

BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



New Year's Resolution

~~To Be Prefect~~

~~To Be Perfec~~

~~To Be Perfect~~

To Follow Christ.

A New Year By Doug Harrell

As we are looking at a New Year beginning, it is important that we take a moment and reflect on the past, and plan for the future, but the most critical part of our planning needs to be the incorporation of God's plans for our lives. I want to share some scriptures that I value when looking toward the future, and hopefully they will bless you as they have blessed me.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
Proverbs 3:5-6 KJV

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."
Isaiah 40:31 KJV

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28 KJV

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
James 1:17 KJV

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
1 John 1:9 KJV

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."
Isaiah 43:2 KJV

If we will face the new year with these scriptures in our hearts and on our minds, 2018 will be awesome, regardless of the wins or losses we face, the victories or struggles. Plan your NEW YEAR with a NEW YOU that is willing to let the Lord direct your path and through His grace I am sure that it will be a blessed and fruitful year.



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

Isaiah 52:7 KJV



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

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

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

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Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

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

Pastor Rev. Jeremy Troxler

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

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

Pine Branch Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bobby Joe Greene

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

A Bible-believing Fellowship
Loving God and Loving People

The Bridge Church of WNC

207 Pinebridge Avenue
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
www.bridgewnc.org

Pastors - Tom & Tammy Anglin

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

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Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

Pastor - Steve Williams

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

Where Everybody is Somebody
And Jesus Christ is Lord!

Pleasant Grove Church of the Brethren

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

Pastor: John Smith

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

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

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-684-8212

Pastor Rick Mercer

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

First Advent Christian Church

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

**Pastor Patrick Bradshaw
Associate Pastor Javier
Guzman**

pbradshawfccmorganton@gmail.com

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

Preaching Christ Crucified, Risen
and Coming Again!

Banner Elk United Methodist Church

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

Reverend Dan Brubaker

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

Bakersville United Methodist Church

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

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

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

"Come grow with us"

Horizon Church

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

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

Sunday Worship 10:30 AM
Wednesday 6:30PM

www.myhorizonchurch.org
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Grassy Creek Baptist Church

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

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

West Burnsville Baptist Church

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

Pastor: Terry Long

Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.
Morning Service: 10:50 a.m.
Evening Service: 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday Service 6:30 p.m.
Youth and TeamKid: 6:00 pm
Church vision: To become passionate
followers and servants of Jesus Christ
while ministering to the spiritual and
physical needs of our church and community.

Burkemont Baptist Church

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

For more information,
please visit
www.burkemontbaptist.org

Dr. David Mills, Sr. Pastor

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

Plumtree Presbyterian Church

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

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
pastor@plumtreechurch.com

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

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

Bear Creek Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bruce Cannon

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

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

Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

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

Pastor Barry MaHorney

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

Faith Fellowship Church

Champ Ray Rd.
Mica, NC 28755
(828)-675-8284
www.fccn.org
www.fccradio.org

Pastor: David Gillespie

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

St. Lucien's Catholic Church

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

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

First Baptist Church of Spruce Pine

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

**Dr. Rocky Branch
Senior Pastor**

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

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Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

Sharing the Gospel in Oslo, Norway

By Franklin Graham

Dear Friend,

"Truth is flexible"—that's the brightly lit message above a popular pedestrian bridge in the heart of Oslo, the capital city of Norway. The bridge is just blocks from the Norwegian Parliament and a short stroll from the arena where I preached the Gospel at an evangelistic Crusade in mid-November.

A pedestrian bridge in the heart of Oslo, Norway, has a red sign proclaiming that "Truth is flexible."

Norway is a beautiful, friendly, and prosperous country, but that sign is an illustration of how far Norwegian culture has drifted from its long and rich Christian heritage. Nearly 9 out of 10 Norwegians are members of a church, just as their parents and grandparents have been for generations. But today not even 1 in 10 actually goes to church. As secularism has taken root and spread, many in Norway—as in our own country—believe that truth is what you want it to be or what feels right to you. Yet when we take our last breath on earth, that thinking won't stand. Each of us steps into eternity in one of only two places—Heaven or Hell.

To show us the only true way to salvation and eternal life, the Bible points directly to "the message of truth, the gospel" (Ephesians 1:13, NASB) and tells us that the "truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21). Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). That's the most important truth anyone can hear, and it is what I went to Oslo to preach.

"This has been very revealing to me," one woman in Oslo said after going forward Sunday night during the invitation. She explained that she remembered making a spiritual commitment years ago but had not been going to church or living for Christ. Instead she had settled comfortably into the culture of materialism and apathy all around her.

She told a prayer counselor that God spoke to her heart through what she called "Franklin's short, straightforward" message on sin and grace. She realized she needed to repent and turn away from sin, asking Jesus Christ to forgive her and change her from the inside. "I feel like a new person," she said afterward. "I really needed this tonight." Now she wants to realign her life to focus on the things that really matter.

The Bible says, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11-12, NKJV). I thank God for doing a mighty work in the hearts of many of those who heard His truth in Oslo, and I thank Him for all those who responded by giving their hearts and lives in repentance and faith to the Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory.

As we look back to the Christmas season, remember that the reason we celebrate is because God sent His Son to earth on a rescue mission. The great wonder of Christmas is that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).

God wants lost people found and rescued before it is too late. We are not meant to be merely spectators in this. It is an urgent mission, and we must take care not to neglect our part in the task. That is why I have just preached in Norway and why the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) proclaims the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ at every opportunity in every place possible.

Our hearts are broken over the unthinkable church massacre in Sutherland Springs, Texas. We immediately sent crisis-trained chaplains from our Billy Graham Rapid Response Team to offer spiritual support in any way they could. The chaplains' ministry is very personal—they comfort and care for individuals and families in the Name of Christ, one at a time, listening to people's stories, praying with them, and sharing God's love. During their time in Texas, chaplains prayed with more than 1,000 people affected by the mass murder.

Billy Graham Rapid Response Team chaplains ministered to the people of Sutherland Springs, Texas, following the church massacre there.

Although our chaplain teams can't end the pain or answer all the questions, we are thankful for the special opportunity to bring the love and hope of Jesus Christ into shattered lives and a grieving community. People need to know that He is present and working through both the suffering and the healing. And when God creates the right moment with someone who does not know Christ, the chaplains are always ready to share the Truth that brings lasting comfort and hope. As our nation and the world seem to grow more troubled and chaotic by the day, the Baby born in Bethlehem is the only answer that will last. He is the One who died on the cross for us and rose again, conquering death and rescuing us for eternal life. It is through Him, and Him alone, that we receive God's gift of forgiveness and salvation.

For so many today who suffer under the threat of conflict or acts of terror, Jesus is the Prince of Peace. For people dealing with doubts and discouragement, Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor. For those staring death in the face, Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. For those who lack strength to face difficult challenges, Jesus is Mighty God.



In 2018 we will be preaching in cities along our nation's West Coast to penetrate the "blue wall." Politicians refer to California and the Pacific Northwest as the "blue wall" because it is a stronghold of liberal politics, but I'm talking about the deep-rooted secularism that dominates the region. Fewer than 1 in 3 people there today believe that Biblical values—or any religious values, for that matter—should be the ultimate guide for our lives. We want to penetrate this region for Christ. We'll hold prayer rallies and share the Gospel in 17 cities. Pray with us as we plan this strategic tour to pierce the blue wall—not for politics, but for the Gospel and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We also plan BGEA evangelistic Crusades in over a dozen other cities in North America, Latin America, Australia, Asia, and Europe. To do all this, we gratefully rely on your prayers and your gifts.



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The Mystery of the Incarnation

By Billy Graham

When you read the record of the coming of Jesus into the world—born in a stable, born of a woman, reared in the woodshop of a poor Jewish carpenter—you could not grasp the truth that He was the God-man if the Scriptures didn't reveal it.

This great mystery of the incarnation is the crux and the core of the Christian message. It is the mystery over which the rationalists stumble, by which the humanists are offended, and by which the world is bewildered.

The natural mind is not equipped to grasp this truth that transcends human wisdom. Paul—after reasoning with the Greeks, who majored in knowledge, and with the Romans, who majored in justice—said, *"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory"* (1 Timothy 3:16).

I would like you to consider with me three facts regarding the incarnation. "Christ's coming in the flesh—His invading the world, His identifying Himself with sinful men and women—is the most significant fact of history."

First, the incarnation is a Scriptural fact. The recurring theme of the Bible is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The prophets wrote of it, the psalmists sang of it, the apostles rejoiced and built their hopes on it and the epistles are filled with it. Christ's coming in the flesh—His invading the world, His identifying Himself with sinful men and women—is the most significant fact of history. All of humanity's puny acts, accomplishments and attainments pale into nothingness when compared to it.

Isaiah said, *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). Even the Savior's entrance into the world was mysterious, transcendent, beyond the grasp of the natural person. But as God, in the person of Jesus Christ, walked and talked with people, they were conscious of the fact that God had manifested Himself in the flesh. Hearts that had been repelled by empty forms of religion ran to Him as starving men and women to a feast.

The distant heavens and the remote earth, the elusive God and the wayward human, were brought into proximity to each other. The fact runs throughout the whole Bible: *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation"* (2 Corinthians 5:19). *"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law"* (Galatians 4:4). Again, the Bible says, *"Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"* (Philippians 2:8).

And we read in John 1:14, *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we*



beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And in Philippians 2:7, *"But [Christ] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."*

Men and women were incapable of coming to God, so God in love and mercy came down to earth to interact with humans. The creature could not come up to God, so the Creator condescended to come down to redeem His creation. Wonder of wonders! God incarnate! God clothed in a human body in the person of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures unite in one voice to declare this.

But He did not come just to be identified with humans—that would inflate our pride all the more. He came not only for identification, but for reconciliation. *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself"* (2 Corinthians 5:19). *"Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"* (Hebrews 1:3). We exclaim with the song writer, "Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"

Second, the incarnation is a historical fact. Christianity has its roots in the deep, firm soil of history. The doctrine of the incarnation means that God came right down amidst the din and confusion of this world. It means that God was capable of participating in our pain, our suffering, our conflicts and our sorrows. It proves to us that His love was not just a vague theory sung in ancient sonnets or proclaimed by shepherd mystics of the back country, but that it was real, vibrant and realizable.

His incarnation—His being born in human flesh—was for the record. He came to the world, once and for all, that we might forever know that He has an absorbing interest in the way we live, the way we believe and the way we die. He came to demonstrate to us that God and mankind belong together. He came to mankind to mend the gap and fill the gulf that separated the creature from his Creator.

Every move He made, every miracle He performed, every word He spoke, was for the purpose of reconciling a lost world to a loving, compassionate God. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself."

The historical fact of the incarnation is that at a specific time, and at a specific place, God invaded the world with His presence in human form.

I was walking near my home, and I looked down and saw an anthill that had just been crushed. I saw that the carefully planned home was ruined and that several ants had been killed and many had been injured. As I watched them writhing in agony and confusion, I wished for a moment that I were an ant. I wanted to be one of them, so I could explain that I wanted to help them and tell them that I was sorry for the disaster. But I had no way of communicating with them, so I went on my way.

But when God looked down and saw the world devastated by sin, He did not go away! "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that

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"A New Beginning"

By Jacob Willis
Yancey County

If I knew back then what I know now, then life would be different. I don't know how many times I have heard this said. It could refer to missed opportunities, missed fortunes, missed relationships, missed education, or missed spiritual blessings. The statement refers to buyer's remorse. A friend of mine in High School bought his first new truck, a Chevrolet. It was shiny and new with all the bells and whistles. He drove the vehicle for about a month and then it began to leak, and then it began to pour water down the seat belt into his lap. The dealership tried repeatedly to fix it, but could never find where the leak was coming from. Chevrolet wouldn't stand behind the vehicle, so he sued them under the lemon law. He had some buyer's remorse for sure. Sometimes we can feel that way about our lives. We can feel that we went after the thing that glittered and shone, only to find out it was a lemon to us. New Years is about new beginnings. It is a time when we take inventory of what is behind, and look with great expectation to what is ahead.

Looking at what is behind can be uplifting, or it can be discouraging. It is probably a little bit of both. Even more distressing is the expectation society puts on us for success. Due to social media and other outlets, it can seem that our every move is scrutinized. The added pressure can lead to depression, suicide, addiction, or other serious mental health issues. It may seem that you have done many things right this past year, but the few mistakes you have made outweigh all the good you've done. Viewing life this way leads to slippery slopes and destructive behavior patterns. God has a much different way to view life. Jesus said, "Come to me all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus gives rest from weighty expectations, unrealistic views of ourselves, and others' opinions. Jesus forgives us of our sins and forgets our sins, Hebrews 8:12. If he can forgive and forget, so we should forgive ourselves. Paul sums it up like this in Philippians 3:13, "forgetting what is behind us, and pressing on to what is ahead for us." If it is behind us God has forgiven us, so move forward. As we begin a New Year, what is it that you need to forgive and forget so that you can move on? Maybe you need to forgive yourself, maybe you need to forgive someone else, or maybe you just need to forget it? Whatever it is that God is calling you to do, you can't do it with a weight tied around your neck. Don't buy the lemon of unforgiveness, buy the message of the grace and mercy of God, and live in 2018!

Also, we need to look ahead. We need to ask God to create in us His supreme desires. It is really important to understand that a New Beginning starts with a heart transplant. Isaiah 43:19 says, "Behold, I will do a new thing now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert". Many of us celebrate Christmas and Easter, two symbols of God's ability to do the impossible, but attempt to live life as if God can't or is unwilling to do the miraculous in our own lives. God is willing and able to bring about change of heart and mind in the New Year. God wants you to forget all that stuff that is behind, and believe in all the good he has for you in the future. Your past is forgiven, your present is secure, and your future is bright, when you choose to follow Jesus. When we put our faith in the promises of Almighty God, then we can be sure He is going to respond with a miracle. He specializes in taking the mundane and ordinary, and turning them into miraculous Spirit Beings. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should have everlasting life." When you ask Christ to come into your heart and life through the power of the Spirit, he makes you a New Creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." The New Year is about a new opportunity to be transformed by the power of God, to forget those mistakes and sins, and to move, by faith, in the direction God has for your life. When you confess your sins; "Lord Jesus, I have sinned against you, I have done wrong"; when you repent of your sins; "Lord Jesus, I don't want to be this way anymore"; and when you ask him to save you, "Lord Jesus, forgive me and save me", you become a child of the living God. When you become a child of God, you trade in all the lemons for what is real and substantial. May God bless, and Happy New Year.

Jacob Willis is an ordained pastor and Bereavement Coordinator for Yancey County Hospice. You may contact him at jacobw@hospiceofyancey.org.

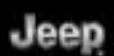


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"You"
By Jody Griffin
Mitchell and Avery County

Then Jesus said to them again, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:21, KJV)
Hey "You"! Yes, "You"!

"You" come from all walks of life, in a variety of colors, shapes and sizes. "You" bring the gifts of knowledge, skill and compassion. "You" are the critical ingredient that transforms a prison from a place of containment to a place of opportunity and change! "You" are volunteers and "You" are providing for the incarcerated a true service! From my perspective as a chaplain, "You" are truly heroes! Every week, I see men and women entering the gates who have come to offer their time and their energy to provide for those who long for someone to encourage and equip them for a new and better life.

"You" serve in a variety of ways! Some are religious volunteers who provide religious education and spiritual inspiration. Others are non-religious, but provide a contribution that enhances the journey through the prison system that helps the inmate see the beauty of life through education, art, music, and more. Some of "You" serve on the Community Resource Council as a liaison between the institution and the broader community. Others of "You" serve as volunteers with AA/NA. At AMCI, "You" are about 80 strong in number! And "You" make an incredible difference!

I have been part of the everyday life in correctional ministry for some time and I can assure you that without volunteers who are willing to come inside the walls, the person who walks out of the prison at the end of their sentence would be much



less equipped to reenter society in a healthy way.

Granted, not everyone is cut out for such. But there are some, perhaps even some reading this article, who are being called to join with others who have been sent here. Am I talking about "You"?

That's for "You" to decide. But one thing I can tell "You" for sure... "You" will receive much more than "You" bring when "You" come from the 'outside' and serve those who are 'inside'. A coworker of mine who is responsible for recruiting/training and overseeing the work "You" do here said it best.

"Volunteers offer the inmate the most authentic connection to the outside world. They literally are able to provide the genuine gift of human connection to inmates who struggle to feel connected to anything."

That's why I am writing these words. I am writing this to say Thank "You" ... for all that "You" do and all that "You" will do. I can personally testify that "You" are having an impact on men's lives.

The beginning of a new year offers everyone the opportunity to become a new "You". This opportunity will stretch "You" and help "You" become more of the person "You" have been created to be.

So, how about "You"? If reading this helps "You" feel led to respond to the call of the Sender, feel free to let me know. I can help get "You" connected to the right people who will assist "You" in becoming one of the sent ones.

Happy New Year! And Happy New "You"!!!

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

By Barbara Harrell

As the New Year is approaching I find my mind wandering all over the page. Looking back to the year just passed, I am excited by some wonderful wins in the drug battle, but still so much to do. So many to be rescued. And where do we go from here? What does 2018 hold for this uphill battle. We will keep moving ahead with anything God puts in front of us. We keep at what we have been doing and look for Him to open doors for other possibilities! This year we will continue to explore the issues and hopefully bring some wonderful stories to you of success. We want to focus on the positive things happening because this gives us all hope. If you have a success story, please share with us.

This year we also hope to highlight the plight of children, many of whom are going hungry. Much of this is caused by this same drug culture that we are living in today. We will be highlighting programs from churches and organizations that are trying to make a dent in the problem. This month we have included a story about an afterschool program that is making some headway in helping first and second graders improve their reading skills. Also, in this issue we look at a backpack ministry that helps feed children on the weekends. If you or your organization is doing something to help these children, let us know and we will share. Sometimes sharing what you are doing could help to get a program started that could help even more children. We are certainly not in competition because there are too many children who need help.

How many children nowadays are free to run and play and hang upside down in the old apple tree, where their world is safe and innocent.

How many are seeing their world from eyes that are no longer innocent and certainly not safe. How many need food, love and hugs. Can we help provide some of these things for them.

We also want to focus on the elderly and their plight in today's world. These precious souls seem to be the forgotten ones. So many of them lay in the bed or sit in a chair with no stimulation, no one to care. Could we visit, or take a group to visit, or take an animal to visit. What could we do to help, because in a few years, there go all of us.

The answer for all of this is God. Teaching His precepts and returning to His fold.

But, how do we do this without giving out the holier-than-thou attitude? Too many of us want to help, but not get our hands dirty. We mouth platitudes, but don't put our arms around that dirty person or problem.

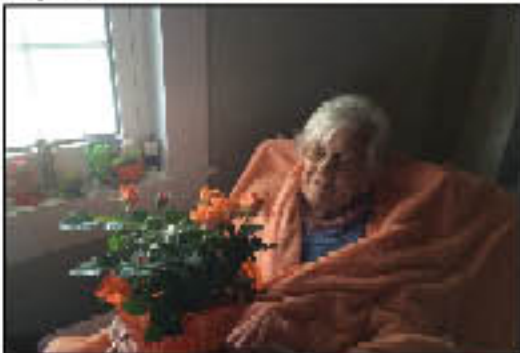
Help us share the good news by sharing your stories of the successes, so maybe we can have more successes in 2018 than we had in 2017.

We will continue to cover as much positive news as we can. Our goal has always been to "share the good news".

"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

Happy New Year.

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



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Through the Eyes of a Child

By Doug Harrell

Here it is, the day after Christmas. In last month's Life Lessons, I talked about the Christmases of long ago, back in the mid 1940's, when I was a child and the memories I had from then. This morning I was reflecting on Christmas 2017, and how the perspective has changed over the years. The eyes of a child versus the eyes of a mid-seventy-year-old great grandfather. Yesterday we were fortunate to have a granddaughter, her husband and four of her sons with us Christmas morning. We also had my ninety-three-year-old mother with us, so we were blessed on both sides, but oh the difference.

The day before Christmas, Sunday this year, I stayed home with mother while Barbara went to church. We cannot both leave unless we have someone to stay with mother. Our church, Bear Creek Baptist Church, has the service streaming on Facebook so I took my phone into mother's room and sat down on the bed with her and we watched the service together. It was the Christmas Cantata and it was beautiful. As we were watching, mother asked me to scratch her back several times, and we laughed about our backs always itching. We were discussing the upcoming Christmas day and it was kind of sad. Mother made the comment to me, "Doug I think my time here is about over, I miss all my friends and family that are gone. I am constantly asking God why he wants to keep me here so long, and I am ready to go on home. This was not a morbid discussion, but just kind of matter of fact, and I understood where she was coming from. She mentioned the fact that she missed AD, my dad, and that it just was not the same anymore.

The eyes and minds of the young in most cases have not experienced the loss of loved ones, and the future is still all ahead of the them, and therefore the magical moments that Christmas can bring are truly amazing. The challenge for us older folks is to be constantly reminded that we are, and should be, celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior, not just a present and Santa Claus day. If we are believers, we still have reason to celebrate, even with our memory bank of losses, but these are really gains, if we truly understand. Our minds need to encompass the fact that we are here but for a short time, and then we move on to eternity, where we will be reunited with those of faith that have gone on before. It is important that we see the season through the eyes of the children, but it is even more important for us to teach and train the children about the true meaning of Christmas. Barbara has always done a great job with this by doing a birthday cake for Jesus that the children and grandchildren were involved in decorating, and then we would light the candles and sing happy birthday to Jesus. This was accompanied with reading the Christmas Story from Luke, chapter two.

As the seasons of life change, and they do for all of us, give us wisdom to embrace the present, but the foresight to plan for the future, and this means preparing those that come behind to face those same challenges as they get older. May we always keep in mind that our number one responsibility in life is to prepare others to accept our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and this is most important for our immediate family. The only true gift, and true legacy we leave, is the gift of grace through faith and belief in Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not forget it.*

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.



Food Insecure Children

By Rev. Ted Henry
Avery County

Nine hundred plus (900) children in Avery County, under the age of eighteen, are food insecure!

That is what I was told some six years ago when I arrived to serve a church appointment in Avery County. Food insecure? What does that mean and whatever it means how in the world could there be nine hundred kids in Avery County seemingly afflicted by it?

The statistic is shocking for certain; yet even to this day I meet people who have no idea the massive number of children in Avery County who have no idea when or where their next meal might come from! Yet, I can't tell you how many times I hear something like, 'Pastor Ted, there is no way. We have RAM, Feeding Avery Families, the Senior Center, and maybe one or two other programs offering food!' Yes, we do have all those wonderful programs in the county and there is still need.

I believe what most people either don't understand or misunderstand is that each program can only offer families three to four days of food. So, there is always a gap, especially in the winter months and in the summer, when school is out, and kids don't have access to reduced or free lunches.

The Avery County Missional Network (ACMN), after much prayer, research, and discernment officially launched in November of 2013. The goal was to work closely with the School System to identify at risk children and provide additional food for the weekends during the school year. The ministry began serving one school with an average of twenty (20) backpacks of food each week.

Today, with the assistance of folks from a variety of local churches and denominations, grants from outside the county, several silent financial partners, support of the Avery County School system, several Avery High School groups, students from Lees-McRae College, as well as many local law enforcement professionals, the ACMN can fill the weekend gap and provide nutritious food to hundreds of children in the ten schools in the county every week of the school year! In addition, the ministry is also able to provide food for the Summer School program as well as the 4-H summer WOW program.

The reality is teachers already have their hands full in keeping the attention of kids today, they need all the help they can get. A child who has eaten breakfast is always more receptive to learn than one who has a growling stomach because they haven't eaten most of the weekend!

The desire of the ACMN is to provide enough food for the weekends so children come to school with a full stomach and we can only do that with continued support through prayer, financially, and physically!

Imagine what it would be like to have more children coming to school on Monday morning ready to focus on their studies and school work instead of the pangs of hunger. The outcome ultimately could be children with higher test scores, higher grades, lower dropout rates, and hopefully more children adequately educated for the job market and /or ready for college.

The ACMN is an ecumenical ministry that operates under the auspices of the 501(C)3 of Linville United Methodist Church in Linville, NC. Please lift the program and the children of Avery County in your prayers!

Rev. Ted Henry is the pastor of Linville/Pisgah United Methodist Church, a Campus Pastor for Common Ground at Lees McRae College, the program director for Food For Avery Children, as well as a Board member of the Hospitality House of Boone.





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New Morning A New Year's Poem

By Joyce "Joy" Harwood Baldwin

*Oh I love a brand new morning
When the Lord makes all things new
As I open up my window
Skies seem lovely, clear and blue.*

*I marvel at creation
As if the first time ever seen
Then say a prayer to God above
Lord make my heart all clean.*

*As calm as the newest morning
My troubled heart becomes serene
He views me from His window
As if the first time ever seen.*

*The winds of time have passed away
New life's beauty to unfold
The sweetest smile on a baby's face
And peace in the eyes of the old.*

*Our Awesome God creates the day
With a welcome new beginning
He longs to make our hearts as pure
And fresh as a brand new morning*



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

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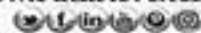


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Burnsville Seven-Day Adventist Church

Sacrifice

By Pastor Ed Couser
Yancey County

Greetings! Happy New Year!! Last week I read an article about an earthquake that startled villagers living on a Japanese seashore over one hundred years ago. They were accustomed to earthquakes, and would soon settle back into their normal activities. One day, after another earthquake hit, above the village on a high plain, an old farmer was watching from his house. He looked out to the sea, and saw a wall of water approaching. His one thought was to warn the people in the village. He called his grandson, "Bring me a torch! Make haste!" In the fields behind him lay his great crop of rice. Piled in stacks ready for market, it was worth a fortune. This elderly man hurried out with his torch, in a moment the dry stalks were blazing. Then the big bell rang in the village below: Fire! Everyone in the village came! They came to try to save the crops of their neighbor. As they reached the plain, the elderly man shouted at the top of his voice, "Look!" He pointed at the sea. At the edge of the horizon they saw a long, lean, dim line. This line was the sea, rising like a high wall and coming swiftly toward them. Then came a shock, heavier than thunder. The great swell of water struck the shore, sent a shudder through the hills, and destroyed the village. It struck again, and again, and yet again; then it returned to its place. On the plain no words were spoken. Then the elderly man spoke, saying gently, "That is why I set fire to the rice." While his action did not make sense to the villagers at first, in the aftermath of the tidal waves, they recognized that his sacrifice saved 400 lives.

Over two thousand years ago on another hillside, another man made a sacrifice that saved countless lives. The Bible says, "Jesus suffered death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone" (Heb. 2:9). Jesus tasted what everyone must taste - death. Jesus died for everyone, for you and me. But why? Jesus died so that we might live. As He looked at the tidal wave of our sin, from the cross, He willingly experienced the tortures of death, so that we might know the splendor of life. Let me ask you a question? Has anyone ever sacrificed for you? Parents, friends, employees, employers, teachers, relatives, neighbors, and maybe many others.

The sacrifice of Jesus did for us what we could not do ourselves. "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 15:21). The result of sin is that it separates us from God. God made Jesus a sin offering on our behalf. Jesus not only took our place, He took our sin. Jesus had to bear the weight and burden of sin alone in order for salvation to be complete. He died alone in order to save us. He identified Himself with us to make it possible for us to be forgiven and accepted by God. "The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark. 15:38). The veil was torn to symbolize that the death of Jesus had opened the way of access to Him for every person. (Heb. 4: 15, 16). Jesus made the way for us to come to Him, and as our heavenly High Priest, He applies the benefits of the cross.

What Christ has done for you and me, reminds me of the farmer on the plain who torched his rice crop so that the villagers were saved. Jesus is the Son of Man who died so that we might live. As we contemplate what Jesus has done for us, as well as what He is doing for us today; may the impact of His sacrifice and His High Priest ministry in heaven, challenge us to honestly evaluate our relationship with Him. And as we begin this New Year, may it be with a new resolve to be faithful to Jesus; He who gave His all. May His example inspire us to give our all, to love Him and live for Him. Let every purpose we form, every work in which we engage, and every pleasure we enjoy, be to the glory of our Lord. As we await his glorious appearing, may the language of our hearts be: *I am thine, O Lord, to live for You, to work for You, and to sacrifice for You!*

Ed Couser is the pastor for the Burnsville and Erwin Hills Seventh-day Adventist Churches. Previously he served churches in Ontario (Canada), New York, Kentucky and North Carolina. He also is a retired Chaplain, Lieutenant Colonel, having spent 29 years in the US Air Force. Pastor Couser, and his wife of 25 years, Carol have four adult children: Melissa, Kaylee, Meagan and Drew. He enjoys sharing the love of Jesus and encouraging others to prepare for His soon return.



Morganton Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Look to Jesus in the New Year!

By Rick and Cindy Mercer
Burke County

One time I read a story about a mother who had lost two young sons, a 3- year old boy and a 16-month old baby boy. Both had drowned in a backyard swimming pool. And after a difficult period of grief she managed to refocus her vision. She began looking at Jesus intently.

She realized her life was worth living if God could use her in some way. She surrendered her life into His hands, placing her complete trust in Him. She began to experience an intense desire to get closer to God, to walk with Him each day. She found that this even made her feel closer to her two lost sons.

She once said, "Now I hunger and thirst after God because of my love for Him. I know what it means to depend on Him fully, to seek Him with my whole heart, to love Him from my innermost being. I know how it feels...when God touches your soul and comforts you. I know how it feels to rest my head on His bosom."

This woman looked intently at Jesus in her darkest hour.

How can we look to Jesus in 2018 amidst our finances, wayward children, depression, relationship struggles and the other multiple challenges that we encounter in this journey called life? When we see Jesus in Scripture it brings spiritual vitality to our whole being. In the Gospels Jesus heals the sick, multiplies the bread, raises the dead, forgives sin, delivers demoniacs, and calms storms. He brings healing, happiness, and hope.

He overcomes disaster, demons and death. He defeats sorrow, suffering and sickness. He triumphs over sin and Satan. His miracles reveal His power. His parables reveal the teaching of His kingdom. His sermons reveal His eternal principles.

His life reveals God's love for the spiritually bankrupt. It shows the redeeming quality of His grace. He seeks. He saves. He forgives. He transforms. He makes hearts new. How wonderful is that?!

As we look unto Jesus, God will fulfill His marvelous promise in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." True, lasting character change comes as the Spirit of God impresses upon our minds the life changing principles we are studying in Scripture.

In the book Patriarchs and Prophets we are told that "It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell." As the old hymn states: "Look upon Jesus, sinless is He; Father, impute His life unto me. My life of scarlet, my sin and woe, cover with His life, whiter than snow." Looking unto Jesus, we are changed. Let us look daily to Him in 2018, becoming more and more like the lovely Jesus we admire so much.

As we look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb.12:2) then we can be assured that he will fulfill the desires of our heart.

We pray that God will surprise you with His bountiful love this upcoming year! Look to Jesus...it is our only hope.



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

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Inherited Capital

By Dr. Mark Creech



In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus told a parable about a son who took the inheritance bequeathed to him and wasted it on "riotous living" until he became destitute. When he realized the foolish way he had acted, he returned to his father in hopes of being received as a simple servant, but instead, the father restored him royally. Many call it the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Not long ago, I found a copy of an old devotional written in 1942 by the Episcopal Church based on the story of the Prodigal Son. Its heading read *Inherited Capital*.

The devotional shared a story about a man and his wife who said to a clergyman, "We both graduated from college, agnostics. We don't go to church. We have two children, seven and nine years of age. We have tried to teach them Christian ideals of right and wrong. Somehow, we have failed. And we have begun to realize that we cannot by ourselves and without belief in God, pass on to the children what we inherited from our church and our church-going homes. Will you give us some books to read that we may regain our faith?"

The devotional then went on to make the point: "The Prodigal Son had used up his material wealth: this couple their spiritual. Only a return to the Father could replenish it. Have we not been living on inherited capital in every phase of our life? This inherited capital may last through the second generation but not through the third. Christian standards of right and wrong lose their strength and dynamic without convictions of God and Christ. Let us return to our Father."

Interestingly, we are now coming to the end of three generations since that devotional was written. And it's abundantly clear that the inherited capital of our Christian culture has been extravagantly wasted and is now in tremendous depletion.

One of my favorite books is by the authors, the late Dr. D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, titled, *What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?* The book irrefutably demonstrates the unprecedented impact for good that Christianity has had on the world, especially western society.

Here are a few highlights from the book:

Most of the world's greatest universities were started by Christians for Christian purposes. Literacy and education for the masses, capitalism and free enterprise, Representative government, the separation of political powers, civil liberties, modern science, the abolition of slavery, the elevation of the common man, the elevation of women, a higher sexual ethic that has protected the human race, a high regard for human life, higher standards of justice, the greatest works of art and music, and countless lives changed from liabilities to assets, have their roots firmly in the rich soil of the Christian religion.

"The religion of Jesus Christ has done more to elevate moral standards than any other force in history," wrote Kennedy and Newcombe. This same Christ who changes the soul has also changed the whole world for the better.

But the authors also noted the way that many in the West now reject Christ and the clear teachings of God's Word. "We have created a morals-free, values-free society, and now we are reaping the whirlwind. All of the scandals we've seen in America — in gov-

ernment...even in the Church — are simply the pimples on the surface that are arising from the moral corruption within," they wrote.

The late R.C. Sproul spoke of this same problem in a sermon titled, *The Parable of the Mustard Seed*. Sproul said:

"You look at our own culture and it seems as

if the church is in decline. You look at Western Europe and you read that in most of the countries in Western Europe the attendance in church on Sunday morning is about 2 percent. The great cathedrals have become, in the words of the skeptics, mausoleums of a God who is dead. And the historians say of our own nation, that now we live in the post-Christian era, where if Christianity is not dead, it is at least rendered irrelevant. The federal government of the United States has declared independence from God, interpreting the separation of church and state to mean the separation of the state and God. The things of God are banished from the public square, from the schools, from the halls of Congress, from the courts, unless or until there is a national catastrophe like 9/11, and then all of a sudden the churches are revisited for a little while until all the panic subsides."

Yes, we've been living on inherited capital for a long time, but we've wasted and neglected what was passed down to us to the place that today we're spiritually destitute — spiritually bankrupt. If we don't change our direction, if we don't change our ways, the incredible good that we have enjoyed and sadly taken for granted won't be there anymore for our children.

Every New Year provides us with a new start — a new chapter to be written. Isn't it time that we came to our senses like the Prodigal Son? Isn't it time for you to turn from your sins and surrender completely to Jesus Christ? Isn't it time to get you and your family into a strong Christ-centered church that respects the authority of the Holy Scriptures? Isn't it time to return to the Father?

If we're sincere in our repentance, he will restore us royally.

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



Lana's Lines

The Book (Continued)

By Lana Ellis
Kingsport, Tennessee



From the now exposed bare floor beneath the tree I retrieved an unopened gift. It was wrapped in what appeared to be ancient parchment paper and tied simply with brown twine. With trembling hands I untied the string and gently peeled away the fragile paper. Inside was a book and with the book was a note, "To You, from Martin."

Opening the book I read the first line, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Flipping ahead I continued to read. God created man in His own image... male and female He created them. The Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" Then I read about the Passover and the sacrifice of the unblemished lamb. Several pages later I read that an angel of the Lord said, "Today in the city of David there has been born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." The Book I was holding in my human hands was not just words on paper but rather the Bible, words inspired by none-other than most Holy God.

The Martin I referred to in my fictional story above was Martin Luther, born 1483 in Eisleben, Germany. October 2017 marked the 500th anniversary of his posting of the Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. That was the beginning of the Protestant Reformation and the revival of the written Word of God which had basically been lost for several centuries. Trying to pursue heaven by way of the Holy Roman Church proved to be an impossibility for Luther. No amount of confession of sins even to the extent of becoming a monk and obtaining the position of priest satisfied his craving for perfection. That is until the day he had access to the Book.

It's hard to believe, but the Bible was not required reading for monks. Only during a short time as a Novice Monk while in his 20's did Luther have access to the Bible. After becoming a monk, one was not allowed to have a Bible but Luther, having tasted the Word, made good use of the copy in the monastery library during his private time. His life would never be the same as he learned that salvation is not by works, but by faith alone. No longer able to tolerate his writings and sermons, the Holy Roman Church and Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther in 1521.

One of the things that Luther pursued from that time forward was to make the Bible available in the language of "the common people." The original Scriptures were handwritten on leather or parchment scrolls, Old Testament in Hebrew and New Testament in Aramaic and Greek. They remained that way for one hundred years after Christ, before they were compiled into book form. In AD 405 Saint Jerome translated the Bible into Latin for the Holy Roman Church; however, it lay dormant for nearly a thousand years, basically ignored by the Roman Church and was certainly unknown by the common man.

In 1523 Luther translated the Bible into the German language and for the first time "the common people" in the Holy Roman Empire could read the inspired words of God for themselves. John Wycliffe, in the 1380's, was the first to translate it into the Middle English language of Chaucer. In 1611 King James of England had it translated into what was the common English language of his time, Shakespearean English. The New American Standard Version, translated from the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, is said to be one of the most accurate literal translations in our modern day English.

The Bible is now the most printed book ever and is available all over the world in various languages. At the same time it's the most ignored book by many, even some who confess to be Christians. In the past, men have dared to take a stand for the Bible, putting their lives at risk, some killed and some burned alive at the stake. We must never take for granted how blessed we are to have such easy access to the written Word of God.

Five hundred years ago Martin Luther in his search for the truth discovered the armor of God and the "Sword of the Spirit". It was then that he took a courageous stand and wrote these powerful words, "A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or a council without it."

A Thank You Note:
January 2018
Dear Martin,

Thank you for the Book. Though simply wrapped, the contents are priceless - God's Word, The Bible, translated into the language of "the common people."

PS: My thanks also to English translators. Your German Translation was Greek to me!

No longer lying dormant The Book Continues...

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



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

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Live the Word and Be Blessed

By Preacher Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County



When it comes to access to the Word of God, you and I are extremely blessed. There are virtually unlimited resources that we can tap into when it comes to the study of the Bible. Paul instructed a young preacher named Timothy to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15). Though the Holy Spirit is our teacher when it comes to the Word of God, we are instructed to be students of the Word. Our study is of the utmost importance to help us be grounded in the Bible. One of the greatest weapons against lies and false teaching is to know the truth. By knowing the truth of what the Bible teaches, one will easily recognize a lie. Though I do realize that many of us may not necessarily agree on certain interpretations we may hold of the scriptures, there are many things that we can agree on: the authority of God's word, Jesus being the only way of salvation, the virgin birth of Christ, the deity of Christ, the Resurrection of Christ, the Second Coming of Christ, etc. These are just a few of what I call essentials that the Bible teaches that we as Christians can agree on. These "essentials" are things that I personally cannot and will not compromise.

To help us understand these important teachings in the Bible, we have numerous resources to help us. We have wonderful preachers, teachers, books, commentaries, lessons, studies of the original languages, Bible Colleges, seminary schools, etc. God has used great Christians in the past to study the Bible, write, and pass wonderful teachings along to future generations. When it comes to equipping ourselves in the study of God's Word, we have no excuse, at least in our country, anyway. Many Christian's ineptness in the Word simply comes from being too lazy to spend time studying.

Not only is the Word of God to be studied, but it is also for us to apply. What I mean by "apply" is that God's word is to be lived out in our everyday lives. Studying and applying God's word go hand in hand if we would reap the blessings of God's word. A professor of mine when I attended Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute used to say this: "When we chose to not apply the Word of God to our lives, it's like staring at a bottle of medicine, never taking it, and wondering why we're not getting better!"

One of the most outstanding portions of scripture on applying God's Word to our lives comes from the book of James Chapter 1:22-25 *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.* James uses the illustration of someone looking at themselves in a mirror, seeing all that needs to be changed, walking away, and forgetting about what they saw. Most all of us have mirrors in our house. We stand in front of those mirrors, so we can see what we look like. We'll comb our hair, wash our face, shave, straighten our shirts and ties, etc. These mirrors are used to show us what we actually look like so we can fix those things that aren't right.

James teaches that those who only hear and refuse to apply the word, are like someone who looks in the mirror, sees their hair all messed up and walks away without combing it! Those who only hear but never do, never get to experience the blessing of walking in God's Word.

God has allowed me to be involved in Christian ministry for around 25 years, almost eighteen of those as a preacher and pastor. I'll be the first to admit that I'm still learning. There have been times where I studied like I should and times I didn't. One thing is for sure, my Savior has brought me a long way from where I started. He has taught me that the real blessing of this Christian life is being a "doer of the Word". There have been times that I've experienced the blessing of walking in His Word and times that I've experienced the consequences of not walking in His Word. Over these many years I've encountered people who can quote more scripture than me, but their life is in constant shambles. They hear, study, and even memorize the Word of God, but for whatever reason, refuse to apply it. They have the medicine but refuse to take it. They have the light but won't turn it on. They have the bread but neglect to eat. All the while, they keep struggling and struggling in their lives and can't seem to realize the answer to their problems has already been given to them: be a doer of the Word!

Starting a new year always makes us think of new beginnings. Perhaps for our health, for our relationships, our careers, etc. If there is one resolution that we all need to make it is that we would be doers of the Word and not just hearers only. There is a quite a difference between knowing the Word and living the Word. May God help us to live the Word and be blessed!

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

Crossword Solution

P	L	E	A		D	A	W	N	S		H	E	A	T
L	A	D	S		A	S	I	A		S	A	N	D	Y
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S	H	R	U	B	S		H	U	R	L		S	E	E
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A	M	A	S	A		D	I	L	L		Y	A	R	N
T	E	N		K	I	D	N	E	Y	S		S	O	D
E	N	D	S		S	A	K	E		P	H	E	B	E
D		S	E	A	L			K	N	E	A	D	E	D
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B	E	L		U	S	E	D		A	T	T	A	C	H
A	R	E	A	S		P	O	U	R		I	S	L	E
D	E	N	S	E		E	L	S	E		N	E	A	R
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Sudoku Solution

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



The Rest of the Story

Doug Harrell

I must admit that I had forgotten this event until rereading this Funny Farm from the annals of 2013 when Clint first wrote it. As I read vivid memories of this flooded my mind and again I laughed until I had to wipe away the tears from my eyes. Less than two weeks ago I drove up to the very place on the mountain that Clint was referring to and cut locust firewood. In remembering the day Clint described, I still can hear the roaring of the engine, and the screaming of the tires, of that old Jeep truck that Clint was driving. I truly thought he would blow the engine before I could get back down the mountain 2-300 yards to where he was stuck. After getting him back on up the mountain he describes throwing the blocks of wood down toward the truck and he truly did lodge himself in the forks of that old tree. I tried not to laugh and did turn away, so he could not see me. I loved that man!! Life was never dull when Clint was around. My Dad, A D Harrell, used to always say that the hills rang with his laughter, and that was true, his and that of those around him. Happy New Year to all of Farmer Clint's fans.

Dear friends,

I love driving in our mountains this time of year. The columns of white smoke rising from so many chimneys bring back so many memories of my own birthplace. There is something about a fireplace that warms my very soul. I can almost feel the coziness of family in your homes, as if to say, "all is well here."

You may find it hard to believe but I would guess that most Americans either have never experienced, or have long since forgotten the wonderful scent of a wood-burning stove or fireplace. I, for one, lost that memory for decades as I moved from Nashville to Durham; Durham to Tampa; Tampa to New York; New York to Dallas; Dallas to Los Angeles; Los Angeles to Denver. City-folk rarely encounter such simple pleasures.

You Don't Just Gather Sticks?

2010 was my very first winter in Mitchell County as Farmer Doug's indentured servant (☹) at Harrell Hill Farms. Now I'd noticed the two wood stoves – one in the office and a second in the living room of the farmhouse. But, you know, it never occurred to me how one 'fueled' the monstrosities.

I'm thinking it was a hot and humid August morning when Doug first announced that it was time to gather firewood. "Okay," I thought, "guess we'll spend a couple hours doing that." I figured that the family would just go into the woods and gather sticks and fallen branches to keep us toasty in the winter. Holy smokes, was I wrong...AGAIN! ☹

Locust Trees?

Well, we set out for a drive up the mountain – on a very ill-defined path I must add – in fact, not to embellish this matter BUT if that was a road I am a giraffe! The places that man – Farmer Doug – calls roads are barely paths! Anyway, Doug was in one truck, the fancier/nicer/better equipped/newer one; I trailed in "Old Blackie", my 1820 vintage Jeep I've mentioned before. We were going hunting for locust trees...whatever the heck that is. I mean, isn't one tree just like another...they are all wood and wood burns. (Silly city-slicker I was!) To my credit, this time I didn't ask the "Why" question, I'd learned not to be quite as "open" about my country ignorance. When Doug says, "Need to go gather some logs," just act as if I know that...and I know the type logs to gather...blah blah blah.

Over the River and Through the Woods

Whenever Farmer Doug asked if I knew how to engage the 4WD-Low in "Old Blackie" I expected the worst, and I wasn't disappointed. We were driving up this mountain path, likely untouched by human hands or machine before, teetering on the edge of a ravine. The good news was, I had good rubber on the tires, I knew that 'cause Doug told me so.

Now he was in the lead and clearly more adept at driving through the wilderness than I. And, besides, I wanted to proceed with a wee bit more caution that he typically displayed since I had no desire to plunge off the mountain in an old black jeep to my fiery death below!

Blackie was grunting, groaning and straining to make the steep grade, starting to slip a bit on the hardpan surface. Doug long ago disappeared from sight so I was solo on this mountain road, wondering if the end was near...praying that somehow God would deliver me to wherever in the world it was I was supposed to end up.

Blue Smoke and Spinning Rubber

Sure enough, at just the wrong time I tried to downshift and began sliding off the cliff. Somehow – (somehow nothing, I think the hand of God reached out and saved me) – the thing stalled out and seemed stable in the middle of the path. About that time the bile rose into my throat...I began to get REALLY MAD... (I was REALLY EMBARRASSED, but REALLY MAD is a manlier emotion).

As I sat there, tires spinning, kinda-sorta slipping sideways, the motor screaming in protest. I decided I would never give up. I was going to climb this mountain, in this truck, on this day if it killed me...and it very well might. I had grov-



eled too long, I was not going to call Farmer Doug and tell him to rescue me...I am, after all, Farmer Clint and I can do this!

Or Can I?

Some ways off, Farmer Doug could hear the phantom cries of my protesting Jeep - squealing and squawking...and he saw the cloud of blue smoke rising over the mountain top. Guess he figured I must be in trouble. More likely, he was slightly concerned that I might just burn all the rubber from his tires or even blow the engine in Old Blackie.

I sat in that Jeep, sweating like a hog, thinking not so nice thoughts and trying to climb that mountain. And I saw Doug round the corner, on foot, waving wildly with both hands..."I guess he wants me to stop," I thought. "What will I tell him...I tried to do it right...this stupid vehicle isn't fit to drive...blah blah blah!"

I killed the ignition as my pal approached, that halfcocked, crooked grin on his tanned face..."You sure it's in 4WD-Low," he cajoled. Infuriated by the insinuation I just stared straight ahead, "Of course it is," I spat! "Let me just check it out," he said calmly. "Oops, guess it wasn't," was my only retort. How humiliating. "Do you want to bring it up now?" Doug inquired..."NO I DO NOT," I said with venomous overtones.

I yielded my position behind the wheel and slinked into the bed of the old jalopy. Doug eased the gearshift a bit to the upper-right and we purred up that mountain without breaking a sweat. Once again, for the gazillionth time in four months, I was humbled in the presence of Farmer Doug...GRRR.

Fat Boy on The Mountain

I spoke not a word when we reached the spot where locust trees lived; I simply stood aside and watched as my lumberjack pal began dropping HUGE trees with his chainsaw. All the while I'm thinking to myself, "Why don't we just pick up what's already on the ground rather than sawing down these trees?" Nevertheless, I awaited further instruction...still licking my wounds of another humiliating experience.

Doug suggested that I gather the logs he was cutting and toss them down the mountain, that way they would all be in one general vicinity for loading in the trucks later; that seemed perfectly logical to me.



I've told you before about my fused right ankle and how it causes me to be slightly less than – shall we say agile? So, I picked up that first log and promptly swung it out and toward the downside of the mountain. Well, what I failed to consider in this rhythmic motion was that I needed to release the log more quickly or it would propel my rotund body off the cliff with it. And, sure enough, off we went!

I finally had the presence of mind to let go of that log but not in time to avoid the plunge. Fortunately, again I believe it was the hand of God, there was a split tree in front of me, you know the kind that makes a giant Y...and my body lodged firmly in the Y. Doug looked on, shook his head and continued sawing...the man is a master of understatement.

With a mighty pull, I dislodged my bloody belly and torn shirt from that mountainside slingshot and again began tossing logs down the hill. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Doug flash a grin, give a quick wink and then return to his chainsaw.

Yapper, I love the sights and smells of an early winter's fire in these hills. And I love the fact that I DO NOT HAVE a fireplace, and no longer have to drive up that mountain to gather locust logs. It's a suicide trip, I tell ya...and that ain't no joke. But what a memory.

Still humbled in the hills,

Farmer Clint



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Bear Creek Baptist Church

His Unfailing Presence

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

*Another year I enter...Its history unknown;
Oh, how my feet would tremble...To tread its paths alone!
But I have heard a whisper, I know I shall be blest;
"My presence shall go with thee, And I will give thee rest."*

*What will the New Year bring me? I may not, must not
know;
Will it be love and rapture, Or loneliness and woe?
Hush! Hush! I hear His whisper; I surely shall be blest;
"My presence shall go with thee, And I will give thee rest."*
—Unknown Author

Happy New Year Everyone! Another year is passing and a new one dawns. Time slips so quickly by. The hustle and bustle of the holidays left us wondering where time went.

As we enter into this New Year I am so thankful we will not go it alone. If we know Christ as our Savior, He promises to go with us. His grace is always in the present tense. He is already in our tomorrows as much as He is in our today. Will hardships come our way? He will be there to buffer them and to see us through. Will joys unmeasured come our way? He will be there to make them even sweeter. Will we need to cry out to Him? He promised He would be there to hear our prayer. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

This New Year may offer many challenges, but it also offers so many opportunities. My prayer

is for the Church to experience genuine revival in 2018. Someone once said, "We will never change this world by the criticism of it, nor by the conformity to it, but by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God." I want that power and presence

profoundly in my life and Church and wish that for all of us.

A census of the seven to ten-mile radius around our churches would show that well over half of our neighbors do not go to Church and, most likely, do not know the Lord. That has to be the explanation as to why we have not seen an end, or decrease, to the ever-increasing drug epidemic in our area or a huge reduction in the other social problems/sins that are steadily manifesting themselves.

Pray with me that God would send a great revival in our Churches and that 2018 will be the year we can see the power of God moving in our midst. Pray that our Churches would be full of Him and of those seeking the Lord. Pray that our streets would be safer and homes more Christ-like.... that 2018 will be the year that will truly count for Him.

From my heart to yours, Happy New Year!

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



The Rotary of Spruce Pine

Houses and Warm Clothes

By Doug Sudduth
Mitchell County

On Thursday, November 30, at the weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Spruce Pine, members and guests received an informative and inspiring program provided by members of the Mitchell-Yancey Habitat for Humanity and by two recipients of the current Habitat home located in Ledger in Mitchell County. The program was introduced by Rotarian Arch Woodard and led by Gary Ray, President of the M-Y Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors. Assisting Gary were staff: Jim Erlandson and Steve Bruton. Comments were also provided by Jessica Hoyle and Joey Stout whose Habitat home is under construction in Ledger and nearing completion. Gary discussed options Rotarians and others have as potential volunteers with Mitchell-Yancey Habitat and explained the initiation of a Neighborhood Revitalization (NR) program starting in Yancey County in early 2018 and in Mitchell County later in 2018. This program typically serves older residents who choose to "age in place" in their homes, yet have limited financial resources and are in need of home repair and remodeling services. Jim, who serves as Chair of the Construction Committee, presented an excellent slide show of the progress from the beginning of the Habitat home in Ledger, including time-lapse photos of the exterior walls being completed in one hour and forty-five minutes. The slideshow brought viewers right on site, as the project progressed to date. Jessica and Joey gave real meaning to what Habitat is all about, as they described the impact of a new home on their lives with their son, Waylon. Rotarian Marvin Walker has served the local Habitat as a board member, volunteer and a member of the Family Selection Committee for Habitat affiliate homes for many years. When requested by Gary Ray, several Rotarians raised their hands as having volunteered for constructing homes.

Ruby Greene, a member and Past President of the Rotary Club of Spruce Pine, led the club members in donating, collecting and delivering winter clothing for homeless veterans in Asheville, North Carolina. These generous donations were delivered by Ruby to the Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry (ABCCM), Veterans Services of the Carolinas. Ruby stated that, when she arrived with the clothing, the trailer where they are stored was almost empty, showing how much the clothing is needed. With the encouragement of Spruce Pine Rotary President, George Nero, Ruby announced in several weekly club meetings her plans to collect and deliver winter clothing for homeless veterans in Asheville. Club members responded with generous donations of winter clothing for men and women.

ABCCM's Homeless Services program is made up of two transitional housing facilities: The Veterans Restoration Quarters for men and the Steadfast House for women and children. Both of these facilities provide housing, food, case management, education and connection to both mental and physical health providers to their residents. All residents are supplied three meals per day and have access to a nurse, computer lab, gym and laundry room privileges. They also receive transportation services to the VA Medical Center and downtown Asheville. The goal of these programs is to move the resident from a state of homelessness to a position of self-sustainability.

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



Steve Bruton, as Rotarian Marvin Walker presents a locally handmade Rotary mug to Gary Ray with Jim Erlandson



Rotarian Ruby Greene with boxes and bags of winter clothing near the storage trailer at ABCCM Veterans Services of the Carolinas in Asheville.



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





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Tim's Treasures

I Am With You Always...

By Timothy W. Tron
Burke County

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."-Matthew 28:19-20

Arktos sat on the expanse of stone, his balcony to the world that opened below. High on the mountain range above the Germanesca Valley, he sat watching the clouds gather in the depths of the void below. The air blew steadily up here. He closed his eyes and tilted his face toward heavens. The warmth of the sun caressed his aged face, blending the deep ravines of time into one of wisdom. His long gray hair, speckled with white wafted against his shoulders. The white beard gave him an air of intellect. Beneath it, his tanned skin, taut against his chiseled chin, gave the look of, "You will pay if you cross me," which belied his true gentle nature; the tender heart beneath the façade of an ancient warrior. This was his place of repose, his solitary corner of earth where he could commune with God. To obtain this height, one must have the strength of a bear and the agility of the mountain goat. Up here, the world below seemed so distant, so unimportant compared with what lay ahead.

Here, there was no sound of humanity. There was nothing but the sound of the distant waterfalls cascading into the abyss below. Their voices echoed off the granite walls of God's fortress of granite that surrounded him.

He was lost in thought, one with the Father as the words came to mind, *"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*-Phil. 4:7

As life and time march onward, the realization of himself becoming the one that others looked to for guidance bothered him. True, he studied the Word relentlessly, but he never seemed to rise above who he saw in those crystal-clear pools from which he supped his handfuls of water. There beyond those sky-blue eyes, was the same man he had seen for all his life. Much of the world around him had changed, loved ones had gone on, and now, he was nearly alone save for the few that were left.

Earlier that morning, he and the others had met once more to study and worship. There was no set plan, just the Word to guide them. They were the remnants of their kind. Many had been lost; as many had perished from the mountain as had those who had died from the sword. They were the keepers of the Word, the bearers of Christ's ministry. They had no name as of their own, but rather, were given only the name from whence they came, the Vaudois. These were the Vaudoisians, the Children of the Light, as they had also become known.

As they slowly gathered, one, then another, in that small but ancient stone



building that had created so many before them, each one was welcomed with brotherly love. They were united as one centuries before, longer than even their elders could remember. The words they used to describe their beginning were simply, "Since time Immorium." As they prepared to begin, each

lit a candle or lamp from which to read. The ancient structure barely allowed the slightest amount of light to enter. While light was hard to find, in the deepest recesses of winter, the sturdy, meter-thick walls also kept the freezing cold without; thus, serving as the perfect sabbatical from the outer world during the long dark winter months. Yet, even in the early summer, as now, they met to refresh their scriptures before departing for their summer missions beyond these peaks.

Today had been especially rewarding. There was the initial joking and sharing of mental challenges, but eventually, as was usually the case, someone said something that yielded to a lesson from within the pages of that precious text, the one they had guarded with a millennium of lives. Immediately, they dove within the leaves of that ancient book seeking the trail upon which they felt obliged to follow. Their questions led to further searches, all following a path only their Lord would know. The older students merely closed their eyes and quoted the scripture from memory, so intense was their learning.

Sitting back and watching their education come to fruition, Arktos had been blessed beyond measure. He knew in time, they would be gone, leaving for their journeys.

Many would never return.

Time after time he had seen them grow, become one with the Word, then leave to serve their commission. Those that returned had a renewed vigor that only experience, and life could teach. Each time, he saw the youth that had been present in the spring of life be torn away, leaving behind the shell of reality forced upon their tender souls. Those that never came back left a hole in his heart that could never be replaced. He felt so inadequate for what he was there to do. There was so much he needed to learn himself, so much more he could share, if only there were more time.

He returned to the present when the cry of the raptor pulled him back. Before he opened his eyes, he whispered softly, *"God give me the strength, and the wisdom to do your will until I no longer have the breath left to live another day."*

Blinking to the light of day, he tilted his head forward. There soaring upon the currents before him was a beautiful Golden Eagle. Below them both, the sun had broken through the clouds and the expanse of meadow falling away to the sharp blue-gray edges of the valley below opened up. The view was breathtaking, as the wild bird was in its grandeur; man and beast as one, above the spectacle of creation only few can imagine. The old man felt the presence of God as the bird remained in place, gliding along with little to no effort. Its piercing eyes sought him, and from within he could feel a voice resonate through his soul.

"You are not alone, for I am with you always, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Arktos could not move. He tried to nod in agreement, but nothing would work; his head could not shake, his fingers could not even curl to feel the stone beneath where he sat. He was spellbound by those penetrating eyes and the omnipotent voice within.

Another searing cry from the eagle echoed off the nearby snow-covered peak, and immediately, the roar of the waterfalls returned. He blinked, and the beautiful bird was gone.

Had he dreamt the scene?

Had it been just another vision?

He reached for his weathered walking stick to prepare for the journey back down the mountain when he noticed it. There beneath its handle lay the reminder of the moment; a tail feather from a Golden Eagle.

He smiled, as he tucked away the keepsake into his backpack, and begin his slow descent into the world that awaited below.

He had nearly disappeared from that summit when the call of the great eagle echoed from a distant valley, and he smiled once more, for God was with him. Yes, God would be with him always.

Thanks be to God.





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Timothy W. Tron is the Executive Director of the Waldensian Trail of Faith. He lives in Valdese with his family. He is the author of, "Bruecke to Heaven," and an active blogger, artist and musician. Timothy also has a BSEE from UF, is an Eagle Scout. He is now teaching in Watauga County.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Revelation 21:4

North Carolina Under the Siege of Tyranny

By Rev. Mark H. Creech

Charles de Montesquieu, the French lawyer, writer, and political philosopher, whose works had a profound influence on America's founders, once said, "There is no crueler tyranny than that which is perpetuated under the shield of law and in the name of justice."



My beloved state, North Carolina, is under siege from tyrants who operate "under the shield of law and in the name of justice." The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals has the state and its future firmly under its iron rule, and yet, there's been little outrage by the state's citizenry.

Daniel Horowitz, in *Fourth Circuit Takes Control of North Carolina*, summarizes the way this unelected body has destroyed the state's right to self-determination. He writes:

"They have mandated transgenderism, blocked every voter integrity law, required very specific times and amounts of early voting, criminalized voluntary public prayer, and erased every single districting map – from federal and state districts to even county school board maps in the middle of an election season and after candidates already spent enormous sums campaigning. Again, this was all done by federal, not state courts. They are rendering elections moot and are now ensuring that conservatives can never win elections by ruling Democrat racial gerrymander advantages into law and into the Constitution."

Horowitz's description of the matter isn't hyperbole in the slightest.

Stephen McDowell and Mark Beliles rightly argue in *Liberating the Nations*, the concept of Constitutionalism in America stretches back to the Hebrew Republic which Moses presented to the Israelites via the Book of the Covenant. It contained the Ten Commandments, as well as a companion body of law. Although these laws were inspired by God, they were handed down to the people for their adoption. Exodus chapter 19 reveals this was necessary for the people to enjoy the benefits of these laws.

God is sovereign. If we break his laws, they will break us. Still, God allows us to choose. He will not force himself upon us. Consent is necessary to know the blessings of his way. We can garner from this example provided in Scripture that tyranny is always from the top down and never operates with the consent of the people.

McDowell and Beliles also note that even when Israel changed its form of government to that of a monarchy, the king was still required to abide within and govern by the Covenant or the Book of the Law – law, by the way, which reflected the character of a benevolent and just God. America's Founders took this concept and wove it into our nation's framework, clearly stating in the Declaration of Independence that "just powers are derived from the consent of the governed."

Certainly, the most fundamental principle of a free society, one governed by Constitutionalism, is the right to vote – the right of the people to decide their own destiny. Nevertheless, "under the shield of law and in the name of justice," the Fourth Circuit has decided it shall decree to North Carolinians in what manner they may cast their votes in the next election.

Once again, let me refer to Horowitz, who gives us the play by play here: "[A] three-judge panel within the Fourth Circuit and the [U.S.] Supreme Court struck down both the federal and state [legislative district] maps [that state lawmakers drew] in the Tar Heel State."

"It is first important to recognize that North Carolina received pre-clearance from Obama's Justice Department, and the maps were upheld twice in state court. That should have ended the matter. Federal courts should have no jurisdiction over state legislative maps. Yet the federal courts nullified 28 legislative districts and remanded back to the three-judge panel, which includes two Obama-appointed judges."

"The North Carolina legislature went back and drew a new, clean map that is better than anything Democrats put out when they had control for 100 years. That should have ended the matter. Yet the Obama judges, who have been accorded God-like power over subject matter the Constitution did not entrust to them, want to make sure the maps maximize the Democrat Party advantage. They gave standing to another lawsuit challenging three Senate and nine House districts. Last Thursday, [October 26th], in a written order, Judge Catherine Eagles wrote on behalf of the three-judge panel that she feels the new map doesn't redress the 'constitutional' violation and is 'otherwise legally unacceptable' – in other words, it doesn't contain enough Democrat advantages. So, in the ultimate act of legislating from the bench, the judge said that due to 'the technical nature of determining an appropriate remedy' and 'exceptional circumstances,' the court is appointing a 'special master' to oversee the maps."

"Thus, an unelected federal court with no constitutional jurisdiction over maps cleared by the DOJ [Department of Justice] and state courts is now requiring that de facto veto power over the new maps be given to an unelected 'expert.'"

The unelected 'expert' chosen by the Fourth Circuit Court is Stanford University law professor, Nathaniel Persily, from California.

Can you believe this? The situation is so egregious and shocking that it's difficult for the average citizen in our state to process. It's so bad that many, without carefully thinking, might simply dismiss it as an unfortunate consequence of Republican gerrymandering.

At the risk of being perceived as partisan, let me say that such a conclusion would be nonsense. North Carolina is in the throes of something unlike anything it's ever experienced in its history since the American Revolution and "no taxation without representation."

Back in October, North Carolina House Rep. David Lewis (R-Harnett) and Sen. Ralph Hise (R-Mitchell) chairman of their respective chambers' redistricting com-

mittees have said the "order provides absolutely no legal or factual basis for objecting to the new maps, while also potentially delegating the legislature's constitutional authority to draw districts to a lone professor in California with no accountability to North Carolinians."

Lewis and Hise also rightly contended that to hand the responsibility of the state's redistricting maps "to a single person on the other side of the country is an outrageous and extraordinary violation of the principle of federalism and our state's sovereignty."

Since making these statements, Lewis and Hise have had the opportunity to review the new maps made by Persily. In a statement released today (December 1) they said that Persily has confirmed their "worst suspicions" and "this entire 'judicial process' is little more than a thinly-veiled political operation where unelected judges, legislating from the bench, strip North Carolinians of their constitutional right to self-governance by appointing a left-wing California professor to draw districts handing Democrats control of legislative seats they couldn't win at the ballot box."

I must agree with Horowitz's conclusion on this matter, "While legislative gerrymandering can be insidious, it is not nearly as tyrannical as judicial gerrymandering, which is unconstitutional and against which there is no remedy."

No remedy? Perhaps. But I'm inclined to believe that if freedom remains precious enough to its beneficiaries they'll find one.

Charles de Montesquieu also said, "The tyranny of a prince in an oligarchy is not so dangerous to the public welfare as the apathy of a citizen in a democracy."

The federal judiciary is off the rails and can only be set right by a citizenry that will no longer consent to its illegitimate yoke.



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

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



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Billy Graham Evangelist Association

Prayer for New Year

By Billy Graham

This prayer from Billy Graham, written for The Saturday Evening Post in 2008, is just as relevant this year.

Our Father and our God, as we stand at the beginning of this new year we confess our need of Your presence and Your guidance as we face the future.

We each have our hopes and expectations for the year that is ahead of us—but You alone know what it holds for us, and only You can give us the strength and the wisdom we will need to meet its challenges. So, help us to humbly put our hands into Your hand, and to trust You and to seek Your will for our lives during this coming year.

In the midst of life's uncertainties in the days ahead, assure us of the certainty of Your unchanging love.

In the midst of life's inevitable disappointments and heartaches, help us to turn to You for the stability and comfort we will need.

In the midst of life's temptations and the pull of our stubborn self-will, help us not to lose our way but to have the courage to do what is right in Your sight, regardless of the cost.

And in the midst of our daily preoccupations and pursuits, open our eyes to the sorrows and injustices of our hurting world, and help us to respond with compassion and sacrifice to those who are friendless and in need. May our constant prayer be that of the ancient Psalmist: "Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end" (Psalm 119:33).

We pray for our nation and its leaders during these difficult times, and for all those who are seeking to bring peace and justice to our dangerous and troubled world. We pray especially for Your protection on all those who serve in our armed forces, and we thank You for their commitment to defend our freedoms, even at the cost of their own lives. Be with their families also, and assure them of Your love and concern for them.

Bring our divided nation together, and give us a greater vision of what You would have us to be. Your Word reminds us that "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12).

As we look back over this past year we thank You for Your goodness to us—far beyond what we have deserved. May we never presume on Your past goodness or forget all Your mercies to us, but may they instead lead us to repentance, and to a new commitment to make You the foundation and center of our lives this year. And so, our Father, we thank You for the promise and hope of this new year, and we look forward to it with expectancy and faith. This I ask in the name of our Lord and Savior, who by His death and resurrection has given us hope both for this world and the world to come.

Amen



Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge

One More Time

By Brent Price
Mitchell County



In the book of Ecclesiastes, the writer proclaims, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." As we begin a new year perhaps it's time for a fresh start, a time to consider new opportunities, a time to pay attention to God's voice deep in your heart.

Your life has purpose regardless of your position or status. No matter what others might say or do to discourage you it's time to embrace the life God has promised—abundant life, joy made complete, a peace that passes all understanding. It is the season to begin anew, a new road lies ahead.

Don't ignore that persistent longing that lives deep in your heart. Something in each one of us waits to be fulfilled. It seems like only yesterday when we arrived in Bethlehem, but now it's time to set out again—time to follow, time to be led by something greater than our own fears and excuses.

The child who has been born in the fullness of time, the embodiment of perfect love has promised to cast out all fear. All we have to do is step onto the path and begin. He will guide, sustain and comfort along the way.

Looking back is pointless. What has been is done. We can't change the mistakes we made in the beginning, but we can change the ending by creating a new beginning. Throughout the story of God's people, it happens all the time.

Sinners are transformed into saints. Liars and cheats become the protectors of a covenant that has endured for centuries. A man after God's own heart is forgiven and through his blood-line a savior is born.

God loves us and calls us in the midst of our stumbling and staggering as we teeter on the edge of disaster. He rejects our excuses and desires to reveal the beautiful spirit that he placed in us from our birth. However, we must begin so that God can finish the work he has begun in each one of us.

It is time, Lord. It is time. One more time.

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



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Beautifully Broken

By Chelsea Blevins
Yancey County

"When we come to the end of ourselves, we find Jesus. And when we find Jesus, we find everything else."

Y'all it's hard. This thing we call life. It's hard when your heart feels broken in a million pieces and you feel as though you may never find all the pieces to put it back together. It's hard when you feel you'll never have what it takes to be good enough. It's hard when your best efforts only allow you to feel as though there will never be anything worth trying for.

I know it's hard.

I was that girl.

I was the girl who struggled to hold herself together from a broken heart after realizing the man I thought was forever didn't hold the same expectation. I was the girl who struggled with insecurities and had never seen myself for the beauty God restored in me. I was the girl who attended numerous colleges and changed career paths only to find none of them were for me.

I am that girl.

Maybe you're that girl too. And ya know, that's okay.

Because before we can ever experience God's grace at its fullest, we must experience the depth without it. I've come to realize that if my way always works out, I'll only miss out on the REAL life God has for me. Yeah, life is hard. But it's also beautiful, and raw, and rare.

It's in those dark heart wrenching moments that God's light shines brighter than ever. That's when his kingdom has the greatest opportunity to shine. That's when he shows up. That's when his grace will fill the gaps.

God doesn't only show up in broken times. No, he's so much greater. But isn't that what we limit him to? Maybe we don't feel good enough because our good enough is only an "I" effort rather than a God effort.

God wants to fill the gaps.

But I think sometimes I mistakenly think somehow, I've got what it takes to fill them. Maybe it's shame that I didn't listen the first time, maybe it's doubt, or fear. But there is something about being broken that makes us whole.

There's something about knowing God is all you have when your last attempt has been.

When Jesus went to eat at the house of Simon there was a slight interruption during the dinner. By slight interruption I mean a prostitute. A very unclean woman who has just interrupted the dinner at a religious leader's home. Keep in mind this dinner was a very elegant, special, religious dinner. The table is set, and they begin to eat. The unclean woman runs in and goes straight to Jesus.

She must have felt shame, judgement, and negativity.

But I can't help but think about what brought her here.

She's broken.

Amongst all the eyes of judgement and humility her eyes are fixed on Jesus.

She's broken, and she knows it.

Jesus sees her in a different kind of way. He sees her as beautifully broken.

She begins to cry. The ugly cry (you know what I'm talking about girls). But you know what's so beautiful about those ugly tears? Those tears become the very water that washes the feet of Jesus. The job that Simon should have done (washing the feet of your guest was a common gesture done to greet guests and welcome them into your home).

She offers all that she is because he has changed all that she was.

The point is, sometimes we are broken. Shattered. Torn. We are the unclean woman.

We are filthy, embarrassed, unworthy, shattered, and torn.

We are broken.

And maybe that's okay because God says we are beautifully broken.

The unclean woman could have run from Jesus because of the shame of her brokenness. But instead she fixed her eyes on Jesus and suddenly none of her brokenness mattered.

She was at the end of herself and the beginning of Jesus.

Her uncleanliness was made clean through Jesus. Her humbleness in humility was exalted. Her brokenness made beautiful.

When we come to the end of ourselves, we find Jesus. And when we find Jesus we find everything else.

It's okay to be broken because sometimes it's through broken tears that we see most clearly.



No Regrets Family— The Appalachian Trail Whooped Me!

By Pastor Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

We have a tradition to bring in the new year as a family. When the time nears for the New Year we count down the seconds and bring in the New Year with celebration. My five-year-old daughter after a full day of playing with family, fell asleep before the New Year began, and we did not wake her up for the celebration.

The next morning, she was so mad at us because bringing in the New Year was a grandiose thing for her. She missed it and would have to wait another year to celebrate the New Year.

I really love the new year as well because I feel like I can get a fresh start. Some people do not make resolutions because they are afraid of breaking them. I think it is a promising idea to set goals and make spiritual plans. For example, have you ever tried reading through your Bible in a year? Maybe setting aside more time to pray and meditate. Meditation is time spent alone thinking about the word of God in your mind and heart. This is what the Bible describes as going into your prayer closet. How about fasting? Hey preacher you are getting personal now. Lol. I do not like to skip meals either. Fasting is a set period you go without food to meditate, pray, and seek the Lord. When you choose to do this do not tell anyone you are fasting. People who are close to you may figure it out but that is alright. Husband and wife could practice a fast together. (1 Cor. 7:5) A fast could include one meal or many meals. But, the goal is to seek the Lord and listen to the Holy Spirit. How about church attendance? Maybe going to a service at your church that you normally do not attend. Surprise your pastor and show up on Wednesday nights. He would really appreciate you being there. This day and time Christians need more fellowship and unity, not less. It is amazing how some churches only gather one day a week. It seems to be the norm these days.

The idea is the new year is an exciting time to make spiritual goals and to set your heart and mind to it. The Apostle Paul talked about this Philippians 3:13 (KJV 1900)

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

Philippians 3:14 (KJV 1900)

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The new year is a time to forget the past, the past is "water under the bridge."

But you can make plans to pursue Jesus Christ and your relationship with Him. Keep your eye on the goal-- your prize is your service to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

The Appalachian trail in Avery and Mitchell counties are some of the roughest and highest elevation changes of the trail. It is very difficult to hike the trail in these areas.

So, myself, brother, and a soldier set out to hike a section of the trail from Lake Hampton to the top of Roan Mountain. I sprained my ankle just outside of Elk Park, N.C. and had to stop our hike. I was disappointed because I really wanted to finish. But the thing is, we tried. The rough terrain got the best of me. I may not have finished, but I tried. And this is like our "walk of faith." We need to try our best. It is better to try and not succeed because of circumstances you cannot control, than to never try at all. God wants you to try. Set out and pursue Jesus Christ so when you stand before him to the best of your ability you can stand there with "No Regrets."

Happy New Year.

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



Through the Eyes of a Child

By Barbara Harrell



I've been spending too much time hanging from that old gargled apple tree. Skinning up that rough trunk to find the best seat in the house. And then, the sky is limitless, blue with those puffy white clouds. Look, there goes the one chasing the other. I wonder what is over that ridge and how many miles is it to the nearest house? What makes the mountains stay in place? Where does the green come from in the leaves?

Opps! —here comes old Pet. She will be needing to be milked here shortly. Not my favorite job, but the milk sure is good, especially when we just squirt it in our mouths. Sis and I like to make a game with it.



Just down the hill, I see Pap hitching that mule to the plow. He will be getting the cold winter ground ready for warm spring plants. I love squishing my toes into the dirt and feeling the warmth, and thinking about just a few weeks and I can sneak into the garden and eat some of the produce. It is so much better than after it goes to the kitchen.

Oh, over yonder on the hill is the cemetery. We always called it the graveyard. It is our best place to play. A wonderful seat has grown between two trees and it is just above Onella's grave. She was my aunt, but she didn't live. Lot's of children buried in that graveyard. Fun to play with them and take our tea set up, so we can share our tea. Sometimes we sweep the ground and make a house. Onella can't tell us, but we think she loves our playtime. People laugh at us for playing in the graveyard, but it is so quiet and peaceful here.



Mama Nat just called and in a bit, I have to go get the potatoes for supper from the root cellar. It is scary down there. Dark and damp, with mice scurrying around. It has wonderful smells though. The apples, potatoes, squash, big crocks of pickled beans and corn blend together to tickle my taste buds.

Wow, if I twist just a little in my tree, I can see way over yonder on that distant hill. I dream a lot about what is over there. When I grow up I will journey over that ridge and then that mountain and I will see what lies over there. I wonder if God lives there. Is that where heaven is?

We have been learning in Sunday School that God created all of this. He must be an awesome person with lots of knowledge. How did He know to make the sky blue? Or the grass green? I need to remember to ask when I go to Sunday School next Sunday.



I love hanging in this tree upside down. It makes the world look upside down. The sky is on the bottom and the green is on the top.

Hanging upside down in the apple tree can help make sense of the world in a child's eyes. God's world is a beautiful place!!

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



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Marlene's Meditations

Unknown Worlds

By Marlene Houk

Psalm 119:161 "...but my heart standeth in awe of thy word."

Staring at the bright shapes dangling just out of reach, chubby fingers stretch high, reaching for knowledge. Sixteen years later, those same hands, now supple and long, grasp the heated leather-wrapped ring that controls 3,842 pounds of metal and 650-horsepower, on a supercharged 6.2-liter V8 powering the Camaro ZL1. He has entered the world of control. During the church service, his jaw drops as he listens to a world far more powerful in every measure than his car. It is the Universe, made by the God Who is infinitely above his finite thinking. (Isaiah 55:8-9) The stars in multiple worlds sing along with the whales to the tune of "How Great is Our God." <http://safeYouTube.net/w/Pp1c> Years later, he welcomes a new cardiology patient, inviting him to recline on the plush leather seats. Booting up his computer screen, the now-famous doctor shows him the ventricles of his diseased heart, and it occurs to his educated mind how much like the first letter of the Hebrew word for God, Shaddai, the heart demonstrates:

First Hebrew letter in Shaddai: shin

Heart ventricles:

<https://promisedlandministries.wordpress.com/2010/03/14/shadows-of-the-messiah-where-gods-name-is-written/>

Have you ever opened the door to a new world and knew that you would stay a while? That first contraction, signaling parenthood?, the thrilling initial flight of a new career?, or perhaps the pure joy of finding your soulmate? Tentatively at first, and then more boldly, you peek around the edge to see the possibilities of fulfillment, wisdom, and purpose.

Joshua 1:8 says, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Joshua 1:8 opens the door to a world of understanding Almighty God Who formed your heart to function, your mind to create, and your spirit to crave Him. Do this:

- Read about Him (and yourself) in His letter to you.
- Drink in the possibilities of a life with Him as your Guide.
- Dream about an ultimate eternity in His presence.
- Gulp down the satisfaction of abundant living from the pages of Scripture
- Experience the lifelong passion that comes from reading the Bible and being changed.

Just. Simply. Read. According to Joshua 1:8 you will prosper and be successful from God's eternal viewpoint!

Reading the Bible through offers a little-known aerial view of the Scriptures that is not easily seen in the minutiae of each word and the intricate filigree of verses. As you read, a divine drone sails off into the unknown, scaling impossible peaks of miracles and wonders. It dives into the deepest part of mankind, discovering a yawning maw, a palpable yearning for the God Who created it. Soaring up into the Sonlight, the Word of God changes all it touches and gilds our lives with the laser light of His glory, lifting our spirits and filling us with His love. All brought about by this idea: Just. Simply. Read. Start anywhere in the 66 books of the Bible. Or, begin with a plan. Perform aerial stunts such as reading a book backwards to observe its structure. But do this: Just. Simply. Read.

Typically, we think of reading the Bible through as defined by a year. But this is not necessarily the case. My daughter read through the Bible in 35 days. (A minor part of that was listening on the way to work and back.) What happens when you Just. Simply. Read.? In her words:

- I learned more truth by simply reading through the Bible.
- Reading the Bible through changed my whole year even though I participated actively only 35 days. The blessings continued far past the actual challenge.
- Reading the Bible through changed my thoughts because the Bible was always fresh on my mind.
- The daily reading reminded me of the Bible's relevance to my life and how it connected to daily situations.
- God cleared my schedule, (canceling a whole semester of classes in a music program), to provide more time to read His Word.
- I realized that reading through the Bible was so doable and simple. God gave me the strength to make it through.
- I would do it again because I see the benefits, how meaningful it is to life, and how God honors the reading of His Word.

How to start: Read an article such as the following one which describes, in a light-hearted way, the possibilities of reading the Bible. Written by a doctor who wanted to binge-read the Bible and succeeded, it is full of tips and encouragement as well as the benefits of simply reading the Bible through. <http://rootedthinking.com/2017/01/09/how-many-days-would-it-take-to-read-straight-through-the-bible/> Or, join a Facebook group such as the following: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/readtruthtogether/> They will encourage and urge you on to: Just. Simply. Read the Bible through. Know this:

- that God will smile on you;
- that you will be changed;
- and that the door to a new world filled with the God Who created you will beckon you in.

Blessings on your journey!

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



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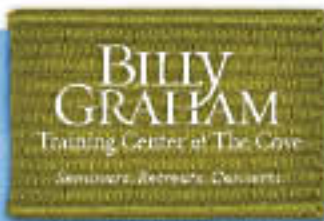


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"Hear what
God the Lord
will speak."

—PSALM 93:9, NKJV



Grace Community Church

Suffering . . . Hope's Distant Cousin

By Jerry Lewis
McDowell County

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. (Psalm 62:5-7 ESV)

David returns to his opening thought. (see verse 1) *For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence.* Why? For my hope is from him. As I am writing this the forecast is calling for snow tomorrow. I hope it snows—I really do! That idea of hope is not what David means here. Most of the time we use the word hope for “wish.” I wish it would snow tomorrow. I wish the Panthers would win. I wish...

Biblical hope is far more than a wish. Biblical hope is the sure promise of future reward. Paul talks about this kind of hope in Romans 5:

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:1-5)

Paul tells the believers in Rome that they can rejoice in sufferings. Why? Paul isn't advocating an emotionless response to the very real pain of life. No! Rejoicing in suffering is possible for the same reason a mother endures the pain of giving birth to a child: the hope of holding that child in her arms as a newborn. Our hope is fixed on the glory of God—we live to honor Him. And strangely enough it comes through waiting and suffering.

Suffering initiates a domino effect: suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Hope grows best in the soil of suffering. Notice the distance between suffering and hope. Suffering is followed by endurance (which takes time). Endurance is followed by character (which is built over time). Character produces hope.

For some of you this has been the worst year of your life. Your suffering is so intense that hope seems a distant dream, a far-flung idea. Don't despair. Hope is coming! Endure—don't quit!

David writes: *He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.* Today, lean in on God. Wait on him—quieten yourself before him. He is your refuge, your safe place...your hope.

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



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“ALL the Saints”

By Shawn Thomas
Burke County

“For this reason, I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints ...” (Ephesians 1:15)

The smallest little words in scripture can sometimes have the biggest impact — if we are paying attention to them! Such is the case here in Ephesians 1:15, where Paul commends the faith that the Ephesians have in Jesus, and their love for “all” the saints.

That word “all” is vital — and potentially very convicting. He does NOT say that he gives thanks to God because of their love for “some” of the saints. Or for their “favorite” saints. No, he thanks God because he has heard of their love for “ALL” of the saints. That is surely a matter for our reflection.

Do you have a love for “all” of the saints? All of us who are genuinely Christians can say that we love “some” of the saints: that person in church who always says something encouraging to us; or the sweet little senior adult we are just drawn to. There is the pastor or staff member who means so much to us; the teacher or disciple who has invested in us; the bosom friend in the church whom we just could not do without. We can truly say that we love them.

But love for these special favorites in the church is not what the Lord commands here. He says love for “ALL” the saints. As my old Sunday School teacher said of scripture, “all means all!” We are to love “ALL” the saints:

- Not just “some,” “all”!
- Not just your favorites; “all”!
- Not those who are like you; “all”!
- Not the ones in your little group; “all”!

“All” means “all”! The loud person. The disagreeable person. The different person. The smelly person. The ugly person. That one that you are not just immediately drawn to in the church. “All.”

Because our love as God’s people, is to reflect His own love: “For God so loved THE WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son.” So, like Him, we are to love them “all.”

For whom might you need to pray today, that God would give you His love, that it may be said that, like Him, you love “ALL the saints”?



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

Women of Rotary

By Doug Sudduth
Mitchell County



Until 1989 Rotary club membership was for males only. In 1978, a California club invited three women to join which led to a lawsuit against Rotary International claiming a violation of state civil rights law that prevents discrimination. In 1987 the US Supreme Court upheld the state court decision and in 1989, the change was made by Rotary International to eliminate the “male only” provision for all of Rotary.



Ruby Greene, Angie Vance, Carole Arthurs, Janie DeVos, Tina White, Robin Buchanan, Cindy Lindsey and Elaine Percival

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



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Mitchell County 4-H

Evinrude/BRP Supports Mitchell County 4-H Robotics Program

By Kim Slotnick
Mitchell County



Mitchell County 4-H is excited to have Evinrude/BRP as a sponsor of the 4-H Robotics Program. In 2014 Evinrude/BRP sponsored the startup of a high school level robotics competition team also called BRP (Beyond the Realm of Probabilities). The program currently has four Jr. Robotics, two middle school level, and one high school level robotics competition teams throughout the county. These teams are led by nine adult volunteers that guide each team through discovery, research, presentations, and robot engineering to compete in FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) robotics competitions in our region and at the state level.

Continued support by sponsors like Evinrude/BRP and the invaluable time of the adult volunteers has helped Mitchell County 4-H to offer opportunities in robotics. Evinrude/BRP feels the Robotics Program will benefit our community by generating interest in technology, Information Technology, Robotics, and Engineering. They believe it will help keep talent and professionals in our area and help create possible, future Evinrude/BRP employees!

In fact, FIRST LEGO League (FLL) team #32483, Mean Green LEGO Machine recently competed in an FLL State Qualifier tournament held in Statesville on November 18th. This rookie team demonstrated outstanding team work and dedication by qualifying for a place in the upcoming state competition being held at North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro on Jan. 20, 2018. This brand-new team of 4th graders; Riley Silver, Barrett Potter, Troy Gouge, Bransen Pittman, and Ajay Frisbee placed 7th out of 34 teams in the robot game during competition.

FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) team #9147, Beyond the Realm of Probabilities, will be competing in an FTC Qualifier on January 13, 2018 in Asheville. The four Jr. Robotics teams will be attending a FIRST Expo at UNCA in March of 2018.

Thank you to all the supporters, past and present; United Way of Mitchell County, The Phillips Foundation, IBM, the Quartz Corporation, and Evinrude/BRP. For more information on the robotics program and other 4-H programs, please call the Cooperative Extension office at 828 688-4811.

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



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Burke County

Catawba River Baptist Association

11—CRBA Prayer @ Morganton City Square @ 12
13—WMU Planning Meeting @ High Peak @ 9 a.m.
14—S.S. Mentoring @ East Valdese @ 6 p.m.
20—Evangelism Training with Don Sunshine @ CoMMA

Great Hope Seventh-Day Adventist Church

"Eating You Alive" movie, 7:00 pm at the Old Rock School, Waldensian Room in Valdese. "Eating You Alive" is a comprehensive look into why we are so sick, who is profiting and who is taking the "hit". It brings together evidence-based science, expert testimony and inspirational stories of people who have reversed disease and discovered the truth about how a Whole Food, Plant-based lifestyle can address and solve some of our world's most current crisis. Love offering taken. This is provided by your friends at the Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church. Questions? 828-334-0084

Reversing Diabetes classes (for preventing, also) start up again January 15 and go each Monday evening through February 19, 6:00 pm in the Waldensian Room of the Old Rock School. The classes are powerfully effective and eye-opening, but we offer them to you free. Pre-registration is necessary by calling 828-334-0084. Invite family and friends. This is provided by your friends at the Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist-Burke County

Blood Pressure Checks - The Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church will be providing Blood Pressure Checks on Saturday, January 6th., from 9:30 a.m., until 10:00 a.m. We would like to invite everyone to also stay for Sabbath School, Worship Service and Kid's Church at 11:00 a.m., and fellowship dinner immediately following. Morganton SDA is located at 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C.

Variety Show & Dinner to benefit the Silver Creek Adventist School will take place on Saturday, January 27th. Dinner starts at 6:30 p.m., followed by the show at 7:00 p.m. SCAS is located at 2195 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. For more information, please call the school at 828-584-3010.

God's Closet - Morganton FREE Shop Day will take place on Friday, February 2, 2018, from 9:00 a.m., until 12:00 p.m., at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. There will be FREE children's clothing, shoes and bedding. No documentation required. We do ask that all shoppers pay a \$1 entry fee.

God's Closet - Morganton is a non-profit organization that will offer FREE clothing to parents and / or guardians of children ages 0 to 18 years of age. If you or someone you know is in need of children's clothing and / or would like to donate and get involved please see the following contact information. We ask that everyone be in prayer for the new God's Closet - Morganton ministry that it will be a blessing to others in our Burke County community.

God's Closet - Morganton

Phone - 828-244-3876

E-Mail - morganton@godscloset.com

Website - www.godscloset.com

Facebook Page - God's Closet - Morganton

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After visiting the God's Closet - Morganton Facebook Page please Like and Share with your friends!

Town of Valdese Community Affairs & Tourism

mangi@valdesenc.gov | 828-879-2129 | visitvaldese.com

Old Colony Players, Inc. is a performing arts and community theatre company operating since 1935 in the Town of Valdese, North Carolina. It was incorporated in 1967 as a non-profit organization. In 2017, OCP celebrated the 50th consecutive season of producing the outdoor drama "From This Day Forward." The drama tells the story of the Waldenses, a people from the area known as the Cottian Alps in Northern Italy near the French border, and the founders of the Town of Valdese. It is the fourth longest running outdoor drama in North Carolina. OCP produces community theatre performances throughout the year, staged in the renovated Old Rock School Auditorium.

The Old Colony Players, Inc. Board of Directors is seeking qualified candidates for the full-time position of General Manager. The ideal candidate should have knowledge and experience with non-profit organizations, fundraising, business and financial skills, personnel management, and have a passion for the arts. The position entails volunteer and committee development, along with community relations. The candidate should have strong communication skills and the ability to work well in a team.

Interested candidates can learn more about the OCP General Manager position by visiting the website oldcolonyplayers.com. For more information please contact the Valdese Community Affairs office at 828-879-2129.

McDowell County

Cross United Methodist Church

24/7 Sharing Food Pantry at Cross United Methodist Church in Marion. The food is available for anyone in the county who is in need and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with no questions asked. We do ask however that you take only what you need so items will be left for others who may be in need. The church is located at 85 West Cross Street in Marion just past Blue Ridge Terrace

Apartments in the Cross Mill Community. Donations of non perishable food items and gently used blankets are very much needed and can be dropped off at the pantry site or you may call 828-442-8098 or 828-460-9257. If you would like to make a monetary donation, make checks payable to Cross United Methodist Church c/o of Susan Gossett, 66 Willis Drive, Marion, N.C. 28752. Your continued prayers for this outreach ministry are very much appreciated!

Grace Community Church--

New Prayer Line Launches in Marion, North Carolina - James 5:16 says "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." A. J. Gordon said, "You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." Churches in McDowell County believe God's Word and agree with A. J. Gordon. That's why they have launched 659-PRAY, a prayer line where people can call anytime, leave a message and know that churches in McDowell County will be praying for them. Here's how it works. The prayer line (659-PRAY) is housed at Freedom Life Ministries (freedomlifeministries.org). Each day prayer requests will be sent to 25 partnering churches in McDowell County who will immediately send those requests to prayer warriors in their churches who will pray for them. The effect is knowing that your prayer request is covered daily by hundreds of people across McDowell County. 659-PRAY will begin on September 1. Between now and then, please ask your pastor if your church is involved. If not, encourage your leaders to reach out and get on board. For more information, please call Robin at (828) 724-9599. - Contact: Chris Allison Cell Phone: 828-559-7312 E-Mail: chris@rocketsleddesign.com

Ecuador Mission Trip

We will be taking a group to Ecuador in June of 2018 to help with construction, medical assessments and support for women and children. The cost is \$1500 (more info to come). If you are interested email: robin@graceforall.org

Mitchell County

All Saints of America Orthodox—

On Saturdays beginning in June, All Saints of America Orthodox Mission will be having Divine Liturgy at the meeting hall located at Trinity Episcopal Church, 15 Hemlock Ave, Spruce Pine, NC 28777. The Liturgy will be served weekly on Saturdays at 11:00 AM. Fr. Steven Webb, the priest appointed to serve the new mission, will be officiating. While All Saints of America Orthodox Mission is a part of the Russian Orthodox Church, all services are performed in the English language.

Bear Creek Baptist Church-Ledger

Celebrate Recovery

This is a Christ and Biblical Based Program, giving hope and help for men, women and families suffering from addiction. Any questions contact Josh Wise @ 385-0061

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

Calvary Chapel Asheville - Spruce Pine

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

Support Group For Caregivers Of Those With Memory Loss

To Hold Meetings The First Friday Of Each Month From 1-3PM

Care & Share, a newly-formed support group for caregivers of loved ones who have memory loss, will hold monthly meetings at the offices of Hospice & Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, 236 Hospital Dr. in Spruce Pine, from 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. High Country Caregiver Foundation welcomes and encourages all caregivers to attend.

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

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

Mitchell County Baptist Association

Mitchell Association has volunteered to be a drop-off point for churches to bring in their old material, bibles and literature to be used by the organization "Love Packages." This material will be picked up on a regular basis.

For more information on this organization, please go to lovepackages.org. Their purpose from the beginning has been to equip and strengthen the Church overseas. They are enabling missionaries and workers around the world to reach the lost, plant churches, train leaders, disciple believers and serve the poor. The office has a list of what can be used.

Good News Clubs—Our Good News Clubs are going strong in Deyton Elementary in Spruce Pine and Gouge Elementary in Bakersville. At Deyton, 8 teachers and 34 students are enrolled. Four students have been gloriously saved. At Gouge, 6 teachers and 14 students are enrolled. We are in the process of starting a Good News Club at another school in January. Requests continue to be finances to continue this ministry, volunteers that are willing to train and teach, and that each child involved will hear and understand the Gospel.

Mitchell County Chamber

Spruce Pine Farmer's Market Finds New Home

We have a new winter location for the market!!

We will be at the community room of Spruce Pine Main Street at 167 Locust street. We will be inside from 12-4pm on January 6th. This will be our winter location the 1st Saturday of the month from January till April. Come shop local with us.

Job Opening

Penland is hiring a Director of Operations!

The Director of Operations is a central management position that will work closely with new director Mia Hall and Penland's talented staff to ensure the smooth communications and day-to-day operation of the school.

Applications will be reviewed starting January 16. Please share this post with anyone who might be a good fit for this leadership role in our community.

Tipton Hill Community Foundation (Tipton Hill) –

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

Women's Prayer Breakfast-

If you would like to join a group of women who are dedicated to praying, learning about God's will, and fellowshiping, come join us for breakfast at DT's in Spruce Pine. We will be ending by 10:00am. Open to all-for more information call Barbara Harrell at 828-467-3644 or email at barbarah@brcnews.com. January meeting is on the 12th.

Yancey County

Task Force for Substance Abuse-

Good morning Task Force members! Hope you all are doing well and looking forward to the holidays!

This is a reminder of our next Task Force meeting which is January 9th at noon in the Yancey County Library. Please mark your calendars now before the holidays!

Thank you and I hope to see you in the New Year!

Yancey County Meals on Wheels (Burnsville) –

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

Mayland Community College

GROW Your Farm Business!

Sign up today for one or all of these area focused agribusiness and farming classes:

- How to Make Money Selling at a Farmer's Market 1/22
- Farm Business Checklist 1/29
- Growing and Selling Mountain Medicinals 2/5
- Farm Resources You Should Know 2/12
- How to be Profitable in the Livestock Business 2/19
- Farm Business Mindset 2/26

These FREE classes will be held at the Mayland Spruce Pine Campus starting Monday, 1/22/2018 and will go from 6-8pm. Sponsored by the NC Cooperative Extension and Mayland Community College Small Business Center. For more information or to register call Allen Cook at (828) 766-1295.

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As part of our spreading "Good News", we have provided these pages for information for your organization or church that would be of interest to the public. I send out reminders in a group email to remind those of you who have requested it, or used this service regularly. If you wish to be added to the email please email me at barbarah@brcnews.com. One of the things any of you using this service needs to remember is that we publish only once a month and the info has to be submitted a month ahead. When sending info please send to my email: barbarah@brcnews.com.

A great way to get your meeting dates, events, and other info to the public.

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Success of 2017

By David Burleson
Burke County



The holidays are a very special time for everyone at Burke United Christian Ministries (BUCM). With the help of our wonderful community and some very special elves, our ministry was blessed to distribute over 150 Senior Santa bags and treat bags for some very special individuals. BUCM also had the privilege of hosting an Evening with Santa and a Polar Express night especially for our children. A big thank you for everyone involved, especially Terri, Chef Carl, our staff and all of our soup kitchen teams.

BUCM is truly blessed to have the greatest volunteers ever. Our soup kitchen teams prepare home cooked meals every day, our food harvesters collect food from our sponsoring grocery stores and restaurants, our pantry workers assist our clients when they shop and then stock the shelves, the clothing store volunteers help sort, price stock and sell clothes and our clothing closet volunteers help stock the closet and assist clients and the homeless with their shopping. The majority of our volunteers work approximately four hours per week. I would encourage anyone who has a little time to assist others, consider coming by BUCM and talk with our volunteer coordinator, Elizabeth Norris or me about the many opportunities that are available. Just email us at bucmdirector@gmail.com, call (828) 433-8075 or come by and visit. We truly believe that "Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation's compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain loving one another." - Erma Bombeck

Looking back, 2017 has been a truly outstanding year at BUCM. With the support of our sustaining churches, community donors, volunteers and staff the needs of many have been met. Almost 63,000 meals were served in the soup kitchen, about 700,000 lbs. of food was distributed in our food pantry and over 100,000 in our mobile pantries, over 1,000 clients were assisted in our clothing closet and over 9,000 clients were provided with some type of crisis assistance. Also, the many food and clothing drives in 2017 have been instrumental in allowing us to minister to our clients. A big thanks to schools, clubs, churches, businesses, and others that assisted with these drives. With the support of the HOWI (Homeless Outreach Warming Initiative) committee, assistance was provided to over 270 homeless clients. From clothes to showers, food to encouragement, we take very seriously our ministry to the homeless of Burke County.

The successes of 2017 have motivated BUCM to expand our ministry for 2018. The need for education advancement is a need for many we work with at BUCM. Because of a very generous donation from the employees of James Tool and principal owner, Jeff Toner, a computer lab and education resource room will be established at the Burke Mission Station. The Mull Foundation has also provided funding for technology upgrades. With this new computer lab and the support of Western Piedmont Community College, the Burke United Christian Ministries will be offering GED and ESL classes for anyone in our community who need them. Our vision for the future for the computer lab will be to also offer evening and summer tutoring for our younger clients, provide clients the opportunity to take online college classes, provide job skills training and budgeting classes, and provide clients access to job vacancies. By working closely with the Community Foundation of Burke County, cooking classes, nutrition classes and food preservation classes will be offered. We have been able to purchase a pickup truck with a grant from the Huffman-Cornwell Foundation to harvest fresh produce that will be used in the food classes. BUCM truly believes that education is the key to enhancing the quality of life for our clients.

The Burke United Christian Ministries' facility will also be getting a facelift in 2018. With funding from the Community Foundation of Burke County and the Rostan Foundation, an awning has been placed at the food pantry to allow clients to move food to their vehicles out of inclement weather. Changes are also being planned to expand the food pantry and create a new welcome center. With a grant from the Cannon Foundation, the plan is to move our pantry to the old clothes sorting area and convert the current pantry into a welcome center and meeting space for agencies to use to meet with clients. The Cannon Grant also provides funding to upgrade our soup kitchen in order to better serve our clients.

These upgrades and enhancements provided by our community will be instrumental in supporting those we serve into the future. With continued support, encouragement and prayers of the supporters of BUCM the future looks very bright. My God richly bless you in this new year.

David Burleson is Director of Burke United Christian Ministries



Enjoying Everyday Life

Living Amazed by God Every Day

By Joyce Meyer

I used to be one of the most negative people I knew. My motto was, "If I don't expect anything good to happen, then I won't be disappointed when it doesn't."

However, God's way of seeing things is just the opposite! He wants us to live our lives filled with hope, expecting Him to do something great at any moment.

What is hope? One definition of hope is "a favorable and confident expectation."

It's a positive attitude and the happy anticipation that something good is going to happen.

Real hope is not a wishy-washy, vague "let's just wait and see what happens" attitude, but it's believing and trusting that what God promised, He will do. God is just looking for opportunities to be good to His children and He wants us to expect and look forward to it!

The Bible says that hope is the anchor of our soul (see Hebrews 6:19). When things look dark and we don't have an answer, that's when hope kicks in to remind us that our new beginning is right around the corner.

For instance, when it looks like everybody else is getting blessed and we're tired and feel like giving up, it's hope that steadies our heart and helps us hold on to our faith in God's promise.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, hope is described as a helmet. So, what we think must be pretty important. Our attitude and what we're expecting has everything to do with what we're thinking and saying!

I encourage you to take control of your thoughts and words first thing every morning. When you wake up in the morning, don't settle for thoughts like, Well, I guess I'll try to make it through another day.

Instead, anticipate good things from God. Think and declare things like:

"God, thank You for this day! I know that You love me and You have a good plan for me today. Apart from You, I can do nothing, but in Christ, I can do whatever I need to do. And with Your help, I am going to have a good attitude and positive thoughts."

Then expect your breakthrough and new beginning. Say, "Today could be the day!"

It's important to realize that we can't live by how we feel if we want to have a positive, hope-filled life. When negative feelings come, if we don't give in to them and feed them, they will die.

So, don't allow yourself to get caught in the trap of waiting to feel hopeful, but instead, decide to be full of hope. When you make a conscious decision to think positive, faith-filled thoughts throughout the day, your feelings will eventually catch up with your decision!

God's Just Waiting to Amaze You

Several years ago, I asked the Lord, "Why don't I have exciting, special things happen in my life anymore?"

God spoke to my heart and said, "Joyce, I still do those things all the time. You have just gotten used to it."

You see, God wants us to live amazed by His goodness in our lives...to actively take notice of the truly wonderful things He does for us. Why? Because when we live amazed, we will never be without hope! Let's look at the story of Abraham...

God had blessed Abraham abundantly. However, there was one thing that he and his wife, Sarah, didn't have—a child. Abraham said, "...Lord God, what reward will You give me, since I am [leaving this world] childless...?"

"And the Lord brought Abram outside [his tent into the night] and said, 'Look now toward the heavens and count the stars—if you are able to count them. Then He said to him, 'So [numerous] shall your descendants be'" (Genesis 15:2, 5 AMP).

Although Abraham's circumstances looked hopeless, the Lord brought him out of his tent to amaze him and remind him that He can do the impossible.

I believe we can spend too much time "in our tent," looking at our own problems. That's why the Bible says to look away from all that will distract unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (see Hebrews 12:2).

Every time we decide to pray, read God's Word or simply dwell on the great things He has done for us in the past, it produces hope. And, like Abraham, we soon begin thinking, Wow, maybe He can do this for me!

When times are tough and you feel discouraged, it's time to step outside the tent and see what God has to say. When you do, you'll find that He is just waiting to amaze you.

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

Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Isaiah 43:18-19



Charis Children's Foundation (CCF)

Updates

John and Steph Limongello
Mitchell and Yancey County

Since God laid it on the hearts of Founders John and Stephynia Limongello to abide by His command to care



for the orphans by beginning a children's foster community, much has happened. My wife and I know our vision is very big but we have a mighty big God which gives us the strength and ability to press forward. We continue to be excited and in awe of God as we can see God bringing the right people at the right time to us. We can see His fingerprints in this as the framework for the Charis Children's Foundation is being built.

Updates:

- CCF has obtained 501c3 approval this past November by the IRs in only 10 business days.
- The house we are donating for CCF to use has been vacated by tenant and bids are being obtained for the needed renovations.
- An anonymous donor provided the fee to obtain a survey of the CCF property.
- We have been blessed by a business donating all of our printed materials up to this point.
- An extremely talented business person has donated their time in devising a business plan with us.
- CCF held a meet and greet at the Bridge church in Spruce Pine this past November. Our first opportunity to meet the community in person and share our vision. The meet and greet was recorded and is viewable on our Facebook page.
- We have had preliminary meetings with possible funding sources for the clinic which is the first phase of our vision.
- CCF had the opportunity to join with a local church and aid a new family in need. Helping families stay together has been part of our vision from the beginning and the foundation of family restoration services has been set.

Currently we have begun a Respite Care Program for foster parents. Volunteers are needed! People who have a heart to spend time with foster children 3-8 hours are needed. This will allow foster parents a much needed rest. Volunteers must complete approx. 8 hour training and be able to pass background/drug tests etc.

This coming January: We are having a catered fundraiser January 27, 2018 at the Burnsville Town Center from 6-8PM. Advance tickets are needed, \$20.00 per person, please call John 828-467-5485 to reserve tickets. This is a catered, event with a mini concert, a chance to meet our board, hear our vision and learn how you can partner with CCF. We are asking for businesses and individuals to consider sponsoring the January fundraiser event.

Your support is needed to aid this vision in coming to fruition. I would like to ask you to please consider partnering with us.

Founders John and Stephynia Limongello can be contacted at 828-467-5485, charischildrensfoundation@gmail.com, Facebook- Charis Children's Foundation and <https://www.gofundme.com/charischildrensfoundation>



John and Stephynia Limongello reside in Burnsville, NC. They were married in 2009 and have two beautiful young boys, John David and Daniel. John was raised in New Jersey. He has earned his Bachelor's and Master's in Social Work. Stephynia was raised in Yancey County, NC and works as a Nurse Practitioner. They attend the Bridge Church of WNC. View our video and donate at <https://www.gofundme.com/charischildrensfoundation>. Contact at charischildrensfoundation@gmail.com. Facebook: Charis Children's Foundation and The Charis Project: Live It Out. Call 828-467-5485 for more information.

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US House of Representatives NC District 11



Congressman
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Bill to Combat Opioid Crisis

My office introduced a bill recently that we've been working on for months: The Opioid Abuse Deterrence, Research, and Recovery Act, a bill to combat the rapidly spreading opioid crisis in America.

The opioid crisis has rocked the United States since the 1990's. In that time, it's become widely referred to as an epidemic—or a rapid acceleration of prescription and non-prescription drug abuse. It's an issue that's been felt heavily right at home in our state—4 of the top 20 cities in America suffering from opioid abuse are in North Carolina, including the number 1 city, Wilmington. Over 12,000 North Carolinians have died as a result of the epidemic since 1996.

Law enforcement officials, physicians, and treatment centers across the country have done an admirable job attempting to contain the problem, but the epidemic has left communities overwhelmed as they try to address the root causes and help rehabilitate those suffering from its damage.

This crisis has got to end—and I believe Congress has an opportunity to lead by helping establish standards that benefit doctors, patients, and treatment centers alike. We can beat this together.

I want to thank my colleague Jim Renacci (R-OH), the lead cosponsor on this bill, for his efforts as well. I'm grateful we could introduce this bill to begin a process of seriously addressing this crisis that has impacted so many.

Christmas came to Team Meadows' Office

We kicked off preparations for the 2017 Christmas Season in Team Meadows' office! I'm grateful for the work of my staff who loaded Christmas trees for the "Trees for Troops" event with the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association. The trees went to military service members in Fort Benning, Georgia. Merry Christmas to all of our faithful servicemen and women around the country and the globe!

Additionally, I want to thank two of the best in the business—Rodney Buchanan, owner of Buck's Tree Farm in Mitchell County, and Jennifer Greene, Executive Director of the NC Christmas Tree Association—for delivering a Christmas tree to my Hendersonville office! They are always so gracious every year and we appreciate their friendship and service to our community.



The House and Senate have both taken huge steps forward in our years-long effort to reform our nation's tax code, and the Senate just took another big stride. We are about to finally unleash the American economy by putting more money back in the hands of the hard-working Americans who earned it.

The merits of this bill have been well-covered: it simplifies the code for the vast majority of Americans by doubling the standard deduction and reduces rates on all Americans while keeping popular deductions for mortgage interest, student loans and charitable giving. Under the Senate bill, a family of four making the median family income will save roughly \$2,200 in taxes. And, despite what you may hear, this has been an open process from the start.

This is an historic opportunity to reform a broken tax code that hasn't worked for the people of this country in years. We have a responsibility to do what you, the voters, sent us to Washington to do: make changes to our government so that your taxes are lower. We can do that by simplifying our incredibly complex tax system, making sure businesses hire and keep workers here in America, and trusting the American citizen with their own money. Another step closer to the President's desk.

This week, Congress has continued moving forward on tax reform. Both the House and the Senate voted to go to a Conference Committee to reconcile the differences in the bills each chamber passed. Once that process is complete, each chamber will vote to finally bring tax relief to the millions of Americans who need it.

I will keep working to ensure that our new tax code will be simpler and fairer. I'm confident my colleagues on the Conference Committee will produce a final reform bill that will unleash our economy and get Americans back to work again.

As the Conference Committee completes its work, I will also remain focused on completing the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence investigation into Russia's meddling in the 2016 elections. I've said it before – we will finish our work once we've exhausted the list of people we need to talk to. Our committee is dedicated to getting this right and sharing as much as we can with the American people.

NC Senate District 47

According to a recent Forbes ranking, North Carolina is the Best State for Business in the country. This is welcome but not unexpected news. Over these past several years, Republicans in Raleigh have pursued regulatory and tax reforms and a controlled and responsible budget which have brought us to this very sweet spot for recruiting and keeping industries in North Carolina. This translates to higher levels of employment, better jobs, and increased revenue for our state.

As good as this news is, I think we can do even better by reducing occupational licensing requirements, which create barriers to work. Our state's burdensome licensing requirements create a negative financial effect that disproportionately impacts those who need jobs the most. A white paper published by the Foundation for Government Accountability in October, *How Occupational Licensing Inhibits Economic Opportunity*, found, not surprisingly, that lower-income individuals, young workers, military families, those with criminal records, and would-be entrepreneurs are most negatively impacted by burdensome licensing requirements.

Another white paper, *Right to Work*, published in November by the Institute of Justice, ranked each state in three criteria: number of lower-income occupations requiring licensing, most burdensome licensing laws, and the degree of burden imposed by licensing laws. Our state licenses 67 of 102 lower-income occupations, more than the majority of other states. We rank 41st in most burdensome licensing laws and 17th as the most broadly and onerously licensed state. Opticians, for example, are required to have 912 days of combined education and training, much greater than the average of 714 days for the 21 other states that require licensing for opticians. Some occupations in our state have heavier licensing requirements than occupations which are linked, to a greater degree, to public health and safety. For instance, a barber license requires 722 days of education and experience, while an EMT only needs 43 days of education and experience.

Citizens of our state should have the right to work in their chosen occupations without burdensome requirements and expense. Often, they do not have the financial resources or time required to fulfill extensive licensing requirements. I would like to see my constituents, and citizens across our state, pursue the occupations they choose without the expense and burdensome constraints of many unnecessary licensing requirements. Safety and consumer interest cannot be ignored, but there are many alternatives to licensing, such as workplace inspections and voluntary certifications, to name a few. I will support legislation that reduces or eliminates burdensome licensing requirements for many occupations. And our state will become an even better place to live and do business!

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



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



15 Comforting Bible Verses

From: Billy Graham

There are so many terrible things occupying the headlines these days, it can be hard to wrap your head around them. When will the madness end?

The people who lived in Bible times were no strangers to atrocity. But many were also well acquainted with the character of God—a loving, protecting Father quick to console His people. He comforted them then and comforts us now.

Take a few moments to soak in these passages of Scripture and let them sustain you in the days ahead.



- "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"*
—Psalm 27:1
- "It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."*
—Deuteronomy 31:8
- "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."*
—Psalm 23:4
- "He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety."*
—Job 5:11
- "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."*
—Lamentations 3:22-23
- "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."*
—John 14:27
- "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*
—Psalm 46:1
- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort."*
—2 Corinthians 1:3
- "Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant."*
—Psalm 119:76
- "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*
—John 16:33
- "If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you."*
—Psalm 139:11-12
- "Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted."*
—Isaiah 49:13
- "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."*
—Matthew 5:4
- "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved."*
—Psalm 55:22
- "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*
—Romans 8:37-39
- Do you have the complete comfort that comes only from knowing Jesus Christ? Begin your life with Him today.



TRAC

Announcements

By Kate Groff
Mitchell and Yancey Counties



COMMUNITY CHOIR

The community choir will begin rehearsals on Tuesday, Jan 9 at 6:30 pm at the First Baptist Church on the Burnsville Square. All singers are welcome to attend in preparation for the March 27 performance of the Easter portion of Handel's Messiah. Rebecca May will lead rehearsals. Group meets each Tuesday until



performance.
(Exceptions: Jan 16 and for bad weather).
\$10 donation by singers will help offset the additional costs. No need to call, just come to the first rehearsal and sign up.

ART CONTEST CAROLINA MOUNTAINS LITERARY FESTIVAL

13th Annual Carolina Mountains Literary Festival is looking for original artwork to use as the image on all publicity for the Festival on Sept 6,7,8, Burnsville. Artists of all ages may create and submit a hi-res photo or a hi-res photo of a painting, drawing, sculpture, collage, computer generated or art in any medium. The art must be attention grabbing and fit this year's theme:
SURFACE AND RISE
For more info, go to the website. Deadline Feb 1.

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



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Plumtree Team Goes to Uganda

By Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
Avery County

I was lying in bed one morning in early October and God spoke to me. He said, "I want you to go to Uganda before the end of this year." The next morning, I heard God say it again, "I want you to go to Uganda before the end of this year." I had in mind to ask two of my friends from church to go with me. I checked the cost of the flights and it was around \$1000 each. Immediately after this I checked my email and someone had made an online donation to our church for \$3000 and labeled it "missions". That was the confirmation I needed.

On Monday, November 27th David Mark Gillespie, John Stevenson and I went on a wild adventure to Uganda, Africa. We landed in Entebbe at 10:20 pm Tuesday, (they are 8 hours ahead of us) and met up with the local pastors at the airport. We prayed together in the parking lot, thanking God for a successful journey there and requesting success for our upcoming ministry adventures.

We arrived at the Vinetea Hotel in Kampala close to 1 am. The rooms were nice with running water, showers, electricity, AC and WIFI. The hotel had a connected restaurant where we could order anything we liked.

Wednesday morning we meet up with Pastor David and crew shortly after 9 am. We drove through town and exchanged money at the bank and made a few other stops for supplies. It was a three-hour drive but with the traffic and road conditions, we probably averaged 35 miles an hour.

We arrived in Gomba around 1:30 pm. They were so excited to see us. For many of them, it was their first time seeing a white man. We got out of the van and went right into the meeting. They introduced our team and we shared a little about our journey. Then we had a break for lunch.

After lunch, I spoke on the 5 step prayer model for healing. It went well, but with no microphone, it was a little challenging. Around 20 people were healed.

After the meeting, we went to a nearby guesthouse. This one was not as nice. The toilet was a squatty potty with no running water or shower. The smell coming from the toilet was very bad. I kept my bathroom door shut all night.

Thursday morning we had breakfast at Pastor Thomas' house around 9 AM. He lived in a small home with a metal roof with one small solar panel on top. They had no electricity or running water. But they made us feel right at home.

After breakfast, we went to deliver food and supplies (rice, beans, sugar, soap) to five very poor widows. We prayed for each one as they had a need.

The most notable miracle we saw that morning was George, whom we met along the way. George used to have a good job working in town. But a witchdoctor placed a curse on him and he lost his mind. When his father introduced us to him he said that he was a madman. We prayed for George and God quickly restored him. He started speaking to us right away. We asked him if he had any pain in his body and he had pain in his chest and shoulder. God healed that as well. His father (a Muslim) was shocked and said, "What is George doing speaking to these white men. He hasn't spoken for over 6 years". George then told us that he wanted to receive Christ as his personal savior. We led him to the Lord and he followed us to church.

We went on to the next home and there prayed for a sweet widow who lived in a grass hut. She really appreciated our gifts and prayers and she blessed us with a big stalk of bananas and some beans. I think she gave us more than we gave her.

Our security guard Emanuel noticed all of these miracles we were seeing and asked for us to pray for him. He was having trouble with his vision. He knew English pretty well. I teased him saying, "You mean to tell me you are carrying around an AK47 and you have bad eyesight?" He laughed and said, "Yes". His eyes were blurry and would sometimes water when he would read. We prayed for Emanuel's eyes and God quickly healed him. John handed him Randy Clark's book, There is More and he randomly selected a page to read. To our amazement, the paragraph he read was about a man's eyes being healed. Then Emanuel told us that he wanted to receive Christ as his savior. His wife had been praying for years for him to get saved. But he was often hostile to her requests for salvation. He told us, that his wife was going to be so happy. Emanuel didn't own a Bible so John gave him his. This was all before church started.

On the way back to the church David Mark carried the bananas on his head like a native. An elderly man stopped him along the path saying that in all his life he had never seen a white man carrying bananas on his head. We got to the church around 11 am and worship had already begun. That



morning we had seen 5 healings and 2 salvations all before church even started. As I glanced around the church I saw George sitting there in his right mind in the service. I couldn't help but pause and thank God for this miracle.

Pastor David was so moved by George's miracle that he took off his shoes and gave them to him. Pastor David stood there on a dirt floor church in his socks because he had literally given the shoes right off of his feet. He then told George to go to his suitcase and pick out any outfit that he wanted. George did and came back looking sharp. Pastor Jonah took off his suit jacket and gave it to George as well. I was overwhelmed by this display of generosity among such poverty. Then to top it off they took up an offering for him. People gave George corn, potatoes and money.

After worship, I shared on Words of Knowledge for healing. Several more were healed.

On Friday we left around 6 am. After a short distance, we stopped at a large outdoor market. People were selling fruit, vegetables etc. We bought some sweet apple bananas which were very good.

Along the trip, we crossed the Nile River on a ferry. We had to get out and pay to cross. They gave us pieces from a cardboard box for tickets for the ride.

We arrived in the Eastern Region of Buyende around noon. When we pulled up to the church everyone began to shout. The service began, after praise and worship, I shared the 5-step prayer model for healing. It went really well. There were many healings. I asked people to come forward and share testimonies about what God had done for them. Everyone was so excited.

After this, we went back to the guest house for lunch and a break. The guesthouse didn't have running water, showers, toilets, electricity, appliances, etc. We set up our room, and had a rest until the evening crusade at 6 pm.

At the crusade, the people and especially the children were staring at us like we were aliens. Many of them had never seen a white man. I shared from Luke 15 about the loving Father willing to take back His prodigal son. We then had an altar call for salvation and healing. Many responded and were saved and healed. After the service, they watched the Jesus movie on a bed sheet screen. They were so excited. For many, it was their first movie ever.

Saturday we left for the morning conference at Pastor Peter's church. On the way, we stopped by and prayed for Pastor Peter's mother. She was 81 years old. She had pain in her thigh. We prayed for her and the pain totally left. She was shocked and very happy that the pain was gone.

There were a lot of children outside. We noticed a girl (named Rose) there with a shriveled hand. Her arm seemed paralyzed from the shoulder down. We prayed for her arm but nothing noticeable happened. We were then informed that she was deaf. We prayed for her and both of her ears opened. She was hearing everything we said. In a short time, she was repeating our sounds and saying, "mama". It was beautiful.

We arrived at church for the conference and worship was great. I shared on Words of Knowledge for healing. I asked does anyone here have stomach pain? Many people put up their hands. I prayed a quick prayer and 20 people were instantly healed. It was awesome! What an amazing sermon demonstration.

I had asked David Mark and John to ask God for words of knowledge (WOK) and they had some. Everyone they prayed for was healed. Others shared WOK as well. Some WOK were for emotional healing. As far as I know, all who responded to the WOK and received prayer were healed. We prayed for many others and they were healed too. The service concluded and we went back to the guest house for lunch.

After lunch, we tried to rest but it was so hot and humid, it was a struggle. We didn't have a fan so we used baby wipes on our skin to help cool off.

Around 5:30 pm we left for the crusade. When we arrived the place was already booming with excitement. The worship had begun and it seemed like everyone was dancing. It was the largest crowd so far probably 2000-3000, maybe more.

I shared my message called Face to Face with God encouraging people to draw close to God. After the message, many responded to the altar call for healing and salvation. John and David prayed with many people and saw great miracles. After the service, they had another film to show them.

Sunday morning David Mark shared at one church, John shared at another church and I shared at Pastor Peter's church where the conference was held. This was probably my favorite time sharing. It flowed so well. The people were really getting it. As I proceeded with the message I could feel the weight of His glory resting on the people as they began to understand the gospel. I saw tears running down faces all across the sanctuary. They spontaneously started praising God for

continued on page 35



His mercy and grace.

After we prayed for healing we heard many testimonies. One young lady shared how she had walked 50 miles (one way) with a bad back to attend the conference and crusade. She was very hungry for more of God. She told us how God had touched her and she was now healed. One after another, shared how God had touched them; backs, necks, knees, headaches, stomach pain, wrist pain, shoulder pain, etc. healed in Jesus' name.

That afternoon the local pastors baptized around 250 new converts at the lake. They each received their own baptism certificates by the end of the night.

After lunch, we tried to take a nap but this was the hottest day yet. We laid there and eventually gave up. We took three chairs and sat outside under the mango tree. The children from across the road started working their way closer. David Mark climbed up the tree and then swung down and scared them. It was really funny. We showed them how to do the bottle flip game. Then David Mark showed them how to do cartwheels, flips and how to walk on their hands. They all were eager to try something new.

Then we ventured out for the final night of the crusade. What a powerful time we had. John and David Mark prayed for many for healing while I shared the message. At least 50 more received Christ that night and many others were healed.

On Monday around 10:30 am we left to go fishing. It was an amazing experience. We rented canoe type boats that leaked and we used bamboo for our fishing poles. They took us out in groups of 3, roughly 200 feet from shore. We paddled out to a big rock and fished. The biggest one we caught was around 2 inches. But it was still fun and the scenery was beautiful.

After the tour of the River Nile we ventured back to Kampala to spend the night at our hotel. We were looking forward to this as we had not had a shower for 3 days and the hotel had AC. After a long, hot, dusty, bumpy ride, with crazy traffic we arrived around 10 pm.

On Tuesday we had a meeting with local pastors, went to the zoo and then on to the airport to begin our long trip home.

On this short trip we saw God heal many, many people, we also witnessed over 300 people get saved in five days. To God be the glory great things He has done!

Ryan Bridgeo can be reached at 828-765-6919. For more information you can visit the church website at www.plumtreechurch.com or email pastor@plumtreechurch.com

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: Deuteronomy 28:1-68



**Happy New Year
from the Staff
of Blue Ridge
Christian News**



whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). That is what the incarnation means. God did something about our plight. He did not turn His back upon us in our time of need. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

Even if you never have received Christ as your Savior, you have demonstrated the fact of the incarnation every day that you have lived. Whenever you date a letter, you are witnessing to the fact that some 2,000 years ago, God invaded human history to reconcile the world unto Himself. The fact that Jesus came is written in history, it is written on the calendar, it is written in the Bible and it is written on your conscience. You cannot escape it!

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14)—and He knows that you know He came. Don't you see that you are without excuse? God has done so much for your redemption—and may I ask you this: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

And third, let us consider the experiential fact of the incarnation. The incarnation can be experienced. The greatest proof that Christ once lived in history is the fact that He lives today in men and women's lives. Every born-again person can say with Paul, *"Last of all He was seen by me also"* (1 Corinthians 15:8). He not only lived, but He still lives, and will continue to live forever and ever.

Every time a person receives Christ as Savior, God in the person of the Holy Spirit takes up residence in his or her heart.

The age-old issue, "Can a person save himself, or does he need God?" is still raging as furiously as ever. As long as the world goes on, people will build towers of Babel, fashion their graven images and invent their own ideologies. Now, as in every period of history, there are people and nations who think they can manage without God.

Economically they may manage, intellectually they may manage and socially they may get by. But down underneath the surface is a vacuum—a void that can be filled only by Jesus Christ.

From Paul on down through history, sane, gifted and rational men and women have found Christ to be the answer to their spiritual and moral problems. They are the happiest, the best-adjusted people in the world. Composers, writers, leaders of government, leaders from the entertainment world, engineers, businesspeople, salespeople, grocery employees, tradespeople and common laborers—men and women from every walk of life are able to say with one accord, *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV). And what He did for them, He can do for you.

Christ not only lived in the flesh, but He can live in you. He can be incarnate in your heart. Right now, where you are, you can receive Christ into your heart and experience the incarnation of God in the human soul. You can have Christ living in you—*"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27).

The most astounding fact of all history—the most astounding fact of all ages—is that the great and almighty God of Heaven can live in your heart. It makes no difference who you are. Your life can be changed if you will humble yourself and let Christ take up residence in your heart. And you will be a "new creation!"

You say, "How can that be? How can I get God to live in my heart and fill the aching void of my life?" Simply and sincerely do this right now: Turn from your sins. Tell God, "I am a sinner. I turn from my sins—I give them up. I turn to Jesus Christ by faith." You can do that now wherever you are. ©1956 BGEA

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version. Sermon Taken from the Oct. 14, 1956 Hour of Decision broadcast.

Are you ready to turn to Christ?



A Fresh Start

By Pastor Dan Qurollo
Burke County

As we begin yet another new year, it is hard for me to believe that the previous year passed so quickly. It seems as though it was just yesterday when we welcomed in 2017. Now, one year later, we welcome in 2018.

Often, much time is spent on looking back over the previous year. Sports shows look back over the previous year and try to identify the top ten plays of the year. Various news agencies look back over the year and attempt to identify the top stories of 2017. To an extent, it is always wise to look back over the past year and analyze things. We cannot allow the past to defeat us, nor can we remain in the past. But looking back to identify areas of improvement can be a good thing.

For each of us, this month represents a fresh start. Another page in the calendar of life has been turned over. The past year is exactly that: the past. It is incapable of being altered; deeds are incapable of being undone.

In light of that reality, determine today what you would like this year to be for God. Do not live in the past defeat of 2017; press on to achieve victory in the pages of your life that have not been written. Determine to spend time with God. This time with God cannot any longer be viewed as optional; it must be viewed as essential. Your time with God must be an emergency which absolutely nothing can change. Determine to be consistent in church. Membership in a church and consistent attendance is absolutely vital to our growth collectively. Determine to serve God each day. Look for those who are in need. I can assure there is no shortage of people who are in need. Find a place in church where you can serve, and be faithful in that area. You may not feel it is significant, but if it is what God desires, be faithful. It's all He demands.

2018 has yet to be written. Fill in the pages of your life wisely.

Pastor Dan Qurollo is pastor Morganton Baptist Church. Check us out on our website www.morgantonbaptist.net or find us on Facebook and YouTube.



Darkness for Light

By Jason Koon
Burke County

January is the month when we observe National Sanctity of Life Sunday, a day in which many churches deal with the topic of Abortion. Honestly, I've struggled with thinking about how to address this problem, because it is an issue that has been co-opted and politicized by both political parties in recent years. However, as I think and pray through this topic, I realize that at its core, this is not a political issue, it's about the forty-two million unborn children every year who are being denied their most basic human right. The right to exist. It's about the fact that in the last generation there are almost 100 million little girls around the world who never saw the light of day, simply because they were little girls and not little boys.

Most of us would agree that this is tragic, but abortion is just one part of the Sanctity of Life issue. Sanctity of life is also about the 5 million children worldwide who are trapped in the Global slave trade and the millions of little girls who are being denied basic education rights. It's about tens of thousands of Christian's dying every year for their faith and millions of Children who live every day under the shadow of impending starvation. It's about children with disabilities in India who are being abandoned by their families and left to die in the streets; it's about widows in Islamic nations who are being denied the right to own property and raise their own children. Sanctity of Life is about orphans, abuse, clean water and much more because Scripture tells us that none of this is acceptable in God's coming Kingdom, and if it's not acceptable in God's coming Kingdom; it's not acceptable now.

Throughout Scripture, there is a theme that every human is created by God, in His image, with inherent dignity and worth. As believers, we have a responsibility to defend that image wherever we see it. We are called to speak into these issues; to be informed, to pray, give, and to help wherever we are able; not necessarily to win a political debate, but to speak the life of the Gospel into the darkness of the fallen world in which we live.

Deep down, we all instinctively know this; try to explain the abortion issue to a group of children and see how many take a pro-choice position. It's wrong. We know it's wrong, but just like the people Isaiah writes about in Isaiah 5:20-23, we call darkness, light. We are wise in our own eyes declaring things to be good that we instinctively know are evil. We do this in every area of our lives, convincing ourselves something is understandable or ok. "It's not really that bad," we say, "It's not like I was actually lying, I mean I can't help if they got the wrong impression." We rationalize away our bad behavior all the time, and it's a very slippery slope, which Scripture tells us will end in destruction. This attitude is equally destructive whether we're talking about global humanitarian issues or the secret desires that still haunt physical bodies. At some point in our lives, all of us have been guilty of looking into a sewer and trying to believe that it's a swimming pool, but we instinctively know what's true. We know that Murder is always wrong, and protecting life is everyone's responsibility. We know that gossip always hurts, racism is always destructive, and life is precious. No matter how hard we try to talk ourselves out of it – deep down inside – we all know it's true.



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



106.9 The Light Listeners Pledge To Provide 71,391 Meals To Local Residents

By Kelly Klemmensen

Listeners of regional Christian radio station 106.9 The Light pledged enough money on Dec. 5 to provide 71,391 meals to local residents through the station's "Hope to the Hungry" campaign. For the first time, 106.9 The Light partnered with seven local rescue missions to raise money to feed the local community during this Christmas season.

The station dedicated a day to promoting the campaign at no cost to the rescue missions, reminding listeners that for just \$2 they could provide a warm, life-changing meal to someone in need. The flood of responses showed how much the community cares for its residents. One woman messaged the station and told her story. She was about to donate when she got a call from her husband. Her husband rarely listens to the radio, but he was charging his phones (what he normally listens to) so he turned on 106.9 The Light instead. Her husband felt moved to give \$500. "God works in mysterious ways," said the wife.

Listeners who donated had the choice to "give where they live," choosing a specific city to support. Every dollar donated was directly given to one of these seven rescue missions:

- Western Carolina Rescue Mission in Asheville, N.C.
- Charlotte Rescue Mission in Charlotte, N.C.
- Hendersonville Rescue Mission in Henderson, N.C.
- Safe Harbor Rescue Mission in Hickory, N.C.
- Cleveland County Rescue Mission in Shelby, N.C.
- Haywood Pathways Center in Waynesville, N.C.
- Salvation Army Shelters in Greenville, S.C.

Throughout the campaign, on-air hosts shared with listeners stories from people in need. One woman from the Charlotte Rescue Mission said, "I was living on the street... There were days I didn't eat. Sometimes there was weeks I didn't eat... When I first came in, everybody welcomes you. They say, 'welcome home.' And then you get to go and get a plate of good food and something to drink. My prayer this morning over breakfast consisted of, 'Thank you God for this food.'"

"106.9 The Light's goal for 'Hope to the Hungry' was to invite listeners to join us in an act of unconditional love for people who are too often overlooked in our communities," said Jim Kirkland, executive director of Blue

Ridge Broadcasting. "During a span of 13 hours, 1,599 individuals took us up on the invitation to provide 'Hope to the Hungry'. We're humbled. All credit goes to our Lord and the listeners who answered His prompting upon them to partner."

About 106.9 The Light:

A listener supported ministry of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, WMIT - 106.9 The Light, Black Mountain, N.C., seeks to serve its listeners with the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, through encouraging music, relevant Bible teaching and support of ministry outreach at home and abroad. 106.9 The Light has the nation's 12th largest FM radio coverage area, reaching portions of seven states including the cities of Charlotte, N.C.; Greenville-Spartanburg, S.C.; the Tri-Cities of Tenn. and Va.; and Asheville, N.C. The station is also heard in Knoxville, Tenn. on 106.7 FM and in Franklin and Cullowhee, N.C. on 101.3 FM, globally at www.1069thelight.org, via its smartphone apps for iPhones and Android, and on Amazon Echo, Tap and Google smart speakers.

Kelly is a PR Specialist at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.



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Crossword

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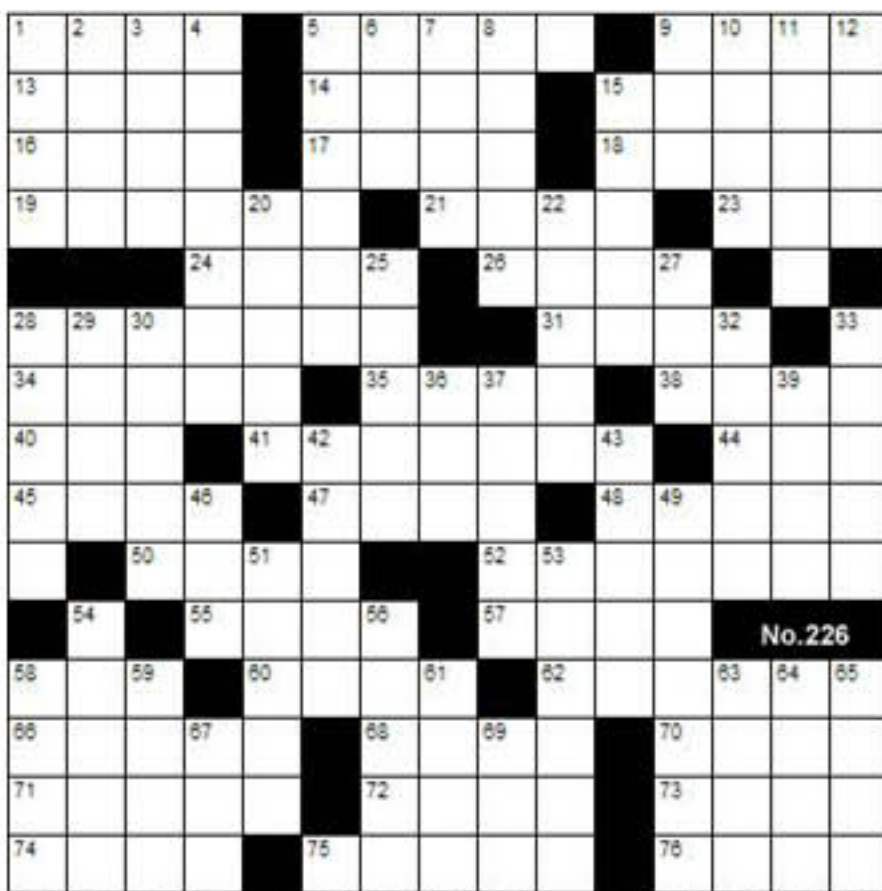
1 give attention to your servant's prayer and his ____ (IKing 8:28)
 5 a light shining in a dark place, until the day ____ (2 Peter 1:19)
 9 seedtime and harvest, and cold and ____, and summer and winter (Gen 8:22)
 13 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the ____ (Gen 48:16) KJV
 14 John to the seven churches which are in ____ (Rev 1:4)
 15 but they saw a bay with a ____ beach (Acts 27:39)
 16 also learn to maintain good works for necessary ____ (Titus 3:14)
 17 donkeys that work the soil will eat fodder and ____ (Isa 30:24)
 18 there before me was ____ standing open in heaven (1,4) (Rev 4:1)
 19 she cast the child under one of the ____ (Gen 21:15) KJV
 21 All who see me mock me; they ____ insults, shaking their heads (Ps 22:7)
 23 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will ____ God. (Matt 5:8)
 24 And these also stagger from wine and ____ from beer (Isa 28:7)
 26 Abb. for the first book of the New Testament
 28 we should live ____, righteously, and godly (Titus 2:12) KJV
 31 on the ten-stringed ____ I will make music to you (Ps 144:9)
 34 and ____ son of Jether, commander of Judah's army (IKing 2:32)
 35 a tenth of your spices mint, ____ and cummin (Matt 23:23)
 38 purple and blue and crimson ____ and fine linen (2 Chr 2:14)
 40 Were there not ____ cleansed? (Luke 17:17)
 41 he pierces my ____ and spills my gall on the ground (Job 16:13)
 44 the other holy offerings ____ they in pots (2 Chr 35:13)
 45 God will bless us, and all the ____ of the earth will fear him (Ps 67:7)
 47 I do all this for the ____ of the gospel (1 Cor 9:23)
 48 I commend unto you ____ our sister, which is a servant (Rom 16:1) (KJV)
 50 Daniel, close up and ____ the words of the scroll (Dan 12:4)
 52 She took some flour, ____ it and baked bread (1 Sam 28:24)
 55 brother of Cain (Gen 4:1-2)
 57 Go, ____ everything you have and give to the poor (Mark 10:21)
 58 Babylon is taken, ____ is confounded, Merodach is broken

(Jer 50:2)

60 Show me the coin ____ for paying the tax (Matt 22:19)
 62 Make two gold rings and ____ them to the other (Ex 28:26)
 66 Forts and towers in the wooded ____ (2 Chron 27:4)
 68 take some water from the Nile and ____ it on the dry ground (Ex 4:9)
 70 the inhabitant of this ____ shall say in that day (Isaiah 20:6)
 71 the ____ forest has been cut down (Zech 11:2)
 72 Above all ____, guard your heart (Prov 4:23)
 73 Peace, peace, to those far and ____ says the LORD (Isa 57:19)
 74 he roasts his meat and ____ his fill (Isaiah 44:16)
 75 Their bulls never fail to ____; their cows calve (Job 21:10)
 76 They ____ at me and say, "Aha! Aha!" (Ps 35:21)

DOWN

1 twenty-five shekels ____ fifteen shekels equal one mina (Ezek 45:12)
 2 The LORD Almighty will ____ them with a whip (Isa 10:26)
 3 Edom southward were Kabzeel, and ____, and Jagur (Jos 15:21)
 4 who ____ us of the regular weeks of harvest (Jer 5:24)
 5 a ____ came to hearken, named Rhoda (Acts 12:13) KJV
 6 If ye have faith ____ grain of mustard seed (2,1) (Matt 17:20) KJV
 7 Go, I ____ you well; keep warm and well fed (James 2:16)
 8 the thirty-fourth book of the Old Testament
 9 Joshua, who ____ seen all the great works of the LORD (Judg 2:7)
 10 son of Seth (Gen 4:26) KJV
 11 not a forgetful hearer, but ____ of the work (1,4) (James 1:25) KJV
 12 Jesus withdrew to the region of ____ and Sidon (Matt 15:21)
 15 if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made ____ again (Luke 14:34)
 20 Jehud, Bene ____, Gath Rimmon, (Josh 19:45)
 22 the nations will ____ to him, and his place of rest will be (Isa 11:10)
 25 Peter went to visit the saints in ____ (Acts 9:32)
 27 Test me, O LORD, and ____ me, examine my heart (Ps 26:2)
 28 He has filled me with bitter herbs and ____ me with gall (Lam 3:15)
 29 to seek an ____; He will cast lots with arrows (Ezek 21:21)
 30 received them and made them leaders of his raiding ____ (1 Chron 12:18)
 32 I mean not that other men be ____, and ye burdened (2 Cor 8:13) (KJV)



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33 How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ____ (Isa 14:4)
 36 I wrote them with ____ in the book (Jer 36:18)
 37 also the cucumbers, melons, ____, onions and garlic (Num 11:5)
 39 David was clothed with a ____ of fine linen (1 Chr 15:27)
 42 Now shall the ____ tremble in the day of thy fall (Ezek 26:18)
 43 wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and ____ (Ezek 4:9)
 46 Jesus, walking by the ____ of Galilee (Matt 4:18)
 49 All my familiars watched for my ____ (Jer 20:10) KJV
 51 whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs ____ (Prov 9:7)
 53 he ____ Damascus on his journey (Acts 9:3)
 54 the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to ____ (Acts 17:10)
 56 Jesus was in the home of a man known as Simon the ____

(Matt 26:6-7)

58 ____ them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep (Acts 18:21) KJV
 59 I have neither ____ on usury, nor men have lent to me (Jer 15:10)
 61 they will ____ out the bread by weight (Lev 26:26)
 63 there was what looked like ____ of glass (1,3) (Rev 4:6)
 64 ____ your hands, all you nations; shout to God (Ps 47:1)
 65 He is not ____; he has risen! (Luke 24:6)
 67 low tech form of Old Testament transportation
 69 they decided to ____ the money to buy the potter's field (Matt 27:6-7)

Solution on page 14

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Dear Dave,

What do you think about online investing apps, and the way they allow you to jump in and out of stocks for really low fees?

Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

I don't think about them, and I don't use them. And I don't play single stocks — period.

There's a ton of research out there showing that people who play individual stocks on their own — or with their broker, or with a golfing buddy — see a rate of return of about seven percent on average. You can make anywhere from 10 to 14 percent, on average, with good growth stock mutual funds.

I could probably play single stocks more intelligently than most people, but why? If the average is noticeably less than I'm seeing with my mutual funds, why bother going there? Plus, with a mutual fund portfolio, you've got someone who does this kind of thing for a living managing and researching your investments for you in your best interest.

I don't have an app on my phone that lets me trade stocks, nor do I plan on getting one. There's nothing wrong with apps, in general, but I'll never recommend jumping in and out of single stocks as a method of investing.

—Dave

Dear Dave,

What's the difference between a credit union and a bank?

Jake

Dear Jake,

A bank is owned by stockholders. When the bank makes a profit — and they should make a profit — the stockholders, who are owners of the company, get that profit. It can be dispersed in the form of dividends, or the value of their stock is increased. A credit union is run more like a cooperative. Technically speaking, it's operated not for profit, and the owners are the credit union members, who are also customers.

As a customer of a credit union, whatever you pay into the credit union — the "profit" — is returned to the members in the form of increased services or actual disbursements. Sometimes, you actually get a check from the credit union.

A lot of banks don't like credit unions, and say they have an unfair advantage because of their non-profit status. This really isn't true. Credit unions, with whatever "profits" are made, put that money right back into creating cheaper checking accounts, better interest rates on loans, or higher interest rates on savings.

A bank could do the same thing, if it were willing to make less profit. So, there's no disadvantage. They're just trying to keep stockholders happy and sell stuff to customers. But really, that all means nothing if you don't get good service from the organization!

—Dave

5 Money Hacks for A Happy New Year

Do you ever feel like you're in a chronic cash crunch? That can put a real damper on your days, and take the hope and expectation out of a new year.

But if money tops your list of New Year's resolutions, you're in luck! Research shows you're on the road to success. According to Fidelity Investments, 56 percent of people who resolved to improve their finances last year did just that. Better yet, 83 percent said last year's financial resolution is an ongoing event instead of a one-time goal. Who knew change could be so exciting?

Put those resolutions into action — and get a leg up on your happy New Year — with these five money hacks.

1. Use Cold, Hard Cash

Lots of folks choose plastic over cash for everyday purchases, and research shows that can lead you to spend more. Why? According to a Journal of Experimental Psychology study, parting with cash really is sweet sorrow. Plastic simply doesn't tug at your emotional strings in quite the same way.

So, put a little more pain back into your purchases. Use envelopes to divvy your dollars up across everyday budget categories. You might have one for groceries, restaurants, entertainment, clothing, and pocket money.

On payday, fill your envelopes with the cash you budgeted for each category. When an envelope's empty, the spending stops for that category until your next paycheck. It's that simple!

2. Give Impulse Buys a 30-day Notice

You went to the store for one thing, and somehow ended up with a cart full of stuff. Sound familiar? If so, join the crowd. A recent study found five in six Americans are impulse shoppers.

We all know it pays to sleep on a big money decision overnight. But what about smaller purchases that crop up throughout the month? Why not add them to your wish list and wait 30 days? That gives you a chance to work them into next month's budget. And who knows? That can't-live-without item you had your eye on just might be on sale by then.

3. Ignore Interest Rates when Paying Down Debt

Want to put a big dent in your debt this year? You might be tempted to grab debt by the jugular, and attack the biggest interest rate first. But it takes more than math to win. According to Fidelity, the number one reason people stick to a money resolution is because they're encouraged by their progress.

That's where the debt snowball comes in. Here's how it works: List your debts in order by outstanding balance, and attack the smallest one first. Once you knock it out, roll that cash over to your next debt, working your way up to the biggest of the bunch. You'll build momentum — and motivation — as you watch your debts disappear and your cash grow!

4. Go Roth with Your 401(k)

These days, most full-time workers have access to a 401(k) through their employer. This is a great way to save for retirement, because it enables you to make pre-tax contributions for your future.

What you may not know is many employers offer a Roth 401(k) option, too. According to a Willis Towers Watson study, 54 percent of large and midsize companies do, yet only 10 percent of employees take advantage. That means lots of folks are missing out on tax-free growth.

And now, any pretax match dollars your employer puts in can be converted to a Roth. That's means even more opportunity for tax-free growth. Just keep in mind that you do have to pay taxes on any money you convert. An investing professional can show you how it works, so you can weigh your options and choose the strategy that's right for you.

5. Take Advantage of Free Financial Education

It's no secret that money issues can cause big-time stress. According to the American Psychological Association, 72 percent of adults worry about money, and 32 percent say money woes stand between them and a healthy lifestyle.

This stress can distract you on the job, too. It's hard to get work done when you're preoccupied with money problems. No wonder almost 90 percent of employers surveyed by Aon Hewitt had considered implementing a financial wellness program.

If your company offers this benefit, don't miss out. It's a great way to learn how to manage your money, and plan for the future. That's something everyone can feel good about!

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Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including The Total Money Makeover. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 13 million listeners each week on 585 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey

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High Beams or Lamplight?

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County



Stars draped their splendor over the inky night sky. However, I could barely see myself putting one foot in front of the other.

As we reached our car and drove the dark Colorado country roads, our headlights weren't enough. Only high beams could penetrate and give us enough light to gauge what was ahead.

High beams are wonderful. But, they're hazardous when they are shining in your eyes from another vehicle coming towards you. Even having them bore into your car from behind is distressing.

Recently, I was reading in Matthew 5: 14, NKJV, where Jesus tells his disciples, "You are the light of the world."

What kind of light ~ a high beam that blinds as it approaches or pushes and prods from behind? Or the kind of light Jesus described ~ a lamp on a lamp stand to give light to all who are in the house.

Have you ever entered a house that has dull, dingy lighting? How about one where every light is lit and glaring?

In either case, we're either squinting or hiding our eyes to protect them.

But lights that attract and point the way clearly are inviting.

As we enter this New Year, it's important to remember that a dark world can be brightened by even a single candle. When that glow penetrates the darkness, all are drawn to its warmth. Add other candles and more darkness is dispelled.

Dim lights make people sleepy while high beams repel.

Sometimes it seems our batteries are weak, and we barely cast a glow that attracts. Other times, we have strong convictions or passions and long to have others jump on board. In either case, if we're not careful, we'll find ourselves alone from lack of interest or because we've tried to force our dream on others.

However, if we approach this year in the light of Scripture, we will not be so dull that others will squint and move on; nor be a beam that repels and causes them to turn away.

Rather, we will be that bright, inviting light that magnetizes others to Jesus... not our cause...and then, in turn, he will illumine his will for them. Those same verses sound like this in The Message:

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world.... I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there...shine! Keep open house, be generous with your lives."

Let's shine invitingly in 2011. Selah

Let your light shine

These bright beauties draw us to them.

*They are like lights in the darkness
bringing smiles and joy.*

Bloom as these do...

*Attracting and engaging others
to see the true Light.*

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

Matthew 5: 16

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Ken and Jan love residing in the mountains of Avery County. Visit Jan's new blog @ pauseandconsider.net, Journeying with Jan; and Ken's photos at kenmeropphoto.com.

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. Isaiah 40:31

Walnut Grove Church

Settling in the Dregs

By Kurt Bomar
Avery County

New Years is always a great time to take inventory of our lives. Have you ever noticed that's when all the commercials seem to highlight their latest exercise equipment? Weight watchers get most of their sign ups in January and I always see an influx of new dedicated exercisers at the gym (although they seem to fade away as we hit Feb. and March). And finally, Marie always reminds us that she has lost 40-50 pounds on Nutrisystem around this time.

The prophet Zephaniah speaks to this phenomenon:
Zeph. 1:12 *At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who are complacent, who are like wine left on its dregs, who think, 'The LORD will do nothing, either good or bad.'*

"Settled in their dregs" refers to the process of wine-making used in his day whereby a winemaker would allow wine to settle for a period before pouring it into another vessel, leaving the dregs behind. If he waited too long to make the transfer, the wine would take on the taste of the dregs. This process would be repeated up to seven times until the wine was crystal clear.

It seems that the Israelites were in their December mode. That is, they were content to remain settled in their dregs. They were materialistic, comfortable and content, not willing to stretch themselves and look to the moving hand of God.

We too can be in our December state of mind, so God gives us a choice. We can spiritually say "it's time to sign up at the gym, try out the bow flex, or give Marie a call" or we can say "I'm fine, what's for dinner?"

But understand, the Lord wants us to always be growing. If we are stretching ourselves Spiritually, He will help us out by shaking up our lives and pouring us out into another vessel.

How does this look? Our lives may be going fine until our boss says, "you're fired" or your boyfriend/girlfriend says, "I'm out of here". We say, "God, how can you let this happen, I thought you loved me?" He does. In fact, He loves you so much that He won't allow you to get too comfortable or too settled, because He knows if you do, your life will become clouded with dregs and you will lose the clarity you once had. So, things get shaken up as He pours you from one vessel to another. And you are left saying, "what's going on? I better seek the Lord." Thus, we wait upon Him with renewed intensity.

Given that choice, I want to constantly be in a state of waiting on Him. I don't want Him to have to shake me up. So, let me encourage you to take inventory of your life at this time of year. Do you have an active ministry inside or outside your local church? There's plenty of stuff to do, and plenty of desperate needs that need to be met. Get out there and look for them!

(inspired by Footsteps of the Flock, Jon Courson pg.368)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



Evergreen Church

The Best Year of Your Life!

By Rev John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

Let us begin reading this new year in Jeremiah 29:11 *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."* THE SURE SIGN THAT WE HAVE an authentic relationship with God is that we believe more in the future than in the past. The past can be neither a source of confidence nor a condemnation. God graciously divided our life into days and years so that we could let go of our yesterdays and anticipate our tomorrows. For the past mistakes, He offers forgiveness and an ability to forget. For our tomorrows, He gives us the gift of expectation and excitement.

What the Lord said to the people of Israel languishing in the Babylonian exile is for any of us who are exiled from Him and hope for the future. He has plans for each of us-good plans for our growth in His grace-so that we can have a future with hope. Think about it. What oxygen is for the lungs, hope is for the soul. Hope enables a vital quality of life; it sets us free to dare, gives up confidence-for daily frustrations, and the courage to live adventuresome. The gift of hope for the future is the key entrusted to us which opens the floodgates of the Lord's power and unlocks the flow of His amazing, unlimited possibilities. So often people say, you've got to have hope! As if it were something we could muster out of ourselves. Hope is adventent. It comes from some-thing or someone else. Authentic hope comes from Christ, who He is, and what He is able to do. His resurrection is the ultimate source of hope. Nothing can defeat Him! The worst that man did on Calvary was followed by the best hope for all time. He is with us now today to give us courage for the future.

He is in charge of this new year. He has a plan! Surrender the year ahead, thanking the Lord that everything that will happen to us is for what He has planned to help us become like Him. Joyous New Year! God 's best for my life begins with a vibrant hope for the future as we close let's look at this chapter as a whole--- JEREMIAH 29--the Babylonians began to deport the Jews to Babylon. Jeremiah's letter to the

exiles helps us understand how we can make the best of a difficult situation. Accept it. Live as normal a life as you can, and put up with inconveniences without complaining. Try to be a blessing to others. Be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker. Be patient. God has the timing all worked out, and His plans never fail. He knows how long and how much. Trust God. Verse 11 is a powerful promise to claim when you are "in exile." God thinks about you personally and is planning for you. His plans are for peace, not war, so you need not fear the future. His plans are purposeful, so let Him work out His will. No matter how difficult your situation may be, do not waste your suffering by resisting God. Avoid false hopes. It is human to indulge in false hopes and grasp at every straw, but this approach leads to despair. Avoid the subtle voices of the false teachers with their false hopes. The Word of God will tell you what to do. Far from Home, God's people in the world today are somewhat like the Jewish exiles in Babylon, for we are away from our heavenly home and living among those who do not accept our way of life. *"Seek the peace of the city"* (Jer. 29:7) is good counsel for us to follow as strangers on this earth. Peter explains how we should do this in 1 Peter 2:11-3:19.

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





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-H.O. Hirt, ERIE Founder

Keeping Purity in Your Marriage

By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County

Purity is a major concern of a God who is holy. The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:15-16 *"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy: for I am holy."*

The term "holy" can definitely refer directly to purity of life. The believer's living hope based on their new birth should lead to a lifestyle of holiness. The price paid for the believer's redemption calls for reverence and obedience.

There are three basic reasons for living a holy life. First, God Himself is holy. God is the embodiment of absolute righteousness, purity, sinlessness, and godliness. Secondly, God has called believers to be holy because He is holy. To be with Him one day, we must be like Him; we must be holy. Thirdly, Scripture demands holiness. Leviticus 11:45, *"For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."*

A part of our personal holiness involves the marital relationship. There are some actions a person can take to help make that possible.

Face Up to Your Own Faults

Any marriage suffers when you have even one of the partners who will not admit he or she has done wrong. Human pride will often lead a person to never admit wrong doing. You need to admit you have done wrong, even if the other marriage partner will not do the same thing. You cannot be right with God if you are not dealing justly and honestly with your marriage partner.

James 5:16 says, *"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."* We confess our faults or sins to one another, so we might pray one for the other.

One of the best things a person can do in a marriage relationship to maintain a right one is to learn to say, "I was not right. I did wrong and I want you to forgive me."

Be Responsible for Your Own Actions

Luke 6:41-42 states: *"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye."*



How can your marriage partner fully trust you if you will not own up to and be honest about your own actions? It is easy to blame wrong behavior on your marriage partner when that is often not justifiable.

If you feel like a troubled marriage is all your partner's fault, then you are probably not taking responsibility for many of your own actions. Faults normally are found in more than one direction. Since we are all sinners, none of us are all we ought to be all of the time.



Don't Retaliate When You Think You Have Been Wronged

Revenge, or trying to get back at your marriage partner, will make an existing problem much worse. If someone has done you wrong, God says in Romans 12:19, *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."*

God can give you grace to not respond in a negative way when you feel that your spouse has wronged you. If you will keep a right attitude, it is possible that your spouse will be ashamed for the way he or she treated you. The Bible teaches we are to respond to evil with good.

Jesus said in Luke 6:28, *"Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you."*

He also said in Luke 6:31, *"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."* Instead of getting on the level of the one who wrongs us, it pays for us to have a better attitude than he or she might have.

Learn to Forgive

The Bible says in Matthew 6:14-15- *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*

Occasionally, there is a marriage that just doesn't work. But, on the other hand, many troubled marriages would work if couples would learn to forgive. You might say, "My marriage partner does not deserve to be forgiven." In all reality, we did not deserve for the Lord to forgive us, but he did through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are two horrible consequences if we do not have a willingness to forgive personal wrongs. First, the Lord will not forgive us if we are not willing to forgive others. Secondly, it will also influence your heart in a negative way. An unforgiving spirit leads to bitterness in one's life. Even the root of bitterness defiles (Heb.12:15).

If you forgive someone, you do not periodically bring up the past to bring accusation against the other marriage partner. Horrible things done to us cannot be erased from our minds, but we can decide we are not going to bring up past trespasses.

Pray for Your Spouse

You cannot always make your marriage companion what you want that person to be. However, you can pray to God about that person. God is able to change men's hearts to reverse wrong behavior.

James 5:16 says, *"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* Since that is true, who knows what the Lord might do for the one who prays for their mate? Prayer can make the impossible possible.

Be Honest and Open With One Another

We are told in Ephesians 4:15 that we are to *"speak the truth in love."* An open and honest relationship is the best kind. If something is seriously bothering you, don't hesitate to speak in love to your spouse. It is so important to talk through and pray through that which may be bothering you in your relationship. If you continue to be angry and do nothing about it, if you let the sun go down on your anger, you give Satan a beachhead, a place to operate in your life. No one needs a marriage of secrets from the past.

Have Friends That Are Pure

1 Corinthians 15:33 states, *"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."* Associating with bad people will ruin decent people. Wrong friends will destroy you. Evil company does damage to good behavior. We tend to become like the company we keep. We should not associate with those who hold to error and false teaching. If we associate with them—accept them as friends and companions—they will influence us and corrupt our behavior, leading us into sin and error.

It is extremely important that we keep our marriage where it ought to be. Both partners need to recognize this great responsibility and obligation.

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

Happy New Year



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The Attitude of Serving Means a Lot

By Pastor Steve Williams
Mitchell County



Here we are once again at the start of a New Year. Are You Ready for the New Year? We usually hear people say, "What happened to the year, it went by so fast." If we don't pay attention, this year will pass by just as fast as last year did. Have you started thinking about what your plans for the New Year's are? Have you asked yourself--- how can I make this a better year than last year in my Christian walk with the Lord. I believe it can be summed up in a word, (Attitude). How we serve God in the coming year will play a big part in how this coming year will be.

The Bible says in Psalm 100:2-3 *"Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. 3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."*

We have all had the experience of someone waiting on us or serving us in a restaurant. Sometimes the experience is good, and sometimes it is not. Both

servers may get the food to the table and take care of the essentials, refills, extra napkins, presentation of the check, etc., But what makes one experience good and the other not? One word attitude. The attitude of the server can sometimes be the difference between a positive dining experience and a negative one. The server attitude may be the determining factor about whether or not you return to that place of business.

Do you know that our attitude in serving God also leaves a positive or negative impression on the people we serve in His name? How we serve others, how we treat them in the name of Christ, leaves a strong impression. Is it any wonder that the psalmist instructs us to serve the Lord with gladness? It is not just service we render, but the attitude with which we do it that is important to God. Serve the Lord today and this year with a glad and thankful heart. You belong to Him, and you get to represent His Kingdom in this coming year! So, don't let this year slip by without Serving Him.

Words of Wisdom for the New Year

- Be at war with your vices (sins), at peace with your neighbors, and let every New Year find you a better man. Benjamin Franklin
- An optimist stays up until midnight to see the New Year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves. N/A
- The New Year stands before us, like a chapter in a book, waiting to be written. We can help write that story by setting goals. Melody Beattie
- No matter what your past has been your future is spotless. N/A
- Start the New Year with eager anticipation and end with pleasant memories. N/A

Tip for the New Year

- The best vitamin for a Christians is B1

Question for the New Year

- What Will You Do with the New Year God has given you?
- Will you use it for God's Glory, or will you waste it on Selfish Desires?

Thought for the New Year

The New Year is before you
Like a spotless field of snow.
Be careful how you walk it,
For every step will show. N/A

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



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Sudoku

Solution on page 14

	2	6						1
3				6			9	
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	4			7				6
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May School Of Nursing and Health Sciences Receives 10-Year Continued Accreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education

BANNER ELK, N.C. — For years, Lees-McRae College has been providing students with a cutting-edge education to take on the healthcare world. With programmatic accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), the school will continue to offer its expanding programs for another confirmed decade.

"Accreditation signifies that the nursing programs have met or exceeded standards and criteria for educational quality and integrity," according to the CCNE accreditation announcement. "It also ensures that the nursing students are achieving the outcomes needed for professional practice."

The RN to BSN program at Lees-McRae received CCNE initial accreditation from 2002-2007 and full accreditation from 2007-2017. The pre-licensure nursing program now joins the RN to BSN program in ongoing full accreditation.

The 10-year continued accreditation by CCNE will last until the end of 2027.

Founded in 1969, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), the national advocacy organization for the U.S.'s baccalaureate and higher-degree nursing education programs, created the autonomous accrediting arm of the organization in 1996, leading to the rise of the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

Dean of the May School of Nursing and Health Sciences, Laura Fero, said the rigorous accreditation process required the administration, faculty, community advisors, clinical partners and students to take a deep look at accomplishments and how they seek to grow in the future.

"The Lees-McRae College May School of Nursing and Health Sciences is committed to delivering the highest standard of education across our programs," Fero said. "Our mission is to prepare graduates to be critical, creative, and collaborative decision-makers in diverse healthcare environments. Students graduate valuing foundational knowledge, cooperative and experiential learning, global and community engagement, scholarship, and personal and professional development."

Above all, Fero was proud of the work completed by the May School of Nursing and Health Sciences team, and said she was, "looking forward to our future as we continue to grow and impact our local, regional, national and global communities."

The May School of Nursing and Health Sciences offers degrees in Nursing, Emergency Medical Services and Management, Health and Wellness Science as well as an online degree completion program in nursing. To learn more about these and other programs offered by Lees-McRae College, visit lmc.edu/academics.

The Nursing degree program at Lees-McRae College is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (<http://www.ccneaccreditation.org>).

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



Nina Mastandrea is the content manager of Lees-McRae College



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Commitment

Pastor Terry Cheek Th.D.
McDowell County



By the time you open this issue of the Blue Ridge Christian News you will have said goodbye to 2017. We all have memories of the previous year, some good and some not so good. If we are teachable we have walked away from 2017 much wiser and more mature than when the year started.

As I begin 2018 I vividly remember a prayer of commitment I made after submitting to God's call to preach and serve Him. I cannot recall the exact words, but I do remember the context. I would serve Him faithfully in any role He placed me and anywhere He placed me. Yes, I truthfully made that commitment, and I meant it. I still do. Then came seminary. From this experience I left thinking the only real service that can truly benefit God is fully vocational service. That was my mistake not theirs. My commitment was real, but my view of that commitment was very skewed.

My service to the Lord has been through the office of pastor and it has been a bi-vocational pastor. I spent many years thinking I was failing God because I wasn't called into full time service. For the last several years and specifically through 2017 I have experienced a revival of sorts. While I have nothing but respect for the vocational pastor I realize the most fulfilling role I can have at this time is to embrace the office of a bi-vocational pastor. I have come to understand why God has placed me in the role He has and the work He has ordained me to do. The bi-vocational pastor is a full-time pastor, a full-time employee, a full-time family man and most of all a full time Christian; all at the same time.

First, may I say I am blessed with a job that provides well for my family and ministry. I am not worried about being a financial burden on the church I pastor, I appreciate dearly the support they give, but I have the liberty to see church finances given first to God's work in missions and evangelism before coming to me. The calling of a bi-vocational pastor is truly a financial blessing for church and pastor.

The blessing is not only mutually financial, oh no! I have the privilege of working everyday alongside people in the community I serve. I experience the frustrations, trials, tribulations and temptations they do. I feel their pain, and share in their victories. I also can meet with them and hear their stories of failure and restoration and victory. As an employee in the NC prison system I also have the privilege to meet inmates and hear their testimonies and when opportunity comes, I share the good news of Jesus Christ. I get to experience the living testimony I preach three times a week.

Make no mistake, the bi-vocational pastor has a full plate. Working 40+ hours a week on a public job and preparing three messages to preach, leading the church, staying in contact with members, visiting as possible and offering associational support and involvement make for a busy life. I do miss a lot of opportunity and I regret that, but in this role priorities must be made and followed.

I am thankful for those in the church family who step up and work to maintain and manage the physical property and resources of the church. The deacon who serves as a true deacon. The members who take it upon themselves to work in and around the church building and grounds. Everyone who prays for our church and their pastor.

For the bi-vocational pastor to be successful others play a key role; for example, the church must step up and be the working, teachable ministers spoken of in God's word, those led by God's man, yet responsible in their individual calling. The bi-vocational pastor's wife is a woman of unique quality and honor. My wife takes on many roles in the home and church. She serves as my personal assistant, taking calls when I'm not available, listening to folks and offering a tearful prayer of love and kindness. She offers counsel to ladies inside and outside the church. She looks for mission's opportunities and teaches our grandchildren and the children of the church.

She is my help mate. She is often my counselor when I become overwhelmed, and make no mistake, I do. She does these things because she feels led to, I don't ask nor expect them.

As I look back I see my skewed view of God's work truly straightened. My commitment to God and His work remains one of faith and learning and dedication. Regardless of where He may lead me.

Why do I share this? We all have a tendency of skewing God's calling in our life. I encourage you to look at your calling and examine how you see it in contrast to how God has laid it out. Let's all get on the same page with God for 2018. It will be hard work and we will get our hands dirty, but the blessings will be amazing. I am content in the role God has called me to, beyond that I have found Joy in it as well. I want you to realize the same in 2018! Until next month may God keep you firmly in His grip.

Terry Cheek is Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Marion.



Happy New Year Blessings

Burke County Schools To Improve Outdoor Activity Spaces 15 Schools To Benefit From Healthy Places NC Grant

By Cheryl Shuffler
Burke County

Fifteen schools in the Burke County Public Schools district will receive funding to add or update outdoor activity spaces for student as well as community use. The funds are a result of a \$555,169 grant to Burke County Schools from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust.

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam informed the Board of Education of the grant award during the Nov. 27 board work session. Burke County Public Schools will provide a \$61,686 match for the grant. In addition to athletic equipment, tracks and courts, the funds will go toward playground equipment, including some for children with disabilities, a football field restroom and a kids' fitness course.

Putnam said, "This generous grant will allow us to establish and update areas where our students as well as community members can enjoy the opportunity to walk, play basketball, play on playgrounds and exercise to maintain a healthy lifestyle. We are very grateful for the folks at the Trust for granting our proposal, and we are looking forward to getting started on these projects."

This investment is part of Healthy Places NC—the Trust's long-term commitment to improving the health of residents in the state's rural, under-resourced counties.

"The improved school recreation areas and walking tracks are just one example of the community coming together to tackle health issues, and the Trust is committed to supporting Burke County on this journey," said Dr. Laura Gerald, president of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. "There is a joint use agreement between the Parks and Recreation Department and the local Little League that will open these facilities up to the entire community. That's the kind of community collaboration and systems improvement we had in mind when we launched Healthy Places NC."

The timeline for the projects includes starting them during the 2018-19 school year with some going into the 2019-2020 school year. The schools and projects are:

- Forest Hill Elementary - Install backstops and other athletic field equipment (soccer goals, etc.) for community and recreational use. Pave a walking track for families and community members to use.
- Oak Hill Elementary - Install a walking track for student and community use. Purchase and install new playground equipment for school and community use.
- Ray Childers Elementary - Install a walking track for school and community use. Install athletic fields for recreational and community use. Install backstops on the softball fields. Install outside basketball courts and goals.
- Drexel Elementary - Resurface the walking track. Purchase and install new playground equipment for one of the playgrounds at the school.
- George Hildebrand Elementary - Repave the walking track. Improve the basketball area at the walking track by repaving the surface and installing new goals. Purchase and install updated playground equipment.
- Glen Alpine Elementary - Purchase and install new playground equipment. Resurface outdoor basketball courts and update goals. Resurface walking track. Install a restroom at the football field.
- Hildebrand Elementary - Install a walking track for school and community use around the football field. Purchase and install updated playground equipment. Update dugout areas at the baseball and softball fields. Resurface small walking track at Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten playground.
- Icard Elementary - Resurface the basketball courts and replace the goals. Install new backstop on the baseball field.
- Mull Elementary - Install a walking trail with fitness stations open to the community.
- North Liberty - Purchase and install playground equipment that is more accessible for students with disabilities. The equipment will be designed to fit the needs of the students.
- Valdese Elementary - Resurface the walking track located at the athletic field. Resurface and update outside basketball courts and goals.
- WA Young Elementary - Purchase and install a Kids Fitness Course for the walking track that the students and community may use while walking the track.
- Hillcrest Elementary - Repave basketball courts and update goals. Purchase and install new playground equipment.
- Table Rock Middle - Total resurface of the walking track due to poor track conditions / large cracks in surface.
- Hallyburton Academy - Resurface walking track.

Burke Middle College's Lisa Wall named Regional Teacher of the Year

Burke County Public Schools' teacher of the year, Lisa Wall, has been named the Northwest Region / District 7 Teacher of the Year. North Carolina's current Teacher of the Year, Lisa Godwin, made the surprise announcement at Burke Middle College on the campus of Western Piedmont Community College on Monday during a student assembly. Wall is the English Language Arts teacher at Burke Middle College and has 22.5 years of experience teaching.

Godwin told the students at the assembly that Wall is now in the running for the next North Carolina Teacher of the Year. Godwin said, "I don't know if you realize how enormous this is, but there are over 90,000 teachers in the state of North Carolina, and through this process we found nine teachers, and your very own Lisa Wall is one of those nine."



Godwin read quotes from students and peers who were part of the Regional Teacher of the Year interview process. They included: "Nobody gets as excited as she does when she reads a book." And, "She sees the best in everyone and everything."

Wall also is described as a teacher who makes lessons exciting, inspires students to want to learn, has a contagious, can-do attitude, jumps in and gets the job done when she sees that something needs to be done and is what the school system is all about.

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam was among those who surprised Wall with the announcement Monday. He said to her students, "I always say, 'be passionate about what you want to do, and you'll figure out a way to make money at it.' Mrs. Wall is very, very passionate about what she does."

Wall said it is a "huge honor" to be named one of the nine regional teachers of the year across the state, but told her students, "It's an honor for me to be your teacher every day."

She said, "This is not just a job to me, this is something that I love. In all of the process going through this for regional teacher of the year, I have thought of my students. It's a blessing to be able to have an impact on your lives every day." Wall has a bachelor's degree in secondary English education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is a National Board-Certified teacher and is licensed to teach Advanced Placement classes. She started her teaching career at Forsyth County Schools in 1992 and came to Burke County Public Schools as a high school English teacher in 1998. Wall has taught at East Burke High, Draughn High and Burke Middle. She is a member of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International and the North Carolina English Teachers Association and has been a presenter at various district, regional and state conferences.

Wall has left her mark on Burke Middle College every day in the classroom as well as through a textbook scholarship program and by composing the school's alma mater. At Burke Middle College, high school juniors and seniors work to complete their high school diploma as well as a two-year associate's degree.

Joining in on the surprise announcement on Monday was Wall's family, including her husband, Tripp, her daughters, Scarlett and Molly, her parents Tom and Mary Keller and her in-laws Trossie and Joyce Wall.

Two years ago, East Burke High School Principal Shane Mace, then at East Burke Middle, was named Region 7 Principal of the Year and last year Putnam was named Region 7 Superintendent of the year. Burke County has had one state Teacher of the Year in its history - high school music teacher James Jerome Williams in 1982. Wall is now eligible for North Carolina Teacher of the Year, which will be announced in the spring.

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



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The Lamplighters Afterschool Reading Program

By Rev. Jeremy Troxler
Mitchell County

A visitor who stops by Spruce Pine United Methodist Church on a typical Wednesday afternoon will discover a hive of activity. Schoolchildren wearing grins on their faces and carrying heavy backpacks over their shoulders climb down the stairs of a big yellow school bus. Soon one gaggle of kids is playing ball on the church playground; another group is devouring a snack of crackers, fruit, and milk. Shortly thereafter the volunteers appear. Throughout the education wing of the building, a peek into each classroom reveals a different scene of focused effort. In one room Reading Buddies are sitting at small tables with individual children, helping each child with his or her reading homework. In another space a volunteer sits on a couch reading a story aloud as a group of kids listen and follow along. Just a little further down the hall, past the line of backpacks now hanging from hooks on the wall, five children are gathered around a teacher as she goes over the pronunciation of specific words. Across the way another group of students is working on a construction paper craft.

At the close of the day the children will stream from their rooms and congregate together in the church sanctuary for Chapel Time. They will help light the candles, be reminded of the Golden Rule, act out a Bible story, pass around Prayer Bear, and be blessed as they leave for home - reminded that they are Lamplighters, beloved of God, and carriers of light.

The Lamplighters Afterschool Reading Program described above is a ministry of Spruce Pine United Methodist Church and community partners that seeks the well-being of children and their families in heart, body, mind, and spirit by helping them to experience Christian love and to grow as readers and as persons. Lamplighters operates on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons during the school year, and serves 20 local 1st and 2nd grade students from Greenlee Primary School who are behind their grade-level peers in literacy. Now in its third year of operation, Lamplighters is overseen by a Board composed of church members, community partners, and educators. The program is led by three part-time staff people, including a Program Coordinator (Dawn Hughes) and a Reading Coordinator (Kathey Hollifield), and depends on the contributions of about 15 weekly volunteers who serve as Reading Buddies and as assistants.

The story of how Lamplighters began involves many characters and chapters. It begins with a pastor's prayer that God would fill a barren Sunday School hallway with children being blessed by adults who love them. It followed a parent's realization that there were too few afterschool opportunities for children in Mitchell County, and was encouraged by a United Methodist initiative called Congregations 4 Children that invited churches to reach out to their local school system. It depended upon a special needs educator with a literacy certification who dreamed of tutoring kids to read in her retirement, a state consultant for afterschool programs who wanted to use her passion and her knowledge to help her church reach more children, a well-connected lay leader with a big heart for young 'uns, a retired school administrator who has dedicated her life to nurturing kids who have suffered from trauma, staff members who saw their work as a sacred calling rather than as a mere job, and a group of committed and supportive church folks who came together around a vision and were willing to work to see it happen.

The story of Lamplighters was spurred along by an energetic retired elementary-school principal, who, though suffering from the final stages of liver cancer, continued drawing up plans for the program on a yellow legal pad from his hospital bed. It depended upon the open and warm response of local school officials - superintendents, curriculum specialists, principals, and teachers - who saw the program's potential and who were willing to work in partnership with a local church.

Lamplighters' story is also a lesson about generosity and provision. Start-up funding for the program was provided by the people of Spruce Pine UMC, by individual donors, and, especially, by a generous four-year grant from The Duke Endowment's Rural Church division. More recently, Lamplighters was honored with a \$21,000 award by the Fund for Mitchell County through the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina's



People in Need grant program. This new grant will fund the program's Reading Coordinator position for the next two years, and will also enable her to receive special training to help the program serve children with learning disabilities.

Above all, the story of Lamplighters is a story about the grace of God: about how God has called together a group of people for a good purpose, has provided them with everything they need, has kept them going amid many challenges, has used them to bless children - and then used those children to bless them just as much.

Through Lamplighters the grace of God is making a difference in the lives of children, families, volunteers, and staff. The children who participate seem truly excited to come to the program: last year one child would wait near the door of his classroom at the end of the school day because he wanted to make sure he didn't miss the announcement about the Lamplighters bus. Parents are grateful to have a safe and nurturing place for their children to be after school. Volunteers tell stories of kids sprinting up to hug them when they run into them at the grocery store. The regular interaction with these loving adults seems to be a true blessing to children who need such nurture.

And yet Lamplighters' impact goes beyond love to literacy. Teachers say that the students are more engaged in class because they have completed their reading homework and because of the additional support that Lamplighters kids receive. Several parents have related that, because of the program, their kids have been reading more at home: some have even asked their parents to read with them for the first time. Test results also seem to point to the positive difference being made by the program: a high percentage of the Lamplighters kids show improvement in their reading scores, and a comparison of the initial test results suggests that students in the program make more progress than similar peers who do not participate in the program.

Such results that suggest that, by the grace of God, Lamplighters is living up to its name.

Back in the 1800s, when town streets had oil or gas lamps to provide light at night, the street lights had to be lit and maintained by a man who served as the lamplighter. The lamplighter would walk down the street at dusk, and would go from pole to pole, climbing up a little ladder, reaching up and in with his stick, and lighting the lamp. Everywhere the lamplighter went he left behind this little pool of light, this circle of illumination.

When he was a boy growing up in England, Robert Louis Stephenson (who would later write the book *Treasure Island*) was sitting once at his window, watching one of these lamplighters go along the street, leaving light in his wake. His parents asked him, "Robert, what in the world are you staring at out the window?"

Robert Louis Stephenson said, "Mom and Dad, there is a man out there punching holes in the darkness!"

The Lamplighters Afterschool Reading Program is one attempt by Jesus' people to punch some holes in the darkness, to shed some light into the lives of children. If you would like to help us pass the light, we would love to have you join us as a volunteer reading buddy, or would be grateful for any financial contribution you might want to make to the program. Or, if you want to learn more about how you might start a similar program where you are, we would love to have you come visit or talk with us: just call us at 828-765-7446 or email us at spumcpastor@bellsouth.net.

What a blessing it is to work together to punch holes in the darkness; to let the light of Christ shine; to be a Lamplighter!

Rev. Jeremy Troxler is blessed to serve as the pastor of Spruce Pine United Methodist Church.



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