



THE

*Able*

LIFE



SUMMER 2019

Stories of ordinary people in the Carmel Family cultivating lives which abide in Christ to build relationships and live the Gospel with everything.

- 1 | Numbering Our Days
- 3 | The Ministry of Availability
- 4 | Virtual Pursuit
- 5 | WEE Are The World
- 7 | Remembering Sandra
- 8 | Men at Camp
- 11 | Growing a Heart for Prayer
- 12 | Saying Grace
- 13 | A Sweet Journey

AVAILABILITY:  
making the most  
of time



# NUMBERING OUR DAYS

Carmel Family & Friends,

As you read the stories that follow, you'll see a common theme of time stewarded in obedience to the Lord.

You'll read about time given to serve at camp. Time given to pursue a new challenge and learn from disappointment. Time given to befriend the "foreigner" among us. Time given to be in community amid busy schedules. Time given to experience a new country. Time given to be present for a friend. And time given to gather with others in prayer.

Our mission as a church is to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19). That can only happen in our homes, on our streets, in our city and around the world when we surrender our time. Time to ABIDE in Christ daily through His word and prayer. Time to BUILD relationships - new ones, old ones and broken ones - with Christ followers and people far from the Lord. Time to LIVE out the gospel - fully surrendered and with EVERYTHING.

Thoughtfully pray over how you'd answer these questions. Then share your answers with a friend or family member for accountability:

*How will you steward your time this summer to more fully abide in Christ?*

*How will you steward your time this summer to build relationships?*

*How will you steward your time this summer to live the gospel?*

*And what do you count among your "everything" that He is calling you to surrender to advance His kingdom?*

Lord, may we begin each day with a renewed sense of purpose and urgency. And may Your words in Psalm 90:12 be a daily reminder to "number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

Love you Carmel,

*Pastor Alex*

PS. Speaking of time, save the morning of Saturday, September 28. Check out the back cover page for details!

## WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

The Carmel team would love to hear your story! How is God at work in your life? Share your story with a member of our team or email it to [pastor@carmelbaptist.org](mailto:pastor@carmelbaptist.org).



# THE MINISTRY OF AVAILABILITY

## MAKING TIME FOR RELATIONSHIPS

One aspect of living an ABLÉ life is stepping into each day knowing God controls our calendars. For 3 years, S. has served as a missionary in the Middle East. Below she reflects on the richness that comes from entering each day being available to change her plans for His.



God has taught us over the years to leave plenty of margin in our days and as a result, we have met quite a few people in our lives that have needed encouragement, prayers, and spiritual wisdom. Sometimes, it is a very brief encounter with a taxi or Uber driver. Other times, it develops into an ongoing relationship. And relationships take TIME.

What does a ministry of availability look like? First, it begins with prayer. I pray and ask God to use me as He desires. To help me see what He wants me to do.

It means stepping away from my computer when my neighbor asks me to come downstairs for coffee.

It means paying attention to the people around me when I am out on an errand.

It means keeping plenty of "open" spaces in my calendar of commitments.

It means expecting there is a "divine appointment" waiting for me.

There are many things we do that we call ministry. Sometimes, we can get so involved in "official" ministry activities that we miss those divine appointments. But, in my experience, my ministry of availability is the most rewarding.

*So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

*1 Thessalonians 2:8*



Lord, help me to recognize the opportunities You bring my way. Give me the boldness to step into those moments.

# VIRTUAL PURSUIT TOGETHERNESS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

The Pursuit Sunday morning Discipleship Community (DC) recently embarked on an attempt to get more men in small groups where authentic community, fellowship and accountability could occur. The tool - technology! The idea for the virtual small groups grew from one dad's use of Google Hangouts to stay connected to and study the Bible with his three sons who live in three different states.

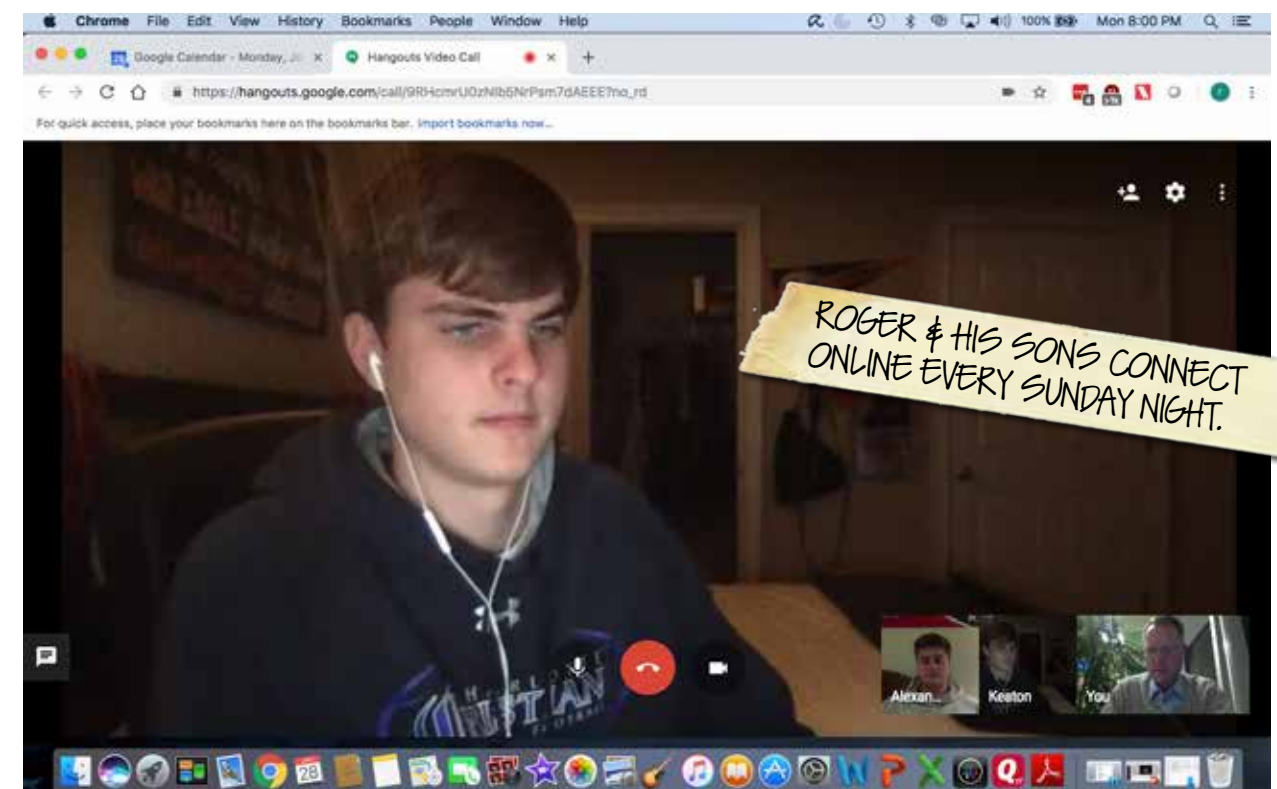
DC leader Roger Gum reflects, "We realized that many men would never show up at church on a Wednesday night or Thursday morning - sometimes because of travel or work schedules and sometimes because of being intimidated. So, we decided to offer an easy on-ramp which we called Virtual Pursuit."

Twenty-five men from the DC participated and were strategically divided into six different groups with a designated facilitator. The smaller group size and virtual nature of the weekly gathering allowed for flexibility when needed.

Together, the groups experienced a 7-week study called *7 Questions that Rattle in the Minds of Most Men* - a study intentionally chosen because of the light reading and homework and the 8-minute weekly video that paved the way for the discussion questions.

Quite a few of the men said Virtual Pursuit is the first men's group they have ever been in, and because of their travel schedules the virtual format is what makes it possible. Roger shared, "We have also seen how the men have been willing to be authentic and vulnerable, and that meeting over video has not dampened this as much as we thought it could. Most of the groups have stayed together and begun a new weekly study for summer."

**Men - if you are ready to connect with other Carmel men in a small group setting, learn more at [carmelbaptist.org/men](http://carmelbaptist.org/men).**





# WEE ARE THE WORLD

## LOCAL MINISTRY BECOMES INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE

*Navigating parenthood at any stage takes the love and support of many friends and family – a community. But what if your family is not close by? What if you are new to a town and are approaching the demands of early education in isolation?*

*109 people move to the Charlotte metro area every day.*

*Approximately 1 in 7 people in Mecklenburg County are foreign-born.*

*Charlotte State of the City Report, 2018*



Cultural misunderstandings are bound to happen in a school setting – from issues in interpreting back-to-school supply lists to parental expectations and perspectives on child independence. WEE School wanted to demonstrate that in caring for each child, they took into consideration the unique background of each family unit. The International Parents' Group not only allowed the international parents to feel seen, but also provided a more convenient channel to communicate concerns or feedback to WEE School administration and teachers.

*"I am originally from Romania, a beautiful Eastern European country, and I have been living in the Queen City for about a year. Joining the International Parents' Group meeting every month was my favorite thing at Carmel WEE School. A wonderful group of moms from every corner of the world, I immediately felt welcomed, and I enjoyed our conversations while tasting goodies and drinks from around the world. For*

*me, this group was a lot of help especially as a newcomer to Charlotte. I made lifetime friendships and learned many things about the city – from the best indoor/outdoor playgrounds and family activities to the best restaurants and homemade cold remedies."*

*"I'm a Scottish lass, married to a Zimbabwean lad, living in Charlotte with our 3 adventurous children! We moved to Charlotte in 2018 for my husband's work, and it's been an interesting cultural adventure. The international group at WEE School was heaven sent at a time when I was struggling to meet other mums and was very homesick. I found a warm atmosphere, coffee, cakes and good chat along with learning where to buy kids shoes (along with more serious things too). No question was considered daft and I laughed a lot...that's important no matter where you're from!"*

If you walked through the WEE School halls this year, you may have noticed a large world map. The parents' group wanted to celebrate the diversity of the school and Charlotte's newcomer culture. Parents were asked to place a small heart sticker on a country or state they called home. The result was truly a burst of hearts across the entire map. From coast to coast, the USA was naturally covered with hearts, but countries including Ukraine, Venezuela, China and Australia contained multiple hearts each. The group counted close to 30 represented countries – an unexpected but proud number of nations.

With the nations walking through Carmel every day, we celebrate the opportunity to represent Jesus to non-believers as well as to partner with other believers from across the globe, who despite having different languages and cultures, are never strangers within the body of Christ.



*Oh Lord, give me eyes to see the nations as You do. Help me to intentionally reach out to those You bring across my path.*

Carmel Baptist WEE School opened its doors in 1972 and provides care and enriching experiences for babies through transitional kindergarten. WEE School also takes pride in partnering with parents during this important stage and welcomes more than 700 children to campus each year. Like much of the greater Charlotte area, the school has seen tremendous growth in enrollment of newcomers from across the US and the world.

As Carmel commits to making disciples of those Nearest, our Neighbors and the Nations, a glance at the WEE School family demographics this past school year quickly revealed that our neighbors are the nations! As a result, this past school year, WEE School established its first International Parents' Group to identify and support the needs of the schools' large multi-ethnic community. Coordinated by a WEE School mom, the group welcomed any parent interested in learning how to parent across cultures. The group, which met once a month, consisted of a wide range of foreign-born, and 1st generation Americans as well as spouses of foreign-born citizens. Home countries included China, Romania, Cameroon, India, Ukraine, Brazil, Zimbabwe, Mexico, Scotland, and more.

*"We often parent, teach, and even worship through our own cultural lens, and it's easy to feel confused or isolated when your lens isn't the same as others. There are a lot of questions when it comes to parenting young children, and it was nice to sense a camaraderie among mothers from across the globe asking the same questions and sharing cultural-based solutions."*

*– WEE School International Parents' Group Coordinator*



# REMEMBERING SANDRA

## THE BLESSINGS OF BEING THERE

*Sherry Barlowe reflects on the importance of listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and reminds us that this incredible gift - given to us by our Lord - can provide us with unbelievable blessings and comfort.*

One of the unique ladies I teach on Sunday morning had been battling lung cancer for approximately a year. She was the perfect example of a strong, self-sufficient woman. The class desperately wanted to help her when she had doctor visits, chemo infusions, radiation and all of the things that go along with a serious illness. The fact that she had no immediate family in Charlotte made us even more eager. She was a master of presenting the image that she had everything handled. On Sunday mornings she came through the door smiling, bubbly and looking absolutely beautiful!

She received her chemo through a port in her chest and it wasn't working properly. Her doctor decided to remove it and put in a new one on the other side. This was surgery but she was adamant that she had it under control. The Holy Spirit's urging to me was that even though it would be going against her wishes, she needed someone with her.

My friend and fellow class member, Jan and I went to the hospital and just ignored her protests! We were able to go with her into the prep room to help her get ready for surgery. We had the opportunity to interact with the surgeon and the nurses and help her answer their many questions as they prepared her for the procedure. During this time, we came to realize that we were definitely meant to be there because she was so much sicker and weaker than she led us to believe. We were able to express our love to her during a unique time of her journey.

This happened on a Thursday. On Monday, Sandra was hospitalized with a "no visitors" restriction. Within 2 weeks she was with the Lord in heaven.

I loved her, and I miss her. She was a breath of fresh air in our class each Sunday. I will be forever grateful for my special time with her on that Thursday in the hospital.

*Be available. Don't miss the blessing.*



# MEN AT CAMP

## TAKING TIME OFF FOR A HOLY HARVEST

*This summer, hundreds of adults are volunteering at Carmel camps. We asked a few men who have faithfully served both during the school year and at camp to reflect on their experience and why it is important enough for them to take time off work to volunteer in this way.*



### Peter Tuz - 9th Grade DC Leader

I joined Student Ministry because I felt there was more to church than just showing up to be fed. When I was young, I had youth leaders who mentored me. Their influence and life experiences made such an impact on my life.

Camp Carmel is a catalyst and a springboard for our Student Ministry and a safe place for students to participate in crazy activities, team games, small groups and worship. But more importantly, it's a moment away from the busy world that provides intentional and dedicated quiet time to focus on Christ.

As iron sharpens iron, after camp we continue to meet throughout the year to read scripture, serve, and pray for each other.

### John Koelz - 9th Grade DC Leader

I used to think I was called to serve in adult and men's ministries, but when my daughters became part of Student Ministry, I decided to get involved.

I was a little unsure at first about serving, but several people encouraged me to give it a try. Looking back, I can now say that serving in Student Ministry is one of the most incredible blessings I have received at Carmel. And as a leader, I was invited to help with Camp Carmel and The Pause retreat. Both have given me the chance to spend more time pouring into the lives of our youth and strengthen connections.



[Read more... -->](#)



*Lord, open my eyes to the needs around me & then move me to action at your prompting.*



# MEN AT CAMP

## TAKING TIME OFF FOR A HOLY HARVEST (CON'T)

Roger Kortekaas - 6th Grade 11:00 Leader

Five years ago, I looked out over the room full of adult Christians in my Sunday morning Discipleship Community and realized there was no new fruit of salvation to be had among these long-time Christ followers in my class.

So, I inquired about serving in the Children's Ministry and on promotion Sunday 2014, I began spending my Sunday mornings with fifth graders. It was just the fit I was looking for! The next summer, I jumped on the opportunity to extend my volunteer experience to CarmelKidz camp. The camp theme that summer was Tabernacle with all study and activities focused on God's Tabernacle - which includes building a scale model of Israel's pre-Temple traveling place of worship.

Make no mistake, the camp venue at Look-up Lodge in Travelers Rest, SC is a warm vacation spot in July. But the cabins are air conditioned, the showers are warm and the afternoon showers are a blessing. **However, it was the awe and wonder in the faces of 200+ CarmelKidz that convinced me there was fruit to be harvested at camp!** On closing night, the children met at the completed Tabernacle and saw first-hand the Bronze Altar, the Basin, the Gold Lampstand, the Altar of Incense and of course the Ark of the Covenant. I will never forget ushering a small group of children into the Holy of Holies. I was hooked.

There are three other camps (Covenant Camp, Boot Camp and Genesis Camp) so Carmel Kidz can attend a different camp each year of their 3rd through 6th grade experience. I've been blessed to attend them all and this year will go full circle by living the Tabernacle Camp again.

I thought about dropping camp from my volunteer list after attending all four, but rewatching the camp video and seeing the faces of those 3rd grade, first-time campers, reminded me of John 15 and all that fruit waiting to be harvested.



Russ Taylor - 5th Grade 9:30 Leader

The past 2 years I have served at camp and I **marvel at how I saw the Holy Spirit work in those kids.** I saw it in the worship time when even the stiffest boys will raise their hands and learn a step or two of the worship song moves. I saw it in the younger campers as they'd meet new friends and depart 5 days later with deep relationships. I saw it in the 6th Graders as they led worship our last night at camp.

**But what amazed me most was how God worked in my own life during that week.** Working as a 6th Grade Shepherd is exhausting. We're up early and on the move all day. When the rest of the camp gets an hour quiet time or nap, the 6th graders are preparing to lead worship. When other grades go lights out, the 6th grade has late night events that keep you running until even the glow sticks go dim. Despite this, as the week went on I never really felt tired. **The magnitude of the responsibility to pour into the kids under your supervision truly feeds the soul.**

After returning from camp, I sat in an urgent care center with a torn muscle in my left leg and swollen right knee trying to explain to the physician why I thought running barefoot on a wet field with 6th graders playing glow-in-the-dark capture the flag was a good idea. He went on to deliver the line every man fears, "Mr. Taylor you're too old for that". But the joke was on him because **through the experience of camp I had never felt younger.**



*Oh Lord, raise up a generation to love  
You & follow You with their whole heart.*





# GROWING A HEART FOR PRAYER

## THE POWER OF PERSEVERANCE

*Kathy Mendieta began her new life in Christ at age 24 with the simple but powerful prayer of repentance. Since that day, Kathy's heart for prayer has continued to grow.*

*"God answered my prayer and changed my life forever. That encouraged me to keep on praying!" And today she remains steadfast in her commitment to seek the Lord's will. "There are prayers I have been praying for 40 years that I do not yet see manifested. That doesn't mean God doesn't hear me or that I'm not praying according to His will. God calls us to persevere and to wait upon Him. (James 1:2-4). And sometimes, I don't know what to pray and all I can whisper is, 'Help!'"*

*I have found that it's not the practiced, polished prayer that impresses God. He longs for prayer that comes from the heart.*

Kathy's prayer life has been enriched by Daughters of the King, a community open to all women who seek to gather regularly to pray. *"Our love for Christ and each other binds us together. We rejoice together when we see God move and when the battle is most intense, I am thankful to have daughters of the High King of heaven who will lift me up in prayer. Everyone is welcome. No one is judged. There is a chair waiting for each Carmel woman at Daughters of the King!"*



# SAYING GRACE

## POINTING THE WAY THROUGH PRAYER

*Don Lane serves as an intercessor with the Carmel Prayer Ministry. Below he reflects on his first introduction to prayer and the impact it has had on his faith journey.*

When I was a young child, sometime during my fourth year, I remember hearing and seeing someone praying for the first time in my life. The occasion was our family sitting at the kitchen table before breakfast one morning and the person praying was my dad. Didn't know it then but he and my mother were praying intercessory prayers to the Lord on behalf of their four children - that God would extend His grace to us. Around this same time, our parents told us they were going to begin a special family time of Bible reading in the evenings after dinner. They wanted us to come to know the truth about how the world came to be, what sin was, the consequences of our sin and the remedy for sin provided for us in Jesus. Our parents didn't summon us every evening after dinner but when they did, we were together for about 30 - 40 minutes, always ending in our parents interceding for each of their children to, at some point, confess to God we were sinners and to put our trust in Jesus alone for the forgiveness of our sins.

That was the sovereign, faith incubating plan the Holy Spirit used to bring me to Jesus, to usher me to a point of decision a year and a half later. People prayed along with my parents for my salvation and in His way and time He delighted to give a yes answer to those prayers. He convicted me of my own sin, helped me understand that I wouldn't be reborn in Christ by being a good boy or obeying my parents. Rather, I was cleansed of sin and its guilt only by His grace through faith.

By the time I came to Carmel, after the organization I worked for moved to Charlotte, it turned out to be the last three years Dr. Poplin was serving as senior pastor before he retired. I was so encouraged in my own faith as the leaders of Carmel called us all to pray for the pastor search committee and the whole congregation as we sought His will for our next senior pastor. We humbled ourselves, we watched, we waited, we fasted, we prayed to the Lord to bring the pastoral couple of His choosing. I still give praise and thanks to the Lord for how he piloted us through that transition!



*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

*Hebrews 4:16*



# A SWEET JOURNEY CAKEABLE MADE CAPABLE

*John, Renee, and Caroline Ratcliffe are learning how a simple hobby like baking can be the expression of an ABLE life.*



This hobby started in 2003 when Renee, with the help of her mother-in-law, decorated a cake for Caroline's birthday. Years later, she discovered that cakes and cake pops were a deliciously effective way to raise funds for their mission trips. With mission teams from Carmel Baptist Church, Joni and Friends Ministries, and Carmel Christian School, this family has served in Albania, the Dominican Republic, and Flat Rock, NC. They began to see baking as an offering to God, and He multiplied the outcome, like loaves and fishes (except sweeter).

Last December, the Ratcliffes had an opportunity to bake cookies for a celebration at Mosaic Style with Love. This experience encouraged them to ask God to show them more ways to interweave their love for baking with the call to love our neighbors, as well as the nations. After participating in Joy Prom in February and hearing Carmel leaders challenge the church body to serve the special needs community throughout the year, they realized that baking could be their opportunity to engage, love and serve persons with disabilities.

As Christ-followers, we are called to honor God's image in every person and to serve and love those who are often marginalized in our society. In Charlotte, as elsewhere in the United States, there is a significant gap in the employment rates between working-age people with and without disabilities. With Renee's degree and background in special education, the Ratcliffe's hope to bridge this gap by providing a context where people with special needs can recognize their unique strengths and maximize their abilities to contribute to a working environment.

*"With this desire in our hearts, the name Cakeable Charlotte came to life. 'Cakeable' is meant to sound like 'capable.' We want to celebrate the God-given capability in every person! The ABLE part of our name reminds us of our mission to Abide in Christ, Build Relationships, and Live the Gospel with Everything. And so, our everyday goal is to offer our baking hobby to God and to be CakeABLE," John explains.*



*Lord, help me to do whatever I do for Your glory alone*



Since the cookie celebration at Mosaic, this family has started the process of turning their hobby into Cakeable Charlotte. They're taking classes at CPCC to learn how to build a nonprofit food-based business and connecting with and learning from local organizations which serve people with disabilities. They are searching for space that can accommodate their varied needs. Several pastors and Carmel members have come alongside to guide them in the sometimes-overwhelming task of building a nonprofit, and they are grateful for their experiences, skills, insight, feedback, and prayers.

*"This venture is daily showing us 1 Corinthians 12 in action," explains Renee.*

*God equips His body, with the various giftings and strengths of each part, to accomplish His work.*

***When we encounter a rejection from a potential site, we're learning to offer it back to the Lord. We trust that every disappointment has an element of appointment in it - for God is appointing His perfect wisdom and timing to meet Cakeable's need."***

As they wait on God's plans to unfold, He has given Cakeable Charlotte some exciting opportunities. Presently, they're offering one-on-one training with students in their homes. Their first student helped Renee create cake pops to celebrate CarmelKidz Associate Leah Kilcoin's retirement. During Carmel Serve weekend, Congregations for Kids partnered a group of teens in foster care with mentors for a day of sweet creations where they learned that cake decorating is an employable skill. And this summer, they are partnering with Gigi's Playhouse to provide baking classes for young adults who have Down Syndrome. They're also using the summer to develop a menu of baked goods with the "Cakeable Club" - young adults who can offer their assistance and feedback, using their unique abilities and preferences.

It's been a sweet journey for this family, and it's exciting to wait and watch what God is doing. As Renee reminds us *"He is able (Ephesians 3:20), and He makes all of us ABLE."*



*"Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin."*

*- Zechariah 4:10*



**SAVE THE DATE**

The **PATH** of

**LOVE**

**PARENT SUMMIT 2019**

Saturday, September 28, 2019  
8:00am - 12:30pm



Parents, grandparents & ALL who pour into the next generation will be equipped, encouraged and challenged to intentionally disciple the next generation and mark key milestones on the path of life.

Registration opens Monday, August 5.  
Childcare provided for children 6 weeks - 5th grade.



Carmel is committed to making disciples of those Nearest, our Neighbors and the Nations.

1145 Pineville-Matthews Road / Matthews, NC 28105 / 704.847.8575 / [carmelbaptist.org](http://carmelbaptist.org)