



July 2015
Number 227



UPDATE

We kicked off our “Access for All” capital campaign in Fall 2011 with a reboot last spring – and many of us have made pledges to be paid through 2016 for four projects at our building. Work has been completed on two projects and two remain. As with any other renovation project on a building with some age, there are always surprises along the way that create extra costs.

I’m convinced that the money we spend on these “Access for All” projects will pay great dividends for many years. In addition to making our building more accessible to all, these projects will enable us to SERVE our community more.

The steeple painting and repairs, along with the painting of the church front, were completed first. Next was the installation of the elevator. Wow! That was complicated and far exceeded our preliminary estimates. But how wonderful now to have our church fully accessible.

Next is the chapel renovation, creating a very flexible space for all sorts of events. The chapel was built in 1940, so our needs have changed (including wanting more comfortable seats!). One of the biggest expenses will be all new electrical (increasing the number of outlets from 3 to 60!). Other improvements will be removing the lovely blue carpet and **refinishing the maple floors underneath. We’ll add a coffee bar with refrigerator and water, new stage, new audio-visual,** and an accessible entrance and ramp from the parking lot.

All of this will greatly increase the possibilities for that space so we can use it much more. New flexible seating and tables can be arranged in many ways for a variety of events – including worship services, small weddings and funerals, receptions, concerts, performing arts and classes. And it will be a great addition for community groups looking for a meeting space – including the many non-profit organizations that already use our facilities.

Cost will be around \$200,000, and we have about 80% of that in the bank. We’ll start in July and should finish by October. Tessera service will temporarily relocate.

Our building and grounds committee has already spent many days in there getting it ready for the contractor (and saving us a lot of money).

The final project will be big renovation of our very outdated kitchen to bring it up to commercial code (another \$200,000). If we receive enough funds in the next few months, we may keep the contractor here to start on the kitchen. This will save us some money since the contractor can keep their staging and crew here.

If you made a pledge, please review it to gauge your progress. We really need a push for the next couple of months. And **you don’t have to pledge to give. You can simply give your offering in a Capital Campaign envelope or make a note if you are paying online.** Remember, this is in addition to the general offering that goes for our operating budget.

Want to learn more?

See our special “capital campaign” section on our church website.

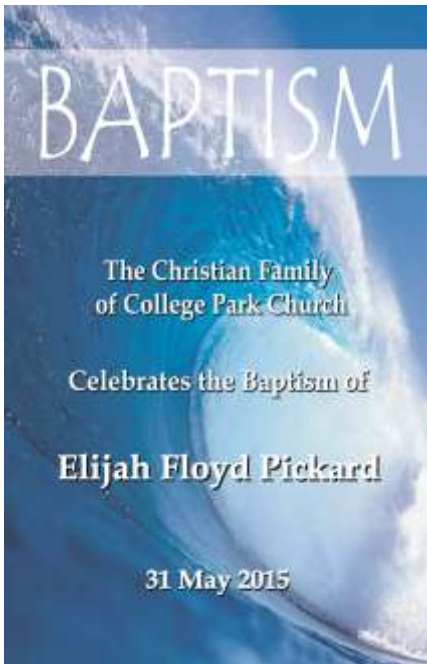
See the bulletin board near the office.

Pick up one of the newsletters from last year.

Talk to one of us on the campaign team (Bill Ingold, Brian Carden or me) or Michael.

We are so lucky to have some extremely bright and talented members that volunteer many hours to research, plan and **supervise this work. This is complicated stuff and thank goodness I don’t have to understand it all. So please thank these volunteers, pray for them and don’t be bashful about offering your talents to help us in the planning and completion of these projects to provide Access for All! THANK YOU!**

Mark File
31 May 2015



When I think about God and Jesus I think about a smiling man with rainbow robes. He makes me feel loved, safe, and important, and I LOVE to feel important. I feel closest to God when I have had a bad day and then I pray and after that I feel very close to God.

I have come to College Park Baptist Church since I was a baby. My friends and I were in the nursery here together. I was

dedicated here and I go to Sunday School and choir, Wednesday nights and Tessera. My favorite Bible story is the one of Esther because she was so brave to be married to the enemy and still be fighting for the Jews and still be Jewish at heart.

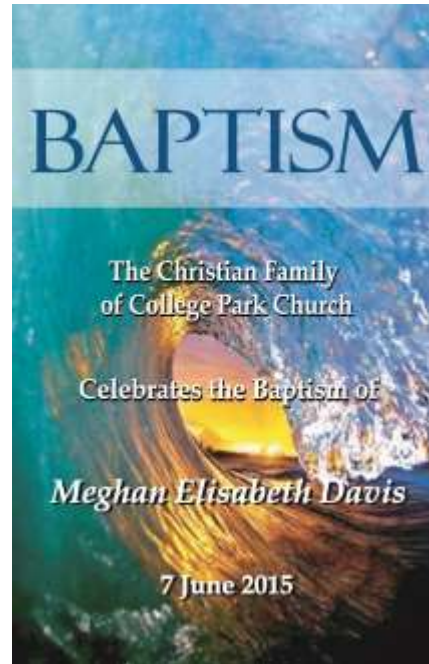
When I was 3½ I was diagnosed with Autism. Then when I was four my biological dad moved out and my mom and he got divorced. He was kind of rough to be around and I felt confused a lot when I was with him. He **smoked and I would ask him, "Why?" and he wouldn't say anything usually. When I was older he'd say "This is something I got hooked on, don't do it."** I worried about him a lot. When I was 7½, he died. God and my church were there for me during this time but it impacted me a lot that next year. It caused me some emotional changes, **but what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.**

The summer after he died I was at vacation bible school **in the mountains at my Nana and Papa's church. Their preacher Chad asked all the people at VBS if they wanted to be saved. About seven people raised their hands and, in that moment, I was one of the ones who asked Jesus into my heart. Over the next few years I have learned more about what it means to be a Christian and to follow Jesus and today I am ready to be baptized.**

To me, following Jesus means several things. I think my life is going to change. I think it will change how I treat people. Even though I have already been trying to follow Jesus, I think I will be kinder to people in the future. Following Jesus is also a responsibility and I will be more serious about it. By getting baptized I am telling the world that I am following Jesus.

I try to live by the saying that Everyday Above Ground is a Great Day.

Elijah Pickard
31 May 2015



I'm a science and math person. I need to have proof to believe things. Naturally this makes faith very hard for me. By sixth grade, I began realizing that there was very little, if any proof for the religion that had been preached to me since infancy. As I learned about religions all over the world, I questioned the legitimacy of my own religion. What makes "God" better than Allah? How is

Jesus better than Lao Tse? How is the Bible any more real than the Three Baskets of Wisdom? And ultimately, is any of it even real? Taking such leaps of faith was nearly impossible for me. I struggled with it so much that by ninth grade I renounced all religion as a fallacy. Then, Maya Angelou died. This seems strange, but after she died, OWN played reruns of all the shows Maya and Oprah did. One of them was about religion. Oprah asked **Maya to define God and Maya replied "God is all." This was a helpful way for me to see God - it felt less restricting and exclusive – it was more all-embracing and open.**

"God" to me slowly evolved to be the spirit of the universe shown through all of us. And Jesus Christ is the purest form of this spirit on Earth. It is not that other religions are wrong or bad, they just see different people and different texts as the truest form of the "all." – Such a realization gave me the freedom to develop and better understand my own faith – College Park has been such a significant part of this journey. Michael's sermons created a picture of God as endless, as a capital S something that we can never truly understand. Sermon series focused on subjects like Dr. Seuss and God in books furthered my ability to see God and Jesus in a new way. These helped teach me that while the Bible is important, God is too big to be restricted to just the Bible. The gospel is living and is found all around us. Ideas such as "we all have both light and dark within us, what matters is which we choose to act on" helped me create a clearer sense of who my God was and the type of person I ought to be as a follower of Jesus. Jesus became clearer to me through parables like Matthew 25 – the one about the goats and the sheep. It helped me see that being Christian and following in Jesus' ways was more than just saying "oh yeah I'm a Christian" but it is doing all you can to help those who can't help themselves.

After becoming knowledgeable on various sermons, books, parables, and more, I remembered the story of **Matthew 6. "You are the light of the world," it says. To me, that summarizes Christianity. "God", the spirit of the**

universe, Something, whatever one chooses to call it, is the balance of light and dark in the world and Jesus is the clearest form of Light the world has yet to see. Following Jesus means being the light in such a dark world. It means helping those in need, it means smiling at someone when they seem sad, it means appreciating the small beauties or small lights of the world such as the laughter of friends or the smile of a proud parent or the joy of a gradu or the way the sun sets on the flat Texas horizon.

With the evolution of my view on my religion, I began to understand the mission work that we do better and the activities of youth better. While having a ramp built on my house would not be a big deal for me, it was for the lovely old man in Hiawassee Georgia that we built a ramp for last summer. It was exactly the light he needed to get through his day and the gratitude and thankfulness he shared with us was the love of God in its purest form.

After building up my faith for about a year, I decided I wanted to be baptized. For me, this baptism means deciding to be a Christian, not because I was born into it, but because I have decided that I want to follow the **teachings of Jesus. By being baptized, I'm saying that I'm not yet finished, that I am on a journey of faith where I'm learning a little more each day about who I am and who God is - I want to continue to look for God in the people and even the other religions of the world, I want to be God's light in the world.**

My baptism is me taking the first step as a Christian without seeing the whole staircase. It is especially important to me to be baptized here at College Park before my family moves to Texas. I love this place – it is where I have grown up and is a place where I know I will always be welcomed and where my faith can grow and my questions can be, if not answered, at least discussed. **Even though I'm moving a thousand miles away, I will always be able to call College Park my church and there is no church I would rather be baptized in. I would like to thank you all for providing such a loving and nurturing environment for me as I've grown up.**

Meghan Davis
7 June 2015

Vacation Bible School August 10-14



Planning your child's summer activities? Be sure to include Vacation Bible School, August 10 - 14, on your calendar.

This year's theme will be **"Handle with Care"** and we'll have Bible stories, activities, crafts and music focusing on caring for our planet. VBS is for Pre-K through 5th graders. Drop-off begins at 8:30 with VBS from 9 am until 12 noon. Interested in helping with VBS? Please email: leaann.rodgers@gmail.com.



What do you think of when you think of God? Different ideas of God have spoken to me more clearly at different times: As a teenager I sang about God being a consuming fire, wanting certain parts of myself to be burned away, or at least refined. In my 20s, after a breakup with a close friend, I took great comfort in the idea of Jesus as a friend. I read the stories of his interactions with the disciples over and over, analyzing them and hoping that I, too, could find a friend in

Jesus. These days the picture of God that speaks to me most strongly is that of communion: ordinary bread and wine made extraordinary when shared with one another. This is the real reason that my family attends Tesseria - we don't have communion every week, but we have it more often than not.

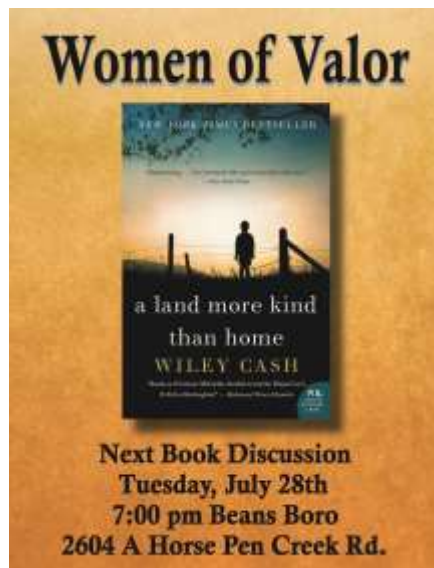
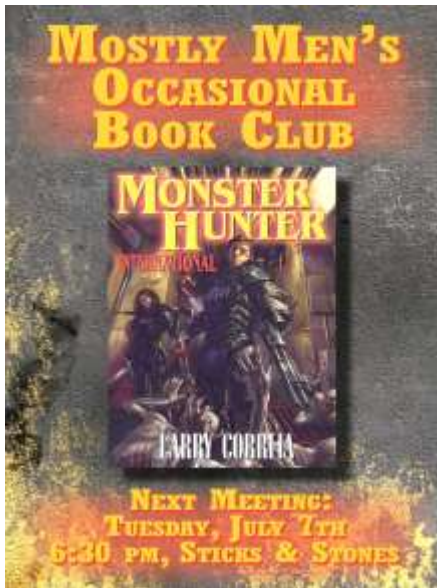
It was with these ideas in mind, both past and present, that I started Lauren Winner's newest book *Wearing God*, which takes some of the metaphors for God that are found in the Bible and looks at them in a new way. If that sounds impossibly intellectual, take heart: Lauren is a wise and winsome guide through these ideas of God as you may not have considered before: God as beekeeper and tree and clothing. When I finished the book I felt as if I had been given something powerful: both a new vocabulary for God and a new way to look at the Bible.

Full disclosure: I have been a Lauren Winner fan girl from the minute I read her first book over ten years ago. I once took a writing workshop with her, and I went to a reading not long after *Wearing God* came out. When Michael asked me my opinion of this new book, I was too busy drawing hearts around Lauren Winner's name to answer him.

All joking aside, I think *Wearing God* is a great book for our congregation. In the introduction, Lauren says she was confronted with the idea that her pictures of God were old ones and needed updating. Over the years, I have heard many members of this congregation speak about the places they find God: in laughter, in animals, in nature. But many of us also struggle with ideas about God that we absorbed when we were children. We might struggle with the idea of God as father because of difficult family relationships, or we might simply not have much experience with things like kings or shepherds. The good news that Lauren is sharing with us through her book is that there are other ways that the Bible speaks about God that might be worth investigating.

No metaphor or picture of God is perfect, because God is bigger than all of our pictures, but the more pictures we have of God, the more avenues we have to understand God's work in the world. If you think your ideas about God might need an update, then please join us for Sunday School this summer as we investigate them together. We meet at 10:00 in the fellowship hall and we invite you to join us!

Kari Baumann
7 June 2015



Vow Renewal:
Mark & Angela Fleming



Mark and Angela are truly special people. They came to our church, College Park, soon after I did, and have been enduring friends ever since.

I have seen them go through a lot:

various parenting phases from toddlerhood on (the good, the bad, and the ugly!), job changes, family crises, health issues, and lots of “ordinary time” in between. So I’ve witnessed them go through all kinds of stages.

What I’ve learned about them will not be a surprise to family and close friends gathered here today: Angela and Mark are deeply good people. They are steady, consistent, true-blue people who are resilient and have the rare quality of being able to change and to grow to meet each new life phase. That’s what makes them distinctive.

I am asked to officiate many important life commitments – both new marriages and renewals of old. And, while I consider them all an honor and meaningful obligation of my job as minister, I feel better about some than others. I often meet with couples – explore their strengths and potential weaknesses, and get a beat on their personalities. What I see in Angela and Mark is a melding of two lives that reflect a serendipitous match. They are a fascinating mix of differences and similarities.

They have enough striking differences to enliven their union and offer challenges for growth over the years. (Who here hasn’t chuckled to hear Angela freely admit she could no sooner be a member of Mark’s writing support group than the man on the moon?!) In fact, I think they’ve learned to, not only accept each other’s profound differences, but to celebrate them and certainly not brush them aside. That’s crucial in a marriage.

But, alongside those very real differences, they have striking points of commonality. Yes, opposites often attract, but people also need to share enough inner values and approaches to life to ground them in a well-grooved friendship that can span multiple decades.

Mark and Angela’s common values are many. Some are so simple and ordinary that they risk flying beneath our radar.

They are both calm and organized. Just think over how this weekend is unfolding! It is more than evident that they planned ahead, made lists, thought through details, **thought carefully through people’s needs and logistics.** Because of that, so many others benefit! Their emailing **menus for the weekend made Ann and me smile: that’s so like them, we thought.**

HELPING HANDS

Helping Hands Ministry Team

We are getting back to doing the things we love to do in warm weather: lawn mowing, hedge trimming, gutter cleaning, trash removal, etc. The point is the Helping Hands team wants to hear from you about projects that we can take on that can help our members. We will be expanding on a suggestion presented by Brian Carden recently to compile our own “Angie’s List” of handymen (church members or others), electricians, plumbers, etc. that can be a reference source for our members. If requests are outside our level of expertise or manpower, we will be glad to offer advice and direction in tackling the project.

Team members: Wayne Jones, Tim Lowrance, Donna Gregory, Caryanne Story-Bunce, Joel Rieves, Sterling Suddarth, Jenny Ward-Sutherland, Jerry Elkins, Kevin Short, Mike Kirkman, and Ronnie Brannon.

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Secondly, they bring, paired with that calm, a quiet sense of humor. When plans go awry, as they often do in life, they may stress and get frustrated temporarily, but they have learned the power of making a way to laugh over the obstacle or surprising problem, and then they adjust plans accordingly. This is a more powerful strength than many people realize. It means they are resilient; they know life is not perfect, people are not perfect, and they **accept that. They don’t spend undue** time crying over spilled blood, uh milk.

Related is a shared value Mark and Angela both have in equal measure! They are deeply accepting people. They accept each other, flaws and all, over and over again, finding new ways to come at problems with fresh resiliency. They

accept others’ flaw; that means their friends, family members, and church family. In life, lots of people let you down, disappoint you. Mature people get that, and don’t walk away. Mark and Angela exhibit that kind of mature acceptance that never is experienced as judgmental or rejecting.

They both share a common faith. I don’t mean simply that they are both Christian. What I find wonderful and rare is how their faith has evolved in similar key ways. They both have held loosely some parts of their faith tradition that divide many people in our wider society. Instead, they cling more dearly to a few core affirmations that really matter to them and weave them together.

God is
God is love incarnate.
God wills good towards all.

These core affirmations give birth to all of Mark and **Angela’s impulses, vocationally and otherwise.**

Mark’s creativity has always brimmed over helplessly. And even though he often writes in a solitary context, he knows it is a gift from God meant to be shared and communicated with a wider community. In his writing, he often wrestles with and plays with topics of faith – though **not in a conventional way. I love that he doesn’t fall neatly,** into generic categories, even if it makes his writing less easily marketable. He has always stayed true to his impulses and craft, whatever the cost. I value that about him more than I can say. My wife co-teaches a **“God in Books” Sunday** school class with him weekly, and he brings a thoughtful genuineness to all his discussions, never having any agenda other than to model pondering and questioning in pursuit **of a more genuine, real faith. Angela’s faith is equally core to her – and finds obvious expression in her interaction with others.**

Finally, both Angela and Mark share a rare quality of compassionate love, which has governed their core life endeavors, both vocationally, and non-job-related.

Angela’s job as a nurse practitioner – aiding both the physical and mental health of people of all ages obviously belies her desire to aid and to heal. Her hallmarks, as I see them, are that she intuitively treats patients holistically – always making time to hear enough of their larger life story to keep them compartmentalizing their ailments as connected parts of their lives.

And, because she is inherently non-judgmental, she is able to be deeply compassionate in a constructive way. When my wife once voiced frustration and anger over some hard-core, far-**right relative, Angela responded, “Ann, why do you let such differences divide you?! Don’t focus on them. I just can’t help but find points of connection with such people.”** What a remarkable gift to be able to avoid letting such differences divide!

Angela and Mark’s deep points of connection ground them and will, I am confident, for many years to come.

Michael Usey
23 May 2015

What Passport Means to Me



When I sit back and do the math, I think I was 12. A shy and unsure 6th grader navigating her way through a youth group of the church that had long been home. A last minute decision on a Sunday morning, the same day the van would leave, someone had backed out, leading me to rapidly stuff a handful of clothes, a

stellar set of pajamas for some “dance” and weeks worth of uncertainty onto van for the trip to Passport camp. Unknown to me I would soon join a community that would follow me into my young adult years.

After one year of camp, I was in. Besides the abundance of fun and friendship, I became a more thoughtful, invested and active player in my journey of faith. Through thoughtful worship experiences that were new to me, and intentional mission opportunities to be doers of faith, my teenage perspective would change with the 5 summers I would go to camp. Camp would be a long awaited and much anticipated experience each summer. Through fundraising our way to camp to making costumes for that dance thing that I was totally unsure of initially!), camp was camp. And that meant a week of disconnecting (for most of **those years I didn't even HAVE a phone or an iPod!**) and participating in a larger community of faith.

The larger community of faith would look a lot different than the small town church I came from. This was the first time I would ever see a female lead or preach in worship. I would see people asking questions and realize that maybe its not necessarily a bad thing to openly ask those things. Camp became an authentic space in which I realized that asking my own questions would be okay. Camp created an acceptance and collection of diverse people that would likely never cross paths or interests otherwise. Camp was not simply nerding out on a Jesus high, it was very real and formative for me and my next steps to come.

Upon preparing for college, I didn't realize that camp would influence this decision. I landed at Wingate University upon attending camp there for a few summers. After connecting with friends from camp who had made similar decisions, I said thank you to Passport for placing Wingate on my radar.

As I made college decisions, I would spend the summer following high school as Summer Staff Intern with Passport at Wingate. I think back to the unsure and sweaty palmed 6th grader and am certain that this was still true for 17 year old me as I joined a team of **“really cool” college students. The summer ahead was** marked by filling a countless number of water coolers, counting 1000s of lanyards, and packing lunches in a room that was filled from floor to ceiling with pallets of kettle cooked chips and peanut butter and jelly.

For five summers I would be challenged and stretched.

I would ask questions and search for answers. I would stand with ministers and those who never thought they could be ministers. I found life and Jesus in things I would have never thought. I would develop community that would continue to follow me after camp. Most importantly I would shape the faith that I exhibit now. I would change my perspective and open my heart, and I would see a church beyond the walls that had confined me for so long.

To me, Passport means an authentic space to learn and grow. A place that may be uncomfortable at first but only because its recognizes potential and aides you in growing. A place that becomes putting our faith in the unseen into action. A place that allows you to have questions without knowing all the answers and says, hey that Okay. A place to explore your uniqueness and how to practically live out your faith.

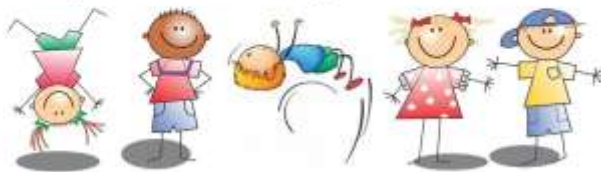
Most importantly, a place that welcomes suitcases of all kinds.

Allison Wray
14 June 2015

SUMMERSAULT Sunday Morning Kids' Hangout

Our kids will take a break from their regular Sunday School classes this summer. On Sunday mornings, 9:45 -10:45 am, the kids will meet on the playground for playtime, refreshments and a bible story. We hope you'll bring your kids for some Summersault fun.

We need volunteers to help lead the Kids' Sunday Morning Hangout for PreK-5th graders. Please sign up to help (2 volunteers needed per week).



Parking Permit Renewal



Member Parking Tags are valid until July 31, 2015. If you would like to renew your tag, please notify the church office. You will be issued a new tag at no charge.



The title of today's sermon comes from an old Gospel song, which celebrates how great it is when the healing work of God transforms your life. As the song says, *It feels like cooling water...cooling water from Grandma's well. It's kind of a corny song, but it's my dad's favorite, and he sings it often as a reminder of God's good work in us.*

Today is Pentecost Sunday, and the typically one would talk about fire as the symbol for the Holy Spirit. But in addition to fire, there are innumerable ways to talk about the movement of the Holy Spirit. For example, today's text uses the imagery of water and the symbol of a river.

Ezekiel is a Judean priest in the vassal state of Judah. He is a member of a marginalized people, a people persecuted for who they are, a people whose history has often been characterized by oppression.

During Ezekiel's lifetime, the Babylonian Empire charges into Judah's borders with its armies and destroy the nation, dismember the sacred Temple, murder many of the nation's men, and almost all of the nation's leaders, and carry the survivors into slavery and exile in a foreign land.

This is where Ezekiel finds himself, a priest and prophet carried away to a foreign land, trying to make sense of all the death and destruction that have left his people desolated and dislocated, hopeless and homeless, tortured and traumatized.

Ezekiel has seen streets filled with the ruins of his **people's homes and Temple; he has seen streets filled with running blood and rotting corpses; he has seen streets filled with the wails of widows and orphans—**what could hope and healing possibly look like?

Like Ezekiel, many of us find ourselves confronted with the same question. What could hope and healing possibly look like in the streets of Baltimore, or Cleveland, where the cries of murdered black bodies and suffering crowds ring out? What could hope and healing look like in these streets in Greensboro with all the sufferings that this city sees?

I don't know how long Ezekiel anguished over that question, but while he was still in exile, the Lord came to him and, through a mysterious, unidentified man—maybe it was an angel, maybe a messenger—through this guide the Lord showed him a vision.

The vision is of the Temple. There it is, rebuilt, with every stone and brick in its proper place, standing tall on the highest mount overlooking the surrounding city of great Jerusalem. A small stream of water trickles from beneath the Temple entrance.

As Ezekiel watches this tiny trickling stream, the guide with him measures off increasingly greater distances and Ezekiel follows the stream away from the Temple. At first, the waters flowing from underneath the Temple cover his ankles. Then the flowing waters cover his knees. Then the flowing waters cover his waist. Then the flowing waters are a river over his head, so deep that Ezekiel has to swim.

The guide asks Ezekiel, "Have you had a good look?" A rhetorical question meant to emphasize the **miraculous nature of the vision, I'm sure, because how could Ezekiel miss it?**

The vision then shifts, and Ezekiel finds himself not in the river, but sitting on the riverbank. Ezekiel sees that the river flows east, descending to the Arabah, a desert region, and then into the sea of stagnant waters, also known as the Salt Sea or the Dead Sea.

The surface of the Dead Sea is 1300 feet below sea level. It is the lowest point on earth with some of the highest salinity, almost 35% salt, which is six times saltier than the ocean. Because of its saltiness, there are no fish or living creatures in or even near the water. Fish that swim down streams into this Sea are immediately coated with salt and instantly killed. No rivers or streams drain out of it, and so saline levels are ever increasing. Thus, the *Dead Sea*.

Simply put, it is the most barren and lifeless place on the surface of the planet. And it is into this Dead Sea that Ezekiel sees the river flow.

When the river empties into those waters, Ezekiel begins to see life flourish where before there was only death. He sees great schools of fish swimming and jumping in the gentle waves. Because the river is turning the salt sea into fresh water.

Lines of fishermen stand shoulder to shoulder along the shore, casting their nets, and reeling in more types of fish than there are in the great Mediterranean Sea. All along the river, groves of fruit trees line the banks, trees that bear fresh fruit every month, not just every year, and whose leaves not only never fade but are medicinal.

What Ezekiel sees is a picture of transformation from barren, wastelands into consummate abundance. A perfect oasis. A paradise.

The imagery of the healing river riffs off of the primordial waters of creation over which the Spirit hovers and creates life, and the vision riffs off of the sacred stream in the Garden of Eden that nourishes the land. The vision even riffs off of ancient Canaanite and other ANE mythology, which claimed that God dwelled at the source of rivers. And finally, the vision riffs off of **the Psalmist's prophetic song, that, "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of our God."**

Ezekiel sees it himself: "There is a river whose streams make glad the city" and the land and the people.

The river that flows from the Temple transforms

Feels Like Cooling Water from Grandma's Well, continued from pg. 7

everything. The most barren, dry land now brims with life, food, and fresh water—which is the first lesson for us today, because it shows us that **God's plan for the world necessitates care and healing of the Earth, of the land that we humans are so reckless with.** The city and Temple that once lay in ruins, and its people who were decimated and exiled, are all now restored along with the Earth.

A second lesson is that the purifying river flows from the *Temple*.

In ancient Jewish history, the Temple was the physical **representation of God's presence in the world.** The Temple was the geographical center of the capital city of Jerusalem, and it drove the economy. Everything **revolved around the Temple complex.** **Ezekiel's vision reveals that the Temple, this physical representation of God's presence, will be the conduit for healing the nation, the land, and the people.**

There's a Jewish Midrash that says the river continues to grow in size until it splits into several branches, one of those branches flowing to the Mediterranean Sea and thus spreading its healing waters to the whole world.

In all of this, the Temple becomes the ultimate point of orientation. In fact, from this point on in **Judaism, it becomes common practice to turn one's head to the direction of Jerusalem when praying.** And at the center of Jerusalem is the Temple, which drives the city structure, the economy, and the religious worship of the community.

In other words, *worship is at the center of Ezekiel's vision: the world's healing will flow out of our personal and communal experiences of worship. The Temple is the source of God's healing river in this vision—not the Emperor's palace, not the courthouse, not the marketplace—the Temple, the house of worship.* It is our worship together that is useful to God to change us, and it is worship that God will use to begin a change in the whole world.

A problem for us reading this text is that Ezekiel is right; the Temple is rebuilt, but years later it is destroyed all over again. So we look to Jesus.

Jesus compared his own body to the Temple, saying, **"Destroy this Temple and I will raise it up in three days."** Therefore, one of the most important teachings of the New Testament is that we are all Temples. As 1 Corinthians 3 states, **"Don't you know that YOU are the Temple of God, and that God dwells within you?"**

Let's translate Ezekiel's message with that revelation. If we truly are the Temple, then the transformation that the world needs will come from us, will begin with us, will start with our transformation and then flood out to transform the world.

WE are the Temple and channel of God's healing river. The river is turning the salt sea into fresh water, and the river is flowing through us.

The Christian mystics throughout the ages declare that God shows up in your life as YOU. Teresa of Avila says, **"Christ has no body but yours, / no hands, no feet on earth but yours."** You and I—together—we the Church are the agents of God's life-giving work in the world.

Read this way, can't we say that Ezekiel's vision is an invitation to each one of us to *pay attention to our lives*—who we are, where we are? All the wisdom of the Christian mystics tells us that we are already positioned exactly where God wants to use us.

Wherever you are right now, you may feel like your life is dry and barren, that nothing good or whole is coming up out of your life. But the river is turning the salt sea into fresh water, and that river wants to flow through you right now.

The problem is that some of us are dammed. Really! Some of us all are dammed up, and the river of God is trying to burst through our very lives, is trying to heal us and the world around us. But we are dammed, and we **need to open up, unclog our riverbeds, and let God's river flow through us.**

It's easier said than done. Every honest mind has struggled and wondered what it means to "open up to and find God."

There's a famous Buddhist story in which a man travels across the country in order to talk with a monk who has achieved enlightenment. The man finds the old, bald-headed, grinning Buddhist monk, meditating in a field. The man goes up to the Buddhist monk and tells him, "I want to know God."

The monk looks up at the man, and answers him, **"Come with me down to the river."** The man silently follows the monk down through the trees until they reach the riverbank, and then the man follows the monk into the river. Together they wade out into the waters until the river is up to their chests. Then the monk, who has been so silent and gentle, turns abruptly and forcefully grabs **the man's head and dunks him under the water.**

The monk holds the man's head under the river's currents for a long time, and the man fights and struggles to come up for air, but the monk plunges his head deeper. Just before the man would pass out from lack of air, the monk lifts the man's head above the water and the man gasps huge gulps of air. Panting, the man then hears the monk's voice in his ear: "When your desire to know God is the same as your desire to breathe, then you will know God."

It's actually a really encouraging story—despite triggering our fears of drowning—because it tells us that all we need to know God is to *want it*. There's no magic formula or practice, just the sincerity of our desire.

The river is turning the salt sea into fresh water, and all we need to do to be a channel of that river is to *want it*, to desire to know God as much as our bodies desire to breathe, and to pay attention to our inmost being. God promises to heal us from the inside out. Out of the overflow of our inner change will come a river of life that will heal this world.

What I'm saying is that we pray for God to heal the most broken parts of our lives, and we pray for God to heal our nation, our world and our Earth; but WE are the answer to those prayers. WE—YOU and I—are the conduits of God's healing work in the world, a healing work that looks like a river, turning the salt and stagnant sea into fresh water, and flowing through us.

The answer for the world's suffering that we all seek is within us.

There's a powerful Islamic poem called *The Conference of the Birds*—I strongly recommend it. It's an epic poem written by Farid Attar, a Sufi poet and mystic, and the poem follows a group of 30 birds, representing all of the birds of the world. The birds gather together to choose a King.

Together, all of the different species of birds decide they should find the legendary Simorgh, which is a great, mystical bird of Persian mythology, and coronate the Simorgh as their King. Now, for the Persian reader, the joke has already landed. In Persian, *Simorgh* literally means "thirty birds." In other words, "Si morph" sets out to find "Simorgh," or, thirty birds set out to find Thirty Birds.

As the poem goes, the thirty birds fly across treacherous landscapes with little water and no rest, and finally they reach the place where the Simorgh dwells. Except when the thirty birds reach the place, all they find there is a lake. As the birds fly over the lake, they look down and see their reflection. The thirty birds are flying in perfect synchronized formation, and their reflection together forms the shape of a giant bird. Each bird realizes that *they together are the Simorgh, the King they seek.*

Some of the final words of the poem read:

**"There in the Simorgh's radiant face they saw
Themselves, the Simorgh of the world—with awe
They gazed, and dared at last to comprehend
They were the Simorgh and the journey's end" (Attar
234)**

Then the birds hear a great voice resounding as if from within them:

**"All who come before My splendor see
Themselves, their own unique reality." (235)**

All along, the King, the answer they were seeking was within them.

Like the thirty birds of this Sufi epic poem, we too travel across treacherous landscapes, searching our whole lives for the answer to the suffering of the world, searching for God; when all the while, we are the answer that we seek.

Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "The world could be fixed of its problems if every child understood the necessity of their existence."

Because the river is turning the salt sea into fresh water, and the river is flowing through us.

Ezekiel's vision is a story about the land, and a story about us, because we are intimately tied to the land and to each other.

Wherever you are right now in life, on whatever street in this city, in whatever vocation, in whatever neighborhood—you are positioned to be used by God. The same river flows through us all, but it looks different for each one of us. Because it looks like us, like our lives.

For John Fahr, it looks like an AIDS ministry and bringing smiles and laughter to the world.

For Geri and Randi Henderson, it looks like regular volunteer ministry at GUM's food bank.

For Rachel Hutto, Cathy Kirstner, Mat Sandifer, Sheryl Kesner, it looks like the patient and loving work of therapy and counseling.

For Brittany Cleckley, it looks like a non-profit dance ministry that brings the community together around key issues.

For Eddie Self and Vicki Lumpkin, it looks like the tough and compassionate work of chaplaincy for the sick and dying.

For Denisa Carden, it looks like the care provided to profoundly disabled individuals in her ministry as a nurse.

For Jerri Cunningham and Terri Brown, it looks like a yoga ministry that brings balance and harmony to people's lives.

For Zack Usey, it looks like being a Big Brother at a local school and going every week to mentor a child.

For Sarah Ramsey, it looks like a huge drive to get silly bands to send to children in Romania.

For Bella Coughlin, it looks like cutting your hair off for Locks of Love.

It looks like the ministry of every teacher, professor, lawyer, policeman, firefighter, social worker, parent.

Because the river is turning the salt sea into fresh water, and the river is flowing through us.

The results are often slow and imperceptible at first. Like the subtle drip, drip, drip of a trickling stream—or like water torture. But while our efforts may feel small at first, God will grow them like a mighty river.

The work of God in this world is happening right now within us, pushing against our inner walls and trying so desperately to flow out, if only we open ourselves up to it. Like the old Gospel song says so well, the work of the Spirit feels like cooling water, cooling water from grandma's well.

Amen

Keith Menhinick

24 May 2015, Pentecost



Summer Sunday School Hot Dog/ Covered Dish Supper

Saturday, July 25th, 6:00 pm, hosted by Tom Smith & Toni Knight at 2506 Brandt Forest Court, Greensboro. Please let us know if you're coming. Email: knight.toni@gmail.com or call 336-282-0638. Hot dog fixings will be provided. If you don't like hot dogs, bring a covered dish. Also bring a chair and beverage.

Congratulations

Craig Bowyer & Erica Palmer are expecting a baby in mid-September.

Stephanie Ballard Cole is now Stephanie Ballard Kretz, married to Phil Kretz on June 6, 2015 (no address change).

Stephen Jones passed the NCLEX, and is now officially a registered nurse for the State of North Carolina. He will begin his career at Cone Health in the Emergency Room on August 31st.

Thank You & Good Bye

Dear Members of College Park Church,

Elizabeth Gilbert once wrote, “Maybe we must all give up trying to pay back the people in this world who sustain our lives. In the end, maybe it’s wiser to surrender before the miraculous scope of human generosity and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely, for as long as we have voices.”

This letter is simply an attempt to surrender – to melt into the incredible kindness and generosity that you have all shown me over the past year. Whether laughing in the back of the church with Bill Ingold, contemplating the deeper meanings of books with the members of Ann Usey and Mark Fleming’s book club, or sharing brief connections with Sheryl Ketner (trying to figure out how **the cross is “flowered”**) before the Easter service, I am so very grateful to have spent this time with all of you. Time is certainly fleeting, but the quiet moments that stir the soul are lasting. Michael Usey, I thank you for your many meaningful messages that had me pondering for days; Rydell Harrison, David Soyars, and the rest of the Choir, thank you for your gift of music that often brought tears to my eyes; and to the many, many faithful church members, thank you for your heartfelt presence. And finally, to the person who invited me to College Park on a very lonely Christmas Eve, I thank you for introducing me to the people who became like family. DiAnne Borders, in your quiet and unassuming way, you have always gone above and beyond to show me (and others) the utmost compassion. Thank you.

As I prepare to move back to my natural habitat (the frozen north), I certainly leave with an aching sadness of what I am leaving behind. Forever and sincerely, though, I will be grateful for each and every one of you, and I will carry the spirit of College Park Church with me as I go.


With Gratitude,
Jodi Bartley
13 June 2015

New address: Jodi Bartley
3302 16th Ave. S #202
Fargo, ND 58103

Summer Sermon Series

**GOD
OF THE UNDERDOG**

Sundays 8:45 & 11 am



COLLEGE PARK
AN AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCH

Where loving God means loving people.
progressive. ecumenical. diverse.

All are welcome.

Announcements

Ultimate Frisbee

Ready to get out and run? Join us for Ultimate Frisbee Monday nights, 6:00 pm, at Lake Daniel Park (corner of Radiance and Mimosa). No experience necessary. Bring a red shirt, a white shirt, some water and you are good to go! You will learn as you play! Or just bring a chair and relax and chat with your friends and watch the game. Find us on Facebook at "College Park Frisbee."



Sunday Morning Kids' Hangout

Our kids will take a break from their regular Sunday School classes this summer. On Sunday mornings, 9:45-10:45 am, the kids will meet on the playground for playtime, refreshments and a bible story. We hope you'll bring your kids for some Summersault fun.



All Church Summer Read - Wearing God

Book discussion group will meet in the Fellowship Hall, 10-10:40 am, each Sunday during the summer, except July 5.

Vacation Bible School - August 10 - 14

Planning your child's summer activities? Be sure to include Vacation Bible School, August 10 - 14, on your calendar. This year's theme will be "Handle with Care" and we'll have Bible stories, activities, crafts and music focusing on caring for our planet. VBS is for Pre-K through 5th graders. Drop-off begins at 8:30 with VBS from 9 am until 12 noon. Interested in helping with VBS? Please email leann.rodgers@gmail.com.

Exercise Bikes Needed

Erwin Montessori is looking for used exercise bikes to start a Read and Ride program (readandride.org) next school year. If you or someone you know has a bike that can be donated, or questions about the program, please contact Nancy Cravey. Tax receipts can be provided for any donations and pickup can be arranged.



4 Ways 2 Give

For added convenience, we now have four ways for you to give to the church general budget or special offerings:

- Write a check or give cash at one of our Sunday services or at the office during the week. If you don't have envelopes with an assigned number (for better record keeping), contact Annette in the church office.
- Set up bill pay through your bank online. It's a favorite since there are usually no fees to you or the church, and it's very easy.
- Pay at either church service with a credit or debit card via tablets available for use (church pays fees).
- Pay online with a credit card at www.CollegeParkChurch.com. Choose the option to cover the credit card fees or let the church pay them.

5G Prayer!

Well, not exactly. But the Prayer Team would love to be part of your prayer network. On the Prayer Team bulletin board, across from Michael's office, you'll find prayer request cards. Write your prayer request and leave it in the envelope. We'll add it to the weekly list of concerns the team holds up in prayer.



Also, you are always welcome to use the Prayer Room, inside the third-floor classroom next to the choir room. It's a peaceful place to pray, meditate or simply be still to listen for God.

Mostly Men's Occasional Book Club

New book is *Monster Hunter International* by Larry Correia. The next meeting will be Tuesday, July 7th at Sticks & Stones, 6:30 pm.

Women of Valor

The new book is *A Land More Kind Than Home* by Wiley Cash. The next book discussion will be Tuesday, July 28th at Beans Boro Coffee Shop, 7 pm.

ZUMBA Classes

Thursday nights 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Cost: \$5.00.



NEW YORK CITY

Do you want to go to New York City this summer? Apartment is available again this year with dates in July and August and some other holiday weekends. Close to Times Square and Broadway. Contact Angela Brady-Fleming by phone: 336-501-0270, text, or Email: fleming1301@yahoo.com



July GUM Donation:

Canned Mixed Vegetables (any size)
Place donations in the wicker basket in the side foyer entrance (beside the bookshelves).



About Meditation

Sunday afternoons 4:00 pm in the Parlor.
Everyone welcome.

General Budget Update 6.21.15

YTD Giving:	\$133,051
YTD Budget:	\$157,181
Difference:	-\$24,130

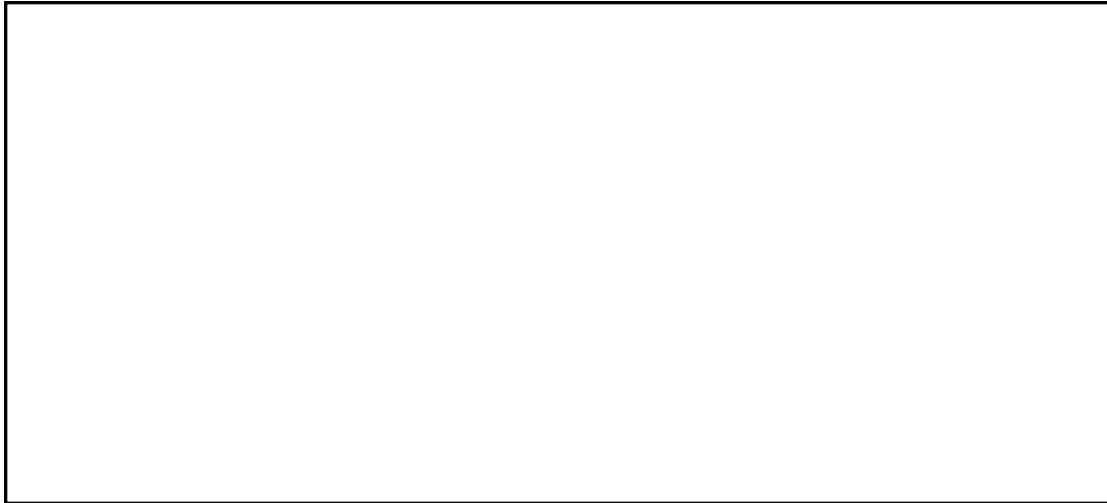


Capital Campaign "Access for All" Financial Report as of 6.21.15:

Donations needed to complete the final two projects: Chapel & Kitchen \$392,000
Cash balance available for next two projects: \$191,533

College Park
An American Baptist Church
1601 Walker Avenue,
Greensboro, North Carolina 27403-2318

Return Service Requested



Looking Ahead-July

- 2 AI-Anon 10 am, Chapel
Narcotics Anon Noon, Chapel
Zumba 6 pm, FH
- 3 AI-Anon Noon, FH
- 5 Sunday Activities—Wedding Jennifer Jordan
Meditation 4 pm, Parlor
- 6 Frisbee 6 pm, Lake Daniels
Theatre Camp, July 6-9, FH
- 7 Narcotics Anon Noon, Chapel
- 9 AI-Anon 10 am, Sanctuary
Narcotics Anon Noon, Sanctuary
Zumba 6 pm, FH
- 10 AI-Anon Noon, FH
- 12 Sunday Activities
Meditation 4 pm, Parlor
- 13 Frisbee 6 pm, Lake Daniels
Theatre Camp, July 13-16, FH
- 14 Narcotics Anon Noon, Sanctuary
- 16 AI-Anon 10 am, Sanctuary
Forever 39 11:30 am, K&W
Narcotics Anon Noon, Sanctuary
Zumba 6 pm, FH
- 17 AI-Anon Noon, FH
- 19 GUM Sunday
Sunday Activities
Meditation 4 pm, Parlor
- 20 Frisbee 6 pm, Lake Daniels
- 21 Narcotics Anon Noon, FH
Pendergraft Meeting 5:30 pm, Parlor
PFLAG 7 pm, FH
- 23 AI-Anon 10 am, FH
Narcotics Anon Noon, FH
Pendergraft Meeting, 5:30 pm, Parlor
Zumba 6 pm, FH
- 24 AI-Anon Noon, FH
- 26 Sunday Activities
Meditation 4 pm, Parlor
- 27 Frisbee 6pm, Lake Daniels
- 28 Narcotics Anon Noon, FH
Women of Valor 7 pm, Beans Boro
- 30 AI-Anon 10 am, FH
Narcotics Anon Noon, FH
Zumba 6 pm, FH
- 31 AI-Anon Noon, FH

Church Telephone: (336) 273-1779; Fax: (336) 273-9637
www.collegeparkchurch.com cpbcgbo@bellsouth.net

Alliance of Baptists - American Baptist Churches -
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

June Food Donations = 72 Pounds
2015 Total Food Donations = 511 Pounds

Every Member a Minister

Phyllis Calvert, Treasurer
Brian Carden, Minister to Senior Adults
Lisa Elkins-Scintillating 60
Rydell Harrison, Minister of Music & Worship
Darlene Johnson, Sexton
Keith A. Menhinick, Wake Forest Pastoral Intern
David Soyars, Organist (*on Sabbatical*)
Ralph & Tammy Stocks, Missionaries
Lin Story-Bunce, Associate Minister
Andrea Turner, Deacon Chair
Michael S. Usey, Pastor
Annette Waisner, Office & Media Manager

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Progressive - Diverse - Ecumenical