



# FOOTPRINTS

NEWSLETTER

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## Almighty God, who does freely pardon all who repent and turn to Him...



November 19, 2024, was predicted to be a dank dark cloudy day and the bad weather lived up to its billing. The continual rain, sometimes quite heavy, made driving difficult, but in spite of the weather conditions that could have defined that day, seventeen folks left their homes in Cullman and Gardendale, Alabama at 5:30 a.m. to gather in a waiting room in Montgomery, Alabama because for them and many others 11/19/24 had been a highlighted spot on the calendar for some time. It had been the focus of their prayers and an anticipated day of hope, indeed, a day of promise.



Family members, Sunday school classmates, prayer partners from two different prayer groups were in Montgomery as a support team for Albert Pugh. Some, in the group had only known Albert for a year or two, others as many as five or six years, and some, including family of course, had known Albert before his miraculous release from prison over thirteen years before. They all knew his history through his testimony and they knew how his love of God had led him to found CREAA and lead its ministry through the Bryan Clay House for the past seven years. Because of their love for Albert, they were there to support him on this most important day.



After more than an hour in that waiting room, during which they took time to pray for their friend as a group one last time, the support team was led into the hearing room where they sat confidently quiet and listened to the testimony of Albert, an attorney, and a friend. Then just as confident, though not as quiet, they waited as the three-member panel dismissed themselves to deliberate the fate of their friend. The whispered private conversations among the group were interrupted a half hour later when the Pardons and Parole Board returned to the hearing room and solemnly took their positions behind the dais.

The chairperson spoke about some procedures and regulations and then delivered the findings of the board. **“Albert Pugh, on a 3 – 0 vote, you have been granted a Full and Complete Pardon”.**

In spite of the previous warnings from the security personnel to the group about no demonstrations or outbursts, there were a few brief cheers of “Amen” and “Praise God” and a couple of spontaneous one or two clap applauses before the group regained its composure and was thanked for coming and then led quietly out of the hearing room.



When the group boarded the vehicles to leave the capital, some tears of joy mixed with the rain that was still falling. It was still a dank dark rainy day, but somehow it seemed that the whole world was bathed in warm sunshine. Then, just outside of town they stopped for lunch and a time to pray together one more time, thanking God for His influence and intervention with the board and His delivering for Albert, and for so many others, what was such a favorable result; a full pardon with all of his rights of citizenship restored! Thank God!



### The Bryan Clay House

*Our transitional home is not a handout, it is a hand up, and a way forward for those that truly want to re-start their lives. Our first Board of Directors meeting was held October of 2017. From that first board meeting we have not stopped, opening our first transitional home for men in Cullman, Alabama on April 1, 2018.*

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On Thursday November 21, 2024, the Bryan Clay House had their annual Thanksgiving Meal together. This year the meal was served and provided by Destiny Church. The turkeys were graciously donated by Another Helper and Blessing Boxes were provided by the Life Church of Cullman. Joan Calvert made delicious desserts for the meal and everyone enjoyed the meal, the desserts and the fellowship! Thank you Destiny, Another Helper, Life Church, and Joan for making this Thanksgiving so special!



## The Bryan Clay House Receives New Beds!

We want to say a big thank you to Scholar Birmingham and Tristan Herbert, Community Manager of Scholar Birmingham for donating thirty full-sized beds and bed drawers to the Bryan Clay House. This was an answered prayer and met a tremendous ministry need. We are so thankful that the Lord continues to bless and meet the needs of this ministry!



*Thank You!*





# THE DEPTHS OF HOPE:

## Analyzing Lamentations 3:22-23 by James Givens

The Book of Lamentations, traditionally attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, is a poignant reflection on the suffering and despair experienced by the people of Israel following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Among its five chapters, Lamentations 3 stands out as a profound meditation on grief, hope, and the enduring nature of God's mercy. Verses 22 and 23 encapsulate this theme beautifully, stating:

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23, ESV)

These verses serve as a beacon of hope amidst the darkness of lamentation, offering a powerful message about the nature of God's love and mercy. In this article, we will explore the historical context, theological implications, and practical applications of these verses, shedding light on their significance for both ancient and contemporary audiences.

### Historical Context

To fully appreciate Lamentations 3:22-23, it is essential to understand the historical backdrop of the text. The Babylonian exile marked a significant turning point in Jewish history. After the fall of Jerusalem, the Israelites faced immense suffering, loss, and displacement. The city, once a symbol of God's presence and favor, lay in ruins, and the people grappled with feelings of abandonment and despair.

In this context, the author of Lamentations expresses deep sorrow and anguish over the devastation. The first half of chapter 3 is filled with vivid imagery of suffering, as the poet recounts personal and communal pain. However, verses 22 and 23 emerge as a striking contrast, introducing a note of hope that resonates throughout the text.

### Theological Implications

- Steadfast Love**: The phrase "the steadfast love of the Lord" (Hebrew: \*chesed\*) is foundational to understanding God's character in the Hebrew Bible. This term conveys a sense of loyalty, faithfulness, and covenantal love. It suggests that despite the people's unfaithfulness, God remains committed to His promises. This unwavering love is not contingent upon human actions but is rooted in God's nature.
- Mercy and Renewal**: The declaration that "his mercies never come to an end" emphasizes the idea of divine compassion that is both abundant and inexhaustible. The use of the word "new" in "they are new every morning" suggests a daily renewal of God's grace. This concept of renewal is particularly poignant for those experiencing despair, as it offers the assurance that each day brings the possibility of fresh beginnings and restored hope.
- Great is Your Faithfulness**: The acknowledgment of God's faithfulness serves as a reminder of His reliability. In a world marked by uncertainty and change, the faithfulness of God provides a solid foundation for believers. This verse invites reflection on the ways in which God has been faithful throughout history and encourages individuals to trust in His promises for the future.

### Practical Applications

- Finding Hope in Despair**: Lamentations 3:22-23 offers a powerful message for those facing personal trials or collective suffering. It encourages individuals to acknowledge their pain while also seeking the hope that comes from God's steadfast love. This duality of lament and hope is essential for spiritual resilience.
- Daily Renewal**: The idea that God's mercies are "new every morning" invites believers to cultivate a daily practice of gratitude and reflection. Each day presents an opportunity to experience God's grace afresh, prompting individuals to seek His presence and guidance in their lives.
- Community and Support**: In times of collective grief, such as during national tragedies or communal crises, Lamentations serves as a reminder of the importance of community support. Sharing in lamentation can foster deeper connections and provide a space for healing, as individuals come together to acknowledge their pain and seek hope in God's faithfulness.
- Encouragement for Others**: Believers are called to be vessels of God's mercy and love to others. By embodying the principles found in Lamentations 3:22-23, individuals can offer encouragement and support to those who are struggling, reminding them of the hope that exists even in the darkest of times.

### Conclusion

Lamentations 3:22-23 stands as a powerful testament to the enduring nature of God's love and mercy. In the midst of profound sorrow, these verses remind us that hope is always within reach. The steadfast love of the Lord is a source of comfort and strength, inviting us to trust in His faithfulness, even when circumstances seem bleak. As we reflect on these verses, may we find the courage to lament our losses while also embracing the hope that comes from God's unchanging character. In doing so, we can navigate the complexities of life with a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper understanding of the divine love that sustains us.

# Congratulations

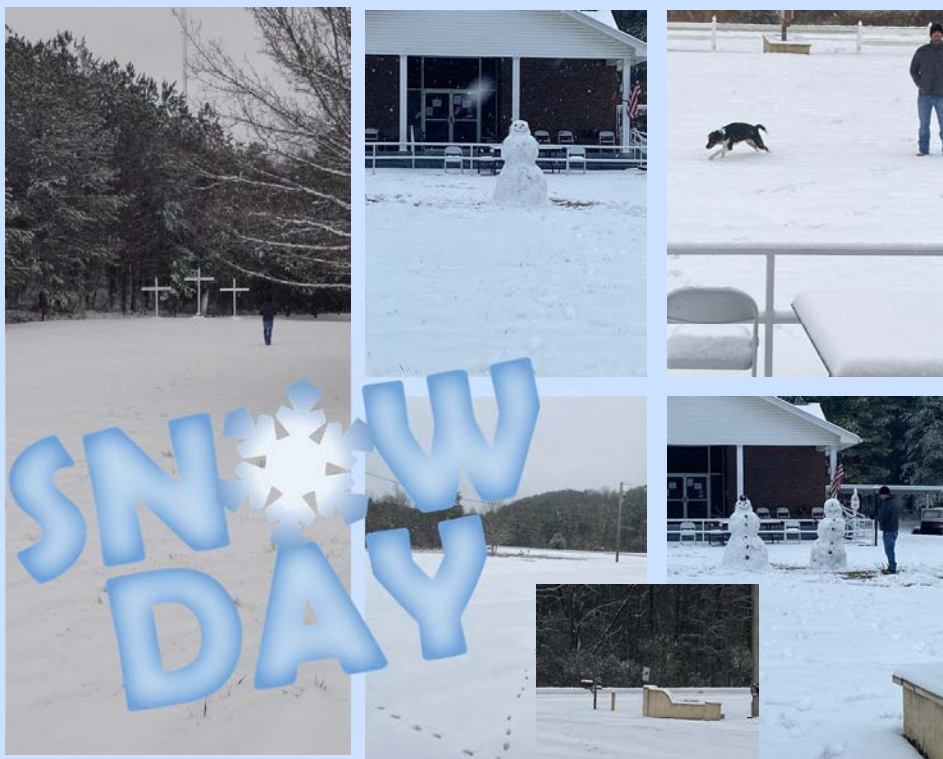
Executive Director Albert Pugh proudly congratulates these outstanding residents



DECEMBER 2024  
RESIDENT OF THE MONTH  
Christopher Brizendine



DECEMBER 2024  
MOST IMPROVED RESIDENT OF THE MONTH  
Jason Jackson





# St. Andrew's did it again!



Our 2024 version of a Christmas Celebration was hosted, for the fourth year, by St. Andrew's Global Methodist Church, but this year it wasn't just the Monday Morning Men's Prayer Group, but the whole church that participated. In the course of two and a half hours the men from the Bryan Clay house were shone the Love of God in word and deed.

After being told, in a short message by Mike Allums, that God loves them, the men were shown that God loves them through a delicious and bountiful meal, prepared and provided by the members at St. Andrew's. A visit from St. Nicholas, with an explanation that Santa Clause's roots trace way back to a Christian bishop in the fourth century who was associated with gift-giving and charity, showed the men that even the Santa side of Christmas is an expression of God's love.

Then God's love was on display as each man received a gift through a raucous game of Dirty Santa before St. Nicholas reappeared with gift-bags for each of them as well.

The evening ended with the hosts joining the guests in a huge circle of love, as, together, they sang and prayed the evening to a close. Thank you, St. Andrew's



Ham, turkey, dressing, sweet potatoes, green beans, all home cooked.



Rev. Robert Lancaster, pastor at St. Andrew's welcomes everyone.



The men are served at a table where they shared a meal with two St. Andrew's hosts.



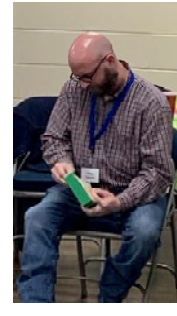
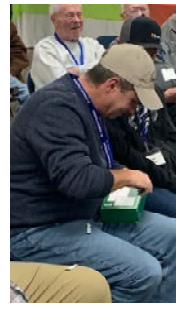
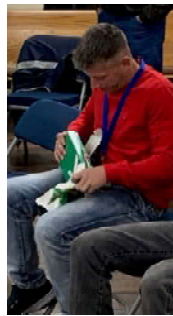
Ray Latham blesses the meal and evening as the St. Andrew's faithful serve.



Members of St. Andrew's are ready to serve.



Our MC, Rick Bryant, introduced the men to "Dirty Santa"



Each man received a gift.



The men receive a visit and a gift from St. Nicholas himself (David Fisher)



After Dirty Santa each man was given an individual bag full of goodies



With everyone in a huge circle, the evening ended with Silent Night and a benediction



# A Helping Hand

My name is James and I've been a resident of the Bryan Clay House for a month now. My experience with the Bryan Clay House has been wonderful. I have been able to obtain employment I have a form of reliable transportation and I have received home cooked meals every day. The Bryan Clay House is dedicated to helping individuals who are recently released from prison or individuals who are looking for a place to transition back into society. The staff at the Bryan Clay House are dedicated to helping others and people like us, to help us get back on our feet. I am truly blessed to be a resident of the Bryan Clay House.

Dear Friends,

My name is Jason J. and I wanted to take this opportunity to share a little bit of my experience with the Bryan Clay House. A story of a guy who got more than he deserved.

I think maybe I will start by saying that I was an inmate with the Alabama Department of Corrections and coming up for Parole soon. For some of us, this time period can make us nervous and

anxious, not knowing exactly what to do, where to go and or what the parole board would accept as a good Home Plan. So, I spoke with a few friends and they told me that the Bryan Clay House checks all the boxes. So, I gave them a call. Immediately I sensed kindness and a willingness to help. They even offered to go to my Parole Hearing and speak on my behalf. I'm glad I took advantage of this because my Parole was granted. After being denied twice, I knew this was the reason for the good news and was grateful for the help. The day I got released from Prison I came to the Bryan Clay House. I was surprised how helpful the staff and the residents were from day one. The House Manager made sure that I had everything I needed, including a full belly. The Transportation Manager got started right away on getting me some of the credentials I was missing so I could get to work right away. This required a lot of patience on his behalf because in my case some proved to be a little difficult but he never gave up. Another thing that surprised me was how everyone tried to lift us up instead of tear us down. Everyone from the residents to the staff to the spiritual leaders that come in to speak to us and feed us throughout the week. One the weekends we get a special treat. Not only do we worship at the house, we also get an opportunity to go to church. One such place is St. Andrews Church in Cullman AL. They provide transportation and when we get there, they always shake our hands and hug our necks like we are family. The Love for us and for God is beyond measure at St. Andrews Church here in Cullman, AL.

I'm glad I got this opportunity to thank the Bryan Clay House and everyone else involved that got me back on my feet, feeling comfortable and confident in taking the next step.

Thank You and God Bless.

Jason J





# NEW EVERY MORNING

*"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." - Lamentations 3:22-23 (ESV)*



As we begin this new year of 2025 wondering what 2025 will bring, I am reminded of the confident heartfelt, hope-filled words from the prophet Jeremiah found in Lamentations 3:22-23. If we believe the words of the prophet Jeremiah, we can find assurance and confidence that whatever may come our way in 2025, the promise still stands that God's love and mercy are never ending. And not only that, but His mercies are new every morning! We don't have to worry about what comes next because our hope remains rooted and grounded in God's steadfast love and His faithfulness.

These are vital life-giving principles in the ministry of CREEA as we work with the men of the Bryan Clay House. With many of the men coming out of years of incarceration, and struggles with addiction, there is a great deal of uncertainty about what comes next and what the future holds. Without the belief that His steadfast love never ceases, that His mercies are new every morning and that great is His faithfulness, the weight of their past mistakes and failures will easily persuade them that there is no hope for a better life or future.

It is important for all of us to know that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. As we further take a look at this passage, I want to call to your attention to the word **steadfast**. The biblical definition of steadfast is to be firmly fixed and not subject to change, to be firm in belief and determination, and to be loyal and faithful. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines steadfast as staying the same for a long time and not changing quickly or unexpectedly.

I love the idea that the steadfast love of the Lord is firmly fixed and not subject to change. This means that God is not going to change His mind about us. God is not as the saying goes, "wishy washy" about us, but firm in His belief and determination, always loyal and faithful, loving us no matter what we do or don't do. His love is unconditional and is a love that does not change, nor does His love ever cease. Our past mistakes are a non-issue with God.

One of the many things that I want to impart into the men of the Bryan Clay House is that God's tender mercies never come to an end and that they are new every morning. I want them to know that so great is His faithfulness, that we can trust in His promises towards us. I want them to know that there is always a forever flowing reservoir, an abundant supply of His mercies, readily available to us that never runs out. In other words, whenever we need it, we can always come get a fresh supply of His mercies that are new each and every morning!

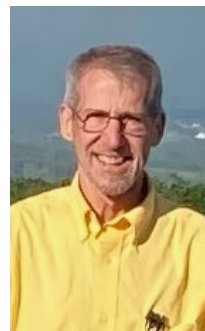
And because they are new each and every morning, God's mercies towards us:

- Will always be available
- Will always be accessible
- Will always be working
- Will always be fresh
- Will always be right on time
- Will always be what we need
- Will always be more than enough

And because they are new each and every morning:

- Every morning begins a new day.
- Every morning brings new provision for the day.
- Every morning brings new strength for the day.
- Every morning brings new grace for the day
- Every morning brings fresh faith for the day
- Every morning brings fresh hope for the day
- Every morning ends the night, so that joy can come in

The good news is that our God is so faithful that He knows exactly what we need and exactly what to do. My prayer for the Bryan Clay House and for all of us is that in 2025, we will embrace the steadfast love of the Lord that never ceases; that we will receive His mercies that are new every morning; and that we will walk by faith, believing that great is His faithfulness so that whenever we feel uncertain, or doubt tries to creep in we will be **STEADFAST**, (firmly fixed and not subject to change, to be firm in belief and determination, and to be loyal and faithful). For we know that no matter what 2025 holds, God is still God and God is still in control. Let all the redeemed say, "**Amen and Amen.**"



**JOHN MEANS**  
CREAA Program Director



**Buddy's excited about 2025.  
What about you?**

*"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error and shortcomings; but who does actually strive to do the deed; who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly. So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."*

*President Theodore Roosevelt — 26th U.S. President*

*"Difficulty, my brethren, is the nurse of greatness a harsh nurse, who roughly rocks her foster-children into strength and athletic proportion."*

*William Cullen Bryant — American Poet and Journalist*

*"It is not the events in our life that define our character, but how we deal with them."*

*Eric Heiden — Olympic Speed Skater*

*"Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one."*

*Brad Paisley — American Singer-Songwriter and Guitarist*



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