

Newsletter

First Presbyterian Church

of Sylva, North Carolina

June 2011

David Grachek, Pastor

Grace Reed, Editor

PASTOR'S CORNER

In parenting seminars they tell you not to stoke the “flames” of your child’s bad attitude by constantly reacting to them. By ignoring their bad behavior you disempower it altogether. That’s a generally good principle with regard to other personal encounters. It’s also not a bad approach to controversial issues in our PC(USA) denomination. Some of you know that there has been a controversial change to our denomination’s constitution regarding the standards for ordination. I have chosen to not stoke the “flames” of this issue any further because it hasn’t and doesn’t deserve the inordinate amount of time, energy and attention it has received. And I am also generally trying to practice not being reactionary to controversial issues. Having said all of that I think it is important at this juncture for me to share pastoral thoughts and the position of the current session with you as the changes taking place will do so on July 10th.

The issue at hand in our denomination pertains to explicit, universal standards for those seeking to be ordained to any church office. The former standards define the relationship status of officers in such a way that would preclude people living in alternative lifestyles and relationship commitments other than marriage between a man and a woman. The heterosexual marital standards were explicit in the former verbiage. The new wording is more generalized in that it expects any candidate for ordination to be under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Implied in that statement are a host of lifestyle expectations that actually extend far beyond a heterosexual marriage clause.

In theory the new standards open the door for folks with non-traditional orientations and lifestyles to be ordained. In theory! The new approach puts the responsibility for discerning whether or

not anyone seeking ordination is indeed submitting to the lordship of Jesus squarely in the lap of the local session or presbytery. Instead of legislating ordination standards through our constitution, the new approach trusts those closest to the scene to apply spiritual discernment and relational oversight. The new approach trusts the duly elected officers to discern God’s will with each individual as an individual. Is it more subjective? Yes. Is there risk involved (depending on your perspective) as a result of this change? Yes. Does it expect the local church to discern rightly in lieu of a more explicit written standard? Yes.

The reality is that, regarding receiving new candidates for ordination, nothing procedurally will change in our presbytery or congregation. This new amendment will not affect how we do church at FPC-SYLVA... except that it underscores the importance (which has always existed!) of deep spiritual discernment about who we elect as ordained officers.

The fact is FPC-SYLVA will NOT be adversely affected by this constitutional change. The fact is FPC-SYLVA will continue to “Build followers of Jesus Christ who meet human needs.” The fact is FPC-SYLVA will not let something about which we have no control and that is fairly peripheral to our day-to-day functioning blur our focus or dilute our impact. Nothing will change about how we elect officers. Nothing will change about our amazing ministries and missions. We are a Christ-centered and biblically-focused congregation. That has not and will not change.

Friends, we live in what is called a “post-denominational age.” That is to say, people don’t really care much about denominations anymore. Their loyalty is to the local congregation and the opportunities to grow and serve through it. While this reality is a double-edged sword, it compels me to de-emphasize the importance of this denominational change. It simply should not be a cause for alarm on “the ground” at FPC-SYLVA. My focus as I pray yours is as well is knowing Jesus Christ and making Him known.

Faithfully,
David Grachek,
Pastor

FAMILY LIFE DIRECTOR

I recently encountered a film about a man named Vic Muniz. A world famous contemporary artist originally from Brazil, Muniz explained that one day as a young man in Brazil he saw two men fighting, he went to try and break up the fight, broke up the fight and then walked back to his car. On his way to the car one of the two men thought it was Muniz he had been fighting and shot Muniz in the leg. As Muniz explains the story, the man who shot him was also rich and gave Muniz money for the mistake which afforded Muniz to come to America where he eventually became an artist.

John Perkins' son Spencer became a Christian at a Vacation Bible School. This helped lead John Perkins to Christ which began the journey to the formation of the Christian Community Development Association, a nationwide association dedicated to the ministry of reconciliation as given in 2 Corinthians 5 and to the restoration of lives and communities from brokenness to wholeness and to God's beloved community.

We don't know the end of our earth-bound stories, but God gives us the end of our ultimate story and it ends with His victory. As difficult as this faith journey is at times, we are blessed to be post-resurrection believers. We've been given the testimony of Christ's resurrection, the defeat of death and can receive the gospel that, "for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

One of God's purposes is to feed the hungry, we have that opportunity as a church this summer through the Summer Lunch Program sponsored through Manna Foods and Jackson County Public Schools. If you would like to volunteer to help with this program at our church, weekdays from 11:00-noon, please contact David Grachek or me.

Another great purpose of God is to "let the little children come to Him." We hope to be a part of that with our community Vacation Bible School, July 24-28 in the evenings. If you feel called to this opportunity either with the material needs of snacks, crafts, and set-up or the logistical needs of putting on this event, please let me know. Also, as always, I plead for your prayers for our youth, may they know that it is for freedom that Christ has set

them free and may they encounter more of His freedom through our trip to Jackson, MS together. Christ's Peace,

–David Cathcart

MISSION NEWS

From Terry Teppert, Executive Director of **Teen Challenge of the Smokies**:

Feed My Sheep

John 21:16, 17

There is no doubt that Peter loved Jesus. So, why did Jesus ask three times. "Do you love me?" It seems like a simple thing. Peter denied Jesus three times and Jesus gave him three opportunities to redeem himself. But, the Greek translation of love used in the context Jesus was using tells us that when He was asking, "Do you love me," He was talking about *Agape*—the unconditional all-encompassing love. Peter actually answered with, "I love you," his love being *Phileo*—brotherly love with conditions.

Now why do we care about this? Because it could possibly be one of the most important questions we ever answer. Each time Jesus asked the question, he told Peter to show it. When Jesus said "feed my lambs" he meant children and new believers. When He said "feed my sheep" He was speaking of physical and spiritual food, shepherding, guarding, teaching and helping.

Each time Jesus asked His question to Peter, His expectation remained the same: prove you love me by feeding my sheep in many different ways. It's easy to say "I love you." It's difficult to do all those things Jesus is asking of us. We have all had the same struggles as Peter, but God gives us opportunities every day to redeem ourselves.

At **Teen Challenge of the Smokies** we hope to achieve the mandate that Jesus set before us. Through our loving, faithful actions we desire to show unconditional love to those men who need the love of Christ through each of us.

We are taking in our first students now and we need *your* help in demonstrating unconditional love. Financially we are continuing

to ask for your support to meet our monthly basic expense. We need food for the kitchen, and we have a wish list. [See below.] Please come visit our new home [at 8409 US 441 South, Sylva, NC]. If Christ is calling your heart to serve Him, look locally. Come help us show the kind of love Jesus wants us all to demonstrate.

We would greatly appreciate:

- a one-time gift or monthly pledge
- LCD Projector
- 12 Heavy Duty Church Chairs
- 15 Passenger Van or Large Capacity Vehicle

SYMPATHY..

..Larry and Susan Blair and family on the death of Larry's brother Skip on Sunday, June 12th in Florida.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

..June 20 through August 10, 11:30 through 12:00 noon - Manna Food Bank, in conjunction with Jackson County Schools, will provide lunches for children up until age 18 at several locations. Volunteers from the church will be distributing lunches in our pavilion Mondays through Fridays for those seven+ weeks.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

..July 24-28, 6:00-9:00 pm – Joint VBS with Methodist, Baptist and Lifeway churches in Sylva at Bridge Park in Sylva.

PRAYER PARTNERS

..There will be prayer partners at the front of the sanctuary following morning worship each Sunday.

FINANCIAL REPORT YEAR-TO-DATE

As of the end of May

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>
Income to Regular Budget	105,092	104,488
Expenses from Regular Budget	112,032	99,145

ARE YOU MINISTERING IN JULY?

Coffee Fellowship:

3 Larry & Susan Blair
 10 Patti Dennis
 17 Dave & Dottie Whitesides
 24 Steve & Marlies Owens
 31 TBA

Kid's Club:

No Kid's Club
 TBA
 TBA
 Melanie Tabor
 TBA

Flowers:

Moira Campbell
 Betty Painter
 Becky Wilson
 Grace Reed
 Dave & Dottie Whitesides

Family Night Supper: Monday, July 6
 Deacons

Ushers & Greeters: Moira Campbell

Deacon of the Month:

Gloria Stockton, 586-3572;
 Roger Moore, 226-6188 (alternate)

Communion: July 3

Preparers: Judy Henderson, Betty Foti
 Servers: Judy Henderson, Betty Foti, Roger Murajda, Jessica Morgan

Deadline for the next issue: July 11

UNLIKELY METHODS

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days” (Hebrews 11:30, NRSV). What must Joshua and the Israelites have thought of those orders?

What must Naaman have thought when Elisha prescribed a leprosy cure of washing seven times in the muddy Jordan River (2 Kings 5)?

What must the disciples have thought when Jesus allowed himself to be crucified?

God seems to delight in using unlikely methods to accomplish his plans. Keep that in mind when life doesn't make sense or circumstances seem hopeless.

God's plans are rarely straight-forward or predictable. He's full of surprises. With a little faith and obedience, we will see God work in our lives, too.

BELOVED, REST

Busy. We're all so very busy, and we consider that a virtue. We measure our days by how much we accomplish.

Long ago, the psalmist was aware of mankind's workaholic tendencies. "It is in vain," he wrote, "that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved" (Psalm 127:2, NRSV).

Balance, beloved. God isn't a slave driver. Work and rest in good measure, for God is pleased to give you both.

THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION

What's better than the first day of a long-awaited vacation? The excitement of reaching our destination, the anticipation of fun-filled adventures, the freedom to relax and lay down our burdens for a while – we'll pay good money for that.

But it's a fleeting pleasure. Before our bags are even unpacked, the clock has already begun counting down to when we'll have to return to the pressures of everyday life.

It won't always be so. One day, we'll lay down our burdens for good. When we reach our ultimate destination, God our Father will welcome us. Our loved ones, long gone, will gather to celebrate. And every day of this breathtaking adventure will be like the first because time will no longer rule over us.

The best vacations are just a shadow of what God has in store for his children.