

THE MESSENGER

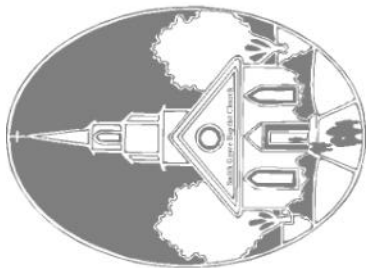
Smith Grove Baptist Church
P.O. Box 57
Colfax, NC 27235

VOLUME 38
July 2021
ISSUE 448

Sunday School 10:00 AM
Morning Worship 11:00 AM
Children's Church 11:15 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday Service 7:00 PM
Bible Clubs 7:00 PM
Thursday Visitation 7:00 PM

~ NURSERY PROVIDED ~
2707 Sandy Ridge Road
Colfax, NC 27235

Dr. Charles (Chuck) Peters, Pastor
Home: (336) 996-8563
Cell: (336) 812-1169



www.smithgrove.org

PROVERBS 25:13

As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him, for he refresheth the soul of his masters . . .

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The Messenger



July
2021



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2707 Sandy Ridge Road ~ Colfax, NC 27235
www.smithgrove.org

Dr. Charles (Chuck) Peters, Pastor
Home: (336) 996-8563; Cell: (336) 812-1169
Rev. Bruce Freeman, Associate Pastor
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Sunday School 10:00 AM
Morning Worship 11:00 AM
Children's Church 11:15 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday Service 7:00 PM
Bible Clubs 6:45-8:15 PM

Streaming Live: Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/mySGBC/>
YouTube
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj39_zpMzkkCXdFYy1NKndQ

PROVERBS 25:13 *As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him, for he refresheth the soul of his masters . . .*

Sun., July 4 ~ Hot dogs & hamburgers in the Fellowship Bldg. after the morning service. (No Evening Service.)

Sun., July 11, 6 pm ~ We will honor our Graduates!

Tues., July 13, 7 pm ~ Robinwood Senior Living
(Snacks provided).

Regular Services:

Sundays—11:00 a.m. & 6 p.m. Worship service in the sanctuary.

Wednesdays - 6:45 pm - Be Strong Bible Clubs in the yard behind the Fellowship Hall; 7:00 p.m. Prayer Mtg. in the sanctuary.
[BEAMS is always the 3rd Sunday of each month.]

Any changes in this schedule will be announced by Pastor Chuck or Pastor Bruce.

All services will continue to be live-streamed on Facebook and YouTube.

~ Save the Date ~ Homecoming 2021 ~ Sun., October 17
Lord willing, we will have lunch in the Fellowship Building after the 11:00 service. *More details later . . .*

**GOD shed
HIS
grace
ON THEE**

Statement of Faith:

We are an Independent Baptist Church (*established in 1921*) preaching the old time Gospel and still believing that the King James Version of the Bible constitutes the preserved, inerrant, and inspired Word of God for the English speaking people of the earth.

REMEMBER IN PRAYER

SHUT-INS: Iris Farrington David & Carolyn McBrayer
Neva Long Willard & Barbara Tucker

Assisted Living/Nursing Home: Rose Matthews

IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY

PVT Adam Brittain, Army, Germany (Sam Crater's nephew)
CW4 Jonathan Harless (Raleigh) } (Hal & Martha
LTC Robert Harless (Fort Campbell, KY) } Harless' sons)
Camren Harrell (Navy Seal Candidate) -Grandson of the Craters
E3 Noah Johnson, US Coast Guard Station Port Canaveral, Cape Canaveral, FL (Henry & Geraldine Johnson's grandson)
Spec. Jocelyn Laramore, US Army; Ft. Hood, TX
 (Granddaughter-in-law of Jim Laramore) Pray also for Valentino James Laramore, Jim's great grandson & his namesake.
CCWO5 Michael Maine, US Army; Ft. Rucker, AL (Nephew of Clarence Redmon)
LT Katie Moore, US Navy; USS Independence (LCS-2)
 (Dreema & Darris Moore's Granddaughter)
SSgt Kyle Norman, 2602 Westridge Ave W #L304, Tacoma, WA 98466 (Sandy Westmoreland's son)
PFC Trevor Westmoreland, PO Box 10197, Ft. Irwin, CA 92310 (Allen & Sandy Westmoreland's son)



2021 ~ Centennial Anniversary for Smith Grove

Smith Grove has a strong history of producing God-called, true-to-the-Word preachers from within its ranks. Ben Farrington, Bill Johnson, Dealis (D.W.) Long, Walter Westmoreland, Cordell McCollum, Johnny Long, David Ward, Clint Nuckles, Eddie Thomason, Frankie Matthews, Wade Smith, and Bruce Freeman are among the preachers called out of the church. *Rev. Wade Smith and family* (Nora and Jonathan), are the first missionaries to be called out of Smith Grove (ministering to the Armed Forces Personnel in Virginia Beach, Virginia – *Little Creek Baptist Church*).

Check back each month for more Smith Grove History!

Wade & Nora



BEAMS' Report for June 2021

of Pledges: 12; # of Contributions: 6;
 Total Contributors: 18
 Total Contributed: \$ 941.00 =
117 Bibles in June (plus some postage)

Many thanks to the Adult Fellowship Bible Class for their ongoing BEAMS' ministry which added \$ 210.00 for postage this month!

You can also get the BEAMS' report online at our website:
http://www.smithgrove.org/beams_ministry.htm

Services will be streaming Live every Wednesday at 7 p.m. & Sunday at 11 a.m. & 6 p.m. on [Facebook](#) & [YouTube](#) — (You do not need a



facebook account to watch the video on fb!)



<https://www.facebook.com/mySGBC/>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj39_zpMzkkCXdFYy1NKndQ

To listen & download mp3:

Audio Sermons Online ~ <http://audio.smithgrove.org/>



Men's & Ladies' Fellowship

Quarterly Mtgs.: (3rd Tuesdays - 7 p.m.)

Meetings will resume when the Covid-19 threat allows.

The Road to Everlasting Life

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Romans 5:8 "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 10:9-10 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans 10:13 "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."



Smith Grove's ministry to our widows and widowers

*"Honour widows that are widows indeed."
(1 Timothy 5:3)*

This is a continuing churchwide ministry to remember widows and widowers of the church in a meaningful way. Each month, we highlight our special "Honour Roll Gang Members" who are having birthdays. Listed below are *July and August* Honour Roll Gang members. Please take a moment to send a card, make a telephone call, or do something extra special for our special saints.

Betty Byrd

3316 Sandy Ridge Road
Colfax, NC 27235
336-993-5492 ~ July 01

Patsy Pendry

8054 Clinard Farms Rd
High Point, NC 27265
336-668-4415 ~ August 19

Becky Redmon

8421 Endicott Road
Colfax, NC 27235
336-993-1833
336-482-1926 (Cell) ~ July 09

Doris Nuckles

8324 Tyner Loop Road
Colfax, NC 27235
336-668-2332 ~ August 28

Are you or a family member turning 90 this year? Please let Pastor Chuck know so that we may recognize you on your special birthday!

July Anniversaries

- 2 Gale and Charlene Tester
- 7 Gary and Helen Hendrix
- 11 Chuck and Carol Peters
- 16 Steve and Stephanie Dillon
- 23 Wade and Nora Smith
- 25 Pam and Glen Blackburn
- 27 Bruce and Darla Freeman
- 28 Homer and Barbara Bowden
- 28 David & Carolyn McBrayer



America The Beautiful

By Carol Smith Hayden

***America the beautiful, we've
always been told.***

Freedom of speech,
Land of Liberty,
This our two hundred and forty-fifth
year.
We should be proud
And yet,

Ashamed.
God has richly blessed our America
And still
We take for granted what we have.
So let's look up, America. Count our
blessings, bring back our pride,
Walk the rest of our lives with God by
our side.

Coastline Baptist Church

Mrs. Jones and I are so grateful for our supporting churches and how they are enabling us to have a ministry here in Shallotte. Our Lord has answered so many prayers and it has been so encouraging to see how the Lord is working in our behalf. From the start we have been praying specifically that the Lord would give us some people who would be spiritually grounded and can be placed in the work here very soon. In our prayers we have been asking for the Lord to give us a song leader and a pianist as well. The Lord recently gave us both of these requests. Praise the Lord! This has really enhanced our services so much. The Lord has used the song leader and his wife to invite several people with whom they had made friends in years gone by. This song leader does an excellent job with the music and his wife sings some duets with him. The music man has been helping me with Saturday morning visitation and getting the John and Romans booklets distributed in some of the developments.

One of those invited is a lay-preacher who has had a ministry at a senior's facility on a weekly basis. He and his wife have been bringing one of the ladies from the place where he ministers. Another brother, whose wife plays the piano, has been so much help in setting up a monitor with a laptop to aid us with the Wednesday morning Bible studies. That, in itself, has replaced a lot of copying files for Bible studies and cut the cost of ink cartridges. We are presently working to get some of our music, some of our preaching services and some of our Bible studies on our church Facebook page which we will link to our church website. We are praying that the Lord will use this avenue to direct more people to our ministry and to our location here as well.

These answers to our prayers have given us more evidence, along with other answers to prayers, that confirms to us that the Lord is certainly at work in our spiritual pursuits to establish an Independent Baptist Church in Shallotte.

We are planning to set up a tent in the Oyster Festival scheduled in the third week of October. This event is a big deal in this area and I believe it will give us a venue to give out thousands of John and Roman booklets and tracts which include God's plan of salvation.

By faith, I can see a time in the near future when people who visit this area can find a sound Independent Baptist Church to attend. Please continue to pray that the Lord would make this happen for His glory. Thank you again for your prayers and part in this church plant.

Gratefully yours in Christ ~ *Pastor & Mrs. Richard H. Jones*

*Excerpt
from a
piece
written by
a 12-year-
old boy
whose
parents
are in the
military.*

"Soul-Diers" is what soldier sounds like when you sound it out. They give their life, and dedicate in many ways their soul, for their cause and country. . . . patriotism has the word patriot inside it, patriot meaning a person who vigorously supports their country and is prepared to defend it against enemies or detractors. A patriot is any man, woman, or child who is prepared to defend their country. I personally think that patriotism is the best thing a country can have, citizens who love their country to such ends they would lay down their life to save it. What is patriotism to me? Well, to me, it is a genuine love for, caring, and understanding of their country, and a willingness to sacrifice for, be appreciative of, and thankful for our great nation.

Be Strong Bible Club & Teens



Our "Be Strong" group is so excited to at last start another long-awaited summer! Since the past two school years have brought many unforeseen challenges, our students and their families are relieved to finally relax at home and enjoy excursions and outings when they are able.

While our young people were busy wrapping up a stressful year with exams and projects at school, our weekly zoom meetings countered by adopting a slightly more laid-back approach! We made our rounds one afternoon in late May, delivering a "Bible Bingo Kit" to each family's doorstep, complete with cards, dry beans for markers, and a "prize bag." Similar to standard Bingo cards, ours are divided in two, Old Testament on the top and New Testament on the bottom. Instead of the traditional five columns, we have 5 sections that represent the Old Testament categories (Law, History, Poetry, Major Prophets, Minor Prophets); and 3 sections that represent the New Testament categories (Gospels & History, Letters from Paul, General Letters & Prophecy). In our stack of 66 cards, each book of the Bible is represented with an image that reflects its overall message. Marshall was our official "Card Keeper," and as he pulled from the stack, he held up each picture so we could see it on our screens at home. As books of the Bible were called, we all scurried to find them on our own cards, covering their squares with beans as we went. The first player with five in a row hollered, "Bingo!"... resulting in a dive into their family's "prize bag" to choose a piece of candy. Chuckles, moans, sighs, and giggles ensued as we became impatient to fill our rows and earn a prize. Between our squeals and good-natured teasing, we chomped Tootsie Rolls and Smarties as we competed, marveling at how quickly *some* players seemed to win row after row until their entire Bingo cards were filled! Beyond the fun and games, we were gradually becoming more familiar with the various sections of the Bible, as well as the focus of its 66 individual books. We celebrated "Bible Bingo Night" for three weeks straight, kicking off summer with a fun and festive flair, while still learning.

On another recent Together Tuesday, in honor of Father's Day, we pondered the faithful men in our lives. Zoomers came ready to share one thing they've learned from their dad, their grandpa, or any other special man in their lives. Mackenzie shared that her dad taught her to both fish and hunt in just one day! Abi's dad encourages her to appreciate the little things in life, like walking in the rain or watching the sun set. Jeffrey praised his dad for being helpful and for giving him more chances than he deserves. Misty told us about her sweet PawPaw, who was like a father to her, always supportive as she was growing up. Addison shared that her dad has kept her safe and taught her that not everyone in this world can be trusted. Stephanie has learned her handyman skills from her dad, and she can always count on his kindness and help when she calls on him. Glenda's dad taught her a good work ethic... to always do her best when she sets out to do a job. Marshall Moore credited his dad with teaching him many things that will help him later in life. John's grandpa was a preacher, and John told us that his own dad always taught him about his heritage and his grandpa, expressing his desire to carry on the tradition of

(Continued)



being a strong family man for John and his brother. It was fitting that John was in fact, joining us from his parents' home, where Darris was gathering up some fishing equipment to pass along to his grandson, Marshall. Indeed, the most treasured traditions often live on, handed down from one generation to the next! Darla said that her daddy has taught lessons in humility, as he downplays his own accomplishments and quietly serves others. Marshall Freeman's daddy has taught him perseverance, as he is determined to fix something when it's broken. Lillie praised her dad for being nice and teaching her to ride a bike... for always trying to protect her and making sure she's okay when she falls off her bike. Bruce shared that, when he was growing up, he would get frustrated with his dad when he wasn't allowed to do this or that, or when he was told he couldn't go here or there. But looking back, he wishes he had thanked his daddy more, for all the ways he provided, and for the many selfless sacrifices he made for their family. In our Christian lives too, we sometimes get disappointed when things don't happen the way we envision them. We can become disheartened when we don't get to fulfill our dreams. And we may find ourselves discouraged when timelines don't unfold according to our plans. But we will have a better outlook when we consider these words from Jesus... *"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:26)* If God supplies the needs of helpless little birds, how much more does He love us and care about *our* unique needs? He's the very One Who has planted the dreams in our hearts, and He knows each of us better than we know ourselves! He thoroughly understands what we are to learn in the individual journeys He sets before us. When we begin to view our situations through grateful eyes, we can clearly see that we can trust our loving heavenly Father to provide exactly what we need to live our lives for Him. After hearing such heartfelt tributes to the many faithful men in our lives, we were all reminded that we can be deeply grateful for earthly fathers who reflect God's wisdom and grace while they're raising us and providing for our families.

We must say that we are also very grateful for your prayers, church family, as we have sought the Lord's guidance over the past months. We have sorely missed gathering with our "Be Strong Bible Club" in person, but we praise God for enabling us to stay in touch... face-to-face on our screens, you might say! He has kept our connections strong and allowed us to lean on one another even more than we have in the past. Through our Together Tuesdays, we have had an opportunity to grow close, in ways we may not have, without a pandemic entering the picture. Rather than focus on the time we've lost, we can now take a step back and see the Lord's hand at work throughout this lengthy time apart, knowing that we've been depending on His perfect timing. With that in mind, we are so very excited to announce that we will soon begin Outdoor Youth Gatherings! Our tentative first night back will be **Wednesday, June 30, at 6:45... in the yard behind the fellowship hall.** We are so looking forward to holding summer meetings outside... playing games, sharing God's Word, and enjoying time together once again. Help us pray for the Lord's continued protection and direction for all our precious young people.

With Hopes and Prayers for the Future God Holds,

Bruce, Darla, and Marshall

Greetings Dear Smith Grove Family... *from Charlene*



I just wanted to take a moment to share a praise report and a prayer request. As most of you know, the company I work for moved from Greensboro to Raleigh in 2015. While I had been with Merz for five years at the time the move was announced, my heart was crushed because I had only recently moved to the Human Resources Department and absolutely loved my new role, my new boss, and my new team. I began to seek the Lord's will for my life, and it didn't take long until I could see the Lord connecting the dots on my "Road to Raleigh." ~ Gale said he would support my decision to go to Raleigh under one condition that I would not commute but would find a place to stay during the week and come home on the weekends.

~ My one and only apartment hunting trip – The Sommerset Place Apartments were within the same block as Merz and across the street from the Raleigh North Police Department. How safe and convenient was that? I began to feel the peace of God flood my heart the first time the property manager showed me the sample apartment. It was quaint and cozy, and I could just see myself living there.

~ It was a Saturday; and while I didn't think I could get into the Merz building, you guessed it! The Lord got there before I did!! There were construction workers there that day and I walked up to the main entrance with doors standing wide open and was able to come right in and see where I would be working in the HR suite. Once again, I had peace about my decision to come to Raleigh.

I won't go into each and every detail, but the Lord took care of us in so many ways – I was never afraid – and over and over again, I could feel the hand of the Lord on our life as He continued to connect those dots.

~ My roommate committed to stay for two years; and when she was gone, I was used to my routine and lived alone after that – just Jesus and me.

~ Time clicked along and then it was March 2020 and the pandemic hit. Raleigh shut down like everywhere else, and we are still working from home. When my apartment lease came up for renewal in March 2021, and we still didn't know how much longer our building would be closed, we decided it was time to give up the apartment. So on a Saturday in March, Gale, Amy, Darrell and the twins came to Raleigh and moved me back home.

~ Not too many of the church family are aware, but I was diagnosed with the early onset of Parkinson's Disease in November 2012. Through the past nine years, my symptoms have increased – especially during the last year -- and meds have been adjusted accordingly. Once again, I was asking God to help me make the right decision about my job. About a month ago, my boss offered me a medical Leave of Absence. I have since accepted that proposal and my "early retirement" started on June 7.

I praise the Lord for His guidance, protection and provision during my years in Raleigh and desire your prayers that as I deal with the Parkinson's Disease, the Lord will provide peace and healing according to His will. I love you all and thank you for your prayers as I traveled up and down the road. My "Road to Raleigh" is over now and it's on to this new chapter.

Love and prayers, *Charlene*

"I LOVE AMERICA"

Pastor Chuck Peters – written 2004



Last week my life was interrupted by a phone call from the military. The phone call was to put me on notice that I was being deployed for military active duty. An M.P. Unit in our State was put on alert for deployment and a chaplain was needed to support the mission. My name was chosen and I was assigned to that Unit. I am now facing a possible 18 Month deployment!

I have been doing a lot of soul searching since receiving that awakening phone call. The call came to a fellow whose age does not exactly represent the average age for soldiering! The call will mean separation from a dear wife for several months. The call means taking off the suit of a Pastor and putting on the uniform of an Army Chaplain. I now will have to be gone from a wonderful church for several months as well. Yes, I have been doing a lot of thinking.

I have also reflected upon the blessings of being an American. I love this Country for several reasons. I love it for the very same reason that others love it. It is love of Country that causes a man's wife to be willing to share her husband with her Country and to be willing to go it alone for 18 long months. It is love of Country that inspires a Church to allow its Pastor to leave them and extend its mission field to include the military!

I love America because I was born here, saved here, married here, and raised my family here. I have been called to preach the Gospel and to pastor churches in America.

America has been good to me. It has given me freedoms to enjoy, yet I am not permitted to forget the price paid for that freedom. My love for America includes a gratitude for those who have fought and died in order that I might enjoy this freedom.

I now am called upon to leave home and go to war. I gladly put on my uniform out of duty and honor. I am blessed to serve my Country and besides, what more could I ask for? I am a hero in my family's eyes, a missionary in my Church's eyes, a defender in my Country's eyes, and debtor in my own eyes!

I am about to pull up anchor and launch out into waters that I have never chartered before. I am confident, however, He will not take me where His grace will not support me. I go in the will of God.

I am thankful for family, friend, and church support. I desperately need your prayers for God's protective hand and the spiritual and physical stamina required for the assignment. Pray for the salvation of our men and women in uniform. Pray that God would see fit to use this Chaplain as an evangelist to the lost and as an encourager to the many that I will find fearful and uncertain.

I go claiming the Word of God and believe those great truths found in II Chronicles 20:15, Romans 8:37, and Isaiah 54:17. Those verses remind me that the battle is the Lord's. We are told that we are more than conquerors through him that loves us. We also read, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn..."

I love America and now feel that this is pay back time to a Country that has done so much for me. God bless the U.S.A.!

It is 9:30 p.m. and I have not been in my room long. Our chapel service tonight was made up of service personnel from all four branches of the armed forces. I spoke on Numbers 13 and talked about the “grasshopper complex” of the faithless 10 spies. I admonished the troops to understand that unbelief, failure, and fear will always result from viewing life’s problems and challenges outside of the context of God’s presence and providence. His calling will always involve His enabling.

These past months in the desert have been spiritually rewarding. I wind down this tour of duty with great gratitude for this experience. The wind, sand, and heat have not eliminated His presence nor hindered His persuasion. Many are dying here in the defense of freedom. Many have died to sin and have gained freedom. It has been said that the most important part of our lives is the part that only God sees. He looks through the desert camo uniforms of our troops and sees the heart and soul of these young men and women. He looks upon some that have been washed and made clean by the blood of His Son! He has seen fit to bring many of these young men and women thousands of miles away from their families in order to bring them closer to Himself! Someone else once said that God must care for the least, or He cannot care for the greatest. His care has certainly been recognized in this war-ravaged land. I soon will be coming home, God willing. I will return home a richer person. This tour in Iraq has resulted in an accumulation of a wealth that money cannot equal. I would justify this statement in the following summary conclusions as I reflect back on my experience as an Army Chaplain on duty in this war zone.

I am grateful for the privilege of being numbered with the many wearing our country’s uniform in the defense of freedom. I am more convinced than ever that the bitter, brutal, and brainwashed religious oriented terrorists need to be fought and defeated before they are able to kill any more innocent people! What kind of a human being would make his way to a group of Iraqi children being handed candy by our troops and then blow himself up? What kind of a mindset causes such indiscriminant killing?

I am not able to remove from my memory the sight of the blazing American tower buildings in New York City. We must never forget 9/11! We were reminded again recently by the terrorist bombings in London that the war is extended to include every freedom loving country. I, for one, have had my resolve strengthened to stay the course until the battle is won! The politicians can wrangle over the justness of this war but this is one soldier who is would rather bleed for the cause of freedom in Iraq than in America from another terrorist attack on American soil!

I am grateful to have seen the grace of God at work in this desert. This desert has bloomed with new life as nearly twenty military personnel have experienced new life in Christ. How thrilling to witness souls experiencing spiritual freedom in the middle of a country known for its religious bondage.

At a place where sin has abounded, many are finding that grace does much more abound! A young Hispanic soldier was recently saved after one of our chapel services. He now faithfully attends our Bible studies. He gave testimony recently of his joy in realizing that his sins are forgiven and that the tomb is empty. He spoke of the emptiness and despair of his former religious practice.

He recognizes now that the statues of the saints, the ritualistic practices, the effort of human acts towards justification, and the very crucifix itself do not adequately represent a Bible spiritual reality. He had found that the Gospel itself was the power of God unto salvation.

We have people attending our services from all parts of our country. We are giving the Word of God to service personnel with various ethnic backgrounds. The thrilling truth is that many are coming to the services hungry to be taught the Word.

The military atmosphere and the separation from family are not robbing them of joy and service for Christ.

I have looked into the faces of the enemy detainees. Yes, I have detected hatred and a desire to get revenge. I have also seen another side of the Iraqi detainees. I have found that many respect a Chaplain. Many trust a Chaplain to be honest, fair, and approachable. This lets me know that a person can be disorientated, brainwashed, and even embittered by religion yet recognize that another human being may possibly have kindness and decency! Many are fighting the truth that a Christian represents and at the same time subjecting themselves to a kindness that characterizes those who are followers of the Lamb!

I end this tour of duty proclaiming that God is good. I have had many lonely moments but never felt alone. I have shed many tears out of a deepened appreciation of my family and friends and their support back home. The care packages, the cards, the letters, and the emails have assured me that my country respects and supports our troops.

It was not easy coming home on leave and burying my own Mother but the dear Lord stood by my side. I returned back to Iraq and was greeted by a very understanding and sympathizing Commander and fellow comrades.

I have regretted that this has been a year away from my wife. I succeeded in missing all of the annual holidays and special occasions. I have reflected upon my marriage and love for my wife. Her personal sacrifice and commitment makes her a real hero. This separation has made me reflect upon the jewel of a wife that God has given me and the great value of marriage commitment.

I have thought about the many friends of my church. They have regarded this tour as a mission opportunity. They have rejoiced when hearing of soldiers being saved. They have faithfully prayed for my safety and soon return. They have sent care packages of items for the soldiers as well as school supplies for the impoverished Iraqi school children. I am grateful for such sweet people! They truly are friends for life.

I come home saying, Thank you America, for the freedom you have given me. Please accept this tour as a small token of that appreciation. I come home saying, thank you family, for your love and support. I return home saying, thank you Church, for your prayers and understanding that this was a mission trip.

I return home saying, thank you, honey, for your faithful love and for keeping the light on. I especially come home saying, thank you, Lord, for your presence, protection, and provision. Thank you for providing springs in this desert that thirsty souls have found.

I stand amazed that a German woman marries an American soldier, moves to America, becomes a citizen, joins the Army as a nurse, comes to Iraq, visits the Chapel service at Camp Bucca Iraq, and gets saved! She later testified that she traveled 7,000 miles to a country that was basically known as an anti-Christian country and gets saved in this place of all places! She went from Germany to America and then to Iraq to get saved. God has a record of spoiling principalities and powers. He is able to make all grace abound.

A wise man once said that one is not a fool to invest their lives in a cause that will outlive this life. Many come home from Iraq and Afghanistan in flag-draped coffins. They paid the supreme price for the sake of freedom. Their sacrifice must never be forgotten. The cause of freedom is a worthy cause.

I can never replace this year that I have had to spend away from my wife and family. I will say, however, that I have been made richer. I may have given up a year but I have gained a sense of joy. It has been worth it all because the cause is greater than life itself.

Chaplain (MAJ) Chuck Peters -July 25, 2005

Word of God & Relevance