

Faith Report

Reconciling: Unity Month

By Stan Long

Every February, some churches celebrate black history month while others ignore ethnic issues altogether. Here at Faith Christian Fellowship, we celebrate Unity Month in February. We will have special worship readings, Soul Food classes and a symposium on Saturday, February 26. These activities are designed to remind us that ethnic diversity is a reality of our life together as a church. Allow me to reflect for a moment:

From the very beginning of FCF's ministry, we have sought to bring unity and healing to the deep racial divides of Baltimore. During the church's foundational decade in the 1980s, many people wondered what this small, vibrant, idealistic bunch of disciples was trying to do. Were they trying to relive the Woodstock vision of peace and harmony? The 1990s was a decade when major evangelical reconciliation movements such as Promise Keepers made the bringing together of divided people groups a preferred value. As more people began to recognize the importance of living out their faith in a multiethnic context, FCF experienced significant growth and maturity as a congregation.

Then came the first decade of the new millennium. While the broader church's "reconciliation

fad" began to dwindle, God brought more and more people from various nations to FCF. At some point the "reconciliation fatigue" of the evangelical churches began to drift into our church. Some said, "We are tired of hearing about the need for various ethnic groups in the body of Christ to get along. That's an old paradigm. Why don't we just realize that ethnicity is a complex but somewhat insignificant thing? We just need to love each other."

Yet the prayer of Jesus in John 17 still haunts us. Paul's message of reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in Ephesians 2 still rings true. Divided people coming together in authentic, dignified unity is **POWERFULLY ATTRACTIVE**.

So, as FCF begins its fourth decade, many might ask, "Why focus on reconciliation? Why spend time in February acknowledging our unity?" Let me give a few good reasons.

Firstly, **all of us need to learn**. It is very easy to have a narrow view of life rather than look at the experiences and history of others. As new worshippers join us, we want them to understand that we are a family. In any healthy family, honesty is encouraged. Sadly, this doesn't happen in many churches. Unity month activities at FCF have provided an opportunity for frank, honest, heartfelt discussions and even confessions.

Secondly, **all of us need to remember**. It is so easy to forget the history of where things have been and the experiences of the past. It is easy to complain about what **is** rather than to remember what **used to be**. We need to give God the glory that some progress has been made in America.

Thirdly, **all of us need to grow**. No matter how old we are, or what our ethnicity, race, or cultural background might be, all of us "have sinned and fallen short of God's glory." We all need to understand how the fall has tainted life: some feel that they or their forefathers are primarily oppressors, and others feel that they are primarily victims. No matter what our history or our forefathers' history, we find unity, dignity, and forgiveness at the foot of the cross. That is why we celebrate our unity!

One last thing: Our denomination's online magazine, ByFaith, has begun a series of articles about race issues. Here is the link: <http://byfaithonline.com/page/in-the-church/> In this series you will soon find FCF's Unity Month described for a wider audience beyond our church. We pray that more and more of our churches might take the risk of understanding more fully the reconciling work of Christ for His people. ♦



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*United that the
world would
know*

*³ Make every
effort to keep the
unity of the Spirit
through the bond
of peace. ⁴ There
is one body and
one Spirit, just as
you were called to
one hope when
you were called; .
Eph 4:3-4*

Reconnecting with Gene Jones



Many of you already know William Eugene “Gene” Jones. Gene is the father of Jocelyn Murrain and grandfather to Randall Murrain. At 81 years of age, he is the oldest member of FCF. He was born in Richmond, Virginia, and served in the US Army during the Korean War. He moved to Baltimore about 40 years ago. Word has it that Gene was quite a dancer “back in the day.”

Gene has always enjoyed football, but golf is his favorite sport. He fondly remembers a round of golf with FCF deacon, Sandy Clark, some years ago. He also likes watching western movies.

More recently, Gene has been suffering from kidney disease, diabetes, and the amputation of half of his left foot. He has been either hospitalized or in a nursing home since June, 2010, which has severely depleted his resources. Gene is 6’ 1” tall and used to weigh around 200 pounds but is now down to around 150 pounds. As of late January, he was in Good Samaritan Hospital but his location can change quite frequently. He is usually located at **Future Care Nursing Home at 2700 North Charles Street.**

Gene is not getting any younger and greatly misses his Faith family. If you have the gift of mercy or helps or just a simple desire to reach out to a brother in Christ, would you consider this wonderful opportunity to exercise those gifts by paying Gene a visit, or sending a card? He realizes that not everybody knows him or would recognize him but he would be delighted and greatly encouraged to receive any visitors. **Before you do make a visit, please call Jocelyn (443-949-7782) to be sure of Gene’s current location.** ♦

Bits and Pieces

- Mark Meadows and Randy Race have joined the church.
- Peter and Jean Campbell’s son, Jamen Paul, was baptized in January.
- Jonathan Hansen was ordained as a ruling elder (RE) in January.
- Ruling elders Bill Bolling, Ananda Kumar and Djik Maouyo are taking a sabbatical from the session, our church’s governing body. At our last congregational meeting, Bill was recognized for almost thirty years of service as an elder, and Djik for ten years of service. Pastor Stan was recognized for ten years of service at Faith. We are grateful for their faithful labors over these years! We pray that our elders Bill, Ananda, and Djik will find their sabbaticals a time of grace, refreshment and renewal. ♦

FCF Youth Enjoy Retreat

Twenty-one kids. One youth director. Seven volunteers. Two nights and days of screaming fun, challenging messages, zip lines, snow tubing, games, singing, and PGF (pretty good food). That was the agenda at last weekend’s Winter Meltdown at River Valley Ranch.

A special shout-out is due to youth director Phil Davis, intern Blake Scheidt, and the adult volunteers: Lauren Ahrens, Nicole & Andy DeVos, Ben Grotte, Katrina Hein, Ann Johnson. ♦

CALENDAR

- Feb. 4** Concert of Prayer 7.00 p.m.
- Feb. 9** No Faith Leadership Night
- Feb. 26** Symposium on Race and Historic Housing Issues; 10.00 a.m. to 1.30 p.m.

Heads up

Mar. 6 Discovery Welcome Luncheon