



PROVIDENCE TIMES

Happenings on Harshaw

2252 Harshaw Road Murphy, NC

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Tuesday, May 5, 2026



The Hills Are Alive with the Sound of the Gospel!

Recently, on a lovely spring afternoon here in Western North Carolina, I drove out to the hills of Cherokee to meet with Mission to the World missionaries Scott and Ruth Hill. As one of the missions to which we, Providence Church, provide support, Pastor Dave prays fervently for these good and faithful servants and their church-planting mission in his weekly pastoral prayer. I was eager to meet the Hills and learn how they ended up in our neck of the woods planting a Reformed church and providing a much-needed ministry to the indigenous folks of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) and to others residing in the area.

I rolled into the parking lot of Grace Community Church shortly after exiting US-74 onto US-441. Notoriously early, I walked into the building and did not see anyone but heard the vroom of a vacuum cleaner and thought to myself, "Oh, the Hills haven't arrived yet; I'll say hi to the cleaning crew and wait for them." Then Ruth appeared out from a closet, having just scrubbed the bathrooms, and Scott turned off the vacuum, grateful for a reprieve from his duties – good and faithful servants. We sat down for two hours of fascinating, joy- and even tear-filled conversation.

When their lives intertwined, both Scott and Ruth were believers. Scott made clear to Ruth early on, the strong ministerial and pastoral calling under which our Lord had placed him and his intent to obey that calling. Scott was ordained by the PCA in 1992. He pastored two churches in South Carolina, each a 10-year pastorate, and all was quite well. They were comfortable, settled and content as leaders of a tight-knit, Bible-believing church family. But God ... and Scott ... had further aspirations of the missionary sort.

A group from the church, including Scott, completed a fruitful and immensely fulfilling missionary trip out of the country, and a strong interest in mission work within the United States piqued within them so that more members of the local church could join in service to our Lord. As God's amazing providence would have it, shortly thereafter, Scott received a call from Mission to the World. What began as a yearly excursion to "The Res" (EBCI Reservation), where MTW maintained a 56-acre plot for missionary retreats, has since evolved into the Hills planting Grace Community Church.

Scott and Ruth spoke of how integral a role their children have played in this ministry. At this point in our discussion, some tears of joy erupted. One evening, as one of the teenaged team members the Hills were hosting was speaking at a retreat, their son, 13-year-old Johnathan, burst into tears, jumped out of his seat, and ran out. Obviously Scott was deeply concerned, having no idea what

prompted Johnathan's sudden outburst. Upon questioning his son, the young teenager said, "You know Dad, it's good if we can come here and work with the teams and even if we come for a week or two to work. It's even good if the interns can come for the whole summer to work and tell the people about Jesus. But, you know Dad, if God would bring our family here to live all of the time, we could tell people about Jesus all year long."

Scott was utterly amazed at how God was leading this endeavor. On the other hand, Ruth, primary caretaker of Scott's mother, was apprehensive to say the least. While clearly feeling the pull of God calling their family to Cherokee, she was more than content in South Carolina and certain of the obstacles, indeed the spiritual warfare, they would face. After much prayer, they relocated to Cherokee in 2012, a three-hour drive from their residence in South Carolina, i.e. their comfort zone – good & faithful servants. There has been no shortage of obstacles throughout the years, "but God..."

Fast forward to June of 2016, a few years after arriving in Cherokee, when the Hills began worship services at the newly planted Grace Community Church. They also host a Wednesday evening Bible study, that has seen recent growth. In addition to the church plant, they take advantage of several other opportunities to serve. One day, Ruth stopped by the Cherokee Cancer Support office for support, and she ended up as a volunteer receptionist one day per week. She now serves as secretary while Scott serves as one of the chaplains. They are also involved in an addiction-recovery ministry, and for the past four years they've hosted the Christian Veterinary Mission, which offers a two-day animal health clinic in the church parking lot, providing low-cost spay, neuter, and vaccine administration for pet owners. They also host a soccer camp every summer. One of Ruth's gifts and enjoyments is hospitality, and these events are busy times for her, involving meal preparation and anything else needed to sustain the workers – good and faithful servants.

Within the past couple months and by God's grace, the Hills have been joined by Tom & Mylicah Smith. Tom is an ordained PCA pastor, and for several years they've been seeking financial support to relocate with their young twins to Cherokee. This is a much welcomed but challenging time for the Hills, as they learn how to delegate many of the tasks they have become accustomed to performing themselves for decades. It's challenging as well for the Smiths, as they get to know the Cherokee people and learn about dealing with cross-cultural barriers, so they can be effective in ministering to the people. Please pray for strength and wisdom for all to overcome these challenges.

When I asked Scott what his greatest joy has been, without hesitation he replied, "Watching God work, and being in the ministry I believe God has called me into." The Hills greatest challenge? "Pouring your lives into people, and thinking they're really growing and making progress...and then seeing some walk away." How they respond? "Continued prayer" – good and faithful servants. Praise God, they have witnessed many fruits of their labor.

Speaking of prayer, would you please keep the Hills and their ongoing ministry in your prayers? Please pray for continued growth and successful outreach to the Cherokee people who, like all of us, deal with much strife and desperately need the knowledge and saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many have welcomed the Hill family with open arms, even at one time including two of their children (now grown adults) into their youth council in Cherokee, considering them members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Amazing grace! – Jennifer

What is Biblical Theology? #2



As a follow-on to this topic from our last newsletter, I wanted to focus upon the usefulness of biblical theology (BT) in our study of God's Word. To do this, we have to also talk about its counterpart, called "systematic theology" (ST), recognizing its usefulness to us. BT, as you will recall, includes the study of each book of the Bible (or any part of a book) in its historical context. It is wonderful because it points us to God's revelation of Himself through the unfolding storyline of Scripture. This means, for instance, that we see God's love for us, which is ours from eternity past through creation and the fall of man, through salvation accomplished for us 2,000 years ago and applied to us by the Holy Spirit today, and all of it through faith in Christ our Lord. Seen in that way, how can we fail to know the love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus.

As important as this is, it is also vital for us to know all that God has to say about particular issues we face. BT gives us the glorious big picture view, yet while looking at it, we can fail to see the fullness of the individual truths and doctrines that are ours through the Word. This is where ST comes in. On the shelves of our library are several "Systematic Theologies" (see the picture above). Each of these seeks to impart to us the fullness of God's mind, when it comes to a particular topic. For example, prayer is practiced and taught in every biblical book, from Genesis to Revelation. ST opens up to us all that the Bible has to say about prayer, in terms of what it is, why we must pray, to whom we should pray, how we must pray, who helps us to pray, what prayer accomplishes, the danger of not praying, and so much more. As you can see, in order to be equipped to live the Christian life and to enjoy our God (worship!), we need to be regularly immersed in both BT and ST. As a helpful exercise, the next time you hear God's Word either taught or preached, try to discern which of these is being employed at any point. A good balance of both is to be desired. – P. David

✝ Communicant's Class ✝

Throughout my life I have been attending Providence Church since I can remember. I have enjoyed learning through services, Sunday Schools, and much more. Because I grew up in a godly family, I felt as if I had known the Lord since I can remember, but as I grew I desired to have a faith of my own. I longed to have my own identity as I walked with the Lord. I wanted to become a member of the church. As a youth, I started a class with Pastor David, called the Communicant's Class. The Communicant's Class is for the children of church members. Our one-on-one discussions and our in-depth conversations about the gospel and the importance of becoming and being a church member grew my faith. I learned so much about the importance of your walk with the Lord, as well as being a part of the church and encouraging your church family. This class encouraged me and helped me in so many different ways. I hope that youth who have the desire to become a communicant member may have the opportunity to be encouraged and taught and ultimately become a communing member of the church. – Eliza

Website Update



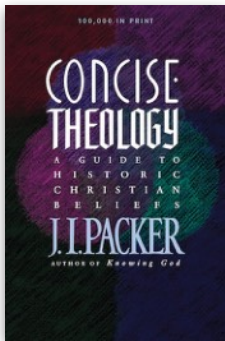
You may have noticed that the church website has been extremely sluggish. It has been especially noticeable at certain times of the day. Without getting too technical, this is because it is on a "shared web host" (read "cheap"!). Sorry about that! We are working to address this and expect it to be fixed within the next few weeks.



Book Review



New in the Library



With all of Pastor Dave's recent writing about BT (biblical theology) and ST (systematic theology), you might be wondering WTA (what's that again?). Well, let me tell you about CT (Concise Theology, A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs), a book written by the late, great J.I.

Packer, English-born Canadian evangelical theologian and author of many wonderful books on Christianity, including Knowing God.

If these subjects and thick books pertaining to them seem a tad overwhelming, the answer is to start with bite-sized pieces. This book contains very short chapters on the essential Christian doctrines, and we have a copy in our library just waiting to be checked out!



We have added some new selections to our library, which will be displayed on the cart in the entrance hall. Featured is an oldie but a goodie! It is Meet the Puritans by Joel Beeke, Randall Pederson, and Fraser Jones. It is a big book, newly revised, & for those who love the Puritans, this is the book for you; enjoy!



The Lord's Supper (Communion)



Communion is one of the most familiar practices in the church, yet it is sometimes approached with very little pause. The elements are simple. Bread and a cup. The setting in which it was first given was just as ordinary. Jesus was seated with His disciples, sharing a meal. There was no outward indication that something foundational was about to be established. And yet, within that setting, He took the bread, broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body." Then He took the cup and said, "This is my blood of the covenant." At that moment, nothing had yet happened at the cross. The body had not been broken. The blood had not yet been shed. And still, Jesus spoke of it as something given. That detail is easy to overlook. Communion was not introduced after the work was completed but before it was fully seen. It was given in anticipation, not in retrospect. Which raises a quiet question. Why would Jesus establish a practice of remembrance before the event itself had taken place?

Part of the answer seems to lie in what the meal was meant to do. The bread and the cup do not explain the cross. They point to it. They do not repeat the sacrifice. They keep it from being forgotten. When Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me," He was not asking His disciples to recall information. He was giving them a way to remain anchored to what His death would accomplish. The elements themselves remain unchanged. Bread is still bread. The cup remains ordinary. But what they signify is not. Each time communion is taken, the same reality is brought forward. The body given. The blood establishing a covenant. Not repeated, but remembered with intention. What began at the table before the cross continues at the table after it. The practice itself has not changed. But its meaning rests entirely on what it points to. Communion does not add to what Christ has done. It returns us to it. Quietly, consistently and without alteration. The bread is simple. The cup is ordinary. But what they hold before us remains central. — Unknown