

musings

of Millbrook Baptist Church



SPRING 2024

ISSUE No. 01

WANDERINGS:
LENTEN THOUGHTS

POEMS FROM
THE PAST

THE WORLD
AROUND US

musings

noun [plural]

UK /'mjuː.zɪŋz/ US /'mjuː.zɪŋz/

your thoughts or comments on something you have been thinking about carefully and for a long time:

Ours is a thoughtful congregation. We're a consortium of collaborative and creative thinkers, each with varied gifts and unique perspectives. It's imperative to the well-being of our community that we always make intentional space for the sharing of ideas.

Sometimes, this ideation needs to be freed from rigid structure. This isn't a publication full of dates and documentation. As a matter of fact, it won't even have a regular publication schedule or editorial calendar.

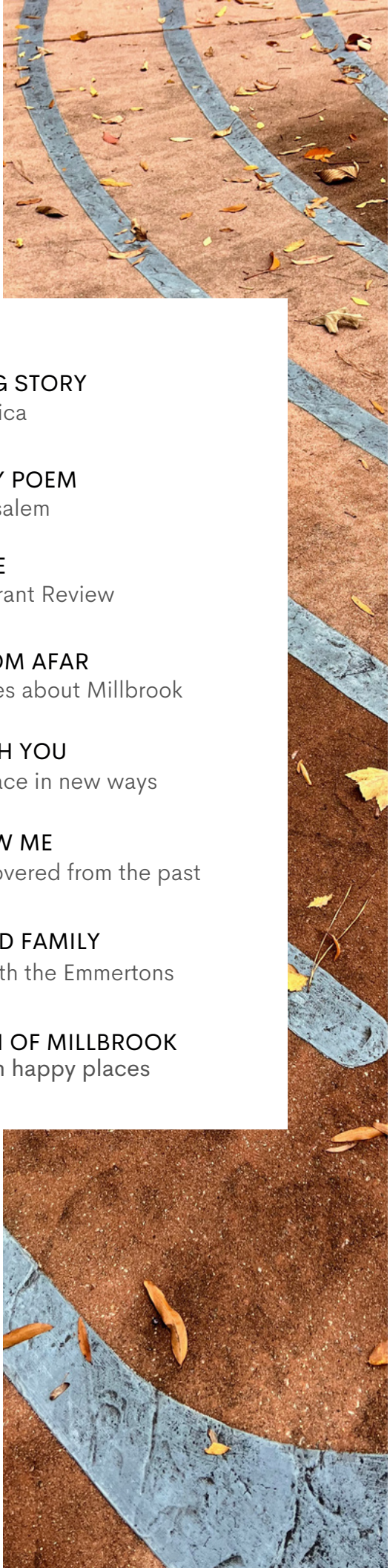
This needn't be read from a pulpit, nor proclaimed at the eleven o'clock hour. This isn't an annual report. This isn't meeting minutes. This isn't in the seminary curriculum. It's not from the Sunday School Board. There's no firewall or subscription necessary.

This is *Musings*. It's a Millbrook story (sort of). It's not so much what we've been doing at Millbrook Baptist Church, but more what we're thinking, who's among us, and what's happening in the world around us. You can read *Musings* today, or tomorrow, or even in a hundred years. You'll catch a glimpse of God's people, living in God's world, thinking about God stuff.



RESIDENT MUSES

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A WANDERING STORY

Jessica McDougald

Most of you know, by now, that when I was maybe 18 or 19, the university in which I was enrolled began to pick up on the fact that I wasn't doing much actual schooling (though I was having a lot of fun) and asked me to give up the charade and not come back for the following semesters. I'd had to call my mom and she'd said "Jessica, I just think maybe college isn't the right thing for you right now."

And so I began my wandering – this is a wandering story.

I was determined to prove that I wasn't a complete screw-up and that I didn't need a college degree to be a productive member of society. And, really, you don't. But it does make things a whole lot easier.

My professional resume, from the fall of 2012 to the start of 2015, is a very loose string of jobs that I was either no good at or not interested in or both. I bounced from one job to the other and made the best of it. I learned a lot of pretty useless skills and met a lot of funny people who kept me laughing.

At one point I worked in a call center. I was really bad at this particular job. It was roughly ten miles from my house down I-40. Rush hour made it nearly an hour long commute full of people merging at the wrong times and otherwise driving with no sense. The day was spent being yelled at on the phone by strangers, over and over. At night I would dream about work, which means I never felt like I wasn't at work.

One day I got called into the office and my boss looked at me with a face full of pity and I knew I was done. I didn't even blame them for firing me. I couldn't even be mad about it. Even I would have fired me from that job.

Another job had me sorting through human blood/urine/feces specimens and entering them into the computer until sometimes way past midnight. It was not glamorous. We did eat a lot of cake, though. It always seemed to be someone's birthday, and so that part was okay. I feel the need to say that the cake was not eaten in the same room in which the poop was handled. Just in case you were worried.





I worked at one place in the mall that did ear piercings. A week before a trip to Africa, I volunteered my previously hole-less earlobes for the cause of training a new employee. My best friend had to pry those earrings out of my very infected ears our first day in Nairobi. Side note: you should really avoid getting your ears pierced at the mall.

You know that meme where the dog with the hat is sitting in a room that is totally engulfed in flames and the speech bubble says "This is fine"? That was me.

I was meeting once a week with a woman who did guided meditation and she was really the one who said: "Jessica, what are you doing?"

She is a very important person in this wandering story. She's the one who called me on my "this is fine" nonsense. She's the one who asked the questions what do you like to do, what are you good at, what have you done in the past that has stuck with you?

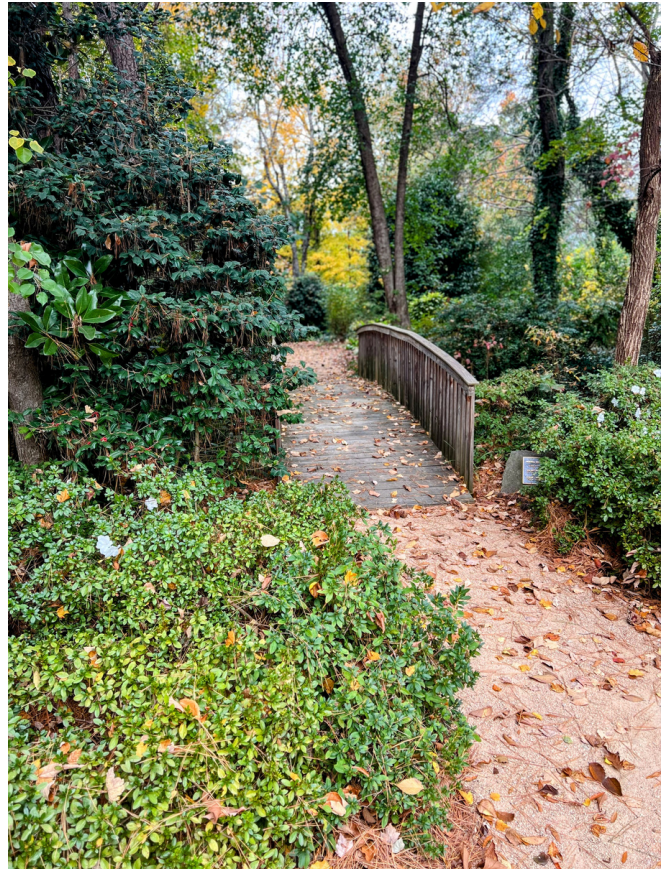
I honestly cannot remember at what exact moment I realized it, but I do remember sitting down with her one day and saying, "I think I am supposed to be doing something church-y."

And here we are.

In the Old Testament, after the Israelites followed Moses out of Egypt, it didn't take them long to realize they were in the desert, wandering, with no food or water. They wandered for forty years. They complained a lot. At one point, they even began to cut eyes at Moses and say stuff like "at least in Egypt we had food..." (New Standard Jessica Translation). Never mind the fact that in Egypt they had been enslaved by an infanticidal Pharaoh.

There are a string of stories, when the Israelites are in the wilderness, referred to as the Murmuring Tradition. There are four instances within the exodus story in which the Israelite people complain about something (for example, in Exodus chapter 17, the people complain about being thirsty) and then they are provided for (Moses, through God, produces water from a rock). Interestingly, in all four cases, provision does not come until after outcry.

It isn't lost on me that it wasn't until I was prompted to realize my own restlessness and started asking "*What do I need to do? Show me where to go and I'll pack my bags*" that I was provided with a direction to head. Although I certainly don't think God is holding keys over our head watching us struggle with doorknobs and snickering to Godself, waiting for us to ask for what we need. I think God is a good, good God, who gives us the resources and the people we need to find our way before we even ask for the guidance, but...I think we're more ripe for moving *with* God if we're also talking *to* God and – most importantly – listening *for* God.



I was talking about this idea of provision and outcry to a friend once. Soon we were discussing times in our lives when we felt as though we were wandering through the wilderness, in search of the promised land. She, being very wise, said she thought the promised land was not so much a destination as it was simply a state of being in step with God.

When the Israelites finally did reach the promised land, it wasn't what they thought it was going to be. If they hadn't been being led by someone in tune to the voice of God, they might have missed it all together. There was still work to be done, there. It wasn't the wilderness, but it wasn't the Hilton either. No one has ever been promised (by God, at least) that we're going to arrive at a place in our lives and all of a sudden have all the wealth, power, status, and easy living we ever dreamed of having. Be wary of anyone trying to sell that idea.

What God did promise, however, is even better. The promise was that God would be with us – wilderness and Canaan alike – and that God would lead us to the place God designed us – you specifically, even – to be. If you find yourself in the wilderness today, know this: you're not there by yourself and you won't be there forever. God is moving and guiding in ways we may not even recognize until years later when we're updating our resumes. May we be people who follow in faith, and never miss the forest, or promised land, for the trees.

(By the way, that Murmuring Tradition stuff was first introduced to me in a book called *Struggling With God* by Mark McEntire so make sure you tell everyone I cited my sources like a good exegete.)

"Come, come, whoever you are. Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving. It doesn't matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair. Come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times. Come, yet again, come, come."

- Rumi

PALM SUNDAY POEM

Bob Stillerman

Back then, like every year, the people flocked to Jerusalem
To celebrate God's age-old glory;
One glory in particular:
An escape was made ready,
A pharaoh's grip was loosened,
A dark angel passed by while
Faithful men and women marked their doors,
And ate lamb with bitter herbs.
And amidst the Pharaoh's cries
They made their leave;
There wasn't even time to let the bread rise!

You know the rest:
They wandered and wondered for forty years.
God was there though:
Cloud by day and pillar of fire by night
Seas were parted; Armies were sacked;
The people sang and danced, grumbled and complained;
God gave them manna, and water, and eventually the law.
But most of all, God gave them space:
Space to become God's people.
They crossed over Jordan into a new land.
A land where God and people were bound in covenant,
A land of generous soil,
A land of hospitality,
A land full of possibility and potential,
A land where God's people could finally be God's people!

So the crowds flocked to Jerusalem:
To rekindle the flames of God's glory,
To stop and say thanks for all they had,
To remind their children of God's story,
In past, in present, in future.

On that first Palm Sunday,
Jesus, the One we call Messiah,
Came to Jerusalem, too!

Over the years, the legend has grown,
But when Jesus entered those gates,
He came with the humility of a servant.

Sure, you could most certainly hear Pilate

On the other side of town,
Coming through a more prominent gate,
The heavy hooves of his war horse trot, trot, trotting,
And the drums of his army, bang, bang, banging,
And the purple edges of his banners, flap, flap, flapping in the wind.

Jesus, on the other hand,
Came riding on a donkey,
A tired, old, donkey.
No sword on his belt, no robe or crown, no army.
Just a makeshift parade,
A rag-tag band of believers,
A few dozen women and men with
Nothing more than the clothes on their backs,
And the faith in their hearts.

And as Jesus trotted down the Mount of Olives
And into all the chaos of a city festival,
A slow clap turned into a chant:
Shouts of "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna,
Blessed is the One
Who comes in the name of the Lord!"
And they laid down their cloaks before him,
And they grabbed palm branches,
And waved them high and often.

This was not coerced.
This was not financed by the emperor's taxes.
This was serendipitous:
A realization that a true king,
A true leader was in their midst.
They longed for him to ride into that valley
And restore a land before all of this captivity.
A land where Israel's prominence was reflected
On the battlefield; on the traderoutes,
In the sparkle of palace gems and rounded arches.
And perhaps just a little bit of the spoils for themselves, too

PALM SUNDAY POEM

There was elation. We feel it to this day.
It's easy to stand atop the mountain
And envision how God should reclaim Jerusalem.
How fitting, Jesus will best Pilate in the
Same way Moses bested Pharaoh!
And many years from now
We'll tell the tale; We'll pray the seder.
Yes, the moment has come!

Unfortunately, reality reared its ugly head.
The confident believers dwindled in the week ahead.
Perhaps they didn't expect the jeers;
The sheer power of Caesar's might;
Perhaps they never expected a trial, or betrayal, or for Jesus
To simply walk right into Golgotha, and not even raise a hand.
This was not the kind of leader they expected.
And on a violent Friday, all that remained of the Hosanna chorus
Were a dozen or so women, who waited till the end,
Their shouts of joy, now cries of grief.

Yes, Palm Sunday is a time of joy.
But it's a tempered joy.
The story reveals that Jesus will not
Reclaim Jerusalem in the way we expect.
Jesus will not do what's easy.
Jesus will do what he must.



A view from the Mount of Olives

And we too, want to shout loud Hosannas.

For we know, it's Jesus, the Word Made Flesh,
The very presence of God, manifested in a being just like us,
That can reveal life in lifeless times.
And high upon that mountain,
We're ready for it to all happen, NOW!

But just as Jesus had to go through Friday
To get to Sunday, so must we.
Our journey's a parabola.
Friday's gonna be dark, and Saturday, too.
But the light shines in the darkness,
And the darkness will not overcome it.



Sunday's coming!!!
Remember that, when the cheers die down,
When the palm branches wither and turn brown,
When the gathered scatter,
When the faithful weep,
When hope seems lost,
We're gonna climb the hill, y'all!!!
Sunday's coming!!!
Hosanna, sing loud hosannas
Cause' Sunday's coming y'all!!!

ROBIN'S RESTAURANT REVIEW: **CHICK-N-QUE**

Robin Griffin

Robin Griffin, our resident foodie, shares her thoughts on one of the Triangle's best food trucks.

As February has just ended and is Black History Month, I elected to highlight a Black-owned business. Chick-N-Que is a food truck and catering service based out of Knightdale. Known for their chopped chicken barbecue (red meat avoiders rejoice!) and Eastern BBQ sauce with a kick, you won't be disappointed with their food or service.

Ernest and Queen Harris lead the family-run BBQ restaurant on wheels, and are two of the kindest folks in the food biz. And family is definitely a feature as you might find their sons, daughter, mom, or dad behind the windows at any time, always pleasant and helpful. In fact, I call them family because I've been supporting them since their very early days and we're on a first name basis.

Beyond the barbecue, chicken sandwiches, and chicken tenders, if you're adventurous and into trying something different they offer an ostrich burger. And you can catch them at the State Fair offering unique items annually, including chicken and waffle kabobs and que & grits. Just look for the inflatable chicken.



Photo from Chick-N-Que's [Instagram Page](#)

My faves are the Bird's Nest, smoked chicken wings, fried chicken skins (only at the Fair), and their Arnold Palmer, which where I'm from we call half and half and their version reminds me so much of home. Ernest and Queen know when I'm at the truck I'm looking for my favorite drink. As for the Bird's Nest, it's perfectly fried and seasoned crinkle cut fries covered in their chicken barbecue and smothered in their homemade cheese sauce. And I don't usually like loaded fries! It's just right! But may count as 2 meals so you may want to share.

I'm honestly not that fond of barbecue or wings but that's 2 of my favorite things from this food truck. That tells you all you need to know. You cannot go wrong with a visit to Chick-N-Que, and the lovely Harris family deserves all the best and much success. Tell them Robin sent you and ask for a half and half.



*One of Robin's faves: The Bird's Nest**

Hungry Yet?

Website:

www.chicknque.com

Where to find the truck:

www.chicknque.com/schedule

**Picture Note: I asked for light cheese. A regular order is indeed smothered with cheese.*

STORIES OF MILLBROOK

Van Ward

Our Virginia Millbrooker, Van Ward, reflects on the DNA of Millbrook Baptist Church.



**WELL VAN, I THINK IT IS
MILLBROOK JUST TRYING
TO BE FAITHFUL.**

In my most thoughtful moments I am drawn to my heritage as a "Millbrooker." Many years ago, I was trying to understand the DNA of Millbrook and interviewed people in my faith community who had been members for a long time. I was looking for some language that defined this community into which I was grafted. I wanted to hear stories first hand. What was the decision making process? I read minutes on church "issues" and cultural "issues" of the times and how my faith community responded.

As I moved through this process with my heart and mind, I realized what I thought of as "issues" really did not seem like "issues" at MBC. It was more like my faith community making it clear regarding who we were in relation to God and the neighbor. *Wow!*

Toward the end of my Millbrook DNA research, I interviewed a long-time member, Ms. Elva Farrell, a lovely "Southern Lady." My question to her, "Ms. Farrell, how do you think Millbrook keeps moving through decades of changes and keeps staying relevant?" After a brief pause, she responded, in her beautiful southern accent, "Well Van, I think it is Millbrook just trying to be faithful." *Wow!*

The notion of "relevant faithfulness" continues to be the catalyst in my understanding of, "Who am I in relation to God and the neighbor." I guess we are never off the hook for asking that question and trying to keep up with our faithfulness to God and the neighbor.

PEACE BE WITH YOU



Each week, we share the peace of Christ with friends who gather in the Millbrook sanctuary. But we don't want to stop there -- we want to include as many people as possible.

Are you away? Have you gone on an awesome vacation? Are you exploring a new place? Maybe you are making a pilgrimage to cheer on your favorite team or see your favorite musical act? Maybe you are just hanging out in your happy place?

Wherever you are, we want to share and receive God's peace with one another. Consider snapping a selfie and passing the peace virtually with other Millbrookers. We'll collect our photos to see if we can send our peace around the world and back again. Email submissions to bob@millbrookbaptistchurch.org

Special thanks to Jessica McDougald for her happy/groovy peace from Surfside Beach!

COME FOLLOW ME

Elizabeth Asbell Elliott

Celia Driver, a long-time Millbrooker, rediscovered some poems her mother, Elizabeth Elliott, wrote for her pastor George Cooke in the early 1990s. Celia shared several of the poems with Bob and Jessica as a way to know a little something of her mother's life. We really enjoyed reading them, and with Celia's permission, are sharing this poem with you. We're grateful for the impression Ms. Elliot made on Celia's life, and even more grateful for the impression her daughter continues to make in our lives.



"Write me a poem," the preacher said,
"I wish I could," was her reply.
"Oh, you can," he was very sure.
So she thought, "At least I can try."

Now, just what could she write about,
What message could she try to bring?
She knew she had no great idea,
Nor a beautiful song to sing.

But there is a wonderful source –
Inspiration for thought and deed –
These words spoken by the Master,
Words everyone should heed.

"Come follow me," The Master said.
"In the way that is Narrow and Straight."
And "Love thy neighbor as thyself."
To do this one must conquer hate.

If we would follow the Master,
We must conquer greed, envy, spite,
Which is plain old contrariness;
Do you agree that this is right?

When our faults and imperfections
Are grubbed from our lives like weeds
Which we pull from our garden rows,
It will show in our words and deeds.

Probably, we may lose today,
Some progress we have obtained,
Toward weeding out unworthy traits,
But, just by trying we have gained –

A few feet along the upward path,
Which will help us to understand
The short-comings of those around us,
Each should hold out a helping hand.

And we can always in our need
Find strength from the hand Above
Which is continually reaching down,
In compassionate help and love.

Getting rid of faults seems impossible –
As far from our reach as the sky,
But with God all things are possible,
And the least we can do is try.

We cannot follow the Master
If sin gains the upper hand;
We will never be with Jesus,
Nor get into the Promised Land.

So please! Stop, look, listen and learn
From One who was meek and lowly
While he lived on this planet Earth,
He was-is-will be Most Holy!

"Come follow me," the Master calls
Today, as He did long ago.
If we heed Him we can escape
An eternity of unspeakable woe.

He does not promise a thornless path,
Nor a flowery bed of ease;
"But come to me all weary,
And I will give you peace."

"Peace that passeth understanding,"
And home in heaven above,
Where there is no care, nor sorrow,
We will be secure in God's love.



OUR EXTENDED MILLBROOK FAMILY

The Emmertons

Millbrook is the church scattered. We thought it would be cool to hear from Millbrookers who now live in other places. Bob conducted a virtual interview with Karen (Catoe) Emmerton, who grew up in the church, and served as a deacon before moving to the Charlotte area in 2016. Karen gives us the scoop on her family. We send our love to Karen, Brett, Nathan, Caroline, and Claire.



Where do you live now?

Indian Land, SC (sandwiched between Fort Mill, SC and South Charlotte, NC)

What's something in the last year or so that's given you a sense of energy or purpose?

Getting very involved in our church, Oakland Baptist in Rock Hill, SC. Karen: serving on the diaconate, missions committee, and leading a visioning/planning team around building relationships within and outside of the church. Brett: serving on the baptism and church constitution committees as well as regularly running the video/sound booth during worship (along with Nathan who just joined the team!).

Any updates you'd like to share about your family?

Karen is in her 7th year as quality improvement coach for the pediatric nephrology group at Levine Children's Hospital (Atrium Health). The job is fulfilling and has loads of flexibility – great for work/life balance. Brett is enjoying his new role as district manager of operations for his company, Sweeping Corporation of America. He oversees NC, SC, and VA. When not traveling, he's able to work mostly from home which also affords him work/life balance. We both feel so blessed to have jobs we enjoy and ones that allow us to be readily available for our kid's extracurricular activities and church/community/life endeavors.

OUR EXTENDED MILLBROOK FAMILY

Nathan is enjoying 6th grade and doing excellent both socially and academically. He qualified for advanced English and Math this year which was a new level of study and self-discipline. He is managing both incredibly well! Outside of school, he participated in a youth NFL flag football league with some buddies from our neighborhood. Their team was the Chiefs, so he is now a loyal fan of Kansas City (which made this year's super bowl win even sweeter!). While football was enjoyable, he hung up his cleats after two seasons and is continuing with his Brazilian jujitsu training. He and Brett have been taking classes for almost 5 years and they both continue to thrive and progress in competitions and earning next level belts. As 7th grade approaches, Nathan is starting to shift his training to wrestling as that would be a sport he could pursue in school. He is enjoying being part of the church youth group now and will be going on his first mission trip to Kentucky this summer. Knowing his compassionate heart, we're certain this trip will be both fulfilling and life changing.



OUR EXTENDED MILLBROOK FAMILY

Claire and Caroline are the dynamic twin duo who thrive in creative spaces, athletic pursuits, and any social affair. They, too, enjoy learning and are doing amazing work academically, but the friendships and fun are what they love the most about 4th grade! Although identical and very much inseparable, they are starting to shine as individuals which is so beautiful to observe. Despite these individual strengths, they still prefer to try to new things together and are currently involved in hip hop dance, basketball, and their school play, Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. Caroline landed the role of Willy Wonka and Claire is playing the part of Mrs. Teavee! Earlier this year, they also tried volleyball and loved it (which their momma is thrilled about!) and Claire dabbled in soccer for what we call a "one and done" season. Their schedules are busy, but we are so impressed with their commitment and are proud of them for trying so many new things. When not on a court, field, or stage, you will find their artistic juices flowing as they build, design, sketch, paint, sing, make music, and dream whimsically, in color, and without abandon. We have no idea what, of their interests, they'll invest in as they get older, but for now, they're leaving no stone left unturned! They are compassionate and spirited and indeed have a zest for life!



OUR EXTENDED MILLBROOK FAMILY

Is there anything you miss about Raleigh?

- Our Millbrook Baptist Church family, of course!
- My friends from my stay-at-home-mom's group
- Pullen Park (there's not another place like it!)
- My childhood home and having my parents 10 minutes down the road
- Goodberry's Frozen Custard

Do you have a favorite memory of Millbrook?

When you're born into a church, the memories are too many to count, but what will always be etched in my mind is the time in which my children got to attend church with their grandparents. Watching my kids run from the nursery into the arms of my parents will always be so special along with the weekly "tours" Nathan and his Papa took around the church, which always ended with a stop at the tall stained-glass windows in the sanctuary. It was a full circle moment for me.

If there's a potluck at Millbrook, what dish are you bringing and who's dish are you sure to sample?

Pre-kids: I would have brought a broccoli casserole, some type of potato dish, or homemade dessert.
Post kids: Store-bought cookies!

For sampling, there wasn't one dish I was particularly drawn to (my palate is vast, and they were all delicious) but I learned early on to always stop by the dessert table first to ensure I had a chance to get a sampling of everything on that table!

Is there anything Millbrook can do better to make you feel connected from afar?

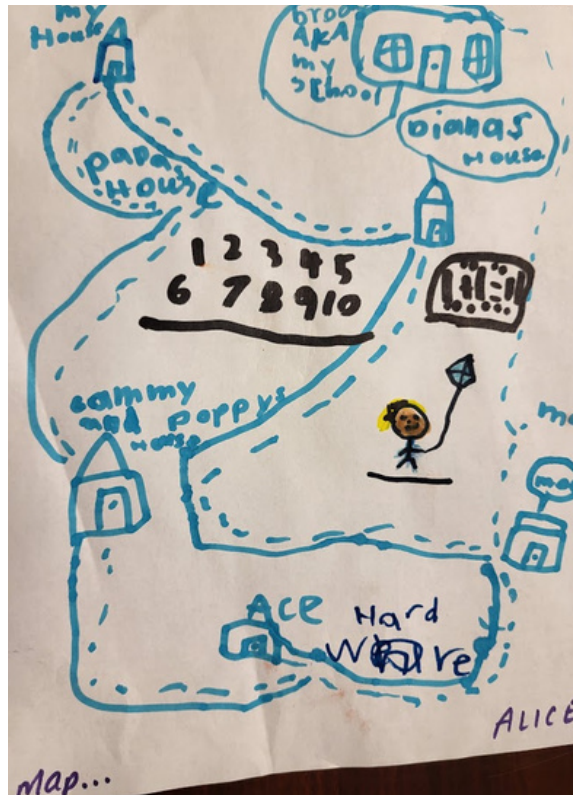
Social Media (Facebook mostly) has allowed me to stay connected with so many MBC members as well as following the MBC Facebook page updates. Online worship is also a great option whenever I need a touch of home. For more personal connection, I would love to see a camera angle that scans the church congregation when streaming live. It's a technical suggestion, but also meaningful as it would be special for me to see some familiar faces (in addition to the very familiar folks I see in the choir loft!). More broadly, I think it's important for online visitors to see the people in the church.

What's something you might tell your friends that's meaningful about Millbrook?

The people of Millbrook are deeply invested in spiritual understanding and growth and are aware of how that translates to the world around them. This church genuinely embraces diversity and welcomes people from all walks of life reinforcing the message that anyone can be called to ministry and will be supported, upheld, and encouraged in their pursuit of God's calling in their lives. This church takes seriously the responsibility of being the hands and feet of Christ, seeking and responding to opportunities with servant hearts and a steadfast commitment to their Christian values. Compassion and love are palpable in this church.

The Children of Millbrook:

Finding Hope in Happy Places



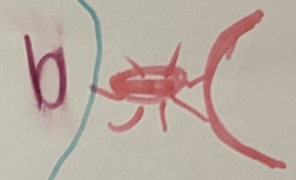
OUR LAW of LOVE:

Brooke is the Best
MNON
be the Best
Kind rs in the WHIP!

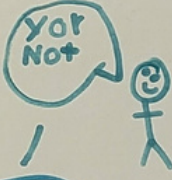
obey rules

hob

Ask somebody if there ok offer somebody help
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play i Fu vrs Behapy



take care of the classroom



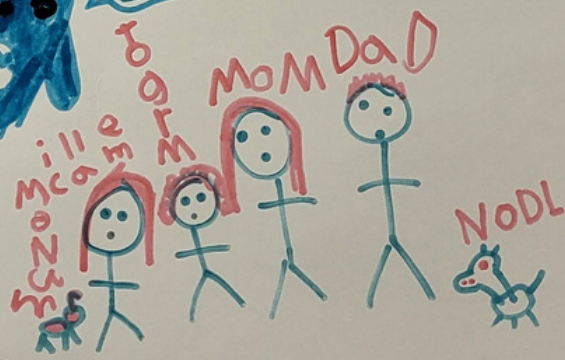
lol omg ITYL bvb

To.Dro
I'm the Best

Be respectful

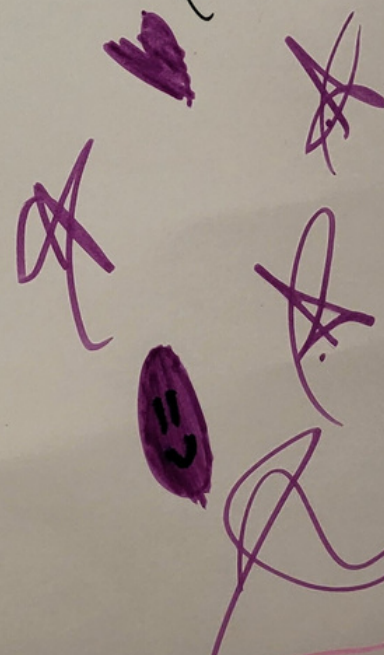
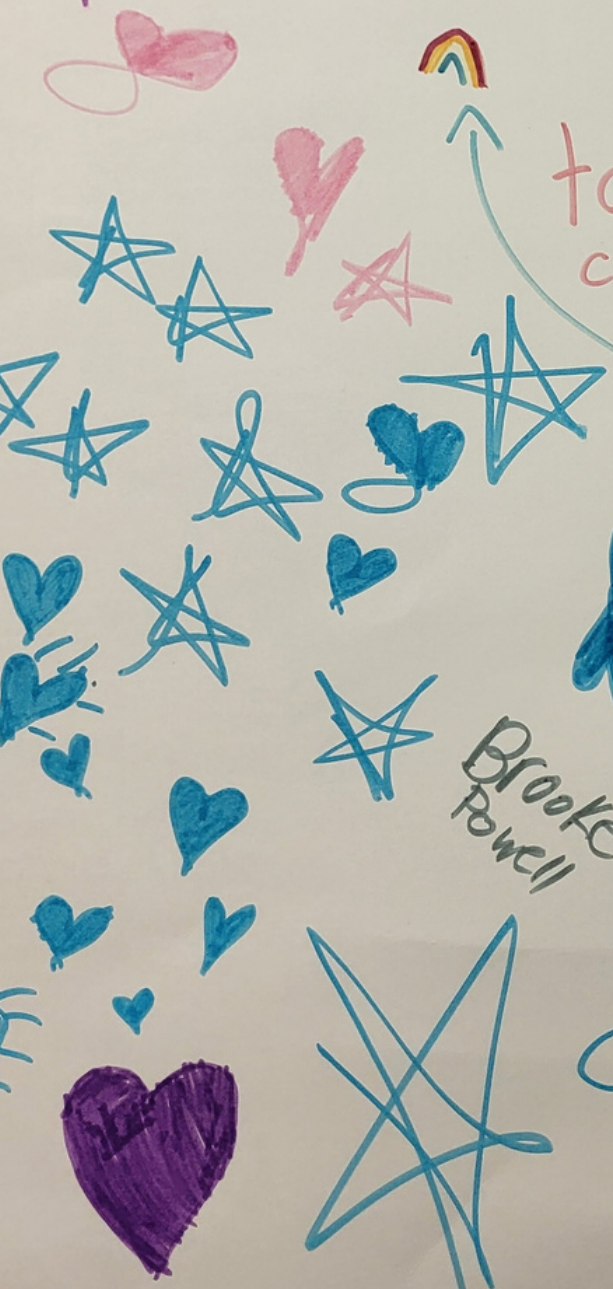


Brooke Powell



clean up!!!

Welcome New friends



YOU ARE INVITED!

Muse with us!

We want to hear your musings! How can you muse with us? It's simple. Think about any topic or expression you think might be of interest to Millbrook. Then share it with us:

- Poems
- Book Reviews
- Recipes
- Photos
- Questions
- Correspondence
- Family Updates
- Doodles
- Notes of Encouragement
- Anything (we mean it!) you want to share

Submissions can be sent via email to bob@millbrookbaptistchurch.org or mailed to Bob's attention in the church office at 1519 E. Millbrook Rd. Raleigh, NC 27609.

And remember: There are no word counts. There are no deadlines. There is no right way to muse. When we have received a new batch of submissions, we'll share another magazine. We're not worried about adhering to a schedule. We'll mark time as the Spirit leads us.

Thank you for reading and connecting with us!



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