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UPCOMINGS!

CCRTA to meet January 15

The Coke County Retired Teachers Association (CCRTA) will meet Monday, January 15, 2024, at the First Baptist Church in Bronte. This will be the first 2024 meeting with a potluck lunch at 12 noon with the business meeting and fellowship to follow.

January is the traditional month to add up volunteer hours, discuss book distribution to local schools, and legislative matters.

All retired public school

personnel are encouraged to attend the meetings and join CCRTA.

Friends of the RLCC to meet January 22

On Monday, January 22, 2024, the monthly meeting of the Friends of the Robert Lee Care Center will be held at 10 am in the Back Eastside Lobby of the Robert Lee Care Center. Anyone interested in finding out more about what we do to help enhance the lives of the residents of the RLCC is in welcome to attend.

if the hours of darkness have their own positive qualities that cannot be found in the sunlight hours?

Paul Kingsnorth is a brilliant English writer who focuses on themes related to the environment, agriculture, the natural world, and man's struggle with seemingly inescapable technology. On Christmas Eve, he wrote about the concept of feasting, with Christmas as one of the few remaining "feasts" on the Christian liturgical calendar still celebrated by most people. He raised a powerful point:

"A feast without a fast is a strange, half-finished thing...[the fast] sharpens the feast. It counts down the days, it provides a communal experience...and most of all it trains the body and the mind to do without, in the service of focusing on something higher...[w]hat happens, then, if you feast without fasting? What happens if your culture encourages you to feast every day, because your economy is predicated on endless, consumer-driven growth?...It's like taking a child to a sweet shop and allowing him to eat anything he wants. For a while it's fantastic, and then it isn't. More, it turns out, is not actually better. More just makes you sick."

I was taken aback reading these words, while sitting atop my kayak on Christmas Eve's first light. A life of feasting without fasting surely becomes miserable gluttony. Living within the measured cycles of life's calendar is much more pleasurable in the long term. Similarly, I ask: the darkness of winter may give us the doldrums, but would we appreciate daylight without the benefit of the darkness? Have you ever tried for a restful night's sleep in a room full of light? There's a reason why non-stop light has been used to torture prisoners of war.

Though the darkness can be

challenging, it can also be a important to re-centering us in a well-lived life. As we undertake the new year, may we consider living within the natural cycles of life and our individual places. It is how we were designed to live. As we do, consider these lines of verse from Wendell Berry, who reminds us that the darkness is quite an interesting and vital place after all:

"To Know the Dark"

To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.

To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight, and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings, and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and the Rural Church and State and West of 98 podcasts. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to him wherever podcasts are found.

Texas towns are partying through the total solar eclipse

By Tyson Bird

The ATV kicks up red dust on a bumpy ride to Decision Point, a rocky ridge on a cattle ranch about an hour northwest of Austin. Mitch Morales steps out of the four-wheeler, walks past some prickly pear, and looks toward Lake Buchanan in the distance. From this perch, you can see panoramic views of the Hill Country. And on April 8 at around 1:30 p.m., another jaw-dropping vista will emerge: a total solar eclipse. The celestial spectacle will cut right through here as the moon's shadow travels across the Earth's surface from Mexico to eastern Canada. "I think this is where I'll be when it happens," Morales says, his eyes marveling at the expanse.

Texas Eclipse, Reville Peak Ranch, Burnet, April 5-9;

seetexasclipse.com

He hopes to have plenty of company—as many as 50,000 people can spread across Reville Peak Ranch, an outdoor adventure playground laced with hiking and mountain biking trails. The 1,400-acre property near Burnet is the site of Texas Eclipse, a festival organized by Morales, an Austin entrepreneur and event producer. Campgrounds tailored to all types of festivalgoers—families, sober travelers, late-night partiers—will pepper the ranch. The evolving lineup features everything from DJs and bands to yoga sessions, art installations, technology talks, and a space travel expo. But the main act hits the stage in the sky that Monday afternoon.

"Imagine looking out and the shadow is being cast over



In Favor of the Solstice

By James M. Decker

This time of year, darkness feels inescapable. Daylight is at its most scarce. Darkness lingers well after the kids rise for school and it returns long before bedtime, even in a fairly tame latitude like Stamford. My friends who live farther north are used to dealing with mid-afternoon darkness. Travel to the polar regions and you receive only a few hours of twilight until eventually, it becomes weeks of nonstop darkness.

Sunlight is undoubtedly healthy for us physically, mentally, and emotionally. You should look up the use of fresh air and sunlight as a treatment for the "Spanish flu" epidemic right after World War I. The struggle from seasonal affective disorder is very real and difficult for some people. It seems like every time you turn around, it is getting dark again. If you have outside chores or if you just want to enjoy the outdoors, the peak of winter becomes quite limiting. It can put a person in a glum mood.

The great Western novelist Elmer Kelton once wrote a powerful line about West Texas. In a discussion between two characters about the merits of the arid, flat, and treeless country where they resided, one character said, "it's a good country if you appreciate it for what it is instead of wasting it wishing for something else."

Darkness is a natural part of our seasonal cycles. So what if we viewed it in this new (pardon the pun) light? What if we appreciate it for what it is? What

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Area Churches Invite You to Worship

Bronte

- Bronte Church of Christ**
 PO Box 346
 118 S. Jefferson • Bronte
 Sun. 10 am & 6 pm, Wed. 7 pm
- Central Baptist Church**
 324 S. Franklin • Bronte
 (325) 473-4811
 Dale Patterson, Pastor
 Sun. 10 am Sunday School
 11 am & 5 pm Worship
- First Baptist Church**
 424 S. Washington • Bronte
 (325) 473-2331
 firstbronte@gmail.com
 Pastor George Cooper
 Sunday 9:45 am Sunday School,
 10:30 am Worship
 Wednesday 6 pm - 8 pm
 Children and Youth
- Bronte Methodist Church**
 Corner of Washington & Holmes
 Bronte • (325) 650-4836
 Pastor Keith Fletcher
 Sun. 10:00 am Sunday School
 11:00 am Worship
- St. James Catholic Church**
 215 N. Washington, Bronte
 (325) 365-2687
 Rev. Timothy Hayter, Pastor
 Sunday Bilingual Mass 8 am
- 4C Cowboy Church**
 Drawer R • Bronte • (325) 895-4080
 Robert Lemmond, Pastor
 Sunday, 10:30 am - Texas Theater
 Wednesday Bible Study 6 pm -
 4C Feedlot Youth Building
Coke County
- Pecan Baptist**
 PO Box 542 • 12 miles West of
 Robert Lee on Sterling City Hwy
 (325) 453-2065, Bill Hood, Pastor
 www.pecanbaptistchurchrl.com
 Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
 11 am & 7 pm, Worship

Robert Lee

- Bible Baptist Church**
 PO Box 938 • 9th & Austin
 Sunday 10 am Sunday School,
 11 am and 5 pm Worship,
 Wed 5 pm Bible Study
- Emmanuel Pentecostal**
 PO Box 794 • 1004 Hillcrest
 Pastor Brantly Robertson
 (972) 841-2009
 Sundays 10 am, Wednesdays 7 pm
- First Methodist Church**
 PO Box 144 • 9th & Chadbourne
 Pastor Gary Karschner
 Robert Lee • (325) 453-2417
 Sun. 11 am Worship,
- Iglesia Bautista Betel**
 101 Houston • Robert Lee
 Sun. 9:45 am • Sunday School
 11 am Service • Bible Study Wed. 6 pm
- Southside Church of Christ**
 PO Box 698 • 8th & Houston
 Robert Lee (325) 453-2176
 Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
 11 am Worship
 Wed. 6 pm, Worship
- Northside Church of Christ**
 PO Box 508
 9th & Chadbourne • Robert Lee
 (325) 453-2685, (325) 763-2118
 or (325) 473-1053
 Services: Sun. 10 am
- Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church**
 601 W. 10th, Robert Lee
 (325) 365-2687
 Rev. Timothy Hayter, Pastor
 Saturday Vigil Mass 6 pm
- Robert Lee Baptist Church**
 PO Box 493 • 22 W. 11th
 (325) 453-2724
 Chris Walls, Pastor
 Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
 11 am Worship
 Wed. 6:30 pm, Prayer Meeting
- Victory Assembly of God**
 (325) 453-2208, PO Box 638
 202 E. 6th Street, Robert Lee
 Rev. Rocky Youngblood, Pastor
 Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
 10:45 am & 6 pm, Worship
 Wed. 6 pm, Bible Study

