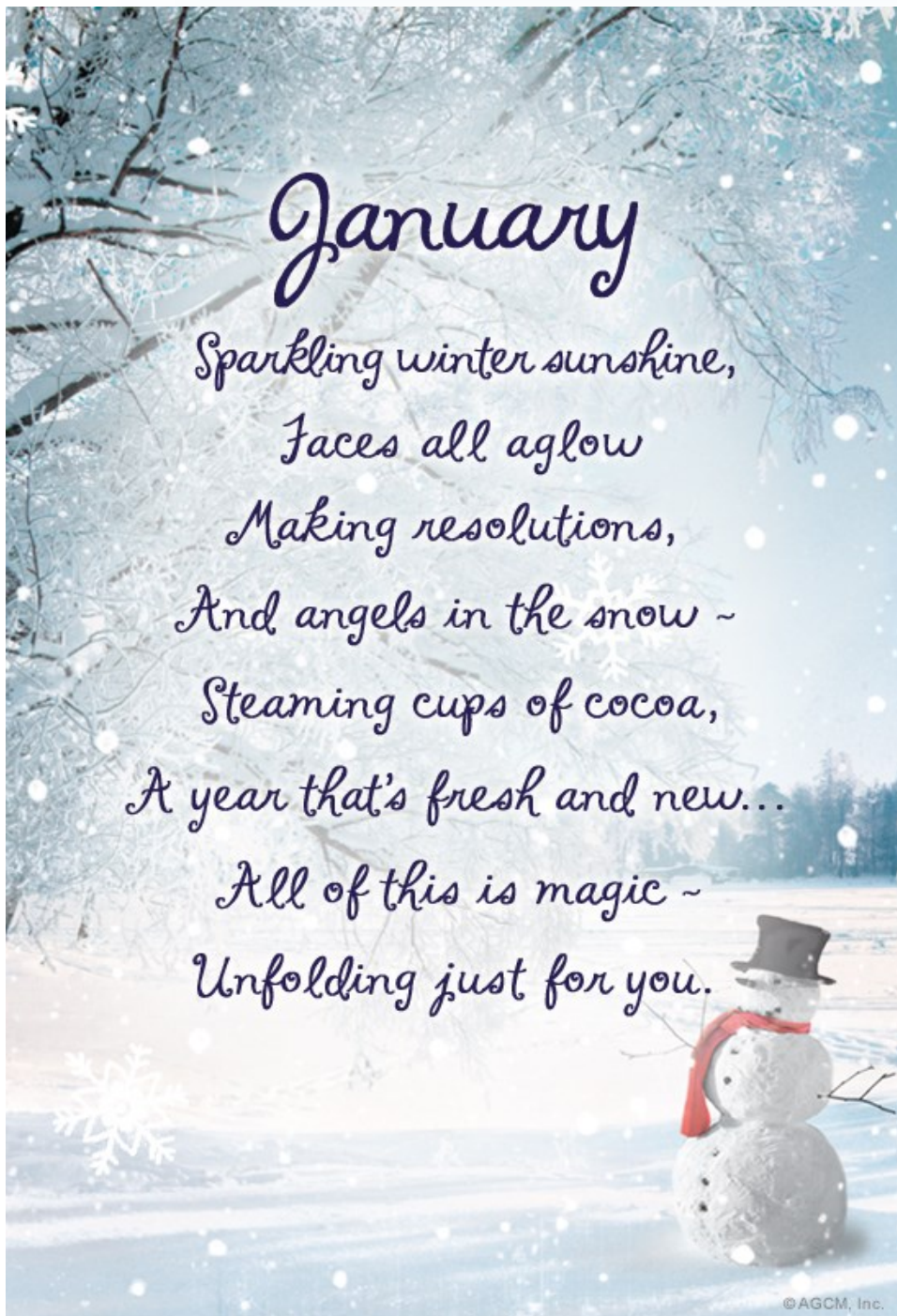


January, 2024

# Glennville First Christian Church Newsletter



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# We love BABIES!!

There is nothing sweeter than seeing children in church. We love seeing them cuddle up to their parents and grandparents. We can't get enough of them wiggling around, and perhaps poking a brother or sister next to them! And those babies are the sweetest blessings of ALL!! And if there's a little extra noise? All the better! It means our church is alive!



MATTHEW 19:14



Little 2 month old John Denver Taylor made his debut at church! Mom and Dad Leanne and Zack Taylor were his Chauffers! Great Grandparents are Joy and John Dubois.



Presenting little smiling "Bogee" (William Benjamin Lee). Parents are Lindsay and Ben Lee. Both of these handsome little boys are grandsons of Denver Taylor. We are so glad to have these babies come!!



**Advent....is the beginning of the Spiritual Year for our church. It is observed the four Sundays before Christmas Day. It is meant as a celebration of the earthly birth of Jesus around 2,000 years ago, but also a preparation and anticipation for the second coming of Christ.**

This **First Sunday of Advent** was welcomed in by the “Akin Sisters”. What a special way to start this Advent season! These girls certainly represent family, faith, perseverance through life’s challenges, and most of all, love. When this first candle was lit, and Isiline spoke words explaining the meaning, we all can have the renewed excitement of Christmas and all that it stands for.

**The Akin Sisters: Sherri Wasson, Sandra Ray, Beth Waters, Ann Purvis, Isiline Purvis**



The **Second Sunday in Advent...** was welcomed in by the Tracey and Robin Stewart Family! From infants, to parents, to Grandparents, we love that the entire family is included in the excitement of the birth of our Savior, and all that it represents.

# Hanging of the Greens

It has long been a tradition at GFCC to have the little ones in this church take part in the “Hanging of the Greens”. It is to involve them in the excitement of getting ready for Christmas! I remember first coming to this church and seeing Pat Brannen line up all of the little ones, letting them choose the decoration they wanted to hang (while whispering in their ear where they might put it!), and then reading passages from the Bible as they paraded to the front of the church. Some ran, some skipped, but all were definitely feeling important for their part in the worship service.



It was not that different this year! The sanctuary was already beautiful, but the TREE needed the attention of these little people. And they gave it the attention it needed! Amanda Durden and Susan Kennedy played the perfect background music while toddlers, and youngsters carried their ornaments to the tree to be hung by Chloe Carlson and Stephen Jordan! They lovingly received the ornaments from all of those little hands, and found a spot on the tree to hang them.

I don't know about others, but nothing brightened my spirits more than seeing child after child hurrying to the front cradling their ornament and handing it over to Chloe or Jordan!





# Backpack Buddies and Celebration of the Season

A GIANT thank you to **Bess Stone** and all those who helped make the booth at Celebration of the Season such a success again! Those who baked goods, manned the booth, made decorations for sale, it would have been NOTHING without you! Because of the efforts of all of you, over \$700 was raised to contribute to Backpack Buddies.

For those who may be unaware, our church packs up bags of food for students of middle school age who may be from families who struggle to put food on the table. These families are identified by the school, and are kept completely confidential. These bags are sent home with these youngsters every Friday when school is in session, so that they have food on the weekends. Hard to believe, I know, that we have a need in our community for such an outreach program.

This program costs money. This program involves much time in shopping, hunting for bargains, assembling each bag every week, and delivering the bags to the school. Our deep gratitude goes to **Amanda and Danny Durden** for heading this program, and for all of their helpers that also volunteer their time. \*If you're wondering why it is called "Backpack Buddies"...originally all of the food each week was packed into a backpack, meant to be returned each week to again be filled. Good idea! But the backpacks didn't always get returned! "Bag Buddies" just doesn't sound as good, so we kept the other name!

If you question at all the need for this program....Last year our church supplied 15 students with food through this program. This year the need has grown to 29 students! THANK YOU for your help in financing this *much* needed program.



***\* Anyone wishing to donate \$\$ to Backpack Buddies, know your donation will be put to good use. Donations may be given to Danny or Amanda Durden!***

# The Pastor's Pen....

Christmas is the time of year, where families get together, not only to open presents, see loved ones and relatives that you haven't seen in a while, but most importantly to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

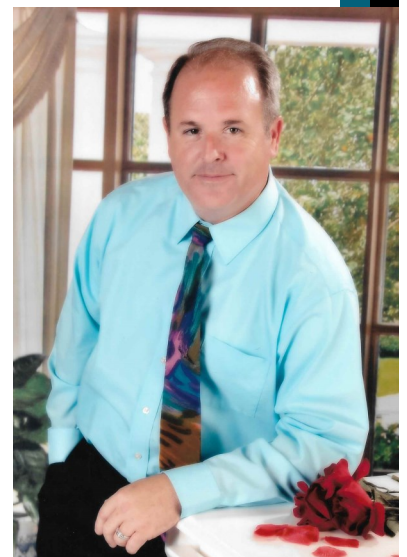
This time of the year for some families may have their ups and downs, whether you lost a loved one during the year, or a family tradition that you once had, now no longer exists. Maybe because of the passing of a loved one or a family conflict. Just as in the sermon a couple weeks ago, you may have a messed up family tree and Jesus's family tree wasn't perfect either, but he didn't live by his family's mistakes. He lived for the purpose that God has placed on his life, to die for our sins and to spread His Gospel. We are commissioned as saved, believers in Jesus to tell everyone!

The Christmas musical we had on December the 17th, entitled: "Smoky Mountain Christmas", portrayed a family who had children that lived two different lifestyles. Their mom brought them together at a bed and breakfast to reunite her family. Just like they did when her husband was alive. Even though the two siblings didn't get along at the beginning, God sent a miracle. Another couple showed up and she was expecting. During the musical, the baby was born which brought the family back together. Realizing that family is more important than things in life. It took the birth of this little child in the musical to bring the family back together, just as God sent His Son Jesus, to die for our sins, and to pull His family back together.

I pray this Christmas season, you make it one of the most memorable times that your family has ever had. We like to play games, kid each other, and enjoy each other's company during this season. But most important when we are together, we celebrate the reason why Jesus came. He came to be the savior of the world.

I hope and pray you had a very Merry Christmas and best wishes on a Happy New Year! May God's love, riches, and blessings be poured upon you and your family this upcoming year.

*Yours in Christ,  
Brother Stuart*





## Welcome, Welcome, Welcome!

We are so very happy to have witnessed the baptism and addition of **Mrs. Vicki Carmona** to our church! We have been blessed by her decision, and we hope she feels blessed by being a part of this family!

Vicki and Jorge  
Carmona

***Be sure to introduce yourself, and give a warm GFCC welcome when you see Vicki and Jorge!***

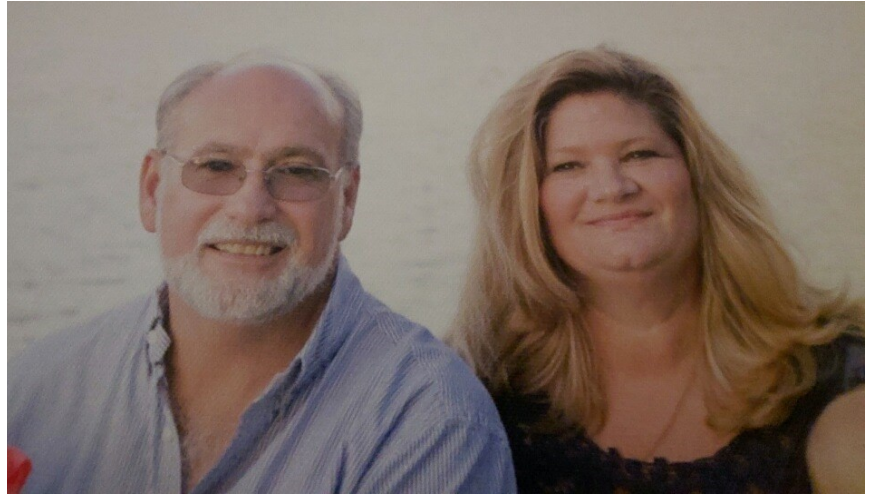


Vicki's family were present on this very special day, to witness and share in the joy!

Nephew, Big brother, Sister-in-law (Also a Vicki!) and husband, happily cheered her on.



## Spotlight on Dennis and Stephanie Wilson



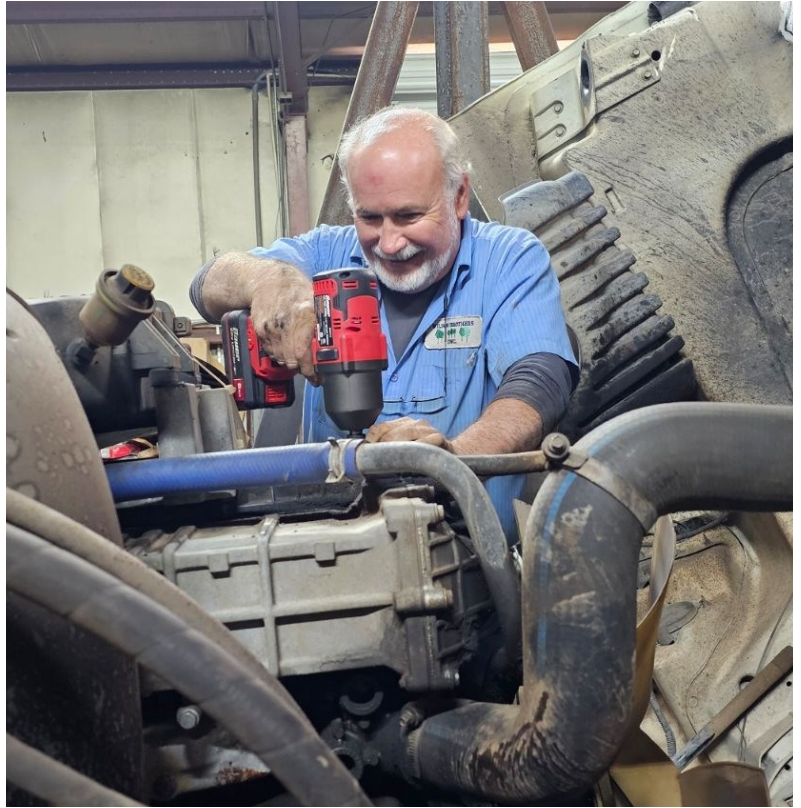
Visiting the home of Stephanie and Dennis Wilson is like walking into a gorgeous little village that storybooks are made of. Their home is set back from the road framed by pecan trees and fields with a few rolling hills for interest. They have a large shop with all sorts of projects in progress (to keep Dennis busy) and family members and grandchildren living close by to ensure that not a day goes by that they won't see several of them! Their lives are consumed with work, family, and doing for others.

Dennis and Stephanie were married Feb. 16, 2014. They were the first couple married by Pastor Bender at First Christian Church! For a couple having been married for 9 years, they have packed a lot into this time. I'd say they were a prime example of getting lemons... and making lemonade!

**Stephanie** grew up in a family being one of five children, (one being her twin), raised by a single mom. Her mom instilled a very strong work ethic in all of the children, being that everyone had odd jobs from the age of 12 and on. Bagging groceries, babysitting, caring for elderly, and more. Later Stephanie worked at a department store, a local newspaper, and worked as a dental assistant for 8 years. Next came jobs for the Health Department of Liberty County, then the Women's Detention Center in the Health Department as a Medical Clerk, then Ludowici and the Women and Men's Centers in Claxton. Finally she ended up at Smith State Prison doing several different jobs, the final being the Personnel Manager (in Reidsville) where she was in charge of the hiring and supervision of those hired for 8 prisons in the system. This was by far the most difficult job working with 8 wardens and trying to keep everyone happy! Thankfully she finally was able to move back to Smith State Prison in Glennville and deal with one warden and "only" 4 facilities. At one time she worked three jobs; working for the prison, care-giver for her disabled mom and stepdad, and was a single mom to two children. (Steven & Molly)



**Dennis** is the youngest of six boys. He is a twin, but most think he is “one of a kind”! His work ethic was also instilled at a young age. Dennis found his way back to this area after having worked in other areas of Georgia and South Carolina. His stepdad was military, having made moving a part of life when he was younger. Dennis is an integral part of Wilson Brothers, Inc., a logging company that has been in the family for 45 years. No small part of the job is keeping all of their equipment in working order, making him an expert in welding, and all of the mechanical needs of keeping heavy duty equipment in working order. Despite several health challenges, Dennis has not slowed down, and simply adapts to whatever road blocks are thrown in his way. He has glaucoma, a condition that damages the optic nerve. He is legally blind in one eye and recently had surgery to improve vision in the other. He has suffered serious burns on the job, but didn’t let that slow him down much. By far the most heart wrenching happening was the loss of his 30 yr. old son in a fatal car accident in 2019 on his way to work. He left behind a wife and a 10 month old son. Only those that have lost a child know this kind of pain. It is forever with you. Dennis has another son, and is blessed to work with him in the family business. (Sons Allen & Benji– deceased)



Sons Allen & Benji and their children.

Dennis and Stephanie built a beautiful home together. It is unique in every way. Modest (just like they are) and filled with beautiful wood floors, wood counter tops, and natural log banisters on their front porch (just like you'd expect a logger to have!) Nothing fancy, but perfect for them! And most days this house, and their lives, are filled with several of their combined 12 grandchildren.



Steven & Family

When asked what their hobbies were, they both smiled... as if there's time! Dennis loves working outdoors and in his shop. Stephanie loves to sew, paint, and do crafts....key word.... when she has TIME. Life is busy. Dennis said he can't figure out how the grocery bill is more than when it is just the two of them?? Stephanie just smiled. It's very possible that the grocery bill is a tad bit higher due to their "treasures", their grandchildren! (AJ, Alena, McKinLee, Rauley, Ripp, Braxton, Brantley, Kaiden, Emmitt, Kayden, Landon, Maylee)

"We wouldn't have made it through life without our faith" says Dennis. (Work injuries, family struggles, stroke, health issues, death.) "It is so easy to become disheartened and question, but faith has carried us through" Dennis adds. "Makes you humble" says Stephanie.

**"Life's challenges are God's way of making us stronger, making us who we are."**

**Stephanie Wilson**



Molly & Family



## Tell me something GOOD! ProKids22:6



Our younger youth (ages 4-11) enjoyed a Saturday of FUN at Exhilerate in Savannah (Indoor playground) on Saturday, December 9th, 2023. What a day it was! As you can tell from the picture, there were sweaty, exhausted youngsters after 2 hours of jumping, running, hopping, swinging, and climbing! I dare say some of the adults were pretty worn out too!

After wearing themselves out while playing, the kids worked up quite an appetite. So, the day was topped off with a trip to CiCi's for a pizza buffet. Just guessing, but I'll bet most of these kids fell asleep on the way home!



*"Yes, yes, I know we had 17 kids. Uh, huh.. I just don't know where 7 of them are right now. Well, they've got to be in here somewhere. I think when they get hungry enough, they'll just show up. "*



# Rocky Mountain Christmas...The Cast!

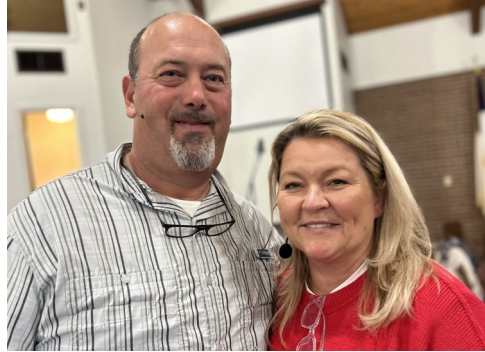


## GFCC Academy Award Winners!!!!!!

**Adam Bland, Emmy Claire Parker, Neil Parker, Angie Parker, Erin Parker, Luke Parker, (Front) Elin Anderson, Bobbi Grace Anderson, Logan Carlson**

Everyone wants to know...will they go on the road? Will they go straight to Broadway? They all were THAT GOOD! We thank each and every one of these actors and actresses for their time and efforts to put this show together. It was obvious that they had fun doing it as well. A big thank you to Pastor Bland for directing the show. And a big thanks to Lisa Burkhalter, as well, for her "tech skills"! We certainly can't forget the choir. Music makes everything better! THANK YOU ALL!





No, Tyler and Marcy Stewart are not adding onto their family (that we know of)! They played the very important part of Marian and John in the play! We can't have a Christmas play without a baby!!

## Calendar of Events for January 2024

Sunday, January 7th– Congregational Meeting after the service



Glennville First  
Christian Church

9224 GA Hwy 23

Glennville, GA 30427

PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

“Christmas doesn’t come from a store. Maybe Christmas perhaps means a little bit more.” -Dr. Seuss