



Steps of Faith

Faces of Faith in Our Community

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STEPS OF FAITH



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Walters works behind the scenes cleaning her church



Tina Walters has been cleaning White Oak Baptist Church every week for 13 years. | PHOTOS BY NELLIE ELLIS

BY NELLIE ELLIS
Staff Writer

Psalm 84:10 says, “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” This verse is preached in sermons, taught in Sunday schools, and even plastered on motivational Facebook posts.

But how often do we look for real life examples of this scripture?

Tina Walters has been cleaning White Oak Baptist Church every week for 13 years. When you ask her why she does it, she will tell you that she feels like the Lord’s there. “If I want to sing or if I want to pray, it’s me and Him so I really enjoy that.”

When many think of important jobs in the

church, the first thing that comes to mind is a pastor or a Sunday school teacher; hardly anyone thinks of those who work behind the scenes. Walters’ job isn’t glamorous in the public’s eye, but it’s one of the most fulfilling responsibilities she’s had in her life.

For Walters’, cleaning during the week isn’t a chore, it’s a privilege and refuge. “I feel so at ease here, and then once I clean I just love to look at the Lord’s house,” she said.

The responsibilities she holds are many. When she first started, Walters only cleaned the church house. As time went on, she said she would notice things that needed to be done and would take care of those items as well.

Now, she will go in and do everything from cleaning, setting up for dinners,

stocking drinks and supplies, to even making sure there’s water in the piano.

Walters says her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren depend on her a lot. When she isn’t at the church, she is often babysitting or helping out her family in anyway possible.

The church house allows her to step away from the outside world and spend quality time with God.

There’s no set schedule that Walters is required to follow; she is able to fit in her work around her family responsibilities. Walters is able to come in when she’d like, for as long as she’d like, anytime throughout the week.

This is perfect for her because it allows her to create her own routines and work at her own pace. She can consistently com-

plete her tasks no matter what the week brings. Walters said that through all the years she’s cleaned the church, there’s only been two times that she’s ever had to ask someone to come in and do it for her.

Although Walters takes pride and ownership in her work, there have been times when she has questioned her own abilities. At the age of 81, she believes that her work may not be as adequate as it has been in the past.

However, she has never acted on her thoughts because she feels like God isn’t through with her yet. “Several times I’ve thought I’d give it up and then it’s like something says, ‘no, not yet,’” she said.

Pastor of White Oak

SEE **WALTERS**, PAGE 3



Walters’ job isn’t glamorous in the public’s eye, but it’s one of the most fulfilling responsibilities she’s had in her life.

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WALTERS: When she isn't at the church, she is often babysitting or helping out her family



The responsibilities she holds are many. When she first started, Walters only cleaned the church house. As time went on, she said she would notice things that needed to be done and would take care of those items as well. | PHOTO BY NELLIE ELLIS



There's no set schedule that Walters is required to follow; she is able to fit in her work around her family responsibilities. Walters is able to come in when she'd like, for as long as she'd like, anytime throughout the week. | PHOTO BY NELLIE ELLIS

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Baptist Church Justin Spires is grateful that Walters is such a willing servant to God. He says that, because she is so faithful in what she does,

the church doesn't have to stress over creating schedules or finding volunteers.

"It stops all of that headache. It's a big load off my shoulders, it's a blessing," he said.

For Walters, she is just

doing what the Lord would have her do and loving the time she spends doing it.

"I feel like the Lord's got me here for a reason," she said, "I just hope I'm doing what he's wanting me to do."



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Faulkner retires after 25 years as director of Laurel River Baptist Association

Now at nearly 75 years old, Faulkner is retiring as Director of the Laurel River Missionary Baptist Association after 25 years in that role. Faulkner said he still wants to preach and/or pastor a church after his retirement.

| PHOTO BY NITA JOHNSON



BY NITA JOHNSON
Staff Writer

After 25 years as director of the Laurel River Baptist Association, Bro. Roy Faulkner decided it was time to clean out the book shelves and files he had collected over the years and retire.

There are many memories that accompany the items of memorabilia that line the shelves and desk of Faulkner.

His office features shelves filled with books - reference books of various sorts that he lends out to the many pastors and church leaders.

"I'm a prolific reader," he said. "I've already given away some of my collections to people and I'm extending my home office for others."

Faulkner said he never dreamed when he took the position of the Association's director that it would extend into a 25-year career. But he knew early on in life that he wanted to serve God and people.

"I was reared in a Godly home and I'm very thankful for that,"

he said. "I was raised in Lynch. My parents were from Woodbine and Rockholds but my grandfather worked for the railroad. They moved to Corbin but then went back to Lynch when my dad got a job at U.S. Steel, where he retired."

The family resided in Cumberland and immediately became involved with Central Baptist Church there. That is also where Faulkner gave his life to God, an act that launched his career in ministry.

"I got saved when I was 16," he said. "I will never forget it. It was on a Tuesday night of a revival. Our pastor was Bro. Jack Bruce, who later pastored at Swiss Colony Baptist. Bro. Bruce really influenced my life."

After graduating from Lynch High School, Faulkner attended Southeast Community College and then transferred to Cumberland College (now University of the Cumberlands) to finish his bach-

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FAULKNER: Says he hopes to continue his ministry by preaching at area churches

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

elior's degree. Having already been called to preach, Faulkner was ready and willing to serve God through the ministry.

It was during his last year of college that Faulkner began preaching at Totz Church.

"Pastor Thurmond Taylor at West Corbin Baptist Church called me and asked me to preach at Totz Church, which was by a coal mining camp. I went there to preach and there were nine people there. Myself, my mother, my father and grandmother were four of those there that first Sunday," he said, laughing. "I stayed there a year."

Seeing spiritual decisions made is primary for preachers and pastors but when Faulkner felt that his service was not productive, he began praying for guidance in his future. He had such an experience early in his career with a church.

"I was there for nine months and not one decision was made - no one was saved, no one joined the church," he said. "I prayed and asked God to show me if I needed to leave. We sang three verses of the invitation and no one made a move, so I told them then that that would be my last Sunday there."

But after the service, a woman who had been one of the 39 people attending church there approached him and said she was going to move her membership there if Faulkner stayed.

"I told her that I'd been praying about staying there and I would have stayed if someone had made a move," he said. "She tried to talk me into going back in and singing another verse of the invitation but I'd already told the church I was leaving."

Faulkner had previously received a call from the director of missions about filling in at Evarts Baptist Church in Harlan County.

"I went there as interim pastor and became pastor after six months," he said. "I was still single at that time but there was this pretty young woman named Kay who went there. She got saved and I baptized her and later married her. We saw that church grow from 40 for Sunday morning services to 150. We stayed there for 25 years, and Kay has stood by me all those years. I couldn't ask for a better wife."

Faulkner said their union has been successful because of Kay's deep faith and dedication.

"I always tell single preachers that when they look for a wife, find one who loves Jesus more than they love you," he said.

Faulkner said the 25 years in Evarts gleamed him many fulfilling experiences.

"I baptized 250 people, saw the church grow and preached over 500 funerals," he said.



Laurel River Missionary Baptist Association Director Roy Faulkner and his wife Kay when they came to Laurel County 25 years ago. | PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Two particular funerals, however, still bring tears to his eyes.

"There was a mine explosion. The two owners were friends of mine, so I went as a liaison and stayed at their office to help the families of the miners that were killed in the explosion," he said. "I'd go home to clean up and change clothes. They brought the men out on a Saturday morning. It was around 6 a.m. when they brought the first body out. It had started to rain a little but as it went on, the rain kept getting harder and harder. I was there, praying with the families.

"I'll never forget that morning," he said, as his voice choked with emotion. "During the next week, I preached the funerals of four of the five people that were killed. They had a joint funeral for the two brothers."

Despite that tragedy, the church continued to grow under Faulkner's pastorship as the first full time pastor.

"For years I was the only full time pastor from the city of Harlan to Virginia," he said. "Most churches couldn't afford a full time pastor. When some of the churches in that area didn't have a pastor, I would go and fill in and do funerals. Back then, it was a community ministry."

But the end of the mining boom brought an exodus of the population in that area and the church attendance suffered a drastic drop.

"At one time we had 2,500 in Evarts, but after the coal mining stopped, it dropped to 1,200," he said. "Kay and I enjoyed it there. I remember one revival we had that lasted three

weeks. I baptized 35 people, mostly adults."

But after 25 years at one church, Faulkner said he became "Holy Restlessness," a term he said he coined. Then he got a call from Bro. Johnny Jervis, who was on the board of the Laurel River Missionary Baptist Association and pastor of Swiss Colony Baptist Church.

"Bro. Jervis told me they needed a director of missions. I came over and preached to the executive board (of Laurel River Baptist Association) which was held at Providence Baptist," he said. "They voted unanimously for me, so I gave my two weeks notice and moved to London."

"That job was being the pastor to the pastors of the 36 churches in the association," he said. "I have greatly enjoyed that job - I've met great ministers and great people. When you work with churches and pastors like that, they become a part of your life."

But he again felt that he needed a change and decided to step down to enjoy some free time with his wife, who has some illnesses. He also said his own health was "not where it should be."

"But we've been here 25 years and this is home to us now," he said. "We're going to stay right here and I will be around to preach if some churches need someone to fill in while they don't have a pastor or if a pastor

needs someone to preach for them."

Faulkner has witnessed many changes in the procedures of church services - moving from the traditional church setting of pews and pulpits to auditorium style seating with stages and folding chairs for a more contemporary atmosphere.

"But there's just something about picking up that church hymnal, turning to a page and singing the verses of the old songs that's still with me," he said. "Now you have big screens on the walls and they've covered up the piano and organs and replaced them with guitars and praise bands."

The trend of more informal church services also extends to the style of clothing worn to church services.

"Now you see preachers get up to preach wearing blue jeans," he said. "I almost always wear a suit or a jacket and tie. I always looked at it that I am representing the King of Kings and I needed to look the part."

While he is always thankful for his experiences with the local churches, he said he hopes to continue his ministry by preaching at area churches.

"I hope I will be preaching and ministering to churches," he said. "My heart has always been in pastorate and I'd enjoy continuing to do that."

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Churches of many denominations are active in the community



Saint Boniface in Jellico. | PHOTO BY ANGELA TURNER

BY ANGELA TURNER

Staff Writer

Small towns like Jellico, Tennessee, Williamsburg and Corbin sit in the northeast-

ern corner of what's known as the Bible Belt with a majority of the families belonging to the Baptist denomination. Homecomings, Sunday special singing events and revival information can all be found in local com-

munity calendars and all play an important role in the Tri-County's faith and its culture.

Equally do the events and services surrounding all the other denominations — tiny in numbers, but large in hearts and spirit.

Andy Dunn, Reverend of St. Paul's Anglican Church, might have said it best when he said as a Christian, not denominational but just as a Christian, we have responsibility to Matthew 25:35. Dunn said every Christian should be reading that and taking it to heart.

And several churches — of multiple denominations — have teamed up to do great work in the community.

It was approximately 10 years ago when St Paul's Anglican Church felt the need to offer a service and decided on a community meal. Operating out of a small space on Main Street, the church and fellowship grew bigger than the building could contain.

Looking to move, Dunn said they found a spot, but it didn't have a place to cook large meals and host a community dinner that was growing.

Dunn said in perfect timing, John Burkhart offered the church to use a barn near St. John's Episcopal Church for the meals.

SEE DENOMINATIONS, PAGE 8



Sam Sosa, Angela Sosa, Ashley McDermott, Alex Sosa, and Kurt Sosa help serve during a Wednesday night community meal. | PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



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A sign painted on an old brick building lets people know Saint Boniface in Jellico is just up the hill. | PHOTO BY ANGELA TURNER

DENOMINATIONS: St. Paul's has been feeding the community from the barn

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

"It all happened within a week, so we believed it was God," noted Dunn.

St. Paul's has been cooking and serving, feeding members of the community from the barn for two years now in a barn near St. John's Episcopal Church in Corbin. They average approximately 60 people a week, a large increase from the two they initially fed 10 years ago on Main Street.

"Anyone who can come, comes," said Dunn. "We just cook until we get you full."

Kurt and Angela Sosa with Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Corbin volunteer at the barn almost every Wednesday. Over the last six months, the youth from Sacred Heart have started a leadership initiative for themselves, cooking and serving an entire meal from beginning to end on the last Wednesday of the month.

"It's been great. It gets the kids involved and they take care of everything," Dunn said. "It's been nice and it gives us a break too."

Katie Wise, who runs the youth group at Sacred Heart, said the youth are incredible and have really shown work ethic skills through this community meal.

"They look forward to it," Wise said. "It gets them out of their comfort zone and they are beginning to make relationships."

Born and raised Catholics, the Sosas say Sacred Heart is unique. It's a family, they say. They don't immediately leave after church, they stick around and catch up, they know each other.

"If I needed anything I know I can count on the people in the church and vice versa," Angela Sosa added.

When the Sosas first moved to Corbin, they dove into teaching youth group classes and spent time with an extensive project refurbishing a mobile home for a local family to live. Just one of the many outreach projects this church helps with.

Sosa and other parishioners are currently working on the church's annual Christmas giveaway.

Joe McMullen with St.

Boniface Catholic Church in Jellico and Julia Jones with Sacred Heart are by default, church historians, and both agree that the Catholic Church began to root in the area as those from Italy, Ireland, and Germany came to work in the coal mines.

Jones, born and raised in Corbin, said as the immigrants settled in coal camps they needed a place to worship. As the railroad progressed and many moved into Williamsburg and Corbin, so did the Catholic Church presence, although it has dwindled some now. St. Boniface only has 15 to 20 families attending.

Sacred Heart's church was first located on Laurel Avenue in downtown Corbin. Jones was one of the last two couples to be married in that church before a larger church was built on Master Street.

"We are there to serve," said Jones. "We work with other churches however we can. We are just trying to bring the love and presence of God to people in need."

Jones said, according to

the Gospel, we aren't to let your right hand know what

the left is doing.

"We aren't there to be

praised, we are there to serve," she said.

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Immanuel Baptist Church takes mission trips to Brooklyn, N.Y.

BY NELLIE ELLIS

Staff Writer

God commands us in Acts 13:47 to be a light unto others so that we can be a living testimony of our salvation. It is possible to accomplish this simply by following and sharing God's word in your everyday life. Some Christians may decide to take the verse a step further, and witness to areas outside of their home community.

This desire can be daunting because it forces many out of their comfort zone as they interact with unfamiliar cultures and surroundings. Luckily, booking a flight to a foreign country is not required to achieve the outreach you want.

One example is Immanuel Baptist Church's mission trips to Brooklyn, New York. These trips are perfect for those individuals who want to share their faith to others in new and diverse locations without having to leave the United States.

While it's not a foreign country, Brooklyn is New York's largest borough and is made up of people from all over the world. It's an area that exposes Christians to a variety of cultures and ideas that are hard to encounter in their own community.

"Brooklyn is really our entry into crossing cultures and sharing the gospel with them," said Immanuel's Next Step Pastor Brett Martin.

The mission trips to Brooklyn began after one of Immanuel's church members became stranded in the New York area while helping with disaster relief for Hurricane Sandy. Jamie Zelaya, a Brooklyn pastor, heard about their situation and took it upon himself to rescue and care for the relief team.

"It showed that there were people in New York who really were trying to share the love of Jesus," said mission trip leader, Jared Earnest.

From that realization, Immanuel decided to partner with Zelaya to help share the love of Jesus. As a result, the church sends three groups every year to Brooklyn with the goal of reaching others through consistency and conversation.

Zelaya focuses on sharing his



While it's not a foreign country, Brooklyn is New York's largest borough and is made up of people from all over the world. It's an area that exposes Christians to a variety of cultures and ideas that are hard to encounter in their own community. | PHOTO COURTESY METRO CREATIVE

ministry with a different ethnic or cultural group every year. He wants to reach the nations, and he believes that the best way to do that is by building relationships with the people in Brooklyn who represent various areas in the world.

"We talk a lot about hearing their story, sharing your story, and connecting that to God's story," explained Martin. He said that the members of the group would start conversations with others and follow-up with that by asking them out to coffee or inviting them to church.

The group revisits locations often and are consistent with the people they are trying to reach so that they can be better witnesses.

It allows Christians to boldly share their message without the threat of turning others away from God. The conversation and kindness displayed throughout the week invites non-believers to learn more about the love and mercy of Jesus Christ.

College student Channing Baker reflected on her personal experience with those conversations. "It was so sad to hear their stories and all their struggles they are going through but it was a great experience to be able to share the gospel with them and just pray for them," she said.

Another benefit of the mission trip is that it promotes personal

growth within those who participate and prevents them from becoming burnt out.

Each morning, Zelaya teaches the Bible. Practicing this ritual creates a greater hunger for God's word, and develops habits that endure beyond the mission trip. It also allows for time to reflect on the experiences of the day before and to pray for those who were encountered.

"Normally on missions you're pouring out to the point you feel worn out but we usually feel fulfilled, not only in what we're doing, but also filled ourselves and rested," Earnest said.

One of the core values of

Immanuel's ministry is to "go after people," and a huge aspect of that is learning how to make conscious efforts to share the gospel. "That's the main thing that we want people to take away," said Martin.

The structure of the mission promotes that attitude in those who go on the trip. Earnest said he has even had individuals come back who only had only been on the Brooklyn mission, but were ready to take a large leap and witness outside of the country.

Earnest says it is "because they've been trained, not only in urban evangelism, but also in being spiritually built up, fed, and encouraged."

Connect with faith this season



Reading scripture can be an integral part of participating in one's religion and bringing a faithful community together. Scripture is an essential component of weekly faith services, but the Bible can be embraced any day of the week.

Many may be surprised to discover that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt first declared the

week of Thanksgiving as National Bible Week in 1941. National Bible Week encourages people to read the Bible or listen to its verses. The event is sponsored by the National Bible Association and the US Catholic Council of Bishops. National Bible Week 2019 marks the 78th commemoration of the event.

The timing of National Bible Week was perhaps

intentional. The end of November marks the beginning of the season of thanks, faith and family. It's a time of year full of community- and family-centric holidays. Incorporating faith into the mix can make the celebrations even more complete.

SEE **FAITH**, PAGE 11

FAITH: Some ideas to be more faithful

Even though National Bible Week may have a decidedly Christian slant, people of all religions can choose to rekindle or fully embrace their respective faiths and make them a priority this time of year. The following are just a few ways to be more faithful in honor of this event.

- Pair youth with older adults and encourage them to read religious passages together.
- Attend a religious service one or more times during National Bible Week and throughout the holiday season.
- Choose a favorite piece of scripture and share with others why it is so meaningful to you.
- Get a head start on the Christmas season by rediscovering Biblical passages that refer to the birth of Jesus Christ.
- Visit services with a member of a different religion and learn about their texts and traditions.
- Share God's word in social media or exemplify it by being more patient, loving and supportive of people in your community.



Photo courtesy of
kanyewest.com

Top 10 Christian albums

The top Christian albums according to the Gospel Music Association on November 22 were:

1. **JESUS IS KING** by Kanye West
2. **Look Up, Child** by Lauren Daigle
3. **Christmas Eve & Other Stories** by Trans-Siberian Orchestra
4. **Burn The Ships** by for King & Country
5. **How Can It Be** by Laurel Daigle
6. **I Can Only Imagine — The Very** by MercyMe
7. **Rescue Story** by Zach Williams
8. **Voice of Truth: The Ultimate Collection** by Casting Crowns
9. **Therapy Session** by NF
10. **Only Jesus** by Casting Crowns



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