From the Pastor’s Pen — Rethink Our Ministry

(If you really love your God and your church, read this)

When Jesus called Simon and Andrew, who are fishermen, He affirmed their occupation, and promises to use that for the Kingdom of God. Now we, who call ourselves followers of Christ, want to do the very thing that we are good at, and do it for the Kingdom and glory of God. In our days, we call it “making disciples” or discipleship. With that in mind, many of us wanted to do the will of God, and bring all people of all nations, races, and cultures of origins to God. We call it “Ministry”.

The sad thing is that with our limited understanding of the “Ministry” with which Jesus wants us to love our neighbor, and bring all people to salvation and discipleship, we may have done, or be doing it all in the wrong way. No wonder there is little or no results out of our “Ministry”.

There is a saying (of which I cannot recall the source) that goes something like this: “People do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” Perhaps we know all the ministries in the church, and know what we have done, and are doing the best things, but we are only doing, and telling them we know what we are doing. Then the people never really know how much we care. All of the methods that we use being “fishers of men”, may be something that the people see as being “Fish trap” and or baited hooks. If the “Ministry” that we do looks like a fish trap or a baited hook, then they are fish traps and a “Baited hooks.” In other words, if we conduct our ministry in a way that will draw the people to the church so that so that we can have more members, and increasing membership means more support for the budget of the church, then that is a “fish trap” and “Baited hook”. If the “Ministry” we are doing in the church is to be very selective in term of the fish we want to catch, that they must look like us, act like us, and think like us, then it is a “fish trap” and “baited hook”. Believe me, the big fish today are very sophisticated too, even the ones we think would be an easy catch. Once they see the trap, and the hook inside the bait that you put out, they will never come close to it again. For some who may continue to come, they know how to peel off your bait from the hook.

A true ministry that Jesus and the apostles did was to use the loving and caring soft safety net to guide and usher all or the fish to the “Gospel Feast”, and allowing the Spirit of God to convince them, teach them, and lead them to their salvation and discipleship. If we do this, then people will see “how much we care” and know “how much we know” too. When Jesus ministered to the people, He never said “Come to our “Synagogue” Church. He just simply said “your sins are forgiven, go, and sin no more.” Coming to the Synagogue, on the other hand, was the act of gratitude with which those sinners responded to His love and His care. There was only one time (Luke 5:14) that Jesus told the Leper to go and show himself to the priest, and offer sacrifices, but again, that was to be certified (proved) that he was clean. The decision to follow Jesus and witness of the Gospel was what the saved sinner chose to do. This is a kind of “Ministry” that is genuine love and care for the people, without any “fish trap” or “baited hooks”.

I would like to challenge us all to look at, and look back at, the ministries of our church, and see if we have offered true Ministry, as Jesus called us to do. I cannot be the judge, that is why I want to invite all of us to be our own judge of our ministry and discipleship. Perhaps, we could do the real ministry in our church.

Reverend CherLue Vang
Missions Ministry

By the O.O.C.

Gleaning Ministry—There were no Gleaning Missions during the month of January 2016. Our Gleaning Van remains at the OOC’s house due to our rain saturated grounds. It is available for use should the need arise. I do not expect any missions in the near future, so, I will do routine maintenance while I have the van at my house.

Loaves and Fishes—Our church has provided 15 items of food to Loaves and Fishes during the month of January 2016. The requested item for January 2016 was one two lb. bag of rice or one 24 oz. box of quick grits. The requested item for February 2016 is one 18 oz. jar of peanut butter or one 16 oz. jar of jelly. As always, substitutions are welcome.

Community Garden—Our Community Garden remains wet but still producing healthy green leaf vegetables for residents of our community. It is very unusual that we have had such mild winter weather this late in the season, so we will give thanks and praise to our God and allow the greens to grow until the inevitable frost “does them in”.

Missions Ministry—We have provided one local family with $50.00 for food during the month of January 2016, and we are planning to have our “Souper Bowl” event on Super Bowl Sunday, 7 February 2016. We will have our usual “Tailgate Party” in the Fellowship Hall. All you need for admission is any nonperishable food donation. All donations will go to Loaves and Fishes, and our “Souper Bowl” contest will predict the winner of the Super Bowl. Since we expect the winner to be a certain local team from Charlotte, I advise all to bring lots of cans and show your support for the Home Team. To be fair, supporters of the “other team” are also invited to attend.

And the winner is…. “Open Hearts Worship”

Thirty-eight responses were received by the Worship Committee when they solicited help from the congregation in naming Wingate UMC’s alternative worship service, which is held each second Sunday of the month in the Fellowship Hall. “Open Hearts Worship” was selected as the name after garnishing the most selections for the non-traditional style of worship that this service provides. Gene Lamm, chair of the Worship Committee, offers thanks to all who participated in this choice.
Prayer Ministry

**Continual Need:** Emily Lawrence, Rollin Channell, Lynn Deason, Eddie Goodman, Steve Ferguson, James Moser, Charles Riddle, Melva Davis, Kevin Neuberth, Diana Starnes, Polly Mohr (Sue Channell’s sister), Luther Johnson (Verma Johnson’s brother), Ronald and Robert Eaton (Carol Manser’s sons), Christopher Stafford (Carol Manser’s grandson), Lonnie Whitley (Carrie Wallace’s brother), Martha Burgess (Doris Wheeler’s sister), Aimee Risch (mother of Victor Hendrix)

**Current Need:** Molly Bentley, Bill Dunlap, Ervin Hamilton, Verma Johnson, Mary Pressley (Georgia Coyle’s sister) Gwen Hurst, Wayne and Dwight Hurst (Mildred Hurst’s sons), Thomas Knight (Denise’s friend), Gene Ferguson (Steve Ferguson’s brother), Naomi Hamilton Hill (Ervin Hamilton’s aunt), J. B Ashcraft (Randy Ashcraft’s father), Eunice Perrone (Leslie Ashcraft’s mother)

**Homebound:** Vivian Chaney, Robert Troy, Carol Manser

**Nursing Homes:** Faye McCord

**College Students:** Matthew Ashcraft (NC State), Candace Allison, Douglas Lawrence (UNCC), Jonathan Helms-Brown (Wingate University)

**Missionaries:** Rev. Umba Kalangwa, Tanzania, East Africa; Davi Trotti, African Mercy Ship; Rev. Macklann Basse, Togo, West Africa

**Always:** Our World, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Church

**Grieving a Loss:** The family of David Rowe, who passed Jan. 19th.

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**Lent to Easter Events**

- Just prior to Lent, on **Fat Tuesday, Feb. 9th**, Smyrna UMC will host a Community Pancake Supper at 6 pm in their Fellowship Hall. It’s all you can eat, and cost is a donation to Smyrna’s Relief Fund.

- The Lenten Season begins with **Ash Wednesday**, which this year is **Feb. 10th**. Our own Rev. CherLue Vang, with provide the message for a joint Ash Wednesday worship service with the Smyrna-Wingate Charge and Wingate Baptist Church at 6:45 pm in the Wingate Baptist Sanctuary. Prior to the service, Wingate Baptist will provide a meal, at 6 pm in their Fellowship Hall. If you plan to dine there, please get your reservation to the WBC office by Feb. 9th.

- **Palm/Passion Sunday**, which begins Holy Week, is **March 20th**, observed at regular worship service times.

- Another combined worship service will be held at Wingate Baptist for **Maundy Thursday**, which is **March 24th**. Rev. Derrill Smith, pastor of WBC, will bring the message at the service which will begin at 6:45 pm. Again, a meal will be prepared ahead of the worship, at 6 pm in the Fellowship Hall of WBC, so they will need to know how many will be attending by March 22nd.

- Smyrna UMC will host an **Easter Sunrise Service**, at 7 am on **March 27th, Easter Sunday**. A breakfast will follow this worship, in Smyrna’s Fellowship Hall.

- The Wingate UMC Chancel Choir will offer an **Easter Cantata**, “My Savior’s Love”, in the Sanctuary at 11 am worship, Easter Sunday, March 27th.
Help Our Mobile Food Pantry

Help will be needed from our churches each time the Mobile Food Pantry distributes food in 2016. As part of the Anson-East Union Missional Network, there are ways for many in our Smyrna-Wingate Charge to participate in this effort to provide food for those in need.

The next distribution will be at Morven UMC (411 E. Main St., Morven, NC 28119) on Wednesday, Feb. 3rd. Persons who can physically distribute food provided from the Second Harvest Food Bank truck will be necessary, as well as those who are able to register and visit with clients, and to assist some through the lines. Please be present by 9 am if you are able.

Wingate UMC will be the site of the MFP distribution in March (Wednesday the 2nd) and we are asking that members of our congregations make special preparations for this event. Please collect plastic grocery bags that can be used by volunteers to bag various food items for clients. If you have access to any sturdy boxes, preferably with hand-holds, it would be helpful for you to share those. On that morning, we will need to begin gathering at the Fellowship Hall at 8 am for setup. As host church, it would be best if as many of our members as possible attend.

Throughout the year, you can be an advocate for this ministry by spreading the word about the opportunities for receiving food, and providing forms for eligibility to become a client of the MFP. Forms are available in the Fellowship Hall and from Pastor Lue, Ervin Hamilton, or Susan Hendrix; so that if you learn of someone in need, help can be provided.

This ministry has a great reach in our communities. In January, in spite of brutal cold and harsh winds, the numbers were lower than usual, but still 95 households were served which included: 42 people aged 0-18; 92 people between ages 19-64; 35 people who are 65 and older. That’s 169 people in all! This was achieved with 29 volunteers from our various churches. This distribution included 4 new clients from Union County and 2 new clients from Anson County.

Of course, your prayers for this ministry are also coveted, especially the first Wednesday of each month, when distributions are made. Here is the schedule after March:

April 6th @ Bethel Charge UMC, 5180 NC 742 Hwy S, Wadesboro at Community Center
May 4th @ Peachland UMC, 19 Allen St., Peachland, NC 28133
June 1st @ Lilesville UMC, 310 Wall St., Lilesville, NC 28091
July 6th @ Marshville UMC, 310 Ross St., Marshville, NC 28103
August 3rd @ Wingate Baptist Church, 109 W. Elm St., Wingate, NC 28174
Sept. 7th @ Mt Beulah Baptist Church, 3373 Country Club Rd., Wadesboro, NC 28170
Oct. 5th @ Morven UMC. 411 E. Main St. Morven, NC 28119
Nov. 2nd @ Austin Grove Baptist Church, 5919 Austin Grove Ch Rd., Marshville, NC 28103
Dec. 7th @ Bethel Charge UMC, 5180 742 Hwy S., Wadesboro at Community Center

In case of rain on a scheduled date, call Anson Crisis Assistance, 704-694-2445 to hear a recording about cancellations.
How to Play Wingate UMC’s “Souper Bowl”

We know how we expect the Carolina Panthers to play in the Super Bowl football championship on Feb. 7th (Great!), but in case you’re not familiar with how to play Wingate UMC’s “Souper Bowl” which will take place earlier on the same day (and predict a Panthers’ win), here’s some instructions:

- Come to the Fellowship Hall right after worship, and bring one (or more) can of soup or other non-perishable food item and place it (or them) in the designated zone with all other items brought. Help any friends/guests to do the same.

- After the Pastor’s prayer, select the “Tailgate” fare, soup, and drink of your choice, and consume said food while engaging in fellowship with other players and fans.

- When the game whistle blows, line up in the center of the playing field (Fellowship Hall) to await your turn at tossing the small football into the goal (Loaves and Fishes box). If you are successful, you may place one item into the team area (Panthers or Broncos) that you would like to win the Super Bowl. If you are not successful, you may take your place at the end of the line to try again later. You are allowed to substitute yourself with a “ringer” (more accurate throwing player) when your turn comes. (Note: Several of the Stewart Street Home residents are excellent ringers!)

- Play will proceed until all food items have been placed either on the side of the Panthers (yes!) or the Broncos (huh?!). The team with the most items (points) on their side is predicted to win the Super Bowl. However, the absolute winner is always the hungry in our community who are provided for by the food collection.

- If you do not accept a position as a player, please fill the sidelines as a fan, offering encouragement to all players and enjoying the game.

Uwharrie UMW District Mission Study Feb. 27th

“Latin America: People & Faith” will be the topic for the Uwharrie UMW District Mission Study which will be held at 1st UMC Ashboro on Saturday, Feb. 27th. Rev. Dana McKim, minister to Pfeiffer University will lead the study. Registration & refreshments will begin at 9:30 am, and the study will run from 10 am to 2 pm. Participants are asked to bring a bag lunch; water and tea will be provided. Childcare for young children and a mission study oriented lesson for older children is available at no cost. There is a $5 cost for adult participants. For more information, or to register, contact Linda Ferguson.
Loaves and Fishes Ministry
February Donations Requested:
One 18oz. Jar of Peanut Butter or One 16oz. Jar of Jelly
As always, substitutions are welcome.

Wingate United Methodist Men’s Breakfast
The Wingate UM Men will now be meeting for breakfast once a quarter, on the fourth Sunday, at 8:00am. The next meeting is scheduled for April 24th.

United Methodist Women’s Group
Wingate UMW will next meet in the Fellowship Hall following worship on April 10th. A light lunch will be served before the business, and information about upcoming Conference and Uwharrie District events will be provided. All women (12 years & up) are welcome.

2016 Nursery Team
If you would like to be part of the Nursery Team, to care for our youngest and cutest during worship on Sundays, please contact Susan Hendrix, who is developing a schedule for the year. More available workers will mean fewer times to serve during the year, so please encourage each other to consider this ministry.

Find Wingate UMC online.
We are currently making changes that will increase our presence online. We have combined the blog with all of the website information at https://wingateumc.wordpress.com/ and added several new contributors. Hopefully, this will ensure that we keep the information up-to-date and interesting for those who find us on the internet. Also, there are several new admins on our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/wingateumc, including Pastor Lue who is posting podcasts of his sermons. So if you miss the service, you can catch up on what he has to say there. If you have suggestions or questions, contact us at either location or email Susan Ozmore at sozmore@yahoo.com.

Flowers for Worship
If you would like to place flowers in the church for worship, please contact Pat Byrum by the Friday prior to the date you wish to place them. If the flowers are in honor or memory of a person or event please inform Pat at that time so that proper notation can be made in the bulletin.
The time of Lent is soon upon us — early, this year as Easter is early. It is the time that Christians remember Christ’s forty days of trial in the Wilderness, where he was tempted by the Satan. It is a time of prayer, repentance, reflection and atonement for Christians. I once heard a Jewish comedian compare it to Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement; “Forty days, one day, forty days, one day...even for sin you pay retail!” I thought that was funny, even though it misses the element of preparation that is part of Lent.

By tradition, among Southern Methodists by whom I was raised, at least, the remembrance during Lent takes the form of self-denial — giving up something — from Ash Wednesday until Easter morning, excluding Sundays. People I’ve known have practiced fasting (usually from sunrise to sunset which can cause trouble when daylight savings time starts), donating the price of a meal each day, eschewing favorite beverages or food, and such. More recently, some folks have started adding something they wouldn’t normally do to their routine in lieu of or in addition to sacrificing something. In either case, the point is to perform an act that, when you do it, reminds you of Christ and his sacrifice for us. I usually stay with giving up something as it is what I was raised to do. As a result, one of the major questions I have to answer this time of year is “What shall I give up for Lent?”

My mother was always very serious about Lent and she felt it was her duty as a Christian parent to assist God in running the universe as it applied to me and my siblings. Not only did I have to tell her what I was giving up, she would monitor my successes and failures. Having a “Lent cop” on duty kind of skewed the selection process when picking out something to give up, let me tell you. It had to be something you could live completely without for the next six weeks. She didn’t believe in the “Sundays off” rule (Did Jesus get one day off each week in the Wilderness? I don’t think so!) or in the words of the minister who pointed out that even a failure brought Jesus to mind and that was the whole point. Partaking of something you had chosen to give up during Lent was betraying Jesus and we’d have none of that around our house, thank you. The year I took the ninth grade Civics class and learned about the Constitution, I tried to give up homework for Lent. It was the perfect solution, I reasoned. I was definitely giving something up and, boy, would I ever thank Jesus every time I skipped an assignment. The teacher couldn’t say anything because the Government and government employees can’t step on the rights guaranteed to the citizens by the Constitution. I was guaranteed the right to worship God in my own way by the Constitution and Lent was definitely part of my religion. Yes, perfect, I figured. I figured wrong, of course. My first clue should have been that, apparently, nobody else had ever thought of it, but in those days that idea didn’t raise as big a red flag as it does now. That was my first head-on experience with the truth that minors aren’t guaranteed squat by the Constitution, unless it suits some adult’s purpose.

Anyway, picking something to give up is critical. Last year, I gave up the left lane. It made for a good bumper sticker — I GAVE UP THE LEFT LANE FOR JESUS. I would drive only in the right lane — no passing, no lane changes to get ahead, no left lane for any reason. The reality of that denial was that it was a very difficult commitment for me to keep. The main reason was that it seems inappropriate to remember the trials of Jesus in the Wilderness while thinking unkind thoughts at the vehicles in the lane ahead of you that seem determined to go well below the speed limit and YOU CAN’T GO AROUND. I kid you not, one guy I got stuck behind would have made better time if he’d turned off his engine and put up a sail. I may go with that one again this year, though — in the end, it helped me become a little more patient last year. I could use more patience and this way I can both remember Jesus and become a little more like him. That’s an even better deal than the one I was trying to get in the ninth grade.

Kidding aside, the path of Lent starts us along the way that finally bring us to the Friday of Sorrows, Palm Sunday, the Maundy, the Last Supper, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. If we approach along this path with devotion, with piety, with repentance of our sins and seeking atonement, we will be renewed in our joy over our salvation by the death and resurrection of Jesus. I’d say, this is a bargain at only forty days.
February Birthdays

Many Happy Returns of the Day

Terri Rankin — February 1st
Steven Walden — February 5th
Robert Baker — February 11th
T.J. Benton — February 11th
Chloe Benton — February 15th
Clayton Heid — February 15th
Sean Epperson — February 15th
Krista Walden — February 18th
Todd Benton — February 21st
Ledale Rollins — February 24th
Aubrey Walden — February 25th