

BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

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Ephesians 6:11-17

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:



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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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Altapass Baptist Church

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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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

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!

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

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

"Come grow with us"

Community Housing Coalition of Madison County

Volunteer Corner

By Stephanie McCullough
Madison County

This past Saturday's Neighbors Helping Neighbors workday was a terrific success! The homeowner was out working alongside volunteers nearly the whole day. Some family, friends and neighbors all showed up to lend a hand as well. We had a group of 14 local volunteers and 4 client volunteers, for a total of 18 people on the work site. I explained to the homeowner that this is precisely why Community Housing Coalition of Madison County exists, and why we at CHC encourage the fostering of relationships across the county. In response, here is a quote from the homeowner, "I'm not just grateful to have had the help, but I'm also grateful to have made some friends". Additionally, before I had a chance to ask, the homeowner offered to volunteer at a future NHN work day. Success! On so many levels!

Summer 2017 will be here before we know it and many of our returning summer groups have already reached out to CHC for information on potential projects. We are in the process of conducting a client review, which will enable us to match urgent need projects with summer groups and their skills. More on this in April's Housing Coalition Headlines.

Now it's time to be thinking about the next NHN. It will be held on Saturday, March 18th 10am-3pm. Mark your calendars! Be there if you can, it is a most rewarding experience. Interested individuals or groups should contact Stephanie at 828.649.1200 or email volunteercoordinator@chcmadisoncountync.org.

Stephanie McCullough is a volunteer coordinator with Madison Housing Coalition.



Front: Jake, Vivienne, Joey, Julie, Ben (five additional volunteers not pictured) Back: Andrea, Celina, Nicholas, Callum, Katelyn, Stephanie, Sydney, Nick

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Church Directory

Plumtree Presbyterian Church

4527 Hwy 19E
Plumtree, NC 28664
828-765-6918
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, 8:30 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!

Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

2907d US Hwy 70 E
Morganton, NC
828-475-2040

Pastor Barry MaHorney

Sabbath (Saturday)
Bible Study-10:00am
Sabbath Worship - 11:30am
Vegetarian Buffet after church
Wednesday - Praise, Prayer & Proclaim - 7:00pm
www.greatopesda.com

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

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Prepare Your Hearts

By Monica Henley-Kritz
Mitchell County

Thursday, May 4th, 2017 -- National Day of Prayer

Scripture: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." Daniel 9:19

Theme: "For Your Great Name's Sake!
Hear Us...Forgive Us...Heal Us!"

Riverside Park at 12:00 noon & again at 6:30 p.m.

Days of Repentance (leading up to the National Day of Prayer):
Saturday, April 29 at 12:00 noon
Monday, May 1 at 12:00 noon
Tuesday, May 2 at 12:00 noon
Wednesday, May 3 at 12:00 noon
(Also, Sunday, April 30, we ask that every church set aside a special time of Repentance & Prayer.)



Monica is a member of Berry Chapel in Spruce Pine NC.



Be A Mentor Change a Life

By Peirce Bingham
Yancey County

Many kids, growing up, lack the adult role models they need to make positive life choices. That's why a mentor can literally change a kid's life! When a youth spends time with an adult who's interested in them, and who serves as an example of living life well, it profoundly affects their future. Mentors are truly community heroes! A mentor agrees to spend 3 to 5 hours a week for a period of one year, with a youth they have been matched with. Training and support are offered through the Mountain Challenge 4H program, out of the Yancey County Cooperative Extension, and the program uses an evidenced based National 4H model. What an opportunity to be a living example in the life of a kid and change the course of that life forever! The time



you spend with your young person, can be doing almost anything and can vary from week to week. Great effort is made to make sure matches are compatible and that areas of shared interest exist. All matches are gender appropriate, and youth ages range from 10 to 16. Mentors may be ANY age 21 or older.

For those with families or who are married it is ok to incorporate a youth into family activities. The time you spend is extremely flexible and takes into account busy schedules, vacations and life's unforeseen situations. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at 828-6186 or 208-0299. I would be more than happy to meet with individuals or a group in your Church to discuss the program in greater detail. As a Christian I can think of no greater opportunity than the chance to reach out and build a relationship with one of our communities "At Risk" youth. I appreciate any attention you can give this and look forward to hearing from you.
Peirce Bingham, Mountain Challenge 4H Coordinator, 828-682-6186 or 828-208-0299

Peirce Bingham is the 4-H Mountain Challenge Coordinator.



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Relay For Life

Relay For Life Spotlight: Rhonda Buchanan & Blue Ridge Regional Hospital

By Don Ford
Mitchell County

It is springtime and there abounds a flurry of activity: flowers blooming, trees budding, and birds chirping. The same is true at Blue Ridge Regional Hospital where a flurry of activity occurs this time each year where staff are involved in the Relay for Life effort.

Rhonda Buchanan, Radiology Patient Representative is the BRRH Relay for Life Team Captain. During her fourteen years of employment at the hospital, Ms. Buchanan has become attached to many of the patients who come for cancer screening and treatment.

For Rhonda, cancer is personal as both her brother and sister have been diagnosed with the disease. At age 14, her brother had to go to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Maryland to be treated. Rhonda says "There were few places he could go for treatment decades ago. Thankfully, that has changed for the better today." Is it any wonder why she is so passionate about RFL and finding a cure for cancer?

Many resources are available to cancer patients in our area. The American Cancer Society provides assistance such as gas cards to help with transportation during cancer therapy and treatment. Mission Hospital System promotes programs such as "Look Good, Feel Good," helping women with makeup, nails and head coverings. Breast cancer support is also available, especially to those without a family or support system in place. In addition, the ACS has online support, information and counseling.

Rhonda Buchanan states that one reason that BRRH raised over \$11,000 for RFL in 2016 "is due to its great employees and the comradery of the staff." According to Rhonda, "this dedicated organization "Relays" all year long." She shared a few of the current fundraising ideas at BRRH which include: Getaway/Fun Day Give Away - a mini vacation, a shopping day package and tickets to an area theme park.

"It is not all about the money or funds" Rhonda says. "People can volunteer their time to serve on the RFL committee or help a cancer patient which is just as important." For more information, please contact Rhonda Buchanan at 828-766-1630. To help with Relay of the Blue Ridge, you may contact Russell Saxon at 828-765-9265.

Don Ford has served the Lord as a minister for 40 years. He and his wife Deborah have one daughter who lives in Georgia.



Rhonda Buchanan

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Never Too Scared

By Jessica Williams
Mitchell County

Growing up I lived in a very loving and caring family. Never wanting for anything. I would walk to my Grandparents house every day after school. There I would stay until mom got off work. Grand maw always had a snack ready for me when I got home from school. She was very loving and caring. Mom, Beverly, always made sure we went to church. My life was a picture-perfect life. I had accepted Christ at a young age, but what happened next, no little girl could ever understand. Mom and Dad sat me, my brother Tommy and my sister Sharon right before we were to get out of school for my 6th grade Christmas break. They told us we would be moving to Hendersonville, N.C. so that my dad could attend Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute. My sister was in her senior year of high school so she would be staying with my grandparents to finish the year. I was excited, scared and very nervous. At first, things were good but I quietly discovered I didn't fit in. I no longer had all my friends I had grown up with and played sports with. Life just wasn't the same. I was still in church and was part of a very large youth group, but I just didn't feel the love. I couldn't find the love, and I slowly started to not love me. I just didn't understand what was going on. This is when my mess in drugs started. I was only in the 7th grade smoking pot and drinking very little, but still it made me forget the hurt and pain I was feeling. Now in the eighth grade it was time to move again. I thought well maybe this time it will be different, and it was for about one year. I still couldn't find the love I was longing for. My dad was now a pastor at his first church. So now I have a new title and new name, "The Preacher's Kid" or "Preacher Steve Williams' daughter".

Still trying to figure out who I am and where or how to fill this love I started partying more on the weekends and attending church always on Sundays. Mom and Dad had no clue I was partying as much as I was. I have now graduated high school and by this time I'm doing whatever I can to get my hands on, Crack, Crank, Cocaine, Pot, Ecstasy just to name a few. And, I was managing to hide it and keep a job. I'm still in search for love in drugs, men, partying, whatever can fill my gap of temporary love. At the age of 21 I stopped doing street drugs and now my doctors have put me on pain pills for my RA, and this is my NEW love. At the age of 24 I'm doing pain pills, but its ok because the doctor has prescribed them to me. I can control this or so I thought. I got married in 2004 and we had two wonderful children in 2008 and 2009, and I was doing well. Thought I had everything I had ever dreamed of, but I was still looking for the love I had felt as a little girl. By 2013 I am now 31 and my life is spiraling out of control. I am doing large amounts of drugs and slowly losing everything. So, when the pills no longer can help, I start doing Meth with the pills, but now I can't get enough. The drugs that had helped me cope for so long with the hurt, anger, loneliness, hopelessness was no longer turning me on. I wasn't able to forget about the hurt and pain I had felt for so long. The drugs were now starting to take everything I had. The love I had for MY KIDS, MY FAMILY and what little bit I had left inside of me. I was wanting to die and prayed to God night after night that He would take my life. I was getting more anger, hatred, and could have cared less what anyone said or thought about me. But just then God sent an Angel, Linda Pittman, to tell me just what I had needed to hear and to remind me who's child I really am and who really loves me. You are a child of the King! You are His Princess and He loves you.

I still struggled for about six months more, but thank God for parents who had not stopped praying or believing in me. Also, many other people were praying for me. And because they stayed strong with prayers and believing that Christ would heal me, HE DID! On February 7, 2016 I was setting on the top of Roan Mountain looking at the beautiful mountains when he touched me. I was tired and ready for something different. I looked over in the seat beside me and there laid the book "War Room Bible Study". As I looked at it, I remembered what Linda Pittman had told me: that my heavenly father loved me no matter what, and if I would just truly let him love me He would, because He had already forgiven me of my past. That day I prayed, "God if you will take this addiction from me I will do whatever you want me to do. Thank you for loving me even when I didn't love myself and please forgive me of all my wrong doings." That day God took it all. It was like a freedom I have never felt before. All the anger, bitterness, hate and worthlessness was now gone. I was free at last. I had a new JOY in my heart that no one can take away and I could now feel him, all of him. I had found the love I was searching for. Thank God, I once was lost but now I am found.

Psalm 40: 1 & 2 I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire, he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

Ever since that day God has blessed me. I now have a new love for life. I have my kids back and my family. Always remember: YOU ARE NEVER TOO SCARED. — Because two scared hands and two scared feet paid the price for you and for me.

As Linda Pittman once told me: John 3:17, For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Now, GO GET YOUR SHINE ON FOR THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE.

*It Sweet T.E.A. Jesus in marion and I'm member of first baptist church spruce pine. Just in case you needed that also thanks
Sent from my iPhone*



One Day with God

By Chaplain Jody Griffin
Mitchell and Avery Counties

One Day with God provides an opportunity for children to spend an entire day behind the prison gates with their incarcerated father. During this day the pain of separation disappears as they sing, play games, have quiet conversation and otherwise connect with one another. It is an amazing day, made possible by the generous sponsorships of individuals, groups, Sunday School classes and churches. Forgiven Ministries, Inc. in Taylorsville, NC reaches out to inmates and families providing a full day of activities designed to bring them together for healthy relationship development. Volunteers from around the area come together to assist in every part of the day. The costs associated with such an event are modest (about \$9000.00 total for approx. 52 children), but must be raised apart from government funding. I am writing to request that your class/church/group/organization consider sponsoring a child/children for our event taking place at Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution on August 19, 2017.

Sponsorship for one child costs \$175.00 and includes ALL materials and activities they will have during the day including a t-shirt, a backpack (with school supplies, books and a Bible included!), arts and crafts, games, lunch, snacks, a magic show, special demonstrations and much, much more! Any amount is appreciated! For one FULL day they enjoy the blessing of time with their Dad, but the effects of this Blessing last much longer! YOU can be a part of this Blessing too! Please consider giving one or more of these children the thing they lack most, TIME with their Dad! A Gift from God to them and their Dad...

God Bless you for considering sponsoring one or more of these children! You may make your tax deductible gift directly to Forgiven Ministry, PO Box 117 Taylorsville, NC 28681 (Memo: AMCI). Of course, if you prefer, you can contact Chaplain Jody Griffin at (828) 765-0229, ext. 253 or reach me on my cell phone at (919) 475-5089 and I will gladly meet you to receive your donation!

Check out Forgiven Ministry online at forgivenministry.org and on facebook for pictures, testimonies and more!

Jody Griffin is pastor of Central Baptist Church in Spruce Pine and Community Funded Chaplain at Avery-Mitchell Correctional Institution.



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Putting on the Armour

By Doug Harrell

I can't speak for anyone else, but it seems as if each day is a battle with my mind. It is daily filled with temptations and ungodly and lustful thoughts. James 1:14-15 *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* Lust can be many things: the first thing that most people think about when the word, LUST, is used is sexual lust. In reality, it can be any number of things. It certainly can be of a sexual nature and in today's culture we are totally surrounded by images and innuendos that make illicit sexual activity seem so exciting. There are many mentions of this kind of lust in the Bible. Mathew 5:28 *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* I have to admit that I have had to ask forgiveness for this at times in my life, at those times the verses above from the book of James and many of the proverbs have popped into my mind. In the real world, lust can mean lots of things: we can lust after money, fame, recognition and many material things. The end result is the same, disfavor with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Everywhere we look we are surrounded by things that people want us to lust over, and get out of balance in our lives. If we just go about our daily lives, we will be surrounded by advertisements and solicitations that compete with what should be our focus, doing the will of God.

How do we put on the Armour of God that allows us to resist all the temptations that surround us on a daily basis? There are several ways that I have found that help me in this and I freely admit that I always need help in this area. The best thing I have found is to concentrate on what goes into my mind daily. What we watch, read, listen to and associate with has a major impact day to day. As the old saying goes, "garbage in, garbage out" is so true. We tend to be a composite of what we surround ourselves with. Ask yourself, "what am I reading, are the words in this book going to teach me to be more Christ like, or are they going to take my fantasies down the wrong road? Are the movies I watch going to fill me with Godly thoughts, or do they make me visualize paths that I should not be traveling? Are the people we are spending our time with, helping hold us to a higher standard, or are they helping us get in the gutter? We tend to become like those we surround ourselves with. Do you really want to be like them? If the answer to that is no, then we need to change our circle of friends. As parents, how many of you have told your children, I do not want you associating with this or that person? There

is a good reason that you said that, because bad influence is catching. Today, peer pressure leads so many of our children and grandchildren down the wrong road. Please protect them as much as you can!

It is critical that we as parents set an example for our children: take them to church, don't send them. Teach them to read the Bible by showing them an example each day. I find that the study of God's word daily is the way that I put on my armour. Without that, my day is not complete. If we, as parents don't put on the armour, how can we expect our children to do this. We are facing times that will be hard for Christians, if we believe what the Bible tells us. Our children will only be able to put on the whole armour of God if and when we teach them that. Get involved with their lives by being a person they can depend on and respect. Don't try to be their best friend, but be their guide, and you can only do this by being true to the teachings of our Lord and Savior. Believe the promise that says to teach them in the way they should go and in their old age they will return to the right path. Ephesians 6:13 *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

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.



You should never be too busy for God

Q: I know I ought to think about God more, but I simply don't have the time. I'm so busy that it's all I can do to concentrate on what's happening at the moment. I suspect lots of people have the same problem. Do you think God understands this? — G.K.

A: God knows all about us — and yes, He understands everything that's going on in your life. As the Psalmist wrote, "You are familiar with all my ways" (Psalm 139:3).

But I urge you to step back a moment and think about what you're really saying. What I mean is this: You're not only saying that you're too busy for God, but that He isn't important to you. Your job is important to you; your family and friends are important to you; how you spend your leisure time is important to you — but God isn't important to you.

But listen: You are important to God! He watches over you and takes care of you; even the next breath you take or the next beat of your heart is a gift from Him. Most of all, you are so important to Him that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to make it possible for you to be forgiven of your sins and go to be with Him in Heaven forever.



Troubles and trials can serve to make our bond with God stronger

Q: I've gone through some hard times recently, and my aunt says I ought to be thankful because they'll make me a better person. Is she right? I admit I'm having a hard time seeing things her way. — Mrs. E.W.

A: We all want our lives to be smooth and trouble-free, of course — but unfortunately life isn't always that way. In fact, I don't think I've ever met anyone who was completely free of worries and problems. Job rightly said, "Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7).

The real question, therefore, is this: How will we react when troubles and problems arise? Will we react in anger, or despair, or doubt, or hopelessness? Will we spend our time blaming others for our problems, or denying that they even exist and refusing to do anything about them? Will we try to solve our problems on our own — even if this isn't realistic?

Or will we turn to God for the wisdom and strength we need? This doesn't mean all our problems will suddenly vanish. But it does mean we'll no longer be alone, and even in the midst of life's deepest problems we'll find that God is strengthening us and helping us. Just as exercise makes our muscles grow stronger, so troubles and trials can make us stronger emotionally and spiritually. This is why the Bible says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance" (James 1:2-3).

The greatest discovery you will ever make is that God loves you — and the proof is that Jesus Christ was willing to give His life for your salvation. Invite Him into your life, and then commit your problems to Him — today and always.

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Snow Hill Baptist Church

No Regrets--Was Jesus Intolerant?

By Pastor Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County



I was riding down the creek when I saw a Red Tail hawk perched on the power line overlooking a cleared Christmas tree field. For those of you off the mountain, let me explain what "down the creek means". This would be a road adjacent to a river or creek that runs along with the flow of the water. I would rather be "down the creek" as opposed to "up a creek without a paddle" lol, and enough of my humor. The Red Tail hawk was amazing to look at and watch. I knew that hawk was spying over that field just waiting to swoop down and claw his next meal. Unsuspecting field mice, rabbits, or chickens would be totally unaware the enemy was watching and ready to attack at any moment.

Christians, we are like the little field mice. We are scurrying along through the grass not expecting anything to happen and the next thing we know we are running for our lives. The devil is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

Christians, let me be blunt, intolerance is not a sin. We have been led to believe by the enemy, to be good Christians we must be tolerant. And, this is simply not true. Could you imagine for just a moment the hawk swooping down to grab a mouse and the little mouse jumps up and says "not today, hawk, I am fighting back." And the hawk says, "wait a minute, you are not suppose to fight back." We, the Christian community, have been told not to fight back, but to be tolerant. This is unbiblical.

We are to love people, no doubt, but where in scripture are we told to lay down our doctrinal distinctiveness and convictions to get along with a pluralistic society? We are to be in the world, but not of the world. There are two definitions that describe our culture and, if I may use Ravi Zacharias definition of secularization and pluralization.

First, secularization is the process in which religious ideas, institutions, and instructions lose their social significance. Wow, did you catch that, Christian principles and doctrine no longer have the influence they once had. No wonder so many of our young people are confused when they are brainwashed by liberal universities and colleges. I know God is sovereign and absolutely nothing happens that He is not in control of, and, we are fighting for the hearts and minds of our young people. Let me be blunt again, it is impossible to follow Jesus as a disciple and only attend church once a week. Discipleship takes place in two places: a personal daily Bible study, and at a New Testament Bible believing church. We cannot equip ourselves for the battle a couple hours a week sitting on a pew. And, we are fooling ourselves if we think we can get by with any less time spent with Jesus than Peter, James, and John, just to mention a few who left all to follow Jesus.

Second pluralization is when competing a number of world views are available to its members and no one world view is dominate. This is where we are at in America. There are a competing number of world views and we are asked to be tolerant of all of them. Could you imagine the Apostle Paul had he had the attitude of many Christians today "don't rock the boat" you may offend somebody. The first and second centuries were much like we are today with many pagan world views and Christianity was small, but through the power of the Holy Ghost and boldness of Christians preaching the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ "turned the world upside down." (Acts 17:6) The preaching of the Gospel is offensive. The Gospel message is a message of love but also repentance.

Intolerance is not a sin. If I am standing on moral ground, I am not standing there because I am better than other people; I am standing there because God's word compels me to stand there. The Christian soldier in Ephesians 6 is commanded to stand, and to withstand in truth of God's Word.

Please join me in teaching our sons and daughters and our grandchildren the difference between being judgmental and intolerant. The Pharisee was very passionate about God's word, but they had no compassion for the sinner. They said one thing, but did something else. Jesus called them hypocrites. Jesus, on the other hand, "the Word of God in the flesh" (John 1:14) is compassionate toward the sinner and at the same time completely holy and without sin. Jesus himself is intolerant. He does not allow, or accept sin, and He does not and will not share His Glory. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." (Is. 6:3)

You say wait a minute, we are not Jesus. No we are not, and we do not win the world by being tolerant. (Tolerant used in this article is not the idea of patience, but acceptance of ideas and practices contrary to God's Word) We act in the same manner He did. The only way to do this is the Holy Ghost in us. The Bible teaches, the Holy Ghost convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. (John 16:8) I simply live in obedience to the Holy Ghost in me. We are compassionate and intolerant at the same time. We unapologetically preach the Gospel to save the sinner, and we remember we are but saved sinners.

Would you please consider this? When I write an article I have to ask, "Is this true." I do not want to write anything that is not true. Live life with "No Regrets".

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.



Bear Creek Baptist Church

On Living the Christian Life Victoriously

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County



What a paradox! Being a Christian is the most wonderful thing that can be said about anyone. To be forgiven of sin, have Heaven as our home, have the Holy Spirit living within and to be able to live by all of the promises given in the Word is such a blessing and privilege. Yet the Christian walk is a huge challenge! Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation. ..." (John 16:33) He also said, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..." (John 15:20)

The Christian life is a war which began the moment we accepted Jesus and will continue until we finally make it home.

The Christian has three primary enemies: Satan and his army, the world, and the flesh. We must always remember, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12)

Our enemy is not the person who says things or does things which hurt us, but is the driving force behind that person. If we can remember that, it will help us to not have bitterness or an unforgiving attitude toward those who are being used to cause us pain.

Drs. Gary Smalley and John Trent coined the phrase, "Hurt people hurt people." Someone who has been hurt, and who will not release the person(s) who hurt them, can get so filled with anger that they hurt others; especially the ones they love most. Their angry outbursts are unintentional and even are uncontrollable because of the deep hurt residing within. I recently counseled with a senior adult whose family member is filled with anger because of having experiencing deep pain in the past. Instead of being able to get past the pain, they have it held within. This person is literally being destroyed by their anger. Therefore, when someone comes into their presence they spray that person with their anger as one would spray paint with an aerosol can. I counseled the one who experienced this "spray" to forgive and not let the one being consumed with anger cause them to also be that way.

Our flesh is an enemy. It loves to fail God and must be "reckoned dead." (Romans 6:11) The flesh longs to fail God and if left unmastered, can lead to tremendous evil. Examples of this would include King David, Samson or the multitudes who gave into the desires of the flesh and paid huge prices for their failings throughout the course of history.

Satan and his army, in my opinion, is the greatest enemy of the Christian because he uses the desires of the flesh and the lure of the world to mislead and to "steal, kill and destroy." (John 10:10)

Yet, though these forces are so powerful and destructive, there is victory in Christ. "...greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world". (1 John 4:4) We can live a victorious Christian life! The Holy Spirit living within will guide with the Word. That is His sword and He uses it to help us overcome. He will strengthen, protect and equip every believer who yields to Him.

What is our role? How can we be victorious? 1) Stay close to God by keeping sin confessed. While speaking to a group of 3rd and 4th graders recently I very passionately and emphatically said, "You know right from wrong. If something is wrong, don't do it." We, adults, know right from wrong also. If we know something is wrong, we must not give into it. And, if we do give in to the flesh or temptation, we must confess and repent quickly. Unconfessed sin destroys our ability to have the power and blessings of God in our lives. 2) Get in the Word. Feast on it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. The Word will help us overcome the forces of evil which seek to destroy. 3) Pray. Prayer is as much about our experiencing God's presence, and His presence changing us more so into the image of Christ, as it is about our getting our requests answered by Him. 4) Finally, we must surround ourselves with people who can hold us accountable in our walk with Christ. We are our brother's keeper and if we see someone overtaken with a fault, we are to restore that person to Christ. (Galatians 6:1)

Be victorious in your walk with Christ. Every resource you need is available abundantly.

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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Face Your Giants and Move Forward in Life

By Joyce Meyer

We all go through hard times in this life and have issues we need to deal with. While it's not easy to face challenges or things that have caused pain, it can actually help us if we let God use them to do a good work in us.

James 1:12 (AMPC) says, "Blessed (happy, to be envied) is the man who is patient under trial and stands up under temptation, for when he has stood the test and been approved, he will receive [the victor's] crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him."

This verse is talking about how going through difficult times and resisting temptation to sin tests and tries us, revealing our true character. It prepares us to pass our tests so we can be promoted and move forward in God's plans for us.

It's time to stop running from things that are hard, that we're avoiding or putting off because we just don't want to confront them. I'm talking about issues like debt, an addiction, poor health due to bad habits, unhealthy relationships, messes caused by bad choices that have led you to live in self-pity...or anything else that is making you feel guilty, frustrated and weary.

Maybe you've been living with a broken heart—an emotional wound—that's been bleeding for way too long. Perhaps you have an anger issue, bitterness, or insecurity that causes you to be easily offended and hard to get along with.

Whatever your "issues" are, they are not just hang-ups, weaknesses or things you have to live with. They are giants coming against you in your walk with Christ. And as a believer in Jesus, you don't have to live with any giant—you are a giant killer!

Confront Your Giants

In 1 Samuel 17, we read about David, the shepherd boy who conquered Goliath, the Philistine giant who was oppressing the Israelite army. David's brothers were soldiers, and his father sent him to the battlefield to take provisions to them. When he heard about Goliath, David asked, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (v. 26).

It bothered David that these Israelite men of God were standing around, letting Goliath intimidate them, so he said, "I'll fight him!" But King Saul didn't think he could defeat the giant.

So, David told Saul how he had killed the lion and the bear when they came after his sheep. Then he said, "And this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God!" (v. 36).

You've probably heard the story: he took his slingshot and five smooth stones, "ran quickly toward the battle line" (v. 48), and killed Goliath. David used what he had and ran toward the battle—not away from it. God blessed him and made him a giant killer, and He wants to do the same thing for you!



Learn the Best Strategy for Battle

The first step in confronting your giants is making the decision that you won't live with them any longer but you will trust God to help you do what you need to do to be free of them. Your attitude should be: I am a giant killer, and I'm not running from my problems anymore. I'm going to take responsibility for the messes I've made and stop making excuses to avoid them. I'm trusting God to show me what I need to do, and by His grace, I'll do it!

Remember that we are partners with God: We have a part to do and He has a part to do. He won't do our part, and we can't do His part. When we do what we can do, He will always do what we cannot do. But we have to be willing to obey His direction, doing what He shows us to do.

The next step is to study the Word; look up every scripture in the Bible that addresses the issue and meditate on each one. Write them down and put them places where you'll see them often. Pray and ask God to help you apply His Truth to your life. It can also help to read books about the subject, and if you need it, get professional help, like counseling.

As you spend time with God, praying and studying Scripture, He will work in your heart, healing your wounds, strengthening your faith, and showing you how to move forward to overcome your giants.

The truth is, you don't have to live defeated, with a broken heart and emotional pain. Make your mind up today: "I'm not going to get stuck in the past and give up my future because of something that hurt me. I can't go back and undo it, but I can go forward in Christ. I will have a whole heart and be healed because Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted. I am a giant killer!"



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.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Ephesians 6:11



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The Inspiring Word

By Pastor Terry Cheek Th.D.
McDowell County

Thanks for returning to read another publication of "The Blue Ridge Christian News" and our article "The Inspiring Word".

April finds the Christian anxiously awaiting the celebration of Jesus resurrection. The world may celebrate Easter, but the saint of God celebrates the resurrection. Yes, I realize the words are used synonymously in our culture, and I am not being critical of the children and their time of treats, fun and games. I only wish to remind the church of our redeemer and His victory over death and the grave. As we consider the Lord's victory we must also consider the battles we are called upon to fight as the body of Christ.

We know from God's word, the church will be faced with struggle against a common foe: the devil and his army, a.k.a. demons and their vessels. For this reason, we are told to put on the whole armor of God. I feel all of us have heard or preached many messages about the armor of God. For this article and the benefit of setting our hearts toward the resurrection I would like you to consider three things with me about the armor of God. Consider with me the armor's purpose, pieces and presentation in your life.

This month open your Bible first to Romans 13 and follow along. Beginning with verse 11 Paul tells the Christian it's time to wake up and realize our position with Jesus. Verse 12 is where I want to focus for a while. Romans 13:12 "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." The position we have is one of sharing Jesus with those around us. We read in John 1:4 "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." He is the light of His children and we are equipped (armor) to share that light. Therefore, one purpose of God's armor is the equipping of His saints to spread the light of His gospel.

Now let's move over to Ephesians 6:13 where we read "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:10-20 describes in detail the armor of God. I recommend you read the entire passage for clarity. Writing to the Ephesians Paul has in mind their weakness to resist temptation. Verse 12 talks specifically about principalities, powers, rulers and spiritual wickedness. Now verse 13 begins with "wherefore" which means because of this. Because we face such a foe we must take advantage of God's provision, His armor. Here, we find another purpose of God's armor. It prepares us for the coming attacks of Satan and his demons.

Now that we have established a twofold purpose for the armor of God let's briefly look at the pieces of God's armor. First, we see truth. Truth does something very important: it serves as a gird, or a belt. The Roman soldier wore a leather belt which supported the other pieces of his armor. Truth is the belt which supports the remaining pieces of armor in our life. Truth, as it is used here refers to the truth of scripture. God's word. It is inerrant and inspired. We cannot lose that. Without that affirmation of the truth of God's word in our life, everything else falls to the ground. Second, we see the breastplate of righteousness, or the character and moral conduct that truth produces in our life. God's word will change our character and conduct. God uses the phrase "born again" for a reason. Third, we read about the gospel of peace. This is illustrated by a pair of shoes. These are not any ordinary pair of shoes. The Roman soldier wore shoes called caligae and these shoes allowed advancement against his enemy. They were a soldier's all-wheel drive for advancing in combat. The Christian must have a sense of eagerness or willingness to advance the gospel against the Devil and fight his resistance. The gospel is what and how we advance. Fourth, we find a shield of faith. We take God at His word, we believe His promises, we trust His work, will and wisdom in our lives. Faith will protect us from the doubt and distraction we are promised to face from Satan. Fifth, we find the helmet of salvation. Paul is writing to the Christians. They are saved but Christians need the assurance of hope that comes only through the daily reflection of salvation. Hope



is not wishing for victory, it is expecting victory. Hope expects victory on God's terms and in God's time. The helmet of salvation protects the assurance placed in our minds and heart. Sixth, we are issued the sword of the spirit, the word of God. The "word" used here is not logos but rhema which refers to the written word of God. There are passages from God's word which encourage us, strengthen us and prepare us. There is also a responsibility. We must read the word to understand how to properly use it.

I have discussed the purpose and the pieces of God's armor; now let me conclude with the presentation of God's armor. It is given to be worn and used. God did not issue His armor for us to hide away. I see a comparison with the parable of the talents. Two people took the talents and put them to work, yes there was risk, but there was also reward which paid off. The third hid his talent and faced horrible judgment because of it. When you stand before God in Judgment will your armor be clean, pretty and shiny because you have hidden it? Or, will your armor be beaten, dirty, patched and dented because of combat? I don't think God wants to see His armor in a museum, because He has issued it for the battlefield. Until next month may God richly bless your walk with Him.

Terry Cheek is Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Marion.



Spruce Pine, North Carolina Casting for Hope



The 6th Annual Casting for Hope Gold-Level Fly-Fishing Competition will occur on April 7-9, 2017 in Spruce Pine and Bakersville, North Carolina. Anglers from all over the United States and even abroad have made Casting for Hope a staple on their competition circuit. Over the last four years, this event has raised over \$300,000 for women and families battling ovarian or another gynecological cancer in our western North Carolina communities.

The Casting for Hope team is seeking volunteers to make the competition another great success. Volunteers are needed to perform a number of tasks such as food pick-up and delivery to sites and registration, but principally, volunteer stream monitors are needed to record the length of the fish that are caught by anglers during the competition. If you've ever wanted to learn more about fly fishing or just enjoying sitting by a river watching a great angler fish--this event is for you! And your services will directly aid Casting for Hope's work in our communities in western North Carolina.

To learn more about the fishing competition, check out the website: <http://castingforhope.org/casting-for-hopes-gold-level-fishing-competition/>

To sign up to volunteer with Casting for Hope, complete this form: <http://castingforhope.org/fishing-tournament/register-to-volunteer-at-casting-for-hope/>

Volunteers will be given an official 2017 Casting for Hope t-shirt and provided meals while volunteering.

Casting for Hope is a regional 501(c)3 public charity with offices in Morganton, North Carolina and Asheville, North Carolina. Dollars raised through events such as this and others throughout the year support Casting for Hope's mission objectives. Casting for Hope provides fly-fishing retreat programming and financial assistance for women and families that are coping after a diagnosis of an ovarian or other gynecological cancer. For more information about Casting for Hope, check us out on the web at www.castingforhope.org.

For more information or pictures beyond the visual assets attached here for publication regarding this event and other Casting for Hope questions, contact: John Zimmerman, Co-Founder and Chairman of the Board: john@castingforhope.org

Taylor Sharp, Co-Founder and Vice-Chairman of the Board: taylor@castingforhope.org

Kathy Haney, Executive Director: kathy@castingforhope.org

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Sudoku Solution

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

Fresh Start Gets to Start Fresh!

By Beth Davis
Mitchell County



There are just a handful of things that Mitchell County SafePlace Shelter Manager Lisa Cassaro gets excited about: her three precious, perfect grandbabies, gardening, cooking, canning, and Fresh Start. Thanks to the generosity of Trinity Episcopal Church, SafePlace is finally able to restart Fresh Start! Trinity is welcoming us into their Parish Hall, and they are donating pizza and drinks for the ladies and children who attend. Fresh Start will meet every Monday, beginning April 3, 5:00-6:00. Babysitters will be provided to give Moms a break, and gas vouchers may be available.

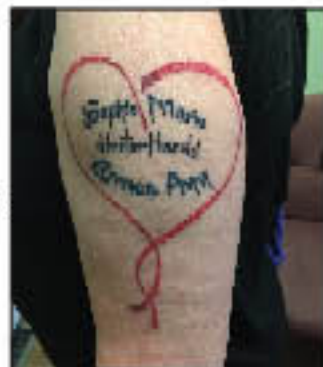
This program is not just limited to current or former SafePlace clients; any woman or young lady who has been a victim of domestic violence and/or sexual assault is welcome to attend. Fresh Start is a support group that provides a safe, welcoming environment for them to discuss the pain they endured at the hands of their abuser, as well as lasting effects this has on, not only them, but their children, too. But this isn't going to just be a weekly gripe session for women to commiserate about their suffering. No, no, no! Not on Lisa's watch! Lisa is going to help empower these women, strap on their armor, to gird themselves with confidence and self-worth.

Lisa has worked tirelessly putting together engaging, informative, and entertaining programs to help women succeed in many aspects of their lives. Several volunteers in the business community, the Spruce Pine Library, and other local experts are graciously lending their time and expertise to help give the women a boost. Below are examples of some of the Fresh Start programs.

- **Employability Skills** - Identifying job search possibilities and concerns, and develop goal strategies; cover letter and résumé development and writing; completing job applications; mock interviews.
- **Computer Literacy Skills** - Fundamentals of using a computer; basics in creating, saving, and reopening a document; basic email and internet skills; sending, receiving, and downloading attachments.
- **Budgeting** - Opening a bank account; learning to budget based on income; debit cards, credit cards, and check writing; clipping coupons and daily spending diaries.
- **Personal Appearance** - Hair and make-up makeovers; wardrobe coordination and dressing for success; work clothes vs. play clothes.
- **Self Care** - Yoga; healthy self-esteem and positive affirmations; journaling; effects of stress on mental and physical health.
- **Ladies Choice!** Cooking and healthy nutrition; basket weaving; gardening and canning; hobbies and special interests.

According to Lisa, "I want our new Fresh Start to simply offer women a place where they feel accepted, where they feel they belong, where they feel they can blossom and grow and thrive together!"

Beth Davis is the Resource Development Coordinator at Mitchell County SafePlace. She can be reached at 828-765-4015 or bethbdavis60@gmail.com.



Lisa Cassaro bears her armor permanently - the names of her three precious grandbabies.

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Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

The Rest of the Story

I will never forget the day! One of the things that Clint's plowing Vickie's yard taught me was to be sure and verify that the message was loud and clear! I had asked Clint if he knew where a little field was across the creek from where we were working that day and he had assured me he knew. I got to the field I had been talking about and there was no Clint. It was an hour or so later that I learned he had actually plowed up the neighbor's yard. Harrell Hill is a very quiet, easy going neighborhood, but plowing up someone's yard was pushing buttons even for Harrell Hill. There was laughter over this even for several years and I had to reseed and smooth out the yard twice to get it back in shape. Oh, how I miss the days of all the mishaps and fun we had and lived to tell about it. The Funny Farm stories are real life examples of how we should be able to find fun and joy at even the most horrendous events. I have not had a chance to visit with Glen and Vickie this spring, I think they have just gotten back to the mountains and Harrell Hill after spending the winter down off the mountains. I am sure we will still get a laugh out of the memories though, when we do get a chance to chat.

Blessings,
Farmer Doug

Funny Farm

Dear Friends,

As late as March of this year I believed I was a country boy. My home is Hendersonville, NC, a nice town of 20,000+ only 1 ½ hours away. But my perspective changed dramatically in late March when I came to spend a few months with my friends Doug and Barbara Harrell at Harrell Hill Farm near Bakersville.

Doug and I go back more than twenty years, I was executive vice president for GTE Corporation (now Verizon) and Doug was a technology marketer. A "country boy" who done good is the way I often thought of me.

Well let me tell you, I have learned some valuable and unforgettable lessons since arriving in the real 'country'...I've worked on the farm now for nearly six months and experienced things which could only happen in a Chevy Chase film – or to me.

Anyway, if y'all will tolerate me I want to share some of my hair raising farm stories. We'll call them "Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm" – names will be changed to protect the innocent, and chances are I may exaggerate the facts a wee bit. It will go something like this:

Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

I was filled with joy the day Doug let me drive his Kioti tractor for the first time. A sprig of hay in my teeth, dirty jeans on my body and a holey tee shirt rounded out my attire...oh yeah, and a great straw hat! So if you think I was ecstatic just getting behind the wheel, imagine my delight when he sent me on my first solo plowing mission.

"Hey Clint, you know that field on the other side of the river?" Doug asked. I assured him I knew just the spot. "Why don't you take the tractor down there after lunch and plow it for potatoes?" Folks let me tell ya, I nearly jumped for joy but chose not to appear too eager. Think about it, me, a tractor and a plow...virgin ground, I was a full-fledged farmer in a few short weeks. My heart was filled with wonder.

I was proud as a peacock drivin' that machine down Harrell Hill Road. Go figure, this was the coolest experience a man could have. And I was dead set on making Doug proud, sure I would make the best plower – or whatever you call a plow person – ever.

I pulled into my appointed plot of ground, flexed my hands, sat high in the saddle – oops I mean seat – and lowered the plow thingy. When I pushed the little green button that makes the plow thingy plow, I experienced an adrenaline rush. If only my daddy could see me now.

I plowed and I plowed...I waved at folks driving by, some slowing down to gawk at me rather suspiciously. But I didn't mind, I thought, "I am ONE with the tractor."

Every now and then I would turn my head slightly to admire the progress, plowing, digging, excavating...I was the 'real deal', a virtual John Deere. I hesitate to call it a spiritual experience but darned near.

As I turned the ground, making deep rows for potatoes I heard a soft rap on the tractor door. Glancing to my left, a small woman, her head covered with a sunbonnet, gazed up at me, her eyes a bit frantic. I was more than a tad annoyed; I stopped the plower (or whatever you call it), killed the roaring engine, and asked, "Hello ma'am, may I help you?"

"Yes, I think so. My name is Vicky, what are you doing?" she asked. All the while I'm thinking it's pretty clear what I'm doing, can't she see I am a farmer preparing a potato field? "Hi, my name is Clint and I am plowing," I replied. "I am helping my friend Doug plant potatoes."

Vicky removed her sunglasses and glared into my eyes, the look was laser-like as she asked, "On my property?" Uh oh...my heart fluttered, my pulse raced, my head began to pound, my skin glowing like a burning ember as I answered, "Oh Lord I hope not!"

At that moment I had a near out-of-body experience as I imagined the consequences for my error. I've seen the films when a farmer encroaches on another's land – he is always shot with a Colt .45. I watched Miss Vicky's hands, fully expecting her to draw a pistol from her pocket and end my life.



I considered leaping from my tractor and running away, but I was hemmed in – either jump into the Toe River on the left or onto Harrell Hill Road on my right. Surely I would drown in the swirling torrent or get squished by a cattle trailer on the road. So I said to Vicky, "Um, ma'am, I am so sorry. I don't even know what to say. You see I thought this was the place I was supposed to plow. Please understand, I'm new here, never been a farmer before...in fact this is the first time I've ever used a plow thingy. This is my first BIG farm mistake. What on earth can I do to make this right? Just tell me, anything, and I will do it!" Suddenly her countenance changed and with a twinkle in her eyes and a warm smile Miss Vicky replied, "A little grass seed would be nice."

Later that day my friend Doug visited my victim. They had a good chuckle over the city boy's error and she told him, "At first I was pretty upset but I don't think I've ever seen such terror in another person's face. His eyes were as big as hubcaps! I just had to laugh." And Doug planted grass seed, twice in fact.

As I reflect on this event I am humbled by God's grace expressed through the actions of a stranger. I would understand Miss Vicky taking great offense for my wrong against her, instead she showed mercy. I learned more about humility that day.

P.S. If you see a 60 year old man driving a Kioti near your property please don't shoot. He is surely lost and needs directions.

Lees-McRae

Appalachian Heritage Week

BANNER ELK, N.C. — Sponsored by the Stephenson Center for Appalachia, Lees-McRae will kick-off the start of spring and highlight the unique aspects of mountain living during its seventh annual Appalachian Heritage Week.

The weeklong event will begin on Monday, April 3, with the New Opportunity School for Women Open House from 1–5 p.m. The program provides the opportunity for participants to embrace their Appalachian heritage as they improve their lives. Join Director Jennie Harpold, members of the NOSW advisory council and past graduates to learn more about this program that has changed the lives of more than 100 women within the region and more than 700 in the 28 years since it was founded in Berea, Kentucky.

That same day, MacDonald Dining Hall will serve a traditional, Appalachian-themed meal while the group Us Fellers, will play old-time mountain music. Meal cost for non-Lees-McRae meal plan holders is \$10.25 without tax.

Starting at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, April 4, professor of biological sciences Gene Spears and professor of biology Stewart Skeate will lead students and community members around campus to identify and discuss the many varieties of trees on campus. Interested participants should gather at 1 p.m. in Swank Park behind the Chaffee Administration Building.

That evening, the Bailey Mountain Cloggers will have the cafeteria jumping from 5:15 until 6:15 p.m. The award-winning team from Mars Hill College returns for the fourth year in a row at the request of students and faculty who have enjoyed the groups dances.

Wednesday, April 5 is the 13th Annual Mountain Day of Service during which students, faculty, staff and community members volunteer their time and efforts in projects around campus and in the community. For information or to volunteer, contact Renee Baker in the Student Development Office at bakerr@lmc.edu or 828.898.3416.

From noon until 3 p.m. on Thursday, April 6, the college will celebrate old and new Appalachian crafts and traditions. Local Potter, Rob Withrow, from Brass-town, North Carolina, will demonstrate his pot-throwing technique in Swank Park. Students and visitors are invited to get their hands wet and shape clay on the turning wheel. Withrow will also have a selection of his work for sale.

Also, beginning at noon on Tate Lawn, student-favorite Apple Hill Farm Owner Lee Rankin will bring alpacas to campus.

That night beginning at 7 p.m. in Evans Auditorium, area author and historian Michael Hardy will present a program on North Carolina history. Appearing as the renowned Richmond M. Pearson, (1805–1878) an American jurist who served as Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court from 1858 to 1878, Hardy captures the past to bring it alive.

The week's festivities conclude on Friday, April 7 when Greg "Bumble Bee" Miller brings his percheron team and carriage to campus to take students and visitors for rides the old-fashioned way – by real horsepower. Horse and carriage tours will be available from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. At 2 p.m. in Evans Auditorium, Lees-McRae history professor, Scott Huffard will present the acclaimed film Blood on the Mountain and lead a discussion of the issues raised by the movie, which explores coal mining in West Virginia and the struggle miners have endured over the years.

"Once again, we invite everyone to join us in Lees-McRae's celebration of our Appalachian heritage," Michael Joslin, director of the Stephenson Center for Appalachia at Lees-McRae College said. "Whether you can contribute to our understanding of the past or hope to learn more about mountain culture, please join us for one or all of our activities. We look forward to a rewarding week."

All events, with exceptions to meals, are free and open to the public. For further information contact Pam Joslin at 828.898.8721 or email Michael Joslin at joslin@lmc.edu.

Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina, Lees-McRae College is a private, four-year college offering diverse baccalaureate degrees, strong athletic programs and outstanding faculty. Field-specific career preparation and hands-on learning enhance the broad core curriculum. For more information, please visit www.lmc.edu or call 828.898.5241.

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Walnut Grove Church

Jesus Wept (John 11:35)

By Pastor Kurt Bomar
Avery County



As we enter the Easter season, this is a good time to look at the shortest verse in the Bible. Jesus is just days away from the cross and we see some deep emotion in him as he weeps. Why is he weeping? He has just arrived at the house of Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus. Lazarus has just died four days earlier. The funeral is in process.

If I put myself in Jesus' place, I still don't see why he is weeping. I wouldn't. I would be joyful and saying "Hey guys, stop crying, I'm here, I'm going to raise Lazarus. Let's get ready for a party!" So why was he weeping?



Let's examine some possibilities:

1. Perhaps he was reminded of the effects of sin. Maybe he was thinking "This wasn't our plan from the beginning. I'm saddened that my buddy, Lazarus, has to suffer because of the fall of man."
2. Some say he was saddened because he knew Lazarus was in paradise and he was about to yank him out of there.
3. He could have been sad because he had been ministering for three years now and still there was unbelief in him by Mary, Martha, and the other mourners. In fact, Mary blamed him for her brother's death.

However, I think maybe the main reason is that Jesus was fulfilling prophecies. Remember what Isaiah said about him. He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3).

Maybe even though he knew everything was going to eventually turn out OK, he looked around right then and saw all the hurting people. This sounds so simple but I think it's true.

Hebrews tells us that as our High Priest he sympathizes with us, he feels for us, and that he prays on behalf of us to the Father. We often focus on Jesus as God, but sometimes we forget that he was a man too.

I like that.

When I'm hurting, I want someone who cares for me. I want someone who sees me as a good friend. Someone who says "ouch" when I cut or burn myself. That's what I see here. That's why he was crying. And that's why we can be confident that when we are hurting, Jesus, our best friend is hurting too.

As we enter into Easter, remember that while Jesus loves us, he likes us too! Selah (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



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Allen's Offerings

Hung from His Creation

By Allen Buchanan



City folk don't have the opportunity to walk outside their door and gaze at their surroundings and see billions of trees like you and me. We cannot avoid contact with this creation. Everything from a toothpick to large skyscrapers have wood or a product consisting of wood in them.

Stop for a moment and ask yourself how the very existence of creation would have been altered without trees. Then turn your mind to the fact that the creator of the tree sent His only Son to earth to die on a tree for you and me.

The first question I ask is, why a cross? How did dying on a cross become the way of punishing a wrong doer? According to Deuteronomy 21:22 (KJV); "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree..."



My second question would be, what kind of tree was used for the cross? Throughout the scriptures the following trees are made reference to: Olive in 1 Kings 6:31; Almond in Jeremiah 1:11; Sycamore in Luke 17:6; Sycamore in Luke 19:4 and the Fig, Pomegranate, Palm and Apple trees in Joel 1:12 (KJV). Cypress, Juniper and Cedar are mentioned in Isaiah 60:13 (NIV). Nowhere did I find one of these referred to as being used for the cross. Since I don't have biblical reference materials, I questioned a couple of ministers who told me basically what I had found. I was curious as to what information about the cross I might find on the Internet. According to Google about 16,700,000 results are available concerning the cross and crucifixion. I scanned through several of these and came to a conclusion. No one knows for sure.

The kind of tree used to suspend our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ between heaven and earth to save each one of us from our sins is such a tiny concern. It doesn't matter. I'm just glad He was willing to die for me.

"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

"I'll never know how much it cost to see my Savior upon that cross!" (From "Here I Am to Worship" - Tim Hughes 2001)

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

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By: Joyce (Joy) Harwood Baldwin

*They found the largest stone to place
In front of Jesus' tomb
The darkness shadowed all around
From the sadness of the moon.*

*The sun and stars and earth agreed
Twas the dreariest day of all
Tho when the stone came rolling out
They heard the angels call.*

*"Rejoice oh kings and peoples
Take joy ye earth and skies
The Savior has arisen
Lord Jesus is alive."*

*He stood in whitest garment
His face shone like the sun
His mission was accomplished
Oh how God loved His Son.*

*Earth trembled at His entrance
The stone was rolled away
It bowed before the master
Holding silent till that day.*

*When Jesus comes again to take
His bride to Heaven fair
The stone will breath in great release
When He breaks through the air.*



Stay Plugged In

By Wendy Cannon
Mitchell County



One morning a couple of weeks ago, I was sitting at the dining table paying some bills. I was using my smart phone as a calculator. Suddenly, the screen started to dim. That was when I noticed the battery of my smart phone was almost empty of its charge. So, I quickly retrieved my smart phone charger and plugged it in. The power was restored! I completed the task at hand but afterwards the Lord began to speak to my heart.

The smart phone is a wonderful creation. We are able to use it to do a multitude of things. We can use a smart phone to make a call to someone. A smart phone can also be used as a GPS, a calculator, a camera, a radio, a weather forecaster, something to connect us to social media, and in short, a computer. But, without a power charge, a smart phone will become useless. If the battery has a full charge the smart phone can function for a while, but eventually it will go dim and then become useless.

How like us! We are a wonderful creation. We were created in the very image of a loving God and were created to be able to do so many wonderful things. But, we also need power.

We need to connect daily to our power source to function as we were intended. Our power comes from God. We connect to our power through prayer, Bible study, and sitting under the Word. When we neglect those things, our power begins to wane and "our screens will begin to go dim."

In today's world, all of our lives are extremely busy. With our busy lives we may neglect to "recharge our batteries." There may come a time when we realize that it has been a few days since we picked up our Bible. We may come to the end of a busy day and realize that we haven't taken the time to pray. At first, we may not feel a whole lot different because we are working off of a "previous charge." But eventually, if we do not "plug in," we will feel the difference. Our attitudes will change. Things that we have dealt with previously will suddenly seem so much harder to handle. We will wake up one morning and our joy will be gone. What has happened? Our "screen has become dim." Our battery has lost its charge.

It is time to "get plugged in." Read the Word. Talk to the Father in prayer. He has been waiting for your return. We have a never-ending abundance of power available to us if we will just "stay plugged in."

Wendy Cannon serves with her husband, Rev. Bruce Cannon, at Bear Creek Baptist Church. She states, "I love western North Carolina and am so happy the Lord is letting us serve Him here in this very beautiful part of the State."



Joy is a resident of Madison County, where she now lives with her husband, Danny Joe Baldwin. She is currently a member of Mt Zion Baptist church in Marshall, NC. As a previous member, she calls Forks of Ivy Missionary Baptist Church in Weaverville, "home away from home". She is currently singing with the Gospel Group "Jonah's Voice" out of Mars Hill, NC. Her latest song "Homecoming" will soon be heard by many.

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Easter Day HE IS RISEN!

By Rev. John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

It is one of the strange things in the modern Church that we think of the Easter faith only at Easter time.

It is at Easter time almost alone that we think of the Resurrection and of the life to come; it is at Easter time almost alone that we sing the hymns of the Easter faith. This is so wrong. I think that we have forgotten the origin of Sunday, the Lord's Day. The Sabbath, the Jewish holy day, commemorated the rest of God after the labour of the six days of creation; the Sunday, the Lord's Day, commemorates the Resurrection of our Lord, for it was on that day that he rose from the dead. In the early Church the Resurrection was the star in the firmament of



the Church. The Resurrection was the one glorious fact on which all worship and all life were founded. To that centrality of the Easter faith, the Resurrection faith, we would do well to return continually. It is the Easter faith (the faith in the risen and living Lord) which makes us able to meet life. For if we believe that Jesus Christ is risen and living, then we must believe that all life is lived in his presence, that we are literally

never alone, that we are called upon to make no effort, to endure no sorrow, to face no temptation without him. It is the Easter faith (the faith in the risen and living Lord) which makes us able to meet death. It is the Easter faith that gives us a friend and companion who lived and who died and who is alive for evermore, who is the conqueror of death. The presence which is with us in life is with us in death and beyond. I once read a story where the writer tells how his father died. His father was old and ill. One morning the writer tells how he went up to his father's bedroom to waken him. The father said, "Pull up the blinds so that I can see the morning light." The son pulled up the blind and even as the light entered the room, his father sank back on his pillows dead. Death was the coming of the morning light. The Easter faith should be in our thoughts not simply at a certain season of the Christian year; it ought to be the faith in which Christians daily live, and in which in the end they die, only to live again.

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



Spring Into Action....

By Mike Stroud
Burke County



Everybody feels better this time of the year. Winter is behind us and longer days before us. April showers bring Spring flowers. Time to get some spring cleaning going on around the house and the yard. People are hustling and chomping at the bit to get out of the house and into some projects. It seems our life can be like that spiritually. We hibernate during winter months of our lives. Time to awake and get the sleep out of our eyes. Time to get into the light of day and start moving. It's like jumping out of the bed first thing in the mornings. Hard to do when you are sleepy. The sun upon your face helps you get moving. That is what we have to do in this season of our life. Let the SON, shine upon our face. Wake up from our sleep and put on some good music and praise the Lord. He gives us life, and we should shout His name with every breath. Come out of the valley and



scale the mountain to the top. Enjoy life from the high side, not the low side. Spring into action with your daily reading of the word of God. Take a few minutes first thing every-day to acknowledge Him in all your ways. He will guide your every step. He has dreams inside of you that only you can fulfill. Run with the dreams in

your heart. Start anew each and every day. His mercy and grace are more than enough to propel you into your destination. Don't settle for less, but the best. You are a child of the Most High God. An Ambassador for Christ. You are the most influential person in your circle of friends and family. Bring new life to those around you, just like spring brings new life to the planet. Blossom into a beautiful person, full of God's glory and grace. Be an encourager, a visionary, a healer with words and actions to the hurting. Break new ground and turn up the old dry soil and water your soul. Pour out to others and God will fill you up to overflowing. There is now better ways to start out the spring season than doing just that. You are beautiful and wonderful in who God created you to be. Be the new life to yourself and others around you. Let your light shine and blossom in the Lord.

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

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The Day a Witchdoctor Got Saved

By Rev. George Patton, Jr.

It was a typical warm sunny day in Uganda when we left the inn where we were staying. We pulled out on the paved road, passing many little shops along the way, until finally we arrived at a little dirt road. We had not travel over a mile after turning off, and out through the jungle we went. The further we went down the road the sparser the houses got. Not only did the houses get sparser, they became less and less like a house and more and more a hut. Little grass huts began to dot the sides of the road and the hillsides. We went through little village after little village. Finally, the electric poles stopped. I knew we were going into some of the most remote areas of Uganda. We started to slow down as the road got worse and worse. The pastor we were with, Jeremiah was his name, (he is a converted witchdoctor that God has saved and called to be a preacher of his Word) pointed up the hill to one of the huts and said, "That is the home of one of the cannibals. He is dead now." You see up until a generation ago they were still practicing cannibalism. We finally arrived at the village center. I had been told that this place was held by witchdoctors, some of the most powerful. We had arrived an hour early so our Brother in Christ decided to show us around the village. We made our way down the village to one of the witchdoctor's houses. His name is Edward. Now Edward's daddy used to be a teacher of witchdoctors for East Africa. They would come from all around to be trained. Edward began to show us around his property. We went by his house and out to his garden. He was telling us stories along the way. We circled around and ended up in the cemetery at his father's tomb. It was elaborately decorated. It was made of white marble with his father's picture on the tomb. As we were standing there I asked Edward, "Edward," I said, "Do you know who Jesus is?" "Yes," He said, "I know who He is." I said, "Edward, you know He is the Son of God?" "Yes," Edward said, "I know that." I said "Edward you know He came, lived, died and was put in a tomb and on the third day He arose again and now He is seated at the right hand of His Father in heaven?" "Yes," Edward said, "I know that as well." "Edward," I said again, "You know He came to take away the sins of the world?" "Yes," He said with his head hung low. I said "Edward you know the Bible says that we are all sinners." "Yes," Edward said, "I know that too." Edward, I said, "What is keeping you from asking Jesus to save you and to take away your sins and give you a place in heaven?" Edward looked up with a glow about his face and said, "I suppose nothing." I said, "Edward, don't you think you want to ask Jesus to come and save you today?" With a big smile on his face he said "Yes I do."

Right there, on his knees, in front of his father's tomb, Edward prayed and received Christ. He said afterward that he had been thinking about this for some time and that God had sent us there, that day, for that purpose. After Edward had prayed, he asked us if we wanted to go and pray over his shines. This is the place that he had been doing his sorcery. I said, "Yes we do." We went and laid hands on those brick shines and prayed with all that we had, binding every spirit of Satan that was there. Then we asked the holy Spirit to come and render any evil activity practiced there in-effective. We proceeded on to our conference at the church and it wasn't long before Edward came in the back and took his seat. What an amazing day when God takes an old witchdoctor and transforms him into follower of Jesus Christ.



Edward at his father's tomb



Edward



Edward's Shines



Edward's Shines



The church in the village



The church in the village

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

Morganton Seventh-Day Adventist Church

More than Conquerors!

By Rick and Cindy Mercer
Burke County

The daily grind can really take a toll on a person from time to time. There are so many “land-mines” just waiting to cause us to stumble as we try and take our stand for Jesus. I think it is safe to say that we just live life “out of focus” on occasion. And it is no surprise that we watch people (and maybe even ourselves) become discouraged if we linger too long on the distractions that whirl around us on a regular basis.

It is then that we can be thankful for the armor that we can “suit-up” in to shield us from the darts, bumps and challenges that we experience way too often. Yes, we have protection! The Bible gives instruction to “take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:13) The scriptures continue on in verses 14-18 with girding our waist with truth, putting on a breastplate of righteousness and to shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Then we are to take the shield of faith with us in order to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And that’s not all! We must take the helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God and then pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints! Amazing that God loves us that much, to give us this wonderful outfit of protection as we face difficult situations!

There was a man named Dirk Pieters who was awaiting his execution in prison. He wrote a moving letter of comfort to the one he called “my most beloved sister and wife, Wellemoet.” He tried to pour the hope that animated his heart into hers. He quoted Christ: “Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you” (John 16:22).

Dirk helped his wife focus on the future joy of being reunited in the presence of Christ. He wrote, “I admonish you...my most beloved...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...I commend you to God.”

He fought through his anguish. He didn’t allow his present circumstances to overwhelm him. And he quoted the reassuring words of Paul: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:35-37).

Dirk looked to eternal realities. He looked through the bars and through the prison walls. He was

able to affirm that absolutely nothing, not death, not anything in all creation, could separate the believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus. This is what Dirk was able to share in his darkest hour.

When we face life’s end, Jesus’ promise of eternal life is our only hope. Staring death in the face, we find that Jesus’ promise of “forever” makes all the difference. Sensing that this life is not the end buoys us up with new hope.

In one of my favorite books, Steps to Christ, we are reminded that “the Christian is not left to walk in uncertain paths. We are not left to vain regrets and disappointments. And if we do not have the pleasures of this life we may still be joyful in looking to the life beyond.”

In Christ we look to the “life beyond.” We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and gave us beautiful instructions in His precious Word! Nothing can separate us from his love. Daily look to Him and let your heart be filled with courage. Daily look to Him and let your life be filled with joy. Daily look to Him and let your soul be filled with hope!

With Jesus on our side...we are mighty and strong...we are more than conquerors!

Rick Mercer is the pastor of 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.



Bakersville Community Health Center

Diaper Program

By Amber Dillinger



Bakersville Community Health Center and Celo Health Center are proud to announce their new community diaper program. Children who live in Mitchell, Yancey, or Avery County and have North Carolina Medicaid may be eligible to purchase low cost diapers at our health centers. Parents or caregivers who are interested in applying for the program must complete an application. If approved they will be eligible to purchase diapers at the low cost the health center pays for them. Parents and caregivers are not charged tax or shipping. Each eligible child can receive (2) packs of diapers per month. (That the parent/caregiver will purchase.) Parents or caregivers can apply for the program or get more information by calling Amber Dillinger at 688-6621. They can also apply in person at the following locations: -Bakersville Community Health Center Annex (86 N Mitchell Ave Bakersville (Across from the Clinic) -Spruce Pine Community Health Center (36 Hospital Drive Spruce Pine) -Celo Health Center (116 Seven Mile Ridge Rd. Burnsville

Amber Dillinger is the Outreach and Enrollment/Certified Application Counselor at Bakersville Community Health Center



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Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge

The Hospice Choice

By F. Brent Price
Mitchell County

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Reverend Brent Price is a chaplain at Hospice & Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge.



Restoring the Penland Post Office

By Doug Sudduth
Mitchell County

Restoring the Penland Post Office and general store was the topic at the March 9 regular meeting of the Rotary Club of Spruce Pine.

Penland Post Office Project Board of Directors chair Alicia Swaringen and board treasurer Suzanne Ford told the club about the history of the buildings and the board's accomplishments since it was formed in 2012, the same year the post office and general store were placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Swaringen said the post office was established in 1879 and moved several times before moving to its current building in 1934. The building itself was built in 1902 and housed the Bailey Lumber Company, and later several General Stores.



Rotarian Reid Duncan, left, presenting locally handmade mugs to Alicia Swaringen, center and Suzanne Ford

The project needs more money to finish the restoration, at which time the space will be available for retail spaces, an outdoor recreation outpost such as kayaking or rafting because of its location along the banks of the North Toe River or other businesses.

Visit www.penlandpostoffice.org or mail a check to The Penland Post Office Project, P.O. Box 41, Penland, NC 28765 to donate.

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

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Jesus Lives, Jesus Lives!

By Preacher Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County



Spring, to me is a glorious time of year. We can look around us and see the signs in God's creation that show us that winter is releasing its hold and slowly giving way to spring. Already, at the time I'm writing this, the yellow flowers (I call them Easter flowers) are up out of the ground and blooming. Others are springing forth after a long winter of being dormant in the ground. Gradually as time goes by, we will see more and more evidence of the changing of the season. Many are already looking forward with great anticipation to working in the gardens, seeing the beautiful blooming colors of spring, and enjoying the warming days ahead. It's rainy and cold outside today. Just sitting here in my study writing about spring gives me a renewed sense of excitement in the days that lie ahead. I've never really been a hot weather kind of person, but since it seems we aren't going to get much snow, I must say I'm looking forward to warmer temperatures and sunny days! Spring seems to give us a feeling of new life springing forth around us and results in a feeling of new life in us. Cold and dreary winter days can sometimes leave us feeling cold and dreary on the inside. However, there is one thought that encourages us; spring is just around the corner!

The greatest reason I love spring is the fact that it is the time of year we as Christians celebrate the Resurrection of Christ our Lord! As a pastor and preacher, I always feel that it is of the utmost importance that we as believers focus our hearts and minds on the events of the death and resurrection of Christ. Though our

salvation is the free gift of God, it came at a great cost to the Lord. We must never forget the great suffering that Jesus went through to save us from our sin. His suffering and death paid the cost that we could not. The message of the Gospel teaches us how much the Lord really loves us. Even though we deserved hell, Jesus took our sins upon Himself. I



often tell my church family that God's love is not measured through our circumstances, but always measured through the cross of Calvary.

The events that transpired when Christ suffered and died must have broken the disciples' hearts. After following the Lord and looking forward to the future with Him, they were surely devastated when He was crucified. The emotions and turmoil that was going on inside them was great. How would they go on? What would they do now? The One they had followed was now dead. They had dedicated their life to Him and now He was gone. They hid behind closed doors for fear they would be next. Peter had denied Him and the others had fled. But.....

Then came the women to the tomb. Seeking to anoint the body of their deceased Lord and Master, their hearts were surely burdened tremendously. Who would roll away the stone for them? Can you imagine how many tears had been shed over those last few days? Can you imagine the heaviness of their hearts as they slowly made their way to the place where Jesus was buried? However, the feelings of depression and heartbreak began to change when they found things totally different than what they expected. The tomb was empty and the stone was rolled away! The question was asked, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered in to the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." (Luke 24:5-7). Like the emotions of winter giving way to the emotions of spring, the news of His resurrection began to spread and the disciples were changed forever! The Lord was alive! Death had been conquered and the grave had been defeated! The way for man's sin to be forgiven had been accomplished in Christ, God's Son! The disciples would not be mourning the death of the Lord any longer, but be preaching the message of the Risen Lord, a message that will sound throughout eternity.

Christians, our Savior is no longer on the cross. Our Savior is no longer in the tomb. Our Savior is alive forever and ever and is seated at the right hand of God! Let us celebrate together and worship the One who rose from the dead to never die again! Let us read the story in the Holy Scriptures! Let us sing the songs that tell the story of His resurrection! May our hearts rejoice inside us as we proclaim to the world, "Jesus lives, Jesus lives!"

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



Sitting on the Steps of Life

By Timothy W. Tron

A few weeks ago, God took me to the front porch of the little convenience store in the town of Colletsville. There, as I sat on the steps of the modern day general store watching the world go by, I waited. The voice had told me to go there and wait for someone, whom I did not know. So, there I sat. One person after another got out of their cars, and either went inside the store or pulled up to the gas pumps to fill up their vehicle. My destination began with speaking to the workers inside, asking if they went to any local churches; neither did. I asked if they lived in the area, and they said yes, just up the road. It was then I realized that was part of the reason I had been sent. Pouring myself a cup of coffee, I then retired to the front steps where my story began and waited.

It didn't take long, but soon an older man, scruffily dressed in overalls, pulled up in his pick-up truck and got out, calling out to me as he shut the door. "Fine day we're having," he nearly shouted from across the parking lot. I took another sip of the hot brew and nodded, "Yes, it certainly is," I answered.

He stepped on the first step and started to climb but paused when I said, "It's not quite as bad as it was last night, though." The rough-hewn mountain man looked down at me, "Yea, that wind can cut right through you."

The previous night had been a bitter cold sixteen degrees with winds gusting to thirty miles an hour. The chill was still in my bones; thus, the hot coffee was good after dinner. I took another sip as I nodded in agreement. I removed my sunglasses so as not to seem unfriendly and asked, "Do you know of any good churches in the area?"

"What kinda church you looking for," he answered as he stepped backward off the step so that he now stood in front of me.

"One that preaches the Word of God," I answered solemnly.

"Thems the best kind. That's what I like," he squinted as he checked me out. It was at that moment, that silent split second when you feel a connection to someone; someone you had never met before, but there in the moment, there was something that tied you together far beyond the mere seconds in which you stood. "Well, there's the couple we have here in Colletsville," he tilted his head in the direction of the two churches I had just driven past a few minutes earlier when I was checking out their starting times and denominational affiliations. "The Advent Church was started over a hundred years ago, when their preacher rode down from the mountains on a mule."

"Wow," I exclaimed.

"They're all good folks."

"I noticed they were pretty close together, the churches that is."

"Yeah, the one used to sit facing the road but the flood spun it around on the foundation, and they just left it there after it was repaired."

"The flood that took out the railroad tracks?"

"Yep, that's the one." He then stepped forward and introduced himself, "I'm Cecil Byrd."

I reached out my hand and shook his firmly, "Tim Tron," I answered, smiling back at him. I followed with, "You have the same name as one of my favorite uncles." To that, he smiled extra wide.

"Yep, I guess it ain't a very common name."

"You take my brother, for example, his name is Daniel Boone Byrd. You'da thought they would've called me Davie Crockett Byrd, but no, they called me Cecil."

"No, I guess not. Did they name you after a family member?"

"No, they told me my daddy worked for a man that he didn't like. His name was Cecil."

"Humm," I said biting my lip in curiosity.

"It don't make any sense, but then sometimes that's just the way life is."

When I asked if there was anyone around that made string music, he told me, no, but his mother used to play the banjo.

"She was quite musical you might say. She played the banjo, guitar, and even the piano." The pride in his voice was evident, but as he spoke, he seemed to drift off almost as if he was still listening to those ancient tones come back to life. In the distance, I could almost hear that relic of claw hammer sound echo off the mountain walls near us.

As our conversation continued, Cecil would welcome or call out to almost everyone that was coming and going in and out of the store. It was obvious he was the unofficial town Mayor. Some he would ask how they'd been or some would ask about a job he had just finished, which was putting a new roof on another church just down the road, not either of the two we had talked about earlier. He was a roofer by trade, putting on roofs for the past forty years. His father had taught him before he passed, when Cecil was only twenty years old. I shared with Cecil my calling and how God had brought me here. He shared with me more of his family history and how he had lost some of his siblings throughout his life. Soon a large black Ford 2500 Diesel pulled up which commanded all of Cecil's



attention. It had just pulled out of the school parking lot which was across the street from the store.

"Nice rig," I remarked admiringly.

"Sure is," he grinned, "That's my boy."

Cecil then left me and walked over to visit with his grandchildren who began pouring out of the massive, fully-loaded pickup, complete with a heavy duty electric winch fastened on the aftermarket painted black metal, Texas brush bumper.

I waited for the appropriate time so as not to interrupt, tossed my empty coffee cup into the garbage nearby as I headed for my car.

"Talk to you later Cecil," I said, waving goodbye.

"You too," he called back, waving in my direction. "Good talkin' to ya."

Behind the store, the Johns River silently flowed past as time and mankind came and went. Somewhere in the farthest reaches of a holler nearby sits a banjo covered in dust whose memory begs to come to life. Somewhere those memories are still alive, a heartbeat away.

Welcome to my new home.

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.

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Avery County

Avery County YMCA - Become a Vendor at the 2017 Healthy Kids Day On April 29, the Y will celebrate Healthy Kids Day, our national initiative to improve the health and well-being of kids. Join the Movement by participating in one of the nation's largest health days for children! The Williams YMCA would like to invite you to be a part of our local Healthy Kids Day for the children of Avery and surrounding counties. This is a free event for the entire community! The event will be held at Newland Town Park (weather permitting) from 11:00-2:00 on Saturday, April 29th 2017. We would like to have as many local businesses there as possible to provide our children and their families with lots of resources to keep children active, healthy and safe. In 2016, close to 400 people were served at this event and we hope to serve even more this year. We are looking for vendors and sponsors for this event. If you would like a table at the event or would like to be an event sponsor - let me know! Please send me any questions you may have! Below are a couple of quick event details:

Date: April 29, 2017

Time: 11:00am-2:00pm (Vendors will be asked to be set up by 10:45am)

Location: Newland Town Park (If the weather is not cooperative the event will be held in the Newland Elementary School gymnasium)

Vendor information: We ask each vendor to provide a fun activity (I am attaching some ideas!), resources and/or snacks, etc. The Y will provide tables and chairs if you need them! There is a Healthy Kids Day Facebook event page under the Williams YMCA Facebook page - please invite your friends to help us get the word out about the event!

For more information please contact, Bonnie Clark, Wellness Program Director

Burke County

Brown Mountain Baptist Church EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE

2046 Brown Mountain Beach Rd, Morganton, NC Sunday, April 16, 2017 at 7:00am Breakfast afterward, then Sunday School. After Sunday School the "Golden Valley Crusaders" will sing. Everyone welcome. For more info call 437-3048 Doug St. John.

Burke Chamber-A Taste of Burke at the Old Armory Building at 306 W McDowell St. in Morganton. Tuesday April 11th at 6:00 to 8:00 pm. For more info call the Chamber.

Safe Plates(Certified Food Protection Manager Course) April 26 and 27th from 9am to 4pm with a 2hr exam on April 28th at 9:00am. 130 Ammons Dr. Suite 2 in Morganton call 828-764-9480 for more info.

Chamber Classics IV Sat. April 8, 2017 at Drendel Auditorium 7:30pm call 828-324-8603 for more info.

Western Piedmont Youth Symphony Spring Concert: Monday, April 10, 2017 7:00pm. Drendel Auditorium for more info call 828-324-8603.

Catawba River Baptist Association

- April (month of food collection for the Children's Homes of NC)
- 1st-State RA Racer Day
- 6th-Senior Adult Outing
- 16th-Easter

May

- 2nd-Church Security Seminar @ 6:30 p.m. @ Walker Road Baptist
- 21st-Association Missions Offering
- 23rd-Why They Stay Seminar with Dr. Steve Parr at 6:30 p.m. @ Mulls Grove Baptist
- 23rd-Why They Stay Seminar with Dr. Steve Parr at 6:30 p.m. @ Mulls Grove Baptist

Mission Trip

Catawba River Baptist Association will be leading a mission trip to Cuba September 16-22. This will be an exciting trip where we will do construction, prayer walking, personal evangelism and preaching. The cost for the trip which includes transportation, food, lodging and supplies is \$2,000 per person. This trip is open to both men and women. If interested you will need to begin the process of getting a passport.

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.

Hopewell Baptist Church Spring Revival—April 9th to 12th 6:00pm Sunday, 6:30pm Monday thru Wednesday. Dr. Len Turner is the speaker. For more info contact Hopewell Baptist Church.

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist-Burke County - Truth for Youth Evangelistic Meetings begin April 12th., and will take place every Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights until April 30th. These meetings will be presented by our local youth. Beginning at 7:00 p.m., each night, at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. 28655

The Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church invites everyone to their Spring Cantata! Saturday, April 15th., at 11:00 a.m. 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. 28655.

Cooking Demonstration and Food Sampling with Connie Vail - Tuesday, April 18th., from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., at the Silver Creek Adventist School, 2195 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. 28655. Cost is \$10.00 per person. Please contact Cindy to register at 870-510-8048 or e-mail cjmercer@tds.net.

LifeStart Seminar: Reversing Heart Disease Naturally will takes place April 25th., at 6:00 p.m., at the Silver Creek Adventist School Gym, 2195 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. 28655.

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

Patient Modesty Organization—Everyone is invited to participate in the Caribbean 5K Run / Walk on the Morganton Greenway at 9 AM on Saturday, April 29th., Registration will begin at Catawba Meadows Park (Shelter #3) at 9 AM. Chicken sandwiches from Chick Fil A of Morganton, and water will be provided to all runners after the race. Each runner will be guaranteed a tote bag with goodies if they register by April 18th.

We will also have a silent auction under picnic shelter #3 with many great items including gift certificates for local restaurants, attraction tickets, and gift certificates for hotels in different states you can bid on. This silent auction is open to 5K participants and public starting at 9:30 AM. Check out the silent auction list at <http://www.patientmodesty.org/morgantonsilentauktion.asp>. Be sure you bring your check book and/or extra cash so you can participate in the silent auction. The Top 2 female and male finishers will receive gift certificates for Caribbean resorts in Antigua and Grenadines donated by Elite Island Resort. We will also have a contest after the race for best Caribbean theme (must wear shirt and pants/shorts) dressed people. The two best dressed will win gift certificates for Caribbean resorts. See web site: <http://patientmodesty.org/caribbean5krun.aspx> for more details.

The costs for entering the race are:

Early Bird Registration before April 1st- \$20 (Walk - \$15)

Pre-registration before April 28th - \$25 (Walk - \$20)

Day of Race - \$30

The race will benefit Medical Patient Modesty, a 501c3 non-profit organization that works to educate patients about how to stand up for their rights to same gender medical care for certain procedures and how to have maximum amount of modesty for procedures. The organization was founded by Misty Roberts, a deaf woman. This is an often unspoken need which Misty has found. And while you may not have thought about medical modesty, this is especially a needed area for people who are concerned about their modesty in medical settings and abused victims. Your support to MPM is much appreciated.

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.

Announcement Grace Community Church in Marion, NC will hold four services on Easter Sunday - Sunday, April 15 - to provide ample worship opportunities for locals as well as people traveling or visiting in the area. Services will be held at 8 am, 9:30 am, 11 am, 5 pm. Everyone is encouraged to attend and bring a friend. For more information, visit our website at www.graceforall.org or call 828.724.9599.

Historic Marion Tailgate Market

When-12:00-2:00 pm, March 28, 2017

Where-Marion Train Depot, 45 Depot Street, Marion, NC 28752

Historic Marion Tailgate Market is hosting a community potluck to kick-off the 2017 market season. Bring a friend & your favorite covered dish. The HMTM will provide the meat and drinks. Vendor applications will be provided.

In 2016, the HMTM celebrated 10 years of providing local foods and crafts by our local farmers and artisans. Let's continue the tradition. Please RSVP by March 21, 652-2215 or Lou Godfrey.

Historic Marion Tailgate Market is open on Tuesday from 3 to 6 pm and Saturday from 9 am to 12 pm in downtown Marion under the Tailgate Market shelter. Opening day, Tuesday, May 2.

Hospice of Rutherford and Carolina Foothills - Hope Grief Support for those who have lost loved ones: Offered at First Presbyterian church, 79 Academy St, Marion. March 7, 14, 21, 28 at 6PM.

New HOPE of McDowell (Marion) - New HOPE of McDowell is seeking a full-time Associate Director - Shelter Manger. New HOPE of McDowell is a non-profit domestic violence and sexual assault agency located in McDowell County, NC.

Bits 'n Pieces

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 - Events for Bear Creek Baptist Church during the month of April are:

Sunday, April 9th, 6:00 p.m. - "The Living Last Supper" Easter Drama will be presented

Friday, April 14th, 8:00 a.m. - Community Women's Prayer Breakfast at Helen's Restaurant in Bakersville

Sunday, April 16th, 7:00 a.m. - Easter Sunrise Service followed by breakfast prepared by the men of the church.

Sunday, April 30th, 6:00 p.m. - 5th Sunday Night Singing. Special music provided by Rhonda Gouge & friends.

Any questions, just give me a call - 688-4331. Thanks and have a blessed day!

Berry Chapel Baptist Church Spruce Pine invites you to their 31st Annual Presentation of the Easter Drama "The Living Lord's Supper" Friday, April 14, 2017 and Saturday, April 15, 2017 7:00pm For more info call 828-765-6590

Bradshaw Fire Department's annual ramp dinner will be on 4-15-17 this year. We'll have our normal menu, and hamburgers and hotdogs. Please join us if you can. We're also going to raffle off an AR-15 this year. Raffle tickets are \$5 dollars each. See any Bradshaw member for tickets.

Celebrate Recovery - This is a Christ and Biblical Based Program, giving help 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. Bear Creek Baptist Church in Ledger, NC 7:00pm

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.

Mitchell County EDC will hold a meeting open to the community on Tuesday, April 25th at noon to outline the marketing project. Lunch will not be provided. Location TBD. Please RSVP to director@mitchellcountyedc.org.

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 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 jnutozts@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.

Grassy Creek Baptist Church will hold an Easter Sunrise Service at the Apple Orchard overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway April 16th at 6:45. Everyone is invited to join us. In an effort to keep from having so many cars parked along the edge of the road, we will offer bus service up there. If you would like to ride the bus, it will leave the church parking lot at 6:30am. In case of dense fog or rain, we will have the service at the church. For more information, call the church office at 765-4620.

Historic Courthouse in Bakersville - Thursday, April 6 at 7pm 1ST ANNUAL HISTORY BEE

We wanted to remind you of our History Bee, at which student-contestants

will receive great cash prizes (\$500 for 1st place; \$300 for 2nd place; \$200 for 3rd place...in two divisions: ages: 15 to 18, and under 15). All questions will be taken from Elizabeth Hunter's book, *Voices of the Valley*, a photographic and narrative jewel about the history of Mitchell County. There will be an admission fee of \$5 for individuals, and \$10 for families. We're sure to see some parents and grandparents there. Light refreshments will be served. If there are any students who still want to register, the deadline is March 31st. Call us at 688-4371 for info.

Monday, April 17 at 7pm "MITCHELL COUNTY: EARLY CROSSROADS OF CULTURE"

We invite you to join us as Dr. Daniel Barron takes us on a fast-paced visual journey into the past and consider a variety of real people and cultures that have visited Mitchell County from around 8000 BC to 1540 to 1780 and one fictional character by the name of Jamie Fraser. Using historic and contemporary Google maps of trails and roads, we'll see how you can actually walk in the footsteps of the first indigenous people, the first Europeans, and many of our Scottish and Scots-Irish ancestors.

Sunday, April 23 at 3pm "OLD-TIME MOUNTAIN STYLE GOSPEL SONGS"

Please join us for a Sunday afternoon of music with Rhonda Gouge and Samuel McKinney as they entertain us with their unique stylings of our mountain music.... we're sure there'll be sing-a-longs!

The Little Rock Creek Baptist Church will be hosting a Community Sunrise Service on Easter Sunday, April 16 at 7:00am. The service will be held on the hill in front of the Mitchell County Courthouse at 328 Longview Dr. in Bakersville, near the handicapped parking area out front. Everyone is welcome and invited to attend as we come together as one body to celebrate the Resurrection of our Savior. For more information, or if your church would like to participate, please contact Pastor Toby Crowder at 828-284-5684.

Mitchell Baptist Association-Spruce Pine - Baptist Children's Homes Food Round-Up is April 2017

Many churches are participating and also food can be brought to the association office by April 26th. For more info call 828-765-9412

The Mitchell County Historical Society announces its First Annual History Bee, scheduled for Thursday, April 6th, 2017, at 7:00 pm at the Historic Courthouse in Bakersville. The goal of the History Bee, and the mission of MCHS, is to help Mitchell County residents, especially young people, become more aware of our rich heritage.

There will be two divisions of competition, one for Mitchell County students under 15, and one for students 15-18. First prize in each age division is \$500, second prize \$300, and third prize \$200. Local businesses and organizations are providing the prizes.

All questions in the History Bee will come from Elizabeth Hunter's *Voices of the Valley*, which was published in 2011, the 150th anniversary of the formation of Mitchell County. This publication is already in public and school libraries, and more copies will be made available to libraries by MCHS. It is also available for purchase from the Historical Society office in Bakersville or from other sources. Students are asked to sign up to participate in the MCHS History Bee by 3/31/2017, and registration is free. Ask your history teacher for a registration form or find it on mitchellinchistory.org. (We have also attached a downloadable copy below.)

If you have questions about the History Bee, go to the MCHS website or call 828-385-0564 or 828-688-3471.

The 6th annual Spruce Pine BBQ & Bluegrass Festival Calling All Food & Craft Vendors! Applications are now being accepted.

If you would like to apply as a food or craft vendor for the 2017 festival, now is the time to apply.

The 6th annual Spruce Pine BBQ & Bluegrass Festival is scheduled for July 14 - 15, 2017, and is now accepting applications from food and craft vendors. This year's festival at Riverside Park across from downtown Spruce Pine will offer the finest BBQ, live music, crafts, fun, and family activities in the beautiful park setting beside the North Toe River.

The Rotary Club of Spruce Pine sponsors this event with 100% of the profits going toward local charities through the Spruce Pine Rotary Foundation, a 501(c)3 charitable organization. One local project that will be funded by proceeds from this year's festival will be the hiking/biking path from Riverside Park in Spruce Pine to the Blue Ridge Parkway, along the historic Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. This project is in partnership with the Toe River Watershed Project and the US National Park Service.

Applications for participation can be downloaded at <http://www.sprucepinebbqbbluegrass.org/FOOD-VENDORS.html> for food vendors and at <http://www.sprucepinebbqbbluegrass.org/CRAFT-VENDORS.html> for craft vendors.

Applications are due by May 12, 2017, but vendors are encouraged to apply early as space is limited. Vendor selection will begin in March and spaces will be available on a first come, first served basis.

Relay Of the Blue Ridge Start getting ready for this. Mitchell High School on Friday evening, May 19th For more info call 828-765-9265

Run for Holland—A Race for Those with Disabilities

Want to improve your health and serve as God wishes us to at the same time?

Start a group to enter the Run For Holland. The Run is on May 6th so start getting in shape. The money raised goes to local organizations that help those with dis-

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Little Miss McDowell Pageant

Local "Princesses" and their Sisters Share a "Bonding" Experience

By Marion Stephan

Relationships between sisters do not always fare well in fairy tales. Cinderella's mistreatment by her three stepsisters is well-known. Disney's Frozen concerns two sister princesses who are separated by one sister's perilous gift.

But the 20 princesses competing in the fairy-tale themed 2017 Little Miss McDowell Pageant found sisters to whom they could grow close. These sisters were the female Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC) cadets who served as "big sisters" to the contestants.

"You create a bond with a little sister you'll never forget," said cadet Krystal Moore, big sister to contestant Ava Effler. Perhaps fittingly, Miss Effler's talent entry was a vocal rendition of the song "One Call Away." The "almost 8"-year-old said she enjoyed "doing my routine" and found learning the opening number to be one of the greatest challenges.

Big sister Rebecca Broughton called her young charge, 7-year-old Olivia Moore, "respectful and quiet." And Miss Moore enjoyed "just having fun" during the pageant experience.

Contestants and their big sisters were interviewed during rehearsals the week preceding the pageant. The girls competed on Saturday, March 11, at East McDowell Middle School.

Big sister Shyanne Flynn called her first year with the pageant "a really good opportunity to bond with my little sister," and Litzzy Pavon liked "meeting my little sister." Shyanne's and Litzzy's little sisters, 7-year-olds Ava Buchanan and Nylla Gibson, enjoyed, respectively, "wearing dresses and makeup" and "dancing."

"It's been really good... getting to interact with my little girl," said Stephanie Santes, big sister to Kaleigh Freeman. The 11-year-old "little girl," in turn, enjoyed "meeting all the new people and getting to show off your talent on pageant night."

Contestants Alyssa Hemphill (8 years old), Kaida Ann Burnette (6), Raelyn Gaye (11), Jullietta Ollis (11), and Melody Miller (10) put the big sister experience at the top of their lists. And their big sisters expressed similar sentiments. "I like that we get little sisters and get to connect and bond with them," noted Shyanne Flynn, Alyssa Hemphill's big sister. Megan Cadwell, big sister to Kaida Ann Burnette, enjoyed "getting to spend a week with one girl" and "getting to know her." "You build such a bond with your sister, you regret the



end," remarked Jessica Moore, Raelyn Gaye's big sister.

The big sisters for the last two contestants in the preceding paragraph expanded their "big sister" experiences to include all the contestants. "I just enjoy being around kids," said Amanda Harris, big sister to Jullietta Ollis. And Angela Elliott, Melody Miller's big sister, praised the "fun" experience of getting "to meet all the little girls" and seeing "how talented they are."

In fact, the bond that developed, collectively, between all the contestants and their big sisters appears to have been the "first-runner-up" for participants' favorite experiences. "We're like a big family," noted Ariel Revis, big sister to 10-year-old Stella White. And Stella herself said she liked "how you get to come to be with everybody."

Ten-year-old contestant Tessa Ross liked "working as a group with other people and learning stuff together." Her big sister, Lindsey Armer, found it "interesting to interact with people younger than you."

Ryan Hunt, 8, said that, in contrast to her brothers at home, "everyone's nice" at the Little Miss McDowell pageant. Her big sister, Hailey Raines found it "pretty fun" to "bond with everyone" and to observe the young contestants' "different styles."

Skylar Woody, 7, enjoyed the moment "we go out and everybody does the [opening] dance." Her big sister, Haley Jolly, "really enjoyed" serving as a big sister, and "will do it next year, definitely." Contestant Hailey Goins, 10, deemed it "fun working with all the contestants." Her big sister, Shelby Lanning, found it "definitely different" to "talk to people and parents."

Big sister Katlyn Davis called it "awesome, helping these kids out and being a role model." Her little sister, 11-year-old Hailey Bartlett, loved "having fun with everyone." Like her fellow cadet, Katlyn, big sister Reagan Harris liked "helping out with the kids." Her 9-year-old little sister, Hope Wakefield, broadened the field: "I actually like it all."

And the Winner Is . . .

In an interview during rehearsals for the 2017 Little Miss McDowell pageant, Addison Cunningham remarked that if she didn't win, she "would support the person who did win." As it turned out, the "person who did win" was herself. The 11-year-old walked away from the pageant with trophies for Little Miss McDowell and for Miss Congeniality.

Addison, a fifth-grader at Marion Elementary, performed a lyrical ballet to "Read All about It," by Emily Sandy. Winners are chosen based on scores from the talent competition, an evening gown competition, and an interview with the pageant judges.

First-timer Raigan Crummie admitted herself to be "a little scared about my talent." Big sister Victoria Thomas said she was working on "getting her [Raigan's] confidence up, because she's very nervous." Nervous or not, Raigan earned first runner up in the pageant.

Raigan, who is 7 and "about to turn 8," is a sixth-grader at West McDowell Middle School. She performed a ballet dance to "Lavender's Blue."

Second runner up Kaylyn Fairchild has performed lyrical ballets in the pageant the past two years. This year she switched her genre to tap dancing, which she says she has studied "about as long" as she had ballet. She was a little apprehensive because the slippery stage floor made the turns in her routine difficult.

The 2016 Little Miss McDowell, in her pre-pageant interview with the Blue Ridge Christian News, called her reign "one of the great experiences or my life." She expressed, in advance, wishes for "good luck to the future Little Miss McDowell."



Little Miss McDowell being crowned



2nd runner up Kaylyn Fairchild and her big sister Hailey Clark



First runner up Raigan Crummie and big sister Victoria Thomas



First runner up Raigan Crummie and big sister Victoria Thomas



Little Miss McDowell Addison Cunningham

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Dine In and Carry Out



A Him Named Hur
By Lana Ellis

In Exodus 17 Joshua's army went up against the tribe of Amalek. On top of the hill overlooking the battle, Moses, as instructed by God, held the staff and stood with both hands raised. As long as the hands of Moses were raised Joshua's army advanced but when Moses' hands grew heavy and dropped, the army of Amalek advanced. Regaining strength Moses lifted his hands again and Israel's army advanced. We don't know how long the battle went back and forth before the plan was put into place in verse 12. A stone was placed behind Moses and he sat down on it. Then two men took their places on each side of Moses in order to support his raised hands. In so doing by the end of the day Joshua's army was victorious and Israel's enemy was defeated.



he evidently was endowed with wisdom and discernment and highly trusted by Moses.

The scene at the top of the hill overlooking the ongoing battle paints a beautiful picture of the Trinity. In the center is Moses representing God. This is not too big a stretch since God says in Exodus 4:16 that Moses will be as God to Aaron. At the right side of Moses is High Priest Aaron, a type of Jesus. Just as Aaron was a mouthpiece for Moses, Jesus in the flesh was the mouth of God and now sits at the right hand of God interceding for us as our High Priest. As promised after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, a Helper came in the form of the Holy Spirit - One alongside - portrayed in our picture by the "Him named Hur."

I was introduced to the "Him named Hur" in a sermon by Youth Pastor Neal emphasizing the responsibility of church members to be available when needed. According to First Corinthians 12:7 as believers and followers of Jesus Christ we have been given spiritual gifts for the common good of the local body of Christ. These include, but are not limited to, wisdom, knowledge, discernment, teaching, giving and helping. So whether we are a "him" or a "her" all of us should be available and willing to come along side as needed and there is no better example to follow than the "Him named Hur."

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

I am a primary sponsor of Senate Bill 234 - SBA Pay/Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund, which would appropriate portions of the N.C. Education Lottery revenues to fund needed school construction in low-income counties, as well as reform the principal and assistant principal compensation structure.

Currently, our state allocates \$100 million for public school construction needs from the state lottery, but these funds are distributed on a head count basis. The result is that in fiscal year 2015-2016, all 40 Tier 1 counties received just \$11 million dollars. Conversely, under the existing Lottery formula for school construction dollars, Tier 3 counties received \$47 million in that same year, with just two counties – Wake and Mecklenburg – receiving the bulk of those funds at \$10 million each. This bill will set up a Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund that will be administered by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The fund will be available to Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties, based on their critical deficiencies. But it will also look at a counties' ability to generate property tax and sales tax revenue. This is a completely new and separate fund from the lottery – totaling \$75 million dollars. We're not adjusting in any way the existing \$100 million per capita fund; rather, this change will supplement existing funding streams and, most importantly, prioritize the critical school needs in our poor, rural counties.

The other part of the bill makes structural changes to the compensation for principals and assistant principals. One specific provision directs the State Board of Education to establish the Principal Bonus Program, a system to reward excellence in our rural county schools. Principals of schools eligible to receive supplemental low-wealth funding from the State Board of Education may receive up to five one-time annual bonuses of \$1,000 each, subject to specified criteria, including improvement of the learning and physical environment of the school. I believe this bill is a step in the right direction to meet the critical needs of our rural county schools. 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

NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel
Warren.Daniel@ncleg.net
919-715-7823

Dear District 46 Constituents, I am excited to share some updates from Raleigh. In this newsletter, you will find information on recent bills I have filed and learn about some exciting news from across the district. I appreciate your concerns, questions, and the valuable feedback that you send to our office, so feel free to reply. - Sen. Warren Daniel At the Legislature... Firefighter Relief Fund S.B. 102— We filed a bill recently titled "Local Firefighter Relief Fund Eligibility." The bill is an act to provide that any destitute firefighter serving honorably with a certified fire department may receive financial assistance from a local firefighter's relief fund. The bill eliminates the requirement that a firefighter have 5 years' experience in order to qualify for relief funds, and also allows retired firefighters to be eligible. You can find information on this bill and others through the bill lookup on the General Assembly home page. Gov. Cooper, AG Stein Illegally Attempt to Surrender in Voter ID Case-- Despite the fact that more than 70 percent of North Carolina voters support our state's voter ID law, on Tuesday Gov. Roy Cooper and Attorney General Josh Stein attempted to fire attorneys retained by the General Assembly to defend the law and withdraw our state's defense of the Voter ID challenge that is currently before the U.S. Supreme Court. In the military, this is called a surrender; in sports, it is called a forfeit. Either way, it is bad for North Carolina, and the General Assembly has filed documents with the U.S. Supreme Court to prevent Gov. Cooper and AG Stein from surrendering on behalf of our state. We expect the court to reject this unethical stunt. Senate Issues Subpoena after Cooper Cabinet Secretary is a Repeated No-Show— After Gov. Cooper's Secretary of Military and Veterans Affairs, Larry Hall, failed to appear for a third time at a hearing to confirm his appointment, on Thursday the Senate Commerce Committee voted to issue a subpoena compelling Sec. Hall to appear before the committee this week. Already Gov. Cooper is attempting to avoid the subpoena through court action, and the members of the General Assembly are wondering what his cabinet nominees have to hide. Imagine the uproar that would occur in the press if President Trump's cabinet secretaries refused to even show up for Senate confirmation hearings. In the district... Construction of a new Regional National Guard HQ in Morganton-- I enjoyed flying with the NC National Guard today to survey the new location for their western region headquarters on the site of the old Western Youth Institution. The old high-rise will be demolished and a brand new \$26 million facility built in its place. Great news for western NC! Senate District 46--Dominating NC High School Basketball Playoffs on Tuesday, February 28th, the Freedom High School varsity boys' basketball team battled it out at home with No. 12 Jay M. Robinson HS for an 88-85 win in the NCHSAA 3A regional semifinal. The FHS boys will play their next game in Greensboro vs. Cox Mill (of Concord) on Saturday, March 4 at 12 noon. In ladies basketball, the Freedom Lady Patriots also won 59-35 on Tuesday at home over No. 11 Central Cabarrus HS. The Lady Pats' next playoff game will be in Greensboro vs. Hickory Ridge (Harrisburg, NC) on Saturday, March 4 at 2 p.m. Not to be outdone, the East Burke Lady Cavaliers also advanced to the next round of playoffs on Tuesday with a 78-64 victory over top-seeded Smoky Mountain HS. The Lady Cavs' next playoff game will be held at Wake Forest University in Winston Salem vs. North Surry (Mt. Airy) on Saturday, March 4 at 2 p.m. Good luck to all of these teams as you continue to represent our district and western NC!! We stand ready to assist folks with state government issues; and, will continue to work with Rep. McHenry's or Rep. Meadows' office with federal issues. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is an issue or question with which I can help. Office: 919-715-7823 Email: warren.daniel@ncleg.net To unsubscribe from our email]



God Bless America

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

US House of Representatives NC District 11



Congressman
Mark Meadows
202-225-6401
www.meadows.house.gov

Why I Oppose GOP Leadership's Obamacare "Replacement"

I've gotten numerous questions lately on why I would oppose the Obamacare "replacement" bill that the House GOP leadership has put forward in Congress. I wanted to share a little information and explain more about my thought process.

Be assured that there is no one more committed to repealing Obamacare than me. I've campaigned on it every two years since 2012—it's one of the top reasons I ran for Congress in the first place.

At the same time, the plan presented by GOP leadership simply doesn't accomplish the goals needed to improve healthcare for all Americans. For one, leadership's replacement bill does not repeal all of Obamacare. It leaves much of the current Obamacare model—including multiple insurance mandates and taxes—in place. This is not what we told the voters we would do—we campaigned on fully repealing the law, and we should deliver nothing less than that.

Furthermore, my main goal in any healthcare replacement plan is to make sure that we lower healthcare costs and premiums. Having run the numbers, it is clear to me that premiums will go up, not down, with leadership's replacement bill. If you remove a pool of healthy people off the insurance market but still require insurance mandates to offer expansive plans, premiums go up. Not only that, but the Congressional Budget Office's score of the bill says that premiums will spike immediately in 2018 by 15%-20%, followed by only a 10% reduction by 2026. This bill doesn't do what we need to accomplish—lowering healthcare costs. It would essentially be Obamacare by a different name.

I want to repeal Obamacare as much (or more) than anyone. However, I cannot in good conscience vote for a plan that goes against the promises that Republicans made to the voters. You deserve better than that. For once, you deserve to have your trust validated by your elected officials. I intend to do just that—even if it means being one of only a few who vote against this replacement bill.

Please know that I'm in frequent discussions with President Trump's administration—including meeting with the President himself—on how we can fix this bill to make sure House Republicans actually follow through on their promises. President Trump has taken a lot of heat so far for keeping his promises to you—it's time Congressional Republicans followed suit and did the same.

NC House District 118



Rep. Michele D. Presnell
Michele.Presnell@ncleg.net
919-733-5732

Senators release tax proposal

Last week, leading Senators released a plan to further cut income taxes for our state's hardworking individuals and families. The proposal would cut \$1 billion in income taxes for North Carolinians. People who earn low incomes and middle class families would primarily benefit.

Building on the General Assembly's work in recent years to flatten and lower the state income tax rate, the plan would decrease the personal income tax rate from 5.499% to 5.35%. The plan would also increase the standard deduction for taxpayers in every filing category – again, building on work in the past few years to increase the standard deduction, which has more than doubled since I took office.



Our firefighters risk their lives every day to protect our lives and property. Whether fighting a raging forest fire or serving as first responders to a car accident, we can count on our firefighters to get the job done with skill and professionalism.

Gov. Roy Cooper wants to increase state government spending by \$1.1 billion, and the Senate wants to cut your taxes by \$1 billion. Which do you prefer?

The proposal has several other provisions that would benefit the people of Haywood, Madison and Yancey Counties. As we continue to move through the legislative Long Session, I will provide more information on the Senate's tax reform proposal and any others that may arise.

Firefighters host reception

Firefighters from Western North Carolina hosted members of the General Assembly last Tuesday for a reception in Raleigh.

Last week in Raleigh, right down the street from the Legislative Building, a large fire quickly grew and burned down a multi-story building. Had it not been for the courageous work of firefighters in Raleigh, the General Assembly and more people's homes and businesses could easily have burned to the ground.

Instead, the fire was contained quickly with minimal property damage considering its initial size, no one died and there were only a handful of injuries.

Firefighters at home and in the places we visit are owed a debt of gratitude for the work they relentlessly perform.



This week, after years of pressure from Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs began providing compensation to veterans suffering from illnesses caused by contaminated water at Camp Lejeune.

I want to thank Master Sergeant Jerry Ensminger for his work on behalf of the Lejeune veterans and their families. Jerry's daughter was born on Camp Lejeune and died at nine years old as a result of exposure to toxic chemicals in the water. Because of his tireless work, Lejeune veterans are finally getting the compensation they deserve.

The government negligently poisoned the men and women who served at Camp Lejeune. These service members sacrificed for our nation and have earned this care and support.

Veterans who served at Camp Lejeune for 30 days or more from 1953 to 1987 and are suffering from a service connected medical condition like kidney cancer or Parkinson's disease are eligible to receive disability benefits. The VA estimates that more than 900,000 service members could have been exposed to toxic water. Many victims still call North Carolina home.

I encourage all veterans in NC who may be eligible for compensation to contact my office for assistance making a claim.

The Senate has been working hard this week on confirming the President's cabinet. This week we voted to confirm Housing and Urban Development Secretary Dr. Ben Carson, Energy Secretary Rick Perry, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross.

President Trump also delivered his first joint address to Congress on Tuesday.

In his speech, the President outlined a blue print to improve our economy and keep our country safe. Americans were clear about their priorities in this past election, and I believe it's time to work together on issues that are critical to the American people.

For far too long, many have felt forgotten by our government. I am encouraged that Congress can work together with the President to pass legislation that will get our country back on track with a stronger economy for all Americans. It is clear that our citizens want to reel in government spending, create jobs, fix our healthcare system, and strengthen our borders. The President, in keeping his promises, has made significant gains in reinforcing these critical policy areas.

I look forward to working with the President to solve the real, everyday problems that face the American people.

Next week, the Senate will continue to confirm the nominees for the President's cabinet. The President needs his team in place so that they can begin working on behalf of the American people.

Clothing, Bedding, Shelters, and Pets

By Nancy Yantchook



Listen to the local radio or emergency channel for information. A Watch, Alert or Advisory means that conditions are right for the disaster to occur within 48 hours. A Warning means that conditions for a disaster are occurring or will occur in 12-18 hours.

Whether stranded in your own home or going to a shelter, warm, durable clothing is necessary, also durable shoes, boots, or work boots with warm heavy socks. For outdoors a heavy warm coat or jacket, hat or scarf, and gloves should be included. Thermal underwear might also be desirable. Rain gear or ponchos should be added.

If told to evacuate, do so immediately and take your supplies. If you have time, shut off the water, gas, and electricity before leaving, keeping in mind that a professional will have to turn the gas back on later. Lock your home. Use the travel routes specified by the local authorities. Don't use shortcuts that may be impassable.

Warm heavy blankets, large bath towels and sleeping bags should top the list to take to shelter, if you must leave your house. A change of clothing, socks, and shoes should be included. Don't forget to take your disaster kit with you. Shelters may not be set up for large numbers of people. Sunglasses, sun block, and a local map may be important.

The shelters in Mitchell County that are designated by the Department of Social Services are: Buladean Elementary School, Tipton Hill Elementary School, Bowman Middle School, Mitchell High School, Harris Middle School and Spruce Pine First Baptist Church. Go to the shelter closest to you or your area of emergency. If necessary to call, call the Emergency Management Director at 688-2104 or 688-9110 for information and location of other shelters.

Animals and Pets

Ask your Veterinarian about animal care during and after a disaster. Remember pets are not allowed inside emergency shelters because of health regulations, but separate facilities will be set up with cages in a trailer or a separate room. The Animal Shelter may be overwhelmed with other pets and you may not be able to get to the area, so you may have to make your own arrangements.

- Be sure animals and pets are confined and cannot run off to get lost or follow you when you leave

- Keep dogs and cats in the house or a shed or garage or barn for shelter from the weather.

- Cattle usually stay outdoors well.

- Horses, sheep, pigs, goats will need some sort of shelter

- Animals do not lick snow for water if thirsty

- Provide water for the animals. Large containers or the type that dispenses water slowly are good.

- Horses need water at room temperature, not cold.

- Provide food for your animals – dry dog food, dry cat food, hay or straw, etc.

- All pets must have up to date rabies and distemper vaccinations.

- Be sure your animals have their name tags and rabies tags on, if this is applicable.

- A picture of you and your pet(s) would be helpful in claiming your pet.

- It is a good idea to have your animals chipped.

A list of emergency telephone numbers should be posted by your phone for any emergency:

• Police.....	911
• Fire.....	911
• Paramedics.....	911
• Sheriff.....	911
• Emergency Management.....	688-9110 or 911
• Doctor..... (Name).....	
• Clinic..... (Name).....	
• Hospital (Blue Ridge Regional).....	765-4201
• Dentist..... (Name).....	
• Health Department.....	688-2371 or 2183
• Home Health.....	688-3421
• Health Supply.....	
• DSS (Dept. of Social Services).....	688-2175
• Electric Company..... French Broad	828-682-6121 or 688-4815 or 4242
• Duke Energy Progress	1-800-452-2777
• Water Company.....	
• Gas Company.....	
• Telephone Company..... Frontier	1-877-462-8188
• Bell South	1-800-642-0544
• School..... (Name).....	
• Minister..... (Name).....	
• Veterinarian..... (Name).....	

Next Month: Children, Disaster Plans, Important Papers, Neighbors

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.

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Wimps or Warriors

By Pastor Steve Williams
Mitchell County

We are living in a world where it looks like everybody in the world is standing up for what they believe in. You have Democrats, Republicans, you have the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and the Transgender, The Left the Right etc... They all have their opinion on what they think is right and what is wrong. We see they are willing to stand up and fight for sin and perversion. It's time for Christians to take a stand today and put on our Battle Armor for God. The Bible tells us in Romans 13:12 *"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."* The Armor of Light is God Word. God's Word is the only True Light in this dark world. Paul tells us also in Romans 1:16 *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: (Word of God) for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."*

It's time for God's people to stand and become Warriors for Christ, instead of becoming Wimps in this World. What has happened to Christians today? I hate to say it, but many God-Fearing Christians are scared they are going to offend someone by what they believe. Christians need to quit worrying about offending people and start Proclaiming God's Word. Let me ask you a question. Do you think the worldly groups or organization seem too worried about offending you? NO they don't, they just keep pushing their agenda. It's time for Christians to put on the Armor of Light, like Paul did in Romans 13:12. Too many Christians are afraid we will hurt someone's feelings. We are afraid if we do that, our churches will decline, if we talk about people's sins and short comings. Folks I'm here to tell you that God's Word will offend people. Folks, I'll be the first to tell you that it offends me. It's time for God's people to take God's Word and stand firm on it. So, if God's Word offends people, it's just going to have to offend them. The truth of the matter is, it's not that God's Word offends them, but it's that God's Word is Convicting them of their sins. And they don't want to believe what they are doing is a sin. Paul knew it was the Word of God and the Power of God's Word that changed his life in Acts 9.

We need more Warriors like Paul; Who have been transformed to the image of God, instead of deformed to the images of this world; Who are not afraid to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit of God, instead of always shaking it off, as if God is talking to someone else. We need more Warriors who are not afraid of meeting and speaking on issues head-on, instead of worried about hurting feelings.

There are Three Great Truths in God's Warriors, and they are also seen In Paul's Life.

First, Paul Had a Boldness Like a Bull. He said in Rom 1:16 he was not



ashamed of the Gospel. Paul Stood on the Gospel, Paul Shared the Gospel, and Paul was Sure of the Gospel, because it had changed his life. Paul let people know that he was a satisfied customer of the Gospel of Christ. Why? Because the Gospel had the *"power of God unto salvation."* Second, Paul Had the Assurance of a Surgeon. The Bible says in Hebrews 4:12 *"For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* See, it was God's Word that performs surgery on Paul's heart and life. To put Paul's Surgery in perspective, this is what he is saying happened to him when God saved Him. In Hebrews 4:12 the word Quick means, living, alive, relevant to that moment. The word Powerful means: able to move the unmovable things. The word Sharper means: When God's word cuts you it brings tears not blood, it brings with it conviction, not scars. The word Piercing: It can penetrate the hardest of hearts. The words Dividing Asunder means: Crystal clear with no gray lines. The Words Discerns the Heart means: God Knows the Truth about you. The Bible says: *"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it. I the Lord Search the heart."* Third Paul Believed on The Gospel. Folks, when you believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ you automatically receive this boldness & power. The problem is, we fail to develop God's Word in our lives, and when we fail to develop God's Word we will lose the Boldness and Power God give us and we will become Wimps instead of Warriors for God.

Words of Warriors:

- If you are standing on anything less than the Word of God you're standing on Shaky Ground.
- If people keep whittling away at themselves, pretty soon there won't be anything left to whittle away.
- You can never win war until you step out onto the battle field.

Just a Thought:

- If people believed in God, the way they claim to believe in God, they would be Warriors for God, Wouldn't they?



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



Hospice and Palliative of Blue Ridge

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abilities. For more info go to runforholland.com.

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.

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 ...?

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.

Women's Prayer Breakfast: If you would like to join a group of women who are dedicated to praying, learning about God's will, and fellowshiping, come join us for breakfast at Helen's Restaurant in Bakersville on April 14th at 8:00am. We will be ending by 10:00am. Open to all-for more information call Barbara Harrell at 828-467-3644 or email at barbarah@brcnews.com.

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.

Clinch Mountain Gospel Sing Friday April 7th at 7:00pm Doors will open at 6:00pm at Mendota Community Center in Mendota, VA. Singing will be the Singing Holbrooks and the Wayne Hubbard Family. Come out for an evening of Bluegrass Gospel and Southern Gospel music. No admission, but Love Offering will be taken. For more info call 682-2064.

Higgins Memorial United Methodist Church - Burnsville Community Easter Sunrise Service on the Square

Join us on Sunday, April 16, at 6:30 am for a multi-denominational Easter celebration! Please bring flowers or greenery for the service.

A covered dish breakfast will follow at First Baptist Church of Burnsville. The Fellowship Hall will open at 6:00 am if you would like to drop your dish off beforehand.

Join one of the churches on the square for worship afterward!

Holy Week Services at Higgins Memorial United Methodist Church

101 N Main Street, Burnsville, NC

Palm Sunday, April 9 at 8:30 am or 11:00 am

Wednesday, April 12 at 6:00 pm, Last Supper

Good Friday, April 14 at 6:00 pm

Easter Sunday, April 16 at 8:30 am in the Family Life Center or 11:00 am in our Sanctuary

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

Jungle Book Kids Swings Into Parkway Playhouse - BURNSVILLE, NC: Elephants, monkeys, and tigers...oh my! Parkway Playhouse Junior opens its spring season with Jungle Book Kids. Banished by the ferocious tiger, Shere Khan, a human boy named Mowgli and his panther friend, Bagheera, are on the run in the deepest parts of the jungle. On their journey, the two meet a sinister snake named Kaa, a herd of elephants and a giant bear named Baloo, who teaches them the swingin' musical rhythms of the jungle. After surviving a dangerous encounter with a band of monkeys led by King Louie, Mowgli and Bagheera are forced to run for their lives. When Shere Khan returns, our heroes must rally their fellow animals into battle and restore peace throughout the jungle.

This production features 21 talented students ages 4-11, and is sure to impress with its high energy dance routines and memorable songs. Performances take place on April 7th and 8th, 6:00pm at Parkway Playhouse. For more information about Parkway Playhouse, performances, volunteer opportunities, classes, auditions, and more please visit www.parkwayplayhouse.com, or call 828-682-4285.

Shoal Creek Baptist Church Burnsville, NC - Saturday April 15 @ 3:00 PM - Kids Easter Celebration

Sunday April 16 @ 6:45 AM -- Sunrise service followed by breakfast

Morning worship with our Choir at 9:00 AM

Trac Gift Shops Jury In New Artists - A few weeks ago, seven people sat around a table to view work submitted for the Toe River Arts Council gift shop/gallery. After several hours, they welcomed 12 new artists and three current artists submitting in different mediums, into the group of over 150 Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey county gift shop artists who exhibit and sell their work in the TRAC Galleries. The Gift Shop Exhibition, April 8 through May 6, showcases the results of the annual selection process that keeps the art fresh and gives talented artists a

venue to show and sell their work locally. Most of the artists have been in the area for a while; others are already familiar presences on our vibrant arts scene; some have a generational tie to the arts; and still others have been quietly creating here for years. All are accomplished in their art.

New to the TRAC gift shops:

Thomas E. Bell (Mitchell): Wood-turned

George H. Cadell (Mitchell): Bronze-sculpture

Patti Connor-Greene (Avery): Clay-porcelain

Courtney Dodd (Mitchell): Glass-blown

Craig Franz (Avery): Painting-oil

Nickolaus Fruin (Mitchell): Glass-blown

Jill Howell (Mitchell): Mixed Media-found objects

Forrest Johnson (Yancey): Watercolor and Jewelry

Cindy McEnery (Avery): Photography

Gaylene Petcu (Avery): Painting-pastels

Galen Sedberry (Mitchell): Clay-wood fired

Martin Stankus (Yancey): Clay-raku/saggar

Current TRAC artists jurying in with different medium:

Susan Garriques (Yancey): Mixed media-oil/paper clay

Jem Klein (Yancey): Wood

Laurel Lovrek (Yancey): Jewelry-handmade beads

These talented new TRAC gift shop artists will leave a lasting impression. The exhibition continues through May 6 in Burnsville. Come on down; see what's new on the walls, on pedestals, and in the cases at your Arts Council. TRAC's Burnsville Gallery is located at 102 West Main Street. The Spruce Pine location is 269 Oak Avenue. Hours for both are Tuesday-Saturday, 10:30am to 5:00pm. For more information, call 828-682-7215 or visit www.toeriverarts.org.

The Toe River Arts Council is a not for profit organization promoting the arts in Mitchell and Yancey Counties, and supported by donations, memberships, local government, grants (including the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, a state agency), and supporters who understand the benefit of art in our community.

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

The Mayland Small Business Center (SBC) offers high quality training and confidential counseling for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Whether you are considering launching a new business or managing an existing one, the small business center provides resources tailored to fit your needs. If you would like to schedule a free confidential business counseling session or sign up for free small business seminars, contact Mayland SBC Director Allen Cook at 828.766.1295 or email him at acook@mayland.edu. - Check out our March classes:

Small Business Classes for April

The Mayland Small Business Center (SBC) offers high quality training and confidential counseling for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Whether you are considering launching a new business or managing an existing one, the small business center provides resources tailored to fit your needs. If you would like to schedule a free confidential business counseling session or sign up for free small business seminars, contact Mayland SBC Director Allen Cook at 828.766.1295 or email him at acook@mayland.edu. - Check out our April classes:

How to Start and Finance a Small Business -Gain knowledge of the basics of starting a business in this seminar that takes you from idea to opportunity. Learn key strategies for start-up, financing and marketing as well as important information about legal issues, licensing, zoning, and operations. Learn the importance of a self-assessment and how to evaluate the feasibility of your business idea.

Discover resources available to help start and successfully operate your business.

4/4, T, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Mayland Campus,

How to Write a Business Plan - A business plan is vital to starting and operating a business. Learn how to turn ideas into a solid plan for financing and long-term success. This seminar teaches the important components of a business plan and helps lay the foundation for a functional plan. Discover how a business plan is used by potential lenders, the dos and don'ts of writing a plan, and steps for making the process easy. You will also learn to introduce yourself and your business with confidence and clarity with your personal "Elevator Speech".

4/11, T, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Mayland Campus

NEW! Get Your Studio Found by Customers -As we approach the season of studio tours, it is of utmost importance that customers have the ability to locate and navigate to your business using their smart phone or computer. Learn how to list your business on the Google map and create a free Google page for your studio. Free Google Gear!

4/12, W, 5:30-7:30 p.m. TRAC Resource Center Spruce Pine

Pinterest for Business -Learn how to pin your way to new sales! This one hour seminar will cover how to create a Pinterest business page and how to market your product on Pinterest.

4/13, TH, 5:00-6:00 p.m. Mayland Campus

Instagram for Business -Learn how to build a business Instagram page, set up your account, and best practices for Instagram. Visually communicate your way to increased sales and business awareness!

4/13, TH, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Mayland Campus

Bits 'n Pieces

Marketing, Public Relations, and Advertising -This class discusses how to build a customer base. Business location, layout, signage, pricing, service, traditional/ social media, direct marketing, promotional material, and trade shows will be discussed to help entrepreneurs effectively communicate and market. 4/18, T, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Mayland Campus

Business Financials: Indicators of Business Health- This class will discuss the four most important financial statements in business: the personal financial statement, the balance sheet, the income statement, and the cash flow statement. The class will also cover basic bookkeeping and record keeping skills. Attendees will gain a workable knowledge of how to properly record financial transactions for a business. 4/25, T, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Mayland Campus

Financing Your Small Business- Are you in need of a loan to start or expand your business? The Carolina Small Business Development Fund can help you navigate the process. Tommy Dennison, Business Development Officer, will be discussing what the CSBDF looks at in order to render an approval on a loan. Topics covered will be the 5 C's of Credit, types of loans available, what you will need to apply, and a typical loan timeline. 4/26, W, 5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m. Avery Campus

How to Sell Your Arts and Crafts at Shows- Learn how to properly select and register for shows, set up your booth to attract customers, and take credit card payments. Applicants will receive via email a free excel spreadsheet that will estimate potential income from your booth sales. 4/26, W, 5:30-7:30 p.m. TRAC Resource Center Spruce Pine

LinkedIn for Business- LinkedIn Company pages help build brand awareness by providing a channel to promote your products and services to customers and prospects. In this quick course, learn how to create a LinkedIn company page to promote your business. 4/27, TH, 5:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. Mayland Campus

Twitter for Business-Tweet your way to more sales! In this quick course, learn how to create a business Twitter page and strategies to use twitter as an effective means to market your small business. 4/27, TH, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Mayland Campus

A Meditation

Be True to Self

By Timothy Eller
McDowell County



Smith Wigglesworth once said, "may the Lord help us be true to God first; then if we are true to God, we will be true to ourselves." Very insightful words from a man who was a plumber by trade, who could not read a newspaper and could read only the Bible. Shakespeare has been noted for his statement "to thine own self be true". Most people today live in a shroud of deception. People are not honest about anything. Most people desire to continue to live in a fairy tale world where they look at life through rose colored glasses seeing things the way they desire to see them. Sin has a way of clouding judgement. People must have a sincere desire to be true with the Lord in their relationship with him. Finding a place where we can have power with God, comes from finding a place of intimacy with God where we are aligned with his holiness and heart. In the middle of God's will is found peace, contentment, and joy. Without Holiness, no man shall see the power of God truly work in their lives. When church again truly becomes about Jesus and not about politics, pride, or unspoken agendas will we have revival.

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.



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Crossword

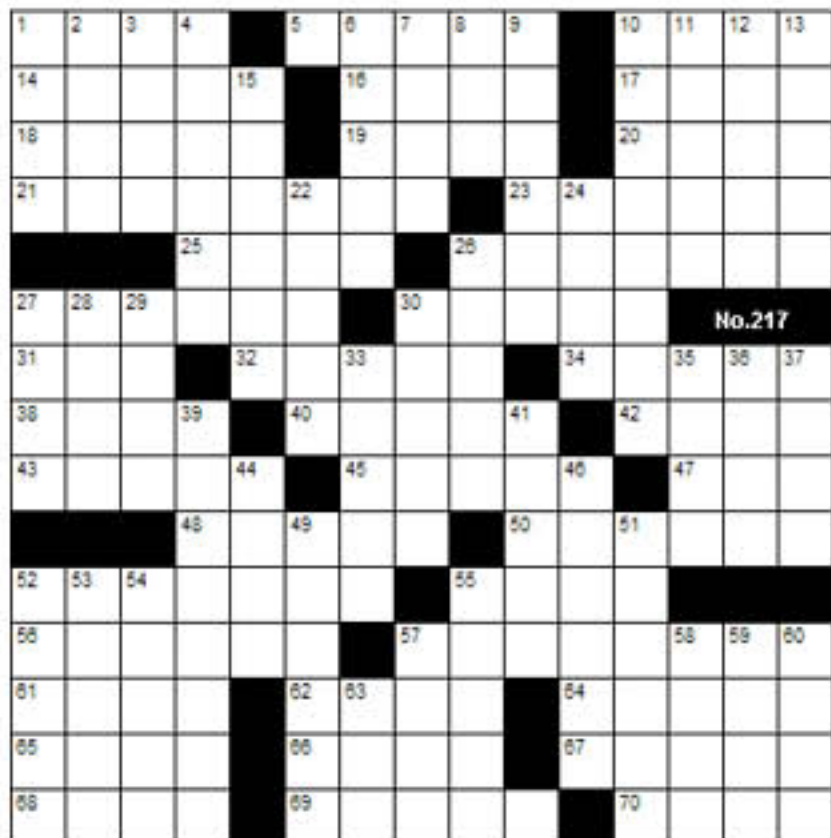
ACROSS

1 Light is ____ upon the righteous and joy on the upright (Ps 97:11)
 5 However, I ____ that I worship the God of our fathers (Acts 24:14)
 10 Their camels were loaded with spices, ____ and myrrh (Gen 37:25)
 14 Asher remained on the coast and stayed in his ____ (Judg 5:17)
 16 from the ____ of Egypt to the Euphrates River (2 Kings 24:7)
 17 "All these I have kept since I was ____," he said (1,3) (Luke 18:21)
 18 You are ____ that appears for a little while (1,4) (James 4:14)
 19 another name given to Esau (Jacobs brother) (Gen 25:30)
 20 Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken ____ (Jer 12:2) KJV
 21 like a choice vine of sound and ____ stock (Jer 2:21)
 23 So then, ____ anxiety from your heart (Eccl 11:10)
 25 You strain out a ____ but swallow a camel (Matt 23:24)
 26 Whenever the stronger ____ were in heat, Jacob would (Gen 30:41)
 27 Fools mock at making ____ for sin (Prov 14:9)
 30 and came to ____, the mountain of God (Ex 3:1)
 31 as a ____ gathers her chicks under her wings (Matt 23:37)
 32 when Nabal was ____, his wife told him all these things (1 Sam 25:37)
 34 His name was ____ and his wife's name was Abigail (1 Sam 25:3)
 38 If anyone ____ anything to them, God will add to him (Rev 22:18)
 40 frolic like a heifer threshing grain and ____ like stallions (Jer 50:11)
 42 The ordinances of the LORD are ____ and altogether righteous (Ps 19:9)
 43 Fear and trembling have ____ me; horror has overwhelmed me (Ps 55:5)
 45 who made ____ in the depths of the sea (1,4) (Isa 51:10)
 47 Jesus, walking by the ____ of Galilee (Matt 4:18)
 48 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have ____" (Matt 8:20)
 50 Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of ____ (Num 32:33)
 52 no one treads out wine at the ____ (Isa 16:10)
 55 brothers, never ____ of doing what is right (2 Thes 3:13)
 56 a ____ would not help the man who had been robbed (Luke 10:32)
 57 Cyrus returned the stolen gold and silver ____ for the temple (Ezra 5:14)

61 first month of Hebrew calendar (Ex 23:15)
 62 keep away from every brother who is ____ and does not (2 Thes 3:6)
 64 first husband of Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:3)
 65 angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the ____ (Acts 12:7)
 66 the wringing of the ____ bringeth forth blood (Prov 30:33) KJV
 67 endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good ____ (Job 39:17)
 68 Salvation is found in no one ____, for there is no other name (Acts 4:12)
 69 this people's heart is waxed ____, and their ears are dull (Matt 13:15) KJV
 70 God said, Let the water ____ with living creatures (Gen 1:20)

DOWN

1 it is only a ____ from the boil (Lev 13:23)
 2 Then he said unto him, Come ____ with me, and eat bread (1 King 13:15)
 3 Do not those who plot ____ go astray? (Prov 14:22)
 4 They rebuilt the temple of God according to its original ____ (2 Chron 24:13)
 6 I have not ____ in a house from the day I brought Israel (1 Chron 17:5)
 7 When the LORD God ____ the earth and the heavens (Gen 2:4)
 8 teacher, what must ____ to inherit eternal life? (1,2) (Luke 18:18)
 9 They purchased ____ and dressed stone for the repair (2 Kings 12:12)
 10 Then ____ went to Tarsus to look for Saul (Acts 11:25),
 11 bring it to ____ and cook the bones in it (1,4) (Ezek 24:5)
 12 Cutting ____ the anchors, they left them in the sea (Acts 27:40)
 13 to devote themselves to ____ and endless genealogies (1 Tim 1:4)
 15 but whoever does not believe ____ condemned already (John 3:18)
 22 dip it in the blood that is in the ____, and strike the lintel (Ex 12:22) KJV
 24 These are the words of the ____, the faithful and true witness (Rev 3:14)
 26 Every seventh year we will ____ working the land (Neh 10:31)
 27 husband of Jezebel (1 King 19:1)
 28 Darius the ____ took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two (Dan 5:31)
 29 Then it will be known to the ____ of the earth that God rules (Ps 59:13)
 30 You are Abraham's seed, and ____ according to the promise (Gal 3:29)
 33 If a man ____ his male or female slave with a rod and (Ex 21:20)
 35 Moses saw that though the ____ was on fire it did not burn up (Ex 3:2)
 36 a Levite who lived in a remote ____ in the hill country (Judg 19:1)



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37 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and ____ not on your own (Prov 3:5)
 39 I speak to ____ people; judge for yourselves (1 Cor 10:15)
 41 they get into the ____ of being idle (1 Tim 5:13)
 44 I will ____ them and see whether they will follow (Exodus 16:4)
 46 The King who put Daniel in the den of lions (Dan 6:16)
 49 Though ____, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear (Matt 13:13)
 51 You did it in ____, but I will do this thing in broad daylight (2 Sam 12:12)
 52 Take off your sandals; the ____ where you are standing is holy (Acts 7:33)
 53 obey him and do not ____ against his commands (1 Sam 12:14)
 54 All these ____ come from inside

and make a man unclean (Mark 7:22-23)
 55 and ____ bearing fruit with seed in it (Gen 1:12)
 57 in the earth in those days; and ____ after that (Gen 6:4)
 58 go to the lake and throw out your ____ . Take the first fish (Matt 17:27)
 59 now therefore ____ thou somewhat the grievous servitude (2 Chr 10:4) KJV
 60 All nations came from ____, Ham and Japheth: Noah's sons (Gen 5:32)
 63 Manasseh did not drive out the people of Beth Shan or Taanach or ____ (Judg 1:27)

Solution on page 14



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Avery County FFA

Busy Days in February

By Gretchen Blackburn
Avery County

On February 2nd, 2017, Lane Richardson of the Avery County FFA Chapter participated in the State FFA Truck Driving Career Development Event in Raleigh, NC. Lane placed 9th in the state in this event. Lane is a junior at Avery County High School and his parents are Michael and Vickie Richardson of Old Beech Mountain. This event requires members to safely operate a truck through a given course. "It provides students the opportunity to showcase their talents and skills while providing real-world application," says Jason Davis, State FFA Coordinator. Participants were judged on their knowledge and demonstration of safety practices and skills in the operation of a pickup truck. This event is one of 43 different career development events offered to North Carolina FFA members on the state level. The State Truck Driving Event is currently sponsored by Southern Shows, with in-kind sport from Capital Chevrolet. This event was held in conjunction with the Southern Farm Show at the NC State Fairgrounds. It was a great opportunity for some other FFA members to visit the farm show as well as cheering Lane on in the competition.

On February 16th, 2017, a group of Avery County FFA members traveled to Raleigh for the NC FFA Legislative Day. These students were able to go to the Senate Building to watch the NC Senate and NC House of Representatives in session. The FFA students had the opportunity to personally visit Senator Deanna Ballard and House Representative Josh Dobson. There was a luncheon and FFA members watched a live production of NC Spin, (Balanced Debate for the Old North State) with a panel discussion about current issues in the senate and house.

President's Day kicked off FFA Week. The Avery FFA had a "Question of Day" where all students had the opportunity to answer the question and a daily winner was drawn. Each day the Avery FFA Officers also helped facilitate an activity. The activities varied from a milkchugging contest to a member gathering where this year's officer team made snacks and served them to all members and guests. Over 80 students and guests participated in the member gathering on Thursday.

The North Carolina FFA is a youth organization of 19,721 student members preparing for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture with 263 local chapters across the state. FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. Visit www.ncffa.org for more information, or contact Dewayne Kregge or Gretchen Blackburn at Avery County High School to learn more about our local chapter.



Avery County FFA Members, visiting Deanna Ballard, NC Senate and Josh Dobson NC House of Representatives for NC FFA Legislative Day. Front- Brie Cuthbertson, Senator Deanna Ballard, Ashley Poore, Ariel Horney, Rylie Daniels, Lillie Wiseman, Madison Clark, Gretchen Blackburn, Representative Josh Dobson, Back-Hunter Huffman, Dewayne Kregge, Dawson Buchanan, Jared Jaynes, Lane Richardson. Another picture outside of legislative bldg.



Lane Richardson with dad, Michael Richardson at the NC FFA Truck Driving Event, Raleigh NC



Milk Chug Winners



Avery County FFA Members, Hunter Huffman, Lane Richardson, Ariel Horney, and Charley Ulery, enjoying the Southern Farm Show at the NC State Fairgrounds.



Working, Where ya at Wednesday (camo day)



Flannel Friday

Gretchen Blackburn is an Ag. teacher at Avery High School, and works with FFA.

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Grace Upon Grace

Jan Merop
Avery County



My heart and mind raced in panic as my young son's fevered brow, choked coughing and labored breathing persisted. I had never experienced a night like this. I didn't know how to help him.

That night was daunting.

My arms encircled him, my voice spoke reassuringly, and songs of Jesus love for him flowed from my worried heart. In the darkness of the night...with my hand upon his head...I prayed that the Lord would take his fever and give him rest.

Miraculously, I felt the heat leave his body, his breathing became even, and he drifted off to sleep. I wept tears of thanksgiving and praise. God had graciously gotten him over a critical period.

The next day, the doctor diagnosed him with croup and taught me to run the shower and create steam to loosen the phlegm. We drew pictures on the steamy mirror as relief, instead of panic took over.

Time and again, God met me in circumstances where I had nowhere to turn but to him. He never let me down; like the time our picket fence crumbled...again.

We were settled securely in our tiny, affordable apartment till the landlord's unexpected announcement that personal circumstances meant we had to move. I was speechless.

Searching for apartments we could afford showed me one thing: there weren't any!

We were led to a place well beyond my means, but not God's. My single parent status gave me eligibility for financial aid. That monetary provision allowed us to have a larger apartment for less! God had done it again. I remember saying, "I wish I had trusted him more."

God is so trustworthy.

I embraced this truth once again when I came across thoughts from George Mueller's life. He demonstrated his trust in God by caring for orphans and not letting their needs be known to anyone but God. Then he watched how the Lord miraculously provided.

But, I loved his words that said, "...because I was enabled by His grace to trust Him, He has always appeared for my help. I delight in speaking well of His name."

I needed that reminder recently. For, it is how I have always felt. By God's grace I am enabled to trust him and he never disappoints me. It is why I write, sing and delight in speaking well of his name.

As it says in John 1: 16, NKJV, "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace."

Grace...the unmerited favor of God that he lavishes upon his children. Selah

Pure Grace

*Blossoms gently descend into buds filled with promise...
like snowflakes falling from a burgeoning sky.
And, so, it is with us.*

*Through God's pure grace,
we can display His beauty to a world
awaiting the promise that is only in Him.*

*"And this is what he promised us - even eternal life."
1 John 2: 25*



Pure Grace by Ken Merop

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.

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Faith Fellowship Church

Put on the Whole Armour of God

By Teresa Young
Yancey County

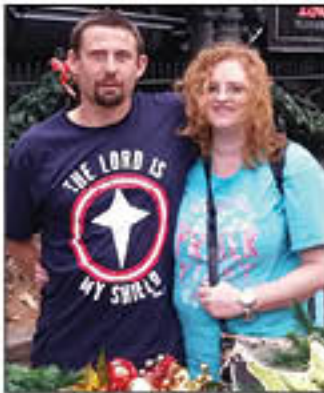
Ephesians 6:10-18 "Put on the whole armour of God" became a visual reality to those who attended Faith Fellowship Church of Newdale during Vacation Bible School (July 18-22, 2016) After previewing several VBS curriculum themes to purchase and not confirming a choice, Director/Deacon Mr. Jeremiah Johnson was given the "Armour of God" theme directly from the Lord, and immediately detailed plans began coming into place about how to carry out the massive task. Jeremiah, along with the support of his creative wife, Angela Johnson, in no way wants to take all the credit for this amazing undertaking because it took so many volunteers from the church and surrounding community to make it happen. For weeks prior to VBS people were busily painting wall murals that depicted each piece of the "armour" and described its purpose. Each elaborate suit of armour was creatively designed and created from resourceful materials.

LOINS girt with truth (Belts, loin guard fabric, and painted decorative accents came from church mission rummage sale and thrift store) BREAST-PLATE of righteousness (Double Bubble Foil Insulation) FEET shod with the gospel of peace (Sandal sole-cut from foam wrestling mats/sides and straps-Foil Insulation) SHIELD of faith (wall-board cut, soaked, and dried while strapped to a form for shaping) HELMET of salvation (prototype mold of silicon, then fiberglass) SWORD of the Spirit (wooden handles and blades cut out by the Mountain Heritage Carpentry Class) SHETH (Foil bubble insulation). The full suit of armour was then completed by red T-Shirts, and spears that represent praise and prayers of the Saints, that CHRIST, in turn, uses to fight our battles and to strengthen us against the tricks of our enemy, Satan, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, so that we can victoriously combat the spiritual wickedness and evil that surrounds us! Each student took the materials that had been prepared and worked to create their own personal suit of armour. Over sixty outfits were assembled and taken home by the students! A special thanks to all volunteers who worked so diligently to make this such a memorable VBS, and to the families of our community who allowed their precious children to attend.

We were so blessed to know that some of these young men and women of faith took this teaching, dressed in their personal armour, and shared God's truth at their homes and other churches. This summer, God's truth marches onward as a church in Avery County will be borrowing all the murals, curriculum, etc. as they continue to share this powerful message of how to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might!



Teresa Young is the Principal At Tri-County Christian School in Spruce Pine.



Jeremiah and Angela Johnson

Blue Ridge Partnership for Children

AMY Wee Trade 2017 Spring/ Summer Consignment Sale

By Ruthie Styles

What has great things you need for the kids at amazing prices and supports a great cause? The AMY Wee Trade Spring & Summer consignment sale, of course. We all know how quickly kids outgrow clothes, toys, furniture and all the other stuff they need and how expensive it can be to keep them in those things. AMY Wee Trade can help with some of those expenses as this consignment sale features the very best in "gently used" and new children's spring and summer clothing. We also carry gently loved toys, furniture, bedding, equipment, maternity clothes and much, much more. This sale is shaping up to be full of quality items at great prices.

Not only does the AMY Wee Trade consignment sale offer quality kid related "stuff" at great prices but, because of our generous consignors who donate 30% of their sales, it also supports the Blue Ridge Partnership for Children's Imagination Library project in Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties. Imagination Library is the program, started by Dolly Parton, where a child who is age birth to five years old gets an age appropriate book once a month at no charge to their family when they are enrolled in the program. Numerous studies have shown how much children benefit when they are read to on a regular basis from the time they are born, and it is a great way to get in a daily dose of snuggle time. Last year the Blue Ridge Partnership for Children celebrated 100,000 books distributed by Imagination Library in our counties and, with the support of the AMY Wee Trade planning committee, consignors, shoppers and others, we are well on our way to reaching 200,000 books distributed.

The AMY Wee Trade Spring & Summer Consignment Sale is at the Cross Street Commerce Center, located at 31 Cross Street, Spruce Pine, NC. Preview day is Thursday, April 6th, 8:00 am until 6:00 pm and admission is \$5.00. Join us for the preview day to shop early and catch the best bargains on the best stuff. Friday hours are 8:00 am until 6:00 pm and Saturday hours are 8:00 am to 12:00 pm with many items marked down to half price on Saturday. There is no admission charge for Friday and Saturday.

If you have questions about the sale, how to consign items or if you would like to volunteer, please contact us at mytrade@gmail.com or call one of the Blue Ridge Partnership for Children offices at (828) 682.0717 or (828) 733.2899.

Ruthie Styles is Community Development Manager for Blue Ridge Partnership for Children serving Avery, Mitchell and Yancey Counties.



Aram Yelton with his first Imagination Library book.





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Marlene's Meditations

Called to Prayer

By Marlene Houk
Burke County



Daniel 9:19 *O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hear-ken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.*

Quietly they tread solemnly, ascending the rock steps to an old courthouse lawn. The spring grass bows under the weight of casual and professional shoes as citizens gather under broad southern oaks and settle into metal chairs christened with the sun.

At five minutes till 12:00 PM, a bagpipe's stirring sounds fade as the haunting and commanding notes from the ancient Jewish shofar command the crowd to attention. It is time.

On Thursday, May 4, 2017, at 12:00 PM, at the historic Burke County Courthouse, graced with history and carefully preserved, citizens in and around the county will assemble to pray during the National Day of Prayer. They will be led by representatives from different facets of society in prayers that pour forth with gratitude, with supplication and with a sense of approaching a mighty throne. It is a reverent time, acknowledging our human inadequacies and beseeching the favor of Almighty God for our nation.

Prayer is our recognition of the chain-of-command to our Commander-In-Chief, God Himself. It empowers, enables, and enlivens the armor that God has bequeathed us to serve Him. As such, prayer becomes the impetus that drives us to victories as we dress in the armor of Ephesians 6.

This year's theme for the National Day of Prayer is: For Your Great Name's Sake! Hear Us...Forgive Us...Heal Us! Taken from Daniel 9:19 which says, "O Lord, Listen! O Lord, Forgive! O Lord, Hear and Act! For Your Sake, O My God...". According to the website, www.NationalDayOfPrayer.org, "...thousands of individuals, churches, and communities will be working to rally millions of Christians to once again heed this call. ...Scripture tells us again and again that our fervent prayer is effective. That our loving God responds to His children's earnest pleas in mighty ways that avail much, and ultimately determine the course of history.

Leading up to the National Day of Prayer, and to support the national chairman of the task force, Anne Graham Lotz, the Burke County National Day of Prayer Team will host a Ladies' Luncheon on Tuesday, April 4, 2017, in the Fellowship Hall of the First Baptist Church of Morganton. The speaker will be Sonya Schweighardt, founder and president of Hope Ministries Uganda, <http://www.hopeninistryuganda.org>.

Sonya will be speaking about how a prayerwalk of faith and obedience are intertwined. She will offer God-stories from her personal experiences in following God into the ravaged country of Uganda, Africa and carving out a ministry to an exiled tribe called the Batwa. She says, "Even though the big picture is obscured, we go forward. We pray and do the things He has called us to do. Just as He led the Israelites to cross the uncharted dried seabed of the Red Sea, so He leads us to go where we've never been before. God takes us on a journey to become mighty warriors of God, fearlessly crossing our own Red Seas as we follow Him." According to the website, Sonya and Russell have been adoption and orphan advocates for many years with 15 children of their own (3 birthed from the womb, 12 birthed from the heart). Her heart is passionate about missions and sharing the gospel message through being the hands and feet of Jesus. With over half of her children from Africa, the Lord has drawn her and Russell to international missions in Africa. With her background as an occupational therapist, orphan care advocate, Daring Daughters leader, and teacher of the gospel message, God has given her passions that run deep and a heart to serve in a special way.

After a year of praying with Russell, God directed them onto the path to meeting Gerald Tugume and his wife Barbara with Hope Ministries Uganda.

Their answers to prayer echo the National Day of Prayer and its mission to "mobilize prayer in America and to encourage personal repentance and righteousness in the culture."

Join others on May 4th at the Historic Burke County courthouse as we call America to "personal repentance and prayer and to intercede for America's leaders and its families."

Footnote: Tickets for National Day of Prayer Women's Luncheon may be purchased by contacting Nancy Whalley at (828) 413-2543 or at Catawba River Baptist Association, 1812 US Hwy 70 E, Morganton, NC (828) 437-0137, rise@hopeninistryuganda.org

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The Big Picture

I never tire of staring at macro photos. Their microscopic detail mesmerizes me, and the stunning beauty and richness of their workmanship captures my heart. And yet the unasked question beckons me. What is the big picture of which this tiny fragment is a part? The answer always surprises me, and I delight in the pursuit of it.

Sometimes we, as Christians, may lose sight of the bigger picture of God's plan for our lives as a whole. The beauty of Philippians 1:6 may elude us in the dark corners of the night when the what-ifs slither from under the bed and scare us. We may be confused and disoriented by grief, anger or betrayal and forget the magnificent truth of Ephesians 1:19

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

As a result, we follow our emotions, hoping to find our way out of the tunnel and back into the light of normalcy. But the rock wall of our efforts looms ahead, forcing us to realize that the solutions we sought were not within ourselves. When presented with insurmountable problems in life, focusing on God's master plan for our lives restores the Big Picture in our hearts. Knowing His grand scheme calms our stormy emotions and brings peace to the horizon of our lives. Looking into the macro treasures in His Book with only 788,258 words that can be read in a mere 67:10 (or less), we discover stunning worlds of truth tucked into the microscopic stories. He gives the Big Picture repeatedly, but antagonists and protagonists in His stories lose sight of it many times as they become blinded by their own agendas.

God told Abraham that Sarah would become a Mother of Nations. He told Mary, the mother of Jesus, the Big Picture and her role in offering the Savior of all mankind to the world. And Jesus Himself gently guided Martha toward the Big Picture when He said that her sister Mary's focus on Him was the better part.

What is the Big Picture spiritually speaking?

Colossians 1:16-18 gives us the answer. It says, *"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

The Big Picture is how our lives relate to God and His plan for us. We are created by Him and for His pleasure according to Colossians 1:16. Our lives exist and are maintained by Him, and our focus and allegiance belongs to the King of Kings. The Big Picture exists outside of us and within the vast heart of God. His Philippians 1:6 plan for us will be carried out to the tiniest glorious detail, resulting in a thrilling macro photo of God's grace and truth, complete with the iridescent orbs of wisdom and the gossamer threads of eternity.

Philippians 1:6 *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

The Big Picture includes majestic biblical themes such as the following.

- 1. The beauty and value of our lives last far beyond our earthly existence. "holy women of old"
- 2. God has a plan for our lives regardless of our attitude, our fragility, and the brevity of our days. We do not deter Him from His focus. Looking beyond her weaknesses, He gave Sarah, Abraham's wife, her long-desired baby Isaac,
- 3. We represent the King of Kings whose Kingdom will never end. We are trophies of His grace.
- 4. We belong to a priceless throng who love the LORD, follow Him and will dwell with Him forever.
- 5. The Big Picture is that, although we are saved, our earthly lives are in the process of righteousness in order to appear before God as His Spotless Bride.

Once we know the Big Picture, we can put on the whole armor of God, protecting every vulnerable spot in our spiritual lives. Using every piece is critical to our spiritual health.

Well, have you figured it out yet? The surreal gossamer wires stretch out in luxurious abandon, holding the iridescent spheres effortlessly within their many hearts. In reality, they are dandelions, their thistles drenched with sparkling dew. Their glorious reflection of God gently reminds us that, whether we maintain our vision of the Big Picture found in Philippians 1:6 or not, we can always enjoy the way God creates sublime beauty out of the tiny details of our lives!



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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How Abraham's Test and Paul's Thorn Help Lala (and you) Pass Your Own Test

By Jerry Lewis
McDowell County



Tests. Every professor gives them. Every student takes them. Some pass. Some fail. God tests too. God tested Abraham at the beginning of his life (leave the comforts of home) and at the end of his life (sacrifice the object of your love, Isaac). God tested Job with unbelievable trials. Tests are inevitable.

Kenneth Matthews says God tests people in order to "reveal their obedience, produce fear in Him resulting in godliness, discover their authenticity and produce their well-being." But here is the remarkable reality of God's tests: he always gives everything you need to pass them. Paul wrote about this:

So, to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12: 7-10, ESV)

Your test is God's opportunity to make available his perfect power. Your test is the opportunity to point people to the Christ who gives you contentment, yes contentment, in the midst of weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities. When you're tested, God gives you all the grace needed to pass the test. When you pass the test, He gets all the glory because He gave all the grace.

There is a purpose in your testing (as Matthews noted above) and there is an end result of your testing: God is glorified. Sunday I shared in the second service about Lala Seagle, retired school teacher and ardent follower of Christ. She was recently diagnosed with ALS. After Sunday's sermon, she emailed me and I asked permission to share. She wrote:

This is definitely the granddaddy of all the tests I've had so far. But as you mentioned, God gives you the test you are ready for. I'll be looking for signs that I am passing this test:

- 1. Is my faith getting stronger?
 - 2. Am I being obedient?
 - 3. Am I producing strong spiritual muscle?
 - 4. Do I see God's power and am I in awe of Him?
 - 5. Am I thankful in the midst of this?
 - 6. Am I able to give Him the glory and praise?
- Great questions for times of great testing.

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

Sudoku

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

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Solution on page 14

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Nonprofit Leadership Attributes: Speaking and Supervising

By Susan Larson

Two area workshops for nonprofit executive directors, staff, and board members will be offered in April under the sponsorship of WNC Nonprofit Pathways. The first will be "Public Speaking" taught by Neela Muñoz on Thursday, April 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Mayland Community College in Spruce Pine. It qualifies for credit as part of the Duke Certificate Program in Nonprofit Management.



This innovative course allows the speaker to discover and use his or her natural strengths while engaging one person, a mid-sized audience or a large group. Especially designed for those working with non-profit organizations, it covers the unique challenges and opportunities everyone faces in getting their messages heard. Participants will get techniques for learning about audiences in advance in order to tailor a speech. They'll also learn how to develop customized openings and closings for different presentations, create and use audiovisuals in a successful way, reduce preparation time, and create effective presentations using a proven outline form.

Neela Muñoz brings an extensive theatre background to her work as a facilitator and coach. She is a seasoned director, Equity actor, and educator with more than twenty years' experience in professional theatre. Neela shares with clients the proven tactics and techniques of public speaking to make them more self-confident and impactful. Her unique training coupled with her passion for coaching and developing clients allow her to creatively communicate the art of self-presentation to a wide array of individual clients from non-profit advocates, veterans, students, pediatricians, politicians, to large firms across the United States and beyond. To access registration and scholarship information about the Public Speaking class, go to April 13 on the event calendar at www.nonprofitpathways.org.



Neela Muñoz

The second class in April will on Friday, April 28, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Mayland Community College section at the Banner Elk School. Called "Leadership Skills for the Nonprofit Supervisor," it will be taught by Sally Loftis. Leaders at all levels will learn to supervise teams and staff, for the good of themselves and their organization. Topics covered will include basic employment law, the budgeting process for personnel, managerial procedures for recruitment, performance management, and staff transitions, negotiating difficult and sensitive conversations, and finding sources of ongoing support for leaders.

Sally Loftis has worked in the field of human resources for 20 years, first in banking, then as a consultant, and now as Human Resources Director at Penland School of Crafts. Using her knowledge of compensation best practices, she has served on the board for the Recognition Professionals International, formerly known as the National Association for Employee Recognition. She has volunteered with the Executive Service Corps, Par's Place, Council for Children's Rights, Second 2 None and The Crossnore School. A resident of Avery County, Sally lives with her family on the campus of The Crossnore School.



Sally Loftis

The cost to attend "Leadership Skills for the Nonprofit Supervisor" is \$15 for the first registrant and \$10 for up to three additional registrants from the same organization. Lunch is included. For a link to register for "Leadership Skills", please send an email to sjanelarson@gmail.com. Registration is limited and must be completed by April 24.

Susan Larson is Director of WNC Non-Profit Pathway.



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Studio Tour-Kids Rule

You're Never Too Young

By Kate Groff

It's not too early to start thinking about summer and being out and about in the mountains of Western North Carolina, wandering the many narrow roads, crossing over and following the Toe River. And it's never too early for kids to start helping out moms and dads with their work, especially if they're artists and participating in the studio tour. The two early starts come together during the TRAC Studio Tour this June 2-4 in Mitchell and Yancey counties when some of these kids take part...with their parents.

Last tour, Grae Geci (age 5) decided to participate in the studio tour—to help out the local animal shelter, make a few dollars, and have fun with her mom in the studio. Her “mom” is Courtney Martin, well-known ceramist in Bakersville.

At the same time, about 5 miles away, Roby Summerfield (age 10), veteran tour artist, worked in her mom's studio. And her mom is Liz Summerfield, educator, ceramist, and long-time tour participant.

During tour weekend last December, both Grae and Roby set up their tables, made signs, and stood and smiled at everyone who came by. Both of them sold out! Roby also works in fiber, giving buyers an even bigger choice. Those were gone also!

John Geci and Courtney are Grae's parents. He's a glass blower, she builds functional pottery. Their studios are separated by their solar heated house, about 10 minutes from Penland School of Crafts. Liz and Scott Summerfield, also a glass blower, work at different ends of one large outbuilding with a showroom in between.

Grae and Roby are growing up in the mountains of North Carolina, both have attended arts related events since before they could crawl and both have an appreciation of craft and the amount of fun they have working along side their parents in their studios.

Continued studies show the benefit of experiencing art at a young age. Perhaps now more than ever—as the country becomes increasingly diverse, the world more interconnected, and the workplace more oriented around technology and creativity—arts education is key to such a system and to ensuring students' success in school, work, and life. And what better way to get that interaction than to experience it with a parent.

The arts council has always put arts in education top on their community agenda, and the tour has always welcomed generations of artists. Any artist under 18 can participate in the tour for free provided they show their work in their participating parent's studio. And it seems these entrepreneurial, creative children are getting younger and younger. We can't promise Grae or Roby will continue to “do” the tour, but the outlook is promising. Perhaps, they'll inspire other young artists to breach that studio door. Both will be 3 months older in June, and we hope they haven't outgrown their desire to funnel their creativity into a way to learn, help others, spend time with mom and dad, and have fun.

The Toe River Studio Tour runs from Friday, June 2 through Sunday, June 4 with a free “meet-the-artist” reception that first night from 5:30 to 7:30pm at the Spruce Pine TRAC Gallery (269 Oak Avenue). Hours of the tour are 10am to 5pm each day. An exhibition will begin May 13 at the gallery with a showcase of participant work arranged geographically. For more information, please check the website, www.toeriverarts.org or call 828-682-7215.

BLACKSMITH EXHIBITION HEATS UP THE SPRUCE PINE TRAC GALLERY

SPRUCE PINE, NC: On Saturday, April 1, and for the 11th year, the Toe River Arts Council opens its exhibition of blacksmith and metal work from around the country. Held in conjunction with Fire On The Mountain Festival, the exhibition will give visitors an opportunity to view these metal arts and crafts in a gallery setting and to learn more about the nationally acclaimed smiths. With seemingly unmovable floor pieces to hold-in-your hand pedestal work to 3-dimensional “how did they hang that” wall pieces, the gallery will be filled with forged, welded, pounded, and pinged copper, iron, steel, bronze. An always-free pizza and beer reception will be held at the gallery on the eve of the Festival on Friday, April 28, from 5 to 7pm. The public is invited to share in the evening and meet these talented artists.

TRAC has been displaying blacksmith work for over a decade and recognizing one master blacksmith each year. This year's Master Blacksmith is Lee Sauder from Lexington, VA. In his words: “Here's what I do for a living: I dig up iron ore, and transform it into metal by the ancient and long-forgotten art of bloomery smelting. Then I try to forge something beautiful out of the iron I've made.” One could say that Sauder grew up with a lead foot. He began forging when he was 12, back in 1973, with an apprenticeship with Larry Mann. He moved around the world working with well known blacksmiths, finally planting those feet in Lexington, VA, where he operates Germinal Ironworks.

The pieces showcased during the Blacksmith exhibition are of the highest aesthetic caliber, inviting profound artistic contemplation from viewers. Other works bring back to life the hand-made uniqueness of the utilitarian items of past centuries: candlesticks, andirons, tongs, skewers. All the smiths have taken a concept and brought it to completion with unparalleled artistry.

Another favorite, Seth Gould, resident at Penland School of Crafts and first place winner of last year's Blacksmith Exhibition, will be demonstrating and ex-



Grae Geci



Roby Summerfield

hibiting some of his newer pieces.

The Annual Blacksmith Exhibition will run from April 1 through the 29th, ending the evening of the Fire on the Mountain Festival. For more information about the Toe River Arts Council exhibition, please call 828.765.0520, or visit the www.toeriverarts.org. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:30am to 5pm. The Fire on the Mountain Festival takes place on that last Saturday, April 29, from 10am to 4pm in downtown Spruce Pine. Please visit www.downtownsprucepine.com for information.

The Toe River Arts Council is a not for profit organization promoting the arts in Mitchell and Yancey Counties, and supported by donations, memberships, local government, grants (including the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, a state agency), and supporters who understand the benefit of art in our community.

Kate Groff is the Programs Coordinator for the Toe River Arts Council.



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McDowell County, NC

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May 2, 9, 16, 23 at 10 am; July 5, 11, 18, 25 at 6 pm;
Sept 5, 12, 19, 26 at 10 am, Nov 7, 14, 21, 28 at 6 pm

Polk County, NC

Offered at LaurelHurst, 1064 West Mills Street, Columbus
May 2, 9, 16, 23 at 6 pm; July 5, 11, 18, 25 at 10 am;
Sept 5, 12, 19, 26 at 6 pm, Nov 7, 14, 21, 28 at 10 am

Landrum, SC

Offered at the Hospice House, 260 Fairwinds Road, Landrum
May 2, 9, 16, 23 at 10 am; July 5, 11, 18, 25 at 6 pm;
Sept 5, 12, 19, 26 at 10 am, Nov 7, 14, 21, 28 at 6 pm

All HOPE Support Groups are offered at no charge to any adult in the community who has lost a loved one regardless of the circumstance. Please call (828) 245-0095 or (800) 218-CARE (2273) to register for any group!

Racism Bad, But Lawlessness Worse

By Rev. Mark H. Creech

"Prejudice, said Mark Twain, "is the ink with which all history is written." [1] We're certainly feeling the import of these words with the Michael Brown case in Ferguson and the Eric Garner situation in New York. Riots, looting, entire city blocks burned to the ground and abundant protests have resulted. The charge leveled by many and the justification given for the disorder is racism.

Racism is a terrible thing. Alveda King provides an excellent definition, arguing, "Racism springs from the lie that certain human beings are less than fully human. It's a self-centered falsehood that corrupts our minds into believing we are right to treat others as we would not want to be treated." [2]

Wherever we see racism and prejudice described in the Scriptures, it's always colored with condemnation. Whether it's the Egyptians' hatred and oppression of the Jews, Jonah's bigotry of the Ninevites, the Jews detesting the Samaritans, Peter's unwillingness to share the Gospel with the Gentiles, the notion of racial superiority is inconsistent with the grace of God and His commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Certainly racist attitudes continue in various ways and degree. Although the Civil Rights movement did much to improve the racial divide in this country, it didn't eradicate the problem.

Most would concede these points. But for this author, despite the common cry that the circumstances surrounding both Brown and Garner and the resulting chaos are about race, there is no direct connection. There is, however, in both cases an absolute connection to lawlessness, which I suggest is the root of the matter.

In his famous commencement address at Harvard University in 1978, Alexander Solzhenitsyn cautioned us as to a deeper problem facing our country both then and now. Solzhenitsyn said, "Indeed sometimes the warnings



are quite explicit and concrete. The center of your democracy and of your culture is left without electric power for a few hours only, and all of sudden crowds of American citizens start looting and creating havoc. The smooth surface film must be very thin, then, the social system quite unstable and unhealthy." [3]

The counsel in Solzhenitsyn's speech didn't deal with surface issues, but went straight to the core. He declared it was time for citizens to think less about human rights and more about human obligations. He argued the time had come for citizens to take responsibility for themselves and their own behaviors, and that all people, every class and race, should stop looking for the government to save them. [4]

For some time Americans have felt this country was on the wrong track. We seem to be drifting further and further away from our moorings. Solzhenitsyn spoke of this as well, when he contended, "This tilt of freedom toward evil has come about gradually, but it evidently stems from a humanistic and benevolent concept according to which man – the master of this world – does not bear any evil within himself, and all the defects of life are caused by misguided social systems, which must therefore be corrected." [5]

Granted, when there is corruption and injustice in government, law enforcement, or any other form of authority, the problem needs to be addressed swiftly and corrected. But in contrast to those who have jumped aboard the "racist" train recently and argued that special concessions need to be made for blacks because of slavery, that law enforcement needs sensitivity training in dealing with minorities, that people should be sympathetic with the robbing, pillaging, and burning by rioters because of acts of racism, I cringe with sharp disagreement. It is these contentions, I suggest, that exacerbate the divide, not help or heal it. These assertions do nothing but frustrate the efforts to full equality.

Interestingly, it appears that the people of color who achieved the greatest success and made the most positive impact on society were not those characterized by a victim mentality or a spirit of entitlement, but just the opposite. Whether we are talking about Joe Louis, Jesse Owens, Jackie Robinson, Maya Angelo, Oprah Winfrey, Morgan Freeman, Booker T. Washington, Condoleezza Rice, Allen Keyes, Allen West, Ben Carson, or Clarence Thomas, these highly influential people took responsibility for their own lives, overcame their impoverishments, and defied odds significantly greater than most today. They, and so many others like them, triumphed because they studied hard, were industrious, made good moral decisions, and were not turned inward but outward – desirous not only to make their own circumstances better, but committed to making a better world for others too.

Milan David once wrote, "If you hate me because I am ignorant, I'll educate myself. If you hate me because I am dirty, I'll clean myself... But if you hate me because I am black, I can only refer you to God who made me black." [6]

The point here is that before we start blaming others, before we start pointing fingers, before we start accusing people of racism, it may serve better to first look within. It may prove a better strategy to do as Michael Jackson admonished in his song, "Man in the Mirror."

*I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could have been any clearer
If you want to make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself, and then make a change*

Racism is an egregious sin when committed. But greater still, no matter the race, is the sin of him who will not govern himself and demands that he be served rather than to serve.

Indeed. And may God hasten the day, as Martin Luther King, Jr. said, when all men will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

Resources:

[1] Sweeting, George. *How to Solve Conflicts*. Chicago: Moody, 1973. Pg. 53

[2] "Racism Quotes." *BrainyQuote*. Xplore, n.d. Web. 12 Dec. 2014.

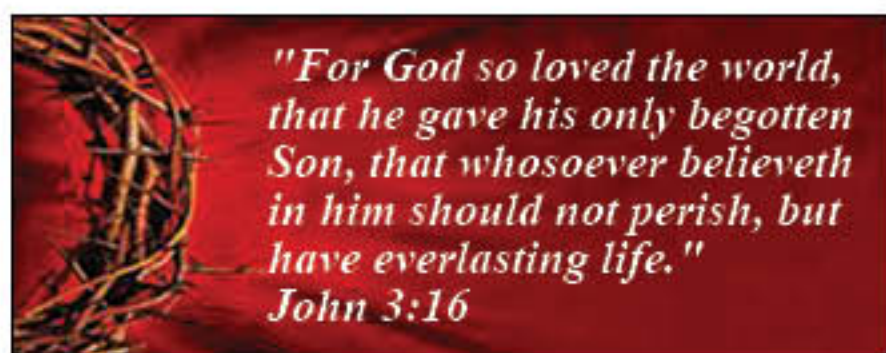
[3] Kennedy, D. James, and Jim Nelson. *Black. Character & Destiny: A Nation in Search of Its Soul*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994. Pg. 109

[4] *Ibid.* Pgs. 108–109

[5] *Ibid.* Pg. 109

[6] Doan, Eleanor Lloyd. *Sourcebook for Speakers: Illustrations, Quotations, Sayings, Anecdotes, Poems, Attention-getters, Sentence Sermons, Etc.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1968. Pg. 305

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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Spring in School

By David Burleson
Avery County

In Avery County, we can never say winter is over while we are still in the month of March. With the mild January and February, we thought that an early Spring was just around the corner, but winter has come back around. Closings and cancellations always present challenges. As we meet these challenges, we express our sincere appreciation to everyone for their patience and support as we strive to make decisions that promote safety.

As of Friday, March 17, here is where we are with days missed due to inclement weather:

1. 8 days have been missed.
2. 16 hours missed for Delays/Early Dismissals.
3. The extended instructional time has allowed us to not make up the 9 days we have missed and if the additional time is continued until the end of the year there will be 2 or 3 more days that can be used to makeup time.
4. We still have our entire Easter and Spring Break in place.

I know we are all hopeful that Spring is now here and we can look forward to the warmer temperatures and the beauty we experience in Avery County during this time of the year.

This is the time in which we welcome our new class of kindergarteners and have the opportunity to get to work with another group of parents and students. As a school system, we are very excited to announce our schedule for the 2017 kindergarten and Pre-K registration. The registration process is designed to provide necessary information for parents and to answer any questions they might have.

A child is eligible for kindergarten in North Carolina if he/she will be (5) five years old on or before August 31, 2016. A child is eligible for Pre-Kindergarten in North Carolina if he/she will be (4) four years old on or before August 31, 2016 and meets the NC Pre-K guidelines for eligibility. Please contact your local elementary school to put your child's name on the upcoming kindergarten or Pre-K lists.

At kindergarten and Pre-K registration children and parents will explore the classrooms, meet teachers and administrators, make new friends and enjoy a short ride on a school bus while learning about school bus safety. All registering children and parents are invited to have a free lunch in the school cafeteria compliments of a local business.

Also at registration, each child will have the opportunity to receive a dental screening, vision screening and fingerprinting. For children with medication requirements or special health considerations, a school nurse will be available to meet with parents to discuss medication or health needs.

Kindergarten Registration begins at 8:30am at all the elementary schools on the following dates:

- Tuesday, April 4 - Banner Elk Elementary School
- Thursday, April 6 - Crossnore Elementary School
- Tuesday, April 11 - Freedom Trail Elementary School
- Tuesday, April 25 - Newland Elementary School
- Thursday, April 27 - Riverside Elementary School

Pre-Kindergarten Registration begins at 8:30am at all the elementary schools on the following dates:

- April 26 at Banner Elk Elementary School
- April 27 at Freedom Trail Elementary School
- April 28 at Crossnore Elementary School
- May 1 at Newland Elementary School
- May 12 at Riverside Elementary School

During the kindergarten registration dates at the respective schools, currently enrolled pre-k and kindergarten students will not be attending school. This allows our kindergarten staff to meet with parents to welcome the class of 2029.

Items to bring to registration

- Birth certificate
 - Current up-to-date Immunization record
 - Current kindergarten health assessment. Must be current within one year
 - Proof of residence
- (Complete any forms that are mailed to you by your school principal)

Immunization Information

Students entering Avery County Schools for the first time must be up-to-date with the required immunizations for North Carolina. For most children, this will be the 4-year-old shots. Please visit www.immunizenc.org for a list of immunizations required for public school entry. Note that the 30th calendar day for 2017-2018 will tentatively be September 19, 2017; therefore, any student who is not up to date with the required immunizations will be excluded from school until the immunizations are up to date or the proper exemption statements are in place. These are not considered to be excused absences. (NC Immunization Law General Statutes of NC Chapter 130A, Article 6)

Kindergarten Health Assessment

NC Kindergarten Health Assessment must be completed by a health care provider on first time admission to Kindergarten in North Carolina. If this is not on file by the 30th calendar day of school the student will be excluded until this KHA is current. Information can be found at this website: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dph/>



wch/doc/aboutus/KHA_1-11.pdf
Child Nutrition Services

For information on the school lunch program, free and reduced applications, or if your child has a food allergy, refer to <http://www.averyschools.net/Domain/15>.

A very special thank you to our school nurses, Twila Ingwersen, Dawn Hicks and Andrea Buchanan, along with Angela Vitale, Renee Banner and a wonderful team of kindergarten teachers and teacher assistants who have developed and refined this process.

Don't hesitate to let us know if we can answer any questions or assist you in any way.

David Burleson is Superintendent of the Avery County Schools

Avery FFA

Hunter Safety Region Competition

By Gretchen Blackburn
Avery County

On Saturday, March 18th, the Avery FFA Hunter Safety Teams participated in the District 8 NCYHEST tournament. (North Carolina Youth Hunter Education Skills Tournament)

Avery FFA had three teams competing in the tournament, with a total of 23 students. Students compete in 4 areas. Skeet, shooting 20 shots from 5 positions. Rifle, shooting 5 shots at each position, standing, kneeling, sitting, and prone. Archery, shooting 5 arrows from each position at 10, 15, 20, 25 yards. Orienteering, giving the team 3 coordinates and yards to pace between each, and the team uses a compass and their own pace to find the designated end point. All students take a State Hunter Safety written exam as well.

We would like to thank the students for a great performance, and the parents for all the support and dedication. We would also like to thank Hunters Helping Kids, Daniel Boone Bear Club, and Avery County Farm Bureau for their generous donations to support this competition. If you are interested in information about this competition or other activities that Avery County FFA is involved in, please contact Dewayne Kregge (dewaynekregge@averyschools.net) or Gretchen Blackburn (gretchen-blackburn@averyschools.net) or call Avery High School at 828-733-0151.



Avery FFA- The senior team, Jared Jaynes, Hunter Huffman, Chris Ingram, Cade Jones, Cade Johnson, Brie Cuthbertson, Ashley Poore, and Bridgette Smith.



Avery Black- Noah Garland, Blake Williams, Lane Richardson, Austin Dugger, Charlie Ulery, Miria Jones, Rylie Daniels, and Hayden Nance.



Avery Red- Ariel Horney, Ethan Laws, Nate Daniels, Dalton Carswell, Dalton Benfield, Tyler Heaton, and Colton Boone.

Gretchen Blackburn is an Ag. teacher at Avery High School, and works with FFA.

May you kneel at the Cross and Praise God for sending his son Jesus to save you.

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"Into the Wilderness": The Principle of Spiritual Testing (Matthew 4:1)

By Shawn Thomas
Burke County



Those of us who have children know that parenting can be a very "up and down" experience. Cheryl & I have talked about this a number of times. It's like you never get to "sit on your laurels" even when you experience a victory with your kids, there is some new "crisis" just lurking around the corner. One time when our kids were in high school Cheryl & I had gone with our son David to the regional high school track meet where he was competing in the 400-meter run, and he surprised us, and actually PLACED at regionals as a freshman! We were SO excited, and on the way home we were just so thrilled, and talking about that when all of a sudden, we got a call from our daughter Libby, that our oldest son Paul had just been "let go" from his first job at a sandwich shop because he was too meticulous at putting the sandwiches together. They said he "wasn't Subway material." After we got that call, Cheryl & I looked at each other and we said something like, "Can't we just savor one day of victory in our kids' lives, without having some crisis pop up again?" But that is often the way it is with kids; you go from highs to lows, over and over and over.

And we need to understand that the same thing happens in our spiritual lives as well. Every Christian gets some "spiritual highs" where we experience God in a fresh way, or take a special "leap forward" in learning and growing in Him — but we also need to learn that the "spiritual highs" don't typically last very long. Here in Matthew 3 and 4 we see that Jesus, who modeled so much for us about what it means for a man to walk with God, went through this same thing. He went from a spiritual "high" right into a time of testing, as an example for us in our spiritual lives as well.

I. The "Mountaintop" Before the Wilderness—Can you imagine the "spiritual high" that Jesus might have been on, immediately after His baptism? Think about what had just happened to Him: He had just been baptized a meaningful spiritual experience in itself. Then as that happened, the Holy Spirit came down upon Him like a dove, anointing and filling Him for ministry; and the voice of His Father called down from heaven: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." I had never really thought of it before I read this passage again recently, but this must have been, just from a human/emotional level, an amazing "spiritual high" for Jesus.

Every Christian gets these "spiritual highs" Maybe it is the initial "high" of your salvation. When you are saved, you realize that you have been going in the wrong direction with your life, rebelling against God and His commandments. You are convicted of your sins, and hear that Jesus died to pay for them on the cross. When you ask Him to forgive your sins and come into your life as your Lord & God, then you are saved, and the "weight" of conviction is lifted off you; you know that you are going to heaven. Everybody doesn't "feel" the same at conversion (and salvation is not based upon our feelings) but many people do experience a kind of spiritual "high" with their salvation.

Or maybe it is the joy of obeying Jesus in baptism. We have talked previously about how there is something about confessing Jesus publicly in baptism that "nails down" a person's salvation. Not long ago, someone who had been baptized told me that they felt so blessed when they came up from the water of baptism; that it was just a very emotional, spiritually "high" moment.

But there are a number of other "spiritual highs" in the typical Christian life as well:

Sometimes it comes from an inspiring worship service, where you get "carried away" in singing and praising the Lord.

Or maybe it is the "high" of a revival experience at a camp or spiritual retreat, as God works in your life in a special way. Maybe it is a prayer that you have prayed for so long, and God answers it, and you are SO thankful to God for His power in answering that prayer.

It could be the joy you feel as you repent of a certain sin in your life, and the "barrier" that sin always puts between you and God is taken down, and you feel so good, and so close the Lord.

Or maybe it's when God gives you a great victory in your life: something you have prayed for, and worked to make happen, actually comes to pass, and God blesses you with it, and you are so excited!

Or God uses your ministry so that someone gets saved, or you help someone really learn to walk with the Lord, or to overcome a stronghold in their life, and you really get to "see" the fruit of a spiritual victory in your ministry. There is a great joy in that!

Or it could even just be the "high" of a great personal quiet time with God, and the special closeness He gave you with Him in worship. I remember a few months ago, I had had the greatest worship and Bible reading time one day, and I was outside just walking and praying and looking up at the moon and the stars, and I was just so thrilled and thanked God. I had just read about a man who had been searching for the real meaning of life, and I prayed and said: "God, I thank you that I KNOW that: I HAVE what so many people are looking for in life; I know You, the one true God, and You have showed me how to worship You and walk with You". It was such a "spiritually high" moment.

In so many times and so many different ways, we can experience spiritual "highs" in our lives, just like Jesus did at His baptism. And it is not a "bad" thing to have a spiritual high but we need to always keep in mind: those "mountaintop" experiences are good: but they don't last forever!

II. From The "Mountaintop" to "The Wilderness" It is very revealing that immediately after that "spiritual high" that Jesus experienced, the very next verse tells us: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."

This is SO typical of what happens over and over, in every Christian's spiritual life. We do not usually get to stay on the "spiritual mountaintop" for very long. We are often immediately brought down from the mountain top into the wilderness to be tested. We see this SO many times in scripture:

In Exodus 19, the Bible tells us that Moses was called up to Mt. Sinai to receive the Commandments from the Lord. And it describes how God came down on that mountaintop: "YHWH descended upon it in fire, and the smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked" and Moses spoke, and God answered him with thunder. Exodus 24 says that "To the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of YHWH was like a consuming fire on the mountain top" "and Moses was on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights." (:18) Perhaps no one before or since has had that kind of personal experience with God. And yet, God had just given Moses the tablets "written by the finger of God" (31:18) when the Lord told him to go down, for the people have corrupted themselves" with the Golden Calf.

It's like: seriously? The tablets aren't even "cool" yet from the fire of the finger of God that engraved them and the people are already turning against God, and Moses has a crisis he has to address. It didn't take long for him to go from the mountain to the valley.

We see this same kind of thing happen with the prophet Elijah in I Kings 18. Elijah had just experienced the great victory of seeing the fire of God fall from heaven to consume the sacrifice that he made on Mount Carmel, and all the people of the land were crying out: "YHWH, He is God; YHWH He is God!" I Kings 18 ends with this great victory, and the rain that God sent in answer to Elijah's prayer and the next chapter opens with the wicked Queen Jezebel telling Elijah that he is a dead man and :3 says "Elijah ran for his life", and :4 says, significantly, "he ... went a day's journey into the wilderness" where he asked God to take his life. That didn't take long, did it for Elijah to go from the "high" of Mt. Carmel to the despair in the wilderness.

We see that pattern over and over. We see it in Jesus' life both here in Matthew 3 & 4, and also in Matthew 17, where the Bible tells us that Jesus went up on the Mountain and He was transfigured and "became as white as light" and His 3 closest disciples marveled at Him. But how typical, that as they came down from the mountain, they were immediately greeted by a man who fell down before Jesus, asking Him to have mercy on his son, who was demon-possessed. He said in :16, "I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." And Jesus says in :17 "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." Again, the spiritual "high" of the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration didn't last long, and Jesus was immediately "hit" with the problems of demon-filled people, and ineffective and powerless disciples. It was "back to the valley"!

And yet that is just SO typical of what happens, SO many times, in our own Christian life: you do not usually get to enjoy a "spiritual high" for long, until you get brought down into "the valley" or "the wilderness".

You get saved, and you're so excited, and the "weight has been lifted" from your soul, but then you come back to "real life" and get hit with "people." I remember when I was 8 years old, I was baptized at the First Baptist Church of Harrah, Oklahoma on a Sunday night. I went to school the next day, and I was so excited, and I told one of my classmates: "I got baptized last night" and she just looked at me with the most condescending look on her face and said, "SO?" I have never felt so slapped in the face with cold noodle! Wow ... welcome down from the mountain to the wilderness!

Or you get that spiritual "high" from worship, and Bible Study, and discipleship, and ministry, and Christian fellowship on Sunday, and what a great day it was; a foretaste of heaven! But then on Monday morning you go back to your corporation or factory or office, and all the complainers, and those joyless souls who just seem to sap the life right out of you.

Or you're on the "high" of that "mountaintop" of that revival or the youth retreat, but then you come home to the same old family you had when you left: and your parents still get on your nerves, and your brother or sister is still annoying, and you've still got your chores and your homework, and all the things you'd left behind for a while when you went to "the mountain."

Or you get a major answered prayer that just makes you sing "Hallelujah", or you get a breakthrough in your Christian life, and you are so excited about what the Lord is doing in your life and then you get in a big fight with your spouse, or you get hit with a crushing unexpected bill, or a major crisis at work or as I have seen SO many times in people's lives, Satan will bring the WRONG kind of guy or gal across your path to try to distract you, and get you to "ditch" what God has been doing in your life.

It happens in so many ways. You go from the "mountaintop" to the "wilderness" just as quickly as Moses, and Elijah, and Jesus did. It is important for you to know that WHEN this happens to you (because it WILL!) you are not alone. This happens to every Christian. Peter tells us "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you." (I Peter 4:12). This happens to every one of us. Every Christian goes through the same thing, because that is what happens: we go from "the mountain top" to the wilderness. Every single time.

III. The Purpose of the Wilderness—And this happens for a reason. It was not a "coincidence" that Jesus went from the "high" of baptism into the wilderness. In fact, the Bible tells us this didn't happen accidentally; that God LED Him there. Matthew 4:1 says "Then Jesus was LED UP BY THE SPIRIT into the wilderness." Jesus didn't just "wander" into the wilderness; He didn't just "happen" to get tempted out there. No, the Bible specifically tells us that the Holy Spirit, who had just descended upon Him like a dove in the aftermath of that amazing baptism experience, then purposefully LED HIM UP into the wilderness. This was part of God's plan: for Jesus to come away from the "spiritual high" of His baptism, into the wilderness of temptation and testing.

continued on page 49



It is very revealing that we see here in the temptations that follow in the next verses, that the devil tried to get Jesus to doubt what God had just told Him at His baptism. What did God the Father say in 3:17 when His voice sounded from heaven? He said: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." God told Jesus, "You are My Son, and I am totally pleased with you." Now notice how Satan begins his temptation of Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4:3: he said to Him, "IF You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." "IF You are the Son of God"! Jesus knew that He was God's Son. And God had just TOLD Him that He was His Son, in that amazing baptism experience. But now Satan was testing Jesus, in the very thing that God had just told Him was true. Jesus was tested in the wilderness, on what He had just experienced on "the mountaintop."

And that is what happens to us as well. When we have had times of spiritual growth on "the mountaintop" with the Lord (whatever form that "mountaintop" spiritual growth takes), God then allows us to come into a time of "wilderness", of trial and temptation, where Satan will try to get us to doubt what we know God has told us about Himself, or what we just learned about His word, or our ministry, or His call on our lives. It is not a "fun" thing to go through, but it is an important element of our spiritual growth, because that testing helps us to consolidate what God has just accomplished in our lives.

It is like the process of strengthening your body through lifting weights. Most people don't lift weights every day or at least they don't lift with the same muscles every day. They'll lift weights one day, and then the next day they will rest, and let those muscles build back up again, and strengthen and then the following day they lift again. And that process of lifting and then resting builds the muscles and strengthens them over time, and incorporates into the body the benefits of the exercise.

A similar kind of thing happens to us spiritually. God will draw us near to Him, in a "mountaintop" experience whether it is salvation, or baptism, or a retreat or revival, or even a special prayer and Bible time or an especially effective ministry experience. But how much of that have we really learned? How much of it will we really retain? God "leads us up" by His Spirit into a "wilderness" where we get tested and see how much of that we really kept. And we find out maybe we didn't really "keep" all of that. But hopefully we did some. Maybe we did indeed learn something, and we did grow. But we show how much we really learned, and how much we really "kept" by how we live and act in the wilderness of testing afterwards. So, hopefully we did indeed grow a little bit. So now God will take us into the next "mountain top"; to another lesson; to another close walk with Him and yes, then He'll allow us to be tested in the wilderness again after that.

So listen: although it may not be pleasant to hear, I am not here to "tickle your ears", I am here to tell you the truth. And the truth is, You WILL be tested. It IS coming. You will NOT stay on a "spiritual high" forever. Most of you know that already. Maybe you are in a spiritual "wilderness" right now. And maybe you feel like you did something wrong: "What have I done to get myself in this 'wilderness'?" Maybe you are questioning if you were really saved, because you're thinking this wouldn't happen to you if you were really a Christian.

Don't let the enemy mess with you like that. Every Christian experiences this "undulation", this "up and down." Everyone has "spiritual highs" and then goes into the wilderness again. It may be helpful for you to realize that this WILL happen to you; it is NOT unusual; it is most likely not your fault it's a normal part of every Christian's experience. You are being tested to see how much you just learned; to see how much of that truth you are going to really hold on to. There is a good old saying: "Don't doubt in the darkness what God has shown you in the light." Don't doubt, in the wilderness of testing, what God clearly told you on the mountaintop of the spiritual high. But you WILL be tested on it; you can count on that.

So when will all these "wildernesses" end; when will all this testing stop? It won't stop until you cross the last "river" to get into heaven. The last test; the last enemy you face is death. You will find out then, how has your whole Christian life prepared you for that? What have you learned from your whole life of walking with God that has prepared you for this hour? Some people show, unfortunately, that they didn't learn much. (I remember years ago, watching with dismay while a deacon, who was a "pillar" of his church, was carted away into a minor surgery whining and crying because he was so afraid that something might happen to him and he might die!) Others face that hour with confidence: they know that just like God has been with them through their different wilderness experiences, He will be with them as they cross this last river as well.

But your wilderness experiences won't end until then. As long as you live, God will continue to bring you through times of spiritual growth, and spiritual testing, over and over, to test and to consolidate what you have learned into your spiritual life.

Your challenge right now is: Don't be surprised when you are brought into the "wilderness". It WILL happen to you. It is a law of spiritual growth. Be ready for it; stand firm in it. Live out what you learned in it. Don't give up in the middle of it. AND ... (this might be comforting to you) know that it won't last forever. Remember: just as the spiritual "high" of the mountaintop doesn't last forever, neither does the spiritual temptation and test of the valley last forever. You won't be in "the wilderness" forever. If you're in "the wilderness" right now, be faithful, and endure this test until it's over. It can help you to get through this time when you realize that soon this test will be over, and God's gonna have you back up on the mountain top again before too long!

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

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McGalliard Falls Park

Morrisa Angi
Burke County

The Town of Valdese is excited to announce that on the first Saturday of each month from April through October, Valdese Public Works will have the waterwheel at McGalliard Falls Park running. The public is encouraged to mark their calendars for these special Saturdays.

McGalliard Falls Park has been a favorite gathering place for Valdese citizens and visitors alike for over a century. The Meytre Grist Mill was originally built in 1906 to serve the Waldensian community populating the area by grinding up their corn and wheat by Fred Meytre. A large flood in 1916 obliterated the original water wheel and the mill then changed to turbine power. The Meytre Grist Mill was closed in the early 1940's as the original owner aged and could not operate it alone, as the community's young men had been called to fight in WWII.

The mill is located next to McGalliard Falls which is a 40 foot high waterfall with a beauty rating of 6 out of 10 for North Carolina waterfalls. The mill was rebuilt when McGalliard Falls Park was created in 1982. Most recently, the Meytre Grist Mill has served as a favorite backdrop for family photos and a reminder of yesteryear.

Most recently, the waterwheel was replaced in 2016 after a tree damaged the previous wheel beyond repair. The repairs and renovations were completed with the support of Historic Valdese Foundation, Rostan Family Foundation and donations from citizens. The renovations would not have been possible without the efforts of Valdese Public Works Department and the services provided by the Young Offenders Forest Conservation Program (BRIDGE).

In summer of 2016, Valdese Councilman Gary Delp, his wife Phyllis, and Friends of the Valdese Rec teamed up with Girl Scouts, Gunnar Hudson and Rachel Watts of Troop 10645 to create a Bird Sanctuary at the McGalliard Falls Park. The scouts chose to do the Bird Sanctuary as their Silver Project for the Girl Scouts. The project began by setting up a booth at the Waldensian Festival in Valdese to sell sponsorships for the bird houses. With the money that they made, and with a contribution from Lowes Hardware of Morganton, they were able to build and paint 50 birdhouses. In addition to the birdhouses, with plants provided by Settlemyre Nursery, Northwest Landscaping Inc, and the community, the group was able to landscape two different areas of the park, complete with a sign reading: "Every Birdy Welcome Here" to mark the entrance. The completed project was unveiled to the public on Saturday, September 17th, with the ribbon cutting of the Grist Mill.

In honor of the renovations and new additions to the park, the public is encouraged to bring a picnic, and spend the afternoon enjoying the new wheel and this beautiful Valdese gem! McGalliard Falls Park is located off of Main Street on NW Church Street.

For further information call 828-879-2129 or go to visitvaldese.com



April Craft Market
Old Rock School & Spring Show

Valdese, NC – January 4, 2017 – The Historic Valdese Foundation is excited to announce the addition of a spring craft show. The first annual April Craft Market will be held on April 8th, 2017, at the Old Rock School in Valdese, and craft vendor applications are currently being accepted.

The April Craft Market will feature a variety of handmade crafts and gifts, and will feel very similar to the annual "Christmas in November Craft & Gift Show" that is held in Valdese on the second weekend in November.

"We are very excited for this new event," states Morrisa Angi, Director of the Community Affairs and Tourism Department in Valdese. "Our vendors and shoppers from the Christmas Show in November have been asking for us to add a spring craft market to our Valdese event lineup, and this year we are very happy to make it happen!"

The craft show will be held at the Old Rock School from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm with approximately 35 vendors offering handmade crafts, gifts and baked goods. The first 250 shoppers will receive a complimentary shopping tote. Shoppers are also invited to visit the Piedmont & Western Railroad Museum the day of the show for an open house.

All proceeds from this event will go towards the Historic Valdese Foundation's "Movie Theater Project," which is an ongoing project to raise funds for projector equipment for the Old Rock School Auditorium. With this projector system, the auditorium will be capable of screening free movies to the public.

For more information about the April Craft Market or the Movie Theater Project, visit www.townofvaldese.com, or call 828-879-2129.

Morrisa Angi is Director of Community Affairs and Tourism



When You Are Weak

By Anne Graham Lotz



When have you been in a situation when you desperately needed help? Who did you turn to? I was recently admonished by a very well-meaning person, "Anne—take care of yourself. No one else will."

Seriously? While I understand the challenge to be prudent about practical matters, I have every confidence that God will take care of me as though I was the only person He had to be concerned with. Because God is my Help ... I can turn to Him. And He is your Help, too.

WHEN YOU ARE WEAK

- In what way, or area of your life, do you feel weak?
- List God's promises found in Isaiah 41:10.
- Write out each promise in your own words, inserting your name.
- Which promise is most encouraging to you, and why?
- How does God promise to hold you up when you are weak?
- Besides upholding you, what else is associated with God's right hand? See Exodus 15:6; Psalm 16:11; 17:7; 18:35; 44:3; 60:5; 89:13; 139:9-10; Isaiah 48:13; Mark 16:19; Romans 8:34.
- What caused Daniel to be overcome with weakness in Daniel 10:15-17?
- How was he given strength? Read Daniel 10:18-19.
- What have you been confronted with that has caused you to go weak?
- When you are weak, whether physical, emotional, mental or spiritual, would you ask God to give you His strength as you turn to Him for help? Then open your Bible.

WHEN YOU ARE WORRIED

- What was the psalmist worried about in Psalm 4:1-2?
- How did God help the psalmist when he turned to God? See Psalm 4:7-8.
- What was Jehoshaphat worried about in 2 Chronicles 20:1-2?
- How did he react to the alarming news, according to 2 Chronicles 20:3-13?
- How did God respond to Jehoshaphat's cry for help? See 2 Chronicles 20:14-30.
- In Matthew 6:33-34, what did Jesus command us to do when we are worried?
- How does the Apostle Paul underscore turning to God when we are worried? See Philippians 4:6-7.
- What is the antidote for worry? Read Proverbs 3:5-6.
- What are you worried about? Who have you turned to? What has been the result?

When you are worried, would you ask God to give you His peace as you turn to Him for help? Then open your Bible.

WHEN YOU ARE WEARY

- When have you experienced weariness physically? Emotionally? Mentally? Spiritually?
- What encouragement do you receive from Isaiah 40:27-31 if you are physically weary?
- What encouragement do you receive from Galatians 6:9-10 if you are spiritually weary?
- What encouragement do you receive from 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 if you are emotionally weary?
- What encouragement do you receive from 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, 16 if you are mentally weary?
- What inner resource for believers does Ephesians 1:18-21 reveal to be available?

The next time you are weary to the point of collapse, would you ask God to give you His resurrection power as you turn to Him for help? Then open your Bible.

The writer to the Hebrews exclaimed with emphatic confidence: The Lord is my helper ... And He is! How do I know He will help you? Because that's who He is. He can't be less than Himself, and He is our Helper. Rely on Him and experience His strength when you are weak, His peace when you are worried, and His resurrection power when you are weary.

He will help you. I know. ©2017 Anne Graham Lotz

Anne is the daughter of Billy and Ruth Graham and a speaker and bible teacher in her own right.



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Graham Children's Health Services
Celebrates 20th Anniversary With
A New Name, Logo, and Website!

By Schell McCall, Executive Director
Mitchell and Yancey Counties



Burnsville —, NC (3/16/17) — For 20 years, Graham Children's Health Services (GCHS) has served Mitchell and Yancey county residents with programs and services designed to improve the health of our community. Since 1997, these initiatives and collaborations have included: Toe River Dental Clinic, Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force, four permanent drug drop boxes, Summer Food Program, Sizzlin' Summer Series, and the renovation/construction of many recreation facilities (including the old Burnsville Gym, Kid Mountain playground, Ray-Cort skate park, countless walking trails and sidewalks, and recreation facilities at Cane River Park) to name but a few!

In 2015, GCHS was awarded a grant through WNC Nonprofit Pathways and the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina that enabled the organization to engage Taproot Consulting to conduct stakeholder surveys and develop a strategic plan. According to Schell McCall, Executive Director of GCHS, "One of the findings that came as a result of this process was the realization that, while many community members are familiar with the results of our work, they don't necessarily realize WHO is responsible for these great projects. Many of the survey respondents said that they'd heard of Graham's, but they didn't know exactly what we do." According to Oscar Weinmeister, Board member and past Board Chair, "When we meet people who are unfamiliar with

our work and we have to spend the first few minutes explaining that we are NOT from Graham County, and we are NOT a children's health clinic...by that time we've lost the opportunity to tell them who we ARE and about all of the great stuff we do!"

With the goal of choosing a name that best fits the organizational mission, GCHS sought and received a small grant for developing a new name, logo, and website. "Our new name — Partners Aligned Toward Health — encapsulates who we are, what we do, and how we do it. We focus on community health, and all of our initiatives are partnerships," says Ron Powell, Board Chair. In order to honor the organization's rich history and to provide visual consistency, the new logo incorporates the artwork designed many years ago by John Doyle for Healthy Yancey (a program of GCHS/PATH). PATH's new website, found at www.pathwnc.org, is user-friendly and provides a wealth of information about PATH and programs.

On March 16, 2017, at the Burnsville Town Center, the staff and Board of Partners Aligned Toward Health (PATH) officially unveiled their new name and logo to the community, expressing deep gratitude for the partnership and support of all of the local organizations, volunteers, funders, staff, and board members (past and present) who have made the past 20 years of community health initiatives such a success. Ms. McCall shared, "We couldn't think of a better way to celebrate our 20-year anniversary than by taking a moment to thank the many partners whose ideas, support, and encouragement have made our work possible. We are looking forward with excitement to the next 20 years of serving our community!"

To learn more, support our work or get involved as a volunteer, contact PATH staff at (828)682-7899, info@pathwnc.org, or visit www.pathwnc.org.

Schell McCall is Program Associate for Yancey County 4-H.



PATH staff and board members present the organization's new identity

Phi Theta Kappa Inducts
New Students

By Michael Lavender
McDowell County

The Beta Zeta Lambda Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa National Honor Society inducted 22 new members to its ranks in a ceremony held Monday evening at McDowell Technical Community College. Phi Theta Kappa is one of two primary honor societies which recognize two-year and junior college students across the country.

Students inducted into Phi Theta Kappa must be recommended by their academic advisor and must have completed at least 12 hours of course work toward an associate degree with a grade point average of at least 3.5 on a 4.0 scale. Membership in the society is voluntary.

Congratulations to these new members:

- Donna L. Allison
- Autumn M. Boyles
- Madison A. Cauthen
- Maggie L. Effler
- Jacob M. Frye
- Emily L. Hamilton
- Richard W. Hughes
- Thomas E. Lindley
- Katelyn N. Lowery
- Destiny R. Mader
- Kaitlin A. Mathieson
- Sydney E. McEntire
- Shana N. McKinney
- Millie Ortiz
- Louis R. Parrow
- Abel E. Rivas
- Adrianna J. Shelton
- William C. Smith
- Grace V. Sword
- Alexandria N. Thomas
- Stacy L. Walden
- Lee A. Wampler



Chapter officers Mackenzie Silver, Raymond Okyere-Forsen, Garrett McPeters, Nhan Nguyen, Lauren Worley and member Andrew Smith.



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Mayland Community College

Event Spotlights

Event Spotlights Community Colleges' Contributions To N.C. Northwest Prosperity Zone

By Beth Morris

WILKESBORO, N.C. —Presidents from the six community colleges in North Carolina's Northwest Prosperity Zone shared details on the regions overabundance of good paying advanced manufacturing jobs, and the challenge of finding people to fill seats in community college classes that build a highly skilled workforce for employers. Dr. Jeff Cox, president of Wilkes Community College, host of the event, offered welcoming remarks and said that the focus of each presentation would be what each college is doing to support advanced manufacturing in the region.

Catawba Valley Community College, Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute, Mayland Community College, McDowell Technical Community College, Western Piedmont Community College and Wilkes Community College (WCC) serve the dozen counties in the Northwest Prosperity Zone: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, McDowell, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties. The event drew a robust crowd of fellow college presidents and their staffs, business and industry representatives, elected leaders, chamber of commerce members, economic development professionals, college trustees and other supporters of the community colleges in the northwest region.

Dr. Cox kicked off the celebration by highlighting the partnership Wilkes Community College has developed with GE Aviation in West Jefferson. The Customized Training Project the college developed for GE Aviation, valued at \$1.2 million, played a critical role in allowing GE Aviation to nearly double the size of their operation in West Jefferson, adding over 100 well-paying jobs in Ashe County.

Travis Ritchie, GE Aviation senior employee human resources manager, spoke about the value GE Aviation sees in its partnership with Wilkes Community College. According to Ritchie, the college played a critical role in allowing GE Aviation to move from doing five to thirty-four processes in the plant and to go from 79 employees in 2013 to 272 employees currently. Ritchie said the company believes so strongly in this community, their workers and the partnership with Wilkes Community College that they are investing \$153 million to expand the operations in West Jefferson.

Dr. Mark Poarch, president of Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute (CCC&TI), said his college's ongoing partnership with the Economic Development Commission to establish customized workforce training has been a factor in companies deciding to locate in the college's service area, Caldwell and Watauga counties, and for many expansions and new business recruitment. Poarch said the college has the ability to be nimble and responsive to the diverse needs of industry.

Deborah Murray, executive director of the Caldwell County Economic Development Commission, also spoke on behalf of CCC&TI saying, "They are my partner in recruitment. They are my partner in retention. They ingeniously create training programs and pathways when an industry considers coming. The very first institute that was created was designed to provide Google with trained workers. Eight years later, the college has 15 different institutes, all developed in response to the increasing demands for a qualified workforce."

A few examples of programs created in response to local business and industry needs include the electrical lineman program developed through a partnership with Duke Energy and Blue Ridge Energies; the upholstery program in partnership with Fairfield Chair Company; and the IT Institute in partnership with Google.

The local economy in Caldwell a decade ago was dominated by furniture and textiles. Today it includes plastics, packaging, pharmaceuticals and information technology, which offer prosperous career opportunities. According to the Caldwell EDC, from 2015 to 2016, Caldwell County's median income increased by 11 percent, boosting Caldwell County from 19th lowest median income in the state, to a rank of 40. Caldwell also recently posted its best single job growth month since before 2000, when it added 695 jobs in January. Since 2010, Caldwell's unemployment rate has gone from 17 percent down to 5.6 percent today.

Furniture and textile companies like Henredon, Valdese Weavers and Drexel once dominated Burke County, home of Western Piedmont Community College (WPCC). Using technology advances, these industries have begun using new processes that make manufacturing less labor intensive. Community colleges are retraining existing employees and training new employees going into advanced manufacturing.

Dr. Michael S. Helmick, president of WPCC, said his college has established training, interning and apprenticeship partnerships with many local companies.



Mayland Community College President Dr. John Boyd speaks during a North Carolina's Northwest Prosperity Zone meeting highlighting community colleges impact on the local economy. Also pictured is MCC Board of Trustee member Henry Street.

The college provides apprentices and develops training modules for Continental Teves Inc., which makes advanced auto braking systems; trains all workers in advanced manufacturing processes for Peds Legwear, a sock company owned by Gildan; develops new production systems and trains workers at SAFT American, a manufacturer of batteries for the military; trains employees at Ekornes, a high-end leather furniture company, on Gerber CNC cutters, high-speed sewing and advanced modularized frame systems; trains employees in advanced robotics used in fiberglass layup and production at Molded Fiberglass, a company that manufactures large truck cabs and bumper systems; and trains employees for Leviton, a manufacturer of electrical devices for home and industry, Siegwerk, which manufactures printing inks, and Ice River Springs, maker of proprietary and custom bottled water. WPCC is also assisting Meridian Specialty Yarns to convert a traditional yard dye house into a state-of-the-art dye operation.

"Western Piedmont is developing the next generation work. We are also establishing certificates that will meet the needs for workers right now but creating stackable certificates to develop workers for long-term educational credits," said Dr. Helmick. "Our newest advanced manufacturing program is mechatronics. Through a partnership with Burke County, Cannon Foundation and Golden LEAF Foundation, we are building a 7,000-square-foot building to house the electronics and robotics portion of the mechatronics program. The future of advanced manufacturing is bright. The biggest need right now is to find trained workers. The industry needs community colleges to provide that training, and in turn, community colleges need industry to support their programs."

Mayland Community College reports that its two-year-old Applied Engineering Program has been popular for both students and employers. The first three students to earn an Associate in Applied Engineering degree found employment or advanced within their company immediately after graduation. According to Dr. John Boyd, president of Mayland Community College (MCC), one graduate moved from an hourly to salaried position in the design department at Altec. The second graduate worked on the manufacturing floor at Altec, then received an offer for a full-time engineering technology position from another local company upon graduation. That student opted to stay at Altec and has applied for a position in the design department. The third graduate interviewed with three local employers, Baldor Electric in Weaverville, Advanced Superabrasives in Mars Hill, and GE Aviation in Asheville. He accepted a full-time position with full benefits at GE Aviation.

"These graduates landed well-paying jobs right out of college," said Boyd. "After reaching permanent status, Altec employees on the manufacturing floor make around \$15 per hour. Employees in the design department move into the \$40,000-\$45,000 per year range. The graduate hired at GE started making around \$18 per hour with full benefits and received a defined pathway to reach \$30 per hour."

Boyd added that it is not unusual for employers to come to the college to scout for skilled workers even before the students graduate. McManus Microwave in Bakersville offered a part-time position to second-year machining students, to become a full-time position upon graduation. "This student chose to finish school before taking a position; however, a large number of our other students are already employed with industry partners like BRP, Altec Inc., Advanced Superabrasives, Glen Raven, Hickory Springs Manufacturing, Baldor Electric, among others," said Boyd. "These students came to MCC to upgrade their credentials in order to advance within these companies."

Altec recently completed an expansion, which caused an immediate need for at least 50 additional skilled workers. Altec provides an educational reimbursement plan to employees; training of current manufacturing employees allows the company to promote from within to fill technical positions with people who are experienced with Altec processes and who have already chosen to live and work in the community.

BRP needs skilled CNC machine operators. The company maintains a close relationship with Mitchell High School, and MCC offers a Career & College Promise CNC machining certificate program on the campus of Mitchell High. This creates a direct pathway for Mitchell High students to enter the CNC Machining program while in high school, proceed through the program at MCC, and enter the workforce with useful skills and familiarity with the types of work performed by CNC machinist.

McDowell County is ranked third in N.C. in the percentage of the workforce employed by manufacturing.

Dr. John Gossett, president of McDowell Technical Community College (MTCC), said, "This makes advanced manufacturing very important to us. The MTCC Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center has brought together many constituents from across the county to address manufacturing in McDowell County. The magic is in the collaboration."

McDowell County and city governments, MTCC, McDowell County Schools, private employers and public agencies are all working together to prepare the workforce for jobs of the future.

"Like the other community colleges present here today, we are working hard to recruit students to advanced manufacturing programs in order to meet the demands of industry," added Gossett. "We are beginning early. We are working with McDowell County Schools, bringing in employers to talk with students throughout K-12 to inform them of skills they need to focus on to prepare them for the future."



Mayland Community College Board of Trustee member Henry Street speaks during a North Carolina's Northwest Prosperity Zone meeting highlighting how the community college impacts the local advanced manufacturing economy. Also pictured is MCC President Dr. John Boyd.

Dr. Keith Mackie, executive vice president of Catawba Valley Community College, spoke about the new Alexander County Academy located in CVCC's Alexander Applied Technologies Center in Taylorsville.

The Alexander Furniture Academy is a public/private partnership between major Alexander County furniture manufacturers and the college to prepare students for skilled positions that are in high demand by some of the largest employers in our area. The Academy's founding partners are Craftmaster Furniture, Kincaid Furniture and Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams. In the 24-week training, expert craftspeople teach a learning track of Sewing Operator or Upholstery Craftsman.

CVCC also offers the Manufacturing Academy, an industry-driven training course to prepare students with necessary skills to succeed in manufacturing, and Apprenticeship Catawba, an exciting new partnership between local advanced manufacturers, Catawba and Alexander County Schools and the college.

Monday's meeting was held in honor of North Carolina Community College Day, which will be celebrated statewide on March 29. With 58 colleges located across North Carolina and nearly 710,000 students, the North Carolina Community College System is the third largest institution of higher education in the United States and is internationally recognized for its programs supporting economic and workforce development.

Beth Morris is Director of Marketing at Mayland Community College.



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Burke County Schools

Music Classes Study Local Legion

By Cheryl M. Shuffler
Burke County



The smooth, ragtime rhythms of a string instrument is piped through the speakers in Margaret Smith's classroom. "Can anyone guess what instrument this is?" the Drexel Elementary School music teacher prompted the students sitting in neat rows on the floor. Eager hands flew up in the air. "A guitar," one student shouted with assurance. "Right, a guitar," Smith acknowledged.

In this era of Taylor Swift, Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez, the music and life story of a woman who died three years before they were even born captivated these third graders. The woman is Etta Baker (1913-2006), the acclaimed Piedmont Blues musician who called Morganton home, and third graders throughout Burke County learned about her the week of Feb. 20. The lesson served several purposes as it came during Black History Month, is about local history, which is part of the third-grade curriculum, and is a precursor to the unveiling of the Etta Baker statue at the City of Morganton Municipal Auditorium on May 25.

In addition to this lesson on Etta Baker, every third grader in Burke County was given a booklet about her, a guitar pick with her name and years of birth and death engraved on it, an invitation to attend, for free, the May 25 concert in her memory. CoMMA and the Burke Arts Council were instrumental in providing the lessons and booklet. Jim Smith, executive director of CoMMA, said, "Our purpose is to educate our current generation, and generations to come about the life of Mrs. Baker."


Baker was born in Caldwell County, but grew up in Morganton. She came from a family of musicians, and her father put a guitar in her hands when she was a month shy of turning 3 years old. She learned the Piedmont Blues guitar finger-picking style, which only involves the thumb and forefinger, from her father who learned it from his father.

Baker raised her nine children and worked in a Morganton factory until she was in her late 70s. Throughout her life, she played her music locally for family and friends, but didn't cut her first album until she was 78. She died at age 93, and was still picking a guitar up unto the end.

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



Students in Margaret Smith's music class at Drexel Elementary School show off their Etta Baker booklets after learning about the local legend.




Jamie Miller, CPA

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