

# Cornerstone United Methodist Church

1411 Rim Road Fayetteville North Carolina 28311 868-5686

## November 2002

Dear Church Family,

As you know, Cornerstone United Methodist Church is a part of the Confessing Church Movement within the UMC and as such is committed to teaching, living, and proclaiming the biblical faith of the Church. We stand firmly within the "faith once and for all delivered to the saints" as expressed in the Holy Scriptures and the Nicene Creed. This means that we are both catholic and evangelical in our faith and practice. When I say catholic, I am not referring to the Roman Catholic Church, but to the great tenets of Christian teaching handed down for all time through the Apostles. This means we share a common faith with other Christian believers through the ages and across geographical



boundaries who accept the central apostolic witness. When I say that our faith and practice are evangelical this means that we believe that we have Good News to tell the nations about salvation through Jesus Christ. We share this gospel witness through proclamation and deeds of love and mercy.

Recently theologians from the Confessing Movement within the United Methodist Church met with leaders from the confessing movements of various other mainline denominations. Following their deliberations they issued the following statement. I encourage you to read it and recognize that God has called us to a great task within our generation: the task of maintaining the classic, biblical Faith in the midst of doctrinal confusion and declining commitment to Christian orthodoxy in the West. May we be found faithful as we prayerfully and graciously contend for the Faith in our day.

Also, our own bishop, the Rev. Marion Edwards has issued a courageous defense of classic Christian teaching in response to recent remarks made by Bishop Sprague of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference. Sprague's statements and published materials reject some of the core beliefs of Christianity as presented in the New Testament. Our Bishop Edwards graciously offers sound doctrinal teaching as a response and correction to what I would qualify as Bishop Sprague's heretical assertions. We can thank God that our episcopal leader has the wisdom and courage to offer such a word in due season. Please read Bishop Edward's remarks included in this newsletter and take them to heart. They are a genuine expression of a bishop faithfully fulfilling his calling to protect and defend the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*In Christ,  
Pastor Ben*

### **Reflections on Guarding Transmitting Teaching and Proclaiming the Apostolic Faith: An Episcopal Responsibility**

by Bishop Marion M. Edwards

The young man had just been ordained an elder in full connection. Happily and eagerly, he was moving to his first appointment after his ordination: 32 years old and ready to serve. On his first Sunday, he met Aunt Agatha, the matriarch of this small parish. "Young man," she said in greeting him, "I welcome you to our little

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## From The Webmaster

<http://www.orthovox.org/cornerstone/cumc.html>

Welcome to Cornerstone Online! Our web site has been redesigned with a new menu system for easy navigation. In addition, each subsequent page has its own menu. There is also a search feature. It is more color-coordinated and easier to look at. The homepage has also been designed so that it communicates who we are as a church and people. It is much crisper in appearance and you will have no trouble finding what you are looking for.

You will be able to download a prayer journal, perform spiritual analysis, use Bible study and search tools, use daily devotional and spiritual resource tools, and review our minister's sermon notes or listen to them through RealAudio. You can learn about the development of Christian history and will be able to utilize the other religious and educational tools in your efforts to understand and grow with Christianity. And finally, you will be able to participate in the life of Cornerstone through the various links.

We have also created the following page (<http://www.orthovox.org/cornerstone/Prayer/Your%20Prayer%20Corner.htm>). You can access this page from the homepage menu "Your Prayer Corner" or by going to the bottom of our home page. It is a page where you can submit and view prayer requests or become a prayer partner. Prayer partners will receive an email every time a prayer request is made or posted. Please consider posting prayer requests here, please view and pray for those who made a request.

It is our hope that you will come to know and use Cornerstone Online! as an extension of your experience in your studies and worship and that you will come to a greater understanding of God and experience a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ as you partake of what God has to offer you in our church.

church. We are glad you are our pastor. I'll be here and support you in every way I can. But, I've got to say that I am 86 years old and have been around the block a time or two. You are 32 years old with the ink still wet on your ordination certificate. I'm not sure what you have got to teach me." The pastor smiled and took Aunt Agatha's wrinkled hands. "Ma'am," he said, "when I put on that robe and put that stole around my neck and stand in that pulpit and open that Bible, I am not 32 years old. I am 2000 years old."

Thus, it is. The responsibility of those set apart by the Church for pastoral leadership is "... to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." (Jude 3) It's not 32 years old; it is 2000 years old. It is not my personal property; it is the gift of God to the whole Church. In our teaching and in our preaching and in our living out the gospel, we are constantly seeking to recover the fullness of that gift. Of course, that means more than repeating ancient words in Greek and Hebrew. It means more than wearing the sandals that early disciples wore. It means more than using first century images for twenty-first century ears. Most importantly, it means a faithful transmission of the Christian faith.

I am a bishop. You are pastors. We share a central responsibility. In fact, those are the words used in *The Book of Discipline* to describe one of the responsibilities and duties of a pastor: "ensuring faithful transmission of the Christian faith" (§331). This is your responsibility, also, as you preach, teach, and lead in your local settings. Even with our differences in emphasis, in theological perspective, even with our differences in exploring the implications, we share one common responsibility: to transmit the Christian faith. Transmit the faith with nurturing care for the Church. Transmit the faith with evangelical zeal for those who have not said "yes" to Jesus Christ. Transmit the faith with prophetic witness to a world broken by injustice, mendacity, war and poverty. There is no choice; otherwise, we have failed to be United Methodist pastors.

*The Book of Discipline* seems to recognize that we bishops need a bit more reminder than other pastors! (Maybe it is the healthy egos which sometimes emerge in our episcopal ministries. Maybe it is the pride with which we bishops sometimes feel that everything we say is worth hearing. But more likely, it is the assurance that those of us in the Church's most visible and representative ministries must exercise the greatest caution to be faithful to the transmission of the gospel.) Thus, *The Book of Discipline* spells out with considerable clarity this responsibility for the bishops of the Church: "to guard, transmit, teach, and proclaim, corporately and individually, the apostolic faith as it is expressed in Scripture and tradition, and, as they are led and endowed by the Spirit, to interpret that faith evangelically and prophetically" (§414.3).

Some mornings that is enough to make me want to crawl back into bed and pull the covers over my head. What an awesome, sacred duty! What a fearful, difficult calling! What trust God has put in your bishop, what undeserved and overwhelming trust! I have now been among you for six years. During that time I have worked to be faithful in my teaching task. I know that sometimes I have failed, fallen short because of the limits of my speaking gifts, fallen short because of the boundaries of my understanding, fallen short because of my own impatience with hearing those who claim to hear God singing a new song. I confess these failings to God and pray that again God will send fresh and saving grace. May my ministry become a stronger instrument of that grace!

Because I struggle with my own responsibility as your teacher, I know the tensions in my episcopal colleagues when they engage in the same struggle. In recent days, I have joined my brothers and sisters in the Council of Bishops in thinking about how we go about this task of teaching. At the heart of this conversa-

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## **FW Friends**

FW Friends, our midweek children's program, is going great. We meet every Wednesday night from 6:30-8:00. FW Friends has activities for children 3 years to 5th grade. Junior high and senior high kids can be a part of this ministry also through being a circle of friends leader for a group of five children.

Adults are also needed to be either a circle of friends leader or to help out with some of the activities. Adults, no preparation required for his. All of the lesson plans are already done, all of the materials are already bought and gathered; all you have to do is come and help lead our children in some great time learning about praising the Lord.

***Marriage & Family Seminar***

***November 15-16***  
***Fri. 6-8:30***  
***Sat. 9:30-4:00***

***Presented by***  
***Ben & Lisa Sharpe***

## **Girl Scouts**

Our Cadette Girl Scouts attended their first Cadette-Senior Camporee at Camp Mu-Sha-Ni in Richmond County. The weather was chilly and wet but that didn't dampen their spirits. Some of the workshops the girls attended were outdoor cooking, tie-dyeing, archery, and Team Building. The girls had a great time!

For more information on Girl Scouts, call Beth Wiggs at 867-4058 or email at [bethwiggs@aol.com](mailto:bethwiggs@aol.com).

## Children's Church

Come check out the children's church board in the fellowship hall. Everyone should find their name in the little basket if they are on the current phone list (and there are blanks for those not yet printed). So, come on by and check it out, your name that is and pick a Sunday to be a blessing in the lives of children from 3-5 years old. Two and a half years ago when I first started being active in the ministries of Cornerstone, I did it because I believe you should support whatever you are a part of and do your equal share of the work, but I must say that in committing time to these various activities, I have learned the real truth. Through opening yourself to others and putting yourself in their service, God can touch your heart in real ways, help you to grow, and really communicate with you like you wouldn't believe. So if you are looking for a way to be closer to God, take a step out in faith and do something you've never done before and He will be there to guide you and bless you for it.



## Fayetteville Urban Ministries

Fayetteville Urban Ministries are always looking for items to make snack packs and hygiene kits for the homeless community that come through their facility. There is a blue box in the fellowship hall for such items. Stop by the box to get a list of what they are looking for and next time you are at the grocery store, do a little mission work, pick up a little something for someone else.

## Pastor Ben

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tion has been an interesting and disturbing dialogue between two of my friends in the Council, Bishop Joseph Sprague and Bishop Timothy Whitaker.

In late January, Bishop Sprague made a speech at Iliff School of Theology in Denver. Iliff is one of 13 seminaries related to The United Methodist Church. Bishop Sprague was invited to lecture at Iliff, and he chose to read a chapter from a book he has written. The book will be published next year. He has called the book *Affirmations of a Dissenter*. Since Bishop Sprague shared his personal theological insights in an open public arena, I deem it appropriate, along with Bishop Whitaker and others, to respond publicly with my own differing views.

Both of those words, affirmation and dissent, have a rich tradition in the Church. We affirm the gospel of Jesus Christ; we dissent from those things which are against the gospel of Jesus Christ. Take a look at the baptismal service. The notions of affirmation and dissent run throughout it. Sometimes this means that the faithful in the Church are counter-cultural, speaking words of judgment and witness over against what the culture says is okay. Thus, faithful disciples have spoken against racism, sexism, moral relativism, systems that manufacture poverty, even when the culture has said, "It's the way things are." Dissenting from those things which are against the gospel of Jesus Christ sometimes means speaking words of judgment and witness against what the Church says is okay. Does the name Martin Luther ring a bell? Does the name Dietrich Bonhoeffer ring a bell? Is it pushing it too far to ask, "Does the name Paul of Tarsus ring a bell?"

Perhaps it is wise to clarify here that there are different levels of dissent. For example, Bonhoeffer dissented from current Church affirmations and teachings in Germany on the basis of the Church's doctrine. However, Bonhoeffer reminds us to be careful about dissent which strikes at the heart of essential doctrines. He wrote: "False doctrine corrupts the life of the church at its source, and that is why doctrinal sin is more serious than moral. Those who rob the Church of the gospel deserve the ultimate penalty, whereas those who fail in morality have the gospel there to help them." (*The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 264 n.1)

I am not accusing Bishop Sprague of "robbing the church of the gospel." I recognize that Bishop Sprague cares deeply about the gospel. I am, nevertheless, suggesting that his "dissent" should be examined in the context of a more robust understanding of the totality of Christian doctrine. Thereby, all of Christian doctrine can speak to the particular doctrines Bishop Sprague holds in question. I believe such a process would be a safeguard to the content of the gospel. I shall return to this point subsequently.

Affirmation and dissent are both valuable parts of the Church's continuing movement to line the work of the Church up with the will of God. The writer of 1 John helps us see the importance of such conversation: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." (1 John 4:1)

"Testing the spirits" is part of the work of the beloved of God. That means asking sisters and brothers of the faith, "Here is what I am hearing. Is that what you are hearing?" That's why Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg. In those days, that is the way the Church engaged in theological argument. It was Luther's way of saying, "Here is what I am hearing of God, but I need to test what I am hearing with the Church."

I think that is the spirit of Bishop Sprague's address at Iliff. I think it is the spirit of Bishop Whitaker's response. Bishop Sprague said that he had been pondering the theme of his lecture for ten years or better. Now he is ready to test it with the Church. I value his openness. But, I profoundly disagree with some of his conclusions.

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Do I, as a bishop, give up my right to think? Of course not. Do I, as a bishop, give up my right to think out loud? Of course not. What I do give up is my right to suggest that my personal opinion is the thinking of the Church. I have been set apart to guard, transmit, teach, and proclaim the apostolic faith. It is my obligation to let you know when I am talking as Marion Edwards and when I am talking as a bishop of the Church. That distinction is a slippery slope indeed. If I have not slipped on it, perhaps it is because I have not, to date, had the courage to climb it! I commend Bishop Sprague for his courage to climb this “slippery slope” but suggest that he distinguish more carefully between what is his “personal journey” and the journey of the Church through 2000 years.

Having said that, let me continue the “testing of the spirits” begun by Bishop Sprague. In an effort to make classical, traditional language come alive in this century, Bishop Sprague has attempted to let modernity’s light shine upon the teaching of the Church. This is often the task of apologetics, those ways in which the Church explains itself to the world. As the Scripture says, always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15b). This is not a time for angry diatribe and bitter finger-pointing. It is a time for correction and accountability, let us grant others the same we ask for ourselves: to be judged at our best and not at our worst.

Bishop Sprague’s address runs about 2500 words long. I do not want to misquote him, but I am sure that long quotes would not be very helpful in this context. You can obtain the full texts of both Bishop Sprague’s and Bishop Whitaker’s speeches by going to our North Carolina Web Page at [www.nccumc.org](http://www.nccumc.org). I trust that my references here will be fair to my brothers and colleagues in the Council of Bishops.

Again, Bishop Sprague has sought to take traditional teachings of the Church and examine them under the light of God’s continuing revealing presence.

He says he is unpacking ancient creeds “on behalf of those who find the ancient creedal language confusing or implausible.” We all do that. We do it every time we open our hymnal to 880 and 881 and see those asterisks. “I believe in the holy catholic-asterisk: universal-church.” Those asterisks are an effort to unpack an ancient creed for those who find the ancient language confusing. To do so is a noble venture, but I fear that in unpacking, Bishop Sprague might have thrown away some of the clothes that were in the suitcase, not just to get a more up-to-date style, but, alas to throw them away!

For me, the most serious lapse in Bishop Sprague’s address, which was on Christology, was to diminish the reality of the Holy Trinity. He notes that Jesus became the Son of God by virtue of his absolute human obedience to God the Father in his statement: “Jesus was not born the Christ, rather by the confluence of grace with faith he became the Christ.” I believe that Roberta Bondi, in her recent address at the Duke Convocation, better emphasized the second person of the Trinity when she described Jesus as the fullness of God, not just the submissive Jesus, but the wisdom and outpouring love of God.

I agree with Bondi and I miss in the bishop’s statement the claim of Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:6b: “one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” I miss in Bishop Sprague’s argument the power of Hebrews 1:1-3a: “Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.” I fear that the Son of God described in Bishop Sprague’s Christology has the attraction of any great hero, but falls short of the eternal fullness of the second person of the Trinity. Bishop Sprague has chosen not to include the gospel accord-

ing to St. John in his statement, not calling to our minds that “the word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). He omits John’s gospel because he contends that John wrote at a time of different theological controversy in the Church, thereby writing differently than did the synoptic writers. I do not understand that writing differently means that St. John was wrong in what he wrote.

Richard B. Hays writes, “Despite widespread views to the contrary, it is NOT true that only John teaches a high Christology. The synoptics contain the virgin birth story, the accounts of the transfiguration, Jesus walking on water and calming storms, etc. Even Mark contains numerous stories that hint reverentially at Jesus’ mysterious identity with the God of Israel... All four Gospels are a theologically interpretive retelling of the Jesus tradition.”

Bishop Sprague feels that Jesus is normative and unique. Nevertheless, in answering a question during the discussion period following his lecture, the bishop said he had to be open to the possibility that another might come. I suppose so. There is no box in which we can successfully confine God. Having said that, I affirm that the Scripture seems clear that no one is saved except through Jesus Christ. Yet such an affirmation is also compatible with a view that people from other religions can be saved—because, as William Abraham suggests, “the eternal Son of God who is fully manifest in Jesus of Nazareth is actively at work in all creation and history.”

There is a danger, in following the full line of what Bishop Sprague has said, of diluting the Trinity by making the Son of God a kind of “johnny-come-lately” to the godhead, one who arrived only when he began to be fully obedient to God. Again, Roberta Bondi, at our recent Duke Convocation, reminded us that the Son of God was not a submissive man but the fullness of God in the second person of the Trinity. In fact, what Bishop Sprague is advocating here is not the Church’s apostolic teaching about

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the Trinity. He is teaching the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century theory of adoptionism which was long ago rejected by the Church. Adoptionism was “the theory that Jesus was in nature a man who became the Son of God by adoption...” This view “...argued that the son of man at his conception, was spiritually, not substantially or physically, accepted by the will of the Son of God.” (*Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Vergilius Fern, p. 5)

When Bishop Sprague speaks of the virgin birth, the atonement, and the resurrection of the body, I sense that he has studied hard and thoughtfully the biblical texts and the teaching of the early church. The problem I have is not with his intention or his careful thinking. The problem I have is what he has omitted from the conversation: the authority of the canon of Scripture. The Articles of Religion of The United Methodist Church remind us that the Scriptures contain all that is necessary for our salvation. Wesley believed in what we might call “soteriological inerrancy.” If you need it in order to be saved, it is in the Scripture.

But Wesley taught us that all of the biblical canon is the authority for the Church. He was very helpful in the Preface to the Standard Sermons when he wrote of how we resolve difficulties we encounter in understanding some of the biblical text, some of the biblical images, yes, some of the biblical metaphors. Unless you think Jesus said, “Baaa” because he was the Lamb of God, you believe that the Bible has metaphors! Back to John Wesley on how we sort through the places where the Bible is not as clear. He wrote this about how he studied the Bible:

Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his Book: for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there any doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of lights:—Lord, is not they word, “If any be willing to do thy will, he shall know.” I am willing to

do, let me know thy will. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, I teach.

So what was John Wesley’s advice when facing a tough text? (1) Get alone with God. (2) Pray about it. (3) Consult parallel places in Scripture; let Scripture talk to Scripture. (4) Have holy conferencing with other believers, and (5) Read what the ancient fathers and mothers of the Church said.

Mr. Wesley believed—and so do I—that all Scripture is twice inspired: once when it was written and again when it is read. All of this to say that the strangeness that Bishop Sprague has found in the virgin birth, the resurrection of the body, and the atonement, may spring from not always letting all of Scripture speak to the rest of Scripture. As indicated earlier, this principle of letting all of the Scripture speak to the rest of Scripture should also be applied to letting the whole of Christian doctrine speak to difficulties about particular doctrines. In order for Bishop Sprague to avoid the pitfall of “robbing the Church of its gospel,” it is essential that we “test the spirits” through what has been called a “robust” understanding of the faith.

*The Discipline* in Part II entitled, “Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task” (p. 59) reminds us that “The United Methodist Church stands continually in need of doctrinal reinvigoration for the sake of authentic renewal, fruitful evangelism and ecumenical dialogue.” Our theological task serves the Church’s doctrinal reinvigoration by “interpreting the world’s needs and challenges to the Church and by interpreting the gospel (doctrine) to the world.” “The Church encourages serious reflection across the theological spectrum.” (p. 75) This theological conversation and interaction with Church doctrine is an ongoing process

in which one has to be careful not to “throw the baby out with the bath water.” My fear is that Bishop Sprague’s theological critique is in danger of “throwing the baby out.”

For example, when Bishop Sprague says that “the gift of eternal life as relationship of atonement with God continues after death,” he may have in mind Jesus’ word to the penitent thief. “This day you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 24:43) or perhaps the apostle Paul’s word that he would rather “depart and be with Christ.” (Philippians 1:23) Again, at our recent Duke Convocation, Richard Hays spoke about the resurrection of the body. He pressed us to consider the Greek meaning of these tests. I believe that the stronger and clearer teaching of the New Testament is the Christian hope for the resurrection of the body. I profess that hope every Sunday of my life! I think the bishop has created a straw person to knock down when he says he does not believe in the resuscitation of the body of Jesus. The biblical teaching of the resurrection is a teaching about a new body, not a resuscitation of the old body. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...” (Revelation 21:1) If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) “New,” which redeems the “old,” is the biblical word which I find missing from a consideration of Bishop Sprague’s resurrection theology.

There are, as the bishop says, numerous theories of the atonement. He is bothered by the idea of a substitutionary atonement which sees Jesus’ death as the appeasement of an angry God.

Well done, Bishop Sprague! Jesus took our sin, and the wages of sin are death. The death is not to make God happy; the death is the sad pay for sin. I don’t think God said, “Hooray!” That’s enough blood; that ought to do it.” I think Bishop Whitaker is right: “the cross is the self-giving of God the Father in the self-giving obedience of God the Son in

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## Cornerstone Small Groups

Monday Women's Bible Study	Joy Semrad	867-6786
Wednesday Night Bible Study	Ben Sharpe	H-868-6991/W-868-5686
Promise Keepers Men's Group	Ken Dye	864-5373
Friday Night Fellowship	John & Antonia Ban	860-3470
United Methodist Men	Steve Kublack	424-1757
On-The-Edge Senior High Youth	Brian & Christyn Hahn	480-0603
Hi-Voltage Junior High Youth	Mike & Sue Todd	425-6443
Kids Ministry/Sunday School	Debbie Hill	764-1094

### Pastor Ben

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the Son's radical identification with all of sinful humanity."

Bishop Sprague also addresses the teaching of the virgin birth. He argues that it is a truthful myth, not a historical fact. I think he is right in addressing this topic with a careful touch. After all, it is not part of the teachings of Paul; it is not part of early apostolic preaching embedded in Acts; it is not part of the Johannine or Marcan gospel accounts. It is probably true that the early creeds were arguing for the humanity and divinity of Christ when they said he was born of the virgin Mary. The emphasis was not that he was born of virgin Mary. Both the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith of The United Methodist Church only mention this teaching in passing. Nevertheless, although the doctrine of the virgin birth is not traditionally a core doctrine, it is a teaching of the Church. Its truth is clear: God was active in the birth of Jesus, not simply in the miracle of conception, but in the incarnation of what God had to say to us: the Word became flesh. Bishop Whitaker offers a helpful observation: "For us in a post-modern culture, the virginal conception of Jesus provides an opportunity to challenge...the naturalistic reductionism of the (sic) Enlightenment."

I am glad that Bishop Sprague has said publicly what his own personal journey of faith has produced. However, in his zeal to make the faith understandable to modern ears, the bishop seems

to have accommodated too much to the culture. I also note that Bishop Sprague understands his statements to be faithful to the creeds of the Church and to the historic teaching of the Church. Nevertheless, I fear that while he would not want to deny or diminish the apostolic faith, he has opened the doors so widely that much of the apostolic faith could easily be lost and/or stolen. Perhaps this is an appropriate time to remember that Leslie Newbigin, Scottish missionary statesman and former Bishop of the Church of South India, never tired of insisting that "the incarnation and resurrection of Christ will fit into no other world-view than the one of which they are the cornerstone." Although I do not agree with Bishop Sprague's conclusions, I am grateful that he has moved me more into my responsibility as a teaching bishop.

I hope the dialogue will continue with Bishop Sprague, Bishop Whitaker, and more pointedly, with the teachings of the Church, the apostolic tradition, and the biblical witness. May this dialogue move the Church, as called for in our *Discipline* (pp. 41-86) to engage in doctrinal reinvigoration through the fulfillment of "our theological task." The guidelines for this "task" are found on pages 74-104 of *The Discipline*.

In conclusion, as suggested earlier, I truly believe the Church has been given the faith of the apostles. This faith I have

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## 3 TREES ON A HILL

Once there were three trees on a hill in the woods. They were discussing their hopes and dreams when the first tree said, "Someday I hope to be a treasure chest. I could be filled with gold, silver and precious gems. I could be decorated with intricate carving and everyone would see the beauty."

Then the second tree said, "Someday I will be a mighty ship. I will take kings and queens across the waters and sail to the corners of the world. Everyone will feel safe in me because of the strength of my hull."

Finally the third tree said, "I want to grow to be the tallest and straightest tree in the forest. People will see me on top of the hill and look up to my branches, and think of the heavens and God and how close to them I am reaching. I will be the greatest tree of all time and people will always remember me."

After a few years of praying that their dreams would come true, a group of woodsmen came upon the trees.

When one came to the first tree he said, "This looks like a strong tree, I think I should be able to sell the wood to a carpenter," and he began cutting it down. The tree was happy because he knew that the carpenter would make him into a treasure chest.

At the second tree the woodsman said, "This looks like a strong tree, I should be able to sell it to the shipyard." The second tree was happy because he knew he was on his way to becoming a mighty ship.

When the woodsmen came upon the third tree, the tree was frightened because he knew that if they cut him down his dreams would not come true.

One of the woodsmen said, "I don't need anything special from my tree; I'll take this one," and he cut it down.

When the first tree arrived at the carpenters, he was made into a feed box for animals. He was then placed in a barn and filled with hay. This was not at all what he had prayed for.

The second tree was cut and made into a small fishing boat. His dreams of being a mighty ship and carrying kings had

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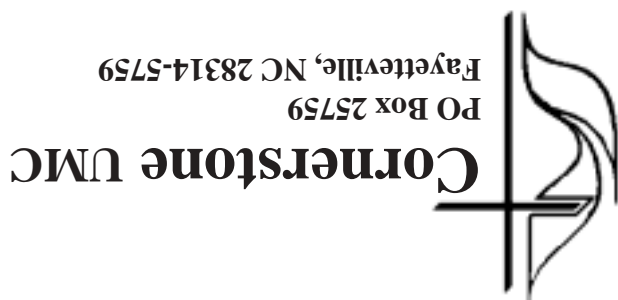
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	2 Men's Fall Rally
3 <b>Cornerstone Pizza Sunday @ Two Brothers!</b>	4 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	5	6 Noon Prayer Group/Bible Study 7:00/FW Friends 6:30	7 Promise Keepers 7:00 Choir 7:00 Cadette Girl Scouts 7:00	8 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00 <b>Pilgrimage @</b>	9 <b>Crown</b>
10 Council Mtg 7:00	11 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	12	13 Noon Prayer Group/Bible Study 7:00/FW Friends 6:30 CBS 8:00	14 Promise Keepers 7:00 Choir 7:00 Girl Scouts 7:00	15 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00 <b>Marriage &amp; Family Seminar</b>	16
17	18 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	19	20 Noon Prayer Group/Bible Study 7:00/FW Friends 6:30	21 Promise Keepers 7:00 Choir 7:00	22 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	23
24	25 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	26	27	28 Thanksgiving	29	30
<b>Pizza Sunday 1 @ Two Brothers! 1st Sunday in Advnet</b>	2 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	3	4 Noon Prayer Group/Bible Study 7:00/FW Friends 6:30	5 Promise Keepers 7:00 Choir 7:00 Cadette Girl Scouts 7:00	6 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	7
8 Church Council Meeting 7:00	9 Pastor's Day Off Women's Bible Study	10	11 Noon Prayer Group/Bible Study 7:00/FW Friends 6:30 CBS 8:00	12 Promise Keepers 7:00 Choir 7:00 Cadette Girl Scouts 7:00	13 Friday Night Fellowship 7:00	14

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*There's always something happening at Cornerstone!*

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You are... God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief Cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. *Ephesians 2:19-22*



### ***Pastor Ben***

*Cont. from page 6*

received. This faith, and no other, I truly believe. The faith of the Church has been lived, preached, taught, explored, defended, and transmitted for 2000 years. Furthermore, I believe with all of my mind and heart, that the Church's faith is true, and that the truth of this faith is both good and beautiful. To be sure, the Church's faith is more than a few narrow propositional statements. Indeed, the faith of the Church offers to the world a grand, intellectual tradition that is far more compelling than any other tradition now available. Therefore, in its encounter with today's "cultured despisers" of religion (Schleiermacher), the Church's faith need not fear for its life, need not submit to their presuppositions and prejudices. The faith of the Church is too intellectually powerful, too grand, too splendid, too life-giving for us to be guided by fear!

### ***Three Trees***

*Cont. from page 6*

come to an end. The third tree was cut into large pieces and left alone in the dark.

The years went by, and the trees forgot about their dreams. Then one day, a man and woman came to the barn. She gave birth and they placed the baby in the hay in the feed box that was made from the first tree. The man wished that he could

have made a crib for the baby, but this manger would have to do. The tree could feel the importance of this event and knew that it had held the greatest treasure of all time.

Years later, a group of men got in the fishing boat made from the second tree. One of them was tired and went to sleep. While they were out on the water, a great storm arose and the tree didn't think it was strong enough to keep the men safe. The men woke the sleeping man, and He stood and said, "Peace," and the storm stopped. At this time, the tree knew that it had carried the King of Kings in its boat.

Finally, someone came and got the third tree. It was carried through the streets as the people mocked the man who was carrying it. When they came to a stop, the man was nailed to the tree and raised in the air to die at the top of a hill. When Sunday came, the tree came to realize that it was strong enough to stand at the top of the hill and be as close to God as was possible, because Jesus had been crucified on it.

The moral of this story is that when things don't seem to be going your way, always know that God has a plan for you. If you place your trust in Him, He will give you great gifts. Each of the trees got what they wanted, just not in the way they had imagined.