

the messenger



Year in Review

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DECEMBER 2017 FREE!



THE NORTHERN INCIDENT



By Matt Branham
Editor-in-chief

My wife and I have made a tradition out of visiting Canada every year. I feel like I've gotten better at planning these trips, but nothing would have prepared us for anything quite like this...

✓ Go to Canada

Smooth ride. Lots of laughs. We traveled alongside the coast of New York and hit a few small towns and native spots. The Canadian border patrol only asked us two dozen questions this time.

✗ Niagara Falls Santa Claus parade / Christmas celebration

I was scheduled to work on the night before our trip, and the festivities happened in the morning. We would have missed everything, even if we left right after I had got off. It was not a big deal, plus it's always good to take a nap before a long haul.

✗ Check into a four star hotel.

I wanted to spoil my wife, until an obscene amount of money was due as a down payment, on top of the cost for the actual stay. We didn't have this problem last year, so this seemed to be a new policy across the region.

✗ Game night at a church.

We tried a dozen other hotels, settling for a two star place at the end of the night. Too much time was spent for much else than a lovely stroll through the Winter Festival of Lights.

✗ Head to Toronto.

Here was when things really got derailed. After checking out and getting breakfast, we were set to drive further north to watch a CFL playoff game and visit the Christmas Market. That was, until the power steering blew up on us. The battery was drained after an hour as well.

✗ Head back home Sunday night.

We got the car towed to the only mechanic that was open on Sunday, but the parts that were needed would not be in stock until the next day. At this point, our inboxes were getting filled with concerning messages, and we couldn't keep up with them because we were out of our cellular network and cribbing off spotty WiFi signals.

We did have friends of family a few hours up north, but they weren't able to pick us up. They did spare us the trouble of finding and paying for another hotel stay, and for that we were extremely thankful for.

The next day was full of unknowns. We weren't sure if the car would be fixed that day or that week. We were already tapped for funds, so there wasn't much point to shop around. We weren't even sure what the repair bill was going to be.

It was a day to be still. And to pray.

We occasionally had someone

come along who would strike up a meaningful, Godly conversion. Our receptionists from our second hotel even gave us a ride to the mechanic, and a few other people helped us out as well. We were able to get the car back at the end of the day, and they really did cut us a financial break. Canada indeed lives up to its reputation for being "nice."

The prayers did not cease, however, as a whole new slew of problems popped up. The American border patrol kept the questions coming and even conducted a "random search." My sim card decided to fry itself, so a stop to Verizon was in order. My engine came close to overheating a few times, so there were a few more stops. The vehicle was shaking rather violently at times, and even the new steering system had its moments of either being too loose or completely nonoperational. After a long and grueling ride creeping into the wee hours of the morning, we finally made it back home.

So, was the trip a failure because hardly anything went according to plan? Quite the opposite, actually. It was a very enlightening spiritual experience to see things unfold without having to make any apparent effort. Psalm 46:10 says "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, and I will be exalted in the earth."

Being frantic might have

worked for our first night's stay, but it became really clear for us later on to let down and to be still. For God's people, being "still" would involve looking to the Lord for their help (cf. Exodus 14:13); for God's enemies, being "still" would mean ceasing to fight a battle they cannot win.

How does acknowledging God impact our stillness? We know that He is all-knowing, present everywhere, all-powerful, holy, sovereign, faithful, infinite, and good. Acknowledging God implies that we can trust Him and surrender to His plan because we understand who He is. The situation may be overwhelming and unnerving, but Psalm 46:1 says "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."

I don't think we'll be back up there for a while, but I'm more excited than ever to see what happens next.



The Messenger Newsletter is a publication for the church by the church. If you have a story, prayer, event, announcement, or something else that you would like to share, please submit it to the church office by e-mail or hard copy on the last Sunday of this month.

Information for the church bulletin is due to the office every Wednesday at noon. Any verbal announcements that need to be made on Sunday must be turned into the church office by 5pm!



THE STATE OF SUMMIT CHRISTIAN

MINISTER SEARCH:

A whole year has nearly come to pass and Summit Christian remains without a senior minister.

"At the moment, we are trying to get in touch with two gentlemen and have some interviews set. We've really been buckling down on trying to get someone in here," said Tony McKee.

GRACE CHURCH CONNECTION:

"One possibility that was mentioned at the Congregational Dinner was Summit Christian becoming an expansion or a branch of the ever-expanding Grace Church.

We have also attempted to talk to Pastor Jeff Bogue from the Grace Bath Campus about getting someone who may be

interested in ministering here. None of us have agreed on anything thus far. It may come down to a church vote at some point, but the reactions to these proposals have been mixed so far."

ATTENDANCE:

The number of souls in attendance have been steady over the course of 2017, albeit slightly lower from a year before.

"That's to be expected. Some were really in tune with Mike Martin's preaching."

FINANCES:

"Our heads are above the water. We are still not in a good position to do too much. We are actually debating on whether to start our new minister off as part-time and work into full-time."

LOOKING AHEAD:

If enough people are interested, a community Super Bowl watch party may be held at Summit Christian.

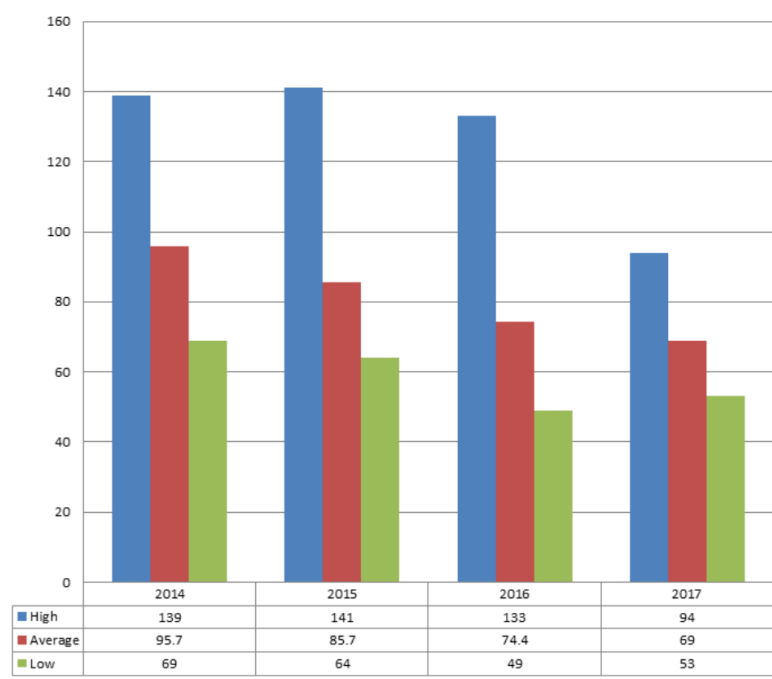
There are no extracurricular or mission trips planned at

this time, though some options may open up in March or April.



MONTH TWELVE

Church Attendance



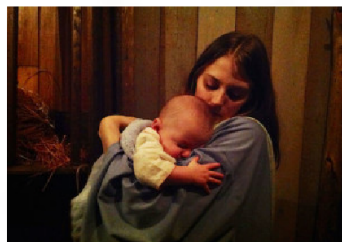
LOCAL CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES



CHRISTMAS IN ZOAR

Enjoy musical entertainment, a juried craft show, tour the village, and more. While in Zoar, makes sure to visit Belsnickle and Kristkind, and take a horse-drawn wagon ride around the village. On Saturday evening, attend a candlelight church service at the Historic Zoar Meeting House (Zoar United Church of Christ), followed by a tree lighting ceremony in the Historic Zoar Garden.

WHEN: December 2-3, 2017
WHERE: Zoar Village, 198 Main St., Zoar, OH 44697
COST: \$8 per person, FREE for children ages 12 and under



NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM

Bring your family and loved ones on tour through the streets of Bethlehem! The city streets are filled with characters to interact with you. Come hear the true meaning of Christmas: Jesus Christ is God's greatest gift. The tour takes about 20 minutes. Dress is casual. Plenty of refreshments are served to all at the end of the tour. Groups of any size are welcome.

WHEN: December 2, 3, 9 and 10, 2017; 5:30pm-7:30pm
WHERE: Calvary Chapel, 8151 Stuhldreher St. NW, Massillon, OH 44646
COST: Free! (No appointment necessary)



NIEDERMAN CHRISTMAS FARM

Fifty speakers set the mood with Christmas music as you view life-size nativity and several Biblical scenes telling the real story of Christmas. In addition there are hundreds of decorated trees and live animals. The walking path is wheel chair and stroller accessible. Free hot chocolate and cookies for everyone!

WHEN: Through December from 5:30pm – 10pm daily
WHERE: 4972 LeSourdsville-West Chester Drive, Liberty Township, Ohio 45011
COST: Free!



SANTA TRAIN

Take a trip to the North Pole with the Lorain & West Virginia Railway! Enjoy complimentary hot chocolate in our festively decorated vintage railway station before your trip to the "North Pole."

WHEN: December 8-9
WHERE: Lorain & West Virginia Railway Train Depot, 46789 OH-18, Wellington, OH 44090
COST: \$15 per adult, \$10 per child & senior

HIGHLIGHT

The Haydu Family, Worship Directors

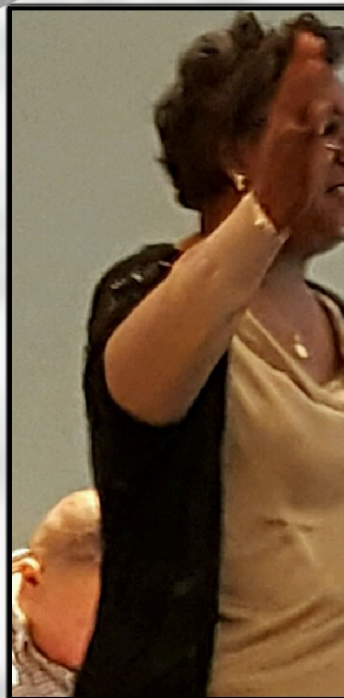


Pam Berg delivering

Soupfest



Tim Smith, Interim Pastor



Working with Arts and

Upward Basketball



S OF 2017

Jodi Utter, Worship Director

SCC VISITS NYC

an extraordinary solo



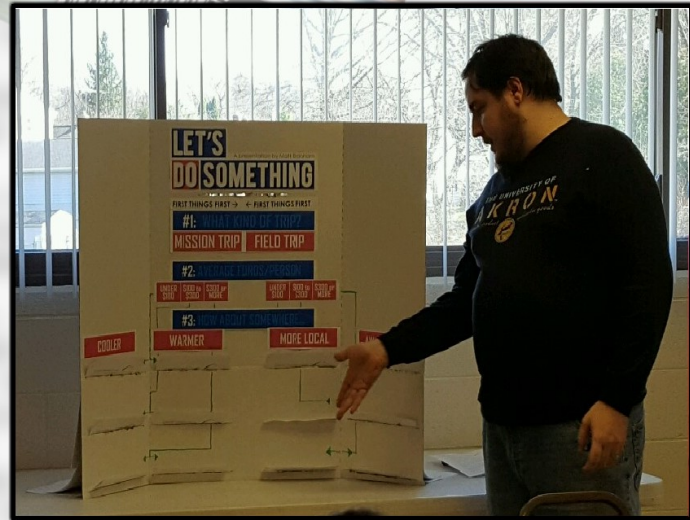
Scrap in Detroit, MI.



James Kasler, Interim Pastor



"Let's Do Something!" seminar



Upward Football



GHOST STORIES

—BY MATT BRANHAM—

The holiday season is supposed to be a time of joy, peace, fulfillment, especially with relationships and spiritual connections. For a lot of people however, myself included, it can be a grueling endurance round. It depends on what "ghosts" you may have. You may get used to them, but there is a better way to handle and even get rid of them.

A fair warning: This was not intended to be an easy read.

Even if you're not religious, you can see how original meaning of Christmas has been obscured over time. We live in an increasingly materialistic world, with the holiday season plagued with unrealistic expectations and excessive self-reflection. For those who grew up and continue to be in family circles, there is pressure to live up to some "Hallmark standard" of a functional healthy family, who can only enjoy this time of year with elaborate gifts and social activities. For those who feel they lead dysfunctional lives, they are afraid to see the victories and well-being of others. For those who feel very lonely this time of year, whether it's from the loss of a job, a loved one, or something else... the holidays can accentuate the things that are missing. For those who have very little money, Christmas can feel totally excluding. Whatever camp you're in, it's difficult to win.

When the rest of the world seems to come together, it's an awful feeling to not belong. I say that because...

THE PAST:

I was in a very large family circle growing up. It seemed like there was a gathering for every occasion. It is a relished staple from my childhood, but

it took was one classic case of family divorce to be removed from all that. There would be smaller, newer gatherings popping up on occasion, but my father would usually tell me to "go back to the basement where you belong", knowing full well that was toxic mold growing down there. He would say other hurtful things to me, like how it "wouldn't matter" if I had gotten scholarships and good grades, and how I was the "accident that caused all this" and "made him miserable."

THE PRESENT:

As someone who may be permanently damaged from all this, I cannot stress enough how important forgiveness is. Forgiveness is a big coping mechanism that God has given us to release us from some of that hurt. Otherwise, it would continue to eat away and contaminate many areas of our lives, and be passed along to other people.

Despite hatred never having a record of making anything better, the world continues to be full of it. How great can darkness be to cause someone to resort to violence during Black Friday shopping? It can all be really discouraging, and I've had many moments of throwing my arms up and asking myself why I even try.



At some point, however, something will come along and make you realize you can't afford not to care anymore...

THE FUTURE:

I had a good friend who was arguably more into the KJV Bible than I was. He had a great wife, two amazing children, a great career, and a whole life ahead of him. That was, until he took his life a few months ago.

I should've paid more attention to the warning signs, but there was a bigger warning of what was to come. If the devil can pressure someone like him do it, who is to say he wouldn't convince someone (who apparently botched every life test so far) do it as well?

I wish I was kidding when I say that his name was also Matt.

That's why I pushed the trip to New York... and sure enough, the Brooklyn Tabernacle Music Conference became a redefining moment in my life. Director Carol Cymbala could've sat down, talked, and prayed with anyone else from the thousand-plus participating. Within minutes, I was sobbing uncontrollably next to her... as though a deep root of hatred and God-knows-what-else had been ripped out of my heart.

A Carol within my own 'Christmas Carol'. God's got a sense of humor, alright...

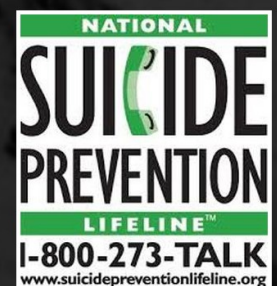
CONCLUSION:

We always have an opportunity to reach out to those who become blue, depressed or are less fortunate. If every person who believed in "loving your neighbor as yourself" put that much into practice, we would change the world overnight.

For those who have the difficulties with the season, this is an opportunity to take action to think, feel and act in ways that break free from the past. You are not defined by yesterday's sins if you are in Christ. He is not the means to something wonderful; He is something wonderful. We should not accept any other "perfect" representation of Christmas that the media, institutions or other people try to make us believe.

And for those on the brink... life is a series of tests, and the difficulty never really lets up. The amazing thing about being a Christian is that no matter how much we study, struggle, fight, pass, or fail our way through life's tests, we can be rest assured knowing that we have already passed the class. And we're still being put through these life tests... what spirit would we be of to stop something that God started?

Don't sell yourself short.



MERRY CHRISTMAS



PRAYER CHAIN

Shannon Aupperle	Barb Scheffer
Diana Boyer	Brittany Smith
Dave Gould	Denise Weirich
Reenie Griggs	Betty Theiss
Paul Lynam	Warren Lynam
Jack Lent	Marie Hubbard

12/2

Sheri Miller

12/18

CELEBRATING

Gordon Young
David M. Gould
Jesus Christ
Penny Buck
Jodi Shafer
Justin Tibbs

12/3

Chris Spencer

12/20

12/13

Emily Campbell

12/25

12/14

Barbara Scheffer

12/26

12/16

Susan Latchaw

12/17

Vito DiBona

12/30

Hope Martin

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE



COME JOIN US FOR WORSHIP

6:00 p

Summit Christian Church
133 South Hawkins Ave.
Akron, OH 44313

NATION REPENTS OF THANKSGIVING WITH DAY OF VIOLENT PILLAGING

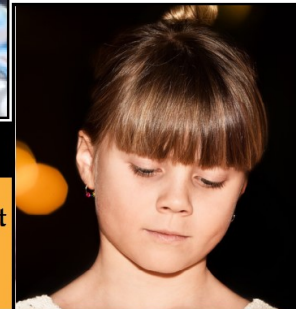
U.S.—Unable to fake contentment and thankfulness for one more second, citizens across the nation awoke Friday and immediately set out on a frenzied mission to violently pillage and strip bare all nearby retail locations, determined to acquire any discounted goods they desired, by any means necessary, numerous reports confirmed.

Pillagers beat each other with various weapons and instruments, wrestled on the floor like animals, and even exchanged gunfire in

some locations, all in the name of taking hold of material goods they desired. Sources confirmed that the unfettered violence occurred

less than 24 hours after these same people sat around tables with family and friends, over large meals, and gave thanks for

the many blessings in their lives. “12 hours of gratefulness annually is way too much for the majority of humankind to stomach,” experts revealed amidst the day’s chaos. “What we see on Black Friday is just human nature’s standard, guttural reaction to the annual tradition of acting like the world does not revolve around them for one whole day.”



IN OTHER NEWS:

In Grievous Spelling Error, Child Sends Christmas Letter To Satan

Seven-Year-Old Quits Christmas Pageant After Being Cast As Sheep Again