

"TURNING THOSE IN CRISIS TOWARD CHRIST"

Emergency Chaplains

JANUARY 2021



The Boswell Family in 1945. The two older sons (middle) had just returned from Europe after serving in World War II

2020 was a challenging year for us, as I'm sure it was for you. Our growth has been slower than anticipated but we continue to make the necessary adjustments. All of our training for certification is now available online and has been well received by our Chaplains.

On a personal level, 2020 was a very challenging year for me. I started with surgery on February 2nd and spent a good chunk of the month in the hospital due to some complications. I finally made it back to the office in mid-March, just in time for the COVID shutdown.

Besides COVID, I will remember 2020 as a year of great loss for me. The least important of my losses was the closing of Cheerz Deli near my house. In the early days of Emergency Chaplains, Cheerz served as my office. It was a cozy place to meet for breakfast or coffee, or to catch up on some paperwork. Back in the old days, when I was a pastor, I met there for several years with a group of men for breakfast and to study God's Word. The pandemic was the nail that sealed the coffin for Cheerz. I'm almost embarrassed to tell you that I'm still mourning over their closing.

In June of 2020, my dad's brother died. My dad, who died in 1980 at 52, was one of eleven children born into a tobacco sharecropper family in Halifax County, Virginia. His brother, Dick Thompson, was the last to



My dad, preparing land for planting

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die from those eleven kids. For me, there was an extra element of sadness saying good-bye to an entire family generation. It seems like yesterday that my dad and all of my aunts, uncles and cousins were together at grandma's house. I remember the table under the shade tree with all the fried chicken and deviled eggs a little boy could eat. We would play a game of softball in the yard. Fifty years zoom by and an entire family generation is gone.



Frances Barbour
1937-2020

On May 1st, my mom's fight with small cell lung cancer took an ugly turn when my brother went to her house and found her in the floor. The cancer had metastasized to her brain. Just the day before, she was cooking and driving, delivering food to shut-ins.

She fought a good fight for the next seven months, but on December 14th around 8pm, her faith became sight as Jesus gently gathered her in His arms and carried her home.

Ironically, my mom was the last surviving child of the ten kids born to Glenn and Carrie Boswell in Caswell County, NC. Another family generation...gone. That's the Boswell family on the front of this newsletter, lined up in their birth order. My mom, Frances, was the baby. She is the little one on the far left.

One day you're at Papa and Granny's house surrounded by uncles, aunts, and cousins. Shade trees. Fried chicken. Deviled eggs. A friendly softball game....Then fifty years zips by in the blink of an eye. Suddenly, I am now the older generation.

Both of my parents left a legacy of serving Jesus with everything they had, until their last days on earth. They made a tremendous impact for Jesus, and on me.

My dad was only surrendered to the Lord for fifteen years before he died. Even now, forty years after his death, I can still go back home and folks want to tell me how God used my dad to impact their spiritual life.

For the past few weeks my mom's friends have reminded me of how much they loved her and the ways that she touched their lives. The Lord gave my mom the spiritual gifts of hospitality and giving, and she exercised those gifts well for the glory of His Kingdom.

If 2020 has done nothing else, it has reminded me of how brief life is. Psalm 90:12 says, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

My prayer for me (and for our ministry) in 2021 is this: Lord, I understand that life here on this earth is short. Help me to have a heart full of Your wisdom to reach those who are lost and to help strengthen Your church until the day of Your glorious appearing. In the precious Name of Jesus I pray, Amen!

Firmly in His Grip,

Chaplain Ralph



Mom and Dad-1979. His last Christmas with us.