

Kootenai Communicator

The monthly newsletter of Kootenai Community Church, Kootenai, Idaho

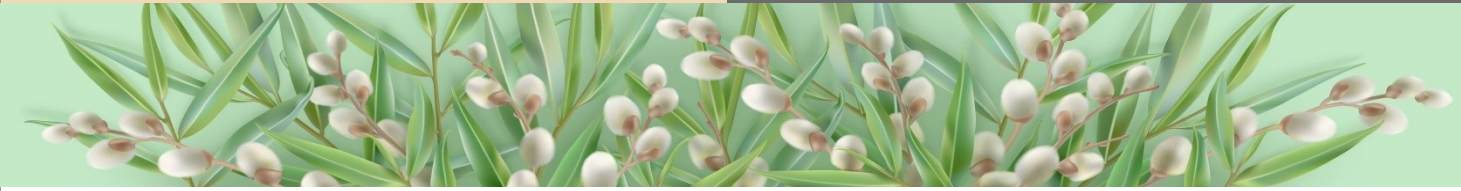
Important Dates <<<

22 Baby Shower for Olline Curiel

Coming April 5—Membership Class
Coming April 26—Women’s Conference
Coming June 6–7—Equipping Conference



*Expounding the Scriptures,
Equipping the Saints,
Exalting the Savior*



RANDOM THOUGHTS

By Jim Osman, pastor/teacher

If this “Random Thoughts” column is new to you, then here is a quick introduction. Below is a collection of my own observations, thoughts, and insights, which may or may not prove to be a blessing to others. Each of these is not long enough to warrant an entire article on its own but begged to be written down nonetheless.

The Four Seasons

I love the four seasons and I’m not talking about luxury resorts. I love living in an area of the country that allows me to experience the worst of winter, the worst of summer, and everything in between. If you have lived in North Idaho for a length of time, then you know that the seasons differ from one year to the next. Not all summers are equal. Not all winters are identical.

For the last two years, we have had below-normal snowfall. This winter (2025), I have only plowed snow once. I could have gotten away with not plowing at all. Last year was similarly disappointing for snowfall. However, some of us old-timers can remember years when it felt like plowing snow was all we did for three straight months. This last summer had a nice long stretch of hot weather. Two summers ago was rather cool and moderate by comparison. We have seen years where fall lasted a week and years where fall was six to eight weeks long. In fact, there was a year maybe fifteen to twenty years ago when I was outside in a T-shirt working on my camp trailer on Valentine’s

Day. The temperature was around seventy degrees on February 14! I am writing this on February 14, 2025, and the temperature today will reach a high of thirty. Two days ago, the high was twenty-five and it got down to negative three overnight! I like the variety. In fact, I love the variety.

Further, there is a rhythm of life that the seasons bring. Rhythms and cycles are part of God’s creation, and they can be a blessing to us. Consider the hydrological cycle observed by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 1:7: “All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again.” The same kind of cycles happen with generations (v. 4), the rising and setting of the sun (v. 5), and the blowing of the wind (v. 6). These repetitive and seemingly mundane cyclical events are wearisome (v. 8) when viewed from “under the sun.” However, there is much blessing to be had when we set our minds to enjoy the changing of the seasons and thus the changing of life’s rhythms as a good gift from God’s hand. After all, God Himself established and ordained those kinds of life rhythms, the Sabbath observance being one of many examples. That was a weekly cycle. There were annual cycles of work and rest. There were Sabbath years and years of jubilee. Each and every rhythm pointed back to the God Who ordained it for good. Let’s consider a few of the blessings of our four seasons.

Spring is a great time of year. I enjoy watching the

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days get longer, the trees bud, and the snow melt. Spring brings rain, which is great for our land and makes for some nice, cozy days inside. In spring I start getting excited about planting my garden. I plan my summer and anticipate sitting on my deck and enjoying fruit from my trees. Summer brings more work, but work I enjoy. I love planting my garden, pruning trees, sitting in the shade, mowing grass, and being outdoors. Apart from sitting outdoors, I wouldn't want to do any of those things year-round, so I look forward to fall when I can be done with garden work. All the fruit is harvested and I process it for long-term keeping. I can be done with outside work and look forward to a change in rhythm—the winter. Winter is a chance to slow down. I don't have gardens to weed and trees to trim. Sure, it does bring snow to plow and shovel, but that is different than mowing.

I love to mow, but I don't want to do that year-round. I like a break from mowing so that by spring I look forward to it again. If I had to mow year-round, it would become a drudgery. The joy would be sucked out of that activity because it would relentlessly demand my time and attention. I like plowing snow, but I don't want to do that year-round either. I don't want to spend twelve months of every year weeding, rototilling, raking, pruning, trimming, planting, harvesting, plowing, shoveling, hunkering down inside from the cold, or sipping hot drinks. You see, I press into the seasonal changes of activities that are forced upon me because it gives me rest from them. I can enjoy all my activities long enough to tire of them. Then I get a break from them. Then I have the season of anticipating picking them up again (like one anticipates Christmas morning). Then I get to enjoy them again for a season. They never lose their wonder and never stop bringing me joy.

I can enjoy the anticipation. I can enjoy the activity. I can enjoy being done with that activity. I can enjoy the rest from that activity. For instance, I am ready to be done with gardening just about the time of the year that I get done with gardening in September. If I were planting, weeding, and harvesting all year without end, it would cease being a joy and would become a burden within a couple years. I look forward to winterizing my mower and putting it away, and I look forward to taking it out and mowing that first time in the spring. I love taking the plow off my ATV in the spring, and I get kind of giddy putting it back on again in the fall. I like the long hours of daylight in the summer that allow me to work outside till bedtime and be productive. I like the short days of winter that force me to rest, slow down, and not work as late. I am forced to rest. I am forced to change up my routine. And for that I am thankful. These are all blessings.

The bitter cold of negative temperatures during winter makes me thankful for summer. It reminds me of the blessings I have in a heated house, clothing, and hot food. It reminds me that spring is coming, and with

it the anticipation of summer evenings on the deck. The bitter cold peaks my anticipation of summer and helps me enjoy it even more when it comes. Winter keeps me from taking summer for granted. It heightens my thankfulness for God's blessings and causes me to press into those blessings with gratitude and urgency.

The couple of weeks of extreme heat we get in the summer reminds me how great the spring and fall days are when the temperatures are more moderate. It makes me look forward to cooler temperatures and even a snowstorm or two. I am reminded of how thankful I can be for swimming in a cold lake, enjoying a cold shower, and the incredible blessing of shade, a good book, and a cup of iced tea. The hard and exhausting work of long days makes me look forward to a slower season of rest and a slower pace.

The changing of the seasons creates its own rhythm. It is a cycle of life and activity that, when received as a good gift from God, reminds me of His grace and wisdom. He makes all the various activities and delights of each season to benefit His children. Winter is not drudgery or wearisome. Winter brings its own unique blessings and experiences. If we ignore the blessings of each season while always pining away for what was or what is to come, then we will just miss season after season filled with tokens of God's goodness. Enjoy all the seasons to the glory of God while you anticipate the blessings of the next.

One final observation about this: enjoying each season while allowing it to build anticipation for the one to come is much like longing for the Kingdom and the new creation. I enjoy sunshine and shade, work and rest, and planting and harvesting. These things, enjoyed now, create anticipation for the season to come when we will delight ourselves in all these activities and more in the new creation. Every season here brings enjoyment in the present and expectation of more enjoyment to come. Similarly, my enjoyment of God's rich blessings in this life are mere shadows, harbingers of even greater blessings to come in the New Earth.

Question About *Selling the Stairway to Heaven*

I received the following email from a reader of my book *Selling the Stairway to Heaven* who asked some follow-up questions. I thought you might enjoy both the question and the answer.

Hi Jim,

I just finished reading your book about NDEs (near-death experiences) as I prepare for a presentation at the Christian Instructor Academy this year. I've done a fair amount of research on near-death experiences, and I haven't found any commentary from you online about John Burke's book *Imagine Heaven*. (And if you have commented on his work, would you

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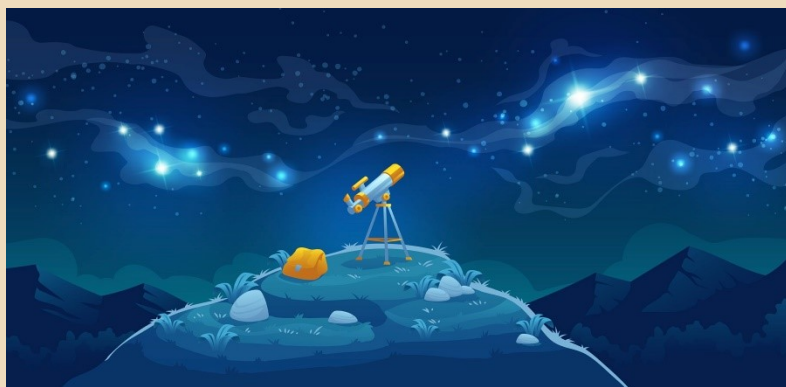
Four- and Five-Year-Olds Class: Angie Cates

The four- and five-year-olds class meets in the library each week during Sunday school. We have just finished Genesis and are starting in Exodus, learning about how God used Moses to rescue the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. We welcome all children ages four to five to come enjoy an hour of learning and building relationships with one another!



Sunday school begins at 9:30 a.m.

>>> *Special Report: 2025 Equipping Conference*



**2025
EQUIPPING
CONFERENCE**

June 6-7, 2025

With speaker
Colonel Jeffrey N. Williams

Save by registering early!

<https://bit.ly/kccee25>



Colonel Jeffrey N. Williams

Colonel Jeffrey N. Williams grew up on a farm in the rural township of Winter, Wisconsin. He graduated from the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point in 1980, served more than twenty-seven years active in the U.S. Army, and continued to serve in our nation's space program until retiring in 2024.

An astronaut since 1996, Williams logged a record-setting 534 days in space on four flights, launching on both the Space Shuttle and the Russian Soyuz in direct support of the assembly and operation of the International Space Station (ISS), most recently returning to Earth in September 2016. Over that time, he also logged nearly thirty-two hours during five space walks in both U.S. and Russian space suits.

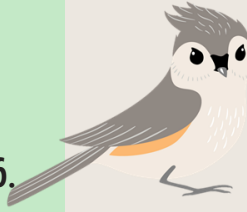
He is the author of *The Work of His Hands: A View of God's Creation from Space*. Williams holds a bachelor's degree from USMA, master's and aerospace engineering degrees from the Naval Postgraduate School, a master's degree in national security from the Naval War College, and a Doctor of Ministry from The Master's Seminary.

Colonel Williams currently serves as an elder at Word of Grace Bible Church, a Russian-speaking, Slavic immigrant community, in Battle Ground, Washington. He also serves as a director on the boards of Grace to You, the Institute of Creation Research, and the Getty Music Foundation. He and his wife, Anna-Marie, have been married since 1980 and have two sons and seven grandchildren.

>>> Young Adult/Young Married Fellowship

YOUNG ADULT FELLOWSHIP

For information, contact Gerimiah Pennell at 208-920-3426.



YOUNG MARRIED FELLOWSHIP

Couples around the ages of 18-28 are invited to join.

Meeting on the last Saturday of the month, March 29.

Contact James and Hannah Pranaitis for more information. 208-217-3156



Women's Ministry <<<

2025 KCC Women's Conference

Living Out the One Anothers

April 26



With speaker and author

Susan Heck

Susan Heck has been involved in women's ministries for over thirty years. This includes teaching Bible studies, counseling, and heading up the With the Master women's ministry at Grace Community Church in Tulsa, OK. Susan speaks at women's conferences nationally and internationally.

Register online now! <https://bit.ly/kccwomen25>



Baby Shower

For Olline curiel

March 22, 10:00 a.m.

she is registered on Amazon.

MEAL MINISTRY



Our church is a body, and we help one another as needs arise. One practical way we do this is through the Meal Ministry. Andrea Kinne and Kaitie Forsyth organize meals to be delivered to those in need. Sign-up is available at the Welcome Table.



>>> Cocolalla Lake Bible Camp

Please visit the camp website at clbcamp.org for more details.

Spring Quilt Camp

March 13-15

Time: Register at 2 p.m. on Thursday; ends 7 p.m. on Saturday
For: Ladies aged thirteen and up
Cost: Contact the office



>>> Student Ministries



March

5 Student Ministries, 7-9 p.m.
19 Guys' and Girls' Bible Studies, 7-9 p.m.

Psalm 15:1-3
"Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent?
Who may live on your holy mountain?
The one whose walk is blameless,
who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from their heart;
whose tongue utters no slander,
who does no wrong to a neighbor,
and casts no slur on others."



>>> Kootenai Thunder

For the most current information, please check our website, kootenathunder.com, and our Facebook page.

HAPPENING NOW

The JH boys' and girls' basketball season is under way. You can check out our game schedule on the website and follow us on Facebook. It's shaping up to be a great year for our junior teams.

BASKETBALL REPORT:

Varsity finished up over the weekend of February 7-8. The boys' varsity team took third place in the season and the tournament. Making the All-League First Team was Malachi Duchow, and the Second Team, Laura Allshouse. The boys' JV team took third place in their season-ending tournament on February 1. Great season for all our Thunder teams!



If you are interested in getting involved in the Thunder ministry, contact Tracy Jensen.

Mission News: Kathleen Ruth Long

Contact Lynn Finegan if you have questions about missions or the Missions Table.

Mission Field News sent from Kathleen Ruth Long

The Long family has close ties and a history with KCC members going back years. Kathleen Ruth Long committed her life to serving God in His mission field in Bangladesh, SE Asia quite a few years ago. Sent out through the Association of Baptists, she serves the Marma people group in translating the Bible into their language. KCC's participation in the prayers and praise requested by Kathleen are a great encouragement to her. There are generous individual givers in our church who send her financial support as a gift of love and appreciation to her for the labor of God she attends to in bringing the gospel to the Marma people. These thoughtful gifts sent to her via the Long family in Custer, WA, demonstrate a 3 John 1:5-8 kind of love from the body of Christ. You can also send cards and letters to the WA address that will be forwarded to Kathleen, which she truly treasures. Please visit the Missions Table and take a look at Kathleen's mission update, written by her sister, Charleen, who was able to visit Kathleen this past December, which was the first time she'd been able to visit her since 2017. Her update will give you a greater appreciation for the work God is doing through Kathleen in His mission field!



>>> Adventure Club News



Questions about AC or interested in volunteering?

Commander: Matt McOwen (408-438-3192)
Secretary: Lori Thomson (208-610-1916)
Email: ac@kootenaichurch.org

MARCH

- 7—Lesson 23: Jesus's Death Satisfies God's
- 14—Lesson 24: Jesus's Death Fixes Believers' Relationship with God
- 21—Lesson 25: PIN NIGHT! Jesus' Resurrection Defeated Death and Secured Salvation
- 28—Lesson 26: Christians Seek to Honor God



We will be extending our AC Year until April 25 due to our two snow days. A revised calendar is available at the check-in tables.

Church News <<<

HAVE YOU SIGNED UP TO BE IN THE ONLINE CHURCH DIRECTORY?

If not . . .

Please give your information to Kathy Conger or email her at secretary@kootenai.church. Also email her a photo!



Church Prayer Chain

If you would like to be added to the email list and receive prayer requests from our church body, please email Aaron Kin at kin-family@icloud.com.

MEMBERSHIP

**April 5
SPRING
MEMBERSHIP CLASS**

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Sign up now at the Welcome Table.

Need a friend with a truck? Do you have a good book recommendation? Is your closet too full? Are you looking for a new toaster?

Put it on the . . .

"KCC Activity Board" on Facebook!



RIDE-SHARING OPPORTUNITY

If you are interested in being paired up with others from your area for this purpose, contact Kathy Conger at secretary@kootenai.church.



THURSDAY MOM'S GROUP will not be meeting in March. Please contact Sarah Krahn (608-719-7656) or Rachel Pierce (608-719-9621) with any questions.

please send me a link to it?) As you are aware, Burke looks at NDEs from all over the world and even chronicles experiences from those who have ended up in Hell. He quotes Scripture extensively in his book and seems to make a plausible case that, indeed, God is revealing what the "pre-afterlife" (if you will) might be like for all people. I am wondering what your thoughts on it might be, given your cessationist view. You mention in *Selling the Stairway to Heaven*:

In all of redemptive history and inspired Scripture, there were only four men who were allowed to see into Heaven: Isaiah (Isaiah 6), Stephen (Acts 7:54–60), Paul (2 Corinthians 12:1–10), and John (Revelation 4–21). In none of those instances did the person die, go to Heaven, and then return to tell about it. Each of these was a vision of Heaven, not a visit to Heaven. Not even Stephen was an exception. He had his vision while dying, but he did not die and then come back to report on his experience. None of the four men who had visions of Heaven did so while their bodies were unconscious, ill, or dead.

So with that idea, is it possible that these NDEs are not of Heaven or of Hell but of some in-between place? It's clear in Scripture that people cannot go back and forth from earth to Heaven—only One could do that, Jesus Christ.

If the Bible is the final authoritative Word of God and nothing should be subtracted or added to it, how do all these accounts fit into the cessationist view?

You mention in your critique of Eben Alexander's experience, "The most viable explanation for Dr. Alexander's experience is that he is genuinely convinced what he saw is true because he has been successfully deceived by the father of lies." I am curious how you would explain how this might work. Does Satan have so much power in our minds, in the afterlife, in the place where NDEs occur (wherever that might be), that he could manipulate so many people to believe that they are on the right track when they are not? And God would not intervene on behalf of His beloved creation because He has already said what He needed to say in the Bible? Is Satan that powerful that he can dupe so many people on a consistent basis around the globe when it comes to afterlife experiences? I'm just not sure how that would work, being that Satan and his demons are not omnipotent, omnipresent, nor omniscient.

Kim, I do appreciate you taking the time to read this. I would cherish a response from you, as I am trying to learn and study more about my faith.

God's richest blessings to you and yours,

Kim

Kim,

Thank you for your kind and inquisitive email. Those are very thoughtful questions. I'll do my best to answer some of them.

First, I have not done a lot of research on the area of NDEs. I am not familiar with Burke's book. I have heard from reliable sources that J. P. Moreland has a great resource on NDEs and philosophical arguments for the existence of the soul. He wrote a book with Gary Habermas titled *Beyond Death: Exploring the Evidence for Immortality*. See also Moreland's book *The Soul*.

You mentioned that Burke is trying to make the plausible case that "God is revealing what the 'pre-afterlife' might be like for all people." I think you identify right there the flaw in his thinking. God has already revealed what the pre-afterlife and the eternal-state afterlife will be for all people. He has revealed this in Scripture. So my point is simply that God doesn't need to reveal anything else regarding that issue. As Jesus said, "They have Moses and the Prophets. If they will not believe their writings, they will not believe even if someone were to rise from the dead" (Luke 16). So for that reason, Burke's contention that God is revealing, needs to reveal, or that we need more revelation is false.

Second question: "Could NDEs be true experiences of some spiritual reality?" Yes, they could. I think the veil between this life and the next is much thinner than we tend to assume. I believe that NDEs are very real experiences of disembodied souls having an encounter of some sort with the spiritual realm. This is not revelation. It is not a trip to Heaven or Hell. This in no way contradicts the cessationist position. Cessationism does not hold that all things supernatural cease to exist. Nor does it say that God doesn't continue to do miraculous or supernatural things. I have no doubt that Don Piper, Eben Alexander, and Colton Burpo may have experienced very real things in their unconscious, drugged, or anesthetized states. I just deny that these things are in any way reliable sources of truth. I further deny that they are necessary pieces of information. As I show in the book, their accounts contradict one another, and more significantly, they contradict Scripture. Therefore, whatever they experienced, it was not God, Jesus, or the true Heaven. Therefore, they were deceived by something or someone else.

Third question, regarding Satan's activity: Yes, I do believe he can deceive people into thinking they are on the right track. He doesn't need to be all-powerful or omnipresent to do that. We can't assume that God "would not intervene on behalf of His beloved creation." I believe God has intervened. He has come in the flesh in the Person of Christ and given us Scripture. Men who reject that revelation are deceived. If they have an NDE that confirms their deception or tricks them into believing something false, they are getting the very thing they desire—lies and falsehood. So, yes. If *Continued on page 8*



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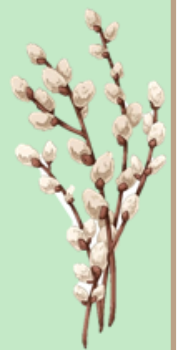
something is not of the truth, it comes from the father of lies, who crafts experiences that lead men to reject Scripture, elevate experience, and deny truth. It is his forte.

Thanks again for your letter. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of these issues. Have a great weekend.

Jim



“He who acquires a heart of wisdom loves his own soul; he who keeps discernment will find good.”
Proverbs 19:8



Good News Club

With the support of KCC leadership, some members of our church have started a Good News Club at Farmin Stidwell Elementary School, and we are excited to announce that they had their first club meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 5, from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Fourteen out of seventeen registered children attended.

This is an exciting, fun-filled after-school club for children in which the Bible is clearly taught with songs, stories, and games! They do need volunteers and support to grow the club. Please see Susan Sisson, Annie Clark, or Lynn Finegan, or text 541-530-4064 or email lynn_finegan@yahoo.com.

