

Newsletter

First Presbyterian Church

of Sylva, North Carolina

David Grachek, Pastor

November 2011

Grace Reed, Editor

PASTOR'S CORNER

INDESCRIBABLE CHRIST

Dr. S.M. Lockridge was a Pastor in San Diego CA from 1953 - 1993. He entered heaven in 2000. He is well-known for a passage out of his sermon titled "He's My King":

"He's enduringly strong, He's entirely sincere, He's eternally steadfast. He's immortally graceful. He's imperially powerful. He's impartially merciful. He's God's Son. He's a sinner's savior. He's the centerpiece of civilization. He stands alone in Himself. He's unparalleled. He's unprecedented. He's supreme. He's preeminent. He's the loftiest idea in literature. He's the highest idea in philosophy. He's the fundamental truth in theology. He's the miracle of the age. He's the only one able to supply all of our needs simultaneously. He supplies strength for the weak. He's available for the tempted and the tried. He sympathizes and He saves. He guards and He guides. He heals the sick, He cleans the lepers. He forgives sinners, He discharges debtors, He delivers captives, He defends the feeble, He blesses the young, He serves the unfortunate, He regards the aged, He rewards the diligent, He beautifies the meek. Do you know Him?

"Well, my king is the king of knowledge, He's the well-spring of wisdom, He's the doorway of deliverance, He's the pathway of peace, He's the roadway of righteousness, He's the highway of holiness, He's the gateway of glory, He's the master of the mighty, He's the captain of the conquerors, He's the head of the heroes, He's the leader of the legislators, He's the overseer of the overcomers, He's the governor of governors, He's the prince of princes, He's the king of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

"His life is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His word is enough. His grace

is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Well. I wish I could describe Him to you. But He's indescribable. Yes. He's incomprehensible. He's invincible, He's irresistible. I'm trying to tell you, the Heavens cannot contain Him, let alone a man explain Him. You can't get Him out of your mind. You can't get Him off of your hands. You can't outlive Him, and you can't live without Him. Well. The Pharisees couldn't stand Him, but they found out they couldn't stop Him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him. Herod couldn't kill Him. Death couldn't handle Him and the grave couldn't hold Him. That's my king!

"He always has been, and He always will be. I'm talking about He [who] had no predecessor and He [who] has no successor. There was nobody before Him and there will be nobody after Him. You can't impeach Him, and He's not going to resign. We try to get prestige and honor and glory to ourselves, but the glory is all His. Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, and ever, and ever, and ever. How long is that? And ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and when you get through with all of the forevers, then 'Amen'."

"Oh I wish I could describe him to you."

Advent is about the anticipation of the coming of the King. I can't wait!

David Grachek
Pastor

FAMILY LIFE DIRECTOR

As I write for this newsletter, Thanksgiving is only a couple of days away. So I would like to begin by giving thanks for our church secretary who on a monthly basis patiently puts up with my slow forming thoughts to make their way into this newsletter. But in the comings and goings of her busy office she also consistently nurtures my faith with her gentle radiance of a bedrock-rooted love for Jesus Christ. Really, what a blessing to have her influence in my life. While contemplating thanksgiving, I also happen to be reading Philippians for my New Testament class and Psalms for my Old Testament class. In Paul and David, our gracious God has given us two incredibly thankful progenitors of our faith. Reading

Psalms for this class I have had to read straight through which is very different from how I've normally read the Psalms. But in getting to read them this way, the reality of David's frequent cries for help and his open lamentations have been an encouragement to be more forthright in my prayers, as though I could hide anything anyway. But what is even more astounding to me is to read over and over and over again, David argue, complain, cry, and plead and then close with, "But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me" (Psalm 13:5-6), or in the same Psalm where he claims, "For strangers have risen against me; ruthless men seek my life" he later says, "With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good" (Psalm 54:3,6). David knows something about God that I think God wants us to know too.

Paul says to imitate him and how blessed we could be if we did. Writing from the confines of imprisonment his overarching mandate in Philippians is to Rejoice and give Thanks. Paul gives thanks for his chains as it has opened up possibilities for ministry, he gives thanks for his comforters that care about him and labor with him. He gives thanks for the faith of the Philippians and their faith and he knows how to be content in plenty and in want. You've got to be kidding me.

I might be really tempted to say these two men are just putting up a pious front and that such attitudes are ridiculously unrealistic, but I've been graciously confronted with the greater reality of God's Spirit continuing to free His people into a Thanksgiving that's deeper than our circumstances. I am confronted with His "Worthy of Thanks" presence when I encounter our secretary and her faith, our pastor and his, and the faith I've been shown by many children and youth. The attitudes of David's Thanksgiving and Paul's Joy are being lived out by so many people around me, by you and those in our congregation, that I am forced to not only acknowledge the reality of God's Truth, but to give Thanks for it. Thank you for confronting me and those around you with God's goodness so worthy of our thanks.

Christ's Peace,
David Cathcart

MISSION NEWS

From the President of **Black Mountain Home** for Children, Youth and Families: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing." – John 15:5

During this season of gratitude, we are thanking God for all the ways He continues to bless us and meet our needs. You are one of those blessings. We truly appreciate your prayers, financial support, and in-kind gifts.

As we work together, keeping our eyes on Christ and remaining in Him, we are seeing much growth in the lives of our youth. Your generosity and thoughtfulness leads them to consider what they can do to help others.

Over the last several months, the Youth Leadership Team has raised money to help a Guatemalan family with whom the Presbytery of WNC is working; purchased soccer balls and other items to send with an intern on her mission trip to Haiti; and donated money to the school's Key Club to help purchase tetanus shots for mothers and babies in third world countries. In addition to this, we have at least two youth who are considering going on a mission trip to Haiti.

As you support Black Mountain Home, please know that your example is encouraging our youth to explore service opportunities both locally and internationally. The difference you are making is reaching farther than you may know. Thank you for being a positive Christian example for our youth. We truly thank God for you.

PRAYER MINISTRY IN OUR CHURCH

Attending the annual budget meeting I asked for prayer ministry to be a budgeted line item. As many of you know our budget is as tight as our economy and we need to cut corners, not add unnecessary items. Someone asked, "Don't you just meet and pray on Tuesday nights and stand up in front of the church to pray on Sundays? Why do you need money for that?" Good question.

We do much more than that but haven't been very good at letting our congregation in on it, obviously. Most recently Sam Hale participated in a Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International event where he was responsible for organizing prayer ministry for all of the attendees, and reported the Lord's healing many. Gloria Stockton and I went to an Order of St Luke conference which was rather expensive but so worth it. At this conference we were able to receive prayer ministry for ourselves as well as extensive training on how to pray for others. Our main topic was post-traumatic stress disorder which with all of our vets coming home from overseas we will be hearing a lot more about. Apparently most of the bizarre horrible occurrences we see in the news today are in some way related to PTSD. It affects more people we know than we ever suspected.

Our prayer ministry team is affiliated with the Order of St Luke (OSL) and we have membership fees and dues we must pay. OSL is an international ecumenical organization which connects and encourages its members through conferences, a newsletter, a magazine as well as an order of study designed to help us get in touch with Jesus' healing ministry.

We are presently praying about and planning an event to encourage personal prayer life. Hopefully it will involve our whole community, which is our prayer.

If you need someone to walk alongside you in prayer, a member of our team will be glad to take that on. We will have a team sit down and pray with you at a time convenient to you, if you need us.

I asked for the prayer ministry to be a budgeted line item, as much as anything to bring it to your attention. What we need most is prayer. Pray for our prayer ministry, to grow in the direction of God's will. Pray for our church, that it will be a place of prayer and healing for our community.

Know that when I am standing up front on Sunday mornings I am praying for you, often by name, and I covet your prayers as well.

Thank you and blessings,
Judy McManus

UPCOMING EVENTS

..Saturday, December 3, 10:00 am until -- Decorating the Church. Lunch will be provided (a big pot of soup and fresh bread). Feel free to bring something to share. Please come help and enjoy this time of festive fellowship. There will be plenty of greenery available for those who help to make a wreath or other decoration to take home. If you have hand clippers, garden gloves, and an apron or old overshirt bring them along. We have extras if you don't though, so don't let that stop you from joining us. Hope to see you for whatever amount of time you have available. Questions: Judy McManus, 508-1165.

..Sunday, December 4, 12:15 pm – Congregational Meeting to review the budget for 2012 and have a ceremony to bestow the title of Pastor Emeritus on Bill Serjak.

..Saturday, December 10, 3:00 pm – The Deacons would like to invite anyone in our church family to go caroling to our shut-ins and area rest homes on Saturday, Dec. 10. We will meet at the church at 3:00 to carpool. Contact Jae Crawford for more information. A sign-up sheet will be placed on the counter of the fellowship hall. Everyone is welcome and we will go out to eat after the last stop.

..Saturdays, December 10 and 17, 6:00 to 10:00 pm – Parents Night Out. Please call Elizabeth Beck at 226-3525, to make reservations if you want to take advantage of either or both of these opportunities.

..Sunday, December 18, during Morning Worship – Children's Christmas Program. Elizabeth Beck, our gifted and devoted Children's Librarian at Syla's library will be blessing our church with the Children's Christmas program this year. Practices will be held during Kid's Club on Sundays. All children are invited to join. There will be a part for everyone.

..Saturday, December 24, 6:30 pm – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. Our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. Join us for carol singing, scripture reading, a short meditation and the lighting of the candles. This is an informal service and we trust all our members and friends will make this a part of their holiday

celebration. Plan to stay after the service to enjoy refreshments together.

..It is time to sign up for responsibilities for 2012 to be included in our church handbook, such as providing flowers on Sunday morning, coffee fellowship, assisting with Kid's Club, hosting Family Night Supper, ushering and greeting, etc. Sign-up sheets are on the table by the coat rack. Please consider how you can serve the Lord in these opportunities.

CONGRATULATIONS TO.

..Adam and Mary Kelley Gelbaugh who were married on October 31st. We pray God's blessing on their union.

A NOTE FROM PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Again, this year, the Presbyterian Women will be supporting the Blankets+ Program. There will be a Christmas tree in the fellowship hall which will need to be decorated with white bows. A donation of \$5 will purchase a small bow and \$10 a large bow. Donations will be sent to Church World Service so blankets can be sent to help families around the world recover from disasters.

The blankets will be displayed and someone will be available to collect your donation. You may also use an envelope which will be on the table in the narthex. The white bows will then be placed on the tree.

Make your check to the church and earmark it "Blanket+ Program."

Thank you in advance for your giving hearts.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: DECEMBER 15

FINANCIAL REPORT YEAR-TO-DATE

As of the end of October

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>
Income to Regular Budget	213,365	214,873
Expenses from Regular Budget	223,977	212,715

ARE YOU MINISTERING IN DECEMBER?

Coffee Fellowship:

4 Tim & Kelly Spilliards
11 Lacy & Dottie Thornburg
18 Herald & Gloria Stockton
25 TBA

Kid's Club:

No Kid's Club
Besan Nash
Stacey Grachek
TBA

Flowers:

Decoration Committee:
Judy McManus, Susan
Blair, Frances Hess,
Mary Gelbaugh, Sylvia
Smythe, Betty White,
Doris Cody, Others,
All welcome!

Family Night Supper – December 7: Becky
Lindsay, Tom & Jae Crawford

Ushers & Greeters:
Lacy & Dottie Thornburg

Deacon of the Month: Jessica Morgan,
507-1683; Jae Crawford, 226-1894
(alternate)

Communion: December 4
Preparers: Tommy Thompson, Blair Yount
Servers: Tommy Thompson, Blair Yount,
Gloria Stockton, Jebby Webster, Livingston
Kelley, Jae Crawford