

Newsletter goes all digital starting next month

The Samaritan Ministries Christian Health Care Newsletter is ending its print run after 30 years, with content instead being delivered to you exclusively through email and our website (samaritanministries.org/blog) starting in January 2026.

For the past two years, we have printed the newsletter quarterly while still providing a PDF version each month along with newsletter links in our This Month at Samaritan email and on our website.

As part of our continuing effort to be good stewards of your membership contributions, however, we will not print a paper issue of the newsletter or Prayer Guide starting in January. This decision reflects the increased costs of paper and printing.

We also will switch from a monthly newsletter PDF to making blog posts available throughout the month, allowing us to offer more content than before and in a more timely way.

The print mailing will continue to include your Share notification and the print version of This Month at Samaritan.

In addition, past newsletter content will still be available online at SamaritanMinistries.org/blog. You'll also be able to find newsletter PDF files going back to August 2015 on the Newsletter area of your [Samaritan Dashboard](#).

We are also developing access to a digital Prayer Guide that will allow you to continue praying for your fellow members' needs.

If you wish to share your thoughts on these changes, please send an email to newsletter@samaritanministries.org.

We also remind you that if you'd like to opt out of receiving the monthly mailing in print and switch to digital notifications only, you can follow this process:

- Sign in to your [Samaritan Dashboard](#).
- Click on the **Membership** icon.
- Click on the **Preferences** tab.
- On the right of your screen, under Notifications, click **Email**.

Completing this process will opt you out of most of our postal mail communications to you, including your monthly Share assignment and This Month at Samaritan. This information will instead come to you through the email address you use to log in to Dash.

Classic/Basic sharing summary

Member Households: 76,374

Bills: \$32,094,200

Shares: \$34,439,282

Taggart, Eastham re-elected to Samaritan Board

Incumbents Jim Taggart and Michael Eastham have been re-elected to the Samaritan Ministries Board of Directors.

A total of 1,925 households voted in a Yes/No ballot for each candidate. A simple majority Yes vote was required for election. Members overwhelmingly voted Yes above a super majority for both candidates.

Thank you for voting. Please pray for the Lord's continued guidance and wisdom for the Board.

A simple referral. A life-changing gift.

You've received the gift of a Christ-centered health care community—filled with prayer, generosity, and encouragement. Someone you know may be searching for exactly the same thing. There's joy in sharing what you've found. Tell them about Samaritan Ministries and REDEEM™ HealthShare. This could be the answer they've been praying for.

In this month's newsletter

Newsletter moving to a new phase: We look back at the development of the Samaritan Ministries Christian Health Care Newsletter to mark the last printed issue. We also look forward to the continuing development of our online presence. Page 1.

Noteworthy: The end of the paper newsletter is the beginning of a new approach. Page 2.

Member Spotlight: Stanton Lanier composes instrumental music to glorify God and refresh the soul. Page 5. Why SMI? Stanton and Lorie Lanier treasure the Samaritan community as "a witness to the Church." Page 6.

Breaking down the labels, part 2: This month, we look at labels that indicate everything from gluten-free to wild-caught marine food. Page 8.

Prayer for the Persecuted Church: A mob attacked missionaries in India while police looked on. Page 11.

The Doorpost: Christmas is the time to remember an amazing truth—God is with us! Page 12.

We're hiring at Samaritan Ministries!

We have open positions—working with other members, helping potential members, creating material, developing solutions, and more! Join our 400 staff members in our mission to redeem health care by helping the Body of Christ love one another through sharing each other's health care burdens. If you're interested in pursuing a career at a [Best Christian Workplace](#), go to SamaritanMinistries.org/Careers to learn more about our open on-site and remote opportunities.

December 2025 Save to Share™ Needs

- **Kristi** is being treated for severe, ongoing long-COVID complications. Please pray for complete healing.
- **Laura** is continuing treatment after having surgery to remove breast cancer. Please pray for complete healing.
- **Tracy** is receiving chemotherapy after having extensive surgery to treat bile duct cancer. Please pray for complete healing.
- **Anna** (17), daughter of Eric and Misha, had two surgeries to treat a heart condition known as Wolff-Parkinson-White (WPW) syndrome. Please pray for complete healing.
- **Dustin** is being treated for multifocal glioblastoma. Please pray for miraculous healing.

These needs were assigned to members who participate in Save to Share™ for needs greater than \$250,000. They have already been shared, so no additional giving is necessary. They are listed to encourage all members to pray.

DECEMBER 2025

Christian Health Care Newsletter



Shari Pittenger, wife of Samaritan Ministries founder Ted Pittenger, drew the illustration that would grace the cover of the Christian Health Care Newsletter for several years.

Newsletter moving to a new phase but with same priorities

Content will be online only starting in January

by Michael Miller

SAMARITAN MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL'S newsletter started as a two-page publication in 1996.

Next month, it will be an online-only publication at SamaritanMinistries.org/blog.

But the focus will remain the same: the Lord and our members.

"Even though we're saying goodbye to the physical newsletter, we're not saying goodbye to the encouragement and connection that have always made it meaningful," said Anthony Hopp, Samaritan's Chief Purpose Officer and a Vice President who also serves as executive editor of the newsletter.

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Samaritan™
MINISTRIES

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God is with us!

Member Letter:

'VERY GRATEFUL FOR PRAYERS, NOTES, AND SHARES'

We are very grateful for the prayers, notes of encouragement, and Shares from other members of Samaritan Ministries. Struggling to pay financial obligations in the past has been very stressful. My husband's emergency room visit gave us an opportunity to see how well members would give, and what a relief and joy to see them come through for us. Thank you, Samaritan staff, for your kind, unhurried, and prayerful conversations during this need process. We praise the Lord Jesus for all of you.

**Mark and Sharon
NORTH CAROLINA**

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Noteworthy | From the Editors

I've been privileged to work on the Samaritan Ministries Christian Health Care Newsletter for 17 years, and I'm very excited to be part of its next phase.

This month's issue will be the final in this format. Starting in January, we will publish exclusively online on our blog at SamaritanMinistries.org/blog. This change will not only save the ministry money on printing expenses, but it will give our newsletter team the ability to provide content throughout the month.

There is some sadness, however. I'm an old-time print guy. I love to assemble a publication for visual presentation. I love being able to hold a product I've been a part of creating.

But I'm also excited about how we'll be able to serve you going forward. We'll continue sharing your stories and information about how to redeem health care. We'll continue to publish the good news about health care sharing and the Good News about Jesus Christ.

Please pray for us in this time of transition. As the early newsletter always said, "Send a note, pay your Share, and always stay alert in prayer."



Michael Miller
EDITOR

Helpful Resources

▶ Facebook.com/groups/samaritanmin

Reach out to other members in our Facebook Group.

▶ Important emails

Medical needs: needs@samaritanministries.org

Sending or receiving Shares: membership@samaritanministries.org

Your membership: membership@samaritanministries.org

▶ Health Resources | Member.SamaritanMinistries.org/#hrc

- Compare quality and cost of health care services in your area using Healthcare Bluebook™. Receive Samaritan's fair-price reward when you submit a screenshot showing you chose a green fair-price provider.
- Find discounts on telemedicine, labs, prescriptions, dental, and more through New Benefits Ltd.

▶ Writers guidelines: SamaritanMinistries.org/writers-guidelines

▶ State disclosures: SamaritanMinistries.org/statedisclosures



Samaritan Ministries'
Christian Health Care Newsletter
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AUGUST 1996

NEW NAME / NEW LOOK
You will have to look carefully, but we have changed our name to Christian Health Care Newsletter. Why? We have known for some time of another organization that was already using Christian Healthcare Network, and even though they do not offer a medical need-sharing program, we felt we should change our name out of deference to them. We also wanted to emphasize Samaritan Ministries move (which is the umbrella not-for-profit corporation). So from now on we will be known as Samaritan Ministries' Christian Health Care Newsletter.

We are also sporting a new look. We are experimenting with a newsletter format that may be evolving. I really hate that word over the coming months. But with the new name and the new look, our primary ministry remains the same: Christians helping Christians with medical expenses!

THIS MONTH'S NEEDS
You will find the medical need that we are suggesting you share with on a separate piece of paper, included with this letter.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
We appreciate the efforts of several of you who have let us know of pending address changes. We also appreciate those of you who have let us know when you fail to receive your newsletter. Once the newsletter leaves our office, we depend upon the U.S. Postal System (which is generally pretty reliable), to get the newsletter to you. We have had a few letters reported as lost, but we will never know unless you tell us. If you haven't received your newsletter by the 15th of the month, please call us.

PHONE REQUESTS
The best number for subscribers to call would be 309-698-8765. We will generally answer this number between 9 am and 5 pm Central Standard Time, although we may occasionally forward it to the answering service. The 24-hour answering service number is 309-686-8866. We usually return calls that the answering service receives that same evening, or at least the next day. Our FAX number is 309-698-6744.

PRAYER REQUESTS:
Judy Kostelny is recovering from knee surgery.
Joy McQuade is expecting a baby any day now.
Deborah Schmale is healing from surgery.
Hazel Knight's eyesight.
Aaron Waaka, son of Brian & Sherri, is being treated for muscular dystrophy.
Rhonda Botterhof has been diagnosed with a circulatory disorder.

Continued next page



Christian HealthCare
NEWSLETTER

MEMBER LETTERS:
Samaritan is a family!

We were devoted to lose our university health plan due to an employment change. After checking out insurance and other sharing ministries we went with Samaritan because of the personal touch. Sending and receiving has become very special to us. Samaritan is a family, and we share and pay for each other. The idea that our money goes to needs rather than profits excites us. We love the months when shares are reduced. Our insurance company never sent us cards, reduced premiums, or prayed for us on the phone. We like belonging to a group of believers that avoid costly and sinful practices such as abortions, smoking, and abusing drugs. Going to the Special Prayer Needs is wonderful. I went through very costly cancer treatment—gross bills were half a million—and our brother and sister came through. We got 60 percent discounts, and are truly blessed.
Terry J Lane
Terrence

Nomination period now open for Board of Directors election
The nomination period for the 14th Board of Directors election is open until August 31. Six elected members serve on the Board, along with Samaritan President Ted Pittenger and two others he designates. Elected Board members serve three-year terms, with two seats up for election each year. The Board of Directors is extremely important to the success of Samaritan Ministries, and elected members make up a majority of the Board, providing important oversight and accountability. Please be in prayer that God will provide excellent candidates again for this year's election. Only God knows what the ministry will face in the coming years, and what gifts, abilities, and skills will best serve Samaritan. Board members do not receive any financial compensation other than expenses for travel, food, and lodging associated with meetings. There are four regularly scheduled Board meetings annually, often taking several days for travel and meeting time, and requiring six to 10 hours of preparation before each meeting. There can also be special meetings, usually by teleconference or email, when urgent issues arise.

Basic qualifications include:
Agreement with the Board of Directors
Residence in the United States
Agreement with the Doctrine of Predestination, which acknowledges the authority of Scripture

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- 9. How to vote will set the values of future America
- 10. The Doorpost
- 11. The Doorpost
- 12. The Doorpost

JUNE 2025

Christian Health Care Newsletter



Mamaw and me: a child's view of dementia
by Anna Hove

MY MAMAW *loved* cooking for others. It was her love language. I can still taste the creaminess of her perfect macaroni and cheese, and I'd do almost anything to have a bowl of her vegetable soup again. Her peas—always baked with sponge golden-brown meatloaf—were known community-wide. I still can't decide if her peanut butter or lemon was my favorite. Maybe her chocolate.

It wasn't unusual for me to spend Friday or Saturday nights with her on a typical weekend. I loved spending that time with her and always felt loved and special. She really had a way of caring for her family.

First signs
I noticed a change in her demeanor during my high school years. Her stories became repetitive as she began sharing the same story within God's love and grace.

Encouraging and meaningful
Encouraging brothers and sisters in God's family were filling us up in prayer brought much peace during my pregnancy. My precious pregnancy ended in a miscarriage, but, thankfully, my labor and delivery of our son went well. The process of submitting bills was smooth, and receiving the checks was so appreciated. The notes were so encouraging and meaningful. Thank you, Samaritan Ministries, for helpfully sharing one another's burdens. To God be the glory!

Like
PENNSYLVANIA

The Samaritan Ministries Christian Health Care Newsletter developed from a simple report to a formatted magazine format to a streamlined layout.

"That spirit continues—just in a digital space—and we warmly invite you to join us. Whether it's reading member stories, staying updated, or simply being reminded that you are helping to redeem health care, we hope you'll continue to engage with us digitally."

Content under the new format will be posted throughout the month rather than all at once, with links still being sent in our This Month at Samaritan monthly email.

Early days

The early development of Samaritan's newsletter came from the need to communicate ministry developments to members during its early days in the mid-1990s. Samaritan members were then referred to as "subscribers," since they subscribed to the newsletter in order to be able to share needs. Eventually, though, Samaritan leaders saw the newsletter as a way to encourage members and teach them about the worldview that the ministry was trying to live out.

"From Samaritan's earliest days, we have sought to accomplish two goals," said Rob Waldo, Samaritan's Chief Administrative Officer and a Vice President. "One is, be unwavering in our commitment to provide edifying, Christ-honoring articles that would spiritually and practically enrich the Samaritan membership, and two, provide them in a way that meets members where they're at."

It helped that the newsletter's founding editor, Ray King, had a journalism degree from the University of Illinois and experience writing for The Navigators.

Content growth

Using a logo designed by Shari Pittenger, wife of ministry founder Ted Pittenger, the Samaritan Ministries Christian Health Care Newsletter was sent out along with Share slips—literally strips of paper with a member's monthly Share assignment on it.

At first occupied with ministry updates and prayer needs,

the newsletter began to include worldview articles. Book excerpts on devotional or worldview topics were also common.

Much of the newsletter, though, was occupied by prayer requests, Special Prayer Needs, and New Rewards (birth announcements), and the page count grew to eight by the end of 1997. By then it included The Doorpost, a devotional by Ray King anchoring the back page of each issue. Ray wrote The Doorpost monthly until he passed away earlier this year.

Ted Pittenger wrote the first annual State of the Ministry report to members for January 1999. That same issue featured well-known homeschooling and parenting author Mary Pride, who wrote about how to fix health care, an early commentary on a subject that would increasingly occupy the newsletter's pages as health care freedom came under attack.

By 2000, the Prayer Guide was a separate insert, while the newsletter's pages continued to focus

on ministry updates and worldview articles by outside writers. In 2001, the first “Subscriber Spotlight” (later Member Spotlight) was published.

Consistently peppering the newsletter were notes from members expressing appreciation for their fellow members and Samaritan Ministries. Members also contributed to the “This Is What Happened to Me” feature, and staff reviewed books and films.

A new look

The newsletter’s look began to change in the early 2000s. The ministry held a contest for a new logo and commissioned a redesign. The new look debuted in September 2002, tied to the logo’s colors and typeface and featured a more streamlined, magazine look. The flag at the top of the front page featured staff member Jason Morris and his wife, Tina, and one of their children.

“This Month at Samaritan” ministry updates were parked on page 3 in those days, while member testimonies and worldview content continued to dominate the newsletter. As threats were made to health care freedom, though, writers like Samaritan general counsel Brian Heller pushed back.

The newsletter also expanded to a standard 16-page count. Soon, technology resulted in three additional developments:

- Blog posts and social media presence. The newsletter content started to be posted in blog form around 2010. Soon, Samaritan content was being shared through social media accounts.

- PDF versions. After the Samaritan member Dashboard was created, links to newsletter articles were posted there as well as a PDF version of each issue.
- An email version of This Month at Samaritan. The email features links to newsletter content as well as ministry updates.

The newsletter continued to campaign against government encroachment on health care freedom as the Affordable Care Act was being pushed through and as some state governments tried to regulate health care sharing ministries. Emphases on members and good health practices, however, were never lost.

A final redesign happened in 2020, offering a cleaner, full-color design on brighter paper. The blog has been through a couple iterations as well, settling on the attractive, easy-to-navigate design that it has now.

Bringing values

The newsletter has always been a service to our members, communicating ministry news, health information, and biblical values.

“Our newsletter brings three values to members: It educates, inspires, and connects,” said recent managing editor Julia Ekstrom. “It educates our members on how to be a part of a health care sharing ministry, how to advocate for the health care solutions that best fit their needs, and how to live healthy lives.

“It inspires our members through devotionals, such as Noteworthy and The Doorpost. And it connects our members with

each other through Member Spotlights that highlight the work our members are doing in ministries around the world.”

Although the change to an all-digital approach will include different timing in content release, the focus will remain the same.

“While we’ve adapted in the use of delivery channels, our commitment to Christ-honoring, quality content has never wavered,” Rob said. “Jesus Christ has been—and always will be—central to the newsletter, whether through member testimonies, spotlights on members’ ministries, or original devotionals.

“Where possible, we’ve sought to give members a voice, amplifying what God is doing through them in their service across the United States and around the globe.”

Into the future

The content will continue to contribute to the ministry’s goals.

“Samaritan’s mission is to ‘redeem health care by helping the Body of Christ love one another through sharing each other’s health care burdens while experiencing authentic biblical community,’” Rob said. “We can’t redeem health care alone. We can’t navigate this complex health care system alone. We can’t even be the Body of Christ and love one another alone.

“Samaritan’s online content is a place for you—for all of us!—to get informed, enriched, and equipped, so that we can be the Body of Christ, redeeming health care, together.” ♦♦♦

Michael Miller is editor of the Samaritan Ministries newsletter.

Member Spotlight

Stanton Lanier: composer

by Anna Moore

Member Stanton Lanier

StantonLanier.com

[YouTube](#) @StantonLanier

[Pandora](#), [Spotify](#), [Apple Music](#), [YouTube Music](#), [Amazon Music](#)

STANTON LANIER composes instrumental music that gives hope to listeners around the world.

Through what he believes is the work of the Holy Spirit, Stanton's arrangements and original songs point to the beauty of the Creator. His songs (StantonLanier.com) have helped others experience the peace that only comes from the Lord.

The award-winning composer writes music for piano, orchestra, and symphony, often offering a cinematic sound. With more than 180 melodies in his collection, he has made it his mission to glorify God and refresh the soul through Scripture-inspired music.

Writing life soundtracks

Stanton lives in Atlanta with his wife, Lorie. They have two adult children, Jacob and Caroline, and one grandchild. Over the past 25 years, Stanton has written one instrumental song every six to eight weeks. His most recent album, "Eternal Beauty: A Cinematic Journey through Psalms," was released in November and can be streamed on music platforms. Sheet music is also available on his website.

"It's 12 psalms," he said. "I did the film scoring for this cinemat-



Stanton Lanier with his wife, Lorie. (Supplied photo)

ic essence of orchestral music and melody that can be like a soundtrack for people's lives."

"December Peace" and "December Peace II" are his Christmas albums. In 2009, "December Peace" won Best Holiday Album from the ZMR (Zone Music Reporter) Awards, defeating famed artists Enya and Yo-Yo Ma.

"I have unique arrangements of hymns and carols and then some original composing with songs like 'Silent Night' and 'Away in a Manger,'" he said.

Sharing God encounters

Stanton didn't take his music full

time until he was a decade into a career as a financial planner for a Christian business. He would write music on the side and give his CDs to friends, clients, and co-workers.

"Some people said, 'Hey, can I get a few more? I'd like to get five and give them to friends,'" he said. "So, the sales started to happen and then the testimonials."

His music started playing on The Weather Channel and people took notice of how it affected them.

"People started to testify to the peace and hope and healing of God," he said. "There were people in the hospital, and The Weather Channel came on. It gave them

hope in the hospital bed. There were people in their home folding laundry and they said God was in the room with them. There were these mysterious, beautiful things that people began to say, so I just started to see from God how His possibility was unlimited and what He could do in the heart of someone. I began to call it a God encounter."

In the early 2000s, Stanton wrote a song titled "Peace" for a

co-worker's daughter, Haley, who had leukemia at the time. The song was inspired by John 14:27, which says, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

Haley passed away, but God used the song for the good of others and for His glory.

"'Peace' became probably one of my first kind of pieces that just

came from the highest Heaven," he said. "I just knew that Haley knew a peace that she would want us to know."

That experience led Stanton to create his nonprofit music ministry, Music to Light the World, in 2004, which has donated 75,000 CDs to cancer centers and hospitals. The ministry has also donated more than \$50,000 to Family Legacy, a non-profit ministry that gives orphans in Zambia access

Why Samaritan Ministries?

Stanton Lanier and his family made the switch from health insurance to Samaritan Ministries when they recognized the expense was too great and the benefits too few to keep going the same route.

"We mainly wanted to save money because we were fairly healthy people and not going to have a medical need unless we had an emergency," he said.

He learned about Samaritan Ministries through a former board member of his nonprofit organization, Music to Light the World, nearly 10 years ago.

The Laniers looked into several possibilities and decided on Samaritan. Now Stanton tells other people about Samaritan because "people think health insurance is the only way."

"We were going to spend all this money for something we were not even using," he said. "So, Samaritan really helped reduce our cost and, though it's gradually increased over the years, we trust the Samaritan Board and the leadership team and the amazing dynamic of the funds that are shared and then the needs that are there and how the Lord takes care of them."

Stanton and his wife, Lorie, hope to continue with the ministry for years to come because of its biblical values. They've experienced both the sending and receiving of Shares and have witnessed the impact of that.

"We love sending the Shares to other people with prayer and knowing who it's for," he said. "We had done that for many years, and then to be on the receiving end was amazing. People are thinking, 'Well, does it really work?' I think people are curious and a little skeptical and they shouldn't be, but they just don't have the experience to know, so we can tell people that it does work."

Their favorite aspect of their Samaritan membership is the community.

"It's not like we're seeing people every day who are Samaritan members, but you do start to occasionally run into someone in your city or town," he said. "I just think the sense of community with the overall membership is a witness to the Church. I mean, it's the Kingdom, you know? It's God's Kingdom ways being played out and implemented in a service organization to love one another in Christ and serve one another and be a community of believers." ◆◆◆

to nutritious food and a Christian education. At the end of 2025, that same mission and vision to glorify God and refresh the soul through Scripture-inspired music will be called Sky Whisper Sound, LLC.

"The name of my studio is Sky Whisper Sound, which is a phrase expressing God's voice, His gentle whisper, His still small voice in a noisy world," Stanton said.

Life surrendered to God

Though Stanton has been playing piano since he was 6, it wasn't something he thought would be possible as a career until years into other jobs.

He earned a chemistry degree at Georgia Tech and an MBA at the University of Georgia, then worked in consulting and insurance. After surrendering his work to the Lord, God led him to a financial planning career for a Christian company.

The faith-centric part of that job equipped Stanton and Lorie for 10 years before he was ready to become a full-time composer.

"I'm at a stage now where I'm available and willing, but I'm not chasing, I'm not striving," he said. "This is what God did in my life, that instead of striving to achieve, which I did up until I was 30, God showed me that I needed to abide, to receive."

The analytical and mathematical factors of financing and chemistry feed into his very detailed composition work.

Co-creating with God

Stanton doesn't have to be sitting in front of a piano to compose music. He only needs a mind ready to receive the beauty the Lord

shows him as he reads or meditates on God's Word. He can be driving around town or going for a walk and hear music in his head before he touches the first key.

"I don't have to have a piano or sheet music in front of me," he said. "I just have this ability that started when I was 14 to find melodies. What's beautiful is to have God's Word in front of me and notice how a passage or some verses have themes, and I see if there might be something lyrical that comes out of those words into music."

It's praise and worship to our Creator, but Stanton also calls it "co-creating with God."

"My heart is to create with the Lord," he said. "He's the Creator with the big 'C' and we're like little 'c' creators."

When he composes, Stanton said half of the time the notes are singing the verse and the other half he is looking at the verse to see if there's a tune that might come out of it.

"Sometimes God brings down a tune that's just speaking that theme," he said.

Beauty as an apologetic

All of Stanton's music is instrumental, though he does occasionally use vocals without words. His music heavily features piano but also uses cello, English horn, flugel horn, and orchestra to add cinematic elements to the experience.

Today, he said, his music gets millions of streams on varying music platforms and views on YouTube each month from around the world.

"Here we are 21 years after going full-time and there's millions of

people listening around the world," he said. "There's no language barrier because there's no English song lyric. It's not American music. It's not English. It's the Holy Spirit."

Stanton has been influenced by Atlanta Bible teacher Ken Boa, who has talked a lot over the last few years about how beauty is becoming a "significant apologetic."

"It's not explaining the Gospel or defending the Christian faith like apologetics, but if, as believers, we can point to beauty and talk about beauty in the context of the Gospel, and it is from God and through Christ, (then) beauty can win hearts," he said. "It can nudge people closer."

How to pray:

- For God to draw many more hearts toward Christ around the world through Scripture-inspired instrumental music.
- For God's blessings over Stanton and Lorie's local church ministry through Bible study and mentoring of engaged couples.
- For God to continue revealing His plans and purposes for Stanton and Lorie with their empty-nest years, fully engaged and joyful in their obedience to Him. ◆◆◆

Anna Moore is assistant editor of the Samaritan Ministries newsletter.

Breaking down more labels

by Anna Moore

What do the call-outs on packaged foods mean?

Part 2 of 2.

MARKETING LABELS on food products can be confusing or even misleading. We continue explaining what some of the labels in today's grocery stores mean with more common labels you'll see on the shelves.

'Certified Gluten Free'

Gluten has become somewhat of a buzzword over the past couple of decades, and food companies have capitalized on that. By labeling products as "gluten free," they may be trying to convince you it's a healthy or healthier choice—even when it's gluten-free to begin with. For instance, fruits and vegetables, quinoa, rice, and oats are all naturally gluten-free. The concern for those adhering to a gluten-free diet arises when the food is cooked or prepared with other ingredients, or when there's a risk of cross-contamination where they are processed.

The "Certified Gluten Free" label lets consumers know the product is safe and trustworthy if they are avoiding gluten. According to the Gluten-Free Certification Organization (GFCO) website ([GFCO.org](https://www.gfco.org)), "GFCO ensures that gluten-free products are safe and trustworthy. GFCO works with manufacturers



(iStock)

to help them achieve certification and improve their processes to meet our strict 80-point Standard, including requirements that all starting ingredients and finished products test below the applicable gluten-free threshold of the country of sale, or 10 ppm [parts per million] (whichever is lower)."

The certification indicates the product has a very low amount of gluten, low enough to be considered safe for people on gluten-free diets. The organization helps manufacturers interested in certification improve their production processes to avoid gluten contamination.

'100% Whole Grain'

The Oldways Whole Grains Council

developed the golden-yellow whole grain stamp (see page 9) to tell shoppers which products contain true whole grains. The stamp comes in three varieties: 100%, 50%+, and basic to show how much of the product's grains are whole.

The 100% stamp means all of a product's grain ingredients are whole grain. Products with the 100% stamp are required to have a minimum of 16 grams, which is considered to be a full serving, of whole grain per labeled serving.

The 50%+ stamp means at least half of the grain ingredients in the product are whole grain. Products with this stamp have a minimum requirement of 8 grams of whole grain per labeled serving.

The basic stamp means the product contains at least 8 grams of whole grain, though it might contain more refined grains than whole.

Shoppers can search products on the Whole Grains Council's website¹ to see which whole grain stamp it contains.

While food guidelines for grains have been debated over the years, the USDA has historically emphasized a grain-heavy diet through the food pyramid.² It still says 50% of your grains should be whole, while allowing for the other 50% to be refined.³

'Glyphosate residue free'

The Detox Project⁴ has three labels seen on some foods. The most common is Glyphosate Residue Free.⁵ The certification assures consumers that the product doesn't contain glyphosate, which is a common herbicide, such as Roundup.

The organization certifies single- and multiple-ingredient food and supplement products.

To receive the certification, the products must have no glyphosate residues "down to government-recognized limits of detection for food, commodity and supplement samples, and lower levels than default government maximum residue limits in the European Union and Japan."

This certification was created to:

- Reduce consumers' risk of exposure to glyphosate residues in foods they consume.
- Educate producers about the glyphosate residue profile of their products.
- Enable producers to fine-tune

production and supply chain strategies to minimize their reliance on glyphosate-based herbicides.

- Encourage farmers to reduce their reliance on those herbicides.

The Detox Project also manages the CleanScan and Gold Standard Detox labels. The CleanScan label indicates the product is free from specific groups of contaminants such as pesticides, heavy metals, and GMOs. The label contains a QR code that is specific to the product's brand. It enables consumers to find information on which contaminants the company tests for.

The Gold Standard Detox label means the product detoxes specific environmental toxins from the human body. It certifies that the product detoxes whatever it says it detoxes.

'Marine Stewardship Council'

The blue "Marine Stewardship Council"⁶ fish label appears on seafood products and seafood menu items.

Seafood with this label is wild-caught and "certified sustainable seafood that meets the MSC Fisheries standard." Wild-caught seafood generally has a higher nutritional value since those animals consume a natural diet. In contrast, farm-raised seafood is treated to a highly processed diet so it will grow more quickly and is also given antibiotics to prevent diseases.

To earn the MSC label, seafood must meet several criteria:

- It must come from healthy and sustainable fish stocks.



- It must be caught using methods that minimize environmental impact.
- It must be sourced from a fishery with effective management practices in place that complies with local and international regulations and can adapt to changing conditions.

'American Heart Association Certified'

Since the mid-1990s, the American Heart Association⁷ has certified certain retail foods as "heart healthy." Foods with the AHA Certified checkmark label have been approved by the association's own standards and are considered healthy enough to help prevent heart disease and stroke.

A word of caution to consider is that some foods with these labels, such as cereals, are high on the glycemic index, meaning they will spike your blood sugar. Since diabetes is a major factor for heart disease, these labels can be misleading in that way.

The AHA says all nutrition requirements for the certification comply with federal regulations for coronary heart disease health claims. Nutrition requirements are set for canned and frozen produce, juices, grain-based products, milk and dairy alternatives, smoothies, snacks, yogurt, meat and seafood, main dishes and meals, whole grains, nuts, fish, oils, and fresh fruits and vegetables.

Here are the general nutritional limits set by the AHA⁸:

- Less than 6.5 grams of fat per serving
- 1 gram or less of saturated fat;



(iStock)

no more than 15% of calories from saturated fat

- Less than 0.5 grams of trans fat and no partially hydrogenated oils
- 20 milligrams or less of cholesterol
- Equal to or less than 480 milligrams of sodium
- At least 10% of the daily value of vitamin A, C, iron, calcium, protein, or fiber

While many labels found on food items may lead us to believe we are getting a healthy product, that may not always be the case.

When shopping at the grocery store or planning your meals, a wise approach is to do your own research first. Consider your specific dietary preferences and health goals, and follow the best course of action for you and your family. ♦♦♦

Anna Moore is assistant editor of the Samaritan Ministries newsletter.

¹ Stamped products | The Whole Grains Council. (n.d.). <https://wholegrainscouncil.org/find-whole-grains/stamped-products>

² UAB Medicine. (2025, March 14). MyPlate Healthy Eating Chart replaced the food pyramid. <https://www.uabmedicine.org/news/myplate-healthy-eating-chart-replaced-the-food-pyramid/>

³ Grains (n.d.) MyPlate.gov <http://myplate.gov/eat-healthy/grains>

⁴ Certification programs | The Detox Project. (n.d.). The Detox Project. <https://detoxproject.org/certification/>

⁵ Glyphosate Residue Free | The Detox Project. (n.d.). The Detox Project. <https://detoxproject.org/certification/glyphosate-residue-free/>

⁶ Sustainable Fishing, MSC. (n.d.). The MSC Blue Fish Label | Marine Stewardship Council | Marine Stewardship Council. United States. <https://www.msc.org/en-us/what-we-are-doing/our-approach/the-blue-fish-label>

⁷ Heart-Check certification. (n.d.) <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/company-collaboration/heart-check-certification>

⁸ American Heart Association. (n.d.). Heart-Check Food Certification Program Nutrition Requirements. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/company-collaboration/heart-check-certification/heart-check-in-the-grocery-store/heart-check-food-certification-program-nutrition-requirements>

Prayer for the Persecuted Church



Hindu nationalists attack Christian missionaries in October in India. (Persecuted.org)

Missionaries attacked while police fail to act

Eight police officers in India were suspended after not stopping an attack on Christian missionaries by Hindu nationalists on October 23, International Christian Concern (ICC) says. The group of about 10 attackers assaulted a busload of missionaries, accusing them of forced conversions. Video shows most police officers there standing and watching the attack. In a different case in India, Pastor Nandan Singh was acquitted of forced conversion accusations made in 2021.

Pray for spiritual and physical recovery for those attacked and for police in India to protect Christians under threat. Praise God for Pastor Singh's acquittal.

Missionary pilot kidnapped in Niger

An American citizen and missionary pilot was abducted in the capital of Niger on October 21, Mission Network News reports. Police say Kevin Rideout may have been kidnapped by a group affiliated with al-Qaeda. *Pray for Kevin's release and for Christians in Niger who face increasing Islamic hostility.*

Priest acquitted in Spain

A Catholic priest in Spain has been acquitted of wrongdoing for making a negative comment about Islam in 2017, ICC says. Father Custodio Ballester of Barcelona criticized Islam on a talk show. A Muslim organization filed a complaint, and prosecutors sought three years in prison for Ballester and others. *Praise God for the acquittal but pray that an appeal by prosecutors will be denied.* ♦♦♦



Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the Body.

HEBREWS 13:3

Our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are being persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. We need to remember them in prayer and action.

Each month, we will provide updates and offer prayer points gleaned from a variety of sources. Please use them in your prayer time and possibly to seek other ways, small or large, to supplement our prayers with action.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE PERSECUTED CHURCH:

International Christian Concern
persecution.org
800-422-5441

World Watch Monitor
worldwatchmonitor.org

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ... John 1:14a

THE DOORPOST

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9; 11:18-21



And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

JOHN 1:14

IN JUNE 2023, I had the privilege to travel to the Holy Land and participate in an archaeological dig at Shiloh. I still struggle to describe what it was like to walk where Joshua, Hannah, Samuel, and many others walked. It was a profound experience to literally dig the Bible and to uncover things not seen or touched in thousands of years.

Shiloh was a place where real people, just like us, lived and worshipped. People today have the same fundamental need as people did then. Worshipers went to Shiloh to seek a remedy for sin; they needed a way to restore their relationship with God and with each other because sin had broken that fellowship. This required a long journey to offer sacrifices as a temporary covering for sin.

All the sacrifices at the Tabernacle were looking forward to the coming Messiah. And, get this: Another way to translate “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” is “the Word tabernacled among us.” Jesus came in flesh and blood in order to identify with us.

We don’t have to travel to a distant land to bring a sacrifice. Jesus is the Tabernacle and He offered Himself once for all, a perfect sacrifice for sin.

Immanuel is here, God with us!



For the Kingdom,
Tom Nofsinger

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Tom Nofsinger".

Tom Nofsinger is chaplain for Samaritan Ministries.

Samaritan Ministries sharing disclosure

Each month, as part of accreditation by the [Healthcare Sharing Accreditation Board](#), we provide a sharing report of members' eligible medical expenses and contributions for the previous 12 months.

Below is a glimpse into the impact members have made from December 2024 through November 2025:



Eligible Medical Expenses
\$428,002,406

This total includes all medical expenses submitted by members that are eligible for sharing among the membership, according to our Guidelines.

Contributions from Members
\$464,090,354

This total includes all member contributions for other members' eligible medical expenses (**\$410,675,205** during this time period) and to the office for additional giving and administrative expenses (**\$53,204,688** during this time period).

Prorated Medical Expenses
\$0

This total includes the amount of eligible medical expenses that were not shared in full but instead at a prorated percentage due to more eligible medical bills than member contributions.

Days to Share
52

This number represents the average number of days from when a medical bill is initially received in our office to when it is assigned to other members to contribute toward with their monthly Share amount. Due to the nature of once-a-month assignments of eligible bills, our Guidelines state that this timeframe is typically 60-90 days.



ACCREDITED

All numbers were accessed on December 1, 2025.