

# THE VINE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE CATAWBA CLERGY NETWORK

## ABIDE

By Shannon Axtell Martin, Director, Catawba Clergy Network

*I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5*

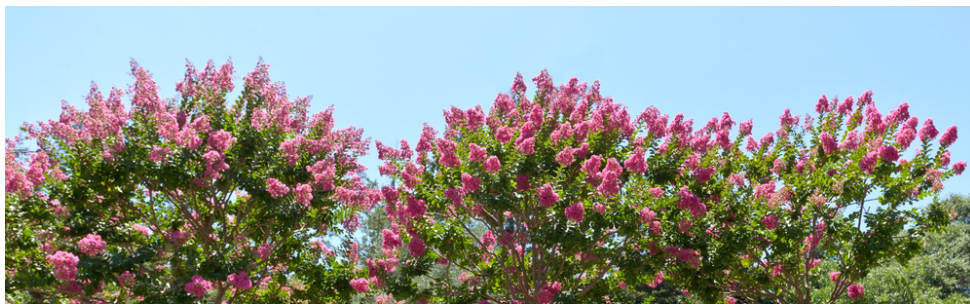
Apart from me you can do nothing? Nothing?! Really? Does this passage seem a little over the top to you, or is it just me? I feel like I can do plenty on my own. Can't you? And yet, when I stop and think about it, how often does that "plenty" I can do on my own leave me feeling scattered and burned out?

The vine is what is connected to the roots, the vine brings the sustenance, the needed elements for survival. The branches are natural outgrowths from the vine. Branches cannot just decide they are better off on their own and leave the vine, and if they think their thriving is only a result of their own striving, they are misguided. The only way for them to grow and thrive is for them to be connected to the thriving roots. This naturally happens when they stay connected to the vine.

Recently I was driving and noticed a tree growing a median. It appeared to be a crepe myrtle, growing in two sections. One was covered in green leaves, the other completely bare. The bare section was leaning slightly more than it should. I wondered what wind, weather, or other trauma caused it to bend, separating it from its roots. If it hadn't been spring, I might not have noticed that half of this tree was disconnected from its roots. But with the robust growth on the other half, the disparity was obvious. I was struck by this image and felt some kind of solidarity with the disconnected half. I thought, "but at least it is still standing!" Just because you are still standing doesn't mean you are healthy, thriving, or bearing fruit. How often is "still standing" our standard? And I wonder, is that good enough?

This is not a call to compare ourselves to the fruiting or flowering of others- but to assess our roots. Are we connected to Christ, able to abide in Him and reach our full potential? Are we barely hanging on and calling that good enough, when we are meant for more?

Maybe instead of trying to prove Jesus wrong and parse out what I can and cannot do on my own, I should take this gift away from this passage: I do not HAVE to do it alone, and neither do you. For that I am grateful. Thanks be to God. Amen.



CATAWBA CLERGY NETWORK

# Catawba Clergy Days

**SAVE THE DATE:  
OCTOBER 20 - 21, 2022**



## Share your thoughts!

If you'd like to be a part of shaping Catawba Clergy Days 2022 please fill out the following survey:

<https://forms.gle/Vz1gZH8pn7GLLzLm9>



*Clergy Days 2021 in person Participants on October 29, 2021*

To read about 2021's event please [click here](#).

# CLERGY THRIVING GRANT CORNER

REST, RESOURCES, RELATIONSHIPS, & REFLECTION

*Clergy Thriving Grants can be up to \$2,500 to support Clergy Thriving. There is a competitive grant cycle, with applications due by May 15. These grants are separate from \$500 COP Grants, for which clergy are eligible upon successful completion of the Communities of Practice Year.*

*We will share stories in this space about how both COP and Clergy Thriving Grants have been used so that others may glean insights and inspiration from the experiences of others.*

## CLERGY THRIVING GRANT SPOTLIGHT: COP GROUP RETREAT



The retreat at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center offered our group an opportunity to deepen our fellowship, learn from one another, and grow in our commitment to ministry in retirement. The morning and evening devotions and prayers in the chapel each day provided inspiration and spiritual nourishment. The communion service on the last day of our retreat was especially meaningful, with both United Methodist and United Church of Christ pastors officiating. Our time together gave us the opportunity to reflect on what our Community of Practice means to us and how it can help us sharpen our ministerial skills, ultimately benefiting local churches. After the past few years of isolation and pandemic restrictions, I no longer take living in Christian community for granted. Our retreat underscored the value of community, reminding me of Bonhoeffer's classic, *Life Together*. –The Rev. Dr. H. William Green

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

# DISCOVER YOUTH THEOLOGY INSTITUTE

You know the youth in your congregations- who is curious, who is wrestling with their calling, who has big questions about what their faith means in their daily life.

If this brings a student to your mind, please nominate them to attend Discover, Catawba's Youth Theology Institute. We explore vocational discernment, theological reflection, and practical theology through tracks in Sport Management, Worship Music, and Service and Ministry Leadership. This on campus residential summer program is free after a deposit of \$75 (which can be waived if it presents a hardship). More information can be found at [www.catawba.edu/discover](http://www.catawba.edu/discover). Contact [discover@catawba.edu](mailto:discover@catawba.edu) to nominate a student or with any questions you may have.

If you are interested in sharing your call story with this group of young people, please contact Shannon at the address above.



**Discover 2022**  
Catawba College Youth Theology Institute

High School Session  
**July 10-15**

Middle School Session  
**July 17-22**



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## BRING DISCOVER TO YOUR CONGREGATION!

Catawba College's Youth Theology Institute, Discover, exists to equip middle and high school students with tools to explore their faith, discern their calling, and become a part of the ongoing conversation about what it means to live a faithful life. We approach Christian faith development through community building, time in creation, scriptural exploration, and theological reflection.

We love when your students join us at Discover in the summer, and we would also love the opportunity to bring Discover to you (whether virtually or in person)! Discover staff are available to come visit your group and facilitate activities or serve as guest speakers.

We can individualize the program to fit your group. Contact [discover@catawba.edu](mailto:discover@catawba.edu) to schedule and find out more.

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# COP ROUNDTABLE

*"I have learned as well as shared within my group. We have built an unshakable bond of love, trust, and respect. We have created a safe space to be authentically ourselves."*

*-Catawba Clergy Network COP Participant*

 Interested in joining a  
**CATAWBA CLERGY  
NETWORK COP?**

"COPs" or "Communities of Practice" are small discussion groups for peer learning and support. Catawba Clergy Network offers COPs for SOC, Catawba alumni, and area ministers. COPs meet monthly and are designed to provide community and resources to help ministers thrive.



The next COP year will begin in September, but if you'd like to learn more in the meantime please contact The Rev. Betty Morton at: [bjmorton19@catawba.edu](mailto:bjmorton19@catawba.edu) by July 15.

## ALREADY IN A COP? APPLY FOR A COP GRANT!

Don't forget to apply for your COP Grant (\$500) by July 15th. You may apply as an individual or on behalf of a group. The application and FAQs are available by [clicking here](#).

## JOIN THE DISCUSSION!

The Clergy Network "Discussion Hub" can be found within our private Facebook group. Through a simple application, you can apply to be a part of this group, which is only for current members of the Clergy Network. This is an informal space which offers a safe place for you to receive and share resources, rest, reflect, and meaningfully connect with fellow clergy as well as Catawba Clergy Network staff. We hope to see you all there! If you have any questions or have resources you would like shared through this Facebook group please contact, Hannah Hutchens McNeely, [hhutchen18@catawba.edu](mailto:hhutchen18@catawba.edu).

[Follow this link if you are interested.](#)

**CATAWBA  
COLLEGE**



Clergy Network

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