

## Looking in the Mirror

### (Introduction)

As I mentioned last Sunday and in my pastor's note on Friday, it is the practice of Presbyterian churches who are preparing for a pastoral transition to do what is called a "mission study." And during this mission study, a small, representative group of members will lead the entire congregation through two primary exercises – first, the congregation looks in the mirror... and second, the congregation looks out the window. We do this so that we can answer three basic questions: Who are we? That's the question of identity. Who is our neighbor? That's the question of mission and ministry. And finally, what is God calling us to be and do? That's the question of vision and priorities for the future.

This morning two members of our Mission Study Task Force, Melvin Meares and Cynthia Honeycutt, will share with you a summary of the findings from the first exercise – the look in the mirror. Next Sunday, Shirley Thomason and Sarah Shumate, who also served on the task force, will share what was learned by looking out the window. And then following that, Heather and I will preach a series of sermons based on the Great Ends of the Church... an old, but still very relevant articulation of Jesus' fundamental purposes for the church.

Before Melvin and Cynthia come, let us hear these words from Holy Scripture.

### **Matthew 5**

<sup>13</sup>"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled underfoot. <sup>14</sup>"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. <sup>15</sup>No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

### **1 Corinthians 12**

<sup>12</sup>For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. <sup>14</sup>Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup>If all were a single member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; <sup>24</sup>whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, <sup>25</sup>that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. <sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

## Charge

The churchwide survey revealed that FPC Hickory is a strong and thriving congregation, even in times such as these. It revealed a high level of both satisfaction and energy among our members. This is the primary reason we can engage in this succession plan. Though you have many challenges before you... and there are many areas of ministry and mission where you can grow, the bottom line is that this is a strong and healthy church right now... and that fact allows you to take a health-based approach to this transition. Rather than having to spend your precious time and energy on dysfunction and conflict... on fixing problems... you can instead look to the future... building on the strong foundation that was laid for us and that we are committed to preserving for those who come after us. Now, having looked in the mirror, next week we will look out the window and explore the question: Who is our neighbor?