

Jan./Feb. 2026

Bethel

Colony of Mercy

Breaking the chains of addiction

Since 1948



A New Year, A Renewed Call!

As Bethel steps into a new year, we do so with gratitude, humility, and also a clear-eyed understanding of the season before us. Addiction continues to shape the worlds of so many people, families, churches, and communities across our nation and here in North Carolina. **The good news is recent data shows signs of progress, but the need for long-term, Christ-centered recovery remains urgent.**

According to data from the (CDC), the United States recorded an estimated 76,516 drug overdose deaths for the 12-month period ending in 2025—a 24.5% decline from the previous year. For the full calendar year of 2024, the CDC estimates between 80,400 and 81,700 overdose deaths nationwide, down nearly 27% from 2023, these national trends reflect meaningful progress. North Carolina has seen even more dramatic improvement. Data from (NCDHHS) shows overdose deaths fell by 35% between April 2024 and April 2025, one of the largest declines in the nation. As reported before there were 12 deaths a day due to overdose. They are now reporting that it has gone down to 8 deaths a day.

Public health leaders largely attribute this decline to the widespread availability of Narcan and expanded harm reduction strategies. As the CDC has noted, these interventions have played a significant role in preventing fatal overdoses. We are deeply thankful for every life saved. **At Bethel Colony, we affirm without hesitation that a life saved today matters.**

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). We believe vigilance, compassion, and action must go hand in hand.

Yet we must also ask a necessary question: what comes next? Much of the current strategy emphasizes

long-term dependence on substances such as Methadone or Suboxone, along with expanded access to needles and medications. While these approaches may reduce immediate risk, they do not offer lasting freedom. **Dependence remains to be dependence, even when it is medically managed.**

History shows that when substances are made more accessible, use increases along with addiction and related harms. The widespread availability of alcohol, the saturation of communities with ABC stores, and the legalization and commercialization of cannabis follow the same pattern. Recent national data confirms that for the first time, daily cannabis use now exceeds daily alcohol use in the United States. Alongside this shift, treatment providers and researchers report rising THC dependency and increased incidents of cannabis-induced psychosis—conditions rarely seen at this scale in previous generations.

“All things are lawful for me,” writes the Apostle Paul, “but I will not be dominated by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12 ESV). **At Bethel, we believe the answer to addiction is not lifelong management through substances, but transformation through Jesus Christ.**

“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). On both our Men’s and Women’s campuses, we witness daily transformation through long-term, Christ centered relationship rooted in biblical counseling, discipleship, daily responsibilities, structure and intentional community life that reflects the church. Graduates’ testimonies remind us that what God begins at Bethel continues far beyond our gates, restoring families and strengthening churches.

As we prayerfully review our budget and steward the resources entrusted to us, we are also preparing for the future God is placing before us. **At our Women’s Campus, we now stand at the same crossroads the Men’s Campus faced years ago; a moment when expansion is no longer optional, but necessary.**

The number of women seeking help continues to grow, and many arrive as mothers. Nationwide, **fewer than 10% of addiction treatment facilities offer programs specifically designed for women.** Even more sobering, **fewer than 3% allow children to live on-site with their mothers during residential treatment.** To faithfully meet this need, we must expand our campus to include staff housing and future family-based programming. One home is already planned (with the septic system installed) and we are now prepared to pour the footers. Our prayer is to complete this first home and immediately begin construction on a second one.

At the same time, architectural drawings for a future lodge on the Women's Campus have reached the mechanical stage. This lodge will be critical in our growth to be able to accommodate more ladies and, in the future, their children. This structure will contain our cafeteria, classroom, check-in office, counseling offices, and much more.

The Men's Campus has been built over 70 plus years of faithful obedience. We are thankful for the growth over the years and we believe this season is different. The need is urgent, the harvest is ready, and we do not believe it will take 70 years to build the Women's Campus. We believe the Lord is saying: ***"Enlarge the place of your tent... do not hold back."*** (Isaiah 54:2)

Thank you to all who give; churches, alumni, and friends who continue to stand with Bethel Colony. **Together, we can build faster for the cause and offer not just survival, but true freedom and lasting hope through Jesus Christ.** Please consider not only your monthly gift but how you, your community, your church can help us accomplish this next stage of growth.

Pastor Paul and Stacy Pruitt
Executive Director

BETHEL COLONY OF MERCY, INC. OPERATING BUDGET
MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CAMPUSES
Combined Budget **2025-2026**

INCOME	
10- Contributions	\$916,090.00
14- Sales Tax Refund	\$15,000.00
15- Fund Raiser	\$50,000.00
16- Pay Phone	\$27,000.00
18- Estates & Foundations	\$100,000.00
19- Entry Fee Donation	\$13,000.00
20- Canteen	\$48,000.00
22- Edward Jones	\$90,000.00
23- Entrance Fee	\$130,000.00
24- Other & New Const.	\$13,000.00
25- Lawn Care	\$69,000.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$1,471,090.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	
26- Utilities	\$170,000.00
28- Vehicle	\$45,000.00
30- Food Services	\$39,000.00
32- Telephone	\$8,500.00
33- Pay Phone	\$300.00
34- Public Relations	\$50,000.00
36- Office Supplies	\$8,700.00
37- Web Donation Fees	\$3,000.00
38- Postage	\$8,070.00
40- Medical	\$7,100.00
42- Homecoming	\$5,000.00
44- Christmas	\$5,800.00
46- Conference & Travel	\$600.00
48- Chr. Ed.	\$6,000.00
50- Recreation	\$2,800.00
51- Media	\$5,150.00

52- Floral	\$300.00
54- Computer	\$14,000.00
56- Misc. Items	\$300.00
57- Off Campus Work	\$12,000.00
58- Work Projects	\$200.00
59- Heavy Equip	\$10,000.00
60- Housekeeping	\$10,500.00
62- Maintenance	\$28,000.00
64- Property & Lib. Ins	\$77,000.00
66- Auto Insurance	\$12,000.00
68- Lawn & Garden	\$6,000.00
70- Pest Control	\$600.00
72- Equipment	\$4,000.00
73- Other Construction	\$5,000.00
74- Remodel	\$25,000.00
75- New Housing	\$78,000.00
76- Property Taxes	\$1,970.00
77- NC Sales Taxes	\$15,000.00
78- Land	\$0.00
80- Salaries for 32 employees	\$674,000.00
82- Social Security	\$42,000.00
84- Treasurer Exp	\$7,500.00
86- Staff Insurance	\$74,000.00
90- Internet	\$4,500.00
92- Benevolent Fund	\$4,200.00
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$1,471,090.00

*WHERE GOD GIVES
VISION HE
ALWAYS MAKES
PROVISION*

From November 1, 2024
to October 31, 2025

Bethel Colony Men's Campus:

Serviced 466 men
Baptized 82 men
Served 97,239 meals
Held 158 worship services
Held 364 teaching sessions

Bethel Colony Women's Campus:

Serviced 101 women
Baptized 26 women
Served 15,828 meals
Attended 158 worship services
Held 364 teaching sessions

**Dual Campus Cost Breakdown
(w/o construction, housing, remodel
& land)**

\$32.25 per day (per man/woman
x's man days here)
\$3,421.05 per day
\$24,013.20 per week
\$104,057.20 per month
\$1,248,686.40 per year

Near the end of 2025, three of Bethel's staff members retired. God has faithfully provided capable, gifted, and godly persons to fill the gaps left by these retirements.

In September, 2025, Shirley Shiflett retired after serving in Accounts Receivable for 11 years. Shirley is still serving in a volunteer capacity at the Women's Campus as well as decorating the Men's Campus for special occasions and seasons.

Kristy Starnes, wife of Pastor Zac Starnes, is now handling Accounts Receivable and we are delighted to have her on staff. She continues to work full-time in the public school arena while fulfilling her responsibilities at Bethel.

In October, 2025, Pastor Loss and I (Cathi Loss) retired after 41 years serving the Lord at Bethel. Pastor Loss served as Associate Director and Director of Counseling. I served as Business Manager which involved several different responsibilities. Pastor Loss is remaining involved by teaching two classes each week, preaching when needed, and serving on Bethel's Board of Directors. I continue to edit our newsletter which I enjoy very much! Thank you for reading it and praying for Bethel's board, staff, and students.

Pastor Robbie Frye and Pastor Josh Alphin have joined Bethel's staff as pastors/counselors. Both of these men are graduates of Bethel's program and are very qualified to serve the Lord and those He brings here.

Mindy Alphin, wife of Josh Alphin, is Bethel's new Business Manager and is doing a fantastic job fulfilling all those responsibilities.

It is our joy to introduce them to you by way of their testimonies. For more information about their experience and education, please look them up on Bethel's website.

"Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will do it." | Thessalonians 5:24 NASB



One of the most impactful parts of my personal testimony that I feel compelled to share is the realization that for thirty years, I lived with a false assurance of salvation. Growing up in a loving home with a supportive mother, stepfather, and two wonderful siblings, I had what many would define as a good Christian upbringing. On the surface, life seemed stable, especially as I found financial success in the Real Estate industry. However, beneath that veneer, a subtle addiction began to take root in my life, ultimately leading to full-blown alcoholism and a methamphetamine addiction.

It wasn't until my second attempt at rehabilitation from drugs and alcohol that I truly encountered my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. During this pivotal moment in November 2019, He revealed to me that my faith was not genuine. This experience transformed my life in ways I had never imagined. The Bible, which had previously been just a book to me, became a living presence. I made the conscious decision to draw near to Christ daily for fellowship and accountability. As stated in John 1:14, ***"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,"*** this realization filled me with grace, hope, and guidance.

One of my mentors wisely said, "The Lord is the perfect trainer." Since that encounter with Jesus, I have experienced God restoring so many aspects of my life that I had either taken for granted or neglected. I'm blessed to have a beautiful wife, Ashley, and two amazing teenage children, Hayden and Lexy. God has begun to teach me what it truly means to be a godly man and to lead my family in accordance with God's original intentions for the Christian home. The patriarch Joshua said it best, ***"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"*** (Joshua 24:15).

God has also been guiding me to serve Him according to the commandments and teachings of Jesus Christ. It was during my stay at Bethel Colony of Mercy that I felt the stirring in my heart: the call to make disciples, as the Lord stated in Matthew 28:19, which is not merely a suggestion for the body of Christ but an imperative. This revelation led me to further my education by attending Fruitland Baptist Bible College, where I recently completed an associate's degree in Religion and Christian Ministries.

Moreover, I am honored to serve now as a pastor/counselor at Bethel Colony of Mercy. Through my personal testimony and education, I hope to show those around me that God desires so much more for His children. **There truly is freedom in Christ, and I firmly believe that deliverance from a life of addiction is not only possible but a beautiful reality waiting to unfold for others who seek the One who can deliver them. "Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed"** (John 3:36). *Pastor Robbie Frye*



I made the decision to follow Christ at a young age, and through the years God has shown me that trusting Him often means surrendering my own plans and expectations. In high school, I met the man who would become my husband, and after we married, we faced seasons that challenged both our faith and our marriage. Those experiences stretched me spiritually and taught me the importance of grace, forgiveness, and perseverance, even when the path forward felt unclear.

Through that season, God worked in my heart and reminded me that His ways are higher than my own. As I learned to surrender control and trust Him, He replaced uncertainty with peace and strengthened my faith.

What once felt overwhelming became a place where God showed His faithfulness and power to redeem even the most difficult circumstances.

In 2013, my husband came to Bethel Colony of Mercy, where God transformed his life and called him into ministry. He has now served on staff for over nine years, sharing the hope and freedom found in Christ. We recently celebrated 21 years of marriage and are blessed with two wonderful children. Today, I have the privilege of serving alongside my husband and the dedicated staff at Bethel, witnessing firsthand how God continues to restore lives and families.

I hold a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and a Master's degree in School Counseling, with over ten years of experience in education and eight years in customer service. I am thankful that God has opened this opportunity to serve others through the experiences He has faithfully woven together.

Mrs. Kristy Starnes



Our Bethel Story: Twenty years in the making, but THIS is just the beginning... ***“And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens! And you who live in the heavens, rejoice! But terror will come on the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you in great anger, knowing that he has little time.”*** — Revelation 12:11-12 NLT



There is not a family that has not been affected by addiction, evil, or earthly struggles. Our family is no different. However, we have seen the power of God in drawing us to Himself, the peace of yielding to Him, and the majestic works of His hand upon our lives.

Mindy's Story: In 2005, Gary (a 2005 Bethel Graduate) brought me to Bethel Colony of Mercy for the first time. It was a special place to him, and it soon became the same for our family. Through Gary and Bethel, I saw that God truly changes people—radically transforming them into new creations in Christ. Over the years, we became close friends with the Pruitts and planned to serve at Bethel after our children were grown.

Eventually, life happened. What was once a burning desire began to fade, feeling like an unreachable goal due to church hurt, health limitations, and addiction to prescription medication. In 2017, we began to dream again. Gary was finally scheduled for a surgery that we hoped would release us from those physical bonds. However, his healing was not found on this earth. The Lord brought a healing only He can provide, and Gary was called Home in March 2018.

“Good people pass away; the godly often die before their time. But no one seems to care or wonder why. No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come. For those who follow godly paths will rest in peace when they die.” — Isaiah 57:1-2 NLT

This left me happy for Gary, but lost for myself. I had always envisioned serving in ministry beside my husband. Yet, I clung to the promise that ***“all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”*** (Romans 8:28).

The Restorer of All Things The Lord has a beautiful way of working for His good; He literally brought Josh to my doorstep. Josh (a 2014 Bethel Graduate) shared the same heart and desire to help others find freedom found in Christ Jesus. His heart and love for others was one of the most beautiful things I've ever witnessed.

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” — Philippians 1:6 NLT

Josh's Story: I first learned of Bethel Colony from my cousin. Through my time at Bethel, I learned that it is NOT a “rehab”—it is a **Life Transformation Center**. The Lord got hold of me in 2014, and I have been loving Him and others ever since.

Our Journey Together: In 2019, Mindy and I married. We became close friends of Bethel Colony, walking the path the Lord called us to while being mentored by the Losses and the Pruitts. When we finally yielded and gave God our “yes,” He made the path straight.

“Then Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to Bethel.’ But Elisha said, ‘As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!’ So they went down to Bethel.” — 2 Kings 2:2 NKJV

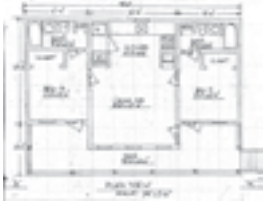
So, we went down to Bethel! We were serving as Youth Pastors at our home church, Antioch Church of Erwin PFWB, when we were commissioned to serve at Bethel Colony of Mercy. We also serve in leadership at RISE Church in Dunn.

We love learning from the men and women at Bethel Colony. It is our safe haven and truly an honor to serve here.

Pastor Josh and Mindy Alphin

Please join us in praying for the much-needed new staff housing.

God has directed us to expand our borders at the Women’s Campus so that we can reach more women caught in the throes of addiction. In order to obey His direction, we must have more staff housing. It is our desired plan to completely finish one new staff house and at least have a good start on the construction of a second house by the end of 2026.



Floor plan



pouring the footers

Thank you for praying specifically for the following:

*Needed finances for these two houses
Materials for building both houses
Builders – laborers for the harvest
Meeting our timeline goal*



AI rendition of completed house

WOMEN’S CAMPUS 4th ANNUAL 2026 Royal Tea - “AS IT IS IN HEAVEN”

Please note high-
lighted changes in
venue and price.

Sponsored by:

THE BANQUET
SHOPPE
LENOIR, NC

Event Date and Time: Saturday, May 2, 2026, 12:00 noon – 3:00 pm

Event Address:

**Mountain Grove Church
2485 Connelly Springs Rd.
Granite Falls, NC 28630**



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

Speaker:

Regina Kelly, Women’s Campus Co-Director

Cost:

\$40 per person; \$200 per table (seating 8)

Childcare will be offered for \$10 per child for children age 9 and under.. *Registration is Required* A children’s meal (chicken tenders and fries) will be available to children during the event in the childcare area.

(Please note: Children registered for childcare will not have a seat in the Royal Tea event.)

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



For more information contact:

Donna Bowman

donnabowman@bethelcolony.org

828-754-3781 ext. 130



Tested By Fire

Having looked at the front of one of my well used Bibles [a small NKJV (4X6 inches) bought in April of 2004] I ran across some notes in the front of it. At the top of the page I saw the phrase **“tested by fire”** taken from I Peter 1:7. (The Greek word “tested” indicates a continuous, repeated action). Bethel Colony gives thorough training to prepare students for the fire. I like to say that graduating from Bethel is the equivalent of “ranger training”. A paratrooper myself, I was drafted November 15, 1966, at 21 years old during the Vietnam War. I was recruited for airborne training in February while attending a military intelligence class in March 1967 at Fort Holabird, Maryland. After graduating, a fellow student and I got orders to Ft. Benning for Jump School. All the other students in our class got orders for Vietnam. After graduating from Airborne School and earning paratrooper wings, I received orders for Ft. Bragg NC at the 218th Military Detachment Unit of the XVIII Airborne Corp. After serving my tour of duty I exited out in September 1968. I re-entered SIU and completed a School of Business degree in 1972. Eight years later I wanted to re-enter the military and was accepted in August 1976 being 30 years old. I asked to go to an Airborne unit and the recruiter sent me to Panama. When I got to Panama I discovered there was no airborne unit in Panama at that time. Go figure! I received my jungle training as an MP with the 193rd Infantry Brigade completing a two-year assignment. The insignia of the 193rd Infantry Brigade which we wore on our sleeve was **“No Ground to Give”**. A good slogan for Christian soldiers! The slogan is on the back of Bethel’s newly printed T-shirts with the scriptural reference (Ephesians 6:10-11). Bethel Colony’s logo is printed on the front. The cross that breaks the chains of bondage. Bethel Colony is equipped to disciple students to be good soldiers of God. (II Timothy 2:3-4) **“You must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”**

The apostle Peter writes to his disciples to endure persecution and trials, establishing a Christ-centered witness in the fires of tribulation which all us will have to endure. This will reveal testimony of the validity of one’s faith. **“--- who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation to be revealed in the last time. In this you, GREATLY REJOICE though now for a little while, if need be, you have BEEN GRIEVED by VARIOUS TRIALS, that the GENUINENESS OF YOUR FAITH being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is TESTED BY FIRE, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”** (I Peter 1:5-7) This fire is a refining fire. *“A biblical metaphor for a purifying that tests and refines a person’s faith and character, removing impurities like sins of lusts, greed, rebellion, and pride. The dross of the soul to make them more holy. This*

purification is often accomplished through trials and suffering, but unlike a destructive fire, it is a purposeful, loving process where God is actively making believers more like Christ.” (St. Benedict Classical Academy)

All are facing the heartaches, bruises, and hardships of life. Those of us who are in Christ must remain faithful in the storms of life. The waves are high and turbulent but He has engraved you on the palm of His hand. **“See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands.”** (Isaiah 49:16) Multitudes are wandering in the deserts of despair having abandoned God. Dysfunctional in the mind, emotions, and abuse of the body the fire of trials has consumed them, having no faith. If they have a god, it is a god of their own understanding handling the Word of God deceitfully, perishing in their darkness. **“But even if our God is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”** (II Corinthians 4:3-4)

You say what shall I do? If you’re lost, come to Christ, as the Philippian jailer did when he brought Paul and Silas out of the jail. **“And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs what must I do to be saved?’ So, they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”** (Acts 16:30-31) Refer also to Romans 10:9-10.

Peter’s disciples have evidence of an efficacious faith. **“--- your faith and your hope is in God. Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit ---.”** (I Peter 1:22) Therefore, they are kept by the power of God through faith. (I Peter 1:5) An introduction to the saints in the letter of James in my NKJV Bible says it clearly about being kept by the power of God through faith: **“Faith endures trials. Trials come and go, but strong faith will face them head-on and develop endurance.”** Those who have a lack of knowledge of scripture, are out of fellowship with the saints and the Lord Jesus Christ, and are living the faith in name only will experience the devastation of their lives. If you identify with the latter, it is time to get serious with your life with Christ. Get back in the Word, the fellowship of your local church, pursuing the Lord, and prove you are a disciple of Christ. **“But you, O man of God, flee these things** (temptations, harmful lusts, love of money) **and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith ---.”**

(I Timothy 6:11-12) Acknowledge that your faith may be tested by fire. Train well as a good soldier.

Where the Grace Blows
Pastor Don Loss
Director of Counseling





Ramah Reflections

If You're Gonna Pray...

“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

--James 1:6-8

There is an old gospel song that says “If you’re gonna pray, don’t worry, and if you’re gonna worry, don’t pray.” I grew up listening to that song, and at first I thought it was weird to tell people not to pray. I think I heard it as “if you worry, don’t pray about it.” But as I have gotten older, I have understood the principle of these lyrics in light of James 1:6-7. Worry is not something that we as mortal humans can just decide we won’t experience, but we do have a choice on what we do with worry when it shows up. The concept in the lyrics of this gospel song is that worry and true prayer cannot coexist and produce results.

When we worry, we focus entirely on the problems in front of us, to the neglect of our trust in the nature of God. As a worrier, I could take my prayer to the Lord, saying “Please, God, fix this problem,” but never actually trust that He can or wants to do that. Worry holds onto control of the outcome. By definition, worry is to be troubled about outcomes, and only God has control of outcomes. Sometimes our worry stamps from a fear that God’s outcome will not be the outcome we want. If I trust God to provide for my needs, then He closes the door on a job I really wanted, I can get upset that He didn’t produce my outcome. I worry that things will not go according to my expectation or my desire. This is why true prayer and worry cannot coexist. Worry still holds on to ownership of the outcome, while prayer relinquishes it.

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, He taught them to say ***“Your kingdom come, Your will be done”*** (Matthew 6:10). We can recite the Lord’s prayer and completely forget what it actually means. It means that I don’t get to have control of any outcomes, but I desire God’s ultimate outcomes.

When I worry, I forget this in favor of my kingdom, the kingdom of my thoughts and desires, being maintained. True prayer can acknowledge my desires, but it quickly puts them aside in favor of God’s will. Jesus modeled this for us in His prayer in Gethsemane: ***“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will”*** (Matthew 26:39). Jesus did not pretend that His desire in that moment was identical to what God required of Him. He acknowledged that He did not want the cup of suffering God had prepared for that moment. We can do the same thing. We can say “God, I don’t want to have to deal with this problem, so please take it away.” But if we never graduate from identifying our will before the Lord to submitting our will to Him in favor of His ultimate plan, we will always struggle with worry that His will is not ours. We will worry over our little kingdoms instead of acknowledging God’s. It is this that makes us double minded.

James 1 tells us to ask God for wisdom, but not to expect that we will receive anything from Him if we do not ask in faith. Faith is trust in God, His Character, and His word. An unsubmitted heart worries that God’s inexorable character will not bend to his or her own petty will. That’s not how we put it to ourselves, but it is true nonetheless. If we pray in faith, we pray with confidence, understanding that God’s will shall be done. We are safe as long as we are in His will. Our plans may not be safe, but we are. The struggle here is to choose to accept the offered safety of God’s will in favor of the perceived safety of our own desires and expectations. This is where we must die to ourselves. Only then will we learn to truly ***“be anxious for nothing”*** (Philippians 4:6).

Blessed beyond measure,

Mrs. Regina Kelly

Women’s Campus Co-Director





Growing in Faith in 2026

There is one thing we will witness at the beginning of every year and that is “resolutions”. Many people set goals for their health, finances, or careers. The goals usually have something to do with an area that feels as if you are lacking and want to improve or grow in. While setting goals dealing with earthly things can be valuable, Scripture calls followers of Christ to prioritize something even more important, and that is one’s spiritual growth. In 2 Peter 1:5–9, the apostle Peter lays out a clear and practical path for a follower of Christ to grow in their faith. These verses remind us that spiritual maturity does not happen by accident. Spiritual maturity requires intentional effort that is empowered by God’s grace.

Peter starts with **faith** because it is the foundation of the Christian life. Faith is trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, but it does not stop there. Growing faith learns to depend on God daily for wisdom, strength, and obedience. Faith anchors us when circumstances are uncertain and reminds us that God is faithful even when life is difficult. As we enter a new year, faith challenges us to rely less on ourselves and more on the Lord in every area of life.

To faith, Peter says we must add **virtue**, or moral excellence. Virtue reflects a life committed to holiness and integrity. It is the determination to do what is right even when it is not accepted by others or even if it is inconvenient. In a culture that often celebrates compromise, virtue calls followers of Christ to live differently. Spiritual growth in 2026 will require clear convictions, an honest response, and a willingness to honor God in our decisions regardless of what the world says or thinks.

Next, Peter emphasizes **knowledge**. He is not merely writing about head knowledge, but spiritual understanding that is rooted and centered in God’s Word. Knowledge helps followers of Christ be able to discern truth from lies and to apply biblical principles to everyday life. A growing Christian by default requires one to be a learning Christian, continually shaped by Scripture. In the coming year, growth will require consistent time in God’s Word, allowing Scripture to renew our minds and guide our decisions.

Peter then highlights **self-control**, a discipline that allows followers of Christ to process their desires and practice self-denial rather than be ruled by them. Self-control affects every area of a person’s life. It can affect how one uses their time, manages their emotions, and responds to different temptations. It is a fruit of the Spirit that when produced will be a marker for the follower of Christ that they are walking with maturity and spiritual strength. As we move into 2026, self-control will be essential in a world full of distractions, consumerism, and excess. Growth begins with small, daily choices to

say no to the flesh and yes to the Spirit of God.

Spiritual growth also requires **perseverance**. Perseverance is the ability to remain faithful through trials, delays, and disappointments. Many followers of Christ begin the Christian life with much enthusiasm on fire for the Lord, but true maturity in Christ is revealed through one’s endurance. Perseverance keeps us steady when prayers seem unanswered. Perseverance is what takes us from the valley through the flatlands and to the mountain top. In 2026, perseverance will remind us that God is at work even when we cannot see immediate results.

To perseverance, Peter adds **godliness**. Godliness reflects a life that is more concerned with pleasing God and honoring His presence than the things of this world. It is not limited to church attendance, but it influences every aspect of life, work, family, and personal conduct. Godliness develops when believers live with an awareness that their lives belong to God. As we grow spiritually, our hearts become more concerned with the things of God and less concerned with us.

Peter then points to **brotherly kindness**, emphasizing the love that should be shared within the body of Christ. Spiritual growth is never meant to be an isolated thing, and no one is an island. How we treat fellow brothers and sisters in Christ reveals so much about our spiritual maturity. Brotherly kindness includes patience, forgiveness, encouragement, and unity. In the year ahead, growth may require healing relationships, extending grace, and choosing unity over division within the body of Christ.

Finally, Peter concludes with **love**. The highest expression of spiritual maturity. Love reflects the heart of Christ and extends beyond what is convenient and beyond one’s personal preference. The love of Christ is sacrificial, selfless, and unconditional. All spiritual growth should lead to greater love for God and for others. Love is the ultimate evidence that Christ is working in us.

Peter closes with both **a promise and a warning**. If these qualities are increasing, believers will be fruitful and effective in their knowledge of Christ. If they are neglected, spiritual blindness and stagnation follow (vv. 8–9). Growth is not optional, it is essential to living a life that honors God.

As we step into 2026, the call of 2 Peter 1:5–9 is clear. **Spiritual growth happens one step at a time, through intentional effort and daily dependence on God.** The goal is not perfection, but progression. May this year be marked not only by new goals, but by deeper faith, stronger character, and greater love.

Pastor Zac Starnes
Associate Director

Fill out and mail your prayer requests to us.

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

“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.”

II Chronicles 7:14

Prayer Request: _____

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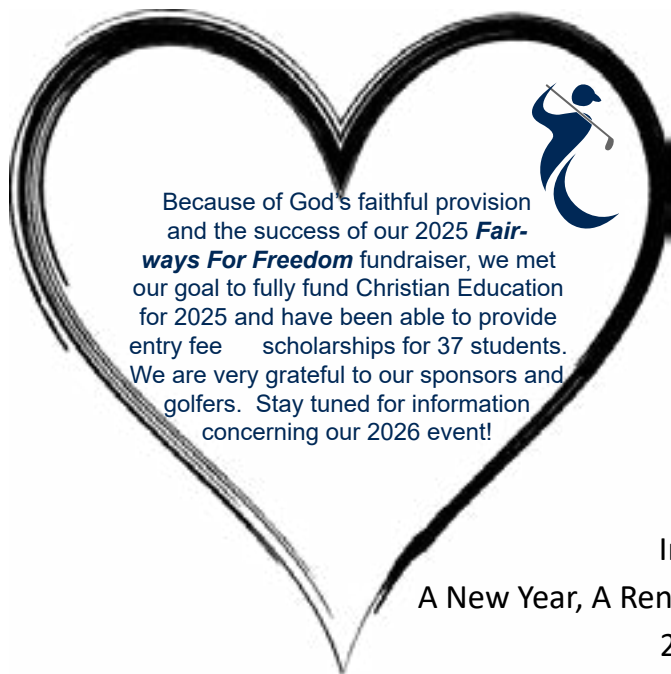
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Because of God's faithful provision and the success of our 2025 **Fairways For Freedom** fundraiser, we met our goal to fully fund Christian Education for 2025 and have been able to provide entry fee scholarships for 37 students. We are very grateful to our sponsors and golfers. Stay tuned for information concerning our 2026 event!



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