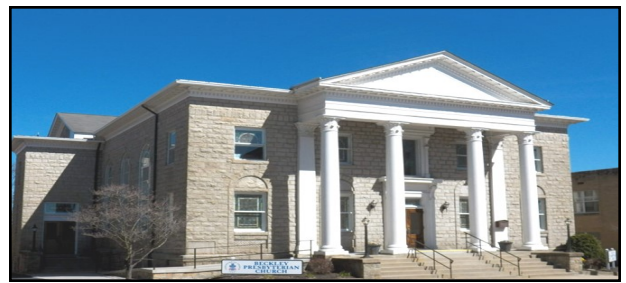


The Pipe Line

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May 25, 2022

A friend of mine was killed in a car crash this week.

Jim Thompson was driving this past Sunday evening when an oncoming driver crossed the centerline and her car collided head-on with the car driven by Jim. He was 66. Jim's wife Sherry and the couple's three grandchildren were all taken to the hospital, with non-life-threatening injuries. The driver of the other vehicle has been charged with driving while impaired, according to the N.C. Highway Patrol.

Jim was the former editor of the Jefferson Post in the northwest corner of North Carolina, and that's how I remember him. I initially wrote this first sentence to say, "A friend of mine was killed by a drunk driver this week." Jim would have edited that sentence and explained that we can't say "drunk driver" because the case hasn't been litigated and no one has been convicted of the legal charge of driving while impaired. There are hundreds of decisions like that which go into each edition of that community newspaper in the mountains, and Jim was on top of them all.

He left the newspaper when it was bought out and he didn't want to deal with all the changes that come with that. I remember that his last edition featured a heartfelt tribute written by his wife, about what a fine man he was. She spoke of how Jim was a lay pastor and what that meant to her.

Two weeks before he died, almost to the hour, Jim wrote a heartfelt tribute to his wife and posted it to his Facebook page. "Here's a photo from about 15 years ago of the most amazing, loving, determined courageous mom I ever met, my darling wife Sherry Cockerham Thompson, here with our three sons. She's been mom to them through thick and thin, and been a second mom to hundreds of students and people needing help. What an honor and pleasure to share this journey. Happy Mother's Day, sweetheart!"

Sixteen days before he died, Jim posted a photograph he took of a bird nest he often watched.

"This is one of my favorite photos ever," he said. "Yesterday, we watched a Great Blue Heron nest. The mother flew to a tree near her nest and then started to flap her wings while staying stationary. The three little ones watched and one started flapping its wings. They all called back and forth to each other. It was obvious she was showing her chicks how to fly. I felt very blessed to see this happen..."

Jim had added the ellipses at the end of that sentence. I take it to mean that he felt blessed and there are many other things he could say and even though he's not putting them into words, he's holding that thought out there about how blessed he is.



In 1996, Jim was going through a process to be licensed to preach when he happened to meet Billy Graham, just before Dr. Graham preached his final crusade in North Carolina. Jim was to be licensed to preach the next Sunday, and asked advice of the world-famous evangelist. "Stick to the scriptures," Billy Graham told him.

I checked the scriptures for references to herons. The number of times depends on the translation, but in the King James Version of the Bible there are just two references to herons, both in Old Testament lists of unclean animals you're not to eat.

The word "blessed" occurs more than 300 times in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, to be blessed has an emphasis on prosperity, but in the New Testament, the blessing is a spiritual inheritance in heaven for the believer.

From the Apostle Paul, we hear, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love." (Ephesians 1:3-4)

And we hear from Jesus, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34)

The memory of Jim that sticks in my mind is when we were both covering a triple-homicide at a Christmas tree farm. To get there, the killer had to turn left on the last dirt road in North Carolina before the state line with Virginia. Because the murders happened a couple of hundred yards into Virginia, the case was handled in a system and place with which I was unfamiliar. I lived an hour or so away, but traveled to Independence, Virginia, for the press conference where they announced the name of a killer I'd never heard of before, Freddie Hammer.

After the press conference, I asked Jim about him, and he said, "Oh yeah, Freddie P's Firewood." I drove by Freddie's firewood business and soon began a long jailhouse correspondence with the killer that continued from here in Beckley, as I wrote my seminary project on how people who have been grievously hurt by the world can forgive. How could those families of people killed by Freddie ever forgive him?

When I went to the seminary last month to defend my project, my professor asked me, "Why now? Why are you writing about this now?"

He wanted me to point to something or another that was going on in the world, some current event, but it struck me that this challenge of forgiveness is universal, always with us.

I accept the scriptures about Jim being blessed, entering heaven, even if none of us expected him to do it this week.

Forgiveness is more difficult, and I've found it's a journey. Some days are easier than others and sometimes you feel a certain way and other times you're angry and want justice. Forgiveness doesn't mean you forget or give up access to the criminal justice system. Jim's killer is facing that now. I wonder if she'll ever forgive herself? Will others forgive her? How do you grapple with the call to forgiveness in your own life, in the face of hurt? We all have the scars of being hurt, and how we deal with it matters.

I will remember Jim, and I'm glad he posted one of his last thoughts, about some birds, but also about his life, "I felt very blessed..."

God bless you!
Monte



Jim Thompson



MEMORIAL GIFT FUND

We are grateful for the following Memorial Gifts

--In Memory of Charles "Chucker" Lucas: by Ms. Nancy Kissinger, Mr. & Mrs. Mike Brandenburg

--In Memory of Martha Rucker: by Ms. Nancy Kissinger, Ms. Harriet Jones, Ms. Nancy Keatley, Ms. Ann Harkins, Mr. & Mrs. Mike Brandenburg

THANK YOU

I want to thank each and every one of you who came and those who donated to the Spring Luncheon for the Delaney Wykle Wellness Center.



The money raised was \$1,600 and will be matched by an anonymous donor. My heart is filled with love and gratitude to the members of BPC.

God Bless all of you.
Most sincerely, Brenda Meadows

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES



Eli Creek Richmond will be graduating from Woodrow Wilson High School and is attending WVU in the fall. He is the grandson of Mr. & Mrs. Ray Richmond.

Beau Blankenship will be graduating on May 26th from Harrison High School in Powder Springs Georgia. This fall he will be attending Hillgrove Transition Academy in Powder Springs. Beau is the son of Joseph and Allison Blankenship and the grandson of Marlene Blankenship.

Joseph (Joey) Ceo will be graduating on June 4th from Camp Hill High School in Camp Hill, PA. In the fall he will be attending SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design) and plans to study animation. Joseph is the son of Jennifer and Marco Ceo and grandchild of Dan and Mary Calvert.

NURTURING FAITH IDEAS

June 5 – Day of Pentecost: Read: John 14:8-17 In John 14, Jesus promises his disciples that if they love him and follow his commandments, the Father will send an Advocate to be with them forever. As believers, we also have an Advocate we call the Holy Spirit. On this Pentecost Sunday, consider what that means to have an advocate with you forever. How does that affect the way you live, speak, and act?

June 12 – Trinity Sunday: Read: John 16:12-15 On this Trinity Sunday, we read in John the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the disciples. The Spirit leads all believers in the way of God's truth and guides believers to behold God's glory and might. What does this mean for you? How do you recognize God's glory and might? Do you allow the Spirit to lead you in the ways of God, or do you choose to follow your own paths in this life on earth?



Beckley Presbyterian Church
203 South Kanawha Street
Beckley, WV 25801

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|----|-------------------|----|--------------------|
| 01 | George Wilson | 09 | Sarah Mestrovic |
| 02 | Andrew Reed | 14 | Susan Shaffer |
| 04 | Rachel Feldhake | 14 | Betsy Gilmer |
| 05 | Madison Van Meter | 26 | Cathy Smith |
| 07 | Robin Van Meter | 26 | Patrick Sniadowski |
| 07 | William Richmond | 28 | Ryan McGuire |
| 08 | John Keyser | 30 | Addison Mullins |



CHURCH PICNIC

Mark your calendars for our annual church picnic.

SUNDAY, JUNE 12th,
at DANIEL VINEYARD
11:00 AM

Worship in the beauty of nature and then enjoy potluck with fried chicken, rolls, and drinks provided by the church. Divided by the alphabet please bring the following :

- A-H Desserts**
- I-P Vegetables**
- Q-Z Salads**

Please invite a friend or relative to join you ...we will have plenty. Sharing our service and fellowship is a wonderful way to introduce someone to the Beckley Presbyterian Church.
-Congregation Care Ministry

June 19 – Second Sunday after Pentecost: Read Luke 8:26-39 In Luke, we see Jesus met by a man filled with demons. He calls to Jesus as soon as he sees him arrive. Jesus commands the demons to come out, and he sends them into a herd of swine, which drown. The reaction of the people was not one of awe but of fear, so Jesus left. When you become aware of the miracles of Jesus, do you run in fear or worship and adore? Your answer makes all the difference in your life.

June 26 – Third Sunday after Pentecost: Read Luke 9:51-62 In Luke 9, we find Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. Many he meets say, "I will follow you, but first I must take care of some business." To follow Jesus implies forsaking security to go where he goes. Discipleship means the same thing today as then: Choose this day whom you will serve. As you reflect on this scripture this week, consider how you follow Jesus, not just in name but in your actions as well.