

THE FIRST PRES

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From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Having completed Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Palm Sunday and Easter, we look forward to Pentecost. After Pentecost, we move into the period in the church which is called Common Time. This period centers on how we grow and develop ourselves and the church to carry on the ministry of Christ Jesus and offer glory to God as we are led and encouraged by the Spirit.

At First Presbyterian in Portsmouth, this will signal the time we begin work on the five development steps to prepare for the calling of a new Pastor. A major part of this process will be the establishment of a Mission Team which will work closely with me during the coming months. Also, in April, the Session will approve and continue its work on the Mission Study Process and complete a six month evaluation of my work to send to the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia. I am also sending a quarterly report of my work to the presbytery during my first year here.

Since I am the church's first Intentional Interim Pastor, I would like to share with you some basic information about the Mission Study (which Intention Interim Pastor Rev. Dr. Robert Gustafson prepared:

What Is It? A congregational Mission study is an **Intentional** effort, involving the **whole congregation** in a **process** of study, reflection and prayer directed to **discerning** what God is calling the congregation to be and do at a **particular pointing** its life.

Central Features:

1. Intentional
2. Whole congregation
3. Process
4. Discerning
5. "Call of God"
6. Particular point

Why Do It?

1. A congregation acts responsibly, both toward itself and its place in the community, when it opens itself to understand God's leading in an honest, thorough and transparent manner.
2. The Mission Study provides opportunities for the church to discover a new identity and to focus on new ministry and mission possibilities.
3. The Mission Study offers the occasion to share together in open and prayerful discernment of God's "call" in the life of the church.
4. The Mission Study provides an occasion to experience renewed understanding and appreciation for the church's existence and purposes.
5. The Mission study lays the groundwork for an appropriate consideration of new pastoral leadership.

The Primary Goals of the Mission Study:

1. The congregation as a whole will discern the call of God at this point in time.
2. The congregation will discover its new identity and purpose.

3. The congregation will be able to articulate clearly its basic values, goals, mission, and vision.
4. Leaders will be better prepared to identify the resources both within the congregation, including personnel and financial, and those in the community, and denomination which can be utilized to meet the mission goals of the church.

The Pastoral Nominating Committee will have a clear picture of the emerging new identity of the church and therefore of the kind of pastor best suited to assist the church in articulating that identity and in achieving it's agreed upon vision.

More information will be coming to the Session and congregation as we work together on discerning God's call to this portion of the Body of Christ.

May God guide and bless our efforts as together we embark on this exciting new adventure of faith, and as we look forward to a new era in the life of First Presbyterian Church, in Portsmouth.

Peace,
George

Church Family News



On March 6th, **Collin Taylor** and his teammate took 5th place in the Duo Interpretation field in the Tidewater Forensics League Tournament of Champions. This is Collin's second year as a member of the Western Branch High School Forensics Team. During the regular Forensic League competitions, Collin's duo team placed 4th in the October 11th competition and they placed 3rd in the January 10th competition. Way to go, Collin!

Synopsis of Session Meeting

At the stated Session meeting on Monday, March 17, 2008, Dr. George Oehler was present as Moderator, and Cathy Broyles was present representing the Diaconate.

The Session took the following actions:

- Received a letter from Western Branch Community Church informing us that Earle and Barbara Mobley have united with their congregation. Accordingly, Earle Mobley was removed from membership in First Presbyterian Church.
- Approved Sunday, October 26, 2008 as Consecration Sunday.
- Approved Saturday, October 18, 2008 as the date for the OctoberBlest Fall Bazaar.
- Approved securing a supply minister Sunday, April 13, as Dr. Oehler will be absent that day.
- Approved sending a letter of thanks to Director of Music, Edna Broadhurst and the choir for the wonderful Requiem Cantata on March 2.
- Noted that the name of Dr. Don Belanus will be added to the list of ministers on the plaque at the front entrance to the sanctuary.
- Approved Alice Butler as Elder Commissioner to the quarterly meeting of the Presbytery on Tuesday, April 22 at Stonehouse Presbyterian Church.
- Approved the participation of our church with other downtown churches in the "Steeple to Steeple" tour on Saturday, October 4, 2008

Easter Greetings from Korea

Alice Butler sent Easter greetings to our missionaries in Korea and got this in return:

Just When is Easter?

I'm sure everyone noticed how early Easter was this year. As you may know, Easter is always the 1st Sunday after the 1st full moon after the Spring Equinox (which was March 20th in 2008). These dates are based on the lunar calendar that Hebrew people used to identify Passover, which is why it moves around on our Roman calendar. Early as it was this year, Easter actually can be one day earlier (March 22), although that is pretty rare.

Easter was the earliest in 2008 that any of us will see the rest of our lives! Also, only the most elderly (95 years old and above) of our current population have ever seen it this early and none of us will ever see it this early again! Here are some facts:

- The next time Easter will be this early (March 23) will be the year 2228 (220 years from now).
- The last time it was this early was 1913 (so only those 95 or older were around for that!).
- The next time it will be earlier, March 22, will be in the year 2285 (277 years from now).
- The last time it was on March 22 was 1818.
- No one alive today has ever seen or will ever see Easter earlier than this year!

Dear Alice and Paul and our many friends at First Church,

Thank you for your email on Maundy Thursday which we just read this morning on the 25th. Our email is only on our office computer so we read email when on campus for classes. We had a quiet Easter and after church had lunch with friends. Now we are well into our spring semester. This week is "spiritual emphasis week" with no afternoon classes and on Thursday and Friday a retreat for the students. All of the faculty will join them on Thursday evening for dinner at a retreat house in the nearby mountains. We will take the international students with us. We trust that everyone had a Joyous Easter!

Faithfully in mission,
Daniel and Carol Chou Adams

Music for Lent and Easter



Once again, Edna Broadhurst and our choir provided inspiring music fitting the solemn and the joyous spirit of the season. On Sunday, March 2, they presented *Requiem* by John Rutter. This beautiful work is especially fitting for Lent, with its combination of sorrow, peace, and hope. Along with additional singers and other musicians – many of whom were old friends – the choir brought us music that truly was a blessing. Then, on Easter Sunday our choir was joined by trumpets and trombones and – with Edna conducting and playing organ – they brought music that fitted the day. Somehow, brass instruments add just the right sparkle and brilliance for expressing the joy of Easter. Thanks to all for bringing us such thrilling music.

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.

Heifer Project

The Presbytery of Eastern Virginia (PEVA) is raising funds to buy a Heifer Project Ark. Donation checks may be made out to PEVA with note "Heifer Project" and sent to PEVA through our church office.

Meals on Wheels



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

Note from the Stewardship Finance Committee



The February Financial Report shows that giving is down at First Presbyterian Church, Portsmouth, and as a result our fund deficits continue to increase. The General Fund deficit at the end of the month was \$23,892.00 and the Sanctuary Fund deficit was \$9,054.00; utilities have been higher than expected. Unpaid pledges from late 2007 and early this year seem to underlie this trend. The Finance Committee will assemble a task force to review the budget and overall finances of the church, and make recommendations to the Session.

In the meantime, church members are reminded to hold fast to covenants made, and respond consistently and generously to God's grace at work in our lives and in the life of this church.

Help Serve at Oasis



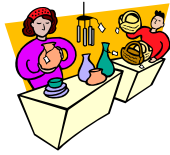
Our church serves breakfast at Oasis on the third Monday of every month. A good, nutritious breakfast is served to the homeless and others in need.

Various groups from our congregation 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 of these groups 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 serve.

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

Oktoberfest Bazaar (Update)



The date for this year's bazaar will be October 18th.

There is no one available to pick up the items contributed (no one **yet**, that is! If you can

do this, please volunteer!), so donors are asked to please bring them to the church, in boxes if possible. 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.)

This is a project that needs a lot of volunteers. We all know the saying that "The Lord will provide." Often, WE are what the Lord provides! Think it over...

Clara Spanos is chairing this event and needs people to volunteer to sort the items on one Saturday in June, August, and October. Also, 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.

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 also will be needed to make this bazaar successful.

Our Sister Church in Congo

Did you know that our church, First Presbyterian, Portsmouth, has a sister church? We do. It is the **CPK Bumbu** church, near Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire).

Some years ago a sister-church relationship was established between churches in the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia (PEVA) and churches in and near Kinshasa. Each church

in PEVA was given a church there to communicate with, pray for and otherwise give spiritual support and encouragement. The churches in Kinshasa were asked to do the same for their sister churches in PEVA. There was no financial obligation involved – it is a spiritual relationship.

Great idea, great start. Etienne Bote-Tshiek, as the PEVA-Congo Mission Facilitator, was in charge of this project for the Presbytery. As with many human sisters (and brothers) some are better at keeping in touch than others. Mary Rice, as chairman of our church's Witness committee, was faithful about this, but civil war and upheaval in the Congo region made communication very difficult, and the relationship between us and our sister church suffered.

Our Witness committee wants to revitalize that relationship. Civil war and unrest are still very much a fact of life in Congo, and communication remains difficult, but with God's help and the able assistance of Bote-Tshiek, it will be done. Alice Butler and the Witness committee are determined that this will happen. Bote-Tshiek has promised to see that the pastor at CPK Bumbu is made aware of our desire. Also, at the end of March, the Director of the CPK Women and Family department is coming to PEVA, and members of our Witness committee hope to meet with her.

As more develops along this line, we will keep you informed.

Campus Ministries "Pig Picking"

The University Presbyterian Ministries (UPM) will have their first annual Pig Picking to acknowledge and thank the people at local area Presbyterian churches for the help and support UPM has received over the last couple of years. They have established weekly Bible studies and other events, partly with the help received from area churches such as ours.

Campus Minister Reverend Linda Rainey invites everyone to attend who can. There is no cost for the pig picking, but they will be

appreciative for donations to assist UPM in the next school year. The date is Saturday, April 19th, 2008, the time is from noon to 3:00 pm, and the location is the UPM house at 1318 West 49th Street, Norfolk.

If you plan to attend, please be sure to let them know, so they can be sure to have enough food. RSVP at phone no. 757-961-0892. Sounds like fun; they hope to see you there!



Dot Wyman's new address is:

Province Place of Maryview
1 Bon Secours Way, Suite 238-B
Portsmouth, VA 23703
Phone: 638-2819

Deadline for Newsletter Articles



The deadline for submitting information or articles for the newsletter each month will be the 21st of the previous month.

In other words, information that is intended for the May, 2008, newsletter should be submitted to the editor no later than April 21, 2008; information to be published in the June, 2008 newsletter should be submitted no later than May 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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Everyone's cooperation on this will be greatly appreciated.

Birthdays

April 7 – 30

7	Emily Newsom
11	Norma Halterman
14	Lane Pittman
17	Betty Yarborough
18	A. T. Mayo
23	Carrie Norfleet
24	Phil Winkler
	Bill Westbrook
25	Ann Michaluk
26	Betsey Stuart
29	Alice Butler

May 1 – 15

1	Polly Moore
2	Sue Parker
8	David Culpepper
10	Marian Hudgins
	Clara Spanos
13	Christopher Powell
15	Joyce Wright