

What does it mean to be free? We like to believe we live in a free country, but how much of it is really free? I mean it seems like we're paying for just about everything. And even the opportunities and the freedoms that we do have are limited by someone or something, right? And even when I'm free to do something, and I go ahead and do it, don't I have consequences for that choice? Even if it doesn't hurt someone else, don't many of my indulgences hurt me? And so, how free are we really? And I guess that leads me to question the very definition of freedom. I think most of us consider true freedom the opportunity to do whatever I want, whenever I want. If I want to eat a whole box of Oreo cookies in one sitting, I have the freedom to do that, right? Or if I want to drive 100 miles an hour on the highway, I could do that. And though that might be illegal, technically I could do it. I might get in trouble, have to pay a fine, even go to jail, or at least suffer a bellyache, but I could do them all. And so, is that real freedom? And I think we get confused about freedom. We want freedom to be the opportunity to indulge in our desires and passions. But we want to do them without consequence. Right? That's what we would like to define freedom as. However, that's not the world that God created. Every action has consequences, either good or bad. Either severe or minor. We are limited by our humanness, and so we are not free in the way we want. And we weren't meant to be free that way. But then Jesus came and he set us free. He said in John 8.36, "So if the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free." (TLB) What did he set us free from? The apostle Paul tells us that we are

set free from sin and death. That the consequences of our choices and the ultimate result of our wrong choices (death) has been removed because of Christ. But did Jesus free us so that we could do whatever we want whenever we want? Not according to the Paul, "For, dear brothers, you have been given freedom: not freedom to do wrong, but freedom to love and serve each other." (Gal 5.13, TLB) And so, if we aren't freed to be free like we inherently understand freedom, what is our freedom? How can we define it? I would define our freedom, in our relationship with Jesus, as the opportunity to choose whatever we want to do but purposefully choosing to go without whatever we crave and being fine with it. And I think each part of that is key. It means we have the opportunity. We have the chance. We aren't chained and locked away. And despite that opportunity, we choose to purposefully go without that thing we desire. Whatever it is that we might crave: sugar, alcohol, gossiping, a new TV, an adrenaline rush, etc., we choose to purposefully go without it. But most importantly, and only through the grace and power of God, we are fine with it. We may crave it, but we live without it. It doesn't consume us. We are fine with it. Even happy with our choice. That's true freedom. Freedom is wonderful if we see it that way. But, I believe, only truly possible by the power of Christ in our life. And ultimately only to be used to love. I pray each of us finds that freedom in all areas of life and love others well. Serving Him and you, Matthew

Adult Night Out

Tuesday, February 19th will be our annual adult night out event at Los Charros in Rushville. This is a chance for us adults to have a night out and enjoy each other's company. **Please sign up** in the back of the sanctuary or let Matthew know if you plan to attend. We'll meet at the restaurant at 6:30pm.

Directory Updates

We plan to make updates and corrections to our church directory in February. If you have any changes (i.e. update of picture, change in address, etc) please let Matthew know as soon as possible. If you currently are not in our directory, please let Matthew know and we'll make sure we get you added!

Youth Game Night

Sunday, February 10th from 5:00pm to midnight we will be having a Junior High and High School Game Night. Join us for pizza for supper followed by a night filled with a variety of games. Please bring a treat or 2-liter pop to share.

January Financials

	Weekly Actual	Yearly Actual	Yearly Budget
Jan 6th	\$1,081.00	\$1,081.00	\$1,331.29
Jan 13th	No Service		\$2,662.58
Jan 20th	\$1,387.00	\$2,468.00	\$3,993.87
Jan 27th	\$1,403.22	\$3,871.22	\$5,325.16
Totals	\$3,871.22		

Prayer List

Tina Althiser (Judy B's friend) – cancer treatments
 Steve Derry – hospitalized undergoing tests
 Shelly Claxton (Pam K's friend) – cancer spreading
 Morris Cox – in nursing home recovering from pneumonia
 Ashley Griffin – foot injury
 Nathaniel Griffin – mouth surgery in March
 Todd Hamm - cancer treatments
 Shane Hargrave – loss of ministry job
 Miranda Hoppock – cancer treatments
 Tam Fabish (Patti C's friend) – knee surgery
 Bill Jones – surgery after fall went well
 Frankie & Sharon Jones – therapy (Frankie) and back pain, with Afib issues (Sharon)
 Leonard Kaufman - cancer
 Loretta Mummert – home recovering from heart attack
 Garry Myers (Dusti H's coworker's dad) – late stage cancer
 Brandi Rudd – cancer treatments
 Marsha Tilletson - tests
 Marissa – cancer (Letha Stambaugh's friend)
 Hailey (14 y/o friend of Carlocks) – cancer
 Mary Belville's friend – cancer
 Mary (Pam K's aunt) – cancer
Praises
 Beckie Beaird (Laurie M's friend) – cancer free
 Evelyn Carlock – doing well
 Birth of Alora Rose Shaw (Jacob and Emma Shaw)
Condolences
 Family of Paul Morris
 Family of Terry Smith
 Family of Brandon Welker

The Astoria Christian (USPS 352-870) is published monthly by Astoria Christian Church, 219 W. State St, PO Box 677, Astoria, IL 61501. Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, IL.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astoria Christian, PO Box 677, Astoria, IL 61501

You Are Welcome At Our Services!

Sunday

Morning Worship.....9 a.m.

Sunday School.....10:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Family Night.....6:00 p.m.

February Events:

- Wed, Feb 6th 6:00 p.m. Family Night
- Sun, Feb 10th 5:00 p.m. Youth Game Night
- Wed, Feb 13th 6:00 p.m. Family Night
- Sun, Feb 17th 4:30 p.m. Youth Committee
- Sun, Feb 17th 6:00 p.m. Board Meeting
- Mon, Feb 18th 6:00 p.m. Camp Fellowship: Rushville
- Tues, Feb 19th 6:30 p.m. Adult Night Out: Los Charros
- Wed, Feb 20th 6:00 p.m. Family Night
- Wed, Feb 27th 6:00 p.m. Family Night



Astoria Christian Church

LOVE

*is patient
 is kind
 it does not envy
 it does not boast
 it is not proud
 it is not rude
 it is not self-seeking
 it is not easily angered
 keeps no record of wrongs
 does not delight in evil
 Rejoices with the truth
 always protects
 always trusts
 always hopes
 always perseveres
 Never Fails*