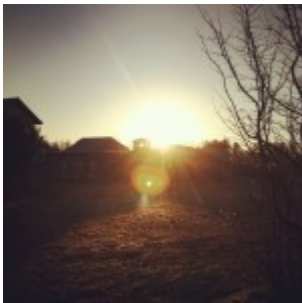




Snapshots from the year

This has been a very full year. It has also been challenging and blessed in many ways. It has been a year of closing doors and opening new ones.



Sunny Day, Sweeping  
The Clouds Away

The 2011-2012 school year at work was very challenging. We had issues with students and issues with staff that made it hard and stressful for me. It was a challenge to keep my focus

on the Lord and be a vessel He could use there. As busy as the summer season was at work, it was still a nice break and good start to the 2012-2013 school year. August marked my 10th year of working for [Chapel Hill - Carrboro City Schools](#) at [McDougle Middle](#). As stressful at times as it is at times, working there is a blessing. Seeing former students return and sharing about their lives is rewarding. Building relationships with fellow staff members is fun. It is hard to see staff retire, move or switch schools. It is also fun to get to know new staff members. I do enjoy the seasonal workflow of the job. I think it is what I need.

In the wake of the shootings in Newtown, CT, we all have looked hard at things around my school and the district. We are truly blessed to have a great School Resource Officers in our district and the ones who have been and the one who is at my school makes me feel safe. I know that for me (my opinion not reflecting that of CHCCS or McDougle) the answer to the issue is two-fold. First being prepared to face the threats with training, staff, and weapons that will deter and not make schools easy targets. But the real answer is people. The issue is sin in the human heart. If a person is broken, torn, distressed, angry and hurt, then the sin in our lives can take more control. People need the salvation, peace, joy, and grace that only Jesus Christ offers. They also need godly support (to encourage, exhort, and correct) from friends and family. So each of us who have the hope, grace, peace, joy and salvation of the Lord, need to see and hear the needs around us. The we need to reach out being the Lord's hands in those lives. Gun control will not solve the issue. People who are determined to hurt others or themselves will find a way to do so. Jesus Christ is the only solution to the complete needs of all people!

Speaking of people, this was a year of re-connecting, strengthening, and getting to know people better. This year brought the end of a two-year cycle with church home groups and the beginning of a new one. When you invest in each others' lives through prayer, teaching, fellowship and fun, it is hard to change. But change is good. We get to know others and build relationships with each other that we would have never had otherwise. At [Antioch](#) we say that on Sunday's we go hard after God and on Wednesdays we go hard after each other. It is true and it is a blessing. It was a blessing this year to celebrate Antioch's 25th anniversary and to help serve at the Family Integrated Church Conference that Antioch hosted. It is humbling to work with so many godly people from around the nation. Both of these events truly remind me of how blessed I am to be a part of Antioch. My church Iron Man (men's accountability) Group has been a huge blessing and encouragement to me this

year. Those guys lift me up, encourage me and challenge me to go further, thanks guys!



Mancuso's in the sun

This year I also had the joy of visiting with the Mancuso's when they came to visit for Antioch's anniversary. I also had the joy of visiting them in Maryland. I met Rob & Amy in college and was blessed by their friendship to me and encouraged in their relationship and then marriage with each other. It is always a joy to spend time with Rob & Amy, Meredith and Thomas. ([Trip Photos](#)) I feel at home with them and leave very encouraged. It is great that in a week or two, I'll get to be on the mission field with Rob and Meredith in Bocachica!



Starlight Barn



Any Number Can Die

This year brought a close to working with Sonny's Catering, but I still get to work with Events by Marg and that is a blessing. This year also brought a leadership change at [Arts Alive](#). The Cobb's had stewarded the studio for the Lord for years. This year they passed

the reigns over to the Gadbery Family. I'm blessed to be able to serve at Arts Alive and am enjoy getting to know a new crop of God gifted dancers, singers, actors and artists. It has been a blessing to serve there for 13 years!



Dad at Gentry's Store's 75th



Dad & Chandler



Mom holding Chandler



Mary Etta



Pizza time with the Gentry's



Geoff and Chandler

Family time this year was a blessing as well. [Gentry's Store's 75th](#), Easter, summer, Mary Etta's (Grandmother Gentry) [97th birthday](#), Thanksgiving and [Christmas](#) were all great times. It is so hard with busy people to get together and enjoy each other. But that is truly the best gift God gave me this Christmas season. I'm so grateful for each person and am striving to pray for each one more consistently.



Ryan & Jen Ozawa



Cliff & Stephanie Ravenscraft

I'm so thankful for social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, podcasts, and this website). In addition to the friendships I have locally, I'm blessed with friends across the U.S. and the world. Many of you I have daily or weekly interactions with all because of social media. It encourages me to hear about what is going on in your lives. It is a blessing to know how to pray for you and encourage you. I'm especially thankful for two couples (and their kids). This year [Ryan](#) & Jen Ozawa (and their kids) have had a tough year. Through medical treatments, prayer and encouragement, and support Jen has been battling breast cancer. Reading her [blog](#) posts and [tweets](#) has been encouraging. I was blessed to help the [Popspotting](#) Podcast community come and support Ryan & Jen by doing [listener editions](#) of the podcast. It is a blessing to pray for and support them. It is also great to live a little vicariously in Hawaii through them. The second couple is [Cliff](#) and Stephanie Ravenscraft, the couple behind [gspn.tv](#) and [The Podcast Answerman](#). It is a blessing to be a leader in the gspn.tv community site and help Cliff and Stephanie out when I can. Cliff's

advice really helped me get this website going. [Stephanie](#) and [Sarah Rader's](#) Authentic Life Radio podcast is an encouraging part of my week. It is largely thanks to Ryan & Jen and Cliff & Stephanie that I have so many friends around the world. I'm looking forward to the gspn.tv community (Disney) cruise in 2013 and I hope many of you can join us!

I'm very thankful for this website. A little over a year ago I felt the Lord calling me to focus a lot of places I had out on the Internet down to one location. I felt Him leading me to use this website to be a place where I could share myself and reach out to others. I have tried and will continue to make this a space that supports the causes and people who have my heart. I pray that this place can encourage others to get involved with the Lord's work with [Proyecto Libertad](#). I hope people will support [Survival Straps](#) and the work of the Wounded Warrior Project. I hope this can be a place where you can come and be encouraged and blessed by the things I am given to blog about. Supporting [Proyecto Libertad's](#) work in Bocachica, Colombia, [Jorge & Karen Silva](#), the [Ariel Family](#) and the staff of PL is a passion for me. I'm so blessed to help by sharing and by going as the Lord leads!



Apartment Door



New Home

Last but not least, this year brought the end and the beginning to something. I lived, for almost 12 years, in the apartment. I loved the place and the location, but felt due to some of the neighbors, the economy, and several other things that the time was right to really look for a house. Most of this year I worked with my realtor, [Amber Cummins](#), on finding a house. She would send me listings, do research and work with me on details. When the time came for a tour, I was blessed to have a great contractor, friend and brother from church, Thom Southern, come and help me check it out. After much searching the right

house was provided by the Lord. I was blessed to get it at a good price and be able to afford to have Thom do repair work on it. The Lord worked out the details via Amber, Corey Riggs (my loan officer), the lawyer, banks, family, and Thom. I moved in December 8th. Once again my church family was a HUGE help and a great testimony to my friends and family. I was moved, the house set up, and my old apartment cleaned in ONE DAY. I'm still in awe about how blessed I am to be a part of Antioch! I'm also very grateful to my family for providing finances, furniture, appliances and so much more. I have only been here a couple of weeks but it is truly home for me. I feel like the Lord has listened to the prayers of all of you and made this place my home. I pray that my home can be one of peace, joy and hospitality for the Lord's work for a long time to come. (You can see the progress from a foreclosed house to my home [here.](#))

In closing, I want to thank the Lord for the blessings and challenges of 2012. He has done much in and through me this year and I am so grateful. I would challenge you to sit down and think about this year. Write it out and truly see how blessed you are!