

Mulberry Messenger

January 2011

2011: A Year of Action

As you might recall, each year we have been together we have had a particular focus. In 2008 it was “The Year of Getting to Know You” as I went to visit in your homes to find out your hopes and dreams for Mulberry. 2009 was “The Year of Spiritual Practices” as we prayed, read scripture, worshipped, served, talked about stewardship, experienced a labyrinth and explored various ways to be in communion with God. 2010 was “The Year of Discernment” as we put those spiritual practices to good use to discover God’s will for this church. Session, the congregation, and I learned about church growth, evangelism, and the importance of reaching out to the community. Although the Transformation Recommendations did not pass, the conversations and ideas that are coming out of that process are fruitful. There is a realization we need to grow and that we can do it ourselves with our own ideas to intentionally reach out, invite and welcome others. Which brings us to 2011, “The Year of Action.” This is the year to try new things, see what works, and move forward accordingly. Here is a simple process to get our creative juices flowing.



1. Brainstorm ideas: What are ways we can grow? What are events we can host for the community? What are some strategies for reaching out to others? The brainstorming has already begun. A lunch periodically to bring unchurched or church seeking friends, co-workers, neighbors, or visitors into fellowship with us. A special prayer service to pray specifically for our community. A Thomasboro teacher’s luncheon on one of the teacher work days. A hospitality time after worship for our visitors. A brand new state-of-the-art website. Creating a place for visual arts in worship. An in-depth class on evangelism. A regular community youth night to host neighborhood kids. What else? Let’s get all the ideas on the table and talk and get excited about some new ways to make Mulberry a warm and inviting space for all people.

2. Session, ministry teams, and myself will take all these ideas and discern which ones we want to implement now, which ones might not work at this time, which ones we might want to try later. How is God leading us to implement these ideas and what can we realistically accomplish through them?

3. As the Nike commercial says, “Just do it!” My son, Christian, just learned the phrase, “Try it...you’ll like it!” Well, Mulberry, how about it? Let’s try some things. Some may be successful. Some may not. But we’ll never know until we do it.

4. Finally, it is crucial to evaluate each new idea we implement. Is it fulfilling its purpose? How can we revise, tweak, or alter it to be even better? Can we expand or grow the idea itself? We must be willing to let an idea die if it is not working and also be willing to let it grow if it is. We must have the flexibility to fail and succeed in our quest for growth.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to dream, explore, and listen to the Spirit who is constantly re-creating. What ideas are at others churches you’d like to try? What have we done in the past? What have you experienced in other worship settings? I am excited about the year to come as we become intentional about reaching out to others. I have no doubt we will continue to move forward into the exciting future God has planned for us. God bless us all in the year to come!



Deepest Sympathy is extended to Edna Carver in the death of her son Richard (Rick) Carver on December 19, 2010. A service celebrating Rick's life was held at Mulberry Presbyterian Church on Wednesday, December 22. Please keep Edna, the family and friends in your prayers.

December Session Highlights



Listening to God and Others

Mark Zagar opened with prayer and shared his faith journey. We reflected on the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-22 and what we have to give up to follow Jesus. We prayed for the congregation of Mulberry and specific prayer concerns.

Listening to God's Will

- The treasurer reported that we have a \$6,000 shortfall so far this year. The 70 pledges we usually get are down to around 50 for next year. There is cause for great concern in our year end finances as well as next year's budget. A letter will be sent to the congregation expressing this concern. A budget meeting will be held on January 16 at 6:00 PM to which all ministry chairs and Session members are invited to create the budget for 2011.
- Thanks was given to those rotating off Session. Possible Session retreat dates include February 5 or 12. The next Leadership School is January 22 and the Finding Youth Paths Conference is January 8.
- Fifteen names were moved from active status to inactive status which puts our total membership around 150.
- A congregational meeting was set for January 9 to elect the new class of elders. When ready, the nominating committee will make their slate known to the congregation.
- Henry Sadler was elected Clerk of Session for 2011.
- It was voted that Mulberry will not proceed with implementing the Transformation Recommendations.
- With great concern over the conduct of many people during the last few months, Mulberry will find a time for honest conversation, healing and reconciliation, and a covenant for Christian conduct that we will uphold in this church. Rev. Chris will lead this process in January and February.



From Sandra Rhyme to the Knit Wits: I wanted to share the following with you [from Marguerite, a social worker who works with Hospice patients]. This is an amazing testimony on how your labor of love touches the hearts and souls of not only those receiving the shawls, but the nurses, social workers and chaplains that distribute them with the same loving care that you put into making them. Mulberry Knit Wits is providing such an amazing "Ministry" to folks during their final journey; they are so blessed to have received your gift of love. Much love to you all...

"Wow! I had no idea your church is the one providing my favorite prayer shawls.

I've been waiting for more to come our way for some months now, and I just have to tell you how special they are. Of course, I raided the supply yesterday. I tried several years ago to write a "thank you" to the Knit Wits but it came back. So, I hope you'll pass this on. Some examples: (1) I wrapped a proud WWII Vet in a red, white and blue one. He wasn't able to talk, but as I read to him what was on the card, he began to cry. It meant so much to him...not only the shawl, but the prayer that went with it. (2) I had a young patient who with his wife and 10 year old child were struggling with // his prognosis. They were a close family and open with their child. I was going to bring him a shawl, but ended up giving them each one. It was very comforting for them to have these. (3) We were caregiver's for an elderly gentlemen, whose wife became sick and under care. She wore the shawl constantly during the week she had it, finding comfort in it in her last days. There are so many more incredible stories that go with these shawls. Now that I have a contact, I'll share them from time to time. There is something very holy and wonderful that happens when they receive the shawls. (And I'm the lucky one who gets to wrap it around them.) I can't say enough about them. And I have to add that I feel the prayer and support that comes with them also. I wish those wonderful knitters could see what I get to see. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you for this wonderful blessing!" -Marguerite

