



Dear Blacknall family,

We are now well along in our weekly celebration of the Lord's Table, and while there are still "kinks" to be worked out, we continue to hear good words about our relatively new practice, even from those who were not enthusiastic at first. What follows is a note I received from one of our long-time members reflecting on the unexpected gifts of more frequent participation at the Table. It was so beautiful that I wanted you all to benefit.

"First, almost every Sunday, sitting where I do, as people go to the Table, I can look forward, or across, and see men and women I know; people who are suffering, carrying burdens, visible or invisible; and I can silently pray for them, as I know some of them do for me....

Other mornings, I am desperate, hoping there will be some magic in the cup, willing to crawl on my knees to the Table, just in case. Or the sermon just preached may have overwhelmed me...with guilt, or gratitude, and this is a tangible way to say, "I believe; Lord help Thou mine unbelief."

Or to be reminded, we are one in the Lord, those folks I revere and those I secretly shake my head at "from a great height"; all belong to Christ, not to me. His blood covers them just as effectively as it

does me, Gentile or Jew, free or slave, fit or fat, MD or welfare mother. Each week the world erases that from the blackboard of my heart; at the Table Christ patiently writes it back.

And I am old. I now read the obituaries every day, and too often, there is a colleague; my latest sun is sinking fast, my race is nearly run; I cringe at what lies ahead, I fear the darkness. But, each and every Sunday, I hear, stretching all the way back to my childhood, the voice of the pastor, the words of the Word: For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do proclaim the Lord's death, until He cometh. It matters."

The author closed with an apology: "Sorry. Not well put into words."

I beg to differ.

Yours, in Christ,



Pastor Allan Poole

In This Issue

- 1 Pastor's Letter
Allan Poole

- 3 Dwelling in the Story
Traci Hoover

- 4 The Desert Shall Blossom
Emily Hamilton

- 6 Mental Health, the Church, & the
Christian Story
Warren Kinghorn

- 7 God's (Phone) Call
Rollin Grams

- 8 Summer Reading
Mindy Lance

- 9 Way of the Cross

- 10 Spring Block Party Snapshots

- 11 Summer Sunday School

About the Newsletter

Welcome to Blacknall's bi-monthly publication highlighting our life together! Each issue features stories, poems, and artwork created by our community. **Are you interested in submitting something for the July | August Newsletter?** Contact [Mary Grimm](#).

Church Staff

- Allan Poole - Pastor
- David Dunderdale - Pastor
- Dave Stuntz - Music Ministry
- Traci Hoover - Director of Elementary Children's Ministry
- Beth Solie - Director of Preschool Children's Ministry
- Brad Turnage - Director of Youth Ministries
- Tanya Kronstad - Director of Middle School Ministries
- Margaret Frothingham - Congregational Care
- Donna McBrite - Business Manager
- Jessica Butler - Financial Administrator
- Mary Grimm - Communications Coordinator
- Ali Shoenfelt - Administrative Associate
- Goodie Bell - Ministry Fellow
- Beth Hilliard - Duke Divinity School Intern
- Tanner Lowe - Duke Divinity School Intern

Blacknall Book Blog

blacknallbooks.wordpress.com

A book blog for children and family ministry to which all of us can contribute. This blog provides space to talk about what we're reading, how it brings us joy, and how it leads us to think about what is noble, right, pure, and lovely. **Would you like to write a review of a children's book or parenting book?** Contact: [Traci Hoover](#)



Dwelling in the Story

Traci Hoover

In 2006 I first learned about a different way to present the stories of God to children. Since then I've been leading children ages three through third grade in our worship center experience. There are a lot of other things that I've done with children in ministry here at Blacknall, but what is it that keeps me continuing to feel so rooted in this place, this way of being with children?

I've realized that it is the gift of dwelling in the story, the story that is God's story. Year after year, over and over again, I simply tell them God's story, beginning with creation and going through to the early church. The presentations are simple and consistent. Their very simplicity and consistency brings something of the mystery of God to me. The gift I receive is the privilege to dwell here. And the beauty is that I have a delightful ever-changing company of people who dwell with me, too.

By being with the children Sunday after Sunday, year after year, I hear the same stories of God but always with new reflections. The children bring them. They wonder about the days of creation, or are startled by the long separation of the Israelites' exile. Together with the children, I puzzle about the imperception of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus. I wonder what it was like to be trapped under Pharaoh's rule and to pass through the waters to freedom and dance with Miriam. How did Jesus provide so much bread? And one of my favorites is the excitement felt as we anticipate Pentecost!

I hope that at Blacknall we, together with our children, begin to understand our lives as part of God's story—the story that was, and is, and is to come. I encourage you to find a way to walk with a child through God's stories. Receive the gift of dwelling in the story. The children can lead us to this place.

Photos (top to bottom): Children's Worship story "The Ten Best Ways to Live", calendar of the Church year, colorful stack of floor mats, Advent story and candles.





The Desert Shall Blossom

Emily Hamilton

“In the desert ways I’ll sing / Spring, O Well, forever spring...” - *Holy Spirit, Truth Divine*, Samuel Longfellow

It is my first dry season in Congo. I moved to the mid-sized city of Beni in the east of the country nearly one year ago. Since the end of December, the days have grown hotter, the roads dustier, my toenails dirtier, and my nostrils—well, don’t think about it too much.

During this dusty, dry season when the land seems parched, I can imagine more viscerally what the psalmist means when he sings, “my soul thirsts for you as in a dry and weary land where there is no water...” (Psalm 63).

Jesus knows the psalmist’s cry because Jesus too knows the desert. In all three Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is led to the desert by the Spirit just after his baptism, just after he hears the Father’s words, “You are my beloved.” Jesus goes into the desert in the strength of his baptismal identity.

In a lovely series introducing the [Christian liturgical season of Lent](#) at Biola last year, theologian Julie Canlis teaches that Christ’s experience in the desert post-baptism can serve as a pattern for our own engagement with the

desert seasons of our lives.

Even though we all experience deserts, our default assumption remains that deserts are, without exception, bad. Whether a desert of transition, depression, anxiety, ambiguity, or unfulfilled longing, deserts are experiences to avoid.

According to Canlis, we think that “deserts are always someone else’s fault or they are due to some kind of unfortunate miscalculation or some lack that you should go buy something to make up for. ‘No one should have to put up with deserts!’ says our consumer culture.” American culture, my culture, struggles to understand how deserts, despite the dryness, can represent opportunities for new growth.

My first eight months in Congo were a desert season. I was hungry, and thirsty, and fasting. When I moved to Beni, whether I realized it or not, I took up a fast from many things: English, simple and regular contact with friends and family, American culture, knowing the implicit rules of how to make productive and meaningful contributions in the workplace.

Even though the Spirit undoubtedly led me to this place, I felt weak and tired as my soul learned to survive on something different.

At first, this desert fast amplified the voice of the Accuser. Still a product of the American desert-avoidant culture, I was tempted to think this desert was someone else's fault. I blamed my husband for wanting to move to Congo in the first place. I thought that if I was spiritually strong enough I would cease to feel the gnawing hunger for community and a sense of home. I was tempted to believe that I should be capable of doing-everything-perfectly-all-the-time.

I tried to prove my worth through overworking and taking too much responsibility for things well-beyond my control. I felt guilty and discouraged when I "failed." I tried all sorts of mental and relational tactics to prove to myself and others that I belonged to God. Thankfully, I found that to be about as impossible as turning stones into bread.

Ultimately, my identity as beloved was challenged and strengthened in the desert of this transition. With new languages, customs, and daily habits, all the things that propped up my identity as spiritually productive super-girl, were gone. As I fasted from the props, the false identities fell, and God's love for me started to become enough.

This dry and hungry time became more deeply fruitful and productive than all my efforts to be the perfect cross-cultural worker. The desert fast of my Spirit-driven cross-cultural transition revealed afresh to me that, in Christ, I am the beloved of the Father, too.

As I have contemplated Christ's experience in the desert, the Spirit has offered me a new way to reflect upon my experiences during the past year.

I remember that it is the Spirit that led Jesus into the desert.

I remember that Christ's desert fast was not some super-spiritual strength show; in fact, he rejects the devil's temptations to display any kind of miraculous feat as proof of his sonship.

I remember that Jesus entered his desert fast in the strength of his baptismal identity, the Father's voice echoing in his ears, "You are my beloved."

Through the lens of Christ's desert, I can see how my own desert has offered invitation after invitation to lean into and learn anew my own identity as "beloved."

It's difficult to say when this dry season began to shift. Maybe it was when I finally felt confident to drive through town alone. Maybe it was as relationships began to deepen. Perhaps it was when my French started to improve.

Maybe it was when I read Isaiah 35 which proclaims that "the desert shall rejoice and blossom." Although Beni has become increasingly hot since December, my soul has started to feel more like the dark soil after a spring rain. Small shoots are breaking ground. As the Scriptures promise and as Christ's own life assures, the desert is beginning to blossom, which is itself a gift of the Father's transforming love.

Emily Hamilton is a Blacknall-supported missionary living in Beni, Congo. Learn more about her experience on her blog congozawadi.org. This piece originally appeared on the website Velvet Ashes on April 6, 2016. ■

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Mental Health, the Church, & the Christian Story

Warren Kinghorn



What does it look like to be mentally healthy as Christians, and what does it look like to live well in the context of mental illness? Mental Health, the Church, and the Christian Story is an adult education class that is meeting in the Fellowship Hall from 10:10-10:45 a.m. on Sunday mornings between March and June.

Mental health challenges are incredibly common—up to 45% of us will experience some form of mental illness in our lifetimes—but Christians do not always do well in talking about them. In the final weeks of the class we will hear from Blacknall folks sharing from their own experiences about how to support children and adults who are experiencing challenges to mental health—challenges including depression, bipolar disorder, substance abuse, trauma, and eating disorders. Please join us as we support one another and learn from each other!

Upcoming Sunday Classes

May 8 - Suicide

Suicide in Christian Perspective, and How to Respond to People who are Thinking of Suicide

Speaker - Warren Kinghorn

May 15 - Bipolar Disorder

Supporting People with Bipolar Disorder

Speakers - Ali Schoenfelt & June Van Bruggen

May 22 - Children & Mental Health

Supporting Children with Mental Health Problems

Speakers - Melissa DiSilvestro & Emily Cox

June 5 - Substance Abuse

Supporting People with Substance Use Problems

Speaker - Ken & Christine Woods-Henderson

June 12 - Trauma

Trauma and Resilience

Speakers - Charlie & Frauke Schaefer

June 19 - Eating Disorders

Supporting People with Eating Disorders

Speaker - Emily Cox & guest

June 26 - The Church

Mental Health & the Church: What are Blacknall's Opportunities? What is Our Call?



Rollin Grams visited Blacknall in November 2015, when he met with Blacknall's International Missions Team (IMT) to share about his ministry in Charlotte, NC. This article is in reponse to the IMT's request for a centennial story about Blacknall and missions.

It is great to know of the prayers of the people for missionaries—and for us. My own story of going into missions involves time in Durham. I was born and raised in South Africa as a missionary kid, so mission was our family life. I'm aware from stories in my parents' ministries, especially, of how effective prayer is in missions. But when I was pursuing ministry and doctoral studies, I did not have missions on my radar screen at all!

I arrived at Duke in 1982 with the intention of studying to become a New Testament professor at a college or seminary in the US. I don't remember when I joined the Mission Committee at Blacknall, but that was a large part of my church involvement (along with being on the Worship Committee and teaching in Sunday School). Along the way, an unexpected call reset my plan.

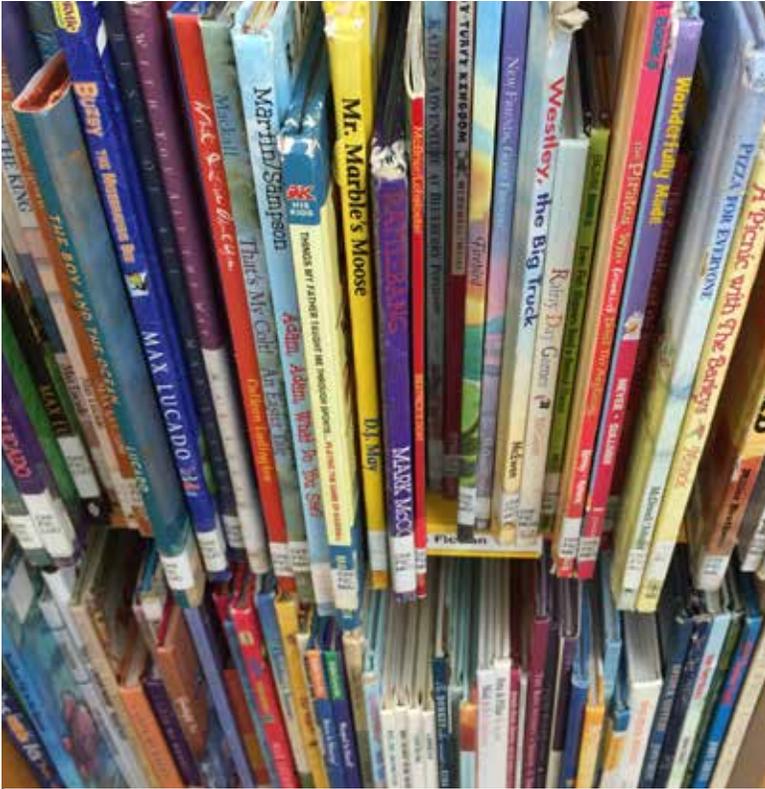
A Change of Plans

At Duke, the transition from graduate course work to dissertation work involved four exams in different subject

areas, one of which was the proposed dissertation area. For me, that was Pauline theology. As you may recall, at that time I had back trouble, and as I finished my final doctoral exam I realized I could not stand up on my own. The secretary and my old friend, Keith Newell, carried me out of the exam room! I was wonderfully taken to another room where a prospective student was waiting for interviews with faculty. (I told him to observe the personal treatment Duke gave to its doctoral students after comprehensive exams!) Keith drove me to my apartment and set me up on the floor with a telephone and the TV on for distraction. What a way to finish the exams!

From Durham to Singapore

After a few hours, the phone rang. A missionary in Singapore was on the other end. He said that a former professor of mine, Gordon Fee, had recommended me to teach a course there in one month's time. As I was no longer in classes at Duke, and since I knew my back usually recovered after two weeks, I thought it might work out if the subject were in my field of study. I asked what the course would be, and the missionary said, 'Pauline theology'! So, I went to Singapore three times in the next couple of years. I was also asked to teach at Duke and at Elon College during that time; this gave me the opportunity to compare different sorts of teaching. Through this experience, I realized that I thrived in cross-cultural teaching and ministerial training.



Summer Reading

Missions Builders Project

Mindy Lance

Read with us June 5-August 14

When you start making summer plans for your kids, don't forget reading! Every summer we see how many books our kids can read and based on our grand total, we make a donation to the Congo Initiative. So your kids are helping other kids read!

How does it work?

- Kids from birth-high school read (or parents can read to them)
- Sign up in the library starting May 29.
- Read any book from the Blacknall Library.
- Record each one on our sticker chart right outside the library.
- Watch our total number grow!

Then stop by the library all summer long! The more we read, the more we can give!

God's (Phone) Call

As I approached the end of my time at Duke, instead of applying for jobs in the US, I joined SIM-USA. In 1989, I left for Kenya to teach at the Nairobi Evangelical Theological Seminary. Blacknall has supported me ever since in teaching ministry, in Kenya, Ethiopia, Singapore, Croatia, Czech Republic, England, Austria, Russia, and (now) South Africa, as well as in the United States! Together, and with the support of others, we have started programs, taught courses, given lectures, and written articles, books, and blogs. I'm so grateful for a church such as Blacknall, faithful not only in the support of missions, but in its support of its missionaries.

Rollin Grams, Ph.D. (Duke, 1989) is currently Associate Professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC, and recently Lecturer at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic. He has taught at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary since 1992. Since 2009, Rollin and Wendy have served with United World Mission in Charlotte, NC, where they have lived and reared three children. In 2010, Rollin published a biography of his parents' life, "Stewards of Grace: A Reflective Mission Biography of Eugene and Phillis Grams in South Africa, 1951-1962." Rollin spends part of his year launching Theological Education courses for South Africa. Rollin blogs at bibleandmission.blogspot.com. ■

Way of the Cross

Reflections from Attenders

Very inspirational and perfect for Blacknall!

The hope of life from the sadness of death!

The Scriptural Way of the Cross gave me enough time to transition into God's Presence. I was able to go at my own pace, and was able to engage with God. I hope to have the chance to do this again next year.

I was so glad that I could bring my children - this was very child-friendly!

Pilgrimage of Prayer

Blacknall's first Way of the Cross, offered during Holy Week, was a pilgrimage of prayer and meditation centered on the journey Jesus took on his way to be crucified. The stations offered a place to stop, pray, and respond.

Special thanks to Bob and Donna Mutter, Betty Renfer, and Beth Solie for their hard work planning, organizing, and putting together this amazing way to engage with Holy Week.





Summer Sunday School



May 29 (Memorial Day weekend) - Brunch Potluck

Congregational brunch potluck in the Fellowship Hall! No nursery or children's, youth, and adult classes.

July 3 (Independence Day weekend) - Brunch Potluck

Congregational brunch potluck in the Fellowship Hall! No nursery or children's, youth, and adult classes.

June 5-August 21 - Summer Story Stations

Children and adults are invited to explore interactive story stations at this inter-generational class. Everyone is welcome and parents are encouraged to accompany their children.

August 28 - Sunday School Kick-Off

A celebration to start off the fall programming. All are invited to attend! No nursery or children's, youth, and adult classes.



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