Blue Ridge Christian News

Power in the Blood

The Damascus Road

By Cassie Tipton-York

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

My Backstory

I grew up in Mitchell County. I did not have a perfect childhood, nor was there anything about me that was perfect. I was an illegitimate child who was not pretty or exceptional in any way. I sought solace for the imperfections of my life in friendships and through social acceptance, thinking that if other people liked me then I must be worth something. I hid my feelings from everyone. My fear of failure, continued on page 8

Behind the Addiction

By Joshua Wise

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

continued on page 4
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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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family’s prayers were being answered. A few weeks prior, my sister and brother-in-law had invited me to Bear Creek Baptist Church to listen to Chris Allen give his testimony. Of course, I declined their invitation, but they had continued to keep in contact with Chris Allen. Chris Allen had prayed with my family, and asked that God work in me. He had continued to keep in contact with my sister and brother-in-law, offering help when I was ready. “When time came that I was ready, and I knew that the help I needed would only come through God the Father. While spending 5 days in the hospital, God had dealt with me and I was ready for a new life, I was ready for Christian rehab. My brother-in-law contacted Chris Allen for direction on what facilities were out there. He told my brother-in-law that South Carolina Crossroads was his choice. He told us that Bruce Cannon has helped establish this facility and he knew that God’s hand was upon it. Was he ever right!!! From the moment my feet touched the ground of this facility…God was moving. I felt his presence like never before. God helped me and led me to a blessed change in myself and I was able to go and see him being renewed, set free and finding salvation for the first time. Upon reflecting back at the months leading rehab, God was orchestrating His plan for my life. He signed the right people, obedient people, and the right resources before us. God makes no mistakes!!! I am a living example. It’s amazing that God would allow someone like me who was so deep in sin, so far down in the valley as someone could possibly be, to the top of the mountain…overflowing with the abundance of His mercy, His grace, His love. He has delivered me and I am forever grateful. Why did God deliver me? Because He has a plan for my life…a calling. I keep thinking if there is a God I would need HELP!!! My Mom came as quick as she could, knowing that she would find her baby boy dead. She was at the point that all hope was gone, she had prayed and prayed…was God ever going to intervene. The next day God moved and when He moves things start happening! As hard as it was, my brother and brother-in-law had me involuntarily admitted (thank God for their obedience). After running from the law, wandering through the woods, it came to an end the sight of August 10, 2015. I was handcuffed and taken to Saint Joseph’s Hospital in Asheville. For the first ten minutes of my life, I felt free. Through many prayers, tears, and heartaches my
St. Lucien's Catholic Church
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Sunday Evening Worship - 6:30 pm

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Call us at 828-765-6800 to enroll in this important outreach effort.

A Meditation

And I now know that, Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me". Addiction is one of Satan’s most powerful tools, but I serve a God that is much stronger. Don’t allow doubt, fear, and the world’s statistics cloud your thoughts. My family prayed and didn’t give up on God...He intervened and I am a living example of his merciful grace. I want everyone reading this article to remember that “there is a difference between living and being alive”. We wake up each day knowing whether or not we will be performing life’s everyday responsibilities or we can wake up thankful and filled with the Holy Spirit, recognizing that he is King and able to meet our every need. As I end, I want to give special thanks to Southeast Carolina Crossroads (910-549-8487), Pastor David Chestnut, Pastor Bruce Cannon, Chris Allen, a praying family, and above all my savior, Jesus Christ.

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

I Am
By Timothy Eller
McDowell County

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

God made himself known to Abraham and also to us as “I AM” this is a common used term for God in the Old and New Testaments. The Hebrew word for this term is “yahwah” which simply means “I will be”. The Greek word for this is “eimi” --- this same means, he who always was, is, and always will be. Explicitly Jesus is the physical manifestation of the “I AM” of the Old Testament in the flesh. This God was the one who made promises to Moses and has made promises to us during his earthly ministry. Jesus is our “I AM”! When we ask who will comfort us, who will be our friend, who will be our counselor, who will be our protector and provider? He replies, I always was and always will be everything you need. Jesus is everything you need in this New Year.

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

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17
You Can Live Conflict-Free
By Joyce Meyer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I said, “But God, he started it! Dave should be the first one to say he’s sorry!”

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

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

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

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

“Abram said to Lot, ‘Let there be no strife, my brother; between you and me, between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are relatives. Is it not the whole land before you? Separate yourself, I beg of you, from me if you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you choose the right hand, then I will go to the left.” (Genesis 13:13-14 AMPC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

The headlines are scary! Drug use is up across the nation and is up in North Carolina.
• Four North Carolina towns make the national top 25 list for opioid abuse. (1)
• Nearly 16,000 people die every year from prescription drug overdose. (2)
• Heroin deaths in our state have skyrocketed more than 50%. (3)
• Nearly one out of every three opioid prescriptions, insured by employers, is being abused. (4)
• Approximately 8 percent of North Carolina residents reported past-month use of illicit drugs. (5)

Drug and alcohol use and abuse does so many bad things to the person using and to their family. It bankrupts families either by the user actually taking money designated for food, bills, etc. and using it to purchase drugs or by the theft and sale of family assets to support their addiction. It is the leading cause of imprisonment in North Carolina and nationwide. It is a leading culprit in marital breakup. Drug and alcohol addiction robs children of food and proper housing. Alcohol and drug use among employees and their family members can be an expensive problem for business and industry, with issues ranging from lost productivity, absenteeism, injuries, fatalities, theft and low employee morale, to an increase in health care, legal expenses and workers’ compensation costs. (6)

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

Opioid prescriptions must have more restrictions and limitations placed upon them. Nearly one out of every three (33 percent) opioid prescriptions, which are subsidized by America’s employers, is being abused. (7) We simply cannot continue to write prescriptions for mass doses of opioids and not maintain very strict control over their distribution. These drugs end up on the streets too easily.

Help is available to those struggling with addiction and to their families. Beginning on Thursday, January 26, 7:00pm Bear Creek Baptist Church, 337 Bear Creek Church Road, Bakersville, will begin offering Celebrate Recovery. Sessions will be held each Thursday night for males, females, and family members.

For more information please feel free to contact the Church at 828-686-4331.

References:
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
(5) https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/store_profile_north_carolina.pdf

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“Life Hurts, God Heals”

For Additional Information:
Call: Bear Creek Baptist Church Office:
828-686-4331
Joshua Wise: 828-385-0061

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Still in Need of Prayer
Franklin Graham

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

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

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

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

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

Reverend Franklin Graham is President and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and of Jamaritan’s Purse, an international Christian relief organization.
my feelings of worthlessness, and my self-loathing were all carefully tucked away. I was a master of faking—something which I had been for a long time to cover up my own weakness and insecurity.

Towards the end of my senior year in high school, my sense of inadequacy gained significant momentum as I was preparing for the next phase of my life. Although I had been accepted to college, I was more frightened of failure than anything else. It was during this time that I made a fateful decision: I started drinking with some of my friends from school. Alcohol offered a long-awaited refuge to my fear and pain, and like most people who have problems with addiction, I was good at drinking. Drinking gave me false courage and I used it to mask my true self, to escape from my problems.

After graduation, I managed to get into college, but the problems I was facing continued. I continued to drink heavily, and my grades began to suffer. I started smoking marijuana and then began to experiment with drug addiction. Within two years, I had graduated from college, but my problems continued. I started getting into more trouble, and my relationship with my parents began to deteriorate.

I was forced to give up my drug addiction and began a new life. I started attending meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, and I got involved in community service. I began to see that I was not alone in my struggle, and I began to turn my life around.

Gradually, however, profoundly, my addiction cost me everything: my marriage, my possessions, my self-respect, and eventually my children. Once DDS stepped in and removed my children from the home, I made one last futile attempt to get clean in an inpatient detox and rehabilitation center. I never believed that I could successfully get clean and stay clean, but I was driven by desperation. That’s when I realized that living a normal, clean life is possible. I was able to stay clean and sober for several years, and I was able to make a new start for myself and my family.

The Road to Damascus

I am sure the Apostle Paul, and probably most anyone who encounters Christ at some point in their life, thought nothing special would happen on that day, or on that journey, but when the Lord shows up, He shows up in a big way. For Saul (Paul), he was on his way to Damascus to punish followers of Jesus Christ when the voice of the Lord spoke to him and then he was rendered blind for three days. I was also blinded as I walked back to a normal, clean life.

For me, I thought I had been broken by God, or so I thought, and I was lost, a result of life, marriage, and society. The only way I could see was to go on living a normal, clean life. I was a member of the Church of the Nazarene, and I was expected of me. I was a member of the Church of the Nazarene, and I was expected of me. I was a member of the Church of the Nazarene, and I was expected of me.

It was in this place, I realized, that I was not alone. The Lord showed me that I was not alone, and I was not the only one who was going through the same things.

I have been in jail for about three weeks—the drugs were out of my system, the moment I had been dreaming was upon me, the moment when I would no longer have to worry about my feelings, my failures, and my mistakes. I was finally free of my addictions, and I was finally able to see the true value of my life. I was finally able to see the true value of my life, and I was finally able to see the true value of my life.

The New Life in Christ

Over the last six years, God has truly blessed my life. First of all, I am living a happy life to my parents, the love, the mercy, and the power of God. I am blessed to be an encouragement to those who have loved ones suffering from addiction and a beacon for those who may be seeking help themselves. What Jesus has done for me also serves as a reminder that although the world may try to discount His existence, He is still very much alive and performing miracles as the same as always. He is true and faithful to His Word. He came to seek and save those that are lost, choosing the footpath of this world to confound the wise and the weak to confound the things which are mighty (1 Corinthians 1:27). When you put your faith and trust in Him, you can do all things through His power and His strength (Luke 1:37), even overcome addictions that seem impossible to defeat.

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

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

The future looks bright for me, and I hope that I can help others who are struggling with addiction. My goal is to help others who are struggling with addiction. My goal is to help others who are struggling with addiction.
A Time for All Ages

By Doug Harrell

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

We have just finished most of our Christmas Celebrations and just a couple of more days until the New Year rolls in. Most of our family has rotated through and was a Christmas. After all, the days when we had the large crowd are probably gone for good, with the family expanding, new brides, new grooms and new great-grandchildren here and probably more in the near future. As the seasons of life change, the ebbs and flows of family also change. At times, really miss the days when all the children, the children and their mates were here on the holidays. I have watched what happened with Mother and Dad as we grew up, married and had our own children. We are creating our own family traditions and occasions, and Mother and Dad were not as big a part as they once were. As we move through life and the changes come, we can either embrace the changes or be bitter and resentful. I am still learning to make the embrace much more powerful than the resentment, learning to love the new rather than bemoan the change. Life is truly too short to be sad and down trodden when things don’t go as we might like.

Christmas Day was a time for reflection here on Harrell Hill. We had our granddaughter Geneva, who is four, and my brother Geneva, who is nine, with us. About 5:30 AM little Geneva woke up and let her open her stocking and gifts and about 6:30 mother Geneva woke and we did the same for her. The joy that both of them exhibited was truly refreshing as they expressed glee over the new found treasures that had been provided. Over those hours I had flashbacks of the mornings around the fireplace at Mother and Dad’s as we grew children were so excited about Santa Claus and what he had brought us. It usually was not a lot in today’s terms, but we were certainly blessed with love and caring that was provided. I tried again to look at Christmas morning through the eyes of the four year old, the eyes of the seven year old and the eyes of the ninety year old. As a seventy three year old, the true meaning of Christmas was more on my mind than the presents under the tree or the stocking. Even little Geneva made several comments about it being Jesus Birthday and that he was the Son of God, the gift of God. I can only imagine what her eyes or ears were filled with those things because I am not really sure that she has reached enough maturity to really understand, but what do I know? I am not sure what it looked like from the eyes of the twenty year old, but I could see signs of joy and also signs of sadness and loneliness in Mother’s eyes. She made the statement several times that it was hard and I can only imagine what life would be like to have lost your mate of almost seventy years, to feel like you were no longer an integral part of the activity that was taking place around you. To not really be able to maintain a conversation thread for more of a few moments, to really not know what was taking place with children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and great great grandchildren.

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

The Enemy Within
By Paula Hoitschaw

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

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

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

Morganton Seventh-Day Adventists Church

Give Me Jesus
By Rick and Cindy Mercer

We are told that one day there will be so much more, sorrow or sadness. I long for that day. If you have ever had the carpet pulled out from under your feet, or been even stood by helplessly as you watched a friend or family member struggle...you too probably understand the desire for a fresh start or just a better world to live in.

Unfortunately, there are plenty of distractions in this world that can “de-role” any of us at any given moment. And when it is one of those “distractions” cripples us to the point that we lose interest in our job, our family or even life itself. We have become all too familiar with mother word for these distractions...or addictions as it is referred to too often. Addictions are present in a multitude of categories. We could even name hundreds of addictions in this given article. But rather than inundate ourselves with the list...it seems more appropriate to steer our thinking to the overcoming of the addictions. Allow me to illustrate through a story I heard some time ago.

There was a man who owned a farm. He was farming all day and had a hard time finding any time to enjoy his farm. He then decided to hire a new preacher. He threw him over his shoulder and carried him to his warm cabin. Mountain Bob began to cure the preacher’s wounds, doing everything he could to save his life.

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

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

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

It was then that he noticed the preacher quietly reading his Bible and realized that the pages of the preacher’s Bible would work perfectly to roll his tobacco. Bob went over to the preacher and showed him how he could have a sheet from his Bible. Of course the preacher said, “No way...I cannot let you do that!” I can’t believe that you would even ask me such a thing!”

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

Bob paced and paced. He just couldn’t take it anymore. So, Bob grabbed his gun and rushed into the room. The preacher mentioned to him that he was gonna stop him. Bob took the Bible and opened it and the preacher was so taken aback by what he saw that he stopped in his tracks and said, “No, no...I cannot have this...I can’t believe that you would even ask me such a thing!”

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

We can then joyfully sing and say, “Give me Jesus...gives me more and more of Jesus!”

Pastor Rick and Cindy Mercer pastor the Morganton Seventh-Day Adventist Church at 2157 Jamstown Road, Morganton. They can be reached at 828-520-3149 or cmerrv@bellsouth.net. Check out www.morgantonad.org. Their passion is to share the love of Jesus with all who will listen.
Nonresistance to alcohol compromises marijuana resistance
By Rev. Mark H. Creech

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

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

Thus, the primary reason pro-alcohol forces went on making new markets for wine, beer, and spirits had a banner year in North Carolina. Pastors, rarely, if ever, preach on the subject of alcohol use and abuse in their churches anymore. A few years ago, a pastor asked me to come to his church to preach on the topic. After I finished my sermon, several people came up to me afterward and said it was the first full sermon they'd ever heard on the subject.

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

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

Maine also voted on a recreational marijuana initiative, but the vote is so close that it will take at least a month to determine whether it succeeded. The Huffington Post notes [1] that even without Maine, 65.9 million Americans living in seven states and the District of Columbia — or 21.4 percent of the U.S. population — will soon have access to legal marijuana.

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

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

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

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

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

Such claims, however, don't stand up to scrutiny. It is true Prohibition didn't end alcohol use altogether, but it did succeed in reducing consumption and its harms. William J. Bennett and Robert White in their book, Going to Pot, reference journalist Daniel Okrent's recent research in his book on Prohibition, titled Last Call. They write:

"Prohibition had the effect of reducing alcohol consumption by 70-75% in its first few years. Furthermore, the highest rate of consumption of alcohol in American history was 2.6 gallons of pure alcohol per person just before Prohibition. It stayed below that for a long time, even long after repeal, not reaching that level of 2.5 gallons again until 1973."

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

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

Since 2000 there has been legislation filed in the North Carolina General Assembly to legalize medicinal marijuana, which is simply the first step toward legalizing recreational pot. Each year, these measures have been rejected.

So the question is this issue will continue to push North Carolinians for a decision in its favor. And if churches don't start taking on alcohol as a threat to their communities, if preachers don't start preaching against alcohol use and encouraging abstinence, if citizen Christians are unwilling to resist alcohol for what it is — America's number one mind-altering drug that destroys more lives than all the other drugs combined — then there seems to be little ground for standing on to defeat weed.

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

Reverend Dr. Mark Creech is Executive Director of the NC Christian Action League. You may contact him at rev.markcreech@christianactionleague.org or 910-787-5665

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2017

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Avery County Schools

Looking Forward
By David Burleson

Dear Friends and Supporters of the Avery County Schools:

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

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

- The Avery County Schools had the highest graduation rate in the state. (For 4 out of the past 5 years, Avery County has been in the top 4 in the state at graduation rates [4th, 1st, 3rd and 1st].)
- The Avery County Schools and the Avery County Commissioners worked together to refine our one-to-one technology program for students.
- STEM students from every school district participated in Hour of Code Activities to encourage interest in Computer Programming. Many schools are developing maker spaces thanks to the work of Nancy Carver, maker specialist and various grants.
- A record number of our students participated in our local and regional science fair with forty-four entering state competition.
- A system of common assessments has been implemented to strengthen instruction in grades 3-12.

We have implemented the Hilltop reading program in all elementary and middle schools along with the Fusion program at Avery High School. Hilltop will be implemented at the beginning of the new year.

The Avery County Schools Child Nutrition Program continues to serve a nutritious breakfast and lunch at each of our schools.

The Avery High Marching Band completed one of its most successful seasons ever, achieving one of the highest scores ever at the ASU marching band contest.

The Avery High ROTC program supported the “Trees for Troops” program and the cadets competed in several state and national competitions.

- The Avery High Construction Classes supported Habitat for Humanity, assisting in the construction of new homes for our community.
- The Avery High FFA attended the national convention and had a record number of former students named American Scholars.
- Our students collected an unprecedented amount of food and toys for needy families.
- We had one of the largest groups ever induced into the North Carolina and National Technical Honor Society at Avery High School.

The Avery High Beta Club had one of its most successful years ever with members providing more hours of community service than ever before.

Each of our schools induced a record number of students into the Beta Club.

The Avery STEM Academy was recognized as one of the top 50 high schools in the nation by Newsweek.

The Avery STEM Academy was also recognized by NCDPI for having a 100% Graduation rate.

Avery High School was recognized by NCDPI for having a graduation rate above 95%.

Avery Middle School implemented PBIS along with holding a school wide Heritage Day. They have also created TAG competitions and implemented challenging enrichment opportunities based on student interest.

Banner Elk Elementary School had 4 Odyssey of the mind teams representing the school and the Banner Elk Kiwanis. The teams are made up of 4th and 5th graders along with a team of 6th graders. Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) will begin again in February after a very successful program during first semester. This old-time string music program will be open to all students and staffs from all schools. Project Lead The Way Robotics was taught in 4th and 5th grade Science classes and the Team to Ski and Snowboard program was kicked off.

The Blue Ridge Academy received the NC Works Governor’s Award of Distinction - Innovative Partnership. The students also worked with Feeding Avery Families to pack food boxes for our community members.

Crumpler Middle School continues to focus on being a STEM middle school and was awarded a $7,900 arts council grant.

Crossnore Elementary School was awarded a national Distinctive Title One Rewards School. The school also obtained grants that helped purchase bicycles for bike club to be put together by members of their bike club.

Forsyth Elementary School completed in Outdoor Classroom.

Riverside Elementary helped establish an active Ski Scout Troop that led a toy drive for children during Christmas. Riverside hosted the Over the Mountain group and participated in their Revolutionary War program in a partnership with Unimom. Riverside students sang Christmas carols for residents of the Bryant Center.

These areas of student participation and success can only be credited to our staff members, our parents, and members of our community.

With continued teamwork and a dedicated ACS staff, we will exceed the level of past accomplishments and experience even greater growth and accomplishments in 2017.

Quality public schools are critical to the economic development of our community. It is the school system's mission to provide a quality education that will build the skills necessary to live a productive and independent life.

There are many opportunities for this semester, and one of the most exciting is continuing to offer any family that has a three or four-year-old that is not currently enrolled in a Pre-K program SCOTTIE (Supporting Children’s Opportunities through Technology, Innovation, and Education) mobile preschools as a classroom that is housed in a renovated North Carolina school bus. SCOTTIE, a state-funded program, will continue to travel to ten designated locations in the county and offer as advertised schedule of educational activities for children enrolled. Currently, we have 90 students enrolled in SCOTTIE. This program is designed to allow parents and their children to have early childhood educational opportunity near their homes. Children who are accepted into the program will be met with a highly qualified, birth-kindergarten teacher and credentials from School. Pre-K services will be offered as well as opportunity for parental participation. We believe that successful start to the school-age program must be an expectation for all children in order to ensure a high-quality education from kindergarten to second grade. We are also beginning a STEM curriculum in our new graduation program to literacy and other educational skills will foster students’ success as they journey through their educational pathway. Interested parents may contact our office, Angela Vinacca, SC-PK Director or Janeen Brown, Administrative Assistant at 731-2000 to register a child or for more information.

Finally, I would like to mention one area of longstanding interest with our local William YMCAS. ACS along with the YMCA is offering a Snow Camp to families that need childcare on days when school is not in session due to inclement weather. Snow Camp, sponsored by YMCA professionals, will be held at the YMCA for families in kindergarten through sixth grade and will operate from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Daily activities will consist of craft, games, sports, indoor/outdoor activities, swimming and tutoring.

Transportation to the YMCA and a bag lunch must be provided by parents. Students will need to bring outside clothes, homework, bathing suit and towel to be used. The costs are as follows:

- $15 per day (with $10 pre-registration fee)
- $30 daily drop in rate

For information contact Lari Blanton at 828-837-5500 or www.ymca-avery.org.

I want to thank each individual in our school system who has given a day or two to provide the best possible education to our students. My gratitude is extended to each parent who has provided support to their child and our school. It is imperative that we continue to work together as a community to reduce the number of students dropping out of school and to continue to emphasize the importance of education. It is also of great importance to provide the needs of each student that is in our school system. We are very blessed to be a part of a community that conscientiously assumes responsibility to educate children and to provide the necessary resources for their success.

Again, thank you for all you do for education. It is our mission to ensure that no child is left behind and with your continued support for public education and ensuring a long tradition of excellence from high school with direction, confidence and skills for the next stage of their lives. May you have a joyful and prosperous 2017 and a successful “Spring” semester!

David Burleson is Superintendent of the Avery County Schools
Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence

By Beth Davis

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

She’s been married for 10 years; they have a kindergarten-age child. She loves her husband, but he’s always kept her isolated: she wasn’t allowed to drive, get their finances or talk to her family. She wasn’t allowed to have a job. She never hit her, but he did her down and made her feel worthless almost daily. She couldn’t do anything right, no matter how she tried.

Yeah, he smokes sometimes. You know the drill: hanging out with the guys, unwinding after work, watching TV. I saw him bring out the best in him. About two years ago, he started using meth... and started snacking her around a bit. About a month ago, he started shooting up meth. Not surprisingly, that’s when things went from bad to much, much worse. He beat her regularly, and the beatings became worse as time passed. Recently, they’ve been missing each other’s calls for a long time.

About a month ago, she started making excuses. Why? He was going to come and visit her. If she did anything wrong, specifically if she had any ideas about leaving! All the while he was regularly, savagely beating her. Then came that rainy, dreary Sunday night. His plan? He told her she was “going to just get rid of her completely.” His plan was to kill her, then cut her up in little pieces so no one would ever find her body. What did it matter? She was so alone, so isolated, nobody would miss her anyway. She managed to sneak out, on foot in that nasty weather, until she found herself by the lake, sitting on the curb of that little store.

Yes, we’re all aware that abuse of the drug and alcohol abuse is to our family and friends. We worry ourselves sick, and see the damage they do, spend many sleepless nights. We pray and pray some more. We beg the addict to go to rehab, to get counseling, to get help... anything kind of help! We bargain with the addict; we bargain with God. We beg the addict to get back to church. Many times we beg our pastor to please try to intervene, to offer prayer chains.

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

Sometimes we blame the victim. We even beg her to “just don’t make him mad,” “try not to push his buttons.” Or a guilty trip on her. “Divorce is not an option.” “Remember your vows — for better or for worse.” “You made your bed now lie in it.” “Think of the children — they need their father.” Nn she’s never hurt them!”

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

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

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

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

Source: Beth Davis, SafePlace, Mitchell County, NC

Life Lessons

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there are approximately eighty-five foster children in just this one county that I live in. The drug and alcohol addiction that is taking place is destroying the lives of all ages. My prayer for the New Year is that this county return to the Christian values that have made it such a great nation and a wonderful place to grow up, start and marry a family. Just this past weekend, Christmas weekend, forty people were shot in just Chicago alone, a dozen died. The Center for Disease Control reported 32,404 deaths due to drug overdose in 2015 and the rates have increased again this year. At least 64 law enforcement personnel have been killed in the line of duty this year part of them by ambush. One ray of hope is that abortions have been declining in the past few years but the numbers are still staggering.

The best hope for a renewal of our basic way of life is through the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. Remember, a revival starts in the hearts of each of us as individuals. Please be in prayer every day for our mothers, our fathers, our children, our families and our leaders as we look forward to a revival of the Holy Spirit of the Lord to be accepted by each of us. I know the Lord is willing and knowing, we are listening and opening our hearts to him! Wish each of you a blessed and prosperous New Year. May God bless each and everyone.

Doug Harrell is a life-long resident of Mitchell County. Owner of Harrell Hill Farms, Inc. a member of Bear Creek Baptist Church and Publisher of the Blue Ridge Christian News.
Bridge42 Church

Gospel Centered
By Jason Koen
Burke County

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

“Our Father is Heaven... Your Kingdom come Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.” - Jesus (Matthew 6:9-10)

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

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

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

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

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

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The Rest of The Story
Farmer Doug

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

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

The second truth is that Barbara, my wife of fifty-three years, has never been a pushover. She might be little of stature but she is not little on wisdom and the things that we have to communicate. She has always been able to get my attention in a so-called “shiny minute”. I definitely gave a rise out of both her and Clint on this issue.

Needless to say, we continued to watch Pastor Glenn Howe and had a good night clap session afterwards.

Happy New Year
Doug

Sunset At Harrell Hill

Dear Friends,

I receive letters, email, phone calls and personal visits from many, thanking me for recounting my close encounters and near-death experiences at Harrell Hill Farm. I confess that I often wonder how it is that Christian brothers and sisters can derive such pleasure from Farmer Clint’s near misses with eternity.

You may be surprised to learn that such occurrences are commonplace throughout my lifetime, even pre-farming days. For example, on one day I will recount how I was run over by an outboard motor after falling into one of Alaska’s most frigid and dangerous rivers. Or perhaps you’d like to hear about the night I was attacked by a moose. But not now, let’s stay close to home for the time being.

On a summer’s eve, Doug, Barbara and I were resting in the kitchen at their farmhouse at Harrell Hill. I was celebrating the fact that we actually had a short time to relax by the farm, hopefully anyways. We had a good meal and then we walked to the old cabin that was a short drive down the road from the house.

As Barbara and I digested her fine home cookie, Doug offered me a second piece of Hawaiian fritter cake... a sure sign of impending doom for me! This dessert is a Barbara specialty and had become my overwhelming favorite. And I knew that if Doug offered me a second slice something terrible was about to happen to me.

He began, “You know, there is so much to do around here and it seems like there are too many hours in the day.” I was feeling more confident than usual as I knew Doug could do a lot of things but even he couldn’t make the time go slower.

I quizzed, “how do you propose that we get more done? Perhaps I could wear a miner’s hat, with the lights on top, and work all night long. Just think, Doug, I can dig, plant, weed, spread fertilizer, during the day; then crawl around on my knees and dig potatoes, pull corn and other veggies at night. I could take a walk in the sunlight at the end of each corn row... or maybe rest beside the green lake beans... or perhaps moose, ever so briefly, in the orchard patch. By sunrise I would already have chosen the over-ripened cabbage and tomatoes for the piglets’ breakfast. That way you can work me around the clock. That would make you happy!”

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

Believe me, friends, I enjoy being somewhat unexperienced, I have grown to love farm chores as each day fills with exciting, back-breaking, dangerous projects. I even became accustomed to getting out of bed at 4:30 AM to Doug’s bellowing from the foot of the stairs, “Pollard, pancakes are ready. We’re burning daylight!” I would spring from my bed, don my Farmer Clint attire, and descend for breakfast, and another refreshing adventure on the farm. And, always, I would note my friend’s Bible, open to his daily devotions, resting on the end table. I accepted the notion of being mired in dirt by 5:30 AM because that’s what farmers do. Prayer, pancakes and projects... can it get any better than this? But
No Regrets Family—Help My Teen is Rebellious
Pistor Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

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

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

One huge factor we tend to overlook about teens is their relationship with God. As a parent I cannot expect my child to act like a savior if the Sea of God does not live in their heart. A Christian’s heart has been transformed by the work of the Holy Ghost. The Bible describes a Christian as a new creation, “old things are passed away and all things are become new.” What that means is that within every Christian is a desire to please God. We often mistake what we call a backslidden child for what is actually the “prodigal son”, one who grew up in a Christian home but has truly surrendered their life to Christ. I know that parents who will desire to obey their parents, because that same heart wants to obey God. Every parent will have some conflict with their teen child, but struggles will soon be resolved because a Christian will come under the conviction of the Holy Ghost and the discipline of God (Heb. 12:7). Give your teen every opportunity to go to Church and attend their own services. Allow for their own decisions. God will not fail to answer their prayers.

Second, choose your battles wisely. Many arguments with teens can be avoided simply by clearly defining the important issues. Let me speak clearly on this subject. What are we more concerned about—keeping our teen off drugs and alcohol or the kind of music they listen to or the way they wear their hair. In his younger teen years I was not always in agreement with the way my son wore his hair, but I did not go to battle on that particular issue. However Pains and I will go to battle and stand firm on issues like alcohol, dating curfew, questionable friends and other things we fear would draw our teen away from their relationship with Jesus. Our children’s relationship with Christ is our number one priority. I have seen parents argue over insignificant issues while totally ignoring the more serious problems teens face. Clearly communicate what is expected and be willing to discuss and compromise on issues that do not directly hinder their relationship with Christ. For example we are willing to bend on curfews and cell phone texting to a teen that is showing maturity and responsibility. We try to allow our teen the freedom to build their own identity. I believe that even young men is known by his actions.—by whether his behavior is pure and upright. Prov 26:11 (HCSB)

Third, focus on character. We tend to focus on behavior; however, God wants to build character in your child’s life. The whole book of proverbs is targeting a young person to fear God and gain wisdom to navigate through life. God spares years developing a young sheepboy to be the king of Israel. In 1464, Agostino di Duccio was elected to produce a statute for the local cathedral. However, Agostino suddenly abandoned this project.

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

The idea is God is at work in your child’s life (Philippians 1:6). He is concerned about the spiritual growth and development of our child. He is directing at molding a young person to fear God and gain wisdom to navigate through life. God spares years developing a young sheepboy to be the king of Israel. In 1464, Agostino di Duccio was elected to produce a statute for the local cathedral. However, Agostino suddenly abandoned this project. In 1476, Antonio Sanclie was commissioned to salvage the marble and complete the project; yet he soon abandoned the effort as well. Finally, in 1501, twenty-six-year-old Michelangelo was contracted to attempt to save the project. He would not finish until 1504. When he put down his chisel, the statue of David remained, representing one of the greatest masterpieces by human hands.
What Grace!
By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County

1 Peter 5:10-14 says the following: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, set you straight. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have wrote briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcucus my son. Grace be with you. Amen." Notice how v. 10 begins. The first words of that verse say, "But the God of all grace." The conjunction "but" draws a contrast. The Apostle Peter in the verses just prior to our passage in this study deals with two main things which draw a contrast to verses 10-14.

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

The other contrast involves Satan and the opposition he throws in our way. He goes about trying to cause problems in our lives, seeking to turn us away from the Lord. Verse 6 uses the word "deceit" when it comes to disclosing Satan’s lies in our lives. In our King James Bibles, we find that word "deceit" is translated in other places in the New Testament as "drown" and "swole up." It is to the Greek word that is translated to "fall down." Satan certainly has no good intentions at all for our lives.

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

God Has Grace To Give To All (v.10)
1 Peter 5:10 refers to, "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." "Or" is a source word. It tells us where something originated or came from in his life. All true grace comes from God. When you need grace, all you need to do is ask Him for it, and He will send it to you.

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

There is not a person on the face of the earth that Jesus did not die for at Calvary. But that does not mean everyone is going to Heaven. One must personally receive Christ to be able to walk on the streets of pure transparent gold in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:17).

God's Grace Is Part Of An Eternal Plan (v.10)
Peter speaks of "eternal grace by Jesus Christ." While in this present world, we face suffering in some form every day of our lives. Sometimes it looks like our pain and suffering will never end. When you compare your present sufferings with eternity, they just last a little while. We are assured of a day when there will be no suffering (Rev. 21). We are called into God's eternal glory. That was the plan before the worlds began, when there was no one in the universe but God. That plan involves several different matters. Never forget God is making you through the circumstances of life, both positive and negative. Certain things will happen, but He has a purpose.

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

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

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

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

God's Grace Brings Peace To Christ (v.11-13)
It is a perpetual praise. The praise of verse 11 is to be "forever and ever." The scheme of grace is that God gets the glory, rather than man, because man is saved by grace and not through his own works (Eph. 2:8-9). If man could produce his own salvation, then men would get the glory rather than God.

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

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

God's Grace Brings Love And Peace (v.14)
All of those who are in Christ Jesus have two very important parts of those who receive salvation. There is charity, or love, which every believer possesses. Romans 5:5 says... "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." God gives us a sufficiency of love to love others that we could not bring ourselves to otherwise love.

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

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

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

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

The Spirit of the Lord has been working in such a way like never before. We have seen so many people saved, delivered and healed. The people continue to come from far and wide. I believe a person could spend a lifetime here and still not finish all the work that needs to be done. We have not even left the area of Lake Victoria yet. There are still so many unreached areas. The people here lead very simple lives. Our Christmas was anything but commercial. These people sing many of the same songs that we sing about the birth of Jesus such as Away in the Manger and Silent Night, but the difference here is they have nothing to give one another. All they have: all their praise to the Lord. Christmas here is celebrated around the church. They come very early and begin with worship. Every age group has its own program; children have a robotic program, youth have a dance skill and the older people have a choir. Of course there is praise and worship and then the Christmas message. After the message there is food for all. We had a great Christmas here even through it was difficult to realize it was Christmas when it was over 90 degrees outside. I am so excited about the New Year’s Services. Here in Attica they have what they call a crossing over. The week before New Year’s Day they have a series of services every night and then finally on New Year’s Eve they have an all-night service and cross over into the New Year. We have been invited by so many churches to preach this service. Unfortunately we can only be at one at a time. We are in the middle of services here in a location called Kumi. Saturday we are heading out to another even more remote area for the cross over service and then a big crusade on New Year’s Day. Please continue to pray for us. Todd is getting more and more invitations to hold youth rallies. God is really growing him as well. We love you folks so much. We pray you have a great New Year.

George Patton is an evangelist/misionary to the world from Grace Baptist Church in Margenton.

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The New Year

By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County

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

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

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

Since I know the spiritual implications in celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas, I began to wonder if New Year’s Day had any biblical ties. According to Wikipedia, the Babylonians made promises to their gods at the start of each year that they would return borrowed objects and pay their debt. The Romans began each year by making promises to the god Janus, for whom the month of January is named. In the Mediterranean, the knights took the “peacock vow” at the end of the Christmas season to reaffirm their commitment to chivalry.

At watch night services, many Christians prepare for the new year by praying and making resolutions. As you take the opportunity to slow down and rest with holidays behind you, there’s just one more day of celebration within reach. It’s my birthday, January 5th. That’s right and today I’m giving you the chance to finish out the roll of wrapping paper. While you’re exchanging those Christmas gifts, remember me.

You may think I’m stretching the truth but I’m sure many years ago, my parents celebrated my birthday with thanksgiving and joy. Imagine with the thoughts of baby Jesus fresh on her mind, my mom told me wondering about the life of Mary. I have sat many times talking to God and wondering all about his 13 years compared to our humans.

One day I plan to know the whole story. Seven years after my physical birth, I was reborn spiritually. Talk about celebration. Luke 1:15 KJV reads, “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” Isn’t that awesome? Not only did my family, friends and I get excited when I gave my heart and soul to Jesus, but the angels and God rejoiced.

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

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

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

Several of you have told me that you have been proud to see your son Michael working at Kmart — and I have to say that I am proud that he is working too. And he has to, that is a good thing. I can remember my first job, it was as a stocker and clerk at the little grocery store and pet store across the street from our house. The man who was the owner was a woman by the name of Barbara Conley, and one of the things she emphasized was that there was always something to do. If there were no customers in the store, she would have us clean the shelves, or dust them, or move the cart up to the front. (I still do that when I walk in stores today!) But the worst sin was to be caught standing around at the cash register doing nothing when she was working again. After Barbara had left the store, it was always a good feeling when the came in unexpectedly and saw the shelves in good order. One, two, or even three, four times, and you would be standing up at the front, talking to the cashier — and that was that. I am beginning to be found doing what had been told to be doing when the come.

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

CONCLUSION

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

I see a goal last year to read 25 books by the end of the year, and I did. I finished my 74th yesterday! One of the longest, and best books I read this year, was a biography on Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 A.D. — the man we often refer to as St. Augustine. After being converted from a life of sacrilege as a young man, Augustine spent a lifetime of service as a Bishop to an adult. In his later years, he counseled a dying man, from which he would not recant. Those who were with him said that in his last weeks, Augustine had 4 Psalms (of the psalmist David) posted on his wall around his death bed. He spent his last days in prayer and repentance and preparation for his coming to the Lord.

We would do well to imitate this great saint. If the end is near, let’s get ready for it. Peter 4 says do the following things: PRAY, LOVE, SERVE. And even if the end of the world is NOT in 2017, or even if it does not portend the end of our lives, we will not have wasted our efforts. These are the things we should be doing every year, until our Master comes. Remember Jesus’ words in Mt. 24:40-41: “He who is ready will be saved, and he who is ready is the one who trusts in the Lord.” Let’s rededicate ourselves today, to PRAY, LOVE, and SERVE, until He returns.

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

Grace

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

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

Grace

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

Forgiveness

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

Patiencce

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


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

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By Chad Cahoon
Mitchell County

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

Chad Cahoon is the Superintendent of Mitchell Co. schools.

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Lord, and give Him praise and honor for changing our lives.
I often remember as I reflect on what God has done for me that my life wasn’t always this way.
John 10:10 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (KJV)

Preacher Chris Rathbone serves as Pastor at Innsbrook Baptist Church.

Dave Says

Dear Dave,

We just started following your plan, and we have $29,000 in debt. We make $55,000 a year, and two of our smaller debtes — one car and a credit card — are both $7,500. The credit card has a higher interest rate, so my wife thinks we should pay it off first. I look at the car as a necessity, and for that reason I think we should pay it off first. Who’s right?

Pat

Dear Pat,

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

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

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

— Dave

Dear Dave,

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

Sandy

Dear Sandy,

Honestly, I think that about the dumbest thing a person could do. I hope I wasn’t too cuticular.

Gold is going down like a rock right now as people start to believe in the economy and the economic direction of this country again. The stock market indicates this is true, and in the process, gold becomes worth less and less. Gold is essentially a fear-based product, and the less fear that’s out there, the cheaper gold is.

That’s not how you want to fund your IRA. Sandy. You want to fund it with something that has a long track record based on growth due to the performance of the companies involved — not someone’s greed or fear. Gold is a horrible investment, and I don’t own my except for one nice watch and a pair of cufflinks. That’s it!

— Dave

Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including The Total Money Makeover. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 12 million listeners each week on 570 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DavesRamsey.
All Things New
By Marlene Houk
Burke County

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

Isaiah 36:4 "Trust ye in the LORD; for I will yet rise up to save his people Israel." 

Panic pushed through his soul as the pain gripped with an iron hand. It had been seven hours, and he could feel the push of the force that propelled him into the unknown. Dully he heard the wail of the sirens as he struggled against the darkness and the suffocating claustrophobia. He could barely see the light at the end, but he could sense the intense efforts of those on the other side as they assisted him. Finally, he broke free into the inviting bright light of the emergency room where a team of nurses, doctors, and operating room technicians worked feverishly to assess, aid, and comfort his tiny body. He heard pain sounds, two of which he recognized from his nine-month journey, and he relaxed, knowing that all was well. A new adventure had begun. Although he didn’t know what the future held, he knew that the familiar voices would be there with him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### Where Should You Go?

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Unless You Are Very Sick Or Injured The Best Place For Your Care Is Your Primary Care Provider.

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Walnut Grove Church

Under the Spout Where the Glory Comes Out
By Kurt Bonar
Avery County

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

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

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

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

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

Here’s the point. When we wander away and we don’t feel the blessings of God we need to know that He didn’t shut off the waterfall. It’s still going full power. He is faithful even when we are not. God doesn’t monitor the columns based upon how good we are doing. He simply gives us the choice to bask in His blessings or not. But His love for us is always there.

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

Kurt Bonar is pastor of Walnut Grove Presbyterian Church.

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New Year's Dawning

By Joyce Harwood
Madison County

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

Our life is short and we are but a flame,
Our time is like a flash,
So will you live the future
Just the way you lived your past?

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

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

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

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Horizon Church

Another Year to Get It RIght....

By Mike Stroud
Burke County

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

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

Mike Stroud is a pastor at Horton Church in Morganton. Music Director at www.amazinggrace-radio.com, and owns Stroud Building Supply in Morganton.

www.brcnews.com
Happy New Year Everyone
By Marcus Benfield
Mitchell County

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

God Bless you all and May God Bless America!

Dr. Benfield is the Senior Pastor of Altpass Baptist Church in Spruce Pine. He
formally pastored in Alexander County, NC for 20 years before coming to Al-
pass in October 2011.

———

MHS Seniors
By Doug Sudduth
Mitchell County

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

They were introduced by Mitchell High School guid-
ance counselor Grant Sparks.

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

Blevins said she is likely to attend Central Texas College to continue her educa-
tion.

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

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

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

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

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Burke County
Burke County

Bear Creek Baptist Church-Lideon - Women’s Prayer Breakfast at Helen’s Restaurant on Friday January 11, 2017 at Helen’s 8:00am. Ordering from menu. All women are invited.

Celebrate Recovery - Kick off will be January 5, 2017 7:00pm. This is a Christ and Biblical Based Program. Group night for men, women and families suffering from addiction. Any question contact Josh Wise@ 855-3061

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 house fellowship and Bible Study in Spruce Pine. The fellowship is held on Thursday evenings at 7:00pm at 7076 State Dr. (Property area - off Brushy Mountain Rd). We are studying the Gospel of John currently. Call John Jackson 766-793-7799 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-farmed support group for adult children of those who have been diagnosed with memory loss. Will hold monthly meetings at the offices of Hospice palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, 1236 Hospital Dr. is Spruce Pine, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM. High Country Caregiver Foundation welcomes and encourages all caregivers.

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. Those who are local residents or caretakers to tell their stories, learn helpful tips, trade information, and give and get support to others in the same situation.

For further information about the group and the meeting please contact Suzanne Russell at (714) 614-5847 or Jani Ousut at janous@yellowmail.com.

First Baptist Church Spruce Pine - First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine is seeking a part-time child care provider for their toddler nursery. The position will require approximately eight hours per week consisting of 4.5 hours on Sunday morning, 1.5 hours on Sunday nights, and 2 hours on Wednesday nights plus other hours during special events as needed. The position will require a patient-filled caring and responsible childcare provider who will focus on providing a safe environment for toddlers. Qualifications include experience in caring for young children, and the physical ability to meet their active needs. 2 references; and willingness to submit to a background check. CPR is required and First Aid is recommended and can be completed once employed. The hourly pay is $15-$25 per hour and is negotiable based on experience and qualifications.

Applicants should contact First Baptist Church, 125 Tappan Street, Spruce Pine, NC 28777. Phone # 282-765-9411 Ext. 301.

Mitchell County
Mitchell County

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

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

Veterans Ministry - the association operates a veterans ministry. The Director of Mitchell Mission was very useful to us in our areas, staring the gospel with those who have faithfully served our nation.

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

Additionally, the association supports a church for the Hispanic community in Spruce Pine.

Mitchell-Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force
Join the Mitchell-Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force for our January 16, 2017 meeting, noon-1pm at the Yancey Country Library. We will hear a presentation from Leslie McCrory with the Regional Perinatal Substance Use Initiative about work being done in western North Carolina to address the issue of newborn drug dependency.

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

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

Spruce Pine Farmer’s Market Move: Indoors! - We will have baked goods, fresh eggs, pork, grass fed beef, and more. The market is inside the Pizza Shop and Day County Brewing Company from 12-4pm. The indoor markets will be every other Saturday beginning the Saturday of the month from December through April. Come shop local with us.

Red Cross Blood Donation - The American Red Cross of Mitchell and Yancey County has volunteer positions open at 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 at 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 contact Kimberly Brewster. Volunteer Services Specialist supporting
the Mitchell and Yancey area blood drives at Kimberly.brewster@redcross.org or
828-333-8909.

Summer 2017 Workshops at Peeland — Say hello to Peeland’s Summer 2017
workshops! We are beyond excited to have 97 great workshops on offer this year.
Take a look and come join us in the studios to build bikes or books or bowls or brooches or...
All applications received by February 11 will be entered into the early registration
lottery. Scholarships are available for all workshops; apply by February 17.

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

Yancey County

Calvary Chapel Asheville - Spruce Pine — Calvary Chapel Asheville is
spousing a home fellowship and Bible Study in Spruce Pine. The fellowship
is held on Thursday evenings at 7:00pm at 79 Seas Dr. (Estate area—of Basher Creek Rd). We are
studying the Gospel of John currently. Call John Jackson 780-793-7399 for information and directions.
And bring your Bible.

Eiggins Memorial United Methodist Church — Bible Study Fellowship (BSF)
Men’s Class meeting in Burnsville announces that its new study year will begin
September 12th at 6:55 pm and the class is being hosted by Eiggins Methodist
101 N. Main Street, Burnsville. This year’s study will focus on the Gospel of John.
Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) is an international and interdenominational Bible
class for men of all ages, denominations, geographic locations and backgrounds.
Living in Western North Carolina are encouraged to join the study. This
year, a group of beginners or advanced Bible students, will meet from 6:55 to 8:55 pm
each Tuesday evening through May – just show up any Tuesday evening beginning
September 12th to join the group and the study.
For more local information, call Mike Lovecchio 904-254-6203 (americas
chile lawrence) or Harvey Schaefer 828-284-07/0 (parvyesch@agmail.com) or go to www.bsfindustrial.org for comprehensive information about BSF.

Laurel Branch Baptist Church (Burnsville) — Seeking bi-vocational pastor,
please email resume to foerec2ap@frontiernet.com.

Trac Announces 2016/17 Grant Recipients — The Toe River Arts Council,
Asheville Area Arts Council, and the Madison County Art Council are pleased to announce
the 2016/17 Regional Artist Project Grant recipients.
The Regional Artist Project Grant (RAGP) is an annual grant program
that provides financial support to developing professionals by funding a project pivotal
to the advancement of their careers as artists. The selection criteria include artistic merit,
the potential of the project to contribute to the artist’s professional growth and
the feasibility of the project itself.
This year’s grant cycle received 30 applicants, with over $4,000 in requests
from all art disciplines. A total of $1,150 was awarded. The Regional Artist
Program Grant is sponsored by the Toe River Arts Council (Mitchell and Yancey
Counties); Madison Arts Council, Asheville Area Arts Council (Buncombe
County) with support from Avery County, and the North Carolina Arts Council,
a division of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, a state agency.

The 2016-2017 Regional Artist Project Grant Recipients are:
From Buncombe County:
John Ramseier ($1,100) — To build a new kiln and furnish it with kiln shelves
Alacia Williams ($1,100) — To purchase a wood planer to enable the precise rendering
of wood work in my curving boxes and carvings.
Heather Hisla ($300) — To purchase a Skrapt KEM 527 electric kiln
Michael Stevens ($1,100) — To document a new 15-piece chamber jazz ensemble with
2 studio recording of 10 new original compositions over the course of two years
Joseph Pearson ($300) — To produce a body of figurative works on repurposed
decorated materials and to help with promotions through various media.

Perry Obe ($1,000) — To outfit traditional stone lithography printing studio in order to develop professionally as an artist/printmaker

From Raleigh-Butler Arts Council ($400): To re-purpose video of my performances, workshops, and interviews into short clips that will reach a global audience online via
my website and social media

Kyle Carpenter ($1,200); To attend, speak at, and exhibit at NCACE in Portland, OR in
2017
Hannah Ramseier ($1,000) — To record a full-length professional album as a musician,
singer, and songwriter

From Madison County:
Hannah Furgeson ($500); To create a documentary film that tells how a music festival saved Bluff Mountain in Hot Springs being clear cut in 1995.

From Mitchell County:
Christina Shangle ($800); To acquire studio equipment needed for the fabrication
of my work in steel for sculpture and installation

Michael Kline ($800); To complete the next phase of construction on my studio
input via email. In addition, a mezzanine will be built to house large sculptural work.

Good bye Mortgage! It's paid off!
Thank you Owens Family Foundation and everyone who contributed gifts,
both large and small, for this effort!

This past summer TRAC sent our an appeal to raise $8,000 that would pay-off
the mortgage on our Spruce Pine facility. The appeal continued with a focus at the
TRAC Auction and then in the year-end letter. Since acquiring our Spruce Pine
facility in 1990, members have been donating to help pay off the mortgage. We
are very happy to announce that through the efforts of Elizabeth Weaver and one
final major gift from the Owen Family Foundation, we have paid it off! This
substantial gift honors the philanthropist and leadership spirit of Dorothy Anne
Greene Owens. We thank the Owen Family and all our members and TRAC friends
for making this possible. A complete donor list will be posted soon to recognize
all who helped us reach our goal.

We thank all those who have supported us over the past year—from donors
to volunteers to those who opened the doors, kept others n7, and helped us on our
journey to a thriving community.

TRAC’s first exhibit of the year begins Friday, Jan 13 at the Spruce Pine Gallery
with Emowy Birds reception provided by ARTCentered students and faculty
as a warm opening to their exhibitings—"Serving Up the Arts." The Showcase
of talent continues Feb 11. Reception on show date. Jan 20 for more info,
contact Kathryn or call 828.765.0530.

Yancey County Meals on Wheels (Burnsville) — Volunteers needed to deliver
meals to Yancey County shut-ins, any weekday, 16:30 am - noon. If you would like to volunteer, please call the Yancey County Senior Center at 828-682-6611.

Maryland Community College

Small Business Center — Allen Cook, Director, E-mail: tcoc@mayland.edu
Address: 200 Maryland Ln, Spruce Pine, NC 28777, Telephone Number: 828-765-
1295
To register for free classes, call Allen Cook at 828-795-1295 or email tcoc@mayland.edu

Free online webinar: Tax Tips for Your New Business: This webinar covers the major tax issues faced by your small business. Topics discussed include selecting a business structure, understanding business taxes, IRC recordkeeping requirements, and IES help available to you. Call 828-765-1295, if you would like a
copy of the accompanying power point to this webinar or would like to schedule free confidential business counseling. Register online: https://www.ncsb.net/workshops.aspx?key=310360161

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

Maryland Community College Small Business Center

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

The SBC Small Biz U Online seminars will be available January 1-23.
Applications to register to take the course are at northcarolina.gov/login and click the “Login”
drop down menu to select “At Cancer.” From the “Center” drop down box select “Maryland Community College Small Business Center.” Once the location and center are entered click “search” to view the online seminars below. Click
the register button to sign up and link to view the online classes.

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

www.brnews.com

January 2017 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 29
Howdy Folks,

Here we are looking at a New Year, 2017. How are you going to enter the New Year? Grumpy or Glad, Grouchily or Gratefully—the choice is yours. A wife was asked, “Do you wake up grumpy every morning?” “No” she answered, “I let him sleep.” Grouchiness in a man or woman drains one of gracefulness, gladness and good health.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It’s Up To You this New Year
- Your life can be a fruit tree
- Or just a shriveled pod.

The vital difference will may be
- The quiet time you spend with God. N/A

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

I found this in an old bulletin. N/A

Steve Williams is the Pastor of Berry Chapel Baptist Church in Spruce Pine.
Lana’s Lines

The HPST Antibiotic
By Lana Ellis
Tennesean

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

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

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

Humbly (1 Samuel 2)—My heart exalts in the Lord...There is no one holy like the Lord...There is no one beside Thee.

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

Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1)—O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God. Ezra (Ezra 9)—Thou art holy, O Lord...Thou hast made the heavens, the earth has been filled with the name of the Lord’s glory.

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

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

Each of these example prayers began with a common theme, humility—the acknowledgment of God. I have heard prayers prayed that I believed with doubt had reached the very ears of God. What made those prayers so powerful? It was the emphasis that was put on God, the Creator of all things. The One who sits on a throne surrounded by a host of angelic beings. The One who put the stars and planets in place. The One who causes each of our heart beats to pulsate through every artery, vein and smallest capillary. The One who enables our lungs to take in breaths of life-giving oxygen. God, the God above all gods!

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

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

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The Duck Commander ALL-TERRAIN HAS LANDED

“WHEN IT ALL GOES SOUTH, YOU KNOW WHAT WILL BE AT THE TOP OF THE HEAP? MUD GRIPS!” JASE ROBERTSON

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

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

- Confirmation of the Governor’s Cabinet secretaries appointments by the N.C. Senate.
- Consideration of the State Board of Elections, Lobbying Compliance Division of the N.C. Secretary of State’s office, and N.C. Ethics Commission into the Elections Enforcement Board with a one-time in partisan membership.
- Clarification that the N.C. Constitution gives sole authority to the General Assembly to draw congressional and legislative districts.

Renovation of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction’s authority to make staffing decisions as the elected head of the Department of Public Instruction.

Governor McCrory called legislators back to Raleigh for a final extra session in an effort to repeal House Bill 2 – Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act. I voted for House Bill 2 in March of 2016 for the same reasons I voted against repeal of the bill in December of 2016 – I firmly believe in protecting and maintaining privacy for women and girls in restrooms, showers, and locker rooms. I voted in the House and in the Senate to uphold the stance.

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

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

I attended public schools in Winston-Salem, where I started my football career, and I continued to play football at Wake Forest University, where I earned a degree in Communications. I met the love of my life, Brooks, shortly thereafter. Together we have two incredible sons and were recently blessed with our first grandchild.

I began my career in equipment sales in North Carolina, only to find that the policies of our government only held back people trying to work their way up. It was then that I decided I wanted to help make real change in our country for the sake of my children and my community.

After representing North Carolina’s 3rd District, I was elected to the United States Senate, and I am honored to work for the people of North Carolina. I currently serve as the Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, where I oversee the nation’s intelligence agencies to ensure that they are working together to keep our country safe. During my time in the Senate, I have made it my mission to ensure the safety and security of our citizens both at home and abroad. I am working to protect the rights of criminals while giving law enforcement the tools they need to bring criminals to justice. I have fought for our veterans and military families.

Through hard work and dedication, I have been able to make real change in our country for the sake of my children and my community. I am proud of the progress we have made and look forward to continuing to work for the people of North Carolina.

Rich Richard Burr

RICHARD BURR

Richard Burr, born November 23, 1950, is a Republican member of the United States Senate from North Carolina. Burr is a former businessman and politician who served two terms in the United States House of Representatives before being elected to the Senate in 2005.

Burr graduated from Duke University with a degree in political science and began his career in business, working for a number of companies in the electronics and telecommunications industries. In 1996, he was elected to the United States House of Representatives, representing North Carolina's 3rd congressional district. He served two terms in the House before being elected to the Senate in 2005.

As a senator, Burr has focused on a number of issues, including national security, energy policy, and economic growth. He has also been an advocate for veterans and military families and has worked to support their needs.

In 2016, Burr was involved in a scandal surrounding the FBI's investigation into the 2016 US presidential election. Burr was accused of selling stocks based on inside information about the investigation. He denied any knowledge of the insider trading and said he had not sold any stocks.

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

"because love covers a multitude of sins" What does this mean, "love covers a multitude of sins"? It means that when you love someone, you overlook the flaws in them, and the sins they commit against you. Think about the people that you love and you are not perfect, full of faults. They do things that might hurt or annoy you all the time. But you overlook it, because you love them. You might say something like, "Oh, know how they did such a thing? But you don't care, because you love them. Now some OTHER person, whom you are NOT in love with, is so mean, and you get offended or held against them. What was the difference? It was not the deed, or the "sinful" itself — because you forgave one for it. No, the difference was that you had LOVE for one, and NOT for the other.

For example, I love my little brother. They are just precious treasures. And so I overlook a lot of things that they do. Several years ago, I got him iPod, and when I didn’t get one of the best accessaries. I gave him a case for the iPod, but it also comes out of a keyboard basically making it a laptop — and every since I have had it, I have hardly ever used desktop computer or laptop again. — I just love it. But one day the glove was basis, and Cory gaved to play with my iPod. I generally gave my iPod with my life, but thought, well, I will let HER sit in my lap and do a few things on it. Before I knew it, she had reached down on the keyboard, and just tapped the "W" right off of it! Never worked again. Now I have got to get it. If one of ALL had done that, I would have been pretty ticked at her! But when Cory did it, I just laughed and — and then a couple of months later, Aisah did the same thing to the "M". It slowed my typing down considerably! But I overlooked their "transgression" because I loved them. Now these are probably other people, whom I thought about that time, would have been pretty unhappy about them turning the numbers of my keyboard. What’s the difference? It wasn’t the transgression — the difference is MY LOVE for one was greater than the other. And you just get ticked off at them for it. What was the difference? It wasn’t the transgression, it wasn’t what they did — the only thing different is YOUR LOVE; you really love one, and not the other.

Some of us here today used to consider our relationships with others in the church, or in our families, or our work, or as some of our friends, or because things going on, or some, or holding things against some, when you are forgetting these very kinds of things in others? Can you see that the difference is not what they are doing, but in your lack of love for them?

God challenges us to love His children to be "genuine in your love for one another". A lot of us in the church may "like" each other, be "nice" of each other with a brotherly love, but God says it’s time for you to grow into real "genuine" love for each other, the kind of love that overlooks transgressions in others — because GOD has this same kind of love for YOU! You, listen, you may or may not accomplish what some people will call a "great thing" in 2017. But if you will love people, love them enough to let them love you, love them enough to overlook their slights and transgressions — then you will have accomplished what GOD calls the greatest thing. If the end is near, then LOVE — more than ever before!

I Peter 4:10-11: "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

We find several truths is this verse about gifts and service in the church. First of all, we see that every Christian has received a gift or ability to serve. He says, "As EACH ONE has received a special gift, etc.

Ephesians 4:11: "Use your gifts to serve others."

Galatians 5:13: "Fruit of the Spirit: Love one another, as I have loved you.

We see this emphasis here that our gifts are not for us; they are for OTHERS. He says as you have received your gift. Employ it in serving one another.

The people who you are responsible to love are those who you have been given a gift with which to serve. It is only a matter of discovering what our gifts is, but if you are a Christian, God has given you an entry point to which to serve him. Gifts are to be used. It says, "As each one has received a special gift, etc.

Love God. Give your gift to USE in service. He didn’t give you the gift of teaching just so that you could enjoy the fruits of your study for yourself. You were given that gift to USE in reaching others’ God’s truth.

This verse also teaches us that you are accountable to God for the use of your gifts. It says to use your gifts as "good stewards of the manifold grace of God." A steward is someone who is accountable for what he does with something that has been entrusted to him.

It also says that you are accountable to God for what you do with the spiritual gift of service which He gave you. How will you judge those that you have used your gifts?

In Matthew 24, Jesus spoke of the end of the age, and in 46 He said, "Blessed is he who listens and does what He hears." In other words, we will be blessed if we are doing what Jesus commanded us to do, being His hearers.
**US House of Representatives NC District 11**

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

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

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

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

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

**NC Senate District 46**

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

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

**NC House District 85**

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

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

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

Another bill, Senate Bill 4, was also brought to the floor for a vote during this special session. This bill had five parts, two of which were the most controversial, so I will only comment on those two. Part One of this bill creates the bipartisan State Board of Elections and Ethics enforcement. I am in support of this. North Carolina has very complex and complicated ethics laws. Any time I have heard questions in my four years in the General Assembly, I received different answers from different ethics-related entities, or in some cases, no answer at all. This provision I believe will streamline this process. The second and most controversial portion of this bill, Section 2, will change the elections of Supreme Court Justices and Court of Appeals Justices from nonpartisan to partisan elections. I have supported this over the course of my four years in the General Assembly. Some may disagree with this provision, however, I voted for this and have advocated for this provision in the past.

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

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

**NC House District 118**

The plan to pack the Supreme Court with two more justices during a Special Session was a figment of the imagination of the media and special interest groups. No, the media and special interest groups did not stop a plan to pack the Supreme Court – such a plan never existed.

Media outlets populate their pages with conspiracies that insinuate impending doom. Naturally, people want frequent updates on matters that suggest impending doom, and the vicious cycle of rumormongering quickly took on a life of its own. While I plan to pack the Supreme Court never existed, one thing is for sure: media outlets made a fortune off of misleading the public here at home and across the nation. If an analysis of advertising revenue generated through pushing such a blatant falsehood were conducted, I would certainly be interested in reading the results.

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

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

And the cycle continues.

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

Gov.-elect Cooper vetoed on the Appeals Court-packing legislation.

Whether the people of North Carolina will continue to buy into fake news event after fake news event remains to be seen.
By Tim Tran
Burke County

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

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

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

In my mind’s eye, I’m standing down the hill from the old farmhouse, looking back up the hill from whence I came. Images that were never apparent until now suddenly reveal themselves. Unlike the front of the home, from behind we can see all of the grandeur of the life of those who live within: the clothesline where the wash will be hung to dry, the barn where the horses will be kept, and finally the back porch where everything from the deep freezer to the cooking table sits, awaiting the next growing season.

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

Our layer must die so that the other may live.

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

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

Like the soil, we must die to our former selves in order to live for Him. “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” - Matt 10:39

We cannot have the same pleasures of this world and still try to obtain satisfaction. One cannot stand with one foot in sin and one in Christ. He is a jealous God and wants us all or nothing. So, we continually battle an enemy that never stops trying to make us fall. Hopefully, in time by chance someone shares the opportunity to find and accept Christ into your life, it is then that you will come into the season of change for every season there is meaning and purpose.

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

Are you ready to get to work?
Eternity awaits your decision.
Thanks be to God.

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

Elementary School Speech Contest

By Cheryl Shuffler
Burke County

A poem about a mouse and a gruffalo, a work of prose about an orphan, an original composition about a middle child, and a notable speech about the death of Martin Luther King Jr. made up the winning speeches in the 2016-17 Burke County Public Schools Elementary Speech Contest. The annual event was held at the Old Rock School in Valdese on Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2016. Forty elementary school students representing the 13 elementary schools competed in the district-level event. A first-, second- and third-place winner was named in four categories. The winners and categories are:

Interpretative Poetry

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

Interpretative Prose

First – Kya Gill, “Happily Ever After?” Oak Hill
Second – Addison Whaley, “Earrings” Icard
Third – Ambria Blalock, “Goldie Locks had Chicken Pox” Valdese

Original Composition

First – Chloe Gerriss, “The Middle Child Syndrome” Salem
Second – Guan Calado, “Chicken” Dowd
Third – Ava Sohi, “I Love You Mom!” Rutherford College

Notable Speech

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

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

News
By Cheryl Slafffer
Putnam receives doctorate degree

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

Putnam said, “I consider myself a life-long learner, and have always been a big proponent of everyone, educators especially, better themselves by never stopping learning. When we as educators follow this philosophy, it is the students who ultimately win as they gain from our expanded knowledge base. I appreciate the staff at Appalachian State University and my cohort of fellow degree seekers for their support and encouragement. My dissertation was about further developing and supporting assistant principals and principals in their multi-faceted role of ultimately increasing student performance. I chose it because after 11 years of experience as a building-level principal, I realized a need, especially in a time where the job of the principal is forever changing and accountability is higher than any time in the history of the principal role.”

Earlier this month, Putnam was recognized as the 2017 Northwest Regional Education Service Alliance (NWRESA) Superintendent of the Year. He has been superintendent of Burke County Public Schools since April 2011; prior to being named superintendent he served as interim superintendent for seven months. Putnam has been in education for more than 20 years, and received his doctorate in education leadership from Appalachian State University on Wednesday.

He has a master’s in school administration from Gardner-Webb University, an educational specialist degree from Appalachian State University, and a bachelor’s of science degree in business education and a business administration degree with a concentration in management from Appalachian State University. Putnam started his career in education as a teacher at Freedom High School, his alma mater, and he held principalships at Broughton High’s Enola School, Drexel High School and W.A. Young and Chestersfield elementary schools. His past work experiences include employment with the United States Navy, who put him in charge of teaching English as a Second Language to military personnel and their families in England at the Royal Naval College.

Putnam’s community involvement includes Burke County United Way, Community Child Protection and Child Fidelity Prevention Team, Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Household Security Task Force, Sports Medicine Advisory Council, Carolina Health Care Blue Ridge, BDC Board of Directors, Morganton Rotary, a local affirmation committee of community leaders and past board member of the Strategic Alliance for Burke Youth (SABY).

Gladen recognizes as finalist

Icad Elementary School fifth-grade teacher Andrea Gladden was among the education superstars the State Board of Education recognized on Dec. 1. Gladden is a 2016NC Finalist for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). The PAEMST is administered by the National Science Foundation on behalf of the White House. Finalists devote time to professional development, incorporate innovative approaches into classroom teaching and use technology in the classrooms. Gladden is one of three state finalists in the science category.

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

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

Gladen also received recognition from the Burroughs Welcome Fund and the National Science Foundation in the Research Triangle Park on Nov. 21 where she presented a speech and was awarded a plaque and gifts. There she met current and previous awardees of the PAEMST award and supporters from NCDPI.

This past year, Gladden was awarded her first Prisc Grant funded by the Burroughs Welcome Fund. She was awarded $2,900 for equipment and for her presentation, called, “Who Is a Scientist?” She was also awarded the City of Fueling Education Award of $1,000 this summer to spend on classroom supplies.

Gladen also as been a part of the Mickeyson ExxonMobil Teacher’s Academy, the E4 Study (Exploring the Efficacy of Engineering is Elementary) Study funded by the National Science Foundation, the Museum of Science, Boston’s Engineering is Elementary (EiE) program, and NC State University. This summer she became a certified extended network provider for EiE. This allows her to provide EiE professional development trainings for western North Carolina.

continued on page 43
Learning for Life

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

Late Registration
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A=Associate
D=Diploma
C=Certificate
ACROSS
1 first letter of Greek alphabet (Rev 21:6)
6 as to a light shining in ___ place (1,4) (2 Pet 1:19)
10 I remind you to ___ into flame the gift of God (2 Tim 1:6)
13 the ___ of your feet shall tread (Deut 11:24)
14 How ___ you turn my Father’s house into a market! (John 2:16)
15 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his ___ and fury commanded (Daniel 3:13)
16 Bring me a heifer, ___ and a ram (1,4) (Gen 15:9)
17 And Israel bowed ___ unto the LORD (1,3) (Num 21:2)
19 walk with long steps (Hab 3:12)
21 together with the overseers and ___ (Phil 1:1)
24 Roman Emperor ___ and the hold of ___ fowl spirit (Rev 18:2) (KJV)
27 the king of the south shall be moved with ___ and shall (Dan 11:11) KJV
31 he burned the bones of the king of Edom into ___ (Amos 2:1) KJV
34 testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in ___ (Acts 23:11)
35 cups shaped like almond flowers with ___ and blossoms (Ex 37:19)
37 Only a ___ of it has reached our ears (Job 25:22)
41 they build ___ ramps and capture them (Hab 1:10)
43 and people have used it for a ___ this day (2 Kings 10:27)
45 the angels hastened Lot, saying, ___ take thy wife (Gen 19:15) KJV
46 the roebuck, and the fallow ___ and the wild goat (Deut 14:5)
48 Jesus ___ in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52)
49 I will send ___ and say, ‘Go, find the arrows (1,3) (1 Sam 20:21)
51 honey and curds, sheep, and ___ from cows’ milk for David (2 Sam 17:29)
53 he ___ unto the LORD, and vowed (Ps 132:2) KJV
56 Their calls will ___ through the windows (Zeph 2:14)
58 like Babylonian chariot officers, natives of ___ (Ezek 23:11)
60 he did not ___ to sorcery as at other times (Num 24:1)
64 I now consider ___ for the sake of Christ (Phil 3:7)
65 You made my enemies ___ backs in flight (Ps 18:40)
67 the princes ___ abide with ___ Balaam (Num 22:8)
69 God has granted even the Gentiles repentance ___ life (Acts 11:18)
70 The LORD ___ righteousness and justice (Ps 33:5)
71 if his hands are ___ the house leaks (Ecc 10:18)
72 for the ___ that is in the land of Assyria. (Isaiah 7:18)
73 the hollowness of his hand, and ___ out heaven with the span (Isa 40:12) KJV
74 fee from the iron weapon, and the bow of ___ (Job 20:34) KJV

DOWN
1 became king of Judah (I Kings 9:9)
2 Send me cedar ___ as you did for my father David (2 Chron 2:3)
3 The wicked ___ against the righteous and gnash their teeth (Ps 37:15)
4 The nations will ___ and tremble, anguish will grip the people (Ezek 15:14)
5 Jacob set ___ pillar at the place (1,5) (Gen 35:14)
6 snake (Isa 30:6)
7 ___ is yours, and yours also the night (Ps 74:15)
8 Israelites to bring ___ heifer without defect (1,3) (Num 19:2)
9 To ___ them that were under the law (Gal 4:5)
10 The LORD looked ___ on Abel and his offering (Gen 4:4)
11 O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in ___ (Ps 6:2)
12 so is good ___ from a far country (Pro 25:25)
13 I have finished the ___ , I have kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7)
14 He came to ___ and then to Lystra (Acts 16:1)
15 prevent (Jer 11:15)
16 she was in a town and did not ___ for help (Deut 22:24)
17 anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; he has ___ (2 Cor 5:17)
18 a small round thing, as small as the ___ frost (Exodus 16:14)
19 Ahab son of ___ became king of Israel (1 Kings 16:29)
20 if he ___ them loose, they devastate the land (Job 12:13)
21 was in the ___ that is called Paphos (Rev 1:9)
23 cries out against me and all its arrows ___ with tears (3,3) (Job 31:38)
26 to loose the bands of wickedness, to ___ the heavy burdens (Isa 58:6) (KJV)
38 I ___ you to bear with my word of exhortation (Heb 13:22)
39 Rescue me from the ___ , let not my soul be cast down (Ps 69:14)
40 lofty trees will be felled, the tall ____ will be brought low (Isa 10:33)
42 Everyone who ___ him was amazed at his understanding (Luke 2:46)
43 Then the ___ shot arrows at your servants (2 Sam 11:24)
44 He ___ not to say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” (1 Cor 12:21)
45 the ___ after his kind, and the grasshopper after his (Lev 11:22) KJV
50 abbr. for the 28th book of Old Testament (KJV)
51 His face ___ like the sun, and his clothes became as white (Matt 17:2)
52 Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert ___ (Joel 2:3)
55 Know ___ that wisdom is sweet to your soul (Prov 24:14)
56 Jesus ___ cut in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, Lamma sabachthani?” (Mark 15:34)
57 ___ you are my war ___ my weapon for battle (Jer 51:20)
59 consciences have been seared as with ___ iron. (1,3) (1 Tim 4:2)
61 leave out ___ and thirty grandsons, who ___ on seventy donkeys (Judg 12:14)
63 we spend our years as a ___ that is told (Ps 90:9) KJV
66 member of the first family of the Bible (KJV)
68 Babylon is taken ___ is confounded, Merodach is broken (Jer 50:2)

Solution on page 14
What To Do If The End Is Near

By Shona Thompson
Barb County

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

We don’t have to fabricate an answer; God’s word gives us directions for just this case. In Revelation 11:17-19, this passage begins with the phrase, “Then the One who is sitting on the throne and the seven spirits of God sent out two angels.” And then he tells that with several admonitions about what we should do when the end is drawing near:

I. PRAY

II. What is the ultimate purpose of prayer?

III. What are some reasons to pray?

IV. Types of prayer

V. How can we improve our prayer life?

VI. Conclusion

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

We need to spend more time in prayer purifying our lives from sin as we draw closer to the end. We need to be praying for our loved ones to be touched and saved. If we are near the end, then a lot of people we know are about to have their last opportunities to be saved before “the door of the ark is closed,” we need to be even more fervent in our intercessions for them as the end draws near.

And Jesus, God’s Son, heard and answered the prayers for the lost! One day last week I received a call from a member of the church in Oklahoma where I served as associate pastor before I came to Pleasant Ridge. We had been praying for her husband, who had declared that he was an agnostic, who had left his wife and little baby to be saved. The woman told me that the man decided that he didn’t want to be alone for Christmas, so he decided to come home and at least be with his family. He went to church with them on Christmas Day, and the message spoke to him in a personal way. That afternoon he told his family that he wanted to be saved, and they called the preacher over and that same afternoon he turned to the Lord and was saved. It is a great thing to pray for others, and it is a great thing to have others pray for you!

We need to pray more for our church to remain faithful, and to find more and more people who have been brought to the Lord through prayer. We need to pray that we would not be led into temptation, but delivered from evil. We need to pray that we may be saved, and we may be delivered from evil.

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

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

How has your prayer life been in 2017? Are you faithful in morning prayer? Are you following through with consistent prayer? Are you reading the Bible through? If you are making ONE change in your life for the better in 2017, I don’t think you could make a better change than to PRAY. Redeicate yourself to this New Year to pray. Peter tells us: “The end of all things is near; so then, pray!”

But he also reminds us of the next verse of THE great prayer that the Christian: 

ILove 

I Peter 4:8-9 “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

The words “above all” here refers to the priority of love. There is nothing more important: 

1 Thessalonians 5:15 says “the goal of our instructions is LOVE.” 
The end result of seeking God’s will is seeking LOVE. 

1 Corinthians 13:13 says “now faith, hope, love; these three remain — but the greatest of these is LOVE.”

Many Christians often think of working on some “big thing” for the Kingdom of God. he’s rid of a great organization; he’s constructed an impressive building; he’s doing something that will make headlines throughout the region or even the whole world. But what we have to realize is that the Kingdom of God is not really about these things. The Kingdom of God is about LOVE. Love God greatly! Love people greatly! The “big thing” we are to build is LOVE! But then notice what he says in the second part of the verse; this is significant. He says...
A Clean Page
By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County

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

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

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

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

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

If we awaken to each new day with God on our minds, we can say with the Psalmist in Psalm 118: 24, 31LT, “This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.”

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

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

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

When I come to him is faith believing that he died and rose again for me, his blood cleanses me and gives me new life while covering me in his righteousness.

Now God can write on my clean page (heart) and instruct my mind in his ways.

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

Salah

Come, join us

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

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

No one should be left out in the cold…

Jehovah friend or human.

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

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink…

Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

John 7: 37 and 38

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

Happy New Year!
Evergreen Church

A Diet That Works
By Rev. John McCourey
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

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

A finishing touch. If you don’t already keep a daily journal, begin doing so now. Get yourself a notebook—any size that’s comfortable for you—and start by writing down that which has spoken to your heart today. Be painfully specific.

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

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Emergency Preparedness

Food In An Emergency
By Nancy Yancek
Mitchell County

- Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. It is unlikely that we would have a two-week emergency, but some authorities recommend a two-week supply of food.
- The easiest way to develop your food supply is to increase the amount of basic foods you normally keep on your shelves. Familiar foods are better than strange foods you have not tried before. Your family will eat better if they like the food.
- Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water.
- Include a selection of ready to eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables.
- Place foods that come in packages or plastic bags into screw top jars or airtight cans to protect them from moisture and pests.
- Open cans, bottles carefully so they can be closed tightly after use.
- If food must be heated, you can use stove or a gas grill or a charcoal grill or the fireplace. CAUTION: Do not use charcoal grills or other portable cooking devices indoors because of fire danger and harmful and dangerous fumes. Do not forget to open cans first and take off the labels. Then wash the label. Place new foods in the back of the storage area and the older foods in the front. Six months is a good cut off time for keeping most foods.
- Inspect all foods for signs of spoilage before use.
- Include vitamin, mineral, and protein supplements to assure proper nutrition.
- Food can be rationed safely, unlike water, if activity is reduced. Children and pregnant women need more food. Take in enough calories to supply you to do necessary work.
- Try to include foods high in protein and liquid content. Stay away from foods high in fats and very salty.
- Keep in mind individuals in your family who need special diets and stock these items.
- If the electricity goes off, use perishable foods in the refrigerator first, then the food in the freezer, and then eliminate opening these doors. Then use your non-perishable foods last.
- Be sure to have a non-electric can opener available.
- Several sizes of pots or pans to heat up food over the fireplace, on the grill or camp-stove.
- Need utensils to stir the food with and to sip the cans.
- Use paper plates, plastic eating utensils, and paper or plastic cups and glasses.
- Have plastic storage containers for leftover food that is not perishable.
- Use tinfoil, aluminum foil and plastic bags to cover food.

MENUSUGGESTIONS:

Breakfast—Canned or powdered milk, canned juice, dry cereal, sugar crackers, peanut butter jelly, Pop Tarts, Swirls, coffee and cocoa mix, and dried or canned fruit.

Lunch—Canned or packaged soup, spaghetti, spaghetti, ravioli, chili, pork & beans, beans & wiene, crackers, cheese, dried or canned fruits, canned juice or ranch dressing.

Snacks—Cheese & crackers, tuna or Spam or chicken, on crackers, peanut butter & crackers, nuts, dried fruit, granola bars, sugar free hard candy, raisins, and trail mix.

Dinner—Canned stew, chili, canned soups, spaghetti, crackers, dried or canned fruits, canned juice or soda, canned or powdered milk.

If you have fresh milk, vegetables, muffins, bread, eggs, frozen meats, frozen foods, then use them first.

Paul and Nancy Yancek moved to Mountain Home in 1996 and are very happy to be living in Red Hill with their dog. She serves as the Chairperson for the MCHP for nearly 12 years. She is an emergency readiness program as that is a real concern in these rural areas.

First Baptist Icard

Kingdom Focused
By Dr. Michael Pardue, Sr.
Burke County

In just a few days, the United States of America will inaugurate a new president. Millions of Americans will cheer this transfer of power while millions more will lament this change of leadership. I am thankful that we live in a country where there is a peaceful transition from one leader to the next, even if we do not always agree with the person who is ascending to the highest office in the land. This election, however, has been different. Not because of the election of someone who has never held political office or a military position. Not because one of the candidates was the first woman to win a major political party’s nomination. This election was different because I have seen many Christians prove my fear that they were much more loyal to a political party than to their Savior and many more who have chastised those Christians who believe the Kingdom of God is always the priority. Some prominent pastors referred to other members of his political party as fools if they did not support their president-elect when he was running for office. He said that not voting for Donald Trump was a matter of pride, not principle. Other pastors have ignored our president-elect’s moral failings while they denounced similar failings from the 42nd president of the U.S. A few Christian leaders, like Albert Mohler and Russell Moore have been consistent. Dr. Mohler writes, “If I were to support, much less endorse, Donald Trump for president, I would actually have to go back and apologize to former President Bill Clinton.” These voices, however, are few and far between. So where does that leave us?

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

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

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

Sudoku

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www.brcnews.com

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Addiction Challenged

“The Grandfather Challenge” Hiking Program (Helping At-Risk Kids, One Hike at a Time)

By James and Cheryl Nipper

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

Jason’s Story:

Jason was a happy, outgoing, and gifted child with a keen sense of humor and engaging personality. He brought brightness to the world around him and was a delight to anyone who knew him. His favorite times growing up were those spent with his family at their cabin near Shine, NC. Although he was greatly troubled by mental illness, he found that the days he spent hiking brought him great peace and satisfaction. Jason always wanted to help other people, and found great joy when he helped "The Grandfather Challenge".

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

Despite all of this, he continued to hike and tried valiantly to cope with his mental illness. Through it all, he found that the days he spent mountain hiking brought him great peace and satisfaction. Life has been so many others with severe mental illness, Jason self-medicated with substances, which ultimately only complicated his mental condition. Jason passed away at age 26 on June 24, 2014. He is greatly missed by both his family and everyone that ever knew him.

Creation of Foundation and Mission Statement:

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

Because of Jason's abiding love of the outdoors and mountain hiking, one of The Jason Project's goals is to organize an outward-bound type, interpret wilderness excursions and mountain programs which are designed to build self-confidence in struggling youth, as well as trust and a positive rapport with adult mentors. As part of their "outreach" efforts, they have established a special program called "The Grandfather Challenge," through which at-risk youth, through a series of four hikes, navigate all of the hiking trails at Grandfather Mountain, NC. One of these hikes takes you to the highest point in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and offers incredible views along the crest of Grandfather Mountain. These hikes are designed to build self-confidence in struggling youth, as well as trust and a positive rapport with adult mentors.

Appalachian Mountain Leadership:

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

You can visit AML's website at www.amlnc.org. As you can see, AML provides a diverse range of adventure-vehicle leadership opportunities, including single day hikes, group camping adventures, and multi-day camping and wilderness excursions, all of which are tailored-made for youth. AML's emphasis is on servant leadership, and they link wilderness activities with mental health and spiritual development. Our program is a unique opportunity for these young people to find a place where they can feel safe, loved, and appreciated.

Day 1: "These past few days. I have been truly blown away by how beautiful and awe-inspiring everything is. From the smallest pine to the biggest mountain, everything seems so much brighter. Colors are more vibrant. And I suddenly seem to have more energy."

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

"Day 3... (the end of the beginning) It is the last day of our trip and I feel better about leaving. These past two weeks have been filled with teaching, learning, leading, loving, laughing, sadness, awe, and so much more! I have learned a lot about traveling the trail and a lot more about traveling through life, especially as a leader...

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

Summary of Leadership/Leadership Programs for Church Youth and Contact Information:
The Jason Project hosts the “Grandfather Challenge” for at-risk kids at Grandfather Mountain, NC. The Jason Project, Inc. is a tax-exempt, IRS 501 (c) (3) non-profit foundation organized to provide challenging outdoor bound type activities and excursions for at-risk youth, including those young people who are suffering from mental illness and/or drug addiction. For further information, please contact James Nipper via email at james@jamesnipper.com or call (828) 765-6501 or (604) 754-7378. If you wish to donate to this project, please visit GoFundMe.com/TheJasonProject.

Appalachian Mountain Leadership (AML) of Boone, NC hosts a very special Created for Purpose program, which is tailor-made for church youth. AML's emphasis is on servant leadership, and they link wilderness activities with their mentoring skills and training, creating a unique experience that can't be matched by any organization in the Southeast. At the AML website, please look at the "Adventures" page, then the "Creating for Purpose" tab to learn about their next wilderness excursion which will take place in July of next year. To contact AML, you can reach their founder and CEO Tom Henry at Tom@amlnc.org or call him direct at (800) 667-8978.

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

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BEPUS receives Golden LEAF grant for technology

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

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

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

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

Over the past few years, the Burke County Board of Education has been committed to improving the technology infrastructure and increasing the number of devices in our schools. Project DETAIL comes on the heels of a rollout of 7,000 Chromebooks taking place now in the middle and high schools.

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

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

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

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