

Aug./Sept. 2026

Bethel

Colony of Mercy

Breaking the chains of addiction

Since 1948



Drawing Near to God

But as for me, how good it is to be near God! I have made the Sovereign Lord my shelter, and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things You do. (Ps73:28 NLT)

Over the past few months I have heard more people bring up how strong the presence of God is at Bethel. Even today two men were talking to me about this very thing while I am meditating on what God would have me write for this edition of our newsletter. I believe He was clearly pointing it out to me; hence, another facet of His presence. There are certain moments in life that never leave us. For many who have come to the hill of Bethel Colony, one of those moments was not simply graduating the program or restoring relationships - **it was experiencing the presence of God in a way they never had before.** Many of our graduates have shared similar testimonies over the years. They grew up hearing about God. Some had attended church. Others knew Bible stories or had family members who prayed for them. But somewhere along the road of addiction, brokenness, and hopelessness, God seemed distant. Then, during a chapel service, a morning devotion, a quiet prayer time, or even while working around the campus, **they encountered His presence.** What had once been **religion became relationship. Knowledge became personal experience. That is something only God can do.**

The psalmist Asaph understood this truth. After wrestling with discouragement and comparing himself to the prosperity of the wicked, everything changed when he entered the presence of God. His

circumstances had not immediately changed, but his perspective had. He concluded, ***“But it is good for me to draw near to God.”*** Those words are just as true today.

The greatest gift God gives us is not merely His blessings; **it is Himself.** His presence brings peace to anxious hearts. His presence brings conviction that leads to repentance. His presence restores hope to those who believe they have gone too far. His presence gives strength for another day and reminds us that we never walk alone. Scripture repeatedly reminds us of the blessings found in God's presence. In His presence there is fullness of joy. In His presence we find grace to help in our time of need. In His presence burdens become lighter because we discover that **the One carrying us is greater than anything we face.**

At Bethel, our desire has never simply been to help men and women become sober. **Sobriety without Christ is only behavior modification.** Our mission is to introduce people to Jesus Christ and disciple them into a lifelong relationship with Him. Overcoming is not just about breaking the chains of addiction, it is about **walking daily in the presence of the One who sets captives free.**

It is always encouraging when graduates return and tell us, ***“When I think about the presence of God, I think about Bethel.”*** While we are humbled by those words, we know the goal has never been for people to become attached to a place. Rather, our prayer is that what they first discovered here continues wherever God leads

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them. Bethel may have been where they encountered His presence, but we pray they have learned to stay connected to His presence every day in their homes and churches, and let the Lord overflow through them in their workplaces, and communities.

That is why **Homecoming** is so special! Each October, we have the privilege of welcoming back graduates, families, churches, volunteers, and friends from across the country. It is far more than a reunion. **It is a celebration of God's faithfulness.** We rejoice over lives that have been restored, families that have been reunited, and the countless testimonies that declare, **"Look what the Lord has done!"** If Bethel has been part of your story, we would love for you to come home. Join us for our **Homecoming and Bible Conference this October.** Come worship with us, reconnect with old friends, encourage those currently in the program, and most importantly, **gather together in the presence of the Lord.** There is something powerful about seeing generations of graduates standing side by side, praising the God who delivered them.

For those who faithfully support this ministry through prayer and financial giving, thank you. Every testimony of a changed life is possible because

God uses people like you. Your partnership provides a place where men and women can hear the Gospel, receive biblical discipleship, and experience the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

As we prepare for Homecoming, would you pray with us? **Pray that God's presence would once again fill every service, touch every heart, and draw many to Himself.** Pray for those who are still struggling with addiction, that they would find hope in Christ. Pray for our staff as they faithfully serve each day. And if the Lord leads you, consider making a special financial gift as we continue ministering to the hundreds of men and women who come through our program each year.

As the psalmist declared, "It is good for me to draw near to God." May that be the testimony of each of our lives. We look forward to seeing many of you this October as we gather once again, not simply to celebrate Bethel, but **to celebrate the God whose presence changes everything.**

We hope to welcome you home,

Pastor Paul and Stacy Pruitt
Executive Director





Ramah Reflections

Pressed; But Not Crushed



"We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body."
2 Corinthians 4:8-10

When Paul penned these words, I don't think he was using hyperbole. We know from Scripture how much the apostle went through in the course of his life in ministry. Later in the same letter, Paul recounts to the Corinthian church how he was beaten, shipwrecked, on the run from both Jews and Gentiles, betrayed, and much more. In reading the trials that Paul had to endure, we may sometimes feel like our issues are not quite significant enough to call on the power of heaven to address.

But the Bible does not say that God only addresses the big ministry problems, or the tribulations that clock in above a certain level. Jesus addressed this well when He said ***"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered"*** (Matthew 10:29-30). So then if God notices when a sparrow falls, does He not see our troubles, even if they are not shipwreck and famine and sword?

Many circumstances in our lives can feel like those described in 2 Corinthians 4:9-10. When someone in your life makes a decision that negatively impacts you, and you are dealing with both emotional distress and practical ramifications of what to do next, you may feel "hard pressed on every side." When you have a life changing decision to make and none of the options seem like good ones, you may feel like you are "perplexed." When someone

lies about you or spreads ill-founded rumors, you very well may feel "persecuted." When sickness and infirmity, and even death visit your family, you may feel "struck down." None of our troubles are insignificant to God, since they surely are significant to us. But the beauty of this verse is in all of the conjunctions. You may feel pressed on every side...YET not crushed. You may be perplexed, BUT you do not have to despair. You may be enduring persecution...BUT you are never forsaken. You may have been struck down...BUT you were not destroyed.

Many times our own emotions try to negate these God-given conjunctions. "I'm hard pressed on every side. I *feel* crushed." "I'm perplexed, and I *feel* despairing." ***But your feelings are not facts. The Word of God is truth.*** God's love and care for you defines your reality. And we find the evidence of God's love for us in His Word, and in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. After all, it was He who said ***"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"*** (Matthew 6:26).

So the next time you are tempted to believe that what you are personally going through is of little moment to God, remember this: ***If He cares about the birds, he surely cares about you.*** Your pressing, perplexity, and persecution all matter to the God who both sustains the mighty apostles and feeds the birds of the air.

Blessed beyond measure,

Mrs. Regina Kelly
Women's Campus Co-Director



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Join us for Homecoming on Sunday, October 4, 2026 to hear more exciting testimonies of God's redemptive work in the lives of our students!!

Bethel Student Testimonies

In spite of having a good childhood, I began using drugs as a young teenager and continued down that destructive road. I had heard about God throughout my life but I never really knew Him. When I ended up in jail about a year and a half ago due to the way I was living, I was given a small Gideon New Testament. I began reading it and came under so much conviction that tears began rolling down my face. Some men doing jail ministry came to see me one day and, even though I was in jail, it was the best day of my life! I gave my heart and life to Jesus Christ and was saved. I was so tired of the way I had been living and I knew God didn't want me to live that way anymore. When I got out of jail, there were still drugs in my clothing that they hadn't found and I threw them in the trash. Then I came to Bethel Colony of Mercy. Now I have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. I am praying and have a strong desire for God's Word. Even though I am not worthy, I have Jesus in my heart and am saved by His blood which counts me as worthy; because He is worthy. Philippians 3:13-14; ***"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."***

Tyler Gibson, age 38 – Bethel Men's Campus

For a long time, my life wasn't just affected by addiction—it was shaped by broken patterns, unhealthy thinking, and trying to fill deeper wounds with temporary fixes. What I struggled with on the outside was really a reflection of what was going on inside. I carried pain, fear, and emptiness that I didn't know how to face, so I coped in ways that only made things worse. Eventually, I reached a point where I knew I needed more than willpower—I needed real change. That's when I began to turn to God, honestly and without pretending, and He started working in places I had avoided for years. My sobriety became more than just putting something down—it became a process of healing, renewal, and learning who I really am. God didn't just remove things from my life; He began to rebuild me from the inside out. I'm still growing, still learning, but I'm no longer trapped in the same cycles. Today, I have a freedom that goes beyond sobriety—it's a new way of living, thinking, and trusting God - one day at a time. Please keep me in your prayers.

Psalm 46:5

Renee Stowe, Bethel Women's Campus

My search to be loved almost led me to my grave because I spent years looking for love in people instead of God. That search led me through abusive relationships, a failed marriage, struggles with alcohol, and the loss of custody of my child. When God called me to Bethel, He revealed that the love I had been searching for was already mine through Jesus Christ. As I grew closer to Him, I realized that Jesus had never left me and that His love was the perfect love my heart needed. He healed the wounded places within me, broke the chains that held me captive, and restored what had been lost. Today, my testimony is that true love, healing, and restoration are found in Jesus, and all glory belongs to Him. "We love Him, because He first loved us."

1 John 4:19

Jessica H., Bethel Women's Campus

Before I knew Jesus, I was lost and broken. Fear and rejection had a big hold on me since I was a child. I always felt like I needed reassurance just for existing. I was living a broken lifestyle and I met someone who I thought put me back together. It turned out to be abuse disguised as love. I turned to drugs and alcohol and got addicted to numbing the pain I didn't know how to handle. I came to Bethel twice, and both times they've welcomed me with open arms. The family I've gained and the hope restored is precious. Bethel planted a seed in my heart that grew. Now I want to know and love God more than anything. Please keep me in your prayers.

Revelation 14:2

Olivia Swann, Bethel Women's Campus

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Please post the following Upcoming Events on your calendar and/or refrigerator:

Bethel Colony of Mercy's 78th HOMECOMING CELEBRATION

Sunday, October 4, 2026

9:00 a.m.

Homecoming Message by Reverend Jonathan Carpenter

Combined Men's and Women's Campus Praise Team

Homecoming Dinner (after service).



We are excited to welcome Pastor Carpenter as a first-time speaker at Bethel's Homecoming. He and his church have supported Bethel's ministry for several years. For the last nineteen years Jonathan has pastored Exmore Baptist Church on the Eastern Shore of Virginia where he was saved at the age of nine and surrendered to preach at the age of ten. He and his wife, Stacey, have two children - Andrew and Bethany. He attended Liberty University in Lynchburg and Tabernacle Baptist Theological Seminary. "It is my desire to see the church revived and mobilized to reach the lost in these last days. To God be the glory in all things." 1 Corinthians 10:31

Bethel's Annual Bible Conference will follow:

Monday, October 5 – Friday, October 9

9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. daily

Our Bible Conference speakers this year will be:

Monday A.M. service - Pastor Jonathan Carpenter



Monday - Friday 7p.m. services - Pastor Stan Wilson

Pastor Wilson is returning this year as a favorite speaker for Bible Conference. He is the pastor at Pressley Memorial PH Church in Cross, SC. He was called to preach at the age of sixteen, and he has eight years of experience in pastoral ministry. He graduated from Emmanuel College in 2015 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education and has recently earned a Master of Ministry Degree. He and his wife, Abby, have two children, Kerrigan and Rebekah.

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FAIRWAYS TO FREEDOM



19th Annual Fundraiser and Golf Tournament

Fri. Oct. 23rd and/or Sat. Oct. 24th

Check in and lunch - 12:00 noon

Cedar Rock Country Club

Lenoir, NC

Building on our Legacy, Shaping our Future

- Two days to select from this year!
- All monies raised will go towards expanding our Women's Campus and our Entry Fee Scholarship fund.
- Multiple Sponsorship Levels are available (some include a foursome in the tournament)
- Scan the QR code or go to www.BCOMGolf.com to register your team or to select your sponsorship level.



- Introducing our **Legacy Level** Sponsorship.
- In Honor or Memory of someone whose life has been touched by Bethel Colony of Mercy.
- 100% of sponsorship goes towards our Entry Fee Scholarship Fund, allowing another man or woman the opportunity to break the chains of addiction.

-Presented By-

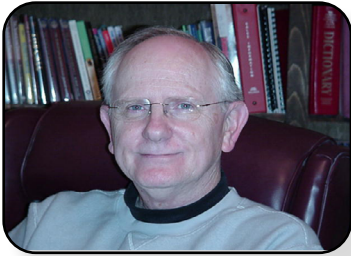


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Strong and Courageous

One of the basic commands of any believer is to stay in the will of God with a spirit to be strong and courageous. ***"Only be strong and courageous, that you may observe to do according to the law which Moses My servant commanded you; DO NOT turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you will prosper wherever you go."*** (Joshua 1:7) Those who walk faithfully obeying the Word of God will by God's sovereign grace develop a strong and courageous spirit. This is the fortress for victorious Christian living. Those who are trained well in the Word of God will be able to withstand the three enemies of our soul. Considering three enemies of our soul that reek of the spirit of the world. ***"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world --- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ---is not of the Father, but is of the world."*** (I John 2:15 & 16) Men of valor emanate courage and strength against any adversaries of our soul. Joshua with his "mighty men of valor" defeated ten kings at Gideon when the men of Gideon sent for Joshua at Gilgal. ***"Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And the Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not fear them. For I have delivered them into your hands; not a man of them shall stand before you.'"*** God is looking for men of valor to make them strong. ***"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole world, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."*** (II Chronicles 16:9) We see young men in spiritual warfare who are strong and courageous in the letter of I John; ***"I have written to you young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one."*** (I John 2:14b)

In the work *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian and Hopeful spied a sign on a fence, "By-Path Meadow", running parallel to the rugged road to the celestial city. Foolishly thinking that the meadow along the difficult road would be an easier travel, they went through the gate. Stepping out of the will of God they ended up in darkness and being taken captive by Giant Despair to his castle called Doubting Castle where they received beatings and starvation. They violated the command God gave to Joshua to ***"---do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left. That you may prosper wherever you go."*** (Joshua 1:7) Only by living the truth seated in the word of God can we be strong and courageous. As one has said, a passion for God is the greatest antidote towards sin. We grow in strength and courage by keeping ourselves virtuous in the way, walking according to the law of God, keeping his testimonies with the

whole heart. ***"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart."*** (Psalm 119:1-2)

The apostle Paul in his second letter to Timothy writes; ***"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God."*** (II Timothy 1:8) He writes specifically of his persecution on his first missionary journey. ***"--- persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra --- what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."***

In the command in Joshua 1:7, ***to be strong and courageous is not an option.*** The apostle Paul has emphasized to Timothy; ***"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."*** (II Timothy 1:13)

We are in the Lord's army and He will infuse in us the strength to persevere in the way. We are flying the flag of allegiance in our souls for Christ alone. Christ our Lord leads us to be triumphant. ***"Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in everyplace."*** We have been given a heart of grace to know Him. ***"The Lord declares, 'I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God.'" (Jeremiah 24:7)***

We have the command to be strong in the Lord with the armor of God. ***"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God THAT you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."*** (Ephesians 6:10-11) All through the passage of the whole armor of God is the spirit of valor. The admonitions are: ***"may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil"*** (v11) ***"that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all stand."*** (v13) ***"Stand therefore."*** (v14)

A final word of God for us who are valiant in the faith. ***"Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our adversaries."*** (Psalm 60:12) Words I trusted to keep me strong and courageous in the spiritual warfare of the ministry at Bethel Colony of Mercy.

Where the grace blows,
Pastor Don Loss
Pastor Emeritus





When Sin Sears the Conscience

One of the greatest deceptions of sin is that it hardens the heart or sears the conscience overnight. One sin does not cause a callous on the heart or cause the mind to grow numb to conviction. A heart gets calloused as sin is accepted gradually, dulling spiritual sensitivity until what once brought conviction in our lives barely stirs the conscience. The Bible describes this tragic progression as having one's conscience **"seared with a hot iron"** (1 Timothy 4:2 KJV). A seared conscience is not that we are unaware of sin, but we are desensitized to it. Like skin repeatedly burned until it loses feeling, **we can become so accustomed to sin that it no longer responds to God's loving correction.**

The conscience is a gift from God. It serves as an internal witness that bears testimony to right and wrong (Romans 2:14-15). When illuminated by the Holy Spirit and shaped by God's Word, it becomes a faithful guide that warns us before we wander too far from the Lord. We must understand that conviction is not condemnation. **Conviction is evidence that God still loves us enough to call us back.** Every time the Holy Spirit pricks our hearts, He is extending mercy before judgment which is evidence that we are not condemned.

Sin has a dangerous effect on the conscience. The first compromise often produces discomfort. The second feels easier. Eventually, **what once caused tears now produces excuses.** We begin to justify what we once confessed. This is the slow erosion of spiritual sensitivity. After his sin with Bathsheba, King David attempted to conceal his wrongdoing rather than confess it. The longer he resisted repentance, the heavier his heart became. In Psalm 32:3-4 he wrote, **"When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy on me."** God's conviction remained, but David's resistance prolonged his misery. Only when he confessed did restoration begin.

Sin never remains isolated. As the conscience grows dull, idolatry begins to flourish. **An idol is not merely a carved image; it is anything that captures the affection, trust, or devotion that belongs to God alone.** Whatever consistently occupies our time, thoughts, and hearts more than Christ has become an idol. Idolatry often grows unnoticed. Pride replaces humility. Success and independence replace dependence upon God. Comfort replaces sacrifice. Pleasure replaces holiness. Approval replaces obedience. The human heart was created to worship, and if it does not worship God, it will inevitably worship someone or something else. As seen throughout Israel's history; whenever God's people drifted from wholehearted devotion, idols filled the void. Their outward religion continued, but their hearts wandered far from God. They maintained ceremonies while abandoning surrender. God repeatedly declared that He desired obedience over empty religious activity because He was after their hearts.

The same danger confronts believers today. We can attend church faithfully while secretly bowing before the idols of money, entertainment, relationships, careers, comfort, or self. We sing praises to God, but our affections are elsewhere. Jesus warned in Matthew 6:21, **"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."** A seared conscience does not happen because God stops speaking or moving. It happens because we stop listening and responding. Every ignored conviction makes the next one easier to dismiss. Every act of delayed obedience weakens spiritual sensitivity. Every hidden sin builds another layer between the heart and the voice of God.

This is why Scripture warns us, **"Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts"** (Hebrews 3:15). God's voice is always an invitation toward life, freedom, and restoration. Delayed obedience only strengthens sin's grip but, the good news of the gospel is that no conscience is beyond God's ability to restore. The same God who warned Cain before he sinned, pursued David after he sinned, and restored Peter after he denied Christ three times, still pursues people today. His grace is greater than our failures, and His mercy reaches deeper than our shame.

When we confess our sins, God does more than just forgive us. He begins restoring our spiritual sensitivity. Ezekiel prophesied that God would remove the heart of stone and give His people a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). A softened heart hears God again and becomes more sensitive to conviction. A softened heart starts treasuring holiness instead of tolerating compromise. Revival can begin here. Before churches awaken, individual hearts must awaken. Before communities experience transformation, believers must allow God to search them. David prayed, **"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way."** (Psalm 139:23-24) Let that be your prayer today. If you are at a place of complacency, or dealing with a calloused heart, or have become numb to the things of God, ask yourself: Has sin become familiar? Have convictions become quieter? Have lesser things slowly claimed first place in my heart? If so, today is the day to respond. The Holy Spirit's conviction is not meant to drive you away from God but to draw you back into His loving presence.

The conscience can be dulled by sin, but it can also be awakened by grace. The idols can fall. The heart can soften. Fellowship with God can be restored. Christ still calls His people to repent, return, and walk in the fullness of His presence. **May we never become so comfortable with sin that we lose the ability to hear the gentle voice of the Shepherd calling our name.**

Pastor Zac Starnes
Associate Director



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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: _____

To send prayer request on-line click [here](#)

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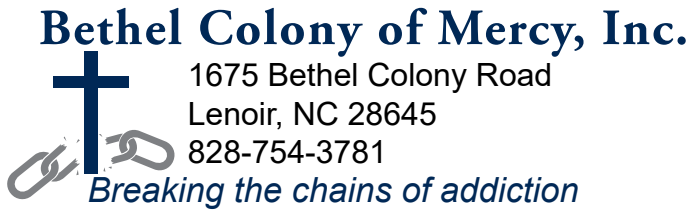
Bethel Lawncare

Bethel's Lawncare 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 Lawncare 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.



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HOMECOMING - CELEBRATING 78 YEARS
Sunday, October 4th, 2026 9:00 a.m.



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