



REACHING OUT IN LOVE
BECAUSE OF THE ONE WE LOVE

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Mulberry
Presbyterian
Church

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Statement of Purpose

*God's purpose for
Mulberry Presbyterian
Church is to love God
through sharing the
unconditional love of
Christ by serving,
loving, teaching, and
praying for ALL people.*

Mulberry Messenger

The State of the Church Address

By Rev. Chris Carrasco

So, where are we as a church? What state is Mulberry Presbyterian Church in? The easy answer is "North Carolina." The more difficult answer is in the few paragraphs that follow. Do you want the good news first? Or the bad news? Since I like to get the bad news over with, I always ask for that first so I can end on a positive note.

THE BAD NEWS

Those who are regularly attending church know that our church attendance has decreased in the latter half of 2011. While we used to have between 70-80 at church on a Sunday, our average attendance is more between 60-70. While 10 or 12 people may not sound like a lot, that number equals about a 15% decrease. Many have asked, "Why?" Well, there are no straight forward reasons. Some have passed away while others have moved into assisted living facilities and still others have health challenges that keep them from worship. After all, we are an older church. Some have moved away, some can no longer make the long commute, and some are dissatisfied with some recent changes in worship. All of this adds up to our decrease in worship attendance.

Coupled with that decrease is a significant decrease in our stewardship pledges for next year. In 2011, we approved an \$8,000 deficit budget which was later made up for when an anonymous church member generously donated \$8,000 to the church a few months later. In 2012, we are currently looking at a \$28,000 shortfall. That's a sobering number. Our budget has little to no "fat" in it and we just don't have many options of decreasing our budget. With faith and hope, we are

moving forward with the confidence that God will continue to provide for us through the generosity of our members and friends. Our challenge is to sacrificially give what we can and pray for the future, health, and life of Mulberry Presbyterian Church.

For the two reasons listed above and many more, 2012 will need to be the "YEAR OF EVANGELISM." Our focus will have to be "reaching out in love" as we share with others what God and Mulberry mean to us. We will have to put our visitors and neighbors first, and ourselves second, as we consider how best to connect with those not yet here. This will affect every aspect of our church and will be the main focus of the Session Retreat this year.

THE GOOD NEWS

I am amazed at the outpouring of generosity by both the congregation and friends of Mulberry in supporting our Capital Campaign. With almost \$45,000 raised, we will have enough to do the project which we hope to start in February 2012. To undertake such a campaign at this point in time in the life of this congregation and in our national economic climate, might not have been prudent by worldly standards. But God was leading us and with us and each of you stepped up to help. This much needed renovation will help us tremendously in our worship endeavors and evangelism efforts. What an answer to prayer!

In addition, we have done so much in the life of this church to prepare for and lay the foundation for growth. This year alone, several significant changes have



helped us move toward this goal. We have created a hospitality room and visitor information folders to more intentionally welcome and connect with visitors. We have stepped up our efforts with our partnership at Thomasboro Elementary School and started the Room in the Inn program to house our neighbors in winter months. We are launching our new website in the beginning of the year to better communicate who we are to others and we are also on Facebook, Twitter, and Blogspot. Our worship style strives to connect better and be more relevant to those of today's society. We started Life Groups, created a new logo, and the list goes on and on. Yes, Mulberry, in the past year we have come a long way in laying the foundation for growth. While there is still more to do, we must also congratulate ourselves on accomplishing all that we have in just 12 short months.

IN SUMMARY

Is the glass half full or half empty? YES! But God is good, ALL THE TIME, and we will move forward with trust and hope and joy at the opportunity to live out God's great commission in this time and place. Keep Mulberry in your prayers as we boldly and faithfully step into 2012.

December Session Highlights

Listening to God As the Christ Candle was lit, Mark Zagar led us in devotion and prayer, then Rev. Chris read and reflected on our covenant and the reason we exist as a church.

Listening to Others Mark shared his faith journey and we prayed for the church and various members who are hurting or in need.

Listening to God's Will

- Our year to date balance as of November is in the red by just over \$4,000.
- Our budget meeting is set for January 15 at 6:00 PM.
- Our 2012 Stewardship pledges are still \$22,675 less than 2011.
- We will be searching for a new administrative assistant the first of the year.
- New Elder class of Brenda Hendricks, Linda Sadler, and Jeff Whitley was approved.
- Mike Hood was elected as 2012 Clerk of Session.
- Session overwhelmingly approved the Task Force motion for a \$45,600 budget for the sanctuary renovation. \$25,600 will be for the structural renovation and \$20,000 for the technology and media renovation. Project will begin in February 2012. A loan from an anonymous church member was approved for 0% interest to be paid in full by December 31, 2013.

Going Out Into the World - We ended holding hands in prayer by Mark and will meet again on January 22 at 6:00 PM.

Discipleship by Mike Hood,

Coordinator

This is the second in a series of articles on the Sunday school classes at Mulberry. This month the Christian Believers class is featured. Up until a little over a year ago, the Christian Believers class was called the Bible Forum class and met in the south east corner of the Fellowship Hall. Bob Bohler, who was minister at Mulberry during the eighties and nineties, was the teacher. After Bob received another call in 1999, Henry Sadler and Mike Hood began to teach the class, rotating every other Sunday. The curriculum, *The Present Word*, was a Bible-based, thematic curriculum, published by the Presbyterian Church. Every quarter the theme would change, alternating the scripture selections between the Old and New Testaments. In the fall of 2010, the Bible Forum class joined the Fidelis class, which had been faithfully taught by Linda Schrum before her passing and by other saints of the church such as Virginia McKnight. The Christian Believers class now meets in the Parlor. The curriculum is still thematic. Recent biblically-based themes include "Believing and Understanding," "The Self-Revealing God," "The God of Beginnings," "Giving a Name to God," and "The God Who Is Involved." The current theme is "Created in God's Image." Selections for each theme come from both the Old and New Testaments, and Henry and Mike still share teaching duties. The Christian Believers Class, starting in January, will contribute five dollars a week to the Sanctuary Remodeling Project.

Evangelism by Mark Zagar,

Coordinator

Have you also noticed that church attendance has decreased in the past few months? Evangelism is even more important than ever for the health and life of this church. How do we get our name out to the community?

Coordinators' Corner

How do we make a positive difference so that people will want to be a part of this ministry? How do we reach out in love? One person, one pastor, one committee can't do it alone. It takes an entire church to keep evangelism at the forefront of who we are. How can we better "go and make disciples" as a church family? As new ideas are tried this year, we hope you will be supportive and participate. Remember, only God grows a church. But there's a lot we can do to partner with God in this process.

Congregational Care by Barbara Campbell & Patsy Caudle, Coordinators

Special thanks to Patsy Caudle, who joins Congregational Care as Co-Coordinator. We appreciate the opportunity to update you on our church members who have medical concerns or need 'just because we care' visits. This month we have had ten calls regarding medical concerns and five home visits. Please be sure to remember Virginia McKnight in your prayers as she adjusts to a new home. She would love to hear from you and would really love a visit! As the New Year approaches, let's remember all those who, for whatever reason, need a phone call and/or visit. God continues to bless us in so many ways; let's show His love through our actions.

Service by Bev Sadler, Coordinator

The Service Ministry is delighted to be hosting the Room in the Inn project throughout the months of January, February and March. On every other Thursday night, we host up to eight neighbors by bringing them to the church, feeding them a delicious hot



meal, interacting with them and providing a warm and safe place to sleep for the night. We continue to need your support and encourage you to participate in this endeavor. Please let Henry Sadler know if you are able to prepare and serve a meal or if you can support by helping with transportation or overnight supervision. Our hosting dates are as follows: January 12 & 26, February 9 & 23 and March 8 & 22. Please keep this project in your prayers and if possible, take this opportunity to serve our homeless community. In late January, we will be helping with Operation Sandwich for the Urban Ministry Center. The center needs 800 sandwiches every day of the year and they need donations of sandwiches, whether it be 50 or 800! If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact Bev Sadler at 704-249-9092. We are making plans for many other service opportunities for the New Year, including doing a Valentine's Day luncheon for the teachers at Thomasboro Elementary. If you have a passion for serving others and have an idea you would like to pursue, please contact Bev Sadler, Service Ministry Coordinator.

Hospitality by Linda Sadler, Coordinator

As Advent Season ends, we extend special thanks to all who were Advent readers during worship and celebrate that weekly readers this year have consisted of families of three generations. This illustrates that God has been with us in the past and in the present, and will continue to be with us in the future. In addition, in 2011 we greeted over 25 visitors and graciously accepted them into the church. We want to continue greeting new visitors in the coming year, so let's keep inviting people to Mulberry! Let's make 2012 a year that we welcome many new and returning visitors, and work to help them become members. Keep reading Romans 12:13 and practicing Christian hospitality, and all the best to all of you for a wonderful 2012!



News and Notes

Note from Bill Thomason and the Fellowship Sunday School Class: We appreciate the recent kind words from Mike Hood about the Fellowship Sunday School Class mailings. However, I did not make our mission very clear and would like to clarify. Many years ago, we began to send cards to church members who were sick or had problems or joys to share. It became impossible to find cards that expressed appropriate feelings in the quantities needed so we decided to use the magic of the computer to create our own mailer, and have done this now for four ten years. Sometimes we reminisce about the olden days in the community, sometimes we share memories of personal adventures or activities that may be of interest. Our main goal was and is to make sure that we send a note to anyone who would appreciate getting a colorful piece of monthly mail to keep them in contact with Mulberry. Last month we sent our mailer to twenty friends. Although none were members of the Fellowship Sunday School Class, sixteen of the twenty are or were church members unable to attend because of relocation or health problems, and the other four were friends who had requested we include them. We will be glad to include anyone that any of you would like to add. Just give me or any other Fellowship Class member a name and address. Along with the mail comes many prayers for us all.

Beginning January 2012, checks intended for the Capital Funds/Sanctuary Project must be written separately from regular stewardship pledges. Please indicate Capital Funds Campaign or Sanctuary Project on the memo line of checks intended for this fund.

Deepest sympathy is extended to Susan Simpson and Tyler Haney in the death of Bob Harkey, Susan's father and Tyler's grandfather, on December 13, 2011.

Mulberry's Room in the Inn Ministry continues on the second and fourth Thursday of every month through March. Donations are still needed and can be dropped off in the narthex. A schedule for volunteer opportunities is also available in the narthex.



Susan Simpson and Tyler Haney; Sonny Brown; Linda Gaskey and the Cochran family; Mark and Linda Zagar; Margaret Harkey; Kim Wells; Virginia McKnight; Hope Cochran; Tim Guy; Curtis Johnson; Lynda Springs; Anna Price; Linda Guy; Ivy and Xander Guy; Lois Andrews; Juanita Holt; Pete Slobodzinski.

Word of Thanks

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to each and every one of you for welcoming me into your church and allowing me the opportunity to share my time and talents in God's service along side you. I know the future will be bright and blessed for all, and I will continue to keep you in my prayers, as I hope you will me in yours. - Karen

"We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." I Thessalonians 1:2, NIV

January Birthdays

13 Arlene Stone	21 Kyle Rhodes
17 Brysen Barnette	27 Bev Sadler
18 Tyler Haney	

Time and Talents

USHERS

1st Sunday Jeff Whitley, Jack Guy, Lillian Williamson, Vance Schrum
2nd Sunday Earl Springs, Nelio Carrasco, Denise Thompson
3rd Sunday Mack Cochran, Sonny Brown, Brenda Hendricks, Linda Sadler
4th Sunday Ashley Barnette, Gloria Vereen
5th Sunday Youth

CHURCH LOCK-UP

Jeff Whitley
Earl Springs
Mack Cochran
Ashley Barnette
Jeff Whitley

CHILDREN'S WORSHIP

1/1: Nelio Carrasco
1/8: Mike Hood
1/15: Hope Cochran, Linda Gaskey
1/22: Jana Barnette
1/29: Brenda Henricks

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Denise Thompson
Patsy Caudle
Jana Barnette
Denise Thompson
Patsy Caudle

NURSERY

Vance Schrum
Nelio Carrasco, Brenda Hendricks
Bev Sadler, Kayla Sadler
Mack & Hope Cochran
Henry & Linda Sadler