



THE MESSENGER

CHURCH INFORMATION

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Pastor's Corner

Dear MEC Family,

Surrounded now by the incomparable fall beauty of the Smoky Mountains, it is hard for me to really believe that just two months ago I was standing in the surf of a Florida beach watching my kids play around me. Where has the time gone? Being there at the beach brought home to me even more just how quickly time is flying. Just one day before, my kids were toddlers, building mounds of sand with their buckets on the beach and venturing out to jump in the waves only when they had the security of mom or dad's hand. Now, the very next day, they are suddenly so big as they swim all around me, bodysurfing, snorkeling, and diving for hermit crabs – all on their own. I am with them, but they don't need me anymore. It is satisfying to see. And heartbreaking. And I feel bittersweet as I watch the sun set, not just on the day, but on our vacation.

Another year has come and gone. Soon we will be back home – to a place we love, and to people we love, but also to “real life.” In just a blink, school is back, and chores, and to do lists. Real life will come back to me in my work and ministry as well. There will be hospital visits, and counseling sessions, and session meetings, and sermons to write. It's all a privilege, all of it, and I am deeply, deeply thankful for the unique opportunity to be a shepherd to people I love in their moments of deepest, “realest” need. But it's also exhausting. There are times when I feel so helpless. I do not want to see people hurt, and I do want to help. I know the One who meets every need perfectly, and who is redeeming all things. But I also know that, for now, brokenness persists, and there are people and needs and hurts that I cannot fix.

It is all what we have been seeing together in Romans. This world around us groans for deliverance. We groan. Even God's Spirit groans with us. Which is great news – but it also means that, at least for now, the reasons and causes for all of the groaning remain.

And that is what I am painfully aware of as I stand on the beach. The knowledge of all that I'm heading back into, of the battles against sin and fallenness that remain, make me want to just stay on vacation a little longer. Where are those disciples who just wanted to build huts on the mountain? “Maybe that's not such a bad idea,” I wonder.

I know it isn't right, of course. I know that none of us, if we love and obey the Lord, are allowed to just check out. We are called to enjoy the times of refreshment, and then walk in the grace of a Savior who promises that His strength and grace are made perfect in our weakness.

And there is one more thought, standing there in the waves: Could it be that this longing, this weariness, this wishing for all to be peaceful is part of how God has made us? Is there something in us that will forever be searching, forever be longing...until God has made all things whole? Could that longing, that “God-shaped hole” be part of how He keeps us from being too at ease in this life, or too comfortable in this world and in the things it offers? Is it right to be tired of things being broken – if it makes us long for His wholeness and our home, and if it makes us willing to be a part of taking that wholeness to others to whom He wants to show grace?

It really is just a blink. Now the leaves are almost gone and the Christmas lights are starting to go up. The days are getting shorter and the nights are getting darker. It's all happening so fast. But it's ok, because in these things there are reminders that it will not always be this way. And this world is not our home. Our God has come, and into the darkness a great Light has shone – the One who comes and says, “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

Putting away the swimsuit and getting out the tree,

Pastor Mark

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Why Youth Stay in the Church When They Grow Up

by Jon Nielson

“What do we do about our kids?” The group of parents sat together in my office, wiping their eyes.

I’m a high school pastor, but for once, they weren’t talking about 16-year-olds drinking and partying. Each had a story to tell about a “good Christian” child, raised in their home and in our church, who had walked away from the faith during the college years. These children had come through our church’s youth program, gone on short-term mission trips, and served in several different ministries during their teenage years. Now they didn’t want anything to do with it anymore. And, somehow, these mothers’ ideas for our church to send college students “care packages” during their freshman year to help them feel connected to the church didn’t strike me as a solution with quite enough depth.

The daunting statistics about churchgoing youth keep rolling in. Panic ensues. What are we doing wrong in our churches? In our youth ministries?

It’s hard to sort through the various reports and find the real story. And there is no one easy solution for bringing all of those “lost” kids back into the church, other than continuing to pray for them and speaking the gospel into their lives. However, we can all look at the 20-somethings in our churches who *are* engaged and involved in ministry. What is it that sets apart the kids who *stay* in the church? Here are just a few observations I have made about such kids, with a few applications for those of us serving in youth ministry.

1. They are converted.

The Apostle Paul, interestingly enough, doesn’t use phrases like “nominal Christian” or “pretty good kid.” The Bible doesn’t seem to mess around with platitudes like: “Yeah, it’s a shame he did that, but he’s got a good heart.” When we listen to the witness of Scripture, particularly on the topic of conversion, we find that there is very little wiggle room. Listen to these words: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Cor. 5:17) We youth pastors need to get back to understanding salvation as what it really is: a miracle that comes from the glorious power of God through the working of the Holy Spirit.

We need to stop talking about “good kids.” We need to stop being pleased with attendance at youth group and fun retreats. We need to start getting on our knees and praying that the Holy Spirit will do miraculous saving work in the hearts of our students as the Word of God speaks to them. In short, we need to get back to a focus on conversion. How many of us are preaching to “unconverted evangelicals”? Youth pastors, we need to preach, teach, and talk—all the while praying fervently for the miraculous work of regeneration to occur in the hearts and souls of our students by the power of the Holy Spirit! When that happens—when the “old goes” and the “new comes”—it will not be iffy. We will not be dealing with a group of “nominal Christians.” We will be ready to teach, disciple, and equip a generation of future church leaders—“new creations”!—who are hungry to know and speak God’s Word.

It is converted students who go on to love Jesus and serve the church.

2. They have been equipped, not entertained.

Recently, we had “man day” with some of the guys in our youth group. We began with an hour of basketball at the local park, moved to an intense game of 16” (“Chicago Style”) softball, and finished the afternoon by gorging ourselves on meaty pizzas and 2-liters of soda. I am not against fun (or gross, depending on your opinion of the afternoon I just described) things in youth ministry. But youth pastors especially need to keep repeating the words of Ephesians 4:11-12 to themselves: “[Christ] gave...the teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” Christ gives us—teachers—to the church, not for entertainment, encouragement, examples, or even friendship primarily. He gives us to the church to “equip” the saints to do gospel ministry, in order that the church of Christ may be built up.

If I have not equipped the students in my ministry to share the gospel, disciple a younger believer, and lead a Bible study, then I have not fulfilled my calling to them, no matter how good my sermons have been. We pray for conversion; that is all we can do, for it is entirely a gracious gift of God. But after conversion, it is our Christ-given duty to help fan into flame a faith that serves, leads, teaches, and grows. If our students leave high school without Bible-reading habits, Bible-study skills, and strong examples of discipleship and prayer, we have lost them. We have entertained, not equipped them...and it may indeed be time to panic!

Forget your youth programs for a second. Are we sending out from our ministries the kind of students who will show up to college in a different state, join a church, and begin doing the work of gospel ministry there without ever being asked? Are we equipping them to that end, or are we merely giving them a good time while they’re with us? We don’t need youth group junkies; we need to be growing churchmen and churchwomen who are equipped to teach, lead, and serve. Put your youth ministry strategies aside as you look at that 16-year-old young man and ask: “How can I spend four years with this kid, helping him become the best church deacon and sixth-grade Sunday school class teacher he can be, ten years down the road?”

3. Their parents preached the gospel to them.

As a youth pastor, I can’t do all this. All this equipping that I’m talking about is utterly beyond my limited capabilities. It is impossible for me to bring conversion, of course, but it is also impossible for me to have an equipping ministry that sends out vibrant churchmen and churchwomen if my ministry is not being reinforced tenfold in the students’ homes. The common thread that binds together almost every ministry-minded 20-something that I know is abundantly clear: a home where the gospel was not peripheral but absolutely central. The 20-somethings who are serving, leading, and driving the ministries at our church were kids whose parents made them go to church. They are kids whose parents punished them and held them accountable when they were rebellious.

(continued on page 3)



Preview of Upcoming Sermons

- Nov. 6th:** God has promised that He works all things for our good – in the lives of those called according to His purpose. What is that purpose? And how can we know that He will bring it about, when so many things seem arrayed against us? This morning, as we start two weeks in Romans 8:29-30, we study the ideas of foreknowledge and predestination in order to see whether once God declares and outcome – is it sure to come about? We will also celebrate the Lord's Supper in worship this morning.
- Nov. 13th:** God promises that He is working to conform us to the image of Christ – and that His working is so sure that His calling and justifying and even His glorifying of us can be spoken of in the past tense. As we spend the morning in Romans 8:29-30 again, marvel at what God says He is doing in you. And be assured that what He has begun, He will bring to completion...even when it seems we have so far to go.
- Nov. 20th:** Romans 8:31-39 is another text we will, Lord willing, spend several weeks on (today and after the holidays). This text carries great promises for our assurance in the Lord's grace and keeping. God has loved His people, a people who do not deserve that love – but a people from whom nothing can separate Him!
- Nov. 27th:** In worship this morning, we begin our advent focus on the coming of the promised Son of God, our Savior. Advent means "to look forward to something." This morning and in this season, let us celebrate the One who has come, and the One who is also coming again! We will be in Isaiah 9:1-7 and its teaching on the "Son of Promise" for our time in God's word this morning.
- Dec. 4th:** We turn next in our advent series on the Sonship of Jesus this morning to Matthew 1, to consider the importance and good news of Jesus being the "Son of David." Matthew bridges the Bible between the Old Covenant and the New, and here Jesus is presented as fulfilling all that was promised before, for He is the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King. We will receive the sacrament of communion in our worship today.
- Dec. 11th:** Our text this morning will be Mark 8. Mark is the only gospel writer to refer to Jesus as "the Son of Mary," and we will consider this morning how a humble man, born of a humble woman, embraced the cross, for He was also the Son of God.
- Dec. 18th:** We come to Luke 2 in our advent series this morning, to consider how Jesus is portrayed as the "Son of Man." Jesus embraced our humanity and joined with our way of life, that having been with us and of us, He could "come to seek and to save that which was lost."
- Dec. 25th:** In our worship this Christmas morning, we continue our advent series by turning to John's gospel, chapter 1 to consider the incarnation of the "Son of God." Jesus was man – and He was God. He is the One who made all things, and He died to redeem all things.
- Jan. 1st:** As we begin a new year in worship this morning, Jim Haider will preach the word of God to us from Hebrews 12.

(Why Youth Stay ...continued from page 2)

They are kids whose parents read the Bible around the dinner table every night. And they are kids whose parents were tough, but who ultimately operated from a framework of grace that held up the cross of Jesus as the basis for peace with God and forgiveness toward one another.

This is not a formula! Kids from wonderful gospel-centered homes leave the church; people from messed-up family backgrounds find eternal life in Jesus and have beautiful marriages and families. But it's also not a crapshoot. In general, children who are led in their faith during their growing-up years by parents who love Jesus vibrantly, serve their church actively, and

saturate their home with the gospel completely grow up to love Jesus and the church. The words of [Proverbs 22:6](#) do not constitute a formula that is true 100 percent of the time, but they do provide us with a principle that comes from the gracious plan of God, the God who delights to see his gracious Word passed from generation to generation: "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Youth workers, pray with all your might for true conversion; that is God's work. Equip the saints for the work of the ministry; that is your work. Parents, preach the gospel and live the gospel for your children; our work depends on you.



Remember them in Prayer...

- For MEC, that God, through the preaching of His word may make us to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that we may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge and grace of God.
 - For those in authority in civil government, that the Lord would direct them in making decisions which lead to peace, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and reverence.
 - Our pastors, elders, and their families, that they might be faithful shepherds of the flock and that their families might be protected from attacks of the enemy.
 - For our deacons, that they may exercise their office with sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Jesus, leading God's people in the expression of the communion of the saints and of helping one another in time of need.
 - For our missionaries and the persecuted church.
 - For Bruce and Linda Farrant as they work to establish the PCA's ministry to Native Americans.
 - For our outreach and witness as a church and as individual believers, that we might love as we are loved, thus making disciples of the One Savior, Jesus Christ.
 - For men of the church, that they would be built up in godliness & in their role as servant-priests, shepherds, & leaders of their own homes.
 - For the women of the church, that they would be godly mothers, wives, and sisters in Christ, and that the Lord would work powerfully through the Women's Bible study.
 - For businessmen and women in the church, that they may work as unto the Lord and for His glory.
 - For the Pregnancy Resource Center, as they try to touch the lives of women with the gospel. so that they will choose life when they are faced with an unwanted pregnancy.
 - For our president and all of our governing authorities whom God has placed in power, that the gospel of Jesus Christ might go forward to build God's kingdom (1 Timothy 2:1-6).
 - For those who teach our covenant children the truths of God's word in Sunday School.
 - For the Spirit to bless the discipleship of our covenant children in our homes, that they would love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.
 - For those who are teaching and discipling through our youth ministry, that a new generation of young adults will learn to walk with and love their Savior and be witnesses to this world.
 - For Derrick Rump and Evan Frisco, as they serve in our country's armed forces. Derrick is currently deployed to Iraq.
 - For David and Vanessa Peters, as David begins his new job and they prepare for the family's move to Virginia.
 - For others in the church who are between jobs and in need financially.
 - For Sandy & Bill Long, as Sandy recovers from a fall and from complications with MS.
 - And for Lynn & William Edwards, during their daughter's pregnancy.
- If you have a prayer request that you would like to have included in the newsletter, please contact Dot Schubert at the church office.

Resources Available

We have several places at MEC where you can go for the right tools to help you and your family grow in grace or to grab resources to pass on to others:

- **The Web Page** – Be sure to check out our newly re-designed church web page (www.maryvillepca.org)! It has lots of up-to-date information about events and ministries at the church and who we are striving to be as we grow in grace together. This is also a great link to give to friends and neighbors who you invite to come to church with you. Plus, all sermons preached at MEC are now available for download via the web page!
- **The Book Table** – Right outside the worship center, in the front narthex of the church, are books on apologetics, grace and the reformed faith, marriage and family life, baptism, and other topics. New titles are added regularly, and all of these books are available for you to take – a small donation to cover costs is requested, but not required!
- **The CD Ministry** – All messages at MEC are recorded and available for distribution. Simply ask a deacon to provide you with a copy of the desired message.
- **By Faith Magazine** – The PCA publishes a magazine full of articles relating to how the reformed faith and reformed people can impact our world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Copies of it are available on the church resource table, or online at www.byfaithonline.com.
- **TableTalk Magazine** – For personal Bible study and devotional time with God, we highly recommend TableTalk magazine, published by Ligonier Ministries. For more information, contact them at www.ligonier.org/tabletalk.

MEC Christmas Schedule

By Sunday, November 20th—Operation Christmas Child



It's the time of year to be sharing blessings in celebration of the greatest blessing of all—the incarnation of Jesus! You and your family may send Christmas gifts and the story of the birth of God's Son to a needy child in another part of the world through the ministry of Samaritan's Purse and the Operation Christmas Child program. To learn guidelines for packing your shoebox and download labels go to www.samaritanaspurse.org/occ. Bring your box to the church and leave it in the marked place in the foyer by November 20th, and it will be dropped off to be sent to a needy child for Christmas. If you have any questions or need a label, please call Jennifer at 448-6381.

Saturday, December 3rd—WIC Christmas Brunch

Ladies of all ages @ MEC are invited to a Christmas Brunch and Celebration of God's gift of Jesus on Saturday, December 3, 2011, at 10 am in Fellowship Hall at the church. Bring a friend, and come to enjoy Christian fellowship and to praise God for the gift of Jesus through scripture, meditation, and carols. If you are able, please bring a brunch snack to share. If not, come anyway! Dress is casual.



Wednesday, December 14th — Christmas Caroling.

Meet at Broadway Towers at 6:30pm. After caroling, everyone is invited to Pastor Mark's house for hot chocolate.



Saturday, December 24th —Christmas Eve Worship Service, 7pm.

Our annual service of hymns, carols, and reflections on the amazing fact of "God With Us" at Christmas.

Sunday, December 25th — Christmas Morning Worship Service, 10:30am.

Our worship service will be at the normal time on Sunday morning. However, there will be no Sunday School that day before the service.

Everyone is invited to come together for these and other events at MEC as we worship and celebrate Jesus during the Christmas season.

The Re-Launch of Marvillepca.org!

"We can rebuild it. Faster, stronger, better than ever before." No these words are not describing a cheesy TV show, nor a new and improved laundry detergent. They apply to our newly redesigned and re-launched web site – www.marvillepca.org!

Swati Rogers has been working to completely reconstruct our site, making it more intuitive, more current, and more useful than ever before. There is whole new content online now, and recent and archived sermons from our worship services are also available.

The church website is an essential tool for reaching out to visitors and to those who may never have the opportunity to worship with us physically – and as a connection tool for our church members, so our heart-felt thanks go out to Swati for her work, and also for the upkeep of the site she will be doing from here forward.

Sew Simple Ladies' Circle

Sew Simple Ladies' Circle is a group of women and girls who love to be creative and to reach out to others with gifts of love. The group was formed in 2007 by Lillian Moland, with a vision for mission work in Congo, Africa. Since then, the vision has expanded to include local agencies such as the Blount County boys and girls homes, Family Promise, Haven House and Refuge Ministries; the Native American ministries of Bruce and Linda Farrant; and Mission of Hope Appalachian ministry.

The gifts have varied as needs are known. The first projects included rolled bandages, layettes, girls' dresses and scripture cards for Tandala Hospital in Congo. More recently the circle has provided fleece blankets, hand knit dolls, decorated flip flops, hanging towels with crocheted tops, hot mats, aprons, coasters, covered hangars, hand crocheted baskets...and much more.



decorated flip flops

The circle includes children, youth and adults who are able and willing to work with their hands to make the gifts. Everyone has different talents and freely shares them for the benefit of others. Lynn Edwards has agreed to assist Lillian with leadership responsibilities.

The circle had a table in front of Broadway Towers at the Fall Festival, thanks to the generosity of Jeannie Schubert, who lives in the building and was able to have a table free of charge. Money raised by selling some of the handmade items of the circle will be used for postage for shipping of gifts and for purchase of supplies to continue making the gifts.

New members are welcomed with open arms. The meetings are held approximately every other Monday at Lillian's home. Dates and times are announced in the monthly calendar and the bulletin. Please consider joining us for the good fellowship of meeting together to serve the Lord through serving others.



Bruce Farrant loading gifts for Native Americans into the Jeep

Apologizing for Jesus

New philosophical, religious, and scientific beliefs and ideas are now reshaping our multicultural and pluralistic society. And for most of us – the words above are confusing, intimidating, and overwhelming. How can we, as Christians, learn to better understand the world and the worldviews around us, with the goal of learning how to better communicate the gospel to the culture around us?

We have started a new series in the Adult Sunday School class this fall that is intended to be highly practical, highly engaging, and highly useful. Beginning with a study of Biblical passages and principles that can guide our attempts at communication, we will then learn about and analyze the belief systems of our neighbors and friends – all with the goal of learning to build bridges and tear down walls with the gospel. Along the way, we will “put things into practice” with case-studies and real-life situations so that we can grow in confidence for understanding our world – and meeting it with the “true truth” of Jesus Christ the Savior.

Everyone is invited to be a part of this new series through the fall and winter, every Sunday morning at 9:30 (with refreshments before!).

Congregational Meeting

Sunday, November 20th

Our annual end of the year congregational meeting will be Sunday evening, November 20th, at 6pm.

We will discuss the new church budget, missions support, and ministry direction for the coming year at this meeting.

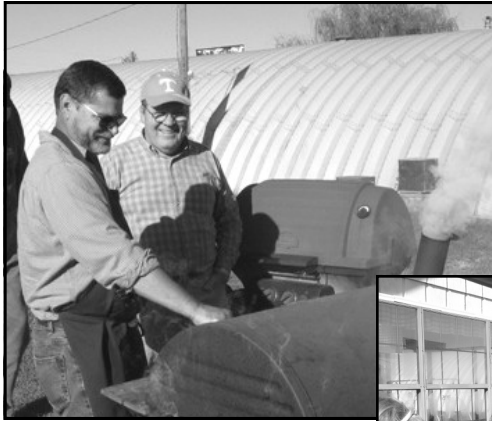
We will also be voting on Glenn Prager's and Bill Long's nominations to once again serve as ruling elders.

All communicant members are invited (and urged!) to attend.

And may the Lord find us faithful as a church in all that we do!

Neighborhood Cookout @ MEC

Sunday, October 2, 2011



MEC Regular Weekly Schedule

Sunday	9:30 am	Sunday School for all ages
	10:30 am	Worship Communion every 4th Sunday
	6:00 pm	Youth Group
Wednesday		Family Night—(except for 11/23/11)
	6:15 pm	Refreshments
	6:30-7:30 pm	Men's and Women's Study Groups
	6:30-7:30 pm	Covenant Kids (Kindergarten—Grade 6)



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