

The Crossnore Chronicle

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The Communication Team of Crossnore Presbyterian Church publishes the Crossnore Chronicle monthly: Editors Betty Redman France, Fred France. The deadline for articles is the last Sunday of each month. Email Betty France at frdnbty@charter.net, call her at 828-387-2197 or drop off articles at the church.

Crossnore Presbyterian Church
200 Chapel Drive
P.O. Box 386
Crossnore, NC 28616

Website: www.crossnorepresbyterian.org (You can also visit us on Facebook).
Church Phone: 828-733-1939
Rev. Kathy Campbell : 828-963-5190 (R) or 828-260-2512 (Cell)
Pastors email: rev.kathy.campbell@gmail.com
Church email: crospres@yahoo.com



Christ challenged the ‘purity system’ by teaching compassion, justice

Paul Graves

The Spokesman-Review

To call Jesus a subversive in first century Israel is a harsh judgment. But it is also accurate. He was born into a social and religious culture that, centuries before, had been designed around a “purity system.” It seemed to begin with the purity code found in Leviticus. *In Leviticus 19:2*, we read these words belonging to God: “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.’” Holiness was understood to mean “separation from everything unclean.” Thus holiness meant the same thing as purity.

A whole social, economic, political and religious structure was built around the social vision of purity. People, places, things, times and groups had their “proper places” in society. So Jesus grew up learning those cultural and religious expectations. He was told God was holy/pure and “that’s just the way it is.” Yet as he matured, he experienced God in a dramatically different way. He experienced God as concerned with justice for people and with compassion. What should he do with that contradiction between his culture’s conventional wisdom and his deeply personal experience of God?

In his book “Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time,” Marcus Borg asserts that “Jesus deliberately replaced the core value of purity with compassion. Compassion, not holiness, is the dominant quality of God, and is therefore to be the ethos (fundamental character) of the community that mirrors God.” Jesus’ subversiveness may not seem so radical for many of us today, but he was a dangerous man in his time. When he said “Be compassionate as God was compassionate” (Luke 5:36), he proclaimed this imitation of God as more accurate than Leviticus’ “Be holy as God is holy.” His gauntlet was thrown down!

Jesus criticized a system that emphasized tithing and neglected justice (Luke 11:42). He spoke of purity as what happens inside, not on the outside (Mark 7:15). His “Blessed are the pure in heart” (Matthew 5:8) meant to lift the burden of the so-called impure people by challenging the rigidity of that very purity system.

The beloved parable of the Good Samaritan is a good example of how we settle for a watered-down interpretation of his actions because, usually, we don’t understand the background of the parable. We normally think of the Good Samaritan as a “good neighbor.” And he was. But Jesus had more in mind. The priest and Levite who didn’t stop to help the “half-dead” traveler were obeying their highest allegiance to the purity codes. Being near or with dead people was seen as an act of impurity. They didn’t know if the man was dead or alive, so they took no chances. Perhaps they actually felt some compassion for the man, but obeyed their purity training and allegiance to that code. The “impure” Samaritan was not bound by that code, so he was free to follow his compassionate urge.

All of this makes me wonder about the different social and religious visions found in our Christian churches, and in our own personal visions. Where do we fall in the spectrum between an inclusive vision of

compassion and an exclusive vision of purity? Jesus treated everyone with inclusive compassion. Some couldn’t handle that approach, so they rejected him. I see the same thing happening today, church-to-church, Christian-to-Christian.

It really makes me wonder: We who say we are followers of Jesus seem divided by that inclusive, compassionate vision. Why do we insist that shutting “certain persons” out is what Jesus wants us to do?

The Rev. Paul Graves, a Sandpoint resident and retired United Methodist minister, is founder of Elder Advocates, an elder care consulting ministry.

He can be contacted via e-mail at welhouse@nctv.com.

On the Letter from the Stewardship Team

Recently, members and friends of Crossnore Presbyterian received a letter from Lynn Andrews, chair of Finance and Generosity Team. Some of the points Lynn made in the letter bear repeating here.

“One of the most difficult subjects to address in any church is not sin and its many facets and pitfalls, but the need for human and financial resources to allow the church to do God’s will.”

This opening sentence in Lynn’s letter speaks so rightly of how we openly speak of sins, especially those of others, and shortcomings, again especially those of others, and covertly speak of how terrible this is. But how often do we talk of generosity? How often do we speak to ourselves and to others of the need to be generous with our gifts and talents? How often do we acknowledge that we are truly blessed in our church and in our personal lives with more than so many others? No one can answer these questions for us. Each of us has to answer them according to our own faith and circumstance.

Lynn wrote of “Free will – the ability to make choices” as a powerful gift that God has bestowed on us. How we make decisions and exercise our free will is up to each of us. May we all be in prayerful consideration as to how we do this, keeping in mind something else from the letter:

All that we have is God’s, and we are only allowed to keep and use it for a short while.

Growing Pains

When my twin sister, Karen, was little, sometimes in the morning she would wake up with aching legs and would need to rub them before getting up. My mom finally took her to the family doctor and he diagnosed her with “growing pains.” Her legs were growing faster than her body could feel comfortable with. Many of us have experienced “growing pains” throughout our lives—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual times when we feel we are out of sorts with ourselves or others or we feel we are being pushed beyond our capabilities. Well, you know what? Congregations can have “growing pains”, too. In fact, our congregation may have this condition. We have doubled the size of our membership in the past two years and visitors are coming every Sunday. The old members don’t know the new members and the new members hardly know anyone. Growing pains can help us identify the hurts we feel when no one seems to know our names or care about us. So, the Session is creating ways for us

to get to know each other and to care for each other. The church directory has been divided up and each Session member has a list of members and friends; and elder will be calling you soon to gather with a small group to share in fellowship. We are also looking at ways to develop a congregational care team who will visit the shut-ins, the sick, and those in need. In the meantime, please pray for those on the prayer list, make a call, send a card, or take time to visit. In doing so, you will touch the lives of others with hope and joy and your own life will be richly blessed. Don't let our "growing pains" slow you down!

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Kathy

Building and Grounds Team

Building and Grounds members and other helpers continue work on the windows in the basement and in the sanctuary. Basement windows have been replaced. The estimated cost for windows on the upper level is \$20,000.

The McNeely house kitchen has been renovated and is more efficient and safer than before. Other repairs are still needed.

Outdoor projects included cleaning out gutters, weed whacking the parking lot, weeding the bank and spraying. Lynn Andrews provided a crew to plant seven columnar-shaped arborvitae plants behind the posts the length of the guard rail. Decorative stones were placed in a bed under the guard rail. Bill and Ellen Wilson planted flowers on the bank.

Flooding in the lower back entry has been a problem but elbows and horizontal drain spouts were added to the downspouts to carry off excess water into the parking lot. The same method may be used to help the drainage system between the church and Fellowship Hall.

Christian Education Team

For three Sundays in July, Pastor Kathy and Barbara Ross taught a new members class on Presbyterian theology, history, and governance. Members refreshed their knowledge of our church and denomination.

Beginning July 31 a series of three classes will be taught on the history of the Bible. Topics covered will be the various versions and their differences, the standards used for determining what books would be included, and the historical use of the Bible in the Church.

Lorraine Alls will begin teaching a Bible study class in the next several weeks, and the date will be announced in worship service.

Thanks to Jim Taylor for the environmental Sunday school lessons in the month of June and to Barbara Ross, Jim Taylor, and Kathy Hutcheson for help with the hymn sing on 3 July. All of our Sunday school volunteers are appreciated for their help in making our Sunday school programs meaningful and informative.

Poverty and Promises

Betty Redman

He sat there quietly. The hot sun beat down upon his bare head, and beads of sweat lay on his forehead and dampened his shabby work clothes. His ruddy face looked as if he had spent a lot of time outside. Eyes that showed no emotion looked into space that promised nothing.

As the church door opened and people began to come out of the Sunday morning worship service, he hesitatingly turned his head towards them. The look on his face seemed to plead for some kind of help, but he seemed unwilling to ask for it.

Most of congregation passed him by. After all, a poor stranger is not what you expect on your church steps as you leave worship on a Sunday morning. Such a sight is disconcerting and designed to destroy your whole day, not to mention your appetite which, up to now, made itself known by way of a growling tummy all through the service. Besides, what could one do?

One couple stopped and asked the stranger what he wanted. "Work," he replied. "I thought maybe there was some work around the church I could do."

"No. There really is no work here. I'm sorry we can't help you," was the reply. It was the truth. The church had a minimal staff and what needed to be done was usually done by volunteers. That's the case with a lot of churches.

It's a common scene viewed by most of us at one time or another. We all struggle with what to do when confronted with the problem of poverty. It is rather easy to ignore until it comes to us in the form of a human being struggling with life and finding it empty in one way or another. For whatever reason, there are those among us who sit on streets, or church steps, or park benches, or in a hundred other places desperately needing a way to survive.

So what can we do? It would have been easy to offer food. He might have accepted, and the giver might have, perhaps, felt better. Often that's what we are willing to do — find ways to provide food for those without it — and the doing of it keeps us too busy to address the fact that the man needs a way to make a living so he can eat everyday. Whatever the cause of his poverty, he needs help in finding his way out of it. There's nothing wrong with offering food, but our higher priority as Christians is to get to the root of problems that affect our society.

The chances are that the problem of poverty will be with us always, no matter what we do. Injustice is a way of life in our culture and with our systems, even those in the Church. In so many ways we buy into the "bigger is better" and "the more you have the better you are" mentality that permeates our culture. To stand against the prevailing norm by which we judge the worth of people and institutions is more than most of us are willing to do. The giving up of some of our material possessions may diminish our importance in the eyes of our friends and colleagues, institutions and agencies. The pain it would cause is more than we can endure.

There is nothing wrong with material possessions. Indeed, the parable of the talents encourages us to do our best with the gifts we have. How we use our possessions is another subject. The message of the cross is one of self-denial and of giving of ourselves for others. For those who call themselves "Christian," the words of Jesus to "feed my sheep" ring in our ears. How easy it is for us to ignore and forget these words!!

This story is about physical hunger, but hunger exists in many forms of our lives. People live with impoverishments of many kinds. Loneliness, homelessness, hopelessness and despair, mental and emotional instability, greed and thoughtlessness find their place in the lives of too many of our people. An individual can find few ways to address these issues, but we always need to try. As a group, Christians can bring about changes that may create the kind of world God envisions through us, if we have the courage. God promises to be with us when we act in accordance with His will. God will not desert us. We can sing the Lord's song even when we walk in the strange land of opposing current norms. We can step out in faith.

*"You said to lean on Your arm, and I'm leaning.
You said to trust in Your love, and I'm trusting.
You said to call on Your name, and I'm calling.
I'm stepping out on Your Word."*

From Just Like Job by Maya Angelou



Announcements

Nursery worker needed: Crossnore Presbyterian is seeking a nursery working for 2.5 hours on Sunday mornings during Sunday school and worship service. This is a paid position. If you or anyone you know is interested please contact Barbara Ross or David Hege.

Remember our 'Supper Club'? Let's start them again. Each group should consist of 3 couples or 6 people. Each will meet once a month for a meal, at a members home, a picnic, a restaurant, or whatever is preferred. Call Peggy Hufnagel at (828)733-0578 or Chick Leemon at (828)733-1620 for more information or to participate.

The Church Kitchen needs contributions: regular and decaf coffee, hot chocolate, tea bags, juice (apple, grape, etc.), cookies, crackers, muffins, coffee cakes, chips, napkins, and coffee filters (12 cup round). If you enjoy the refreshments before and after church, please make a contribution and help us reduce our cost for these wonderful fellowship times. Contact Tommie Tennant if you have any questions: (828)733-5232.

We are trying to cut costs by sending The Crossnore Chronicle via email.

Please send a request to crospres@yahoo.com if you would like to receive newsletter electronically.

New Shipment of brooms: \$10.00 each, see Tommie Tennant.

Crossnore Presbyterian Church invites you to consider becoming a member of this church. We receive members by profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, by reaffirmation of faith, and by transfer of your membership from another Christian church. If you are only in this community for part of the year, we encourage you to consider becoming an affiliate member. Affiliate membership allows you to have an active connection with this congregation while still maintaining your membership in the community where you live the rest of the year. If you are interested in learning more, please speak to Rev. Campbell or call the church office at 733-1939.

Calendar

Sunday

All Sundays

09:40 am Sunday Morning - choir 'warm up'
10:00 AM - Sunday School for All Ages
11:00 AM - Worship

1st Sunday each month - Communion

2nd Sunday each month - *Five Cents a Meal Offering*; and, *Canned Goods, Groceries and Pet Food for Volunteer Avery*

Last Sunday of each month - Newsletter article deadline - drop in box at church, email Betty France at frdnbt@charter.net or call Betty at 828-387-2197

July 27th - *Reception for new members* in the Fellowship Hall directly following church

August 7th - *Youth Group* meets following worship
August 21st - *Youth Group* meets following worship

Tuesday

All Tuesdays

Prayer Cloth Ministry is on Tuesdays at 10:30am. We need more thread and Polyfill; if you are interested in joining, can contribute, or would like more information contact Lorraine Alls: allsrevlb@yahoo.com

Presbytery Meeting: July 26, 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM, First Presbyterian Church, Gastonia

Wednesday

All Wednesdays

Bible Study: 3-4:30 PM, Church Fellowship Hall

Choir Practice, 5:00-6:30 PM - This is a great time to become a member of the church choir. Enjoy singing, fellowship, and being part of the music leadership in our weekly worship! Contact Kathy Hutcheson, Music Director, for more information: (828)733-0928.

July 27th *Session meeting,* 6:15PM - 8:15PM in the Fellowship Hall

August 24th *Session meeting,* 6:15PM - 8:15PM in the Fellowship Hall

September 28th *Session meeting,* 6:15PM - 8:15PM in the Fellowship Hall

Thursday

All Thursdays

Information for the Sunday Church Bulletin - due in the morning at 9 AM

Saturday

Second Saturday of the month - *Country Community Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall:* 7 AM until 10 AM, suggested donation \$6.00 - The last Community Breakfast for 2011 will be October 8th. It is advertised in the Avery Journal.

Other

Vacation Bible School: July 18-22, 5:30-8:15 PM - **Island Odyssey: to the ends of the earth with Jesus Christ,** at the church.

