

# The Cumberland

## Knoxville First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Inc.

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Rev. Mike Wilkinson ~ Pastor

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Our Weekly Newsletter

*"Loving God, Loving People"*

June 29, 2016



I want to begin this article by thanking everyone (student; teacher, cook; music; art; recreation; guest speaker; director) who participated in last week's **Vacation Bible School**. I also want to thank those who loaned us various items to decorate the Surf Shack; these items may be picked up at your convenience. Lastly, I want to thank **Rev. Greg Tucker**, the Pastor of Faith Fellowship Cumberland Presbyterian Church, for teaching our adult class. While the attendance was small (35 on Thursday night; 33 on Friday night; 28 on Saturday night; no count on Sunday night for the Luau), the joy-level was high and hopefully contagious. Our offering during **Vacation Bible School** will be given to the **Stott-Wallace Missionary Offering Fund** to help support the 22 Cumberland Presbyterian missionaries now serving on the field.

As you know, Tom Witmer and I spent last week in Nashville attending the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. As I mentioned in the last newsletter, one of the items of business before the Assembly was a plan of reunification between the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America (our sister denomination that we helped established in the aftermath of the American Civil War). While we share a common history, a *Confession of Faith*, and a desire to reunite, all the details of the reunification have not yet been worked out. Both General Assemblies did vote, however, to continue working toward reunification that will hopefully take place in the next year or two; please make this a matter of prayer. Other items of note that took place at our General Assembly was the approval of a Resolution of Repentance, Apology, and Resolve that addressed the sin of racism that both led to the creation of the two separate denominations and has contributed to us remaining separated over the years. One last note from General Assembly, I was elected to serve a three-year term on our denominational Ministry Council. The Ministry Council provides both oversight and vision to of Communications Ministry, Discipleship Ministry, Missions Ministry, and Pastoral Development Teams. This is my second time to serve on the Ministry Council; I was the initial Chair when the Council was formed eight-years ago.

Last Sunday, I preached a message about "Loving the Lost". I have included as an insert in this newsletter a slightly redacted version of this sermon. I did so for four reasons: first, I believe the call for us to take the love of Christ outside our "four walls" is fundamental to our lives as followers of the risen Jesus; second, I believe the call for us to go outside our "four walls" is absolutely necessary for us, as a congregation, to realize the future that God has planned for us (see **Jeremiah 29:11**); third, with the Summer vacation season upon us, so many of our regular attenders were not here last Sunday and I want them too to know that our call is to go outside our "four walls" with the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and four, several folks who receive this newsletter are not directly involved in the everyday life and ministry of First Cumberland, but as Christians, they too have a call on their lives to go outside their "four walls" with the life-changing, hope-filled message of the Gospel. My hope is that everyone who receives this newsletter reads this sermon, even if you were here last Sunday. Furthermore, I would like to encourage every active participant here at First Cumberland to read it at least three times this week, may even read it every day.

I close on a personal note: our oldest daughter, Christina Hinkle, is expecting her second child (our third grandchild, but our first granddaughter). The due date is July 8<sup>th</sup>, but all indications are that she will deliver sometime this week. Once Joanna and I receive the telephone call that our daughter is in labor, we will immediately drop everything and travel to Birmingham for the birth. Hopefully, all of this will take place during the week so that I can be here next Sunday. If not, **Rev. Don Winn**, a retired Cumberland Presbyterian minister, will be here to preach in my place. Please continue to keep Christina and Baby (Joanna calls her Ethel because her parents have not yet settled on a name), in your prayers.

Learning the unforced rhythms of grace,

*Pastor Mike*

### **Cumberland Presbyterian Women's Ministry**

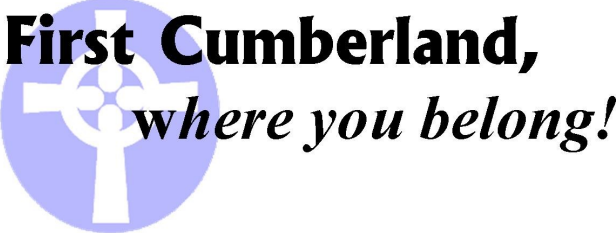
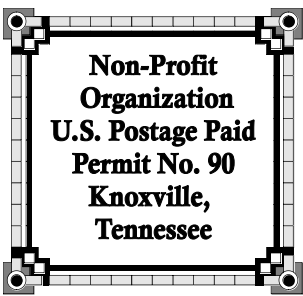
The **West Circle** of our ladies' ministry will meet Tuesday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, at 11:00 a.m., in the Keene Room. Please bring a sandwich lunch – drinks and dessert will be furnished. All the ladies of the congregation are invited to attend.

A big thank you goes to all who helped clean the big Kitchen off the Gym last week. The following people participated – **Jimmy, Maxine, Greg, Dawn, Chris, and Justin Curtis; Lois Witmer; Judy Gwilliams; Dianne Fielder; and Betty Hammill**. Thank you for a job well done!

### **Talent Show and Ice Cream Social**

Our **Outreach and Missions Committee** is planning a church-wide **Talent Show and Ice Cream Social** Sunday afternoon, July 10<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 4:00 p.m. A **Talent Show sign-up sheet** is on the bulletin board beside the Church Office; several people have signed up, but there is room for more, so make plans to participate with singing (solos, duets, quartets, etc.), playing musical instruments, magic tricks, dancing, twirling, stand-up comedy, or any other talents from our adults and children. Please bring ice cream, toppings, cookies, fruit, etc. to share. There will be a panel of judges for those bringing homemade ice cream! Invite your family and friends and come join us for this time of fun and fellowship!

*For the glory of God, Knoxville First Cumberland Presbyterian Church exists to **worship** Christ, **evangelize** the lost, **love** one another and our neighbor, and **learn** more about our God.*



### Happy Birthday

June 22nd-July 5th

22nd - Kari Summers  
27th - Ryan Haddox  
29th - Sherrie Shetterly  
30th - Terrie McVey  
2nd - Laci Witmer  
3rd - Logan Collins

Stewardship Report June 19, 2016	
Sunday School.....	36
Worship Service.....	64
Offering.....	\$3,915.00
Building Reimbursement.....	\$1,625.00
Stewardship Report June 26, 2016	
Sunday School.....	35
Worship Service.....	62
Offering.....	\$3,125.25
Kroger Rewards.....	\$139.32
Stott-Wallace Missionary Offering Fund..	\$130.00

Activities for June 29-July 5, 2016	
Wednesday:	6:30 p.m. Choir Practice
Sunday:	9:30 a.m. Sunday School
	10:45 a.m. Worship Service
Tuesday:	11:00 a.m. West Circle Meeting
(See our web site for complete calendar listings)	

*Among Our People*

Mildred Acuff had a scope procedure preformed on Monday, June 27<sup>th</sup> . . . It was good having Dick Booher back worshipping with us last Sunday after his prolonged recovery from surgery . . . It was good having Georgia Moore, sister of Jewell Kerr, worshipping with us last Sunday . . . A special word of thanks to Laura Paschke for playing the piano the last three weeks while Gene McCammon’s was at Music Camp . . . It was good having Donna Walker back worshipping, and singing in the Choir, last Sunday after recovering from her surgery . . .

**Friendship Club**

The next Dutch-treat lunch of the **Friendship Club** is Wednesday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, at **Chili’s Bar and Grill** (located on Kingston Pike just east of West Town Mall)), at 11:00 a.m. As always, feel free to invite family and friends to join you on these outings. A sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board outside the Church Office.

**Annual Garage Sale**

Our annual **Garage Sale** will be Friday and Saturday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, from 8:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. We are now collecting donated items; simply bring the items you would like to donate with you to church on Sunday or call the Church Office (865-588-8581) to schedule a time to drop them off.

### Prayer Concerns

#### In the Hospital

No one connected to First Cumberland is known to be in the hospital at this time. PTL!

#### Health and Prayer Concerns

(alphabetized)

Mildred Acuff; Preston Beeler (cousin of Greg Beeler); Charlotte Byrd; Gordon Blaylock; Dick Booher; Kim Boyatt (friend of Susan Edwards); Peggy Bradshaw (mother of Dianne Fielder); Wanell Brown (friend of Rose Wilkinson); David Clark (coworker of Tom DeLozier); Carol Craven (sister of Lois Witmer); **Cumberland Presbyterian missionaries around the world**, Mary Helen Daniel; Mae Denton (friend of Tammy Eblen); Nora Derreberry (mother of Maxine Curtis); Grace Flory (mother of Lois Witmer); Judy Gammon; Lynne Garrison (sister of Lois Witmer); Mark Hester; Bud and Betty Hickman (friends of Mary Ann Haney); Christina and Baby Girl Hinkle (daughter of Pastor Mike and Joanna); Bobbie Himes (sister of Jin Gaston); Becky Ingle (friend of Amanda Roberts); Kim Jones (friend of Amanda and Scott Roberts); Jewell Kerr; Sherri Kramer (friend of Joy Taylor); Steve Kusenda (brother-in-law of Margaret Migas); Bob Lawson (friend of Pastor Mike); Gene McCammon; Maxine McGuire; Catherine McKinney; Ruth McNabb (mother of Tammy Eblen); Brian Migas (son of Margaret Migas); Jonathan Migas (son of Margaret Migas); Georgia Moore (sister of Jewell Kerr); Mary Anne Moncier (aunt of Dianne Fielder); Dewaine Moncier, Jr. (cousin of Dianne Fielder); Alice Montgomery; Amy Beth Davidson Morgan; Barbara Mullenax; Cliff Parrott; Tom Parrott (son of Cliff Parrott); **persecuted Christians around the world**, Jan Pipkin (sister-in-law of Dianne Pipkin); David Poore (coworker of Phil Bridges); Anna Faye Presley (niece of Catherine McKinney); Becky Rader; David and Rebecca Rech (parents of Justin Rech); John Snoderly (brother of Betty Hammill); John Snoderly, Jr. (nephew of Betty Hammill); Sydney Snoderly (great-niece of Betty Hammill); Charlie Spalding (friend of Joy Taylor); Jean Stapleton (mother of Elaine Stapleton); Gladys Stone; Angel Tindell (grand-daughter of Catherine McKinney); Donna Walker; Carl Ware (father of Sam Ware); Codde Weaver (son of Elaine Stapleton); Devan Willhite (friend of Greg Beeler); Lois Witmer

*Please keep the Church Office informed of any needed changes to our Prayer Concerns list.*

**Church’s Website**

The church’s website, [www.first-cumberland.org](http://www.first-cumberland.org), includes audio recordings of the sermons from the previous four Worship Services.

**Thought of the Week**

“Jesus isn’t looking for you to be like other Christians, He’s looking for you to be like Him.”—A.W. Tozer

“ . . . let’s go outside, where Jesus is, where the action is— . . .”—**Hebrews 13:13, MSG**

## ***Loving the Lost***

Congruent with the 186<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church that . . . I attended last week, was an Evangelism Conference sponsored by our denominational Missions Ministry Team. . . . The theme for this conference was “Go!”—particularly it was to go outside where both Jesus and the lost are. The theme Scripture for the conference was **Hebrews 13:13** which from *The Message* reads, “. . . let’s go outside, where Jesus is, where the action is—. . .” As followers of the risen Jesus, we are called to go outside where the lost are. For decades now, our evangelism plan has been: “They know where the church is; they can come inside if they want to.” While this plan has been tried and tried again, it has not been found to be “tried and true”—if anything, it has been tried and disproven.

With that in mind, I want to call you attention to the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of **Luke**—this chapter contains three parables that Jesus told about something of great value being lost—*The Parable of Lost Sheep*, *The Parable of the Lost Coin*, and *The Parable of the Lost Son*, better known as *The Parable of the Prodigal Son*. The context for this chapter is that Jesus has been spending a good a lot of His time outside with lost people—with sinners, even eating His meals with them. Jesus being outside with sinners has the religious elite all bent-out-of-shape, so in response to their objections, Jesus tells these three parables in rapid succession to show them how wrong their attitude toward the lost is, and in so doing, Jesus clearly shows that God loves the lost and feverously desires to save them or as the Apostle Peter would later write, God is “. . . not willing that any [person] should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” [**Second Peter 3:9**, KJV]

Before I read these parables, perhaps I should define the term “lost”—by lost, I mean someone who does not yet know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior—someone who has not yet confessed and repented of their sins—someone who has not yet surrendered their life to God—someone who is still on the outside when it comes to knowing Jesus. The lost could be currently living an immoral lifestyle, as where many of the people Jesus hung out with on the outside, or they could be living the type of life that we would all approve of—they could even be a part of a local church—they could appear to be on the inside—they have just not yet allowed the grace of God to cleanse them from their sins. I say “not yet” because as long as there is breath in the body, there is hope that the grace of God can reach them one the outside and bring them in. According to a recent publication of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, there are four-and-a-half billion people today who are lost—who are outside—who are living without the hope that comes from knowing Jesus Christ. When we think of these lost people as one large number—as a faceless crowd, it is easy to overlook that each one is an individual. It is also easy to overlook that the lost are our neighbors, our friends, our co-workers, our classmates, and possibly even our family members. Each and every lost person is a precious soul for whom Christ died, for in the words of **Romans 5:8**: “. . . God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” [NRSV] As followers of the risen Jesus, we should want to go outside where Jesus is in order to reach each lost person with the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now I know that when we are tired—and many of us are tired of trying to be evangelistic with little to no success—I know that when we are tired, we want to stay on the inside and say to ourselves, let someone else go outside, but again, as followers of the risen Jesus, we are compelled to go outside, at least one more time, so that we can reach the lost with the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Again, the context for our Scripture for today is the contrast between the love of God for the lost and the lack of love for the lost by most religious people. Throughout the gospels, we see Jesus interacting with lost people—with unrepentant sinners—with those on the outside. Jesus is pure, holy, and sinless yet He hangs out with sinners. As we examine these encounters in the gospels, we cannot help but notice that Jesus does not come condemn the lost; instead, He repeatedly chastises the religious for their lack of love for the lost. In **John 3:17**, Jesus says, “. . . God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” [NRSV]

Throughout His ministry, lost people are drawn to Jesus. What would draw a sinner to Someone so pure, so holy, so sinless? His love, compassion, and mercy is what draws people to Jesus. Lost people are despised and rejected by many religious people, but lost people are important to Jesus. How important are lost people to you? Are they important enough for you to pray for their salvation? Are they important enough for you to go outside and share the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them? We know that lost people are important to Jesus, because instead of judging, criticizing, and avoiding lost people, He goes outside and pursues them. Speaking of Himself, in **Luke 19:10**, Jesus says: ““The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them.”” [NCV] This is illustrated by the commitment of the shepherd, the persistence of the woman, and the compassion of the father in the three parables recorded in our text for today. Found people are a delight to Jesus, so much so that He throws a party every time someone is found—in fact, in our Scripture for today, Jesus says that ““. . . there’s more joy in heaven over one sinner’s rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue.”” [**Luke 15:7**, MSG] The older brother in *The Parable of the Lost Son* represents religious people who have no concern for the lost—those who refuse to go outside; we see this in both his condemnation of his younger brother and his anger towards his father. If the older brother loved his father, he would have loved his younger brother, as well, and he would have gladly joined the party.

I said a moment ago that there are currently four-and-a-half-billion lost people in the world, but did you know that right here in Knox County, Tennessee . . . slightly less than 20% of the 486,561 people who live here actually attend church. That means that more than 80% of the people—some 389,000 people in our community do not attend church—they are outside and the majority of those people are lost. This 80% breaks down pretty evenly into two categories—the “Nones” and the “Dones”. The “Nones” is the largest of the two categories, though barely. The “Nones” are the lost who have never been associated with a Christian church in any manner in their entire lives—they have never been inside. Nearly 200,000 “Nones” live in Knox County—gone are the days when everyone you knew went to church somewhere, at least occasionally. The “Dones” are the de-churched—that is, they are the people used to at least visit the inside, but now prefer to remain outside—they are the people who have become fed up with the religiosity of the Church and have left it. They lost the “worship war” in their particular congregation over shifting from traditional music to contemporary—they grew tired of the blatant hypocrisy of fellow church members—they did not want to hear another word about tithing—they were looking for more doing instead of just talking. Many of the “Dones” are not lost, in the sense of having never known Jesus, but they are displaced and are living outside of the Community of Faith—outside the fellowship of the Church. . . .

How do we, as followers of the risen Jesus, develop our love for the lost—for both the “Nones” and the “Dones”? . . . to borrow a phrase from Nike: “Just do it!”, but do what?—go outside where Jesus is. The American Church has spent decades now talking about the shifting culture in our country and the decline in church attendance, but has actually done very little about it. It is time to quit gathering inside to talk about it and go outside to do something about it, but how do we do it? We began by asking God to increase our love and compassion and mercy for others to the point that we draw the lost to us and to Jesus. Lost people enjoyed being around Jesus; do they enjoy being around you? Maybe it is time we quit trying to clean the “fish” before we catch them and leave the cleaning to Jesus . . . I have shared before how my dad was an abusive alcoholic from his early adult years until he was forty-nine-years-old. Over that span, a lot of well-meaning Christians attempted to get him to stop drinking and start attending church. They consistently did this by telling him how bad it was to get drunk and mistreat his wife and children. Believe me, he knew that all too well, so instead of offering him hope, they piled on the guilt; are you ever guilty of doing the same? What changed my dad was someone sharing with him the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ—that God loved him just the way that he was, but that God loved him too much to leave him the way he was. The man who led my dad to the Lord did not condemn him, not even once; instead, he lovingly told him about Jesus and once my dad surrendered his life to Jesus, his drinking-problem went away.

Many of us like to pretend that we do not know any lost people and in the off-chance that is true, we need to get outside and meet more people. Talking about the lost people in the world, Jesus says, “. . . ‘. . . look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.’” [John 4:35, NRSV] This leads me to the second thing we need to do to develop our love for the lost and that is, we need to realize that we are not responsible for the entire harvest—that is, we are not responsible for everyone outside, but we must be ready to do our part. Did you know that surveys repeatedly show that more than 95% of the people who profess to be followers of the risen Jesus have never led anyone to place their faith in the Lord? Again, we are not responsible for the entire harvest, but we must be ready to do our part. Perhaps you are familiar with the story of the little girl throwing starfish back into the ocean that had been stranded by a storm—she had been doing this for some time when a man approached her and said, “Little girl, why are you doing this? Look at this beach! You can’t save all these starfish. You can’t begin to make a difference!” The girl seemed crushed, suddenly deflated, but after a few moments, she bent down, picked up another starfish, and hurled it as far as she could into the ocean. She then looked up at the man and said, “Well, I made a difference to that one!” We must be willing to do our part. Pray and ask God to help you live a life that draws lost people to you and to Christ, and pray that God will help you be a willing participant in the harvest and that He helps you recognize the ripe wheat that already surrounds you. By the way, you only find ripe wheat fields and starfish outside.