

Planting in the Desert

A monthly newsletter from the Austin family

February 2024

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Creeside church of Christ
Crosstown church of Christ
Decatur church of Christ
Frisco church of Christ
Gold Canyon church of Christ
Hico church of Christ
League City church of Christ
North Valley church of Christ
Northside church of Christ
Salt River church of Christ
Sunset church of Christ
Westhill church of Christ
& many generous individuals

Greetings my brethren! Lord willing this is the last time we send a newsletter with a month and a half in between. I will do my best to do better. I feel bad that I am sharing some news from January. But better late than never, I suppose.

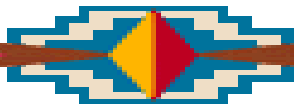
Since our last letter, Alyssa has moved to Tennessee to start school at Freed Hardeman University. Needless to say, this has been quite the adjustment for our family. We were planning for July, but she had enough credits to graduate early and had an opportunity to join her volleyball team for spring training. We scrambled and Divine drove her out just before the big snow and ice storm hit, which caused flight delays & cancellations, so Divine was gone an extra 5 days. Thankfully, the Hallmark family was generous in letting her and Alyssa stay with them! She seems to be enjoying it and adjusting to everything - please keep her in prayer!!

Salt River hosted the area-wide singing mid-January. There were 77 in attendance that night and the spirit was uplifting. Evan and his family also were traveling through and worshipped with us. Of course, we had him preach and everyone was thrilled to see them. Our sister Ramona lost her sister in January. Sadly, she was only 28 and left behind her 6-year-old daughter. The church stepped up to help Ramona and the family with food, singing, and support during this trying time. Ramona was a great example to her family and gave God the glory.

When February rolled around, I was excited to go out and see Alyssa. The Graymere church (TN) flew me out to spend time with the brethren and give our yearly update. This is always such a joy as we feel a close connection with so many. Juan, another missionary from Peru, was there at the same time. A big thanks to Jonathan Winchester who took care of us during our time there. All three of us were blessed to attend several days of the Freed lectures. The speakers, lessons, and environment were fantastic. I thoroughly enjoyed my time visiting and sharing several meals with Alyssa and seeing how things were going in her life - I thank God!

We have had a better relationship with those from Journey to Recovery (JTR) since they are brought to the building every third Sunday to worship with us. The ladies have also been bringing food to feed them after worship. We are also able to conduct a Bible study at JTR on Tuesday of the weeks they worship with us. This has been a more effective schedule, and we thank God. Ramona is now working there full-time, which has given an extra voice of encouragement for people to attend. She is allowed to be present in those studies as well.

February also brought a loss to Salt River as we saw Brother Aaron Sayles move to Virginia to be with his kids and grandchildren. Aaron has been a major worker, encourager, teacher, counselor, leader, and friend in the church. A beloved brother. We are already missing his presence tremendously. I can't say enough about all that



represented at Salt River. Please keep him and the church in prayer as everyone is adjusting. Because of the AZ housing market, he sold his house in only 4 days, but his house in Virginia was not ready. So, our family was honored to have Aaron stay with us for several weeks. What a joy it was to have the extra time with him. He has always been like another grandfather to our kids.



As Aaron left our home for VA, we had a special visit from long-time friends, John & Jill Schadegg. We were so very thankful and blessed to spend time with them – such encouraging, loving & servant-minded brethren!! Later that same evening, Aaliyah and her boyfriend, George, came to visit us for several days as they attended a concert in town. Aaliyah is doing well – keeping up with her studies and maintaining two jobs. We sure love & appreciate any time we can get with the kids!

The jail ministry has been going well. John and Ian, specifically, are knocking out all the Bible correspondence courses I can get them and are now moving into short study books. John has already said he wants to preach when he gets out. He and Ian are not only studying on their own, but they are also hosting

Bible studies with some of the other guys in their respective pods. This has been encouraging news to me as God is at work. Praying they can continue this focus and zeal when they get out. Ian gets out in several months, but John has a couple of years to go. Again, we solicit your prayers.

Our family is doing well – now down to four at home. Alayna and Josiah are both in club volleyball. They have practices and tournaments that keep us on the move. Divine and Alayna were in Kansas City for nearly a week. Divine is now coaching Josiah's volleyball team for the homeschooled kids (East Valley Athletes for Christ – EVAC). Josiah was able to recruit a friend from the Mesa church of Christ to play with him. Alayna has also started Beach Volleyball season at our local high school – time outdoors during sunset, truly enjoying the beautiful AZ weather this time of year ♥

With the new year has come many repairs around the home. We've had to do necessary work on the house, the pool, the vehicles, and even the appliances!! Just the waves that come and go with life. With two less schedules to keep up with, we thought it'd be a lot less busy than it has been. But, no complaining here - we have been tremendously blessed with great health, and so many loving people in our lives!! We are so thankful for all your love, prayers, and support. Sending our love!!