

## A Verse to Live by

“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

Acts 4:29-30 (NIV)

### September Prayer Focus

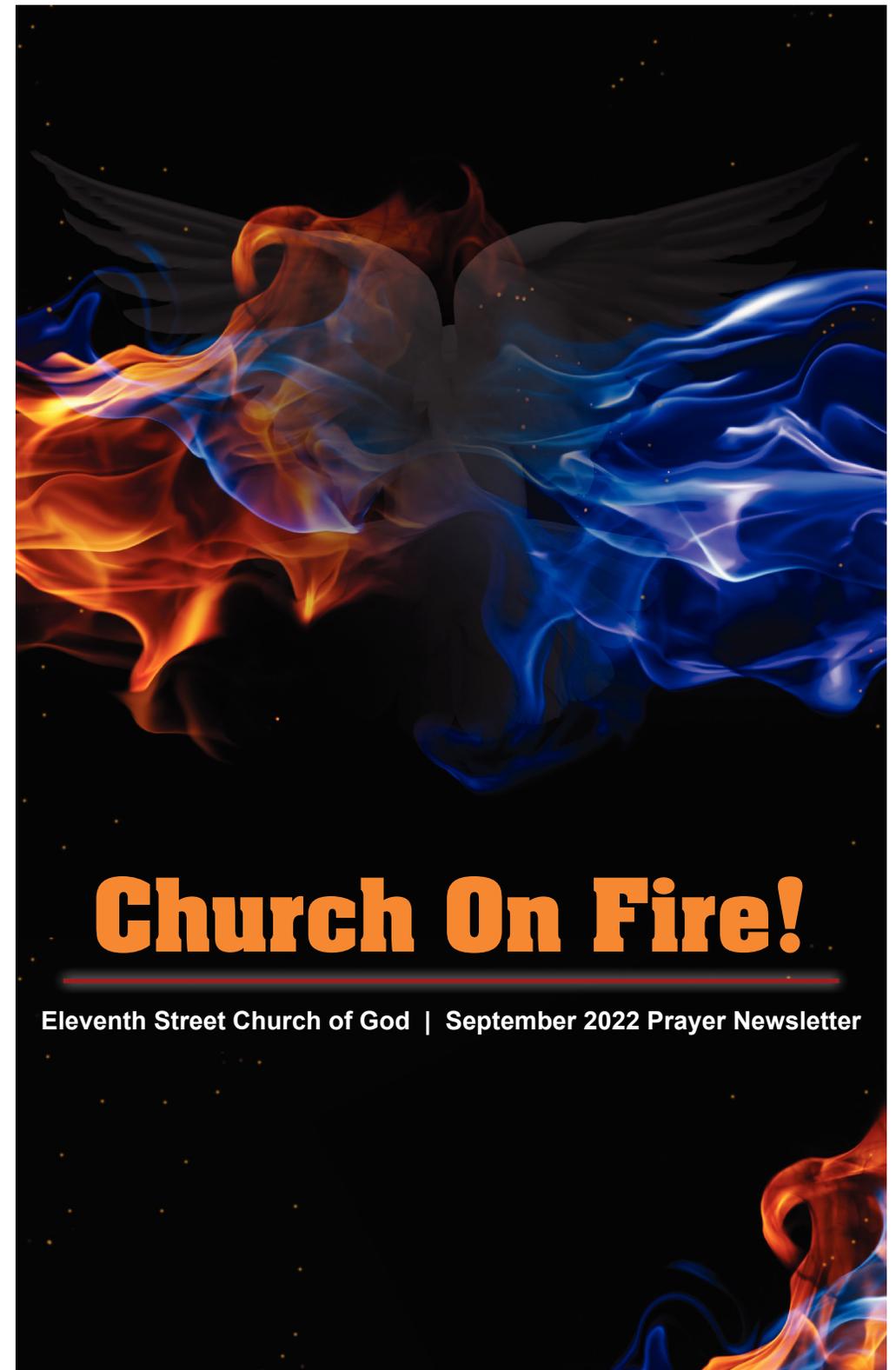
Our Board of Elders needs our prayers while they continue to make decisions for our church and its daily operations. Pray also for the Pulpit Committee as they continue to look for the next pastor. Please pray that God will give each person on these boards wisdom and discernment. Pray for our church, that each member has the courage to use their God given talents to minister and serve. And pray we keep Christ as the head, staying united and full of love.

### Recommended Scripture Reading

Colossians 1 - This chapter gives great instruction on how we should operate as a Church.

Acts 4 - A great chapter about boldly preaching the Gospel and a powerful prayer in verses 29-30 to pray over ourselves and our church.

Ezekiel 37 - This chapter describes the vision God gave Ezekiel regarding Israel's future restoration. It is a very encouraging chapter about God's ability to restore.



## Where Do We Go From Here?

I hope you had a good summer. We had a busy one with graduations and starting new chapters. For the first time in 14 years, I am not homeschooling. Talk about a life change; I worked myself out of a job! But I feel blessed to see my sons moving on into careers, new ministries and new opportunities. That's the cycle of life. One chapter closes, and parents have to let go. As we reluctantly with tears and some heartache close that chapter, our children excitedly open another into a future of so many possibilities. Our congregation is in this same type of season. We closed one chapter, with tears, and now we need to open another one. Oh, how goodbye hurts. Goodbyes always have some pain to them.

I am sure like me, many of you are asking, "Now what? Where do we as a church go from here?" This question has been on my mind everyday since Randy announced his retirement. It is an insecure feeling when we don't have the answers and don't know how it's going to work out, but as always and in every situation, with God there is hope.

Pastor Randy and Wanda were faithful leaders of our church for 40 years. The average tenure for a senior pastor at a church is somewhere between 5-8 years. Our situation is unique and we were blessed with consistency for 4 decades. But my brothers and sisters, don't lose heart! Although right now we do not have a senior pastor, we are not without a Priest, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,..." (Heb. 4:14 ESV)

Jesus is not only our priest, but our leader, "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." (Eph. 12:23 NIV) He "fills everything in every way", that means He will provide our needs to continue ministering, serving and loving those around us. He is our Rock and our future hope is in Him alone, "but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." (Eph. 2:19-22 ESV) If we continue to submit to and obey Christ, God will provide what we need, "Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from

him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us." (1 Jn. 3:21-23 NIV) Even if it seems everything is going against us, remember - "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Ro.8:31 NIV) If God can turn dry bones into a large army (Ezekiel's vision in Ez. 37), if He can raise Christ from the dead, then He can make our church a growing, thriving spirit-filled church on fire! This is not the time to give up hope for 11th Street; it is the time to be full of hope, "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." (Ro. 8:25 NIV) Be patient my friends, God hears our prayers, knows our concerns and has not abandoned our church.

We need to trust, obey, and pray. God has promised to provide what we need; "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Ro. 8:32 NIV) His will is for churches to thrive and be full of the Holy Spirit. A place where believers can grow and mature, where we boldly share the gospel, and love each other. We can have that here and now! But we must have Jesus as the head, being obedient to Him.

Each member of our church has a vital role to play in our present and future. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." (1 Cor. 12:4-7 NIV)

We all need to pull together to become a thriving, purpose driven church. Do you know God has called each of us into full time ministry? Whether as a stay at home parent, at your job, or in a church - "...for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Pet. 2:9 NLT) We are the church, we are a royal priesthood. So let's keep on ministering!

So, to answer the question, "Where do we go from here?" We follow our High Priest, Jesus. Obey His commandments. Love each other. And use our spiritual gifts to bless each other at 11th Street.

Watching God Work,

Carolyn Abel