

Newsletter

First Presbyterian Church

of Sylva, North Carolina

September 2011

David Grachek, Pastor

Grace Reed, Editor

PASTOR'S CORNER

We Are Family – Really? Yes, Really!

I was a bit surprised by an article I read while attending a weeklong seminar at Montreat Conference Center where author and consultant Tony Robinson suggested that churches would be healthier if they stopped thinking of themselves as a family. That ruffled my feathers a bit because I've always thought the family metaphor to be both appropriate and helpful in congregational settings.

Robinson's initial argument derives from a congregation who hired an unnamed national firm of some sort to do a "ministry audit." The firm concluded that the most important thing the church could do was to "end whatever amount of ongoing conflict exists as well as quit thinking like a family."

Robinson suggests that the church, like many plateaued and declining churches, had fallen into the trap of family thinking that caused it to "lose sight of larger transformative purposes and settle, instead, for the comfort and satisfaction of their members."

I get the danger of becoming selfish and inwardly focused, as some families do – but that's not the only way to be family. The last church I served as intern and parish visitor adopted a family-oriented slogan, but it was balanced with both an inward and outward focus as we strove to be "A Family of Faith: A People on Mission."

Robinson suggests other dangers lurking in the family metaphor. Seeking to maintain a comfortable family atmosphere, churches may be afraid to ask hard but needed questions for fear of conflict. Families can also harbor secrets, be hard to join and send

unfriendly signals to single persons because the notion "our church is a family" could morph into "our church is for families."

I take Robinson's point, but I'm not ready to give up on the metaphor of the church as a family. For me, the more important question is "What kind of family will we be?" This is where both professional and lay leadership should show both spiritual and emotional maturity through intentionally shaping the meaning – and responsibilities – of the church family.

It's true that churches can easily devolve into dysfunctional and insular families whose main concern is to keep everybody happy and sweep potential conflicts under the rug.

But it's also possible for churches to think and act as a welcoming family of many diverse individuals who celebrate being part of a larger family of faith and who understand they have a mission to the human family.

So, despite Robinson's insightful points, I still think the healthier aspects of "family" remain a positive metaphor for congregations to employ.

In Christ,

David Grachek
Pastor

FAMILY LIFE DIRECTOR

During this time of year I always think about Ecclesiastes 3, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." The awesome mysteries of God surround us and yet the one I am both most often astounded by and inwardly comforted by, is the mystery of God's creation and use of time. In a recent discipleship class we looked at the Creation account in Genesis 2 and how God formed the man out of dust and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Then we are told in verse 8, "And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden..." What really intrigues me is the fact that God "planted" a garden, as opposed to God "created" a garden. It seems that already God is allowing the creative process of His Creation to grow within the framework of

His "time." I think somehow this must show us something about who our God is and His care for us.

I recently watched a video from Jim Henson's memorial service. Jim Henson, the creator of "The Muppets" and the "Sesame Street" characters, was being eulogized by his friend and collaborator Frank Oz. Frank shared the story of Jim giving him a Christmas gift early in their career together. Frank shared that what struck him most about this gift (an elaborate, strange and humorous sculpture of "Ernie" from Sesame Street) was thinking about Jim's generosity of time, how much time Jim must have spent on creating that gift. Frank spoke about all the little details, painted textures, and meticulously cut out photos that Jim had invested. Frank also spoke about knowing the joyful anticipation that Jim expressed over what he was working on, "I can't wait to give this gift to you." Frank closed by saying that when he was given that gift which contained the generosity of time, thought, creativity and care, he knew that he was loved.

I share these thoughts ultimately to say that I don't know specifically what God has in mind for the months ahead for our youth group or children's ministries, but I'm thankful to know that God does. I know that He planted seeds for what's ahead a long time ago and that He continues to lovingly labor and excitedly anticipate their arrival, "and I am confident of this, that He who began a good work in [us] will see it through to completion until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). Please pray for us that we might all see how much time, care and love God has put in to this day, our lives, and into the hope we have in our Lord Christ.

–David Cathcart

UPCOMING EVENTS

..Tuesday, September 27, 7:00 pm -- Prayer for Jackson County Schools. Campus Prayer Journey, a time of prayer for our children in Jackson County, near the flag pole or front entrance of each school. This will be a time for all Christians to come together to pray for the students, faculty and staff of each school. There will not be any program or formality, just a short time of prayer.

..Sunday, October 2 – A Congregational Meeting has been called for immediately following Morning Worship for the purpose of selecting the Nominating Committee.

..Saturday, October 8 – Church Work Day. Plan to join us in work, fun and fellowship while improving our facility's appearance.

..Sunday, October 9, 12:30 pm – Deacons Meeting.

..Sunday, October 9, following Morning Worship – Fall Hike at Bear Pen Gap, sponsored by the deacons. Bring a bag lunch. We will carpool to the trail head. See information posted on doorway outside the fellowship hall.

..Upcoming events at Black Mountain Home for Children, Youth and Families:

- Wednesday, October 12 – First Annual BMH Golf Classic. See the bulletin board in the fellowship hall for more information.
- Saturday, October 15 – Fall Festival 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. – Annual silent auction with theme baskets, live music, games for the kids on a glorious fall day in the mountains.

..Sunday, December 18, during Morning Worship – Children's Christmas Program. Elizabeth Beck will be working with the children during Kid's Club to prepare for this program. Watch for more details.

CONGRATULATIONS..

..to Michael and Katherine Collings on the birth of James Sebastian on Thursday morning, September 15.

UCM NEEDS OUR SUPPORT

The United Christian Ministries in Jackson County has had a year full of needs to fill. They have been able to help many people, but still more have needs they have been unable to help.

Their funds for heat and electric help were expended before June; also, their food cupboard is low on needed items.

They really need saltines, dish detergent, laundry soap, toilet paper; these items go into a take-home bag for really needy people. You may deliver these items to our grocery basket in the Church Hall.

I am sure they would be happy to have dollars if you don't have time to shop for the items -- Financial donations are always gratefully received, and can provide for both food and other needed help for the communities' many families who are facing hard times.

Thank you for all the support you have given them in the past, and thanks in advance for whatever you are able to do.

BLACK MOUNTAIN HOME FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Tom Campbell

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in faith and in purity. I Timothy 4:12

Over the past several years, we have seen an increase in the number of teenagers admitted to Black Mountain Home. Currently, almost 90% of our youth are 15 years old or older. As we have changed programming to meet their needs, we've started to see greater success serving teens and, as a result, they are choosing to stay with us to finish their education.

One benefit of serving older youth is our ability to participate in Black Mountain's adult leagues for softball and basketball. We use sports teams to teach life skills and character development. As we coach and teach the basics for each sport, we focus on three words—teamwork, sportsmanship, and hustle. We stress winning attitudes more than winning scores.

At the beginning of the softball season, our youth experienced many opportunities for character development as we lost games in the double digits. We reminded our youth that true winners are able to keep their heads up and continue giving their best even

when they are losing. Our youth were persistent and never gave up. They encouraged each other and cheered for small and big victories alike—a youth's first hit in a game, a youth's ability to keep his composure and focus while being taunted by fans of the opposing team, and so much more.

As they grew as a team and maintained winning attitudes, other teams and league officials began to notice and comment. Our youth were setting an example for others no matter what the numbers were on the scoreboard.

We are thrilled with the progress our youth have made and celebrate their runner-up finish in the post-season tournament. Our prayer is that God will use the highs and lows of this season to mold and shape our youth into the people He wants them to be. And as a ministry, we cling to those same three words—teamwork, sportsmanship, and hustle—all for the glory of God.

Deadline for the next issue: October 14

FINANCIAL REPORT YEAR-TO-DATE

As of the end of August

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>
Income to Regular Budget	171,924	177,985
Expenses from Regular Budget	180,422	163,997

ULTIMATE COMFORT

“For each of us, the time is surely coming when we shall have nothing but God. Health and wealth and friends and hiding places will all be swept away. ... To the man of pseudo faith, that is a terrifying thought, but to real faith, it is one of the most comforting thoughts the heart can entertain.”

—A.W. Tozer

ARE YOU MINISTERING IN OCTOBER?

Coffee Fellowship:

2 The Cathcarts
9 Mary Kelley
16 Betty & Sara Beth Foti
23 Tom & Jae Crawford
30 Ali Large, Judy Henderson

Kid's Club:

No Kid's Club
Stacey Grachek
Kelly Doppke
Jae Crawford
TBA

Flowers:

Sandi Beck
Ali Large
Shirley Bryson
Jean Guilford
Linda Kelley

Family Night Supper – October 5: Judy Henderson, Ali Large, Heidi Buchanan

Ushers & Greeters:

Hal & Gloria Stockton

Deacon of the Month:

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

Communion: October 2

Preparers: Jae Crawford, Erik Enberg
Servers: Jae Crawford, Erik Enberg, Joe Scott,
Judy Henderson, Jebby Webster, Betty Foti

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WHEN TROUBLES COME

Have you noticed that things often seem to fall apart all at once? It could be a string of financial setbacks. First the refrigerator goes out, then the car won't start and next the roof starts leaking. Or maybe our relationships break down or our career unravels.

What can we do when hardships threaten to overwhelm us? Peanuts, character Charlie Brown said, "I only dread one day at a time." but we can do better than that.

We can take a deep breath, cling to God's hand and keep walking, knowing that our heavenly Father is always with us.

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"Faith , like light, should always be simple and unbending; while love, like warmth, should beam forth on every side and bend to every necessity of our brethren."

—Martin Luther