

# THE FIRST PRES

First Presbyterian Church  
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## From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we continue our journey together into the future which God is preparing for First Presbyterian Church, I wanted to share more of the process we will be undergoing in the coming months. The first step has been that of building relationships between you and me. I have been blessed by your warm welcome and your willingness to allow me to listen to your stories of life at First Church through the past decades. I look forward to our growing relationship of trust and commitment to the process.

I have begun the steps to build what I am calling our Aloha Mission Team (AMT) which will work closely with me through the coming months as we plan, conduct, research and gather all the information and traditions which will be an integral part of the Mission Statement which the Session and Presbytery of Eastern Virginia will approve so that you can elect a Pastor Nominating Committee and seek a new Pastor.

The five steps of the process will be:

### 1. **Coming to terms with History.**

Through visits, town meetings and any other methods that are needed, we will review together the joys and sorrows, the successes and challenges, the hopes and dreams of this community of faith. Everyone's input is needed. Part of the process we will enter is to celebrate and forgive the events and people

from the past who have been a part of our life together. Coming to terms with history enables healing to take place and new courage for the future to arise.

2. **Discovering a New Identity.** All around us change is occurring in the culture outside our church walls. In our schools, our work, our community, our nation and world change is happening. First Presbyterian is not the church it was fifty, twenty five or even 10 years ago. Who are we today in light of what is going on in all of our lives? Several years ago I heard a sermon preached entitled "You Can't Have a 1950's Church Any more. No longer can we "Leave It To Beaver". You have a First Fellowship, fellowship breakfast, Sunday School and Worship every Sunday. You have staff, officers and members who are seeking to carry on Christ's ministry in the world. The Aloha Mission Team will work to look at demographics, community needs, and other information to help us clarify who we are.

3. **Church Leadership for the future.** We will be looking at who were the past, who are the present and who will be the future leaders of this congregation. We will look at all of the tasks for which we need committed and faithful leaders. Some of the leaders will be ordained as Elders and Deacons, others will be involved in Christian Education, Presbyterian women and men, worship, fellowship, building and grounds, witness and service to name a few. We will look at church organization and how to seek God's will as we carry on the function of the church to "build up the body of Christ" in the next decade.

#### 4. **Reconnecting with our denomination..**

We will again look at our Reformed history, our Presbyterian Heritage, our working relationship with the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia, the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic and the Presbyterian Church (USA). We will look at strengths and weakness of our connectional ties as we travel together in this process.

#### 5. **Commitment to new leadership and a new future.**

This will complete the process as the AMT brings the Mission Statement to the Session, the Session and Presbytery approves that Statement and the church elects a Pastor Nomination Committee. I will not be involved with the PNC but serve as Intentional Interim until a new Pastor is ready to come. Then I will say, "Aloha! - - Hello, Goodbye and I love you", and ride off into the setting sun thankful that I have been blessed by God to have this sacred time with you.

These five Developmental Tasks Sound a bit daunting, but I know with God's help, lots of cooperation and "speaking the truth in love" will enable us to complete the process. I look forward to listening to each of you in the coming months. Please contact me so that I may listen and learn from you about the past, present and future of the First Presbyterian Church of Portsmouth.

Peace,  
*George*

#### **Lent and Easter Events**

- Mar. 9 Fifth Sunday in Lent
- Mar.12 Downtown Lenten Service at First Presbyterian  
(Worship 12:00/Lunch 12:30)
- Mar. 16 Palm Sunday
- Mar. 20 Maundy Thursday Service/Dinner  
(Worship 6 pm/Dinner 6:30 pm)
- Mar. 23 Easter Sunday/Worship10am  
(**No** First Fellowship or SS)  
Children's Easter Egg Hunt  
11:00 followed by refreshment

#### **Palm Sunday**



Please be sure to join together again for the annual *Liturgy of the Palms* presented by the Downtown Portsmouth Ministerium at 10:30 a.m. this coming Sunday, Palm Sunday, at Courthouse Square (northwest corner of High and Court Streets). This brief service includes prayers and readings from the gathered clergy, music by the combined choirs of downtown churches, and palm fronds for all. Don't miss it!

#### **Easter Sunday Worship**



**Don't Forget** – our worship service on Easter Sunday morning will be at 10:00 a.m., and there will be **no Early Worship** and **no Sunday School** that day.

#### **Easter Egg Hunt**



After the 10:00 Easter worship service at our church, there will be an Easter Egg Hunt for the children. During the hunt, refreshments for the adults will be offered, such as hot chocolate and coffee, hot cross buns, and cookies. Please plan to attend our service and join us afterward for fellowship and fun. Bring family and friends, because we'll be baking a lot for all to enjoy.

#### **Oktoberblest Bazaar**



The Session and Diaconate have agreed that our church will have a bazaar this fall (Oktoberblest). At present, although the Diaconate has submitted suggestions, the Session has not decided how to use the money raised. More on this will appear in the bulletin and in the newsletter to inform you.

This year we have no one available to pick up the items contributed, so donors are asked to please bring them to the church, in boxes if you can. Please place items in the Library Room, which is across the hall from the Westminster Sunday School Classroom. (This is the same room where items were collected for the last bazaar.)

**Clara Spanos** is chairing this event and needs people to volunteer to sort the items on one Saturday in June, August, and October. (Clara is pretty amazing, but she can't do this by herself.) If you could volunteer to help her, she would appreciate it.

Please begin now to look through your attic, closets and garage for items to be contributed. October may seem like a long time off, but it's not too soon to start. Of course, help, donations, and prayers are needed to again make this a successful event.

Please contact Clara if you would like to cook, take care of a table of items to sell, move and sort on Saturday and help clean up and pack. We need all the helping hands and items that you can spare. It will have been three years since we last had a bazaar; we're hoping that you have lots of goodies that we can sell.

### Give/Get a Ride



This program is for members who need a ride or who are available to give one. The program is still going strong and rides are available.

**If you need a ride**— whether it's to church, to a medical appointment or to the grocery store — please call Mary at the church office or call Agnes McFadden at 399-3190 or Jennifer Patgorski at 718-3610. They will need 2 days' advance notice to make arrangements.

**If you can give a ride**, please call Mary, Agnes or Jennifer to let them know of your willingness and availability.

They ask that everyone please keep this program and its participants in your daily thoughts and prayers.

### Makemie Woods Funds for Our Youth



The Session has approved financial help to send interested children of our congregation to Makemie Woods this summer to help revitalize our youth's summer camp program. The cost for five campers is expected to be over \$2200. The Session has approved for half of that cost to come from the budgeted Youth Fund. The Youth plan to have fund drives to raise the rest. There will be events like dinners after church on Sundays and car washes. Please support them. More information will be published about individual events as they are planned. In addition, if you want to make a donation to this cause, you may use the special offering envelope and drop it in the offering plate during a worship service. Just write "Makemie Woods" on the special offering envelope every penny will go towards funding our kids to go to the camp. Any such donations will be appreciated very much.

Each kid has to send \$100 dollars soon to secure their spot at camp for the particular week that they want to go. Won't you please help?

### Deadline for Newsletter Articles



The deadline for submitting information or articles for the newsletter each month will be the 21<sup>st</sup> of the previous month. In other words, information that is intended for the April 2008 newsletter should be submitted to the editor no later than March 21, 2008; information to be published in the May 2008 newsletter should be submitted no later than April 21, 2008; and so on. All information for the newsletter should be submitted directly to the newsletter editor whenever possible.

Submissions may be made by U.S. Mail, telephone, or e-mail.

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## The Circle is Complete

Everyone's cooperation on this will be greatly appreciated.

### Please Help Serve at Oasis



For those of you who may not be aware of this ministry, our church serves breakfast to the homeless, and others who need a good meal, on the third Monday of every month at Oasis. Various groups take turns preparing and serving, including the Presbyterian Men, the Diaconate, the Choir, the Youth, the Session, Open Ends, the Service Committee, and the Mary Rice Class.

**Karen Diggs** coordinates the scheduling for service at Oasis throughout the year and is always looking for new people to help. Those who can help should contact Karen through the church office. Please consider volunteering- we always need people to make breakfast casseroles, shop for milk and juice, or actually show up at 6 am to work.

Thanks and God bless all those who make this important ministry possible.

### Parking Behind the Quality Shop Building



The current owner of the building that most of us refer to as the Quality Shop has advised that, although he personally does not have a problem with members of our church using the spaces behind the building for parking, other people occupy the building. Our parking there really depends on the parking requirements of the tenant. Sunday mornings should not be a problem, but other times during the week should be arranged and agreed upon with the tenant. Questions and requests for further information on this may be directed to Todd Taylor. Thanks to Todd for generously volunteering to be our "agent" in this matter

**Easter. We celebrate it every year,** but what is it we celebrate? Bunnies? Eggs? Chocolate? Of course not. Easter Day may include all these things but, as any Christian knows, they aren't what we celebrate. We celebrate God's plan for our salvation. We celebrate the Resurrection; we celebrate the rising of Jesus from the tomb.

**Jesus' death** on "Good Friday" and His descent into Hell are significant parts of the plan of salvation. However, there is something else. There is another aspect of the crowning event – the Resurrection – that will be considered here. The Resurrection is what gives meaning to the rest, and the Resurrection has an additional significance of its own.

**To be sure, without the Resurrection, there would be nothing to celebrate.** Jesus betrayed and abandoned by his disciples, given a mockery of a trial complete with political intrigue and false testimony, his cruel treatment at the hands of the Roman soldiers, his horrifying death on a cross, and his hasty burial in a borrowed tomb – all these events add up to a sad and tragic tale. They are certainly nothing to celebrate or rejoice over. So, where does the joy come in?

**Without the Resurrection, even the joy of Christmas would be meaningless.**

Gabriel's visit to Mary, the Star, the rapturous singing angels, the shepherds, the Magi – meaningless. The birth of Jesus would be just another birth of a child to a poor couple in a strange place. His death would be just another crucifixion by the Romans in Palestine. Most likely, we would never have heard of it.

**When God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden,** He made a covenant with them. The covenant was that they would live forever in harmony with Him as long as they obeyed the conditions that He set. He told them that all the garden's riches were theirs except that they should not eat the fruit of one particular tree. They had only to obey Him in this one thing. He told them that if they ate that fruit they would die.

**The Serpent, of course, made that tree and its fruit the focus of his evil plan.** The Serpent wanted Adam and Eve to disobey God, but it had to be their choice to do it. He told Eve that God was lying when He said they would die. He told her that God had an ulterior motive for not wanting them to eat that specific fruit. The Serpent was lying, of course, but Eve believed him and ate the fruit. She didn't drop dead; neither did Adam when he ate it. Thus the first covenant was broken and the circle had begun.

**When they didn't die right away,** they concluded that the Serpent might know what he was talking about. They also concluded that perhaps God was not to be trusted in all things. Score that round to the Serpent. That seed of doubt was all Satan could have hoped for. Through Adam and Eve, the Serpent had introduced evil and sin into the world. He had caused them to question their faith in God, the One who had created them. Doubting God is just the beginning of our giving Satan exactly what he wants. The seed may be there in all of us, but it is our choice to nourish it and make it grow.

**The death that God had spoken of** was the loss of an intimate and eternal relationship with Him. By accepting evil and sin, Adam and Eve had closed that door. They and their descendants were cut off from the Source of Life and from the purpose for which they were created in the first place. They became subject to misery, death and corruption. Sin and guilt became their nature, instead of righteousness and direct communion with God. As their descendants, we have inherited that same nature.

**Death is a fact of life in this world.**

Everyone dies eventually. Even Jesus died. He was dead and buried. The Apostles' Creed says it; so does the Bible. All human flesh is subject to death and Jesus was human. The wonder – the miracle – of Easter is that He came back to life. No humans ever have come back from death without divine intervention, and even those are few. The power of God is required to restore life to someone who is dead. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He conquered death once and for all, and through the Resurrection

of Jesus all people have the hope of eternal life.

**Paul says that since sin and death came to us through a man** – Adam – so sinlessness and immortality are restored to us through a man – Jesus. [1 Cor. 15:20-22]. The circle of life to death was begun by Adam acting in weakness and the circle of death to life has been completed by Jesus acting in power.

**Each year during this season we recall and observe all that happened** that last week before Easter – the triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, the clearing of the temple, the questions, challenges, and plots by the religious leaders, the Last Supper, the agony and the sense of loneliness Jesus felt in the garden, the arrest and trial, the death and burial. We celebrate the fact that in the death of Jesus our sins are forgiven – our debt has been paid.

**In the Resurrection** we celebrate not only the raising of Jesus Christ from the dead, but also we celebrate the victory of eternal life over death. The circle has been completed. To God be the Glory!



Lane Pittman



**Birthdays**

March 19 – 27

- 19 Lee Price
- 21 Mallory James
- 22 Minnie Riley  
Jennifer Patgorski
- 27 Kelly Fletcher

April 2-14

- 2 Tara Taylor
- 4 Harvey Spiers, Jr.  
Julia Newsom
- 7 Emily Newsom
- 11 Norma Halterman
- 14 Lane Pittman

## Synopsis of Session Meetings

### January meeting highlights:

- Received letter from Stated Clerk of Presbytery that our nominee (Gail Pittman) for Commissioner to General Assembly was not selected by the Nomination Committee of Presbytery.
- Approved holding a Church Bazaar in the Fall
- Stewardship & Finance reported that they will try to more fully publicize financial information to the congregation. In light of the fire at Zion Baptist, the committee plans to review our insurance coverage and explore developing a plan of action in event of a catastrophic event.
- Souper Bowl of Caring offering will be collected on Sunday, February 3.
- Approved donating the Souper Bowl collection to the Zion Baptist Drop-In Center which helps with assistance and feeding of the homeless.
- Endowment Fund balance is \$249,279.30. Interest income this past year was used for the Courtyard Concerts.
- Personnel Committee is working on having a Personnel Manual.
- An Ad Hoc Committee was reactivated with David Stuart as Chairman. Its purpose is to explore sprucing up entryways, painting in Educational Building, and redoing the parking area outside kitchen door.

### February meeting highlights:

- Approved request for transfer of church membership to First Presbyterian, Virginia Beach for Christian and Kimberly Hearn
- Letter of thanks from Zion Baptist Drop In Center for the Souper Bowl donation of \$504.35.
- Al Fry & David Stuart reported on the Presbytery meeting held in January.
- Lenten devotional booklets have been distributed by the Christian Education committee.

- Approved plans by Christian Education and Youth committees to publicize summer camps at Makemie Woods. Approved that the church will pay 50% of tuition costs for campers, and approved that the youth may have fundraising events to raise money for the other portion of tuition. Also approved asking for donations to help with tuition.
- Approved an International Missions dinner to be held on March 5 with the planned speaker being Alice Taylor.
- Donations to the Gideons International on Sunday, Feb. 17 were \$220.
- Approved inviting Frances Dille, Chaplain at Maryview Hospital, to be the worship leader for the Lenten service at our Church on March 12
- Approved changes in fee structure for use of the church for weddings
- Approved that there be no First Fellowship service or Sunday School held on Easter Sunday and that the Worship Service be held at 10:00 AM
- Approved Hunter Webb to serve a one year term and renewed Bunky Joyner's term on the Endowment Committee
- Stewardship & Finance – The Treasurer advises that although general fund receipts were on target with the budget for January, expenses for the month exceeded the budget by \$2,653. Utilities and office expenses were higher than expected and the sanctuary fund was depleted by organ repair costs.

## Meals on Wheels

This important ministry is in serious need of volunteers, so if you can help, please offer your services. The work requires that you spend just a few hours with us on the third Thursday morning of each month. If you can help, please contact the church office. We need you!

## Church Family News



Emma Holbrook Wells, daughter of Wendy (Dray) and Robert Wells, was born February 12.

Congratulations to the happy parents and to Grandmother Dotty Dray and Great-grandmother Dot Wyman.

## Stamps for Missions Update

(Thanks to Norma and Lanier Halterman)



**Peggy Reinhold** reports that the new printing has been delivered to Presbyterian Printing in Congo, enabling them to print materials faster and cheaper for Congo needs. This was done with help from the Stamps for Missions project. Also, \$1500 was sent to help support a continuing education project at which 117 pastors and lay preachers from one of Congo's most primitive sections met for 3 days of "renewal, encouragement, worship and challenge." These pastors now have Bibles and hymn books, thanks to Stamps for Missions, and are hungry for spiritually uplifting events such as this

Mrs. Reinhold also sent a financial report on the project for 2007, which is summarized here.

On hand January 1, 2007	\$ 229.80
Rec'd from Sales of stamps and donated postage	\$6013.47
Total available	\$6243.27
Expenses for supplies, shipping, and Subscription	\$ 530.04
Sent to Congo	\$5700.00
On hand January 1, 2008	\$ 23.23

**Norma and Lanier Halterman** are our congregation's coordinators for this project, and will be happy to answer your questions and grateful for your stamps. Please pray for the churches in Congo and for the continued success of the Stamp project.

## ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT 2007

Report was approved as received.

Highlights:

Membership – prior = 236  
Gains = 1  
Losses = 28

Breakdown of losses:

By certificate – 1  
By death – 3  
By member request – 9  
(5 were inactive for years)  
Joined other church – 3  
Moved to Inactive – 8  
Unable to locate - 4

Total Active Members: 209

Average Attendance: 94

Child Baptisms: 3

Officers: Male Session - 5, Female Session - 7  
Male Deacon - 5, Female Deacons - 7

Age distribution of active members:

25 & under: 20    26-45: 49    46-55: 19  
56-65: 46            Over 65: 75

Christian Education – 87 involved in Sunday School

Potential giving units – 99

## Receipts

Regular contributions -	\$172,882
Capital Bldg. Fund	23,555
Investment Income	3,815

## Expenditures

Local Program -	\$201,382
Local Mission	2,967
Capital Expend	20,354
Other Mission	2,407

This report will be posted on the Bulletin Board outside the Minister's office