



Newsletter of
 Providence Baptist Church ~ Rico, GA
 6402 Campbellton Redwine Road, Palmetto, GA 30268

Spreading the Word

January 2005

www.pbcrico.com

(770) 463-2003

Church Library Opens this Month

Providence Baptist Church announces the (re) opening of its church library and resource center on Sunday, January 23rd.

The library features many books and historic church documents that were part of the church's collection several years ago. One special treat is a church scrap book that dates from the 1940s to the 1980s. It includes photos of weddings, homecomings, baptisms, vacation Bible schools, and many other church events.

The library also includes newer books donated by the church family. Categories include Bible study helps, doctrinal studies, denominational materials, Christian living and devotional books, Christian witness and evangelism tools, helps for establishing and maintaining a Christian home, Christian education helps, books for youth, stories for children, biographies, mission books, fiction, and more.

The resource center, housed in a compact 5'x4' section of the library, has current and past church newsletters, welcome letters, visitation cards, church directories, church officer lists, promotional material, and office supplies—all in one convenient place.

The church family is invited to donate additional books for the library. Books that cannot be used will be placed on the counter in the back of the Fellowship Hall. Anyone is welcome to take these books or find a new home for them. For more information see Laurie Searle.

Library Operation and Hours

The library is self-serve. To check out a book, simply write your name and the date on the book's card, place it in the file box, and return the book in three weeks. If you need the book longer, just update the card.

The library and resource center will be open during church services on Wednesdays from 6pm-8:30pm and on Sundays from 9am - 12:30pm.



Inside this Issue

Welcome to Providence

- About Our Church.....2
- Church Leaders2
- Church Schedule2
- Church Ministries2
- Happy New Year3

Meet the Members

- January Birthdays 4
- Kids Decorate Tree 4
- Randy and Susan Ride for CMA... 4
- Clifford Reeves and Evelyn Mauldin Reeves 5
- Bill and Betty Melear..... 7

Missions & Ministries

- Women of the Word..... 9
- Foreign Missions Banquet Report .9
- International Mission Report9
- Music Ministry9

Learning Opportunities

- Women of the Bible 10
- Miracle of Life Change..... 10

Church Business

- Nursery.....10
- Wednesday Night Supper 10

Just for Fun

- Church Scrapbook Party 11
- Souper Senior Day 11

Feature Story

- The Treasure Chest..... 12

January Church Calendar

Welcome to Providence

Where God is Working

About Our Church

Whether you are a first time visitor, a regular attendee, or a committed member of our church, we'd like to get to know you. We invite you to attend any and all of the various activities available at Providence Baptist Church ~ Rico.

Our desire is to reflect God's glory through sound biblical teaching and meaningful worship in the atmosphere of a warm and loving fellowship.

Please take a few moments to get to know us better, and as you have opportunity, make plans to join us at Providence Baptist Church ~ Rico!

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Church Newsletter

Spreading the News is the newsletter of Providence Baptist Church. This monthly newsletter is intended to keep the congregation informed and connected. It is also meant to be shared with the community so we can lead others to the Lord through our work at Providence.

If you have stories, news, or announcements to share, please contact Laurie Searle by the last Wednesday of the month at (770) 463-2133 or laurie.searle@mindspring.com.

Church Bulletin

The church bulletin is a great way to share your announcements and coming events. To submit bulletin news, please contact Melea Goode by Thursday each week at (770) 463-3207 or mlgoode1@aol.com.

Church Bulletin Boards

The church bulletin boards feature current news, photos of church activities, and sign-up sheets for various events. Please see Laurie Searle if you need help posting your information.

Church Web Site - www.pbcrico.com

The church Web site is designed to share our news with a broader audience. To post events, trip reports, or mission information, please contact Robbie Lee at RLee132@earthlink.net.

Church Leaders

Pastor

Kenneth Koon

Youth Minister

Robbie Lee

Music Minister

Derrec Oliver

Deacons

David Goode, Chairman
Kenneth Bryant
Billy Landers
Doug Landers
Ted Pepin
Bill Melear

Weekly Schedule

Wednesday

Fellowship..... 6 PM
Bible Study..... 7 PM
Youth Worship..... 7 PM
Children Classes..... 7 PM
Choir rehearsal..... 8 PM

Sunday

Fellowship..... 9:15 AM
Sunday School 10 AM
Adult Worship 11 AM
K.I.D.S. Church..... 11 AM
Youth Worship..... 11 AM
Nursery School 11 AM
Evening Worship 6 PM
Children's Choir..... 6 PM

Ministries

Women's Ministry

Women of the Word (WOW)

Men's Ministry

Baptist Brotherhood

Senior's Ministry

Keen-agers

Girl's Ministry (Grades 1-6)

Girls in Action

Boy's Ministry (Grades 1-6)

Royal Ambassadors

Welcome to Providence

Where God is Working

Happy New Year!

I don't believe in "out with the old, in with the new." In fact, 2004 was such a good year I'm a little reluctant to let it go.

In 2004, I became a member at Providence and experienced many of the church's customs for the first time. I got to meet the extended church family at the homecoming. I experienced my first outdoor church service and an old fashioned baptism at Ken Casey's pond. My spirit was motivated and rejuvenated by guest preachers and speakers at the revival. I celebrated the Lord's Supper with my family. And I had many social and learning opportunities to get to know the people and the work at our church.

As I savor the memories from 2004, I can't help but feel a twinge of anticipation and excitement about 2005. I'm looking forward to my first vacation Bible school, the new church library, the groundbreaking of our new church building, the birth of Robbie and Christi Lee's new baby, more Wednesday night study groups (my very favorite night), our special services, and last but not least, sharing the word with others.

As I write this introduction to our newsletter, many folks are still away for the holidays. I hope that when they return, they take some time to pour a cup of hot cocoa, put their feet up by the fireplace, and enjoy reading our newsletter. In this edition we have some very special member profiles featuring four of our beloved church members. We also have a special treat—a new Christian short story that will run in this and the next two issues—perfect to read on cold winter nights. Have a safe and Happy New Year.

Enthusiastically yours,
Laurie Searle, church reporter ☺



Welcome in Your Golden Year

Author Unknown

Before you flip your calendar
To start a New Year bright.
Reflect for just a moment on
The year that ends tonight.

Each joy and every heartache has
Been etched into your heart,
But in a few short hours you
May make a brand new start.

As you review the days and weeks
That simply seemed to fly,
Would you say fortune smiled on you
Or did she pass you by?

Since it's not wise to dwell upon
Those days that made you cry.
The thing to do is set your sights
And aim right at the sky.

Forget those tears and sorrow as
You bid the old, "Adieu,"
And welcome in your golden year.
It's dawning—Just For You

Meet the Members



January Birthdays

Doug Lauanders	01/02
Laurie Searle	01/04
Nicolas Hill.....	01/08
Rachel Hill	01/11
Sharon Knapp.....	01/14
Kathleen Smith.....	01/14
Deztinni Hannah	01/15
Bobby Tyler.....	01/15
Brian McElwaney.....	01/22
Eddie Collins.....	01/27
Tanner Holmes	01/27

If we missed your January birthday or you haven't updated your directory information yet, please see Patti Howell.



Honoring our Families

Many families have attended Providence Baptist Church for generations and have stories that span most of our church's history.

If you would like to share your family's story or historical church photos with the congregation, please contact Laurie Searle at (770) 463-2133. Laurie will print your story in the newsletter and then archive it in the new church library.

PCB Kids Decorate Tree



The PBC Nursery and Children's Church celebrated Christmas by decorating our annual tree in the Fellowship Hall on Dec 5. (We give a special "thank you" to Ms. Melea for assembling the tree for the party.)

Mrs. Barbara, Mrs. Elaine and Mrs. Tia assisted 28 children making gingerbread ornaments, and then settled them all down to cookies and milk. Even with their tummies full, you could still hear their sweet voices ringing through the halls as Mrs. Linda led them in caroling.
- Angie Collins

Randy and Susan Ride for CMA



Congratulations to Randy and Susan Knight for receiving their "colors" in the Christian Motorcycle Association. See next month's newsletter for a feature story on their mission.

Meet the Members



Clifford Reeves & Evelyn Reeves Mauldin

Clifford and Evelyn were born in Rico, GA, and grew up on their parent's farm about a mile south of Providence Baptist Church.

Their father was Mannie Clifford Reeves Sr., a carpenter and dairy farmer, who married Estelle Rose Blissitt on December 19, 1909. Mannie and Estelle were active members and leaders at Providence and lived to celebrate their sixty-third wedding anniversary.

Growing up on a rural dairy farm in the early 1900s meant a lot of hard work for Clifford, Evelyn, and their brother Julian. In addition to helping with the farming chores of milking cows and tending the garden, they also chopped fire wood, cleaned the fireplace, and kept the oil lamps cleaned and filled—common chores before electricity came to the area in 1939. They also walked everywhere—to church, to school, to Smith's store—since their parents didn't get their first car until 1917.

"We really enjoyed going to church, though it was a bit different back when we were kids," Evelyn said. "The church was just one main building, with a coal house and an outhouse out back. It didn't have any Sunday school rooms or a nursery. Mothers used to bring a pillow to church to lay their babies on during

services. And singing was really big. Sometimes it seemed like we would have singing all day long."

Some of the services were different too, according to Clifford. Revivals used to run for two-weeks, with two services each day. In between services, the preacher ate dinner with different members of the church family and spent the afternoon visiting.

When Clifford and Evelyn weren't working the farm or going to church, they attended Rico Elementary School, which was located in the large house next door to where Mary Kate Floyd now lives on Rico Road. Evelyn then went on to attend Palmetto High School and Clifford went on to attend Old Campbell High School, a few years later.

After high school, Evelyn did office work in Atlanta. She stayed at a boarding house in the city during the week and came home to Rico on the weekends. During that time, she met Graydon Maulden and they were married in 1947. Graydon worked for Fulton County in a machine shop and Evelyn worked in the finance department at the Salvation Army. They continued to live in Atlanta for the next 16 years but came home to Rico on the weekends to visit family and attend Providence.

In 1963, Evelyn and Graydon moved back to Rico in a home they built across the street from where Evelyn grew up. They continued to serve at Providence and held many positions over the years: Graydon served as Sunday school teacher and superintendent; Evelyn served as Sunday school teacher for 50 years, treasurer for 11 years, church clerk, president of the Women's Mission Society, and "any other job they needed help with."

One of Evelyn's fondest memories at Providence was early on before the church had Sunday school classrooms. "We had a group of children but no place to teach them," she recalls. "I wound up holding Sunday school in our little church library, which was located in a cubby hole behind the pastor's office. It was really sweet."

Evelyn and Graydon enjoyed 25 years of marriage before he passed away in 1971. Today Evelyn is still active at Providence and is honored as our oldest

member. We also believe she is the oldest resident living in the Rico community.

Clifford took a different path after graduating from high school. In 1936 he joined the Coast Guard and was assigned to the USS Dorothea L. Dix transport ship in Panama City, FL. Next he was assigned to Base 6 in Fort Lauderdale, FL, and after that he was assigned to Fort Trumbull, CT, where he received pharmacy training and met Virginia Catherine Recker, his future wife.

Clifford's next assignment was in Fort Lauderdale, FL, serving on the American Seaman, a special training ship. He and Virginia decided to marry so she came down to Florida. "When we wanted to get married, I had to get permission for a special liberty to leave the ship," he recalls. The couple married in 1941 and lived in several locations during Clifford's three tours of duty. Clifford served during WWII and remembers being at sea the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. He received a medical discharge after about nine years of service.

The couple moved back to Rico for a few years to help Clifford's father with the farm, but by 1957 they were on their way back to Florida, where they stayed until Virginia retired in 1974.

"I remember the day Virginia retired, he said. "We sold the house, rented a U-Haul and had everything packed in one day. The next morning we were bound for Rico when every light on the dash board turned red. We were lucky that they had another truck in Griffin, so we unloaded everything and loaded it in the new truck. We made it home to Rico the same day and never left again."

Clifford and Virginia moved into the same house Clifford was raised in and started attending Providence again, where they were both active members and leaders. The couple enjoyed 47 happy years together before Virginia passed away.

One of Clifford's fondest memories of attending Providence was of his baptism(s). "The first time I was baptized, I was just a kid," he recalls. We used to have a cement pool across the street behind where the lodge is today. We'd fill that pool with water from Pole Branch, the little creek that runs across Whiteside Road. It was real special being baptized outside in that pool. The second time I was

baptized was just a few years ago, inside of the church this time. I used to joke that the first time didn't take."

Today, Clifford still attends Providence when he can and stays active in the church through home visitations. On a recent visit, he shared a good old fashioned *fish story*.

"One time two younger boys wanted to go fishing so I told them to get some catalpa worms off a tree for bait. They messed around and only got a few but we headed out anyway. We got to the (Chattahoochee) river and it was full, bank to bank, boiling in mud. We set out a line and wound up catching 67 fish! No telling what we would have caught if we hadn't run out of bait."

The next day Evelyn invited me to look at some scrapbooks, so I eagerly rushed over to see if I could find any photos of the 67 fish. I didn't see any fish, but I did find a great photo of Clifford and Evelyn.

Clifford and Evelyn Reeves



Meet the Members



Bill & Betty Melear

Bill and Betty Melear are long standing members at Providence Baptist Church and mainstays in the Rico community.

Betty was born and raised in Rico, GA. Her father, James Burnett Smith, and mother, Nora Blissett Smith, owned and operated the Smith's General Store at Rico and raised seven children: Joe, John, Harold, Virginia, Estelle, Betty, and Lucy. Their family lived in a large house on the hill behind Smith's store, close to Providence.

"It was a good time growing up with a large family," Betty recalls and has fond memories of simple pleasures like boiling eggs out in the pasture or riding across the river on the ferry.

"Daddy had the first car in Rico and used to take all of us kids to the ferry and drive us across the river," she said. "I used to get so nervous and excited, all at the same time."

Betty attended Rico Elementary School, Palmetto High School in the 8th and 9th grades and Campbell High School in the 10th and 11th grades. Back then that's as far as high school went, according to Betty.

One Saturday night when Betty was a teenager she went to a party at Jones Mill. Little did she know she'd meet her future husband there.

Bill was born in Newnan, GA, and later moved to Whitesburg, GA, with his family. His father, John Virgil Melear, and mother, Ludie Louise Bennett Melear, raised eight children: Florence, Raymond, Bill, Dorothy, Marvin, Kenneth, Edna, and Harvey.

Bill attended Newnan High School and worked for the Newnan-Times Herald during school and for a while after he graduated.

One Saturday night, he and a friend decided to crash the weenie roast at Jones Mill. He met Betty at the party and they started dating.

His family moved to Rico when he was 20 years old and by that time he knew he wanted to marry Betty. Her family insisted they wait until she turned 18, so they set their wedding date for September 20, 1941.

They both laugh when they think of their marriage at the preacher's home in Newnan. "All the folks from Rico came down and were peeping in the window when we got married," they recalled.

As a young couple they both held interesting jobs. Betty used to pack peaches in Newnan during the war. "My job was to pack the prettiest peaches at the top of each basket," she said.

Bill worked in the Newnan Cotton Mill and earned \$12 a week when they first got married. From that, Betty spent \$4 a week on groceries.

Around that time Bill also tried his first business venture, using his ingenuity and a little red wagon to sell cold Cokes for a nickel a pop. "During the peach harvesting season, I'd pack some Cokes and some ice in a little red wagon and take it up to the train station to sell to the workers loading the peaches," he said. "They loaded the peaches into refrigerator cars, so any time a chunk of ice chipped off, I'd put it in my wagon. If I was lucky, I'd only have to buy ice once during the day."

Bill's next job was with the US Navy and soon after he joined, he and Betty were blessed with their first child, Nora (Bonnie). Betty recalls a precious moment when Bill came home from the Navy with a special present for his young daughter.

"Bonnie was just a baby, no more than two years old," Betty said. "She was real bashful and when Bill came up the path, she hid behind the cedar chest."

He had the biggest Hershey bar you'd ever seen and said, 'Here sugar, I bought you some candy, I hope you like it.' Bonnie said, 'I don't like that kind,' and I burst out laughing."

With Bill out of the service and two more children on the way, Linda and Carl, the couple settled into their lives in the Rico Community.

They both attended Providence Baptist Church and served in many capacities over the years: Bill was Sunday school superintendent, minister of music, and deacon; Betty was a substitute Sunday school teacher, active in the Women's Mission Society, and hospitality director, responsible for finding a place for the preacher to eat dinner each Sunday.

Bill had an interest in farming so he took a few classes and tried his hand, and mule, at the plow for several years. He farmed land down by the Chattahoochee and was somewhat successful, except for the times he planted the same crops three times in a row, only to have them fail because the river flooded.

In 1955, Bill heard about a local farm that was being auctioned and decided to stop by. Although he hadn't intended to buy the 200-plus acre farm, the bidding on the property was so low, he asked a banker who happened to be there from Douglasville if he would loan him the money if he won the bid. The banker said yes, Bill made his bid, and he was soon the proud owner of the property, which cost him only \$35 an acre.

Bill had a few more interesting jobs working for American Thread, and then for Independent Life Insurance for 13 ½ years before taking on a job that made folks hungry at the sound of his name. In 1966, Bill bought his father's barbecue stand known as Melear's Barbecue.

The "stand" was really a restaurant located on Hwy 29 in Union City. While it was well visited by locals, great reviews soon made the restaurant a popular southern icon, as attested by politicians, celebrities, and hungry bicycle riders from East Point. Bill used to say, "A lot of people like to play golf, but I hit a hole in one every time one of my customers enjoys a meal."

Betty remembers the first time they had a really big catering job in Newnan, GA. "We intended to serve 10,000 people," she said. "We had a whole school

bus just for the waitresses, two trucks for the potato chips, five trucks for the meat, and more trucks for the bread, condiments, and drinks. The crowd fell short of 10,000 but we still managed to feed more than 9,000 that day."

In 1986, Melear's Barbecue ran a promotion to celebrate its 20 year anniversary. It rolled back its prices and served everything on the menu at 1966 prices. Bill and Betty expected a crowd, but they had no idea that folks would be standing in a line that stretched around the parking lot three times. Before the day was over, they had called everyone they knew to help prepare and serve barbecue.

Bill and Betty retired in 1989 and sold the restaurant in 1997. Today they still live in the house they bought at auction nearly 50 years ago, near their family and friends in Rico. They are blessed with 3 children, 4 grandchildren, and 5 great grandchildren. They also attend Providence when they can and stay active in the church through home visitation. On a recent visit, they recalled one of their favorite memories growing up in Rico.

"On the way to church, a bunch of us would pick a watermelon from a neighbor's garden and put it in the creek to ice down. All during service we'd be thinking about how hot it was and how cool that melon would be. On the way home, we'd crack open that melon and have a big time. We really enjoyed those simple pleasures."

Bill Melear Plowing the Back 40



Missions & Ministries

Women's Mission Update

The Providence Baptist Church women's mission, Women of the Word (WOW), meets once a month to discuss and plan mission projects. Ladies of all ages are encouraged to attend. The next meeting is scheduled for January 10 at 7 PM at Linda Rigney's house.

Men's Mission Update

The Providence Baptist Church men's mission, Baptist Brotherhood, will meet in the Fellowship Hall for its monthly Bible study on Thursday, January 6th at 6 PM. Men of all ages are encouraged to attend. See Dennis Ball for more information.

Foreign Missions Banquet Report

Providence hosted its annual Foreign Missions Banquet on December 5, with guest Paul Vasquez, who is the Hispanic Minister at Palmetto Baptist Church's Hispanic Mission.

Paul narrated a video of their recent mission to Peru. They intended to collect and distribute clothing for 5 churches, but instead collected and distributed clothing, toys, crutches, and Spanish Bibles to more than 50 churches.

Two members of the Hispanic Mission were also on hand to give their testimonies about the Palmetto mission and how it has helped them worship and help others in their communities.

International Missions Report

Patti and Ervin Howell depart on January 3 for their trip to Russia to participate in the *Stuff a Stocking* mission sponsored by SOAR International.

While in Russia, they will purchase items for the stockings, stuff the stockings, and deliver the stockings to churches and orphanages.

Please keep Patti and Ervin in your prayers for a safe and successful journey.

Music Ministry



The Adult Choir performed the Christmas cantata "Great Day," on December 12 during the evening service.

The first part of the cantata featured the adults led by music minister Derrec Oliver. During the second part, the children's choir joined in.



The Kid's Choir performed the Christmas play "Hotel Bethlehem," during the evening service on December 19.

Music minister Derrec Oliver played the part of the inn keeper, who told his staff there was no room at the inn.

Soloists included: Bethany Landers, Michael Hughes, Katie Hughes, Houston Hutcheson, Kacie Landers, Patti Hughes, Randy Holmes, Nathan Koon, and Kayla Oliver.

Special thanks to Kim Oliver for her direction and to Robbie Lee for audio assistance.

Learning Opportunities

Women of the Bible

Home Study with WOW

Beginning in January, Women of the Word will host an in-home Bible study on the women of the Bible.

The first session is scheduled for January 10 at 7 PM at Linda Rigney's house.

The Miracle of Life Change

Bible Study Series

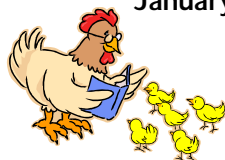
The Sunday night series, "The Miracle of Life Change," will pick up again in January. Join us for this learning session with video messages from pastor/teacher Chip Ingram, President of Walk Thru the Bible.

Church Business

Nursery

Providence Baptist Church has a volunteer staffed nursery available to parents attending church services on Wednesdays and Sundays, for children age infant to 4yrs.

The following schedule is provided for the nursery staff.



January Nursery Schedule

Jan 2	Sylvia Redic Bridget Holmes Elaine Bryant
Jan 9	Shannon and Jeff Wallace Angie Collins
Jan 16	Sylvia Redic Sherry Koon Bethany Landers
Jan 23	Michelle Hutcheson Tia Womack Sandra Davis
Jan 30	Joyce and Libby Sylvia Redic

Wednesday Night Supper

By Kathy Landers

Wednesday night suppers are a tradition at Providence Baptist Church.

Kitchen volunteers prepare drinks and main dishes, and take care of setting up the meals and cleaning up afterwards, while the church family brings covered dishes and deserts and/or other offerings. This combined effort makes it easier for working families and those with children to attend the Wednesday night programs.

Please follow the supper themes below for suggestions on what to bring each Wednesday night.

Thanks in advance to everyone who participates.

January - Supper Themes

Jan 5	Potluck
Jan 12	Casseroles
Jan 19	Soup Night
Jan 26	Nachos * Church sponsored. Sign up list will be posted for items to supplements.



Just for Fun

Church Scrapbook Party

Everyone has great photos and memorabilia that tell a special story: a baby's first service, a baptism, vacation Bible school, revival, or homecoming; a trip with the seniors, story time in the nursery, or youth bonfire; Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations. Why not share those special memories and preserve them for future generations in a church scrapbook?

If you have some favorite photos to share from this past year, attach a Post-it to the back with details including the month and year, event, and names of those in the photo. Put them in an envelope with your name on them and drop them off in the library, or bring them to the scrapbook party.

Anyone who would like to help create the scrapbook is invited to attend. Please bring colored paper and supplies—we'll provide the scrapbook. When we're through, we'll archive the scrapbook in the church library for everyone to enjoy and then make this an annual tradition.

Church Scrapbook Party



Date: Jan 22

Time: 7 PM

Location: Laurie Searle's House

"Souper" Senior Day

On Saturday January 29, Women of the Word (WOW) will host its annual "Souper" Senior Day in the Fellowship Hall at Providence Baptist Church.

Seniors are invited to sample a smorgasbord of soups and deserts, created for your dining pleasure by WOW! You'll fill out special cards with your lunch selection and then be served in style by our WOW hostesses.

After lunch, we'll have fun and games planned with lots of small prizes donated by WOW and the church family*. (If anyone has small gifts they would like to donate, such as hand towels and lotion, candles, knickknacks, etc., please see Melea Goode.)

For more information about this event, contact Melea Goode.

Souper Senior Day



Date: Jan 29

Time: 11AM - 2PM

Location: Providence Baptist Church

Cost: Free

The Treasure Chest

By Forrest Stokes

This special three-part story was contributed by a writer who goes by the pen name, Forrest Stokes.

A small village north of Rome, about fifteen years after the crucifixion of Jesus

Junius was accustomed to being obeyed, and when the small boy didn't answer fast enough, he kicked him in the seat of the pants, sending him sprawling onto the cobblestones.

"The Inn! Where is it? Answer quick now, or feel my anger!"

The boy managed to point out the correct building, then scampered away. The village square was small, surrounded by two and three story plaster buildings, gleaming white in the sun. They had wooden shutters, tile roofs, and painted doors. Junius had been in many just like it, and had even burned at least two such villages to the ground. He was a retired Centurion, battle scarred, sunburned, and gone to flab.

He strode into the Inn, a quiet dusty place with a cold hearth, and bellowed for the Innkeeper. A small frightened man appeared and immediately poured him wine. Junius drained it in one long draught.

"You have an old man here that goes by the name of Bartomay?"

"We do sir. He is deathly ill, and we are afraid he may die in our best room. That's bad for business, that is. Will you be helping him on his way then?"

Junius stared down the little man, and he cowered and made a show of cleaning the bar. Junius noticed him staring at the short sword he always wore on his belt. "You don't know who you have staying with you Innkeeper," he said. "One of the best Centurions of all time, a mountain of a man in his prime. Now show me his room."

They went up the stairs and stopped at a small room on the second floor. "Bring a bottle of wine, then leave us," Junius instructed the Innkeeper.

He opened the door, and it creaked on its rusty hinges. Light streamed in the window, which had no covering other than the wooden shutters.

"Bartomay? Are you here?"

Junius was blinded by the light, but as his eyes adjusted he saw the white hair of an old man, backlit by the sun, framing a face full of wrinkles. The man struggled to sit up in the bed, and the Innkeeper, who had returned with a bottle of wine, helped him.

"Junius, yes, I would know you anywhere," he said. "Well met, old friend."

They clasped forearms, Junius' grip still strong, Bartomay's weak.

"What a rat hole this is," Junius said, surveying the sparse room. "You haven't been hiding here all these years, have you? How long has it been anyway? And why did you send for me? I thought you were dead."

"Slow down, slow down," said Bartomay. "I heard that you had finally retired, I knew you would need money, and I have a task for you. I will pay handsomely."

This got Junius' interest. He had thought this would be simply a reunion of old friends, but if the old man had money, he was interested. He sat in the only chair in the room, poured some wine, leaned back and started to sip. For the first time he noticed that Bartomay had his sword drawn, lying beside him in the bed.

"What's this? Expecting to be murdered in your sleep?"

The old man looked sheepish, then said, "I can still defend myself against these village thieves. They are after my treasure, and I mean to defend it."

"Treasure? What treasure could you have, living in this hovel? And you didn't tell me what happened to you yet - don't think I didn't notice. Before I do anything for you I need some answers. You trained me well, old soldier."

Bartomay looked Junius in the eye. The old man's eyes were cloudy, and watered freely. He didn't

seem to have any teeth, although Junius didn't have many either.

Finally the old man said, "It's a long and torturous tale, my friend. I will tell it, but first I need your promise. Not your promise to help me, since you are right - it would be foolish to promise before knowing the facts. What I need is your promise not to rob me, and not to tell anyone about my treasure. If you will help me I will reward you handsomely. If not, then go about your business, and as one old soldier to another, forget you ever saw me."

"You old fool! I could kill you now, rob you, and be gone before that old Innkeeper knows anything."

Bartomay laughed, showing his toothless gums. "I know you, old soldier. I taught you how to stay alive when you were just a young recruit. I remember saving your life at least twice. I would not have offered or sent for you if I thought I couldn't trust you."

It was Junius' turn to laugh. He drained his wine and poured more. "Alright old sarge, I won't kill you and rob you - yet. But I want to know all the details."

They settled down, preparing for a long evening of stories. The Innkeeper was sent for, food and drink was ordered, and another bed was prepared in the tiny room for Junius.

After they had eaten and swapped old stories, Junius got up and warned the Innkeeper he would slit the throat of anyone caught eavesdropping at the door. He moved his bed so it blocked the door and leaned with his back against it.

"Alright, old sarge," he said. "The last I remember you was when we were in Judea, with those cursed Jews. Pilate made life miserable for us then. Suddenly one night you just disappeared. We searched for you, then searched for your body, and finally decided some jealous Jew had killed you over his wife." A thought suddenly struck him. "If you are alive, and not dead, then you deserted, old man. Maybe I should do my duty and execute you, a dozen years too late."

"Fifteen years, my friend, fifteen long years. Perhaps I would have been better off if you had found me and executed me."

"So where did you disappear to then? It must have been a lot of money to make you risk death."

Bartomay dipped a crust of bread in his wine and then sucked on it with his toothless gums. Finally he spoke.

"Do you remember a time in Jerusalem where there was a big fuss about a new King of the Jews?"

"That happened every year that I was there. I never saw any people so crazy about religion and politics."

"This one was called Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth. The Jews, or at least some of the Jews, hailed him as their new Messiah, sort of a God in human form. The Jews that were in power didn't like that of course, so he was brought before Pilate."

"I seem to remember that. Pilate couldn't find anything the man had done, but the Jews wanted him dead anyway."

Bartomay's voice got low and soft. Dusk was just falling outside, and Junius lit an oil lamp and closed the wooden shutters. The yellow light danced in the draft and threw a wispy shadow on the wall behind Bartomay's head of gray hair.

He said, "I was on duty that day. I drove Jesus, and the other two condemned men, to the execution place - Golgotha. I made him carry his cross, and whipped him. I denied him water. I wouldn't let anyone help him."

"What of it? You were just doing your duty old sarge. Just like any of us would have done in your place."

"But I took a strange pleasure in it. I did not want to look, but I could not turn away. Some force drove me on and hardened my heart. When we reached Golgotha, I took the hammer and nailed his hands and feet to the cross. A demon had possessed me. I felt a thrill with each blow, like lightning up my arm."

Junius dismissed him with a wave of his arm. "If not you, it would have been someone else, maybe even me. We have all taken pleasure in battle, that's nothing new. The killing gets in your blood and it's hard to stop."

"But this wasn't battle, don't you see? By all accounts he was an innocent man, and I took pleasure in his torture. Before we raised up his cross, he looked me in the eye. The look he gave me and what I saw there, has haunted me these fifteen years."

"You mean that's why you deserted? Because that phony pretender looked at you funny?"

Bartomay looked into the flame of the lamp. There were deep creases and shadows in his lined face. His eyes were watering again - or were they tears?

"The look he gave me was one of pain, great pain that floated on the surface of his eyes. Yet beneath the pain was not fear - well, maybe a little fear. It was not hatred, which is what I would have expected. It was compassion. Compassion for me and what I had done. That look has been seared into my memory ever since - I will never forget it."

"I remember that man now," said Junius. He got up and started to pace in the tiny space between the two beds. "There was some rumor that he rose from the dead a few days later. A couple of soldiers got punished for letting someone steal the body." He stopped pacing and grinned at Bartomay. "It wasn't you was it? That took his body? That's not the treasure you have hidden is it? Where is it? Under your bed?" He made a show of stooping to look under the bed, but Bartomay grabbed his sword.

The old man was shaking and trembling with the effort. Junius backed off and sat back down on his own bed.

"Just joking, old sarge. I don't want to look under your bed. But you're not going to tell me that you deserted because he looked at you funny."

Bartomay lowered his sword. Junius thought he saw him blush.

"I did not desert right away. After his cross was raised there were other signs and portents. I stood back, the blood lust had left me. I watched him die on the cross. I suffered the storm and felt the earthquake. I watched them take away his body. I returned to my barracks, and took to my bed, shivering with a strange fever. For three days I lay there, thinking that I would die, haunted in my fever dreams by the memory of what I had done. Finally, on the third day, I awoke, fever broken. I was healthy again, but my spirit was broken. I took what little belongings I had and left the barracks, turning my back on the Roman Army."

Junius leaned back against the door and watched his old sergeant. *He lost his nerve - I've seen it happen before. One day you are a good soldier,*

then you have a close escape and the next day you are a coward, afraid to do your duty. Strange that it didn't happen during battle though. How could the death of one man affect him so that he would desert his Army career?

Junius was startled when Bartomay threw back the covers on his bed. His legs were bloated and swollen, various shades of purple and yellow.

"This is why I need your help," he said. "I cannot walk on these legs, cannot do more than stumble about."

"Can't the surgeons help you? I can fetch an Army surgeon from Rome."

"No, I've had surgeons. They are swollen and will remain this way. The blood doesn't flow, they say, it is all clotted up. They think I will die soon - my heart will give out."

Junius was glad when Bartomay covered his legs back up. He had seen many battle wounds and dead bodies, but the threat of old age scared him more. He could feel his own final days approaching, faster than he wanted.

"So what do you want me to do to earn my money?" he asked.

"East of here, probably three days by cart, there is a community of followers of Jesus. They have a Church, and I spent much time there several years ago. I will give you money to buy a cart or wagon and something to pull it. I will ride, you will drive, and you will take me to my friends. When we get there I will pay you."

"What if you don't make it, old sarge? What if you die on the road? What then?"

"Take my body on to my friends. I will give you a paper, written in their language, instructing them to pay you. The treasure is hidden in my chest - the paper will describe how to open it. You will receive one-fifth."

"And how much is one-fifth of this mysterious treasure? How much in gold coins, with the face of Caesar stamped on them?"

"There are rich men here and abroad who would pay a princely sum for this treasure. Have no fear - you will be rewarded."

Stay tuned for Part 2 in February.

January

Sun *Mon* *Tue* *Wed* *Thu* *Fri* *Sat*

See page 2 for Wednesday and Sunday schedules. Exceptions are noted below. PBC = Providence Baptist Church						1
2 See pg 2	3	4	5 See pg 2 Supper - Potluck	6 Baptist Brotherhood Bible Study Fellowship Hall 6 PM	7 Deacons's Retreat	8
9 See pg 2	10 WOW meeting at Linda Rigney's house 7pm	11	12 See pg 2 Supper - Casseroles	13	14	15
16 See pg 2	17 MLK Day Holiday	18	19 See pg 2 Supper - Soup Night	20	21	22 Church Scrapbook Party at Laurie Searle's house 7pm
23 See pg 2	24	25	26 See pg 2 Supper - Nachos (see sign up list)	27	28	29 Senior "Souper" Bowl at church Fellowship Hall 11am
30 See pg 2	31					

2005