

MEDITATION

Always put God first

For over thirty years, the New Year has been welcomed with a televised celebration that takes place in Times Square in New York. It features Dick Clark, whom many call "the world's oldest teenager."



**Jeff Hensley
Meditation**

I was a bit less than a teenager when I first began watching the "ball drop" on New Year's Eve, but as I watched the familiar scene this year, I found that I felt a bit older than usual. Perhaps it was because this New Year is the one year anniversary of my son's death. Or maybe it's because I am recovering from a total hip replacement. Whatever the reasons may be, the arrival of this particular New Year seemed to be more than an average reminder that I am growing older.

Of course, growing older is not necessarily a bad thing. After all, the Bible celebrates the gift of wisdom that comes with experience, and there is a blessing in knowing that God grants us another year. In fact, each day is really a gift, and I think all of us should praise God for the opportunity to put our feet to the floor each morning. In addition, history tells us that there are many who have had some of the most productive experiences of their lives after they have grown older.

For example, Moses was around 80 when God called him and, although he cited many excuses for not doing what God wanted, he never mentioned his old age as one of them.

The philosopher Socrates gave his greatest wisdom to the world after he had reached 70 years of age. His student Plato was still learning at age 50, and he produced some of his own most memorable work after turning 60.

The artist Michelangelo was still composing poetry and designing structures in his 89th year. In fact, he painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel while he was on his back on a scaffold, and he was near 90 years of age when he did it. The Roman statesman Cato is said to have begun studying Greek at age 80 and the Italian scholar Petrarch reportedly started studying Latin after his 70th birthday.

If these examples are correct, then it is obvious that growing older does not have to be a bad thing. It can, instead, be a gift, and this New Year can be yet another chance for us to seek to honor God with our daily lives. The biblical book of Ecclesiastes understands what it is like to grow older. In chapter 12 the writer speaks metaphorically of an aging human body as if it were like an old house. Because of this understanding, the writer exhorts all of us to remember our Creator in the days of our youth.

Whatever 2008 may bring us, and whatever our age may be on our birthday this year, I hope all of us will follow the advice of the Scriptures and put our Creator first in all of our activities.

Dr. Jeff Hensley is pastor of Kings Mountain Baptist Church.

CHURCH BRIEFS

Grace United Methodist Church, 829 Cleveland Ave., will have an all you can eat country buffet breakfast Sat., Jan. 19 from 6:30-10 a.m. The cost is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children ages 7-12. For more information call 704-739-3763 or 704-739-8676.

David Baptist Church, 2300 David Baptist Church Rd., Kings Mountain, will host a BBQ benefit for the Missy Wiggins Van Fund Sat., Jan. 19 from 1-7 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Pork or beef plates are \$8 and can be eaten in or carried out.

Shady Grove Baptist Church, 3240 Tryon Courthouse Road, Cherryville, will host a hot dog lunch Sat., Jan. 19 from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. in the Family Life Center. The cost is \$5 per plate. Dine in or take out. Proceeds will go to help sponsor a mission trip to Tanzania, Africa. The public is invited.

Beulah United Methodist Church, 1534 Stony Point Rd., Shelby, will host a breakfast buffet Sat., January 19 from 7-10:30 a.m. The cost is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children under 12.

Kingdom Life Covenant Ministries, 114 S. Railroad Ave., will host "Moving Beyond Religion 2008" Sat., Jan. 26 at 10 a.m. and Sun., Jan. 27 at 3 p.m. For more information call Carla Ellis at 704-734-0082.

CHURCH NEWS

Benefit concert slated at David Baptist

EMILY WEAVER

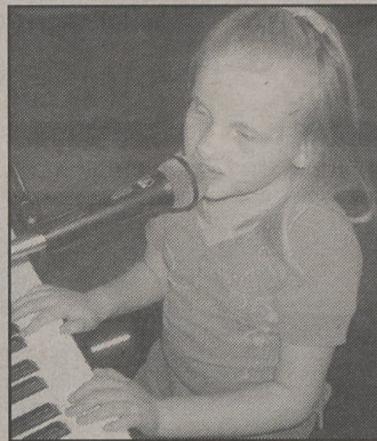
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"I once was lost, but now I'm found; was blind, but now I see." Those simple words to "Amazing Grace," have a profound meaning to eight-year-old Kayla Elise.

She was born blind. But through God's amazing grace and a little help from the National Federation of the Blind, she has learned to "see." The NFB, one of the largest organizations of blind people in the U.S., has helped Kayla and thousands of other blind children learn to deal with their disability and, as much as possible, to function as normal.

A benefit concert will be held for the NFB on Saturday, January 19 at David Baptist Church in Kings Mountain. The doors will open at 6 p.m. Tickets will be sold on a first come, first-seated basis for \$5 for teens and \$10 for adults at the door. Children 12 and under will not have to purchase a ticket, but a love offering will be accepted. People will still be admitted if they cannot afford the full price.

Event organizer and band leader Brandon McSwain, a Kings Mountain native, said that the concert will open at 7 p.m. with performances from "The Last," a modern worship



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Kayla Elise will give a special performance at David Baptist Church on Saturday night with other bands to raise money and awareness for the National Federation for the Blind.

band, out of Charlotte. A special guest performance and appearance from Kayla Elise will follow.

Even without the gift of sight, Kayla embodies great vision in music. At her young age, she plays the piano, sings and writes her own music, McSwain said. The bass player in the "Brandon McSwain Band," Joey Williams, is Kayla's stepfather.

"The guys in the band have really gotten to know her and love her," McSwain said. Having her around and being able to mentor her, he added, has "been very encouraging for us."

The "Brandon McSwain Band" will close the show. "Our music style is more of acoustic jazz," he said, although they have performed some pop/rock-like songs.

If he had to compare their musical styles to a mainstream artist, he said that their sound is similar to that of John Mayer. "All of us are Christian and we do a lot of conferences and we have led worship in the past," he said. "But our heart is in getting a message of hope out to the world."

McSwain, son of Tim and Doris McSwain, has been writing music for the past eight years and is also a gifted piano player, lead guitarist and vocalist. After graduating from Kings Mountain High School, he attended ASU and moved away to work in the music industry. He has since returned to North Carolina and is working on putting the final touches on his band's first full-length album, which is set to be released in April.

This benefit, he said, will be the first in a string of self-promoted concerts and benefits for the NFB cause. "NFB has done a lot for Kayla and the family," McSwain said. "We just want to do this to raise money and awareness for the organization."

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