

Newsletter

First Presbyterian Church

of Sylva, North Carolina

May 2011

David Grachek, Pastor

Grace Reed, Editor

PASTOR'S CORNER

What is it that unites us?

Primarily, it is the saving work of Christ that unites us. Secondly, it is the essential doctrines in that define orthodoxy. We have, as a common heritage, the blood of Christ that has been shed for the forgiveness of our sins. True Christians serve the true and living God and we know Jesus in a personal and intimate way (1 Cor. 1:9). We have been redeemed by God himself. Furthermore, we have the body of Scriptures which tell us the essentials of the faith and deviating from these essentials means to be outside the camp of Christ. It is the essential tenets of our reformed faith that we must know and unite in.

The Christian church, as a whole, needs to repent. We need to look at ourselves. We need to look at our churches. We need to look at one another and decide that we will stand on the essential doctrines of the faith and that we will be united against the enemy. Those of us who are united by the blood of Christ are not enemies with one another whether we be Presbyterian or Baptist or Lutheran. It may be difficult for many of us to look lovingly into the eyes of those of a different denomination without thinking in our hearts that they are wrong about this doctrine or that doctrine. But, we need to be reminded that there is neither a Presbyterian nor a Baptist nor a Lutheran on the throne of God. All of us I am sure will have our theologies corrected when we stand before the throne of God. Therefore, we need to seek to work together to further the Kingdom of God.

Romans 14:1-12 speaks about accepting Christians of differing opinions and to not judge them because, "To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man regards one day above another, another regards

every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind...But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God," (Rom. 14:4-5,10). The whole point is that we need to be united, not bickering. We need to move beyond the denominational barriers of what separates us into the common ground of what unites us: Jesus!

Ask yourself what is most important in life. Is it your relationship with God? If it is, and it should be, should you not also be seeking the same thing that God wants? Should you not also be seeking to love one another as Christ commanded us? Love is the perfect bond of unity, (Col. 3:14). I believe that God so loves me that He sent His Son to become man to reconcile my fallen state back to Him. God did not leave me where He found me and I do not believe we should do the same with our friends. God loves us enough to reach out to us. We should do likewise.

One of the signs of apostasy (falling from the truth) in the Christian Church is the bickering and disunity among Christians. Apostasy begins in our hearts when we put distance between ourselves and our brothers and sisters in Christ because of a difference of opinion on a non-essential doctrine. This falling away can be complete or it can be slight. Let's not commit apostasy in our hearts by abandoning the truth of God's call of unity and love within the body of Christ. Remember, it is the devil that wants us to fight each other so that he can be freed up to deceive the world. If we are fighting each other then we are falling prey to His tactics.

Apostasy begins with the individual. Apostasy begins in the heart and the mind. Whichever comes first is not important. Whether we think something wrong and then feel it or feel something wrong and then think it. The heart and the mind are so closely related that we must guard them both. We must focus on the truth of God's Word and let our minds be shaped by it. We must seek to have our minds shaped by the love of God as we move not only to learn about Him, but also to carry out His desires.

Jesus said that the world would know that we were His disciples by the love that we have for one another (John 13:35).

I know that it is easy to speak these words and it is very difficult to apply them. That is true because true love is difficult to live. But what if the world began to see the Presbyterian Church uniting in spite of its differences? What if the world started to see how the Presbyterian Church started to love not only those that agree with their theological beliefs, but others as well? What if the Presbyterian Church didn't stop there, but also loved those people who do not even darken the doorstep of a church? What do you think the world would say if the churches' bickering stopped? What do you think the unbelievers would say if they saw us living more and more the loving attitude and a sacrificial life of Christ across denominational barriers? It would be a tremendous witness for Christ. It would be a tremendous assault on the enemy and I know that God would use it mightily to bring others to Himself by his grace.

What should we do to bring unity wherever possible?

We need to look at our own hearts and our own minds and compare them to Jesus and the Scripture. Wherever the two are not in agreement, it is we who need to change. We need to pray that the Lord would provide opportunities to work with other Christians across theological differences and across denominational lines. We need to recognize that we have differences of opinions and worship styles and that that is okay. But we need to lift each other up and be united in Christ. We need to focus on knowing Christ and making Him known!

Amazed by His grace,
David Grachek
Pastor
Sylva First Presbyterian Church

FAMILY LIFE DIRECTOR

Last week my family and I had the great blessing of being able to spend a week at the beach of Edisto, SC with three other families, all friends of ours from Montreat College. During that time one of the devotions in My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers, refers to Jesus' instructions to "Look at the birds of the air" and

"consider the lilies of the field." Chambers points out that these places of God's creation simply *are* and this simplicity of being brings God's blessing. Chambers goes on to observe, "So often we impair God's designed influence, which He desires to exhibit through us, because of our own conscious efforts to be consistent and useful. Jesus said there is only one way to develop and grow spiritually, and that is through focusing and concentrating on God."

I read this devotion while in the company of some of the most influential friendships I've had and each of them bears witness to the truth of this devotion for in terms of personalities and vocations each is blessedly unique. Each of these friends continues to seek out our Lord and His Kingdom and it has lead their lives in strikingly different directions, but in those varied paths God weaves His good Glory across a broad swath of His creation.

This Chambers devotion is also a hope for our summer mission trip. Our travels will take us to a variety of locations on our way to Jackson, MS with the intention of considering the lilies as expressed through the lives of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. John Perkins, Clarence Jordan (author of the Cotton Patch Gospels and founder of Koinania Farms), and Millard Fuller (founder of Habitat of Humanity). In focusing on Christ, their lives have consequentially influenced others towards Christ and His liberating call for belief in Him, repentance, forgiveness, mercy, grace, justice and reconciliation. Please pray that our eyes would be more firmly fixed on Jesus through these encounters. And for us all, may we, "with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, [and be] transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18) and Hallelujah there is freedom there.

–David Cathcart

MISSION NEWS

Musser Musings—From Scot and Carol Musser, our missionaries serving the Lord in Camarma, Spain with Resourcing Christian Education International.

Behind the Scenes

I have heard it said that often, when God calls us into a ministry, it has more to do with how He wants to change us, than about how He wants to use us to change others. I doubt that it is an accident that he moved this farm girl, who had little need of social skills growing up, to a city and culture where relationships are a fundamental part of life. In this culture of relationships, I yet have much to learn.

Today was supposed to be a routine day: buy groceries, clean house, teach my Spanish class, and take care of my family. Then my Spanish friend from our church, Teresa, called and asked if I could take her to her mother's house to drop off something. So, I invited her to join me on my shopping trip.

If you are going to enjoy this trip with me, you need to meet Teresa. She has become my "Spanish mother." She is the right age for it, and she acts like it too—when I am with her, I just do what I'm told and hold on for the ride. We work together each month to collect food to distribute to needy people in our community, along with personal visits for follow-up.

Through Teresa I am learning the concept of "confianza." "Confidence" or "trust" is the key factor in Spanish relationships. Such relationships cannot be rushed, and making time for those relationships is a very big priority. The way I understand it, it basically means that you are such good friends, that you look out for each other, in such a way that—well, you are like family. (It can be stretching! In my culture, it is more similar to presuming on someone—except that she would give all she has to return the favor.)

Today when I picked her up, she was waiting with her very good friend, Sylvia. Their friendship goes back 40 years. As we drove into an old section of the nearby city, Sylvia and Teresa reminisced about their past there and pointed out the landmarks. "This is where I got married." "That is the oldest school in the city." "There is the old convent." HOME SWEET HOME!

When we got to her mom's house, I pulled over to let Teresa get out and drop off her things. "You can't park here," she said. I

wasn't parking; I was just letting her out to drop off the money. But that wouldn't do. I had to go in. We parked—no easy task in this part of the city, where there are many more cars than there are parking spaces.

Her 90 year old mother met us at the door, along with Teresa's sister and brother in law. They all talked at once. I couldn't follow much of the conversation, so I sat quietly and watched. The only part I really understood was when Teresa's mother revealed a glass piggy bank half full of coins and explained that it belonged to her 9 year old great grandson. She gives him 70 euro cents (about a dollar) each time he visits her to save for his future.

After a brief visit, we left. But we weren't finished. Sylvia wanted to treat us to coffee. We walked several blocks, leading me to wonder what was wrong with the coffee shops we were passing by along the way. Finally we arrived at the right place. Now it was clear that the point was not the coffee. She greeted the elderly man at the counter warmly, and his wife came out from the back in an old, worn apron—more warm greetings and introductions. At one point in the conversation, Sylvia turned to me and said, "Here, everyone loves me!" She was glowing with pride and contentment. So, let's just reprioritize things today! Sometimes efficiency and productivity need to take a back seat to the finer things in life!

On the return trip, Teresa opened up and talked about her childhood. Her mother has always had a strong character and to this day remains harsh in how she deals with the family. Her Father was a gentle man—protective of the children when he was around. I can see how Teresa has her Mother's strong character, but it is more tempered, probably by the influence of her Father, who taught her to manage it.

Today was one of those days when I was privileged to go behind the scenes. Much of daily life here feels very normal—familiar amenities, large grocery stores, and modern transportation. It's easy to get focused on daily routines and miss the bigger picture. Today's experience was another piece of a living puzzle that helps us relate with these people and their lives—in ways that you don't

learn from classes or books! It is the best way to learn—and no, I did not clean my house today!

Financial Support Update

If there has been one theme that we can see in our ministry in Spain, it has been that of God's faithfulness! Churches and individuals have given sacrificially for many years in order for us to live and serve in Spain. We are humbled and very grateful for this partnership. However, over the past year we have lost several financial supporters, leaving our support account in the red. We had hoped that it would be sufficient to just take a significant pay cut and keep this matter between us and God in prayer—however, it is a legitimate argument that that is not how a partnership works. Therefore, we feel that God would have us share this need. If you are still reading this long letter—you are among our most faithful partners! We would ask that you join us in committing our financial need to the Lord in prayer. Should you be able to help us with a donation, we could use both one time gifts (to bring us out of the red) and regular contributions, (to keep us out). Our need at present is \$1,200 per month.

Thank you to each of you for your prayers, friendship, partnership, and support of our work in Spain!

Sincerely,

Scot and Carol Musser

P.S. As we face the next school year, we are praying diligently for additional staff. Major needs this fall will be teachers for **Elementary, P.E., Bible, HS Math, ELL, and a Principal**. If you know of any educators who might consider serving with us in Spain, please let us know and direct them to the ECA website: ecaspain.com.

Prayer Requests:

1. Camarma Church outreach events and ministries to the community.
2. Unsaved friends and seekers who we have contact with in our school and community.
3. Staff needs for ECA for next fall—there are many!
4. Our financial deficit and monthly support needs.

Donations can be sent to R.C.E. International, P.O. Box 4528, Wheaton, IL 60189-4528, designated “13902 – Ministry of Scot & Carol Musser-ECA in Spain.”

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

..Friday, June 10-Sunday, June 12 – Deacon-sponsored camping weekend at Smokemont in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Even if you do not join us in camping, you are invited to the covered dish supper on Saturday. Site D5 has been reserved for this event.

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 church following morning worship each Sunday.

ARE YOU MINISTERING IN JUNE?

Coffee Fellowship:

5 Betty Painter
12 Tommy & Sarah Thompson
19 Harry & Betty White
26 Donna Mason

Kid's Club:

No Kid's Club
Kelly Doppke
TBA
TBA

Flowers:

Charles & Sonia Toledo
Donna Mason
Joan Yount
Pat Newman

Family Night Supper: June 1

Phil & Patti Dennis

Ushers & Greeters: Fran & Jebby

Webster

Deacon of the Month:

Jebby Webster, 586-3577
Dianne Scott, 506-5665 (alt.)

Communion: June 5

Preparers: David Noland, Dianne Scott
Servers: David Noland, Dianne Scott, Erik Enberg, Jae Crawford, Joe Scott, Jebby Webster

Deadline for the next issue: June 13

FINANCIAL REPORT YEAR-TO-DATE

As of the end of April

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>
Income to Regular Budget	82,484	79,543
Expenses from Regular Budget	91,115	78,094

QUIET SPACE

“Rest is not idleness,” said John Lubbock, “and to lie sometimes on the grass on a summer day listening to the murmur of water or watching the clouds float across the sky is hardly a waste of time.”

Most of us need more, not less, rest built into our daily routine. Only when we are quiet can we hear God’s whisper.

Summer is a great time to find a peaceful, outdoor spot to read, rest and pray – even if only for a few minutes. God is eagerly waiting for us to make space for him.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAILURE

“Our society is so caught up in winning,” said Carlton Young, “we forget that most of the great men and women in history have, at one time or another, failed at something. Often repeatedly and discouragingly. But each failure is nothing more than a brick in the wall that forms the foundation of our success.”

In *The Upper Room*, Bob La Forge writes, “Failure does not mean that God is against us or that we are hopelessly inept. Failure may be exactly what God can use.”

Moses and David, two giants of faith, also knew failure – and not just the average variety that comes from everyday mistakes. Their huge moral missteps resulted in severe consequences. But failure wasn’t the end of their stories. These men repented and moved forward, and God used them mightily.

And so it can be for any of us who fails or falls short.