



FALL 2015

We  
joyfully  
**PROCLAIM**  
the love  
of God in  
Jesus Christ,  
**GROW**  
in His truth,  
and  
**SHARE**  
His Gospel  
with our  
neighbors.

God  
whispers  
to us in  
our pleasures,  
speaks  
to us in our  
conscious,  
but  
shouts  
to us in our pain.  
It is His  
megaphone to  
rouse a deaf world.

– CS Lewis

# The Link

*Telling the Stories God is Writing at Little Falls Church*

## Counseling

*Dr. Matt Merrill, Pastor*

Grace and I both have psychology degrees from NC State. She went on to earn a Masters in Counseling from the University of North Florida. Three psychology degrees from large state universities and yet both of us are troubled by much of what is happening in the counseling world these days.

Most of our concerns stem from the issue of worldview. A worldview is how a person conceives of the world, the nature of humankind and the purpose of life. Most counselors approach their craft without a Christian worldview. Many believe that humans should pursue their own will (rather than God's will) and nobody has the right to define who you are (self-determination).

I am so happy that God doesn't let me self-determine my way. I have tried and it never turns out well! My attempts to make myself whole and happy apart from God are both sinful and ineffective. We were designed to thrive under God's loving rule.

To help me work through the more difficult moments of my life, I have worked with several Christian counselors. These are educated, board-certified professionals who approach their craft from a biblical worldview. They help me to work through issues of frustration, depression and relational-strife in a way that leads me back to God and His ways. I am so thankful for how they have helped me.

Whether you are going through a time of depression, marital-strife, anxiety – or any other condition where you feel the need for help – please pursue help with a Christian counselor. As your pastor, I love to counsel with both members and non-yet-members about these things. Plus, I'm free. When I know that you need greater help than I can provide, we have a good list of counselors who begin with a Christian worldview. If cost ever keeps you from pursuing the help you need, just let me know and the church will help.

## Keeping My Eyes Open

*Jennifer Greenleaf, Director of Family Ministry*

Having led over 50 different camps for children during my years in ministry, my “eyes were open wide” to the kinds of joys and challenges I would face as I led Vacation Bible Camp (VBC) at Little Falls for the first time this past July. Experience can be a good teacher and I had learned the ins and outs of things like how to select curriculum to best help us communicate the love of Christ to kids and how to structure camp activities in the easiest, most effective way for volunteers to flourish. However, each camp is unique and each church community its own mission. With all my experience, there was still much for me to learn. I had to keep my heart open to the Lord if we were to keep in step with His goals for VBC, and my eyes open to appreciate how He was working in our midst. Here is a snapshot of some of what I experienced leading my first VBC at Little Falls.

### **God has a very special place in His heart for kids.**

Only the love of Jesus could inspire a church community the size of Little Falls to invest the kinds of human and financial resources needed to reach 150 neighborhood children with the Gospel. The fact that VBC is our largest outreach reinforces the fact that Little Falls values children. What a beautiful reflection of our Savior and His priorities!

### **God meets us where we are.**

Throughout the Scriptures we see that our loving God is constantly reaching out to us. He reached out to the ancients through Abraham, Moses and the Prophets. He sent His Son, Jesus, into our broken world to remove the barrier of sin that divides humanity from our God. He reaches out to folks today through His people, the church. Little Falls gets to live out this truth by reaching out to children with the Gospel in ways that resonate best with them – through friendship, play, arts, music and storytelling! Wow!





**God invented fun and He delights when people experience joy in Him.**

Camp is hard work for those who lead and serve, but that is truly secondary to the exuberant FUN we all have. I felt the Lord's favor when He raised up the most extraordinary group of volunteers to lead and teach children at VBC. I basked in the palpable delight of the Lord when at least 11 children declared their belief in Jesus and put their trust in His salvation during Bible time the last two days of camp. I had the repeated sensation that Jesus was smack dab in the middle of "it" whenever I saw children running around the play area screaming with delight or belting out songs about the love of God.

**God is present.**

Camp was not without its hardships for some children, leaders and parents. But God's faithfulness through it all - giving wisdom, grace, forgiveness and restoration whenever necessary, proved His active presence and participation in VBC over and over again. He was with us during camp; of this, I have no doubt. All I had to do was open my eyes to see His radiant grace at work all around me.



## Music & Story Time

*Grace Merrill, Link Editor*

If goldfish crackers and pacifiers aren't a part of your daily routine, you may not be familiar with *Music & Story Time*. Alan MacEwen is part of the band leading us in worship at the 9:30 service on Sunday mornings but you may not know that Tuesday mornings through the summer you will find him out on the playground playing for a younger crowd. *The Link* recently met up with Alan to find out more about his experience with this sweet and playful ministry.

**Q: What is Music and Story Time?**

A: Music and story time is a once a week opportunity for kids, parents and caretakers to join me for singing and a Bible story. We gather Tuesdays at 10:00. During

the warm months, from Memorial Day through mid-September, we meet in the wonderful corner lot playground at Little Falls Church. During the 10-week winter session, we meet in the Tree House on the top floor of Little Falls Church.

**Q: How did you get involved in this ministry, and when?**

A: I got involved in this ministry during Katherine Rader's tenure as our church's children and family ministry leader. The idea was hers. She asked me to do it with her. At first I was hesitant. I did not have a lot of experience at the time playing for children. I was not sure I would be good at it and frankly I was not sure how it was going to work. But I decided to take a little leap of faith and give it a try. If I'm remembering right, we did two summers together before she left to start her family.

**Q: How has the ministry changed over the years?**

A: The first change was when Katherine left. Though I had been reluctant to get involved when she asked me, I was quickly convinced what a great idea it was. It already seemed like an institution after a couple seasons, and I thought it was something that should continue, even if it was just me singing and playing. M&ST hasn't necessarily grown in attendees over the years, (there have been between two and about 70 kids, parents and caretakers on a given Tuesday).

We usually have about 25. I have certainly grown as a song leader and story reader though. The second big change was when Julie Verry suggested we start a winter series of Music & Story Time. I believe last winter was the third year of doing the 10-week colder weather indoor session.

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord  
all the earth....  
– Psalm 98:4*

Q: What have you seen God doing through M&ST?

A: For a few people, coming to *Music and Story Time* was a clear factor in their decision to start coming to Little Falls Church, so that is one thing. One thing I love about M&ST is it brings Little Falls Church outside where people can see us. People driving by or maybe walking by pushing a jog stroller can see our church out doing something. I think it has been one of the things that has given our church the neighborhood reputation of being “active in the community.” I have personally heard us described that way a couple times in the last ten years, and that’s a great thing to have totally unconnected people saying about God’s ministry through us. Additionally, being a stay-at-home parent or a nanny of small children can be an isolating job. M&ST provides a welcoming, comfortable atmosphere where these grown-ups can relax for a little while and connect with each other while the children play. Hopefully through it all they catch a taste of the Gospel through the songs and Bible stories.

Q: How has it affected you personally to be a part of this ministry?

A: I can truly say I have been a beneficiary of Music & Story Time, even though I’m in the role of the one doing the ministering. I really feel like God has blessed me. At the start I wasn’t really that comfortable around kids other than my own, but now it’s easy for me to sit down with a group of tiny kids and connect with them. I have gotten to know a lot of sweet kids, and some great parents and nannies too. M&ST helped give me the experience and confidence to start playing for kids in my life as a professional musician. I started substituting as a music teacher at Trinity Preschool and have given music lessons to kids (and adults) on guitar, ukulele, trumpet and piano. I’ve put out a children’s music album with my band, *The Grandsons*, and we have started doing a lot of kids shows. The album won awards and spawned a hit single on XM/Sirius’ kids music station. I had a hit in outer space! This summer we also reached the pinnacle of DC area children’s music venues. We performed two consecutive days at Wolf Trap’s Theatre in the Woods. He has blessed me with all these unexpected material blessings as a result of M&ST, along with treasures in heaven. He has also shown me what it is like to be a direct part of a ministry and how He will use the talents He gives us, even if we are not confident in ourselves. We may not always see what He is



doing or how He will serve others through us. For me, it has been fun to see the unexpected places He has taken me so far.

*Q: Is there anything else you would like the readers to know about Music & Story Time?*

A: No ministry happens in a vacuum! I could not be there on Tuesday mornings if it weren't for my wife Donna's full time work and her support and encouragement. Additionally, there are plenty of ways you can help if you feel a tug at your heart for this ministry. You can pray for this ministry and those who attend. You can make lemonade. If you play a musical instrument or would like to read, I am happy to share the stage. But even if being up front is not for you, you can show up on a Tuesday and be a smiling face in the crowd and get to know a neighbor. You can invite a neighbor with small children to join you there. You never know how the Lord might work through you!

*We must make the invisible kingdom  
visible in our midst.*

– John Calvin

## Kaleo and Me

*Robin Puttock*

For the past two years I have spent Sunday evenings with Chris Lugo and the youth in Kaleo. For those who don't know me, I have been a member of Little Falls for about 5 years. My husband, Mark, and I have two daughters; a seventh grader and a fifth grader. I felt a calling to start participating in Kaleo during the All Church Retreat in 2013. During that retreat, I got to know Chris and Katie Lugo and got a chance to hear about their experiences with youth ministry as well as their ideas for the Little Falls youth while we shared a meal together. I initially felt I might not be the best candidate to serve the youth ministry. I felt I did not have the biblical knowledge required. I did feel confidence from my years as a mom, however, so I decided to trust God and jump in!

The first year I participated on a monthly basis with both the middle school and high school groups. The following year, I attended the weekly Kaleo middle school gatherings. I found that because I was there each week, I was able to form deeper relationships with the middle schoolers (i.e they felt more comfortable throwing dodge balls at me during the game time). All joking aside though, the consistency of being there every week translated into more meaningful discussions with the kids as well as a level of trust that would not have been possible otherwise. This trust also meant that the kids sometimes asked questions that I was not sure how to answer. This was my initial fear that almost prevented me from joining Kaleo. However, God responded during these times. Without fail, one of the kids in the group would jump in to offer their thoughts and insights. Time and time again, I was impressed and humbled. I was also energized.

Conversely, during these past two years, I was not as energized by my professional life. I was enjoying the practice of architecture, but found it was taking too much time and energy away from other priorities. I prayed to God daily to show me what my path should be, all the while continuing to attend Kaleo each week. God spoke to me through Kaleo. He made it clear to me that I should be teaching; teaching something I loved - architecture. After a New Years trip car ride home from Myrtle Beach, Mark and I decided I would take steps to pursue teaching architecture, the first of which would be obtaining an advanced degree. In the following months, I applied and was accepted to a Masters Program of Architecture, and this August started classes full-time. I left my firm, my salary, and our economic safety net. The transition has been relatively smooth, something Mark and I attribute completely to God. We have given it up to Him. He is also taking care of us by providing us with a network of folks who have provided and continue to provide a great deal of encouragement to us during this transition. I am not sure of the future, if I will find a professor position, but I am not worried. I know God has a plan for me and my family and we are all excited to see where God leads us.

O God, early in the morning I cry to You.  
Help me to pray  
And to concentrate my thoughts on You;  
I cannot do this alone.  
In me there is darkness,  
But with You there is LIGHT;  
I am lonely, but You do not leave me;  
I am feeble in heart, but with You there is HELP;  
I am restless, but with You there is PEACE.  
In me there is bitterness, but with You there is PATIENCE;  
I do not understand your ways,  
But you know the way for me....  
Restore me to liberty,  
And enable me to live now  
That I may answer before You and before men.  
Lord whatever this day may bring,  
Your name be praised.  
Amen.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## Church Family News

**Promoted to Glory**  
Betty McCord – July 2  
Dick Wilson – August 8

*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.  
He determines the number of the stars, He gives to all of them their names.*

*- Psalm 147:3-4*

FALL2015



Vacation  
Bible  
Camp  
2015



## Little Falls Presbyterian Church



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*We joyfully proclaim the love of God in Jesus Christ, grow in His truth, and share His Gospel with our neighbors.*