

The Cumberland

Knoxville First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Inc.

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Rev. Mike Wilkinson ~ Pastor

Website: www.first-cumberland.org

Our Weekly Newsletter

"Loving God, Loving People"

July 1, 2015



This week's "*From the Pastor*" is too long for the front page; it can be found one of the addition pages in this week's newsletter.

Garage Sale

- ⇒ Our annual **Garage Sale** is now a two weekend event—Friday and Saturday, July 17th-18th, and Friday and Saturday, July 24th-25th. To insure that someone is here to receive your donations, please call the Church Office and schedule a time to drop off your donations.
- ⇒ Volunteers are needed to help organize the **Garage Sale**; the plan is to work every Tuesday between now and the sale. Work will begin at 9:00 a.m., but you can come anytime that fits your schedule. Contact Maxine Curtis if you can help on Tuesdays or another time that fits your schedule.
- ⇒ The proceeds from the **Garage Sale** will help fund the redecorating/updating of the Keene Room. To this end, most of the existing furnishings in the Keene Room have been priced to sell.

Youth BBQ Fundraiser

In conjunction with the **Garage Sale**, our **Youth Group** will be holding a **BBQ Fundraiser**. **Scott Roberts** will be smoking Boston butts. Pulled pork barbeque can be preordered for \$12.00 per pound, including an eight-pack of buns. Preordering will allow **Scott** to know how much meat to cook, so please let either **Scott** or **Pastor Mike** know how many pounds you want. Extra BBQ beyond that which is preordered will be available on a first-come-first-served basis to those shopping at the **Garage Sale**; individual BBQ sandwiches will also be available the days of the sale for \$3.00.

Cumberland Presbyterian Women's Ministry

- ⇒ The next meeting of our **Ladies' Bible Study** will be Saturday morning, July 27th, from 10:00-11:00 a.m., in the Keene Room. Please read Chapter 5 (Fasting) in "*Soul Feast*". The final four dates are as follows: Saturday, August 1st; Saturday, August 15th; Saturday, August 29th; and Saturday, September 12th. All the ladies of the church are welcome and invited to attend.
- ⇒ In cleaning the kitchen last week, we found some dishes we think were left there. We have left them on the table in the kitchen off the gym. If they are not picked up by the **Garage Sale**, we will put them in the sale.

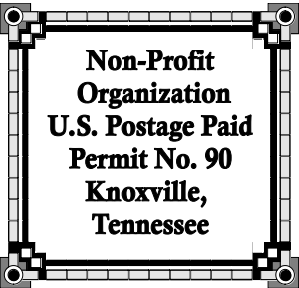
Sunday School News


- ⇒ A new **Sunday School Class for young adults** (post high school through age 29 or so) will begin this coming Sunday, July 5th. This, as yet unnamed, class will meet initially in the Conference Room next to the Church Office. This class will not only meet for Sunday School, they will participate in various mission/service projects (i.e., FISH Food Pantry, Habitat for Humanity, etc.) as well as social outings. Please pray for this new class and the young adults from our congregation it hopes to initially minister to and through.
- ⇒ This September, we plan to divide our current **Youth Sunday School Class** (6th-12th grades) into two classes: a **Middle School Class** taught by **Bonnie Bridges** (6th-8th grades) and a **High School Class** (9th-12th grades) taught by **Phil Bridges**. This means that we need a teacher for **Bonnie's** current class, **Juniors**, (3rd-5th grades); if you would like to volunteer to teach this class starting in September, see **Pastor Mike** or **Amanda Roberts** (the Chair of our *Christian Education Committee*).

Homecoming/Anniversary Celebration

Knoxville First Cumberland Presbyterian Church was established March 22, 1885, and moved to our current location September 7, 1975. With this in mind, our Session has set Sunday, September 27th, as the day to celebrate the 130-year total ministry of our congregation and the 40-year ministry in our present location. Our *Missions and Outreach Committee* and our *Worship Committee* will soon join together to begin planning this exciting event. If you have any input or would like to help plan and/or prepare for this celebration, please contact **Kim Halbert** or **Sam Ware** (the Chair's of the respective committees) or **Pastor Mike**.

*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

July 1st-7th

2nd – Laci Witmer
3rd – Logan Collins
4th – United States of America



Stewardship Report June 28, 2015	
Sunday School.....	37
Worship.....	59
Offering.....	\$3,479.00
Building Reimbursement.....	\$80.00
Music Fund.....	\$75.00


Activities for July 1-7, 2015	
Friday:	The Church Office will be closed.
Sunday:	9:30 a.m. Sunday School 10:45 a.m. Worship Service
Tuesday:	9:00 a.m. Garage Sale Work Day
(See web site for complete calendar listings)	

Among Our People

Chris Atkins, son of Susan Edwards, is in Blount Memorial Hospital undergoing testing . . . **B.F. Daniel** is still under hospice care . . . **Cooky Dyer** is now back home . . . **Edna Fleenor** celebrated her 99th birthday last Tuesday, June 30th . . . **Bob Neal**, Mildred Acuff’s son-in-law, is now out of the hospital . . . **Marlene Ritchey** is still under hospice care . . . **Geneva Stout**, Kim Halbert’s great-aunt, is still in rehab recovering from surgery . . . **Carl Ware**, Sam Ware’s father, is now out of the hospital . . . The **Brent Witmer Family** spent last week at the Nickelodeon Universe Indoor Theme Park, in Orlando, Florida . . . It was good having **Jamie Wright**, Jim and Cooky Dyer’s daughter, worship with us last Sunday . . .

Chapel Carpet Fund

As you know, a few months ago Classical Conversations (a homeschool group that meets at our church) started a **Chapel Cushion Fund** to replace the pew cushions in our Chapel. They did this out of appreciation for what First Cumberland means to them. The old cushions have now been disposed of and since the wood pews are in such good shape, the decision has been made not to purchase new cushions at this time, and to instead purchase much-needed new carpet for the Chapel. Our Session’s hope is to have this and the Keene Room refurbishing completed before our upcoming Homecoming/Anniversary Celebration on September 27th. To date, \$827.01 has been contributed to this fund and Classical Conversations will continue to raise funds for this project. Anyone who would like to help can donate to it, simply make your check out to the church and mark it **Chapel Carpet Fund**.



Prayer Concerns


In the Hospital

Christ Atkins (son Susan Edwards)
@ Blount Memorial Hospital

Health and Prayer Concerns (alphabetized)

persecuted Christians around the world; Cumberland Presbyterian missionaries; Mildred Acuff; Sarah Armes (mother of a coworker of Kathy Byers); **CHRIS ATKINS** (son of Susan Edwards); Janie Beeler (wife of Greg Beeler); Preston Beeler (cousin of Greg Beeler); Charlotte Byrd; Gordon Blaylock; Dick Booher; Kim Boyatt (friend of Susan Edwards); Peggy Bradshaw (mother of Dianne Fielder); Greg Brown (friend of Mary Cregger); Mary Cregger; B.F. and Mary Helen Daniel; Allison, Hailey, Connor, and Hannah Davis; Nora Derreberry (mother of Maxine Curtis); Jim and Cooky Dyer; Edna Fleenor; Grace Flory (mother of Lois Witmer); Judy Gammon; Sandy Gang (cousin of Greg Beeler); Lynne Garrison (sister of Lois Witmer); Jack and Jin Gaston; Bud and Betty Hickman (friends of Mary Ann Haney); Bobbie Himes (sister of Jin Gaston); Kim Holloway (friend of Lisa Hayes); Bettye Hudson (friend of Pastor Mike’s mother) Becky Ingle (friend of Amanda Roberts); Kim Jones (friend of Amanda and Scott Roberts); Sherri Kramer (friend of Joy Taylor); Ada Ladd; Bob Lawson (friend of Pastor Mike); Gene McCammon; Maxine McGuire; Catherine McKinney; Ruth McNabb (mother of Tammy Eblen); Bob Metts; 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; Bob Neal (son-in-law of Mildred Acuff); Carl Overstreet (friend of Cliff Parrott); Cliff Parrott; Tom Parrott (son of Cliff Parrott); David Poore (coworker of Phil Bridges); Anna Faye Presley (niece of Catherine McKinney); Nicolae Racile (father of a friend of Joy Taylor); Becky Rader; Rebecca Rech (mother of Justin Rech); Marlene Ritchey; Bryan Rogers (Bonnie Bridges’ son); Roger Rollins (coworker of Steve Summers); Carol Seeman; Tara Shelley and baby; Jonathan Spencer; Gladys Stone; John Snoderly (brother of Betty Hammil); Sydney Snoderly (great-niece of Betty Hammill); Geneva Stout (great-aunt of Kim Halbert); Jack Walker; Carl Ware (father of Sam Ware); Joni Warner (friend of Jewell Kerr’s sons); Lois Witmer; **FAMILY OF KEN WITT**

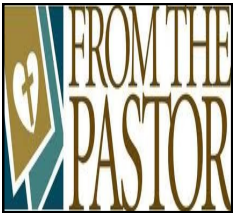
Please keep the Church Office informed of any needed changes to our Prayer Concerns list.



Friendship Club

The next outing for the **Friendship Club** is Wednesday, July 15th, at 11:00 a.m. They will gather at the **Lakeside Grill** (Concord Marina) for a Dutch-treat lunch. Everyone reading this announcement is already a member of the **Friendship Club** and is therefore automatically invited to attend this and all monthly outings. A sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board near the Church Office.





I know that I am writing on an extremely controversial subject, and am doing so only after much thought and prayer. As I am sure you know by now, last week the Supreme Court of the United States issued a judicial ruling that immediately legalized “gay marriage” in every state in the nation. This ruling did not shock me because as a nation we have been moving in this direction for the last several years as indicated by the fact that thirty-seven states had already legalized “same-sex marriage” and several denominations had already given their clergy permission to officiate the wedding ceremonies where state law allowed. Nonetheless, as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I feel compelled to share my thoughts on marriage with you.

At least four times (**Genesis 2:24**, **Matthew 19:5**, **Mark 10:7**, and **Ephesians 5:31**), the Bible expressly states that when a man marries a woman, the two become one flesh. Nowhere does Scripture give such an endorsement to a same-sex relationship. To the contrary, our Sacred Text repeatedly (i.e., **Leviticus 18:22**, **Leviticus 20:13**, **First Corinthians 6:9**, and **First Timothy 1:10**) speaks against the practice of homosexuality, clearly identifying it as sin. Furthermore, the Cumberland Presbyterian *Confession of Faith*, to which I as an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament took a vow to uphold, states: “Marriage is between a man and a woman for the mutual benefit of each, their children, and society. While marriage is subject to the appropriate civil law, it is primarily a covenant relationship under God. As such, it symbolizes the relationship of Jesus Christ and the church, and it is the human relationship in which love and trust are best known.” [6.17] My objection to two people of the same gender marrying one another is solely a theological one and not a political or legal objection. In fact, I have little objection to a legalized same-sex domestic relationship/partnership that grants the legal benefits and responsibilities of marriage to gay couples. My objection is that “gay marriage” is not what I, nor Scripture, would consider to be “a covenant relationship under God.” Others, maybe even some of you reading this article will disagree, but that is my position, and for this reason I cannot in good faith officiate the wedding of two people of the same gender. While “same-sex” marriage is now the law of the land, as a Christian pastor, I am not legally required to officiate the ceremony proclaiming such a union to be blessed by God. In fact, I am not legally required to officiate any marriage ceremony, heterosexual or homosexual. Though I have never refused to officiate a wedding in the past, I know several pastors who have refused to do so on various grounds.

As I stated earlier, the Supreme Court’s decision did not shock me because our nation has been moving in this direction for the last several years, but the primary reason this decision did not shock me was that the lawyers arguing against legalizing “gay marriage” did so on the grounds that to allow two people of the same sex to marry one another would diminish the dignity of marriage. The instant I heard their argument, I knew the battle was lost because so many heterosexual marriages had already severely damaged the dignity of marriage. Any marriage that distorts the covenant relationship between Christ and the Church damages the dignity of marriage. Affairs—both sexual and emotional—damage the dignity of marriage. Abuse—physical, sexual, and psychological—damage the dignity of marriage. The ever-rising divorce rate in our country damages the dignity of marriage. Living together in a sexual relationship before marriage damages the dignity of marriage. Truly, we heterosexuals have long since diminished the dignity of marriage to the point that “gay marriage” can do little additional harm to that dignity. With that in mind, I want to challenge each of us that are married, or who hope to be married in the future, to live in that covenantal relationship in such a manner as to enhance the dignity of marriage and thus bring glory to God.

Please understand that I am not “casting stones” at anyone—married, single, homosexual, heterosexual—and I do not make any claims about my own marriage being perfect or even good enough to be the example for anyone to follow. It is just that I, and I believe the Bible, hold marriage in such high esteem that it breaks my heart for it to become merely a civil matter, though as my previous comments indicate, that has been going on for a long time. I think that when the Reformers chose to reduce the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church from which they broke from seven to two (baptism and communion), they made a mistake by not including marriage. I do not know, maybe that is when the diminishing of the dignity of marriage began in the West.

Clearly, I do not favor the legalization of “gay marriage” and believe that is contrary to God’s Word. I also believe that my response as a Minister of Word and Sacrament to this issue is to show the grace of God to all people, including now legally married homosexual couples. By showing the grace of God, I do not mean accepting their sin, but rather, extending kindness and mercy while sharing the life-changing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them. By the way, that is the call of God on my life, not just for homosexuals, but for all sinners, and that includes both you and me.

Learning the unforced rhythms of grace,

Pastor Mike