

# BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

## Recovering

### Pray Then Wait

By Kelly Everett

It is incredible how The Lord works. He heals, He restores, He uses the weak to lead the strong. However, The Lord also has this "incredible" way of doing things on His own time. Over and over again I read Mark 11:24 "Therefore I say unto you, whatever things you desire, when you pray, believe that you will receive them, and you shall have them."

So here I am, doing this whole pray then wait thing. I can honestly say it works, but it's that timing part that gets you. I'll start with my childhood. In the first grade my parents got a divorce. I remember crying in the car with my blanket while they would scream. One Sunday, while at children's church, I remember crying uncontrollably. Mrs. Allison approached me and asked if I wanted to pray with her. I prayed, six year old, clueless Kelly, who only knew that Jesus loved her, begged that the Lord would put her family back together.

Fast forward four years later, I found out my dad had a drug addiction. I was in the 5th grade, I had no idea what drugs were, but I knew they made Mommy cry. So, I prayed that Mommy would be okay. Next thing I know dad is on a plane to some place in Florida called Dunklin, where God is supposed to get the drugs away from him. Skip to two years later, in the living room of my grandparents' log house, Mom and Dad got remarried. Six years I waited, and in that time God was working for the good of my family. Even when I could not see it, He was working.

It seemed to me that that should be my story. That my parents divorced, my Dad was addicted to drugs, and God healed their marriage. Like, how many kids can say that? How many times have children prayed for the miracle of a restored family and actually witnessed it happen? It honestly seemed like that would be the hardest thing I would ever have to experience. Until the day I had to face my own devil.

She was beautiful, and tall, with long legs, and silky blonde hair. Her stomach was flat, and she definitely didn't have stretch marks or cellulite. People adored her, showered her with compliments, and told her how pretty she was. Then I looked in the mirror at myself. I saw stretch marks on my boobs and butt. My thighs touched where hers did not. Her long legs made my short muscular legs look like tree stumps. All of a sudden, I had this complex. I felt fat, unworthy of love, I felt like I needed to look like her. So, I started working out and eating "right." Five pounds became ten, ten became twenty, and twenty became forty. Until I looked in the mirror and didn't recognize Kelly anymore. I looked hollow and fragile. My bones poked out everywhere. My breasts were gone, my once perky butt was nonexistent, my thighs did not touch, and my hair fell out when I touched it.

I remember people being concerned. My sick mind enjoyed it, it enjoyed that I was noticed and cared for. I remember people who used to be good friends not recognizing me in the grocery store. But I was skinny right? That made me pretty right?

Mom stopped me in the kitchen after three years of fighting anorexia. She told me if I did not do something I was going to die. We had prayed constantly through that battle that the Lord would set me free from that bondage, from the fear of food and weight, that he would heal me and restore me. We prayed my body would find what we called God weight (the weight that God wanted me to be) and we prayed it would be easy for me. Mom was right, after a year of annoying therapy appointments, threats of inpatient clinics and NG tubes, cardiology appointments for my heart that was beating at an all-time low, OB appointments for my period that had been gone for years because my reproductive system wasn't needed to keep my alive, I would probably die if I kept at it. I don't know what it was about that day, but it clicked. It hurt, and I was petrified.

I began to eat 2,500 calories a day, weigh myself and face the number on the scale, watch my body fill back out. Clothes no longer began to fit, and people commented on my weight gain. The entire time I prayed the most selfish prayers. I prayed I would not gain over my set point (if you don't know about set point weight theory I highly recommend checking it out). I prayed my period would come at a certain weight, so I would not have to gain anymore. I prayed those chains would fall off, that I would hear them rattle on the ground. Gaining weight was so hard, and sitting still was so hard. I would eat and rest and know that all



I had worked so hard to control and lose was coming back on, but sitting in that uncomfortable spot made me stronger.

I remember being so shallow, half of the reason I wanted to lose weight in the first place was because I had a boyfriend who wrestled. He would fast and drop pounds like it was nothing. One day someone told him if he wasn't careful I would be bigger than him. That was a trigger for me. That was one of my biggest motivators. That relationship didn't last, that relationship was so out of God's will, but revealed so much to me. I remember praying God would send me a big burly man of a husband who made me feel small and safe. I prayed for that husband my entire recovery. After 3 years of being skinny and single, I was ready for my big loving man. The Lord must have laughed when he heard that plan.

Fast forward to a year later, I was weight restored. God had even answered my selfish prayers. I decided I needed to join the choir at church. A friend I had class with a couple years back was involved in the worship team. She was married to the choir director's son. She invited me over to eat lunch with them the following Sunday. Since their whole family was part of the worship team at church I figured it was just something they did. Little did I know they were trying to hook me up with Bradley Greeson, the oldest son of the family. I remember eating with their family that Sunday, it was the first family meal I had had in a year. I ate with them the next day too, and then Bradley invited me to a concert that Friday. We hit it off, and the rest was history. We have probably hung out every day since we met. We knew everything about each other. He knew about my eating disorder and I knew about his health issues with Spina Bifida. We prayed for healing over each other. Two weeks later I got the last piece of my recovery, I got my period and never gained over the weight I prayed for.

A battle I had fought for years was finally over, I had finally found my husband, and my prayers had finally been answered. But this took YEARS. That is why God's timing is so hard. We pray and we wait. We ask, and it shall be given to us, but we have to wait on The Lord's timing. Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" declares The Lord. "As the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God has this way of doing things His own way, on His own time. It is hard, and trying sometimes, but I promise it is for our good. Oh, and God answers our prayers just like we want right? WRONG! My soon to be husband is not this big burly man...He is 4'7 and weighs just about what I do. I am pretty sure God heard that prayer and laughed. However, He sent me a man who loves Him, and loves me, and makes me feel so safe and loved. He sent me a man who makes me laugh, and supports my biggest dreams, and prays not only for me but with me.

The point is that we pray and then we wait. It is truly wonderful to remember praying for the things that I have now. God's timing is always perfect, but not always exactly like we want it to be.

If you have any questions or are struggling with disordered eating, relationships, whatever. Please reach out!

Many blessings,  
Kelly

Kelly lives in Mebane, NC and works at Duke Hospital in the NICU.



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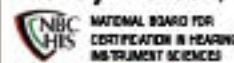


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# Contents

## In Every Issue

Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm - p. 15

Life Lessons - p. 9

Your Government - pp. 32-33

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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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### APPLIANCES

Jonathan's Used Appliances (10)

### AUTOMOBILES - Dealers

Buchanan Young (37)

John Greene Chrysler (7)

### AUTOMOBILES - Tires

Phil's Tires (33)

Spruce Pine Tire (25)

### BUILDING SUPPLY

Summit Building Supply (12)

### BEEF

Harrell Hill Farm (46)

### CHURCHES

Altapass Baptist (4)

Bear Creek Baptist (4)

Berry Chapel Baptist (4)

Burkemont Baptist (4)

Faith Fellowship (4)

First Advent Christian (4)

First Baptist Spruce Pine (4)

Grassy Creek Baptist (4)

Great Hope 7th day Adventist (4)

Morganton Seventh day Adventist (4)

Pine Branch Baptist (4)

Plumtree Presbyterian (4)

Spruce Pine United Methodist (4)

St. Lucian Catholic (4)

The Bridge (4)

West Burnsville Baptist (4)

### CHIROPRACTIC

Cruz Chiropractic (16)

### CPA

Jamie Miller (23)

### DENTIST

Scott Murphy (23)

### EVENTS

Freedom Life (43)

Mitchell Chamber (40)

Valdese Tourism (11)

Yancey Senior Center (9)

### FARM SUPPLIES

Griffith's General Store (27)

### FOSTER CARE

McDowell Co. Foster (41)

Mitchell Co. Foster (12)

### FURNITURE

Back Stove (45)

L&B Furniture (42)

Peoples Furniture (35)

Southwest Trading (45)

### GUN SMITHIN'

Pappy's (9)

### HEALTH CARE

Bakersville Medical Clinic (21)

Carolina Home Care (10)

Fruit Health Care (48)

### HEARING AIDES

Miracle Ear (2)

### HOSPICE

Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, Inc (5)

Hospice of McDowell Care Partners (13)

Hospice of Rutherfordton (35)

Hospice of Yancey (25)

### HOUSING

Clayton (26)

### HUNTING SUPPLIES

Cooper Trading (8)

### INSURANCE

Eben Insurance (34)

Fortner Insurance (6)

Miller Insurance Group (24)

Mitchell Co. Farm Bureau (36)

Nation Wide / Trent (31)

Premier Insurance (23)

### NURSERY

Lakeview Garden (44)

### PAWN

Mountaineer Pawn Shop (39)

### PHARMACY

The Prescription Pad (31)

### PLUMBING/HEATING

Burleson Plumbing Heating (30)

### PROPANE

Amerigas (10)

### REALTORS

Whitson Realty (19)

### REHABILITATION/NURSING

Brian Center (6)

### RESTAURANTS

Abeles Resturant (42)

Bantam Chef (22)

Bubba's Good Eats (9)

DT's (27)

Western Sizzlin (5)

### RETAIL

Grassy Creek Clothing (16)

Mountain Time (46)

### THRIFT STORE

Hospice and Palliative Care of the Blue Ridge, Inc (45)

### TRANSPORTATION

Mitchell Transit (7)

Yancey Transit (11)

### TREE SERVICE

Ray's Tree Service (20)



# Church Directory



## The Bridge Church of WNC

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

**Pastors - Tom & Tammy Anglin**

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

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## Berry Chapel Baptist Church

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

**Pastor - Steve Williams**

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

**Where Everybody is Somebody  
And Jesus Christ is Lord!**

## 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.  
Morganton, NC 28755  
(828)-675-9284  
www.fccn.org  
www.fccnradio.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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Bible Believing Church"**

## Grassy Creek Baptist Church

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

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

## West Burnsville Baptist Church

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

**Pastor: Terry Long**

Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.  
Morning Service: 11:00 a.m.  
Evening Service: 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday Service 6:30 p.m.

Church vision: Glorifying God through  
knowing, growing, going, to build the church  
and impact the world.

## Burkemont Baptist Church

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

For more information,  
please visit  
www.burkemontbaptist.org

**Dr. Luke A. Lane**

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

## Plumtree Presbyterian Church

4527 Hwy 19E  
Plumtree, NC 28664  
828-765-6919  
www.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..."**

## 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

## 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**

## 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

**Knowing God, Seeing God, Serving  
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## Spruce Pine United Methodist Church

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

**Pastor Rev. Jeremy Troxler**

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

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

## First Advent Christian Church

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

**Pastor Patrick Bradshaw  
Associate Pastor Javier  
Guzman**

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

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# Nativity for Christmas

## A Gift to the Community

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Western NC

The spectacular outdoor Nativity painting by Asheville Artist, Gloria Gaffney, is painted in the sweeping style of the Renaissance era but Ms. Gaffney's original work while being traditional still manages to reflect our culture and lifestyle in 2018. Along with the magic and wonder of Christmas, everyone who views the scene will be filled with a sense of familiarity, calmness and brotherly love. The Nativity encompasses the true Spirit of Christmas and will have a unifying effect on everyone who sees it this Holiday Season. The project took 2 years to complete from concept to finished display. It took a team of people to handle the painting because of its large size and Polycarbonate shielding and intricate lighting. The painting is a gift to the Community from Ms. Gaffney and she hopes that enjoying the Nativity every year will become a household tradition in Asheville. At this time of year, her work is a reminder that the birth of the Christ Child is a celebration for everyone, not just for those who believe but for the unbelieving as well, and for all time. Her work can be seen at Asheville City Hall, UNCA Highsmith Union, The Biltmore Estate Winery and other collections.

This visually stunning outdoor painting is on display Nov 22 through Jan 12, 2019 and can be enjoyed by driving by 89 Washington Road, Asheville 28801, as part of your Christmas celebrations.

Gloria Gaffney 828 620 3022  
streetartist@netzero.net



Gloria studied art at the University of Illinois as well as many others. She has received many awards including for her murals.

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6*



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By Doug and Barbara Harrell

Our apologies! When we first started Blue Ridge Christian News our Mission Statement was threefold:

Spread the Good News, both Christian and secular  
Unite the Body of Christ across all denominations  
Be the best vehicle for advertising in our coverage area

We have tried to be true to this Mission Statement over the past almost nine years, but we messed up in the past couple of issues. Our definition of Christian has always been very simple, a person or church group that believes Jesus was born a virgin birth, was crucified on the cross and shed His blood for the remission of our sins, and that rose again on the third day that we may spend eternity in heaven with Him through the grace that He provided. It was brought to my attention that we had ran some articles that were very critical of the Catholic Church and their doctrine and I am very sorry. It was unintentional and an oversight on my part for letting that happen. We do not want this paper to be a venue to discuss or argue theological issues that divide us. We want to be a venue that unites us as Christians, and with 1.5 billion members world wide that believe in the virgin birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church is the largest worldwide body of Christians.

Can you imagine what type of world this would be if all Christians of all denominations would work together rather than fighting and attacking one another of theological issues! What could we accomplish for world peace, ending hunger and need. Mark 3:24-25 *And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.* As we go into the Christmas season, my prayer is that Blue Ridge Christian News will continue to be true to the call of uniting God's Kingdom to the best of our abilities, and that we be true in following God's lead in this effort.



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# Evangelism Explosion International

## 5 Ways to Share Christ During Christmas

By Rev. John B. Sorensen

Have you ever been to a birthday party where no one talked about the main guest? Of course not. Yet, some people don't even realize that Christmas is a celebration of Christ's birthday!

Christmas is also a wonderful time to reflect on the many blessings that God has bestowed upon us, especially God's grace through Jesus Christ. And it provides natural opportunities to share the Gospel. Here are a few ideas:

### Idea 1: Send Christ-centered Christmas cards.

Remember that Jesus is the reason for the season and not Santa Claus. If you send Christmas cards in the mail or via e-mail, choose cards with Christ centered images and messages. Include a scripture verse about the real meaning of Christmas. You never know. A simple card or personal note might encourage someone to think more about the meaning behind the trees and lights.

### Idea 2: Invite others to a Christmas service at your church.

More people attend Christmas and Easter church services than any other time during the year. According to research, Google searches for churches increase weeks before each holiday (Pew Research, 2014). People are searching for a place to incorporate a spiritual element into their holiday celebrations. Why not invite them to a Christmas service at your church?

### Idea 3: Share some Bible prophecies concerning Jesus Christ

If someone asks you how you know the Christ of Christmas is the Son of God, consider sharing some prophecies concerning Jesus. For example, in the Old Testament there are 333 prophecies about Jesus Christ, written hundreds of years before He was born in Bethlehem. They include detailed accounts of His lineage, birth, ministry, suffering, death and resurrection. The chances of all of those being fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ is simply mind boggling! Yet every one of them was indeed fulfilled in Jesus. This is classic evidence that you can share with friends and family at Christmas or anytime.

### Idea 4: Join the celebration.

People are often more open to hearing about Jesus at this time of year. Research shows that more than 80% of non-Christians celebrate Christmas (Pew Research, 2013). They set up trees and exchange gifts and enjoy Christmas traditions—so Christmas parties and holiday dinners can be perfect times to share the true meaning of Christmas with them.

### Idea 5: Give the ultimate gift.

The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ. That is not only Good News. It's GREAT news! This Christmas, while the traditional practice of exchanging gifts is in full swing, remember to share about the greatest gift ever given—eternal life through Jesus Christ.

But, you know, you can't share something you don't have. Eternal life—Heaven is not something we can earn and we certainly don't deserve it because we're all sinners and our sin separates us from an all Holy God. But the Good News is that God solved our problem by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to pay for our sins and purchase a place for us in Heaven. And we receive this gift by faith. If you haven't received this gift, don't let another Christmas go by. Learn how you can know and share Christ this Christmas at [EEsteps.org](http://EEsteps.org).

*Rev. John B. Sorensen, D.D. is the President/CEO of Evangelism Explosion International, headquartered in Arden, N.C. EE has been a leader in equipping Christians to share their faith for more than 50 years. For more free tips and resources, visit [evangelismexplosion.org](http://evangelismexplosion.org).*



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## Community Funded Chaplain

By Jody Griffin

Avery and Mitchell Counties

*Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me. (Matthew 25:36)*

High Country Prison Ministry (HCPM) supports the Community Funded Chaplain at Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution (AMCI) in Spruce Pine, North Carolina. The position of 'Community Funded Chaplain' came about as the North Carolina Department of Prisons reorganized several years ago. With the reorganization, a majority of the state funded chaplain positions were eliminated leaving many correctional facilities (prisons) without a chaplain's daily presence.

HCPM stepped up and agreed to fund a part time 'Community Funded Chaplain' position for AMCI. In 2016, I was presented with the opportunity to serve in this position and agreed to do so wholeheartedly. I came to Spruce Pine to pastor a local church (Central Baptist). As it happened, I had gained valuable experience and training as a military chaplain including a three year assignment that allowed me the opportunity to serve in a number of military prisons. As a result, I meet the qualifications and have experience as a correctional chaplain.

At the time, HCPM had been without a chaplain in this position for some time, and thus had accumulated a balance of operating funds. However, since that time, we have seen churches struggling with their own financial obligations and thus HCPM has lost some critical support.

As a result, the ministry of a qualified and approved Community Funded Chaplain at AMCI is now at serious risk...

The Community Funded Chaplain must meet the same educational and professional training standards as a state funded chaplain and must attend any and all chaplain training provided by the Chaplaincy Services Department. The chaplain spends 20-25 hours a week in ministry to inmates, family members, staff and volunteers at the institution. Also, the chaplain serves as a liaison between the correctional facility and the community.

The primary work of the chaplain is Pastoral Care, meaning counseling and assisting inmates and staff with their daily spiritual needs and in occasions of crisis. In times of critical illness or death of an inmate's family member the chaplain plays a role in assisting with communication and making necessary arrangements according to policy. In so doing, the Chaplain is the minister to the entire institution.

As your Community Funded Chaplain, I have shared the Good News of God's Love in Jesus Christ with countless inmates. Many have found the gifts promised in Scripture as a result. Many more have been comforted in sorrow, encouraged in difficulty and called to adjust their understanding in order to aid them in fully understanding such realities as grace, mercy and Truth. I have walked beside them through tragedies and rejoiced with them in victories.

I have enjoyed the distinct privilege of caring for the staff at AMCI and being counted among the dedicated individuals who daily stand in harm's way with courage and conviction that they make a difference.

This letter is an appeal for your support of this vital ministry! Would you be willing to prayerfully consider including HCPM in your church's budget? If that isn't possible, would you be able to make a one-time donation to this ministry in order to ensure the chaplain's ministry remains a reality in this place?

The number of incarcerated men in our institution is over 800. They are from almost every county in North Carolina and some are from other states but are sent here to fulfill the obligations of sentences incurred while in our state.

When you give to support the chaplain position at AMCI you are literally contributing to the ministry of reaching and assisting men in desperate need of hope. You are sharing the Love of God in Jesus Christ and you are ministering to everyone associated with the prison in many ways.

Please consider helping to keep the Community Funded Chaplain's position at AMCI.

If you are able and willing to help, please send your tax-deductible donations (HCPM is an approved 501c3) to:

High Country Prison Ministry  
PO Box 161  
Crossnore, North Carolina 28616

Merry Christmas! And May God Bless you for helping HCPM be the Presence of Christ to all who are in prison.

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



## Healing with GriefShare

By Carolyn Dotts

Mitchell County

Grief is a subject that very few people want to discuss, except possibly those in the midst of it. Until you have experienced the loss of a loved one, whether it be a spouse, sibling, parent or other close relationship, grief is unknown. Certainly, people are aware of the emotion of grief, and that it is caused by loss, but they cannot feel that emotion until they experience a loss.

Someone who recently lost her spouse shared with me that she feels like she is in a club that no one else wants to be a member of...and she is right. No one chooses to join this club. You are thrust into it, sometimes with little or no advance warning or time to prepare, as with an accidental death. Other times you wait days, months, even years for admission as you watch a loved one linger and decline in terminal illness. Regardless, once you are a member, suddenly you realize the other members truly understand where you are and what you are experiencing. I've frequently had grieving people turn to me and say, "You KNOW, you really get it."

Grief is also likened to a journey. This is one of the reasons GriefShare was formed-to offer support to grieving individuals by others who are already on that journey. They come alongside those newly acquainted with loss and help guide them on the path to healing. This is accomplished in a series of small group curriculums created by the Church Initiative ministry, based right here in Wake Forest, NC. Currently over 20,000 churches across the country offer one or more of these curriculums to their communities. GriefShare is nondenominational and open to everyone. Spruce Pine has been fortunate to have Western Carolina Church support a GriefShare ministry, and several curriculums have been offered since 2008.

The original GriefShare curriculum is in its 3rd edition. It is a Christ centered, Bible based support group that meets for a 13-week cycle twice a year. Here in our community it has been offered in the fall, beginning in August, and in the spring, starting in March. Its video-based format features the expertise of leading Christian pastors, counselors and authors, and is accompanied by a journal to be used for notetaking and as a devotional. Following the video, a time for small group discussion and sharing is offered. There is never any pressure for participants to speak.

Another GriefShare-sponsored event is the annual Surviving the Holidays video seminar, usually offered in November. This is a 2-hour session designed to minister to those who are trying to navigate the holidays after experiencing a loss of a loved one. It covers dealing with emotions, offers practical holiday survival tips, and what to do about traditions and other changes. There is opportunity to discuss and share following the video. Participants are given a Surviving the Holidays guide which includes articles, devotionals and tips.

The newest addition to the GriefShare curriculums is the Loss of a Spouse. It is a 2-hour event that reaches out to those who have lost not only a mate, but also a life style. It is also a video format followed with small group discussion. Participants take home a booklet filled with grief recovery exercises, journaling prompts and devotional materials.

My own personal experience with GriefShare began in 2008 with the loss of my husband. I participated in a GriefShare at a church in Boone, where my healing began. Upon completing the 13-week cycle, I knew our community needed this resource. Because I felt I would not be able to facilitate meetings as I worked through my own healing, I enlisted the aid of Pastor Frank Herbert and his wife Linda. They led the sessions and began drawing me in as a facilitator as I felt ready. After several years they retired to Florida, and Frank went home to be with the Lord several years ago. GriefShare is a ministry of Western Carolina Church, and has been offered twice a year until last year when I lost my 20-year old grandson, Caleb in December. I have stepped away for a while to heal and wait for the Lord to show me the next step. I can confidently say the Lord has used GriefShare in my healing, as well as many others in our community. If you are interested in learning more about GriefShare, please contact me at Western Carolina Church, 828-765-4633 and leave a message.

Carolyn Dotts makes her home in Ledger and is a teacher of Exceptional Children at Greenlee Primary School. She is a widow with two sons and five grandchildren. She is a member of Western Carolina Church in Spruce Pine.



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Life Lessons

By Doug Harrell

As I sit here at my desk getting ready to write this article my mind is going over all the lessons and teachers that have touched my life over the past 75 years! Each person that we interact with on more than a casual basis has an impact upon our lives, either good or bad. Life lessons and habits are a culmination and accumulation of actions and events that have occurred over the years. Now I am not a believer in that we are all totally products of our environment, because I truly believe that we can determine our reaction to events. Different folks turn life events into different outcomes every day. Many things in life we cannot control, but we can control how we react to the things that life throws at us. Deciding to look at life through rose-colored glasses is not all bad, but can be very helpful to our future. Don't misunderstand me here, we all know that we must deal with reality and face the problems that will arise in our lives. Even with reality, we have a choice in deciding if we will look for the seed of benefit rather than just the challenges.

The only way that I know to be able to have the rose-colored glasses is through deep faith in our Lord and Savior, only that faith will sustain us in certain situations. The scriptures are full of messages that help us on this journey through life and one of my favorites is Psalms 23 *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 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. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

I guess the biggest lesson I am learning, can't say that I have learned it yet, is to realize that I am not in control of many of life's events and that God's hand is involved. Learning to lean on Him is always the biggest challenge for believers and it is a constant process day by day. At a young age we think life will always go on and that the end is never coming, or is so far away that we don't even think about it. As we age, all that changes, and we see the hurt that takes place. Today I had the opportunity to visit with a dear lady that had lost her teenage son and shortly after that was diagnosed with MS. I am sure a year ago she had no idea what was going to happen! Folks, crap will happen if we live long enough, we don't get out of this old world alive and there will be messes we will go through. Romans 8:28 *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*

Accepting this scripture mentally is tough at times for all of us, but oh what a relief it is when we come to the realization that it is true if we believe. Many times, in my life things have happened that I felt were insurmountable, but in the end I was blessed because of them. God does not always work on our timetable, but if we stay in His will, He does work. We need to let our relationship with the Lord determine our attitude, not the events of the day. Being willing to let go and let God, can be tough but when we are able to sing praises regardless of the events, then we are making progress. Philippians 4:11-13 *"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"*.

Having a relationship with Jesus is like a GPS in many ways, you plug in a destination and the GPS gives you instructions along the way, when you make a wrong turn, it tells you how to get back on track. The relationship with Jesus does the same thing with our lives. When our true destination is eternal life with the Lord and Savior and we are on life's journey, we will make wrong turns, grace and forgiveness cleanses and washes away the mistake, and our conscious understanding of God's will and direction puts us back on the correct road. We know we made a wrong turn, but we are forgiven and can get back headed toward our destination. Psalms 103:8-11 *"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. So as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him"*. Study His word, meditate on His teachings, and follow the urging of the Holy Spirit in the direction of your life today. Have a blessed and Merry Christmas.

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



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## Crossnore Announces Opening Of Center For Trauma Resilient Communities

By Holly Solomon  
Avery County



Crossnore School & Children's Home is pleased to announce the opening of the Center for Trauma Resilient Communities. The Center's focus is to provide training and consultation for building trauma resilience within an organization or community. Start-up funding for the Center has been provided by an anonymous private foundation that is committed to healing people and communities.

On November 12, 2018, Louisville, Kentucky Mayor Greg Fischer announced a partnership between the City of Louisville, the University of Louisville, and Centerstone Kentucky to begin the Trauma Resilient Community Initiative. Funded by a \$5 million, five-year federal grant, the Trauma Resilient Community Initiative has contracted with Crossnore's Center for Trauma Resilient Communities to provide training in trauma-informed care and resilience to service providers, public school officials, and community agencies serving youth and families in Louisville. "This initiative is another tool we can use to dismantle the very real barriers of violence, trauma, and racial inequity," commented Mayor Fischer. The Center for Trauma Resilient Communities was co-founded by Brett A. Loftis, JD, Crossnore's Chief Executive Officer, and two professional trainers, David McCorkle and Beatriz Vides, both of New York. McCorkle and Vides have both trained nationally and internationally and were previous faculty with The Sanctuary Institute providing training and consultation on The Sanctuary Model®, a trauma-informed model of care. In October, it was announced that Shenandoah Chefalo, author of Garbage Bag Suitcase and foster care advocate has joined the team as a Faculty Trainer.

Trauma and resilience training is appropriate for any business, non-profit organization, school, church, hospital, shelter, or community. "As part of our strategic plan at Crossnore, we are passionate about bringing trauma-informed care to our community. This begins with understanding how we are all affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress and their impact on our minds, bodies, and spirits," said Loftis. "Our goal is to help communities recognize trauma and learn to respond in ways that promote healing and protects the helpers at the same time."



Brent Loftis

The Center provides a comprehensive array of training on the "what" of trauma and toxic stress, and the "why" this information is critical for individuals who need help as well as the organizations that provide help. The Center provides the "how" through a fully customized, step-by-step process for building a trauma resilient culture within an organization or community. Since opening, the Center has held trainings for the Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, Goodwill, Phoenix Project, Myers Park Methodist Church and numerous other schools, nonprofits and faith communities. Myers Park's Minister of Congregational Care, Bill Roth said, "The Center trainers have a deep knowledge of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on emotional and physical wellbeing. They share hope for how trauma and chronic stressors can be transformed through the intentional relationships, understanding, and compassion that can create lasting change."

About Center for Trauma Resilient Communities: A program of Crossnore School & Children's Home, the Center for Trauma Resilient Communities opened in 2018. Trainings range from three hour seminars to three-day intensive Train-the-Trainer programs. To integrate trauma informed care throughout an organization, the Center offers one- to two-year initiatives customized for your specific organization. For more information about the Center for Trauma Resilient Communities, please visit [www.traumaresilientcommunities.org](http://www.traumaresilientcommunities.org).

Holly Solomon is Director of Communications for The Crossnore School. She blogs several times a week at [www.hollybarrett.org](http://www.hollybarrett.org), and is host and producer of "Living a Redeemed Life," a bi-weekly podcast.



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*Merry Christmas*



The First Christmas

By Ruth Bell Graham

The first Christmas—imagine being alive on that very day, at that very time, in the very town where Jesus was born!

Imagine living in Bethlehem and seeing two people coming along the dusty road down in the valley, a man walking and a woman riding a donkey. How slowly they came. They stopped often to rest. Why did they stop so often, now that their journey was almost over?

Again, they stopped, this time in front of you, and when you saw the woman's face, your heart gave a leap. For on this young woman's face, pale and travel-weary, was a smile that seemed to reflect all the joy of heaven.

That night you were wide awake. Somehow you knew that it was a special night, that something wonderful was about to happen. Something so wonderful that you almost were afraid to breathe for fear of breaking the stillness.

For tonight Bethlehem was very still. Listening. Waiting for something. Very late in the night there was a commotion out on the street. You could hear men shouting, and you run to the door and stare at those men shouting in the night.

What were they saying? They had seen an angel!

The angel had told them about a Baby born in Bethlehem, and they called the Baby "Savior" and "Lord." With their own eyes they had seen the Baby in a stable behind an inn.

You don't wait to hear any more, and you run to the inn and around the inn to the stable. Then, slowly, softly, you enter.

There she is. The young woman with the radiant smile. Leaning against a stall. Her eyes closed. The man standing at her side.

Behind them, in a manger, is the Baby. Tiny. Wrapped tightly in linen cloth. Sleeping as soundly as any newborn baby. Sleeping as though the world had not waited thousands of years for this moment. Sleeping as though your life and my life, and the lives of everyone on earth, were not wrapped up in His birth. Sleeping as though, from this moment on, all the sin and the sorrow of the world were not His problem.

Should you ask her if you may touch the Baby—not wake Him, just touch His hand? What a moment that would be! To reach out and touch the Son of God! Yet I don't envy the people who lived in Bethlehem that night, for they couldn't have understood all that this Baby was born to do: to speak words of joy to an unhappy world, to show love to people too used to hatred, to win victory over the sin and the sorrow of the world.

You and I are greatly blessed to live now when His work of love is finished. He is as close to us today as He was to those in Bethlehem. Closer, for today we do not have to reach out our hands to touch Him.

There will be a Gift

There will be less someday—much less, and there will be More: less to distract and amuse; More, to adore; less to burden and confuse; More, to undo the cluttering of centuries, That we might view again, that which star and angels pointed to; we shall be poorer—and richer; stripped—and free: for always there will be a Gift, always a Tree!

*"Less and More" by Ruth Bell Graham from "This Christmas Night: Reflections from our Hearts to Your Home" by Billy & Ruth Graham*



## Holidays in Valdese

### Concerts at the Rock

January 18: An Evening with Nu Blu and Jimmy Fortune

February 2: Love Canon

March 9: Hog Slop String Band

Old Rock School • Tickets available online at [concertsattherock.com](http://concertsattherock.com).

### Movies at the Rock

December 1: The Polar Express (2004)

January 11: Chronicles of Narnia:

The Lion, Witch, & The Wardrobe

February 8: Crazy, Stupid, Love (Rated PG 13)

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### Old Colony Players Presents:

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### Valdese Christmas Parade

December 1, 2018 • Downtown Valdese • 10AM

The parade will begin at the corner of Church Street & Main Street and will continue to Morgan Street. There will also be an open house at the Piedmont & Western Railroad Museum.

### Christmas in Valdese

December 14 • Old Rock School • 6PM

Town tree lighting, Christmas carols by Valdese Elementary Students, and a visit from Santa!

### Mingle with Kris Kringle

December 15 • Old Rock School • 8:30AM-11:30AM

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And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.  
Luke 2:7



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- Tuesday, December 11th –Dollywood Festival of Lights- Admission \$69.95 (Leave the Senior Center At 12 noon)
- Monday, December 17th – Asheville Mall
- Thursday, December 20th – Bristol to see the Lights – Costs - \$3.00 per person (Leave Senior Center at 4pm)



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## Lees-McRae Christmas: A Service of Music and Lessons

By Nina Mastandrea  
Avery County



For a night of music, scripture, and family fun, join Lees-McRae College on Monday, Dec. 3 for Lees-McRae Christmas: A Service of Music and Lessons. BANNER ELK, N.C. — This year, Lees-McRae College will be celebrating Christmas like never before. Open to the public, Lees-McRae Christmas: A Service of Music and Lessons on Monday, Dec. 3 is a free event that welcomes all for a night of music, singing, scripture, food, and holiday fun.

Starting at 7 p.m., head to Hayes Auditorium and Broyhill Theatre for fun games and favorite holiday tunes performed by the Lees-McRae Highlanders. With the help of several local pastors including Ted Henry, Michael McKee, Tee Gatewood, Alan Yawn, and Feild Russell, guests can enjoy and are welcome to participate in a music and Christmas lesson service. The service will conclude with a lighting ceremony.

Following the service, visitors are invited to Evans Auditorium in the Cannon Student Center for cookies, hot chocolate, cider, and even more music that will put all in the holiday spirit.

Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina, Lees-McRae College is a private, four-year college offering diverse baccalaureate and graduate 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](http://www.lmc.edu) or call 828.898.5241.



*Nina Mastandrea is the content manager of Lees-McRae College*

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Remembers Connie Sedberry

By Tracy Black  
Mitchell County

It was my intention to write an article this month about Christmas and what happens at Mitchell County SafePlace. Unfortunately, life's events have intervened as they often do and changed all that. On November 13th, in the wee hours of the morning, Connie Sedberry, our Executive Director, our leader and our friend, succumbed to cancer and passed away. I hope you will indulge me as I reprise a profile I wrote in 2005 about her.

Connie Sedberry is the Associate Director and Finance Officer at Mitchell County SafePlace. At first meeting, Connie appears the consummate business woman. Keeping on target of the finances of a non-profit agency is a daunting job. Connie manages to not only keep on target but always seems to find a way to supply the staff with all the things they need to do their jobs and find the money needed to help each and every client, not a small feat. It doesn't take long to find out there is so much more to this woman. Connie is a fun loving, artistic woman with a passion for alleviating the suffering of others.

Connie lives in Loafers Glory with her husband Ken and their two sons, Noah 19 and Galen 17. Together, Ken and Connie run a thriving pottery studio, Sedberry Pottery, and an art gallery with other artists in Asheville called Ariel Gallery. Connie and Ken have always loved to travel, and it was through one of these trips that Connie had what she describes as a defining moment in her life.

While traveling in Central America the Sedberry's saw what can only be described as abject poverty. To this day Connie's face fills with emotion as she recalls the children playing in the streets where raw sewage flows and the shanty shacks that these bright youngsters call home. It was at this time that the entire family vowed to never take the comforts that they had for granted and to make a difference where ever possible.

It was soon after that Connie joined the SafePlace family. Since 2001 Connie has approached her duties with efficiency and compassion. Even with all of the responsibilities of her position Connie always finds time to lend a tender and loving ear to troubles and a joyful "atta girl" for every success. She finds her greatest reward in seeing those who have gone through the SafePlace program live a peace filled life and going on to be successful.

There are so many women in Mitchell County that have Connie to thank in part for their new lives; for showing them that there is somebody who has faith in them and believes their dreams can come true. So, on behalf of so many, Thank You Connie.

Since that time, Connie went on to become the Executive Director of SafePlace. Yet even with the added responsibility of running this agency on her shoulders she never lost the passion she had for the victims we serve and the people who help us.

Several years ago a woman brought a friend and her son with her to deliver Christmas presents she had bought for a SafePlace family. Connie and I spoke with these women for about 20 minutes. This little boy, who was about 7 years old, patiently waited as his mom asked all manner of questions about SafePlace and domestic violence. He was well behaved but didn't seem to be paying much attention to what was being said, or so I thought. As the conversation ended and goodbyes and thank you's were being said the little boy turned to Connie and said, "Is it only grownups that can help or can kids help too?" When Connie told him that indeed children could help too, the little fella reached into his pocket and pulled out everything in his pocket and asked "Would this help?" In his tiny hand were some wadded up dollar bills, some change and a match box car. Connie lovingly smoothed out each dollar bill, counted the change and wrote him a receipt for this generous donation of \$3.85 and a beloved toy car. Later, Connie confessed that she was so overwhelmed by this gesture she could barely speak and she always considered this the most generous donation we ever received.

That was Connie in a nutshell, always gracious, kind and compassionate. We at SafePlace are forever changed by her love and she will always hold a place of honor at our agency and in our hearts. Thank you Connie!

Tracy Black is the Interim Executive Director for Mitchell County SafePlace. She can be reached at 828-765-4015 or [tracyblack@bellsouth.net](mailto:tracyblack@bellsouth.net).



From the Manger...  
to the Cross



*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. Revelation 1:8*

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## The Fruitful vs. the Frustrated Life

By Joyce Meyer



Have you ever spent your time running around all day long but at the end of it, you didn't know what you actually accomplished? It's so frustrating when you realize you were busy, going from one thing to the next, but you didn't get around to doing anything you intended, or needed, to do.

It's easy to live this way in our world today with so much going on all the time. But I can't find any scripture in the Bible where God commands us, or even suggests to us, that we be busy. However, it does talk a lot about being fruitful, bearing good fruit in our lives.

There are two ways we bear good fruit. One is by displaying the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). And the second way is by getting out in the world where God has planted us and being good to people.

I'm talking about helping people who are hard to love or don't seem to deserve it. Or giving to the poor and getting involved with people so you can make a difference and help make their lives better, rather than spending all of your time trying to make yourself happy.

I've discovered that being selfish and self-centered never makes anyone happy. Living for God is really just the opposite of that. God does want to bless us and give us the things we need, but when we give our lives to Him, our purpose is to serve Him.

### Who Do People Think You Are?

In Matthew 12:33 (AMP) Jesus says, "...The tree is known by its fruit." And this is how people know who we are. Just as you recognize an orange tree by the oranges it produces, you recognize a Christian by the fruit of their lifestyle.

I've said often that you won't be recognized as a Christian just because you have a Christian bumper sticker on your car or you wear Christian jewelry or go to church every week. Most of the time people won't care what you have to say if your behavior doesn't back it up.

The fruit of our lives is seen in our behavior—what we do to help others and our attitudes—as well as what we say. It's the visible expression of the invisible work that God is doing in us.

Jesus says in John 15:8, "My Father is glorified and honored by this, when you bear much fruit, and prove yourselves to be My [true] disciples." In other words, we're not proving anything to anyone simply by what we say. It's the fruit of our lives that proves who we really are.

So, it's good for us to frequently ask ourselves: Who am I helping in my life? How am I making a difference or making someone else's life better?

### How to Bear Good Fruit Every Day

The key to bearing good fruit is found in John 15:5, which says, "I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for [otherwise] apart from Me [that is, cut off from vital union from Me] you can do nothing."

Jesus is telling us that as we spend time with Him in prayer and by studying the Bible, His Spirit is working in us, changing us little by little (2 Corinthians 3:18), causing us to reflect His image or characteristics more and more. It's a progressive transformation that takes time and requires a consistent commitment throughout our lifetime.

If you aren't spending regular time with Jesus and growing in your relationship with Him through prayer and Bible study, I want to challenge you to reevaluate your priorities and put first things first. The truth is we put our time into what we really want to do. And if something is truly important to you, you will find time to do it.

### God's Gift to You

God created you because He loves you, He wants to have a personal relationship with you, and He wants to do amazing things in you and through you. Every day is a gift from God and it's so precious!

Ephesians 3:20 says that God "is able to [carry out His purpose and] do super-abundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us." He has a plan for you and He will give you everything you need to fulfill your destiny as you seek Him and grow stronger in your faith in Him.

I want to encourage you to focus on Jesus and live by the wisdom He reveals to you in His Word. Choose to do today what you will be happy with later on, and no matter what the cost, you'll find that the good fruit it brings is more satisfying and fulfilling than just being busy any day of the week!

For more on this topic, order Joyce's three-CD series *Busy Going Nowhere*. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting [www.joycemeyer.org](http://www.joycemeyer.org).

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](http://www.joycemeyer.org).

HAPPY BIRTHDAY,  
Jesus

## Crossword Solution

H	A	M		S	T	O	O	P		R	A	H	A	B
A	G	E	D		H	U	M	A	N		B	O	R	E
R	I	D	E		A	R	E	N	A		E	L	M	S
P	R	I	S	O	N		R	E	M	O	T	E	S	T
	L	A	I	N		B		L	E	F	T	No.237		
C			G	E	R	A	H	S		T	E	A	R	S
A	M	E	N		U	S	E		P	E	R	S	I	A
M	A	Y		A	B	E	A	C	O	N		I	N	K
E	N	E	R	G	Y		V	A	T		W	A	G	E
L	Y	D	I	A		L	E	S	S	E	R			S
			D	I	N	E		T		V	I	A	L	
A	B	E	D	N	E	G	O		M	E	S	S	E	S
B	E	L	L		S	I	N	C	E		T	H	A	T
E	A	S	E		T	O	T	A	L		S	A	V	E
D	R	E	S	S		N	O	R	T	H		N	E	W

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## Sudoku Solution

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



# Clint's Chronicles on the Funny Farm

## The Rest of the Story Doug Harrell

As usual, I reread this story and relived it at the same time, oh the memories we made! Clint was correct that I thought he was going to burn the tires off that fine Jeep truck and possibly blow the motor as well, never heard such a commotion as he was creating. We were actually on a rather steep hillside when he was throwing the wood off and got stuck in the tree himself. The amazing thing about Clint was that he always was able to laugh at himself, and then keep on keeping on with a good attitude. Read and enjoy the tale. Merry Christmas

## Funny Farm

Dear friends,

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

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

## You Don't Just Gather Sticks?

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

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

## Locust Trees?

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

## Over The River And Through The Woods

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

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

Blackie was grunting, groaning and straining to make the steep grade, starting to slip a bit on the hardpan surface. Doug long ago disappeared from sight so I was solo on this mountain road, wondering if the end was near...praying that



somehow God would deliver me to wherever in the world it was I was supposed to end up.

## Blue Smoke And Spinning Rubber

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

As I sat there, tires spinning, kinda-sorta slipping sideways, the motor screaming in protest. I decided I would never give up. I was going to climb this mountain, in this truck, on this day if it killed me...and it very well might. I had groveled too long, I was not going to call Farmer Doug and tell him to rescue me...I am, after all, Farmer Clint and I can do this!

## Or Can I?

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

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

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

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

## Fat Boy On The Mountain

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

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

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

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

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

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

But what a memory.

Still humbled in the hills,

Farmer Clint





## Responses to the King

Preacher Chris Rathbone  
Mitchell County



The Book of Matthew, chapter 2, verses 1-12, tells us the story of the wise men that came to visit Jesus. Although a lot of Christmas plays, and Nativity scenes portray the wise men there with Mary and Joseph shortly after the birth of Christ, the scripture states in verse 11 that they visited at a house. The journey that they took, most scholars believe, would have made Jesus about 2 years old when these events took place. Also, Herod demanded the male children be put to death 2 years and under, according to the time he had inquired of the wise men (verse 16).

In this text we find 3 characters represented and how they responded to the news of a new king who had been born. First there is the Hypocritical Herod. When Herod heard the news from the wise men, his first response was troubled. Though he stated he wanted to worship this new king, his true motive was to kill him. On the outside, his inquiry to the news seemed to be genuine, but his actions later on gave away his true motive. Herod said one thing with his words, but acted another way with his life. He wanted no king over him. He was his own king. His response was one of rejection.

What was truly in his heart was manifested by his actions to seek out and kill the Christ child because he wanted nothing to do with him. Herod even believed the scriptures the chief priests and scribes read to him, but his response was all out rejection. This is the response of many today when they hear the news of One who has come as our king. Many do not want Christ to be king of their lives, so they simply reject the message of hope and promise given to us in the scriptures. By their deeds, they show who their king really is, and it is usually themselves!



The next characters represented by this story are the Blind Bible teachers. I am amazed when I read this portion of scripture and see such an indifferent response by the Bible teachers of that day to the news of the birth of the promised Messiah. The very ones who should have been overwhelmed with joy by the news of the promised Messiah were the ones who seemed to show the least interest. These were the religious leaders of the day. They pointed Herod to the scriptures which foretold the Messiah's birth. They seemed to have head knowledge, but no heart knowledge. They were so busy keeping their rules and rituals and memorizing their scripture, they missed the point of God wanting to change them in their hearts. They were ones who had a form of Godliness but denying the power thereof, ever seeking knowledge but never coming to the truth (II Timothy 3: 5 & 7). There was religion with no relationship. Shouldn't they have been the ones to recognize what had happened? Why did they not follow these wise men to Bethlehem to find this new born king if they truly believed the scriptures? This head knowledge only had led them to a place of indifferent response. James calls faith without works dead faith (James 2:17). Certainly, if their faith had been genuine, there would have been a genuine response. Again, we see this response of many today. There is a form of religion in their lives, but no evidence of them responding to Christ as their king. They hear the message, possibly even know the scriptures, but continue to live a life of indifference toward the message of the King!

Last of all we see these wise men as Sincere Seekers. These were those who responded in genuine faith and acceptance. How do we know this? We see it by their response to what God had shown them. They believed this wonder in the heavens to be an act of God who was revealing that He was doing something in the world. God was announcing that He had kept His promise of a Messiah. When these wise men saw this, they believed and responded. They began their journey to see this King personally. They searched out and found further confirmation from the chief priests and scribes in the scriptures. Again, they responded in faith and continued their journey toward the King. And last of all, we see these Sincere Seekers fall down before the child King and worship Him. Truly their response to the King was sincere and genuine! Their faith had determined how they responded!

What is your response this Christmas season to the news that will be preached and proclaimed by pastors, teachers, scriptures, and through many Christmas hymns and programs? God has kept His promise to man! The King has come, the Messiah has come, and the message is being proclaimed! How will you respond? Will you respond in rejection as Herod did? Will you simply respond with indifference to the King? Or will you respond in genuine faith and start your journey to your King? Spread the news Christians! The King has come and is waiting for a response from all!

Merry Christmas!

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



# Neuropathy



## Do You Suffer From:

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- Balance problems

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## Let the Rabbits Run

By Timothy W. Tron  
Burke County

As they sat in the little out-building dimly lit by a single incandescent bulb overhead, J.W. leaned back in the old metal legged kitchen chair smiling broadly as the student before him began pulling the first few strains of sound from the instrument under his chin. It would be the first of nearly a dozen lessons. His now white hair protruded boldly from beneath the cap on his head. As he listened to the young man play, he talked to the elder sitting next to him on the upturned white 5-gallon bucket. Reno Sharpe had come along this evening with the young man, a friendly escort of sorts. They talked of old friends and days gone by while the student would painfully try to repeat what the master fiddler had just shown him. There were no music books, no sheets from which to read; no, this was learning as in the old days, by ear.

John Wesley Parsons was his full name, but everyone knew him simply as J.W. It was said that he could fix anything with strings on it, from fishing poles to rehairing a bow. The room around them that night doubled as a slaughterhouse. J.W. raised hogs on the side, along with a host of other jobs. In the summertime, he sold minnows and watermelon. There were butcher saws and knives gleaming in the shadowy room. It was appropriate for the beginner fiddler, so badly were the sounds coming from his bow, akin to killing a song if you will, and not in a good way, that J.W. would remark, "Boy, are you married?"

"Yes-sir," he stopped making the painful sounds to look up from his violin to answer.

"You gotta out-building you can practice in?"

"No sir, but I'm starting to work on one now."

"Well, you better gitter built if you wanna stayed married."

To that, both he and Reno laughed heartily. The young man joined in knowing full well what they meant.

It was just one of many evenings the three would spend together over the course of several weeks that fall.

J.W. was quick to tell the two men that night that he literally taught Charlie Daniels how to play the fiddle. It was a true story, yet it is doubtful that Mr. Daniels would ever attest to it. To J.W., that was his claim to fame. In truth, his real legacy would come later, but not through a single entry such as Mr. Daniels. J.W.'s legacy would be a gift to many.

One evening, J.W. brought his guitar along. The student had now progressed enough that he was able to follow along to the rhythm of the guitar. The master fiddler was slowly working his prodigy into someone that would benefit from this experience for a lifetime. J.W.'s own background was from years of mastery learned through countless hours of sawing the bow across the strings. In wartime, he played with bands that would tour all over the Far East; Japan, Korea, and other Pacific Rim islands. J.W. would eventually come home to settle back down on the farm and raise a family. There he found like many old-time fiddlers, they could earn more money playing for Pea Pickin's or Corn Shuckin's on the weekend than they could at a regular paying job. That being the case, and money being tight, he became known far and wide for being a master fiddler.

As he set his fiddle down that evening, he said to the two men, now his tiny audience, as he picked up the old Martin guitar beside him, "You always want a good guitar player backing you up. And when you get one, make him stand right beside you. You got to have him right beside ya like he was'n a glued to your side. Otherwise, you won't be able to hear em. If you get off, it makes the whole band get off, and that's a bad, bad thang."

The student would reflect back on the many things learned in that tiny studio. Not all of the things taught were just from the notes flowing through the wood and strings, but rather, from the knowledge of the elder passing onto the student the lessons of life and what it was to live in a time when the music of this sort was in much greater demand and appreciation. In today's education, too often the human aspect of the interaction between student and teacher is overlooked. Sitting around the hearth on cold winter nights, the old-timer's in the Appalachians would pass down not only the songs but the stories and traditions of the culture that made them distinct from others. It made the music they made all that more special.

On that memorable evening, J.W. sat down all four legs of his chair and began tuning his guitar. His large fingers adeptly turned the tuning pegs as he bent his head to listen. There was no tuner needed so well adapted were his ears to the sounds of the instruments in his hands. To try to watch his fingers position themselves on the tiny neck of the fiddle, it was sometimes impossible to discern which string he was actually playing. Because of his large working hands, the fingers were nearly always positioned to cover two strings, which made his double stops (purposely playing two strings at once) perfect. Even though the fiddle looked out of place in those rough, hewn hands, the beautiful strains of his waltzes were some of the sweetest melodies many had ever known.

That particular evening, his mood seemed different.

Before continuing, he told the two men in a solemn tone, "What I'm about to play you I don't want you telling anyone about. I don't normally sing in front of people," he would go on to say.

Knowing or not, the young man had always brought along his video recorder in order to tape each lesson. From those he would practice the week, carrying the master with him as a manner of speaking. This night was no different. Instead of interrupting, he let J.W. continue so as not to stop what they were about to see. "If it was really something to be kept secret, he could always go back and erase it if necessary," he thought to himself.

"This here's a song about an old man and his dog. I call it the Rabbit Song." He began playing and singing like we had not seen before. His voice was as good as any country singer they had known on the radio. The song was from the heart. As he played and sang, J.W. closed his eyes as if he was being transported to another

place and time.

*"These hills have been my home, come eighty years next Monday,  
Since sixty-five it's just been this old dog and me.  
My woman was called home to be with the Lord in Glory.  
My life has been a good one but my journey's end I see."*

*Seems like the rabbits run much faster than they used too.  
Every year the hillsides get harder to climb.  
Seems like the autumn turns too quickly into winter.  
Won't be long and me and this old dog will say goodbye."*

The same young man sat in the cozy little barbershop behind Max's house. It was Thursday night, and Max was open for business. Earlier in the week, Max had found the young man had an old fiddle on display in his house. It was one his wife had bought at an auction back when they were in college. It was merely intended for decoration since neither one of them could play it. That evening Max, curious as he was about most things couldn't take it any longer when he paused clipping away with the scissors, and gently touching his customer's shoulder, and leaning in to say, "I happened to see a fiddle sitting in your dining room at your house last week when I was doing that work for you. Do you play?"

"No sir, that was something my wife bought a long time ago at an auction when we were in college. It's broken up on the neck and can't be tuned unless it can be repaired," he replied. Then the next few words he was about to speak would alter the course of the young man's life, "But I've always wanted to learn how to play a stringed instrument."

It was almost as if Max had been waiting to hear those exact words. Before he had barely got the words out of his mouth, Max had an answer. "I know a man that can repair your fiddle and teach you how to play it too."

"Really," the young man said in almost disbelief?

Grabbing the local phone directory, he opened it up to the 'P's, "Yep, sure do, his name is J.W. Parsons."

Pointing to the J.W.'s name, they wrote down the number. Then the conversation turned to all the music that had been a part of Max's life and how he and J.W. had made music so many times. Those were precious memories. The world began to spin seemingly out of control for the young man that night, as so many things that could have been began to become possibilities. It is sometimes said that truth is stranger than fiction. It seemed that night as if the young man had stepped back into time, hearing about lives from another century.

As J.W. played for the audience of two that night, his student and Reno, he sang to them a song that was nearly as prophetic as it was sad.

*"Instead of sleeping over in the corner by the fireplace,  
That old dog would run and hunt all day.  
Not too long ago, we were out amongst the corn rows,  
Making the memories that are on my mind today."*

*Seems like the rabbits run much faster than they used too.  
Every year the hillsides get harder to climb.  
Seems like the autumn turns too quickly into winter.  
Won't be long and me and this old dog will say goodbye."*

He ended the song and solemnly sat down the guitar at his side as the two men cheered his beautiful rendition. His humbleness overwhelming them as he repeated, "Now don't tell no one I ever sang that, you hear." They shook their heads in disbelief and approved. It was the gentlemen's agreement, they had given their word.

From there, J.W. would eventually introduce the young man to other venues and people, whereby eventually, those off-key notes would form melodies that would entertain crowds of enthusiastic onlookers, but never to the same level of the master's hand. The style of which he had learned from the old Pea Pickin' fiddler, J.W. Parson, was one of a kind; a mix of bluegrass with a hint of old-time mountain music. From that point forward, the legacy of J.W. Parsons would be passed down as that young man would go on to become the first Director of the Chatham County Junior Appalachian Musician's Program (JAM). There, he and many others would teach young children from the ages of 8 to 16, how to play the songs and instruments of the old-time music. The method used in the program was exactly the same J.W. would use, sharing the sounds of the music along with the stories that made it special; and learning by ear.

Years would go by, and like pages on a well-worn book, the edges of recollection would begin to fade. Sadly, in his later years, J.W.'s memory would begin to slip. It was painful to watch the master fiddler slowly lose the precious gift he had known most of his life. Around him, especially his loved ones, people watched the man they loved and called Papa, slowly fade from them. His friends would fight back the tears as they would see him one more time and know this was only the shell of the man they had once known.

One might attribute the loss of his memory to the accident that took his loving wife, "Mara-Lou," as he called her. They had been in a wreck and gone to the hospital afterward, but the doctors told her everything had checked out. They went home, even though she was still in pain. Sadly, she passed away during the night from her injuries. J.W. was never quite the same afterward.

The Bible tells us in Philippians, 3:13 "Brethren, I count not myself to have ap-

*continued on page 19*



## "On The Road With Jesus"

By Shawn Thomas  
Burke County



One of best ways to learn about someone is to spend some time on the road with them. I remember reading an article by the renowned actor, Charlton Heston (who played Moses in the classic 1956 movie "The Ten Commandments"). Heston was conservative politically, and was supporting Ronald Reagan as he ran for office, so one time he went on the road with him. People had sometimes suggested to Heston that he follow in Reagan's steps and run for office, but he said spending that time on the road with Reagan taught him a lot of lessons, among them being how HARD it is to be a candidate like that: how hard the travel is; how many meetings there are; and how many people to try to meet and keep happy. He said he could tell that Reagan just "fed" off of the people; he said the more he met, the happier he seemed to be, and the more energized. But Heston said all that would have killed him! So, he learned some things about politics, and about himself, while "on the road" with Ronald Reagan.

This is one of the reasons why Jesus took His disciples "on the road" with Him: so that they could spend time with Him, and learn from Him. And they did learn amazing lessons that they would carry with them for the rest of their lives. You and I did not get that opportunity to personally walk with Jesus like they did, but through God's word, we can "virtually" go "on the road" with Jesus and His disciples in their trip to Samaria in John 4, and as we do, there are a number of lessons we can learn from it:

### We Learn to Take Comfort in the HUMANITY of Jesus

:6 "Jesus, being wearied from His journey ..."

This is an amazing statement. It says that Jesus was "wearied." We need to hear that, because some of us tend to think of Jesus as some kind of "Superman" character with special powers who didn't really get weak or tired like we do. But the Bible says He DID! That was part of His "becoming like us" that Hebrews 2 talks about. In the Incarnation He became like us in our weaknesses. He didn't need to rest from 6 days of creating the whole universe (the only reason He "rested" was as an example for His people; He wasn't "tired" by it at all!) But here this same Creator was "wearied" from walking, by the 6th hour of the day. He had undoubtedly gotten up early and spent quality time with His Heavenly Father in prayer, then He walked for a number of hours before stopping here in Samaria. He was a real man who got "weary." If getting tired and weary is not in your mental picture of Jesus, you need to re-do your mental picture! Jesus got "weary", just like we do!

Have you ever been "weary"? I'm sure all of us can say we have. Maybe you are "weary" right now. But take comfort — Jesus knows what that is like! So, when you're weary, bring that to Jesus. He too has been weary; and He knows how to help you in your time of need.

When I read this passage this week it reminded me of an encounter I had the Sunday night of our church fellowship over at Lake James. A woman of another ethnicity came out to "our reserved area" at the lake, and wanted to know if she and her son could swim there. My first thought was "well, this is supposed to be 'OUR area!'" But the Lord nudged me to let her do it; maybe we could be a witness to her somehow. But after we had been there some time I noticed she was just over there by herself, and the Lord nudged me to just go by and speak to her, and see if some opportunity to witness might open up, so I did. I asked where she lived, and a few general questions. Nothing really seemed to open up, so after a while I said, "Well, it was good to meet you ..." and I was already starting to think to myself, "Well at least I was obedient," and I started to walk away — and all of the sudden she said, "So what church are you all from?" And it just opened the door, and I eventually did get to share the gospel with her. (I think partially God wanted to show me that it is HE who opens up doors, not me!) But it ended up being a great opportunity. She said she did trust what Jesus did on the cross to save her; I don't know if she really did or not; but we got to talk about her husband. She said he is a Catholic, but she doesn't know if he really knows the Lord or not. So, I went over the gospel again, told her that the most important thing is that both her and her husband to trust that it was Jesus dying on the cross that will take us to heaven, not our own good works. It turned out to be a great opportunity; but God had to show me that I needed to SEE her being there as an opportunity, and obey Him and go through the door when He opened it up.

Now, lest any of you think I'm some kind of "great witness" for sharing that afternoon; I want you to know, I fail all the time at this. (Cheryl can tell you we were at a gas station the other night and this scroungy looking character was begging for money. He just rubbed me the wrong way, and I kinda gruffly said no. When I got back to the car Cheryl said: "I guess that wasn't the one God gave you to witness to today?" I went, "Ahh...". I probably missed that one!)

But I've been encouraged the last couple of weeks to hear so many of our people, taking opportunities to share with family, with servers in restaurants, with employees, with those in our barber chair, and others, as God has opened doors for us. That's one of the things I think if we were physically walking with Jesus, that we would really come away with: how many opportunities God will give us to minister and share with people, if we will just watch and pray for those opportunities. Just step across the room; just speak a word like Jesus did here in :7, "Give me a drink ...", and see what opportunity God might open up for you to be a witness.

### We Learn the necessity of repentance

One of the most important spiritual lessons we learn from Jesus here in John 4 is the importance of repentance if a person is to be saved.

See, too often, what we call "evangelism" consists of telling people, "just receive Jesus as your Savior" or "just ask Jesus into your heart" and you will go to heaven. But as we walk with Jesus here in John 4, we see Him confronting the woman there with the necessity of repentance:

Now that doesn't mean that we have to somehow "clean ourselves up" before we can get saved.

Jesus cleans us up. He gives us the power to change. But we have to be WILLING to be changed. And this is just what so many people do not want.

They want to hold on to their SIN with one hand, and take Jesus in the other hand, and think He's gonna take them safely to heaven.

And He will NOT! You have to be willing to let go of that sin — and Jesus will help you to do that — but you have got to admit that what you are doing is a sin, and be willing to STOP DOING IT with His help. You cannot just willfully continue in your sin, and think Jesus is going to take you to heaven. He won't. There has to be repentance.

— I don't care how many times you "ask Jesus into your heart;"

— I don't care how often you SAY Jesus is your Lord & Savior;

If you are not repenting and turning away from sin in your life you are not being saved.

Real salvation is accompanied by real repentance. And there are people who in some sense "really believe" in Jesus, and "really want" to be saved, but they will NOT be saved, because they have never repented of their sin.

Look at the Rich Young Ruler in Matthew 19. After Jesus talked to him, it says he "went away sorrowful" because he wouldn't obey Jesus and repent in an area He pointed out in his life. And you may go away sorrowful too. You may walk away from this service sorrowful, because although you'd like to follow Jesus, you know you are in a sinful relationship with another person and you are not willing to walk away from it; or because you know there is a habit in your life you don't even WANT to let Jesus help you break. And you are going to "walk away sorrowful" today because you will not repent, and YOU WILL BE LOST unless you repent! This isn't just me saying that. Jesus Himself said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3)

### We Learn that JESUS is the Answer:

— When we get saved, yes we need the gospel. We need Jesus' death on the cross to forgive our sins, and give us power to turn from sin and live a new life.

— But even now as Christians, when we get up every day, we need the gospel: we've sinned yesterday, and the only reason we aren't lost today is the gospel! And we need to remind ourselves of that, and "preach the gospel to ourselves" every day.

— And then as we go out into the world, we need to be looking for opportunities to share the gospel with others, like we have been talking about.

— As we serve in our job or school, we do it knowing that everything we do there, reflects on the Gospel.

— The Christian realizes that their marriage and their family exists to show the world a picture of the Gospel: the husband is to love and sacrifice for his wife the way Christ loved the Church; the wife is to submit to her husband the way the Church submits to Christ. The marriage and family of a Christian are all about the Gospel.

— And as Christians make decisions about their lives, we are to make those decisions taking into account how our decision impacts the Gospel.

There is no area of our life that is not impacted by the Gospel. In a very real sense, everything in the life of a Christian is to be about the Gospel.

And folks, the Gospel is JESUS! JESUS is the answer. Just like in that elementary Sunday School class, Jesus really IS the answer to everything. (Some people are reluctant to help or counsel people; they're afraid they won't say the right thing, or they won't have the answer to the problem. But in a very real sense, you can't go wrong by just pointing the person to Jesus. He REALLY IS the ultimate answer to everything:

— You want to go to heaven? Jesus is the answer for that! He is "the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father" but through Him.

— You want peace? Jesus is the answer! He said, "MY peace I give to you."

— You want direction? Jesus is the answer. He said, "I am the way!"

— You need healing/help/deliverance? Jesus is the answer! He said, "bring them to Me!"

— You need to know how you should act? Jesus is the answer. He said we are to "follow in His steps" (I Peter 2:21)

— You need strength? Jesus is the answer. We just read in II Timothy where Paul said: "The Lord strengthened me" when he was facing the lion's mouth.

— You need hope in a desperate world? Jesus is the answer. He said He is "coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30) and things will not always be as bad as they are now. There is coming a better day than what we have now; there is coming a better world than what we have now — and JESUS is our hope of that. JESUS IS THE ANSWER!

The most important lesson of all that we learn, from walking "on the road" with Jesus, is that He is the answer to everything we need.

What is it that you are facing today? As we bow our heads, would you pray, Lord, show me how YOU are the answer to the problem I am facing today. And help me to give that thing to You, and let You do what no one else can.



Shawn Thomas is Senior Pastor at Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Morganton. His messages and devotionals are available at [www.shawnethomas.com](http://www.shawnethomas.com)



Treasures in Prison Cells

By Harrietta Turner  
Mitchell County

I am taking this title from the prophetic vision received by Bill Yount which has been widely circulated over the past 21 years in which he saw Jesus who appeared to him and told him among other things: "Tell My people that great treasure is behind these prison walls in these forgotten vessels. My people must come forth and touch these ones, for a mighty anointing will be unleashed upon these for future victory in My Kingdom. THEY MUST BE RESTORED!"

There is a wonderful new NC Statewide prison program which completed its first year very successfully the end of August 2018 and has begun its 2nd year.

It is the NC Field Ministers' Program and more can be learned and seen about it by going Online to [www.wbtv.com/2018/10/02/Joe-Gibbs-NC-DPS-Baptist-seminary-working-prison-chaplain-program](http://www.wbtv.com/2018/10/02/Joe-Gibbs-NC-DPS-Baptist-seminary-working-prison-chaplain-program) which shows a Video of a TV Newscast and has Joe Gibbs, who is financing most of the program, explaining that after the 4 years of Seminary study the graduates will be launched out to work as Chaplains in our states' 56 prisons.

An even more informative, professionally shot Video plus many photos is on the Website of Joe Gibbs at <https://www.gameplanforlife.com/field-minister-program>

AND ON THIS WEBSITE IT EXPLAINS THE PROGRAM AS FOLLOWS:  
Game Plan for Life has teamed up with the College at Southeastern and the North Carolina Department of Public Safety to fully fund the North Carolina Field Minister Program. The program is a fully paid, four-year Bachelor of Arts degree in Pastoral Ministry with a secondary emphasis on counseling. Inmates serving sentences ranging from 15 years to life sentences are eligible to apply for the program. In the first year of the program, 30 inmates were accepted as students into the program. 30 additional students will be accepted into the program each year, until reaching full capacity at 120 students.

So, as seen from the above Online Website description ...It is a 4 year intensive full Seminary program from the Southeastern Baptist Seminary in Winston Salem, with the professors from the Seminary visiting the 30 especially chosen prisoners at their new location at Nash Correctional Institute and the program is approved by the Warden at Central Prison, and financed mainly by the former Redskins football coach Joe Gibbs who is also well-known across North Carolina for his Nascar racing endeavors.

A long search, choosing and then orientation training of the first 30 chosen from across the state's prisons for the first year of the studies ended with their completion of the year's studies and the beginning of their 2nd year of courses in September with a new group of chosen prisoners beginning their first year this September.

I have been able to follow this endeavor from the beginning since a Mitchell County inmate at Mt. View C.I. whom I had been corresponding with for a couple of years. Charles (Tony) Ball, was one of the chosen for the first year. He was from Buncombe County where his grandfather founded one of the Asheville Churches of God and his father was a professor for a while at Appalachian State University. He was so outstanding with this first year of his Seminary courses that the staff member from the Seminary who oversees the program at the Nash Prison has asked him to be his assistant after the 4 years of intensive study is completed with him graduating.

His address is Tony (Charles Anthony Ball) #1291874  
PO Box 600, Nashville, NC 27856  
in case anyone would like to write to him or he could give anyone the names of some of the other chosen prisoners who left their home counties and prison employment, as most did have prison jobs, and went to this new prison of Nash C.I. They are not allowed to work at prison jobs now since their studies do take all their time and this means many do not have any funds for buying anything from the canteen and the attempts of the Program managers haven't been successful at finding sponsors for Tony or for some of the others who do not have immediate family members to send them monthly funds. If anyone feels led to send them a small donation or sponsor one of them for any amount such as \$25 a month they could do this through the JPay Website... and Tony could give anyone the addresses and prison numbers of his fellow needy Seminary students.

They would also be blessed by the prayers of those of us on the outside of the prison walls just as those of us who have the privilege of corresponding with them are blessed by their dedication to serving our Lord so effectively.

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prehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," One could say, God, moved J.W. past the painful loss of his beloved, comforting him in his final years with a sense of peace. Looking back, it was as if God knew the pain he suffered from losing his life-long partner. In taking away his memory, he might have lost his musical talent, but he was also afforded a few years of peaceful grace before he left this world. We often only comprehend what we can see. Beneath that placid façade of bleakness, we witnessed, who's to say J.W. couldn't already see the joy that would fill his soul on that beautiful reunion day when he and Mara-Lou would meet again on the far distant shore of Jordan?

The memory of the Rabbit Song would return to that young man J.W. taught so long ago every time he saw him in those final years.

That young man would be me, Timothy Tron.  
As he had asked, I never mentioned the song or that it had been played. Reno passed long before J.W., so it was a memory only I carried with me.

Not many years after J.W.'s passing, I mentioned to Wendy about the song. It was the first time I had told anyone. She replied, "I'd like to get a copy of that from you someday."

Someday will come. My walk in faith has buried so many things in storage. Unlike the things we carry, the memory of that special evening has not been lost.

As time goes by, the children from that JAM program are growing up and moving onto other parts of their own lives. Many of them had heard the story of the Rabbit Song, but few know the rest of the story. As they grow up and continue playing the music learned from the student of J.W., it is as if a part of J.W. Parsons continues on. His legacy still surviving into the next generation beyond our own. Those students are now becoming teachers as well, carrying on the tradition of learning by ear, playing in the old-time way.

Yes, the rabbits seem to run much faster than they used too. These Blue Ridge mountains seem harder to climb.

In the corner sits my fiddle, lovingly signed on the back by J.W. Parsons.

As the weather turns cooler, it takes me back to that little old shack behind J.W.'s home where we sat underneath the light of that autumn moon. It's time to rosin up the bow and play that fiddle hard, cause J.W.'s memory will not be lost, his legacy will linger on.



Let the rabbit run.  
Thanks be to God.


Timothy W. Tron lives in Collettsville, NC. with his family. He is the former Director of the Trail of Faith in Valdese, where he still volunteers and helps with tours. He now teaches Math full time at Watauga High School in Boone. He is the author of a new Christian series, "Children of the Light," with the first book being, "Bruecke to Heaven," and his recent book, being the second, "The Light in the Darkness." He is an active blogger, artist, and musician. Timothy also has a BSEE from UF, and is a Lay Speaker. He can be reached at [twtron@live.com](mailto:twtron@live.com)

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## Being a True Eccentric

Dr. Tracy Jessup

*"Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever...The Lord will reign forever; your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord." — Psalm 146:5-6, 10*

In the June 8, 2016 edition of Christian Century, Peter Marty, the magazine's publisher wrote an intriguing article entitled "The true eccentric." Admittedly, I always had considered the word "eccentric" as having negative connotations. For example, when googling synonyms for eccentric, one finds words such as abnormal, irregular, odd, strange, peculiar, weird, bizarre, outlandish, and freakish.

The etymology of the word "eccentric" comes from the combination of two Greek words meaning "out of center." It became an astronomical term in the Middle Ages, when Copernicus discovered the elliptical orbits of planets revolving around the sun instead of the earth.

In the article, Marty suggests that an eccentric existence is one in which God forms the center of life, becoming the axle of our self-understanding, as it were. He writes, "We go places in life when we treat God as our center and view ourselves as out-of-center and away from the place in which only God rightfully belongs. There is a movement and meaning in a life of faith lived eccentrically. But if we place ourselves at the center of importance — our ego, pride, or achievements — we go nowhere significant, spiritually speaking at least. The world spins mindlessly around our self-interests" (p. 3).

The question for our consideration is this: Who or what is the center of our lives? If Christ is the center, we will appear "eccentric" to the culture around us because the goals, ideals and values of this world often are at odds with those of the Kingdom of God. As such, the follower of Christ will be a true eccentric in this world, as we focus, not on self, but on Christ and his Kingdom.

Each of the last five Psalms begins and ends with the words, "Praise the Lord," bearing witness to a life that is centered on God." For example, Psalm 146, reads, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long" (vv. 1-2). Then the writer contrasts God alongside powerful people who are exposed as being inadequate centers. "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish. Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever...The Lord will reign forever; your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord" (vv. 3-6, 10).

In the introduction to his translation of the book of Genesis, Eugene Peterson, writes, "If we don't have a sense of the primacy of God, we will never get it right, get life right, get our lives right. Not God at the margins; not God as an option; not God on the weekends. God at center and circumference; God first and last; God, God, God" (p. 18).

Prayer: Jesus, be the center of my life, from beginning to the end it will always be, it's always been You, Jesus" (from the song "Jesus at the Center" by Adam Ranney, Israel Houghton, and Micah Massey).

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Dr. Tracy Jessup serves as vice president for Christian Life and Service and senior minister to the University. He is a graduate of Gardner-Webb with a B.A. in Music and earned his M. Div. degree at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He also teaches in the undergraduate department of religious studies and enjoys the opportunity to serve the local church through interim pastorates, pulpit supply, and preaching revival services. He and his wife, Teresa, have two children, Christian and Anna.



## Reminder for the Season

By John McCoury

Roan Mountain, Tennessee



As we are getting ready for Christmas, we as Consumers get quite a bit of help from private and public agencies that report to the public on the quality of merchandise, the comparative value of products offered, how to get the most for one's money, what scrupulous practices to be aware of, and the like. With this information, the consumers can be more discriminating. Since God is ultimately the giver of all gifts, we are not so much



consumers of humanity's goods as we are of God's, for He richly furnishes everything to enjoy. He blessed us with one after the other of his riches in the Holy Scripture. In Deuteronomy 28-3 to 8 Moses writes of how God would bless in the city, in their field, of the fruits of the ground and the increase of cattle, of the fullness of their basket and even of their storehouses—All are God's gifts. We need to be reminded of that often. In the city of Lystra, when St. Paul healed a crippled man and was about to be revered as a god, the apostle turned the thoughts of the peoples to the living God who made heaven and earth

and sea and everything in them. He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy" (Acts 14:15, 17). We are consumers also of spiritual blessings, of which St. Paul speaks eloquently in the opening verses of his letter to the Ephesians 1-3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Thank the Lord for all His blessings we have received. Here is something to REMEMBER for the season

- I. Thou shalt not leave "Christ" out of Christmas, making it "Xmas." To some, "X" is unknown.
- II. Thou shalt prepare thy soul for Christmas. Spend not so much on gifts that thy soul is forgotten.
- III. Thou shalt not let Santa Claus replace Christ, thus robbing the day of its spiritual reality.
- IV. Thou shalt not burden the shop girl, the mailman, and the merchant with complaints and demands.
- V. Thou shalt give thyself with thy gift. This will increase its value a hundred fold, and he who receiveth it shall treasure it forever.
- VI. Thou shalt not value gifts received by their cost. Even the least expensive may signify love, and that is more priceless than silver and gold.
- VII. Thou shalt not neglect the needy. Share thy blessings with many who will go hungry and cold unless thou art generous.
- VIII. Thou shalt not neglect thy church. Its services highlight the true meaning of the season.
- IX. Thou shalt be as a little child. Not until thou has become in spirit as a little one art thou ready to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.
- X. Thou shalt give thy heart to Christ. Let Him be at the top of thy Christmas list.

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



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Tipton Hill Community Foundation  
Earns Regional Honor

By Jennifer Ferre  
Mitchell County

ASHEVILLE, NC The WNC Honors Awards is built on a 69-year-old tradition of recognizing rural community development clubs for their innovative ideas and grassroots solutions. These centers and clubs are the backbone running through our beloved mountains. The culmination of this year's program occurred at a luncheon held on Saturday with 240 community leaders from 13 counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee.

Communities of Promise receive a cash award of \$1,000 and are chosen because of the initiatives implemented by the community that show promise and can be replicated around the region. Tipton Hill Community Foundation from Mitchell County received this high accolade for expanding their community center and the services it provides by adding an outdoor covered shelter to the back of their facility. This new covered space provides a platform for multiple activities and can accommodate 250 people. Their first ever community-wide Easter Egg Hunt was a huge success with over 100 community members in attendance. Due to its popularity, plans are to expand the event in 2019 and Tipton Hill has already received a donation to pay for the eggs. In collaboration with the Mitchell County Health Department and the Center for Rural Health, a flu shot clinics are held at the Tipton Hill Community Center and the ongoing Tele-Medicine Clinic, housed at the center, provides medical services to 90 patients.

"We should all be grateful for the dedication rural communities put into making the mountains a place we can all be proud to call home," shared Jennifer Ferre, Interim Director. "For over 69 years, the WNC Honors program has served as an inspiration for continuing and replicating community success."

Generous sponsorships from Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort, Harrah's Valley River Casino & Hotel, Biltmore Farms, Inc., Duke Energy, The McClure Fund, First Citizens Bank, Buncombe County Farm Bureau, Carolina Farm Credit, Wells Fargo and New Belgium Brewing brought in \$38,500 to award to the 64 community centers and clubs in the region.

Community centers and clubs across the mountain region voluntarily participate in the annual cash awards program by submitting an application to WNC Communities, a nonprofit dedicated to strategies to improve rural community life. The 64 communities involved this year represent over 5,000 volunteers with an impressive 166,500 hours in outreach programs dedicated to education, health, conservation and events highlighting the mountain's great art, craft, and music traditions, as well as collaborative efforts with government, churches, community colleges, nonprofits and small businesses. In addition, the collective fundraising efforts of these communities brought in over one million dollars for everything from neighbor helping neighbor to food pantries, community gardens, school supplies, senior meal sites, military honorariums, preserving mountain heritage and funds dedicated to the upgrades and maintenance of these rural beacons known as community centers.

Tax ID# 56-0797760 WNC Communities supports sustainable economic development opportunities that are unique to each community while together developing strategies that improve community life. For more information visit [www.wnccommunities.org](http://www.wnccommunities.org)

Jennifer is the Interim Director of WNC Communities Foundation.



(back row) Tipton Hill Community members Patsy Griffith, Kit Faulk, Arvene Byrd, Scott Griffith and Anne Peterson (front) presented the Community of Promise Award by Lumpy Lambert with Harrah's Valley River]

First Baptist Church of Marshall

By Buddy Freeman

A woman tells her friend, "My husband bought me a mood ring the other day. When I'm in a good mood, it turns green. When I'm in a really bad mood, it leaves a red mark on his forehead."

A teacher in Kentucky asked her third grade students to name the seasons of the year and put them in order.

67% of the students gave these answers @!) Squirrel season; (2) Deer Season; (3) Rabbit season; and (4) University of Kentucky Basketball Season.

A burglar entered the home of a Quaker. The Quaker heard a noise, took his shotgun down stairs and found the burglar. He aimed his gun and said gently, "Friend, I mean thee no harm, but thou standest where I am about to shoot."

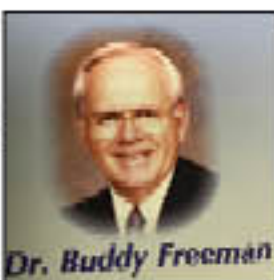
Did you hear the one about the ministers who formed a bowling team? They call themselves The Holy Rollers.

The Sunday School Teacher asks, "Now, Johnny, tell me frankly do you say your prayers before eating?" "No Mam," little Johnny replies, "I don't have to. My Mom is a good cook."

A little boy was attending his first wedding. After the service, his cousin asked him, "How many women can a man marry?" "Sixteen" the boy responded. His cousin was amazed that he knew the answer so quickly. "How do you know that?" "Easy," the little boy said, "All you have to do is add it up, like the Preacher said, '4 better, 4 worse, 4 richer, and 4 poorer.'"

A little boy was watching his father, a pastor, write a sermon. He asked, "How do you know what to say?" His father said, "Why God tells me." The boy asked, "oh, then why do you keep crossing things out?"

Dr Buddy Freeman is now serving as the pastor at First Baptist Church of Marshall, NC.



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## Pack Your Timbrel!

By Marlene Houk  
Burke County



When my daughter became an elementary music teacher, I entered a new world of unknown musical instruments. What a delight to discover the cabasa (See November 2018 article.) the kalimba, the uilleann pipes, steel drums, glockenspiels, bam-boo qeej, (a Hmong Instrument), the udu (an idiophone from Nigeria), and on the list goes. God, our Creator, has designed us to pursue, enjoy, and praise Him with music. In addition, when we sing Bible verses, rote memorization is reinforced by utilizing a different part of the brain.

"Music stimulates all brain regions that are considered the core of emotional processing," says Dr. Jon Lieff, (a pioneer in geriatric psychiatry, and a specialist in the interface of psychiatry, neurology, and medicine). These areas include the Amygdala, Nucleus Accumbens (NA), and the Hippocampus along with critical regions of the cortex. According to Dr. Lieff, in the Amygdala, happy music encourages goal-directed behavior. The Nucleus Accumbens enables us to feel the pleasure of music, but it is also connected to many other critical regions of the brain. One of these is the auditory cortex that is related to hearing. Music helps the Hippocampus to recover from stress. Dr. Lieff states, "The power of music is intricately related to the earliest survival activity. This can be seen in music's great importance for cohesion in all societies."

The God who created music constrained Miriam, the older sister of Moses, to praise God using music with her timbrel. When the Egyptians viciously pursued the helpless Israelites through the dry path of the Red Sea that God had made, He allowed the Israelites to pass through safely but drowned every Egyptian soldier. This stunning victory and legendary triumph caused Moses to respond with a song of praise. Then, Miriam repeats the "chorus" of his song, grabbing her timbrel and leading a group of fiercely jubilant Israelite women with their timbrels.

Exodus 15:20-21 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Miriam intuitively and spiritually responded to her people's joy at the amazing miracle of their survival that God had orchestrated. Her joy knew no bounds. The timbrel is a non-pitched percussion instrument that encourages rhythm with its high happy sound and silvery joyful notes. Did she know what Dr. Lieff did? Whether she did or not, she responded to her heart's desire to praise the God of Abraham for delivering them from certain death. The following is a list of Dr. Lieff's findings on joyful corporate music and in italics is the spiritual analogy.

- Music releases dopamine, a chemical that enables movement. Happy music is being used currently for Parkinson's patients to help them move.
- Music empowered the Israelites to move toward the land that God had promised them.
- Music enables a group of people to be cohesive and unified, bonding them with resulting feelings of love and joy. It encourages people to trust and cooperate as well as to interact with each other.
- Music helped the Israelites to work together to provide, protect, and nurture the approximately 2.4 million Israelite nation.
- Music can decrease tension and conflicts and increase empathy because of shared experiences.

With many opportunities for the devil to increase bickering and hostilities, music provided a simple solution to reduce his influence in daily life.

- Music fulfills people's need to belong.
- Music assisted the newly liberated people to define themselves and provide a sense of identity for individuals.
- Musical activities are critical for survival of the community, encouraging hearing and commitment.

The pleasurable result of music actually contributed to the survival of the Israelites.

- Music helps to replace the brain cells destroyed by stress, and these new brain cells are connected with attachment and tender feelings. Music can decrease stress by decreasing cortisol in the HPA system.

In the stresses of traveling through enemy territory, fighting the daily challenges for food and shelter, and fear of tomorrow, music enabled the Israelites to renew their physical brains to make these life and death struggles easier.

- Music helps us to realize we are part of something bigger.
- God was forming a nation in preparation for the Savior of the world. Music helped them to realize God's plan for the Israelites.

The timbrel (or tambourine-the western equivalent) is made from many different types of wood, plastic, metal, or other materials. There are many different sizes, and it can be made with a covering over the circle, using it as a drum. The sounds are mysterious, happy, joyful, exciting and exultant. Children and adults are both drawn to this simple instrument popular since ancient times.

Miriam is teaching us to include praiseworthy music in our lives as a simple pleasurable way to obey our LORD, renew our physical strength, and become powerful men and women of faith for His glory! God tells us to praise Him and then makes it easy and enjoyable.

So, as Beth Moore, internationally known Bible study leader says, pack your timbrel! Because now we know, music is powerful, and praising the LORD with music is absolutely critical to the Christian life.

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](mailto:marlenehouk@bellsouth.net)



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# Grace Community Church

## Seeing Beyond the Walls of the Cave

By Jerry Lewis  
McDowell County



King David's early years as king were anything but ideal. Anointed by Samuel, David donned no royal robe, sat on no ornate throne. Rather, he returned to the fields as a shepherd boy. Then came his most famous moment, when with a single sling and stone he killed Goliath the giant. Saul, the sitting king, became insanely jealous. David ran for his life. Into a cave.

Psalm 57 is written while David is looking at the dark walls of a cave. There is no palace, no servants, no accoutrements fit for a king. He's running for his life, not running the kingdom. Out of that cave David writes:

*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.*

*I cry out to God Most High,  
to God who fulfills his purpose for me.*

*He will send from heaven and save me;  
he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah*

*God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness! (Psalm 57:1-3, ESV)*

In fear, David cries out to God for mercy. In faith, David sees beyond the walls of the cave. "Be merciful to me...God who fulfills his purpose for me." Somehow David knows that caves come before crowns, pain often precedes one's purpose.

*My soul is in the midst of lions;  
I lie down amid fiery beasts—*

*the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows,  
whose tongues are sharp swords.*

*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!*

*Let your glory be over all the earth! (Psalm 57:4-5, ESV)*

David was real about his situation. Beyond the walls of the cave Saul waited for David, trapped inside. But David saw beyond Saul: he saw a God who was above his cave, even above the heavens. David continues.

*They set a net for my steps;*

*my soul was bowed down.*

*They dug a pit in my way,*

*but they have fallen into it themselves. Selah*

*My heart is steadfast, O God,*

*my heart is steadfast!*

*I will sing and make melody!*

*Awake, my glory!*

*Awake, O harp and lyre!*

*I will awake the dawn!*

*I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;*

*I will sing praises to you among the nations.*

*For your steadfast love is great to the heavens,*

*your faithfulness to the clouds. (Psalm 57:6-10, ESV)*

Though the cave was dark, somehow David's heart was not. His soul was bowed down, but his heart was steadfast. His "I will" penetrated the darkness of the cave with a vision of the glory of God! David sang in the cave. And in doing so, he saw beyond it. If you ever sing "among the nations" you will have to sing "in the cave" first. And what will be the theme of your song? The steadfast love and faithfulness of God.

David ultimately wrote 73 of the 150 Psalms...his first ones were written in the cave. Sing today in the cave. One day you will wear a crown.

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



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## Red Ribbon Week 2018

By Terri Leiser  
Mitchell County

Since its inception in 1988, millions of people around the world have participated in the Red Ribbon Week Campaign and local youth are no exception. The Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force, a program of Partner's Aligned Toward Health, and RHA prevention services sponsored Red Ribbon Week activities and events in schools across Mitchell and Yancey Counties.

In 1985, angered by the murder of DEA Agent Enrique Camarena, parents and youth in communities across the country began wearing red ribbons as a symbol of their commitment to raising awareness of the destruction caused by drugs in the United States. In 1988, the National Family Partnership sponsored the first official National Red Ribbon Celebration. Today, the Red Ribbon Campaign serves as a catalyst to mobilize communities to educate youth and encourage participation in drug prevention activities.

Students from Appalachian Youth to Youth (a youth empowerment initiative of the Task Force) raised awareness in Mitchell and Yancey middle schools by sharing drug prevention facts during morning announcements and hosting tables during lunch. Through their leadership, Appalachian Youth to Youth members inspired over 350 students to sign the drug free pledge. To further unite students in the goal of being drug free, youth also handed out wristbands in the schools with this year's Red Ribbon Week theme – Life is Your Journey, Travel Drug Free.

To tie together the messages of Red Ribbon Week and to empower students to influence others with their drug free choices, the task force and RHA brought nationally known speaker DeMarco Fomby to give presentations in the middle and high schools of Mitchell and Yancey Counties. Through his musical talent, comedy, and life experiences, Fomby encouraged students to find their passion in life and use it to make a difference in the world, especially for drug prevention.

The Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force and Partner's Aligned Toward Health are thankful for the support of Mitchell and Yancey County schools, RHA Prevention Services for financial support, and Mountain Community Health Partnership (MCHP) for providing funding for the purchase of Red Ribbon Week bracelets for each student.

*Terri Leiser is the Youth Team Advisor for Appalachian Youth to Youth.*



## Four Things the World Needs to See from the Church

By Jason Koon  
Burke County



The American Church seems to be in a state of decline, and while this isn't the first time in American history that we have dealt with this, there is no question something is wrong in the Church today. People are leaving in droves and a majority of those who remain report that they rarely or never experience God at Church. This is the third article in a series looking at what the world needs to see from the Church if we're going to remain relevant in the coming decade.

### Unity

When Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Whittenburg Cathedral in 1519, there were two denominations, Catholics in the West and Orthodox in the East. Over the next 500 years the Western Church would split and splinter to the point that, as of 2001, there were 33,830 Christian denominations worldwide. This doesn't even include the Non-denominational movement, which, let's be honest, has quickly become a separate denomination. Now, it's not that the people who got us to this point were wrong or evil, all this was born out of a desire to know, believe, and live according to the truth of God's Word. Regardless of the origins of the problem, however, we must admit that we do have a significant problem, and the world around us recognizes it. So, what can we do to fix it? How can The Church hold to the truth in unity as we are commanded to do by Scripture?

The first key to unity is standing firm on God's truth. People can cooperate with any person or group with any worldview from any background, but Believers can only have biblical unity with other believers. There are many, in our world today, who – with good intentions – are seeking to build interfaith unity outside of Christianity. And while I believe we must pursue unity, this approach is flawed to its core. If we are to be unified for the cause of The Gospel, we must build our unity on the Biblical Gospel. We must not be afraid to be dogmatic where Scripture is dogmatic.

However, we must also be willing to be flexible where Scripture is flexible. There are many issues which Scripture leaves up to conscience. For example, we are commanded to live righteous and sober lives, but what does that look like in everyday life? The Bible leaves room for conscience on issues such as Alcohol consumption, R-rated movies, four-letter words, styles of music and dress, and many others. Scripture does give us basic, heart-attitude guidelines to follow, but leaves the specifics up to us.

There are many doctrinal issues where this holds true as well. Not every opinion I hold is correct, and I must never sacrifice Biblical unity on the altar of personal doctrinal preferences. Issues like high-church versus low-church, Calvinism versus Arminianism, or end-times specifics are worthy of discussion and debate, but we should understand these debates as family meetings rather than as theological border walls.

One of the most common objections the unchurched world has toward Church is the perception of arrogance, dogmatism, and division within the Church. And to an extent, they're not all wrong, many Christians and Churches have earned their reputations for being divisive. However, as the world grows more and more post-Christian, we are going to quickly realize that we don't have the time, resources, or energy to waste on endless dispute and division. We are going to have to come together in the name of Jesus and commit ourselves to work together to take the Gospel into the World, so that all may come to know Him.

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



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*-H.O. Hirt, ERIE Founder*



# Morganton Baptist Church

## Replacing Frenzy with Worship: Keeping the Focus in Christmas

By Pastor Dan Qurollo  
Burke County

In Luke 10:38-42, Luke records an exchange that took place between two sisters named Martha and Mary. We learn from other accounts (e.g. John 11:1) that these two sisters along with their brother, Lazarus, lived in the village of Bethany, a town just outside the city of Jerusalem. On this particular day, they had a very special Guest arrive at their house – Jesus Himself. One can only imagine the excitement and the desire to have everything perfect for the One they loved so dearly. Martha was busy about all the preparations of serving to the point that the Bible teaches that “Martha was *cumbered about much serving*.” The word cumbered suggests that her attention was directed from one thing to another. Simply put, she was distracted and overburdened with her work. Although her intentions were good, her intentions became a hindrance as her focus was placed on the wrong things. As she continued serving and becoming more overburdened, she noticed Mary was simply sitting at the feet of Jesus. Eventually, she could take it no longer and said, “Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.” Martha’s improper priorities (cumbered about much serving) led to an improper perception (Lord, dost thou not care?) which then resulted in an improper solution (bid her therefore that she help me). Jesus tenderly corrected Martha and explained that she was anxious and troubled over many things. Jesus then made an important observation easily overlooked: “But one thing is needful.” Martha was distracted from the necessary by the unnecessary. She allowed her busyness to distract her from that which was most important: sitting at the feet of Jesus.

As we approach the Christmas season, we approach what has become the busiest time of the year. So many events and festivities clamor for our attention. Often, by the end of this time of year, people simply collapse in exhaustion. It is easy to stick a magnet on our car that says “Jesus is the reason for the season” or “Keep Christ in Christmas”; yet I wonder how many of those same people have allowed the busyness and demands of the season to sidetrack them from that which is most important. As the shepherds arrived at the manger scene, they worshiped. When the Magi arrived, they worshiped. When everyone had left, Mary pondered all these things in her heart. The focus was truly on Jesus and nothing else.

This Christmas, I urge you to spend time in worship and adoration of Jesus, the center of Christmas. Spend time at the feet of Jesus, pondering the incredible Gift that God sent into this world to redeem mankind from sin. Allow your heart to be filled with worship to the One worthy of all praise.

Pastor Dan Qurollo is pastor Morganton Baptist Church. Check us out on our website [www.morgantonbaptist.net](http://www.morgantonbaptist.net) or find us on Facebook and YouTube.



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~ Anne Richardson

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Addressing Prescription Opioid Misuse in Yancey County

PROBLEM

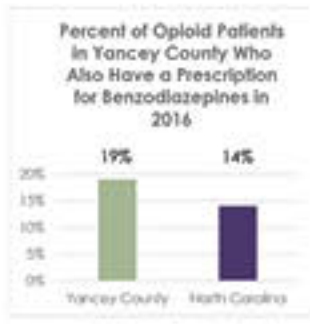
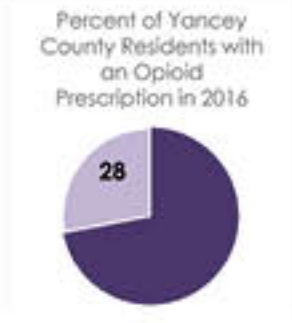
From 1999 to 2016, more than 12,000 North Carolinians died from an opioid-related overdose. Most of these deaths have been from prescription opioids. In Yancey County, the unintentional medication and drug overdose death rate is 25.0 (per 100,00 persons) compared to the state rate of 12.2.

CAUSES

This death rate may be influenced by the high number of opioid prescriptions for Yancey County residents.

Over 14% of the opioid prescriptions in the county are high-dose prescriptions of greater than 90 MME per day. High-dose prescriptions have a higher risk of overdose and death. Even 50 MME per day doubles the risk of overdose.

In addition, some people use both opioids and benzodiazepines, which also increases



Data shows that Yancey County residents ranging from ages 0-19 are being prescribed an opioid prescription.

Resident men between ages 40-49 have opioid prescriptions with the highest average doses in the county.

Resident women ages 80+ have the highest opiate prescriptions.

Men ages 60-79 have the highest number of opioid prescriptions being dispensed per patient.

SOME STEPS WE CAN TAKE TO REDUCE PRESCRIPTION OPIOID MISUSE AND OVERDOSE

- Keep prescription medications locked and safely secured within the home through a lockbox, safe, or by simply locking your medicine cabinet.
- Don't share your medications with family members and/or friends. Take as prescribed by your doctor.
- Instead of a prescription medication, try other alternative methods that have been proven to help reduce pain like yoga, acupuncture, chiropractic treatment, or mindfulness training which are all available in Mitchell County.
- Another alternative is taking 200 mg of ibuprofen plus 500mg Acetaminophen which provides the same, if not more, pain relief as a prescription medication.
- Dropping of your expired and/or unused medication safely and anonymously at one of your local prescription drug drop box locations.

**Local Prescription Drug Drop Box locations:**

Spruce Pine Police Department: 828-688-9974 (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm)

Mitchell County Sheriff's Office: 828-688-3982 (Mon-Fri 8am-7pm)

Yancey County Sheriff's Office: 828-682-2124 (24 hours/7 days a week)

Burnsville Town Hall (Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:30pm)

Contact the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force at 828-682-7899 to learn more about medication lockboxes and alternative pain methods.



**Additional Resources**

A Fact Sheet about the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain: [https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/5Guidelines\\_FactSheet\\_a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/5Guidelines_FactSheet_a.pdf)

Other CDC resources around prescribing: [https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/news/bina/clinical\\_tools.html](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/news/bina/clinical_tools.html)

NC State and County level data: <http://www.itsurp.org/ncdrhs/ncdrhs.gov/Data/DrugUse/Prescribing.html>



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# Obedient Heart Fellowship

## Think Not?

By Jim Huskins  
McDowell County



We all know the joke about a traveler asking for directions and being told something like, "You can't get there from here, you have to start in Steubenville." That story is funny because it stereotypes ignorance. It is also profound because it underscores the fact that where we end up depends partly on where we begin.

We who want to honor the Creator are on a journey toward a specific destination: eternity in His presence. The Bible describes that road as a narrow, difficult, path which few find, and fewer successfully negotiate, but even a casual overview of modern Christianity gives the impression that we have many ways to God, and most of them are easy and crowded. Both descriptions cannot be accurate.

This confusion exists because many Christians start with the notion that "grace" makes obedience unnecessary. New converts are told that they can live any way they want, and God will invariably "save" them. The only way to draw such unbiblical conclusions is to "start" with inadequate, out of context, understanding of passages including Acts 15 and certain of Paul's teachings.

We know from scripture that Paul was misinterpreted in the early days of the Church. "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:15,16) If Paul's teachings were misinterpreted by contemporaries of the same culture and language, what are the chances that we who are removed by so much time and distance have also misunderstood?

What if we started our faith journey somewhere other than Paul and a doctrine that must be described as cheap grace? What if we began with the unambiguous teaching of the Son of God?

Jesus says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17,18) The word translated "law" is the Greek word "nomos" (also rendered "nomia") used in the Greek New Testament and the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word "Torah." Torah is God's instructions for living found in the first five books of the Bible. Jesus teaches that, as long as Heaven and earth remain, even the smallest punctuation mark in Torah will remain in effect. How could Paul possibly teach the opposite?

To underscore his point, Jesus comes back to this issue in Matthew 7:21-23: "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The KJV translates as "iniquity" the Greek word "anomia." It's "nomia"—Greek for Torah—coupled with the prefix "a" which means "without." On the day of judgment, many who thought they were doing his work—prophesying, casting out demons, doing wonderful things, all in His name—will hear Jesus say, "Depart from me you who refused to keep Torah. You are lawless!"

We are taught from the cradle that Jesus "fulfilled" Torah so that we do not have to, but that's not what He said. The word translated "fulfill" in Matthew 5:17 is "pleroo" which means "proclaim fully." It does NOT mean "make irrelevant." Paul does not teach that Jesus did away with Torah. Doing so would contradict our Messiah. It would be presenting a "different" Jesus.

The fact that we need to obey Torah is stated many times in the New Testament, including several by Paul. I close by mentioning three calls to Torah found in Revelation, each from the mouth of Jesus: In 12:17, the dragon (satan) makes war on the seed of the true Church: those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Chapter 14 verse 12 defines God's saints as "they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." And Revelation 22:14 says, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

In spite of what you've been taught, God's Torah is neither a burden nor a curse. It is His divine instruction for how we who are saved by grace should live. Jesus told us in Matthew 28:19, 20 that we are to teach everyone to keep Torah. He underscored the point in John 14:15 by saying, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

It is impossible to begin with Jesus and conclude with the conviction that He revoked Torah. Jesus never told us to stop thinking. We will not be able to use the excuse that someone taught us incorrectly. Those condemned in Matthew 7:23 spent their lives doing faithfully what religious leaders told them. Too late did they discover the error of following empty traditions of men rather than the clear instructions for living given by our Heavenly Father.

Obedient Heart Fellowship believes that the entire Bible is true and relevant. We accept salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, and we attempt to love and serve Him by keeping his commandments. We meet each Sabbath—Seventh Day—at Abba's House, 72 South Main Street in Marion. 10:00 A.M. 828-460-7913

Jim & Beverly Huskins are members of Obedient Heart Fellowship.

# Merry Christmas

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And find us on Facebook



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[griffith25@frontier.com](mailto:griffith25@frontier.com)

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



## Burke County

### Catawba River Baptist Association

Toy Store 2018

Monday, December 3 – (8 am – 8 pm)

Tuesday, December 4 – (8 am – 4 pm)

Wednesday, December 5 – (8 am – 4 pm)

Are you searching for a way to serve God locally? Consider spending time as a volunteer with our Association's Annual Toy Store held at Summit Community Church. Ways you can Serve:

- Volunteer as a shopper to help parents shop for toys
- Donate new toys or stocking stuffers.
- Provide meals and snacks for our awesome volunteers
- Send monetary donations to CRBA
- Pray with parents as a Prayer Partner
- Pray for our volunteers and the families we are serving
- Help set up on Sunday, December 2nd at 1:30 p.m. at Summit Community Church. This is also a wonderful project to involve your youth group!!!
- Translate/interpret for families with minimal English speaking skills.
- Serve as a greeter.
- Help clean-up

If you are willing to donate or serve at Toy Store, please contact the CRBA office at 828-437-0137

Toy Store Needs

- Toys \$12-\$15, Candy, Tooth Brushes, Tooth Paste, Kindle Fire, RC Toys, Soccer Balls, Batteries (AAA, AA, C, D), Volunteers, Funding

The churches of CRBA are concerned with the vast drug abuse present in Burke county and we want to help by beginning a Celebrate Recovery ministry. If God has put this type of burden on your heart and you are willing to help us begin and lead this ministry, please give us a call at 828-437-0137. You may also contact Robby at rsmith@crbanc.org. Your help and prayers are greatly appreciated

**Corinth Baptist Church** will present a Live Nativity (Drive thru) on Friday Nov. 30, Saturday Dec. 1, and Sunday Dec. 2, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. each evening. Corinth Baptist Church is located at 7929 West NC 10 Hwy, Vale, NC 28168 (1/2 mile west of Banoak Elementary School). In addition to the Live Nativity, light refreshments will be available in the Fellowship Hall and crafts for children. The event is FREE and open to the public. For more information, contact the church office at 704-462-1547.

**Great Hope Seventh Day Adventist Church** The Forks over Knives movie will be shown at the Old Rock School's Waldensian Room (downstairs) in Valdese Thursday, January 3, 7:00 pm. This is a film that can save your life! The film features leading experts on health that will have people talking for years. Do yourself a favor for the new year and see this movie and invite others to come, too. A love offering will be taken to cover expense!

Reversing (& preventing) Diabetes Classes will again be offered for 6 Mondays, January 7 through February 11, 6:00 pm. Scientific evidence will be shared in a group setting, along with healthy and tasty food samples. These classes are worth much but are offered free at the Great Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church at 2907 US Hwy 70 in Drexel (across from the Foothills Thrift Store). Class size is limited so please pre-register by calling Sharryn at 828-334-0084.

### Morganton Seventh-day Adventist-Burke County

The Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church Choir Christmas Cantata will take place on Saturday, December 15, 2018, at 11:00 a.m. There will be a fellowship lunch to follow! 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C. Everyone is welcome!

**The Silver Creek Adventist School** will be having a Fundraiser Dinner & Christmas Program on Wednesday, December 19, 2018. Dinner will begin at 5:30 p.m., followed by the Christmas Program at 7:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome! Located at 2187 Jamestown Road, Morganton, N.C.

**The Morganton Seventh-day Adventist Church's** former Community Service Thrift Store is RE-OPENING as The Giving Heart Thrift Shop! Located at 402 East Main Street in Glen Alpine, N.C. 28628. The new store will be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Like us on Facebook @thegivingheart-thriftshop

**The Giving Heart Thrift Shop** will be offering gently used / brand new clothes of all sizes and for all ages! As well as, furniture and small home goods!

## McDowell County

**CarePartners:** Want to make a difference, touch lives, and impact your community? If so, several Volunteer opportunities are available in the following positions! Administrative Office Volunteer, Patient/Family Support Volunteer, Bereavement Support Volunteer, We Honor Veterans Volunteer, Special Events Volunteer, and a newly added position, Pastoral Care Volunteer! For more information about these positions, please contact CarePartners Hospice and Palliative Care McDowell Volunteer Services Department at 828-652-1318 ext.303. You can make an everlasting impact with just a few hours of your time a week! Call today to learn more!

**Cross United Methodist Church** - New Community Outreach Benefits McDowell Families with Children  
Teens for Christ B.E.A.R. Closet

(Baby Equipment and Resource Closet)

Beginning Wednesday, August 1st, 2018 the youth group at Cross United Methodist Church located at 85 West Cross Street in Marion will launch a new outreach ministry benefiting families with children. The outreach will be open the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. and the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. For more information or if you are interested in volunteer opportunities call (828) 803-8790 or email [TeensforChristBEARcloset@yahoo.com](mailto:TeensforChristBEARcloset@yahoo.com).

**Asheville Street Baptist Church** is in need of a pianist. Please call Lynn Burnette at 828-439-2421 for more information.

**First Baptist Morganton** currently has 55 adult choir robes that they would like to make available to another church. If your church is interested please contact David Thayer @ 828-437-2544 ext. 16.

**First Baptist of Marion** - Fresh Fraser Fir Christmas Wreath Fundraiser 24" Door-Size = \$20 Each Purchase Yours Today! Wreaths will arrive on Monday, December 3. Once again fresh Fraser fir wreaths from Avery County are for sale to raise money for FBC mission trips, including purchasing ministry supplies and helping our college students travel to Ukraine. To reserve your wreaths, please see one of the adult or college student mission team members or contact the Church Office.

**McDowell DSS** is making preparation for Christmas and once again requesting donations for our elderly and disabled clients. If you would like to make a donation, some suggestions are: Monetary donations, snack foods (such as Little Debbie cakes, snack crackers, raisins, gum or canned drinks), toiletries (lotions, toothbrushes, toothpaste, hair brushes, combs), blankets, throws, gloves, hats, socks, towels, washcloths, costume jewelry and magazines. We will collect donations until the first of December. Donations may be placed in the container outside the Lobby.

**Hoof Prints for Hope Toy Drive** – This is FBC's fourth year participating in this local toy drive sponsored by The Vess Family. They have experienced firsthand Christmas in the hospital with their daughter, Amber. Please consider donating a new, unwrapped toy for children spending Christmas in the hospital. Consider purchasing game cards, headphones, hand-held games, adult coloring books and pencils, etc. for older kids and teenagers. Toys such as dolls, puzzles, coloring books and crayons, toy cars, stuffed animals, etc. for children newborn and up. Donations Due Wednesday, December 12th

**Belize Mission Trip** February 5-12, 2019 FBC's relationship with the Baptists of Belize will continue this winter by sending a mission team to work in the western region of the country. Our construction crew will continue work on the Santa Elena Baptist Primary School, helping complete a second story addition. The medical team will provide free medical clinics to underserved communities near the Guatemalan Border, where there is a large immigrant population. Our team will stay in Santa Elena at the Aguada Hotel. The week will end with two nights at San Pedro on the coast. Funds to cover our ministry costs are already raised. However, each team member provides their own travel costs, which is estimated at \$1,100 per person, covering airfare, ground transportation, lodging, international travel insurance, T-shirt, and most meals. For more detailed information, promotional flyers are available near the Chapel or see Scott Hagaman. A minimum of 10 persons are needed to launch this mission trip with a maximum number of 25. A valid passport is required, which should not expire within 6 months of travel. Registration Form and \$100

## Mitchell County

### Bear Creek Baptist Church

Women's Prayer Breakfast Dec 14th 8:00am at DT's.  
Celebrate Recovery

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

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

**Blue Ridge Regional Hospital** invites you to Cookies with Santa. Parents are invited to bring children to this free event to take their own photos with Santa. Apple cider, coloring activities, goodies and more will be provided. 12:00 to 1:30 Saturday December 8th.

**The United Methodist Mitchell Yancey Parrish and Bakersville Baptist** churches will have a joint candlelight Christmas eve service at 7:00 pm on Dec.24th. The service will be held at Bakersville Baptist church on Mitchell Ave. in Bakersville. This service is open to everyone. Please join us as we celebrate our Lord's birth.

**Grassy Creek Baptist Church in Spruce Pine** invites you to their Christmas Cantata, "Beautiful Star of Bethlehem" on Sunday, December 9th at 11:00am. We would also love to have you join us for Disciple Life (small group bible study) at 10:00am; we have classes for all ages. For more information, call the church office at 765-4620.

**Main Street Spruce Pine** - Downtown Spruce Pine TRAC Studio Tour, Nov. 30-Dec. 2, Mitchell-Yancey counties. For more information about any of these events, call SPMS at 828-765-3008.

**Mitchell County Baptist Association** Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

**Mitchell County Chamber** Ho, Ho, Ho, it's Christmas and here comes Mrs. Claus.



She is taking time out of her busy schedule to visit the Market on Oak and share holiday stories, milk & cookies, and fun. Don't forget your camera! The event takes place December 15 from 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m.

We are announcing the Opening of YaYa Village Commercial Share Kitchen! We've realized there's a gap that needs to be filled between the production of local food and their consumption. That's why we started YaYa Village Commercial Shared Use Kitchen so that we could provide a certified area at a reasonable cost for locals trying to sell their products. This way we strive to help community entrepreneurs with their part-time business.

So, if you have a product you want to market and sell (like jams, jellies, baked goods etc.) or if you need a commercial kitchen for catering, having a private Pop Up dinner, hosting a class or whatever you're imagining, we hope our Shared Use Kitchen can provide you with a solution.

Come visit our space, get an application and let us talk to see what is that you have in mind!

We are also serving Lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm Annual wreath fundraiser supporting the Imagination Library

The Blue Ridge Partnership for Children will once again be selling fresh Fraser Fir Christmas wreaths as a fundraiser for the Imagination Library!

Through the Imagination Library, young children in Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties receive a FREE book in the mail, every month from birth through their 5th birthday. You can help support this exciting children's literacy project by purchasing a wreath for \$20 from the Partnership for Children.

You can reply by email to order your wreaths, or call us at 682-0717 or 733-2899. We put in our orders on Monday of each week, and they will be available the following Friday. Pick up is available in Burnsville, Newland and Spruce Pine.

If you'd like to pick up your wreaths on Wed 11/21 before Thanksgiving, we need your order before noon on 11/16. And new this year – ALL ORDERS MUST BE IN BY 11/30! Pickup will be offered thru 12/14, but you'll need to be sure to put your order in by 11/30.

Thanks for helping us support this worthy cause, while celebrating the holiday season!

**Shop with a Cop** - It's that time of year again as we gear up for this year's Shop With A Cop. We have set a date for this year to be Friday December 7th, 2018. We are asking that you help us in any way possible. Whether by volunteering or financially. We really need the community to come together this year with us and help these kids have a magical Christmas. If you would like to donate please contact the Spruce Pine Police Department (828-765-2233) or Mitchell County Sheriff's Office (828-688-3982) to do so. You can make the checks out to either department and just write in "Shop With A Cop" in the memo section. Every little amount will help these kids in our county. (100% of the funds go directly to the kids in our county). If you have any questions please contact us.  
Thank you and God Bless

**Mitchell County Historical Society** - Our 2018 Mitchell County Historical Society Christmas Ornament is for sale in our office (\$20) in the Historic Courthouse in Bakersville. It celebrates the heyday of the Cloudland Hotel and is decorated with a drawing of the famous resort that appeared in a newspaper ad in the 1890s along with a sprig of the famous rhododendron that appears in the largest naturally-occurring rhododendron gardens in the world atop Roan Mountain. A brief version of its history is included on the back.

This keepsake is perfect for anyone who has an interest in Roan Mountain and the grandeur of resort hotels from the late 19th Century. (See photo below.)  
Trinity Church Sunday, December 9, 2018. Advent Procession with Lessons and Carols. Lessons and Carols has become a tradition for Trinity Church. The readings foretell the coming of Christ. Music for the evening will include works of Ord, Handel, Bruckner, Palestrina, Manz, and Pinkham. These evening services will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church, 15 Hemlock Ave, Spruce Pine at 5:00pm with a reception following in the Parish Hall. For more information about these services or about the church, please contact Trinity at (828)520-1151 or TECSP15@att.net.

**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.

**Toe River Studio Tour — The Journey Continues** - The mountains of Yancey and Mitchell Counties of Western North Carolina are home to some of the top artists in America. And twice a year, Toe River Arts honors their talent and the area in which they choose to live and work with a premier studio tour showcasing their work. For a quarter of a century, local artists have opened their studios, demonstrated their talent, and offered up their hospitality. The first weekend in December is a fitting way to mark the holiday season, to get out in the crisp late fall air and enjoy what residents already know about the Blue Ridge mountains—the clear Toe River, curves in the roads, the likelihood of finding something different, something that speaks to this out of the way place. Artists in the two counties will welcome visitors to their studios for an entire weekend of browsing and buying.

A memorial service for our dear friend Connie Sedberry will be held on Saturday, December 8th at 12 noon at Trinity Episcopal Church. Trinity Episcopal is located at 15 Hemlock Avenue in Spruce Pine.

Toe River Chamber Ensemble & Toe River Community Chorus Holiday Concert—Tuesday, December 18, 7pm

Join us on Tuesday, December 18th for a joyous evening full of wonderful music. The Toe River Community Chorus and Chamber Ensemble members will perform "Let There Be Peace on Earth." All performances are free and open to the public.

Donations during the event help fund the two groups.

First Baptist Church Burnsville Square For more info, call 828.682.7215 or visit the website.

**Comprehensive Transportation Plan** - Mitchell County, the towns of Bakersville and Spruce Pine, the High Country Rural Planning Organization (HCRPO), and the North Carolina Department of Transportation – Transportation Planning Division (NCDOT TPD) are working together to develop a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) that will identify transportation needs and long-term solutions for the next 25 to 30 years. The study includes alternative modes of transportation (bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation).

The public is encouraged to provide feedback for the Mitchell County CTP by taking an online survey at the link below. The deadline to take the survey is November 9th.

Hard copies of the survey is available at  
-Mitchell County Administration building

-Bakersville Medical Clinic

-Bakersville Medical Clinic/Spruce Pine

-Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce

-Mitchell County Transportation Authority

-Museum of NC Minerals

You may return the survey to Bakersville Medical Clinic (BKVL or SP Office) or Mitchell County Administration Office.

## Yancey County

**ASAP** - Join ASAP on February 23 for our 16th annual conference hosted at the AB Tech Conference Center in Asheville, NC. This one-day business and marketing conference provides beginning and established farmers tools to grow their farm businesses. The conference includes workshops led by experienced farmers and agricultural professionals, a Grower-Buyer Meeting, one-to-one consulting, exhibitor hall, a new farmers market manager track, and much more. Learn more about the 2019 Business of Farming Conference.

Want to promote your business to local farmers? Consider sponsoring or exhibiting at the conference! It is a unique opportunity to reach farmers who are seeking resources to grow their farm businesses. Contact Robin Lenner for more information.

**Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse** - Free over-the-counter medication event to be held December 12 at the Town Center in Burnsville. This event is for both Mitchell and Yancey County residents and is for all in our community over the age of 18.

People coming to get medication will not have access to physically pick medications on their own. From what I understand, members of the public will fill out a sheet indicating what type of medication they would need, and staff/volunteers will fulfill their requests. There are controls in place to make sure medication is given out responsibly.

The Task Force will have a table at the event to hand out free medication lockboxes, prescription drug disposal systems and other prevention materials. I am looking for one or two more people to take on a shift to help with the table. The event runs from 9am-2pm and I am specifically looking for people to help from noon-2pm.

## Mayland Community College

Get New Customers with Business Local Search (2.5 Hours) NEW!

Business local search is a great way to build customer traffic! This seminar will walk you through the process of implementing and optimizing online tools. Topics covered will include: Google My Business, Bing Places for Business, Yelp, Facebook and other important local search engines that are essential to your business.

12/11, T, 1:30-4:00 pm

Fee Waived

Yancey, 828.766.1295

QuickBooks: Class Three (3 Hours)

This class will focus on recording income and expenses in QuickBooks as well as balancing transactions. We will also look at various scenarios that your business may face when keying transactions into QuickBooks. This a great class to get answers to QuickBooks questions.

12/4/18, T, 5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Fee Waived

Instructor: Sisk-Morris

Yancey 828.766.1295

QuickBooks: Class Four (3 Hours)

The final class of this series will explore the use of QuickBooks for payroll. Learn how to set up payroll and cut checks using QuickBooks payroll features. Cut checks and make deposits on a sample business in this test drive of the most popular small business accounting platform in use.

12/6/18, Th, 5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Fee Waived

Instructor: Sisk-Morris

Yancey 828.766.1295

Allen Cook

Director, Mayland Small Business Center

Mayland Community College

(828) 766-1295

acook@mayland.edu

**Wreaths Across America** - Be sure to mark December 15 on your calendar. Make it a point to attend a moving ceremony honoring those veterans who have passed, those still living, as well as those currently serving in our military branches and their families. Check out the WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA website for a ceremony in your area.







Becoming a Son or Daughter of God

By Alan Griffin

The Bible talks about two Adams. The first Adam was in the Garden of Eden, the second Adam (Jesus Christ) was in the Garden of Gethsemane. Each Adam was head of their own creation. The first Adam was the beginning, the seed, of the human race. Christ, the second Adam, is the head of the church. With the first Adam, all die. In the second Adam, Christ, all are made alive. *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."* Romans 5:12 NKJV By the sin of the first Adam came the judgement of death, and by the righteousness of the last Adam comes the free gift to all men through the justification of life. *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came, by Man also resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."* 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 NKJV



*"And the Lord formed man dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."* Genesis 2:7 NKJV We, being the descendants of the first Adam, received our life through our Creator. There were at the time other beings here on earth, but they were not living souls. The last Adam (Jesus Christ) is the life giving spirit and did not receive His life through another. He came from the bosom of God, took on a body of humiliation in order to die, paying the sin debt of the first Adam and giving life to all who will believe. *"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."* 1 John 5:12 NKJV Everyone that is born of the seed of Adam dies, and everyone that is reborn of the incorruptible seed of Jesus Christ lives forever.

Those of us who live in pleasure are dead already, even while we are living. We are dead to God because we are still living in sin. We live our life for earthly gain never seeking out the spiritual things of the Lord. The god of this world has blinded us from the truth of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but despise wisdom and instruction."* Proverbs 1:7 NKJV When we fear the Lord we trust Him so we can receive the message of the new birth, which is "God is Light." All things in this world are exposed by light. The Light or the Word of God gives us the consciousness of sin, and exposes our sinful nature enabling us to turn from that sin and turn towards God. Jesus said, *"The Words I speak are spirit and are truth."* These Words are to us life. Whosoever receives these Words by faith has eternal life.

Our natural mind, consciousness, which we received through the first Adam, is cleansed by the Word of God. As we study our Bible the Holy Spirit rewires our thinking so that they are in tune with God's will. *"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior."* Titus 3:4-6 NKJV As we study our Bible on a daily basis, as we fellowship with other Christians, as we spend time in prayer with our heavenly Father, we grow in faith. We learn to trust God, and more and more the mysteries of God are revealed to us.

The sin question that so many people fuss about has already been settled, because all the sins of mankind have been forgiven. People put confidence in their behavior, telling themselves they have been good or they have lived a better life than others. They feel they have earned their way to heaven through their behavior, and this is completely false. It is not a question of sin, but a question of faith. Who do you believe the Son of God is? *"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."* John 3:18-21 NKJV

"Believing is receiving." When you believe the Bible that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the next step is to receive the new birth. We place our life into His hands and let Him lead us through this journey, instead of walking blindly as so many do. We are reborn through our daily Bible study and prayer (DBS&P), and through the Holy Spirit of God. When we do this we pass through death into life, because our free gift from God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." 1 John 5:14 NKJV So this is the truth that is set forth in the Bible. Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Unless one is born of water (water is the Word of God) and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3: 3,5-6 NKJV

Receiving the new birth is no different than a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. We are a new person in Christ and even though our old self will continue to rear its ugly head, we have begun the process of regeneration. As we continue our daily study of God's Word the Holy Spirit little by little changes us to be more like Christ. We may not make the complete change in this life time, but when we are reunited with Christ we will see Him as He is and we will be like Him.

Alan Griffin started the kidsnchrist ministries in November 1997. He has worked with inner city kids for 21 years. He found a need for specialized Biblical literature that would reach people of all ages and has been writing since 2005. The ministry has expanded their websites to reach around the world. Kidsnchrist.com, millennialchristian.com, teensnchrist.com, seniorsnchrist.com, picture-verse.com, and soulworks-smallgroups.com. We had an outreach of over 13,000,000 people last year with 36,000,000 impressions. If you have any questions for Alan you can reach him at alan@kidsnchrist.com



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# YOUR GOVERNMENT PAGES

## NC Senate District 46



Sen. Warren Daniel  
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919-715-7823



### Burr Leads Bipartisan Coalition Providing Tax Relief for Disaster Victims

Two months after Hurricane Florence devastated the Carolina coast, many are still struggling to rebuild their communities. I am committed to doing everything I can to make sure that North Carolinians continue to get the federal support they need during this long and difficult process.

I led a bipartisan group of Senators in introducing a bill that will provide much needed tax relief for victims of Hurricane Florence, Hurricane Michael and the wildfires in California who have seen their homes destroyed, businesses swept away and savings wiped out. Our legislation provides several important tax breaks for eligible individuals and businesses that will help lessen the burdens they face and allow them to rebuild their futures. Working with my Senate colleagues from North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and California, it is my hope that our bill will be considered and passed as soon as possible.

I also joined Senators Thom Tillis, Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott to thank Senate appropriators for the initial \$1.68 billion in disaster relief funding allocated in October. We worked quickly to secure a down payment to help those hurting the most. There is still more to be done, however, and we announced our intention to request more disaster relief funding in the coming weeks.

I will be keeping those impacted by Hurricane Florence in my thoughts and prayers this Thanksgiving and Christmas. As folks across the state make their way home to spend time with their families and loved ones, I want to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday. I'll enjoy getting to spend some time with my wife, my children, and my grandchildren, and I'm always thankful for their love and support. I am also thankful for the privilege of representing the great state of North Carolina in the United States Senate. God Bless

## NC Senate District 47



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

As I prepare to begin my fifth term next month as your state senator, I am profoundly grateful for each volunteer, worker, and voter who supported me in continuing to serve the citizens of the 47th Senate District. I will continue to work on policy issues that are important to my constituents and align with my core values.

Under Republican leadership, prudent stewardship of our state's tax dollars and pro-growth policies such as lower taxes and deregulation have placed North Carolina at the top of states in which to start a business. This has kept our economy strong and unemployment low. However, further work can be done, such as reducing burdensome occupational licensing requirements, which create unnecessary barriers to work. Most negatively impacted are lower-income individuals, young workers, military families, those with criminal records, and would-be entrepreneurs. A focus on reducing these barriers to work continues to be one of my priorities.

To keep our economy on an upward trend, a ready and able workforce is key. Unfortunately, the opioid epidemic, aside from its devastating effects on individuals and their families, has created a labor shortage which we need to reverse. New industries are attracted to areas that have an adequate workforce, and existing businesses are hard-pressed to expand without enough employees. My record shows that I have supported legislation that addresses opioid addiction, and I will continue to pursue solutions.

As a Christian conservative, religious liberty and sanctity of life for the unborn are fundamental issues that I will always stand strong for and defend. During this Advent season, let us remember and reflect on that which is truly important – our families, community, and the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ. I extend my best wishes to you and your families for a Merry Christmas. As always, please share your thoughts with me on issues related to state government by emailing me at [ralph.hise@ncleg.net](mailto:ralph.hise@ncleg.net) or calling me at 919-733-3460.





Letter to School Board

By Members  
Mitchell County

Dear Mitchell County School Board,

The Mitchell County Baptist Association would like to thank the Mitchell County School Board for the opportunity to speak this evening to address the content portrayed in a theatrical play entitled "The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Abridged" on Thursday, November 8, 2018.

We commend and support the actions of the Mitchell County School superintendent and school administration who chose to stop the play when they realized the controversial content would not be supported by the general population. We are in agreement that the arts are important; however, we are concerned and opposed to the content of this production believing it was not appropriate for the audience to which it was presented.

It is our God given responsibility to protect our children, and we send them to public school trusting teachers and staff to help us educate, discipline, protect and instruct our children. We are thankful for the directives that have been put in place to ensure the health of the student body from future events and content, such as was presented.

As an Association, we want to express those things we feel are important for the well-being of our students. The following is a list of those morals that we affirm to be critical:

1. We affirm the family. The family is the God based anchor in our society. Children are gifts from the Lord. Marriage is the union of one man and one woman for a lifetime. We are thankful for a school system that is sensitive to the family and community convictions. It is the responsibility of the family to teach the moral values to their children, and not the school system.
2. We affirm the sobriety of mind and self-control believing drugs and alcohol are detrimental to all people.
3. We affirm that all knowledge comes from God, and that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." We are grateful for student led prayer and student led Christian programs in our school system.
4. We affirm chastity. True love does wait, and abstinence is the very best education we can share with teens for their personal welfare and relationships.
5. We affirm that God gives life. God loves all people. God values all life. Abundant life is found in Jesus Christ. Suicide and thoughts of suicide should be taken seriously. Teens will find their greatest purpose, and purpose for living, through a relationship with Christ.
6. We affirm the rights of the students and faculty to exclude themselves from any activity or events they find personally objectionable and offensive. We stand behind any student or faculty member who desires to excuse themselves from any offensive content.

While we realize the School Board has the final decision, we simply want to encourage you to lead our schools in respectful and helpful educational resources. We humbly ask and believe it is critical for you to carefully examine all information and content in light of these truths for our schools and community.

In closing, we are grateful for you, the School Board, our own members and friends. We are praying for you as the School Board, the Superintendent, teachers and school staff as you discern what content is appropriate for our students and as you care for them while attending school. It is our desire to leave a positive, affective impression on all, as a witness of Jesus Christ.

Respectfully,  
The Mitchell Baptist Association



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The Santa Clausification of Christmas

By Dr. Jim Denison



I need to begin with a disclaimer: I am a fan of Santa Claus. I have fond memories of writing wish-list letters to him as a child and bringing our sons to visit him at the mall when they were children.

My purpose this morning is not to criticize the commercialization of Christmas, but to explore a different though related topic.

How important is religion to Americans?

In the latest Pew Research Center report, 20 percent of those surveyed named "religious faith" as the "most important" source of meaning in their lives.

Here's the good news: religion received more votes than any source except "family." Here's the bad news: in a nation where 72 percent of the population identifies as Christian, a large majority of those claiming to follow Jesus do not find meaning in life primarily from their relationship with him.

He may be part of their lives, but he is not central to them.

How to get along with God

Of all life's priorities, which should come first? Here's God's answer: "Thus says the LORD: 'Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me'" (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the importance of putting the Lord first in our lives (cf. Matthew 6:33; Exodus 20:3; Colossians 3:2). God does not share his glory. If he did, he would be committing idolatry.

Years ago, I heard a preacher warn: "If you want to get along with God, stay off his throne."

However, such single-minded commitment to our Father runs counter to the secular culture we inhabit. It's fine if you want to make Jesus part of your life. But if you choose to make him your Lord and tell others they should do the same, you risk being branded as bigoted and intolerant.

Consider Santa Claus as an example.

From "Merry Christmas" to "Happy Holidays"

Santa is the perfect symbol for American religion. He is a kindly grandfather figure who visits us to give us presents and then retreats to leave us alone. We have a transactional relationship with him: as the song warns, "He knows when you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness' sake!"

The Santa Clausification of Christmas doesn't end with Santa Claus. Our secular culture has turned "Merry Christmas" into "Merry Xmas" and "Happy Holidays." Christmas music specials abound on television, but if this year is like past years, few will include more than a passing reference to Jesus' birth.

My point is not to criticize the fun traditions that have grown up around the Christmas holidays. Nor is it to criticize secular people for acting like secular people. Before I became a Christian, I viewed Christmas in the same way.

My point is to encourage us to "take back" the holiday by reculturating it.

"Concentric circles of concern"

Dr. Oscar Thompson was a beloved evangelism professor when I taught on the faculty of Southwestern Seminary many years ago. He popularized a ministry model he called "concentric circles of concern."

Dr. Thompson traced seven levels in our relational lives: from self to family, relatives, friends, neighbors and associates, acquaintances, and "person X" (someone unknown to us). He urged us to build bridges to each as appropriate to our relationship with them.

Let's adopt his model as our missional strategy this Christmas season.

First, begin with the "self." We must know Jesus before we can make him known. So, make time for Christ each day—"Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10) by meeting with him in worship, Bible study, and prayer. Make your life the Bethlehem of Jesus.

Second, develop a Christmas strategy for your family. Be sure your children and grandchildren know the true "reason for the season." Plan to attend Christmas worship services together. Find ways to serve those less fortunate than yourselves. (My wife helped our sons choose toys we would donate to those in need.) Janet has written a wonderful children's devotional book for Christmas that I encourage you to share with your family.

Third, extend this strategy to your relatives. Being with extended family during the holidays can be stressful (most of us have relatives we wouldn't choose as close friends). But we can use our time with them for ministry—pray for your relatives by name, asking the Lord to lead you to serve them. Then look for ways to help them see Christ in you.

Fourth, consider your friends, neighbors and associates, and acquaintances. Ask the Lord to put at least one of them on your heart as your Kingdom assignment this Christmas.

Last, ask Jesus to reveal his love and joy to those you encounter but don't know personally. Salesclerks, other shoppers, and fellow travelers can be divine appointments from God.

"How many fathers gave up their sons for me?"

In worship last Sunday, we sang this wonderful chorus:

How many kings stepped down from their thrones?

How many lords have abandoned their homes?

How many greats have become the least for me?

And how many gods have poured out their hearts,

To romance a world that is torn all apart?

How many fathers gave up their sons for me?

Only one did that for me.

And for you. How will you share the good news today?

Jim Denison, Ph.D., speaks and writes on cultural and contemporary issues. He is a trusted author and subject matter expert in areas where faith and current events intersect. His Daily Article provides leading insight for discerning today's news from a biblical perspective.



The Coming of the Lord

By Bruce Cannon  
Mitchell County

*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. (Isaiah 9:2)*

There are so many references in the Old Testament to the coming of the Lord. Every Passover lamb that was slaughtered pointed to that day when Messiah could come to pay for the sins of the world. The Ark of Noah was a foreshadowing of the salvation the Lord would provide when He came. Those who got into the Ark were spared the flood just as those who accept Christ as Lord and Savior will also be spared the judgment of God for sin. The covering God provided for Adam and Eve when sin entered into the world, through the killing of an innocent animal, also pointed to Jesus' coming, salvation and forgiveness. He not only would cover sin when He came; He would pay the price for redemption and wash sin away.

The above text tells of the great light man would see when Jesus came into the world. And, what a great light it was! For four hundred years God had not spoken to His people. The last word they heard from the Lord was through Malachi's prophecy and it was an indictment against the people of God. After that prophecy the Heaven's would be silent. Once again man had allowed sin to dominate his existence and that always breaks fellowship with God.

And then four hundred years after Malachi's prophecy it happened. A census was ordered. A journey by a young virgin and her espoused husband was taken. Micah prophesied the birth would take place in Bethlehem. The census moved Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem where they could follow the ruling of Caesar Augustus to the place where the birth would take place just as it had been prophesied centuries earlier. The plan of God was being fulfilled to the letter just as it had been given.

Mary and Joseph arrive on time for the birth to take place in Bethlehem. Upon arrival a place for her to have the baby was sought, but there was no room. A stable and a manger would have to suffice. But what accommodations are these for such a noble birth? And yet, that is exactly where the King of Kings and Lord of Lords should be born. He, Jesus, is the great and faithful High Priest who would experience everything His creation, man, would have to experience. Does Jesus know what its like to be poor? Absolutely! He was born in poverty and raised much the same.

Upon His birth the night sky lights up with angels who proudly proclaim, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:10-14)

And, a star lights the night time sky as no star had ever done before. What was this star? Astronomers have tried to explain it being the lining up of planets to produce the bright light. But, I beg to disagree. I believe it was the smile of a Heavenly Father who, looking down upon His Son, beamed with pride and joy. Thus, the Savior of all mankind was born.

What an amazing story! I love Christmas because of what it means to all mankind: the payment for salvation was made through the Lord Jesus. What God required for the payment of sin only Jesus could pay. He who knew no sin died on a Cross that we might be forgiven, have a home in Heaven and be spared the judgment of God. Praise the Lord!

From my home and heart to yours: Merry CHRISTmas! May each of you know Him and experience Him in such an amazing and personal way this Holiday Season.

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.



Merry Christmas

By Pastor Dean Honeycutt  
Mitchell County

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Snow Hill Baptist Church. We trust you will have a wonderful holiday season knowing that Jesus is the reason for the season. And "there is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved."

Remember that first Christmas was joyful and humbling. And I pray that your Christmas is both joyful and humbling. Joyful in that we celebrate the birth of Christ; humbling in that the baby in the manger was born to die for us. The angels and shepherds rejoiced at the birth of Jesus Christ. Mary and Joseph had traveled a long way to Bethlehem hoping to find a room in an inn but found themselves in a stable. The Bible says there was no room for them in the inn. Which leads me to think is there room for God in my heart?

The manger scene most of us picture is warm and comfortable, however because it was a place where animals were kept it was anything but warm and cozy. Not the conditions any of us would want our children to be born. But it was the place God's Son was to be born. We see the providence of God as he orchestrated human events to bring Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem because Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken. This census would bring Joseph and his expecting bride to Bethlehem because Joseph was a descendant of King David. Jeremiah's prophecy would be fulfilled "The Lord will raise unto David a righteous Branch and a King shall reign and prosper." (Jr. 23:5) Jesus is the "root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." (Rv. 22:16) This dynasty will reign and rule forever. There is a lot of fanfare and glamour around a "duck dynasty". Why is it that things of the world seem to gain more attention at Christmas time than what Christmas is all about?

Who would believe that a King would be born in a stable? Jesus Christ was born in a very humble place, and He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. That was nothing more than stripes of cloth, what most of us call rags. Mary and Joseph were poor; they did not have a brand new baby outfit and they did not have one of those soft fleece baby blankets. Everything about the birth of Christ is humbling and meek. Micah says though Ephrathah father of Bethlehem is insignificant or the "runt of the litter" of the tribes of Judah --out of you shall come a King in Israel. (Micah 5:2) We see throughout scripture little is much when God is in it. A little baby wrapped in swaddling clothes became the greatest gift the world has ever known. Keep your focus on the gift and the Giver-- that is what Christmas is all about. Not malls or a man in a red suit.

Our Savior was born in a humble stable in a very meek and lowly way. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, "the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head, a man of sorrow acquainted with grief." I often wonder what God is trying to teach me through the birth of Christ? Certainly, humility and meekness are attitudes God wants in my life, not glamour or popularity. You know God did not glamorize the birth of His son in a human way. The Bible does not record dignitaries or a priest at the stable. However, we do know that a multitude of heavenly angels were present at the Birth of their Commander and Chief. The first people to herald the good news were shepherds, far from some of the more popular people in Bethlehem at that time. Quite fitting since Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.



I am grateful Christ would leave the glories of heaven empty himself, take on human flesh, live a sinless life, and die for me. The God-Man Jesus Christ is God's atoning sacrifice for my sin. Jesus Christ would voluntarily restrict deity to experience humanity. I wonder how often I give up my comforts to do what God wants me to do. Certainly Christmas is a time for giving and sharing and a time of meekness and humility and a time to reflect on the meekness of the Baby in a manger and the triumph of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. May you have a wonderful Christmas.

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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Kid's Corner

Bully Frog

By Christy Lowman  
Burke County

The American bullfrog is found all over North Carolina. They are also found all over the United States, Asia, S. America, and Mexico. They have become pests in many regions and threaten the native frog and reptile species' existence. Natives have to compete against the bullfrogs for food, and habitat. The bullfrogs are also eating native frogs. Some people might look at the bullfrog as a bully to the other amphibians, but in North Carolina they play an important role in the environment.

Bullfrogs are opportunistic feeders, eating any moving prey that will fit in its mouth. Some of the larger prey it eats are other frogs, fish, mice, snakes, and birds.

Bullfrogs are the most prolific amphibians. The females can lay as many as 12,000 eggs in the spring and summer. Tadpoles can grow up to over 6 inches in length. It can take two years for a bullfrog tadpole to transform into a frog. These tadpoles are toxic and distasteful to fish and other predators so they are able to survive and grow unharmed.

The bullfrog has three different calls. An alarm call is an aggressive call that is used when males are being territorial to other males, and sounds like a baby crying. A long baritone call that sounds like "jug-o-run," can be heard from April to August, day and night and is a mating call. The males are the only ones who can do this call. Some people think the bullfrog sounds like a cow mooing. This is where the name came from.

Female bullfrogs are larger than the males. They are also the largest of all North American frogs. The bullfrog can grow up to 8 inches long and weigh up to 1.5 pounds.

Bullfrogs are nocturnal predators. They sit quietly and wait for prey to pass by. Then they lunge with their powerful hind legs and their mouth open wide.

In the winter, bullfrogs hibernate deep in the mud.

What about you? Have you ever been bullied or seen someone being bullied? Or perhaps you have been a bully to someone else? Did you know that bullying is wrong? It does not make God happy. If you see someone being bullied make sure you tell an adult. Also, it is okay to tell the bully to stop, and that what he is doing is wrong. If you are the bully, please remember that we are supposed to act Christ-like wherever we go. It means that we are to act like Christ, in EVERYTHING we do, even in our thoughts. If you have a hard time being Christlike, and all of us have, imagine that Jesus is standing right beside you. This is what helps me. Would He approve of how you're acting or would He be disappointed?

The hardest thing, when being bullied is doing what the Bible tells us to do for our enemies. We are commanded to love and pray for our enemies. Bullies are people too, it is important to look past the bully and see them as Christ sees them. He loves them too. There may be something going on in the bully's life that causes the bullying. If you pray for them, God may answer your prayers and change their hearts.

So tonight, when you say your prayers before you go to bed. Don't forget to pray for the people you don't like and the ones that are mean to you. Ask Jesus to change their attitudes. If you are the bully and do not know how to stop. Ask God to help you. He can change your heart. Who knows, in the end you might become great friends with your enemy!

*"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor[a] and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, Matthew 5:43-44 NIV*

*"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Luke 6:27-28 NIV*

*If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you. Proverbs 25:21-22 NIV*

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Christy Lowman is a Christian author and illustrator that lives in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains with her husband and two children. She enjoys writing and illustrating books for all ages. Some of her short stories are published with Guideposts and HCL. Christy gives all the glory to God in everything she does. A portion of every book sold from the Small Bible Character Series will be donated to battle human trafficking. If you enjoy her books, 'like' her author page on Facebook and let her know! You can buy her books at [https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp\\_byline\\_sr\\_book\\_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Christy+Lowman&search-alias=books&text=Christy+Lowman&sort=relevancerank](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](mailto:christysoaps@yahoo.com).

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John 1:14*



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## Christmas Parade

By Morrisa Angi  
Burke County

Valdese, NC The Town of Valdese is proud to honor the remaining direct descendants of the original Waldensian Settlers as the Grand Marshals for the Valdese Annual Christmas Parade, which will be held on Saturday, December 1, at 10:00am.

"On May 29, 1893, Southern Railway's No. 11 chugged its way three miles west of Icard Station at Connelly Springs to a prearranged spot 'in the middle of no-where' and stopped long enough to deposit a travel-weary band of twenty-nine souls who were to break ground on a settlement...The impoverished band of Alpine farmers quickly realized the rock infested ground was unsuitable for farming and to top it off, none of them spoke English." (McCall, M. (1993) What Mean These Stones. Valdese, NC: Historic Valdese Foundation).

The Valdese Christmas Parade will conclude a year-long celebration of 125 years for the Town of Valdese. "Throughout this past year, Valdese residents and visitors alike have participated in numerous celebrations honoring our unique Waldensian heritage. What better way to conclude the celebratory year but to honor the remaining direct descendants", states Morrisa Angi Community Affairs Director for the Town of Valdese.

Those being honored as Grand Marshals include – Mr. Ed Bleynat, Mr. Frank Grill, Ms. Imogene Pons Hudson, Mr. Steve Martinat, Ms. Doris Burris, Ms. Phyllis Jacumin, Ms. Rosalba Shook, Mr. Jim Rostan, Mr. John Rostan, Ms. Rheta Micol Robinson, Mr. Edward Micol, Jr. – Along with these individuals, we are also honoring those who passed away this celebratory year, Ms. Naomi Rostan (March 8, 1919 – April 20, 2018) and Mr. Henry "Benji" Perrou (August 13, 1920 – March 5, 2018). The Grand Marshals who are able to join us will be honored at the beginning of the parade and will ride in the Burke County Tourism Ridgeline Trolley.

The parade will begin at the corner of Church Street and Main Street, and will conclude at the corner of Morgan Street and Main Street. The Piedmont & Western Railroad Museum will host an open house at the Old Rock School the morning of the parade. Parade visitors are invited to view the HO scale model railroad exhibit which stretches from Marion, NC to Leadvale, TN. Admission is free, and donations are greatly appreciated.

"I would like to thank our Valdese Merchants Association for their contribution to the parade by sponsoring the grand finale, Santa float," Angi adds. "This event is a great time to come together as a community to celebrate the holidays." Attendees are encouraged to stay on the sidewalks for safety purposes.

For further information regarding the Christmas Parade and upcoming events in Valdese go to [www.townofvaldese.com](http://www.townofvaldese.com) or call 828-879-2129.

Morrisa Angi is Director of Community Affairs and Tourism



## 8 Fun Activities For Your Family Inspired By Christmas Carols

by Karen Holcomb



As your family enters the Christmas season and journeys toward Christmas Day this year, resolve to adore Christ with the focus and anticipation of a locomotive powering toward its destination. Don't get derailed by commercialism. Try these carol-themed activities to keep your family on track.

### 'Silent Night' listening

Step outside with your children after sundown. Listen to the night sounds and compare them to the sounds around the stable the night Jesus was born — sheep bleating, angels singing and a baby's first cry. Contrast the homes and buildings within view with those outside Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. Sing "Silent Night" together.

### 'Away in a Manger' visit

Arrange to serve in a soup kitchen or shelter this December, giving your children a glimpse of how it may have felt for Mary and Joseph to arrive in Bethlehem with no lodging, relying on the hospitality of an innkeeper. Contact N.C. Baptists on Mission to discover ways your family can serve those across the Carolinas who are still impacted by Hurricane Florence. Also consider, visiting a petting zoo, farm, or live nativity with your children to help them experience a stable setting and see a manger.

### 'Hark! The Herald Angels Sing' signs

While on one of your many Christmas outings with your children, point out the large white directional arrows painted on the asphalt at road intersections. Discuss the similarity in shape between an arrow and an angel. Share that the arrow-like role of an angel in the Old and New Testaments was to point to something or someone important. At home, make simple arrow-shaped angels out of creased cardstock and stand these on your table or mantle.

### 'Joy to the World!' Christmas caroling

Invite a few friends from church to join your family in a Christmas caroling adventure. Visit the shut-ins who are members of your church or go to a local nursing home. Prepare a few songs and dress in festive Christmas attire. If possible, borrow your church van so you can all ride together and practice en route.

### 'Deck the Halls' wreaths

Save bough trimmings from your Christmas tree and make a wreath or swag for your front door, adding ribbons and ornaments. Tell how the Israelites used tree boughs for shelter and celebration during the annual Feast of Tabernacles, a joyous event commemorating God's rescue from Egypt and likely in observance at the time Jesus was born. (Palm boughs were also used to celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.)

### 'Star of Bethlehem' star-gazing

Spread a blanket on the ground one clear night and lie down to look at the stars with your family or view them through a telescope. Tell about the star which appeared above the stable in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. For intriguing facts about this real phenomenon, visit [bethlehemstar.com](http://bethlehemstar.com). Eat trail mix or roast hot dogs around a small campfire as you reflect on the long journey of the wise men to Bethlehem. Afterward, paint a picture of the stars using a "camel-hair" paint brush! Affirm God's use of His created stars to tell His message.

### 'We Three Kings' checkers tournament

Challenge your kids to a checkers tournament, with the winner being the first to have three kings crowned in a game. Explain the biblical account of the Magi bringing three gifts (gold, frankincense and myrrh) to the newborn King Jesus, avoiding the treacherous plot of the evil King Herod.

### 'Go, Tell it on the Mountain' train ride

Take your family on a Great Smoky Mountains Railroad train ride this Christmas. Create and share a Christmas card with other passengers or workers while there. After your trip, use a biblical map to trace a mountainous route Joseph and Mary may have taken from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Whatever activities you choose to do with your family this holiday season, be sure to include plenty of time at home. Let the peace of God settle on your home. Set a toy train engine on your kitchen table as a reminder to keep your thoughts, desires and schedule on track for a worshipful Christmas.

Karen Holcomb is a Contributing Writer for the North Carolina Baptists



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# Burnsville Seventh-Day Adventist Church

## Praise

By Pastor Edward Couser  
Yancey County

It's amazing what praise can do! Recently, I have been reading through selected chapters in the Book of Psalms. These chapters encourage us to praise God. So, I'd like for you to turn in your Bible's to Psalm 147. Psalm 147 begins with a command - not a suggestion, not a request, but an



exhortation that we need to take as a divine direction. It says, "Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God." As believers, we all know about the importance of prayer, but what about praise? To me, the Bible, especially the chapters I have been reading, emphasize the importance of praising our Lord. Here are some reasons

on why this is important:

First, praise reverences God. Look again at Psalm 147:1. God is good to us, His creation. He takes interest in us and knows us. His restorative and creative acts are enough to cause His people, you and me, to worship Him. Because of this, the psalmist knows that God is "great" and mighty in "power" and His understanding is "infinite." He created us to serve Him. Turn back to Psalm 145:10. It says, "All thy works shall praise thee O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee." To me, this means everything He has created needs to praise Him. Over in the book of Revelation chapter 4, there are four living creatures praising God in the throne room of heaven. They say day and night, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come." In addition, the twenty-four elders fall before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For you created all things, and by Your way they exist and were created." The word worship is really related to the word "worth." Worship is an indicator of our worth ship - how much we think He's worth. God is worthy of our praise and our praise reverences our Lord.

A second thing praise does, it refreshes us. Sometimes I get tired. Sometimes I get tired in the work. And to be honest, sometimes on Saturday night when I get home I'm empty. But I praise God before I enter His pulpit on Sabbath, there are two things I do: (1) I am consciously claiming His power, and (2) I am giving Him praise and worship in my mind and heart. Look at Psalm 147: 2, 3 to see what I'm talking about. "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem. He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken hearted and bindeth up their wounds." There is refreshment, there is healing, there is a binding up of that comes when we praise. God created us to be God-centered not self-centered.

Praise reverences our Lord. Praise refreshes us. Praise also releases and builds our faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Do we know what gives our faith a vitamin shot? It is to praise our Lord. As we begin to praise God, our faith just grows because I believe that praise is faith turned inside out. He loves you and me. He knows the number of hairs on our heads. Faith is the by-product of our praise. Our faith reflects our thankfulness. Psalm 147:7 says, "Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving."

I cannot think of a better way to prepare for this holiday season than to think about the goodness, love, and mercy that God blesses us with every new day. Perhaps as we enter into this holiday season, we need to listen to what David wrote in Psalm 34:1: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall be continually on my lips."

God Bless you and Happy Holidays.

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.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Matthew 2:1-12



Dear Editor,

Over the past several months, it has been disappointing to read the column called Lana's Lines by Lana Ellis which is both critical and misrepresentative of the Catholic Church's teachings. The published mission of your paper states: "All of us at the Blue Ridge Christian News feel that our belief in the virgin birth, the death and resurrection of our blessed Savior, and knowing that He is coming again to take us "home" make us brothers and sisters in Christ." I concur with and applaud your mission. The Catholic Church has been boldly proclaiming this truth throughout the world for over 2000 years.

The divisions that have resulted over the ages within the Body of Christ are sad and tragic. I hope the Blue Ridge Christian News will cease to publish articles that obfuscate the teachings of the Catholic Church and thereby misinform its readers. As we anticipate the birth of our Lord this Christmas, may we reflect upon those truths that unite us and pray for greater Christian solidarity both locally and throughout the world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
Fr. Christopher M. Gober  
Pastor, Saint Lucien Catholic Church

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December 2018 - Blue Ridge Christian News page 37



# Crossword

## ACROSS

1 Second son of Noah (Gen.7:13)  
 4 whose sandals I am not worthy to \_\_\_ down and untie (Mark 1:7)  
 9 Joshua spared \_\_\_ the prostitute, with her family (Josh 6:25)  
 14 Even on the \_\_\_ you laid a very heavy yoke (Isa 47:6)  
 16 Suddenly the fingers of a \_\_\_ hand appeared and wrote (Daniel 5:5)  
 18 He himself \_\_\_ our sins in his body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24)  
 19 In your majesty \_\_\_ forth victoriously in behalf of truth (Ps 45:4)  
 20 Like men condemned to die in the \_\_\_ (1 Cor 4:9)  
 21 under oaks and poplars and \_\_\_ (Hos 4:13) KJV  
 22 and a light shined in the \_\_\_ (Acts 12:7) KJV  
 24 I have reached its \_\_\_ heights, the finest of its forests (Isa 37:24)  
 26 Abner son of Ner had \_\_\_ down (1 Sam 26:5)  
 28 do not let your \_\_\_ hand know what your right hand is doing (Matt 6:3)  
 30 The shekel is to consist of twenty \_\_\_ (Ezek 45:12)  
 33 You have fed them with the bread of \_\_\_ (Ps 80:5)  
 37 The God of peace be with you all. \_\_\_ (Rom 15:33)  
 40 they decided to \_\_\_ the money to buy the potter's field (Matt 27:6-7)  
 41 Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of \_\_\_ (Ezra 6:14)  
 42 \_\_\_ your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD (Ps 33:22)  
 43 till ye be left as \_\_\_ upon the top of a mountain (1,6) (Isa 30:17) KJV  
 45 written not with \_\_\_ but with the Spirit of the living God (2 Cor 3:3)  
 46 struggling with all his \_\_\_, which so powerfully works in me (Col 1:29)  
 48 large container for liquids  
 49 we do not \_\_\_ war as the world does (2 Cor 10:3-4)  
 50 a woman named \_\_\_, a dealer in purple cloth (Acts 16:14)  
 51 the \_\_\_ person is blessed by the greater (Heb 7:7)  
 53 So the king and Haman went to \_\_\_ with Queen Esther (Esth 7:1)  
 55 Samuel took a \_\_\_ of oil, and poured it upon (1 Sam 10:1) KJV  
 58 So Shadrach, Meshach and \_\_\_ came out of the fire (Dan 3:26)  
 62 he took and sent \_\_\_ unto them (Gen 43:34) KJV  
 64 a \_\_\_ and a pomegranate, round about the hem (Ex 39:26) KJV

65 their hate and their jealousy have long \_\_\_ vanished (Eccl 9:6)  
 67 these things write I unto you, \_\_\_ ye sin not (1 John 2:1) KJV  
 68 now therefore \_\_\_ thou somewhat the grievous servitude (2 Chr 10:4) KJV  
 69 Its \_\_\_ length will be 25,000 cubits (Ezek 48:13)  
 70 Christ Jesus came into the world to \_\_\_ sinners (1 Tim 1:15)  
 71 I also want women to \_\_\_ modestly, with decency (1 Tim 2:9)  
 72 the east, and to the \_\_\_, and to the south (Gen 28:14)  
 73 Sing to the LORD a \_\_\_ song; sing to the LORD (Ps 96:1)

## DOWN

1 Praise the LORD with \_\_\_ : sing unto him with the psalter (Ps 33:2)  
 2 his only daughter, \_\_\_ of about twelve, was dying (1,4) (Luke 8:42)  
 3 ram that you saw represents the kings of \_\_\_ and Persia (Dan 8:20)  
 5 thy works; and the last to be more \_\_\_ the first (Rev 2:19)  
 6 Give us this day \_\_\_ daily bread (Matt 6:11)  
 7 Take a pot, and put an \_\_\_ full of manna therein (Exodus 16:33)  
 8 The supports and \_\_\_ were attached to the top of the stand (1 Kings 7:35)  
 10 By faith Abel offered God \_\_\_ sacrifice than Cain (1,6) (Heb 11:4)  
 11 dug a \_\_\_ in the ground and hid his master's money (Matt 25:18)  
 12 He trains my hands for battle; my \_\_\_ can bend a bow (2 Sam 22:35)  
 13 Do your \_\_\_ to present yourself to God as one approved (2 Tim 2:15)  
 15 engraving and can execute any \_\_\_ given to him (2 Chron 2:14)  
 17 and will sing praise to the \_\_\_ of the LORD Most High (Ps 7:17)  
 23 and now \_\_\_ greater than Jonah is here (Matt 12:41)  
 25 Jesus \_\_\_ withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:16)  
 27 Its posts he made of silver, its \_\_\_ of gold (Song 3:10)  
 29 It is easier for a \_\_\_ to go through the eye of a needle (Matt 19:24)  
 31 In the first row there shall be a \_\_\_, a topaz and a beryl (Ex 28:17)  
 32 ye shall offer up an \_\_\_ offering unto the LORD (Num 15:19) KJV



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34 John to the seven churches which are in \_\_\_ (Rev 1:4)  
 35 I put a \_\_\_ on your nose, earrings on your ears (Ezek 16:12)  
 36 Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your \_\_\_ he became poor (2 Cor 8:9)  
 38 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of \_\_\_ (Heb 9:28)  
 39 one official is \_\_\_ by a higher one, and over them both are (Eccl 5:8)  
 41 censers, sprinkling bowls, \_\_\_, lampstands (Jer 52:19)  
 43 You will increase my honor and comfort me once \_\_\_ (Ps 71:21)  
 44 an idol \_\_\_ in the shape of a calf (Exod 32:8)  
 47 interpret dreams, explain and solve difficult problems (Dan 5:12)  
 49 Woe to the women who sew magic charms on all their \_\_\_ (Ezek 13:18)  
 51 "What is your name?" "My name is \_\_\_," he replied (Mark 5:9)  
 52 But as the serpent beguiled \_\_\_ through his subtilty (2 Cor 11:3)  
 54 The owl will \_\_\_ there and lay eggs (Isa 34:15)  
 56 Am, Rimmon, Ether and \_\_\_ four towns and their villages (Josh 19:7)  
 57 Let love and faithfulness never \_\_\_ you (Prov 3:3)  
 58 room on the roof and put in it \_\_\_ and a table (1,3) (2 Kings 4:10)  
 59 Your servant has killed both the lion and the \_\_\_ (1 Sam 17:36)  
 60 Salvation is found in no one \_\_\_, for there is no other name (Acts 4:12)  
 61 and it vomited Jonah \_\_\_ dry land (Jonah 2:10)  
 62 made the hearts of the people \_\_\_ with fear (Josh 14:8)  
 63 let me have some of that red \_\_\_ I'm famished (Gen 25:30)  
 66 slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth \_\_\_ (1 Sam 7:11)

Solution on page 14





Addressing Prescription Opioid Misuse in Mitchell County

PROBLEM

From 1999 to 2016, more than 12,000 North Carolinians died from an opioid-related overdose. Most of these deaths have been from prescription opioids. In Mitchell County, the unintentional opioid-related overdose death rate is 17.02 (per 100,000 persons) compared to the state rate of 9.2.

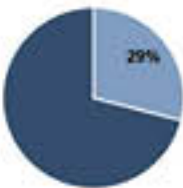
CAUSES

This death rate may be influenced by the high number of opioid prescriptions for Mitchell County residents.

13% of the opioid prescriptions in the county are high-dose prescriptions of greater than 90 MME per day. High-dose prescriptions have a higher risk of overdose and death. Even 50 MME per day doubles the risk of overdose.

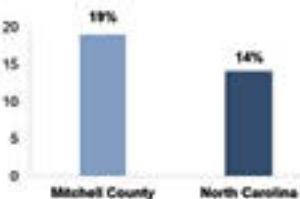
In addition, some people use both opioids and benzodiazepines, which also increases the risk of overdose.

Percent of Mitchell County Residents with an Opioid Prescription



In 2016, Mitchell County ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in the state for having the highest number of opioids dispensed per person.

Percent of Opioid Patients in Mitchell County Who Also Have a Prescription for Benzodiazepines



Data shows that Mitchell County residents ranging from ages 0-19 are being prescribed an opioid prescription.

Residents ages 40-49 years and men ages 40-69 years have opioid prescriptions with the highest average doses in the county.

Both men and women ages 60-69 have the highest number of opioid prescriptions being dispensed per patient.

SOME STEPS WE CAN TAKE TO REDUCE PRESCRIPTION OPIOID MISUSE AND OVERDOSE

- ➔ Keep prescription medications locked and safely secured within the home through a lockbox, safe, or by simply locking your medicine cabinet.
- ➔ Don't share your medications with family members and/or friends. Take as prescribed by your doctor.
- ➔ Instead of a prescription medication, try other alternative methods that have been proven to help reduce pain like yoga, acupuncture, chiropractic treatment, or mindfulness training which are all available in Mitchell County.
- ➔ Another alternative is taking 200 mg of ibuprofen plus 500mg Acetaminophen which provides the same, if not more, pain relief as a prescription medication.
- ➔ Dropping of your expired and/or unused medication safely and anonymously at one of your local prescription drug drop box locations.

Local Prescription Drug Drop Box locations:

- Spruce Pine Police Department: 828-688-9974 (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm)
- Mitchell County Sheriff's Office: 828-688-3982 (Mon-Fri 8am-7pm)
- Yancey County Sheriff's Office: 828-682-2124 (24 hours/7 days a week)
- Burnsville Town Hall (Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:30pm)

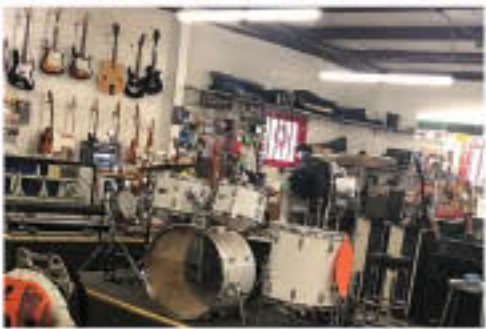
Contact the Mitchell Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force at 828-682-7899 to learn more about medication lockboxes and alternative pain methods.



Additional Resources

- A Fact Sheet about the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain: [https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/Guidelines\\_FactSheet-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/Guidelines_FactSheet-a.pdf)
- Other CDC resources around prescribing: <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/index.html>
- NC State and County level data: <http://www.injuryrecovery.ncdhhs.gov/Data/Overdose/Painkillers.htm>

Submitted by the Drug Abuse Prevention Program in Mitchell County, with funding from SAMHSA, DE-04-CR-0000002



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Carlson Continues Life's Passion for Ministry with NCBAM

By Carol Layton

Shirley Carlson chuckles recalling her mindset when moving to Asheboro in 2017. "We came to Asheboro thinking we would slow down from mission work. But God had other plans!" Instead of narrowing her and husband Roger's callings, God has continued to expand their work and use every bit of their knowledge, experience and passion for His glory.

For most of their lives together, Roger served as a pastor. In 1999, they became church planters for the North American Mission Board and then later served as project coordinators for the Pennsylvania/North Carolina partnership. They began volunteering with Baptists on Mission in 2005 when Katrina devastated Gulf Port, Mississippi. Roger and Shirley began as rebuilders—tearing out, mudding out, painting, or "whatever else needed to be done." After Katrina, the Carlsons travelled from North Carolina to Mississippi every other weekend for more than a year. "We slept in churches, schools, and all kind of buildings. God gave us a heart for the area."

Since moving to Asheboro, Roger accepted the call to pastor Staley Baptist Church and Shirley joined North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) as a Call Center Specialist. Shirley laughs, "This is the first time I've gotten paid for Baptist work—well 'financially that is'—we've always been blessed." Shirley sees her position at NCBAM as a perfect opportunity to use decades of ministry experiences. "My work in the Call Center is a continuation of my life's passion to help people."

Shirley's intimate knowledge of the aftermath from disasters served NCBAM clients well when Florence hit the Carolina coast in September quickly followed by Michael's blow to the center of the state. The Call Center has received more than 70 hurricane-related calls to date. As a Call Center Specialist, Shirley gracefully stepped from one area of ministry to another. "I know what it's like for people who have just lived through a disaster. They need all kinds of help, but they also need someone to listen to what they've gone through. I listened, prayed with callers, and referred them to Baptists on Mission groups, FEMA, and other agencies offering shelter, feeding units, or other sources of help in their areas."

Not content to minister only from afar, Shirley took a week off from work at NCBAM to help in New Bern where Roger was assessing flood damage. "It was utter devastation—people were almost in shock not knowing what to do. Seeing the yellow shirts of Baptists on Mission gave them hope. I just hugged people and let them tell me their stories."

Shirley's experiences in disaster relief make her a strong proponent of one of NCBAM's newest outreaches—Disaster Preparedness for Aging Adults. The outreach was developed because older adults are typically disproportionately affected in disasters and other emergencies. For example, during Hurricane Katrina, seniors accounted for 74% of casualties even though only 15% of the population. The outreach helps churches plan, implement, and maintain Disaster Preparedness ministries for their most vulnerable.

After years of volunteering in disaster relief, Shirley knows too well the struggles people face in recovery. "So often people wait too late and are not prepared. Churches need to have a plan in place to check on their elderly members who are frail—whether it's a huge disaster like Florence or just localized power outages from ice storms. Preparation is so important."

To learn more or to schedule a Disaster Preparedness training at your church, call the NCBAM Call Center at 877.506.2226.



Shirley Carlson



Carol Layton is the Director of Communications and Administration for NCBAM at Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina

Poised to be our Savior

By Ken and Jan Merop  
Avery County



Sanctuary. A sacred or holy (set apart) place. A place of refuge.

Have you ever needed such a place where you could focus...be quiet, undistracted, away from the main stream of life, peaceful...even when all around you is anything but tranquil?

I recall a time when God had compelled me to take 15 years of my weekly columns and select some for a devotional book. It was quite scary and exciting all at once.

The process was arduous. The more I moved ahead, the less I knew. Finally I declared, "I can't do this!"

Then the Lord whispered to my spirit, "No you can't. But I can. With Me all things are possible."

I was poised to complete the project, but first I needed a place to be.

And so we headed to the mountains where I regained my focus and cleared my thoughts through prayer and meditation on God's Word...Psalm 121: 1 and 2, NKJV in particular, which says, "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."

Peace flooded my soul. I read the rest of the psalm and leaned into his keeping and preserving power. We would write this book together. I was now poised to really complete this endeavor. My heart had rediscovered its sanctuary.

When Jesus left heaven and all its glory and took on the form of a human being...starting out as a baby...just like us, He came poised to be our Savior. No one else could do what He was about to do because no one else was sinless.

As He went from childhood through adulthood, His mission never wavered. He had come to live among us, be the substitutionary sacrifice for sinful mankind and rise again to give eternal life to all who believe.

His heart's refuge was with the Father in heaven. The Garden of Gethsemane was His place to be...to commune with His Father and eventually say, "Not my will but yours."

He came willingly so that God the Father could give us the most indescribable present that first Christmas. He gave us his presence through Jesus Christ, God the Son. And, he continues to gladly come into the heart of anyone who trusts Him as Savior filling them with His presence.

If you want to know true peace, the only sanctuary for your soul is found in Jesus. He personifies all you're longing for and more.

This Christmas, be poised to belong to him. Selah

SNOW SNUGGLE

*This gentle dove snuggles up on this snowy branch,  
instinctively fluffing her feathers to keep warm...  
trusting her Creator's care.*

*What was it like at Jesus' birth as  
He snuggled in swaddling clothes and lay in a manger?  
He was Immanuel...God with us...  
so that we could have a place of refuge,  
snuggled and embraced.*

*"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High  
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty...  
He shall cover you with His feathers.  
And under His wings you shall take refuge."  
Psalm 91: 1 & 4*



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.



# Storytime with Mrs. Claus

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# 4 Tips to Take Financial Stress

## Out of the Holidays

By Rachel Cruze

It's the most wonderful time of the year, which means holiday shopping is underway! If you're a spender like me, your head is spinning with all the upcoming festivities. The holidays are such a magical time of year, but I think we can all agree they're not-so-magical for our wallets.

It's easy to lose sight of what matters during this special season and feel pressured to overspend. But it is possible to enjoy the holidays and not let them turn into a debt hangover in January. Here are a few ways you can save this holiday season and still enjoy your time:

### Make a Christmas budget

Overspending is easy to do when you don't make a plan for your money. We know Christmas is on December 25th every year. Your Christmas will be less stressful—and more festive—if you create a budget ahead of time and plan for your purchases. I like using the EveryDollar app. You can list out all your Christmas expenses, including the gifts you want to buy for people, and track your budget on the go!

### Set expectations early with your kids

Discontentment happens when kids expect the whole toy store under the tree and only receive three or four gifts. Make sure their expectations are realistic long before Christmas morning. If a new bike's not in the budget, let them know. Make a list and check it twice.

Who doesn't love giving gifts to their loved ones? It's so much fun, but those expenses can add up. Make a list of everyone you want to buy for and assign a dollar amount to each person. And stick to it! If you can't afford to buy a gift for someone, there are lots of free holiday activities to enjoy together. Spend some quality time with them instead. I promise you, they will appreciate that just as much, if not more!

### Remember what the holidays are about

There is a lot of pressure around the holidays. But don't lose sight of what really matters this season, and that is spending time with the people you love. Ten years from now it won't matter who got what gift or what party you went to. What will matter most are the memories you create with the people closest to you.

I promise you, the holiday season will be much less stressful if you figure out how much you have to spend and set some boundaries! Come spring, when you start planning that family vacation, you'll be thankful you aren't still paying off Christmas debt. And if you want your holidays to be truly merry, focus on spending time with family and less on stuff!

*About Rachel Cruze. As a #1 New York Times best-selling author and host of The Rachel Cruze Show, Rachel helps people learn the proper ways to handle money and stay out of debt. She's authored three best-selling books, including Love Your Life, Not Theirs and Smart Money Smart Kids, which she co-wrote with her father, Dave Ramsey. You can follow Cruze on Twitter and Instagram at @RachelCruze and online at rachelcruze.com, youtube.com/rachelcruze or facebook.com/rachel-ramseycruze.*



# Tips for Serving Others

## Serving Others at Christmas

We tiptoed up the steps, onto the porch, and gently laid down the goodies: canned vegetables, a frozen turkey and various foods all packaged in a laundry basket. Another "secret basket" contained presents.

My 6-year-old son, Ryan, whispered, "Mommy, do you think they'll like the presents?"

"Of course they will," I whispered back.

The wooden steps creaked when we descended and ran back to the car.

Breathless and giddy, my son asked, "Do you think they'll know we did it?"

"I hope not, because

Matthew 6 says, 'When you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.'"

Never underestimate the value of modeling selfless giving. Providing opportunities for your children to see you give to others will help them to get excited about generosity. Kids of all ages can learn to give anonymously, but don't expect them to be involved beyond what they're capable of developmentally. Secret baskets are a great place to start. Set your sights on someone with a financial, physical, emotional or spiritual need, and anonymously gift them useful items with a note of encouragement attached.

Here are more ideas for encouraging generosity in your kids, whatever their age:

### 0- to-3-year-olds

Preschool children can learn to give within the confines of family. Teach them to sneak a yummy food treat onto the plate of a loved one. Help them hide a piece of wrapped candy in someone's lunchbox. "Shhh, don't tell" is something they will understand. As they do secretive things that make others happy, they will soon discover that sharing is fun.

### 4- to-7-year-olds

Let your child help you shop for items and package them with prayers and Scriptures tucked inside. Ask local hospitals or nursing homes to distribute them anonymously to those who are sick and lonely.

### 8- to-12-year-olds

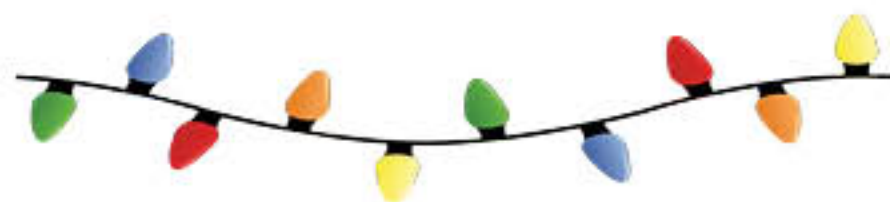
Make handcrafted cards with your tween. Mail them without revealing the sender's identity. A hopeful message lifts the spirits of someone who needs to hear God cares.

You can also encourage your tween to leave unsigned gratitude notes on restaurant tables and store counters. Is there a greater gift than to tell someone that his or her hard work is noticed?

### 13- to-18-year-olds

Teens have youthful energy to invest. When an elderly or sick neighbor runs errands or goes to the doctor, ask your teenager to mow the neighbor's lawn, shovel snow or wash his windows. An anonymous message of God's love, tucked behind the neighbor's screen door, will brighten the day for both the giver and recipient. As teens begin to earn their own money, they can spread joy by secretly giving small gifts to strangers. Suggest that your teen purchase a movie ticket for the third person back or leave a dollar with the store clerk, toward the water, soda or coffee of the next customer who comes in.

Secret gifts teach children to help those in need. Any occasion is a good time to surprise someone with the love of Jesus Christ.



*All children need a family to celebrate Christmas with. A loving family that the child can share the love and joy of the Christmas spirit. Every child in foster care deserves to have a family to love them. Make a difference foster/adopt a child. Contact McDowell County DSS 828-652-3355.*



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## Money Problems

By Dr. Mark Creech



After suffering a heart attack and having quadruple bypass surgery, a man awakened to find himself in a Catholic hospital with Nuns taking care of him. As they nursed him back to good health, one of the Nuns asked if he had health insurance. "No, unfortunately not," he replied. "Do you have any money in the bank?" asked the Nun. "No. No money in the bank either," the man said. "Do you have any relatives you could ask for help?" the Nun continued. The man replied, "I only have a spinster sister who is a Nun." At this remark the Nun became irritated. "Nuns are not spinsters," she said demonstrably, "Nuns are married to God!" "Alright then," said the man, "Send the bill to my brother-in-law."

Your sister may not be a Nun, but if Christ is your Savior, you have a rich, heavenly Father who knows your every need.

Jesus said, "Don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the idolaters eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided" (Mt. 6:31-32).

It's characteristic of people who don't know God to be anxious about money and all the problems that arise when it's running short. But this shouldn't be the case for people who have learned to relate to God as their loving heavenly Father.

God is not uncaring, capricious, or unpredictable. He loves his children better than we love our own. Jesus also said, "What man among you, if his son ask him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! (Mt. 7:9-11).

Moreover, it makes little sense to live one's life just around making a living, which can be an endless drudgery of existing to pay bills. However, this is the way most people carry on their lives.

Steven J. Cole on Bible.org shares a marvelous story that illustrates this point. "An American businessman was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellowfin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

"The Mexican replied, 'Only a little while.'

"The American then asked why didn't he stay out longer and catch more fish.

"The Mexican said that he had enough to support his family's immediate needs.

"The American then asked, 'But what do you do with the rest of your time?'

"The Mexican fisherman said, 'I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siesta with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening, where I sip wine and play my guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life, señor.'

"The American scoffed, 'I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat, you could buy several boats. Eventually, you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing, and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then to L.A. and eventually to New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise.'

"The Mexican fisherman asked, 'But señor, how long will this all take?'

The American replied, 'Fifteen to twenty years.'

'But what then, señor?'

The American laughed and said, 'That's the best part. When the time is right, you would announce a stock offer, sell your company stock to the public, and become very rich. You would make millions.'

'Millions, señor? Then what?'

"The American said, 'Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siesta with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings, where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos.'

Don't worry when it seems you don't have enough to make ends meet. Don't live your life the way most people do - caught up in a vicious cycle of trying to get more and more so you won't have to be worried about money, or so you can live in ease.

Focus instead on the higher things of life. Nurture and develop your relationship with God through Christ. Make God's business your business, placing it above all other business and the Lord will take care of everything else.

Tell your creditors to get in touch with your brother-in-law. Well, no, perhaps it's best not tell them that unless a Nun is your sister. But neither should you be consumed with anxiety. You can trust your heavenly Father and turn the matter over to him.



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



He Dwells Among Us!

By Pastor Terry Cheek  
McDowell County

As we find ourselves once again preparing to celebrate Christmas, Christians find themselves face to face with the conflict of worldly fantasy and spiritual reality!

As we celebrate Christmas let's revisit the incarnation. In John's gospel chapter 1 and verse 14 we read, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

The birth of Jesus was unique to say the least. The birth of any other child is the creation of a new personality. New life is created, a life that never existed before. The birth of Jesus was not the creation of a new personality or even the creation of a new life, it was the coming of deity who had existed from eternity. Is there any wonder the angels awoke the slumbering echoes of the Judean hills with their praise?

John describes the incarnation using four words that condense the 2,500 words used by Luke. John tells us Jesus "dwelt among us." The Greek word *eskenosen* gives us the meaning of pitching a tent. Said another way Jesus tabernacled among us. This word is significant in John's gospel when describing the incarnation. Some scholars believe Jesus was actually born on the first day of the joyous annual Jewish feast of tabernacles (15th of Tisri or on our calendar September 29 in the year 4 BC). If this is the case, Jesus' circumcision which took place on the eighth day would have taken place on "the great day of the feast" mentioned by John in 7:37. Regardless of where you stand on this thought it is an interesting study.

When we hear the word tabernacle it reminds us of the rich typology of the Old Testament tabernacle and its hidden glory. Have you ever thought about the tabernacle, it has no outward beauty? The furniture of the outer court was made of brass (copper). The curtains were linen, possibly bleached white by the sun. The only color was the entrance gate which gave access to the brazen altar. Looking on from the outside there was nothing glorious about the tabernacle. It appeared to be just another tent placed among the tents of the common people, only the tabernacle was larger. When the tabernacle was moved from place to place the gold furniture was carefully covered from the eyes of the curious.

The glory of the Lord was a hidden glory. When Jesus came to pitch His tent, He did not lay aside His deity, He simply veiled His glory. The Apostle John tells us "we beheld his glory,"

"the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." These remarks should direct our minds to the Shekinah glory that filled the tabernacle. The Lord Jesus had an inner glory that permanently resided within Him. John realized this inner glory, he saw God in Christ, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John was referencing the days he had spent in the company of the Lord Jesus. When John tells us "we beheld his glory" John is describing the glory that an only begotten Son receives from a Father. Also John tells us they saw one "full of grace and truth" this is a Hebraism for the sum total of divine revelation; grace is a reference to the revelation of God as love and truth is a reference to the revelation of God as light.

As we celebrate Christmas let's look upon it as more than a baby in a manger. Let's look upon it as a celebration of the Incarnation of God who tabernacled among us and still resides in the hearts of everyone who knows Him as Lord and Savior today.

Merry Christmas and May God richly bless you this season!

Terry Cheek is pastor of Calvary Missionary Baptist Church in Marion NC. You can contact Terry by email at [terrycheek63@gmail.com](mailto:terrycheek63@gmail.com) or by phone at (828) 460-6120.



Christmas

By Pastor Steve Williams  
Mitchell County

What has happened this year. Here it is Christmas upon us again. It won't be long till the Malls are full of shoppers looking for the right gift for their loved ones. There will be Christmas music being played at Churches, Businesses, and on the Radio. I love to hear Christmas music in the air, it excites me very much. I guess we have all heard the familiar Christmas Song, "The Twelve Days Of Christmas". I never thought of it being a Christian Song but the other day I ran across this interesting article about the Twelve days of Christmas.

The twelve days of Christmas refer to the period of time between Christmas Day, the 25th day of December, which celebrates the birth of Jesus, to the 6th of January, the day of the Epiphany, when the wise men came to honor the Lord Jesus Christ at Bethlehem.

It has been said that the song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas," dates back to the 16th century when Christians were not allowed to practice Christianity in England. The song was written to help the young believers learn the truths of their faith.

The phrase, "My true love," refers to God who loves us; "me" every believer, and the "partridge in a pear tree" to the Lord who wept over Jerusalem, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathered her chicks under her wing, and ye would not" Matthew 23:37.

The other symbols mean; 2 turtle doves- the "Old and New Testaments; 3 French hens- "faith, Hope and charity," 4 calling birds- the four gospels; 5 golden rings, the first five books of the Old Testament (The Book of laws), 6 geese a laying- the 6 days of creation; 7 swans a swimming- the 7 Sacraments of the Catholic Church; the 8 maids a milking- the 8 Beatitudes; 9 ladies dancing- the 9 fruits of the spirit; 10 lords a leaping- the 10 commandments; 11 pipers piping- 11 faithful apostles; 12 drummers drumming- the 12 points of the Apostle's Creed.

So now when you hear "The Twelve Days of Christmas" try to see how many of the 12 you can remember what they stand for. I would also like to challenge you to remember that the greatest gift that anyone will ever receive in their life is the gift of Salvation. Please take time and thank God for his Son Jesus Christ and for His great love for all mankind. I pray that all of you have a very Merry Christmas this year.

Professing and Practicing:

- It's not what we eat but what we digest that makes us strong.
- It's not what we gain but what we give that makes us rich.
- It's not what we read but what we remember that makes us educated.
- It's not what we hear but what we heed that makes us Christians.

Words of Wisdom:

- You may give without loving but you can't love without giving.
- Old age is something that everyone else reaches before we do.
- It is a greater thing to obey the Bible than to preach it.
- The straight and narrow path wouldn't be so narrow if more people would walk it.
- The way you spend Christmas is more important than how much you spend.
- To be active is one thing but to be effective is another thing.

**Help From God A little Humor:** A Little Boy came screaming out of the bathroom, "I dropped my toothbrush in the toilet!" "Trash it" said the mother, who kept brushing her teeth. "I'm sorry," he said, "I didn't trash yours when I dropped it in the toilet last night." Every parent needs a lot of help from God, and a little humor helps, too.

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



Sudoku

Solution on page 14

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

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By Lucy Burleson  
Provided by Marie Watson  
Mitchell County

## T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE JESUS

*T'was the night before Jesus cam and all through the house,  
Not a person was praying, not on in this house  
The Bibles were lain on the shelf without care,  
Not thinking that Jesus would ever appear.*

*The Children were dressing to crawl into bed,  
Not once ever kneeling or bowing their head.  
And Mom in her rocker with baby on her lap,  
Was watching the late show while I took a nap.*

*When out of the East there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.*

*When what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
But angels proclaiming that Jesus was here!  
With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray,  
I knew in a moment this must be THE DAY!*

*The light of His face made we cover my head.  
It was Jesus! Returning just like He said.  
And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth,  
I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.*

*In the Book of Life which He held in His hand  
Was written the name of every saved man.  
He spoke not a word as He searched for my name:  
When He said, "It's not here", my head hung in shame.*

*The people whose names had been written with love  
He gathered to take to His Father above.  
With those who were ready He rose without sound,  
While all the rest were left standing around.*

*I fell to my knees, but it was too late,  
I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate.  
I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight.  
Oh, if only we had been ready tonight!*

*In the words of this poem the meaning is clear,  
The coming of Jesus is drawing so near.  
There's only one life and when comes the last call,  
We'll find that the Bible was true after all!*

*Jesus said, "Be ready, for surely I come quickly!"  
ARE YOU READY?*



Dear Dave,

My fiancé and I are getting married in three weeks, but he lost his job as an experienced HVAC technician at a hospital a few days ago. Do you think we should still go on a honeymoon, or wait until things are more stable? I'm on Baby Step 3 of your plan, and I make \$56,000 a year. I also have \$7,000 in an emergency fund. He was making \$64,000 a year, and he's on Baby Step 2 with about \$10,000 in car debt remaining. We have \$3,000 already set aside for the trip, plus another \$2,000 we were planning to put toward fixing up his place.  
Corina



Dear Corina,

First, congratulations on your upcoming wedding! I hope you two will have long and happy lives together.

Usually, I'm not a big fan of spending when someone loses a job. But I think your situation is a little different than most. You're both serious about dumping debt and getting control of your finances. Plus, you're working together, and you've already got a nice chunk of cash parked in the bank. That tells me you're both wise enough to know the importance of saving.

Your guy can find another job in a couple of weeks, considering his field and experience. Companies everywhere are hiring people right now, and the economy is booming! If he gets out there and really busts it looking for another position leading up to the wedding, I think you two will be fine. He might even be able to work it out to start right after the honeymoon.

You two have some financial padding, his job is an easy one to replace, and his income will be restored soon if he'll just get out there and make it happen. Go on the honeymoon, and have a wonderful time. God bless you both!  
—Dave

Dear Dave,

Should I keep buying dental insurance for my kids, or is it just a gimmick?  
Brenda,

Dear Brenda,

Dental insurance is one of those things where it's easy to see that the payout is greater than the return. We've had dental insurance proposed to us at my company several times as an employee benefit, but when you add up what you pay for it you'll find you rarely spend that much on dentistry. In many cases, I advise self-insuring for dental care.

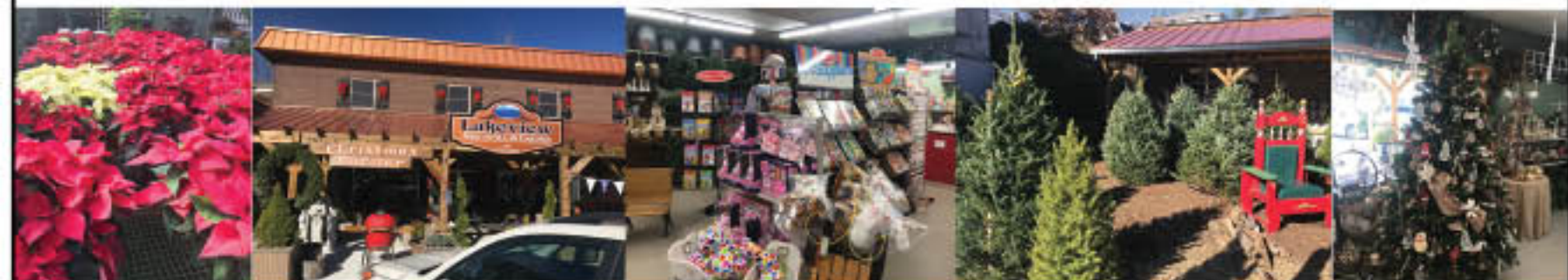
Now, there is a dental discount company I highly recommend called 1Dental.com. This kind of thing is worth it. As a member, you get discounted rates on dental work when you visit an in-network provider. I've gotten to know the folks behind this organization, too, and they're great people. Hope this helps, Brenda!

*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 14 million listeners each week on 600 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*



My mom left a spiritual legacy to all who knew her. Her life was a testimony for Christ. Marie Watson

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*Matthew 1:18-25 18Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. 20But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying, 23Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. 24Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the LORD had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 25And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.*

*Merry Christmas from All of Us at  
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