

5/24/09

"PLEASE SAY SOMETHING ABOUT HEAVEN . . ."

(A Memorial Day Sermon)

Text: ". . . and there shall be no night there; they need no candle
Neither light of the sun, for the Lord shall give them light,
And they shall reign forever and ever." -- Revelation 22:5

Rev. Richard M. Cromie, Ph.D., D.D.
Sharon Presbyterian Church
Charlotte, North Carolina
Memorial Day Weekend, May 24, 2009

This sermon began as my response to the woman whose husband had passed away some years ago. I attended the Funeral as her friend, but another Presbyterian clergyman across the State, no one you would know, conducted the service. No criticism intended; pastors live in glass houses and should never throw stones. But, following the Memorial Service the new widow was upset. While the Pastor had praised her deceased husband, saying how everyone would miss him, how active and generous he had been with his church, and how good he had been to his wife and children and grandchildren, the good Reverend failed to say a single word about heaven and everlasting life. "Everything was fine, the music was uplifting, the prayers helpful," she told me, "but, I already knew he was a good man, I wanted to hear some confirmation that John was in heaven with the Lord, and that he will be there to greet me when I die. Please, Dr. Cromie, whenever you preach a memorial service, say something about heaven." This Memorial Day Weekend I am taking her advice.

There are several conflicting stories about the origin of our Memorial Day, some of which bring loud objections from rival towns vying for the honor of being first. While civilizations from all time have honored their departed warriors, there is universal agreement that our American Memorial Day began following the towering losses on both sides during the American Civil War, now nearly a century and a half ago. There are similar holidays of course in most civilizations, ancient and modern, coming from the same sense of tragic loss in the death of young people fighting for a cause they, or others, deemed to be worth more than life itself. I sometimes wonder about that, as you do.

When we were last in London with our grandchildren Maddie and Wil, quite by accident, we came upon the Memorial Monument to the Animals who had died in various Wars. I was touched. There, off Hyde Park Corner, in carved granite were depictions of horses and elephants and mules and dogs, even a little kitty. The inscription above the monument said simply: "They never got to choose." It meant that the animals that died never chose to go to battle. True, they didn't. But I feel sure the same is true with many of their human counterparts. Witness the rising stress and tensions and mounting suicides

among those who are serving in Iraq. *and Afghanistan.*

Among the various possibilities as to where our Memorial Day began, there has been a steady claim in Waterloo, New York, where on May 5, 1866, the Mayor ordered all flags to be lowered to half-staff and all citizens were to march to the town's three cemeteries to honor those who had fallen in the Civil War and decorate their graves

Meanwhile, in Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, near State College, a huge sign greets you at the entrance announcing itself as the "Birthplace of Decoration Day." It is a gentler story . . . there, on Sunday, May 30, 1864, note the date) Emma Hunter placed flowers on the grave of her father, Colonel Hunter, who had died in a Battle of the Forty-Ninth Pennsylvania Regiment. At the same moment, at the very next grave, a Mrs. Meyer was paying similar tribute at the grave of her son. When they were finished planting flowers and sharing tears together, one said to the other, "Why don't we meet here again next year on the same Sunday, and we'll do it again!" They did, on May 30, 1865.

In Vicksburg, Mississippi; Petersburg, Virginia and Charleston, South Carolina there are equally impressive traditions. In Charleston, e.g., a black Sunday School teacher took her Negro students out to decorate the graves of the white soldiers in late 1864. That was the extra mile; the nation was still in the days of slavery. But, God's love is powerful: she taught those children and all the rest of us what honoring the dead should really mean.

The same thing happened in Columbus, Georgia, where the famous TV mini-series on the Civil War *"The Blue and Gray"* was written. In 1966 President Lyndon B. Johnson, prompted by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, of New York, was persuaded to sign an official Proclamation stating that Waterloo was the birthplace of Decoration Day, commemorating their community celebration. It was called Decoration Day officially until 1887, when it became Memorial Day, but that old fashioned designation lingers here and there even to

the present.

The Civil War officially ended as General Robert E. Lee signed his agreement with General Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865. Shortly thereafter, General John A. Logan, of the Grand Army of the Republic, noted for his victory at Vicksburg, but also as the sane and sensible General who, for example, spared Raleigh, North Carolina from being burnt to the ground by angry Union Soldiers, officially proclaimed a celebration of Decoration Day to be held on the thirtieth day of May. In most places, the date took hold, although not in all Southern States. After all, while Logan had warm sentiments to the South, he was still a Yankee General. Several Southern States, as you know, celebrated their own Decoration Day and Confederate Memorials. Some still do to the present.

During World War I, Congress declared that the fallen heroes of that War were to be included in the memorial festivities; others followed in turn. In 1967 a joint resolution of Congress changed the holiday from May 30th to the last Monday of the month. I've never quite forgiven them for that. Even if three-day holiday weekends are a good idea to most, it helped to dilute the central purpose of the Day and converted it into a picnic, party and ball game celebration.

The Civil War took 646,000 American lives -- 150,000 on the battlefield. In subsequent generations each time a new battle drew our nation across the world, Memorial Day had to be broadened, too. 8.5 million people died in World War I. In World War II, 61 million lost their lives around the world, 24 million of them military personnel from dozens of different nations, including the half a million American service men and some women who made the ultimate sacrifice.

In the early 1950s, the Korean Conflict claimed 37,000 Americans plus a probable 2

million Chinese and Koreans soldiers on both sides, not to mention civilian deaths in the range of 2 million more. The Viet Nam War claimed 60,000 American soldiers and 4 to 6 million other soldiers and civilians in the areas of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. And of course we keep adding to the totals in the recent wars in Iraq and now Afghanistan and all the rest.

Memorial Day is a somber time set aside, primarily to remember those who died in battle, defending our freedom. The primary tribute is to decorate the graves of fallen soldiers and sailors and air force and marines. But it has evolved into a time to decorate other graves, too, at least symbolically, of friends and family who have passed beyond where we can see. The Bible says "Greater love hath no one than this: that we lay down our lives for our friends." Of course, it refers principally to the Lord Jesus who died for all of us, but to any and all other times where life is given to preserve other life.

My personal favorite story of the origin of Memorial Day took place up in Northern Virginia, near the end of the War Between the States, in a happenstance meeting between a grieving Yankee mother who had gone to the cemetery in to decorate her Union soldier son's grave. While there, she met the widow of a young Confederate officer who had paid the same supreme price for his devotion. Even though they were widely separated by years and pulled apart by locality, they were united in their grief over the death of one they loved too much to lose. A bond formed. That first meeting took place on the last Sunday of May in 1864. They promised each other that they would meet again the following year and they repeated the decorations many years to follow.

But we need to return to that woman I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon who asked me to say something about heaven, I want to spend a little time with you talking

about what the Bible says about eternal life and what happens when we die. It is not as easy as it sounds. The Bible says many things about life and death and everlasting life.

I.

In the beginning, the concept of life beyond death begins very slowly in those early centuries of the Old Testament. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were warned not to touch the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the center of the Garden. It reads, "For in the day you eat of that tree, you will surely die." (Genesis 2:17) That seems to imply that if they had never sinned by touching the tree, they would not have died. That appears to be improbable in the historical reality of things, and it is one of the puzzles of the opening chapter of Genesis. But it is the Bible's way of saying that death and human sin are somehow related, and that God did not intend it at the moment of creation. It seems as though they were destined to live in the Garden of Eden forever. Death entered the human scene after they were driven out.

It was not long however, before the people of God began to realize that those who were gone from this earth were still present in the minds and memories of those who had known and loved them. One Bible verse says, "Although dead, yet they speak." In the Old Testament, the earliest concept of a life that survives death is rather simple: so long as you were remembered, you were not gone. Each of us believes that, too. One of my closest friends and mentors decades ago told me as I went to say goodbye in his terminal illness: "Richard please don't forget me when I am gone." I haven't and I never will.

Margaret Mead wrote a generation ago that one way to tell the worth of a civilization is by how it respects and reveres its dead. In the surrounding communities of ancient Palestine, there were several elaborate concepts of life beyond death. Most civilizations prepared bodies with the expectation that they would somehow live on, or return to the earth. The Israelites never did that, not that we know of, but the ancient Egyptians went to elaborate expense in embalming bodies, mummifying them, and burying their Kings and Pharaohs in magnificent splendor, note the pyramids and the Tombs of the Kings which are still being unearthed today. They believed that someday human life would be

recreated or resurrected; or at least those who were gone would live on in a luxurious life in another world. That belief probably came as a innate reaction to the disappearance of a fellow human being, with the thought deep down there has to be more than what accidental death and illness can do to take away a human person. We have our Christian point of view, as we should, but we should not belittle the universal yearnings of all of God's children to reach beyond the boundary of death.

In the Bible, the first hint or belief or concept of heaven, I repeat, begins in the thought that if you were remembered, you were not gone from the Earth. We continue to feel the same. That is the impetus behind our Memorial Day Holiday, e.g., and similar ones all throughout history and all around the world today.

When we were growing up, my father, whose elder brother Bill was a veteran of World War I and was buried near the soldiers' monument in Allegheny Cemetery in Pittsburgh, took his children each Memorial Day down to the monument to listen to the music and the speeches, topped off by a 21 gun salute which made the long wait worthwhile. Hundreds and hundreds were there. Every year we heard the famous poem, "In Flanders Fields", written by young John McCrae who died in battle in World War I:

In Flanders fields the poppies grow
Between the crosses row on row
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead, short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrels with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
the torch.
Be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die,
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

About twenty years ago, sad to say, they had to cancel the Memorial Day Parade up in my

old hometown: There were not enough marchers for a parade, and too few attendees gathered on the sidewalks to cheer them on. We must not break faith with those who are gone. That first thought of life continuing in the Bible was a literal memorial tribute. Not only with the ones we have loved and lost, but all of God's created children who once breathed the breath of life and now no longer have it. Those who are gone are also precious in the eyes of God.

I watched some of the Memorial tribute on television not long ago, on the occasion of the anniversary of the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial Wall. The largest portion of the service was simply the reading of the list of those who were gone: one by one, name after name after endless name. It became a little tedious, but someone was remembering. Each name was a precious person to someone on the earth. In the earliest past of Scripture, as long as you were remembered, if someone called out your name, you were not gone from the earth.

II.

Then, secondly, as the centuries of Biblical history passed, a more advanced concept began to develop. About midway in the Scriptures, they came to a concept that life actually continued beyond the grave. Job, e.g., in the midst of all his illness, death and distress, yearned for the day when he would be able to see the Lord face to face. God had spoken to him to scolded him for his lack of faith. He anticipates the day when he can ask God to explain this life. He says: "Without my flesh I shall see God face to face; with my own eyes shall I see him." That sounds tame enough and familiar to us, but it was an astounding statement at the time.

Prior to that, the most advanced suggestion of an afterlife in the Bible was the existence of Sheol. Sheol, often mentioned in the Psalms and even earlier, was a kind of an in-between land, a "Never-Never Land," an ancient purgatory, neither heaven nor hell, as it were, without punishment or correction. It was just an underground land where the souls and spirits of the departed lived on, as their bones were buried in a common family grave back home. The Prophet Samuel was summoned back to earth out of Sheol to speak to

Saul, not as an alien visitor, but Samuel himself came back from the dead. Then, once he had given his advice and warning, he disappeared into the deep again, but he was still there.

When Job envisioned a place where he would go and see God face to face, without the encumbrance of his frail and fragile body, he takes the Biblical theme a huge middle step forward. He proclaimed a place where we will go where God will make it right again.

Isaiah takes the vision to its zenith when he prophesied of the grand highway where all of our ailments and illnesses will be restored, "Where the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb will sing for joy...Streams shall spring forth in the desert and everlasting joy shall be with the redeemed of the Lord. God will take care of his children forevermore." (Isaiah 35)

Even more dramatic and memorable is the day when Ezekiel peeked up over the highest mountain in the world. He looked down in the valley of dry bones where the dead are gathered with their fathers. He saw the dead. "But, he exclaimed, "They are not dead, they are alive. I saw them." We know this passage as his familiar vision of the valley of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37, where he heard a noise of the rattling of the bones coming together again, the ankle bone connected to the knee bone and the knee bone connected to the back bone. Now, hear the word of the Lord. God spoke to him and said, "Behold I will open your graves, and raise you from the dead; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel...And I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live again. Know that I, The Lord, have spoken it." (Ezekiel 37: 7-14) Handel liked that passage too.

There are many other examples, but these few are more than enough to show that the Old Testament moves from an earlier nebulous idea to one more complete. It reached its Old Testament finest reassurance in the familiar words of the Twenty-third Psalm: "Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. . . . Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever."

III.

Then thirdly, in the New Testament, the subject is brought to its fullest glory. What was once a hint and a guess is not a reality. There, in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are promised a grand and wonderful place where all will be well and where we will all be together again. The Bible uses elaborate symbols like the streets will be paved with gold, and rubies and precious jewels are imbedded in the curb stones. (Revelation 21, 22) Extravagant indications of accomplishment and wealth are there, simply meaning that each and everyone will have everything we need and want.

➤ Beyond The Streets of Gold - there

There are two important images in the New Testament, the first in John 14. Jesus said: "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may be also." Hold on to that forever. It is promise with a guarantee. In the ancient world a servant would go on before his master to find and prepare a room. It was before Holiday Inns and Marriott's and advanced reservations systems. The servant would be sent ahead to find a suitable place and make it ready for his master.

Then, when the selected room was spic and span and everything in place, the servant would go back to get the master and deliver him to his room. Jesus reverses the image. He, the Master, goes ahead to prepare the rooms for his servants. Each of us has a symbolic room there, prepared by the Lord, specifically for us. When it is ready, not one moment before and not one second after, he will come to take us by the hand and lead us home. The messenger of death is not some strange unwelcome creature with his hood and scythe at the ready to mow you down; he is the Risen form of Jesus Christ whom you eyes will welcome not as a stranger but as the stronghold of your life.

➤ Some have wondered through the years, and you might be asking yourself just now if you can be sure there is a special room for you. Is your nameplate on one of the rooms? It is not an idle question. The most frequently asked question over the 45 years of my pastoral ministry is what happens when we die. Where do we go? Will my loved ones be

there to greet me? Are they able to see what is going on on earth? We will come back to that in a quick minute.

More philosophically, someone always asks, "Is there room for everyone?" People often want to know my opinion about the fate of other people, even non-believers. Will Jewish people get to heaven? Or Muslims? Or Buddhists? Or my neighbor down the street? Or a husband in my home? Those are thoughtful questions. The answer is not as easy as some Christians make it.

Some insist on excluding the glories of eternal life from those who do not say the right words in accepting the Lord Jesus Christ. They also define what the right words are. Is there an answer that combines our compassion, with an honest reading of the Scripture? I think so, even if we have to hold both ideas in tension.

The New Testament clearly says that no one will enter the Kingdom of heaven without Jesus Christ. He has the keys to the eternal gates. There is no way around that except to choose not to believe it: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved!"

But also, Christ Himself notes that not all who call upon His name will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We need to add our good Christian behavior to prove what we say we believe. The book of James says bluntly, "Faith without works is dead." Jesus said clearly in places like Matthew 25, that those who help the least of the brethren will find favor with God and will be ushered into his kingdom. It has to matter what we do to confirm our belief.

Some sit in a self-righteous little corner and pretend to have the exclusive formula of how to listen to the Lord. While He was on the cross, Jesus promised the one criminal ^{who was hanging my right hand} that he would be with Him that day in Paradise." (Luke 23:32ff.) All the man had said, in scolding the other from scoffing at our Lord, was that Jesus was innocent. Then he added his plea: "Jesus, please remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 23:42) That was apparently enough. He was not required to repeat the formula proscribed in the Baptist or Pentecostal book of Faith.

The New Testament says that Jesus Christ has the keys to Heaven, but (listen), it also means they are his to use as he chooses, not as we choose. The Lord alone gives admittance to eternal life. He can select anyone he chooses and bestow the honor. Like, e.g., a baby who dies in infancy, or a good and righteous Jew, or a dedicated, devoted Muslim father, or those possessed by various demons, or those whose mental capacities prevent them from affirming Jesus. We have no power or right to say what Jesus can or cannot do. The Bible requires that we make our personal affirmation of the Lord Jesus, but we cannot restrict how he will parcel out the gift of Salvation to others. "My ways are not your ways," says the Lord. We are not on earth to decide who will be blessed by Jesus Christ. That is his role; we would do better not to reverse it.

If we succeeded in that, the whole witness of the Old Testament would become invalid. If we remain open about it, then Jesus with his keys, can reach back to Isaiah and Ezekiel, Abraham, Sarah and Joseph, and any or all of the others, to unlock the ancient doors and welcome them into the Kingdom. How selfish we become when we try to set limits on the love of Jesus Christ.

You and I have more than enough to worry about in managing ourselves. Nothing I have said about broadening the range of Jesus' forgiving love changes your obligation and mine to listen to and follow Jesus in all we say and do; it simply means we must take a cup of humility before we receive our cup of glory. It is yours and mine today, and every day, to bow as humbly as we know how and say a little prayer: "Lord please remember me. I accept your offer of love and forgiveness. Help me never to forget my commitment to follow you in life and death and in everything I am called upon to do. Then, in your good time, take me home to my eternal place beyond the here and now, and to live with you forever more. Amen."

I chose as the text for our sermon some of the last words of the Bible. It says: "I, John saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'The Tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their

eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither suffering, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things are passed away.'" (Revelation 21, 22)

And I love his final words, I fully grown and brave, but afraid of the dark. It reads, "There shall be no night there and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light and they shall reign forever and ever. Amen." (Revelation 22)

You see, it's true. Honor the dead who gave their lives for us, and face death bravely yourself. "As one who wraps the drapery of his couch around him, and lies down to pleasant dreams. (William Cullen Bryant) Do not fear. Christ guarantees that we shall live with them, and see Him face to face. We can look forward to that with joy, but meanwhile there is work to do here in the kingdoms of the earth. We can yearn for heaven but we must struggle on to make sure those who are gone and what they stood for will not be forgotten.

Conclusion

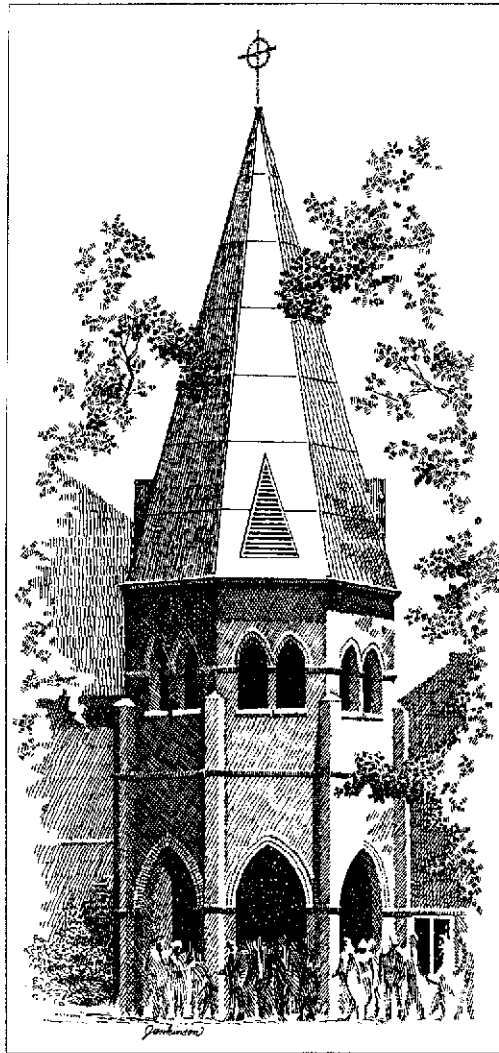
It's time to close. Several years ago for Peggy's birthday we went to New York and saw "Les Miserables," in my opinion the best Broadway show of all time. The story is set in France. John Paul Jean and others have waged a battle for freedom and lost. Tolstoy once said, "It is better to fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed than to succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail." Their cause was freedom. The play ends in defeat, on stage anyway. But the last resurrected song was magnificent. Remember the lines:

"Will you join in our crusade?
Who will be strong and stand with me?
Somewhere beyond the barricade
Is there a world you long to see?
Do you hear the people sing?
Say, do you hear the distant drum?
It is the future that they bring
When tomorrow comes. . . ."

Is there a land you long to see? Sure there is. Let's work for it. Some day tomorrow will come. Others will be looking back on what we did and what we stood for. I hope they will

be pleased with you and me. But more than that, far, far more than that, that Jesus Christ will be pleased with all we tried to do and did, and that he will gladly welcome us home: "Enter now into the kingdom which has been prepared for you, For now and evermore. Amen.

Sharon Presbyterian Church
Charlotte, North Carolina



May 24, 2009

www.sharonpcusa.org

**Service For The Lord's Day
Memorial Day Weekend
10:00 a.m.**

The Prelude *Prayer of Christ Ascending* Olivier Messiaen

The Chiming of the Hour

The Congregational Concerns

The Minutes for Mission
Pentecost Offering
Blood Drive

Chris Buchanan
Ralph Lovejoy

The Passing of the Peace

The Choral Introit *Come! Join Our Cheerful Song!* Dale Wood

* The Call to Worship

* The Prayer of Invocation

* The Hymn of Praise, No. 478 *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*

* The Prayer of Confession

O Lord our God, forgive us for the many ways in which we place ourselves in the center of things, and go about our days and years, as if we were in charge of the present and the future. Forgive us for demanding what we want, pretending that it is the only way to praise your Holy Name. Forgive us for our sense of self-importance, when we live and move and have our being only because we belong to Jesus Christ. Forgive and renew us, for in his name we ask it here. Amen.

A Time of Silent Prayer

* The Assurance of Pardon

* *The Gloria Patri* Hymnal, No. 579

The Sharing of Our Tithes and Offerings
O Worship the King

arr. Kevin McChesney

Spirit Ringers

* The Doxology Hymnal, No. 592

* The Prayer of Dedication

The Meditative Hymn, No. 527

Near to the Heart of God

The Children's Time

Following Children's Time, those four years - 1st grade will be escorted to Children's Worship in Room 7 of the Education Building, where they may be picked up following the service.

The Morning Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

The Old Testament Lesson

Psalm 23

Lisa Moore, Elder Layreader
This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God!

The Anthem

Inscription of Hope

Z. Randall Stroope

The New Testament Lesson

Revelation 21, 22 (selected)

The Sermon

"Please Say Something About Heaven..." Dr. Richard M. Cromie

Text: "There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever." Revelation 22:5

* The Hymn of Commitment, No. 564

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies

* The Benediction

The Postlude

Christ Ascends!

Todd Kendall

* All who are able may stand

Head Usher: Stephanie Spivey

Today's Worship Leaders: Dr. Richard M. Cromie, *Interim Pastor*; Rev. Ron E. Nelson, *Associate Pastor*; Dr. Dee Osbourne-Smart, *Seminary Intern*; David Mayo, *Director of Music*; Sandy Breaux, *Organist*

**Worship 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School for all ages at 9:00 a.m.**

May 31, 2009

Pentecost Sunday

Dr. Cromie Preaching

"Young Folks and Their Visions –
Old Men and Their Dreams...
A Sermon for Pentecost 2009"

June 7

Graduation Recognition Sunday

Communion

Rev. Nelson preaching

We extend a warm welcome to all of our visitors today. If you would like more information about our church, please visit the display in the Narthex where we have a gift bag for you! Hearing aids and large print Bibles and Hymnals are available in the Narthex. Please ask the head usher for assistance. The nursery is in the Charles Little Activity Building (Building 3), with the babies in Room 3, children ages 2-3 in Room 4, and ages 3-4 in Room 7 of the Education Building.

Join us following the service for Fountain Fellowship to catch up with friends or make new ones.

Please remember to silence your cell phone/beeper during worship.

The flowers are given by Jim and Pat White to the glory of God and in celebration of the wedding anniversary of Beth and Mike Palmer. **The flowers in the narthex** are given to the glory of God and in honor of Janice Smith and David Hansen who were married in the sanctuary May 23, 2009.

We express our sympathy to Freida Caldwell in the death of her sister, Brennie Wilson Alexander, on May 13, 2009; to Dave Stukey in the death of his father, Kenneth Carroll Stukey, on May 14, 2009.

Please remember in prayer *those in the hospitals:* A.J. Blanchard, CMC Main; *those at home:* George Ashley, Bill Johnson, David Barker, John Sullivan; all of our homebound members and their families; Frank and Nancy Dimmock, our missionaries in Africa; those in our church and beyond who have lost jobs and are seeking new opportunities; Andrew Clark, nephew of Pat and Jim White, serving in the military overseas.

Congregational Nurturing has moved their meeting from Monday, May 25, to Monday, June 1, due to the Memorial Day holiday.

The church office will be closed tomorrow in observance of Memorial Day.

It's softball season again! The Sharon men's softball team will begin play in the Southeast Church League in early June. Games are on Mondays and Fridays through June and July. If you are interested in playing, please call Randy Butler for details, 704-552-5431.

Are you interested in joining other couples at Sharon Church for dinner and fellowship? If so, please join us for the **Sharon Couples Dinner Groups**. Get to know your fellow Sharon Church members by sharing your home and a meal together. Four couples per group will share hosting responsibilities for four gatherings, then rotate joining another set of couples. Please contact Gina Crocker for more information and to register, 704-752-7141, or crockerfour@yahoo.com.

Volunteers are needed to become part of the worship team and help with the Sanctuary **sound system** for services and special occasions. If you are interested, please contact Charles Alley, 704-553-2163.

Vacation Bible School is seeking donations of chocolate chip and sugar **cookies** for the week of June 22-26. Volunteers to serve refreshments are also needed. Please contact Susan Milkey, 704-643-5265, smilkey@carolina.rr.com.



The Presbytery of Charlotte's Alzheimer's Care Group presents a Workshop for Families, Caregivers, and Congregations, on Thursday, June 4, 2009, from 1:30-4:30 p.m. at Davidson College Presbyterian Church in Davidson, NC. Come hear presentations, explore what vendors have to offer, and join in worship with others who care. For more information, contact Debbie Wilkinson, 704-535-9999.

The Mission Statement of Sharon Presbyterian Church

The Mission of Sharon Presbyterian Church is to celebrate God's love and His gift of salvation through Jesus Christ and to proclaim these truths to each other and the world through the worship of God, the teaching and nurture of our congregation, and the outreach of our church to the community and to the world.

2009 Session of Sharon Presbyterian Church

Class of 2009: Pam Beers, Pete Bleynt, Gregory Lynn Clodfelter, Susie Ellis, Andrew Kromer, John Mallard, Norris Parker, Randy Ross, Robin Shealy, Mike Spainhour

Class of 2010: Sarah Brown, Will Burch, Terry Dawson, Steve Ferber, Brooks Gearhart, Susan Grills, Carolyn Nowaczewski, Beth Osowski, J.D. Pearce, Nancy Walker

Class of 2011: Rich Barefoot, Chris Buchanan, Gene Manning, Joel McIntyre, Chris Moffat, Lisa Moore, Ray Shrum, Linda Skinner, Stephanie Spivey, Cary Young

Clerk of Session, David Stanford

Joining Sharon Presbyterian – we invite you to commit your life to the Lord Jesus Christ through discipleship to him through membership in his body, the Church. The three ways of joining a Presbyterian Church are by **Profession of Faith in Jesus Christ** as your Lord and Savior and Baptism into his Church, which represents a sincere promise to live for him in the service of his Church; **Reaffirmation of Faith:** Reclaiming the faith after inactivity or separation from another Church where membership is lapsed and there is no letter of transfer; and, **Transfer of Membership:** Certification of your previous membership in one of the branches of Christ's Church is forwarded to Sharon Presbyterian and you are received by letter of transfer. If you would be interested in joining or learning more about Sharon Presbyterian, please speak with one of our pastors.

Sharon Presbyterian Church ❖ 5201 Sharon Road, Charlotte, NC 28210

❖ Office and Emergency Contact: 704-553-0869 ❖

Email: Office@SharonPCUSA.org ❖ Website: www.SharonPCUSA.org



Next Sunday, May 31, 2009, after worship

Church Family Picnic in the Grove

Cookout for all, reservations not needed

*Entertainment by Jim Terrell
& the Rea Road Blue Grass Band*

Dress casually for worship

Drop off your blanket and lawn chairs before worship

Rain date is June 7

This Week at Sharon:

**Please remember to turn off the heat/AC and the lights,
and lock the doors following your meeting.**

Today

5:00 p.m. Spirit Ringers, Choir Room

Monday, May 25, Memorial Day

Church Office closed for holiday

7:00 p.m. Boy Scouts, Scout Hut

Tuesday, May 26

5:30 p.m. Church Administration, Session Room

7:00 p.m. Sharon's Vision, Room 6

Wednesday, May 27

6:30 p.m. Prayer Shawl Ministry, Room 1

7:30 p.m. Chancel Choir, Choir Room

Thursday, May 28

1:00 p.m. Bridge, Room 1

7:00 p.m. Health and Wellness Seminar, Charles Little Activity Building

7:30 p.m. Pastor Nominating Committee, Session Room

Saturday, May 29

9:00 a.m. Receive food for homeless meal, CLAB

5:00 p.m. Feed the homeless at shelters

Sunday, May 31

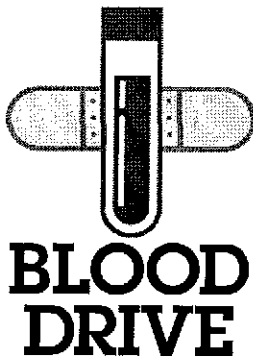
8:30 a.m. Blood Drive, CLAB

9:00 a.m. Sunday School

10:00 a.m. Worship

11:30 a.m. Groovin' In the Grove Picnic

5:00 p.m. Spirit Ringers, Choir Room



**Next Sunday, May 31,
from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
in the CLAB
To donate or volunteer,
contact Ralph Lovejoy,
704-442-1166**

Help feed the homeless

Matthew 25:40



Join us in our outreach ministry by helping serve our monthly dinner to the homeless of Charlotte at the Salvation Army Women's/ Children's Shelter and the Men's Uptown Shelter on Saturday, May 30, 2009.

Place this portion of the form in the offering plate or church office.

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Date: _____

I will deliver the following food to the CLAB Saturday, May 30, between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.:

3-lb. meatloaf, cooked, cold, not sliced	(need 31)	Indicate #:
Biscuits	(need 31 dozen)	Indicate #:
Cake(s)	(need 25)	Indicate #:
Pie(s)	(need 24)	Indicate #:

I will be glad to do the following on Saturday, May 30: (Check below:)

Receive food at the CLAB from 11:00 - 1:00 on Saturday, May 30	
Need 8 Servers at Men's Shelter	
Need 4 Servers at Women's Shelter	

I need a reminder phone call _____

Keep this portion of the form as a reminder.

I have agreed to do the following on Saturday, May 30:

1. Bake _____ 3-lb. **MEATLOAF(s)** – deliver cold/unsliced.
2. Bake _____ dozen **BISCUITS** – quantity marked on each package
3. Bake _____ **CAKE(s)**
4. Bake _____ **PIE(s)**

Please deliver food on Saturday, May 30, to the Charles Little Activity Building between 11:00a.m. and 1:00p.m.

Coordinator: David Beers (704-552-2201)



Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather heard the Spirit call them to Kenya

Listen—The Spirit is Calling

Can you hear it? Be still and listen closely. Can you sense the movement of the Spirit? Can you hear the call of the Spirit?

Allison McCullough heard the Spirit calling her to work with a coalition for the homeless in Hollywood, California, and leading her to attend every child's birthday party in her new neighborhood.

Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather heard the Spirit calling them to Kenya to accompany people seeking peace and reconciliation amid post-election violence in a deeply divided land.

Rachel Bauman heard the Spirit calling her to help individuals and families complete their tax forms in Miami, Florida.

Hanna Kim heard the Spirit calling her to Xela, Guatemala, to work with a church as it began a ministry with the elderly and to take guitar lessons from her host father.

Celeste Teal Mason with her host dad in Guatemala



Pentecost Offering

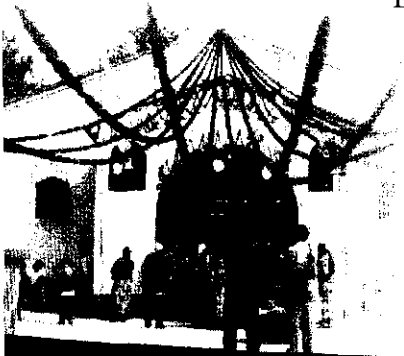
*The "Hallelujah Chorus" sung at
Christmas in Kenya*



Alex Marino followed the Spirit's call to New Orleans, Louisiana, to take part in the ongoing efforts to restore communities in the lingering aftermath of Katrina.

Each of these young adults listened intently and responded faithfully when the Spirit called them to serve. They were willing to live and learn beyond their comfort zones. Each year, dozens of young adults join the Young Adult Volunteer Program (YAV) through Presbyterian World Mission for a yearlong commitment to Spirit-led service and ministry. For many, that one year as a YAV will shape a lifetime of listening and responding to the Spirit's call to follow Christ in every aspect of life. And, by their example, they will engage others to do the same.

Listen. Can you hear the Spirit's call?



A Guatemalan church

Young Adult Volunteers (YAVs) are challenged by the sacrifices of community living, simple lifestyle, and devotion to prayer and service, nationally and internationally. The application deadline is January 20 for service beginning in August/September of that