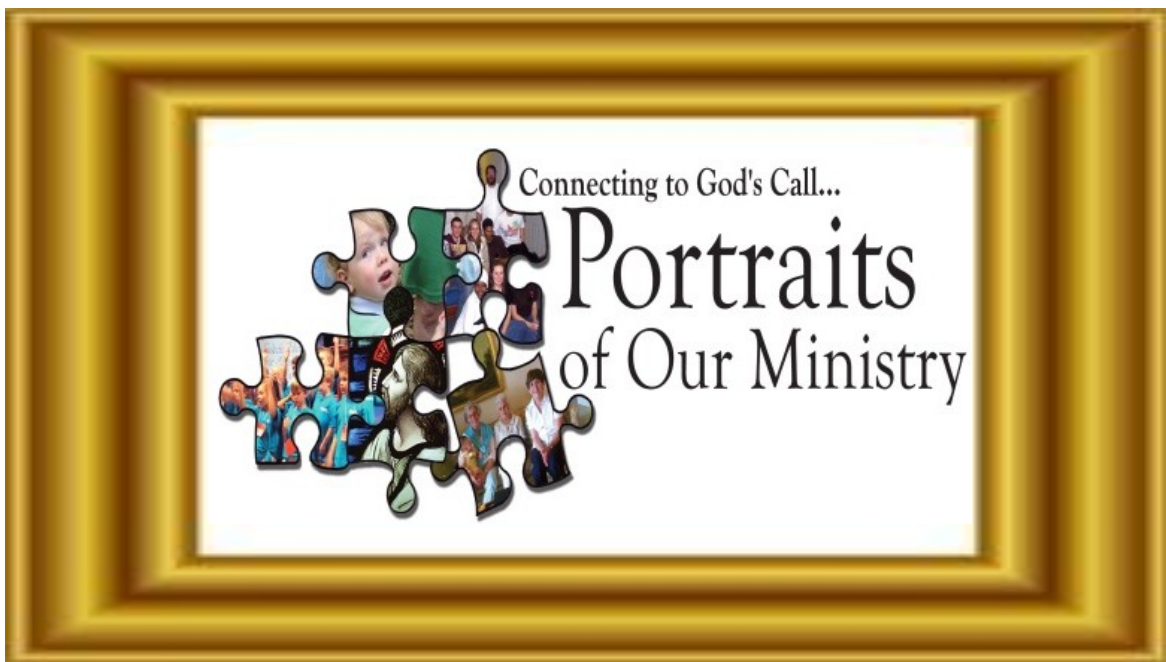




**OAKLAND AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST**



# **Inspiring Portraits**

**Personal Devotional Guide**

**October/November, 2011**

# Prayer for Stewardship Season

*O God, you are the author of all life, the Creator of all things.  
We can only give to you that which already belongs to you.*

*You bless us with gifts of time and talent  
and so we dedicate a portion of these gifts to you.*

*You bless us with financial gifts  
and so we return a portion of these gifts back to you.*

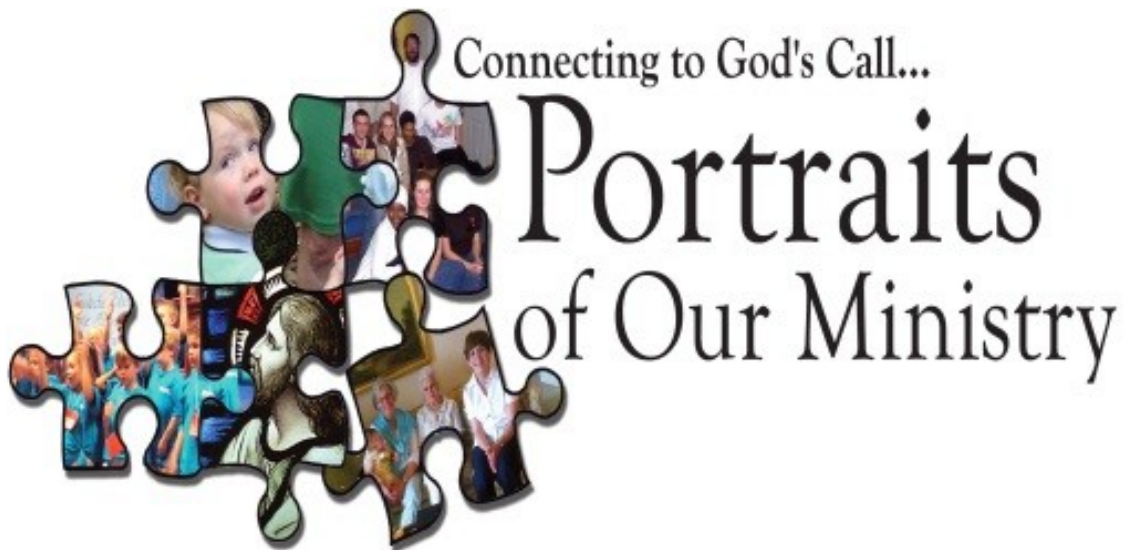
*We ask you to encourage a spirit of generosity in our living and giving.  
By connecting to God's call in all the portraits of our ministry,  
we desire to love and follow our Lord and Savior,  
Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.  
Amen.*

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## Youth Ministry

With leadership from adult advisors, parents and Dan Young, the Youth Groups of OAPC are often on the go, from mission trips to retreats and recreational outings such as skiing and bicycling down the Virginia Creeper Trail.



You're invited to the  
**“Moving Portraits” Stewardship Luncheon!**

Join us Sunday, **Oct. 16, Noon-1:30 p.m.** in the Activities Center for a first look at OAPC’s congregational portrait along with entertainment that’s not to be missed!

The main entree will be provided. Members of the congregation are asked to bring your choice of the following sides: macaroni and cheese, green beans, or a leafy salad. Families with 1-3 members, please bring one side dish. Families of 4 or more, please bring two side dishes. RSVP with the number attending from your family and the side item you plan to bring to:

Jim Barnes at [jim@waiterschoice.com](mailto:jim@waiterschoice.com).

Or, see the registration information in the Narthex.

Questions? Contact Jim Barnes, 803-417-4207, or Lucinda Sutton, 803-804-8561.

**“Moving  
Portraits”**

**Stewardship  
Luncheon**

**Sun., Oct. 16  
Noon—1:30 p.m.  
Activities Center**

## Week 1

In preparation for Sun.,  
Oct. 2, 2011

PORTRAITS OF OUR  
MINISTRY . . .

CONNECTING TO  
GOD'S CALL

1. God's Sacrifice

Exodus 20:1-20

<sup>1</sup> Then God spoke all these words: <sup>2</sup> I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; <sup>3</sup> you shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

<sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup> You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. <sup>8</sup> Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.

<sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work. <sup>10</sup> But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

<sup>12</sup> Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. <sup>13</sup> You shall not murder. <sup>14</sup> You shall not commit adultery. <sup>15</sup> You shall not steal. <sup>16</sup> You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. <sup>17</sup> You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

<sup>18</sup> When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, <sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die." <sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin."

## Commentary and Reflection....

The Ten Commandments are an ancient description of how we are to relate to God, to one another and to other people. These words lie underneath the entire system of laws embraced by societies around the world, and remain as key markers for our faith.

In Jesus' teaching these words were amplified and expanded beyond mere rules to be posted and obeyed. They were turned into positive injunctions as to how people of faith are to live the entirety of their lives, "To love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves is the greatest and second commandment, fulfilling the entire Law."

Jesus lived this Law and yet was executed on account of this very obedience. Jesus was a victim of the Law and so fulfilled the Law, taking upon Himself all that could ever divide us from God. God's sacrifice, under the Law, freed us from ever even imagining that we could fulfill the Law and freeing us to live joyfully and obediently as friends, followers and servants of God.

## Questions to consider....

In what ways do you understand and seek to apply the Ten Commandments in your daily living?

Jesus was put to death because Jesus obeyed the Law of God. Is this always what happens to those who seek to live for God?

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## HOPE Garden

This project has been successful beyond all our expectations. The garden has produced, produced, produced...

New friendships have been formed. The first year, there was wonderful interaction with and involvement of Winthrop students. Church members seem to love to walk out in the garden and see what's growing. Others have sat on the benches for some quiet time. So many people comment on how beautiful the garden is. Flowers around the edge attract bees and butterflies and can also be used when members are visiting the sick, shut-ins, those grieving or in crisis. There is definitely a lot of connection taking place.



## Commentary and Reflection....

Do you recall a time or season when you initially missed, ignored or rejected an important message that God had for you only to finally come to see this? How did you react when you came to realize this and what did you decide to do hoping never to repeat such a mistake?

What are the thoughts or attitudes that prevent you from easily hearing and responding faithfully to God?

*Matthew 21:33-46*

*Jesus said, <sup>33</sup>“Listen to another parable. “There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <sup>34</sup>When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. <sup>35</sup>But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup>Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. <sup>37</sup>Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ <sup>38</sup>But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup>So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. <sup>40</sup>Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” <sup>41</sup>They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”*

*<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? <sup>43</sup>Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. <sup>44</sup>The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.””*

*<sup>45</sup>When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them.*

*<sup>46</sup>They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.*



## VBS Ministry Portrait

Themes and t-shirt colors for Vacation Bible School may be new each year, but learning about God's love and growing together in faith is part of every VBS!

<sup>1</sup> When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

<sup>2</sup> Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." <sup>3</sup> So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup> He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

<sup>5</sup> When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD." <sup>6</sup> So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry. <sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. <sup>8</sup> They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf.

### Week 2

In preparation for  
Sun., Oct. 9, 2011

PORTRAITS OF OUR  
MINISTRY . . .

CONNECTING TO  
GOD'S CALL

1. Invited and  
Clothed

Exodus 32  
The Golden Calf

1. Can you think of a time in your own life when you questioned God or were impatient when all did not seem to be going according to “the plan”? To what did you turn for security, or, in what ways did you “hedge your bets”?

2. What are the status symbols that our peers today display to imply their security and stability? As you answer, you may think of answers that might be correct for a group of people other than your peers, but avoid the temptation of thinking of the idols “they” worship. Challenge yourself to reflect on the idols “we” have created.

3. Two questions: Have you ever helped a person re-focus and re-direct by returning to their originally-stated goals or purpose? Have you re-aligned yourself in this way?

Consider OAPC’s Vision: **We are the body of Christ**; and Mission: **To become like Christ as we live by his WORDS** (WORDS: Worship, Outreach, Relationships, Discipleship, Support).

*They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, ‘These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’<sup>9</sup> “I have seen these people,” the LORD said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people.<sup>10</sup> Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”*

*<sup>11</sup> But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God.*

*“LORD,” he said, “why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?<sup>12</sup> Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.<sup>13</sup> Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self:*

*‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.’”<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.*

## Comments and Reflection . . .

The people become impatient, waiting for Moses’ return and not knowing what has happened to him. They seem unsure that all is going according to the plan, or that there is even a plan in the first place. *(See question #1 on left)*

During the time of Moses, a calf was a powerful symbol for what it represented: food in meat and milk, water and plants that would allow herds (and people) to survive, and the image of a calf also implies fertility. All of these implications cast together in a golden mold of a calf are quite a status symbol. *(See question #2 on left)*

Moses persuades God to relent in his anger towards the “stiff-necked” people by re-stating the covenant made between God and Israel. *(See questions #3 on left)*

## **Matthew 22—The Parable of the Wedding Banquet**

<sup>1</sup>Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. <sup>4</sup>Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>5</sup>“But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. <sup>6</sup>The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

<sup>8</sup>“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. <sup>9</sup>So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ <sup>10</sup>So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup>“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. <sup>12</sup>He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. <sup>13</sup>“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ <sup>14</sup>“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

## **Comments and Thinking Further . . .**

In this parable told by Jesus, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a wedding banquet where the guest list for the party is seemingly defined by one’s willingness to attend. Is this true, that our willingness to attend is our ticket to the party in relation to our life of faith?

In verse 11 of the parable, the king noticed a man not wearing wedding clothes and the consequences of this action seem quite severe. My understanding is that it was customary for wedding garments to be provided to people who attended these celebrations. An appropriate theological interpretation is to say that the man was unwilling to leave his “worldly identity” at the door and put on his new life in Christ. Was this man hedging his bets like Aaron and the Israelites and holding out in case the banquet wasn’t what he wanted? What are the ways of the world we have the hardest time parting with today as we enter the Kingdom of God? Can you be partly faithful?

## **PRAYER:**

Almighty God, May we accept your invitation to the banquet. May we understand fully what it means and what you have done . . . to prepare a place for us. May we come to the banquet, ready and willing to leave behind all the things and attitudes that are in a place which should be occupied by You. Re-focus us, re-direct us. May the wedding gift we bring be our joyful obedience to your will for justice and righteousness. May our celebration spill out into our communities, so that others might hear the invitation to come. AMEN.

## **A Response to the Word . . .**

Consider the words to hymn #516 in the Presbyterian Hymnal:

### ***Lord, We Have Come at Your Own Invitation***

*Lord, we have come at Your own invitation,  
Chosen by You, to be counted Your friends;  
Yours is the strength that sustains dedication,  
Ours a commitment we know never ends.*

*Here, at Your table, confirm our intention,  
Give it Your seal of forgiveness and grace;  
Teach us to serve without pride or pretention,  
Lord, in Your kingdom, whatever our place.*

*When, at Your table, each time of returning,  
Vows are renewed and our courage restored:  
May we increasingly glory in learning  
All that it means to accept You as Lord.*

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## **Campus Ministry Portrait**

Worship. Fellowship. Fun. Food. Service. Whether we are working behind the scenes to ensure the church's connection to our college students through our programs, in preparing exam care packages, by joining the students for a welcome dinner the first week of the semester or in meeting periodically with other church members for lunch at the Campus Center, the Campus Ministry Committee enjoys fellowship together as we create a church home-away-from-home for our college students. Generating ideas to bring these young men and women into Christian fellowship further strengthens our own lives in Christ.



## The Thessalonians' Faith and Example

<sup>1</sup>Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

*To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.*

<sup>2</sup>We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly <sup>3</sup>remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>For we know, brothers and sisters \* beloved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup>because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup>And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup>so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup>For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. <sup>9</sup>For the people of those regions \* report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, <sup>10</sup>and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

## Comments and thinking further.....

### Gratitude for a portrait of faith painted....

In the first Chapter, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy let the Christians in the church of Thessolonica know that they ALWAYS give thanks to God for them in their prayers.

## Week 3

In preparation for Sun.,  
Oct. 16, 2011

PORTRAITS OF OUR  
MINISTRY . . .

CONNECTING TO  
GOD'S CALL

3. Giving to God  
I Thessalonians 1:1-10

What is the "portrait of ministry" that was painted by the Thessolonians according to the first ten verses?

Write a prayer of gratitude to God for the "portrait of ministry" that you see Oakland Avenue Presbyterian Church painting.

1. How are they trying to trap Jesus?  
Why do you think that they are trying to trap Jesus? Why would asking Jesus whether it is right to pay taxes to Caesar or not be seen as a trap?

2. Why might the coin be offensive to Jewish people of the time? How did Jesus' answer to the attempted trap amaze the Pharisees and Herodians and lay a potential trap for them?

### Responding through Prayer:

"The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof". God has poured out blessings in our lives. All we have is a gift of God. Take 5 minutes to give thanks to God for the gifts of life, forgiveness, salvation, time, intellect, talents, and material gifts that have been given to you.

Now take 5 minutes to think how those gifts can be used to be a blessing for God and for others and commit to giving back to God what is God's.

Matthew 22:15-22:

*<sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. <sup>16</sup>So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. <sup>17</sup>Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' <sup>18</sup>But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? <sup>19</sup>Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup>Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' <sup>21</sup>They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' <sup>22</sup>When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.*

### Comments and thinking further . . . Trapping or Trusting....

The Herodians, a political party in support of Herod the Great, are mentioned in the gospels on three occasions\* and in each case they are linked up with the Pharisees, one of the two most powerful Jewish religious/political powers of the time. (*see question #1 on left*)



This is an image of a silver denarius with the inscription Caesar Augustus, which means Exalted Emperor or another interpretation Majestic Ruler of All (*see question #2 on left*)

\*Mark 3:1-6; Mark 12:13-17; Matthew 22:16-22. There are also three references to "Herod" Mark 8:15, Luke 13:31,32; and Acts 4:27 that probably refer to the group as opposed to the individual.

This week many different people are getting ready for the "Moving Portraits" Luncheon.  
Have you registered? Invited a friend?  
Do you recall which side dish you are bringing and for how many?



My name is Hannalie Ferguson, and I have been a member OAPC for 38 years. Outreach to other members and to the needy in our community has always been important to me. OAPC members feed the hungry at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen one day a month. This ministry is only a small measure of what Christ calls us to do as his disciples. In connecting and strengthening our mission to serve those who are hungry and in poverty, we will as a congregation increase our challenges, and that is what Christ asks us to do. this is what the "O" of the WORDS Mission Statement at OAPC means for me.



When you arrive at church today you will find tables in the Narthex with the 2012 Pledge Packets in alphabetical order prepared for each member/member family. Please collect your Pledge Packet and use the information it contains as you consider your response to God and the amount of your 2012 Pledge. **Pledge Sunday is November 6, 2011.**



## Week 4

In preparation for Sun.,  
Oct. 23, 2011

PORTRAITS OF OUR  
MINISTRY . . .

CONNECTING TO  
GOD'S CALL

4. God Willing  
Romans 10:8b-13,  
Deuteronomy 26:1-11

*Romans 10:8b-13* <sup>8b</sup>‘The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup>because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. <sup>11</sup>The scripture says, ‘No one who believes in him will be put to shame.’ <sup>12</sup>For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. <sup>13</sup>For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

*Deuteronomy 26:1-11* <sup>1</sup>When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, <sup>2</sup>you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. <sup>3</sup>You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him,

“Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.” <sup>4</sup>When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, <sup>5</sup>you shall make this response before the Lord your God: “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. <sup>6</sup>When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, <sup>7</sup>we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. <sup>8</sup>The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; <sup>9</sup>and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>10</sup>So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.”

You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. <sup>11</sup>Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.

Some background:

This passage is part of the presentation of the law, which began in Chapter 12 of Deuteronomy. The focus is on how one is to worship—particularly, in returning the first fruits or portion of the first harvests, and the special liturgy one is to follow in doing so. It is actually almost confessional in nature... one is to use certain words when presenting their first fruits to the priest. Liturgy has always been a very important part of our faith.

### Reflect:

Think about our weekly worship services, and look at a recent bulletin. What is the importance of following a particular liturgy? The headings in our weekly bulletin are “Time of Greeting and Fellowship,” “Hearing the Word,” “Responding to the Word,” and “Bearing the Word into the World.” Each part of our worship has significance. Look at what happens after we hear the Word read and proclaimed. We respond to the Word, and then we bear the Word into the world. *(see question #1 on right)*



### Churchwide Retreat at Montreat

A Congregational Retreat in Montreat is a time for fun, fellowship, worship and spiritual renewal in the midst of the mountain beauty of God’s creation. Anita Case and Keith McGuire shared their musical talents during worship in Upper Anderson.

When you arrive at church today you will find tables in the Narthex with the 2012 Pledge Packets in alphabetical order prepared for each member/member family. If you have not already collected your Pledge Packet, please plan to do so today. Use the information it contains as you consider your response to God and the amount of your 2012 Pledge.  
**Pledge Sunday is November 6, 2011.**

1. How do we respond to and bear the Word into the world? Think about ways that you can respond to God and bear God’s Word into the world.

### Pray:

Gracious and loving God, thank you for your abundant blessings. Today, I thank you for... You have given me gifts with which to serve you. Help me to serve you by using my gifts of... I ask your healing hand to be upon... Help me to grow in my relationship with you by... In times of doubt, reassure me with your love. Keep me ever-mindful of your many blessings and the gift of your Word, through which we learn about you and how to Worship you. Help me to respond graciously and take your Word into the world in all I say and do.

**NEWS!**  
As you  
Arrive on  
Sun., Oct. 23

## Week 5

In preparation for Sun.,  
Oct. 30, 2011

PORTRAITS OF OUR  
MINISTRY . . .

CONNECTING TO  
GOD'S CALL

5. Serving  
Genesis 1:26-31,  
I Corinthians 3:16-17

### Opening Prayer:

All-good God, you created us for health and holiness. Guide me now as I ponder and plan ways of nurturing my body for your glory and the service of all creation.

### All human beings are made in God's image.

*God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, in the likeness of ourselves."...God created human beings in God's own image, in the image of God they were created, male and female God created them.....God blessed them...And so it was, looking at all of Creation, God recognized it as very good." (Adapted from Genesis 1:26-31)*

Granted, God does not have a personal body, so humans were created to reflect the power, wonder and mystery of the Creator. All human beings-no matter how short or tall, fat or thin, disfigured or unblemished, athletic or sedentary-are made in the image of their Creator, the one perfect God.

Obvious? Maybe not. After all, if we human beings genuinely believed ourselves to be made in God's image and likeness, would we flirt with skin cancer by over-sunning ourselves? Would we wear clothing that squeezes us and shoes that crimp? Would we pay billions of dollars for diets that usually end in frustration and binges? When we like ourselves, warts and all, we dance instead of standing around. We walk proud and free instead of shuffling along slump shouldered. We glow with confidence. Sound stewardship of our bodies is being able to understand clearly that we are made wonderfully godlike. If we believe and accept this truth, we can bask in the beauty of God's creation.

When Paul admonishes the Corinthians for misusing their bodies, he writes to them,

*"Do you not realize that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you?...God's temple is holy; and you are that temple." (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)*

Even though Jesus showed us the goodness of our humanity, the temptations to degrade it continually beckon. In many cases, we simply have never learned to celebrate and build "our temple."

From a Christian point of view, our body is a temple of God.

### Reflection:

Discuss with God how a sense of wholeness about your body will assist you in witnessing to God's kingdom here on earth?

Now may be the time for us to reflect on the changes that we can make in our lifestyle. Thinking not only of our own individual bodies, but also the body we make up at OAPC, think about the following: If we are called to witness to God's kingdom, how can we witness with our bodies (body), so it is as fully alive as it can be?

### Closing Prayer:

You, God, created my inmost being  
And knit me together in my mother's womb.  
For all these mysteries-  
For the wonder of myself,  
for the wonder of your works-  
I thank you. Amen.

Nurturing our body and employing our body for loving service become ways of worshipping God. Being good stewards of our bodies can be a way to worship God as well.

Considered in another light, how can we be followers of Jesus in our world if we do not treat our body reverently? Our body, like the body of Jesus, is the means by which we reach out to other people, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and shelter the homeless. With our hands, our eyes, and our voices, we care for the ones we love. Our eyes study the word of God, and our ears listen to the voice of God. God does not make art for art's sake. We are created for good works. We are invited to reverence our body, not just because it is wonderfully, beautifully made, but also because we need it to live the full life of service to which Jesus calls us.

Identify some of your favorite activities. For example, what do you enjoy doing with your ears, eyes, mouth, hands, feet, arms and so forth? On the sketch below, write each of these activities near that part of the body that makes it possible. When you have finished, look at your new picture and reflect on the many ways your body is a gift for your life.



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## Week 6

In preparation for Sun.,  
Nov. 6, 2011  
Pledge Sunday

PORTRAITS OF OUR  
MINISTRY . . .

CONNECTING TO  
GOD'S CALL

6. Ready to Light the Way  
Matthew 25:1-13

### Question....

What do you do to help you be most focused on the arrival of Jesus, the Bridegroom rather than getting caught up in the daily routine or your own priorities?

<sup>1</sup>“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

<sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup>but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept.

<sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ <sup>7</sup>Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup>But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup>And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut.

<sup>11</sup>Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ <sup>12</sup>But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ <sup>13</sup>Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. (see question on left)

### Commentary and Reflection.... Vigilance

This piece of art provokes me to notice and comment that the “foolish” bridesmaids were actually more focused on their own party, their own needs, than they were focused on the Bridegroom and the Bridal party. The five wise bridesmaids are alert, on the look out, “at the door” prepared with light to show the way for the people for whom this day, their wedding day, was most important. (see question on left)

Artwork:  
Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids  
by Jim Janknegt



William Loader commenting on this passage writes,

“Having had lamps in hand which burned well once is no guarantee they will burn in future. Having the status of being Christian, even being a light bearer, means nothing if it is not a continuing part of our being....

Matthew is interested in enabling people to live in a relationship with God which has continuing significance and continuing life. .... Religion is frequently a distraction if not an escape from reality. Matthew keeps bringing us down to earth and will continue to do so in the passages which follow.” (see question #1 on right)

I would agree with other commentators on this passage of scripture that we are not to be concerned over the size, extent or brightness of the flame from our lamp. Our one concern is simply, “Is my candle lit?” Even a small candle, with a seemingly small flame is incredibly bright when the surrounding world is completely dark. (see question #2 on right)

Once again this year we are invited to allow our light to be seen and shared as we make our Pledge for God’s work in and through the life of our congregation. A verse from proverbs (4:23) reminds all of us the vigilance that is needed if we are to connect to God’s call and share God’s light by means of the portrait of our ministry as a church: Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Proverbs 4.23

Please remember to bring your completed 2012 Pledge with you to worship today. As previously announced, **during the singing of the final hymn, you will be invited to bring forward your 2012 Pledge Card and place it on the Communion Table.**

## Questions....

1. Looking back on our life, do you have any sense that your lamp that used to burn brightly and so bring God’s light to many, is today in any way dimmed? What has caused this to occur and what do you need to do about this?
2. Is my candle lit and held up for all to see?



