

# Newsletter

First Presbyterian Church

of Sylva, North Carolina

April 2011

David Grachek, Pastor

Grace Reed, Editor

## PASTOR'S CORNER

### What Is Relativism?

If men and women could be considered children of God and enjoy abundant life apart from the gospel, our mandate to evangelize to world would not be urgent. Reaching the lost is an all-consuming priority only because there is no salvation except through the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). Christianity is uncompromising in its claim that belief in Jesus is the only way to heaven (John 14:6).

This claim is offensive to anyone brainwashed by modern relativism. On many issues I do not agree with the pope, but I agree with him that relativism is the chief threat to the survival of organized religion.

What is relativism? Relativism says that truth may be one thing for me, another for you. Such a simplistic philosophy would never have gained a serious hearing in the past. Only by working hard these last fifty years to dummy down education has the devil been able to convince people to accept relativism as a world view. Relativism can and should be rejected.

Relativism keeps men and women from seeking the truth and as such is a false philosophy. Truth is not whatever a man or woman chooses to believe. The only true world view is the one that correctly describes our universe. Reality is one; therefore, truth is one. On questions where world religions disagree, no more than one answer can be correct. How can we determine which is correct? We can determine which is correct by logic and evidence. It is necessary to do some serious thinking, but also Scripture. Relativism has unfortunately convinced people today that the road to truth is not thought but feeling. The message of the media is that we cannot go wrong if we just follow our hearts. People so

indoctrinated soon believe what they want to believe, and they never bother to consider the logic and evidence that shows the truth in Christianity.

*Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life..."*

In recent years, and especially in recent months, our denomination, the Presbyterian Church USA, has wrestled with remaining in the culture and staying faithful to Christ – between relativism and truth. I have prayed continuously about the PC(USA) and the vote of the presbyteries on some current issues. One of the issues I have been praying about and ask you to pray for is: ordination standards for the PC( USA). This is one of those issues regarding culture and staying faithful to Scripture.

In the summer of 2010 our denomination had its bi-annual meeting of representatives from all 173 presbyteries in our denomination. At this meeting in Minneapolis there was an overture from a number of very liberal presbyteries to change our ordination standards, which are found in our "Book of Church Order". The overture was primarily to **delete** the following requirement for Pastors, Elders and Deacons:

*Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament. (I Timothy 3, Romans 1)*

The replacement language for these moral requirements was for the usual examination of candidates for ministry with regard to gifts and abilities and our constitution, which we have always done (Book of Order G-1, G-14, and W-4.4). What will be missing now is a specific requirement for a lifestyle in conformity with Scripture.

The practical result of this, as hoped for by the presbyteries, which proposed it, is that this would open the door for people living outside of these requirements to be ordained as Pastors, Elders and Deacons. For this requirement to be removed from the Book of Order would require a majority of the presbyteries to vote in favor of it. As of the writing of this letter the vote is 82 in favor of removing these standards and 62 against (only 87 votes are needed to have a majority). If the remaining presbyteries vote the same way that they did 2 years ago on this same issue; then this overture to remove the fidelity chastity language will pass. There is still the possibility that it will not pass. I am praying that our standards will remain in place.

It should be noted that people are welcome in our church, but there is a Biblical standard for officers that we must adhere to regardless of what society is doing. Jesus certainly welcomed all sinners to come to him.

Why am I writing to you about this? It looks as if the unofficial vote will probably reach a conclusion in early May. And it looks very much like these standards will be removed from our church policy. As I expect that this issue will find itself in the newspapers and possibly on television it seemed appropriate to talk with you about this issue. Although the official tally for the vote will be certified on July 11 and will become a part of our church policy, I didn't think it would be wise for you to be surprised when this happens. You should know that I and many other evangelicals have worked hard to prevent this from happening. In terms of our local church, Sylva First Presbyterian Church has taken a Biblical stance on ordination (we will uphold Biblical requirements for ordination even if the PCUSA will not).

Should our denomination take this course of action, I want you to know that you have a pastor and a session that are committed to carefully navigate Sylva First Presbyterian Church through these difficult waters. We are committed to remaining faithful to God's Word and to being a witness in the place that God has put us. We will prayerfully find a way forward for our church. Should you have any questions or concerns, I or any of the session members would be happy to speak with you or receive your concerns by e-

mail or by letter. Thank you for being in prayer over all of these issues and for your pastor and session.

Respectfully,  
David Grachek  
*Pastor*  
*First Presbyterian Church*  
*Sylva, NC*

## **FAMILY LIFE DIRECTOR**

Dear Church Family,

"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." John 17:20-21

A little more than a year ago I came across a book titled, *Consuming Jesus: Beyond Race and Class Divisions in a Consumer Church* by Paul Metzger. The disciples on the road to Emmaus as they reflected about their conversation with Jesus said, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" I felt a similar sensation as I encountered the challenges and hopes of this book. Particularly as I read about a man named John Perkins, a black man born in rural Mississippi in 1930. He encountered firsthand the evil reality of racism, especially as it was this evil that murdered his older brother, a WWII veteran. Perkins moved to California to escape this racism and through his son's conversion to Christianity at a local Vacation Bible School, he too became a Christian. Perkins was the fertile ground for God's gospel and Perkins' faith continued to grow. Perkins went on to obey God's call for him and his family to return to Mississippi to share the gospel there. Perkins began ministries and also began working towards civil rights in obedience to God's Word which led to Saturday, February 7, 1970 when he was falsely arrested and horrifically beaten by his jailers nearly to death. Again, in obedience to God's word and His Holy Spirit, Perkins forgave his tormentors, writing, "The Spirit of God kept working on me and in me until I could say with Jesus, 'I forgive them, too.' I promised Him that I would 'return good for

evil,' not evil for evil. And He gave me the love I knew I would need to fulfill His command to me of 'love your enemy'" (Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, p. 195). Perkins, now in his eighties, continues to live out this Divine love, and it is with his ministry, the John M. Perkins Foundation in Jackson, MS that our youth group will have the opportunity to work this summer.

In March of last year, Shelly and I were able to visit with Dr. Perkins in Jackson where he shared with a visiting group that he often feels as though we need a new vocabulary of love, this love of God that can go beyond enemies, race, and class.

I thought of the need for this vocabulary recently in a recent e-mail conversation with Steve White. Steve is one of the missionaries this church supports and he works with indigenous tribes in Brazil. He shared, "Many Indian languages don't even have a word that means forgiveness. The concept is unknown. Vengeance they understand." Thank God that Christ understands forgiveness and expressed it for us on and through His cross. I am learning that this word is one of the most powerful testimonies of Christ's presence in our lives. The forgiveness that has taken place and needs to take place in issues of race is a very clear demonstration of the forgiving reconciliation I pray our group this summer would begin to embrace more fully in all areas of our lives. I truly plead with you to pray for our group that we could all encounter the power of Christ to forgive and reconcile us to God and to each other.

Also, you may have heard "rumors" of my pursuing seminary. This rumor is true and it also has ties to the book I mentioned by Paul Metzger as he is a professor at Multnomah Seminary in Portland, OR. I have applied and been accepted to this seminary and now my family and I are pursuing this direction. There are many logistical obstacles that would need to be overcome before this move becomes a reality, like our house selling, so we are learning new lessons about "trust." I share this place in our lives with you to ask for your prayers too. I also want to say that this church family has done nothing but convince me of God's goodness, God's mercy, God's trustworthiness, and God's incomprehensible love. You have convinced me that there is

absolutely nothing in this world that I want more for me and my family than Him, and this seminary seems to be the way God is leading us to know Him more fully. When we as a church declared this past Sunday, "Christ is risen indeed!" the many ways you all have been sharing your lives with me and my family now close to eight years has been a continuous declaration of the reality of His resurrection. I'm thankful that I'll have eternity to thank Him and you.

Walking together,  
David Cathcart

## MISSION NEWS

### Save the Gatlinburg Getaway

The Gatlinburg Missions Conference has been a favorite with the youth and youth leaders of our church for many years. Several of our members have served on the planning team. David Cathcart currently represents us and the churches of our Presbytery. Over the past few years, the conference has struggled financially as a result of lower attendance, rising hotel costs, and last minute cancellations due to flu, basketball tournaments and snow. This year there was a shortfall of \$3,000 when it came time to pay the hotel bill. David Cathcart reports: *Members of the Gatlinburg Missions Conference Committee gathered on Saturday April 9<sup>th</sup> to discuss the future of the Missions Conference. As the management of the Park Vista has changed they are now charging for rooms that had been reserved but were not needed. This unexpected change in management procedure has put the Conference in financial straits. After prayer and discussion, the consensus was reached that this is a very unique conference that is still bearing visible fruit by God's Spirit. Because of this the Committee is pursuing a conference for 2012. They are looking into changes of venue as well as restructuring the format (fewer missionary presenters, solo singer instead of a band, etc.) so that it might continue in such an ideal spot as the Park Vista. The committee is also asking the main supporting churches if they might be able to support this next conference with any additional funding. The*

*committee is prayerfully seeking to be good stewards of the churches finances as well as God's vineyard. Thank you for prayerfully considering our church's role in this ministry.*

Our church supported the conference with \$750 as a line item of our budget and the session has agreed to ask the budget committee to consider raising this for next year.

They still have about \$2000.00 to pay on this year's bill. If any alums or fans of the conference would like to chip in, please write a check to Gatlinburg Missions Conference and send it to Ike Lowry (treasurer), 911 Lona Lane, Bluff City, TN, 37618

From **Steve and Buffy White** (serving in Brazil with South America Mission), March prayer letter:

Well, the Christmas holidays zipped past (we got to see both Sam and Sarah) and Ammi's new school year is just around the corner. Info is trickling in and it looks like we may have students from 20 different tribes this year. That means 20 different languages all trying to figure out what God's Word has to say to them in a new and difficult language: Portuguese. Surely with men this would be impossible, but with God all things are possible. That is, possible if we pray earnestly with believing faith. Yes, this is our #1 prayer request for you and your church and ALL your praying friends. Help!

We held our annual Field Conference in February. Dr. George Murray, the Chancellor of Columbia International University was our speaker. It was a WONDERFUL and encouraging and challenging week. We all feel committed to trusting more in Jesus, our All Powerful God, to do great things if we remain faithful to Him. This year, South America Mission is embarking on a new ten-year plan called SAM 2020, focusing on seeking God for a renewed Vision. We are truly blessed with the leadership we have in SAM and their unity and desire to seek God for guidance in our ministry. This is a Mission-wide push, and all SAM's fields are involved. We really believe that we are in a time of great advancement of the Gospel in these days. More Christian mission activity is going on now than ever before in the history of the

world. God is building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

First Quarter of this school year I will be working with our Brazilian staff to produce ministry DVDs in their own voices to help them raise their own support from Brazilian Churches. Budgets are ever tighter. Costs go up. Giving is down. Everyone needs to be involved in keeping Ammi in the black. 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter I'll once again be teaching "Orientação Cristã." 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter: Numbers to Joshua and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter: the Epistles of Peter, John and Jude.

Something new to us, but as old as mankind, is changing our curriculum and teaching style these days. Most of our students come from oral cultures. All of Ammi's teachers are literate. Yes, there are many problems with communication. Always before, the burden was on the student to move to literacy. Now, a new concept in missions is changing that: Orality-teaching the oral-culture student in a more oral and less academic style. The burden is on the teacher to change. It's exciting, and no, I haven't mastered it yet. It's not as simple as just telling stories. There's a right way and a wrong way and the differences are subtle. Drastic changes are happening to my syllabuses. Pray with me that I can, not just adopt changes, but that with God's help I can excel in transmitting God's Word to oral culture students.

Buffy is very busy teaching her Jr. and Sr. high students. Missionary furloughs sometimes don't fit academic calendars. One of the high schoolers is leaving in March instead of May and she is struggling mightily to get him through. There are issues of credits and hours that affect future enrollment in stateside schools and affect how things are done, even in as small a school as CCA. Buffy is also involved in Sarah's wedding plans in far away Hanover, NH. She longs to be there but is needed here. A mother's heart... 'tis oft' divided.

Praise:

- \* We thank the LORD for our refreshing and uplifting 2011 Brazil Field Conference
- \* Praise God that Jesus is all-powerful to save every tribe, language, nation and people.

Pray:

- \* Pray for South American mission as we seek vision from the Spirit of God in SAM 2020.
- \* Pray for our new and returning students from so many tribes, that they will make the big transition from village to school and begin to learn what God has for them in His Word.
- \* Pray that God will enable us to move to an oral style of teaching to better help our students learn.
- \* Pray for Buffy with needs pulling her in different directions to have peace and get it all done.

**Black Mountain Home for Children, Youth and Families'**  
president, Tom Campbell:

*"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." --Hebrews 11:1.*

As youth come into our care, we choose to see them as at-promise rather than at-risk. We are certain that God has great plans for each young person. As we work diligently with these youth and encourage them to grow, we cling to our faith that God's promises are true.

When one young man first came to us, he was facing many challenges. During his first two years, he only had a handful of passing grades on his report card. Even when he was pulled from our care prematurely, we held to our faith knowing that he was at-promise and God had a plan for him.

Later he called and asked to return so he could graduate from high school and continue his education. We welcomed him back and celebrated with him when he became the first member of his family to graduate from high school. Now he is attending a local community college where, during the fall semester, he earned a place on the Dean's List with a GPA of 3.75.

This is just one example of how our faith is strengthened when what we were certain of before we could see it begins to become visible. If you're not already a part of our ministry, we invite you to join us and share in the blessing of watching our youth grow and

flourish. Thank you for standing with us in faith as we hope and dream the best for each youth God has placed in our care.

(Steve and Buffy White are our "Missionaries of the Quarter." Check out information on this couple on our bulletin board across from the church office.)

## **PRAYER MINISTRY**

**WHAT IT IS:** A small number of people in this congregation are prepared to pray with you should you desire it. Yes, God already knows what we need, but His tendency is to wait until we ask. His choice has been to work through His people as channels for what He wants to do. So God works through the proclaiming and teaching of the Word. He works through the prayers for healing by others. He works through the various other ways of obedient service. We, as a prayer-ministry team, can help you pray for any spiritual, emotional, physical, relational, community need.

**WHAT HAPPENS** when you arrange to meet with a prayer-ministry team (at least 2 others, maybe 3). First, anything shared will be held in strictest confidentiality. Our first responsibility is to respect you as a person. We will begin with prayer inviting God's presence and guidance. We will listen to you as you share your prayer need and listen to the Holy Spirit as to what we should do in prayer. Then we will continue in a kind of conversational prayer as we talk with each other and as we talk with God. This is all very informal, respectful, low key, and quiet (not silent). If the one needing prayer is not ready to go a particular direction in prayer, we do not push it, but respect the person.

Our goal in these prayers is the glory of the Father and your healing and freedom. When that goal is being met, you will likely find yourself feeling free-er, and drawing closer in your walk of faith in Jesus Christ. While the leader of the team will ask questions and suggest ways to go about praying, you continue to have the right to say what or how you are willing to continue. We do not manipulate or control you in any way. We will continually ask you if trying a particular way of prayer is okay with you.

[Please call Sam Hale 586-9463, Judy McManus 508-1165, or the church office 586-4256 to make an appointment. You need to allow at least 90 minutes.]

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

..Sunday, May 22, 12:30 pm – Deacon-sponsored church hike to Mingus Mill Falls. This is an easy, yet beautiful hike. All, including singles, and families with children, through mature adults will be able to do this hike. Bring a bag lunch for a picnic when we get there. We are leaving after church. We can carpool.

..Second weekend in June Deacon-sponsored camping weekend with covered dish supper on Saturday for all even those not camping. Site to be announced.

.. The Mission Committee is sponsoring a competition during May between Sunday School classes for bringing needed items for United Christian Ministries. There has been a greatly increased demand in the last few months. Some of the most needed products are dish and laundry detergent, shampoo, spaghetti/and sauce, peanut butter/jelly, cooking oil, sugar, personal hygiene items, and size 4 diapers. Labeled boxes will be placed near the fellowship hall. There will also be a box for those who are not in a SS class. The winning class will have a monetary donation in their name given to UCM to help with their expansion project.

## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL:

July 24-28 at the Bridge Park Pavilion

"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me."

Each summer we pray that our Vacation Bible School would glorify God and share the love of Christ with children. That is of course still our prayer this summer, and we are grateful that we can partner with three other churches in our neighborhood to not only pursue these same aims, but to also share in the oneness which

Jesus prayed we might know as His followers. I am especially thankful that we can join with LifeWay, First United Methodist and First Baptist to host one, shared Vacation Bible School called "Son Harvest County Fair: Growing the Fruit of the Spirit." Your help is greatly needed and no matter your area of skill or comfort, your talents and presence will help, from creating the sets, set-up and take-down, games, crafts, snacks, teaching, or helping keep an eye on our kids, we truly need you. I will continue to share updates and planning meetings, and in the mean time please contact me if you have any questions, David Cathcart 828-506-2475, [cathcartdw@gmail.com](mailto:cathcartdw@gmail.com).

## CONGRATULATIONS

..to Doug Reed and Grace Gallagher who were united in marriage on Saturday, April 2, 2011. They are now at home at 931 University Heights Road, Cullowhee, NC 28723. Their phone number is 828-293-5410.

## SYMPATHY

..to those who have lost loved ones recently:

Dennises - Patti's father death on February 13

Crawfords – Jae's father on February 21

McRories - J.D.'s on March 13

Becks - Randy's on March 16

Though each of these are greatly missed, we are thankful to know that they are at home with the Lord. We shall be with them again, in God's time.

## SPRING CLEANING

Sweep over me, Lord  
And brush out my sin!  
Replace it with faith,  
And live here within.  
Amen.

Peggy Ferrell, from  
*Prayers and Poems*

**Deadline for the next issue: May 12**

**FINANCIAL REPORT YEAR-TO-DATE**

As of the end of March

|                              | <u>2011</u> | <u>2010</u> |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Income to Regular Budget     | 57,808      | 60,712      |
| Expenses from Regular Budget | 69,108      | 67,232      |

**ARE YOU MINISTERING IN MAY?**

**Coffee Fellowship:**

1 Judy & James McManus  
8 Carol Lynn Knight  
15 Sue Lareau  
22 Roger & Amanda Murajda  
29 Charles & Sonia Toledo

**Kid's Club:**

No Kid's Club  
Jae Crawford  
TBA  
Joan Yount  
TBA

**Flowers:**

Judy McManus  
Balfour & Carol Lynn Knight  
Frank & Linda Trubicza  
Roger & Amanda Murajda  
Doug & Sandra Oxford

**Family Night Supper:** May 4

Dave & Dottie Whitesides  
Donna Mason

**Ushers & Greeters:**

Roger Moore, Mary Kelley,  
Stacey Grachek

**Deacon of the Month:**

Gloria Stockton, 586-3572  
Jessica Morgan, 507-1683

**Communion:** May 1

Preparers: Livingston Kelley, Gloria Stockton  
Servers: Livingston Kelley, Gloria Stockton, Bob  
Porter, Mike Doppke