

# View

January 28, 2007

## This Week's Agenda

### The Lord's Day

9:30 AM: Singing, Prayer, Lord's Supper, Sermon: David Posey

5 PM – Singing, Lord's Supper, Sermon

### Classes Offered This Week

#### Today at 5:30

Auditorium: Outlining Your Bible

Room 11-12: Revelation – Seven Churches of Asia

#### Tuesday at 7 PM

John's Gospel: Next Class – February 13th

#### Wednesday

10:00 AM – OT History - 10 AM at the building.

7:30 PM – Classes for all ages 18 months and up.

Auditorium – Galatians

Room 11-12: The First Century Church

### News & Prayer Concerns

*"First of all, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men..."*

#### Prayer Concerns

Sara Clark is doing much better and was able to attend on Wednesday night. We're very thankful for her recovery, but pray that it continues.

Carl Hanson continues to recover from his heart surgery - keep he and Arlene in your prayers.

Others to include in your petitions to our Father: Ken Dickey (Steve's older brother), Herman Ward, Sharon Jones, Frances Kaler and Beverly Henderson (Pamela Ludlow's mother); those who are expecting: Julie Agee, Aimee Cain, Candee Dickey, and Amber Karlsson; men serving in foreign fields: Steven Sabath (Arletta's son), Brandon Folkert (the Terrys' nephew) and Danny Boyer.

#### Group Meetings

Steve Thompson's group is scheduled to meet this afternoon. Check with Steve if you have questions. If you have not had opportunity to meet with a group, you are welcome to come to this one. Please let Steve or Donna know.

#### Daily Bible Reading Plan Available

Get 2007 off to a great start by reading your Bible each day. You can acquire the 5-day per week reading plan by visiting our website at [www.folsomchurch.com](http://www.folsomchurch.com).

#### Vacation Bible School

We have set the date for this year's VBS: June 25-29. Please make your plans accordingly.

#### Out of Town

Several of our members are out of town today, including the Terrys. David and Christie Posey will be out of town, leaving tomorrow, returning a week from Thursday.



**Read your Bible  
each day, and  
spread the word!**

### Preachers we support

John Scholtz - South Africa, Zimbabwe  
Robert Nichols - Japan  
Barney Mejia - Nicaragua  
Dale Pennock - Vermont  
Gary Stouffer - Vista, CA  
Jim Lee - Englewood, Ohio  
Jeff Carr - Mandeville, LA  
Armando C. Pastor - Sto. Domingo & Dumabel  
Pepé G. Ando - Davao City  
Amado M. Estoy - Iriga City  
Ecclesiastes C. Licayan - Monkayo  
Abe S. Aguete - Pagudpud  
Rex M. Bayaca - Laoag City  
James Amangan - Bangued  
Quirino Tien - Cuyayan Valley  
Rosillito F. Nardo in Koronadal City.  
Johnny Buguis in General Santos City.

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# Snake Handlers

By Allen G. Breed, Associated Press

[Last week, after the sermon in which I subtly produced a toy snake as a prop, someone jokingly accused me of "snake handling." In light of that, I feel this article, from 1998, would be of interest.]

MACEDONIA, Ala. - Punkin Brown stalks around the altar of the Old Rockhouse Holiness church, his head bobbing, his voice a stream of guttural barks from the depths of his chest. He is "in the Word," and the congregation is clapping and shouting.

Then, nonchalantly, he bends over and plucks a 3-foot yellow timber rattlesnake from a wooden box on the altar.

The rattler stiffens in a "V" shape in Brown's right hand as he leaps across the stage. He sets the snake on the altar and strokes its upstretched head. Members of the congregation cool themselves with funeral home paper fans as a guitar player picks out a blues riff.

"They say it won't bite," the beefy 34-year-old evangelist shouts. "If it won't bite, there ain't no sense in being scared. I seen that big copperhead in there bite, but I know one thing: "that the Lord told me it was all right. The Lord said it would be all right."

Brown knows they can bite. The preacher from Parrottsville, Tennessee, has been bitten 22 times since he began handling serpents 18 years ago.

And he knows how serious the bites can be. His 28-year-old wife, Melinda, mother of their five children, died of a bite three years ago at a revival in Kentucky.

That was a rattlesnake, like this one.

And on this October day on Sand Mountain in northeast Alabama, the family's sad history repeats itself.

Brown doesn't even flinch when the rattler sinks one fang into the base of his left middle finger. If he was scared, it doesn't show.

Brown hands the snake to another man and walks behind the altar.

"God's still God, no matter what comes," Brown says, his voice relaxed and reassuring, the fire and Brimstone completely gone from it. "No matter what else, God's still God."

These are his last words of preaching.

Brown starts to fail. He braces himself, his left hand on the pulpit, his right on Pastor Billy Summerford's

shoulder. His head is down and he swallows hard.

Brown raises both hands in the air. His friends hold him up for a few seconds, then lower him to the floor.

A video camera rolls, taking in the alarming scene and the incongruous, smiling face of an oblivious little girl. Someone asks Brown if he wants a doctor. He shakes his head and points to the sky.

"JEEEEEEesus, have your way, JEEEEEEesus," the congregation shouts in warbling voices.

After about 10 minutes, the church goes silent, except for some muffled sobs. The little girl in the video

**"After about 10 minutes, the church goes silent, except for some muffled sobs. The little girl in the video still smiles, uncomprehending. Brown is dead."**

still smiles, uncomprehending.

Brown is dead.

The New Testament's book of Mark calls serpent handling one the "signs" that true believers must follow.

And John Wayne "Punkin" Brown Jr., a rising star in the Pentecostal faith, was a true believer.

Brown felt he was following God's law when he defied a judge's order following the death of his wife in August 1995. The order restored to him custody of his children from his in-laws, but with conditions: no poisonous snakes around the house and no more snake-handling services for the children. Now, the orphaned children are the objects of a new custody fight, pitting Appalachian tradition against child welfare law, faith against science, grandparent against grandparent.

Punkin Brown's parents, Peggy and John Brown Sr., who have their own snake-handling church in Marshall, N.C., are seeking custody of Jonathan, 12; Jacob and Jeremiah, 7; Sarah, 5; and Daniel, 4.

But on Oct. 7, as their son's body was laid out for viewing at a funeral home, a juvenile court judge in Cocke County, Tenn., told the Browns that he needed to determine if the children they had helped raise would be safe with them. They, too, have admitted violating the order.

In a preliminary decision, Judge John Bell gave temporary custody to the children's maternal grandmother, Mary Goswick of Plainville, Ga. She is a former serpent handler herself, though she says that's all in the past.

Melinda Brown's father, Lewis Duvall, says his grandchildren are better off away from all that.

Brown's in-laws testified that the children woke in cold sweats from nightmares about snakes.

"All we want to do is get them comfortable in school and to where they won't be raised up in such an atmosphere of wondering whether their granddaddy or their grandmother or their uncle will come home... in a box," says Duvall, who is divorced from Goswick.

"The father evidently did not have enough love in his heart to want to live and take care of his children."

But Punkin Brown's friends say it was all about love. He even said so himself in an interview a year after his wife's death.

"I never lost my faith in God. But I felt panic because she was my wife. I loved her," Brown told Scott Schwartz, a Smithsonian Institution archivist and author of a book, "Faith, Serpents and Fire."

Brown found himself facing a decision between loving God and loving his family. In the end, he decided they were one and the same.

"I let people talk me out of my handling of serpents, and I felt that I had let Melinda down for this," he said.

### **The truth about "snake handling"**

Does the Bible teach that believers are to handle snakes and if they are bitten they will not be harmed? Are we ever directed to handle snakes to demonstrate faith or as worship to God? Since the belief comes from Mark 16:9-20, let's look at the text.

Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country. They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either. Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. "These signs

will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed. And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.

In two of the earliest manuscripts, the text of Mark 16 ends at v. 8. But we'll proceed on the basis that the text is an authentic part of the gospel of Mark.

The subject of this text is the disciples, "those who had been with Him" (v. 10). They were the ones who were told that He had been raised, but refused to believe (v. 11, 13). The eleven are in view from v. 14, where Jesus rebukes them for their "unbelief and hardness of heart." He then give these eleven the "great commission" and says that all who believe and are baptized shall be saved (v. 16). But when he says "those who believe" in v. 17, he was most likely speaking about those who had refused to believe up to that time. That fits the evidence best since the things Jesus mentioned actually occurred in the apostles, but not to every Christian (see Acts 2:4; 3:6-7; 28:3-5). In Acts 28:3-5, Paul was bitten by a snake but "suffered no harm," unlike Punkin Brown. That's because Paul was an apostle.

To those, like the Pentecostals, who believe these signs continue, J. W. McGarvey observes, "they should present some ocular (visual) demonstration of the fact before he asks the people to believe his assertion." Kind of an eerie suggestion in light of the story of Punkin Brown, isn't it?

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## Reading for Sermon of February 11th **Genesis 6-9**

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## Calendar for the Folsom Point church of Christ

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
				Elder's Annual Planning Meeting		
7 <b>The Lord's Day</b> Group Meetings Young Peoples' Class	8	9 7 PM In-Home Bible Study	10 OT History Class: 10AM 7:30 PM Bible Classes	11	12	13
14 <b>The Lord's Day</b> Assembly 9:30 AM & 5 PM	15	16 7 PM In-Home Bible Study	17 OT History Class: 10 AM 7:30 PM Bible Classes	18	19	20
21 <b>The Lord's Day</b> Assembly 9:30 AM & 5 PM	22 7 PM Ladies Class Daniel's Home	23 7 PM In-Home Bible Study	24 OT History Class: 10AM 7:30 PM Bible Classes	25	26	27
28 <b>The Lord's Day</b> Assembly 9:30 AM & 5 PM	29	30	31 7:30 PM Bible Classes			

### Mark Your Calendar

February 11th, State of the Church Presentation by the elders

June 25-29, Vacation Bible School

**The View** contains news and articles of interest to the members of the Folsom Point church of Christ. Announcing an activity or event does not necessarily imply that we financially sponsor the event or that the elders specifically endorse every component of that event, since it may not fall under the direct oversight of the elders. The church's work and the elders' oversight is limited by Scripture. We will not announce events that are primarily social in nature. However, we do want to publicize and encourage those activities that provide an opportunity to be built up in the faith and provide an opportunity for you be a more involved and active member of the body at Folsom Point.

### ABOUT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AT FOLSOM

We are a church of Christ patterned after the New Testament example of local churches. We believe in the authoritative word of God and will provide you with a Bible answer for everything we do in our doctrine and practice. We exalt Jesus Christ and seek to glorify Him, not ourselves (Ephesians 3:21). Therefore, our efforts are directed toward promoting commitment to Christ, not to any man or institution (I Corinthians 2:5).

Our assemblies are simple. We sing without use of an instrument (see Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; we will be happy to show you why we use no instrument, if you desire further study on this issue). We pray (I Timothy 2:1), partake of the Lord's Supper each first day of the week (I Corinthians 11:23-29; Acts 20:7) and teach from God's word. All preaching comes from the Bible.

The financial support of this congregations comes entirely from the free-will offerings of its members made on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:1-2; II Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:6-7). We never solicit funds from non-members. Contributions are used for the spiritual growth of this church and for the support of a few men in other areas, such as the Philippines, who are preaching the gospel. We do not use money collected here for social programs or the support of any human institution. We believe the church itself can do all the work God has given it to do. And we aim to do *only* the work God has given it to do – teach the gospel, build up the members, and help needy Christians. All other "good work" is the responsibility of individual Christians (Titus 2:11-14; James 1:27; Galatians 6:9-10).

We offer personal Bible studies at your convenience. We are here to help you with your spiritual needs: please favor us with a request for a Bible study or correspondence course that you can complete at your pace.