

BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

Power in the Blood



Cassie Tipton-York



Joshua Wise

Rev. Bruce Cannon

The Damascus Road

By Cassie Tipton-York

In the scriptures, there are many recorded accounts of the miracles performed by Jesus during His earthly ministry. The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), the Centurion's servant (Matt. 8), the demoniac (Mark 5), and countless others were changed and transformed when they encountered the Son of the Living God. Even Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9), a Pharisee who lived his life persecuting followers of Jesus, had an eye-opening experience when he was blinded on the road to Damascus. The conversion of Saul, renamed Paul, shows us how Jesus can even turn great wickedness around for His glory and for the advancement of His kingdom. Like Paul, everyone who knows Jesus Christ as their personal Savior has a "Damascus road" story. Although I know now that the path to my salvation was plotted long before I was born, my redemption story goes like this:

My Backstory

I grew up in Mitchell County, I did not have a perfect childhood, nor was there anything about me that was perfect. I was an illegitimate child who was not pretty or exceptional in any way. I sought solace for the imperfections of my life in friendships and through social acceptance, thinking that if other people liked me then I must be worth something. I hid my feelings from everyone. My fear of failure,

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Behind the Addiction

By Joshua Wise

As a young boy, I was very blessed. I grew up in church and was expected to be there every time the doors were open. My mother was the youth leader at Cane Creek Baptist Church and not only taught the word of God to us, but lived it too. As a child, my mother grew up in a home where alcoholism was an issue, so it was never tolerated or accepted in our home. As time passed, and I was given more freedom, I began to fall into the hand of peer pressure. As young teenagers, we were allowed to start camping on the weekends. With this new found freedom came bad decisions. It started with stealing alcohol from family members and later led to drug abuse. Teenagers often feel that it's cool to drink beer, liquor, etc....but I can honestly say it was the beginning of destruction. Destruction that led to over a ten year addiction for me. As the camping trips became more frequent so did my habit. What used to take a few beers to make me feel good, now was taking much, much more....and sad to say it just didn't give me the high that it once did. Up until this point in my life, I had had a good group of friends. The kind of friends that would last

Joshua Wise



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"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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3631 Altapass Hwy
Spruce Pine, NC
828-765-0660
altapassbaptistchurch@ccvn.com
www.altapassbaptistchurch.org

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

Sunday School - 10:00am
Worship - 11:00am
Sunday Evening - 7:00pm
Sunday Youth Program - 7:00pm
1st & 3rd Sunday
(Conductors for Christ ages 5-11)
2nd & 4th Sunday
(Teen Discovery ages 12-18)
Wednesday - 7:00pm

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Bible Believing Church"

Pine Branch Baptist Church

48 Church Road
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
Phone: (828) 765-9101
www.pinebranchbaptist.net

Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

Sunday School • 9:45-10:40am
Worship Service • 10:45am
Sunday Evening • 6:30pm

A Bible-believing Fellowship
Loving God and Loving People

The Bridge Church of WNC

207 Pinebridge Avenue
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
TBCWNC.org
Pastors - Tom & Tammy Anglin

Sunday Service 10:30AM
Wednesday Service 7:00PM
Church Office M-F
9:00AM-3:00PM

Our passion is to help connect the Body of Christ in this area in order to see the Fire of God transform our community, state, nation and world! (See John 17:21)

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

280 Chapel St.
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
828-765-6590
www.berrychapelbaptist.com

Pastor - Steve Williams

Sunday School 9:45 AM
Worship Service 11:00 AM
Sunday Evening Care Meal/
Ministry - 5:30 PM
Wednesday Evening
Service 7:00 PM

Where Everybody is Somebody
And Jesus Christ is Lord!

Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

11090 Hwy. 226 South
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
www.sprucepineumc.org
spumc3@bellsouth.net
828-765-7446

Pastor Rev. Jeremy Troxler

Sunday School - 10:00am
Sunday Worship - 11:00am
Choir Wednesday - 7:00pm

The mission of Spruce Pine United Methodist Church is to be a beacon on a hill spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ through: Worship, Fellowship, Education, and Nurturing Service

First Advent Christian Church

211 Lenoir Road
Morganton, NC 28655
828-437-8206
www.fccmorganton.org

**Pastor Patrick Bradshaw
Associate Pastor Javier
Guzman**

pbradshawfccmorganton@gmail.com

Sunday School 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship 11:00 AM
Wed: Youth Meal 5:30PM -
Meeting 6:30PM
Adult Bible Study/Prayer 6:30PM
Choir Practice 7:15PM
Sat. Band Practice 4:30PM

Preaching Christ Crucified, Risen
and Coming Again!

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-684-8212

Pastor Rick Mercer

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study - 9:30 am
Sabbath Worship - 11:00 am
Vegetarian Buffet after church
Wednesday
Praise, Prayer & Proclaim -
7:00 pm
www.morgantonsda.org

Pleasant Grove Church of the Brethren

1717 Harrell Hill Road
Bakersville, NC
(828)-458-1947

Pastor: John Smith

Sunday School - 10:00 am
Worship - 11:00 am

We are a small, Christ-centered family of believers and would love to share God's Word and love with you and yours!

Horizon Church

500 East Fleming Drive
Morganton, NC
828-437-1212

**Pastors: Senior Pastor
Timothy Fortune &
Associate Pastor Mike Stroud**

Sunday Worship 10:30 AM
Wednesday 6:30PM

www.myhorizonchurch.org
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Grassy Creek Baptist Church

793 Old NC 226 Hwy
Spruce Pine, NC
828-765-4620
www.grassycreekbc.org

Sunday School 10:00am
Morning Worship 11:00am
Sunday evening 6:30pm
Wednesday:
J.A.M. (Jesus and Me) 7:00pm
Seekers (young adults) 7:00pm
Mid-week worship 7:00pm
"That Mitchell County
may know Christ"

Banner Elk United Methodist Church

486 College Dr.
Banner Elk, NC
(828) 963-6640

Reverend Dan Brubaker

Sunday School - 10:00 am
Contemporary Service - 9:40 am
Traditional Worship Service - 11:00 am
AA Open Step Meeting - Mon. 7 pm
AA Closed Big Book Meeting - Wed. 7pm
UMW & UMM Meeting - 2nd Sat. 10:00 am
English Classes - Tues. & Thurs. 6 - 9 pm

Roan Mountain Missionary Baptist Church

37 Sandy Branch Road
P.O. Box 668
Bakersville NC 28705

Pastor: Dr. C. Timothy Fowler

Sunday School - 10:00
Worship Service - 11:00
Sunday Evening - 6:30
Wednesday Bible Study - 7:00

Please join us in worship.
The Church where Christ is proclaimed
and His Word is believed.

Behind the Addiction

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a lifetime. But, one night I choose to go in a much worse direction. A distant family member asked me to help him track down a deer that he had shot. Instead of keeping my plans with my high school buddies, I went with him. That night I stared the face of Satan straight on. I was introduced to meth. He told me that meth would make everything better, that life couldn't get any better...and sure enough I felt like Superman (I was on top of the world). But that only lasted a short time. Each time I used, the effect just wasn't the same. Before I even realized it, I was hooked, I couldn't live without it...and a lot of it. Throughout the next ten years, I lived each day for the next high. I used whatever I could get my hands on (pain pills, marijuana, cocaine, etc.), chasing a high that I would never reach again. I found myself falling, losing control of the things that use to matter to me. I stared a mother and father, a sister and brother in the face that loved me so very much and could see the disappointment and hurt that I was causing. But no matter how much I knew I was hurting them, I just could not overcome the drive for that next high. Later, I was blessed with two special little girls. Sad to say, I loved them...but my desire to stay high seemed to be more important. I let over 5 years pass by, missing out on some of the most important days of my life. Addiction overshadowed how so very precious the birth, first steps, and first words of my children were. My sin and addiction lead to the downfall of my marriage-- divorce. With all these memories taking place in my life I was losing control.....I was in such a depressed state that I was ready to take my life. One night, I came to my mom's with all intentions of saying goodbye. I was higher than I had ever been, I left her house and went next door to mine. I found myself outside, left with no hope...Screaming if there is a GOD out there HELP ME!!!! My mom came as quick as she could, knowing that she would find her baby boy dead. She was at the point that all hope was gone; she had prayed and prayed--was God ever going to intervene. The next day God moved and when He moves things start happening! As hard as it was, my brother and brother-in-law had me involuntarily committed (thank God for their obedience). After running from the law, wandering through the woods, it came to an end the night of August 10, 2015. I was handcuffed and taken to Saint Joseph's Hospital in Asheville. For the first time in 10 years, I felt free. Through many prayers, tears, and heartaches my

family's prayers were being answered. A few weeks prior, my sister and brother-in-law had invited me to Bear Creek Baptist Church to listen to Chris Allen give his testimony. Of course, I declined their invitation, but they had continued to keep in contact with Chris Allen. Chris Allen had prayed with my family, and asked that God work in haste. He had continued to keep in contact with my sister and brother-in-law, offering help when I was ready. The time had come that I was ready, and I knew that the help I needed would only come through God the Father. While spending 5 days in the hospital, God had dealt with me and I was ready for a new life, I was ready for Christian rehab. My brother-in-law contacted Chris Allen for direction on what facilities were out there. He told my brother-in-law, Southeastern Carolina Crossroads, was his choice. He told us that Bruce Cannon has helped establish this facility and he knew that God's hand was upon it. Was he ever right!!! From the moment my feet touched the ground of this facility...God was moving. I felt his presence like never before. God helped me and he used me. I experienced a change in myself and was able to be a part of seeing men being renewed, set free, and finding salvation for the first time. Upon reflecting back at the months leading to rehab, God was orchestrating His plan for my life. He aligned the right people, obedient people, and the right resources before us. God makes no mistakes!!! I am a living example. It's amazing that God would allow someone like me who was so deep in sin, as far down in the valley as someone could possibly be, to the top of the mountain...overflowing with the abundance of His mercy, His grace, His love. He has delivered me and I am forever grateful. Why did God deliver me? Because He has a plan for my life...a calling. I know that part of my plan is to tell my story. Psalms 40: "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry, clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall trust in the Lord." He has established my goings, I am a new creature, a new man, a dad to my girls. Oh what a blessing, Oh what a Savior! He has restored my life, opened doors, and continues to replenish the important things in life. He continues to add new friends (Christian friends), advocates that uplift me and acknowledge that "all things are possible with God".

Church Directory

Plumtree Presbyterian Church

4527 Hwy 19E
Plumtree, NC 28664
828-765-6919
www.plumtreechurch.com

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
pastor@plumtreechurch.com

Sunday School 9:45 am
Worship Service 11:00 am
Life Groups Tuesday-Thursday evenings, 7:30 pm
Fusion Youth Wednesday's, 6:30 pm
Healing Services 2nd Sunday of each month, 6:30 pm

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Bear Creek Baptist Church

327 Bear Creek Road
Bakersville, NC 28705
www.bearcreekbaptist.com

Reverend Bruce Cannon

Sunday School 9:45 AM
Worship Service 10:45 AM
Discipleship 6:00 PM
Evening Worship 6:45 PM
Wednesday Worship 7:30 PM

"For God so loved the world, he gave his only Son..."

West Burnsville Baptist Church SB

222 West Burnsville Church Rd.
Burnsville, NC 28714
(828)-682-3990

Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.
Morning Service: 10:50 a.m.
Evening Service: 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday Service 6:30 p.m.

Church vision: To become passionate followers and servants of Jesus Christ while ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of our church and community.

Burkemont Baptist Church

4668 Burkemont Rd.
Morganton, NC 28655
828-437-2357

For more information,
please visit
www.burkemontbaptist.org

Dr. David Mills, Sr. Pastor

8:30am - Early Worship
9:45am - Sunday School
11:00am - Worship
6:00pm - Evening Worship

St. Lucien's Catholic Church

695 Summit Street
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
Phone (828) 765-2224

Sunday Mass 9:00 am
Wednesday Faith Formation
6:00 pm
Food Pantry Wed. 1:00-4:00pm

First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

125 Tappan Street
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
828-765-9411
www.sprucepinefbc.com
www.spfbc.blogspot.com

Dr. Rocky Branch
Senior Pastor

Sunday School - 9:45 am
Sunday Worship - 8:30 and 11:00 am
Sunday Evening - 6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening - 6:30 pm

Knowing God, Seeing God, Serving God, Submitting to God!

Burnsville Seventh-day Adventist Church

283 Crest View Road
Burnsville, NC
828-682-7476

Pastor Ed Couser

Sabbath (Saturday)
Pot Luck Lunch every Sabbath
after the sermon for everyone
Bible Study - 9:30 AM
Sabbath Worship - 11:00 AM
Tuesday Upper Room
Fellowship (Prayer Meeting) Wed.-6pm

Faith Fellowship Church

Champ Ray Rd.
Micaville, NC 28755
(828)-675-9284
www.ficn.org
www.ficnradio.org

Pastor: David Gillespie

Sunday School - 10:00 am
Worship Service - 10:45 am
Wednesday Bible Study - 7:00pm
"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord:
And he delighteth in his way."
Psalm 37:23

Bakersville United Methodist Church

119 S. Mitchell Avenue
Bakersville, NC 28705
828-765-9015

Pastors -
Dr. Louis H. Woodard, &
Rev. Gene Lanier

Sunday School 11:00 AM
Morning Worship 10:00 AM

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A Meditation

I Am

By Timothy Eller
McDowell County

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, "I AM" hath sent me unto you. Exodus 3:14 (KJV)

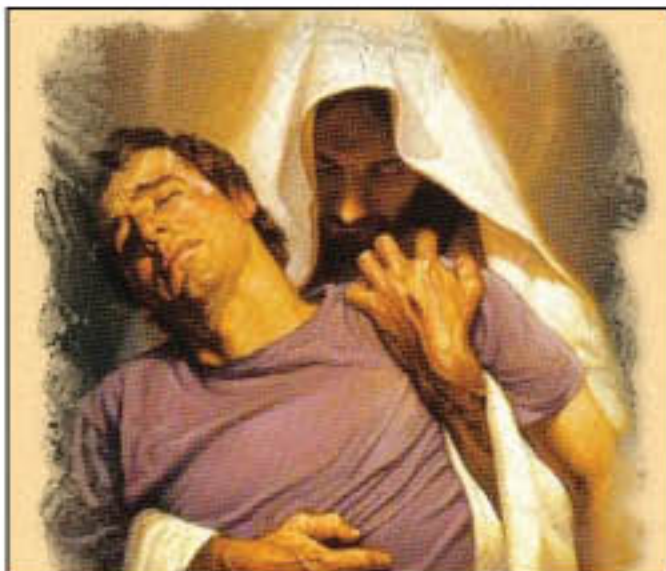
God made himself known to Abraham and also to us as "I Am" this is a common used term for God in the Old and New Testaments. The Hebrew word for this term is "hayah", which simply means "I will be". The Greek word for this is "eimi" --- this name means, he who always was, and is, and always will be.

Explicitly Jesus is the physical manifestation of the "I AM" of the Old Testament in the flesh. This God was the one who made promises to Moses and has made promises to us during his Earthly Ministry. Jesus is our "I AM"! When we ask who will comfort us, who will be our friend, who will be our counselor, who will be our protector and provider? He replies, I always was and always will be everything you need.

Jesus is everything you need in this New Year.

Tim Eller graduated from Carolina Graduate School of Divinity and has been involved in prison and jail ministry for the past fifteen years. Currently he is operating in the capacity of a servant of Jesus Christ.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17



And I now know that, Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me". Addiction is one of Satan's most powerful tools, but I serve a God that is much stronger. Don't allow doubt, fear, and the world's statistics cloud your thoughts. My family prayed and didn't give up on God...He intervened and I

am a living example of his merciful grace. I want everyone reading this article to remember that "There is a difference between living and being alive". We wake up each day breathing and capable of performing life's everyday responsibilities or we can wake up thankful and filled with the Holy Spirit, recognizing that he is King and able to meet our every need. As I end, I want to give special thanks to Southeastern Carolina Crossroads (910-549-8487), Pastor David Chestnut, Pastor Bruce Cannon, Chris Allen, a praying family, and above all my savior, Jesus Christ.

Josh Wise lives in the Hawk community in Mitchell Co. He works with Pioneer Cabinets and speaks continuously to help other addicts.

You Can Live Conflict-Free

By Joyce Meyer

Can you think of a time when you had an ongoing issue with someone in your life? Then, just when you thought you couldn't take another minute, God asked you to hang in there one more time and not give up?

Maybe you've thought, God, I have held my tongue and kept a good attitude with this person so many times, and now You want me to play the peacemaker again? This is just too much to ask!

God calls each one of us to be an instrument of His peace. Many times this means being the first to ask forgiveness or sticking with someone who has tried our patience over and over again.

These situations are perfect opportunities God will use to build our character, because He can use other people to be the "sandpaper" that smooths down the rough edges in our personality.

You're probably familiar with Matthew 18:21-22 (AMPC). Peter asked Jesus how many times he had to forgive someone who sinned against him. I'm sure he thought he was being generous when he said, "Up to seven times?" But Jesus answered Peter by saying, "Not up to seven times, but seventy times seven."

You see, God is asking us to be longsuffering with the people in our lives. He wants us to go the extra mile and stay determined to do the right thing, even when other people do the wrong thing. And I have found that it's almost impossible to stay in conflict with someone if you refuse to argue!

Over the years, the Lord has used my marriage to teach me important lessons in this area. I can vividly remember one occasion when my husband, Dave, and I had been arguing, and afterward, the Lord spoke to my heart and said, "I want you to go apologize and ask for his forgiveness."

I said, "But God, he started it! Dave should be the first one to say he's sorry!"

The Lord was asking me to be the peacemaker, regardless of what Dave did or didn't do. He wanted me to see how taking this action brings unity and allows Him to bring healing in our relationships.

Conversely, if we always wait for the other person to apologize or be the peacemaker, we actually harm ourselves and hinder the potential for peace.

The Lord instructs us to pursue peace with others and "seek it eagerly" (1 Peter 3:11 AMPC). It's not always easy, but as we take steps to follow God's Word in this area, it opens the door for Him to bless us in so many ways.

One of my favorite examples is the story of Abraham and his nephew Lot. Genesis chapter 13 tells us how they each had a tremendous number of livestock. In fact, their possessions were so great that there wasn't enough land for both of them, and it inevitably led to strife. But look at how Abraham handled the situation:

"Abram said to Lot, Let there be no strife, I beg of you, between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are relatives. Is not the whole



land before you? Separate yourself, I beg of you, from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you choose the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Genesis 13:8-9 AMPC).

Because of Abraham's willingness to keep peace in the family, the Lord blessed him abundantly. In verses 14-17, God says to Abraham:

"Lift up now your eyes and look from the place where you are...for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your posterity forever. And I will make your descendants like the dust of the earth, so that if a man could count the dust of the earth, then could your descendants also be counted. Arise, walk through the land, the length of it and the breadth of it, for I will give it to you."

I encourage you to apply this lesson to your own life. Maybe somebody's trying to stir up strife and you find yourself in a situation like Abraham's. If so, let peace begin with you, even if you know you're right.

No person or relationship is perfect, and there will always be things to work through. However, when you make a firm decision to pursue peace, you can quench the spirit of strife and put a stop to conflicts before they ever really begin.

And remember, even if no one else notices, God always sees. And when you choose to do what's right because it's right, He will reward you in some of the most marvelous ways.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including Battlefield of the Mind and Overload: How to Unplug, Unwind and Unleash Yourself from the Pressure of Stress (Hachette). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.org.



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Drug Use

Rev. Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County



The headlines are terrible! Drug use is up across the nation and is up in North Carolina.

- Four North Carolina towns make the national top 25 list for opioid abuse. (1)
- Nearly 16,000 people die every year from prescription drug overdose. (2)
- Heroin deaths in our state have skyrocketed more than 584 percent. (3)
- Nearly one out of every three opioid prescriptions, insured by employers, is being abused. (4)
- Approximately 8 percent of North Carolina residents reported past-month use of illicit drugs. (5)

Drug and alcohol use and abuse does so many bad things to the person using and to their family. It bankrupts families either by the user actually taking money designated for food, bills, etc. and using it to purchase drugs or by the theft and sale of family assets to support their addiction. It is the leading cause of imprisonment in North Carolina and nationwide. It is a leading culprit in marital breakup. Drug and alcohol addiction robs children of food and proper housing.

Alcohol and drug use among employees and their family members can be an expensive problem for business and industry, with issues ranging from lost productivity, absenteeism, injuries, fatalities, theft and low employee morale, to an increase in health care, legal liabilities and workers' compensation costs. (6)

The problem has now reached epidemic proportions in North Carolina and around our nation! The question that must be answered by everyone is: what are we going to do about it? There is not enough prison space available, nor can we build enough prison cells, to house those who will need to be incarcerated if our society continues to breakdown and does not address this problem head-on.

Opioid prescriptions must have more restrictions and limitations placed upon them. Nearly one out of every three (32 percent) opioid prescriptions, which are subsidized by America's employers, is being abused. (7) We simply cannot continue to write prescriptions for mass doses of opioids and not maintain very strict control over their distribution. These drugs end up on the streets way too easily!

Help is available to those struggling with addiction and to their families. Beginning on Thursday, January 5th, 7:00pm Bear Creek Baptist Church, 327 Bear Creek Church Road, Bakersville, will begin offering Celebrate Recovery. Sessions will be held each Thursday night for males, females and family members. For more information please feel free to contact the Church at 828-688-4331.

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Rev. Bruce Cannon currently serves as the Senior Pastor of Bear Creek Baptist Church in Bakersville. Formerly he served as Director of Missions for the Bladen Baptist Association and has served on the General Board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.



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Still in Need of Prayer

Franklin Graham



As we close out 2016 and begin a new year fresh, I want to say thank you for the support you have provided through your prayers and your financial gifts. I look back over the year and thank God for the incredible opportunity to go to all 50 states, stand on the capitol steps, share the Gospel, and call tens and tens of thousands of people to prayer. It was amazing. Never did we dream there would be such a harvest of souls at these rallies. We wouldn't have been able to do this without you standing with us. And yes—God answers prayer!

The need for prayer for our nation didn't end with an election, a new administration in Washington, or a new year. America still needs the message of "repentance that leads to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10, ESV). We are looking at going back to all 50 states in the next few years. In May, we will start with the Decision America 2017 Tennessee Tour, going to four cities—Chattanooga, Murfreesboro, Jackson, and Memphis. And then in the fall, we will go to seven cities across the Lone Star State with the Decision America 2017 Texas Tour. These are one-night events, saturating each region with the hope of the Gospel and a call to prayer and repentance.

This is a time of both great opportunity and tremendous challenge for our nation. By the time you read this letter, we will be preparing for the inauguration of a new president who has a clear vision for America's future. As Christians, we have a responsibility to pray for our president, vice president, and new leadership in Washington, that they will look to Him for wisdom and direction. The Bible directs us that "prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made ... for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

In addition to Decision America 2017, we have a full slate of Crusades across North America and around the world. In February I will hold a Crusade in San Juan, Puerto Rico. This island, a U.S. territory, is facing an epidemic of drug abuse, corruption, and poverty. Will you be praying for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and that hearts there will be open to the Gospel? "It is the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16).

Hundreds of thousands of people in the U.S. and around the world told us that they made a life-changing decision for Christ during 2016 as a result of the ministries of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. We thank God for each and every one—and we give Him the glory! We couldn't do this work without your faithful prayers and gifts. I am deeply grateful for your partnership in the Gospel. May God use you in His service in this new year!

Reverend Franklin Graham is President and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and of Samaritan's Purse, an international Christian relief organization.

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The Damascus Road

continued from page 1

my feelings of worthlessness, and my self-loathing were all carefully tucked away behind a mask of laughter which I had been forging from birth to cover my weakness and insecurity.

Towards the end of my senior year in high school, my fears of inadequacy gained significant momentum as I was preparing for the next phase of my life. Although I had been accepted to college, I was more frightened of failure than ever before. It was during this time that I made a fateful mistake; I started drinking with some of my friends from school. Alcohol offered a long-awaited refuge to my fear and pain, and like most people who have problems with addiction, I was good at drinking. Drinking gave me false courage and I used it to muster up the nerve to go on to school as was expected of me. Shortly after moving into the dorm, I started smoking marijuana and thus began my descent into drug addiction. Within two years, I flunked out of school, I started using methamphetamine, and I got in trouble with the law. I sought help through psychiatry and drug rehab; however, neither worked and I continued to use.

Over the course of the next fifteen years, I tried to forge a life for myself out of the chaos of addiction by getting married and having children. Although I managed to stay clean while I was pregnant, having children did not stop my drug use and my addiction just kept getting worse. By the time my youngest child turned two years old, I was using OxyContin on a daily basis and methamphetamine whenever I could. After my marriage fell apart, during my second attempt at managing my addiction through methadone maintenance, I started attending a local church with my parents. I was still abusing drugs, I had an open case with DSS, along with other assorted problems associated with my addiction, and I went to church hoping God would take all the negativity out of my life. Although I wanted God to remove all the bad, unwanted aspects of my life, I did not want to give up what had become my life: getting and using drugs. What I did not realize at the time was that God was working; but for my life to get better, it was going to have to get worse. I was not ready to give up the drugs.

Gradually, however profoundly, my addiction cost me everything: my marriage, my possessions, my self-respect, and eventually my children. Once DSS stepped in and removed my children from the home, I made one last feeble attempt to get clean in an impatient detox and rehabilitation center. I no longer believed that I could ever go back to living a normal, clean life, therefore, I did not believe that this stay would "fix" me, just as the other attempts at getting clean had not worked in the past. Needless to say, even though I learned some new things about myself and my addiction, this stay was no different than the rest, it did not change me. Utterly hopeless and desperate to escape, I cut all remaining ties with the people who showed any concern for me and I set out to destroy myself. Living out of a backpack on the street, staying with whoever would put me up for the night without any regards for my personal safety. I was consuming more drugs than ever, living the life of a reprobate. I did not have any intentions of returning to the life and the people I had known, I never thought I would see my children or my family again, but the LORD had something else in mind.

The Road to Damascus

I am sure the Apostle Paul, and probably most anyone who encounters Christ at some point in their life, thought nothing special would happen on that day, or on that journey, but when the Lord shows up, He shows up in a big way. For Saul (Paul), he was on his way to Damascus to punish followers of Jesus Christ when the voice of the Lord spoke to him and then he was rendered blind for three days (Acts 9). For me, I thought I had been forgotten by God, an outcast and menace of society, an individual without hope who was destined to die in their addiction. That is when the Lord Jesus Christ stepped in and changed my life forever.

I'll never forget the knock of intervention on the door of the home of which I happened to be, "Cassie, we know you are in there, so might as well come on out." Well, I thought, it is finally over. No more running, no more hiding, whatever happens next has to be better than this. I grabbed the couple of backpacks which held the few possessions I had left, and I stepped out the door to face the consequences of my actions. Four members of the Yancey County police department were waiting to take me into custody, and as they put me in the car, an inexplicable relief washed over me. On the way to the police station, I thought about the choices I had made that led to this event, and quite honestly, I was surprised that this was to be the end of my running, rather than the death I had been so actively seeking. I did not care what happened next, at least the life I had been living was over.

I had been in jail for about three weeks-- the drugs were out of my system, when the moment I had been dreading was upon me, the moment when I would have to face all the mistakes I had made. I did not have anything to mask my feelings, no pills and no meth, only the raw, undiluted truth of what all I had done. The weight of my sins, the guilt, the shame, and the sorrow crushed me into oblivion, but it was in that moment of brokenness that I met Jesus. In what seemed almost like a dream, where time has no meaning, He was there; I could feel His presence. He revealed to me in that cell that although the burden of sin is heavy and the punishment for sin is death, He already bore my sin to Calvary and died on a cross to pay my debt. Jesus Christ changed my life in a jail cell in Yancey County, and from the moment He showed me the truth, my life has not been the same. Although I had lost all faith in myself, I was given faith in a power greater than myself by the One who spoke creation into existence, my Savior, my Redeemer, and my Friend, Jesus Christ.

A New Life in Christ

Over the last six years, God has truly blessed my life. First of all, I am a living witness to the love, the mercy, and the power of God. I am blessed to be an encouragement to those who have loved ones suffering from addiction and a beacon for those who may be seeking help themselves. What Jesus has done for me also serves as a reminder that although the world may try to discount His existence, He is still very much alive and performing miracles the same as always. He is true

and faithful to His Word, He came to seek and save those that are lost, choosing the foolish of this world to confound the wise and the weak to confound the things which are mighty (1 Corinthians 1:27). When you put your faith and trust in Him, you can do all things through His power and His strength (Luke 1:37), even overcome addictions that seem impossible to defeat.

Not only have I been clean and sober since the Lord changed my life, I have been granted a new life in Christ. In 2012, I regained custody of my children and God has restored and renewed my relationship with them and my other family members. I have also been recently blessed with two more children that I acquired when I married my husband in November of last year, a man who also happens to be another one of God's miraculous conversions.

When the Lord changed my life, He gave me a heart of service and a burning desire to help others like myself. I felt led to go back to school so that I could pursue a career in substance abuse treatment. In 2015, I graduated from the Human Services program at Mayland Community College where I earned my Associates in Applied Science degree in Human Services Technology. Among Mayland scholarship recipients, I was honored to be chosen by Mayland's scholarship committee to speak at D.R.E.A.M. Day (Dreams Realized Every Day AT Mayland Day), and I was recognized by the faculty at Mayland as an outstanding graduate for both my academic and leadership skills. At the beginning of this month, I started my last semester at Lees-McRae College where I am earning my Bachelors in Applied Science in Human Services. I currently hold a 4.0 GPA and I intend to eventually pursue my Masters in Addictions Counseling.

Like each one who is a redeemed child of God, we all have a conversion story. We were all dead in our trespasses and sins until the Lord Jesus opened our blinded eyes and wrote His truth on our hearts. I am sure I will never come close to being as influential as the Apostle Paul, the only similarities we share is being chased down by a Holy God despite the magnitude of our sin. I know that it is only by His love, His grace, and His mercy, that I am where I am today. Although my life is still fraught with obstacles and I still lack faith in myself, I have complete faith that the One who called me out of the darkness will finish His good work in me until He calls me home, or when the trumpet sounds at His glorious coming.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. II Corinthians 5:17

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8:36


Cassie is continuing her education and working part time with the Mitchell Co. Chamber.


Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Psalms 23:4


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A Time for All Ages

By Doug Harrell

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace."
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

We have just finished most of our Christmas Celebrations and just a couple of more days until the New Year rolls in. Most of our family has rotated through rather than being here all at one time. Those days when we had the large crowds are probably gone for good, with the family expanding, new brides, new grooms and new great grandchildren here and probably more in the near future. As the seasons of life change, the ebb and flow of families also changes. At times, I really miss the days when all the children, then the children and their mates were here on the holidays. I have watched what happened with Mother and Dad as we children grew up, married and had our own children; we started creating our own family traditions and occasions, and Mother and Dad were not as big a part as they once were.

As we move through life and the changes come, we can either embrace the changes or be bitter and resentful. I am still learning to make the embrace much more powerful than the resentment, learning to love the new rather be mad at the change. Life is truly too short to be sad and down trodden when things don't go as we might like.

Christmas Day was a time for reflection here on Harrell Hill. We had our granddaughter Geneva, who is four, and my mother Geneva, who is ninety-two, with us. About 5:30 AM little Geneva woke up and we let her open her stocking and gifts and about 6:30 mother Geneva woke and we did the same for her. The joy that both of them exhibited was truly refreshing as they expressed glee over the new found treasures that had been provided. Over that hours' time I had flash-backs of the mornings around the fireplace at Mother and Dad's as we four children were so excited about Santa Claus and what he had brought us. It usually was not a lot in today's terms, but we were certainly blessed with the love and caring that was provided. I tried again to look at Christmas morning through the eyes of

the four year old, the eyes of the seventy three year old, and the eyes of the ninety two year old. As a seventy three year old, the true meaning of Christmas was more on my mind than the presents under the tree or in the stocking. Even little Geneva made several comments about it being Jesus birthday and that she was glad she was a Christian. At her age I have to compliment her parents for teaching her those things because I am not really sure that she has reached enough maturity to really understand, but what do I know! I am not sure what it looked like from the eyes of a ninety two year old, but I could see signs of joy and also signs of sadness and loneliness in Mother's eyes. She made the statement several times that it was hard and I can only imagine what life would be like to have lost your mate of almost seventy years, to feel like you were no longer an integral part of the activity that was taking place around you. To not really be able to maintain a conversation thread for more than a few moments, to really not know what was taking place with children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and great great grandchildren.

As I look forward to the New Year, I hope I am able to place myself in the shoes of the four year old and the ninety two year old and show love and compassion for all those of all ages around me. It is so easy to get angry and frustrated with both ends of the spectrum, and also the middle at times. I look at how children are being treated today, sometimes with no love, no discipline and no teachings of the real meaning of life is so many cases. As I write this



continued on page 13

My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham

Encourage your children to give thanks, especially for Jesus

Q: I've decided that the hardest thing about Christmas is getting our four children to write thank you notes afterward. Am I expecting too much of them? I admit I get tired of trying to get them to do this. — Mrs. S.G.

A: I suspect many parents could echo your frustration! After all, expressing thanks doesn't come naturally to most children; it's something they have to learn. And if they don't, they'll most likely be selfish and inconsiderate the rest of their lives.

This is why I hope you'll keep urging your children to write thank-you notes for the gifts they've received (or to express their thanks in other ways — a phone call or email, for example). Take time also to explain why it's important to thank people for what they've done for us. It's not just a social custom or a matter of courtesy; it's a way to help us look beyond ourselves, and to be grateful for the love of others. The Bible says, *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition. ... Rather, in humility value others above yourselves"* (Philippians 2:3).

Remember too that our children learn not only through what we tell them, but through what we do. Is your life characterized by "an attitude of gratitude"? Is thankfulness a sincere part of your life every day? The Bible says, *"Give thanks in all circumstances"* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Most of all, however, encourage your children to give thanks for the greatest gift any of us can ever receive — the gift of God's own Son, Jesus Christ. Christmas is over for this year — but shouldn't Christmas be part of our lives every day, as we thank God for sending His Son into the world for our salvation? Make Christ the center of your family's life during this coming year.



Seek Christ's assistance to lift you out of despair

Q: I always feel kind of depressed after Christmas, and I've never been able to figure out why. It usually takes weeks and weeks for me to begin feeling normal. Why is this? — M.B.N.

A: I'm not a psychologist, of course — but I've noticed that some people do tend to feel somewhat "down in the dumps" after they've been very busy. It's not just physical exhaustion (although that may be part of it); often it's emotional exhaustion as well.

I often think of Elijah in the Old Testament. He was one of God's greatest prophets and a man of deep faith, and he had experienced God's provision during very difficult times. In one of the most dramatic scenes in the Bible, Elijah confronted hundreds of pagan priests who denied God — and God rewarded Elijah's faith by answering his prayers and rejecting those of his opponents. (You can read about this in chapter 18 of 1 Kings.)

And yet immediately afterward Elijah became depressed, and even asked God to take his life. Why? One reason was because he was physically depleted (the first thing God provided for him was food and rest). But he was also emotionally and spiritually drained, feeling he had failed because the king and queen refused to give up their opposition to God.

I don't know, of course, what your experience has been during the holidays. But get rest if you need it (and seek to control your schedule next year). Most of all, ask God to help you recover the true meaning of the Christmas season: the coming of Jesus Christ into the world for our salvation. Open your mind and heart to Christ, and allow His love to saturate your soul. The Bible says, *"Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, ... not on earthly things"* (Colossians 3:1-2).



The Enemy Within

By Paula Holtsclaw

As I sit in my office glancing out the window I see a car pull-up; I recognize the individual in the car as one of our clients. She is a beautiful girl in her mid-twenties. She hesitates to get out of her car and I see she is crying. She has two passengers in the car with her-- one she has known a long time and his name is Drug Addiction. He is telling her not to go into Social Services. He tells her that she will fail her drug screen because she is doing meth. He tells her that her children will remain in foster care. He tells her that the Workers in that building are against her. He tells her that her parents have turned their backs on her and she disgusts them. Drug Addiction tells her he is the only thing she can count on. He tells her to pull out and leave. However, in a soft voice the passenger in the back seat speaks and tells her to go into my building. He tells her that he has warriors inside who will help her. He tells her that his warriors will not judge her because they have faced their own demons in life. He tells her those warriors will help her up when she stumbles, will work to get her children back to her, and will give her every resource available to get her on her feet. He tells her that her family loves her no matter what because parents never stop loving their children. He tells her he knows this because all his children have let him down many many times and he always forgives them and never stops loving them. The passenger in the back tells her she has never been alone-- that he will never leave her. He tells her that Drug Addiction is no match for his love for her. In that moment, she feels no judgement. There is no hatred. There is no condemnation. There is just a peace. In that moment, she makes a choice and, as I watch, she heads toward the doors of Social Services. As she is walking in the door she feels a hand take hers and she knows that it's her back-seat passenger. She feels his strength and she whispers to him-- I know that you've got this Lord!!

It's the start of a new year and with that comes the belief that we can start a fresh and wipe the slate clean of all the bad that happened to us last year. There is a hope inside of us that the New Year will bring us exciting things. I believe that statement to be true-- a new year can be a fresh start and a chance to change your life. Every day at Social Services we see those who are struggling with the demon of drug addiction and day after day we see that demon take away everything they have. We see the loss of jobs, homes, family, and their own precious children. We see the total devastation that comes with the use of drugs. However, there is hope for those struggling with that Demon and, as long as there is breath in your body, you can change your life. I believe that hope comes from the Lord and His presence in your life will overcome anything. The Lord has put His servants at Social Services to help those with drug addictions by helping them get the resources they need to get clean, to get jobs, and to get their children back home with them. Those servants will do everything they can to help you they need is for you to want to help yourself. There is no obstacle too big for the Lord and I have never seen anyone not succeed when they have the Lord foremost in their life. Every success story we have at Social Services is attributed to that person's faith. I would say to those battling this demon of drug addiction, "you are not alone-- the Lord is with you and he will never leave you, not even in your darkest shameful hour." He has His warriors in place to help you fight your battles and all you have to do is trust in Him. This year is your year to turn your life around and take back what drug addiction has taken away. This is your year to get treatment and get clean. This is your year to look in the mirror and be proud of what you see. This is your year!

Paula is the Director of the Mitchell Co. Dept. of Social Services.



Morganton Seventh-Day Adventists Church

Give Me Jesus

By Rick and Cindy Mercer

We are told that one day there will be no more tears, sorrow or sadness. I long for that day. If you have ever had the carpet pulled out from under your feet, or maybe even stood by helplessly as you watched a friend or family member struggle...you too probably understand the desire for a fresh new start or just a better world to live in.

Unfortunately, there are plenty of distractions in this world that can "de-rail" any of us at any given moment. And what if one of those "distractions" cripple us to the point that we lose interest in our job, our family or even life itself. We have become all too familiar with another word for these distractions...or addictions as it is referred too often.

Addictions are present in a multitude of categories. We could even name hundreds of addictions in this given article. But rather than inundate ourselves with "the list"...it seems more appropriate to steer our thinking to the overcoming of the addictions.

Allow me to illustrate through a story I heard some time ago.

There was an old traveling preacher that was going from one mountain town to the next. He would diligently march forward to eagerly do his part in sharing the gospel with as many people as possible before the winter set in. Unfortunately, he got caught in a bad winter storm and lost his way.

The pastor now lay in the bitter cold snow, struggling for his life. Then thankfully, along came Mountain Bob. He was running his traps and discovered the almost frozen to death preacher. He threw him over his shoulder and carried him to his warm cabin. Mountain Bob began to nurse the preacher's wounds, doing everything he could to save his life.



The good news is that the traveling preacher was getting stronger and stronger each day. He could hardly contain his excitement as he prepared to leave Mountain Bob's cabin and return to the task he originally set out to do.

But the bad news is they were snowed in for the winter. It simply was not safe for the preacher to set out on foot to travel to the next mountain town. His only choice was to stay. As time passed, the preacher and Mountain Bob became very good friends.

As a matter of fact, everything was going great until Mountain Bob got robbed. Yes, robbed by little critters called rats. You see Mountain Bob liked to smoke...a lot. He would take his tobacco and roll his cigarettes in the thin little paper. But the rats got into his rolling paper and left it in tiny shreds! This left Bob with no way to smoke. Unfortunately, Bob was highly addicted to the tobacco. The more he thought about, the worse it got. It was driving him crazy not being able to smoke!

It was then that he noticed the preacher quietly reading his Bible and realized that the pages of the preacher's Bible would work perfectly to roll his tobacco. Bob walked over and asked the preacher if he could have a sheet from his Bible. Of course the preacher said, "No way...I cannot let you do that!" "I can't believe that you would even ask such a thing!"

It was then that Bob quickly reminded the preacher that he saved his life and that he should be very grateful and oblige him with his request. In no uncertain terms, Mountain Bob indicated he might have to take the very life that he had saved. The preacher told Bob that he would just have to do that because there was no way he would even consider this ludicrous request.

Bob paced and paced. He just couldn't take it anymore. So, Bob grabbed his gun and walked out to end his life. The preacher instantly followed him and demanded him to stop the craziness. So reluctantly the preacher made a deal with Mountain Bob.

The preacher agreed to give him a page from his Bible under one condition. He told Mountain Bob that he would have to read every word on the page before he used it to roll his tobacco. Bob was very excited and willing to comply with the preacher.

So, Mountain Bob read and he smoked. Then he read and read and smoked. He read, and read and read and he smoked. He read and he read and he read and he read and he smoked. Well, you get the idea! Mountain Bob got to the point that he would rather read than smoke.

As Bob filled his life with the words of Jesus and fixed his thoughts upon Him, his life was transformed moment by moment!

You see, you can't stomp sin out of your life...but you can crowd it out by putting in more of Jesus. It is the same way with overcoming any sin in our life. It doesn't matter what it is...you simply fill your life with more of Jesus and before you know it the sin is crowded out.

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:1-2 NASB

We can then joyfully say and sing, "Give me Jesus...give me more and more of Jesus!"

Pastor Rick and Cindy Mercer pastor the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church at 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton. They can be reached at 870-820-3549 or cjmercer@tds.net. Check out www.morgantonsda.org. Their passion is to share the love of Jesus with all who will listen.





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Nonresistance to alcohol compromises marijuana resistance

By Rev. Mark H. Creech

The votes for advancing alcohol sales across the Tar Heel state were alarming this year. A total of 27 alcohol referendums were held in Alexander, Bertie, Burke, Camden, Cleveland, Davidson, Davie, Gaston, Haywood, Johnston, and Stanly counties. Every referendum succeeded with votes in favor of greater access to alcohol besting limited sales by an average of 62.3% to a 37.1% margin.

It used to be 30 to 40 years ago, if there was an alcohol referendum on the ballot in some city or town in North Carolina, nearly every mainline church would join forces to defeat it. There was a general consensus among churches that easier access to alcohol was inherently problematic, bringing with it hosts of social problems. Today, however, it's difficult to find a handful of churches willing to oppose an alcohol referendum.

Thus, the primary reason pro-alcohol forces bent on making new markets for wine, beer, and spirits had a banner year in North Carolina.

Pastors rarely, if ever, preach on the subject of alcohol use and abuse in their churches anymore. A few years ago, a pastor asked me to come to his church and preach on the topic. After I finished my sermon, several people came up to me afterward and said it was the first full sermon they had ever heard on the subject.

What concerns me is another threat coming down the pike that was also up for a vote on Election Day, not in North Carolina but in other states. And the compromise of our churches on the alcohol issue, I believe, places us in a vulnerable position to effectively resist it.

According to the Washington Post, "Voters in California, Massachusetts and Nevada approved recreational marijuana initiatives Tuesday night, and several other states passed medical marijuana provisions, in what is turning out to be the biggest electoral victory for marijuana reform since 2012, when Colorado and Washington first approved the drug's recreational use."

Maine also voted on a recreational marijuana initiative, but the vote is so close that it will take at least a month to determine whether it succeeded. The Huffington Post also notes that "[e]ven without Maine, 66.9 million Americans living in seven states and the District of Columbia – or 21.4 percent of the U.S. population – will soon have access to legal marijuana."

Does this concern you, citizen Christian? If not, it certainly should. On top of all the quantifiable damage done to individuals, families, and society caused by alcohol – on top of all the quantifiable damage caused by tobacco to the public's health – now there is a movement with serious momentum to legalize recreational marijuana – something some of the most reputable studies from Europe and the United States have found has multiple significant adverse outcomes.

Interestingly, the same arguments made in favor of legalizing recreational marijuana are essentially the same made when an alcohol referendum proposes lifting restrictions on alcohol sales in our state:

- It's needed to generate more tax revenue
- It's needed to enhance economic growth
- It will create new jobs and new opportunities
- It will provide better control, ending the business of illegal sales.

Just as these always prove to be false promises for communities that vote in favor of an alcohol referendum, they'll prove over time to be false for any state that legalizes marijuana.

Of course, one can never talk about alcohol and marijuana in the same sentence without someone quickly pointing out that Prohibition was a failure, and, therefore, the current prohibition on marijuana needs to also be lifted.

Such claims, however, don't stand up to scrutiny. It is true Prohibition didn't end alcohol use altogether, but it did succeed in reducing consumption and its harms.

William J. Bennet and Robert White in their book, *Going to Pot*, reference journalist Daniel Okrent's recent research in his book on Prohibition, titled *Last Call*. They write:

"Prohibition had the effect of reducing alcohol consumption by 70 percent in its first few years. Furthermore, the highest rate of consumption of alcohol in American history was 2.6 gallons of pure alcohol per person just before Prohibition. It stayed below that for a long time, even long after repeal, not reaching that level of 2.6 gallons again until 1973."

The authors also cite research from Professor Mark Moore of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government noted in an article from the *New York Times*: "Cirrhosis death rates for men were 29.5 per 100,000 in 1911 and 10.7 in 1929. Admissions to state mental hospitals for psychosis declined from 10.1 per 100,000 in 1919 to 4.7 in 1929. Arrests for public drunkenness and disorderly conduct declined 50 percent between 1916 and 1922...[V]iolent crime did not increase dramatically during Prohibition. Homicide rates rose dramatically from 1900 to 1910 but remained roughly constant during Prohibition's 14-year rule. Organized crime may have become more visible and lurid during Prohibition, but it existed before and after."

To contend Prohibition didn't work is an untenable argument, no matter who makes it. What is more, to claim the current prohibition on marijuana hasn't worked is just as untenable because, like alcohol, legalization won't reduce consumption or harms but only increase both.

Since 2008 there has been legislation filed in the North Carolina General Assembly to legalize medicinal marijuana, which is simply the first step toward legalizing recreational pot. Each year, these measures have been rejected.

Still, the point here is that this issue will continue to push North Carolinians for a decision in its favor. And if churches don't start taking on alcohol as a threat to their communities, if preachers don't start preaching against alcohol use and encouraging abstinence, if citizen Christians are unwilling to resist alcohol for what



it is – America's number one mind-altering drug that destroys more lives than all the other drugs combined – then there seems to be little ground for standing on to defeat weed.

Don't misunderstand me. Prohibition is a dead issue and it isn't coming back. Nevertheless, the less resistance there is to alcohol, the wider the door swings for marijuana legalization to sashay in.

Reverend Dr. Mark Creech is Executive Director of the NC Christian Action League. You may contact him at rev.markcreech@christianactionleague.org or 919-787-0606



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Looking Forward

By David Burleson

Dear Friends and Supporters of the Avery County Schools:

As we return to school for the second semester, I would like to say thank you for the important role you play each day in helping our school system foster student success. There is evidence of your support and service in many areas and we want you to know that we greatly appreciate what everyone in our community offers to our schools. Your interest and involvement in the Avery County Schools is truly a lasting gift and one that not only benefits our students and teachers, but the entire community.

As I reflect upon the fall semester, many special highlights come to mind. The following are just a few examples:

- The Avery County Schools had the highest graduation rate in the state. (For 4 out of the past 5 years, Avery County has been in the top 4 in the state in graduation rates [4th, 1st, 3rd and 1st]).
- The Avery County Schools and the Avery County Commissioners worked together to refresh our one-to-one technology program for students.
- STEM-students from every school in the district participated in Hour of Code Activities to encourage interest in Computer Programming. Many schools are developing maker spaces thanks to the work of Nancy Carver, media specialists and various grants.
- A record number of our students participated in our local and regional science fair with forty-four moving on to state competition.
- A system of common assessments has been implemented to strengthen instruction in grades 3-12.
- We have implemented the HillRap reading program in all elementary and middle schools along with the FUSION program at Avery High School. HillMath will be implemented at the beginning of the new year.
- The Avery County Schools Child Nutrition Program continues to serve a nutritious breakfast and lunch at each of our schools.
- The Avery High Marching Band completed one of its most successful seasons ever, achieving one of the highest scores ever at the ASU marching band contest.
- The Avery High JROTC School supported the "Trees for Troops" program and the cadets competed in several state and national competitions.



- The Avery High Construction Classes supported Habitat for Humanity, assisting in the construction of new homes for our community.
- The Avery High FFA attended the national convention and had a record number of former students named American Scholars.
- Our students collected an unprecedented amount of food and toys for needy families.
- We had one of the largest groups ever inducted into the National Honor Society and National Technical Honor Society at Avery High School.
- The Avery High Key Club had one of its most successful years ever with members providing more hours of community service than ever before.
- Each of our schools inducted a record number of students into the Beta Club.
- The Avery STEM Academy was recognized as one of the top 500 high schools in the nation by Newsweek.
- The Avery STEM Academy was also recognized by NCDPI for having a 100% Graduation rate.
- Avery High School was recognized by NCDPI for having a graduation rate above 95%.
- Avery Middle School implemented PBIS along with holding a school wide Heritage Day. They have also created TAG competitions and implemented challenging enrichment opportunities based on student interest.
- Banner Elk Elementary School had 4 Odyssey of the mind teams representing the school and the Banner Elk Kiwanis. The teams are made up of 4th and 5th graders along with a team of 6th graders. Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) will begin again in February after a very successful program during first semester. This old-time string music program will be open to adults and students from all schools. Project Lead The Way Robotics was taught in the 4th and 5th grade Science classes and the Learn to Ski and Snowboard program with Sugar Mountain is set to begin.
- The Blue Ridge Academy received the NC Works Governor's Award of Distinction - Innovative Partnership. The students also worked with Feeding Avery Families to pack food boxes for our community members.
- Cranberry Middle School continues to focus on being a STEM middle school and was awarded a \$7,000 arts council grant.
- Crossnore Elementary School was named a national Distinguished Title One Rewards School. The school also obtained grants that helped purchase bicycle kits to be put together by members of their bike club.
- Freedom Trail Elementary School completed its Outdoor Classroom.
- Riverside Elementary helped establish an active Girl Scout Troop that led a toy drive for children during Christmas. Riverside hosted the Over the Mountain group and participated in their Revolutionary War program in a partnership with Unimin. Riverside students sang Christmas carols for residents of the Bryan Center.

These areas of student participation and success can only be credited to our staff members, our parents, and members of our community. With continued teamwork and a dedicated ACS staff, we will exceed the level of past accomplishments and experience even greater growth and accomplishments in 2017. Quality public schools are vital to the economic development of our county. Therefore, our school system is dedicated to preparing our children for successful, productive citizenry. There are many opportunities for this semester, and one of the most exciting is continuing to offer any family that has a three or four-year-old that is not currently enrolled in a Pre-K program SCOTTIE (Supporting Children's Opportunities through Technology, Innovation, and Education), a mobile pre-kindergarten classroom that is housed in a renovated North Carolina school bus. SCOTTIE, a state-endorsed program, will continue to travel to ten designated locations in the county and offer an abbreviated schedule of educational activities for children enrolled. Currently we have 90 students enrolled on SCOTTIE. This program is designed to allow parents and their children to have early childhood educational opportunity near their homes. Children who are accepted into the program will be met with a highly qualified, birth-kindergarten teacher and credentialed assistant. Wrap-around services will be offered as well as opportunity for parental participation. We believe that a successful start to the school-age program must be an expectation for all children in order to ensure a 100% graduation rate Avery County. We also believe that early exposure to literacy and other educational skills will foster students' success as they journey through their educational pathway. Interested parents may contact my office, Angela Vitale, EC/Pre-K Director or Renee Banner, Administrative Assistant at 733-6006 to register a child or for more information.

Lastly, I would like to mention one more exciting partnership with our local Williams YMCA. ACS along with the YMCA is offering a Snow Camp to families that may need childcare on days when school is not in session due to inclement weather. Snow Camp, staffed by YMCA professionals, will be hosted at the YMCA for students in kindergarten through sixth grade and will operate from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Daily activities will consist of craft time, games, sports, indoor/outdoor activities, swimming and tutoring. Transportation to the YMCA and a bag lunch must be provided by parents. Students will need to bring outside clothes, homework, bathing suit and towel to be used. The cost is as follows:

- \$15 per day (with \$10 pre-registration fee)
 - \$20 daily drop in rate
- For information contact Lark Blanton at 828-737-5500 or www.ymcaavery.org. I want to thank each individual in our school system that works so diligently each day to provide the best possible education to our students. My gratitude is extended to each parent who has provided support to his/her child and our schools. It is imperative that we continue to work together as a community to reduce the number of students dropping out of school and to continue to emphasize the importance of education. It is also of great importance to meet the needs of each student that is in our school system. We are very blessed to live in a community that conscientiously assumes its responsibility to educate children and to provide the necessary resources for their success.

Again, thank you for all you do for education. It is our mission to ensure that no child is left behind and with your continued support for public education more students will graduate from high school with direction, confidence and skills for the next stage of their lives.

May you have a joyous and prosperous 2017 and a successful "Spring" semester!

David Burleson is Superintendent of the Avery County Schools



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Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence
By Beth Davis

The nice lady was on her way home from church one recent, rainy, dreary Sunday night. On a whim, she stopped by a local store to pick up a few Christmas trinkets that she really didn't need. That's where the nice lady saw her sitting on the curb.... cold, damp, wearing a thin, worn hoodie. Crouched over, with her arms wrapped around her legs, she rested her head on her knees. The nice lady immediately knew why she was drawn to the local store; she asked if the 30-ish woman was OK (she wasn't), and what could she do? "I never pray, but I finally prayed for help." With the help of Mitchell County Law Enforcement, the nice lady brought her to Mitchell County SafePlace.

She's been married for 10 years; they have a kindergarten-age child. She loves her husband, but he's always kept her isolated: she wasn't allowed to drive, get together with girlfriends, and, worst of all, seeing or talking to her family were rare. She certainly wasn't allowed to have a job! He never hit her, but he put her down and made her feel worthless almost daily. She couldn't do anything right, no matter how she tried.

Yeah, he drank sometimes. You know the drill: hanging out with the guys, unwinding after work, watching the game. It sure didn't bring out the best in him. About two years ago, he started using meth....and started smacking her around a bit. A little over a year ago, he started shooting up meth. Not surprisingly, that's when things went from bad to much, much worse. He beat her regularly, and the beatings got worse as time passed. Remember, she couldn't leave because she wasn't allowed to drive. How could she possibly explain this to her "distant" family and friends? Of course, she had no money.

A few weeks ago, he started making incendiary devices. Why? He was going to throw them at her if she did anything wrong.....specifically if she had any ideas about leaving! All the while he was regularly, savagely beating her. Then came that rainy, dreary Sunday night. His plan? He told her he was "going to just get rid of her completely." His plan was to kill her, then cut her up in little pieces so no one would ever find her body. What did it matter? She was so alone, so isolated, nobody would miss her anyway. She managed to sneak out, on foot in that nasty weather, until she found herself with nothing but the clothes on her back, sitting on the curb of that little store.

Yes, we're all painfully aware of the destruction drug and alcohol abuse is to our beloved family members and friends. We worry ourselves sick, pace the floors, spend many sleepless nights. We pray and pray some more. We beg the addict to go to rehab, to go to counseling, to get help.....any kind of help! We bargain with the addict, we bargain with God. We beg the addict to get back to church. Many times we beg our pastor to please try to intervene, to form prayer chains.

According to co-director of EMERGE, the nation's first and one of the leading programs for the treatment of abusive men, Lundy Bancroft, an internationally renowned expert in domestic violence and its root causes, "No one wants to believe that his or her own son or brother is an abusive man. Parents don't want the finger pointed at them, so they say: 'Our child wouldn't abuse his partner. We brought him up right.'Family loyalty and collective denial of family problems are powerful binding agents." Sometimes they blame the victim. Maybe they've seen how she 'overreacts' to his actions, but they don't know what he's been doing to her behind closed doors - even before the drugs or alcohol have entered the picture.

Sometimes we blame the victim. We even beg her to "just don't make him mad," "try not to push his buttons." Or lay a guilt trip on her. "Divorce is not an option." "Remember your vows - for better or for worse." "You made your bed, now lie in it." "Think of the children - they need their father. And he'd never hurt them!"

We're quick to blame drugs and/or alcohol addiction on abuse. But, just think about it for a minute. Remember, for 8 years this man kept his wife completely isolated.....no driving, no working, no money, no access to family or friends. Over time, he pulled her down, down, down, stripping her of any self-esteem or self-worth. And don't forget that he smacked her around at times. The fact is, he chose to do these things. He chose this power, this control, this abuse.

Dee Harrison, who also practices the EMERGE philosophy in her Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP) in Mitchell, McDowell, and Burke Counties, explains, "Most of the abuse is focused on the intimate person in their lives. For abusers, the majority of their 'outside' relationships are conducted in a respectful manner, which indicates that they already know how to behave respectfully towards others [bosses, coworkers, other family members, friends, the mailman] when they decide to. The belief of EMERGE is that abusers decide that it is socially acceptable to use abuse and control with their partners and children in order to get what they want in that immediate situation. To them, the short-term gain is much more important than the long-term damage, and loss that they experience because of their abuse.

Dee goes on to emphasize that "abusers tend to have a view of the world that is negative and self-centered. They view themselves as victims." The goal of the EMERGE model is for the abuser to accept responsibility, and learn to co-exist respectfully with the partner.

As you can see, this is a very complex issue. According to Tracy Black, Associate Director for Mitchell County SafePlace, "It is our hope that directing these abusers to meaningful, effective treatment will one day bring an end to domestic violence that plagues our communities."

****sources, contributors -**
For over twenty years Lundy Bancroft, the author of the national bestseller *Why Does He Do That?* has specialized in counseling men who are unhealthy relationship partners, helping them make lasting changes.
Dee Harrison, MAC, LCAS, CCS, CSOTS

Beth Davis is the Resource Development Coordinator for Mitchell County SafePlace. Reach her at 828-765-4015 or bethbdavis60@gmail.com.



there are approximately eighty-five foster children in just this one county that I live in. The drug and alcohol addiction that is taking place is destroying the lives of all ages. My prayer for the New Year is that this country return to the Christian values that have made it such a great nation and a wonderful place to grow up, marry and start a family. Just this past weekend, Christmas weekend, forty people were shot in just Chicago alone, a dozen died. The Center for Disease Control reported 52,404 deaths due to drug overdose in 2015 and the rates have increased again this year. At least 64 law enforcement personnel have been killed in the line of duty this year, part of them by ambush. One ray of hope is that abortions have been declining in the past few years but the numbers are still staggering. The best hope for a renewal of our basic way of life is through the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. Remember, a revival starts in the hearts of each of us as individuals. Please be in prayer every day for our mothers, our fathers, our children, our families and our leaders as we look forward to a revival of the Holy Spirit of the Lord to be accepted by each of us. I know the Lord is willing and knocking, are we listening and opening our hearts to him? I wish each of you a blessed and prosperous New Year. May God bless each and everyone.

Doug Harrell is a life-long resident of Mitchell County, Owner of Harrell Hill Farms, Inc, a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church and Publisher of the Blue Ridge Christian News.

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Gospel Centered

By Jason Koon
Burke County



"The Church is a sign-post, a preview to the watching world of what the coming reign of God in Christ is to look like." – Russell Moore

"Our Father in Heaven...Your Kingdom come Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven" – Jesus (Matthew 6:8-9)

Last Spring while reading through Russell Moore's book, *Onward: Engaging the Culture Without Losing the Gospel*, "I inadvertently commented something to the effect of, 'This guy is right on. Moore is the Chairman of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Committee (say that three times fast), and his crime; opposing Donald Trump for president."

I fully understand evangelical support for Trump – think about the alternative – though I don't necessarily share the enthusiasm that many Evangelicals have shown; I describe my position as 'cautiously optimistic.' Over the past year however, Moore has been very critical of Trump and to a lesser extent of his Evangelical supporters, echoing the sentiments of Albert Mohler, who wrote that he couldn't support Trump without having to "apologize to former President Bill Clinton." As you might imagine these two Conservative Christian heavyweights have raised the ire of many Conservative Christians and particularly of those in the SBC, who employs Moore. Recently, several prominent SBC Churches and Pastors have even begun the call for Moore's removal from his position.

I find this troubling; this issue is bigger than a presidential election. What is at stake may be no less than the role of the Church in the political arena and the focus of the Church's mission in the world. Jack Graham, a prominent Texas pastor, publicly worried that Moore would have "no access, basically, to President Trump" and others have recently mused that his criticism of the president-elect may end up "costing Baptists a chance to capitalize on a victory for the religious right." Is that what we are doing now? Capitalizing on political victories? Is this the Great Commission that Jesus called His Church to in Matthew 28:19-20? Go to Washington, influence policy, lobbying for all I have commanded and boycotting my opponents. Are we actually now worried that Moore's stance on the centrality of the Gospel may jeopardize Baptist political power?

I don't know Russell Moore personally but I whole-heartedly believe his views are born, not out of political disagreement with or personal distaste for Donald Trump, but out of a passion for the surpassing worth of Jesus Christ and His Gospel. I believe Moore sees a Conservative Christian movement that, in recent decades, has become far too cozy with certain politicians and political parties and I believe that he takes his dual-role in the Convention seriously; a role that his beloved predecessor Dr. Richard Land described as "to speak to Southern Baptist and on behalf of Southern Baptists." In other words, Moore understands that his primary mission is not lending Evangelical credibility in the political arena, but being a Gospel-centered voice informing Believers on issues and then drawing us back to the centrality of the Gospel. I am thankful for this voice that continues to remind me that the eternal nature of the Gospel and the surpassing Glory of the coming Kingdom are far too important to sacrifice on the altar of political influence. I pray for Moore and for His Gospel-focused voice to continue to ring out loud and clear in Washington and in the hearts and minds of believers across the nation

Jason Koon is Pastor of Bridge42 Church in Morganton, NC.

Sudoku Solution

4	2	6	7	1	8	3	5	9
8	3	7	4	5	9	6	1	2
5	1	9	6	3	2	7	4	8
2	6	4	8	9	7	5	3	1
9	5	3	2	4	1	8	7	6
1	7	8	5	6	3	2	9	4
6	4	2	1	7	5	9	8	3
7	9	1	3	8	6	4	2	5
3	8	5	9	2	4	1	6	7




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Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

The Rest of The Story Farmer Doug

Clint ran this story five years ago this month, my how time does fly. We are closing in on seven years of publishing Blue Ridge Christian News and it seems like only yesterday that we were on the farm experiencing the daily antics of Clint and his heroic deeds.

There are lots of truths involved in this story, Barbara says I have always been a workaholic and there is some truth in that. I have never been happy sitting around and playing games or watching ballgames and such on TV. I am much happier being active and hopefully accomplishing something at the same time. I was really looking to get a reaction when I made the suggestion that we cancel our Gaither Gospel Hour viewing so we could work longer. I really enjoyed this program myself. My greatest love in music is to listen to Christian music, especially Southern Gospel.

The second truth is that Barbara, my wife of fifty three years, has never been a pushover. She might be little of statue but she is not little on wisdom and the ability to communicate. She has always been able to get my attention in a so called "skinny minute". I definitely got a rise out of both her and Clint on this issue. Needless to say, we continued to watch Gaither Gospel Hour and had a good nights sleep afterwards.

Happy New Year
Doug

Sunset At Harrell Hill

Dear Friends,

I receive letters, email, phone calls and personal visits from many, thanking me for recounting my close encounters and near-death experiences at Harrell Hill Farms. I confess that I often wonder how it is that Christian brothers and sisters can derive such perverse pleasure from Farmer Clint's near misses with eternity ☹. You may be surprised to learn that such occurrences are commonplace throughout my lifetime, even pre-farming days. For example, one day I will recount for you how I was run over by an outboard motor after falling into one of Alaska's most frigid and dangerous rivers. Or perhaps you'd like to hear about the night I was attacked by a moose? But not now, let's stay closer to home for the time being.

One summer's eve, Doug, Barbara and I were resting in the kitchen at their farmhouse at Harrell Hill. I was celebrating the fact that we actually had a short work day, by Doug standards anyway, a mere 12 hours. As we visited around the dinner table Doug surmised that he had "been thinking...", always a scary scenario. Usually this meant we would soon embark on a wild and crazy venture of some sort and I would go along kicking and screaming, my body and life hanging in the balance.

As Barbara and I digested her fine home cookin', Doug offered me a second piece of Hawaiian Sunset cake...a sure sign of impending doom for me! This dessert, a Barbara specialty, had become my overwhelming favorite. And I knew that if Doug offered me a second slice something terrible was about to happen to me. He began, "You know, there is so much to do around here and it seems there are too few hours in the day". (I was feeling more confident than usual as I knew Doug could do a lot of things but even he couldn't MAKE more time happen!) "So," I queried, "how do you propose that we get more done? Perhaps I could wear a miner's hat, with the lights on top, and work all night long. Just think, Doug, I can dig, plant, weed-eat, spread fertilizer, during the day; then crawl around on my hands and knees and dig potatoes, pull corn and other veggies at night. I could take a 5 minute nap at the end of each corn row...or maybe rest beside the green lake beans...or perhaps snooze, ever so briefly, in the sorghum patch. By sunrise I would already have chosen the over-ripened cabbage and tomatoes for the piggies' breakfast. That way you can work me around the clock. Would that make you happy?"

Shaking his head and closing his eyes, the way Doug does when he really would like to shoot me, my friend replied, "You know, Pollard, you just don't have vision. You're a great worker and willing to do just about anything, but you need to look beyond the walls." Uh oh, here it comes! "We're usually finished dinner by 7:30 or so, and then we watch The Gaither Homecoming shows on TV, or sometimes we eat watermelon on dad's front porch. I'm thinking we should make good use of that hour, after dinner, to do more chores. Just think, an hour a day six days a week, it would be like having another day."

Believe me, friends, I enjoy hard work. Although inexperienced, I had grown to love farm chores as each day is filled with exciting, back-breaking, dangerous projects. I even became accustomed to getting out of bed at 4:30 AM to Doug's bellowing from the foot of the stairs, "Pollard, pancakes are ready. We're burning daylight!" I would spring from my bed, don my Farmer Clint attire, and descend for buckwheat cakes and another harrowing adventure on the farm. And, always, I would note my friend's Bible, open to his daily devotions, resting on the end table. I accepted the notion of being mired in dirt by 5:30 AM because that's what farmers do. Prayer, pancakes and projects...can it get any better than this? But



now, NOW this obsessed Farmer Doug, the Paul Bunyan of Harrell Hill, wants to take away the ONE HOUR I have each day to do nothing. I think not!

When you are a guest in one's home, as I was at Harrell Hill farmhouse, it is important to study and discern the "power structure", i.e., who is in charge. Well, having been Doug's indentured servant for several months I'd discovered that Barbara is the boss of him when we're inside that house. It only made sense, therefore, that whenever Doug proffered one of his cockamamie schemes I would take a step back, hide behind Barbara, and see how the early skirmish would end. (Notice that I did not say, "...see who would win the early skirmish!")

Now Barbara is a very loving, dutiful, hard-working partner to Douglas. But there are some things she will not compromise. I've witnessed her drop everything she's doing to help her husband at a mere call. But hear me now, YOU DO NOT MESS AROUND WITH GAITHER HOMECOMING! As I cowered in the background, speechless and flabbergasted by Doug's "suggestion", I watched the lady of the house raise her head...look up at her husband (WAY up 'cause he's about 9' tall), and those tiny little eyes shot terrifying laser beams right into his skull. And the BIG man quivered, and his knees knocked and buckled...and he collapsed like an umbrella in a hurricane! And I knew, GAME OVER!

The three of us chuckled at this fiery exchange, and I wondered if Doug knew just how close he came to being annihilated (he of course did). I reminded Doug that God stopped the sun once, Joshua 10:12-14:

*12 On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel:
"Sun, stand still over Gibeon,
and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon."
13 So the sun stood still,
and the moon stopped,
till the nation avenged itself on[a] its enemies,
as it is written in the Book of Jasher.
The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day.*

14 There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a human being.

Happy to be chiding him, I said, "Note verse 14...I'm pretty sure the Lord won't stop the sun for you!"

Barbara departed to her bedroom to watch Gaither Homecoming. I looked at my friend, with that "gotcha" grin and said, "Think I'll go down to Daddy D's and have a little watermelon, wanna go? I love eating watermelon in the daylight." Doug shook his head, closed his eyes, "Pollard, one of these days..." Yeah, I know...but I'd won this battle on the Funny Farm (or at least got to enjoy the spoils)...no extra work day for me. And that doggone watermelon was so good. Praise the Lord!



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No Regrets Family-- Help My Teen is Rebellious

Pastor Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County



We would all like to have teens who always did what they were told and never gave us any trouble, however that is not always the case. I remember giving my mom a fit. I would have been labeled as a rebellious teenager. Now I regret ever arguing with my mom. Bless her heart she deserves a gold medal after raising me. "No Regrets" family ministry is about helping families pursue a relationship with Jesus Christ. Even Christian families at times have problems. But how do we handle a rebellious teen?

Well there is no magical formula or spell a parent can cast on them. But I think we can do some things to help. It is true that most teens do not like to argue with their parents. Teens would rather avoid the argument and confrontation with a parent. I know I did not like to argue with my parents. Arguing just led to more frustration and unresolved issues; someone once told me-- if I am not part of the solution then I am part of the problem.

One huge factor we tend to overlook about teens is their relationship with God. As a parent I cannot expect my child to act like a saint if the Son of God does not live in their heart. A Christian's heart has been transformed by the work of the Holy Ghost. The Bible describes a Christian as a new creation, "old things are passed away behold all things are become new." What that means is that within every Christian is a desire to please God. We often mistake what we call a backslidden child for what is actually the "prodigal son", one who grew up in a Christian home but never truly surrendered their life to Christ. A heart surrendered to Christ will desire to obey their parents, because that same heart wants to obey God. Every parent will have some conflict with their teen child, but problems will soon be resolved because a Christian will come under the conviction of the Holy Ghost and the discipline of God. (Heb. 12:7) Give your teen every opportunity to go to Church and experience God. Pray for their salvation or a very serious rededication to God as Lord and Savior. Then this same teen that once slammed doors and disregarded rules will now have a new nature and the direction of the Holy Ghost in their life. It is so much easier to communicate spiritual convictions with a teen who is a child of God. Your number one advocate is the work of God in your child's heart.

Second, choose your battles wisely. Many arguments with teens can be avoided simply by clearly defining the important issues. Let me speak clearly on this subject. What are we more concerned about-- keeping our teen off drugs and alcohol or the kind of music they listen to or the way they wear their hair. In his younger teen years I was not always in agreement with the way my son wore his hair, but I did not go to battle on that particular issue. However Pam and I will go to battle and stand firm on issues like alcohol, dating, curfews, questionable friends and other things we fear would draw our teen away from their relationship with Jesus. Our children's relationship with Christ is our number one priority. I have seen parents argue over insignificant issues while totally ignoring the more serious problems teens face. Clearly communicate what is expected and be willing to discuss and compromise on issues that do not directly hinder their relationship with Christ. For example we are willing to bend on curfews and cell phone texting to a teen that is showing maturity and responsibility. We try to allow for opportunities to build trust. *11 Even a young man is known by his actions-- by whether his behavior is pure and upright. Prov 20:11 (HCSB)*

Third, focus on character. We tend to focus on behavior; however, God wants to build character in your child's life. The whole book of proverbs is directed at molding a young person to fear God and gain Godly wisdom to navigate through life. God spent years developing a young shepherd boy to be the king of Israel. In 1464, Agostino di Duccio was enlisted to produce a statue for the local cathedral. However, Agostino abruptly abandoned this project.

In 1476, Antonio Rossellino was commissioned to salvage the marble and complete the project; yet he soon abandoned the effort as well. Finally, in 1501 twenty-six-year-old Michelangelo was contracted to attempt to save the project. He would not finish until 1504. When he put down his chisel, the statue of David remained, representing one of the greatest masterpieces by human hands. What had seemed beyond hope or repair, in the hands of the master, became a breathtaking achievement. (pg.72, Experiencing God at Home, Blackaby)

The idea is God is at work in your child's life (Philippians. 1:6). He is concerned about developing a Christ like nature in him. So, rebellion is just part of the problem. I sat down with my son the other day and encouraged him to examine his character and the type of man God wanted him to become. David had a group of men that followed him when he was running from Saul. The Bible describes them at first as rag tag outcasts, but latter on they became known as mighty men of valor. Why would these men risk their lives to follow David? Because David was a man whom God molded his character. Sure, David had his share of problems but all in all he had a godly character. So as a parent my job is not only to discipline behavior, but to focus on character that produces behavior.

When the rules or actions of a teen are in direct rebellion then discipline must follow. A parent who practices what they preach and mean what they say will be respected. As parent I cannot participate in the vices I am trying to get my kid to stop or not do. If I do not want my kid to become a drunk then I must abstain from alcohol. If I do not want my child to cuss, then I have to have a clean mouth as well. If I want my child to respect their body then I must respect mine. Character is huge; I cannot expect my child's character to be any deeper than my own.

With love and concern for today's family,

Pastor Dean Honeycutt shepherds Snow Hill Baptist Church in Bakersville, NC. He may be reached at 828-385-0213, snowhillbaptist@gmail.com, or visit their website at www.snowhillbaptist.com.

What Grace!

By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County



1 Peter 5:10-14 says the following: *"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen."*

Notice how v.10 begins. The first words of that verse say, "But the God of all grace." The conjunction "but" draws a contrast. The Apostle Peter in the verses just prior to our passage in this study deals with two main things which draw a contrast to verses 10-14.

The first contrast has to do with our cares mentioned in verse 7. Christians today have many cares but one day they will be no more. We deal with great concerns and problems today; but, it is good news to know that we can take them to the Lord. One old song says, "Take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there." Above and beyond that fact, there is coming a day when we will deal with cares no longer.

The other contrast involves Satan and the opposition he throws in our way. He goes about trying to cause problems in our lives, seeking to turn us away from the Lord. Verse 8 uses the word "devour" when it comes to disclosing Satan's objectives in our lives. In our King James Bibles, we find that word "devour" is translated in other places in the New Testament as "drown" and "swallow up." It is kin to the Greek word that is translated to "fall down." Satan certainly has no good intentions at all for our lives.

The key is this--no matter what your problems are, God will see to them through His matchless, marvelous, and mighty grace. No matter how problematic things are in your life now, they will be better sooner or later.

God Has Grace To Give To All (v.10)

1 Peter 5:10 refers to, "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." "Of" is a source word. It tells us where something originated or came from in life. All true grace comes from God. When you need grace, all you need to do is ask Him for it, and to draw near to Him to receive it.

All saving grace, keeping grace, serving grace, settling and satisfying grace, every manifestation of grace, comes from God who gives it abundantly and freely to those who are willing to receive and believe on Him.

There is not a person on the face of the earth that Jesus did not die for at Calvary. But that does not mean everyone is going to Heaven. One must personally receive Christ to be able to walk on the streets of pure transparent gold in the New Jerusalem (John 1:12).

God's Grace Is Part Of An Eternal Plan (v.10)

Peter speaks of "eternal glory by Jesus Christ." While in this present world, we face suffering in some form about every day of our lives. Sometimes it looks like our pain and suffering will never end. When you compare our present sufferings with eternity, they just last a little while. We are assured of a day when there will be no suffering- Rev.21:4. We are called into God's eternal glory. That was the plan before the worlds began, when there was no one in the universe but God.

That plan involves several different matters. Never forget God is making you through the circumstances of life, both positive and negative. Certain things will happen after we have to undergo times of suffering.

First, the Lord will perfect us. That word "perfect" means to "arrange, to set in order, or to adjust." It is used of the mending of the net of James and John (Matt. 4:21). There is always mending to be done in our torn and tattered lives.

Secondly, the Lord will stablish us. "Stablish" is translated "steadfastly" in Luke 9:51. It means to turn steadfastly in a certain direction. It comes from a word that means "to make stiff, solid, or stable." What wonders the Lord can do in our lives!

Thirdly, the Lord will strengthen us. This is a promise to believers, pledging the help of Almighty God through the problems of this life.

Fourthly, the Lord will settle you. "Settle" means to "lay a solid foundation." It is a building term. In order to stand buildings need a solid foundation.

God's Grace Brings Praise To Christ (vs.11-13)

It is a perpetual praise. The praise of verse 11 is to be "forever and ever." The scheme of grace is that God gets the glory, rather than man, because man is saved by grace and not through his own works (Eph.2:8-9). If man could produce his own salvation, then men would get the glory rather than God.

It is a provided praise. Two men are mentioned here in the last verses of the Book of I Peter--those being Silvanus and Marcus. Silvanus was a faithful brother who spread the word about the things God was doing through Paul. Marcus must have referred to John whose surname was Mark or Marcus. Mark spread the word also about how God should be praised. What are you doing to get that message out?

Also, the church at Babylon did their part in getting the word out about the worthiness of Christ to receive worship and praise.

God's Grace Brings Love And Peace (v.14)

All of those who are in Christ Jesus have two very important parts of those who receive salvation. There is charity, or love, which every believer possesses. Romans 5:5 says...."the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost

which is given unto us." God gives us a sufficiency of love to love others that we could not bring ourselves to otherwise love.

Peace also is given to believers. The peace Jesus gives is one that passes all understanding (Phil.4:7)

When we think of the supply of love and peace God gives to us through, and all because of His grace, we can do what the Apostle Peter did at the end of this book and say, "Amen." It means "so be it or let it be so." God's grace will prevail.

Tom Walker is President of Foothills Baptist Bible College and Pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church in Marion, NC.



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Patton's Missions

Africa
By Reverend George Patton
Burke County

Dear friends,

Thank you for your continued prayers and support. It has been so refreshing being back on the mission field. We have seen God doing so many great things here in Kenya. Our original plan was to only spend 2 weeks here in the back country and then proceed on to Zimbabwe and Malawi, but because of the cry of the people here and the leading of the Holy Spirit we decided to come back for another four weeks. We will be going back to the capital on January 23. We have a meeting with some pastors from South Sudan on January 24 and then January 25 we will be flying to South Sudan. The pastors have contacted us from there. 87 churches have come together in the South Sudan to build the first Bible College in the country and we have been invited to join in the work. We will be there for one week then off to Rwanda for 2 weeks and Uganda for 2 weeks then back here to Kenya. We will return back to Morganton on March 14.

Every service here has been full. We have had services in little tin churches as well as large elaborate churches. I was so very sad to hear that there is no pastor or bishop in this entire area that has had any type of Bible training. They have been eating up the training we have been providing. We have been teaching six hours a day and preaching two hours every night. They want so much more. They have told me, "Pastor we are Bible illiterate." It seems so over whelming at times. There is so much they need to know. These pastors are simple people. Many of them are farmers by trade. They will go to their fields early in the morning before the conferences and then at night after the conferences to do their work. We have been trying to take Mondays off.

The Spirit of the Lord has been working in such a way like never before. We have seen so many people saved, delivered, and healed. The people continue to come from far and wide. I believe a person could spend a lifetime here and still not finish all the work that needs to be done. We have not even left the area of Lake Victoria yet. There are still so many unreached areas. The people here lead very simple lives. Our Christmas was anything but commercial. These people sing many of the same songs that we sing about the birth of Jesus such as Away in the Manger and Silent Night, but the difference here is they have nothing to give one another. All they have: all their praise the give to the Lord. Christmas here is celebrated around the church. They come very early and begin with worship. Every age group has its own program; children have a recital program, young people have a dance skit and the older people have a choir. Of course there is praise and worship and then the Christmas message. After the message there is food for all. We had a great Christmas here even though it was difficult to realize it was Christmas when it was over 90 degrees outside. I am so excited about the New Year's Services. Here in Africa they have what they call a crossing over. The week before New



Year's Day they have a series of services every night and then finally on New Year's Eve they have an all-night service and cross over into the New Year. We have been invited by so many churches to preach this service; unfortunately we can only be at one at a time. We are in the middle of services here in a location called Kisumu. Saturday we are heading out to another even more remote area for the cross over service and then a big crusade on New Year's Day. Please continue to pray for us. Todd is getting more and more invitations to hold youth rallies. God is really growing him as well. We love you folks so much. We pray you have a great New Year.



Todd youth



Todd youth

George Patton is an evangelist/missionary to the world from Grace Baptist Church in Morganton.



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The Inspiring Word

Pastor Terry Cheek Th.D.
McDowell County

By the Lord's amazing Grace, we find ourselves at the beginning of another New Year! 2017 is in front of us and once again we are asking the question; what will I do with it? By the way it's a healthy question to ask. There is a lot to be said about making plans, commitments, promises and even the popular resolutions for a coming year. There is even more to say about keeping them. Keeping any plan, commitment, promise or resolution requires that we embrace with our heart what is necessary to fulfill the expectations placed upon our life. Let's talk about that for a little while.

Every year we make promises with the fullest intention of keeping them. Maybe we're going to drop a few pounds, or quit smoking, or get away from immorality, maybe we're going to get back in church or quit drinking or doing drugs. Too often you keep falling short, year in and year out. With it comes the feeling of being a failure. You let yourself down, maybe even your family, friends or a spouse. Why? Why do you fail? I have the answer, I also have some words of encouragement for you, please keep reading!

First, understand that you do not have what it takes to overcome the pitfalls of life. The pitfalls of life come from sin and within each one of us is a sin nature. Maybe you have never heard of that. Simply put we are born separated from God because of the sin of Adam and Eve. We are told in Romans 3:10 "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one;" and again in Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" we cannot within ourselves overcome the sin nature within us.

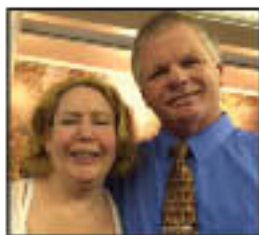
Second, there is a consequence or penalty that comes with sin. Every one of us are headed for this penalty. Notice with me Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Sin has a death penalty. This death penalty is an eternal death, a death beyond our heartbeat. That isn't very good news to begin a New Year with, is it? If we stopped right there we could find no hope and have no confidence moving into 2017, but the Bible continues so let's continue in it! God has a gift. A payment for the penalty (consequence) of sin, a payment that doesn't mean an eternal death. God offers eternal life as a substitute for eternal death.

Third, the eternal life that God offers was provided by Jesus Christ! Jesus paid the penalty for our sin. Romans 5:8 "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Commendeth is an old English word that simply means God shows or displays, in this case His love. Even while we are living with a sin nature embedded in our lives and having no hope, Jesus died for you! He did this to prevent you from dying an eternal death. All the pleasures you may find in sin; for example, drinking, drugs, immorality, greed, lying, cheating. They are short lived pleasure, short lived because the end is death. It's important to understand, we are not sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners! Jesus is the salvation of sinners.

Fourth, how does Jesus remedy our sin nature. I'm glad you ask! Your Bible tells you in Romans 10:9-10 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Simply put, confess and believe! Confess that Jesus and only Jesus can save you. There is no other person who can take the place of Jesus Christ as your savior. You must be willing to confess that. To confess Jesus as your savior you must believe that God did raise Jesus from the dead. That's right, it's no fairy tale. Jesus resurrection is a reality you must accept by faith, then by that same faith confess Jesus as the only forgiveness of sin, your sin!

This miracle is called being born again! Having this new life in Jesus Christ gives you His presence daily. That's right, Christ lives within you. In that fact is the strength you need to fulfill your New Year resolutions. Whatever they may be with Jesus in your life they will be the right decisions made with the presence of godly strength and you will have the faith to let God lead you to success His way in 2017! Until next month may God keep you firmly in His grip!

Terry Cheek is Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Marion.



The New Year

By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County

I've never been one that enjoyed seeing Winter arrive. The shorter days and colder weather aren't my cup of tea. Tack on the holiday rush mixed with sickness and who wouldn't want to avoid this season? I do get somewhat excited on December 22nd. It's the shortest day of the year and I know come the 23rd, everything is looking good! Warmer weather and longer days will be here before I know it.

Along with the bad is plenty of good. I enjoy taking the time to be thankful for all God has provided. Thanksgiving sets my heart and soul in tune as I prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ child. If God had not sent his only Son to save everyone who believed on Him we all would perish forever. Eternal life is ours for the asking because God first loved the whole world.

Although New Year's Day starts another year of adventure, it also marks the end of one. People go crazy for one day of celebration. Millions hit the outdoors for food and fireworks. Some go so far as to make resolutions to improve their life in the coming days. I have yet to see anyone succeed in keeping their resolutions.

Since I know the spiritual implications in celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas, I began to wonder if New Year's Day had any biblical ties.

According to Wikipedia, the Babylonians made promises to their gods at the start of each year that they would return borrowed objects and pay their debts. The Romans began each year by making promises to the god Janus, for whom the month of January is named. In the Medieval era, the Knights took the "peacock vow" at the end of the Christmas season to re-affirm their commitment to chivalry. At watch night services, many Christians prepare for the new year by praying and making resolutions.

As you take the opportunity to slow down and rest with holidays behind you, there's just one more day of celebration within reach. It's my birthday, January 5th. That's right and today I'm giving you the chance to finish out that roll of wrapping paper. While you're exchanging those Christmas gifts, remember me.

You may think I'm stretching the truth but I'm sure many years ago, my parents celebrated my birth with thanksgiving and joy. Imagine with the thoughts of baby Jesus fresh on her mind, my mom held me wondering about the life of Mary. I have sat many times talking to God and wondering all about his 33 years compared to we humans.

One day I plan to know the whole story. Seven years after my physical birth, I was reborn spiritually. Talk about celebration. Luke 15:10 KJV reads "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Isn't that awesome? Not only did my family, friends and I get excited when I gave my heart and soul to Jesus, but the angels and God rejoiced!

The fact that Jesus lives in my heart is the main thing that keeps me looking up day after day. It keeps me pressing on through the season of Winter. In a lifetime, we go through many seasons and hardships. For that reason, we need a Savior. Jesus is the Only One! Happy New Years!

Allen Buchanan is a freelance Christian writer. Allen attends Bear Creek Baptist church.



And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. Romans 13:11-13

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Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

continued from page 32

Several of y'all have told me that you have been proud to see my son Michael working at K-mart — and I have to say that I am proud that he is working too. And he wants to; that is a good thing. I can remember my first job: it was as a stocker and clerk at the little grocery store and gas station about a mile from our house. The manager of the store was a woman by the name of Barbara Conley, and one of the things she emphasized was that there was always something to do: if there were no customers at the register, then stock the shelves, or dust them, or move the cans up to the front (I still do that when I walk in stores today!) But the worst sin was to be caught standing around at the cash register doing nothing when she came. When I was working nights after Mrs. Barbara had left for the day, it was always a good feeling when she came in unexpectedly and saw me straightening the shelves. One or two times, unfortunately, I was standing up at the front, talking to the cashier — and I hated that feeling. I wanted to be found doing what I had been told to be doing when she came.

If that's so with an earthly manager, how much more so with the Lord? If 2017 is the year that Jesus comes back — or if it is the year that He comes for YOU — one of the most important questions of your life will be: are you doing what He called and gifted you to do, when He comes? I can't imagine a worse feeling, than knowing that God gifted me to teach, or give, or serve, or sing, or whatever — and for Him to come and I am doing NOTHING in the church when He comes. Don't be found standing around with "your hands in your pockets" when Jesus comes back. If we are near the end, then SERVE! Be found doing what He called you to do when He comes.

CONCLUSION

We don't know what 2017 is going to hold. But we know that the end of all things is closer than it has ever been before. And even if the end is not this year, it could well be that the end of some of our lives is this year. In fact, it is almost a certainty that some of us who are here this morning, will NOT be among our number if there is a 2018. In light of that, God's word says we need to be "of sound judgment and sober."

I set a goal last year to read 25 books by the end of the year, and I did: I finished my 27th yesterday! One of the longest, and best books I read this year, was a biography on Augustine of Hippo Regius — the man we often refer to as St. Augustine. After being converted from a life of sensuality as a young man, Augustine spent a lifetime of service as a Bishop as an adult. But in his later years, he contracted a deadly fever, from which he would not recover. Those who were with him said that in his last weeks, Augustine had 4 Psalms (the penitential Psalms) posted on the wall around his death bed. He spent his last days in prayer and repentance and preparation for His coming to the Lord.

We would do well to imitate this great saint. If the end is near, let's get ready for it. Peter 4 says do the following things: PRAY. LOVE. SERVE. And even if the end of the world is NOT in 2017, or even if it does not portend the end of our lives, we will not have wasted our efforts. These are the things we should be doing every year, until our Master comes. Remember Jesus' words in Mt. 24:46 "Blessed is that slave whom his Master finds so doing when he comes." Let's rededicate ourselves today, to PRAY; LOVE; and SERVE until He returns.

Shawn Thomas is Senior Pastor at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Morganton. His messages and devotionals are available at www.shawnethomas.com

Grace Community Church

Regifting: 3 Gifts Worth Giving Again

By Jerry Lewis
McDowell County



Let's face it. Every Christmas we get that gift we know we won't use. Before we completely rip off the paper, we know who's going to get it next. Thestreet.com lists the following as the top ten gifts most likely to be regifted: candles, picture frames, gift baskets, perfume, fruit cake, wine, cookbooks, bath soaps, books and (drumroll please), pajamas (really?).

If you know Jesus, he has given you 3 gifts you should regift. As a matter of fact, you may need to wrap them up today and give them away. Christmas isn't the only time to do that. You can give these again and again all year long.

Grace

John, writing about his best friend and the Messiah, said, "For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:16 ESV) Charles Spurgeon said: "Nothing but the infinite can ever satisfy me; I am such a great sinner that I must have infinite merit to wash my sin away; but we have had our sin removed, and found that there was merit to spare; we have had our hunger relieved at the feast of sacred love." The grace that found you in your sin, drew you in, washed you clean, and put you in God's trophy case is worth regifting.

Forgiveness

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14 ESV) Toward the end of his life, John Newton, former slave trader and ultimate author of that old hymn, Amazing Grace, said: "Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior." Who has hurt you, wounded you, slighted you? Will you give them the forgiveness that was freely, at a very high cost, given to you?

Patience

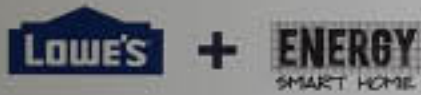
Maybe this one surprised you. Patience is not on most people's short list. Thankfully, it's on God's. Peter, who knew very well the patience of the God who once called him Satan, wrote: *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* (2 Peter 3:9 ESV) Who grates on your nerves, pushes your buttons, stretches you to your limit—almost every time. Ask God for the grace to be patient.

Regift. Today. Don't wait. Seriously.

Jerry Lewis is Senior Pastor at Grace Community Church in Marion.

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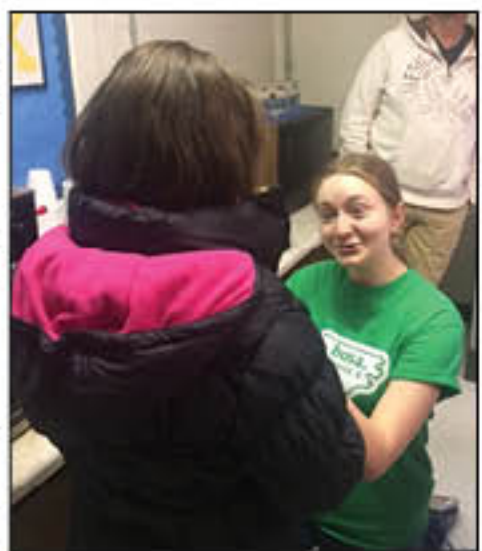
Mitchell County Schools

Health Occupation Students of America Distribute Winter Coats

By Chad Calhoun
Mitchell County

On December the 13, 2016 four HOSA officers, Megan Duncan; President, Carrington Boone; Secretary, Graci Pittman; Secretary, and Kaeleigh Buchanan; Chairmen along with advisor Linda Pitman traveled to Deyton Elementary to meet with Ronda Franklin, Mitchell County's 2016-2017 Teacher of the Year to distribute winter coats. This Coat drive was a project for HOSA week at Mitchell High School. Several students were allowed to choose the coat of their choice, as well as try it on. Upon arrival officers assisted the children with trying the coats on. This was a great experience for all officers to be a part of, and become one on one with less fortunate children. As Carrington Boone put it "This experience has opened my eyes to the needs of children in our county. I did not realize the need was so close to home, I hope to help more children in the future." Megan Duncan, president and organizer of this event also had some heartwarming words "The look on the child's face when they picked the coat they wanted, the way their eyes lit up and the way they smiled so wide was truly remarkable." Several less fortunate children were so ecstatic to be receiving the coat of their dreams as Graci Pittman said "It was a blessing to be able to have the opportunity to see how grateful these children were; it was definitely a humbling activity." HOSA is wanting to be more involved with the community and activities that take place within it. Kaeleigh Buchanan, Chairmen of the HOSA Club also has some insight on the trip "Being a part of this Coat drive has been a step forward in HOSA helping the community. Taking the coats was such an eye opening reality. I cannot wait to see what else we do, and the other lives we touch, to God be the Glory." The officers along with Mrs. Pitman plan to do more interactive things with the community and school. If you have any questions, ideas or kind regards, you may reach Advisor, Mrs. Linda Pitman at lindapitman@mhslive.net, or President, Megan Duncan at md8219@mhslive.net. We hope the children use and love the coats, and everyone has a Merry Christmas! -HOSA Officers

Chad Calhoun is the Superintendent of Mitchell Co. schools.



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Mine Creek Baptist Church

My Life Wasn't Always This Way....

By Preacher Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

Several years ago, I received a call that a near tragedy had taken place in the life of a family I knew. The family wasn't directly connected to the church of which I was pastor, but I felt a heavy burden to reach out and offer to help, if by nothing else, just praying with them.

A couple of days passed before I had a chance to make the trip to the hospital. My heart was broken as I stepped into the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital. A teenage boy in the family had overdosed and almost died. Though the family hardly knew me, they began to open up when I told them I was a pastor and had heard of their situation and had come to pray with them. Tears streamed down the faces of the family members as they shared what had happened that seemed to lead up to the events of the last few days. To be honest, I struggled greatly to even know what to say or do to help them. Somehow just being there with them seemed to bring comfort. Maybe it was because they just felt that someone cared. Doctors had told the family that they felt the young man would pull through but would likely have permanent effects from the overdose.

Time passed slowly as I witnessed family and friends enter and exit the room. They would walk in, look at their loved one, speak a few brief words, and look at me and then exit. Many young people were there that day coming in and out of the room. Each one entered and if they were not already crying, they would start as soon as they saw their friend. Some would try to speak but could not, and would leave weeping. Many looked at the family and at me. What I saw in their eyes pierced my heart. To this day, I remember the look in their eyes. One could tell that inside their hearts there was hopelessness and emptiness just by looking in their eyes.

After I left the hospital, I too cried, most of the way home that evening. Questions rolled over and over in my mind. As I remember him there in the ICU room, just struggling to hold on to life, I asked myself, "What was he looking for?" Surely lying there in that bed connected to life support wasn't what he was hoping to find, was it? Did he think that somehow the drugs would help him find something or escape from something? What was he expecting to find at the bottom of that pill bottle? Was it hope? Was it meaning? Was it simply an escape to try and forget something in his life? I wondered what he thought he would find as my heart took me back several years.

Many people seem to search throughout life for that one thing that is going to fill up that emptiness in their heart. My search came through alcohol. My friends and I would usually go every weekend somewhere to drink. We didn't drink to be sociable with each other, we didn't drink because it tasted good, we drank to get drunk. The cycle repeated itself over and over again. We would sober up long enough to recover from the previous weekend and by Wednesday or Thursday we were planning for the next. For the most part, I did a pretty good job of hiding what was going on in my life. Some people knew, but most didn't realize the struggle I was having inside me. You see, during this whole time I was attending church services with my girlfriend on Sunday mornings. Some services I felt miserable. Mostly I went to keep Michelle (now my wife of 22 years) off my case! During this time of struggle, a faithful preacher, Buster Yelton, would preach the gospel every service I attended. He shared of how much God loved me, yes me! He talked of just what Christ went through on the cross to forgive my sin and change my life. He taught of God's great plan for my life and that by faith and repentance I could be a new person in Christ. It seemed as if every time he preached, I was the only one in the building! Have you ever felt that way?

One particularly weekend, the whole direction of my life changed. We had drunk until about 2 a.m. Sunday morning. This was one of only a couple of times that I had drunk until I physically passed out. The last thing I remember was asking my buddies to help me get turned around in the bed of my truck because I was about to be sick. After that, I remember nothing. The next morning I woke up in the same position, hanging over the tailgate. Rolling over in the bed of the truck I felt as if I had been hit by a car. There was no way I could make it to church that morning.

Something different happened that morning though as I lay there looking up through those Hemlock trees with the sun shining through the limbs. For the first time, I knew that no matter how many times I did this, it would always be the same. All that was ever at the bottom of those cans and bottles was nothing. There never had been anything there and there never would be! That emptiness inside me would never be filled by alcohol, or anything else, just by Jesus. Now friends, you can say it was the alcohol or my imagination, but I know what it was. That morning I heard clearly, for the first time in my soul, the God of all creation speak to me. He spoke louder than any audible voice ever could. He said, "Chris, this is not why I created you, this is not my plan for your life. What you are searching for can only be found in Me! I'm waiting for you." That weekend was the last time alcohol would ever control me. Shortly after that experience, I gave my life and heart to Jesus. He gave me forgiveness, hope, direction, peace with God, and a foundation that I can stand on no matter what happens around me.

This is difficult to share knowing that so many who never knew will now know. But I want those who are struggling with alcohol, drugs, ungodly relationships, or whatever it may be, to know that you will never fill up that emptiness inside no matter how hard or how many times you try. All you will ever find is emptiness. Let Christ fill that longing and emptiness in your soul with Himself. Know that what you are in right now is not why God created you. Come to Jesus and find what you have been searching for all along. Years from now, you will be able to look back over your life and see where God has brought you and what He has brought you out of. You don't have to stay where you are at now. God has so much more for you than this. Then one day, together we can lift our hands to the



Lord, and give Him praise and honor for changing our lives.

I often remember as I reflect on what God has done for me that my life wasn't always this way!

John 10:9-10 *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* (KJV)

Preacher Chris Rathbone serves as Pastor at Mine Creek Baptist Church.

Dave Says

Dear Dave,

We just started following your plan, and we have \$39,000 in debt. We make \$55,000 a year, and two of our smaller debts — one car and a credit card — are both \$7,500. The credit card has a higher interest rate, so my wife thinks we should pay it off first. I look at the car as a necessity, and for that reason I think we should pay it off first. Who's right?

Pat

Dear Pat,

When the rules of paying off debts from smallest to largest don't apply, I look at things this way: If you have two debts that are of equal amounts, I would attack the one with the larger interest rate first. In your case, that would be the credit card debt.

I get what you're saying about the car. You guys might be in a bind if something happened and you lost one car. But it's also something you could work around if you had no other choice. So yeah, knock out the credit card first then move on to the car. Going this route will serve two purposes: First, it will save you some money. And second, I've got a feeling it will fire up your wife and get her on board with the plan even more than she already is.

She's taking this seriously if she's eyeballing interest rates, Pat. So use this momentum to work together, and knock out that debt!

— Dave

Dear Dave,

What are your thoughts on transferring an IRA over to gold?

Sandy

Dear Sandy,

Honestly, I think that's about the dumbest thing a person could do. I hope I wasn't unclear.

Gold is going down like a rock right now as people start to believe in the economy and the economic direction of this country again. The stock market indicates this is true, and in the process, gold becomes worth less and less. Gold is essentially a fear-based product, and the less fear that's out there, the cheaper gold is. That's not how you want to fund your IRA, Sandy. You want to fund it with something that has a long track record based on growth due to the performance of the companies involved — not someone's greed or fear. Gold is a horrible investment, and I don't own any except for one nice watch and a pair of cufflinks. That's it!

— Dave

Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including *The Total Money Makeover*. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 12 million listeners each week on 575 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.

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Marlene's Meditations

All Things New

By Marlene Houk
Burke County



2 Samuel 22:33 "God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect."

Isaiah 26:4 "Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."

Panic gushed through his soul as the pain gripped with an iron hand. It had been seven hours, and he could feel the push of the force that propelled him into the unknown. Dimly he heard the wail of the siren as he struggled against the darkness and the suffocating claustrophobia. He could barely see the light at the end, but he could sense the intense efforts of those on the other side as they assisted him. Finally, he broke free into the inviting bright light of the emergency room



where a team of nurses, doctors and operating room technicians worked feverishly to assess, aid, and comfort his tiny body. He heard gentle sounds, two of which he recognized from his nine-month journey, and he relaxed, knowing that all was well. A new adventure had begun. Although he didn't know what the future held, he knew that the familiar voices would be there with him.

New-he was completely new! He had no past, and he had no preconceived ideas and no understanding of the significance of the culture he had been born into. His slate was clean, and he reveled in the luxurious love that cuddled him like the softest Sherpa fleece. He also knew instinctively that he would be protected from the slightest threat of anything that attempted to thwart his parents' goals for him. As his mind began processing hundreds of newborn impressions, his sleepy eyes watched the light shine on a warm and caring staff, and he knew he would thrive in this new world.

Just as this newborn baby was welcomed, praised for the accomplishment of his birth, and fulfilled the love and wishes of family, so the addict, when he is birthed into the heirship of the Kingdom is welcomed, praised for his decision to follow Christ, and treasured for his potential to glorify God.

These powerful facets of a new Christian mentioned above (love, affirmation, and purpose) nourish and grow that new creature referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:17. As the church, his family, begin to gather round at the altar, smile and welcome this prodigal son into the church, their love lights the darkness of statistical failure and weaknesses. As the LORD JEHOVAH gifts him with the Holy Spirit, and He sanctifies his spiritual gifts, providing him opportunities to serve in the Church, he is affirmed as a child of God. As his friends accept His Lord as Savior, and as others in his sphere decide to focus on Christ, this new convert is affirmed in his choice of faith over failure. And, as the fruit of his spiritual labors glorify God, he disciples others and repeats the new birth process.

The converted addict lifted his wet face to the sky and praised the Lord of the universe for sending that ambulance full of Christians to help birth him into the family of God. His heart swelled with new life, and its rhythm filled his soul with spiritual strength and the all-consuming desire to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! (2 Peter 3:18)

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4

Marlene Houk is a regular contributor to The Blue Ridge Christian News. She and Sid, her husband, attend Mount Home Baptist Church.



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This year's Camp Erin of the Carolinas will be held from Friday, November 13th through Sunday, November 15th at South Mountain Christian Camp in Bostic, NC. For more information, please contact Cy Miller at (828)245-0095 or cymiller@hospiceofrutherford.org



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For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
John 3:16



Walnut Grove Church

Under the Spout Where the Glory Comes Out

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Jude 20,21

There is a wonderful old hymn entitled "Get under the spout where the glory comes out." There is also a deep profound truth hidden in it.

First let me dispense with a common misconception. It doesn't mean that this upcoming year we can earn God's love by being a "good little boy or girl." Oh how we miss so much when we think that God's love to us depends on our obedience to Him. This can be proven by looking at Rom. 5:8. There Paul tells us that God loved us even before we knew Him. While we were still in a sinful state. Does it make sense that after we are saved, His love for us would turn conditional?

God doesn't make a list and check it twice like Santa. Rather we make the list and He blots it out!



that He didn't shut off the waterfall. It's still going full power. He is faithful even when we are not. God doesn't monitor the volume based upon how good we are doing. He simply gives us the choice to bask in His blessings or not. But His love for us is always there.

It's up to us to get back under the spout where the glory comes out.
Selah (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Presbyterian Church.



If this is true, then why are we told to "keep ourselves in the love of God?" It's very simple. It means we are wise to be in the place where we can receive His blessings. Think of God as a refreshing waterfall on a hot day. We can get under it and enjoy that blessing, or we can wander down a path that separates us from it.

Here's the point. When we wander away and we don't feel the blessings of God we need to know

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New Year's Dawning

By Joyce Harwood
Madison County

New Year's Dawning

*The new year now is dawning,
Will you cry or will you dance?
Oh take time to smell the flowers;
This could be your final chance.*

*Our life we know is short here
And our time is like a flash.
So will you live the future
Just the way you lived your past?*

*Will you make the best of all
That god has given you;
Or will you waste away the time
Feeling sorrowful and blue?*

*Will you leave your loved ones
With a question on their minds;
Or will you make it clear to all
That heaven you did find?*



Joy has lived in Madison County since 1976, where she now lives with her husband, Danny Joe Baldwin. She is a native of Buncombe County and the daughter of the late Clell and Edith Moss. She is currently a member of Mt Zion Baptist church in Marshall, NC with her husband. As a previous member, she calls Forks of Ivy Missionary Baptist Church in Weaverville, "home away from home".

Horizon Church

Another Year to Get It Right....

By Mike Stroud
Burke County



Here we go again. Facing a brand New Year. Will I lose the weight I have gained at Christmas? I make a new resolution that I will start a new diet, read my Bible more, pray more, do more for the ministry, and start exercising more. Yeah, right. It sounds good to start going on a diet after Sunday dinner, but the fact is we are weak. I don't know about you, but my intentions are greater than my applications. Once that belly starts growling, I'm howling for relief. Fasting is not my strong suit. Why is it so hard to push through the agony of doing better? We like lazy. We think we always have tomorrow or next year. We prioritize according to how we feel at the moment. Not much at sacrificing. The greatest accomplishments in our life come through sacrifice. When we sacrifice those hunger urges, and press on to eat clean and healthy, our bodies thank us. When we sacrifice to spend time with The Lord more, He enriches our hearts and soul. By the way, it shouldn't be a sacrifice to serve the Lord. I look at the sacrifice He made to bring me salvation and eternal life. Think about the agony He endured through the Cross of Calvary. Beaten and Bleeding to wash away our sins. Yet, He endured the Cross because of the joy and glory set before Him. He rose again from the dead and now is seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for the saints. That is encouraging to me. My prayers seem to go unanswered sometimes, but I know if Christ is praying for me...I'm good to go no matter what I am dealing with. If Christ can go through what He did for me, the least I can do is take up my cross and go through a little suffering. That is my prayer for us this year. That we go further than before in our walk and dedication to the Lord. That we sacrifice a little more this year. We must remember, our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Ghost. Let's sacrifice to be a good steward in our bodies. Bodily exercise profits little according to the Bible, but it does profit. They walked everywhere in Christ day. Let's get to walking our walk like we never have before. That is a good way to start the New Year. You can do it.....

Mike Stroud is a pastor at Horizon Church in Morganton, Music Director at www.AmazingGraceRadio.com, and owns Stroud Building Supply in Morganton.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matthew 5:16

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Altapass Baptist Church

Happy New Year Everyone

By Marcus Benfield
Mitchell County

I trust you had a Very Merry Christmas as well. As we begin 2017 we have many things on the horizon. In just a few short days our 45th president will take the Oath of Office and begin his new role of leadership of the Greatest Nation on God's Earth. I trust we will all pray for President Trump, Vice President Pence and their cabinet regularly.

Many times, a New Year begins with Resolutions that are often broken within 30 days or less. May I suggest we Resolve to do some things this year that we can do successfully.

First of all, let us Resolve to pray daily even several times a day as the Apostle Paul admonished us to "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17)

Secondly, let us Resolve to read our Bible Daily for the Psalmist teaches us that His Word is a Lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. (Psalm 119:105)

Thirdly, let us resolve to be more Faithful in our Church Attendance as the Hebrew writer tells us to Forsake not the assembling of ourselves together. (Hebrews 10:25)

Fourthly, let us Resolve to Love one another as the Apostle John teaches us. (John 13:34&35)

Fifthly, let us Resolve to work together in Unity as we see the example of this all through the book of Acts in the early Church. Again, the Psalmist reminds us as well as to how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. (Psalm 133:1-3)

Sixthly, let us Resolve to be Thankful each day for God's Abundant Blessings on each of us.

Finally, may we Resolve to Reach the Lost with The Gospel of the Saving Grace of Christ. After all He commanded it in Matthew 28:19&20 as well as Mark 16:15. He also told his disciples in Acts 1:8 "And ye shall be Witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

May we seize this opportunity to welcome a new Year of Resolutions that we can be confident that at years end we have kept and that they have made a Real Impact for Christ!

God Bless you all and May God Bless America!

Dr. Benfield is the Senior Pastor of Altapass Baptist Church in Spruce Pine. He formerly pastored in Alexander County, NC for 20 years before coming to Altapass in October 2011.



The Rotary of Spruce Pine

MHS Seniors

By Doug Suddruth
Mitchell County

The Rotary Club of Spruce Pine recognized the "Seniors of the Month" at its Thursday, Nov. 17, regular meeting.

They were introduced by Mitchell High School guidance counselor Grant Sparks.

Mitchell High School senior Callie Blevins plans to become a preschool teacher. She has worked as an intern at Roan Child Development and will move to Fort Hood, Texas, after she gets married this coming June. Her fiancé is active duty military and is currently in Afghanistan.

Blevins said she is likely to attend Central Texas College to continue her education.

MHS senior Kayla Bryant is a lifelong resident of Mitchell County, serves as FBLA president, is in show choir and works part time at Bonnie and Clyde's in Loafers Glory.

Bryant wants to attend Liberty University and become a history teacher. She credits MHS history teacher Matthew Hurd for fostering her love of history. She said she plans to eventually earn her doctorate.



Mitchell High School guidance counselor Grant Sparks, November "Senior of the Month" Callie Blevins, November "Kayla Bryant

Doug Suddruth is the Public Relations Officer for the Spruce Pine Rotary Club.



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Phone: 828-733-2400
Hotline: 828-387-5478

Non-Profit Pregnancy Center offering free assistance to anyone with a difficult pregnancy situation. Open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am-5pm. Call for appointment or just stop in to speak with someone.

Burke County

Catawba River Baptist Association - On Tuesday, January 17th we will be hosting the Every Believer a Witness Pastors/Ministers training conference with evangelist and founder Dennis Nunn. Dennis was raised in North Carolina and loves teaching people to make witnessing a lifestyle. At this important training, he will teach us a great strategy that will benefit your church in wonderful ways so please sign up today.

The cost is \$49 per person and includes DVD's, CD's, Training Manual, and of course the conference which will begin at 10 a.m.

To register please go to <https://everybelieverawitness.org/pastor-equipping-conference#register>.

Once you register you will be sent digital DVD and CD copies of the presentation which should be looked at before attending the conference to help you better understand the process.

I personally teach this method in churches and have actually seen church members come to faith in Christ as they began working on their personal testimony. This is a great tool and I hope each of our pastors and staff will join us for this very important training.

Music and Worship Leadership Meeting- I'm excited about possible partnerships with area Ministers of Music in order to strengthen music/worship ministries in our local churches. With that in mind we are planning a Music and Worship Leadership meeting for Tuesday, January 24th at 6:30 p.m. at our CRBA office for all persons involved in music/worship leadership in our area churches. We will have a time of Q&A and then will discuss plans for the future. We hope to see you there.

Christian Business Men's Connection (Morganton) - We are a movement of Men to Experience the Power of One God, the Value of One Man and the Leverage of One Team, resulting in the Spiritual Reproduction among Businessmen. Please join us for lunch at one of our weekly Bible study meetings: Tuesday, 12:00 noon at the Community House, Morganton. Contact: Wayne Giese, 828-413-5819.

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist-Burke County - 10 Days of Prayer - January 11, 2017 through January 20, 2017, each night at 7:00 p.m., at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. 28655. "For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." - Matthew 18:20 KJV.

Pleasant View Baptist Church, Morganton, NC, a theologically conservative SBC church, is seeking a pastor who is a dedicated teacher, counselor, proactive leader, committed to community outreach. Prefer a graduate of seminary or similar college with some experience.

Send resume to PVBC-SEARCH TEAM, 1834 US 70 E, Morganton, NC 28655

Aglow International Hickory Lighthouse Hickory Lighthouse meetings are the second Saturday of each month.

McDowell County

Clinchfield Baptist Church (Marion) - We are accepting resumes for Minister of Music. Current worship style is blended, using both traditional hymns, choral, and contemporary arrangements with soloist and choir. The position is a paid part-time position and involves organizing and leading the church's music ministries both adult and children. Baptist background preferred. Send resumes with references to Clinchfieldbaptistchurch@frontier.com or to address 1150 East Court Street, Marion, NC 28752 Attn: Personnel Committee.

First Baptist Church of Marion - Belize Medical Mission Registration is now complete for the 2017 Belize Medical Mission Trip. 14 are onboard and preparing to provide free clinics in 5 underserved villages in the northern Corozal District of the country. The team is currently raising funds for medical supplies and medicines. Contributions are greatly appreciated. Please make your donations to FBC for the Belize Medical Fund. For more info., please contact Scott Hagaman.

New HOPE of McDowell (Marion) - New HOPE of McDowell is seeking a full-time Associate Director - Shelter Manager. New HOPE of McDowell is a non-profit domestic violence and sexual assault agency located in McDowell County, NC. This position includes benefits such as employee health insurance and paid vacation, personal, and sick time. The primary purpose of this position is to provide direct client services and advocacy to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children as well as assisting with carrying out the strategic goals and objectives of the organization, providing direct leadership and supervision to all Client Services Advocates, and operating under the direction and expectations of the Executive Director/Court Advocate and Board of Directors.

Mitchell County

Bear Creek Baptist Church-Ledger - Women's Prayer Breakfast at Helen's Restaurant on Friday January 13, 2017 at Helen 8:00am. Ordering from menu. All women are invited.

Celebrate Recovery - Kick off will be January 5, 2017 7:00 pm. This is a Christ and Biblical Based Program, giving hope and help for men, women and families suffering from addiction. Any question contact Josh Wise@ 385-0061. There will be a meeting every Thursday night with someone there to talk to men, women, and their families.

Calvary Chapel Asheville - Spruce Pine - Calvary Chapel Church in Asheville is sponsoring a home fellowship and Bible Study in Spruce Pine. The fellowship is held on Thursday evenings at 7:00pm at 79 Sean Dr. (Estatoe area—off Brushy Creek Rd). We are studying the Gospel of John currently. Call John Jackson 760-793-3799 for information and directions. And bring your Bible.

Support Group For Caregivers Of Those With Memory Loss To Hold Meetings The First Friday Of Each Month From 1-3PM Care & Share, a newly-formed support group for caregivers of loved ones who have been diagnosed with memory loss, will hold monthly meetings at the offices of Hospice & Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, 236 Hospital Dr. in Spruce Pine, from 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. High Country Caregiver Foundation welcomes and encourages all caregivers to attend.

Families dealing with a loved one with memory loss can quickly become exhausted, traumatized, and isolated, and this new group intends to provide support, friendship, education, information and referrals for caregivers. Monthly meetings held on the first Friday of each month will offer refreshments and fellowship. There will be opportunities for caregivers to tell their stories, learn useful tips, trade information, and give and gain support to others in the same situation.

For further information about the group and the meeting please contact Suzanne Russell at (714) 614-5867 or Janet Ouzts at jmutouzs@yahoo.com.

First Baptist Church Spruce Pine - First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine is seeking a part-time childcare provider for their toddler nursery. The position will require approximately eight hours per week consisting of 4.5 hours on Sunday morning, 1.5 hours on Sunday nights, and 2 hours on Wednesday nights plus other hours during special events as needed. The position will require a spirit-filled caring and responsible childcare provider who will focus on providing a safe environment for toddlers. Qualifications include experience in caring for young children, and the physical ability to meet their active needs; 2-3 references; and willingness to submit to a background check. CPR is required and First Aid is recommended and can be completed once employed. The hourly pay is \$15-\$20 per hour and is negotiable based on experience and qualifications.

Applicants should contact First Baptist Church, 125 Tappan Street, Spruce Pine, NC 28777. Phone # 828-765-9411 Ext. 301.

Mitchell Baptist Association-Spruce Pine - Evangelistic Ministries The Mitchell Baptist Association operates several evangelistic ministries to reach those who have never heard the gospel.

Prison Ministry - the association employs a fulltime chaplain at the Mountain View Correctional Institution. The chaplain is responsible for ministering to the spiritual needs of the inmates.

Veterans Ministry - the association operates a veterans' ministry. The Director of Missions visits the veterans' hospitals in in our areas, sharing the gospel with those who have faithfully served our nation.

Mountain Outreach Campground Ministries - the association financially supports an evangelist to conduct Sunday morning worship services at the Secluded Valley Campground off the Blue Ridge Parkway in Spruce Pine.

Wilderness Hispanic Mission - the association supports a church for the Hispanic community in Spruce Pine.

Mitchell-Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force

Join the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force for our January 10, 2017 meeting, noon-1pm at the Yancey County Library. We will hear a presentation from Leslie McCrory with the Regional Perinatal Substance Use Initiative about work being done in western North Carolina to address the issue of newborn drug dependency.

A Recent Study of Medicare recipients found that in 2011, about 15 percent were prescribed an opioid when they were discharged from the hospital; three months later, 42 percent were still taking the pain medicine.

Talk to your doctor and ask questions about any pain medications you may be prescribed after injury or surgery.

Spruce Pine Farmer's Market Moves Indoors! - We will have baked goods, fresh eggs, pork, grass fed beef, and more. The market is inside the Pizza Shop and Dry County Brewing Company from 12-4pm. The indoor markets will be once a month the 1st Saturday of the month from December through April. Come shop local with us.

Red Cross Blood Donation - The American Red Cross serving Mitchell and Yancey County has volunteer positions open as Blood Donor Ambassadors assisting in the areas of Reception and Hospitality at local blood drives in Spruce Pine and Burnsville. With the need for blood donations increased during the holidays, this is a critical role and meaningful way to serve an urgent need through the Red Cross. Drives are held at the First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine and the Higgins

Memorial Methodist Church in Burnsville. Volunteers serving in this role help the Red Cross provide a great blood donation experience for donors - helping to save lives. For more information and to apply go to <http://www.redcross.org/volunteer> or contact Kimberly Brewster, Volunteer Services Specialist supporting the Mitchell and Yancey area blood drives at kimberly.brewster@redcross.org or 828-333-9809.

Summer 2017 Workshops at Penland - Say hello to Penland's Summer 2017 workshop catalog, now online in full as a PDF! We're beyond excited to have 97 great workshops on offer this year. Take a look and come join us in the studios to build bikes or books or bowls or brooches or ...?

All applications received by February 11 will be entered into the early registration lottery. Scholarships are available for all workshops; apply by February 17.

Tipton Hill Community Foundation (Tipton Hill) - Country Breakfast, the first Saturday each month, 7:30 - 10:30 am, at the old Methodist Church, across from Jerry's Store. Come join us for homemade sausage, scrambled eggs, gravy, jellies, juice and coffee. Eat in or take-out, all funds support the Tipton Hill Community Foundation.

Yancey County

Calvary Chapel Asheville - Spruce Pine - Calvary Chapel Church in Asheville is sponsoring a home fellowship and Bible Study in Spruce Pine. The fellowship is held on Thursday evenings at 7:00pm at 79 Sean Dr. (Estatoe area—off Brushy Creek Rd). We are studying the Gospel of John currently. Call John Jackson 760-793-3799 for information and directions. And bring your Bible.

Higgins Memorial United Methodist Church - Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) Men's Class meeting in Burnsville announces that its new study year will begin September 13th at 6:55 pm and the class is being hosted by Higgins Methodist - 101 N. Main Street, Burnsville. This year's study will focus on the Gospel of John.

Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) is an international and interdenominational Bible class for men of all ages, denominations, geographic locations and backgrounds - all men living in Western North Carolina are encouraged to join the study. The group, for beginner or advanced Bible students, will meet from 6:55 to 8:55 pm each Tuesday evening through May - just show up any Tuesday evening beginning September 13th to join the group and the study.

For more local information, call Mike Lawrence - 904-254-6303 (jamesmichaellawrence@gmail.com) or Harvey Schestag - 828-284-0707 (harveyschestag@gmail.com) or go to www.bsfiinternational.org for comprehensive information about BSF.

Laurel Branch Baptist Church (Burnsville) - Seeking bi-vocational pastor, please email resume to fioreecapps@frontier.com.

Trac Announces 2016/17 Grant Recipients - The Toe River Arts Council, Asheville Area Arts Council, and the Madison County Arts Council are pleased to announce the 2016/2017 Regional Artist Project Grant recipients.

The Regional Artist Project Grant (RAPG) is an annual grant program that provides financial support to developing professionals by funding a project pivotal to the advancement of their careers as artists. The selection criteria include artistic merit, the potential of the project to contribute to the artist's professional growth, and the feasibility of the project itself.

This year's grant cycle received 50 applicants, with over \$54,000 in requests from all art disciplines. A total of \$11,500 was awarded. The Regional Artist Program Grant is sponsored by the Toe River Arts Council (Mitchell and Yancey Counties); Madison Arts Council; Asheville Area Arts Council (Buncombe County) with support from Avery County, and the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, a state agency.

The 2016-2017 Regional Artist Project Grant Recipients are:

From Buncombe County:

John Ransmeier [\$1,100]: To build a new kiln and furnish it with kiln shelves
Alicia Williams [\$1,100]: To purchase a wood planer to enable the precise milling of wood used in my rocking horses and carvings.

Heather Hietala [\$800]: To purchase a Skutt KM 1227 electric kiln

Michael Stevens [\$1,000]: To document a new 15-piece chamber jazz ensemble with a studio recording of 10 new original compositions over the course of two days

Joseph Pearson [\$800]: To produce a body of figurative works on repurposed discarded materials and to help with promotions through various media.

Perry Obee [\$1,000]: To outfit traditional stone lithography printmaking studio in order to develop professionally as an artist/printer

Connie Regan-Blake [\$600]: To repurpose videos of my performances, workshops, and interviews into short clips that will reach a global audience online via my website and social media

Kyle Carpenter [\$1,200]: To attend, speak at, and exhibit at NCECA in Portland, OR in 2017

Hannah Kaminer [\$1,000]: To record a full-length professional album as a musician, singer, and songwriter

From Madison County:

Hannah Furguele [\$500]: To create a documentary film that tells how a music festival saved Bluff Mountain in Hot Springs from being clear cut in 1995.

From Mitchell County:

Christina Shmigel [\$800]: To acquire studio equipment needed for the fabrication

of my work in steel for sculpture and installation

Michael Kline [\$800]: To complete the next phase of construction on my studio to create a workspace for an apprentice and an organized, dry glaze storage area From Yancey County:

Jem Klein [\$800]: To purchase a Jet bench top wood lathe to help create large sculptural work.

Good bye Mortgage! It's paid off!

Thank you Owen Family Foundation and everyone who contributed gifts, both large and small, for this effort!

This past summer TRAC sent out an appeal to raise \$80,000 that would pay-off the mortgage on our Spruce Pine facility. The appeal continued with a focus at the TRAC Auction and then in the year-end letter. Since acquiring our Spruce Pine facility in 1999, members have been donating to help pay off the mortgage. We are very happy to announce that through the efforts of Elizabeth Westveer and one final major gift from the Owen Family Foundation, we have paid it off! This substantial gift honors the philanthropic and leadership spirit of Dorothy Anne Greene Owen. We thank the Owen Family and all our members and TRAC friends for making this possible. A complete donor list will be posted soon to recognize all who helped us reach our goal.

We thank all those who have supported us over the past year—from donors to volunteers to those who opened the doors, kept others ajar, and helped us on our journey to a thriving community.

TRAC's first exhibit of the year begins Fri, Jan 13 at the Spruce Pine Gallery with an Empty Bowls reception provided by ARTsCentered students and faculty as a warm opening to their exhibition—"Serving Up The Arts." The showcase of talent continues through Feb 11. Reception snow date—Jan 20. For more info, contact Kathryn or call 828.765.0520

Yancey County Meals on Wheels (Burnsville) - Volunteers needed to deliver meals to Yancey County shut-ins, any weekday, 10:30 am - noon. If you would like to volunteer, please call the Yancey County Senior Center at 828-682-6011.

Mayland Community College

Small Business Center- Allen Cook, Director, E-Mail: tcok@mayland.edu
Address: 200 Mayland Ln, Spruce Pine, NC 28777, Telephone Number: 828-766-1295

To register for free classes, call Alan Cook at 828-766-1295 or email tcok@mayland.edu

Free online webinar: Tax Tips for your New Business: This webinar covers the major tax issues faced by your small business. Topics discussed include selecting a business structure, understanding business taxes, IRS recordkeeping requirements, and IRS help available to you. Call 828-766-1258, if you would like a copy of the accompanying power point to this webinar or would like to schedule free confidential business counseling. Register online: <https://www.ncsbc.net/workshop.aspx?ekey=310360161>

Free online webinar: Avoiding the Biggest Tax Mistakes in your Small Business. Learn on your schedule at your convenience with this online class: Learn about tax benefits available and how best to avoid common mistakes small business owners may make. Topics include common questions to small business owners: best practices, record keeping tips, mileage/personal/business use of vehicle, IRS requirements for hiring new employees, home office requirements. Register for this class online: <https://www.ncsbc.net/workshop.aspx?ekey=310360162>

Mayland Community College Small Business Center

The Mayland Small Business Center (SBC) offers high quality training and confidential counseling for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Starting this spring the SBC will offer free classes online. Classes that begin in January include: Creating a Loan Package, Finding Money to Start A Business, Finding & Attracting an Investor, Creating Financial Projections, How to Write a Business Plan, How to Start a Business, Choosing a Legal Structure for a Business, and Buying A Business.

The SBC Small BizU online seminars will be available January 1-June 30. To register for a free online class, visit www.ncsbc.net/events.aspx and click the "Location" drop down menu to select "At Center." From the "Center" drop down box select "Mayland Community College Small Business Center." Once the location and center are entered click "search" to view the online seminars below. Click the register button to sign up and receive a link to view the online class.

Whether you are considering launching a new business or managing an existing one, MCC's Small Business Center provides resources tailored to fit small business needs. If you would like to schedule a free business counseling session or register for other small business seminars, contact the SBC Director, Allen Cook, at 828.766.1295 or email him at tcok@mayland.edu.



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Angelia "Angie" Ollis

Hair & Makeup Artist

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Berry Chapel Baptist Church

Calendar for New Year

By Pastor Steve Williams
Mitchell County



Howdy Folks,

Here we are looking at a New Year, 2017. How are you going to enter the New year? Grumpy or Glad, Grouchy or Grateful-- the choice is yours. A wife was asked, "Do you wake up grouchy every morning?" "No" she answered, "I let him sleep." Grouchiness in a man or woman drains one of gratitude, gladness and good health.

You cannot be grouchy and grateful at the same time. You can't think defeat and thrill with the victory. You cannot dwell on sin and delight in saintness, entertain griping and enjoy gladness.

It's a Fact: Love produces more Love, so if you attend to grief, you will attract more grief. So, you need to acknowledge past benefits so you can attract present blessings. A grouch always has more grief than one who is grateful.

Unless your moments are packed with praise your New Year will be burdened with frustration. Unless your steps are taken with thankfulness your New Year journey will be annoyed with anxiety. Unless your days are filled with gratitude your life will be full of grief. Don't wake up Grouchy to the New Year! Wake up full of joy in the Lord. How do you do that? The Bible says in Philippians 4:6 "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanks giving, let your request be made known to God."

Christians need to remember when we are facing difficult times, that being grouchy is not a good way to face them. But Christians have Help, and a way to get through these difficult times. The Bible tells us: Psalms 121:1-2 says "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth." To "look" means to direct the vision in order to find out. Looking has a powerful effect on our lives. Most of us remember much more of what we see than what we hear. Here in this verse we see the Psalmist was going through some troubles of his own, and the main thing I want us to see is that he knew where to look for help and deliverance. In this coming New Year let us do the same thing.

1st He Looked In The Right Direction. He lifted up his eyes, he set his eyes on things above. He turned toward heaven not toward human reasoning. We must always look up when we are faced with difficulties. We need to Look up from the trouble of this world, look up through the temptation to sin, look up when you feel like quitting, look up when you are bewildered or confused. Look up to the power of our great Lord who is able to help. Not only did he look in the right direction.

2nd He Looked To The Right Person. It is our nature as human beings, to look or search out some means of help when we find ourselves in trouble. Many times even our most faithful and dearest of friends fail to be able to comfort us in these trying times of life. Do you remember what Job said to his friends? "Miserable comforters are ye all". The greatest comfort Christians can receive is the Peace that only God can give you. You see the Psalmist knew the right person to look to for Help. My help cometh from the Lord which made the heavens and earth. He looked in the right direction. He look to the right person.

3rd He Looked For The Right Thing. He was looking for help. Not a quick fix. Not a temporary solution. Many Christians today try to grit their teeth and bear the load, or square off and try to hit it head on by themselves. It never has or it never will work. We are no match against Satan and the Difficulties that surprise us during our life. The Psalmist was a strong man, a great king, a great warrior, yet with all his wisdom, with all his personal strength, he realized that the Lord was his help. May we also look to the Lord when we face difficulties this New Year!

Words of Wisdom for the New Year

- Great trials are often necessary to prepare us for great responsibilities. (A Fact Found In Gods Word)
- Don't look for trouble, it knows where you are. N/A
- The best friend is the one who brings out the best in you. Adrain Rogers
- God works through people who work. Billy Graham

Question for the New Year - Jesus gave His all, what will you give?

It's Up To You this New Year

Your life can be a fruit tree

Or just a shriveled pod.

The vital difference well may be

The quiet time you spend with God. N/A

Ten Rules For A Happier New Year

1. Give something away (no strings attached)
2. Do a kindness (and forget it)
3. Spend a few minutes with the aged (their experience is a priceless guidance)
4. Look intently into the face of a baby (and marvel)
5. Laugh often (it's life's lubricant)
6. Give thanks (a thousand times a day is not enough)
7. Pray (or you will lose the way)
8. Work (with vim and vigor)
9. Plan as though you'll live forever (because you will)
10. Live as though you'll die tomorrow (because you will on some tomorrow)

I found this in an old bulletin. N/A

Steve Williams is the Pastor of Berry Chapel Baptist Church in Spruce Pine.

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The HPST Antibiotic

By Lana Ellis
Tennessee

Finally votes have been counted and in spite of ongoing disputes a new United States president has been named. During the campaign both parties, according to their viewpoints, made several promises for the "good of the people". In the meantime Christians were praying around the clock with most of those prayers based on 2 Chronicles 7:14. *If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their land.* When I began thinking on this subject I came up with the catchy title for an article "Administering the HPST Antibiotic for the Healing of America". The ingredients making up the "antibiotic" are Humility, Prayer, Seeking and Turning based on the above Scripture.

As I began getting my thoughts together for my "sermon" on what is required for the healing of America, my attention was drawn to the prayer of Daniel found in Daniel 9. Daniel also was praying for the healing of his nation, Israel. While in the process of studying his prayer I looked at the prayers of others in Scripture. There was one common theme that stopped me in my tracks, Humility. All the ingredients of the "HPST Antibiotic" are required for healing of the land but the "H" is so easily overlooked. Humility – What does it mean and how is it displayed?

The Hebrew word in 2 Chronicles 7:14 translated "humble" means to "bend the knee" – showing subjection. Being privileged to live in a free country citizens of America are not required to bow to a superior ruler. Is it possible that our "freedoms" have made us more insensitive to what being humble really means? Have we become so proud and self-righteous that subjection is not part of our thought patterns? What is God expecting when He tells His people to humble themselves? I think the answer to that question lies in the prayers of many in the Bible. See for yourself the common theme that begins the following prayers.

Hannah (1 Samuel 2) – *My heart exalts in the Lord...There is no one holy like the Lord...There is no one besides Thee.*

Hezekiah (2 Kings 19) – *O Lord the God of Israel who art enthroned above the cherubim, Thou art the God...Thou has made heaven and earth.*

Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1) – *O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God.*

Ezra (Nehemiah 9) – *Thou alone art the Lord. Thou hast made the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. Thou dost give life to all of them and the heavenly host bows down before Thee.*

Mary – (Luke 1) *My soul exalts the Lord...Holy is His name...He has done mighty deeds.*

Jesus (Matthew 6) – *Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.*

Each of these example prayers began with a common theme, Humility – the acknowledgment of God. I have heard prayers prayed that I believed without doubt had reached the very ears of God. What made those prayers so powerful? It was the emphasis that was put on God, the Creator of all things. The One who sits on a throne surrounded by a host of angelic beings. The One who put the stars and planets in place. The One who causes each of our heart beats to pulsate through every artery, vein and smallest capillary. The One who enables our lungs to take in breaths of life-giving oxygen. God, the God above all gods!

Maybe my feeble attempt to put in words what God is trying His best to teach me about prayer will cause you to think more about your prayer life. I know from experience lately that my morning prayer, "Thank you God for taking care of me during the night and take care of me, mine and others today" seems a bit shallow after this study. Yes, the "HPST Antibiotic" does need to be administered to an ailing America but as we pray let us not overlook the all-important "H" ingredient of the formula – "humble themselves."

Lana Ellis resides in Kingsport TN, next door to grandchildren. Church is West Colonial Hills Baptist Church.



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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC Senate District 47

The General Assembly was busy in December with three extra sessions. The first extra session in the month resulted in appropriations of over \$200 million of disaster relief to those affected by Hurricane Matthew and the November wildfires that befall portions of my district. Additional disaster relief appropriations will be considered in the upcoming 2017 session.

Another extra session included confirmation of cabinet secretaries, full appellate court panel review, employee status, restoration of administrative authority to the state superintendent, health insurance, board of trustees at UNC institutions appointed by the Legislature, State Ethics and Elections Enforcement Board, clarification of the General Assembly's authority to draw Congressional and legislative maps, and partisan appellate court elections. Following are some highlights of the enacted bills:

- Confirmation of the governor's Cabinet secretary appointees by the N.C. Senate.
- Consolidation of the State Board of Elections, Lobbying Compliance Division of the N.C. Secretary of State's office, and N.C. Ethics Commission into the State Ethics and Elections Enforcement Board with an even split in partisan membership.
- Clarification that the N.C. Constitution gives sole authority to the General Assembly to draw congressional and legislative districts.
- Restoration of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction's authority to make staffing decisions as the elected head of the Department of Public Instruction.

Governor McCrory called legislators back to Raleigh for a final extra session in an effort to repeal House Bill 2 – Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act. I voted for House Bill 2 in March of 2016 for the same reasons I voted against repeal of the bill in December of 2016 – I firmly believe in protecting and maintaining privacy and safety for women and girls in restrooms, showers, and locker rooms. I will always vote for what I believe is decent and appropriate and in the best interest of my constituents.

I wish each of you a happy and healthy new year! As always, please share your thoughts with me on this or other issues related to state government by emailing me at ralph.hise@ncleg.net or calling me at 919-733-3460.



Sen. Ralph Hise
Ralph.Hise@ncleg.net
919-733-3460



Growing up in North Carolina, my parents instilled in me the values of hard work, public service, and gratitude for all that our great country has to offer. My father was a minister who served our country in World War II, while also serving our family, congregation, and the community of Winston-Salem. My mother was an elementary school teacher who understood the value of education and its power to lift people out of poverty.

I attended public schools in Winston-Salem, where I started my football career, and I continued to play football at Wake Forest University, where I earned a degree in Communications. I met the love of my life, Brooke, shortly thereafter. Together we have two incredible sons and were recently blessed with our first grandchild. I began my career in equipment sales in North Carolina, only to find that the policies of our government only held back people trying to work their way up. It was then that I decided I wanted to run for public office, to make a real difference in our country for the sake of my children and my community.

After representing North Carolina's Fifth District, I was elected to the United States Senate, and I am honored to work for the people of North Carolina. I currently serve as the Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, where I oversee the nation's intelligence agencies to ensure that they are working together to keep our country safe. During my time in the Senate, I have made it my mission to ensure the safety and security of our citizens both at home and abroad. I am working to protect the rights of crime victims while giving law enforcement the tools they need to bring criminals to justice. I have fought for our veterans and military families who have fought so hard for us, to protect the retirement security of seniors, and to make college more affordable so that every American has a shot at the American Dream. But my work is far from done. As the Senator for North Carolina, I will continue working to restore the strength of our economy, to expand opportunity for all Americans, and to keep our country safe.

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

continued from page 39

"because love covers a multitude of sins." What does this mean, "love covers a multitude of sins"? It means that when you love someone, you overlook the flaws in them, and the sins they commit against you. Think about it: the people that you love are not perfect, far from it. They do things that might hurt or annoy you all the time. But you overlook it, because you love them. You might say something like: "Oh, I know they did (such and such a thing)" – but you don't care, because you love them. Now some OTHER person, whom you are NOT inclined to love, may do the SAME kind of thing, and yet you are offended or hold it against them. What was the difference? It was not the deed, or the "sin" itself – because you forgave one for it. No, the difference was that you had LOVE for one, and NOT for the other.

For example, I love my little granddaughters. They are just precious treasures. And so I overlook a lot of things that they do. Several years ago, I got my first iPad, and when I did I got one of the best accessories I ever got: a Zagg keyboard case, that serves both as a case for the iPad, but it also folds out into a keyboard, basically making the iPad a laptop – and ever since I've had it, I have hardly ever used a desktop computer or laptop again – I just love it. But one day the grandbabies were over, and Corley wanted to play with my iPad. I generally guard my iPad with my life, but I thought, well, I will let HER sit in my lap and do a few things on it. Before I knew it, she had reached down on the keyboard, and just ripped the "W" right off of it! It never worked again. Now I have got to tell you: if one of Y'ALL had done that, I would have been pretty ticked at you! But when Corley did it, I just laughed – and then a couple of months later, Abigail did the same thing to the "M". It slowed my typing down considerably! But I overlooked their "transgression" because I loved them. Now there are probably other people, who if THEY had done that same thing, I would have been pretty unhappy about them tearing the numbers off my keyboard. What's the difference? It was not the transgression – the difference is MY LOVE for one was greater than for the other. And if you think about it, there are all kinds of examples of this in your own life as well. There are people who do things to you, or say things to you, or forget to do something for you, or whatever – but you don't hold it against them, and the reason you don't is because you are predisposed to really love them. But someone ELSE might do the VERY same kind of thing – and yet you get ticked off at them for it. What was the difference? It wasn't the transgression; it wasn't what they did – the only thing different is YOUR LOVE: you really love one, and not the other.

Some of us here today need to consider our relationships with others in the church – or maybe even our own families or neighbors or work associates. Are you being critical of some, or holding things against some, when you are forgiving these very same kinds of things in others? Can you see that the difference is not what they are doing, but in YOUR lack of love for them?

God challenges us here in His word to be "fervent in your love for one another". A lot of us in the church may "like" each other, and be "fond" of each other with a brotherly love, but God says it's time for you to grow into real "agape" love for each other: the kind of love that

overlooks transgressions in others – because GOD has this same kind of love for YOU! Listen, you may or may not accomplish what some people will call a "great thing" in 2017. But if you will LOVE people: love them enough to let them lean on you; love them enough to overlook their slights and transgressions – then you will have accomplished what GOD calls the greatest thing. If the end is near, then LOVE – more than ever before!

III. SERVE

I Peter 4:10 "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

We find several truths in this verse about gifts and service in the church:

First of all, we see that every Christian has received a gift or ability to serve. He says: "As EACH ONE has received a special gift." EVERY Christian has a gift. I Corinthians 12:7 echoes this same thing: "To EACH ONE is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." God has left none of His children out. "EACH" of us has been given a gift with which to serve. It is only a matter of discovering what our gift IS, but if you are a Christian, God has given you an ability with which to serve Him.

Gifts are to be USED. It says, "As each one has received a special gift, EMPLOY it!" God gave you your gift to USE in service. He didn't give you the gift of teaching just so that you could enjoy the fruits of your study for yourself. You were given that gift to USE it in teaching others God's truth.

We see this emphasis here that our gifts are not for us; they are for OTHERS. He says as you have received your gift, Employ it "in serving ONE ANOTHER." You are not to use your gift because it makes you feel good – although I will say there is often a certain feeling you get when you use your gift. But you feeling good is not the purpose of your gift. You are to use your gift to serve others, whether it benefits you in some way or not. I believe that God has given me the gift of understanding and teaching His word, but there may be times when it is hard for me to do that: it may be physically difficult for me to do it; or I may not always "feel" like doing it – but so what – this isn't about me; it is about me using the gift God has given me, to minister to others. This is what Jesus did for us, and it is what we are to do for others as well.

This verse also teaches us that you are accountable to God for the use of your gifts. It says to use your gifts: "As good STEWARDS of the manifold grace of God." A steward is someone who is accountable for what he does with something that has been entrusted to him. The Bible says here that you are accountable to God for what you do with the spiritual gifts of service which He gave you. How will you fare when you are judged for the way you have used your gifts?

In Matthew 24 Jesus spoke of the events of the end, and in :46 He said, "Blessed is that slave whom his Master finds so doing when He comes." In other words, we will be blessed if we are found doing what Jesus commanded us to be doing, when He returns.

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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

US House of Representatives NC District 11



Congressman
Mark Meadows
202-225-6401

www.meadows.house.gov

Winston Churchill once said, "Christmas is a season not only of rejoicing but of reflection." As Christians, the Christmas season is an important time to worship Christ, and to reflect on what His birth means for us as humans. It is not insignificant that God planned for his Son to be born humbly into the world as a human, just like you and me.

When God chose to humble Himself and become a man to dwell among us here on earth, He formed His son in Mary's womb, in the same way that we also were knit together in our mothers' wombs. In Jeremiah 1:5 God speaks to the prophet Jeremiah and says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." What a beautiful reminder that God knew us and the people we would become even before we existed here on earth.

My family has had a beautiful reminder of Christ's entrance to the earth this year as we celebrated the birth of our very first grandchild this month. It is awe inspiring to think that Jesus Christ came into the world the same way each and every one of us did.

As significant as Christ's human birth is, it is His life that we are called to emulate. During this Christmas season let us rejoice in His life and reflect on His example. Give thanks for the family that surrounds us and the blessings we receive. Be thankful for a Savior who came to this earth to live a blameless life and be our example so that when he died in our place God's grace was poured on us.

NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel
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Two thousand years after the birth of Christ, we continue to celebrate the gift of hope that was given to mankind amidst all the darkness of the Roman Empire, a child sent to be the light of the world. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

The world today may at times seem filled with darkness, but we have been given a great Light. This Christmas, let us renew our devotion and worship of the Christ Child who was born on earth, dwelt among us, was crucified, buried and rose again. In 2017, may we all strive to shine our light, the light of Christ, into the dark world that He has already overcome.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



NC House District 85



Representative
Josh Dobson
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919-733-5862

The North Carolina General Assembly convened for a special legislative session on December 13, 2016 focusing on disaster relief funding for the ongoing efforts across the state to help recover from Hurricane Matthew and the mountain wildfires. The chamber voted unanimously late Tuesday to spend \$201 million, much of which would go for housing, local infrastructure needs and match federal aid.

Several more bills were filed in a second special legislative session, which was called for Wednesday, December 16, 2016. Several of these bills voted on were very controversial and I would like to give the people of the 85th District background on two of the more important bills and explain why I voted in favor of these bills.

The first bill, House Bill 17, has four separate parts. The first part gives more authority to the State Superintendent. I would support this provision regardless of what party the governor or state superintendent is affiliated with. The second section of this bill eliminates the Governor's four appointments to the board of trustees at each university in the UNC system and creates four appointments by the NC General Assembly. If this was a standalone provision, I would have voted against this. However, it was part of an overall bill. In the General Assembly, you don't get to choose which parts you support and only vote for one provision. The third section of the bill requires Senate confirmation of cabinet appointees. I am very much in favor of this. This is the process at the federal level and I have advocated for this under Republican and Democrat Governors. Lastly, section 4 of this bill transfers the Center for Safer Schools from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). I have no objection to this provision.

Another bill, Senate Bill 4, was also brought to the floor for a vote during this special session. This bill had five parts, two of which were the most controversial, so I will only comment on those two. Part One of this bill creates the bipartisan State Board of Elections and Ethics enforcement. I am in support of this. North Carolina has very complex and complicated ethics laws. Any time I had questions in my four years in the General Assembly, I received different answers from different ethics related entities, or in some cases, no answer at all. This provision I believe will streamline this process. The second and most controversial portion of this bill, Section 3, will change the elections of Supreme Court Justices and Court of Appeals Justices from nonpartisan to partisan elections. I have supported this over the course of my four years in the General Assembly. Some may disagree with this provision, however, I voted for this and have advocated for this provision in the past.

As you can see, it is much more complicated than a yes or no, up or down vote. Some may question the timing of these votes and that is their right to do so, however, I voted for this legislation and I would have supported it regardless of who is/was Governor. Governor Cooper will still be head of state, have veto power, and the bully pulpit.

On another note, I would like to say thank you for allowing me to serve another year in the General Assembly. I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and wish you a very happy new year.

NC House District 118



Rep. Michele D. Presnell
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The plan to pack the Supreme Court with two more justices during a Special Session was a figment of the imagination of the media and special interest groups.

No, the media and special interest groups did not stop a plan to pack the Supreme Court – such a plan never existed.

Media outlets jumped at the opportunity to fill their pages with conspiracies that insinuated impending doom. Naturally, people want frequent updates on matters that suggest impending doom, and the vicious cycle of rumormongering quickly took on a life of its own.

While a plan to pack the Supreme Court never existed, one thing is for sure: media outlets made a fortune off of misleading the public both here at home and across the nation. If an analysis of advertising revenue generated through pushing such a blatant falsehood were conducted, I would certainly be interested in reading the results.

Special interest groups also undoubtedly made a fortune off of pushing a fairy tale onto the public. The cycle is clear:

- A special interest group goes to the public to raise money to stop an impending (although completely fictional) travesty;
- The special interest group – after having pocketed some of the money raised – produces advertisements and other media about the imagined slight, and raises more money;
- The fictional "Supreme Court packing" scheme does not materialize, so the special interest group goes back to the public again to raise more money – they need to stop the next impending disaster from happening, whether real or imagined.

And the cycle continues.

Perhaps the Left-leaning media and special interest groups imagined Supreme Court packing to be a real threat because Gov.-elect Cooper and the General Assembly in which he served at the time packed the Court of Appeals in 2000. The provision, which was tucked into the 233-page budget bill that year, prevented Republicans from gaining control of the court in the election that followed that Fall.

Gov.-elect Cooper voted yes on the Appeals Court-packing legislation.

Whether the people of North Carolina will continue to buy into fake news event after fake news event remains to be seen.

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By Tim Tron
 Burke County

"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." -Matt 10:39



The mountains are shrouded by a thick blanket of clouds today. Grandfather remains hidden like an ancient being wrapped up in his winter blankets; protected from all harm, safe but unseen. Water drips from the leaves as the river now runs with fully bodied spirit over the rapids that just a few weeks ago barely made a trickling sound.

Shards of dark earth lie in rows of the fields of upturned soil. The gentle rain flows deep into the crevices, soothing the parched earth that seldom finds the touch of rain. All around us somber earth tones match the mood of the sky above; winter is now upon us in full season.

In my mind's eye, I'm standing down the hill from the old farmhouse, looking back up the hill from whence I came. Images that were never apparent until now suddenly reveal themselves.

Unlike the front of the home, from behind we can see all of the genuineness of the life of those who live within; the clothesline where the wash will be hung to dry, the burning barrel where the trash will be burnt, and finally the back porch where everything from the deep freezer to the canning table sits, awaiting the next growing season.



Here, the real work of life goes on, out of sight. Like the soil, until the blade of the bottom plow chisels into the earth, causing an upheaval of sediment, the true work of the earth cannot be seen. The dirt folds over like the corners of grandma's quilt on the bed, rolling up the root-side of the dirt, exposing it to the elements. Meanwhile, the sod below begins to decay adding nutrients and building more compost for the future.

One layer must die so that the other may live.

We too are like these things, the soil and the farmhouse. What truly makes us who we are is what we are within; the part of us that cannot be seen from the outside. To reveal ourselves is to have the bottom plow cut us deep within and fold over our barriers we have created. Many fear revealing their true nature and only do so in short bursts of often uncomfortable circumstances that they wish they could have prevented. Sin makes this possible, and since we are all sinners, each of us has this inner being with which we battle daily. In essence, we are comprised of a triune being; body, soul, and spirit. (1Thess.5:23) The world and Satan try to affect us from the outside in, while God works on us from the inside

out. He infuses us with His spirit. From the inside out we are changed when we truly accept Jesus Christ into our lives. Like the back of the farm house where the real work takes place, out of sight, inside us is where the actual work has to start. We have to choose to allow the Holy Spirit to come into our lives, so that from within, we will be filled with a new light, which then will begin to permeate into our soul, and eventually our body. The longer we walk with Christ, the more our whole being changes; our tastes, our likes, and how we physically seek pleasures in this world, knowing what is to come is even greater. One is never finished in this manner, as we are always a work in progress.



Like the soil, we must die to our former selves in order to live for Him. *"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." -Matt 10:39* We cannot have the sinful pleasures of this world and still try to obtain sanctification. One cannot stand with one foot in sin and one in Christ. He is a jealous God and wants us all or nothing. So, we continually battle an enemy that never stops trying to make us fall. Hopefully, in time or by chance someone shares the opportunity to find and accept Christ into your life, it is then that you will come into the season of change.

For every season there is meaning and purpose.

The prayers we lifted for the life-giving rain have been answered. The fires are all out, and once more the forest begins to heal. Like the sod that has been turned for preparation for the next year's growing season, we too have to decide in that season when to begin the life we lead.

Are you ready to get to work?

Eternity awaits your decision.

Thanks be to God.

Timothy W. Tron is the Executive Director of the Waldensian Trail of Faith. He lives in Valdese with his family. He is the author of, "Bruecke to Heaven," and an active blogger, artist and musician. Timothy also has a BSEE from UF, is an Eagle Scout and is Vice President of the Valdese Merchants Assoc. He has been Ordained to perform weddings at the Trail and attends several area churches seeking to serve the Lord every day.

Elementary School Speech Contest

By Cheryl Shuffler
Burke County

A poem about a mouse and a gruffalo, a work of prose about an orphan, an original composition about a middle child, and a notable speech about the death of Martin Luther King Jr. made up the winning speeches in the 2016-17 Burke County Public Schools Elementary Speech Contest. The annual event was held at the Old Rock School in Valdese on Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2016. Forty elementary school students representing the 15 elementary schools competed in the district-level event. A first-, second- and third-place winner was named in four categories. The winners and categories are:



Original Composition

First – Chloe Garrison, “The Middle Child Syndrome” Salem
Second – Guian Callado, “Chicken” Drexel
Third – Ava Sohl, “I Love You Mom!” Rutherford College



Interpretative Poetry

First – Daniel Kreshling, “The Gruffalo” Salem
Second – Caliope Jones, “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” George Hildebrand
Third – Kennedy Abernathy, “The Mississippi Squirrel Revival” Valdese



Notable Speeches

First – Laya Bolds, “Robert F. Kennedy – On the Death of Martin Luther King” Salem
Second – Piper Atkins, “Billy Graham’s Speech to America After 9/11” Oak Hill
Third – Samuel Ramirez, “The Quit India Movement” Forest Hill



Interpretative Prose

First – Kaylen Hall, “Happily Every After?” Oak Hill
Second – Addyson Whaley, “Earrings” Icard
Third – Ambria Blalock, “Goldie Locks had Chicken Pox” Valdese



Cheryl Shuffler is the Public Relations Officer for the Burke County Public School System.



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Admissions Criteria

Serious illness
Seeking Curative Treatment
Physician willing to work with the Palliative Care Team

Settings

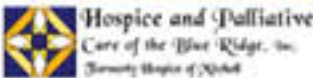
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News

By Cheryl Shuffler

Putnam receives doctorate degree



Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Larry Putnam has received his Doctor of Education degree (Ed.D.) from Appalachian State University. Putnam successfully defended his dissertation "A Case Study on the Self-Perceptions of Novice Assistant Principals' and Principals' Leadership Abilities Based upon the North Carolina Standards for School Executives" on Wednesday, Nov. 16.

Putnam said, "I consider myself a life-long learner, and have always been a big proponent of everyone, educators especially, bettering themselves by never stopping learning. When we as educators follow this philosophy, it is the students who ultimately win as they gain from our expanded knowledge base. I appreciate the staff at Appalachian State University and my cohort of fellow degree seekers for their support and encouragement. My dissertation was about further developing and supporting assistant principals and principals in their multi-faceted role of ultimately increasing student performance. I chose it because after 15 years of experience as a building-level principal, I realized a need, especially in a time where the job of the principal is forever changing and accountability is higher than any time in the history of the principal role."

Earlier this month, Putnam was recognized as the 2017 Northwest Regional Education Service Alliance (NWRESA) Superintendent of the Year.

He has been superintendent of Burke County Public Schools since April 2012; prior to being named superintendent, he served as interim superintendent for seven months. Putnam has been in education for more than 20 years, and received his doctorate in education leadership from Appalachian State University on Wednesday. He has a master's in school administration from Gardner-Webb University; an educational specialist degree from Appalachian State University; and a bachelor's of science degree in business education and a business administration degree with a concentration in management from Appalachian State University. Putnam started his career in education as a teacher at Freedom High School, his alma mater, and he held principalships at Broughton Hospital's Enola School, Draughn High School and W.A. Young and Chesterfield elementary schools. His past work experiences include employment with Drexel Heritage and the Department of Corrections. Putnam's community involvement includes Burke County United Way, Community Child Protection and Child Fatality Prevention Team, Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Homeland Security Task Force, Sports Medicine Advisory Council-Carolinas Health Care-Blue Ridge, BDI Board of Directors, Morganton Rotary, a local affirmation group of community leaders and past board member of the Strategic Alliance for Burke Youth (SABY).



Larry Putnam

Gladden recognized as finalist

Icard Elementary School fifth-grade teacher Andrea Gladden was among the education superstars the State Board of Education recognized on Dec. 1. Gladden is a 2016 NC Finalist for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST).

The PAEMST is administered by the National Science Foundation on behalf of The White House. Finalists devote time to professional development, incorporate innovative approaches into classroom teaching and use technology in their classrooms. Gladden is one of three state finalists in the science category.

Gladden said she learned much about herself as an educator through the process of being nominated for the Presidential Award, which included her completing an administrative, narrative and video component. She also has made contacts and formed partnerships with educators across the country.

She said, "I believe that it is vital in today's society for children to learn to become problem solvers at a young age. Problem solving is a skill that must be encouraged and nurtured so that it can grow over time. My students learn that in life we will experience failures, but it is how we recover from those failures that is most important."

Gladden also received recognition from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund and the National Science Foundation in the Research Triangle Park on Nov. 30 where she presented a speech and was awarded a plaque and gifts. There she met current and previous awardees of the PAEMST award and supporters from NCDPI.

This past year, Gladden was awarded her first Prism Grant funded by the Burroughs Wellcome Fund. She was awarded \$2,000 for science equipment for her project entitled, "What's in a Drop of Water?" She was also awarded the Citgo Fueling Education Award of \$1,000 this summer to spend on classroom supplies. Gladden also has been a part of the Mickelson Exxon Mobil Teacher's Academy, the E4 Study (Exploring the Efficacy of Engineering is Elementary) Study through the National Science Foundation, the Museum of Science, Boston's Engineering is Elementary (EiE) program, and NC State University. This summer she became a certified extended network provider for EiE. This allows her to provide EiE professional development trainings for western North Carolina.



State recognizes Andrea Gladden

continued on page 45



McDowell Tech

community college

Learning for Life

- Accounting (A)
- Accounting- Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Bookkeeping (C)
- Accounting- Payroll Accounting Clerk (C)
- Accounting- Income Tax Preparer (C)
- Advertising and Graphic Design (A,D,C)
- Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Technology (D)
- Associate Degree Nursing (A)
- Associate In Engineering (A)
- Automotive Systems Technology (A,D,C)
- Basic Law Enforcement Training (C)
- Business Administration (A) - Concentrations Available In:
 - Marketing and Retailing (A)
 - Operations Management (A)
 - Carpentry (D,C)
- College Transfer - Liberal Arts or Science Program (A)
- Collision Repair and Refinishing Technology (D,C)
- Collision Repair: Structural Damage (C)
- Computer Information Technology (A, C)
- Computer Integrated Machining (A,D)
- Cosmetology (A,D)
- Cosmetology-Esthetics Instructor (C)
- Cosmetology - Esthetics Technology (C)
- Cosmetology-Instructor (C)
- Cosmetology - Manicuring Instructor (C)
- Cosmetology - Manicuring / Nail Technology (C)
- Early Childhood Education (A,D)
- Early Childhood Education-Infant Toddler Care (C)
- Early Childhood-Special Education (C)
- Electrical Systems Technology (A,D)
- Emergency Management (A)
- General Education (A)
- General Occupational Technology (A)
- Health Informatics (C)
- Health Information Technology (A)
- Health Information Technology- Billing and Coding (C)
- Health Information Technology-Health Care Informatics (C)
- Health Information Technology- Medical Coding (D)
- Health Information Technology- Release of Information (C)
- Health Sciences Therapeutic and Diagnostic Services (D)
- Industrial Systems Technology (A,D, C)
- Information Systems (A,C)
- Information Systems Advanced (C)
- Network Management (A, C, D)
- Nurse Aide (C)
- Network Management Advanced (C)
- Office Administration (A,D,C)
- Office Administration-Medical Transcription (D)
- Photographic Technology (A,C)
- Practical Nursing Education (D)
- School Age Child (D,C)
- School-Age Education (A)
- Software and Web Development (A, C)
- Software and Web Development Advanced (C)
- Surgical Technology (D)
- Web Administration and Design (A, C)
- Web Administration and Design Advanced (C)
- Welding Technology (D,C)

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Crossword

ACROSS

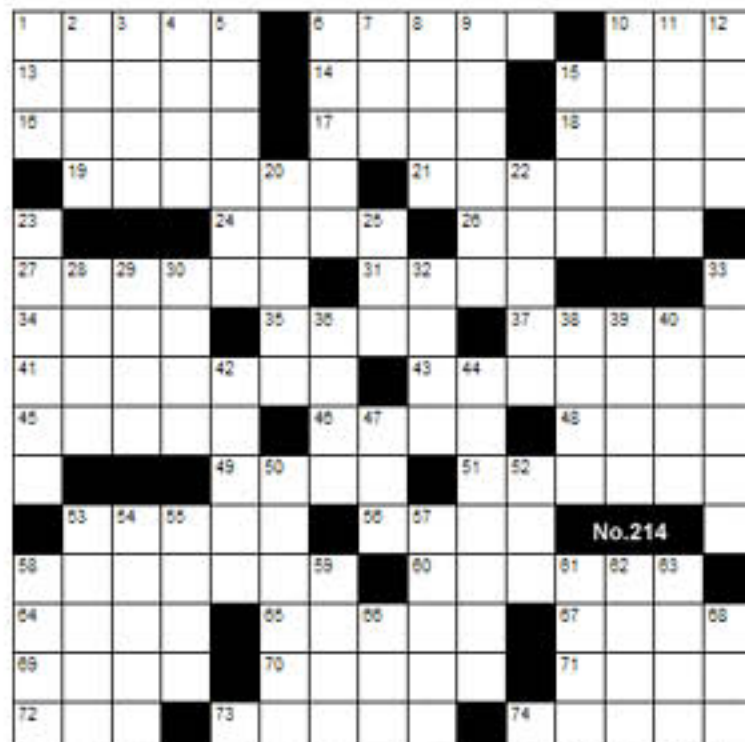
1 first letter of Greek alphabet (Rev 21:6)
 6 as to a light shining in _____ place (1,4) (2 Pet 1:19)
 10 I remind you to _____ into flame the gift of God (2 Tim 1:6)
 13 the _____ of your feet shall tread (Deut 11:24)
 14 How _____ you turn my Father's house into a market! (John 2:16)
 15 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his _____ and fury commanded (Daniel 3:13)
 16 Bring me a heifer, _____ and a ram (1,4) (Gen 15:9)
 17 for the tent a covering of ram skins _____ red (Ex 36:19)
 18 And Israel vowed _____ unto the LORD (1,3) (Num 21:2)
 19 walk with long steps (Hab 3:12)
 21 together with the overseers and _____ (Phil 1:1)
 24 Roman Emperor
 26 and the hold of _____ fowl spirit (Rev 18:2) (KJV)
 27 the king of the south shall be moved with _____, and shall (Dan 11:11) KJV
 31 he burned the bones of the king of Edom into _____ (Amos 2:1) KJV
 34 testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in _____ (Acts 23:11)
 35 cups shaped like almond flowers with _____ and blossoms (Ex 37:19)
 37 Only a _____ of it has reached our ears (Job 28:22)
 41 they build _____ ramps and capture them (Hab 1:10)
 43 and people have used it for a _____ to this day (2 Kings 10:27)
 45 the angels hastened Lot, saying, _____, take thy wife (Gen 19:15) (KJV)
 46 the roebuck, and the fallow _____, and the wild goat (Deut 14:5)
 48 Jesus _____ in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52)
 49 I will send _____ and say, 'Go, find the arrows (1,3) (1 Sam 20:21)
 51 honey and curds, sheep, and _____ from cows' milk for David (2 Sam 17:29)
 53 he _____ unto the LORD, and vowed (Ps 132:2) KJV
 56 Their calls will _____ through the windows (Zeph 2:14)
 58 like Babylonian chariot officers, natives of _____ (Ezek 23:15)
 60 he did not _____ to sorcery as at other times (Num 24:1)
 64 I now consider _____ for the sake of Christ (Phil 3:7)
 65 You made my enemies turn _____ backs in flight (Ps 18:40)
 67 the princes of _____ abode with

Balaam (Num 22:8)

69 God has granted even the Gentiles repentance _____ life (Acts 11:18)
 70 The LORD _____ righteousness and justice (Ps 33:5)
 71 if his hands are _____, the house leaks (Eccl 10:18)
 72 for the _____ that is in the land of Assyria. (Isaiah 7:18)
 73 the hollow of his hand, and _____ out heaven with the span (Isa 40:12) KJV
 74 flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of _____ (Job 20:24) KJV

DOWN

1 _____ became king of Judah (1 King 5:9)
 2 Send me cedar _____ as you did for my father David (2 Chron 2:3)
 3 The wicked _____ against the righteous and gnash their teeth (Ps 37:12)
 4 The nations will _____ and tremble; anguish will grip the people (Exod 15:14)
 5 Jacob set up _____ pillar at the place (1,5) (Gen 35:14)
 6 snake (Isa 30:6)
 7 The _____ is yours, and yours also the night (Ps 74:16)
 8 Israelites to bring you _____ heifer without defect (1,3) (Num 19:2)
 9 To _____ them that were under the law (Gal 4:5)
 10 The LORD looked with _____ on Abel and his offering (Gen 4:4)
 11 O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in _____ (Ps 6:2)
 12 so is good _____ from a far country (Prov 25:25)
 15 I have finished the _____, I have kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7)
 20 He came to _____ and then to Lystra (Acts 16:1)
 22 prevent (Jer 11:15)
 23 she was in a town and did not _____ for help (Deut 22:24)
 25 anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the _____ has gone (2 Cor 5:17)
 28 a small round thing, as small as the _____ frost (Exodus 16:14)
 29 Ahab son of _____ became king of Israel (1 Kings 16:29)
 30 if he _____ them loose, they devastate the land (Job 12:15)
 32 was in the _____ that is called Patmos (Rev 1:9)
 33 cries out against me and all its furrows _____ with tears (3,3) (Job 31:38)
 36 to loose the bands of



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wickedness, to _____ the heavy burdens (Isa 58:6) (KJV)
 38 I _____ you to bear with my word of exhortation (Heb 13:22)
 39 Rescue me from the _____, do not let me sink (Ps 69:14)
 40 lofty trees will be felled, the tall _____ will be brought low (Isa 10:33)
 42 Everyone who _____ him was amazed at his understanding (Luke 2:47)
 44 Then the _____ shot arrows at your servants (2 Sam 11:24)
 47 The _____ cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" (1 Cor 12:21)
 50 the _____ after his kind, and the grasshopper after his (Lev 11:22) KJV
 52 abbr. for the 28th book of Old Testament
 53 His face _____ like the sun, and his clothes became as white (Matt 17:2)
 54 Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind

them, a desert _____ (Joel 2:3)
 55 Know _____ that wisdom is sweet to your soul (Prov 24:14)
 57 Jesus _____ out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama sabachthani?" (Mark 15:34)
 58 You are my war _____, my weapon for battle (Jer 51:20)
 59 consciences have been seared as with _____ iron. (1,3) (1 Tim 4:2)
 61 leave out
 62 sons and thirty grandsons, who _____ on seventy donkeys (Judg 12:14)
 63 we spend our years as a _____ that is told (Ps 90:9) KJV
 66 member of the first family of the Bible
 68 Babylon is taken, _____ is confounded, Merodach is broken (Jer 50:2)

Solution on page 14



Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

What To Do If The End Is Near

By Shawn Thomas
Burke County



A couple of years ago, I read a survey of Americans which asked what they would do, if they knew the world was coming to an end soon. Two of the top responses included going out and getting drunk, and going on a trip to Las Vegas. I was amazed — but perhaps I shouldn't have been. That is the kind of attitude you should probably expect from a person who doesn't know God: "eat, drink & be merry, for tomorrow we die." But the Christian person, on the other hand, should have an entirely different attitude. Jesus is coming back. The end is near. We don't know when, but it is closer than it has ever been before. Climactic events could well take place in 2017. What should we, as those who claim to be God's people, do this year in light of that?

We don't have to fabricate an answer; God's word gives us directions for just this case: in I Peter 4:7-11. This passage begins with the phrase: "The end of all things is at hand" (or "is drawing near.") And then he follows that with several admonitions about what we should do when the end is drawing near.

I. PRAY

I Peter 4:7 "The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer."

A thoughtless person, contemplating the end of all things, might think that prayer was not of much use near the end. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." What time is there now for answered prayers? Everything is about over. But this is really a godless attitude. Prayer is not somehow of LESS importance as we move towards the end; it becomes even MORE important. Think about it.

We are drawing nearer to an appointment with God, in whose presence we will live forever; we must spend even more time preparing ourselves in prayer for our coming to Him.

We need to spend more time in prayer purifying our lives from sin as we draw close to the end.

We need to be praying for lost people to be touched and saved — if we are near the end, then a lot of people we know are about to have their last opportunities to be saved before "the door of the ark is closed"; we need to be even more fervent in our intercessions for them as the end draws near.

And listen: God DOES hear and answer our prayers for the lost! One day last week I received an e-mail from a member of the church in Oklahoma where I served as interim pastor before I came to Pleasant Ridge. We had been praying for her daughter's husband, who had declared that he was an agnostic, and who had left his wife and little baby to be saved. This woman told me that this man decided that he didn't want to be alone for Christmas, so he decided to come home and at least be with his family. He went to church with them on Christmas Day, and the message spoke to him in a personal way. That afternoon he told his family that he wanted to be saved, and they called the preacher over and that son-in-law asked Jesus to be his Lord & Savior, and he wants to be baptized as public profession of his faith! THAT was a Christmas miracle! We had been praying for him for two years that I know of — and others probably longer than that. And I thought of some of us here today, and people we are praying for — DON'T GIVE UP! God DOES hear and answer those prayers! Especially as we get closer to the end, we need to pray more fervently than ever before for our loved ones to be saved.

We need to pray even more for our church to remain faithful amidst the falling away morally and doctrinally which has been prophesied to happen in the last days.

We need to pray that we would personally not be led into temptation, but delivered from evil. "Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation", Jesus admonished His disciples near the end of His earthly ministry. He would say the same to us today: "Watch and pray", the end is drawing near.

As Jesus Himself modeled for us in His last hours here on earth, prayer does not somehow become of diminished importance as we draw near to the end of our stay on earth. Rather it becomes even more crucial. So, is the end of all things at hand, as many believe? Then let us heed this verse: "Therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer."

I really believe that prayer is one of the biggest differences between the lost person and the person who really knows the Lord. There are some things that we Christian people do, that a lost person may do as well: lost people may go to certain meetings, fellowship with people, give to help someone or some cause, etc. But prayer is one thing that you will only do if you really believe in God. If God is not real, why waste time with it? Why spend 30 minutes or an hour of your prime time and energy at the beginning of the day, if there is not a God who is really hearing and answering prayers. It is a waste! But if you really believe in God, you know it is NOT a waste; it is the best thing you can do with your time. If the end of all things is near: you will pray!

How has your prayer life been in 2016? Are you faithful in morning prayer? Are you following that up by consistently praying little "spontaneous prayers" all through the day? If you were to make ONE change in your life for the better in 2017, I don't think you could make a better change than to PRAY. Rededicate yourself this New Year to prayer. Peter tells us: the end of all things is near — so PRAY! PRAY!

But he also reminds us in the next verse of THE great priority for the Christian:

II. LOVE

I Peter 4:8 "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins."

The words "above all" here refers to the priority of love. There is nothing more important. I Timothy 1:5 says "the goal of our instruction is LOVE." The end result God is seeking from our teaching isn't "knowledge", but that we might grow in LOVE!

I Corinthians 13:13 says "now abide faith, hope, love; these three — but the greatest of these is LOVE."

Many Christians often think of wanting to do some "big thing" for the Kingdom of God: let's build a great organization; let's construct an impressive building; let's do something that will make headlines throughout the region or even the world. But what we have to realize is that the Kingdom of God is not really about these things. The Kingdom of God is about LOVE! Love God greatly! Love people greatly! The "big thing" we are to build is LOVE! And then notice what he says in the second part of the verse; this is significant. He says,

continued on page 32

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**Welcome
2017**

A Clean Page

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County



Sometimes a clean page can be daunting. There it sits waiting for inspiration. The longer I look at it, the less likely I am to fill the empty page.

But if I simply begin writing, thoughts and images flow into my fingertips and ta-da! The page gets filled.

As we look at the New Year of 2017, it's hard to believe that the old year is behind us already.

Sometimes, depending on the circumstances of our lives, it may have seemed like 2016 would never end. But at other times, we may have felt like a huge wind was pushing us forward without any time to look over our shoulder.

But for all of us, today is brand new...with no regrets, should haves or would haves. This year is a clean slate with yesterday as a stepping stone. We don't have to know what tomorrow will bring and plan everything specifically. We have today...a clean page...and we can determine how we will write upon it.

If we awaken to each new day with God on our minds, we can say with the Psalmist in Psalm 118: 24, NLT, "This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it."

Starting the day this way and seeking his direction redeems even the most mundane tasks. Hearts and lips filled with praise create melodies of blessing.

To have a heart that is a clean page for God to write upon, we must first come to him and ask for his cleansing. In Hebrews 10:22 we read, "Let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water."

It may be disarming to think about blood cleansing us, unless we understand that blood represents life. Our hearts are darkened by sin (wanting our own way) and are spiritually dead. Jesus Christ's blood shed on the cross is his life.

When I come to him in faith believing that he died and rose again for me, his blood cleanses me and gives me new life while covering me in his righteousness. Now God can write on my clean page (heart) and instruct my mind in his ways.

The more I study his Word, the Bible, and live according to its teachings; the better each day in the New Year will go... a clean page for the Lord to write my story. Selah

Come, join us

*The language of the birds isn't understood
by human ears.*

*But looking at the one bird on the feeder,
it seems he is saying to the hesitant one,
"Come, join us."*

*No one should be left out in the cold...
feathered friend or human.*

So, come. It's Jesus' invitation to us as well.

*"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink...
Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.*

John 7: 37 and 38



Ken and Jan reside in Land Harbour in Avery County, where they have moved in retirement because they love our mountains. They have written for us in years past.

Happy New Year!

A Diet That Work

By Rev. John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

We're off! Ready or not, 364 days stretch out in front of us, full of nothing but seconds, minutes, and hours waiting to be invested with all our high hopes and new motivation. Tops on the list for a lot of folks is attacking the age-old battle of the bulge. If you question that, just check the magazine rack and your local newspaper. They are filled with ads, fads, before-and-after pictures, and high-powered promises. Let's face it, though: a diet that works isn't fad or fun; it's tough! I have found no way on earth to get (and stay) trim and fit without being tough on myself. In the final analysis, it isn't all that complicated: the head must rule the body. As concerned as I may be about our physical fitness as we enter this New Year, I'm even more concerned about our spiritual fitness. I know of no Scripture that teaches we'll be weighed in before entering heaven. There'll be no angelic aerobic classes in glory (which thrills me no end). And so far as I can tell, no local celestial diet will be handed to those who pass the pearly gates (surely there'll at least be Hagen Daz strawberry). But I am forever bumping into verses that mention our appearing before the Lord for some type of spiritual accountability. That's what the "wood, hay, and straw" stuff is all about in the 1 Corinthians 3 passage. With a New Year sprawled out in front of you, what's your spiritual game plan? A good guide is Psalm 119:1-16. You'll notice that the first eight verses affirm three absolutes: the reality of God's blessing ("How blessed . . . how blessed . . ."), the authority of God's Word ("thy precepts . . . statutes . . . commandments . . . judgments"), and the necessity of God's presence ("Do not forsake me . . ."). With that, the psalmist asks the same question all of us ask on the edge of twelve new months: How can I keep my life pure (v. 9)? What's the secret? The answer is found in the next seven verses. If you're looking for a diet that really works, you've found it! Seek the Lord on a regular basis (v. 10). Pursue Him daily. Keep Him involved in the everyday stuff of life. Include Him in your decision: plans, your fun time, your struggles. The key is consistency. Treasure His truth in your heart (v. 11). Commit verses of Scripture to memory. A heart full of treasure leaves little room for trash. Openly tell others of Him (v. 13). Something wonderful happens when we open our own lips and speak to others about how our God has changed our lives. Make this the year you make your fate known. Rejoice and delight in God's workings (w. 14, 16). Smile more. Let your delight shine. Laughter has numerous therapeutic benefits. Spend more of your free moments meditating on His principles (v. 15 Think about them. Weave them into your driving time, your workouts, while waiting for an appointment, before going to sleep. Give God your full respect (w. 15-16). Don't hold back. Trust completely. Make this the year you dare to live by faith. When uncertain hold His precepts in highest regard. Forget the superficial ads and fads. Follow the Psalm 119 diet. You may not lose twenty pounds of fat, but you'll develop spiritual muscles that will make a difference. When you stand before Him at the end of the race, He won't frown and ask, "How much did you lose?" He will smile and say, "Well done! You have finished well!" A finishing touch: If you don't already keep a daily journal, begin doing so now. Get yourself a notebook—any size that's comfortable for you—and start by writing down that which has spoken to your heart today. Be painfully specific.

John McCoury is pastor of Evergreen church in Roan Mountain, Tennessee and also chaplain at Roan Highlands Nursing Center.



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Food In An Emergency

By Nancy Yantchook
Mitchell County

- Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. It is unlikely that we would have a two-week emergency, but some authorities recommend a two-week supply of food.
 - The easiest way to develop your food supply is to increase the amount of basic foods you normally keep on your shelves. Familiar foods are better than strange foods you have not tried before. Your family will eat better if they like the food.
 - Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water.
 - Include a selection of ready to eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables.
 - Put foods that come in packages or plastic bags into screw top jars or air-tight cans to protect them from moisture and pests.
 - Open foods boxes carefully, so they can be closed tightly after use.
 - If food must be heated, you can use sterno cans with a rack, a propane grill or stove, a charcoal grill or the fireplace. CAUTION: Do not use charcoal grills or other portable cooking devices indoors because of fire danger and harmful and noxious fumes. Don't forget to open cans first and take off the labels.
 - Select foods that are compact and light weight.
 - Keep foods in a dry, cool dark spot if possible.
 - Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies, dated with a marker. Place new foods in the back of the storage area and the older foods in the front. Six months is a good cut off time for keeping most foods.
 - Inspect all foods for signs of spoilage before use.
 - Include vitamin, mineral, and protein supplements to assure proper nutrition.
 - Food can be rationed safely, unlike water, if activity is reduced. Children and pregnant women need more food. Take in enough calories to enable you to do necessary work.
 - Try to include foods high in protein and liquid content. Stay away from foods high in fats and very salty.
 - Keep in mind individuals in your family who need special diets and stock these items.
 - If the electricity goes off, use perishable foods in the refrigerator first, then the foods from the freezer, and try to minimize opening these doors. Then use your non-perishable foods last.
 - Be sure to have a non-electric can opener available.
 - Several sizes of pots or pans to heat up food over the fireplace, on the grill or camp-stove.
 - Need utensils to stir the food with and to empty the cans.
 - Use paper plates, plastic eating utensils, and paper or plastic cups and glasses.
 - Have plastic storage containers for leftover food that is not perishable.
 - Use saran wrap, aluminum foil and plastic baggies to cover food.
- MENU SUGGESTIONS:**
Breakfast--Canned or powdered milk, canned juice, dry cereal, sugar, crackers, peanut butter, jelly, Pop Tarts, Swirls, coffee and cocoa mix, and dried or canned fruit.
Lunch--Canned or packaged soup, spaghetti, spaghettiios, ravioli, chili, pork & beans, beans & wienies, crackers, cheese, dried or canned fruits, canned juice or sodas.
Snacks--Cheese & crackers, tuna or Spam or chicken, on crackers, peanut butter & crackers, nuts, dried fruit, granola bars, sugar- free hard candy, raisins, and trail mix.
Dinner--Canned stew, chili, canned soups, spaghetti, crackers, dried or canned fruits, canned juice or soda, canned or powdered milk.
- If you have fresh milk, vegetables, fruits, bread, eggs, frozen meats, frozen foods, then use them first.

Paul and Nancy Yantchook moved to NC in 1996 and are very happy in Red Hill with their dog. She served as the Chairperson for the MCHP for nearly 12 years. She focused on the emergency readiness programs as that is a real concern in these rural areas.



Kingdom Focused

By Dr. Michael Pardue, Sr.
Burke County



In just a few days, the United States of America will inaugurate a new president. Millions of Americans will cheer this transfer of power while millions more will lament this change of leadership. I am thankful that we live in a country where there is a peaceful transition from one leader to the next, even if I do not always agree with the person who is ascending to the highest office in the land. This election, however, has been different. Not because of the election of someone who has never held political office or a military position. Not because one of the candidates was the first woman to win a major political party's nomination. This election was different because I have seen many Christians prove my fear that they were much more loyal to a political party than their Savior and many more who have chastised those Christians who believe the Kingdom of God is always the priority.

One prominent pastor referred to other members of his political party as fools if they did not support our president-elect when he was running for office. He said that not voting for Donald Trump was a matter of pride, not principle. Other pastors have ignored our president-elect's moral failings while they decried similar failings from the 42nd president of the US. A few Christian leaders, like Albert Mohler and Russell Moore have been consistent. Dr. Mohler writes, "If I were to support, much less endorse, Donald Trump for president, I would actually have to go back and apologize to former President Bill Clinton." These voices, however, seem few and far between. So where does that leave us?

We need a time of healing and a reorientation of priorities. I write this a day after the electoral college has given Donald Trump an overwhelming victory. Our country will move forward and there is no way of knowing what will be ahead of us as a nation. Christians, however, always have hope. As Christians, we need healing because the followers of Christ have a sacred text that calls us to unity with one another not to a political party. We must realize that all presidents and kings are flawed men and women, mired in sin, in need of a Savior. We must contemplate the fact that our King sits on His throne and reigns there regardless of who sits behind the desk of the oval office.

We also need a reorientation of priorities. The political process, no matter how important, is not our primary focus. We are first, and foremost, citizens of Christ's Kingdom. His Kingdom is our first loyalty and as such, His priorities are our first priorities. What will this election do to further the Kingdom? At this point, I really do not know. I do know, however, that God has given us His priorities in Scripture. I am quite certain that if our focus is those priorities, we will find that we have a lot less time to bicker and fight over the political process of the United States. Our time on earth is fleeting, and when (and only when) we are kingdom focused, are we being good stewards of the time God has granted us here. I hope that 2017 will be, for you, not only a time when our country has a new president, but when you will seek after healing where it can be found and where your priorities will always be Kingdom focused. Happy New Year.

Dr. Micheal Pardue, Sr. (www.michealpardue.com) is the Pastor of First Baptist Church of Icard. He holds a Master of Christian Ministry from North Greenville University and a Doctor of Education from the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served in various positions with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and has ministered in five other Baptist churches in the Foothills of North Carolina. Micheal also writes for the Biblical Recorder. His first book, *It Shall Not Return Void*, is now available from Rainer Publishing. He and his wife, Rachel, have seven children.

Sudoku

		6						
	3			5	9	6		
5		9			2			8
		4	8				3	
9	5						7	6
	7				3	2		
6			1			9		3
		1	3	8			2	
						1		

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Solution on page 14



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Addiction Challenged

"The Grandfather Challenge" Hiking Program (Helping At-Risk Kids, One Hike at A Time)

By James and Cheryl Nipper

James & Cheryl Nipper, the parents of Jason Matthew Nipper, are pleased to provide an update on their unique and challenging hiking program taking place at Grandfather Mountain for at-risk youth, with a focus on those individuals who suffer from mental disorders and/or drug addiction. Our goal in this article is not only to introduce our program to local churches to explore whether we might be able to serve at-risk kids, but to also introduce readers to Appalachian Mountain Leadership in Boone, which hosts a unique two week wilderness based leadership training course each July for aspiring church youth.

Jason's Story:

Jason was a happy, outgoing, and gifted child with a keen sense of humor and engaging personality. He loved music, reading, and all aspects of nature. His favorite times growing up were those spent with his family at their cabin near Plumptree, NC. Although he was greatly troubled by mental illness, he found that the days he spent hiking brought him great peace and satisfaction. Jason always wanted to help other people, and found great joy when he could help a friend.

Life changed for Jason when he reached his mid-teens. He started developing symptoms of mental illness and soon found life more challenging. Despite many struggles, he still succeeded in earning an International Baccalaureate (IB) degree in high school, and was awarded a full, four year scholarship to his favorite school, the University of Florida. Jason lived in Gainesville, Florida off and on for three years and tried his best to be a "normal" student pursuing a degree, but was eventually forced to withdraw from the University due to the continuing progression of his mental illness and severe anxiety.

Jason continued to struggle with everyday life, and tried valiantly to cope with his mental illness. Through it all, he found that the days which he spent mountain hiking brought him the greatest peace and satisfaction.

Like so many others with severe mental illness, Jason self-medicated with substances, which ultimately only complicated his mental condition. Jason passed away at age 26 on June 24, 2014. He is greatly missed both by his family and everyone that ever knew him.

Creation of Foundation and Mission Statement:

More than anything else, Jason wanted his life to have "meaning." His parents James & Cheryl Nipper have sought to fulfill that desire and honor their son's memory by forming a non-profit corporation called The Jason Project, Inc., which has qualified as a tax-exempt Charitable Foundation under IRS Regulation 501 (C) (3). They hope that Jason's intense love of nature and hiking, coupled with his desire to help others, will live on through the young persons who participate in this program. Their greatest desire is that at-risk youth participants, including those youth who are suffering from mental illness and/or drug addiction, will, through this program, learn meaningful life-lessons, and find it easier to overcome some of life's challenging hurdles.

Because of Jason's abiding love of the outdoors and mountain hiking, one of the Foundation's goals is to organize outward-bound type, intercept wilderness excursions and similar programs which are designed to build self-confidence in struggling youth, as well as trust and a positive rapport with adult mentors. As part of their "outreach" efforts, they have established a special program called "The Grandfather Challenge," through which at-risk youth, through a series of four hikes, navigate all of the hiking trails at Grandfather Mountain, NC. One of these hikes takes you to the highest point in the Blue Ridge Mountain chain, and affords incredible views along the crest of Grandfather Mountain. These hikes are normally conducted in four consecutive weeks, and the hikes get progressively more difficult as the course proceeds. As these hikes take place, adult hike leaders strive to teach these young people to respect this very pristine and special nature preserve, and to recognize and appreciate God's beauty and creation. Each hike is led by two highly qualified and experienced adult hikers, and each child is mentored, encouraged, and supported by caring adult leaders who try to instill self-confidence, trust, respect, and a strong commitment to complete a rigorous, challenging physical goal. The organizers of "The Grandfather Challenge" strongly believe these experiences enhance self-confidence in our youth, and will encourage them to rise above their challenges in life. A special Certificate, hiking boots, and other recognition is given to each young person that completes this program.

Jason's parents fervently believe that this type of program or activity can not only provide enjoyment to those who participate, but can also build confidence



and trust in others, similar to the ideals pursued in various "outward bound" programs, and will thus allow them to fulfill their goals expressed in their Mission Statement:

To provide healthy and rigorous outdoor excursions and challenges where at-risk youth can be encouraged and inspired to rise above their adversities and excel mentally, spiritually, and in life.

Community Support and Alliances:

Although they eventually expect to receive referrals for at-risk youth candidates to complete this Challenge from multiple sources including children's homes and juvenile court pre-trial intervention programs, the program's first priority was to form an alliance with the Avery County School system. Dr. David Burleson, as superintendent of the Avery County School system, was the program's first partner to work with them in implementing The Grandfather Challenge. The non-profit organization has now also formed alliances with the Catawba and Caldwell County School systems, representing a total of 14 high schools and 9 middle schools. Also, the Grandfather Mountain State Park of North Carolina (through its Superintendent Sue McBean) has issued a Special Use Permit to the project, and the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation (with the support of Jesse Pope and Harris Prevost) has sanctioned the program and issued a special pass for entrance to the Grandfather Mountain attractions.

Foundation Pays All Expenses of Program:

The Jason Project, Inc. provides hiking boots, backpacks, socks, raincoats, Grandfather Mountain entrance fees, professional guides, and all other costs associated with this program. There are no costs to participants or referral agencies. At the successful completion of each round of hikes, the youth participants are each given a Certificate of Completion and a gift certificate at an awards ceremony in their honor.

Hike Regimen Highlights:

The hiking trails at Grandfather Mountain State Park offer some of the most rigorous and challenging hiking trails in the Southeast, and include areas rated as either moderate or strenuous. Some areas feature ropes and ladders, and provide some of the most phenomenal views existing in the High Country. "The Grandfather Challenge" features four major hikes, culminating in the following "Granddaddy" hike along the crest of the mountain to MacRae and Calloway Peaks, then down the east side to the Blue Ridge Parkway:

From the parking lot on top of Grandfather, hike the Grandfather Trail up to MacRae Peak via ladders and ropes; climb The Chute and visit Attic Window, Indian House Cave, and Alpine Meadow; hike through Calloway Gap, and on to Calloway Peak, the highest point of the Grandfather Mountain ridge trail; then descend down the East side via the Daniel Boone Trail to the Blue Ridge Parkway. This is the most challenging hike of the program, and will require a full day of hiking and climbing.

Appalachian Mountain Leadership:

The inherent value and effectiveness of our program is directly dependent on the experience, qualifications, and spiritual fiber of our hike leaders. Our hikes are supervised and conducted by Appalachian Mountain Leadership (AML), in Boone. We are extremely pleased with the professional and Christian manner in which these young men and women conduct themselves and lead youth groups not only through the "Grandfather Challenge" hikes, but also through various extended wilderness excursions.

You can visit AML's website at www.amlnc.org. As you can see, AML provides a diverse range of adventure/servant-leadership activities, including single day hiking or rock climbing, hiking, multi-day camping and wilderness excursions, and a very special Created For Purpose program, which is tailor-made for church youth. AML's emphasis is on servant leadership, and they link wilderness activities with their mentoring skills and training, creating a unique experience that cannot be matched by any organization in the Southeast. At the AML website, please look at the "Adventures" page, then the "Created for Purpose" tab, to learn about their next wilderness excursion which will take place in July of next year.

From AML's website, here are some things that students have said about their experiences in the Created for Purpose program:

Day 11: "These past few days, I have been truly blown away by how beautiful and awe inspiring everything is. From the smallest plant to the biggest mountain, everything seems so much brighter. Colors are more vibrant. and I suddenly seem



continued on page 45

so small. I have pushed through this journey, troubles, pleasures and all. I have pushed onward in a spiritual journey as well. The Lord is teaching me great things in every breath I breathe. Purpose is something I have always struggled with, and I had hoped my purpose (where the Lord is leading me) would suddenly become clear to me on this trip. I feel like I am just picking up the pieces that will one day lay out to make the bigger picture. I just have to be patient and have FAITH. We ALL have wonderful purpose and I can't wait to continue my journey of life to see what it is. It all leaves me breathless, I have no words great enough to describe how a life with the Lord feels."

"Day 13... (the end of the beginning) It is the last day of our trip and I feel bitter sweet about leaving. These past two weeks have been filled with teaching, learning, leading, loving, laughter, sadness, awe, and so much more! I have learned a lot about traveling the trail and a lot more about traveling through life, especially as a leader..."

You can see from these testimonials that the Created for Purpose program has a very powerful effect on youth, and assists them in their search to find their own "purpose" in life, and helps equip them to become leaders in their own churches and local communities. We have never seen or heard of any two-week wilderness based leadership training program that matches the Created for Purpose program offered by Appalachian Mountain Leadership each summer. As you can see from their website, the program consists of 10 days of backpacking through the Pisgah National Forest in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina; two days of rock bouldering, and two days of local community/mission service. Equally important, the program requires a serious eleven month commitment from a church mentor to work closely with, guide, and encourage these youth participants to closely assess their personal and spiritual lives and learn how to value and implement the concepts of servant leadership and thus become future leaders in their respective communities and churches.

Summary of Wilderness/Leadership Programs for Church Youth and Contact Information:

The Jason Project hosts the "Grandfather Challenge" for at-risk kids at Grandfather Mountain, NC. The Jason Project, Inc. is a tax-exempt, IRS 501 (c) (3) non-profit foundation organized to provide challenging outward bound type activities and excursions for at-risk youth, including those youth who are suffering from mental illness and/or drug addiction. For further information, please contact James Nipper via email at james@jamesnipper.com or call (828) 765-6561 or (904) 354-7378. If you wish to donate to this project, please visit GoFundMe.com/TheJasonProject.

Appalachian Mountain Leadership (AML) of Boone, NC. hosts a very special Created for Purpose program, which is tailor-made for church youth. AML's emphasis is on servant leadership, and they link wilderness activities with their mentoring skills and training, creating a unique experience that cannot be matched by any organization in the Southeast. At the AML website, please look at the "Adventures" page, then the "Created for Purpose" tab to learn about their next wilderness excursion which will take place in July of next year. To contact AML, you can reach their founder and CEO Tom Henry at Tom@amlnc.org or call him direct at (603) 667-6978.



*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service.
Romans 12:1*



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Icard Principal Daniel Wall said, "Icard Elementary is very proud of Mrs. Gladden's accomplishments. Her excellence in teaching science and caring for all her students has made a positive impact on our school and community. We celebrate with Mrs. Gladden in this wonderful achievement."

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Larry Putnam said, "I have observed first hand in Ms. Gladden's classroom. During one lesson, students were simulating an actual oil spill and which materials would absorb oil better than others. The students were so engaged because it was a 'real world' problem to solve." Gladden is a graduate of South Caldwell High School and Appalachian State University. She has a bachelor's and a master's degree in elementary education K-6. She also has her National Board Teaching Certification and AIG K-12 Licensure. Gladden is married to Tommy Gladden, also a Burke County Public Schools employee, and they have two daughters.

BCPS receives Golden LEAF grant for technology

Project DETAIL (Digital Education Teaching and Individualized Learning) -- an initiative by Burke County Public Schools -- has received support from the Golden LEAF Foundation in the form of a \$200,000 grant. The purpose of the grant is to provide funding to Burke County Public Schools for implementation of a one-to-one digital learning initiative for middle school students and teachers.

The initiative will have a strong focus on building teacher leaders, said Dr. Melanie Honeycutt, chief information officer for the district. The funds will assist the district in purchasing devices for sixth-grade students and teachers and assist in professional development through a partnership with the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation to strengthen the district's evaluation plan.

Honeycutt said, "Outcomes of the project include individual student growth as reflected in their digital portfolio, improvements in math proficiency scores and increased use of technology as an educational tool."

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam said the emphasis is on sixth grade as a continuation of the one-to-one learning opportunities students are exposed to in elementary school. He said, "Federal Title 1 allotments have allowed the district to focus on digital learning in the elementary grades and now, thanks to this opportunity from the Golden LEAF Foundation, when our students enter middle school, they will not take a step backward in instruction and student-centered learning due to the lack of devices available for staff and students."

Over the past few years, the Burke County Board of Education has been committed to improving the technology infrastructure and increasing the number of devices in our schools. Project DETAIL comes on the heels of a rollout of 2,000 Chromebooks taking place now in the middle and high schools.

Putnam said, "Project DETAIL will add another 900 devices to secondary education and will not only put more devices in the hands of students but also allow for professional development for teachers on how to get the most out of the devices for instructional purposes. I thank our school board members for their support in this and other technological initiatives."

Honeycutt said the district started working on the Project DETAIL proposal in August and received official word from Golden LEAF on funding earlier this month. Professional development for teachers will start in February and current fifth graders can look forward to using the devices in August in their sixth-grade classrooms.

Successful implementation of this grant could lead to future grants, and the Project DETAIL grant committee already has plans in place to apply for future Golden LEAF grants to further the mission of the initiative.

Cheryl Shuffler is the Public Relations Officer for the Burke County Public School System.



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