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Charity & Children

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



@bchfamily

December 2022

Issue 12

Volume 135



Safe for Christmas

By **Jim Edminson**, Editor

Twenty-seven-year-old single mom Angelica doesn't have visions of sugar plums dancing in her head this holiday season. Instead, she dreams of her four children with wide eyes and smiles on Christmas morning.

Decorations are going up on the outside of their cottage. Her children, MiAngel (3), Raquell (5), Rakel (7), and Aire 'Ana (11), are excited about decorating a "real" tree and each child has a Christmas wish list.

Angelica is part of the Family Care Program at Kennedy Home in Kinston. The program offers supportive cottage homes for working single mothers and their children, providing a goal-focused living environment structured to help mothers transition to a successful, independent living situation.

"My hope is for my children," she says. "This new beginning is all about them. I'm able to slow down and spend time with them. It is a new day filled with new hope for a better future."

Only a few months ago, life was bleak for the young family. The hard-working mom was an hourly worker. When she and her children all experienced COVID, she was unable to work for a month. Falling behind on rent, they were evicted from their home. The five were staying with a family friend. Angelica realized she needed help and a new start. (Continued on page 6.)

Christmas is for all ages

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

It's hard to live in someone else's shadow. Few people can name more than two or three vice-presidents. Almost no fan knows the name of the linemen who make holes for the million-dollar backs to scamper through, or the second-string quarterbacks who back up the stars.

When it comes to being overshadowed in the Bible, consider Elizabeth and Zechariah. The Christmas drama puts Mary and Joseph on the marquee. Featured also would be Herod at his wily worst, three Eastern wise men, a group of shepherds, and an anonymous innkeeper. Only end credits might include, "Also starring Elizabeth and Zechariah."

Elizabeth and Zechariah were the parents of John the Baptist. Zechariah and Elizabeth were past their prime in years. Most of us would not like the term the King James Version uses to describe their senior citizen status. It says they were "well stricken in years." Some of you might see it that way, but most of you would not. Some are indeed "stricken" with age. But most of you handle it well and are a bright example to those around you.

Zechariah was an older priest who ministered in a little village in the hill country of Judea. There were 20,000 priests like him in Israel and each year one division of priests got to do a two-week stint in the Temple of Jerusalem. One priest, chosen by lottery, would get the opportunity to make the sacrifice. The priest entered the holy darkness of the inner Temple, spread coals on the altar, and sprinkled incense on it. As the smoke began to rise and fragrance filled the air, the gathered throng outside would know that God hears prayers.

This particular year Zechariah won the coin toss. As he entered the Temple, he was greeted by a voice with shocking news. "Your wife Elizabeth will bear a son," it said, "and you will call his name John!"

"You're putting me on!" was his reaction.

"We're too old for this. We're not even in mid-life. We're in later life."

Then suddenly Zechariah could not speak. Luke said it was because of his unbelief. It might also have been that he had a stroke—some people would if they got that kind of news at 65...or even 45. So, Zechariah emerged from the holy place dazed and mute. His one opportunity to deliver the main sermon at the Temple and he can't utter a word!

Elizabeth did become pregnant and John was born six months before Jesus. Upon his birth Zechariah's blood pressure returned to normal, he regained his speech, and spoke of the coming of Jesus "to give light to those who sit in darkness, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The story of Elizabeth and Zechariah is an opportunity to speak a good word for the ordinary in the Bible. These two people become lost in the Christmas story because theirs is a sub-plot in a larger drama. Zechariah was not a "name" priest who served a prestigious congregation. He came from a small town, maybe even open country.

When God chose to reveal himself, he bypassed the power of Rome and the super-intelligence of Athens and came to ordinary people, living in a little country out on the back side of nowhere. When he wanted to slip into human life, he did so in the form of a child, in the home of a father who worked with his hands as a carpenter, to a peasant mother of simple tastes and quiet graces. Elizabeth and Zechariah are but two among many of the ordinary people that God has used in his way of doing things. Ordinary people are the heart and hands and feet of his will.

People say Christmas is for children. That may

be true in the sense that in their bright-eyed amazement they capture its wonder and awe better than the rest of us. But I would like to restore Christmas to those of all ages who still stand in wonder and amazement at God's gifts and his provision for our lives. Elizabeth and Zechariah were old in body but youthful in spirit. They didn't yearn for the "good old days" or try to remember how it was "back when."

While it was still dark in Israel, they rose to light their candles and anticipate the dawn. They looked forward to the coming of One who would usher in a new day.

And so do we. We celebrate once again the season that transcends age and is for all ages. We are bright-eyed with our children, but we celebrate also those who have weathered the years and survived the storms. They are the teachers who impart the meaning of love and the definition of grace.



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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BCH University graduates affirmed for excellence

By Jim Edminson, Editor

The fifth class of Baptist Children's Homes University (BCHU) graduated November 15 at Mills Home in Thomasville.

The graduation ceremony was kicked off with comments by BCH COO Keith Henry as he welcomed this year's graduates: Amanda Armstrong, Sara Becker, Dr. Rodney Michael Briles, Alicia Rosser, and Tara Dawn Sessoms.

BCH's Bond Kiser shared a personal devotion and BCH President/CEO Michael C. Blackwell presented the commencement address which involved each graduate sharing what was most significant to them upon completing the multi-year program.

BCHU is a leadership and talent management program covering eight core areas that challenge participants to reach their "next best." Cohorts are made up of staff members who not only do their jobs, but look for ways to improve BCH's overall "culture of excellence" in their areas and departments.

Amanda Armstrong is BCH's Accounting Manager and has served since August, 2019. She is married to her best friend Derek. They have two sons, Derek (12) and Dax (11), and attend Walter's Grove Baptist Church in Lexington.

Sara Becker is the Operations Manager for Greater Vision and has served at BCH since 2002. Her passion is helping people in need and pointing them to Christ. In Sara's words, "I am thankful for everything I have learned during my time at BCH."

Dr. Rodney Michael Briles serves as the Assistant to Senior Vice President Sam Barefoot and has served since 2020. He has 21 years of experi-



The fifth class of Baptist Children's Homes University graduated on November 15 at Mills Home in Thomasville. BCHU is a leadership and talent management program that challenges participants to reach their "next best." Pictured left to right: Amanda Armstrong, Mike Briles, Sara Becker, BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell, BCH COO Keith Henry, BCH VP Staff Engagement and Compliance Bond Kiser, Alicia Rosser, and Tara Sessoms.

ence in church ministry serving in youth ministry, children's ministry, and education ministry. He and his family reside in Indian Trail, NC.

Alicia Rosser is the Manager of Oak Ranch and has served since 2010. She lives in Broadway with her family and is an avid equestrian and loves God's creatures big and small.

Tara Dawn Sessoms is the Director of BCH's

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ministry and has served since 2019. She has been in the field of mental health for almost 25 years and is licensed as a Clinically Licensed Mental Health Counselor, a Nationally Certificated Counselor, and a Certified Sexual Offender Treatment specialist.

Double your end-of-year gift! Double your impact!

Give now through the end of January and your gift will be doubled. Your gift will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$250,000.00. Give a gift of \$50 to sponsor a child's Christmas and it will be doubled to \$100 – a cottage sponsor's gift of \$600 becomes \$1,200. What better gift to give a friend or business associate than to honor them with a gift that blesses a child. BCH notifies honorees with a card and sends a gift acknowledgment receipt to you.

Check with your employer. Some corporations will match an employee's charitable gift, so the potential is that a \$100 gift could get matched by their employer and then both could get matched by our year end challenge, making a \$100 gift worth \$400!

Consider a gift of appreciated stock or other property. When you give stock or property to BCH, we then sell it. By donating the stock or property directly to BCH, you eliminate the capital gains tax you would pay if you sell it. If you have held the stock for more than one year, your gift will be deductible at its full market value on the date it is received.

If you have a Donor Advised Fund this would be a good time to make a difference by doubling its impact.

IRA Charitable Rollover Gifts are a great gift option for someone 70 1/2 and older. If you have an IRA and have not taken your required minimum distribution, an IRA Charitable Rollover gift is a great way for you to change the life of a child through the ministry of BCH and poten-

tially lower your income and taxes this year.

These are challenging times! Consider giving a little extra for those who wish they could give, but cannot this year. Thank you in advance for your investment in the life of a child. For details on any of these gift opportunities, please call Brenda Gray at 336-689-4442.

NOTE: This information is not intended as legal advice. Check with your accountant, tax advisor or attorney to determine the best strategy for your particular situation.

IMPORTANT: Call our office if you plan to make a stock gift. Brokers may not inform us of the donor who makes the gift. For questions about stock gifts or to expedite your stock gift, call Sam Barefoot at 336-474-1224.

This Christmas, keep giving a child the gift of home

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

I cherish the time spent with family and friends during the holidays. The smell of fresh baked gingerbread cookies and sweet potato pie brings back wonderful memories. The brightly decorated Christmas tree with all the beautifully wrapped presents makes me smile. I recall fond moments of watching our children in care at Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) open their special Christmas gifts—gifts you helped to provide. I have watched some rip through packages while others carefully unwrap theirs with great precision. I have witnessed children scream with excitement over a shiny new tricycle or cry with joy over a beautiful doll. But as I watch our children who have lived through so much trauma and chaos, I realize the best gifts can't be wrapped in glittery paper with big bright bows, they come wrapped in your love!

Gifts like "home."

Remember the story of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*? She was lost, frightened and longing for "home." She dreamed of being back in Kansas with Auntie Em. Like Dorothy every child who walks through the doors of BCH dreams of finding "home."

In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy discovers special words to return her home. "There's no place like home, there's no place like home," Dorothy whispers as she clicks her heels and is transported magically back to Kansas, back home where she is loved and cared for.

We do not live in a storybook world and there are no magical phrases to take away the hurt felt by Erissa. She does not know who her father is. Her mother died from an overdose. There were no ruby red slippers, no recitation to help Erissa escape her nightmare. For her "home" was a painful place.

She has had enough frightful experiences to last her a lifetime. She felt alone, discarded like a broken Christmas toy. But she is not a toy, she is a child—a child to be loved. Broken and alone, returning home was not an option.

You gave her the gift of "home." A "home" where she has found refuge. A safe place. A place she hoped and dreamed was possible for her. A "home" where she feels the love and warmth of Christian cottage parents. She lives at a "home" where she experiences the true gift of Christmas—Christ's love for a lost and hurting child. "HOME!"

"Home" comes in many shapes and sizes here at BCH. "Home" is a cottage on one of our campuses. "Home" is a foster family. "Home" is a family care cottage. "Home" is Cameron Boys Camp or Camp Duncan for Girls. "Home" is a family sustained through our Tucker Greater Vision Outreach ministry. "Home" is where our special needs



adult residents experience independence, family, and compassionate care through a loving community of care givers. "Home" is NCBAM providing volunteers and resources, enabling our senior adults to live in their homes as long as possible. "Home" is a place for birth moms to find hope and healing. "Home" is an adoptive family. "Home" is wrapped in your love!

The gift of home, the gift of life, the gift of hope, the gift of medical care, the gift of patient and kind cottage parents, the gift of food, the gift of clothes, the gift of encouragement, the gift of the Gospel being lived out and shared, the gift of healing, refuge, and safety. These are gifts so needed by those who walked through our doors last year. None of these can be wrapped in a box with brightly colored paper and big bows.

You help provide "home" for an abandoned five-year-old child, "life" for a precious baby girl, "hope" for a young boy whose mother is in prison, "healing" for a teenager adopted at the age of sixteen, "cottage parents' loving hands" to dry the nightmare tears of a six-year-old boy who had been left in a burning home as an infant, "food, clothing, safety and refuge" for a sibling group of three boys that had been living in a car with their Dad who was struggling with a drug addiction, and "salvation" for two precious sisters who heard the gospel and asked Jesus into their hearts. These are the gifts you provided—gifts wrapped in your

prayers, your love!

For me, Christmas is not an event to be celebrated just during the month of December. But it is an event to be celebrated 365 days of the year as we celebrate the most wonderful gift ever given—our Lord and Savior.

One of my favorite Christmas quotes is "Every time we give, it's Christmas." And so, I ask you to consider three requests. Will you give "home" this year? Will you give a voice to those who struggle to have a voice by sharing with your family, friends, and church the needs of those God has called us to be "HOME" for 365 days a year? These are challenging times. Will you consider giving a little extra for those who wish they could give, but cannot this year? Our children are depending on you!

I want our children to wake up on Christmas morning smelling freshly cooked gingerbread cookies and pumpkin pie. I want them to wake up with lots of gifts under the Christmas tree wrapped in brightly colored paper with great big glittery bows. But more important, I want them to wake up to those gifts that can't be wrapped in beautiful packages. I want them to wake up to the gift of "home" and all that word encompasses for those we serve. I want them to experience the true meaning of Christmas—the best gift ever given—Jesus!

From our "Home" to yours, Merry, Merry, Merry Christmas!

Your gift brings a child the

Hope

of Christmas

For the child who has never known
a "Merry Christmas..."

For the 691 lives who trusted Christ in the
past five years...

For the 156,500 lives you impacted in 2021
through your prayers and support...

For those who need hope this
Christmas and those who will
come next year...

Please give.



Change a child's life this Christmas!

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THROUGH THE \$250,000
GIFT CHALLENGE!

I want to share the **HOPE** of Christmas

- ☐ \$50 Christmas for one child ☐ \$100 Christmas for two siblings ☐ \$300 A cottage holiday outing
☐ \$600 Christmas for a cottage ☐ \$1,000 A large gift for a cottage ☐ \$_____ Any size gift

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2) By Credit Card: Give online at www.bchfamily.org/givenow or call Faith Frazier at 336-474-1312.

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



Angelica sets big goals for her young family's future

By **Jim Edminson**, Editor

(Continued from page 1.)

Angelica knew she couldn't do life alone anymore. Homeless and struggling financially, she began seeking a new life for herself and her children. Learning of a job opportunity in Kinston, she and her friend drove the 35 miles from Greenville where she was born and raised. While there, Angelica made a visit to the area's Salvation Army office and learned about the Family Care Program.

After she returned to Greenville, she called Kennedy Home and completed an application over the phone. There was a later phone interview, and in a few days the family had a place to live.

She and her children packed their belongings and were driven to Kennedy Home—sight unseen. She remembers being skeptical but all her fears went away as the young family rode onto the historic campus with its tree-lined drive, the cottages, and the yards where children played.

"My kids saw the other children and joined them as soon as the car stopped," she remembers. "They were all running in the yard, playing together."

She chokes as she recounts living in their previous home. The children stayed inside most of the time. She worked nights. When she was home in the daytime and could be in the yard with them or watch them from her kitchen window, they were able to play outside. Most days they just watched television.

"I watched them running with the other children and thought they were free of fear—I was free of fear," she says. "I breathed easier. I felt a weight lifted off me and knew my children were safe."

Despite the desperation of working long hours and never having enough, Angelica sees now that her children suffered most from having an absent mom. She was there, but at the end of a day she was physically and emotionally spent.

"So much has changed in my life in such a short time," she says. "I realized that I was working so hard just to pay bills, I wasn't able to be a mom."

Being a part of the Family Care Program has allowed Angelica to focus on her family's real needs. "It's hard to be a single mom working and parenting. But here it is different. I feel I can be a part of my children's lives. I have the time

to listen to them and spend time with them on their schedule—not mine."

She is taking business classes online and working part time. She has been able to save some money, something she was never able to do before. Recently, Angelica bought a good used car. She has begun dreaming about owning a business and buying a home one day. Setting goals for her life has been motivating. "You start with small goals. You reach a goal, and it feels so good. You set another goal, and another. Soon you're realizing that your goals are turning into your dreams coming true."

Focusing less on the trials of life has renewed Angelica's interest in her faith. She was a part of church before her mother passed when she was only 16 years old.

"Whether it was bad times or a little better times, faith has kept me moving forward," she says. "Now, I am able to look at my personal life and take steps to be closer to God. My children are asking questions about God. It's hopeful."

Angelica's Christmas wish list? She needs a laptop and a new phone. But she says knowing her children are safe has been the best gift ever.



Gift Catalog

2022

40+
GIFT OPTIONS

You can share hope through the new gift catalog.

You are able to provide children, single mothers, special needs adults and all those Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) serves with necessities and opportunities they've never had before. The catalog is a way you can be Christ's hands and feet to the lives we are privileged to minister to daily.

DIRECTIONS:

Please look through the categories of items and make your choices -- cost and quantity options are in red. There is an order form at the end of the catalog with instructions on how to make your gift.

CELEBRATIONS

Sponsor a Birthday

Show love to someone on their birthday by providing a gift & decorations for a child or adult in our care.

\$50/Child or \$600/Cottage

Prom Dress/Suit

Provide a new prom dress or suit to a teen in our care or an adult in our intellectual/developmental disabilities ministry

(IDDM) so they can participate in a once in a lifetime experience. **\$150**

College Care Package

Send a care package to a college student who has aged out of the foster system to help them feel loved and celebrated during their college years.

\$50



Sponsor Christmas

Purchase a Christmas gift and help make Christmas magical for a child in our care. This child may be experiencing the real joy of Christmas for the first time.

\$50/Child or \$600/Cottage

Christmas Meal

Provide a special Christmas meal for a child or adult in our care.

\$50/Child or \$600/Cottage



Clothing Wardrobe

When a child comes into our care, most come to us with little to no belongings. Provide a child or adult in our IDD ministry with the opportunity to have new clothing when they arrive.

\$400

Suitcase

Purchase a suitcase for a child in care to replace the plastic bag they typically carry their belongings in.

\$50 Quantity: 1 | 5 | 10

CLOTHING

Winter Coat

Give the gift of warmth to a child in care or adult in our IDD ministry. You can show Jesus' love with this simple gift. **\$50 Quantity: 1 | 5 | 10**

Shoes

Send a child to school with a new pair of shoes -- a first for many of our boys and girls.

\$75 Quantity: 1 | 5 | 10

ACTIVITIES & HOBBIES

Fishing Pole

Purchase a fishing pole for a child in care so they can learn a new skill while enjoying the beauty of the outdoors.

\$25/Child or \$300/Cottage



ACTIVITIES & HOBBIES (CONT.)

Sports Equipment

Provide sports equipment for a child in our Cottage Homes.

\$50/Child or \$600/Cottage

Art Supplies

Encourage creativity through art supplies for children and special needs adults.

\$25



Personal Tent

When campers go on outdoor trips to connect with Jesus & each other, it requires each child to have their own solo tent. Outfit a camper or our entire camp with tents to allow these teens to experience God's creation in a new way.

\$100/Child or \$1,000/Camp

Canoe

Purchase a Old Town Penobscot 174 Canoe for our campers to use on canoe trips. Canoe trips are one of the most important ways campers learn teamwork, social skills, organizational skills while exploring the beauty of God's creation. **\$1,500**

CARE IN TIME OF CRISIS

Counseling Session

Provide a session of counseling for a mother in crisis who has placed her child for adoption or is currently parenting in difficult circumstances.

\$100 Quantity: 1 | 5 | 10

Night of Safety

Provide one night of safety for an expectant mom in a crisis situation through a hotel stay and warm meal.

\$150



BASIC NEEDS

Welcome Care Package

Provide a child with a special Welcome Care Package that provides necessities such as toiletries & towels when they enter into care.

\$35

Bedding Basics

Provide new bedding for a child in our cottage home or adult in our IDD Ministry **\$100**

Mattress

Give a child in care with a good night's rest with a new mattress. **\$150/Child or \$1,800/Cottage \$9,000 for a whole campus**

Family Start Up Package

Provide a woman & her children coming into our Family Care program with a "start up package" including necessary items to stock their kitchen/bath/bedroom (including utensils, pots and pans, towels, dishes, glasses, bedding, etc.) **\$400**

School Supplies

Purchase school supplies for a child in our cottage homes, wilderness camp, foster care or our Guatemalan orphanage.

\$50

HELP AGING ADULTS

Wheelchair Ramp

Pay for an aging adult to have a wheelchair ramp built at their home as part of our Rampin' Up program so they can maintain their independence and quality of life.

\$350



Red Bags for Medications

Purchase red cooler bags for aging adults to help with medicine management.

\$3 Quantity: 5 | 10 | 100

Electric Fan

Purchase an electric fan for an aging adult without A/C to provide relief and keep them safe during the hot months in North Carolina. **\$25**

WILDERNESS CAMPS

Life Jacket

With our campers living outdoors in the wilderness, they spend a lot of time learning about teamwork & appreciating creation through canoeing & rafting trips. Provide a life jacket for a camper at Camp Duncan or Cameron Boys Camp.

\$25/Camper or \$250/Camp

Pair of Boots

Another necessity for outdoor living is a sturdy pair of boots. Your gift can provide a pair of boots for a camper or for our entire camp.

\$100/Camper or \$1,000/Camp



BABIES



Diapers & Wipes

Purchase diapers and wipes for one month for a single mom in our Family Care program, a family in our Foster Care program or for a child in our Guatemala orphanage. **\$100**

Formula

Provide formula for a month for a baby in our Family Care or Foster Care ministry or for a baby brought to our orphanage in Guatemala. **\$200**



SPECIAL EXPERIENCES

Birth Mothers Retreat

Sponsor a birth mom to experience hope and healing at our annual birth mothers retreat. Birth mothers are women who make the courageous decision to work with us to create an adoption plan for their babies. **\$500**

Backpack/Canoe Trip

Sponsor an extended river, beach, hiking trip for a camper in our Wilderness Camps. **\$500/camper or \$5,000/Camp**

Campership

Provide a child in care the opportunity to experience a week of summer camp. **\$250**

Group Celebration Trip

Sponsor a group celebration trip for a child in our cottage care or a camper in our Wilderness Camps. (example: The Ark Encounter, Creation Museum, Dollywood, Carowinds, etc.) **\$125/child or \$1,500/Cottage**



Event Tickets

Give an adult in our IDD ministry an experience of a lifetime by purchasing tickets to a sporting event or play for them to attend. **\$150**

Education

Provide a child the opportunity to receive an education by sponsoring school for a month. **\$220**

GLOBAL NEEDS

Chicken

Purchase a chicken for our Guatemala orphanages to provide a renewable food source for our children and caregivers.

\$10 Quantity: 1 | 5 | 10

Chicken Feed

Purchase chicken feed for a month to allow them to continue providing a

sustainable food source for Guatemala children. **\$40**

Meals for a Week/Month

Help a Guatemalan child to receive the nutritious food her or she needs each week or for a month. You are not only filling hungry bellies but you ensure healthy eating. **\$50/Week or \$200/month**



You can help share God's Word with a child or individual who has never had his or her own bible.

\$10/Child or \$25/Adult

BIBLES

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Where Needed Most

Not sure what to give? You can give an amount of your choosing to go towards where it is needed most. **\$** Fill in your amount on the order form at the end.



One of Everything

Having trouble narrowing down your gift choices? You can impact numerous lives across every Baptist Children's Homes ministry by providing one of every items listed in the gift catalog. **\$6,705**

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Three ways to make your gift:

MAIL THE ORDER FORM WITH A CHECK:

- 1) Find your item(s) on the form below. Items on the form are listed in the order as they appear in the catalog.
- 2) Write the quantity in the space provided beside each item item(s) you are choosing.
- 3) Total your purchases and make your check payable to "Baptist Children's Homes" for the total amount.
- 4) Cut out the order form. Place the form and check in the enclosed pre-paid postage envelope. Please fill out the information on the envelope. If using your own envelope, the address is BCH, P.O. Box 338, Thomasville, NC 27361

MAKE YOUR GIFT ONLINE:

Go to bchfamily.org/gift-catalog or scan the QR code to make your gift online.



MAKE YOUR GIFT BY PHONE:

Call 336-474-1312 to make a credit card gift by phone.

Thank you for the gift of hope this Christmas season!



Item	Amount	Quantity	Your Gift	Code
Birthday Sponsorship - child	\$50	\$		GC001
Birthday Sponsorship - cottage	\$600	\$		GC002
Prom Dress/Suit	\$150	\$		GC003
College Care Package	\$50	\$		GC004
Christmas Sponsorship - child	\$50	\$		GC005
Christmas Sponsorship - cottage	\$600	\$		GC006
Christmas Meal - child	\$50	\$		GC007
Christmas Meal - cottage	\$600	\$		GC008
Winter Coat	\$50	\$		GC009
Shoes	\$75	\$		GC010
Clothing Wardrobe	\$400	\$		GC011
Suitcase	\$50	\$		GC012
Fishing Pole - child	\$25	\$		GC013
Fishing Pole - cottage	\$300	\$		GC014
Sports Equipment - child	\$50	\$		GC015
Sports Equipment - cottage	\$600	\$		GC016
Art Supplies	\$25	\$		GC017
Counseling Session	\$100	\$		GC018
Night of Safety	\$150	\$		GC019
Life Jacket - camper	\$25	\$		GC020
Life Jacket - camp	\$250	\$		GC021
Personal Tent - camper	\$100	\$		GC022
Personal Tent - camp	\$1,000	\$		GC023
Boots - camper	\$100	\$		GC024
Boots - camp	\$1,000	\$		GC025
Canoe	\$1,500	\$		GC026
Welcome Care Package	\$35	\$		GC027

Item	Amount	Quantity	Your Gift	Code
Bedding Basics	\$100	\$		GC028
Mattress - child	\$150	\$		GC029
Mattress - cottage	\$1,800	\$		GC030
Mattress - campus	\$9,000	\$		GC031
Family Start Up Package	\$400	\$		GC032
School Supplies	\$50	\$		GC032
Wheelchair Ramp	\$350	\$		GC033
Red Bags (Minimum Quantity of 5)	\$3	\$		GC034
Electric Fan	\$25	\$		GC035
Diapers & Wipes	\$100	\$		GC036
Formula	\$200	\$		GC037
Birth Mom Retreat Sponsorship	\$500	\$		GC038
Backpack/Canoe Trip - camper	\$500	\$		GC039
Backpack/Canoe Trip - camp	\$5,000	\$		GC040
Campership	\$250	\$		GC041
Group Celebration Trip - child	\$125	\$		GC042
Group Celebration Trip - cottage	\$1,500	\$		GC043
Event Tickets	\$150	\$		GC044
Chicken	\$10	\$		GC045
Chicken Feed	\$40	\$		GC046
Meals for a Week - Guatemala	\$50	\$		GC047
Meals for a Month - Guatemala	\$200	\$		GC048
Education	\$220	\$		GC049
Bible for child	\$10	\$		GC050
Bible for adult	\$25	\$		GC051
Where Needed Most		\$		GC052
One of Everything	\$6,705	\$		GC053
TOTAL DONATION AMOUNT		\$		

Relationships take center stage at 2022 meeting

By **Blake Ragsdale**, Managing Editor

Whether through visits at the Baptist Children's Homes (BCH) booth, successes shared by pastors during the EVERY CHILD break out session, or from BCH president/CEO Michael C. Blackwell's report to messengers, it was apparent at the Annual Meeting that the bond between BCH and NC Baptists is stronger than ever.

"There is no one we would rather be 'on mission together' with than NC Baptists," Blackwell remarked. "God knitted our hearts together when the Children's Homes was first established in 1885, and this relationship is just as vibrant and vital today."

From the stage, Blackwell drew attention to BCH's variety of ministries that impacts children and individuals of every age and at every stage of life. Specifically, he spotlighted the growing EVERY CHILD Foster & Adopt partnership between BCH and NC Baptists that is addressing the foster care crisis in the state. He also introduced North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry's (NCBAM) newest initiative to aging adults—The NCBAM Care Village in Kinston providing geriatric management services to members.

The NC Baptist Historical Committee also recognized Blackwell for his BCH history book *Founded on Faith...Built on Love*.



Top photo, Dr. Michael C. Blackwell expresses appreciation to the NC Baptist Historical Committee for the recognition of his book *Founded on Faith...Built on Love*. Photo above, traffic was steady as NC Baptists visited with BCH staff at the ministry's main booth. Middle right photo, Mark Smith, left, BCH Foster & Adoption Church Liaison, moderates an EVERY CHILD panel discussion with church partners, left to right, John Cashwell, Senior Pastor Providence Baptist in Harrisburg; Andrew Hopper, Lead Pastor Mercy Hill in Greensboro/High Point; Kyler Smith, Senior Associate Pastor Hickory Grove in Charlotte; Casey Norkett, Missions Pastor Hickory Grove. Bottom left photo, Blackwell shares the BCH report with messengers. Bottom right photo, Blackwell signs copies of *Founded on Faith...Built on Love*.



New Area Directors eager to serve NC's aging adults

By **Carol Layton**, NCBAM Director of Communications and Administration

Regional Directors for North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) are eager to connect to help strengthen churches' senior adult ministries. A full compliment of area directors are available to provide programming for retreats, lunch 'n' learns, leadership conferences, and other special events. The team offer more than 40 basic classes and evidence-based programs as part of NCBAM's "Wise Up Enrichment Workshops."

NCBAM ministry director Dr. Sandy Gregory is thrilled to be fully staffed after two retirements and a promotion left the team with essential openings during 2022. "We're excited for the new team members and the new opportunities for ministry that the Lord has provided. As our Care Village model of ministry continues to grow, we'll begin 2023 with a \$77,000 grant from FEMA for aid in fire prevention and a \$275,000 grant for wheelchair ramps from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) through the Piedmont Triad Regional Council Area Agency on Aging. Having a talented mission-minded staff and grant funds for ministry projects is a great way to begin the year!" (ARPA grant funds are restricted for use in Davidson, Guilford, Alamance, and Randolph Counties.)



Beeson

The new directors are Melanie Beeson, Philip Brown, Austin Decker, and Rich Gwaltney. Beeson earned her BA from Meredith College. She taught elementary school for 12 years and spent several years at home with her children before joining NCBAM. She previously served as

NCBAM's Call Center Director since 2014. In January, Melanie is relocating to Wilmington to serve as Southeast Coastal Regional Director as well as statewide One Hope Director. (One Hope is NCBAM's outreach addressing social isolation and loneliness.)

Beeson and her husband Joel have three grown children. In their spare time, they enjoy traveling: especially to Ocean Isle Beach. She unofficially served as NCBAM's decorator-in-residence.

Brown serves as the South Central Regional Director. He received degrees from North Greenville University and Fruitland Baptist Bible College and served as a missionary in Kosovo, as min-



Brown



NCBAM's Call Center and regional directors work with volunteers to help keep frail older adults safer in their homes. Wheelchair ramp construction is a number-one need across the state. The \$275,000 ARPA grant will make a huge difference in the lives of seniors in Davidson, Guilford, Alamance, and Randolph Counties.

ister to children and youth, and most recently as associate pastor at Lewisville Baptist Church.

He and his wife, Kristy, enjoy family time with their two boys, Carter and Jackson. Brown loves gardening, reading, cooking, and everything Wake Forest athletics!



Decker

Decker is the North Central Regional Director. He earned his BA in Bible and Counseling from Piedmont International University and his Masters of Divinity from SEBTS. He has worked as a teacher, a youth pastor, and a chaplain. Decker and his wife Cheyenne trained together and ran the Disney half-marathon last November. Asked at the finish line how it felt, Decker said, "It's indescribable! It's not good."

The Deckers have five pet ducks at their house. Cheyenne adores them. Austin tolerates them only because he loves Cheyenne.

Gwaltney serves as Northeast Regional Director/Cary Care Village. He earned a BA in Pastoral Ministries from Toccoa Falls College and a MA from



Gwaltney

Wright State University in Educational Leadership. He served as Spiritual Life Director of Dalat International School in Malaysia for five years and more recently as Community Engagement Representative with Transitions Life Care in Raleigh.

Gwaltney and his wife Kerry have two grown children. After living in other parts of the States and in Asia, they enjoy splitting their time between Oak Island and Black Mountain. Gwaltney loves to bake; his specialty is his grandmother's pound cake recipe.

NCBAM AREA DIRECTORS

Anita Davie
Far West Regional
828-450-1834

Angie Gregg
Central West Regional
828-467-1371

Austin Decker
North Central Regional
336.250.3683

Philip Brown
South Central Regional
704.640.8087

Rich Gwaltney
NE Regional/
Cary Care Village
984-328-0765

Charity Johnson
SE Sandhills Regional/
Kinston Care Village
252-933-0298

Melanie Beeson
SE Coastal Regional/
One Hope
336-287-0538

Robert Leonard
SE Coastal Regional
704-699-7519

Suggestions of MH athletes for Thomasville honor— MH cooking and sewing lessons impact alum lives

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

We were deeply saddened to learn that **Dennis Webster** died Saturday, October 15 at his home in Sumter, SC. His home was in Burlington, NC before he entered Mills Home (MH) in 1958. Dennis led a full life as a MH resident taking part in the church life, social activities at the gym and valley as they came around, and campus duties as they were assigned. He really enjoyed working on the farm, but he was especially grateful for his duty at the gym because that was where he found **Dinah Dove**, the girl “meant for him.” He graduated in 1965, joined the US Army and waited for Dinah to graduate in 1966 and meet him at the altar during a week’s leave. The wedding was held at a little town near the border of SC and NC where Dinah’s grandmother and other relatives are buried. During Dennis’s term of military duty in Vietnam, he earned the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, 1 O/S Bar and Sharpshooters Badge Rifle M-14. Having suffered an injury, he also was awarded the Purple Heart. After spending Dennis’s last seven months of military service at Fort Bragg, Dennis and Dinah settled in Sumter, SC and reared three sons (Scott, Marc, Jason). They now have five grandchildren. He was retired as finance manager with Bombardier. A memorial service for Dennis was held on October 19 at Elmore Hill McCreight Funeral Home in Sumter, SC. The memorial service was special to Dinah because all three of their sons spoke. Condolences may be sent to Dinah and family at 3180 Pinewood Rd, Sumter, SC, 29154.

We were sorry also to learn that **Page Sawyer**, died October 1 after a brief illness. Page’s work career followed that of her husband, **Larry Sawyer, Jr.** who worked at Odum Home and Mills Home from 1973-

1982. She was the epitome of a loving and supportive pastor’s spouse and partner. At MH, Larry served as area director and Page served as director of support services. They were both well liked and popular among the residents and the Baptist Children’s Homes workers. After leaving MH, Page worked for the Robeson County Health Department until she retired in 2004. She was an active member of First Baptist Church in Lumberton and the Circle of Friends Sunday School Class in which she shared teaching responsibilities. Besides her husband Larry, she is survived by three offspring, four grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Condolences may be sent to Larry at 328 Windsor Rd., Lumberton, NC, 28358 or call him at 910-738-5698.

Bertie Fulbright was one of the “big girls” on campus in 1946. She entered MH with sister **Irene** in 1938 and left in 1947. She loved being in the church choir and BYPU (Baptist Young People’s Union, later called BTU or Baptist Training Union.) She also sang in the church trio with **Jewel Chance** and **Betty Duncan**, traveling to various state churches with **Mr. MacMillan**, editor of *Charity & Children* (C&C). She was very fond of **Mrs. Shockey**, the house mother at the WC Cottage, because Mrs. Shockey made her feel special. Bertie fell in love with **John Benfield**, a former resident of MH, and left to marry him in 1947. They spent their adult years in Thomasville in a long married life with Bertie being a stay at home mom of their two offspring. From those two offspring came two grandchildren and five great grandchildren. When John passed away in 2012, Bertie worked in the Pilot School cafeteria serving as cook as well as financial manager. Although she had never had any bookkeeping courses, she handled that job well and proudly for 25 years. Cooking was no problem

because she had learned to cook from **Swannie McHargue**. She was also proud of being the treasurer of her church for 32 years. Living in Thomasville made it easy to attend most Homecomings for special reunions with MH folks.

Bob Mayton still works with the Thomasville High Alumni group (headed by **Tommy Bryant**) that is seeking nominations of former Thomasville outstanding athletes for induction into the Thomasville Athletic Hall of Fame. They are calling it the Thomasville Athletic Hall of Fame because their intention is to induct outstanding athletes from all the local schools, Thomasville High School, Mills Home High School, and Church Street High School. Bob recently reported to alumni that the group had voted to induct **Johnny Allen, Pat Preston, and the Mills Home 1936 Football State Champions** into the Thomasville Athletic Hall of Fame. The induction date is to be announced.

Several Mills Home alumni are searching for information about MH athletes who were on championship teams or who were recipients of awards such as being named a member of a NC All-State team. It was easy to come up with the famous **Johnny Allen, Pat Preston**, and the MH championship team of 1936. Other names that have been mentioned are **Robert Tate, George Tate, Betty Sue Blackburn, Martha Berndt Fisher, members of the 1971 wrestling team, Ralph Carver, and Vaughn Dagenhart**. If you can think of others who might fit into this category, please give their names to **Bob Mayton** with as much information as you can regarding any awards they might have won.

Delania Ellington LeFever and her brother **Fred** entered MH from Graham, NC in 1968 and Delania left in 1974. Now married to **James B. LeFever**, she has lived for several years at 810 Mount Joy Road, Man-

heim, PA, 17545. Living that far from Thomasville, it is hard for her to make the drive to Homecomings, but when she does, she thoroughly enjoys seeing her old friends. Most of her work career she has been an RN at the Physicians Surgery Center in Lancaster, PA. She retired early in 2022. Her husband is the sales manager at I.B. Hasletter & Sons Hardware, Mount Joy, PA. Delania and her husband both enjoy traveling in their own country as well as foreign countries. They especially love exploring New England states and are amused to hear New Englanders, upon discovering out of state visitors during autumn, saying “here come the Leaf Peepers.” A trip to the Hawaiian islands was also enjoyable and enlightening for them. Two main trips outside the US were exploring Europe by a Rhine River cruise and visiting the Canadian Rockies by rail. A pastime Delania enjoys by herself is making clothes for herself and shirts for her husband. She also enjoys using her “long arm sewing machine” to do the final quilt sewing for friends.

Reminders: Please remember that you can contact **Deneesha Davis** at any time you have a problem with C&C such as correction to address, etc at ddavis@bchfamily.com. Remember that **Sharon D. Stiles** is the person to talk with regarding ashes being placed in the columbarium. Contact Sharon at 1588 Elkhart Circle, Gastonia, NC, 28054. You can email her at sharonstiles51@yahoo.com or call her at 704-685-2443. Remember that contributions toward the upkeep of the Columbarium at God’s Acre are always welcome and should be sent to **Floral Hicks Patton** at 6428 Sisk Carter Rd., Rockwell, NC, 28138.



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



Christian Adoption Services

Adoption plan brings couple new son

Russell and Caroline adopted a newborn son through a plan with the child's birth parents. It is a beautiful picture of family and teamwork made possible by Christian Adoption Services.



The Mill Coffee & Community in Thomasville

Barista hosts first "Story Time" event

Kim Hearn, part of the team at The Mill, led the coffee shop's first "Story Time." It was an opportunity to read to participating children while parents relaxed with a cup of coffee.



Greater Vision Outreach in Thomasville

Church leads worship, tackles projects

Members from Vietnamese Baptist Church in High Point assisted with projects at Greater Vision Outreach to assist community families and led BCH children and staff in worship.



McNeill Home in Indian Beach

Kennedy Home alumni gather

Recently, men and women who grew up at Kennedy Home in Kinston spent time together at BCH's beach cottage. Many memories have been made there by BCH children and adults.



Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

BCH staff share at chapel service

BCH staff members had the privilege to share during a recent chapel service at Southeastern. They were invited by Southeastern president Danny Aikin (second from right).



Mills Home in Thomasville

Quilters share their talents

The quilting ministry of First Baptist in Clemmons created handmade quilts for the boys, girls and single moms at Mills Home. Mr. and Mrs. Shiflett from the church delivered them.



Weekday Education in Thomasville

Children dress up for fall fun

The community children attending preschool classes at the Fleshman-Pratt Education Center dressed up for a trunk-or-treat. BCH staff provided goodies and fun for the students.



Emmanuel Home for birth moms in Thomasville

NC Baptist volunteers make progress

Volunteers from Providence Baptist in Harrisburg and Memorial Baptist in Norwood painted picnic tables at Mills Home and the garage at our forthcoming Emmanuel Home.



Christian Adoption Services

Orphan Sunday spotlights ministry

On November 13, Christian Adoption Services was in churches across NC for Orphan Sunday. The ministry cares for birth mothers and supports domestic and international adoption.



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at svbarefoot@bchfamily.org
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- Central Area Family Services**
Regina Keener, Dir., 336-474-1200
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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
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Kevin Qualls, Dir., 704-847-0038
www.christianadopt.org
- Weekday Education**
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- Tucker Greater Vision Ministry**
Sara Becker, Mgr., 336-687-6384
- HOMEbase** at W. Carolina University
Jim Dean, Dir., 828-508-0035
- 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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Retreat was opportunity for recalling memories—KH childhood memories last for years

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

The Alumni Fall Beach Retreat will always be remembered by as a trip down memory lane. Many thanks to **Debbie McCormick Caulder (72-74)** for recording all that went on. She kept her eyes and ears opened wide. Here are some of her notations:

SUNRISE at 7:05 A.M. was a highlight of the trip. A walk to the ocean on our first morning to see the sunrise and take pictures was an event to remember. During the whole week-end there were many of the alumni who walked over to do the same, taking pictures of the ocean and the sound in the late afternoon to see the sun go down.

FIRST TIMERS to the cottage since they left Kennedy Home were **Debbie Connie (68-73)**, her sister **Joyce Connie (68-72)**, **Rusty Wortham (72-75)** and **David Bradley (66-74)**. David and Rusty brought their wives. We hope that next year we will have many more "first-timers" join us.

MEMORIES were recounted. One told about when the cottages used to take trips. Some went to the Lost Colony in Manteo. They talked of going to see Dolly Parton and Porter Wagoner at Granger Stadium in Kinston and even a trip to a Billy Graham crusade.

Ferebee Cottage was remembered as having houseparents who wanted sheets tight on the bed, so tight that a quarter would bounce up from the mattress. We had a good laugh. Donna and Scott arrived at the cottage greeted by a beautiful deer.

BEDTIME brought more memories. It was suggested that you never wanted to be the first one to go to sleep at night, especially at the Skeeter Hut, because you would get tooth paste all in your hair.

BONFIRES through the years have always been fun on the beach when your cottage would go down for the week. Roasted marshmallows are delicious cooked on an open fire.

WALKING ON THE BEACH brought wonderful memories. Some house-

parents would take their youngins for a walk on the beach late at night for a great family experience.

TALENT SHOWS on the last night were a highlight for some of the cottages. Some remembered how cottages had regular talent shows during the year.

BEING STUNG by a Man O' War was never any fun. Once in a while someone had to be taken to the hospital for treatment from the sting. There is a lot of pain involved with an injury like that.

Memories of life at Kennedy Home (KH) were abundant. **Debbie Connie** remembered crying so hard when she arrived on the campus and then crying so hard when she left. Easter ducks were given to **Debbie Connie and Debbie Caulder** one Easter for gifts. Debbie Connie remembered sleeping with her duck "Dexter."

DATES: Some of the KH boys always had trouble finding a girlfriend but **Dallas Wilkerson and Ricky Murry** never had that problem. Both have gone to be with the Lord now but will always be remembered by so many cute girls.

Many remember when the church was being repainted and we had worship in the new gym. This was back in 1972. On my very first Sunday at KH, I was scared to death because this was a completely new experience.

Rev. Rodney Beals was our preacher (now gone to heaven) and he wanted me to sing a solo. Becky was playing the piano in the carpeted part of the gym and there I stood trying to get my nerve up to sing. One of the KH youngins was holding my son Scott (who was in diapers). When I started, he got away from the girl and came waddling up to me. I kept singing, reached down and picked him up and finished my solo. I remember Mr. Beals telling me the next day that I made "my place" during that solo because I didn't stop. I just held Scott in my arms and kept singing. If you remember this event, drop me a line and let me know about what you

remember. Someone at the beach retreat even remembered that we sang "Amazing Grace."

Michael Grimsley's wife shared at the beach that Michael had a very hard life growing up mostly because of his large size. She states that he was fortunate that he had **Bill and Betty Beacham** for houseparents—they were very tall people. She says that he "mellowed out" during those years. **Michael** credits KH for helping him cope with the issues of home. Michael used Mrs. Beacham as his "go to" person to help him with many problems.

There was one at the retreat who shared about a cottage going to a revival and singing the song "Pass It On." He recalls listening to the pastor and giving his life to the Lord and was later baptized in the KH swimming pool. Many youngins gave their life to the Lord while living at KH over the years.

MEMORIES continued. **Patsy Hensley**, a staff child at KH, taught **David Bradley** how to swim. She would hold him up in the pool so he could float. Patsy was supposed to attend the retreat but couldn't come at the last minute. Many youngins learned to swim. Swimming was a summer highlight for many. It gave the children something special. I had to take senior life saving with **Bill Beacham** so we could fill in when the life guard couldn't come. I loved every minute of it. That is the only sport I was ever any good at. I loved the high diving board. I had an old life saver nailed to my KH mail box.

I have so many fond and lasting memories serving at Kennedy Home.

CHIMES were one of the best memories of KH. Every Sunday morning they rang and the sound reverberated on campus. Rev. Beals would play chimes from the church tower every Sunday morning when it was time for everyone to line up. We would all come out of the cottages and walk down the sidewalks all the way to the church for morning worship and Sunday school. This was a

most beautiful sight to see. We had close to 150 children living on campus, which allowed me to have five choirs and 62 piano students. I would teach the children who wanted to learn to play the piano and then the students would play a short song for the offering. **Wayne Jackson**, one of my advanced piano students, would even help me with the teaching. I taught him to direct congregational singing, also. After leaving KH he attended college and became a minister of music and youth. My Becky really loved Wayne a lot. He was one of our "full" orphans along with his brothers. He told me that he couldn't help it, but he "loved" **Ms. Becky**—that was okay with me. We both loved him a lot and I still do. She even carried a school picture of Wayne in her wallet that he gave her. He was a good youngin. I later played the organ for his wedding. He now has three sons. All three can really sing just like Wayne.

Today, several of my students play for worship services in their church. This really makes me feel real good. At Homecoming this past year, **Penny Maready** played the piano in Becky's place and did a great job. **Doris Russ** is still playing for her church. She plans to play for Homecoming in 2023. Doris is 90 years old now. I'll be 80 in September. Some of us are really getting on the old side. The Lord allows for me to play the piano at the Centerview Baptist Church in Jacksonville. I teach piano there and teach students to play in worship. I am also their Minister of Senior Adults.

Let's all keep hanging in there as long as we can and keep serving the Lord. Don't waste your talent or your time.

MEMORIES will continue in the next month. Help me by sending more articles. Love you all! jt



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

Even better than our anticipation

By Jim Edminson, Editor

It happened in my sixth year and Eddie's eleventh, the covert op under cover of darkness. We went carefully and oh so silently into the room lit only by stray moonbeams. We trod stealthily like two ninjas, our breaths shallow and quick. Our mingled fear and excitement climbed with every step. Mission? Seek those stockings stuffed with gifts, the unwrapped kind, and put our crazy anticipating anxiety to rest until Christmas morn.

We had reconned the mission and knew the exact positioning of the stockings. Eddie, second to oldest, counted two from the left. I rushed to the end of the line. We lifted the stockings in unison releasing their loops from the nails. The hard part was behind us.

First, I felt the sharp edges and round bulges in my red felt stocking decorated with a hand-painted Christmas elf. My eyes opened wide. My focus was on the uppermost treasures—the large hard globes at the toe had to be the fruit I knew to expect, and the smaller shapes would be the nuts (I would save these for later). I unloaded small boxes that seemed to overflow from the top—and then I went in.

Maybe some of the readers do not know about Matchbox cars, but they were what I hoped for this particular holiday. The small replicas of the best vehicles imaginable came in boxes about the size of matchboxes, hence the name (Google it—it's worth a look). My eager child's hands

opened each box, removed the car, and felt the details as best I could. On the silent carpeted floor, I took them all for a first spin, marveling at the smooth ride. I opened every box, explored all of the stash, and my nervous anticipation slowed to unbelievable happiness.

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined" (Isa. 9:2 NRSV).

Waiting is hard. Waiting with anticipation is less hard, but the excitement and longing sometimes reach fever pitch. It was so for the faithful who lived with that anticipation of the coming of Messiah—the Deliverer. The prophets' words kindled their desire for that promise. Would it be this year? This generation? They eagerly watched for the signs, combing the messages in the Pentateuch, reading the passages, seeking to be vigilant, knowing that the fulfillment would be beyond their wildest imagination.

Isaiah proclaims, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, or the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this" (9:6-7). How can this kind of anticipation be waited for by mere men?

For me, the Christmas season has always been about anticipation. Advent comes alive with powerful scripture lessons, melodious hymns, lighted candles, chrismons among greenery. Entering into the sanctuary each Sunday, my anticipation grows and I wonder how the church

can sustain all of this wonder and joy until the great day of celebration.

As December days meld together in my mind, I cast thoughts back and recall all my days of anticipation. Now some have said that the anticipation is the biggest part, that all of the built up expectations and longings will never be topped by the reality when it comes. There will be, they say, a let down at the end.

The testimonies of Simeon and Anna tell a different story. The reality, the sight of Immanuel, far exceeded any of their glorious anticipation of Messiah. The rejoicing, according to the gospel message, was spectacular the day of His birth, complete with angels' chorus and shepherds' adoration, and the journey of kings from afar. The reality, the fulfillment, outshone all of the lead-up.

You and I live with a different anticipation. We have read the rest of the story. We know that Messiah has come, salvation is ours through His death and resurrection. And we know that He has promised to come again. We live in days of anticipation, days waiting our King's return. We anticipate the eternal reality of standing and praising in our Messiah's midst forever.

I know when that reality comes, it will be even better than our anticipation. I have turned to the last page. I know the conclusion. And it is beyond good: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen, Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20). May we be ready to rejoice in that day and may His peace be with us all as we anticipate.



Glory be to our God!

Edminson encourages others through the Good News of Jesus. Invite him to speak to your church or organization. You can email him at wjedminson@bchfamily.org.



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