

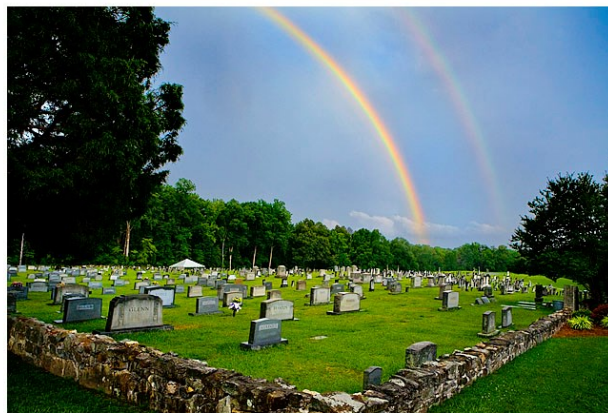
Bethel Focus

Bethel Presbyterian Church, Organized 1764

Grace Transforms Everything by [Sean Michael Lucas](#)

In our town, a church just went through a rebranding effort as part of their relocation to a new building in a different section of town. Their logo and signage are beautiful and well conceived. One sees their stickers on cars everywhere. And their tagline is memorable: “Faith changes everything.”

As I’ve thought about that tagline, on one hand, it is completely appropriate. Faith in Jesus Christ does change everything about the way we see the world, the way we engage our families, the way we live out our callings. And yet, I suspect, based on this congregation’s theological heritage, faith is viewed as a decision that the individual makes to follow Jesus. Thus, they emphasize evangelistic outreach, gearing their ministry toward bringing people into contact with Jesus so that they might make a life-changing decision for Him. While I appreciate this church’s evangelistic zeal, I wonder whether this is the best emphasis. What would happen if instead of saying that “faith changes everything” we claim that “grace transforms everything”? Over against the moralism that is characteristic of so many evangelical churches, I’d suggest that the truly distinctive message we have as



TODD HOLBEN

the church is this message of God’s grace that “makes beauty out of ugly things” — indeed, grace transforms everything. The old slave-trader turned hymnwriter and preacher, John Newton, noted toward the end of his life: “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior.” No wonder Newton wrote the great hymn “Amazing Grace.” For this is the heart of the gospel of grace: we are great sinners and Christ is a great Savior. The Bible speaks of our sin and sinfulness in wide-ranging ways: we are deceitful ([Jer. 17:9](#)); dead ([Eph. 2:1](#)); dirty ([Isa. 1:18](#); [64:6](#)); wayward ([Isa. 53:6](#)); lawless ([1 John 3:4](#)); disobedient ([1 Tim. 1:9](#)); ungodly ([Rom. 4:5](#); [5:6](#)); ignorant, hardened, and

alienated from God’s life ([Eph. 4:17–18](#)). We fall short of God’s glory ([Rom. 3:23](#)); we suppress God’s truth (1:18); and we act out in sinful ways (1:21–32; [Eph. 4:19](#)). We deserve God’s wrath for our sin and disobedience, and we are already condemned ([John 3:17–18](#); [Eph. 2:3](#)). But God, because He is rich in grace, chose to save some undeserving sinners — He united us together with Christ, made us alive with Him, raised us with Him from our dead condition, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places ([Eph. 2:4–7](#)). He has granted us faith to trust in Jesus ([Eph. 2:8–9](#)), declared us righteous ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)), clothed us with Christ ([Rom. 13:14](#)), and gifted us with the Holy Spirit ([Eph. 1:13–14](#)). He empowers us to live in

April 2014

April Sermon Schedule:

- April 6 “The Easter Meal”
Luke 22:14-20
- April 13 Rev. Mark Ashbaugh
- April 20 “Our Confidence”
I Peter 1:3-5
- April 26 “John the Baptist”
Matthew 11:1-19

Men of the Covenant:

Bethel will host Presbytery Men of the Covenant on April 7 at 7:00 pm. We cordially invite all men to attend. A meal will be provided (donations accepted to cover the cost of the meal). In keeping with our 250th Anniversary celebration this year, Dr. Don S. Fortson, Professor of History at RTS Charlotte, will be speaking on the contribution of Presbyterian churches in the founding of our nation.

Inside this issue:

April calendar	2
March Sessions minutes	3
Prayer Requests	4

All Events

April 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	01 Dan Love Women's Bible Study Circle #1 FLC, playground reserved Diaconate Meeting	02 Bricen Krashner Basketball	03	04 Casey Forrest Maggie McCarter	05 FLC Reserved
06 Choir Practice Deacon's Fund Collection Joint Session & Diaconate...	07 Staff Meeting FLC Reserved - MOC Presbytery Men of the Covenant	08 Joy McCarter Women's Bible Study Circle #2	09 Pam Brannock Coleen Riddle Circle Basketball	10	11 Todd Holben	12 Eagle Scout Project...
13 Choir Practice Hazel Sims	14 Linda Boyd Staff Meeting Circle #3	15 Betty Jo McCarter	16 Chris Wallace Basketball	17	18 Owen Taylor Patrick Newberry	19
20 Choir Practice Ann Carol Love Susan Long	21 Staff Meeting	22 Women's Bible Study	23 Basketball	24 Glenn Jackson	25	26
27 Choir Practice Wedding Shower for Katie...	28 Staff Meeting	29 Brandon Wallace Women's Bible Study	30 Laura Clinton Senior Citizens Luncheon Basketball	01	02	03

Grace Transforms Everything,

Continued from p. 1

ways that please Him ([Eph. 4:25-5:2](#); [Gal. 5:13-26](#)). We now can say no to our sin and live godly lives because God has shown us grace ([Titus 2:11-14](#)). And this grace, this undeserved favor, is not just for the beginning of our Christian lives, but also for every moment of every day of our discipleship. We come again and again to this fountain of grace, trusting in our union with Christ ([Col. 3:1-4](#)), to putting to death our sin and living in

the light of what is true about us ([Rom. 6:11-13](#); [8:14-15](#); [Col. 3:5-16](#)).

A life lived rooted in God's grace shown to us in Jesus is transformed. Our walk with Christ is transformed — no longer are we driven by mere duty, but by delight in this Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us ([Gal. 2:20](#)). We engage in personal, family, and corporate worship in order to enjoy communion with God through Christ by the Spirit — we're greedy for delight in God.

Relationships with others are transformed

— since we're not driven to perform to please God or others, we do not fear losing the Father's smile, but are freed to risk ourselves for others ([Zeph. 3:17](#)). Even more, we can be honest about ourselves, which means defensiveness is gone, replaced by authenticity, confession, repentance, and forgiveness.

Our callings in this world are transformed — this world is more than an evangelistic opportunity or a turbulent sea in which we've been given a lifeboat to save some. Rather, this is God's good world ([Ps.](#)

Session Minutes

The Session of Bethel Presbyterian Church met Sunday, March 2, 2014 at 2:00 PM in the Conference Room of the Family Life Center with Moderator, Rev. John Gess, for the regular scheduled monthly meeting.

The meeting was called to order and opened with the reading of the Scriptures from Matthew 28:16-20 and prayer by the Moderator.

A quorum was present. Elders present: Neil D. Allen, J. Brent Clinton, Christopher L. Wallace, Robert N. Boyd, Frank C. Falls, Robert C. Love, Jr., Steven H. Linder, D. Ross Love, W. Hampton Stowe, III, James G. Long, Timothy G. Marsh, and Robert B. Meek, Jr. Also present were Assistant Pastor, Rev. Mark Ashbaugh, and Pastoral Intern, Will Milks.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2014 Session meeting and the February 23, 2014 Congregational meeting, as written and mailed to each Session member.

No Deacons report was available, as the Diaconate had not met since the previous Session meeting.

William Albert Milks and Beverly Nicole Milks were examined for membership,

based on transfer of letter. Each gave their personal testimony, and a motion was made, seconded, and approved to approve this aspect of the examination. Both then affirmed the questions from the Book of Church Order, Chapter 57-5, and a motion was made, seconded, and approved to approve this aspect of the examination, as well as to approve the examination as a whole. Rev. Mark Ashbaugh prayed, and then the Session extended the right hand of fellowship to Will and Nicole, welcoming them into the congregation.

Communicants' classes will be held March 23rd, March 30th, and April 6th, for young persons desiring to join the church. Inquirers classes will be held later in the spring, for adults desiring to join the church.

Missions Weekend will be held at Bethel March 14-16, 2014.

Rev. Gess gave a report on pastoral activity over the past month. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to approve his report.

General Assembly will be held June 17-19, 2014 in Houston, TX.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to approve exploring the possibility of a concert performance by the group Indelible Grace, as a regional outreach event.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to approve consideration of a mis-

sion trip through MTW, Carolina Mountain Mission, in Canton, NC.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to approve a youth camping retreat for March 28-30, 2014, in Chester, SC.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to approve an Eagle Scout project undertaken by Steven Truelove, for improvements to the trail behind the family life center, leading to the mission houses.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to change the regular scheduled April Session meeting, to be held on April 6, 2014.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to change the regular scheduled May joint Session and Diaconate meeting, to be held on May 4, 2014.

A letter of thanks, appended to and made a part of these minutes, was received from The Carrie E. and Lena V. Glenn Foundation, regarding information research on the Glenn family, from Session minutes. The Glenn Foundation could be a future source of grant money.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to adjourn. The meeting was closed with prayer by Bobby Boyd.

Robert C. Love, Jr.
Clerk of Session

[24:1](#)) in which He has called us to serve as signs and agents of God's coming new creation ([Isa. 65:17-25](#); [2 Cor. 5:17](#)). Work, parenting, community involvement, engagement with art, music, film — all take on new meaning because we take Christ with us into those arenas to show what the new world looks like.

Even the ugly parts of life have grace-laden possibilities because Christ is Lord over the whole world and is making all things new ([Rev. 21:5-6](#)). As

agents of God's grace, we live out of the overflow of undeserved favor, extreme gratitude, and passionate communion with Jesus — which moves us into life's ugliness to see God's beauty emerge.

Here is a manifesto for the church's ministry, a huge vision of God's purpose in this world: In Jesus, God shows grace to undeserving, ugly sinners as part of God's own mission of transforming this world so that it will reflect His glory. And so, what changes when the church has a grace-

centered ministry? Everything!

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Organized 1764

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Prayer Requests:

Pastor John Gess, Assistant Pastor Mark Ashbaugh, and Intern Will Milks, as they preach and minister to the Bethel congregation, and for their families.

Please pray for the Lees. Pray for God's protection as we travel, and God's voice as we share about the ministry of reconciliation. Please keep our kids in your prayers also.

Our upcoming Missions Conference and all the events of the 250th Anniversary Celebration, that God would be glorified, the gospel would be clear, and His kingdom would be advanced.

Session and Diaconate members, WIC officers, Sunday School teachers, Bible Study leaders,

Youth leaders/teachers, giving thanks for their faithfulness and willingness to serve.

Missionaries throughout the world, as well as local ministries such as Habitat for Humanity, God's Kitchen, Clover Area Assistance Center and Biblical Studies Released Time. Please pray fervently for the work in Northern Mexico, for "great boldness to keep preaching the gospel....." (Acts 4:29) because we all know that the gospel is the only hope we can have in the midst of fear and violence around our cities. Yes, we need courage and valor, but to bring hope that transforms our cities in Northern Mexico." (Quote from a letter from Andres Garza.)

Our college students, and expectant mothers and their unborn babies within the church family.
Our soldiers serving in Afghani-

stan, Europe & Iraq: James Pittman, III (nephew of Victoria & Steve Linder), John Rice (grandson of Joe & Phyllis Wysor) recovering from injuries from a roadside bomb explosion, Greg Sandifer, and Ted Trevino.

Charlotte Barnett, Monnie Blackman (C. Robinson's sister, lupus), Loma Burton, Abe Craddock (friend of J. LeMoyne, emphysema), Susan Heffner (undergoing chemo), Elaine Honeycutt (P. Brannock's sister-in-law, cancer), Sherer Gordon Hopkins, Bob Kenley, Herb LeMoyne (J. LeMoyne's brother, Parkinson's disease), Harold McCarter, Randy McCarter (son of Duke & Maxie, cancer), Jesse Patino (B. Love's brother-in-law, lymphoma), Jim Pittman (V. Linder's brother, prostate cancer, has spread to his spine), Bobby Wallace.

