

# Cornerstone United Methodist Church

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## June 2004 Newsletter

### Notes from Pastor Ben

As I come to the end of my pastoral ministry at Cornerstone United Methodist Church I want to take the opportunity to offer some parting words of instruction and encouragement. As a model for such remarks I take the example of Paul's parting words to the Ephesian elders as recorded in Acts 20:17-38.

Before I turn to specifics my family and I want you to know how much we love you all. You are precious to us. Our children have grown up together. Some of us have become middle-aged together! Thank you for supporting my family and me. Thank you for genuinely caring for us. Thank you for praying for us. Thank you for letting us share in your lives – letting us rejoice with you and weep with you.

Thank you for forgiving my failings and mistakes. There have been many! Sometimes I failed you unintentionally. Sometimes I failed you out of pure human sinfulness. You have been so gracious to me in spite of my inadequacies.

Now in his remarks Paul reminds the elders about the conduct of his ministry. I can honestly say with Paul that I have worked diligently among you. I haven't coveted anyone's possessions. I strived to be motivated only by the desire to please God and love those given to my care. I have tried to model Christ in my ministry and personal life. I know I have fallen far short of that high goal, but that was indeed my endeavor.

You can testify that "I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." With Paul I can say that I am innocent of any man's blood: i.e., I have not shrunk back from speaking the Truth of Christ to everyone under my care. From God's Word I have:

- comforted those who needed comfort
- instructed in righteousness those willing to learn
- corrected those who were in error
- rebuked those who needed reproof.

You know that I am leaving you because of God's call on my life to be a part of a mission in Durham. My family and I do not know what joys and hardships lie ahead. Yet I am compelled by the Spirit to be faithful the carry out the ministry God has entrusted to me: to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

I have learned so much among you that will be used of God in the ministry ahead of me. Now I commend you to one another's care. Remember that you are precious! I want to remind you that Cornerstone is *not* your church! Rather *you are God's church* purchased at the price of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Like Paul, I want to offer you some final instructions and warnings. In the passage I referenced Paul begins by instructing the Ephesian elders in the perils of leaders who are motivated by an agenda other than the gospel. He calls such persons "savage wolves." Now let me be very careful to say that God is indeed raising up new and vibrant leadership among you. I am thrilled that God continues to call men and women into positions of influential ministry within our church. The folks who have stepped forward to raise up new ministry and to continue existing ministry in this church are being faithful to the apostle's command: **Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.** [1 John 3:18 (NIV)] During this time trust your established leadership, those who have already worked hard among you and shown themselves trustworthy in God's work.

With that in mind I need to warn you that the enemy will use this time of transition to attempt to sow destruction. Be very careful and alert because it during such time that certain people will suddenly rise up from among you or come in from outside and wish to lead or serve in some critical ministry. If such a person appears and will not accept correction, or is living in unrepentant sin, or refuses to submit to authority, do not let them gain influence in the body of Christ!

Do not allow overbearing, abrasive, domineering people who are driven by an appetite to control gain power over you. Such a person is operating out of "selfish ambition or vain conceit." They come with their own agendas that have nothing to do with serving Jesus Christ. In a church I once led a parishioner who was on the upper end of the socio-economic scale remarked to me: "I think that giving a substantial amount to the church entitles me to a greater influence." I could not believe this person actually would articulate such a sentiment! Because this person's family income was larger, the dollar amount of their tithe was larger and thus she assumed that this gave her greater say in direction of the Church. This is directly contrary to our Lord's teaching:

**Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.**

**Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." Mark 12:41-44 (NIV)**

She had revealed her heart, she believed that she could purchase influence and control in the body of Christ. She had disqualified herself from leadership in God's church. She had fallen into the error of Simon the magician who thought he could purchase the power to bestow the Holy Spirit with the laying on of hands by offering the apostles money. In response to this base request...

**Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." Acts 8:20 - 23 (NIV)**

Remember: "The difference between manipulation and leadership is motive."  
[Dennis Sawyer, Leadership, Vol. 14, no. 3.]

One of the wonderful qualities of Cornerstone United Methodist Church is that we have a "sweet spirit." We genuinely love one another and those God sends our way. Do not let anyone gain influence in this church who will take you away from that quality of love. Let me warn you that just a small handful of "mean" people can ruin a church if the people of God passively sit by and do nothing.

The kind of leaders God approves of have the following characteristics:

- They have a lively faith in Jesus Christ! They have genuinely experienced conversion and are growing in their faith.
- They know and are continuing to learn God's Word.
- They have a servant heart. They are the one's who serve because they love Jesus and other people. Not so that they can receive recognition.
- They give of their financial resources, but do not see the tithe as a means of purchasing power.

- They are deeply connected to the life of the local congregation and love their brothers and sisters.
- They do not form factions, participate in gossip, or connive to achieve personal agendas.
- They are teachable and submit to God-ordained authority.

Do not tolerate false teaching from any leader. We live in a time when many have wandered away from the truth of God's Word. They distort and deny the clear teaching of the Scriptures so that they can justify immoral behavior. Do not put up with such a person for even one minute! Watch out for those who devote a great deal of time and energy to explaining why God's Word doesn't mean what it clearly says.

Finally I want to offer you some words of encouragement just as Paul did with the Ephesian elders when he said: **"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."** Acts 20:32 (NIV)

God is going to continue to grow and bless this church if you remain obedient to Christ and steadfast in prayer. We can be sure of this because:

- God DESIRES to continue a good work among you: **I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.** Philippians 1:3 - 6 (NIV)
- God is ABLE to do greater things than you can imagine in this church. **[God] is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.** Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)
- God has a PLAN to bless this church. **For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.** Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NIV)

The second point of encouragement I would offer is that you welcome your new pastor with love and enthusiasm. Treat him and his family with respect. The Word of God instructs us:

**The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.** 1 Timothy 5:17

**Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.** Hebrews 13:17

Love your new pastor and help him succeed. If you sow blessing into your pastor's life you will reap blessing in return. Remember, before you criticize your pastor ask yourself: Have I earnestly, diligently and repeatedly prayed for my pastor?

The final point of encouragement I offer you is that you make Acts 2:42 the model for your life together as a church. Devote yourselves to PRAYER, the TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES (Scripture), the observance of HOLY COMMUNION, and to FELLOWSHIPING WITH THE BELIEVERS.

I want to conclude by again referencing St Paul. I could not say it any better! **"Finally, [beloved in the Lord], good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you...May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.** (2 Corinthians 13:11,14 (NIV))

### **A Sacred Duty Why Christians Must Vote**

This fall Americans will go to the polls and elect a president-one who will influence the direction in which the country's moral compass will point. But according to a recent report, only a third of evangelical Christians-those who ought to be most concerned with moral values-will actually vote.

These are shocking figures. Of all people, we ought to vote, not just as a right, but as a spiritual duty. All it takes is to lose your right to vote, as I did once, to know how precious that is.

The Rev. Curt Young in Silver Spring, Maryland, told his flock just before the last presidential election why they needed to vote. Just a short distance from his church is the Capitol, the Supreme Court, and the offices of Congress. Young wanted his congregation to know that the Scriptures have a lot to say about our responsibility to choose leaders.

It was such a good message that I want to offer you a part of it today. In Deuteronomy 16, he pointed out, Moses tells the Israelites: "You shall appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes . and they shall judge the people."

The term judges and officials covered all government leaders. Besides hearing cases and rendering decisions, they set public policy and could even call out the military in a crisis.

Given these heavy responsibilities, the criteria for selecting judges were strict. They were to be men who feared God, who were committed to the truth, and who hated dishonest gain. And they were warned: "You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality; and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe . subverts the cause of the righteous."

When Moses commanded the Israelites to appoint God-fearing leaders, he wasn't just talking to a handful of citizens who felt like getting involved. Young noted that the command was directed to all citizens. And modern Christians are under the same obligation to choose leaders who love justice.

Ironically, the Scriptures warn that if we value prosperity over justice, we'll end up losing both. Moses told the Israelites to "follow justice and justice alone." He follows this command with a promise that they will "live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you." In other words, if you want prosperity, choose leaders committed to justice.

In the Old Testament, God often sent people to find particular individuals to lead. Today, in our modern democracy, free citizens act as God's agents for choosing leaders, and we do it by voting.

So there's no excuse for those who don't take the trouble to vote. But to vote, you have to register. That's why, in answer to MTV's Rock the Vote, a group of Christian musicians are endorsing an effort called Redeem the Vote. At Christian rock concerts and festivals throughout the summer groups like Verbs and Joshua 33 will be encouraging Christian young people to register by visiting the Redeem the Vote booth at the concert or to register online at [www.redeemthevote.com](http://www.redeemthevote.com). While polls show that Christian young people care about the issues that have an impact on our lives, most of them are not registered to vote. That means they are left out of the political process. Redeem the Vote wants to change that. So register today, get young people to register, and then, in November, get out of the pews and into the polling booth to perform our sacred duty of choosing our leaders.

### **Nursery Help Needed**

The nursery is in real need of help. Our regular nursery staff will be out of town for four weeks. We need someone in the nursery for the 9:30am and 11am services for June 13, 20, 27 and July 4<sup>th</sup>. The sign up sheet is posted on the nursery door. Thank you in advance for your help.

**Sharpe Send-Off Pizza Pot-Luck**

We all know that Pastor Ben is leaving soon and we wanted to have a going away party for him. It is also well known how much he loves Pizza! Well, we thought a Pizza pot luck dinner would be something he would really enjoy and appreciate.

At Cornerstone UMC on Sunday, June 6th at 5:00 pm we will be creating a Pizza Buffet for the Sharpe Family. We ask everyone to bring a Pizza (either homemade or from various restaurants) along with a drink. Other suggested items might be chicken wings or desserts.

Many people wanted to give the Sharp family a going away present. During his transition to his new ministry they will greatly need financial help. A basket will be at the party to collect money to send them forward to serve Christ in Durham. Please put gift money in an envelope. If you are writing a check, make it out to Ben or Lisa Sharpe. Please do NOT make it out to Cornerstone. If you are one of our Cornerstone folks around the globe and you'd like to send a contribution for the Sharpes or a note of encouragement, please mail them to Beth Wiggs, 6406 Milford Road, Fayetteville, NC 28303. Make your checks out Ben or Lisa Sharpe. We'll put all of them into the basket the night of the party. Also, we are going to put pictures together in an album for the Sharpes to take with them. Please drop your pictures off in the basket in the foyer at church. You can also give them to Antonia Ban or Beth Wiggs. (Or send them in the mail to the above address)

**The Sharpe's know about the party since we had to make sure they'd be in town. They do not know about the pictures or the donations so please don't tell!**

If you have questions, please call Antonia at 860-3470 or Beth at 867-4058.

P.S. Who hasn't heard Pastor Ben at a Pot Luck Dinner ask if there was any Pizza left when going through the line? Welcome to Pizza Heaven!

### **AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY RELAY FOR LIFE RECAP**

This was the first year Cornerstone United Methodist Church participated in the ACS Relay for Life. This event is designed to raise money and awareness for cancer research throughout the U.S. It also gave us the time to memorialize those lives that have been touched by cancer.

Due to the efforts of our organizer, Danelle Petero, our team consisted of 16 members from our church. These folks went out in the community and collected money from co-workers, friends, and family in the weeks leading up to the event. Angel Corey led our team by raising over \$200!!!! This sets the bar high for next year's fund-raising.

As small as our church family is compared to many others within the community, we made a "BIG BANG" impression at the track. In addition to our relay team, we were blessed to have our PRAISE TEAM BAND rock the place with worship songs throughout the night! Thanks to their efforts, we were able to make the race an outreach opportunity for our church as well.

The efforts of many from our church made this event a success. A special thanks goes out to those who prepared and donated baked goods. This allowed us to increase our donations to the event. Thanks to Ken Dye who supplied the buns for hot dogs and hamburgers that were deliciously prepared by John Ban. Also, thanks to all the donations of baked goods.

It turned out to be a great event for everyone. Our church raised over \$800.00 for the American Cancer Society, contributing to the Cumberland County total of over \$68,000!! I believe that this event, like others in our community, can be an opportunity for our church to show that we care and have a desire to be involved in the world outside of our own front yard. This is a worthy cause, and I hope that it will be an annual event in the life of our church. Please keep in mind, planning for this event begins this September for next year's race.

Thanks again for a wonderful team effort!

Steven Tischer, 2004 Team Captain

### **Council Members Missing!!**

At the May Council meeting, there were many members absent. I know that there are things that come up and that people are on vacation. I know that there are other things that seem like they would be more fun to do than a council meeting. But it is important that we fulfill the obligation that we took on as council members. Your input and vote are needed! The next meeting is scheduled for June 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30.

### **VBS Help Needed**

We are in need of a Jungle Gym Leader for VBS-contact Kathy Davis (868-1653 or katdavis@nc.rr.com) if you can help!

### **Cornerstone Calendar**

Wed 10:00am Wednesday Morning Discipleship w/Pastor Ben @ Church

6:30pm Wednesday Bible Study w/Richard Upchurch @ Church

7:00pm Early Service Praise Team Practice

Thu 7:00pm Late Service Praise Team Practice

7:00pm POINT Man, Men's group @ Church

Fri 7:00pm Friday Night Fellowship @ the Ban's

June 6 The Rev. Ben Wells to lead worship

5:00pm Pot Luck Pizza Party @ Church for the Sharpe family

June 7 - 11 5:30-8:30 Vacation Bible School-Lava Lava Island!

June 13 Pam Colley Testimony

June 20 Richard Upchurch to preach

June 27 The Rev. Kong Namkung's first Sunday at Cornerstone