



Connections

February 2023

BAPTISM

Rising up in response to God's calling

On Wednesday, December 4th in a borrowed horse trough nine people were baptized here at Open House Ministries. Maybe it was the proximity to Christmas, or maybe it was the fact that the entire moment was staged around a piece of borrowed farmhouse furniture, but this day echoed the mysterious joy of the nativity story.

Yet, the truth is the connection was more than mere sentimentality or a scheduling coincidence. These moments share a deep cosmic connection. Christmas is the unveiling of the mysterious redemptive plan of God to save humanity. Scripture had foretold (and we could hardly imagine) that God would take on human flesh without ceasing to be God to save us. The author of Hebrews states simply, "For this reason, he [God the Son] had to be made like us, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17).



Christ's birth makes possible the very new birth and new status as members of the family of God we celebrated in the lives of the baptized. Without Christ and apart from Christ we have nothing and can do nothing. Yet, because of Christ, we can experience the riches of this mystery, which is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Like the shepherds who came from the nearby fields to witness the birth of Christ. Friends, sponsors, and family made their way to our gym that morning to witness the symbolic new birth of those they loved. From an outsider's perspective, it was as ordinary as any other Wednesday. Yet, from where we stood, we knew we were gathered to witness something far greater.

Before the first individual was baptized, I reminded everyone of what Jesus said in Luke 15:7, "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." (Continued)



GRACIOUS GIVING

A Convenient Way to Support Open House Ministries

Many of our Open House Ministries supporters take advantage of our automatic donation option—a way to simplify your giving to Open House Ministries on a monthly basis.

Recurring gifts are very helpful, allowing us to make even more strategic plans for providing homeless families with shelter, intervention, and Christ-based, life-saving programs. Your continued support through an automatic withdrawal from your checking account or credit/debit card helps provide Open House Ministries with a steady and dependable stream of income, creating a solid foundation of support for this ministry.

It's easy to set up. Just go to our website at www.sheltered.org and click on *Donations*. When filling out the form, choose a donation schedule option under *frequency* that works for you and complete the required information for ongoing donations. If you would like assistance, please contact us at 360-727-0300 and we can help set it up for you.

Thank you for supporting Open House Ministries. You are a blessing. •

BAPTISM CONTINUED



I told those in attendance, "Heaven is rejoicing over these individuals. How dare we not? How dare we stay quiet. I expect each of you to cheer, clap, and make a joyous ruckus." But I believe it would be impossible to stay quiet for what was about to unfold.

As each resident stepped forward to be baptized, I invited them to speak before the crowd. One by one, they shared how following Jesus had changed their life. Some spoke with brevity, others with vivid stories. All, however, spoke with a boldness of a life marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Then each baptismal candidate stepped into the water. With great relief, they found the water warmer than expected. This provided a moment of levity before each took the baptismal vows: Do you acknowledge one God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Is it your desire to turn from your sin? Do you intend, with Holy Spirit's help to obey Jesus's teaching and follow him as your Lord and Savior?

Upon their positive confession, I baptized each into the water. Assisting me in many instances was a friend, family member, or sponsor who had come in support. Then as each individual rose up from beneath the waters, the house erupted in shouts for joy. It was like the great company of a heavenly host who appeared to announce the birth of Jesus. We could not help but cheer and shout for joy at the work God was doing in our midst.

I began the day expecting to baptize six people. We ended the day baptizing nine people. God is doing amazing things here. In fact, I believe I am witnessing something of a quiet revival underway at Open House Ministries. These baptisms are just the beginning of a much bigger spiritual awakening. 2023 is not going to be a year of slumber but a year where many will rise up in response to the call of God. • Chaplain Jon Nichols



MINISTRY BLESSINGS



Thank you Liberty Bible Church for bringing joy to Open House Ministries. We were blessed by your full day of giving to our children.



Special thanks go out to the Hoo Hoo Club for another amazing Christmas celebration. Your work and dedication to Open House Ministries is a testimony of great compassion for the families and children in our ministry. Thank You!

WHEEL DEALS



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Thank You!