

Mayfair Announces New Youth Minister

By Mark Yokley

The life of a church sometimes mimics family life. New people come and add to the family, and others mature and share the work of the group. We have a new addition that illustrates that.

We are excited to announce that beginning this past February, Grayson Tucker joined the Mayfair Church family as our new Youth Minister! Grayson, his wife Margaret Anne, and their two boys, Emmett and John, officially began with the ministry team on February 3, 2025.

Grayson has a deep love for the Lord and a passion for walking alongside young people as they grow in their faith. Margaret Anne shares his heart for ministry and brings a warm, supportive presence to our church family. Together, they are eager to build meaningful relationships and invest in our students' spiritual growth.



New Mayfair Youth Minister Grayson Tucker and his family, Margaret Anne, Emmett, and John

If you think the name Grayson Tucker sounds familiar, it is because you probably remember him from his time serving as one of Mayfair's youth ministers from August 2012 to December 2016.

Since then, he has led the Student Ministry at Riverside Church of Christ in Coppell, Texas. We are beyond excited to welcome him "back home" to Mayfair!

Back to the beginning of the story, Grayson was born on February 5, 1990, in Birmingham, Alabama, to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tucker, who still live in Birmingham and worship with the Homewood Church of Christ.

Grayson spent his early years in Birmingham, where he attended South Shades Crest Elementary School before his family moved to Midlothian, Virginia when he was in third grade. He attended Woolridge Elementary School, Swift Creek Middle School, and Cosby High School. He then matriculated to the University of Alabama, where he received his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration.

Margaret Anne is the daughter of Paul Pate and Donna Pate. She grew up in Huntsville, where she attended Jones Valley Elementary School and Grisom High School. She also attended the University of Alabama and received her Bachelor of Arts in History.

The Tuckers found a great house located at 8811 Hickory Hill Lane SE Huntsville, Alabama 35802.

Grayson is a Board Member of the National Children's and Youth Ministry Conference and serves on the Creative Team at Impact LU, which our students love to attend. He also serves with TeenLife as a Group Facilitator

Please join us in praying for the Tucker family as they transition into this new season of life and ministry. We can't wait to see how God continues to work in the lives of our students under the leadership of Grayson, Jacob, and Olivia.

We want to extend our thanks to the youth deacons who helped search for and find Grayson. It is their good behind-the-scenes work that makes things better for all of us. You can follow Grayson and Margaret Anne on Instagram at @grtucker and @matucker726! Pray for the efforts going forward: Grayson, Margaret Anne, Emmett, and John.

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

By Dick Savage

We are well into 2025 with 2024 just a memory. We left those days at the end of 2024 when people around the world were thinking about the LORD Jesus. They were thinking about the years when His arrival was predicted in the Old Testament; thinking about His arrival as a baby born of the virgin Mary; thinking about His life, His death, burial, resurrection, and His return to the Father in Heaven to wait for the appointed time of His return to earth. When He returns, He will not be the savior. He will be the Judge. Unfortunately, people don't think about the fullness of Jesus all year. I want us to think about Him now, as we enter the second quarter of 2025, by looking at this passage from Isaiah 9:6 (NIV).

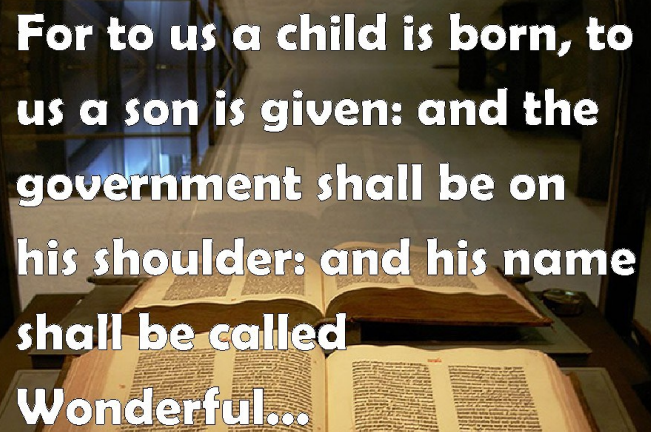
*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

The phrase "a child is born and a son is given" is a Hebraic expression of humanity and divinity. "A child is born" signifies humanity and "a son is given" shows his divinity. Thus, "a son is given" is a Hebraic way of saying this son existed before us and will continue to exist, hence He is God.

What does it mean that the government will be on His shoulders? It is not talking about government as we understand the word in English. The word in Hebrew that is translated as "government" in English means to carry the authority and responsibility of protecting someone or something. In Jewish culture, the words that are translated as "the government will be on His shoulders" in English, are used at the climax of a wedding ceremony.

The bridegroom places the veil over his bride's face just before they give their vows. This symbolizes the groom saying: "You are beautiful, but I cover that beauty to show you I love the beauty within you and when we are old and beauty fades, I will love you more than I do now."

Then the bride circles her groom three times to show she will teach her new husband three things

An open Bible is shown in a close-up shot, resting on a wooden surface. The pages are yellowed with age and contain printed text. Overlaid on the image is white text in a bold, sans-serif font. The text reads: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given: and the government shall be on his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful..."

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given: and the government shall be on his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful...

—Isaiah 9:6

about God through her role as a wife. By living her life practicing righteousness and justice she will teach her husband the righteousness and justice of God. Second, she will teach her husband the love and mercy of God by giving him unconditional love and mercy. Finally, she will teach her husband the faithfulness of God by being faithful in sickness and in health, richer or poorer, and in joy and sorrow.

She circles her husband these three times to indicate the picture of eternity by being betrothed to him forever, as God desires to be betrothed to us forever (Hosea 2:19-20).

This is where the phrase "the government will be on His shoulders" comes in as the groom removes the veil from his new bride and throws it over his shoulder declaring that God has honored him to be her provider and protector and will protect her heart and provide her with all the love and affection God created her to desire from her husband. This pictures the love and desire created in us that we are to have for Jesus and His promise to be our protector and provider of all the love and desire we need.

The story of Jesus coming into the world is not so much the story of a birth as it is the story of a gift. From Earth's perspective, it was the entrance of Jesus into life on Planet Earth. But from Heaven's perspective, it was the departure of Jesus Christ from Heaven.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

Jesus is eternal. He has always existed. But at just the right time, the Son of God came to this earth to be the Son of Man. The Bible says, *“But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law” (Galatians 4:4 NLT).*

We need to remember that Jesus chose to leave the glory of Heaven and walk among us as a human. The Son of God was born into the most unsanitary conditions imaginable, laid in an animal water trough, and wrapped in pieces of cloth. This is how the Creator of the universe came to us in human form as a gift.

The first Christmas was not about a gift TO a child; it was about the gift OF a child. Isaiah tells us, *“For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6 NLT).*

Each word that Isaiah chose to describe Jesus gives us a different insight into His nature, character, purpose, and plan.

His name is Wonderful Counselor. That takes care of the dullness of life. We no longer have to settle for the cheap substitutes but instead can experience what God has for us. It also takes care of the decisions of life. No longer do the problems we face need to plague us, because there is One who wants to counsel us.

His name is Mighty God. That takes care of the demands of life. We must never forget that Jesus was God incarnate. This means that Jesus has unlimited power. And if we put our trust in this Mighty God, He will give us the power to live the life He has called us to live.

His name is Everlasting Father. That takes care of our future. We know that life is not merely what we experience here and now on Earth. According to the Bible, we will exist forever. The big question is, where will we be? If we put our faith in Jesus Christ, and do what He asked us to do, beginning with baptism, then we will live in Heaven. Because He was born, crucified, and resurrected, we can have this hope beyond the grave.

His name is Prince of Peace. In Hebrew, the phrase “prince of Peace” means the one who removes the peace-disturbing factors of life. In our sinful state, we are enemies with God (Romans 5:10). *“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8 NIV).* Because of Christ’s sacrifice, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). This is the deep, abiding peace between our hearts and our Creator that cannot be taken away (John 10:27–28) and the ultimate fulfillment of Christ’s work as “Prince of Peace.”



The Key

By Bob Rieder

Lean into faith.
Uncertainties abound.
Loads to bear, some heavy.
Aches of the heart.
Faith sees above it all.
Faith finds a way through it all.

Two realms,
different but coexisting.
One, visible, destined to pass away,
the other, behind the curtain, endless.
Dual realities,

interwoven, intersecting.
Faith holds the key.

Lean into faith.
It is formed around
the words of the Truth-Speaker.
As a mother holds her infant,
so His heart enfolds us.
With us and for us.
He is worthy of trust.
It suffuses our faith.

Lean into faith.
Unlocking our heart
to the Giver of Life.

“Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life” (Proverbs 16:31 ESV)

In this issue of “JOY in the Journey,” we continue our series on Mayfair’s Senior Members, who truly wear a “Crown of Glory.” As members age, they are often unable to meet with us due to health issues but are still near and dear to our hearts. This month, we learn more about one such member, Art Seeley.

Art Seeley

By Keith Hodges

We have several seniors at Mayfair over age 90 who have fascinating stories to tell about their lives – not the least of which is Brother Art Seeley. He was born in Dodge City, KS in 1931, graduated from high school in Plains, KS, and attended the University of Wichita before enlisting in the Air Force. He received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Omaha under the “bootstrap” program and later completed his master’s degree.

Expecting to be drafted at the height of the Korean War, he decided he’d rather shape his own career by seeing if he could be a pilot in the Air Force. He traveled to the West Coast by train, was tested and passed, and enrolled in the Aviation Cadet Program – again traveling by train to the East Coast. He then received his commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in Oklahoma and was transferred to his first combat unit as a B-26 pilot in Korea, in August of 1954.

He returned to the U.S. in 1955 for an assignment in Florida – the first of numerous assignments throughout the U.S. in a wide variety of types of work – but always in flying, and eventually also missile expertise. At some point, he was trained and became proficient in flying the larger transport and refueling planes, so essential in military operations.

This career path took him to several bases in the United States, then to France and Germany ... and war zone assignments in the Philippines, Guam, and Okinawa in connection with flying munitions into South Vietnam during the conflict there.

All this led to him eventually logging over 5,800 flying hours in the B-26, KC-135, C-130, C-47, and C-123 aircraft. He rose to the rank of Colonel and received a number of the Air Force’s highest service medals and commendations. But with all of that valiant service, some more important things happened along



Art Seeley

the way.

While stationed in Florida an Air Force buddy suggested they take a quick weekend trip to Birmingham, AL, where he could arrange a blind date for Art with a young woman named Calvalene. Art says when she came out of the door where she was staying, she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

Those weekend trips became frequent and then every week. He jokes that his gasoline bills each month from driving to and from Birmingham ran over \$100 – when gasoline was 23 cents a gallon! They had met in 1955, and married in 1956 in her hometown of Hackleburg, AL.

They got married in a church building there that later burned to the ground. But it was replaced by a similar building in the very same spot. Some 68 years later, I was honored to officiate a service for her in that building.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

Calvalene had been raised in the churches of Christ, and later Art would learn and obey the gospel. To that union were born a son (Arthur, Jr.), and two daughters (Sharon and Kimberly). In all, the Seeleys lived in 18 different locations in the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia.

After retiring from the Air Force after 28 years of service, Art worked for a large bank in Birmingham as a credit manager. Then they retired to a home in Hamilton, Alabama, close to her hometown of Hackleburg.

In March 2020 (in the face of the pandemic) they moved to Huntsville to be close to their daughters who lived here. They purchased one of the “garden homes” associated with Brookdale Retirement Center, about a mile from the Mayfair church building. They placed membership at Mayfair, but by the time the pandemic was over, it was getting harder for them to attend. They both enjoyed participating in the services online – which Art continues now after her passing.



Art & Calvalene Seeley

It’s been my privilege (sometimes with Francie) to visit there. They would comment on how much they enjoyed the services, particularly Jason’s preaching. After Cal’s passing, I asked Art if he’d like me to bring Jason over sometime to visit. Naturally, he said yes, and Jason was more than glad to accommodate. They hit it right off, and Art showed both of us his little flight museum – a bedroom he had converted into an amazing display of photos of the different planes he’d flown, various commanders under whom



A C-123 aircraft similar to the one flown into Vietnam by Art Seeley

he’s served, and commendations and medals he has received.

While Calvalene was hospitalized leading up to her death, I was privileged to visit with her several times – always a delightful experience where I felt like I had been blessed more than a blessing. One of those times will forever stand in my memory as perhaps the most delightful experience I’ve had in making hospital visits. I visited her in her room at Crestwood; she was alone in her room. I couldn’t tell if she was sleeping or just had her eyes closed. I went to her bedside, touched her arm, and called her name. She looked up and smiled when I said, “Cal, it’s Keith Hodges.” Her response was classic. She said, “Good – I can use me some Keith Hodges right now!”

Of course, Art also has many classic stories to tell from both his peacetime and wartime flying experiences. Towards the end of the Vietnam War, Art was flying some of the last munitions into Saigon, which was under siege by the Viet Cong. As he approached the airport, he noticed there were no lights on at the airport – it was under bombardment. He radioed and was told to proceed, and he’d have lights when he needed them. Just before touching down, the runway was flooded with light from Army trucks lined up along the runway. He landed, the plane was quickly unloaded, and he flew out safely with great relief.

I think Brother Art is an excellent candidate for any attention we can give him. They received, and now he receives “Monday meals.” And some from the children’s ministry have visited to sing to him. Information about how to contact him can be found in Mayfair’s online directory.

Getting to Know Your Elders

We continue our series on getting acquainted with our Mayfair elders by learning about Rodney Steger and his family, their history, and how they came to be at Mayfair.

Rodney Steger

For some, talking about themselves is easy. For others, like myself, I find it a little bit challenging. As I share things about myself to hopefully allow others to know more about me and my family, I want to share in the context of how God is constantly working in the background of all of our lives (not just mine). As I look back on where I have come from, I am convinced that God has always been there.

I was born in Paducah, Kentucky, and grew up in a small community just east of there called Reidland. I was the youngest of three brothers, but my mother desperately wanted me to be a girl. Growing up with four brothers and having two boys, she hoped that God would answer her prayer. He did. He said “No!” When discussing having another child after my birth, my father is quoted as saying, “*I would just assume to have three boys as opposed to having four boys.*”

Being the youngest, my brothers always believed I got away with everything and was not subject to the same discipline they experienced. I tend to look at it from the perspective of the third child, just being the observer. I would watch my brothers butt heads with Mom and Dad over something as simple as a ‘haircut.’ Granted, the length of one’s hair was a big deal to male teenagers back then. For me, the conflict wasn’t worth it, so when told to go get a haircut, I simply went and got one.

As a very young child, I recall my family being involved in the planting of the Reidland Church of Christ. We met in the elementary school gymnasium until a new building could be constructed. My father was appointed as one of the Shepherds of this church, and I recall, at a very young age, going with him at night to check on the progress of the building. I can remember seeing men of the church volunteering their time and effort in the construction.

As a young man, my father thought he wanted to be a funeral director, so shortly after he and my mother were married, he went to what was then called “embalming school.” After graduation, he

worked for a short while at a local funeral home, but when the opportunity presented itself, he went to work for a nearby chemical plant. This job represented ‘regular’ working hours and a predictable schedule, but this particular job also required him to work a swing shift schedule of days, afternoons, and midnights. Each week, on Sunday, his shift would change. Again, being the observer, I learned at an early age to always ask “*What shift is Dad working?*” Specifically, when it came to asking permission for something or showing him my report card.



Rodney & Sara Steger

The church was central to our lives growing up. We were at every service. Our family entertained every visiting preacher at our house with a meal and fellowship. I attended funerals of people I didn’t know. We attended Gospel Meetings, not only at our church but at other local congregations. There were gatherings where people simply all came to someone’s home with a stack of songbooks, and we sang until late in the evening.

In my upbringing, reading, seeing, and understanding ‘the Truth’ was pretty obvious to anyone who was paying attention, and for me, the realization of what God’s expectation for me was something that came together at an early age. I certainly can’t say that I fully understood all aspects of this, but it was pretty clear then and is still clear to me today that God’s desire and expectation for all of us is pretty simple: obedience. So, at twelve years old, I submitted to him in baptism.

Once I was able to go to school, my mother went back to work. It was with purpose that she and my

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

father felt the strong desire for their children to go to college, something they had not been able to do. Their resolve was also for their children to first attend a 'Christian' college. This was not considered an optional choice for my brothers and me, and it was communicated from an early age to all three of us. I look back at this and realize how hard my mother and father worked to make this possible. It was a diligent and prayerful pursuit on their part. They were looking ahead at girls we might one day marry, lifelong friendships we would form, and putting us in an environment where the importance of serving God was placed at the forefront.

As I attended high school and thought of a career path, architecture was something that appealed to me. Two of my older cousins, a pair of brothers, were architects, and I was fortunate to work for them during high school. As I looked into pursuing this, it became clear that our Christian Colleges at that time did not offer a clear academic path for one wanting this profession. This has since changed and is continuing to change, but at the time, doing what I wanted to do was just not possible at a Christian college. My parents held firm, but we agreed that if I would attend a Christian College as they wished, after two years, I could transfer to a college or university where I could pursue a degree in architecture.

The summer following my graduation from high school, I enrolled and prepared to attend Harding College. As my mother and I were shopping for supplies that I would need as I left home for the first time, we ran into a preacher that our family had known for many years. He had moved away but was in town to preach a gospel meeting at a local church. When he found out about my plans to attend Harding, he immediately wrote down the names of two young ladies who would be enrolled that fall as freshmen as well. One of the names given to me by that preacher, Frank Gould, was Sara Ruth Rose, who I would marry some seven years later. He would perform the ceremony for us, and interestingly, many years before, he performed the marriage ceremony for Sara's mother and father. Sara attended Harding for two years and then went to the University of Missouri, where she graduated with a de-

gree in dietetics.

I attended Harding for two years and then transferred to Auburn University to pursue a degree in architecture. Sara and I maintained a long-distance relationship during those years. In Auburn, the Auburn Christian Student Center became a connection point for me, and my years there were marked by growth and many great experiences. Observing Paul Cates as a great example of quiet faithfulness and Jim Brinkerhoff, who was then just a fellow student, are experiences I reflect on even today. Sara graduated from the University of Missouri and began work in Columbia, Missouri, but was ultimately able to move to Opelika while I was finishing at Auburn. We attended the 10th Street Church of Christ, and we were embraced by the people there.

Following my graduation from Auburn, work brought us to Huntsville in 1984 and to Mayfair very shortly thereafter. In 1988, we were blessed with twin girls. I recall how the Mayfair family embraced us as we had no relatives nearby. I see God's design and intention in the church as I think about how the community of faith that we call 'Mayfair' literally raised our children, not to mention raising Sara and myself. Looking back, my observation and realization is how many have poured into them and their growth and maturity. Those two girls are now grown with families of their own. They live in Huntsville as well and are members at Mayfair. Haley and her husband Leland Sheldon have two girls, Darby and Adeline. Holly and her husband, Joshua Davis, have two boys, Reuben and Teddy.

In 2012, I was asked to serve as a shepherd at Mayfair and was totally dumbfounded by such a request. I immediately reflected on my father who served as a shepherd for two different churches for nearly a combined fifty years. Serving as a part of the leadership at Mayfair is certainly a humbling endeavor, but one that is characterized by joy, because of the members of this great congregation (Hebrews 13:17).

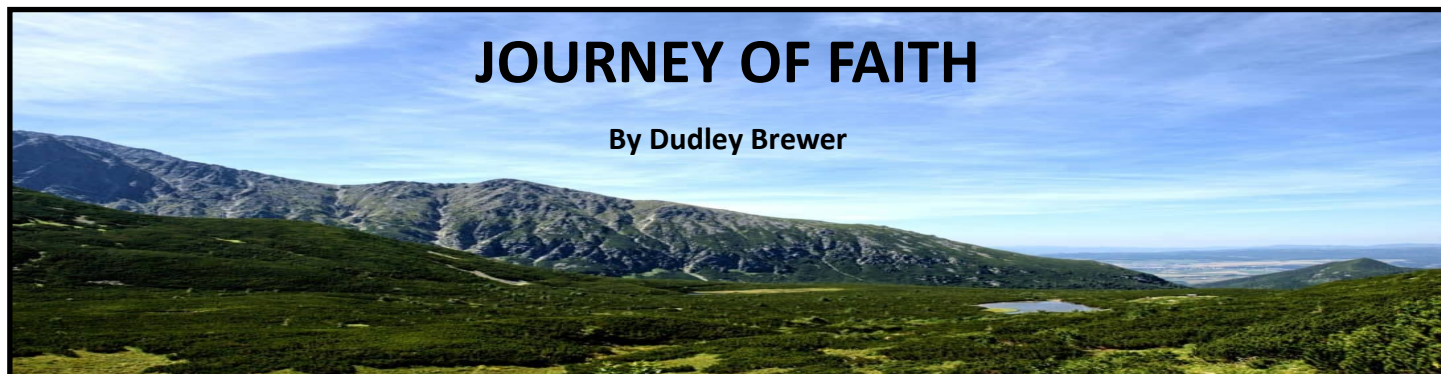
I, like all of you, am a work in progress. As I grow older and reflect on various observations, I have been motivated to add to my prayers a change in my perspective. As I strive to conform to God's will for my life and recognize that I may not receive the answer to my prayer that I wanted in a particular situa-

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

tion, my prayer has become that God would open my eyes to see him working through myself, others, and the various circumstances that surround me. God has given us a pattern for daily observation. In Genesis 1, as God created, He pauses and observes that 'it was very good.' God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. There is nothing that God does that isn't good. Therefore, it seems ridiculous that God would pause and observe what He's done and then

evaluate it. But God doesn't just race from one thing to the next thing. He intentionally acts, observes what he has done, and evaluates. Then the next day, He intentionally acts, observes what He has done, and evaluates. I hope that you, like me, can look at the past and recognize our God's work. But more importantly, I hope that we can be people who live in the present. That we can intentionally act as He makes His appeal through us, (2 Corinthians 5:20) and that we can observe God working in our lives and the lives of others.



JOURNEY OF FAITH

By Dudley Brewer

In life, everyone has a journey. Some are easy, and some are difficult. There are joyous moments on the mountaintops and times when we find ourselves in the deepest valleys and down on our knees. It is in those valleys that holding on to our faith is most important.

Brother Gary always reminded us: "You are either going into a storm, coming out of a storm, or there is one on the horizon." I find comfort in David's words in Psalm 23:4 when he says, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and staff, they comfort me" (NIV).

I have walked through one storm after another like many of you have and are still doing. Until 2019, I had no health issues. But at 62, we knew something

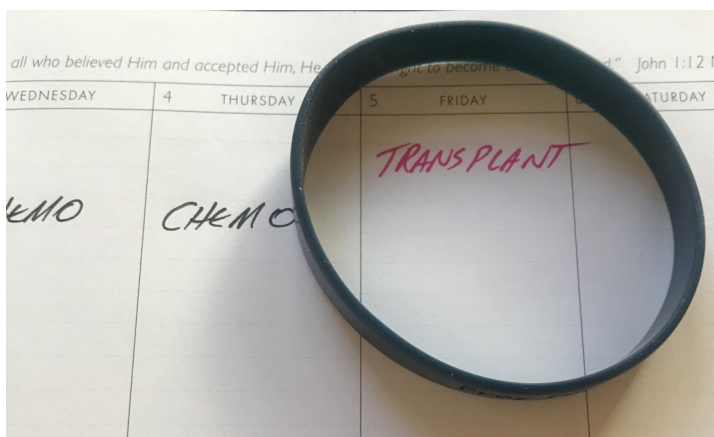
was wrong. Simple tasks became difficult, like getting out of my truck and into the house. I am thankful that Dr. Kelley Smith persevered and finally discovered the problem. With the diagnosis of Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, we relied on scripture passages to guide and comfort us, and we prayed as we never had before for God to lead us to the best care.

At the Cleveland Clinic, we met our surgeon, who confidently assured us he could repair my heart. We told him many were praying for him and that God would guide his hands and give him the wisdom to repair a worn-out heart. Jan reminded him, "You are not doing this surgery alone!"

One of my favorite verses has always been Psalm 3:3. I remember the morning of my surgery reciting this passage and singing this song repeatedly. "Thou, O Lord, art a shield about me, You're my glory, You're the lifter of my head high. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, You're the lifter of my head."

When things were at their worst, and we were crying out with all we had, we still had things to be thankful for. Knowing God was in control and how much He loved and cared for us gave us much comfort and peace. Deuteronomy 31:8 reminds us: "He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (NIV).

(Continued on page 9)

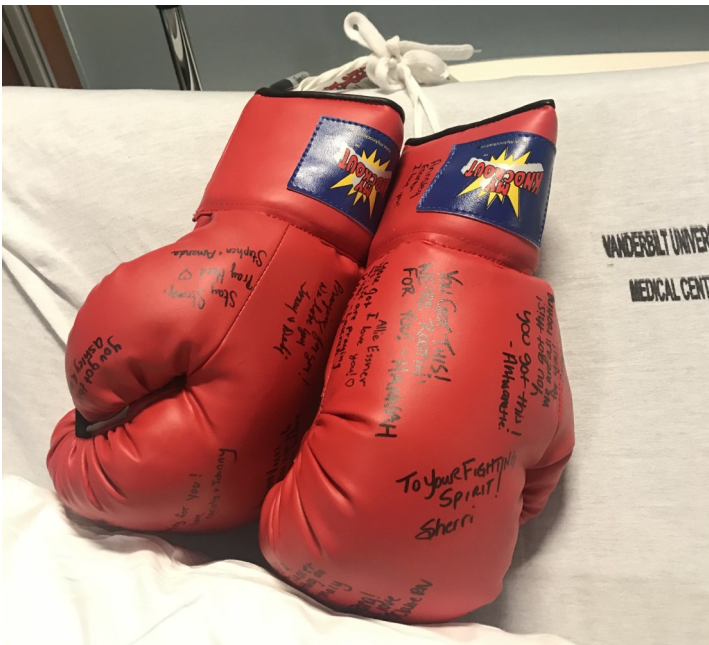


(Continued from page 8)

After surgery and a long recovery, I attempted to go back to work, but things were still not right. I became weaker and weaker, not knowing what was wrong. Dr. Michael Brown was relentless in searching for answers. I was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma and Amyloidosis, which had affected my heart and gastrointestinal system. Once again, we cried out to God, and many of you joined us, pleading and praying.

It's been said that the mountaintop views are glorious, but it's in the valleys where we grow. I remember sitting with Jan, Ashley, and Adam at Blue Plate Cafe, telling them, "God has got this; He is still in the healing business; let's get it fixed and move on."

God led us to Vanderbilt University Hospital, where I began chemo treatments in preparation for a stem cell transplant. Once again, we pleaded and prayed, as many of you did; instead of asking why, we prayed that something good would come from this. We prayed for complete healing and that He, my God, would be glorified through this battle.



My son Adam gave me a powerful analogy of a fighter entering the boxing ring for the fight of his life. "Dad, lace up your gloves, put in your mouthpiece, and get ready to FIGHT! And know God is in your corner to give you the strength to endure every punch and knockdown." After this analogy was posted on social media, someone mailed me a pair of

boxing gloves that all the doctors and nurses signed as they entered my room—a room filled with sickness and sadness, yet a room filled with daily scriptures on the walls. My hospital room became a sanctuary, a place of prayer, and a place to share our faith with everyone who entered those doors and walked down those halls. I can remember seeing my family at the foot of the bed, kneeling over me, pouring their hearts out to the Father when I was too weak to speak.

But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high (Psalm 3:3 NIV).

1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us to "encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (NIV). And that is exactly what this church family has done so well. Many prayers were offered from Mayfair, the community, and even our Baja family. The smallest acts of kindness meant so very much during these challenging times. Renee Graham passed out bracelets that some of you may have worn with the scripture James 5:15, which says, "And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up" (NIV).

God was working through every person who had crossed our path, encouraging, lifting us up, and helping us bear the burdens that weighed us down. Isaiah 41:13 promises: "For I am the Lord your God, who takes hold of your right hand, and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you" (NIV). I will never forget Brother Clifton Mann telling me, "Reach out and hold on to that right hand." I know that not every journey ends like mine has so far. I truly give God all the credit and glory for walking with me and seeing us through some of the darkest times in my life. None of us know where tomorrow will take us, but when God goes before us and brothers and sisters stand together and hold us up, it is much easier to walk through these valleys.

Mountaintops and valleys will come, but we should never miss the opportunity to use both to give God the glory. Our greatest witness to others and our ministry is often best seen in our deepest, darkest valleys. My brother Terry Davis said it best: "It's a WIN-WIN. If God chooses to heal us, we win. If He takes us home with Him, we still win!"

Open My Eyes...

By Jay Ramsey, M.D.

As an eye surgeon, one of the most common fears I hear among patients in North Alabama is that they may be unable to see to read their Bible as they age. Although vision doesn't improve as we age, it typically doesn't decline unless an eye disease is affecting the eye. Some diseases of the eye can be cured, while others can be prevented from progressing if diagnosed early and treated appropriately. That's why the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends a screening eye exam at 40 years old, if not earlier, and an eye exam every 1-2 years for those 65 and older. Here are five of the most common eye diseases one might encounter.



5 Common Eye Diseases Causes and Cure

1. Cataracts. A cataract is a cloudiness of the natural lens in the eye, similar to how headlights on a car become hazy or cloudy after years in the sun. Everyone gets cataracts if they live to be old enough. The only treatment for cataracts is surgery, so most people will have cataract surgery in their lifetime, with the average age of cataract surgery in the United States being 65. I'm a cataract surgeon, so this is what I spend most of my working hours doing. Cataract surgery is wonderful because it can completely reverse the loss of vision due to the cataract. Even better, sometimes, treatment can be done to reduce or eliminate the need for glasses after cataract surgery. Often, patients will insist that the surgery is a miracle!

2. Glaucoma. Glaucoma is a condition where high eye pressure damages the optic nerve, leading to loss of peripheral vision and eventually blindness. Glaucoma is sneaky because you can't feel the high eye pressure and can't appreciate the loss of peripheral vision without specialized testing. Unlike cataracts, glaucoma can't be reversed with surgery, so it's important to diagnose and treat it early. Treat-

ment is focused on lowering eye pressure to slow its progression. Most glaucoma can be treated with eye drops or a quick, painless laser procedure called SLT. Occasionally, surgery is needed to stop the progression of more advanced glaucoma.

3. Age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD is a disease that becomes more common as we age and is rare in those younger than 50 years old. It happens when wear-and-tear accumulates in the macula, leading to loss of central vision. There is no cure for macular degeneration, but you can reduce your risk by not smoking. When caught early, macular degeneration may be slowed by using a supplement called AREDS2. More advanced macular degeneration, called "wet" AMD, can be stabilized or partially reversed by the injection of anti-VEGF medication.

4. Diabetic retinopathy. Diabetes is very common, affecting 14.9% of those living in Alabama. It can be treated by a primary medical doctor using oral medication and sometimes insulin. If blood sugar is adequately controlled, then the disease may never affect the eye. However, when blood sugar is too high for an extended time, it will cause damage to the retina, leading to loss of vision, early cataracts, and sometimes even aggressive glaucoma. The best prevention is controlling blood pressure and blood sugar. Once damage begins, it can be treated with laser surgery or injection of anti-VEGF medication.

5. Dry eye disease. Dry eye disease is extremely common, with some estimates as high as over 50% of people having dry eye. Like many of the diseases above, there is no cure for dry eye, but symptoms can be controlled with ongoing treatment. Unlike the diseases above, the burden of treatment primarily falls on the patient, who is responsible for using eye drops. Treatment typically includes over-the-counter lubricating eye drops called artificial tears, but may also involve warm compresses, cleaning the eyelids, and occasionally medicated eye drops.

Taking care of my patients' eyes is a great joy in my life. I have the opportunity to educate patients about a truly incredible part of the body. In particular, with cataract surgery, I can restore sight to someone who couldn't see. I am reminded of Psalm 119:18: *"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law"* (NIV). What a blessing it is to be able to play this role in a patient's life.

Should We Expect a Reward?

By Igor Egirev

Editor's Note: This article appeared in the August 2024 issue of "In Christ" newspaper, published by the Institute of Theology and Christian Ministry (ITCM), in St. Petersburg, Russia, and is used by permission. The newspaper is published in Russian and English and shares news from the congregations of the Churches of Christ throughout the Russian-speaking area. The newspaper's mission: *"We want to give our congregations the opportunity to share with each other stories about the ministries we carry in our homes and to learn about what is happening in sister churches in other cities. We are sure that this will help us to support each other spiritually, to gain and share experience. And in the end, all of this will contribute to the strengthening of brotherly ties between the churches of Christ all over the world."* The author, Igor Egirev, is the Director of ITCM.

Is it selfish to expect any reward from God in return for our good deeds? Modern ideas about serving God proclaim total freedom from selfishness. We'd like to think about ourselves as persons totally free from any expectations of rewards for what we do in serving God and neighbors. And while it's hard to argue with that, a question arises: why then does Jesus speak so frequently about rewards? This is especially evident when reading the Sermon on the Mount once again: Gospel of Matthew 5:12; 5:46; 6:1-4; 6:5-6; 6:16-18; 6:19-21.

What kind of reward is He speaking of? First, it's important to clarify what He is not referring to — He is not talking about material blessings such as wealth, earthly goods, or health. God, in His love, cares equally for both the righteous and the unrighteous. That means our earthly blessings are not the result of what we do. Christ calls us to have the same



Igor Egirev, Director, ITCM

love as God has, even for our enemies (Matt. 5:43-46).

Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount by listing rewards in the Gospel of Matthew 5:3-12, and they are: the Kingdom of Heaven (5:3); comfort (5:4); inheriting the promised land (5:4); being filled with righteousness (5:6); receiving mercy (5:7); the ability to see God (5:8); being called the children of God (5:9); and once again, the Kingdom of Heaven (5:10). These rewards are heavenly, not earthly (5:11-12). This treasure is something no one can steal, and it will not be destroyed (6:19-20).

Who needs such a reward? We do, the believers in Jesus Christ. For those who reject Him, this reward holds no value. But for us, it is the precious pearl.

Why do we need to remind ourselves of the reward Jesus speaks of? We need to understand that our God is not a God of "equalizing," but that our lives are illuminated by the light of the future, the light of His promises. It becomes easier to walk a difficult path when we know that everything has a meaning: trials, suffering, deprivation, and self-denial. But if there is no reward, then what is the point of it all? *"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"* (1 Cor. 15:32). However, Christ, from the very beginning of His teaching, sets before us a goal in the form of a reward, and striving for it is not selfish at all. That is why we echo the words of the Apostle Paul: *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:14).



ITCM

Ministry Expo Makes An Impact!

The Impact Sunday Ministry Expo, was Mayfair's faithful response to the words of the Apostle Paul found in Ephesians 4:15-16.

¹⁵ *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,* ¹⁶ *making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:15-16 NIV).*

We are also told in Ephesians 2:10 that God has created good works for us to do, but it is up to us to do them.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10 NIV).

With Impact Sunday, Mayfair set out to bring together our Mission of Making Disciples, our Ministries, and our Members to mobilize the entire congregation to make the most of the opportunities that God has put in front of us.

Following Sunday morning's worship, an estimated 900 people from a worship attendance of 1,112 stayed to attend the Ministry Expo. Nearly 90 tables

were set up representing about 70 ministries with each ministry signing up new volunteers. Let's pray those new volunteers will make an IMPACT!

In addition, over 100 new ideas were presented through the Creative Ideas Lab.

The objective of the Ministry Expo was for every member at Mayfair to find his or her role in the ongoing tasks of serving and making disciples.

A copy of Mayfair's Ministry Catalog was provided to all who attended. If you did not receive a copy of the catalog, you can download it from the Mayfair website at <https://mayfair.org/volunteer>.

While you are there, you can also volunteer for any of the ministries and provide information about specific skills you have that might be useful in serving others.



Mayfair Assistance Helpline
If you require assistance with home maintenance, automotive repairs, or transportation needs, please call the phone numbers below and leave a message and you will be contacted for details:

256-881-4651 (during office hours)
256-704-3384 (nights & weekends)