

THE FIRST PRES

First Presbyterian Church
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May 2, 2008

Church Family News



Frank and Liz James wish to thank their beloved church family at First Presbyterian for visits, phone calls and other expressions of love and concern during this great transition in their lives. It has been a big adjustment, but they have weathered it well, and Liz reports they are doing fine. They love to get phone calls and visits from friends. It may be best to call before visiting. Their telephone number is 393-0925, the same as it was when they were at home on Florida Avenue. These days they live in Apartment #2 at Dominion Village. The mailing address is:

Dominion Village
2856 Forehand Drive
Chesapeake, VA 23323.

Dot Wyman has moved. She craves calls and visits to keep her in touch with friends at First Presbyterian. Dot's phone number is: 638-2877 and her address is:

Dorothy Wyman
One Bon Secours Way
Suite 237
Portsmouth 23703

Former members **Christian** and **Kimberly Hearn** are expecting a baby boy in late August/early September. They are thrilled. Also, Christian has received a fellowship to Virginia Tech to complete his PhD. He and Kimberly have bought a townhouse in Blacksburg and will be relocating in the June/July timeframe. They want to be settled in before the baby's arrival. They asked to be remembered to everyone at FPC.

Synopsis of Session Meeting



At the stated Session meeting on Monday, April 21, 2008, Dr. George Oehler was present as Moderator. The Session took the following actions:

- Approved Diana Taylor as Sunday School Superintendent.
- Approved Elizabeth Fitzwater as Chairman of Confirmation Committee which will oversee preparation of youth for confirmation.
- Ad Hoc Building Improvement Committee is looking at enhancing the exterior of the church, particularly entrances to the Sanctuary.
- The Financial Task Force is exploring ways to "turn around" the financial downturn the church is experiencing.
- Dianne Griffin and Mike Broadhurst were approved as the Sessions' representatives to the Church Officer Nominating Committee.
- A Congregational Meeting will be held on May 11 following the 11:00 Worship Service to elect two At-Large Members to the Church Officer Nominating Committee.
- Due to Mother's Day, the monthly Hospitality gathering will be held on May 18.
- The Session agreed that we should proceed with a Mission Study which will provide a foundation for the Pastor Nominating Committee. Dr. Oehler has a group of members who have agreed to be part of the Mission Study Team.

Note From the Stewardship/Finance Committee



The life of this church depends on support of many different kinds. Prayer, attendance, volunteering are all important;

but a reality of being “in this world” is that accomplishing anything usually takes money. Distasteful as any discussion of money may be, it is an undeniable fact that finances are part of any church’s operation. Giving remains down at First Presbyterian Church, according to the most recent financial report. As a result, deficits in the General Fund continue. Utilities have been higher for the church as they have for all of us. Unpaid pledges from late 2007 and early this year make this situation harder to deal with. All members of the congregation are reminded to meet the pledges that have been made, and are urged to respond to God’s grace at work in our lives by giving generously whenever we can.

The Finance Committee, with the Session’s approval, has assembled a task force to review the budget and overall finances of the church. Finance Task Force members are Diane Griffin, Anne Porter, John Hackworth, Jim Plaatsman, and Michael Broadhurst. The Task Force will make recommendations to the Session, after gathering pertinent information as well as input and suggestions from our bookkeeper and other members of the congregation. Anyone interested in serving on this Task Force should contact Diane Griffin or one of the other task force members.

Prayer for the work of the Task Force and continued support for all church activities – financial and otherwise – are ways we can all be of service

Cyber-Cafe

Many of us have come to take for granted services and conveniences that are unheard-of or inaccessible in some parts of the world. This article describes an opportunity to share some of our blessings.

The International Partnership Committee (IPC) & the Presbyterian Church of Kinshasa (CPK) have devised a plan to establish a Cyber-Café in Kinshasa. As there is no mail service inside the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congolese have few ways to communicate other than costly cell phone connections, or personal contacts. Our Presbyterian community of believers is about prayer, communication, and fellowship, which can be made possible only through regular e-mail exchange.

On a recent trip the Congo Mission Facilitator Etienne Bote-Tshiek hand carried mail from our PEVA churches and members to our CPK sister churches and members. Although this is slow and infrequent, it is currently the most reliable source of communication. A Congolese mother embellished her response with beautiful language of thanks and appreciation asking the Lord to place the pen in her hand and give her the words to write. A CPK nurse expressed wholehearted gratitude that her sister church had not been forgotten. A message to one of the minister members of PEVA stated that the churches in the Congo were praying for and asking God’s blessing and comfort following the loss of his mother-in-law. These people hunger for word from us.

Once the Cyber-Café is functioning we will be able to communicate much more easily with our CPK-sister on a daily basis. Our friends in the Congo need to hear from us and receive our encouragement. Personal communication is appreciated foremost even above monetary assistance for their many obvious needs. A message from us sends hope, inspiration and love through which they acquire emotional nourishment.

Computers, equipment, satellite dish and a wireless Internet connection will be needed in order to make this project possible. CPK will charge churches, members and the community for email and other services. These fees will generate income to make the Cyber-Cafe financially self-sustaining. Our Williamsburg Presbyterian Church has given \$1,100 towards the required amount of \$8,000 for this project, and is initiating a challenge for our PEVA sister churches to walk and work together toward our goal.

Give/Get A Ride

All ministry groups and committees of CPK would benefit from use of the cyber-café. The English education group of CPK would benefit from a cyber-café. It would be used as a tool to teach English with computer software and e-books. Sister churches would benefit from the use of the cyber-café to better communicate with their sister churches in PEVA.

While this is a PEVA-sponsored project, the Witness Committee of FPC plans to commit some of their budgeted funds to help provide equipment for it. If you want to contribute, please contact Alice Butler or another member of the committee. Any gifts will help our brothers and sisters in the Congo achieve this significant change in their daily lives. Even if you can't donate money to this cause, please pray for the success of this worthwhile mission.

Specific information about equipment to be purchased and costs:

- Internet Provider for service. At the CPK cyber-café site it would cost \$350 for installation and then a service fee of \$100 per month for twelve months. This payment would have to be guaranteed to the Internet provider. No credit arrangements exist in the DRC.
 - \$150 per month for a maintenance/security person to run the CPK cyber-café
 - Computers = \$700-\$1400. To have a functional cyber-café, 5-10 computers would be efficient; but to start small, two are needed.
 - Printer = \$550
 - Scanner = \$150
 - Surge box to regulate flow of electrical current = \$250
 - Generator = \$1,000, since electrical supply is sometimes a problem in the city of Kinshasa
 - 2 tables at \$50 each
-



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.

Gleaning Opportunities for All Groups

What is **Gleaning**? When farmers harvest their crops, they often leave some of the grain, or whatever the crop is, in the field. In the Old Testament, this practice was established as ancient law so poor people and strangers could come behind and gather, or GLEAN, the leavings so they could have something to eat [Leviticus 19: 9-10]. This is what Ruth was doing when she met Boaz. (See Ruth 2 and 4. Ruth was King David's great-grandmother and an ancestor of Jesus. See also Matthew 1: 5-6.) Thus the practice of gleaning has a long and sacred history, recognized at First Presbyterian by a Sunday School class called the Gleaners.

Beginning in June 2008, there will be an opportunity for youth groups, women's groups, and men's groups to glean at a farm in Suffolk. The gleaning work will be done seven days a week. Based on weather the farmer will give a five day window for groups to come glean. The first crop will be corn, then squash, turnips, beets and carrots. Then in late summer comes more corn, cantaloupes, watermelon, pumpkins and greens, collards and kale. Contact Alice Taylor at PEVA (397-7063, ext. 309, or alice@pcusa-peva.org) if you have an interest. You can be placed on the list for gleaning dates.

Meals On Wheels

This important ministry still is in need of volunteers. 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. Thanks and God bless all the volunteers.

Musing – Are Science and Religion Opposed?

Is science opposed to religion? No. The word, “science” comes from the Latin root, *scire*, which is translated “to know.” Another word from the same root often is used to describe God – omniscient, or all-knowing.

Science is a method for knowing something, a systematic process for examining phenomena and recording the facts that are revealed. Science leads us to accurate conclusions – that is, GOOD science does. (GOOD science doesn’t mean science that leads to conclusions we like or agree with, but rather science that’s done correctly.) Good science takes a theory about something, and then tests it through time-proven and time-honored methods to find out whether it is true – whether the facts support the theory. Science proves what it proves. It doesn’t have an attitude or an agenda, and it doesn’t have a set of beliefs that it sets out to defend, other than the scientific method itself.

While science itself doesn’t have a bias, SCIENTISTS, on the other hand, often do. Scientists are people and people have attitudes or agendas. Often, scientists use the methods and prestige of science to defend a set of beliefs or a preconceived notion about something. They will twist and bend the rules of science in order to prove their notions or hypotheses correct. (People in other fields do this too, but that doesn’t make it right.) This is not good science.

Some scientists – by no means all of them – do oppose religion and set out to disprove any theory that involves faith or religion. On the

other hand, some scientists are open to what they would call a “supernatural” explanation. Some have started out not believing in God and have come to be staunch and vocal supporters of the faith. Some scientists have some grounding in religion and find that their science strengthens their faith. Other scientists, unfortunately, refuse to accept religion in any form and would choose to doubt their own findings or those of other scientists rather than believe evidence of a supernatural force at work.

Should religion be opposed to science? Of course not. We are made in God’s image, and God is not the enemy of knowledge. He gave us brains and the capacity to think and to study and experiment and learn. We are told that we must love God WITH ALL OUR MINDS, as well as our hearts. He intends for us to ask questions, to wonder about things, to examine the world around us. Willful ignorance about things – refusing to use the brains He has given us – doesn’t serve God; instead it dishonors Him.

There are some things that science can’t explain. Most importantly, science can’t prove the existence of God. That is not any reason to conclude – as some folks do – that God doesn’t exist. All it really means is that God doesn’t submit himself to investigation through the scientific method. Rather, God chooses to reveal Himself through scripture and through His dwelling in our hearts, and in many other ways. This is where faith comes in.

Some people say that belief in God is a sign of mental illness, a sign of stupidity or ignorance. My reply to them is that we’re crazy for God, stupid in our sinfulness, and ignorant about a world where He doesn’t exist. Some say that anything that can’t be demonstrated through science is just an illusion. I say God is a spirit, but He’s no illusion. Faith says that God is real, and faith is something that a lot of really smart people can’t seem to understand. Christ tells us to have love and compassion for such folks. We must pray for them to see the light.

We must reject any theory or research or writing that would be inconsistent with the laws and teachings of God. Please notice that I didn’t say we must AVOID such things. It’s up to you whether you choose to read them or know about them, but as Christians we believe in

God and so any hypothesis or theory that rejects God must itself be rejected.

Science has a lot to offer us, and God intends for us to use our brains to seek knowledge. We just need to be sure not to leave God out. After all, the laws that science observes are the laws of nature, the creation of God.



Lane Pittman

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 June, 2008, newsletter should be submitted to the editor no later than May 21, 2008; information to be published in the July, 2008 newsletter should be submitted no later than June 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.

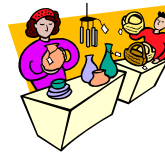
Help Serve at Oasis

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.

Octoberblest Bazaar (Help Needed!)



The date for this year's bazaar is Saturday, October 18th. In its April meeting the Session suggested that the money raised be used to spruce up the front

entrance – doing things like painting the doors and fixing the rails and generally making our entrance more inviting.

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.)

Clara Spanos is chairing this event again and she really needs people to help her move and arrange items dropped off at the church for the bazaar. So far, only two of our youth have volunteered; more are needed. Also, she still needs four or five people to help with the tables of items to be sold, as well as someone to take money for breakfast and lunch. In addition, Clara would like to have a silent auction and will need someone to watch over that if possible. None of this can be done without helping hands from this congregation. A bazaar is a project that needs a lot of volunteers. We all know the saying that "The Lord will provide," but often, the Lord's people are what He provides! We all need to do what we can, and what we can do often is more than we think it is.

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 – (Update)

First Presbyterian, Portsmouth, has a sister church. Some background: several years ago sister-church relationships were established between churches in the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia (PEVA) and churches in and near Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). 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. Unfortunately, civil war and unrest are still very much a fact of life in Congo, and communication remains difficult.

On Wednesday, April 16, the Witness committee met with Etienne Bote-Tshiek and his wife after supper in order to discuss plans to revitalize our Sister Church relationship with the CPK Bumbu Church. Already, as a result of this meeting, things have developed.

A message has been received from the members of CPK-Bumbu to us, the brothers and sisters of First Presbyterian Church, Portsmouth. The essence of that message, as translated for us by Elizabeth Fitzwater is as below:

Much love in the Lord; the Grace and peace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be with you:

After a long period of silence, we have real pleasure in sending you news of our church, CPK-Bumbu.

1. Our pastor has finished his first five year term in our church. The congregation, happy with his service, has shown its confidence in him by granting him a second term as the head of our church.

We would like to have your e-mail address to avoid these long periods without communication

between us. The church does not have an e-mail address, but by sending e-mail to elder Marcel Kajingu, who is our clerk of session, this communication is possible. His e-mail address is: markajingu@yahoo.fr.

Here are telephone numbers:

Reverend Eloi Nsambu:

00243998866699

Elder Marcel Kajingu: 00243915113731

2. Our church activities are going well. We would like to thank you again for the generous gifts you have sent to us. We purchased a generator, synthesizer, blender and computer. These items are useful during our prayer services. Again, thank you.

3. For your information, our church does not have an office or a conservation room. The congregation agreed to build a small annex to serve as an office and a conservation store [apparently, either a music room or a room to store files - Editor's note]. By the grace of God, this work was almost finished. Regrettably, while we were striving to complete this work, the last rains caused a retaining wall to fall, putting our property at risk. We are seeking to rebuild the retaining wall, and then build the office.

4. We have had several deaths among our congregation and church leaders. In one year, we have lost more than 20 congregants and three elders. One deacon is still ill. We continue to pray for him.

5. Church activities: All of our committees are functioning well: the women, and the youth are all committed to the advancement of the work of God.

6. In your last letter, you mentioned that your minister's service to the church was ending. Has his call been renewed or have you elected another pastor?

We pray for you. Please also pray for us.

Receive our fraternal greetings in Christ our lord and saviour.

For the congregation,

Elder Marcel Kajingu and Reverend Eloi Nsam

Summer Camp



Thus far only one child is going to Makemie Woods from our church. Another choice is

Triple R. Ranch in Chesapeake. Please check their website to see if the programs are more in-line with the dates, programs and schedules that kids may be looking for.

Vacation Bible School



Vacation Bible School again this year will be held in conjunction with St. John's Episcopal Church from June 23-27. Please plan to enroll your children. We had a wonderful group last year and Clara is hoping those wonderful ladies and gentlemen from our church will help again. Gentlemen are needed again to watch over the kids and man the doorways.

Please contact Clara Spanos if you would be willing to help in the kitchen at St. John's.

Cookbook Pot Luck Kickoff on Wednesday, May 21st!



Please help us gather ourselves and recipes together for a Pot Luck Dinner Wednesday night, May 21.

The Fellowship Committee will furnish the fried chicken, and we ask that members bring side dishes and desserts for the dinner. Please bring your recipes on an index card for each of the pot luck dishes and then bring as many recipes as you wish. Please be sure you have your name on the recipe card so that it will be highlighted in the cookbook. The Fellowship Committee will be organizing a cookbook for the church that will go on sale at the Octoberblest bazaar. We need your recipes to include in the cookbook. The Fellowship Committee will be asking for many recipes to include in the book. We will need recipes for these sections of our cookbook:

- Appetizers and Beverages
- Breakfast
- Soups and Salads
- Main Course Meals
- Desserts

If possible, we could also include in our cookbook "No or Low Sugar Recipes" for our diabetic friends, "Feeding a Wednesday Night Crowd" for large numbers of people recipes, and a "Kids Can Cook" section for our youngsters.

Please contact Cameron Russell if you have any questions at 638-1075.

Thank you very much for your help and input for our church cookbook. The Fellowship Committee.



May 18 – 30

18	Hunter Webb, III
21	Bob Graupmann
26	Glenn Council Diana Taylor
27	Mike Pendergraft
30	Scott Taylor

June 1 – 15

1	Don Taylor Peggy Norfleet
4	Carol Chou Adams
5	Mary Johnson
6	Megan Diggs
7	John Hardy Billy Taylor
8	Dale Pendergraft
9	MacKenzie Christine Morgan
12	Keith Hackworth
14	Christie Wilson
15	Ann Hagerty