

NOVEMBER 2024

We thank God in all our remembrance of you.



Julie Houston Elmer

Julie Houston Elmer, age 69 of Birmingham, AL, went peacefully to be with Jesus on October 22, 2024. Julie was born in Anniston, AL, and raised in Chulafinnee, AL, by her late parents, Charles and Bettie Houston. She was married to Dr. Ken Elmer for 41 years. She graduated from Jacksonville State University as a first-generation college student with a degree in political science, and she was crowned Miss Alabama in 1977, going on to represent the state of Alabama in the 1978 Miss America Pageant.

After college, Julie became a senate aide in Washington, D.C. She eventually returned to Alabama, where she met her husband, Ken, during rehearsals for the 1982 Miss Alabama pageant, bonding over their shared love of music. They married in 1983, between Ken finishing medical school at the University of Alabama, Birmingham, and starting his pediatric residency. Julie worked in radio advertising for Birmingham's WQEZ and then Magic 96 until becoming a mother in 1985. She then dedicated all her time and effort to investing in the lives of their three children.

As a mother, Julie was the ultimate cheerleader and a constant source of encouragement. Even now, friends fondly remember Julie's hospitality and household as a warm, welcoming place, always stocked with ice cream and her famous chocolate chip cookies. She and Ken were actively involved at Briarwood Presbyterian Church, serving together in the choir and praise team. After her children graduated from high school, she took on the full-time role of Briarwood's Women's Ministry Coordinator, a position she cherished for 10 years until her retirement in 2016.

Julie loved Jesus more than anything, and the way she chose to spend her time reflected this love. A gifted musician, she was always ready to sing a gospel hymn or accompany someone on the piano. In her spare time, Julie served as an assistant teaching director in Community Bible Study, where she led music, prepared and delivered biblical studies, trained leaders, and supported the spiritual growth of women in Birmingham. Even in retirement, during her battle with early-onset Alzheimer's disease, she arranged and delivered flowers through Briarwood's L.O.V.E. Ministries and volunteered at Restoration Academy, reading to children. Above all, she wanted her life to reflect the love of her Savior.

After nearly a decade of walking alongside her on the hard road of memory loss, Julie's family rejoices in the promises of 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." This was the story of her salvation, and they find comfort in knowing that Julie is now fully restored and with her Lord.

The family also expresses sincere gratitude for the years of loving support from friends and family during this difficult season, and to the Kingdom Builders Sunday School class, who brought weekly meals to the family for many years. The Elmers also extend their deepest appreciation to Gayle Griffith, who dedicated her days to being Julie's constant companion and caretaker. Gayle's unwavering love provided Julie with comfort and joy during her final years.

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WELL DONE

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’” Matthew 25:21

On October 22nd Jesus spoke those words face to face to His faithful servant, Julie Elmer, as she entered into eternal joy. What a glorious thing! Faithful servant is a very fitting description of her. In all seasons and callings (wife, mother, friend, Bible teacher, praise leader, women’s ministry director, etc.) she humbly trusted God to work in and through her. Even in the ravages of dementia her love for Jesus shone brightly.

In 2006, after a season of being a stay-at-home mom, she became the women’s ministry director at Briarwood. I can’t exactly remember how it happened, but I started volunteering and she asked me to be on her women’s leadership team. We became fast friends. She was such a special person; how could I not want to be her friend?! God equipped her with a perfect balance of being a “people person” and a “task person.” She could get things done and at the same time make those around her feel special. To the casual observer she appeared calm and gracious, always available to listen and encourage, even when the tasks of the ministry were pressing in on her. Those of us with behind-the-scene knowledge were usually freaking out with all the details, but her firm belief that “He who called you will do it” made her a peace-filled, confident leader. In everything, her goal was to glorify God, present the Gospel to the lost, and encourage, train, and challenge her sisters in Christ. Every single event. Every single encounter.

As an added bonus, Julie was fun, always quick to laugh and entertain. For years, she and her husband Ken, along with Tammy and Matt Moore, were well-known at Briarwood for their funny skits and songs. For her first ladies’ retreat as director, she recruited the group to perform a few songs as “The Supremes.” They brought the house down not only with their talented performance but also with their beautiful (and hilarious) costumes. You haven’t lived until you’ve seen Ken and Matt in Diana Ross wigs and red sequined evening gowns. Only Julie Elmer could have pulled that off and gotten away with it. Thankfully for the guys, there is no video evidence. It was before everyone had camaras on their phones. And I think the photos were confiscated.

Her memorial service was such a special time of remembering her life. I encourage you to go to the Briarwood Facebook page and watch it. You will be encouraged and challenged as I was. Hebrews 12:1 tells us that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. Julie is among those now. She has completed her race, passed the torch, and is cheering us on from the celestial sidelines (not sure how that works theologically). With endurance and eyes fixed on Jesus, we are still running our own God-ordained races with the goal of hearing “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Thank you, Julie, for leading the way so well. We miss you. See you soon.

-Denise Hamilton

BRIARWOOD WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Countdown to
Christmas

Nov. 20, 2024
Fellowship Hall



Countdown to Christmas

Countdown to Christmas will focus our attention on preparing our hearts for **the** upcoming **Christmas** season. As our time together unfolds we will hear **the** gospel, enjoy delicious food, and fellowship with one another. Our prayer is that this event will bring our focus back to **the** Heavenly Father's great love for His people in providing our Savior, Jesus Christ. This event is for the believer and the non-believer. Our desire is that each person who attends will either grow in their love for the Savior or be introduced to Him for the first time.

Event Date and Times: Wednesday, November 20th programs begin at 9:30 am or 6:30 pm (doors open 30 minutes earlier)

Morning Schedule:

9:00 am Doors open and food is served

9:30 am Welcome and Celebration (please plan to be in your seats by this time)

9:50 am Program Begins

10:40 am Giveaways and Final words

11:00 am Dismissed

Evening Schedule:

6:00 pm Doors open and food is served

6:30 pm Welcome and Celebration (please plan to be in your seats by this time)

6:50 pm Program Begins

7:40 pm Giveaways and Final Words

8:00 pm Dismissed

Speaker: Ashley McMakin, owner of Ashley Mac's

Ashley will share with us her story of faith and how she prepares her heart for Christmas.

Food: Both the breakfast and the dinner will be catered by Ashley Mac's Catering.

Tickets: The cost is \$20/person.

Tickets will go on sale beginning October 16th. They will be available in the bookstore and *online.

**online tickets will have an added credit card charge*

We have limited tickets for the event. There is a FIRM DEADLINE to purchase your ticket by November 12th.

Registration: Tickets will be available for purchase beginning October 16th in the bookstore and online on the women's webpage.

Volunteers: Beginning October 16th we will have a volunteer sign up page located on the women's webpage.

Nursery is available for both session with nursery registration.



FOUNDATIONS

This Fall I have asked Cathe Cleveland to share with us about four non-negotiables for us as believers. These are four bedrock truths that our women's ministry will continue to reinforce throughout the Fall and into the new year. I pray you will be both encouraged and challenged as you consider these truths.

In the last two newsletters, we talked a little about the first two of four non-negotiable principles that flow from Covenant Theology and frame the way we think biblically and live covenantally. This month we look at the third.

Here are all four:

1. God is our reference point.
2. His Word is our authority.
3. His glory is our purpose.
4. His presence is His promise.

His Glory is Our Purpose

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. (Psalm 46:1–3 ESV)

Trying to continue to have civil conversations with people I know and love who are on all sides of the issues dividing our nation and the world in the fall of 2024 has driven me to spend a good bit of time meditating on Psalm 46. These opening verses talk about how God, as our refuge and strength, is far more secure and unchanging than even the mountains and the ground beneath our feet. The writer probably did this in part because we tend to think of mountains as beautiful, majestic, and unchanging.

I have always loved being in the mountains. I grew up in Oklahoma where it is relatively flat, but our family spent a few childhood vacations in Colorado. Even as a child, the majestic beauty of driving along Trail Ridge Road and other places in the Rockies made a lasting impression. When someone loves being in the mountains, whenever they speak of them their appreciation for the beauty and majesty naturally overflows. And there are always stories of hiking adventures and perfect sunrises. And, oh, the pictures that could be shared!

Mountains seem so permanent. But the truth is that once mountains form, they immediately begin a process of very slowly but very constantly eroding. The roots of even very small plants along with the freezing and thawing of water crack even the largest rocks and eventually break them down into soil. The nature of things is that mountains are constantly losing height as rocks and soil are continually pulled downhill by gravity and the runoff of rain and melting snow.

This year we witnessed this process in a sudden, violent, more obvious way in North Carolina and neighboring states. Hurricane Helene brought unprecedented amounts of rain in the Appalachians in a very short period of time. We saw vivid videos of the tragic mudslides that took many lives, homes, businesses, and memories.

Life will never be the same for the survivors as they work to rebuild. Never again will they be lulled into trusting the ground as being solid and permanent. Now they understand even better the true nature of mountains in a fallen world with their beauty and the potential for destruction in a moment. I am sure the way they speak about life in the mountains will be forever changed and probably truer to reality in some ways. Hopefully their experience will also help the believers among them to have a clearer understanding of God that is truer to reality. Surely they have a deeper understanding of those words in Psalm 46.

The final verses of the Psalm remind us of where our confidence belongs so that it can never be shaken:

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” (Psalm 46:10–11)

Psalm 46 is only one of many places in Scripture that we are assured that God’s glory will be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. (See also: Numbers 14:21, Habakkuk 2:14, Isaiah 9:11, Psalm 72:19.) As a matter of fact, Question 1 of the *Westminster Confession* points out that glorifying the Lord is our very purpose for being on earth: “What is the chief and highest end of man?” And the answer with the scriptural proofs given is “Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, (Rom. 11:36, 1 Cor. 10:31) and fully to enjoy him forever. (Ps. 73:24–28, John 17:21–23)” In other words, **God’s glory is our purpose**. If glorifying God is the purpose we are here on earth, it begs the question, what does it mean to glorify the Lord? Scripture brings some clarity.

1. We speak of His glory

“I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!” (Psalm 34:1–3)

It could be said that the person who loves mountains and speaks of their majesty to others is reflecting some of the “glory” or majesty of those mountains to others. While that is only a small shadow of what it means to glorify the only One who is truly glorious, it points to the idea that a big part of glorifying the Lord is related to how we speak about Him. We should speak well and knowledgeably of Him and His greatness. We should speak clearly about the fact that we have nothing to boast in ourselves, but any boasting we do should be about the greatness of our God:

2. Everything we do should glorify Him

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

The scope of how we glorify the Lord is much bigger than speech alone. *Everything* we do should be in accord with what He has revealed to us in His Word about what is true, and beautiful, and good. We should act in such a way that when others see our behavior it would reflect positively on the reputation of our Lord and Savior.

3. Our actions should flow from confident faith

Additionally, as we saw in the closing verses of Psalm 46 above, our actions must be accompanied by confident faith, that we “Be still and know” God as He really is.

4. He WILL be glorified throughout the earth

As we glorify the Lord, we may be limited in our effectiveness in any area where we misrepresent who He truly is. We should actively seek to more deeply comprehend all His attributes so that we confidently show everyone that He is truly worthy of more praise than we could ever give. But we can be 100% confident that He *will* be exalted among the nations of the world and that does *not* depend on how effective we are at glorifying Him. But when we truly know Him for who He really is, we will realize it is a gracious privilege that He allows us to have *any* part in glorifying Him.

It leads us to doxology as Paul leads us in the closing verses of Romans 11:

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11:33–36)

Let us continually join together to lift up His great name!

“Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!” (Psalm 34:3)



Operation Christmas Child is
just around the corner!
We need your help!

Fill a shoebox and let a child know that someone cares about them and that God loves them! Briarwood participates every Christmas season in Samaritan's Purse's Operation Christmas Child. Operation Christmas Child sends shoeboxes packed with small gifts – toys, school supplies, and hygiene items to children around the world, some of who may have never received a gift in their life. The boxes are given with a gospel booklet and a gospel presentation and an opportunity to participate in a twelve week discipleship program (The Greatest Journey).

Beginning on November 3, shoeboxes will be available in the Ministries Lobby for you to take home and fill. Boxes are due back November 10-17.

If you would like to build a box online instead, please click [here](#).
Boxes built online go to hard-to-reach countries.

See the Trailblazer web page for more information about the packing party (<https://briarwood.org/ministries/trailblazers/>).

Trailblazers Packing Party

Friday, November 8 at 9:00 A.M.

in the Briarwood Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall.

Come join the Briarwood Trailblazers, Oak Mountain Forerunners, and Vallydale Legacy to pack shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child.

Please bring items to share!

Sign up at briarwood.org/trailblazers.

(Contact Sharon a sjohnston@briarwood.org to bring items early)

Angels will be available on November 10th and 17th
outside the bookstore and the chapel.

All gifts due back on November 24th.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
to assist at the tables on Nov 10 and 17th

There will be three shifts:

7:50-9:30

9:30-11:00

11:00-12:30

To volunteer please email Amy Wood at
apwood@briarwood.org or call 205-776-5222

BRIARWOOD WOMEN'S MINISTRY

MOM 2 MOM

telling the next generation



FRIDAY
NOV. 8

9:30 - 11:30 AM | FELLOWSHIP HALL E & F

Join us once a month as older moms and younger moms gather around a table for fellowship, refreshments and encouragement.

For more information and to register, visit: briarwood.org/women.
Nursery available with registration.

Young
Moms

Young Moms

YOUNG MOMS PRAYER GROUP

Friday
mornings

9-10 am
G-103



Does your heart yearn for another mom with whom you can pray for your young children? In the midst of a sometimes-scary world, God has entrusted us with the precious gift of little ones. The responsibility can feel daunting! BUT praying with other moms focuses our vision on the Lord and His Word as our source of wisdom, comfort, and instruction. Join us as we pray for our wee ones!

Beginning Sept. 6

For more information, contact Danae Lloyd at 781.351.0121.



Sing Along

with *mom*

Moms and littles (infants to 5 yrs) join us for a preschool music and movement class. This is a fun opportunity to meet with other moms and littles as we sing and grow together in this season.

Wednesdays

beginning September 11

G-101

9:30 am – 10:30 am

For more information and to register (free), please visit briarwood.org/women.

Young
Moms



Brent and Melanie Beth Gilbert
welcomed
William Alan Gilbert
on October 9, 2024.



Hank and Maddie Abbott
welcomed
Frances Lynn Abbott
on October 18, 2024.

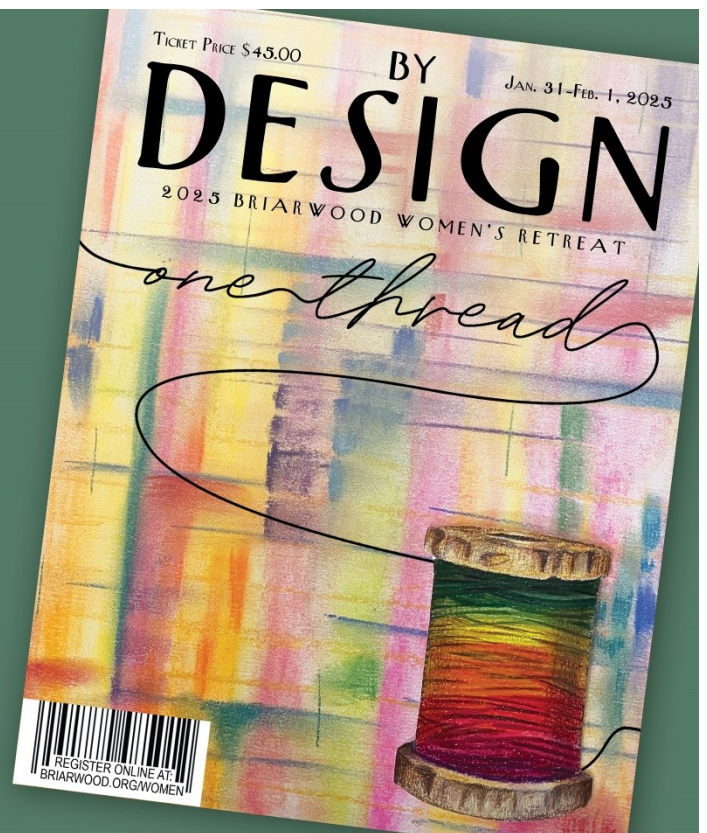
SAVE THE DATE

Women's In-Town Retreat

January 31-February 1

REGISTER ONLINE AT BRIARWOOD.ORG/WOMEN

Registration Opens in December



Portraits of Hope with WBL

Join us for an evening of celebration for women transformed inside and outside by the grace of God. Enjoy the extraordinary exhibition of portraits of 70 ladies associated with the Lovelady Center and be encouraged as Carmen Latner shares her path to Christ and to a renewed mind.

- 6:00-7:30 PM, Thursday, Nov. 7
- Beverly B. McNeil Portraits, Inc.,
2801 6th Ave South, Birmingham, AL 35233
- \$10 Tickets at wblbirmingham.org
Light refreshments will be served.



**CHILDREN'S
MINISTRY
HELP NEEDED:**

**PASSPORT
NIGHT**

Hi Ladies! My name is Emily Baker, and I have the joyful privilege of serving as the Children's Missions Coordinator. We had a wonderful time at our first Passport Night as we explored Kenya and heard from our missionaries, Ben and Jenny Roberts. Afterwards, the nearly 120 children who came enjoyed a pizza dinner and three rotations centered around Kenyan crafts, stories, and games. We praise the Lord for this incredible turnout for our first Passport Night! With this amazing attendance comes a need for more volunteers.

Would you consider helping in our Children's Ministry?

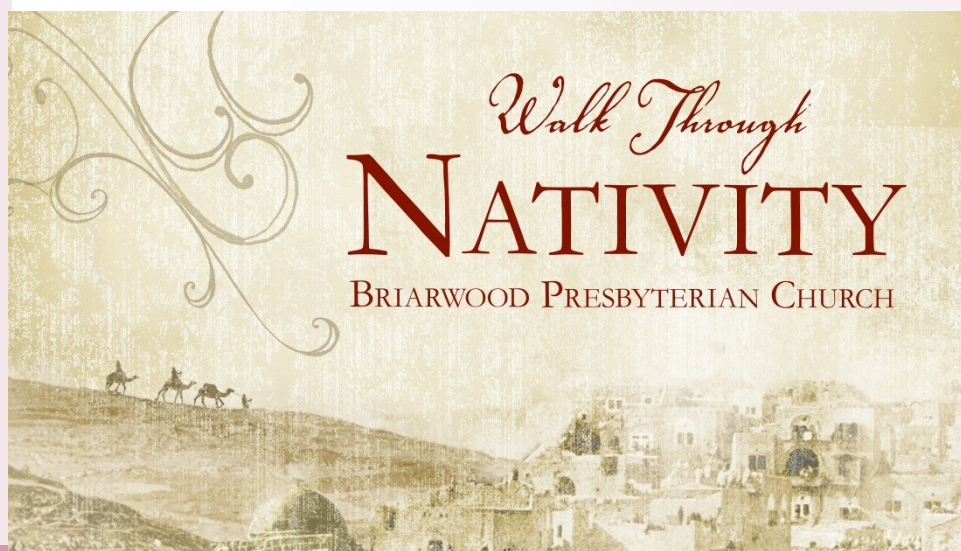
Volunteers are engaged in crowd control. Coming up, we have a Passport Night on **November 15**. [SIGN UP HERE](#). Please feel free to email me with any questions: ebaker@briarwood.org. We pray that these opportunities stir a love for missions within the hearts of our children. Thank you!

Hundreds of Briarwood members come together to depict the birth and life of our Lord in 13 biblical scenes with narrated drama using live actors and animals (including a camel!) Won't you plan on joining us this year?

Wednesday - Friday

6:45 p.m.-8:45 p.m.

December 11-13



5 Year Bible Reading Plan

You can download the 5-year plan by visiting:

<https://briarwood.org/women-of-the-covenant/five-year-bible-reading-plan/>



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2
4

Revelation
part 1

NOVEMBER

S M T W T F S

1 2

3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10 11 12 13 14 15 16

17 18 19 20 21 22 23

24 25 26 27 28 29 30

Briarwood Women's Care Team



The Briarwood Women's Care Team's primary focus is to serve as advocates for women experiencing significant needs and/or in crisis, and to come alongside the staff and leadership as they minister to women in the congregation in difficult circumstances.

To find out more information, or to request help, visit:

briarwood.org/women-of-the-covenant/womens-care-team/