



Mulberry Presbyterian Church
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"A Mulberry Christmas"

*December 19, 2010
 6:30 p.m.*

*Featuring all
 Mulberry Choirs*

Refreshments will be served

Or Current Resident

*Mulberry Presbyterian Church
 5600 Tuckaseegee Road
 Charlotte, NC 28208*

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Mulberry Messenger

December 2010

The Characters of Christmas By Rev. Chris Carrasco



With Christmas right around the corner, it's time to send Christmas cards, think of presents for loved ones, and make plans to either travel or entertain company. We know the Christmas routine, the traditions and expectations we have for us and our family. We also know the Christmas routine for this church. The Chrismon Tree goes up along with the nativity. The Advent candles are lit every week. Our Christmas Eve Communion Candlelight services will be at 5:00 PM and 11:00 PM. With all the expectations and routine that revolve around this time of year, can we really gain a deeper or new perspective on the Christmas story itself?

It's a story most of us have heard since we were young. We know what happened and how it happened and read the same story year after year. A cereal commercial used to say, "Try them again, for the first time." How can we hear the Christmas story again, for the first time?

This year, beginning with the first Sunday in Advent through Epiphany Sunday on January 9 our advent/Christmas sermon series will be "The Characters of Christmas." We will take each character every Sunday and find out more about who they are and what we can learn from them. Using the biblical witness of scripture, historical facts from Josephus, what we know of the culture of the time, we will piece together how each character played an important role in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

November 28 we will focus on King Herod. What do we know about his reign and his legacy from historical documents? How was he both a hindrance and a help in the Christmas story? What can he teach us as we live out our faith today?

December 5 is our Angel Sunday. What do we know or believe about angels? Do they really exist or are they more of a fairy tale? What is their role throughout scripture? They appear in several instances in the Christmas story to several characters.

December 12 we will discuss Joseph. He is rarely mentioned in scripture and remains a background character in the story. What can we know about him? What role did he play or not play in the Christmas story? How is he a role model for parents and disciples alike?

December 19 is about Mary. The mother of Jesus is central in this story. From the pregnancy to the birth even until her son's death, Mary shows up in scripture on a regular basis. What can we learn from her faith journey as the "Mother of God"?

December 26 is about the infant Jesus. Reflecting on Jesus' birth and his infancy reminds us of the full humanity of Jesus. Birth is messy and unsanitary and dangerous. How might the infant Jesus and his birth inform our efforts to birth new life in our lives?

January 2 is when the shepherds come. What was the shepherding business like 2000 years ago? Why did Jesus refer to himself as a shepherd? Why would God's plan include their attendance at the greatest birth in history?

January 9, three days after Epiphany, we celebrate the magi. Were they kings? Where were they from? Why would they make such a dangerous journey? How far are we willing to journey to find Jesus and worship him?

Another exciting piece about this series is that one of the Sunday School classes will follow up this sermon series by studying the same character that is focused on the previous week. On December 5 they will talk about Herod, December 12 on angels, and so on. This is a great way to process what was preached the week before and go even more in depth into the historical and cultural facts regarding these characters. I hope you will join Mike Hood and others for this fascinating Sunday School series.

May God bless you and deepen your understanding of the Christmas season this year. May Christ be born in your heart once more. And may that make ALL the difference!

Thank you...it was so nice of you! *Enjoyed attending your Fall Festival (Trunk or Treat). Three thumbs up for all your organization for this event. Glad you had this special event for all the neighborhood children in the area. CiCi, age 5, had the best time. The hayride was the best I've seen this year. Look forward to attending next year! Thanks again, June Hilliard.*

Thanks to all *who helped make the Fall Festival and Trunk or Treat a great success! Special thanks to those that helped with registration, those that decorated trunks, those that donated to the cause, those that provided hayrides, and especially to the youth that served hot dogs all night long. We had 16 decorated trunks and over 350 people visited our church. Now we need to try to get those people to come back!* The Reach Out Ministry

Special thanks also *to the cooks and many helpers who participated in the Fall Bake Sale and BBQ.*

November Session Highlights

- Jeff Whitley led us in a devotion and prayer after which he shared his faith journey and we prayed for Mulberry and lifted up our prayer requests.
- Communion was set for December 24 at 5:00 and 11:00 PM Christmas Eve services.
- Next Session Meeting will be December 19 at 8:00 AM.
- Mulberry will enroll in the free Dignity Memorial program to receive 10% off of services at Forest Lawn West and any other place that Dignity is involved with. Any member of Mulberry or family member of Mulberry can take advantage of this discount.
- A motion was made and passed that Henry Sadler, Earl Springs, and Jeff Whitley will count the surveys on December 5.

A Letter to the Mulberry Family

As you know, this past year we have prayed and discerned God's will for this church and its future. I want to thank you for your hard work and prayerful consideration of how we want to move forward as a church together. Thank you for attending the Building Healthy Churches Classes as we learned more about our current culture, vision, and an outward focus. Thank you for taking the recommendations seriously and prayerfully discerning how God is at work in our midst. Thank you for your honesty as we discussed and shared together our thoughts and feelings. Thank you for respecting each other enough to listen and for creating a Christian atmosphere to have these difficult discussions.

At the time of writing this letter I do not know what the result of our congregational survey is. But whatever the outcome, I am confident that we will be able to stay united and move forward together into the exciting future God has planned for us. No matter what the survey results are, we will and we can achieve growth on our own as I and your Session make plans for 2011.

Speaking of Session, I want to especially thank them for their extra time and energy they have committed to this process. They have taken significant time in Session meetings to learn more about the various ways we can embrace the future. They have sacrificed many of their Saturdays to attend leadership schools. They have spent time and energy to create a self study that accurately reflects where we have been and where we are. They have prayed and struggled and discussed several issues of a very sensitive nature. Your current Session should be commended for the work they have done this year and I want to publicly let them know of my appreciation for all they have done: Class of 2010 – Sonny Brown, Annette Pearson, Vance Schrum, Jeff Whitley, Ronnie Williamson, Kayla Sadler. Class of 2011 – Barbara Campbell, Jack Guy, Henry Sadler, Earl Springs. Class of 2012 – Jana Barnette, Phil Egel, Bev Sadler, Mark Zagar

This year has been the Year of Discernment as we have wrestled with what our future holds and how we want to move forward. 2011 will be about putting that discernment into action. Thank you all for your faith and faithfulness to God and to Mulberry. Bless us all on our spiritual journeys as we reach out in love...because of the One we love. And all God's people said, "Amen!"

Peace,

Rev. Chris

