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Our Mission

Nashville Christian Family ® exists to provide Christians and the community at large with ways to strengthen and grow as a part of the Middle Tennessee Christian Family. This local monthly publication is designed to promote positive living by sharing with readers of all ages relevant and timely news and information related to health, faith, parenting, youth, finances, Christian entertainment, missions, church leaders, and much more GOOD NEWS!

From the Publisher

Christmas: A Time to Celebrate the True Meaning of the Season



"And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" Luke 2:1 – 14, New King James Version**

Christmas is here! This time of year is truly magical and exciting—a season for gathering with family and friends, decorating the tree, serving and giving to those in need, exchanging meaningful gifts, attending festive celebrations, and enjoying holiday treats and meals.

Yet, by the time Christmas Day arrives, many of us find ourselves overwhelmed by the flurry of holiday activities. Rather than enjoying the season, we can become stressed, exhausted, over budget, and simply ready for it all to be over. But that shouldn't be the case for believers!

Christmas offers a special opportunity to refocus our hearts and minds on what matters most—to "be still and know that He is God." Make time for yourself and your family to slow down and embrace the true joy of the season. Gather your loved ones and read the Christmas story from the Bible. Most importantly, celebrate the true meaning of Christmas: the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

From all of us at *Nashville Christian Family*, we wish you and your loved ones a blessed, peaceful, and joy-filled Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Robert Stringfellow, Publisher, 615-815-8765
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ON THE COVER 20

Dr. Phil Barfoot has spent his life blazing new trails in worship ministry. From conducting The American Festival Choir at New York's Carnegie Hall to leading choirs through the great cathedrals of Europe, his ministries share one calling: keeping the church choir alive and thriving. Discover how the "Idea Man" of worship ministry encourages believers to dream bigger dreams. See page 20 to learn more.

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A Grandparent's Influence Will Often Have Eternal Impact

I remember holding each of my five grandchildren for the first time. My heart was filled with boundless joy and thanksgiving to the Heavenly Father. Although I prayed for physically healthy grandchildren, I prayed even more for grandchildren who would grow knowing the love of Jesus.



As a grandparent, what do you want your grandchildren to know and remember most about you? For me, I want my grandchildren to know that I loved and served Jesus with great fervor, that I loved them with my whole heart, and that I wanted them to know, love, and serve Jesus.

A grandparent's influence ranks second only to a child's parent. Grandparents should take every advantage to spiritually pour into their grandchildren's lives with the intention to have an eternal influence.

Grandparents are pictured throughout Scripture as vital individuals in the family, passing down faith and godly wisdom. Deuteronomy 4:9 is clear that grandparents are to actively teach and guide their descendants, teaching the truths of God to their children and to their children after them. Proverbs 17:6 describes grandchildren as the crown of the aged, and the pride of children is their parents.

Consider also 2 Timothy 1:5. Grandparenting extends far beyond the laughter, affection, and gift giving. We are to help shape the moral and faith foundations of a relationship with Jesus as their Savior, Lord, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Love is most often spelled "T.I.M.E," so spend as much time as possible with your grandchildren. Invest in them through cards, letters, texts, and other means of social media; however, nothing ranks higher than actual time together. Talk about life, friends, laughing, goals, disappointments, and accomplishments.

Grandchildren need to hear you say how proud you are of them and how thankful you are that God put them in your family. They need to know how much you enjoy every moment together playing games, working on projects, walking in the park, sharing a good book, and praying together (not just at mealtime). It is important that they hear how you see God at work in their lives, and knowing that being with you as a grandparent is always a "safe" place.

Traditions are important to families, and grandparents are uniquely positioned to establish those moments that become especially memorable in the lives of grandchildren. For example, I host annual tea parties for my granddaughters. We cook, get dressed up, and have fun around our fancy table.

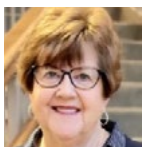
Here are other ideas for grandparents that cultivate moments of influence.

- Hiking and nature walks, gardening, and seasonal outdoor fun like flying kites, water balloon fights, and chalk art on driveways.
- Going to museums and exhibits, library adventures, historical sites and tours, and performances — especially those involving grandchildren.
- Cooking and baking together, making crafts, and taking in sports games.
- Storytelling — sharing about your life and childhood to teach spiritual lessons.
- Attending church together whenever possible.
- Praying together, building an understanding of the importance and power of prayer, and letting them hear you pray for them.
- Planning service projects together that model blessing others through thoughtful acts and being a role model for spiritual disciplines.

The list could go on, but the key is to love your grandchildren unconditionally as you speak biblical truth. Make every effort to stay in touch at every stage and season of their lives.

Godly grandparenting is not only about entertainment or gifts, but about shaping the eternal faith foundations of the next generation through relational investments. Intentionally seed their lives with biblical teaching through the years while consistently pointing them toward Jesus.

And don't forget a grandparent's secret weapon: Lots of hugs and a whispered, "I love you."



—Nancy Duggin, Prayer Catalyst
Tennessee Baptist Mission Board
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A Stewardship We Cannot Skip



The last midterm election came and went, and by the most careful estimates only 17 percent of Christians showed up to vote. Read that number again. Nearly nine out of ten believers stayed home. That is not a political problem. It is a discipleship problem.

We cannot love our neighbor, defend the innocent, or seek the good of our city while ignoring the one civic instrument we still hold in common. When the church steps back, other voices fill the space, and they do not share our convictions about the value of a human life or the freedom to worship. The decisions made in those empty polling places still bind us. They bind our churches, our schools, and our children.

Part of the reason is that we have forgotten our own history. Most Americans have never held a copy of the Constitution in their hands. They have heard it quoted and seen it summarized, but they have never owned it. And fewer still know that Scripture was being printed on American presses before the Constitution was ever written.

In 1782, with the Revolution still underway and English Bibles scarce, Robert Aitken of Philadelphia printed the first English-language Bible produced in America. Congress examined it and formally recommended it to the inhabitants of the United States. It remains the only Bible Congress has ever recommended. The men who framed our government read it, quoted it, and reasoned from it. Their understanding of human dignity, of conscience, and of the limits of power did not come from nowhere. It came from a biblical inheritance they assumed every citizen shared.

That is why we must know our history. Not to claim that America was a church, but to understand the soil in which our liberties took root. A people who do not know what they inherited will not know what they are losing. And a generation that has never read the document will not defend it when defending it costs something.

It is also why voting is a matter of stewardship. Scripture tells us to pray for kings and all who are in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives. Prayer and participation are not rivals. We are to pray for our leaders, and we are to help choose them. We are to be salt and light, not salt in a saltshaker. That stewardship reaches all the way down to the school board and the county commission, where decisions about our children are made quietly by whoever shows up.

This is the work of God and Country. We put pocket Constitutions and replicas of the Aitken Bible into the hands of church members, free of charge, so that believers can read the documents, teach them to their children, and engage with confidence rather than fear. Seventeen percent is the number we are working to change. To learn more and enroll your church visit www.godandcountry.org.



—Joni Bryan is the founder and executive director of The 917 Society. Learn more at www.917society.org.



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Smile for Christmas: A Tradition of Faith, Hope, and New Beginnings



Christmas traditions often begin around a dinner table, beside a decorated tree, or in the familiar songs of a candlelight service. For Dr. Jaime Romero and his wife, Eva, one cherished tradition takes place at Solace Implant Center & Oral Surgery: helping someone receive the gift of a restored smile.

Through their annual Smile for Christmas program, the Romeros and their team provide donated smile restoration to someone facing significant dental needs and financial hardship. The purpose reaches beyond teeth. It is about helping a person move forward with renewed confidence, comfort, and hope. The heart behind the tradition is a desire to use their gifts to serve others. As Christians and business owners, Jaime and Eva see their work as an opportunity to put faith into practice. Smile for Christmas gives that commitment a personal expression, bringing together professional skill, generosity, and compassion during a season centered on God's love.

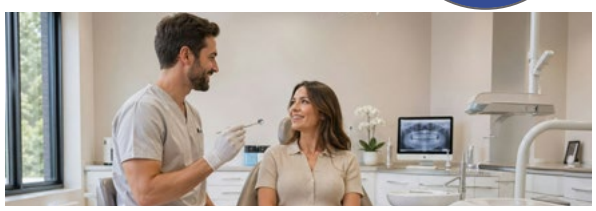
Dental struggles can touch nearly every part of daily life. A meal with family can become difficult. A photograph can bring anxiety. Speaking freely or smiling at a stranger can feel uncomfortable. Behind those experiences is a person whose circumstances deserve understanding.

One recipient, Stacie Jensen, endured serious medical challenges beginning in childhood, including Short Bowel Syndrome and numerous surgeries. Her health struggles also affected her teeth, adding another burden to an already difficult journey.

Through treatment with Dr. Romero and the Solace team, Stacie regained abilities that many people take for granted: chewing, speaking, performing, and smiling with confidence. Her experience reflects why this tradition matters. Restoring a smile can help someone reconnect with everyday joys and parts of themselves that hardship has overshadowed.

Over the years, the Romeros' commitment to giving back has included people navigating illness, financial challenges, and the work of rebuilding their lives. Each story is different. The shared thread is the opportunity to meet someone with compassion and offer practical help.

For the Solace team, this annual tradition is also a reminder to look beyond a patient's immediate



dental needs and recognize the person, family, and future connected to that smile.

This Christmas, Solace invites the community to help identify someone whose life could be changed through Smile for Christmas. Readers may share their own story or nominate someone they know, explaining the challenges they face and what a restored smile would mean. Send stories to Smile4christmas@solacesmile.com. To learn more about Solace Implant Center & Oral Surgery, call 615-320-1392.

For Jaime, Eva, and their team, the tradition carries a simple message: the gifts entrusted to us can become blessings for someone else. Sometimes, that blessing begins with the chance to smile again—and the reassurance that someone cares about the person behind it.

—Solace Implant Center & Oral Surgery Staff Writer, www.solaceoralsurgery.com

Brought to you by: **United Way of Greater Nashville • www.unitedwaygreaternashville.org**

A Fresh Start for the Martin Family



Thanks to the partnership between the Appalachian Service Project (ASP), United Way of Greater Nashville, and Clarksville-Montgomery County Long-Term Recovery Group one family is beginning a new chapter in a new home. For Quentin and Carla Martin and their three children, it is a fresh start after years of rebuilding following the 2023 tornado. On December 9, 2023, devastating tornados struck North Nashville and Clarksville, leaving destruction and heartbreak in its wake. This tragic event claimed lives, upended homes, and tested our community's resilience.

Meet Quentin and Carla

Quentin and Carla were high school sweethearts whose paths diverged for a time before life led them back to each other. Together they blended their families, building a home full of laughter, love, and joy for their three children. After the tornado in 2023, there were months and years of worry and stress while the family rebuilt what they had lost while maintaining a stable home for their children. Through it all, they have stayed rooted in their community, always the first to lend a helping hand to a neighbor or friend in need, and staying positive in the face of adversity with a grit and a grace that is rare. Quentin and Carla's resilience, generosity, and faith are just a small part of what makes this family so uniquely wonderful, and you will never meet people more deserving of a fresh start in the form of this house.

In Their Own Words

"We are Quentin & Carla, a family of five, and this new home represents far more than a place to live. It gives us hope, stability, and the opportunity to begin a new chapter together. We are deeply grateful for a safe, secure place where our three children can grow, dream, and make lasting memories. United Way's & ASP's time, energy, skills, and compassion have blessed our family in ways we will never forget. Every part of this home will remind us that people cared enough to help a family they may never have met. We look forward to filling our home with laughter, family dinners, holidays, birthdays, and countless memories. To everyone who helped make this possible: thank you. Your generosity has given us more than a house—it has given us comfort, security, hope, and a foundation for the future."

— Appreciatively & Respectfully, The Martin Family



A Home Built on Community

Stories like the Martins remind us of what is possible when neighbors, volunteers, and organizations come together. The time, energy, and skills helped turn a house into a home, and gave a deserving family the stability to look forward to everyday moments, from family dinners to holidays and birthdays.

To everyone who helped make this home possible: thank you.

—Kris Wiese,Director Marketing and Communications www.unitedwaygreaternashville.org



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Christian Parenting at Christmas: Raising Thankful Hearts Instead of Bigger Wish Lists

Christmas is one of the most wonderful times of the year, but for many parents, it can also become one of the most challenging. Children's wish lists seem to grow longer every year as advertisements, social media, and friends influence what they think they need to have. Without realizing it, Christmas can slowly shift from celebrating the birth of our Savior to satisfying endless wants. As Christian parents, we have a wonderful opportunity to establish healthy, God-honoring boundaries that teach our children contentment, gratitude, generosity, and the true meaning of Christmas.



Why Parents Struggle to Set Christmas Boundaries

Many parents feel guilty saying no during the Christmas season. We love seeing our children excited and don't want them to feel left out when classmates receive expensive gifts. Some parents also try to make up for busy schedules or financial hardships by buying more. Yet children rarely learn contentment by receiving everything they want. Instead, they often learn to expect more. Hebrews 13:5 reminds us, 'Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.' Contentment is not automatic; it is intentionally taught.

Christmas Is About Receiving Christ, Not Receiving More

The very first Christmas was not about abundance. Mary and Joseph were poor. Jesus was born in a humble stable. The shepherds came with worship, not shopping bags. Even the wise men brought gifts that honored Christ rather than fulfilling His wishes. John 3:16 reminds us that God's greatest gift was His Son. When children understand that Christmas celebrates God's gift of salvation, presents become a blessing instead of the purpose of the holiday.

Setting Healthy Christmas Boundaries

Healthy boundaries do not steal joy; they protect what matters most. Explain before December begins, 'In our family, Christmas is first about celebrating Jesus. We enjoy gifts, but we don't measure Christmas by how many presents are under the tree.' Decide your family's gift budget and traditions before shopping starts. If children continue asking for more, lovingly respond, 'We've already decided what we're giving this year, and we're grateful for what God has provided.' Consistency gives children security.

Teaching the Difference Between Wants and Needs

Christmas is a perfect opportunity to teach the difference between needs and wants. Food, clothing, shelter, love, forgiveness, and salvation are true needs. The latest electronics, trendy shoes, or newest toys are wants. Wants are not sinful, but they should never become demands. Philippians 4:11-12 teaches that contentment comes through Christ rather than circumstances. Ask your children, 'Do I want this because I need it or because everyone else has it?' Such conversations shape grateful hearts instead of entitled ones.

Replace 'What Am I Getting?' with 'What Can I Give?'

One of the best ways to redirect your child's focus is from receiving to giving. Help them buy a small gift for a sibling, bake cookies for a neighbor, write cards to grandparents, donate gently used toys, or serve at a local ministry. Acts 20:35 reminds us, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Children often discover their greatest Christmas joy comes from blessing someone else.

Children Learn by Watching Their Parents

Our children notice what excites us. If they see us stressed about shopping and constantly buying one more gift, they assume that is what Christmas is about. But if they see us reading Luke 2 together, praying, singing Christmas hymns, attending church, and serving others, they learn that Christ truly is the center of Christmas. Our example usually teaches more than our words.

Create Christ-Centered Traditions

This Christmas, choose one day each week to focus on giving instead of getting. As a family, perform one act of kindness—deliver cookies to a neighbor, donate toys to a family in need, write thank-you notes to those who have blessed you, or pray together for someone who needs encouragement. Then, read **Luke 2:1–20** and ask each family member to share one way they can keep Jesus at the center of Christmas.

The Three Gift Challenge

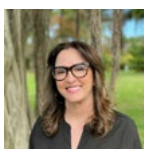
Explain that the wise men brought **three meaningful gifts** to Jesus—not because He asked for more, but because they came to worship Him. Challenge each family member to give three gifts that money cannot buy:

- A gift of **time** (helping someone).
- A gift of **encouragement** (kind words or a handwritten note).
- A gift of **service** (doing something for someone without being asked).

After Christmas, talk about which gift brought the greatest joy.

The Greatest Gift

James 1:17 reminds us that every good and perfect gift comes from God. Long after children forget the toys they received, they will remember the atmosphere in your home. They will remember whether Christmas was filled with peace, gratitude, worship, and love.



—Lee Ann Mancini is the author of Raising Kids to Follow Christ: Instilling a Lifelong Trust in God, *founder of Raising Christian Kids, adjunct professor at South Florida Bible College & Theological Seminary, and executive producer of the animated series* Sea Kids *on Right Now Media, Pure Flix, Answers.tv, Minno, and Yippee.*

Springer House Wedding & Events Venue

This southern home and property is tucked away in the quiet woods of Coble, Tenn. and has been in the Springer family since the 1840s and in 1865 the gorgeous two story home that is now called The Springer House was built.



For many generations this home has been the center of family gatherings and that is why in 2017 we felt that it was very special to make this home and property into a family business for weddings and events.

We value the love and history of our family place. But I love even more being able to share and create new memories with each couple and family that steps on this property. I value in making your day special and all about you.

I would love nothing more than for you to have your wedding or event with us at Springer House Events.

With Love,

—Jessica Ward Pate,
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Here's what these awesome partners have to say about their experience with *Nashville Christian Family*:

"You have heard the old saying "the Proof is in the pudding' and that is what I got when I advertised in the Nashville Christian Family magazine. I wanted my message to get out to faith based businesses and people and it worked. My business has well passed the investment I made in the publication. My plans are to continue to use most of my marketing dollars with this publication."

—Ben Davis, CSA, Owner Select Pointe, LLC











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A Father's Journey Toward Stability



When Andrew moved from Washington to Tennessee in September 2024, he hoped to be closer to his children and build a better life for his family. But things didn't go as planned. Soon after arriving, Andrew found himself with sole custody of his young daughter, who has autism, and no permanent place for them to live. "We did have trouble getting into places to stay," Andrew recalls.

Finding housing was difficult, especially while caring for his daughter and trying to get established in a new state. Andrew wanted to give her a stable home, but he needed help getting there.

He eventually connected with The Salvation Army's Supportive Housing program, and within days, he and his daughter moved into the Center of Hope. There, Andrew began working with staff to address the challenges keeping his family from securing permanent housing. They helped him apply for benefits, complete apartment applications, and enroll in assistance programs, including TANF and Families First. Having someone help him navigate those processes made a difference after struggling to find housing on his own. Andrew admits he was skeptical about how much help he would receive.

"I didn't think they would help like that," he says. "But once I showed them that I'm willing to work the program, I saw there is hope."

As Andrew worked with his case management team, he began making progress. He stayed focused on finding a home for his daughter and took advantage of the resources available. Staff continued working with him, offering guidance and helping him through the steps needed to secure housing.

Eventually, Andrew decided to reapply for an apartment he had tried to get months earlier. This time, his application was successful. After months of uncertainty, Andrew and his daughter finally had a place of their own. "I wouldn't be in my apartment if it wasn't for The Salvation Army," Andrew says. "Growing up, I never had the support system that I do now. Coming from a broken family to living out on the streets to finding my own way—these people helped me and my family have a better life."

For Andrew, having a home means being able to focus on raising his daughter without the constant worry of where they will stay. He's continuing to work on managing his finances and building the skills he needs to maintain their independence.

He knows that getting into an apartment wasn't the end of the work. There are still challenges ahead, but he now has a stronger foundation and people he can turn to for support.

"I give this place a five-star rating," Andrew shares. "I wouldn't be anywhere if it wasn't for these people. I really want to thank The Salvation Army from the bottom of my heart. It's a long road ahead and I just keep progressing every day."

For Andrew and his daughter, the Supportive Housing program provided the help they needed to move from homelessness into a home of their own. And for Andrew, that support has made a lasting difference.

—Misty Ratcliff, Development and Communications Relations Manager Kentucky and Tennessee Division, The Salvation Army www.salvationarmynashville.org



KID'S KORNER

Christmas Books for Children

It's that time of year when shopping is at the top of everyone's to-do list. What if you gave books for Christmas this year instead of the latest gadget or toy? Books have a much longer shelf life than the other options. Below are a few ideas to guide you in your Christmas gift selections for your children, nieces and nephews, or any kids.

***God is Good* by Amy Parker**

The book uses warm, rhyming verse and illustrations of cute animal families to teach young children about God's constant goodness, seen in everyday blessings like warm hugs, family, chirping birds, and sunlight. (ages 0–4)

***Fruit of the Spirit Bedtime Prayers* by Jill Roman Lord**

God's love and blessings are celebrated every day through the nine virtues of the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Read it as a book or prayer each evening. (ages 0–4)

***God's Wide Wonderful World* by Jennifer Jahn**

Join a silly narwhal as he explores God's creation and introduces children to six classes of animals. This delightful board book is perfect for young animal lovers and ends with a reminder that people—including each little reader—are the greatest part of God's wide, wonderful creation! (ages 0–4)

***Serah's First Christmas* by Tama Fortner**

Experience the story of the first Christmas through the eyes of a little shepherd girl who meets the newborn Jesus and learns that even the least of those who come to the Christmas manger are loved and have a place in His kingdom. (ages 4–7)

***Know, Go, and Grow Devotional: 90 Devotions on Gospel Transformation for Kids* by Tama Fortner**

Each devotion dives into God's Word through relatable stories, practical life lessons, and key biblical truths. The author includes additional help to go further and go bigger in one's faith. (ages 7–11)

***Parable Port: The Sower's Secret* by Brook Eastman and Shaun Stevenson**

A hilarious action-adventure series for Christian kids set in a town where the parables of Jesus literally come to life. Join this fun-loving friend crew for their very first faith-filled adventure in Parable Port! Perfect for boys and girls ages 8-12.

***Heroes of the Bible Devotional 2: 100 True Stories of Real People with Godly Faith* by Joshua Cooley**



These devotionals for kids highlight the power of God working through regular believers, people whose stories are in the Bible. Learn about Christian heroes like Job who survived intense trials, Habakkuk who asked hard questions, Rahab who saved Jewish spies, and more! (ages 8–12)

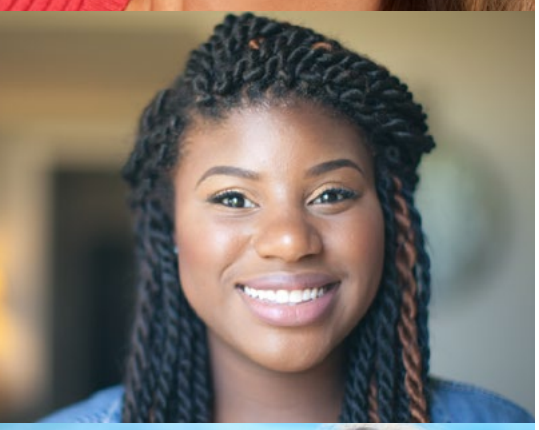
Give the gift of a book this Christmas. What is your favorite Christmas book?

—Sally Cressman is the author of The Dance of Easter. *Sign up for her email list to receive "31 Prayers for Grandchildren." She'd also love to connect on Instagram.*



Unlock Your Perfect Smile









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Secrets From the Studio

Brought to you by: **WHTN/CTN TV • www.ctntv.org**

Finding Peace and Joy During the Holiday Season

The holidays are supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year. But let's be honest. Sometimes Christmas brings more than twinkling lights, family gatherings, and favorite traditions. It can also bring back memories, old disappointments, strained relationships, and hurts we thought we filed away a long time ago. And sometimes, the older we get, the louder those hurts become. My recent podcast guest Diana LaCerte and I talked about something many people experience but don't always know how to put into words. The pain we haven't dealt with doesn't necessarily disappear with time. In fact, sometimes it gets louder. What we've buried emotionally can begin showing up in our relationships, our thought patterns, our physical health, and the way we see ourselves.

Look Beyond the Surface – You Don't Have to Stay Stuck

Diana understands the connection between our physical and emotional well-being. As a physical trainer and host of the television show Soul Fit, she encourages women to look beyond the surface and recognize that being healthy involves more than what we eat or how much we exercise. Sometimes the weight we're carrying has very little to do with what we're putting on our plates and everything to do with what we're carrying in our hearts. Here's one of the secrets from the studio I learned in this conversation – you don't have to stay stuck. Healing takes courage. It may mean having an honest conversation, asking for help, setting up healthy boundaries, or finally addressing something we've avoided for years. It takes work, and sometimes it takes the support of a Christian counselor, trusted friends, or a faith-filled community. Most importantly, we can invite God into the places that still hurt and trust Him to lead us toward healing. As we head into Christmas, I want to encourage you not to let old pain steal the joy of a new season. You may not have the picture-perfect family gathering. Every relationship may not be restored, and every difficult circumstance may not be resolved. But you can still experience peace, laughter, meaningful connections, and the simple pleasures of the season. Another secret from the studio is that we can choose not to let the old pain steal the joy of a new season.

Let's Make Room for More than Surviving the Holidays

Our story isn't over. There is still room to grow, heal, laugh, love, and enjoy life. With God's help,



the right community, and a willingness to do the hard work, we can become healthier in body, mind, and spirit. This Christmas, let's make room for more than surviving the holidays. Let's make room for joy. After all, Jesus came so we could experience life abundantly, and that promise is just as beautiful in our next chapter as it was in our first.

Today's Secret from the Studio: We don't have to settle for surviving the holidays – we can choose to make room for joy.



—Monica Schmelter is host of Bridges on Christian Television Network and the Hope for the Journey podcast, where she encourages women over 40 to embrace fresh starts and boldly live the story God is still writing. Connect with her at www.monicaschmelter.com.

Special Feature

Brought to you by: **Wallin, Hargis, & Colquette Wealth Advisors • www.whcwealth.com**

Taking the Stress Out of Holiday Finances

A Q&A with Michael R. Wallin, CFP®, LUTCF

Q: Are more people feeling financial stress this holiday season? Yes. Last holiday season, the American Psychiatric Association's Healthy Minds Poll found that 41% of U.S. adults expected more holiday stress than the year before, up from 28% in 2024. Nearly half (46%) worried about affording or finding gifts, and three in four (75%) said they were anxious about the economy.[1] Heading into this season, many of the families I meet with are asking the same question: is my plan ready?

Q: What's the biggest mistake you see when markets get volatile? Letting emotions make the decisions. When headlines turn alarming, it's tempting to sell, stop contributing, or abandon a long-term plan. Those reactions can lock in losses and derail goals that took years to build. A well-designed plan should anticipate volatility, not be surprised by it.

Q: How often should I check my investments? Less often than most people do. Checking balances every day feeds anxiety without giving you any real control. For most long-term investors, a monthly or quarterly review is plenty, paired with an annual conversation with your advisor to confirm your plan still fits your goals.

Q: What practical steps can families take right now? Start with the basics:

- Build or maintain a cash emergency fund for short-term needs.
- Set a realistic holiday budget before you shop.
- Automate retirement and savings contributions so daily headlines don't drive your decisions.
- Review your diversification to make sure your portfolio matches your timeline and risk tolerance.
- Revisit insurance coverage and beneficiary designations so your family is protected no matter what markets do.

Q: How does faith fit into financial planning? For many of the families I work with, it's the foundation. 1 Timothy 6:17 reminds us not to put our hope in wealth, "which is so uncertain, but to put [our] hope in God." That doesn't mean ignoring wisdom. It means planning carefully so money becomes a tool rather than a source of fear.

Q: When should someone talk with a financial planner? If market swings are costing you sleep, if you're nearing retirement, or if you simply aren't sure your plan can weather a downturn, now is a



good time. A second opinion can bring clarity and confidence heading into the new year.

[1] American Psychiatric Association, "Americans More Anxious About the Holidays," APA Healthy Minds Poll, conducted by Morning Consult, November 4–5, 2025, among 2,203 U.S. adults.



—Michael Wallin - With more than three decades in financial services, Michael Wallin and the team at Optivise Advisory Services help families align their finances with their faith. For guidance on debt management or building a plan, call 855.378.1806.

Investment advisory services are offered through Optivise Advisory Services, LLC (Optivise), a SEC registered investment advisor.

Brought to you by: **Larry Crain • www.crainlaw.legal**

Crain Law Group, PLLC

Nashville Christian Family Corporate Community Partner 25 Years of Good News

Should Nativity Scenes Be Allowed On Public Property?



In December of 1953, a life-sized nativity scene was commissioned by Harvey's Department Store and placed on display at Centennial Park. It was considered the largest nativity display in the world at the time. Some of my fondest childhood memories of celebrating Christmas surround my family's annual trek each year from Lewisburg to Nashville to take in this awe-inspiring light show. There was a stillness augmented with soft, choral music that was penetrating, and it brought the miracle of Jesus' birth to life. Many of my generation will recall that display featured 123 figures: 45 human figures and 78 animals. To a child, it appeared massive spanning 280 feet long and 75 feet deep.

It remained one of Nashville's most celebrated Christmas events for 14 years, and sadly closed in 1967. Many thought at the time that it was removed in response over constitutional concerns. The truth is, the figures had become brittle due to water damage and age. The display was discontinued due to maintenance concerns. Years later, in the early 1980's, public nativity scenes came under intense legal challenge under the First Amendment Establishment Clause. In 1984, the U.S. Supreme Court had an opportunity to weigh in on this controversy in a case called Lynch v. Donelly. Residents of Pawtucket, Rhode Island sued to remove the creche, which included a nativity scene along with secular symbols like Santa's sleigh and reindeer. The Court held in a 5-4 split that the display did not violate the Establishment Clause because the inclusion of the secular symbols cast a broader context and served a legitimate secular purpose.

Unfortunately, the ruling in Donelly did not end the controversy. Lawsuits challenging such displays on public property continued unabated. The Court had its next landmark case in 1989, when the ACLU sued over a display in Allegheny county Maryland. The county set up a creche with a banner: "Glory to God for the birth of Jesus Christ". A second display outside the Allegheny County courthouse featured a menorah, a Christmas tree, and a sign honoring liberty. The Court declared the banner display unconstitutional, but upheld the menorah display, again because of its appeal to traditional symbols of the season.

In recent years, there has emerged a common theme in various court rulings over religious displays on public property. Some have called it the "reindeer test" implying that if the display includes enough secular symbols, it will be interpreted in a new light.

Whether cities may allow Christmas nativity scenes on public property is a topic of ongoing debate. The controversy often turns on a delicate balance of religious expression, historical tradition and the separation of church and state. Those who support such displays argue that nativity scenes are an established part of Christmas history and culture. Those in opposition cite a rigid view of the separation of church and state claiming such displays favor Christianity over other religions or non-religion.

Still, one wonders whether the famed Centennial Park nativity scene would today pass constitutional muster. Personally, I would welcome this Nashville tradition back – even if it meant adding Rudolph.

—Larry L. Crain
Crain Law Group, PLLC









Faith Under Fire

Honoring Katie's Endurance



Daughter-of-mine, I am forever your mom, loving you no matter what. Recently, I had a 2 1/2-hour conversation with the one who has remained in contact with you until you gradually withdrew from him, too. I saw his heart. It isn't easy to see a grown man cry. He loved you. Still does. I saw that. We shared tears and sorrow. You rarely asked for help but received it from the man devoted to helping you, even from afar.

I'm thankful he graciously talked with me and shared timelines about your deteriorating health and your trips to multiple puzzled doctors and specialists, to Johns Hopkins, and even Mayo Clinic, searching for a diagnosis and treatment. Biopsies had revealed cell abnormalities in swollen, infected lymph nodes. Then, came lung blood clots and increasing excruciating, unrelenting pain. Now, the "why and how" of your withdrawal from all of us has become more evident. Maybe others will see it, too.

Almost two decades later, you were primarily limited to your Pawleys Island hammock overlooking the sea, choosing purposely to avoid all pain meds. You had given up on Western medicines that proved no help and caused so many other problems. You occupied time, tried to distract pain, and invested energies in research and dictating your sci-fi stories—dictating because you were no longer able to write. You listened to treasured sci-fi novels when books were too heavy to hold, little rescue dog, Kiki, keeping you company. **"How long, oh, Lord?"**

None of us knew literary creativity lurked behind your scientific nursing view of humanity. You had excelled as an award-winning, master level, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) at Vanderbilt. With your patients, you had chased "beyond the norm" care and applied that same drive for personal hammock care. A sci-fi writing skill flourished.

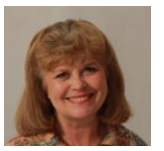
By way of a road trip, you had scouted and endured options for relocating, choosing Wyoming for its arid climate. Researching possibilities. Wholistic, "clean" eating, ranging from vegan to vegetarian and on to organic fruits and vegetables replaced typical food preferences. Hence, your next choice for Hawaii—what better place for fruits and veggies. Still researching possibilities. Engaging with life as it unfolded. Quietly retreating from society.

Your "paradise on earth" dealt fewer ups with the downs, shorter periods of what seemed to help. The downhill slope increased—body fighting itself. The race laborious. Even chewing tired your weary body. The effort to move—exhausting. This highly intelligent, fiercely independent, stubborn "I-will-do-this" attitude governed your positively tackling everything life threw at you. Oh, daughter-of-mine, you organized your locales, had your vehicle transported to Hawaii, arranged for movers in Hawaii to do what you could no longer do for yourself—all with your constant pain companion.

I ask myself: "What's the most horrible physical pain you've ever been in?" "How long did it last? Hours? Days? Weeks? Even a year? Did you search for help, a cure, even a little relief? How much complaining? Ever want to give up?" **"How long did you endure? Fifteen years? Longer? Two decades?"**

Mamas, Sisters, Brothers, Friends, think about that—before you declare what you would never do. Regardless of His plan for when you get to His real paradise, regardless of how you get to His real paradise, know for certain:

Jesus is one breath away



—Sheila E. Moss - Forever mama of five—God's most valuable gifts

Cool Stuff With a Mighty Message

This Christmas, Give More Than a Gift. Give Someone a Reason to Seek God!













What if one simple Christmas gift could change someone's relationship with God forever?

Christmas is a season of love, generosity, and celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Yet, amid the decorations, shopping, and exchanging of presents, we sometimes forget the greatest gift of all: having a personal relationship with God. This Christmas, the GOD Talking Button™ offers a meaningful way to bring faith into everyday life and share God's love with those who matter most.

One Press. A Moment With God.

Imagine starting your morning, facing a difficult decision, or simply needing encouragement. With one press of the GOD Talking Button™, you hear one of seven Bible-inspired messages designed to uplift your spirit, strengthen your faith, and remind you of God's promises.

It's a simple, tangible invitation to pause, reflect, and reconnect with God throughout your day.

Each message is an invitation to seek Him further, open the Bible, discover His Word, and experience the joy of walking with Him daily.

A Christmas Gift That Can Introduce Someone to Jesus

We all have friends, relatives, coworkers, or neighbors who may not have a personal relationship with God. Sometimes, sharing our faith can feel difficult. We don't always know how to begin the conversation.

That's where the GOD Talking Button™ becomes something truly special. You're creating an opportunity for that person to hear Bible-inspired encouragement, become curious about God's promises, and perhaps begin exploring faith for themselves.

One press could spark a conversation. One conversation could inspire someone to open the Bible. And that first step could lead to a lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ.

Make This Christmas Truly Meaningful

Whether for yourself, your children, parents, grandparents, friends, or someone who needs encouragement, the GOD Talking Button™ is a wonderful reminder that God's Word belongs in our everyday lives. Because the most meaningful Christmas gifts aren't always the ones we unwrap. Sometimes, they're the ones that open our hearts.

GOD Talking Button™ — Faith. One Press Away.

Discover it at www.GODTalkingButton.com

—Nashville Christian Family Staff Writer

THIS CHRISTMAS

At The Fisher Center

Christmas at Belmont
November 20 - 21

Be Like Blippi
November 24 | 6:00 PM

Michael Carbonaro: WONDERBOY
December 11 | 7:00 PM

Christmas Celebration! with Music City Chorus and Friends
December 13 | 7:00 PM

NUTCRACKER! Magical Christmas Ballet
December 16 | 7:00 PM

Vienna Light Orchestra
December 18 | 3:00 & 7:00 PM

Michael W. Smith Every Christmas
December 19 - 20 | 7:00 PM

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VIEW ALL EVENTS

Turn Your Income Tax Liability into Scholarships for Christian Education

If provided a choice to divert a portion of your federal income tax to support Christian education, would you? Now you can thanks to the federal Education Freedom Tax Credit (EFTC), one provision in the Big Beautiful Bill.

Beginning January 1, 2027, the Education Freedom Tax Credit, allows a taxpayer to donate up to $1700/year ($3400 for married couples filing jointly) toward scholarships for Christian schools and receive an income tax credit for the amount donated. For example, donate $1700, and receive a $1700 tax credit thereby reducing your income taxes by $1700!

Philos Classical Christian School (philosclassicalchristian.org) is participating in the EFTC, partnering with ACE scholarships (ACEscholarships.org) to receive and administer EFTC donations. Here is how the EFTC works.

Your donation is given to ACE Scholarships, an approved Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO). You designate which school is to receive your donation, such as Philos Classical Christian School. You receive required documentation from ACE to claim the credit and include when tax returns are completed for tax year 2027.

As a donor taxpayer, you benefit in 3 ways:

1-You receive a tax credit for the amount donated, up to $1700.

2-Your money is now used to fund Christian education, more aligned with your Christian values, rather than the federal government.

3- EFTC funds will provide tuition scholarships, giving more students access to a God-centered classical Christian education at Philos Classical Christian School growing students in wisdom, knowledge, and truth of God.



Martin Luther stated 500 years ago: "I am much afraid that the schools will prove to be the great gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, and engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the scripture does not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt."

Prophetic? Perhaps. But the truth is simple: When God is removed from the center, something else takes His place.

Look at our institutions today. A recent poll, commissioned by the Buckley Institute, found that 47% of college students agreed that socialist countries such as Cuba and the former Soviet Union provide a better economic model than the capitalist United States.

Martin Luther's words have never rung truer. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders and decisionmakers. That's just one reason the Education Freedom Tax Credit is so important. If there was ever a time for classical Christian education, that time is NOW.

Classical Christian education stands in a rich tradition. It was the education of America's Founding Fathers, the Protestant Reformers, and generations of students for centuries. The simple definition of Classical Christian Education is education that pursues Christian wisdom and virtue and trains students in



knowledge of truth of God and live according to that truth.

Students learn every subject through the lens of one foundational truth: God is the Creator of EVERYTHING. History reveals God's providence. Science explores His Creation. Literature reflects the drama of sin and His redemption. Mathematics displays the order of the world He made.

Philos Classical Christian School, a member of the Association of Classical Christian Schools, opened in Chapel Hill, Tennessee, in August 2024. Beginning with grades K–3 and adding a grade each year, Philos was founded to give families access to a five-day-a-week Christian education rooted in a biblical worldview.

As the only Christian school in Marshall County, Philos fills an important need in the community. The school is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, receives no government funding, and relies on tuition and private support.

Philos strictly adheres to the classical Christian education model, supporting parents in educating their children (Deut 6:5-9 & Eph 6:1-4). We believe that Jesus's last command to make disciples of all nations starts at home, making disciples of their children.

Using both the mind and the soul in pursuit of our chief end, we engage God and Creation with admiration and joy. Every lesson, book, and conversation, is an opportunity to shape a student's character toward and in Christ. We desire to cultivate virtue, deepen faith, and order the heart to what is true, good, and beautiful so that each student becomes the person God created them to be.

Philos Classical Christian School is now in its third year, as it grows toward serving students in grades K–12. The Education Freedom Tax Credit will provide funds to help reduce tuition so more students will be able to attend and receive a quality classical Christian education.



Join Philos in this endeavor and divert a portion of your federal income tax payments to provide scholarships to students to enroll in Philos Classical Christian School. Make a difference not only in a student's life, but also the student's family, church, and community.

—Mark T. Bolt
Founder, Philos Classical Christian School
www.philosclassicalchristian.org
Mark.bolt@philosclassicalchristian.org

What is Faith-Based Investing?



Faith-Based Investing allows you to:

- ☑ Grow your wealth while honoring biblical values
- ☑ Avoid companies that conflict with your beliefs
- ☑ Invest in companies you are proud to own
- ☑ Make an impact with integrity and invest with purpose

Our commitment, first to our Lord, is that we will not invest a single penny into any company that violates our filters.

- **Pro-Life**
- **Purity**
- **Family**
- **Marriage**
- **Liberty**
- **Sobriety**
- **Longevity**
- **Stewardship**

Who is the local authority on Faith-Based Investing? PanthRex.

PanthRex
BIBLICALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING

To learn more about investing Biblically, visit us at PanthRex.com or call us at **888-302-5559** to *schedule an appointment today!*

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PHIL BARFOOT
BLAZING A NEW TRAIL

"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." – Ralph Waldo Emerson



Center stage at Carnegie Hall. Dr. Phil Barfoot conducts The American Festival Choir before a packed house at New York's Carnegie Hall in 2025.

If there was ever a person who personified the above quote, it is Dr. Phil Barfoot. His life and ministry has been and continues to be blazing a new trail into fresh, new ideas and arenas of opportunity that encourage fellow believers to think outside the box and dream bigger dreams.

"From as long as I can remember, the Lord has opened doors of opportunity to affect lives and lead people into a closer walk with the Lord, with worship at the very core of it all. I realize that I am never the most talented guy in the room, but I am grateful for God's favor that has been upon me every day of my life to fulfill His plan and His purpose. I thank God every day I get to do what I do."

Known as the "Idea Man" in worship ministry, Phil's popular music ministry manuals, *The Ultimate Idea Book for Music Ministry*, volumes one and two, are used by more than 7,000 churches and universities throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Affectionately known as "Uncle Phil" to thousands of choir members around the world, he has developed a "laser focus" on the passion and purpose that God has stirred within him.

"It was exactly 21 years ago that I had my 'road to Damascus' experience where the Lord clearly impressed upon me that I needed to spend all my waking hours doing everything I can to keep the choir alive and thriving throughout the world. There are currently 75% fewer church choirs today as there was 21 years ago. Choir is not my idea, it is God's idea. When we get to heaven, God is not going to summon the praise team, but rather the choir… every tribe and tongue, nation and generation, all worshiping our Lord for millions and millions of years…for eternity. God gives us a very special opportunity every time we gather together to worship here on earth to have a little 'hors d'oeurve' of what Heaven will be like. God has designed the choir to be our lead worshipers both here and throughout eternity."

Phil's six devotional books, *New Every Morning*, *Rise Up and Praise Him*, *Joy in the Morning*, *Enter His Gates*, *In His Presence*, and, most recently, *Come and Worship*, feature devotionals by 306 premiere worship pastors, ministers of music, instrumental directors and Christian university professors across America.

Here are some of the ministries that the Lord has led Phil to create that simply provide avenues for this special calling and purpose on his life. He serves as Founder and CEO of each of the following companies…

CELEBRATION CONCERT TOURS INTERNATIONAL

Established in 2010, this Franklin, TN-based choir travel company takes choral groups on travel adventures, singing in the great venues of the world. This unique travel ministry has taken over 20,000 travelers on ministry trips around the world.

Here are the 2027 trips on their schedule: The 5th Annual Branson Praisefest, Greece – The Footsteps of Paul, Then Sings My Soul – An Inspirational Hymn Tour Through the Spiritual Heart of England, Worship in the Holy Land, Oklahoma Baptist Children's Choir in Washington DC, The Best of Scotland and Ireland, Discover Northern Italy and Switzerland, Explore Northern Italy and Switzerland, The 6th Annual Best of Italy, Eastern & Central Europe with Agape Mission Singers, The 8th Annual Music City Celebration – A Tribute to Roger Breland and The 17th Annual Christmas in New York.



Ministry abroad. Celebration Concert Tours International choirs singing in the great cathedrals of Europe.

The simple passion and purpose of Celebration Concert Tours International is to get choirs outside the walls of the church and into ministry throughout the world. To learn more about these choir tours and ministry opportunities, visit celebrationconcerttours.com.

All of the above ministry trips have a few openings. Special discounts and incentives are offered to both Choir Directors and participants alike. For more information, call 615-771-2665 or email at cct@celebrationconcerttours.com.

CELEBRATION MINISTRY STAFFING

Since 2019, this unique staffing company has been equipping the local church with the finest, most effective Ministry Leadership. For the past seven years, Celebration Ministry Staffing has placed hundreds of Worship Pastors, Pastors, Youth Pastors, Executive Pastors and Children's Pastors in churches across America. The philosophy of CMS is "it's all about relationships," which is foundational to their ministry.

The CMS team of Advisors consists of some of the finest Worship Pastors, Pastors and Executive Pastors from across America, all combining their efforts to provide the very best candidates and ministers for each ministry position. CMS is currently the fastest growing church staffing company in America! For more information about Celebration Ministry Staffing and its services to churches, visit celebrationministrystaffing.com.



The CCT Ministries team.

CCT MUSIC

Founded in 1999, this music publishing and recording company has a catalog of over 500 songs from top composers, all arranged and orchestrated for church choirs and orchestras. CCT Music provides music for thousands of church choirs around the world. Included in the catalog are over 50 major choral collections and musicals that Phil has composed that collectively include more than 350 of his songs. CCT Music has also produced and recorded more than 500 local church choirs since September 2000.

"I'm especially excited about our *NewWorship Community* brand, which features brand new songs being heard on Christian radio that are sweeping the country by storm. People want to sing the most current, new and fresh worship material and *NewWorship Community* absolutely provides that." Phil is also known throughout the country for his very popular choral Christmas collections, with 26 of these best-selling projects available for the church choir and congregational worship.

To explore CCT Music's choral collections and worship resources, visit cctmusic.com or browse the catalog at semsenmusic.com/product-category/cct-music.

STUDIO78



Designed by award-winning studio designer Carl Tatz.

Owned by Phil and Daewoo Kim, this *world-class studio with a hometown feel* has become one of the finest recording studios in Nashville. Designed by Carl Tatz, the setting, quality and equipment are second to none with a great location in Brentwood, TN. To learn more about the studio and its recording services, visit studio78nashville.com.

INSPIRE THE CHOIR CELEBRATIONS

As a result of Phil's passion to keep the choir alive, he has initiated five Inspire the Choir Celebrations across America. Cities and dates are as follows:

- **Sunnyvale, TX:** January 23, 2027
- **Hendersonville, TN:** January 30, 2027
- **Oklahoma City, OK:** February 6, 2027
- **Spring, TX:** February 13, 2027
- **Pensacola, FL:** March 6, 2027

Each Celebration consists of hundreds of choir members all joining together as one voice to worship the Lord. There are general sessions, dynamic teaching, choral techniques, worship and singing.

Each one of these will host 400–800 local worshipers all with the desire to become more effective at what they do. For more information, please call 615-771-2665 or email cct@celebrationconcerttours.com.



A packed house at the Sandi Patty Tribute at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center in Nashville.

THE MUSIC CITY ACADEMY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS

The priority and purpose of this important new Academy is to feature practical instruction from the top leaders in a variety of creative fields to assure each participants' success in the Christian Music Business. You actually learn from and are mentored by the very top people in each industry! Electives run **January 4 – 8, 2027 in Nashville**.



The 425-voice American Festival Choir singing on July 3 at a new event called The Freedom Gathering at Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, honoring our veterans.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE PAGES 30 AND 31 IN THIS ISSUE.

MUSIC CITY CELEBRATION CHOIR

ATTENTION ALL SINGERS!

If you love to sing and would like to be a part of major concerts here in the Nashville area at venues such as the Schermerhorn Symphony Center, the Grand Ole Opry, the Ryman Auditorium, etc., please send the words, "Music City Celebration Choir," followed by your name, address, phone number and email address to cct@celebrationconcerttours.com and a member of the CCT Team will be in touch with you.

The next major Nashville concert planned is THE CONCERT OF THE AGES – A TRIBUTE TO BILL & GLORIA GAITHER, featuring dozens of Christian artists and the 400-Voice Music City Celebration Choir.

"I am very grateful for an incredible staff and the support of hundreds of friends across America that we partner with in this noble cause of keeping the choir alive and thriving, and leading worshipers into the intimate presence of Almighty God." Phil anxiously awaits the next chapter in his "blazing the trail" adventure.

Soli Deo Gloria

—Benjamin Lee Griffin

THE CCT MINISTRIES TEAM

- Dr. Phil Barfoot, CEO
- Brian Powers, VP of Operations
- Ben Griffin, Executive Assistant to the CEO
- Josh Bell, VP of Tours
- Zach Teige, Tour Manager
- Scott Lee, President of CMS
- Joey Guarino, VP of Recruitment
- Ken Barker, GM of CCT Music
- Daewoo Kim, Head Recording Engineer

Celebration Concert Tours International, Celebration Ministry Staffing, CCT Music

3326 Aspen Grove Drive Suite 300
Franklin, TN 37067

CCT: (615) 771-2665
CMS: (615) 656-8242

p.barfoot@celebrationconcerttours.com
p.barfoot@celebrationministrystaffing.com

Studio78

Daewoo Kim, Chief Recording Engineer
(615) 310-7707



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LEARN MORE!

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TREVECCA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY

NASHVILLE CHRISTIAN FAMILY CORPORATE COMMUNITY PARTNER 25 YEARS OF GOOD NEWS

Trevecca Nazarene University Names Dr. Thomas Middendorf 12th President



Longtime provost Dr. Tom Middendorf is to succeed Dr. Dan Boone following his retirement in 2027.

Trevecca Nazarene University's Board of Trustees announced the election of Dr. Tom Middendorf as the University's 12th president. Middendorf, who serves as University provost, senior vice president and chief of staff, will assume office July 1, 2027, following the retirement of Dr. Dan Boone, who has led Trevecca since 2005.

The announcement came during the University's 125th homecoming weekend and concluded a national search led by Board of Trustees Chair Dr. Brian Wilson alongside FaithSearch Partners, an executive search firm with extensive experience in Christian higher education. Throughout the process, the search committee gathered feedback from faculty, staff, students and other University constituents. After reviewing hundreds of candidates, the presidential search committee unanimously agreed to bring Dr. Middendorf's name as the sole finalist to the Board of Trustees for final vote on November 5.

Of the board's decision, Wilson said, "We approached this search by giving priority to prayer. We committed to laying aside any personal agendas, with the aim of finding the mind of Christ regarding the next leader for Trevecca. That commitment to prayer and to the guidance of the Spirit, alongside a rigorous and critical national search process, brought the search committee and board to the unified conclusion that Dr. Tom Middendorf is the leader God has prepared for this next season of growth and development. Dr. Middendorf knows Trevecca deeply, has helped shape much of our recent growth and has earned the trust of our faculty, staff, students and board. We are confident in Trevecca's future under his leadership."



Middendorf earned his bachelor's degree in psychology from Trevecca, a master's degree in professional counseling from Olivet Nazarene University and a doctorate in ethical leadership from Olivet. He returned to Trevecca in 2008 and has served in progressively responsible leadership roles, including associate provost and dean of academic and student affairs, before being named provost in 2019. He oversees academic affairs, marketing, enrollment, student development, and graduate and adult education, and he also serves as a professor of leadership studies.

Middendorf's connection to Trevecca and the Church of the Nazarene runs deep. A third-generation Treveccan, he follows a family legacy that began with his grandfather, who helped construct buildings on campus as a student; continued through his parents, who met on the Hill; and remains evident in his own journey as a student leader, alumnus, and professional with a deep commitment to Christian higher education. It was also at Trevecca that he met his wife, Jessica ('00). Together, they have built a life centered on faith and family, raising two children, Marley and Asher, while remaining actively engaged in the Church of the Nazarene.

In accepting the role, Middendorf said, "Trevecca is not simply a place where I work. It has shaped my faith, my calling and my family for three generations. I do not view the presidency as an achievement to attain. I view it as a stewardship to receive. My hope is that we leave Trevecca's mission stronger than we found it and continue preparing students for meaningful work, faithful service and lives of leadership. We are just getting started."

During his tenure, Middendorf has helped lead record enrollment and retention, the creation of more than 25 new academic programs and the



Trevecca Board of Trustees Chair Dr. Brian Wilson announces Dr. Tom Middendorf as the University's next president. Middendorf is pictured with his wife, Jessica, and outgoing president Dr. Dan Boone and his wife, Denise.

launch of Trevecca's four-year nursing program. He has also expanded health sciences and built strategic partnerships across Nashville and the region.

Middendorf will succeed Boone, whose 22-year tenure has transformed the University. Under Boone's leadership, Trevecca grew from approximately 2,000 students to nearly 4,000, expanded its academic offerings to more than 100 programs ranging from associate degrees to doctoral programs and invested more than $250 million in campus construction and renovation.

Boone, who will work alongside Middendorf through the remainder of the 2026-2027 academic year in a transitional capacity, praised the board's selection. "From the beginning of this process, we have prayed that God would bring the right leader to Trevecca, and I believe He has answered that prayer in Tom. Trevecca has never been about one person. It's about a community that has been faithful to its calling for 125 years. I've had the privilege of working alongside Tom since 2008, and I've seen firsthand his love for our students, his steady leadership and his deep commitment to our mission. First Lady Denise and I are thrilled for Tom and Jessica, and we look forward to supporting them in every way we can."

The announcement comes during Trevecca's 125th anniversary year, celebrated under the theme "Rooted, Refined and Ready." To learn more about Trevecca, its presidential transition and 125th anniversary celebrations, visit www.trevecca.edu.

—Article provided by Trevecca Nazarene University

Emergency Cleaning For Last-Minute Guests

Start With a Fast Walkthrough

The doorbell hasn't rung yet, but you can already picture it. Before you touch a single sponge, grab a basket and take sixty seconds to walk your home the way a guest would, starting at the front door and moving through the spaces they'll actually use. Scoop up anything stray along the way, shoes, mail, toys, whatever's cluttering the path. Here's some good news. Guests notice a lot less than homeowners fear. What actually stands out is grime and clutter, things like toilets, sinks, counters, and dishes, not whether the baseboards are dusted.

We've found that one of the most effective ways to feel prepared for last-minute guests is to do a quick lap around your home and establish your game plan. Put grime first, clutter second, and save the deep-clean extras for a day when the clock isn't running. Set a timer for each room so no single space swallows your whole afternoon. The Molly Maid team hears this exact scramble all the time. Guests on the way, minutes ticking down. No baskets handy? An empty box or a laundry hamper works just fine for corralling stray stuff until later. And if your afternoon is already spoken for, a one-time cleaning service can help handle the cleaning while you focus on getting ready for your guests. Either way, the goal isn't perfection. It's a home that feels cared for by the time the doorbell rings.

Reset the Entryway and Living Room First

The entryway sets the tone, and it takes almost no time to reset. Clear shoes, bags, and mail out of the entryway, then set out a basket or tray so guests have somewhere to drop their own stuff. A fresh doormat and a quick wipe of the door handle finish the job in under two minutes.

In the living room, fluff the pillows, clear the side tables, and give the main walking path a fast pass with the vacuum. Skip moving furniture or attacking the carpet stain in the corner; focus on what's visible from the couch. A lamp or two flipped on, even in daylight, makes the whole room feel finished and welcoming.

Give the Bathroom a Fast, Focused Clean

The bathroom is worth the extra few minutes, mostly because grime shows up fast in a small, bright space. Wipe the sink, counter, and mirror, give the toilet seat and handle a quick clean, and swap in a fresh hand towel. Empty the trash can while you're at it.

Does your shower look rough? Close the curtain or door and move on. Scrubbing grout can wait. In our experience, it's not what people notice first. Set out soap and a couple of extra toilet paper rolls where guests can spot them, and give the mirror one streak-free swipe with a microfiber cloth. Small touches like these make a rushed clean feel intentional. It's the smallest room in the house with the biggest payoff.

Clear the Kitchen Counters and Sink

Kitchens get noticed too, especially if food is involved, so the sink and counters are worth the attention. Load the dishwasher, or stack the overflow out of sight, then wipe the counters, stovetop, and table. A clear counter reads as clean, even if the drawer underneath tells a different story.

Take the trash and recycling out, and corral loose mail, keys, or homework into a bin you can sort later. A disinfecting wipe on the fridge handle and light switches covers the spots people touch without thinking. Got sixty extra seconds? A quick sweep near the table clears out the last of the crumbs or pet hair.



Handle Trash, Laundry, and Odors

Trash bags should leave the house, not get tucked behind a door where a curious guest might find them. Laundry baskets belong in a bedroom with the door shut, not staged as a coat rack for the first person who walks in.

For smell, go to the source rather than masking it. Empty the trash, deal with any dirty dishes, and crack a window for a few minutes if the weather cooperates. Always read the label before spraying anything, especially with kids or pets around, and never mix cleaning products. If a spill or stain needs more elbow grease than you have time for, call in a professional rather than rushing it.

Contact Us Before the Holidays!

Call the experts at Molly Maid today to schedule an appointment at 615-794-0200 or 615-603-3766, today www.mollymaid.com/s-davidson-williamson-maury-counties/about-us/contact-us/ We're Maid for This!

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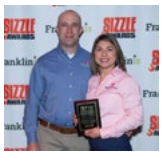

—Daron and Maricela Farrar

Ms. Molly Foundation

Molly Maid is proud to fund and support the Ms. Molly Foundation, which supports domestic violence agencies and shelters in local communities. We're proud to have raised over $3 million dollars since 1996.

SPREAD CHEER.
SHARE HOPE.

Help Middle Tennessee families meet basic needs this holiday season.

In Middle Tennessee, nearly half of all households are living one unexpected expense away from financial crisis.

During the holidays as children are home from school, parents must find and afford childcare while continuing to work. Higher utility bills, increased grocery costs, travel expenses, and the desire to provide holiday gifts can place added strain on already stretched household budgets.

Your once-a-year gift helps connect our neighbors to the resources they need to achieve greater stability. Please scan the QR code to learn more.

Season of Sharing

UNITED WAY
Greater Nashville

Family Matters

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Opening Doors to Homeownership



A home is where families gather, children grow, and traditions take root. At CENTURY 21 Capital Properties, helping people achieve homeownership is a shared commitment that brings the entire team together.

Led by broker and owner Eva Angelina Romero, the company helps families navigate one of life's most meaningful financial decisions. From the first conversation to closing day, the team's mission is to make the process understandable, personal, and focused on each buyer's goals.

Romero's dedication to housing extends beyond her brokerage. Appointed by Governor Bill Lee, she serves as a housing commissioner on the Tennessee Housing Development Agency's Board of Directors, representing licensed real estate brokers. Her service reflects her commitment to expanding access to attainable housing throughout Tennessee.

That commitment is shared across the CENTURY 21 Capital Properties team. It means understanding a buyer's concerns, explaining the steps ahead, and connecting them with lending professionals who can evaluate financing options.

For many aspiring homeowners, saving for upfront expenses feels like the greatest obstacle. Some postpone a conversation because they assume they need a much larger down payment than their circumstances may require.

THDA's Great Choice Home Loan program offers eligible buyers a thirty-year mortgage with a fixed interest rate. Income, purchase price, credit, and other eligibility requirements apply. Through Great Choice Plus, qualifying borrowers may also receive a second mortgage to help cover their down payment and closing costs.

Current assistance options include deferred loans of up to $6,000 or $10,000, depending on eligibility and program terms. These carry zero percent interest and are forgiven after ten years if requirements are met; selling or refinancing sooner triggers repayment. Another option provides up to five percent of the purchase price, capped at $15,000, with monthly payments.

THDA also offers Homeownership for Heroes, providing reduced mortgage interest rates for eligible military members, veterans, educators, and certain public safety professionals. Required homebuyer education helps participants understand budgeting, financing, and the responsibilities of ownership. A THDA-approved lender determines eligibility and explains current terms.

At CENTURY 21 Capital Properties, these resources become part of a broader conversation about readiness and long-term stability. The team helps buyers explore properties, understand negotiations, coordinate inspections, and prepare for closing while keeping their individual needs at the center. For Romero and her colleagues, service means helping families take informed steps toward a place to call their own. Buyers are invited to connect with CENTURY 21 Capital Properties and begin building their homeownership plan today.



—Century 21 Capital Properties Staff Writer, www.c21capitalproperties.com, 615-538-8330

Money Matters

Brought to you by: **Wallin, Hargis, & Colquette Wealth Advisors • www.whcwealth.com**

Hope in an Uncertain Season

Money Matters | Michael R. Wallin, CFP®, LUTCF

Here we are in the middle of the holiday season. Now our eyes turn to the greatest gift we have been given: Jesus. His birth brings joy, hope, and celebration to many, but for some the season also brings stress, anxiety, and fear, much of it rooted in finances.

Last holiday season, the American Psychiatric Association's Healthy Minds Poll found that 41% of U.S. adults expected more holiday stress than the year before, up from 28% in 2024. Nearly half (46%) worried about affording or finding gifts, and 75% said they were anxious about the economy.[1] Those pressures haven't gone away. Cost of living, interest rates, job uncertainty, and a volatile stock market since the midterm elections can leave anyone feeling unsteady.

Yet 1 Timothy 6:17 instructs us, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."

Applying this verse starts with disconnecting your daily peace from your portfolio balance. Here are five practical steps:

1. Audit where your hope actually lives. Notice when a market drop causes panic, irritability, or sleeplessness. Those are signs that financial security has quietly become your primary source of hope.
2. Limit portfolio and news checks. Move from daily checks to reviewing long-term investments monthly or quarterly.
3. Shift focus from what might be lost to what is provided. God "richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." Keep a short daily list of non-financial blessings: health, relationships, a meal, shelter. Net worth is not self-worth.
4. Practice wise stewardship. Trusting God doesn't mean ignoring wisdom. Keep an emergency fund in cash, follow a realistic budget, and avoid panic-driven decisions during downturns.
5. Practice generosity, even in uncertain seasons. Giving, whether to your church, a charity, or a neighbor in need, loosens fear's grip on your heart. Generosity is a tangible way of declaring that God, not your bank account, is your true provider.

If market headlines are stealing your peace this Christmas, you don't have to sort it out alone.



With more than 20 years of experience helping families steward what God has entrusted to them, I would welcome the opportunity to help you build a plan grounded in wisdom, not worry.

[1] American Psychiatric Association, "Americans More Anxious About the Holidays," APA Healthy Minds Poll, conducted by Morning Consult, November 4–5, 2025, among 2,203 U.S. adults. psychiatry.org/news-room/news-releases/americans-more-anxious-about-the-holidays



—Michael Wallin - With more than three decades in financial services, Michael Wallin and the team at Optivise Advisory Services help families align their finances with their faith. For guidance on debt management or building a plan, call 855.378.1806.

Investment advisory services are offered through Optivise Advisory Services, LLC (Optivise), a SEC registered investment advisor.

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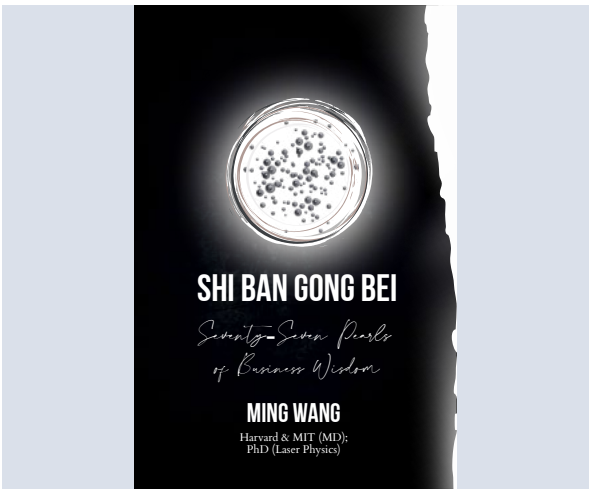
Shi Ban Gong Bei



An ancient Chinese saying about accomplishing twice the work in half the time.

The Angel Studios' film *Sight* (FREE link: sight.drmingwang.com) is based on the autobiography *From Darkness to Sight* by Dr. Ming Wang.

In this talk, Dr. Wang will present *Shi Ban Gong Bei* 77 business pearls about how to accomplish double in half of the time.

- Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*: We are 90% emotional and only 10% logical;
- Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational*: Our irrationality is actually predictable;
- Standing on the shoulders of these two human behavior study giants, Dr. Wang published a 3rd book, *Shi Ban Gong Bei* – an ancient Chinese saying about accomplishing twice the work in half of the time. By observing the symptoms of 77 human's irrational and inefficient behaviors and coming up with the diagnosis and treatment, Dr. Wang points out 77 things that SHOULD do that will improve efficiency by up to 10x or 1,000%!
- Dr. Wang lives in the intersection of emotional/logical. He grew up in the East and lives in the West, and he is both a physician (who needs to understand his patient's emotional need) and a laser physicist (who needs to be a master of the extreme precision of a laser).

About Dr. Ming Wang, MD, PhD

Dr. Ming Wang, Harvard & MIT (MD, magna cum laude), is one of the few laser eye surgeons in the world today who holds a doctorate degree in laser physics. He is a world-renowned laser eye surgeon, philanthropist, and a co-founder of the non-profit Common Ground Network.



As a teenager, Ming fought hardship in his childhood and came to America with only $50 and earned two doctorate degrees, one in laser physics and one in medicine, and graduated with the highest honors from Harvard Medical School and MIT.

Dr. Wang has performed over 55,000 laser vision procedures (including on over 4,000 doctors). The amniotic membrane contact lens, which Dr. Wang has invented (and holds two U.S. patents which he donated to the world), has been used by tens of thousands of eye doctors throughout the world in nearly every nation, and millions have had their eyesight restored.

Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration has helped patients from over 40 states and 55 countries, with all sight restoration surgeries performed free-of-charge. Dr. Wang was named the Kiwanis Nashvillian of the Year for his lifelong dedication to help blind orphans from around the world.

—Leona Walthorn

An Encouraging Word

Never Changing in a Changing World

Over two thousand years ago, a baby born in a humble manger changed the world. That truth is why we celebrate Christmas with such joy. It is far more than remembering a baby in a manger; it is celebrating our Savior who came, the Lord who lives, and the King who is coming again. The Jesus born in Bethlehem is the same Jesus we can turn to today. As He grew from a baby into a man who healed the sick and comforted the brokenhearted, He still cares about those needs and offers us His love. Just as He calmed the storm and forgave sinners, He still offers peace when our lives feel out of control and mercy and grace when we need them. The Jesus who welcomed the weary still invites us to come to Him when our burdens become too heavy.

Our world has changed dramatically since that first Christmas. Yet one truth endures: Jesus came, and He will come again. In the meantime, as we celebrate Christmas, let us remember that in this ever-changing world, the baby born over two thousand years ago remains the same. Yesterday, He was faithful. Today, He is faithful. And tomorrow, He will still be faithful.

Hebrews 13:8 is just as true today as when it was written: "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*" His love has not diminished.



His promises have not expired. His power has not weakened. His faithfulness has not run out. In a world that never stops changing, we can celebrate today with the same joy the world felt long ago. This Christmas, may you rest in the One who never changes. The world will continue to change, but Jesus never will. Merry Christmas!



—Rhonda L. Smart, rhondalsmart@gmail.com

Music Notes

Michael W. Smith

Multi-Platinum singer-songwriter, Michael W. Smith, is excited to return to Nashville with his EVERY CHRISTMAS concert tour. Concert audiences will be engulfed in the joy and true meaning of the season as Michael W. Smith performs his most popular Christmas classics in a night for the whole family. Michael W. Smith has been releasing new music regularly and performing around the world to sold-out crowds for the last 40+ years. He has written and recorded over 36 No. 1 songs, been bestowed with three GRAMMY® Awards, 45+ Dove Awards, one American Music Award, was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame and has sold more than 15 million albums.

Smith has given back to the global community throughout his career. He has raised funds to battle AIDS in Africa, started Rocketown, a safe haven for young people in Tennessee to meet and find hope; and has helped more than 70,000 children through Compassion International.

Tickets: bufishercenter.evenue.net/events/MWS

—Michelle Wichern

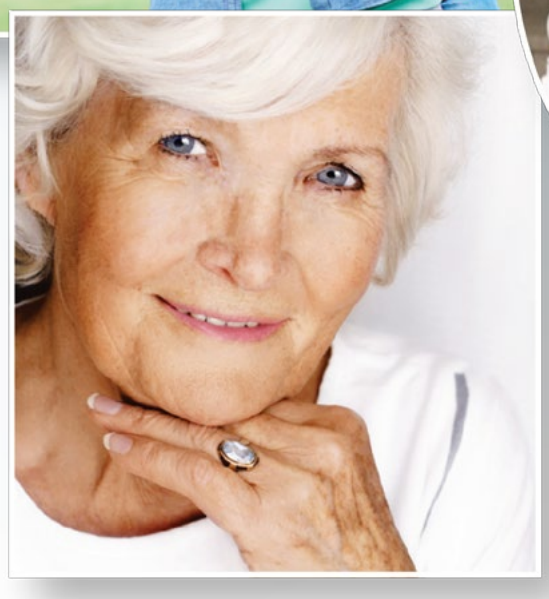


Celebrating 21 Years In The Medicare Business!

- Medicare: Medicare Advantage Plans & Med-Sup Plans







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CCT Music is pleased to announce the opening of this dynamic, new Academy!

THE MUSIC CITY ACADEMY
FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS
NASHVILLE, TN

Dean, Dr. Phil Barfoot

The priority and purpose of this important new Academy is to feature practical instruction from the top leaders in a variety of creative fields to assure each participant's success in the Christian Music Business.

FIRST INTENSIVE SESSION:
January 4 - 8, 2027

- Course Offerings -



SONGWRITING
Lead Communicator: Jeff Bumgardner

Jeff is a top songwriter for a major music publisher, has been nominated for over thirty GMA Dove Awards, winning eight of them, is a highly sought after songwriting coach, advisor, clinician, speaker, and author.

This five-day intensive explores the craft of songwriting. Designed for writers at every level - from someone working on their first song to experienced and published writers - this course examines what makes a song memorable, singable, emotionally compelling, and lasting.

TOPICS: THE STRUCTURE OF A GREAT SONG, THE LANGUAGE OF A GREAT SONG, THE MELODY OF A GREAT SONG, THE ANATOMY OF A GREAT SONG, THE CREATION OF A GREAT SONG (Your song will be recorded by professional musicians at Studio78 during our workshop)



ARRANGING / ORCHESTRATING
Lead Communicator: Cliff Duren

Cliff Duren is the Executive Pastor of Music & Worship at First Baptist Church Dallas, TX.
He has also served in multiple roles at First Baptist Church Woodstock, GA and Brentwood Baptist Church in the Nashville area.
In addition, Cliff is a song writer, arranger, orchestrator, and producer for various church music publishers and Christian artists.

He is, without a doubt, the most prolific and in-demand arranger/orchestrator in the Christian music business.

Cliff is a five-time Dove Award winner for his contributions in Christian music and enjoys being a guest speaker, worship leader, and clinician at multiple events each year.

This five-day intensive explores the craft of arranging and orchestrating. Composers of every level are welcome as we walk through various ways to approach a vocal arrangement. Then, we'll breakdown each section of the orchestra and explore how they work together in any given orchestration.

TOPICS: ARRANGING, VOCAL ARRANGING, ORCHESTRATION – STRINGS & WOODWINDS, ORCHESTRATION – BRASS & PERCUSSION, ARRANGING & ORCHESTRATING – PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

MUSIC BUSINESS / ENTREPRENEURIAL

Lead Communicators: Phil Barfoot (CCT Music)
Ryan Dahl (PraiseCharts), Daniel Semsen (Semsen Music),
Mike Harland (Worship Essentials Network)
Luke Gambill (Lee University), Craig Adams (Trevecca University),
Larry Grayson (Ouachita Baptist University) & David Hahn (Liberty University)



In a world where there are fewer and fewer opportunities for full-time employment in the Christian music business, you will be inspired to look for unique opportunities and to "create your own" dreams and vision and to find a need and fill it.

You will hear the personal testimonies and life-stories of the top leaders in the industry who God has used to create unique and successful products and have employed many others in taking their ministry to the next level.

You will also learn the details of how to start a company from A to Z.

TOPICS: DREAMING BIG, THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX, WORKING WITH INTEGRITY, BLAZING YOUR OWN TRAIL (CREATING YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITIES), KEEPING YOUR EYE ON THE BALL, KEEPING YOUR FOCUS ON MAKING A DIFFERENCE, ALLOWING GOD TO LEAD YOU IN YOUR CAREER, LEARNING THE TRAITS OF A TRUE ENTREPRENEUR, HOW TO START A COMPANY FROM A TO Z

STUDIO ENGINEERING

Lead Communicator: Daewoo Kim



Daewoo is a top recording engineer in Nashville with more than 25 years of experience in audio recording.

His credits include:
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Teachable Moments

The Triple Perspectives of Advent



Advent, derived from the Latin adventus meaning "coming" or "arrival," ushers us into a sacred season of watchful expectation. It is no mere prelude to Christmas but a profound invitation to contemplate God's eternal presence woven through the tapestry of time. As the Church teaches, Advent reveals the Power of the Wisdom of Three using the visions of the Divine, using the three human stages of time: past, present, and future, each illuminating Christ's threefold comings: historical, mystical, and majestical. These stages stir the soul with awe, drawing us into the mystery of a God who transcends human history yet intimately engages our human story.

The first coming gazes into the past, beholding the historic Jesus who shattered eternity's veil in the Incarnation. Here, we recall the humble Bethlehem manger, where the Word became flesh some two millennia ago. As Pope Paul VI proclaimed, this is where the Creator stooped to redeem His creation. Imagine the shepherds' wonder under starlit skies, the Magi traversing deserts drawn by a celestial sign, these events echo Isaiah's prophecy: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Is 9:1). It is through this human history advent awakens our reverence for God's fidelity; He entered our history not as a distant God, but as an infant, vulnerable and near to us, forging an unbreakable covenant with humanity. Through Advent candles' violet hues, we revisit this miracle, humbled that the Eternal One chose our fragile timeline to unveil His divine love.

Turning to the present, the second coming unveils the mysteries of Jesus, and the Triune God, unfolding now, both in the hidden recesses of our souls and the heart of the Church. St. Bernard of Clairvaux described this intermediate coming as Christ's "spiritual incarnation," where He is born anew in modern believers through grace, sacraments, and the Eucharist. Amid daily trials, God whispers through Scripture, prayer, and communal worship, transforming ordinary moments into encounters with the divine. Pope Benedict XVI emphasized this as recognizing Christ "present in our midst," our "travelling companion" in life's journey. This vision inspires awe at God's immanence, He does not abandon us but dwells within, igniting hope amid shadows of the world. In the Eucharistic assembly of church, Christ comes "truly present," bridging heaven and earth in perpetual renewal.

Finally, the third coming lifts our eyes to the future, where the glorious and majestic God triumphs in splendor. Christ's return as King, when "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead" (Nicene Creed). Advent's urgency, stirred by John's cry, "Prepare the way of the Lord" (Mt 3:3), prepares us for this majestic dawn. It evokes trembling wonder: the Alpha and Omega, who was, is, and is to come, will gather all in perfect communion.

In these three comings, Advent orchestrates human time's symphony, harmonizing history's echoes, present graces, and future glory into a call to vigilance. Let us, like sentinels, watch the work of our Triune God: Father of the past, Son of the now, Holy Spirit heralding tomorrow. As we observe the lighting of the wreaths and pray, may awe seize us: the Infinite draws near, not with fear but instead, inviting us to His eternal embrace.

If this is my last post, I want all to know there was only one purpose for all that I have written; to have made a positive difference in the lives of others.



—Anthony "Tony" Boquet, Certified Professional Business Coach, A Modern Solutionary, the author of The Bloodline of Wisdom, The Awakening of a Modern Solutionary *and* The Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, A Devotional Timeline

Body & Soul

Obstacle or Opportunity



Every day, you face a steady stream of choices—both at home and in business. The secret to navigating them isn't a complex formula; it's simply keeping God at the center of your heart and mind. He is your plumb line. You don't need to lock yourself in a prayer closet for hours to find Him. Just talk to Him. He wants a real, moment-by-moment relationship with you, and He uses that daily connection to mold you into His image.

At your end of this relationship, character is everything. When Paul mentors Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, the core message is clear: God doesn't commit to raw talent; He commits to character. He already knows your talents—after all, He gave them to you. True godliness is simply being faithful to His character and emulating His ways in your daily life. Because God is love, the ultimate question is: Are you acting as an ambassador of that love?

True character is defined by selflessness and servanthood. How you speak to and treat others carries more weight than you might ever realize. Scripture is filled with commands to care for people, alongside strict warnings against putting obstacles in their path:

- Romans 14:13: "T*herefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.*"
- Romans 16:17: "*I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.*"
- Isaiah 57:14: "*And it shall be said, 'Build up, build up, prepare the road! Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people.'*"

Take a step back and look at your interactions. Are you a stumbling block to the people around you, or are you creating opportunities for them to succeed?

As you navigate business and family life, keep this powerful acronym on your desk as a daily anchor: BACE.

- Balance is the key to life. Think back to the plumb line—if a foundation is out of balance, whatever you build on top of it will eventually collapse. Balance keeps you focused on what matters.
- Agreement is the power of life. Aligning yourself with God and His Word unlocks true spiritual strength. When you are in agreement with Him, the Holy Spirit can operate freely in your life.
- Communication is the basis of life. This means actively acknowledging Him in every single room you walk into, keeping Him at the forefront of your mind.
- Exchange is the process of life. Growth happens when you willingly trade your old ways, your pride, and your agendas for His.



—Michael G. Carnes is Chairman of the Board for the TN Christian Chamber of Commerce and owner of Palette Productions, having over 46 years of entertainment leadership. After rising to senior leadership at a major Hollywood studio by age 29, he now directs executive strategy and mission-driven media, film, and television production.

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The Light Beyond Santa's Shadow

My old high school friend Benny Morgan has a rather unusual traveling companion. His shadow! For years, Benny has entertained his Facebook friends with photographs of adventures with "the Shadow." They walk, celebrate birthdays, and apparently even go fishing! Recently, Benny got me thinking about someone who shared my adventures for more than half a century.

My Mz Claus.

For more than forty years, I've had the wonderful privilege of being Santa Claus. I've listened to thousands of Christmas wishes, shared countless hugs, posed for more photographs than I could ever count, and enjoyed a cookie or two along the way. Being Santa is a blessing, but the fellow in the red suit does attract attention. Children's eyes light up. Adults smile and wave.

Through much of that wonderful journey, Jeanie was right there beside me. Somewhere along the way, she almost stopped calling me by my given name. To her, I was simply "Santa." But when she spoke of me to others, I was always "My Santa."

I'm a people person, blessed with the gift of gab. Jeanie was quieter, content to let Santa do the talking. But Jeanie was more than Mz. Claus beside Santa. She was my wife, partner, encourager, and a woman whose faith touched more lives than I realized.



In recent months, I've heard from people who shared how Jeanie influenced their Christian walk. Some remembered her love of Scripture and the encouragement she offered.

One person shared, "Jeanie showed me the love of Christ." Another remembered, "Mz Claus comforted my child." Those simple words speak volumes.

At Jeanie's celebration of life, Brother Jim Castlen spoke of biblical women whose qualities he saw in her: the faithfulness of Proverbs 31, Esther's courage, Abigail's wisdom, and the devotion of Mary and Martha. That was Jeanie. That makes me think about something beyond Santa and Mrs. Claus.

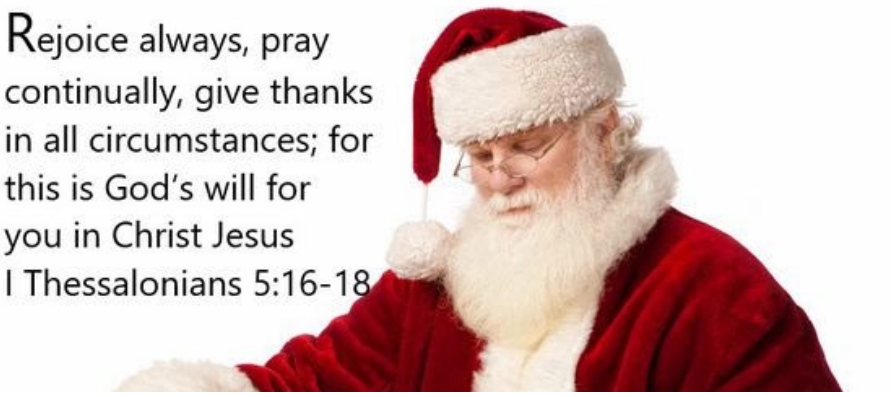
How often do we overlook the people who stand beside us—or in our shadow?

Sometimes we're so busy doing what God has called us to do that we miss what He is doing through those closest to us. We notice applause and accomplishments. But what about the quiet encourager who prays, serves, and helps without expecting recognition?

Proverbs 31:28 tells us, "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." I particularly love that last phrase. Her husband also, and he praiseth her.

And this isn't just about marriage. It's about family, friends, neighbors, and the people God places along our journey. It's about recognizing the good in others and taking the time to tell them.

We celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. In Matthew 5:16, Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your



good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Jeanie didn't need a spotlight to make a difference. She simply reflected the love of Christ in the way she lived. And that brings me to a little Christmas challenge.

This Christmas, do something extraordinary for someone you love.

Some of the most meaningful gifts don't cost a dime. Write your spouse a letter. Thank a parent for sacrifices you've taken for granted. Tell a friend what their encouragement means. And don't just assume they already know. Tell them! And do something extraordinary for a stranger. Better yet, do it as a family! Encourage someone. Help a neighbor. Brighten a lonely person's day. Share unexpected kindness.

Let your children and grandchildren discover the joy of giving without expecting anything in return. After all, some of our most treasured Christmas memories aren't made by the gifts we receive, but by the love we share. And here's something I've learned from my friend Benny.

Benny remembers his Shadow on ordinary days, even when they're just taking a walk. We can remember those who share our journey, too.

One of the greatest blessings of my life was the remarkable woman who shared those adventures with me. She called me "My Santa." And I was blessed beyond measure to call her my Mz Claus.

So this Christmas, look beside you. Look behind you. Look around you. Someone may be quietly making your life brighter.

Let them know you see their light. And then go share a little of that light with someone else.

Merry Christmas, and a great big HO HO HO!

Remember, Jesus is the reason I wear the red suit.



—Durward Blanks has been bringing joy and holiday magic as a professional Santa Claus/St. Nicholas for over thirty years. Beyond the red suit, he is a motivational speaker and writer whose mission is to spread God's love through his words, presence, and faith. For inquiries or to connect with Santa Durward, email DurBlanks@gmail.com or call 615-496-1368.

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The Influence of a Poem: *Man and SUPERMAN* by George Bernard Shaw

My parents did not meet each other in Ireland though they grew up just 15 miles from each other. It took coming to the United States, traversing through the numerous hurdles of Ellis Island, and mysteriously arriving in Chicago where are they found each other and make a long meaningful life together.

It wasn't much further down the road from my parents' dirt floor shanties in Ireland that a most unusual gentlemen lived, who had earned quite a following because he was a writer and a poet, who made sense to a lot of people. In school my parents were quite studious and by the time they finished eighth grade, they had read all of Shakespeare and numerous well-known writers and a few poets like George Bernard Shaw (GBS).

From the very moment, I believe it was in college, that I became acquainted with GBS, I was fascinated by his charisma and I felt inspired by the plethora of his profound understanding of life, and our realization that we live in a world that is full of incongruities, occults, and beliefs which could lead us down a wrong pathway resulting in truly missing one's direction in life.

I believe this magnificent writing entitled, *Man and SUPERMAN*, can quite easily stand on its own, however, I feel moved to extrapolate and share a depth of its meaning, as I continue to absorb increasingly more as I am re-reading this poem.

Many of us perceive that we live in a beautiful and magnificent country, however we are aware that we rub elbows daily with those who believe they are much wiser or experienced and believe it's okay "to take it easy" and not to take things seriously, but rather, let things fall where they may. In contrast, GBS rather quickly and bluntly remarks, in the first line of his poem, "This is the true joy in life…Being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, the being a force of nature". No doubt, a part of our reality is shaken as GBS calls it like it is, our "true joy in life".





GBS quickly reframes, one is thinking this life is all for me, as he clarifies the importance of finding "true joy" is intimately connected for each of us in, "being used for a purpose" which we recognize we are doing conscientiously, however, he augments our willingness to do so and describes it as "being a force of nature". Our mind quickly remembers forces of nature with hundreds of acres of trees being totally burnt to the ground in a few hours, or the gail of winds which blowout every inch thick window in a downtown skyscraper during a fierce storm. It becomes incredibly clear to each of us that this poem is so noble, and worthwhile as it aspires each of us toward "our purpose" in life with passion! It becomes clear that the purpose is forever #1 for each of us as we become "a force of nature". Having "purpose" in life is now left to be an awesome power and that is the power to serve others.

GBS further extrapolates the direct opposite of "purpose" as he describes "…a feverish, selfish little clog of alienation and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to make you happy". Each descriptor of GBS is like a karate master's punch to the gut resulting in true alienation. And those without purpose are one hundred percent opposite and recognized this foolishness strikes us, as if we just walked into a category five tornado!

After a somber pause, GBS articulates his opinion with a thrust that is felt throughout the room as he says…" I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when

I die for the harder I work, the more I live…I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle for me. It's sort of a splendid torch, which I got hold of for a moment. I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to the future generation". I'm sure that as each of us recalibrated GBS last line in his poem…, we must say it again with greater passion….

" Life is no brief candle for me. It's sort of a splendid torch which I got hold of for a moment. (perhaps I sit down for this) I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before I hand it on to the future generation".

—To speak with Dr. Tim Lynch, PhD., You can call him at 615-504-4357, or E-mail him at tdlynch@bellsouth.net If you want to know more about Dr. Lynch.. Check out Psychology Today Practice Directory, or his WEB: thelynchgroup.net



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Plan of Salvation

Has something in the magazine or something you have discussed with someone or some thoughts that you have had or something that you have heard, brought you to a point of realizing that you want and need to know Christ in the truest and personal sense?

If so, below is a simple outline for someone of any age who is not a Believer to act on their desire to accept Jesus Christ into their heart as their Savior.

God's Plan of Salvation
God created us to honor and serve Him
Revelation 4:11: "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created

Each of us has sinned against God
Romans 3:10: As it is written, "There is none righteous, no, not one"
Romans3:23: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The penalty for sin is eternal separation from God and Heaven
Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Good works cannot ever earn God's forgiveness and Salvation
Titus 3:5: not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.

God loves each of us
John 3:16: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

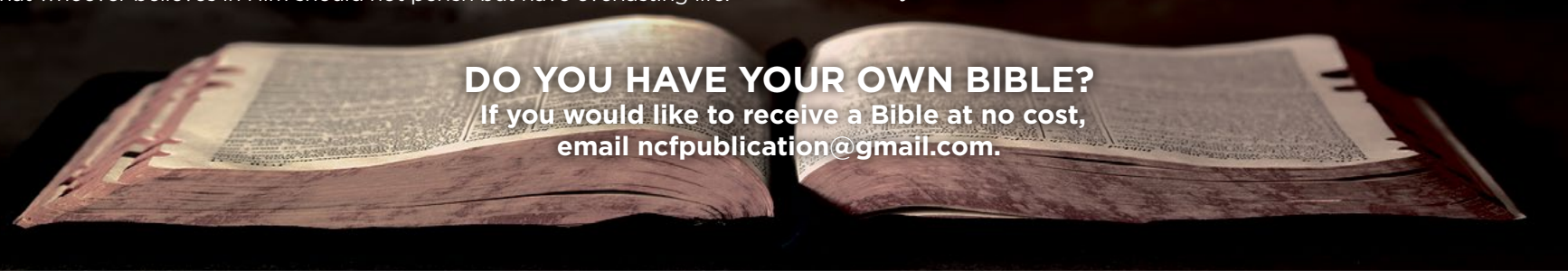
Jesus Christ died on the cross in our place, paying the penalty for our sin
Romans 5:8: But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We each must accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior
Romans 10:9: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:13: For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

To accept Christ into your heart and life, pray a simple prayer along these lines - *"Dear God, I know that I am a sinner and I am sorry for my sins. I know that Jesus died for my sins and the sins of the world. Right now, I ask Jesus into my heart and receive Him as my personal Savior. Forgive me of my sins, thank you for saving me through the blood of Jesus. Please Lord, help me live for you. In Jesus name, amen."*

All scriptures are taken from The New King James Version of the Holy Bible.
If you do not have your own Bible, email publisher@nashchristian.com and we will make sure you receive one.



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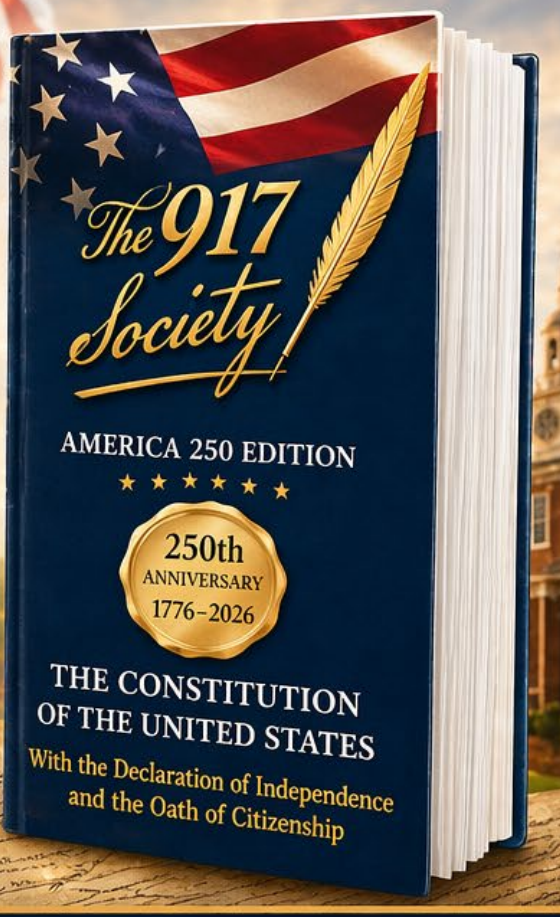

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