



Blacknall Newsletter

March | April 2017

Dear Blacknall family,

The purity of silver and gold is tested
by putting them in the fire;
The purity of human hearts is tested
by ...

I think we all know how that last phrase ends. "The purity of human hearts is tested by suffering." Or maybe, "The purity of human hearts is tested by adversity."

But I was surprised (not for the first time in Proverbs) that the actual verse says, "The purity of human hearts is tested by giving them a little fame."

The more I have been thinking about this, the more true it is. When suffering or adversity comes, my heart is held in check. I am in need. I am dependent. I want to be approved and all of the external checks and guardrails keep me in line.

But when a little fame comes...then I am confident. Then I am happy. Then I feel free to express myself without restraint, without worrying what others think of me because I am already approved! And it is then that the purity of my heart is tested.

As we enter into this season of Lent, I am not sure how much "little fame" I will experience. But my hope and

prayer is that I will be most attentive to my heart in those times.

Unfortunately, that will not purify my heart. If I am careful when a little fame comes it will not make my heart pure. It might keep others from seeing how impure my heart is, which is an impure motive in and of itself. But it will not purify my heart.

Several weeks ago in church we read about the baptism of Jesus. John the Baptist said "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." - Matthew 3:11

My attempts to purify my heart by being careful when my little fame comes are like John's baptism with water. What I need this Lent is Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire, to give me a new heart. Please, Lord?

When suffering or adversity comes, my heart is held in check. I am in need. I am dependent.



David

Pastor David Dunderdale

In This Issue

- 1 A Little Fame
David Dunderdale
- 3 Hosting Syrian Refugees: A Week with Baraa, Ola, & Hammouda
Kay Ferguson
- 4 New Temporary Parking Lot!
Donna McBrite
- 5 Longing for Wellness: Reimagining Health & the Church
Mary Banks Knechtle
- 6 Long Days of Small Things: Motherhood as a Spiritual Discipline
A Book Review by Mandy Rodgers-Gates
- 8 Lent & Easter Calendar

About the Newsletter

Welcome to Blacknall's bi-monthly publication highlighting our life together! Issues feature stories, poems, and artwork created by people like you. To contribute, contact [Mary Grimm](#).

Church Staff

Allan Poole - Pastor
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 Lauren Hunter - Duke Divinity Intern
 Allison Wattenbarger - Duke Divinity Intern

Pass the Peas



Pass the Peas is Blacknall's opportunity to serve the members of Reality Ministries twice a month on Tuesday nights. This past month, Mills and Ava Kinghorn brought their parents to join the clean up crew. Ask them about their experience being a part of the amazing group of folks who set up, cook, serve and clean up for PTP. It is a great place for families to serve together! To join a team this spring (3/14, 4/4) or next fall, please contact [Noreen Naiman](#).



Hosting Syrian Refugees

A Week with Baraa, Ola, & Hammouda

Kay Ferguson

In early December, my husband Jay and I had the opportunity to welcome a young Syrian family into our home for five days of temporary housing before they moved into their own apartment. We are volunteering through World Relief Durham, just as Blacknall's Good Neighbor Team is volunteering through World Relief to support two other Syrian families. Baraa, his wife Ola, and their five-year-old son Hammouda were such a joy to get to know. While they spent time with their case manager going to appointments, learning the bus system, and going to their first class about life in the United States, each day we had breakfast, went grocery shopping, cooked, ate dinner, and got to know each other every evening. In other words, we shared ordinary American life, although they cooked a delicious Syrian meal for us one night.

However, as everyone who has ever been five years old knows, playing is just as important as any of the above

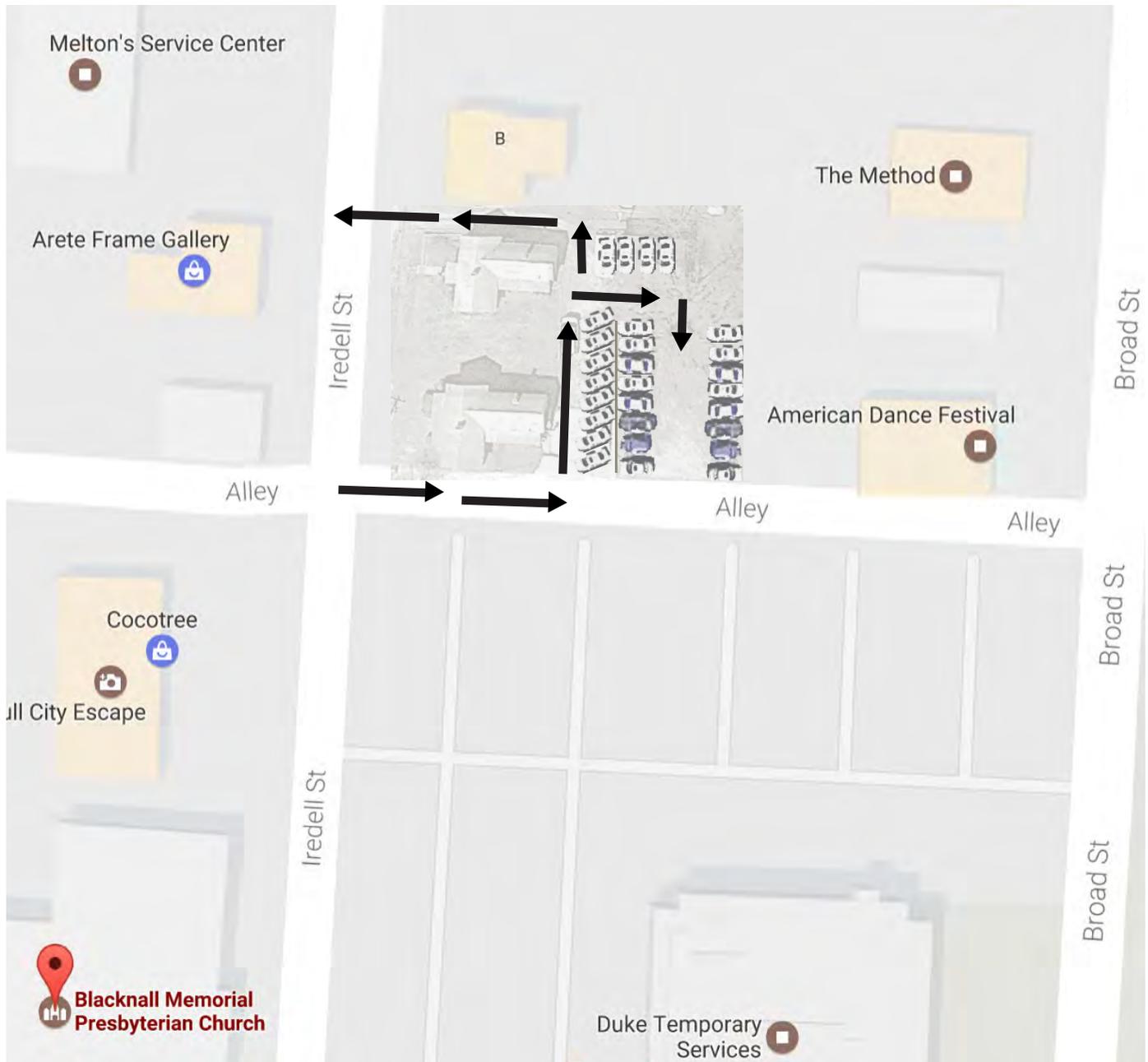
activities. One of our neighbors said that we could come to their backyard to play. After a long day of appointments, Ola, Hammouda, and I bundled up on a cold afternoon for the short walk and some outside time. Hammouda happily ran right to the swing set and then spied the trampoline. Hammouda jumped and jumped which was a great outlet for all of his energy.

"It was a beautiful five days, the first days in America. After tiring travel [we] finally arrived, to beautiful family home of Jay and Kay. They [were] wonderful people with us. They have welcomed us. They treated us excellent. My [child] Hammouda was very happy with them and likes them. They made us cake, it was delicious. They helped us a lot, so much that we can begin a new life."

- Baraa, Ola, & Hammouda

As Ola and I watched, Ola smiled at me and asked, in her very limited English, if she could jump! At 28 years old, she had never been on a trampoline. It was such a great moment, to watch a small boy and his mother from Aleppo laughing and bouncing together on their fourth day in America. It made me wonder

what other firsts this family would have, both fun and challenging. And what a metaphor for feeling free. I took a quick video with my phone. Ola loved showing it to Baraa and the folks on their Good Neighbor Team, smiling each time. Baraa, Ola, and Hammouda make us smile. We are so grateful to God for our new friends.



New Temporary Parking Lot!

Since the last update, our new temporary parking area has been completed! We have a gravel parking lot behind the two houses at 714 and 716 Iredell Street. This is just past the Duke lot we use on Sunday mornings. There are two gates, one off the alley into the lot, and another at the end of the driveway past the second house. These gates do not have a lock on them, but there is a chain that can be hooked to the house or to the side of the drive-

way to keep it open securely. If you are the last car to leave the lot, please close the gate. If you plan to have meetings or would like to use this lot, it is now available. If you plan to park there during the week, please contact [Donna McBrite](#). (Please note that this temporary parking lot is separate from the recent congregational approval to purchase 717 and 719 Iredell Street.)



Mary Banks Knechtle

Cameron crazies are cool. March Madness is fun.

Mental illnesses can be game changers in our personal lives—not cool or fun.

Often the mentally ill suffer shame and isolation in the church. Many others become mentally unwell when they experience chronic illness, divorce, unemployment, grief, cultural pressures, abuse, family trouble, or addiction—to name a few. It is a deep common journey shared by most of us.

The church can help people move towards mental wellness. Living well looks like being connected to God, to others, and to the broader creation; loving and being loved; vulnerability; attention to the needs of our bodies; being shaped in and by wisdom. *

A task force at Blacknall envisions equipping our community to better serve those with mental health issues and encourage mental wellness by promoting a supportive environment, training leaders and integrating mental health into existing congregational care systems. This group was invited to participate in the Duke Divinity School's "Reimagining Health Collaborative: The Church and Mental Health." The Divinity School hosted

summer and winter gatherings where participants from many churches met together to receive lectures from faculty and discussed mental health and the church. Our Blacknall group was composed of people who expressed interest following the Summer Sunday School sessions spotlighting mental illnesses. We met weekly throughout the fall to develop a strategy to affirm and improve what is already happening at Blacknall.

How do you welcome mental health issues in your ministry at Blacknall? What could happen differently to move people towards mental wellness?

The reality is—we all have peculiarities. We all have mental challenges. We long for wellness. We are beloved by God and called to love one another. Let's be a church that reimagines ways to encourage mental wellness.

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." - 3 John 1:2

*Notes from Dr. Warren Kinghorn's lecture, "What Does it Look Like to Live Well?" 7/15/2016 (Warren Kinghorn, Blacknall Elder, M.D. & Th.D.)

Photo: Blacknall's Reimagining Health Team



Long Days of Small Things

A Book Review by
Mandy Rodgers-Gates

God entered the flesh-and-blood reality of human life, with all its mess and chaos, in the person of Jesus Christ, and God continues to be present in the mess and chaos of our daily lives. This truth pulses through the pages of Catherine McNiel's book for weary parents, [*Long Days of Small Things: Motherhood as a Spiritual Discipline*](#).

Long Days of Small Things is not just another book for parents. First of all, it does not offer parenting advice or philosophies. Instead, it seeks to help parents be where they are and to see the ways God is already at work—in the midst of the noise and busy-ness of life with small children, and inside their own parched souls. (And this book is nothing if not realistic and honest about the challenges, frustrations, and failures of parenting.)

In certain Christian circles, much talk is made of “quiet time” with God and other spiritual disciplines. While McNiel is appreciative of these traditions, she points out the ways they can perpetuate a sidelining of family life and, especially, of moms (at least historically). They often unintentionally divide our spiritual lives from the

mundane tasks we spend so much of our lives on: cooking, cleaning, yard work, wiping dirty bottoms (you get the picture). In response, McNiel masterfully weaves together Scripture, theological insights, and her personal stories to give us a sense of the sacred in the midst of the mundane. For example, one chapter brings together God's work of creation and the miracles of pregnancy and nurturing little bodies. Another moves between the

service aspects of Jesus' ministry and the solitude and service of parenting—being woken in the middle of the night to calm fears (as Jesus was on the boat in the storm), being immersed in the grime of life (as Jesus when he washed the disciples' feet). At the end of each chapter, McNiel offers helpful reflections on three practices we are

already doing, and invites us to experience God in the midst of them: everything from breathing and walking to feeding children to menstruation and sex.

**What if God is already
forming you amidst the
chaos of diapers, play
dates, & soccer practice?**

Sacredness in the Mundane

McNiel manages not only to give us a renewed perspective on God's presence in the ordinariness of our days, but also to shed new light on the character of God

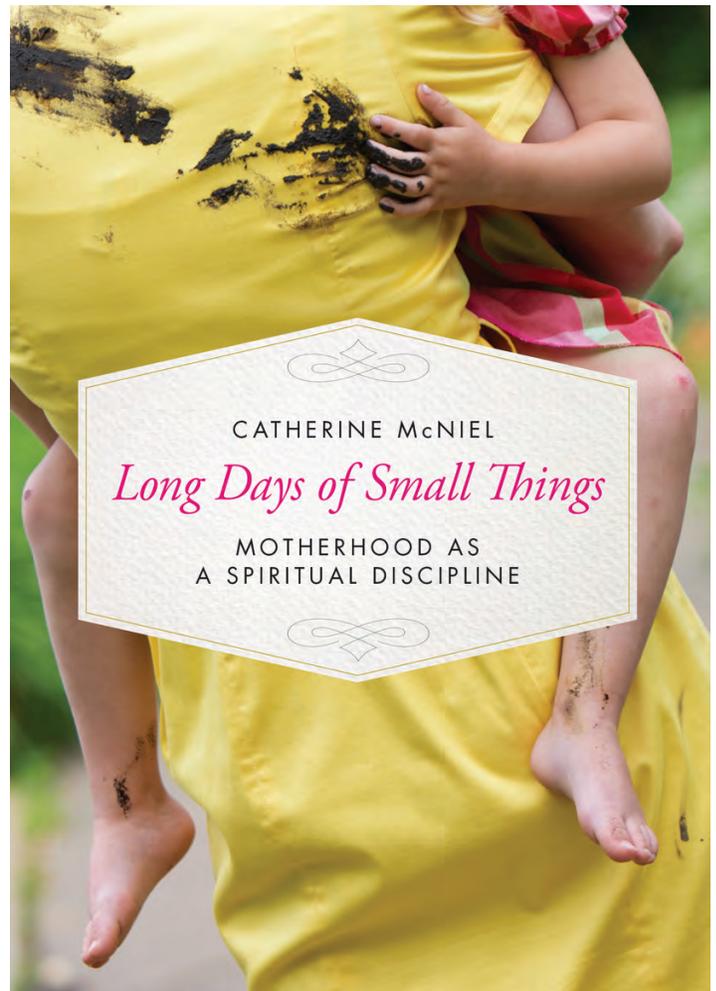
and the beauty of the Gospel. The truth of the Incarnation unfolds in a new way as McNiel reflects on what it meant for Mary to raise Jesus: “She labored and pushed, pouring out water and blood and risking her life to give God his first breath. . . . She placed tiny pieces of fish in his hands and taught God-made-boy to take and eat them. The wine she poured out for him, the bread she broke for him.” Here, in the midst of lifting up the holy task of motherhood, McNiel offers Protestants a new way to appreciate Mary, known from the earliest centuries of Christianity as the “mother of God.”

An Earthy Jesus

The stories of the Gospels come to life as McNiel paints a picture of the ancient Near East and the teacher named Jesus whose feet were “caked in layers of sweat, dust, and mud” and who told earthy stories of “sheep, fish, bread, and water” that the uneducated, working class crowds could understand—perhaps even better than the elite. We meet Jesus in a fresh way in this book, which is as much as we could ask of any book on spiritual formation.

The content of McNiel’s book would be compelling enough, even if it were written in fairly sterile prose. McNiel’s writing is anything but. There is an effortless lyricism to her writing, and at moments a particular turn of phrase took my breath away. This is a book to be savored, in small chunks—read here and there as you grab a few minutes in between soccer practices and homework help.

McNiel’s book is a healing balm and refreshing cup of water in the midst of a season of life that can often feel like a wilderness experience. It is also an invitation to women to hear God’s voice speaking to them, to own (and share) the wisdom gained through sacrifice and service, and to live boldly into the calling God has on their lives. That invitation is most welcome. ■



A Book Reading with the Author!

Thursday, March 30, 7-9 p.m.
Blacknall Fellowship Hall

Ever wonder how you’re supposed to practice the “spiritual disciplines” when you have neither quiet nor time? Connect with other moms and meet Catherine McNiel, author of *Long Days of Small Things: Motherhood as a Spiritual Discipline*. Dads are welcome too. Light appetizers, dessert, and drinks provided. [RSVP here](#).

Lent & Easter

Lenten Simple Suppers

Wednesdays, March 1-April 5 | 6 p.m.
Fellowship Hall
\$3/person, \$10/family

Lenten Services

Wednesdays, March 1-April 5 | 7-7:30 p.m.
Sanctuary
Come and worship as a way to journey together toward Easter.
Childcare age 4 & younger.

- *Holy Week* -

Scriptural Way of The Cross

Monday-Friday, April 10-14 | 9-5 & 6-8 p.m.
Fellowship Hall
Walk the interactive space & follow Jesus' journey to the cross.

Maundy Thursday

Thursday, April 13 | 7 p.m.
Sanctuary
Blacknall will be joined by Mt. Level Missionary Baptist Church.
Childcare age 4 & younger.

Good Friday

Friday, April 14 | 7 p.m.
Sanctuary
A Tenebrae Service reflecting on the passion of our Lord.
Childcare 2nd grade & younger.

Easter Sunrise Service

Sunday, April 16 | 6 a.m.
Mt. Level Missionary Baptist Church

Easter Services at Blacknall

Sunday, April 16 | 8:30 & 11 a.m.
Sanctuary



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