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notifications and location-specific severe weather warnings. A mobile app is also available from a phone's app store. Union County residents can sign-up online by going to the Union County Government website www.unioncountygva.gov. You can also register by calling the Union County Emergency Management Agency at 706-439-6091 during office hours, Monday-Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Q. Will my phone recognize the alerts when they

come in?

A. To ensure that your phone will provide the information you will receive from the alerts, be sure that these telephone numbers are "allowed and accepted" by your phone: 800-566-9780 – WEATHER WARNINGS; 866-419-5000 – EMERGENCY CALLS; 855-969-4636 – GENERAL CALLS If any of these numbers are "blocked," you will not be able to receive the blocked notifications.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

day she worked the morning shift. Over the past few weeks, Cora had become weak, and Mom knew her time would come soon. So, she went by Cora's room before leaving work. The kind elderly lady smiled, patted Mom's hand and said, "It will be over soon."

When Mom came back to work the next morning, a young orderly met her and said, "You should have been here last night." A nurse working the night shift fussed at Mom for not being at work. Mother explained that her schedule had been changed. The nurse looked at her and said, "You missed two miracles." Miss Cora had died at 4 a.m. The nurse was with her when she passed, and as she was attending to Cora, the nurse heard singing. So, the nurse walked into the hall, and there was Mr. Brown walking down the hall singing "Jesus Loves Me." Then the nurse felt a tug of her arm, and there was Mrs. Jones. Her eyes were shining, and she asked, "Do you see that?" And she pointed down the hall toward Cora's room. The nurse asked Mrs. Jones

what she was seeing. Mrs. Jones said, "I can see them as well as I can see you. I can see Jesus and Cora walking down the hall."

By the time Mom got to Mr. Brown and Mrs. Jones rooms, the miracles had passed. Mr. Brown was once again mute and confined to a wheelchair. Mrs. Jones could no longer see and was bedridden. However, one nurse and three other staff members all witnessed Mr. Brown singing and walking. They also saw Mrs. Jones walking around looking at things she hadn't seen in years. Every time my mother gets worried about something, she thinks about those miracles that occurred in a nursing home in Dunlap, Tennessee.

As we think about all the bad things going on in this world, we should remember that God loves all of us. He cares about what we are experiencing. He loves us even though we may be unlovable. Isn't that the reason for this season? So, we should celebrate God's love for us during this time of year.

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

ers made the way for 60 children to shop for themselves and their families for Christmas this year too. There are countless other organizations that generously gave Christmas to those in need that I haven't listed. Were I to do that, the list would fill the entire newspaper. And isn't that amazing?

No matter what your economic station in life, if you grow up in Blairsville-Union County, there is someone looking out for you. There is an individual, a group, or an organization that is making sure Christmas happens for everyone. This is one of the many reasons just living here in this mountain community is a gift. People care about their neighbor.

We have had our share of challenges this year. 2020 will go down in the history books for many reasons, but at the end of this twelfth month, I can't help

but think that perhaps 2020's headline for the history books should read: 2020, What Began in Turmoil Ended in Peace. Though a pandemic still exists, a vaccine has been made. Though some are still getting sick, many more are caring for them. Though some have little, many more give out of their abundance to meet those needs. Though the world seems to be upside down, in this town, we stand side by side, arm in arm, and hold our ground looking forward to the future.

If Christmas is about peace, joy, and giving, then in Blairsville-Union County, it will be a merry one indeed. To all of our community, we at the Chamber want to thank you for faithfully supporting all our businesses, our students, and our local front-line workers. Now more than ever we wish you peace on earth and good will in 2021.

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ons are designed to contribute to and exacerbate ill health as sort of part of their punishment for having offended (i.e. if you weren't in prison you could go see a doctor of your choice any time you wanted).

So, I say to Mr. Gowder, I do not wish prison on anyone – especially as they are currently designed and function. But you are a representative of a society that has designed, created and sustains this system of retribution masquerading as rehabilitation and/or corrections. And unless your wealth and status in the community ultimately saves you from prison, you will eventually reap what you have sown, which is a hell on earth in an American prison that, as a member of the ruling class, you

have designed for others, but which you never expected to have to experience yourself.

Punishment for offenses against society is necessary and appropriate. Cruel and unusual punishment as is in evidence in our current system of corrections is not. With that said, I wish you well Mr. Gowder, and may you by God's hand become part of the solution to criminal justice and prison reform. That would indeed be a positive outcome to this unfortunate episode in your life.

The Rev. Frank F. Wilson

**Editor's Note: Mike Gowder's co-defendant James Heaton received the same delay in prison reporting time, as detailed in the Dec. 16, 2020, edition of the North Georgia News.*

without the approval of elected officials. This has shaken the secure foundation of established law and has minimized the confidence of the future of our Republic. Let We the People put them on notice that they need to act in accordance with established law. A Patriot Reflection is presented weekly by www.joshuaswarriors.org.

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encourage more branching and flowers. Simply cut off a few pieces of stem. Those pieces of stem can be placed in potting soil and kept lightly moist. After a few weeks, they will root and you have a new plant. If you have questions about the Christmas cactus contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Fowler...

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world offers much tribulation. But when you, friend, find your place in the Peace of Christmas, it changes your outlook in this life because your soul is reconciled to its Creator for eternity. Isn't that merry?

The angels announced it. The shepherds witnessed it. "O night divine, O night when Christ was born!" The world would never be the same, for in that first Christmas God stepped into the world He created to bring His Peace to you.

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of our most vulnerable – including sick Americans – to wait in line behind younger, healthier non-healthcare workers who are much less likely to die or require hospitalization with COVID-19.

To highlight the ideological mindset with which these public health professionals are attempting to apply medicine, let's examine some of the tenets of last month's guidelines, which are largely preserved in the Dec. 20 recommendations.

For starters, it makes sense for the initial rollout to include hospital workers and long-term care residents in congregate settings. Health care workers are at highest risk of exposure in dealing with the disease and come into regular contact with vulnerable individuals. Long-term care homes house the most vulnerable of our fellow Americans.

Moving into phased allocation, the CDC committee has included various sensible factors like risk of infection and death. Also taken into consideration, however, are so-called "ethical principles," like whether or not people are "racially and ethnically diverse" enough to warrant first go at a potentially life-saving intervention.

Beyond the initial phase, there are three categories of people identified for prioritization before enough vaccine will be available for the general public. The first is non-healthcare essential workers – think police officers, grocery store employees, etc. – the majority of whom are typically younger and healthier than the other two groups up for consideration.

Next in line are the people most at risk from dying or requiring hospitalization due to COVID-19 infections, including people with high-risk medical conditions and folks aged 65 and older. These are our sick and elderly, with the latter being the most at-risk among those who develop COVID-19.

A staggering 4 in 5 Americans who have died from COVID-19 are 65 or older, and over 90% of COVID victims have had one or more pre-existing medical conditions that increased their likelihood of dying with the disease.

Based on these facts, one would think the goal would be to minimize death and harm, which would mean prioritizing all sick and elderly in an early vaccination regime. But the committee signaled just last month it was against such prioritization for adults aged 65 and older because "racial and ethnic minority groups (are) under-represented" among these people.

For seemingly similar reasons, these public health experts have been recommending that tens of millions of adults with high-risk medical conditions take a backseat to the non-healthcare workforce, which, again, tends to be younger and healthier on the whole and therefore much less likely to die from COVID-19.

Eventually, there will be enough vaccine stock for everyone who wants it, but what would a limited supply policy recommendation like the one enumerated above mean for our communities here in North Georgia?

At 96.8 percent white according to census data, Union County is not what one would call racially and ethnically diverse. This isn't by design – it just is. Furthermore, as a retirement community, Union County has a greater percentage of older people known to be more susceptible to the disease, with people 65 and older representing 33.7% of the local population compared with just 14.3% statewide.

But since most of our aging county residents happen to have been born with the wrong skin color, at least according to ideologically motivated public health professionals advising the CDC, their lives appear to mean less when it comes to preserving health. The bottom line: policies implemented using such race-based recommendations would very likely mean more deaths in Union County and everywhere else, including in minority communities.

To be fair, the committee is attempting to use a multivariable approach to recommending people for vaccine prioritization, but why is much higher vulnerability to death not of greater concern now that we have a potentially safe and effective vaccine? Why is skin color playing a factor at all in keeping the vaccine from reaching, as quickly as possible, so many Americans disproportionately dying with COVID-19?

The Advisory Committee's recommendations had yet to be accepted by the CDC at press time, which may or may not matter in the end, as individual states will decide how vaccines are to be distributed. Georgia's first vaccines have already started going to frontline health workers, with long-term care facilities next. Unfortunately, it seems Georgia's draft distribution plan

for follow-up phased allocation will utilize recommendations by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, so it remains to be seen if politicized health recommendations will be put into play in Georgia.

Yes, racial and ethnic minorities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, but the reasons are undoubtedly complex and don't throw off the importance of overall protecting our most vulnerable, including our sick and elderly Americans who are themselves members of racial and ethnic minority groups.

This isn't about vaccinating white people versus Black people versus Asian people, etc.; it's about taking care of our most vulnerable people, period. If minority communities are more vulnerable than others, then residents there will be taken care of in greater proportions by using this guiding principle.

Failing to prioritize our most vulnerable in favor of working individuals who are much less likely to die or require hospitalization is unconscionable. Regardless of race or ethnicity, is someone 65 or older? Regardless of race or ethnicity, does he or she have a high-risk medical condition? If so, give him or her access to the vaccine at the earliest opportunity. This is how we will make the greatest strides in saving lives – if that's even the goal anymore.

Resources:

- https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/the-health-benefits-of-strong-relationships
- <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/meetings/downloads/slides-2020-11/COVID-04-Dooling.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/racial-ethnic-disparities/index.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html>
- <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine>

Weekly Patriot Reflection



A Free People should be Governed by Law

Our great nation was founded on sound principles of Natural Law that were embraced within the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. These were properly defined so that society would have a stable frame of reference, in order to feel secure in making plans for the future. This stable framework would bind the people, and the ruler, equally. It would limit those who governed so that society would not be subject to their ever-changing whims. John Locke wrote, "The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom. Where there is no law there is no freedom. For liberty is to be free from restraint and violence from others, which cannot be where there is no law." In our modern era we have been subject to the whims of those who govern that think they know best what we need. They have undermined the established procedures and laws concerning adoption and approval of laws and have arbitrarily signed bills into law