



Mulberry Presbyterian Church
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Your ministry teams are hard at work doing God's ministry here at Mulberry. Here are some of the exciting new ideas they are working on:

Worship – We bought new recording equipment that will allow us to record our services onto a CD. This will make it easier to replicate and play as well as one day put on our website. If you ever need an audio copy of a service, please call the church office.

Building and Grounds – Plans are still underway to create a Cry Room in the narthex of our sanctuary. This will allow parents with young children (or older children) to take them to a more intimate space to console, feed, or take care of their young ones.

Service – We are planning to feed hundreds of men on Friday, April 9 at the men's shelter. This is one of many service opportunities being planned for this year.

Personnel – We have welcomed Jeff Whitley to our staff as our sexton and is doing a wonderful job at keeping our facility in tip top shape. Thank you Jeff!

Christian Education – The Easter Egg Hunt for our community is just around the corner and all hands are needed to make this a big success. This is a wonderful outreach to our community! Vacation Bible School to be held in June will also include reaching out to the children in our surrounding area.

Nurturing – A program to welcome our new visitors is being created which includes writing notes and delivering yummy goodies when a visitor comes for a few Sundays. If you'd like to be a part of making our visitors feel welcome, please contact Mike Hood.

Or Current Resident

Mulberry Presbyterian Church
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Charlotte, NC 28208

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U.S. POSTAGE PAID
CHARLOTTE, N.C.
PERMIT NO. 1896

Mulberry Messenger

March 2010

The Year of Spiritual Practices: Creating a Covenant with God

By Chris Carrasco

Believe it or not, our year of spiritual practices is almost at an end. But that doesn't mean we stop doing them! In fact, this last spiritual practice of creating a covenant with God is the most important of them all. After learning so much about prayer and scripture reading, fasting and confession, hospitality and stewardship, and many other practices, it's now time to pray about which ones God is calling us to focus on. To do all of them at once is very overwhelming and even burdensome. I don't believe God calls us to be in a burdensome relationship with God. So which ones do you feel most drawn to? Which ones will be most helpful in deepening your relationship with God?

A covenant is a promise with God. Covenanting has a long history in the Bible. Recall the covenants of God with Abraham and Noah. In our context today, a covenant is an intentional way to live out your relationship with God. It may include 20 minutes of daily prayer, a weekly fast, tithing to the church, reading scripture 4 times a week, and fasting once a month. Why create such a covenant? Why not just pray or read scripture when you have time or the mood strikes you? Consider this quote from spiritual author William Paulsell, "It is unlikely that we will deepen our relationship with God in a casual or haphazard manner. There will be a need for some intentional commitment and some reorganization in our own lives. But there is nothing that will enrich our lives more than a deeper and clearer perception of God's presence in the routine of daily living." If we are serious about our relationship with God, we will want to make a commitment, a covenant, with God about how we will "keep in touch." I challenge and encourage you to sit down, reflect, and write a covenant with God in this Lenten season. On the following page is a summary of the spiritual practices we have covered over the course of this second year of my service to Mulberry as well as some questions you might begin with.

June – Scripture reading: approaching scripture in a way that will form us and shape us into better disciples

July – Prayer: realizing prayer takes all different shapes and forms and includes listening to God as well as communicating with God

August – Worship: engaging worship with our whole being and expecting God to speak to us personally during the service

September – Service: as we encounter those in need of help we understand that God is present in the “least of these” and that we can love God through them

October – Stewardship: all that we have is from God and part of our gratitude is to give back to God through our time, talent, and treasure

November – Hospitality: creating welcoming space for the visitor or guest in our homes and churches realizing God may use them to teach us important spiritual lessons

December – Pilgrimage: a journey, physical or spiritual, to go out of our comfort zone seeking God’s path for our lives and churches

January – Self-examination: making intentional time on a regular basis to understand how we have not lived as God intends and to make changes in our lives accordingly

February – Fasting: abstaining for a short time from food, TV, sweets, or anything that is in excess in our lives in order to focus more clearly on our relationship with God

In this season of Lent, I hope you are experiencing some intentional time to be in relationship with God. In that time, ask God and yourself these questions: What am I deeply attracted to regarding these spiritual practices? Where do I feel you are calling me, God, to stretch and grow? What kind of balance do I need in my life? May God bless the fruit of your seeking and lead you to a covenant that is life giving and life transforming.

February 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) Kayla was our Session liturgist leading us in an opening devotion, prayer, and sharing her faith journey with us.
- 2) Rev. Chris led us in a devotion on Genesis 18:1-15 about Sarah receiving the news she was to be pregnant. “Is anything too wonderful for God?” the angelic messengers asked. Chris believes God wants to birth something new at Mulberry even if some believe we are past “childbearing age.”

3) Ronnie Williamson gave a report on the Presbytery meeting which included our PCUSA moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow leading a workshop on Technology and the Church.

4) A Session meeting was called for March 7 where we will approve the baptism of Rylynn Whitley, daughter of Lauren Whitley.

5) We discussed at length a covenant agreement with the Presbytery about entering a Pilot Transformational Cluster Project. This involves a process of revitalization and transformation in the upcoming years that will include the Session, the Pastor, and the congregation as a whole. It is being led by church consultant Bob Meyer from Colorado in conjunction with the Church Development Committee of Presbytery. Session did approve the covenant with a 2/3 vote, which was needed to pass the covenant. More information and education is upcoming for both the Session and congregation in the next few months, including a Leadership School on Saturday, March 20 in Charlotte which anyone is invited to. Please see Chris for more information.

2010 Mulberry Women’s Retreat

Mulberry's annual women's retreat will be Friday through Sunday, May 28th-30th at “Boonefest” House in Blowing Rock, NC. Sharing God’s Word with us will be Pastor Chris Carrasco. The cost will be \$80.00 per person and we are taking retreat money immediately. Space is limited– reserve your spot now! Volunteers are needed for various retreat tasks; see, call or email Linda Zagar (704-763-5934, linda.zagar@yahoo.com) if you are interested in helping out.

Scholarships are available; speak with Annette Pearson or Linda Zagar for more information. If you are able to make a donation to our scholarship fund please give it to Linda Zagar. Please pray & ask God if He is calling you to assist in sending someone on this weekend of learning, fun & fellowship. All donations appreciated!

Grateful Thanks to our Church Family

The family of Ashley Barnette wish to thank everyone for their heartfelt expressions of love during the loss of Ashley's mom and Jana's dad.