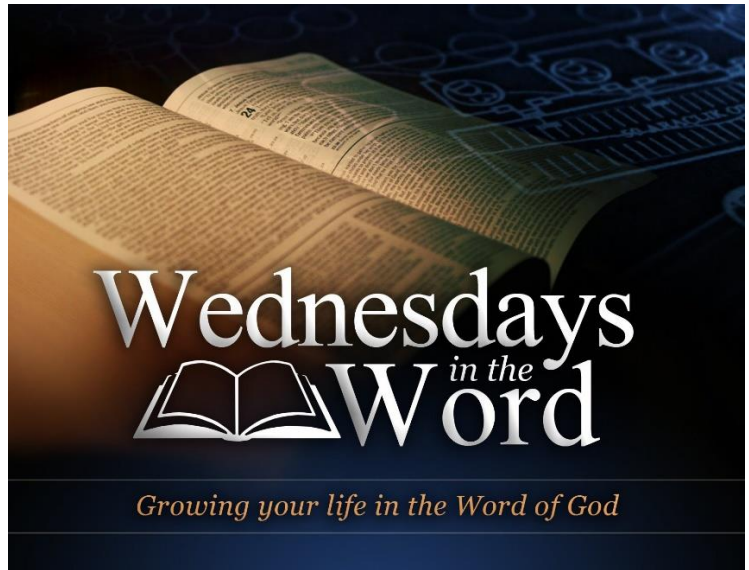


Photo courtesy of Zion.org



### The Potter's Kids

The Potter's Kids is the fun place to be on Wednesday nights at HCC from 6-7 p.m.!

All children are welcome to join us as we study the Ten Commandments. We'll see glimpses of God in His laws, as well as very good rules to live by.

### Prayer Coordinator Linda Kearfott

#### Prayer Requests

*Linda Kearfott is the HCC Prayer Coordinator!*

*If you have a prayer request to share or an update, please speak with Linda, write your request on the prayer card in the pew pocket and place it in the offering plate, or contact her at the following number or email.*

*Linda Kearfott  
(309) 232-4528  
[linda.kearfott@yahoo.com](mailto:linda.kearfott@yahoo.com)*



Image courtesy trinitywesternuniversity



### Hudson Garage Sale Pie Making Days at HCC April 25 – 9:30 a.m. and April 27 – 9:30 a.m.

A sign-up sheet will be placed in the foyer with a list of ingredients needed for making pies which will be sold at the Hudson Garage Sale Day in May.

*The Ladies Aid and Helping Hands thanks you for all of your help and support. Anyone who wants to come and help make pies is welcome! See Wilma Hoover, Miriam Koons, or Karen Brown if you have questions.*



# E a s t e r

## Good Friday

7PM

Hudson Methodist Church  
(together with all Hudson Churches)

## Easter

6AM

SUNRISE SERVICE  
NEAR COMLARA BOAT LAUNCH

7:30AM

BREAKFAST  
HUDSON CHRISTIAN CHURCH

9:30AM

EASTER WORSHIP SERVICE  
HUDSON CHRISTIAN CHURCH



HUDSONCHRISTIANCHURCH.COM  
301 CLINTON ST. HUDSON, IL



Photo courtesy of SMC.com

**Join the Adult Sunday School Class at 11:00 a.m. downstairs to discover what the Bible teaches about:**

### ***Engaging Culture in an Ever-Changing World***

#### **When Races Collide: Ephesians 2:11-22**

- ◆ Our relationship with Christ should be reflected in our unity with one another.
- ◆ How does racial prejudice impact the church's witness?
- ◆ When have you seen the love of Christ tear down barriers between people?
- ◆ How does our reconciliation with God help us reconcile with others?

#### **When Life Is Expendable: Exodus 1:16-17, 22-2:9**

- ◆ Life is a gift from God we are to protect and preserve.
- ◆ When life is devalued...a look at God's perspective.
- ◆ What is the cost for standing up for those who can't protect themselves?
- ◆ "Made in His image"...what it really means.

#### **When Circumstances Overwhelm: Psalm 42:1-3, 6-8; 43:3-5**

- ◆ God lifts us up when circumstances pull us down.
- ◆ Longing for the Father...longing for peace.
- ◆ God's goodness – healing and hope – leaning on the Rock of Ages
- ◆ Light & Truth



# April 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 10:00 a.m. Ladies' Prayer and Fellowship  6:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study Potter's Kids	<b>4</b> 7:00 p.m. <b>Good Friday Combined Choir Practice at Hudson Methodist Church</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>																
<b>7</b>  9:30 a.m. Worship  10:45 a.m. Coffee/Donuts  Sunday School 11:00 a.m.  <b>1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Fellowship Potluck 11:45</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>  10:00 a.m. Ladies' Prayer and Fellowship  6:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study Potter's Kids	<b>11</b>  <b>Food Pantry Preparation Day</b>  <b>5:30 p.m. Deacons/Elders Meeting followed By Spiritual Focus Meeting</b>  7:00 p.m. <b>Good Friday Combined Choir Practice at Hudson Methodist Church</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>  10:00 <b>Food Pantry Distribution Day</b>  <b>WALK FOR LIFE</b> <b>9-11:30 a.m.</b> and will be held at Christ Church, PCA at 1301 Linden Street in Normal.																
<b>14</b>  9:30 a.m. Worship  10:45 a.m. Coffee/Donuts  11:00 a.m. Sunday School	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>  <b>9:00 a.m. Ladies Aid</b>	<b>17</b>  10:00 a.m. Ladies' Prayer and Fellowship  6:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study Potter's Kids	<b>18</b>  <b>6:30 p.m. Helping Hands Meeting at HCC</b>  7:00 p.m. <b>Good Friday Combined Choir Practice at Hudson Methodist Church</b>	<b>19</b>  <b>Good Friday</b>  7:00 p.m. <b>Worship Service at Hudson Methodist Church</b>	<b>20</b>																
<b>21</b>  <b>EASTER!</b> 6:00 a.m. Sunrise Service  7:30 a.m. Easter Brunch  9:30 a.m. Worship  <b>No Sunday School</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>  10:00 a.m. Ladies' Prayer and Fellowship  6:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study Potter's Kids	<b>25</b>  <b>9:30 A.M. PIE MAKING DAY</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>  <b>9:30 A.M. PIE MAKING DAY</b>																
<b>28</b>  9:30 a.m. Worship  10:45 a.m. Coffee/Donuts  11:00 a.m. Sunday School	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 0 auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>April Birthdays</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>Brandon Current</td><td style="text-align: right;">4/2</td></tr> <tr><td>Kim Taylor</td><td style="text-align: right;">4/3</td></tr> <tr><td>Cricket Miller</td><td style="text-align: right;">4/7</td></tr> <tr><td>Ashley Richard</td><td style="text-align: right;">4/9</td></tr> <tr><td>Mary Lobdell</td><td style="text-align: right;">4/20</td></tr> <tr><td>Jerry Wills</td><td style="text-align: right;">4/22</td></tr> <tr><td>Steven Baird</td><td style="text-align: right;">4/23</td></tr> <tr><td>Terry Dowden</td><td style="text-align: right;">4/27</td></tr> </table> </div>			Brandon Current	4/2	Kim Taylor	4/3	Cricket Miller	4/7	Ashley Richard	4/9	Mary Lobdell	4/20	Jerry Wills	4/22	Steven Baird	4/23	Terry Dowden	4/27
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