

West Suffolk Baptist Church

Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant



West Suffolk Epistle



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This introductory archery course for beginners offered young participants lessons in competitive archery, including range etiquette, basic equipment knowledge, and eye dominance assessment. Attendees received supervised practice sessions along with breakfast. The class took place on November 8, 2025, at the West Suffolk Parsonage (4939 Quaker Rd, Suffolk, Va.), running from 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon. Jack Becht, a member of West Suffolk Baptist Church, organized the event.

Occasionally, hunting workshops are available to help students develop hunting skills that go beyond what is covered in the Basic Hunter Education Course.

This course is provided in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and ensures equal access to all Department programs and facilities for all individuals.

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Heaven's Perspective on Persecution

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you" (John 15:18).

With those words Jesus comforted His disciples. His followers would not be alone in their suffering; they would partake in what He had already endured. It's a comfort that points to the certainty of persecution for everyone who follows Christ. The Lord acknowledged that inevitability just a few verses later:

"These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them." (John 16:1-4)

All believers know, to at least some degree, what it is to suffer for the sake of the Lord. At times we've all been alienated or ostracized for our faith. Some have lost relationships, forfeiting friends and even family members for the sake of Christ. Many believers feel the pressure to keep silent about the Lord and His Word, often with the threat of losing their position in an organization or some other social structure. All Christians face those kinds of persecution at one time or another.

But that is mild persecution compared to what we see in Scripture, and what many believers still suffer around the world. Current statistics indicate that today as many as 100 million Christians live under the constant threat of bodily harm and even death because of their faith. By God's grace, many of us don't face that fierce level of persecution at our doorstep—yet. However, it is on the rise as the world becomes increasingly hostile to God's Word and His people.

Whatever the degree of persecution you might face, how you respond is dictated by your perspective. If you can't see beyond your own suffering and fear, persecution will be a hindrance to your spiritual growth and usefulness. But if you view persecution from heaven's perspective, you'll be able to endure, and even thrive in the midst of it.

So what is heaven's perspective? Like any other hardship we encounter, persecution is a trial permitted by God for our growth. And as James writes, we need to:

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1:2-4)

God is not caught off guard by our suffering. Persecution isn't an indication that He lost control, or that we've fallen out of favor with Him. It's a trial that serves a purpose in His divine plan. And if we react the right way, we can expect to benefit from it in the end.

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That's the promise James makes just a few verses later: *"Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him"* (James 1:12).

Peter made that same point to his readers in 1 Peter 4:12-14:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Peter's readers were indeed facing a "fiery ordeal." Scattered across the Roman Empire, they lived as aliens amid a pagan society. On top of that, they endured the constant threat of violent persecution, as the Romans excelled at devising excruciating tortures and horrific deaths for their enemies. And in spite of that, Peter called them to rejoice.

"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6-7)

The fruit of believers' suffering is a proven faith. Enduring persecution proves the quality of their love for the Lord, and nothing is more valuable than tested faith. It not only affirms your status as a child of God (Romans 8:17), it also empowers you to conquer sin (1 Peter 4:1).

Because of that immense value of having confidence in your salvation, you're willing to suffer the pains and hardships of persecution. You don't try to escape it; you accept it as the Lord's preordained proving ground for your faith. That is why Peter writes that we can rejoice in trials.

In other words, there's nothing—not health, comfort, or security—more valuable than the confidence that your faith is real. Believers can gladly sacrifice those things because they know their suffering builds up their spiritual strength, the assurance of their faith, and their anticipation of future glory in heaven with Christ.

John records these words from Jesus, which He said hours before His salvation-securing death: *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33). The worst thing the world can do is kill us, which sends us directly into the arms of Christ and our ultimate triumph.

We should expect to face various forms of persecution in this life. But we'll never be able to bear up under the weight of the suffering if we don't first have heaven's perspective on it—that God is allowing it for our good. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

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What is Limited Atonement?

The doctrine of limited atonement (also known as “definite atonement” or “particular redemption”) says that the atonement of Christ was limited (in its scope and aim) to the elect; Jesus did not atone for the sins of everybody in the world. In my denomination, we examine young men going into the ministry, and invariably somebody will ask a student, “*Do you believe in limited atonement?*” The student will respond by saying, “*Yes, I believe that the atonement of Christ is sufficient for all and efficient for some,*” meaning the value of Christ’s death on the cross was great enough to cover all of the sins of every person that ever lived, but that it applies only to those who put their faith in Christ. However, that statement doesn’t get at the real heart of the controversy, which has to do with God’s purpose in the cross.

There are basically two ways in which to understand God’s eternal plan. One understanding is that, from all eternity, God had a desire to save as many people as possible out of the fallen human race, so He conceived a plan of redemption by which He would send His Son into the world as the sin-bearer for fallen people. Jesus would go to the cross and die for all who would at some point put their trust in Him. So the plan was provisional—God provided atonement for all who take advantage of it, for all who believe. The idea is that Jesus died potentially for everybody, but that it is theoretically possible that the whole thing was in vain because every last person in the world might reject the work of Jesus and choose to remain dead in their trespasses and sins. Thus, God’s plan could be frustrated because nobody might take advantage of it. This is the prevailing view in the church today—that Jesus died for everybody provisionally. In the final analysis, whether salvation happens depends on each individual person.

The Reformed view understands God’s plan differently. It says that God, from all eternity, devised a plan that was not provisional. It was a plan “A” with no plan “B” to follow if it didn’t work. Under this plan, God decreed that He would save a certain number of people out of fallen humanity, people whom the Bible calls the elect. In order for that plan of election to work out in history, He sent His Son into the world with the specific aim and design to accomplish redemption for the elect. This was accomplished perfectly, without a drop of the blood of Christ being wasted. Everyone whom the Father chose for salvation will be saved through the atonement.

The implication of the non-Reformed view is that God doesn’t know in advance who is going to be saved. For this reason, there are theologians today saying, “*God saves as many people as He possibly can.*” How many people can God save? How many people does He have the power to save? If He is really God, He has the power to save all of them. How many people does He have the authority to save? Cannot God intervene in anyone’s life, just as He did in Moses’ life, Abraham’s life, or the Apostle Paul’s life, to bring them into a saving relationship with Him? He certainly has the right to do that.

We cannot deny that the Bible speaks about Jesus dying for “the world.” John 3:16 is the premier example of a verse that uses this language. But there is a counterbalancing perspective in the New Testament, including John’s Gospel, that tells us Jesus laid down His life not for everyone but for His sheep. Here in John’s Gospel, Jesus speaks about His sheep as those whom the Father has given Him.

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What is Limited Atonement?

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In John 6, we see that Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44), and the word translated as “draws” properly means “compels.” Jesus also said in that chapter, “All that the Father gives me will come to me” (John 6:37). His point was that everyone whom the Father designed to come to His Son would come, and no one else. Thus, your salvation, from start to finish, rests on the sovereign decree of God, who decided, in His grace, to have mercy on you, not because of anything He saw in you that demanded it, but for the love of the Son. The only reason I can give under heaven why I’m a Christian is because I’m a gift of the Father to the Son, not because of anything I’ve ever done or could do. ~ **Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.**

The Church is Actually a Building

Faithful pastors often remind their flocks, “The church is not a building. The church is the people.” That is a true and important reminder. Yet it is also true that the New Testament frequently refers to the church as just that: a building—that is, that the people themselves are like a building on which God has broken ground and is constantly working.

One example is found in Ephesians 2:19–21, where Paul compares the church, then freshly constituted of Jews and gentiles alike, to a temple under construction:

You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

This picture suggests many helpful ideas, including the cohesion of believers as they are built together and the progress they make as God continues the construction. Yet key to it all is the idea of a foundation.

“The Wise Man Built His House...”

Roman architects in the first century took immense care with foundations. They planned, if possible, to build on bedrock, and sometimes they would dig down twenty or thirty feet to get to the firmest base—and all that without modern construction equipment!

People may have wondered, “Why dig so far down? Why not stop at this level? After all, it looks pretty good.” But the master builder would say, “No, we dig down until we reach the most solid base. And when we have dug down, then we will build up.” Many Roman structures remain to this day—and of those that don’t, while the superstructure may be gone, the foundation often remains.

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Jesus made use of this idea of a foundation as He concluded some of His sermons: “*Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.*” (Luke 6:47–48; Matthew 7:24). That house, that life, stands firm in inclement weather—in contrast to the house built “*without a foundation*” (Luke 6:49).

“How Firm a Foundation...”

Within his metaphor, Paul identifies the foundation on which the church is built: “*the apostles and prophets*”—that is, not on their personal authority but on their authority as heralds of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ on the one hand and of the oracles of God on the other.

In practical terms, what Paul meant is that the church would come to be built on the New Testament Scriptures, which contain the Spirit-empowered testimony of the apostles about Christ (John 14:26), and on the Old Testament Scriptures, which contain the God-given oracles of the prophets (2 Peter 1:21). “*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,*” says the hymn, “*is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!*” (“How Firm a Foundation” - 1787). In a Christian church, the Bible is the foundation of all our life and all our practice. (Importantly, the church is built upon the foundation of the Bible; it is not a foundation alongside the Bible.)

When we grasp that, we will realize that we can’t go fiddling with the foundation. Once the building begins to go up, we’ve had it as far as the foundations are concerned. And as God’s holy temple, the church, begins to climb into the sky, the foundations are not to be added to or taken from—as so many have done, wittingly or unwittingly, over the years.

“The Church’s One Foundation...”

If the apostles and the prophets are the foundation, says Paul, then the Lord Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. The cornerstone was a part of the foundation, at the intersection of the first two walls. It was the first stone placed, and its lie determined the placement of every stone that followed.

The Scriptures are the foundation of the church, but it is ultimately Christ about whom they speak (John 5:39). We depend on the Scriptures because Christ speaks in them through His apostles and prophets. So strong is this dependence that in a slightly different context Paul can say, “*No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3:11). As another hymn puts it, “The church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord.” (Samuel John Stone, “The Church’s One Foundation” (1866)

This, of course, is the point that Jesus Himself made in His own parable. Who is the one building on the rock? “Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them.” To be part of the temple of God is to give Christ Himself our presence, our attention, and our obedience.

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The Church is Actually a Building

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“When We’ve Been There Ten Thousand Years...”

The temple in Jerusalem didn’t last. It was destroyed—twice, in fact. So many buildings of the Roman era have fallen or will fall. But the temple that God is building His church into will stand forever. And as the hymn writer puts it,

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the Sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d begun.

John Newton, “Amazing Grace” (1779)

The temple God is building will stand forever, to His glory and to the good of all who are built into it, resting on the foundation of His Word, built from the cornerstone of Christ. Have you become a part of it yet? ~ **Alistair Begg**

Witnessing His Glory

The book of James has an unusual sentence construction that links the word glory with the name of Jesus: “*My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality*” (James 2:1). In this verse the words “Lord of glory” have alternate renditions. Some translations read, “Our glorious Lord.” Still another possible translation reads, “Jesus Christ, who is the glory.”

B. B. Warfield, in his book *The Lord of Glory*, says, that Jesus was the glory of God, the shekinah. According to the Old Testament, the shekinah was the visible manifestation of the invisible God. The shekinah was a radiant cloud or brilliant light within a cloud that signaled the immediate presence of God. For Jesus to be identified with the shekinah was to be equated with the presence of God Himself. In Jesus we see the full manifestation of the majesty of God.

That the New Testament writers ascribed glory to Jesus was a clear indication of their confession of His full deity. Glory, in the sense it is used with reference to Jesus, is a divine attribute. It is the glory of God that He refuses to share with any man.

Coram Deo

The angels sang “Glory to God” at Christ’s birth. The heavenly elders give glory to God around His throne. Why don’t you follow their example and give God glory today in every circumstance of your life? ~ **Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.**

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Awaiting His Return

There is a widespread fascination with the end of the world. Throughout history, we have witnessed the bold assertions of soothsayers, naysayers, and doomsdayers. Every day, self-proclaimed prophets of the end times make whimsical predictions about the future. Claiming to have biblical authority, they tout their cleverly devised schemes about the end of the world as we know it, and by reading between the lines of the Old Testament prophetic books, they carefully contort the words of sacred Scripture to fit their fictional fantasies about the second advent of Christ.

Christians throughout the world have become so enamored with some obscure aspect about the second advent of Christ that they construct their entire systems of doctrine upon what might happen—not upon what has happened. We are, indeed, called to live with eager expectation of the second advent of Christ, but we should only do so in light of the first advent of Christ. In remembrance of Christ's first advent, it is not enough simply to wish Jesus a happy birthday. In fact, to do so borders on blasphemy. Instead, we are called to remember and to celebrate the incarnation of the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Logos.

At the first advent of Jesus Christ, the fullness of time had come and God sent forth His Son into this fallen world. As the prophets foretold, He was born of a virgin who was richly blessed of God. He was born under the law of God, not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. As was necessary to redeem those under the Law, He fulfilled the righteous demands of the Law and took upon Himself the sins of His people, His sheep for whom He laid down His life.

As His people, we confess that Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. We believe He will return to this world not as a babe in a manger but as the King of all the earth, in power and glory to manifest His reign over the new heavens and the new earth.

We confess His return because of what He taught us at His first advent and on account of the hope that is within us. For this reason, during the wonderful Advent season that comes each year, we should eagerly await the second advent of Christ as we celebrate the first advent of Christ. Nevertheless, let us always be mindful that although Christmas day comes only once a year, we are called to remember and celebrate the eternal work of Christ—past, present, and future—each day of our lives *Coram Deo*, before the face of God. ~ **Dr. Burk Parsons**

Tracing the Story of Christmas

In order to understand the story of Christmas, we have to go back. Not back just a few thousand years to the birth of Jesus, but all the way back, back to our first parents, Adam and Eve. God placed them in the lush and perfect garden of Eden. They had everything they needed. It was perfect. Then they sinned. As a consequence, God banished them. Now Adam and Eve lived under the curse. But as God pronounced the curse, thundering from heaven, He also gave them a promise.

God gave Adam and Eve the promise of a Seed, a Seed who would be born of a woman. That Seed would make all that was wrong, right. He would make all that was broken, whole. This Seed would bring peace and harmony where strife and conflict raged like a storm-tossed sea.

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Tracing the Story of Christmas

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In the Old Testament, the third chapter of the very first book, Genesis, speaks of conflict and enmity. Adam and Eve, who had known only the experience of tranquility, would now be locked in bitter conflict. Even the ground would be a challenge. The prick of thorns would be the constant reminder. As the poets say, nature is red in tooth and claw. Even the promised Seed would enter into this conflict, fighting with the Serpent, the great spoiler. But Genesis 3 promises that the Seed would overcome the Serpent, securing the final victory and ushering in wave after wave of peace.

The Seed, however, would be a long time coming.

Adam and Eve had Cain and Abel, and neither turned out to be the Seed. When Cain slew Abel, God gave Adam and Eve Seth, a little grace in a very troubled world. But Seth was not the Seed. More sons followed. Generations came and generations went.

Then Abraham appeared on the world's stage. God called this man from ancient times to make from him and his wife, Sarah, a great new nation that would be a beacon of light to a lost and hopeless world. Again, God made a promise to this couple of a Seed, a son. They thought it was Isaac. But Isaac died.

This story was repeated from generation to generation, building anticipation of the One to come who would make all things right, who would bring peace. A widow named Naomi and her widowed daughter-in-law, Ruth, even entered into this story. They were in desperate circumstances. There were no social nets to catch the fall of such marginalized people in the ancient world.

Without husbands and sons, without rights and means, widows lived from meal to meal. They lived on a thread of hope. Then came Boaz and the classic story of boy meets girl. Boaz met Ruth and they married. Before long, just as the curtain fell on the biblical story of Ruth, a son, a seed, was born to Ruth. This son would be a restorer of life, a redeemer. But he was only a shadow of the Seed to come. He, too, died.

The son born to Ruth and Boaz was named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse. Jesse had many sons, and one of them was a shepherd. One time this shepherd grabbed a handful of stones and felled a giant. He faced down lions. He also was quite a musician. To everyone's surprise—even his father's—this son of Jesse, the great-grandson of Ruth and Boaz, was anointed king of Israel.

While David was on the throne, God gave yet another promise directly to him. This was another promise of a son. God said David's son would be king forever and there would be no end to his kingdom. That was God's promise. ~
Dr. Stephen J. Nichols

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Do Babies or Others Incapable of Professing Faith in Christ Automatically go to Heaven?

People often wonder about the eternal destiny of the unborn, babies, and those unable to intellectually understand the gospel. That question is a difficult one. Unfortunately, the Bible offers us no explicit answer. However, based on several passages, as well as an understanding of God's character and His dealings with men, we can develop a good idea of how He works in such situations.

II Samuel 12:23 is one of the passages often quoted to imply that babies go to heaven. Though the verse doesn't explicitly say that, David clearly does expect to one day be reunited with his departed child. Since we know David is a believer whose destiny was heaven, we can infer that his hope of reunion means he expected his child to be in heaven. Thus, 2 Samuel 12:23 suggests strong evidence for a heavenly destiny of the unborn and children who die young. "But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

If this were all we had to support our position, it would be admittedly less than stalwart. However, there are other evidences that point us to the same conclusion. **First**, the Bible clearly teaches that God cares deeply for children. Passages like Matthew 18:1-6 and 19:13-15 affirm the Lord's love for them. Those verses don't state that children go to heaven, but they do show God's heart toward children. He created and cares for children, and beyond that, He always accomplishes His perfect will in every circumstance.

The psalmist reminds us that God is "full of compassion and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth" (Psalm 86:15). He is the God who became flesh that He might carry our sins away by His death on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). He is the God who will comfort Christians in heaven, for "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death; nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain" (Revelation 21:4). We can be assured that God will do what is right and loving because He is the standard of rightness and love. Those considerations alone seem to be evidence enough of God's particular, electing love shown to the unborn and those who die young.

However, another point may be helpful in answering this question. While infants and children have neither sensed their personal sin and need for salvation nor placed their faith in Christ, Scripture teaches that condemnation is based on the clear rejection of God's revelation--whether general or specific--not simple ignorance of it (Luke 10:16; John 12:48; 1 Thessalonians 4:8).

Can we definitely say that the unborn and young children have comprehended the truth displayed by God's general revelation that renders them "without excuse" (Romans 1:18-20)? They will be judged according to the light they received. Scripture is clear that children and the unborn have original sin--including both the propensity to sin as well as the inherent guilt of original sin. But could it be that somehow Christ's atonement did pay for the guilt for these helpless ones throughout all time? Yes, and therefore it is a credible assumption that a child who dies at an age too young to have made a conscious, willful rejection of Jesus Christ will be taken to be with the Lord. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

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On November 15, 2025 several of our young folks from West Suffolk Baptist Church were invited to the home of Walt Lawrence to receive some basic training in firearms safety. The younger folks were instructed in the proper use and handling of rifles and handguns. Also present during the session were Jack Becht and Les Twilley.

Shown below, Jack Becht (center bottom) and Les Twilley (right bottom) are both firing the CVA Accura MRX .50 caliber—a modern inline muzzleloader known for ballistic performance on par with contemporary rifles. While the basic concept of muzzle loading predates current firearms technology, there are few similarities beyond that point. Advances in optics, powder formulation, and bullet design now enable accurate shooting while preserving a connection to historical methods. Essential components such as powder flasks and ramrods remain integral, though they are now commonly produced from advanced materials including plastic and carbon fiber.



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If you have a birthday or anniversary in December that is not posted here or is listed in error or you do not want to be published in this newsletter, please contact Walt or e-mail him at gwlcf10415@gmail.com.

Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner December 2025

Birthdays

Terrye B. (4)
Laird E. (4)
Katie G. (9)
Auden Douglas T. (12)
Jennifer A. (13)
Wilma S. (16)

Scott T. (19)
John M. (21)
Cheryl P. (22)
Jessica T. (23)
Andrew K. (31)

Anniversaries

John and Teresa H. (1)
Malcolm and Amber H. (14)
Vincent and Alexandra P. (17)
John and LeAnn M. (22)

Put On the New Self - Colossians 3:12–15 (ESV)

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.



***West Suffolk Baptist
Church
Leadership***

The West Suffolk Epistle is a monthly publication of West Suffolk Baptist Church.

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Please submit information to the editor by the second Sunday of each month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or its leadership.