

# DECEMBER 2024



December is a busy month: Sunday School class parties, family and friends gathering through the month, school programs, church get togethers, cooking, cleaning, shopping, and more cooking and cleaning. It is a busy season for all of us. Sometimes it is so busy we can even miss the real reason we celebrate Christmas. So how do we keep our focus on Christ in the midst of all that is demanded of us?

At the *Countdown to Christmas*, Ashley McMakin shared with us how she prepares her heart in the midst of a busy season. She reminded us that throughout the Word of God we are told to remember. In 1 Samuel 7:12 we are given a picture of remembering when Samuel had an ebenezer stone placed between Mizpah and Shen as a remembrance of God's help and faithfulness in the midst of Israel's struggle with the Philistines. This stone of remembrance was to remind the Israelites of God's faithfulness. Ashley shared how looking at her own "ebenezer stones" helped to prepare her heart to worship and celebrate Jesus. Remembering the Lord's faithfulness through life's journey brings her eyes back to the very One she worships and adores.

To prepare our hearts this Christmas, may we be a group of women who recount the ebenezer stones in our lives. Let us remember so that we can worship!

Merry Christmas!

Kristie



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## Special points of interest

- Women's In Town Retreat  
January 31-February 1
- Women's Spring Bible Studies  
Begin week of January 6-10

# FOUNDATIONS

Written by Cathe Cleveland

*In the last three newsletters, we talked a little about the first three 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 fourth and final one. Think of these four principles as four sides of a picture frame that keep us on track as we seek to stay “on message — on mission — in ministry.”*

Here are all four:

**God is our reference point.**

**His Word is our authority.**

**His glory is our purpose.**

**His presence is His promise.**

## His Presence is His Promise

It is not good to be alone. We know this is true from experience. Even when you are in a crowd, you can feel very alone whenever you do not know of at least one other person there who feels what you are feeling. It can also happen when you feel the pain of loss after you are separated from someone geographically, relationally, or through death. We can all attest to the fact that it is never good to feel like you are the “other.” In Genesis loneliness was the first thing at creation that God said was not good:

*Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”  
(Genesis 2:18 ESV)*

God saw loneliness and immediately made a remedy for it. Prior to the fall, the man and woman dwelt with God in the garden He had designed for them. After the fall we hear about their very tangible encounter with His presence after they realized their sin:

*And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8 ESV)*

Imagine hearing the LORD God walking in your home—being in the very presence of God. The truth is that He provided an even greater solution to loneliness. Christianity is unique among world religions because it alone teaches that God chooses to dwell with His people. It is one of the great themes that unfolds throughout Scripture and the story of His fulfilling that promise from runs Genesis to Revelation. Once the pattern is recognized, we start seeing hints and shadows of God’s presence with His people everywhere in Scripture. Here are six big ones that you can think of as a kind of hatrack that you can hang others on to help you recognize and organize them.

### **The Garden—The First Sanctuary**

This was the starting place for the development of God’s covenant promise to dwell among His people. Adam and Eve dwelt in God’s presence but after the fall they were driven from the Garden. His presence cannot tolerate sin’s presence. (Genesis 1–3) But He also begins unfolding His promise of making a way to be present with His people beginning in Genesis 3:15 and further through Abraham.

### **The Tabernacle—The Exodus Sanctuary**

God met with Moses at Mt. Sinai and the glory cloud was the visible manifestation of God’s presence. Moses was on the mountain for forty days as God instructed him with great detail on how the Israelites were to build and furnish the tabernacle, and what were to be the responsibilities of the priests that ministered there. Exodus 24–31 records the intricate details. The tabernacle was to be placed in the center of the camp where it would be a constant reminder of the glory and majesty of God. That God would dwell in the midst of His people would not be something to be taken lightly.

The closing chapters of Exodus cover the construction of the tabernacle and so there could be no question of the presence of God, chapter 40 closes with a description of the glory cloud covering the tabernacle, and how it went with them in all their journeys through the wilderness.

## **The Temple—The Jerusalem Temple**

Solomon built the more permanent temple in Jerusalem and 1 Kings 8:10-11 tells us that the glory cloud filled that temple as well.

*And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. (1 Kings 8:10-11 ESV)*

## **The Person of Christ—The Word Becomes Flesh**

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 ESV)*

Christ's sinless life, atoning death, and resurrection provide sinners with the gift of righteousness by fulfilling God's commands on behalf of His people. He provides the way for His people to become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

## **The Body—We Become His Dwelling Place**

There is both an individual and a corporate aspect to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers after Pentecost. My body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit:

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19–20 ESV)*

In English, "you" can be either singular or plural and it is sometimes difficult to tell unless you are in Alabama where we sometimes say y'all to indicate plural. But in New Testament Greek it is clear. The ESV has a note letting us know that the "you" in 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 is the plural form in the original language. We as the church body are indwelt corporately:

*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16–17 ESV)*

And Ephesians tells us that both Jews and Gentiles are being built into one holy temple with Jesus as the cornerstone:

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19–22 ESV)*

## **The New Heavens and New Earth—Our Eternal Home**

And, finally, at the culmination of all things, when everything will be as it was intended, Christ will come for His Bride, the Church, and dwell with them forever in the place that Jesus promised while here with His disciples:

*"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (John 14:1–3 ESV)*

John tells us of the new holy city of Jerusalem where God will dwell with His people and He will Himself wipe away every tear:

*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:2–4 ESV)*

*On loneliness, I highly recommend the enCourage Women's Podcast of CDM Women's Ministry of the PCA, Episode: Call Me Crazy: Candid Conversations about Loneliness and Reclaiming Peace.*



# Countdown to Christmas

What a wonderful time we had as over 480 women joined us at this year's Countdown to Christmas! We had a delightful time in fellowship, entertainment, and encouragement from Ashley McMakin to keep our eyes and hearts fixed on the Lord this Christmas and all through the year.









# Countdown to Christmas

## Thank you to all of our event volunteers!

Stephanie Adcock  
Donna Arrington  
Debbie Bellamy  
Gralynn Branham  
Lisa Bunn  
Laura Bush  
Karen Carlisle  
Elaine Cox  
Kathy Davis  
Ashley Draper  
Rebecca Galbreath  
Susan Greenall  
Evi Jones  
Margi Lyles  
Felicity Martin  
Amy Monroe  
Sandy Murphy,  
Kate Noel  
Meredith Peters  
Avery Pickens  
Heather Purser  
Cindy Reeder  
Jan Ricketts  
D'onne Salmon  
Shea Terry  
Melody Weaver  
Belinda Youngblood

### Women's Leadership Team:

Shannon Black  
Meredith Peters  
Lisa Bunn  
Ashley Draper  
Vanessa Cain  
Julie Clark  
Rhonda Parsons  
Marie Gathings  
Heather Purser

### Video Participants:

Victor Roy  
Michael Wichlan  
Carol Davis  
Benny Youngblood  
Benny Parks  
Eric Reebals  
Jerri Lynn Turner  
Rebecca Galbreath  
Stephen Kim  
George Harrick  
Chuck Crawford  
Hannah Martin  
Jay Shaw  
Ben Stallings

### Special Entertainment:

Tammy Moore  
Hannah Brennan

### AV Team:

Jesse Reagan  
Lee Watford  
Frank Barker III

### Kitchen and food service:

Sherri Blahnik  
Margaret Kim

### Facilities and Maintenance Crew

### Nursey:

Alison Craig and team

### Bookstore Team:

Debbie Little and team

### Graphics:

Rebecca Galbreath



Thank you to those who provided table centerpieces, Christmas trees, and other decorations:



- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Anna Bardin       | Susan Huff         |
| Debbie Bellamy    | Vanessa Jones      |
| Caroline Black    | Beth Jordan        |
| Rebecca Black     | Danae Llyod        |
| Shannon Black     | Sarah McIntosh     |
| Elizabeth         | Jess Merkle        |
| Bondurant         | Mary Myers         |
| Lisa Bunn         | Meredith Peters    |
| Vanessa Cain      | Janice Peterson    |
| Sue Cizek         | Ashley Ponter      |
| Julie Clark       | Christian-Emilee   |
| Barbara Dickinson | Van Puffelen       |
| Karen Derieux     | Heather Purser     |
| Susan Dobbs       | Claire Roebuck     |
| Meredith Dorroch  | Charleigh Steelman |
| Connie Evans      | Kellie Stewart     |
| Sandy GORITY      | Morgan Stroud      |
| Kelly Hammond     | Hayley Travers     |
| Brenda Harrick    | Jerri Lynn Turner  |
| Lyndsey Holcombe  | Molly Ward         |

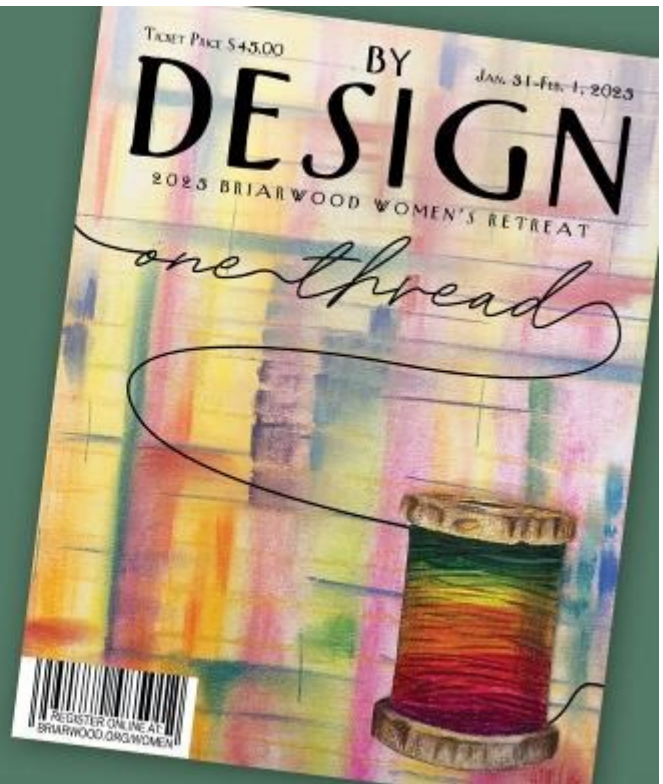


# SAVE THE DATE

## Women's In-Town Retreat

January 31-February 1

REGISTER ONLINE AT [BRIARWOOD.ORG/WOMEN](http://BRIARWOOD.ORG/WOMEN)



### Schedule

**Friday night, January 31**

**6:45 – 9:00 pm**

Large Session #1

Location: Worship Center  
Fun, Giveaways, & Worship

Speaker: Meaghan May

**Saturday, February 1**

**8:30 – 11:00 am**

Large Session #2

Location: worship Center  
Fun, Giveaways, & Worship

Speaker: Meaghan May

**11:15 – 12:15 pm**

Breakout Sessions

Various Locations

**12:30 – 2:00 pm**

Lunch and Final Challenge

Location: Fellowship Hall

ABCD

You are invited to the

## Women's Ministry In Town Retreat

**January 31-February 1, 2025.**

### **By Design: The One Thread of Scripture**

#### Cost:

Cost covers all retreat material, refreshments, and lunch on Saturday. (*Price cannot be broken and is non-refundable but transferable.*)

December 16 -January 2:      \$45 per person

January 3 – January 22:      \$55 per person

*Payment is online only.\*\**

#### Registration

Registration opens **December 16<sup>th</sup>** at [www.briarwood.org/women](http://www.briarwood.org/women)

When you register you will need to select the breakout session you would like to attend. Information about the breakout sessions is available on the registration page.

#### Other

Dress is comfy – retreat casual.

No childcare is available Friday or Saturday.

Nursing moms are welcome to bring their baby as needed.



# Women's Spring Bible Studies

Begin the week of January 6th

## Monday

### Malachi

10:00am with Michele Cantley

## Tuesday

### "A Woman's Wisdom"

9:30am with Cindy Reeder

### A Study of Acts with Nancy Guthrie

9:30am with Mary Anne Turnbull

## Wednesday

### The Book of Ruth

6:30pm with Elizabeth Bondurant

## Thursday

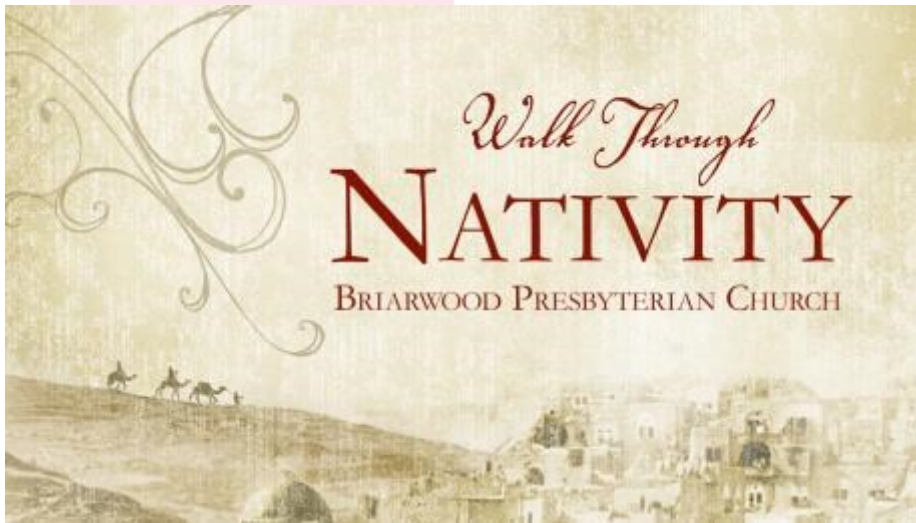
### The Gospel of Mark

9:30am with Donna Evans

### The Gospel of John

9:30am with Yvonne Welch

# Christmas at Briarwood



**Walk Through Nativity**  
**December 11–13 • 6:45–8:45 p.m.**

Stroll through 13 Christmas scenes  
with narrated drama using live  
actors and animals.  
Come enjoy this free family event!

Hundreds of volunteers are needed!  
To sign up to volunteer for this year's Walk Thru Nativity click here:  
[Walk Through Nativity - Briarwood Presbyterian Church, PCA](#)





# Christmas at Briarwood



A Briarwood Christmas • Sunday, December 15 at 6:00 P.M.

**Briarwood Christmas Festival**  
**“Hallelujah! Hope in Christ”**  
December 15 • 6:00 p.m.



YOU'RE INVITED  
**Candlelight  
Service**



**Christmas Eve Services**  
December 24

Family Candlelight  
Service  
5:00 & 7:00 p.m.

Candlelight  
Communion Service  
11:00 p.m.

## Community Updates



Wishing JoAnn Weston of Joyful Hearts a Happy 90th birthday on December 1st!



Josh and Ali Wheeler welcomed Tahlia Grace Wheeler on November 15, 2024.



Andrew and Lindsey McGehee welcomed Andrew Oliver McGehee on October 25, 2024





## Pray for the Wichlans

Michael Wichlan has served at Briarwood as a Shepherding Pastor since February 2018. He and Denise are moving to Gadsden, AL for him to be on staff at Rainbow Presbyterian Church as the new Executive Congregational Care Pastor. Michael will provide shepherding, administrative leadership, and overall congregational care for this growing body of believers in Christ. He and Ray Tucker (previous Membership Pastor) will create much havoc, especially with their Tennessee and Alabama rivalry. They said "this is a time of 'sad-joicing' to be leaving many special people from Briarwood." Please join us in praying for their transition to serve at Rainbow Presbyterian Church.



## 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/>



*Revelation*  
part 2

DECEMBER

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	31				

## 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/](https://briarwood.org/women-of-the-covenant/womens-care-team/)







It is with great sadness that I have to let you know that I am stepping away from my position as the women's ministry administrative assistant. I have had such an incredible and joyous experience over the last 3.5 years in this role serving the women of Briarwood alongside our fearless, loving, and silly leader, Kristie Harrick.

However, it is with great joy that I get to step aside to care for my new son Peter and to more diligently assist my husband Luis with serving the Briarwood Hispanic congregation.

With love,  
Amanda Peterson Leon