

In Every Season

By Geoff Giesemann, Spiritual Growth Minister



Debbra came to the Burnt Hickory family in October 1999. Her adult children, Breana and Dylan, grew up

here. Debbra has been a key part of our teaching program, discipleship work and women's ministry.

Career-wise, Debbra is the Office Manager at Gaines Park Senior Living, a home and care facility for elderly residents here in Kennesaw. This position also allows her to serve the residents and families in spiritual matters.

Additionally, Debbra is a published author through 21st Century Christian, having written four study guides. More recently, she began writing for Renew.org, an organization promoting a revival in discipleship. She has also served as the guest speaker at numerous ladies' retreats across the country.

I asked Debbra to share with us some of her spiritual journey and experiences as she walks with God.

This year in *Branching Out*, we are talking with a few of you about what your walk with God looks like. We want to glean inspiration and encouragement by sharing these journeys. This conversation with Debbra Stephens is the fifth and final article in this series.



Debbra Stephens

Tell us a little about your spiritual journey and how you came to know God.

Debbra: I'd have to say that I was first taught to fear God, long before I came to love Him. I was raised in the Greek Orthodox religion, a very disciplined and conservative tradition, where I was trained to worship a Holy God in solemn reverence. I was introduced to the Church of Christ when I was an adult. It wasn't until then that I came to believe in Jesus as my personal Savior, who makes it possible to have an intimate relationship with God through the Spirit. After I was baptized I began to see the Bible in a whole new light. And I've been hungering after it ever since!

How would you describe your walk with God in your personal life?

Debbra: I can wholeheartedly proclaim that God has faithfully provided—from His goodness, mercy, generosity, and grace—all I have ever needed in every season. He has been there every step

of the way, even when it didn't always seem so.

When our lives were filled with turmoil, trouble, and heartache, God made a way and delivered us out of an abusive environment.

When I was struggling as a single mother, He always provided for our needs—with wisdom, guidance, and faith to trust Him. He provided for my kids in more ways than I can list here.

And, now that I am on my own, He is my Constant Companion, Husband, and Friend. I thoroughly enjoy Him and utterly depend upon Him entirely in my studies and writing. But the more He teaches me, the more I realize I have to learn. And I've come to realize that this walk is one to fill a lifetime and beyond.

What prompted you to start writing about your faith walk?

Debbra: Through my daily Bible study, God graced me with a peace, strength, and wisdom I was desperate for and I

wanted to share that and encourage others. So, I started my first blog, *Garlands of Hosannas*, back in 2007. The Holy Spirit developed in me a desire and a skill to write that I never even knew I had. Since I lacked formal education and training in this area, I knew it was entirely from Him. He faithfully provided, as He placed more and more opportunities before me. I gradually started writing devotionals, then articles. I'm now on my 3rd generation blog and am writing for other venues.

What is your work environment like?

Debbra: Gaines Park is owned and operated by Christians, who allow us to speak the name of Jesus and pray openly and freely. I believe that, since the majority of our staff and residents are Christian and most of the involvement from the community is from Christian groups, we are noticeably and unquestionably Christ-centered. That makes a visible difference in the atmosphere and in the care provided.

What has been the biggest challenge in your workplace?

Debbra: Witnessing all the ways people suffer, both residents and family members. At the same time, it is so amazing to see the grace of God to help them through and see the difference faith makes in their outlook.

Recently, one of our male residents was declining but he wrestled with fear to accept his death. During an anxiety attack one day, he sent a caregiver to get me. He asked me to pray for him so I did right then and the peace of God came upon him. After he returned to his room, I shared with him how Jesus came that we might have His peace and he need not fear death. After he died, his daughter came by the office. She described to me the calm her father had at the end and how peacefully he passed. It was powerful reassurance that Jesus was with him.



The Church in This Place!

By Adam Bridgman, Branch Minister



Framing is going up at the Hamilton Crossing facility! It seems like our dream of planting churches was so surreal not too long ago. Since September 2018, BH Bartow has been solidifying this passion in Cartersville, GA. While we have made many adjustments to accommodate this vision, moving here (in January, hopefully) will be our largest. We want to make sure we use this place as an equipping station for members and a blessing to the community.

Having a space we can utilize during the week will also help relieve our dedicated members who set up and take down every Sunday morning. We also are blessed with a committed facilities team aiding us in the move including Ken Braziel, Jim Hughes, Nathan Sargent and Kris Jordan. This team has been given the tasks of picking out everything from carpets and kitchen cabinets, to signs and stages.

Meanwhile, we are beginning conversations with local businesses and schools to see how we can be a blessing to them as we move into the neighborhood. Please continue to pray for us that we may be led by the Spirit as we make big decisions towards being the church in this place! 🌿

Beginning next year, the Bartow campus of Burnt Hickory will be meeting at: 10 Hamilton Blvd., Suite L, M & N, Cartersville, Ga.

