

Senior Adult's Newsletter
July 2026
Christ Covenant Church



GOD HAS BLESSED AMERICA FOR 250 YEARS, LET US THANK HIM

THINK OUTSIDE: No Box Required

By Pastor Bruce Creswell

So, the sign read at the coffee shop in Whittier, which sums up our week of vacation in **Alaska**! We were outside beholding the pristine beauty of untouched wilderness, accompanied by the sound of quietness, the lack of commercialization, billboards, the hustle and bustle of Charlotte life. It had a detoxifying effect on the mind and soul!

What drew us to **Alaska** was our first visit in 2013. It was a cruise along the coastline seeing the mountains, the glaciers, and enjoying the beauty and quietness. Though we briefly stopped along the towns of Skagway, Ketchikan, and Juneau, most of our time was spent outside. We all agreed that we would like to return to see the interior of **Alaska** and so we arrived thirteen years later. With sunny skies, 70 degrees, and no humidity, our journey into **Alaska** began in Anchorage driving to Denali National Park and Preserve.

There is one entrance into the park which contains over 6 million acres! Several thoughts stand out about this park. It is home to the largest mountain in the United States, Mount McKinley (Denali), which stands at 20,310 feet. We were so fortunate to have this mountain in its full majesty and splendor, which is not always possible. With the warm weather and sunny skies there was no cloud cover. Though we took many pictures from different angles to capture it's beauty, they just did not measure up to the real live experience of seeing it firsthand! More than once my staring was accompanied by silence and wonder.

Going further inland, on a 6-hour bus tour, we saw a variety of wildlife that kept our focus and cameras on the alert. In their natural setting the caribou, the Dall sheep, the mountain goats, the ptarmigan, the moose, the arctic squirrel, the bald eagle, and the raven made their appearance. Seeing them in person, on their turf, minus the atmosphere of being at the zoo, was new to me, it was like seeing them for the first time.

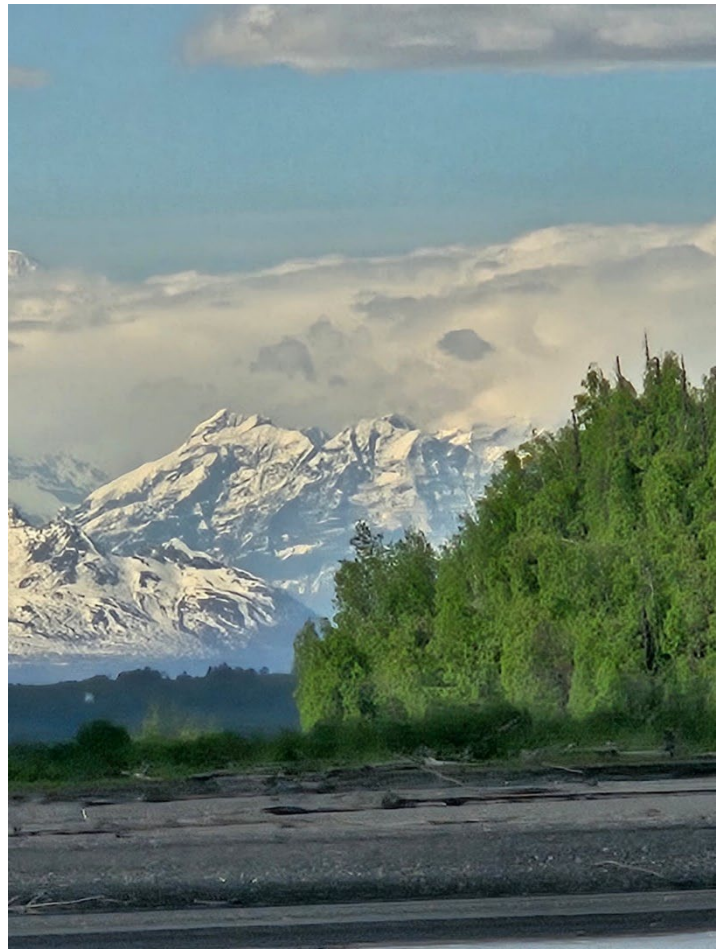
Off to Talkeetna, where we journeyed on the Chuitna River which was guarded by snow-capped mountains, offering a beautiful view of Mt. McKinley.

Heading to Seward, we notice the temperature dropping, lingering in the 50's. Stopping for lunch and dinner, everyone, with one exception, enjoyed their share of seafood (I enjoyed hamburgers well-done.), followed by a good night's sleep as a big day awaited us.

Arriving at 8am we boarded the boat for the 7-hour Kenai Fjords Glacier Tour, warmly layered as the weather was a bit nippy, with a steady wind. The Kenai Fjords parallels with Denali in its splendor, beauty, and its majesty. I caught myself saying, "WOW" as we passed by each mountain range and rock formations. The sun glistened glaciers had a bluish tint to them. We witnessed the calving of a glacier, a massive block of ice breaking and crashing into the sea. Though we were at a safe distance, we felt ripple effect from the ice crashing. All the different sea residents greeted us with their appearances: the otters, seals, sea lions, the puffins, the sea gulls, and the whales. I returned their greeting with a smile, with an amazing "WOW," and taking their picture. Again, it was like seeing them for the first time!

We drove through the longest tunnel in the United States, the Anton-Anderson Memorial Tunnel, 2.5 miles long. It is a combined car and train highway, with tracks in the middle of the road. Every hour and a half, cars are stopped for the trains to pass through, so the key is timing your trip. The tunnel empties into the small town of Whittier, with a population of nearly three hundred. It came into existence in WW II, manufacturing ammunition for our troops. Afterwards, it became incorporated and the residents of the entire town live in apartments made from the large army base. It is an ideal fishing port filled with shops and cafes.

With Whittier our visit came to end; driving back to Anchorage we had a good dinner and turned in early for next day's departure. Our journey to Alaska was spent, for the most part, **OUTSIDE**, beholding the handiwork and wonders of His creation. Praise the Lord!



*You made the starry host; You traced the mountain peaks.
You paint the evening skies with wonders.
The earth, it is Your throne from desert to the sea.
All nature testifies Your splendor.*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord
Sing His greatness all creation.
Praise the Lord, raise your voice,
You heights and you depths from furthest East to West.
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.*

[Psalm 150 (Praise the Lord) by Matt Boswell & Matt Papa (2021)]



HYMN HISTORIES

by Peggy Dear

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

Francis Scott Key was an attorney in Washington, D.C., when the war of 1812 broke out. Although he is best known for writing "*The Star-Spangled Banner*," he also wrote several hymns and was a leader in the organization of the American Sunday School Union.

In 1812, President James Madison asked **Key** to try to negotiate the release of a physician who had been taken prisoner by the British. The British admiral granted **Key's** request for a visit, but because of an attack on Fort McHenry and Baltimore was about to be made, **Key** was detained aboard his truce boat.

Key paced the deck all night. As dawn brought some shafts of light, he could see "the broad stripes and bright stars" of the flag flying over the fort. That day he went back to the city and wrote the first draft of "*The Star-Spangled Banner*" on the back of a letter. Before the day was over, the anthem was printed and circulated all over Baltimore. The flag that was waving over Fort McHenry that night is still on display in Baltimore.

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

*O say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thru the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof thru the night that our flag was still there.
O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

*O thus be it ever, when free men shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just:
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust!"
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!*

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY (1779-1842)

Book Review

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA God's plan for America Unfolds by Peter Marshall and David Manuel

As we celebrate **America's 250TH BIRTHDAY**, it's interesting to review the 50-year period between 1787 and 1837 when **America** was FRAGILE and God provided the spirit and the men to steer our course. The book is a sequel to the Light and the Glory by the same authors.

The review zeros in on two chapters, "**Needles of Light**", and "**New Wine, New Wineskins**", plus a few comments on slavery. Unique facts about other aspects of our history such as the War of 1812, Battle of New Orleans, Trail of Tears, early banking, etc. are commented on to provide a glimpse in the other exciting chapters.

Chapter 5: "Needles of Light" is an amazing account of GOD'S HAND on **America** in the 1790's when darkness prevailed. Gone were the Puritans and Christian influences. Deism, rigid Calvinism, French Rationalists, and Unitarianism were the driving forces. Men's hearts were turned to self, not God, and **Americans** thought "man's innate goodness" would carry the day. The hero of **American** Deism was Thomas Paine whose agenda was to destroy Christianity, using the book The Age of Reason, and calling the Gospel "Fable of Christ".

It seemed darkness had won, but then God intervened. It started with small revivals (East Haddam, and Lyme, Massachusetts) and then all of New England, with the leader being Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards as well as Yale's new president. He fired anti-God faculty members and Yale was the genesis of **America's** renewal flame.

Significant sermons were picked up by the newspapers, Deism was exposed, but Unitarianism which denied original sin was on the rise. Dwight's favorite student, Lyman Beecher, inherited from Dwight the role of the leader of the Second Great Awakening. Unitarians were everywhere in Boston: literary men, professors at Harvard, judges, the wealthy, etc.

But Beecher started preaching orthodox Christianity and new converts came in droves, so the Unitarians sent SPIES to the services, but after 2 years, the basic tenets of Christianity won, and the Unitarianism ceased to be a viable alternative. Suddenly, orphanages, old people's homes, sanitariums and hospital were established by the Christians, and it became **LAW** in 1811 in Connecticut to give every child a Bible.

Chapter 13: "New Wine, New Wineskins" is another inspiring chapter and covers **America's** Christian expansion of the 1830's. Charles Finney gave up his law practice to preach, and the results were astounding. The Presbytery reluctantly ordained him even though he had no formal training. He was once invited to preach at a Unitarian church with their vague beliefs, and he compared the tenets of Unitarianism with the gospel and **ALL THE ATTENDEES, BUT ONE**, gave their life to Christ.

SLAVERY was abolished by the British empire in 1833, thanks to the efforts of Wilberforce, but continued to be an abomination for **America**. Slaves usually worked 15 hours a day in the summer. Living conditions and discipline were so cruel, and slaves outnumbered whites in several southern states. In 1824 Ohio pursued gradual emancipation. Virginia considered deportation, but the cost of \$100 million was prohibitive. The first move to free the slaves was in 1787 with the Continental Congress, but Georgia and South Carolina objected. Christians passed resolutions, but the South always argued that to free the slaves would mean the end of the middle class. **America** was in a sad holding pattern, and like Nineveh was at the crossroads of mercy and judgment. For God's plan for **America** to be fulfilled, slavery must be eliminated.

Shortly after **America's** independence, the states drifted apart and even started implementing TARIFFS against each other! **Americans** were primarily interested in finding fertile soil and solving the slavery issue which began in 1619 was not a top priority.

Some of the most unique historical facts are these:

- The # 1 cash crop in Kentucky was **WHISKEY**.
- For \$400 a slave could be purchased.
- Soil in New England was too rocky, and contour farming had not yet been discovered. Soil in Ohio, however, was quite fertile and could yield 100 bushels of corn per acre.
- Kentucky reaped the benefits of the preaching of Rev. McGreedy, a Scot Irish Presbyterian. A meeting in Cane Creek drew 25,000 attendees and in a 3-year period church membership tripled.
- **GEORGE WHITFIELD** was the original circuit rider and much of the early frontier was converted to Methodism. Many converts had a copy of **PILGRIM'S PROGRESS**.
- When circuit rider, Francis Ashbourg arrived in Philadelphia in 1771, there were about 300 Methodists in **America** and by 1816 when he died, there were 214,000. He ordained 4,000 preachers, preached 16,500 sermons and traveled about 275,000 miles on **HORSEBACK!**
- Just prior to the War of 1812, England had 644 warships on duty compared to **America's** 10. President Jefferson opposed building up our navy. Over 6,000 **American** citizens were kidnapped to serve on English ships.
- Shortly after the British had burned and ransacked our Capitol in the War of 1812, **GOD INTERVENED** with a tornado that stopped the destruction of the city.
- John Quincy Adams was called the last of the Puritans. Not only did he rise early to read his Bible, but in his diary he **RECORDED HIS SIN** of the day.
- President Jefferson and Chief Justice John Marshall were constantly at odds. The president eliminated the US Mint, disbanded the army, and scuttled plans to build our navy. Conversely, Marshall believed in strong central government.
- In 1819 numerous banks failed, the country experienced severe depression and the middle class collapsed.
- New banks printed money without gold or silver backing and 40 % of the money in circulation was **COUNTERFEIT!** The value of a dollar varied between states.
- Andy Jackson, the people's president, became a Presbyterian late in life. His inauguration was attended by over 20,000 people, an unheard-of number. The election of 1824 with Jackson and John Quincy Adams resulted in many claims of the election being stolen.
- Oregon wagon trains were at times more than one mile long. Some of the wagons were made by Studebaker. A settler in Oregon could receive 640 acres (1 square mile) by simply asking, and he could raise 2 to 3 crops. On the trail it was not uncommon to see 50 grizzlies per day.
- On the "Trail of Tears" of the Cherokees, 4,000 of the 15,000 died - an extremely harsh mandate.
- The Battle of New Orleans, where Andy Jackson was our commander, greatly discouraged the British with their 1,971 casualties compared to 7 killed and 6 wounded for the **Americans**, who won because of their accuracy with long rifles (accurate up to 300 yards) not artillery.
- This book is well researched, full of interesting facts and a fun read. The early Christian leaders had a tremendous impact on the fabric of culture of **America**, and we should be so thankful for their contributions.

Submitted by Hugh Wise, July 2026

Book Review

FLIGHT PATH - A BIOGRAPHY OF FRANK BARKER, JR.

Janie Buck & Marylou Davis

A few weeks ago, **Paul Engle** completed his tour of the Apostle Paul's travels by looking at his missionary journeys outlined in Acts and Romans 15. During the last class, **Paul E.** opened with a term quoted from **R.C. Sproul "Causal Nexus"**. Simply defined, a causal nexus is the link between an action and the resulting consequence. Some might call this "coincidence", others call it "fate", as if the things that happened to them just happen...for no apparent reason. But, as seasoned Christians, we learn better. Things don't happen "just because". Proverbs 16 tells us several times, in different ways, that it is God Who guides and directs us. Maybe through people or circumstances. But it is His watchful eye, His still, small voice and His hand that guides us... if we are open, available, looking and listening.

In a way, this is the story of the birth of **Christ Covenant Church**. That's because in September 1960, **Frank Barker, Jr.**, became the founding pastor of **Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL**.

The story of **Frank Barker, Jr.** is filled with what he called "stars". See, **Frank** was the kind of guy that tried to do better. His behavior was a disappointment to his parents and himself. Although he tried to change, he kept making decisions that showed he was more "one of the boys", than a child of God. While he grew up in church, by the time he was in college and in the Navy, there was no sign of Christ in his life. *But God*.

Frank recalls a warning he received late one night on a lonely stretch of road between Birmingham and the Florida border. He grew very tired but refused to pull over to rest. He fell asleep at the wheel and, when the road curved, his car did not. After being jolted awake, he was able to gain control of the car. When the dust cleared, he was stopped directly in front of a sign nailed to a tree. The sign read, "The wages of sin is death". The authors record **Frank's** thoughts: *"I don't believe this is an accident. [God is] telling me 'Shape up or else!'; 'I've got to change my ways.'" So, he started doing the only thing he knew to get on the path to reformation: Go to church. "I was seeking spiritual help but didn't know how to ask for it." Sound familiar?*

Eventually, the "stars" pointed **Frank** to the Columbia Theological Seminary, the seminary of his pastor. Even **Frank** admits that, at this time, he still didn't know Jesus. That didn't stop the Lord. One month after enrolling, his roommate asked him to fill in at a church in Oxford, AL. For two years, **Frank** pastored this flock through sermon and Bible study. The Lord led him to start a Sunday School for kids there, too. **Frank's** life is peppered with incidents like this.

Frank came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ while in seminary. Since he "now understood salvation was a gift", he wanted to "express my gratitude but didn't know how." He became concerned about other people knowing the gift of salvation. So, his first stop was talking to his parents. They knew and when he inquired as to why they didn't tell him, they responded, "We did, but it didn't soak in. God had to open your eyes..." Even **Frank** admitted "I must have been blind..." after re-reading Luther's commentary on Galatians. He told his sister and a neighbor and led both to the saving knowledge of the free gift Christ offers. I think these experiences helped shape what life at Briarwood Presbyterian was to become.

Throughout his early ministry at Briarwood, **Frank** shepherded a church that grew in size and scope. And during this time, **Frank** and the Briarwood staff learned to rely on God for every need, seeking God “as the source of our supply, not teaching or speaking.” Each “guiding star” was God leading **Frank** through circumstance, people and His Word. After one experience in which prayer played a major role, **Frank** saw how prayer “directed not only me, but the whole church...”

Frank saw a need for missions and wanted Briarwood to be a “mission-minded” church. The Lord had a plan and brought the mission field to Briarwood through several outreach initiatives like English classes to internationals and supporting other missionaries, both denominational and other in need.

Frank also learned the importance of asking for help, especially as the church seemed to grow exponentially. A Campus Crusade for Christ ministry was formed by a couple enthusiastic to begin this ministry from the ground up. A dance ministry for younger girls started by **Frank’s** wife, **Barbara**, a trained ballerina, also included a home Bible study, attracting many girls from all walks of life. Additional ministries within the church began to sprout, grow and thrive.

Briarwood also faced a crossroads of sorts. As a member of the P.C.U.S, church leadership began to see how the denomination was turning away from the foundational teachings of the church and the Bible. So **Frank**, as one of several speakers at a rally in Atlanta called Presbyterian Churchmen United, gave a speech. Excerpts from the speech are included in the book. **Frank** was one of 800 pastors who signed a Declaration of Commitment noting their adherence to the Scripture as the Word of God. After the rally, it was clear the leadership of the General Assembly at the time did not hold the same view. **Frank** recalls, “The Moderator...wrote...” “We have to learn to live with diversity.” The problem was what he called “diversity”, God called APOSTASY!” So, in February of 1973, a new denomination was formed: The Continuing Presbyterian Church. In December, that name was amended to the National Presbyterian Church. However, a name conflict with the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, saw the name changed again to **The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)**.

So where does **Christ Covenant** fit in this story? Well, Briarwood sponsored **Christ Covenant** as a church plant and the late **Harry Reeder** was named pastor. After 40 years serving Briarwood, **Frank** sensed it was time to retire and that **Harry**, Senior Pastor to a flock of 2000, was to be his successor. But **Frank** let the Lord work and kept his mouth shut. **Harry** wasn’t interested in leaving Christ Covenant. Again, **Frank** let God work. **Harry** was installed as Senior Pastor at Briarwood in the fall of 1999.

The authors, co-laborers in different ministries at Briarwood, complete **Frank’s** story by highlighting several things they learned about him, both from their own experience and from the myriads of people who shared their stories about **Frank**. This is but a summary:

- *Humility*. “His congregation knew him as “**Frank**””.
- *Protection* of his flock, especially from error.
- *Influential* in the formation and revival of mission-giving churches
- *Available* to his congregation.
- *Supportive* of church happenings and outreach.
- *Encouraging* to young men seeking to serve in ministry
- *Committed* to teaching the Word of God.

Thus ends the story of **Frank Barker, Jr.**, a man who has been given to us as an example, in much the same way as the experiences lived out by the Old & New Testament saints has been given to us as an example (1 Corinthians 10:11 ESV). Let us learn and not only follow the example of those who daily live the Word they believe and trust, but also be an example to others, in thought and word and deed.

Submitted by Pam Hollars July 2026

Book Review

THE RELIGIOUS FORMATION OF JOHN WITHERSPOON **Calvinism, Evangelicalism, and the Scottish Enlightenment** **By Kevin DeYoung. Routledge, 2020**

This is the product of our **Pastor's** research done for his Ph.D. in early modern history at the University of Leicester (UK). Silly me, I thought this book on **John Witherspoon** was just published in the last year, but it seems it has been around since 2021. Nevertheless, I was glad to finally read what **Pastor Kevin** has been alluding to numerous times in sermons. This edition is the full PhD dissertation as originally submitted to the examination committee at Leicester but has been reformatted for publication. It is not an abridgment.

It was not exactly what I expected. I was thinking it would fill in my knowledge of **Witherspoon** as a founding father but that was not the case. The author had a different goal in mind. Apparently, **Dr. Witherspoon** had been accused of changing his views from the theological battles he fought in Scotland as a staunch Calvinist against the creeping liberalism in the early 1700s, to become something less than a committed Calvinist when he came to America. This book completely dispels that assertion.

The book has five chapters; the first four deal with **Witherspoon's** spiritual battle in the reformed church in Scotland prior to 1768 at which time he came to America as president of Princeton. Those years were marked by the decline of Christianity in Scotland due to creeping unbelief among church leaders and pastors as they adopted so called "Moderate" theology. In America we experience the same movement away from Biblical orthodoxy to what we call "Liberalism" in the next century. It reached a climax (in my opinion) in 1924 with the Auburn Affirmation. Both terms, Moderate and Liberal, denote the same sort of theological change. I would call it apostasy though some might think that term too extreme. Yet it is the sort of thing Paul warned the Ephesians about in Acts 20:29: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." Or 2 Timothy 3:5. "...having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof."

In a previous book review on **Herman Bavinck**, I noted he fought against the inroads of unbelief in the Dutch church in the 1800's. But of course, this was the next century from **Witherspoon**. Apparently, apostasy moves in waves across geography and history. Yet God always seems to have a remnant that resists leading to a reform movement. So, these heroes: **Whitfield** in the 18th century, **Bavinck** in the 19th century, and **Gresham Machen** in the 20th century. Thank God for these courageous men that held the line of Biblical truth.

One of the startling (to me) issues of the day in Scotland in the early 18th century was about the Biblical doctrine of “imputation of righteousness.” The moderates charged that teaching our righteousness is imputed by Christ’s obedience and death would weaken “the obligation to holiness of life by making our justification before God depend entirely upon the righteousness and merit of another.” (p68) This charge exposes a weak and false understanding of the merits of Christ and the basic plan of salvation. The moderates would rather earn their salvation than accept a gift and live in gratitude! **Witherspoon** fought mightily against this false reasoning and other heresies as well but to no avail.

“The doctrine of salvation was hotly disputed in the Reformed world of the eighteenth century. Questions about the atonement, the call of the gospel, and the nature of saving faith took on added importance as developments in science, philosophy and natural history called in to question conventional formulations of Christian belief.”
(p.45)

By the time he departed to America the church in Scotland was apparently too firmly in the grip of these things to be turned. His resistance to these trends makes him a hero of the reformed faith; yet I suppose if I had been there, I might have said: **Dr. Witherspoon** the church is a goner. Get out and form a new church. Call it RCS. The Reformed Church in Scotland as would happen in America some 200 years later with the formation of the Presbyterian Church in America.

There is a huge gulf between believing the Bible completely and trying to squirm out of a particular teaching or idea someone does not like. If you can’t accept the sovereignty of God to work miracles, such as the resurrection of the dead... well, you might as well give it up and become a pagan because if God can’t raise the dead neither is he the author of life nor sovereign over life and is in fact no god at all.

But be assured. God is sovereign and rules from heaven with our Lord Jesus at his right hand. And He has promised with a pledge of blood to raise us with spiritual bodies at the last trumpet. Hallelujah.

The last chapter deals with **Witherspoon** in America and the profound effect he had on many leading up to his signing of the Declaration of Independence, and the training of both pastors and early leaders. The fact that many of our founders were serious believing Christians is an encouragement to patriotism knowing that the doctrines of our faith, when applied to life produce a civilization that matches man’s nature and also his sanctified aspirations.

Good book.

Submitted by Chris Williams July 2026

What's Your Story?

A Call for Coram Deo Class Senior Life Stories

There are no ordinary lives...none. Each of us has lived a life woven with God's grace over the years. Would you write down your own **"Life Story"** to share with your Sunday School family? It will be added to over 100 stories written over many years by our past and present members of Christ Covenant's senior community which have been compiled in our **Senior Life Stories** binder. Sharing them is a wonderful way to encourage each other while learning more about our classmates and discovering how much we all have in common!

Your story doesn't need to be a long book. We suggest a maximum of one or two pages front and back, handwritten or typed, recounting some of the highlights you wish to share. If you're not sure where to start, here are some ideas to guide your writing – **choose all** or just the ones that matter most to you:

Your Roots: Where were you born and raised? Do you want to share anything about your parents or what your childhood was like? Were you raised in a Christian home?

Your Family: If married, how did you meet your spouse? Do you have children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren?

Work, School, Military: Did you serve in the military, go to trade school/college, or what was your most interesting occupation?

Your Faith: How and when did you come to know the Lord, and how has He carried you through difficult challenges in your life?

Your Joys: What are your favorite hobbies, talents or interests. What is a valuable piece of wisdom you want to pass down?

How to Share Your Story: Please take some time over the summer to share your Life Story by the end of August to be included in our next updated Coram Deo Senior Life Stories binder. ***If you're not comfortable writing your own, you can provide basic information, and we will be happy to help you write it.***

Give your handwritten or typed hard copy directly to Patty Marion in SS class OR email it to Patty at www.pattymarion@runbox.us by the end of August.

You can purchase the completely updated binder in September at our cost of \$10. Those who already have binders will receive an Addendum insert to add to it.

Patty Marion

CAMPING SPIRIT

“**Skunk! - - - In the fireplace**” was the quiet yet urgent alert-warning from the sister cowering with Mom inside of the family pop-up camper. Her younger brother and their dad were just about to pass right by that fireplace as they returned (walking under late night darkness) from the Smoky Mountain campground shower. One flashlight with low batteries illuminated their path. But: with stealth and courage, man and boy very slowly navigated between the odiferous threat in the fireplace and the camper door to join mom and sister inside. There they huddled together as the pungent intruder exercised complete dominion in the blackness of the campsite until dawn.

It’s just one of the many camping experiences that small family remembers. like the time the four of them pitched a tent in Yellowstone Park: At dusk; having set everything up before the first night of their stay (fire crackling, dinner served, four sleeping bags laid out in the tent and Mom’s customary **oatmeal chewie’s** in hand: a park ranger drove thru the campground in a green truck with loud speaker. - - - “Due to the increase of black and grizzly bears in this campground, it is recommended that campers keep food and cosmetics stowed away from sleeping areas. Also, do not walk about at night without a flashlight”. - - - Immediately, all camping parties with tents (except the one small family holding their oatmeal chewie’s) packed and loaded up and left. Exhausted from a very long drive, this small family stayed, zipped within the fragile canvas tent walls: - - - Dad and Mom awake with pale faces and ready to panic loudly at any moment. Well - - - no dreaded bears came near, and dawn brought opportunity for adventure in nature. In fact, over the remainder of the park visit, driving and looking for a Yellowstone bear, they didn’t spot a single living bear. They did, however, photograph themselves beside a huge stuffed grizzly they came across in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. But the memory of that time together remains and is re-told to this day!

Many more times and experiences from family camping took place for Mom, Dad and their two youngsters as they grew through ages five and three into their high school years. And family camping yielded lasting benefits for them as they visited other beautiful and interesting places as (just the four of them) camped together: The Teton Mountains; the Uinta mountains (many times); the forests, lakes and rivers of Minnesota and Wisconsin; the Smoky Mountains near Gatlinburg; The Pacific Ocean near San Diego and Tijuana. There were also real physical and spiritual benefits: hiking; swimming; games and simple meals; fresh air and sunshine and deeper sleep.

The **spiritual** benefits turned out to be their **most important** family camping benefits: (Not just benefits but **gifts** from **God**). Camping takes a person and a family to places where God speaks (as in Romans 1:20) - - - “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead”.

Camping was the major, most frequent, kind of vacation or weekend outing for this family. During the week, Dad was often out of town due to his employment so weekends and vacations were looked forward to and planned around those days and hours when they could all be together. Looking back, it's clear how the spirit of The All Mighty revealed Himself during those camping times through all of their senses. They camped in His created beauty, away from stress, noise, demands of employer or school or urban life and property. While camping, they were insulated from all that: They were focused almost entirely on each other: eating, hiking, fishing, exploring, talking, laughing, sleeping. All while surrounded by the creator's **spiritual voice**. - - - The **sight** of the work of His hands in mountains, foliage, and waters; - - - the **touch** and fragrance of His breath in breeze, wind, rain, and flowers; - - - the **audible power** of His **strength** and **will** in thunderstorms, rivers and waterfalls; - - - the **calming peace** in His evening and dawn silence. Camping together was a great gift and treasure to that family (now grown and expanded with children's children and grandchildren).

One indelible memory (remaining sweetly vibrant) is packing the family car for another camping trip and starting out in the quiet early morning dark. The last cargo to be loaded into the car was the little seven-year-old sister and her five-year-old brother. They were sleepy but content to be carried, (pretending to be asleep, they now confess) while being securely bedded down on the back seat. Doors would shut; engine would start and the drive to the next campsite would begin. The great God of the universe was watching.

By Steve Sperry July 2026

SUMMER SUNDAY SCHOOL: TWELVE MEN

We learned a lot as well as enjoyed our journey with Paul Engle in the teaching, the time, and the travel of the Apostle Paul. On behalf of the class and myself included, thank you Paul for all the preparation and the dedication you have put into each study. It is no wonder why we had a consistently full classroom each Sunday.

***This summer** we will be looking at Christ's disciples, **The Twelve**. They are twelve men. They are twelve very different men who reacted to the Lord in twelve different ways. As we become acquainted with the faults and hopes of Christ's twelve men and how He built His kingdom using them, we, His disciples, are encouraged how He uses each of us. With the Savior in our midst, we can be confident in our service.*

***Our study will through July and August**. Each Sunday we will look at the lives and ministry of these 12 Men.*

SOLISTA ROCK PAINTING ACTIVITY

The Rock Painting activity on June 11th went very well. There were 8 residents and 7 volunteers. Our own **Candy Thompson** was the instructor. There will not be an event in July.



Thank you for helping to bring joy and love to the Solista residents!

The Ladies' Luncheon will be Friday, July 10th, at Trio's at 1130. The address is 10709 McMullen Creek Pkwy, off Hwy. 51. Please let **Dot Branson (704-575-5955)** know that you will attend. We hope that you will join us for great food and sweet fellowship.

The Senior Men's Luncheon will be Friday, July 17 @ 11 AM
(arriving a little earlier helps us get parked and order by 11:15), **at Park Place Restaurant 10517 Park Rd.** Join us for a good, encouraging time gathered with your Christian brothers for great food and fellowship and Pastor Mo's devotional.



Patsy Rider	July	01
Doug Hart	July	04
Rosemary Adams	July	07
Jan Conti	July	07
Carol Faber	July	08
Tom Cox	July	09
Helen Smith	July	10
Jan King	July	12
Wendy Klipp	July	15
David McArthur	July	15
Patrick Hogan	July	16
Dan O'Neil	July	18
Carol Marzahn	July	20
Martha Walkup	July	20
Karen Grindstaff	July	24
Ken Webb	July	24
Hugh Wise	July	24
Jimmy Price	July	25
Nancy O'Neil	July	27
Bill Scott II	July	27

John & Vivi Wickberg	July	04
David & Angela Pacey	July	15
Dan & Nancy O'Neil	July	20
Jim & Patti Prieb	July	20
Steve & Patsy Rider	July	20
Mo & Janie Up De Graff	July	22
Myron & Mary Guthrie	July	23
Bob & Karen Hott	July	24
Jimmy & Jane Price	July	25
Tom & Anne Hopkins	July	26
Buddy & Liz Parker	July	27
Mark & Laura Costello	July	29

JULY SENIOR ADULT ACTIVITIES

Sunday School, Sundays, 9:00 am
Prayer Meetings, Tuesdays, 7:00 – 8:30 pm,
WC107

Ladies Luncheon, -- Friday, July 10, 11:30am
Trios Restaurant, McMullen Creek

Men's Luncheon, Friday July 17, 11:00am
Park Place Restaurant, Pineville

Save the Date:
Fall Retreat @ Bonclarken,
October 13-17, 2026

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