

THE SPECIALIST

Trinity Baptist College's **Alumni Newsletter** • Fall 2013

HOMECOMING



This year's alumna of the year, Denise Riffle, graduated from Trinity in 1982 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education. She is in her 32nd year of teaching 1st grade at Trinity Christian Academy. She is now teaching the children of her previous students.

Not only has she been dedicated to her job, she has also been faithful to her service to the Lord, serving 35 years in the teen ministry of Trinity Baptist Church. She is also a leader in the women's ministry, serves monthly in the nursery, and was a dorm mom for Trinity Baptist College.

Denise ('82) and her husband, Dennis ('81), have three children, a son-in-law, and a grandson: Adam ('10) and Sarah ('10) Morehouse, and grandson, Ethan, Rebekah (graduating in '14), and Jonathan.



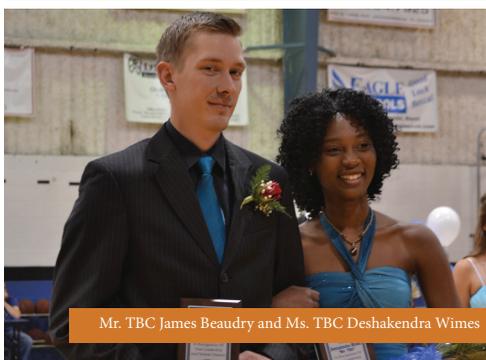
Ladies Lunch



Winning Golf Team



Chapel service with Greg Peters ('92)



Mr. TBC James Beaudry and Ms. TBC Deshakendra Wimes

special NEWS

ALUMNI & FRIENDS BROADCAST FOR EDUCATORS

Beginning in January, Trinity Baptist College will be hosting a free online webinar for educators. The broadcast will continue once a month, ending in April. Each broadcast will allow the participant to receive one ISP credit. The first session will be Thursday, January 23, 2014 from 4 P.M.-5 P.M. Dr. Valerie Riley will be speaking on "Differentiated Instruction in the Classroom." Registration for the webinar will begin January 6, 2014.

Newest Alumni Association Members

Silver

Dr. Edward Gibson (89)

Dr. Gordon Woods (93)



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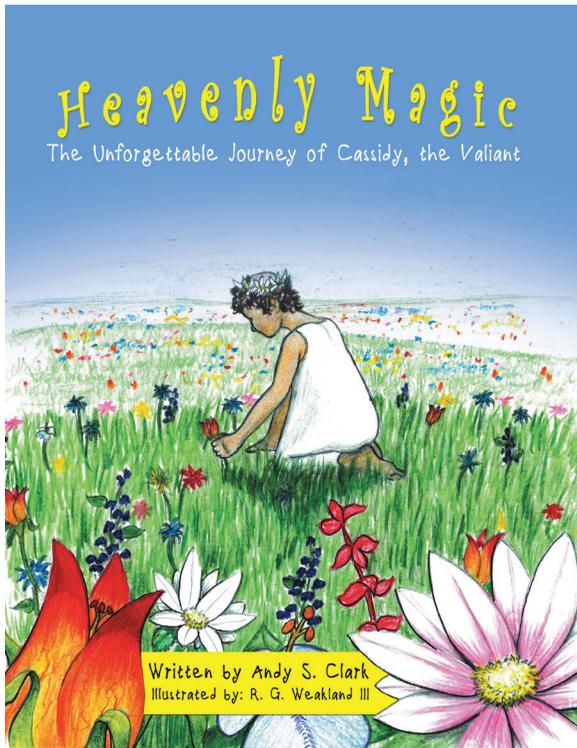
Get more news on what's going on in the lives of fellow alumni and here at Trinity!

Send your email to alumni@tbc.edu.



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special FOCUS

by Andy Clark (2000)

I remember being awakened by a phone call on Saturday morning, October 1st, 2011. My brother, Chad Clark (1997 graduate), was on the other end of the line. “Andy, uh...I just called to tell you that Cassidy passed away about an hour ago.”

I told my wife the news, got dressed, and drove over to his house. Chad greeted me at the door; he looked bewildered and exhausted. My parents had already arrived, and the mood was very somber. My mom was crying quietly, and my dad was sitting with his arm around her. I hugged them, and Chad led me to the bedroom, where his wife, Jeni, was sitting by the lifeless body of his youngest daughter. The scene was actually so surreal. We all knew that this day was coming, but we had also hoped against hope that God would perform a last minute miracle. No miracle came. I sat beside her on the bed and said a quiet prayer, thinking that maybe Jesus would restore her life, but it was to no avail. Eight-year-old Cassidy had gone to be with her King.

This ended a five year battle with leukemia, a fight that began when Cassidy was just three years old, a fight that had come on the heels of another agonizing battle involving cancer. Chad and his first wife, Myndi (1996 graduate), were serving in youth ministry in southern California when she was diagnosed with stage four

cancer in 2005. The doctors only gave her a few months to live. After a long and painful seventeen month journey, Myndi died. Just six weeks later, Cassidy was diagnosed with leukemia.

What do you say in a moment like this? Nothing. I mean, what can you say? I had never lost a wife or a child. He had lost both. And yet, his faith in his God was stronger at that moment than it had been seven years earlier when he had received the news about Myndi for the first time. Over the past seven years, I had seen him comfort others who were questioning why God would do this to his family. I had heard him talk about the grace and love of God in ways that few people ever comprehend.

So I said nothing, except maybe, “Do you need anything?” He said they were okay, so I left for home to hug my wife and hold my children.

On the way home, I started thinking about Cassidy. She had endured so much. I mean, five years is a long time to be sick. She was in and out of hospitals, she had three bone marrow transplants, she had gone into remission several times, only for the cancer to rear its ugly head again. Finally, the doctors told Chad that there was nothing else that they could do for Cassidy. He sat her down to tell her the doctors’ report, prepared to help her process this devastating news. She listened, asked a couple of questions, and then a huge grin appeared on her face. She told her dad that she was excited and ready to go to Heaven, to be with her mommy and Jesus. And now, on this day, she was actually there!

I also thought about all of the people that were hurting: family, friends, prayer warriors, church members, pretty much anyone who knew the family’s story. So many were trying to make sense of all of this. I mean, let’s be honest. It doesn’t make any sense, not to us anyway. How can we mortal beings even begin to comprehend the reasons behind the actions of an infinite God?

Shortly after I returned home, I sat down at my computer and began to write a story that I hoped would not only honor the life of this brave little girl, but would also be a source of comfort and peace to all who knew Cassidy. I wrote about Cassidy waking up in eternity, reuniting with her mom, meeting King Jesus, and discovering the “magic” of Heaven.

I read the story to some family members and close friends, and many of them were moved by it. I was encouraged by many of them to consider publishing it. So I called my brother-in-law, Ralph Weakland (a current student), a gifted artist, and asked him if he would be interested in illustrating a children’s book. I then contacted some “self-publishing” companies and began the process of publishing the book. This past July, *Heavenly Magic: The Unforgettable Journey of Cassidy, the Valiant* was published.

Heavenly Magic: The Unforgettable Journey of Cassidy, the Valiant can be ordered on amazon.com or barnesandnoble.com. It is available in softcover and ebook.

Find out more about *Heavenly Magic* on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Heavenly-Magic>

special MESSAGE



After graduating from Trinity Baptist College on a Wednesday evening in 1995, Chris and Alicia Johnson were married on the following Saturday and began serving in full-time

ministry one week later. As part of an amazing journey, God blessed the Johnsons with three daughters (Alyssa, 16; Andrea, 15; and Amelia, 10) before leading them to Clermont, Florida in November, 2006. A few months later, they were part of a team that launched Liberty Baptist Church, where Chris has served as the Senior Pastor since the fall of 2007. Over these years, God has blessed and used the Johnsons in some wonderful ways!

About four years ago, while Chris was preparing a sermon series through the book of James, God began working in Chris and Alicia's hearts about caring for the fatherless. There were some families at Liberty who were fostering children, and this helped open their eyes to a tremendous need. In the state of Florida and throughout America, there are thousands of abandoned, abused, and neglected children who need to experience the love of Christ and the safety of a strong Christian family. The church began to work with local agencies to provide support systems for foster and adoptive families in its community. James 1:27 says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The Johnsons began to wrestle with how this verse should be played out in their own lives, and they felt called to start the process of fostering. It was a family decision, with full agreement and the support of their three daughters, which would prove to be vital to the family's success in this endeavor! They did not necessarily plan to adopt, but they were committed to being open to whatever God would lead them to do.

Since that decision, the Johnsons have been honored to welcome 20 children into their home. Some of their greatest joys have come from working with biological parents to reunite them with their children. They have even had the privilege of leading some of these parents in beginning a personal relationship with their Savior, Jesus Christ. During the last three years, Chris and Alicia heard of many children who would not be reunited with their birth families and sensed the call of God to adopt some of these children into their family.

The Johnson family's first adoption was a two year old boy, Alex (now 5), who had been a medical foster child with a family in their church since he was ten months old. He has cystic fibrosis, which is a terminal illness. Alex has spent a lot of time in the hospital and requires a daily regimen of medicines and medical treatments to keep him healthy. Their next adoption was a 17 year old boy, Joey (now

19), who also had been a medical foster child (diabetes) with a family at Liberty. Joey first entered care when he was two years old, and the Johnsons felt compelled to reach out to him and offer him a forever family, just before he would have aged out of the system and been left on his own with another year of high school to complete. Joey graduated from high school this past June, and is now a student at Lake Sumter State College. He has answered God's call to missions and is praying about where to continue his education. The Johnsons then adopted Anna Beth. She had been with the family as a foster child since she was seven weeks old and is now three years old. Earlier this year, Chris and Alicia welcomed Ethan and Emma, who were 16 and 17 (now 17 and 18), into their family. These siblings had spent several years in foster care, often having to be separated in different homes, before being placed in the Fort Myers, Florida campus of the Florida Baptist Children's Homes where they waited six years for a forever family. After hearing their story the Johnsons committed to praying that God would provide these young people a home, which led to God calling theirs to be that home. The Johnsons claim Psalm 126:3 as their family's verse: "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

The Johnson family is passionate about orphan care and continues to serve as a foster home. The entire family is also actively involved in recruiting and supporting foster and adoptive families and advocating for children in need. They often share their story at special events and functions, including those sponsored by the Florida Department of Children and Families. God has also created a special culture at Liberty Baptist Church, with approximately 40% of the attendees being a part of foster and/or adoptive families. Chris and Alicia recently returned from Washington, DC, where they received the Congressional Angels in Adoption Award for their efforts. The Johnsons enjoy opportunities to share the Gospel and their Biblical motivation anywhere God provides the platform. The journey has not always been easy or convenient, but it is the Gospel message of redemption and grace that keeps the Johnsons committed to this cause! Will you prayerfully consider what God would have you do to answer this important Gospel call?

nominate an ALUMNUS

Do you know of an alumnus serving in ministry that should have their story shared here? Nominate them to be highlighted by sending an email to alumni@tbc.edu.

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Return Service Requested



Positions

Denver Ayres (04), Associate Pastor, Open Door Baptist Church, Denham Springs, LA

Lee Tomlin (05), Associate Director of Missions at BBFI Missions Office, Springfield, MO

Nate and Sarah Flowers (01) Hessee, Church Planter, New Life Baptist Church, St. Louis, MO

Philip Napier (08,13), Youth Pastor, Breezy Hill Baptist Church, Graniteville, SC

Aaron Pilant (02), Student Director, First Baptist Church of Bradenton, Bradenton, FL

Births

Christopher (95) and Alicia Shanley (95) Johnson, adopted Ethan William and Emma Faith, May 20, 2013, Clermont, FL

Nate and Sarah Flowers (01) Hessee, son Jonathan Branson, June 29, 2013, St. Louis, MO

Daniel (13) and Charity Rakoncay, son Asher Caleb, July 24, 2013, Jacksonville, FL

David and Kristin Amiel (04) Bertsch, son Matthew Joseph, August 5, 2013, St. Augustine, FL

Jacob (06) and Maylynn Leporacci, son Landon James, August 21, 2013, Jacksonville, FL

Tim (05) and Kendra McElveen (06) Jacobs, son Titus, August 25, 2013

Jonathan and Joanna Babcox (08) Seay, daughter Sophia Alese, August 26, 2013, Jacksonville, FL

Shaun and Kristin Byerly (09) Staley, son Liam Patrick, September 1, 2013, Jacksonville, FL

Chad (13) and Cynthia Schill (06) Dufresne, son Cody Lawrence, September 7, 2013, Jacksonville, FL

Chris (02) and Carolyn Dowdy, daughter Allison Glory, September 9, 2013, Lakeland, FL

Andrew (08) and Cheron Skinner (08) Hale, son Riley Robert, September 11, 2013, St. Augustine, FL

Paul (09) and Jensen (10) Kelly, daughter Kensington Faith, September 12, 2013, Lynchburg, VA

Joshua and Krista Howard (11), daughter Elianna Marie, October 9, 2013, Lakeland, FL

John (04) and Sarah Williams (04) Aheron, daughter Olivia Joy, October 12, 2013, Stratford, CT

Abel and Kasey Herrera (11), son Adrian Scott, October 13, 2013, Jacksonville, FL

Jonathan (12) and Victoria (13) Jowers, son Jonathan Hunter, October 25, 2013, Jacksonville, FL

Deaths

Roy Edwin (Eddie) Mathews (95) went home to be with the Lord on March 11, 2013. He is survived by his wife, Joan Wright (91) Mathews and daughter, Helen.

Marriages

JR Sagner and Lauren Agan (13), June 22, 2013, Villa Rica, GA

Lawrence Wilson (13) and Brittany Baldwin, June 22, 2013, Jacksonville, FL

Cory Noland (12) and Shelley Bubar (13), August 24, 2013, Steinhatchee, FL

Michael Hopper and Anna Marie Pickles (12), September 1, 2013, Thomasville, GA

Accomplishments

Christopher (95) and Alicia Shanley (95) Johnson were awarded the Congressional Angels in Adoption award for their involvement and support of foster care and adoption.

Lee Tomlin (05) received his Master of Divinity degree from Liberty University.