

Senior Adults Newsletter
January 2026
Christ Covenant Church



“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” Matthew 2:2

WHAT’S NEXT?
By Pastor Bruce Creswell

Like many of you, I have been a part of our church’s Bible reading plan for 2025. With grace and perseverance, we are coming in the home stretch of our reading! The daily devotionals that accompany our reading, Paul Tripps’ *Everyday Gospel*, has been both encouraging and enlightening pertaining to the assigned chapters.

What’s Next? In 2026, I plan to return to the old paths that I have travelled over many years. Beginning January 1st, I will embark upon the McCheyne Two-Year Bible Reading Plan, it is slower and deliberate as to allow more time to read and reflect. Also, I’m looking forward to resuming my daily Table Talks monthly study/devotional guide which has been a part of my daily diet since 1994! Last but not least, reconnecting with my old friend, Octavius Winslow (been dead since 1870) in his *Morning Thoughts*. His daily nuggets warm the heart to worship and love the Lord.

What’s Next? There are some **goals** for 2026, nothing profound or earth shattering. One is an ongoing *continuation of downsizing*. Passing on to the children/grandchildren family pieces and my personal treasures! This calls for creativity on my part to lure them to take on their oversight. I know that they may not share my interest in Churchill, WWII, or Big Band Music; so, I must be on the lookout for those who do, especially young people who would be encouraged and enjoy. Mind you, I do not mean to depart with all my treasures at one time!

The second goal is further *organizing the family records* including pictures, family history, and articles. I am sure you understand what I am talking about. A file cabinet full of records from the **Creswell** and the **Hardin side** of the family. No doubt there will be some good material for further newsletter articles out of it.

Then there is the goal of *restoring some sense of organization* to my study here at the church and at home. Both studies have been disturbed and unsettled by the reshuffling and reshelving of books, especially in the last two years. Some shelves are emptied; some are even in storage as many books have found new homes! There is also a need for thorough cleaning and making the shelves presentable.

Like I said, these goals are not profound, but doable and much needed! However, I do know the Lord's plans for me in 2026. These are high priorities and He has enabled me by His Spirit and His grace to carry them out.

The Lord's Plan for Me

1. He wants me to know Him and commune with Him. To understand who He is and who I am in Him so to glorify and enjoy Him, I must employ the means of grace. To read His Word and reflect on what I read. To meet with Him in prayer.
2. He wants me to serve Him by shepherding the Senior Adults here at Christ Covenant. That is to be a shepherd and love the flock and serve where needed.
3. He wants me to love my wife, my children, and grandchildren, which includes spending time with them, praying for them, encouraging them, and being there for them.
4. He wants me to take care of my body. This means getting the necessary sleep, eating the right kinds and amounts of food, and daily exercise. Also, it involves time management, being realistic, balancing responsibilities, and having to say "NO" where needed!

What's Next? For you and me following the Lord's plan for 2026, begins with a daily meeting with Him. W.D. Longstaff's hymn, *Take Time to Be Holy*, reinforces that time spent with the Lord in secret will be witnessed by others in our conduct.

*Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;
thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.*

What's Next for You?

Take time to plan how you will stay close to the Lord in 2026.

STAYED UPON JEHOVAH

Chuck Marzahn

Dave Britton or other sailors among our class have spent enough time around boats to know what a "stay" really does. On a sailboat, the **stays** are those strong cables running from the mast to the deck. As part of the standing rigging they hold the mast upright against wind and wave. Without solid **stays**, the mast snaps, the sails collapse, and the boat is lost.

Without the **stays** nothing **stays** upright for long. (*continues on next page*)

That picture has always stuck with me when I run across the word “**stay**” in old hymns. It’s not just poetic filler. It’s a deliberate image of what keeps a believer standing when life leans hard. Folks from the era of sail when many of our hymns were written would have immediately grasped the meaning.

Take “**Stayed Upon Jehovah,**” from the hymn “**Like a River Glorious**” by Frances Havergal:

“Stayed upon Jehovah, Hearts are fully blest; Finding, as He promised, Perfect peace and rest.”

The heart that’s **stayed**, anchored, rigged, held firm, on Jehovah doesn’t flop around in the winds of our culture. It stands.

Or in “**Abide with Me**” by Henry Lyte:

*“Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day; Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away; Change and decay in all around I see - O Thou who changest not, abide with me... **My guide and stay.**”*

There it is again. Not just a companion, but the **stay** - the cable that keeps the soul from toppling when everything else is shifting.

Joachim Neander’s “**Praise to the Lord, the Almighty**” puts it plainly:

*“Praise to the Lord, who o’er all things so wondrously reigneth, Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth! Hast thou not seen how thy desires e’er have been Granted in what He ordaineth? ...**Who hath guided and stayed thee...**”*

Guided and **stayed**. Held upright by the **One** who never moves.

And in “**All Things Now Living**” (tune from Wales, words by Katherine Davis):

*“All things now living give praise to the Lord, For He is our Maker and Keeper and Ward... **Protected and stayed by His power alone...**”*

Protected and **stayed**. Same idea.

These hymn writers weren’t tossing in nautical terms for flair. They knew the image: we’re the mast, tall, exposed, taking the full force of the wind. On our own we bend, crack, fall. But rigged to **Christ**, we stand.

Paul says it straight in Romans 3:21-22: “*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*” That righteousness isn’t something we generate. It’s imputed - credited - to us. It’s the **stay** bolted to the deck of God’s own character.

When sin’s wind hits, when trials heel us over, when guilt tries to snap us at the base, we don’t hold ourselves upright. **Christ’s** perfect righteousness does. He is the **stay** that never slackens, never corrodes, never fails.

So, when the hymn says, “**stayed upon Jehovah,**” it’s not sentiment. It’s engineering. The mast stands straight because the **stay** is perfect.

And the **stay** is **Jesus**.

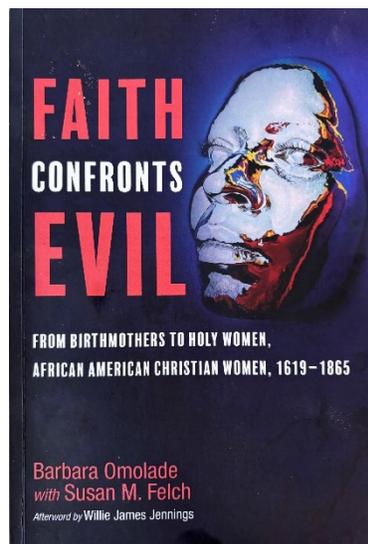
Ask yourself: What’s really holding you upright today? Your effort? Your record? Or the righteousness of **Christ**, rigged firm and true?

That’s the difference between standing - and falling.

FAITH CONFRONTS EVIL
FROM BIRTHMOTHERS TO HOLY WOMEN,
AFRICAN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN, 1619-1865
By Barbara Omolade with Susan M. Felch. Cascade, 2024

This short book traces the history of slavery in America from Jamestown to the Civil War through the lives of several women who were slaves and who were also Christians. It is an amazing account of faith, courage and endurance under daunting circumstances that would cause many of us to give up. But these women were brave beyond their own human strength and demonstrate the power of God to motivate people through the message of the Gospel.

For black slaves in America life was like living in a police state absolute obedience was demanded in every aspect of life was regimented and strict. Moreover, a happy, if false, countenance be displayed at all times under penalty of beatings or worse. In culture it seems amazing that any would have been drawn to must have seemed a “white man’s” religion. The testimony of women, however, is that the gospel has power beyond human wickedness. Of course, we know it is not only the power of the message, but of the Holy Spirit that enabled slaves to see the oppression of their owners to the truth of the Bible.



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All of these biographical accounts are amazing. Most prominent in my mind is the story of **Phyllis Wheatley**, who as a girl of 6 or 7 was kidnapped from West Africa, transported (called the “middle passage”) in a slave ship named “Phyllis.” She was sold in Boston to **Susanna Wheatley** who, though she kept **Phyllis** as a slave nevertheless treated her as a foster child giving strict attention to her education. It turned out that **Phyllis** was extremely bright and quickly achieved fluency in English and continued into Biblical and classical studies. She proceeded to write poetry that gained attention in Boston and in England.

***‘Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there’s a God, that there’s a Saviour too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
“Their colour is a diabolic die,”
Remember, Christians, Negros, black as Cain,
May be refin’d and join th’ angelic train.***

The stories of **Sojourner Truth**, and **Harriet Tubman** are equally interesting though these women were not literate yet gained their faith through hearing the preaching from faithful pastors. These women drew courage through belief in the Gospel and the implications for a holy life. The book filled in details about life under slavery especially about what is called the “second middle passage” in which black American families were broken up through slave sales for profit. This dread prospect

hung over them all the time. Slave women were exploited to simply birth more slaves. These were evil times in America made all the worse by claims of Christian faith by slave masters.

These brave women who took up opposition to slavery are to be admired. But more, to think about the power of God to grab the lives of oppressed people and give them hope that there is certain expectation of eternal life based on the infallible promise of God.

The message of this book is that Christianity transcends race and oppression. There is not a “Black Christianity” and a “White Christianity.” I think differences in skin tone were created by God to challenge us to remember that the image of God in us has nothing whatever to do with physical appearance.

The co-author of the book, **Susan Felch**, is a now retired professor of English at Calvin University in Grand Rapids. She is a scholar of some note and has authored numerous books and academic articles. She is also the wife of **Rev. Doug Felch**, the founding pastor of **Redeemer Orthodox Presbyterian Church** here in Matthews, where we were pastored for some nine years way back in the 1970 and 80s. Stay tuned for a review of another of her books.

Chris Williams, January 2026

GRANDPA’S HODGEPODGE AND POTPOURRI
A BOOK OF MISCELLANY
By Joe Morris, 2025

It is noteworthy when a friend, fellow believer and **Christ Covenant** member writes a book. So, it is with pleasure that I review this book. **Joe Morris** has written an easy-to-read, clever and amusing fifty brief chapters about very random things. There are chapters on common sense, backaches, electricity, words, revenge, exercise and gumballs. There is an account of the death of his pet under **“Losing your best friend,”** which is well written and compelling. Silly state statutes: (my favorite) *“In West Virginia it is illegal to whistle underwater.”* There are many such fun and thought-provoking epithets. **Joe** writes with clarity and humor and with a number of pointers to Christianity.

<https://www.amazon.com/Grandpas-Hodgepodge-Potpourri-book-miscellany/dp/1969368853>

Chris Williams, January 2026

LAUGH AGAIN
EXPERIENCE OUTRAGEOUS JOY
by Charles R. Swindoll

Remember **Chuck Swindoll**, the legendary Christian author from the 1970's who hosted the radio show, "Insight For Living"? This book, authored in 1992, is one of about 30 of his widely read books including **Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life, Improving Your Serve**. I have read **Laugh Again** twice and it seems to me that the central theme is joy not laughter.

Swindoll begins with this statement: *"I know of no greater need today than the need for joy."* Supplemental statements follow: *"Life is meant to be enjoyed, not endured"*, *"The Christian Life is to be lived above all circumstances"*, and *"Joy announces that the king is in residence"*. Then he warns against the joy stealers who make you act like the *"night watchman at the mortuary."*

Philippians is the source of his commentary. Philippians is short with only 4 chapters and 104 verses but provides keen insight to believers who face the fallen world daily. The theme of joy is expressed as Paul faced severe circumstances while imprisoned in Rome. These verses are refreshing, inspiring, and constructive: Philippians 1: 21, *"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain"*. When Christ is central in your life, nothing can steal the joy He brings. Philippians 2:12, *"To make my joy complete"*, Philippians 3:1, *"Rejoice in the Lord"*, Philippians 4:4, *"Rejoice in the Lord always"*, Philippians 4: 6, *"He who began a good work in you"*—what an inspiring statement about our sanctification, Philippians 4: 8, *"Whatsoever is true, honorable etc. think on these things"* Philippians 4:13, *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"*—no statement in scripture speaks more clearly of the indwelling Holy Spirit, Philippians 4:19, *"Greet every saint in Christ Jesus"* These scriptures help us to think positive thoughts which overcome worry.

The joy of Jesus is a choice that means we are riveted to the present, the here and now, not the then and never. He uses a nautical term to advise us to set our sail on the Christ centered, Christ controlled life. So, with so much preparation, how do we interact with the fallen world that we encounter every day?

Swindoll pastored years in the Los Angeles area, which he said is not a quaint nor quiet village but is a full spectrum of human depravity. In other words, LA is not a place where people snap peas or watch lightning bugs. We live among many who are enemies of the cross as pointed out in Philippians 3:18-19. So, the question is: how do we as believers respond to the lost who are hopeless, love material things, etc., and march to the beat of a different drummer? In a "Cesspool Cosmos", Christians are not supernaturally protected from the pains of living on this earth, but we are insulated by divine power. God has placed us among non-believers, so we don't argue with them, put them down, but win them with the JOY of Jesus. Therefore, we simply need to stand firm as described in Philippians 4:1 and let our light shine before men (Matthew 5:16). Think positive thoughts as discussed in Philippians 4:8 and be content in all circumstances as in Philippians 4:11. Let God be God and proceed accordingly.

Submitted by Hugh Wise – January 2026

HYMN HISTORIES

by Peggy Dear

RISE UP, O MEN OF GOD

This hymn was criticized because it speaks only of men of God and not women of God. Many contemporary hymnals have changed the words to "saints of God" or "church of God." Yet **William Merrill's** notion was not to discriminate against women, but to challenge men. Women of his day had numerous church organizations and groups but there was not much for men.

Merrill had been trying to strengthen the men's brotherhood in his Presbyterian denomination when a magazine editor suggested that he write a special hymn for the brotherhood. It was an interesting idea **Merrill** thought, but he didn't know what to write.

A short time later, as **Merrill** was returning to his church in Chicago on board a Lake Michigan steamer, he was reading a Christian magazine. In it he noticed an article, entitled "The Church of the Strong Men," and that gave him his inspiration. Before the steamer was tied up at the dock in Chicago, he had written this hymn.

This hymn is full of exclamation points and military-sounding commands. The Christian message still comes to us---both men and women with exclamation points and definite commands. Followers of Christ are called to be soldiers, not merely passive recipients of God's blessings.

RISE UP, O MEN OF GOD

*Rise up, O Men of God!
Hane done with lesser things
Give heart and soul and mind and strength
To serve the King of Kings.*

*Rise up, O men of God!
His kingdom tarries long
Bring in the day of brotherhood
And end the night of wrong.*

*Rise up, O men of God!
The church for you doth wait,
Her strength unequal to her task
Rise up and make her great.*

*Lift high the cross of Christ,
Tread where His feet have trod,
As brothers of the Son of man,
Rise up, O men of God!*

William Pierson Merrill (1867-1954)

JANUARY SENIOR LADIES LUNCHEON

The Ladies' Luncheon will be held on Friday, January 2nd, 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!

JANUARY SENIOR MENS LUNCHEON

The CCC "Senior Men's Lunch" will be Friday January 14th, 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

January Luncheon Invitation

Friday, January 9, 2026

Social time: 11:45 am / Lunch 12:00 pm / CLC 3-6

Speaker: Will Ross, Associate Professor- RTS

Menu*: Vegetable Beef Soup, Salad, Bread, Tea/Water

Please RSVP via the SignUp Genius link by Sunday, January 4 or by calling ministry admin., Jenny Blackmon, 704-708-6104.

Please wear your name tag.

Cost: \$7 per person. *Menu ingredients available upon request.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0444AAAF2EA2FC1-61137435-january#/>

SignUp Genius Tip: Click on the "Sign Up" button, which is on the right side of form; then, scroll to bottom and select "Save & Continue". This will open up the screen to allow name, # attending, and email address to be entered. Creating an account is not

WINTER / SPRING SUNDAY SCHOOL

Resumes on January 4, 2026, WC201&211

Odyssey of Paul the Apostle: Trials, Travels, Teaching

Taught by Paul Engle, January 11 - April 12, 2026

Join us for a fresh look at the life, trials, and travels of one of the world's most influential and inspiring leaders. On this odyssey we'll dig behind the surface to look at the cultural, religious, geographical, and social context in which he lived. Learn how this man who faced multiple trials can inspire and form our daily walk with Christ in the twenty-first century. Photos, maps, charts, and other new graphics will be used on hundreds of slides. Weekly handouts are provided.



Becky Hargett	Jan 02
Janice Barnett	Jan 04
Joe Underwood	Jan 07
Dan Hayes	Jan 08
Sylvia Walls	Jan 08
Leslie Allison	Jan 09
Nicholas Bonevac	Jan 09
Fred Depp	Jan 09
Peggy Elkin	Jan 11
Jane Erwin	Jan 11
Susan Woodall	Jan 11
Jacque McClintock	Jan 12
Barbara Anne Price	Jan 12
Paul Neal	Jan 13
Jameson Barlaan	Jan 14
Pat Wall	Jan 14
Carol Bieganousky	Jan 15
Bill Clingon	Jan 15
Anne Murray	Jan 15
Patti Prieb	Jan 15
Jane Gissendaner	Jan 16
Margie Engle	Jan 17
Donna Whitehead	Jan 17
Mo Up De Graff	Jan 18
Judy Moore	Jan 19
Dottie Toney	Jan 20
Sam Murray	Jan 21
David Henry	Jan 22
Lisa Kelly	Jan 23
Curtis Whalen	Jan 28
Dot Branson	Jan 29



Jim & Kass Goebel	Jan 02
Rick & Cameron Ely	Jan 04
Fred & Lisa Kinney	Jan 07
Bill & Karen Clingon	Jan 08
Gary & Toni Wilhite	Jan 14
Hugh & Fran Wise	Jan 20

Pastor of Senior Adults and Visitation

N. Bruce Creswell

bcreswell@christcovenant.org

Study (704) 708-6106

Jenny Blackmon, Assist. to Pastor Bruce

jblackmon@christcovenant.org

Newsletter Editor: Darrell Hargett

dhhargett47@gmail.com

Christ Covenant Church

800 Fullwood Lane

Matthews, NC

JANUARY SENIOR ADULT EVENTS

January Senior Adult Luncheon

January 9, 11:45AM CLC3-6

Ladies' Luncheon, -- January 2, 11:00

Trios Restaurant, McMullen Creek

Men's Luncheon -- January 14, 11:00

Park Place Restaurant

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

WC105

Senior Adults' Christmas Dinner 2025

A Toast to the Festivities!



Senior Adults' Christmas Dinner 2025

Recognitions

The Chef Extraordinaire- Tara Dabbs and Serving Crew! Thank you for the delicious meal!



Senior Adults' Christmas Dinner 2025

Paul Engle



Pam Eash



Senior Adults' Christmas Dinner 2025

Handyman Ministry: Mo Up de Graff &



Dave Britton



Caleb Johnson- Executive Admin for KDY



Jenny Blackmon-Ministry Admin for Pastor Bruce

Jim Wright, Soloist

Senior Adults' Christmas Dinner 2025



FIGARO!



Senior Adults' Christmas Dinner 2025

Pastor Will Keyton, Speaker

