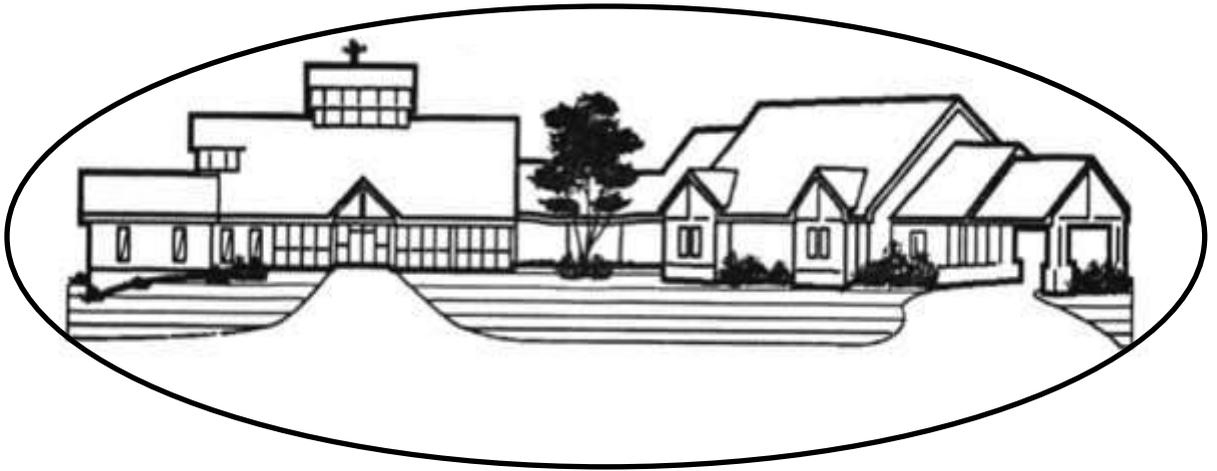


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# Agapegram

September 2019

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Seneca, South Carolina 29678  
[www.eternalshepherd.org](http://www.eternalshepherd.org)  
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Little Lambs Preschool: 864-882-3202



# The Myth of the Dying Church

by Gene Veith at patheos.com 07.30.19

*“...I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overpower it.”*

Mt. 16:18 EHV

We keep hearing that Christianity—particularly conservative, evangelical, orthodox Christianity—is dying out. We are told that secularists, atheists, and “nones” are getting the upper hand in American religion, that young people are deserting traditional faiths, that the church is dying. *None of that is true.* Quite the contrary.

Glenn Stanton has written a new book entitled *The Myth of the Dying Church: How Christianity Is Actually Thriving in America and the World*. He cites an abundance of evidence from prominent objective scholars that punctures the myth of Christian decline and **shows that “intense religion”**—as held by committed, believing, faith-filled Christians—is not in decline at all.

What we are seeing is the decline of *nominal Christianity*, from mainline Protestants giving up on liberal theology to non-believers on church rolls quitting the pretense. Even among young people who leave the church, the overwhelming majority confess that they never really had a faith to begin with. Ironically, the effect of nominal believers leaving is to purify the church and make it stronger.

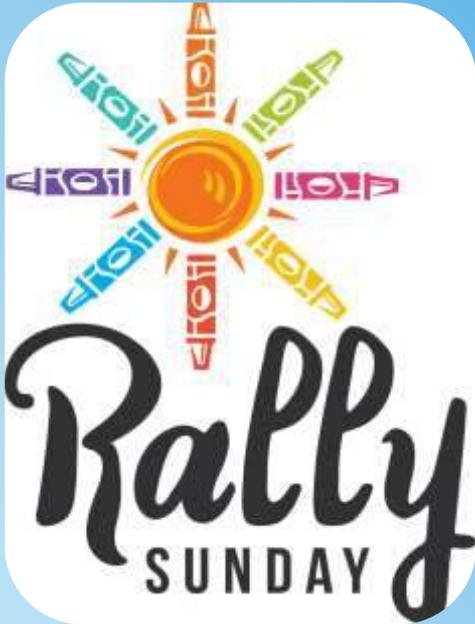
Mr. Stanton summarizes ...: *First, the “nones” are certainly not a new group of unbelievers exiting the pews of our nation’s churches. They are merely a group who are identifying more accurately what they have always been, those without any real religious practice. ...*

*Second, the United States is not growing more secular. [Two] Harvard/Indiana University sociologists... [state]... “We show that rather than religion fading into irrelevance as the secularization thesis would suggest, intense religion—strong affiliation, very frequent practice, literalism and evangelicalism—is persistent, and in fact, only moderate religion is on the decline in the United States.” . . .*

*Third, not only are we not an increasingly secular nation, there is certainly not an atheism revival as the Daily Wire claimed. There are not more atheists in America than adherents of any other religion. Not anywhere close. Their mistake was assuming that those who report no particular faith are indeed atheists. ... They are mostly drifters and non-joiners, even as about a third admit that faith is important to them.*

[Pastor David’s comments: So, what does this mean for us? In a sense, nothing new. The call remains the same: remain in Christ; give thanks in all circumstances; walk in faith & obedience; give a reason for the hope you have, make disciples of all nations. The difference may be that we can see a bit more clearly who doesn’t currently hope in Jesus.]

*“This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”* Mt. 24:14 EHV



**Sunday, September 1st  
9:45 am**

**"Then Jesus said to them,  
"Follow Me, and I will make  
you become fishers of men."  
Mark 1:17**

**Join us for Rally Day as we kick-off the  
new Sunday school year and immerse ourselves  
in God's Word!**

***Preschool thru 8th Grade meet with Ms. Nicole in  
room #300 and then down to the Fellowship Hall  
for a Science Share.***

**JESUS**



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## September Council Update

Thanks to all members who attended the brief voter meeting held August 11<sup>th</sup>. Holding meetings directly after late service, as we've done the last two times, accomplishes the church's business in a minimal time frame. Please feel free to contact me if you like this new congregational meeting format or if you have ideas to improve such. Our next Congregational Meeting in November will be more traditional as we elect new Council/Elder servants and approve the 2020 church budget. Additionally, we'll have the opportunity to fellowship over a light meal served by Susie Williams' Fellowship Team.

After spending 39 years in the Information Technology (IT) business, I know the critical importance of having a reliable, secure and efficient IT infrastructure. I am thankful for Cecil Murray who accepted the lead position to analyze and update Eternal Shepherd's wi-fi network, refresh our old and inefficient PC's and utilize new technologies (Cloud, security...) that could offer real value. I've heard that Cecil, the past few weeks, has been at Eternal Shepherd even more than Pastor! Special thanks to Cecil for his dedication and expertise in slaying the electronic demons for our benefit.

You may have already seen the big beautiful Eternal Shepherd sign on Highway 123. Special thanks again to Bob Massa for his multi-year effort to give us visibility on this major road. What will Bob do next with all his extra time? He's agreed to lead the feasibility and initial plans of acquiring a 15-passenger van for Eternal Shepherd. A vehicle like this could be used in so many ways (Feed the Hungry, Prison Ministry, Youth, Comfort Dog, Disaster Relief, travel to church for handicapped members...). I just hope to have 50% of Bob's energy when I'm his age!

In His service,  
John Cochell



## Instruments of Peace?

by Kerry Blount

From the time my oldest daughter was an infant until well into her pre-school years, she endured a series of surgeries to repair a club foot and a hand that had not properly developed in the womb. I often held her on my lap during medical visits and minor procedures, like blood draws. Like many others, she hated blood work, but she became very stoic about it and would sit on my lap in silence, squeezing my arm with her face against my chest as the nurse or phlebotomist did their work. On one particular visit when she was almost four, the nurse was completely ineffective, sticking her three times and then searching roughly for the vein with the needle inserted. I was furious, but tried to maintain some measure of composure when I told the woman to stop immediately and find a supervisor. She angrily left to do so. As I held my daughter against me, she looked up with trusting eyes—not even a hint of accusation in her face—and said with complete innocence, “Daddy, why do you let them hurt me?” Her trusting heart knew there must be a reason; she just wanted to understand. I’m sure my feeble, choked answer at that moment did not connect with her heart the way I hoped, but she continued to endure when endurance was called for, as it was many more times.

Four decades later, in a world filled with unreasoning and indiscriminate violence, her question comes to me much too often, in the much more troubling context of recurring tragedies light years beyond a simple but sometimes uncomfortable medical procedure. I hear it as I see the face of a broken child being carried in a frantic father’s arms after an air attack, after a terrorist bombing in city streets far and near, after a retaliatory strike for a heinous act of terrorism, or after a school shooting just down the road. It comes to me as the voices of many thousands asking why “the protectors” are not doing everything in our power, individually and collectively, to prevent the recurring images—no, the recurring reality—of the death, maiming, and destruction of those who give no offence, raise no weapon, support no opposing cause. I wonder how the fathers of these shattered children will be changed by the knowledge that they could not protect their sons and daughters from inexplicable, random violence, and I grieve for them just as fervently as I do for the children and their mothers. After all, what else can I do?

I grieve, but do I pray? I weep, but do I raise my voice against those who perpetrate or support the violence? I vote, but do I do so with my daughter’s question on my heart and in my mind? Let us, as followers of the Christ, not be afraid to ask what we are called to do and say and be in response to the recurring violence that once moved our God to tell Noah that He would have to start again. (*Genesis 6:11-13*). Even so, come Lord Jesus.

*Most Holy Father, shape us and use us as instruments of peace. Give us the courage and wisdom to intervene with peace in the face of violence, to protect the weak, raise the fallen, and comfort the grieving. In the name of the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen*

## From The Board of Stewardship

### A TIME AND TALENT SURVEY IS COMING

God has given each of us so many talents and skills. But these talents and skills vary from person to person. Everyone is needed to assist in the work God wants us to do here on earth. While our talents and skills complement and supplement each other, the church leadership does not know the special talents and skills that you have.

A Time and Talent Survey will be sent out at the end of September. It is new in two ways from previous surveys. It will concentrate on likes and abilities instead of being task-oriented. It will contain a series of 'I' statements, such as 'I want to help when I see someone is hurting. You will just check the ones that are applicable to you. The second way that this differs is that the survey will be presented on-line. This allows the information to be automatically tabulated and stored for future reference. When a need or opportunity arises for service, this information can be used to find individuals with the needed talents and interests.

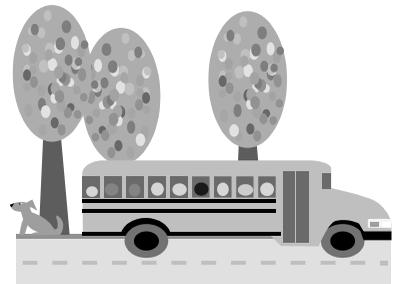
The survey will also ask for basic contact information, work and special skills that you have as well as the time and the method you prefer to serve. The survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete.

An e-mail will be sent out at the end of the month with a link to the survey. You can simply complete it at home or assistance will be available so that you can do it here at church.

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:8-10*

### **PLEASE NOTE**

Little Lambs Preschool classes have begun. **Please make sure to drive slowly when driving around the church between the hours of 8:00 am and 12:00 pm Monday through Friday.** Thank you for helping keep our Little Lambs safe.



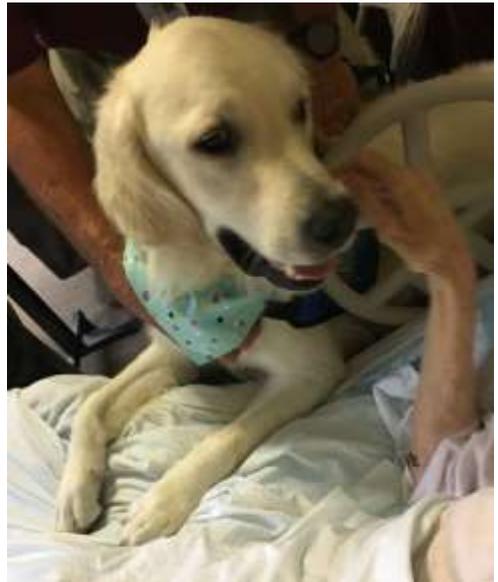
## **Seth Comfort Dog Team News**

Seth and his team have been quite busy of late! At present, we have ongoing visits at the following facilities: Morningside, Belvedere, Residences at Park Place, Keowee Place, Foothills, Lakeview, Lila Doyle, Brookdale, Spring Park (where Charlene Schubert resides) and Richard Campbell VA Nursing Home. Recently we have added the following Hospice agencies: Hands of Mercy Hospice, Interim Hospice, Hospice of the Foothills, and Providence Care Hospice. We will also be spending more time at Prisma Health Oconee Memorial Hospital visiting patients and staff. Further the Tribble Center recently requested a visit at their facility for National Dog Day and we hope to add regular visits there as well.

I think our team of 25 wonderful people can tell you that this ministry is not only heartwarming and fulfilling but it is also stretching our faith. We are going places we never thought we would go and are meeting people we would most likely have not met. And through Seth's calm presence, we find that doors of conversation are opened to us that might not have occurred before. God uses Seth as the bridge for ministry.

Let me share with you an encounter Bob and I had at Keowee Place recently. We visited with a couple who were in their 90's. The wife was bedridden and hadn't spoken or been responsive for quite awhile. When Seth did his famous "rise" onto her bed (see picture below), the wife suddenly started smiling, laughing, talking and making jokes as she petted him. We didn't realize how special this was until we looked over at her husband and saw he was crying. He said he hadn't seen his wife look so happy, laugh or even speak in such a long time. Something about Seth brought back some memory and filled her with joy! As Bob and I left their room now with tears in our eyes, we felt so blessed to witness a small miracle where God used one of His creatures to brighten this couple's day. This story is just one of many we have experienced as we follow God's lead as He sends us various places through this ministry.

Seth's Facebook page (SethComfortDog), and Instagram account (LCKK9Seth), are great social media sites that provide updates almost on a daily basis of his whereabouts throughout the week. Also, if you follow any of the other LCC Comfort Dogs you will see that they went to El Paso and Dayton after the recent shootings. Seth's brother Jared Comfort Dog went to Dayton immediately after his Passing of the Vest ceremony! The comforting presence of the dogs and their teams is a testament of Christ's love in action and we never know when we will be called to deploy and serve in this way as well.



*To God be the glory,  
Kyra Carbone, Top Dog*

## Meet Our Newest Members

### Welcome Cindy & John Munro

Both born & raised in Tampa FL where they lived until John retired and they moved to Sapphire NC. The Munros had two children, their 31 yr old son lives in Atlanta as a software designer, their daughter was killed in a tragic car accident two years ago at the age of 24. Burying her was the hardest thing they have ever done of course. John was with the Nt'l. Marine Fisheries Service (part of NOAA), Cindy was a CPA. "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" and "How Great Thou Art" their respective favorite hymns, Missions is their interest area. Cindy enjoys knitting, sewing and reading whereas John likes Amateur Radio, enjoys classical music and playing the clarinet, flute, oboe & trumpet. The LCMS website indicated ES the closest MS to them (42 miles), thus here they are!



**CHECK IT OUT!!!** A new shipment of cards has arrived and been added to the cart. The Masculine Birthday slot has been refilled - what a hit that was! Don't forget to check out the boxed cards on the bottom which are an even bigger savings than buying them individually in the top slots. You'll also notice seasonal napkins for just \$2.50 on the bottom.

## Hospitality Happenings for September

### September late service schedule:

**9/1 - Elaine Grotheer**

**9/8 - Julie Moore**

**9/15 - Jill Roeder**

**9/22 - Alice Ramsburg**

**9/29 - Colleen Wakeman**

Thinking about joining the hospitality board?  
Please see myself or Marlene Bell with any questions. *In his service, Sue Williams*

*Join us for Fellowship  
after the late service.*





## SEEKING ADDITIONAL PRAYER SHAWL VOLUNTEERS

The Prayer Shawl Ministry has begun making **pocket prayer shawls for the Comfort Dog Ministry**. They can use and distribute all that we can make. So if you previously hesitated to use your knitting or crocheting skills because of the huge commitment to make a full size prayer shawl, here is your opportunity. It only takes about an hour to make a pocket prayer shawl. There are knitting and crochet patterns available that embed a cross within the work. Yarn is also available for you to use. This can be done at home and at your convenience. Please contact Sue Hauser or Colleen Wakeman if you are interested.

**Crochet Classes** will be offered for anyone interested, even if you do not want to make prayer shawls. Classes will be held in the Fellowship Hall before Women's Bible Study at 3 pm on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> with a final class discussing reading and understanding crochet patterns on October 30<sup>th</sup>. A sign up sheet will be available on the Bulletin Board to sign-up in late September. The above class will give you a chance to help make pocket prayer shawls if you are interested and don't know how to crochet.

**REMEMBER, all ESLC members are our distribution chain** for our prayer shawls or pocket prayer shawls. You can give either type of prayer shawl to anyone that you have been praying for and are concerned about. We just ask that you pray with them if you can give it to them in person. Prayer Shawls are available in a self-service kiosk in the Fellowship Hall by the closets. If you select a full size prayer shawl, please log it in by signing your name, to whom you are giving it and the date. A log behind the sign out page shows all the individuals that have already received a prayer shawl. For pocket prayer shawls, just simply take one, no sign out is needed.

**LADIES: Thursday Bible Study – Start-up** You are invited to join us **“Round the Table” on Thursdays, starting September 5, in Fellowship Hall from 4:00 – 5:30 PM each Thursday.** This study is **God of Creation by Jen Wilkin.** Please **SIGN-UP on the bulletin board at church.** The Fall session will begin on Thursday, September 5th and will continue thru Thursday, November 21st. Questions? Call or e-mail: Janet Walker, Char Beyer, and Margi McLain (**For more details please see the “Round the Table” Bible Study article in the August Agapegram**).

## **Honduras Missions**



**IT'S TIME:** If you have not made up your mind about joining this year's **Honduras Mission Team**—IT'S TIME. We will have a brief information meeting after the late service on Sunday, Sept. 15, 2019, for those who are thinking of going and those who have committed. We will answer any questions and provide some basic information for this year's trip. The dates of the trip are Feb. 22, 2020 to Feb. 29, 2020 with a cost of about \$1600.00. The dollar amount is spread over 3 payments with the first, a \$200.00 deposit being due Oct. 6, 2019. The money is given to ESLC and then a check is sent to World Gospel Outreach as a gift, making all payments tax deductible. There is a sample letter to send to friends and family if financial support is needed. It is a great way to allow others to be part of this mission work. *Come and be part of the wonderful mission that is WGO in Honduras.*



**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:** Habitat For Humanity is in need of volunteers throughout the organization. Due in a large part to longtime volunteers moving away. There are jobs for men and women in all areas. Please consider helping in this worthwhile organization. If you have any questions contact Henry or Sue Watson.



***Our Mission: Empower.***

***WE EMPOWER FAMILIES TO  
MOVE BEYOND GOVERNMENT  
ASSISTANCE AND INTO THEIR FULL  
GOD-GIVEN POTENTIAL.***

***Please be sure to read their News Letter. You may pick up a copy at the front desk or go to [RippleofOne.org](http://RippleofOne.org) for more details or to volunteer.***

## BABY BOTTLE DRIVE FOR THE FOOTHILLS CARE CENTER



**ALL BABY BOTTLES ARE DUE BACK BY SUN., SEPTEMBER 1ST**

**Please make sure to return your filled baby bottle to the Bottle Return Basket in the narthex or to the front desk by Sunday, Sept. 1st**

*~Thank you so much for your support!*

### DETENTION CENTER OUTREACH MINISTRY:



**Saturday, September 14th** ESLC is planning a visit to the Men's and the Women's sides of the Detention Center in Walhalla. **We will need cookies for this ministry** (30 baggies with regular cookies – 4 cookies to a bag). These cookies are a small way of sharing God's love and are much appreciated by those who receive the goodies. **We will meet at**

**ESLC Sat., Sept. 14th at 10:00 AM** for logistics & prayer and then on to the Center to make our 11:00 AM appointment. *Thank you for your support of this ministry.* Questions, contact Cecil Murray and **cookie angels please contact Elaine Grotheer.** The sign up sheet is on the bulletin board.



**ON-LINE GIVING** Bob Massa, Finance Board Chair  
Remember you can give on-line. After establishing an account,  
if you have the QR App on a device, you can use this method to  
contribute each Sunday using the QR code printed in the Sunday  
bulletin or the monthly Agapegram. *~Thank you for your faithful support.*



## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR BABYREAD**



BabyRead is an early literacy program dedicated to low-income families in Oconee County. Volunteers are needed to read to moms and their babies or toddlers at public or school libraries twice a month for one hour each time. **Become a BabyRead volunteer by emailing Caren at [babyread@charter.net](mailto:babyread@charter.net).** To learn more about BabyRead, go to [www.babyread.org](http://www.babyread.org).



## **FOOD BANK NEWS:**

Please help us in collecting preferred needed canned, or boxed grocery items each month. These items will help restock the Golden Corner Food Pantry's shelves. **September's** preferred product is "*Canned Vegetables*". Please place items in one of the trash cans marked Food Bank down by the main Fellowship Hall. *~Thank you for your generosity and support.*



## **SCRIP CARDS**

Please remember that  
**Scrip cards make great gifts and earn money for Eternal Shepherd at the same time.** Please see your scrip ladies today or pick up an order form located by the Scrip box in the narthex.  
*~Thank you for your support.*



## SPECIAL GIFTS/MEMORIALS



### In *July* the following gifts were given:

In loving memory of *Nick Nicholson*  
the Comfort Dog Ministry Fund received gifts of \$50.00

In loving memory of *Alex P. Richards*  
the Comfort Dog Ministry Fund received a gift of \$200.00

### Other gifts:

The Capital Campaign Building Fund received gifts of \$30.00

The Comfort Dog Ministry Fund received gifts of \$1,555.00,  
and gifts of \$28.85 from the Rummage Sale,  
\$633.07 from the Southeastern District,  
and a gift of \$206.00 from Thrivent Choice

The Debt Reduction Fund received a gift of \$50.00

The Elders Fund received a gift of \$100.00

The Fellowship Hall Carpet Fund received a gift of \$25.00

The Food Bank Fund received a gift of \$25.00

The General Fund received a gift of \$169.00 from Thrivent,  
and a gift of \$600.00 from a Grant from  
Giving of Central Carolina Community Foundation

The Haiti Missions Fund received a gift of \$250.00

The Honduras Mission Fund received a gift of \$100.00

The Mission Quilt Sewers Fund received a gift of \$25.00

The Operation Christmas Child Fund received gifts of \$2,270.00

Pastor's Discretionary Fund received a gift of \$20.00

A Special Missions Fund received gifts of \$35.00

# Little Lambs Tales

*“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.” 1 Timothy 4:12*

We began our school year on August 21<sup>st</sup> and I am once again reminded how even though our preschool children are so young, they set a great example for us on how to live as Christians. They love one another without bias. They speak words of kindness to one another and encourage us to likewise use encouraging words. As they listen to the Chapel message, they listen with an open heart, trust and have faith in the message they are hearing.

We are blessed here at Little Lambs Preschool to be using the Concordia Press Curriculum materials which will guide our lessons through the messages we hear during our Chapel time each week. How fortunate to be able to base our academic lessons on our Christian faith. It is such a gift and we love to share this gift with our beautiful children.

## **Some dates to keep in mind for September:**

- **September 2—Labor Day (no school)**
- **September 18—Farm Day**
- **September 27—Donuts with Dad (8:30-8:45am)**

Do you shop at Ingles? Do you use a printer? If so, you have the ability to help our Preschool! Connect your Ingles card to Little Lambs. You can do this online at Ingles Tools for Schools or by signing the sheet in the Narthex. Our school ID number is 11415. If you need help with this process please stop by the Preschool Office and I can help you or see Roberta Port after church service for assistance. ***Please be aware that you must sign up for the Ingles Tools for Schools Program every year.***

When your printer cartridge runs empty, bring it to the church and you will find a box to place those in as well.

It is amazing how these little things that you can do provide a great benefit to our Preschool program.

Most especially, we ask for your continued prayers for all of us at Little Lambs Preschool. We appreciate all the support you continue to give to us and know that it is because of your support that Little Lambs Preschool continues to thrive!

*Blessings in Christ,  
Gina*

# OUR HOUSE

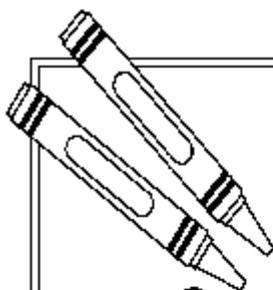
This craft is a reminder of the blessing of your family and what you and your family should do for God.

## What you need:

- 8 1/2" x 11" cardstock
- Markers or crayons
- A photograph of each person in your family that you can cut apart
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- A hanging picture frame that holds an 8 1/2" x 11" photo (optional)

## What you do:

- Draw a colorful picture of the outside of your house. Remember to add a door and windows.
- Decide where you want each person's photo to go. Cut out a whole body (if you want someone to stand on the front porch, for example) or just cut out a face (if you want someone to be looking out a window).
- Use the glue stick to glue the cut-out photos onto your drawing.
- Write out Joshua 24:15b. NIV: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."
- To frame your picture, have an adult help you. If you don't have a frame, display your house on a refrigerator or bulletin board for everyone to see.



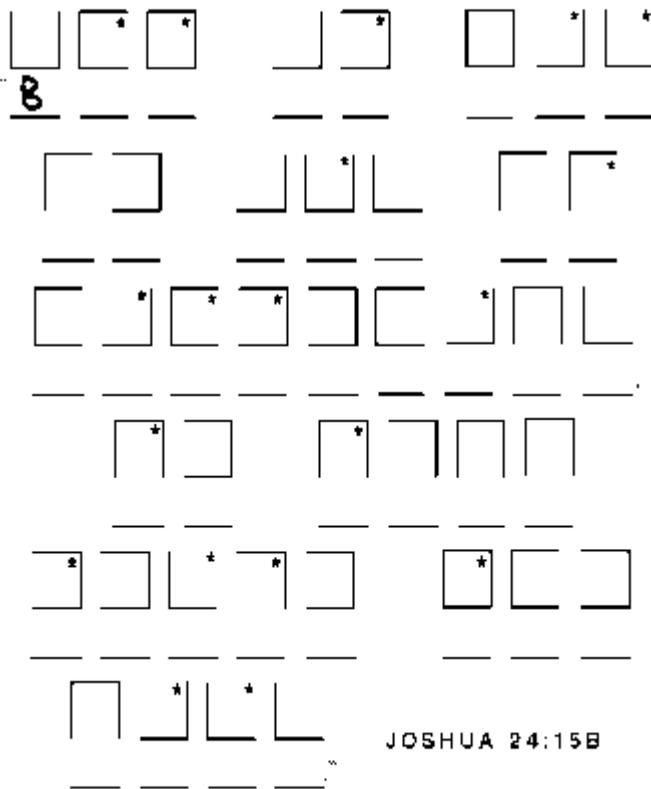
Just for

# KIDS

## As for our family...

With school starting, schedules are getting busy again. Sometimes you might feel like you're going in too many directions and forgetting what's really important. Use the key below to remind you of where your family's real focus should always be.

KEY: A B D O N R  
E F H S T U  
I L M V W Y



Answer: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

## **SERVICE TIMES**

8:30 a.m. Worship Service  
(Communion 2nd & 4th Sundays)

9:45 a.m. Sunday School  
& Adult Bible Study

11:00 a.m. Worship Service  
(Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays)



## **THOSE WHO SERVE**

Pastor: David Hammer  
Deaconess: Holly Lustila  
Secretary: Celeste Entrekin  
Preschool Director: Gina Cote  
Choir Director: Rick Schmidt  
Choir Accompanist: Michelle Rowland  
Organist: David Phillips

## **MISSIONARIES**

Joanna Johnson, Taiwan  
Nate Esala, Lutheran Bible Translators  
David & Dr. Arianna Shirk, Kenya  
S.E.D. Missionaries to Peru

Eternal Shepherd Lutheran Church  
220 Carson Rd.  
Seneca, SC 29678