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#### 5¢/Meal Program Giving Increases

In 2008 we donated 1,452.75 to the 5¢/meal program. In 2009 our giving increased to \$2,373.40. Thank you, generous Mulberry members!

#### Grateful Thanks to our Church Family

Thank you to our Mulberry family for helping us through our recent crisis. Special thanks to Chris for her hospital visits, Henry Sadler and Mike Hood for visiting and Earl Springs and Barbara Campbell for their kindness. We are blessed to be a part of God's family in this place. During Jim's hospitalization and recovery at home, we have felt your love and prayers. For every card, phone call, visit, act of thoughtfulness and prayer we are truly grateful. God bless and much love,

Jim and Elaine Brown.

#### Loaves and Fishes

Chris received this thank you note from Loaves and Fishes:

"On behalf of Loaves and Fishes, I want to thank you for once again allowing us to park a collection trailer on your property during the February Food Drive. This year's drive was a great success, and Mulberry Presbyterian contributed over a ton of food to the total. We could not succeed without the support of our community - thanks again!

Lilian Wetmore,  
2010 Food Drive Co-Chairman

**Or Current Resident**

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# Mulberry Messenger

April 2010

## Introducing A Year of Discernment

By Chris Carrasco

Easter is one of the high points of the Christian Year. It is a testimony that out of death and pain God brings new life, hope, and resurrection. We celebrate what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, put our trust in him, and rejoice that "nothing is impossible with God." With spring just around the corner, flowers are blooming, birds are singing, and the world awakes from its winter slumber. What a great time to recognize a new beginning in the life of Mulberry Presbyterian Church!

You may remember, that the first year I was here I made a concerted effort to visit and get to know each of you. I learned about your families and personal lives as well as your hopes and dreams for this church. In my second year we focused on the spiritual practices, deepening our relationship with God through prayer, bible study, and worship. As we approach the beginning of our third year together, we are going to focus on discernment. Now that we have gotten to know each other better and gotten to know God better, it is time to reap the fruits of those relationships. Our focus will be primarily one question, "**What is it that God wants Mulberry to be and do?**" I will ask you to pray about this, give feedback on this, and continually ask God and each other this question.

Discernment is the process of seeking God's will. It is that easy...and that difficult. What is God's will? How do we know it? What if we disagree what we believe God's will to be? These are all questions and issues we will wrestle with together in this next year. Your Session is also seeking God's will. Every time we meet, we do our best to seek God's will on each and every decision. The scripture theme for this year will be Jesus' words to his father in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke 22:42, KJV)

This will be a challenging process. To help us in this process, Session has decided that we will be part of a Transformation Cluster Project with 9 other churches who are also seeking God's will for their church. This Cluster is led by both Presbytery leaders and an outside consultant who specialize in these issues. Session, along with other leaders from this church, attended a Leadership Conference last month to learn more about the cluster and the process involved. You will hear more about their impressions and thoughts as the months go on. We will attend 3 other Leadership Schools (June, September, January) held in Charlotte to which anyone is invited to attend.

This is an open process. It is a prayerful process. It is a process that will lead Mulberry into a new beginning. We will have to prioritize, evaluate, and discern what we are currently doing and readjust to be more in line with what we believe God wants for us. Please know, there is no predetermined outcome. Just an openness to God's will. Please join me and the Session as we enter into A Year of Discernment in 2010. Pray for the church, for

the Session, and for you as a member to be open to God's leading. Pray this simple prayer honestly and fervently, "Not my will, but thy will be done here at Mulberry Presbyterian Church, O Lord."

### **March Session Highlights**

*Every month, a brief summary of Session actions will be published in the Messenger as a way to better communicate the significant decisions being made at Mulberry.*

1. The Session was encouraged to exhibit three attitudes during our gatherings: Idealism – "All things are possible with God;" Dedication – "Not my will, but thine be done;" Love – "Love one another as I have loved you."
2. Vance led a devotion and opening prayer, we prayed for our church and prayer concerns, Vance shared his faith journey.
3. The pastor asked each ministry team to look at their budgets to see if there was any money they could "volunteer" to go to our benevolences and Presbytery as our Transformation Covenant requires.
4. Personnel recommended that we hire a seminary intern for Christian Education from September to April for a total of \$3200. Ken Fuquay will be this intern. The motion passed unanimously.
5. Personnel recommended that when the pastor's cell phone plan expires in April, it be upgraded to unlimited talk, text, and data to make her more accessible and productive in her position. This would be a \$40 increase than the current plan per month. The motion passed unanimously.
6. Outreach Ministry Team changed its name to Reach Out Ministry Team.
7. Much energy and enthusiasm was generated when we discussed the Leadership School that took place on March 20th. Everyone, Session and congregation, is invited to the next Leadership School on June 26th in Charlotte. Church Consultant Bob Meyer from Colorado leads these day long events and many people were impressed with his presentations and guidance.
8. The next Session meeting will be on April 25 at 6:00 PM at Cracker Barrel with Jim Brown as liturgist.

### **Thoughts from Presbytery Leadership School, Saturday, March 20th**

As you will recall, YOUR Session voted to participate with 9 other churches in a year-long program or Journey of Discernment offered by the Presbytery of Charlotte. The first of four Saturdays was provided on March 20th at Derita Presbyterian. Those attending from Mulberry included: Annette Pearson, Barbara Campbell, Jana Barnette, Mark Zagar, Hank Sadler, Kayla Sadler, Mike Hood, Henry Sadler, Linda Schrum, and Vance Schrum.

The introduction to the Journey of Discernment Mulberry will be taking for the next year was provided by Bob Meyer, a recognized church growth leader, who has been hired by the Presbytery to provide us with information and options. Let me clarify, the Presbytery is NOT telling the churches participating what to do - that will be up to our members as we are

led by God's direction. A framework will be provided and it will be up to Mulberry to seek God's help in filling the direction HE has for our service to Him in this place.

The excitement and anticipation of those attending this Leadership School was evident as the day was shared in Your Session's meeting Sunday, March 28th. Shown below are a few highlights and some of the comments which were shared:

The time just flew by . . . so much great information, challenges, and examples of what could be in store for us.

- Change is not something to be feared
- The morning session was centered around "Hope For Our Churches - An Even Greater Future"
- The statistics of what is happening in churches were sobering - just a few included those shown below:
  - 94% of churches are at a plateau or declining - over all denominations
  - Of the current generation, 4% are accepting Christ (from Spiritual Fathers by Dan Schaffer)
  - Of children who grow up in our kind of churches, only 9% remain true to their faith after leaving home
- Growth is Biblically based - God's intention for the church is that it grow!!! This is given to us in the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20
- Growth is a part of the Presbyterian Book of Order - found in G.0100 #2 "The Great Ends of the Church are the proclamation of the Gospel for the salvation of mankind..."

The information shared was not based on the premise that Theology needs to change but that the Style in which it is presented change to provide a new way of sharing "The Good News of the Gospel" to lead persons to Christ. The afternoon session was centered on the description of "A Great Commission Congregation" and how members are able to translate this mandate from God into the life and work of its members.

Ask those persons attending about "the Donkey Circle" and the Prayer Team... Did this first Saturday provide all the answers? Certainly not, BUT it provided a framework to begin the journey we have before us at Mulberry. The next Leadership School will be held on Saturday, June 26th beginning at 8:30 am and ending by 3:00 pm. Location to be announced.

WHO is invited to participate from Mulberry on June 26th? YOUR SESSION, YOUR STAFF, and ANY INTERESTED MEMBER FROM MULBERRY. The only requirement is that we register the number planning to attend so that adequate arrangements may be made for seating and lunch. **SAVE THE DATE NOW!!!** Make YOUR plans to be a part of the Leadership Team for Mulberry.

Vance Schrum