



Have Hope!

by Pastor Alan Felton

I recently came across the last letter my grandmother wrote to me. I was serving in the military in Europe and was scheduled to come home in just a few months. My grandmother's health was failing, but she was committed to "staying alive" until I was home. Sadly, it was a commitment she could not keep—my grandmother died just a few weeks after her letter arrived.

This last letter obviously carries great sentimental value for me. I was close to my grandmother, and she claimed (out of earshot of my sister and cousins) that I was her favorite grandchild. But after

reading this last letter nearly forty years after it was written, I was struck by something I had missed in earlier readings.

Despite the obvious health challenges and terrible pain my grandmother was enduring at the time, her letter is filled with a great sense of hope. She writes not only about looking forward to seeing me again but also about members of our family and those in the community close to her. She was thankful for the small joys she experienced each day and for all the acts of kindness from neighbors and friends. While I am sure my grandmother must have realized that her life was growing short, she still spoke with anticipation of things she might yet do and see.

The hope expressed by my grandmother was more than the product of being an optimistic person. While my grandmother always saw the glass as half full, she was not unrealistic. She had faced tough challenges throughout her life and was facing more of them as she

wrote her letter to me. Yet my grandmother was a devout Christian—probably the most religious person I have ever known. Her hope was not something she found in herself or in anyone else except Jesus.

These days, many are searching for signs of hope. We aren't likely to find them in the news headlines or in anything we say or do. But still, we have hope because of Jesus. As the Apostle Paul teaches, "So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16–18).

Have hope, and rejoice in God's sure presence! ■



Benson Memorial United Methodist Church, 4706 Creedmoor Road, Raleigh, NC 27612
Open office hours: M–Th 9AM–1PM | Available by appointment: M–Th 9AM–4PM / F 9AM–1PM
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facebook.com/bensonmemorialumc/ | instagram.com/bensonmemorialumc/

Sooper Bowl SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 9, 2025
Noon to 2:00 p.m.

Bring your favorite soup in a crockpot. The Fellowship Committee will begin receiving crockpots beginning at 8:00 a.m. and will maintain heat as necessary (Do not bring ladles as they will be provided.).

The church will provide crackers, cornbread, ice cream cake, tea, and lemonade.

Everyone is welcome at no cost.



Scout Sunday is Coming!

Join us on Sunday, February 9, for a special Scout Sunday service at our church, where members of Scout Troop 214 will be taking the lead. It promises to be a wonderful worship experience as our dedicated scouts actively participate in both the 8:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. services. Bring your friends and family to share in the fellowship, as we celebrate and support our local Scout Troop on Scout Sunday. We look forward to seeing you there!

LEVEL UP LITERACY



Join us and make a meaningful difference in a child's literacy journey!

Calling on all volunteers! This program requires a commitment of 30 minutes per visit, two to three times a week. Volunteers will also participate in a one-time, one-hour training session on the Science of Reading activities and data collection, with both virtual and in-person options available.

As a volunteer, you'll have the rewarding opportunity to work one-on-one with a student two or three days a week (depending on their grade level). Each 30-minute session includes:

- ◆ 10 minutes of a Science of Reading literacy activity,
- ◆ 2 minutes to check progress based on the previous session, and
- ◆ 18-20 minutes of reading a grade-level-appropriate book together.

SIGN UP TODAY!





Dream Big for Methodist Home for Children

Pastor Alan and his wife, Joan, helped represent the Capital District at the Methodist Home for Children's Dream Big Gala on January 26. The gala—held at the Raleigh Convention Center—was hosted by WRAL anchor Deborah Morgan and attended by hundreds, including Bishops Connie Shelton and Hope Morgan Ward. More than \$150,000 was raised for MHC's operations.

Benson Memorial faithfully assists MHC with its annual Christmas in July celebration and in other ways throughout the year.

February Adult Fellowship Meeting Open to Everyone (No Age Requirement)

The February Adult Fellowship Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 13, at 11:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Carol Wright will serve a lunch of pizza, salad, and dessert at no cost to the attendees. Following the meal, Annie Roncolato will play a medley of love songs for our program. Please join us for fellowship, food, and musical entertainment.



Mark Your Calendars!

Benson Memorial is planning a field trip to tour the [International Civil Rights Museum](#) in Greensboro on Saturday, March 8, 2025. The museum is located in the former Woolworth's building where the NC A&T four began the sit-in movement in February 1960. The time for the tour is TBD, as it will depend on how many people sign up.

If you are interested in taking this worthwhile tour of an amazing museum, please contact Susan Brooks at sebrks@bellsouth.net to let her know and to allow her to keep you informed as details develop.



Upcoming Bible Studies: Mark Your Calendars!

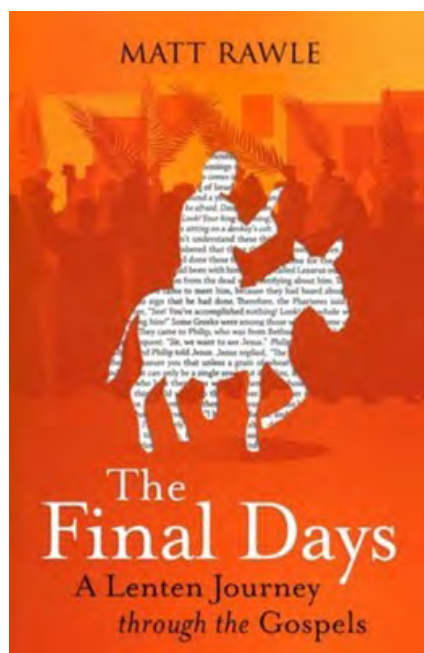
Renounce, Resist, Receive: The “Burden” of Baptism

taught by Pastor Alan Felton

Wednesday evenings at 6:45 p.m., February 12–February 26

We make various promises when we are baptized. These vows reflect the new life we promise to live as baptized followers of Jesus Christ. Baptism is not a “one-and-done” moment but the beginning of a life lived in conformity with the ways of Jesus. As the Apostle Paul teaches, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

This study reflects on how we are formed as Christians through our vows to renounce wickedness, resist evil, and receive Jesus Christ as Savior. What are we formed for? How do we live these vows? While we may consider such commitments a burden, baptism grants us the freedom to bear Christ’s light into the world.



The Final Days: A Lenten Journey through the Gospels

by Matt Rawle

taught by Pastor Alan Felton

Wednesdays at 6:45 p.m. and Thursdays at 10 a.m., March 5–April 9

Lent is a time for careful examination and humble reflection. One of the ways we engage in self-examination is through the study of Scripture. Reading the holy word brings us closer to God and prepares us for Easter.

The Final Days, written by Matt Rawle, leads participants through a study of Jesus’ Passion as recounted in the four Gospels. Each one offers slightly different insights and revelations about Jesus’ journey to the cross. These differing accounts don’t diminish the truth of Jesus but instead reveal it in more detail and with important nuance.

Subversive Witness: Scripture’s Call to Leverage Privilege

by Dominique DuBois Gilliard

taught by Pastor Alan Felton

Wednesdays at 6:45 p.m. and Thursdays at 10 a.m., April 23–May 21

Most of us are uncomfortable with the notion that we possess privilege. We often say we hold no power. To do so is in keeping with a Christian sense of humility and meekness. Yet each of us holds some sort of power, and we do enjoy privilege, sometimes in ways we do not recognize.

Yet, as Dominique DuBois Gilliard teaches in this study, Christians can reimagine privilege and exercise power in subversive ways to follow Christ and serve our neighbors. We do this sometimes by leveraging our privilege and using our power, and sometimes we follow Jesus best by forsaking power and privilege.



Sharing God's Love Through Creativity

The Children's Sunday School class at Benson Memorial is spreading love and joy this season by creating Valentine's Day cards for the residents of Magnolia Glen. Over the next couple of weeks, our youngest disciples will channel their creativity and compassion into handmade cards filled with heartfelt messages, Scripture, bright colors, and lots of love.

This special project is a beautiful way for the children to learn about showing kindness to others—especially those who may feel lonely. It also provides a chance to connect with our neighbors at Magnolia Glen, reminding them that they are cherished and remembered by Benson Memorial.

Parents and grandparents, this is a wonderful opportunity to talk with



The children's Sunday School class hard at work making Valentine's Day cards.

your children about the importance of sharing God's love through small acts of care. We encourage you to ask them about their creations and the joy they hope to bring to someone's day.

The cards will be delivered just in time for Valentine's Day—

bringing smiles and warmth to Magnolia Glen's residents. Thank you for supporting our children as they live out Christ's call to love their neighbors!

Cortney Babajtis



NEW! Mom's Morning Meet-Up

Motherhood is a journey filled with joys, challenges, and countless moments in between. Whether you're a new mom navigating sleepless nights, a seasoned parent balancing schedules, or a grandmother offering wisdom from experience, you are invited to join our new Mom's Morning Meet-Up at Benson Memorial UMC!

Starting in February, we'll gather on the last Wednesday of every month from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. in the Youth Center. There's no formal study or agenda—just a relaxed space to connect, enjoy a cup of coffee, and share conversation with other moms in our church community. A light breakfast will be provided, so come as you are and bring a friend!

For now, our time together will be open-ended, allowing us to talk about whatever is on our hearts. As the group grows, we'll see where the Spirit leads—whether that means adding a study, guided questions, or simply continuing with meaningful fellowship.

Motherhood was never meant to be a solo journey. Let's walk it together! We hope to see you there.

For more information, feel free to reach out to Cortney Babajtis at outreach@bensonmemorialumc.org.



[\(complete church calendar is here\)](#)

Sunday, February 2

- 8:45 a.m., Worship Service
- 9:45 a.m., Sunday School
- 11:00 a.m., Worship Service
- 11:00 a.m., Livestream Service
- 12:00 p.m., Chancel Chimes
- 3:00 p.m., Prayer Shawl Group

Wednesday, February 5

- 7:15 a.m., Coffee and Prayer
Online Gathering
- 5:45 p.m., Wonderful Wednesday
Fellowship Meal
- 6:45 p.m., Bible Study
- 7:00 p.m., High School Bible Study

Thursday, February 6

- 10:00 a.m., Thursday Morning
Bible Study
- 5:00 p.m., Chancel Choir

Sunday, February 9

Scout Sunday | Souper Bowl Sunday

- 8:45 a.m., Worship Service
- 9:45 a.m., Sunday School
- 11:00 a.m., Worship Service
- 11:00 a.m., Livestream Service
- 12:00 p.m., Chancel Chimes
- 12:00 p.m., Souper Bowl Sunday

Tuesday, February 11

- 10:30 a.m., Women Who Read
Book Group
- 6:30 p.m., Welcoming Families
Committee Meeting

Wednesday, February 12

- 1:30 p.m., Preschool Board
- 5:45 p.m., Wonderful Wednesday
Fellowship Meal
- 6:45 p.m., Bible Study
- 7:00 p.m., High School Bible Study

Thursday, February 13

- 10:00 a.m., Thursday Morning
Bible Study
- 11:30 a.m., Adult Fellowship
Lunch and Program
- 5:00 p.m., Chancel Choir



Our first 2025 Campus Workday will be February 15 at 9:00 a.m. until noon. We will be pruning back shrubs on campus that have grown too large. Areas that need attention include the entrance to the administration building, the courtyard, the traffic circle, and the west side of the sanctuary building—to name a few locations. It is also time to cut the lirioppe and pampas grass on campus.

Participants will be asked to rake up clippings and load them into a trailer to be taken to the Wake Yard Waste Center. So, if you bring your gloves, rakes, and leaf blowers, you will be well outfitted for the day. We have some gloves and rakes on hand if you need them when you arrive around 9:00 a.m.

This is a long list of tasks, and we will need a strong turnout of volunteers to get it done in three hours. Any questions, contact Jerry Crenshaw at (919) 868-8061.

