

March/April 2025

# Bethel

## Colony of Mercy

Breaking the chains of addiction

Since 1948



## Finishing Strong

**Scripture bears the theme of finishing strong.** We see that in Hebrews chapter 11, known as the "Hall of Faith," as the writer teaches us about those who were faithful to trust God. Then, in chapter 12, we are reminded of the endurance we need just as those in chapter 11 when they went through great difficulty but finished strong. Jesus was persecuted and shed His blood and we must keep our eyes on Him. Verse 2 tells us to **"look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."**

When I first got to Bethel as a student in 1997, the first obstacle I faced, like so many others, is can I trust what is going on in this place? You learn the hard way after going to so many places to get help and finding out what they're doing is not right or the people working there are only there for a paycheck. So when I got here, after waiting 3 months to get in, I was really examining the program, the leaders, and the students to see if there was fruit. It did not take long to figure out that this was a different place than I had ever been to before. The Spirit of God was evident, the teaching was solid, and I could see my peers having joy, answered prayers, and an excitement to grow. When I looked to the leadership, can I tell you watching Paul Ritchie and Don Loss has been inspirational. Hearing them teach, it was obvious they had an anointing on them. They were and still are strong in their faith. They teach you what you need, not just what you want. They hold you to a higher standard. They worked as a team. They did all that in love, being gentle where it was called for and taking a strong stand when needed. As every pastor and leader knows, we live in a glass house, so it was not

only them that were looked at but also their families. The Losses and the Ritchies have won many to Christ because of their love for God and others.

**What an example we have in scripture of Finishing Strong.** And, at Bethel, we have had key leadership that has demonstrated strength and longevity. **The Losses have been ministering at Bethel Colony for 41 years.** What a model that is to our team, but also to the hundreds of students over those years.

This is a subject that is not emphasized enough. It is stressed in sporting events and the apostle Paul even uses that as an example to teach the principle. It is important that we have this attribute in our character, it will make the difference in our marriages, other relationships, our ministry to others, and our ability to walk out an overcoming life. Jesus calls us to obedience, to commit full-hearted to that obedience, and He calls us to finish what God called us to do. Phil 1:6 admonishes us to **"be(ing) confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."** The Lord will help us run and complete the race.



Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce  
**Non-Profit of the Year** award  
presented to Bethel by Blue Ridge Energy

When we make up our minds to surrender to God and finish strong it helps us to **remove all doubts in the commitment.** It gives a real closure, no looking back. Phil 3:13, **"...one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead."** Like parachuting, you have to trust the preparation, the training, and the tools. There is no turning back after the leap.

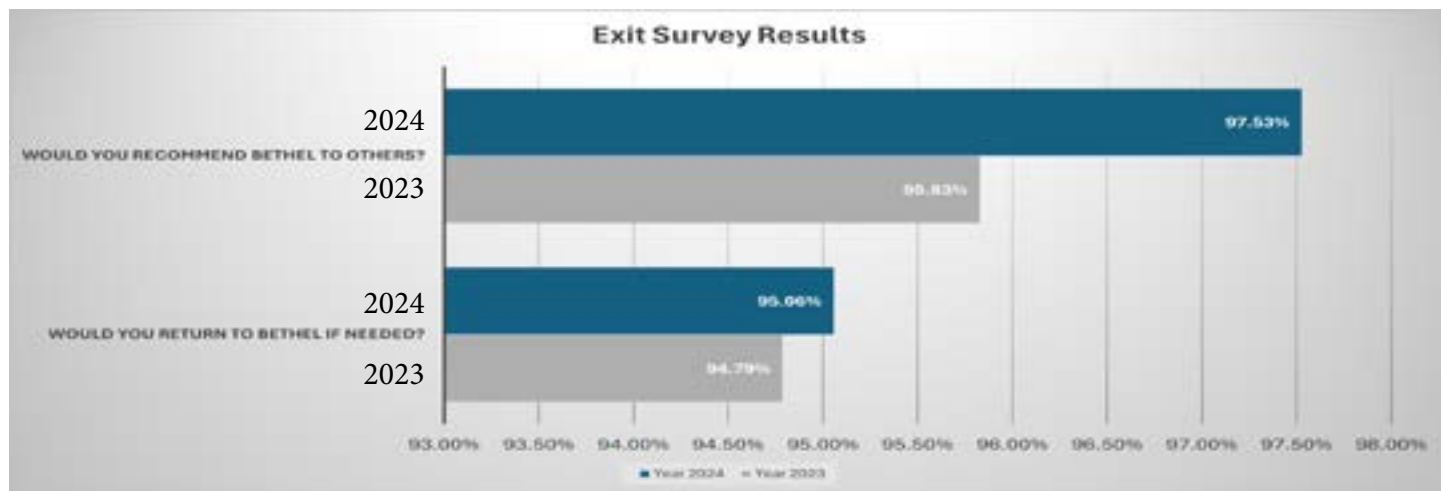
When we decide we are going to do this with all our heart it

helps us **maximize our efforts by being single minded or focused.** Prov. 4 says, ***“Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.”*** Whenever you do anything with your all, remember tests will come, and most of those tests are about our own growth. The great news is that He sustains us, ***“Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”*** Is. 46:4

We want to be a people of excellence. When we put our full

heart into what the Lord calls us to do, we have that desire. That desire helps us to inspire and encourage others. It is a testimony of God's greatness. But can I also say, the respect you get from others pales into insignificance when you consider **the respect you give to yourself when you've completed something to the best of your ability.** You have no problem looking at the man in the mirror, knowing you have done your best unto the Lord. Phil 3:14, ***“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”***

*Pastor Paul and Stacy Pruitt*  
Executive Director



## BETHEL COLONY OF MERCY WOMEN'S CAMPUS

### 3rd ANNUAL

### 2025 Royal Tea - Victorious Kingdom

**Event Date and Time:** Saturday, May 3, 2025, 12:00 noon – 3:00 pm

**Event Address:** Lenoir Presbyterian Church  
1002 Kirkwood St. NW  
Lenoir, NC 28645  
(same location as last year)



**Event Description:** Ladies Tea & Fundraiser Bringing Women's Campus Alumni and Supporters Together

**Speaker:** Regina Kelly, Women's Campus Co-Director

**Cost:** \$20 per person; \$120 per table (seating 6)

To register online, please go to [bethelcolony.org/events-at-bethel/royal-tea](https://bethelcolony.org/events-at-bethel/royal-tea) or use this QR Code:



For more information, contact:  
Cynthia Lambert-Brown  
Event Coordinator  
Email: [stanbrownapwa@gmail.com](mailto:stanbrownapwa@gmail.com)  
Cell: 678-378-8193



## Ramah Reflections

# New Life



***"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."***

~Romans 6:4

When entering Easter season, we as believers begin to reflect on the death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior. We see the illustration played out for us in every spring bloom: what was dead and barren only a few weeks ago is now blooming to vibrant life. But the more we think about the way Christ was crucified and raised to life, the more we should identify with His death and resurrection. All too often, however, we do not. We memorialize. We commemorate what Christ has done, but for some of us, we don't participate in it. In the book of Romans, we see a clear call, not to merely remember the sacrifice of Christ, but to partake in the very activity of the death and resurrection of Christ. ***"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism."*** This burial is our death to sin. When we were baptized, we, in all spiritual reality, died to our own old sinful selves.

***"That just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."***

This means that we get to be walking illustrations of the resurrection power and life of Jesus Christ. We also get to be dead to sin and alive to God. We also get to have a new, more powerful life. We also! Christ's resurrection story was always meant to be "Part I" of a greater saga following the children of God being raised to life in Him. ***"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."*** (Romans 8:29).



I was raised in a small west Hillsborough church. From a very young age I was taught the word of the Bible. However, I can say that as I got older, I allowed the enemy to pull me from the church, my faith, and from God. I can also say that does not mean that the body of the church that I grew up in ever stopped reaching out to me, trying to keep me involved, or praying for me. I don't ever remember a time where I didn't know God, but I do remember the times where I didn't have God first in my life, and how dark the times became when I didn't have him first. ***"But God commendeth His own love in us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*** Romans 5:8

Since finding out about Bethel Colony of Mercy in the summer of 2022, I can say that God is who pulled me out of the rock bottom I had reached. In desperation of trying secular options along with

So we have no right to simply be **spectators** in the faith when it comes to the resurrection. We have to be **participants**. This is the essence of the gospel. ***"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."*** (John 12:24). Christ died to multiply Himself into us. We get to live out the power of the Cross every time that we say yes to Christ and no to sin. It is a far greater, more powerful celebration of Christ's work on the cross to contend with sin in our own flesh and win than it is to create a memorial out of the sacrifice of Christ. When we live out Christ's sacrifice by recognizing His power in us to live a holy and righteous life, we bring Him more glory than any Easter service.

Every person who accepts the sacrifice of Christ, repents of sin, and turns to God, has the power to walk out the new life in Christ. We see real life transformation. The power of the cross and the resurrected Christ is seen in the life of every man and woman that has come to Jesus, as many have at Bethel Colony, and received forgiveness of sins and power to walk away from addiction. The power of the new life is seen in every testimony of every former addict who can say ***"Whom the Son sets free is free indeed!"*** Resurrection power is available for everyone who believes on Jesus, not just at Easter, but every day. Glory to God!

Blessed beyond measure,

***Mrs. Regina Kelly***

Women's Campus Co-Director



## Women's Campus Testimony

attempting to fix the shambles of my life on my own with no lasting success I was ready to attempt any and everything that it would take for me to recover. After hearing about Bethel, I slowly began to consider the Christian route again. Around the middle of September, I was waiting for my bed to be ready at Bethel. It was during that wait that I can say God began speaking to me again. This led me to the realization that if I didn't give the program a chance, all of the struggles that I had been able to overcome through God's grace and mercy on me, that I was just going to continue to be drawn out further from the people who are truly dear to me - my child, the life I had once known, and eventually from God. Satan has done everything but take my last breath from me. Finally I made it to Bethel on November 16, 2022. I was there for 98 days before making the next best decision in my life to go to Vessels of Mercy.

I learned at Vessels that God will always be there for you no matter what choices you decide to make throughout your life. And, that giving God the control in your life is the first right decision that you

can make towards your own salvation. ***“Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in the time to come.”***

Proverbs 31:25

Through the blood that was shed for us on Calvary all things are possible. And all fear that the enemy tries to deceive us with is taken away only by God. An example of the two most precious blessings that Satan has tried to steal from me would be the relationships that I have with my family, and my child. But because I know Jesus was born to die for all of our sins, I now know that the battle between Satan and me has already been won. If I keep my eyes fixed upon Jesus, this alone gives me the hope and strength to know that He alone is going to be responsible for the restoration of my family. When you are sowing good seeds continually you are also able to find how in sowing these good seeds the harvest you are reaping will be more than an abundant blessing only from God. ***“Thus saith the Lord; refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: For thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord and they shall come.”*** Jeremiah 31:16

## Men's Campus Testimony

I started drinking with my wife, Jodi, after graduating college in 1988. Both of our drinking slowly increased over time with my wife's drinking getting very serious after her father died in March of 2003. She died in 2008 from the physical effects of her alcoholism. I tried to stop drinking after her death and attended many secular AA meetings, but went down the same path from a functioning alcoholic to a drunk; eventually losing my job.

I relocated to Charlotte, NC from Buffalo NY with my son, Chris Jr., in August 2012 and attended AA while looking for a new job. I stayed sober for close to 2 years, even overcoming both my parents passing away within 6 weeks of each other, but I ended up drinking again in June 2014. Within 3 weeks I locked myself in a hotel room for over a week and tried to take my life. I should not have survived that attempt.

After being in a psych ward for 45 days following my suicide attempt, I came to Bethel in August 2014. I was assigned to work in the kitchen, but talked to the Director Pastor Pruitt and told him my engineering and construction background. Since then I have worked under the construction manager doing MEP and architectural design, estimating and planning many projects at Bethel's two campuses.

I was in Bethel's student program for 11 months until July 2015 and when I left to work at Fort Jackson, Columbia, SC., I kept close to Bethel and came back every 3-4 weeks to visit. I would stay for a weekend and continue on my engineering and construction projects.

In 2016, I came back to Bethel after my job assignment was complete, and transitioned to volunteer staff. One evening I cried to the Lord; “when will I get over my wife?” A profound thought came over me from the Lord; “Chris, instead of trying to push down your wife's memory, EMBRACE IT! Build something in her memory.” Confirmation came the next day when I asked Executive Director Paul Pruitt how his meeting went with the board members that day. He said; “We decided today that we are going to buy land and start a women's program”. Well there it is; my purpose, my destiny has always been to help develop this ministry and hopefully prevent the destruction that my family has suffered with the death of my wife, Jodi! I left Bethel again to go to work in January 2018, and again kept close supporting the ministry.

The most important thing that I have learned since beginning my journey originally at Bethel is the power of forgiveness. We must forgive all of those who trespass against us just as the Lord has forgiven all of our trespasses against him in order for us to do all things with a loving heart.

I could never praise and thank God enough for pulling me out of the darkness I created for myself, or that I was subjecting the people he had placed in my life to. But I do want to give a thank you to everyone that God has placed in my life since embarking on this journey. Those that have been there to help make this amazing accomplishment become a reality through only the power of Christ. I strive to continuously praise and thank God for blessing me with the people who are now placed in my life as well as the people who may someday be put into my life that I can witness this testimony too.

Regan Dillard, Bethel graduate in 2023



In June 2020, I came back into the program as a student after relapsing. The effects of depression and anxiety had overcome my personality and my whole being. My history with depression medications started in 2001 with Zoloft, then switched over the next 21 years to other drugs (Cymbalta, Prozac). Since Prozac was not working, the doctors experimented with adding mood stabilizers in April of 2020 (Abilify, Vraylar). **The mood stabilizers turned me into a zombie!** For the next 2 years I was a **“walking dead man”!** I just recently found out how concerned everyone was for my mental health as I was not the upbeat joyous person I once was. I had no joy, **actually no feelings at all**, was super quiet and did not really communicate with anyone. I had no drive to work or create designs, every day was just a battle to get through, get back into bed, and escape from my living hell! I stayed in Bethel's Vocational Student Program for the next 2 years, as Bethel did not want to put me back on staff until I was mentally strong and back to my old self.

In January of 2022 I started slowly weaning off my depression meds and by April was starting to act like my old self, cracking jokes, talking to others, etc. That summer I returned to Bethel's volunteer staff. I still had bad days - waking up and not being motivated to do very much work, etc. My productivity was not great but I did have joy, could laugh, cry, and enjoy emotions again.

In February 2024 I was tasked with a design project for a local ministry and to help manage Bethel's new Work Program students. I believe these 2 tasks have given me new purpose and the confidence I was searching for!

**I have been healed from my mental health issues. I wake up early, NO FEAR, NO ANXIETY, ready to get to work.** I am working extra hours, driven to accomplish more, assisting in developing policies and procedures to help the Bethel management team and staff members. I thank Bethel's staff for sticking by me through all of the past darkness. **This past year has been the healthiest I have been mentally in over 20 years - true freedom from addiction and depression. All due to Bethel Colony of Mercy and the Lord's mercy and grace.**

Chris Pilarski, Facilities Manager at Bethel Colony of Mercy, Inc.



Associate Director/Pastor Zac Starnes

# Free From Condemnation

A phrase that I hear often in ministering to others is “I cannot forgive myself.” There is some truth in that statement but also some issues that arise. Many will feel a block between them and God or start making progress in their relationship with God and hit a wall. **Forgiving self is not the issue, the issue is not accepting the forgiveness that God has given.**

If we look back to Genesis 3 with the beginning of man, Eve doubted God’s authority when she gave an ear to the serpent’s lies in the Garden of Eden. The serpent did not make Eve disobey God, but he did throw a dart that challenged her allegiance to God. Her mindset was challenged and her confidence in what God said was challenged. **Instead of being reminded of the command given to her by God, she allowed that lie to take root which, in turn, was her downfall.**

Don’t we do the same thing at times? We allow a challenging thought to creep in, a fiery dart from the enemy, or; we allow a past sin to dictate our relationship with God. **We find ourselves believing those thoughts, fiery darts, and past sins rather than the truth and love God has for us.**

We can easily condemn ourselves or blame the devil and life circumstances for a failure. We cannot give the devil more credit than is due. We have a responsibility to respond when we fall short and **our response should be an active pursuit to be found blameless before the Lord; not sinless.**

Jesus paid the ultimate price with His life. If He is Lord and Savior of your life, you are free from condemnation. Romans 8:1 tells us, **“Therefore, no condemnation exists for those in Christ Jesus”** (HCSB). Followers of Christ are declared not guilty by God through Jesus Christ. We need to know that sins or failures do not dictate our position with God. If we are His; we are His. Romans 8:38-39 **“For I am persuaded that not even death or life, angels or rulers, things present or things to come, hostile powers, height**

**or depth, or any other created thing will have the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”!** (HCSB) Nothing can separate us from the love of God, which includes ourselves. So, if we say we cannot forgive ourselves then we are putting ourselves in a position that we are not meant to be in.

Isaiah 59:1-2 states, **“Indeed, the Lord’s hand is not too short to save, and His ear is not too deaf to hear. But your iniquities have built barriers between you and your God, and your sins have made Him hide His face from you so that He does not listen.”** (HCSB) Sin separates us from God. He cannot look upon sin, but He can hear a prayer of repentance, and He can reach down and pluck you from the muck and mire. We must come in agreement with Him about our sin and rebellion and seek His forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 tells us that **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** (HCSB)

Spring is here and Easter is right around the corner. It is the time of year when we have a holiday to celebrate the life that was given for us to be reconciled to God. The best way to celebrate is to accept His death as your own. And, making Him Lord of your life is the only way to God the Father. Jesus is the “One and done” sacrifice. The One who overcame the grave in order that we may be with Him forever. We can do nothing apart from Him. We are buried in His death and resurrected in His life. **He did not die on a cross for us to hang our head in shame, and He did not die on a cross for us to condemn ourselves.** No one can forgive themselves, only God can, and He demonstrated His forgiveness for us with Christ on the cross. We’ve got to stop allowing our past failures to dictate our present relationship with Christ. **Confess, repent, and receive the forgiveness that God has for you through Christ.**

*Pastor Zac Starnes*  
Associate Director



## New Staff Housing

As Bethel grows, the need for more staff housing increases. Bethel staff and students are building this house on a recently acquired plot of land adjacent to Bethel’s original property.

Thank you for your prayers and support of our staff and students.



# Flight to Emptiness

The flood of dysfunctional lives, rooted in abandoning the person of Christ, is on the road to nowhere. Adding to the flight, the pursuit of meaning without Christ will result in the emptiness of the soul. No possessions, no persons, no riches, no gurus, no philosophies, no substances, etc., will give the soul meaning. ***"For what is profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"*** (Matthew 16:26) Jeremiah warns Israel concerning abandoning fellowship with Him. (Jeremiah 2:4-6) ***"Hear the word of the Lord, house of Jacob, and all the families of Israel. This is what the Lord says: What injustice did your fathers find in me, that they went far from Me, and walked after emptiness and became empty? They did not say, where is the Lord who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who has led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and pits, through a land of drought and deep darkness---."*** (NAS) Life without the Lord is a walk in darkness. (Psalm 82:5) ***"They do not know, nor do they understand. They walk about in darkness."***

Jeremiah speaks of God's judgment against the cities of Judah. ***"I will utter my judgments against their wickedness, because they have forsaken Me, burned incense to other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands."*** (Jeremiah 1:16) Jehovah was the fountain of living waters to them. Not satisfied with the cistern of God's living water, they built their own cisterns and dispatched the true God and sought other pagan gods. God declares their depravity evil. ***"For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns --- broken cisterns that can hold no water."*** (Jeremiah 2:13) Broken cisterns are the evidence of emptiness. Pursuing the fountain of living waters is the path of life and joy. ***"You will show me the path of life, in your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*** (Psalm 16:11) Pursuing the emptiness of idolatry leads the soul into captivity of Satan, chained in the abyss of darkness and despair.

The depravity of man started in the Garden of Eden. ***"For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but***

***the woman being deceived, fell into transgression."*** (I Timothy 2:13-14) Adam willingly disobeyed God. As Adam's seed we all willingly disobey God. ***"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all men sinned."*** (Romans 5:12)

Jesse Penn-Lewis, in her work War on the Saints, writes on Satan's craft in the Garden of Eden. ***"We see him working upon an innocent creature's highest and purest desires, and cloaking his own purpose of ruin, under the guise of seeking to lead a human being nearer to God. We see him using the God-ward desires of Eve to bring about captivity, and bondage to himself. We see him using 'good' to bring about evil; SUGGESTING evil to bring about supposed good. Caught with the bait of being 'wise' and 'like God', Eve is blinded to the principle involved in obedience to God and is deceived."*** She further writes concerning the temptation of Eve. ***"Satan said to Eve, 'Ye shall be as gods,' but he did not say, 'and ye shall be like demons'. Satan did not tell Eve this, when he added 'knowing good and evil.' His true objective in deceiving Eve was to get her to disobey God, but his wile was, 'Ye shall be like God.' Had she reasoned, she would have seen the deceiver's suggestion expose itself, for it crudely resolved itself into 'disobey God' to be more like God!"***

Finally, for the one who trusts Christ there is rest. Reverend Richard Baxter (1615-1691) writes a work, The Saints' Everlasting Rest based on (Hebrews 4:9). ***"There remains a rest for the people of God."*** All you who are chasing after emptiness resulting in an empty soul, acknowledge your wretched sin and fly to Jesus. ***"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*** (Mark 2:17) Read John chapter three where you will find rest for your soul.

Where the grace blows,

***Pastor Don Loss***  
Director of Counseling



Newly constructed Auto Shop coming soon!

Bethel's growth on both Men's and Women's Campuses has created a need for a bigger and more up-to-date auto shop to accommodate the maintenance needs of a larger fleet of vehicles to service both campuses.

Your prayers and contributions have made this possible! Thank you!



Fill out and mail your prayer requests to us.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

II Chronicles 7:14

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Prayer Request: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Bethel Colony of Mercy is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, gifts to which are deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes. Financial information about this organization and a copy of it's license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at (888)803-4989. The license is not an endorsement by the State. Any gift for which you've received a tangible benefit is not tax deductible.

## BETHEL MERCHANDISE IS AVAILABLE IN OUR FACEBOOK STORE



### New Bethel Shirt



To schedule lawn care service,  
and check prices, contact  
Zach Davis, **Lawn Care Manager**  
828-754-3781 ext.245  
or opt.3 for lawncare

## Bethel Lawn Care

Bethel's Lawn Care service is part of our ongoing program and coincides with our mission statement - **teaching the deliverance message of Jesus Christ**. Part of our approach is daily work assignments. Work assignments are designed to teach men responsibility and stewardship. As we help more folks in our community the Lawn Care Service not only helps men with responsibility and stewardship but instills



a Christian work ethic, provides a skill they can use to get a job, and teaches them to give back to their community and to Bethel.



\*

# Bethel Colony of Mercy, Inc.



1675 Bethel Colony Road  
Lenoir, NC 28645  
828-754-3781

*Breaking the chains of addiction*

AUTO  
NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
LENOIR NC  
PERMIT NO 280

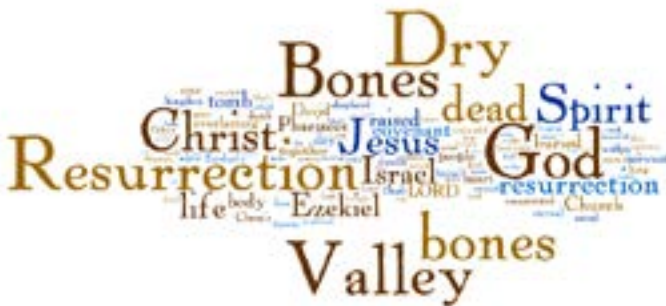
\*

\*

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

. . . . .

\*



## In This Issue:

Finishing Strong.....Pastor Paul Pruitt

Royal Tea

New Life.....Mrs. Regina Kelly

Testimonies

Free From Condemnation.....Pastor Zac Starnes

Flight to Emptiness.....Pastor Don Loss

Prayer Requests