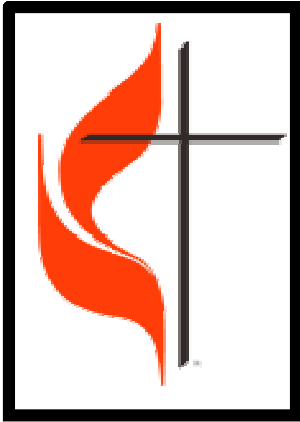


April 2009



Merrimon Meanderings

Monthly Newsletter of the
Merrimon United Methodist Church

Peg O. Witt, Pastor

From Your Pastor

Spring is here! At least according to the calendar. With the cool/cold days and nights we've had, it's hard to be sure. However, we do know that God is in charge of all of this wonderful creation - and for that, we give great thanksgiving.

Easter is just a few days away. The first Sunday of April is Palm Sunday, when we will remember that triumphal entry Jesus made into Jerusalem, but we will also look at that last week of our Lord's life on earth as a human.

On Thursday, April 9th, we will have Maundy Thursday Holy Communion Service at **7:30 PM**. Then on Friday, April 10th, we will have the Good Friday Tenebrae Service at **7:30 PM**. These Services are opportunities for us to be fully reminded of what Christ has done for us in his willingness to go to the cross for each of us. I hope that all who are able will join us for these most worshipful experiences.

Also, on Easter Sunday, we will celebrate Homecoming! What joy to look forward to gathering with folks from all over who will come and share this time with us! As we feast at the tables, we will be celebrating Christ's resurrection as well as sharing joys and memories of years past. I look forward to this time of celebration and sharing.

Most of all, let us remember -- **CHRIST HAS RISEN!!!**

Peace & love.
Peg O. Witt

“The person who has a tremendous reserve of patience and tolerance has a certain degree of tranquility and calmness in his or her life. Such a person is not only happy and more emotionally grounded, but also seems to be physically healthier and to experience less illness. This person possesses a strong will, has a good appetite and can sleep with a clear conscience.”

Dalai Lama, 3/2009

Merrimon Meanderings

Published on the first of the month by the
Merrimon United Methodist Church,

Peg O. Witt, Pastor

powitt@hotmail.com

Mailing address: 310 Jonquin's Creek Road
Beaufort, NC 28516

Physical address: 5012 Merrimon Road
Beaufort, NC 28516

<http://www.merrimonumc.org/>

Editor: Marilyn Shuping, 2810 Vienna-Dozier Road

Pfafftown, NC 27040 336-924-9776

Beach House Telephone # 336-714-2292

[\(mbsshuping@tdarx.com\)](mailto:mbsshuping@tdarx.com)

Fellowship Hall Telephone: 252-728-1876

(Local calls only)

Contributors: Peg Witt, Marilyn Shuping, Sandi
Malone and Mary Ann Whitfield.

Anyone having articles or information to include in
the next issue of the *Merrimon Meanderings*, please
mail or email me by the 20th of that month at my
above addresses. Thank you!

Marilyn Shuping

Calendar of Services and Events

Sunday, April 5th – Palm Sunday Service with Holy
Communion

Cantata at Merrimon UMC with Edwards
Freewill Baptist Church

Thursday, April 9th – Maunday Thursday Service
with Holy Communion, 7:30pm

Friday, April 10th – Good Friday Tenebrae Service,
7:30pm

Sunday, April 12th – **Easter Sunday and
Homecoming and Easter Egg Hunt**

April Birthdays

4/4 – Gladys Suessle

4/25 – Minnie Pittman

4/28 – Jake Carraway

May Birthdays

5/4 – Dick Emer

5/6 – Gale Ebron

5/20 – Jim Tyson

If you would like the church to send someone a birthday or sympathy card, a thank you note or just a word of encouragement, please let Gale Ebron (252-728-7873) or ggebron@coastalnet.com know.

What is Palm Sunday? By Mary Fairchild

On Palm Sunday Christians celebrate the Triumphant Entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, the week before his death and resurrection. For many Christian churches, Palm Sunday, often referred to as "Passion Sunday," marks the beginning of Holy Week, which concludes on Easter Sunday.

The Bible reveals that when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds greeted him with waving palm branches, and by covering his path with palm branches. Immediately following this great time of celebration in the ministry of Jesus, he begins his journey to the cross.

The biblical account of Palm Sunday can be found in Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; and John 12:12-19.

Book on Biblical humor is 'gospel according to Peters'

Biblical knee slappers By Tony Fitzpatrick (submitted by Sandi Malone)

To most, the Bible is a somber work, full of such serious melodramas as Abraham intent on carving up his son at God's demand, Job enduring his many burdensome troubles, and powerful, piercing language, such as the immortal line: Jesus wept.

To David A. Peters, Ph.D., the McDonnell Douglas Professor of Engineering at Washington University in St. Louis, the Bible indeed is a beautiful work that is sprinkled liberally with, at times, rollicking humor.

Peters, whose academic expertise is aeronautics, particularly helicopter mechanics, has written a book, "The Many Faces of Biblical Humor" (Hamilton Books, 2008) that overwhelmingly backs his claim. In his preface, Peters states: "The Bible is full of wit and wonder which was intentionally placed there to help us understand God and his requirements."

Peters, whose Christian background is Baptist and more recently Presbyterian, first read the Bible cover-to-cover when he was 15 years old and reads it every year at the pace of six pages a day. He is also a student of Judaism who observes Passover each year. What stumps him most is people who cannot see humor in the Bible. In 2003, making his yearly reading, he noted more than 1,000 lines or stories that struck him as humorous.

In the preface he writes: "This (the book) encompasses a broad spectrum of humor, romance, metaphor and wonder — as well as a good deal of irony and sarcasm."

Take the very famous tale of Moses and the burning bush. Peters recalls it, as he does all of the tales throughout the book, in facile, paraphrased language with liberal conjecture.

"First of all, that God would reveal himself as a burning bush is humorous on its own merit," Peters says. "But what's even funnier is Moses' attempts to wriggle out of God's calling him to go to the Pharaoh to let his people go. He claims that's he's not a good public speaker, even that he has a speech impediment. He's like a reluctant athlete on the bench who's scared to play."

Forerunner to Francis, Mr. Ed

In a summary at the end of his book, Peters cites 14 favorite one-liners and 14 favorite stories. His all-time favorite story is Balaam and the Talking Donkey, perhaps a precursor to Hollywood's Francis the Talking Mule and Mr. Ed.

"Someone calls on Balaam to prophesy against the children of Israel and Moses for coming out of Egypt," Peters relates. "God tells him not to go, but he's offered a lot of money so he goes anyway.

On the road, the donkey that he's riding sees an angel of God with a sword, and the donkey stops. Balaam can't see the angel and he beats the donkey. Further down the road the donkey sees the angel again and stops between two walls, crushing Balaam's foot. She gets beaten again. A third encounter there is no way getting around the angel, so the donkey lays down. Balaam beats her again.

God enables the donkey to talk. She says: 'What did I do to make you beat me these three times? Have I ever done anything like this before?' And God enables Balaam to see the angel, and the donkey says, 'Then if I were you, I'd take better stock of the situation.' When Balaam sees the situation for what it is, he faints."

Desperate widows

The Old Testament has its share of salacious stories, but the tale of Judah and Tamar has the tinge of a TV situation comedy. Judah has a son who marries a woman, but the son is bad and God kills him. The law then held that the next brother must marry the widow, but this son doesn't want children, so he practices an ancient form of birth control, and she doesn't get pregnant, which angers God who then kills the second son.

Judah begins to regard the woman, Tamar, as at best unlucky, and he tells her she can't have a third son until he grows up. Tamar realizes that Judah, who now is a widower, is tricking her.

She wants children and sets her eyes on Judah. She goes to a town dressed as a prostitute, knowing that Judah passes through regularly on business. Women were veiled then, so Judah doesn't recognize her. Never having prostituted herself before, Tamar doesn't know what to charge, so Judah suggests he give her a goat. She agrees, but afterward asks how will she know that he will keep his word about the goat, and he says he'll bring it back, but that she can hold his signet ring and staff as security of payment.

Judah returns with the goat and asks the villagers where the prostitute is. And they claim there aren't any there. Not long afterwards, it becomes apparent that Tamar has become pregnant from the encounter.

Judah, unaware that he's responsible, becomes angered and makes plans to burn the harlot at the stake. He hauls her out of the tent and is about to set the fire, when Tamar says, 'Not so fast,' and she produces the signet ring and the staff.

"Judah is not going to burn his own child and declares her more righteous than he is," Peters says. "And it's a good thing he spared her because Tamar is one of three women from whom the Messiah descended."

Seven exorcists

Not all of the humor is hoarded in the Old Testament. Peters sees humor in Paul's various travails. He escapes from numerous jams using his wits against his far slower enemies. He even sees some humor in the raising of Lazarus because Jesus takes his time in showing his power waiting until days pass to, as he tells his disciples, " better show God's glory."

Peters rates Paul the fourth funniest one-liner when he says at the Circumcision Party in Galatia: "I wish that those people who are commanding you to be circumcised would be cut off completely!"

In a scene from Acts 19:15-16 exorcists are trying to cast out a demon inside a man, and they exhort "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out of him." The demon responds: "Jesus I know, Paul I know but who (in the name of Hades) are you guys?" And the demoniac jumped all seven of them and whipped the tar out of them until they ran out of the house naked and wounded.

"I wrote the book to help people see that the Bible is alive," Peters says. "The stories also are awesome and beautiful, but it's my hope that they become more accessible."

In the words of an old vaudevillian comic: Take this book, please.

+++++

Why Go To Church?

A Churchgoer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday.

"I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this. They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these

meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

When you are DOWN to nothing.... God is UP to something!

Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible!

Thank God for our physical AND our spiritual nourishment!

"When Satan is knocking at your door,
simply say, "Jesus, could you get that for me?"

From a strictly mathematical viewpoint, what equals 100%?

What does it mean to give more than 100%?

What equals 100% in life?

Here's a mathematical equation that can explain some of these questions.

If the ABC's were represented with numbers 1 through 26, then...

HARDWORK = 8+1+18+4+23+15+18+11 = 98%

KNOWLEDGE = 11+14+15+23+12+5+4+7+5 = 96% But.....

ATTITUDE = 1+20+20+0+20+21+4+5 = 100%

Then, look how far the love of God takes you.

LOVE OF GOD = 12+15+22+5+15+6+7+15+4 = 101%

Therefore, one can conclude with mathematical certainty that while HARDWORK and KNOWLEDGE will get you close, and ATTITUDE will get you there. It's the LOVE OF GOD that will put you over the top!

+++++

THE 23RD PSALM

The Lord is my Shepherd = That's Relationship!
I shall not want = That's Supply!
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures = That's Rest!
He leadeth me beside the still waters = That's Refreshment!
He restoreth my soul = That's Healing!
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness = That's Guidance!
For His name sake = That's Purpose!

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death = That's Testing!
I will fear no evil = That's Protection!
For Thou art with me = That's Faithfulness!
Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me = That's Discipline!
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies = That's Hope!
Thou annointest my head with oil = That's Consecration!
My cup runneth over = That's Abundance!
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life = That's Blessing !
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord = That's Security!
Forever = That's Eternity!
Face it, the Lord is crazy about you. I thought this was pretty special!!!
What is most valuable is not what we have in our lives, but WHO we have in our lives!
Do not ask the Lord to Guide your Footsteps if you are not willing to move your Feet.
Peace.

10 Commandments for 21st Century

1. Thou shalt not worry, for worrying is the most unproductive of all human activities.
2. Thou shalt not be afraid, for most things we fear never come to pass.
3. Thou shalt not cross bridges before thou comes to them.
4. Thou shalt not handle but one problem at a time, leaving the others to The Lord until their proper time.
5. Thou shalt not take troubles to bed, for they make poor bedfellows.
6. Thou shalt not try to carry the problems of the world on your shoulders, for only One hath a back that strong.
7. Thou shalt be a good listener, for God often speaks through the mouths of others.
8. Thou shalt not try to relive yesterday, for good or ill, it is gone forever. Live and rejoice in today.
9. Thou shalt dismiss feelings of frustration, for they are rooted in self-pity and interfere with positive action.
10. Thou shalt count thy blessings, never overlooking the smallest, for our biggest blessings are often composed of our smaller ones.

Becoming a Born-Again Believer in Caring for the Environment

In the 60s I was a student on a university campus along with thousands of other baby boomers. Everything was in cultural flux and our generation was confused, scared, angry, opinionated and passionate. We not only wanted change, we demanded it. We were wrapped up in a ruthless war that no one seemed to understand, our president was being exposed for dishonesty and our environment was showing signs of becoming non-sustainable. We were looking for meaning and truth - but most of all we wanted authenticity.

During that time, thousands of us found our answer not through religion, but instead through an authentic faith in Christ. History later referred to us as the Jesus Movement; a movement of young Bible-believing, non-denominational evangelicals. We put our faith and hope in God and we were no longer angry or scared - although still very opinionated and passionate, just about different things. Unfortunately our passion for the environment

was lost in a new focus on the second coming of Christ. Today, the things we once feared as young seekers are now happening: the world population has doubled and the natural resources of fresh water, soil, air and sources of energy have begun to wane. The extinction rate of endangered species has escalated and even the global climate has started to change, threatening the future of our planet.

I am a Christian; and not just a Sunday Christian, but a passionate evangelical Christian pastor of a thriving church. I believe in the Bible with all of my heart and have diligently tried to mold my life around its truths. I believe that Jesus is coming again but sincerely can't claim to know when. I believe that his Kingdom (that is, the Kingdom of God) has come to earth as it is in heaven. I believe that it came because of his ultimate sacrifice on the cross for mankind. I believe that he has called his people to stewardship in his kingdom; to care for the people he loves, specifically the poor and broken, and for the earth that he lovingly created. I believe that this responsibility is not just a suggestion but a commission and a mandate without option.

As a committed student and Bible teacher I have read and taught the story of the flood numerous times, always seeing it the same way until one morning in 2005. The Bible is an amazing book and it has a miraculous characteristic. You can read it over and over again and never get tired of it, always extracting something different with each reading. God has a way of illuminating new understanding to his never-changing truths.

As I read Genesis 9 that morning, the Lord began to reveal something that I'd never seen before. In this portion of scripture, it tells of God's covenant with Noah to never again destroy the whole earth with a flood. God said, "I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." (Genesis 9:11) As I carefully examined the passage I realized for the first time that God's covenant was not made between God and Noah or even God and man, but between God and his entire creation.

God said, "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you-the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you-every living creature on earth" (Genesis 9:9-10). Not only did he say it, but he repeated it six times in a row. He really meant it and to me that was profound.

As God laid out the conditions of this covenant agreement he spoke a number of mandates that everyone should know about. First of all, this was to be a covenant of blessing to humanity. If his mandate were observed, the world's environment would provide provision to all humanity and would allow man to inhabit and populate the earth. He said, "Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything" (Genesis 9:2). Secondly, his covenant demanded responsibility and an accounting that we would use the earth, but not abuse it. He called us to the sanctity of all life. He said, "I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man" (Genesis 9:4). Also, his covenant was not to end with Noah's generation or even with the Old Testament law, but was to be everlasting - for all generations to come. He said, "'This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth'" (Genesis 9:12-13).

This changed everything for me. No longer could I separate my passion for the Kingdom of God from my commitment to care for the environment. I had to tell everyone that Christians should not only care about creation but had been mandated by God to be leaders in a worldwide environmental movement. I shared this mandate with my church, I wrote a book on caring for creation (Saving God's Green Earth) and I became an advocate of Genesis 9 on radio and television. Together with other like-hearted people I started a ministry called 'Let's Tend the Garden'. I wrote tirelessly for all kinds of publications and spoke nationally to anyone who would listen. I told everyone that caring for the creation is not an option but a commission, especially for those who value and believe God's word in his Bible. Many have listened, and others who shared this conviction have joined in an effort to change the minds and practices of Christians worldwide.

Over one-third of the world's population says they profess Christ as Savior and believe that the Bible is true. That is nearly two and a half billion people who, if they recaptured this God-given mandate, could unite to make a lasting difference due to obedience to an ancient but culturally relevant truth.

Tri Robinson is the pastor of the Vineyard Boise Church in Boise, ID, and author of Saving God's Green Earth and Small Footprint, Big Handprint. He lives on a homestead that is almost fully sustainable and blogs about his adventures there at timberbuttehomestead.com.

Relay for Life Update !

From Mary Ann:

I have a form for purchasing luminaries/torches for the Relay for Life event. I'm going to make several copies (with our team # on them) and have them available at the church. This is another way we can raise money!!

We have already turned in \$3833.00 and have at least \$1300.00 more to turn in so that brings our total to \$5133.00 at this time. Pam mentioned that we should have another "Pancakes and Paddle" fundraiser but it hasn't been decided as yet.



**Merrimon Meanderings
Merrimon United Methodist Church
174 China Grove Road
Arapahoe, NC 28510**