

The Rear View Mirror

She was the 25th child in the English family of a religious dissenter; she had little education and lived in a male-dominated age; she married an older man and bore him 19 children, nine of whom died. Her house burned down, her health failed, and her pastor husband was either poor, jailed, or sick much of the time. But Susanna Wesley raised two sons named John and Charles who changed the world.

It makes a lot of sense to look back in time and see how history still affects our lives today. Our Methodist heritage reads like only a story God could have written. When you dig into the details you can see that all along God had both a plan and a purpose for the Wesley family. As we continue to prepare for the celebration of Christmas, maybe it is a good time to look in the "rearview mirror" of our lives and see the hand of God past and present. The Bible tells us in Jeremiah 29:11-14, *"For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* (I suspect Susanna Wesley held these words in her heart.) *"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord."*

The traditional celebration of Christmas can open our hearts and minds to reflect on how we see God impacting our lives. Do we think about and talk about Jesus as our Savior? Are we like so many around us (possibly even family members) still looking for a Savior? Or, are we thankful that once we were lost, but now we are found. A mirror can reflect the past and the present, but only God can see the future. Do you believe it is possible for God to use you as he used the Wesley family to make the story of Jesus our Savior available to those who do not know him? In John 7:37 Jesus says *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."* Later in 14:6 Jesus says, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me."* This is a special time to expand our campus, expand our **REACH** to people who really do not know what Jesus has done and is doing.

It seems we are all living a journey of following Jesus and seeking to find "the way, the truth, and the life." Fortunately, one of the things we can be so thankful for is that we have a church home. It was designed by God to be our rock and foundation. We come here to find God, learn more and more about Him and His plans for us, worship Him, be in community with other seekers, and find new ways to serve our great God.

Our pastors, staff and leadership team have lead us to another great place in the history of God's plan for this place called Long's Chapel. The **Rear View Mirror** shows what God has done here in the last 100+ years. More recently we see the beginning of the Open Door Ministry, Child Enrichment Center, and of course the current sanctuary. We have been blessed to become a major force in Haywood County for demonstrating the love of Jesus. God has been using the people of Long's Chapel to be a blessing to others. The ministries both local and global are too numerous to mention here.

Now, as this year is quickly coming to a close, we can and should be thinking about our future both as individuals and as a church family. Our pastors have been preparing us to see (in our headlights) what God will do in the next 100 years. And yes, we may not live to see all of it, but God has put us in a special place in time to be used by Him to transform lives in our little corner of the world. Participating in the building of a church facility is a special honor God is making available to us. Let us "praise God from whom all blessings flow" this Christmas and always.

Tom Fogarty for Stewardship Ministry