



The Olive Branch

September 2022

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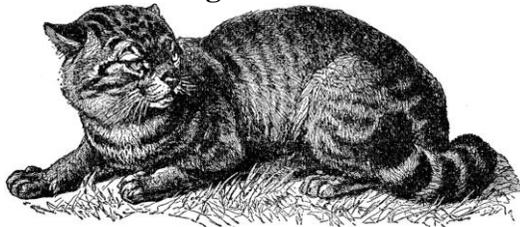
By Fran Barbano
"Please pray for our children and for America"



Greater Works

by Brad Gonzales

Learning to Trust



By Joyce M. Griffin
Olive Branch welcomes our newest contributor!

AND MORE!



Also, coming soon

events will be returning October 1st

with our annual "Chat and Chew"



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**Living the D.R.E.A.M.
with Christ**

**“For I know the plans I have for you,
declares the
Lord, plans to prosper you and not to
harm you,
plans to give you hope and future.”
Jeremiah 29:11**

**D – Develop = People, ministers and
facilities to serve the needs of the
community.**

**R – Reach = World Missions, US
Missions, and Community Outreach.
Reach the People where they are with the
love of Christ.**

**E – Equip = Believers with the
knowledge of God to establish them in a
relationship with Christ.**

**A – Anoint = Holy Spirit lead
spontaneous worship that glorifies
God and draws people to Him.**

**M – Mobilize = The Church to exercise
their gifts in ministry outreach and
missions.**

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The Olive Branch
Editor: Brad Gonzales
AJ1stOliveBranch@gmail.com

First Assembly of God

*Apache Junction, AZ
480.983.1200*

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Dallas R Satterfield
Executive Pastor: Bill Housley
Care Pastor: Brenda Brakeman
Pastor Hispanic Ministries: David Gonzalez
Worship Leader: Michele Smet
Youth Director: Michele Smet
Children’s Pastor: Meagan Western
Administrative Assistant: Leann Rogers
Media Ministries Co-Ordinator:
Rachel Birman
A/V & Facility Management: Kevin Rogers

BOARD MEMBERS:

David Bailie (Secretary)
Ron Brackeen (Treasurer)
Jerry Hayes
Harold Worthen
James Eiles
Vicki Green

COORDINATORS

Women’s Ministries: Sue Ruthardt
Missions: Dallas R Satterfield

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OFFICE INFORMATION

Office Hours
Monday-Thursday 8am—4pm
Location Address: 651 N. Ocotillo Drive
Apache Junction AZ 85120
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1145
Apache Junction AZ 85117
Office: 480.983.1200 FAX: 480.982.9105
Email: office@ajfirst.org



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School's in Session – God Save the Children!

By Fran Barbano



“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword...” Heb 4:12

History has been recorded since man devised a means to record it. Too often, history repeats itself. When we read history and learn what has transpired, wouldn't it seem logical that we could “see the hand writing on the wall” so to speak, and avoid another trip down disaster lane? Not so. And history repeats itself, whether in war, the falling of empires, an individual's quest for power to control the world, or the power to control other people that are deemed “undesirable.”

If we believe that the *Holy Bible* is the word of God, did we ever think that those professing faith in God would be persecuted in America? A case in point is the “improper” use of public facilities. Meetings for purposes to discuss God (i.e. Bible study, prayer, discussions on how we might make a better impact on our world for the good of all and for God's sake, to name a few), are banned. Did we imagine the day, when this country—founded on religious freedom—instituted such patent discrimination laws and rules for meetings in public buildings against citizens of America?

The Bible is history. Will this part of history be completely disregarded and discarded because of the adamant few whose hatred and intolerance are geared to their own selfish purposes? **What about truth?** How will our children learn the truth or weigh decisions based on truth for themselves if they are deprived of this knowledge?

Taking a Bible out of school children's hands and throwing it in the trash **has** occurred for decades across this nation. These forces are even expelling the child if the child is “**caught**” with a Bible in school. Will the Bible be thrown out of school once and for all? Shouldn't we be more concerned about drugs, knives and guns than with God's word, which incidentally, might even save some of these kids and their classmates?

This is a Wake Up call, church. It has been happening for decades in America. How powerful the word of God must be to have so many people working on behalf of stopping any mention of God, or the reading of a Bible in public places, or praying for that matter. For heaven's sake. Where will it end? It is fact that persecution of the faithful is taking place all over the world as Christians are being imprisoned, maimed, or murdered because of their faith. Violence and chaos seem never-ending.



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The scariest thing? *It is going to accelerate.*

When “in God we trust” is removed from our currency; and any mention of God is removed from our state mottos, hang on. It’s going to be one hellish ride.

Pondering the complexities of life and the trials and tribulations of this society, I shudder at what becomes of a society that turns its back on God. America has been a nation abundantly blessed. Looking toward the future is like peering through a dark looking glass, hoping to catch a shimmer of light, a glimmer of hope. What I see looming ahead is frightening. If society continues to turn its back on God, how soon before God turns His back on America?

School has started, and with it unspoken *fears* of teachers, parents and children alike. Will they be *assaulted*? Will they be *beaten*? Will they live through another school year? If you think I’m exaggerating, let me share.

My granddaughter, Cassandra, spent the night. I asked if she was looking forward to going back to school. She said, “Yes,” then *whispered*, “but, *Gramma*, I hope I don’t have to die by being stabbed or shot.” I nearly fell over. She was 11-years-old! Children should not have to live in fear of their lives because school is starting. Imagine performing scholastically with this life-or-death fear hanging over your head. *They are children.*

My heart aches as I wonder what will happen to our kids. If God doesn’t intervene through parents and teachers alike, when will ‘going to school’ not be safe at all? As more parents opt for home schooling, charter schools, Christian schools and private schools, they are wanting more than scholastic achievement for their children. They are seeking a safe haven, a place where learning is fun—or at least not dangerous—and praying that their children might be spared the widespread violence in public schools today. **Please pray for our children and for America.**

“We are the Bibles – The World is reading
We are the creeds – The World is needing
We are the sermons – The World is heeding.”

Billy Graham



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Greater Works

by Brad Gonzales



The subject of "works" can be misunderstood, in no way am I saying that we can work our way to heaven, nor that we weigh the good with the bad. **The gift** of God is eternal life (John 3:16).

In fact, we need to come to God just as we are, we do not have to "clean up our act" before we seek God. Quite to the contrary, God is in the transforming business! All you need is faith. (Eph. 2:8-10)

Greater works is about what Jesus told us, when we receive power of the Holy Spirit, we will do these and greater works!

John 14:12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and **greater works** than these he will do, **because** I go to my Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."



That blows my mind!

What could be greater than healing the blind, making the lame walk, calming the wind and seas, or raising the dead, to mention just a few.

First, You already have **miracle working faith!**

It is a miracle that a sinner can be [born again](#) ([John 3:3-9](#)), that an imperfect person ([Romans 3:23](#)) can be changed ([Romans 12:2](#)) by the grace of Christ into a perfect man ([Matthew 5:48](#)) and become a child of God. (think about this)

If you believe through faith and if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9 NKJV



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Saturday night, **Faith builders for Jesus** had a *family movie night*, a great example of what faith can do.

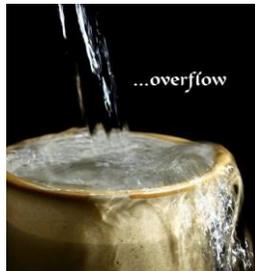
"The girl who believed in miracles" If you missed it, you missed another great movie. (if you search online, you can find it for free) The child like faith of this girl was transformative to all that came in contact with her, and she was quick to point out it is faith in God and God was the one at work, not her.

" I assure you and most solemnly say to you unless you repent and become like children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt 28:3 AMP)

How do you get all the air out a cup? You fill the cup with water.

If I remember right, Pastor Dallas gave an illustration some time ago. The air, in this illustration, is the world and, the sin affecting our lives. The water is the Holy Spirit.

So, what kind of person are you? Glass half full or half empty? Nay, Nay! Are you filled to overflowing?



So filled that we are overflowing and all those around us get splashed on. So compassionate that we cannot pass someone in need without praying with them. Just as Jesus did these acts of love, we become the contagious love that becomes **revival**.

Matthew 10: (NIV)

7As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' **8Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.** He said, go in my name and because you believe! Others will know that I live.





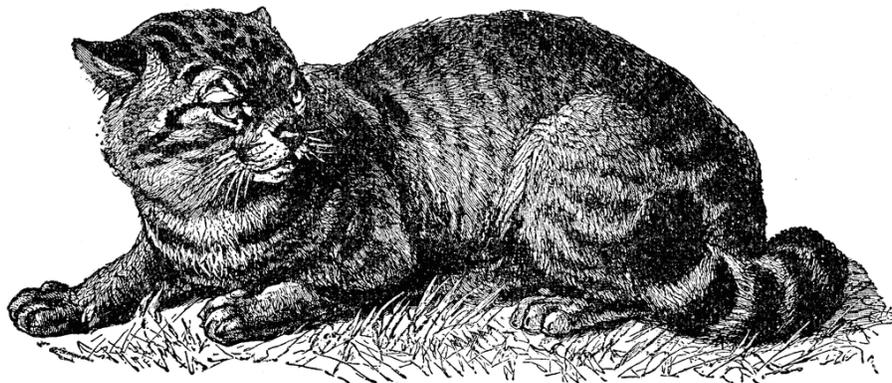
Learning to trust
By Joyce M. Griffin

In my best "cat-mother" voice,
I call to the feral feline that visits my backyard.
I offer food and words of kindness,
Hoping one day he will see me as a friend.

But months have passed and still he cannot trust.
He warily eats his fill and dashes off,
And doesn't know that I would love and care for him,
And all his needs would be supplied.

I used to treat God much as that treats me.
I'd seek a little taste of mercy when in need,
But never ventured close enough to feast upon His love.
In groundless fear, I'd shun the only One who truly cares.

I'm grateful that, unlike the little cat,
I finally learned I could depend on God's extended Hand,
And found in Jesus everything I'd ever need or want.
And, all fear gone, now trust Him with my very soul





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Supposing there was no intelligence behind the universe, no creative mind. In that case, nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. It is merely that when the atoms inside my skull happen, for physical or chemical reasons, to arrange themselves in a certain way, this gives me, as a by product, the sensation I call thought. *But, if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true?* It's like upsetting a milk jug and hoping that the way it splashes itself will give me a map of London. But if I can't trust my own thinking, of course I can't trust the arguments leading to Atheism, and therefore have no reason to be an Atheist, or anything else. **Unless I believe in God, I cannot believe in thought: so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God.** –C.S.Lewis

"And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Romans 13:11

The Sleeping Church

by Fran Barbano

We no longer live in a society that we can consider 'normal.' Everything changed drastically in 2020. In reality, things changed in 1963 when the *Holy Bible* was removed from our schools. The mention of God in public forums soon became vilified or prohibited. I wonder how many in the church, the body of Christ, are praying. If we are praying, is there urgency in our prayers?

Our country and our freedoms are being chipped away. Yet the bulk of the church is sleeping. How can that be? If we call ourselves 'Christian' shouldn't there be some visible evidence? Shouldn't we be relentless in our prayers?

Much of society and many in government appear to have lost their minds. The wicked laws being passed are staggering and stunning. Yet, there is no outcry from the church. Where was the church when Bibles were removed from classrooms at the hands of an atheist? Where was the church when Roe v Wade made it's appearance—before it became law in 1973? Where was the outcry? Where, for heaven's sake, were the "pray-ers" (pray-ers = those who pray)? And where are they today?

Yes, there are those who pray always. Prayer meeting attendance is small. In a church of 200 attendees, we witness about a dozen at any prayer meeting. At some prayer meetings the numbers can be counted on the fingers of one hand. This is nothing new. These are sobering facts that the church must consider.



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Unless the church and the nation repent and return to God, we will lose our nation. We are on the brink of crossing the threshold of collapse and are still sitting on the fence. America and all nations of the world continue to thumb their nose at God and tell Him daily, "We will do it our way." The people only seem to pray when there is a personal need, and rarely do we hear of church goers making a concerted effort in prayer for our nation and the nations of the world.

Just as the pandemic affects the entire world population, few heed God's warnings in His word to us. Everything we are facing today has the answer embedded in God's word, the *Holy Bible*. God—through His prophets gave us the solution to the pandemic, the drought we have faced for decades, and other dilemmas we face. Still the church sleeps. Few seem to give credence to the Bible; fewer still appear to be reading it.

In 2 Chronicles 7:13,14, we are told, "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence (disease, pandemic) among my people; If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (KJV) God's word is explicit. In many cases, through the prophets, God says, 'if you do this, then I'll do that.' This is one of those instances.

In Ezekiel 22:30, God says, "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." I believe God would have saved the land at that time, but no one willingly 'stood in the gap' in prayer.

Do we understand our role today? God could turn everything around but we are unwilling to pray and intercede for the land, for our babies, or for righteousness and truth to reign on earth as it is in heaven. God is willing. We refuse. God has not changed. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We have changed. And just as God does nothing without warning the people through the words of His prophets, God will do nothing without the prayers of His people. We are His intercessors on earth. God works through our prayers.

If we are not prepared to enter that bottomless chasm that marks the end of all things, then pray. Pray for our leaders and all people globally; pray that a spirit of repentance will cover everyone, everywhere, and in all governments here and around the world; pray that the church wakes up and repents for our lack of prayer and for deserting God in the front lines of battle. Pray—while there is still time. Pray.



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Upcoming events at AJ First

Every Friday morning Prayer Watch 8:30-9:30

And

Every Sunday morning 6:30-9:00

Worship Service 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday Adult Bible study and AJ Youth at 6:30 pm

LOVES Women's Ministry:

In-House Retreat

Friday, Sept. 9th at 6:30 pm- Saturday Sept. 10th

September 11th after Sunday Worship service
Informational meeting for the Christmas program.

September 17th 8 am
Men's Prayer Breakfast

October 1st



Young at Heart (50+)
Chat and Chew

There is *much more* happening, see the announcements and calendars for updates.

Look for
the next issue of The Olive Branch will be out during the first week of November.