

Summer 2025

ECHO ECHO

Newsletter of the Washington Church of the New Jerusalem

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## Pastor's Annual Report to the Society

- Rev. Glenn "Mac" Frazier

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### Introduction

Another fiscal year has passed, and once again we pause to thank the Lord for His providence, look honestly at our health as a church "body," and set our sights on the work ahead. 2024-25 was a year of steady—

sometimes quiet—progress: we stabilized attendance in worship, kept our school on an upward enrollment trajectory, and widened our digital reach. At the same time, the strain on a shrinking pool of volunteers became clearer to me, reminding me that **how** we organize our people is as important as **what** we try to do.

Tonight, you will have already heard the Treasurer’s report on our budget and the principal’s report on the school. My purpose in this report is to lift our gaze above the numbers and to focus on mission, ministry, and the path forward.

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## Year-in-Review (July 2024 – June 2025)

### Worship

- Median in-person attendance **44** (11 children + 33 adults); average **47.1** when festival services and a large memorial are included.
- Special services: Thanksgiving, Christmas Tableaux & Eve, memorial for a former faculty member, multi-congregational youth weekend.
- *Music*: recruited & trained **one additional accompanist**.
- *Digital reach*: 2.5 k total YouTube views (↑ 12 %), 466.6 watch-hours, +16 subscribers → 195 total.
  - Livestream slice: 1.7 k views, 31.9 k impressions, 3.4 % click-through, 15 min avg. view; avg. 4 concurrent viewers, peak 11.

### Small Groups

- Two year-round small groups: theology reading group (completed *True Christian Religion*) and rotating-home married-couples’ group.
- Seasonal Christmas reading group and Easter study added three long-term participants from outside our area.

### Service

- Student project-based units generated several service projects.
- Congregational service ministry remains thin; still seeking a volunteer **Service Coordinator**.

### Community

- Weekly fireside gatherings and Friday volleyball continued.
- Plant sale replaced rummage sale.

- Alumni ping-pong tournament, two barbecues, youth & young-adult weekends, and a guest lecture were **very well attended**.

### Communications

- Stand-alone school site **WNCSchool.org** launched; church-site refresh in progress.
- Ongoing Facebook campaign tied to school marketing; grant funding secured to extend this work.

### The School

- Enrollment 2024-25 **25 students** (three 8th-grade graduates).
- Projected 2025-26 enrollment **≈ 30 students**.
- The full school report was presented earlier this evening by the principal.

*Financial note:* Expenses again exceeded income, producing a sizeable operating deficit bridged by our endowment. Details were covered in the Treasurer’s report delivered earlier tonight.

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### Looking Ahead — Goals for 2025-26

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| System               | 2025-26 Focus                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Worship</b>       | • Recruit & mentor, <b>a second band leader</b> .                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Small Groups</b>  | • Plan a <b>men’s weekend retreat</b> and <b>two men’s breakfasts</b> .<br>• Host additional <b>young-adult weekends</b> .                                            |
| <b>Service</b>       | • Identify <b>one or two volunteer Service Coordinators</b> to relaunch congregation-wide service efforts.                                                            |
| <b>Community</b>     | • Host school-centric fellowship events— <b>ping-pong &amp; chess tournaments, family barbecues, etc.</b> —to build community <i>and</i> spotlight school enrollment. |
| <b>Communication</b> | • Update church <b>website</b> in line with the new school website.                                                                                                   |
| <b>School</b>        | • Keep <b>enrollment</b> trending upward; target 30+ this fall and lay groundwork for further growth.                                                                 |

### Revitalizing Our Body — Committees & Boards

“As the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” (1 Cor. 12:12)

“Since angels do know that all the heavens, like their societies, reflect a single individual, they refer to heaven as the universal and divine human...” (HH 59)

For sixty years the Washington New Church relied on a network of committees—our “organs” and “systems.” Over time, as membership shrank and new boards took on responsibilities, many committees went dormant. The result: **more board meetings, fewer active volunteers, and under-used gifts.**

Over the coming year I will lead a three-step rejuvenation: 1.

**Summer 2025 – Discovery** → Locate original committee charters, interview veteran members, and map all current volunteer work. 2.

**Autumn 2025 – Design & Pilot** → Draft a lean committee model aligned with our six church systems and introduce a new test approach with our boards. 3. **Winter–Spring 2026 – Refine & Adopt** → Gather feedback, adjust, and—if the pilot proves its worth—prepare by-law amendments for the 2026 Annual Meeting to formalize the committees and gradually reduce the size of the Board of Trustees.

You will receive periodic updates, including a detailed outline of the new plan at the semi-annual meeting this winter.

### **Gratitude & Closing**

Friends, the human body grows when every part does its share. I see that happening here—sometimes in small, hidden ways, but always with love. Thank you for bringing your time, your voice, your prayers, and your presence. Together we have the privilege of embodying the Lord’s love and wisdom in human form, as the Washington New Church. I look forward—with real optimism—to discovering how the Lord will animate this body in the year ahead.

Very respectfully,

**Rev. Glenn “Mac” Frazier**  
Pastor, Washington New Church  
June 13, 2025

### **From the Principal**

We enjoyed a great conclusion to our school year as we celebrated three graduates from 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Two of these shared speeches reflected on their education. I loved both these student speeches as well as the remarks of our parent speaker. (All three speeches below pages 5 – 12.) Two of the three speakers were not raised in the New Church, and yet all three speeches highlighted the value of the religious basis as part of the education at WNCS. This is very encouraging to the

WNCS team as it endorses the mission behind our current vision of Washington New Church School. We see the instilling of New Church teaching as a good and valuable mission, even as we work primarily with families who are not part of the organized New Church. Our prayer is that the good and wise religious framework offered by the New Church will serve the individuals we instruct and through them, all the communities they touch throughout their lives. The remarks of all three of our speakers reflected the impact of this mission.

We awarded the Long-Term Service award to Bill Kunkle this year. This is not a huge surprise for people who are regularly in the building because we all see the many, many hours he gives each week to a variety of IT and building maintenance projects. (And every so often he will also read to the kindergarten or teach the 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade how to wire a light bulb.) One of Bill's most dramatic contributions this year was the re-building of our recess shed, with the help of Eric Genzlinger. The two of them expanded the size and building it to last.

I hope that all our teachers and students can find great ways to unplug from the day-to-day education of the school year, while still enjoying the myriad versions of life-long learning available over the summer.

### **Adelaide Smith's Speech**



When you think of your fondest memories, what do you see? Do you see yourself alone in your room, or watching TV on the couch? These are good things, but they lack something important. Look closer. What do you see? People! Perhaps these people are your parents and siblings at a Christmas dinner. Perhaps they are the first gracious customers you had at your first stressful McDonald's job. Perhaps they are friends

from school that you love playing basketball with. Whatever the case, people are important in our lives. These people are our community and for me, this community is the Washington New Church and School.

I've gone to WNCS for all my years of school, and the more I have been here, the more it's become a part of me. The creativity, the fun, and the wonderful education all mean a lot to me. But I've come to realize that, really, my greatest memories of it are formed around people.

A community is made up of people. This means that, in order for a community to thrive, people must contribute to it. We must contribute our time, we must contribute the skills we have, and we must contribute our love. And this is especially true for a tiny community like WNCS.

I must say, the more I start to notice these things, the more I have been inspired by everyone's hard work and impressed by the amount they help the community. The school parents contribute by volunteering for events, showing up for student performances, and buying birthday cupcakes. It makes me grateful to think of the work parties and plant sales in which many have participated. I also want to thank the students - my peers, the younger children, and, in past years, all the cool older kids, for working to get along and for being a pleasant bunch. Lastly, every SINGLE one of my teachers this year and in past years have not only helped me grow but also contributed to the community in more ways than just showing up for work. They bring love into their teaching and a continual effort to improve the school. Each of them embodies important virtues, as my classmates could assure you: industriousness, honesty, compassion, and many others.

In this school, I have learned how important this is: to live a life of use. In fact, the book *Conjugal Love*, from the teachings of the New Church, says that "The pleasure in being useful, springing from love through wisdom, is the life and soul of all heavenly joys." The pleasure in being useful is the soul of all heavenly joys. This shows us that being useful is vital to our lives. We must pursue it, and we can by helping the people of WNCS. And this is not all. Our community is like a tree, branches spread wide, welcoming the whole world. Each leaf, flower, and root have a job just like every person in a community. If these jobs are done well, our community can extend to help even remote parts of the world: it can model kindness and good education and encourage others to do things.

One of the wonderful things about our school community is how often people organize fun hands-on projects that teach the students useful skills such as the lunches that each of your classes made for the school this year. But, as teachers know, that can feel difficult. I doubt that it seemed easy for Mr. Kunkle to teach our class to wire light bulbs or for Mrs. Stillman to help the school weave the banner. And this is true for more people than just the teachers. When my classmate Alana tried to organize spirit week for the first time a few years ago, it took her a long time to get it approved. It didn't just happen with a wave of a magic wand - and yet, this year, setting up spirit week wasn't at all hard. Maybe, if we keep thinking of ideas, sharing them, and collaborating with others, things like this *will* become hugely successful. Just like a tree keeps growing and producing day in, day out, for seasons and seasons, on and on...

But trees die. They are living things, and they need care.

When someone I love passes away, I feel immense grief, and I am sure you have felt this too. One thing that I have realized, though, is it helps to unite people. I really miss Miss Carina now that she's gone, but I also feel powerfully the way the people she had left, lifted each other up, connected by our common love for her. I can picture her now, smiling and making jokes as she did. I can picture her joy at a chance for this group of people she cared about to become stronger - because of her.

We must contribute to our community if we want it to thrive. A good community is a wonderful thing just like a healthy tree. It grows first a sturdy trunk, branches, and leaves, then sprouts flowers which shower the world in fragrance and color, and finally, an abundance of fruits. And the tree continues to grow and flourish, stretching out as if it wants to reach the whole world and share the fruits that it produces, always extending, and yet always supported by its sturdy trunk. In the gospels, Jesus describes Himself as the vine that sustains us, and we are the branches. He is the trunk that our community relies on, and we must extend that to the world through the 'branches.' *This is how* our community can thrive.

This community has helped many people to grow, to inspire them. When I say 'community,' I mean the people. Us. We have helped to change each other: you've helped to make me who I am, and I hope

that I've helped you as students this year, perhaps enough that when I come to listen to your world-famous concerts or watch your NBA basketball games in 20 years, you'll give me a free seat. We are helping each other, and this is why our community needs to thrive.

How can you contribute? It's not as hard as it seems. It can be as simple as an idea. A kind word. A thank you or a smile. Showing up for events and starting conversations. These are all buds that can build friendships, start projects, and grow the community. So, if you are a parent, know that you are an important part of this community. If you are a teacher or a student, know that you are an important part of this community. If you are sitting in this room, listening to these words, know that you are an important part of this community, a branch of this beautiful tree.

I asked you before what makes a memory - a good memory. Look around this room. Can you remember the ways that these people have touched your heart? Can you see people who have changed your life? Let's make these connections stronger. Let's continue to grow together. ~ Thank you!

### Donovan Amin's Speech



*“What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore— And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over— like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode?”* - Langston Hughes.

Hughes asks this question in his poem **Harlem**, he wonders what happens to the hopes and passions we put off or ignore.

Before I came to Washington New Church School, I didn't even realize I had dreams that were being pushed aside. I was angry, impatient, I yelled, and I didn't see much purpose in school or in trying to be better. But WNCS changed that. Slowly, those deferred parts of me — the desire to belong, to learn, to be kind — began to grow. Instead of exploding, like Hughes warns, some dreams might. **Mine found light.** WNCS gave me space to breathe, to build real friendships, and to become someone I'm proud of. Over the last three



years, that dream has grown, flourished, and shaped who I am. In 540 school days, I've found joy, friendship, purpose, and a community that feels like family. WNCS helped turn what might've been a forgotten hope into one of the best experiences of my life.

When I got here, Donovan Amin wasn't anything close to the person you see right now, **I was shy, I always wore a mask.** I had only a few friends in my grade and yet I still enjoyed my first year here. Despite my shyness I never felt left out, I always felt included and in on a joke. I might not have loved school to the degree I do today, but a little seedling of fondness had been planted. I remember my early passion for science and how I'd be ecstatic to do any form of an experiment. How I'd constantly be on the swings, daydreaming. I remember very clearly my first day here. At recess I had no idea what to do, I could tell people already had established friendships and groups, so I had just migrated my way towards the swings. I remember being called by a kid and asked to help them on the swing. When I saw the amusement and joy on the child's face, I knew that this was where I wanted to be. **This is what I liked doing. Helping people brought me a delight that I'd never experienced before,** and one that has yet to be matched. My second year here was unbelievable, from the first day to the last day of school my stomach hurt from belly laughing. There are plenty of moments I could talk about (Though I'm sure half of them I'm not allowed to repeat) but a couple of moments that spoke to me the most were during Homework Help. Those moments - sometimes quiet, and sometimes loud enough to be heard from the lobby, those moments were some of my favorites. Bryce Assan and Elijah Mbella are to this day, two of the funniest people I've met in my entire life. Whether it was talking in the morning about the latest NBA news or laughing to the point of tears because of the most interesting pronunciations of words I've heard in my life. It's safe to say I was a little surprised I made it through the year without getting detention once. I also remember the comradery our class shared, I remember talks in the morning about literally anything. I remember class parties and how my poor classmates spent more time shushing me, Bryce, and Elijah, when watching the movies. One of the things that will stick with me for maybe my whole life was how competitive those two made me. Whether it was working through fouls playing basketball or pushing each other to read flawlessly when we popcorn read.

Another thing I'd like to talk about is how the New Church has taught me to be a better person. I find more and more that I really enjoy helping people, and the idea of a "core love" is very fascinating to me. I appreciate deeply the teachings of the New Church, especially the marriage between Good and Truth, man, and woman. I think the idea of unity through marriage is a very beautiful idea, one I think that most people can relate to as well. In addition to conjugal love, the closest ideal to me. One of the most important of New Church beliefs is the importance of living a life of good works. Like I mentioned earlier, I've really grown to enjoy helping people. The feeling that helping others brings me is unmatched. I can clearly see a difference in my mentality from before I came to WNCS to now. Before, I would still help people out, but I never quite enjoyed it. There was always grumbling and eye rolling. It just wasn't pleasant, but when I got to WNCS, within the first 3-4 months I found myself really enjoying helping people. That's something I can still say is true.

Finally, I'd like to take a moment to thank all my teachers for being able to put up with me day in and day out. I am forever grateful for the support and love you all have given me. Whether it was taking time out of your day to remind me to do my homework and offering ways I could help my grade out. Or constantly entertaining my crazy ideas and being very encouraging. I cannot thank all of you enough for everything you've done for me. You all went above and beyond to ensure I had a good education and more importantly a good experience at WNCS.

What I'd really like to say is, looking back now, I can see clearly: if I hadn't come to WNCS, my dream might have sagged, dried up, or even exploded, just like Hughes wondered. But because of this school — because of the friends who believed in me, the teachers who pushed me, and the values that rooted me, my dream didn't get deferred. It grew. It thrived. Thank you.

**WNCS Parent Speaker: Introduction by Brian Smith**

Our speaker was born and raised in two foreign countries. Khartoum, Sudan, and Southern California. Even though it is hard for us to imagine what life would be like in either place, this background helped equip our speaker with broad experience and curiosity and openness to many people.

Professionally, his career has led him to become an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Maryland. In this role, he has come to focus his work on providing counsel to the Maryland Department of Disabilities which gives him the satisfaction of contributing with his area of expertise to public service needs. Please join me in welcoming Donovan's father: Hisham Amin!

### Hisham Amin's Speech



Good afternoon.

My name is Hisham Amin, I am the father of 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduate, Donovan Amin.

When Don was young, I would chant, "Big Don, Big Don, here comes Big Don! Get out the way, here comes Big Don! Scoot back, scoot back, here comes Big Don!"

Today I say to you, Donavan, Melizane & Adelaide, "Get on your way to Bremen Town, *Bremen Town*" [this is a reference to the school play "Ballad of the Bremen Band" performed by grades 5-8 in the spring.] Onward Christian soldiers, onward to Bremen. March on your journey to be the force for good that we know you can be.

And how do we know that you can be a force for good?

First, you come from and rise from a house of believers. Believers in God.

WNCS has taught you not only the fundamentals of reading, writing and math that you need, but also rights and wrongs, deep principles, higher values, and that a relationship with God is there for you as a bedrock if you want it.

Because you come from WNCS, a house of believers, we know you can be a force for good.

***Melizane*** – How do we know that you can be a force for good?

You come from Nigeria and Haiti. These are lands of survivors, leaders, revolutionaries, history makers, heroes. You came to us on your journey, and you fit in here like a silk glove. I know you made a

positive impact because you made a positive impact on my own son. I learned that you prefer to be quiet, but given an intellectual challenge you hold your own.

Your voice was marvelous in the play. And today, your whole family has been a force for good. Be a force for good in your melodious way, Melizane.

**Donovan** – How do we know you can be a force for good?

Man, there is no sugar sweeter than you. You are as sweet as sweetness gets. You came here [in 6<sup>th</sup> grade] shy and guarded, bent on protecting yourself. And you grew here and just bloomed. Instead of being guarded and protected, you now guard and protect.

Your voice is deep and rich, yet so soft and inviting. You teach me every day what it means to vibe with someone. We know you can be a force for good.

**Adelaide** – You might have had the toughest road of all. You have climbed the full mountain of WNCS [Jr K – 8<sup>th</sup> grade]. And you did it with your whole family watching the entire time. Being a principal's kid is hard enough, but you had the whole family here. The result? You are a role model. By all accounts, you have grown to become a bright and capable and together young lady.

You are a leader, and artistic in what you do, Melissa the Cat. I thought Art Club was a cool, cool endeavor on your part. You, Adelaide, can be a force for good.

So, we have no doubt that all three of you can be a force for good on your journey.

**And what of Bremen?** What is it? Where is it? That is for you to decide. Think about who you are, and what you like, and where and how you can spend many hours a day, every day. Form a vision in your head. A vision that you really like. Move toward your vision.

When I was your age, I had a very firm grip on school. School was my house back then. But I went about it without a vision... without a Bremen. Without a vision, I didn't know where I was going or why I was heading in any particular direction. And I was doing things, and doing them well, but never really satisfied or happy with it.

And it stayed that way until I was about 40. I tried hard at what I was doing, and did as well as I could, but I never stopped to make sure I was heading somewhere I wanted to go. So, I never experienced the deep satisfaction of knowing that you're in the right place. Of knowing you are where you need to be.

Picture your Bremen. Picture where you need to be. And go there. And make it better!

May the force be *with* you. May the force be *in* you. May you *be* the force. A force for good. On your way to Bremen Town... *Bremen Town*,

Thank you.



## Announcements

**Jacob's Creek Family Retreat:** July 24 – 27. It's time to sign up if you haven't already! I'm really looking forward to our theme for this year – Faith: An Internal Acknowledgement of Truth.

Come meet other New Church people from around the country as we turn to the Lord to get some help in this regard. You can visit our website -([www.jacobscreekfamilyretreat.org](http://www.jacobscreekfamilyretreat.org)) or email me ([matthewgenzlinger@gmail.com](mailto:matthewgenzlinger@gmail.com)) with any questions about Jacob's Creek Family Retreat, including how to register - Matthew (Head Pastor)

## News in Print Form

For some of us, June was one of those months where busy is more than a buzz word (as in busy as a bee – get it?) and July is a time for the rest and relaxation we were wishing for. So, rest and relax, won't you? Here are a few of the things that need relaxing from:

### More Congrad-ulations:

May was time for college students to become ex-students, but June was for the high schoolers. So, to all you newly fledged high-schoolers, welcome to the next phase of stress, but also

congratulations on completing the easy part. We might not know your names (journalism is tough) but we are happy for your success.

In addition, congratulations to the three June 5<sup>th</sup> graduates of the WNCS 8<sup>th</sup> grade: **Donovan Hisham Amin**, **Melizane Ngozi Iku**, and **Adelaid Tovah Smith** (with honors). Graduates' speeches will be found beginning p. 5 in this Echo, along with the speech given by Donovan's father, **Hashim Amin**.

### **And More Congratulations:**

At its graduation program, the school presented the following awards:

Student Service Awards: To **Adelaid Smith** for organizing and leading the student Art Club, and to **Marcellus Smith** for his third year of excellent piano accompaniment at chapel services.

#### Justin Zuber Awards for Scholarship:

Silver Award (1 year) – **Marcellus Smith**

Gold Award (2 year cumulative) – **Adelaide Smith**

#### Levi Cowley Sportsmanship Award: **Marcellus Smith**

Teacher Appreciation Award [the school's highest award "In recognition of affirmative attitude, cheerful cooperation and goodwill to fellow students" - **Donovan Amin**.

### **In Non-School News:**

Congrats to **Sharon Croft**, who now has an official-looking NASA – Goddard coffee cup (alas, without coffee) awarded to her as a result of the passage of a preselected amount of time. Journalistic integrity requires us to say that this amount of time is 40 years and represents the actual number of years she has graced the halls of that institution. Good work, Sharon.

**Jean Allen** is happy to report that after a month in the hospital and a rehab facility, **John** is finally home and doing well.

**Phil and Janna Zuber** spent a week in early June in Berkeley, CA to watch their first granddaughter graduate from high school!, then they all trucked off to Stinson Beach for a fun time with the family out there including a day with Janna's sister Karen DeLue and some of her family.

## JWST:

That is short for the James Webb Space Telescope. You can find a fascinating documentary about its development by the Goddard Space Flight Center at Youtube.com, search “Cosmic Dawn NASA documentary.”

## Meetings:

Annual meetings seem to be occurring more and more often – for some of us, anyway. We have had at least one recently and used that opportunity to pass a budget and to remind everyone that budgets are supposed to be met by means of money (as in contributions). (Your help, by the way, so thanks to all who participate in that.) It was also an occasion to elect Society Trustees **Lincoln Smith** (incumbent), **Erin Stillman** and **Phil Zuber** (with thanks to retiring Board members **David Glenn** and **Craig Cooper**), and to elect School Board members **Charlotte Radcliffe** and **Paige Sweeney** (with thanks to retiring Board members **Gillian Frazier** and **Jenny Smith**).

Another Society meeting held in June was of the outdoors type, celebrating New Church Day with a BBQ feast. By cleverly moving the date from Thursday to Friday, the party was held on a beautiful June afternoon instead of in the midst of a thunderous storm carried by 50+ mph winds that were drowned in rain. A grand time was had by all as a result of that cleverness. And thanks to all the food and fun providers and organizers.

## More Congratulations:

On June 22, 2025, **Brenna Sweeney** and **Austin Cole** were joyfully united in marriage during a beautiful ceremony officiated by Rev. Chuck Blair. They were joined on the altar by their daughter, Reagan, who received a special



bracelet as part of the ceremony, symbolizing the love and unity of their new family. The celebration took place overlooking the South River at Historic London Town Gardens in Edgewater, MD. They begin their married life with deep gratitude, the support of their community, and hearts full of excitement for the future.

On July 3, 2025, Master Sergeant **Nathan A. Smith** (eldest son of **Stewart & Patti**) will be promoted to **Sergeant Major** (SGM/E-9), the highest enlisted rank attainable in the U.S. Army. Shortly afterward, SGM Smith will take on the responsibilities of Command Sergeant Major (CSM) of the 5th Battalion, 159th General Support Aviation Battalion. Nathan joined the 5th Battalion in October 1997 as a Private (E-1) and has held every position relevant to a CH-47 Mechanic and enlisted flight crew member. This upcoming role will see the culmination of his 30-year career in aviation. During his career so far, he has supported *multiple* training, humanitarian, contingency operations, and overseas deployments. His military decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, three Air Medals, and more than 40 other awarded medals and commendations. Nathan currently resides in Williamsburg, Virginia with his wife of 26 years, Valerie Lynn, and his six children, Greg, Hayden, Meredith, Braddock, Lauren, and Dean.

