

February
2018

FREE

BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

Good News Bible Club



Back row: Jeannie Burleson, Elaine Buchanan Mabe, Brenda Jones, Darrell Cable, Bruce Cannon, Wendy Cannon Front row: Judith Cable, Roxene Phillips, Michelle Conley, Jay Shuford, Stella Thomas

Good News Bible Club Doug Harrell

"And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

Mark 10:13-16 KJV

There is nothing in this world as important as teaching our children and youth about the Lord Jesus Christ. In today's politically correct environment it has become increasingly difficult to do this in public places outside our homes. Good News Bible Club, part of Child Evangelism Fellowship, is very active in our local area with 41 active clubs in Avery, Mitchell, Yancey and McDowell Counties plus others in Burke County that I may not be aware of. There were 2177 children enrolled in these clubs last year, plus enrollments at two YMCA's in the area, and there were twelve 5-day camp programs that took place also. Out of this last year, there were over 200 professions of faith made for Christ. God is great!

The greatest needs are twofold, financial and volunteers. It costs approximately \$1000 per school year per school to fund the program and that is important, but even more important is the need for volunteers. Normally there is a need for at least six volunteers that can meet with the club once a week, and the volunteers need to be at the school or location from about 2:00 PM until about 4:30 PM on the day the club is meeting.

My friends, as a father, grandfather and great grandfather, I can truly say that there is nothing as important in this life as touching the lives of our children. Below I have reprinted, by permission, some of the information from Child Evangelism Fellowship that describes more in detail what Good News Bible Club is all about.

Good News Club What is Good News Club?

Good News Club® is a ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship in which trained teachers meet with groups of children in schools, homes, community centers, churches, apartment complexes, just about anywhere the children can easily and safely meet with their parent's permission. Each week the teacher presents an exciting Bible lesson using colorful materials from CEF Press. This action-packed time also includes songs, Scripture memory, a missions story and review games or other activities focused on the lesson's theme.

As with all CEF ministries, the purpose of Good News Club is to evangelize boys and girls with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and establish (disciple) them in the Word of God and in a local church for Christian living.

Can We Really Teach the Bible in Public Schools?

Yes! The Gospel has been taught freely in public schools all over the world for some time. Now children in the U.S. have that opportunity, too! In 2001 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Good News Clubs v. Milford Central School* that Good News Clubs can meet in public schools in the United States after school hours on the same terms as other community groups. Children attend Good News Club only with their parents' permission.

Please be in prayer about lending a helping hand either with financially or by volunteering, or better yet, both. Please contact Darrell Cable at 828-925-9122. In the Asheville area contact Jason Beverly at 828-450-6194.



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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

"A Christ-Centered,
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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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Our passion is to help connect the Body of Christ in this area in order to see the Fire of God transform our community, state, nation and world! (See John 17:21)

Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

Pastor - Steve Williams

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

Where Everybody is Somebody
And Jesus Christ is Lord!

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..."

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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God, Submitting to God!

Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

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

Pastor Barry MaHorney

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

Faith Fellowship Church

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

Pastor: David Gillespie

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

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Mine Creek Baptist Church

Some Things Just Don't Make Any Sense!

By Preacher Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

Every time I read the paper or watch the news I am amazed and often dumbfounded at what is going on in our country. There are some things that just don't make much sense to me. We seem to have educated ourselves into losing all common sense. Things that should be simple, common sense issues have been made into such complicated debates that most people can't even understand what the debate is about! Let me give a few examples.

A few years ago, there was a story on the evening news from a South Carolina station that went something like this. A woman who was addicted to heroin gave birth to a baby. Of course, as expected, the baby had major complications and only lived a few weeks and sadly, died. The mother was arrested, tried, and convicted for manslaughter and placed in prison. As sad as that is, here is something worst. She could have had that same baby aborted during the pregnancy and not one charge would have been brought against her. This goes on every single day in this country. Babies are killed in a mother's womb and a lot of people seem to be ok with it. Just doesn't make much sense to me.

In our school systems today, our children can study and read a book written by Adolf Hitler called "Mein Kampf". And probably if one wanted to, one could even invite someone into the classroom to talk to the children about this book. They could answer questions and even explain to the children about Hitler's worldview. Now we are talking about a person who was responsible for the slaughter of millions. For the most part, this would seem by some as educational and productive for children. However, if I as a pastor were to be invited to speak to the children about the teachings of Jesus, how do you think that would go? If I taught the kids they were created in the image of God, and that He loves them and has a plan and purpose for their lives, how do you think some people would react? What if I taught the children about how Jesus teaches us to love and care for others, would that be ok? What if I taught the children about being honest, respectful to their elders, honor their parents, and treat others how they would want to be treated? These are just a few basics that are found in the Bible. Most likely, I would be on the next evening news and probably the focus of a lawsuit before long! Just doesn't make much sense to me.

In our nation there is a debate going on over marriage. We have same-sex couples who believe that their relationship should be recognized as a legitimate marriage relationship. Now for us as Christians, this should not even be up for debate! The only way one could come to the conclusion that this is right is to ignore what the Bible teaches. One of the basic understandings of Biblical marriage is the bearing of children in a marriage between a man and a woman. Would someone please explain how this is possible in a same-sex relationship? Even if one does not believe the Holy Bible or simply chooses to ignore it, even nature itself teaches that this is not normal behavior. Anyway, just doesn't make sense to me.

Right now, there is probably someone who is reading this article and they are boiling over. Why, you may ask? Because I would have the audacity to actually call something wrong. Right now, I am being called a religious fanatic, hatemonger, proponent of hate speech, judgmental, intolerant religious bigot, etc., etc., all because I do not agree. The very ones, who go about teaching everyone to be tolerant, are right now being intolerant of my views simply because they do not align with their views. And somehow, I am the intolerant one! Just doesn't make sense to me.

Right now, in our country, our national debt continues to grow and grow. Yet, even though we do not have the money, our leaders continue to spend that which we do not have, and they know we do not have it. Now folks, when I was in elementary school, learning the three R's (Reading, Riting, and Rithmatic) I was taught the basic financial principal that one cannot spend what one does not have! It's pretty simple to understand that if a candy bar cost a dollar and you only have a quarter, you wait until you get the dollar before you buy the candy bar. If you do not have the dollar, my Daddy always told me you had to go to work and earn it! Somehow, we have missed this along the way. Just doesn't make sense to me.

The examples could go on and on. We as a nation, and often as individuals, constantly ignore the teachings of Scripture. In spite of what the Bible teaches about respect for human life (even in the womb), marriage, raising children, right and wrong, finances, etc., we seem determined to do the opposite. We don't want to follow what God teaches us to follow and yet we want God to continue to bless our nation. We elect leaders who we know are not going to follow the scriptures and we expect God to bless our nation. We continually give in to voices of unrighteousness all in the name of tolerance, and we expect God to bless us. We want to do that which is right in our own eyes, and we expect God to bless us. Someone once said, "Those who choose to ignore history are destined to repeat it!" Our nation is destined to repeat what has happened to other nations in history if something does not change. The Bible teaches us that it is righteousness that exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34). We cannot be a nation that winks at ungodliness and expect a God of holiness to bless us! *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord...* Psalms 33:12.

Folks, some things just don't make any sense!
Proverbs 16:25 *There is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

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



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Church Secretary: 828-765-9411

In case of inclement weather, all activities will take place at First Baptist Church



Youth to Youth

By Schell McCall, Executive Director
Mitchell County

Youth to Youth Members at Bowman Middle School Lead Their School's Participation in National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week

This past week (January 22-28) was National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week -- a national health observance that links young people to facts that SHATTER THE MYTHS® about drugs. Members of the Youth to Youth group at Bowman Middle School observed National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week by announcing a substance abuse awareness



fact each day during morning announcements. On Friday morning, students were given the opportunity to take a quiz on the facts presented during the week for a chance to win a Bluetooth speaker. Over 150 kids took part!

This activity is an example of the work that local Youth to Youth empowerment groups are doing to gain leadership skills and spread awareness of substance abuse issues to their peers! Youth to Youth

(Y2Y) is a youth-led, adult-guided initiative of the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Program that brings young people together to build leadership skills and create positive change in schools and the community.

To learn more about PATH's Youth to Youth initiatives contact PATH staff at (828)682-7899, info@pathwnc.org, or visit <http://pathwnc.org/programs/substance-abuse-prevention/youth-to-youth-y2y/>.

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

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Snow Hill Baptist Church

No Regrets Family - The Greatest Pitcher in the World.

By Pastor Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

A young boy stepped onto the baseball field with a ball in his hand and a bat over his shoulder. Looking out to deep center field he said, "I am the greatest batter in the world" as he threw the ball into the air and swung his bat with all his might. "Strike one" he said. Again, taking his stance looking deep into the outfield, "I am the greatest batter in the world. "Strike two". Determined to make the hit the boy threw the ball into the air swung the bat with all his might. "Strike three". Then with a smile on his face the little baseball player said, "Wow I am the greatest pitcher in the world."

One of the greatest things you can give your child is confidence and self-worth. This is so important to their development as a child and adult. I have noticed children who are trained Biblically in a Christian home with a loving father and mother are very confident. I am not talking about a prideful or arrogant confidence, a haughty spirit or better than others attitude. I am talking about a confidence that trusts in God and helps that child mature in their relationship with Jesus Christ, and when they get out on their own they have the confidence to stand alone in a world system that is ungodly.

Psalm 139:14 (KJV 1900) *14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Marvellous are thy works; And that my soul knoweth right well.*

I speak with first hand experience. My mom encouraged me, but my dad, bless his heart struggled in that area because he was an alcoholic. My dad failed to realize as a young boy I needed his praise, I needed his encouragement, I needed to hear him say "atta boy" you did an excellent job. My dad learned to do this after I became an adult and had a family of my own; however, though I appreciated his approval the damage had already been done. As parents we cannot turn the clock back and have a redo.

So as a child and young teen I longed for the approval of male role models in my life. I looked for approval. It is very important for your child to know that you love them and approve of them. This does not mean you approve of the things they do wrong, of course not. You discipline them when they do wrong, and then you hold them and love them and praise them when they do right. You build their confidence up.

Our daughters need approval from us as well. They need to hear that they are beautiful, and God has created them in a beautiful way. I do not like to go shopping, but when I am asked to help look for a prom dress I go along because when my daughter comes out of that dressing room she is looking for my approval. That is important because she wants to know what I think. I do not always approve the dress or jeans. But when she does find that one that she likes, and I like I want her to know how beautiful she looks in it. This is important because when God brings that special person into her life to wed she will also be looking for my approval and that is very important to me and Pam.

You can go to about any playground where kids are playing and in a brief time pick out the ones who have confidence and those who do not. I am not talking about being shy. A child can be shy by nature but still have confidence. Confidence is built by a healthy relationship between a child and their parents.

What is a healthy relationship between child and parent? The Bible says for children to honor their parents. This means children respect their parents and obey them. A wise parent understands how to discipline their children in love. "Fathers who provoke their children to wrath" are overbearing in nature and expect demands out of their children that they cannot possibly deliver. It is like the dad who expects his child to play a sport like a professional athlete and gets mad when the child does not do well on the field or court. Can you imagine how this child feels when they do not receive the praise from their dad or mom they so desire to hear. We can push our children so hard that we drive them away from the things they love.

When dad and mom love and respect one another their children will learn to love and respect others. We model in front of our children behavior. My child will learn confidence when they see me act in confidence. When we trust God in times of adversity and pray in confidence our children will see this in our lives. The way I live my life for God, treat my wife, and love my children will often play a key role in the way my child will conduct his life as an adult. Is this a one hundred percent guarantee, no, it is not but I will guarantee that your child will have a far better chance succeeding in life and loving God and others if they understand their self-worth is found in their relationship with Jesus Christ. What a privilege and honor it is to have children and see them grow into confident young adults.

Praying for your family.

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.



He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 1 John 4:8

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If ye love me, keep my commandments. John 14:15

God's Love

By Jody Griffin
Avery County

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16, KJV)

I have discovered since beginning to write about the ministry privilege granted me to serve as a correctional chaplain, that no matter the perspective offered, some who read these words will affirm them, while others will reject them. Some will feel validated while others will feel violated. It is a heavy responsibility. But it is also inspiring at times in ways that defy explanation.

One day a young man declared that God could not love him. I asked him why he felt that way. He said that God could not love him because of all the things that he had done. My response was to share the above promise with him. And another from John 5:8, *"But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* Then Romans 8:1, and so on and so on. He shared openly his doubts. I shared openly my faith in the Power of God's Promises.

He laid out his reasoning to me in detail...graphic detail. Human logic called out that he was right about one thing. It would be very difficult for many to have love for him. My mind wandered a bit as I thought of those who had been injured physically, emotionally even spiritually as a result of his actions. There has been no contact from any of them. He reasoned that if they hated him, it just made sense that God did too.

Sometimes the only thing to say is nothing, and that's exactly what I did for what seemed like forever. Until what felt at the moment like a feeble pastoral effort drew these verses to my mind and heart. We prayed and asked for God to assure him of God's love that is so great that it is offered to all. When he left he seemed calmer, at peace and appeared to be touched by the love we had spoken of together.

The real challenge for me began later that day. I just could not get his 'story' off my mind. He was overcome with regret for his decisions that led to his incarceration. His shame told him that he was not worthy of God's Love. My own human limitation was challenged by his question and his explanation for feeling that way. Then it struck me. My struggle to be truly 'present' with him in his despair came because deep down, I understood the feeling.

I've had my moments when I have wondered if and how God could ever love me. And in those moments I am compelled to remember that God's love is not like human love. Human love is flawed by selfishness, greed, idolatry and other forms of sinfulness. But God's Love, the kind of love spoken of by those who were inspired to pen the words of Holy Scripture, is different. God's Love is given to all in Jesus Christ, and for those who will believe in him, the benefits are eternal. Sometime later this same young man passed by me on the yard. I said hello and he said, "Some guys in my block told me about what you said to me that day, Chap! I get it now! I got it! God does love me! Now all I want to do is live my life for Him!"

Got back and had to shut the door for a bit. As one called to share God's Love with everyone, I confessed to God my personal struggle to love a person whose decisions had caused such pain. Deep in my heart I knew what the Lord was saying to me.

My own decisions have caused their share of pain for others. Yet, even as I was speaking grace to this person, I was holding his sin against him. Funny how we do that, isn't it? (Not really)

But God, with infinite grace, opened this fellow's eyes to the true meaning of life as God has given it to us. And God, with infinite grace reminded me that my sins are forgiven through the blood of Christ! Thanks be to God!

Moments like these are what this opportunity is all about. Thank God for the honor that I have to represent Christ within the walls! And thank you for praying, and for supporting this work! You make moments like these possible through your financial support!

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



Is Jesus the Only Way?

By Pastor Kurt Bomar
Avery County

We as Christians are often attacked as being too exclusive in our positions about Salvation. You've heard the chorus before, "Who are you to say that you have the exclusive rights to truth? You Christians are narrow minded and egotistical to believe that."

I find it interesting that I never hear this complaint lodged against other major religions. Islam, for example, is much more "exclusive" than Christianity, in that, not only do they too believe their religion is the only way to paradise, but they also believe that if you don't agree with them, then you are an infidel and they can kill you. If you doubt me, examine the Quran:

Quran (2:191-193) - "And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah [disbelief or unrest] is worse than killing... but if they desist, then lo! Allah is forgiving and merciful. And fight them until there is no more Fitnah [disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah] and worship is for Allah alone.

Translation: convert or die.

While other major religions may not be as violent, they all have one thing in common—a claim of exclusivity of truth. So, to lodge this complaint against Christianity alone is hypocritical.

This takes me to my second point: if all major religions are mutually exclusive in their truth claims, then logic demands that only one can be right. Therefore, the complaints of the accusers of Christianity (usually atheists) would better be spent on examining the claims of Christianity to see WHY we claim exclusive truth. To not do so would be like a student railing against his teacher for insisting that 2+2 can only =4 instead of counting on his fingers to confirm the truth.

Disclaimer: I'm not saying that other religions don't have elements of truth. In fact, all of them do. I'm not saying that they're are not nice, moral people who practice other faiths often are.

What I am saying is that the only way we can be absolutely sure of absolute truth is to hear it directly from God. God knew that, so he sent his Son to tell us. He lived, died, and rose again from the dead. A fact no other religion can claim. We had reliable men who recorded the visit of Jesus for us. We know their testimony is reliable because they laid down their lives rather than recant. Occasionally a man (woman) will lay down their life for something they believe to be true, but no one will lay down their life for something they know to be a lie.

My encouragement is to not be intimidated by those who would complain that we are "holders of exclusive truth". It's OK to claim you're right if you are.

1 Peter 3:15 *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

Selah, (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.



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Life Lessons

What is Love

By Doug Harrell

I don't know who will be reading this, but if you are in a relationship, or wanting to be in a lasting relationship, you might want to read the book in the Bible "Song of Solomon".

"My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."
Song of Solomon 2:10-14 KJV

Valentines Day is a day that we set aside to show love and affection to our girlfriend, boyfriend, friend or our mate. I happen to think that it is important to do this every day rather than just one day a year. In May this year, my lovely wife Barbara and I, if we live until then, will celebrate 54 years of marriage and I will be quick to tell you that I would do it over again in a minute. Saying that we had never had arguments or quarrels would be a big misnomer to say the least, but I can truly say that neither of us has ever considered divorce at all, at least I can attest to myself and think that is true of Barbara as well.

Very early on in our marriage we began reading books on marriage and marriage relationships and vowed to each other that we would always work on making the marriage as fun and fruitful as possible. I want to just list a few things that are critical to making a relationship last with an abundance of love and fun. Talking to sweethearts, do you really know the person you are thinking about marrying? Have you spent enough time dating to be over the infatuation period, do you know their spiritual background and beliefs, are you on the same page on social issues? DO YOU BOTH HAVE A SOLID RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD? This is the basis of all relationships if you want a relationship that will last through the ages! Many people today laugh and scoff at the idea of a Biblical Marriage, but don't be so glib. God has laid out the foundation for love and marriage and it does not have to be dull, it is just the opposite! Men, don't be afraid to show your emotions, tell your wife every day that you love her and desire her, brag on her mind and her body. Here again, read and reread Song of Solomon and see how lovers speak to each other. A woman wants to feel loved and wanted intellectually and sexually, there is absolutely nothing unbiblical about any of that. Romance your wife each and every day of your life and I promise it will make marriage much more fun. You ladies, your husband wants your respect probably more than anything else you can give him. We men want to be seen as the knight on the white horse taking care of our woman. Let him know how much you respect him and give him room to be the leader in the family. I promise if you will lift him up as your leader and provider, in most cases he will become the person you would like him to be. Let him know that he is your lover, friend and companion, the one you want to be with, the one you admire most. Enjoy loving each other in all areas of your lives and it can be so rewarding. Marriage and relationships, family, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, these are the things that make life pleasant. When the Lord decides to take us home, the only thing that we really leave in this old world is the impact and legacy we leave with our friends and families, the difference we have made on their lives. Begin with a loving relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and spread Christian love to all those you come in contact with. If you are married, read and reread Song of Solomon. Happy Valentine's Day to all.



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.

Morganton Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Ultimate Love

By Rick and Cindy Mercer
Burke County

We have all heard stories that came out of the 911 tragedy. The following story begins with a man named Stanley who sat on the eighty-first floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center. Suddenly the nose of a 767 jet filled the sky outside his window. He dropped the phone and dove under his desk. Steel shrieked against steel as the ceiling crashed down. Electrical wires sparked. Desks and filing cabinets hurtled across the room. And then Stanley started sobbing and then praying.

As many of us watched the dreadful fate that day, news reporters flashed scenes over and over again—the thousands of people fleeing the building that day. Horribly burned and profusely bleeding, they stumbled down darkened staircases.

Another man named Brian was running down from the eighty-fourth floor when he heard cries for help. It was Stanley, who had somehow managed to crawl through the rubble but was now trapped under a fallen wall.

Brian pulled away charred debris and shattered doors. Finally, he reached the desperate man. "You have got to make it through the wall," he yelled. "I can't," Stanley replied. "You have to do this," Brian shouted back. Stanley clawed his way until he was partly free, and Brian pulled him from the rubble. The two strangers hugged like brothers. When they finally got outside, with tears in his eyes Stanley looked at Brian and said, "Keep in touch because I owe you my life."

Does this bring to mind the amazing love that saved you and me? When we ponder on that, our heart should also

cry out, "Lord, I want to keep in touch, because I owe you my life." The essence of the Christian life is fellowship with God. When two people are in love, they long to be together. Separation is painful. When we fully sense Jesus' love and commitment in saving us, our hearts respond in love. We long to be with Him. We want to spend time with Him in fellowship. We don't want to be separated from His love for an instant! In one of my favorite books Steps to Christ we are told that "The price paid for our redemption, the infinite sacrifice of our heavenly Father in giving His Son to die for us, should give us exalted conceptions of what we may become through Christ." And then the inspiration of scripture reminds us "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John 3:1. This places great value upon man!

Friends, God values us highly. He loves us immensely. He longs to be with us intensely. His love breaks our hard hearts and draws us to Him. Through Calvary, we owe Him our lives. The least we can do is give back to Him the lives He redeemed and gave to us.

That is the ultimate example of love!

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 cjmercerc@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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The Nonprofit Leader's Guide to Planning and Action

Contact: Susan Larson
Mitchell County



Nonprofit organizations are continually faced with questions, "Are we doing the right thing? Will this event or that program be consistent with our mission? What should we be focused on in the short term to get to our long-term goals? What are our long-term goals?"

Consultant Judy Futch is an expert in helping nonprofits assess their goals and plan for the future. She will be guiding a two-part process for Avery, Mitchell and Yancey county nonprofits on two Wednesday mornings, February 28 and March 21, in the ARC, upstairs of the Toe River Arts Gallery at 269 Oak Avenue, Spruce Pine. The workshops will run from 9:00 a.m. to noon with a registration fee of \$30 for the first registrant from an organization and \$25 for up to three more from the same nonprofit. The cost covers both sessions and registrants should clear their calendars to attend both. "The Nonprofit Leader's Guide to Planning and Action" is sponsored by WNC Nonprofit Pathways with support from Duke Energy.

In the first session participants will focus on mission, vision, guiding principles and strategic directions and annual plans. She'll suggest key ways to involve staff, board and volunteers in these planning processes and will set the stage for a planning event to conduct with them before session two. In session two participants will describe what was planned and what actually happened and assess what the highlights were and what they might do differently the next time.

Judy Futch is a senior consultant with WNC Pathways. In addition to working with a number of local nonprofits, she is also one of the consultants guiding the WNC Nonprofit Pathways Leadership Program. She consults with mature organizations on issues of merger, service delivery improvement, staff retention and recruitment, strategic direction and leadership succession. She also works with early-stage organizations to identify stakeholder interests, clarify vision, mission, goals and leadership roles and to build effective board, executive director and staff relationships.

Her background is in health education. She established the Mental Health Education Program at Wake Forest University School of Medicine (formerly Bowman Gray) and also the Management Education Department at Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) in Asheville.

To be sent a link to register for this workshop, contact Susan Larson at sjanelarson@gmail.com or 828-765-2652.



Judy Futch

Susan Larson coordinates programs of WNC Nonprofit Pathways in Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties. She lives in Mitchell County with her husband, retired physician David Larson.

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I Love You . . . Or Do I?

By Pastor Dan Qurollo
Burke County

The word love has come to be used in a variety of ways. Some people may say they love chocolate or love a particular hobby. They may love their job, and they may love their car. These same people will then say they love a spouse or children. Obviously, the manner in which we use the word love differs extensively. In addition, the biblical concept of love is greatly contrasted with how the world views love. Unfortunately, believers have allowed the world's concept of love to dictate their concept. It is easy to say the words "I love you"; it is truly a challenge to love as God expects us to love.

Many believers are familiar with the famous words of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. I fear that many who are familiar with this passage do not understand what it means and therefore cannot properly apply it to their lives. Note the following brief definitions of this well-known passage and determine to make this the standard by which you are going to love. You will most likely find as I do that it is easy to say I love you...but do I?

1. Charity suffereth long; therefore, it bears up under provocation and is forbearing with others. In other words, love does not react.
2. Charity is kind; therefore, it always expresses itself in that which is loving and merciful.
3. Charity envieth not; therefore, it avoids negative feelings over someone else's success.
4. Charity vaunteth not itself; therefore, love never heaps praise on oneself.
5. Charity is not puffed up; therefore, love never has an exaggerated self-conception.
6. Charity doth not behave itself unseemly; therefore, love never behaves disgracefully or acts dishonorably.
7. Charity seeketh not her own; therefore, love does not devote serious effort to achieve one's own desires. In other words, love is not self-serving.
8. Charity is not easily provoked; therefore, love does not cause a state of inward arousal by anger.
9. Charity thinketh no evil; therefore, love keeps no score of wrongs.
10. Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity; therefore, love is not glad in injustice or wrongdoing.
11. Charity rejoiceth in the truth; therefore, love rejoices in righteousness.
12. Charity beareth all things; therefore, love throws a cloak of silence over what is displeasing in another person.
13. Charity believeth all things; therefore, love is trusting.
14. Charity hopeth all things; therefore, love waits with confidence for that which is good and beneficial.
15. Charity endureth all things; therefore, love maintains a belief or course of action in the face of opposition. In other words, it holds out or endures instead of fleeing.
16. Charity never faileth; therefore, love never becomes inadequate for some function.

The challenge is indeed great to love as God expects us to love. I challenge you to determine to love those whom God has brought into your life with this kind of love. Imagine the impact Christianity could make if we all simply chose to love this way. Jesus told his disciples, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

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



"What Does Love Look Like?"

By Jacob Willis
Yancey County

Many pictures of love are depicted in society today. Valentine's Day approaches with cards, chocolates, flowers, stuffed animals and pictures of couples in love. Love that is depicted on television usually is the puppy love of romance novels, the erotic form of love, or of the Shakespearean tragedy. We can become so confused about what real love looks like that we mistake true love for something else. Satan uses counterfeit images and messages about love to create chaos in our lives. All temptation begins with attempting to meet a legitimate need in an illegitimate way. So it begs the question what does real love, biblical love look like?

First of all, real love looks like Jesus. If we are looking for the example of real love we look to Jesus. Love is a choice before it is a feeling. The Bible says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Love is choosing to give what isn't required without the expectation of receiving anything back. Agape (God Love) is unconditional, unmerited, and unfettered. Jesus gave himself a ransom for many, in other words He died so that you may live. The Bible says, "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us." He made an active choice to love us while we are at our worst. That is love personified.

Secondly, love is an action. Love is a choice, but love is also an action. If someone is saying constantly "I love you", but then demonstrating another behavior, that isn't true love. The Bible says in Romans 5:8, "Christ demonstrated His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us". He took love from thought into action. If you ever question whether someone loves you, observe what they do. God not only said He loves you, He died in your place for your sins. To sin means to miss the mark, to set out of bounds, or to just be plain twisted. That's why the Bible says in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." That doesn't mean some of us, that means all of us have broken God's law. He doesn't judge us for it, He comes down to where we are and dies for us. Jesus says in John 3:17, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that through Him the world might be saved."

Finally, love is tough. Love must, out of love, speak the truth. Love must say what is best and right, sometimes to the chagrin of the audience. True love is willing to confront wrong, stand up for the marginalized, and, when needed, stand up for ourselves. Jesus makes enemies because He preaches the truth. The people that love you most are the ones who are willing to tell you the truth.

While working with Yancey Hospice and Palliative Care, I get to watch true love in action. Couples who stick with one another and care for each other during the worst of times. Doctors, nurses, CNA's, social workers, volunteers, and chaplains assist patients and families, to provide dignity to a dying person. Christ is our great example of love. When we follow His example we can change the world one life at a time. If you have never received Christ as your savior, He loves you, and He will forgive you.

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



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

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Family Matters

By Ruthie Styles
Yancey County



Yancey Alliance for Young Children (YAY C) awarded funding for new Family Matters program.

The Yancey Alliance for Young Children (YAY C) has been awarded a \$20,000 grant by The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina to fund our Family Matters program, which will provide parents with new opportunities to learn about topics related to raising children birth through eight. Over the next year, 24 classes will be offered in 3 regions of the county – Burnsville, South Toe, and Cane River – on topics such as communicating positively with your child, understanding typical and atypical development, supporting a child who's experienced trauma, and using everyday interactions to build your child's skills. Meals and child care will be provided. More information is coming soon about where and when these classes will be held, and how to sign up.

YAY C is an initiative of the Blue Ridge Partnership for Children and was launched in July of 2016 with CFWNC funding to create mutually supportive alliances that increase young children's access to critical health and education services. This CFWNC award is the result of the YAY C Parent Education Work Group planning efforts, which have been led by Teresa Emory, Outreach Coordinator for Parent to Parent Family Support Network, a program of Appalachian State University. Family Matters is also made possible by the many Yancey County families who gave us feedback about their needs for information and support. YAY C is partnering with Parent2Parent, Yancey County Schools and our many talented parenting professionals to provide these classes.



Family Matters when you are working together on projects like Siloam and her mother, Margie Mason.

YAY C would like to thank the Bailey-Hilliard Fund/Yancey Fund, Crutchfield Charitable Fund, Clyde and Mildred Wright Endowment Fund and an anonymous fund of The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina for funding our new Family Matters Program. The Yancey Fund is an affiliate fund of The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina and partners with CFWNC to award grants in Yancey County. The Advisory Board of The Yancey Fund has local knowledge of donors and nonprofit organizations, and helps CFWNC effectively allocate financial resources.

Advisory Board members read applications, attend site visits and relay their fact-finding to the full Yancey Fund Board. With support from the Program Officer of CFWNC, the Advisory Board makes recommendations to CFWNC about worthwhile projects. The combination of The Yancey Fund's local expertise and dollars and CFWNC's regional philanthropy benefits many Yancey County non-profits.

Contributions to The Yancey Fund are pooled and invested by The Community Foundation. Proceeds from the investments are used to make grants while the original gifts remain intact, continuing to grow for the benefit of future generations. If you would like to know more about the Yancey Fund please visit www.yanceyfund.org or call Ron Powell, Chair at (828) 208-3057.

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

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 1 John 4:7



I have always been moved to help with Missions since I was a young child. At the same time, going to a foreign country scared me. I often prayed that the Lord would direct me to my mission field. I always thought I would grow up and be married with lots of children, teach school, and live happily ever after. I had a love for children. God's timeline and my timeline were not the same. He always knows what is best for us. As time passed and I hadn't found the person God has chosen for me to marry yet, my mission field became more clear. As a teacher, I see the needs our children of McDowell County have. I was introduced to our local DSS and the Foster Care program, and heard how great the need for Foster parents was here. I prayed asking God's direction. With each step of the process, I involved my supportive family. With me being single and working full time, I knew I couldn't do this without their help.

In 3 years, I have fostered 3 children and adopted one of them. My first fostering experience was a little 7 month old boy. We had him for 9 weeks. He eventually went home to grandparents. That first time losing a child to go back to family was bittersweet. It was SO hard, but I understood it was what was best for him. Three months later, we received the call to take another little boy. He was part of our family for 2 years. I spent those two years developing a positive relationship with his mother. Shared parenting is so important in foster care. You become a role model, friend, confidant to that parent. It also helps so you can maintain contact when they go home. Our third child was a little girl that came to us at birth. After 2 years, we were blessed to be able to adopt her.

*God is hopefully still using our family in some way in the Foster Care system. God can use you too. This is our community and our mission field. Make a difference foster/adopt a child. **Contact McDowell County DSS 828-652-3355.***

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Knowing Your Love Languages:

By Timothy Eller
McDowell County

In our fast-paced society, we often communicate via Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and Snap Chat. We are able to communicate with people around the world. Even if we are communicating more, I feel that we are not connecting. We are losing the connection that we have with other people. Over the phone or internet, we lose that energy that is produced and intimacy when people are together in person and they communicate. We need to regain that communication between human beings in a face to face manner. We need to realize that communication is related to in five ways. Words of Affirmation is our first love language, communication, and quality time, acts of service, gift giving, and physical touch. These languages refer how to you receive love, and respond to others with love. Do you know your primary language of Love? This is key to building long and lasting intimate relationships.

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



MCAR Dealing with A Surge in Animal Cruelty and Neglect Cases

By Patricia Beam

How the public can help identify and report cases of abuse and neglect
Spruce Pine, NC (January 22, 2018) – In the past few weeks, Mitchell County Animal Rescue has seen a surge in cases regarding animal abuse, abandonment and neglect. These cases have resulted in animals being admitted to the shelter in terrible conditions ranging from broken bones, animals in need of immediate veterinary care, very poor health due to prolonged neglect and cases of advanced emaciation and starvation.

Sadly, in some of these cases, it is possible that neighbors may have known about this abuse but were reluctant or afraid to report them right away, causing unneeded suffering on the part of the animals involved. Because of this, Patricia Beam, MCAR Executive Director, urges everyone in our community to be vigilant about reporting any suspected cases of animal abuse or neglect. "Reporting animal abuse and neglect in Mitchell County is easy, and all calls we receive are looked into. This can be the difference between life or death for some of these animals."

To report suspected cases of animal abuse or neglect, you can call Mitchell County Animal Rescue directly by phone at 828-765-6952. They can also be reached by email at mcaredirector@gmail.com. Patricia Beam serves as the County Commissioner appointed Cruelty Investigator for Mitchell County, NC working closely with local law enforcement. Calls can be made anonymously if you wish and you are under no obligation to provide your name or phone number. You can also reach local and county law enforcement on their non-emergency hotline, Mitchell Communications, at 828-688-9110. If you see an animal emergency, you can also call 911.

MCAR wants the public to know that they are a resource to any pet or pet owner in need by offering free services to help low income families. These services are available to help prevent animal neglect from happening in the first place. Free blankets are provided all winter long outside the front entrance of the shelter, and can be used to help insulate dog houses. They can also be used as bedding for the times when animals should be brought inside in order to remain warm in the coldest weather. They also have a pet food bank available to the public for anyone in need of food. "We have a wonderful pet food bank program, made possible by donations, so that if your pet is hungry and you cannot afford pet food, just call the shelter and we will provide you with free dog or cat food while you get back on your feet," said Patricia Beam. This ensures that no animal in Mitchell County should ever go hungry.

Mitchell County Animal Rescue is here to help both the animal citizens of Mitchell County and the people who love them. This recent influx of animals experiencing abuse and neglect has put a strain on the limited resources of the shelter. If you would like to help them during this time of need, donations may be made by check or online at their website www.mitchellcountyanimalrescue.org. Donations of pet food or other products are also always welcome and a wish list of items needed is posted on their website and Facebook page. Volunteerism is also encouraged for those who would like to work directly with the animals or in our office.

Please remember that we, as a community, are the animals' first defense against abuse and neglect. We encourage you to be aware of your surroundings and if you see something that concerns you, please do not hesitate to contact MCAR immediately. Animals need you to be their voice. By working together we can end animal suffering in Mitchell County.

For more information about MCAR visit www.mitchellcountyanimalrescue.org.



Crossword Solution

	A	S	W	A	N		D	A	W	N		W	H	O
	S	K	I	P			W	I	S	E		L	O	A
A	T	I	L	E			I	M	P	A	T	I	E	N
F	O	R	L	O	R	N		S	K	I	M		D	
A	N	T		P	I	G			E	M	B	A	L	M
R	E	S	U	L	T		W	A	R	E		D	I	E
			N	E	E	D					S	O	N	S
A	M	A	D			S	E	E	D	S		E	G	G
H	E	R	O				U	P	S	I	D	E	No.227	
A	D	O		N	U	T	S		T	E	M	P	L	E
B	I	D	D	E	N			H	E	B		S	A	Y
	C		A	R	A	B			I	S	O	L	A	T
D	I	S	R	O	B	I	N	G			R	U	L	E
U	N	I	T		L	E	A	H			A	R	M	S
G	E	N		V	E	R	Y			C	H	E	S	T

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Sudoku Solution

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

About Mitchell County Animal Rescue
Mitchell County Animal Rescue, Inc. (MCAR) is a not-for-profit humane organization devoted to the rescue and care of abandoned and otherwise unwanted animals in rural Mitchell County, NC, in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains. Our mission is "To protect, rescue, and care for abandoned and unwanted animals; to promote the importance of spay/neuter in reducing the population of stray animals, to place animals in loving homes; and to educate young people in humane treatment of animals." Founded in 1984 as a mostly volunteer organization, our success in community service led to a partnership with Mitchell County in 1994, ensuring that no animal in need would be left behind. Although we are a small shelter with limited resources, we are highly dedicated to our community and we strive to offer as many programs as our budget will allow including: adoptions, intake of stray and surrendered pets, lost and found, cruelty investigations and prosecution assistance, low-cost spay/neuter programs, low-cost rabies clinics, pet food banks and community education. We currently operate with 4 full-time and 2 part-time employees who are extremely dedicated to fulfilling our mission. And let us not forget our dedicated community volunteers who share their hearts and souls with our animals each and every day. We have an army of 30 regular shelter volunteers, 30 children volunteers each week from the local Montessori School, a 9 member Board of Directors, and 2 veterinarians who work closely with our staff at a reduced cost. We are extremely proud that our little shelter has won the Non-Profit of the Year Award from the Mitchell Chamber of Commerce for the last four consecutive years, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017! We have 22 dog kennels, 4 of which can hold multiple dogs in cases of mothers with litters or bonded dogs who should remain together. We also have a special cat area with 39 cages, many of which can also hold multiple cats who enjoy company. In addition to the space at our facility, we have an active foster program with 6 homes participating. Visit www.mitchellcountyanimalrescue.org to find out how you can join us in our work.

Patricia Beam works for the Mitchell County Animal Rescue.

Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

The Rest of the Story

By Doug Harrell

Usually, when I sit down and read one of these stories of Clint's, I am laughing a belly laugh. Today, I must admit, tears were running down my cheeks as I finished reading his recap of adventure. Lord, I miss that friend! There are people in all of our lives that are true friends from the very beginning of the time that you meet, Clint was one of those to me. Over the sixteen years we were best of friends, I don't think that ever changed for either of us. Clint tells the story of digging a little pond to water the garden, today where we started that little pond, stands a true pond with water aplenty to water the garden and more. No, I did not dig it, but had it done professionally. Clint would be so proud! Enjoy as you laugh along with Farmer Clint!

Funny Farm

Dear friends,
I've been writing this column for nearly 3 years – in fact, this is my 36th tale from what I call "The Funny Farm" at Harrell Hill. A few months back I seemed to have exhausted my inventory of stories from that fateful summer of 2010...when I lived and worked alongside my friends Doug and Barbara Harrell. But, "poof", here I am again...another incident has come to mind! ☺

Drought Drama

Sitting here today, in our comfy FLOODED Mitchell County, it seems impossible that drought plagued the area not that long ago. In fact, the summer I went to "Farmer School" at Harrell Hill was a hot and very dry. Coming from the BIG City of Hendersonville, NC, I was clueless concerning the life and plight of the farmer. Like most "city folk", I thought tomatoes grew in my local Ingles store!

Farmer Doug was bemoaning the lack of rain, for just a second, when he decided that we needed to find water to irrigate the parched garden. Being the cynic that I am, I thought to myself, "FIND WATER? That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard!" After all, the fields were literally cracking from the extreme heat and lack of rainfall. Nevertheless, who was I to challenge Doug's ideas. So, as he mounted his GIANT earth moving thingamabob, I fell in behind him and went in search of life-giving water.

When we arrived in the field Doug stopped alongside what appeared to have been a ditch/stream – perhaps back in prehistoric times. If you laid on your belly beside it you could ALMOST feel an itty bitsy bit of moisture in the soil. Always the optimist, Farmer Doug had referred to it as a "stream"...I'm thinking to myself, "This IS NOT A STREAM...it's little more than a leak in the dirt!"

Farmer Doug sensed my disbelief, gave me that "Pollard you don't know nuttin'" smile, and patiently explained that we needed to carve a retaining pond to capture as much of the precious liquid as possible. "When pigs fly," I opined to myself. It reminded me of God's words to Adam following the Fall... "And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;" Genesis 3:17. Surely the scorched ground COULD NOT give up enough moisture to save our garden.

Journey to the Center of the Earth

My friend began dropping the giant front-end loader bucket/digger thingy into the packed ground, his machine straining and groaning in protest. He'd encounter a boulder which delayed progress and threatened to doom our lake building efforts...but Farmer Doug never gives up. Every so often I would climb into the expanding cavern to shovel it out, doing my part in this DRY HOLE! I recall feeling somewhat tentative about the effort...surely there were evil critters – perhaps a rattlesnake or two; maybe a killer groundhog; surely a venomous spider – beneath the surface, irritated that we were disturbing their homestead.

By this time I had lost at least 50 pounds of Farmer Clint fat...having gone from a size 50" waist (at 309 lbs) to a svelte 41" and 250 lbs. Although I was feeling more fit and trim than ever, the heat of the day nearly sent me to heaven...shovel and grunt...dig and sweat...another rock fighting against my shovel...oooooh, ahhhh, ooooooh, ahhhh (that's the sound of a man working on the chain gang ☺!)

I was pretty sure that I was only minutes, possibly seconds away from meeting Jesus when I noticed a tiny wet spot on the wall of the canyon...surely I was hallucinating – this must be a mirage.

Now more...a little more...more now...VOILA, a trickle began flowing from the center of the earth! Farmer Doug grinned...I stood in that hole, my mouth gaping, as water covered the toes of my Farmer Clint boots ☺. I watched in wonder as the makeshift reservoir began filling, ever so slowly but surely!



A Garden Party!

Remarkably, after a couple hours that doggone hole was FILLED with water! Farmer Doug, with me in-tow ☺, jury rigged an irrigation system with pvc pipe, a few sprinkler heads and some duct-tape...he started the compressor and primed the pump before plunging it into the muddy water...and we had LIFT OFF! Who needs rain when you have a lake to draw from? ☺

It may be a bit of a stretch to say that those vegetables erupted in applause, but not much! As the cool mist fell upon our garden I could almost see and hear those withering leaves and stalks revive...amazing.

A Farmer's Praying Knees

During the Summer of 2010, my summer of restoration on Harrell Hill Farms, Lee Brice released a song titled "Love Like Crazy." I want to share a couple verses of that with you:

*Just Ask Him How He Made It
He'll Tell You Faith And Sweat
And The Heart Of A Faithful Woman,
Who Never Let Him Forget
Be A Best Friend, Tell The Truth, And Overuse I Love You
Go To Work, Do Your Best, Don't Outsmart Your Common Sense
Never Let Your Prayin' Knees Get Lazy
And Love Like Crazy*

My friends, these words perfectly describe Farmer Doug Harrell, my friend above friends. At the risk of embarrassing him, I hope you will take this message to heart... Never Let Your Prayin' Knees Get Lazy!

I've told you before that Doug always woke me long before sunrise with a patented, "Pollard, we're burning daylight!" And I've described the delicious buckwheat cakes and homemade molasses he made to fill my belly. But before any of that happened...in advance of waking his helper...before stirring the pancake batter...Doug Harrell sat in the dim morning light, Bible in hand, seeking the face and will of his Father.

We had a productive garden in the summer of 2010...a time when much of Mitchell County looked like scorched earth. Corn...tomatoes...beans...okra...broccoli...survived despite the drought – and water flowed from dry ground. I believe, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that God rewarded the faithfulness of my friend Farmer Doug Harrell...the Lord made that water flow...all because he never lets his prayin' knees get lazy!

And the water continued to fill that muddy reservoir until the rain fell again.

Praise God and Amen!

Still Humbled in the Hills,
Farmer Clint



Mountain View Corrections

Turn Your Faith Loose

By Don Stafford
Mitchell County

Imagine having enough faith to impress God. That's exactly what happened in Luke chapter 7: 1-10. A centurion, a commanding officer of the Roman army, came to Jesus on behalf of his servant who was sick and tormented. When Jesus offered to go to the centurion's home and heal his servant, the officer said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed". V7

Now here was a man who understood the power of words V 8. He was, after all, an army officer. When he spoke, everyone listened, and then they did what he said. Now Jesus responded quickly because the man's words were full of faith. He said "I have not found so much faith in all of Israel". The faith that so impressed Jesus was the centurion's willingness to believe without requiring a sign or wonder from heaven. All he needed in order to believe that Jesus could heal his servant was the Word. "Speak the Word only," He said. And within the hour his servant was healed.

The Bible says, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word". Someone told the centurion that Jesus was all powerful and that He could do all things. They told him how He spoke as one with authority and not as the Pharisee's. How He could heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind and cause the lame to walk, and how he loved all those who needed Him.

Jesus can help you and me with our problems and heart aches. All we need to do is turn our FAITH Loose and see what will happen.

Don is the Pastor of Ledger Baptist Church and a chaplain at Mountain View Corrections



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What the Issues of Racism and Abortion Have in Common

By Dr. Mark Creech

During the 1930s, the Federal Writers' Project sponsored remarkable interviews with former slaves. The project was based on the premise that no one could better describe the institution of slavery in America than someone who had experienced it. These experiences were recorded for posterity, and today the Library of Congress contains more than 2,000 incredible slave narratives.

Recently, I came across a book edited by Belinda Hurmence titled, *My Folks Don't Want Me to Talk about Slavery*. Hurmence reviewed and compiled 21 first person collections of the more than 170 interviews by the Federal Writers' Project that were of former slaves from my home state, North Carolina.

Here's an excerpt from that book. The person speaking is former slave, Jacob Manson. At the time of the interview, Mr. Manson was 86 years old and lived on North Haywood Street in Raleigh.

"I belonged to Colonel Bun Eden. His plantation was in Warren County, and he owned about fifty slaves or more...

"Our cabins was built of poles and had stick and dirt chimneys, one door, and one little window at the back end of the cabin. Some of the houses had dirt floors. Our clothing was poor and homemade.

"Many of the slaves went bareheaded and barefooted. Some wore rags around their heads, and some wore bonnets. We had poor food, and the young slaves was fed out of troughs. The food was put in a trough, and the little n@#*@#* gathered around and et. The chilun was looked after by the old slave women who were unable to work in the fields, while the mothers of the babies worked. The women plowed and done other work as the men did. No books or learning of any kind was allowed. No prayer meetings was allowed, but we sometimes went to the white folks' church.

"When bad storms come, they let us rest, but they kept us in the fields so long sometimes that the storm caught us before we could get to the cabins...

"Marster lived in the great house. He didn't do any work... went dressed up all the time, and had n@#*@#* to wash his feet and comb his hair...

"Marster would not have any white overseers. He had n@#*@#* foreman... He liked some of the n@#*@#* womens too good to have any other white man playing around them. He had his sweethearts among his slave women. I ain't no man for telling false stories. I tells the truth, and that is the truth. At that time, it was a hard job to find a marster that didn't have women among his slaves. That was a general thing among the slave owners. One of the slave girls on a plantation near us went to her missus and told her about her marster forcing her to let him have nothing to do with her, and her missus told her, 'Well, go on, you belong to him.'

"We worked all day and some of the night, and a slave who made a week, even after doing that, was lucky if he got off without getting a beating. We got mighty bad treatment, and I just want to tell you, a n@#*@#* didn't stand as much show there as a dog did. They whipped for most any little trifle. They whipped me, so they said, just to help me get a quicker gait.

"I think slavery was a mighty bad thing, though it's been no bed of roses since, but then no one could whip me no more."

Reading such words today, it's hard to believe there ever was a time in our country when the racist subjugation of one group of people was not considered a grave injustice. What's even harder to believe is that members of Christendom in partnership with Muslims in North Africa initiated the slave trade to the New World.

Gilbert M. James in Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics notes: "When voices were raised against this inhuman traffic, particularly by influential men and representatives of powerful organizations, the slaveholding interests were driven to find moral justification for enslaving human beings. As a result, a vast body of literature developed on the Scriptural justification of slavery, to which large segments of the church in the South gave support. The churches' defense of slavery



became so wide-spread that: 'the American Anti-Slavery Society observed in their 'Resolutions' of May 7, 1844, that no institution is more hostile to the anti-slavery movement than the professedly Christian church in this country.'"

Throughout the annals of history, one may find professing Christians who led in the way of folly and wickedness. Yet in every case, such evil was never because of Christianity but in spite of it. It was never because of what Christianity actually taught but a perversion of its actual position.

This same error today, I believe, is being made with respect to abortion. Although it is evangelical Christians and Catholics who are largely making the case against this wanton and gruesome destruction of the innocent unborn up to more than 60 million, there are still a number of pro-choice Catholic groups. Christian Protestant denominations that have official and long-standing pro-choice positions include the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, and the United Church of Christ."

Let's not forget that, despite the stain of much of the churches' support for slavery in the past, it was also Christianity which produced a William Wilberforce and the Clapham Saints who had a profound influence in abolishing the slave trade. And it was Christian abolitionists that were the driving force behind ending slavery in America.

The fight against racism and the struggle to end abortion are both highlighted and emphasized in the month of January. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is celebrated on Monday, January 15th, and Sanctity of Human Life Day is observed on Monday, January 22nd.

Both issues, racism and the sanctity of human life, are addressed by God's creative purpose "in the beginning" to make man after his own image. Every person carries the divine image. Therefore, we should never unjustly disaffect, degrade, or destroy the life of any fellow human being at any stage or station.

Here's a final thought: May God hasten the day when our nation might record and listen with awe to the first-person testimonies of those who were targeted for abortion, and for one blessed reason or another survived, during the sad days when it was still legal.

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



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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

Questions with Answers

By Billy Graham

For decades, Billy Graham's 'My Answer' column has provided easy-to-read, Biblical answers to difficult spiritual questions.

Each week, new answers are posted on BillyGraham.org, where readers can search for specific topics or scroll through hundreds of time-tested posts from Billy Graham and the BGEA team.

Last year, the most-clicked answer pages were visited hundreds of thousands of times. Perhaps you or someone you know has wondered about the answer to one of these questions.

- 1. Are we living in the last times?
- 2. What is the rapture?
- 3. What happens the first minute after we die?
- 4. Is it OK for a Christian's body to be cremated?
- 5. Does a Christian have to tithe (give away 10%)?

Do you have a question about what it means to know Jesus Christ as your Savior? You can explore the answer and chat with a trained coach who's waiting to help you.

Q:

How bad is the world going to have to get before God finally steps in and Jesus comes back? I get very concerned when I see all the evil things that are happening in the world today. Are we living in the last times?

A:

The Bible warns us against making precise predictions about the exact time of Jesus' return—but His return is certain, and we may well be living in the last days before He comes again. The Bible says, "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here" (Romans 13:12).

Shortly before returning to Heaven Jesus told His disciples that someday He would come back to establish His Kingdom. But before that could take place, He said, certain things would have to happen—and we see many of these today. For example, He said that before His return the Gospel must be preached throughout the world (see Mark 13:10). Never before has this been possible—but now it is, through radio and the Internet and other modern means of communication.

You also have placed your finger on another sign Jesus gave: Satan's final attempt to halt God's work through a massive onslaught of evil. Our world is no stranger to evil; Satan has always been working to stop God's plans. But God's enemies now have access to modern weapons of mass destruction, and no one can predict what the outcome will be. Jesus said, "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. ... Nation will rise against nation" (Matthew 24:6-7).

The real question, however, is this: Are you ready for Christ's return? You can be, by turning to Him and putting your faith and trust in Him. Don't take His warnings lightly, but commit your life without delay to Jesus Christ. Are you ready for Christ's return?

Q:

What is the rapture?

A:

There are many Christians who believe that the second coming of Jesus Christ will be in two phases. First, He will come for believers, both living and dead, in the "rapture" (read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). In this view, the rapture—which is the transformation and catching up of all Christians, dead or alive, to meet Christ in the air—will be secret, for it will be unknown to the world of unbelievers at the time of its happening.

The effect of this removal, in the absence of multitudes of people, will, of course, be evident on earth. Then, second, after a period of seven years of tribulation on earth, Christ will return to the earth with His church, the saints who were raptured (Matthew 24:30, 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:13, Revelation 1:7). He will be victorious over His enemies and will reign on the earth for 1,000 years (the millennium) with His saints, the church.

Signs of the end of the world? Read this Biblical wisdom from Billy Graham and Franklin Graham.

After 1,000, living unbelievers and the wicked dead now raised to life will be judged at the great white throne judgment. They will then be cast into the lake of fire, while the saved will live forever with Christ in a new heaven and earth (Revelation, chapters 19-22).

Be ready to meet Christ by giving your life to Him today.

Many other evangelical Christians believe that Christ's return and the rapture will not occur until the seven years of the tribulation have ended. As far as the latter view is concerned, the rapture will not be secret, since it will be part of Christ's visible and triumphant return to end this present evil age (1 Thessalo-



nians 4:13-17). At this point, interpreters differ as to whether there will be a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth or whether the white throne judgment and the new heaven and earth will immediately appear.

All Christians do not agree on every detail of what will occur in the final events of this world's history. Some of these events and their order of occurrence have simply not been made clear in the Bible. What is important is that all Christians hold in common that Christ will ultimately return bodily, visibly, and gloriously to reign and rule with His resurrected and transformed saints forever and ever. The details of this great event will be made known in God's own time.

Are you rapture ready? Read more in this Bible study from Anne Graham Lotz.

Q:

What happens to us in the first minute after we die? Do we enter heaven immediately, or do our souls go into some kind of a sleep until the end of time, when our souls and our bodies will be reunited? I've always had lots of questions about heaven.

A:

The Bible doesn't answer all our questions about heaven and life after death—and the reason is because our minds are limited, and heaven is far too glorious for us to understand. Someday, all of our questions will be answered—but not yet. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "Now I know in part; then I shall know fully" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

However, the Bible certainly does indicate that when we die we enter immediately into God's presence if we belong to Christ. From our earthly point of view, death looks somewhat like sleep—but not from God's point of view. Paul declared, "We are confident (of eternal life), I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). Elsewhere he wrote, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Philippians 1:23).

Later, we will be given new bodies—bodies that will never age or be subject to death, because they will be like Christ's resurrection body. As the Bible says, "The dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Is your hope in Christ? Death is a reality—but so is God's offer of salvation in Christ. Don't put off your decision for Him, because you could be called into eternity at any moment—and then it will be too late.

Don't wait, invite Christ into your life today.

Q:

When a Christian dies, is it all right to cremate the body?

A:

The Bible does not give specific directions for the disposal of the body following death. Bible-era practices are described in Unger's Bible Dictionary as follows: "Interment in Bible times followed soon after death, as is evident in the narratives of the burial of Sarah (Genesis 23:1-20), Rachel (Genesis 35:19-20), and Rebekah's nurse (Genesis 35:8). The Hebrews did not normally cremate, except in most unusual cases of emergency, as in the case of Saul and his sons (1 Samuel 31:11-13).

Later Babylonians burned their dead and deposited their ashes in ornate funerary urns, as did Greeks and Romans. Hebrews in later time, indicated by the numerous ossuaries found in New Testament Palestine, also practiced cremation." Christians will want to show respect for the body. Even though the essential person or spirit has moved on to an eternal destiny, the body is the tangible reminder of all that person meant to us. In addition, the body is destined for resurrection, transformation, and reunion with the spirit at Christ's return.

Whether burial or cremation best expresses that appropriate respect is a very personal decision. The wishes of other close family members and friends should also be considered in any decision, because they are the ones who will live with the decision and with the memories.

At the resurrection it will not make any difference whether a person's body has been buried or cremated. God knows how to raise the body, either in the resurrection of life or the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28-29). The new body of a Christian will be a radically changed and glorified body like the body of the exalted Christ. It will be an eternal, spiritual body never again to experience weakness, disease, suffering, or death (1 Corinthians 15:35-54 and Philippians 3:20-21).

Q:

Does a Christian have to tithe?

A:

Christians who want to please the Lord often have questions about tithing. The dictionary defines the word "tithe" as "a tenth part of something paid as a voluntary contribution or as a tax especially for the support of a religious establishment." It was a common practice in the Old Testament and was required of members of the nation of Israel.



continued on page 18

Many Christians believe that this principle of giving one-tenth should be carried over to the New Testament in giving to the church and other Christian organizations. Billy Graham would fit into this category. He has said, "We have found in our own home, as have thousands of others, that God's blessing upon the nine-tenths, when we tithe, helps it to go farther than ten-tenths without His blessing." However, even then the question as to whether to tithe from one's net or gross income is not answered in Scripture, nor is the question of whether to give it all to the local church or to include other ministries. We feel that such decisions should be based on personal conviction.

Other Christians who tithe do so simply because they respect the Old Testament principle and find it a helpful place to begin in their giving. They do not believe, however, that tithing is a New Testament obligation. It is not mentioned in the New Testament except where it is describing Old Testament practices or in the Gospels where Jesus is addressing people who were under the Old Testament law. Note Jesus' comments to the Pharisees in Luke 11:42.

A New Testament teaching on giving which may be helpful to you is found in 1 Corinthians 16:2: "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income." This passage brings out four points: we should give individually, regularly, methodically and proportionately.

The matter of your giving is between you and God, and He always takes into account our circumstances. He knows when they are beyond our power to direct and control. The important thing is that we see giving as a privilege and not a burden. It should not be out of a sense of duty, but rather out of love for the Lord and a desire to see His kingdom advanced.

Second Corinthians 9:6-7 says: "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

The deeper question, you see, is this: What has priority in our lives? Is Christ really first—or do we put ourselves and our own desires first? Make sure Christ is first in your life, and then ask Him to guide you.

Love

By Pastor Terry Cheek Th.D.
McDowell County



February is a month famous for one thing, LOVE. I'm thinking Valentine's Day! We set aside February 14th every year to recognize our love and affection for husbands and wives. I realize there is no Valentine's Day in the Bible, if you're a student of God's word you know that everyday should be Valentine's Day for the husband and wife united by God.

I write specifically to husbands and wives because God ordained this relationship from creation. From Adam and Eve and throughout God's word, we find the relationship of a man and woman as husband and wife equally yoked as God's plan for the family and procreation.

It is heartbreaking to see what man has done to marriage and human sexuality. Consider the book of Genesis and begin there. The fall of man in the Garden and Sodom and Gomorrah are both examples that took us down a dark path concerning sexuality. Today man tries to justify many things; same sex relationships, couples living together outside of marriage, adultery, pornography, bi-sexuality and even pedophilia as legitimate expressions of love. God calls these and more like them sin. For the Christian marriage, Valentine's Day is not about sexual perversion, it is a celebration of Godly love. There is no genuine love apart from the love God calls a man and woman into as husband and wife. For example, in Hebrews 13:4 we read "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

I want to take this time to honor biblical marriage. Not just marriage, but biblical marriage. There is a difference. In Deuteronomy God told Israel not to marry into the neighboring people. Not because of race, but because of idolatry. The neighboring people did not know the God of Israel, they worshipped false gods and images made by their hands. God did not want that influence in His people. From 2 Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" This passage goes much deeper than marriage, it relates to every aspect of the believer's life. Yet, it does include marriage. This is written to the believer. We are responsible for how we approach marriage.

Like many pastors, I counsel. Too often this counseling involves marriages. I have heard too many husbands and wives tell me if they only knew the other person was not saved. Before I marry anyone, I ask specifically if both are saved, are they born again. This is the foundation of a Godly marriage. I will not marry a couple unless both have a testimony of being saved, and both have a home church to reference back too. I counsel singles to know the spiritual condition of the person you're dating. Just claiming they are a Christian isn't enough. There are too many definitions of a Christian floating around today. Ask pointed questions, where do they go to church, how long have they been going there, what work are they involved with, what is the pastor's name, visit with them and listen to the conversations with others. If they are well known or not, the conversation will tell you quickly. I'm not trying to break up dating couples, I'm trying to save future marriages.



A man or woman with a lustful heart will tell you anything you want to hear so they may fulfill their fantasy. It may be sex, money, power, influence or even a quick escape from an unwanted home life. What ever the reason, if it isn't a Godly marriage or hasn't become one through the salvation of husband and wife it has little chance of surviving. If the devil helped make it, he will destroy it. It is always God's desire for a marriage to be successful. A Christian should never give up on their marriage. The Christian can be the testimony God uses to win the spouse. That doesn't mean a Christian should live in dangerous conditions. Separation and divorce are two different things.

A Godly marriage is a beautiful marriage. A man and woman both born again by grace and through faith in Christ alone. Christ is the foundation of their lives and will be the foundation of their marriage. These marriages have problems too, all marriages do. There are faults and failures, even sin from temptation. Where Christ reigns there is HOPE! Divorce will not be mentioned in the Christian marriage, why, because the Christian marriage has a foundation that will not crumble and both husband and wife will want to fight for it. If you and your spouse are both born again praise God for that, many today can't say that. Enjoy Valentine's Day as your special day of the year to worship God for His creation of marriage. Remember to cherish each other as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise, also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." Sound counsel from God's word concerning marriage, love and Valentine's Day, until next month may God keep you firmly in His grip.

Terry Cheek is Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Marion.






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Enjoying Everyday Life

Discover Your Self-worth

By Joyce Meyer

Every person on earth needs to know they matter—they need to know they're valuable and they mean something to someone. The problem is when people don't get a good start in life, they often waste their lives searching for self-worth in all the wrong places.

In the world today, people so often base their value and importance on what they do, how much education they have, who they know, what kind of clothes they wear, how they look, their job title, and the list goes on.

But when worldly standards determine your sense of self-worth, you'll always be striving to please people...and it will derail you from your God-given destiny. The only way to find true security and have a healthy self-esteem is by knowing and experiencing the love of God.

The apostle Paul talks about this in Galatians 1:10. He says: "Am I now trying to win the favor and approval of men, or of God? Or am I seeking to please someone? If I were still trying to be popular with men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" (AMP).

He's basically saying, "If I were trying to be popular with people, I wouldn't be serving God and know that He loves me."

I can say with certainty that if I was trying to be popular with people, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing today. When God spoke to my heart about His call on my life to teach the Word, I didn't receive much support from those around me.

As I began to step out and do what God placed in my heart, some of my friends and family told me I shouldn't be doing it. I was even asked to leave the church I was attending at the time, and I ended up losing friendships that I thought were important to me.

It was a very difficult season, but I discovered that while it's not always easy to do what God calls us to do, obedience to Him is always worth it in the end. Doing things God's way is the only thing that works in the long run. There are people in your life—I'm talking about people other than your spouse and children—who may come and go over time, but God will always be with you because He loves you and He promises to never leave you nor forsake you (see Hebrews 13:5). The bottom line is you are valuable because God loves you and He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for you. Your worth is not based on how you look, who you know, your title at work or any of the other superficial things the world considers impressive.

After Paul met Christ and became a born-again believer, he came to realize that everything else was meaningless compared to the priceless privilege of knowing God. I absolutely love what he says in Philippians 3:8:

"I count everything as loss compared to the priceless privilege and supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord [and of growing more deeply and thoroughly acquainted with Him—a joy unequalled]. For His sake I have lost everything, and I consider it all garbage, so that I may gain Christ."

The truth that God loves you is what makes you valuable. He created you because He loves you and wants to have a personal relationship with you. He has wonderful plans and purposes for your life, and His love for you is unconditional—He loves you just as much on your worst day as He does on your best day!

No matter what your past is like, where you're from, what you've done, or where you are today, God is there for you and He loves you! He loves us all the same, and He wants to meet us right where we are to heal our wounded souls and bring us out of the messes we're in—whether it's a mess we've created or the result of what other people have done to us.

After the years of being abused by my dad and abandoned by my mother (who knew what he was doing but didn't have the courage to stand up to him), I was so messed up! I felt worthless, guilty, damaged, used, condemned and terribly insecure. I tried to find my worth and value in many things, especially in work. And living this way just made me more miserable, angry and messed up.

It was so wonderful to discover that God loves me and to find the healing and restoration I desperately needed through my relationship with Him. The truth is God is so much more important to us than any person in the world could ever be! I want to encourage you to spend time seeking God in prayer, studying what the Bible says about who He is and how He loves you. Meditate on scriptures like Ephesians 1:4-5, Romans 8, Psalm 27:10 and Isaiah 38:17. Ask God to help you learn to receive His love and find your true worth in Him. He chose you on purpose...He wants you and He loves you...and there's nothing more valuable than that.

For more on this topic, order Joyce's four-CD series Moving Forward. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, Enjoying Everyday Life, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting www.joycemeyer.org.

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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.



The Rotary Club of Spruce Pine

Mitchell County SafePlace

By Doug Sudduth
Mitchell County

The Rotary Club of Spruce Pine received an informative program about Mitchell County SafePlace from Dr. Dan Barron and Kellie Biggs when the club met on December 21. Introduced by Rotarian Elaine Percival, Dr. Barron spoke about the numerous agencies that receive grants from the Fund for Mitchell County and then invited Ms. Biggs to talk about her work with the Teen Dating Violence Prevention Program. Over the last two years 620 students, ranging in age from 11 to 16, have had the opportunity to participate in the Safe Dates program. The evidenced-based curriculum helps in the prevention of dating abuse, a factor linked to alcohol and other drug abuse. Students are better able to understand both emotional and physical abuse, recognize warning signs, setting boundaries, and helping friends who may be in abusive relationships. As one student said, "This class is important so that at a young age we can become aware of the physical and mental abuse that can be caused by dating abuse." Spruce Pine Rotarians support the program that Ms. Biggs has implemented in Mitchell County Schools and applaud her efforts to keep our children safe.



Rotarian Elaine Percival presenting a locally handmade Rotary mug to Kellie Biggs

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

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Grace Community Church

Prank Called by Worry

By Jerry Lewis
McDowell County

Worry is like an unwanted sales call, an untimely bill, an annoying interruption in cell service. It doesn't seek permission, doesn't give advance warning, and stays longer than you want. It cares not for whatever else has filled your day and will take all your brain and heart space.

How do you close the door when worry knocks? How do you hang up the phone when worry calls?



Micah gives an answer in 7:7, "But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."

I said this Sunday and it bears repeating: there must be "but as for me" times in your life. Some will be bigger than others. However, if you've

determined that worry has to be gone, that it is a sin you are no longer willing to tolerate (I have), then I'll share with you what I'm doing.

I'm memorizing Micah 7:7. Sounds simple I know. Just yesterday, worry called-interrupted an otherwise pleasant drive down Highway 70. And when it did, I answered with Micah 7:7. I prayed out loud, "But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." Worry left.

I'm not trying to be trite or dismissive. I'm simply saying that worry is no match for God's word--and that I've got to learn how to answer worry's call. I'm not sure I can ever avoid worry's calls--perhaps one day they will come less and less. I do know how to answer them.

Will you join me? Answer worry with God's Word.

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



Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

What We Preach

By Shawn Thomas
Burke County

"To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ." (Ephesians 3:8)

Here Paul shares the essence of the Christian message. Both what this message is, and what it is NOT, are significant:

The message we have, Paul says, is "the unfathomable riches of Christ." Jesus Christ Himself is the Christian message. He is "the way, and the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through (Him)." (John 14:6) In Him is found "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" Ephesians 1:3 tells us. So just as Paul shared in I Corinthians 1:23, "We preach Christ crucified ...". HE is our message.

This message is also NOT what many "Christian" ministers and ministries focus on today:

- It is NOT a proclamation of physical healing and material prosperity.
- It is NOT "positive thinking."
- It is NOT merely "family values."
- It is NOT "church growth."
- It is NOT conservative politics.

Some of these things may be good, or have certain good elements. But they are not to be the focus of the message of a Christian church or ministry. Only Jesus can save (John 14:6). And every spiritual blessing is found "in Him," Ephesians 1 repeatedly shows us... So as Paul points out here, our message is "to preach ... the unfathomable riches of Christ."

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



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Tim's Treasures

Somebody to Love

By Tim Tron
Burke County

"Can anybody find me, somebody, to love....?"

The strains of the electric guitar were screaming to the wailing of Freddie Mercury's nearly falsetto pitch. The singer with the one-of-a-kind voice echoed in my ears as he kept repeating the refrain, "Can anybody find me, someone, to love." For something different for my run tonight, I picked a playlist a little outside of my norm; Queen was on the docket. Back when I began running in the late seventies, at the tender age of 15, they were one of my favorite rock bands. Naïve, I had no idea of their lifestyle. To me, they made music that was challenging and inspiring. My own musical talents were limited to the organ. The combination of opera with rock genres that Queen had become known for, resonated within my young being. It was all that mattered at that time. Besides, who didn't remember listening to "We are the Champions" in at least one High School pep rally?

That was many years past, at a time when the words teen and trouble went hand in hand. Like so many youths of our world, then and now, who seek someone to love them, so it was in mine.

As ancient legs churned below my thoughts, my mind recalled those pathways so many years ago. Thousands of miles would pass beneath my feet before my running career would end. The body may forget, but the mind relinquishes the memories less. Slowly, the pace increased until there was a smooth cadence. My fingers pressed the speed button on the treadmill up until it felt this was the proper altitude for tonight's flight.

Some call it the runner's high when the body's endorphins are released to protect our muscles from pain. Call it another one of God's little miracles. When our muscles are torn in the process of exercising, the endorphins buffer the pain, allowing us to push ourselves farther than we might otherwise. The more we become physically fit, the greater the number of endorphins are released. Once we become one with our body, we can almost achieve a feeling of running on air. So, it was this evening, at least for a few sparse moments, when I had finally found a rhythm that matched its pace and was back in the groove. It felt good, but I knew it wouldn't last. The belt on the treadmill flowed beneath as the gray sky outside the fitness center faded away.

"I've got to get out of this prison cell," Freddie sang. The image of this earthly body came to mind, and the day when we meet Jesus in the sky, in our new bodies, made whole and anew. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."-1 Thess. 4:17

It felt as if I were being lifted beyond that cursory station in life, away from the toil of keeping that decaying shell fit. Before me was the image of the cross. His body, abused, flayed, and bloody, hung limp. It felt as if my approach was on hand and knees. Beyond me, the song continued, "Somebody, tooo, toooo, love."

There before me hung that precious life, the Son of God. I had found him, somebody to love, and what was made all the more precious, He loved me more. As the ancient rock song played behind me, the love of Jesus began to wash over my soul. His love flowed through my veins like a river of the Spirit descending from on high.

I was unworthy of such love.

There was no compassion on earth combined that could match the feeling that poured from the cross. My humble being crawled beneath his, looking up at the shattered human form, where once abode God in the flesh. Tears formed in my eyes as I looked upon his image.

"Come and see," he would tell the disciples when they asked where he dwelt. Yet, He was no longer here. We could not go and abide with him on that day for he had begun his crossing of that great strand. He would fall into the depths of hell, and then rise from the dead and become the resurrected Christ. My mind could see the lifeless, blue-tinted foot hanging limp. Blood crusted upon the grayish image. The ground below him stained with his precious blood. His own life source that was to be used to wash away my darkness. He had given all so that my sins could be forgiven, so that someday we may abide with Him, not just for the tenth hour, but for all eternity.

My hand reached to touch him, but before there was contact, the voice of the song screamed again, "Find Me Somebody to Love."

And I had.

He was there, He was always there. The guitar wailed, the strains flooding together until their voltage surged through me, uniting with the other from above until all was one. I received Him, wholly, without question, and he flooded my soul with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was with me.

The black ribbon flowed underneath as the overwhelming feeling of God's love warmed my entire being within. My heart panged for Freddie, for his lifestyle caused his death; AIDS. Had he come to know Christ before he passed this life? Had he found somebody to love? His memory lives on today in the form of music, a gift from God. But more importantly, had he received the most precious gift before dying?

Had he too received Christ?

"Someday I'm gonna be free," his voice rang out, and yes, we will be, free of



this earthly prison cell, called a human body.

I pray that Freddie did find somebody to love him more. Someday we shall find out the answer, but for now, I know for certain I had found Somebody to Love, and His name is Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

"Can anybody find me Somebody to Love?"

No, you're not going crazy because everybody's trying to put you down, you only have to believe. Once you find Him, you have found Somebody to Love, and in return, someone who will love you beyond your understanding. You will finally be free. Death will hold no sting.

Can anybody find me Somebody to Love?

Yes, I can Freddie, Yes, I can.

His name is Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God, again and again.

Forever and ever, Amen.

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.



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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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Vickie A. Hogan Multidisciplinary Simulation Lab

McDowell Tech

By Michael Lavender
McDowell County



McDowell Technical Community College in Marion recently dedicated a new simulation lab for health science students in the Hemlock Building on the college's main campus. The Vickie A. Hogan Multidisciplinary Simulation Lab will be used to train and educate students preparing for careers as nurse aides, practical nurses, registered nurses, phlebotomists, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and those preparing for related careers in health science.

Funding for facility renovation, equipment and related expenses was provided by generous gifts and grants from A.C. "Bud" and Thurlene Hogan, Appalachian Regional Commission, Bank of America, Cannon Foundation, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, and The McDowell Endowment.

"We are grateful to each of these individuals and organizations for their support of the college and our programs," said Dr. John Gossett, MTCC President. "We are especially thankful to Bud and Thurlene Hogan, who helped us conceive and initiate plans for this facility before Mr. Hogan's death last February."

The Multidisciplinary Simulation Lab was dedicated in honor and memory of the Hogan's late daughter, Vickie, who had dreamed of becoming a medical missionary, but was unable to do so because of a series of strokes that began when she was in elementary school. She went on to finish nursing school, became a nurse and eventually worked with stroke patients at what was then Thom's Rehabilitation Hospital in Asheville, where she herself had been patient years earlier.

"Research has shown that simulation labs allow students in clinical programs to get important hands-on experience performing procedures they will later use with real patients in hospitals, medical facilities and in emergency, field-based settings," said Dr. Penny Cross, Vice-President for Learning and Student Services.

"The main difference," she said, "between providing care in a simulated lab and in the field, is a live person and surroundings that mimic real life. However, our newest mannequins are extremely life-like, without the risk of injury to live patients as students begin their practical training. Our ambulance box, exactly the same size as a real one, has been set up to teach EMT students how to provide quality medical care in the confining space of an ambulance."

"MTCC is the first college in North Carolina to have the most up-to-date version of Victoria, a medical simulation mannequin," said Judy Melton, Dean of Health Sciences, who has coordinated the creation of this lab. "We are excited to have the latest, cutting-edge technology on campus to assist our health science students in attaining their educational goals."

"I am convinced that students trained in our new lab will be some of the best-prepared health care providers anywhere," said Gossett, the MTCC President. "We are raising the overall skill level of our students and they, in turn, will raise the level of patient care in medical facilities and emergency settings throughout the region."

Michael is the Media and Promotions Director for McDowell Tech in Marion NC.



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Dave Says:

Dear Dave,
At what point can you spend, and have a little fun, when you're following the Baby Steps plan? Jen

Dear Jen,
Everyone likes having fun, and there's nothing wrong with spending some cash if you can afford it. I just want people to make sure they have their finances in order first.
I recommend completing the first three Baby Steps before you run out and buy a bunch of toys. Just to review, Baby Step 1 is saving \$1,000 for a starter emergency fund. Baby Step 2 is where you pay off all debt — except for your home — using the debt snowball method. In Baby Step 3, you go back and fully fund your emergency fund with enough cash to cover three to six months of expenses. Completing the first three Baby Steps puts you on pretty solid financial ground. At this point, once you've saved up the cash, it's okay to take a vacation or buy a reasonably-priced toy. But don't have so much fun that you forget about the other Baby Steps. Baby Step 4 means putting 15 percent of your income into pre-tax retirement plans, like mutual funds and Roth IRAs. Don't neglect saving for college if you have kids. That's Baby Step 5. Baby Steps 6 and 7 are paying off the house early and building wealth and giving like never before.
Remember, there are only three things you can do with money — spend, save, and give. You can do all three without putting yourself in a bind by following my plan!—Dave

Dear Dave,
I have cousins who are thinking about moving back to Connecticut from Virginia. They'll be renting for a while, and I have an unoccupied rental house. Do you think renting to family is a bad idea? Katherine

Dear Katherine,
Renting to family can work out just fine, as long as there are clearly understood rules and boundaries in place ahead of time. Both parties should understand there must be a landlord and tenant relationship with regards to all aspects of the rental agreement.
Tenants have the right to expect a landlord to make needed repairs promptly, pay the taxes and insurance on a property on time, and do all the other things a landlord should do as outlined in the rental agreement. As a landlord, you have the right to expect the rent to be paid early or on time, and for the tenant to respect the property and guidelines in the rental agreement. A landlord also has the right to evict a tenant through fair, legal process if they violate the terms of the agreement. When it comes to these business dealings, you're wearing the landlord cap, and they're wearing the renter's cap. At Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other family events, the caps come off and you're family. But you don't get to play the cousin card as a way to keep from paying rent, and you don't get to play that game to avoid your duties as a landlord.
Phrases like, "Well, I just thought because you're my cousin" have no place in these situations. Make plans to have a full-blown, in-depth conversation about every aspect of the rental agreement and relationship before anything is signed. If you don't, there's a possibility someone will develop a sense of entitlement about something.
And that's no good in any type of relationship!—Dave

Dear Dave,
My sister has bad credit due to a lot of late payments. She has finally started to change her ways and get control of her finances, because she and her fiancé want to make an offer on a house. The bank won't approve it if she is on the loan, and his income alone isn't enough to get the amount they need. His parents are well-off, and they have offered to co-sign on the loan. Is this a bad idea? Rhonda

Dear Rhonda,
It's a really bad idea. Those two have no business thinking about a house right now, and his parents are about to make things even worse with their loving, misguided help.
If you need a co-signer, you're nowhere near ready to buy a home. They need to slow down. I mean, they're just engaged. They don't even need a house at this point. They should get married, live in a cheap apartment for a while, and work on paying off their debts. After that, they need to save up an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses, then start setting cash aside for a huge down payment on their first, modest home.
These two have a bad case of house fever. And mom and dad need to step back, look at things objectively, and realize they would not be blessing these kids by helping get them into a home they obviously can't afford!—Dave

Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including *The Total Money Makeover*. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 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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The Light Shines in the Darkness

The Darkness Is Spreading—Rapidly.

By Franklin Graham



Every day, it seems like yet another menacing cloud has spread its dark shadow across the land.

The relentless reporting of widespread sexual harassment has dominated the news cycle for months. Television hosts, congressmen, Hollywood elites, journalists and businessmen have all confessed to grievous acts of sexual harassment. The repercussions have been enormous, as women across the country have accused employers and co-workers of inappropriate behavior.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Online pornography use is at an all-time high. Gay and transgender characters are now a common sight on television, even in programs for small children. Atheists are hell-bent on eradicating any mention of God in town halls, schools and sporting events. Drug addiction, especially to new opioid painkillers, is an epidemic in many parts of the country, particularly in rural areas with high joblessness.

Mass shootings are no longer a rare occurrence, and they happen in once-sacred places like churches and historically safe spaces like schools and public venues. The weapons of terrorists are no longer just homemade bombs but also cars and trucks, which can run down citizens in broad daylight on busy city thoroughfares. Abroad, the darkness is just as widespread.

Christians across the Middle East suffer intense persecution from Islamic terrorists and oppressive governments. In so many parts of the world, it's never been a more dangerous time to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some think we are on the verge of nuclear war as North Korea continues to ratchet up the very real threat of an atomic conflict that could have catastrophic consequences for the entire world. The thought of multiple nuclear weapons being launched from countries like North Korea and Iran (which the North Koreans supply with arms) and reciprocal military responses is frightening indeed.



The Bible is clear that moral and spiritual darkness has always been the case for a world that rejects and refuses to acknowledge God. Describing a godless culture that hates God, the Apostle Paul said that *"they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened"* (Romans 1:21).

Moral darkness invariably leads to unruly, disobedient living that defies God's commandments and principles, setting the stage for lifestyles and behavior that eventually reap destructive consequences.

What I believe is happening today that I certainly haven't seen in my lifetime is the incredibly swift spread of darkness across virtually every sector of our culture, here at home and in practically every region of the globe.

The Judeo-Christian worldview that once was predominant has seen serious erosion. The forces of evil are working on every front to undermine and destroy the foundations of a morally healthy society—respect for authority, the sacredness of the marriage union between a man and a woman, the sanctity of life for the unborn, and our freedom to take a stand for values that we know are right.

The Bible is clear that such moral chaos comes because people reject the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and the people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light" (John 3:19-20).

Jesus is the Light of the world. In fact, there is no light other than Christ. Those who walk in darkness are those who don't know the Savior of the World, the Author of Light.

For those of us who have repented of our sins and placed our faith in our Lord and Savior, *"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son"* (Colossians 1:13).

Paul put it this way as he described the Lord's commandment to him in his preaching: *"I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God"* (Acts 26:17-18).

Hell, itself is not only the absence of light, but it is complete, utter, total darkness. The Scriptures call it "outer darkness," a place that is reserved exclusively for the devil, fallen angels and unrepentant man.

But the Light that is from above, the Light of the World, will be the single source of all light in the new Heaven and the new earth. *"And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light"* (Revelation 22:5).

And we know that however great and wide the spread of darkness over the world may be, it can never extinguish the True Light. *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"* (John 1:5).

While I can—for as long as I can—as God gives me strength, I will proclaim Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). In the coming year, I will be proclaiming that Gospel in 18 cities along the West Coast of the U.S., as well as in Portugal, England, Armenia and Mexico.

It's our responsibility as believers to let our light shine before men, and to honor and glorify God by our good works and godly life, regardless of how evil the culture has become. The Bible calls us to be *"blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world"* (Philippians 2:15). ©2017 BGEA.

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. Is Jesus Christ the light of your life?

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

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Allen's Offerings

911. What's Your Emergency?

By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County

Yes, I'm calling for America. We are experiencing hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, flash floods, earthquakes, ice storms, blizzards, mud and rock slides. That is just natural disasters.

In other areas, we are experiencing snipers, terrorist attacks, suicide bombers, drug wars, illegal aliens, sexual abuse, child abuse, murders and human trade.

Some suffer from starvation, addiction, pride, lying, cheating, suicide, vulgarity, back biting, uncertainties and many medical issues.

We need the One to come to the aid of our Rescue. We need the Way, the Truth and the Life

- we need JESUS! America is Lost without this One to turn to. We have no hope nor future.

In our pulpits, men of God stand and preach the second coming of Jesus Christ. They refer to our land as the present-day Sodom and Gomorrah. With so many of us calling out "911" we cannot deny we're in trouble. We've given Satan too much lead way.

...because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 1 Peter 5:8

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14:6

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

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Romans 10:13

Jesus is the answer!

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



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Joy from Him

By: Joyce (Joy) Harwood Baldwin

YOUR LOVE

*How lovely is Your song oh Lord
So tender from above
It's sweet to know Your Spirit
As peaceful as a dove.*

*Fresh as a flower in sunshine
Clean as the spring waters flow
Soft as the rain in the morning
White as the new fallen snow.*

*No cloud can ever cover
The glory of Your face
As a beautiful horse at battle
With reins of love and grace.*

*Tho time could bring all wisdom
Of earth and heaven above
Nothing here could ever change
The wonders of Your Love.*



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.

Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge

Hospice Accreditation: Because Quality Matters

By Brent Price, Outreach Programs Coordinator
Mitchell County



As the number of healthcare providers in our community continues to steadily grow, choices are increasingly more difficult to make. Today it is more important than ever to be sure that your hospice provider has done all they can to guarantee the best possible care available.

Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge earned our hospice accreditation through the nationally recognized Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC) in 2016. The ACHC is a nonprofit accreditation organization that has stood as a symbol of quality and excellence since 1986.

On-site surveys are conducted every three years by ACHC surveyors who possess specific hospice expertise and experience. They follow a comprehensive review process that examines organizational structure, policies and procedures, and compliance with state and federal laws.

Hospice accreditation is not required by law and many hospice agencies choose not to become accredited. However, we know that accreditation reflects our dedication and commitment to meeting standards that clearly reveal a higher level of performance and patient care.

The process of review is rigorous and costly. Still, we believe that it is one of the most effective ways we can demonstrate and ensure our promise of outstanding care.

Accreditation sets us apart from other hospice providers by highlighting our dedication to the improvement of patient outcomes and safety. It provides a witness to our commitment to hospice standards and best practices while containing costs and continuously improving performance. When you need to choose a hospice provider find out if they have done the hard work to become accredited. From the deepest heart of our calling we seek to be faithful to the patients and families we serve. The choice to become ACHC accredited is an important way we have chosen to be true to our calling—an opportunity to give our utmost for His highest.

Hospice accreditation is important because quality really does matter—and most of all, because you matter to us.

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

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Highlighting Burnout

replenish | re-PLEN-ish
(v): To fill up again; to restore or make complete again

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. —Psalm 42:1 (ESV)

Burnout—it's real, and it can have major consequences. It can leave you empty, discouraged and exhausted, with little energy left for God. Sound familiar? Maybe it's time to replenish. Start here.



1. Get away

Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while. —Mark 6:31, NASB

You don't have to use vacation days or drive far away to take a break with God. You can pick a place close by to relax and simply enjoy His presence. Here are some ideas: a community park, a pool, a hammock or rocking chair, a quiet corner of an ice cream or coffee shop, a book store or library, or a spot by the water. You might even bring some music or a journal.

If you like to be active, try going on a hike or bike ride, kayaking, taking a one-person picnic, gardening or painting. Getting away doesn't have to mean a change in your physical location, as long as you're getting away from daily stresses to spend time with God.

2. Be still

Be still, and know that I am God. —Psalm 46:10a, NASB

Taking time to "be still" may be harder today than ever. So much screams for our attention in this fast-paced, digital world. In the Bible, the prophet Elijah heard God in the form of a "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). If we don't intentionally take time to turn down life's noise and be still, we could miss God's quiet message to our hearts.



Part of being still means taking a break from the demands of work, school and other activities and focusing on God. If you aren't intentionally setting aside one day a week to rest and worship, now is a good time to start.

3. Listen

A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel. —Proverbs 1:5, NASB

God often speaks to us in a still, small voice. Other times, He sends a meaningful message through a person or experience at the right moment. Yet, worry, stress and a growing "to-do" list can clutter our minds and keep us from listening.

O Thou

Whose stillness drowns earth's total noise—its grating sounds: progress, traffic, voice; flutterings of my frustration, mutterings, agitation; the screaming silences without, within; the din of questions clamoring for their "why?" and "how?" now! the rumblings of man's discontent, erupting hate, violence; war's distant thunder rolling near, and everywhere the cries of fear that paralyzes as it grips...and near at hand a faucet drips. O Thou, Whose stillness drowns earth's total noise, only in Thee is stillness found... And I rejoice.

4. Meditate

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. —Psalm 1:2, ESV

There are so many thoughts crowding our minds that it can be hard to focus. We're pulled in every direction, with this person or that thing demanding our attention. But then we come to a verse like Psalm 1:2, which tells us to meditate on God's Word. How exactly do you do that? And with such a hectic schedule? Here is thinking patterns to help:

- Think on these things:
- What is noble and right.
- What is pure.
- What is lovely and admirable.
- What is excellent and praiseworthy.

5. Be present

But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." —Luke 10:41-42, ESV

Find yourself going through the motions or so frazzled that you can't really enjoy a special moment? As the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10 reveals, we can't afford to be so busy or distracted that we fail to hear God's voice, experience His presence, or honor His goodness.

Are you Mary or Martha? Read Luke 10 and decide.

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Catawba River Baptist Association - Your Catawba River Baptist Association is partnering with Burke Hospice & Palliative Care to offer a grief recovery group beginning Tuesday, February 6th at our CRBA office.

GriefShare is where a friendly, caring group of people walk through life's most difficult experiences. Built around a 13-week video curriculum, GriefShare support group meets weekly to help those who face the challenges of grief and want to move from mourning to joy using scripture. To sign up for this special ministry please call 828-879-1601. Rev. Ken Baker of Hospice will be the facilitator.

Our Annual CRBA Royal Ambassador Racer Day will be Saturday, February 24th beginning @ 9 a.m. @ Oak Ridge Baptist Church in Connelly Springs. The cost is \$5 per car and kits can be purchased at our CRBA office or by visiting www.royalracers.com. Lunch will be provided for all attending.

This rally will highlight the variety of opportunities NC Baptists have to be involved in missions across our state, in our nation, and around the world. Featured will be worship, testimony, mission video, and a prayer time for missions. The rally is for men, women and youth- everyone interested in missions is encouraged to attend. A main focus of the rally will be state, national, international partnerships and projects (including Disaster Relief) that are supported by the NCMO. Baptists On Mission

A meal is provided for the NC Mission Rallies at no charge, but reservations are necessary to ensure an accurate meal count. The cutoff date for reserving a meal for the celebration is one week prior to the event. To register, please include the number of people you are registering under the "Choose Quantity" button at the bottom of the page under Region Rally Events and then click "Continue." You can also register by phone by calling Kailyn Eskridge at 919-459-5596. Meal 5:45 pm Missions Program 6:50 - 8:30 pm

Please join us at the Region 8 Missions Rally on Monday, February 12th at South River Baptist Church, 2659 S. Chipley Ford Rd. Statesville, NC. To register please go to <http://baptistsonmission.org/events/region-rallies>

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 - 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

@GodsClosetMorganton

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

The Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church will be offering FREE Blood Pressure Checks on Saturday, February 3rd., from 9:30 a.m., until 10:00 p.m., located at 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C.

Valentine Banquet - Sunday, February 11th., at 6:00 p.m., at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. Come and enjoy a delicious dinner and support the Morganton SDA Youth Pathfinder Club.

Please join us for our monthly Health Social - Sunday, February 25th., at 5:30 p.m. Please bring a plant-based dish and copies of the recipe to share if you would like! For directions and more information, please contact Cindy at 870-510-8048.

Town of Valdese Community Affairs & Tourism

mangi@valdesenc.gov | 828-879-2129 | visitvaldesec.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!

First Baptist of Marion - Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina Annual Gathering March 15-17, 2018 Knollwood Baptist Church Winston-Salem, NC Leadership Institute Thursday, March 15 Tunes & Tales Thursday, March 15 Friday Gathering Friday, March 16 All Are Called Forum Saturday, March 17 Mission Trip We are headed to Houston, Texas where we will partner with CBF Field Personnel to provide Hurricane Relief. Youth/Parent Info Meeting - Jan 28th, Noon

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@rocketsled-design.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 hip 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

Bits 'n Pieces

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

First Baptist Church Spruce Pine - will have a Spring Awakening with Dr. Jim Henry on March 24-25. Dr Jim is Pastor Emeritus of FBC Orlando where he served as Senior Pastor for over 30 years. He also is former SBC President in 1995-1996. Saturday March 24, 6:00 pm and Sunday March 25, 10:45 am and 6:00 pm. All Churches Welcome.

Support Group For Caregivers Of Those With Memory Loss To Hold Meetings The First Friday Of Each Month From 1-3PM

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

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

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

Mitchell County Baptist Association - Mitchell Baptist Association Mid-Year Meeting is February 26, 7:00 pm. Snow Hill Baptist Church in Bakersville. 2018 Bible Drills—are on Saturday, March 24, 2018 at Bear Creek Baptist Church.

Disciple-Making Conference is Tuesday, February 27, 2018 at Center grove Baptist Church in Clemmons, NC. For more info contact Patti Cardwell At pcardwell@ncbaptist.org or call 800-5102 ext. 5635.

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

Applications are Ready!

The Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce is launching the first annual Blue Ridge Weddings Pop Up Show that will take place March 10 at the Cross Street Commerce Center from 11:00 am until 3:00 p.m. If your business could benefit brides in the area, we would love to see you at the show! If you are interested and would like more information, please contact Kelly Jones for an application at kjones@mitchell-county.com

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. This will be our winter location the 1st Saturday of the month from January till April. Come shop local with us.

The Mitchell County Historical Society has begun scheduling its Scanning Days for the beginning of the new year. (We will have others later in the year.)

We will be happy to scan your pictures, documents, letters, maps, by computer scanner, so you will have an electronic copy of these treasures for your own computer. You can then send them to all your friends or family to enjoy. We scan them while you wait and add them to our ever-growing collection of images and documents about Mitchell County.

We will also have our learned genealogists on hand to look into your family histories and/or give you tips on how to pursue your own genealogical history.

Our scanning dates are as follows:

Saturday, February 3

Historic Courthouse, Bakersville

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 17

Main Street Office

Saturday, March 3

Peterson Store Hunt Dale 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
If you have any questions, please call us at 688-4371...Weds. through Friday, 10
to 4. Or, go to our website: mitchellinchistory.org

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. February meeting is on the 9th, at 8:00am.

Yancey County

Parkway Playhouse Presents Murder Mystery Dinner At The Nu Wray Inn

BURNSVILLE, NC: Executioner of the Estate – an interactive murder-mystery dinner presented by Parkway Playhouse – will be performed on February 10th at 6:30pm at the historic Nu Wray Inn located at 102 Town Square in Burnsville.

The story: The most famous pastry chef in Bakersville, Eric "Sticky" Van Suijtsen, has recently died. His family and business associates have gathered at the Nu Wray Inn to witness the execution of the will. When the most obvious successor turns up dead, it's clear that more than just the will has been executed! You and the rest of the guests must sift through all the clues to sort out this mysterious recipe.

Tickets to Executioner of the Estate can be purchased by calling the Nu Wray Inn at 828-682-2329. Tickets are \$45 per person and admission includes a three-course dinner.

The Nu Wray Inn is also offering a special overnight package. \$250 plus tax includes 1 night overnight accommodations, 2 tickets to the Murder Mystery Dinner, one bottle of wine, 2 Nu Wray Inn wine glasses and a Nu Wray Inn postcard.

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.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture - Our 15th Annual Business of Farming Conference is right around the corner on February 24. Don't wait: early bird registration ends in two weeks on January 31. Also, use our \$25 farm partner discount to register a second member of your farm, and attend even more of the great workshops and networking activities offered at this year's conference. We have several new workshops this year including "Legal and Insurance Implications of Agritourism," "Managing Farm Lodging and Rentals," and "Photography Composition and Techniques" all taught by regional farmers and business professionals. See a full list of conference offerings.

On February 23, Farmers can also attend a half-day workshop on "Farm Succession Planning" hosted by Mountain BizWorks or "Labor Challenges and Strategies" hosted by NC Cooperative Extension in partnership with other local farms and organizations. Take advantage of a great weekend of learning and networking! Register for the conference and half-day workshops online or contact ASAP at 828-236-1282 to register over the phone.

NOTES

A Caring Partner at Home

When Florence was unable to live independently, her daughter Marcy became her round-the-clock caregiver. When her medical needs became too much for one person to handle, the compassionate team at CarePartners Hospice ensured that both Florence and Marcy's physical, social and spiritual needs were being met.



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Winter Months

By David Burleson
Burke County



The winter months bring many challenges to the Burke United Christian Ministries (BUCM) and the clients we serve. The recent snow and very cold temperatures have created a high demand for food, clothes and homeless supplies. Because of our wonderful staff and volunteers at BUCM, lunch was served every day and dinner was served on our usual nights of service; Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. We were also able to take care of the food and clothing needs of our clients.

The winter months are particularly difficult for our homeless clients. During the last year, BUCM served 277 homeless clients. Of the 277 homeless clients, 45 were under 18 years old. With the support of the HOWI committee and other committed community members, winter has been a little warmer and comfortable for our homeless community.

The amount of food needed at BUCM for the soup kitchen and food pantry increases during the winter months also. We are extremely grateful to our churches, businesses, restaurants, grocery stores, civic groups and individuals that contributed food and supplies for BUCM. We are very thankful that several individuals choose to give BUCM their birthday and Christmas gifts to help others. This was especially true for many of our children and teenagers. Also, several church youth groups collected food and funds during the national Souper Bowl of Caring event that coincided with the Super Bowl game. This is one of the largest food drives of the year. It is a blessing to see that our future leaders understand the importance of helping others.

Gently used clothes, shoes and other supplies donated by our community have helped meet the needs of our clients. Coats and other warm clothes have been especially appreciated during the winter months. Because of the generosity of many in our community, our clients have clothing and other supplies to keep them warm.

Since the calendar shows that we have several more weeks of winter, we still have many needs to meet. Many times, we are asked about our greatest needs during the winter months. Here is a list of those needs:

- Blankets
- Men's Jeans
- Back Packs
- Children's Sneakers
- Towels
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Meat
- Mac & Cheese
- Cereal
- Jelly
- Shampoo
- Toilet Paper
- Sleeping Bags
- Tarps
- Tents



During the winter months, we have seen God at work in tremendous ways at BUCM. When there have been needs, what is needed shows up right on time. It has been a blessing to see what God has done through the people of Burke County.

I also want to invite everyone to our breakfast fundraiser on Saturday, March 24 at Friday Friends. The all you can eat Breakfast will be from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and the cost is \$8. For good food and fellowship, be sure to come out and support BUCM.

Another way to support BUCM and the clients we serve is to volunteer. We still need volunteers for our clothing closet and store, the food pantry and to harvest food. If you would be interested in discussing being a volunteer or making a donation to BUCM, please call me or Elizabeth Norris at (828) 433-8075 or visit our webpage at bucm.net.

The Burke United Christian Ministries is very excited about what God is planning to do in 2018.

David Burleson is Director of Burke United Christian Ministries

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Signs to Look for in an Abusive Personality

By Beth Davis
Mitchell County
reprinted with permission from Kit Gruelle



I'm trying to stop using the term "domestic violence." It leaves too much out. Too many women think that if they're not being physically abused then they're not in a dangerous, abusive relationship. Nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, it only takes being hit one time for the victim to know what the abuser is capable of. From that point on, all he has to do is use gestures (loading and unloading a gun, for instance), looks, other actions to remind her what he's capable of.

Many people refer to abusive men as "batterers." Wrong term, in my opinion. We're talking about a complex set of tactics that are strategically employed by the abuser. These tactics all fall on a continuum. From a dozen red roses to a gun held to her head, they're all part of the same thing: his sense of entitlement, of male superiority/supremacy. The goal is to first gain, and then maintain control of/over the victim/s. And it's never, ever just about him and what he does. It's also about the deeply, dangerously patriarchal systems that aid and abet his abusive behavior. Abusers come from all walks of life. They are uneducated, homeless men and they are doctors, lawyers, and bank presidents. The idea that abusers and victims are all uneducated and poor is a dangerous myth. Unfortunately, that myth continues to hold sway, even in 2018. We are stunned when we hear about domestic abuse murder or murder/suicide when it happens in a part of town that does not comport with our belief system. And yet it keeps happening.

Lists like this have been created many times. They're typically used by advocates to help survivors be able to identify what they've been living with. The survivors always have their own unique/tragic/outrageous stories to tell, and they're all heartbreaking and infuriating. But they're also all about raw, determined courage and wisdom.

I'm going to do some editing to the list we typically use. These additions are based on what I've learned over the last 30+ years.

1. **Morbid jealousy:** This is not your garden-variety jealousy, the kind of jealousy that is a normal, human emotion everyone feels at some point in time. (Your best friend gets a A+ on a test that you got a B on, despite studying like mad. You might feel a twinge of jealousy.) In abusive relationships, the jealousy is the If-I-can't-have-you-no-one-can! kind of jealousy. He expects you to constantly prove your love/undying loyalty to him, and he keeps moving the bar. He checks the mileage on your car. He constantly texts you and demands that you respond to him immediately. He has the bizarre notion that you're having a fling with the produce guy at the grocery store. (Please!) Mind your antennae. If it seems off the wall and controlling, it is.

2. **Controlling behavior:** C'mon, baby, let's hang out all weekend! Just you and me! It sounds/feels good at the beginning, but when you tell him you want to go see a movie with your best friend or simply have a night to yourself and he freaks out and starts in on you, pay attention! Controlling behavior represents invisible building blocks he's using to wall you off from everyone else. Guilt, shame, whatever works, he'll use it. And it will only get worse.

3. **Quick involvement:** I've never been able to talk with anyone like I can talk with you! (Classic.) It's normal to want to be with your new lover a lot, but when that also comes with "Let's move in together", that's a massive warning sign. If he's acting like he wants to "sweep you off your feet", stop and think about that. Being swept off your feet is destabilizing, kind of the object of the exercise for men who want control over you. Taking time is a good thing!

4. **Unrealistic expectations:** Abusers tend to be highly insecure. They rely on their partners to give them a sense of connection and stability, but what they're really looking for is someone to blame everything on when things don't go the way they want them to. No one is perfect, and no one should be held to unrealistic standards or standards that continue to move. Not fun. Impossible.

5. **Isolation:** Isolation is not just a geographic issue; it's a state of mind. Once he sets up shop in the victim's head, he tends to be able to run the show even if he's nowhere in sight. He will try to cut the victim off from friends and family, or make the victim "choose" who she "really loves." Lots and lots of guilt is applied. Women can live in an apartment building surrounded by other people and still be isolated. Cell phone technology has added entire new dimensions to his ability to isolate the victim because he can monitor her at all times. It's quite terrifying.

6. **Blames others for his problems:** He refuses to take any responsibility at all for the choices he makes to be controlling and abusive. It's always the fault of the victim and/or someone else. ALWAYS. And unfortunately, women are also blamed by other people and institutions (church, the criminal justice system, family, friends) who might say to her, "What did you do to make him angry?" which does nothing but reinforce her subordinate position and provide him with reinforcements.

7. **Blames the victim/s for his feelings:** YOU TICKED ME OFF! People do get angry. Anger, for an abuser, is a tactic. He will use anger when other tactics don't "work" for him. Even if the victim has done something that he perceives as upsetting, that does not give him the right to express his anger in a tactical way, or a way that frightens the victim. This is one of the most important tactics to be mindful of. He is responsible for how he expresses himself 100% of the time. It's called being a grownup.

8. **Hypersensitivity (aka He can dish it out, but he can't take it):** He feels entitled to make hateful, hurtful comments to the victim(s), but the minute someone says something to him he doesn't like, or doesn't respond to him the exact way he feels entitled too, he lashes out. Very, very thin skin. Unable to and not interested in listening to others. His way or the highway. Exhausting. Literally exhausting.

9. **Cruelty (to children or animals):** Huge warning signs. Sometimes the cruelty



can be quite sadistic. Perhaps he was abused/taunted as a child and now he wants to be the one with all the power. Even if he was abused as a child, that's not an excuse for him to be abusive and hurtful. He must recognize that his choice to be hurtful is not acceptable and commit to changing his behavior. If he doesn't, there's nothing the victim can do to change him. Nothing.

10. **Emotional abuse:** Words cut deep. We do not pay as much attention to emotional abuse as we should. Victims cannot call law enforcement if they're being emotionally abused unless they're being threatened. By not paying attention to emotional abuse, victims might think they're making a "big deal out of nothing." Nothing could be further from the truth. Emotional abuse is, in my opinion, one of the most horrendous forms of abuse because it is invisible, and it doesn't take much to cut someone in half with words. If you know someone who is being emotionally abused, please listen respectfully to them and tell them they do not deserve to be talked to/yelled at like that. Emotional abuse is REAL, and it is a significant abusive tactic.

***Kit Gruelle is a survivor of domestic violence who has worked as an advocate for battered women and their children for almost 30 years. As a renowned community educator, she has trained scores of advocates, criminal justice professionals (law enforcement, prosecutors, magistrates, and judges), health care providers, clergy, legislators, educators, and other allied professionals, and has guest lectured at colleges, universities, medical and law schools, schools of social work and public health, and departments of sociology, women's studies, and psychology on violence against women and children.

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



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.

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

US House of Representatives NC District 11



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

DACA Negotiations

As many of you know, the House and Senate are in the middle of negotiating immigration reforms and principles before the coming deadline in March. I wanted to make sure you're updated on a few of my key concerns:

First, you may have heard some discussion about possibly including DACA reforms in an upcoming spending bill and combining the two issues. I am completely opposed to this and believe DACA should NOT be included in a spending bill. It should be addressed as an independent, standalone item.

Second, I fully believe any solution on immigration must do four specific things before we do anything else:

1. Secure the border
2. End 'chain migration'
3. Institute e-verify
4. End the 'Diversity Visa Lottery' program

Doing those four things, among others, would go a long way in fixing our broken immigration system.

The bottom line: There is no reason why House Republicans can't pass a stand-alone, responsible immigration bill that secures our border and promotes conservative priorities in line with President Trump's agenda. None. It's time to put aside the excuses and get to a solution. If we resolve to put American interests first and keep our promises we made to the voters in 2016, we can get this done.

FBI Investigation Continues

Jim Jordan (R-OH) and I, along with several of our colleagues, are continuing our push to 'investigate the investigators' as information continues to come in suggesting that in 2016, high level officials at the FBI engaged in activity that raises questions about whether they sought to undermine then-Presidential candidate Donald Trump.

As I've said before, this really comes down to a critical set of questions: Did the FBI use a Clinton campaign paid-for political dossier to justify spying on the Trump campaign in 2016? Did President Obama's DOJ compromise our security in order to target political opponents?

Well, it seems we're getting closer to an answer. Sara Carter of Fox News is reporting that the FBI did use the dossier to get a FISA warrant to spy on American citizens. If the FBI indeed used a DNC project paid for by the Clintons to spy on political opponents—(and it sure looks like they did)—then that is as wrong as it gets. That's why Rep. Jordan and I are calling on the Department of Justice and on House leadership to release ALL documents on this Russian investigation to ALL members of Congress, Democrat and Republican. The American people need the truth about what's happened here—the truth on the FBI's actions, on the Russia investigation, all of it. Let's get to the truth. This has dragged on long enough.

We also need Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Deputy AG Rod Rosenstein to do their jobs, too. If the Attorney General is willing to be transparent with Congress and give us the documents we request, we'll applaud him. However, if he's not willing to do that, we're committed to holding his feet to the fire, and would urge him to step aside. No one is above the law, and it's time we get to the bottom of this.

NC Senate District 47



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

Most institutions of higher education, in their mission statement, espouse an environment open to diverse viewpoints and opinions. However, on many college and university campuses an atmosphere that welcomes expression of conservative views is lacking or non-existent, and often replaced with one of hostility. As political correctness becomes more extreme on liberal college and university campuses, the value of a four-year degree is diminished when First Amendment rights of conservative students, faculty, and invited speakers are stifled through intimidation, shout-downs, protests, and even physical violence.

The intolerance of liberals on college campuses toward those with whom they disagree and want to silence is often combined with anti-Christian bigotry under the guise of social justice, often, ironically, at universities that were founded by Christian denominations. The expression of diverse political viewpoints on a wide range of issues should be a given, however, because it is not, I supported legislation, which Governor Cooper opposed, that requires the UNC Board of Governors to develop, adopt, and implement policies and form a committee on free expression. The committee will make annual reports to the Board of Governors, the General Assembly, and the Governor. The initial annual report of the Committee on Free Expression is due by September 1, 2018.

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.

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

The Most Romantic Verse in The Bible?

By Shawn Thomas
Burke County

"So, Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her." (Genesis 29:20)

Surely this is at least one of the most romantic verses in all of the word of God. Jacob loved Rachel so much that he was not only willing to work seven years to earn her hand in marriage, but the seven years "seemed to him but a few days" because he loved her so much. It's hard to beat that sentiment!

But this is also indicative of a truth that applies in a number of areas of life: we can spend a lot of time on something we really love, and care about. It's not hard to get someone to do something, or be with someone, that they really love. Which convicts many of us regarding the paltry amount of time we are willing to give God. If we really "love" Him, as we claim, then why does someone have to twist our arm to go to worship? Why is it so easy to spend multiple hours on television or the internet, but so hard to spend even an hour with God in His word and prayer?

Do you love the Lord? Perhaps the best test of that, is whether "the most romantic verse in the Bible" describes the way that you spend time with God.

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



YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
919-733-5805

Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net

Reading Commission

I was very pleased that the legislature, as part of the two-year budget adopted last June, approved provisions for a new education initiative that focuses on reading proficiency for students at all grade levels. The initiative's main goal is to improve students' reading skills and literacy in general. The program will thus help bolster the necessary educational credentials that North Carolinians will need to equip them to be both self-sufficient and ready for the workforce in the years that lie ahead.

All North Carolina high school students in the 11th grade take the ACT test at the end of that school year to assess their readiness for either entering the work force or continuing their education at some higher education institution, community college or university. The ACT includes an assessment of each student's readiness for career or higher education based upon their reading ability. Sadly, less than 40% of our high school juniors are able readers. With reading being the key to success in most modern-day jobs and other subjects studied in school, this lack of readiness by our students is a huge drag on their futures as well as for our businesses needing capable employees, whether just out of high school or after completing additional schooling after high school. Moreover, when students leave high school unable to read at a competent level, those attempting to go further with their education most often find themselves first paying for remedial courses before they can even get to the courses that they believe are important to their future. That is assuming they do not become discouraged and drop out.

In recent years, the North Carolina legislature has invested heavily in trying to enhance reading in kindergarten through third grade. That program has been called, "Read to Achieve". It seems, thus far, to be meeting with noticeable success. However, there are still substantial numbers of students leaving third grade without adequate reading skills. In addition, experts tell us that students, about the fourth grade, begin to need different reading skills as they get into more substantive subjects in which reading is key. In short, it may be said those students need to learn to read not just to pronounce or recognize and say words. Rather, students need to understand what the words mean and they need to be able to use words to explain their understanding.

It is this latter reading approach, that of comprehension and communication, that the new Reading Commission is formed to address. The commission is headed by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson. The members of the commission consist mostly of educators with expertise and understanding of different ways to teach reading in grades 4 through 12. The idea is not to prescribe what schools and teachers must do as much as to identify a variety of successful methods or approaches from which they may choose. Ultimately, the goal is that, as a state, North Carolina will dramatically increase the percentage of our students who are capable readers when they leave high school.

NC Senate District 46



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

One of the big topics of discussion across our nation last month was the federal tax reform bill that was passed into law on December 22, 2017. Having a front seat to the many tax reforms we've implemented in NC, (Carolina Journal), I have found the negative reactions to tax relief to be very interesting. Similar to the objections to tax reform we heard here in NC, last month there were national leaders denigrating the idea of returning a 'paltry sum of \$2000' to the hands of the taxpayer. In other words, to liberals, government knows how to spend your money better than you do. For the average citizen, an extra \$2000 would be helpful, and the equivalent of a few month's rent, a couple mortgage payments, a down payment on a car, etc. But just as we saw in NC, the liberal left in Washington D.C. made outlandish statements implying that the economy would collapse if the government lowered tax rates. As President Reagan once said, "The difference between them and us is that we want to check government spending and they want to spend government checks." I believe the facts bear out that the tax reforms NC has implemented over the last few years have put our State on a very positive economic path. Since December 1 of 2017, Burke County has entertained three different jobs announcements that will add 440 new jobs in Burke County. In Cleveland County, officials were also able to announce hundreds of new job opportunities due to hundreds of millions of dollars in business expansion and relocation in the county. More North Carolinians are employed now than at any time in the history of our state. The General Assembly's nonpartisan Fiscal Research Division has recently reported that, "the economy is on solid footing and remains in a stable growth pattern.... Employment continues to grow at a steady pace.... The state's growth is starting to outpace average national growth.... The economy is stronger than it was a year ago and is beginning to look like an economy that has entered into a true expansionary phase." That's good news for our State, and you can read the entire economic report at NC General Assembly Fiscal Research Division. As these federal tax reforms continue to take effect, I expect that there will be more good economic news on the horizon. Happy Valentine's Day to each of you, and I hope that you will take the opportunity this month to let the special people in your life know how much you love and appreciate them.

NC House District 118



Rep. Michele D. Presnell
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N.C. retirement plans put \$5.7 million back in retirees' pockets in January Implements President Trump's Tax Package in a Matter of Days

The following is reprinted from the Office of State Treasurer Dale Folwell.

(Raleigh, N.C.) – North Carolina State Treasurer Dale R. Folwell, CPA, announced today that January benefit payments to North Carolina retirees will increase by a total of \$5.7 million this month thanks to the Retirement Systems Division (RSD) beating the clock on an IRS deadline.

The deadline was the result of the new federal tax reform law, which lowered the amount of federal taxes that should be deducted from 2018 benefit payments to North Carolina retirees and benefit recipients. Employers have until February 15, 2018 to update the federal withholding tables used to calculate how much is withheld from individual payments. The RSD Operations Team within the N.C. Department of State Treasurer was able to update the tables ahead of the IRS's deadline.

"I'm very proud of our team for taking the initiative so quickly after the new tax law was passed by Congress and signed by President Trump. While we are in the check delivery business, it involves more than just buying ink and stamps," said Treasurer Folwell. "This is a testament to the outstanding job that our career public servants do to serve government workers."

New streamlined processes continue to help RSD create operational efficiencies, including releasing 2017 tax forms weeks ahead of schedule and at the fastest pace in six years. This comes despite a steady increase in retirements and new payment disbursements that set another record for RSD: over \$500 million is now paid out each month to more than 312,000 retirees and benefit recipients.

"Our team, led by Tom Causey and Susan Fordham, decided not to wait until February to enact this increase in our members' benefit payments," explained Steve Toole, Executive Director of RSD. "By updating these tax schedules sooner, our members will see larger January benefit payments."

The January benefit payments will be disbursed to retirees and benefit recipients on Thursday, January 25, 2018.

Background:

Among its many functions, the N.C. Department of State Treasurer manages the North Carolina Total Retirement Plans, which administer the retirement benefits of more than 900,000 of North Carolina's state and local government, law enforcement, judicial and legislative employees, as well as teachers and fire and rescue workers. More information is available at myncretirement.com.

GOD BLESS AMERICA

Shoals Creek Baptist Church

Loving Threads

By Pastor Merritt Taylor
Yancey County

It was initiated by a memory from a ministry from days gone by, back in Alabama. It was inspired by the challenge to "get out of the boat" from a sermon series. God took this and led Mochelle Huckabee to enlist the talents of others, a desire to teach some a new skilled-hobby, and the passion to show others the love of Christ in a simple and tangible way. This is what gave birth to the Shoal Creek Baptist Church Prayer Shawl Ministry. First, there were crocheted prayer shawls for folks with health problems, others who were lonely, or just simply needed to know that others were praying for them and love them. It did not take long before we received news about a truly miraculous recovery of a teenaged girl who received a shawl. After this, one of the ladies in the fellowship received a cancer diagnosis, and chemo-therapy was the scheduled treatment, which normally leads to the loss of hair, and this led to crocheted hats for her and other chemo-patients, and then, hats for shoe boxes as gifts for Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child. Last of all, simple scarfs were made to be placed in blessing bags with other necessities to give to the homeless folks, and other scarfs were placed in public venues for anyone who desired to keep it. The prayer shawl ministry even expanded to collect stuffed animals for the Burnsville Police Department, given as a comfort in situations where children are encountered in an officers' duties. There were enough animals collected for two departments to share. The fellowship of Shoal Creek and friends of Shoal Creek have embraced this ministry, enabling its growth in many generous ways.

This simple ministry of crocheting threads of yarn into shawls, scarfs, and hats is to share the love of Jesus with others. As each piece is crocheted, there is prayer for the person who receives it. Before the shawls are distributed, the church places them on the altar, hands are laid upon them and prayer is lifted to God in heaven to use each, just as He used the aprons and handkerchiefs that Paul used and were given to people in need. Our God is still in the miracle business, and He has given a few miracles with this ministry. Some have received a touch from the Master's hand, and others have received a different kind of miracle and that is they can do something that makes a difference in the lives of others.

It is loving threads; Meeting a need, sharing love, and showing Jesus is real! This is just one of the many ways some "get out of the boat" and carry the message of the Gospel into this world. Each piece is "Stitched in prayer and Gifted in love!"



Ministry Members—Seated L-R: Daphne Buchanan, Mochelle Huckabee; Standing L-R: Pam Taylor, Lexi Dark, Kasi Westbrook, Lacey Robinson, Wanda Hughes, Barbara Branch, Jana Dark, Linda Punch, Keli Miller, Margaret Neumann—Not pictured: Mary Lea Hardin, Wendy Duncan, Amanda Silver, Sherri Hubbard, Rachel Proctor, Maria Chavez, Shirley Colterayahn, Kathy Newell, Linda Lowman



Church prayer for shawls, scarfs, and hats at the altar



Mary Lea is a brain surgery survivor from years ago, and her physical limitations have kept her from doing many things. She has discovered a new purpose in life and ministry through crocheting prayer shawls and scarfs. She comes in every Sunday morning that she can attend with several items, and always takes more yarn to do more. This ministry is doing more than just touching the lives of those who receive the shawls, scarfs, and hats, for it is impacting those who are crocheting these gifts of love as well.



Young, old, and in between, all working for God's glory



Shawls, scarfs, hats, and animals



Part of the group going out to share the love of Jesus together



Items collected for the Blessing Bags to give to homeless people



Placing scarfs on benches in downtown Burnsville



I am not lost! Take me if you need me! Stitched in prayer, Gifted in love

Pastor Merritt Taylor is a native of Williamston, NC and has been married to his Beloved wife, Pam, for 36 years. They have three children, and five grandchildren. Taylor is a graduate of Fruitland Baptist Bible College, Liberty University, and Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been serving as pastor of Shoal Creek Baptist Church since September 1, 2013.

BCPS Honored With 10 Public Relations Awards

By Cheryl Shuffler

School public relations professionals across the state were honored Friday, Jan. 26, for the products of their craft during the North Carolina School Public Relations Association's (NCSPPRA) annual Blue-Ribbon Awards for Effective Communications celebration at the O. Henry Hotel in Greensboro. Thirty-eight school districts were recognized for outstanding work and received a total of 306 awards in eight categories.

Included in the list of winners is Cheryl M. Shuffler, public relations officer for Burke County Public Schools. Burke County Public Schools received 10 Blue Ribbon awards in five categories. Board of Education Members Edna Weller, Seth Hunt and Board Chair Randy Burns as well as Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam, Assistant Superintendent David Fonseca, Chartwells K12 District Manager Peggy Luther and Chartwells K12 Regional Marketing Manager Christa Turski joined Shuffler in accepting the awards on behalf of the school system.

The categories, entries and awards are:

Digital Media Engagement

It's Great to be Mitchell Greathouse – Gold Award (Greathouse Link)

Snapping with Students on Snapchat – Silver Award

Electronic Media

Welcome Video – Bronze Award (Link to Welcome Video)

Drexel Students Talk Turkey – Bronze Award (Link to Turkey Video)

Excellence in Writing

Welding Class Sparks Interest at FHS – Gold Award (Link to Welding story)

Freedom Principal, East Burke AP Awarded by School System – Silver Award

(Link to story)

Photography

Backpack Giveaway – Gold Award (Link to Photo Album)

Last Day - Recreate First Day – Bronze Award

MORE

Publications

Burke County School and Family Magazine – Bronze Award (Link to latest edition)

District Strategic Plan 2017-2022 – Bronze Award (Link to Strategic Plan)

Dr. Putnam said, "You know Cheryl Shuffler as the voice of Burke County Public Schools as she is the one who calls your phone on snow days. But every day, she is out there helping us tell our story and accentuating the positive about Burke County Public Schools. These awards represent 10 examples of the countless stories we tell and the ways we engage with our community. They also are examples of teamwork. Our principals, teachers, staff members and students all have a part in telling our story of igniting learning for a brighter future every day. By focusing and promoting our schools and working with our community partners, we showcase what a great county, community and school system we have."

NCSPPRA President Todd Hagans, executive director of Community Relations & Communications for Gaston County Schools, said entries of the award winners rivaled the best work of public relations practitioners in any field. "Blue Ribbon Awards are the highest honor in our organization and they validate the superior work done by my colleagues this year," Hagans said. "This roster of excellence is tangible evidence that NCSPPRA's public relations professionals are among the nation's finest and that they are producing cutting-edge communications and products that support their schools and school systems."

Award categories included digital media engagement, electronic media, excellence in writing, image/graphic design, marketing, photography, publications (print & electronic), and special events and programs. "Best of the Best" honors were also awarded to the most outstanding entry in each category. Entries were judged by the Georgia School Public Relations Association Board of Directors.

Prior to the awards ceremony, attendees heard a presentation from Dr. James Merrill, superintendent of Wake County Public School System. W. Jeffrey Booker, Gaston County Schools superintendent and NCSPPRA Superintendent Liaison, also



offered congratulatory remarks during the ceremony on behalf of the state's school superintendents.

NCSPPRA's mission is to build support for public education through well-planned and responsible public relations. For more information visit the NCSPPRA Facebook page or www.ncspr.org.

Contact Public Relations Officer Cheryl M. Shuffler at cmshuffler@burke.k12.nc.us or 828-438-2989

Burke County Public Schools Mission Statement

The mission of Burke County Public Schools is to educate diverse learners, nurture their potentials, and empower them to be competitive, successful, and productive citizens.

Burke County Public Schools Vision Statement

Burke County Public Schools, a world-class model of exemplary education, inspires students to be life-long learners who can compete successfully on the global stage and contribute to their community as productive citizens.

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

Mitchell County Chamber

Blue Ridge Wedding Pop Up Show and Bridal Marketplace

By Patti Jensen
Mitchell County



Blue Ridge Wedding Pop Up Show and Bridal Marketplace coming to Spruce Pine March 10th

Spruce Pine (January 30, 2018) The Blue Ridge Mountains are a beautiful setting for weddings throughout the year and the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce is helping brides and grooms in their planning. The Blue Ridge Wedding Pop Up Show and Bridal Marketplace will take place on Saturday, March 10, 2018 from 11 AM-3 PM at the Cross Street Center in Spruce Pine and will feature wedding vendors who specialize in helping brides plan their perfect day.

Brides will be able to talk with caterers, hair and makeup artists, wedding planners, wedding venues, custom invitation and sign designers and more at the event. "This event was created to help brides getting married in our area connect with amazing wedding vendors who can help take some of the stress out of their planning," said Patti Jensen, Executive Director of the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce.

"We have so many wonderful businesses in our area who offer amazing products, venues and services at affordable prices and our goal is to connect them with the brides who are planning their upcoming weddings. Supporting these small businesses and showcasing our beautiful area is a win-win."



The event is free to attend and open to the public. "Those attending the Show will enjoy giveaways, samples, prize drawings and more," said Jensen. The vendors showcased at the event will have time to talk with brides, grooms and mothers of the bride to share about their services as well as provide information and giveaways.

A unique feature to the Show is the Bridal Marketplace. Former brides and mothers of the bride who have wedding décor that they would like to sell have an opportunity to set up a booth at the Show. "We know that there are many garages and closets out there with beautiful wedding décor that has only been used once," said Jensen. The Bridal Marketplace is available on a first come first serve basis by reservation only and has a small fee attached to reserve the space. Those interested in these spaces should call the Mitchell County Chamber at 828-765-9033. "We are especially thankful for our sponsors Springmaid Mountain and Cross Street Commerce Center for their support of this event. Brides can meet with Springmaid Mountain Resort at the event and register for a two night giveaway. Attendees at the Show can see the Cross Street venue and learn about the upcoming renovations to the space.

Vendors interested in being a part of the Blue Ridge Weddings Pop Up Show can call 828-765-9033 or email kjones@mitchellcountychamber.org. The event also has a Facebook and Instagram page that will feature new vendors and sponsors as the event draws near.

Patti Jensen is Interim Director of the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce.



Front row from left, Cheryl Shuffler, BCPS public relations officer; Edna Weller, BCPS Board of Education; Peggy Luther, Chartwells K12 district manager; David Fonseca, BCPS assistant superintendent; Patricia Hollingsworth, chief communications officer Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools; back row from left, Chris Fuller, NCSPPRA executive director; Larry Putnam, BCPS superintendent; Randy Burns, BCPS Board of Education chair; Seth Hunt, BCPS Board of Education; and Christa Turski, Chartwells K12 regional marketing manager.

Everlasting Love

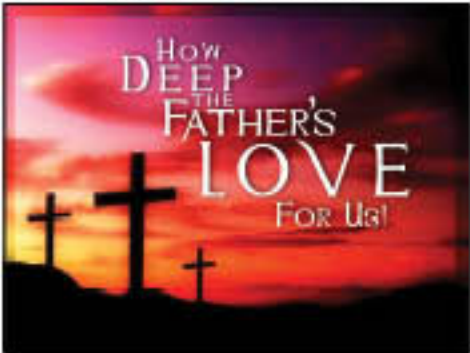
By Rev John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jeremiah 31:3) The tragedy of sin is that it keeps God from being to us all that He wants to be— Our Lover (1-6). The image of marriage is frequently found in both Jeremiah and Hosea. When we disobey God, we sin not only against His law but also against His love. We break the heart of God when we give our love to what He hates. Perhaps no doctrine in Scripture is as clearly stated as that expressed in our text and in many other passages. God loves us! His love is an "everlasting love" and compels Him to act strongly and lovingly on our behalf.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4: 10). This theme finds glorious expression in the grand hymn of the last century entitled "I Am His, and He Is Mine." Loved with everlasting love, led by grace that love to know; Spirit, breathing from above, thou hast taught me it is so! O this full and perfect peace, O this transport all divine—In a love which cannot cease, I am His and He is mine. Jesus prayed, "I in them, and thou in me, ... that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast I given me, be with me where I am" (John 17:23-24). The Father will never allow us to part from Him or our Savior. These precious facts are taught to us by the "inspired" (literally "God-breathed") Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16), and "the Comforter ..., the Spirit of truth [who] will guide [us] into all truth" (John 16:7, to himself (Ephesians 1:4-5). "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3: 1).

In His grace, we come to Him, experiencing sweet forgiveness and everlasting love. Cradled in the security of His undying love, we have peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3). As we look at the rest of Jeremiah 31 we see he is to be Our Father (7-9). Israel is His firstborn; He redeemed the people in Egypt (Exod. 4:22). God wants to be a Father to us (2 Cor. 6:14-16), but our sins stand in the way. Our Shepherd (10-14). The flock of Israel was smitten and scattered, but the Lord was caring for it just the same. No matter how dark the day, the Shepherd will find you, lead you, and give you a song. Our Comforter (15-40). What lamentation there was when homes were broken up and people were carried off to a foreign land! But God gave the word of comfort: they will come home again. He promised them a new covenant that would change their hearts, and we have that covenant in Jesus Christ (Heb. 8; 10:1-25) In closing Phil 4:23.
Pastor: John McCoury Send all prayer requests to jhm4021@gmail.com

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



Lees-McRae College Elects Dr. Herbert L. King, Jr. as 16th President of the 118-year-Old Institution

By Nina Mastandrea
Avery County



BANNER ELK, N.C. — On January 19, 2018, the Lees-McRae College Board of Trustees elected Dr. Herbert L. King, Jr. as the 16th president in the 118-year history of the institution. King will succeed Dr. Barry M. Buxton on June 1, 2018.

"I am honored and excited to have the opportunity to serve as the next president of Lees-McRae," King said. "I value its mission; its student centeredness and I feel at home in the natural beauty that Banner Elk provides. My family and I are eager to become part of this community, and I am grateful for the trust that the board is placing in me to lead Lees-McRae into the future."

President-elect King will arrive on campus having served as the Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Hampden-Sydney College in Hampden-Sydney, Virginia, where he was responsible for all development, alumni relations and career functions of the college.

While at Hampden-Sydney, King achieved the third, fourth and fifth-best fundraising years in the college's history and the best years outside of a capital campaign. His time there was also marked by the two best years of endowment gift giving as well as setting the record for unrestricted gifts to the college.

Through the generated gift income, Hampden-Sydney was able to construct the \$11 million Brown Student Center and the \$4 million renovation of the Viar-Christ Center for the Arts. He also increased the alumni giving percentage from 29 percent to 36 percent in one fiscal year resulting in three Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) awards.



Dr. Herbert L. King, Jr.

Prior to Hampden-Sydney, King served as the Vice President for External Relations at Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia, and the Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Ferrum College in Ferrum, Virginia.

King's experience extends beyond the scope of higher education with time as both Executive Director and Director of Development at the Patrick Henry Boys and Girls Homes in Brookneal, Virginia, where he was tasked with creating the organization's first strategic plan, launching comprehensive facility renovation efforts and multiple fundraising efforts.

King received his Doctor of Education in educational leadership from The University of Virginia, his Master of Education in educational administration from Lynchburg College and his Bachelor of Arts in English and history from Hampden-Sydney College.

Dr. Barry M. Buxton, 15th president of Lees-McRae College, announced his retirement on July 31, 2017. As such, the Board of Trustees began inviting nominations and applications for an innovative and visionary leader in academic, fiscal, administrative and professional matters.

McNair Tornow, Board of Trustees chairman and search committee co-chair, said "The trustees and the search committee expended a great deal of time defining the leader to lead us in the future—we found that person in Lee King. He possesses those qualities we were looking for—good communicative and collaborative skills, exceptional fundraiser and strategic planner, devotion to family and strong spiritual values. Not only does Dr. King understand the attendant challenges of the role, but he is excited about and wants specifically to be president of Lees-McRae College."

King comes to campus with his wife Tammy and their three children, Jacob, 17; Kathryn, 14; and Aaron, 9. For more information, please visit lmc.edu/president-elect.

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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Berry Chapel Baptist Church

What's Love Got to Do with It?

By Pastor Steve Williams
Mitchell County



The answer to that question is Everything. Sincere biblical love is a rare thing in this world. There are plenty of exhibitions of fleshly and worldly love, but sincere, biblical love is hard to find! The Bible tells us that God's Love is Endless, in Jeremiah 31:3 *The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.* The Bible also tells us that God's love is Unbiased, in John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* The Bible also tells us God's Love is Unchanging in Rom. 8:38-39. *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Let's look at what the Bible tells us in 1 Cor 13:1-7 *1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing. 4 Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity (love) envieth not; charity (love) vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

This passage in I. Cor 13:1-7 shows us two very important things about biblical love in the Christians Life; First it shows us the Importance of Biblical Love. See it's one thing to speak love, but it's a whole different story to show it to others. It's easy to say I love you because all that is, is words I've spoken. I've heard sometimes our words are cheap. Showing our love for our fellow man is going to take us out of our comfort zone, could even cost you time and money, and may even take a great effort. The Bible says in 1 John 3:18 *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."* Second this passage paints us a Picture of Sincere Love. Verses 4-6 shows us Loves Action. A Sunday School teacher asked her class if they knew the difference between kindness and loving kindness. One little girl said she knew the difference. She told the teacher that kindness is like when you ask your mother for some toast and she gives it to you, but loving kindness is when you ask your mother for some toast and she gives it to you with butter and jelly on it. And that's the way God is. God, in his loving kindness, is an exceedingly generous giver. He doesn't just give you some blessings, but He gives some blessings with some butter and jelly on it. That's the way True biblical love should be.



Words of Wisdom

- Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Friends show their love in times of trouble, not in happiness. N/A
- *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;* Matthew 5:44
- Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none. William Shakespeare

A Little Laughter for The Soul...Is It Love

Bill and Steve are discussing the possibility of love. "I thought I was in love three times," Bill says.
"Thought?" Steve asks. "What do you mean?"
"Three years ago, I cared very deeply for a woman who wanted nothing to do with me," Bill says.
"Wasn't that love?" Steve asks.
"No, that was obsession," Bill explains.
"Then two years ago, I cared very deeply for an attractive woman who didn't understand me."
"Wasn't that love?" asks Steve.
"No, that was lust," Bill replies.
"And just last year, I met a woman while I was on a cruise. She was gorgeous, intelligent, a great conversationalist and had a super sense of humor. Everywhere I followed her on that ship, I would get a very strange sensation in the pit of my stomach."
"Well, wasn't that love," asks Steve.
"No. That was motion sickness!" Bill replies.

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

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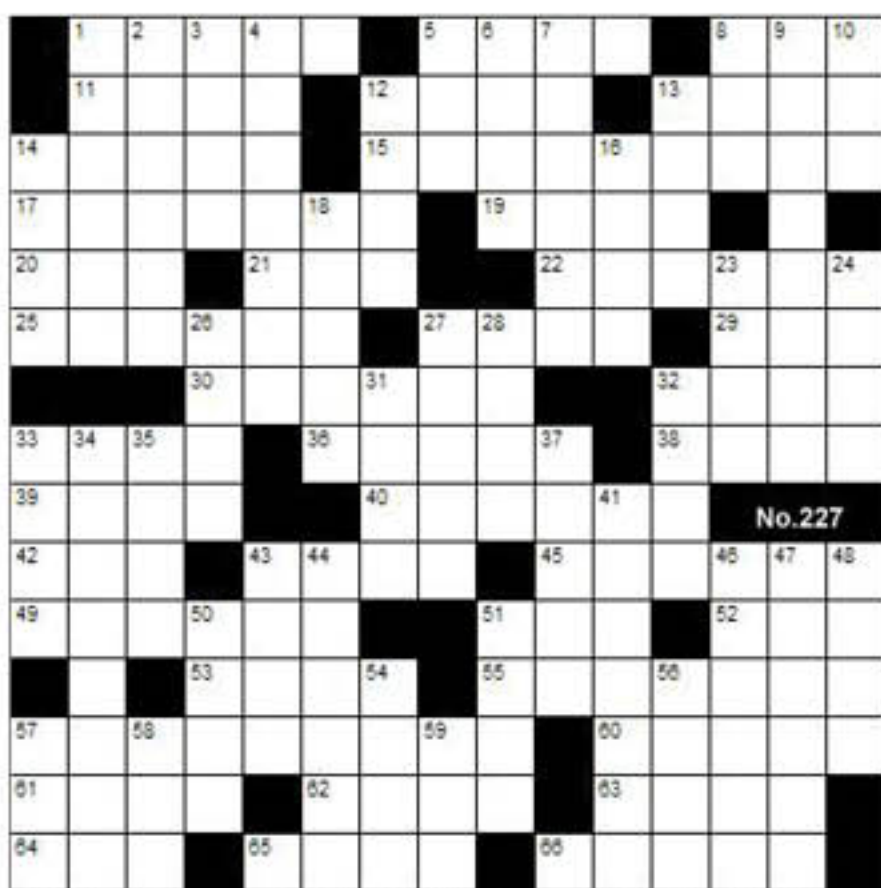
ACROSS

1 a ruin and a desolate waste from Migdol to ____ (Ezek 29:10)
 5 as it began to ____ toward the first day of the week (Matt 28:1)
 8 the LORD your God, ____ brought you out of Egypt (Deut 13:5)
 11 He makes Lebanon ____ like a calf (Ps 29:6)
 12 Whoso is ____, and will observe these things (Ps 107:43)
 13 Then he gave a ____ of bread, a cake of dates and a cake (2 Sam 6:19)
 14 take thee ____, and lay it before thee (1,4) (Ezek 4:1) (KJV)
 15 But the people grew ____ on the way (Num 21:4)
 17 They repay me evil for good and leave my soul ____ (Ps 35:12)
 19 They ____ past like boats of papyrus (Job 9:26)
 20 picnic pest (Prov 6:6)
 21 The ____ is also unclean; although it has a split hoof (Deut 14:8)
 22 Joseph worked with physicians to ____ his father Israel (Gen 50:2)
 25 What has happened to us is a ____ of our evil deeds (Ezra 9:13)
 27 fish, and all manner of ____, and sold on the Sabbath (Neh 13:16) KJV
 29 Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to ____ in the desert? (Num 21:5)
 30 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he ____ any thing (Acts 17:25)
 32 Noah and his ____, Shem, Ham and Japheth (Gen 7:13)
 33 As ____ man who casteth firebrands (1,3) (Prov 26:18) KJV
 36 remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many ____ (John 12:24)
 38 They hatch the ____ of vipers and spin a spider's web (Isa 59:5)
 39 David became a ____ after killing Goliath
 40 as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it ____ down (2 Kings 21:13)
 42 he saith unto them, Why make ye this ____, and weep (Mark 5:39) (KJV)
 43 a little honey, spices, and myrrh, ____, and almonds (Gen 43:11)
 45 Jesus went into the ____, and began to cast out (Mark 11:15)
 49 when thou art ____, go and sit down in the lowest room (Luke

14:10) KJV
 51 abbr. for the nineteenth book of the New Testament
 52 "Go and ____ to him, 'You will certainly recover (II Ki 8:10)
 53 ____ and Dumah, and Eshean (Joshua 15:52)
 55 examine the mildew and ____ the affected article (Lev 13:50)
 57 Michal was upset by David ____ some of his clothes in public (2 Sam 6:20)
 60 Xerxes who ____ over 127 provinces (Esth 1:1)
 61 The body is a ____, though it is made up of many parts (1 Cor 12:12)
 62 Labans' oldest daughter (Gen 29:16-17)
 63 He trains my hands for battle; my ____ can bend a bow (2 Sam 22:35)
 64 abbr. for the first book of the pentateuch
 65 do not reap to the ____ edges of your field (Lev 23:22)
 66 Jehoiada the priest took a ____ and bored a hole in its lid (2 Kings 12:9)

DOWN

1 Jacob set up ____ pillar at the place (1,5) (Gen 35:14)
 2 Her filthiness clung to her ____ (Lam 1:9)
 3 Therefore disaster ____ overtake him in an instant (Prov 6:15)
 4 a holy nation, ____ belonging to God (1,6) (1 Peter 2:9)
 5 when Isaac was old, and his eyes were ____ (Gen 27:1)
 6 the poison of ____ is under their lips (Rom 3:13) KJV
 7 those parts of the body that seem to be ____ are indispensable (1 Cor 12:22)
 8 ____ unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! (Matt 23:14)
 9 you have not been trustworthy in ____ worldly wealth (Luke 16:11)
 10 How ____ is the candle of the wicked put out! (Job 21:17) KJV
 12 and a bird on the ____ may report what you say (Eccl 10:20)
 13 Part of the body (Judg 19:29)
 14 like the merchant ships, bringing her food from ____ (Prov 31:14)
 16 all the days of my appointed ____ will I wait (Job 14:14)
 18 join in their purification ____ and pay their expenses (Acts 21:24)
 23 said to David, "Am I ____, that you come at me (1,3) (1 Sam 17:43)
 24 Benjamin's ____ was five times so much as any of theirs (Gen 43:34) KJV



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26 to loose the bands of wickedness, to ____ the heavy burdens (Isa 58:6) (KJV)
 27 Bitterly she ____ at night, tears are upon her cheeks (Lam 1:2)
 28 The fear of the LORD ____ length to life (Prov 10:27)
 31 abbr. for the fifth book of the Old Testament
 32 a man's ways ____ right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart (Prov 21:2)
 33 husband of Jezebel (IKing 19:1)
 34 A cheerful heart is good ____ (Prov 17:22)
 35 I see ____ of an almond tree (1,3) (Jer 1:11)
 37 and the ____ where he built high places (2 Chr 33:19)
 41 ____, a prophetess, was leading Israel at that time (Judg 4:4)
 43 Roman Emperor at the time of the early church
 44 They were ____ to trap him in what he had said (Luke 20:26)
 46 Speak to one another with ____,

hymns and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19)
 47 talking about and listening to the ____ ideas (Acts 17:21)
 48 one official is ____ by a higher one, and over them both are (Eccl 5:8)
 50 projectile (Job 41:26)
 51 It had a great, ____ wall with twelve gates (Rev 21:12)
 54 King David himself walked behind the ____ (2 Sam 3:31-32)
 56 See if you can ____ him into showing you the secret (Judg 16:5)
 57 Then they ____ another well, but they quarreled over (Gen 26:21)
 58 Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the ____ of the world (John 1:29)
 59 by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and ____ (2 Cor 1:19) (KJV)

Solution on page 14



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A Healthy Heart

By Ken and Jan Merop
 Avery County



All the leads were attached to me correctly. Yet the doctor couldn't get a reading from the cardiogram machine.

I lay there praying against the trepidation of what he might find.

That was many years ago. But I can still hear the doctor saying, "I don't see anything on the screen. I don't know what's wrong."

Quietly, I said, "I'm still here."

He quickly turned and said, "Oh, it's not you! It's the machine."

We laughed a bit and he eventually was able to rule out anything with my heart.

Healthy physical hearts are essential to good health. Proper nutrition, good eating habits and exercise are vital. Our spiritual hearts need to be nurtured as well. For example, in Proverbs 12: 25, NKJV it says, "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad." Proverbs 17: 22 says, "A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones."

There are many verses that remind us of God's peace and our thankfulness. For example, Colossians 3:15 encourages us to let God's peace rule in our hearts and to be thankful.

The above verses give us the prescription for a healthy heart. Joy, encouraging words, peace and thankfulness provide the environment in which a heart thrives... not just survives. In 1 Thessalonians 5: 16 this prescription is affirmed with these words, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Recently, my husband Ken gave me an acronym for the word heart. 'H' stands for healthy, which we just explored. Then he saw how 'EAR' follows 'H.' We must listen to God's word so we will hear his voice and what he wants to say to us. Once we hear what he has to say we will discover a beautiful truth.

The letter 'T' stands for treasure.

A treasure is something of great value. That is how God sees us. In Isaiah 43: 7, the Lord God says, "Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."

We belong to the Lord and He loves us with an everlasting love. Jesus proved that by dying a substitutionary death for me and you so that when we receive his free gift of salvation, we are born anew into his family. We are his children...and children are a treasure.

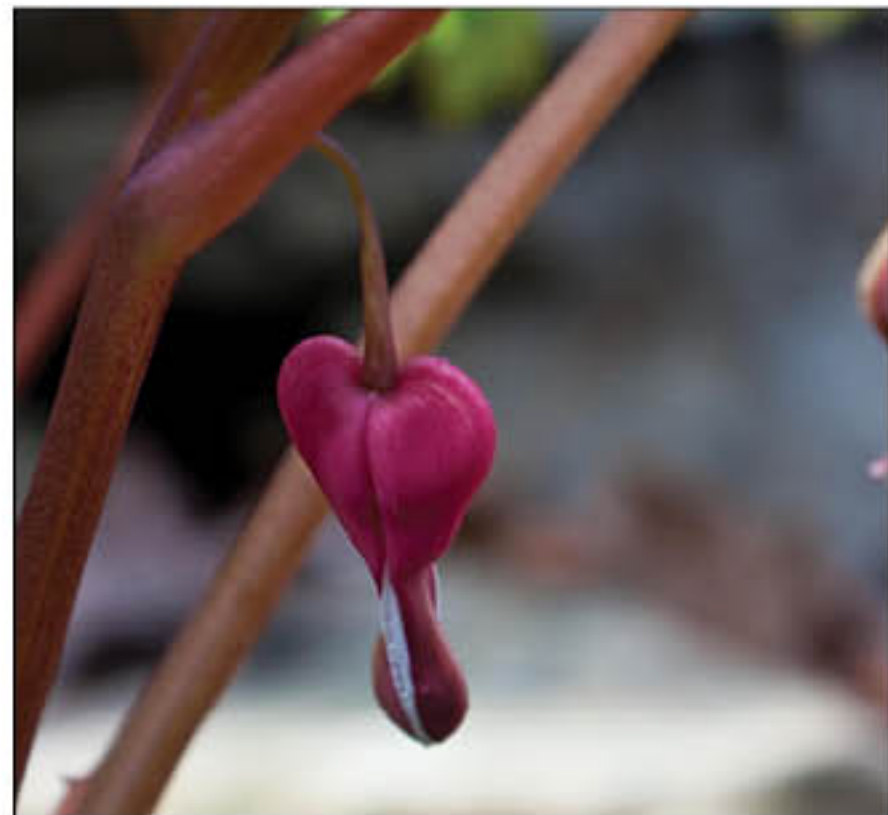
Let's live as treasured ones. Selah

A Singular Heart

*A heart singularly focused on God
 opens itself to His abundant love
 that flows freely to others.*

*Sometimes that heart bleeds with the one loved.
 Other times it rejoices with exuberance.
 And, still, there are times when it quietly embraces.
 We are designed to have a singular heart for God...
 the One who embodies love.*

*"God is love, and all who live in love live in God,
 and God lives in them."
 1 John 4: 16b*



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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 kenmeropphotography.com.

Bridge42 Church

The Goal

By Jason Koon
Burke County

Most of us will probably nod along in agreement as we read the following quotes about the state of the modern Church:

"The Church has lost its hold on the masses. The Church does not hold the young people passing out of its Sunday schools. The Church has failed in meeting the increase of population."

"The Church is in a state that is not pleasing to God, it is not answering its destiny, it is on a downward path."

There is no place left for the growth of that faith which realized those frequent conversions which were the glory of previous generations."

Most of us, however, would be surprised to learn that these quotes come from a book called "The Dearth of Conversions" written by Andrew Murray one-hundred twenty years ago. There have always been those who try to live with one foot in the world and one in the Church; maybe it's worse today, maybe not, I don't know. But I do know that unless we renounce our conformity to the world, and begin to pursue the transforming power of the Word and the Spirit that we are promised in Romans 12:1-2, we will never see God move the way He desires to move in us, and make us into the people He has called us to become.

I can't speak to the specifics of the state of the Church in 1897; Andrew Murray is better equipped to pinpoint the exact deficiencies in His day than I am, but I do think I understand some the root problems in our thought processes today. One of the most critical errors we have made is in the way that we have presented the Gospel (an error which, Murray warned us about 120 years ago). We have told people that the goal of their salvation is to get to heaven.

If you asked one-hundred Christians if they agreed that the final goal of their salvation is to get into heaven, I would be surprised if less than two or three objected. Now, it might seem strange to suggest that a statement like this is incorrect; after all, heaven in our future hope and our promised "blessed inheritance." Maybe it's not incorrect to suggest that heaven is our goal, but, biblically it is incomplete:

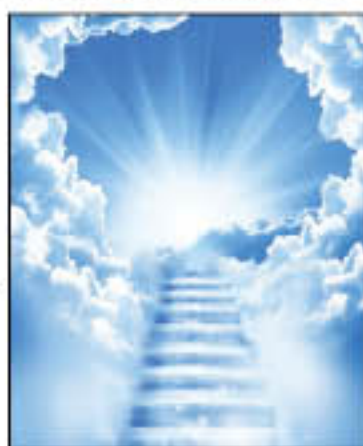
Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son – Romans 8:29.

He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him – Ephesians 1:4.

As Christians, heaven is our future home, it has come to earth in the person of Jesus, and residing within each believer in the person of the Holy Spirit, but it is not the ultimate goal of God's plan. The ultimate goal is to make us right with Him; to make us righteous. When we have Churches filled with people who are hoping only in heaven, not in righteousness, we are much less likely to take temptations and other threats to our righteousness seriously. "Well, it doesn't really matter, I'll get to heaven either way."

However, if we understand the ultimate goal of our salvation as being made righteous, our perspective begins to change. "Why would I want to do anything to move myself away from my goal of righteousness before God?" "Why wouldn't I do everything I can to conform my life to the ultimate goal of righteousness before God?" Recovering the understanding of righteousness as the ultimate goal of our salvation is key to reversing the "downward path" that many of us may be on.

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



Bear Creek Baptist Church

It's A Really, Really Big Problem!

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

It's a problem of gigantic proportions. It affects every family in the United States in some form or fashion. It decreases job productivity, leads to employee absenteeism, and increases the likelihood of accidents on the job. It causes families to struggle terribly. It leads to so many deaths. It fills jail cells and court calendars. What is IT?

Substance Abuse and Addiction.

Check out these statistics provided by The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an operating division within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

* 21.5 million American adults (aged 12 and older) battled a substance use disorder in 2014.

* Approximately 5 percent of the American adolescent population suffered from a substance use disorder; this equates to 1.3 million teens, or 1 in every 12.

* About one out of every six American young adults (between the ages of 18 and 25) battle a substance use disorder.

As sad as it is we must understand that Western North Carolina, along with the rest of the state and nation, has a drug abuse/addiction epidemic. Drugs, especially opiates, are readily available and can be easily obtained. Once drugs are mis-used and/or abused, addiction occurs. And the heartbreaking cycle of theft, deceit, criminal charges, and stays in jails begins. Families go through agony watching a son or daughter, sibling, or parental figure waste away due to this problem.

Drug addiction is no respecter of persons. It affects the rich and poor, church and unchurched, educated and non-educated, and younger and older.

My burden is to reach youth and children with truth before drug use begins. My plan is to be very plain spoken, to pull no punches, and to sound the alarm of what drugs do. It is to call everyone to the table in Western North Carolina to deal with this problem, develop effective means of prevention and treatment, and to implement those plans.

Help is found and comes when we live no longer in denial that there is a problem, understand that we cannot handle this by ourselves, turn to God for His blessing and provision AND accept responsibility for our situation. Rather than

pretending there is no drug problem or that it is someone else's problem to deal with, why not take responsibility for the solution, seek the Lord's blessings and be ready to join other like-minded citizens who want to see change. We can no longer bury our heads in the proverbial sand.

February is the month for love. I would much rather have written on the blessings of loving and being loved but this is the topic the Lord laid on my heart. And, what better way to show love to the masses around western NC than to come together for the sake of the home, the addicted and society in general.

Pray with me. Seek God's face for the answer and when He reveals the solution join other like-minded believers to deal with this problem.



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

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-H.O. Hirt, ERIE Founder

How to Avoid Dissension in Marriage

By Dr. Tom Walker
McDowell County

Dissension in marriage is very disturbing and disquieting to a marriage. It is God's plan that there be harmony and closeness in human relationships, especially in the home. The word "dissension" can mean "a disagreement among those expected to cooperate or a conflict among two or more people."

There are some very basic things to consider that we might avoid troubling dissension between a married couple.

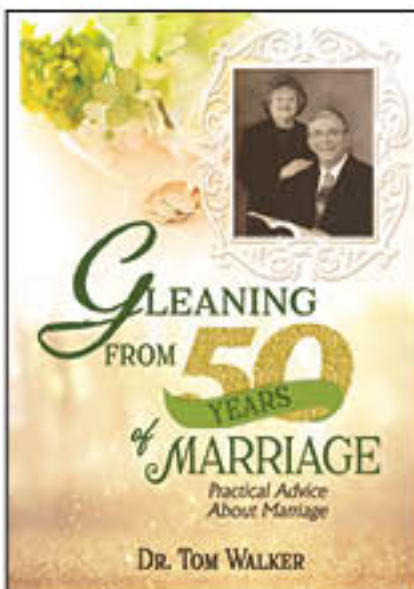
Love Your Spouse Deeply

Love should be kept very much alive between you and the one you chose to join your life with in marriage. I heard recently of a young married couple where the husband was upset with his wife and addressed her with a distasteful four-letter word. Where love is what it ought to be, the woman does not have to worry about that kind of thing happening. If love is not what it ought to be, conflict can cause abuse in many forms, verbally and even, possibly physical. 1 Corinthians 13:7 says of love that it, "Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." The word "beareth" means "to cover with silence or endure patiently."

Deal with Self Individually

Too often a person sees their marriage partner as the cause for all of the problems without looking in the mirror at one's own self. Romans 8:13 says, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deed of the body..." The word "mortify" means "to become dead" or "put to death."

It is the responsibility of every believer to not allow the flesh (or the old Adam nature) to have its way. We should live unselfish lives. It is important that we do what the Apostle Paul recommended and, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:11). The old man within us is not dead when we are born again, but the new nature can overpower the downward pull





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of the old nature.

One must look at his or her own weaknesses. If that is done, one will not be as quick to charge the marriage partner as being the one who is all wrong. Fleshly motivation causes intolerance and insensitivity.

It is best to pray for a meek and quiet spirit. A proud heart will not want to admit where it is wrong. It is troubled and retaliates when it seems someone is assaulting your self esteem.

Live Knowledgeably

I believe that means that each marriage partner realizes how weak and full of infirmities each one possesses. We should expect weakness in each other and not live in a dream world that expects either marriage partner is perfect. When weakness shows up in your spouse, do not be surprised about it. You are both imperfect marriage partners and both must be willing to face that fact if harmony and peace are to prevail. When we live with a real knowledge of ourselves, we will be more patient with one another.

Live Consciously

Keep in mind the Bible says, "they two shall be one flesh" (Eph. 5:31). As marriage partners, you be no more offended with the words or failings of each other than you would be if they were your own. Physically, if your pancreas fails to function as it should, you can become a diabetic. If one ever loses sight of the "oneness" of the marriage relationship there will more dissension than there should be. You are not thoughtless when it comes to your flesh, neither should you be when it comes to dealing with your marriage partner.

Live Agreeably

Seek to agree about matters, especially when major financial decisions are to be made in regard to finances or in regard to the children. We always have to keep in mind that a marriage is two people working together for the common good of both. Marriage is designed by God to be for a lifetime. Why be miserable in marriage when you can work together, respecting one another's opinion, and live a life of complete happiness? Why have to go through an unnecessary divorce due to stubbornness and a lack of cooperation?

Live Cautiously

Beware of the words you speak to your marriage partner. If they are nothing but cruel, harsh, bitter words, they will be in the other person's mind even if he or she has forgiven you. The tongue is something which must be controlled. When you find yourself with an angry spirit, it is best to hold your tongue. James made some interesting statements about the tongue. James 3:5-6 states: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Nothing is more damaging and dangerous than a tongue without a bridle. If a person is silent in an angry atmosphere peace and calm will come much sooner.

Live Tenderly

Don't respond with anger to anger. It would be best if a person who is dealing with an angry marriage partner would say something like this: "We should not allow this to come between us. Our love for one another should put it to rest. It must be repented of immediately. God is not pleased with this being between us. Let's pray together and not allow sweet and bitter water to come out of the same spring."

If a tenderness of spirit toward God and toward each other would come after prayer then troublesome matters could be easily resolved.

Live Forgivingly

If you have sinned by what you have said or what you have done in regard to your spouse, ask the other party for their forgiveness. Afterwards, you need to go to the Lord in prayer and ask the Lord to forgive you for the trespass. If you will confess to one another and to the Lord, you should sense so much shame that it will discourage the same thing happening again.

If you follow these instructions, they will take care of dissension that can rob a marriage of its happiness and bring about its destruction.

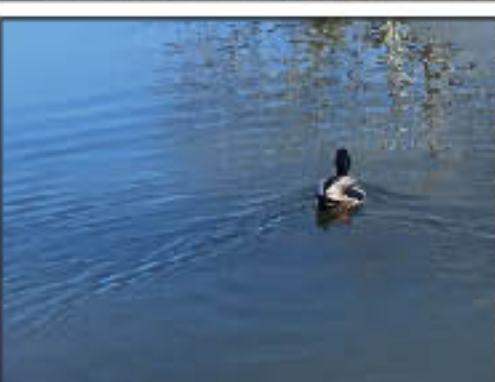
Tom Walker is President of Foothills Baptist Bible College and Pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church in Marion, NC.



Frozen

By Marlene Houk
Burke County

Job 37:10 By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened (confined).
Sun shimmering on the water graces any day with its stunning beauty, but I recently discovered that the sheen on frozen water carries its own glory. The wintery rays shone on the iced-over patches that decorated this tiny lake in



the waters become filled with food for our souls. And He redeems our trials, suffusing them with His glory and tossing them into eternity!

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

western North Carolina, and the opaque ice muted the glow of the sun's brilliance. An egret stood as a lone sentinel on a huge slab of ice while mallards and ducks plunged into melted icy waters. The sun, the water and the ice all revealed the glory of Job 37:10. God's very breath brings us the beauty of a sunny wintry day that is filled with His goodness. The ducks were foraging for food beneath the surface with their feet high in the air. The young people were fishing and laughing. And others were braving nippy winds and muddy patches on the walkway. But all were being blessed by the breath of God.

Lake Tomahawk in Marion, NC sits serenely inside the mountain town and offers a respite from daily life. Its blue waters catch the sun's rays and toss them into the crisp Spring-like air, causing a lilt to our steps and hope for a new season. The little lake reminded me of God's Son-Jesus-bringing the sunshine of His love and presence into our lives, melting the ice of our winters and tossing the glory of those troubles into eternity as the following verse affirms.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

When we experience the icy frozen waters of fear, sorrow and depression as they insidiously cover our lives, remember this. The Son still shines His glory on the worst parts of our lives and brings, not the blinding rays of a summer day, but the muted glow of 2 Corinthians 4:17. His Word will not return void. As we bask in its glow, the ice disappears and

Spring Quarter Upcoming

By Tom Walker
McDowell County



The new spring quarter begins at Foothills Baptist Bible College on March 13th. New students can pre-register for the classes by calling 828-738-0992 or 828-442-7015 for more information. The school facilities are located at 1036 Zion Hill Road in Marion, NC.

Foothills on campus classes are on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 until 9:10 P.M. It is difficult for many people to attend day classes. To overcome that problem, we are having evening sessions.

The courses for college credit which will be taught in the Spring quarter will be:

The Christian Life, Prayer, Book of Job III, Pastoral Administration II
An on-campus student can take one course or four in one quarter.

Dr. Tom Walker, pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church, is president and founder of the Bible College. He says, "It is a joy to see our students apply themselves and gain a deeper knowledge of the truths of God's Word. When one studies he or she is obeying the Word of God that says, 'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth'."

The school has a correspondence division for those who are not able to attend campus classes. At the present time forty-four courses are available through correspondence.

The school is a Fundamental Baptist institution. FBBC has a dedicated faculty that works toward academic excellence. It is evangelistic with an emphasis on missions and practical Christian service. Classroom instruction is based on the King James Version of the Bible.

Their website can be found at www.FoothillsBBC.org.

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

Sudoku

Solution on page 14

					6			8
		1			5			
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7			6					

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One Head One Bed

Cheryl M. Shuffler
Burke County

Teacher starts nonprofit to give kids beds

Heritage Middle School teacher Tim Barnsback has founded a nonprofit organization to give homeless students beds. He said becoming aware of the growing numbers of homeless young people prompted him to take action.

Barnsback said, "After learning about several students that are homeless/transient or sharing beds with adults and younger students, I solicited donations for a set of bunk beds, mattresses and linens. While this made life easier for one family, it revealed the depth and complexities of student homelessness. Requests for beds started coming to me at an alarming rate."

When Barnsback learned that one of his son's friends is one of these families, doing nothing was no longer an option. He said, "How can we expect kids to dream about the future when they don't even have their own bed?"

Barnsback founded One Head-One Bed as a non-profit organization dedicated to providing portable beds to homeless students in public schools. He said, "No matter where they stay, students should always have the comfort and security of sleeping in their own bed." Barnsback reached out to a friend at Disc-o-Bed, and a natural partnership was formed.

With the help of generous donations from the Valdese Rotary, One Head-One Bed provided beds for eight homeless students in Burke County Public Schools before Christmas.

Mike Swan, director of student services for Burke County Public Schools, oversees the district's McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act and delivered the beds to the Burke County students helped by One Head-One Bed. Swan said students who meet McKinney-Vento criteria include those who are living in a shelter, motel, campground or are doubled up with others due to loss of housing or economic hardship. The federal McKinney-Vento act first passed in 1987 and provides educational rights to students no matter their living situation. Those rights include school enrollment, transportation and services.

More information visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/OneHeadOneBed/>

<http://www.discobed.com/>

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/program-monitoring/homeless/>

<https://hepnc.umcg.edu/>

To contribute:

<https://www.gofundme.com/axasxe-beds-for-homeless-students>

Contact Tim Barnsback:

OneHeadOneBed@gmail.com

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



Heritage Middle School teacher Tim Barnsback and several of his students accept a donation from Valdese Rotary for One Head - One Bed, a nonprofit organization that gives homeless students beds.



Heritage Middle School teacher Tim Barnsback and Burke County Public Schools Director of Student Services Mike Swan prepare to deliver beds to students before Christmas. Barnsback started One Head - One Bed, a nonprofit organization that gives homeless students beds.

Annual Student Art Exhibit
Bring A Bit O' Sunshine

By Kate Groff
Mitchell and Yancey County



As in years past, Toe River Arts opens its first exhibits of the year with Student Showcases. In Spruce Pine, the exhibit begins on February 10th; and on the 17th in Burnsville. Students in both Mitchell and Yancey counties display their talent and brighten this dreary time of the year with color and creativity. Student art is all about splashes of color and intriguing ways of capturing perceptions in artistic forms, and the shows promise to delight the senses.

Keenly aware of the great role art plays in forming awareness and skills in our youth, TRAC views arts education as one of the foundations of its mission. Involvement in the arts results in gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skills. Experiencing the arts first hand improves motivation, concentration, confidence, and promotes a teamwork mentality. Merely opening young eyes to new ways of seeing creates the base to forge social bonds and community. And once a year, the arts council celebrates the child, from kindergarten through high school, from public to private to homeschooled with a festive recognition of burgeoning talent.

Every inch of the galleries will be covered with the culmination of youthful imagination. And each year, mixed media artist True Kelly festoons a corner of the Spruce Pine Gallery and the windows in the Burnsville Gallery with photographs from students past having fun with art. Many have grown to study art, many have chosen a different path, but all have experienced what it means to let individuality loose with canvas, clay, or colored pencils.

And we recognize and celebrate the hard working, dedicated art teachers. In Mitchell, Marissa Westall, and Leslie Dickerson at the elementary level, Olivia Ellis for middle schoolers, and Melisa Cadell at the high school. Yancey County has Marcia Huskins for grades K-5, Keli Miller at the middle schools, and Christy Edwards at Mountain Heritage High. And we can't forget the teachers in the private and home school settings. These individuals spend the entire year developing curriculum-based projects and teaching arts to over 4,000 students. These exhibits continue to demonstrate their dedication to their students and their support of arts in education.

One of Toe River Arts new community funded arts programs is Carousel, which teaches the arts educators a new art form in hands-on workshops. Education Coordinator, Cassie Floan, said, "When we started Carousel we hoped to be able to teach the teachers, and send them back to the classrooms armed with the materials and know how to give their kids a new art experience. We scheduled a workshop, invited the arts teachers and they came. We hope to see some of that new work on display in February."

The Arts Showcase at the Spruce Pine Gallery, located at 269 Oak Ave., will run from February 10-March 17. Yancey's Showcase begins February 17 and continues through March 24 at the Burnsville Gallery, 102 W. Main St. Gallery hours are 10:30 am to 5:00 pm, Tuesday-Saturday. For more information about the exhibitions, please call 828-765-0520 or 828-682-7215.

Whether or not you're a parent, grandparent, neighbor or friend, these two exhibits are worth the drive into town. Kids learn when they are told they can. And what is on the walls and atop the pedestals shows how much they've been paying attention.

TRAC is a non-profit organization founded in 1976 to promote the arts in Mitchell and Yancey Counties and funded in part by a Grassroots Art Grant, through the North Carolina Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, a state agency, both Mitchell and Yancey County Schools, and the Yancey County Community Fund. For more information about the Arts Council's educational arts programs, visit the website, www.toeriverarts.org or call 828-682-7215.

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



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A Flashback to the Past

By Christy Lowman
Burke County

For this month, we are going to take a look at a popular animal that God created. To do so we must travel back through time. So, strap on your time traveler helmet, your aviator goggles, and grab your backpack. Don't forget to pack some juice boxes, fruit snacks, and beef jerky for our trip incase you get hungry. Are you ready? Okay, close your eyes, and let's start the countdown. We will be there in approximately 10 speed bumps. Count with me, 1 speedbump, 2 speedbumps, 3 three speedbumps, 4 speedbumps, 5 speedbumps, 6 speedbumps, 7 speedbumps, 8 speedbumps, 9 speedbumps, 10 speedbumps.

Phew! We are finally here! Wow, do you notice a difference in the climate and surroundings? We have arrived in the United States, the country we currently live in, but what is different? It's summer time! It's hot, humid, and sticky. I'm sweating, are you? Everywhere I look I see trees and plants. The sweet fragrance from the tropical flowers makes my heart smile. It's like a jungle out here with all the animal sounds. Can you hear them?

Come on and tip-toe. There are a lot of dangerous animals around. We must be very quiet so we don't become something's lunch!

Now we are looking for one of my favorite dinosaurs. She is the size of a dump truck, a plant eater, and has a helmet on her head. Do you know which one I'm talking about? Triceratops! Triceratops' name means "three horned" face. For a land animal, she has one of the largest heads, reaching a total of 10 feet. On top of her head, her helmet, is a solid bone called a "frill," which can grow up to 7 feet wide. On the edge of this helmet, there are rows of small bony horns. Right above the eyes, there are two protecting 3-foot-long horns. This helmet extends all the way to triceratops' mouth, where it ends in a parrot beak with a small horn on top of her nose.

Why do you think God made Triceratops with such a fierce helmet? Triceratops was on the lunch menu for other dinosaurs. This God given helmet saved her from being a meal to the many meat eaters that lurked behind the trees. She also used her 2 large horns that were attached to her helmet, to bring down trees and bushes for her to eat. Her sharp beak broke small saplings and plant stalks for her to munch on. The male Triceratops may have also fought other males during mating season using his horns against his rival, like moose and other horned animals do today.

You see Triceratops' helmet kept her alive in many ways. Without it she would have not survived as long as she did. Her helmet is much like our own God-given helmet, the helmet of salvation. God has equipped us with a massive, mighty helmet to save us from our number one enemy, the devil. You see, he likes to put terrible, unholy, thoughts in our heads. We have to dismiss these, and ask God to take them away. It is very important to only have godly thoughts. The more we read our Bible and talk to God the easier it is to keep our minds on track and to think good thoughts. We also need to make sure that what we watch on TV, the songs we listen to, and the video games we play are pleasing to God. We don't want to fill our heads full of ungodly trash!

Putting on the helmet of salvation, means that we are not only protecting our mind but that we are living in the hope, and faith in Jesus Christ. That we are saved because we believe that Jesus died for our sins and will one day come back to earth to pick us up! Is that cool or what?

Oh! Look! There she is! Is she not the most beautiful dinosaur you've ever seen? Check out that monster of a helmet! And look at that cute short pointy tail... Oh, we better get back, I hear your mother calling you for lunch! Strap on your helmet, and goggles, and don't forget your backpack! Close your eyes and start the count down!

Most kind, heavenly Father I pray that you will be with each child here. Show them how important it is to guard their mind. Help them rest assured in the hope of salvation. And most importantly help them recognize the devil's schemes when he puts bad thoughts in their head, teach them to dismiss those quickly and to draw nearer to You, so You can strengthen their positive Christlike thoughts. Show each one of them how to use their mighty helmet of salvation. In Jesus' name I pray AMEN.

But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. 1Thessalonians 5:8

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Christy Lowman is a Christian author and illustrator that lives in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains with her husband and two children. She enjoys writing and illustrating books for all ages. Some of her short stories are published with Guideposts and HCL. Christy gives all the glory to God in everything she does. A portion of every book sold from the Small Bible Character Series will be donated to battle human trafficking. If you enjoy her books, 'like' her author page on Facebook and let her know! You can buy her books at https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Christy+Lowman&search-alias=books&text=Christy+Lowman&sort=relevancerank You can reach her at <https://www.facebook.com/authorChristyLowman/> or christysoaps@yahoo.com.



Winter 2018

By Lana Ellis
Kingsport, Tennessee

In case you haven't noticed it's winter! Yeah, right! We've had record cold temperatures, often accompanied with brutal cut to the bone wind chills. Due to snow and ice, not only in the mountains but in the flatlands, hazardous driving conditions have plagued many. An icy road in Charlotte was too big a challenge for even a professional race car driver! Schools have been cancelled and illnesses have kept many confined at home. Cabin fever, cloudy days and winter blahs make the days go by slower, but then it's February and things begin looking up! Following is a portion of an article I wrote a few years ago. Maybe it will help you endure the last month of Winter 2018 with a positive attitude.

The month of February is a link, a footbridge, between winter and spring. It's a short month and with that comes hope - the winter woes will soon be gone and the joy of spring is on the next page of the calendar. The flower of February, the violet/pansy, gives encouragement, blooming even when there's snow on the ground. Amethyst is the birthstone for the month and amethyst means spiritual wisdom. The word "February" comes from the Latin word "februum" which means purification. Of course in the middle of the month is a day set aside for the expression of love. Even before researching the aforementioned information I had a feeling that the little month of February was put on the calendar for a reason. It contains hope, joy, encouragement, spiritual wisdom, purity and love. For those of us who prefer winter to be short lived it could easily become our favorite month of the year!



Of course all of us who know God and His promises are aware that He alone can produce in our hearts and minds the attributes that can be seen in the month of February. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our link to God. He is our footbridge from the "winter woes" of life to the promise of eternal newness of spring. It's through Him that we have a hope that is far more than just wishful thinking. A hope that produces joy unspeakable in our hearts. The presence of His indwelling Holy Spirit encourages us when nothing else can. His Word, the Holy Scriptures, instills in us spiritual wisdom and His forgiveness produces purity. His love... oh, His love - the love of God is greater than all I can ever know or think. I wish I had the understanding and the vocabulary to express the deep meaning of God's love but I'm not the only one who realizes the difficulty. To quote Frederick M. Lehman, "The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell."

During this last month of winter think on these things: hope, joy, encouragement, spiritual wisdom, purity, love and newness of life. If the winter blahs become hard to deal with take a look at your February calendar. It's only a page away from the month of Spring!

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

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