

Living under God’s smile

Recently, I’ve been cleaning out my work space, sifting through 30-plus years of stuff I’ve accumulated. I’m left with my flying pigs that readers have given me, a 1924 hymnal and my “girl on a swing” greeting card that I bought about 20 years ago and have kept on my desk. The image is of a young girl on a swing, mid flight. Her face is tilted skyward, and she looks like she’s utterly enjoying the feeling of momentum, like she’s flying. The message inside says: “Fly high. Hope the wind is always at your back.” However, I didn’t choose the card for the message, but for the image of the girl. Even now, 20 years later,



NANCY KENNEDY
GRACE NOTES

whenever I look at it I’m struck by the realization that the girl, leaning back, easily pumping her legs, closing her eyes while the wind blows through her hair as her entire being is warmed by the sun — the girl is me. She’s not who I want to be or hope to be, but because of Jesus, she is me. She is secure and free, forgiven, the delight of God the Father, and in Christ, she is me. If you are in Christ, she is you, too. Jesus said that if he sets a person free, then that person is “free indeed” (John 8:36). And if Jesus has set us free, if we’re “free indeed,” then shouldn’t we all be out on the swing sets swinging to the sky, trying to touch the clouds or the

neighbor’s tree, experiencing the holy wind of God at our backs, convinced that God is well pleased with us because of Jesus, swinging just for the sheer pleasure of it? At my church we used to sing a simple chorus: “God has smiled on me. He has set me free. God has smiled on me. He’s been good to me.” At one time I knew I belonged to Jesus and I knew he loved me, but only as long as I didn’t screw up. I lived with a sense that there’s a line you can’t cross, although I wasn’t sure where the line was. But from God’s perspective, once someone becomes a follower of Jesus, it’s a done deal, although often from our perspective, we’re not sure about the smiling part. Here’s the condensed version of how I know God smiles on

us: The Father smiles on Jesus, the only one to ever live a perfect, sinless life, obeying the law of God to the last comma and semicolon, and who died for those who never could be perfect. God raised him from the dead and now, for those who belong to Jesus by grace alone through faith alone, God the Father smiles on them too. God’s smile is for all of his children, not just for Jesus. Not only that, but we can’t escape it — ever — because it has nothing to do with what we do or don’t do, but has everything to do with the One who has redeemed us. That’s what Jesus meant with his dying last words: “It is finished.” Even when you’ve committed the same sin for the 11 millionth time, when you think the Bible

is dry as dirt, when your faith is cold and your temper is hot, at your lowest, ugliest moments, God smiles on you. Don’t misunderstand — if you do something wrong, God will correct you and it may be painful, but he will never leave you, never forsake you, never not be your Father. It’s like this: Once you learn how to swing you can never unlearn it. And once you’ve discovered the freedom you already have in Christ and once you know it so deeply that it becomes a part of you, you won’t ever unknow it. So, fly high dear friends. It is finished. Christ is risen, and we are free indeed. Contact Nancy Kennedy at 352-564-2927 (leave a message) or email at nkennedy@chronicleonline.com.

DONE

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Smith said she thought Council had done a good job. “Was there something specific that we just frivolously spent money on or didn’t put thought into it?” Christopher said it wasn’t so much “frivolous spending” but a need to be “more focused on future expenses.” Smith said being focused and better spending habits are not the same thing. Whalen interrupted from the audience again. “I take exception to ‘frivolous.’” The conversation

turned contentious, with the mayor trying to explain that he was talking about making sure money is there for needs; not doing that is what he said he finds frivolous. The finance committee discussion veered even further off the rails when Whalen brought up the city’s \$125,000 loan for the new fire truck, questioning its necessity when the money was already there for the purchase. “Where’s that money?” Whalen asked. “...How is there a deficit?” Crupper confirmed, “The money was there ... we approved the money in the budget to pay for it without borrowing money.” Money was moved around in the line item budget to balance the budget and pay for the truck, he explained.

Former fire chief Josh Willoughby brought the opportunity for the low interest “125,000 loan to Council’s attention, Crupper said. “That’s how it came to be.” Crupper went on to praise the conscientiousness of the city superintendents, who “really watch their dollars.”

AUDIT UPDATE

The mayor introduced the audit update by saying the state was still reviewing whether or not to come in and audit the clerk’s office. In the meantime, Christopher said they recommended having “Paul Maddox, who has a longstanding history with the city, perform a very specific limited scope [forensic] audit.” Maddox was agreeable, according to Christopher. Council members expressed displeasure that the state’s advice was being considered over their own recommendation for an outside auditor and bemoaned how much time had already been

DISCUSSION ON TRANSCRIBING COUNCIL MINUTES

Councilmember Jayson Payne brought up the matter of the minutes being unavailable for the public. No 2025 minutes have been put on the website for public view, he explained. Payne said he had previously put forward the idea of using transcription software to streamline the process of generating the minutes. The mayor said the minutes are the sole responsibility of the city clerk. “She is extremely swamped and bogged down.” Henson read KRS 61.835 which states minutes must be available for “public inspection at reasonable times no later than immediately following the next meeting of the body.” Are you okay by breaking the law like that?” Christopher said no, but reiterated the clerk’s office had too many other issues to be resolved. Councilmember John Coleman asked City Attorney Frank Wichmann if it was true the law was being broken. Wichmann said the statute requires “minutes to be prepared and approved by the mayor, not the city council.” He said it is not an uncommon custom, though, for cities to delay minutes until they are approved by council, but the statute doesn’t require that. “Part of the problem is the content of the minutes.” Recording detailed discussion is not required, only actions taken (motions, votes, results). If only the actions were included “then the preparation of the minutes wouldn’t take so long,” Wichmann pointed out. Henson pointed out that detailed or not, none of the 2025 minutes are available, “therefore we are not abiding by the statute.” Interim city clerk Lisa Clifton said she planned to work on Good Friday to catch up “her minutes” and do what she could to tackle former clerk Alex Cummins’s.

DISCUSSION OF SALARY OF INTERIM FIRE CHIEF

Dave Henson requested a discussion of interim superintendent salaries. His main issue, he said, is that current interim fire chief Todd Alexander is being paid “half the pay that previous interim fire chiefs have been paid.”

lost, especially with the budget process looming. Retired City Clerk Vivian Link, who has recently returned to help tackle the clerk’s office mess, was tasked with reviewing departmental salaries with an eye to seeing how much was left in the budget for fire department salaries, Christopher said. He got the answers, reviewed them with Clifton and talked to Alexander about the matter. An executive order will be issued by end of the week effective April 21 to resolve the issue. In the subsequent circuitous discussion, Whalen stepped to the podium, demanding to know why Alexander was not paid the same as Rick Willoby was paid when he served as interim. Smith interjected “We have not seen a budget. We don’t know!” Whalen said he would put in an open records request for the budget the next day and “hand deliver it to each and every one of you.” His voice rising an octave, he asked, “Why ain’t they getting their budget? Is it some kind of pissing contest?” He went on to advocate for Alexander to have comp time, insurance, and adequate pay. Addressing Christopher he said, “I don’t think it’s right what you’re doing to him or anybody else.” Christopher thanked him for his input and recognized Coleman, who commented, “A couple of things I see wrong. You’re expecting a man to do a job when you’re not paying him what the job pays; and then you appoint him to be in that position without knowing if we have the money yet or not, so that’s wrong; the fact that you don’t know if we have the money is wrong.” Christopher said that he did not hire Alexander. “I consulted with Frank Wichmann; I said, ‘who steps in as the fire chief and the clerk,’ and he said, ‘The assistant; they have to act as interim.’” Coleman asked Whalen if Rick Willoby, who served as interim after Whalen’s retirement, was his assistant. He was not, Whalen said. Christopher said the difference was Wha-

len retired; Willoughby resigned. Again, he said the money had to be figured out first, and that took a while. Coleman asked, “Do you think if you had done the audit when we asked you to a long time ago we would have already known that and it would have been taken care of?” Crupper pointed out former chief Josh Willoughby would have been paid through June 30 at \$33 per hour. “That money’s still here ... Pay the man!” As the discussion wound down, Ronnie Maines spoke out. “If Todd didn’t take it over we probably might not have a fire department, and he deserves the money, and

I’ll tell you what, I sit over here and I get so aggravated. Since I’ve been on we ain’t done nothing. We talk about it, and it’s just aggravating ... Our wheels keep rolling, and we never get nothing done.”

WILLIAMSTOWN MARINA UPDATE

At the April April 7 council meeting, Christopher opened the single sealed bid received for replacement of the marina’s fuel lines. The \$202,844.57 bid was almost \$150,000 higher than expected and was rejected. Mark Cummins, marina lessee, said he has since met with M&M Mid-Valley Service & Supply, the

company that placed the bid, at the marina to show them the site and discuss what actually needed to be done. There will be another bid session. M&M told Cummins they will submit a new bid that should be significantly lower. Cummins indicated a second company, Grau, said they’d be ready to submit a bid as well.

SIGN UPDATE

After a conversation about when or if a check had been sent to Norfolk Southern for the lease of the railroad right-of-way for a Williamstown sign at the junction of highways 25 and 36, the meeting was adjourned.



CYNTHIANA DEMOCRAT

Staff Writer Wanted

JOB DESCRIPTION

Responsible for generating local news and information for print and online, including the gathering of content for The Cynthiana Democrat and its special sections. Hard news reporting, feature writing, photography and editing of content are key functions. The successful candidate will have a passion for community journalism and be eager to grow with the company.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Write compelling, accurate and timely news, informational features and produce special publication content for paper.
- Take and produce digital photos with accurate and informative captions for publication.
- Update news and information in a timely manner for publication on the newspaper’s website.
- Prepare copy and images in our system for pagination on deadline.

OTHER ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

- Proactively and effectively communicate with the editor and other departments.
- Effectively communicate, plan and execute strategy and tactics with the editor.
- Responsible for participation in the development and successful implementation of special sections as directed by the editor while working closely with the advertising team on content and deadlines
- Assist with other newspapers in the group when necessary.

This position reports directly to the editor with some night and weekend work as necessary for timely news and information coverage. Paxton Media Group is an equal opportunity employer and offers a competitive benefits package for full time employees.

JOB TYPE: Full-time
SCHEDULE:

- Evenings as needed
- Monday to Friday
- Weekends as needed

WORK LOCATION: In person

Send resumes to Ben Carlson at bcarlson@paxtonmedia.com





MOTION

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After roughly two hours, Judge Schrand called for a brief recess. When court returned to session he announced that he would deliver his

ruling via conference call with the attorneys the next morning, Friday, April 18. Christopher’s motion was denied; the April 21 hearing date remained unchanged except for venue, which was moved to the old courthouse.

NKU GRANT COUNTY
OPEN HOUSE
APRIL 29, 4-6 P.M.
390 N. Main Street, Williamstown, KY 41097