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Charity & Children

And now abides faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina



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January-February 2021

Issue 1

Volume 134

God gives sisters a home with loving parents

By **Jim Edminson**, Editor

Carol spells adoption differently than the average person on the street. The spelling is simple, she says: It's L-O-V-E.

In October 2017, Carol had a heart breaking conversation with her daughter—it was a meeting that no mother imagines ever having. Her daughter told her that she wanted to surrender the parental rights of her three daughters: Emma, Jamie, and Addie.

Heart-broken, Carol sat in silence weighing the gravity of what she had just heard. She began to pray. She talked

with God, crying out for the needs of her daughter, for her three granddaughters' futures, and for His divine direction. She would spend many sleepless nights praying, drawing closer to God, seeking a miracle.

Kayla and Wes entered into marriage with a heart for adoption. Before marrying, Kayla would curiously seek information about adoption. To adopt or not was never

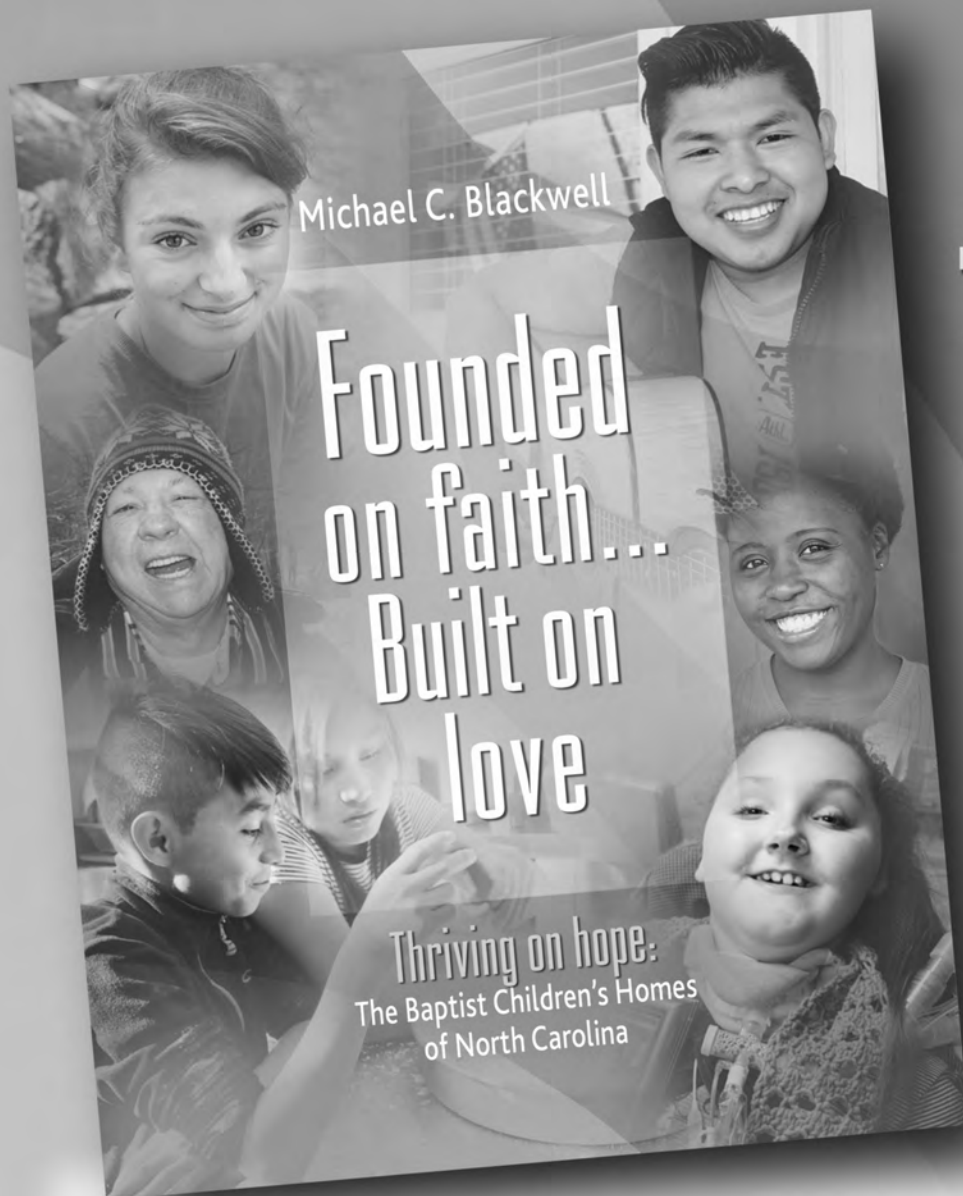
a question, it was only when. Seeking the “when” became a constant prayer as the couple went about their lives—serving in their church and growing careers.

Carol knew the girls needed a Christian mother and father. She did not know how the need would be met. She did know the Lord God who already inhabited the future and she trusted He was at work, paving the way. Carol kept praying.

*Continued
on page 8.*



Left to right, sisters Addie, Emma and Jamie with baby Josiah.



It's a book for the ages!

Hello friends!

I want you to have a personalized copy of my newest book—***Founded on faith....Built on love.*** This life-changing, miracle-making, hope-sharing history of The Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina is a must-read for all who hold the 135-year-old ministry close to their hearts. The book is filled with color pictures and inspiring stories of drama, suspense, courage, and ultimate victory. It's a must have for your library.

A generous grant from the Broyhill Family Foundation makes it possible for you to have a signed copy for only \$20.00. This includes all postage and handling. A full-color book of this quality would sell for as much as \$40.

The Baptist Children's Homes is part of your life story. And the real stories in this book of young people overcoming seemingly impossible odds will challenge you to be your best self.

Subtitled ***Thriving on hope***, this new history book focuses on the last 20 years while summarizing the entire spectrum of BCH from 1885 through 2020—135 years of many ministries, beating with one heart.

I look forward to inscribing your copy or copies (makes a great gift for friend, family member or church library)

of ***Founded on faith....Built on love.***

Please complete the coupon on page 8 and note the payments options. Return it in the enclosed reply envelope. Costs for this mailing are being completely covered by the Broyhill Family Foundation. No BCH funds are being expended.

I have served as BCH president since 1983. I am more excited about our ministry than ever before. Find out why by ordering your copy or copies of ***Founded on faith...Built on Love*** today. I look forward to hearing from you.

Please complete the order form on page 8 and return it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. There will be only a limited number of books printed, so order now. Once they're gone, that's it. No more. Your copy or copies will arrive in the first quarter of 2021.

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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Expecting teen chooses adoption, stays a part of her daughter's life

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

Kelsey was two months away from high school graduation. Soon, the seventeen-year-old would be stepping across the stage in her cap and gown marching into her future. She was quickly becoming a young adult, but not in the way she had planned. Kelsey was pregnant.

"I was surprised and really scared," admits the Durham resident, who is now 30. "I came from a good Christian home, I went to church every Sunday—you never think it's going to happen to you."

Frightened of disappointing her parents and not wanting to do anything to derail her graduation, Kelsey kept her secret except for confiding in close friends.

"All my girlfriends were saying, 'You don't have to tell your parents,'" she shares, "They were willing to take me to an abortion clinic, but in the back of my mind, I always felt God saying, 'I have another plan for you.'"

The teenager did conceal her pregnancy from her family. When she told her parents, the conversation was difficult. Kelsey had a younger sister and brother and her parents were concerned about how a baby would impact the dynamics at home.

"They were not ready to be parents to my child, and my mother felt I was not mature enough to be a mom," Kelsey admits. "She was right. I was young and immature, but I did know that I needed to take care of myself and this baby."

Kelsey began to educate herself. The process included an appointment with a staff member at an abortion clinic—simply to ask questions.

The same week, Kelsey was introduced to Christian Adoption Services (CAS). Now a ministry of Baptist Children's Homes (BCH), CAS offers domestic, international, and foster-to-adopt services. CAS staff members work with expectant parents who have decided to place their baby for adoption as well as those who are already parenting but have decided to place their child(ren) for adoption.



Kaylee and Kelsey have maintained a close relationship even after Kelsey chose adoption for her biological daughter. Christian Adoption Services, a ministry of Baptist Children's Homes, helped Kelsey, as an expecting teen in 2008, find the right family for Kaylee. It is an open adoption where the adoptive and birth families have contact during and after the adoption process.



A teenage Kelsey holds newborn Kaylee moments after giving birth.

What she learned from her visits remained on her mind, but Kelsey's journey took her to another important place—Lois' Lodge. The family-style maternity home, unaffiliated with BCH, was familiar to her family as its residential program had successfully helped the daughter of friends. Reluctantly, Kelsey made the difficult decision to move in with the other expectant girls and caregivers.

"I'm very close to my family so when I left for the maternity home, it was very hard," she says.

Kelsey credits Lois' Lodge for helping her grow and learn essential life skills like cooking and basic home finances. They also helped her in begin

courses at the community college. These opportunities were needed as she considered the possibility of being a young parent.

"My viewpoint on the world changed while I was there," she confesses. "I lived with girls from all walks of life. Some had been living on the street who never had their parents' support. I learned so much from those girls."

It was during her time at Lois' Lodge that Kelsey's path came into focus. Instead of parenting, Kelsey chose adoption. More specifically, the teenager desired an open adoption where the adoptive and birth families have contact with each other during and after the adoption process.

With the guidance of Gretchen Goers, her case-worker at Christian Adoption Services, Kelsey began the process of choosing a family who would potentially be her unborn child's adoptive parents. CAS works with families who want to adopt by helping them find a child for adoption. Prospective families create albums that share photos and information that give a glimpse into their lives. As Kelsey sifted through album after album, she was drawn to one in particular.

"I picked out Joy and Todd's book. I felt connected to them immediately," Kelsey says.

Gretchen arranged for the three to meet the next day. After spending time together, Kelsey decided Joy and Todd, who were unable to have children, would be her unborn daughter's parents.

"We all cried," she remembers.

"It was special."

Joy and Kelsey drew closer together over lunches and attending doctor appointments together. Joy was there for some of the sonograms and the couple included Kelsey in the baby's naming. Joy and Todd determined two things: their daughter's middle name would be "Grace" and her first name would begin with "K" in honor of Kelsey. Together, the three chose Kaylee Grace.

When the long-awaited day arrived, Kelsey invited Joy and Todd into the delivery room for Kaylee's birth. Todd cut the umbilical cord and Joy held their newborn daughter immediately afterwards.

"Watching that moment—watching them become parents—is something I will absolutely

Continued on page 10.

Music opens girl's world to new hope

By Brenda B. Gray

Executive Vice President, Dev. & Com.

The little girl carefully picks up her treasured violin. Her eyes close as she lifts the bow and plays the notes to "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee." The bow runs across the strings and suddenly her face glows. It is a beautiful smile. A smile of "I can do this," a smile of hope and joyful worship as she proclaims her faith in Jesus through her music.

Most of the child's life has been filled with anything but joyfulness. Prior to coming into care at BCH's orphanage in Guatemala, she would have never imagined a God who loved her.

Her mom and grandmother were prostitutes. Her life was lived in unsafe environments. As a 10-year-old, her mom began grooming her for a life on the streets. The emotional and physical abuse she suffered caused her to retreat

away from the world.

Her face was ghostlike. Her eyes were fixed in a blank stare. The caregivers at the orphanage feared that no one would be able to break down the wall she hid behind.

On December 25, this precious girl will celebrate her 13th birthday. She was a Christmas baby, born into a world of fear. But now, God has turned that fear into hope—the darkness in which she lived, into light. Through her houseparents and missionaries Roger and Vicki Grossman, she has been introduced to the One who has brought transformation into her world.

At Christmas 2019, Roger directed the children of the orphanage in their first Christmas pageant. This sweet girl struggled to sing in tune. But she loved music and she shared with the Grossmans that she wanted to learn to play the violin. But there were no funds to buy a violin and no teacher.

In January 2020, she received a late Christmas present—a violin—from Wilkesboro Baptist Church. Another gift came from a wonderful music teacher who had taught many children to play the violin.

Christal McDaniel, a member at Mt. Vernon Baptist Church in

Olin, heard the girl's story and was determined to help.

She felt she could be an instrument of healing to a child who had opened up to the world of music. McDaniel provides the girl lessons bringing hope and healing.

Thank you Wilkesboro Baptist Church! Thank you Christal McDaniel! Thank you to each of you who make this ministry possible.

So many children are depending on you to help deliver this lifesaving ministry.

Imagine. Can you hear the girl's violin? Do you hear the melody coming from the life you helped change? Can you feel the impact on hundreds of children like her?

We could not do what we do without you—and we would not want to. You are family.

What a year it was in 2020. COVID-19 impacted every aspect of BCH's ministry. And the orphanages, clinics and ministries in Guatemala were especially impacted. We had hoped the third cottage would be open, but mission teams who help with construction have been unable to go. We also experienced a financial deficit of thousands of dollars (approximately \$120,000) due to funds and supplies that mission teams normally bring with them.

Last year, you rallied to raise \$100,000 to help build Mae Home and \$45,000 to purchase a van. This year, I am asking you to help raise much needed funds to care for the basic needs of the children in the orphanages in Guatemala and to help meet critical medical needs through the clinic.

Help us meet the many needs of the children. Help us continue to turn fear into hope and darkness into light. Help us rescue children. Last week, we received a one-year-old abandoned by his family who weighed only 12 pounds. Four other children came to the orphanage with the message: "Take them. We do not want them."

There are three things that I need you to do. First, pray—and then pray. And then pray again. Second, love these precious children abandoned to fear and hopelessness. And finally, give that they may have life.

In James 1:27, we read: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this—to look after the orphans and widows in their distress..."

Thank you for following our biblical mandate to care for these precious babies, these beautiful boys and girls who are so valued and loved by our Lord and Savior.

For more information on how you can help, call me at 336-689-4442.



Brenda Gray serves BCH as the executive vice president, development & communications and directs fund-raising/friend-raising activities for the ministry.

[MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE]

HELP HER FIND THE WAY OUT

This little girl needs your help to find the way out of a life filled with darkness and pain. She needs you to ensure that she has a place to live where she is safe and is loved unconditionally.

This little girl needs you to make sure Baptist Children's Homes is there for her.

You are needed more than ever! Hundreds upon hundreds of boys and girls need you now and in the coming year.

DOUBLE your gift through the matching gift challenge until Jan. 31. Please give at bchfamily.org/givenow.



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☐ Yes, I would like to receive email updates from Baptist Children's Homes.

☐ Contact me with information on how to prepare a Christian Will. ☐ I have included Baptist Children's Homes in my estate plans.

BIG STORIES OF 2020

Blessings abound during historic and unprecedented times

By Blake Ragsdale, Managing Editor and Jim Edminson, Editor

This past year was filled with loss and hardship for so many Americans. People throughout North Carolina and the world have been deeply impacted by COVID-19. But in spite of the challenges, there was good news.

Facing a pandemic

In March 2020, Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) entered an unprecedented time navigating everyday life during the pandemic.

Immediately, BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell stepped to the front to assure friends, residents and staff members that just as BCH has in other times overcome great challenges, BCH would persevere and come through this time stronger than ever.

Fortunately, many safety protocols to protect the BCH family at facilities around the state had long been in place. Because of the ministry's readiness and the quick response in implementing even more precautions, BCH effectively has remained safe during the past 10 months.

As soon as public schools were closed, BCH's staff members embraced "Stay Home...Stay Safe." Cottage

parents added to their daily roles serving as school teachers, activity directors, and guidance counselors. Cottage parents helped the children succeed online using remote learning.

Despite the fact that many North Carolina Baptist churches faced their own challenges, they did not forget BCH. Their strong giving and support brought BCH through a tough year.

BCH marks 135 year anniversary

The year 2020 marked the anniversary of BCH which was established November 11, 1885. The theme for the year is "Founded on faith...Built on love." Although celebration gatherings were canceled, the anniversary was highlighted through the writing of a new BCH history book by Dr. Blackwell that will be available first quarter of 2021 and the release of a three-minute documentary scripted and narrated by Blackwell recounting the Children's Homes' storied history. The video, titled "Founded on faith...Build on love," is a message of resolve, strength and faith, and can be viewed at bchmc.org/bch_strong.

BCH acquires new ministry

Trustees took historic action during their September 15 board meeting adding Christian Adoption Services (CAS) to BCH's array of services. Through CAS, BCH gains the ability to aid families with domestic and international adoptions.

BCH and CAS were already working together through a partnership that was established in July 2019.

"Boys and girls need to be cared for by dedicated families who can give them the love and protection they deserve," says Blackwell. "Bringing in the proven expertise of Christian Adoption Services expands our ability to offer children hope."

BCH helps churches establish foster/adopt ministries

The number of churches partnering with BCH to impact the lives of children through family foster care and adoption is growing. BCH staff members provide training and licensing classes at participating churches to couples who desire to foster. BCH helps churches

provide ongoing ministry, practical support, and community for the couples and the children they foster and/or adopt.

BCH filmed an information video for a foster/adopt breakout session as a part of the virtual 2020 Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC). Along with the video, BCH launched bchfosteradopt.org website providing information to churches and couples concerning the foster care and adoption ministries.

NCBAM aids the isolated aging

Providentially, North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry's (NCBAM) "One Hope" outreach addressed isolation among the aging shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic began. In March of 2020, as older adults were

encouraged to isolate themselves, calls to *Hope Line* increased 923%. The high demand was met by dedicating two phone lines and weekend service. In June, *Hope Line* implemented an outbound Friendly Call

Service. As part of the new outreach, NCBAM produced printed and audio versions of daily devotions for overcoming loneliness, began a bilingual outreach, and established a new website: onehopeNCBAM.org. NCBAM also heightened its Servant Care outreach to retired Baptist ministers and their spouses or surviving spouses.

NCBAM was quick to provide virtual solutions for seniors as well as senior-adult leaders. The ministry's State Leadership Conference was live-streamed and followed by three regional virtual events. The ministry produced 20 videos to engage seniors with fall-prevention exercises, and offered numerous online workshops for Hope Line volunteers and the general public.

Greater Vision expands to Kinston

The Bob and Carolyn Tucker Greater Vision Outreach Ministry added a new location. The initial outreach was dedicated in 2019 at Mills Home in Thomasville, BCH's original historic location. The new center is at Kennedy Home in Kinston, BCH's second oldest location. Many community families found themselves in financial crisis due to COVID-19. Greater Vision Thomasville and Greater Vision Kinston were able to provide food and necessities to offset dire circumstances.

Together, the locations impacted lives by providing 152,550 meals, serving 77 families (220 household members) through the self-sufficiency program, and 83 partnering agencies distributed needed items to individuals and families in crisis through their own networks.

Ride sets record during pandemic

The annual "Ride to Clyde" on October 10 raised just more than \$90,000 for BCH. It is a record amount for the event that celebrated its fifth anniversary. An abbreviated ride was held due to the pandemic. The ride, organized by BSCNC, normally has bikers travel from the coast to Broyhill Home in the mountains.

Cheers broke out from the riders gathered outside Rich Fork Baptist Church in Thomasville when an original total of \$75,000 was announced. Later, after riders had departed, more contributions were tallied bringing the total to \$90,564. "Ride to Clyde" has now generated in excess of \$275,000 for BCH through the event's five years.

BCH expands digital media

Dr. Blackwell has expanded BCH's digital communication plan by adding regular audio and video programs.

The former journalist, broadcaster, and pastor is channeling his expertise, insights and humor into his national award-winning podcast "It's a Family Matter" and the popular "A Good Word" video programs

which alternate and are made public every Monday. "A Good Word" has brought encouragement to viewers for the past two years. The short videos are viewed by BCH friends and staff members from around

the state and put a joyful spin on Blackwell's CEO title by presenting himself as "Chief Encouragement Officer." Catch up on past episodes found at his YouTube playlist bchmc.org/goodword.

Dr. Blackwell's podcasts, where he invites and interviews a variety of relationship and parenting experts, are available through all podcast apps as well as bchblog.org/podcast.

Visit online and experience more ways to learn about BCH.



Founded on Faith Mini Documentary
Celebrating God's goodness and lives changed through 135 years of ministry as narrated by Michael C. Blackwell. vimeo.com/bchfamily/bchstrong

Church Foster Care/Adoption Ministry
Through Salem Baptist Church, see how a church can partner with BCH to establish a foster care & adoption ministry. vimeo.com/bchfamily/churchfa

A Good Word with Michael C. Blackwell
From his December message, Dr. Blackwell shares favorite words of encouragement directly from God's Word. vimeo.com/bchfamily/gwdec20

God's timing is perfect for girls, new parents, and Grammy

By **Jim Edminson**, Editor

Continued from page 1.

"Prayer, prayer, prayer," Kayla asserts. "Wes and I believe in prayer and connecting to God—we are reminded time and time again that He knows our needs and we can trust His timing."

Wes and Kayla were convinced they were called to adopt, but both agree that just as important as the calling is, it is important to wait on God. In December 2018, they both believed it was time. God's word to them was to actively pursue adoption. They turned to Christian Adoption Services (CAS) for help.

Carol was stunned when Kevin Qualls was introduced during worship at her church. Qualls was the president of Christian Adoption Services and his message that morning was entitled "Adopted into the Kingdom." At the close of the service, she was holding a CAS brochure. She remembers thinking, "God is already at work."

"We didn't know what to expect at the initial meeting," Wes recalls. "We had peace in our hearts and knew Christian Adoption Services was the way for us to go."

Wes begins to layout the timeline. The information session was on January 31, 2019. The couple learned that 98% of adoptions are for newborns. And if the couple applied, it would take at least 7-8 months or longer for a placement. With confidence, Kayla and Wes moved forward submitting their application on Saturday, February 8 and did

not expect to hear back for a few weeks.

To their surprise, Wes's phone rang that Monday. It was Marcia from CAS. The couple was told of three young sisters who needed a mommy and daddy. Marcia told Kayla and Wes that they had been praying for God to send the right couple and she felt they might just be the ones.

"It was immediate," Kayla says, "Wes and I looked at each other and said, 'We are going to do this.'"

Carol wanted an open adoption for her granddaughters. Her desire for them to have loving, Christian parents did not mean that she did not

want to continue to be the girls' "Grammy." Just weeks after Kayla and Wes applied, they were sitting with Carol.

"After spending time with Wes and Kayla," Carol says, "I knew they were God's choice to parent the girls. God confirmed it when they told me about their first date—it was the exact

day and time of Emma's birth. God put them together and chose them to be the parents of not only Emma, but Jamie and Addie as well—to raise them for His glory."



Kayla and Wes welcomed, left to right, Jamie, Addie, and Emma into their lives on June 12, 2019.

"We believed God said to go, do it!" Wes says. "At that time, we didn't know where the money needed to cover the costs of three adoptions would come from or how we would accommodate the girls in our three bedroom home. We just knew this was right—and soon the answers began to come."

"When God moves, He moves," Kayla added. "We finalized the girls' adoption in June—four and a half months after the first information meeting."

Wes and Kayla have been married six and a half years. They both welcomed the idea of

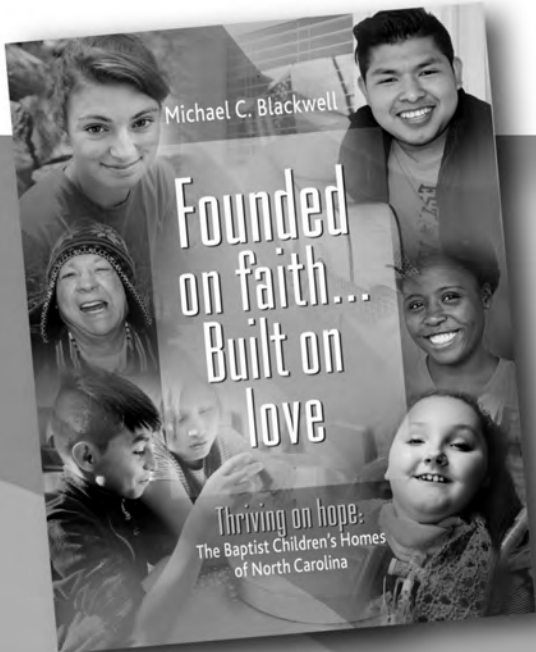
having a child when they first married, but a child did not come. With three new daughters making them a family of five, Kayla learned that she was pregnant. Josiah was born July 14, 2020.

Josiah's sisters are thrilled about having a baby brother. Kayla says each daughter is so gentle and helpful with Josiah.

This past Thanksgiving, the family was counting blessings when Wes asked Emma what she was thankful for—she didn't hesitate, "A mommy and a daddy."



"Grammy" Carol



Pre-order your autographed copy of Dr. Blackwell's new book.

To receive *Founded on faith...Built on love*, you're asked to pay \$20 to cover the cost plus shipping and handling. Multiple books can be ordered, but be sure to include an additional \$20 for each book. Make checks payable to Baptist Children's Homes of NC.

Please send me _____ copies at \$20 per book. Find enclosed my total amount of \$_____.

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A call for soulful prayers for healing and watchcare — Alum connect online for conversation and storytelling

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

I was touched by a call from our alumni president **Jane Brown**. She was clearly emotional as she expressed sadness about what she read in last month's column. She was very concerned about the wellness of alumni including those impacted by COVID-19 and was grieved by the passing of beloved sisters and brothers. She said the other council members felt the same way and wanted everyone to know how concerned they were with the physical suffering and grief that fellow alumni were experiencing.

On behalf of the council, she is sending wishes for a meaningful Christmas, deep felt love, and ongoing concern for the wellbeing of all alumni. She asked us to join together in soulful prayers for healing and watchcare from above for all.

Jane is thankful for the special connectedness that is obvious among us, and she prays that the upcoming vaccines we will receive in 2021 will bring the health necessary to allow us to gather again at the annual Mills Home (MH) Homecoming.

In addition, Jane reminds us that we have a special fund provided by a fellow alumnus for the purpose of paying dues for members who are having personal budget problems during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are in that category, please contact her for help to pay your annual dues. You can reach Jane at 919-451-2912 or ddbjhb86@gmail.com.

During 2004, **Sally Beck Ferguson** created the Mills Home Alumni Webpage and alumni hopped into action and contributed to many long streams of conversation, storytelling, general reminiscing, and maybe a little fibbing. This way to communicate has made for exciting days and enabled us to become acquainted with so many other alumni we had never met. It seemed to me that Homecoming that year was highly anticipated as we all looked forward to meeting these new friends from our webpage connections. And expectations were met in a very satisfying way. It turned out to be one of the best and most affectionate weekends ever. A woman who just happened to be a guest at Homecom-

ing that year turned to me and said, "I have never seen so much love in any one place." It pleased me immensely to know she perceived our interactions in that manner.

Many thanks to **Pati Stroud England** for news even though it was sad. She reported that **Elaine Nesbit Taylor** lost her husband, **Chuck Taylor**, on August 6. Friends can send condolences to Elaine at 3089 Park Lane, San Jose, CA 95127. Or phone her at 408-251-6969. Pati added that **Joyce and Buddy** hope to travel cross country to see Elaine very soon.

Please keep our friends who have had health issues recently in your prayers. **Martha Hunt Pridgen** has returned home after a brief stay in the hospital in November. **Mark Berndt** is recuperating from throat surgery and has promised to let us know about progress in his healing. Send get well cards to Martha at 1134 Fisherman's Cove Rd. Pine Hall, NC 27042 and to Mark at 1078 Cleavemark Dr. Clarkston, GA 30021.

Wallace Maultsby called with sad news from **Anita Wilson**, the daughter of his classmate **Tommy Wilson** ('33-'44). She reported that Tommy died on Nov. 27. In his early campus years at Chowan Cottage, Tommy was a quiet, reserved young man and somewhat small in stature. He grew over the years so that as a high school student he stood above most of his classmates, not only in stature, but in athletic ability. He excelled in baseball, football, and especially basketball. He served his country in the army, married, and lived in Charlotte for much of his adult life. After missing many years of connection to his alumni friends, Tommy returned several years to reunite at Homecoming with old friends. Wallace also mentioned a phone conversation with **Milton Bliss**. He is happy to report that Milton is of sound health and sounds quite energetic.

I was pleased again to have another person respond to my request for information on how folks had been spending COVID-19 lockdown time. **J.W. Wood** wrote: "The COVID-19 shutdown has given me time and focus to do some woodworking and

building projects that have been on my 'standing list' for a long time. My first project was to build a covered yard swing out of a stash of Western Redwood that has been in my shop for 25 plus years. Next, a friend of my sister **Jan** needed a custom fireplace mantel and surround. I made that. **Teresa**, my wife, has needed a hot-house and winter place to keep her plants so we built her a really nice hothouse. Sawdust has always been my best friend, so being able to build these projects using materials that I have collected over the years has been most satisfying."

Jay ended with: "Thank you for your years of sharing our stories with our Mills Home families and friends."

This is a personal note that I wanted to share about how I have been keeping busy: "Once I got tired of making so many masks for whoever wanted them, I found old materials that inspired me to take a second stab at quilting. That's been great fun and the first two will be gifts for our grandchildren, **Rob and Liz**. I just finished the top of a third quilt which is for our daughter. What's next for me? I have been so captivated by the paintings by **Phil Christman** that I'm ready to attempt a painting. It won't be great, but it will be inspired!"

A lot of people spend a goodly portion of their time on Facebook. Topics of conversation that pop up on Harry Walls' facebook page (Mills Home Orphanage Memories) are obviously interesting to most people, and they eagerly get involved in conversations. Common topics are events from campus life, descriptions of buildings and places on campus, workers from the various generations, and events from the lives of alumni. Some people simply pass on stories they just heard or read, jokes they have run across, while others posts photos from their current lives or life at Mills Home. There are photographers, or at least picture lovers, in abundance on Facebook so participants are treated to many marvelous personal photos and scenic pictures from the internet. They include flowers, landscapes, seascapes, and even pictures of ghastly looking fungus.

Everyone seems to love the photos and we really enjoy when Phil shares a photo of his latest painting. His work is realistic and quite varied: beautiful farm scenes, landscapes showing any and all seasons, and beach scenes and seascapes showing ships, boats, and bridges.

We were happy to hear from another "scrub" orphan around the time we should have been attending Homecoming. Many of us met **Nancy Williams** when her father, **Rev. Roger Williams**, became pastor of the MH Baptist Church in 1956. Other family members we came to know and love were her mother **Mary**, sister **Betty Gayle** and brother **David**. Nancy shared that she is now living at 208 Dellwood Dr., Morganton, NC 28655. Married to **Stephen T. Bailey**, they are parents to two children and grandparents to two grandchildren. Both Nancy and Stephen are now retired. They can also be contacted at Nancy.bailey50@gmail.com or 828-403-8323

The update sheet for **Mary Hunt Williams** ('54) shows that she entered MH in 1948 with sisters **Polly, Martha, and Betty**. In her active campus life, she played on the basketball and softball teams. In her church life, she loved Baptist training union and especially the Bible study. Through her "duties" on campus, (the sewing room, laundry, and cottage house duty) she learned responsibility and built a work ethic. Her favorite worker was Huffman housemother, **Mrs. Tom (Chris) Marlowe**. Marrying not too long after graduation, Mary began a great progeny of two offspring, six grandchildren, and eight great grandchildren. In the early 1980s, she and Martha created many crafts for the Homecoming Arts and Crafts Show, an important annual fund raiser for the Alumni Association. Also faithful to return for Homecoming, Mary says she simply loves seeing old friends and reminiscing about life at MH.



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



Alumni Support

Santa makes a special delivery

Kennedy Home alumnus Jim Dyer, who regularly portrays Santa Claus for events and special causes, delivered to Mills Home handmade hats created by Regina Burch of Christ Baptist Church in Raleigh.



Union West Rotary Club

Girls open gifts from friends

Members of Union West Rotary Club made sure the girls at Camp Duncan know they are loved. They dropped off Christmas gifts for each of the residents at BCH's wilderness camp in Aberdeen.



Weekday Education

Celebrating 12 days of Christmas

The boys and girls attending Weekday Education centers in Thomasville celebrate the 12 days of Christmas by dressing up differently each day. From hats to pajamas—each days brings smiles.



Piedmont Baptist Association

Churches fill "Baskets of Hope"

Churches from the Piedmont Baptist Association filled "Baskets of Hope" with supplies and other necessities they collected for the single mothers in BCH's Family Care ministry.



Lowes Home Improvement

Lowes improves children's lives

Lowes of Waynesville and West Asheville provided grills and vacuums for each cottage at Broyhill Home. They also gave comforters, linens and Christmas gifts for the boys and girls.



Randolph County Concerned Bikers

Bikers bring Christmas joy

Hundreds of cyclists roared through the Mills Home campus for the annual Toy Run. For years, bikers have collected gifts for the children at Mills Home to kick-off their Christmas season.

Do you feel called to a CAREER IN MISSIONS?

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The SECC is the only workplace giving program authorized for payroll deduction for most state employees. Choose #3641 and you will change the lives of boys and girls in our state.

Birth mother shares that "adoption is a beautiful thing"

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

Continued from page 3.

cherish for the rest of my life," Kelsey says. "They were meant to be parents."

In the weeks and months ahead, Joy and Kelsey would text. Photos of Kaylee would pop up on Kelsey's phone so she could see the growing little girl.

"Joy would just send me photos. I never had to ask," Kelsey says. "It was like she just knew when I needed to see a photo of Kaylee."

The relationship between birth mother and child has not been limited to only photos. There have been regular visits including birthday parties, recitals and special occasions. Kaylee was told about her adoption when she was five. According to Kelsey, the decision to tell her when she was young has proven to be right for Kaylee. "It's always been about Kaylee and putting her first."

The two have grown close through the years, and Kelsey sees some fascinating similarities. "We both have a love for theater—Kaylee's a very good singer and she loves going to church and hearing the Word." Then Kelsey laughs, adding: "She also is bad at math like me."

Today, Kaylee is 12. In addition to receiving

communications from Joy, Kaylee occasionally texts Kelsey.

"Just yesterday, I received a text from Kaylee," Kelsey says. "It read: *'There are no words in the world to describe how thankful I am for you.'*"

Kelsey says Christian Adoption

Services was not only a resource and support system for her as a pregnant teen, but they continued to support her through CAS's annual "Birth Mothers Retreat." At the retreats, Kelsey connects with other birth mothers who have chosen adoption for their children.



Kelsey invited her daughter's chosen adoptive parents, Joy and Todd, to be with her in the delivery room. Todd cut Kaylee's umbilical cord and Joy held her immediately afterwards. Kelsey wanted them to feel, as much as possible, as if they were having the baby.

there," she explains. "CAS is not only about being pro life, but they offer this really great option. I've thrived from being a birth mom.

"Abortion and parenting shouldn't be the only options that come to your mind—adoption is a beautiful thing," Kelsey says.

"In some ways, birth moms can be forgotten after the birth," Kelsey says. "Part of CAS's mission is to assure us that our feelings matter."

Kelsey shares her story so others can learn about the services CAS offers.

"So many Christians say not to get an abortion, but they aren't able to tell you the resources that are out

Alumni look to better things in the New Year!

Cottage devotions helped shape children's lives

By **John Thompson**, 110 Lee K. Allen Drive, Havelock, NC 28532 (252)671-3515 jthompson117@ec.rr.com

Well, it's happened. The year 2020 has come and gone. And what a year! People have lost family members, been sick and in the hospital and lost opportunities of family gatherings like Christmas, Thanksgiving, and family vacations. Alumni have missed out on Homecoming, the fall beach retreat, and the annual Christmas party all because of COVID-19. I pray that it will soon be over.

Becky and I aren't allowed by doctor's orders to eat in a restaurant. It seems like all I do is cook, cook, cook. Because of our two son's occupations, they don't get around Becky very much because they are afraid of exposing her to the virus.

At my church, we haven't had choir in worship since last March. Worship has been in the church parking lot and has been very successful. We served the Lord's Supper, had a Baptism, and folks even joined the church—all while we were meeting in the parking lot.

The virus has impacted our lives in so many ways. Let's all pray together that this will soon be over.

Cherry Grove Baptist Church along with churches in Craven and Carteret county have filled over a thousand back packs and bought new winter coats for all Baptist Children's Homes' children and for children in some churches in West Virginia.

In keeping with the stories of music at KH that I've run these past two months, I have a note from **Hugh Kirkman** (75-76) to share: "I remember singing in the children's choir. I always looked forward to choir practice. I lived in the CCB cottage with **Mrs. Lanie Cribb** who was my wonderful cottage mom. I remember she treated us as if we were her children. She made sure that none of us would ever miss choir practice while having her hands full with a whole house full of boys. She always made sure we were clean and dressed neat for church and when went to school. I really loved her."

I remember how Hugh was always excited about singing with the other

children. Today, Hugh works at a senior adult center in New Bern and likes working there. He attends many of the KH alumni meetings and enjoys being with his KH brothers and sisters.

Ken K. Halley shared: "Way back in 1948, my two sisters, **Mae and JoAnn Hawley** were placed at KH. JoAnn was only six years old and too young to go to school so she stayed in the Spellman Building with the matron. There was no room for me so I had to wait until January 3, 1950 before joining my sisters. Mae and JoAnn came from Middlesex and I came from Baily. There were 12 children in our family.

"I have many memories from my time at KH (1950-1959). I was in the Boy Scouts and we were going on a week-long camping trip to Topsail Beach. We rode in the back of a large truck with a canvas tarp covering us and all the supplies. When we got close to the ocean, I cut a small peep hole in the canvas so I could see out. What a wonderful sight. I had never seen the ocean before and I loved it.

"When we arrived, one of the supervisors noticed that somebody had cut a hole in the new canvas. I was identified and my punishment was to return to KH. I begged that I could stay. The other scout leaders decided that I could stay. I was so happy. We swam, fished, and I volunteered for every job that nobody wanted. I would love to hear from some of those I grew up with, my phone number is 913-727-2882 or email Khawley@kc.rr.com.

"I was nine years old back then and now I am 80 plus. I remember singing in the church choir and we traveled a few Sunday evenings to sing in other churches. My sister and I are the only ones living from my large family."

Jonathan Mark Phifer shared this note: "Hello, Mr. Thompson. I saw your post about people sending you their experience at KH so I thought I would add my story. My parents started working there when I was about 15 years old. My younger brother **Reagan**, my parents and I loved being there because we

were able to share the message of Christ with all the kids. Our family did not think of it as a job, but instead as a mission opportunity for sharing Jesus. I am now 21 and looking back I have some of the most wonderful memories and best relationships built during that time. It is amazing how God works and where He leads us. There are about 30 other young men who I keep up with from that time and we are always talking about the great times we had there. Not only do we talk about the fun, but we also talk about the "God stories" and the way Christ impacted us.

"Every Saturday night, we would play basketball. Every day we rode bikes and played until dark. Instead of treating the kids as if they were a part of the system, my family treated them like they were our family and loved them the way Christ loved them. That's what it is all about."

I recently read an article in a 1980 *Charity & Children* about devotions in a cottage. I remember some of the houseparents sharing about the devotions they presented to the children in their cottages. When I first went to KH, we had Sunday evening services as well as the morning worship and Sunday school. We also had Wednesday night prayer meeting under the direction of **Rev. Rodney Beals** and when he left **Rev. Dixon**. The children attended all church activities and all went to prayer meeting. At business meetings, the children who were members of the Kennedy Home Church could participate. Eventually, the campus did not meet for evening prayer meetings, but staff members conducted a prayer meeting every Wednesday morning in the gym. We had some great times in those meetings.

Those Wednesday morning times were when houseparents shared about what happened during their cottage devotion times. Folks like **Mr. and Mrs. Bill Beacham**, **Mr. and Mrs. Mac McCormick**, and **Mr. and Mrs. Earl Maready** shared about many meaningful times during their cottage devotions. I hope that this devotional time taught our children the importance of having a special time with

their own children later in life.

Dave and Claudia Russell were houseparents at Ferebee Cottage. One of the first things they asked after coming to KH was "how do we conduct devotion?" They were told to bring their own family traditions into the cottage. They had their cottage devotion time at breakfast every morning. Mrs. Russell said that the big reason for having devotions at breakfast was that it is just about the only time during the day that all of the cottage was together. She said it was the most valuable group time that they had every day—the morning devotion set the tone for the day.

In their devotional time they had Scripture reading, followed by discussion of what the text meant and how to apply the meaning to one's life. There was then a time for prayer, which was usually done by one of the children. The Russells also encouraged the boys to have their own personal devotions in addition to the group time. It wasn't long before the boys' devotions became a part of their daily routine as well.

As you know we had to cancel our Christmas party at King's in Kinston because of COVID-19. So, President Katie is looking ahead to possibly having a Valentine Party at King's or a get together near Easter. None of us know how long all these pandemic restrictions will continue, so just be on the look-out for an announcement from Katie.

Always remember, that you are always welcome to visit Becky and me. Or give me a call or send an email just to let us know how you are doing. We want to keep in touch. We thank you for the wonderful "love gift" you gave us in November. All that you did touched our hearts as well as served a real blessing and we are deeply grateful. It was so thoughtful! We truly do love and appreciate you. We wish for you, one and all, a very successful and blessed New Year. Happy 2021!

Love ya!—jt

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



Choosing love over fear

By **Jim Edminson**, Editor

We live in a world of symbols. That red octagonal sign at the intersection, the yellow circle with two dots and a friendly, upward curving line, and the envelope-shaped icon that appears on our computer screens—we all can identify these right away. All of us equate the “who” of the brown night bird with wisdom and the white morning bird with peace. And everyone understands the heart symbol—the red curvy one on a Valentine card and the one formed with fingers from both hands, index fingers touching forming the rounded top and the thumbs the bottom point. Universally, we know the meaning of a heart.

Love, of course!

According to the Apostle John, we know true love when we know the Author of love: God. How beautiful! Since God is love, we rest assured that love is strong and lasting and powerful and, well, eternal. Nothing is stronger nor more powerful than love.

For the third time in my life, I crooked my arm and felt the hand of a daughter hold onto me as we proceeded up an aisle formed by loved ones on each side. I walked in time to the music, matching my steps to my daughter’s, gently kissing her before placing her hand into the hand of her chosen.

Familiar, yet, so much of this third time was brand new. Jenny chose to marry her beloved Donald in the middle of a pandemic. Little could the two know when they set the date that their special day would be overshadowed by the coronavirus. All of us waited, believing that the virus would run its course and be gone by their July date. When

the calendar moved halfway through June, the couple brainstormed contingencies. On the first of July, they moved the venue to her parents’ back lawn and drastically shortened the guest list to 30. They decided to go with their plans and unite in holy matrimony. On that pre-determined date. During a global pandemic.

Also new to this third time: the officiating clergy were Jenny’s sister Mary and brother-in-law Alan. As I took my place by Kathy, I watched not only the two marrying but also the two joining. What a beautiful and unfamiliar day. Masked and socially distanced, we witnessed a new beginning. We celebrated love.

Between watching and listening, I probably missed a bit of the ceremony. But then the resounding words pierced my ears and heart: “Jenny and Donald,” intoned Alan, “have chosen love over fear.”

As Mary and Alan prepared for the ceremony, they took love over fear as the theme. What a perfect message for beginning a new family in the midst of trauma. In July, there were more unknowns than there were knowns; much is the same even today. Choosing love over fear is worthy, and in so doing, His people choose God over our own understanding. Love prevails.



You and I stand at the threshold of a new year and trust the One who already inhabits that future. What is unknown pales beside our loving God.

At the conclusion of the wedding, our families gathered for a photo the couple wanted as a remembrance. They chose the heart symbol—the symbol for love. The word that describes our God. Choose love over fear.

Happy beginning to all with love.



Edminson encourages others through the Good News of Jesus. Invite him to preach or speak at your church. Contact him at wjedminson@bchfamily.org.



January is Sanctity of Life Month

As you honor this special month, please make a gift to Christian Adoption Services, now a ministry of Baptist Children’s Homes. Your gift to their **ANGEL FUND** allows us to provide ministry and care to more expectant mothers and adoptive families.

Your gift is DOUBLED through the Matching Gift Challenge!

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