

# Sister-to-Sister

## Sister in the Spotlight

A transplanted northerner, T Buckner is the picture of true Southern charm. Conversations with T always leave you smiling!

T did grow up on Long Island and moved to New Jersey when she was a teenager, along with her older sister and two younger brothers. After high school, T went to college for three years, totally supporting herself until her money ran out. So she changed courses and went to work for AT&T. She married Kevin, who decided that he wanted to get his MBA, so they moved to Penn State where T worked in the office of the University President and Kevin achieved his degree. At that point, T and Kevin decided to return to NJ where they started their family with two children, Grant and Robyn.

T's family was Catholic and as a teenager, T began asking questions that she didn't feel she got good answers to. She began reading the Bible for herself and continued to feel the disconnect between her spiritual traditions and what she read in God's word. Although T visited a number of churches during high school and didn't find the fit she was looking for, she says that God was always with her. She always had people around her who had a sense of who God is. When her first child was born, T's biggest



fear was that this child would grow up without knowing God and so she began her search in earnest.

T recounts a story from a day at the mall where she had gone to walk with the baby. T had prayed to find someone who could help her with this spiritual dilemma. As she was walking in the mall, T spotted a woman who was also walking with two children and felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to speak to her. As the two women talked, they shared their lives as mothers and then began to talk about God. T's new friend talked about her struggles as a mother with two small children and some health concerns. The woman also told T that before she had left her house that day, she prayed that God would use what little energy she felt in her body to meet someone who wanted to study the Bible. And God answered that prayer with T! They began to study together and T was baptized about 20 years ago.



After her conversion, T was facing some health challenges of her own and the family decided to move to El Paso, TX for T's health. They also learned of a church plant that was happening there and became involved with this outreach effort. While in El Paso, T went back to school and took some more courses. She then decided to start a career as an interior designer which she did for five years.

From El Paso, the Buckner family moved to OH with Kevin's job. Kevin and T attended a marriage seminar there and a woman spoke about the orphan crisis in the world and asked the attendees to pray separately from their spouses about how God would have them respond to this need. They were then encouraged to share their prayer with their partner to see how God might be working. Kevin and T did pray about this and when they came back together to discuss it, Kevin had the idea to start a fund to help people finance adoptions. That continues to be his dream today. T's response was that she would support his dream but felt they should experience adoption in their family first. Kevin agreed and said that had been his original thought too but was afraid that T wouldn't want to adopt! So while they were in OH, they started the adoption process.

*Con't on page 7*

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**Next Issue:**

September 2011

YOUR WORTH IS FAR ABOVE RUBIES



Leave a Ruby for someone special! Just write a note and drop it in the box in the foyer.

**To: Kathleen Gray**  
Thanks for a great VBS!

**To: Cynthia Abbott**  
Thank you for all your hard work on VBS.

**To: SEED Bible Class**  
Thank you all for sharing what you are learning with our class each week!  
*Holly Barrett*

**To: Alannah Gonda**  
You are doing a great job with the teens this summer!

**To: Emily Welfare**  
Thanks for your hard work with the children's ministry this summer.

**To: Jennifer Stansfield**  
Congratulations on your promotion to Director of the pre-school! You're going to do an awesome job!  
*Brandi ;)*

**To: Jane Hixson**  
Thanks for bailing me out with dessert for W2PR... you were a life saver!  
*Holly*

**To: Jo Ann Dees**  
Thanks for your dedicated work with Community Care. You do an awesome job!

**To: VBS Volunteers**  
Thanks for all your hard work on VBS! It was awesome!

**To: Holly**  
Thanks for putting together the Summer Bible Study!



Check out [www.gemsministry.blogspot.com](http://www.gemsministry.blogspot.com)!

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## Where is God's Presence?

I don't know about you, but when my schedule gets busy, the first thing to be eliminated is my time with God in prayer and in the Word. It's a vicious cycle. It's also one the Israelites mastered and a legacy I regretfully carry on! I become self-sufficient, I walk away from the presence of God, I become miserable (and not so fun to be around either), I hurt and feel empty, I cry out to God and repent, He draws near, we are happy, then it starts all over again. Ugh! This last time through this cycle a question hit me, "Where is joy found?"

Joy is found in God's presence. Leviticus 9:24 reads, "Seeing the appearance of the glory of God consuming the sacrifice, the people shouted with joy and fell facedown." Psalm 16:11 also states, "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence with eternal pleasures at your right hand." You may ask yourself, where is God's presence? Let's journey through our hand-held Garden of Eden (the Word) and discover some of his locations.



### 1. God's Word

- Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."
- Proverbs 6:20-23: "His word will guide you, protect you and advise you."
- Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on you own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight."

### 2. Nature

- Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands."
- Romans 1: 19-20: "God's invisible qualities are plain to see all around us."

### 3. In God's Strength and Power

- Isaiah 40:27-31: "Why do you say O Jacob and complain O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my cause is disregarded by my God?' Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Therefore Sisters, let's dwell in the presence of God with joy. As your summer schedules begin to resemble your crazy year-long schedules, may you remember to stop, smile and remember that you are in the presence of the Creator of the Ends of the Earth who will not grow tired or weary!

*-Jennifer Johnson*

## PASTORAL CARE

## God Loves Losers

I admit that I have only a basic “Sunday School” education of the Bible. This is especially true of the Old Testament. Long ago, I decided the Old Testament was about rules and regulations and I didn’t understand why we even bothered with it anymore. I didn’t see any relevance to my life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I was not taught about God’s love when I was a child. Grace was a word that I heard a lot but for which I had no functional definition. However, I started a serious study of the Old Testament about two years ago and I fell in love with it. It is such a marvelous story of God’s patience, grace, perseverance, and love. It also reminds me of how hopeless our attempts at being Holy can be. We can’t be Holy and blameless on our own. The Old Testament points us to Jesus and his work on the cross.

I recently read a book called “Surprised by Grace, God’s Relentless Pursuit of Rebels” by Tullian Tchividjian. The book is an in depth study of Jonah. My exposure to Jonah’s story had mostly been from my Sunday School teachers as I was growing up and I learned all about his disobedience and the punishment of being swallowed by a “big fish”. I missed the whole point of the story! It wasn’t about punishment but about grace, not only grace for the “good” people but also God’s love and grace for those whom we deem unworthy of his grace and love. It’s about running from a call to take the gospel to the entire world, not just our little corner of it. It’s a story of God’s sovereignty, his ability to do as he wills even when it doesn’t make sense to our self absorbed minds.

How much do you find yourself questioning God? When your marriage or children are causing you much hurt and pain, isn’t it easy to lash out at God and ask “Why did you put me in this mess? Where’s my comfortable gourd leaf to give me escape? God, where are you? Why do you seem to be blessing those other people when I’m so miserable? Please fix this!”

It takes much courage and faith to ask instead, “God, what am I to learn about myself and my relationship to you as I struggle? What do you want me to see?” Jonah needed to see that God loves everyone, even those Ninivites and his grace covers us all if we accept it.

-Sandy Welfare, Pastoral Care Ministry

*The Pastoral Care Ministry at Providence Road facilitates personal growth and change thru the lens of Scripture. We believe that true change takes place in the heart and, we approach counseling by pointing to hope in the midst of our life struggles. We counsel people in troubled marriages, abusive relationships, abusive histories, grief and family crisis, addictions and recovery. We have the capacity to see both men and women. Please contact Kathy Bannister at the Pastoral Care Office to schedule appointments at 704-364-0748 or [swelfare@prcoc.org](mailto:swelfare@prcoc.org).*

## THRIFTY MOM

## Produce - How to Come by it on a Budget

It's all you hear these days from health food experts, on talk shows, in diet books, etc. If you want to be healthy, you need to eat more whole foods; foods that are as close to the way God made them from when they come out of the ground and go into you/your family's mouth. So, you think I can do this! I'll go down to my local grocery store and get fruit for my snacks, vegetables for my meals, and only shop around the outside of the store so I stick with the least processed foods possible. Then you realize, that one pear cost you a dollar. One tomato costs two dollars. That recipe for simple tomato sauce called for 5 lbs. of tomatoes, that's going to be ten dollars! How will I ever afford this? I'll admit that my family is fine without eating organic. If that is super important to you, then hopefully, some of these tips will work for you at local stores that sell more organic items. Here are a few ways that my family has been able to eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables while not breaking the bank.

1. Know the cost per serving of produce when you buy it. For example. If I'm buying apples by the pound, I know most apples are about ½ lb. So if it's 1 dollar a pound, I'm spending 50 cents an apple. What if I buy a bag of apples, will it be less expensive? If something is too expensive, simple, don't get it!
2. I do not purchase most of my produce at the major chain grocery stores in town. They charge a fortune compared to other stores/markets. **Big exception:** the markdown rack. At my local Bi-Lo and Lowes Foods, there are discount racks where I can find bags of potatoes for a dollar, bananas for next to nothing, etc. The items may need eaten in a few days or they may just have not fit in the allotted space for that item so they're selling it on the cheap. I can work almost any main produce item into our family meal plan for the right price.
3. Aldi is my friend here. Their produce is almost always very reasonable. As in any store, if a produce item looks past its prime, I'll skip it and not purchase. I don't have to wait for a sale here to pick up sweet potatoes or a pineapple.
4. If you do only shop big chains, shop their "loss leaders." These are the items that are advertised on the front page of the store's sales ad to get you in the door. The store may take a small loss on these items but they've gotten you in the door with them and they hope you will pick up a lot more than just the .99 package of strawberries while you are there.
5. It's summer, go to the farmer's market or your local produce stand!
6. What about a produce co-op? <http://yourneighborhoodproduce.net/> This is one with lots of local pick up locations that I have used a few times in the past.
7. Grow something yourself - Get a big pot and plant a tomato in it. Plant an apple tree or build a raised bed garden in your backyard. Herbs are a great container grown item and growing them yourself can save you LOTS of money. It's not that much work and you'll certainly know where your food is coming from this way. Let's be serious here, is there really anything better than the taste of a tomato that you just picked out of your own garden?
8. Freeze or can anything you can with abandon! My goal this summer is to freeze lots of tomato sauce, we'll see how it goes (new baby and all), but I can't reach a goal without setting one first. If you somehow come into a bounty of one kind of produce (whether by amazing deal at the store or a weekend trip to the apple farm in October), wash and freeze as much as you can. Things that I've frozen that have worked really well are: ears of corn, cut apples, strawberries, almost too ripe bananas that have been peeled and sliced, peaches, and tomato sauce.

-Sara Hyden



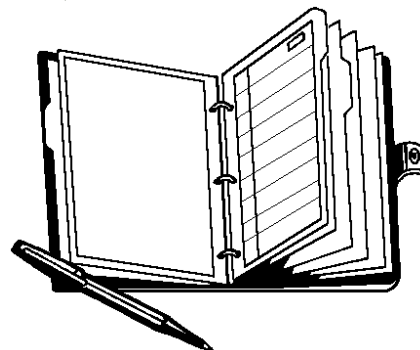
07/01	Isabel Garcia
07/02	Gaye Carico
07/03	Amy White
07/06	Leah Caldwell
07/08	Kristi Fowler
07/09	Danielle Fernandez
07/09	Tammy Reed
07/11	Hillary Cameron
07/11	Bobbie Robinson
07/13	Jody Toth
07/14	Sally Loftis
07/15	Julie Hallman
07/16	Jennifer Franklin
07/16	Claudia Herran
07/17	Katie Morton
07/19	Tina Travis
07/20	Mandi Jubenville
07/20	Beth Edging
07/21	Melanie Brown
07/21	Terri Springer
07/22	Elizabeth Bobo
07/22	Mary Cornejo
07/24	Linda Khoury
07/25	Alyssa Santa Ana
07/30	Wanda Fuller
07/30	Chloetta Bickar

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Congratulate Kathleen Gray on her recent marriage.
- Congratulate Kati Berlin on her new job!
- Ask Wendy Hines about her daughter-in-law's new etsy online store.
- Congratulate Torrie Landon on her new job!
- Check in with Courtney Walling to see how she is settling in her new home.
- Ask Debbie Buinicky about her first time working at PBC.



GEMS CALENDAR



- 7/22-23 Living Proof Live
- 8/1 Girls Night Out, 6:30, Olive Garden Pineville



08/01	Brooke Morris
08/01	Ellen Wilbanks
08/02	Cynthia Monk
08/02	Elaine Hunter
08/02	Fran Loflin
08/03	Carolyn Matthews
08/03	Karen Wright
08/03	Caitlin Craig
08/03	Rachel Bingham
08/03	Alicia Wells
08/08	Julie Kinser
08/09	Margaret Jones
08/09	Morgan Lavender
08/12	Kathy Berlin
08/12	Kourtney Sells
08/13	Judi Runkle
08/15	Eva Gonzalez
08/17	Maggie Ray
08/17	Kim Pearce
08/19	Lisa Tucker
08/22	Barbara Lowrance
08/24	Kathleen Vadini
08/24	Denise Ferguson
08/24	Kristen Fulton
08/25	Helen Cohen
08/27	Wendy Hines
08/27	Caralyn Rose
08/29	Jane Hixson
08/29	Joyce Weimer
08/31	Jackie Money Penny

## SISTER IN THE SPOTLIGHT, CON'T

After two years in OH, the family moved to Louisiana and the adoption of Chloe was finalized there. Two years later, the family moved to Michigan and started their second adoption process. Two years after that, they moved to NC and completed the adoption of April in 2006.

Throughout all their moves, the Buckner family remained active in congregations across the country. T and Kevin have done a lot of teaching from adults to teens to children. When they moved to NC, they spent quite some time looking for the right congregation for their family. They visited every Church of Christ within driving distance of their home in Mooresville and met lots of great people. When they came to Providence Road during their search, they were impressed by the sermons and quality of worship, as well as the members' dedication to reaching out to others. They completed W2PR and placed membership. During 2010, the family again felt led to see if there was another church closer to their home that God might want them to attend, and so they visited some other churches, studied together at home, and sometimes just didn't go to any church services. But as the year went on, and they prayed and talked, T realized that PR was the place God wanted them to call home. As T says, quoting Gretchen Dowdy, "A church alive is worth the drive!" Since returning to PR in January of this year, the Buckner family has jumped in with both feet. T is now involved with the Greeters ministry, Kings Kids and W2PR. Grant and Robyn are getting involved with the young adults, Chloe and April are enjoying the Kings Kids, and Kevin is looking for the right place to plug in.

T says that the biggest lesson God has taught her over the years is about accepting His grace. For a long time, T didn't understand grace and had a hard time receiving this gift from God. She always felt like she had to do something to earn it. Finally one day, T was just worn out and told God that she couldn't work anymore and He responded in her heart, "Good. Now you can learn about my grace." Clearly God had a plan for T to learn about His grace because she suddenly realized one day that her children's names spell GRACE... Grant, Robyn, April, Chloe and they all have middle names that begin with E. What a great reminder!

Finally T says that she would like to encourage all the other GEMS to "never give up! Never let go of grace." T's favorite scripture is Ephesians 3:17-19, "...And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." She says she always goes back to the love of God as a touchstone and reminds us that God's desire is for all of us to just receive His grace.

-Holly Barrett

# Beth Moore is bringing Living Proof LIVE to Charlotte this summer!

**July 22-23** is the date and the conference is at *Time Warner Arena*. Tickets are \$65 and can be purchased at [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com).

There is no group rate so we are asking everyone to purchase their own tickets but we will gather as a group at the church building and go together.



4900 Providence Road  
Charlotte, NC 28226

**GEMS Vision:** We will glorify God in Charlotte and beyond by bringing women to Christ, maturing them into a loving community of believers, and equipping them for service in the name of God.

**GEMS Mission:** The GEMS Ministry will empower women by offering unique opportunities to:

- **G**row spiritually through Bible study and prayer,
- **E**ncourage one another in love,
- **M**inister to the needs of today's women, and
- **S**hare our lives across all generations and backgrounds.

