

*The Voice in the Wilderness*

# Is there any hope?

By John Noblin

*Parksville Baptist Church*

Psalm 137:1-2, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it."

These are the words of people who had lost all hope. They were God's people who, because of disobedience and an unwillingness to follow Him, now found themselves carried away captive and exiled into the land of their enemies. As they remembered Jerusalem and how good they had it back then, they now sat down to weep. They couldn't imagine that it had come to this. They are now captives in shackles and chains who have been taken from the land of God's blessings to the wasteland of despair in enemy territory. Songs were the one thing they had left to give them hope, but now, they couldn't even sing. They were grieved and heartbroken, so they hung their harps on the weeping willows and sat down hopeless.

I would imagine we have all had times like this. Times when there seems to be no hope. When we look around at how bad things have become and we remember better days. Times when we scratch our heads and wonder, "How could it ever have come to this?" We ask ourselves, "How did I let myself get so far from home, from what's good, from what's right, ... from God?" The Israelites pondered those same questions themselves. "We had it so good when we obeyed the voice of the Lord; now look at us. What were we thinking by neglecting His Truth? We have played the fool in departing from the Lord."

Based on what we see today, there are many people who are living right there. I just nailed their address. Young men and women, and older ones too, who can remember a time of life when they were being led in the right direction. Days when Mama and Daddy and Grandma and Grandpa or that neighbor or friend or relative made sure they were in Church and seeking righteousness. They used to sing the songs of Zion that gave them hope. Songs about the love of the Lord, the blood of Jesus, the hope of Heaven and songs of faith. But, like the Israelites, they've allowed the enemy to wrap them in chains and shackles of addiction, drugs, alcohol, adultery, fornication,

idolatry, lust, hate, prejudice, selfishness, godlessness, cruelty and wickedness. They don't even resist anymore; they have given up and sat down by the river and hung their harps on the willows.

It makes me sad and angry at the same time to hear of so many suicides, drug overdoses and needless deaths in McCormick County. Can we not see that the enemy of our souls is dealing in death? What can be the cause of the kind of despair, depression and discouragement that leads to this? I believe it has a great deal to do with "hopelessness." Like the Israelites, many people feel there is nowhere else to turn; they can't go any further. If you're one of those folks in captivity and at the end of your road, I have great news for you: There is a turn you have overlooked.

You can turn to the Lord. Over and over again, God calls us to turn to Him. Many times, He gives the invitation to "Come, and come just as you are." He will take you because He loves you. He offers grace to sinners like us. Lives are being changed every day and all around the world by God's power and grace. I am seeing Him at work right here in McCormick County. Do you need to let Him work in your life? In coming to Him, He offers us hope, peace, rest, joy, purpose, freedom, security and His love.

Your enemy can't do that. Neither can your dealer; your beer, wine and liquor man; or your man or woman on the side. They're offering death and destruction, imprisonment, fear, depression, hurt, sorrow, pain and suffering, which all lead to hopelessness.

As you sit there in your tears and regrets and your grief and pain, while you remember the God of your youth, why don't you call out to the Lord for your deliverance? There is hope; in fact, as long as there is God, there will be hope. He's eternal, so there will always be hope. Unless you wait too long and pass up the opportunities He gives you to be rescued.

Please share this article with someone you know who needs "hope" today. And, if you're looking for a church where you won't be judged, but will be loved, I invite you to visit Plum Branch Baptist Church in Plum Branch. There's something happening there.

## Volunteers needed for Rise Against Hunger food packaging event

By Rick Lindley  
*Communications  
McCormick United  
Methodist Church*

McCormick United Methodist Church is sponsoring a Rise Against Hunger food packaging event. On Oct. 6, at 9:30 a.m. we will package 20,000 meals in two hours. We are asking for participants from throughout the community to assist us in this endeavor. We need 90 volunteers for the project.

Rise Against Hunger is a non-profit organization that utilizes volunteers to package millions of nutri-

tious meals annually. The meals are then distributed to countries around the world. This program addresses hunger and ensures the meals are used as a tool to change lives by promoting education, improving students' health and nutrition, addressing gender inequalities, stimulating economic growth and fighting child labor.

If you would like to volunteer, please stop by the church office at 200 East Gold Street or call us at 864-852-2394. The Church office is open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

# Mark Your Calendar

## HAPPENINGS

### FIFTH ANNUAL OYSTER ROAST AND LOW COUNTRY BOIL

The fifth annual Oyster Roast and Low Country Boil will be presented by the McCormick County Historical Commission on Friday, Sept. 21 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the Dorn Mill Complex, 206 North Main St. The event will feature live entertainment by the Carolina Drifters. Tickets are \$30 for adults and \$15 for children 12 and under. Come early and set up a tent, table and chairs on the lawn. Coolers are allowed. Water and sodas are provided. Oyster knives will be available for purchase. Gloves will be provided. Tickets may be purchased at the Red Rooster. No tickets will be sold at the gate.

### COMMUNITY THREADS FOR SEPTEMBER 2018

Community Threads will hold regular Open Sew Sessions in the Bordeaux Room at Hickory Knob State Resort Park 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. No experience necessary. Bring your projects and enjoy a day of stitching. Mark your calendars: Thursday, Sept. 27, Fat Quarter Raffle - theme, FLOWERS. Community Threads is a pro-

gram of the McCormick Arts Council at the Keturah (MACK). For more information, contact the MACK at 864-852-3216 or Belinda at quiltingworkshops@gmail.com.

### PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

The 40th Pumpkin Festival will be held Saturday, Oct. 13 at the Oolenoy Community Building in Pumpkintown. The theme is "Celebrating 40 Years in the Oolenoy Valley and Pumpkintown Community." Activities will include a parade, 152 booths of quality arts and crafts, music, clogging, activities for children, barbecue chicken lunch, barbecue sandwiches and other country foods. The festival will start with the parade at 9 a.m. Barbecue lunch will be served at noon. For more information or to help with the festival, call Buddy Cox at 864-878-2045. Anyone who would like to participate in the parade can contact the Pumpkintown Fire Department at 864-878-3473.

### MEETINGS

#### MIMS CLASS OF 1968

The Mims High School Class of 1968 will meet each month on the fourth Sunday at 4 p.m. at the MACK.

## Authentic prayer

By Kittye Craig - Jackson

Matthew 6:5-8 - "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."

You don't have to be a believer to pray. Crisis hits somebody's life, and during their normal life, they might not even tip their hat to God or give God the time of day, but boy, crisis hits and they hit that "Spiritual 911" button. "Oh God, help me!" Or, some people seem to begin to pray but never finish - "Jee-sus Christ."

You don't have to be a believer to pray; everyone prays. Jesus assumes that. He doesn't say, "if you pray." He says, "when you pray." But, the issue is not prayer; the issue is whether your prayers and my prayers are authentic or not. So, Jesus goes on to contrast authentic prayer with hypocritical and pagan prayers. He does that by giving you and me some "do's" and "don'ts" about prayer.

Back in Jesus' day, there were all kinds of folks who would struggle to see who could get furthest up in the synagogue and stand and pray in front of everyone. In fact, these folks were such powerful, pious people of prayer that they couldn't even wait to get to church. I mean, on the way to church they would stop at nearly every street corner and begin to pray out loud. "Wow, look at Joe. He's so spiritual! What a man of God!"

The only problem is Joe wasn't really praying, at least not authentically. You see, Joe's chief thing was not to pray, it was to be seen. Joe was putting on spiritual airs. He wanted to be known as a spiritual giant. But, he's not. He's not really praying at all - Joe is performing.

God says, "Don't be like those babbling pagans who just go on

and on and on." Again, the issue is they are trying to impress God with their many words. Trying to impress God? As if you and I can impress God. Prayer is simply conversation with God. Talking with Him, opening your life up and inviting Him into your life.

Put yourself in God's shoes for just a moment. Imagine if you are God, and every day you've got millions of authentic and inauthentic prayers flying at you all the time. The only thing I can figure is it must be like the difference between getting a phone call from a telemarketer versus a phone call from your best friend. One's trying to manipulate you, one's trying to get something from you, one's trying to impress you, one's trying to get you to do something, one's trying to twist your arm, one's trying to meet a sales quota, one's trying to impress some bosses and one is simply about relationships.

Prayer is at the heart of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We are committed to the realization that God answers prayer in His way and in His time because He is sovereign. God can't be manipulated. Prayer is not some kind of arm wrestling match with God trying to get a reluctant God to do something for us. God always answers prayer, always answers out of His grace, always out of His love, always out of what He believes to be best for your life and for mine down there at the bottom of His heart. Maybe we can't see it, but we have to trust it. He always answers, either yes, or no, or wait.

That's what authentic prayer is all about. It's letting your heart break open and maybe even bleed before the Lord for certain people and situations. Stop making your prayer sound like you're reading from a short novel - far more has been produced by a short authentic prayer than you and I can ever imagine in our wildest dreams.

Be authentic - not a performer!



# Church Calendar

**BETHANY MISSIONARY BAPTIST**  
702 South Main St.

• Sept. 23: Family and friends celebration at 11 a.m. The Rev. Keith F. Gordon is pastor.

**BORDEAUX WORSHIP CENTER**  
• Services at 11 a.m. on Sundays.

**BUFFALO BAPTIST**  
3699 Hwy. 28 N.

• Sept. 23: The guest speaker will be the Rev. Earl Owings.  
• Sept. 25: Senior Adult Fall Rally at 11 a.m. at South Main Baptist Church. The guest speaker will be Scott Lawson, "The Cowboy Preacher," from Happy Trails Cowboy Church.  
• Sept. 30: Spaghetti fundraiser following the worship service. Dine in or take out. \$6 for adults, \$3 for children ages 3-12. Proceeds to benefit the Youth B Christmas Mission project.

**CEDAR SPRING BAPTIST**  
1873 Hwy. 283, Plum Branch

• Sept. 30: The deaconesses and Pastor Sloan Gordon will have Family and Friends Day at 2 p.m.

**FIRST BETHANY BAPTIST**  
• Sunday school at 10 a.m. Sunday worship at 11 a.m.

• Second Sunday evening services: Forest View Manor (Callison Hwy.) at 4 p.m. Mission meeting (all ages) at 5 p.m. Finger food fellowship at 6 p.m.  
• Fifth Sundays: Fifth Sunday singing and worship at 5 p.m.  
• Wednesday nights: Light supper (free) at 6 p.m. Class from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Bible Buddies - birth to five years old. GA (Girls in Action) - first to fifth grade. RA (Royal Ambassadors) - first to fifth grade. EPIC Group (Youth) - Sixth to twelfth grade. Adult Bible study.

• Sept. 25: Grief Share Support Group starts at 6:30 p.m. Everything said in the session is confidential. This is not just for members of the church. Everyone is welcome. Session is free and will be held for 13 weeks, but attendees may come to all or just part of the sessions. For questions, contact Pastor John Alexander at revjohnalexander@gmail.com.  
• Oct. 26-27: The church directory will be updated for members, but anyone is welcome to come have pictures taken. Those who do will receive a free 8"x10". For more information, contact Angela G. Quarles at 864-993-5081. If there is no answer, leave a message, and your call will be returned.

**LUTHERAN CHURCH BY THE LAKE**  
100 Twelve Oaks Dr.

• Sept. 23: Loss of Spouse seminar at 2 p.m. Widows and widowers are encouraged to attend. This program is from GriefShare. There are workbooks that go with this program, so it is helpful to have an idea of how many will be attending. A team of widows will follow the video with sharing time. You do not have to share. Refreshments will be served. Anyone planning to come should call Jeanne Blanchek Thayer at 864-391-2494 or email jeanneblanchek@yahoo.com.

**McCORMICK FIRST BAPTIST**

• Tuesdays, Sept. 18 - Oct. 30: Ladies Bible study, "Discerning the Voice of God" by Pricilla Shirer. 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. or 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at the upper room fellowship hall. Call the church office for information and to sign up: 852-2640.

**MINE CREEK BAPTIST**

Visit the Messenger's online events calendar to get the word out about your community and church events:  
[themccormickmessenger.com/event-calendar/](http://themccormickmessenger.com/event-calendar/)

• Oct. 7: The Mine Creek Burial Aid Society will celebrate their 110th anniversary at 2:30 p.m. The guest preacher will be Minister Daisy Butler of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Johnston. The Rev. Johnny Peterson is pastor.

**MT. ZION A.M.E.**  
185 Mt. Zion Church Rd.

• Church school at 9 a.m. Worship service at 10:15 a.m. The Rev. Lebbie Ligon is pastor.  
• Sept. 22: Pastor Appreciation Program at 1 p.m.  
• Sept. 30: Fifth Sunday worship service will be held at Elijah Clark State Park at 10 a.m. The Rev. Lebbie Ligon is pastor.

**PINE GROVE A.M.E.**  
317 Pine Grove Church Rd., Plum Branch  
• Church school at 9 a.m. Morning worship service at 10:15 a.m.

**PLEASANT LANE MISSIONARY**  
12 Peterson Lane, Edgefield

• Oct. 7: 141st church anniversary at 10:45 a.m. The guest speaker will be Minister Albert Haynes of Tabernacle Baptist Church in Augusta, Ga. The Rev. Melvin Searles Sr. is pastor.

**PLUM BRANCH BAPTIST**

• HisKids children's ministry and PBBCC youth meet Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.  
• Sept. 23-26: Revival services with the Rev. Bryant Sims.  
• Oct. 21-24: Revival services with Dr. Paul Noe.  
• Oct. 27: Fall Festival at 4 p.m.

**REPUBLICAN UNITED METHODIST**  
865 Chamberlain's Ferry Rd.

• Sunday school 10 a.m. Church Service 11 a.m.

**SHAWS CREEK BAPTIST**  
Trenton

• Jan. 1, 2019: McCormick County Emancipation Program. The Rev. R.C. Holloway is organizing a McCormick County Choir (100 voices) to provide music for the program in January. Meeting and time will be announced at a later date. 443-2136.

**SPIRIT AND LIFE**  
615 Hwy. 378 West

• The new location for the church is 615 Hwy. 378 W. (across from Tax Shop). Sunday prayer 9:30 a.m. Sunday school 10 a.m. Worship Experience 11 a.m. Wednesday prayer 6:30 p.m. Bible study 7 p.m. Every Thursday is Fast Day. Bishop Donn M. Lee is founder and pastor.  
• The month of October has been declared "Women's Month." Women have been invited to minister every Saturday and Sunday at 3:30 p.m. (with the exception of Oct. 21 and 28).  
• Sept. 30: Fifth Sunday Fellowship at 11 a.m. in Calhoun Falls. There will be no service at Spirit and Life.  
• Oct. 21: 12th church anniversary at 3:30 p.m. Bishop James Ware of True Fellowship Pentecostal Church in Lincolnton, Ga. will be the speaker.  
• Nov. 1: The Emergency Food Bank will open from 10 a.m. to noon.

**ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST**  
301 Edgefield Rd., Plum Branch

• Sunday service at 9:45 a.m. Come as you are.

**VILLAGE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

• Village Church of Christ meets Sundays at 9 a.m. Contact Michael Kolb at 864-391-4543.

**GOOD SHEPHERD CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
Invites you to attend services  
Wednesday & Friday at 9 a.m.; Saturday at 5 p.m.  
Sunday at 11 a.m.  
Hwy. 221 North, McCormick  
Father Robert Sayer  
Confessions: Saturday 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.  
Or by Appointment Only  
For additional information call 852-4722

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**McCormick United Methodist Church**  
A Stephen Ministry Congregation  
We Welcome you to Join us in Worship this Week  
Gold and Pine Streets McCormick, SC (864) 852-2394  
mccormickumc.org  
Reaching Up Reaching Out  
Rev. C. Nels Ledwell....Pastor  
Worship Services...8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.  
Church School...9:45 a.m.

**McCormick First Baptist Church**  
108 S. Oak Street, POB 416, McCormick, SC 29835 • 864-852-2640  
www.mccormickfbc.org  
Michael Allen, Pastor  
Michelle Allen, Children & Youth Director  
Sunday  
Sunday School 9:45 AM  
Morning Worship 11:00 AM  
Evening Service 6:00 PM  
Youth Program 6:00 PM  
Wednesday  
Children's Program 5:30 PM  
Prayer Meeting 6:00 PM  
Nursery for Sunday Morning Worship provided

**Lutheran Church By The Lake**  
We invite you to worship with us.  
SUNDAY MORNING 8:15 & 10:15 A.M.  
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