



Our Mission...to seek God's will for our lives, joyfully responding to the Good News of Jesus Christ, with Love and Grace.

Volume 1, Issue 3
Fall 2011

RALLY DAY

September 11, 9:30 am

It's almost RALLY DAY . . .

Have you ever wondered why we call the kickoff for the Sunday School year "Rally Day"? If we look up the word "rally" in the dictionary, we discover these definitions, which apply to our celebration of Rally Day.

1. To call together for a common purpose; assemble. We are indeed called together for a common purpose: to grow spiritually and to strengthen our relationships with God and one another. Our common purpose, whether we are in the two-year old classroom or in an adult classroom, whether we are a student, parent, or teacher, is to grow as a disciple of Christ. Christ calls us together, to rally around our purpose as his disciples.
2. To reassemble and restore to order. During the summer, our church community, and certainly our Sunday School classes, take a much-needed and God-ordained Sabbath. But sometimes, that time that should be God-focused turns into a vacation from God. On vacation, we tend to turn off the alarm clock, let the dishes pile up, and relax.

Many times, we do that with our spiritual lives, too. We allow our Bibles to get a little dusty, and we may even sleep in on Sunday mornings. But, Rally Day gives us the opportunity to reassemble our spiritual lives, to rally back from vacation and turn that alarm clock back on and brush the dust off our Bibles. We rally back to our church routine.

3. To rouse or revive from inactivity or decline. This definition applies most when the dust is thick on our Bibles and that spiritual alarm clock is stuck on "snooze." This Rally Day is the perfect time to revive your spiritual life! We have so many Sunday School and weekday/weeknight offerings: Which one is right for you? Check out the Adult Spiritual Formation Catalog and discover what God has in store for you this year.

Use this Rally Day as a time to rally back to the routine of church, to dust off your spiritual life and experience Christ anew. You'll be amazed at what you see.

See you on Rally Day!

Dr. Matthew S. Brown, Senior Pastor, is on Sabbatical and will rejoin us refreshed and renewed on October 1!

Sunday Schedule

8:30 am, Worship in Chapel

9:30 & 11 am, Worship in Sanctuary

9:30 am, Sunday School for All Ages

Communion the first Sunday of each month

CHILDCARE AVAILABLE AT ALL SERVICES





CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

What an exciting week of Vacation Bible School we had with your children, sharing God's love in Christ through story, song, science, art, fellowship, and mission!

Did you know that each day of VBS 60 volunteers drove, sang, worshipped, shared stories, painted, glued, decorated, fed, and followed Jesus with 200 children?

Be sure to check our website for VBS photos at www.smpchome.org! We pray that this time of Vacation Bible School has been a blessing for your family!

We want that excitement and commitment to continue in Sunday School at SMPC! Come, read, taste, and see that the Lord is God!

See you on Rally Day!

Educating the Minds, Strengthening the Bodies, and Nurturing the Souls of Children and Families

Children and Worship Nursery Care for Children Infant –Kindergarten (8:30, 9:30 and 11 am)

Children, birth through kindergarten, need to interact physically with their world. They learn primarily by seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling. Therefore, these children need appropriately-sized space to move around and explore soft cuddly toys, manipulate large and small blocks, trucks and puzzles; investigate God's world and strengthen their bodies and minds by running, jumping, smelling, and feeling outside in it; hear, play, sing, and see God's songs and stories; draw, color, and paint God's stories, and experience God's love from face-to-face personal interaction with parent disciples and a child's care expert. Hearing God's stories, singing God's songs, praying prayers and experiencing God's love are all an act of worship.

South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church provides secure, nurturing care for children from infancy through kindergarten on Sunday mornings during all worship services. Our infant, toddler, two-year old, three-year old, four-year old, and kindergarten rooms are staffed with childcare experts, as well as parent disciples, providing our children with consistent and attentive care.

*"If our children are to have faith,
they must worship with us."*

John Westerhoff, Professor of Theology and Christian Nurture at Duke University Divinity School, says that, "[i]f our children are to have faith, they must worship with us." This past year the Children's Ministry Team spent some time reflecting on how best to integrate our children here at SMPC into the worship service. To this end, we are starting two new programs.

First, the Children's Ministry Team has put together a four-week study for first grade children and their parents examining the central understandings of the sacraments from the Reformed perspective, as well as examining what our denomination is teaching children about worship. This study will begin on Rally Day. Patty Stevenson will be leading the children and Kim Lee will be leading the parents.

Second, the Children's Ministry Team, in concert with the Worship Committee, planned and thoughtfully put together a Children's Worship service to be held in the Chapel each Sunday for children up to third grade. The Children's Worship service will be held during the 11 am worship service. Childcare will be available for parents with children younger than first grade at all worship services.

Children are, by their baptism, members of the people of God. The call to worship is addressed to all. In *The Public Worship of God*, Henry Sloane Coffin affirms, "Worship is the offering to God of the entire congregation of his people, and children should certainly be included. A childless congregation presents an abnormal and unpromising appearance." Therefore, children will enter the Sanctuary with their parents at 11 am to hear the call



to worship, pray the prayer of confession, hear the Good News, sing the Gloria Patri, meet their newly baptized brothers and sisters in Christ, and listen to the anthem. We will then recess to the Chapel following a short liturgy with the congregation. Once in the Chapel, the children will engage in their own call to worship, hear the scripture, engage in a children's sermon, sing a hymn, say what it is we believe, and pray for the people. They will return at the doxology to celebrate the Lord's Supper with their families, hear and say the Lord's Prayer, hear and say the affirmation of faith, sing a hymn, and receive the benediction as they scatter back out with their families into the community.

11 am Worship and Children

Children ages Three, Four, and Kindergarten gather together in one classroom with their childcare professionals to participate in the Children's Message during the 11 am worship service.

First through third graders are invited to participate in Children's Worship during the 11 am worship service. Immediately following the anthem, first through third graders will leave the Sanctuary to share in Children's Worship located in the Chapel. They will return to worship with their families in the Sanctuary at the Doxology.

First Graders and Communion

First grade is an exciting time in the life of the church community as well as in the life of your family. It is our tradition here at South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church to formally welcome first graders to the Lord's Table.

In Sunday school the first graders learn that we have a place to worship; worship is our response to God's love; we have a plan to help us worship; we pray as a part of worship; and the Reformed understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The culmination of our class will be that on World Communion Sunday, the first graders will be welcomed to the Lord's Table at the 11 am worship service.

The sacrament is known by different names, such as The Lord's Supper, Communion, and Holy Eucha-

rist. Eucharist comes from two Greek words Eu + Charis. Eu means well or good. Charis means favor or grace. Eucharist is receiving the good grace of God. Coming to the Lord's Table gives each of us the opportunity to accept in faith the gifts of grace, love, and forgiveness, and to remember God's divine presence in our lives. Through it we celebrate our oneness in Christ.

For children it is a chance to see God's people share a meal together as God's family. They can begin to know that in this celebration we say "thank you" to God. The sacrament of communion is a way to remember Jesus. Remembering is something children understand. The sacraments are heavenly mysteries that none of us ever fully understand, but in the sacraments are an opportunity to listen to your children's questions and inner grappling with faith.

Third Grade Bibles

It is our tradition here at South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church to present our third graders with Bibles during the 11 am service. This is a very exciting event for both parents and children! The Bible we present is the NIV Adventure Bible, a Bible specifically edited for children ages 8-12.

Children and Sunday School

Children and Sunday School (9:30-10:30)

Children Three through Kindergarten

Children Three-years through Kindergarten need to interact physically with their world. They learn primarily by seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling. They are concrete thinkers who need consistent, face-to-face interaction with loving and faithful adults. Therefore, these children need appropriately-sized space to move around and explore soft, hard, prickly toys, manipulate large and small blocks, trucks and figures, markers, crayons, and pencils, books and puzzles, as well as paint and glue; investigate God's world and strengthen their bodies and minds by running, jumping, smelling, and feeling outside in it; hear, play, sing, and see God's songs and stories; draw, color, and paint God's stories, and experience God's love from parent disciples. Hearing God's stories, singing God's songs, praying prayers and experiencing God's



develop a basic sense of trust in God.

Sunday school begins in September and ends in May for Threes, Fours and Kindergarteners. We are using the Live B.I.G. curriculum by Abington Press. These lessons are taught using Bible story, arts, crafts, and song. Our Sunday school classes are taught by parent disciples. These parent disciples have been called, taught, encouraged, prayed for and with by members of our Spiritual Formation Committee.

Children and Sunday School (9:30-10:30) First through Fifth Grade

Children first through fifth grade are beginning to learn through the use of language, memory, imagination, logical, and mathematical concepts related to concrete objects. They are beginning to understand that not all people think the way they do. Their thinking is still concrete, though they are beginning to demonstrate some abstract thinking. While they are beginning to engage in abstract thinking, they cannot predict all logical outcomes. They are very interested in fairness. They love stories, but their understanding centers on good or bad, right or wrong, black or white, fair or unfair. It is important for Sunday school teachers to present stories through a positive lens, demonstrating God's characteristics of love, care, concern, constancy and compassion.

Sunday school begins in September and ends in May for grades first through fifth. Each Sunday morning, first through fifth graders gather with their Shepherds in Mecklenburg Hall from 9:30 to 9:45(ish) to sing, pray, take attendance, give an offering, hear a "Moment for Mission," and talk about where the children are going that Sunday and what they are going to do. They dismiss by age to their grade specific class. Each Sunday for five weeks, the children encounter the biblical story from a different medium. For example, the story of Creation may be presented to first graders through Art the first Sunday, Cooking the second Sunday, Science the third Sunday, Film the fourth Sunday, and Drama the fifth Sunday. This pattern repeats for each grade. Sunday school is led by parent disciples. These parent disciples come in two forms: teachers and shepherds.

YOUTH MINISTRY

SUNDAY MORNINGS (9:30-10:30)

6th and 7th Grade: I Know the Bible!

6th Grade: New Testament

7th Grade: Old Testament

The 6th and 7th grades focus on a more traditional Bible study in this 2-year curriculum.

Each lesson begins with background information on the passages for the day (bios of characters, information about words or vocabulary, historical information or geographical information), followed by reading and studying the selected passages. There is Q&A opportunity and activities to reinforce the learning (art, acting, singing, writing, etc.). At the end of each unit, there is a "game day" to provide fun and review. Students participate in fun activities such as Bible Tic-Tac-Toe, Who Wants to be a Bible Millionaire? Bible Pictionary, etc.

8th Grade: Confirmation

Confirmation is an exciting adventure in the journey of faith. Our program culminates in joining the church, but also sparks lots of interesting questions and hopefully offers some answers about who God is, who we are in relation to God, why we are here, and where we are going. We are using the PC(USA) curriculum *Professing Our Faith*, as well as Sparkhouse *re:Form*. We will cover topics such as belonging to God, prayer, what it means to be Presbyterian, the sacraments, Jesus Christ, and Christian vocation, among others. Confirmands also meet monthly with a mentor whom they choose from our church family. They also complete a community service project, attend a church committee meeting, write their own Statement of Faith and meet with the Session before becoming a full member of the church on Confirmation Sunday.

9th - 12th Grades

The High School Class meets in its own teen-decorated Sunday school room and uses a variety of materials to keep interest and enthusiasm high. This year we will be studying Scripture passages from the lectionary using the curriculum *Feasting on the Word*. Our focus will be applying Scripture to daily life.



Sunday Evenings

Middle School Youth Group (5:30-6:30)

High School Youth Group (6:30-7:30)

The Youth Ministry leads Middle School and High School-aged youth to embrace their identity as children of God, to establish and strengthen their relationship with God and the Church, and to equip and challenge them to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

We do this through a variety of ways, both big and small. We focus on connecting together and joyfully responding to God's love and grace. We serve our local community through projects such as CROPwalk, Center of Hope Christmas stockings, serving at Crisis Assistance Ministries, and Second Harvest Food Bank. Summer trips are an opportunity to explore and grow in our faith, whether through mission trips or attending Montreat or Massanetta conferences.

Contact Rev. Katie Harrington, katie@smpchome.org or 704.544.0404, ext. 108, to learn more about this ministry.

ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION MINISTRY

Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" [Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it. 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:36-38, NRSV)

Presbyterians place a high priority on learning. Or, as I once heard Matt say to a group of inquirers, "There will always be an assembly of folk who endeavor to love the Lord their God with all of their minds." That is who we are: learners, disci-

ples who seek to love God with all of our minds. As a nod to our Presbyterian heritage, this fall SMPC studies the Old Testament! Come, read, taste, and see that the Lord is God!

Yours in Christ,
Kim Lee, Director of Spiritual Formation

SUNDAY MORNINGS (9:30-10:30)

Adult Lectionary Bible Study Class

Sunday Mornings, Room 302

Join us for a deeper study of the scriptures chosen by our ministers. We will approach the text from its historical setting, often with the eyes and ears of the first hearers, then consider how it applies to our 21st century lives. What in the world has changed? What has not? Whether you are a biblical scholar or a novice, you will enjoy this class. For more information, contact Gwen Volker at gkmvolker@gmail.com.

All Things Considered

Sunday Mornings, Room 201

Sunday Discussion Group

Come join us for thoughtful discussion on contemporary Christian topics. The group shares opinions, experiences and knowledge of the day's topic in an inclusive, small-group setting. No preparation is needed, and the topics are different each week, making it easy to join the group at any time.

September 11: Remembering 9/11 - When Life Plans Change – Kathy Paquette

September 18: "Strength and Faith through Brokenness" – Amy Potvin

September 25: "The Best Version of YOU"- Jeremy Boone

For more information, contact Heather Russell, hrussell70@gmail.com or 704.910.5000.

JOY Sunday School Class

Sunday Mornings, Room 301

Calling all seniors to join us! No prizes ... No discounts ... No "Early Bird Specials." However we do



have the very best ***star teachers! Grab a cup of coffee (or tea) and a muffin at the Coffee Grounds and join us. Classes begin on Rally Day, September 11. We would be so JOYful to see you! Teachers: Mary Ann Christian, Dixie & Dave Lindquist, and Tommy Sinclair. For more information, contact Mary Ann Christian at MACHris1@carolina.rr.com or 704.544.5327.

Parents of First Graders Study

Sunday Mornings, Commons
September 11 – October 2

Parents will learn: To ponder the central understandings of worship, the sacraments, and prayer from the Reformed perspective Please register for this class by emailing Kim Lee at kim@smpchome.org.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Inquirer's Class

You are invited to participate in an Inquirer's Class on Sunday, October 23 from 4 to 6 pm, Room 201. Dr. Brown leads this class, which takes a brief look at the history, beliefs, and structure of the Presbyterian Church, answers questions relating to membership, and explores how the Spirit of God uses our gifts to form community. If you have questions or would like to attend, contact Nancy Metzler at nancy@smpchome.org or 704.544.0404, ext. 103.

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

Monday

Exploring Theology

Mondays, 6:30-8 pm, Room 202
September 12 – November 14

Join us for a 10-week study of "The Burning Word, a Christian Encounter with Jewish Midrash" by Judith M. Kunst. Facilitators: Becky Trella, beckytrella@bellsouth.net and Gwen Volker, gkmvolker@gmail.com

Tuesday

Invitation to Genesis

Tuesdays, 9:30-11 am
(September 13-November 15)

This is a 10-week Bible study that takes us into

the rich tapestry of Genesis. Rev. Lynne Frech will facilitate. If you have any questions or to register, contact Lynne at lynne@smpchome.org or 704.544.0404, ext. 107.

Pastor's Study with Dr. Matthew S. Brown **The Ten Commandments**

Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 pm, Chapel
October 11-November 29

The Ten Commandments. We will utilize the book, The Truth About God by Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon. To register for the study and reserve a book, email Kim Lee, kim@smpchome.org.

Living with Hope: A Scientist Looks at Advent, Christmas, Epiphany by John Polkinghorne

Tuesdays, 9:30-11 am, Session Room
November 22-December 13

This gives ua a unique perspective on the themes of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. . Rev. Katie Harrington will facilitate. If you have any questions or to register, contact Katie at katie@smpchome.org or 704.544.0404, ext. 107.

Thursday

Men's Group

Thursdays, 6:30 am, Room 201
August 4 - ongoing

We welcome anyone to come join us for the coffee, the fellowship and possibly the opportunity to learn something about yourself. Our discussion will be based on a book by John Eldredge entitled Wild at Heart. The author explores masculinity and what it will take for men to restore their passion for adventure in their life in the world and the church. For more information contact Russ Wenner at Russell.m.wenner@gmail.com.

Disciple I –

Becoming Disciples through Bible Study

Thursdays, 9:45-11:45 am
(September 15-May 10)

This is a 34-week study that begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation. Come, read, taste and see that the Lord is God! Kim Lee will facilitate.



If you have any questions or to register, contact Kim at kim@smpchome.org or 704.544.0404, ext. 117.

Food for Thought Book Group

The first Thursday of each month, 6:30 pm
Future reads and meeting dates:

October 6: *Breath: a Lifetime in the Rhythm of an Iron Lung* by Martha Mason

November 3: *Breaking Night: a Memoir of Forgiveness and Survival* by Liz Murray

December 8: *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford

Please feel free to join our group at any time! For more information or to order a book, contact Kathy Paquette at khpaquettewh@aol.com.

Share a Meal With Your SMPC Family Sept. 18

Celebrate a new season by sharing a meal with your SMPC family! On Sept. 18, following the 11 am worship service, we will gather in Mecklenburg Hall for an old-fashioned potluck luncheon. Experience the SMPC spirit of hospitality over a glass of sweet iced tea and a home-cooked meal. Please plan on joining us! This is a great family fellowship event!

SMPC FALL FESTIVAL

**On Saturday, October 8,
we'll roll out the welcome mat to
host the 2011 SMPC
Fall Festival.**

**We need EVERYONE to help in some small way. You can share your gift of hospitality with our Charlotte neighbors through this free community event!
Contact: Jill Flemming,
jflemming2@carolina.rr.com**

*Upcoming Mission Trip to
New Orleans*

Families are still living with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance continues to help. Many are still in need of functional homes after all these years. You could be the one making a huge difference in the lives of people in need while also enjoying fellowship, fun, and good food.

Please consider joining our next mission trip to New Orleans Oct. 2-8. For more information, contact James Ruckman at jruckman@carolina.rr.com.

*AMERICAN RED CROSS
BLOOD DRIVE*

**Saturday, October 22,
8 am-12:15 pm,
Commons**

**Contact: Gayle Ireland,
cireland@mindspring.com**

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1st Annual
COMMUNITY
OUTREACH DAY

Saturday, Nov. 5

We will share our time and talent with various charities to answer God's call to love and serve our neighbors who are in need.

Contact: Jennifer Blake,
jblake33@hotmail.com

Nursery Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed in our childcare rooms (infant-kindergarten) on Sunday mornings during the 11 am worship service to assist our paid childcare experts. The role of a Nursery Volunteer is a fundamental component of the SMPC Children's Ministry. In order to provide a warm, loving and safe experience on Sunday mornings for our children, we need the assistance of adults and students (sixth grade and above). Volunteers help monitor the doors as children arrive and depart the classrooms, supervise play, read stories, sing songs, color, cut and paste. If you are a church member and are interested in helping out in the nursery, please contact Marianne Mangels at jmmangels@carolina.rr.com.

Attention:

College Students and High School Grads, 2008-2011:

SMPC would like to stay in touch with you and wish you well in your next endeavors. We need your mailing address and email address at school, home, wherever you are. We need a response to confirm your address even if your address has not changed. Please notify Rev. Katie Harrington, Katie@smpchome.org.

In Search of the
Perfect Gift

by Donna Brown

Many years ago a young boy sat on his parents' couch intently studying the Sears catalogue as was his habit. A photograph was snapped and the picture found its way into the family album where it opened the door to numerous discussions about this child, turned teenager, turned adult's determination to find the exact toy/shirt/car that he desired. Yes, finding the perfect item or gift can be a challenging task.

For years SMPC members have found perfect gifts for loved ones during the Advent season at the Alternative Gift Market, benefitting ministries locally and around the world. It is a way to give life-changing and meaningful gifts to those in need at Christmas. Gifts have provided training for nurses in Haiti, school supplies for homeless children at A Child's Place and computer training for seniors at Shepherd Center South. Ministry representatives have expressed their gratitude for the support they have received through monetary gifts and welcome offers of gifts of time.

Interestingly, while we think of giving alternative gifts at Christmas, the need for support and opportunity to give exist all year long. Birthdays and anniversaries are occasions we regularly celebrate with gifts. Why not fill a bag of groceries for Loaves and Fishes when you buy ingredients for a birthday cake? Or, how about adding an extra box of crayons and paints to your cart for children at Thompson's Family Focus when you shop for a birthday present? Maybe instead of heading to a local restaurant for dinner to celebrate a milestone, your family might volunteer to serve dinner together at the Center of Hope.

This year's Alternative Gift Market will be on Sunday, November 20. Catalogues with a wide variety of giving opportunities will be available in early November. Grab a catalogue, find a comfortable



couch and browse the possibilities. Then decide how you are going to give hope/love/comfort - all perfect gifts.

FROM THE PEW

Leigh Yeoman

Sainthood---the Simple Explanation

A saint ain't what you think
No glossy gossoman wings
Or haloes floating overhead.
It's Matt at sermon time
Katie with the youth
Lynne in sick rooms
Asking God to heal.
Freda sending emails.
Sainthood is in God's service.
You can do it too.

When does a life in the service of God begin?
Of what stuff is a saint made? Are there any saints
left in a world that is seemingly overwhelmed by
evil and materialism? Perhaps.

Leigh Yeoman was born and grew up in Montgomery, Ala., where she and her family were members of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Her mother earned a masters degree in sociology and in addition to having a private counseling practice, she was actively involved in volunteer work. Her father was a skilled painter and sculptor. With these role models, it is no wonder that Leigh developed her creativity and compassion for people.

Through high school, Leigh was a member of the track team and a guard on the basketball team that was state runner up. Still in excellent condition, she continues to work out and play basketball.

At age 13, Leigh began to take summer mission trips into the mountains of N.C. Much of the time was spent winterizing homes whose only insulation had been newspaper. The rest of the time was spent in Bible studies with the people she was helping. She was involved with this program as long as she

lived in Montgomery. And, later she and her husband, Pat McDonnell, became chaperones for this youth group.

After high school graduation, Leigh attended the Montgomery campus of Auburn University. Although her degree is in applied communications, she has enough hours for majors in speech and hearing, and psychology and sociology. She and Pat, who had already graduated, were married during her senior year.

For the next six years, Leigh worked for the State Arts Council of Alabama and the Alabama Business Review. Both Leigh and Pat were actively involved in the programs at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Beginning in 1991, Pat was transferred to Nashville; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Omaha, and finally to Charlotte in 1998. According to Leigh, most of these years were spent packing and unpacking boxes. They were also spent teaching and attending Sunday School and church in each new city. Today, Leigh continues to attend Sunday School, book studies, and Bible studies that nurture growth in Christ.

When she and Pat moved to Charlotte, they had four sons and one daughter. Leigh attended a woman's retreat, where she made many friends. By that summer, she and Pat were actively involved in the life of South Mecklenburg Presbyterian Church.

That year, the youth group had taken a mission trip to Haiti. Leigh was so impressed with their experiences that she began leading efforts to gather food, clothing, school supplies, and medical supplies for our work there.

During this time, a young man from Haiti named Lucner (pronounced Luke near) was living with Kay Dano and attending Central Piedmont Community College. Many days, Leigh picked Lucner up at the bus stop and gave him a ride to Kay's house. He soon became one of the founders of OFCB, the school that we partner with today in Haiti.



With Carol Palmgren initiating the research, Leigh and several other members developed an interest in Fair Trade Coffee, a program that we still offer at our church.

In February 2005, Leigh traveled to the state of Chicapas in southern Mexico. She found herself in a village of 200 families. Each family owned an acre or two of land on the adjacent mountain. The fields were an hour's walk for the natives. For Leigh and the other visitors who were not used to the rough terrain and oxygen deprivation from the thin mountain air, it was a 3-hour walk.

Leigh discovered that the villagers took special pride in their coffee. The beans are organically grown and carefully inspected to eliminate inferior beans from the finished product. After a day's work, the farmers strapped a 40-lb. sack of beans behind their backs and carried it to the village. The single straps that kept the sack in place stretched across the forehead, not over the shoulders. To experience this daily ordeal, Leigh carried one of these bags most of the way to the village.

Although most of the villagers lived in small houses with dirt floors, Leigh stayed with a family who had a relatively large house. It was approximately 1,000 square feet and had a concrete floor. At night, three generations slept on mats on the concrete floor, with curtains for room dividers. For five nights, so did Leigh.

Any clean water came from nearby creeks, wells, and pumps that were attached to wells. Baths were taken in the open at available water sources. When passing while a person bathed, good manners dictated that one look in the other direction.

While she was there, Leigh discovered that we eliminate three or four middlemen by trading directly with the villagers. Every pound of coffee that we buy at church improves the profitability and quality of life of these good people.

While serving breakfast at the Center of Hope this winter, Leigh met a woman with four children who had escaped an abusive husband. During their

conversation, Leigh discovered that the woman was a nurse. With the help of our church, Leigh acted immediately, locating an apartment for the woman and her children. The woman soon found a nursing job and enrolled her children in school.

There are people from whom the love of Christ radiates like a light. Leigh Yeoman is one of those people. She has enlightened the lives of people from Haiti to Chicapas, from Charlotte to Mobile. The Lord told us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Leigh does that. All people are her neighbors.

Barringer Elementary from the Eyes of Tom Strohl

“A dozen people could change the culture of the school. Two dozen could transform it. Even one more person can make a big difference.”

The words belong to Mrs. Fellows, the principal of Barringer Elementary School. Barringer is located 15 miles northwest of our church. Each morning, Mrs. Fellows and the teachers arrive early to greet the students and give them hugs as they enter. Many teachers tutor students before and after school. Last year, the school had two full time tutors. None of the teachers have lost their jobs, but the status of the tutors is in doubt.

When I began working with him last year, Nakim wouldn't look me in the eye. Admittedly, it's tough to look a 6-ft tall person in the eye when you're not 5-ft tall. An adult can be intimidating. Nakim mumbled and didn't like to read out loud. For a few weeks, I read to him until he began to relax.

“Let's take turns reading,” I suggested as we picked out a book in the library. “Okay, but you first,” he said. After reading a paragraph, I let Nakim take over. His voice was soft and tentative. “Do you know what a syllable is, Nakim?” I asked. “No,” he replied. “It's a unit of sound that is found in a word. How many syllables does Barringer have?”



I asked. "Two," he guessed. "Listen carefully. Bar-rin-ger. How many syllables?" "Three," he replied. "That's right. Three. We'll learn to sound words out by their syllables. They'll make much more sense," I said. "Okay," Nakim said with a smile.

I continued to come once a week to work with Nakim. He progressively became more confident and proficient in his reading.

"How's he doing?" I asked his teacher as we returned to class. "Much better! He's actually spending his breaks reading library books," she said. "Can you come back tomorrow?" Nakim asked expectantly. "Today is Wednesday. I have a full day of work tomorrow. What if I come back Friday?" I suggested. "Oh, good! I'll see you then," he said as we went back to class.

The principal said, "These kids rely on us so much. If you miss a week, they think that you're mad at them."

As I walked into the classroom Friday morning, Nakim smiled from ear to ear. His teacher asked if he had a book to read. "Yes, ma'am," Nakim said, pulling a library book from his desk. As we walked to the library, Nakim seemed to be half a foot taller. His ability to read and recognize words was steadily improving. "See you next week," I said as Nakim walked through his classroom door. "Mr. Tom," his teacher asked seriously, "thanks so much. He's doing so much better." "That's great!" I replied. "That's what we're looking for. See you next week!"

Things continued to go well until ...

"Good morning, Mr. Tom. Nakim moved last weekend. He moved to Spartanburg where he has more family," the school secretary said. My heart sank. "Oh," I said. "He'll be better off since he has more family there. Mrs. Petrillo said to come down to her class. She has other students who need help," the secretary said. "I'm on my way," I said. I wasn't happy, but I knew she was right. There were

other students who needed help.

Nakim's teacher introduced me to Jalem, the student I worked with until the end of the year. As with Nakim, Jolen's reading skills and self confidence improved with each week. I promised to return in September and continue to work with her.

Elizabeth Lankford chairs our Community Outreach Committee. Her daughter, Gwinn, attends Hawk Ridge Elementary School. During the past year, Elizabeth helped five students with their reading skills. According to her, the children loved the extra attention and learned rapidly because of it. Working closely with Elizabeth is Deb Holzmeister. For years, Deb has been the liaison between our church and Barringer Elementary. Deb is a former employee of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. She has volunteered as a tutor and knows the importance of an educational ministry. Either Deb or Elizabeth can help you with the volunteering procedure, if you are interested. (It can be done online.)

Rodney Young has been tutoring at Barringer Elementary for two years. He feels that tutoring helps students in several respects. It not only helps them in the classroom, but it also improves their self-confidence and self-esteem. A dedicated person who comes faithfully can make a child feel loved and worthwhile. Rodney feels that we can make a lasting impact on these children and point them toward a better way of life.

Tim Morgan loves children. He is a member of the school board, leader of a our Scout troop, and reads to children in a program called "Freedom Schools." This program provides low income students with places to learn and play during the summer. Tim feels that reading skills are crucial in understanding all other subjects. He also feels that adult supervision and approval are vital in a child's development. Do you feel intimidated by the prospect of teaching a child to read? "It's no different than reading with your children or grandchildren," Tim observes.

When I was in high school, my mother was a guidance counselor. No one thought that Fred Jones would amount to much. We hoped that Fred would

keep his grades high enough to stay on the football team and graduate. “What would you like to do after you graduate, Fred?” my mother asked during a counseling session. “I’d like to go to college and become an accountant, but my parents can’t afford it and I don’t have the grades for a scholarship,” Fred said, baring his soul. Searching for an option, my mother suggested, “If you join the Army, you can take courses while you’re enlisted and finish your education on the GI Bill.”

After graduating, Fred enlisted and, as frequently happens, we lost track of him. Eight years later, my mother was in line at the grocery store. She noticed a well-dressed young man with a huge smile. “You don’t recognize me, do you, Mrs. Strohl?” he asked. “No, who are you?” she replied. “I’m Fred Jones. I took your advice and went to college on the GI bill and got my accounting degree. I’m working for an accounting firm in Charlotte,” he explained. Some things transcend words, so Mom and Fred laughed and hugged, then laughed and hugged again.

Barringer Elementary School is filled with boys and girls like Fred Jones. If you would like to help, call Deb, Elizabeth, Rodney, Tim, or me. Until you feel comfortable with the school, Rodney or I will keep you company.

All children blossom emotionally and intellectually with tutoring, attention, and love from concerned adults. This is the perfect opportunity for us to work together to transform the lives of these children. Let’s not overlook them. Let’s not pass them up.



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