

## ***Church of Resurrection Hope Church of God of Abrahamic Faith***

On Sunday, April 16, 1961 a group of believers met in the home of Z.B. and Verlie Duncan in Conover, N.C. and organized the Church of Resurrection Hope. Mozelle Minton recalls that Shular Messick named the church. Forty-five charter members united together with a powerful determination in the Lord to begin a church work in Whitnel, N.C. to the glory of God allowing them to worship in spirit and in truth.

Charter members were as follows:

Donald Austin	Nelie Messick
Opal Austin	Shular Messick
Ralph Austin	Jewel McLean
Clarence Baker	Evelyn Minton (Church)
Earl Baker	Herbert Minton
Margaret Baker	Mozelle Minton
Shirley Baker	Cecil Ritch
Dennis Baldwin	Clara Ritch
Rachel Baldwin	Clarence Ritch
Evelyn Clark	Faye Ritch (Higgins)
Vernon Clark	James D. Ritch
Patricia Duncan (Clontz)	James P. Ritch
Paul Duncan	John Ritch
Verlie Duncan	Margaret Ritch (Curtis)
Z.B. Duncan	Maude Ritch
Ozzie Eckard	Opal Ritch
Judy German (Brown)	Wanda Ritch (Steinke)
Ruby German	Elbert Smith
Larry German	Velma Smith
Paul German	Ella Story
Patsy Holden (Smith)	Ann Triplett
Paul Holden	Viola Triplett
Ruby Holden	



The following Officers and Teachers were elected by unanimous vote:

Pastor	Z. B. Duncan
Moderator	Vernon Clark
Church Clerk	Paul Holden
Church Treasurer	Elbert Smith
Deacons	Clarence Baker , Ozzie Eckerd, Shular Messick and Clarence Ritch
Trustees	Earl Baker, Herbert Minton and Cecil Ritch
Song Leaders	Dennis Baldwin and James D. Ritch
Pianist	Evelyn Clark
Assistant	Patsy Holden
<b>Sunday School:</b>	
Superintendent	Larry German
Assistant	Dennis Baldwin
Secretary-Treasurer	Clara Ritch
<b>Teachers</b>	
Men's and Women's Class	Paul Holden and Shular Messick
Young People's Class	Dennis Baldwin and Verlie Duncan
Small Children's Class	Evelyn Clark and Ruby Holden

On the following Sunday, April 23, 1961, a business meeting was held at the home of Elbert Smith in Lenoir, N.C. at 11:00 a.m. The by-laws for the newly organized church were voted on and approved unanimously. Clarence Ritch resigned as deacon and Doyle Price was elected to replace him. Clarence Ritch was then elected as a trustee. Shular Messick, Herbert Minton and Cecil Ritch were elected to find a place for the new church.

The following months found this group meeting in the homes of some of the members. Services were held at various locations including the NC Hwy. 221 rest area at Blowing Rock and Price's Park just off the Blue Ridge Parkway. Within a few months the Caldwell County School Board granted the privilege to use part of the old Whitnel School for worship services.

In July of 1961 Brother C. F. Pryor of Cleveland, Ohio came to the church and was instrumental in uniting our church with the Church of God General Conference whose headquarters were in Oregon, II. August of 1961 Pastor Z.B. and Verlie Duncan attended the Church of God General Conference in Indiana. On August 8, 1961 the new congregation voted to become a member of the Church of God General Conference and the Southeast Conference of the Church of God of Abrahamic Faith.

In the meantime, a parcel of land just off the Walt Arney Road was purchased and the basement was built and a temporary roof was put on it. That winter worship services were held in the new basement which was heated by torpedo type kerosene heaters. On February 3, 1962, a finance committee composed of S.T. Messick, Ozzie Eckerd, Clarence Ritch, Earl Baker and Z.B. Duncan was elected to oversee the church finances and the building fund. In the summer of 1962, work on the sanctuary of the church was begun. Pastor Z.B. Duncan drew the plans and oversaw the construction which was done by the members of the church and other volunteers. The church building was completed by the summer of 1963 and the dedication of the new sanctuary was held on July 7, 1963.



### ***OFFICIALS SERVING CHURCH OF RESURRECTION HOPE 1961-Present***

**Pastors:** Z. B. Duncan, James D. Ritch, C. Michael Medlock

**Board of Elders** (by constitutional change of April 1973; consisted of the pastor and four elders):

Clarence Baker, Paul Holden, S. T. Messick, Clarence Ritch, F. M. McLean, Clarence Walker, Keener Bell, Jerold Brewer, Paul Duncan, George Brown, Larry Bleich, Dewey Phillips, James D. Ritch

**Deacons:**

Clarence Baker, Ozzie Eckerd, Doyle Price, S. T. Messick, Clarence Walker, F.M. McLean, Earl Austin, Keener Bell, Jerold Brewer, Paul Knight, Douglas Whisenant, Dewey Phillips, George Brown, Arthur Jones, Paul Duncan, Timothy Duncan, James Walker, James P. Ritch, Bill Brewer, Jason Phillips, Steve Austin, Thomas Austin, Eric Brewer, Rodney Clark

**Trustees:**

Cecil Ritch, Earl Baker, Herbert Minton, Clarence Ritch, Jerry Clontz, George Brown, John Branch, Paul Knight, Jimmy Keller, Dewey Phillips, Vernon Clark, John Branch, Eric Brewer, Rodney Clark, Roger Ritch, Donald Swallows, Patsy Smith, Elaine Phillips

**Moderator:**

Vernon Clark, George Brown, Dewey Phillips, Earl Austin, Tim Duncan, Rodney Clark

**Church Clerk:**

Paul Holden, Dennis Baldwin, James D. Ritch, Paul Duncan

**Treasurer:**

Elbert Smith, S. T. Messick, Ozzie Eckerd, Paul Duncan

**Sunday School Superintendent:**

Larry German, Dennis Baldwin, Paul Holden, Steve Austin, Patsy Smith, Russell Smith, Doris Church

**Song Leader:**

Dennis Baldwin, James D. Ritch, Dewey Phillips, Timothy Duncan

**Pianist:**

Evelyn Clark, Patsy Holden Smith, Paul Duncan, Wanda Duncan Keller, Pat Bleich (substitute)

**Organist:**

Paul Duncan

**Custodian:**

Cecil Ritch, Jimmy Minton, Jerry & Patricia Clontz, Evelyn Minton

### ***GASTONIA CHURCH MISSION WORK***

Wesley and Sarah Price of Gastonia were active in the Calvary Advent Church and came out with our group. Doyle Price, son of Wesley and Sarah also served as a Deacon at Resurrection Hope for a time. Mr. & Mrs. Price began a prayer meeting and Bible study in their home in Gastonia, N.C. A group of Resurrection Hope members traveled to Gastonia every 3rd Saturday to meet for preaching, Bible study and fellowship with the Gastonia Church. There was a great bond formed as the love of God united our spirits in the truth of His word. This work continued until the death of Mr. & Mrs. Price.



### ***RADIO PROGRAMS***

Our church and others have supported the spreading of the Gospel through the "Bible Truth" radio program. Pastor Duncan gave many hours to preaching and recording God's word to be heard over the airways. He felt strongly that God's word needed to reach out abroad to those that would hear. He continued the radio work until his death in March, 1984. After Pastor Ritch became pastor, he continued this outreach on WJRI and WKGX in Lenoir and WSVM in Valdese. After Pastor Ritch's retirement, Pastor Medlock is continuing this outreach on WJRI in Lenoir, WSKY in Asheville, and previously on KCNW in Kansas City, Missouri. For many years the church also had the "Berean Youth Sunday School" program which aired on WJRI following the Bible Truth Program. Larry German, Dennis Baldwin, James D. Ritch, Jimmy Minton, Paul Holden, George Brown and Paul Duncan were responsible for the messages on the Berean Sunday School programs. Over the years the "Bible Truth" program has been aired on these 20 broadcasting stations:

### North Carolina

WPEG	Concord	97.7	FM
WPET	Greensboro	98.7	FM
WZKY	Albemarle	1580	AM
WSVM	Valdese	1490	AM
WJRI	Lenoir	1340	AM
WKG X	Lenoir	1080	AM
WCGC	Belmont	1270	AM
WEGO	Concord	1410	AM
WNNC	Newton	1230	AM
WHKY	Hickory	1290	AM
WPAR	Claremont	88.1	FM
WMMY	West Jefferson	106.1	FM

### South Carolina

WGCD	Chester	1490	AM
WHAT	Clemson	1560	AM

### Virginia

WJJJ	Christiansburg	1260	AM
WHHV	Hillsville	1400	AM
WVVV	Blacksburg	104.9	FM

### *Death of a Pastor*

Pastor Z.B. Duncan fell asleep in death on March 10, 1984, leaving the church without a pastor. Elders Paul Holden and Paul Duncan filled the pulpit for six months while a search was made for a pastor. Because of the different factions wanting a different pastor, Elder Paul Duncan suggested casting lots for the next pastor just as the disciples filled their vacant discipleship. The official board approved this suggestion. After much prayer and fasting, on October 10, 1984, a congregational meeting was held. A motion to choose the new pastor by casting lots was made by Earl Austin and approved. A container containing seven blank pieces of paper, seven pieces with the name "James Ritch", and seven with the name "Dennis Baldwin" was used. After a prayer for God's guidance and will, Shular Messick, the church's oldest member, was asked to pull a piece of paper from the container. The piece of paper drawn had the name "James Ritch" on it. At that point, the entire congregation pledged their support of Pastor James D. Ritch as God's selection of the church's pastor.

### *FELLOWSHIP HALL*

Pastor Duncan envisioned the church having a fellowship hall where conference meetings, church fellowships, and other activities could be held. He drew up a possible floor plan, but his implementation of this vision was cut short by his death. The official board continued the effort over several years.

Finally, on April 19, 1987, the church held a "Ground Breaking Service" for a new fellowship hall. Official Board members, Grace Holden Circle representatives along with Pastor James Ritch turned shovels of dirt on the location behind our church to begin a new phase of service for our church and the community.





The plans were revised by Tim Duncan to include a full basement to accommodate the original elevation of the land. After much toil and several complications, including the cave-in of part of the basement wall because of heavy rain, the fellowship hall was complete and ready for use. The dedication of the new facility was held. The script below was read in unison by the congregation at the dedication service:

On this day, **November 27, 1988**, we as God's people, dedicate and consecrate this building to the service of God and to the praise of the name of Jesus, our Savior.

We pledge that as we enter within its' walls, that we will conduct our activities and study of God's Word in a manner that will bring glory and honor to His name, that through this ministry, people of all ages may so learn of the love of God and Jesus, as Savior, that all may be prepared for the return of Jesus, as he comes again to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, to rule the Kingdom of God on this earth.



### ***CHURCH REMODELING AND HANDICAP FACILITIES***



As members of our congregation began to age the Official Board voted to remodel the sanctuary and extend the church foyer by adding restrooms and to the outside an updated handicap ramp. A new heating and air condition system was installed, new carpet and our church pews were refinished. We held the dedication of our new handicap facilities and remodeling of the sanctuary on August 3, 2003. We had also remodeled the baptistery in the basement of the church with beautiful ceramic tile and added new railing. A baptismal service followed the dedication service baptizing Hannah Austin, Judy Ritch and Brandon Ritch. Following the service we enjoyed lunch in the fellowship hall followed by a Praise Service in the sanctuary with the "Strings of Praise" being a part of that service. The "Strings of Praise" members were Steve Austin, Jimmy, Kevin and Wanda Keller, Sheila Swallows, Kirby Anderson, Bobby and Jonathan Raby.

### ***CHURCH BASEMENT FLOODED***

In the Spring of 2009 we experienced the basement being flooded due to heavy rains and the guttering stopped up and the waters ran down the basement wall. Considerable work had to be done to meet EPA regulations and dry out the basement before we could repair. Our Vacation Bible School was ~~canceled~~ for June and later we held a one afternoon VBS class in the picnic shelter and then traveled to the home of David and Melody Phillips for a swim party and cookout. Again the congregation came to the rescue and used their faith in God and helped provide the monies to repair the damage and replace the asbestos tiles with beautiful ceramic tiles. God saw the need and provided, praises to Him!

### ***FELLOWSHIP HALL DESTROYED BY FIRE***

Through disaster God does provide a way. We have witnessed to that fact with the burning of our fellowship hall on Friday night, May 14, 2010. The bitter sweet of it was a fellowship hall in ashes but our sanctuary miraculously standing unburned. Our faith tried by fire but God has not wavered from his people. It was a time to be strong, seek God's direction and work together to rebuild. Brother Paul Duncan was chosen by the official board to oversee the rebuilding of our fellowship hall. Lots of rules and procedures had changed since our first fellowship hall was built. We have many updates in our new fellowship hall that would have never been accomplished had it not been destroyed.

Rebuilding was difficult, long and hard, trying at times, exciting, a trial of our faith but so rewarding in the end. Our people have put in lots of hours to help where and when needed. The "Fields of Grace" youth room had just been dedicated the month before the fire. Our youth and the church put in lots of hours to remodel the basement for their special place to study God's word and have fun together. They have grown in spirit through this fire and they are striving again to rebuild their area. The "Go Serve" group from Atlanta Bible College came up for a weekend and helped work on their project, establish their youth area again and our youth were blessed to bond with this team of young people.



Out of the ashes of the old fellowship hall, a new and improved fellowship hall was born. The building was widened by 8 feet to allow for a bigger kitchen area, an inside stairway from the main floor to the basement, and two bathrooms for the new and improved youth area in the basement of the fellowship hall. The church was able to furnish the fellowship hall and make the improvements because we were getting ready for a yard sale just before the fire. Our insurance policy had a replacement cost clause and all the yard sale items were paid for at the cost of their replacement. God provided us with the funds to build back and furnish the building so much better than it was before the fire. God certainly works in mysterious ways.

The dedication of the new fellowship hall was held in conjunction of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church on October 9, 2011. Pastor Dennis Baldwin spoke at the morning worship and the choir, under the direction of Tim Duncan, presented several special selections. There was special music by others as well. Following the morning worship, lunch was served in the new fellowship hall. The dedication service was held at 2:00 pm with Dr. Joe Martin as the featured speaker. The choir again performed several selections. An open house of the new facility followed the dedication service.





### *A New Church Outreach*

At the beginning of 2013, Becky Ritch approached several individual with the ideal of having a living nativity prior to Christmas 2013. She had a vision of some type of walk-thru drama about the birth of Jesus. She formed a committee to plan and initiate an annual presentation. Paul Duncan was in charge of writing the script. After looking at all the scriptures that pointed to the birth of Christ, he felt that it should be more than just the birth of Christ. He realized that God and his angels had spoken concerning Jesus from Genesis to Revelation. At that point, the walk-thru drama, “God & Angels Speak - the Story of Jesus from Beginning to End” was born. The drama was composed of eleven scenes: the Garden of Eden, Isaiah’s prophecies, Mary & Gabriel, Joseph’s dream, Bethlehem, the shepherds and the angels, the manger scene, Joseph goes to Egypt, Joseph returns from Egypt, the empty tomb, Jesus’ ascension and the promise of his return and God’s kingdom on earth. The props for all the scenes and the scene booths were created and assembled. Each year from 2013 - 2019 the setup and practice of the production was done from August to November. Then on the first weekend of December the walk thru drama was presented free of charge to the community and any who wanted to attend. This outreach presenting the gospel of the Kingdom of God required much work and a huge cast of 60-70 people. The shortage of cast members and the pandemic resulted in the demise of this outreach.









### *Pastor's Retirement & a New Pastor*

In October, 2015, Pastor James D Ritch retired after pastoring the Church of Resurrection Hope for 30 years. Once more the church was without a pastor. The board began a search for a new pastor. Paul Duncan again filled the pulpit while the search was being made. In April 2016 Pastor Michael Medlock came and preached a trial sermon. After talks between the official board and Pastor Michael, both decided that Pastor Michael and his wife Charity would be a good fit for the church. Pastor Michael and Charity began their search for a home in the

Lenoir area. After one possibility close to the church fell through, a great home in the Cahaj Mountain community was found and the move was made. Pastor Michael and Charity began their service to the church.

Pastor Michael felt that contextual and objective study of the Bible was important to learning the truths set forth in God's word. He decided to change the Sunday evening service from preaching to a bible study session. He took over the Bible Truth Program on WJRI. The church began advertising the church in the local newspaper. Also, Pastor Michael began writing a short letter/article for the local paper on the second and fourth weeks of the month. Under Pastor Michael's leadership extended the airing of the Bible Truth Program to KCWN in Kansas City, Missouri. After broadcasting there for a little over a year, the board decided that the broadcast on KCWN should be switched to WSKY in Asheville, North Carolina, so that the Hendersonville church could be advertised.

In 2019, the church began having an early service to give the membership an option of a worship service with contemporary Christian music. Paul Duncan was the leader of that service. Refreshments were served prior to the early service. The Sunday School was changed to Faith Journeys. The regular morning service now includes a time for sharing and testimonies. Since Pastor Michael feels that the fellowship of the body of Christ is extremely important, he initiated a monthly fellowship meal that followed the morning worship service.

Of course, pandemic put a stop to our services for a while, the church currently has a Sunday morning worship service and a Wednesday evening prayer/bible study service. Pastor Michael live-streams a short devotional on the church's Facebook page once a week. The church has also utilized Call Multiplier to get church announcements and prayer requests out to the church membership and friends of the church.

The Church of Resurrection Hope is truly blessed of the Lord and it is our desire to fulfill Jesus' command to preach the gospel of the coming kingdom in our local community and support the General Conference's efforts all over the world. We want to "Love God, and Love Others" so that our actions are evidence to the world that there is a loving God and a loving Savior, Jesus Christ. Looking for that blessed hope!





In 2017, the church had new stained glass windows installed.





*Our Pastors*



Z. B. Duncan  
(1961 - 1984)



James D Ritch  
(1984 - 2015)



C Michael Medlock  
(2016 - Present)

## ***GRACE HOLDEN CIRCLE***

My memories of the Grace Holden Circle are stated below in honor of the many ladies which have toiled to help our church both those living and those which have fallen asleep waiting the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The work of our ladies can only be attributed to the fact that they have a genuine desire to serve God. It shows through their dedication in every aspect of what they do.

The Grace Holden Circle was named after Grace Holden because of her faithfulness to the Women's Circle at Calvary Advent Christian Church. She was a blessing to her church, community and family as well as many, many friends. An excerpt from Mozelle Minton, "the beginning of the ladies' Grace Holden Circle came after the death of Grace Holden in 1956. Nelie Messick named the circle after Grace."

The purpose of the Grace Holden Circle is for home and foreign missions. It is also to help the fellowship of our ladies to become closer to our Lord Jesus Christ and create a common goal of service with each other. The Grace Holden Circle has truly been a blessing to our church.

Looking through our scrapbooks and minutes over the last 50 years, the Grace Holden Circle has purchased hymn books and Bibles for the church. They started the "Pave the Parking Lot Project." Menus were made to enable all members to help provide food when anyone in the church had lost a family member to the enemy death.

They purchased a new clock for the church. The members held meetings in their homes with refreshments. Later, the meetings were moved back to the church. They helped participate in the church's 10th Anniversary by preparing food for the dinner. Rose Austin served the cake while Patsy Smith served the punch. The members have sent innumerable cards to widows and widowers, baked more cookies for Bible School than is imaginable and let's not forget the gallons of kool-aid made for Bible School. Outside beautification has been an annual event since the beginning. It has always been the desire of the circle to make the outside appearance one that reflects our love for God and His son, Jesus Christ. The circle has always tried to honor the mothers and fathers on their special day by giving a small gift to each one that is in attendance.

In 1975, the ladies all signed a Mother's Day card and sent it to Rose Austin's mother in Germany. The members have given of themselves by giving baby, household and wedding showers. The circle has always remembered the Veterans with a small gift also. It is their love that shines through in every circumstance.

There have been numerous penny calendars to raise money for special projects. The ladies of the circle have held many bake sales, sold telephone praying hand pens, cook books, Danny Duz-its, flavorings, knives, calendars, "30 Pieces of Silver" love offerings, quilt tickets, as well as, church picture plates and anything else that could be sold to raise money for our church. They also had a no-bake bake sale which was interesting!

The ladies walked and rocked to raise money several times by holding walk-a-thons and rock-a-thons. It was always a great deal of fun for everyone who participated. One time we held a "Prettiest Baby Contest" to raise money. There was a great response to this project.

In 1978, the ladies of the circle met to quilt at Estelle Whisenant's home. It was a learning experience for some and a showmanship for those experienced in quilting, but everyone had fun. As the years rolled by, there were more and more quilts made. Patsy Smith, Verlie Duncan, Wilma Brewer, Coral Reeder, Sheila Swallows, Reba Brewer and Marie Wood quilted items for the Christmas Bazaar. Patsy Smith and Reba Brewer have continued to make many quilts to raise money for the church. Mozelle Minton, Evelyn Church, Elaine (Punkie) Phillips, Becca Phillips, Melody Phillips, Becky Ritch, Mary Duncan, Irene Knight, Patricia Clontz, Keila Keller, Elizabeth Duncan plus the others mentioned above have gone above and beyond in making crafts for our bazaars. In addition to the ladies, we had men from the church that made wood crafts to help our bazaar. Paul Holden, Hub Minton, Dewey Phillips, Steve Austin, and Jimmie Keller all contributed many beautiful items. We are truly blessed by the talents of these individuals and praise God for the use of their talents.

The circle has prepared a great deal of food for conferences and anniversaries. The willingness of our ladies is a testimony of their wonderful faithfulness.

The circle has had a variety of parties including New Years, Valentines, Easter, Tacky, Pilgrims, Old Fashioned Sunday, Halloween, Christmas, as well as, a Thanksgiving Dinner. They have held numerous Christmas Bazaars, which served breakfast and lunch. Our breakfast foods were donated by the members, which included ham, sausage, livermush, jelly and gravy biscuits. Our lunch consisted of Wilma Brewer's famous BBQ and Hot Chicken sandwiches. Of course, we had very good desserts prepared by the Brewers. We also had a bake sale with our bazaars. The ladies outdo themselves when it comes to baked goods. Our first Christmas sales were held at the Lenoir Mall. We made many contacts during the first couple times, which gave us a reputation for the quality workmanship that was displayed. I remember the first Christmas Bazaar that was held in the church basement. I



was so astounded when I walked in. I felt like I was in a general store. It was beautiful. Of course, we give God all the glory for the women and the talents He has bestowed upon each of them.

The Circle has always appreciated both the Pastors and the Sunday School Superintendent by surprise birthday parties or in other ways. One year, the Grace Holden Circle sang Paul Holden a special song on his birthday and presented him with a gift. Pastor and Mrs. Z. B. Duncan's portrait was made and placed in the church in recognition of their service to the church. Upon Pastor Duncan's death, the ladies held a "Jim Ritch Family Day" to recognize Pastor Ritch as our new pastor. The Circle also recognized the Sunday School Teachers, Choir Director, Organist and Pianist in different ways.

The members have raised money to help roof the church. They purchased one square of shingles, as well as, provided snacks and lunch for the men who roofed the church. They purchased the stove and hood for the Fellowship Hall in 1987 plus many, many other items that were needed. They have purchased fabric to make curtains for the basement. They have purchased paint and remodeled the Sunday School rooms.

The Grace Holden Circle worked diligently to set up the Memorial Garden. The land across from the church went from a vacant lot to a beautiful place to go sit down and meditate. They have worked hard to keep it beautiful! The playground for our children has been enjoyed not only by our children but neighborhood children as well. With the addition of the picnic shelter, we all have benefited by the many cookouts and picnics that have been held at the shelter. After the fellowship hall burned down on May 14, 2010, our shelter enabled us to host the Carolina Conference, which was a blessing that only God can give.

Now, in 2011, the ladies once again are working toward restoring the needed items to the newly built fellowship hall. Each lady adds her own faithfulness to the needs of our church. God has truly blessed us with talented, faithful ladies that remain faithful to God and His Church.

May God be praised for all the ladies of the Grace Holden Circle, those from the past that haven't been personally named and the current members that have been named. The glory for the women and the talents He has bestowed upon each of them. In the future, may we, as the Grace Holden Circle continue to let God guide us and continue to do His will that His Name may be glorified.

By: Wanda Duncan Keller

## ***OTHER OUTREACH OF THE GRACE HOLDEN CIRCLE AND THE CHURCH***

**Food Pantry** - The food pantry was actually initiated by Jim Walker after he first became a Deacon. We bought the shelves that were in the basement of the fellowship hall that had no doors or locks on them. These shelves were stocked with food periodically and when necessary, supplemented with love offerings. June of 2004 was the first year that we actually had a specific fund for the food pantry. By September 2004 our fund was depleted. It was reinstated in January 2006 and has since grown to its' current status. The pantry has been supported by generous donations of our congregation . The Food Pantry is now established in the furnace room of the church basement. Others that have been in charge of the Food Pantry are Patsy Smith, Melody Phillips and Keila Keller. Currently Wilma Brewer and Sheila Swallows are distributing the food as the need arises. Over the years many individuals and families have benefited by receiving staple and Perishable goods from our Food Pantry.

**Angel Food Ministry** - In the fall of 2006 our congregation became aware of Angel Food Ministries; a ministry with a servant heart, founded in Monroe, GA. Angel Food is a non-profit, non denominational organization dedicated to providing financial support in the form of food relief to communities throughout the United States. It was established in 1994. It offers a medium sized box of food for \$35.00 that contains food staples from every food group. We began working with the folks at Oak Hill Ruritan to learn the procedures for proper distribution. Shortly thereafter we ventured out on our own, taking orders and delivering food one Saturday each month. The Angel Food Fund had its first deposit and order through the church on May 13, 2007. There had been deposits and payment for the Angel Food banner in March and April 2007. Previous orders were made through the Oak Hill Ruritan distribution. At our peak, we handled between 80-100 boxes of food each month. We received \$1.00 return on each box which we as a church designated for school supplies for the youth of the church and also the youth of Whitnel Elementary School in our local community. Angel Food Ministries has recently undergone a time of re-organization and distribution has ceased at the present.

Patsy Smith

**Military Boxes** - In 2003, I started a new mission, I started sending care boxes to members of the military who we knew and had addresses for who were on deployment. I requested help from the church family to help make this mission a success. I tried to send boxes every four to six weeks to the names on my list. Since Donald had military experience, he helped me pick out items that would be useful in the field. These items included socks, personal care items, various types of individually wrapped snacks, and personal notes of encouragement.

Donald's longtime friend Kim Baker was in the North Carolina National Guard Military Police Unit, she was deployed to Baghdad, Iraq in 2003- 2004 then again in 2005. She was the first person I sent care boxes to. She was very appreciative of the items that were sent. Her unit spent plenty of time on patrols and the snacks that were sent helped feed them while they were away from the base. Sending Kim those first boxes, I learned the easy way to fill out the custom forms online and how to pack everything in the boxes in Ziploc bags to save space; the bags kept everything clean and dry and the bags were reusable by the soldiers and sailors to protect their personal items from sand and water.

When John Beavers, Channing Ritch, and Amelia Brewer Corley joined the Navy, I felt that these young men and young lady needed some love from home when they were deployed and started sending care boxes to them. I tried to include things that would brighten their days away from home in addition to the basic items. John made the comment to me, 'I share most things with the guys in the shop except the socks. I put the new package of socks in my rack and when I want a pick-me-up I get out a new pair. That feels just like a hug from home.' I didn't mind him sharing with others, considering not everyone got packages from home and there was always something for them in the shop - either from me or someone else to snack on. Amelia said of the care boxes, 'They were a great comfort to me while overseas. Just knowing I had a little church in Whitnel praying and thinking about me was very calming.' When Chris Corpening was deployed by the Air Force to Iraq, I included him in the care boxes from home. After his deployment was over, he requested that we keep sending items to that address since it was an active unit that was continually getting new members. I received a lovely hand written letter from Captain Michael Wall, USAF in December 2007. 'Thank you so much for the box of snacks and fruit punch mix! My airmen and I certainly appreciate your thoughtfulness. My airmen and I often spend long hours behind the wheel while we deliver supplies up and down the highways of Iraq. It's not the safest job, some say, but we do our best to serve our great country. The type of snacks you sent is always a big hit, since they are easy to eat while driving. I have no doubt that they will all go fast.

God Bless. Psalm 138:7' "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me."

Some of the other people I sent boxes to included Pat Bleich's brother when he was deployed to Iraq and Kim's sister Kathryn when she was deployed to Afghanistan.

I didn't keep track of the quantity of boxes I mailed out, but looking back, I am estimating that I sent at least 50. I tried to include the youth with this mission by letting them help me repack the items in the zip bags and pack the boxes during Wednesday night classes. One time as I pulled up to the post office, I asked someone in the parking lot to help me carry in the 5 or 6 boxes I had prepared to mail out that day. This time of preparing the military boxes have been a very rewarding time for me to show my love of the country by supporting the military around the world. I also would like to thank all in the church that have helped me make this a successful mission.

Sheila Swallows

**School Supplies/Tutoring** - The Circle involved the congregation in collecting school supplies for Whitnel Elementary School and for the youth of our church. At present we still give each child of the church a bag of school supplies at the beginning of their school. We also established a night of tutoring each week for our youth. We opened the fellowship hall and church volunteers helped any of the youth with their studies.

**Exercise and Weight Loss programs** - For a time we gathered to exercise and Reba Brewer also led a group in the First Place program.

**Hilltop/Carolina Oaks Resthome** - For quite a few years the Circle headed up giving a gift to each of the residents at Christmas. Our congregation brought gifts to help support this effort.

**Helping Hands Health Clinic** - This clinic helped those that did not have enough income to fill their prescriptions. Helping Hands provided for those needing their medications. For a year we provided meals for the workers at the clinic.

**Comfort Caps** for chemo patients were made by Circle members and taken to the hospitals.

**Shelter Home/Hospice** - For several years now the Circle has gathered items for Christmas Shoe boxes for the residents at the Shelter Home and provided pantry items for Hospice. The Circle, under the direction of Punkie Phillips and Evelyn Church, has sponsored Yard Sales to benefit both the Shelter Home and Hospice.

**Church Family Quilt** - Reba Brewer with the help of Patsy Smith did a church family quilt and then held a drawing - Punkie Phillips won the quilt.

*This recap of the 50 years the Grace Holden Circle has been in existence is just a small drop in the bucket of how God has inspired and used this group of ladies to go and serve those around us. We have been so blessed and give Him all the praise for what he has done.*

## **MEMORIAL GARDEN**

In 2002 our church family experienced the tragic death of one of our teens, Brittany Austin. This was very traumatic for the Austin family and the church. The situation lay heavy on our hearts as to how we could help everyone and especially our youth to deal with this loss and look to God for comfort.

Patsy Smith, Preacher Jim and Becky began to look around our church property to put a bench in Brittany's memory. The more we considered different spots the Lord spoke to our hearts and showed us how to develop the vacant lot across from the church. The committee drew up a plan for this plot to include a memorial garden, picnic shelter, campfire area and playground and then we broke it down to be done in three phases. We took the proposal to the Official Board for approval.

Many volunteers from the church got involved and spent hours of work into clearing the plot. The memorial garden and campfire area was established in September 2004.

**Picnic Shelter** - Eric Brewer shot the lay of our property, John Smith drew plans for the picnic shelter and Jason Phillips contacted a contractor on pouring the cement. Work continued to build the picnic shelter. There were endless hours spent and different incidents and situations that would simply amaze you as to how the Lord opened doors, opened hearts and opened wallets to show US - He is with us, and He will provide. On August 6, 2006, a very hot day, our congregation held a dedication of the Memorial Garden and Picnic Shelter. Included in the dedication was the raising of the flag by the Caldwell County Sheriff Department Color Guard in honor of Vernon and Evelyn Clark. It was such a moving experience, God touched our hearts in so many ways during this project and continues as families have added their memorials. Patsy Smith said at the dedication "God blessed us and made it all possible - He will be here with you as you meditate in the garden, as you enjoy a meal or a birthday get together, or as we gather on a cold, crisp evening around the camp fire - God is ever present among His people - those who love Him and serve Him."



**Playground** - In 2007 a beautiful playground was established for the youth of the church and our community. Many people contributed money and energy to develop this area. Again God has blessed!

**Flag Retirement Ceremony** - On June 12, 2010 Pastor Ritch conducted a Flag Retirement Ceremony to show respect and honor to the American flag and our country. Jason Phillips, Tim Duncan, Bobby and Jonathan Raby and Paul Duncan assisted with this program. Church members each took part in the cutting and burning of the stars and strips. The ashes were buried at the base of the flag pole.

## **MEMORIES**

Vernon and I was in the group that met at Brother Z. B. Duncan's home where the church was organized. Later on we had church in our home and other homes also. When the ground was broken for the church we have today, Vernon helped dig the foundation, a lot of members worked hard to get the church built. We had services in the basement for a long time and then went up in the main sanctuary where I began playing the piano. God has blessed us daily. I have a lot of memories of our church.

In God's hands and care,  
Evelyn R. Clark

Our journey with this congregation began in November 1975 when the Lord sent us from Ohio to North Carolina. We were welcomed with open arms, warm hearts and lots of good southern cooking. Why the Lord sent us here we didn't know? Over the years it became apparent that there was a reason for us to be here. Mother and Dad spent their last 20 years here where the weather is not as rough as in the North. They thoroughly enjoyed their fellowship with the members of our church. We feel that being here has been a major benefit for all involved. Mother and Dad became replacement grandparents for a lot of the younger folks here at Resurrection Hope. Our children finished growing up, married and had our five grandchildren here.

We praise God that our faithfulness has been blessed. We have seen lots of things happen in the past 40 years. We pledged things and put on a new roof, got a new organ and piano and bought parking spaces to blacktop the parking lot. When we lost our pastor to death, we spent much time in prayer and fasting and we watched a new pastor be sent by God to lead our church. We also pray and fast for the health of people and have seen God work with us. We've seen a fellowship hall built and furnished. We used it for yard sales, bazaars, dinners, and fellowships. While we were in Ohio visiting, we became aware that lightning struck and destroyed our fellowship building. We have now watched the fellowship hall rise up out of the ashes and is now completely rebuilt. We can't thank God enough for his graciousness toward us. He has been so good to all of us. We are waiting for the soon return of our Savior Jesus Christ. Come quickly Lord Jesus!

Jerold and Wilma Brewer

### **50 Years of Memories at the Church of Resurrection Hope**

I was nine years old when the Church of Resurrection Hope was organized. We had a great deal of people at my parent's home, Pastor and Mrs. Z. B. Duncan. There were 45 Charter Members and their children. I call myself a "*charter child*" because I was there when the church was organized and have been there ever since. There are a lot of us charter children that have remained faithful to the church. What a blessing that has been! We started the meeting at 7:30 P. M. on April 16, 1961. At this meeting, the Church was named The Church of Resurrection Hope. It was the suggestion of Elder Shular Messick. This was the hope of the 45 charter members as well as their children and so our Church was named. We didn't have any place to worship so the plan was to find somewhere in the Lenoir area. The Caldwell County School Board was contacted in an effort to rent the old Whitnel School that wasn't being used at the time. Until we could find somewhere to worship, we worshiped outside and also went to the mountains where we had services. Within about eight weeks, we were able to obtain the school on the second floor. It was an ordeal to get the huge piano that is now located downstairs in our church to that second story area but God always provides the way when you walk in faith. Pastor C. F. Pryor came and discussed many truths held in common by our group. He preached for our group. Some members from the Guthrie Grove Church in South Carolina came up. This is how we became acquainted with The Church of God of Abrahamic Faith. It's through this time that we

found that we had the same basic truths. What a blessing to find others that believed the way we do!!!! Pastor S.O. Ross came and preached for us and worked out plans for Mission Builder Aid. By then we had purchased the present sight. Also, the footings had been dug, poured and the masonry laid as well as the concrete floor poured. The first floor joists were installed then Conover Sheet Metal Company put a temporary roof over the whole basement where we petitioned off three Sunday School rooms and two restrooms and the rest was used for worship as we heated with an oil blower. As five years had been scheduled for completion, we seen God work in a mighty way as it was completed the same year.

The labor was all by members and friends with even the children helping what they could. Our pews and pulpit furniture was purchased from Southern Desk Furniture Company. Due to Pastor Duncan building this man's home, the Lord touched the owner of the company's heart to let us have one year to pay for the furniture, interest free. This was paid off in eleven months. This was even a greater blessing from God!!!! The Grace Holden Circle wanted carpet in the Sanctuary. This was done before Pastor C. F. Pryor dedicated our Church. M. G. Crouch Lumber Company gave us a good discount on all materials because Pastor Duncan worked for them as a Foreman. Then, M.G. Crouch Lumber Company donated the first 50 Hymnals called "Songs of Truth". In 1977, the church was paying off the only indebtedness of the church, which was the lot across the street from the church.

I remember being in Sunday School as a teenager. James D. Ritch, our current Pastor, was our teacher. We had a great deal of children at that time. We always had good discussions and were taught a lot.

As a child, we had Bible drills. We had contests to see which child or in some cases adults who could find the Bible verse the fastest. We had many who were very fast. One must know the Books of the Bible in order to win at this.

We had numerous Christmas plays where the children always had parts to remember. It helped us put God's Word in our hearts.

One of the children's favorite things was playing volleyball on Wednesday nights before service. We always had both sides full. Later we starting offering cold soft drinks between the time volleyball ended and the service began. Pastor Duncan always was in the middle of the games. The older children watched out for the younger children so that they could participate. It was so much fun!!!!

In 1984, Pastor Z. B. Duncan fell asleep to wait the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. With a need for a new pastor, the whole congregation prayed for God's guidance. It was decided to cast lots for our new pastor. Shular Messick, one of our oldest Elders was chosen to draw the name. At that point, James D. Ritch became our new Pastor.

In 1987, our new Fellowship Hall was built. Tim Duncan oversaw the building of the Fellowship Hall. The women worked diligently to get everything needed for the Fellowship Hall. Thanks to Tim for a job well done! The Fellowship Hall was such a blessing. We had Craft sessions, Exercise Classes, Tutoring Classes, Angel Food pick up, and numerous fellowships of the church family as well as providing supper for conference meetings. We have always been blessed to have more than enough food for the conferences. Our ladies do a great job anytime they are called upon! Praise God for them!

As I grew older, I had a desire to help the younger children. With Pastor Jim's approval, I started a Bible Memorization. Scripture verses would be given to the children to memorize. The first Sunday of each month, the children would recite the scripture. I provided a treat to those that could complete the scripture. It was always encouraging to me to see how well our children could do. The next project was to have the children memorize the Books of the Bible. All the children did really well with this but Hannah Austin was the fastest of any. It was amazing to hear her say the Books of the Bible! There wasn't any slowing her down.

There was a contest between the adults and the children to see which group could read the Bible all the way through. This was good for both ages as a chart showed the progress. Of course, the adults had the edge but the children showed strength in reading God's word.

Punkie Phillips and I did the first musical in our church. It was called "The Tale of the Three Trees". We had a lot of children with memorization parts. There were about 8 - 10 songs, which all children learned the songs. Some of the children sang solos. It was an absolute success. We took the children with the adults that helped to the Koinonia to perform our musical. The residents were very impressed with our children. After that, there were many musicals performed at the church. My very favorite was "Hallelujah Heart." It was also the children's favorite.

The Grace Holden Circle bought hand bells for the children. Punkie Phillips, Allison Smith, Patricia Clontz and I helped the children to learn to play the hand bells. The children performed several songs with the bells at different times. It was always a blessing!

Easter Egg parties are always the best! Children love looking for Easter Eggs. The parties are always great! Halloween parties are great too but there is always so much candy!!!

On May 14, 2010, our Fellowship Hall took a direct lightning hit burning down the Fellowship Hall. It was a horrible experience to watch it go up in flames. With all the sadness, we were truly blessed that no one was hurt!!!! There

were a lot of tears that night. It was a greater blessing that the Church didn't burn. GOD IS GOOD!!! The heat from the Fellowship Hall could have set our church on fire. We could have lost it all! Praise God that the church was spared!!!! The Lenoir Fire Department really did a great job! Our church is grateful for all they did that night!! Also, our neighbor, Renee Burnette, seen the fire and called the fire department. Her quick thinking and reacting helped save the church also!!! We all watched in despair but at the same time in thanksgiving we gave God praise for His blessing that night! A year has come and gone, Moss Marlow Company from Hickory, North Carolina rebuilt the Fellowship Hall. The size of the building was increased by six feet. The ceiling was extended to nine feet. The kitchen is bigger with two sinks, two refrigerators, two microwaves, two stoves and a middle island. We also have a larger ice-maker. The new building has inside stairs to the basement where the "Fields of Grace" will be. This is the area our youth had just completed right before the fire. It is better than before!!! Our ladies' committee that was chosen to pick out the items for the new Fellowship Hall is Becky Ritch, Patsy Smith, Wilma Brewer and Patricia Clontz. Thanks to them is in order for a good job done! Paul Duncan oversaw the building. Thanks to him also for a great job!

In 2011, during the month of April, we had a short celebration for the 50 years that we have been a church. It was decided to wait for the fellowship hall to be completed before we held the 50 Year Celebration and combine the Fellowship Hall dedication. God has blessed us exceedingly! A great deal has been accomplished during the 50 years we are celebrating on October 9, 2011. My prayer is that our Father, God, will send His Son, Jesus back to this earth to set up His Kingdom on this earth made new before 50 more years pass.

As a child, I loved to go to church. As a teenager, I loved to go to church. As a young adult, I loved to go to church. In my middle age, I love to go to church. As I approach my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, I still love to go to church. It's important to me. It's where I go to worship my Father, God. I appreciate all the sacrifices that were made by the ones that started our church so that I could have a church where the truth is preached. It's my obligation to see that I carry their faith on realizing that we've come this far by faith and by the mercies of God and that by His Grace we will continue on.

By: Wanda Duncan Keller

### My Ministry

My local church in North Carolina ordained me into ministry. I received a Certificate of Ordination from our regional conference dated August 14, 1966 at the age of 21. I soon realized this would be my life's vocation. September 1, 1968 I requested and received a Certificate of License from our General Conference and was ordained August 17, 1973. My wife and I pastored The Restitution Church in Southern Illinois from the fall of 1969 to the spring of 1975. Following that ministry we accepted the pastorate of Hope Second Advent Christian Church in North Carolina and remained there for ten years. We have been with Grace Fellowship Church of God here in Virginia since the fall of 1985. Twenty six years of service this year to the wonderful people of Grace Fellowship Church of God of Abrahamic Faith.

During the years since 1985, for more than fifteen of those years, we have traveled about an hour east to help Fair Oaks Community Church, one of our sister churches in Virginia. Their pastor left in 1993 and since then we have traveled down to help them in their ministry. We provide a message and communion on the first Sunday of the month at three in the afternoon.

Dennis and Rachel Baldwin

I started my ministry going to Gastonia to the Prices home in 1974 or 1975 after this I was given the opportunity to go to the Piney Advent Christian Church for about five years and in the winter, November of 1980 I got the call to come to Sparks Springs 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent Christian Church and so I have been here ever since. My radio ministry started with the Berean Youth Radio program on WJRI in Lenoir. In 1982 we started a radio ministry here in Texas on the Weatherford Station. That station went all Islamic music and so we moved to the station in Graham, Texas and still with the help of craft sales we are able to maintain the funds today.

Jimmy Minton

Lots of memories for sure, "dinner on the grounds" comes to mind setting plywood on saw bucks outside on the shady side of the church, weighted down with so much food that they often had a swag in the middle, running away flies and yellow jackets to us all running from the rain! All our church families from S.C. and other places gathering



and sharing were more important than the food (almost). The smiles and laughter of all the children together was and is wonderful still.

I remember driving a bus with kids and their bags. I would have said luggage but as often as not there were few suitcases and more duffle bags and plastic bags to camp several times, all the kids filled with anticipation of seeing old friends and making new ones. It was always funny to me and made me smile inside and out listening to them asking "Who are you taking to the banquet?" only a few miles down the road from the church. They would meet in the parking lot screaming and waving the girls hugging each other and the boys not sure what to do slapped each other on the backs and ran away. The weeks at camp always ended in an emotional farewell the night before leaving often with so many tears you would have thought they would never see each other again.

And sometimes they didn't! One year we lost one of the young men from S.C. in a car accident only a short time after returning from camp.

I have many fond memories of services at our church filled with the mighty spirit of GOD and an altar filled with repentant people praying for forgiveness and loved ones gathered round them praying, tears were shed like rain and GOD's power flowed out. I remember one Sunday night in particular it was summer and the windows were open as there was no air conditioning just a lot of "prayer conditioning" when Z.B. was preaching and had given the invitation suddenly he announced that we are going to Texas to run a revival and there was a mighty wind that blew through the building like I imagine GOD's spirit filling us all, he told me after church when I asked when he was going "I don't know no one has asked me yet!" but that call came the next week.

One of the most vivid would be concerning the church pews. Several years ago when we remodeled the church sanctuary and added the new front area, the board had decided to have the pews refinished while the sanctuary was unavailable to use. A company from Charlotte was contracted to do the work and the pews were removed and loaded on a truck. As far as we knew they were taken to that business to begin the work. Time passed the sanctuary was almost finished and no pews only excuses of we are working on them deposit and progress payments had been made but no date was given for completion. I got the phone number of the company and called them and demanded to see the pews (I had a very bad feeling about this) the owner told me they were at his finishers place in Lincolnton, he gave me a name and I obtained an address off the internet and went there the next day. I recall it was raining very hard that day and as I turned into the driveway my heart sank to my feet there were our pews, part of our church sitting outside in the mud under a makeshift porch on the side of a work shop rain was standing in the pew seats piled on top of one another some were inside with marks on them attempting to scrape the finish off. There was also a pit dug in the ground roughly as long as a pew lined with plastic and a harness suspended over it to dip the pews in a solvent to try and remove the finish, it was very surreal to see it all and no one was there working. I called Pastor Ritch and told him "You better get down here because if this man comes home, me or him one is going to get a whipping!" as I took pictures and explained with anguish and anger what I had found. I then called Paul Duncan at school and told the secretary I had an emergency call for him and explained to him what I had found. They both came to the place, it was very sad indeed, the man in Charlotte was contacted and he said he was unaware of all this and the person doing the work was a subcontractor that had told him he could handle the work but we later found he had never attempted any pews or a job this large. The pews were taken to a company in Hudson that had to repair some of them and washed off the finish and restored them, some bear the scars now.

Dewey Phillips

When I was a teenager I was president of the young people's group. We studied on different subjects of the Bible. We also had social events such as a ball game with refreshments as hotdogs with all the trimmings, cookies, cakes and drinks. We had a good time talking and sharing our thoughts with each other. My dad, Z. 8. Duncan played ball with us. We helped put the tile in the basement of the church and afterwards we went to Lenoir and handed out tracks to tell people about Jesus. I graduated in 1961 from high school. Paul Holden, our Sunday School Superintendent came to me and asked me, "Patricia, I need you to teach children - in the 6 9 year old class, I think you know the Bible well enough to teach Sunday School." I didn't think of myself as a person who could teach these small children but I said I'll try to do my best for the Lord. I have taught for 40 some years. I thank God that I had the pleasure to teach these children. I am still teaching and it is a blessing to me.

Patricia Clontz

My thoughts on the Resurrection Hope Church- One word...FAMILY! When we moved to Lenoir, people from the church helped unload the moving truck. You just don't know how much that meant to us. Later when I was so homesick, there these people were again to give me a hug. So much love for someone new... Now, I try to pass it on. This church has made us feel at home.

I love being part of a small church. You can make a big difference in a small church. This point became obvious when I "missed" coming one Sunday - I got three phone calls that week to see if I was okay. This church *notices* when you are not here. I feel part of this church family...I feel God's love here.

Reba Brewer

When I bring to memory parts of the last 50 years, a lot comes to mind. Some have been good; others not so good.

The times when we sat behind a very nervous mother who I am sure was in fear for her family, to the prayers of another mother that needed help becoming a mother.

The first time I stood in the sanctuary totally in awe at the hugeness of this place, and then when the front was enlarged and God worked out how it should be.

Many prayers have been answered and many couples have been pledged in love to each other. We have seen a great multitude of people come and go; so many it is sometimes hard to recall their face.

Some of the best memories have been plays or Christmas programs. If you've never been behind the scenes and heard the dear children as they try so very hard to repeat their lines; or heard the sweet songs they sang you have truly missed one of the greatest blessings of all times.

And past Bible Schools are among some of the best. From Horseback riding to riding on the back of a trailer pulled by a tractor that tried to do a wheelie, to games and skits, we have been blessed to have them all.

It's truly hard to put down in words the last 50 years without thanking God for all He has done and for giving us a place to come and worship Him in truth. I can remember moving away, yet it was God that took us to Texas and He is the one who brought us back. And He gave us a wonderful family to share the last 50 years. We all share a love that is much greater than any the world could ever know because we have the love of Jesus.

Punki Phillips

What is a memory? Is it a sad moment or a happy one or both? What qualifies a moment in time to become a memory? How does your heart deem a moment, situation or event special enough to keep it tucked away and become a memory?

Isn't it amazing how the same moment in time becomes a memory for one and is quickly forgotten for another?

In trying to put something on paper about my memories about my time with Resurrection Hope Church of God, I had a very hard time picking just one? How do you decide which is more important?

Would it be the first time that I came to church with Steve? I remember the knots in my stomach as I met all the new people, hoping they would think I was good enough for their "son". This was the first time I met Z.B. After the service Z.B. was standing at the back shaking hands, as we approached he said to Steve, "now who is this pretty young lady?" Steve introduced me and Z.B. reached to shake my hand. He still holding my hand leaned down and in a quiet voice said, "You are the one, he will try you but don't give up on him." I remember that day like it was yesterday and he was 100% correct with that statement.

Or would it be the great memories of the trips on that church bus, you had a 50/50 chance of returning. Several trips ended with Paul and Earl standing on the side of the road trying to figure out how we were going to get home. Those volleyball games before and after church were memorable to, we had lots of fun but I am sure we didn't smell or look like folks that were going to church. Bless the folks that sat around us.

Maybe it would be my wedding day. I can remember the sites and sounds of that day, seeing *my* best friend stand in front of the church waiting on me to be his wife. Trying so hard to listen to every word that Pastor Jim said so I would not mess up my vows. The extremely hot day in October that caused my groomsman to pass out or the long line of bottles that Eric had saved to tie to our car.

It could be the time that we sat in grief and sorrow as we listened to Pastor Jim and Dennis Baldwin do the funeral services for Irene, Earl and Brittany. I was reaching out to God to spare my family from any more tragedies. It could be the time that Steve and I sat at the front of the church with Jim trying to save our marriage and hoping for the faith that guidance would come.

Is it the time I stood as a new mom, scared out of my mind, trying to figure out how I was going to take care of such a tiny baby, and how all the fear went away when I handed her over to God. Or was it when I sat with pride when that same tiny girl quoted the books of the bible with skill and speed. Grinning at the countless nights that our supper conversation consisted of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts...Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts... It has to be my filled heart when she stood on graduation Sunday. I was so proud of her accomplishments with school and her desire to continue her education but most of all that her kind, sweet soul who had sought to ask her Uncle Thomas to be a part of her celebration.

So you see my memories range from happiness to grief, acceptance to pride. Memories are not of a building but of the people that you have shared them with. So I hope that I have made a memory with someone here as you have truly made memories for and with me.

Teri Austin

Good memories are like precious jewels - we treasure them. We keep them stored in a safe and secure place, and on occasion, we take them out to enjoy them again. They give us joy and comfort as we remember the pleasure they brought.

Many special times come to mind as we think back over 50 years. Weddings galore - my own - my daughter's, baby showers, baby births, baptisms, celebrations with our loving church family, tragedies sometimes, deaths and funerals - still holding onto each other for strength, seeking God's mercy and guidance through it all.

Our first bazaar, oh such an endeavor but an eye opening experience that made our faith grow. This church building has always been my safe harbor - it's not just a building of brick and mortar but a safe haven for a troubled heart. When I enter the doors, my heart feels at home - and yet - it longs for my eternal home when many loved ones will awake from their sleep of death, my dear daddy, and a special redhead that left us so sudden. Her hand used to hold mine every Sunday as we sat and enjoyed the sermon. A jewel I remember often. Memories, there are many. Some sad, some very joyous, but all are treasures to enrich our lives. Praise be to God and His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ for every blessing and every memory.

Patsy Smith

### Communion

When we came to the church after our move in 1975, the people were friendly and welcoming. When, at 16, you leave everything and everyone you know behind it can be scary to face new situations. We found a place to worship that was able to fill the void of our church in Ohio.

We had settled into a regular pew and order of seating; Dad on the aisle, Mom next, then Eric, Sheila, me and then Bill. One Sunday was especially memorable; it was our first communion at the church.

Z.B.'s sermon about the last supper was moving and brought to mind the way Christ prepared His disciples for the days ahead. At the Troy View Church in Ohio communion consisted of flat communion crackers and grape juice. When the "bread" was passed it was very familiar. When Z. B. asked all to partake it was not difficult. Imagine our surprise when the "wine" was passed and it really was wine (homemade by Mr. Messick.) I could smell it as it came down the row. We kids had never had wine and were unsure what to do, so we looked to Dad at the end of the row. Dad sat, back straight, cup resting on his knee, eyes on Z. B.

When Z.B. said, "Let's all partake of the cup," Dad lifted his cup and drank it down. We all followed his example. It burned as it trailed down my throat, that burning gave a totally different meaning to communion. Christ was offered vinegar mixed with water while he was on the cross, how it must have burned his throat. How much more did he suffer for me?

Using Mr. Messick's wine really brought new meaning to communion for me. We used up all of his wine quite some time ago and tried some commercial wines for a while. None of these gave the same feel as that homemade wine. We use grape juice now, and I understand the reasons for this, but sometimes, I miss that burn of ~~remembrance~~, that small discomfort, to remind me of all the pain he suffered for me.

By Marie Brewer Wood

The Lord's calling of me at the age of 13 has led me to heights and even lows that I never dreamed I would have the privilege to experience. Dennis Baldwin and I, under the teachings of Brother Z. B. Duncan, aspired to be God's

servants. After being ordained and licensed by the Southeast Conference and the Church of God of Abrahamic Faith, I sought for God's will for my life and my family. I asked God, "What would you have me to do?" As I prayed outside I ask for a sign to show me. God sent a ball of fire over my house.

That was the sign I followed. Weeks later I received a call from the Cool Spring Church of God in Browntown, VA. My family moved there in November 1971 and we were blessed by the congregation in Browntown and grew stronger in faith. In 1976 I again was searching for God's will and asked that if God wanted me to go to another ministry that I would receive two calls the same day. I received two calls that afternoon, one from Iowa and the other from Ohio. We moved to the Lawrenceville Church of God in Springfield, Ohio in August 1976. Eight years we were blessed by this congregation and the Lord. I gave a year's notice of resignation as required by the church in August 1983 and began again to seek God's guidance. His answer was Ezekiel 20: 45-46, "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set they face toward the south, and drop thy word toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field." I pondered months on this answer and as the time drew near to leave in August 1984 we moved back home to North Carolina (south). Brother Duncan has passed away in March of 1984 and Resurrection Hope was without a pastor. I knew God sent me south for a reason but the church needed to be shown God's will. Through the sign given to Earl Austin and the decision of casting lots, God showed His wisdom to the whole church. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Jeremiah 33:3. We truly have "Come This Far By Faith!"

James D. Ritch