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Celebration Magazine

A publication celebrating what Jesus is doing at Clear Creek



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from Big & Mini

Big & Mini

As isolation because of quarantine seemed to be at its peak, a group of college students in Austin, Texas wanted to create a solution. Having grown up in a world where communication over great distances was literally at your fingertips, the group wanted to solve two problems at once: decrease loneliness caused by the pandemic and bridge the ever-growing generational divide that our world is facing. Their solution was a program called Big & Mini that takes someone from a younger generation, matches them with someone from an older generation, and connects them so that they can begin a virtual friendship.

When Nancy Tallman saw the story air on the Today Show, she had no idea that God had already begun to work in the life of a seventeen-year-old high school senior from Pflugerville, Texas who just so happened to be watching the same story. They both signed up, waited for a match, and soon found themselves staring at each other for the first time on the computer screen. From the very beginning, Nancy wanted this to be an opportunity to share God's love and allow Him room to work in the life of her "mini."

Through the months that followed, their relationship grew. They learned about each other's dreams and plans, got to meet each other's family, and even exchanged Christmas gifts. Through their friendship, Nancy heard an increasingly familiar story about her "mini's" spiritual background. She went to church when she and her sister were younger, as they got older sports took the priority, and now they haven't been to church in years. But even with that, Nancy wanted to make sure that one aspect of her Christian life somehow wove its way into every interaction they had: prayer.

Nancy would ask her "mini" if there was anything she wanted prayers for. She would ask her "mini" to pray for things on her behalf regardless of whether or not she thought she might do it. And most importantly, Nancy constantly prayed that God would work in the life of her "mini." And as always, He delivered.

At one of her practices, Nancy's "mini" was exposed to COVID-19. She shared it with Nancy who immediately told her she would be praying about it. A few days later, her "mini" got the news that her test had come back negative. She was very excited to share the news with Nancy. When she did, she told her, "Thank you so much for praying for me. God answered those prayers, and my test came back negative." As subtle a shift as it might seem, she went from simply being thankful her test was negative to being thankful to God that her test was negative. This is the first step in changing her entire worldview from one that just accepts that good and bad things happen to one that accepts there is a loving God in control of it all.



All We Want for Christmas

On the Sunday afternoon before Christmas, the Cannon and the Halstead small groups decided to join forces to serve some of our older, less mobile members by showing Jesus' love to them through Christmas caroling. This proved to be the perfect activity for the current situation since it could easily be accomplished while keeping everyone involved safe.

The caroling ensemble consisted of children from age 5 up to adults age 60+. We are all on our unique walk with Jesus but had the same goal in mind that day – to bring a smile and show love to our audience (both on earth and in heaven). The young parents in the group remember caroling for shut ins as a teen and how serving them made them feel. They are making the decision to continue the tradition with their own children. In doing so the parents are modeling taking next steps with Jesus by teaching their children to serve and put others' needs and happiness ahead of their own.

Us older carolers realize the years these older members have invested in the lives of many of us and in His Kingdom here at Clear Creek. We want to let them know they are not forgotten. We also realize that we will be standing in their shoes in the not-too-distant future and hope we will be remembered as well.

The sheer joy and expectation on the faces of our audience was priceless and gave everyone a warm feeling inside. They all eagerly came outside onto their porches and some had even alerted their neighbors so they could also enjoy the concert. All the familiar tunes were sung and everyone sang along – songs like Silent Night,



Joy to the World, Jingle Bells and Rudolph. With a huge grin on his face, Waymon even conducted the group while we were at their house.

While there were huge grins on most faces, there were also some tears. Mrs. Betty started out grinning, but could not contain the tears as her emotions overwhelmed her. She said that she never imagined so many people would care enough to come sing for her. But why wouldn't we? After the hard year we and our older members have endured, it is the least we younger family members can do!

Knowing that some of their church family sacrificed their time one Sunday afternoon to show them some love was the best gift some of our older members got for Christmas 2020 and was just what they needed. And for us carolers, getting to be with friends and family, serving together and seeing the look of love on all these faces was the most perfect gift we received as well. Both of these groups want to mark their calendars for caroling again in December 2021 to continue the tradition.



Going the Extra Mile

For nearly four decades, Carol Golden and Dawn Marlin have served other families by hosting people in their homes, delivering meals, and teaching the smallest children that come to church in the beloved class called Cradle Roll. They each have their list of families with infants they pour into up to 18 months and longer, if subsequent siblings follow.

Both ladies have a heart for mothers and a passion for laying the foundation of children growing in their faith from the earliest age possible. The curriculum for this particular area is centered on basic truths of who God is and what He has made. All presented in song and play. Their team of ladies are loyal and loving, which aides in it being one of the most welcoming and loving areas of our church.

The past nine months and counting stopped all traditional Bible classes abruptly. For two months, the ladies hosted a Zoom for babies and mommas to join. They check in with each other and then sing the songs with the toy props as the mommas rocked and babies watched. It was one of the most precious zooms ever to see!

Then, like most of us three, four, five months into this pandemic, we got weary, especially of zoom! It was time to switch gears and create another way to partner with families in teaching their children about God.

Mid-summer and on, Carol and Dawn hit the road along with other teachers' help to deliver goodies and baby gifts for new births.... 17 and counting! They drove miles upon miles across Hamilton County and North Georgia. Recently, Carol and her husband even went to a funeral nearly two hours away to support one young family. She and her daughter, Julie, also recorded all the Cradle Roll units on DVD and delivered them to families personally or by mail. An extra resource for parents to have in teaching their smallest child about God at home.

They are committed to the Lord, the church, and the next generation knowing about the love of God. Until the class doors open again and after such, they'll continue to call, send cards, and go the extra mile. The love of Christ is unending as described in Ephesians 3:18, and these two servants along with their families and teaching teams are an extension of it.

Thank you for going the extra mile ushering infants into the fold of God's BIG love!



Go Along For the Ride!

A lot of times in ministry you make plans, work hard, do your best and hope God makes something good happen. Then other times you discover God already doing something amazing and you get to go along for the ride!

That's been the case with our friend, Sai. He's a graduate student from India who's been in the US for one year. A few days after arriving in Chattanooga, he met a couple people from UCM who invited him to a welcome dinner for international students. He went to the dinner, met even more UCM people, worshipped for the first time and promised to come back.

That first semester, Sai quickly became a regular at UCM's weekly meetings and also was a part of our Friendspeak program, practicing English using the Bible. One of his friends back in India asked Sai, "Have you found any friends there?" He said, "No, I've found a family in UCM." A community of people welcomed Sai into their family. They ate together, carpooled together, studied together and more. God was obviously working.

In the fall, Sai joined a Roots Group, one of UCM's small groups based on Discovery Bible Study. One of his first "I will..." statements was "I will start reading the Bible every week with a friend." Since

then, Sai has been going through major passages of the Old & New Testament each week with Tyler, a leader in UCM. Sai grew up in Hindu culture, but is now learning who the God of the Bible is and is hearing the call of God for his own life.

Sai visited Clear Creek for the first time for Friends & Family Day. He was amazed at how the passages he had been reading in the Bible were the same things talked about that day. He loved worshipping and being with his community again

on Sunday. He's been a regular at Clear Creek since then. In fact, Sai tells everyone how he has rearranged his work and school schedules to be with his UCM family. He tells other people how important it is to focus on the important things and plan your life accordingly.

Through all of this, Sai keeps pointing to God saying things like, "It was God that let me find UCM," "God has me here for a reason," "God is teaching me so much through my Bible study," "We have to figure out how to introduce more people to God and UCM."

Next semester Sai is going to be one of our student leaders in UCM. He's committed to living a Christ-like lifestyle, growing as a disciple and leading others. It's been an amazing year of growth as God quickly and clearly pulls Sai towards the ultimate purpose.



The Goodness of God

Have you ever felt like extreme circumstances keep affecting your family and there is no light at the end of the tunnel? We all go through hard times, and sometimes we see others go through things that we hope we never have to encounter in our lifetime. In moments like that, sometimes we think “Why is God allowing this to happen?”

It was brought to our attention that a member of our church family knew someone dealing with severe hardships. This family had been through very serious health and financial issues, each day uncertain how they would make ends meet. They expressed they never imagined they would be in the situation they were in, and their pride prevented them from asking for help. Through their friendship and connection, their friend (CC member) was able to share God’s love with them by working with the church in providing financial resources and essentials for them to keep going. While we are so grateful that we could play a small role in helping, the impressive nature of this story is not what we were able to help but instead what God was able to do through our obedience.

The family wrote a letter of gratitude to the church, and here is a little bit of what it said...

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16)

What an amazing scripture and resounding representation of the congregation at Clear Creek Church of Christ... We have felt your prayers. We have felt your love. We have felt your positivity. We have seen Christ in you.

We know without a shadow of a doubt that you’ve “got our backs” as we hurdle this mountain. We feel like you have opened your arms and welcomed us with a warm embrace... Once again, with great humility, we thank you. You are a blessing and beautiful reminder of how wonderful Christ and His congregation are.”

We aren’t sure there are words to accurately express the goodness of God and what He can do, but we do know that trust in Him to provide is well-placed.





Boldly Step Out

“Discipleship” has been one of the key words used at Clear Creek for some time now. Being disciples who make disciples is something we have chosen to base our identity and our motives largely after. However, sometimes we can experience a gap between hearing those words and seeing them lived out. The high school ministry and youth group as a whole was given a real-world example of being a disciple who makes disciples in our very own Hannah Window.

Hannah is a junior at Soddy Daisy high school and wants nothing more than for her friends who don’t know Jesus to come to know him. Through much prayer and seeking, God opened her eyes to a friend, Lily Guerra. Lily was not raised to know Christ and has a complicated background. But she was open. Hannah knew that Lily was open to Jesus and sought out opportunities to engage with her regularly in this regard. Eventually she boldly took the plunge to invite her to a youth group gathering. Little by little, Lily became more plugged in, more open to share her struggles, and more open to the redeeming love of Jesus. On October 7th, she chose to give her life to him and be baptized. She has since been actively engaged in every youth group related activity she can possibly attend and is constantly seeking growth, depth, and community in Jesus. God is good.

There were many victories in this story: a new sister has been gained in Christ, new bonds have been formed between life-time-church-kids and a new believer. But potentially most importantly, Hannah Window, along with her sister Maya, showed an entire group of teenagers that if we boldly step out in faith, God moves. We need only to be open to his call, and he will lead us where he is calling. This is when disciples are truly made



LIFEBLOOD OF OUR MINISTRY

Within our youth ministry, perhaps the greatest challenge of this extra-challenging year was the frustrating loss of small groups meeting together in-person on a weekly basis. We have often said that Small Group Leaders are the lifeblood of our ministry and the “new normal” of the pandemic has caused some of our leaders, like Jan Hudgins, to look for unique ways to stay connected to students.

Jan has a long history of volunteering within CCYM, but she most recently returned as a volunteer in fall of 2019 to work with the 8th grade girls. Jan has a contagious energy and joy for living that is an inspiration to many. Our girls loved her (how could they not!), and she busied herself with building relationships with her new group, exhibiting the same enthusiasm she has shown with many other students over the years. Even after the pandemic changed life-as-we-knew-it, Jan continued to look for ways to connect with her girls. Meeting in-person was especially difficult, but on numerous occasions Jan has been able to recruit a squad of girls to go shopping with her or grab a meal for some conversation and mentoring.

Recently, Jan was able to meet with Sophie Hadfield (9th) and Kinsley Childs (8th) for an after-church lunch. Regarding Jan’s influence, Sophie had this to say: “She tries to include everybody, and it always ends up being a lot of fun. I love hanging out with Jan because she really tries to connect and make time for us. And it really means a lot. She gives the best advice; she’s SO much fun. She’s hilarious, and loves us.” Sophie’s parents, Paul and Amy, have this to add: “Jan has found a way to bridge the gap between their generations in the most meaningful way. She reminds us of adults who invested in us, and we realize how important that mentorship is now. It also inspires us to reach out and do similar work ourselves.” Thank you, Jan, for your example of tireless enthusiasm, your mentoring of young people, and the way you inspire others to make a difference.

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