

My Guide

By Janet Berrill

Back in April I traveled to China with three friends. In many ways, China is very different from the United States. The first thing that struck me was the written language. Gone were the familiar letters I was used to seeing. Instead, every sign was covered with Chinese characters that looked nothing like words to me. I've traveled in Europe before, and even though I didn't speak the language, at least I could recognize the alphabet. Not so in China.

On our first day in Beijing we were on our own. We decided to visit the Summer Palace, but getting there wasn't easy. Since we couldn't read the signs, figuring out the public transportation system was a challenge. We often had to rely on the kindness of strangers, most of whom spoke very little English.

Then there was the matter of paying for things. China is almost entirely cashless. Although we had downloaded the payment apps before our trip, only one of the four of us was actually able to get them to work. Even buying something as simple as a snack became an adventure.

Communication was another hurdle. Unlike many places in Europe, very few people in China speak English. Since my Chinese vocabulary consisted of little more than *shieh shieh* ("thank you"), conversations were usually limited to smiles, gestures, and hoping we understood one another.

Fortunately, on our second day we met up with our guide, Oliver. Oliver is a native Chinese man who works as a tour guide, and he was wonderful. He took care of everything for us. He drove us to each destination, purchased our tickets, ordered our meals, spoke with the people we met, and answered our endless questions. We didn't have to worry about how

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Congratulations to Our Graduates!



"My Guide," Continued...

to get somewhere, what to order, or how to communicate. We were in his country. He knew the language, the customs, and the people, and we trusted him completely.

After a week in Beijing, it was time to travel to another city. Unfortunately, Oliver would not be going with us. One of my friends began to feel nervous. "What are we going to do without Oliver? How will we manage in a country that is so foreign to us?"

Her question reminded me of another group of travelers who were about to enter unfamiliar territory. Just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Moses encouraged Joshua with these words: *"The LORD Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."* (Deuteronomy 31:8)

Just as God went before the Israelites into a land they had never known, He was going before us. It was comforting to have Oliver with us—to have someone we could see, someone who knew the way. But God is an even greater Guide. We may not see Him with our eyes, but His Holy Spirit lives within every believer. He knows every road ahead, every conversation, every challenge, and every need before we encounter them.

God had taken care of us in Beijing, and He would continue to take care of us wherever we traveled. He had promised never to leave us nor forsake us. That promise brought peace to my friend, and it continues to bring peace to me. My hope is that it will do the same for anyone who feels uncertain about the future. We never travel through life alone. Our Guide is always with us. Oliver knew the roads of China. God knows the road of my life. I was grateful for Oliver's guidance for one week, but I am even more grateful for God's guidance that never ends.

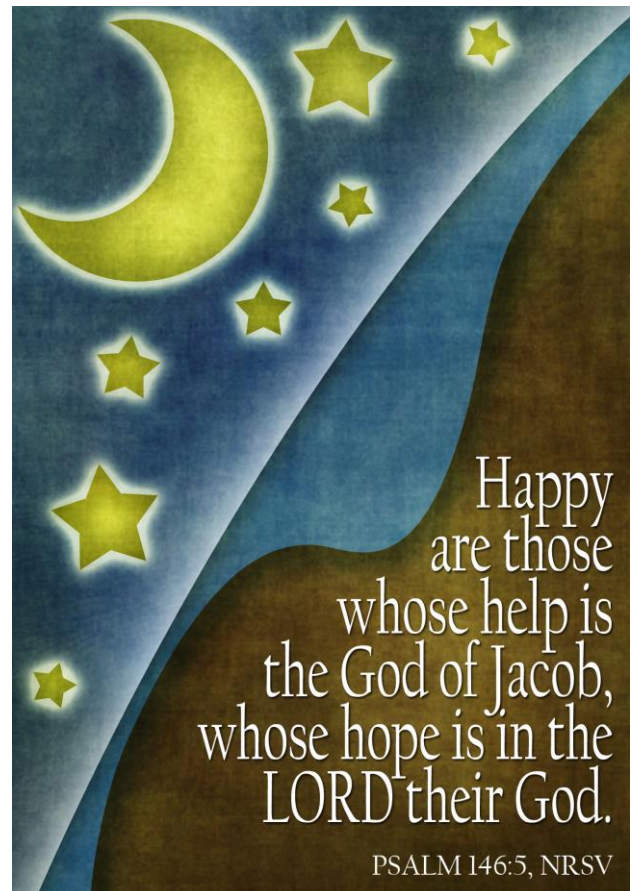


Happy Birthday!

Blessings to all who celebrate a birthday this month. May you feel the love, joy and presence of the Lord as we all celebrate your special day with prayers and warmest wishes.

Barbara MacQueen
Kenneth Bills
Joanna John
Tingting Sun

August 11
August 13
August 15
August 27



Elders' Corner

By Ken Bills

The hot days of summer have arrived in full force, and with the sweltering heat, the seasonal thunderstorms have also begun. As many of our fellow pet owners can no doubt attest, thunderstorms can be rough on pets. Our two cats are uneasy when thunderstorms pass through. Lucy, our 40-pound labradoodle, is distressed by the mere sound of heavy rain on our skylights; thunder and lightning absolutely terrify her.

Lucy's fears make each thunderstorm an "experience," and never more than during the night, when lightning lights up the bedroom and thunder rumbles and booms. Normally, Lucy sleeps in her dog bed on the floor at the foot of our bed, and she knows that she is not permitted to sleep with us. But when a thunderstorm starts during the middle of the night, her fear overcomes her training, and she sheepishly jumps onto the bed. At that point, the bed is a crowded place: Cindy, Lucy, our two cats and me. But Cindy and I don't have the heart to turn her away. As we shelter together through the thunder, our bed becomes a refuge in the storm. The three feet between the floor and our bed is not enough to shut out the lightning or quiet the thunder, but Lucy knows who she trusts to watch over her.

On some stormy nights, my thoughts turn to Noah and the ark. (Genesis 8) Like our bed, I imagine that the ark was a pretty crowded place, between Noah, his family and two of every kind of animal. I get a bit crabby when thunderstorms wake us several nights in a row. I can hardly imagine what enduring forty days and nights of rain must have felt like to Noah, much less an additional 100 days or so after the rain stopped for the ark to run aground on the mountains of Ararat plus another few months until the waters had receded enough for Noah and the animals to leave the ark. The

ark was God's means of deliverance for Noah and the animals, and the ark, and the rainbow, remain a powerful sign and symbol of God's salvation and love for us. Noah was protected and sheltered in the ark the midst of rain and the flood, but it's worth noticing that the flood still came. Noah had to live through it, and I doubt it was an easy time.

Jesus did, and still can, calm the wind and the waves with a word as He did for His disciples in boat during a storm on the Sea of Galilee. "Master, Master, we are perishing!" the disciples cried. "And [Jesus] awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm." (Luke 8:4). And He still delights when we cry out to Him for deliverance from trouble.

But calming the wind and rain is not always the way God chooses to work. Sometimes He preserves us through trials and afflictions instead. In those times when the thunder and lightning of our trials are not abated, God would, I think, be pleased if we were (by His grace) able to draw near to Him with the same trust that Lucy shows in Cindy and me on those stormy nights of summer.

Financial Update

(Through June 30, 2026)

	Actual	Budget
Income	\$79,592	\$88,500
Expense	\$110,353	\$88,500

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"
Philippians 4:19

*"Be still before the Lord and wait
patiently for him; do not fret when
people succeed in their ways, when they
carry out their wicked schemes."*
Psalm 37:7

Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

***From Where Shall My Help Come?
Psalm 121:1***

One of the perks of being a professional Christian counselor is that I have the privilege of seeing the truth and power of God's Word at work in hurting people as they heal and grow. And since all truth is God's truth, reputable secular mental health research often substantiates and supports Biblical principles and underscores its importance. One good example is the power of our mind and our will to understand and manage the negative emotions that accompany the unavoidable hardships of living in a fallen world as a fallen creature. The way we choose to think about a situation can have a significant impact on our outlook and perspective as we persevere through trials and challenging situations.

We are made in the image of an emotional God, and emotions are a gift from our Creator. While positive emotions give us pleasure, negative emotions often create confusion. We don't know what to do with them, and we try to avoid or get rid of them without getting too deep in the emotional trenches. But all emotions are valuable! They give us information that goes beyond what our five senses can provide. The challenge is to use our minds to understand and manage our emotions. And as we use our minds to apply God's truth, we are enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit to recognize that as genuinely difficult as our situation may be, no trial is beyond the Lord and His redemptive purposes.

A mental health strategy that I have found particularly helpful is the practice of asking oneself, "Is there another way to look at this?" when faced with difficulties that are generating negative emotions and mindset. This isn't about minimizing or denying our emotions; rather it is about using our minds and allowing God's truth to broaden our perspective.

A little while back, I was feeling overwhelmed with too many challenges in ministry and in family life. I quickly reached the point where even the smallest inconvenience provoked my grumbling, and my outlook most definitely lacked the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen that is the fruit of faith. But as I began to seek the Lord, bemoaning my lack of internal resources, He reminded me that His resources are inexhaustible. Turning my focus to the Lord's abundance instead of remaining fixed on my own poverty helped me to see the Lord's goodness and welcome His redeeming work in my life. And again, this wasn't an exercise in minimizing or denying my emotions. Quite the opposite! My negative emotions sent a loud and clear message that I needed help, the Lord's help!

Without doubt, King David made it his practice to respond to tribulation by turning his thoughts to the Lord. His words in Psalm 13 give us a good sample:

*How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?
Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;
Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death*

*Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557) or
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**If you have any items or information you would
like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:**

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