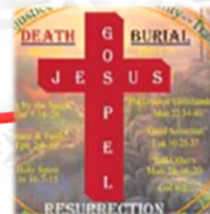




*** THE MIRACLE NEWS ***



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Courage and Encouragement

by Paul Kruse

The following is information I have gathered from other articles, along with my own knowledge on this topic.

How important is courage anyway?

- If it wasn't for the courage of Jesus willingly going to the cross, there would be no Christianity.
- It takes courage to repent and turn from sin and strive for a sinless life.
- It takes courage to follow and obey Jesus.
- It takes courage to say and do the right things.

Jesus said sending Christians to the world is like sending sheep to the wolves. (Matt. 10:16) Courage!

One has to be courageous to become a Christian, knowing the devil has you in his crosshairs. (James 4:7; John 10-10)

What is courage?

(Deut. 31:6-8) **Defined, courage is being able to move forward facing much danger, the unknown and fear.** I believe the Christian believes that over 80% of the things we fear never happen, which helps us to be courageous. Nonetheless, fear and danger are real and we all need the courage to overcome them, especially as Christians. Jesus gives us this courage by His many examples.

Death on the Cross for all the sins of man, back-talking to the devil, spending 40 days and nights in the wilderness, attempting to bring the dead back to life, speaking back to Pilate and many more events. Paul showed His courage in many ways defying the Romans for Jesus and ending up be-

headed. Also in his statement, "To live is Christ, to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21) After all this who can be afraid?

As Jesus did, we draw our courage from our faith, purpose and God's promises. Jesus is the epitome of courage. He encourages us to follow Him and do as He did on earth as the best way of life and afterlife. We win either way, life or death, with Jesus! So, where death is your sting? (1 Cor. 15:55) Jesus' victories are the foundation for courage and the ability to live a victorious life. (1 John 5: 4-5.)

The highest degree of courage is seen in the person who has the most fear and refuses to give in to it. The military during combat is the one of the best examples of this. There, it's kill or be killed. Also, the agreement to be put in this position by noncombat military. In Christian maturity we display the Christlike characteristics of courage. Courage teaches us Love and sacrifice and to take on the challenges and responsibilities that God calls us to. (1 Peter 1:10)

What is there to fear?

(2 Peter 1:10) Fear is giving in to imminent, perceived and real danger and the unknowns of daily life. (1 John 4:18) **The Bible says the only fear we are to give in to is to fear the Lord.** As Prov. 9:10 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." This fear is not threatening but comforting, just letting us know who we are to respect and worship.

Also the Bible says (Matt.10:28) do not fear the one who can take your life but the One who can take your life and soul. This also is a teaching type of fear and fact.

(Continued on next page)

Courage and Encouragement (continued)

How do we encourage others?

Facing a variety of troubles and experiencing fear and disappointment is part of life and we do need courage to go forward. Finding courage to move forward when we are fearful and when life seems **impossible**, the road **impassible**, the race **unwinnable** or giving encouragement to the discouraged, is an important focus in Scripture.

To encourage means to give support, to inspire with Hope, Love, Faith, courage and confidence.

It also means finding and helping others find the courage, by God's grace and **strength, to run the race God has set before us no matter how difficult or painful it may be.**

So now as Jesus has shown us how to be courageous, we must encourage others. We must be examples when facing trials or the unknown, and coming out of it all by God's power so we survive and prosper.

Jesus is both our encourager and an example of being courageous. (1Cor. 2:1-2).

Where else does the Bible say we find courage?

I call it the 4 G's.

- **God**
Deut.31:6. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified, for the Lord your God goes with you, He will never leave you or forsake you. (Isaiah 41:10)
- **Gospel**
What God did for us. The greatest act of Love when Jesus sacrificed Himself for us for the forgiveness of sin. (John 15:13). Also the greatest act of courage and Love. (1Cor. 15)
- **Greatest Commandments**
Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and might. **Courage.**
Love your neighbor as yourself. **Courage.**
And on these commandments hang all the law of the prophets. (Matt. 22:37-39) **Confidence.**
- **Great Commission**
Jesus has all the power from God. He will be with us always. **Encouraging!** (Matt.28:20)

Finally, have courage and be an encourager as Jesus was and is!

God Bless You!



Join us on May 7th for our Seventh Year Celebration of Give STL Day!

Powered by the St. Louis Community Foundation

First Step Back Home is participating in **Give STL Day**, which will be held on Wednesday, May 7, 2020.

Give STL Day, hosted by the St. Louis Community Foundation, is a 24-hour, online day-of-giving event, designed to ignite the spirit of giving across the region. Since its inception in 2014, **Give STL Day** has raised over \$10 million for more than 900 regional nonprofits.

This year, with your help, we are committed to making **Give STL Day** even more successful.

Mark your calendar for May 7, 2020, and bookmark this giving link:

www.GiveSTLDay.org/FirstStepBackHome

Visit www.givestlday.org for additional details, and don't forget to give on May 7!

Recent Presentations Help Spread the Word!



FSBH Ministry Founders **Paul and Lana Kruse** are thrilled when offered the opportunity to share the vision of FSBH with others. In the past few months they spoke at several events.

On September 26, Paul and Lana were the guest speakers at the **Dardenne Presbyterian Women's Ministry Ladies Luncheon**. They were able to share about recent ministry events, and the ladies provided a love offering of \$700 for the work being done for the homeless in our region.

On the last Sunday of September, they were part of a Great Commission outreach event at **First Baptist Church, O'Fallon**. They were able to attend the morning services and interact with parishioners all morning at booths set up in the lobby along with other local ministries.



FSBH board member **Chris Bray** came along for part of the morning when the Kruses had to leave to get to **Central Presbyterian Church** in Clayton for their Missions Weekend Service. That event was also a tribute to **Rev. Randy Mayfield**, their Mission's Pastor for 40 years! Central Presbyterian Church has been a supporter finan-



cially and in prayer and encouragement for many years!

Then, on the first weekend of October, FSBH was featured in the "take action" opportunities booths for women who attended the first annual "Women Together" conference at **Morning Star Church**. Lana met several ladies who were interested in helping with ministry functions such as the upcoming **11th Annual Christmas Wonderland**, or the meals being served at the Economy Inn.

If your organization would like to learn more about FSBH, please contact us and we'll be happy to set something up!



New Playground Delights Kids at Rolling Meadows!

Grace Community Chapel, St. Peters, took up two special offerings last summer to fund a new playground at Rolling Meadows Mobile Home Park. Money came from the entire congregation in July for their "Change for Change" offerings, as well as from daily offerings during the children's Vacation Bible School. Altogether they raised \$3,295.12, which was spent on purchasing a playset, getting the land prepared and mulched, and landscape borders established.

When the check was sent to us, the Missions Committee included this scripture reference in their letter: Mark 10:13-16 – *"Once when some mothers were bringing their children to Jesus to bless them, the disciples shooed them away, telling them not to bother him. But when Jesus saw what was happening, He was very much displeased with his disciples and said to them, 'Let the children come to Me, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as they. Don't send them away! I tell you as seriously as I know how that anyone who refuses to come to God as a little child will never be allowed into His Kingdom.' Then he took the children into His arms and placed his hands on their heads and He blessed them."*



Every day at VBS last summer at **Grace Community Chapel**, children brought offerings that were given to get this playset for others at Rolling Meadows Mobile Home Park.

RunnyMeade to Get Playground Too!



There are 180 homes in RunnyMeade, and FSBH has done several outreach activities in this park over the past year. We are developing an online Facebook page for residents there to communicate about local activities and needs.

Last summer a one-week VBS program was held on the grounds, sponsored by **First Baptist Church, O'Fallon**.

Thanks to ministry partners at **Central Presbyterian Church**, Clayton, FSBH has been funded to build another playground, similar to the one we just put in at Rolling Meadows, at their sister-park, where we also have mobile home ministry taking place. The new playset will be constructed at RunnyMeade Mobile Home Park, O'Fallon. Paul is coordinating the construction crew and hoping the weather cooperates to get this accomplished before winter sets in.



Residents at our mobile home parks will enjoy tasty and festive Thanksgiving Dinners this year at the **4th Annual Thanksgiving Dinner** event on Saturday, November 23, 2019 at the Clubhouse at Rolling Meadows. Friends of **FSBH** and **Gateway West Church** will prepare all the trimmings for a festive meal, complete with pumpkin pie, that day. Meals will be delivered throughout the park to those unable to make it to the Clubhouse that afternoon.

Also, **St. Louis New Life Church**, Bridgeton, has arranged to prepare grocery supplies for several of our families so they can prepare their own meals on Thanksgiving Day. Families will receive turkeys, sides, desserts and even food for breakfast the following day!

What a blessing to be parts of these holiday activities that help many families struggling with provisions to enjoy special family times too!



Mark your calendars and join in for a “Happy Birthday Jesus” party at the **11th Annual Christmas Wonderland** on Saturday, December 21, 2019, 10:30 am – 2 pm at **Wentzville United Methodist Church** 725 Wall Street, Wentzville MO 63385.

The objective of this annual free event is to bless the poor in our community with Christmas celebration, gifts, and food, all provided by community groups and churches under leadership of First Step Back Home (FSBH) Ministry. Registration will begin at 10 am, and activities will get underway by 10:30 am. Free tickets are available through the FSBH Facebook Page or Website: firststepbackhome.net

Last year more than 560 people came to this growing popular event, including 185 children and teens from 120 families and 185 volunteers, helpers and visitors from the community. This year things are sure to be fun and festive as well! Highlighting the day will be the arrival of **Santa** at 12:30 pm to greet and have photos with kids 12 and under. Before he comes, though, there will be entertainment from **Cicoff, Jester of the King**, who uses mime, juggling, acrobatics and storytelling to present Christmas in a fresh and exciting way! Kids will also have several craft project opportunities, face painting and games. And there will be a special “Kids’ Only” shopping area where youngsters can find something special to wrap up for mom, dad or grandparents who have brought them to the event.

Lunch and snacks will be served throughout the day, and gifts for families will be provided as they become available to the ministry for distribution, including filled laundry/cleaning baskets, diapers, gifts for teens in attendance, new Bibles for children and personal care items. Santa gifts will be available for children birth – 12 who attend that day.

- If you are interested in donating holiday cookies, desserts or candy, contact **Jan O’Rourke: 314-737-8400** or malonyorourke@gmail.com
- If you would like to help with setup, cleanup, crafts or activities, contact **Janie Wolfangel: 314-650-2386** or janiewolfangel@yahoo.com
- If you can contribute new unwrapped toys, batteries for toys, tape or tissue paper, contact **Sandi Bahr: 636-236-1737** or sandi1979bahr@outlook.com
- If you have other ideas or just want to talk about other ways to be involved, contact **Lana Kruse: 314-799-3694** or lanakruse@gmail.com

All donations can be receipted as tax-deductible contributions to FSBH.

Checks made out to FSBH, gift cards for gas or food, filled laundry baskets or new unwrapped toys can be sent to FSBH at

18 Auvergne Drive, Lake St. Louis, MO 63367

or brought to the venue on Friday, December 20, 2019 from 9 am – 3 pm or on the morning of the event.

Thanks for My New Smile!

by Denise Weeks



Sixteen months ago I was badly addicted to fentanyl, heroin, and meth, living a life of poor choices, prostitution, and plummeting out of control. But I was still known to be that girl who was always smiling. June 29, 2018, I was brutally beaten and sexually assaulted in a hotel room, resulting in the loss of my front teeth, amongst other traumas requiring a great deal of healing.

After serving nine months in jail and being accepted into **Mission Gate**, I met some wonderful people who have graciously helped me get my smile back. Several people and groups, including **First Step Back Home**, donated funds to get the dental work required to fix what those attackers took from me... my beautiful smile. FSBH helped me find a local dental practice, **Dr. Tom Delaney DMD** and **Dr. Darren Bremer, DMD**, that would work with me on a re-payment plan so the work could be done before it was fully paid for.

Being able to smile again has brought more healing from such trauma and I am so very humbled and grateful to ALL who have found it in their hearts to help me regain my smile. I love you all, and God bless you!

I will graduate from Mission Gate at the end of December. I'm working full time as a cookie elf at Daddy Ray's in Moscow Mills, and now have a car. I am building back family relationships with my son and others and plan to work at Mission Gate in some type of leadership capacity in the new year.

Networking Resources Helps Two Organizations

FSBH helped to supply gently-used bedroom furniture from **The Sharing Shed** for new space at **Promises of Hope Ranch**, Winfield. Paul rented a large truck and we hauled donated twin beds, mattresses, box springs, dressers and bedside tables. **The Sharing Shed** also provided bed linens, pillows and curtains for the new rooms that were constructed from an old garage space. Now six additional ladies are able to be housed at the Ranch, which serves as a transitional housing facility for women coming out of prison. **Promises of Hope** is a part of the **Mission Gate Prison Ministry**. Coordinator of the Winfield facility is **Mrs. Denise Knox**, who also serves as Chaplain at the Lincoln County Jail.



Recent Donor Acknowledgements

We want to thank several businesses, churches and community groups who have financially supported FSBH this past quarter with these recent gifts.

- \$5,500 – **Central Presbyterian Church**
- \$5,400 – **Steve Crawford Trucking, Inc.**
- \$5,000 – **Employees Community Fund of Boeing**
- \$5,000 – **Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Fleming, Fleming Charitable Foundation** of the **St. Louis Community Foundation**
- \$3,295 – **Grace Community Chapel** – for Mobile Home Park Playground Project
- \$3,000 – **Dardenne Presbyterian Church** Helping Hands Ministry
- \$2,500 – MasterCard Match from anonymous employee contribution
- \$1,300 – **Mary Martha Thrift Store**
- \$1,200 – **Mission Financial- St. Peters**
- \$1,000 – **The Way Church** in Honor of Music Pastor **Brando Hall**
- \$1,000 – **Expert Realty Company** and Buyer **Kathy Harper**
- \$ 700 – **Dardenne Presbyterian Women's Ministry**
- \$ 300 – **Element Church, Wentzville**
- \$ 300 – **Warrenton Christian Church**
- \$ 300 – **Ladies Auxiliary of Knights of Columbus Council 823, St. Charles**
- \$ 274 – Thrivent Choice Dollars as allocations from **Dennis & Donna Hall, Susan Bauer, and Joe & Tina Koncki.**
- \$ 225 – **Chapel of the Lake, Lake St. Louis**
- \$ 200 – **Immanuel Lutheran Church** Women in Mission
- \$ 185 – **Faith United Church of Christ, Wentzville, August Special Offering**
- \$ 102 – **Lorrain County United Way** Employee Contributions
- \$ 50 – **New Life Nazarene Church** - \$5 for each visitor who attends their services
- \$ 20 – **Amazon Smile** Designations

We are so very thankful to all of you who think of donating to our public charity when opportunities present.



Heather & Rob Hussey of **Expert Realty** presenting a check to Paul & Lana Kruse on behalf of **FSBH** from their buyer client **Kathy Harper**, who chose FSBH as her charity to bless!

Meal Ministry Update

Our meal calendar is filling up quickly. We are blessed by so many generous and caring groups and individuals who serve the families staying at the Economy Inn in Wentzville.

In the last quarter, we have welcomed new meal serving groups: **Lowry Family** (led by **Cindy Lowry**), **Just One** (**Kris Parsons**), **Lisa Snider**, and the **Sisters of Service** from **St. Joseph's Cottleville** (led by **Jodi Ward**).

Current openings are: 3rd Fridays (even months) and 4th Saturdays.

The calendar is always available online at firststepbackhome.net/meal-calendar. Contact **Kim Orf** to sign up for serving meals. (contact info is on Page 1).



The **Sisters of Service** from **St. Joseph's Cottleville** serving at the Economy Inn, October 26.

Donation Methods to Support FSBH

We want to remind you that your tax-deductible charitable donation is a great way to support the ministry. We are a public charity per IRS Regulations of a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations will be receipted for tax-deductible documentation purposes. Here are several options to consider:

• Corporate Matching Grant Donations

- Some matching grant companies are **AT&T**, **Wells Fargo**, **Monsanto**, **Boeing**, **MasterCard**, **Pfizer**, **VMWare**, and **Thrivent Financial Services**.
- Boeing and perhaps other corporations offer **volunteer time grant matches**. If you volunteer 25 hours with our ministry, Boeing will send a \$250 cash gift.
- If you work for a company that offers match gifting, please initiate the paperwork for this to be done, and we'll complete the required elements so you and others can participate.
- **Write a Check payable to "First Step Back Home"** and send to the following address:
First Step Back Home, Inc.
Paul Kruse
PO Box 966
O'Fallon MO 63366

- **Log onto our ministry website and click PayPal** for direct donation via your credit card. There is a small fee charged to the ministry with this option. www.firststepbackhome.net
- **Thrivent Members** can create an "Action Team" and receive \$250 "seed money" twice per year for charitable causes. Details can be found at this link: thrivent.com/actionteam.
- Log onto **GoFundMe** to support the **FSBH Sponsored Housing Project for Mobile Homes**.
- When you shop online, use **Amazon Smile** and choose **First Step Back Home** as your charity. They will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases. You can use this direct link to our page: smile.amazon.com/ch/20-8676289





Death Prevention is Goal for Winter Warming Centers

From November 16, 2019 through March 2020, if temperatures are predicted to be 20 degrees or below overnight (via weather.com), the Emergency Weather Response program of the St. Charles, Lincoln and Warren Counties Continuum of Care will activate a **Free Warming Center Response** to provide safe sleeping accommodations for the night at local churches in the area. To locate the nearest warming center, call the hotline number at **636-395-0492**. Transportation services may be available.

Last winter 22 nights were activated with 50 people and some pets served, for a total of 134 bed nights of lodging. Eight churches will be Warming Center locations this year, with each one scheduled for a week of service at a time. Participants will not only receive a safe, warm place to spend the night, but social service agencies will follow up with them to evaluate and provide further resources.

Churches participating in the 2019-20 winter include **Grace Gospel Temple, St. John UCC, Calvary Church, Ridgecrest Church, St. Charles First United Methodist, Chapel of the Cross, Wentzville Christian** and **First Baptist- Wentzville**. Trained volunteers at each site who have had background checks and received specialized training will be on hand to greet, check in, oversee the evening activities, provide food, prepare laundry and clean up, and load a van where supplies are transported from one church to another during the winter season.

Please keep the hotline number handy, and pass it out to homeless you encounter during the cold winter season. If you or your church would like more information about how you can become involved, please call LINC Director **Kathy Thompson** or Warming Center Coordinator **Tiffany Jackson** at **636-332-5127 x 222**.

Current Statistics on Homelessness and Housing Needs in Our Region

One of the projects of our **St. Charles County CAPS** students this semester was to research data about homelessness in our region. On the next page is a picture from the **St. Charles County Housing Team**, showing the discrepancies of income to quality housing. At the bottom of the page, it lists housing plan needs for continued population and economic growth in St. Charles County.

As of 2018, our State of Missouri has **5,883 families** experiencing homelessness. In 2018, the St. Charles County, MO Living Wage necessary to support 2 adults and 1 child was **\$23.21 per hour**. But that same-sized family that officially lives in poverty was earning just **\$10.00 per hour**. The Missouri **Poverty Rate is currently 9%, 551,000 Missourians** living in poverty. In **St. Charles County, it's 5.2%**. For those people, there is a large gap between what they earn and what it takes to just afford shelter and food. THIS is a serious situation that **First Step Back Home (FSBH)** strives to address for the homeless and near-homeless in our area. We have so many people approach us for help now, largely because so many of the traditional agencies are overflowing with clients and end up referring them to us. **FSBH** does our absolute best, within our financial means, to help everyone who can prove that they are honestly trying to help themselves. We give ourselves to homelessness prevention and crisis intervention.

Sources:

<https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/mo/>

<https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/29183>

<https://spotlightonpoverty.org/states/missouri/>

Article researched by Tony Belonog, SCCAPS



Quality Housing for All

6 in 10



HOUSEHOLDS earning \$50,000 and less are cost burdened.

23,000

Number of cost-burdened households in St. Charles County who earn less than \$50,000 and cannot afford the cost of food, healthcare and other basic necessities.

People with incomes less than \$50K
in St. Charles County

Restaurant
Staff
Salary
\$22,090



Starting Teacher
Salary
\$31,842



Paramedic
Salary
\$41,248

Medical Assistant
Salary
\$34,070

\$54,392

Living wage needed for a 4 person household in St. Charles County. The living wage shows a considerable gap between income and the true cost of living.

Household incomes are not keeping pace with escalating housing costs in St. Charles County.
Projected population growth to over 450,000 by 2030 is generating upward pressure on the cost of housing.

GOAL: Create housing solutions for people who live and work in St. Charles County.

Housing Plan Needed for Continued Population and Economic Growth

1

Build 7,700 affordable housing units for the new workforce of people living and working in St. Charles County by 2030.

2

Fund repair programs for the 11,258 housing units in St. Charles County that will be 70 years and older by 2030.

3

Repair, replace, and transform 4,300 mobile homes in St. Charles County by 2030.

To learn more, visit mohousing.com/housing-teams or email stchousingteam@gmail.com.

St. Charles County Housing Team is a voluntary council dedicated to Quality Affordable Universal Design Housing for good neighborhoods, safe communities, and thriving families.