

THE HARAN HERALD

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026



HARANBAPTIST.COM

7539 Old Bent Mountain Road,
Roanoke, VA 24018

PASTOR'S THOUGHTS

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. —2 Corinthians 5:17

Ah, winter is here! New Year's resolutions, diets, gym memberships and removing all the Christmas decorations. Some are praying for more snow; some are praying for less snow (you know where I stand). It doesn't matter which one a person prays for, God has the final say. The new year usually brings a lot of well-meaning decisions that are meant to change our lives for the better.

I was watching a video of Mike Lindell (the My Pillow guy). He announced his candidacy for the governorship of Minnesota in this mid-term election. Listening to his testimony, I learned how he became a new creation. He went from being a gambling crack addict to the CEO of his company.

Years ago, we had a group go to World Changers in Chattanooga, TN where the pastor of a large Baptist church shared his testimony of overcoming drug addiction and selling drugs to becoming a pastor. Thus, a huge change in his life. A new creation is not something new! Both men were at a low place in life, yet Christ was able to make them new creations, sold out for the Gospel! How does this happen? PRAYER and sharing!

Look at this statement from Paul Chitwood of the International Mission Board:

As we approach Christmas, I find myself reflecting on a simple but profound truth: somewhere in the world today, someone will hear the name of Jesus for the very first time.

*This may be a young man in a city where churches do not exist. A mother searching for peace and hope. A student far from home. A father who has never met a Christian. For them, the name of Jesus is not familiar or celebrated. It is entirely new. And when they hear it—clearly, lovingly, and often in their own language—it may be the very first moment eternity with Christ becomes a possibility in their lives. The lost don't always know they are lost. **But they know when they are found.***

Moments like these happen because missionaries are present long enough to build trust, learn a language, and share the hope of Christ faithfully.

And that presence is made possible through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

As a body of believers, we worship, praise, and glorify God in His church. Outside His church we are commanded to make disciples. When we live our faith boldly and share our faith proudly, we too become missionaries for Christ! Silence is not an option. Several have already used "Share Jesus Without Fear" with mixed results. It doesn't matter what the result is, they shared! God is responsible for results, not us! Keep up the great work, Haran Baptist, God is working through you!

In the coming weeks you will be hearing more about the direction of Haran Baptist Church. Moving God's church forward and making disciples is a priority for any church. As we move into the new year, I pray everyone will resolve to become more involved. As Evangelist David Ring once said, "God does not want our ability, He wants our availability!"

"But if you refuse to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD."
—Joshua 24:15 (NLT)

Together we can make a difference for God's kingdom.

—Pastor Don

UPCOMING MEETINGS

JAN 4 | 12:00 Church council

If you are a committee or department head, please plan to stay for this meeting where we report on the ministries of the church and schedule upcoming events.

JAN 5 | 6:30 Deacons

JAN 10 | 8:30 Brotherhood breakfast
(at the church)

JAN 11 | 12:00 Business meeting

We will vote on the 2026 church budget at this meeting. Copies of the budget are in the office.

MUSIC NOTES



But you are a chosen people,
a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
a people belonging to God,
**THAT YOU MAY DECLARE THE PRAISES
OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS
INTO HIS WONDERFUL LIGHT.**

1 Peter 2:9

THANK YOU to all of our musicians who gather many times each week to do just that! Thank you to those who sing, those who play, and those who do both. Thank you for coming early and staying late, for practicing at home and in the car, for always wanting to push yourselves to do your best. Thank you for saying

no to other things, for coming to rehearsal on your one free evening, for sliding in straight from work. Thank you to those who come voluntarily, to those who come because your mothers make you, and to those who make your mothers come. Thank you to those who take part in more than one ensemble because you just can't get enough.

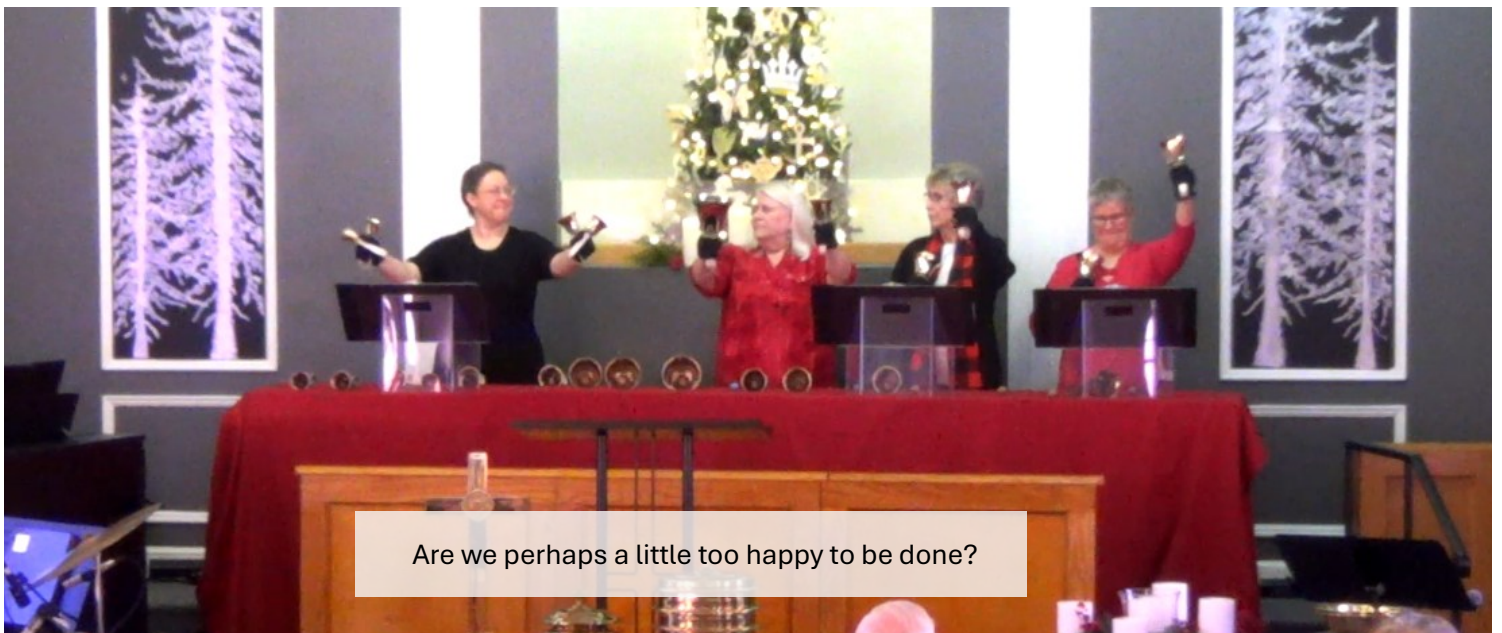
We are His people! God has brought us together as a family and put His song in our hearts. Through His grace and mercy, we enter 2026 not in darkness but in His wonderful light. That's why our songs pour out! Thank you to all our family of musicians for bringing your gifts as an offering to the Lord. —Anna Ruth



The public image:



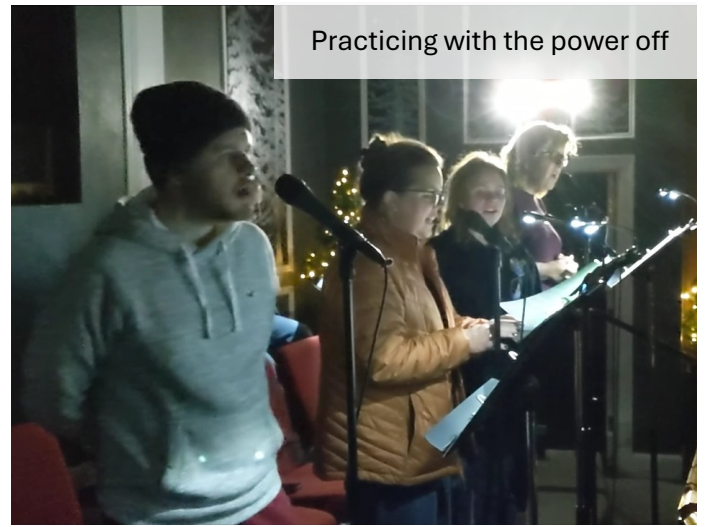
The real story:



Are we perhaps a little too happy to be done?



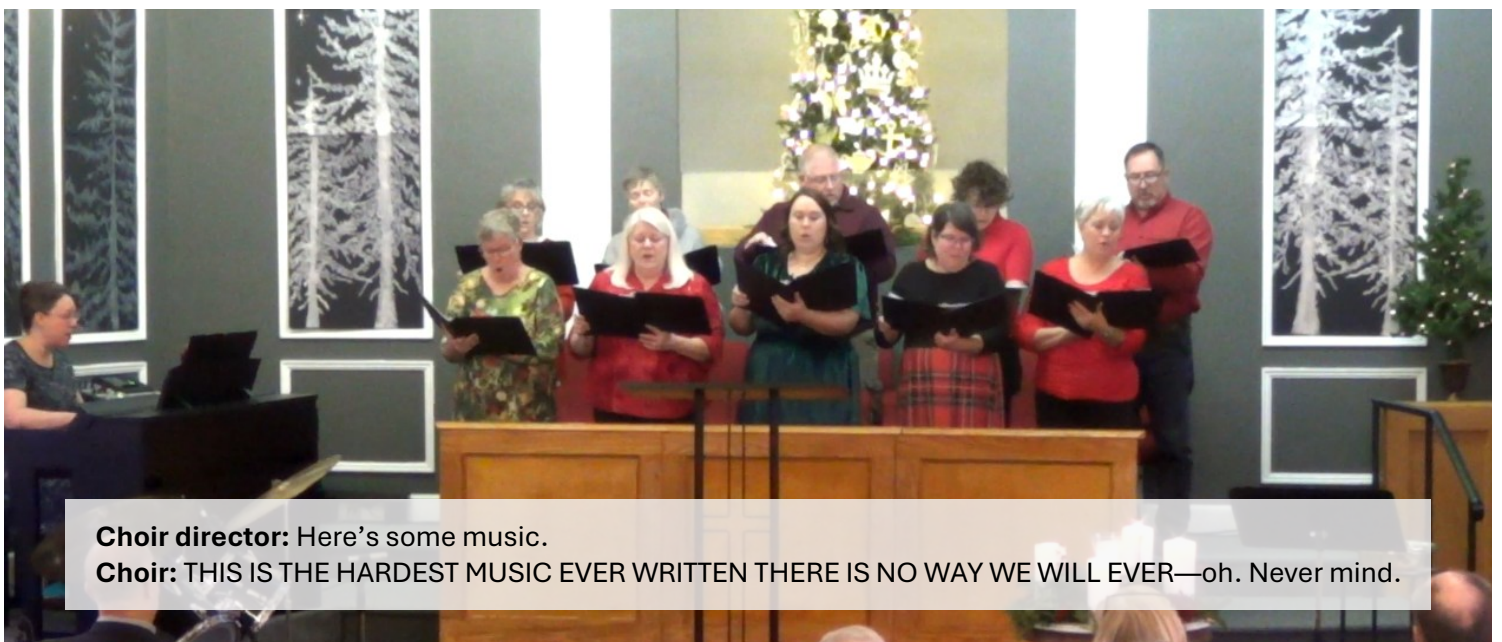
Practicing with the power on



Practicing with the power off



Call this team if you would like your house decorated in three minutes flat



Choir director: Here's some music.

Choir: THIS IS THE HARDEST MUSIC EVER WRITTEN THERE IS NO WAY WE WILL EVER—oh. Never mind.



Our Operation Christmas Child boxes have spread from shore to shore! This year our boxes were delivered to children in **Guatemala** and **Chile**. Below are the countries where our boxes have gone over the past ten years:



FROM GUATEMALA: JAKI AND A TOOTHBRUSH



I've never met my birth mother. People at the orphanage told me that she brought me there when I was a few months old.

At the orphanage in Guatemala, the caretakers provided for our basic needs. They taught us, fed us, and clothed us, but their limited resources meant that we ate a

steady diet of rice and beans and wore whatever clothes were available, no matter what the size. Sometimes, the girls wore boy clothes because that's what the orphanage had on hand. I don't remember us having any combs or brushes.

We did have a toothbrush—one toothbrush for 10 girls. We shared it, like we shared everything else. That's why I was so excited when we each received our own Operation Christmas Child shoebox gift.

My favorite thing I received in my box was a toothbrush of my very own. I got a lot of use out of it. It was a prized possession. To this day when I pack shoebox gifts, I don't just include one toothbrush—I pack at least four

of them in each box! That way, the children can use them for a long time, or have enough of them to give to their friends or family members.

I also received a stuffed animal. I was 5 years old, so I loved to hug it. I was delighted to receive crayons and coloring books. When the girls and I colored, there was no white space left on the pieces of paper. We filled every available space with color.

We received our gifts in plastic containers, so we kept our larger gifts in them. The possessions we really cherished we kept underneath our mattresses. I didn't receive a photo in my shoebox, but some of the other girls did. They kept the photos underneath their mattresses so they could pull them out to look at them then tuck them away again for safekeeping. I always include a photo and a letter in the shoeboxes I pack because I remember how much the girls treasured them. Even if they couldn't read the writing, it meant something to them that they were from those who had given them the gifts.

I had heard about Jesus at the orphanage. When we had received our shoeboxes, we learned the song, "Jesus Loves Me." But it wasn't until later that I truly knew who He is and that Jesus really does love me.

A year after I received my shoebox, I was adopted by a couple from the U.S. My parents took me to church and, within the year, I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

I still love the song, "Jesus Loves Me." I love to sing—I'm on the worship team at church. I'm also a nanny, so I get to teach the song to the kids. Many of the children are from my church, which has packed shoeboxes for many

years—long before I became a part of the congregation and began sharing my story.

I get to help the children pack shoeboxes. I tell them that I received a shoebox gift and answer their questions about what to put in the boxes. I explain how important basic items like paper and pencils are to a child who doesn't have



Jaki processes her own shoebox.

them. They're amazed that I had to share a toothbrush—they couldn't imagine having to share things like that. But they grasp at an early age what it is to give to others.

I hope that my story will make a difference in other children's lives—both those who pack shoeboxes and those who receive them. I'm so thankful that someone took the time to pack one for me.

FROM CHILE: HOPE TO A FIRE-RAVAGED COMMUNITY



The school supplies Fernanda found in her shoebox showed her God's love in the wake of the fire her family experienced.

Notebooks and pencils were some of the items that immediately caught Fernanda's attention when she peered inside of her shoebox gift. She'd be going back to school in a few months and had no supplies to take with her—everything she owned had burned during a fire a few weeks earlier.

The inferno had attacked the community in southern Chile, turning nearly every home into ashes and rubble. In just a few hours, the house where 12-year-old Fernanda lived with her parents and younger brother was gone.

Fernanda's grief was still raw when she attended the Operation Christmas Child outreach event at a local church. She was in shock, trying to make sense of how quickly and significantly her life had changed.

The event offered the hurting young girl moments of joy during a season of sadness. Her shoebox gift was the first present she had received since losing all of her belongings in the fire. "That day was a surprise, because people I didn't know were giving me a present," Fernanda said. "They were giving me love."

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Fernanda has always been a kind and giving child. She enjoys creating paper flowers for friends and family. She helps take care of her brother and makes her parents cards on Mother's Day and Father's Day.

After the fire, it was Fernanda who needed support because, like her entire community, her heart was broken. God used the Operation Christmas Child event—including the vibrant worship songs that Fernanda enjoyed so much—to bring comfort and encouragement when she needed it the most.

Thankful to Be Alive

Fernanda and her family barely escaped the fire.

"I looked outside and the fire was right around the corner, just a block away," said Veronica, Fernanda's mother. "We started throwing a few clothing items into bags. The dogs jumped into the car with us and we left."

Many of the roads were already closed as they drove away. They finally reached the home of Fernanda's aunt, where they prayed that they would be far enough away from the fire to stay safe.

After a few hours, the family was anxious to return home. Veronica was worried about her husband, who had been at work when they fled. She didn't know if he was safe. She knew he would be worried about his family. And she couldn't bear the thought of him returning home and finding them gone and assuming the worst.



Once Fernanda's family home, charred remains like these covered the neighborhood after the fire.

So, they all piled back into the car with the dogs and slowly made their way to the neighborhood. The route was horrifying. "We saw people dead inside cars and animals dead in the streets," Veronica said. "We didn't see a single home standing."

Veronica was overwhelmed when they arrived at the spot where their house once stood. "I began to cry, because all the effort of one entire year of building a house—from bottom to the top—was gone."

Veronica and her husband had decided that building their home would be a family effort. They involved their children in the process because it was a way for them to learn together and to spend more time as a family. Veronica said that Fernanda had especially enjoyed helping her father with the flooring.

Their house had been built with a lot of love. It wasn't just a physical structure the family was mourning, but the memories it once held.



Charred wood from the neighborhood fire a year ago is still present to remind Fernanda of her family's great loss.

Faithful to the Gospel

The outreach event that blessed Fernanda had its origin with Luz and her husband, Hernán, pastor a church in Fernanda's neighborhood. Not even a catastrophic fire could stop them from continuing to serve families in the area.

"Some people told us to start again in another place. But that thought never crossed our minds because we feel that this is the place God called us," Luz said.

Luz and Hernán started the church about 13 years ago. More recently, the couple knew that they needed to try and bolster the church's outreach to children.

Pastor Hernán and his wife, Luz, are committed to proclaiming Christ in the neighborhood, even after the fire tore it apart.

"God begin to speak to us about kids' ministry and the necessity for us to include that in the church," Luz said.

They connected with Operation Christmas Child leaders in the country and began hosting outreach events and teaching *The Greatest Journey* discipleship lessons.



The church in Fernanda's neighborhood continues to host Operation Christmas Child outreach events so children can hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ—often for the very first time!

Ministry became more challenging after the fire. The congregation had to meet under a large tent because the church building was destroyed. A number of church members had their homes decimated. Luz was heartbroken at the significant loss that seemed to be everywhere she turned.

“It was devastating to see kids playing in the street with balls that they had made from scraps and trash,” she said. “As a church, we felt a heavy weight to do something.”

They decided to stay the course and continue with an outreach event that had already been planned. Boys and girls were invited to the big tent where they heard the Gospel and received a shoebox gift.



Fernanda attends an outreach event for other boys and girls from Chile a year after she received her own shoebox gift.

The event blessed children, including Fernanda, and also encouraged Luz and the church members.

“Without Samaritan's Purse and Operation Christmas Child, it would be impossible to do all the things we're doing today,” Luz said. “For most of the kids in this area, an outreach event is the first time they hear the Gospel.”

Please pray for Fernanda, her family, and all those affected by this fire in Chile. Pray also for strength for Luz and Hernán and that their ministry would yield a ripe harvest.



Fernanda (center), her parents, and younger brother are thankful to be alive.

PRAY FOR YOUR SHOEBOX RECIPIENT

Because every child needs Christ, Samaritan's Purse sends Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts to boys and girls living in major cities, dense jungles, arid deserts, war zones, on remote islands, and along lofty mountain ranges. We work closely with local teams to bring these special gifts to children in need—even to hard-to-reach areas where there are few believers or where many have long been hostile to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Please don't stop praying for the boy or girl that you first lifted up when you packed your shoebox. Continue to ask God to soften his or her heart to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so that he or she will follow Him all the days of their life. Pray also for families and entire communities to be transformed as God's love is shared through your simple gift.

“Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”—Matthew 21:22









BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

JANUARY

BIRTHDAYS

2	Tori White	16	Don Summerville	28	Neil Wray
3	Amaleah Altis	18	Ruger Emery	30	Doug Johnson
5	Tina Robinson	21	Martha Knighton		Brittany Stoots
14	Kinsley Stoots	28	Nate Johnson		

ANNIVERSARIES

22	Zeke & Lynn Winfree	29	Allen & Victoria White
26	Larry & Debi Avery		

FEBRUARY

BIRTHDAYS

1	Allen White	8	Rebekah Johnson	20	Avery Johnson
5	Dylan Robinson	12	Michael Edmonds	23	Judy LaPrade
6	Steve Robbins	14	Ben Robinson	24	Barbara Stone

MARCH

BIRTHDAYS

3	Linda Johnson	20	David Paul	25	Mary Etta Summerville
4	Megan Eller	21	Judy Martin	30	Bobby Ferguson
10	Roger Ayers	24	Rick Stone	31	Olivia Flanagan

Are we missing a birthday or anniversary? Email the church office at haranbaptist@gmail.com and let us know.