



I like this picture a lot. It is from a trip in 1985. Our church, First Crossville and First Fyffe went together to a retreat center about five miles outside Gatlinburg.

The lodge where we went had a view straight into the National Park. No buildings, no lights. Lots of mountains and trees. Trees with the last of their fall leaves, red and orange. Sit in the rocking chairs on the porch and stare at the view while you drink a cup of coffee. Life is good. Isn't God great? He's everywhere you look.

We made this picture on our last day. I like it because it captures so much of who these people are. We are at the sky altar. It was a large hill with nothing on it but this rock. You stand by that rock or sit on it and you see all of the mountains. And know that the God who made them is there. You sing a hymn, read the Bible, and talk about what you experienced on the retreat.

Many of you do not know these people. On the left are C.I. and Evelyn Massey. It is no surprise that C.I. would be the one waving his hat to get your attention. He once told the church that he was glad to toot his own horn. And he worked tirelessly for the church. Look on the corner stone to see his name. Evelyn has on her angelic smile. She is probably thinking about people she will visit when she gets home. Cook them a chicken casserole. So good they are still mentioned in our church gatherings. A great woman of God. Next are two sisters, Louise Hood and Idelle Petty. Louise had lost her husband Dick a few years earlier. She and Dick were foundations of the church. And Idelle was a definite doer. Retired teacher/librarian. Always anxious to share with the church. Or take a hungry preacher and his family out to lunch. The sisters loved to tell stories about growing up in the country with a dinner table that held about twenty on Sundays. Next are Neila and L.D. McReynolds. A couple who deeply loved each other. Always at church. Sat with the Killians most Sunday nights. Neila made the home and loved everyone. L.D. has a big smile because he always had a big smile. Did so much for church and

community. Also guilty of taking a certain hungry preacher out to lunch time after time. Notice how L.D. is so at ease with himself, so confident. Just what a church needs. He and Neila are probably cooking up plans to help their family back home. On the end are Mary Ann Pendergrass and Dot Watts. Across the street neighbors. Who took care of each other and everybody else. Mary Ann was still sharing her home with church groups until a couple of years ago. Ran the family business and taught a lot of Sunday School. They loved their families. Notice how they stand in the back, content for the others to be out front. The church needs that, too.

And I like the picture because I remember how much the time together at the retreat meant to all of us. Discussions about life and death. Lots of tears that night. Some local Sacred Harp singers performed for us. We came to realize people from Fyffe, Crossville, and Collinsville had a lot of the same problems. Tears and laughter. Those rocking chairs and the view. Maybe a hike into the woods. Or a fire at night. The warmth of the Spirit.

Idelle got a country ham in Gatlinburg. A week later she had us all over to eat and remember the trip together. And we all continued to remember it through the years.

There's another reason I like the picture. Because it has a new meaning for me.

I was driving when the call came. Mary Ann had died. I pulled over and talked to Andy. And then I sat there a while on the side of the road. Cried some tears of my own. And thought about that picture.

Mary Ann was the last one. They have all gone on to heaven. Mary Ann was a very much too young widow. She had lost Howard just a year or two before the trip. As a young pastor, she and Howard taught me about facing cancer and death as Christians. And Mary Ann continued to teach all of us. She told me more than once how important that trip was to her. Helped her cope with being a Christian and a widow. Mary Ann was the last. If I went back to the sky altar now the rock would be empty. All gone.

They all eight taught us. All eight faithful to Jesus. Faithful to the church. All eight different. All eight the same. All eight with Jesus now.

When I got home and looked at the picture I saw something new. I see those eight standing there. Smiling. And C.I. waving his cap at us to get our attention. They look like they are half way to heaven and have stopped at the rock to watch us. They are all telling us it is our time. Our time to be faithful. Our time to be examples. And cheering for us. And they know we can do it. They already showed us how.

*Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders ...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us... Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12:1-2.*

Maybe when you look at the picture you imagine some others there cheering you right now – your mother. Your mate. Your loved one. Faithful Christians who have gone on ahead. Cheering you on toward Jesus at the finish line. Be faithful. It's your time.

## Summer Mission Trips and Music Camp

1. Our youth went on a **mission trip in June to Arizona**. They did needed work at an American Indian reservation where it was very, very hot. Using nail guns and cleaning out plants. And keeping an eye out for cacti.



2. They went on a **second mission trip in July to Destin, Florida** where they stayed at Laguna Beach Christian Retreat Center and worked with King's Crossing Church on a church plant. They passed out cookies and flyers to provide information about the church. They also did some work on the building. Back at the Retreat Center they had worship and Bible study. And they did find the beach.







3. Our children went to Shocco Springs for the annual **Mix/Remix Music Camp**. They spent a lot of time in classes, in worship and in recreation. And learning music.





Collinsville Baptist Church  
P.O. Box 558  
Collinsville, AL 35961

Non-profit Permit Imprint  
Permit Number 2  
Fort Payne, AL 35967