



BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS



Picture courtesy of Burkemont Baptist Church

The Human Side of the Crucifixion

By Doug Harrell

Can you imagine your father coming up to you and saying "I want you to volunteer to go be flogged, stripped naked, thorns pushed down on your head, subjected to all kinds of ridicule when you have done nothing wrong and have honored me your entire life"? I cannot imagine the pain Jesus went through.

"And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Luke 22:41-44 KJV

I have never sweated blood before but, according to scientific fact, if you are under enough stress this can happen. We oft times forget that

Jesus was totally human and totally God and that He had the same human emotions that we all experience. To willingly to lay down your life for someone else may seem like something we would be willing to do if it was family, loved ones, or even friends might be one thing, but to do it for complete strangers, people that had not even been born yet, people that had done everything wrong in their lives and had not been good people! People whose lives were full of all kinds of sins, when you had never sinned! Just think about this. It is truly amazing from a human perspective. Yet Jesus prayed, *"Not My will but Your will be done"*.

Every time I think about this I get goose bumps with the true bravery that Jesus showed that weekend, human bravery, not just God's bravery. The next time you see a picture of Jesus on the cross, take time to really let it sink in, we are saved by Grace today because He had enough human courage to take the weight of all our sins on His unblemished shoulders, bow His head and say, *"It Is Finished"*. Stop and give a true prayer of thanksgiving when you say, Thank you Lord for Your saving Grace which is sufficient to give me eternal life with You in Heaven. Amen and Amen



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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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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

"Home of Tri County Christian School"
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!

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

First Advent Christian Church

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

**Pastor Patrick Bradshaw
Associate Pastor Javier
Guzman**

pbradshawfccmorganton@gmail.com

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

Preaching Christ Crucified, Risen
and Coming Again!

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church

2187 Jamestown Road
Morganton, NC
828-684-8212

Pastor Rick Mercer

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

Faith Fellowship Church

Champ Ray Rd.
Micaville, NC 28755
(828)-675-9284
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

Altapass Baptist Church

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

Dr. Marcus R. Benfield

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

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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"

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

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Plumtree Presbyterian Church

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

Pastor Ryan Bridgeo
pastor@plumtreepresbyterian.org

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

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

Bear Creek Baptist Church

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

Reverend Bruce Cannon

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

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

West Burnsville Baptist Church

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

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.splfbc.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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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.greathopesda.com



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Superman

By Brent Price, Outreach Programs
Mitchell County

We are living in challenging times, to say the least. Sometimes in the midst of life's struggles and tragedy we desperately need something to make us smile, chuckle or perhaps laugh out loud. Laughter is a gift from God and perhaps this story will deliver on God's gift.

While attending college in Greensboro I worked for a singing telegram service. Belly Business posted an ad in their window that said, "clowns needed" and I applied for the job. After a short "interview" the owner hired me and booked my first party.

Make-up, funny shoes, red nose. Address in hand, balloons in the back seat, prepared to bring laughter to children everywhere. There was just one little problem--- a problem that I didn't know was a problem. A problem that was waiting to ambush me smack in the middle of my mission to spread joy to a world ready to eat lots of cake.

News flash. A significant number of three to five-year-old children are horrified by clowns. I entered the party smiling, singing and carrying fistfuls of balloons. Children screamed and cried. Panic broke out. One child tried to climb up his mother's leg. Another took refuge under the kitchen table and clung to the tablecloth when his mother tried to pull him out. It was not a pretty sight. We all entered therapy as soon as we could get an appointment.

When I returned to the office my boss was eager to know how things had gone. Well, needless to say, I did not have a good report. She called the client who voiced satisfaction even though the children were "a little afraid." For now, my job was secure.

My next assignment--- another birthday party. My boss suggested to the excited mother that perhaps the children would enjoy a visit from a superhero. "Wonderful idea. All the children love Superman."

Once again, I prepared to enter the unpredictable world of children's birthday parties. I parted my hair on the side just like the Man of Steel, removed my Clark Kent glasses and entered the celebration prepared to save planet Earth. The children were beside themselves. They laughed. They wanted to touch my cape. I held them for pictures. Held two on each knee. Held three. Held them all at once while standing on one leg!

Superman was a hit. No children had been traumatized or scarred for life. They all had pictures for show-and-tell and once again--- my job was secure. But not so quickly, Man of Steel.

On my way to the car I turned to the house and saw all the children plastered against the front window ready to witness my departure. Didn't see that one coming. However, it's amazing how fast you can think when you have to.

Smiling and waving, I ran past my parked car. With raised hands in that classic Superman pose, I leaped out of sight. Well, it might not have worked on you, but they thought it was pretty impressive.

Now, I had to get back to my car. Crouching on the opposite side of the street, I inched my way back to the passenger door of my old brown Ambassador. I eased the door open, slipped inside, hunkered under the steering wheel and resumed my life as a mild-mannered student.

I guess it really doesn't take much to create a little bit of wonder and a whole lot of joy.



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



And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! John 1:36

Please Pray for
**Doug & Barbara Harrell
& Family**

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Church Secretary: 828-765-9411

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



The 95% Christian

By Pastor Kurt Bomar
Avery County



When I was in School, if I ever got a 95% grade on a test, I was delighted at first. Then I would look at the test and say "If I had just done a little better, studied a little harder, I could have gotten 100%."

There are a couple of Bible characters that I think did 95% jobs and as a result suffered tremendous heartache.

The first is Jacob. He ran away from his brother and spent 20 years in Padan-Aram before God told him to return home (to the promised land). He obeyed but when He was 95% there he stopped in a town just a days journey from Bethel (where he was supposed to go). The town was called Shechem. There he started putting roots down. As he did, his daughter went into town to meet the girls of her age. As a result the leader of the town (named Shechem himself) violated Dinah. The result was a revengful mass murder committed by his sons and an expulsion from the town. (Gen. 34 tells this tragic tale).

Remember King Saul. He was told to annihilate the Amalekites. (1 Sam. 15) He had a great military victory, but he didn't finish the job, just 95% of it. The result? It cost him his kingdom. Why? Because the Lord said "I desire obedience, not (95%) sacrifice".

You might say "How do I know I'm only at 95%?" Here's the test. When God speaks to you he does so through targeted strikes (like a lazar missile). He will say "you need to do this, say that, or go there." Satan on the other hand, in an attempt to discourage us uses a different tactic. He carpet bombs. Satan says "you're just not good enough, you need to do more, be a better person (without telling you what specifically you need to do)." Understand that if the voice inside is condemning you, it is from the evil one. Satan condemns, and God convicts. God says "do this specific thing right and I will be pleased". When you do it, you will feel the pleasure of God.

When my children were young we had a rule about obedience that they memorized early:

Any two of the three is a 95% Christian.

As we ponder this ourselves, let's listen to God's instruction and give him that last 5% that will cause him to say "well done my good and faithful servant".

Selah, (think about it)

Kurt Bomar is pastor of Walnut Grove Church.

Blessed be the God and Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 Peter 1:3

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Guardian ad Litem Program

Local Courts Celebrate 35th Anniversary

By Jada Ellis McMahan

"We are honored to celebrate the Guardian ad Litem Program in the 24th Court District including Mitchell, Madison, Yancey, Avery and Watauga Counties. Our system of justice could not operate as it was intended without our volunteer Guardians ad Litem.

"We have one of the strongest court appointed special advocate programs in the country," said Cindy Bizzell, administrator of the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem program. "The work of our volunteer GALs helps the court make the best decision possible in the lives of vulnerable North Carolina children."

Established by statute in 1983, the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program has been serving abused and neglected children for 35 years.

Pursuant to North Carolina General Statute § 7B-601, when a petition alleging abuse or neglect of a juvenile is filed in district court, the judge appoints a volunteer Guardian ad Litem advocate and an attorney advocate to provide team representation to the child, who has full party status in trial and appellate proceedings. All Guardian ad Litem advocates are trained, supervised, and supported by program staff in each county of the state. The collaborative model of GAL attorney advocates, volunteers, and staff ensures that all North Carolina children who are alleged by the Division of Social Services to have been abused or neglected receive GAL legal advocacy services.

A Brief History of Guardian ad Litem

- 1983
Guardian ad Litem is established in the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts by the General Assembly. (N.C.G.S. 7B-1200)
- 1994
Guardian ad Litem completes the 1983 mandate to have a GAL Program in each judicial district. From the coast to the mountains, the program has staff and volunteers in all 39 judicial districts.
- 2000
Guardian ad Litem staff create a manual designed to encourage best practices within the program.
- 2003
Guardian ad Litem celebrates 20 years of advocating for abused and neglected children in the court system. At this time, the program has more than 3,800 GAL volunteers and attorneys serving more than 15,700 children.
- 2010
For the first time, Guardian ad Litem reaches the milestone of having 5,000 volunteers.
- 2013
Guardian ad Litem celebrates 30 years of advocacy.
- 2016
Guardian ad Litem once again reaches the milestone of having over 5,000 volunteers.
- 2017
Guardian ad Litem provides for the best interest for a record 18,083 children.
- 2018
Guardian ad Litem celebrates 35 years of advocacy.

ABOUT

North Carolina Guardian ad Litem equips and trains community volunteers to serve as independent court advocates to represent and promote the best interests of abused and neglected children and youths by advocating for their best interests. The Office of Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Services is a division of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts. Pursuant to G.S. 7B-601, when a petition alleging abuse or neglect of a juvenile is filed in district court, the judge appoints a volunteer Guardian ad Litem advocate and an attorney advocate to provide team representation to the child, who has full party status in trial and appellate proceedings.

Could you be the voice for a child?

In 2017, more than 2,400 abused and neglected children and youth in North Carolina went to court without someone to advocate just for them. Volunteer to become a Guardian ad Litem advocate and be the voice for a child.

About N.C. Guardian ad Litem

North Carolina Guardian ad Litem equips and trains community volunteers to serve as independent court advocates to represent and promote the best interests of abused and neglected children and youths by advocating for their best interests. The Office of Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Services is a division of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts. Pursuant to G.S. 7B-601, when a petition alleging abuse or neglect of a juvenile is filed in district court, the judge appoints a volunteer Guardian ad Litem advocate and an attorney advocate to provide team representation to the child, who has full party status in trial and appellate proceedings.

Could you be the voice for a child?

In 2017, more than 2,400 abused and neglected children and youth in North Carolina went to court without someone to advocate just for them. Volunteer to become a Guardian ad Litem Advocate and be the voice for a child.

Contact: Erica Griffith Edwards
828-682-4754
Erica.G.Edwards@NCcourts.org
volunteerforGAL.org



But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Romans 8:11

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Avery and Mitchell Counties

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: (Philippians 1:3-6)

What is a "Community Funded Chaplain" (CFC)? In the North Carolina Department of Prisons, a Community Funded Chaplain (CFC) is a person who serves in a correctional setting (prison) as a minister to the inmate population, as well as to prison staff and administration. The Community Funded Chaplain receives no compensation from the state. By definition, the CFC is endorsed by and compensated through some outside source(s), i.e. the 'community'. Interestingly, the qualifications for service as a CFC are the same as those required of state funded Chaplains. CFCs must have a Master's degree in ministry or a related field and must also meet the requirements set forth by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) with an established number of credits earned in a clinical setting.

The CFC must enter into a covenant with the Department of Public Safety and Chaplaincy Services and must attend all required training and updates set forth by the same. The greatest obligation of the CFC is to minister to all inmates and staff regardless of their religious affiliation. And the CFC ministers an average of 25 hours per week within the institution he/she is assigned. Hours are spent in pastoral care and counseling, assisting inmates and families dealing with hospitalization and death of loved ones. The CFC organizes and oversees the religious programming of the institution according to the operating procedures of the institution.

As you can see, the CFC must meet stringent prerequisites in order to provide ministry within the gates and behind the walls. There are most limited numbers of individuals who meet these prerequisites and an even smaller percentage of those who do meet them who are available to serve.

So, imagine my surprise when having been a pastor in Spruce Pine for two years I was presented with the need for a Community Funded Chaplain at Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution! I have been a pastor for thirty years, but also during that time served as a military chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserve. One of my assignments as a military chaplain was to serve in U.S. Military Confinement Facilities. I spent periods of time serving in places like the Regional Confinement facility at Fort Lewis, WA, the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Ft. Leavenworth, KS and even the Naval Brig in Charleston, SC. Each of these opportunities gave me a unique understanding of correctional ministry.

In the mid 1990's I was privileged to earn credits from ACPE through an intensive two-year process known as Clinical Pastoral Education. Little did I know at the time that these experiences would combine to provide me with such opportunity as the one I now enjoy daily, as CFC at AMCI!

Yet, here I am, seeking to faithfully fulfill the calling God has given me. If you have been a reader of this column for long you know that there are many good things happening as a result of the ministry presence here. But what you may not know is that your support of this ministry is critical. Here is what we need...

We need your PRAYERS! Please pray for God's Provision for this ministry and for the accomplishment of our mission to bring the Hope of Jesus Christ to those who live and work in this place!

We need your FINANCIAL SUPPORT! A Community Funded Chaplain is provided through partnership with churches, individuals and other groups who generously give to keep the Chaplain on the job!

If you are willing, please help us maintain this ministry at AMCI by sending your tax deductible contributions to:

High Country Prison Ministry
P.O. Box 161
Crossnore, NC 28616

God Bless you for caring for the incarcerated, and for your faithful prayers and gifts!

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



Mountain View Corrections

Serving on the Inside!

By Don Stafford
Avery and Mitchell Counties

What a privilege and honor it is to serve the community Churches of Mitchell and Avery Counties and tell the story of Jesus Christ here at Mountain View Corrections in Spruce Pine, NC.

Many of these men accept Christ as Lord and Saviour, and then want to be baptized. Usually there are about 50-60 men baptized each year. I have so many great stories to tell about how God is working behind the walls here at MVC. I would be glad to come to your Church and share some of these stories. Just give me a call at 828-467-1158 and we will arrange a time for me to come.



The following article was written by a Chapel clerk about the Church at MVC.

"THE" CHURCH, AND SERVING - ON THE INSIDE

Prison is a third world country to people "on the street." By that, I mean they know as much about prison and life "on the inside," as they do about a third world country, which is not very much. They may have some ideas based on movies, which may or may not be accurate; however, when it comes to religious life in prison they really have no perceptions about what it is like. Three things come to mind concerning religious life at Mountain View Correctional Institution (MVCI) - the physical brick and mortar church, "THE" Church - the body of Christ; the day-to-day serving of the Lord in the Chapel.

MVCI houses 908 inmates in a facility originally designed to house 556 inmates, so space is a premium. The Chapel exists in a 20' X 48' room. This room includes a worship area for 30 people, office areas for the Religious Services supervisor, the Chaplain and two Chapel clerks, bookshelves for the Chapel Library, a staff bathroom, and storage areas. In addition, we have an outdoor Native American prayer circle, and the visitation area for larger worship services. Space is very limited; especially when you take into consideration, we accommo-



date approximately 40 services and meetings per month. We currently service not only Protestant groups but also Native American, Rastafarian, Jehovah's Witness, Catholic, Islamic, Moorish Science Temple, and Wicca groups, as well as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and CBI Thinking for a Change classes. With the small amount of space allotted, we stay very busy rearranging chairs and equipment, maintaining records, and keeping up with supplies. We accomplish all of this with one staff supervisor; one community funded volunteer chaplain, two Chapel clerks and numerous volunteers who come from as far as two hours away.

The largest faith group we have at MVCI is Christian, and of the approximately 40 services and meetings, 26 are for this group. This is "THE" Church, the body of Christ, at MVCI. The body of Christ here is not very different from on the street. We struggle with many of the same things you struggle with in the Church every day. Anytime there are imperfect people involved, there are going to be personality conflicts; differences of opinions; people getting their feelings hurt. We are no different. The men here struggle with walking in the spirit and not in the flesh, with lust of the eyes and impure thoughts and language. Many are fathers and husbands struggling to keep those relationships alive.

Our congregation is non-denominational. We come together more as brothers in Christ and less as Baptists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, etc. Our worship is free of those hindrances so often associated within the body of Christ on the street. If I had to pick one of the most vital parts of the Church inside, it would be prayer. The men here are prayer warriors extraordinaire. They have lots of time on their hands and they make good use of it in prayer and studying the Word. Many of the men are young babes in the Word, still not ready for meat. You can help by praying for them to have discernment in the Word and in the difference between true and false teachings.

Serving in the Chapel is a blessing, even when serving the different faith groups. We have many opportunities every day to pray for the many false teachings and lost souls who come through the Chapel door. You can feel the darkness when sitting in the same room with these groups as they proclaim their beliefs to one another. Pray for us as we wage this battle in prayer. Pray for us to be strong and courageous and that they may see Christ in us. Christ died for all man's sins. He loves these lost men and He desires for them to come to His cross to receive His saving grace.

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

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Challenges of Life

By Doug Harrell

A new day dawns, the times and situations change daily. The question is, can we adapt and change with the changes we face daily? As I have grown older, the need to trust and allow each day to be led by the Lord becomes even more evident. I think in the earlier years of our lives we feel that we are invincible and indestructible, but with age this tends to change. We see, and feel, the changes in our body, and sometimes even our minds, as the years go by. The frequency of funerals becomes more in our face as our friends and classmates began to crossover the river of life to the other side. We realize that our days are numbered here on this earth. 1 Peter 1:24 (KJV) *For all flesh [is] as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:*

When we begin to really come to grips with this, it can become really a burden unless we have a true relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without this relationship, our time here on this earth is as an empty vessel. Death is just the end of life, nothing more to it. There is no hope there! We can be good people, but there is still no reward and no eternal life in heaven. I know, the atheist will just laugh at this, but the Bible tells us that. Proverbs 1:7 (KJV) *The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of knowledge: [but] fools despise wisdom and instruction.* All we can do is to let our light shine so that they can see Jesus in our daily lives, and hopefully we will be able to witness to them in such a manner that they will come to an understanding, and a relationship with Jesus, that is personal to them. There are situations that we sometimes face with our family and friends when we are ridiculed and laughed at for our beliefs, take the time to pray for them, because it is truly their loss, as well as ours, when we realize that death in their situation will truly separate us for eternity. John 14:2 (KJV) *In my Father's house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

Hopefully we learn with age and wisdom to sing the song "What a Friend We Have in Jesus". The first verse reads "What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief to bear! What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer." I pray that we keep learning, not sure that we ever completely learn, to do this daily. I pray that each of you, as you read this today, will take your cares and concerns to the Lord in prayer. Only He can truly give us the "Peace That Passeth Understanding", God Bless!

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.



What Can We Do?

By Bruce Cannon
Mitchell County

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

Once again, our hearts have been broken by an act of terror on one of our nation's school campuses. As of February 2018, including the shooting at the high school in Parkland, Florida, there have been five school shootings in which a gun was discharged, and victims were either injured or killed this year.

We must ask ourselves several questions and answer those questions. One, why? Why would someone go onto a school campus with the intent of hurting or killing innocent students? How can anyone do that? The answer has to be: evil. The person committing the deed has to be filled with evil thereby discounting the value of life. The problem with school shootings, or any other type of violence involving a gun, is not with the ownership of guns but with the lack of conscience on the part of the individual perpetrating such an act. One possessed with evil will use whatever tools available to bring about violence.

On August 12, 2017 a car was driven into a group of pedestrians in Charlottesville, Virginia leaving twenty-six injured and one dead. On May 18, 2017 a car was driven into a group of pedestrians in Times Square leaving twenty-two injured and one dead. When one is possessed with evil any tool can be used to bring about harm or death.

The most important question that must be asked and answered is: What can we do? What can we do in a nation where Judeo-Christian values have been compromised for decades? What can we do when we now are in our second or third generation of Americans of whom many have been raised without Biblical training? The prophet of old said, *"For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind:"* (Hosea 8:7) The apostle Paul said, *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* (Galatians 6:7) That last verse not only applies to an individual; but also, to a home or to a person.

First, we must see actions such as the school shooting in Florida as wake-up calls. As we head toward the coming of the Lord for His bride, the Scriptures teach, *"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."* (Matthew 24:12) Iniquity is abounding. Love is waxing cold. And, we are trying to raise our children and grand-children in these conditions.

Second, we must return to the God of our fathers. We must humble ourselves before Him, seek His face, turn from our wicked ways (as believers) so that He will hear from heaven, hear our prayers and heal our land.

I am genuinely concerned about what the condition of our nation will be in the next years ahead if we do not do this. What schools will be next? Will there be one in western North Carolina which will have an armed intruder enter therein for the purpose of hurting and killing students? How we need His protection, His provision and His power! All of the schools, without exception, which had a shooting have stated, "We didn't think it would happen here."

Third, train up children to know right from wrong and to honor the old-fashioned beliefs that made this nation great. Train them to respect and serve the Lord. Teach them His Word, His Will and His Ways. Model before them Christlikeness so they can see what they must do. Without that they are lambs among the lion and he is seeking to devour.

Finally, join me in deep prayer that God will have mercy on our nation, hear our plight and rush to our rescue.

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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Honoring Billy Graham

Christian Action League Billy Graham Spoke to America, Its Social Issues and Told Us How to be Free

By Dr. Mark Creech

Among the dozens of things written about Billy Graham, after his passing earlier this week, was something I found on the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) website.

In a statement about the world-renowned evangelist's death, FFRF noted a time when Christopher Hitchens, who has been hailed as an antitheist, was once asked if he believed Billy Graham was an evil man. Hitchens replied, "Yes, disgustingly evil man."

The article then went on to argue that Graham worked to destroy America's secular government.

"Graham helped corrupt America's secular foundations by riding the wave of religious fervor in the 1950s, which brought with it 'under God' into the Pledge of Allegiance, the Capitol prayer room, and 'In God We Trust' as a national motto," said FFRF. "Graham leaves behind a legacy that has severely damaged our Constitution and the wall of separation between state and church. FFRF will continue to work to undo this legacy."

Interestingly, opinions about Graham and his impact on politics vary. Groups on the far Left, like FFRF, think that he was too involved. Many argue that he was neutral. While others claim he should have done more.

One thing is for certain; however, Billy Graham had a lot to say about America and its many social issues. Moreover, he told Americans how to be free and to stay free. Here are some powerful remarks he made:

"America has probably been the most successful experiment in history. The American Dream was a glorious attempt. It was built on a religious foundation. Its earliest concepts came from Holy Scripture."

"You can put a public school and university in the middle of every block of every city in America – but you will never keep America from rotting morally by mere intellectual education."

"I believe America has gone a long way down the wrong road. If we ever needed God's help, it is now."

"God honored and blessed America as few nations in history. However, in recent years the nation has been moving away from its religious heritage."

"A terrifying spiritual and moral tide of evil has already loosed us from our spiritual moorings. Monstrous new ideas that could easily destroy our freedoms are rushing into the vacuum."

"Spiritually, we have wandered far from the faith of our fathers...no nation that relegates the Bible to the background, which disregards the love of God and flouts the claims of the Man of Galilee, can long survive."

"Our government is certainly going to fall like a rope of sand if unsupported by the moral fabric of God's Word. The moral structure in our country grew from Judeo-Christian roots. When those values are applied, they produce moral fruits. But if that structure disappears, the moral sentiment that shapes our nation's goals will disappear with it."

Graham also spoke out prophetically about the social issues of our day.

Regarding the issue of race, Graham said:

In Christ, the middle wall of partition has been broken down. There is no Jew, no Gentile – no black, white, yellow, or red. We could be one great brotherhood in Jesus Christ. However, until we come to recognize Him as the Prince of Peace and receive His love in our hearts, the racial tensions will increase, racial demands will become more militant, and a great deal of blood will be shed. The race problem could become another flame out of control!"

"Only God can break down the national and racial barriers that divide men today. Only God can supply that love that we must have for our fellow man. We will never build the brotherhood of man upon earth until we are believers in Jesus Christ."

Regarding the issue of abortion, Graham said:

"The Bible does not support the indiscriminate practice of abortion. Many of the great characters of the Bible, such as Jeremiah or John the Baptist, were chosen by God before they were born. Many people feel that an exception might be made in the case of incest, rape or when the mother's life is in danger. I think in these instances the decisions must be based on individual cases and the serious moral and spiritual implications must be carefully considered. For example, some of the greatest people whom I have ever met were born as a result of rape. I am thinking, for example, of Ethel Waters, who did more than almost any person to pave the way in Hollywood and New York for black people to be in show business. She was the queen of black stars. Later, when she gave her life wholly to Christ, she joined our team. Ethel stayed with us for many years and was loved by people all over the world. Suppose her thirteen-year-old mother, who had been raped, had chosen abortion? The world would have never known Ethel Waters. And I could name many like her."

Regarding the issue of religious freedom, Graham said:

"The framers of our Constitution meant that we were to have freedom of religion, not freedom from religion."

Regarding the issue of same-sex marriage, Graham took out full-page ads in the larger daily papers in North Carolina supporting a state constitutional amendment that would define marriage as one man and one woman, which read:

"At 93, I never thought that we would have to debate the definition of marriage."



The Bible is clear – God's definition of marriage is between a man and a woman. I want to urge my fellow North Carolinians to vote FOR the marriage amendment on Tuesday, May 8th."

It could be argued that Graham spoke to the issue of transgenderism when he said:

"Ancient historians tell us that one of the symptoms of a declining civilization is a desexualization of the human race, with men becoming more effeminate and women becoming more masculine, not only in physical [appearance] but in their basic characters."

Regarding the issue of gambling, Graham said:

"It is the sin of avarice which causes gamblers to have fever in their blood and drives them on, recklessly hardening their hearts until they have lost not only their money but their souls."

Regarding the issue of alcohol, Graham said:

"Liquor is not necessary either for health or for so-called gracious living...It is the cause of untold sorrow, suffering, and material loss, not to mention the spiritual implications of drinking."

It could rightly be contended that Graham spoke to the current opioid crisis, although not directly. Graham once said:

"Volumes could be written on the problem of [drug] addiction. Millions of barbiturates are swallowed every night to help the nation sleep. Millions of tranquilizers keep us calm during the day; Millions of pep pills wake us up in the morning. The Bible warns that these flights from reality bring no lasting satisfaction."

Graham obviously understood something that FFRF and much of the nation still doesn't understand today: Our freedom is bound up in our relationship to the Creator.

We were made by God in His image. Unlike any other part of the creation, we possess superior intellectual, moral, and spiritual faculties. Most importantly, mankind has been given a will to make or mar his destiny, to climb in life or to sink to the depths.

Graham repeatedly reminded us that liberty and its maintenance is a profound spiritual matter. It is deeply rooted in divine sonship, and the image of God in man is defaced whenever our relationship to God is forgotten and we see ourselves only as children of this earth.

Graham said it over and again, if we would live free both personally and corporately, we must repent of our sins, receive Christ as Savior, and embrace His Lordship.

Such is not evil. It's the opposite contention that's "disgustingly evil." We have seen it played out thousands of times throughout history in murder and mayhem. Whenever we choose something other than what a loving God intended, in comes the strong man, in comes the despot, whether literally or figuratively, to fill the vacuum and bind us to misery.

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

Remembering Billy Graham

He never forgot the Lord, and he spread the message throughout the world. Salvation is the key. Coming to Christ is a must. Make Him your Lord and Savior.

Billy Graham has gone home to be with the Lord. He was a good and faithful servant. He will rest now.

What will you do?

John 3:16 King James Version (KJV)

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.



Honoring Billy Graham

Billy Graham Evangelical Association Spiritual Heart Disease

By Billy Graham

Note: The following message comes from a sermon preached May 23, 1957, during Mr. Graham's historic New York Crusade.

—The Editors

Now tonight I want you to turn with me to Proverbs, the 23rd chapter and the seventh verse: "For as [man] thinketh in his heart, so is he."

The word heart is used in different ways all the way through the Scriptures. I want you to see tonight the meaning of the word heart from the Biblical point of view.

The Bible says that "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). When God looks at a man, He doesn't look to see the color of his skin. He doesn't look to see the kind of clothes he wears. Nor does He consider his social position. The Bible says that God looks upon the heart to see what you are on the inside—the thoughts, motives and intents of the heart. The question I want to ask every one of you tonight is this: Is your heart right with God? And if it's not right, before you leave here tonight I hope you'll allow God to make it right.

The Bible indicates a great deal about the condition of the average person's heart. In Proverbs 6:18, the Bible speaks of a "heart that deviseth wicked imaginations." In other words, the Bible says that your heart is full of evil imaginations. And the Bible says, in Jeremiah 17:9, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Your heart is deceitful. You can't trust it, if you're outside of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, in Matthew 15:8, that our hearts are far from God: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Think of it now. There are many of you here tonight who go to church. You sing on Sunday morning. You go through the ritual of the liturgy of your church. With your mouth, you honor God. But your heart is far from Him. Your heart—your real self—is taken up with the things of this world.

You have very little time in private for God. You spend far more time watching television than you do reading the Bible. You spend far more time reading the press and reading novels than you do in prayer. You don't have time for God. Your heart is a long way from God tonight.

The Bible says that our hearts are dark. Romans 1:21, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." The Bible teaches that your heart is dark because your spiritual eyes have been blinded by the god of this age. Let Him open the eyes of your heart.

And do you know the greatest stumbling block to the Kingdom of God? Murder? No. Drunkenness? No. Adultery? No. Pride. More people stay out of the Kingdom of God because they're proud than any other reason. We don't like to humble ourselves and come to the cross of Christ, and say, "O God, I'm a sinner." The Bible says that our hearts are rebellious. "But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone" (Jeremiah 5:23).

And the Bible teaches that your heart can be hardened. The same sun that shines on the clay hardens the clay, but it melts butter. And the same Gospel that is preached here tonight will soften some hearts until they will yield to Christ, but it will harden others. And it's possible for you to harden your heart by delaying to receive Christ until it is so hard that, when God speaks, you no longer hear Him. Now, what is God's attitude toward our hearts? The Bible says He knows the heart: "Shall not God search this out? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:21). He knows all your secrets. You don't hide anything from God. He knows every single thing that goes on there.

The Bible says that He searches the heart. Think of it. The great God of Heaven searching your heart. He's in there searching and probing. "I the Lord search the heart" (Jeremiah 17:10).

Then the Bible says that God ponders the heart. "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts" (Proverbs 21:2). You can rationalize that the way you're living and the way you're doing is all right. But the Bible says God doesn't take your evaluation and your judgment. The Bible says that God ponders your heart—meditating on it, evaluating it.

And the Bible says God weighs the heart. I want to ask: Do you weigh enough? He weighs your spiritual life in comparison to the Ten Commandments. And the Bible says that every one of us have broken those Ten Commandments. He weighs you by the law of conscience—the times your conscience spoke to you, and the times you rejected the voice of your conscience. He also weighs you by the life of Christ. And none of us weigh enough. We all come short of the glory of God (see Romans 3:23). We're all sinners in the sight of God tonight.

Now, there's something else in Scripture. The Bible talks about the heart of Jesus. The Bible talks about the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ. And all the way through the New Testament, you have the expression the blood of Christ. What does that mean? That means that the heart of Christ, in its compassion and in its love, bled on the cross for our sinful hearts. His pure heart, His perfect heart, His glorious heart, His loving heart, His tender heart, His compassionate heart—bled on the cross.

And when they put spikes in His hands and a spike through His feet, and they put a spear in His side, near His heart, His heart bled literal drops of blood for us. God says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin" (Cf. Hebrews 9:22). What did He mean? He meant that without the death of Christ, there could be no forgiveness of sin. Do you know why? Because you and I have broken the laws of God. We deserve death, judgment and hell. But Jesus Christ went to the cross and bled and died in our place.

And now God says, "I commend my love toward you, that, while you were yet



sinners, Christ died for you" (Cf. Romans 5:8). And God says, "He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us" (Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). It's a mystery, that death of Christ, the great atonement of Christ. None of us can understand its depths, its height or its breadth. But we do know this: that in some mysterious and glorious way, God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself at the cross. He bled, and His heart was broken for us.

The Bible says that God also prepares your heart by the Holy Spirit. "The preparations of the heart in man ... is from the Lord" (Proverbs 16:1).

And last of all, the Bible gives us this glorious promise—that God will give you a new heart. If you will come to Christ and surrender your heart to Him, God says, "I'll take out the old heart. I'll put in a new one." An old heart will not do. He must give you a completely new heart. God doesn't just patch you up when you come to Him. The Bible says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

And in Ezekiel 36, the Bible says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

Would you like to have a new heart tonight? Change the whole direction of your living. Change your whole moral life. Change your affections. Surrender your life to Christ and have Him give you a new heart.

It's called regeneration. It means that God will give you a new life—a new direction to your life, new thoughts, new energies, new ambitions, new directions. The Bible says that three things are necessary. First, you must be willing to turn from your sins. You must be willing to renounce sin. Second, you must commit and surrender your life to Christ. By that, I mean you give in to Christ as your only Savior. You're not saved by joining a church. You're not saved by living a good moral life. You're saved only because of the grace of God in Christ. And you must commit yourself to Christ as your only Savior. Are you willing to do that? Then the third thing: You must be willing to follow Him, serve Him, confess Him and acknowledge Him. You must be willing to go back to the factory and the home, and stand up for Christ.

Are you willing to do that? Let Him change your life and forgive your sins. ©1957 BGEA

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, King James Version. Surrender your heart to Christ now.

Last Column

By Billy Graham

Shortly before his death, Billy Graham approved the response to his final My Answer column.

Q: Mr. Graham, how would you like to be remembered?

A: I hope I will be remembered as someone who was faithful—faithful to God, faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and faithful to the calling God gave me not only as an evangelist, but as a husband, father and friend.

I'm sure I've failed in many ways, but I take comfort in Christ's promise of forgiveness, and I take comfort also in God's ability to take even our most imperfect efforts and use them for his glory.

By the time you read this, I will be in heaven, and as I write this I'm looking forward with great anticipation to the day when I will be in God's presence forever.

I'm convinced that heaven is far more glorious than anything we can possibly imagine right now, and I look forward not only to its wonder and peace, but also to the joy of being reunited with those who have gone there before me, especially my dear wife, Ruth. The Bible says, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror: then we shall see face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

But I won't be in heaven because I've preached to large crowds or because I've tried to live a good life. I'll be in heaven for one reason: Many years ago, I put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to make our forgiveness possible and rose again from the dead to give us eternal life. Do you know you will go to heaven when you die? You can, by committing your life to Jesus Christ today.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)



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The public is invited
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Rev. Steve Williams, Pastor

Our Stories

By Sandra Ayers
Mitchell County

I am a parent with a child who has struggled with addiction. I will not elaborate on their struggle. That is their story to tell. However, I also have a story that I wish to share.

My story involves anger, confusion, despair, denial, isolation, and fear. Every time the phone rang I was afraid. If my child came home I was afraid. If my child did not come home I was afraid. I was afraid of what people thought. I was afraid I could not fix things, guess what I couldn't. My life was unmanageable. My child had become my addiction. I was desperate, I needed help but did not know where to turn.

January 2017, I saw a sign for "Celebrate Recovery." A New program in Mitchell County. I decided to go. At Celebrate Recovery I found recovered addicts, people still struggling with addiction and people just like me. Celebrate Recovery is a confidential Christ based program for anyone with "hurts, habits, and hang-ups." Who doesn't qualify?

If you are struggling with addiction please come, if someone in your family is struggling with addiction please come.

Is everything in my life "fixed" absolutely not, but I do have a better understanding of addiction and how it affects the addict and the families of the addict. I, through the "celebrate Recovery" Program have learned to replace anger with love, confusion with understanding, despair with hope, denial with acceptance, isolation with support and fear with trust in Jesus Christ.

"Celebrate Recovery" meets every Thursday at 7:00 pm at Bear Creek Baptist Church. Everyone is welcome here.

By Cassie Burleson

Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties along with our surrounding counties are filled with people either suffering from addiction or suffering because their loved ones are addicted. If you are like me and fall into this category, please let me tell you about Celebrate Recovery. Some people think Celebrate Recovery is just another support group, but they are mistaken. Christ is the difference, and the Answer. Celebrate Recovery is a Christ based recovery group for anyone with hurts, habits or hang-ups. This includes addicts, the people that love them, anyone that wants to join us to worship and celebrate recovery through Jesus Christ. This group meets at Bear Creek Baptist Church in Ledger every

Thursday night at 7 pm. Although I don't live in Mitchell County anymore, I attend this meeting to support this wonderful ministry and to receive support and prayers from other just like me. If you are skeptical, come. If you are lost, come. If you are broken, come. Christ can and will save you, just like He saved me from a life of torment and destruction.

Date: Saturday March 24, 2018 • Activities Start at 10am

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Candy and plastic eggs will be
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groups: 2 yrs & under, 3-4 yrs,
5-7 yrs, 8-10 yrs.

3 Grand Prize Eggs will be
hidden in each age division.



Snow Hill Baptist Church

"No Regrets Family"

By Pastor Dean Honeycutt
Mitchell County

I would like to dedicate this article to Doug and Barbara Harrell, owners and editors of the Blue Ridge Christians News. Since moving back to the mountains and taking over the Blue Ridge Christian News Doug and Barbara have been a tremendous blessing to our mountain communities and thousands of people. Doug and Barbara have been good to me and my family and we appreciate their kindness to churches and families all over this area.

As many of you now know Doug is having some major health issues and has asked all of us to pray for him and his family as he takes treatments. Doug is satisfied with however God decides to heal him; he is a man of tremendous faith. He is placing his trust in God.

It is a Biblical prayer that Doug will experience the tremendous grace of God in his adversity. Just as the Apostle Paul expressed about his thorn in the flesh. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (KJV 1900)

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

In Luke 17:5 the apostles asked the Lord to increase their faith. A key to overcoming difficulties is faith. The stronger our faith then the stronger we are when trials in our life arrive.

I can understand my faith only as my faith has been tested. Let me explain-- if I study for a test and retain knowledge the only way to measure what I have learned is to be tested. If I buy a new tool and it promises to hold up under the toughest conditions I will never know what that tool can do until I put it to the test. So it is with our faith, we never know how strong our faith is until our faith is tested.

Take for example Job, had it not been for the Lord Job would not have lived. The New Testament describes Job as one who was steadfast or enduring through tribulation. Jonah would not have made it out of the whale's belly had it not been for the Lord. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have been burned to death had it not been for the Lord. Daniel would have been devoured by a lion had it not been for the Lord.

It is often said "God will not put on you more than you can handle"; this view of God at first thought sounds very compassionate. However, this is a flawed view of God. God is not up in heaven pouring down on you only what you are able to handle. God is not the one pouring out, but rather the One pouring into your life grace that is sufficient to handle what this fallen world and Satan throw at us. God will not allow adversity in your life above what His grace is sufficient to handle. Take for example those who suffer extreme adversity like Joni Eareckson Tada who at the age of 17 became a quadriplegic and asked her friends to help her commit suicide?

There I was lying in the hospital bed in the summer of 1967 desperately trying to make ends meet, desperately trying to turn my right side down emotions, right side up. In my pain and despair, I had begged many of my friends to assist me in suicide. That seems to be a common topic these days and many disabled people that I know even in the nineties have a tough time finding life worth living. I sought to find a final escape, a final solution, through assisted suicide, begging my friends to slit my wrists, dump pills down my throat, anything to end my misery. The source of my depression is understandable. I could not face the prospect of sitting down for the rest of my life without use of my hands, without use of my legs. All my hopes seem dashed. My faith was shipwrecked.

Or what about the child that is born with no arms or legs? If we are not careful, we will have a view of God much like a milk jug. If inside it is full of all that you can handle, and God is up there pouring it out on you up until the point you can no longer handle it. This is not the God of our Christian faith. God will not allow adversity in your life above what His grace is sufficient to handle.

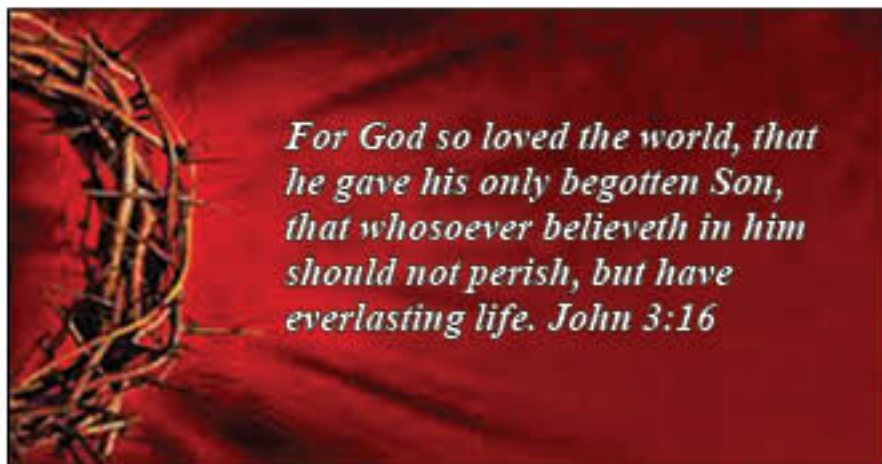
In life adversity and suffering are at times more than we can handle. That is why God wants us to depend on Him. It is the Christian with the strong faith who will experience the mercy of God during times of adversity. "Sometimes God allows what He hates, to accomplish what He loves" Joni Eareckson Tada

We are no match for cancer. We are no match for suffering. We are no match for heartache. And we are no match for death. These things are bigger than we are, and they are more than we can handle. However, with faith in God we can handle anything. 2 Corinthians 4:7-11 (KJV 1900)

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Doug, I love you and Barbara, God will not take you where He has not been. I will never understand all that God does, but I know He never makes a mistake. I am very grateful for men and women who have had their "backs against the wall" and then something miraculous happens "But God".

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.



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Sudoku Solution

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

Getting Out of the Valley

By Pastor Steve Williams
Mitchell County



Many people feel their life is hopeless. They don't understand why certain things have happened in their life. They can't see how in the world they are going to make it through. But my Bible guarantees me that my God will set the course of the playing field straight, even though I don't understand. Isaiah 45:2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: This gives me hope to keep living and trusting God. The truth of the matter is we will all go through rough stretches of life and it doesn't look like we have much to look forward to, but the Good News is, we have a God that is still in control no matter what we think. Our new millennium has taught us that the promise of technology is hollow. (Look at all the hacking into computer systems.) The reliability of our government is questionable. (Look at all the corruption in Washington) The integrity of our financial system is suspect. (Look at the Wall Street collapse several years ago.) The security of our nation is compromised. (Twin Towers, Las Vegas Shooting, and School shootings)

There is an old Arab parable that says: All sunshine and no rain makes a desert. If you never have any down times, dark times, gloomy times in your life you'll be dried up. You'll have no depth to yourself, no maturity. It takes good times and bad times to make a mature person. Life is a mixture of pain and pleasure, of victory and defeat, of success and failure, of mountain tops and valleys.

We have become so self-focused that we have forgotten what God says about the valleys of life and that others have been here before and survived. David shows us all that there is hope in the valley of life. Psalms 23:4 *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

There are five facts about valleys that you need to remember whenever you go through a tough time: (1) Valleys are Inevitable: They are going to happen, so you might as well count on them. You have either just come out of a valley, you're in one right now, or you're probably headed toward one. Valleys happen throughout life -- one right after another. After every mountain top there is a valley. Jesus was very realistic about it. In John 16, He says "In the world you will have trouble." It's not a matter of if a valley will come, it's when your valley will come. You're going to have difficulty, disappointment, and discouragement in life. There will be times of suffering, and sorrow. There will be times of frustration, failure. They are going to happen. They are a normal part of life. Don't be surprised by it. (2) Valleys are Unpredictable: You can't plan them, time them, or schedule them. Valleys are always unexpected. They usually come at the worst time. Have you ever had a flat tire, or get sick at a good time? Folks, they just happen. It would be great if you could schedule your valleys in life, but you can't because they are Unpredictable. (3) Valley are Impartial: No one is immune to them. No one gets to skate through life problem-free. Everybody has problems -- good people and bad people. Problems, trials, difficulties, disturbances, downtimes, depression doesn't mean you're a bad person. It means you're a person. It doesn't mean you're an evil human being; it means you're a human being. Valleys are impartial. They don't care how good or bad you are. (4) Valleys are Temporary: They have an end to them. They don't last. They are not a permanent location. David says, *"Even though I walk through the valley..."* The valley is not something you stay in your entire life. It's something you go through -- a circumstance, a situation that has a season to it. When you're in a valley you often think it's a dead end, but it's not. They don't come into your life to stay. They come to pass. I Peter 1:6

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. He admits that sometimes you're going to go through tough times.

It's going to be rough. Life is tough. You're going to have it. But it's only for a while. (5) Valleys Are Purposeful

God has a reason for taking you through the valleys. Whether it's doubt, depression, despair, discouragement, defeat, He's got a reason behind it. We will face financial valleys, relational valleys, emotional valleys, and all kinds of different trials. This is no accident, it happens to prove your faith whether I understand it or not. We love to enjoy the mountain tops, but you don't build faith on the mountain tops. You build faith in the valleys of life. When everything is going fine and great you don't really need God. But when you come face to face with a dark valley, you get on your knees. Faith is strengthened in the valleys.

Words of Wisdom

• God will never give you anything you can't handle, so don't stress. Kelly Clarkson

• Without faith, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible. N/A

• The greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or other material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith. Billy Graham

• Through hard work, perseverance and a faith in God, you can live your dreams. Ben Carson

A Little Laughter

• The Sunday School teacher was describing that when Lot's wife looked back at Sodom she turned into a pillar of salt, when Bobby interrupted. "My mommy looked back once while she was driving," he announced, "and she turned into a telephone pole."

Good Advice

• If the devil is knocking at your door, let Jesus answer.

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

Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

The Rest of the Story

Doug Harrell

Clint always had a certain love for the animals, but his wariness most often took over. He was kinda like, "man those are BIG animals" if you know what I mean. He was a little more comfortable with smaller pigs as well, but not so much when they got up to grown-up size. The favorite place to keep him when we were working with the cows remained the truck cab over the tenure on the farm. Great memories!

Funny Farm

Dear Friends,

'Til the Cows Come Home!

It was mid-March 2010, and I had only been at Harrell Hill Farms for a few days. Already my rotund/chubby/obese body – I was a svelte 300+ lbs. – was protesting the newfound life of physical labor. (Don't tell anyone but a week or so into my "Farmer Clint" transformation I was questioning whether this was the life for me!) One of my first assignments was to don a 50 lb. backpack filled with fertilizer pellets and spread them alongside – called 'side dressing' – Christmas trees. Sounds fairly simple except that with the extra 50 lbs. I now was toting 350 lbs. on a nearly vertical slope, oftentimes falling my fat-self halfway down the mountain. The strain was nearly unbearable, so much so that I told a friend back home that I was thinking of trying to escape in the middle of the night.

Anyway, it was approaching 5:00 am – a wee bit early for a former prison chaplain – as I meandered outside the farmhouse for a whiff of cool mountain air. Traversing the ditch in front of the house I heard the faint sound of hooves pounding Byrd Road. I wondered what could possibly be heading up the street at such an early hour...must be wild horses. (Don't laugh, how could I know?) When what to my wondering eyes should appear but 'Daddy D' Harrell, alongside a herd of cattle.

In my hometown of Hendersonville, I saw an occasional white squirrel or even a flock of turkeys on my street, but cows never. And it never occurred to me that a man of 'Daddy D's' generation – nearly 94 years young - would be leading them. Clearly, he was too advanced in years to do this alone... 'twas a job for Farmer Clint @ !

Learning 'Cow-Speak'

Outside of these mountains one rarely thinks about such things as talking to cows. I mean, why would you? I always thought cows stayed in a big pen, you give 'em some corn-stuff to fatten them up, then somebody turns them into grill fodder. Wrong answer!

As man and herd came ever closer to my location I could hear 'Daddy D' singing to the critters... 'Sookeeee, Sookeeee, Sookeeee'. Now I hadn't a clue what that meant but the bovine had no trouble translating. They trotted along as though he were their 'Daddy D' too.

Soon Doug sauntered down from the homestead and he, too, began speaking in a foreign tongue. But he said, "Hey-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh...hey-ohhhhhhhhhhh...hey-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh... what the heck was that about? Whatever it meant the hamburger on hooves 'parlez vous'd' his lingo and obediently followed.

Now, I ask you, given a similar circumstance – and feeling as though you needed to help – what would you do? That's right; you make up your own Farmer Clint verbiage and establish your credentials among the thundering herd. Such was my approach.... "HEAHhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...HEAHhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh... HEAHhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh," I bellowed. And man did those cows fly in varied directions, as though I had called their mothers a bad name! The rib eyes scattered like roaches at a RAID conference...like chickens at a coyote ball...like mice at a

kitty convention...you get the point. The serenity and calm of a summer's morn became mayhem and madness about midway Byrd Road.

"Train Them Up in The Way They Should Go..."

It is difficult to describe the facial expressions worn by 'Daddy D' and Doug as their clump of cows dispersed like mosquitoes in a Deep Woods Off attack. Suffice it to say, their eyes were wide, their mouths turned up in a slight scowl... it was an eerie sight. As I trudged forward, tobacco stick in hand, 'Daddy D' motioned for me to approach.

I stumbled my behemoth body toward him, assuming he wanted me to help formulate a battle plan. He did, but I was an "extra" in this ballet. "Clint," he said, "do you really want to help me with the cattle?" (Knowing full well that my deepest desire is to "fit-in", to "be one with the farm", to be drafted onto the team). Proudly, and with a wee bit of Farmer Clint panache I said, "You know I want to help!"

"Well, it's like this," 'Daddy D' began. "These cows don't know you like they do Doug and me. I think someday they will, but for now the very best thing you can do is to go sit in that truck over there!" Deflated, dejected, feeling like cast-aside like dryer lint, I limped over to 'Daddy D's' truck. He came to the window and said, "Remember, I've been moving cows my whole life...and that's a longgggggggggg time."

So, it was that my 94-year-old mentor gave me hope for a future as Farmer Clint the Cow Master @ .

Since Then...

It's been 5 years since my first "round-up" and I've learned a great deal about farms and their inhabitants. For one thing, I've learned that I'm better at telling farm tales than I am at herding cows. Second, a man simply cannot inject himself into a wad of cattle without proper introduction and a bit of aptitude for such things. Finally, I've learned how to whisper softly "Sookeeee" and "Hey-ohhhhhhh" like a pro. Don't get me wrong, the cows don't follow, but they don't scatter either. It won't be long before I resemble Rowdy Yates on 'Rawhide', aka Clint Eastwood, moving the thundering herd over the plains!

Oh yeah, I almost forgot to tell you, I lost 103 lbs. during my sentence – ooops I mean stay – at Harrell Hill Farms. God is good!



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Takes Home Multiple Awards!

By Nina Mastandrea
Avery County

BANNER ELK, N.C. — College information and ranking resource, Affordable Colleges Online (ACO), awarded Lees-McRae a top spot on three separate lists for 2018.

The college received a spot as Best Online College in North Carolina, Best Online Accelerated Nursing Degree in the U.S. and Best Online Registered Nurse Degree in the U.S.

"We wanted to honour the colleges and universities setting the bar for online learning," said Dan Schuessler, CEO and Founder of ACO. "These schools are going above and beyond the industry standard to help make online education programs an excellent option and more affordable."

Affordable Colleges Online took into account the college's regional accreditation, in-state tuition and fees, percent of full-time undergraduate students receiving institutional financial aid, number of online programs offered and the student-to-teacher ratio, while developing the ranking.

Established in 2011, ACO offers "free community resource materials and tools that span topics such as financial aid and college savings, opportunities for veterans and people with disabilities and online learning resources," according to an ACO release.

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

The Belt of Truth

By Christy Lowman
Burke County



Have you ever seen a King snake? They grow up to 6 ft. long and can be found all over the U.S. Some are solid black with white throats. Others are black with white or yellow spots. Some are black with white sections or chains. The most unusual is the Scarlet King snake which is red with yellow and black bands. Don't confuse it with the venomous Coral snake that is black with red and yellow bands.

King snakes are not poisonous to people or large animals, but they still might bite you. In fact, most people like having these around because they will kill and eat poisonous snakes like copperheads, rattlesnakes, and water moccasins. King snakes also eat rats, mice, birds, bird and turtle eggs, and lizards. They are active hunters seeking out their prey by its scent. These snakes kill their food by grabbing it with their mouth and constricting it. Constricting means that the snake squeezes the prey until it dies. Then they eat it. Depending on the size of its meal, it may eat only a few times per month.

King snakes are known to make good pets. As a pet, they can live up to 30 years. In the wild, their life span is unknown, and they hibernate in the winter.

Have you ever held a pet snake? Their skin is super smooth and very soft! Of course, don't pick up any snake off the ground, and always get permission from your parents before holding someone's pet snake!



This snake is called "king" because it kills all other snakes including other King snakes. It's Greek name, genus lampropeltis means: shiny shields," because of its well defined glossy scales. They also have many other names such as: Salt and Pepper snake, Thunder snake, Horse racer, Chain snake, Cow sucker, Wampum, Master snake, and Oak-leaf rattler.

When I think of comparing an animal with the belt of truth I automatically think of a snake. Did you know that they make belts out of snake leather? It is ironic to compare the snake to the belt of truth because if the snake/devil had been truthful in the Garden of Eden then Eve wouldn't have committed the first sin. The serpent (snake) wouldn't have lost its legs for his punishment for lying to Eve. Can you imagine what snakes would look like if they still had legs?

What can we learn from the serpent? When we don't strap the belt of truth around our waist, and lie instead of telling the truth, there will be consequences. Everyone answers for every lie or wrong thing they do. If the snake had been truthful it would be walking with legs instead of slithering on its belly, and people wouldn't be out to kill them when they see them. The devil whispers in all of our ears, trying to get us to lie, sin, and deceive others just like he did to the snake in the Garden of Eden. That is why it is so important that you wear your "belt of truth" each day. When you tell fibs, it breaks a person's trust. Sometimes it takes a very long time for that person to trust you again. He also tells us to go out and tell people the truth about Jesus Christ, even if it upsets them. Lying to people makes telling others about Jesus very difficult if not impossible for them to believe you. So, always be truthful, it is what God wants you to do. If it wasn't important it wouldn't be the ninth commandment in the Ten Commandments. So, strap on the belt of truth, not only to keep your pants up, but to help remind you to always tell the truth no matter what. You can even imagine that your belt is made from snake leather if you want to! Every time you think about fibbing remember your belt and ask God to help you always tell the truth!

Our most kind, heavenly Father, I pray that you will help each child strive to always tell the truth even if they get in trouble by doing so. Help them realize how important it is to always be honest and to obey this commandment. Show them that all fibs, small and big are all lies in Your eyes. Remind them to put on their belt of truth and to remember that it is there when the devil tempts them to sin. In Jesus's name I pray Amen.

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, Ephesians 6:14

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."...Genesis 3:14-15 NASB

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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 HCI. 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.

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Morganton Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Unshakable Faith

By Rick and Cindy Mercer
Burke County

Have you ever been tested and tried for your faith? Has your allegiance to Christ ever been challenged? If you are like most people, our "trials" to defend our faith position has been limited and certainly has not caused us to face severe ridicule, imprisonment or even death.

But we have certainly read the multiple stories of those who have died a martyr's death. And it seems that every time these stories resurface the question remains, "Is my faith that strong?" Other thoughts come quickly to our mind...like, "Where did that kind of courage come from?"

Maybe our courage can be like Pieter Beckjen who made his living by ferrying people and goods on the river Amstel. There were times when he would sail down the canals of Amsterdam with fellow believers—so they could worship in secret.

When Peter and his wife had their first child, the couple tried to keep the infant hidden so they wouldn't be forced to have it christened in the state church. But neighbors eventually betrayed them to the magistrates.

Peter was tried, convicted for "crime against the divine and secular majesty...which disturb the peace," and condemned "to be executed with fire...and his entire property confiscated."

They put this earnest ferry operator on the rack in one last fiendish effort to bend his faith. But it proved unshakable. Pieter was burned in January of 1569.

A close friend of his, Willem Janss, heard about the planned execution and hurried to the site from a nearby town. Wanting to offer some encouragement, he arrived at Amsterdam's gate, but the bar had already been let down. Willem had to bribe the gatekeeper to let him in.

He rushed to the site of the execution and arrived just as Pieter was being led out to the stake. Willem called out, "Contend valiantly, dear brother."

What gave Pieter such death-defying faith? Why was he willing to stand "heartily" for the Lord without wavering? There is one significant reason. He believed that Jesus was divine and that His offer of eternal life was real. To reject Jesus was to reject eternal life. Pieter accepted the Savior's words to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26). Eternal life is life forever in the joyful presence of God the Father, Jesus Christ His Son, the Holy Spirit, and all the heavenly hosts.

The martyrs of the past saw beyond the flames to eternity. By faith they grasped the promises of God.

The promise is ours today: "He who believes in Me... shall never die" (John 11:25, 26). Our lives are "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). His promise of the resurrection is certain. We can have absolute confidence that He will fulfill His word.

We can certainly praise God that because of Resurrection Day, we all too can have "victory in Jesus!" We can be assured that at the end of all of the promises from God's word there is a period. There are no question marks. We can believe that the promises are true. Encourage each other to keep their hands on the plow "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men."—(Col. 3:23).

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."—(Luke 21:28)

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



Burnsville Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Poking Holes in the Darkness

By Pastor Ed Couser
Yancey County

Several years ago I had the privilege of pastoring in Bowling Green, Kentucky. While there, one day our church family decided to take a tour of Mammoth Cave. I remember walking down its winding trails among the stalactites and stalagmites. In the background I heard the faint sound of dripping water. When we entered the largest cavern several hundred feet underground, our guide pointed out the system of electric lights found throughout the cave. Without warning he turned out the lights! The blackness was thick. I could not see my hand in front of my face. Then after a few seconds of complete blackout, our guide lit one match. One tiny match lit up the entire cavern.

In Jesus' day, the world was dark, cold, and impersonal. The people yearned for hope. They longed for light. In fact, John in his gospel used "light" as a theme to communicate the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus reminded His hearers, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness." (John 12:46). Light is necessary for our daily existence. We need light to survive, to live physically. We also need the light of God to survive spiritually. Jesus is our light. He reminds us what is good. He exposes our sins. He leads us into His truth. Jesus is the light to our world even today. Why does Jesus reveal Himself as our light? "So that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." (John 12:46b). I remember something Robert Louis Stevenson wrote while he was looking out a window from his house one evening many years ago. (The days before electricity). He wrote about the town lamplighter coming along lighting the street lamps in succession. Stevenson described that as the lamplighter went along, he was "poking holes in the darkness."

Without Jesus, we live in a dark, cold, and impersonal world. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus stands at the door and knocks. He longs for us to willingly open the door of our hearts to invite Him in. His desire is to dispel the darkness in our lives. Why? So that we can live in the light of His life, truth, and love, as we await His second coming.

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



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The Rotary of Spruce Pine

AMY Regional Library

By Doug Sudduth
Mitchell County



Members and guests of the Rotary Club of Spruce Pine were privileged to welcome Amber Westall Briggs to their weekly club meeting on February 8. As the Regional Library Director for Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties, Briggs was introduced by Teaky Tollison, who noted that the director has "just about the most perfect career on the planet, because most days she is surrounded by books and people of all ages." Briggs has a special affection for Rotary International for in 2012, she was selected to participate in a Professional Exchange in Finland. She credits Rotary with teaching her about service above self, the Rotary motto. Briggs started with AMY Regional Library as a volunteer in Burnsville and has served as its director for more than two years. She sees the public library as constantly changing, shifting from a repository of books to a full-fledged community center. Through outreach programs the library is vital to a rural community. Briggs sees public advocacy as essential for expanding library services.

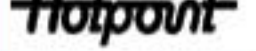
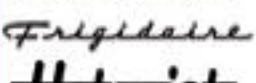


Teaky Tollison, Amber Briggs, receiving a locally handmade Rotary mug from Rotarian Mike Tollison with O'Neal Shelton, Assistant Governor, Rotary District 7670, Area 8

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

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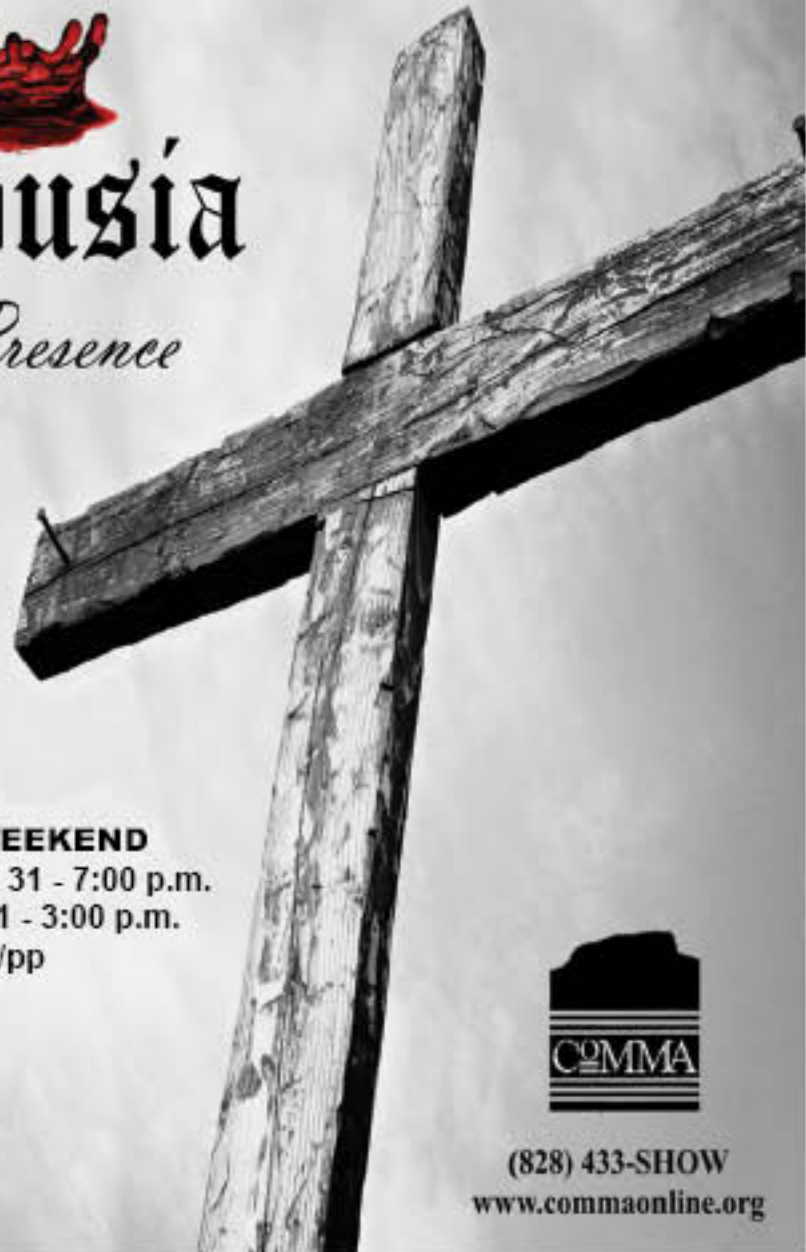
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Dave Says Financial Counseling

(Debt and income crisis)

Dear Dave,

I received a call the other day from a company saying it could negotiate the balance on my credit cards to a lesser amount. The caller also said they could get me a zero-percent interest rate until the debts were paid off, and then the accounts would be closed. I'm kind of starting over again financially, because I sold a company I had run for almost 15 years, then got into real estate and lost almost everything. I'm making just enough to squeeze by, and my credit card debt totals \$40,000. Would this be a good idea?



Bill

Dear Bill,

No, this is not a good idea. You're looking at two major problems with a company such as this one. One, they will absolutely destroy whatever credit you may have. Their plan is to take your cash, and spend some time beating down the credit card companies until they agree to accept a lesser amount. Then, they use your cash to settle loans you will have — by that time — defaulted on. This will put you in a situation very similar to if you had filed Chapter 13 bankruptcy. Stay away from these people.

You have an income crisis, in addition to a debt crisis, at this point. For starters, I want you to start living on a tight, written, monthly budget. I'm talking rice and beans, no vacations, and no eating out until you pay off this debt. Where your income is concerned, maybe you should consider getting back into the kind of business you ran previously for a while. Look for a managerial or supervisory position in that area, at least until you're able to get back on your feet and save some cash. Finally, cut up the credit cards, close the accounts, and put as much money as you can spare toward paying off that debt using the debt snowball system. Never go back into debt again!

—Dave

(Pay off house first?)

Dear Dave,

My husband and I are in our forties. We have no children, and we bring home \$95,000 a year combined. We're also debt-free except for our home. We owe just \$10,000 on the house and can take care of that in a few months. Would it be okay to rearrange the Baby Steps a bit, and pay off our home before getting serious about saving for retirement?

Nan

Dear Nan,

I don't usually give folks any wiggle room when it comes to sticking with the proper order of the Baby Steps. But if you're that close to being completely debt-free, I don't see anything wrong with paying off the house first.

Most people I talk to still have anywhere from \$100,000 to \$300,000 left on their mortgages. This is a little bit different story, however, and you two are obviously managing your money well.

Knock out that mortgage, and start pouring at least 15 percent of your income into retirement. You're going to love the feeling — and the freedom — that comes with being completely debt-free!

—Dave

How Much House Can I Afford?

Courtesy of DaveRamsey.com

Buying a home can be lots of fun. It's exciting to see all those years of dreaming come to life in a place you can finally call your own. With so many possibilities at your fingertips, it's easy to get caught up in the excitement before asking yourself the most important question of all: How much house can I afford?

It doesn't matter if the kitchen is fabulous or the backyard is big. If you can't pay the mortgage each month, or find the cash to fix what's broken, your home will never be a blessing.

Step 1: Start with a Solid Foundation

Before trying to find out how much house you can afford, determine if you're financially ready to buy a home by asking yourself these questions:

- Am I debt-free with three to six months of expenses in an emergency fund?
- Can I make at least a 10 percent (preferably 20 percent) down payment?
- Do I have enough cash to cover closing costs and moving expenses?
- Is the house payment 25 percent or less of my monthly take-home pay?
- Can I afford to take out a 15-year fixed-rate mortgage?
- Can I afford ongoing maintenance and utilities for this home?

If you answered no to any of the above questions, now may not be the right time to buy a home. Just married? Wait at least a year before buying a home, even if your finances are in order. Don't add the stress of a home purchase to a brand-new marriage, and never buy real estate with your significant other unless you're actually married!

Step 2: Get the Right Real Estate Agent

Your search for homes may start online, but it shouldn't end there. You can do a lot of research on your own, but you need the help of an expert when it comes to finding and securing your perfect home.

A buyer's agent can help you navigate through the home-buying process. In some cases, they may even be able to help you find a house before it hits the mar-



ket, giving you a competitive edge. When it comes to making an offer, your agent will negotiate on your behalf so that you don't pay a penny more than necessary.

Step 3: Maximize Your Down Payment

The more cash you put down, the less money you'll need to finance. That means lower mortgage payments each month and a faster timeline to pay off your home loan!

A down payment of 20 percent will keep you from having to pay private mortgage insurance (PMI). PMI protects the mortgage company in the event you don't make your payments, and they have to foreclose on you. It usually costs about 1 percent of the total loan value, and that cost is added to your monthly payment.

Step 4: Get Pre-approved for a Mortgage

Getting pre-approved takes a little more work, because a lender will need to verify your financial information and submit your loan for preliminary underwriting. Although it takes some extra time to get preapproved, it pays off when you begin your home search since a preapproval letter shows that you're a serious buyer.

Remember, bad financing can turn your biggest asset into a liability. We recommend always getting a 15-year, fixed-rate conventional loan with monthly payments that are no more than 25 percent of your take home pay.

Step 5: Calculate the Costs

You can figure out how to buy a home that won't bust your budget by crunching a few numbers. Once you know how much you can realistically spend on a new home, make sure you and your spouse are on the same page about your budget and what you can actually pay.

Add up all income you bring home each month, then multiply your monthly take-home pay by 25 percent to get your maximum mortgage payment. If you bring home \$5,000 a month, that means your house payment should be no more than \$1,250 a month, including taxes and insurance. Also, remember to factor in home ownership costs and moving expenses.

The Final Step

Talk with a professional real estate agent about your financial goals for help in finding a home that fits your budget. A good agent with the heart of a teacher will understand how important it is to help you find a home you can afford — and that means one that won't bust your budget!

* Used with permission from DaveRamsey.com. For help deciding which mortgage is right for you, visit <https://www.daveramsey.com/mortgage-calculator>.

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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An Open Letter To The Churches
Of Yancey County

By Vivian Hollifield
Yancey County

For over 40 years, the Yancey County Committee on Aging and the Yancey County Senior Center has been your silent partner ministering to one of our County's most vulnerable populations, our senior adults. Our mission statement indicates that the primary focus of our ministry will be the over 60 years of age population of our County. We fulfill this ministry each and every day by accomplishing the following:

- 1. Meals on wheels (delivered to 75 individuals each day)
- 2. Providing a face to face contact through our meals on wheels program with many individuals who might not see another individual at all during the day. This provides both social interactions for these seniors as well as a wellness check on them.
- 3. Providing nutritious meals to over 78 individuals at our new facility located at 503 Medical Campus Drive, Burnsville.
- 4. Providing educational classes by qualified professionals on subjects that aid and assist our seniors.
- 5. Providing exercise classes that strengthen the physical well being of our seniors.
- 6. Provide supplemental food items acquired from Manna Food Bank in order to supplement our senior's food budget and aid them in having a balanced diet.
- 7. Painting and various crafts classes.
- 8. Weekly Bible study and devotionals.
- 9. By providing no cost transportation for seniors who desire to attend the meal at the Senior Center

Unfortunately, decreased funding over the last five (5) years has resulted in our Senior Center being unable to continue the current pace of operations without some additional sources of income. The increased cost of raw food, electricity and other basic supplies have only increased the demands on our limited budget. Currently we are searching for grants that we may qualify for and are attempting to raise funding in different ways. We have and continue to search for ways to cut our expenses as much as we can without cutting our service to our seniors.

We would like to ask your church to consider providing a continuing contribution to our senior center by a monthly amount in your church budget. If only 40 churches would donate \$50.00 per month that would allow us to continue our ministry to our seniors. If your church cannot do that, perhaps you would consider a love offering for us several times a year.

If you have any questions please call Vivian Hollifield at 682-6011 or if you desire, arrangements could be made for a speaker to come and share with your congregation about our senior center, our ministry, our needs and how your church could help us.

Vivian manages the Yancey Senior Citizens Center and Lives in Burnsville, NC.



Singing in the Cave

By Jerry Lewis
McDowell County



Singing comes natural when life is good, the bills are paid, the family is well, and the future looks bright. However, when the news isn't good, singing often escapes us. David taught us in Psalm 57 to sing in the cave. Running for his life, with his enemies camped all around him, he wrote:

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. (Psalm 57:1, ESV)

Before David sang, he cried out to God. His singing never glossed over his fear, never ignored his dilemma. When you're in the cave, there's no need to pretend life is good. Problems are problems. Hurts are hurts. Bad news is bad news. A troubling diagnosis is a troubling diagnosis. David calls his enemies lions, fiery beasts with spears for teeth and swords for a tongue!

But he doesn't stay there.

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast! I will sing and make melody! (Psalm 57:7, ESV)

This is the same Psalm! David is still sitting in the same cave. Saul is still pursuing him. None of that has changed. When you're in the cave, you will have to will what you do not feel. David reflects on the character of God (he wills to see God in spite of his circumstances) and as a result reflects the character of God (he feels God's presence).



What is your song? When life unravels, what fills your mind? Your house? Your car?

Worship. Enjoy.

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

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Unprecedented Increase in Midlife White Death Rate for NC. Why?

By Dr. Mark Creech

According to the Associated Press, Researchers at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. say the midlife white death rate in 40 of the state's counties is seeing an unprecedented increase.

When I first read this, I thought to myself, "What in the world?" But the lead author of the study, Dr. Chris Mansfield, attributed a large portion of the exacerbated mortality rate to "deaths of despair." That's a classification that applies to suicide, alcohol, and drug abuse issues. Mansfield added that the findings in the Tar Heel state reflect national trends.

In 2015, a couple of Princeton economists released a groundbreaking study that contended that the death rates among white middle-aged Americans had claimed nearly as many lives in the past 15 years as the spread of AIDS. The Guardian, which reported on the study, said: "Though not fully understood, the increased deaths are largely thought to be a result of more suicides and the misuse of drugs and alcohol, driven by easier access to powerful prescription painkillers, cheaper high-quality heroin, and greater financial stresses."

It's not always easy to pinpoint what's at the heart of people's despair but it's a sure thing when drugs and alcohol are in the mix, especially alcohol, the problems intensify. It's like throwing fuel on the fire.

Alcohol and suicide are like bosom buddies. One-third of all suicides in the United States involve alcohol. Adult alcoholics are 120 times more likely to commit suicide.

Quitalcohol.com says, "Because alcohol makes people act more impulsively, previous suicidal thoughts may evolve into action with the use of alcohol. Because alcohol inhibits the ability to reason, drunken people do not fully realize consequences...Regular alcohol abuse causes depression, which is the main factor in suicide. Shameful acts are performed while abusing alcohol and these acts may lead to suicidal feelings or actions...Drinking causes countless issues in people's lives, and may cause some to believe suicide to be the only answer."

This is not to mention many other alcohol-related health issues that can kill early in life, such as alcohol poisoning and chronic liver disease – just to mention a couple.

It was interesting to me to note that the ECU study said, "Considering specific causes of death for midlife whites in the state as a whole, the fitted rates for heart disease, diabetes, and lung cancer in 2013 were lower than in 2000, but rates for suicide and liver disease were higher. The fitted rate for suicide increased by 52.0% from 2000 to 2013. The increase in suicide deaths of midlife whites is projected to be 80.0% in 2020. Similarly, for liver disease, the fitted mortality rate of midlife whites increases by 38.8% from 2000 – 2013 and is estimated to be 59.7% higher in 2020."

Significant increases in suicide rates and liver disease? That smells of alcohol to me, and to most anyone else, I think, that's willing to be honest about it.

As someone who has been addressing alcohol policy in North Carolina since 1999, I can say with authority that North Carolina has done more in the last 18 years to repeal public health and safety restrictions on alcohol than any period since Prohibition. And voila, it appears the warnings that were easily dismissed and left unheeded not to do this are now exacting their toll in blood.

Moreover, while the state has also been increasing accessibility to alcohol, we have also inadvertently distracted citizens from the one thing that is truly the balm for their despair – worship!

Last year the North Carolina General Assembly passed, and Governor Roy Cooper signed the "Brunch Bill," legislation that now allows establishments that sell alcohol to begin sales early on Sunday mornings, instead of waiting until noon when church services are over. Indiana and Georgia are currently considering similar proposals.

Proponents argue this shouldn't have a negative impact on church attendance. Still, reputable studies show that when a state repeals its Blue Laws, not only does this escalate alcohol-related problems, but religious attendance falls.

Worship is necessary to the recreation of the battered and broken spirit of humanity. We desperately need it because life often gets our goat.

Do you know the origin of that expression? Racehorse owners used to put a goat in the stall with sensitive, high strung horses. The presence of a docile goat would help quiet and relax the horse. Sometimes before a big race, an unprincipled owner would steal the goat out of a rival's stable. He knew that if he could "get his neighbor's goat" his horse wouldn't run the race well.

This is the day of jangled nerves and complicated personal problems. Life often gets our goat and we don't run the race of life well. But sound research demonstrates that regular church attendance results in people having stable family lives, fewer instances of divorce, fewer out of wedlock births, and less



crime and addiction issues. Those who attend church regularly also have positive health benefits such as increased longevity, less killer diseases, and better chances for recovery from illness.

If you are wondering why the experts at ECU didn't see the same increase in mortality rates in midlife nonwhites as whites, their study did say for reasons unknown that there was no evidence of increases in heavy drinking among midlife nonwhites. Maybe that's because, generally speaking, nonwhites, more specifically blacks, attend church more often by higher margins than whites.

If your life is riddled with misfortune, you might want to ditch the booze or other drugs. You definitely ought not to take your own life. It may sound overly simplistic, but let me suggest going to church. Try a Christ-centered, Bible-believing fellowship for a while, with an open mind and heart. It might just save and extend your life.

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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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

Laughter

By Chelsea Blevins
Lincolnton County



One of my most favorite things about life is laughter. That bubbly feeling you get with a giggle or that deep rumble that comes from the most pure and rarest form of happiness. Yeah, laughing is my favorite.

There is something really special about seeing the expressions of others. Feeling someone else's feelings in that same moment together. Sometimes I think God has to talk to me with humor to get my attention.

If I am being honest it isn't always that I WANT to hear what God is trying to do with my life. I run at the slightest sound of fear and vulnerability. I don't like to feel uncomfortable, I don't like to be "that girl", I don't like things not going the way I planned.

See here is where God laughs. Because for me to think for a second my plan would be better than the One who breathed life into me? Who am I kidding.

A while back I received a call from my sister and I could hear the worry and the fear in her voice. I think for a few minutes the world felt as if it came to a standstill. You know that moment when fear sets in and you just want to run. That moment when you have no idea what to say or do or how to feel. You maybe even have a little anger at why God is allowing this to happen. That, why me? why now God? moment. My brother-in-law was diagnosed with cancer.

I can only image what my sister went through. What my brother-in-law went through. What thoughts the devil tried to tell them as newlyweds. But, ya wanna know something?

They never for a moment let fear step into the race God had set for them. They never let the enemy drag them down in defeat.

They learned to laugh in the face of fear.

They learned that because Jesus is enough, nothing was too big.

I think we all have to reach a point in our lives. The point when we realize Jesus is all there is, and he is enough. He is more than enough.

This life is a race and sometimes it's tough, but with Jesus we can finish. Not only finish but finish strong and bold. I like to think of Jesus as my sideline motivator. "Come on, you can do this! Don't give up! Walk and not grow weary! Run and not faint! Use the strength I've given you! I have prepared you for this! I have prepared you!"

Maybe you are letting your fear keep you from finishing the race God has prepared for you. Maybe you're telling yourself you're not strong enough or that you're not equipped to finish. But I think that's why we often get so confused.

It isn't us who finishes the race. It's Jesus in us. We finish and only finish because of Jesus. It has nothing to do with our own capability.

David was just a weak little shepherd boy, but Jesus made him strong.

There were just five loaves of bread, but with Jesus it fed five thousand.

Lazarus was dead, but Jesus showed up.

A woman was thirsty, Jesus gave her an everlasting drink.

Satan thought he had won, but the tomb was empty.

We have to have faith for God to work in our lives. When fear settles in we have to remind Satan of the empty tomb.

We aren't capable of much alone but with God the scene changes quickly. We aren't made to be enough on our own. The places where you can't reach, God can, and I promise you he is gonna fill those gaps.

My brother-in-law didn't have cancer on his agenda and he sure didn't want to hear those words but through that moment God grew him and molded him. Because of faith he finished the race. He was cleared and is now cancer free. His testimony leaves me speechless.

We may not always like the way we are being grown but if God is growing us then we have the opportunity to have joy as we go through the process. Letting God into our lives is an all the way deal. When you let Jesus in He wants past the front door. We have to welcome him into every room in our hearts.

There's more to life and God than ups and downs. Life is always going to be that way. The only constant thing in this life is Jesus. Until we decide he is enough, nothing else ever will be.

Cancer may become a frequent word in your family.

Heartbreak might be knocking at your door.

Your worst fear might become your reality.

But, there is power in the name of Jesus and God is so much bigger. He really, really is.

God wants to do so much in our lives, but we have to be willing to allow Him in. We have to allow Him to work and at times that means being uncomfortable and vulnerable. That means allowing Him to grow us in his way and His time.

Following Jesus is more than running at the sound of fear.

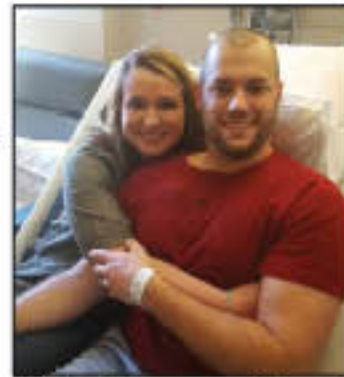
Following Jesus is standing firm in faith and believing what He says even when fear tells us to run. Following Jesus is finding beauty in disaster. Following Jesus is finishing the race when Satan attempts to bind you with chains. Following Jesus is learning to laugh in the face of fear.

With Jesus, we can laugh.

With Jesus we can boldly, fearlessly, and joyful finish the race before us. So, 1 mile or 100 miles, fast or slow, I pray you take your wild heart and you run the race that is set before you, bold, fearless, and joyful.

(Thanks to my lovely sister and brother for allowing me to witness God work in your lives. You taught me to laugh at fear and the true meaning of faith. Love you!)

Chelsea lives in Burnsville, attended Mountain Heritage High School and South College.



Mitch and Lacey, my sister and brother-in-law.

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Allen's Offerings

Armed with God's Word

By Allen Buchanan
Mitchell County

After drinking his Coca-Cola, the pilot decided to toss the empty glass bottle out the window of his small airplane as he flew over the desert of Africa. Little did he know that on the earth's floor below, the bottle would make such an impact. Fortunately, the bottle had not crashed down on anyone's head. Instead, it hit the ground hard and didn't shatter. One of the local tribesmen happened to see it just about the time it hit the ground. He didn't have a clue as to what it was, or that something could fall out of the sky. As he picked it up to examine it, others were watching and came over to see too. As quickly as this bottle had entered his life, his personality had changed, and he wasn't willing to share. His next thought was what to do with it? Before long he had discovered he could carry sand, water and even food in it. His fellow tribesmen thought he should share the bottle. But there was only one and everyone seem to want it as their own. This led to problems within the tribe. Arguments and fights broke out over the possession of one bottle. The tribal leader stepped in and declared it must be returned before someone got hurt or even killed for it. He explains that the gods must be crazy to send them such an object. After the tribe tried to throw it back up in the sky where it had come from, they determined that since the world was flat, the leader would walk to the end of the earth and drop it off. This story came from the 1980 Indie film, "The God's Must Be Crazy".

I told you about the Coca-Cola bottle as a way to say that with everything made, it started out with good intentions. Once Satan got his hands on it, we started spinning downward and out-of-control. After the school shootings in Parkland, FL recently, I'd give anything to have the answer that would stop all this violence once and for all. My heart is shocked each time I hear of another shooting because the numbers keep increasing. Can it all be blamed on guns? I doubt it. Weapons have been around throughout history and used in warfare and for protection. Guns have provided many meals for starving families.

Back in the early 90's as technology was coming on the scene, I encouraged people of all ages to make use of it to expand their imagination. All the endless possibilities that could now be accomplished through a computer chip was simply amazing. Yet, here in 2018, I wish to some degree, this technology had skipped our generation or not happened at all.

If we look at just one avenue of shootings within America, say high school; is it possible that our teenagers do this to get their name in print or to get many likes or hits on Facebook and YouTube? The youth have always wanted to be loved and given as much attention as possible. If they don't get it at home, social media is there to catch them. Somewhere along the way, Satan has convinced them that their talents or sports are no longer the best places to grab their ten minutes of fame. You've got to kill. No, a thousand times No! God's word says otherwise; Exodus 20:13 states "Thou shalt not kill." Before we can get anyone to obey God's word, they must first know Him. It's too late now to pray that everyone who was killed in Parkland was saved. It's not too late to make sure your teenager has Jesus in their heart the next time they enter their high school campus. Arm your child! Not with guns, but with God's Word.

"My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."
Ephesians 6:10-14 KJV

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



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The Inspiring Word

Peace

Pastor Terry Cheek Th.D.
McDowell County



I am writing this month with a heavy heart. The school shooting in Florida is just 24 hours old. The MSM is running rampant with stories that haven't been proven. Political posturing has begun to take a toll on the nation. People are being polarized once again by social engineers, social media and cultural icons.

The victims and their families are left traumatized and vulnerable to manipulation. Most of us reading this article and even myself as I write it cannot begin to understand the sorrow these people are living. I can't imagine getting a phone call and being told my daughter (who is a teacher) and two of my grandchildren at the same school have been killed by a gunman who entered the school. Yet, I realize it's possible, given the day we live in. What can we possibly learn from God's word about tragedies like these and how we should handle them?

I want to share with you 10 pieces of scripture that I hope will help you today or at some point in your life. Because in some way, shape, form or fashion tragedy will strike us all.

1. John 14:27 *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

If we continue to look for a solution to violence on Earth, we will never find it. No one can solve these problems. Instead, we must start putting our trust back in the Lord. We have pushed God out of America, it shows with the culture of violence we have. I remember going to school and every car and truck in the parking lot had a rifle or shotgun in it. There were no school shootings. Because we respected life and the giver of life.

2. Psalm 55:22 *Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*

When we send our cares, our worries and our praises to the Lord, He hears us and blesses those who claim His name. The Lord said often, that He would never cast His eyes from His children when they called out to Him. We cannot hope to begin seeing change on this planet if we continue to ignore the person who loves us the most.

3. Psalm 56:3 *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*

God knows all. He knows the sorrow we feel and knows when our hearts are heavy. When this world seems too scary to face alone, remember to put your trust in the Lord, and know that His plan will conquer all.

4. Deuteronomy 31:6 *Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*

He promises His people, no matter the situation, He will never leave us. No matter our fear, He is with us.

5. Matthew 5:4 *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

There is comfort in the Lord for those who are mourning tragedy. Calling upon him in our time of need is not being weak, it is showing that our trust has been put in Him and that He is who we seek out in our times of grief.

6. Psalm 147:3 *He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. There is comfort in the Lord to those who genuinely reach out to him.*

7. Lamentations 3:47-48 *Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction. (48) Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.*

The Lord is not ignorant of our sufferings. For those who call out to Him, He is there to provide peace.

8. Lamentations 3:55-57 *I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. (56) Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. (57) Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou said, Fear not.*

The Lord gives us strength when we are weak and gives us comfort when we are scared.

9. Romans 12:17-19 *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. (18) If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. (19) Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

Revenge is not ours to take. Evil weighs down our hearts and becomes a never-ending cycle. The Lord will avenge those who chose to live an evil life with justice.

10. Romans 12:21 *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Continue to look towards the Son in all you do. Do not let the evil in this world overcome your conviction to do what is godly and right. A small ripple can lead to a wave, either good or bad.

Thank you for sharing your valuable time with me and 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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By Joy Harwood Baldwin

PALM BRANCHES

*I stood among a lively crowd
As Jesus passed that day
His mission to accomplish
The King would come our way.*

*The people spread their garments
Palm Branches from trees so green
They placed them in His pathway
In honor of the King*

*He came riding on a donkey
Palm Branches made a way it's true
For the Awesome One to ride
His robe of purple, white and blue.*

*Hosanna to The Son of David
Praises rang out to The Highest
His face shined like the brightest sun
Jesus of Nazareth, He was the Christ*



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

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Is Life Really Like a Box of Candy?

By Lana Ellis
Kingsport, Tennessee

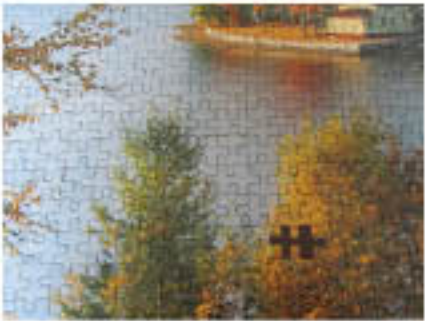
Forest Gump said, "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get." I'm afraid I have to disagree with Forest. A luxuriously wrapped box of candy with each piece of perfectly shaped chocolates nestled snugly and safely in tiny cups or wrapped in gold foil is a far cry from real life. Life does not come with all the pieces neatly assembled. Therefore to me life is more like a jigsaw puzzle. It was while working a rather difficult puzzle that I began seeing how easily it could represent life.

A puzzle piece that looks like it should fit but doesn't yet we may have the tendency to try to pound it into place - Trying to make a piece fit is like one who makes poor choices in life and attempts to justify them. Sometimes I can return to the puzzle that had "puzzled" me and immediately pick up a piece and put it into its proper place - With some situations in life there's not an immediate solution. That's when we step back, pray and wait. Then one day the answer comes and the piece fits. In the more complicated puzzles there will be a lot of pieces that look alike - These are difficult situations in life that seem impossible at the time - Hearing the doctor's diagnoses, facing months of chemo and rehab, marital problems, the wayward child or even raising children in general. Jesus said that we would have tribulations in this life but we're also told that tribulations produce perseverance resulting in a hope that does not disappoint.

The jigsaw puzzle could have a missing piece. What should have been a beautiful picture is left with a blank spot. The death of a loved one certainly leaves a hole in one's life but as bad as that is there is no comparison to the gaping hole in a life without Jesus. If your life is missing Jesus there is no better time than right now to trust Him to complete the picture. Once He is in place the rest of our puzzled life pieces have a better chance to fall in place and fit snugly together.

So back to the question - "Is life like a box of candy?" My desire for all of us is that there will be lots of days that are chocolate covered morsels of sweetness but we shouldn't be surprised when there are days that are more like dill pickles, sour grapes or indigestion from a bowl of chili. After all, at times life can be a bit "puzzling".

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



The Heart of Man

By Preacher Chris Rathbone
Mitchell County

In Matthew 15 verses 1-20, Jesus teaches an all-important lesson to the religious leaders and His disciples about man's heart problem. He's not talking about a physical heart problem but a spiritual one. Let us set in context how this lesson came about.

The scribes and Pharisees, which were the Jewish leaders, came to Jesus and asked Him a question. They wanted to know why His disciples broke their tradition by not washing their hands before they ate. More than likely, these men had made a little religious ceremony from hand washing! I imagine that before they sat down to eat they all would go through this little ritual of washing their hands and it had become such a tradition to them they expected everyone else to observe it. Jesus pointed out that they were more worried about a man-made tradition than the commandment to honor their parents (read vs. 3-7). They should have been more concerned about keeping the law of God than a tradition of man. Jesus calls them hypocrites in verse 7! He said they honored Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. They worshipped in vain and taught their traditions like they were doctrines of God. They ignored God's word and had made their traditions a law and expected everyone to keep it. Folks are still doing that today!

While washing one's hands is certainly good hygiene, it is not a commandment of God. Beginning in verse 10, Jesus teaches us a very important lesson about the heart of man. While the Pharisees were worried about something physically entering their body and defiling them, Jesus explained the things which a man eats doesn't defile him, but it's the things which come from his heart, from the inner man, that will defile him. They were blind leaders leading blind followers! They and their teaching were not of God and would be rooted up (vs. 13-14).

Peter asks Jesus in verse 15 to explain the parable to them. Verses 16-20 are of the utmost importance when it comes to understanding the inner heart of man. For some reason, our society keeps believing that if we can just change the outward condition, outward influences, outward appearance, the outward availability, outward whatever, that man will stop doing evil things. Jesus explains to us, if we'll just listen, what needs to change. I want to quote this, so we can all get into our thick skulls what causes men to do wicked things.

Matthew 15:16-20 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught. But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.

Once again, our hearts are broken from hearing about another school shooting. My heart goes out in prayer for all those affected and who have lost loved ones. May God grant peace and grace to those who have been hurt by such a senseless and evil act. Once again, the question is asked, "What was the motive?" or "Why would someone do such a thing?" The politicians are already using this tragedy to push for laws restricting guns. The political pandering and finger pointing will go on for months. All the while most people will ignore the root of the problem: the wicked heart of man. Wicked people do wicked things because of a wicked heart. We can restrict gun ownership, and wicked people will use box cutters and airplanes. We can place restrictions on who can travel in planes and wicked people will use home-made bombs in subways. The problem is not that which we try to change on the outside of man, the problem stems from the inner heart of man. If the heart is not changed, the things wicked people do will continue. We can scream, fight, and debate all we want but what's in the well (heart) will always come up in the bucket!

Jesus changes hearts! As long as mankind rejects the One who can change who they are on the inside, the wicked things they do on the outside will continue. No matter how many laws or traditions man comes up with, wicked people will always do wicked things. The problem is not with laws but with man's heart. A wicked heart will always find a way to do wicked things. There must be a transformation of the heart of man before our society will ever see an end to these senseless acts of violence. We regulate alcohol, but people still drink and drive and kill innocent people. We regulate drugs and people still sell and use them illegally. We take peoples driver's license for alcohol and drug use, and guess what, they still get into a vehicle and drive under the influence and kill innocent people! We incarcerate rapist and child molesters, they will serve their time and most likely rape and molest again if given the chance. We better wake up my friends and realize what the root of the problem is: It's the heart of man!

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



5 Common Myths About Hospice



Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge

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Myth 1. Hospice is only appropriate for people who are in the last few days of life

Hospice is for anyone with an advanced illness. Hospice can do so much to make the patient comfortable and have a better quality of life. Education and support is also provided for family members. It is much better for the patient and their family when services start sooner rather than later.

Myth 2. Hospice is too expensive

As a nonprofit, community-based agency, Hospice of the Blue Ridge accepts people based on their need for care rather than their ability to pay.

Myth 3. Hospice is only for people who have cancer

Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge serves individuals with a variety of medical conditions including end-stage heart disease, dementia, kidney and lung disease. Hospice cares for people of all ages.

Myth 4. You are required to have a do-not-resuscitate order

The goal of Hospice is to allow for a comfortable, peaceful end-of-life experience. While some people choose to have a DNR to avoid unnecessary medical intervention, you are not required to have a DNR to receive hospice care.

Myth 5. People die faster on Hospice

Research shows that patients on hospice actually live longer and have better quality of life than those who do not have hospice. It is best for people to receive hospice earlier in their disease process to get the support that they need.

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What's Your "One Thing"?

By Joyce Meyer

What's Your "One Thing"? When it comes to your relationship with God, how do you rate it? Do you judge it by how often you go to church? Or how many Scripture verses you've memorized...maybe the length of your prayer time? Does any of that really matter?

Well, the answers to these questions are yes and no. Yes, there's a benefit to attending church. Sure, it's good to know the Word of God. And prayer—well, you really can't pray too much. But it doesn't matter whether you're sitting in a pew every time the church doors open or even if you can quote the whole Bible. It doesn't matter how long or loud you pray!

That may sound like a contradiction, but it's not. Yes, go to church, worship and fellowship with other Christians. Certainly, we should learn God's Word and know how to apply it to our lives. And like I said, you simply cannot pray too much. But no...none of that impresses God or proves anything to Him. He is not logging your prayer hours.

You see, Christianity is not about our weekly church attendance. Many people go to church often and hear many sermons, but hardly put much of what they learn into action. But real Christianity is about having a personal, intimate relationship with Christ. It's about learning how to live an abundant, purposeful life.

We can go to church each week and hear a powerful, life-changing message every time, but when we hear a sermon, we need to focus on what really touches our life in a personal way. That's most likely the thing God wants to deal with us about. Then, we need to go home and meditate on it, study more about that subject in God's Word, and spend time in prayer seeking how to apply that truth to our life.

That's what intimacy with God is all about. It's a personal relationship with Him. It's Him being involved in our lives, and it's knowing He's aware of and concerned about all the details -- even the seemingly insignificant or non-spiritual details.

I remember years ago when my husband, Dave, and I used to be in a bowling league. God had recently touched my life in a powerful way. On my way to bowl one evening, God spoke to my heart and said, "Why don't you ask Me to help you bowl?" Bowl? God? Yes... and He will help us with everything we're concerned about—our health, our finances, raising our children, or whatever it is we need. That's how personal a relationship with God is! He is concerned about everything that concerns us. We don't have to divide our lives into the sacred and the secular. Ephesians 6:10 (AMP) says to "be empowered through your union with Him." Our whole life is sacred because God is in it!

So, why does it seem like some people are much closer to Him than others? Does God have favorites? Why do some seem to have a deeper relationship with Him? Why can't we all have that?

I think the answer is simply one thing: Intimacy. We—not God—determine our level of intimacy with Him. We are each as close to God as we want to be. And the closer we get to God, the more intimate we become in our relationship with Him and the more we grow and mature spiritually. In other words, we grow up. David had the right idea. He said, "One thing I have asked of the Lord, and that I will seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord [in His presence] all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty [the delightful loveliness and majestic grandeur] of the Lord and to meditate in His temple" (Psalm 27:4 AMP).

David was more concerned with seeking God's face — His presence — than seeking His hand — what God could do for him. He simply loved God. And because of that, he grew in character, excellence and integrity, and became a mighty king.

Jesus had many followers. Twelve of them were close friends that He spent much time with. Three of them went with Him into special situations and circumstances to minister to someone. And then there was one who actually called himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved!"

All of these people spent time with Jesus. Some were closer to Him than others, but He loved them all. And He loves all of us. God will never love any of us more than He does right this minute. He has a plan for each one of our lives. The one thing that's more important than anything is spending time with Him. The only question is: How close do you want to be?

Please note: The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication and/or website are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Joyce Meyer Ministries.

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.



By Claudia Bailey Honeycutt
Mitchell County

There are days I love small town life. Today is one. Baby K and I met some of our dear friends for lunch. Love them so much. I wanted to encourage them, as they are heading to Duke to begin treatments. Of course, it didn't work out that way. They spent an hour encouraging me and talking about the goodness of God. We went to DT's. What an awesome place to have in town, where people just meet each other. For coffee, or food, or work, or prayer, or company meetings, or just good food. My kid works there too, so I am a bit partial to the little one in the jeans and black t-shirt, with the messy bun and the cute socks. The one with the great eyelashes.

Anyway, we grabbed the living room on the left as you walk in. I was so aware of the crowd in there. Friends stopped by to check on the baby and tell us how much

they loved us and had prayed us through. Friends stopped to hug my friends and give them words of wisdom and encouragement on their next journey. Lots of hugs. Lots of handshakes. Lots of smiles and laughter. It was such a blessing to see how small towns really work. People for the most part, love each other. They pray for each other. They encourage one another, through kidney stones, and babies, and deaths, and sickness, and aging parents, and troubled kids.... How many thousand cups of coffee, or scoops of ice cream have been shared in that window living room while people just loved each other?

I see men on the street early on Saturday mornings, having breakfast and catching up, or whatever men do during those times. Maybe they just eat. I dunno. I see women talking a thousand miles an hour, trying to get it all in before their lunch break is over, or they have to pick up the kids from somewhere. I see teenagers come in after school, for a coffee, or a quick snack before the ballgame. Lots of homework. Lots of job work. Lots of newspaper reading. Lots of hugs and tears, and happy times and good, old-fashioned talking. Like, face to face use your mouth and hands and eyes, not texting...talking!

I'm thankful for places like that downtown. I'm thankful for small town friendships, and small-town support systems. It's important to recognize good things. Today, it was a good day to be from Spruce Pine.



Claudia is a wife, mother, and grandmother who has given up her career to "stand in the gap".

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Burke County

Burke County National Day of Prayer Women's Prayer Luncheon

Speaker: Jessie Seneca

Date: Friday, April 27, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Tickets: Contact Nancy Whalley: nancywhalley1@gmail.com or (828) 437-4782

This Prayer Luncheon is a prelude to the National Day of Prayer, Burke County Historic Courthouse, Thursday, May 3, 2018, 12:00 noon for everyone.

Burke County Chamber - ACC Chili Cook Off—24th Annual, Thursday, March 8th, 11:00am-1:30pm—Morganton Community House (120 North King Street)

Tickets: \$7.00 available online or at the door All you can eat. Enter Your crock-pot of Chili and Win Up to \$100.00 downtownmorganton.com or call 438-5252 for info.

Catawba River Baptist Association - Pockets of Lostness: I know each of you and all of our churches are concerned for those lost without Christ (63,000) in Burke County. While most in Burke County do not have a relationship with Christ there are areas where lostness is more concentrated. These are the areas we want to place significant emphasis, so please join me on Monday, March 12th at 10 a.m. as we share where these pockets are and then work together to find creative ways to reach them for Christ. We will have special guests from the Convention of N.C. and the North American Mission Board joining us so please do all you can to make this a priority on your calendar. This is for all pastors/staff and leadership and will include lunch.

Catawba River Baptist Association will be hosting a Leadership Roundtable for Senior Adult Church Ministries in Burke County on Tuesday, March 13th at 1:30 p.m. at our CRBA office in Morganton. This will be a time of brainstorming and information as Debra Kuykendall from the North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry shares some creative ideas that can be used for Senior Adult ministries in local churches. Please join us for this fun and inspiring event.

This year's Associational Bible Drill and Speaker's Tournament will be Sunday, March 18th at 3 p.m. at Wilkies Grove Baptist Church in Connelly Springs. Bible Drill (Children & Youth) and Speakers Tournament (Youth) ministries are a great discipleship tool that helps students learn and memorize God's Word. For more information on this important discipleship ministry please give us a call at our CRBA office.

Come out and support the 2nd Annual South Mountain Baptist Camp 5K & Fun Run on Saturday, March 10th at Catawba Meadows Park in Morganton, NC! Registration will begin at 8AM, the 5K will begin at 9AM, and the 1-Mile Fun Run will begin at 9:45AM. There will be prizes for top finishers in each age category, as well as special treats waiting for everyone when they cross the finish line! Let your kids have fun by dressing up as their favorite superhero or princess for the Fun Run. You can register online at www.racesonline.com and searching "South Mountain Baptist Camp". We hope to see you all there!

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

Morganton Seventh-day Adventist-Burke County - Chili Cook Off - Sunday, March 11th., at 1:00 p.m., at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. Come and enjoy good food and fellowship!

Easter Cantata - Saturday, March 31st., at 11:00 a.m., at the Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C.

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!

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

Calvary Missionary Church - Sunday Morning March 25, 2018 the Purpose Quartet will present a song service. For more info contact Pastor Terry Cheek @ www.theinspiringword.org

McDowell County, N.C., 01/31/2018: CarePartners Hospice & Palliative Care McDowell, winner of the 2016 SHPBEST Hospice: Caregiver Satisfaction Top 5% Premier Performer Award, is currently seeking volunteers. Positions available are Patient/Family Care Volunteers, Veteran Care Volunteers, Special Program/Event Volunteers, and Administrative Volunteers. Flexible days and hours. To learn more about these volunteer opportunities, please contact Scott Sain at scott.sain@msj.org or call 828-652-1318.

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

Sinning Like a Christian: A New Look at the 7 Deadly Sins Begins Feb. 28th - 11 Weeks Led by Scott Hagaman; Location: Chapel Dr. Will Willimon, Duke Divinity professor and UMC bishop, grapples with the seriousness of sin, which is ultimately discovered not in the badness of humanity but in the goodness of Christ. Willimon's perspective provokes both conservative and liberal, as well as a lot of discussion. The focus is the "seven deadly sins," which identify human propensity, visible around us and in our own lives, to do evil.

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 Associational Bible Drills on Saturday, March 24, 2018

Registration 9:30 am Drills 10:00 am Contact Martha
Burlison at 688-2407 or the associational office at 765-9412

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

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

Berry Chapel Baptist Church—The Living Lord's Supper -- The dates for this year are Friday, March 30, 2018, 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, March 31, 2018, 7:00 p.m.

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.

Easter Egg Hunt: Saturday, March 31st. is our next HOPE for Mitchell County event with the Easter Egg hunt. We need individually wrapped candy and prizes that will fit into the eggs and volunteers to match up the recycled eggs. Children's wagons will be available in the vestibule and office for your donations. We will also have a "Filling Eggs Party" on Wednesday March 28th. from 9:00 to 1:00pm. Lunch will be provided. Please see Janice Branch for more information.

Grassy Creek Baptist Church is hosting this year's Choral Conference & Singing School. Loren Harris, baritone singer for the Kingdom Heirs, will be leading the music and teaching the songs. Choir members, music directors and all who love to sing are invited to join us. The dates are Friday, March 9th (6-9pm) and Saturday, March 10th (9am-3pm). Cost is \$20 per individual, \$35 per couple or \$45 for a family; this price includes lunch on Saturday and a CD recording of the final concert. Please call Patricia Edwards (828-682-1248) to reserve your seat and lunch as space is limited. Deadline to register is March 6th.

Support Group For Caregivers Of Those With Memory Loss To Hold Meetings The First Friday Of Each Month From 1-3Pm - Care & Share, a newly-formed support group for caregivers of loved ones who have memory loss, will hold monthly meetings at the offices of Hospice & Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, 236 Hospital Dr. in Spruce Pine, from 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. High Country Caregiver Foundation welcomes and encourages all caregivers to attend.

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

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

Downtown Spruce Pine - I have completed the 2018 calendar of events for downtown. This year, we have added a new event- "Downtown Day". This will be a day geared to bring our locals downtown to celebrate Main Street and all we have to offer. We are still working out the details, but will have activities, games and music planned and hope you will be part of the day. We have also scheduled 3 outdoor movies, in addition to the summer concerts. (Sponsorship opportunities are still available for these events if you would like to help. Many thanks to Tree House Mountain Realty, Peoples Furniture, Superior Installation and Tropical Grill for their support this season).

- Our spring clean-up will be 2 weeks before the Fire on the Mountain festival. If you can help or want to get involved, let me know as we can always use extra hands getting the town spiffed up before the event.

- Restaurant owners- we would like to get your ideas/feedback on how we can help get more patrons to your door when we have our concerts/movies/farmers market. There is definitely a missed opportunity here. Coupons? special sales? Brown bag lunch? If you have ideas, please call or email me and share. I will take all ideas back to the PR committee for discussion.

- Fire on the Mountain will be the last Saturday in April from 10-4. Locust Street will be closed, as usual, beginning late Friday night until 5:00 pm on the 28th. Make plans to have all vehicles moved prior to that night. More info will be sent as we get closer to the event. Also, the BBQ festival will be in Riverside Park again this year, so you will not have to worry about any street closings affecting your businesses.

- If anyone wants one of the Historical Society Depot ornaments, I have them in my office still. Just let me know when you are coming if you are interested in one.

- I have multiple businesses interested in locating downtown. If you have a "move in ready" space available or one coming available, and I have not been in touch, please contact me asap.

- In case you missed it.... we are excited to partner with the Spruce Pine Farmers Market by hosting the event in Central Park every Wednesday, beginning April 18th. The winter market will be in the visitor center the first Saturday of March.

Social Media Marketing Series

Social media is a free and extremely effective means of reaching current and potential customers. This new four class series is a great source of information for those who would like to increase their online presence.

Class One: Introduction to Social Media Marketing (2.5 Hours)

Make sense of social media and use it to increase business traffic and sales! This class will help you understand how social media marketing can benefit your small business. Class one will explore the various social media sites, basic terminology, and an overview of how social media marketing works. 3/6, T, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Fee Waived Morris - Spruce Pine Main Street Visitor's Center

Class Two: Which Social Media Site is Best for my Business? (2.5 Hours)

Find out which social media platform that your customers are likely using in order to properly target your social media marketing strategy. This class will explore the most popular social media sites, the typical user profile, and number of users. Sites discussed will include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, and others! 3/8, TH, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Fee Waived Morris Spruce Pine Main Street Visitor's Center

Class Three: Posting, Tweeting, and Blogging to Build Sales (2.5 Hours)

Arguably, the most important class of this series! Learn the essential elements required to build an effective post or tweet that will engage your customers. Class will cover everything related to posting, tweeting, and blogging such as optimum times to reach customers, how to design a post using a free program called Canva, and the benefits of blogging about your business. 3/13, T, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Fee Waived Morris Spruce Pine Main Street Visitor's Center

Class Four: Social Media Management Strategies for Business (2.5 Hours)

Make efficient use of your time by learning strategies to manage your social media marketing! Learn how to save time by posting to multiple sites simultaneously. Class will also explore time saving resources and tips. 3/15, TH, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Fee Waived Morris Spruce Pine Main Street Visitor's Center

Mitchell County Baptist Association - 2018 Bible Drills—are on Saturday, March 24, 2018 at Bear Creek Baptist Church.

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 Chamber will host a Candidates Forum on Tuesday April 3rd at 6 PM. Mark your calendars to come and hear from the candidates in the upcoming elections. At the old Historic Courthouse.

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, March 3

Peterson Store Hunteale 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

The Mitchell County Historical Society is excited to announce our opening event of the season: Our Second Annual History Bee, to be held the evening of Thursday, March 22nd at 7:00PM, at the Historic Courthouse in Bakersville.

We will again have students from the local middle schools (Grades 6 - 8) and

continued on page 35

A Caring Partner at Home

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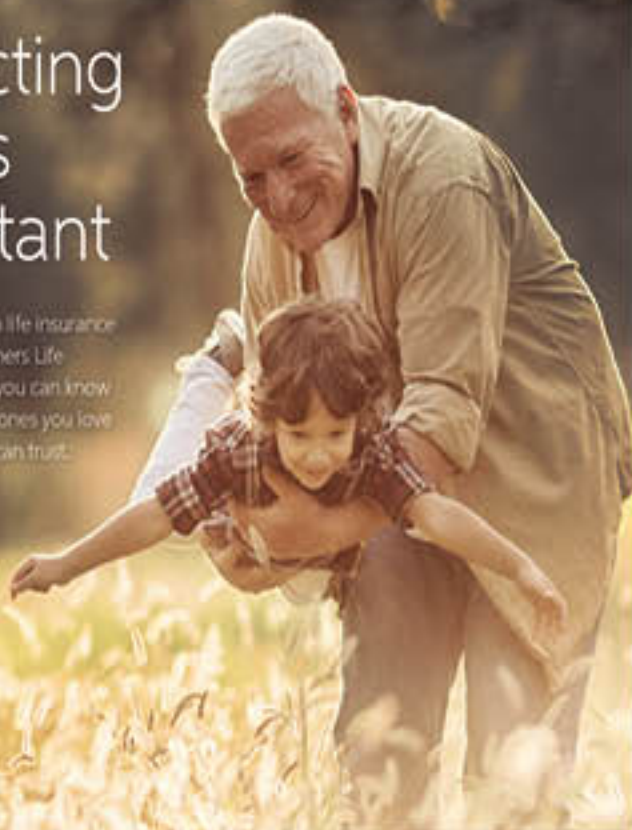
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Partners Aligned Toward Health

We are Appalachian Youth to Youth!

By Terri Leiser, Youth Team Advisor
Mitchell and Yancey Counties



This 2018 school year marks the formation of a new youth empowerment initiative under Partners Aligned Toward Health and the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force. Youth to Youth is a youth-led, adult-guided group that brings youth together to build leadership skills and create positive change in schools and the community. Students participating in Youth to Youth address issues that most teens are likely to experience today, helping them to become leaders and role models amongst their peers. The skills students pick up in Youth to Youth will serve them not only throughout their school career, but later in life as well. At this age, youth are able to influence each other in ways adults cannot, and the reality that kids have the power to make positive change in each other's lives is a driving force behind the group.

Topics covered by Youth to Youth include development of life skills, dealing with stress, healthy relationships, managing peer-pressure, bullying, learning public speaking skills, organizing and leading community events, substance abuse education and prevention, and more.

The basis for the initiative is promoting a healthy lifestyle, learning to make healthy decisions, and remaining drug free. Kids are able to have a voice and make decisions that will impact their community.

All four middle schools were able to vote on the specific name for Youth to Youth to represent themselves and agreed on "Appalachian" Youth to Youth. These kids identify with their area and take pride in it!

The weekly meetings are at each individual middle school in Mitchell and Yancey Counties, but the over-arching focus is the same. Each group is unique and different, with their own personalities. It's amazing to be able to utilize these strengths to appeal to everyone in the community. This is an exciting time to be in the middle schools in Yancey and Mitchell Counties!

During our regular meetings, we often discuss facts about drugs and alcohol and came across this alarming statistic: "Research has shown that kids who have conversations with their parents and learn a lot about the dangers of alcohol and drug use are 50% less likely to use alcohol and drugs than those who don't have such conversations."

At East Yancey Middle School, Youth to Youth students talked about what they can do to make a difference. They decided to help parents out by giving them a start to conversations as well as information as to what kids are thinking. Here's what they said:

We invite you to explore these sites for resources on how to start the conversations with your kids and grandkids about drugs...

Advice for all ages, including younger kids: <https://www.parents.com/kids/problems/drug-abuse/talking-to-your-child-about-drugs/>

Advice for talking to teens:

<https://drugfree.org/article/how-to-talk-with-your-teen/>

Look for Appalachian Youth to Youth on Facebook and Instagram. Contact Terri Leiser for more information: terri@pathwnc.org or 828-682-7899.

Terri works with the youth programs at Partners Aligned Toward Health. She is from Oxford, Mississippi and now lives in Bakersville. She studied at University of Colorado at Denver.



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The Work of Thy Hands

By Tim Tron
Burke County

"For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands."-Psalm 92:4

The roar of the old feed truck jumped to life. Cobwebs and black smoke coughed from her tailpipe as the deep rumble tickled the boy's feet.

"C'mon around here and I'll put you up in the seat."

The skin of the man was tanned from countless hours toiling in the sun, working the land. His overalls worn threadbare in places; badges of honor to this farmer. He lifted his grandson up and put him on the cracked and frayed leather of the ancient seat. Plumes of dust billowed forth from the sand-colored cushion that peaked through the seams beneath.

"Sit right there now until I get in."

The boy was barely three years old but yearned for every breath of life to be in the presence of his papaw. The farmer reached the open door of the driver's side, then swung himself into the seat and slammed the door shut. Dust exploded into the shafts of sunlight that filtered through the clouded window before them. The man began grabbing the long-handled gears, and a deep guttural grinding below them shook the truck into motion. The old ford grain truck began rolling down the bumpy gravel road. In the back, their precious cargo. The sun was just reaching the top of the trees along the fence line that clung to the road. The lad stood on the seat and looked through the tiny back window of the cab. Golden harvest grains of corn radiated in the morning sunlight, like those ancient troves of gold once beheld by the Conquistadors in their New World explorations.

"Turn around here now," the man growled at the boy pointing to the seat behind him. "I don't need you bumping out the window." He grinned over at his only grandchild. Doyle had much to be thankful for on this day. This load of corn was headed to the mill in town. It would be enough to feed his hogs and cattle through the winter. If they were lucky, there would be enough to trade or sell for extra supplies so badly needed. The sense of accomplishment of countless hours of hard work was reflected in every grain. Once the seed had been planted, the work didn't end. Cultivating, spraying, and detasseling took many hours of hard labor. Working the land seemed to be a never-ending job. Then there were the weeks without rain. The boy could often find his papaw bent over in prayer, asking God to send the much-needed life source so that they may continue their livelihood. Prayers had been answered in abundance that year.

Then there was his grandson; the pride of his life. Yes, there was much to be thankful for that day. Not many months ago, the child had remained in the hospital isolation ward for days. Pneumonia had nearly claimed his young life the previous year, and it had returned in his second year with a vengeance. He had barely survived the second time. His tiny weakened frame was only just now beginning to fill out. It was a blessing to see him radiate, like their load of corn, with happiness as they bumped along.

He nodded at the boy once the tot was seated, then turned and spat a timely squirt of chewing tobacco juice out his own window. His head snapped back to the front maintaining his focus on the winding road. The old green truck rumbled along as the dust behind billowed up like a rooster tail, dissolving everything from view behind them.

As Doyle's long arms swung madly back and forth on the expanse of a steering wheel, the fields from which they had recently gleaned their precious cargo passed by the windows. The little boy looked out watching the blur precede by, one fence row after another in a uniformity that soon pulsated into a numbing coalescent hum. He had seemingly forgotten the loneliness of that hospital bed covered in clear plastic. The fields of green washed away those painful memories until all that was left was the glow of joy within. A feeling of warmth and happiness flooded his being until he was sound asleep.

The clouds of dust folded over onto themselves and washed across the fields of time. Nothing remains the same on the surface. Yet, beneath, some things can never be erased.

As the sweat poured down my face, I slowly made another trip up the steep grade of the mountain, carrying one more log to the flatbed trailer. One after another, each tree that was cut was measured, then taken with care to the waiting trailer. Slowly, ever so slowly, the logs began to accumulate until there were as much as the tandem axles could handle. My body was drenched in perspiration. The later days of September were not yet cool even though we were in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. But there was no time to wait. The work had to be done and time was of the essence. Winter would soon be here, and our plans were to at least have the foundation to the new spiritual studio finished before the cold north winds began to blow. As I worked, the clouds began to build, and my mind drifted back to those long-ago days.

As I put the truck into gear and pulled away with my first load, 20 logs, my mind could see that grain truck bouncing down those dusty Pose County roads once more. My harvest had not been one of my own doing, but rather, this one was of God. I had not planted the seeds, but I was here to take in the harvest. Why and how I had come to this place were all a part of His plan. I was merely putting into action the next step in the journey. My harvest wasn't the golden kernels of corn from my youth, but rather, the sweet, aromatic pines of the Appalachians.

Beautiful, straight, tall white pines littered the new land we had purchased, and with them, the perfect location to nestle the new studio that would become a new place of worship. As I worked, I was cautious to only clear enough trees for the new building. Even with being careful not to take down any unnecessary trees, it quickly became obvious that we might have enough to build most of the new building.

By the second load, we had 41 logs total taken to the sawmill. Like those



golden seeds of corn falling into the collection shaft behind the grain truck at the mill, the massive front-end loader at the sawmill took each load of logs from my trailer like a giant hand of God. The men running the mill told me that it might be a while before they got to them. So, like most things these days, I put it in God's hands, trusting that when the time was right, they would call.

A few days ago, the sawmill operator called and asked me to stop by on my way home from school. The news sounded promising. When I pulled up, I found Tony, the operator, there waiting for me. Now at this point, to make a long story short, Tony had worked through some challenges, but in the end, God's hand was in it. There he shared with me his testimony, and once again, I was reminded that no matter what we do, no matter where we go, the Master's plan is at work. Through our connection, something beautiful had happened in Tony's own life. He was now back in the graces of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He told me that in a few days, my logs would be finished. Just hearing him share his story with me that evening, I knew that in the end, the harvest was being done, one way or another.

Today, we brought home all those logs. Now not covered in rough bark, but sawn into useable lumber. Tony had masterfully gleaned every ounce of wood from those trees and turned them into a work of art; a massive trailer full of sweet-smelling wood. Their texture painted a golden glow. At that moment, a sense of accomplishment flooded over me, and my papaw's memory flashed in my head. Yet, this time, the harvest was not just of what lay on the trailer, but also of

another that had returned to his faith. The feeling of once more making



all the right choices, taking the care needed to bring the harvest to fruition was something that taught a man many things of life. When the crops were ready, you knew. In the journey, you are never alone; God is with you.

Like Jesus telling his disciples, *"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."* -John 4:35 Like the patient farmer, Jesus knew his crops were ready. Then as now, we must recognize what we must do to serve. Jesus told them specifically, *"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."* -Luke 10:2

Like the farmer of old and the lumberjack of recent days, the feeling of one bringing in the bounty of a season of growth can be one of utter satisfaction. We may not be the ones to plant the seed, but when Jesus tells us to go forth and reap the harvest, how much greater joy can there be than to know you are harvesting the Lord's crops? As Jesus also told his disciples, *"Yea are now fishers of men."* We need only take his message to the world and once again, like in days of old, bring in the harvest, for the fields are white for the taking.

Let us not tarry, for time is of the essence.

Let us reap what He has sown.

Time to harvest.

Thanks be to God.

For specialized, custom sawmill work in the Caldwell County area of North Carolina, call master sawmill operator, Tony Moretz, at 828-493-0400 Tell him the Lord sent you, and he'll know what you mean.

Timothy W. Tron is a Math teacher in Watauga county. 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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YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

US House of Representatives NC District 11



Congressman
Mark Meadows
202-225-6401

www.meadows.house.gov

Immigration Update

I wanted to give you an update on news surrounding the immigration debate and where we stand in Congress.

Right now, unfortunately, the House of Representatives is not acting on immigration, instead choosing to let the Senate go first and try to pass their own bill—and I believe this is the wrong approach. The Senate has already failed to pass any of the four measures they considered. If the House is going to wait for 60 Senators to figure out an immigration bill first, we might as well all go home and take a nap.

The House should not wait on the Senate to act before we do. We already have an immigration bill in the House that deals with the problem and delivers on the voters' priorities, including border security, ending chain migration, and ending the visa lottery program. It's time for us in the House to start leading and get to work on our own bill.

That's where we currently stand. But here's the bottom line on this debate: House conservatives will not accept an immigration proposal that fails to do what we told the American people we would do during election season. We kept our promise on cutting taxes, but we have to follow through on immigration now, too.

The Budget Agreement

As you know, recently Congress passed a two-year budget agreement that suspended the debt ceiling and lifted the spending caps through fiscal year 2020, clearing the way for record spending increases of over \$300 billion. I am profoundly disappointed in the agreement, and I voted NO on the budget bill because I could not support the high spending levels and lack of fiscal discipline.

What this whole issue boils down to: Congress failed to get its fiscal house in order. Instead of planning, deliberating, and passing a responsible long-term budget, as any American would in running a business, Congress waited till the last minute, governed by crisis, and spent their way out of a problem. Keep in mind—for months, several of my colleagues and I urged Congressional leadership to work toward a long-term, responsible budget that gives our armed forces the funding and stability they deserve. I voted several times in the past year to honor that promise to our service members.

I want to fund our military, but at what cost? Should we bankrupt our country in the process? Estimates suggest this bill will likely increase government spending by \$1.5 trillion. This is not budgeting. While this Budget Agreement provides a needed investment in our nation's military, that investment comes with a heavy burden that our children and grandchildren will be strapped with. We could have funded our military without growing the size of government at record levels.

When I ran for Congress, I promised the people of Western North Carolina that I would fight to rein in Washington's addiction to spending. This budget failed to do that. It did not represent the promise I gave to my voters, and I suspect it isn't what many of my colleagues promised their constituents either.

I'm very disappointed in the result, but I maintain my commitment to fighting for the kind of fiscal responsibility that can sustain our country for decades to come. And I'm determined to fight for the day when we will do better.

NC Senate District 47



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

Lowering student to teacher ratios in kindergarten through third grade classrooms and eliminating the pre-K wait list are two priorities that brought the North Carolina General Assembly back to Raleigh in February. House Bill 90 was passed and ratified by the General Assembly and presented to Gov. Roy Cooper on February 13th. However, Gov. Roy Cooper did sign this bill that Republicans and the majority of his own party voted for.

This data-driven solution phases in a four-year implementation of reductions in student to teacher ratios. No changes to ratios will be implemented the first year of the plan to give school administrators enough time to plan and meet the requirements of the reductions in ratios. Annually, \$70 million will be allocated for hiring the additional K-3 teachers needed to meet the required ratios.

The plan also reinstates funding for program enhancement teachers in art, music, and PE that was eliminated by then state Sen. Roy Cooper and former Gov. Jim Hunt. Immediately, the legislation sets aside more than \$60 million to be used for the 2018-2019 school year. The amount increases yearly to nearly \$250 million by the 2021-2022 school year, based on data that shows what is actually required to meet students' needs. Also eliminated is the current pre-K wait list through the addition of close to 3,000 slots through 2020-2021, in addition to the nearly 1,800 slots we've already set funding aside for in the 2018-2019 school year.

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.



Senate Intelligence Committee Hears from Intelligence Agency Leaders on World Wide Threats

This week in Washington, I led a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing with the leaders of our country's intelligence agencies. The Directors of National Intelligence, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, and National Geo-Spatial Intelligence Agency

all appeared before the committee to discuss the threats facing the United States.

Among the many threats facing America, my concern over Chinese technological and intellectual property infringement is growing by the day. Our Intelligence Community has to work with the private sector to confront the emerging threats presented by this new wave of 21st century technology. North Korea also continues to push for long-range nuclear capabilities in addition to its considerable conventional military forces, and I believe this rogue regime must be met with a strong coalition of opposition.

We must remain vigilant against these hostile foreign powers and their continued efforts to undermine our country. Rest assured, I have the utmost confidence in the men and women of our intelligence community to see this task through.

NC House District 118

Haywood Pathways Center receives \$100,000 grant

The John W. Pope Foundation announced recipients of the 2018 Joy W. Pope Memorial Grants in the Arts and Human Services, which included a \$100,000 grant to the Haywood Pathways Center in Waynesville.

From the John W. Pope Foundation:

Haywood Pathways Center, located in Waynesville, will use the grant to help complete construction of an emergency/short-term shelter for homeless families. When completed, it will be the only emergency housing in Haywood County for homeless women with children. Haywood Pathways formed in 2014 when multiple organizations merged. Haywood Pathways supports men, women and children during periods of crisis with services that include emergency housing, a soup kitchen and employment training.



Rep. Michele D. Presnell
Michele.Presnell@ncleg.net
919-733-5732

YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

NC House District 86



Rep. Hugh Blackwell
919-733-5805

Hugh.Blackwell@ncleg.net

NC Retirement Pensions in Good Hands

Some of you may be looking towards eventual state or local government retirement, whether sooner or later. Others are already drawing from one of the state retirement systems. In either event, there is recent good news. Specifically, your pensions have been both well-funded and well handled by North Carolina State Treasurer Dale R. Folwell, whose office manages the state and local trust funds that provide the actual benefits, recently issued a very encouraging announcement...

North Carolina's Retirement Systems, according to independent national evaluation, are among the five highest-funded pension plans in the United States to date. According to that evaluation, North Carolina's Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement Systems and the Local Governmental Employees' Retirement System have been funded at 90.4% and 95.2% respectively. State Treasurer Folwell said, "We are proud to see North Carolina's pension plans receive another national accolade, but there is still work to be done in sustaining them... We are committed to ensuring that our teachers, first responders and state and local government employees have financial stability that can be counted on in their retirement. This ranking is a credit to the monies contributed by state and local employees, taxpayers through appropriations by the North Carolina General Assembly, and to the investment gains made by the Investment Management Division of the Office of State Treasurer."

According to the recent report from S&P Global, "proactive management" and "funding discipline" deserve credit when a state such as North Carolina manages well its liabilities for pension payments to become due government retirees. Treasurer Folwell was especially pleased to also report that the state pension funds for calendar year 2017 reported positive gains of 13.5%. This outperformed the 12.8% target. In addition to higher than expected gains, pension fund assets were recently valued at \$98.3 billion, up from the \$89.1 billion valuation at the end of 2016.

As North Carolina state government attempts to do a good job of managing the assets set aside to be sure there is adequate funding to pay its pension obligations to government retirees, I wanted to make you all aware of this positive news on the job being done.

NC Senate District 46



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

You may have heard discussions recently about class size reductions in grades K through 3 in our public schools, along with concerns about whether enough funds have been appropriated by the General Assembly to implement the change. Since 2014, the legislature has already appropriated about \$222 million in additional tax dollars toward lowering class sizes and reducing student-to-teacher ratios. However, questions have arisen about whether these amounts were adequate. Working closely with school superintendents, and listening to feedback from parents and teachers, House and Senate Republicans passed a plan (House Bill 90) on February 13th that doubles down on our years-long efforts to improve academic outcomes for students by the end of third grade. This plan phases in smaller class sizes and lowers student-to-teacher ratios in kindergarten through third grade classrooms over a 4-year period, at a cost of about \$600 million.

For years, lowering student to teacher ratios and reducing class sizes in the early grades has been one of our top priorities because research has shown it leads to improved academic outcomes. House Bill 90 phases in the implementation of lower student-to-teacher ratio reductions over the next four school years – with no changes to the status quo in the first year. This will give school administrators ample time to plan and take the necessary steps to meet those requirements. School systems across the state will continue to receive about \$70 million each year to hire additional K-3 teachers needed to meet the class size requirements. They will be required to gradually lower their student-to-teacher ratios until they achieve full implementation in the 2021-2022 school year.

The plan in HB 90 also fulfills our earlier promise to reinstate a dedicated funding stream for program enhancement teachers in subjects like art, music and P.E. that was actually eliminated in the 1990s by former state Sen. Roy Cooper and former Gov. Jim Hunt. It will immediately set aside more than \$60 million to be used for the 2018-2019 school year, and will increase each year based on what data shows is actually required to meet students' needs, and public schools across the state will receive nearly \$250 million in additional recurring state dollars by the 2021-2022 school year.

Finally, our plan in HB 90 eliminates the current Pre-K wait list by adding nearly 3,000 slots through 2020-2021. This is in addition to the 1,800 slots that were already added in 2018-2019.

It is a privilege to serve the people of western North Carolina in the NC Senate. If I can be of assistance to any Burke or Cleveland County residents, please contact my Raleigh office 919-715-7823.



God Bless America

Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force

Advocate On Capitol Hill For Substance Abuse Prevention Efforts

By Schell McCall, Executive Director
Mitchell and Yancey Counties

Burnsville, NC – On February 7, 2018, while attending the CADCA National Leadership Forum, members of the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force (MYSATF) had the opportunity to meet with North Carolina legislative leaders on Capitol Hill to advocate for continued support of substance abuse prevention.

"We are thrilled to have had the opportunity to share our concerns and data with our local and state representatives," said Jeff Spargo, Program Coordinator for MYSATF. "We plan to continue our advocacy efforts to help prevent substance use and abuse in our community."

"Capitol Hill Day is a vital opportunity for Forum attendees to communicate directly with their representatives to educate them about the successes and challenges facing our field and reiterate what legislators can do to advance prevention efforts," said Gen. Arthur T. Dean, CADCA Chairman and CEO. "We are bringing the 'boots on the ground' to Upper Senate Park and Capitol Hill with the knowledge of what communities are facing every day in this drug crisis and partnering with our nation's legislators for prevention."

About MYSATF

The vision of the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force is to create a community free of substance misuse behaviors. For more information about the Task Force, visit www.pathwnc.org or contact the Program Coordinator Jeff Spargo at: jeff@pathwnc.org

About CADCA

The mission of CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America) is to strengthen the capacity of community coalitions to create and maintain safe, healthy and drug-free communities globally. This is accomplished by providing coalition development assistance and training, public policy advocacy, special events, media strategies and marketing programs.



Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force Honored At National Leadership Forum

Burnsville, NC – On February 6, 2018, the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force (MYSATF) was one of 160 community coalitions honored at the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) National Leadership Forum, held just outside of Washington, D.C. Staff of MYSATF were on hand to accept a graduation certificate that signified their successful completion of CADCA's National Coalition Academy, a rigorous training program designed to increase the effectiveness of community drug prevention leaders.

CADCA's National Coalition Academy (NCA) is a comprehensive, year-long training program developed by CADCA's National Coalition Institute. To graduate, coalitions must complete a rigorous curriculum that incorporates three, week-long classroom sessions, a web-based distance learning component, an online workstation where participants network and share planning products, and ongoing coalition development technical assistance. They must participate in all components of the NCA and complete five essential planning products that serve as the foundation of their comprehensive plan for community change.

"We are so proud of our coalition for investing the time and resources to take advantage of the CADCA community coalition training. To graduate from this year-long intensive course is no small feat and the Task Force is strengthened as an effective, sustainable coalition because of this training," said Schell McCall, Executive Director of Partners Aligned Toward Health, the parent organization of the Task Force. "We look forward to applying our knowledge and strategies toward substance abuse prevention in our community."

While at the National Leadership Forum, Coalition staff had the opportunity to learn the latest strategies to address substance abuse and hear from nationally-known prevention experts, federal administrators, and concerned policymakers. The Forum brings together approximately 3,000 attendees representing coalitions from all regions of the country and internationally, government leaders, youth, prevention specialists, addiction treatment professionals, addiction recovery advocates, researchers, educators, law enforcement professionals, and faith-based leaders. It is the largest training event for the prevention field.



Terri Leiser and Jeff Spargo

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



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Bits 'n Pieces

Mitchell High School (Grades 9-12) compete for very generous prizes by answering multiple-choice questions about the history of Mitchell County taken from the pages of the artful and informative book, VOICES OF THE VALLEY, written by Elizabeth Hunter. Each school will be allowed to borrow 8 books from which to study. Copies of VOICES are available at the Mitchell County Historical Society office, located in the Historic Courthouse in Bakersville.

There will be two divisions of competition: Grades 6 - 8 and Grades 9-12. First prize in each division is \$500, second prize \$300, and third prize \$200.

The deadline for signing up to enter the competition is MARCH 16TH. We have attached an application form below. You can also find an application form on our website: mitchellhistory.org. Please call 688-4371 (Weds-Sat., 10 to 4) or 385-0564 for further information. All the history teachers should have the application.

There will be an admission fee of \$5 for an individual and \$10 for families. Light refreshments will be served.

We had an enthusiastic crowd last year, and the students and parents really enjoyed it. So, spread the word...it truly is a fun evening!

The Penland School of Crafts Community Open House will take place on Saturday, March 3 from 1:00 – 5:00 PM. This is an afternoon of fun and education for all ages with hands-on activities in most of Penland's teaching studios. No admission is charged. For complete information visit penland.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.

TIPTON HILL COMMUNITY CENTER EASTER EGG HUNT

Get your Easter baskets ready, boys and girls ten years of age and younger, for the first community-wide EASTER EGG HUNT on MARCH 31 at the former TIPTON HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND from 1:00 p.m. -2:30 p.m. A FREE hot dog LUNCH will be served from 12:00 – 12:45p.m. at the TIPTON HILL COMMUNITY CENTER across from GRIFFITH'S STORE. The Easter Bunny will be there, too! In case of inclement weather, the hunt will be moved to the Tipton Hill Community Center. Please call 688-2524 after 7:00 p.m., if you want to make a donation!

Toe River Arts - This coming March 17, AS IF Center will join forces with Toe River Arts and present a workshop and talk with Cynthia Reeves about her month-long adventure on Svalbard in the Arctic. It's going to be a great, chilly day in Spruce Pine.

For more info you can go to <http://www.toeriverarts.org/arts-resource-center/weaving-research-creative-writing/> and read all about the two events or go to <http://www.toeriverarts.org/for-press/> to download images and press release
TOE RIVER ARTS STUDIO TOUR APPLICATION : MARCH 7, 5PM
GIFT SHOP ARTIST APPLICATION : MARCH 10, 5PM
2019 EXHIBIT PROPOSAL APPLICATION : MARCH 24, 5PM
DELIVERY OF BLACKSMITH WORK – SPRUCE PINE : MARCH 24, 5:30PM

Trinity Episcopal Church in the English Woods neighborhood A reception will follow each Evensong

Sunday, March 4, 2018 at 5:00pm for Evensong for the Third Sunday of Lent. Music will include Summer Jenkins' Even When God is Silent and Hear My Prayer by Felix Mendelssohn with soloist Rachel O'Reilly

Sunday, March 18, 2018 at 5:00pm for Evensong for the Fifth Sunday in Lent. Music will include Ave Verum Corpus of William Byrd and Hungarian composer Gorgyl Bardos' Eli! Eli!. His setting of the seven last words of Christ.

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. March meeting is 9th, at 8:00am.

Yancey County

Each year, churches across Yancey County partner to present a Community Lenten Lunch Series each Wednesday during Lent. There is a Lenten reflection, followed by a meal together. An offering is taken up at each of these services and this year, the churches have decided to donate the offerings to the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force.

We are truly honored to have been chosen as the recipient of these collections and are thankful for the support of the community churches. I hope that many of you will be able to come out and support the upcoming services each Wednesday at noon. There will be a Lenten message, followed by a meal together. Listed are the dates and locations of each Lenten service:

February 21: Jack's Creek Presbyterian 12-1pm
February 28: Micaville Presbyterian 12-1pm
March 7: First Presbyterian Burnsville 12-1pm
March 14: First Baptist Burnsville 12-1pm
March 21: Higgins Methodist 12-1pm

Higgins Memorial Methodist - Too Busy Not to Pray, Wednesday Nights During Lent

Pastor John would like to invite you to join him on Wednesday nights during

Lent, February 21, 28 and March 7, 14, and 21, from 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm. The study group will use Bill Hybels book, Too Busy Not to Pray, as a guide for a time of Bible Study and prayer as we look at what the Bible says about learning to talk with our Lord.

This is a study Pastor John has taught several times in churches in which he has served, and he believes those participating will find this to be a practical, down to earth tool in enhancing their relationship with our Heavenly Father.

If you would like a copy of the book, you can purchase one for \$10 in the church office, or Pastor John will have copies at the study. You do not have to have a book to do the study; just bring your Bible and a heart eager to learn to pray! Grace and Peace

Parkway Playhouse Presents - Parkway Playhouse is excited to announce summer intern opportunities for college students studying theatre. Also, registration for the 2-week long Madagascar - A Musical Adventure, JR Summer Production Camp opens March 1.

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.

RELAY FOR LIFE MEETING - MARCH 6TH - The American Cancer Society has been instrumental in leading the way in cancer research for many years. Locally, many individuals, groups, businesses, organizations and churches have been involved in fundraising to find a cure for cancer. Relay of the Blue Ridge was recently formed to encompass Avery, Mitchell and Yancey Counties. The next planning meeting will be held at the Mitchell County Senior Center in Ledger on Tuesday, March 6th at 5PM. Anyone from Avery, Mitchell and Yancey County interested in helping with the Relay for Life effort is invited to attend. For more information, in Mitchell County, please contact Rhonda Buchanan at (828) 467-4389 or Sylvia Buchanan at (828) 385-1036. In Yancey County, please contact Lou Edwards at (828) 208-9551.

Calvin F Hall

Fortner Insurance

Mitchell County

On February 1, 2018 Calvin F Hall celebrated 60 years with Fortner Insurance Agency, Inc in Spruce Pine. Calvin began his career with Fortner in 1958 as a producer for the late Ed & Peggy Fortner, who started the agency in 1919. Calvin worked his way up through the agency before becoming President Emeritus in 2001. Calvin has dedicated his life to service beyond self and was instrumental in the growth of Fortner from 1 office with 3 people, to today's 4 locations and 27 employees. A reception was held at the Fortner office in Spruce Pine to honor Calvin.

Calvin is a very interesting person with lots of hobbies from dancing to collecting railroad memorabilia. Ride by his home on Hall Town Road in Spruce Pine and see many of his collectibles.



Wins State Award

By Melissa Soto
The High Country

At a recent North Carolina Economic Opportunity conference, WAMY Community Action was recognized as an Exemplary Organization among the state's community action agencies. WAMY was chosen as the recipient based on their innovation in fundraising, their response to community need, and their success in helping families become self-sufficient.

WAMY's introduction of Phil the toilet last spring was both creative and inspiring. Phil made his way around the High Country, visiting local businesses and spreading awareness that "Poverty Stinks". Phil was a visual reminder to us all that we need to "Flush Out Poverty." In addition to Phil, WAMY holds an annual Brunch and Bubbly event that will be coming up in April and several small fundraisers throughout the year.

Fundraising has allowed the agency to create many services in response to the community's need. Many people don't realize that low-income families cannot use their food stamps to purchase hygiene products, cleaning supplies or paper products. When a customer came into the office admitting that she had to steal toilet paper, the agency mobilized resources and created a Care Closet for their clients. This closet allows them to get necessary products and even clothing for interviews, while maintaining their dignity.

While most WAMY clients come into the program at a lower income level, they do not necessarily leave in the same manner. The Total Family Development program works with families to help them increase their education and employability to a level where they are making an average of \$22,000 more than when they began. They leave with a sense of independence and self-worth that will continue for generations to come.

Melissa Soto, Executive Director of WAMY, states, "It was an honor to be recognized by the State as an exemplary organization. WAMY truly believes in the ability of people to change their lives, with just a little help from their community. Our clients do the hard work, we are just there to act as a safety net and provide support along the way."

For more information about WAMY and their programs, go to www.wamycommunityaction.org or call 1-800-571-WAMY.

Melissa is the Executive Director at WAMY Community Action. She is from Boone and studied at Appalachian University.



Lorrie Mario, Manager, Products and Services, Duke Energy
Rosanne Teniente, Program Analyst, Office of Economic Opportunity
Melissa Soto, Executive Director, WAMY Community Action
Melvin Williams, Director, Office of Economic Opportunity

Attendance 'Above Expectations'

By Michael Foust



WASHINGTON, D.C. — Each day, Cary Summers roams the eight floors of the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., talking to visitors and discovering what they like best about the massive new facility.

And most don't even know he's the museum's president. Summers had retired from president and CEO of Herschend Family Entertainment/Silver Dollar City Corporation but agreed in 2010 to help get the Museum of the Bible off the ground because of its unique eternal focus. Advice from the late Bill Bright has served him well.

"Bill encouraged me to build things that would attract people who would never go into a church or a synagogue," Summers said of the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. "And I was intrigued with that idea."

That is what happened at Silver Dollar City — an 1880s-style theme park that features a gospel music festival alongside mainstream attractions — and that's what he's helping accomplish at the Museum of the Bible, which opened in November.

"Walking through the museum gives me the opportunity to listen to people," he said. "I get to learn a lot about what's working, what's not working. I find that fascinating, really."

Attendance has been "above expectations," he said.

The \$500 million, 430,000-square-foot museum is the largest of its kind in the world and brings the Bible to life with cutting-edge technology that few museums enjoy. It has 12 theaters, 93 projectors, 250 computers and 384 monitors. Each visitor to the museum also receives a hand-held tablet known as a



"Digital Guide," which gives guests a one-of-a-kind personalized tour. The Digital Guide has age levels for adults, teens and children.

The museum examines the history of the Bible, looking not only at its development but also its impact on the world. The facility has no entrance fee, although there is a suggested donation of \$15 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and under. "People are coming from all over the world," Summers said. "Just during our grand opening week, I know there were at least 40-plus countries that were represented."

It's not just Christians who are attending. Visitors from all cultures and all religions are walking through the doors, discovering how the Bible has changed the world.

"We've had many Muslims come through and thoroughly enjoy it," Summers said.

Museum officials expect the lowest months of the year for tourism will be December, January and February, with the highest months during Spring — particularly during the Cherry Blossom Festival and school field trips — and during Summer.

Officials already are noticing a few trends, with a "tremendous amount of families" visiting, he said.

"It's become a great family hangout because of all of the emphasis we have put on younger people," Summer said.

Attendance has been so high that the museum has doubled the number of locations to eat in the museum, from two to four.

Summers has been particularly encouraged by the feedback received in the exit surveys that are conducted by a third party.

"The number one word that is popping up — the number one-word description of how the museum makes you feel — is the word 'hope,'" he said.

It seems the museum is changing peoples' perceptions of the Good Book for the better.

"The Bible is blamed for everything under the sun," he said. "But it's the misuse of the Bible that has created those problems. If you do realize that, then you say, 'Maybe there is hope.'"

Learn more at www.museumofthebible.org.

Michael Foust is an award-winning freelance writer and father of four children. He blogs at www.michaelfoust.com.



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Yancey County Hospice

Winter Is Not the End

By Jacob Willis
Yancey County

I Corinthians Chapter 15 says, "50 Now I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — 52 in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." This winter has been a particularly cold one. January set a new record for cold in many places. Many people's water froze, and heating our homes was not very easily done. Winter, though beautiful, is something that when it finally ends, I am thankful for. When the first snow falls it is magical and delightful for all to see. When they push it around for five days, salt and sand the roads, it becomes an eyesore. The cold pierces through our clothes and reminds us that winter can be painful. Winter pictures to us the end stages of our life.

Growing older is a gift from God. When we get older, hopefully we get wiser. We grow as people and in God's Spirit if we are a Christian. If God's Spirit indwells us, then we are becoming more fit for heaven every day. The irony is, as the inward man is renewed by the Spirit, the outward man is becoming more unfit for this world. Our bodies begin to break down, and the slow decay of life sets in. The Christian has a hope that with these changes to the inside that surely there is more to life than this. In fact surely there is a place where we can in a sense start over. That is what happens in springtime— we get to start over. We plant new flowers, we fertilize our lawn, we plow our gardens, we open the windows and clean our house from top to bottom, and we get ready for a new beginning. That is exactly what is happening in the life of an aging person. God is working on the inside to get it ready for a new beginning. When we are young and strong it is easy to forget our connection to God. We may be tempted to neglect our relationship with God, erroneously thinking that our strength is sufficient. When we get older we realize that we need God every day. We need Him to wake us up and help us sleep. We need Him to ease the pain of loss and the fear of death.

Then there comes the time in our lives when our strength is gone and our lifespan is fading. The fear of debility becomes reality. The very thing we should all know is going to happen sneaks up on us, and all of a sudden we are terminally ill. It may feel as though

this is the end, and that our loved ones will be left without help or hope. Our loved ones may feel abandoned, helpless, or angry with God. These are all normal feelings. It is at this point that our loved ones hold on to us, and we hold onto them. Sometimes this creates added pain, as we attempt painful procedures to prolong life, however, these do not always improve the quality of life. Sometimes they add suffering and pain for ourselves and our families. They also can shorten life. Instead of dying at home with our loved ones and family by our side, we can die in a hospital after a costly procedure that only prolongs the inevitable. The hospice philosophy is not to lengthen nor shorten days, but to make your last days of winter quality days. To enhance quality of life by making you comfortable, active (for as long as possible), and giving you coherent pain free time with your family. Hospice doesn't hasten death. Hospice does make the process more comfortable. At Yancey Hospice we don't believe that death is the end. Winter is not the end. If you are a Christian there is a point where death is a merciful thing.

Death is not the succession of life. It is not the end. It is the beginning of what we always could be. We will be changed. A newness of life in Christ will occur. We will shed the shame of sin, the doubt of the flesh, and put on the new imperishable body. A body that will never die, or be worn out. The pain of this life will be a distant memory, and the joy of the new life will make all of those memories pass away. If you have trusted Christ as your Savior it isn't good for you to outlive usefulness, because you have a home in heaven waiting on you. You have a place to go, when you have nowhere else to go. When we ask Christ to come into our hearts and forgive us of our sins, we reserve a new start in heaven. I'm not perfect, but I am going to be one day, until then I need your forgiveness. The day is coming when we will all be changed. Spring is coming, and winter is not the end.

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



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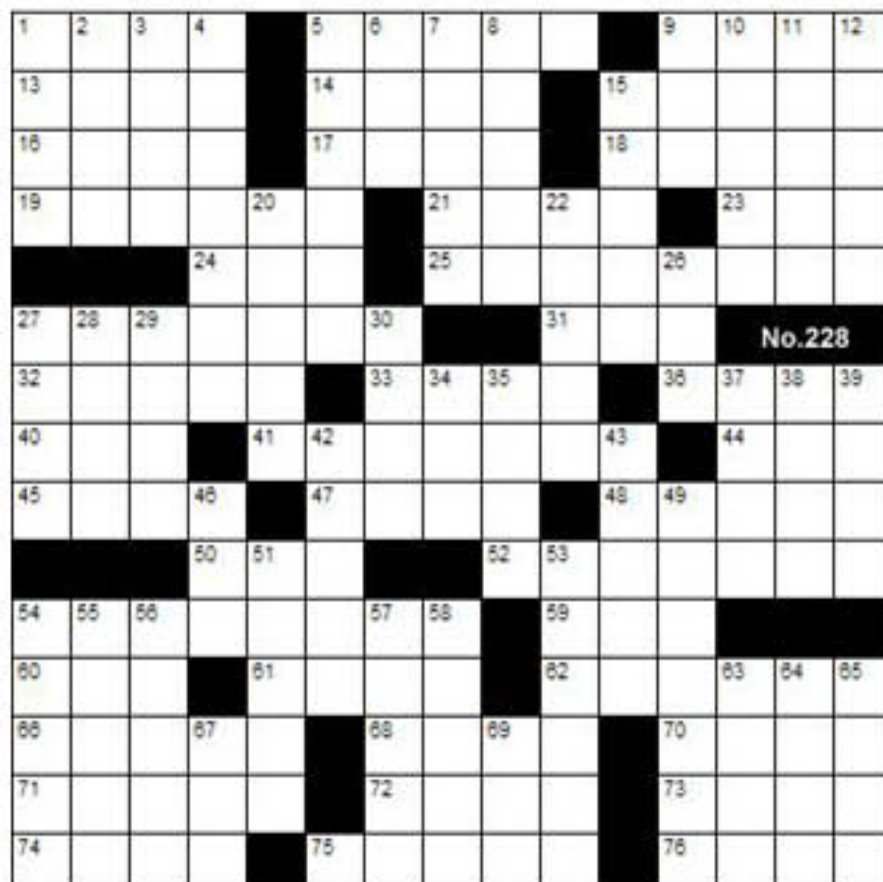
ACROSS

1 Worthy is the _____, who was slain (Rev 5:12)
 5 up everything around us, as an ox _____ up the grass (Num 22:4)
 9 Bring me a heifer, a goat and _____ (1,3) (Gen 15:9)
 13 them that had gotten the victory _____ the beast (Rev 15:2)
 14 Their calls will _____ through the windows (Zeph 2:14)
 15 he asked for a writing table, and _____, saying (Luke 1:63)
 16 away, absent (Rev 18:14)
 17 dedicated by Samuel the _____ and by Saul son of Kish (1 Chr 26:28)
 18 see that ye love one another with a pure _____ fervently (1 Pet 1:22)
 19 the house of him who _____ falsely by my name (Zech 5:4)
 21 Christ Jesus came into the world to _____ sinners (1 Tim 1:15)
 23 if someone wants to _____ you and take your tunic (Matt 5:40)
 24 For I have not come to call _____ righteous, but sinners (Matt 9:13)
 25 And the people _____ there for water (Ex 17:3) KJV
 27 Moses, Joshua, and David were _____ of some of the books of the Bible
 31 opposite to windward side (naut.)
 32 the vine is _____ up and the fig tree is withered (Joel 1:12)
 33 twenty men in an area of about half an _____ (1 Sam 14:14)
 36 Sallu, _____, Hilkiah and Jedaiah. These were the leaders (Neh 12:7)
 40 I am with you always, to the very end of the _____ (Matt 28:20)
 41 The elders who direct the _____ of the church well are worthy (1 Tim 5:17)
 44 Moses said unto God, Who _____, that I should go unto (2,1) (Exod 3:11)
 45 thrust him into a net and he wanders into its _____ (Job 18:8)
 47 _____ your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD (Joel 2:13)
 48 What _____ thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? (Ps 114:5) KJV
 50 do not _____ your freedom as a cover-up for evil (1 Peter 2:16)
 52 all the wage _____ will be sick at heart (Isa 19:10)
 54 love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be _____ Maranatha (1 Cor 16:22) KJV
 59 Eat not of it _____, nor soddened at all with water (Exodus 12:9)
 60 Take fragrant spices; _____ resin, onycha (Ex 30:34)

61 dead man, "by this time there is a bad _____ (John 11:39)
 62 Potiphar put him in _____ of his household (Gen 39:4)
 66 but lips that speak knowledge are _____ jewel (1,4) (Prov 20:15)
 68 he loved also Rachel more than _____ (Gen 29:30)
 70 At midnight the cry _____ out: Here's the bridegroom! (Matt 25:6)
 71 Now shall the _____ tremble in the day of thy fall (Ezek 26:18) KJV
 72 Son of man, record this _____ (Ezek 24:2)
 73 catch them in their net, and gather them in their _____ (Hab 1:15)
 74 ye have _____ that one teach you again (Heb 5:12)
 75 ten bulls, twenty she _____, and ten foals (Gen 32:15) (KJV)
 76 No one _____ a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment (Matt 9:16)

DOWN

1 supplied with all the cedar and pine _____ he wanted (1 Kings 5:10)
 2 And Israel vowed _____ unto the LORD (1,3) (Num 21:2)
 3 the inscription that was written: _____, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN (Dan 5:25)
 4 My strength is gone and I can hardly _____ (Dan 10:17)
 5 the _____ person is blessed by the greater (Heb 7:7)
 6 blackish by reason of the _____, and wherein the snow is hid (Job 6:16)
 7 Jehoiada the priest took a _____ and bored a hole in its lid (2 Kings 12:9)
 8 strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of _____ (Num 26:9)
 9 Many, O LORD my God, _____ the wonders you have done (Ps 40:5)
 10 The lazy man does not _____ his game (Prov 12:27)
 11 May the LORD be _____ and faithful witness (1,4) (Jer 42:5)
 12 the hollow of his hand, and _____ out heaven with the span (Isa 40:12) KJV
 15 _____ your treasure is, there your heart will be (Matt 6:21)
 20 a servant girl named _____ came to answer the door (Acts 12:13)
 22 children of base men: they were _____ than the earth (Job 30:8) KJV
 26 a ship, and went over the _____ toward Capernaum (John 6:17)
 27 But for _____ no suitable helper was found (Gen 2:20)
 28 I particularly _____ you to pray so that I may be restored to you (Heb 13:19)
 29 I led them with cords of hu-



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man kindness with _____ of love (Hos 11:4)
 30 Love and faithfulness keep a king _____ (Prov 20:28)
 34 others asked, "How _____ a sinner do such miraculous signs?" (John 9:16)
 35 They sound like the roaring sea as they _____ on their horses (Jer 6:23)
 37 God made them _____ and female (Mark 10:6)
 38 Take an _____ of manna and keep it for the generations to come (Ex 16:32)
 39 young children
 42 you have _____ me from my chains (Ps 116:16)
 43 Abrahams wife (Gen.17:15)
 46 like a shelter in a vineyard, like a _____ in a field of melons (Isa 1:8)
 49 cut the ram in pieces, and wash the _____ of him (Ex 29:17) KJV
 51 mightier than I, whose _____ I am not worthy to bear (Matt 3:11) KJV
 53 the posts thereof and the _____ thereof (Ezek 40:21) KJV

54 You will increase my honor and comfort me once _____ (Ps 71:21)
 55 Now Deborah, Rebekah's _____, died and was buried (Gen 35:8)
 56 every kind of clean animal, _____ and its mate (1,4) (Gen 7:2)
 57 They were all cast in the same _____ and were identical (1 Kings 7:37)
 58 Forts and towers in the wooded _____ (2 Chron 27:4)
 63 its rooms are filled with _____ and beautiful treasures (Prov 24:4)
 64 wolves; they _____ not the bones till the morrow (Zeph 3:3)
 65 They hatch the _____ of vipers and spin a spider's web (Isa 59:5)
 67 Moses led Israel from the _____ Sea and they went into the Desert (Ex 15:22)
 69 They were all encouraged and _____ some food themselves (Acts 27:36)

Solution on page 14



Marlene's Meditation

Waiting
By Marlene Houk
Burke County

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

I shifted uneasily in the blue upholstered airport seat, waiting for the international flight that would whisk my brother-in-law, his wife, and two young nephews out of our reach for the next five years. It was an 18-hour flight from Charlotte, NC to Durban, South Africa, an interminable wait for my own children, a robust 13-year-old and a fidgety 17-year-old.

Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. It's a gnawing, grinding, grabbing tentacle of tension that slithers into my heart and destroys my patience. I often declare war on waiting with frenzied cleaning or continual chatting with friends. Sometimes, I multi-task while waiting, proud of checkmarks on my to-do list. I bring stacks of books and make big plans to pack much work into a 7-hour drive or a stint in the surgical waiting room because distraction is a relief from the dreariness of waiting. Waiting does not come easy to those who are creatures of action, who stride into the future with solutions, and who, later, understand the wisdom of what happens during true waiting.

Tucked neatly into the subtle layers of Esther, the 17th book of the Bible, the careful student will discover the faint, quiet fragrance of waiting and its treasured timeless value. Like a carefully preserved wedding dress, the silk folds and Chantilly lace of a life that waits upon the LORD glimmers with His glory. Listen to the crackle of the paper as we separate the glorious layers of the lovely heirloom wedding dress of waiting. Hidden between the drama and the chaos, a quiet fact resides. Esther waited. How does God design waiting, like a wedding dress, to fall in graceful folds around our spirits while subtly reflecting His glory?

From the time of her marriage to the king and the evil plot of Haman, there were five years. Perhaps Esther did not consider them as waiting years, but God nevertheless designed them to be intervening years of preparation for His will. And this short list is some of what she learned as demonstrated by her later actions:

- 1. Relationship waiting: If your waiting is not based on your relationship with the LORD, it will gather tension rather than peace. Esther continued to maintain strong relationships with God, Mordecai, and her people, the Jews.
 - 2. Directed waiting-upon the LORD. If you do not focus on the LORD during your waiting, stress will reduce waiting to a trial. Esther finally understood the value of focusing on the LORD rather than her fear.
 - 3. Promises of waiting: According to Isaiah 40:31, waiting is a time to:
 - a. renew strength,
 - b. Mount up our focus above earthly woes to eternal effects.
 - c. Endure the journey of life without fainting.Esther gained strength as she worked with the people God had placed around her, as she focused on the salvation of her people, and as she endured the 10 months of waiting for redemption.
- Queen Esther learned to wait, and we, as her proteges, can learn to graciously accept the royal duty of waiting, knowing that we become more like Christ through the journey and that glory awaits us!

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



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Alive, Active, Powerful

By Ken and Jan Merop
Avery County



A blank page sits in front of me right now. I pray and contemplate what to write.

Sometimes ideas pop up like crocuses through snow encrusted ground; or, like fish readily biting at the surface when food is tossed to them. Other times, however, ideas seem to snuggle down and bury themselves in a rock or crevice. I must dig out, dust off and examine closely for a sparkle to glimmer across my mind.

Lately, it's been more of the hidden gems than the popping of colorful blossoms. Yet this less invigorating form of writing reaps the rewards of discovery that provides nourishment. Dead seeds will be brought to life. Colorful ideas will germinate and grow.

It's not just about writing. It's about life.

Have you been in that place where your life is like a blank page? I think we've all experienced that. I know I have.

We're used to being busy, productive. Then it seems much of the things that have kept us actively engaged are being stripped away for one reason or another. Change is in the air; but, it's not tangible and leaves us wondering what's up. Recently I found myself in that place. Lethargy was beginning to take hold. I was sighing too often. Truthfully, I didn't know what to do about it.

Then it occurred to me that I needed to dig into God's Word. I craved His nourishment like a crying, hungry child seeks to be satisfied.

I hadn't neglected my quiet time. But, I needed input and direction. So, I looked through past studies I'd done. When I found Believing God by Beth Moore, I knew the Lord was answering my heart's cry.

Before I even began the study, I personalized Psalm 121...a Psalm I had memorized as a child...and one I had been returning to frequently. It had been influential at another momentous time in my life. Reading verse 1, NKJV, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills - from whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth," was the direction I sought.

Then changing "you" to "my," I affirmed that God wouldn't let my foot be moved; He would keep me and not slumber; the Lord is my keeper and preserver. Bolstered by God's word, I stepped expectantly into the study. It was time to have present, active, continual faith in God because He is alive and active in me. I leaned into His power knowing nothing is impossible with God. Selah

WINTER'S WARDROBE

*The frosty white crystals encasing the branches
remind us of winter's tenacious grip.*

*March winds blow, snow still swirls...but
the rock is a reminder of where to find refuge.*

*Winter's blasts will turn to spring breezes
and new buds will bravely adorn the branches.*

*"...Wait quietly before God...He alone is
my rock and my salvation, my fortress
where I will not be shaken.*

Psalm 62: 5 & 6



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.

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Do You Really Want to Know God's Way?

By Shawn Thomas
Burke County

In Psalm 25:4-5 David prays, "Make me to know Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me ...". Many Christians might identify with these words. Upon reading them they might say, "Amen! I want God to lead ME like that!" But do you really? Are you willing to do what is necessary for God to lead you? What does that involve? Psalm 25 shows us:

— First, David says at the end of :5 "For You I wait all the day." If we want to know God's way, then we must be willing to wait on Him. Now, "waiting" on Him doesn't mean "just sitting around and waiting." It means waiting in His presence in His word & prayer. It means investing the time it takes to know His way. This is no "5-minute quiet time" or hurried daily devotion. It means spending all the time necessary to hear from God. Are you willing to invest that time? There is no substitute for it. That is what it takes to really know His way.

— Second, to really know His way we must be willing to turn from sin. It is striking how many times this Psalm, in which David is asking for God's guidance, refers to his need of purity before God. He asks God in :7, "Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions." In :11 he asks, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great." In verses 12 and 14 he mentions "the fear of the LORD", which is an awareness of His presence and our accountability to Him which causes us to purify our lives from sin. All of which instructs us that if we really want God to lead us, we cannot just continue thoughtlessly in sin. We must purify ourselves from all known sin, if we really want His leadership. Do you really want God to lead you? Are you willing to give up that sin in order to have it? You can't have both.

— Then, in :9 we find another key to God's leadership: humility. "He leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way." If we want God to lead us, we must come to Him in humility, admitting our sin (as we just saw) and humbly submitting ourselves to His leadership. We can't come in pride, thinking that we already know what to do; or that we have all the answers. We will be ready to do whatever it is He shows us. The proud person is not willing to submit themselves to him like that. And they will also never have God's direction. For "He teaches the humble His way."

So ... in light of these things, how much do you really want God to lead you? It is one thing to pray, "Make me to know Your ways, O LORD?" Many say that. But as Psalm 25 shows us, it is another thing entirely to do what it takes to really know it!

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



Pinebridge Project

President Dr. John Boyd
Avery, Mitchell and Yancey Counties



Mayland Community College is pleased to announce that we are progressing through the state construction process on the Pine Bridge Coliseum project. State construction projects generally take longer than non-state projects because of the review process by state construction. There are three stages, during which, the state construction office reviews the progress of the project; we have recently completed the second stage.

The Pine Bridge Coliseum project will be a multi-phased project. This first phase includes a new roof, outside façade, and enhanced security on the southern side overlooking downtown. This phase also includes a cosmetology center and parking lot improvements. We intended to include massage therapy with cosmetology; however, estimated construction costs may prohibit this from being included in phase one.

The 2nd phase will be a gallery & visitor center next to cosmetology. We will continue working on the massage therapy space, as funds become available. The college is also working on plans for a Resource Center for Entrepreneurs that will complete the southern side of the Pine Bridge; including limited lease commercial space. We still intend to include the large event center, arts and crafts classrooms, commercial kitchen, and other program space in future phases. Phase one construction is set to begin this summer.

Lastly, the college is replacing the roof on the Pine Bridge Inn. We are in early discussions with an existing hotel to lease the Inn and manage it as a boutique hotel.

The college is investing approximately 3 million dollars in this first phase and will continue to write grants and raise private funds to complete the total project. We strongly believe that this project is a game changer for our three counties, and particularly the town of Spruce Pine. The completion of Pine Bridge will take time and is very dependent on finding grants and donors who share our vision to rejuvenate our community.

Dr. John Boyd is President of Mayland Community College.





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Biomedical engineering lesson has students saying "Wow, this is so cool!"
By Student News Ambassador Natalie Ollis,
Burke Middle College

By Cheryl Shuffler
Burke County

The STEAM Academy's unit for this semester, biomedical engineering, teaches students how medical technology helps people in the world today. While working through the lessons and completing experiments, students from Ray Childers Elementary School said over and over again, "WOW, this is so cool!" And who wouldn't think it cool to look at an imprint of a hand under a microscope, create a plaster of an ear and have a hologram rise out of an iPad?

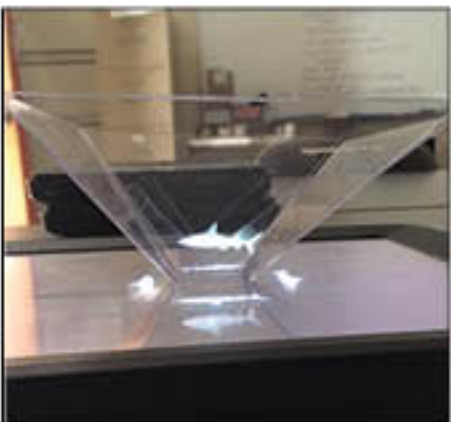
Before they jumped into the cool stuff, the students researched biomedical engineering and learn vocabulary words associated with it. Like all of the STEAM lessons, this one is housed on the Google Classroom app, which allows students access to information after they leave STEAM so if a particular unit piques their interest, they can return to it and learn more.

Once the students mastered the background and vocabulary, they brought out the microscopes to look at human cells -- skin, hair, bone, muscle, brain, heart, lung, and blood -- as well as an imprint made of their own skin by putting liquid glue on their hands and peeling it off. Next, students moved to the ear. High school instructor for the Advanced Learning Department Wayne Whaley used a 3D printer to make molds of a human ear. The students filled the ear molds with plaster to create models. Also, as part of the lesson, they demoed holograms using a Plexiglas prism and YouTube videos. For their last experiment, students isolated their own DNA using chemicals and made a vile for a necklace filled with a combination of sports drink and their own spit.

Students in third through eighth grades visit STEAM three times during the school year for specially focused lessons that involve hands-on learning. High school students can also take Project Lead the Way and virtual NC School of Science and Math classes at the STEAM Academy.

Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam said, "This ties into the master curriculum plan of redesigning our district's Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) plan four years ago. We are getting students on a college campus, in lab situations -- just like the real world -- and we are sparking their interests in fields, such as healthcare, forensics and aerospace engineering. We just started an internship program where local businesses and industries are investing in our students and showing them the possibilities of jobs available here in Burke County. Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge is one example as they have 10 of our high school students interning with them in various sectors of the hospital. Our vision is to continue to invest in our students at all levels. For those business and industry leaders who share our vision, we invite you to invest in and build your workforce with BCPS."

To learn more about the Burke County Public Schools internship program, contact Jamie Norton, internship coordinator, at 828-438-2997 or jnorton@burke.k12.nc.us.



Three BCPS Schools Excel At Breakfast Challenge

Heritage Middle School, Patton High School and Draughn High School are top performing schools in the No Hungry Kids NC Breakfast Challenge. The three schools were recognized on Feb. 15 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina at the 2018 NC Child Hunger Leaders Conference for their efforts to increase breakfast participation. No Hungry Kids NC presents the Breakfast Challenge Awards each year to schools that increase the number of students eating breakfast by at least 70 percent over the previous year.

Burke County Public Schools initiated the Universal Breakfast Program, which gives every student in the district access to free breakfast, last year. To get more students to take advantage of the free meal, Burke County Public Schools has focused on ways to make breakfast part of the school day. This includes programs such as Grab and Go Breakfast and Second Chance Breakfast. Grab and Go, available in five elementary schools, allows students to grab a quick, nutritious meal to eat either in the cafeteria or in the classroom. Second Chance, available in two middle schools and the four traditional high schools, allows students to visit a breakfast cart in the hallway between morning classes.

Burke County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Larry Putnam said, "The goal is to feed more students a healthy breakfast to get their day off to a better start. Studies continue to show a direct correlation between better grades and attitudes in students who eat breakfast compared to those who don't. Burke County Public Schools wants to break down the barriers that keep kids from eating breakfast, whether it be because they arrive at school too late or are embarrassed to be in the free breakfast line. With our Grab and Go and Second Chance options and with all of our kids having access to a free breakfast, no one is singled out."

MORE

Burke County Public Schools Food Services Management Coordinator Angie Hensley said, "We would like to personally say thank you to the principals and staff at Heritage, Patton and Draughn for their support of our school nutrition program and helping us feed students. We are excited for them to attend the awards ceremony and be recognized for their hard work. In addition to the recognition, they will receive a monetary award that will go back into the Child Nutrition Program. We are excited to talk with more principals in the district about expanding the breakfast program at their schools."

Burke County Public Schools partners with Chartwells K12 to provide breakfast and lunch to students as well as a supper feeding program at Forest Hill Elementary School called "Eat Well After the Bell." Visit <http://burke.nutrislice.com/> for your school's meal menu.

Photo Credit -- Robin Heeralall, Student News Ambassador at Patton High School
Patton High School students line up to take advantage of a second chance at breakfast in the hallways between classes. Patton, Draughn High School and Heritage Middle School are top performing schools in the No Hungry Kids NC Breakfast Challenge.

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



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God Working

By David Burleson
Burke County

Over the last several months, we have seen God work in many wonderful ways. When food was getting low in the pantry, groups that had just completed a food drive would show up. When supplies for our homeless were getting low, a donation would show up at our front door or in the mail. As soup kitchen supplies became depleted, the needed food showed up. It is always a blessing to see God show up, right on time.

We have also seen God work through our volunteers and staff at BUCM. Thankfully, we have wonderful soup kitchen teams that prepare delicious meals every day for lunch and dinner on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. Our food harvesters travel to our supporting grocery stores and restaurants to pick-up food for us to use for our clients. Everyday our pantry and clothing volunteers work to help meet the needs of our clients.

God also works through many groups in our community. We are very thankful that several church youth groups collected food and funds during the national Souper Bowl of Caring event on February 11. This is one of the largest food drives of the year. A big thank you to the following youth groups and youth leaders:

- First Presbyterian Church Morganton – Youth Pastor, Adam Bowling
- First Methodist Church Morganton – Youth Pastor, Larry Taylor
- First Baptist Church Morganton – Youth Pastor, Tyler Roach
- Summit Community Church Morganton – Youth Pastor, Stephen Snyder
- Oak Hill Methodist Church – Youth Pastor, Shannon Lemaster-Smith
- Enon Baptist Church – Youth Pastor, John Pritchard

This drive brought in over 6,000 lbs. of food and \$10,000 to use to purchase food. It is a blessing to see that our future leaders understand the importance of helping others.

We also appreciate the Burke County Schools for doing a Souper Bowl of Caring Food Drive for BUCM and other agencies in our county. A huge thank you to Dr. Larry Putnam, the staff and the students of the school system for their outstanding work and generosity. This donated food will help support many in our community.

Donations of gently used clothes, shoes and other supplies from 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.

I 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 \$10. For good food and fellowship, be sure to come out and support BUCM.

We always need additional volunteers at BUCM. We always need volunteers in 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.

Please consider being a part of what God is doing at Burke United Christian Ministries.

David Burleson is Director of Burke United Christian Ministries



It's Not About Us

By Timothy Eller
McDowell County

I have been reading Freedom from Addiction by Neil Anderson. He says that we must come to the end of ourselves and our resources. The primary problem people have in walking in deliverance is self-sufficiency. People feel that they can fix themselves and if they tried harder they can manage their life controlling issues. We never have the ability inside of us to fix our own problems. If we could fix our life we would not need Jesus. Everything that we have need of has been made available to us through the blood of Jesus. The problem is that we look to the wrong



source. Self-help without Jesus Christ, is no help. There are more programs out there to help people be free and to find their real self. The problems with finding ourselves outside of Jesus and what He did, is the futility a life dictated by manmade effort. No matter how hard we try to bring meaning to life, it is meaningless outside of Jesus. When He indwells humanity, a metamorphosis takes place. We are changed from glory to glory. Noel Jones and the City of Refuge Choir ministered to the church with a wonderful song in 2008 titled, "It's not about us, It's about Jesus". This song is the solution to getting answers about the problems we have in life. We cannot solve our problems; the healing comes only through Jesus the healer.

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.



Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

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Grace

By Rev. John McCoury
Roan Mountain, Tennessee

Our reading for this month is the Scripture: John 1:14-18 *Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. (John 1:16-18)* Notice the reappearance in verse 17 of the words grace and truth, and the contrast which John draws between them and the Law and Moses. The Law makes demands. It is hard, cold, unyielding, without mercy. The symbol of it today is the IRS — the Tax Man. If we do not give up what the law requires we are subject to penalty: Do this and thou shalt live, says the IRS. John says that the Law was given by Moses. Moses did not originate it, but he gave it. Moses may disappear, but the Law remains — cold, unyielding, demanding, without mercy. But, John says, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Take away Jesus and you take away grace and truth; He is the channel of them. What John is saying in this section is that law is all about demand, but grace and truth are all about supply, and are designed to meet that demand. Many people think that law and grace are contradictory, that they are opposing principles. But not in the sense in which they were originally intended. Law and grace supplement one another. Law makes its demands, rightfully and justly, and no one can meet them, but grace and truth are given in order to meet that demand. In Exodus 20 there is the remarkable account of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai — the Law, which came with smoke, thunder, earthquake, fire, fear and trembling. But in the very next section we read the detailed plans for the building of the tabernacle — God's provision to meet the demands of the Law. That tabernacle is a picture of Jesus, the meeting place where God's demands are fully met in terms of the sacrifice of blood, of a life poured out. Thus, John saw in the coming of Jesus the fulfillment of that tabernacle: The one who was after me has already been before me. So, it is with us. We can say with John, Out of his fullness (of grace and truth), we have all received, grace upon grace. God has a daily supply of grace for us. Grace is the generosity of love reaching out toward us, giving itself to us. To those who come to Christ, God's promise is that every day we can take a new supply of his love. We can know that we are loved. We know we are cherished, protected, and blessed. We are strengthened, kept, and supported by his love; grace upon grace, day after day, like the manna to the Israelites in the wilderness. God gives us a daily supply of love. Because we have been loved, when we reach out in love to someone else, when we give as fully and freely as we have received, then we fulfill the Law, for love is the fulfilling of the Law. Father, I thank you for the grace of our Lord Jesus. What a gift that He has come among us to reveal you to us and to bring us to you. Help me to walk in the warmth and love of his grace today. Life Application: God's amazing grace transforms His moral law into liberating truth. Are we grasping the rhythm of grace with truth and truth with grace?

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



Think Inside the Box

By Scott Bunn and Robin Lenner
Western NC Counties

ASAP's Eighth CSA Fair Planned for Thursday, March 15

ASHEVILLE, NC --The traditional growing season is getting closer and Western North Carolina farmers will soon begin picking asparagus, greens, and radishes to sell at farmers tailgate markets and to pack boxes for their CSA—or Community Supported Agriculture—farm share subscribers. To help the community learn more about CSAs, ASAP is hosting their Eighth CSA Fair on Thursday, March 15, from 3 to 6 pm at New Belgium Brewing Co. (21 Craven Street, Asheville, NC). The annual family-friendly event is free and provides an opportunity to meet area farmers, browse farmers' CSA programs and products, and sign up.

Family farms offering traditional CSAs is a chance for community members to support a farm at the beginning of the season and receive a box of fresh produce, meats, or flowers from their farm on a regular basis through the growing season. Many farms feature half and full size shares to accommodate different size households, and offer convenient add-on options such as farm fresh eggs. Many farms also offer opportunities for CSA members to connect in person with the farm, either through on-farm CSA pick-up, farm tours, member work days, or end of season celebrations.

Meridith Miller, a Buncombe County resident who has attended and volunteered at previous CSA Fairs, values the interactions with farmers. "Getting to see all the different farms represented at the CSA Fair really opened my eyes to the range of choices available," Miller said. "It adds a lot to be able to talk to the growers to learn about their plans for the season. I like being able to find out what they are planting because I have some favorite products that I look for."

According to farmers, the CSA Fair is valuable for their farm business. "The CSA Fair is such a great way for us to connect directly with families wanting to invest in local farms and their own health through the purchase of a CSA share," said Melissa Harwin of Highgate Farm. "The fair provides us with the opportunity to answer questions and share information to help folks find the best match for themselves."

Highgate Farm is one of the 15 Appalachian Grown™ certified CSA providers slated to attend the fair. ASAP's Appalachian Grown certification program identifies local food from family farms in the Southern Appalachians. All of the participating farms in the CSA Fair have pickup locations in Buncombe County.

- A Way of Life Farm (Bostic)
- Betsy's Farm (Candler)
- Blue Meadow Farms (Hendersonville)
- Edmundson Produce Farm (Hendersonville)
- Flying Cloud Farm (Fairview)
- Full Sun Farm (Leicester)
- Hickory Nut Gap Farm (Fairview)
- Highgate Farm (Marshall)
- Intentional Swine (Asheville)
- Long Valley Eco-Biotic Farm (Marshall)
- Olivette Farm (Alexander)
- Reeves Home Place Farm (Leicester)
- Stonecrop Garden (Marshall)
- Terra Lingua Growers (Etowah)
- Wildwood Herbal (Weaverville)

This year's event is sponsored by the The Market Place, ImageSmith Communications, Food Life, and Buncombe County Service Foundation. The Market Place will offer a local food inspired cocktail the week of March 5 to celebrate the CSA Fair.

To learn more about the fair and ASAP's work, visit asapconnections.org. Those unable to attend can search for more local farms offering CSAs in ASAP's online Local Food Guide at appalachiangrown.org; the new 2018 print guide hits the stands in April.

[Note: Participating farm list is subject to change. High-resolution images available; contact Development Director Scott Bunn at scott@asapconnections.org.]

ABOUT ASAP (APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT)
ASAP's mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food. To learn more about ASAP's work, visit asapconnections.org, or call (828) 236-1282.



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Upcoming Events

By Kate Groff
Mitchell and Yancey Counties

"Art work created by students from pre-K through high school in Mitchell County is currently showcased at the Spruce Pine TRAC Gallery, located at 269 Oak Avenue, until March 17. A free reception is planned from 4 to 6pm on Friday, March 9. The public is invited to view this amazing display of talent of the youth of our county.

UPCOMING TOE RIVER ARTS OPPORTUNITIES:

The Toe River Arts Community Chorus is looking for singers. They have just started rehearsal for the Easter presentation of Handel's Messiah. Especially seeking tenor and base vocalists. If you love to sing and be part of a dedicated group of volunteers, come join in at the First Baptist Church (on the Town Square in Burnsville), Tuesday evening from 6:30 to 8:30pm. Please email Jessica.crim@gmail.com with any questions.

Deadline to apply for the Toe River Arts Studio Tour June 1-3 is Wednesday, March 7 at 5pm, at either gallery (102 W. Main in Burnsville/269 Oak Avenue in Spruce Pine). Artists must show in a participating Mitchell or Yancey county studio and be current members of Toe River Arts. Applications and information are available at the website, www.toeriverarts.org/for-artists or at either gallery. Please email kate@toeriverarts.org with any questions.

Deadline to apply for representation in either Toe River Arts Burnsville (102 W. Main St.) or Spruce Pine (269 Oak Avenue) gift shop is Saturday, March 10 at 5pm. Artists must be Mitchell, Yancey, or Avery county residents and current Toe River Arts members. Work must meet guidelines that are available online at www.toeriverarts.org/for-artists or at either gallery. Please email kate@toeriverarts.org with any questions.

Deadline to submit proposals for 2019 exhibitions in either the Burnsville or Spruce Pine facilities is Saturday, March 24 at 5pm. Participating artists do not have to be Toe River Arts members nor live in the region. Collaborations encouraged. Limited gallery availability. Submission information and applications are available on-line at www.toeriverarts.org/for-artists or at either gallery. Please email kate@toeriverarts.org with any questions.

ARTS SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE

The Toe River Arts Council announces the availability of its annual art scholarships. Awards will be given to graduating high school seniors or adults continuing their education from Yancey or Mitchell County. They must be pursuing a higher education degree majoring in any of the arts or arts education. The application deadline is April 1, 2018 at 5pm.

Each scholarship will be in an amount between \$250 and \$1,000 and will be paid directly to the degree-based institution of the applicant's attendance.

Guidelines and an application form are available at www.toeriverarts.org/for-artists/arts-scholarship/ and must be submitted by the deadline, April 1, 2018 at 5pm. In addition to the application form, applicants are asked to present work that best exemplifies the extent and quality of their past accomplishments. Examples may include but are not limited to: ceramics, drawing, graphic design, jewelry, painting, print making, sculpture, textile and fabric design, drama, music, and creative writing. Work portfolios are limited to ten objects.

Submissions do not have to be related to the category of degree program to be eligible. For example, the applicant may submit a sculpture even if they are accepted to a photography program. There is no application fee. No late applications will be accepted. The evaluation will be based upon those submissions that demonstrate original thinking, an artistic commitment, and a willingness to take creative risks.

Completed submissions may be dropped off at either TRAC Gallery between 10:30am and 5pm, Tuesday-Friday in Spruce Pine at 269 Oak Avenue or Burnsville at 102 West Main Street. Please contact TRAC at 828-682-7215 with any questions.

The Toe River Arts Council (TRAC) Scholarships for the Arts is made possible by funding by an Endowment Fund held by the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina (CFWNC).

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



What Does the Lord Require?

By Jason Koon
Burke County

Micah 6:8 – He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?



Justice and Mercy, in our modern understanding, seem to be almost opposite concepts, yet God lumps them together in this passage. Why? It has to do with an Old Testament concept of justice. In the Old Testament, justice was thought about not in terms of punishing an offender, as much as it was in defending the victim and extending to the less fortunate, the poor, and the immigrant. A widow might go to a judge pleading for justice because she knows the biblical command after command to look after the widow and avoid taking advantage of the weak would ensure a finding in her favor. In our day, we tend to see justice in more of a negative light, and rightfully so. Justice that defends for the weak and the downtrodden also finds against the guilty, the sinner, and the oppressor. And as the Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 3, we have all sinned, we all stand guilty before God; we all bear some responsibility for the injustice and evil in the world because, at one time or another, we have all aligned ourselves with the forces of evil through our sin. Scripture's universal denunciation of the human condition, and its universal proclamation is that justice calls for our destruction.

For those of us who have been forgiven, though, there is another aspect of justice we need to consider. We have been rescued from God's justice in order to promote justice in the world around us. Justice demands we be people who are working to see the poor lifted up and the immigrant welcomed in. Justice demands we work to build a world in which the orphan, the widow, and the minority matter, in which they are noticed and their cries for justice do not fall on deaf ears. When we think about justice in this sense, we realize how close it is to mercy.

In the book *The Pietist Option*, Mark Pattie observes that mercy and justice are two sides of the same coin. Mercy asks the question, "how can I alleviate suffering?" And justice asks, "how can I get at the root cause of suffering?" In other words, justice demands we work to move the world closer to the ideal Kingdom Jesus will bring with Him at His return.

As a whole, I think we are pretty good at practicing mercy today. We have our moments and our detractors, but overall Christians still have a hard time watching someone go hungry when they can spend a few dollars to prevent it. Justice, however, is a different story. Justice is difficult, there are no quick fixes, there are no easy answers. We live in a world that is unjust and will be unjust, on some level, until Christ's return. That doesn't mean we should be ok with the way things are, Jesus never was. Jesus, the Apostles, the Prophets all call us to work toward justice. This might hurt our own bottom line or cause us to lose standing with certain members of the community, but this is a call that permeates just about every book in the Bible, and it is a call that we can no longer ignore. We must be committed to working together to alleviate the suffering around us in real, big-picture ways. As Micah wrote, "he has told you, O man, what he requires."

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



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But God...

By Pastor Dan Qurollo
Burke County



Most likely, you have had those conversations that just seemed too good to be true. You were reluctant to truly accept all that was being said. Why? Because you were looking for that infamous shoe to drop that is shown by the word but, a word that truly changes everything. That change may be for the better, and it may be for the worse. It signifies a change of direction. Such is the case when we see the words but God in Scripture.

Joseph experienced a life of challenges. It seemed as though for every single step he took forward, he took two backwards. About the time that things would appear to improve, something else would take place. For years, Joseph faced many challenges, yet he never allowed himself to get bitter over that which he was experiencing. After his father passed, his brethren grew worried that he might execute revenge on them. Joseph explained in Genesis 50:20, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Joseph maintained the perspective that God was always in control. We too can have this same perspective.

One of the most famous but God phrases occurs in Ephesians 2. Paul explains to the believers in Ephesus what they were before salvation. Verses 1-3 make it clear that the unsaved person is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins and chooses to conduct his life in accordance with his own sinful desires. He is an object of God's wrath; as such, he is a breath away from spending an eternity without Him. But all of that changed in verse four as Paul writes, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us..." Everything completely changes when God steps on the scene. A person's life is radically transformed the very moment he places his trust in Christ as Savior. No longer the same, this person has a new life that desires holiness and surrender to Him Who gave us all.

Thank God for the contrast when God steps on the scene!

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



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