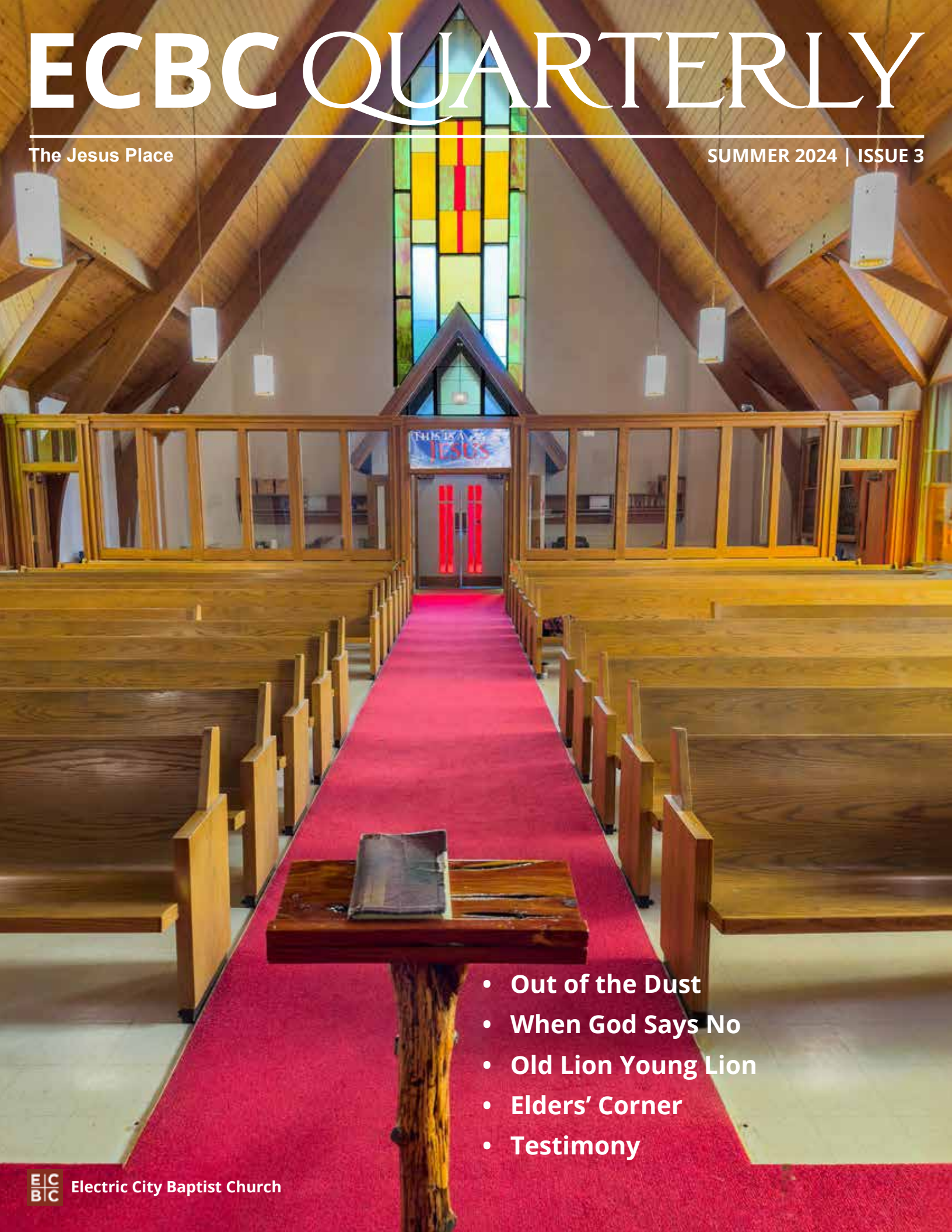


ECBC QUARTERLY

The Jesus Place

SUMMER 2024 | ISSUE 3

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- The image shows the interior of a church. In the foreground, a wooden pulpit with a rough-hewn log base holds an open book. A red carpet runs down the center aisle, flanked by wooden pews. At the far end of the church, there is a large, colorful stained glass window with geometric patterns. Above the entrance doors, a sign reads "THIS IS A JESUS". The ceiling is made of exposed wooden beams, and several white cylindrical pendant lights hang from it.
- Out of the Dust
 - When God Says No
 - Old Lion Young Lion
 - Elders' Corner
 - Testimony

WHEN GOD SAYS NO

By Anthony Stafford

We experience God and His ways in our everyday life.

We feel the sun on our skin, we feel the wind in our hair, and we enjoy the beautiful sights that nature provides. We also similarly but cautiously avoid all the various dangers that this created world offers.

And we experience God personally when we speak to Him and bring our requests and petitions through prayer to Him. We ask Him for many things and for help in many ways. And, as Scripture teaches us, we know He is a good Father.

Luke 11:11 says, *"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?"*

So how can we understand clearly—when we ask God for something that He has the power to provide or do—and He says no?

A somewhat infamous story in ancient Scripture tells about a shepherd boy who became king. The Bible describes him as "a man after God's own heart." God works through this man mightily and blesses him greatly. But just as we all do, this king falls into sin and the results are terrible.

The consequence is that his newborn son is going to die. The story is found in the Old Testament book

of 2 Samuel. The man's name is David, and after finding out the consequence of his sin, he pleads with God through fasting and prayer that God might save the life of his son.

God says no.

David comes in the next morning, and his son is dead.

How should we respond when we don't get what we ask for?

"Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and wor-

shipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat" (2 Samuel 12:20).

I believe this is a clear display of how we ought to respond when God says no to us.

Now, not all issues in our lives are because of our sin, and not all

situations are as serious as life or death, but here are a few ways we can walk through God's no.

Following the example of David, we can:

1. Recognize that God is in control.
2. Take a shower.
3. Get prepared for our next steps.
4. Worship God.
5. Get some rest.
6. Eat some food.

God is the setter of reality, and these are a few steps that we can see from Scripture that will help us walk through the times when God says no.

The Stafford family (from left): Penny, Moses, Bethany, Anthony, Finley, and Lincoln.





OLD LION YOUNG LION

*ECBC's Sunday morning radio
show on WPTR 1240 AM and
97.1 FM*

***The righteous are bold
as a lion.
—Proverbs 28:1***

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And Recent Baptisms

In Old Lion Young Lion, elder Sam H. Hazleton V and Pastor Anthony Stafford speak boldly like lions to bring the truth of the Bible to the radio show's listeners by digging into the Word of God. They discuss how God's Word relates to today's life struggles and how it frees us from the everyday problems, addictions, and sorrows we find ourselves in.

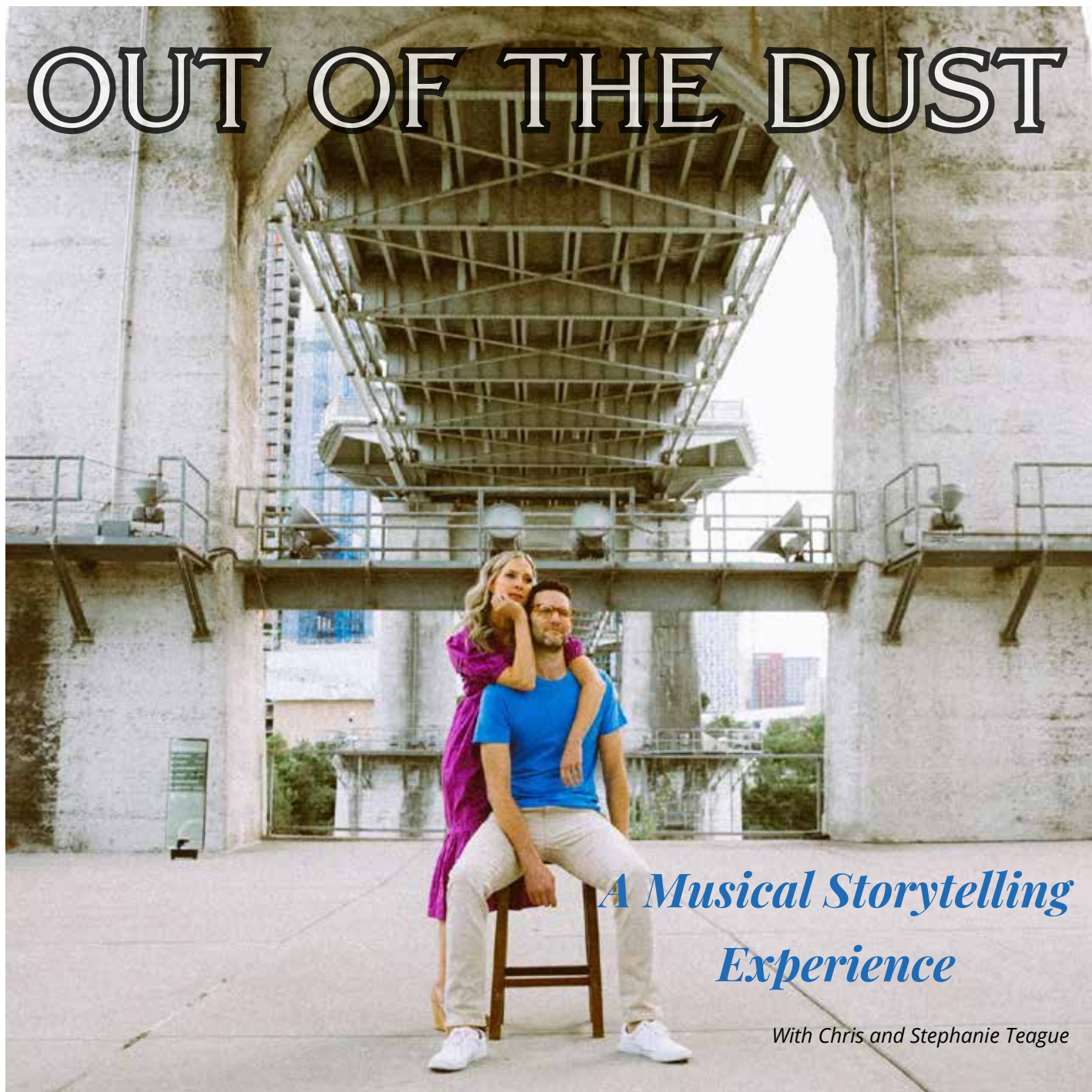
Sam and Anthony lead listeners in following the greatest King and Lion, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ. The Bible is a prophetic book that tells how God, through His Son, fixes broken people and all of the things that are going wrong in the world. By studying God's Word, we learn to fall in love with Jesus and His cosmic story.

Old Lion Young Lion airs weekly on the Capital Region's classic rock radio station, WPTR. The show started in December 2023 and has aired nearly 30 episodes. The hosts have explored topics such as the "cosmic drama," the "man on a mission," and the books of Jonah, Colossians, and Philemon.

You can email your Bible-related questions to oldlionyounglion@gmail.com. If Sam and Anthony answer your question on the show, you may receive special podcast merch.

Listen live on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. at wptrradio.com/streaming. Find past episodes on ECBC's website and wherever you listen to podcasts.

OUT OF THE DUST



A Musical Storytelling Experience

With Chris and Stephanie Teague

Coming to ECBC on Saturday, August 24, at 6:30 p.m. Free and open to the public.

Chris and Steph Teague met and began falling in love on a 13-hour road trip from Nashville to Philadelphia. They were high school, mission trip sweethearts who later married in college. They were volunteer worship leaders and served together in a variety of ways, and they seemed to be a perfectly normal, happy Christian couple.

Their story started to change when Chris entered a season of doubt, which many people walk through on their faith journey. Such seasons are normal and sometimes essential, but Chris believed that, as a leader, he should have it all together. He believed he had nowhere safe to share what was going on in his heart and mind,

and he thought no one would truly understand what he was going through. So, he kept his doubts a secret, and they just kept growing.

At the same time, he was pursuing a degree in the music industry, which offered him plenty of alternative activities to alleviate the shame he felt about the divide that existed between who he pretended to be at church and who he was becoming. Eventually, Chris spent all night out on Saturdays with friends, drinking and partaking in a variety of substances. He woke up on Sunday mornings and led worship to a God he no longer believed in. But no one knew, not even his wife, Stephanie.

The secrecy and the ensuing lies put an insurmountable strain on their young marriage and ultimately lead to their devastating divorce. Stephanie's world was shattered when she learned the truth of what was happening to Chris. She had worked all her life to be a "good, Christian girl." Her lack of control over the situation and her inability to save their marriage left her alone amid the wreckage of their former life, with nothing to do but surrender. Fortunately for her, the place of surrender is where God seems to do His best work.

How did God restore their marriage even after they got divorced?

While Steph discovered what it meant for her to be truly free with Jesus, even after a broken marriage, Chris ran further away into the arms of his captor. Friends, lovers, drugs, and alcohol were his companions. No longer bound by accountability to God, and freed from the shame of having a secret self, Chris openly pursued everything he thought would make him happy and fulfilled. He became ruled by lies, rebellion, and self-seeking. His new relationships were guided by the same selfishness that led him to leave Stephanie.

About seven months after leaving his marriage, the tides shifted, and the consequences of his choices finally came crashing down. His kingdom fell, and all the pleasures and freedoms that had seemed so promising were exposed to him as forgery. Freedom turned to fear, and reckless abandon was replaced with anxiety. He couldn't hide anymore, but at the same time, in the darkest of moments, he felt immensely isolated.

Then the truth came to him: "A fool says in his heart there is no God." He decided he would settle his doubts later: first he needed a savior. And something truly unbelievable happened. God

asked Chris to pursue Stephanie again.

Come to ECBC to experience Chris and Stephanie's music and hear their full story of marriage redemption when they visit on Saturday, August 24, at 6:30 p.m. The concert is free and open to the public.

ABOUT OUT OF THE DUST

Chris and Stephanie Teague travel the country as full-time, husband and wife "musicianaries," telling the story of God's grace in their lives. They were both raised in Murfreesboro, TN. Today they live in Nashville and have two children who travel with them. They've published two albums of redemption music that include songs of hope, joy, and redemption in the midst of loss and suffering.

They welcome questions and invite anyone to contact them who needs encouragement or finds themselves in a similar, or not so similar, life situation.

Meet the Out of the Dust duo in person at ECBC, or contact them through their website at outofthedustmusic.com.

*The fool hath said
in his heart, There
is no God.
—Psalm 14:1*

Photos on these pages courtesy of Out of the Dust. Text used and edited with permission. Front cover photo by Bud Maurer.



ELDERS

CORNER

Getting to know them



SAMUEL H. HAZLETON V

Sam is the father of five grown children and has two grandsons. He and his wife of 35 years, Joani, reside in Clifton Park, NY. Sam ran a software business for 25 years and sold it in 2021. Along with Michael Gile, he oversees a jail ministry in New York's Capital Region consisting of over 20 volunteers who preach and teach multiple times each week in three local county jails: Saratoga, Rensselaer, and Schenectady. The ministry has seen several hundred inmates over the last decade receive Christ as Lord and Savior. Sam's passions are inspiring vibrant and effectual individual and corporate prayer, defending the power and purity of the gospel message, mining the vast hidden treasures of God's Word, and cultivating the full expression of God's glorious church on the earth.



ALLAN DITTON

A steady and strong Christian leader, Allan has been saved and serving the Lord for decades. He was married for 24 years to his beautiful, loving wife, Tammy, who is now with the Lord. Allan considers his family his primary ministry and cares for and guides his two wonderful, young daughters, Kaitlynn and Emily—both successful Christian women. Allan is known as the reluctant elder due to his desire to serve in the background rather than lead in the front. He and his ECBC team run a weekly youth group that disciples and teaches Jesus to the teens in our area. Allan has owned a pottery business for many years and is a highly skilled creative who is recognized locally. He is a fervent defender of the faith and has a desire for the Northeast to be won for the Lord!

COMING EVENTS

AUG. 24 OUT OF THE DUST

Concert on Saturday at 6:30 p.m.

SEPT. 22 ANNIVERSARY SUNDAY

ECBC turns six!

SEPT. 25 HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

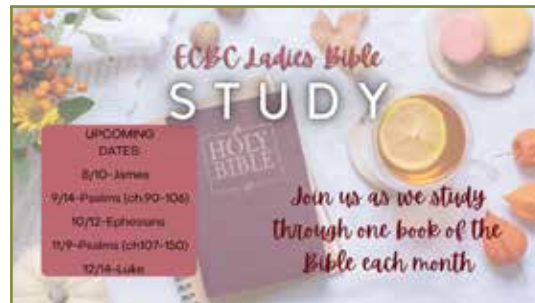
Meetings start up again

OCT. 4-6 MAN UP CONFERENCE

Friday evening through Sunday service

NOV. 2 INSPIRE

Women's event on Saturday at 6 p.m.



Under Construction

A growing church is always in transition.

THE BATHROOMS

A PASTOR'S WIFE

By Bethany Stafford



I always knew I wanted to be a mom, but if you had told me I was going to be a pastor's wife I probably would've laughed at you. When Anthony first told me he thought God wanted him to be a pastor, the only response I could think of was, "OK, let's do it."

This is not a shout-out to me. It was the only possible response, because I was terrified of being the reason my husband didn't follow God's plan.

I have grown in so many ways in the past six years, and being a pastor's wife has been such a valuable experience. Growth is a funny thing, though. It almost never happens the way you think it will or when you think it will. A lot of times, growth is happening and you don't even know it. And every once in a while, certain moments of growth stick with you and shape you.

'I was terrified of being the reason my husband didn't follow God's plan.'

I had one of those moments years ago when my first two children were still babies. Funny enough, the growth occurred during a moment when I was surrounded by ordinary, everyday life—running errands. I was driving between stops and thinking about the craziness of life with kids, and kind of talking to God at the same time. (I find that my quiet times with God often happen in the car.)

I had this almost comical thought: "No wonder why God tells us not to have sex before marriage, because He knows how crazy hard raising kids is, and He knew we would need a partner." I kind of laughed, and I kept thinking: If God had a reason for this "rule," He probably has one for all of His other "rules."

I love to do puzzles. So as I am working through this thought, I think, "So God is the creator of the universe, and everything is like this big puzzle, each piece fitting in its exact spot perfectly to create a beautiful picture. But then sin comes in and wrecks the whole thing."

Now you have all these different pieces everywhere, and God is there saying, "Hey, if you just listen to me I can show you this wonderful amazing picture. I promise I know how the pieces fit together."

But then sometimes (a lot of times), we humans in our sin and arrogance look back at Him and laugh, and we say, "Haha, no, actually I have a way better idea. I know what this is supposed to look like." So then we take one of the pieces, rip it in half, and try to smash it to fit into another piece. We then sit back and wonder why our puzzle looks ridiculous.

As I look back at my original reaction to being a pastor's wife, I think: How silly was I to be afraid, when saying "let's do it" was just another puzzle piece closer to experiencing a wonderful, beautiful, amazing life designed by God.



The Gospel Is Found in the Word of God.

God provides the answer to reconciling
your relationship with Him.

1

RECOGNIZE YOUR CONDITION.

Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23

2

RELIGION AND GOOD WORKS ARE NOT THE ANSWER.

Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 2:5

3

JESUS PROVIDES THE WAY.

John 14:6, Romans 5:8

4

BELIEVE AND RECEIVE JESUS.

John 3:16, Romans 10:13, John 1:12



THE GOSPEL

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