


# BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



**"It is impossible to  
rightly govern a  
nation without God  
and the Bible."**

**George Washington**

## **Prayer for the United States of America**

**"Almighty God; We make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in Thy holy protection; that Thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government; and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large.**

**And finally that Thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without a humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation. Grant our supplication, we beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."**

**George Washington**



**David Pope, MD**

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# Contents

## In Every Issue

Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm - p. 15

Dr. Billy Graham - p. 9

Life Lessons - p. 9

Your Government - pp. 32-33

## BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

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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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## ADVERTISER CLASSIFICATIONS

### APPLIANCES

Jonathan's Used Appliances (36)

### AUDIO

Audio Video (5)

### AUTOMOBILES - Dealers

Buchanan Young (37)

John Greene Chrysler (11)

Mike Brown (7)

### AUTOMOBILES - Tires

Phil's Tire (23)

Spruce Pine Tire (180)

### BEAUTY SALON

Rumors Salon (23)

### BOOK STORE

Dellingers Book Store (9)

### BUILDING SUPPLIES

Summit Building Supplies (42)

### CHURCHES

Altapass Baptist (4)

Bakersville United Methodist (5)

Banner Elk United Methodist (4)

Bear Creek Baptist (4)

Berry Chapel Baptist (4)

Burkemont Baptist (5)

Burnsville 7th day Adventist (4)

Faith Fellowship (4)

First Advent Christian (4)

First Baptist Spruce Pine (5)

Grassy Creek Baptist (4)

Great Hope 7th day Adventist (5)

Horizon (4)

Morganton Seventh day Adventist (5)

Pine Branch Baptist (5)

Pleasant Grove Church of  
Brethren (4)

Plumtree Presbyterian (4)

Roan Mt. Missionary (5)

Spruce Pine United Methodist (4)

St. Lucian Catholic (5)

The Bridge (4)

West Burnsville Baptist (5)

### CHIROPRACTIC

Cruz Chiropractic (40)

### COLLEGE

Mayland Community College (44)

### CONCRETE SUPPLY

Boone's Concrete (36)

### CPA

Jamie Miller (8)

### DENTIST

Scott Murphy (45)

### EMPLOYMENT

Carolina Home Care (22)

### EVENTS

Back to School Bash (42)

Freedom Life (16)

McDowell DSS (26)

Valdese Tourism (5)

Yancey Chamber (35)

### FARM SUPPLIES

Griffith's General Store (13)

### FURNITURE

Buck Stove (18)

L&B Furniture (15)

Peoples Furniture (30)

Southwest Trading (8)

### GUTTERS

Energy Savers (22)

### HEALTH CARE

Bakersville Community Clinic (23)

Mission Health (1,2)

Pruit Health Care (21)

### HEARING AIDES

Miracle Ear (46)

### HOSPICE

Hospice of McDowell (40)

Hospice of Mitchell (35, 27)

Hospice of Rutherfordton (12)

Hospice of Yancey (25)

### HOUSING

Clayton (20)

### INSURANCE

Farris Insurance Agency (10)

Fortner Insurance (16)

Miller Insurance Group (41)

Mitchell Co. Farm Bureau (44)

Nation Wide / Trent (47)

### LANDSCAPING

Harding Landscaping (39)

### MULCH

McClure Construction (17)

### PAWN SHOP

Mountaineer Pawn Shop (24)

### PET SUPPLY

Appalachian Pets/Supplies (8)

### PHARMACY

The Prescription Pad (26)

### PLUMBING/HEATING

Burleson Plumbing Heating (19)

### POOL SERVICE

Backyard Creations (12)

### REALTORS

Whitson Realty (42)

### RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

High Country Mahindra (19)

### REHABILITATION/NURSING

Brian Center (6, 31)

### RESTAURANTS

Abeles Restaurant (36)

Bantam Chef (34)

Bubba's Good Eats (10)

D T's (16)

Tokyo (30)

Western Sizzlin (22)

### RETAIL

Grassy Creek Clothing (7)

### RETIREMENT

Mars Hill Retirement (48)

### TRANSPORTATION

Mitchell Co. Transit (10)

Yancey Co. Transit (38)

### TREE SERVICE

Ray's Tree Service (29)



# Church Directory

## 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

"A Christ-Centered,  
Bible Believing Church"

## 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  
Transforming Lives Through  
The Power of Jesus Christ!

## 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"

## Plumtree Presbyterian Church

4527 Hwy 19E  
Plumtree, NC 28664  
828-765-6919  
www.plumtreepresbyterian.org

**Pastor Ryan Bridgeo**  
pastor@plumtreepresbyterian.org

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

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

## Bear Creek Baptist Church

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

**Reverend Bruce Cannon**

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

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

## West Burnsville Baptist Church SB

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

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

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

## Burkemont Baptist Church

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

For more information,  
please visit  
www.burkemontbaptist.org

**Dr. David Mills, Sr. Pastor**

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

## St. Lucien's Catholic Church

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

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

## First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

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

**Dr. Rocky Branch  
Senior Pastor**

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

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

## 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.  
Mica, NC 28755  
(828)-675-8284  
www.fccn.org  
www.fccradio.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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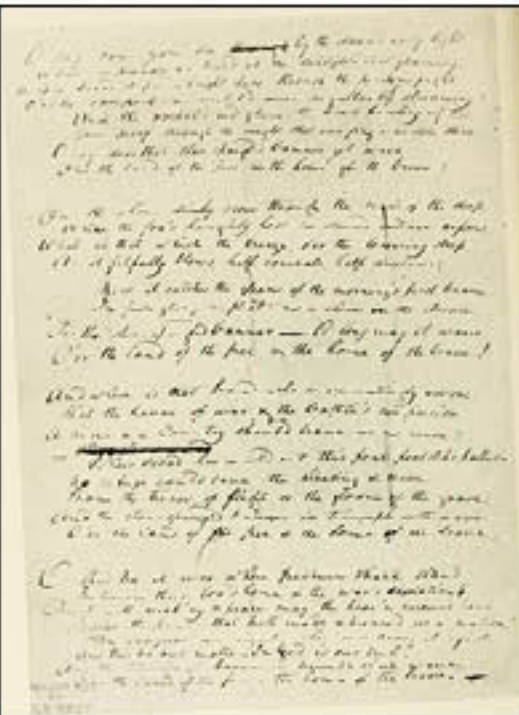


Lana's Lines


Oh, Say Can You See?

By Lana Ellis  
Tennessee

For twenty-five exhausting hours Baltimore's Fort McHenry was bombarded by the greatest naval power in the world. About eight miles away a thirty-five year old lawyer boarded an enemy ship to negotiate the release of his friend who had been taken prisoner. Even after a successful release negotiation had been reached the two men could not leave the ship due to the intense raging battle. After a restless night amid the noise of war they noticed the silence. Peering anxiously through the smoke filled air they beheld a beautiful welcomed sight - the American flag was still flying. It was the morning of September 14, 1814 and the British had retreated in the midst of the War of 1812. Realizing the importance of that day the young lawyer, Francis Scott Key, penned the question, "Oh, say, can you see by the dawn's early light what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming; Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight, O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming." As he continued to write four verses emerged to become what is known as America's National Anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner".



Copy of Original Star Spangled Banner by Francis Scott Key.



Today as I write it's June 14 – Flag Day, a day set aside to show honor and respect to the stars and stripes of the flag of the United States of America. It is also on this day in 2017 that a disgruntled man opened fire on a group of United States Representatives and police officers. Five were injured including Rep. Scalise who arrived at the hospital in critical condition. Many wars have been fought since the inception of the United States of America but the worst form of war is one within – Brother against Brother, Neighbor against Neighbor, Citizen against Citizen. We can only pray that we will never have to experience another Civil War. After all there is nothing "civil" about war.

In 1858 Abraham Lincoln delivered a speech noted for the phrase "a house divided against itself cannot stand." He most likely was aware of the words of Jesus who said, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand." Matthew 12:25. (NASB) In light of that let's take a look at the lesser known fourth verse of the Star Spangled Banner written by Francis Scott Key.

Oh, thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand  
Between their loved home and the war's desolation!  
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land  
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!  
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust":  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

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

Sample Day Trip  
Tour the Waldensian Museum  
Lunch & Downtown Shopping  
Tour the Trail of Faith  
Tour Waldensian Heritage Winery  
Tours also available of the  
P&W Railroad Museum • Village Park Mural  
Art Galleries • Old Rock School



# Historic VALDESE

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## Upcoming Events in Valdese

- Valdese Farmers Market**  
Wednesdays 9-12 & Fridays 11-4  
Locally grown produce & baked goods  
Faet Street Parking lot across from Fire Department
- Family Friday Nights Summer Concert Series**  
Every Friday Night May-September - Variety Music  
7pm at the Wells Fargo Parking Lot
- Independence Day Celebration- June 30, 2017**  
Live music, amusement rides for all ages, beer & wine  
Live Music By Jim Quick & Coastline
- 42nd Annual Waldensian Festival**  
August 11 & August 12, 2017  
Live music, vendors, beer & wine, car show



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Loss of Loved Ones

By Carolyn Dotts  
Mitchell County

At some point in our lives, loss of a loved one will occur. Some people experience this loss as children, while others, as adults, lose someone dear to them. Regardless of the age, the result is the same-grief and sorrow. I have experienced loss both in childhood and as an adult: my biological father died when I was 12, then my grandmother when I was in my early 20's, and the most significant loss occurred nearly 10 years ago when I lost my husband in a tragic car accident. Since then I have lost both my stepfather in 2010 and my own mother just last Thanksgiving. I guess I can say that I am now familiar with loss and the journey through grief. Until the loss of my husband, however, I had no idea how to handle grief and how it has affected my entire being.

Grief is not a subject that is easily discussed or even acknowledged by many, but it is a significant part of living. Until the loss of my husband, I shied away from the topic and avoided funerals. What was I to say to those in grief? I felt I had nothing to offer. I didn't understand.

However, when my own home was flooded with people who cared, bringing food and flowers, kind words with hugs, and even just sitting with me in silence, I began to understand. When I stood in line at the Celebration of Life service for 3 hours greeting people, some of whom I didn't even know, my heart overwhelmed with the love being expressed, I understood more. In the days following, the flood of cards, calls and compassion eased me into this journey of grief.

As time passed, however, the time and attention others offered began to slowly lessen. Now what was I to do? I gradually realized that this was my journey and mine alone, no one could travel that road for me, and the only one traveling it with me, was the Lord. I turned to Him through prayer and reading His Word. I was trying to find my way on this bewildering path of grief. I was searching for help. I read anything that was recommended to me on the topic of grief and through this search, I discovered a little-known resource called GriefShare. Visiting the website, I found daily encouraging emails, a library of articles to read, and books to purchase, but the most valuable offering was the GriefShare support group. It consisted of a 13-week cycle of meetings, held in locations across the country, hosted by local churches. These meetings were listed on the website, but a search revealed that the closest ones were either in Boone or Asheville. Now what? At that time, I was still teaching full time in Mitchell County, and my time to travel and participate was limited by my work schedule. Eventually, though, I was able to locate a meeting on a Sunday afternoon in Boone. I decided to be brave and attend.

The first session met a heartfelt need, as I realized that there were other people on this same journey, farther along the path than myself, who were able to share



what they had already learned. I asked a friend who had also lost her husband a year ago, to join me in the remaining sessions, and by session 12, we both knew this was what was needed in Mitchell County. I enlisted the aid of a couple, a retired pastor and his wife, who assumed the position of facilitators, until I had reached a stage in my own healing where I could help lead.

That was nearly 10 years ago in 2008. Since then GriefShare of Mitchell County has been offering both a fall and spring 13-week cycle of sessions. GriefShare is a non-denominational Bible-based, Christ-centered support group. It is currently held at Western Carolina Church on Thursday evenings at 6:00pm. The spring cycle just ended and the fall cycle is scheduled to begin in August. Meetings are structured using professionally rendered videos using well known Christian grief counselors, as well as lay persons, to address topics related to this life experience. The videos are followed by discussion. While discussion is encouraged, no one is required to participate. Silence and listening is welcome. A workbook is used to take notes during the video and offers daily devotions and articles to read during the week. Many participants opt to attend through several cycles to catch up on missed sessions or simply repeat the session. There is no limit to the number of times you can attend. Another advantage is each session is self-contained, so you can view them in any order without missing valuable information. Over the years of holding the cycles, I have watched the healing of the broken hearted, as well as precious friendships develop through this shared experience.

GriefShare is not well-known in the county, in spite of having been available since 2008. I plan to use the next several months to better acquaint the community with this much-needed, but not well attended resource. I hope to answer any questions and help those on this journey of grief to lay aside any fears they may have, to join us in our next cycle. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact me at Western Carolina Church, 828-785-4633.

*Carolyn Dotts makes her home in Ledger and is a teacher of Exceptional Children at Greenlee Primary School. She is a widow with two sons and five grandchildren. She is a member of Western Carolina Church in Spruce Pine.*



**Brian Center**  
Health & Rehabilitation / Spruce Pine

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# Mine Creek Baptist Church

## Our Nation's Godly & Christian Heritage

By Preacher Chris Rathbone  
Mitchell County

Listening to how many people talk today, one would be led to believe that our nation was founded by a bunch of atheists. They want us to think that our founding fathers wanted God, The Holy Bible, and Jesus completely left out of the public and political square. They want us to believe that these men had no moral basis or compass on which they founded this great nation known as the United States of America. They attempt to justify certain "rights" or "equality" by stating that our founding fathers wanted the citizens of our nation to basically shun any moral guidance given to us in the Bible and have the right to live any way one would choose. I beg to differ folks. I am a Christian, I am a preacher, and I am an American. I believe that many of our founding fathers looked to Almighty God and their faith in Jesus as the moral foundation in which they established our country. This month I would like to share with you some quotes from a few of our founding fathers and let you decide for yourself what these men believed and the desire they had for our nation to be built on a Christian foundation.

**John Adams:** SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; JUDGE; DIPLOMAT; ONE OF TWO SIGNERS OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS; SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. "The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity. I will avow that I then believed, and now believe, that those general principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable as the existence and attributes of God."

**Samuel Huntington:** SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS; JUDGE; GOVERNOR OF CONNECTICUT. "It becomes a people publicly to acknowledge the over-ruling hand of Divine Providence and their dependence upon the Supreme Being as their Creator and Merciful Preserver . . . and with becoming humility and sincere repentance to supplicate the pardon that we may obtain forgiveness through the merits and mediation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

**Thomas Jefferson:** SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; DIPLOMAT; GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA; SECRETARY OF STATE; THIRD PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

"The doctrines of Jesus are simple, and tend all to the happiness of man. The practice of morality being necessary for the well being of society, He [God] has taken care to impress its precepts so indelibly on our hearts that they shall not be effaced by the subtleties of our brain. We all agree in the obligation of the moral principles of Jesus and nowhere will they be found delivered in greater purity than in His discourses.

I am a Christian in the only sense in which He wished anyone to be: sincerely attached to His doctrines in preference to all others.

I am a real Christian – that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus Christ."

**James Madison:** SIGNER OF THE CONSTITUTION; AUTHOR OF THE FEDERALIST PAPERS; FRAMER OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS; SECRETARY OF STATE; FOURTH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

"A watchful eye must be kept on ourselves lest, while we are building ideal monuments of renown and bliss here, we neglect to have our names enrolled in the Annals of Heaven.

I have sometimes thought there could not be a stronger testimony in favor of religion or against temporal enjoyments, even the most rational and manly, than for men who occupy the most honorable and gainful departments and [who] are rising in reputation and wealth, publicly to declare their unsatisfactoriness by becoming fervent advocates in the cause of Christ; and I wish you may give in your evidence in this way."

**Patrick Henry:** REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL; LEGISLATOR; "THE VOICE OF LIBERTY"; RATIFIER OF THE U. S. CONSTITUTION; GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA.

"Being a Christian... is a character which I prize far above all this world has or can boast.

The Bible... is a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed.

Righteousness alone can exalt America as a nation. Whoever thou art, remem-



ber this; and in thy sphere practice virtue thyself, and encourage it in others. The great pillars of all government and of social life [are] virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor, my friend, and this alone, that renders us invincible. This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed."

Pretty good words from men who some apparently believe were non-believers! I will be the first to acknowledge that not all of our founding fathers were necessarily Christians, but most all of them recognized the Biblical and moral foundation that our country needed to be built on. Many may simply choose to ignore our country's heritage or even choose to walk away from it, but there is no denying that our founding fathers wanted this nation built on Biblical and Christian principals. We as citizens, as community leaders, as political leaders, etc, are only fooling ourselves if we forsake God and moral truths given to us in the Holy Bible and think that somehow, we will not suffer the consequences. As we celebrate our Nation's Independence let us recognize that it is God who has blessed America. Let us also pray for our nation, for we have strayed far away from the moral foundations that our founding fathers gave us. May God have mercy and may He continue to bless our nation as hopefully one day we will strive to return to Him!

Proverbs 14:34 *Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*

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

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## Celebrate Recovery

### How Opioid Crisis Affects Our Health Care

Blake Fagan and Miriam Schwarz, Guest columnists

This is the third article in a series addressing the opioid crisis we are facing in Western North Carolina. The first article defined the problem. There are too many opioids being misused, the drugs can be addictive, and addiction (including to heroin) can lead to overdose and even death.

The second article described the community response including what is being done through the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force, which is under the umbrella of PATH, Partners Aligned Toward Health, the new name for Graham Children's Health Services.

In Buncombe County, in January and February alone, first responders went to 150 overdose calls — more than all of the overdose calls in 2015. Sadly, 20 of the overdose victims could not be saved; they died.

This article is to inform the public of two things. First, your provider- your physician, or other healthcare provider, may be treating temporary or short-term (also called "acute") pain differently than in the past. Second, you as the patient have the right to ask for information and get answers to the questions you have about the treatment prescribed to you.

• Pain treatment will look different now. Doctors, dentists, nurses, physician assistants, podiatrists and pharmacists in Western North Carolina are worried about the misuse of pain medicine. WNC sees too many deaths from the misuse of prescription pain medicine. That is why your provider or health care team may now be talking with you about a plan to treat your pain safely if and when you have acute pain.

They may talk to you about your pain level, any history of drug abuse by you or family members and ways to treat your pain without prescription pain medicine, or they may prescribe pain medicines you can take that are not addictive. You may hear more about acetaminophen and ibuprofen.

It may surprise you that these over-the-counter pain medicines have the best evidence for treating acute pain. One 500mg tablet of acetaminophen and one 200mg tablet of ibuprofen taken together up to four times a day with food and water has the best evidence for treating acute pain.

One worrisome statistic is that if a person high school age and under takes just one week of a prescription pain medication such as hydrocodone or oxycodone, they have a significantly increased chance of developing a drug addiction during their lifetime.

If your provider deems it necessary to give you an opioid prescription pain medication for acute pain, you may only receive three days of this pain medication and definitely not more than seven days. Your provider is following the new Centers for Disease Control guidelines for managing acute pain.

• Talk with your provider about your pain treatment plan. We encourage you to have a conversation with your provider if you are given an opioid prescription. Ask questions, such as: What are the side effects of this opioid medication? Will this opioid medication interact with any of my other medications I am taking? Do I have to finish this whole prescription? Or if my pain is under control, can I stop taking this medication? When can I switch to acetaminophen and ibuprofen to control my pain?

How do I safely store my prescription pain medicine so other people cannot take it? How do I safely throw away pain medicine that I do not use (so that it does not get into the hands of others ... like my son/daughter or granddaughter/grandson or their friends)?

The next time you visit the doctor, you may encounter these changes in how we help you with pain management. Please ask questions. We care about your well-being and will work with you to treat your pain safely.

*Dr. E. Blake Fagan is a family physician and the chief education officer at the Mountain Area Health Education Center (mahec.net). He received his medical degree from Vanderbilt University and is a graduate of MAHEC's Family Medicine Residency Program in Asheville. He is a Western Carolina Medical Society board member. Miriam Schwarz, MPA, is the executive director for the Western Carolina Medical Society Association and Foundation.*

*Jim Haaga has supplied the local information. He is an Emergency Room doctor at Blue Ridge Medical Center.*



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Freedom

By Doug Harrell

When we think of freedom we think of many different things. As we approach July 4th we think of Independence Day, fireworks, parades, picnics and family fun. We think about being Americans, being able to be "One Nation Under God, Indivisible, With Freedom for All". Have you ever really stopped and thought about what really brings us freedom? What kind of freedom do you value most?

As a child, how much freedom were you allowed and how much should you be allowed. Proverbs 29:15 *The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.* It is important that we be guided and trained as a child, and not be allowed complete freedom, yet there needs to be freedom for the child to grow and mature as well. Finding that line, and admonishing with love and guidance is the most important thing a parent can do to let that child have freedom as an adult.


As Americans, we should understand that this country was founded because of people searching for religious freedom. Many of our modern denominations came out of the fact that in many places there was a state religion that was mandated and all were expected to belong to that and worship as the state required. Here in America, we have had the freedom to belong to whatever religion we chose, but the nation was vastly Christian, with many different denominations. Today, the most eroded freedoms in our nation are those of a Christian nature. It is unacceptable or not allowed to even carry a Bible into many school rooms for your personal use. Clothing that has a Christian message cannot be worn for fear of offending someone else. Many schools are not allowing a student that is speaking in a school graduation event or others to mention the name of Jesus, or to give God the glory, because it might offend someone. We are losing our rights to be a Christian openly, we must hide that from society or we will be shamed and shunned. If we own a business that serves the public, we must do things that go against our Christian beliefs, or we stand the risk of being sued. Just today, as I write this, the Supreme Court has decided to hear a case of a lawsuit by a gay couple against a baker because he would not create a special wedding cake for them. Freedom of speech and expression as guaranteed by our 1st Amendment is routinely denied in situations involving Christian thought and practices.

If our country is going to continue to offer the freedoms we have grown up with, we need to continually pray for our leaders, that they may seek God's will and direction as they make decisions that will effect our country for years to come. We have been blessed because we were not afraid to be "One Nation, Under God". Our country is struggling today in so many ways that were not even thought of years ago. The drug addiction situation is unbelievable today with of 59,000 deaths this past year as a result of overdoses. The number of children born to unwed mothers and the number of abortions is unbelievable. We are sowing what we reap, there is always a price to be paid when we depart from the teachings of Christ.

The only freedom we really have comes from the Blood of Christ, shed on the cross for each of us. As we go into this July 4th we need to be in constant prayer for our country, ourselves, our public servants, our pastors, our families and all our leaders. 2 Chronicles 7:14 *If My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.* WILL YOU PRAY?

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





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For the estranged, it's never too late to return home

Q: I never got along very well with my parents, and when I rebelled and left home I thought I was finally free. Well, I've done everything I ever wanted to do, but now I'm miserable and almost broke. I ought to go home, but I can't bring myself to do it. I don't know why I'm writing, but I guess you could pray for me. — Z.H.

A: I'm sure many who read this will be praying that God will give you the courage to turn your back on the way you've been living, and turn instead to Christ and His will for your life.

Have you ever heard of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son? (You can find it in the Bible, in Luke 15:11-32.) In it Jesus tells about a young man who was very similar to you. He wanted to be free, and after he left home he indulged in every pleasure he could imagine. But then he ran out of money, his "friends" abandoned him, and the only job he could find was feeding pigs.

Finally, he realized how wrong he'd been, and he decided to return home — although he was afraid his family wouldn't want him. But as he neared home, his father ran out to welcome him home. May this be your experience.

Why did Jesus tell this parable? One reason was to warn us about Satan's false promises. But the main reason was to teach us about God's love for us. Listen: God loves you, and He doesn't want you to wreck your life. Confess your sins to Him, and ask Christ to forgive you and come into your life. Then ask Him to give you the courage to return home. The Bible says, *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"* (John 8:36).



When Jesus is at the door, you'd be wise to invite Him in

Q: I hear preachers say that we need to accept Jesus, but I'm not sure I understand what that means. I'd like to be sure that I'm a Christian, but I don't know if I really am. — Mrs. J.K.

A: I'm thankful you want to be sure that you are truly a Christian. After all, could anything be more important — both for your life right now and for eternity? The Bible warns, *"How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?"* (Hebrews 2:3).

Let me use a simple illustration to help you understand what it means to accept Jesus. Suppose someone came to your door and rang the bell. What would you do? One possibility, of course, would be to ignore it, telling yourself that you were too busy to be bothered. But the other possibility would be to go to the door and find out who it was and what they wanted. And if it were a friend, you'd probably take the next step; you'd invite them to come in.

The same is true with Jesus. He wants to come into our lives, to clean out the things that shouldn't be there and replace them with His love and presence. But what will we do? Like that visitor ringing our doorbell, we can ignore Him, or we can leave Him standing on the porch — or we can invite Him to come into our hearts and lives.

And that's what I hope you will do — and you can, by a simple prayer of faith. Why not invite Him into your life today? Jesus' words are for you: *"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me"* (Revelation 3:20).







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## Marlene's Meditations

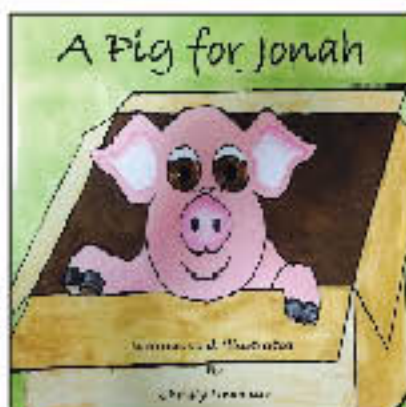
### In the Eyes of a Child

By Marlene Houk  
Burke County

*Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;*

"Thunder floated alone in the shimmering blue sky. Below him rolled the sea, splashing against the shore of a small town at the bottom of a mountain. To him, it felt like he had been in the same spot forever. 'I wish I knew what I was supposed to do up here,' Thunder mumbled."

God made us to enjoy and grow through the stories scattered extravagantly throughout His Word. Jesus Himself used stories and parables in His ministry on earth as powerful learning books upon which He hung many truths. Abstract truths attach themselves to our hearts and minds through colorful stories that range from the bizarre to the poignant. Children and adults alike easily identify with stories, compelled to listen to The End. Even at the school where my daughter teaches, the principal reads a story to the graduating 5th grade class. She conveys her message to them as her voice creates the world in which the story was written.



God created us with a love for stories and then filled His Word with action-packed adventures that chronicle His messages to us. Hard truths are easier to swallow when they are blended with the drama and distraction of a riveting story. Adults and children alike are drawn into the breathtaking action and strange attitudes of characters God has included in His Scriptures. He is the Master Storyteller, and that helps us to understand the tremendous truths He offers.

I talked with Christy Lowman, the author of *Thunder's Big Purpose* (quoted above) to discover the "behind-the-scenes" facets of creating a children's story book with a Christian worldview. She has written since seventh grade and recently contributed to *Guideposts* and Tyndale's collection of Christian stories. Now, a homeschooling mom of two young boys, she understands the importance of stories in the development of a child's spiritual understanding.

Me: Christy, how do you develop a story for children?

Christy: I pray about the ideas. Sometimes they come to me during Bible time



with my sons, and occasionally from their experiences. *A Pig for Jonah* was based on my son praying for a pet pig. The book tells how his prayer was answered in an unusual way that involved three dogs, a porch and a boy's earnest prayer. I also like to write about people's common struggles such as, Jellyfish who wears glasses and feels the brunt of his friends' mocking.

Me: Why do your children's books include an educational component?

Christy: I think it's important for children to read because it can lead them to the Bible and the truth that God is the

author of science. For example, my book, *Thunder's Big Purpose*, uses clouds as its theme.

Me: Has this adventure into writing led you down other paths?

Christy: Yes. Some of the profits from the Cloud series are donated to fight human trafficking. Part of the profits from *A Pig for Jonah* is donated to an organization that buys back Arabic people who were enslaved when they converted from Islam to Christianity. Christy also illustrates her books with delightful watercolor drawings. She plans to release the second in the Small Bible Character series in the Fall of 2017 as well as a middle-grade novel about bullying.

"Finally, Thunder, the small, gray cloud, knew his purpose. After all, he was an important cloud because..." Read, *Thunder's Big Purpose* to discover what happened to him and to help your children understand the process of God's plan for them. Just as the Bible includes transforming stories, so God allows us to create stories that point others to Him!

Note: You can find Christy's books at Amazon: <https://goo.gl/8BmJc6> or on Barnes and Noble <https://goo.gl/cS4cDj>

Marlene Houk is a regular contributor to *Blue Ridge Christian News*. Her passion is to delve deeply into the truths of Bible women and to discuss those in Bible Studies called *Backstage Pass to Bible Women*. She and her husband discover joy, nurture, and challenge in their church. Her contact is [marlenehouk@bellsouth.net](mailto:marlenehouk@bellsouth.net)



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Persecuted Christians

By Franklin Graham

The World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians in Washington, D.C. was a powerful and moving event, with over 600 participants from 136 countries. Delegates included church leaders from all over the world and advocates for the persecuted, as well as victims of persecution who shared personal accounts of the horrors they have suffered because they bear the Name of Christ.

Vice President Mike Pence addressed the summit on the second day, speaking from his heart to those in the audience and around the world who brave hostility, harm, and loss for their obedience to our Lord and Savior:

"Your faith inspires me. It humbles me."

Then he spoke words unlike anything heard in Washington in recent memory: "I am here on behalf of the president of the United States as a tangible sign of his commitment to defending Christians and, frankly, all who suffer for their beliefs across the wider world."

I have known Vice President Pence for some time, and I am grateful for his own firm faith. "We stand with you," he said. "The Bible tells us that all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. And those gathered here are emblematic of millions across the world."

It is not easy for people living in America to wrap our minds around what many of our brothers and sisters in Christ must endure in some

other countries. A woman in America who followed reports on the summit wrote us afterward: "Thank you for bringing this issue to everyone's attention. Living in my little bubble in the U.S., I had no idea things were this bad all over the world!"

During the summit, I met and talked with a woman from Iran whose father was hanged to death because of his faith. I spent time with two men whose brothers were among the Coptic Christians marched out on the beach in Libya and viciously beheaded by ISIS for refusing to deny Christ—then the video distributed for all the world to see. I met a dear pastor from Uzbekistan who was arrested and imprisoned for four years for proclaiming the Gospel. A delegate from Mexico—a nation right next-door to our own—was repeatedly beaten, his church burned, and people from the congregation made to walk barefoot over broken glass as they were forced to leave town at gunpoint.

The stories go on and on. Today, believers in many countries face persecution and martyrdom on an unprecedented scale. In fact, throughout the world the number of Christians facing hostility, maltreatment, and even death is greater than at any time in history.

An organization that monitors and tracks persecution estimates that 215 million Christians experienced high or extreme levels of persecution last year in the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a follower of Jesus Christ. That's as many people as two-thirds of the entire population of the United States. Of those persecuted, tens of thousands die. It is not possible to know exactly how many, but some researchers report 90,000 or more in the past year.

Persecution has many sources, and no part of the world is exempt. In some places, the persecution is caused by intense anti-Christian movements that have grown within Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism. In other parts of the world, believers face political ideologies that are openly hostile to their faith, or they die as the result of civil wars or tribal conflicts in which Christians are treated as the enemy. Still others face intimidation and violence in societies riddled with corruption, drug cartels, and lawlessness, where anyone committed to Biblical values is seen as a threat to power or profit.

In our country, as well as in many Western nations, the rapidly rising tide of secularism is strongly anti-Christian. Secularists are especially opposed to those who stand firm on the unchanging moral and spiritual standards of God and His Word.

This hostility toward Christians—and toward the One we serve as Lord and Savior—is hardly a surprise. Jesus, who endured the greatest persecution of all, said to His followers, "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20, ESV). It is an inevitable part of our world. But that does not mean we can overlook it or stay silent when others are persecuted. We are the body of Christ. As believers, what harms one of us hurts us all.

What can you do? Here are some basic action steps suggested at the summit that any believer can take:

- Take time to learn more about what is happening to believers and churches who face severe persecution. One good place to start is with a 28 minute video highlighting stories of persecution around the world. It is on our web site.
- Pray for those facing persecution, for their families, for our churches in America to rise up in support of them, and that world leaders would do all they can to combat the persecution. Pray also for the persecutors, as Jesus Himself instructed us to do (Matthew 5:44).
- Encourage your church to become more aware of and more active in earnest prayer for those who are being persecuted. The Bible says, "Remember those who

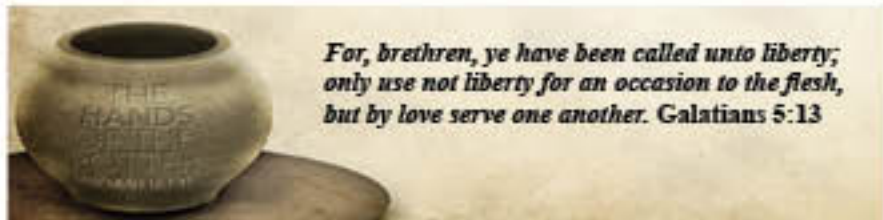


are in prison, as though in prison with them" (Hebrews 13:3).

• Finally, make the proclamation of the Gospel to a lost and dying world a priority in your life, your giving, and your prayers. Only the power of the Gospel can sustain those who are persecuted and change those who carry out persecution. As I write, I have just completed the four-city Decision America Tennessee Tour. We went across the state, holding an outdoor meeting in each place. We had music, the crowds that gathered joined me in praying for our nation and its leaders, and I preached the Gospel. I'll share more in my next letter of what God did during the tour.

We want to help our suffering brothers and sisters in Christ wherever and in whatever way we are able, as God leads. You can be a part of this through your prayers and your gifts for persecuted Christians. We rely on the support of friends like you to carry out all of the ministries God has given us. Thank you for all you do for the Kingdom.

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



For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. Galatians 5:13



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July 2017 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 11



Perilous Times

By Pastor Dan Qurollo  
Burke County

The Bible perfectly describes the times in which we live as being "perilous times." Each day we turn on the news, it seems as though the threats of war continue to rise. Terror attacks continue to increase and nuclear threats continue to mount as man becomes further from God. News of scandals and lies across the world take the front page of the newspaper. The times in which we live are full of danger.

Yet they are also full of opportunity. As one studies the book of Acts, we find ordinary individuals taking a bold stand on the Word of God, regardless of what it might cost them. Some were imprisoned; others were executed. Yet they boldly proclaimed the truth of God's Word to a society that desperately needed it. They did not allow their message to be governed by acceptance of the masses. They instead took every opportunity to share the Word of God. We too must boldly take every opportunity God gives us. We have no idea how long we may have before it is eternally too late.

These days are also full of gratitude. While it is disheartening to see how far America has digressed from the Word of God, it is incredible to think of the tremendous sacrifices made so that we could enjoy the freedom of religion. Individuals gave their lives because they believed in freedom. They believed that individuals should have the right to speak their minds openly but truthfully, that the government has no right to interfere with one's religion, and that individuals should be allowed to live in peace and harmony in their own homes. It was for these and many more freedoms that individuals fought. It was for these that many individuals paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

This July 4th, take some time to thank God for the freedom you have been given. It truly came with a price. Then boldly take the opportunities which God gives you to share the truth of God's Word.

Pastor Dan Qurollo is pastor Morganton Baptist Church. Check us out on our website [www.morgantonbaptist.net](http://www.morgantonbaptist.net) or find us on Facebook and YouTube.



One Day with God

By Jody Griffin  
Avery and Mitchell Counties

Standing back, observing a group of inmates as they were gathered inside the front door of the Administration Building awaiting the call...one could feel the nerves.

But this call would be different from the ones they hear over the PA daily. This call would be for them to step into the courtyard where their children were waiting to greet them. Each man's name was called, they stepped through the doors, and they were greeted by their children, running, jumping, even leaping into their arms! For most of the children it has been years since they have felt the comfort of their daddy's arms wrapped tightly around them. For some it will be the first time.

Twin five-year old girls, cautiously walk toward their father, clinging to the volunteer who has come to be their companion throughout the day and assist them in any way needed. They cringe before the young man who is their biological father, a tall, tattooed man they do not really know.

Gently, patiently, lovingly the volunteer speaks softly and holds them tightly as they cling to her. One begins to shed silent tears, the other soon joins. I watch their father intently. How will he handle their hesitation? He hangs back, letting the volunteer comfort and care for them.

Soon they are laughing and playing alongside their dad and the volunteer! Giggling and singing and hugging him, I witness his heart open to this precious gift...and their hearts opening to hope, peace, and Love.

There are songs sung, crafts created and numerous special demonstrations that capture their imaginations and set them all free from the limitations imposed by walls and wire. There is a shared meal of delicious catered food and even time for "Father/Son Sharing" and a "Daddy/Daughter Dance". For this day, they are with their Dad and for this day nothing else matters.

I watch in wonder as the day progresses and when it comes time for the children to leave I notice those same twins, once again crying. But now they cling to their Daddy, and they weep because they face separation from him again and they don't want to leave.

I watch them board a van for transport back to the church that is hosting their Moms/caregivers. They are smiling! Laughing! Singing! Waving! Basking in the love they have been blessed to experience and share this wonderful day!

Together with their Father, they have heard about a Heavenly Father, and experienced the gift of His Loving care.

Children, Dads, Volunteers, Prison Staff, I watch them all. And I realize that this day truly has been orchestrated by God.

No one else could provide the money and the resources. No one else could touch the hearts of people to give. No one else could move volunteers to give up their Saturday to go into a prison. No one else could compel individuals to bless the lives of these precious little children. Only God could do this.

And I saw it with my own eyes. I felt it stirring inside my own heart. This... This is truly what it advertises to be...This is One Day with God.

One Day with God at Avery Mitchell Correctional is scheduled for August 19, 2017.

Volunteers are needed. Donations are needed. YOU are needed! Please help these children have time with their Daddies.

Pray! Give! Volunteer!

Forgiven Ministry, Inc. (200 Macedonia Church Road, Taylorsville, NC 28681) travels nationwide conducting these one day camps. They are an approved 501 c.3 charitable organization so

your gifts are tax deductible. Volunteers can reach out directly to them, or contact me and I will help you get connected.

Please prayerfully consider helping us fund and conduct this blessed day. You'll be amazed by what you see!

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



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Something You Cannot Escape

By Dr. Mark Creech

American conservative radio commentator, someone that ABC News once said was “the most listened-to newsmen in the world,” Paul Harvey, told a remarkable story about a woman trying to escape the ravages of a hurricane.

Harvey said after Hurricane Andrew devastated South Florida, Patricia Christy was waiting in line for food. She vowed to herself that she was going to get out of that state. She was leaving on the first plane out and was determined to get as far away from the horror of hurricane damage as possible - then have a restful vacation.

In his newscast, Harvey reported he had just heard from Patricia Christy. She was standing in line for fresh water on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, having just gone through Hurricane Iniki.

We can never escape what God has ordered no matter how hard we try.

Dr. Billy Graham has eloquently stated:

“The trouble with our modern thinking is that we have a conception that God is a haphazard God with no set rules of life and salvation. Ask the astronomer if God is a haphazard God. He will tell you that every star moves with precision in its celestial path. Ask the scientist if God is a haphazard God. He will tell you that His formulas and equations are fixed and that to ignore the laws of science would be a fool’s folly. If the laws in the material realm are so fixed and exact, is it reasonable that God could afford to be haphazard in the spiritual realm, where eternal destinies of souls are at stake? Just as God has equations and rules in the material realm, God has equations and rules in the spiritual.”

W. Somerset Maugham used to tell a story similar to Paul Harvey’s, but one of profound consequence. He wrote about an Arabian merchant who sent one of his servants to the city of Baghdad for provisions. The servant wasted no time in returning quickly to his Master and reporting that he had seen Death in the marketplace making a threatening gesture at him. He begged for a horse that he might escape to the distant town of Samara.

That same day the merchant went to the marketplace. Seeing Death, he asked the foreboding figure why he had earlier made a threatening gesture at his servant.

Death replied, “That was no threatening gesture. That was a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad because I have an appointment with him tonight in Samara.”

Death and Judgment are uncomfortable topics, but we cannot escape them no matter how we deny, devise, or detract from them. They are unavoidable.

Voltaire was a renowned French philosopher and agnostic in his day. When he was in good health, he claimed that Christianity was good for chambermaids and tailors to believe in, but not for people of education and wisdom. Nevertheless, when he was sick and at death’s door, he called upon his physician, saying, “I am abandoned by God and man. I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months of life. Then I shall go to hell, and you will go with me. O Christ! O Jesus!” Voltaire couldn’t escape death and judgment.

Death is around us every day, and the Scriptures teach that after death comes the Judgment of God (Hebrews 9:27).

Recently, my sister-in-law turned 60-years old. I was amused when she told my wife, “I thought it would take a lot longer than this.” Indeed, life is brief even though most of us act as if we will never die. Yet every moment of life we move closer and closer to life’s end and the moment when we will have to stand before God and account for our lives.

Nations die and experience the judgment of God too. Psalm 9:17 solemnly warns, “The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God.”

Sometimes I tremble for America. We seem to think that we can act in defiance of God’s order – that we can ignore his sovereignty. Although many never state it outwardly, our behavior is indicative of the erroneous notion that we are big enough to shake our fist in the face of a holy God and escape his judgment.

Rome rose to incomparable greatness in her day. People thought that magnificent Empire would be around for centuries to come, but God judged Rome for its wickedness and great was its fall. Greece was the first to attempt democracy. It became the envy of the world for its splendid architecture and its dazzling list of philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Still, God judged Greece for its sin and mighty was its collapse. The Mayan’s were known to achieve something as complex and advanced as brain surgery. They excelled in various sciences, but God judged them for their evil ways and now they are a mere shadow of themselves.

No culture can sin against God with impunity. Moreover, God always judges nations in this life, and not the next one.

Some misinterpret God not immediately responding in wrath to mean their aberrant conduct is alright. Hardly! It only means God is longsuffering and patient and is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”



(2 Peter 3:9).

Dr. Graham has also beautifully written, “Few people have met the ruler of a kingdom or a head of state. But the power of those leaders is real and it affects all who live under their governance. Jesus Christ governs with love that demands obedience. His great love calls us to the foot of His cross so that we may receive His pardon for our transgressions. The Bible says, ‘Let the peace of God rule in your hearts’ (Colossians 3:15).”

If we repent of our sins and receive Christ as Lord, then the peace of God can rule in our hearts. This peace with God will also be extended to our nation. But outside of this, there is only death and judgment, and we will not escape it.

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

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Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 1 John 4:4

The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy store-houses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Deuteronomy 28:8



# NC Cooperative Extension of McDowell County

## Honey Bee Club

By Adam Lawing  
McDowell County



James Nations and Ray Revis



Ray Revis and Ed Speer

The McDowell County Honey Bee Club had their June monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 8th. Two individuals were honored for all of their hard work and time they have put into this club.

James Nations, who is the president of McDowell Farm Bureau, was honored for all of his efforts with that organization. Farm Bureau donates \$1,000 every year to the club in order for them to put on their yearly Bee School every February. Not only that but, Farm Bureau lobbies and works with state and national government to help protect bee keepers and their bees.

Ray Revis was honored with a lifetime membership for his dedication with the club. Ray was one of the founders of the McDowell County Honey Bee Club and worked to get the Bee School started. Ray has been working with honey bees for almost a decade and he himself is a 3rd generation bee keeper and now his daughter has become a 4th generation bee keeper.

Adam works with the NC Cooperative Extension in McDowell County.



## New Executive Director

By David Burleson  
Burke County



I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you as the new Executive Director of the Burke United Christian Ministries (BUCM) after retiring from public education. It is my hope and desire to continue to work with our community to develop ministries that meet the physical and spiritual needs of those in our community who are facing life's hardships. In order to provide the best possible ministries for those in your community who are in need, it takes the support of all community members, groups, churches and organizations.

We greatly appreciate the encouragement of our supporters through donations, volunteer efforts and especially through prayers. Through the support of church-



es, groups and individuals, BUCM has been able to support those in our community who need a hand up through the soup kitchen, food pantry, mobile food pantry and the Saved for You Clothing Store. Our soup kitchen provides lunch 365 days a year and dinner on Tuesdays and Thursdays, along with several Sunday nights each week. Last year we served 67,698 meals. Our food pantry provides food to one family at a time by allowing them the dignity of selecting from the food that is available and what they want to eat. Last year 791,322 pounds of food was distributed to 6,528 households. Our mobile food pantry served 1,846 households with over 91,220 pounds of food. The BUCM Saved for You clothing store assisted 780 clients last year with clothing valued at \$28,140. BUCM also provided over \$94,500 in crisis assistance and met the needs of over 2,800 households in Burke County.

Our volunteers are the individuals who sustain our ministry. Last year our volunteers gave 34,222.7 total hours' worth \$685,858.51.

We, at the Burke United Christian Ministries, believe these volunteers, our churches and community members are essential to our mission if we are to meet the needs of the diverse group of clients we serve. It is my prayer that each of our churches would make a commitment to provide support to our clients. If any church, Sunday School Class or individual would like to donate or volunteer, we would love for you to do that. We are so appreciative to our churches and community members whose support makes BUCM possible. Here are some opportunities for our churches and individuals to consider for serving:

- Make BUCM Part of Your Annual Budget
- Be a Food Harvester
- Work in the Soup Kitchen
- Assist in the Food Pantry
- Donate Gently Used Items for the Saved for You Clothing Store
- Donate Children's Shoes or New Underwear
- Donate Food for the Food Pantry or Soup Kitchen
- Volunteer in the Office Area (Typing, Folding Newsletters, Answering Phones)
- Lead a Worship Service on Wednesday or Sunday Night Followed by a Meal
- Lead a Vacation Bible School in the Summer for Children
- Read with or Tutor a Child After School
- Eat Lunch with a Client
- Working in the Firewood Ministry
- Transport Clients or Potential Clients to BUCM
- Place a Collection Barrel at your Church or Business
- Begin a Ministry of Presence (Just come have lunch with a client who needs someone to talk with)

More than anything, I ask for your prayers for me and for our ministry that we would make Godly and wise decisions. I also ask that you pray that our clients not only be provided the resources they need, but also, that we would be Christian role models for their lives.

I want to personally thank our churches for their leadership in our community. Our faith community is very important to me and I believe that to develop a strong ministry that meets the needs of others, we need to involve our faith community in every way possible. For too long, organizations around our country have separated themselves from the churches. I believe we need to welcome the influence of our churches and godly individuals into our community organizations in any way possible.

Again, thank you for your support of Burke United Christian Ministries and for your efforts to help those in our community. Thank you for all you do for our community, and I look forward to working with you in the future. Feel free to call me at (828) 433-8075 or email me at [bucmdirector@hotmail.com](mailto:bucmdirector@hotmail.com) if you any questions or suggestions.

David Burleson is Superintendent of the Avery County Schools

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## Crossword Solution

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L	E	V	E	L		R	U	L	E		A	D	A	M
	R	E	D	E	E	M	S		F	A	M	I	N	E
A				E	L	S	E		T	R	E	A	D	
S	T	R	O	K	E		R	I	S	E				R
H	E	A	P		C	A	S	T		N	A	O	M	I
D	E	C	E	I	T	S		C	H	A	R	M	E	D
O	M	E	N	S		E	C	H	O		M	I	T	E
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## Sudoku Solution

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



# Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

## The Rest of the Story

Clint and I worked several months together here on the farm and I do believe that this was one of the most hilarious events we had happen during that six-month period of time. My great uncle, Hal Byrd, built a cattle shed on the side of an old chicken house that Aunt Mae Byrd had used. The shed roof did not have much pitch and was prone to leak quite bad. I had been working on it and built a feed lot around the barn so we would have an additional place to work the cattle when they were up on this farm. We were putting in a chute and head gate on the inside but when we went to check it out it was really muddy, as in wet wet wet cow manure. We had just had a real hard rain and it had leaked bad right where we were putting the head gate. I decided to use a big 2-inch pump and just pump out the water and manure and in the process of doing so I accidentally caught Clint square in the face with a full 2-inch hose wide open with liquid cow manure. I swear, really, I don't swear but I do affirm, that I did not intend to do this. The force of the hose almost knocked Clint down and I will never forget the look he gave me as he asked, did you mean to do that? I honestly told him, no I did not mean to do that, but I had to admit I was laughing my head off. A good shower was in order for both of us after this and Barbara made us strip down to our underwear outside and spray ourselves, and our clothes, off before we could bring them or ourselves in the house.

## Farmer Doug

### Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm By Clint Pollard

Many of you have written or called about Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm. It seems that you take great pleasure in my many foibles and near -misses with danger. Also, some of you question my veracity - that would-be TRUTH telling - regarding these tales. A couple things you should know: clearly the Lord is protecting me from myself and the myriad monsters and events that seek to snuff me out; and these stories are absolutely true (not to say I don't exaggerate a teeny tiny bit ☺) Now get a load of this.

## Ancient Cow Manure!

My friend Doug, along with yours truly (Farmer Clint), set out one balmy morning to construct a new critter chute, or cow tunnel, or cow funnel, or whatever it is you call the slender little space where cows unknowingly go before they meet the head-gate. Ya know, this farming business gets pretty tricky if'n you don't know what you're doing so, I try to stand back a wee bit when we tackle a new challenge.

Now one would imagine that constructing a narrow chute/tunnel/funnel would be fairly simple, some 2X4's, 4X6's, 3/4" plywood, screws and electric screw-driver, and a 2 ton headgate. Simple enough, right? Wrong answer!

Ya see the choice location for our construction project is the "Aunt Mae Barn", so called after Aunt Mae Byrd (Doug's Aunt). An aside, I've learned over the last many months that Doug and Barbara are related to everyone in Mitchell County and beyond. So, if you're local please feel free to drop by for dinner with your distant relatives, anytime ☺. Really, tell Barbara that Farmer Clint sent you.

Anyway, the floor of the Aunt Mae Barn is really not a floor, of course. (Even I know you don't put floors in a barn, whatdya think I'm simple?) So, the floor is really the ground, but in this barn, it's not really the ground because GROUND IS DIRT. Oh no, we can't have dirt ground on Harrell Hill Farms - this GROUND is 100% cow patties, about 6 feet deep and at least 100 years old.

Now you are likely saying, "So, what is your problem, Farmer Clint?" Hundred-year-old cow pies must be firm and packed down! True enough...unless the tin roof of the barn has holes in it the size of Haley's Comet and we've just had torrential rains. Another question I have for the Lord some day, how come it doesn't rain when you need it on the crops but it pours when you have to dig in cow manure?

As we walk - actually slog - into the barn it is clear this will be a story for the ages. I'm talking knee deep in ancient cow manure, so thick and gooey I can barely lift one foot in front of the other. And, naturally, when I take a step the bovine feces splatter all over me and the surrounding area.

Doug has another brilliant idea, we will submerge a small bilge pump in the liquid dung and pipe it right out the window. I am constantly amazed at the ingenuity required to be a farmer...but I'm learning so very much!

Naturally it is MY JOB to hold the little pump under the water/prehistoric mastodon dung while Doug props the hose on the window sill. That was working just fine until I allowed the pump to rise slightly losing its vacuum. With a look of frustration and disdain Doug turned to tell me to hold the pump deeper in the muck and mire.

As he addressed me (a bit too harshly in my opinion) the hose pipe dislodged from the window and took dead aim at ME. I dropped the pump into the sludge, causing it to suck even harder, and I was blasted with the full force of a cow manure firehose! I was immediately blinded; I ingested heaven only knows how much grainy, putrid cow droppings; my ears filled to overflowing...I was totally deluged by an E-COLI shower! I dared not scream lest I swallow a terminal dose, I could not run as my fully submerged boots seemed forever vacuum-held a foot



below the surface dung. My shirt was bursting buttons, my pants heaped high, petrified manure dripping from my hair...I thought Doug was going to pass out! Once he finally regained composure he FINALLY aimed the manure stream back out the window.

Gasping for air I looked at my friend, "Ya know," I said, "if any other human on planet earth did that to me they would die right now!" With that crooked smile and a twinkle in his eye, Doug replied, "Yeah, but it's me, huh? And we are friends. Wanna go have some lunch?" (Lunch? How can anyone think about lunch after that? Hmmm, sounded like a good idea to me.)

Returning to the farmhouse I began hosing myself down, hose down my shirt, down my pant legs, head to toe, when Barbara peeked out the door, "What are y'all doing?" she asked. "Oh, just got into a bit of a mess," I explained, "and don't want to drag it into the house." Doug chuckled, "Pollard, you are a trip!" Indeed I am.

Comic relief on Harrell Hill Farms, once again I dodged a bullet - death by e-coli emersion. Thank you, Lord!

Farmer Clint



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## The Inspiring Word

### Sermon on the Mount

Pastor Terry Cheek Th.D.  
McDowell County

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

For this publication of the BRCN we will continue our study of the Lords Sermon on the Mount. In June, we looked at Matthew 7:13-14 where we considered the only way to heaven and eternal life. For July let's begin looking at how the Lord exposes a fraud. From Matthew 7:15-23 we understand that false prophets are Satan's diplomatic representative. That's right, they are sent with a purpose of luring people down the broad road that leads to destruction. Let me say this before we get deep into false prophets (preachers and teachers). I'm not talking about folks who honestly hold a different opinion of a few verses of scripture. This isn't about name calling someone who disagrees with you. There are passages and verses that have been discussed for centuries and no firm conclusion has been found. Until God gives revelation there will be no firm conclusion either. This isn't a false teacher. A false prophet, preacher or teacher is someone who knowingly and willingly misleads someone to destruction. With that understanding let's move ahead.

We first see they "come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves." On the outside the false prophet looks genuine. They know what to say and what to do to fit in and make a grand first impression. They do all they can to gain acceptance and win over the true people of God. That should get your attention! False prophets don't go after the babes of faith, they go after the mature and those who are confident in their doctrine and theology. Those who feel they have it all together and don't have anything to worry about. That's why Jesus is talking to His followers, He knows they will be targets and He wants to warn them. He wants to warn you too!

It may be difficult to see through the clever words and appearance but we can see them by their fruits.



The ultimate test of anyone is their doctrine and lifestyle. Are they a person of conviction and integrity? False prophets do not have the "fruit of the spirit". Read Ephesians 5:9 and pray over it for wisdom and discernment. After all Jesus did say "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" We all will reap what we sow. If our heart is right there may be difficult trials to overcome but in the end, we will be stronger for them. The false preacher or teacher will bring those difficulties and the end result will not

be strength, it will be weakness. Thorns and thistles should remind us of the curse in Genesis 3:17-18. These folks are dangerous and we need to be cautious, but not to the point of driving folks away. Don't let the fear of a false preacher or teacher lead you to isolation. Prayerfully seek God's word and the Holy Spirit's guidance for discernment and use it humbly and wisely for Gods glory.

Let me bring something in front of the Christian. The Lost! Often the Lost are impressed with acts that are nothing more than spiritual illusions. The lost will be drawn into a world of deception which feels like a spiritual event but is nothing more than an emotional, motivational, smoke and mirrors show to draw money or make a social impression of some charismatic man or woman, falsely, in the name of God. The lost will be led away into Hell by these folks and if a church is inattentive, it like Ephesus, can be permanently ruined.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is simple. Jesus has no smoke and mirrors. He is the straight gate and the narrow way and because of false teachers, there are few that find it. The true church has an opportunity to show people Jesus Christ in our lives, our words and our deeds. We are not saved by works, but we are saved for works. Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ should produce works that lift Him up, and if we lift Him up we know He will draw people to Himself! Our job, lift up Jesus!

We must be cautious of the false teachers, but they must not occupy all of our time. The Lord has already pronounced their judgment. They will be cast into Hell! If false preachers or teachers come into our presence we don't have to do anything different, keep preaching the truth of God's word, the whole counsel of God. The strong need to protect the weak and everyone remain steadfast in God's word and prayer. Darkness cannot survive in the presence of light! Some will say we cannot judge others, and they are right, but we are expected to know sound doctrine and follow it, while rejecting the bad doctrine. Our time and space has gone this month. Until next time may God keep you firmly in His grip!

Terry Cheek is Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Marion.

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1*

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Celebrate Our Freedom

By Rev John McCoury  
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

As we celebrate our Freedom on the Fourth of July, God's word tells us truly How to Be Free. "Faith (in God) -- Many people are lacking in faith. Some are in bondage to the love of money. Faith in God brings freedom from the bondage of sin. When we repent, surrender, and believe, we receive forgiveness and cleansing. We are set free. (Gal. 5: 1) When we know we have been F-orgiven-- we are free. R-eliance (on God) -- *Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass*" (Ps. 37: 5). Many are insecure. They are in constant bondage to material pursuits, their own finite power, and other people. Reliance on God brings freedom from the chains of insecurity. We can trust Him to supply all our needs. God is omnipotent (Phil. 4:19; Prov. 3: 5-6). We are free Because of the R-epentance, --Because of the R-esurrection and Because of his R-eturn-- We are free when we E-nlist (for God) *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few*" (Matt9:37). These are busy times. Many are overwhelmed with the seeking of temporal and selfish gain. We must take time for God, to help the needy, comfort the downcast, and share Christ with the lost. Doing God's work brings freedom from self-centeredness (Matt. 9:38). When we know we have E-ternal Life (with God). -- Many are fearful. They dwell on the gloomy side of life, failing to recognize that God holds the future. Christians should be free from fear of the future--old age, death, and the judgment. These should not defeat us. We have the promise and assurance of eternal life



with God (John 14:1-3). As we think about the Fourth of July here are some HISTORICAL FACTS ON THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE-- A Baptist minister, Francis Bellamy (1855-1931), wrote the original Pledge in August of 1892. The original Pledge read: "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." The Pledge was first published in The Youth's Companion (September 8 issue), which was a leading family magazine, and the Reader's Digest. Francis Bellamy, who in 1892 was also chairman of a committee of state superintendents of education, prepared a program for the public schools' quadricentennial celebration for Columbus Day. This program was structured around a flag raising and the recitation of his Pledge of Allegiance. The Pledge's words were changed slightly in 1923 and 1924, when the National Flag Conference decided to replace "my Flag" with "the Flag of the United States of America. The words "under God" were added to the Pledge by Congress in 1954. Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I also lift up to You in prayer the families of our military. I pray that the gospel will extend to them, that they might know Him and the power of His resurrection. Father, I desire that these families might be a prayer force for our nation and our military. May they know abundance and no lack. May they be well provided for and well taken care of. Father, give them the courage of warriors. May the peace that passes understanding sustain them in seasons of separation. Comfort them with Your Word, that they might have faith to see their sons, daughters, husbands and wives returned to them in wholeness and safety

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



1st Annual "Shine On" Event

By Jessica Williams  
McDowell County

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A great family day opportunity to honor our Lord.

Admission into this event is FREE but RSVP would be appreciated for large groups.

Contact: Michelle Treese at 828-527-1521

For more than a year, a group of women in McDowell County have been meeting to study the Bible, pray for each other and their community and provide Christian fellowship to one another.

Now, this growing group wants to help other women in McDowell who are not as fortunate as they are. They are reaching out to women and children who are homeless and in need of a friend or mentor.

The group is called Sweet TEA for Jesus. The TEA in the name is an acronym and it stands for "Teaching, Edifying, Aiding."

"It is all about showing the love of Christ to all of Marion," said Michelle Treese, who is an "ambassador" with Sweet TEA for Jesus.

Since those beginnings, Sweet TEA for Jesus has grown to include more than 700 women in McDowell County. They hold a regular Bible study, which usually attracts around 50 women. They hold a Bible study at the Marion Community Building on Monday evenings starting at 6:15 p.m.

The group consists of girls and women of varying ages, ranging from 12 years old to those in their 80s.

"The ladies are middle school, high school, young mothers, professionals, and retired, nurses, teachers, stay-at-home moms, entrepreneurs, photographers, civil servants, etc.," said Treese. "Those involved in the Bible studies represent many churches in the community and some have small children and some have great-grandchildren. Moms, daughters, sister, aunts, grandmothers, nieces, friends...all women are welcome and will be loved."

One of the ways this is being done is through another Bible study held by the group. This Bible study takes place on Thursday evenings starting at 6:30 p.m. at the Friendship Home on Fleming Avenue. This is the shelter for homeless women and children operated by McDowell Mission Ministries.

"Our purpose is to first and foremost be community minded with the women in this community," said Treese. "We have really prayed and sought the Scriptures on what we're supposed to do."

Therefore, these caring women are trying to help others who are facing very tough situations and hoping to rebuild their lives.

Jessica Williams Sweet T.E.A. Jesus in Marion and member of First Baptist Church Spruce Pine.



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*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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# Traditions

BUCK'S HOMES &amp; HOMES



Costelluzza: The Solemn Reminder

By Timothy W. Tron  
Burke County

The rocks were damp to the touch, but the coolness and relief from the flies was refreshing. The climb through the forest was intense. All around the sparse trail, plush ferns grew, blanketing the forest floor. Here and there, granite boulders peaked above the greenery, their stillness matching that of the tree trunks that stood towering to the canopy overhead. Only two days before, we had scaled a mountain reaching 9137 feet while watching the world from high above the tall waterfall that cascades down into the Germanesca valley. Today's climb seemed more intense, more purpose-driven.

Briars ripped at my flesh, exposing streaming trails of blood down my forearms. "Battle wounds," I mused to myself. As I caught the group that had been dropped off ahead of mine, I was stopped by a very caring, dear, EMT trained student who was traveling with us, Nadine, who insisted she bandage my wounds. Looking back, it was just as if we had fought through enemy lines, and one-by-one, we were taking care of the wounded before we ascended further. Once my dressing was complete, and the remainder of my team arrived, we rushed onward.

As we climbed, it felt as if something were driving us.

There was a sense of urgency to the ascent. In the back of our minds, the story of the people of the valleys fleeing their persecutors, looking for refuge here on this mountain peak which overlooked their village kept driving us onward. Some may have sought shelter from the cave below, but their attackers followed too closely, so in a sheer panic, they tore at the rock, hands, feet, anything that could grasp. The air emptied from their lungs, as their hearts beat in their ears. Their body's energy spent, they called upon God to deliver them. Inside, a force from on high lifted them, their pains erased as the chill of the Spirit came over their beings. One by one, they reached the summit only to find that the men below, pushed by the darkness that ruled their world, would not stop their pursuit. There on the edge of the earthy terrain, the chasm opening to the depths below; the drop which plummeted beyond where the eye could follow. Nowhere else to run, they turned to meet their attackers.

Some knelt in prayer, others embraced their loved ones, while some chose to resist, but in vain.

Some say over three-thousand were thrown to their deaths that day. John Milton would be so moved, that he would pen the words to the sonnet, "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont."

*"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,  
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones;  
Forget not: in thy book record their groans  
Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
O'er all th' Italian fields where still doth sway  
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow  
A hundredfold, who having learnt thy way  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe."*

I sat on the cool boulder within the shadows of the cave. Looking out on that solemn stone surface, the edge of the earth disappearing before me, the mist of the sky becoming one with the feeling of sorrow filling my soul. I ate in silence, feeding my body's need for nourishment. From the protection of the stones, I sat and chewed, trying to absorb the moment. There was no joy in that sustenance, only that it would allow me the strength to descend from this point. Something inside me wanted to hold onto this place. Part of me wanted to keep its memory in me, but fear of feeling that pain of remorse, the depths of which paled in comparison to the heights at which so many fell from when they met their fate on the horrific Easter day so many years ago, it all was so difficult to comprehend.

The sheer tragedy so long ago was still here; its mark forever cast upon the granite, like gravestones of the perished.

They did not all die. For if it were so, I



would not be here to tell you of this story today. Our tale continues. Yes, the light still continues to shine in the darkness. The students came, slowly, painfully, but they came. The pestilence of flies flew in clouds about our bodies. Satan himself vying for attention in a place where he had claimed his own, its darkness could still not overpower the faith that was shared. As the testimony was called upon, the air seemed to breathe a sigh of relief. His Word was spoken, out loud, freely with no fear.

God wiped his hand across our vestiges, and the darkness subsided; the cloud of flies dispersed. In the distance, thunder rumbled a warning. Not yet fully recuperated, we began racing for the trail to descend. Weary legs were called upon to carry us safely down the rocky path, winding back and forth in a seemingly never-ending drop down the backside of this monolithic reminder of the martyrs that have gone on before.

Our time at the summit was brief, yet the impact of its solemnness will live with us forever.

There is so much more to tell, but the gravity of this journey weighs heavy upon the soul. It will take time for its meaning and purpose to come to fruition in my life, as well as all those that made the journey that day.

I'm thankful beyond measure and blessed beyond belief to have made the trip, for with God, all things are possible. To know the obstacles that stood in the way, would in itself be enough to write about, but there is so much more to the story.

With time, it will come.  
In all that we do, let us give thanks.  
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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# Morganton Seven-Day Adventist Church

## One Act of Kindness

By Rick and Cindy Mercer  
Burke County

I don't know about you...but it seems to me that bad news and "unrest" is all around us these days. It only takes turning on the TV to your favorite news channel or checking today's "headline notifications" on your electronic devices to find out that distress and calamity saturate the world we live in today.

Honestly my spirits are lifted when I see a Facebook post or someone calls you up to tell you of a "random act of kindness." For a brief moment, there is hope that people still care about the human race.

I recently came across a story that truly brightened my day. The following story about Rodney and the homeless shelter could be a story about you, me and many others as we seek to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Rodney Roberson could tell it was going to be a bad night. Working at a homeless shelter to pay his way through seminary, he'd grown accustomed to chal-



lenging situations, but this night looked particularly difficult. Rain splattered the cold ground outside. Soon all the shelter's cots and sleeping mats were taken, but street people kept coming. Arguments broke out. People cursed angrily. Some began to fight over sleeping mats.

In the midst of this tension, a large man named José stumbled in and threw down his sleeping mat. Managing to yank off his boots, he collapsed in a drunken stupor. The stench from José's feet quickly filled the air. People nearby insisted that Rodney do something about it.

The obvious solution was to persuade José to take a shower, but Rodney could not rouse him. José was breathing, but he seemed dead to the world. Rodney and two coworkers discussed hauling José to the shower, but he weighed more than 200 pounds.

Some of the street people demanded that Rodney drag José back out to the sidewalk. But others howled in protest. It seemed that for anyone to win, someone had to lose.

But then Rodney got an idea—why not bring the shower to José? He found a wash basin and some lemon-scented dishwashing liquid. Kneeling by the drunken man, he began to peel off his filthy socks. The stench almost overwhelmed him.

But for several minutes Rodney scrubbed José's feet with a soapy washcloth. He carefully dried them with a towel. Suddenly he noticed he was surrounded by people. Rodney stood up warily and looked around.

Everyone was grinning at him—even those who'd complained the loudest. In fact, people he'd never seen smile before were grinning. Men and women of all races were engaged in what was taking place.

A quiet hush had fallen over the shelter. There would be no more shouting or threats that night. People with sleeping mats gave to someone without one. The conflict was over. It had been washed away by someone who didn't need to take sides, someone who didn't need to score points, someone willing to be, like Jesus, chief among them by becoming a servant.

One act of kindness can change an entire office. One act of unselfish love can change a family. One act of caring can change a classroom. Kindness breaks down barriers. Kindness leaps over walls. Kindness builds bridges. Dr. Luke spoke of our heavenly Father as the one who is "kind to the unthankful and evil" (Luke 6:35). God Himself models kindness for us in all of His actions. He invites us to be kind to those around us today.

This story of Rodney, José, and the men and women in the homeless shelter jolt my mind when I think how many times I too could have calmed a storm around me. The simple, random acts of kindness that we could do, almost seem too great a sacrifice for us many times, but those sacrifices pale in comparison to the sacrifice that Jesus gave, so that we might have eternal life.

Trust Jesus to give you the courage to be a "Rodney" to someone today.

*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](mailto:cjmercer@tds.net). Check out [www.morgantonsda.org](http://www.morgantonsda.org). Their passion is to share the love of Jesus with all who will listen.*



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## Mitchell County SafePlace

### 3rd Annual Love=Respect Billboard and Print Ad Contest Winners

By Beth Davis  
Mitchell County



Mitchell County SafePlace is proud to announce the winners of our 3rd Annual Love=Respect Billboard and Print Ad Contest.

Mitchell High School Freshman, Kierra Carpenter won the billboard competition with her haunting image about dating violence. Sadly, most teenagers do not realize that Interpersonal Violence (IPV) is not limited to physical abuse. Many, many victims share how painful and difficult it is to overcome verbal beat-downs and name-calling. And worse, many young people keep this abuse to themselves. Kierra's striking message illustrates how very real this problem is. Her powerful entry will be displayed on a billboard in Mitchell County for one month.

Freshmen Ashley Renfro and Laurel Self claimed the winning prize for their print ad. Their art-imitates-life ad presents a familiar scenario that is more common than some parents may realize. In fact, the harsh fact is that 1 in 4 teenage girls are sexually assaulted before they reach adulthood. Mitchell County SafePlace is also proud to use their compelling ad in brochures and on posters.

Contestants were asked to submit original artwork depicting something they had learned about dating violence, unhealthy relationships, or sexual assault in their Safe Dates class. The winners received \$100 gift cards.

Safe Dates is an 8-week class led by Mitchell County SafePlace Education Specialist, Kellie Wiseman Biggs. This evidence-based program teaches our young people the warning signs of abuse, calming strategies, how to properly deal with anger, and how to help a friend who is abusive or being abused. Each year every 6th and 9th grade student is offered the opportunity to participate in the Safe Dates class.

Mitchell County SafePlace congratulates all of these young women on their exceptional work for this project! Great job, ladies!!



Mitchell County SafePlace Love=Respect Billboard Contest Winning Entry by Mitchell High School Freshman Kierra Carpenter.



Kellie Wiseman Biggs, Mitchell County SafePlace Education Specialist.

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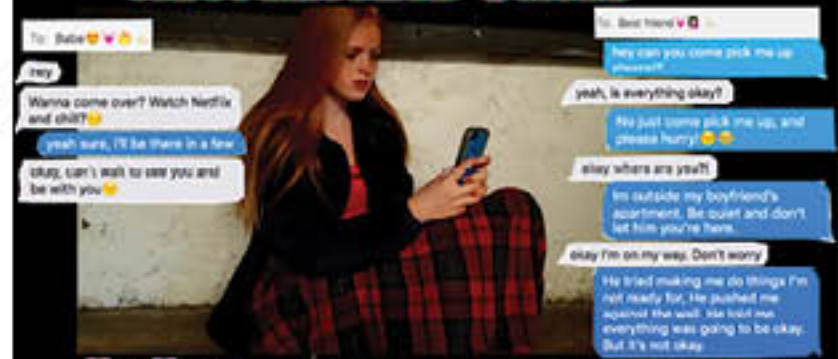
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Mitchell County SafePlace Love=Respect Print Ad Contest Winning Entry by Mitchell High School Freshmen Laurel Self and Ashley Renfro.

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





# Enjoying Everyday Life

## The Change That Transformed My Life

By Joyce Meyer

I started smoking when I was nine years old and smoked for many years. I liked it! So, when I decided to stop, it was really difficult for me.

Every time I tried to quit, I'd last a few hours and then I'd be running around, digging cigarette butts out of the trash or looking for cigarettes in my coat pockets – anywhere I could think to look for them!

I didn't have success until I got a revelation: I was burying myself in defeat with negative confessions.



I had to stop talking myself out of my victory.

Thankfully, I finally realized that I was causing myself to fail through the negative things I was saying about myself. For a long time, I would say, "I just know I could never quit smoking. And if I did, I'd probably gain a lot of weight."

But God was able to get through to me eventually and help me see that if I didn't change the way I was talking, I wouldn't change. Then, He began to put

a desire in my heart to start speaking what I wanted, not what I had.

I started saying things like, "I can't stand to smoke! These things stink and they're expensive. I don't smoke anymore!"

At first, I felt silly doing this because I would make these declarations while I was smoking. However, within about a week of changing my confession, I realized I now had the grace of God to quit smoking.

What I learned from this experience is I cannot rise above my own confession. And I discovered it takes two things to get the mouth under control: a lot of help from God and discipline and self-control.

God taught me to talk like Him.

Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue..." And Hebrews 4:14 says that Jesus is our great High Priest and we should "hold fast our confession [of faith and cling tenaciously to our absolute trust in Him as Savior]" (AMPC).

The word confession means "to say the same thing as." As the High Priest of our confession, Jesus can only do what we're saying that agrees with His Word. So, it's vital for us as Christians to learn how to speak the Word of God and not just say things based on our feelings or what other people have said about us.

Now, I believe we'll have greater success with this if we concentrate on what we should be doing with our mouth, rather than focusing on all the things we shouldn't say. It's self-defeating to go around saying things like, "I shouldn't do that... I'd better not do this..."

I want to encourage you to really listen to yourself and locate yourself. Where's your heart? The Bible says out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (see Luke 6:45). We need to stop saying, "Oh, I didn't mean that. I was just kidding." And we need to start being accountable for the words we speak.

The truth is, the things we say come from something that is formed in our heart. So, you can determine where your heart is by listening to yourself. You can hear bitterness and jealousy...insecurity and unhappiness.

How do you talk while you're going through a hard time? Or when you don't get what you want? Remember that what you say reveals the real you!

Changing the way you talk will change your heart.

Do you need a change of heart? All of us do. We all have room to grow in our relationship with God. And the way to make progress is to speak His language. When you do, you'll...

- Bless everything you can possibly bless. The Bible says we have the power to bless or curse with the words of our mouth. (See James 3:8-10.)
- Be thankful and say so! (See Psalm 100:4.) Don't just think about how much you appreciate someone – tell them!
- Be an encourager. Make an effort to give someone an encouraging word every day.
- Tell the truth!
- Speak the Word of God. Recite and memorize verses that deal with things you want to change or overcome, such as anger, unforgiveness, insecurity...
- Stop talking too much. Be quick to hear and slow to speak. (See James 1:19.)

God wants you to pray and ask Him to help you use your mouth to say the right things. When you do, it will change your life!

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](http://www.joycemeyer.org).





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# The Rotary of Spruce Pine

## Current News

By Doug Sudduth  
Mitchell County

Four Mitchell High School seniors were recognized as "Students of the Month" for May at the Thursday, May 18, regular meeting of the Rotary Club of Spruce Pine.

Seniors Megan Townsend, Tivia Clark, Tristen O'Shields and Allie Biddix told the club about their time as students at Mitchell and their plans for life after high school.

Biddix is involved in the Future Business Leaders of America, or FBLA, the student council and the aviation club at Mitchell. She works part time at Jerri's Seafood in Spruce Pine and plans to major in environmental and civil engineering at N.C. State.

She is an SECU scholarship recipient.

O'Shields will attend New York University and study acting on a half-scholarship. He is an officer in the International Thespian Troupe and said performing arts students are having multiple fundraisers to pay for the troupe's trip to Nebraska this summer.

He enjoys acting and said his favorite role was as Edward Bloom in "Big Fish."

"High School is hard,"

O'Shields said. "But, I realize it was all worth it now."

O'Shields said he has always jumped at any chance to sing and dance.

"It's kind of ridiculous," he said. "But, I'm kind of ridiculous."

Townsend also has a love of acting. She will attend Marymount Manhattan College in New York City and major in theater history performance and text. She thanked Mitchell performing arts teacher Greg Franklin and said she would ultimately like to get her doctorate.

Clark is a member of the Mitchell drama club and chorus.

A student of acting also, she said Franklin once told her, "Academics give a school its structure, but performing arts gives it its soul."

Clark has worked part time at Ingles for two years and said she has been counting down the days until graduation since middle school.

An incident involving a family member piqued her interest in crime and she wants to become a forensic scientist. She plans to complete her basic classes at Mayland Community College before transferring to a four-year university.

Mitchell High School guidance counselor Grant Sparks introduced the students.

At their weekly meeting on Thursday, June 15, the Rotary Club of Spruce Pine presented a \$500 scholarship to Davis Sutton, a member of the Mitchell High School Class of 2017.

Buddy Thornton spoke to the Rotary Club of Spruce Pine Thursday, May 25, about a career that took him from rocket science to rock 'n' roll. Thornton worked on several space-related ships such as the Saturn V and Skylab and projects and was sound engineer for multiple major music acts, most notably The Allman Brothers Band. During his speech, Thornton mentioned Gregg Allman's ailing health. In an instance of unintentional foreshadowing, news broke two days later Allman had died from complications of liver cancer. He was 69.

Growing up in 1950s Alabama, Thornton spent a lot of time building radios, tube amplifiers and playing music. Thornton spoke about "The Impacts," a band he and a friend formed in high school in which Thornton played bass guitar. After high school, Thornton entered college as a chemistry major. As a college sophomore Thornton began working at the Marshall Space Flight Center with Douglas Aircraft Astronautics in Huntsville, Alabama.

After a couple of years, Thornton left the aeronautics field and moved to Macon, Georgia, to work at a friend's studio, Capricorn Records.

He worked in Macon until 1976, when he moved briefly to Los Angeles to work at Record Plant Studios. Chris Stone, one of the studio owners, put Thornton in touch with fellow Little Switzerland resident Bill Szymczyk, who was at the time building Bayshore recording studio in Miami's Coconut Grove.

When Bayshore later closed, Buddy left the music business and went to work as an RF engineer for the 3246th Test Wing at Eglin Air Force Base in Valparaiso, Florida. After a year in the Florida Panhandle, he moved to Melbourne, Florida,



where he worked for the rest of his engineering career on Joint Stars and other programs as a defense contractor.

Thornton retired from the defense industry in 2009.

Thornton and his wife, Maureen, live in Little Switzerland.

The Rotary Club of Spruce Pine at its regular meeting Thursday, June 8, heard from Hospice and Palliative Care Clinical Director and registered nurse Lisa Boone.

Boone spoke to the club about trending changes in local hospices to for-profit and the benefits afforded by Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge for remaining local and nonprofit.

"We are one of the few local hospices remaining," she said. "We were recently accredited, we are patient-centered and transparent."

Hospice added palliative care, which is symptom management, to the services it provides four years ago.

"Palliative care is for people who may not be terminally ill, but have a chronic illness," she said. "Mainly, we have a team of people - CNAs, nurses, social workers, volunteers - that support people, regardless of age, with comfort and quality of life."

Boone said Hospice's June 3 golf tournament, the agency's biggest annual fundraiser, raised \$11,000.

Photo By Brandon Roberts

Narrative By Brandon Roberts



Pictured, from left, is Rotarian Tim Hayes, Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge Clinical Supervisor Lisa Boone and Hospice Outreach Programs Coordinator Brent Price.



Pictured, from left, is Rotary President Alex Glover, Senior of the Month Tiva Clark, Senior of the Month Tristen O'Shields, Senior of the Month Megan Townsend, Senior of the Month Allie Biddix and Mitchell High School Guidance Counselor Grant Sparks.



Pictured with Sutton is Rotarian Elaine Percival, who presented Sutton with the scholarship.



Rotary President Alex Glover presents music and aerospace engineer Buddy Thornton Thursday, May 25, with a locally handmade Rotary mug.



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By Pastor Bruce Cannon  
Mitchell County

*"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." (Psalm 127:3)*

As I write this article I am sitting in a hospital room where my daughter is about to give birth to our first grandchild. We have just passed midnight. My heart is so full of emotion. I am so excited about meeting this precious little gift of the Lord; yet I see my youngest daughter wrestling with the pains of labor. My heart goes out to her. I am praying that God will ease her pain, help her through the next hours and protect our little baby as he prepares to make his entrance.

I pause to remember that by the time you read this article July will be here and we all will be making plans for 4th of July celebrations. This causes me to reflect on the many who made huge sacrifices over the centuries that my family and I



might be able to celebrate freedom, witness the birth of this baby and have the tremendous privilege of being in a medical facility that is state of the art.

I then begin to count my blessings. I live in the most beautiful part of our State. I pastor a Church of people who love me and whom I love dearly.... who are praying

for my little girl right now. I live in a Country where I can worship God without fear of reprisal. I worship a God who has all power, who is always present, who knows everything and who loves me so much. How much more blessed could I be?

My daughter is now pacing the floor, rocking back and forth trying to ease her pain. It won't be long now until we meet this little fellow. His name will be Benjamin. There is absolutely no telling what this one, who has been prayed for since his conception, will do with his life.

What I promise to do is to pray for him daily, live my life to the very best of my ability that he will always see Christ clearly in me and spend just as much time with him as possible.

*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.*



Nina Mastandrea, Content Manager  
Avery County

Online Human Services program ranked among best in the U.S.

BANNER ELK, N.C. — In a recent ranking by AffordableColleges.com that listed the 25 best online human services programs for 2017, the Lees-McRae College online Human Services degree received a top spot.

"Our ranking lists some of the best human services degrees offered across the nation," according to the Affordable College website. "The schools in this ranking are also some of the most affordable, allowing you to maximize your return on investment..."

A resource for online learning and college affordability information, AffordableColleges.com hopes to help prospective students find schools and programs that match their educational interests while still being affordable, according to a recent press release.

"When calculating the rankings, we use the most recent data available from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)," according to AffordableColleges.com. "Run by the U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS offers reliable and accurate insight into affordability, academic pedigree, and online/distance learning programs."

Learn more about the online Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in Human Services program here: [lmc.edu/humanservices](http://lmc.edu/humanservices)

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](http://www.lmc.edu) or call 828.898.5241.

*Nina is the content manager of Lees-McRae College*



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## The Mystery of the Gospel

By Jason Koon  
Burke County



In his letters, the Apostle Paul refers to the mystery of the Gospel at least fifteen times, eight times saying that it had been hidden in ages past, but "now revealed" to the Church. Clearly, this mystery is important to the Christian life, but what is it? People have proposed different ideas, but when we look at these passages, we find a very clear explanation of this mystery, and we also find that it is a huge key to the success and the health of the Church and of its mission in the world.

Ephesians 3:6 says that this mystery is that "the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ." To us, this may not seem particularly profound, but in the First Century, this was a radical shift in the way Israel thought about their relationship to God. Israel saw themselves as the exclusive chosen people of God, which means that no one else had any right to call themselves God's people, and they saw their purpose as simply keeping themselves separated from the rest of the world. Sound familiar? In many ways, we haven't come as far in the last 2000 years as we'd like to think. Now, Paul, this follower of a little-known Rabbi named Jesus starts talking about the Gentiles being grafted in. Who could imagine such a thing? That the Gentiles would be members of the same body? Israel is the body. Israel is the only partaker of the promise, and as the people of God, our responsibility is to keep as far away from them as possible.

Now it is true that God's Word clearly says that we need to be careful not to get mixed up in evil; Revelation tells us to come out and be separate. It makes sense, we must defend the faith, keep the Gospel unstained, but what are we defending? We're defending this mystery, hidden for ages, but now revealed to His Church; that the wall of separation has been removed and redemption is available to everyone, and look at what this mystery did in Paul's life. Colossians 1:28 says, "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." Paul has given his life to warning and teaching so that everyone may have an opportunity to be made complete in Christ. This is the mystery of the Gospel; that God is building

for Himself a Kingdom made up of people from every tribe, every tongue, every nation, and every ethnic group. How dare we try to get in the way of this?

Finally, Ephesians 3:10 tells us, "so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known." This mystery is that the Gospel is going to go to the ends of the earth and God's Kingdom will be preached in all of creation. We heard this from Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, but here we see something even more astonishing. Even those who don't believe, even those who will never partake in the mystery themselves will be able to see the wisdom of God made known to them through us! Have you ever thought about what an awesome responsibility this is? That through us, God is showing His wisdom to the world. As believers, the way we live and the things we live for demonstrate the Wisdom of God to a watching world. As Russell Moore wrote, "The Church is a preview of what the reign of God in Christ is to look like. A colony of the coming Kingdom."

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



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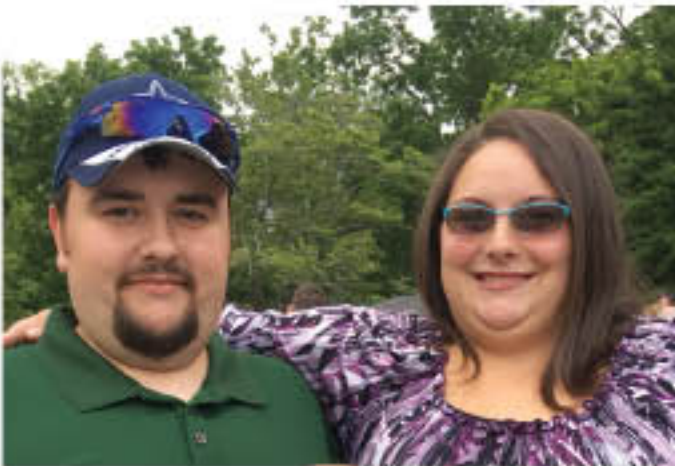
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By Dustin and Katy Duncan (McDowell Foster Parents)

Many times as a foster family people will ask us how we do what we do. How can you accept a child as your own and then let them go? The answer is very simple. With all these children have already lost foster families can give them something they will never have to lose again. We can give them HOPE. Hope that everything will be ok. I believe that the children we have fostered were put in our lives for a reason. We have been able to share our love and the love of Jesus Christ with children that may

have never got that chance. Every child deserves to be loved even if we can only do it for a little while. It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. Alfred Lord Tennyson. Fostering is the hardest, most REWARDING thing you will ever do. Give a child HOPE become a foster family.

Contact McDowell DSS to begin your foster family journey. 828-652-3355



Step Into The Temple Isaiah 6:1-8

By Jason Webb  
Burke County

Baseball season is here. It is upon us. Can you feel it? The smell of the fresh cut outfield grass, the dust of the infield, the crack of the bat, hot dogs on a grill at the ball park...all things that come to mind that I enjoy about baseball season.

From little league fields and the parents' extreme support of their kid's team, to the major league parks and raucous screams of 20,000 fans, the excitement of the game permeates this time of year. I'm reminded of a song by John Fogerty that many of you will know:

*Well, I beat the drum and hold the phone, the sun came out today  
We're born again, there's new grass on the field  
Just a-roundin' third and headed for home, it's a brown eyed handsome man  
Anyone can understand the way I feel*

*Oh, put me in Coach, I'm ready to play, today  
Put me in Coach, I'm ready to play, today  
Look at me, I can be Center Field*

Often times, when a pitcher would throw a ball past me, I would channel my inner Gomer Pyle, and allow a Sha-zam or Gall-lee to escape. I couldn't keep up with the speed of the pitches, so I turned to two other sports - golf & church league softball. One of those has the ball being held stationary on a tee, and the other has the ball being thrown at you at a pace similar to that of a snail. Those two I could handle.

Much like the excitement we feel when going to a ballpark, Isaiah writes in chapter 6 of being in the presence of God. Imagine the way his heart raced, his pulse quickened, and how he couldn't believe his eyes. Try to fathom the awe he felt as he stood in the presence of the Lord.

- Isaiah 6:1-8 ESV
1. In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of His robe filled the temple.
  2. Above Him stood the Seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.
  3. And one called to another and said:  
"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
The whole earth is full of His glory!"
  4. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.
  5. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"
  6. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.
  7. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."
  8. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

So many emotions that would've passed thru my mind.... what do you think passed through Isaiah's? I would've been dumbstruck, floored, blown away... Isaiah had to have felt all that and more, up to and including fear, hopelessness and redemption.

Let's set the stage for what Isaiah encounters in this passage. Chapter 6 starts off by stating that these events happened in "the year King Uzziah died". King Uzziah died somewhere around 740 BC. 2nd Kings 15:5 tells us that he was struck with leprosy for disobeying God. Some ancient Hebrew texts notate Uzziah's literal death at this time, while others state that he was considered to have died when he contracted leprosy. Uzziah had been a good King for Israel, reigning as well as any other King had. According to the Matthew Henry Commentary, Isaiah was allowed to see this vision as a reminder that even though the king of Israel had died, the King of Kings still sits on His throne.

Isaiah is able to see several facets of God - but these three are emphasized above the rest: God's majesty, transcendence, and His holiness. God's majesty is shown by the size of God's robe. The scripture says that the train of it filled the temple. Just. The. Train! The train of His robe served as the manifestation of God's majesty and glory, filling the church, i.e. the whole of creation, filling, enriching, and beautifying it with His presence.

His transcendence is put on display by the fact that His throne is described as high and lifted up, not just physically over the thrones of earthly kings, but exalted in a place of rule and lordship over them. God's throne demanded itself to be seen in three distinct ways - 1. A throne of glory, which we must worship. 2. A throne of government, which we must be subject to. 3. A throne of grace, to which we may boldly approach.

God's holiness is presented to Isaiah in multiple ways. 1. He is unable to see God face to face. In Exodus 33, we see Moses asking God to show him His glory. God responds to Moses saying, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and



will proclaim before you my name, 'The Lord' ... But you cannot see my face, for man shall not see Me and live".

Next, we see the seraphim standing above the throne. They are singing praise to the Lord, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is filled with His glory". When they praised God, their voices shook the door posts and thresholds of the temple, and the temple filled with smoke. Imagine how Isaiah felt. How much in awe he must have been of the scene that was surrounding him!

Imagine how in awe Isaiah must have been! How would you have reacted to all of that? Remember the ball player from the song Center Field? All the excitement of being back in the action? Is it possible Isaiah could have experienced that excitement? Sure it is. However, reality soon showed up.

Isaiah was in fear for his life. In verse 5, Isaiah says "Woe to me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

As soon as Isaiah said that, one of the seraphim flew to him, carrying a burning coal that he had taken from the altar. The seraphim touched the coal to Isaiah's lips, and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin is atoned for." The touching of the coal to Isaiah's lips is very key to this section, because it purifies him and prepares him for what comes next. We also see purification by fire in Malachi 3:3, where scripture reads "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver...". The silver refiner uses fire to remove the impurities from the silver, so he can see his image in the silver. This is EXACTLY what God was doing here!

God speaks. Directly to Isaiah. "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Isaiah then answers, "Here am I. Send me!"

All of the interaction in the first seven verses leads up to this moment between Isaiah and God. God allowed Isaiah into the throne room to receive confirmation that even though King Uzziah had died, God was still very much alive. That He allowed Isaiah to observe His majesty, transcendence, and holiness first hand, served as extra reinforcement for the call which Isaiah was about to answer. The seraphim that touched his lips and removed his guilt, had done so in order that he might answer God's call. Then finally, the call itself came. God asked who He could send, and Isaiah quickly answered that he would go.

When that moment comes, and God invites you into His throne room, what will you do? As you are being purified by the fire, will you respond appropriately, or will you fight along the way? Will your answer be, "Here am I. Send me", when that call comes your way? Will you respond with the eagerness of the ball player in the song Center Field? "Put me in, Coach, I'm ready to play" should be changed to "Put me in God, I'm ready to serve"! Be ready, for when God begins to develop you more, you must be aware that you will be asked to do more. Know also that He will prepare you, purify you in the fire, for what He will have you do. Be willing to allow God to make you into the blessing He needs you to be.

Jason Webb is involved in Prison Ministry at The Summit Church in Morganton.

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## Avery County

### Avery County Chamber

July 1—Annual Roasting of the Hog-Beech Mountain, Safety Fest, Town of Seven Devils, Seven Devils  
 July 1 & 2—Art on the Green, Historic BE School, Banner Elk  
 July 4—Parades-Banner Elk, Crossnore  
 July 6—The Bear, Assault on Grandfather, Grandfather Mountain  
 July 6-9—62nd Annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, McRae Meadows and Grandfather Mountain  
 July 8—Grandfather Marathon, Boone  
 July-August—Sunday Summer Concerts, Fred's General Store, Beech Mountain  
 July 14-16—Fine Art & Master Crafts Festival, Historic BE School, Banner Elk  
 July 14-15—BBQ Boot Camp, Sugar Mt. Resort  
 July 22-23 Pet Fest, Historic BE School, Banner Elk

## Burke County

### Burke County Chamber

Toastmasters Kick-Off Meeting, July 20, 2017 from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm at The Learning Center 414 East Parker Rd, Morganton, NC To reserve you seat, please call 828-580-5617 or email brbcleaningservices@blueidgehealth.org.

#### • Catawba River Baptist Association

We are putting together a mission team to serve in Chicago July 29-August 4th. The cost is \$200 per person which includes transportation, lodging, meals, trip shirt and all needed supplies. For more information and registration forms please contact our CRBA office. This trip will entail construction, VBS, testimonies and prayerwalking

#### • West Virginia Mission Trip

We will be taking a group to Fayetteville, West Virginia July 23-28 where we will do VBS, Nursing Home ministry, Block Parties as well as some light construction. This is a great trip for adults and youth as well as families with children. The cost of \$200 per person includes food, lodging (sleeping on air mattresses at New River Baptist Church), and supplies. For more information, registration and medical release forms please call our CRBA office or email me at rsmith@crbanc.org

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.

### VBS Information to Date:

Walker Road Baptist, 100 Walker Rd., Morganton, NC

June 26-29, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

First Baptist, 200 South Main St., Drexel

July 9-11, 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Mount Home Baptist, 2272 Mount Home Church Rd., Morganton, NC

July 10-14, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Abee's Grove, 654 Abee's Church Rd., Valdese, NC

July 12-15, 6:30 pm; 10:00 am on Saturday

East Valdese Baptist, 101 Eldred St., Valdese, NC

July 30-Aug 2, 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm

First Baptist, 500 Faet St, NW, Valdese, NC

July 30-Aug 3, 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm

High Peak Baptist, 3073 High Peak Rd., Valdese, NC

July 31 - August 4, 5:45 pm - to 8:45 pm; meal each night

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

### Morganton Seventh-day Adventist-Burke County

Saturday, July 1st., the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church will be offering FREE Blood Pressure Checks from 9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. All are invited to stay for Sabbath school (immediately following the blood pressure checks) worship service at 11:00 a.m., and FREE vegetarian fellowship luncheon afterwards!

Health Social - Sunday, July 9th., at 5:30 p.m. Please bring a plant-based (non-dairy / non-meat) dish along with copies of your recipe to share, if you would like! Come prepared to enjoy some great food and fun fellowship! For directions, please contact Cindy at 870-510-8048.

LIFESTART FREE Seminar - Learn how to Lower Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) Naturally. Tuesday, July 11th., at 10:00 a.m. Location: Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. 28655.

VBS - Fruits of the Spirit Big Heart Farms - Where God's Fruit Grows! Please join us for Vacation Bible School! June 26th. - 30th., from 6:00 p.m., to 8:00 p.m., at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. 28655. We will be learning about the Fruits of the Spirit in Galatians Chapter 5!

**Historic Valdese** - The outdoor drama "From This Day Forward" written by Fred Cranford is the flagship show of Old Colony Players. The summer of 2017 will mark the 50th consecutive season of production. This drama tells the story of the Waldenses, a people from the area known as the Cottian Alps in Northern Italy near the French border, and the founders of the Town of Valdese.

The 50th season is proudly directed by Kenneth Kay & Kim Cozort Kay  
 Rated PG13 for Battle Scenes

Purchase Tickets by calling 828-879-2129, order online , or get them the night of the show with cash or check.

Show runs Friday & Saturday starting July 14 and ending August 12 at 7:45pm.

**Waldensian Festival, Kickoff** is August 11 and the Festival is Aug 12.

New Entertainment rides for All Ages! Over 170 Food/Art/Craft Vendors with extended hours for Attractions and Tours. Come out and help us Celebrate.

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

## McDowell County

**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. VBS will begin July 10 through July 14. 9:30am to 12:00pm

**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.

**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. 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 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** - Bear Creek Baptist Church invites everyone to come to 5th Sunday Night Singing featuring Mark Robinson and Faithful Hearts, July 30 at 6 PM.

**Celebrate Recovery** - This is a Christ and Biblical Based Program, giving hip and help for men, women and families suffering from addiction. Any question contact Josh Wise@ 385-0061

There will be a meeting every Thursday night with someone there to talk to men, women, and their families

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

**Support Group For Caregivers Of Those With Memory Loss** to hold meetings the first Friday of each month from 1-3PM

Care & Share, a newly-formed support group for caregivers of loved ones who have 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 jautouzs@yahoo.com.

**First Baptist Church Spruce Pine** - 3rd Annual Fund Raiser Baptist Men Golf Tournament Hole in One, New Car, July 1, 2017 1:00 Shotgun Start Grassy Creek Golf Course \$60 each person including lunch, Corporate Sponsor \$500.00 includes 4 golfers large sign and 4 extra Mullingans Two flights, Captains choice, Long Drive, Closet to Pin, Putting Contest Motorcycle Sunday July 9, 2017 10:45am Be our Guest for a great time of worship and riding, Lunch will follow the morning service, then a ride through the back roads. Special Parking for all Bikes, 125 Tappan St. Spruce Pine, NC, 4 additional info call 828-765-9411.

**Mitchell County Baptist Association** - WALK FOR JESUS

Sponsored by Mitchell Baptist Association - Saturday, July 22, 2017 Begins 10:00 a.m.

— Starting point — First Baptist Church (Spruce Pine) parking lot

— Walk through upper street in Spruce Pine to City Drive-In

— Prayer stops along the way

— Walk back through lower street

— Ending point - back to First Baptist Church parking lot

All ages invited — a time for families, fitness and fun! No agendas, just a celebration of Jesus Christ, and a prayer walk for our town, our state, and our beloved nation.



# Bits 'n Pieces

Bring signs -- not political -- just signs to honor Jesus.

Vans will be provided for those who are unable to walk long distances, but who still want to be involved. For more information contact Mitchell Baptist Association at 765-9412.

**Mitchell County Chamber** - The Spruce Pine BBQ and Bluegrass Festival will be July 14 and 15.

**Mitchell County Historical Society** - Stories of Appalachia (Time and Location to be determined) Steve Gilly and Rod Mullen will present the story of George Carter, the developer of the Clinchfield Railroad.

**Mitchell-Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force** - A conference sponsored by Youth to Youth will be held at Queens University, Charlotte, NC on July 17-20. An awesome leadership opportunity to our youth to learn and make a difference with their peers in the fight against drugs in our schools and communities. Some scholarships are available. Contact the Task Force office for more information. Call 828-682-7899.

**Red Cross Blood Donation** - The American Red Cross serving Mitchell and Yancey County has volunteer positions open as Blood Donor Ambassadors assisting in the areas of Reception and Hospitality at local blood drives in Spruce Pine and Burnsville. With the need for blood donations increased during the holidays, this is a critical role and meaningful way to serve an urgent need through the Red Cross. Drives are held at the First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine and the Higgins Memorial Methodist Church in Burnsville. Volunteers serving in this role help the Red Cross provide a great blood donation experience for donors - helping to save lives. For more information and to apply go to <http://www.redcross.org/volunteer> or contact Kimberly Brewster, Volunteer Services Specialist supporting the Mitchell and Yancey area blood drives at [kimberly.brewster@redcross.org](mailto:kimberly.brewster@redcross.org) or 828-333-9809.

**Penland School of Crafts**--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. 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](mailto: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.

**Toe River Arts** - JULY 8, 2017 - LIVE EVENT - 6-9 PM, Dinner/Entertainment Auction begins at 7 PM, \$40 PER PERSON  
SILENT EVENT - 10 AM-5 PM, reception 4-6 PM, BIDDING IS FREE  
BUT YOU MUST REGISTER - Burnsville Town Center

**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 College**  
Understanding and Using Your Tax-Deductible Expenses (3 Hours)

There are many personal and business expenses which are tax-deductible that most people do not know about. What are these expenses and how can you use them to reduce your Federal and State income tax bill? We will discuss these expenses, how to track them, and where to record them for tax purposes.

7/6, Th, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Fee Waived Branch, Newland 828.766.1295

**Five Tips You "Gotta" Know if You're "Gonna" Grow (2 Hours) NEW!**  
Whether you are a startup or established business, there are five tips that are critical to your success. Learn how to put these strategies to work in your small business. Leave the class knowing five tactics to build a strong foundation from which to grow. 7/10, M, 5:30-7:30 p.m. - Fee Waived Collins - Yancey 828.766.1295

**How to Become a Networking Natural (3 Hours)**  
The business world is driven by relationships. Networking your new or growing business in a planned and strategic fashion can have a positive impact on success. Find out how to do it right. 7/11, T, 1:00-4:00 p.m. Fee Waived Snider  
Mitchell 828.766.1295

**Your Craft Business - How to Set Yourself Apart (2 Hours) NEW!**  
Being able to distinguish yourself from your competition is an essential skill for every creative entrepreneur. Learn how to identify what makes your arts/crafts unique and build your business brand around it. Come to the beautiful Yancey Learning Center in Burnsville and "set yourself apart!" Sponsored by the Toe River Arts Council and the Mayland Small Business Center! 7/11, T, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fee Waived Snider - Yancey 828.766.1295

**Smart Phone Photography for Business (2 Hours) NEW!**  
In this era of online sales, taking digital photos to market your product/service is crucial to sales. This class will equip students with tips and strategies for taking professional looking digital photos for websites, social media, and business publications. 7/13, Th, 5:30-7:30 p.m. - Fee Waived Morris  
Mitchell 828.766.1295

**How to Sell on Ebay and Etsy (2 Hours)** Ebay and Etsy are popular websites for selling a variety of items. This seminar will cover how to set up an account and build an online store at each site. Students will also learn best practices and tips to sell! 7/18, T, 5:30-7:30 p.m. - Fee Waived Anderson  
Mitchell 828.766.1295

**Manage Your Business With Excel (2 Hours)** Excel is a software program that allows users to organize, calculate, and format data using formulas. With an Excel spreadsheet a small business owner can simplify and manage their business finances. This seminar will give attendees an introductory knowledge of how use Excel in a small business setting. 7/18, T, 2:30-4:30 p.m. Fee Waived Anderson  
Mitchell 828.766.1295

**8 Secrets of a Profitable Artist (2 Hours)** It is crucial that artists create great art and stay financially solvent. Join us to learn eight valuable secrets to build profits in your creative business. Sponsored by the Toe River Arts Council and the Mayland Small Business Center! 7/19, W, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fee Waived Collins  
TRAC Art Resource Center, Spruce Pine 828.766.1295

**Smart Phone Videography for Business (2 Hours) NEW!**  
Video marketing is a great way for customers to connect to your business. Shooting a professional looking video to post on the web is a challenge. The seminar will give tips and strategies for producing videos that will help you connect your business with your customers. 7/20, Th, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fee Waived Morris  
Mitchell 828.766.1295

**Small Business Foundations (2 Hours)** - Gain an insightful overview of all the stages of business growth. Each attendee will do an evaluation of their current business to determine where it stands and growth potential. If you are just starting a new business, the principles in this class will help build a solid foundation. 7/25, T, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fee Waived Collins Yancey 828.766.1295

**Mount Mitchell Crafts Fair Primer (2 Hours) NEW!**  
Learn how to properly display your items to get the attention of prospective buyers. Cosponsored by TRAC, topics will include booth types, setting up, tent styles and recommendations, common show requirements, building displays that target your buyer, and the elements of a customer friendly booth. Held at the Yancey Learning Center in Burnsville a week before the Mount Mitchell Crafts Fair, this seminar will get you ready to sell. 7/27, Th, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fee Waived Styles  
Yancey 828.766.1295



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Mimi Camp

By Barbara Harrell

4 or 5 years ago I had a group of my grandchildren that really wanted to go to summer camp, but there were too many little boys to be able to afford sending them. This really hurt my heart, so I decided to do our own camp. We called it Mimi Camp, and it took place at my house. We set it up as a regular camp with similar activities and rules. However, Christian values, etc. would be the foundation on which this camp would be based. Our camp has come a long way and I would like to share it with you.

Mimi Camp-2017 Attendance 10 campers, 3 teen helpers and 4 adults. (Not all were present all the time) Camp started at 7:30 at our assigned places, dressed, with rooms cleaned and ready for the day.

Devotional was next and it was done by adults, teens and campers. The pledge came next as it is important to teach patriotism as well as Christian principles. Projects and crafts were enjoyed by all ages—from building the solar system to painting projects of tie-dye shirts to rocks.

Hiking, picnicking, learning about their ancestors, swimming and visiting the nursing home were all part of our curriculum.

I would like to share with you several of the most touching moments: Devotions were especially touching when the campers were 2 young boys reading the scripture of the armour of God. Then they had the students to draw the different parts and glue to a picture of a person and explain that each of them should put this armour on everyday so they could resist the devil!

Sharing and helping each other touched me immensely. One of our swim trips to the river proved to be challenging, because the river was high and swift. The bigger boys got across and then found a long strong stick to help pull the others across.

Spending time at the nursing home was especially beautiful as these kids sang Jesus Loves Me and This Little Light of Mine and then shared many hugs with the residents there.



Visiting the Nursing Home



Breakfast and devotional and pledge



Swimming in Rock Creek



Hiking and learning about their heritage



Painting rocks for our flower garden



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Barbara Harrell loving mother, grand-mother and great-grandmother. Part owner Blue Ridge Christian News.





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# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC Senate District 47

State legislators have passed a bipartisan balanced budget that continues our focus on providing tax relief to hard-working middle-class families, growing our state's economy, improving public education outcomes, and substantially increasing teacher pay, all while bringing the state's savings reserve to its highest level in history.

### A few highlights of the budget include:

- Lowering the personal income tax rate from 5.499 to 5.25 percent in 2019, while increasing the amount of income exempt from state income tax.
- Continuing the plan to substantially increase average teacher pay from last year's budget by providing an average 3.3 percent raise this year and 9.6 percent over two years. This is in addition to the substantial raises enacted in 2014, 2015, and 2016. In addition to teachers, school principals also see a significant pay increase.
- Incorporating a new plan allowing highly qualified new teachers start at a higher pay grade on the salary schedule, providing financial incentives to those who accept positions in low-performing schools, are licensed in special education, or STEM classes, or meet other criteria.
- Allocating over \$100 million over two years from lottery funds for public school construction in rural counties with struggling economies.
- Adding thousands of slots to the pre-K program for at-risk children, eliminating 75 percent of the wait list.
- Designating nearly \$3 million to provide support for additional foster children.
- Setting aside \$10 million for opioid and substance abuse treatment state-wide.
- Funding \$18 million for medical education, including increases to UNC School of Medicine and the school's Asheville campus.
- Allocating \$15 million over the biennium to community and rural health centers, free clinics, and other health services providers in rural areas to assist the uninsured.
- Providing more than \$4 million for training law enforcement officers.
- Earmarking \$2.3 million for a new firefighting aircraft in the wake of devastating wildfires in the western part of our state, including my district.
- Providing a \$1,000 salary increase to state employees and experienced-based step increases to State Highway Patrol troopers, clerks, and magistrates.
- Designating \$241 million to improve structurally deficient bridges state-wide, adding \$143 million to improve the safety and condition of existing roads, increasing contract resurfacing by \$20 million, and increasing funding for pavement preservation by \$30 million to extend the life of thousands of miles of roads.

As of this writing, Governor Cooper has indicated that he might possibly veto this bipartisan budget that includes key provisions that he claimed he also supported. I would urge the governor not to pander to the extreme left wing of his party, but to do the right thing and sign the budget passed by nearly 70 percent of all voting members of the legislature. However, if he should choose to veto a budget that includes his own priorities, rest assured that we will waste no time in overriding his veto.

As always, please share your thoughts with me on issues related to state government by emailing me at [ralph.hise@ncleg.net](mailto:ralph.hise@ncleg.net) or calling me at 919-733-3460.



Sen. Ralph Hise  
[Ralph.Hise@ncleg.net](mailto:Ralph.Hise@ncleg.net)  
919-733-3460

## NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel  
[Warren.Daniel@ncleg.net](mailto:Warren.Daniel@ncleg.net)  
919-715-7823

I am thrilled to announce that the North Carolina General Assembly should be ending its 2016 short session in the next few days. We have reached a budget agreement that achieves our shared goals with Gov. McCrory of prioritizing teacher pay raises, cutting taxes for the middle class, controlling the growth of government spending, and increasing our Rainy Day Fund. The \$22.34 billion budget compromise is one of the best budgets that I have had the opportunity to work on, and while there are a few areas in which it could be improved, overall I believe it takes a balanced approach to meeting the needs of our state, while controlling the growth of spending.

Here are a few of the highlights of the 2016-17 budget.

Our \$22.34 billion compromise plan includes a responsible 2.8 percent spending increase, invests hundreds of millions of additional dollars in public education and shores up the state's rainy day fund by close to \$475 million. As a result, our rainy day fund has risen from about \$100 million five years ago, to nearly \$1.6 billion today.

We are proud that the final product continues the discipline and conservative principles of spending responsibly, taxing sparingly and saving wisely that have turned North Carolina's fiscal outlook around over the past five years.

I hope that everyone has a great Independence Day. This is truly the greatest, freest country on the face of the earth. As always, if I can ever be of assistance to you or your family, please don't hesitate to contact my office at (919) 715-7823.

### Budget Nears Completion

A budget compromise between the House and Senate was released Monday.

The House and Senate are expected to vote on the budget proposal this week. The bill will then be sent to the governor for his signature.

The governor has 10 days to consider the budget before determining whether he will sign or veto the bill. If he vetoes the bill, it will return the House and Senate for a possible veto override vote.

### FFA students visit Raleigh

Students who participate in Future Farmers of America (FFA) always astound me with their good works and achievements.

I had the pleasure to speak with 17 FFA students from Yancey County who first crammed into my office in the Legislative Office Building before we headed over to the House floor on Tuesday. They shared stories about their recent work on building a more positive and productive environment in our community.

They were an impressive group made up of young men and women who will lead our state well in the future.

Agriculture teachers like Nicole Robinson are invaluable. Agriculture is our state's top industry, and we could not maintain our position as a leading agriculture state without dedicated teachers like Mrs. Robinson.

The students who visited kindly presented me with an Honorary "I Believe" Award. If you visit my legislative office in Raleigh, you will see it prominently displayed as soon as you walk in.

## NC House District 118



Rep. Michele D. Presnell  
[Michele.Presnell@ncleg.net](mailto:Michele.Presnell@ncleg.net)  
919-733-5732



Yancey County FFA students, Mountain Heritage High School Agriculture Education teacher Nicole Robinson and myself.





# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## US House of Representatives NC District 11



Congressman  
Mark Meadows  
202-225-6401

[www.meadows.house.gov](http://www.meadows.house.gov)

### Pray for the Shooting Victims

As many of you know, there was a shooting last week at the Republican Congressional baseball practice in Alexandria. In light of the terrible news, please be sure to pray for my friend Congressman Steve Scalise, Capitol police officers David Bailey and Crystal Griner (both of whom were injured while protecting everyone on the field), and the injured staffers Matt Mika and Zack Barth. Doctors are hopeful that all of them will make a full recovery—Congressman Scalise was upgraded to “fair” condition recently which is outstanding news!

Weeks like this one are a reminder that we cannot thank our Capitol Police officers enough for what they do every day. This situation could have been so much worse had they not been there in the line of duty. Please say a prayer for them. We often forget how much we really rely on our police until moments like these.

Senator Rand Paul was actually at the field at the time of the incident and said he saw officers Bailey and Griner continuing to protect the scene even after being shot. That's what courage and heroism look like. Thank God for them.

### House Freedom Caucus Calls to Cancel August Recess

The House Freedom Caucus is officially calling on Republican leadership to cancel the August district work period so that we can continue legislation and do what we promised.

With repealing Obamacare, tax reform, budget items, and other issues left to finish—Congress has too many important commitments to keep and far too few accomplishments made so far to go home for a month. If we don't make real, definitive progress on our goals by the end of July, then we should work in Washington, D.C. through the recess until we finish the job.

## NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell  
919-733-5805

[Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net](mailto:Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net)

By the time you are reading this, I expect the state budget to have been finalized. Barring something unexpected, there is a provision I would like to highlight. Specifically, the budget contains an increase to a cap that has been frozen in place for more than twenty years on per student spending for children with special needs. The law has been that the state would not provide additional money to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities or special needs if a given school district's population of those students were more than 12.5% of its total students. Within the new budget, the cap has been raised for the new school year starting in August to 12.75%. That means an additional appropriation of more than \$6 million just to increase by a fourth of a percent. Though the percentage increase in the cap is small, it is, nevertheless, significant for exceptional children in school districts that do not receive full funding. First, it will help additional children with the additional resources that children with special needs require. Second, it represents movement, if slight, in the right direction.

Last year, I chaired the House Select Committee on Education Strategy. We held a lengthy hearing on the issue of underfunded special needs students. We heard from local district directors of programming for such exceptional children. The committee concurred that something should be done. Each new dollar spent under the new cap is a new opportunity for more of these children. The NC House budget proposed raising the cap to 13% at a cost of just under \$12 million. However, in compromising with the Senate, the final number was halved since the Senate had proposed no increase. We do have agreement in the final budget, however, that a new joint committee of House and Senate members will be appointed to look at all the ways we fund schools, including exceptional children. I am very proud of the work that has been done on this too long avoided issue. At least, we have begun and, hopefully, the legislature will follow through.

## NC House District 85



Representative  
Josh Dobson

[Josh.Dobson@ncleg.net](mailto:Josh.Dobson@ncleg.net)  
919-733-5862

After two weeks of negotiations between Senate and House conferees, the compromise budget was introduced on June 19th. The budget is fiscally conservative but still makes the much needed investments in education, early childhood, rural healthcare, and economic development. It is expected that Governor Cooper will veto the bill.

There is much within the 446 page bill that could be of interest. However, teacher pay, cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for retirees, and state employee pay are among the topics that seem to draw the most interest. The total spend number is just over \$23 billion, which represents a 3.1% increase over the most recently enacted budget and a 4.3% increase over projected actual expenditures for the current fiscal year.

Teacher salaries will continue to rise. The average teacher will receive an estimated State-funded increase of 3.3% next year and a 9.6% increase over two years. The salaries for Principals and Assistant Principals will both move sharply higher. A new principal salary schedule will be based on a school's average daily membership and school growth performance, while assistant principal salaries will be tied to the teacher salary schedule plus 17%. With the new principal salary schedule it is hard to predict what the average percent increase is, but modeling suggests an increase of 8.6%.

Most state employees are getting a salary increase of \$1,000. Excluded from these raises are legislators, judges, and Council of State officials (e.g. Governor, Lt. Governor, etc.). There are a range of targeted pay raises for correction officers, Highway Patrol officers, Assistant/Deputy Clerks of Court and Magistrates. One cost-saving provision is that the budget will eliminate retiree medical benefits for new hires after January 2021 in order to reduce long term, unfunded health care liabilities. Since neither the Senate nor the House budget included recurring monies for cost-of-living adjustment to state retirees, the most surprising provision might be a 1.0% recurring COLA.

Monies for textbooks and digital materials will rise by \$11.3 million next fiscal year. A new Teaching Fellows program will be established; it is a competitive forgivable loan program that will provide students interested in pursuing teaching degrees in math or science up to \$8,250 per year. The loans may be used for tuition, fees and the cost of books. Loans made to Teaching Fellows may be forgiven if the recipient serves within North Carolina in a low-performing public school for one year or a public school that is not identified as low performing for two years.

The Health and Human Services part of the budget is where I spend most of my time. I am proud of the important investments we made. Money was appropriated to reduce the Pre-K waitlist by 75% in two years. The Child Care Subsidy market rate is also increasing for child care centers and homes. Also, through a grant process, an additional 7.5 million dollars will be available for access to care in rural areas of North Carolina.

Perhaps the parts of the budget that impacts most of my constituents are the tax provisions. Under the conference budget, the income tax rate will fall to 5.25% from 5.49% beginning in 2019. The standard deduction will increase to \$20,000 beginning that same year. The corporate income tax rate will decline to 2.5% from the current 3%, also effective beginning in 2019.

The first year tax cuts are minimal—only \$6.9 million, which is almost a rounding error in a \$23 billion budget. However, in the second year, the cuts are estimated to cut revenues by \$521.8 million followed by loss of revenue of \$989.1 million, \$1.03 billion and \$1.07 billion in successive years. We are keeping our promise to continue to reduce the tax burden on the people of Western North Carolina.

When all the debate is over and the budget passes both chambers, Governor Cooper will have 10 days to take action. He can veto it, in which case the budget bill will return to the legislature for veto override votes. He can sign it, which it means it becomes law when signed, or he can allow it to become law without his signature—basically that will happen if he does nothing after the passage of 10 days. Meanwhile, the legislature will begin the process of closing down in anticipation of adjournment in about two weeks.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve Western North Carolina.



## A Nugget from our History Past:

By Pastor Steve Williams  
Mitchell County



While being held on a British warship that was bombarding Fort McHenry, a young man asked, "Can you see the flag?" Training his field glasses on the site, Francis Scott Key said with Enthusiasm, "Yes!" That was the 14th of September 1814, and he had watched the unmerciful and unsuccessful bombardment all night long. As the breeze chased away the smoke and the darkness gave way to dawn, the flag was still there. Hurrying to his hotel room Francis wrote a poem about those anxious and agonizing hours. And it started with the question: "Oh say can you see?" He then gave the poem to his brother-in-law, Judge Joseph Nicholson, and he had it printed. When Thomas Carr, an organist, saw it at the Baltimore American, he quickly set it to music, and it became our national anthem.

### The Star Spangled Banner

*Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hail at the twilight last gleaming?  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars thru the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watched we so gallantly streaming?  
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.  
Oh, say does the star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

Christians also have a National Anthem and that is Amazing Grace. John Newton knew God's grace. The slave ship captain who became a preacher never forgot how God rescued him from sin. On John Newton's Tombstone it reads, "John Newton Clerk. Once an Infidel and Libertine, a Servant of Slaves in Africa was, by the Rich Mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Preserved, Restored, Pardon, and Appointed to Preach the Faith he had long labored to destroy."

### Amazing Grace

*Amazing Grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me,  
I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.  
From many dangers toils, and snares, I have already come;  
Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.  
When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God praise, Than when we first begun.*

Freedom is a great thing that we, here in the Good Old USA get to enjoy. As we have heard before in our history classes, while in school, and even in our church houses on Sunday, "Freedom is not cheap—help keep Her Freedom. And what all Christians must look at is the Cross on Calvary and realize the great price Jesus Christ paid for our freedom. Jesus Christ came and gave his life that you and I might have eternal life. See eternal life gives us Freedom. Salvation set the lost man or woman, boy or girl free from sin because our sin debt has been paid in full, if you have asked Jesus Christ into your heart. There is victory and Freedom for all who will seek it.



Let us pray and thank God for the freedom we experience through His Salvation and also the Freedom we still have in America.

### Words of Wisdom:

- The Christ life is like water skiing: if you don't keep moving you're sunk.
- A rumor is like a check: never endorse it until you're sure it's genuine.
- Jesus is the light of the world, and we should be His shining examples.
- Anybody can give up. It takes guts to keep up.
- Minds are like parachutes—they only function when open.

### Question of the month.

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Gen18:14

### Joke of The Month: Getting Old

An old man was wondering if his wife had a hearing problem. So one night, he stood behind her while she was sitting in her lounge chair. He spoke softly to her, "Honey, can you hear me?"  
There was no response.  
He moved a little closer and said again, "Honey, can you hear me?"  
Still, there was no response.  
Finally he moved right behind her and said, "Honey, can you hear me?"  
She replied, "For the third time, Yes"

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



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# Grace Community Church

## He Will Hold Me Fast

By Jerry Lewis  
McDowell County



For a long time, I have been fascinated with and moved by, the language in the Bible that speaks of God's right hand.

*My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.* (Psalm 63:8, ESV)

*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* (Isaiah 41:10, ESV)

Big word alert! Anthropomorphism: to give human characteristics to God. The reason we do such a thing is not to misunderstand God, but rather to understand him. God is so infinitely beyond us that we cannot understand him without thinking in human terms. Since God is a spirit, we know that he doesn't have a right hand. Yet, when God speaks to Isaiah, he describes himself as holding us up with his right hand. God condescends to our level so that we will understand his deep love for us.

But you can't stop there. In Psalm 73, Asaph describes our side of this sustaining relationship:

*Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.* (Psalm 73:23-24, ESV)

Don't miss this! God holds us with his right hand, but he holds our right hand. In order for this to happen, God cannot be walking alongside us. (If he was, his right hand would hold our left hand.) In order for God's right hand to hold our right hand, God has to walk in front of us, facing us. In other words, God's back is to our future (he already knows it anyway!) and his face is toward our face. How should we respond to such a God?

*Therefore, let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.* (Psalm 32:6-8, ESV)

God holds your right hand, with his right hand, his back to your future, his face toward your face, with his eye on you.

Last year I joined more than 10,000 other pastors at the Together for the Gospel conference in Louisville. With them I sang the words of this song. Today, you need to join us. Sing this with faith. "God has his eye on you, your hand in his."

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



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## Master Plan Creates a Vision for Future Investment in Downtown Morganton



*One conceptual view of Historic Courthouse Square in Morganton showing a permanent stage anchoring the the southeast end of the square across the street from the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center.*

and distilled it into a vision based on two core principles, seven key goals, plus a Top 10 in 5 (years) list of next steps.

The presentation was the climax of a month-long planning process to provide guidance, vision, and inspiration to help move downtown Morganton to the next level.

Stantec's Craig Lewis made the presentation and discussed the principles, goals, and top 10 list in detail.

The two core principles of the plan are to "Put People First", and "Life Begins at the Square." Speaking about putting people first, Lewis said, "This seems like a simple thing ... it's the people that walk around, it's the people that shop, it's the people that go to restaurants ... it's not the cars. And unfortunately for many of our communities we've spent a lot of time investing in how to make cars happy. We need to flip that."



*A conceptual design for possible residential development in the areas around Fonta Flora on N. Green Street.*

The seven key goals are to restore two way operations to the streets, maximize the Courthouse Square as a more flexible public space, focus activity into the core, diversify and expand housing, connect to the community, embed art into everything, and have fun and experiment.

After reviewing the goals, Lewis presented a list of 10 things he recommended the City and community do in the next five years to keep building on the energy and investment in downtown.

- Complete feasibility study, final design, and construction of the two-way street conversion
- Adopt a ground floor active use overlay for the core [downtown] blocks
- Increase retail & restaurant use on the ground floor of the core to 90%
- Attract a hotel to downtown
- Move the Arts Council to pioneer a new block and expand public art opportunities both permanent and temporary.
- Begin Courthouse Square Improvements
- Construct 100 new housing units in the downtown
- Convert College Street to a greenway street connecting the downtown to the Broughton and State property Campus
- Bury or relocate the overhead utilities around the core
- Create an outdoor courtyard space behind Brown Mountain Bottle Works

Lewis said these projects would require hard work and investment by the city and the public.



*Converting the one-way streets in downtown back to two-way operation is the top recommendation of Stantec.*

"We presented a lot of ideas, a couple that are big, that will require coordination by the city fathers and mothers [that require tax dollars]," Lewis said. "A lot of these other things are hundreds of different little ideas on a block by block basis where you all can have an opportunity to continue to inject new ideas and new life into these areas."

At several points during the presentation, Lewis asked for input. Lewis asked the audience to use their smartphones and answer online polls. As people gave their answers, the polls would update in real time. After reviewing the Top 10 in 5, Lewis asked the audience to vote on their Top 5 from the list.

The audience picked the following five projects to focus on:

1. Begin Courthouse Square Improvements
2. Increase retail & restaurant use on the ground floor of the core to 90%
3. Complete the two-way conversion
4. Attract a hotel to downtown
5. Create an outdoor courtyard space behind Brown Mountain Bottle Works

"You could feel the energy at CoMMA, and I think there was an overall desire to move forward with many of these plans," Jablonski said.

But there is still more to do. The consultants will take the feedback from Wednesday night, finalize some documents ideas, and present a final plan to the City Council later this year. The Council will ultimately have to adopt the plan and the vision for downtown.



# One Nation Under God

By Doris Thompson  
Mitchell county

*God Save America...  
We humbly pray on bended knee.  
Go before us, and watch over us  
On the land, in the air, and on the sea!  
From the greatest, to the smallest,  
On each pathway that we trod.  
Please Heal our dear Nation,  
As we turn to you, dear God...  
Please protect our dear America,  
As we seek your face, dear God!!*

*If my people, which are called by  
My name, shall humble themselves,  
and pray, and seek my face,  
and turn from their wicked  
ways; then will I hear from  
heaven, and will forgive their  
sin, and will heal their land.  
2 Chronicles 7:14*



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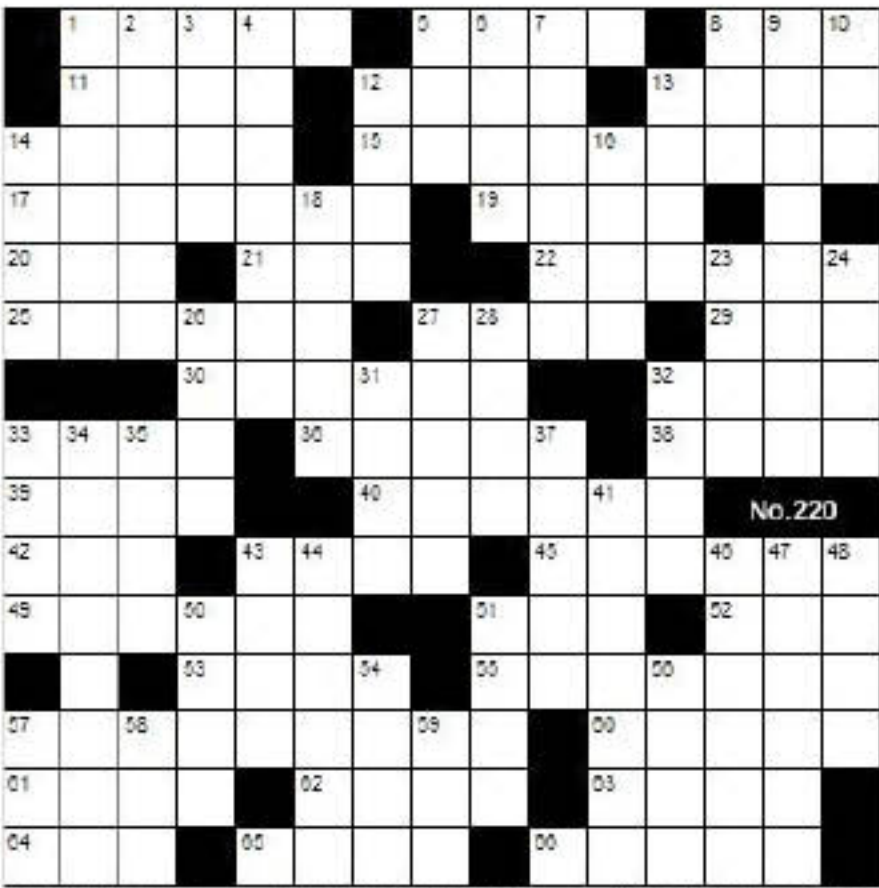


# Crossword

## ACROSS

1 a ruin and a desolate waste from Migdol to (Ezek 29:10)  
 5 with their tongues they have deceit (Rom 3:13)  
 8 of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark (Gen 6:19)  
 11 Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou , go, flee (Amos 7:12)  
 12 the LORD God formed the man the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7)  
 13 The burning sand will become a , the thirsty ground (Isa 35:7)  
 14 this message will bring terror (Isa 28:19)  
 15 But you must not eat meat that has its still in it (Gen 9:4)  
 17 To what can I this generation? (Matt 11:16)  
 19 the darkness is passing and the light is already shining (I Jn 2:8)  
 20 Lying lips abomination to the LORD (Prov 12:22)  
 21 the hour cometh, , is now come, that ye shall be scattered (John 16:32)  
 22 In her hand she holds the distaff and the spindle (Prov 31:19)  
 25 To them that were under the law (Gal 4:5)  
 27 not the least stroke of will by any means (1,3) (Matt 5:18)  
 29 my words are on the of my tongue (Job 33:2)  
 30 Ye made also be- between the two walls for the (1,5) (Isa 22:11) KJV  
 32 God made them and female (Mark 10:6)  
 33 when he saw Jesus off, he ran and worshipped him (Mark 5:6)  
 36 leaving a in the mud like a threshing sled (Job 41:30)  
 38 behold a man riding upon horse (1,3) (Zech 1:8)  
 39 Only when the ram's sounds a long blast may they go up (Exod 19:13)  
 40 David fought Goliath with and a stone (1,5) (1 Sam 17:50)  
 42 experienced in the of engraving (2 Chron 2:7)  
 43 she let them down by a through the window (Josh 2:15)  
 45 these sayings were abroad throughout all the hill (Luke 1:65)KJV  
 49 called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will (Isa 62:2)  
 51 Finish your outdoor work and your fields ready (Prov 24:27)

52 twenty first letter of Greek alphabet  
 53 Esau went to the field to for venison (Gen 27:5)  
 55 Satan might not outwit us. For we are not of his schemes (2 Cor.2 :11)  
 57 emulations, wrath, strife, , heresies (Gal 5:20) KJV  
 60 your will be filled to overflowing, and your vats (Prov 3:10)  
 61 for that day is great (Jer 30:7)  
 62 and begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Gen 5:32)  
 63 man shall not by bread alone, but by every word of God. (Luke 4:4)  
 64 She will return to her hire as a prostitute and will her trade (Isa 23:17)  
 65 seven lean, cows that came up afterward (Gen 41:27)  
 66 the hollow of his hand, and out heaven with the span (Isa 40:12) KJV  
**DOWN**  
 1 When Jesus stepped , he was met by a demon-possessed (Luke 8:27)  
 2 The plan good to Pharaoh and to all his officials (Gen 41:37)  
 3 And they that , as though they wept not (1 Cor 7:30)  
 4 with garments of salvation and me in a robe of righteousness (Isa 61:10)  
 5 See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of (Ex.35:30)  
 6 A answer turneth away wrath (Prov 15:1) KJV  
 7 represent four kingdoms that will from his nation (Dan 8:22)  
 8 O my God, I am ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face (Ezra 9:6)  
 9 I will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot in a (Zech 12:6)  
 10 Even when I am and gray, do not forsake me, O God (Ps 71:18)  
 12 after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a (1 Sam 24:14)  
 13 appeal, request (2 Chr 6:19)  
 14 it is only a from the boil (Lev 13:23)  
 16 Aaron shall thereon sweet incense every morning (Exodus 30:7)  
 18 Whose soever sins ye , they are remitted unto them (John 20:23) KJV  
 23 you have fallen from heaven, O morning , son of the dawn! (Isa 14:12)  
 24 The creatures back and forth like flashes of lightning (Ezek 1:14)  
 26 to settle down and the bread they eat. (II Th 3:12)  
 27 For the LORD has against his people (1,4) (Mic 6:2)  
 28 abbr. for the eleventh book of the New Testament



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31 David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a (Romans 11:9)  
 32 during the time of King Herod, from the east came (Matt 2:1)  
 33 husband of Jezebel (IKing 19:1)  
 34 Did I not proclaim this and it long ago? (Isa 44:8)  
 35 of them also which used curious brought their books (Acts 19:19)  
 37 So Joseph bought some cloth, took down the body (Mark 15:46)  
 41 you men of the foremost nation (Amos 6:1)  
 43 my ears have heard the of my wicked foes (Ps 92:11)  
 44 you were a powerful man, land an honored man (Job 22:8)  
 46 he will to death when there is no longer any bread in the city (Jer 38:9)  
 47 Give her the reward she has (Prov 31:31)  
 48 Render therefore to all their (Rom 13:7)  
 50 The man said, is now bone of my bones (Gen 2:23)  
 51 Water will forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert (Isa 35:6)  
 54 Judah's sin is engraved with an iron (Jer 17:1)  
 56 we through the Spirit for the hope of righteousness by faith. (Gal 5:5)  
 57 deplete, drain (Hosea 7:9)  
 58 The is yours, and yours also the night (Ps 74:16)  
 59 by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and (2 Cor 1:19) (KJV)

Solution on page 14



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 Friday, July 28th- Farmer's Market-Asheville



# A Meditation

## Feast of Pentecost

By Timothy Eller  
McDowell County

Since last issue the church has celebrated the Feast of Pentecost. Pentecost is the feast that occurred fifty days after Passover. Jesus was the bread of life and he fulfilled Passover and the Feast of Unleavened bread while he was here on earth. He then after his resurrection spent 40 days with his disciples fellowshiping with them and communing with them on an intimate level. His last command to them was "to tarry in Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high."

Luke 24:49: "49And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." After leaving the disciples and ascending into heaven he promised to not leave them comfortless.

John 14:16-18: "15If ye love me, keep my commandments. 16And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; 17Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless I will come to you."

Ten days after leaving Pentecost fully came to the disciples. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

"1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Then Luke the writer of Acts confirmed what had occurred: "14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:"

We experience Passover as Jesus was our Passover Lamb, we partake freely of Jesus as the Bread of Life. But have you experienced Pentecost.

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.



# Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge

## It Looks Like a Weed to Me

By Brent Price  
Mitchell County

My wife and I were working in our flower garden getting ready to mulch and set out new plants. I stepped into a portion of one bed to thin some tiny flowers that had re-seeded from the previous year. Carefully I began to pull the tiniest plants from the ground leaving behind the largest and healthiest plants. From another portion of the garden, Tammy asked what I was doing. I explained that I was thinning flowers that had "volunteered" from last year. She watched as I painstakingly pulled one small plant after another leaving space between the largest ones. Finally, she exclaimed, "Well they all look like weeds to me!" I looked up at her standing with her hands on her hips and we began to laugh. I said, "Trust me. They're flowers; wait and see."

If my wife had started her work in that particular section of the garden I don't guess there would be a single flower left to bloom later this summer. All those "weeds" would have ended up on the compost pile.

Pulling weeds in general is not rocket science. Weeds are easily identified. If a plant of some sort or another doesn't belong in a particular place or you simply don't want it growing in a certain area, then you pull it. It's easy to see how one person's weed could easily be another's flower.

It occurs to me that our lives are not so different from working in the flowers. Moment to moment we're faced with decisions. Accept this, reject that. Go or to stay, embrace or pull away.

While we generally take time to think over the important decisions, most of our day-to-day choices are made with a minimal amount of reflection. The pace of life demands that we make decisions quickly and move on. We don't always have adequate information. It's easy to be careless. Have you ever gotten in a hurry or not been paying attention only to realize that you've pulled up a flower instead of a weed?

Even what appears to be an insignificant choice can possess the power to change our lives in profound ways. Sometimes it is the simplest choice that can make all the difference. Stop and listen to the stranger who needs someone to hear their story. Offer appreciation to someone who's working in a thankless job, but obviously cares about the quality of their work. Invite someone to dinner who is lonely. Push aside your fear and judgment and reach to someone who needs a second chance. Or— you can simply pull the weeds.

More times than not, I happen to see more flowers than weeds. God provides the seasons each of us requires to grow and become so I try to be careful. Flower or weed?

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



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## Fireworks That Rock The Soul

Ken and Jan Merop  
Avery County



I felt the boom of the fireworks in my chest as I responded emotionally to the brilliance lighting up the Fourth of July sky. But that night, a deeper pounding had taken over my heart. Ken had just asked me to marry him, creating for us our own personal fireworks.

We display our national pride and solidarity by celebrating our nation's birth with heart-pounding fireworks. It's joyful, yet sobering when we think of the cost.

What other nation have been so blessed by God; or, have given so much around the world through aid, missionaries, military might and more? Yet, she has known her share of pain, tears and heartache through wars, natural disasters and foreign enemies bent on our destruction.

But, from its inception, its heart has always been to persevere.

Recently I learned that the word persevere as used in the Bible about our faith means to stay under with patience. Endure. Don't give up or retreat. Stand firm for truth. Be steadfast.

In 2 Peter 1: 5, NKJV we read, *"For this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love."*

Imagine if in our marriages and homes as well as in our national persona we practiced the above instructions. What if we diligently supported our faith with noble characteristics? Imagine if we applied the knowledge of God's Word to virtuous living. Then instead of seeking our own desires, just think what it would be like if we practiced self-control. How much more would we value and achieve perseverance...having that patient endurance during difficult times?

Undergirding it all with godliness, brotherly kindness and love creates a firm foundation to stand upon.

Practicing the above verse in marriage and family life establishes a safe home environment. Respect for one another and encouragement prevail. We grow in our faith and apply it to everyday situations. Our family rests in God's love and that of each other.

The same is true for our nation as a whole.

We have gotten away from the anchor and moorings that have held us steady and strong. God is being mocked. The foundations are crumbling. Fear, uncertainty and confusion are rampant.

As the fireworks burst into the air this weekend, I pray the resurgence of our faith in God will burst forth in our hearts and we may have a revival that will rock the soul of this great nation. Selah

## ILLUMINATION

*"...One nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all."*

*A celebration of freedom illuminates the night  
As a dazzling thunder flash bursts into the inky sky.*

*Let's be a colorful illumination of God's light -  
sparkling and shimmering in the darkness.*

*"Let your light so shine before men, that they may  
see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

*Matthew 5:16*



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.

*But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. James 1:25*



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# Walnut Grove Church

## Build the Wall

By Kurt Bomar  
Avery County

There's been a lot of attention lately about a wall being built. Whether it gets built or not I don't know, but it reminds me of another wall that needed to be built that we are all a part of. 1 Kings tells us how the walls of the Temple were to be built and there is a lesson in it for us.

1 Kings 6:7 *In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.*

When we go by a construction site we hear lots of loud noises: Jackhammers, drills, heavy equipment and lots of hammering. Not so with the building of the Temple. It went up silently. Why was this? I think partly because so much of the OT is a picture of things in the NT. What are we called in the NT?

1 Peter 2:5 *you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

We are the living stones and when we get to Heaven all work will cease. There will be no more sounds of drills and hammers and pick axes. We will be perfect. But wait a minute, if this analogy is true, where are we now? We're still in the world. That's the rock quarry. That's the place where we are getting worked on. We're being cut into shape. Then we're getting our rough edges ground off. We get chipped and polished. We're being shaped into perfection... and quite frankly, it hurts. To make things worse, often times God uses other stones to grind up against us to smooth us out.

You see we can't be polished smooth without the friction of others rubbing us the wrong way. We tend to look at others who irritate us as things to avoid, resist, and confront. But often God is using them to point out things that we need to change in our lives.

So, don't fight it. Whether it's others inside or outside the Church or whether it's just "bad luck", our first question to Jesus should be "Lord what are you trying to teach me in this situation?"

I know this is a hard thing to do!

But do you want to see how determined the Lord is to complete this project?

Philippians 1:6 *He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

He's not going to quit working on us, so let's pass the test ASAP.

As you get into the habit of this being your first question to the Lord, you'll find you are being polished and perfected. And you will be pleasing to the Lord.

Selah (think about it)

(Inspired by "Footsteps of the Flock, Jon Courson p.166)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



# Yancey County Hospice

## Freedom's Never Free

By Jacob Willis  
Yancey County

Freedom is never free. We hear this term often around the fourth of July. We remember the sacrifices that have been made by so many of our veterans that we might live in freedom. I remember a WWII veteran in the first church I pastored who fought in the "Battle of the Bulge". He lost a portion of his arm so we could worship on Sunday mornings. I remember all of the veterans at Bethlehem Baptist Church coming to the front of the Church on Memorial Day as we remembered those who gave their lives. These men still bore the marks of war, mentally, physically, and emotionally. As they stood there I often wondered what it must have been like to stare death in the face. Freedom is never free. When we look at the cross of Jesus our Lord, we see the cost of spiritual freedom. It is such a strange way to save the world. Why isn't faith in God compulsory? Why were we not designed as the angels to obey or be punished? Why didn't Jesus reveal himself at a press conference for all the world to see? Freedom, I think, carries heavy responsibilities. God chose to save mankind by sacrificing himself, to bring glory to himself. Not in a narcissistic way, but in a way which shows the grace of God. To show the universe the power and glory of unconditional love. The power to set the captive free.

This freedom cost Jesus everything. He died vicariously, in our place for our sins. He died so that he might live His life out in us for all eternity. His Spirit inside of us sets us free from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and eventually the presence of sin. This freedom is a judicious declaration based on God's love demonstrated on the cross. Romans Chapter 5: (6-11) "6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The word justified means "just if I'd never sinned". That is by definition freedom. We are now free to choose to serve the living God. That is the responsibility of being free. The responsibility to choose.

In America we may choose how we live our lives, how we raise our kids, and who we worship. Joshua in verse 24:15 says, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." Soldiers payed the price for each American to have true choices. Jesus payed the price for us to go free. Free to serve the Living God, and to live our life for Him. When we choose to serve Jesus we are choosing to live our lives in such a way as to bring glory to God. Jesus doesn't ask us to perform anything to receive His loving salvation. He only wants us to choose Him. Freedom is a wonderful thing, it cost Jesus everything. It is your responsibility to choose. The awesome thing about it, Jesus is the only choice that brings peace, hope, joy, and love to our hearts. We then, in turn have a responsibility to bring Jesus to our world. Phillip Elliot said, "There is only one life to live, and soon it shall pass. Only what is done for Christ will last."

Jacob Willis is an ordained pastor and Bereavement Coordinator for Yancey County Hospice. You may contact him at [jacobw@hospiceofyancey.org](mailto:jacobw@hospiceofyancey.org).





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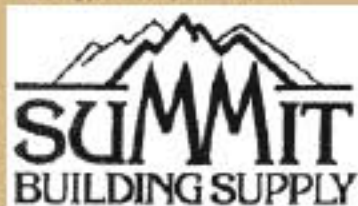
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End of Year

By David Burleson  
Avery County

It is difficult to believe that another school year has come to a close. It seems only yesterday we were preparing schools for our students' return. While this school year has brought many challenges and successes to our school system, we have met those challenges because of a team effort on the part of all involved.

We, again, take this opportunity to thank our entire community for the support given to our schools and the acknowledgement that the education of our children is very important to the future of Avery County. From our businesses and churches, we have also garnered tremendous support, not only financially, but also by allowing their personnel to come into our schools to mentor students, to proctor tests, and to provide contacts with positive adult role models.

In addition, we acknowledge the tremendous support on the part of parents, and



we appreciate the concern for their children and their willingness to work with us to provide the best educational opportunities possible. We continue to believe that one of the most important relationships that can be established is between the home and the school. If we

work together and support each other, the potential for success of every student is greatly enhanced.

However, we would be remiss if we did not thank our students for the great job they have done this year. We are proud of them, their accomplishments, and the way they represent our school system. We read the horror stories around our country about violence in schools, and while we know that could happen here, we are thankful for our outstanding Avery County Schools' students. We can still have school-wide assemblies, feel comfortable inviting guests into our schools, and allow our students to represent us in extra-curricular activities without fear of problems and embarrassment. Students, thank you for being the people you are; and, parents, thank you for the lessons you have taught your children! You represent all of us very well.

Additionally, much of the success we have experienced this year must be attributed to the faculty and staff at each local school. Because of their hard work, we provided clean, well-maintained buildings, an excellent transportation system, nutritious meals, as well as an educational program complimented by many across our state. Without these quality individuals, our school system would not be making the positive difference it is.

On another note, one of our school system's goals is to provide students the opportunity to be successful in their pursuits. One area that measures their success is the testing program implemented by the state of North Carolina. Based on preliminary results, we did well again in the state accountability program for the 2016-2017 school year. Even though we are proud of the accomplishments we have made, we continue to set higher goals for our students. While we do understand that testing is important, we also understand it is not as important as the students we serve. Therefore, our desire continues to be to provide a well-rounded, balanced education for all our children so they are able to meet the demands of an ever-changing world. We cannot allow testing to dictate what we do for our children, but we must allow the needs of the children to dictate what we do for them.

As we talk about schools around the country, one major area of concern continues to be the issue of safe schools. We are proud of the many initiatives our Safe Schools Task Force, which consists of members representing all aspects of the schools and community, have helped put in place over the last several years. This hard-working group of individuals tries to be on top of all school safety issues. One of the issues this Task Force has worked on is the door locks at all our schools. The ability to determine who is entering our schools is one way to make our schools safer every day.

We believe in empowering school faculties and staffs to establish rules and procedures that work best in their school, for we must do the best for the students we serve. Moreover, sometimes we must establish rules and procedures that will not be popular with every student but are necessary in maintaining order and discipline in the school environment. Therefore, our goal is for our Student Code of Conduct to mirror the expectations you, as the Avery County community, expect in our schools.

We believe in community schools and in empowering the communities to help their schools be successful and to be the center of their communities. Likewise, we appreciate all our community does for our schools. As we work to make the Avery County Schools the best school system it can possibly be, we look forward to your continued support.

On a personal note, I want to thank everyone in our community for your support over the last six years. I have been blessed to finish my career at home and will always be thankful to our board of education for providing me with this opportunity. May God richly bless you!

David Burleson is Superintendent of the Avery County Schools



Even Now!

By Shawn Thomas  
Burke County

*"Even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give You." (John 11:22)*

The situation Martha faced with Lazarus was as bad as it gets, humanly speaking. Her brother was dead. Who could do anything about that? Had Jesus come a few days earlier, sure, He could have healed him; but now Lazarus was dead, and had been so for four days. But in the face of that, Martha demonstrated great faith: "Even now", she said, "I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give You." Those words, "even now" are so poignant. "EVEN NOW": even when all human hope is gone. Even when the loved one is dead. Even now, she believed — actually "I KNOW" in fact is the term she used — that God could do anything through Jesus.



This faith is worthy of our imitation. In our worst moments, when all human hope is gone, we can believe that there is nothing that God can't do, as we come to Him in Jesus' name:

- Even now God can touch our country
- Even now He can touch our child
- Even now He can save that marriage
- Even now He can revive that church
- Even now — despite who you are or what you have done — He can use you to glorify His name in some great way!

Jesus said, "Nothing is impossible with God." If you will have the faith to believe that, like Martha did, even when things appear very difficult, then "even now" — in YOUR situation — God can do "great and mighty things that you do not even know"!

Shawn Thomas is Senior Pastor at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Morganton. His messages and devotionals are available at [www.shawnethomas.com](http://www.shawnethomas.com)



Sudoku

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

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Solution on page 14

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## Parkway Playhouse

### Parkway Playhouse Presents Bonnie & Clyde The Musical

By Kristen Livengood, Managing Director



Burnsville, NC: At the height of the Great Depression, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow went from two small-town nobodies in West Texas to America's most renowned folk heroes and Texas law enforcement's worst nightmares. When Bonnie and Clyde meet, their mutual cravings for excitement and fame immediately set them on a mission to chase their dreams. Their bold and reckless behavior turns the young lovers' thrilling adventure into a downward spiral, putting themselves and their loved ones in trouble with the law. Forced to stay on the run, the lovers resort to robbery and murder to survive. As the infamous duo's fame grows bigger, their inevitable end draws nearer. Patrons should be advised that this show contains adult language and content.

Bonnie & Clyde is a musical set to open at Parkway Playhouse on July 8th. The incredibly talented cast directed by Dwight Chiles, stars Briar Boggs as Clyde and Annelise Henry as Bonnie with Luke Haynes, Christine Caldemeyer, Hunter Taylor, Karen Yow, Randall Garland, Gabe Garland, Aaron Neighbors, Faith Creech, Olivia Hughes, Terisa King, Mike Yow, Jon Goldman, Lily Bartleson, Summer Kiesel, Leif Cedergren, Rigel Happer, Dakota Whitehead and Bruce Chuvala. Performances are on Friday and Saturdays at 7:30pm and Sundays at 3pm through July 22nd.

Following the performance on opening night, July 8th, a complementary Opening Night Reception for the cast and audience will be held. And on Sundays, July 9th and 16th, the cast will sit for post show discussions. Audience members can ask questions about everything from costumes to scenic design, acting and their individual roles in the production.

Tickets range from \$12 for children to \$22 for adults. All performances are at the historic Parkway Playhouse theatre, located at 202 Green Mountain Drive in Burnsville, NC. Tickets can be purchased by visiting the Parkway Playhouse Box Office (open 1-5pm Thursdays through Saturdays), calling 828-682-4285, or by visiting [www.parkwayplayhouse.com](http://www.parkwayplayhouse.com).

For more information about Parkway Playhouse, performances, volunteer opportunities, classes, auditions, and more please visit [www.parkwayplayhouse.com](http://www.parkwayplayhouse.com), or call 828-682-4285.

*Kristen Livengood is the Managing Director at the Playhouse. She was a former Office Assistant at UNC Campus Recreation.*

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Accentuate the Positive

By Cheryl Shuffler  
Burke County

LMS students make their own fidget spinners

Students at Liberty Middle School are getting into the latest fad: fidget spinners. But instead of just fidgeting with and endlessly spinning these hand-held toys, the students are actually incorporating hands-on learning to make them. Liberty Project Lead the Way teacher Clay Nelson said he decided to design his own version of the fidget spinner and recruit students to help assemble them. He said, "I saw that these fidget spinners were catching on at school, and I wanted to ride the wave while it was still here and make some money for my club while I had the ability to."



Liberty Middle School students Laterrian Turner, left, Douglas Luckadoo and Kenneth Lail assemble fidget spinners in the school's Project Lead the Way workshop.

cleaning them up, assembling the bearings and performing quality control on each one by testing them to make sure they work.

"It takes about two to three hours to print each spinner," Nelson said. "Once they are done printing, they are slightly rough and the pieces don't always perfectly fit into the holes created by the printer due to conversions. The students sand these down by hand, knocking any burs and blemishes down. After this, they place the middle bearing in, plus three individually cut pieces of steel, which were cut from cold rolled steel into the spinner frame. The only part of this which is ordered is the bearing; only one goes into each spinner."

Liberty's student-made spinners were available for sell at Friday night's TGIF special "Family Night" concert in downtown Morganton with the proceeds going back into the Liberty Technology Student Association to help create more cool stuff.

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam started the push with 3D printers four years ago and now they are scattered throughout the district. Putnam is always looking for the next new. He said, "Currently, we are waiting on the new WAZER, which is a water laser jet, and the Glowforge 3D printer, which also is a laser printer."

As for the fidget spinners, they were initially created for people with attention deficit disorders, autism or anxiety and just this year have gained popularity in schools. Some say the fidgeting helps release nervous energy and relieve stress. Nelson said, "My dad asked me what it was, and I told him that it was pretty much the equivalent of tapping your foot, but it's in your hands." Some schools across the country have deemed the spinners a distraction and banned them. Others, like Liberty, are turning them into lessons in physics, inertia and entrepreneurship.

Nelson said, "I know there is a lot of controversy with these spinners being in school, and people can say what they want about them, but I truly believe that these toys have sparked an ingenuity in students that we have not seen in the recent past. Students are coming to my room with their own homemade spinners, trying to fix them and also wanting to create different designs. I can't remember the last time I've seen a vast majority of students tinkering, taking things apart and putting them back together. This spinner fad is, in this regard, giving students a great outlet to finally express their creativity with their hands. I absolutely love it."

Burke County Public Schools' newest Board of Education member has occupied his seat for six months now and said it didn't take him long to understand that this board puts students first.

The board appointed Seth P. Hunt Jr. in November to serve out the term of veteran board member Catherine Thomas. Thomas vacated her seat due to growing commitments outside of Burke County that pulled her away from her board duties.

Hunt said of his experience thus far on the board, "It has been more gratifying than I ever thought it would be. I get bored easily intellectually, but the things we deal with as board members hold my attention. It is most enjoyable to be a part of this board. While the board doesn't agree on everything, every board member is focused on the education of our children."

Hunt said he sought the vacant seat because of the impact public education had on his young life, and he wanted to make a difference in this generation of students. He said, "Serving on the board is something I really wanted to do, not just to do something nice, but to be a part of something that is good for our kids and Burke County. I wanted to be a part of a group that is making a positive difference in the lives of children."

As a youngster growing up in Wilson County in eastern North Carolina, Hunt was the son of a school principal and teacher assistant.

A fidget spinner is three-pronged device with a ball bearing in the center. Nelson explains how it works, "The person using the spinner needs to put their thumb and index finger, or middle finger on the either side of the middle part of the spinner, the ball bearing part. Once the arms are free from obstruction, the spinner will freely spin for a duration once pushed, some I've heard can go up to three minutes of spin time."

Nelson's students are printing the spinners on a 3D printer,

"I was an average student," Hunt said. "I didn't apply myself as I should have. Now, I want students to understand when they graduate from high school or a community college or university that their education is just beginning. It is so true that education is life long, and if you can master the basics, you can successfully navigate life."

Hunt graduated from Saratoga Central High School and went on to get a degree in political science from Atlantic Christian College, which is now Barton College. While his career paths took various turns throughout his life, the one constant has been his servant leadership. Hunt has been a sheriff's deputy, an EMS dispatcher and a small-town mayor. He also spent 15 years as the CEO of state institutions, the majority of which was at Broughton Hospital. He finished out his career as the special executive to the facility director at the J. Iverson Riddle Developmental Center. In 2015, the year Hunt retired, the state recognized his years of service with the N.C. Order of the Long Leaf Pine, a prestigious honor the governor awards.

Broughton Hospital brought Hunt to Burke County 23 years ago, and he now thinks of it as home. Hunt's wife, Scarlett, recently retired as a teacher with Burke County Public Schools and their son, Prior, is a graduate of Patton High School and Appalachian State University and plans to attend law school. Hunt said he and his wife have enjoyed being involved in the community and feel blessed by it. He said, "We have had really good experiences with the school system with our son going through it and my wife working in it. I inherently knew serving on the school board was something that I wanted to be a part of."

Hunt's professional experience with education includes overseeing residential schools at the Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment Center, the North Carolina School for the Deaf and Broughton Hospital.

Hunt said his time in state government brings him valuable experience as a board of education member. He said, "I am a budget hawk. I believe that if you are going to change things for the better and make an impact, you have to know the system, otherwise you won't accomplish anything, and you will be left frustrated. I know the bureaucracy of how things work."

Hunt sees the role of the school board as a buffer between what is handed down from Raleigh into the classroom. His goal is to help find balance between teachers teaching the curriculum that is set for them and giving them the tools they need to do their job. He said, "I feel for teachers and how the pressures of testing and other measurements complicate the curriculum."

He said, "I don't want to be a blockade, but a mitigating force so teachers can actually teach. They know their jobs, and I want them to be able to do it. I am proud of our teachers and staff and all they do day in and day out to make our schools work. They provide for our children in an untold number of ways. There is no way to recognize everything they do as they do so much more than we see or hear about. They don't do it because they want the accolades. They know the effect they are having on kids' lives, just like the two to three teachers who had an impact on my life as I was growing up."

Hunt wants teachers to enjoy a good work life balance. He said, "It's not all about work, and it's not all about play. You have to work hard, and I appreciate and understand that teachers put in so much time."

Since Hunt joined the school board, he is most excited about being a part of finalizing the plans to build the new Mountain View Elementary School. He said, "I drive by there two to three times a week. It is thrilling to see it come about and to know what it is going to be and to know I'm a part of it."

Looking ahead, Hunt said he is equally excited about the direction Morganton and Burke County are headed in. "I am looking forward to the growth of our school system overall as Burke County grows. There are exciting things getting ready to burst, and this is an exciting time to live in Burke County."

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



BOE Profile: Seth P. Hunt Jr.

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