

**Senior Adults Newsletter
December, 2025
Christ Covenant Church**



For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
(Luke 2:11)

CHRISTMAS REMEMBERED and REVISITED

By Bruce Creswell

Originally written 2002 & tweaked in 2025

This Christmas, I want to share this article with my children and grandchildren of a Christmas that has become a cherished memory of mine growing up. Mind you, there are other Christmases that I recall, but this one stands out to me particularly of God's surprising grace and love.

This is the very first Christmas article of the new Senior Newsletter for December 2002 (we started in January 2002). Now twenty-three years later my adult children will read it for the first time and so will many of you! May you have a blessed Christmas and New Year.

The snow blanketed all of Baltimore during the week of Christmas. It had covered the lawns, laced the trees and bushes and accented the roofs and windowpanes of the houses in our neighborhood. At night, the lights cast a warm glow on the cold snow. Old houses really show their unique character and personality outlined in the snow. It looked like a scene from a Norman Rockwell painting.

Inside the house on 1607 Potomac Avenue, it was beginning to look like Christmas. Decorations were through the house - the entire trimming was old-fashioned having been handed down through the years. The custom was to put the tree up on Christmas Eve and take it down the day after New Year's Day. Momma made cookies -- chocolate chips, sugar and mint. Great-Aunt Ruth's annual gift, a tin of Plantation Dainties hard candy, (exclusively from Hutzler's, the only store in her thinking) was on the coffee table. The necessary staples were on hand for Christmas dinner. However, it would be a "slim" Christmas with regards to gifts. There was very little money; Momma's weekly take home pay was about \$70.00, as Dad had missed a lot of work. It was kind of awkward listening to friends say what they knew they were going to find under their tree and not able to boast myself. But we were going to be together and enjoy what we had and that was ok. Hard times were just a part of life,

period. But Momma bemoaned the fact that her children would have a skimpy Christmas.

It was Christmas Eve day; the tree was brought in from the outside and placed in its stand. The lights were secured on the branches and then the old ornaments, which had seen better days, were gingerly placed on the tree. Momma, Sandy and I got ready for the Christmas service at church. As we began our walk to the church, Momma clutched her handbag filled with little gifts for the pastor and those who had befriended us. The church was decorated with pine boughs and with candles in the window. There was a huge wreath made of magnolia leaves in its customary place centered on the balcony. The service with the special music and the message was well attended. Our hearts were so warmed by both worship and fellowship that walking home afterwards in the cold and snow didn't seem all that bad.

We got home in time to watch the customary 1939 version of The Christmas Carol, with only the lights from the tree on. Momma was scurrying about the kitchen, preparing for tomorrow's dinner. Finally, we turned in at midnight, and I went sound asleep.

Like any other family we were up early on Christmas day. Even though we knew what to expect, there was still a sense of excitement. As we made our way into the living room, my eyes could not believe what they saw. Around the lighted tree were packages galore, more than I could ever remember from past Christmases. Momma in her housecoat acted as if nothing unusual had occurred. My sisters and I were pleasantly surprised as we unwrapped our presents that morning. There was a burnt-orange woolen sweater that I received and wore until it no longer fit (having kept it all these years, I recently gave it away to someone who needed it). It would have been a great Christmas even if we didn't have all those gifts, but it certainly made for a memorable surprise.

It wasn't till much later that Momma told me that her brother took her shopping and gave her the money to buy the presents!

Sharing this Christmas remembrance with you brings me back to the immensity of the Father's love for you and me. Paul declares in Romans 8:32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not freely give us all things?" He was willing to pay dearly for His affectionate love for us."

This Great Gift from the Father to us was the sending of His Son to this earth to be our Savior. Through His death and resurrection came our salvation and the assurance of eternal life. And with His gift of salvation flows all His other gifts of goodness to us. Charles Spurgeon puts it this way, "When God gave us Christ, he gave us everything, for all the blessings of this life and of the life that is to come lie hidden in Christ as the kernel is within the shell of the nut. What encouragement we have for believing prayer! Christian, Christ is the golden key of God's treasures; you have but to use aright, and whatever you need shall be yours." Amen and amen!

May your hearts rejoice this Christmas in the good tidings of Great Joy and may His Gospel shine bright in you and through you in the coming New Year!

Pastor Bruce and Dad

REMEMBERING MARGARET CAREY

By Sam Cheek, Pastoral Intern

*Bruce invited me to share the life of a woman very dear to me, who had been serving Christ for many years before I was even born. In God's timing, **Margaret** went to be with the Lord November 14, and so it is a joy to share some memories with you now.*

When I began attending church as a 16-year-old, I did not expect that two of my closest friends would be in their 70s. One of them, **Margaret**, was already well known in the church for her love of the whole church family, especially the next generation (pictured here in 2023 with my family, Rose, Ralph and Fred). Over the years, she became a source of encouragement to countless young people with her sense of humour, grace, and words of comfort.



Margaret met John when they were teenagers, and they were soon married. They spent most of their married life at Kensington Baptist Church, Bristol, where they raised their five children. After having three very energetic boys, they announced in church that they were expecting a fourth boy, to which a lady at the back of the church called out, “Not *another* one!” As always, they received it with grace and humour. They went on to adopt a fifth child, a girl—much to **Margaret's** joy! All five adult children have grown up to serve the Lord; some took over the family building company, while others became pastors and missionaries. They have given **John and Margaret** twelve grandchildren.

In 2007, three generations of the **Carey** family moved church across Bristol to help with a church revitalization. Crossways Tabernacle, a dwindling congregation of twelve people, became Headley Park Church, which now has over 200 regular attendees and has recently planted a church. The Carey family - led by the example of **John and Margaret** - tirelessly served the church for over 15 years and helped shape its warm, loving, Christ-centred culture.

One of the best parts of speaking to a couple married for over 65 years was hearing their stories, including how God had worked in providential (and unexpected!) ways in their lives. As a young couple with small children, they had limited money but were outgrowing their house. They had a choice: should they buy a reasonably sized, decorated house, or a large, derelict property that could one day host youth events? They decided on the latter.

They went to an auction for what was essentially a shell of a house, and one particular bidder was driving the price up. As they reached the final limit of their budget, an object suddenly flew through the window and hit the opposing bidder on the head, knocking him out! A cricket match had been taking place next to the auction house, and the ball had been hit so hard that it flew over the car park, through the window, and ultimately secured the property for them within budget. They always told that story with a mix of disbelief and humility at God's ability to provide in unexpected ways.

In the months that followed, **John** worked full-time as a builder in his construction company during the day, then went home to build his new house at night. They showed whole albums of pictures documenting the intense labour of constructing the house—all with the hope that it would be used to disciple and evangelise young people through the church. God honoured their work, and before long,

the house was used for bonfires, BBQs, and games nights. Their hard-working spirit and desire to serve all generations with the gospel would characterise much of their lives.

When I think of **Margaret**, two things stand out most vividly: her ability to befriend and encourage young people, and her writing. Her grandson Noah was in our youth group, and **Margaret** quickly became a source of joy and encouragement for us all. She shared stories, prayed during our exams, asked about our lives, and shared the joys and challenges of our journey into adulthood (picture here of her at our wedding).



As we moved away from Bristol, **Margaret** often wrote the most beautiful cards and letters. Her words were full of understanding and grace. She used her life experience, and all that God had taught her to speak into our lives in a profound way, even from a distance. In one of

her last messages to me, **Margaret** expressed how grieved she was that she could no longer write to people. I know that I and many others will treasure **Margaret's** letters for years to come.



As I reflect on **Margaret's** life, it is amazing to see how deeply it was shaped by her Saviour. **John and Margaret** demonstrated, time and time again, a self-sacrificing love for their church family. They raised their children to know and love Jesus and to extend that love to others. **Margaret** used words to encourage and comfort, bringing truth into every season of life. She suffered, too. **John** died last year, and I know how deeply she felt the pain of loneliness and the separation from her husband of over 65 years. Her body felt frail after a long, full life. Yet, as her grandson said to me, she is now with Jesus, whom she loves so much, and he cares for her more than we ever could. We give thanks for her life of faithfulness and live in hope of the same glory she now knows.

No Sunday School on December 28

HYMN HISTORIES

by Peggy Dear

ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY

James Montgomery, a newspaperman in London, had been imprisoned twice for his controversial editorials. But there was no controversy when he ran this poem in his newspaper column on Christmas Eve, 1816. Other than **Isaac Watts**, probably no other writer contributed more to the development of Christian hymns than this unique journalist who championed the cause of the poor and downtrodden, as well as foreign missions. It is fitting that the music was composed by a blind organist, **Henry Smart**, the designer and builder of some of England's finest organs and one of the outstanding musicians of his day.

In writing this hymn, **Montgomery** referred, not only to the Gospel accounts of Christ's birth but also to the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, where the Messiah is called the “*desired of all nations*” (Haggai 2:7, NIV), “*who would come suddenly to His Temple*” (Malachi 3:1).

ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY

*Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth,
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:*

*Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.*

*Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with man is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant light.*

*Sages, leave your contemplation,
Brighter visions beam afar,
Seek the great Desire of nations,
Ye have seen His natal star.*

*Saints, before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In His temple shall appear.*

James Montgomery (1771-1854)



CHRISTMAS DINNER

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 6:00 PM

Speaker: Will Keyton, Asst. Pastor, Sovereign Grace and Special Music by Jim Wright

Reservations are now full.

You may contact Lucille Ruths, lmruths@gmail.com, to see if there have been any openings due to cancellations.

**Don't miss this annual special time together
Yes, we will have "the 12 days of Christmas".**

DRESS IS FESTIVE!

DECEMBER SENIOR LADIES LUNCHEON

The Ladies' Luncheon will be held on Friday, December 12th, at 11:00, at Trio's Restaurant. The address is 10709 McMullen Creek Pky. (off Hwy. 51). Please let Dot Branson (704-575-5955) know that you plan to attend. We look forward to seeing you!

DECEMBER SENIOR MENS LUNCHEON

The CCC "Senior Men's Lunch" will be Friday December 19, 11:00am, at Park Place Restaurant 10517 Park Rd. Join us for a good time gathered for great food and fellowship with your Christian brothers, and Pastor Mo's rich Biblical devotional, always reminding and encouraging to us in our individual walks. Arrival by 11:00 helps us get parked and order @ 11:15

BONCLARKEN RETREAT GROUP PHOTOS





PHOTOGRAPHY THANKS TO DANKS SEEL

FINISHING WELL AND SOME SUFFERING TOO

By Steve Sperry

A woman named **Karrie Hahn** wrote a book titled **LIMPING HEAVENWARD**; subtitled **Living by Faith in Comprehensive and Chronic Suffering**. She describes a severe category of suffering, similar to that of the Bible's Job, which **Karrie Hahn** endured for decades but eventually overcame through the help of Christian counsel, prayer, endurance and faith. **Hahn** describes **comprehensive and chronic suffering** as a combination of continuing physical, emotional, or psychological, or spiritual pain, aggravated by **additional sources** of suffering, creating an overwhelming sense of despair and hopelessness in a person's life. For instance: A broken relationship like a divorce occurs. On top of that the sufferer's job is lost bringing financial anxiety. Then on top of that comes a medical diagnosis for long-term disease and expensive treatments. The piling-on of these additional chronic situations is what makes the suffering **comprehensive** and not simply **chronic**.

It's an interesting 190-page volume that deals with the topic in detail. But the matter of how to relate to and help or counsel someone afflicted by suffering turned out to be the subject that grabbed my more focused attention! "Why?" you may ask. - - - Well, I'm quite aware that I belong to that demographic group known as **seniors**. We seniors are basically **limping heavenward** yet desiring to **finish well**. As ageing (up there in years; systems wearing down) seniors, we get the privilege of dealing with a vast variety of sufferings among our ranks. I'm interested in knowing how I might respond to an opportunity to either be a help and comfort to a suffering person's finishing well: and, how I might want to be helped and comforted as others may come to my side as I endeavor to finish

well. I would just like to try and share some of **Karrie Hahn's** thoughts about helping suffering people.

“**Five damaging responses** to suffering and **seven ways to help** those who face suffering”: **Hahn** offers advice on **how not to comfort** suffering people. She identifies people making these mistakes as “**miserable comforters**”. She also offers advice on **how to help** someone who is facing suffering:

The How Not's

Accusation: Suggesting or assuming that one's suffering is due to some sort of sin or transgression.

Aphorisms: Launching biblical sound bites like Psalms or isolated verses at sufferers without attempting to listen or empathize with them.

Abandonment: Withdrawing from a suffering person due to some fear or unwillingness to be involved.

Avoidance: Similar to abandonment with similar reasons such as immaturity, selfishness, fear, the miserable comforters own suffering. Not totally abandoning the suffering person but keeping at arm's-length, (not genuinely involved).

Apathy: Either remaining unmoved by another's suffering, or feeling compassion yet doing nothing but failing to turn compassion into action.

Hahn calls these five kinds of responses to another person's suffering as hurtful. I got the feeling that she had experienced these five responses herself.

The How To Help's: (Guidelines on how to help suffering people)

Lament with them: Be willing to join them in their grieving; step into the reality of their situation; identify emotionally with them. For example: agree with them that this world is bad and can be cruel.

Be angry on their behalf: For example, join in anger at how sin in this fallen world severely hurts people. And sinful people can cause suffering. If they are expressing frustration, join in and agree with that frustration experience.

Focus on what you have in common, not what separates you: I think that **Hahn** is saying people who are experiencing chronic suffering often feel that they are different or estranged from people: and they sense that separateness as a further aggravation of their situation. And when trying to help a suffering person it's best to stay away from dwelling on those thoughts, but to look for and try to maintain a sense of fellowship and mutual sharing of human and spiritual value.

Don't just pray for them: be the answer to their prayers when you can: Be willing to be the answer or locate answers to their prayers when you can.

Realize that true compassion leads to action: It's easy to feel sorrow or compassion for a person's difficult circumstances and to convince ourselves that we've actually helped because of our emotional response. But have we actually helped?

Understand the difference between scripture's comfort and scripture's call: **Hahn** describes scripture's **comfort** as the Lord's **indicatives** (His promises, comfort, love and covenant relationship for His people). The **imperatives** of scripture are seen as the Lord's **call**: (His expectations for His followers to strive toward). People experiencing chronic suffering usually want and need the **comfort and encouragement** of the **indicatives**: not the **call**: the additional doubt, confusion, despair, pressure etc., such as being asked things like “How do you think God wants you to change?” or “How can you rejoice in all circumstances right now?” **Hahn** indites **miserable comforters** as those who offer these kinds of **imperatives** while they attempt to help sufferers when the **comfort** of scriptures **indicatives** is what's needed.

Be sensitive to seasons. We humans are not omniscient; not mind-readers. We don't know and can't always know what a suffering person needs during any particular time or season of their life.

They sometimes may even need to hear imperatives. **Hahn** suggests: "Just ask." In such situations. For instance, an appropriate question would be, "What would be most helpful to you right now?"

Should the time (season) come for me, as I limp heavenward, when some form of that chronic suffering brings others alongside to help or comfort, I think I'd prefer to hear many of those indicatives of scripture and none of the imperatives: unless, of course, the Lord decrees that I really need reminding of His imperatives. And, I hope that if I find myself called to sit beside a sufferer (perhaps finishing well) I'll remember how to be a useful helper and avoid being a miserable comforter.

JOY SINGERS CHRISTMAS PLANS

Joy Singers are prepared to spread Christmas cheer. The Senior Adult choir will present a musical program at 1:30pm on December 8th at Solista Charlotte (*formerly Carmel Place*). Included in the program are several selections of hymn tunes and musical arrangements of Christmas music. There will also be a sing along for the residents, which will include their favorite Christmas Carols.



Choir members are Bill Grindstaff, Ed Barnett, Steve Marion, Barry Osborn, Miriam Jones, Becky Hargett, Hilda Torres, Judy Aylestock, Judy Salter, Phyllis McClellan, Billie Quesnel, Dot Branson, Pamela Hollars, Janice Barnett, director and Pam Eash, accompanist.

Not pictured are Dan Haynes and Moe Up de Graf.



Frances Di Andrea	Dec 01
Susan Baron	Dec 02
Carolyn Cousar	Dec 02
Tina Stratis	Dec 02
Martha Bridge	Dec 03
Ken Cochrum	Dec 03
Robert Yates	Dec 03
David Kleinsteuber	Dec 04
Anne Prendergast	Dec 04
Barry Osborne	Dec 05
Stu Carroll	Dec 07
Harriet Marshall	Dec 07
Lance Whitehead	Dec 08
Bill Grindstaff	Dec 10
Tim Roberts	Dec 12
Chris Williams	Dec 12
Marcia Harris	Dec 18
Joe Morris	Dec 18
Pat Shetter	Dec 18
Martha Ann Harris	Dec 19
Douglas Linton	Dec 19
Ken Bodwell	Dec 22
Susan Botzko	Dec 22
Deborah Carter	Dec 22
Wayne Bieganousky	Dec 23
Erna Furstenburg	Dec 23
Darrell Hargett	Dec 24
Elaine Deaner	Dec 25
Jackie Greene	Dec 26
Susan Parrish	Dec 27
Betsy Elenbaum	Dec 28
La-Trell Ross	Dec 28
Sherrie Webb	Dec 29
Daniel Daloia	Dec 30
Lynn Sistare	Dec 30



Dennis Shaler & Rita Sischka	Dec 02
Hein & Erna Furstenburg	Dec 06
Paul & Tricia Neal	Dec 07
Butch & Sandi Barkman	Dec 16
Ken & Tara Dabbs	Dec 19
Dan & Sandra Hayes	Dec 20
Paul & Margie Engle	Dec 20
Fred & Jean Depp	Dec 29
Lanier & Karen Ellis	Dec 29
Chris & Betty Williams	Dec 30

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DECEMBER SENIOR ADULT EVENTS

December Senior Adult Dinner
December 5, 6:00 CLC

Ladies' Luncheon, -- **December 12, 11:00**
 Trios Restaurant, McMullen Creek

Men's Luncheon – **December 19, 11:00**
 Park Place Restaurant

Prayer Meetings, Tuesdays, 7:00 – 8:30 pm,
 WC105