

The Spire

WOODMONT CHRISTIAN CHURCH

NOVEMBER 19, 2019

The
Guatemala
Edition



Rookie Reflections

BY PAM RICHARDSON

To be honest, I didn't really know what to expect when our plane landed in Guatemala City around 8:45 P.M. on Saturday, October 26, 2019. It was my first visit to a Central American country, and my eyes couldn't take in the sights of Guatemala City fast enough as our group made its way to Hotel Las Americas. From Brenda and Yvonne, our capable and trustworthy Unbound interpreters and guides, I very quickly learned my first two basic Guatemalan rules: don't drink or brush your teeth with tap water AND don't flush toilet paper down the toilet! Just ask Denise Sesler how many toothbrushes she used while away!

By the time we hit the road early Sunday morning, I could barely contain my excitement about what lay ahead. The sounds of the city quickly gave way to the lesser hustle and bustle of the countryside. I was mesmerized by the beauty of the landscape and the majesty of the mountains in the distance.

My first surprise came that afternoon when we arrived for our first interaction with the people Unbound serves. The name of Woodmont Christian Church is well known in the areas surrounding San Lucas Toliman, and visitors from our church are welcomed with open arms. Our name is well known because whether or not you've ever visited Guatemala or sponsor a child, the people of Guatemala love and honor you because of the generous contributions of time, talents, and resources you have freely given.



There are far too many personal experiences to share here in this brief reflection, but I will always remember the determination of the women and men in the villages and homes we visited to make the future better for their children and grandchildren. I will always remember the dark eyes and black silken hair of the beautiful children and adults proudly clad in the colors and weavings unique to their tribal ancestors. I will always remember waking up to crowing roosters and honking geese with the ancient volcanoes dotting the distant horizons. I will always remember the joy of the first moment I met Jose, the seven-year-old second grader I sponsor. I will always remember the simplicity

and happiness of the people who have so little but are quick to offer God praise and thanksgiving for the gift of life and family. I will always remember the tears and laughter among the members of our Woodmont group.

It's often said that music is the universal language, but I disagree. After my journey to Guatemala, I am completely convinced that love is the universal language just as it's the tie that binds all humans to one another. In Guatemala, every hug a person receives adds a year to his/her life. I will live to be hundreds of years old if this is true. I left a part of my heart in Guatemala and can't wait to return again!





A Stranger Welcomed In

BY CHRIS COX

I rounded the last flight of steps and I will never forget what I saw. The scenery was beautiful enough: a lively small city below us enveloped by the green of Guatemala mountains. Yet it was what I saw on the roof that made that beautiful vista just a backdrop: my two sons—one of them dressed up as Scooby Doo—laughing and playing soccer with the two brothers that our family sponsors.



I was struck by the beauty and the rarity of that rooftop soccer match. Between these two band of brothers there was barely a shred of surface commonality. They did not speak the same language. Their life experiences could not be much more different. My sons were only beginning to grasp what life was like in Guatemala and our sponsored friends did not know much of what life is like for a kid in the United States. Outside of letters that our families exchanged, they were worlds apart when the day started and now, they were united. Guatemala used to seem like some distant place and in moments like that it felt like home.



It's a crazy thing to feel so welcome so far away. We hear the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25 and we always think of ourselves as the protagonists of the story. I'm the one at the center who Jesus is commending for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, or welcoming the stranger or I am one of the folks who is in trouble for not taking care of my neighbor. The trouble with that reading is that it centers me as the hero, when Jesus is pointing

out that the hungry, the poor, the thirsty, the naked, the prisoner, and the stranger have infinite value. It's not just about you and me. It's about all of us.

So it's good to have the shoe be on the other foot sometimes. Because we went to Guatemala and we were strangers and they welcomed us in over and over and over again until we were strangers no more. I saw it on that rooftop. I saw it as our sponsored kids' mother tenderly embraced my wife at the end of the day. I saw it in the square of a remote mountain village where

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my Woodmont friends hit balloons with a gaggle of giggling kids. I saw it the ways that all potential barriers of language, culture, and space dissolved before my eyes.

We were strangers and they welcomed us in. It was humbling and a jolt to how I see the world. It reminds me of God's love that binds us all together. It reminds me to be grateful. It reminds me that this is a big world full of God's children. It's true by sponsoring and building, we help make a world of difference in the lives of the Guatemalan people. But by inviting us into our lives, they make a world of difference in our lives as well.



Open Arms

BY EMELINE FREEMAN



This was my third time visiting the beautiful country of Guatemala, and like the times before it, I learned and laughed and made friends with people that live more than 2,000 miles away from my home here in Nashville.

This was my first time going as an “adult” rather than traveling with the youth group which was a new experience, but also brought me closer to people I’d never met before and even closer to people I already loved, like the Thomas’s. Emmie and Jim Thomas’s involvement in everything that Woodmont does with Unbound is truly amazing and inspiring. Emmie’s hard work to make this trip possible was just the tip of a huge iceberg that just keeps giving. I really look up to Emmie as she loves with no ends and does pretty much everything with a smile on her face.

I think it is a brave thing to do to sign up for trips like these, but it all suddenly seems worth it when you are greeted by lovely smiling faces of the most grateful and giving people. The love that these beautiful

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Guatemalan people have in their hearts is shocking and enchanting all at the same time. Their smiles are constantly spread from ear to ear yet they are living lives that nobody should have to ever experience, they have open arms for thousands of hugs to strangers, and they give us their month or years earnings in textiles or coffee the second we arrive to their towns.

I believe that anyone on this trip will attest that I am in love with every single Guatemalan child that I have met and could hug and tickle and make silly faces at a thousand more of them if I had the chance. The joy these kids have is amazing and while they have horrible living conditions they also have wonderful souls and great smiles. While sharing a room or even a single twin sized bed with siblings, these sweet little kids were just happy to have a house and maybe a few toys.

Everything about these trips has always humbled me while showing me the love of God so strongly through the people of Guatemala. No matter what the circumstances, they stay so strong in their faith and don’t ever allow their beliefs to be shaken or changed by anything.



Joyful Noises

BY DENISE SESLER

“O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.” - Psalms 95:1-2.

As we approach this season of joy and thanksgiving, I'd like to share a few of the joyful noises that were heard during Woodmont's group awareness trip to Guatemala a few short weeks ago:

The joyful noise of warm welcome and celebration in the homes, community centers and events we were privileged take part in while visiting Guatemala.

The joyful noise of pine needles crunching under our feet as we were greeted by our lovely hosts.

The joyful noise of fireworks being set off as we arrived in Guatemalan neighborhoods.

The joyful noise of empowerment and pride as Guatemalan women shared with us the leadership, environmental and educational initiatives they are spearheading in each of their communities.

The joyful noise of our sponsored children and families sharing with us their stories, their talents, and their love as we spent the day with them at the Unbound center.

The joyful noise of laughter from sweet children when we took their pictures and played games with them.

The joyful noise of Woodmont and Unbound fellowship as we traveled each day by van or boat to the communities Woodmont is so blessed to support.

The joyful noise of Jim Thomas choking up as he watched the future home of a sponsored Guatemalan family being dedicated to his wife Emmie for her birthday.

The joyful noise of music and laughter as many of us danced outside Jim and Emmie's room on our last night at the Unbound center.

So incredibly thankful for the joyful noises of Guatemala. All these and so many more.



Emmie's Home

In 2004, thirteen-year-old Ellen Thomas, a member of Woodmont's youth group, asked her mom, Emmie, how she could sponsor a child in another country with the money she had earned singing on recording sessions.

Providentially, Emmie's research led her to Unbound, resulting in Ellen's sponsorship of a young girl in Guatemala.

That single sponsorship led to the first Woodmont and Unbound youth mission trip in 2008. The mustard seed of that first sponsorship in 2004 found fertile ground at Woodmont, as others in the youth group quickly followed Ellen's example. Inspired by the leadership of their youth, it wasn't long before the idea caught on with adults at Woodmont, and the rest is history.

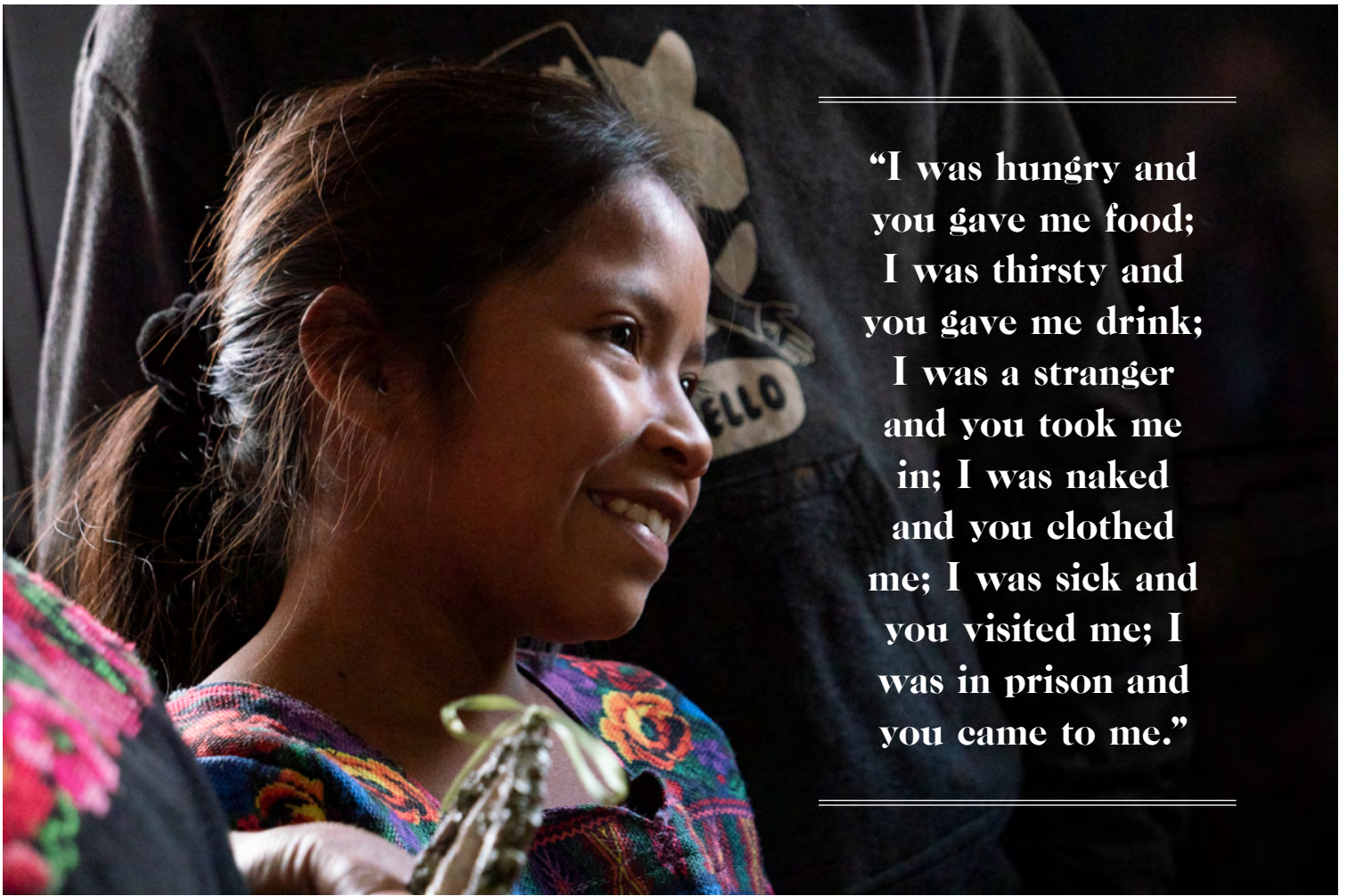


Nurtured by Emmie and scores of others, the relationship between Woodmont and Unbound grew over the years to include hundreds of sponsored children and seniors, as well as construction of scores of new homes, providing security and dignity for deserving families and proving the powerful ripple effect that a single act of kindness and generosity can trigger.

Emmie's birthday is October 29, a date which perfectly coincided with our trip. This year, her family chose to celebrate her fierce commitment to the people of Guatemala by sponsoring the construction of a new home in her honor, affectionately named "Emmie's Home."

Our prayer is that Emmie's Home will be a sanctuary of love, kindness, and generosity for all who call it home or visit. May it also serve as an inspiration and testimony of the life-changing impact that seemingly small acts of kindness can yield when nurtured with commitment, patience, and faith.





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you gave me drink;
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and you took me
in; I was naked
and you clothed
me; I was sick and
you visited me; I
was in prison and
you came to me.”**



A Seed Planted

BY JACK DERRYBERRY



Several things struck me about our recent Guatemala trip. The first of these is the effort involved in getting there. Twenty-one people, one long day down and one long day back combined with local travel all day the day after going and the day before returning. So we were pretty far removed from Green Hills. This is not like driving the Room In The Inn bus to the pick up point. It is so far removed in time and distance that it is hard to imagine what is happening at home, there is little correlation.

The second is the level of difference in situation from here. Streets are poorly paved, houses small or non-existent, everything fronted on a street is concrete blocks, closed doors and barbed wire. There is mostly no-running water, no electricity, no toilets and little protection from the rain. Dirt floors are the rule. Labor is manual and hard, especially farming which is by hand with few farm tools. Labor is hard and barely compensated.

With this backdrop in mind, I have often wondered what is involved in a full commitment to missions and missional living. Jesus tells us in Matthew 25 that, “I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me” and then in response to a question Jesus says, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to me.” What we do for others we do for Him. These acts that we tried to do are challenging and difficult but they are both a duty and a blessing and thus no more nor any less than what we should do. We don’t do these acts for praise but because they should be done for Him.

Now that we are improving our facility to serve our members better, we should always remember that we serve our members best by having them be missional and do service for others and by result for Him. Anything we do for others is better than being like the servant who was given one talent and did nothing with it. In the eight days we were gone we tried to do this by simply showing up and being supportive. Many of the folks we saw, if not all, are in an economic and cultural prison not of their own making and “we came to them.” We saw the result in their faces.

Third and lastly, I think the trip showed us what we can best do for children and youth and young adults. Five of our twenty-one member group fit into this category including three ten years old or younger. They ranged in age from six to nineteen. We will not know the fruit of this investment for years but we know the seed is planted and is growing. Teaching young members what missional service is all about and how truly fulfilling it can make us feel is truly one of the best things we did.



People of the Resurrection

BY MARY KIGER



Guatemala is both breathtakingly beautiful, and heartbreakingly poor. Women in their intricately woven and embroidered traditional Mayan dresses trudge up volcanic mountains with a toddler on their backs and water, laundry or grain balanced easily but heavily on their heads. The rain beats down on them as they make their way up the mountain to the tin and wood shack they share with their family. The shack's floor runs with mud as the rain seeps through the slats. No light bulb, no warm towel and tonight there will be no fire or warm food because the "kitchen" is outside in the driving rain.

You have heard it said and I say it here: Woodmonters are people of the resurrection - our lives, are fundamentally changed by understanding that life is eternal, and we are all one in Christ Jesus. My time in Guatemala has been a resurrection experience and I am still exploring the many facets of this awakening to a life that is forever changed.

Visiting villages and homes in southern Guatemala and grappling with the extent of poverty contrasted against our overwhelming wealth and privilege - reinforced my spiritual understanding that we are not separate from those who struggle in poverty. My spirit could easily have been broken on the cross of overwhelming need if not for the miracle of Unbound.



One sponsored child places the possibility of a different future in that cold, damp home. Along with support for continued education for the sponsored child, comes a social worker who assesses need and identifies mostly modest sources of help. But sometimes that help comes in the form of a new cement block house. Woodmonters have built 30 such homes so far! Educated children become teachers





and leaders and, in these small shifts for a family, Unbound offers hope to break the relentless chains of poverty.

Unbound began and grew through the work of lay Catholics and Catholic congregations have provided the sponsoring support for most of Unbound's growth today. Thanks to young Ellen Thomas's desire to sponsor a child in a faraway country and Emmie and Jim's commitment to bring Unbound to their faith family, Woodmonters have sponsored over 275 children and elders to date. I know that more Woodmonters will join us in the incredibly joyful experience of sponsoring a child or a family through Unbound. First, don't wait - please. If you don't sponsor through Unbound yet, join us - it is easy and the single most rewarding thing anyone can do with \$40 a month in my experience.

But my request is far broader than simply becoming a sponsor. Help Unbound grow throughout the many protestant denominations in the United States. Unbound serves in 18 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin

America. Worldwide, over 310,000 children and elders are sponsored through Unbound - 70,000 of those in Guatemala. But the waiting list for sponsors is so long that Unbound maintains a waitlist to get on the waitlist! We can each kindle the flame of hope in a friend or family's church community by sharing the story of how Unbound continues to transform and uplift our Woodmont faith family. We just need to share the story of resurrection with others with gifts to give and the hunger to help. God will take care of the rest.



**For more
information on
Unbound, contact
Mary Kiger at
[maryhkiger@
gmail.com](mailto:maryhkiger@gmail.com) or
(615) 414-8345**





Why Stewardship?

BY MARTHA HOBBY,
WOODMONT ELDER

I feel very blessed to be a part of a loving church like Woodmont. The staff are all professional, loving and caring people. The music is beautiful and inspirational. Many Sunday School classes are offered. Women participate in CWF and Circles. Special Cares people are remembered and visited. Children's ministries are thriving and there are many outreach programs that Woodmont supports. These are just some of the things going on at Woodmont.

As I reflect back over the years, I think of all of the lives that have been touched through the outreach programs. Walk Thru Bethlehem, Room in the Inn, Habitat for Humanity, Morgan Scott, and Fall Hamilton programs are just some that come to mind. Woodmont also provides a meeting site for the AA and Al-Anon programs.

I have also found the people at Woodmont to be loving and caring. They reach out to others who may be going through a difficult time. I experienced this love and support when I went through a very serious health issue four years ago.

Just like our homes, our church is on a budget and requires financial stability to maintain the property and keep it up to standards. Not only does giving of our money generate good to the church and the lives of others, it also generates joy and contentment in our hearts.

I find it a blessing to give my tithe to God through Woodmont Christian Church.



November's Stephen Minister Profile: Bill Meador

When an event shakes up your world, you can either let it hurt you or help you. If you would like help in turning a life crisis into an opportunity of growth and faith, a Stephen Minister is ready to help you. To request a Stephen Minister, contact Sara Kate Hooper at allsk@aol.com or (615) 364-5406.

A Woodmont member since 1994, Bill is a local pharmacist who enjoys gardening, reading, vintage collectibles, spending time at his cottage in Monteagle, and vacationing at the beaches along 30-A. He and his wife Beth have two children and one grandchild. He has been a part of our Stephen Ministry team for three years.

For Bill, the most rewarding thing about being a Stephen Minister is developing trusting relationships with our care receivers while God's healing power works to bring resolution in difficult situations.



THIS WEEK

SUNDAY, NOV. 24 CHRISTMAS WREATH SALE

- 8:30 AM Seekers Bible Study, Room 105
- 9:30 AM Challenge Class, Room 200
- 9:30 AM Disciples Class, Room 105
- 9:30 AM Informal Worship, Sanctuary
- 9:45 AM 21st Century Class, Boardroom
- 9:45 AM The Bridge Worship, Drowota Hall
- 10:45 AM Life in the Balance Class, Bay Room
- 11:00 AM Pathways Class, Boardroom
- 11:00 AM Points of View Class, Room 105
- 11:00 AM Reflections Class, Room 200
- 11:00 AM Traditional Worship, Sanctuary
- 5:00 PM Jubilation Rehearsal, Choir Room
- 5:45 PM Youth Group, Youth Wing

MONDAY, NOV. 25

- 3:00 PM "Geezers," Boardroom

TUESDAY, NOV. 26

- 9:00 AM Women's Prayer Group, C.S.
- 6:00 PM Handbells Rehearsal, Choir Room
- 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal, Choir Room

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 27

- 6:15 AM Men's Small Group, Room 100
- 7:00 AM "Original" Men's Bible Study, 105

THURSDAY & FRIDAY, NOV. 28 & 29

**HAPPY THANKSGIVING!
CHURCH OFFICE &
BUILDING CLOSED**

FRIDAY, NOV. 29 ROOM IN THE INN SOUTH HALL



Hunter Mobley

9:45 A.M. THE BRIDGE



Don't Worry, Be Happy

9:30 A.M. & 11:00 A.M.

ROY STAUFFER • PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

	SUNDAY SCHOOL:	TOTAL ATTENDANCE:	OPERATING:
OCT. 27:	357	925	\$28,059
NOV. 3:	415	958	\$102,808
NOV. 10:	410	899	\$94,464
NOV. 17:	468	1016	\$44,643

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Nov. 24: Christmas wreaths on sale in the Gathering Hall

Support Woodmont's growing boy scout troop by purchasing a 20-inch fraser fir wreath with a red velvet bow this Sunday in the Gathering Hall. Wreaths are \$25 and will be available for pick up on Sunday, Dec. 1 from 9:15 AM to 12:15 PM or starting Dec. 2 in the church office. Questions? Contact christi_williams@yahoo.com

Nov. 24: Gift delivery for Woodmont's Angel Tree

Please bring all gifts to the Angel Tree in the Gathering Hall by this Sunday morning, November 24. If you bring your bag(s) on Wednesday night, be sure to check your name off the lists by the tree. Each bag should be labeled with the Angel's name and ID#. No need to wrap the gifts, but including a roll of wrapping paper would be helpful to the parents and caregivers. Thank you for supporting the families at Fannie Battle Day Home! Questions? Contact Tracy Crawford crawfordbt@icloud.com or Ann Wiles annwiles@gmail.com

Dec. 1: Hanging of the Greens at 5 PM in the Sanctuary, followed by The Tasting Party at 5:45 PM in Drowota Hall

Dec. 8: Walk Thru Bethlehem Sunday

Costume checkout dates: Sunday, Nov. 24, 9 AM to 1 PM; Sunday, Dec. 1, 9 AM to 1 PM; Thursday, Dec. 5, 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM.
Volunteer sign up is open at woodmontchristian.org/signup

Dec. 15: Music City Bronze Handbell Concert

On Sunday, Dec. 15, at 4 PM, Nashville's professional handbell choir, Music City Bronze, will perform a free Christmas concert in our church sanctuary. It promises to be a festive and stunning performance. Music City Bronze performs many concerts every year, and this is the first time Woodmont Christian Church is honored to be hosting them. You won't want to miss this spectacular event filled with holiday favorites! All are invited to this free event, so bring your friends and families!

PRAYERS FOR OUR CHURCH FAMILY

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

- Donovan & Megan McAbee on the birth of their daughter, Marin Grace McAbee, on Nov. 17.
- Mary Ramsey and Trey Moore, married Nov. 16 at Woodmont

SYMPATHY TO:

- Virginia Lewis & family on the death of her husband, Malcolm Lewis, on Nov. 17. Visitation is Thursday, Nov. 21, from 5 to 7 PM in the Gathering Hall. Funeral is Friday, Nov. 22 at 2 PM in the Sanctuary with visitation from 1 to 2 PM in the Gathering Hall.
- Nick and Jade Forlidas, on the death of their brother-in-law, George Hernandez, who was killed in a hunting accident in Wills Point, TX on Nov. 17.

CONTINUING CONCERNS:

- Rita Baldwin will have surgery Monday, Nov. 25 at Vanderbilt.
- Hale Hooper - Cumberland Rm 225
- Julia Shipp - at home
- Gary Thompson
- Isse Waddey
- Betty White - broken shoulder from fall on Nov. 10, at home
- Walter White

FAMILY/FRIENDS CONCERNS:

- Glenn Hammonds, brother of Susan Hammonds-White, in CA

OUR ELDERS INVITE YOU TO JOIN THEM IN PRAYER FOR:

OUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

1. We thank God for each child and their parents.
2. We thank God for the Sunday School teachers, music teachers, and other volunteers who give so freely of their time.
3. May the children come to know Christ and grow in their faith.
4. May they feel God's love.

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."- Prov. 22:6



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