

We Will Pray

Volume 1 Issue 4 Spring 2022

**Ignite The Fire
Movement
Summit Ministries
Newnan Magazine**

BRIDGING THE GAP

BETWEEN

Faith & Community

Newnan City Church

Transforming Lives
through Service

Coweta Pregnancy Services

Loving and Saving Lives

Newnan Police Department

Outreach & Service in
Coweta County

Backpack Buddies

Reducing Weekend
Food Insecurity

Newman

CITY CHURCH

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Editor's Note:

Why Do We Serve?



Why do we serve? This is a question we should all ask ourselves. Is it because we love serving? Is it because it is the right thing to do? Or is it because we are compelled by the Holy Spirit to serve because of great love for our Heavenly Father? Either way, we should examine our motives for serving. Why? Often, we experience burn out, depression, and anxiety in the midst of desiring to help others. Therefore, these questions are vital to answer and understand the right way and reason for service. Our ultimate motivation should be for the love of our Heavenly Father.

Let's define service. Service is the noun form of serve, and it is defined as the action of helping or doing work for someone.

What does the Bible say about service? "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ... If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:10-11 NIV). We can have love and passion, or we may know it is the right thing to do, but to render service God's way is always healthy and rewarding.

We have been graced with so many great men and women of God who have gone before us with selfless service to mankind. Let's look at the life of Mother Teresa through a short biographical sketch:

Mother Teresa (1910-1997) was a Roman Catholic nun who devoted her life to serving the poor and destitute around the world. She spent many years in Calcutta, India, where she founded the Missionaries of Charity, a religious congregation devoted to helping those in great need. Her life of love and service topped anything she could ever hope to achieve. She maintained, "The Fruit of love is service, compassion in action." She is famous and known for her consistent service towards all of mankind, the rich and poor alike. "Even the rich are hungry for love, for being cared for, for being wanted, for having someone to call their own," she explained. We can mimic her actions as an earthly vessel who allowed no constraints or hinderances to abort her mission of servitude.



Our service to mankind is bedded in a rich love towards our Heavenly Father. We serve others as an action of love for our Father. We are inspired, pumped, and motivated by Holy Spirit's presence in us. It is His presence that fuels us and also protects us from burnout, depression and anxiety. It is our job to partner with Him through prayer, fasting, and the study of His Word, and through meditation and obedience to become true servants of God. Mother Teresa cautioned: "There is always the danger that we may just do the work for the sake of the work. This is where the respect and the love and the devotion come in - that we do it to God, to Christ, and that's why we try to do it as beautifully as possible." Let us be motivated to do everything wholeheartedly, as unto the Lord. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23-24).

Apostle Debra Harris

Editor-In-Chief

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EAST NEWNAN BAPTIST CHURCH'S ESL PROGRAM

Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ by Meeting Literacy Needs

by Susan Muzio Conner

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10, NIV).

Teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), helping to prepare qualified ESL students for their citizenship interview and test, and assisting students in completing GED requirements is the focus of the Georgia Baptist Literacy Mission ESL classes.

East Newnan Baptist Church’s (ENBC) English as a Second Language program's emphasis is on "Conversational English." Classes instruct basic grammar at a beginner level to enable students to grasp basic conversational concepts.

The ENBC ESL program offers three levels of conversational English in an environment of Christian fellowship, demonstrating the love of Christ to serve, challenge, and encourage students to communicate effectively within the normal day-to-day activities of family, business and community life here in the United States of America. New students are welcome at any time.

The ENBC ESL program is designed to increase skill with English by speaking it. While conversational English is key, grammar also is introduced to intermediate and advanced students to broaden their knowledge and confidence in speaking the English language. Each student is provided an opportunity to advance to higher skill levels in the conversational and literacy aspects of the language at their own pace.

Serving Coweta County and surrounding areas, the ESL program at East Newnan Baptist Church is a continuation of the ESL program started at First Baptist Church Newnan (FBCN) in 2010 by Phyllis Finley. The Lord laid it upon my heart to apply as a teacher with the FBCN ESL program. In 2017, I completed the certification program offered by the Georgia Baptist Mission Board Literacy program and began teaching with Phyllis and others with the FBCN’s ESL classes.



The program was very successful reaching many students, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ as they were taught the English language. Ultimately, student participation began to fizzle out for one reason or another.

At that time, I began working as the East Newnan Baptist Church Administrative Assistant. The Lord once again placed upon my heart the need to continue reaching people with the Gospel through teaching English. After obtaining permission from the senior pastor, ENBC's ESL program began in 2019 on Tuesday evenings and continues to grow as the Lord brings students from many countries, including South Korea, China, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Columbia and others. Following The Centers for Disease Control guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic, classes continued in the open-air environment at Carl Miller Park, but as the transmission rates waned, the program eventually returned to the ENBC campus.

You may wonder what is gained from teaching English to people whose native language is not English. The rewards of serving God through teaching English classes are vast. There is a hunger in people who aren't born in the United States to learn English and assimilate into American life. One small part of helping them accomplish this is to lovingly serve our Lord Jesus Christ by reaching them with the Gospel as they come to learn our language. It is most humbling to be teaching someone the language you speak and understand in such a way that can be beneficial to those eager to learn.

If you have the desire to serve the Lord by helping people learn the basics of the English language or to develop their English language skills by increasing vocabulary and conversation, a volunteer teaching position might be a great fit for you! ESL classes provide an excellent opportunity to serve God in the Coweta County community by using the skills He gives us to bring Him glory, to introduce students to Christ, and to provide instruction in the English language.

In our desire to serve God, the Bible reminds us that humble service in the Body of Christ is defined in Romans 7:6-7 (NIV): "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach." God continues to be faithful in providing the people and resources to accomplish His Purpose. I am honored to be used by Him in such a way!

Our church office is open Monday - Thursday (except holidays), 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

East Newnan Baptist Church ESL / 14 Pearl Springs Trail, Newnan, GA / 770.253.0550 / eastnewnanbaptist.org



Susan is a proud native of Newnan and a graduate of Newnan High School. She graduated from The University of Akron with an A.A.S. Degree in Legal Technology and with a B.A. in Business Administration from Malone College during her years living in Ohio. Susan spent many years in the legal field before joining the East Newnan Baptist Church staff as the Administrative/Ministry Assistant. Susan is a member of First Baptist Church Newnan (FBCN). She enjoys serving God as the Director of the Newnan Chapter of the Georgia Baptist Literacy Missions (GBLM), as well as functioning as an instructor for the GBLM's English Second Language classes. She is a member of the FBCN Prayer Team, Coweta Kiwanis Club, and a frequent church and community volunteer. Susan enjoys gardening and playing golf, and is an avid and passionate genealogist.

ONE ROOF ECUMENICAL ALLIANCE OUTREACH

Serving God Through Serving Others

Dr. Ann M. Kerlin, PhD, LPC

I have the joy of being the Executive Director at One Roof, a charity that began in Newnan back in the Fall of 2007. Derenda Rowe is responsible for getting this ministry launched. She was followed by Dr. David Gregory, who led us faithfully for two years. Then Frankie Hardin became Executive Director for two years. I stepped into this position January of 2020, just in time for the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and then the EF-4 tornado that struck Newnan. But the work we do has taken on extra meaning for all of us here on staff during the time of these crises. (In case you are wondering, almost all of our staff did get COVID-19 at some point during the last two years, despite observing precautions.)



ONE ROOF

One Roof's mission statement indicates what we do: "We are people serving the Lord, working with families in crisis in Coweta County, offering food, clothing, financial assistance and shelter." It is our hope to make a positive impact on the quality of life for Coweta residents.

Our staff comes from different denominations, and we have a variety of churches who support us. We all take our faith seriously. We see our mission as following Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25 about the importance of compassionately and generously providing for those in need, and to follow the example of the Bible's Good Samaritan, who saw a person in dire need of assistance and helped him above and beyond the minimum required.

We provide financial support to Coweta residents who are in the midst of crisis. We provide for rent, utilities, emergency housing and other necessities. We have financial limit guidelines per household (and depending upon our budget), and we do ask that those who request help are doing their best to help themselves; we come alongside them to give them "a hand up, not a handout."

After the Coweta County tornado's devastation, many renters were displaced. Our major role became helping them find temporary shelter. We still work with the Newnan Tornado Recovery Support group, and it looks like the recovery process is indeed a slow one, even for those with insurance on their homes.

Currently One Roof is housing two homeowners while their homes are being repaired. They do not have insurance coverage for this service, but generous donations from the community have made this lodging possible.

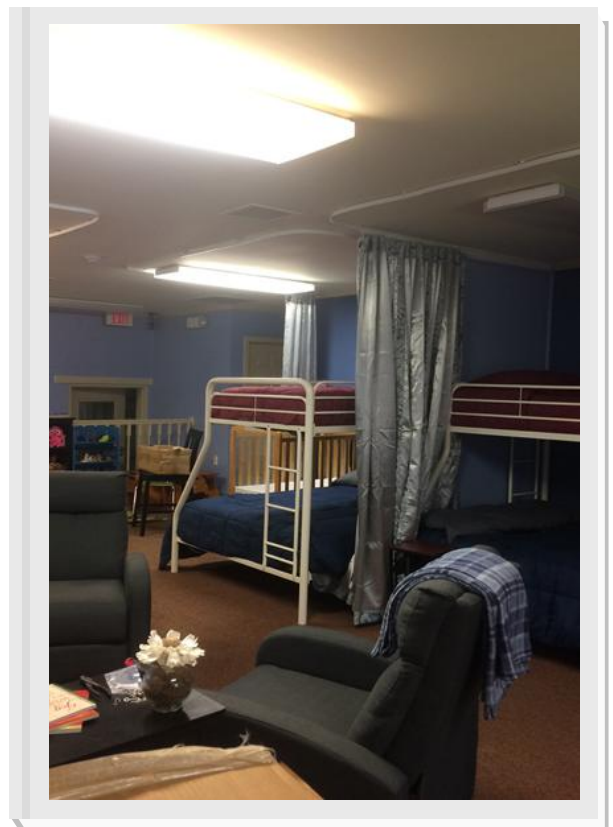
Because of the increased demand for housing and because Coweta had no other shelters, we launched The Lodge in 2019, a transitional living center for women and children. Former Director Frankie Hardin led the project to a successful launch. We have a small facility with a dorm-style sleeping arrangement; if you have nowhere else to go, this is a temporary home. One of our former residents successfully transitioned to an apartment, and a generous donor gave us a car, which we had the pleasure of passing on to this hard-working client. This was a very successful example of someone who came to us without much but through partnerships with the community was restored to stable housing *and* has a way to get to work every day.

One Roof's food bank offers clients the opportunity to pick up food twice a month during client hours. We typically distribute between 60-80 pounds of food per family. We appreciate the donations we receive all year long and from the annual Newnan Junior Service League's (NJSL) Can-A-Thon. In 2021, NJSL's Can-A-Thon contributed a record-setting \$57,700 and 266,155 cans of food to One Roof.

We operate an open-to-the-public thrift store, and we use it to provide vouchers for free items to those in need. Often we are blessed by donations from community partners. In honor of Poverty Awareness Month, Willis Road Elementary School students read a book in January about a child without shoes and the school's PTO came up with the wonderful idea to collect new tennis shoes and also gently used shoes to donate to One Roof's thrift store. Any child who comes into the store will be able to choose a free pair of shoes until we give them all away. We also wrapped up our winter coat giveaway at the end of February. Several local churches donated coats this year.



To help individuals with spiritual needs, One Roof maintains a prayer request board and we are available to pray with clients. Requests can be noted on the One Roof Facebook page or can be shared confidentially in person at the One Roof office during client hours (listed below). In order to alleviate some of the stress impacting the community, we have been offering some free counseling sessions. We also provide lay counseling training with SouthCrest Church in hopes that more people will be trained and available to provide faith-based care and encouragement to the hurting in our county.



I'd like to end this article with my favorite prayer from Numbers 6:24-26 (ESV)

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Store Hours: Monday-Saturday (10 am to 5 pm)

Client Hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (1-4 pm)

One Roof Outreach / 255 Temple Ave., Newnan, GA / 770.683.7705 / oneroofoutreach.org

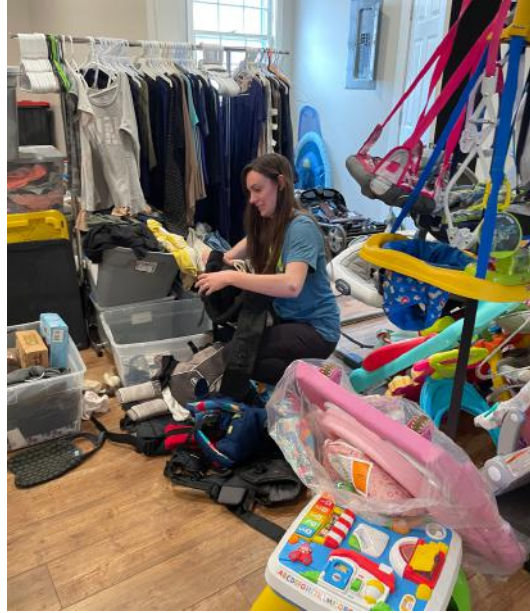
One Roof Thrift Store / 251 Temple Ave., Newnan, GA



Dr. Ann M. Kerlin, PhD, LPC is the Executive Director at One Roof Ecumenical Alliance Outreach. She also teaches counseling at Luther Rice College & Seminary in Stonecrest, GA, where she has been a faculty member since 2011. She has an accounting degree from The University of West Georgia, a Master of Divinity from Luther Rice, a Master of Human Services from Liberty University, and a doctorate in counseling from Liberty University.

Coweta Pregnancy Services

Loving and Saving Lives



By: Cindy Coggin Hughes

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV)

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV). We as Christians know that God is the giver of life and has a plan and purpose for every life he creates.

Coweta Pregnancy Services began serving the community in 1988. We are a non-profit, Christian-based organization serving women and men of all ages who are facing an unplanned pregnancy. We aspire to bring truth, hope and healing found in Jesus Christ.

We are constantly reminded that “perfect love casts out all fear.” God’s perfect love is what we are called to give to every single life that He created, even ourselves. It also means loving the life of every woman that walks through our doors, whether to find out that she is pregnant or not, or if she is taking a scary first step in the healing process to work through the decision of a previous abortion. We will love the life that is within the woman and do our best to stand up for her rights. We will love the man who comes with his own fears and worries because he is responsible for the life as well. We will love and appreciate the life of every person who chooses to volunteer their time in order to walk the journey with our clients. We will love and appreciate every donor that gives even a dollar to keep this ministry going.

Coweta Pregnancy Services performs an average of 1,000 pregnancy tests and 600 ultrasounds each year. In 2021 we also provided emergency assistance such as diapers, wipes, formula and clothing to more than 1,500 families who were struggling to provide even the basic needs for their children.



We offer important options including counseling, abortion education, community referrals, and pregnancy/parenting classes which enable families to gain valuable information while earning a new car seat, crib and other baby essentials. Many parents choose to participate in a bible study during their class.

We know that everything begins with education, and we strive to help moms and dads become the best parents they can be! We share the gospel with every client who comes through our doors and try to get them plugged into a local church for additional support. We do not provide or refer for abortion services. We are here to help women consider all their options, including adoption and parenting.

Coweta Pregnancy Services has a small staff and many volunteers who give their time and talents to counsel and mentor families who are facing pregnancy. We walk beside them and provide support every step of the way before, during and after the pregnancy! We are always in need of volunteers who can donate time to our ministry: to sort donations, do administrative tasks, assist with special events, counsel/mentor clients, and/or serve on our board of directors.

Many church small groups serve either one time or regularly at Coweta Pregnancy Services. There are a variety of serving opportunities for every age. Coweta Pregnancy Services is supported by many area churches, businesses and individuals. We also have fundraisers throughout the year to supplement our budget.

Donations of new and gently used clothing and baby items from sizes Premie up to Size 6 are greatly appreciated. We also accept formula (unopened only) and diapers (open packs ok).

We recently received this moving letter from a client:



"I don't think there are enough words to express how grateful I am for the impact you have made on my life. When I came in three years ago, I just wanted to confirm a pregnancy and learn information on how to get an abortion. I was 20 years old, and I was finishing my sophomore year in college. I didn't have any money, so I came there because you offered your services for free. At the time, I didn't have a relationship with God, and I remember that after my ultrasound you asked me if it was okay to pray. I said yes reluctantly, but it was the best decision. Because of that prayer, my daughter is here now! Holding my hand and saying a prayer for me at the lowest time in my life overwhelmed me with an unconditional love that I've never experienced. I will never forget that moment because receiving love from a stranger was one of the most heartfelt experiences in my life. You, along with God, have made an extraordinary impact on my life. Being a single mother in my 20's was extremely difficult, but I know why God put my daughter in my life. In the first few years of her life, I held resentment towards Coweta Pregnancy Services because I knew the only reason I kept my baby was because of the prayer. Now I adore her, and I honestly think she is the best thing that ever happened in my family. I hope you continue to pray for every young, scared girl who walks through your doors."

During the past year, the facility has undergone construction, and we have doubled the size of our building in order to serve more clients. To God be the glory! Hours of operation are Monday-Thursday, 10 am - 4 pm.

Coweta Pregnancy Services / 29 Brown Street, Newnan, GA / 770.251.7158 / coweta-ps.org



Cindy Coggin Hughes is a Newnan native and graduate of Newnan High School. God was preparing her for the Executive Director position at Coweta Pregnancy Services most of her life. Her previous career in shopping center marketing and management combined with her ultrasound training paired together to give her the skills she needed. Cindy has a huge heart for the unborn and loves helping families that come to the center. Cindy has been with CPS for 13 years. Cindy attends and serves at Southside Church and has a daughter, Savanna who is 21 and attends Georgia State University.



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Overseer LaVonia Lovett
Senior Pastor & Founder

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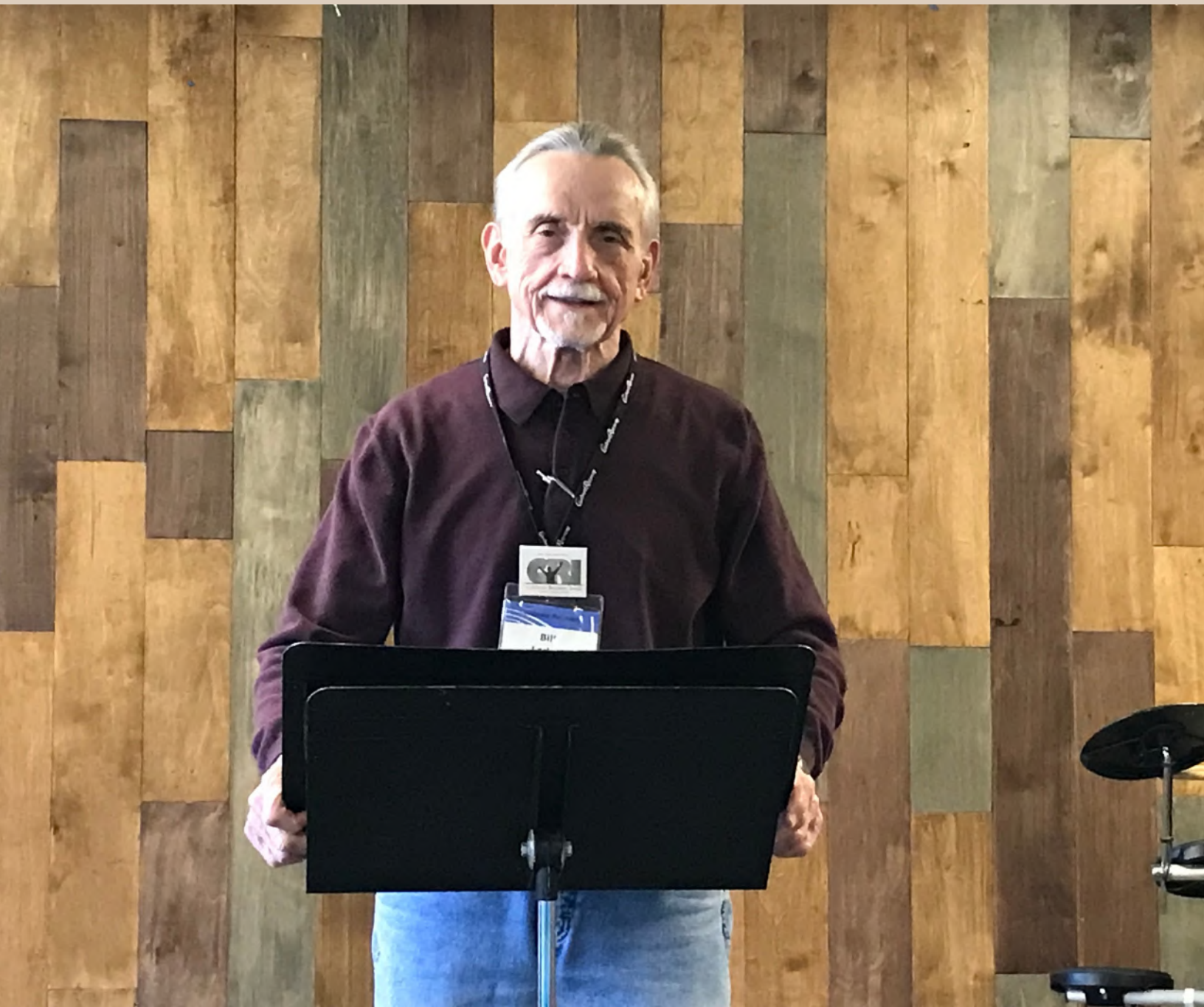
SUN
10AM

SUNDAY
WORSHIP
(Virtual or
in-person)

TRANSFORMED LIVES
HAPPEN AT

Celebrate Recovery

By Bill Larkey



“Hello, my name is Bill Larkey. I’m a grateful believer in Jesus Christ and I’m in recovery for alcohol addiction, codependency and anxiety.” This is the way we introduce ourselves in Celebrate Recovery (CR) because our identity is in Jesus Christ and not in our issue.

I have been a ministry leader of Celebrate Recovery at SonRise Baptist Church since CR began at the church on October 25, 2012. Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered, twelve-step recovery program that deals with a variety of “hurts, hang ups and habits.” These include such issues as substance abuse, gambling, anger, low self-esteem, fear, food addiction, compulsive spending, pornography, and more - essentially anything that interferes with our living the fulfilled life Christ offers.

Most destructive habits are based on lies learned from hurtful experiences in our past. In Celebrate Recovery, we learn to identify these lies, and then how to replace them with truths based on God's Word. In so doing, we experience recovery from our issue(s), and we grow to become more like Christ. Paul says it best:



“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will” (NIV).

Foundational to Celebrate Recovery are two Biblically-based tools:

The 8 Principles of Recovery,

<https://www.celebraterecovery.ca/cr-tools/8-recovery-principles/>,

and **The 12 Steps of Recovery,**

<https://www.celebraterecovery.com/resources/cr-tools/12steps>.

Celebrate Recovery began 30 years ago in 1991 at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, when CR Founder Johnny Baker gained approval from Pastor Rick Warren to launch this ministry. CR has now expanded to numerous sites all over the world. CR also has developed programs specific to certain groups and their issues: "Celebration Place" for children, "The Landing" for high schoolers, "Celebrate Recovery Inside" for jail and prison inmates, "Welcome Home" for veterans, and others.

In Newnan, Celebrate Recovery at SonRise Baptist will soon celebrate its ten-year anniversary! We've always recognized that people who come to CR for the first time may experience anxiety over not knowing what to expect. We strive to send a message that anyone coming through our doors will enter a safe place where anonymity and confidentiality are paramount. Everyone is accepted - free from judgment, condemnation and intimidation, and is received with love, respect, inclusion, and hope for a better life. Here's an overview of what to expect when someone attends a weekly, Thursday night CR meeting:

CR AGENDA

Welcome/Greeting: 6:00 pm / Our first interaction with guests is extremely important. We only have one chance to make a first impression. We want all who attend to experience the qualities of healing mentioned previously, and we try to demonstrate those qualities as each person is greeted.

Meal: 6:00 - 6:45 pm / We truly are blessed to have quality meals prepared and served by small groups in our church. It's an opportunity for guests, regular attenders, leaders and small group members to interact and get to know each other while sharing a meal. We also are grateful that a few local restaurants occasionally donate group meals.

Large Group: 7:00 - 8:00 pm / Large Group is a time for praise and worship. It also includes a lesson on the Eight Principles and Twelve Steps, or a testimony of one's recovery from an issue(s). Lessons and testimonies alternate week-to-week. Participants' progress in recovery is celebrated by providing "chips" which mark intervals of recovery time for each participant. The Large Group ends with the Celebrate Recovery version of the well-known Serenity Prayer
<https://www.celebraterecovery.com/resources/cr-tools/serenityprayer>.

Ladies and Men's Small Share Groups:

8:00 – 9:00 pm / Immediately following the Large Group are Small Group breakout sessions, further segregated by gender. Attendees share matters on their hearts and minds regarding the lesson or testimony experienced in the Large Group. Established guidelines are followed to ensure safety of the group. The Newcomers 101 Group offers an orientation to CR for those who are attending for the first time.

9:00 pm: CR Meeting Ends

Recovery doesn't occur in isolation, so we encourage the development of supportive relationships with others in the group, pairing them with accountability partners and sponsors. Step Studies also provide the opportunity for individuals to take the study of the Eight Principles and Twelve Steps to a deeper level and are held on a different date/time of the week from the regular CR meeting.

It is rewarding to hear little children squeal with delight when they attend CR. A child once asked her mother if they were going to "church" tonight. Indeed, these meetings are designed to feel like entering the warm fellowship of a church family

It is extremely gratifying to walk with people as they travel the road to recovery and share from their experiences to benefit others.

Some have committed their lives to Christ, and a few have chosen to be baptized at a CR Thursday night meeting.

Relationships sometimes are restored for those who attend. One man said he had never heard his father tell him he was proud of him until after his life turned around and he was baptized.

A second Celebrate Recovery Coweta County site meets on Tuesdays at SouthCrest Church. And exciting news for SonRise's Mexico mission: we hope to establish a CR site there in the near future!

Celebrate Recovery @ SonRise Baptist Church / 6 Shenandoah Blvd, Newnan, GA /
Phone: 678.423.1828/
sonrisebaptist.org/ministries/celebrate-recovery.com



Bill Larkey retired from the Georgia Department of Corrections, Probation Division. He received certification as an alcohol and drug counselor and worked in several venues. He currently serves as a Ministry Leader with Celebrate Recovery at SonRise Baptist Church in Newnan, Georgia.

Newnan City Church

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH
SERVICE



By Pastor Jim Ellison

July 1, 2007 was the day that began a transformation in my soul from which I would never recover. This particular day marked the beginning of what would become the foundation for my understanding of local outreach ministry. I began my tenure as pastor of the historic downtown Atlanta First United Methodist Church, located in the heart of the city on Peachtree Street.

Twelve years earlier, on July 1, 1995, my wife Beth and I began laying the foundation of what would become Providence United Methodist Church. Located in the suburbs of Fayette County, GA, the church grew to reach many people and we loved our time there. Serving in a community where the overwhelming majority of people looked, thought, and believed like you became a comfortable place to serve. Serving the marginalized in our community was a foreign thought. The closest thing to local outreach was driving to Atlanta in the church van, dropping off socks, blankets and hygiene kits at a shelter, and then swinging by the Varsity before heading home to the suburbs. Who doesn't like a slaw-dog, onion rings and a Coca-Cola® when doing mission work?

All this changed at Atlanta First United Methodist. I went from a 100+ acre campus, to one block in downtown Atlanta. I went from observing wild turkeys and deer from my church office window to a window view of sky-scrappers. But most importantly, I went from serving as the pastor of a suburban congregation in a middle-to-upper-income community, to serving a congregation planted in the midst of severe poverty and destruction. Within three weeks of being the new downtown pastor, a homeless person was found dead on the steps of the church. I was no longer in a bubble.



Words fall short when I try to articulate how serving in downtown Atlanta shaped my theology and specifically inspired my call to action to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the marginalized. My understanding of scripture shifted. I began seeing references to the poor throughout the Old Testament, and Jesus' words regarding the poor began to weigh heavy on my heart. I reached a point where I truly believed that neglecting to serve the under-resourced was not compatible with being a follower of Jesus. Saying yes to Jesus also must include living a life where serving the poor is part of one's normal routine.

Fast-forward to 2022. Beth and I are now serving at Newnan City Church (NCC) in downtown Newnan. This is the congregation we founded in 2017. When we were in the planning stages of designing NCC, we established three pillars upon which the congregation would be built: 1) Worship, 2) Small Groups, and 3) Local Missions. The three pillars are articulated as the best way to fulfill NCC's purpose—transforming lives for Jesus's sake.

Local Missions and Outreach is the "program" arm of the congregation. We don't have a plethora of programs for children, students, or even older adults. We don't have choirs or scouts or book clubs or sewing groups.

Please understand: I don't think any of these types of programs are necessarily bad. They are not. However, the leaders of NCC made the decision early on that the program arm of the church would look much different than a traditional, program-driven congregation. The only program we would offer is local missions outreach opportunities



Here's the NCC strategy for Local Missions and Outreach:

Cast the vision. Every Sunday, the vision is shared that serving the under-resourced in our community is expected for the follower of Jesus who is growing in her/his faith. This is done during the announcement time prior to the worship service.

Find where God is working. We decided early on that we wouldn't try to duplicate any outreach ministries already up and running in Newnan and throughout Coweta County. Rather, we are consistently searching for new local mission and outreach partners. Local missions are interviewed to ensure that NCC is a good fit for them, and then we begin coming alongside them to serve.

Fill a gap when needed. When NCC learned that there was not a warming shelter in Newnan, we partnered with the Newnan Emergency Shelter Team to host our homeless neighbors during cold, winter nights. Because no other church or organization was offering this service, we made the decision to fill this gap.

Make it easy to serve. Our goal is to have a minimum of one serve opportunity for NCC to volunteer for each week. We have easy sign-up opportunities in person, as well as on-line. The key is to provide an opportunity for families to serve together. This means that one's age or spiritual maturity are not factors in his/her ability to serve. All are welcome - and it's fun!

Celebrate transformation. We tell lots and lots of stories at NCC. These are stories of how the Lord has transformed lives specifically through serving in local missions. What we've experienced is that transformation is a two-sided coin: the under-resourced and marginalized are transformed, and so are those doing the serving. Sharing stories through testimonies and through sermons has been an effective way of celebrating what the Lord is doing.

How is your local congregation involved in local missions and outreach? I encourage you to discover ways to serve the marginalized in Newnan and Coweta County. Your soul will never be the same again.

Newnan City Church / 17 First Avenue, Newnan, GA / Phone: 678.552.9817 / newnancity.org



Jimmy Ellison is the pastor at Newnan City Church, located in downtown Newnan, GA. He and his wife, Beth, founded the church in 2017. They have been married 32 years and have two adult sons, Will and Ben.

SUMMIT MINISTRIES NEWNAN



Standing in the Gap for Coweta County

HOW WONDERFUL AND PLEASANT IT IS WHEN BROTHERS LIVE TOGETHER IN HARMONY! (PSALM 133: 1).

BY CONNIE J. SINGLETON

In ancient times, a gap in the protective wall around a city meant danger for the citizens and a means by which the enemy could invade. If left unattended and unrepaired, the city most likely would fall. In Ezekiel 22:30, (NLT), the Bible records that the Lord said, "I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one." At this time in Israel's history, the country's political and religious leaders, prophets and even many citizens were godless and evil. (Sounds familiar, yes?) God was in search of someone to lead the people in prayer, repentance and righteousness.

Until 2015 when Summit Ministries was formed, there was no regular, ecumenical and comprehensive effort to "stand in the gap" for Coweta County. At that time, four churches united and pledged to seek unity among the churches and the people of God, and to express the love of Christ within our community.

"NOW THESE ARE THE GIFTS CHRIST GAVE TO THE CHURCH: THE APOSTLES, THE PROPHETS, THE EVANGELISTS, AND THE PASTORS AND TEACHERS. THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO EQUIP GOD'S PEOPLE TO DO HIS WORK AND BUILD UP THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST. THIS WILL CONTINUE UNTIL WE ALL COME TO SUCH UNITY IN OUR FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S SON THAT WE WILL BE MATURE IN THE LORD, MEASURING UP TO THE FULL AND COMPLETE STANDARD OF CHRIST." (EPHESIANS 4: 11-13).

In that year, China Grove Community Church, Greater Love Kingdom Ministries, Harvest Outreach Worship Center and Kingdom Connected Ministries made an ongoing commitment of financial resources and volunteer support for the purpose of giving all aspects of our county operations (churches, education, first responders, government) Biblical covering in regular prayer and encouragement, and for unifying God's people. Apostle Debra Harris of Kingdom Connected Ministries was the catalyst for the group's creation, and she continues to lead its vision-casting and implementation.

Ignite the Fire Movement is the prayer and community service arm that was birthed out of Summit Ministries. Apostle Harris says Ignite the Fire's annual calendar of events gives ample involvement opportunity to all interested churches, service organizations, leaders and citizens of Coweta County to cross boundaries of race, religion, and/or class to "show and share the love of Jesus and who we are in Him. At the end of the day, it's all about love. If we focus on that, we won't have the problems we see and experience today."

In 2022, Ignite the Fire's calendar includes one prayer walk, three prayer rallies, and two community outreaches - all are open to public participation.

The prayer walk is an opportunity to pray, worship and walk in unity for the community within the parameters of the City of Newnan. It starts at Newnan High School and ends at the court square, the latter which is symbolic to what God represents in Heaven - justice for the people.

Prayer rallies bring the community together in preventive prayer. Men and women of God who hold positions of authority, who have a “call” or hold an office within the community are invited to pray from the podium over specific areas: for the US president and our nation, governmental officers at national, state and local levels, law enforcement and first responders, churches, students/teachers/administrators in education, and for Jerusalem. These events are about two hours long and most often are held at Greenville Street Park in Newnan.

Community outreaches are practical applications of serving those in need in the community. Held at Lynch Park or Howard Warner Community Center twice a year and hosted by Summit Ministries, Bridging the Gap, Newnan City Police officers, various churches and individuals provide a hot meal, food boxes, and household goods/supplies, clothing and toiletries.

We Will Pray! Magazine is a free, quarterly publication of Summit Ministries that serves as an outreach extension to the community and others. It’s distributed county-wide as another way to share God’s love and His Word and to be a witness of unity within the Body of Christ. Featured authors are local pastors, leaders, and Christian citizens who have encouragement to share.

Community Prayer Rally
April 16
(West GA Technical College
Newnan Campus)

Community Outreach:
May 7
(Lynch Park)

Community Prayer Rally
June 4
(Greenville Street Park)

Community Prayer Rally
October 15
(Greenville Street Park)

Community Thanksgiving Outreach:
November 22
(Howard Warner Community Center)

Unbeknownst to many of Coweta’s citizens, in April of 2018 Ignite the Fire played a significant role in preventative prayer against the evil and unrest of the white separatist/nationalist group that targeted and came to Newnan. Apostle Harris remembers, “We organized prayer with several pastors on the night before, and we prayed specifically over law enforcement. Our focus was the love of Christ for all people. We just knew that once we prayed, it was a done deal.” And it was: there were no resulting injuries, deaths or property damage in Newnan. The gap in our community wall truly was covered by this ministry.

Bridging the Gap, Newnan Police Department and the Coweta County Sheriff's Office are exceedingly important partners affiliated with Summit Ministries. They can be counted on to regularly serve alongside Summit volunteers to develop rapport, provide practical support, and in the case of law enforcement, especially, to change the perception of the police within the community.

"We want the legacy of Summit Ministries to be that of laboring untiringly to be that unifying piece among God's people and to show His love."

To financially support Summit Ministries' activities:
\$TheSummitNewnan



Summit Ministries

Email: thesummitnewnan@gmail.com

FB: Ignite the Fire Movement



Connie J. Singleton serves as Managing Editor of We Will Pray! Magazine. She has worked in healthcare, publishing and education and has co-authored and published a book with an Atlanta-based women's ministry executive. She has written for Newnan-Coweta Magazine and The Newnan Times-Herald, and she especially enjoys sharing the stories of those who find joy in living or life purpose from their hardships.



NEWNAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Outreach & Service in Coweta County

By Sergeant Edward Lee

“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that Faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you say to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled, without giving them the things needed for the body, what is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (James 2:14-17 ESV).

When I think of outreach, I think of helping others in need. But outreach goes beyond that. It brings together individuals, groups, and organizations to unite and establish a bond of fellowship. We can speak of someone's needs, but what good is it to speak and not contribute? We must put in work to be faithful and receive all our blessings.

Growing up, I was always encouraged to help others or those afraid to help themselves. It was something that I always felt in my heart. When I think about great things happening to others and not me, I always refer back to my grandparents saying, “Things could be worse,” meaning some people have one hand while you have two. Some people have no legs while you have two. I am thankful for what I have and learned to utter thanks (pray) that God is the reason.

Joining the military the same year I graduated high school was a great experience. Having the courage to fight for others came from somewhere; I know God gave me the ability and mindset to do so.

After many years in the military, I want to continue to help others and be a role model so others can follow. I became a law enforcement officer in 2000 and knew that I could make a difference. Being thankful and having the opportunities and the ability to help others all come from my faith in God and the abilities He gave me.

We all must think of times when we needed someone to help us. We all have been down on our luck and just need a little help. That is why I enjoy helping others in the best way I can. I enjoy the collaborations with others because I meet people who are striving for the same goals – to have a better community.



When we are servants to each other, we are servants of our Lord and Savior. When we do as God commanded, we are blessed to receive all that we need daily.

Being a servant to people takes a loving and caring heart. Working and living in an environment surrounded by love and caring will make a community more robust and united. I strive to achieve those goals for my community.

I always want to set the standard for being a great role model for others to follow. Loving what I do makes it easier to achieve those goals.

“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9: 6-7 ESV).

We must teach our kids to love and follow God’s commandments. Let your kids see you give, let them see your happiness when you give, and explain to them why you give so they will have an understanding and feel good about giving.

I am thankful for the opportunities that I have to go out and serve others for a better quality of life. I feel thankful and blessed knowing that I have the opportunities to help my community in many ways possible.

Newnan Police Department’s programs contribute to our community and the future that we are striving to make our community a better place. As a law enforcement officer, I realized many years ago that I was more than a crime fighter.

I am an adviser, mentor, problem solver, teacher, and more. But also I am a man displaying his blessing and faith in God to be free to help others. I love to serve my community because I am blessed and able to do so.



When you are a good servant to the people, you are a servant to God's work. The Newnan Police Department has united with many outreach organizations within our community. We all can contribute something to help others. Not only does outreach help the community, but it also unites other organizations, churches, and companies. Outreach helps to create a relationship with the community to help build trust and restore faith in each other. We must teach our youth to love; we must teach our youth to give; we must teach our youth about our God. The joy of giving should express our love, humanity, and purpose. The best gift for ourselves is the joy of receiving God's blessing.

Newnan Police Department / 1 Joseph Hannah Blvd., Newnan, GA / 770.254.2355 / newnanpolice.com



Sergeant Edward Lee hails from Evergreen Alabama, where he attended Hillcrest High School, and joined the Alabama National Guard in 1992. Later he joined the regular Army from 1993-1998. He has served in law enforcement in the following Georgia communities for more than 21 years: Lagrange, Hogansville, and currently in Newnan. He started off in patrol within the Newnan Police Department, and for the last seven years has been the Community Resource Officer. He holds an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice from West Georgia Technical College, and a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration from Mercer University. He is a member of Bethlehem Healing Temple EPC in Evergreen, AL (Prophet James Kelly).



Agape Food Bank

FOCUSING ON THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

By Overseer LaVonia Lovett



When the Son of Man appears in his majestic glory, with all his angels by his side, he will take his seat on his throne of splendor, and all the nations will be gathered together before him. And like a shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats, he will separate all the people. The sheep he will put on his right side and the goats on his left. Then the King will turn to those on his right and say, "You have a special place in my Father's heart. Come and experience the full inheritance of the kingdom realm that has been destined for you from before the foundation of the world! For when you saw me hungry, you fed me. When you found me thirsty, you gave me drink. When I had no place to stay, you invited me in, and when I was poorly clothed, you covered me. When I was sick, you tenderly cared for me, and when I was in prison you visited me."

Then the godly will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty and give you food and something to drink? When did we see you with no place to stay and invite you in? When did we see you sick and tenderly care for you, or in prison and visit you?" And the King will answer them, "Don't you know? When you cared for one of the least of these, my little ones, my true brothers and sisters, you demonstrated love for me" (Matthew 25:31-40 The Passion Translation).

Recognizing that God has blessed us to be a blessing, Agape Food Bank opened its doors in the year 2014. We clearly understand and know that when we feed the hungry, we are feeding Jesus Christ. Agape Food Bank's mission and goal is to help fight hunger locally by supplying food assistance to those in need within the community.

Under the direction of Agape Christian Center Ministries, the Agape Food Bank's goal is to serve as many families possible on a monthly basis. We presently serve between 60 - 80 families per month, including children. Agape Food Bank is grateful to the disciples of our congregation who make this possible. We provide food for families in Coweta, Troup, Meriwether and Heard counties.

Types of groceries provided include pre-boxed, pre-bagged and client's choice. Those who come for pick-up at the Agape Food Bank facility are free to choose their own items. Pre-boxed and pre-packaged are used for those without transportation and who need delivery, and for the elderly. There are no qualifications for receiving food from Agape. We understand that life will sometimes get hard and unexpected situations will throw you a curveball, but Jesus tells us that if we love him, feed his sheep. No one has to feel like they are alone: we are here to help.

We partner with the Mid-West food bank in Peachtree City and some of the surrounding grocery stores in the Coweta County area.

With the rising prices in grocery shopping, it is understood that when people face hunger, they often struggle to meet other basic needs as well, such as housing, employment, and healthcare. That's why we are committed to providing food to those in need. When the EF-4 tornado hit Newnan in March 2021, Agape Food Bank set up at the Highland Apartments and handed out food bags and water. We also handed out food boxes and lunch bags to the elderly in the housing projects on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. At the time, they had been experiencing power outages for days. It was such a blessing not just for the residents but also for us. Those who were dislocated from their homes after the tornado also needed help, and it was our privilege to assist. During the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic that we still are experiencing, people need help more than ever.

Isaiah 58:10 (NLT) tells us to "feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon." The more we feed the hungry and help the poor and afflicted, the more we will look like Christ. All charity is grace. It does not matter about the "why" when people hit hard times; what matters is being a light to them, and that is grace.

Agape Food Bank understands that when we help to feed those who are in need, we become acutely aware of all for which we ourselves have to be thankful. When others become the focus of your life instead of yourself, your eyes focus on their problems and not your own. You are happy to help them. This is the attitude and heart of the Agape Food Bank disciples.

Agape Christian Center Ministries / 4046
highway 54 Suite 207 Newnan, GA 30277
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Ministries



Overseer LaVonia Wilkes Lovett is the founder and senior pastor of Agape Christian Center Ministries, Inc. in Newnan, GA. She is a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led woman of God who operates in excellence. Her life is dedicated to living by example and encouraging men, women, boys and girls how to live up to their full potential. Overseer Lovett has more than a decade of preaching, teaching and counseling which enables her to reach others with humor, warmth, transparency and strength. She has a unique teaching and preaching style that not only engages but also challenges the listener to make significant and lasting personal changes.



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NEWNAN'S A-O HOUSE

Privileged to Serve

By: Hollie Mosley

If you were to walk into a little brick building behind First Baptist Church of Newnan on a weekday morning, you would see widows living on a fixed income; single moms with their children, struggling to make ends meet; homeless men and sometimes families; those struggling with addiction; and others who experienced loss from the tornado or another tragedy. All of them come in need of a smile, encouragement, food, groceries, and prayer.

Some clients come weekly and we get to know them well. They become friends who we look forward to seeing. If we don't see them for a few weeks, we become concerned! We ask about their health and families, how the new job is going, or what is new with them. We help them find clothes for themselves and family members. We tease and joke, enjoying the interactions. We love to see someone excited to get a suit for a job interview or to wear to church. Children's faces light up when they find a special clothing item or shoes that fit. We especially feel good if we have a heavy coat that will keep a homeless man warm on cold nights. In the past, we have asked for special donations, such as blue jeans for children as the school year looms, coats before winter cold hits, and even backpacks and school supplies. All the clothing items are donated by various people in the community, including members of First Baptist. It's always a joy to see how the Lord provides for specific needs at just the right time.



The A-O House (short for Alpha-Omega, a Greek name for God, who is the Beginning and the End) was founded in the early 1980's by a group of women from First Baptist Church of Newnan who were concerned for the less fortunate in our community. They began with prayer, asking God for leadership to meet the needs they saw. In October 1991, the A-O ministry was launched, a consolidation of local churches and other organizations' food pantries and clothes closets. It is a non-profit community organization that helps feed and clothe individuals with limited income or disabilities. Its purpose is to show God's love to those in need. The goal is to help them through difficult times by providing food, clothing and prayer. Everyone who comes has the opportunity to hear about our true hope: Jesus Christ!

The A-O House is currently open Monday through Thursday from 9-11 am. Each visitor has the opportunity to speak one-on-one with a worker to determine how the ministry might best assist them. All workers are volunteers who have a heart to share God’s love with others. They understand that, except for God’s grace, they could be experiencing some of the same struggles they see. Here are thoughts from some of our workers regarding the A-O Ministry:

“My heart for the A-O House comes from seeking the heart of God. He loves all His children and wants us all to do the same. Regardless of age, gender, social status or race, I have been the one privileged to serve those who come in the A-O House.”

“I personally don’t feel led to foreign missions, but I love doing this for our community.”

“I’m glad to be part of this ministry that helps to fill needs with genuine concern and love.”

“It’s a blessing to serve here and to be a blessing to others.”

“We appreciate all the clothes that are donated in order to help those in need.”



“Christians sometimes neglect Jesus’ Word and His example of reaching out to the needy. We can do that here, helping fulfill the Great Commission as individuals and the church. We can tell them about Jesus and the plan of salvation. We also pray for their health, family, job situation and much more. There is great joy in doing this, and it’s changed my life forever.” (The Great Commission, found in Matthew 28:18-20, was Jesus Christ’s last recorded personal directive to His disciples, and it holds great significance to all His followers: Go and make disciples of all nations.)

The ministry orders food from Atlanta Community Food Bank. Our shelves are supplemented with generous donations from Midwest Food Bank in Peachtree City, Target, Publix and Kroger. In addition to canned and boxed food, the ministry provides fresh and frozen produce and meats, and bakery items. Individuals also give money and canned goods. During Vacation Bible School each summer, children bring groceries as they learn about God’s Word. A mission organization for young girls at First Baptist called “Girls in Action” also runs a canned goods drive during the year. Donations of food and clothing are always welcome!

Once a client’s food order is ready and they have done their “shopping” in the clothing room, they pull their vehicle up to the doors to receive their free bags of food.

A worker will always offer an opportunity for prayer. In this private setting, we’ve found our clients will open up and share their needs. It is a true privilege to pray for each person. Tears flow and hugs are shared. Sometimes, clients will pray for the workers! That is a beautiful picture of how God graciously blesses us.

The mandate for our ministry is simple and clear: to spread the gospel by feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger and clothing the sick. If we do not, we have neglected the LORD HIMSELF and His Word (Matthew 25:34-45).

A-O House / 68 Madison Street, Newnan, GA / Phone: 770.683.6477 / fbcnewnan.org/missions/ao-mission-center/



Hollie Mosley is a volunteer at the A-O House in Newnan. She loves to pray and leads the prayer ministry at First Baptist Church. Her greatest joy is enjoying time with her husband and daughter. She loves to walk, sing, and work in her yard.

BACKPACK BUDDIES

Reducing Weekend Food Insecurity for Coweta's Children



By Lori Burnett



Backpack Buddies is a 501c3 non-profit organization created in Coweta County by President and Founder, April Anderson, to supply economically-disadvantaged children in the school system with food for the weekend. April attended a conference where she first learned about the program and returned determined to find out if there was any such need in Coweta County. Upon contacting the school board, she quickly realized that the need was great and began the Backpack Buddies journey by serving Jefferson Parkway Elementary School in 2011. As funding and support became available, more elementary schools were added to the program. In August 2016, the Backpack Buddies staff began dreaming about adding middle and high school students to the program.

By the end of the 2017-2018 school year, Backpack Buddies served 600 students in all but one middle and one high school in the county. To date, Backpack Buddies is partnering with all Coweta County elementary, middle and high schools, serving more than 1,000 students each week.

As is true for our entire country, the last two years have proven to be some of the most trying times for our community's students. Prior to the pandemic, Coweta County had approximately 10,000 students who qualified for the free/reduced lunch program. Currently, all students in the state of Georgia are receiving free meals at school, but the need is even greater today than just a few years ago.

The pandemic played a major role in negatively impacting families financially, and from mid-March, 2020 through August, 2020, Backpack Buddies served over 23,000 bags of food with the Coweta County School System through our partnership with the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

Backpack Buddies began the 2020-2021 school year in August with 850 students on our list to serve, when in previous years, there would be no more than 150 students in need at the beginning of the school year. That number continued to grow throughout the fall and winter months, and then our county was hit with the tornado in March, 2021. The tornado displaced so many of our Backpack Buddies and their families as well as so many other families that had not been part of the Backpack Buddies program. As a result, the Backpack Buddies distribution center became one of many hubs for donations of all kinds. The outpouring from our community was simply amazing and allowed our organization to strengthen an already incredible partnership we have with another non-profit serving our local schools called ELEVATE Coweta Students. Backpack Buddies began serving alongside ELEVATE to ensure that families impacted by the storm received food and basic essentials as they began sorting through the rubble.

This partnership with ELEVATE has helped Backpack Buddies identify and serve more students through this partnership.

Most residents are unaware that hunger is an increasing epidemic in our county. We believe the Backpack Buddies program is essential to help relieve hunger, which in turn will improve grades, health, school attendance and self-esteem in the children served. However, as the program coordinator for Backpack Buddies, I often wonder if what we send home with our students is enough. Is it enough food to get them through the weekend? Is it enough to help sustain them until they are able to get that next meal at school? There is no real, tangible way to answer that question. So, I pray. I pray that the food that goes into the bags each week will be enough—that Jesus will multiply it just like He did in Mark 6 with the loaves of bread and fish that He and the disciples served to the 5,000. Mark 6:42 (ASV) says, “And they ate and were filled.” I pray that our students will take their weekend bag and that God will multiply it so that they can “eat and be filled.” But more than the physical need of hunger being met, I pray that God will use the Backpack Buddies program in such a way that our students will encounter Him. Maybe it will be through the counselor at school who realizes that the student is hungry.



Maybe it will be because a student realizes there are volunteers who care about them enough to show up every week to pack a bag of food so they can eat.

Maybe it will be because of the generosity of someone who cannot physically serve at Backpack Buddies, but instead can give a box of cereal bars or a can of soup. Maybe it will be through the lives of faithful people praying for students in Coweta County to know Jesus through a personal relationship. Regardless of what means God uses to draw a student to Him, I pray that Backpack Buddies might get to play a small part.

As an organization, our commitment is to continue to work with the faculty and staff in each individual school to identify and serve more students in need. Without the continued support of donors and volunteers, Backpack Buddies would be unable to serve them. Please visit our website and contact us to find out how you can get involved. Backpack Buddies is grateful for the opportunity to serve students in Coweta County and we would love to have you join us because "hunger doesn't take the weekend off."

Backpack Buddies of Georgia / 96 Werz Ind. Blvd., Newnan, GA / 678.770.8618 / backpackbuddiesga.org



Lori Burnett and her husband, Todd, have served in ministry together for the past 25 years and have raised their daughters, Annabeth and Addison, and their son, Braden, to serve with a heart for ministry as well. Lori attended Liberty University where she earned a degree in Psychology.

Because of her love to help others, Lori began volunteering with Backpack Buddies while serving on staff at a local church. In August 2017, she transitioned into the role of Program Coordinator for Backpack Buddies. Lori has a heart to serve the children of Coweta County by meeting the physical need of hunger in hopes that those children will be more successful in school, which ultimately will help them be more successful in life.



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Bridging the Gap Community Outreach
HELPING THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST RESTORE THEIR LIVES

By Marty Hohmann



**"They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat."-Jesus
Matthew 14:15 (New American Standard Translation)**

We all know the rest of the story, don't we? Jesus took five loaves and two fish, blessed them, and fed 5,000, in addition to the women and children, who had gathered to hear Him speak. When they were done distributing the food, twelve baskets were filled with the leftovers.

Nearly 2,000 years later, Bridging the Gap Community Outreach is still fulfilling the words of Jesus with their stated mission to Feed, Serve, and Restore. Executive Director Kelli Yeager-Nelson says that the monumental (some would say miraculous) feats performed by Bridging the Gap are part of a collective effort.

"We couldn't do it if we didn't have the community partners. My philosophy is that we're all in this together," she says.

"The only thing that can line up all those partners is God. I tell people He works here!"

The 2021 impact for the community is evidence of that. From January through December of last year, more than 58,000 meals were delivered to children who depend on free school lunches. Four hundred and forty tons of food was distributed throughout the community, up from 231 tons in 2020. New households served are up 70 percent, with 57 percent of those having a female head of household with dependents. And total food distribution is up 168 percent from last year.

Yeager-Nelson, along with countless community partners, is changing Coweta County by meeting needs and restoring hope.

“We are in the restoration of dignity business,” she says. “We are supposed to give without any strings attached. I don’t care who gets the credit as long as we feed the people.”

Bridging the Gap was founded in 2009 “to meet people where they are.” When Yeager-Nelson came on board in 2019 after having served as a CEO of the United Way in a midwestern community, they honed the mission to “Feed, Serve, Restore.”

She couldn’t have imagined what 2020 and 2021 would hold, but she knew from where her help would ultimately come. With the pandemic, followed by an EF4 tornado in Newnan in March of 2021, the community needs exploded. But so did the help!

With a faithful, diligent staff of five, Bridging the Gap is moving mountains, but it takes a lot more than five servants to move those kinds of mountains. They include a volunteer coordinator, a warehouse manager, and director of operations. “We can’t do a single thing with only the five people who work here,” she says. That’s where the countless partners, from local grocery stores, to the Atlanta Community Food Bank, to churches, civic groups, the police and sheriff’s departments, Hello Fresh, Amazon, and individuals who want to make a difference in their community come in.

Around 45 volunteers come in on a regular basis to work with moving and delivering food, managing the warehouse and sorting donations. Last year, Hands on Atlanta sent 4,000 volunteers their way. “There are a lot of moving parts here,” she says. And indeed, there are.

Covid-19 caught Bridging the Gap, and everyone else, off guard. The truck would go out to pick up food from grocery stores and would return half empty, says Yeager-Nelson. So, they immediately went into crisis mode. Two local churches, Foundation Church and Community Christian Church, began a telethon-like effort to quickly raise money to go on a massive shopping spree, and each raised \$20,000. Yeager-Nelson says they immediately went to BJs and restocked their freezers and shelves.



And just as Joseph in the Bible stored up food for Egypt during the years of plenty so that the people would not go hungry during the lean, Yeager-Nelson says she took the lessons of Covid to heart and began to create a stockpile of shelf-stable goods. It was that stockpile that helped serve the community following the devastation of the March tornado that swept through downtown Newnan. Bridging the Gap immediately sprang into action and distributed food, toiletries, and other needs with the help of thousands of volunteers who walked the streets or covered ground on four-wheelers.

Whether it is wide-scale crisis management or an individual crisis of hunger and other needs, Bridging the Gap, through assistance from the community, is there to meet those needs. The organization is privately funded, though they intend to begin applying for grants to provide additional assistance. "The mainstay is community giving," says Yeager-Nelson. "Also, private citizens who have foundations here. They are the heroes."

Bridging the Gap delivers food to homes and works with Meals on Wheels to feed the elderly population. They work with the local school system to operate the summer meals program. And they offer food distribution at their facility at 19 First Avenue, Newnan on Saturdays and Wednesdays

Additionally, Kingdom Connected Ministries International (located at 121 Hillwood Circle in Newnan, just off the bypass) was the first church to partner with them to distribute food in another part of the county every Friday afternoon. Once a month, Change Church in Grantville will be distributing food boxes. These distribution partners are vital in reaching out to what the USDA has classified as 13 food deserts in Coweta County, places where food is not readily accessible. And the numbers are growing as a result of Covid. According to Feeding America, our county had identified 129 children who were food insecure prior to Covid. That number has increased by 23 percent since the pandemic.



The amount of food processed and distributed by Bridging the Gap is staggering. "On average, we do a little more than a ton of food every day," says Yeager-Nelson. That is high quality, nutritious food provided by 12 current partners. "The ultimate goal is to end hunger in the county." And whatever food has passed its freshness window isn't wasted. It is set aside for farm animals.

Approximately 300 to 500 boxes of food including meats, fresh produce, dairy products, canned goods, breads and desserts, are distributed weekly with an average weight of 65 lbs. per box. Between 30 to 50 emergency bags are distributed weekly, and bags are also distributed to local law enforcement who provide essentials to the 449 homeless who are in Bridging the Gap's database.

Restore is a stated part of their mission, and Yeager-Nelson says that once they make sure people are fed, they can move to the next step of serving them. Bridging the Gap offers new or very gently used clothing for men, women, and children, housewares, home furnishings, showers and a place to wash clothes.

"Restoration means different things to different people," she says. Sometimes the road to restoration involves connecting people with other resources in the community.

Sometimes it involves having someone to pray with. BTG has a pastoral care team they can call on at any time.

"We aren't a church. But we can lay you at the feet of someone who is," says Yeager-Nelson. And in return, those at Bridging the Gap reap the blessings of giving freely. "We kind of quietly go about our business. It's very humbling to see people's lives changed."



Countless lives have been changed and it seems everyone has a Bridging the Gap story. Like the woman Yeager-Nelson ran into at one of the big box hardware stores who recognized her from when she received assistance three years ago. Now the owner of a flooring company, she paid it forward by donating to the Christmas in Coweta program, which last year gave 2003 children a wonderful holiday they could only dream of.

The most pressing needs for Bridging the Gap to continue to do what they do so well is to obtain another delivery truck. They have one truck that can hold six pallets, but there's so much more food that can be delivered with the right transportation. In addition, the warehouse that stores food, toiletries, durable medical supplies, diapers, and clothing, sustained roof damage during the tornado and is awaiting a new roof.

None of those issues, however, will slow them down. Needs will be met. Anyone requiring assistance or desiring to volunteer should contact Bridging the Gap Community Outreach for more information.

Bridging the Gap Community Outreach / 19 First Avenue, Newnan, GA

Phone: 770.678.9110 (open Tuesday through Saturday)

Text line: 470.977.2870 (24/7 operation)

Facebook: BTG Community

Food distribution & deliveries: from outreach facility on Saturdays at 8 am and Wednesdays at 4:30 pm

Showers & laundry facilities available: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 am - 1:30 pm

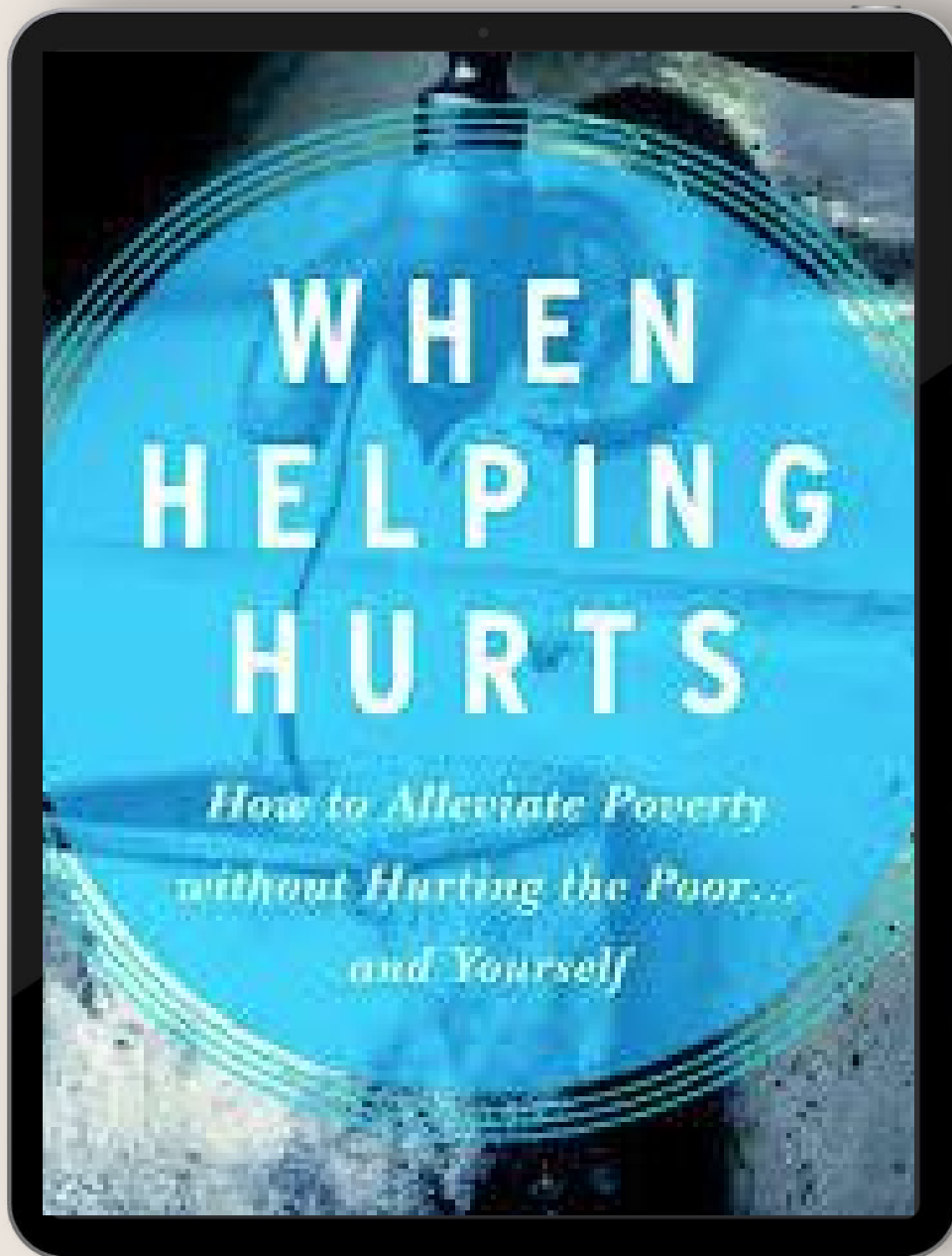


Marty Hohmann is a lifelong journalist and former newspaper owner who loves to write feature stories about those who are walking in God's calling on their lives.

It is her hope that the articles she produces will have an impact on the reader long after the type has faded from the paper.

WHEN HELPING HURTS

BOOK REVIEW BY MATT MORRIS



WHEN HELPING HURTS

HOW TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY WITHOUT HURTING THE
POOR...AND YOURSELF

By Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

When Helping Hurts, written by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, was first published in 2009 and has been translated into five languages. With a new revised edition, it now has sold over 300,000 copies. This important book has become a staple for those serving in mission work.

This book evaluates and investigates common practices by the evangelical church when it comes to mission work and its impact on the community they serve. By using data and personal experiences, the authors take you on a journey of the positive and negative impacts decisions have on communities when churches participate in mission work. Throughout this journey, the authors reveal that inexperience, misinformation, and misperceptions can actually hurt the communities that we are trying to serve.

The church's position should always be to serve the poor and overlooked in our communities. Through serving our communities, we are able to share the gospel not just in word, but also in deed. The authors never say that we should not participate in mission work, but that we should participate in a healthy and informed way. When we engage in mission work from a position of ignorance, we actually can do more harm than good.

Ignorance can show itself in multiple ways and it can come in the form of inexperience. When we do not engage in mission work consistently, we can become blind to the real needs of those we seek to serve. By not getting our hands dirty and actively engaging with the people of these communities, we lack a certain perspective that only comes from being with those who we seek to serve.

One of the big takeaways from this book is that the definition of poverty changes, based on who defines it. The authors explore how wealthy churches often view poverty by the lack of material possessions, while the poor view poverty from their social positions and the psychological effects.

By only seeing the poor for what they lack physically, we often miss the opportunity to see the person and not the problem. Most churches in North America focus mainly on what they can provide to those who are less fortunate and by placing the focus on the physical needs, they reinforce the shame and stigmas that the poor already live with every day. This focus sees only part of the individual and makes it almost impossible to participate in the restoration of the whole person.

I highly recommend that any North American church that wants to participate in local or overseas missions read this book. Even if we do not have all the answers, it is important that we understand that living life with those we wish to serve is more impactful than what we can do for them. Then we are building a relationship with the person rather than making them a project or even a transaction. In failing to understand before we act, we potentially hurt not only those we seek to serve, but ourselves as well.



Matt Morris is the worship pastor of Legacy Christian Church in Senoia, GA. He is also a conference ministerial candidate with the Free Methodist Church. Matt and his wife, Ashley, are passionate about worship, mission work, and growing the local church. Matt and his wife have two kids, Ellery and Deacon, and they live in Senoia, GA.

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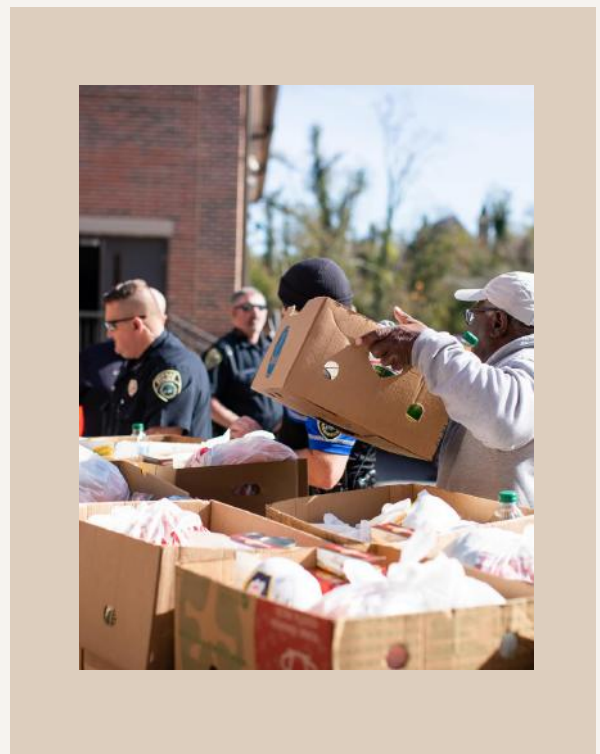


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