Marriage ... God's Foundation of Society

Mack and Ann Peterson - Tipton Hill
Married 60 years
Upper Brunnell Fundamental Brethren

Fritz and Sarah "Lib" Burnette
Married 74 years
Hopewell Baptist Church in Morganton

Hoye and Betty Hyleman
Married 71 years
Shoal Creek Baptist Church

Martin and Myrtle Brazwell
Married 68 1/2 years
Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother,
and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.
Genesis 2:24

Avery and Betty Carpenter
Married 70 years
Berry Chapel Baptist Church

Bill and Helen Weatherman
Married for 73 years
Walnut Grove Church

Roy & Jan Walters
Married 65 years
Barlentmont Baptist Church

Preston and Bev Denton
Married 71 years
Mount Home Baptist Church

Marriage And Family, Our Foundation
By Doug Harell

This past month has been lots of fun talking to older couples around the region of Western North Carolina that Blue Ridge Christian News is proud to serve. Speaking with couples that have been married for at least 60 years has been the focus of the February “LOVE” issue for Valentine’s Day.

The marriage has similarities between the many different couples I have talked to or gotten letters from. The conversations were usually started with the question, what do you give credit for the long marriage you and your mate have had? The most common thread was their combined faith in God and their involvement in their local churches. The phrase, evenly yoked, came up many times in the conversations. Comments like, we agreed at the beginning to not fuss and fight, not to go to bed angry, and being willing to talk things out. One couple said that going out to McDonald’s at least once a week together for breakfast had been important. Several mentioned giving each other space to grow and mature over the years had been important to them. Another common thread was: to be focused on a relationship with God and not just material things that did not last. Another thing that was mentioned, in just about all of the discussions, was being willing to tell each other daily that you loved them. It has been heartwarming to see the smiles and read the letters we have received from the ones featured on the front page this month.

The rewards of years of hard work have been through loud and clear. While Barbara and I have not made it to the 60 year mark yet, after 53 years we could easily relate to the stories laid out in front of us. God’s path is quite clear in his word, a couple is to leave their mother and father and become one in God’s eyes, and their eyes, until death do they part. This act, this combining to become one, is, has been and always will be, the very foundation of society as God planned it. The rewards are unfrangible and to be treasured throughout all time.

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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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What Is This Thing Called Love?

By Lana Ellis

Tennessee

Today we are in pursuit of an answer to the question “What is this thing called love?” It must be very important according to the title of a song written by Bob Merrill. “Love makes the world go round.” If you ever wonder where you can find love, John Paul Young says, “Love is in the air, everywhere I look around. Love is in the air.”

In 1959 singer songwriter Cole Porter was looking for an answer when he penned the words, “I was a humdrum person living a life apart when love flew in through my window wide and quickened my humdrum heart. What is this thing called love?” For song writers and poets have capitalized on this thing called love. As we search for an answer to that question let’s look further into Cole Porter’s quest to find the answer. He says “What is this thing called love?”

We must know the source of love before we can be expected to love another. If the two individuals vow “all death do us part.” that should mean more than just words. It must mean the words of Jesus Christ, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

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

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Marlene’s Meditations

Marriage – A Priceless Painting
By Marlene Houk
Barke County

Eyes staring at the rhythmic twists and cadences of the artist’s hand, I gazed with wonder as he sketched in the background. As the mysteries of his artwork unfolded, the slow unfolding mesmerized me. Although it took an hour for the black light chalk artist to finish his work, it was well worth the wait. A tranquil rural scene cradled a rustic wooden fence, and the blue bird perched happily, singing with abandon. Strong branches swayed gently in the breeze. But a collective gasp rose from the audience when he turned on the black light. What had been a blank space in the painting was now filled with Jesus’ face, and dawned in the clouds, plainly visible. When the special ultraviolet light revealed Him, it captured an astounding completion to the picture.

As the artist cracked on his black light, it dawned on me that marriage should be considered sacred because God chose its symbolism to represent a spiritual truth as indicated in Revelation 21:9. The church (people who have entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ) is Jesus’ (the Lamb) Bride. John 8:12 says, “And Jesus said, I am the light of the world.” Just as the picture gained significance when the light shone, so, when Jesus lights our marriage, it communes with an eternal beauty. Jesus is the Light of the world, and His covenant with His Bride, the Church is reflected in the glow of our earthly godly marriage.

continued on page 16
Assurance For The Doubter
By Shawna Thomas
Burke County

“Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns as, for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.” (1 John 3:18-20)

People often say things like “trust your heart,” or “follow your heart.” But although that may sound good, it is not the best policy. The truth is, our own hearts often mislead us.

The Lord commands us here in 1 John 3:18 not to love others with word or tongue only, but in deed and truth. Then He says in 3:10 that if we DO this, then “We will know by this (these deeds of genuine love) that we are of the truth and will assure our heart before Him (v.20) in whatever our heart condemns us; for GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR HEART and knows all things.”

So there is an objective truth with God that is “greater than our heart.” There may be times when “our heart” doesn’t “feel” like we are God’s — so a Christian may have doubts about his salvation, even when he really does belong to the Lord. God’s prescription for that person is to do the deeds of the Christian life: including demonstrating practical love for his brothers & sisters. He says this fruit should comfort you and give you assurance that you really are His.

So we find several important lessons in this passage:
Genuinely Christian people may have doubts about their standing with God. It is NOT true that if you have any doubts at all, that you are not saved. John specifically says here that there are times when the real Christian’s heart will condemn him — but God knows better!

We also see here that WORKS have an important role in giving the Christian the assurance of salvation. Scripture makes it clear that we are not SAVED by our works (Eph. 2:8-9), but it is also evident from these verses that we may be ASSURED of our salvation by works ("you will know them by their fruits", Matt. 7:20).

And finally, we see that the way we “feel” is not a sure indicator of our salvation. Our hearts may “feel” one thing ("our heart condemns us") but “God is greater than our heart" and knows our true standing with Him. Thankfully our feelings are not the ultimate measure of our salvation — God’s love and grace in Christ Jesus are!

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

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Our Heritage
By Marcus Benfield
Mitchell County

Psalm 16:5 & 6: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of thy cup shall I drink in thine_lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a good heritage." 

Hello everyone, I trust you have been blessed and are thankful for your blessings. By the time you read this I and around 15 others will be on a mission field in Jamaica where most there don’t have the smallest care for religion. We are all reaching out to those being saved or identified with Jesus Christ. We want to go for those that say, “I want to examine the latter part of verse 16 aforesaid, yea, I have a good heritage.” What is heritage? Webster’s defines it as “the traditions, achievements, and beliefs that are part of the history of a certain group of people. Let me say all of us who are the children of God have a ‘good heritage.’ Let’s look at this together:

1. We all have a Heritage left to us.
   - I realize many of you like myself do not have a long family tree of family who served the Lord. Many of us are examples of God’s Mercy and Grace from the inside out. It is for this reason that I feel we can identify with those who have a rich family heritage of service in the Lord and for that they should be thankful. I want all of us to know however that we all have a wondrous heritage left to us by our Loving Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. Psalm 61: 5 says “For thou, O God, hast heard my vows; thou hast given me the heritage of those that feared thee.”

2. We all have a Heritage we are living.
   - We have been entrusted with this Rich Heritage and we need to strive to live it out to the best of our ability in a Godly fashion before others.

3. We all have a Heritage we are leaving.
   - Someone has well said "Just one short life will soon be passed. Only what’s done for Christ will last." The longer I live the more I realize just how short life is. No wonder Moses said “Teach me to number my days.” As I come to the close of this earthly life, let me arrive at the place where my mind says, I feel that I have arrived. We all know certain people who started well in the faith and then somehow fall by the wayside. God help us to Leave a Rich Heritage of Faithfulness; to the end so those coming behind us will have a clear path to follow. The Apostle Paul admonishes us in 1 Corinthians 4:11 “Keep the body, and...” and 19: “teaching them to observe all things, saying, He did to me also, I myself should be a castaway.” What does this mean to become a castaway? Allowing me to illustrate: say your wife has a very pretty tassel that sits in our home. It is very special to her. To anyone else it would be useless because it has a crack in the bottom and it leaks terribly. She keeps it because of memories when it was purchased. To me, the bottom part is most critical of anyone. It is precious to the owner, but only in regard to what used to be and what might have been. That is what Paul is conveying here. Many have served God well and are precious to Him. However, because of unrepented and unforsaken sin, these individuals are now placed on a shelf spiritually speaking and have become memories of what could have been if... and are no longer making an impact for the kingdom of our salvation. God help us and challenge us to never become a Castaway!

In closing, let me refer back to the Apostle Paul more in 2 Timothy 4:6-9. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. Amen."
Don't you love it when you are dead set on "not doing something." Well...that is exactly how I felt last month when the January Blue Ridge Christian News (BRCN) articles were due. We knew that the Arizona Sun article was due that day. I knew that topic has the tendency to draw a little chidder within us. We knew we could submit an extremely personal article, but resolved to the fact that we would actually do it. We ended up doing just that. Isn't that funny? It seemed more appropriate to submit a good story that emphasized the importance of surrendering to Jesus no matter what issue or addiction one may be going through.

The article about "Mountain Bob" was submitted and appeared in last month's BRCN issue. He was there, and I was all ready to move on to February! That was until we had that one class mate and friend with Doug Harrell, who had been invited to our church to interview a couple for the February issue that had been married for 85 years. We all sat together at our fellowship lunch and had a great time getting to know Mr. Harrell. I noticed my husband, Rick, who is the pastor of the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, had his hand on Mr. Harrell’s shoulder. I then realized this was a perfect chance for us to ask Rick if he would consider performing our wedding ceremony. Rick graciously said yes, and we were all very excited. Now, that certainly wasn’t unusual for him to do something like this, but I didn’t think anything of the idea.

That is, until my husband turned to me and said, "Looks like we are going to subdue the article anyway." To which I replied, "Which article?" My husband replied, "You know, the one we were supposed to submit last month." (With a smile on his face) I replied, "Neither Rick nor Bob, but honestly maybe the idea was perfect for each other! Honestly, neither one of us had intended on falling in love...at least not on the first date. But we did. We were both so happy our blind date was going so amazingly well. So well in fact that he asked me to marry him that night! Right then, I really knew that God had a plan for us and not to just say yes to God’s plan. So I said yes, and he said yes!"

We married on May 3, 1997. We blended our families fairly seamlessly. Rick with two boys ages 6 & 7 and me with two boys ages 4 & 5. Everyone seemed happy and I was sure I had found my Prince Charming. And he was charming. He said and did all of the right things, I didn’t think things could possibly get any better.

As time went on, I realized that my "Prince Charming" had some problems to say the least. He was a alcoholic with a consistent basis. But I had known him all my life and it was never our family secret. Eventually, he began using crystal meth and that is a force to be reckoned with for sure! It is important to note, that when I married my husband that he didn’t look like someone who was a drug user...in fact it was quite the opposite of what I never have would have married him. In the beginning he went with the flow. Later on, he tried to make a change. So I could be more involved with the farm. There were definitely good times, but for the majority of the first seven years of our marriage, I put up with some very difficult challenges. There were many months I would have to go to work only to find him in bed with someone else. I was very aggressive, and my husband recognized the consequences of their addiction. People are more likely to change if they have suffered enough negative consequences. Set boundaries that you all agree on.

If you want to provide financial support, buy the goods and services they need in order to get their daily living expenses covered. This can include things like groceries, clothing, and transportation. Recognize and acknowledge the potential for addiction and promote that.

Be brave enough to make your own needs known and prioritize them. How can families help themselves?

How can families help their loved ones with addiction?

Work on your relationship with Christ. You need Him now more than ever and He will help. In Him.

Avoid self-blame. You can't control other people's decisions, and you can't force them to change.

Ask for help. Share with those you can trust so they will be praying for you and for the addicted one.

Attend recovery meetings so you may hear how God is helping others who are going through a recovery process. Seeing others succeed.

If all else fails, try to be negative. That may only increase their feelings of guilt and push them further into addiction.

If this ministry can be of help to you please feel free to join us. More information may be obtained by calling John Wise at 828-387-0001 or ejmerc@nc. Check out www.morgantonad.org. Their passion is to share the love of Jesus with all who will listen.

Celebrate Recovery Update

By Bruce Cannon

Mitchell County - The Mitchell County’s Celebrate Recovery meets at Bear Creek Baptist Church, 377 Bear Creek Church Road, Bakersville, every Thursday evening at 7 p.m. Following a time of teaching and worship services, a small group time for support, encouragement and prayer. Healing is taking place in the families and support is being given to those seeking recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

Some of the families attending are unable to get the one addiction with another to attend but they come by themselves for encouragement, instruction, prayer and help.

How families can help those struggling with addiction:

- Try not to accuse or judge. Avoid name calling.
- Do not enable. Do not provide excuses. Do not live in denial of this problem.
- Do not shield the addicted from the consequences of their addiction. People are more likely to change if they have suffered enough negative consequences.
- Set boundaries that you all agree on.
- If you want to provide financial support, buy the goods and services they need in order to get their daily living expenses covered.
- Recognize and acknowledge the potential for addiction and promote that.
- Be brave enough to make your own needs known and prioritize them.
- How can families help themselves?

Celebrate Recovery is a ministry of the church. It is not a 12 step replacement. We believe there is a place for 12 step groups in the recovery process. However, we also agree that a recovery plan should be tailored to each individual. So the recovering person can find the best fit for them.

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

By Dr. Billy Graham

The United States has inaugurated a new president, but Americans everywhere are experiencing a serious lack of unity. Still, there is a possibility for healing. Billy Graham and Franklin Graham say that only can be achieved by seeking God.

*Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.*

Romans 14:19 (NKJV)

If there's anything Americans likely can agree upon, it's just how divided their United States has become. Anger, dissension and fear have become primary drivers as many people lean on their own understanding rather than seeking God through these issues.

Billy and Franklin Graham know that these tumultuous waters can be navigated only through prayer. In a recent Facebook post, Franklin Graham urged Americans to "pull together.

"We need to go beyond politics and come together in prayer," he wrote. "Democrats and Republicans have to work together and make choices for the good of the nation."

Unity is particularly critical for Christians; Billy Graham writes below in this My Answer column. Be encouraged as you read how you can be a difference-maker in a troubled world.

Q Why can’t Christians seem to get along with each other? We have a few people in our church who do nothing but criticize everything (including our pastor), and they just generally like to make trouble. Haven’t they ever heard that Christians ought to love one another?

A The Bible is clear: love for others should be the mark of anyone who claims to follow the Lord Jesus. said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35).

Over the years, I’ve talked with a number of pastors who had experienced some kind of trouble in their churches. Sometimes they admittedly were at fault, perhaps neglecting their pastoral duties or failing to prepare their sermons adequately. But sadly, in many cases they had become discouraged solely because a few disgruntled people opposed them—just as these people had opposed their predecessors.

Why did they oppose them? Perhaps they wanted to control everything, or always be the center of attention. Or perhaps they were driven by jealousy or anger or some other hidden motive. But whatever the reason, they were opposing God’s servants and blocking His work—and that is always wrong. The Bible warns, “Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged.” (James 5:9).

Don’t let the sins of a few keep you from Christ, and don’t let their negative attitudes poison you and your support for your church and its pastor. Instead, pray for them—and if God gives you an opportunity, confront them about these needs to be filled with Christ’s love. In addition, your church’s elected leaders may need to intervene. The Bible says, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace” (Colossians 3:15).
My Valentine

By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County

June 1972 was my first summer living in the Lily Branch Community of Mitchell County. Eight months earlier my dad had accepted the call to Pastor Lily Branch Baptist Church. It was Saturday afternoon at the post office and I was in my bedroom after taking a bath.

This particular weekend was Decoration at Lily Branch. The cemetery across the road was filled with families placing flowers on grave sites as memorials. Old friends were reminiscing about days gone by. New friendships were forming.

Little did I know my life was about to change. The church music director, Margaret Murdock, decided to stop at the parsonage and introduce her nieces from Maryland. Susan 14, Sherri 12 and Teresa 10. Margaret’s nephew, Tim, a good friend of mine was tagging along. At that moment the house I was trying to be very quiet since my room was so close to the living room. While everyone was talking, I accidentally knocked over a large glass container of marbles that I had collected. Imagine the loud noise as everything hit the hardwood floors. No more hiding for me. Embarrassed, I joined them and was introduced to Margaret’s nieces.

In nearby Burnsville a carnival was in town. Margaret asked if I’d like to go to this with them. On the way, I rode up front beside Susan yet I had my eye on Sherri in the back seat. Her smile and long hair got my attention. Later on, as we headed home, I rode in the back with her. The following week, Sherri came to Vacation Bible School and we became fast friends and we’ve been together ever since.

Long before the internet, cell phones, and cellphones, we wrote handwritten letters. For the next 10 years, Sherri and I would see each other the 3rd weekend of June and date for a week each. The rest of the year we wrote letters. Every new and then we would talk on the phone. So exciting!

In March 1987, Sherri was living with Susan’s family in Chattanooga, TN. Her brother-in-law was in college there. Sherri helped Susan with their children. We were living in Rutherfordton, NC and I was a student at McDowell Tech in Marion. I sent Sherri money for a bus ticket to come for a weekend visit. The excitement waiting for her at the bus station was so intense. In preparation of her visit, I remember telling my dad how much I loved her and if I didn’t ask her to marry me soon, I would make a lifetime mistake.

That weekend we traveled to the mountains to visit friends and discuss our future together. Cold weather, fog and rain did not dampen our time together. We decided that if I could get a job, even a part-time job, we would get engaged. Only a few days passed and I had a job as the evening receptionist at McDowell Tech. Guess what this meant? I asked my mom not to tell Sherri if she called. I wanted to tell her. Sherri did call and mom had to tell her. I should have never asked mom to lie, that was so okay.

At the end of March, our family moved back to the mountains. Soon I purchased an engagement ring and started counting the days when I could give it to her. I was so afraid I would lose it. Sherri lived nearly 600 miles from Black Mountain. She and I got married June 12th and I wanted to be there. Since I had never visited Sherri and wasn’t going to travel alone, her cousin, Dale Murdock went with me. After visiting with her family, we drove to her uncle’s house for the night. It was there that I proposed and Sherri said, “Yes!” I was so happy and so thankful.

We decided not to tell anyone until after the wedding, because it was with Teresa’s big day. While the ladies were getting ready, someone slipped and let Sherri’s mother know. Her father was told in the receiving line after the wedding by Teresa’s mother-in-law. Definitely not the way we planned it.

That summer was one of the best times we’d ever had together. We chose to get married November 26th during my Thanksgiving Holidays. After our honey moon, we moved to Snow Creek and joined Bear Creek Baptist Church. In 1983, I applied for a full-time job at Maryland Community College and got it. Two years later, we moved to California and got married June 12th and I wanted to be there. Since I had never visited Sherri and wasn’t going to travel alone, her cousin, Dale Murdock went with me. After visiting with her family, we drove to her uncle’s house for the night. It was there that I proposed and Sherri said, “Yes!” I was so happy and so thankful.

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

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Snow Hill Baptist Church

No Regrets Family-Kindle the Flame
By Pastor Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

We have not experienced much winter yet, but I am sure we will feel the cold again before it’s all over. Sometimes it gets really cold up here on Hensen Creek. I have seen the creek freeze over and the wind blow snow sideways. And when it is really cold (I mean bone chilling cold) and we have to keep the water running to keep the pipes from freezing I keep a big fire in the stove going full blast all day. Pam does not like to get cold. If it is not above seventy in the house she is cold. Just before we go to bed I pack the stove full of wood, and that fire will not last all night. It has been burning hot, but it will die down. That is when I get up in the middle of the night and put more wood on the fire. This keeps the house warm and everybody happy.

Marriage is a lot like keeping a fire, you have to keep adding to it so the flame will die down, and if you do not kindle the flame the fire will go out. A lot of married couples get into trouble simply because they do not “kindle the flame.” One thing I have learned after nearly twenty five years of marriage is that you cannot be selfish. I have to give of myself and Pam has to give of herself. Marriage is not about chang- ing your ways – it is about you becom- ing the right person for your mate, and that your friends take rules. Every time I do something that Pam does not expect me to do, for example wash a load of clothes, or load the dishwasher, it is like throwing a piece of wood on the fire. We do not know what we would do if I came home and saw Pam changing the oil in my truck, ha ha! Just teasing on that one, but when Pam does things for me – just little acts of love it is like throwing a piece of wood on the fire. Little acts of kindness go a long way.

Romance is very important in a marriage and, like most men, I strike at this. But, for twenty-five years, Friday night is date night for Pam and me. This is something that has been a tremendous blessing to us. It has given us much needed time to talk and spend time together as a couple. We were encouraged to do this before we were married and it has proven to be great advice, and I would encourage every couple to do the same. During your spouse is like throwing another “log on the fire” – it will kindle the flame.

One evening during that first year of marriage Pam and I went out to eat. I wanted to take her somewhere nice because she is worth it. We went into a fancy restaurant and looked at the menu. I quickly realized that we could not afford to eat there and we ended up at a Long John Silvers. That was the first time Pam ever saw me eat because I was ashamed that I could not provide more for us. God taught me a very important lesson. If our marriage is based solely on what I can provide then it is doomed, however, if it is based on what God can do through us then it will be blessed. Money cannot buy happiness. I learned, with the help of my dear wife, that where we ate was not nearly as important as the two of us just being together. I would like to encourage couples to spend time with each other. I am amazed at how many couples arrive at the same place, but in separate cars. Do not get so busy with work, hobbies or friends that you forget each other. Do not let facebook or twitter come between you and your spouse. Husband step up and retake that love that brought you and your wife together and never let that flame go out.

I would like to share with you some scripture from the book of Proverbs that has been a blessing to me and use a place I go when thinking about that special relationship I have with my wife.

1. Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.
2. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets.
3. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers’ with thee.
4. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.
5. Let her be as the loving kind and pleasant tree; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou refreshed always with her love.

Prov. 5:15-19 (KJV)

One more thing – couples that pray together stay together. Pray with your spouse and men lead that prayer time together. God bless you and your marriage and remember live with “no regrets” because we will stand before God one day.

Pastor Dean Honeycutt shepherds Snow Hill Baptist Church in Bakersville, NC. He may be reached at 828-385-2019, snowhillbaptist@gmail.com, or visit their website at www.snowhillbaptist.com.

The Rotary of Spruce Pine

Staying Safe
By Doug Sudduth
Mitchell County

On January 12, at the weekly meeting of the Ro- tary Club of Spruce Pine, Rotarian Tina White did a short talk on Situational Awareness and how to be more aware of what is going on around you. She discussed with group how to be more aware of your surroundings in order to keep safe by referencing recent shootings but also basic every day aware- ness.

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A Valentine’s Day Poem
Butterfly
By Joyce Earnwood

There are few things more lovely
Than a butterfly
Yet a pair hold more beauty
It seems this is why.

No matter how graceful
That one may be
What soul has the pleasure
If no one can see.

Oh the sweetest nectar
Is the midst of a Rose
Is by far more delicious
As two share and grow.

In the grandest old palace
One may sparingly live
The real true existence
Is when two love and give.

One spreads his wings
As he flies so high
Yet when two soar together
They can touch the sky.

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

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The Inspiring Word
Sermon on the Mount
Pastor Terry Cheek T.D.D.
Adwell County

Hello friends and neighbors! Thanks for returning to read another publication of “The Blue Ridge Christian News” and our article “The Inspiring Word.” We’re going to pick up on our study of the Sermon on the Mount. In this article, we’re going to look at Matthew 7:1-6 where we read “Judge not, that ye be not judged. (2) For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (3) And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (4) Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? (5) Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and, behold, thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye. (6) Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. “In our passage the Lord referred to the Pharisees practice of judging others against themselves. Christ’s command not to judge was not forbidding them from distinguishing between good and evil. Neither was it prohibiting them from discerning between truth and error in doctrine. Jesus was not so much dealing with conduct, but rather the motives behind one’s conduct. Think about this. We know formication, murder, covetousness and other similar behaviors are sin. There is no denying. The conduct speaks for itself. Why the person engaged in it is another matter. Will it change the fact that sin was committed, no, but not knowing the motive should make us step back and really ask how the Lord wants us to move ahead with this. We do not want to be like the Pharisees. They felt they were qualified to determine a person’s motive by their action, and they engaged in judging the motives of others. This was exactly what Christ forbid.

As an application of the futility of judging another’s motives, the Lord illustrated with a speck of sawdust and a board. A speck of sawdust and a board are identical in nature, both are wood, yet they differ in size. The Lord tells us the one who judges is concerned more with the sawdust in someone else’s eye than they are over the board in their own eye. Another way Jesus was telling us that what one is quick to judge in another can be a major issue in their own life. Instead of dealing with the personal problem, it’s easier to divert attention away from self to another person. We have no authority to judge another person’s life or motives until our own life has been purified. The Lord gives us a very sobering thought in verse 6. He didn’t expect the truth. He taught to be received by the Pharisees. His sovereignty revealed the Pharisees would not accept the Lord’s standard of righteousness over our own.

Christ carefully documented His reasons for rejecting both the Pharisees interpretations and their practice of the law. Therefore, the Pharisees doctrine, traditions, and practice could not produce a righteousness that would make one worthy of God’s kingdom.

We have spent some time on this and there, but what about here and now? Our culture and society seem to force us into a judgmental frame of mind. When we find ourselves caught up in the emotion or drama of an event or situation we need to back away and pray. If we don’t we most certainly will become judgmental. We will focus so heavily on the speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye that we lose track of our own errant life. Remember the devil is the prince and the power of this world. Likewise, the old serpent is a master at creating drama. He is also subtle and crafty in his methods. Because of our sin nature we are vulnerable to his attacks and easily lead into a judgmental mindset. How do we overcome it? Simply put, we can’t. The Lord has already gained the victory. When we submit to the Lord’s authority and submit ourselves to Him, we allow Him to live through us. We can have a testimony that opens doors for others to hear the gospel, see folks saved and others return to a Christ centered worship. Isn’t that a life worthy of God’s Kingdom? Time and space have run out. Until next time may God keep you family in His grip.

Terry Cheek a Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Marion.

Tri County Christian School
New Van
By Teresa Young (Daniel Honeycutt) Mitchell County

“My name is Daniel Honeycutt, and I am a fifth grader at Tri-County Christian School in Spruce Pine. In my English class, my assignment was to write a persuasive paper. I wanted to let you (our community) know that my school needs a better van, and to ask that you would pray about helping us to get it. We don’t have the extra money in our regular school fund, and the van we have now is 11 years old and has lots of miles on it! We need a newer, safer van. We use the van for our students to go many places, like to sing at the local nursing homes, volunteer at Samaritan’s Purse, go on educational field trips, and for our daily enrolled students to go to Maryland Community College. I know it’s a lot to ask, but I know God will bless you for helping and you will receive a tax-deductible receipt. Anything you can give will be greatly appreciated. Thank you!”

For more information, please contact: Tri-County Christian School 201 Pinebridge Avenue Spruce Pine, NC 28777 (office phone) 828-766-3569. Electronic donations may be made at online at www.tricountysschool.org.

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

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February 2017: Blue Ridge Christian News page 13
The Origin of the Home
Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County

There are a couple of passages of Scripture that we need to consider in order to form a foundation for our study.
Gen 1:25-28 says, "And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

Genesis 2:22-24 declares, "And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

The concept of the home did not originate with men, but rather with God Himself. Any concept that man might create could be faulty or defective in some way. But, if God originates it, the story is entirely different. What God ordains can and will work.

Let's briefly contemplate some thoughts about the home as the Lord set it up and ordained it in the beginning of the human race.

The Place of Its Origin
If it all began in a garden the Bible calls Eden. The word "Eden" means "delight." When man fell, it no longer suited man's soul, but it also affected Adam and Eve's environment. Bit by bit, man began to create the garden of Eden. Man had to keep the ground after that time by performing hard work.

The garden was located in the area of Mesopotamia. It was a place where the head of four rivers divided from the river that flowed out of Eden (Gen.2:10-14). However, before God's plan was unfolded on the earth, it was in the heart of Almighty God before the foundation of the world. God determined that He would not only create man, but that he would make a partner of the opposite sex for him called "woman."

The People of Its Origin
The two people mentioned are male and female, Adam and Eve. When we consider their names, the name "Adam" means "red or ground." Adam's body came from the dust of the earth. The name "Eve" means "life-giving." God created the body of Eve from a rib in Adam's body that she might be a helpmeet to him. She was to give birth to a posterity made up of children. God knew it was not good that man be alone. I personally believe God knew that a man needed one to help him as he faced the daily trials, pressures and demands of life. It is not good for a man to be alone.

The Purpose of Its Origin
God has a definite plan in marriage. The Lord at first created the human race with one man and one woman. As far as He was and is concerned, marriage consists of one naturally born man and one naturally born woman.

God told the first man and woman to "multiply and replenish the earth" (Gen 1:28). That of course takes the union of a male and female. Two males or two females would not be able to multiply and replenish the earth and obey the command God gave to Adam and Eve.

God also initiated marriage to fulfill the sexual desires that are built into man's make-up (1 Cor. 7:5). Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "It is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7:9), or burn with desire. The only honorable way to satisfy sexual desires is to do so in the bonds of marriage; that is the way God has ordained it.

The Lord also designed marriage not only to bring children into the world, but to provide the proper atmosphere in which the children could be raised. As we all know there is quite a difference in a man and woman, not only in a biological, but also in an emotional sense.

continued on page 18
The Rest of the Story:

It was never a dull day around Clint, you never knew what to expect. I have never seen pigs with as much of a “sugar high” as those poor pigs had. They had cleaned the entire 5 gallons of scum and just laid down. With Clint, you had to be very specific in your instructions, and I must admit that I did not always do that to perfection. The surprising thing was that Clint had actually gotten in the pen with the pigs and poured the five gallons in their troughs. I was not there, but knowing pigs the way I do, I am sure that they were all over him trying to get to those scums. I don’t recall any dirt being scattered or the pigs eaten alive, but I would not have been surprised if a few tales had been derived from the feeding frenzy that I am sure took place!

Rest in peace, my friend.

Farmer Doug

FARMYARD

Dear friends,

When you’re out it’s hard to decide which story to share next with 50,000 of my closest friends. Sometimes people are prissy as to why I am willing to relay tales of my incompetence month after month. I tell them that I am a proof-positive that there is a merciful God Who looks after the fools of this world…” and I am chief among them

The Farmer’s Apprentice

It was early October, 2010, and time for the Family Fun Festival at Harrell Hill Farms. This annual harvest celebration is truly a wonderful event highlighted by Gospel music, face-painting for children, hay rides, excellent BBQ and other goodies, and the raising of old timey sorghum molasses. If you’ve never attended this country festival you should make plans to come this year on Saturday, October 4th! Anyway, back to the story.

When I came to Harrell Hill Farms in the Spring of 2010, A.D. “Daddy D” Harrell kind of adopted me as somewhat of a “project” D-day I was introduced to and courted by Farmer Doug, as you know, but Daddy D. occasionally stepped in when I was to provide me some special lessons. This was to be such a day as he pulled up to the barn and gave the horn of his Chevy pick-up truck. As I went running to see what was on his mind.

“Get in, I want to be with you sometime,” he said with a wry smile. I was usually tentative when summoned by this man but knew I was not to question his commands.

I climbed into the passenger seat having no idea what would come next.

We meandered up Byrd Road, weaving slightly to left to right (Daddy D’s eye wasn’t what it once was) until we arrived at Farmer Doug and Barbara’s farm house and parked in the driveway. “Come on,” was my only instruction and I went.

Daddy D. carried an old, oil-Tared brown bag which appeared heavy in one hand. As we approached the front porch he began digging in the bag, first taking a couple white-knit sheep’s wool caps (I think that’s what he called them), then he handed me some sticks and dried leaves, and finally unveiled a rusty contraption of some sort. I confess, I quickly identified the first three contents but couldn’t imagine what we would do with the ancient, rusty, medieval torture device. Soon I would know.

Setting The Steel Trap

Please understand, Daddy D’s hands were pretty gory… I don’t mind telling you that man didn’t do things by half measures. I can only imagine how his hands had become so — ummm, weathered would be a nice term but they were a mess. I once remember him threading his boots with a pair of pliers because his fingers couldn’t do it. At any rate, he said “I’m going to tell you what to do, but you have to follow my instructions. I would do this myself but my fingers can’t manipulate the trap like they used to. Now, don’t do anything until I tell you.” Always the eager learner, I agreed to the challenge.

“Now look,” he began, “we’ve got a groundhog under the porch here and it’s digging tunnels all the way under the house. We’re going to set this trap to my yard.” By this time I was pretty excited, just think — “Farmer Doug The Trapper”. It just had a certain ring to it, don’t you think?

Another thing you have to know about Daddy D, he was fun and mischievous much of the time I spent with him. But, he was very SERIOUS when teaching me things which might be considered dangerous. “Clint, don’t ever go into the woods with a chainsaw by yourself because you have a partner!” etc. etc. You’ve gotta watch where you’re going with that tractor and rake, you’re running people off the road down there!” — Always to make sure the power is off before you climb over. These warnings were endless.

I wiped my brow and looked in the eye as Daddy D “dressed me down” for a little while longer — a verbal whipping! I earned; then we went about the business of resetting the trap. He, with his very best fingers actually did the “setting;

I was allowed only to sprinkle a few leaves and twigs in the vicinity. Daddy D put those sheep’s heads apples nearby at bat. “That’ll get the job done,” he said. And he winked at me — you know, that wink we get from a parent which actually means, “it’s okay now, I still love you, let’s move on.”

Back At The Barn

While I was learning to be a groundhog trap operator, Farmer Doug and I were busy boiling the juice from sorghum cane. This is a very tedious process which requires continuous skimming to remove the various impurities and proteins which rise to the surface. It forms greenish foam — similar to the slime used in Ghost Busters — and it must be scooped into buckets for disposal. Anyway, these were a couple 5 gallon buckets of what I call “molasses sugar.”

“Hey, Farmer Clint, why don’t you take some of that up to the pigs? They will be your friends for life,” Farmer Doug laughed. Now that was rather funny since you may remember that I had some rather unpleasant encounters with these aggressive piggies earlier in my stay on the farm.

I went to my digger and lifted a bucket of corn and walked to my truck. After having nearly chopped off my hand with a groundhog trap, I was “into” following directions to the letter. So, I left a 5 gallon bucket full of molasses drippings just inside the pigsty fence. I looked forward to a new, improved relationship with the hogs after this little gift.

Too Much Of A Good Thing

It has been said that too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. Apparently that is true of molasses and piggies.

The next morning, as we enjoyed Doug’s patiently buckwheat pancakes with molasses mixed with butter, it started.

Doug: “Hey, Clint, ummm, did you give molasses to the pigs?”
Me: “Yeah, and they REALLY liked ‘em.”
Doug: “Well thanks for that. I wonder, how much did you give ‘em?”
Me: “About half of the 5 gallon bucket.”
Doug: “Oh, a WHOLE 5 gallon bucket full?”
Me: “Yeah, but it was a couple inches from the top ‘cause the rest spilled out into the truck bed.”
Doug: “Humphmum, I — now that crooked, wily, half-cocked smile
overtaking his face.
Me: “Now what? You tell me to give the pigs some molasses, I give the pigs molasses. Didn’t you want me to give them molasses?”
Doug: “Yes, I did. I was thinking more like a cupful in their evening feed. But you gave them 5 gallons, right?”
Me: “Yes I did. Are they okay?”
Doug: “Hmmm, not sure yet. When I drove by all of them were lying on their backs with their feet straight up in the air.”
Me: “Dead, are the pigs dead?”
Doug: “Now, they aren’t dead. Not sure if they will be or not since I’ve never given 5 pigs a 5 gallon bucket of molasses.”
Me: “Damn it, Doug, I’m sorry. I thought you meant… oh never mind.”
Doug: “Once again, it’s your fault, Clint. I forgot that you’re still new to the farm, I need to communicate better; to let you know exactly what I’m saying.”

You must know that by now I’m feeling pretty much like the village idiot. I didn’t disappoint Daddy D by nearly severing my ear, now I have killed Doug’s pigs. What next?

Doug: “There’s one thing about it, Pollard.”
Me: “Yeah, what’s that?”
Doug: “If I don’t give you his beforehand, that will be some mighty sweet-tasting BBQ next fall!”

I received that message… my second “wink” of the day. (And these pigs lived until the next October).

Still bumbled in the hills,

Farmer Clint
The longest the marriage, the more detail that is added as the Master Artist God Himself, overlooks a glorious masterpiece of brilliantly colorful life and painted shadows of grief. The final picture of an older couple holding hands, smiling at each other and walking into the sunset gives us hope that there is an eternal Light to sustain us, infusing a richness and depth of detail to our marriages that is breathtaking.

The Bible elevates marriage as a symbol of the magnificent relationship between Christ and the Church in calling the body of believers His Bride. This is the reason our marriages should reflect that relationship in the “holy state of matrimony.” It is the reason that marriage is defined biblically as between a man and a woman. One of the most beautiful mirrors of marriage that reflects this symbolism are couples that have been married the longest. Their marriages offer an expansive and richly detailed landscape of the opulent grace and strength which Christ brings to a couple’s sacred commitment.

Jack R. Taylor, in his book, What Every Husband Should Know (01581 Broadman Press, Nashville, TN) offers an acoustic of marriage that provides the best path to that marital grace and strength mentioned above. When these facets of marriage shine, we can enjoy more fully the presence of His grace and strength in our marriages. Here it is:

Motivating one another to seek God, Accepting One Another, Respecting One Another, Responding to one another, Identifying with one another, Attentive to one another, Going in the same direction, Excited about one another

The Bible readily affirms Jesus’ love for His Bride and helps us to put into practice these ideas mentioned in the marriage acrostic. We are commanded to:


I spoke recently with a couple who have been married 71 years. Preston and Bea Denton were married on October 15, 1945 while he was home on furlough during World War II. He was in the navy and on board the ship LST 700 in Japanese waters when a suicide bomber attacked the ship. Although soldiers behind him were killed, Preston, made it home, met Bea, and was married a few weeks later. Even after they were married, they were separated as Denton was stationed in New York on Staten Island. Three children, six grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, three great-great-grandchildren later, I asked Bea several questions about their seven decades of marriage.

Question: What helped you and Preston to have a long marriage?
Answer: She replied in a sweet warm voice, “We didn’t believe in separation or divorce. Preston was good to me, and we did things together with the children and also as a couple. When the children were young we enjoyed the beach (as a family) and also had caregivers when we spent time together.”

Question: If you were to advise a new bride about marriage, what would you say?
Answer: She replied in a reflective and quiet voice. “Make sure you know the Lord and go to church. I was saved at eleven years old, but it wasn’t until after we were married that I began to serve the Lord fully.”

Question: How did you solve problems?
Answer: She replied in a practical and down-to-earth manner. “We did not stay mad at each other. We weren’t too fussy with each other, and we prayed.” We both knew the Lord and that worked.

Question: What is your favorite verse in the Bible that you’ve applied to marriage?
Answer: After a moment’s thought, Eea (who earned her GED high school equivalency diploma at the age of 64) acknowledged this powerful verse. It is that verse that includes “...and not unto mine own understanding” Proverbs 3:5

As the artist sketched in the last details of the chalk drawing and turned on the ultraviolet light, the audience drew a collective breath at the powerful face that was revealed under the special light. It was Jesus, the strength, light, and beauty behind the enduring marriage of two people who reflected God’s perfect illustration of Jesus’ bride relationship with His Church! They had lived their painting for 71 years, and the beauty of their portrait of marriage had been filled in over the years into it was rich in love with numerous details of joy, shadows of sorrow and a surreal overall luminous glow of Jesus’ presence!
"I lost my daughter Carrie 14 years ago to cancer. When she was in the hospital lying in pain, baled from the chemo, one of the nurses stopped me and said, 'I talk to you about your daughter. She is such an upper. We go there in the morning, and if I have a long face, she cheers me up.' So I asked her, 'Carrie, how come you're always so up and cheerful despite all of this?' Carrie said, 'Every day I wake up and decide today I'm going to love my life.' The key word is decide. That was her mantra. When I wake up in the morning, I say that to myself. It doesn't always work, but for the most part I am one fortunate person and I am gonna love my life to the very end.

Yes! Life is precious—sacred at every stage—from conception all the way to the grave. Every life at every point in every circumstance is still a phenomenal gift. Except to allow it to pass naturally when there is no longer any hope for it, we should decide for life. We should embrace it. We should love it. We should choose it.

Reverend Dr. Mark Creech is Executive Director of the NC Christian Action League. You may contact him at revmarkcreech@christianactionleague.org or 919.797.0606

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Dedicated Wrestler," and 'The Heart and Desires Award.' He has won several trophies in Taekwondo, and in his senior year of high school, he received the 'Most Outstanding Senior Award,' by the North Carolina Student Government,' added Carr.

Carr also said in his book that wrestling was Shawn's passion. He played a huge role in getting his 1997 high school wrestling team to the state finals. He practiced hard each day and was always supportive of his teammates, constantly cheering them on. Carr said that Shawn's coach, Bobby Skinner, said he was one of the most inspirational persons he had ever known. "At the end of each match, he had given his all—and as we say in wrestling, he 'left it on the mat,'" said Skinner.

When Shawn gave his speech to the more than 300 students in the school gymnasium in Carr's request in June of 1997, Carr said it was "sad, but highly emotional." Shawn encouraged the weekly service to never give up in the face hardships. Listen to your parents, he told them. Set goals in life, and don't let other people's negative opinions of you determine your destiny. What really counts, Shawn said, is hard work and being a good citizen in life. At the end of his speech, Carr said, "many people had tears in their eyes, and the crowd gave him a standing ovation.

But here's the clincher. "There were more to this story," wrote Carr. "Liviston grew up in the coal mining community of the county but was educated in Orange County High School, and his inspiration for all would make him a world champion on anyone's terms.

I've never met Shawn Hessian. I don't know anything about him, except for what Tony Carr wrote concerning him several years ago. I did find him, however, on Facebook and it appears from what I could read, as an adult Shawn is still motivating and encouraging thousands of people to embrace life to the fullest—even in the midst of seeming impossible odds.

One of his most recent Facebook posts reads, "I want everyone to try to be kind to one another. I realize we are living in a time of uncertainty and our reaction to lash out, but it is very important that we stay positive. I am going to find a way to do good work for this country as someone with a disability. I have to admit I have a lot of concern for our community—families and people. Disability is something that can touch everyone.

Wow! Can you imagine how impoverished the world would be without people like Shawn Hessian? Look what he's done for others despite his disability.

Yet you might not be aware that many abortions are performed every day in this country because doctors tell the parents that their child will likely suffer a severe handicap. Some physicians even suggest terminating a pregnancy if a couple's genetic history suggests a probable or possible abnormality.

This is tragic.

The late esteemed former Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. C Everett Koop once wrote:

"I am frequently told by people who have never had the experience of working with children who are being rehabilitated into our society after the correction of a major handicap that such deeds should be allowed to die, even 'encouraged to die,' because their lives could obviously be nothing but unhappy and miserable. Yet it has been my constant experience that disability and unhappiness do not necessarily go together. Some of the most unhappy children whom I have known have all of the physical and mental faculties and on the other hand, some of the happiest youngsters have borne burdens which I myself would find very difficult to bear.

Moreover, we might add that many handicapped persons often end up contributing more to life than most people who are "normal." "

In its most recent edition (January/February 2017), the Saturday Evening Post features a short interview with the incomparable and beloved comedian, Carol Burnett. In response to the question, "What fuels your terrific optimism?" Burnett shared the following:

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www.brcnews.com
February 2017 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 17

By Mike Stroud
Burke County

You get to love those old 70’s and 80’s TV shows. So cheesy, but yet so satisfying. The plane. The plane from Fantasy Island. I still remember to this day. Ricardo Montalban, the star of Fantasy Island, being asked about love and marriage. His response was “anyone can be a midnight cowboy, but it takes a real man to be married to one woman and please her”. I always admired that about him. How deep is your love the old Bee Gees song proclaims. In a world where we give up on love to quickly, where are the real men and Christians that stand for a love that never fails. Everyone gets caught up in the Valentine season. Will you be my Valentine? That is the hottest question of the month. Buying boxes of candy, flowers, and notes abound of our affection to others. Love is a powerful force. Everyone needs love. I think our notion of love and its definition is watered down. We want love as long as it is fulfilling us and meeting our needs. When it is required beyond that we tend to give up. The American version of love is different than the God kind of love. The meanings of love vary in the Bible. You have AGAPE, The God Kind of Love, and PHILEO, the brotherly kind of love. We just throw this all into one meaning. The God kind of Love sacrifices it all. EROS, is the sensual or desire kind of love in the Bible. This is the one most people get caught up in. Especially, in our physical relationships. We are looking for satisfaction that others can give us without commitment. This is dangerous and always destroys relationships. True Love and God’s Love always build, it never destroys. It always gives and sacrifices for the other person. During this Love is in the air season, let’s really love beyond ourselves and watch the true rewards of beautiful relationships flourish. No one can resist love and love never fails, so love like God loves and never fail it.

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

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

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Foothills Bible College

The mother is known for the tender element she contributes to the lives of her children. Mothers are nurturers and custodians of their children. She is the closest and best of friends to her kids and does not try to deceive them like many others people attempt to do. Mother's heart is soft and patient and is like a rare jewel. She emphasizes sympathy, care and help.

The dad contributes strength. Dr. Kyle Pruitt says a father has a distinctive style of communication and interaction with his children. They should learn self control from their dad when he says, "Enough is enough." The dad stresses justice, fairness and duty.

Children need both of these character elements to become the kind of well balanced person that God wants them to be. It is so unfortunate today that many children are faced with broken homes and have to be raised by only one parent.

Since God originated and ordained marriage we should take our marital responsibilities seriously. Biblical marriage is a man and a woman coming to join together in order to love and be a help to one another. If God gives them a family, they should seek to raise their children to personally know the Lord's forgiveness and peace.

If a couple cannot have children due to physical problems of one of the marriage partners, there are always children to adopt that need a good home, who need someone to love and care for them.

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

By Timothy W. Tinnon
Burke County

"Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, And a path through the mighty waters, 'Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing. Now it shall spring forth, Shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness And rivers in the desert.'

—Isaiah 43:16-19

"Trust and obey, there's but two words, go to the old hymn. The word 'Trust,' is something that is probably the more difficult of the two commands mentioned in the song. Its definition, "reliance on the varacity, integrity, or other virtues of someone or something; religious faith," from Old Norse means "help, confidence, protection, support." [1] Trust is a word that confides in our ability to depend upon something greater than ourselves, and as such, is often difficult to understand or appreciate when it comes to living.

In the last year, I have been witness to everything from loss of loved ones to the utterly inexplicable. I've felt the preseence and heard the voice of heaven's beings, more than once. In that timeframe, the path upon which we seemed to be truly making our way to somewhere unexpected, stirring the course of everything I had come to know and trust, into a wilderness where only faith could sustain a being. Again and again, I sought protection and support from the only place I knew, the Word of God. He never let me down.

Leveraging on God's past and the future allows for reflection and projection, something else I experienced in the span of 2016. While still moving a farm from one place to another, we continued to settle into the life that was new, serving at the Trail of Faith. Thars at the Trail, I found more and more calling to help those in need, those seeking God, and guidance from a place that was so aptly named. There I learned how to make a path, even when the path was not clear. I learned that in the midst of what seemed to be the perfect path, our father became greatly ill. Once again I was reminded of those God-circumstances that provided the ability to see him before he passed. There is no greater gift than knowing God had given you the chance to bury your mother one last time or to kiss your father goodbye, but the very first step of the way, the nursery blessing. When I walked out of that hospital room, I knew I would not see each other until we reach God's land above, and so it was. On our way home from the funeral, my sister and I received confirmation that all was right when we saw the most unbelief, colorless, double rainbow like none we had ever seen before in our lives.

Another blessing, another circumstance unexplained.

Even while those daily life lessons were being lived, both good and sorrowful, His was at work on the next road into a wilderness you've imagined. Every time my family would ask questions as to how, when, and where, I would ask them to be patient and trust in the plan. For in time, all of our concerns would be answered. It was in these moments, soon after their questions, I found myself alone with Him, praying and listening to more.

There were times of darkness that filled us with doubt. In the waiting, there was learning. It was probably the pithiest advice, each subject to the other. Yet, each time He spoke, I listened. Each time I asked, He answered.

There was the day we didn't have enough money to buy food until the next paycheck, and with only a half-a-gallon of milk left in the fridge at the house. I silently asked God for help as I went to the Trail to open up the morning. There was nobody else that could sustain our family the way we were. None of the usual things had been told how close we were to going hungry, nobody. As I passed the door, there sitting on the porch as I walked in was a single white envelope with my name scratched on it, almost illegible. I picked it up, opened it, and opened it. Tears filled my eyes as I dropped to my knees.

There was $40 cash. God once more answered prayer.

"Knock, and the door will be opened, ask, and ye shall receive." This was just one of many Godsendings that we experienced as a work to trust and obey. Brothers and sisters from all over came to our aid in our time of need again and again. This in itself was difficult to understand and accept. We had to learn a whole new paradigm of life, how to receive.

Continually, each day, prayers would be lifted up for guidance. One specific prayer that seemed to go unanswered was for Him to find someone to buy out our farmstead. The like all things asked for, one must consider God's time. For, in what seemed an eternity but in reality was blinding speed, our home of over twenty years finally sold. It was a bittersweet memory, even now.

Looking back, it was when things began to move faster than one could conceive, at God-speed.

In a blazing fury, we cleaned, moved, and moved the last vestiges of a lifetime in a matter of two weeks. We had moved from the reflection to the immediate. As things began to move along, we still didn't know where we would end up. The path was unclear.

Prayers continued to be lifted up, for we were still housed in a temporary shelter, affectionately called, "The Shack." Thus one day we found ourselves driving toward the area of West Lenox. I wondered why. Deep inside it felt right even though it didn't seem logical at the time. All after we had been there, I knew it was God thing. Again, His will would be done in time. There, through one unbelievable circumstance after another, we found a new home that would soon be our next step in the journey. There too we found new friends that would someday become our neighbors, as well as a brother and sister in Christ.

Something else I learned through the course of the year, unbelievable circumstances are more easily called "Miracles." In all honesty, we are afraid to use the "M" word for fear of non-believers accusing us of believing in fantasy. "If they could only see what I've seen," I think to myself, "then it wouldn't be such a stretch of the imagination." After the sale of our farm and the purchase of our new home, we had moved from the reflection into the projection of time.

Then came the closing of the door we never saw coming. The loss of funding for my position at the Trail, and then the search for the next "What." For nearly ten years of my last 23 years at North Park, I had feared losing my job and to have to find a new one. We never thought it would happen after we had given everything up to live for our new life.

But alas, here we were. Faith took on a whole new level of trust.

Once more when it seemed like all would be lost, the unbelievable transpired. After three weeks of looking for jobs, filling out an untold number of applications, there had not been one phone call, not one interview. One morning I awoke to scripture that read, "Today will be the end of your suffering, your trials will cease today." That afternoon came the first phone call. Then in a matter of 24 hours, God speed once again took over. Before I knew it, I had two job offers and was quickly hired as a High School Math Teacher in Boone, NC. His plan had been fulfilled. The realization dawned on me that the move to our new home’s location allowed for a commute to the new job that was manageable instead of infeasible. God’s hand was in every step of the way.

At the beginning, the story seemed like I was moving to a place where I could share God’s word from the mountain; the mountain being the Trail. Before I knew it, I was serving Him from the mountain top, but in a way, I had never imagined.

Every day, new doors open to places I never saw coming. Each day I pray for strength, guidance, and wisdom. Every day God answers prayer.

God will make rivers through the deserts and roads through the wilderness if only we trust in Him.

It has been a year of untold highs and lows, but in the end, it has been a year of serving our Lord, and for that, I couldn’t ask for more.

The Love of God

By Rev. John McCouy
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

Our Scripture reading for this month is in Ephesians 3:17-18. As we observed Paul writing he treats the love of God as a cubic, having breadth and length, depth and height...a perfection of form. Every side of a cube is a perfect square, and from every angle it presents the same appearance.” The Holy of Holies was cube-shaped, so is the New Jerusalem, and so is the love of God. 1. The Width of His Love. His unstretched arms encompass all humanity (John 3:16). His love removes our sins “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12). 2. The Length of His Love Eternal, providing His children with everlasting life. 3. The Depth of His Love. Reaching down to the most horizon and hopelesslyimmerse. 4. The Height of His Love. “As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward us” (Ps. 103:11). Let us ask the question “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach...” But only God loves us with infinite dimensions. He loves you to an endless degree. Paul encouraged the disciples of our Lord at Ephesus to walk in love. Jesus had commanded His disciples to live by the principle of love (John 13:34-35). Unselfish, sacrificial love was to be the badge of identification by which the world would recognize His disciples as His followers. Human beings need love more than anything else in the world. A famous physician has said, “We must learn to practice love or we will perish. The human spirit was made for love. Without love a personality withers and dies like a water lily transplanted in a desert. In no relationship is the practice of Christ like love more necessary or more protective of happiness than in the marriage relationship. Paul’s great hymn of love recorded in 1 Corinthians 13, he declares that love is more important than any other gift or ability or activity. He sets forth some of the characteristics of Christian love. Christian love is very patient (v. 4). Christian love is very kind (v. 4). Christian love never boils with jealousy (v. 4). Christian love is never envious (v. 4). Christian love does not esteem inflated ideas of its own importance (v. 4). Christian love is never rude, unworthy, or indirect (v. 5). Christian love is never self-seeking; nor does it pursue selfish aims (v. 5). Christian love is never quick to take offense and keeps no score of wrongs (v. 5). Christian love is never glad when others go wrong (v. 6). Christian love always rejoices when truth prevails (v. 6). Christian love can overlook faults and is always hopeful for the best (v. 7). Christian love keeps on loving in spite of some things that are unlovable (v. 8); the nature of Christian love as set forth in 1 Cor. 13:4-8)

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

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Fill My Cup
By Sheila Hallock
Mitchell County

"Like the women at the well, I was seeking for things that could not satisfy. And then I heard my Savior speaking—'Draw from my well that never shall run dry.'

We were a different group of women sitting on a sunny deck, on a Tuesday evening. Some of us are strangers, some co-workers, some family. As I looked around, the thought came to me—'How did I get here? These ladies are mostly strangers. Where do they go to church? Do I believe the same way they do? Will they accept me? Will they judge me? Will I disagree with the little fiery redhead lady leading the group?'

Then I listened. Weeks later I had the vision of the island of Misty Toys in the Christmas movie Rudolph. This group of ladies was different. We aren't all that different, but none in the same way. We all had a story to tell, some shared their story, some did not, but I came to see that was okay. We were accepting each other for what we were, broken, scarred, hurting, confused. Our pasts were different; our present was different; our futures would hold differences, but we all had one thing in common. A woman going to be changed, changed for the better. Because a small group of ladies desired to pray together, learn about the Bible together, even though we all held a somewhat different version of that Bible, we all wanted the same thing—'Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up Lord, O God, and quench this thirsting of my soul.'

As we continued to meet we learned we all had one thing in common, Jesus. Jesus had brought this little island of misty together. He was teaching some that they were loved, some his forgiveness, some to forgive others, some He was tenderly bringing back to the fold, some to pray, and some to trust Him and to trust others. We were learning different things at different times and yet we were all learning the same thing. Jesus was filling us up. 'Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more. Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole.'

We were all thirsty at the well. Some had brought cups from which to draw and some had vases, but we were all coming, and all helping each other to quench their thirst. 'And then I heard my Savior speaking—'Draw from My well that never shall run dry.'

Months and years have passed, we still meet, we still are misty, we still have no denominations, we still have different versions of the Bible, but now we have one thing in common; we have each other and we have Jesus. We have prayer warriors! We have our animals and we know that we are a united front that will stand together, shoulder to shoulder, shield held high and sword drawn. We are in battle with Satan and we know it.

"So, my brother, if the things that this world gives you leave hangings that won't pass away. My blessed Lord will come and save you if you heed to Him and humbly pray.

One misty tells the group. All because God brought a little group of misty women together, something great is going to come. Because we prayed, or one of us prayed, one of us was filled, God has a plan. God is going to work in a life or lives, something is going to happen. "Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up Lord."

One evening the fiery redhead announced to the group, that the Lord has laid on her heart that we are to hold a retreat, a conference for local women and teens, local woman ministering to local women. Around the room hands jacks, month drops open, hearts stop, fears creep in, doubts take flight. Then we listen, we pray, we plan and God works. "There are millions in the world who are seeking for pleasures easily afforded. But none can match the wondrous treasure that I find in Jesus Christ say Lord."

Fill My Conference
By Sheila Hallock
Mitchell County

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Sanctity of Marriage
By Pastor Kurt Bossart

Gen 5:1: In the day that God created men, in the likeness of God made he him; 2 Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their same Adam, in the day when they were created.

When God called Adam and Eve “Adam”, He was making a profound statement. That statement was, “you are one.” Right from the beginning He was teaching us that when we enter into the Covenant of Marriage we are to do it for life.

I’ve heard various versions of this complaint through the years: “I know God wants me to be happy and I’m just not being happy with this guy/girl so I believe it’s God’s will that we get divorced.” Another one is “I don’t think it’s healthy for our children to see us fighting all the time.”

Ironically here always seems to be someone waiting in the wings when these complaints come up. But regardless, know that under God’s plan, there’s no one down the line or around the corner who will give you a greater thrill. There’s not another person on earth who will make you happier, more contented or more fulfilled.

Such is the amazing mystery of matrimony.

There is no greater thrill than seeing your children grow and walk in the ways of the Lord. But all that is cast aside by the one who says, “if I have an affair, God will forgive me and they will too.” I believe there is nothing worth losing your family over and I hope you don’t too.

The most talked about sin in the Bible isn’t murder, theft or lying— it’s adultery. I believe that because of the long-term repercussions.

As we focus on marriage this month, please determine that no matter what you’ve been through, no matter where you’ve been, you will do whatever it takes to guard the sanctity of your family.

Kurt Bossart is pastor of Walnut Grove Presbyterian Church.

Happy Valentine’s Day

Bakersville Community Health Center
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On February 1, 2017, two long-established community health centers will join together to improve access to quality healthcare and increase services in Yancey and Mitchell Counties.

Retaining their names and locations, the partnership of Celo Health Center and Bakersville Community Health Center will ensure stable, consistent care for years to come while increasing the availability of care for patients across the two counties, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

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The Month for Love
By Pastor Bruce Cannon

February is the month for love. Hopefully we men (and ladies) remember that the 14th of this month is Valentine’s Day and an opportunity to be reminded to show love for our spouse, our significant other (if unmarried) and even our children. For children, too, are loves of our life.

We love because He, the Lord, first loved us. We love because He placed within our blueprint the need to love and be loved.

Yes, so much of the time we neglect those extremely special people in our life. I am reminded of the old joke told of a man who was questioned about showing affection, verbally and physically, to his wife. He was asked how long it had been since he told her that he loved her? He replied, “I told her when I married her twenty years ago, and I have not changed my mind. If I change my mind I will tell her.”

How many wives, or significant others, would love to hear those wonderful words “I love you”? How many children would love to hear those words from a parent? How many relationships would blossom and thrive with simply saying those words and living them our daily?

A story aired in July, 2012 of children living in a very overcrowded orphanage in Romania. These children, because of serious overcrowding, were not only or shown love like children living in healthy environments. The effect of this was horrible. The children were grossly emotionally and physically underdeveloped. Time spent in this environment even caused their brain cell bodies (grey matter) to shrink. The story read: “Infants and young children expect an environment in which they are going to interact and receive nurture, not only food, but psychological nurture, from adult caregivers.” (http://www.livescience.com/21776-early-neglect-alters-kids-brains.html)

Protect, nurture and encourage the relationship you have with your spouse and others by:
1) Saying and meaning those wonderful words, “I love you.”
2) Spend quality time together. Go out on a date.
3) Find his or her love language and fill up their love tank.
4) Spend time before the Father asking Him to bless the love of your life.

This investment pays off with huge dividends! It is a very worthy undertaking of our time and will radically improve our relationships.

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

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Call the Activity Director, Kristin Lowe, of Brian Center Spruce Pine (828) 765-7312 for more information. Thank You for considering this opportunity to make a difference in someone’s life.
Keys to Making a Long-Term Relationship
By Tracy Black
Mitchell County

Often, we are asked, “Since ya’ll deal with violent, bad relationships, what makes a good relationship?” Just as “bad” relationships are based on Power and Control, we believe that “good” relationships, whether they are friendships, business partnerships or romantic, are based on Equality.

Here are the 8 traits of an equal relationship:
- Non-Threatening Behavior - partners in a healthy relationship will strive to make their partner feel safe and comfortable in being who they are.
- Respect - partners will be respectful of their partner’s opinions and understand that everyone has different opinions and that’s okay.
- Trust and Support - partners will support each other’s goals in life and trust their right to have their own feelings, friends and activities.
- Responsible Parenting - partners will share parental responsibilities and duties. They will be positive role models for the children.
- Shared Responsibility - partners will agree to a fair distribution of work and decision making.
- Economics - partners will make money decisions together and will make sure those decisions will benefit both partners.
- Negotiation and Fairness - partners will seek to find ways to resolve conflicts so both are satisfied. They will be willing to compromise, and willing to accept change.

If you are in a long-term marriage, I am sure you recognize many of these things as normal parts of how you do things. Be assured that modeling these qualities will not only lead to a more stable long-term relationship, but will build a foundation that the generations to come can follow and learn.

Tracy Black is the Associate Director of Mitchell County SafePlace. She can be reached at 828-765-4011 or tracyeblack@bellsouth.net.

Spring Quarter Begins
By Tom Walker
McDowell County

The Spring Quarter will begin on March 13th at Foothills Baptist Bible College. This is the fourth year for the Spring Quarter, the first graduating class was held last summer.

FBBC is a place where men and women can learn more about the truths of the Word of God. It is the belief of the school and its administration that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God. The school rejects the idea that the Bible only contains or that it becomes the Word of the Lord. It is God’s truth for every generation.

Both men and women alike are welcome to study at Foothills Baptist Bible College. The school is not only for preachers, teachers and missionaries, it is also a place where people can go and learn more about what God has to say to this generation.

The faculty has the proper educational qualifications and a heart for the students and their welfare and concern. Every instructor has reached the Doctoral level in the educational process.

One can earn an Associate Degree, A Bachelor Degree, A Masters Degree, or a Doctoral degree in theology or Christian Education. FBBC holds night classes. This is good for those who must work a daytime job.

It gives them an opportunity to keep working their jobs and yet have a night to come to further their education.

The courses which will be taught in the Spring quarter are as follows:
- Period 1 - The Book of Genesis - Dr. Gary Lauer - 6:30-7:05 P.M.
- Period 2 - The Book of Revelation II - Dr. Tom Walker - 7:10-7:45 P.M.
- Period 3 - The Book of Isaiah - Dr. Eric Grindstaff - 7:55-8:30 P.M.
- Period 4 - The Book of Acts - Dr. Tom Walker - 8:35-9:10 P.M.

Those courses can be taken for credit or they can be audited. A high school diploma or a GED is required to take courses for credit. They can be audited without having a high school diploma. Auditing means you can come to class, listen to the lectures and receive a syllabus, but do not have to do all the outside work that students studying for credit have to complete.

The first class begins on March 14th at 6:30 P.M. You can register for classes by calling 828-442-7015 for more information or to pre-register. If you can sign up early before the first day of classes, it would be helpful in pre-ordering materials.

Prospective students can call for an appointment.

Visit the school web site at www.FoothillsBBC.org.

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

www.buckstinyhouses.com

Proudly Made in America
Avery County

High School: Up to this point in the school year, winter weather has not had a tremendous impact on our schedule but it always creates some challenges. As we meet these challenges, we express our sincere appreciation to our staff, students, and parents for their patience and support as we strive to make decisions that promote safety.

As of Friday, January 27, here is where we are with days missed due to inclement weather:

- 3 days have been missed.
- 2.7 hours missed for Delay/Early Dismissals.

The extended instructional time has allowed us to not make up the 3 days we have missed and if the additional time is continued until the end of the year there will be 8 or 9 more days that can be used to make up time.

During the winter months when roads become hazardous due to snow and ice, our goal is to transport students to and from school in the safest manner possible. We realize that our buses carry you most treasured possession, and we commit to offer the best and safest travel possible. Our school bus drivers and transportation staff are well trained, dedicated and committed to the safety of each child in the Avery County Schools. Our buses begin to leave as early as 5:20 a.m. each morning and do not complete their return route until 5 p.m. Our goal is to make a decision about the operation of the school by 9:30 a.m. each morning after driving roads around the county, reviewing local forecasts and talking with meteorologists, especially Ray’s Weather.

Barclby

Barclby Chamber of Commerce - Tus and Tails—to benefit A Better Life Animal Rescue Feb 11th at 7:00pm at Silver Fork Winesery, The Pavilion. $75.00 per person.

Catawba River Bapt. Association - Ministers and Wives Fellowship Mon Feb 16th 6:30pm Walker Road Baptist Church $10.00 per person, call by Feb 5th for reservations at 828-477-0137.

Dissatisfaction RA Race Car Competition - Saturday March 4th Oak Ridge Baptist Church Registration: 9:00 to 1:00pm Cost $5.00 per car Lunch will be served to everyone.

For more info www.baptistmission.org/Church-Programs/Royal-Ambassadors

Christian Business Men’s Connection (Morganton) - We are a movement of Men to Experience the Power of One God, the Value of One Man and the Leverage of One Team, resulting in the Spiritual Reproduction among Businessmen. Please join us for lunch at one of our weekly Bible study meetings. Tuesday, 12:00 noon at the Community House, Morganton. Contact: Wayne Giese, 828-431-5169

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist-Barclby County - “Funniest Home Videos” Fundraiser Dinner and Show Saturday, February 25th, at 6:30 p.m., at the Silver Creek Adventist School, 2195 Jemstone Road, Morganton, NC. 28655

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

McDowell Country

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

First Baptist Church of Marion - Belize Missionary Mission Registration is now complete for the 2017 Belize Mission Trip 14 are onboard and preparing to provide free clinics in 5 underserved villages in the northern Corozal District of Belize. The need is currently for medical supplies and medications. Contributions are greatly appreciated. Please make your donations to 7BC for the Belize Medical Fund. For more info, please contact Scott Hagaman.

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

Mitchell County

Bear Creek Baptist Church-Ledge- Associate Bible Dills will be held at Bear Creek Baptist Church on March 24th at 10:00am.

The Primitive Quartet will be at Bear Creek on March 19th at 6:00pm.

Women’s Prayer Breakfast at Helen’s Restaurant on Friday February 10, 2017 at Helen’s 5:00am. Ordering from menu. All women are invited. Celebrate Recovery - This is a Christ and Biblical Based Program, giving help for men, women and families suffering from addiction. Any questions contact Josh Will at 704-325-6605.

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

Calvary Chapel Asheville - Spruce Pine - Calvary Chapel Church in Asheville is sponsoring a home fellowship and Bible Study in Spruce Pine. The fellowship is held on Thursday evenings at 7:00pm at 79 Sen Dr. (Estate area—of Brushy Creek Rd). We are studying the Gospel of John currently. Call John Jackson 760-763-7700 for information and directions. And bring your Bible.

Support Group For Caregivers Of Those With Memory Loss To Hold Meetings - The First Friday Of Each Month From 1-3pm - Care, Share, a newly formed support group for caregivers of loved ones who have memory loss, will hold meetings at the offices of Hospice & Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, 236 Hospital Dr. in Spruce Pine from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. High Country Caregiver Foundation welcomes and encourages all caregivers to attend. Families dealing with a loved one with memory loss can quickly become exhausted, traumatized, and isolated, and this new group intends to provide support, friendship, education and referrals for caregivers. Monthly meetings held on the first Friday of each month will offer refreshments and fellowship. There will be opportunities for caregivers to tell their stories, learn useful tips, trade information, and give and gain support to others in the same situation.

For further information about the group and the meeting please contact Suzanne Russell at (704) 614-5867 or Janet Qualls at justmorrain@gilead.com

First Baptist Church Spruce Pine - First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine is seeking a part-time childcare provider for their toddler nursery. The position will require working approximately eight hours per week consisting of 4.5 hours on Sunday morning, 1.5 hours on Sunday nights and 2 hours on Wednesday nights plus other hours during special events as needed. The position will require a spirit-filled caring and responsible childcare provider who will focus on providing a safe environment for toddlers. Qualifications include experience in caring for young children, and the physical ability to meet their active needs; 2-3 references; and willingness to submit to a background check. CPR is required and First Aid is recommended and can be completed once employed. The hourly pay is $15-$20 per hour and is negotiable based on experience and qualifications. Applicants should email resume to 125 Tuppen Street, Spruce Pine, NC 28777. Phone #828-765-9411 Ext. 301.

Mount Baptist Association-Spruce Pine - A Praise and Thanksgiving service has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 7, 7:00 p.m., at Berry Chapel Baptist Church, as Spruce Pine. If you remember, and I’m sure you do, hundreds of us gathered at the Tri-County Tabernacle in Spruce Pine, and prayed for divine intervention in the past election. God answered our prayers and we owe it to Him to give thanks. Hopefully, we can have as many or more than we had at that time. This will be time of prayer and praise only. No preaching. We simply want to acknowledge the goodness of God and to recognize Him for His many blessings. We prayed about the election and He answered. We prayed for rain and He answered.

I am reminded often of the words of our Lord after he had healed the ten lepers. Only one came back to thank Him and His words were "where are the nine". I never want to be one of "the nine".

We owe the Lord so much for what he has done. We encourage everyone to build up our churches, all denominations, all Christians and all people. If you have any political or religious affiliation, are invited to come out on February 7th and let’s just praise God. Please share this with your church family and plan to bring a bus load.

Berry Chapel Baptist Church is located on Altapass Road about one tenth mile past the Spruce Pine Hospital, on the right. This event is sponsored by Mount Baptist Association.

Spruce Pine Farmer’s Market Move to Indoors! - We will have baked goods, fruits, eggs, peak, grass fed beef, and more. The market is inside the Pizza Shop and Dry County Brewing Company from 12-6pm. The indoor market will be once a month the 1st Saturday of the month from December through April. Come shop local with us.

Red Cross Blood Donation - The American Red Cross serving Mitchell and Yancey County has volunteer positions open as Blood Donor Ambassadors assisting in the areas of Reception and Hospitality at local blood drives in Spruce Pine and Burnsville. With the need for blood donations increased during the holidays, the American Red Cross Blood Drive Foundation is seeking new volunteers to assist at blood drives in Mitchell, Yancey, and Watauga counties. The Red Cross Drives are held at the First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine and the Higgins Memorial Methodist Church in Burnsville. Volunteers serving in this role help the Red Cross provide a great blood donation experience for donors — helping to save lives. For more information and to apply go to http://www.redcross.org/volunteer or contact: Garity Bramwell, Volunteer Coordinator, Garity.Bramwell@redcross.org or 828-333-9809.

Summer 2017 Workshops at Penland - Say hello to Penland's Summer 2017 workshop catalog, now online in full as a PDF! We're beyond excited to have 97
great workshops on offer this year. Take a look and come join us in the studios to build bikes or books or bowls or brooches or...All applications received by February 11 will be entered into the early registration lottery. Scholarships are available for all workshops, apply by February 17.

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

The Foundation is happy to announce the Lending Library is now open at the Tipton Hill Community Center. The Lending Library books to individuals at no cost. House is the gray outdoor building to the left of the front steps of the Community Center, the Lending Library has appropriate books for all ages except for pre-schoolers. Books have been donated by private citizens, Bowman Middle School Library, and the AMY regional library Bookmobile. Categories of books currently include fiction, history, biographies, religion, and miscellaneous. The Lending Library operates on the honor system of a book taken, left good condition book. The Foundation asks that each person not take more than five books at one time so your neighbors may participate. Donations would be appreciated. The Library is open 24/7 and is unlocked at all time.

Tipton Hill Community Foundation and Center for Rural Health Innovations will be hosting an event to invite everyone to an Open House at the Tipton Hill Community Foundation on Tipton Stilir on Saturday, February 18th from 2-4 PM. Refreshments will be served and you will have an opportunity to look at the new equipment and talk with the providers of the new medical service being provided to the community. A fantastic new service for the area.

This service is now open Monday, Tuesday and Thursdays from 9:00 – 12:00 AM

Women's Prayer Breakfast: If you would like to join a group of women who are dedicated to praying, learning about God's will, and fellowshipping, come join us for breakfast at Helen's Restaurant in Bakerville on Feb 10th at 8:00am. We will be ending by 10:00 am. Open to all for more information call Barbara Harrel at 828-467-3544 or email at barbara@bcraews.com.

Yancey County

Cauley Chapel Asheville - Spruce Fee - Cauley Chapel Church in Asheville is serving as a Community Church on Saturdays. Their Superbowl viewing is held on Thursday evenings at 7:00pm at 790 Sra. Dr (Ennante area—off Bruskey Creek Rd. We are studying the Gospel of John currently. Call John Jackson 760-793-7399 for information and directions. And bring your Bible.

Higgins Memorial United Methodist Church - Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) Men's Class meeting in Burnsville announces that its new study year will begin on Wednesday, September 1st at 6:55 pm and the class is being hosted by Higgins Methodist - 1101 N. Main Street, Burnsville. This year's study will focus on the Gospel of John. Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) is an international and interdenominational Bible class for men of all ages, denominations, geographic locations and backgrounds - all men living in Western North Carolina are encouraged to join the study. The group, for beginner or advanced Bible students, will meet from 6:55 to 8:55 pm each Tuesday evening through May - just show up any Tuesday evening beginning September 3rd to join the group and the study.

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

Shoal Creek Baptist Church - Next month on Wednesday evening, February 11, 2017 at 6:00 pm as part of our Fellowship meeting, we will have Rev. Patrick Randolph of Hendersonville, NC providing music and a presentation of Memmitz Ministries (this is a nursing home ministry that he does through Henderson County). Patrick is a multi-talented blue grass/ gospel musician who plays many instruments proficiently. We will take up a love offering in support of what he does.

Seaton Estate Baptist Church-Burnsville - On March 12-11 South Estate will be holding Revival meetings at 7:00pm. Guest speaker will be Nicky Waters from the Soothing Chapel Baptist Church in Hudson, NC. For more info call 828-675-4531 (church office) 675-1814 (Parsonage) or 208-4474 (cell).

Trac Announces 2016/17 Grant Recipients - The Toe River Arts Council and the North Carolina Arts Council are pleased to announce the 2016/2017 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, 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 $14,000 in requests from all art disciplines. A total of $11,500 was awarded. The Regional Artist Program Grant is sponsored by the Toe River Arts Council (Mitchell and Yancey Counties), Madison Arts Council, Ashville Area Arts Council (Buncombe County) and the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the NC Department of Cultural and Natural Resources, and a agency.

Yancey County Meals on Wheels (Burnsville) — Volunteers needed to deliver meals to Yancey County shut-ins, any weekday, 16:30-4; noon. If you would like to volunteer, please call the Yancey County Senior Center at 228-682-6611.

Maryland Community College - Small Business Center- Allen Cook, Director, E-Mail: tcook@maryland.edu. Address: 200 Maryland Ln, Spruce Pine, NC 28777, Telephone: 828-765-1295. To register for free classes, call Alan Cook at 828-765-1295 or email tcook@maryland.edu.

FREE ONLINE SMALL BUSINESS SEMINARS
Introducing Small BizU! We know you are busy so the Maryland Small Business Center has been developing an online seminar program that allows you to learn what a lender is really looking for and how they evaluate loan requests. Simply understanding the way a lender thinks can make more than double your effectiveness in raising money for your business.

Maryland State Small Business - A comprehensive ten-part course on the tactics of how money is really raised for small business formation. The course examines the sources of available capital and an overview concerning the difference between debt and equity. The course walks you through the maze of financial terms and tactics necessary to successfully identify and secure money for a new business venture.

Finding and Attracting an Investor – Finding and Attracting an Investor examines the peculiar nature of investment capital. The course presents practical tactics on how to identify and secure different types of capital including seed capital, early stage capital, venture and angel capital. The course uses information from many different kinds of businesses and presents the tools for completing the fund-raising process are presented. Special focus is given to the federal and state laws that govern the capital and securities process.

Creating Financial Projections - Financial projections are a collection of statements that present a numerical model of your business. Learn how to create a projected income statement, cash flow statement, balance sheet, and break-even point analysis. Understand what financial projections are and what comprises a good set of projections.

Marketing 101: The Basics of Bookkeeping – Take command of a bookstore and coffee bar and see how money moves in and out of a business while learning the fundamentals of accounting at the same time. This course provides an in-depth look at each of the primary accounting transactions used in a business. Without using any accounting jargon to begin with, the course demonstrates how bookkeeping is the backbone of running a successful business.

Creating Buzz: Marketing on Small Budget -Creating Buzz is one of the most comprehensive courses on low marketing is actually executed in a small business. Creating Buzz is packed-full of hundreds of strategies, checklists, and tips across the growing field of business promotion in your lifestyle. Whether you are a savvy seasoned pro, or a business just starting off, you won't find a more thorough, realistic, and actionable guide to increasing your bottom line in such a concise and cost-effective package.

Creating Financial Projections - Financial projections are a collection of statements that present a numerical model of your business. Learn how to create a projected income statement, cash flow statement, balance sheet, and break-even point analysis. Understand what financial projections are and what comprises a good set of projections.

Joining the Toad River Arts Council, the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the NC Department of Cultural and Natural Resources, and a agency.

How to Write a Business Plan - This ten-part course walks you through the details...
New Mitchell County 4-H Extension Agent
By Kim Slonick
Mitchell County

The Mitchell County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension would like to welcome Kaley Brown to the extension staff as the new Mitchell County 4-H Extension Agent. Kaley recently graduated from N.C. State University with a degree in Animal Science. Kaley will be responsible for providing leadership for the development, implementation, evaluation, and marketing of an effective educational program in 4-H and youth development. You can contact Kaley at the Mitchell County Extension Center, 828-885-4811.

Kim Slonick is 4-H Program Assistant for the NC Cooperative Extension-Mitchell County Center, you may contact her at kim_slonick@ncsu.edu.

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church
Unexplainable Love
By Cindy Mercer
Berk County

When some people say they are excited, you know it without a doubt. You may hear squeals of anticipation and quotes like, “This is so amazing!” Nothing like this has ever happened to me before.” Or you may see people doing somersaults, jumping up and down or clicking their heels in the air. You are probably thinking all of the above would be the expression of someone who is in love for the first time...and while this may be true, I am actually describing the scene of what one would expect from someone who won the lottery.

Now before you get any ideas, stay tuned. This ends up being a good love story. And who doesn’t like that? Follow me as I share the story of Kim and Steve.

Kim was excited! Maybe excited is too mild a word. She was euphoric! She was wild with delight. Her husband, Steve, had just won the Ohio state lottery of several million dollars—$110,000 per year for 20 years. To top it off, he won the lottery a second time to the tune of $150,000. This Dayton couple could live the life of their dreams. Incredible pleasures lay at their fingertips.

There was only one problem. Kim was having an extramarital affair and she knew the win would cause only greater problems. She didn’t want to walk away from millions, but certainly didn’t want to end the affair either. She wanted Steve’s money, but had no interest in his love. The lottery winnings unmanned Kim’s mind. She plotted to get the money and finally came up with a plan: to hire a hit man to kill her husband.

While she discussed her plan on the phone with her lover, her 21-year-old son listened to the entire conversation. Soon police arrested Kim for plotting her husband’s death—for a measly $500. She had put $23 down, with the balance to be paid when the job was done.

Surprisingly enough, Steve repeatedly visited Kim in prison. “You don’t want 22 years under the bridge,” he explained. Their relationship grew. He diligently fought to have her sentence reduced. He dropped all his charges against her. Her love broke her heart. His loving initiative touched something deep inside. Kim saw her affair for what it was—a cheap imitation of the real thing. How could she resist the real, genuine, authentic love of one who would not let her go? How could she be unfaithful to somebody so faithful to her? How could she turn her back on one who embraced her with his love? She couldn’t. When she finally got out of prison, she threw her arms around him, sobbing. “Please, never, never, never let me go!”

Their friends of course called them crazy and Steve and Kim didn’t disagree. “Love is a state of insanity anyway... You just cannot explain it,” Steve said.

God’s unconditional love is certainly unexplainable. Unconditional love is a love that perseveres no matter what. It is a love that is not dependent on the one being loved. Here is an almost unbelievable thought.

There is nothing you can do to get God to love you any less. Our actions do not determine His love—His heart does. When we turn our backs on Him, He loves us still. When we reject His invitation to follow Him, He loves us still. When we violate His will, He loves us still. Our actions may bring Him pain. Our wrong choices may break His heart. Our bad decisions may give Him deep grief, but nothing we do can change His steadfast love.

I can’t turn away from that love. All I can do is fall at his feet and thank Him forever for loving me so.

Now...don’t you feel a good love story?

Rick Mercer is the pastor of the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church at 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton. They can be reached at 828-864-0500 or cjmerrick@juno.com. Check out www.morgantonnda.org. Their passion is to share the love of Jesus with all who will listen.

Valentine Specials

Dinner for 2
$30.00
Valentine Special good February 10th, 11th, 13th, 14th

Choose Two:
Sirloin, Shrimp or Chicken
Choice of 2 sides, appetizer and dessert

Saturday Morning Breakfast Buffet from 6:30 to 10:30am
M-Tue: 11:00am-8:00pm
Wed: 11:00am-2:00pm
Thurs: 11:00am-8:00pm
Fri: 11:00am-8:00pm
Sat: 8:00am-8:00pm

Bubba’s
Good Eats!
309 East Main St.
Burnsville, North Carolina
828-678-3388

Valentine’s Day is coming up. It is time to plan a night out with someone special. Whether you are looking for a simple dinner for two or a night out on the town, we have the perfect spot for you. And don’t forget to check out our Valentine Specials, which include a dinner for two for $30.00.

Happy Valentine’s Day!
And The Rain... 

By Preacher Chris Rathbone

Mitchell County

The dry season that happened last year seems to be a distant memory. Hardly anyone brings it up in a conversation. Often during the summer of 2016 people would say things like, “We need rain badly!” Others would talk about how dry their yards and gardens were. I saw several church signs that were instructing everyone to “Pray for rain!” We made rain a special object of prayer during our Wednesday night prayer meeting many times.

All summer every few days we heard the threat of rain was always mentioned. The weatherman (or woman) would talk about how much rain we were behind for a certain month.

In the middle of all that came along the climate change gurus. There were special interviews with different people talking about how the climate change was causing the shortfall in rain. Just a few years back it was called global warming. When that didn’t work they changed it to climate change. If you think about it, they’ve been telling us for years that it’s too cold, too hot, too warm, too wet, too dry, too smoky, too icy, too cloudy, too sunny, too windy, too still, too what was it? Oh yes, it’s because of climate change.

Although there were some dry places a few times, I continued to own my yard. All during the summer people were moaning, trimming grass, and tending their gardens. For sure the grass slowed in its growing, but it grew nowhere.

A few times I looked up my sprinklers to water the garden. Some of the local streams here got low. A fellow I know said he caught a trout and it had a tick on its back! Just kidding! If you went into one of the local gas stations often you could overhear people talking about the dry weather and the threat of rain as the topic of conversations.

Some time in late summer, or early December, the weatherman said that the weather pattern was going to change because of the change in the way they call the jet stream. Sure enough, it must have changed. Rain began to come every few days. Everyone was excited and thankful. I even posted a video of it raining on my Facebook page! The conversations began to change from how dry it had been to how good rain was getting. We were all very thankful to say the least.

During all the dry weather we experienced the Lord kept reminding me of this thought, “It will rain.” So whenever someone would bring it up I would tell them that the rain would come. I kept telling folks that God would send the rains we need. Now I’m not in any way saying that the dry weather wasn’t serious. Crop losses were expected, wildfires burned (many if not most started by arson), and people lost their homes, businesses in some places. We prayed and will continue to pray for those affected. Some folks had their wells and springs dry up. Certainly it caused some major problems. But in the midst of it all, God kept reminding me that the rains would come and they did.

Every since I was a boy it’s been when the weather was what we would call odd. There are late snowstorms in the spring. Sometimes in January and February there were days the temperatures would be in the 70s. There were summers when it was dry and hot and summers when it was wet and cool. Winter storms brought lots of snow and some winters could hardly get a snow day from school. Every since I can remember the climate has changed! Now all of a sudden many are freak out by something that has been going on since the beginning.

You might be asking, “Preacher, what’s the point in all this?” Well the point is this; I believe many have listened too much to the doomsayers of the world and have forgotten the promise of God. God has made mankind a promise about the climate in His Word. The promise has been that man has abandoned God’s word. Many Christians themselves have forgotten the promise God made to Noah.

Genesis 8:22 And Noah said, “This is the token which will confirm my covenant with you and with all living beings on the face of the earth, forever. For upon the seven days of the flood, when the waters were upon the earth, I brought forth each kind of living thing from Noah out of the Ark.”

Now if you don’t believe in the promises and trust in God’s word, this won’t mean anything to you. But, as believers in God and His Word, this truth should change our perspective on things. This earth and the universe are in the care and control of their Creator. We are certainly to be good stewards of the resources God has given us. God promises us that as long as this earth remains the seasons will come and go. This earth will remain forever until the day God judges it. Rest in His promises and use what wisdom when it comes to being a steward of His creation.

This morning I’m looking out the windows of my home and watching the rain fall into the large puddles. Last night we could hear the rain falling outside the church during the evening service. I believe in the promise that God has given about this earth! Why? Because once again, just as He said it would... the rains came.

Preacher Chris Rathbone serves as Pastor at Mine Creek Baptist Church.
Opening day of the new session for the 2017-2018 biennium of the North Carolina General Assembly convened on January 11th in Raleigh. I was honored to be sworn in for my fourth term as Senator of the 47th District. I am proud of the legislative accomplishments of the North Carolina Senate over the past six years, as well grateful for the opportunity to continue serving the citizens in Mitchell, Madison, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford, and Yancey counties for another term.

Following are my top legislative priorities for this session:

- Keeping House Bill 2 to ensure safety and privacy for women and girls in restrooms, changing rooms, and shower facilities. It is unseemly for a city, town, or municipality to create an ordinance which would force businesses and public buildings to allow men into women’s restrooms.
- Limiting state spending to no more than inflation plus population growth. Our Republican-led legislature has raised revenues while lowering taxes and keeping spending under control, allowing us to shore up the rainy day fund to nearly $1.4 billion, and appropriate over $200 million to assist hurricane and wildfire victims. I am in favor of an amendment to the North Carolina Constitution that would prevent a future legislature from over spending and placing our state in financial jeopardy.
- Structuring of pension and retiree benefits. Currently, our state’s pension system is funded at less than 94 percent, while healthcare is an unfunded liability, which we cannot continue to ignore.
- Continuing our economic growth by putting the Department of Commerce under the office of the Lieutenant Governor.
- Following Congressional direction on the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, and developing a Medicaid system that is a stepping stone for serving the state’s medically needy citizens while putting people back to work.
- Restructuring the small school and low wealth funding formulas to increase the benefit to rural areas by eliminating the bias toward urban areas and large counties.

For this legislative session, I have been appointed to co-chair both the Health Care and Appropriations on Health and Human Services committees. I also have been appointed as a member of the following other standing committees: Finance, Commerce and Insurance, and Rules and Operations of the Senate.

I look forward to continued work on keeping our state a great place to live, work, and raise a family. As always, please share your thoughts with me on these or other issues related to state government by emailing me at ralph.hise@ncleg.net or calling me at 919-733-3460.

Sen. Ralph Hise
Ralph.Hise@ncleg.net
919-733-3450

NC Senate District 47

It is an honor to once again represent you in the North Carolina Senate for the 2017-18 long session. On January 11, I was privileged to stand with the forty-nine other senators and take the oath of office administered by North Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Martin. I am also thankful that my wife, Lydia, daughters Brenna & Julia, and my parents, Steve & Sharon Daniel, were able to share this special day with me.

The actual start date of the 2017-18 long session of the General Assembly commences on Wednesday, January 25th. In preparation for that, last week Sen. Phil Berger, President Pro-Tem of the Senate, announced the chairs and members of Senate standing committees for 2017-18. I am honored to have been selected to serve as the Chair of two committees, the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Appropriations Committee on Justice and Public Safety. In addition, I will also serve as a member of the Finance, Transportation, and Rules committees. I appreciate the confidence that my colleagues have placed in me to work on these important committees, and I look forward to continuing to work on legislation that will make North Carolina a better and safer place to live, work, and raise a family.

Although my committee assignments and my office location have changed, my commitment to constituent service remains a top priority. If you or a family member has an issue with a state government agency, please call my Raleigh office. Sometimes we also receive calls that deal with federal issues, such as VA concerns. In those cases, we will help connect you with the appropriate Congressional office to ensure that your concern is addressed. For state agency related concerns, call any Raleigh office at 919-715-7823 and we will contact the appropriate agency on your behalf.

If you or your family members are ever traveling to Raleigh, please come by the office, Room 627 in the Legislative Office Building. I would love to meet you and arrange a tour of the Legislative Building.

I am excited about starting a new session in the NC Senate and continue to serve the people of Burke and Cleveland Counties.

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

NC Senate District 46

As the North Carolina General Assembly begins its full, long-session agenda on January 25, 2017, once again we can expect concerns of families for their rights and freedoms to rise to the forefront, at least from time to time. I say this in large part because I believe there is an ongoing culture war being waged in our country, with North Carolinians being a focal point more often than not—largely because of our size as a state (more than 10 million people) and because of our critical role in the outcomes of the last several presidential and U.S. Senate elections. As a result, I fully expect the battle to be continued by those who seek to redefine family roles and to undermine the beliefs that many Christians have long held regarding family. Hopefully, this session of the legislature will continue to support the important concepts of family, responsibility and personal liberties on which our nation and state were each founded.

While being fully committed to support for our families as those issues may arise, I expect personally to focus my efforts on at least three educational issues that, in my opinion, bear heavily on our state’s ability to wisely resist the culture war on families. I believe, too, these can be especially critical in resisting the radicals and anarchists who plot, engage in vulgar displays and language, commit violent acts and loudly treat stress against those who fail to yield to their intimidation. Resisting requires an educated citizenry.

To that end, I am convinced we need first to redouble efforts to identify and hire principals who can lead our K-12 schools. Secondly, we absolutely must insist that, to the maximum extent possible, students graduating from our state’s high schools be able to read at a level that equips them for good careers and that they not require remediation in reading if they choose to pursue a college degree. Third and last, we must significantly raise the percentage of students attending college who actually complete, within four years, a credential of significant value. If we undertake these three things well, we will, I hope, equip those students to better choose leaders (including judges) and policies for the future who will respect our personal rights guaranteed by the national and state constitutions.

Rep. Hugh Blackwell
919-733-5805
Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net

NC House District 86

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US House of Representatives NC District 11

On January 27th, 2017, I had the honor to speak with hundreds of thousands of Americans, from all different backgrounds on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade for the 44th Annual March for Life. Vice President Mike Pence became the first White House representative to speak at the March for Life, speaking boldly and clearly about the right to life. In his remarks, he reiterated President Donald Trump’s commitment to be a pro-life president and appoint a pro-life Supreme Court justice. What a privilege to take part and stand for protecting the unborn.

It is a historic time in America. I believe we are witnessing a renewal of sorts where a culture of life in America is being brought to the forefront, hearts and minds are changing on the subject of abortion. For too long we have been the torchbearers for abortion all over the world, but now it is the time that we become the torchbearers for life for all nations, that we would be the City on a hill that all would see.

America is at a crossroads. We have a new Administration in the White House that celebrates life and is committed to defending it. Last week, I was proud to support H.R. 7, the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act which I’m hopeful will soon go to President Trump’s desk to be signed into law. In the coming weeks, Congress will also have the opportunity to take another important step in the fight to defend life: defunding abortion giant Planned Parenthood.

I am encouraging my Republican colleagues to hold to the commitment we made to the American people and include language to stop federal funding from Planned Parenthood—the largest abortion provider in the country—and demonstrate a clear, firm commitment to the idea of sanctity of life. Thank you to the so many who continue to speak out for the unborn. May we never forget that life is precious.

NC House District 118

Members of the 2017-18 session of the North Carolina General Assembly were sworn in Jan. 11. Of the nearly 30 million people in our great state, 170 are chosen by voters between the House and Senate to pass laws that affect our everyday lives. The magnitude of that responsibility was reflected on the opening day of session as family members and state leaders joined members in the House and Senate chambers for the swearing-in ceremony.

Decisions any fellow members and I make over the next bimillennia will have a lasting impact on the course of our state. It is truly an honor to have been chosen by voters in my district to be a part of that decision-making— it is a responsibility I don’t take lightly.

Members returned to the General Assembly on Jan. 25 to take action on legislation. When Bill filing is open, and my work on developing legislation that positively impacts my constituents will continue throughout the 2017 legislative Long Session.

Please always feel free to contact my office or me. I look forward to serving you and your interests over the next two years.

NC House District 85

The General Assembly reconvened on January 11, 2017 for the 2017-2018 Session. Once again I am honored to represent the people of Mitchell, Avery, and McDowell Counties. This will be my third term and I am ready to get started. Speaker of the House Tim Moore recently appointed me as Chairman of the Department of Health and Human Services Appropriations committee and also as Chair of the Health Policy Committee. These two committees will be responsible for all legislation and spending concerning healthcare in the state of North Carolina.

I am eager to get to work to improve healthcare for the people of North Carolina. As is well known, healthcare can be a very divisive issue. It is already being hotly debated at the federal level. I don’t pretend to have all the answers to solve our state and nation’s healthcare issues. However, I do believe there are some things we can do at the state level to make healthcare more affordable, efficient, and accessible for more North Carolinians. Instead of playing politics and bickering, let’s put to work to put specific policies in place that will improve our healthcare.

First, I know that Medicaid expansion is a divisive issue and I will save that debate for another day. However, we do have many North Carolinians in rural areas across this state that are uninsured and/or do not have adequate healthcare. There are things that can be done to alleviate this problem. I believe we should increase funding for our rural health clinics, our free health clinics, federally qualified health centers, and public health departments in North Carolina. All of these entities provide a valuable service in our state. I believe we need to do all we can to strengthen, empower, and encourage these local agencies. I plan to do just that in this long session.

Second, it is no secret that our rural areas do not have an adequate number of physicians. I plan to file a bill on day one that will allow physician assistants, family nurse practitioners, and certified registered nurse anesthetists to practice at a higher level without jeopardizing safety. This will bring more healthcare providers to rural areas of this state.

Third, there will be much debate over Medicaid reform in this long session. Medicaid represents close to one fourth of the entire state budget. The General Assembly will work to make sure that our Medicaid program is efficient, effective, and at the same time not compromising care for the least among us.

Access to healthcare is a vital part of who we are as a state. I look forward to working once again to do my part to make sure North Carolina has the best healthcare in the nation. As always, thanks to the people of the 85th District for allowing me this opportunity to serve.
Local Business Partners with Hospice of McDowell

By Doug Harrell
McDowell County

In the summer of 2009 Tony Panou, the owner of Bantam Chef restaurant in Marion, was looking for a way to return to his town and county. After meeting with his employees and discussing options they decided that Hospice was the place that they would like to work with. After meeting with Hospice and agreeing to work as a partner with them, Tony formulated a plan to raise funds to donate. He and the employees decided they would use the profits from the bubble gum machines, a 50% of the take, to purchase new equipment. Each employee was given a dollar jar, put in the kitchen, filled with tips from the customers and money from a "cuss jar". Every cuss word spoken by any employee cost 25 cents. Tony laughed when he told this story and said sometimes it was a fairly good amount!

Tony and the employees put all the money into a Mastercard and sent a check to Hospice. The check that was written for this past six months for was for $2,487.00, the largest check for six months to date. With this check the total contributed to Hospice added up to $21,874.00.

Tony states that it was such an honor to be able to contribute back to the community and that it has been and continues to be a team effort for his entire staff. "As long as I own and run this restaurant, we will continue to do this" Tony says. He feels that the blessing he and the staff receive from giving is amazing and wants to say a big THANK YOU to the community for helping with the project.

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

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Avery Pregnancy Center

Expanding Service
By Bob Brown
Avery County

We here, at AFRC, have been blessed by being able to serve the women of Avery County through your support. In addition to providing baby clothes, diapers, toys, high chairs, strollers, and car seats, we also provide a baby centered educational program for the moms.

We have a beautiful two story house that serves as a lighthouse on a hill for everyone in our community. We are open two days a week but that is about to change.

Scripture states that “Where there is no vision the people perish.” AFRC has a new and greater vision than when we opened the doors five years ago. We are in the process of expanding our services, keeping AFRC open as many days as needed, (prayerfully free) to provide additional services, not only to saw moms or mothers to be, but to the entire community, both male or female. We will still remain Avery Pregnancy and Resource Center, doing what we do best, providing for our Family Members ( Clients).

You can help us plan for an expansion of services by calling me, Bob Brown, at either of the numbers listed above. In order to provide these new services, we need to know from our community if there is a need to provide these services. The following services are being considered free of charge:

1. Finances: which will include financial planning, budgeting, checking and savings accounts, and much more. This service will be taught by a financial expert from Wells Fargo.
2. Technology: learn how to use your new Android, iPhone and or tablet by Carolina West Wireless.
3. Cooking Classes
4. Sewing Classes
5. Beginners Bible Study

We have not decided on a time or day that these services will be offered. If you please call me for more information I will try to arrange a time and day that is convenient for all to attend.

Blessings.

Bob Brown is the Executive Director of the Avery Pregnancy & Resource Center.

Burke County Schools

Welding Class Sparks Interest At FHHS
By Cheryl Shaffer
Burke County

If high school students know anything at all about welding these days, it’s usually limited to the fact that if you look at the welding arc it will burn your eyes. Students in the welding class at Freedom High School are learning so much more than just basic safety related to the skill. They are learning different cutting systems and different cutting maneuvers and fillers, as well as welding, brazing and soldering processes.

“I didn’t know any of the details,” said junior Madison Deviney, recalling her first days in the class in early August, “just that there are a bunch of sparks, and it’s bright.”

Madison is the only female in the welding class, which is new to Freedom this year and taught by Western Piedmont Community College instructors Max Jordan Jr. and Bryan Deal as part of the Career and College Promise curriculum that offers high school and college credit.

Freedom High School Principal Mike Swan encouraged Madison to take the welding class while she is pursuing a CNA license through nursing classes at Freedom and considering a career in criminal justice. Madison said she wanted to stretch her comfort zone with the welding class.

“We’re going off to college soon,” Madison said, “and we need to be able to adapt to different situations and be open to trying new things.”

Freedom senior Gavin Riddle said he wanted to take the class to learn a new skill. He said, “I don’t want to have to rely on someone else to do something for me. I want to know how to do it myself. This is not a typical class setting. It’s refreshing. I learn a lot more by working with my hands and this is a hands-on class.”

Freedom senior Ron Michaux may consider welding as a career. The class has discussed the salary welder make (national average is $38,150 a year, according to the U.S. Department of Labor) and the job outlook (welding jobs are expected to grow by 4 percent by 2024, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.)

Roa, who worked with Oak Hill Iron Works on his graduation project, said he started getting serious about learning a new skill the summer before his senior year. He plans to continue the welding

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Making Each Moment Count? Let Us Help Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, Inc.

What is the difference between Hospice and Palliative Care?

Hospice Services
Hospice care and Palliative care of the Blue Ridge provides care to patients with a life limiting illness

Admissions Criteria
Life limiting illness of 6 months or less
Physician who is willing to work with the hospice team

Settings
Hospice can visit patients in home, long term care centers and hospitals

Services Offered
24 hour call staff Pain Management
Grief Support Registered Nurse
Volunteers Counseling Service
Chaplain Services Physician/PNP Services
Certified Nursing Assistants Family/Patient Education

Payment
Medicare / Medicaid
Most Private Insurances
Services Provided Regardless of Ability to pay

Additional Services and Benefits Available
Medical equipment
Medications
Speech, physical and occupational therapy

Palliative Care Services
Pathways Palliative Care Program
Pathways is a palliative care consultative service that helps patients who are facing a serious illness. This program is designed to help patients manage illness and improve their quality of life. The Pathways program provides support to those who are seeking curative treatment and can assist in identifying and setting up other programs that can be beneficial to the patient.

Admissions Criteria
Serious Illness
Seeking Curative Treatment
Physician willing to work with the Palliative Care Team

Settings
Home
Long Term Care Facilities
Hospital

Services
Registered Nurse Nurse Practitioner
Physician Chaplain, as needed
Medical Social Worker, as needed

Payment
Medicare / Medicaid
Most Private Insurances
Services Regardless of Ability to pay

Hospice and Palliative Care is a community based non-profit hospice (828)-765-5677

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FaithHealthNC

Impacting lives in McDowell County

By Philip Long
McDowell County

Imagine not being able to get to your follow-up doctor’s appointment or get much needed medications. Or even worse, going through life alone, especially during an illness. FaithHealthNC was launched in McDowell County a little over three years ago and is now seeing the fruits of its work.

FaithHealth’s main focus is helping people. Carolyn Fender and Ann Young, McDowell County’s two FaithHealth Connectors, are at the forefront of seeing lives changed. “We’ve been able to help people by providing transportation to doctor’s offices, helping get medications, providing food for families, running errands for and with people, and even visiting our clients in their homes,” says Fender.

Who is a FaithHealth client? Referrals are made from McDowell/Mission Health physician practices, McDowell Hospital, McDowell Community Care Paramedics, and other agencies. “Because of our limited number of volunteers, we are not able to help everyone. But we do our best to take all referrals,” says Young.

How has FaithHealth impacted the lives of its clients? Here’s a good example: Brenda Hall became a client of FaithHealth in September 2016. On her initial visit, Carolyn and Ann learned that Brenda had 3 strokes in 2013 and had severe asthma and allergy problems. She was also in need of food and transportation.

In the last 5 months, FaithHealth volunteers have provided her with several trips to the doctor, the pharmacy, and even to run errands such as paying bills, getting groceries and supplies, and trips to ISSS. Brenda has since been able to continue her allergy shots once a week and has only been in the hospital with asthma related symptoms one time since September, a result of the heavy smoke from the wildfires in McDowell County. FaithHealth volunteers have learned that when Brenda has an attack she needs immediate medication and transportation to the doctor that day.

That’s where FaithHealth Volunteers step in, making a huge impact on her life and her ability to stay well.

Since the beginning of the program in McDowell County, FaithHealth has touched the lives of many people such as Brenda. From April of 2015 (the first official month) through December of 2016, FaithHealth has met a total number of 1361 needs. Just last month (December 2016) the two FaithHealth Connectors and five volunteers made 76 trips for 24 clients. Of all the needs, transportation is still the number one request.

How can you help? FaithHealth is in need of volunteers. For people of faith, this is a great opportunity to put your faith into action. We need folks who can help once a month, twice a month, once a week ... whatever time you can give. It is truly a ministry of love, compassion, and servanthood. You will be blessed even more than our clients!

The next FaithHealth Training will be held Tuesday, February 21 at 5:30 pm. We will meet at McDowell Hospital and a free meal will be provided. If you would like to become a volunteer and attend training (or have questions), please contact Ann Young at 828-724-9383 / ayong@faithhealthnc.com, Carolyn Fender at 828-668-7508 / cfender@faithhealthnc.com, or Philip Long at 828-659-5434 / philip.long@msig.org.

So consider this: What could be greater than helping others, especially those in need? This ministry has the potential of impacting our community in a mighty way, but we need help. If you are able to drive someone to the doctor’s office, the pharmacy, or the grocery store, could run errands for those in need, could make a visit, or could make a phone call to someone lonely, then you’re a perfect fit for this ministry. Thanks for considering becoming a part of McDowell FaithHealth.

Philip Long is Manager of FaithHealth Fellow, McDowell County, Volunteer Services and Pastoral Care, McDowell Hospital.

Scott W. Murphy, D.M.D., P.A

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The Crossnore School And The Children's Home Complete Merger

By Holly Barrett  
Watauga County

The merger of these two 100-year-old agencies into one organization was completed on January 1, 2017.  

CROSSMORE, N.C. (January 9, 2016) — The Boards of Trustees for The Crossnore School and The Children’s Home are pleased to announce the completion of their merger into one organization. The new organization will be known as Crossnore School & Children’s Home.  

Brett A. Loftis, JD, remains Chief Executive Officer of the new organization and leads an executive team of six, including in Crossnore, NC, Caroline Hart, Chief Advancement Officer, Teresa Huffman, Chief Financial Officer, and Angelica Spencer, Chief Program Officer. The remaining three officers are located in Winston-Salem, NC, and include Anthony Cortes, PhD, Chief Operating Officer, Janny Taylor, Chief Human Resources Officer, and Herbeth Robinson, Chief Clinical Officer. Since September 2016, when the merger was approved by both Boards, staffed integration teams have been working to integrate programs, policies, and procedures to ensure no disruption of services across both campuses.  

“For more than a century, both organizations have worked to transform the lives of thousands of children,” said Loftis. “We are excited about continuing to care for children in our residential group foster care, single-family foster care, outpatient therapy, and educational settings. Providing this full continuum of care for children positions us to become the premier provider of services for children and families in western North Carolina.”  

For more information about the merger, please contact Holly Barrett, Director of Communications at (828) 732-4056 or hbarrett@crossnorschool.org. About Crossnore School & Children’s Home: With two campuses in western North Carolina, Crossnore School & Children’s Home grows healthy futures for children and families by providing a Christian sanctuary of hope and healing. For more information about Crossnore School & Children’s Home, please visit www.crossnore.org.  

Holly Barrett is Director of Communications for The Crossnore School. She blogs several times a week at www.hollybarrett.org and is host and producer of “Living a Redeemed Life,” a bi-weekly podcast.  

Jackson Hewitt  
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There is no fear in love; but fear casteth out love: because fear keth torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18
Amazing Love

By Jac Merop
Avery County

When I think of “amazing love,” I immediately think of God’s love. It is deeper than the ocean, higher than the mountain, wider than the ocean and the earth, and unfailing. Because of who he is, his love is matchless, sacrificial, protective, unwavering and beyond our human comprehension.

His love is painted across the heavens in each morning sunrise. He repeats this majesty in a new way in the evening sunset. He paints the curtains of stars and the extraordinary light of the moons to brighten the darkest sky. All of creation beckons us to receive his loving care.

He continuously expresses himself through the love of spouses and children, parents and other extended families and friends. Even a simple smile from a stranger can bring us joy on a dreary day.

And because of who God is, we can become all that he has created us to be. That is why though my parents are not well known, they were loved and respected by all whom they met along their journey in life. With God’s love in their hearts, they became who God intended for them to be. Their story is simple yet filled with the drama of the history they lived.

The war was over. PT Caesar Turchiarelli could at last look to the future. Having been a Pearl Harbor survivor and enduring the hardships of war, the hope for a wife, family and future was palpable.

God chose and called Caesar’s wife, my father’s wife, for a reason. Caesar’s wife was a woman of love and grace. Caesar loved her and she loved her husband with all her heart. Caesar was a man of honor and integrity, and his wife honored him with her devotion and love.

Now she and her new husband would have a new beginning together building their marriage on the foundation of love and trust. But, while enduring a risky pregnancy with me, her mother died, further compromising the pregnancy and leaving her in bed till I was born. Her patient and loving husband endured with her through it all.

God blessed them with daughter, Janet Claire, and son, Daniel five years later. As the years marched on they became grandparents to five grandsons and eight great-grandchildren.

They had celebrated 60 years of marriage before God called each of their names to come Home and be with Him. In 1996, two vibrant and loving people promised to love and cherish one another in sickness and in health till death would part them. Through their example, my brother and I saw love, devotion, trust and consideration lived our daily lives.

There is a 1 Corinthians 13 love.

Does that mean they were always patient and kind; never envying; always humble; never proud or rude; unselfish at all times? No. They weren’t perfect. But, most importantly, they walked hand in hand with the Lord seeking to emulate 1 Corinthians love.

For that to happen, they entered their lives as it does to each one of us, but we saw them turn toward God and seek his direction.

For approximately 7 – 8 years, the most severe tests came as Dad developed dementia and Mom determined to care for him at home. At first it was a slow onset, but the older he got, the more pronounced it became.

So when his health and his mind took a turn because slower, Mom, in turn, had issues with her eyes and partially lost sight in one eye. Yet her spirited approach to life kept Dad cared for and content while she continued to keep their home and prepare their meals into his 93rd year.

Safely she would pray, “Lord, please keep us well and strong. I have to take care of my husband.” And God granted that request.

They were an incredible duo to watch... to emulate.

“Love bears all things,” says I Corinthians 13: 7, NKJV. “Believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

God’s amazing love infused our marriage for those 60 years with keeping power, belief hope, trust and endurance. And, so, we can agree with verse 6, “Love never fails.”

On August 23, 2015, Dad entered Heaven’s rest at age 96. We thought Mom would defy and be with us for a good while, but being such an incurable giver, took its toll. After repeated heart attacks, she joined Dad only five months later on January 12, 2016 at 93.

Thanking back, I am so blessed to have been born to these two wonderful parents and to have seen with my own eyes how God’s amazing love can be demonstrative in marriage.

Pause... and Consider

Lead Me, Please

The first time I heard Ken pray, I sensed the deepening awareness in my soul that this was the man for me. Until that point, as a single mom for some time, I didn’t realize I was praying for male, spiritual leadership. But, God knew that my heart was crying out for this type of partnership.

He felt my need for tenderness, kindness, a happy disposition and an affectionate loving spouse to encourage me. But, most of all, the Lord knew I needed a man who loved him above all else and would lead me and our family in faith.

Some time ago, I heard a radio interview with a song writer/singer regarding a song he had written for his wife about their relationship. In the song he realizes she is crying out to be led by him spiritually.

The song touched me as I had been there. But, the beauty of the lyrics led to a deeper realization on the part of the song writer. If he indeed was to fulfill his God-given role as the spiritual leader of the family, then he, too, had to cry out, “Lead Me, Lord.” For without the Lord guiding his thoughts, decisions and actions, how could he ever lead his wife and family?

We have recently celebrated our 15th wedding anniversary.

It seems we just were enfolding our family yesterday and here we are with three married sons and five grandchildren ages 8 – 19. Through the ups and downs of family life, one constant has remained: Prayer.

I have watched my husband continue to be consistent in prayer; in seeking the Lord through His Word, the Bible; and, in growing with me as we study together and let God work through us in various ministry opportunities.

We see two very different personalities. Ken is laid back and I am the idiot/solution person. So it can be a challenge for me to say, “Lead me.” But, it’s not a contradiction, rather, it has been the way God has chosen to refine us both.

Our life verse as seen in 1 Corinthians 2: 9, NKJV, still reverberates in our hearts when we repeat it from memory. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Love hearing Ken’s voice lifted in prayer knowing that he takes seriously his role to lead me. Selah

Blushing Promise

Like the bride who has saved her first kiss for her groom.

These petite, finely etched roses seem to be blushing with promise. Exquisite, perfectly painted flower is a classic work of art whispering pledges of hope.

“Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases.”

Song of Solomon 2: 7b

Happy Valentine’s Day!

www.bronews.com

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Burke County Schools continued from page 35

WNC Nonprofit Pathways

Strengthening Nonprofits to Serve the Community

By Susan Larson

WNC Nonprofit Pathways will present three low-cost workshops for board staff and volunteers of nonprofits in Mitchell, Avery, and Yancey counties over the next three months. The goal is to strengthen nonprofit organizations so that they can better serve the community.

The February workshop will focus on nonprofit boards and will call on the expertise of a teacher who is very familiar with the area. Leslie Anderson, who has counseled over 100 nonprofit organizations across the country, will lead the workshop from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 7 at the Arts Resource Center above the TRAC Gallery in Spruce Pine. The topic is “Building Better Boards,” and its intended to help board members, clients, and staff members of nonprofits understand their roles and responsibilities. WNC Nonprofit Pathways, the sponsor, has kept the costs low so that multiple members from the same organization can attend and learn together. The first participant is $15 and up to three more can attend at $10 each, with lunch provided for all.

Nonprofit organizations are under increased expectations for accountability and effectiveness and boards play an essential part in determining whether groups succeed or fail. The ultimate goal for this workshop is to strengthen the group’s infrastructure and service to the community. Anderson will cover topics such as planning, leadership development, fund development, communication, finance, legal issues and evaluation. Nonprofits that attend will be eligible for up to three hours of additional coaching by Anderson at no charge.

For the past 20 years Leslie Anderson Consulting, Inc. has provided organizational development services (strategic planning, board development, community collaboration, research, etc.), guidance on crisis management, advocacy and community change, as well as technical assistance to nonprofits, coalitions, foundations and government units across the United States. She led the planning process for the Golden Leaf Foundation’s Community Assistance Grant Program in both Mitchell and Yancey counties. Leslie is one of five core consultants who helps organizations improve their performance through Western North Carolina Nonprofit Pathways. In addition to her busy consulting practice, Leslie volunteers extensively and has been recognized by the region and state with several awards, the most recent being "Women Making History," by Asheville Citizen-Times in 2016. Advance registration is required by February 3. To request a link for registration send an email to spclarson@gmail.com or call Avery-Mitchell-Yancey WNC Nonprofit Pathways coordinator Susan Larson at 828-765-2650. WNC Nonprofit Pathways is an Asheville-based organization serving the western counties of the state with the goal of assisting nonprofits’ needs and providing services to build skills and strengthen organizations.

The March workshop will be “Financial Reporting for Nonprofits: Making Sense of Nonprofit finances” and will take place on March 7 at the Yancey County Public Library from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It will be taught by CDA Wade Rogers.

Sally Loftis will lead the April workshop “Coaching, Supervisor or Boss: Leadership Skills for the Nonprofit Supervisor” on Friday, April 28, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It will be held at the Buncombe Schools, a MCC campus in Avery County. Registration for the March and April workshops will open three weeks prior to each event.

Susan Larson is Director of WNC Non-Profit Pathways.

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

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H.O. Hirt, BRL-E Founder
Annual Student Art Showcases
Shine Through Winter Fog
By Kate Groff

On Saturday, February 11, the Toe River Arts Council (TRAC) will open the first of two highly anticipated exhibits of the year in the Burnsville Gallery with their Annual Student Showcase of work from Yancey County students. One week later, the Spruce Pine Gallery begins an exhibition of Mitchell County student work. These two displays from all students in all school settings—from public to private to those schooled at home—cover the walls and pedestals, floor to ceiling with color and imagination. Over the past school year, students have let their creativity flow into works on paper and canvases, in clay and in fiber, with stones and seashells, beads and bobbles, and they present it all to the community in two dazzling exhibitions. Student art is all about splashes of color and turning ways of capturing perceptions in artistic forms. The shows promise to delight the senses. Keenly aware of the great role art plays in forming awareness and skills in our youth, TRAC views arts education as one of the basics of its mission. Involvement in the arts results in gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skills. Experiencing the arts first hand improves motivation, concentration, confidence, and promotes a teamwork mentality. Marvelous opening young eyes to new ways of seeing creates the foundation to forge social bonds and community.

Students look forward to these exhibits. They can bring moms and dads, grandparents, sisters, brothers, even the neighbor across the street to see their work. This art is of future Toe River Valley artists, and we are so proud of them.

And each year, mixed media artist Tise Kelly festoons a corner of the Spruce Pine Gallery and the windows in the Burnsville Gallery with photographs from students past having fun with art.

We celebrate the work of the hardworking art teachers in both counties. In Mitchell, Amy Masterson at Greenlee primary, Leslie Dickerson on the elementary level, Olivia Ellis in the middle schools, and Melissa Caddell at Mitchell High. Yancey County has nurtured teachers with Marcie Hockins for grades K-5, Kelli Miller at the middle schools, and Charity Edwards at Mountain Heritage High. These individuals spend the entire year developing curriculum-based projects and teaching arts to over 3,000 students. Their exhibits continue to confirm their dedication to their students and their support of arts in education. And we can’t forget the teachers in the private and home school settings. They never neglect the arts when working with young minds and hands.

Get out of the chilly cold. Step into a cacophony of warm color at both the Arts Council galleries. The Arts Showcase at the Spruce Pine Gallery, located at 269 Oak Avenue, will run from February 18-March 18. On March 3 (with a snow day on the 10th), Arts Matter, a consortium of arts professions in Mitchell County, will host a free and open to the public reception at the Spruce Pine Gallery from 4 to 6pm. Yancey’s Showcase starts February 11 and will run an additional week—until March 25 with an all-day Open House on March 25. Gallery hours are 10:30am to 5:30pm, Tuesday-Saturday in. For more information about the exhibitions, please call 828.755.6520.

TRAC is a non-profit organization founded in 1976 to promote the arts in Mitchell and Yancey Counties and funded in part by a Grassroots Art Grant through the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, a state agency, and both Mitchell and Yancey County Schools. For more information about the Arts Council’s educational arts programs, visit the website, www.toracarts.org or call 828.682.7215.

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

Check out our new Website www.brcnews.com
And find us on Facebook
Emergency Preparedness

First Aid Kit
By Nancy Yancek

Assemble a first aid kit for your home and for each car. Store-bought first aid kits are good for one emergency, but do not usually contain enough supplies for serious injuries or for several people. A good First Aid Kit should include:

- Sterile adhesive bandages in various sizes (Band-aids)
- Assorted sizes of safety pins
- Cleansing agent (Ibuprofen, Phisohex)
- Latex gloves (2 pair)
- Sunscreen
- 2-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4 rolls)
- Triangular bandages (3 inches)
- 2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- 3-inch sterile roller gauze (3 rolls)
- Adhesive tape—non-allergic, paper, etc.
- Medicine dropper
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Needle and thread
- Moistened towelettes (Wipes)
- Disinfectant hand soap (Lever 2000 or hand sanitizers)
- Antiseptic (70% isopropyl alcohol in bottle or individual pads) (Bactracin or Triple Antibiotic Ointment)
- Thermometer
- Tongue blades
- Petroleum jelly (Vaseline) or other lubricant
- Non-prescription drugs
- Aspirin or Tylenol
- Anti-diarrheal medication (Kaopectate, Pepto-Bismol, Etc.)
- Amoxicillin for stomach upset (Tums, Mylanta, etc.)
- Syrup for 2 days (used to induce vomiting if advised by Poison Control Center or Dr.)
- Laxative (Mineral Oil, etc.)
- Prescription Medicines—at least a 7-10-day supply of your regularly used medicine. The pharmacy and insurance companies will not allow individuals to board airplanes. Keep everyone in your family in mind when gathering medicines. Special formulas, bottles, diapers and medicines for babies should be included. Special medicine for the elderly should be included. Diabetics should have a supply of their insulin or other medicine.
- Extra eye glasses should be included.
- Extra hearing aids or batteries for hearing aids should be included.
- Contact lenses and supplies should be included.
- Denture needs should be considered.

Name brands listed above are only suggestions to give you an idea of what the listed items are or are used for. Use your own favorite brand.

This might be a good time to take that Red Cross First Aid and CPR course that you have been putting off.

Next week: Tools and Sanitation supplies.

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

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Valentine’s Day

By Pastor Steve Williams
Adair County

Howdy Friends,

February, the second and shortest month of the year derives its name from the Latin word which means “to purify.” It was in this month that the Romans were purified for the religious festivals of the months to follow. It has the amethyst for its gem and the primrose for its special flower.

The 14th of February is Valentine’s Day. This day combines something of Cupid and the Rose. The name of this day come from one of two men, both of whose names were Valentine, and both were martyrs for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. One was a priest and doctor who was beheaded on Februa-ry 14th in 299 A.D. The other a bishop who was beheaded on February 14th in 273 A.D. According to an old story, the blind daughter of the siter was kind to one of these men. Just before he met his death because of the Lord whom he loved, he heard a farewell message, and signed it, “From your Valentine.” As we think of Cupid on Valentine’s Day let us not forget the Cross.

The cross shows us the greatest love of all. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ loved us so much that He died on an old rugged cross to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. Through His death and resurrection we can all receive salvation. And the way you receive salvation is by asking Jesus Christ to come into your heart and to forgive you of all your sins. When you do this you enter into a personal relationship with Him forever more.

When you have a personal relationship with God you will experience a love that is greater than you could ever imagine.

The Bible tells us in John 15:11 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Jesus Christ gave His Life that we may all have eternal life and spend eternity with Him—now that’s LOVE.

May we in return show the Love of Christ to our fellow man that they may know how much Jesus Christ Loves them. This Valentine’s be sure to tell Jesus how much you love Him and also thank Him for the Love He extends you daily.

Words of Wisdom:
- It is the inconsistent Christian who helps the devil most.
- A man of words and not of deeds is like a garden full of weeds.
- Life is like a game of tennis—the one who serves seldom loses.
- Don’t forget that God is between you & your enemy.
- Well done is better than Well Said.

Question of the Month:

Why don’t you jump to opportunities like you jump to conclusions?

Money Matters:

It’s not a question of how much of MY money I give God, but how much of GOD’S money do I keep for myself.

APARTING PLEA

Living without God means dying without HOPE.

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

Sudoku

What is your most prized possession?
Your ability to earn an income!

Personal Disability Insurance

You will protect your house, car and health against loss, but will not protect your ability to earn an income!

90% of long term disability claims are due to illness and are not work related so are not covered by workers’ compensation.

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Yancey Alliance for Young Children

Early Education Investments Prepare Children for Later Learning Milestones
By Gregory Stellas
Yancey County

Did you know that by the time a child reaches kindergarten, children who are developmentally behind their peers are likely to remain so for the rest of their educational careers and beyond? Achievement gaps created as a child’s earliest years are notoriously difficult to close, and the effects of these gaps is hugely expensive for our society to address.

Research has clearly documented that reading proficiency in the early grades is a key indicator of future high school and employment success. Children lagging in their reading scores by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school. At this stage of their educational careers, children go from learning to read, to reading to learn. In fact, a child not reading at grade level by the end of first grade has a about a ten percent chance of reaching grade level by the end of their fourth.

The good news is, approximately one-third of that achievement gap can be eliminated with high-quality early education programs. We’ve seen the benefits first-hand in North Carolina. Duke University researchers found that third graders who have higher reading and math scores and experienced fewer special education placements in counties that spent more money early childhood programs such as Smart Start and More at Four now NC Pre-K. What’s really significant about the study is their finding of a spillover effect. All children in the community were impacted, regardless of whether or not they were enrolled in a Smart Start or More at Four program.

North Carolina’s First 2000 Days Initiative (initiative2000days.org) reminds us that there are only 2,000 days between the time a baby is born and when he or she will begin kindergarten. During that time, a child’s brain architecture is forming, creating the foundation for future learning. Now is the time for us to come together to build a stronger foundation for our children.

In 2016 North Carolina posted a record-high graduation rate, in 10th consecutive year to do so. A recently released study indicates SAT scores are on the rise, and it’s no coincidence that these score-makers were in 1999 - when our state significantly increased its investment in early childhood programs, and young children in 2001 - when full-school-day public Pre-K programs began. In fact, over the past 20 years of investments, SAT scores have continued to improve. And while Pre-K programs have been reduced by the NC Legislature we have seen a return to the test scores in subsequent years. A recent study showed that North Carolina voters support these investments in our young children. In fact, seventy-four percent, almost three-quarters of the state’s voters, support expanding access to the NC Pre-K and Smart Start programs so that more children can experience their benefits.

We are fortunate that our forward thinking Yancey County School Board and administration are boosting our children’s opportunities for success by recently investing in two new Pre-K programs for the two youngest children - one located in Madison Elementary and the other at Madison County Elementary - to go along with the existing Pre-K classrooms at Mountain Heritage High School. And since these programs continue to maintain enrollment capacity, they will likely be one of the key sites helping to support young children in the community. In combination with our other private and public child care providers, we’re giving our children the best start they need to succeed in school and in life.

To increase the availability and affordability of services in our early childhood systems, the Yancey Alliance for Young Children (YAY Children) is working across community sectors to form the partnerships necessary for our children to enter school ready to learn. That’s why we are faciliating working groups, parent and community members will have a focus on the needs of young children when reaching out to the services they need. By working together, we will ensure that Yancey County’s children receive the high-quality early learning experiences they deserve, and go on to become successful and effective contributors to our region.

When you invest in the beginning, everyone wins in the end. To receive more information about YAY Children and how you can help, contact Katherine Savage, Program Manager of YAY Children, at katherine@yaychildren.org, or by calling 828-682-0047. You can also find us on the web at http://www.yaychildren.org. On Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/YAYChildren/, or follow us on Twitter at @YAYChildren.

Gregory Stellas has been an advocate for children in Yancey County since moving to the South Toe valley in 2001. He is a Community Champion with the First 2000 Days Initiative and the current chair of the Yancey Alliance for Young Children.

...
Uncomfortable Truth
By Jason Ken
Barker County

All of us have conceptions in our minds of what our faith is about, of who Jesus is and what He has done and taught. Many of these conceptions are solidly based on Scripture while some are based on ideas that aren’t exactly biblical, but don’t exactly oppose biblical truth either. Still others are based on cultural or personal misunderstandings of Christianity. Below are what I believe to be two of the most important misunderstandings that some of us have about our faith.

Our Faith is much older than Most of us realize
On the Surface this sounds ridiculous. Jesus lived 2000 years ago…there…problems solved, right? Not quite. The problem is not that we don’t know the facts and dates of Christian history, the problem is that we struggle to understand how long this time period actually is. The time since the last Cubs world series win in 1908…that’s a little over 5% of the History of Christianity. America has been around for 11.8% of the time since Jesus, the Roman Empire was around for twice as long. Our faith truly is much older than we realize.

So why is this important? It means that these generational rifts that we often experience – divides over what we call traditional and modern – probably aren’t as earthshaking as they sometimes feel. Consider the modern altarp call which dates back to around 1830, or Sunday School which gets us back into the late 1700’s. Even things that seem to be immovable pillars of the Christian experience – Snepples on Churches and congregational singing – these things are only about 500 years old. So don’t get too fearful of the prospect of a late 21st Century Church that has forgotten about Amazing Grace, the church was just fine for almost 1500 years without it. Besides Amazing Grace is not going anywhere anytime soon.

Also to those who think that a song from 1992 is considered old. It’s not. Godly men and women have been writing songs, prayers, sermons, commentaries, and all kinds of great works for two millennia (longer if you include our faith’s ancient Hebrew roots). There is plenty of stuff that pre-dates Michael W. Smith that is worth using even in the most modern of worship services. In fact, I think our service, both traditional and modern, are missing out on something if we never engage our faith’s ancient roots.

Our Faith is more than just knowing Truth
Our faith is about knowing, believing and doing truth. Jesus said this over and over again in the Gospels, “He who hears these words of mine, and does them,” (Matthew 7:24), “teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded,” (Matthew 28:20) are just a few. Now before you accuse me of promoting works based theology, I’m not. I’m not really promoting anything at all yet, so far I’m just reading Scripture. I think Jesus is saying that we are saved by Grace through faith, but I think they are also saying that faith always impacts daily life.

Too often, we are satisfied to learn truth simply to gain more knowledge about biblical facts, but I don’t know of any place in Scripture where we are commanded simply to smart knowledge. What I see in Scripture is that I am commanded to know and to believe, and that as my heart becomes increasingly given over to faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit begins to work in me, producing Godly fruit. Yes, we are to study deep truth, but we study deep truth so that we can learn how to live deep lives.

Jason Ken is Pastor of Bridge2 Church in Morganton, NC.
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