

# THE BEACON BEAM

April 2019



## LIGHT FOR THE PILGRIM WAY

### Why Fear Death?

*by Michael Rogers*

Since we had been to Niagara Falls many times before, my wife and I guided friends on their first visit. On a warm July morning, we walked from our car through heavy ground fog with visibility of about fifty feet. We stood at the railing above the Horseshoe Falls hearing thundering water; just fifty yards from us, the falls were invisible. We assured our friends that nature's great scenic wonder did exist. They believed us, based on the sound of the rushing water alone.

In ten minutes, the morning fog burned away, and before us the awesome panorama of Niagara Falls was fully visible. I take that experience as a paradigm for the present-day comfort of Christian hope. We have plain indicators of eternal life today, but only beyond our death will heaven's splendor and the face of Christ be fully revealed.

The Bible's answer to the fear of death unfolds in stages. The Old Testament knows it in *anticipation*. Psalm 23 assures us that God will be "with us" in death's valley. Psalm 16 declares, "You will not abandon my soul to Sheol ... at your right hand are pleasures evermore." The lifeline for pre-Christian saints was the bold belief that death would be a passageway into God's secure presence. No clear road map told how this would happen—somehow God would do it.

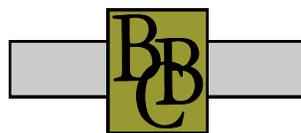
For centuries, the prophets looked forward to the keystone event of Jesus' bodily resurrection. Only by this did we gain the historic *foundation* for the answer to the fear of death: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). Consequent to His own rising from the dead, Jesus could promise, "I go to prepare a place for you ... and I will come again and receive you to myself" (14:2-3). He guaranteed to those who trust exclusively in Him, "Because I live, you also will live" (14:19).

That should seal the matter. Why would any Christian not have airtight eternal hope, banishing all tremors of mind regarding physical death? Since Christ has risen for us, He has "delivered all those who through fear of death were subject to life-

*(Continued on page 2)*

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Gregory N. Barkman, *Senior Pastor*  
Michael R. Karns, *Minister of Christian Education*  
Robert F. LaTour, *Minister of Families*  
Gregory L. Phillips, *Minister of Music*

#### *Sunday*

Morning Worship...9:30 AM  
Sunday School.....11:10 AM  
Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

#### *Wednesday*

Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM  
IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM  
Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

*(Continued from page 1)*

long slavery” (Heb. 2:15). Do any Christians have a problem with that? Yes, in fact, many do. A ninety-eight-year-old woman, eyes brimming with tears, once confessed to me, “Pastor, I’m afraid to die.” She was not connecting the Easter doctrine of resurrection she had professed for a lifetime to a possession of comfort by that hope. We may have our biblical foundation correct without making lively and habitual applications of it to the soul.

Sustaining hope in the face of death matures best as we consciously recognize that Christ Himself is on heaven’s throne. Many Christians have a “me-centered” view of eternity. They ask, What will the *place* be like? What will I do all the time? Eternity exerts its magnetic pull on us when we study Christ Jesus Himself as our all-consuming final destination. Paul wrote, “For to me, to live is *Christ*, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21, emphasis added). If we say Christ is presently our “all in all” during this imperfect lifetime, think what it will mean to be possessed by Him completely:

*Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).*

The heavy fog of our sin will be gone, and we shall behold His face.

Every engaged woman gives supreme attention to obtaining her bridal gown, the dress she will wear on one of the biggest days of her life. As a pastor, I watch the bride emerge on her father’s arm. Halfway down the aisle, she forgets her dress, as her eyes lock on to her groom and her smile beams at him alone. Christians await just such a moment. A hymn based on Samuel Rutherford’s writing says, “The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom’s face; I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of grace.”

In John 17:24, Jesus prayed, “Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me, will be *with me* where I am, to see my glory” (emphasis added). We can gradually be weaned away from our natural fear of death as we dwell much upon the preeminent Lord who will greet us there. Comparing Christ to every earthly joy left behind, Jonathan Edwards wrote:

*Beside [Jesus], father and mother, husbands, wives, or children are but shadows, while the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean.*

Is your view of heaven Christ-centered? Heaven exists for us to know Jesus Christ in His exalted glory. Apart from Him, it really has no meaning at all.

Dr. Michael A. Rogers is senior pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Lancaster, Pa.

If we’re going to endure through the chaos of life as Christians, what has to be in view is how glorious Jesus is. No encouragement to keep the faith is going to have any power unless we are gripped by the incomparable glory of Jesus the Christ. Following Jesus is costly. Unless our hearts are beating to the rhythm of grandeur of Jesus, we will never think that being a Christian is worth it.

When the One who is the radiance of the glory of God came, He came as the unblemished Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He came as the sacrificial offering and as the offerer. He is the Great High Priest who offered Himself as the only One who could crush sin. As He was beaten and whipped—as the blood was flowing from His head, His hands, His feet—purification was being made for the sins of everyone who puts their trust in Him. It is as the hymn writer says:

*See from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down:  
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

When Jesus made purification for sins, He sat down. The work was finished, and there no longer remains any need for any other sacrifice for sin.

Dr. Irwyn Ince is assistant pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., and director of the Grace DC Institute for Cross-Cultural Mission.

# YOUTH AND OLD AGE

by Greg Barkman

David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel said, “I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread” (Psalm 37:25). Here is wisdom for everyone, whatever your stage in life.

## SOMETHING COMMON TO ALL

“I have been young.” Youth is an experience shared by all. To be born into this world guarantees that we will experience youth to some degree. Even those who die in infancy experience a short period of youth, although we usually reserve the word to describe those who are older than infants or toddlers. Everyone who lives long enough to learn to speak can say with David, “I have been young.”

Young people should remember this simple thought: Your parents, teachers, and all the adults in your life have experienced youth, but you have not yet experienced adulthood. They understand you better than you understand them. You are the one who has a small supply of life’s experiences, not they. Satan tempts you to believe that adults cannot understand you because you are young, and they are not, but this is a deception. The experiences and temptations of youth are not significantly different from one generation to another. Our sinful hearts complain, “Nobody understands me,” but God’s Word contradicts that as a misconception. Your parents understand you better than you realize, because they, like all people can say with David, “I once was young.” They share the common experience of youth with you.

## SOMETHING INEVITABLE TO MOST

“And now am old.” When he wrote this, David had moved beyond youth to reach the stage of life termed “old age,” a stage that most people will eventually experience. There are two alternatives. Either we die young, or we grow old. Some die before they reach “three score and ten,” which is why we should be prepared to die at any time. Not everyone will arrive safely to the senior stage of life. Death is the only certainty in life, and those who are wise prepare to die before they prepare to live. But whereas there is no guarantee you will reach old age, most who live in the Western World escape the diseases that shorten longevity. Since the only alternative to old age is death, and since most who read this article will eventually arrive at old age, we should all plan for that stage of life. It’s only a matter of time, and most of us will be there.

Planning for old age usually means financial planning for retirement, but not many plan their finances with old age in mind. The financial pressures of life seem more real than the probability of old age, and most North Americans manage to save only about \$30,000 towards retirement, which is not much to supplement government old age provisions. For some, it is truly impossible to save more. For most, the temptation to live above our means outweighs the wisdom of planning for the future. Christians, who have God’s Word to guide us, and God’s Spirit to empower us, should be able to exercise the self-control necessary to live below our means (Eph. 4:28). We should, but too often we do not.

But there are other important considerations. We need to develop strong social relationships when

younger, so that they are well established when we are old. There are few things sadder than a lonely old person, even one who is financially secure. But when youth is lived primarily for self, loneliness in old age is usually the result. Today, many young adults scorn marriage, an almost certain recipe for eventual loneliness. Many couples refuse to have children, which also contributes to end of life isolation. Even when the usual social institutions of marriage and children are providentially denied, meaningful relationships can be developed, but only if you are willing to invest in them while young. The best place for Christians to begin is within the local church. A good church relationship pays rich dividends in many ways, and there are few substitutes for a caring church family when you are old. It is probably shortsighted to move constantly from place to place, searching for that elusive perfect church. Sound doctrine is essential, and where apostasy intrudes, change is the only honorable recourse, but those who church hop for social reasons seldom build lasting relationships. Ironic, isn’t it. The problem is often an unwillingness to invest in the lives of others. The consumer mentality of church life, always shopping for the best deal, can leave one impoverished at that stage of life where strong relationships are most needed.

However, the most important preparation is spiritual. Old age should be a time of spiritual maturity. When this is so, it is a blessed stage of life, with more cause for joyful satisfaction than the early years of beauty and physical vitality. Youth without wisdom leads to many bad

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decisions with life-long consequences. Old age, coupled with spiritual maturity provides abiding satisfaction. But wisdom is not automatic. It requires intentional preparation. Elihu was right when he said, "Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand justice" (Job 32:9). It is sad to see young people without wisdom. It is even sadder to see foolish old people. With youth, there is always the realistic hope of change. With the aged, there seldom is. How tragic for people to live a

lifetime and know virtually nothing about life. To enjoy wisdom, one must acquire it throughout life by making God and His Word first priority. When this is true, you will be prepared for both long life and death, whichever comes first.

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

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### DEPRAVED...BUT NOT TOTALLY?

My family and I were in church and had just heard a powerful sermon from the Ten Commandments. I turned to my wife and said, "I am so glad our children were here to hear that sermon!"

She didn't even have to say anything to me. She simply gave me that look. You know, the one that says, "I can't believe you are actually saying what you are saying."

I felt embarrassed and grieved. It had happened so subtly and quickly. I had placed myself outside the circle of the sermon's diagnosis. I had accepted that whatever the Word of God and the preacher were describing did not include me. And I was glad that the people in my family who "really needed" the diagnosis had been in attendance.

Why do we find comfort in pointing to people who appear to be worse sinners than we are? There's only one conclusion that fits. **We stubbornly hold onto the possibility that we're more righteous than the Bible describes us to be.**

And how does the Bible describe us? It's devastating; a hard pill to swallow: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5).

I wish this verse was describing a historic super class of sinners. But sadly, it's a mirror into which every human being is meant to look and see themselves. It's capturing in a few powerful words what theologians call "total depravity."

Total depravity doesn't mean that as sinners we are as bad as we could possibly be. What it actually means is that sin reaches to every aspect of our personhood. Its damage of us is total.

Physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, motivationally, socially, we have been damaged by sin. It's ravages are inescapable and comprehensive. No one has dodged its scourge, and no one has been partially affected. We are all sinners, all totally depraved.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I want to believe that I'm deprived, but not deprived. Or that I may be deprived ... but not totally.

That's why I make up self-atoning revisions of my history. That's why I erect self-justifying arguments for what I have said or done. That's why I turn the tables when someone points out a wrong, making sure they know I'm not the only sinner in the room.

Remind yourself of the Gospel: **There's no need to line up all the good things we've done as a counter-balance for all our wrongs.**

"Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

Each one of us needs grace that not only forgives our sin, but also frees us from the self-atoning prison of our own righteousness. We're not only held captive by our sin, but also by the delusion of our righteousness.

We must all humbly confess: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). . . . "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!" (Psalm 51:2)

And then rest in his righteousness alone.

Paul David Tripp, *Paul Tripp Ministries, Inc.*, Used by Permission

# On the Feminine Side

by Marti Barkman

If you had seen the two friends as they walked you'd have known by their manner the urgency in their conversation. Their pace would quicken, then slow, and often stop altogether as they recounted and tried to make sense of the happenings of the past few days. They had witnessed events unlike any seen before and as the hours and the miles passed and their destination grew closer, they were nowhere near understanding what had transpired.

Only days before, Jesus had shared the Passover meal with 'The Twelve', the apostles who had been with him for the past three years, saying things to them they failed to understand, and ending the meal with a stunning revelation: One of them, one of those men in that very room, would betray him! The murderous plot was already in place. They could hardly believe what he was saying, and in their puzzlement over who the betrayer could be, their talk turned from who could be the worst to who might be the greatest among them. How did they make that strange transition? Perhaps they hadn't really believed the words predicting Jesus' death. But the truth of his words was verified when, not many hours after the meal, Jesus was arrested. Betrayed! The hasty trial ended in a guilty verdict, and swiftly, this One in whom so many had placed their hopes was hung on a cross 'til dead. What a tragedy this seemed to those who loved him. How keen the sorrow, as in their grief they buried his body. He was gone and what were they to do? Who could ever replace him? And now, those women and their talk of an empty tomb? Were they to be believed?

The seven mile walk from Jerusalem, where all this had transpired, to their town of Emmaus, wasn't long enough for Cleopas and his companion to talk over all that had happened. So absorbed were they in their discussion they hardly noticed that another traveler, a stranger, had caught up with them,

joining them as they went. As they walked and talked, it seemed this man knew nothing of the events they discussed. "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" asked the stranger. And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Luke 24). They went on to describe how the religious leaders, who hated him, had turned him over to the authorities, demanding his crucifixion. And their concluding, sorrowful statement: "But we had hoped he would be the one to redeem Israel."

**"But we had hoped..."** Hope. It inspires us, keeps us going. And lets us down. When Cleopas and his friend confessed their hope now lost, how did Jesus respond? Maybe we could change slightly the popular WWJD of some years ago, and ask what *did* Jesus do when he encountered those two puzzled, disappointed believers that day. What did he tell these two men who spoke longingly of what might have been? **He told them the truth!** The truth about himself.

Luke tells us that as the three men walked together, Jesus, 'beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.' "To explain to these followers who he was and why he had to die, Jesus did not start with his birth or his sermon on the mountain or his wrangling with the Pharisees, or the plot against him facilitated by Judas. Jesus opened up Genesis and Exodus and Leviticus, and Psalm and Hosea, and Isaiah and all the way to Malachi, showing them, this is who I am, this is why I came, this is the curse I came to bear. This is the mercy I came to show, I am the blessing God promised. I am the sacrifice God provided."<sup>1</sup>

What was the reaction of the two men hearing Jesus' words? "Tell us more!" Always willing to speak to the eager listener, Jesus stayed with them until they recognized who he

was. Now they had informed hope. They could hope, not for a Messiah who would be a strong political leader and take them from bondage to Rome, but one who could grant them forgiveness for sin, and eternity with him! They didn't have to hope he *might* be the Redeemer...they had the firm assurance that he IS the Redeemer!

When we face disappointment and shattered dreams, where should we go? Always to the truth. And it need not be some brand new truth, but likely something we already know. What Jesus told those two travelers were facts they may have known most of their lives, but until that day they had missed the real message of the Redeemer to come. And the tragic events that had dashed their hopes? These were all necessary for God to carry out his plan of redemption. And ours? In every way a necessary part of God's plan.

What does Jesus have to do with my hopes and dreams, you might be thinking. To Cleopas and his companion, Jesus seemed to know nothing about the most significant event in their lifetime. But in actuality he was the main character in this drama which his Father had authored. It was the two men who were uninformed. Their hopes for what Jesus would do for them had to be destroyed for them to understand who he really was. May God be gracious to do the same for us when we grieve for what might have been, leaving us, as he did those two men on a dusty road, with hope informed by truth.

<sup>1</sup> *The Promised One*, by Nancy Guthrie



Be diligent to present yourself **approved to God**,  
a worker who does not need to be **ashamed**,  
rightly dividing the word of truth.”

II Timothy 2:15

by Bob LaTour

Most individuals desire privileges, advancements and opportunities that come only through the approval of the authority figures in their lives. They want people to think of them as mature, professional individuals who have shown themselves trustworthy, responsible and capable of making wise decisions. In order to accomplish this, they must have a good idea of what those over them highly value. Failure to know the expectations of authority figures will limit an individual's opportunities to gain the greater privileges that may come with gaining their approval.

Speaking of gaining approval, wouldn't you agree that the wisest decision that any person can make is the decision to seek God's approval? Our personal goal should be to "present" ourselves for God's inspection in order to gain His "well done" by honoring His expectations. In order to do this, we must learn what He values through the study and application of His Word.

Leading up to our text, Paul admonished Timothy as a young pastor to fulfill his role with the desire to gain God's approval. He was to educate faithful men who could teach others, to endure the hardships of ministry, to engage himself in the battle for truth, and to endeavor to carry out his ministry according to "the rules."

The principles that Paul shares are applicable to every Christian. They can also act as a guide in the selection of a local church where the Word of God is carefully, reverently and faithfully expounded.

"Diligent" means "to make effort, to be earnest, to labor." Chris-

tians in general, and pastors in particular, must be serious-minded when it comes to handling God's Word. We dare not be careless or complacent for there is a stricter judgment forthcoming for any who teach the Word of God.<sup>1</sup>

The word approved refers to one who has been tested and found acceptable. It was used for testing and approving metals. We are to guard and to guide our hearts by the Word of God as the standard by which we will be graded for His approval or disapproval!

The Greek word for "worker" describes "a toiler" or a "laborer." What we spend our time working on reflects who we are trying to impress and what we really value. How sad that personal study of the Word of The Most High God often gets the "left-over" time of our busy day!

Ashamed gives the sense of not measuring up to a standard or an expectation. We must always be sobered by the truth that our efforts will be judged by the all-knowing Author of the book that we are studying, obeying and sharing. Writing to the Philippians from prison, Paul revealed his passion for God's approval of his ministry. "According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."<sup>2</sup>

"Rightly dividing" means to "make a straight and accurate cut" like a master craftsman handling highly-valued material. Timothy was to learn the Word carefully and then

"walk straight forward according to this line" so that his efforts would not result in failure. This takes the determination, consistency and accuracy associated with a desire for excellence.

Paul sandwiched his instruction on teaching God's Word between two warnings dealing with "striving about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers" and "profane and idle babblings that will increase to more ungodliness and that spread like a cancer."<sup>3</sup> God forbid that we would ever stray from the truth. May we always handle it accurately and reverently for God's glory and with a passion for His approval.

1 James 3:1 2 Phil. 1:20-21  
3 II Tim. 2:14, 16-17

*Psalm 19:7-10 "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes...; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."*

# Praise, My Soul, The King of Heaven

1. Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,  
To His feet your tribute bring;  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
Who, like me, His praise should sing?  
Alleluia, Alleluia!  
Praise the Everlasting King!

2. Praise Him for His grace and favor  
To our fathers in distress;  
Praise Him, still the same forever,  
Slow to chide, and swift to bless.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!  
Glorious in His faithfulness!

3. Father-like He tends and spares us;

Well our feeble frame He knows,  
In His hands He gently bears us,  
Rescues us from all our foes.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!  
Widely yet His mercy flows!

4. Angels, help us to adore Him,  
Ye behold Him face to face;  
Saints triumphant bow before Him,  
Gathered in from every race.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!  
Praise with us the God of grace!

Henry F. Lyte, 1793-1847,  
*Hymns of Grace and Glory*  
From Psalm 103

*Please join us for our Spring Bible Conference—  
April 7-10 (Sunday through Wednesday)  
with Mark Webb from Olive Branch, Mississippi.  
“The Great Servant Song” from Isaiah 52:13-54:12*

## THE BEACON BROADCAST

### *Monday thru Friday*

WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN)	9:30 a.m.
WKBA 1550 AM (Roanoke, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WKPA 1390 AM (Lynchburg, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	2:00 p.m.
WDZY 1290 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WSKY 1230 AM (Asheville, NC)	7:15 a.m.
WYYC 1250 AM (York, PA)	5:00 a.m.
WYYC 98.1 FM (York, PA)	5:00 a.m.

### *Sunday*

WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WLES 590 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:30 a.m.
Harbour Light of the Windwards 1400 AM/94.5 FM (Caribbean)	9:30 p.m.

### *Monday thru Sunday*

WXTH-LP 101.7 FM (Richwood, WV)	10:05 a.m.
	10:05 p.m.

# BEACON HIGHLIGHTS FOR APRIL

## CALENDAR

**02** Coffee n' Courage  
**03** Fellowship Meal  
 Teen/Parent Focus  
 IMPACT Clubs  
**07-10** Spring Bible Conference  
 ESL  
**08** Tri-State Particular Baptist  
 Fellowship  
**13** Teen Homeplace Ministry  
**14** Lord's Table  
 ESL  
**16** Elders/Deacons Meeting  
**17** IMPACT Clubs  
**18** Silver Saints  
**21** Easter  
 ESL  
**24** IMPACT Clubs  
**25** Men Sharpening Men  
**28** Missionary Josh Jensen  
 Members Meeting  
 ESL

## MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

**01** Alice Marley  
**02** Kevin Isley  
**04** Bonnie Kooy  
 Paul Nance  
 Ann Rose  
**07** Valarie Webb  
**10** Daniel Freeman  
**11** Jamie Hinshaw  
**12** Don Boudreault  
**14** Pam Atkins  
**18** Dean Via  
**19** Jay Lowe  
**20** Brenda Yelverton  
**21** Gayle Davis  
**24** Judy Caldwell  
**25** Angela Boyd  
**27** Ed Bradshaw  
 Carl Hinshaw  
 Rob McDorman  
**28** Greg Barkman  
 Barbara Coble  
 Joe Moody  
**30** Lori Craig

## MISSIONARY BIRTHDAYS

**01** Cathy Payne  
**03** Joshua Jensen  
**27** Trevor Johnson  
**28** Thomas Slawson  
**29** Steve Worth

*We express our heartfelt  
 sympathy to the families of:*  
 Rick Eller  
 Colby Rose  
 Jean Thacker  
 Ann Watkins  
 Dalton Zachary

*We welcome our new members:*  
 Nathaniel and Mary Speight  
 4414 Nire Valley Drive  
 Burlington, NC 27215

*The Beacon Beam*  
 Beacon Baptist Church  
 PO Box 159  
 Alamance, NC 27201

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