



Mulberry Presbyterian Church  
Phone/Fax (704) 392-1030  
Email: [mulberrypc@bellsouth.net](mailto:mulberrypc@bellsouth.net)  
[www.mulberrypc.com](http://www.mulberrypc.com)

## A Feast for the Soul

By Chris Carrasco

Are you hungry for something more in your spiritual life? Are you hoping to learn how to better incorporate the spiritual practices in your journey of faith? Then you will want to come to the next adult class series on Marjorie Thompson's book Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life. Biblically based and theologically sound, Thompson writes in a way that all of us can understand and uses a "workbook mentality" to lead us through exercises designed to strengthen our spiritual lives. With wide margins and pertinent questions, she invites us to write out thoughts and answers as we read along. Each participant will want a book which is available in the church office. A suggested donation of \$16 would be appreciated. Come and join Chris at 10:00 AM or 6:30 PM on Thursdays from January 7 through March 11 for this meaningful time to share and deepen our spiritual lives together.

**Or Current Resident**

Mulberry Presbyterian Church  
5600 Tuckaseegee Road  
Charlotte, NC 28208

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
CHARLOTTE, N.C.  
PERMIT NO. 1896

# Mulberry Messenger

January 2010

## The Year of Spiritual Practices: Self Examination

By: Rev. Chris Carrasco

Happy New Year! Did anyone make New Year Resolutions this year? As we know, those are short lived and don't usually result in long term change. But the intention is a good one: (1) look back over the last year (2) notice what you would like to change in your life (3) make an effort to live differently in the next year. In fact, this annual end-of-the-year ritual is actually a spiritual practice called self-examination.

Self-examination and confession do not call us to self-hatred; they open the door of our heart to cleansing, renewal, and peace. Spiritual author Kenneth Leech wrote, "Self-examination is not morbid introspection or self-condemnation, but the honest, fearless confrontation of the self, and its abandonment to God in trust."

We have the opportunity everyday to engage this spiritual practice. Try this simple process at home. In the evening, reflect on what happened during that day. The people you met, the activities you did, the conversations that took place, the feelings you experienced. Identify where God was most present in that day and give thanks in prayer. Next reflect on your words, actions, or feelings that were not pleasing to God, not according to God's will and the great commandments of loving God and neighbor. Confess these to God and pray for forgiveness. Ask for help to change your words, actions, and feelings in the future. Close with a simple prayer of thanksgiving and re-dedication of yourself to God's will. These simple steps, when done on a regular basis, will open us up to God's work in our lives. God will honor that time and reveal to you the ways you can become a more faithful follower.

"Examination of the world without is never as personally painful as examination of the world within... Yet when one is dedicated to the truth this pain seems relatively unimportant," writes M. Scott Peck. Are you willing to go through the pain of seeing yourself, warts and all, so that you can grow in your faith and daily discipleship? This spiritual practice offers us more awareness of how we are living out our faith on a daily basis and a concerted effort to more faithfully follow in the footsteps of Christ.

The spiritual practice of self-examination has another benefit. One of the most precious results of self-knowledge is greater compassion. The more clearly we see ourselves, the harder it becomes to judge the weaknesses and failures of others. As we perceive the realities of sin in ourselves, we can identify with the brokenness of others. Instead of condemning someone whose behavior is irritating or unacceptable, we can learn to separate the unworthiness of a person's behavior from the worthiness of that person being a child of God.

One of the Desert Father's stories demonstrates this reality. "A brother at Scetis committed a fault. A council was called to which Abba Moses was invited, but he refused to go to it. Then the priest sent someone to say to him, "Come, for everyone is waiting for you." So he got up and went.

(Continued on next Page)

He took a leaking jug, filled it with water and carried it with him. The others came out to meet him and said to him, “What is this, Father?” The old man said to them, “My sins run out behind me, and I do not see them, and today I am coming to judge the errors of another.” When they heard that they said no more to the brother but forgave him.” May Mulberry Church be a place of forgiveness and acceptance of each other’s faults as well as our own as we engage in the spiritual practice of self-examination.

### **December 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) Henry Sadler was elected 2010 Clerk of Session
- 2) New Elders Jana Barnette, Phil Egel, Bev Sadler, and Mark Zagar and youth Kayla Sadler were examined and approved. Installation date set for January 10.
- 3) Stewardship reported our 2010 pledges were down \$10,000 and giving units were down by 6.
- 4) A Session Retreat was set for January 9 from 9:00 – 4:00 titled Finding New Paths.
- 5) Personnel requested and Session approved end-of-year monetary gifts to be given to staff.
- 6) A proposal from the Presbytery about joining a transformational cluster was considered. After lengthy discussion, more information was needed and a called Session meeting was set for December 27 at 6:00 PM.
- 7) We received Clyde Thompson (fiancé of Denise Kuebler) into membership.

### **Finding New Paths**

A church transformation event on January 9, 2010 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Philadelphia Presbyterian Church sponsored by Charlotte Presbytery. A day of speakers and workshops to inspire us to become a vibrant church for our times. Keynote speaker Dr. Tom Bandy is a internationally recognized speaker and leadership coach for Christian churches and director of Thriving Church Consulting, published 16 books including *Accelerate Your Church: Out of the Box and Beyond*. Join Pastor Chris, Mulberry elders and staff for an adventure. Call the church office to register and learn more. Registration deadline is December 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **We're Walking Where?**

By Lisa Falkner

Yes, you heard correctly. We, as a congregation, are walking to Jerusalem. But don't panic: passports are not required for this trip overseas. The **Walk to Jerusalem** is an imaginary trip designed to encourage you to increase your physical activity, spiritual growth and cultural awareness through a virtual tour of Jerusalem. Although our goal is imaginary, it promises to be a fun activity with many rewards, both spiritual and physical.

#### **Frequently Asked Questions**

1. “*How does the **Walk to Jerusalem** work?*”

The simple answer is you just wear a pedometer, walk, and record your progress daily. We will pray as we walk and there will be weekly devotions and scripture readings to guide you on the journey.

2. “*This sounds like a cumbersome time commitment to a lot of paperwork*”

This activity is very user friendly. While there is a commitment to participate, it should not cause any anxiety from an overabundance of note taking or documentation.

3. “*I can't walk great distances, so I can't participate.*”

You don't have to walk a set number of miles a day to contribute. Everyone's mileage will be put toward the common goal of covering 2400 miles by Easter Sunday. Every little bit helps. Just by tracking incidental walking around your house, you can accumulate a surprising amount of miles in one day.

4. “*When do we start?*”

On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, following worship, we will hold a **Walk to Jerusalem** kick-off luncheon. During lunch, you will be given written instructions and a small booklet to record your mileage. Also included are weekly devotions and a place to record prayer concerns. Rev. Chris will lead the spiritual portion of our pilgrimage.

There will also be an opportunity that day for a brief health assessment that will be recorded in your travel book. By evaluating blood pressure, weight and BMI at the beginning and end of our journey, we will be able to document healthy outcomes on a physical level.

5. *Can anyone participate? What about young children or people who are not very active?*

Anyone and everyone can be a part of this exciting program. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, we will discuss specific ideas for making this activity relevant to all generations and physical abilities.

As we look forward to 2010, let's embrace this opportunity to jump-start our physical activity as well as our prayer life and spiritual growth. By encouraging and motivating each other we will grow in whole person health.