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Matthew 25 Alliance: Churches unite to care for neighbors in need

Coalition of local congregations provides shelter, meals and support for neighbors in need.

By **Rev. John Harrison** - June 14, 2026 | Updated: June 14

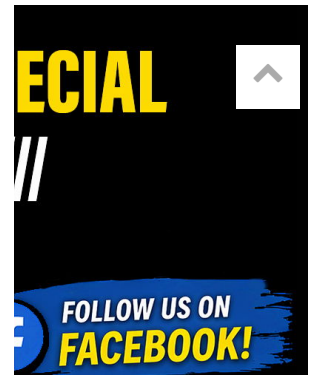
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Amanda Boutot
Associate Division Director
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The Matthew 25 Alliance is a coalition of six churches in White and Habersham counties working together to serve people in need. Pictured are alliance members (back row, left to right): Dennis Brown, Laura Meier, Michael Fisher, Willene Keel and Mark Griffin; (middle row): Melissa Line, Becky Schacht, Tina Hawkins and Michelle Fritch; and (front row): Denise Ingels and John Harrison. (Photo submitted)



I was talking to someone this week who asked several folks recently, "What's the bottom line of Christianity?" Quarterback Tim Tebow gave a talk once when he said it's not about *do's* and *don'ts*, it's about *done*, what God has done for you in Jesus. Other folks say it's in our decision to accept this gift that we are saved.

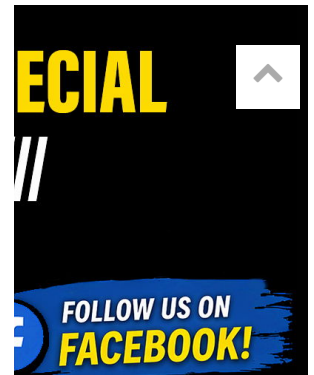
The 'least of these'

I'm not one to reduce God to a single line in the sand, but a scripture that spurs me forward in my own spiritual life comes from the end of Matthew, when Jesus, speaking to his disciples just before he dies on the cross, prepares them for life without him standing physically by their sides. He said that when he comes in judgment to sort out the people who belong to him, he will say to his own:

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*Come...inherit the kingdom prepared for you...
 For I was hungry and you gave me food,
 I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
 I was a stranger and you welcomed me,
 I was naked and you gave me clothing,
 I was sick and you took care of me,
 I was in prison and you visited me. (Matthew 25:34-36)*



In the story, the folks to whom Jesus says this scratch their heads in confusion because they can't remember doing those things for Jesus, and he says, *"Just as you did it to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me."*

Working together to serve those in need

The message of the story, in my eyes, is that the people who aren't worth much in the eyes of the world are worth a great deal in the eyes of God, and one way to measure our faith is in how we treat the folks the rest of the world ignores.

If we spend time with the folks Jesus mentions, if we share the love Jesus came to bring into our world, we'll look back and realize we were spending time with God.

If we work together, things that used to feel impossible start to feel possible.



It can be overwhelming to visit someone in prison or to care for someone who has no way to pay for the doctor. It can be intimidating to help someone who is exposed to the cold, the sun, or the rain. It can be hard to share a meal with strangers, or a bottle of water with someone who is hungry. It can be difficult to feed people who are hungry.

For most of us, it's not easy to work together, to



"yes" to the people Jesus reminds us to say "yes" to if we want God to say "yes" to us.

The Matthew 25 Alliance

Three churches in White County and three churches in Habersham have come together to say "yes," and we call ourselves the Matthew 25 Alliance. Since February 1, we have opened warming centers on five cold nights this winter, and we're working to serve meals and help people connect to resources this summer. We're at the earliest stages of our work together, and we're trying to grow slowly and steadily enough to keep every promise we make and to honor each person we serve.

We don't put a sermon between anyone and a hot meal, nor do we put an altar call between anyone and a safe place to sleep for the night. We're not asking who you are. The question we're asking is *whose* you are, and the answer we have in mind is that every person who comes through our doors belongs to God. It is by opening doors together that we hear God saying in new ways every day that we belong to him.

Whether you're hungry to eat, hungry to serve, or just curious to learn more, we'll be hosting a free meal this Wednesday, June 17, from 12 to 2 at First Baptist Church in Cornelia, and you can reserve a plate of food by texting us at 470-252-8653.

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