

# Macedonian Call

## January 2023



If you've known me for any amount of time, you are aware that one of my greatest concerns is the erosion of religious liberty in the US. It's seemed to me throughout the past year, as well as the year before, secular liberalism, socialism and totalitarianism are presently eroding our most fundamental rights—freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of religion (see Amendment I of the US Constitution). Now, you may look at the several legal victories in 2022 and find assurance that there are some level-headed, federal judges who are well-versed in our constitutional rights and have an opinion different than mine—that's okay—you're entitled to be wrong. But, a few prominent legal victories shouldn't provide us with the false sense that threats to our freedoms of speech, expression and religion are easily overcome and will eventually go away. In a recent opinion piece, Kelly Shackelford, president, CEO and chief counsel for First Liberty Institute, issues a stark warning of things to come for those of us who hold close the rights I mentioned above, especially that of religious liberty. Shackelford wrote: "As we approach 2023, it is becoming increasingly clear that those who oppose freedom—both people in the populace and in our own government—have not gotten the Court's clear message that religious liberty must be respected. In fact, they continue to exhibit blatant and at times dangerous hostility toward religious Americans. Sacrificing freedom of conscience is a horrible idea for everyone, even those who are not religious. Earlier [in December 2022], a Richmond, Virginia restaurant barred members of a pro-family organization from receiving service simply because of their religious beliefs regarding unborn life and marriage, even though this violates federal and state law! In several communities, government officials mistakenly banned nativity scenes from their Christmas displays after an anti-religion

organization sent letters making the ridiculous claim that such displays are unconstitutional. Then, Congress passed, and President Biden signed, a law that can be weaponized to punish the free exercise of religion. The so-called "Respect for Marriage Act" lets radical activists harass faith-based institutions in court because of their religious beliefs about marriage.... At the same time, while Congress repealed the military's COVID-19 vaccine mandate for those entering the military, thousands of active-duty personnel, and some who have been forced out of service, who have a religious objection to the vaccine continue to face hostility from military leaders.... Even those serving our veterans are facing religious hostility from this administration. Recently, a nurse practitioner, Stephanie Carter, sued the VA when her request for a religious accommodation from participating in abortions at the VA facility where she works was essentially rejected – twice!" While acknowledging that US citizens "enjoy more religious liberty than any time in the past 50 years," Shackelford advises that now is the time to "exercise that freedom or risk" losing it. He concluded the article by stating, "As we begin 2023, my prayer is that religious Americans will resolve to stand up against the hostility and live out their faith in public, at work, and in their schools." That is my prayer as well. A New Year doesn't only bring with it new blessings from above (James 1:17), it also brings new battles. But, as believers God has given us instruction on how we should stand against them (see Eph. 6:10-20). In spite of all the challenges which will threaten our religious liberty in 2023, we are still trusting God to give us a "Happy New Year!" ~ Pastor Randy

Source: "Supreme Court Respected Religious Liberty in 2022, But Will It in 2023?" Kelly Shackelford, 12/27/22



**FAMILY  
MINISTRY**

**A Note From Ashley**

The New Year for many of us brings new goals and aspirations. We may make New Year's resolutions or think to ourselves, "This is the year I will accomplish..." Whatever our goals may be, whether they're new or not, should first and foremost be handed over to God in prayer. In our power and money driven world sometimes, our focus can drift from glorifying God to glorifying ourselves. If our aspirations are centered on ego-centric ideas we may need to reevaluate our priorities. Most New Year's resolutions are typically beneficial. Some set goals to work out more, change up their eating habits, budget their money, make more money, etc. While none of those are inherently bad we want to make sure the motivations behind them are glorifying to God. Do we want to change our workout routine or eating habits to honor our bodies as temples of God, or do we want affirmation from others? Do we want to make more money in order to bless more people and introduce them to Christ or for selfish gain? Psalms 40:8 reads, "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." As we go into this New Year it is important for us to constantly seek the will of God and not our own. In John 6:38 Christ states, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." Are we as focused on God's will and purpose for our lives as Jesus was? Focus on the will of God in this new year and see the change it will bring.  
Happy New Year ~ Ashley



**A Note From Pastor Joe**

Hello from Pastor Joe. I pray that you are ardently entering into 2023 with one main goal. Not just to work and make money so you can pay your bills and keep your home, vehicles and lifestyle. Not just to be able to purchase things you desire and/or need. Not just to go on vacations and enjoy retirement. These things are great, but as a child of our heavenly Father, there must be a larger goal. Something we commit to, give ourselves to, keep forefront in our mind and heart. Paul says it this way in Philipians 3:12-14. In verse 12 "I press on for that which Christ Jesus laid hold of me" and verse 14 "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. The biblical paraphrase, The Message, reads like this, "I am off and running and I am not turning back!" The word press is a hunting word used by soldiers hunting for enemies or hunter hunting animals. It means to pursue, a strong word for active, earnest endeavor. Here is my suggestion:

- Pray – Ask our Father to tell you what He would like to accomplish this year through you.
- Take – The mind of Christ is yours to take on. Emulate Him. (Read Phil. 3:15)
- Find – Find a friend who wants to accomplish what the Lord desires in their life and support each other. (Read Phil. 3:17)

Welcome to 2023 ~ Pastor Joe



**Weekly Bible study, Thursdays at 11:00 am in the JOY Classroom. This is a very special time of fellowship, prayer and Bible study. We invite all senior adults to join us.**

**Awana Clubs**  
Wednesdays @ 6:30 pm  
for 3 yrs-6th graders

**Youth Bowling Night**  
Friday, January 27th  
6:00 pm  
7th—12th Grade

**Bowling Night**



All Young Adults are invited to a night of fun at District 57 where we will play Laser Tag. Meet at the church at 6:30 pm on January 19th!



# Music

## A Note From Susan "I Need Thee Every Hour"

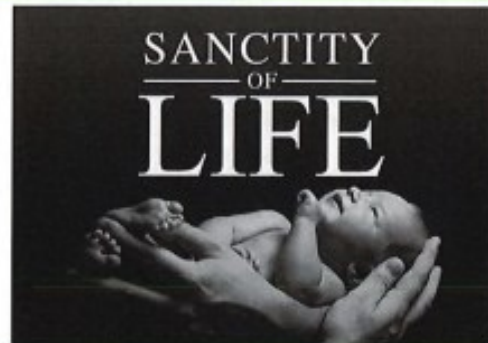
I need Thee every hour  
Most gracious Lord  
No tender voice like Thine  
Can peace afford  
I need Thee, O I need Thee  
Every hour I need Thee  
O bless me now, my Savior  
I come to Thee

As we enter 2023, I reflect upon how God has blessed me and my family during the past year. Without His guidance, presence, and grace, it would have been difficult. While searching for a hymn to research for this article, I stumbled upon "I Need Thee Every Hour". This hymn was written by Annie Sherwood Hawks, born on May 28, 1835, in Hoosick, New York. By the age of fourteen, Hawks was writing poems that were being published in a variety of newspapers. In 1859, she married Charles Hawks and focused on raising their three children. Dr. Robert Lowry, a prominent writer of gospel songs, was her pastor at Hanson Place Baptist Church in Brooklyn, N. Y. Lowry encouraged her gift of poetry. Dr. Lowry promised to write the music for her poems and encouraged her to continue writing prose. I Need Thee Every Hour was written in June 1872. Hawks writes, "One day as a young wife and mother of 37 years of age, I was busy with my regular household tasks during a bright June morning. Suddenly, I became so filled with the sense of nearness to the Master that, wondering how one could live without Him, either in joy or pain, these words were ushered into my mind, the thought at once taking full possession of me — 'I Need Thee Every Hour'. Seating myself by the open windows, I caught up my pencil and committed the words to paper." She took the poem to Lowry, who added the refrain and music to the poem. Mrs. Hawks continued by explaining "For myself, the hymn, at its writing, was prophetic rather than expressive of my own experiences, for it was wafted out to the world on the wings of love and joy, instead of under the stress of great personal sorrow, with which it has often been associated."

"I need thee" is repeated 20 times in this intimate hymn about the nearness of Jesus. By her own admission, Hawks didn't understand "why this hymn had touched the great throbbing heart of humanity" until years later, during a period of loss and grief. Then, at last, she felt "something of the comforting power" of words from her own pen. I pray that we don't wait until loss and grief to recognize our need for the comforting power of Christ. We need Him every second, minute, and hour of each day. Blessings to you in 2023. - Susan



Choir Practice  
Sundays at 5:00 pm  
New members are always  
welcome!



January 22nd is recognized by churches across the nation as "Sanctity of Life Sunday," and it is a great opportunity for us to recognize that God is the Author and Creator of life. We will line the church's driveway with luminaries in memory of the more than 63 million babies killed in 48 years of legalized abortion in the United States.



Sunday,  
January 29th  
11:00 am  
Service

We will begin on the 29th with a Men's Breakfast at 9:00 am in the Fellowship Hall including a joint SS Class for the men at 9:45. Then at 11 am the Men's Ministry will conduct the morning service. All men are invited to join us!!!