

Podcasts feature **America's Santa**

Listen to Dr. Blackwell's two episodes with alum Jim Dyer as they discuss Dyer's journey from a broken home to his many successes, including becoming Santa. (www.bchfamily.org/podcast)

Charity & Children

The historic publication of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, first to tell the story for 135 years.



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**"On the worst day of my life,
the most wonderful thing
happened. God saved me."**

— Whitney Harris

Birth mother shares story of regeneration and hope

By **Jim Edminson**, Editor

Whitney knew it was her last chance. She bought a bus ticket to a rehab center in San Francisco and took a deep breath. At one of the stops along the more than six-hour drive, she stepped off the bus to run into a McDonald's. She was shocked when she came outside and the bus had left, leaving her with nothing. Angry and filled with despair, she approached an older man in a nearby parking lot, and before he could speak, she blurted out her dilemma. She needed to catch up with the bus. "I can give you a ride," he said gently. He called his wife and explained that he was driving to San Francisco. Whitney climbed into his truck.

"I didn't realize it then, but he was a servant of God," she says. "He asked a few questions and I responded with short answers and then he began talking about Jesus. It was all he could talk about."

Whitney says the realness of the Jesus he spoke about became a seed planted in her heart. The duo retrieved her bags, and her new Jesus-loving friend drove her to the rehab center. He handed her a piece of paper with his phone number written on it and offered a last bit of encouragement before he began his trip home.

This was not her first attempt to break the

addictions that had plagued her young life, but she remembers thinking that this time was different. She became friends with some of the others addicts at the center, especially one guy. Time passed and she remembers marking 30 days clean: "I'm doing it. It's real this time."

A few weeks later, she feared she was pregnant. The brightness dimmed. She borrowed \$20 to purchase a pregnancy test. Walking out of Walgreens, she crossed the street to Starbucks, stepped into the restroom, and took the test. She sat on the curb outside and looked at the results and thought: "This is the worst day of my life." (Continued on page 6.)

Success is about persistence, timing, and attitude

By Michael C. Blackwell, President/CEO (Chief Encouragement Officer)

It has been almost 40 years since I left the pastorate to become a child care executive. I have spoken in many different kinds of churches – about 1,000 since 1983. Today, churches face a happy, scary, exhilarating, depressing, encouraging, and frightening time. But more than anything else, clergy and laity face a time of opportunity. Ask yourself two questions: What has brought me to this point in life and what will it take for me to continue?

I believe the world is divided into those who plan to succeed and those who don't—and the ultimate question becomes which are you? I have never met a clergy person who wants to fail. One may often feel lonely and depressed, but down deep, clergy are called to serve well—we all want to succeed. But sometimes we get derailed. I have three words to consider for both clergy and laity: persistence, timing, and attitude.

First, persistence. One of my heroes is Winston Churchill. He was the greatest war leader Great Britain ever had. During the dark days of World War II when Adolph Hitler's Nazi forces were virtually destroying London, it was Churchill who kept the people's hopes alive by determination, inspiration, and rhetoric. In the early 1960's after Winston Churchill had already turned 90, he made a final commencement address. It may be the most dramatic commencement address ever. Churchill, by this time an overweight, bent and aged man, shuffled slowly to the microphone. He raised that big head of his and said to his enraptured audience: "Never give up, Never give up, Never give up." With that the old man turned and ambled back to his seat. The crowd sat stunned in silence before giving him a thunderous standing ovation.

Never give up. Persistence has been a key to your success and persistence will be a key in the future. Persistence has brought you to this point but this is only the beginning. As clergy and laity, I suggest you need to do three things: be totally, absolutely dedicated;

be convinced that what you do is in God's will; and believe in yourself more than anything else. Persistence is part of the foundation for success.

My second word is timing. One who succeeds knows what to do and then does it, understanding that life is a challenge, that church work isn't easy. But the successful person is one who also knows that life is an adventure and that the journey is worthwhile.

Reinhold Niebuhr offers this on timing. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

A high achiever knows how to seize opportunities. The brass ring comes around only a few times. Reach out and grab it. Life without risk is a life of sheer boredom. No one wants to look back with regrets in their yearbook of life and say "why" while one focused on success always looks ahead and asks "why not?"

Too many church members have stopped growing. They go to their

graves with their music still inside them, with their poetry yet to be written. Between the City of Reality and the City of Dreams, many people exit at the Town of Compromise and lead lives boring, dull, and frustrating. Successful clergy and church members continue to help people dream dreams and see visions.

This Bible story illustrates my point. Many of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. In His day, all good fishermen knew one fished only from the left side of the boat. One night the men fished all night and caught nothing. Jesus told them to fish off the right side of the boat. They did and their boats began to sink because they caught so many fish. Jesus reminded them that success in life is much closer than often realized. With the disciples it was just a boat's width away. Don't stop too soon on the way to your dreams.

My third word is attitude. It's trite but true, a person with the right attitude takes a lemon and makes lemonade out of it. One who refuses to fail comes to the end of his rope, ties a knot, and hangs on. A successful person keeps purpose and direction near. The question isn't whether you accept life, the question is how you accept it.

The Chinese word for crisis is comprised of two characters. The first represents danger and the second opportunity. When Chinese see the word, they interpret it both ways:

danger and opportunity. I have found that is the way life is. If you view life as an opportunity for fulfillment and service, then it will become a self-fulfilling prophesy. If you view life as filled with danger, that will become the measure by which you live. It all

depends on your attitude.

There's nothing stopping you. Start planning today for your next success!



Mission:

sharing hope . . . changing lives

Vision:

To provide the highest quality of Christian services to children, adults and families in a caring culture of measurable excellence

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God is "gracious" as Smiths foster toddler boys

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

Life in church ministry is normal for husband and wife Kyler and Lauren Smith. Kyler just celebrated 10 years at Hickory Grove Baptist in Charlotte where he has served since 2012. His first day on staff was particularly special—it was the day he also met Lauren whom he would marry two years later.

As the Smiths, now parents to four-year-old daughter Eliza, served the Lord together, God began igniting conversations between them that would take them beyond their familiar church ministry life.

"As followers of Christ, we have long been aware of the orphan crisis," shares Lauren. "I spent some time serving outside of an abortion clinic and that is where our hearts for the orphan crisis really began."

"Foster care, for us, seemed like a good way for our family to engage."

The couple needed assistance getting started. They discovered that help existed within North Carolina Baptist life.

"We learned one of our own entities provided help—provided resources—to assist us," says Kyler who took on a new role in 2021 at Hickory Grove as senior associate pastor. "We learned about Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) in this process and our experience with them has been a God-sent gift."

BCH trains and licenses couples, like the Smiths, to be foster families through the *EVERY CHILD Foster & Adoption Ministry*, a partnership between BCH and NC Baptists.

"BCH has proven to be an invaluable resource to Lauren and me," adds Kyler. "They're continuing to be there with us day by day."

Once licensing is complete, BCH provides a case manager to its foster families to give them ongoing support and assist them with child placements. The children come from the state foster care system where there are approximately 17,000 boys and girls in its custody. These are children who have been removed from their family homes for their safety.

"Once we were exposed to this ministry, once we reckoned with the need, we took a step of faith and, I'm telling you, the Lord has been gracious to us," shares Kyler.

The Smiths soon opened their home—and their hearts—to a pair of toddlers.

"Our foster boys have been with us for several months now, and they have settled right into our home," shares Lauren. "There's a lot more craziness in our house, but it's been a blessing to serve them and their family and to walk



Kyler Smith, senior associate pastor for Hickory Grove Baptist in Charlotte, and his wife Lauren, along with their biological daughter Eliza, are a Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) foster care family. They say God "has been gracious" to them as they have cared for two toddlers in the custody of the foster care system. [Learn more at every-child.org](http://www.every-child.org).

alongside of them."

Caring for the boys has also opened a door for them to minister to the boys' parents.

"It is been an opportunity for us to practice sacrificial love as we love people who are different than us," divulges Lauren. "We are able to love on their boys and encourage their parents to fight and do what it takes to be reunited with their (children) again."

Hickory Grove is taking steps forward, as a church, to support foster and adoptive families.

"We are in early stages of developing a ministry to help resource families engaging in adoption and foster care," says Kyler. "It's not only through material and financial support, but through encouragement."

As both a foster parent as well as a pastor, Kyler has a message for fellow pastors regarding the vital role churches can fill.

"From one pastor to another, I just want to plead with you to just consider anew the opportunity—the stewardship—you really have as a leader of your local church," he says. "I trust there are countless families in your congregation that could be well resourced by you to meet the foster care crisis need in your community."

And for those praying about fostering, Kyler has a message for them as well.

"I want to encourage you to take that step," he shares. "Ask God to use you and receive His children into your home. I trust you will see Him do things in and through you and in spite of you. He surely has for us."

[Learn more at every-child.org](http://www.every-child.org).



The Smiths share on camera how God has worked through their foster family journey. In the first video, they share their experience as a couple. In the second, Kyler speaks to fellow pastors about the vital ministry role the church can fill. Scan the codes or go to www.bit.ly/ecvimeo.

Take a moment, cherish what you did today!

By **Brenda B. Gray**, Executive Vice President, Development & Communications

Make every moment count and cherish each opportunity to make a difference. At the end of the day, when you are sitting in that comfortable recliner and you think about your day, do you take stock of what you accomplished on that day? That is what I want to ask you to do in the next few minutes. Take stock of what you did today...

Today, you gave a child a warm breakfast.

Today, you gave a child warm water for a shower.

Today, you shared a devotion with a child.

Today, you helped a child learn to read.

Today, you laughed with a child.

Today, you wiped a child's tears of hurt and loneliness.

Today, you listened to a child.

Today, you took a child on their first fishing trip.

Today, you put a Band-Aid on the knee of a child.

Today, you bought a child a pair of shoes.

Today, you helped a child find love and hope.

Today, you helped a child believe in their dreams.

Today, you gave a child a warm bed where they could find rest and peace.

Today, you gave a child a cone of ice cream.

Today, you held a child's hand as they dipped their toes into the ocean for the first time.

Today, you created a family through foster care.

Today, you created a family through adoption.

Today, you screamed when a child brought you a green snake.

Today, you baked a birthday cake for a child's first birthday party.

Today, you fixed three meals for a home full of 10 hungry teenagers.

Today, you transported children to summer school.

Today, you shared the love of Jesus with a child.

Today, God used your gifts of love to make a difference.

Each day our children's lives are touched because you care. Each time we reach out to a child you are there. Our cottage parents and our foster parents are missionaries who offer warm, loving, and caring Christian homes. It is your giving that makes it possible for us to be there for each child that walks through our doors. I have often heard: "You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving." I am grateful to our partners in ministry. Thank you for putting your faith in action through your many gifts of love.

As you know the cost of providing the basics for so many children can be enormous. Gas prices and the economy is in front of us every time we open the newspaper or turn on the TV. Each time I go to the store, it seems that food prices have increased. As we prepare to buy clothes and school supplies, it can seem a bit overwhelming. Then I am reminded of God's provision through you. Our food pantries are full and I know our

children will be well fed. Through our bed sponsorship program our children will have a warm and safe place to sleep. Children are helping our children through VBS offerings to help with our many needs. Churches and individuals are already bringing school supplies. We are receiving calls daily to schedule speaking engagements to promote our annual offering. Each caller says, "We want to help the children."

I know that you receive letters daily asking for help from many organizations. I know that stewardship of all that God has given you is important. Thank you for your spiritual investment in those we serve. Today and tomorrow, your investment will make a difference in the lives of many children, families, and individuals in need on their journey to hope and healing.

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

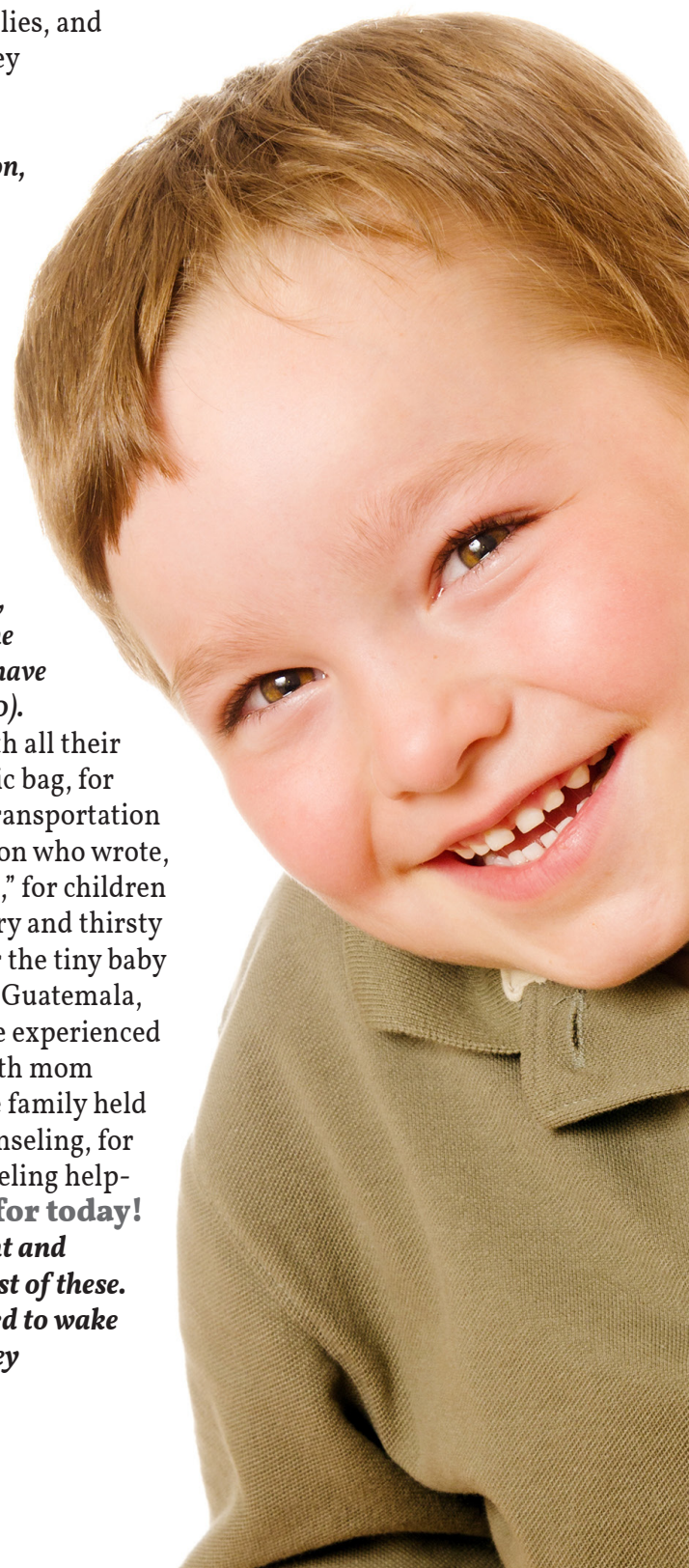
When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25: 36-40).

For the child who came to us with all their belongings stuffed in a black plastic bag, for the frail aging adult who needed transportation to the doctor, for the father in prison who wrote, "Thank you for caring for my child," for children and families who come to us hungry and thirsty both physically and spiritually, for the tiny baby abandoned near our orphanage in Guatemala, for the independence, joy, and care experienced by our IDDM residents, for the birth mom who chose life for her baby, for the family held together through support and counseling, for each one who entered our doors feeling helpless, alone, and lost, **thank you for today!**

Now close your eyes for the night and rest knowing you cared for the least of these. You made a difference! Be prepared to wake up tomorrow and walk this journey with us again.



"The bus is coming!"

The voices of Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) cottage parents will soon echo these words throughout the cottages as children tie their last shoelaces, grab their backpacks, and run to catch the bus to school.

Because of back-to-school sponsors, BCH boys and girls are discovering hope and seeing success! As a sponsor, your support goes beyond ensuring children have the school supplies, clothing and necessary materials they need for the upcoming year. You provide children—North Carolina boys and girls who have gone without food, without a safe home and without love—the compassionate care they deserve.

Our cottage parents and our foster and adoptive families are not only prepared to meet their day-to-day needs, but they are ready to introduce them to the unconditional love of Jesus.

Up ahead, there is a future that is free of turmoil and pain because of friends like you. Children are now able to focus on school and make the most of opportunities that were once out of reach.

Will you be a back-to-school sponsor and bring a child success both in school and in life? Please don't wait! In the next few days, we will purchase supplies for all the children in our care across the state.

The bus is coming, but it's not too late – please give.



Scan to make a gift on our mobile giving page.

Use my gift to change a child's life!

☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$2,500 ☐ \$ _____ Any size gift!

To make a gift by check: Print your information below and mail this form with your check.

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

You can make your gift by credit card at www.bchfamily.org/backtoschool or phone Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.

☐ Yes, I would like to receive email updates. ☐ Contact me with information on how to prepare a Christian Will.

☐ I have included Baptist Children's Homes in my estate.



Adoption becomes the perfect path for Whitney

By Jim Edminson, Editor
(Continued from page 1.)

Darkness had been a part of Whitney's life since childhood. She says she was drawn to it. It lured her from the security of her Christian home to "seek bad things." At age 14, she began a journey that moved her away from her family and the people who loved her.

"Everything I was told not to do, I wanted to do," she confesses. "I hated my parents. I hated what they stood for, and I resented their faith and its restrictions."

Whitney says her life became about doing what she wanted to do and not caring about anyone else. In high school, she would party with friends, pushing the boundaries and seeking the freedom she thought was somewhere out beyond her family. She remembers drinking until she blacked out. The darkness she so desired dragged her into a world of drugs. Weed and costly cocaine lost its appeal, and she began using the cheaper and ready-available meth. After a failed attempt at college, she ended up addicted to heroin. By age 24, she was living on the streets, homeless.

"All I wanted was to get high," she admits. "I was consumed with this life. What I had wanted so badly, the darkness that I desired, now enslaved me."

Sitting outside Starbucks and holding the positive pregnancy test, 26-year-old Whitney felt the weight of her life crash down on her. She believed life had always been about her and what she wanted. Now she was overcome with fear. She was "clean," but she was no longer the healthy, well-cared for teen living with mom and dad. Her thin frame began to tell the story, appearing emaciated from the drug use and



Dana and Darren Murph attended the delivery of their son Maverick. The Murphs have an open adoption, allowing birth mother Whitney to be a part of the boy's life. The adoption was facilitated by Christian Adoption Services, a ministry of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina.

subsequent withdrawals. Her face was no longer bright but pocked from scratching meth sores. The damage and decay to her teeth had robbed her smile. The magnitude of her sin was visible.

She says that as she looked at the pregnancy test result, she knew she could no longer go on destroying her life. The pride that had kept her on the run from God evaporated.

"It was the worse feeling," Whitney says. "There was only blackness. I was broken."

She bowed her head and tears ran down her cheeks. Her mouth opened and she cried out: "God, I can't do this any longer."

Whitney says she heard God's voice. He had been there listening and waiting. "Come with me and you will never have to go back to this life again."



After giving birth to Maverick, Whitney moved to Lynchburg, Virginia and enrolled at Liberty University where, today, she is a senior in the school's nursing program.

In that moment, the walls in Whitney's heart fell and the darkness fled. She was finished with the past she once loved so much. She relented, yielding herself and giving her life to God: "On the worst day of my life, the most wonderful thing happened. God saved me."

God's "realness" was immediate as she felt her mind and heart being regenerated. "God truly set me free and the Holy Spirit opened my eyes and tuned my ears to His truth."

The birth father wanted nothing to do with Whitney or the baby, encouraging her to have an abortion. But instead of an abortion, she turned to adoption. She wanted her baby to be raised by

Christian parents. A Google search brought her to Christian Adoption Services (CAS) and Dana and Darren Murph.

"I called CAS and spoke with Sheryl Naylor," she says. "She told me they would help me. I could feel her love through the phone."

Whitney moved to North Carolina and was invited to live with Shea and Lee Williamson during her pregnancy. With Naylor's help, she planned an open adoption with the Murphs.

"We were all together in the delivery room. There was a wonderful feeling of peace," she recounts. The Murphs named their adopted son Maverick.

Whitney is reunited with her family and a senior at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. She shares her testimony often, letting others know there is redemption. God saves.

"I know the depth of God's mercy and grace. I know because the magnitude of my sin was met with the greatness of His love. Maverick is loved by two wonderful parents who are raising him to love Jesus. Now, I live with hope."

Editor's Note: In the September issue of *C&C*, Dana and Darren Murph will share their story of adoption.



Volunteers paint a pretty purple for pastor's widow

By Carol Layton, NCBAM Director of Communications and Administration

In the midst of a long, hot week-end of building ramps and meeting safety needs for seniors in Lenoir County, Camp BAM's volunteers blessed a pastor's widow with a fresh coat of paint and spruced-up landscaping.

Widowed for eight years, 81-year-old Jeanette Moon is active at Immanuel Baptist Church in Greenville, North Carolina. "I'm able to drive and I visit the shut-ins as much as I can. It's important they have someone to talk to. I prayed, 'Please, God, give me opportunities for ministry. I want to minister in your name.'"

Jeanette's late husband, Andrew Moon, died in 2014, and lived the last ten years of his life with an Alzheimer's diagnosis. "He retired from ministry just before he was diagnosed," remembers Jeanette. "He was a joy to take care of. He still loved life and walked and swam until the end. He was even able to substitute teach at the local high school."

Jeanette is part of the Servant Care outreach of North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM). The outreach provides ongoing needs assessments and priority access to NCBAM services for NC Baptist ministers (65+), their spouses or surviving spouses. NCBAM provides "help for the journey" to individuals 65+ in ways that help them maintain their independence and enjoy quality of life.

Jeanette says the past years have been difficult. "It's harder today than when he died. I've had so many decisions to make lately, and I've had to make them alone."



Above left, Delene Holloway and Kynlee (Kiki) Talbert create a "wisteria purple dream come true" for Jeanette Moon. Moon, left, also received a matching hand-crocheted lap robe from Camp BAM volunteers.

But Jeanette's face always lights up remembering their lives together. "Andrew was a remarkable person. We married in 1965 and he went into the ministry soon after that. From day one, I loved being a pastor's wife." Together, the Moons served Baptist churches for more than 40 years—in Virginia, Florida, and eastern North Carolina.

Jeanette spoke at the Sunday morning church service at Kennedy Home in Kinston so that all Camp BAM teams could hear how much their work was appreciated. Jeanette told them, "I had a dream. I wanted to paint my old green bathroom a pretty purple color, but wasn't able to do

it myself. Three adults and two of you young people came to help me and to work in my yard—pulling weeds and laying mulch—things I could no longer do. You are all precious and our churches need you. Thank you for helping me."

The "pretty purple color" that Jeanette chose for her bathroom was called "wisteria." After she spoke, volunteers presented her with a hand-crocheted lap blanket sent from "The Busy Needles" of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church. Amazingly, the blanket was created in perfectly matching shades of wisteria.

Delene Holloway from FBC Concord helped to paint Jeanette's bathroom with volunteers from Impact Community Youth Group. "How satisfying it is to know that God brought us together to make this precious woman so happy."

Camp BAM's intergenerational volunteers ranged from preteens to retirees. Together, they completed

five wheelchair ramps, six additional safety projects, one technology class, and serviced three BCH ministries. Fifty-two volunteers from six churches participated in the five-day camp that was based at Kennedy Home (FBC Concord; Impact Community Youth; Parkwood, Staley, Rivermont, and River of Life Baptist Churches.) Twenty-five senior adults in the Kinston area were blessed with increased safety, education, and fellowship from the volunteers.

You can help fund Camp BAM by contributing to the Live Out Luke Endowment Fund. Mail your gift to The North Carolina Baptist Foundation, 201 Convention Drive, Cary, NC 27511.

Baptist Communicators awards BCH's excellence

Michael C. Blackwell, Jim Edminson, and Carol Layton received awards from the Baptist Communicators Association (BCA) during their April meeting held in New Orleans this year. The national competition is part of the group's annual gathering and is designed to encourage and recognize professional excellence among Baptist communicators.

Blackwell, BCH president/CEO, was honored with multiple awards. He and BCH's podcast production team received 3rd place in best

broadcast/podcast "overall show" for Dr. Blackwell's podcast "It's a Family Matter." Blackwell also received 3rd place for the best broadcast/podcast "individual episode" for the "It's a Family Matter" episode (9-20-2021) entitled: *Lessons in Grieving, Part 1 of 2*.

In writing, Blackwell received 2nd place for his "first-person" *Charity & Children* column: *Negative balance? Deposit into one's emotional account* (May 2021).

Blackwell's podcasts are released bi monthly and can be found on major podcast hosting plat-

forms or at www.bchfamily.org/podcast.

Layton received a 1st place award for the Camp BAM banner design, a 2nd place for the design of the Care Village "rack card," and a 3rd place award for the NCBAM Trifold Brochure design.

Blackwell and Edminson won 2nd place in the "best overall publication" category for the creation of Blackwell's recent history book entitled "Founded on faith...Built on love." The book highlights the changes that have occurred in the last 20 years. A limited number of books are still available. For information, call 336-474-1286.

Remember Mom and Dad

NOTE: Listed are **all** Honor and Memorial gifts made to BCH from March 1 through July 1.

IN HONOR

Adam D. Skrzecz

By Kimberly W. Skrzecz

Alan Williams

By Morgan Williams

Alexis Fiorini

By Wanda Beasley

Amanda Hurley O'Quinn

By Mrs. Kerri S. Hurley

Andrew Winstead

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By David & Deborah Shaw

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By Peggy J. Overton

Christina Craig

By Faye D. Kistler

Clay Bollinger

By M/M Eric L. Hartley

Cliffon Watson's 100th Birthday

By M/M Don B. George

Coline Gibson

By Brenda J. Mulford

Cookie Griffin

By Mr. Terry B. Griggs

Cori Hunter

By M/M James C. Keller

Courtney Simpson

By Brenda J. Mulford

Cyrus Austin

By Bronda B. Green

Daneye Brinkley

By Cynthia A. Thompson

David Allen Smith

By Geraldine Millen

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Esther Gillis

By M/M Royce A. Gills

Eunice Johnson

By Brenda Mustian

Evelyn Kelly

By Naomi C. Hilton

Everett & Uriah Faucett

By Hallie Wheeler

Five Grandchildren & Daughter

By M/M David E. Mikeal

Four Grandchildren

By M/M David E. Mikeal

Fran Barnes

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One-day projects for all ages & free meal.
Register at bchfamily.org/foc

- Sept 10 - Cameron Boys Camp, Cameron
- Sept 17 - Odum Home, Pembroke Kennedy Home, Kinston Camp Duncan, Aberdeen
- Sept 24 - Mills Home, Thomasville

Western Area Conference at Broyhill Home in Clyde | Sept. 8

Gospel music, free meal, meet the children
Register: bchfamily.org/wac or 828.627.9254

Christian Adoption Services (CAS) Golf Tourney | Sept 12

Cedar Wood Country Club in Charlotte
Register at christianadopt.org/events

NCBAM Field of Makers | Sept. 23-24 at Denton Farm Park in Denton

A fundraiser benefiting seniors
Register: ncbam.org/field-of-makers

Founders Day, Camp Duncan | Sept. 24

Tour campsites, meet the girls, free meal
Register: bchfamily.org/founders-day or 336.474.1209

CAS Rocky Mount Banquet | Oct 20

Rose Hill Estate in Rocky Mount
Dinner and program benefiting adoption
Register at christianadopt.org/events

CAS Spartanburg, SC Banquet | Nov 3

First Baptist Boiling Springs, SC
Dinner and program benefiting adoption
Register at christianadopt.org/events

Creating memories is an opportunity for caregivers

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

Like any child, the boys and girls living at Baptist Children's Homes' (BCH) statewide cottages cannot wait for summertime to arrive. The children, however, are not alone in their excitement. Their cottage parents know the summer months afford them the opportunity to carry out one of their favorite acts of ministry—creating new memories for the boys and girls they care for daily.

"The commonality between every child in BCH's care is trauma," explains BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell. "Their memories are tainted by past emotional and physical abuse. Our caregivers introduce them to joyful experiences that help painful remembrances recede as bright, new memories are made."



Below are a few of the hundreds of memories that have been made this summer:

A foster care boy was "floored" when chosen to throw out the first pitch as Kennedy Home in Kinston children, foster care families and staff were treated to a Down East Wood Ducks minor league game by local business Crown Equipment.

An autistic boy living at Broyhill Home in Clyde conquered his fear of the pool and ended up going down the large water slide at the water park.

Girls from Mills Home in Thomasville were amazed by Biltmore House in Asheville. They were fascinated by everything they saw inside and could not believe it was once a residence.

Many of the children living at Odum Home



Through the help of Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) supporters, cottage parents, caregivers and staff are able make new summertime memories with those BCH serves. Above, boys from Broyhill Home marvel at the sky's brilliant colors at the sun sets over the sound at McNeill Home, BCH's cottage at Indian Beach. Left, Kennedy Home children are treated to a memorable week of Bible studies and activities thanks to members of Scotts Hill Baptist in Wilmington. Below left, children at Broyhill Home celebrate the first day of summer on the makeshift slip n' slide. Below, brothers R.L. and Ben from Three Forks Home pose with cowboys during their cottage's day out at Tweetsie Railroad.

in Pembroke had never eaten at a nice restaurant until a donor made it possible for them, and all BCH children and staff members, to afford a steak dinner.

Adult residents from Three Forks Home in Zionville, one of BCH's homes for intellectually/developmentally disabled adults, could not stop smiling as they experienced a day out at Tweetsie Railroad in Blowing Rock.

Members of Scotts Hill Baptist in Wilmington spent the week at Kennedy Home ministering to the single mothers, staff and children. Not only did the boys and girls witness them being the hands and feet of Christ as they tackled several campus projects

but the group led bible studies and made s'mores—a first for several boys and girls.



For the first time, a child from Mills Home went with her cottage to the movies. She was excited to have "movie" popcorn and a drink.

A group of students from Deep Impact Camp, organized by NC Baptist On Missions, helped Odum

Home children make tie dye t-shirts. One of Odum's boys said his shirt was going to be his favorite one to wear to school.

Many of boys from one of Broyhill Home's cottages saw the ocean for the first time during their week-long trip to BCH's McNeill Home at Indian Beach. They sat amazed as they watched the sun set over the sound.

Happy memories shared from days gone by – Alumni remember those who recently passed

By **Lib Johnson** (336) 299-7412 libsjohnson@triad.rr.com

The usual coverage of Homecoming events will be in the next issue of *Charity & Children*.

It is always nice when former workers write a bit to keep us informed of their whereabouts. **Max and Orilee Evington** are both retired and are still located at 312 N. Creekside Dr., High Point, NC 27265. Friends might wish to contact them there or at 336-886-8487 or jmevington@gmail.com. Max served the Mills Home Baptist Church from 1974 until 1987 and was much beloved by the Mills Home (MH) youngsters. His chief work on campus was sharing the Holy Gospel as he worked with the MH children in the various church organizations. Besides their three children who were with them at Mills Home, they now enjoy nine grandchildren and four great grandchildren. When they return for Homecoming, they especially enjoy the lunch after the Sunday worship service and fellowship with old friends. Of friends he worked with at MH, he had a special friendship with **Jim Camp**.

Facebook afforded us the opportunity to learn that the very talented family of **Jane Helms Brown** and her husband **Danny** just received three major awards at the annual State Singing Contest held in Benson, NC on June 26. **The Brown Family** group comprised of Jane and husband Danny, daughter Sana and her husband Josh, and granddaughter Allie, took the coveted Grand Champion Award. **Shepherd's Voice** comprised of Danny, Jane, and Sana won the Consolation Award (considered 2nd place), and their family group comprised of all five won the "Family Award."

Nobody is more faithful to attend Homecoming than **Virginia "Ginny" Williams Neeley**, and her sister **Nellie Williams Sheets**. It was unusual that they missed last year but Virginia's son **Danny**, who usually brings her to Homecoming, came on down from Ohio to be with

his mom's friends. Ginny and Nell arrived at MH with another sister **Lena** in 1941 from Whiteville, NC and both graduated in 1952. They were both very active residents: both were majorettes in the MH band, played on the basketball team and sang in the choir and sextet. Ginny's duties about campus included working for **Dr. Wall, Mr. Reed**, and the **Grant family**. She loved **Tom and Chris Marlowe**, house parents at the Huffman, because they seemed like real parents.

After graduating from Thomasville High School, Ginny and Nellie moved to Ohio where they found jobs and husbands and settled down to rear families. Ginny married **Richard Neely** and reared five children. Now widowed, she has nine grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren. Ginny declined to mention any particular Mills Home experience, but she did say that rearing her kids and then watching them rear theirs have been the most notable personal experiences for her since leaving her beloved MH. Like so many alumni, Ginny's best part of Homecoming is being with her many "brothers and sisters."

Nell Williams' "duties" at MH included working in the kitchen, the laundry and the library. She was very fond of **Mrs. Shocky and Swannie MacHargue** who were her housemother and dietitian at the WC. She spent most of her adult life in Sugar Grove with her late hubby **Richard** and reared three offspring. Like Ginny, she was a stay-at-home mom. She has been blessed with three grandchildren and two great grandchildren. She loves seeing old friends at Homecoming but she also loves going through the old buildings.

It is sad to report that **Audrey Dixon Dean** passed away at her home June 2. Born February 15, 1958, in Guilford County, Audrey entered MH in 1966 with **Penny, Terry, Merry Ann and William**

Arnold. She left in 1971. At the time of her death, she was living in High Point where she had spent most of her adult life and owned a business.

Audrey is survived by her daughters **Mindi and Brandi** and step daughter **Chastity**, her three brothers **Terry, Tony, and James**, her honorary son **Ryan**, and her three grandchildren **Dani, Mikala, and Hannah**. No service has been planned at this time. Friends can send condolences through www.wrightfs.com (Wright's Funeral-Cremations of High Point).

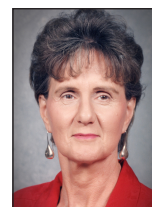
We have learned also of the sad news that **Ellis "Bill" Powell** passed away in early June. Bill entered MH in 1964, three years after his siblings **Charles Anthony (Gomer), Mary, and Margaret** entered MH. He left in 1969 before his class graduated. His sister Margaret remembers that as a five-year-old, Bill was extremely smart and as the years went along, he showed an uncanny ability in analyzing machines and solving mechanical problems. Margaret is still happy over the fact that Bill learned tasks on the farm, but she was especially grateful he learned maintenance tasks alongside **Mr. Paul Edinger** because of the kindness and Christian love "Mr. Paul" showed to all. Margaret also remembers that Bill was very fond of houseparents **Mr. and Mrs. Abernathy**. Friends may send condolences to the family in care of Margaret Armstrong, 1634 Elm St., Burlington, NC, 27217.

I believe **Harry Walls** took on the "contest" of persuading alumni to return for Homecoming. He called **Bonnie Overby** and found out she is still recovering from a stroke she had about nine months ago. Despite that, she is very upbeat and definitely plans to be at Homecoming. He also called his buddy **Dave Stepp** in Washington State. Dave sends regrets that he cannot return this year because he too is dealing with some health issues. He looks forward to a future Homecoming

to be with friends. Folks can send cards to Dave at PO Box 630, South Bend, WA, 98586 and to Bonnie at 116 Emerald Point, Mt. Gilead, NC, 27306. Both graduated in 1968.

Charles Ray Fortenberry shared this little tale, *The Arch: A biographical story*: "It was a beautiful June day in 1961 and hopefully the final move of my young life. You see, I had been a pass-around kid. None of my family, nor the foster care system, wanted me. I was an 'outcast,' but that would end today. I was headed to my new home! I was eleven. I felt new adventure and wonders awaited me in a new life in which I would not be passed around again. There would be new friends, work, school, sports, an educational trip to Washington, fun trips to the beach, and a ski trip to Beech Mountain where I met the love of my life. Traffic on I-85 was light and the trip took about an hour and half. As we pulled into Thomasville, heading down Lexington Avenue, I was more certain a whole new world was before me. We took a short ride down Lexington and made a right turn on Boyles Street. Then we crossed railroad tracks and there was the big arch with the words, 'Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, Inc.' I knew I had arrived at last, home at last. I enjoyed life there until 1969 when I graduated."

In addition to enjoying MH life, Ray was especially fond of **Mrs. Thelma Robertson** who was his houseparent at the Farm and Culler Cottages. After MH, he married and fathered two children. When at Homecoming, he especially loves being with "old" friends. Friends can contact Charles Ray Fortenberry at ssccf68@gmail.com or 803-229-2829.



Lib Johnson was a resident of Mills Home from 1946 to 1957. Johnson began writing the Mills Home alumni column in 1992.



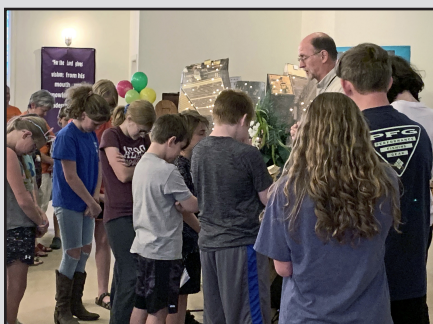
Making News Every Day Around the State



Kennedy Home in Kinston

Alumni gather for Homecoming

In June, former residents gathered at the place they call "home." Kennedy Home alumni spent a weekend of fellowship and reminiscing as well as attending Sunday service at the church.



Midway Baptist Church in West Jefferson

Children accept Jesus at VBS

Twelve children accepted Christ during VBS. BCH's Lewis Smith shared the BCH ministry and presented the gospel. Pastor Steve Leashomb prayed with the children.



Scotts Hill Baptist in Wilmington

Mountain Camp ministers to children

Boys and girls from BCH's statewide locations attended Mountain Camp at Laurel Ridge. Scotts Hill does an amazing job of sharing the grace of Christ during the week-long retreat.



Good Shepherd Ministries in Guatemala

Orphans share their creative writings

During a recent library visit, boys and girls from Good Shepherd Children's Home read aloud short stories that they had written and illustrated. They received medals from the library staff.



NC Baptists: On Mission Together

Unzicker and friends tour Broyhill

Todd Unzicker, Baptist State Convention NC Executive Director-Treasurer; and NC Baptists Dennis Thurman and Jason Miller spent time with cottage parents Will and Betty Porter.



First Baptist Church in Rockwell

Church presents check to Camp

Recently, Cameron Boys Camp director Drew Scott and campers were invited to a Sunday service. Pastor Matthew Laughter presented them with a \$3,000 gift raised by their VBS.



East Taylorsville Baptist Church

VBS children collect \$5,000 offering

Friends at East Taylorsville experienced an amazing week of VBS. In addition, the boys and girls collected a \$5,000 missions offering to help minister to BCH's boys and girls.



Lakeview Baptist Church in Monroe

Church's VBS collects supplies

BCH's Jody Yopp (right) greets pastor Billy Atkins as he picks up supplies collected by children and families during their VBS week. They will be used at BCH's many cottages.



Kenansville Baptist Church

Pastors take pies for missions offering

Associate pastor "Soapy" Martin and lead pastor Aaron Smith received pies to the faces since VBS children met their mission offering goal. They raised \$3,000 for Kennedy Home.

Can we help? Many ministries beating with one heart.

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- Central Area Family Services**
Regina Keener, Dir., 336-474-1200
- Eastern Area Family Services**
Christopher Allabaugh, Dir., 252-522-0811
www.kennedyhome.org
- Odum Home**
Kathy Locklear, Res. Mgr., 910-521-3433
www.odumhome.org
- Cameron Boys Camp**
Drew Scott, Dir., 910-245-4034
www.cameronboyscamp.org
- Camp Duncan for Girls**
Brad Gearhart, Dir., 910-944-3077
www.campduncanNC.org
- Family Foster Care**
Bob McCleary, 828-627-9254
www.bchfostercare.org
- Christian Adoption Services**
Kevin Qualls, Dir., 704-847-0038
www.christianadopt.org
- Weekday Education**
Brooke Child, Dir., 336-474-1201
- Tucker Greater Vision Ministry**
Sara Becker, Mgr., 336-687-6384
- HOMEbase** at W. Carolina University
Jim Dean, Dir., 828-293-4660
- Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities**
Tara Sessoms, Dir., 336-474-1259
www.hereismyhome.org
- NC Baptist Aging Ministry**
Sandy Gregory, Dir., 336-474-1221
www.ncbam.org
- Good Shepherd Children's Home** in Guatemala
Keith Henry, COO, 336-474-1215



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Alumni share updates and memories; alumna writes book, "Wisteria Trees and Honeybees"

By **JOHN THOMPSON**, 104 Village Court, Havelock, NC 28532 (252) 671-3515 jthompson117@ec.rr.com

Thanks to all the good folks in our Baptist churches who help Kennedy Home (KH). Cherry Point Baptist Church of Havelock, whose pastor is **Rev. Rick Smith**, delivered a truckload of paper products to Kennedy Home in June. Centerview Baptist Church of Jacksonville had a huge Vacation Bible School with a contest between the boys and the girls to see who could bring in the most change to help KH. Guess what? They collected a little more than \$3,000. They also delivered a truck load of paper products to help out with the ministry. The pastor is **Dr. Michael Schwalm and Denise Thompson** is the church's preschool director and served as VBS director.

Thanks again to all the alumni and their families who came together at Homecoming. It was the largest attendance we have had in many years. If you didn't make it this year, start planning now to attend next year. Go ahead and mark your 2023 calendar for the first weekend in June. Our alumni president, **Katie**, and the alumni committee did a great job planning this great time together!

Special thanks to **Penny Maready Batten and Doris Russ** for playing the keyboard and piano for Sunday's worship.

Donald Wetherington writes: "The Bible says honor your mother and your father that your days may be long! When I was a small, a six-year-old boy, I was put in the Baptist Children's Homes. I don't know what happened to my father. He just vanished off the face of the earth when I was around five years old. While there, I learned about a Father that lives in heaven and Jesus Christ who adopted me. And I'm here to tell you that He has never left me nor forsaken me. If you don't know Him as your

heavenly father, why don't you do that today? You'll never regret it."

Susan Langston wrote a note saying that her husband **Ronnie D. Langston, Sr.** passed away. From Princeton, NC, he was born 2-24-49 and passed on to heaven on 2-20-22. He resided in the Brokenhurst Cottage at KH from 1955-1958. His siblings, **Guy Langston and Becky Langston Weaver** also stayed at KH during that time. At the time he passed, he resided in Fremont with Susan. You may call her at 252-315-1454.

Billy Smithwick (1972-1976) sent me this note. Billy was the alumni president at one time and did a wonderful job. He always speaks highly of KH and asked me to bring you up to date on his life: "I am sending you my latest update about what I am going through. I have lived in Ahoskie for several years until recently when I became homeless for a few months. I was homeless, unemployed, and had no way to get around. Recently, God has blessed me with a job and very soon I will have someplace where I will call home. I will give out my new address soon. I want to thank everyone for all their prayers and I will keep in touch. I plan on attending the beach retreat in October and I hope to see as many as I can then. Right now, I have started a new job with Aramark working at Chowan University. I am being tremendously blessed. I hope to see you all soon. God bless!"

Donna Daniels Wade has written a book entitled *Wisteria Trees and Honeybees*. This is a great book that you will want to read. You can contact her at donna.wade@ncsecu.org to secure your copy. At our recent Homecoming, she gave all of us who wanted one a signed copy. You really need to get it and read every word. She is also

a composer of beautiful music. She even wrote a song about Homecoming. Donna writes: "When I am with **Mr. Thompson, Debbie, Debbie, Donna, Gary, Danny, David**, and the others who shared time and space with me at KH, it's as if we are truly family. We laugh, play, have fun, and, yes, sometimes remember. That is the best thing that came out of my time at KH. My family grew, and you know, you can never have too much family. Besides that, I learned how to make a bed, do laundry, wash dishes by hand, and clean house. I learned how the library system worked, how to can beets and how to make chocolate toast and lemonade. I learned how to play a piano and clarinet and how to crochet. In short, I guess I learned about dedication and responsibility. I am teaching my grandkids some of these things now. Things like how to play roll the bat and red rover, how to do flips in the pool, and how to make chewing gum wrapper chains. Life is good."

Debbie Lassiter shared about the death of **Sheila Suggs**. Her funeral service was held on June 30 in Princeton, NC. Sheila was a loving wife, mother, daughter, sister, grandmother, and friend and was a faithful member of Trinity Church of God. Sheila was an avid yard worker and took pride in her work. She loved singing and going to the lake, but most importantly, spending time with her family and friends. She will be dearly missed but precious memories will forever remain the hearts of those who knew and loved her.

Debbie writes: "I had someone ask me why I always refer to KH and what does it mean to me? Anyone who knows me knows that I have made no secret about the fact that I was raised at the Baptist Children's Homes in Kinston.

I spent seven years of my formative life there, from the age of 10-17. It used to be an orphanage home and then it was turned into a home for children whose families had various problems. Today, KH helps children and houses families with mothers and children who are struggling in life for one reason or another. It is a place for them to transition until they have a place of their own. The children I grew up with there truly feel like my brothers and sisters. Many of them I lived with longer than I lived with my actual family. My father and mother were basically irresponsible and could not take care of their own children. I don't say this to mean it in a bad way. I think it was the best thing that ever happened in my life. I feel my life would have been different had I stayed with my parents. I truly believe that I would have taken a much different path in life and would have ended up in a far worse place. I am so blessed to have the life I have, the children we have, and the loving husband that I am so blessed to have in my life. So, I'm putting this out here so everyone can understand what KH means to me and why I refer to it so often—truly a blessed place for me to have been raised!

Debbie, thanks so much for sharing this with our readers. KH remains a great place for healing and hope.

Let me encourage many more of my KH youngins to send me a note about why they loved Kennedy Home. Please fill free to visit me in Havelock, share a meal, remember old times together, spend the night, or just spend a few minutes

for a great old visit.
—jt



John Thompson served at Kennedy Home from 1972-1977. Today, he enjoys an active retirement.

Stories of longevity rooted in commitment

By Jim Edminson, Editor

When I take the right road, my drive to the office at Mills Home in Thomasville goes under a canopy of trees with trunks big enough for a group of four to six friends to join hands and encircle them. When I arrive and walk toward my office, I step over roots that reach away from the trees, tying them to the rich soil of this historic place. These towering trees and widening roots provide stability to the land and stretch far into the past to connect those of us here now with the myriad of people who came before. It's difficult not to look up, literally and figuratively, to the saints who have gone before, with all the trees that grace this place.

Among the people inside these buildings, the same rootedness exists. Longevity permeates the space, speaking volumes of the ministry and the desire of staff members to stay connected with the vision of "sharing hope...changing lives." But these people, my co-laborers, also have powerful personal stories of commitment that are living testimonies to God's goodness. Ron and Cindy celebrated 50 years of marriage a couple of weeks ago. Jennie and Howard have a well-known love story spanning decades, as do Nancy and Donald, Wyatt and Jimmy, Carol and Jim—the names and faces go on. Our own president/CEO and his bride Catherine can count backward many years to that day they both said I do, celebrating their 55th on August 12.

When I listen to these friends talk of their relationships, their faces light up and my heart is warmed, telltale evidence that these commitments matter, bring joy, sustain them.

I look farther afield and find more longevity. Lib and Bob, Carolyn and Harold, Maxine and Bill, and others spring to mind, more proof of God's good work in the hearts of His people called to a lifetime commitment to each other. Theirs are the roots that ground their families, the shelter that overspreads those for whom they provide with love and care. Not to overplay the metaphor here, but the connection between trees with deep roots and wide canopies and committed love relationships that stand the test of time is hard to miss. Paul's words to the Ephesians makes a similar comparison: *"I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:17-18).*

There are trees at Mills Home that become diseased and begin to fade. They are carefully tended, but with all the care in the world, sometimes trees die. While they make room for other life to spring forth, their presence is missed; the landscape's difference is felt.

I witnessed the strength and joy of steadfast couples and the love they shared before one went on and one remained. Marian and Gerald, Becky and John, Brenda and John, Diane and Randy, all beautiful shared stories that live on after the severing of their earthly coupleness that so defined them. The testimony of their commitments are among my most vivid story-memories: *"God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart..." (Eccl 3:11).*

Kathy and I added another year to our shared life this week, marking our 41st anniversary. The celebration had none of the fanfare of last year's big 4-0, yet we had all we have ever needed. We really do cleave to each other, just as we did on that long-ago July day when I left my parents and she left her home, supported by the roots they provided and standing unafraid under the canopy of their love. Our parents reached high numbers of years together before one went home first, to be followed by the other later on. The examples of their commitment provide strength for our days, hopes for our tomorrows.

There is talk about the fragility of life and the uncertainty of love in today's society, but maybe it depends on where we look. The stories I hear, the ones I am privileged to tell, speak of long-suffering, yes, but also commitment. They are not the easy lives of people with charmed existence (although those exist, too); rather, they are the overcomers who faithfully hold on, both of them, to each other, digging deep and standing firm. Like the trees I see all around me here, the people create those same life-invigorating canopies, those same gnarled roots, God-given tenacity to stand firm: *"Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures" (Ps 119:90).*

More trees will be planted at Mills Home, and they will join an impressive collection of venerable oaks, hollies, maples. In their turn, these new trees will shelter and inspire, adding to the story of longevity together with the people who come this way to serve.

Churches, it's time to prepare for this year's

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