

*Life is fragile
handle with Prayer*

DANNY ANTHONY, Edna Toole's cousin - cancer

CHERYL BARRON, Stan Raley's sister

BECKY BROWN, Sherri Clopton's mom

LINDA BULLOCK

DWIGHT CALLENS

LINDA COLLIE

ALAN DES ORMEAUX, Vinson friend; cancer

CHARLES DOOLEY, surgery recovery

TAMMIE DUNN, Linda Bullock's daughter

ALANA FAIR

JAMES GORDON, Bridget Smith's dad

ANTORIAS GROVES, Ethel Clark's son-in-law

EVELYN GUY, health issues

TERRY HARPER, Cindy's husband health issues

THERMAN HODGE

BILLY JOHN, health issues

ARTHUR KING's Mother

LAMAR KING

WALTER KING, Lamar's dad

JACK MEARS

CHARLENE RALEY, Stan's mom – health issues

STAN RALEY, surgery recovery

GRADY RICHARDSON, Angela Duncan's dad

AL ST. CLAIR

THELMA TALBERT, Shirley Raley's mom

RUTH TAYLOR, Brookdale/Meridian

ANNIE THOMAS, Edna Toole's mother, health

MILLIE TODD, infant girl of Harley & David: surgeries

TERRY TRIBBLE, Renée Cumberland's friend

DICK VINSON, Bladder Cancer; surgery 6/17

SAMANTHA WARD, Caleb Warren's fiancée

ANNIE WEBB, Cindy Harper's g-grand-daughter

EUGENE WHITE, Baptist Hospital; JacksonMS - cancer

MEMBERS of our ARMED SERVICES

OUR GOVERNMENT – NATIONAL & STATE

CHURCH MISSION WORK WORLDWIDE

ANNIVERSARY & BIRTHDAY

January 16 - 22: None Known

4th Sunday Fellowship

Pot Luck

JANUARY 23RD

Be sure to invite friends!!

The Church is a *Family!*

4 Marks of a Healthy Church Family

~continued from cover~

Likewise, a healthy local church is marked by togetherness. Some of the earliest comments made about the infant church in the book of Acts can be found in Acts chapter 2. From the very beginning, the early church was marked by sweet fellowship, real intimacy, and a spirit of friendship. Those first Christians “were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:44 ESV).

Not only that, but they were “attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes” (Acts 2:46 ESV). We often emphasize the need to be like the early Christians (e.g. the name we wear, how we worship, etc.), and rightfully so, but what about replicating their relationships? You see, these relationships cannot be molded inside of a church building. We must do more than just worship around our brothers and sisters to be the family God calls us to be. Break out of your shell, get into the homes of your brothers and sisters, get them into your home, and spend time together outside of the church house. Do as much as you can together to forge the bonds of friendship and create that Acts 2 - togetherness.

❖ **Second**, a healthy church family is marked by affection. Love and affection are almost synonymous with a healthy home. After all, what's a home without the warmth of love and the safety of knowing others care? Similarly, love ought to be evident in our church homes. Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35 ESV). Since we are brothers and sisters in the Lord, we are taught to “love one another with brotherly affection” (Romans

12:10 ESV). The apostle John reminded us that this love, though, has to transcend our spoken words (see 1 John 3:17-18). Loving our church family is more than speaking kindly to them in the foyer of the church building. Rather, it is selflessly loving them to the point that we are willing to become their very servant. We are there for them when they are sick. We are the first ones on the scene when there is a problem. Since we love them, we are willing to babysit their children, pick up their prescriptions, rake their leaves, fix their broken toilets, and give of our own goods to help them in times of need. That's the church! That's a family! A healthy church family, you see, is a place where we “through love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13 ESV).

❖ **Third**, a healthy church family is marked by expectations. Within a physical family there is an expectation to grow up and mature. We can't remain an adolescent forever. Even from a young age, many children are given responsibilities within the home to foster their growth and development (e.g. feeding the dog or cat, taking out the trash, mowing the lawn). Likewise, the body of Christ is a place where we are expected to grow and develop. Peter exhorted his readers to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18 ESV). Conversely, the writer of Hebrews lamented because many of his recipients failed to grow from spiritual adolescence to greater maturity (see Hebrews 5:11-14). A healthy church, much like a good family unit, aids us as we seek to grow up in Jesus. Wise shepherds understand their Biblical call to help teach, equip, train, and empower the flock for “the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:12 ESV). Older men willingly mentor the younger men following in their footsteps, and the older women lovingly disciple the younger women to help them be what God calls them to be. Who are you mentoring in your church family? Who are you helping to grow? Who are you equipping? The church, you see, is a place where I am expected to grow, but it is a place where I am empowered to grow because of the help of my Christian family.

❖ **Fourth**, a healthy church family is marked by accountability. One of the beautiful things about a loving home is the fact that your family is there to rescue you when you go astray. Television shows like the popular program Intervention often highlight families coming to the aid of some loved one who has lost their way. They are honest with their family member, even though it hurts. They give them the love, support, and encouragement they need to get back on track. They help them to stay accountable. Comparably, the church is a place where we come running to the aid of our family members in need of an intervention. As the apostle Paul taught, “if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness” (Galatians 6:1 ESV). Inherent in this passage is the relational aspect of New Testament Christianity. Without a relationship, how could I know if a brother or sister has gotten caught up in sin? If my relationship with them is lacking, how could I possibly be successful in helping them to become spiritually realigned? You see, a healthy relationship with our brothers and sisters is paramount. In fact, rescue requires a relationship! And when we have the close Christian relationships we ought, we will tenderly hold our brethren accountable to the Lord's standards. We are a family of burden bearers and burden sharers.

If you are like me, then you are craving something much more than a business model for the church. You want a community. You want a family! Thankfully, that's God's plan for the church, and a family is just what we will experience as we implement the life-changing teachings of the Scriptures. God has masterfully crafted the church to be so much more than committees, programs, spreadsheets, and budgets. God gave us His Son to make us His family. But what will you do to make your church home a haven of love, a network of real friendships, an environment of growth, and a place of accountability? Don't settle for anything less than God's design for the church. Let's be the family God made us to be! **MM**

by Brandon Baggett ✦ Eastern Meadows church of Christ ✦ Montgomery, AL

WINTER 2021/ Magnolia Messenger / page 6-7