

# THE FIRST PRES

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July/August 2008

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Many, many thanks to everyone who participated in our Celebration of the Heritage of the First Presbyterian Church of Portsmouth. We had **44** to register and **68** to attend. We had children, youth and adults. We even had food left over, much like the occasion when Jesus fed the 5,000 and had twelve baskets left over. It was a blessing to hear so many stories about your love shared at the Body of Christ in the good and bad times of life.

I would like to say a special word of thanks to the Aloha Mission Study Team for all their planning, hard work, decorating and even cooking. Also, thanks go to Cameron Russell and her Fellowship Committee for their help with set up, decorating, serving and cleaning after breakfast. Also, thanks go to Mike Pendergraft for his cooking and serving everything so well.

It was amazing to me that we could feed 68 people, share wonderful memories and still be out in time for worship at 11:00. It was a joy to have Grady Fitzwater report on his time at Makemie Woods. He liked the food best of all. We'll get a report in August from Annabelle Hice about her week at Makemie Woods. It was wonderful that you and the Session were generous in your support of these two and Gabrielle Furman to Montreat. As I said during Sunday morning sharing time, I consider camps and conferences at Montreat or Makemie Woods a part of any church's Christian Education program.

Finally, let me invite you to attend the Aloha Mission Study Team's second celebration on Wednesday, August 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. A delicious Hawaiian luau is being planned by the Study Team. The cost will be the regular \$4.00. Everyone is invited to attend. Child care will be provided. **JUST remember** to register by card or call! We will repeat our sharing time and end by 7:45.

Peace,

*George*

**P.S.** Don't forget to fill in your space, fond memories, and crisis---whatever you desire to put on the time line chart in the Fellowship Hall. We'll then put it on the wall in the all for everyone to see as we celebrate our history together.

## CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

**Trey Rhodes**, son of Carl and Kendall, has begun a 15 month tour in Iraq. Trey's wife, Theresa, and their son and daughter, Carson and Lily, reside in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. The family requests your prayers and thoughts.

Trey's mailing address is: Maj. Trey Rhodes  
HHC 3rd ESC  
APO AE 09391

## IN MEMORIUM



We mourn the loss of two stalwarts of First Presbyterian Church:

**Allan Covert**, faithful and loving husband to Lillian, was a good friend to many of our members and a loving and cheerful presence in our church whenever he was able to attend. His good humor and the laughter that seemed to always surround him will remain in our hearts and minds for years to come.

**John Hardy** was one of those men you could count on to quietly take care of things around the church. John's service to the church was loyal and dependable, and he reliably sought and gave what was best – a good example for all of us. He and Frances were faithful in attendance as long as they were able.

We shall miss these men and their contributions. Our sympathies and prayers are with their families.

## 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.

## GREETINGS FROM KOREA

In June, the Witness Committee heard from DANIEL and CAROL CHOU ADAMS, our missionaries in South Korea. Classes at Hanil University have ended, and during the summer months, Dan and Carol will be busy traveling and writing and delivering lectures – sounds like a “working vacation”. They report that Korea also is suffering from high oil costs. Gasoline prices have risen from an equivalent of between \$6-7 a gallon to about \$8 a gallon. Even though Dan and Carol drive a minivan that uses LPG, that has gone up 12% and now it costs \$50-60 to fill the tank. They dread the coming of Korea's bitter winter.

Dan and Carol send greetings to all the folks in First Church. They think of us often and keep us in their prayers, and send many thanks for our faithful support.

Let us likewise keep them in our thoughts and prayers, and thank God for their faithful work in the mission field on our behalf.

### **HERITAGE AND HISTORY OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN**

The Aloha Mission Team (the group that will work with Dr. Oehler to get our congregation ready to call a permanent new minister) cordially invites everyone to participate in the August celebration of the heritage of First Church. The August celebration will be observed on Wednesday, August 6, after supper at the church. Supper is at 6:00 pm, with the celebration at 6:30. The program that evening will be a repeat of the one held after worship on Sunday, July 27<sup>th</sup>. If you were not able to attend on July 27<sup>th</sup>, or if you have something more you would like to contribute, the August 6<sup>th</sup> celebration will be your chance to take part in the discussion.

Come and celebrate our history and heritage!

### **MEALS ON WHEELS**



We do appreciate our needed “fill in” volunteers for delivering meals in July! Several of the regular volunteers are out with surgery and illness.

Our team for July included:  
Agnes McFadden and Penny Brangan  
Frank Jennings and Pete Brown  
Ed and Amy Giles  
Marian and Lloyd Gardner (Amy’s parents)  
Linda Hackworth and Al Fry  
Rudy and Alice Simpson  
Beverly Byrd and Polly Moore  
Jennifer Patgorski, Gabrielle & Tanner  
Furman

Thanks to all of you!

### **MUSING – GOD IS GREEN**

**“GREEN” – you hear it a lot these days.** Green factories, green office buildings and houses, green power plants, green cars, green appliances, green this and green that; even “green” candidates for elective offices. Recently I heard a new church building described as “green.” Of course, the word “green” used this way doesn’t refer to the color but to a way of living – a way of doing things and using technology that doesn’t harm the environment. How should we Christians respond?

**We shouldn’t dismiss environmentalism** – being “green” – as merely a political statement or the ranting of a bunch of nuts. To begin with, our faith should rise above such reactions. Our attitudes – expressed in our words and actions – should be determined by God’s teachings and not by political considerations. Besides, just because a fanatic says something, that doesn’t mean it isn’t true. We should cherish and protect our environment because God gave it to us. Earth Day officially comes in April, but as believers we should observe “earth day” every day because God created the earth.

**What do we read in the Bible about nature and our environment?** Genesis says that God created the earth and that He separated the seas from the dry land. On the land He placed vegetation and trees, and He placed “living creatures” in the seas and “winged birds” in the skies. “God blessed them” and told them to “be fruitful and increase in number.” Then He created living creatures on the land, including livestock and wild animals.

**After everything else had been created, God created human beings “in His image”** to “rule over the fish in the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” He

blessed humankind and told us to “be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.” (“Subdue” – not abuse.) He gave us seed-bearing plants and trees for food, and provided food for all His creatures – “everything that has the breath of life in it.” The Bible presents as accepted fact the idea that God created everything. Besides Genesis, other books in the Bible – Old Testament and New – refer to God as the Creator.

**Two major ways that God reveals Himself are through scripture and through nature.** Creation came with God’s word – “Let there be...” “And there was...” All of nature came this way from the mind and words of God. Scripture, of course, also is the word of God, which came to us from those who were inspired to memorize it and others who were inspired to write it down. Scripture and nature both tell us things about God, if only we will listen. Paying attention to nature – God’s creation – and reading scripture – God’s word – each is important to knowing God and understanding our relationship to Him.

**God gave the bounty of nature to us for our benefit** – true – but He also gave us stewardship over what He had created. As responsible stewards, we should be taking care that our use does not contradict God’s clear intent that animals and plants be fruitful and increase. As the human population of the earth grows – as we increase in number – and as our lifestyles demand more and more of the resources God has entrusted to us, our responsibility as stewards also increases.

**It is appropriate that we should look at the environmental impact** that comes from a building or a process or a policy. After all, God’s creatures live and raise their young in the air, in the water, and on the land. We are not being good stewards of God’s creation if we or our fellow humans are doing things that result in the air, the water, or the land being

unfit for that life. We aren’t being good stewards if we are careless and wasteful in using the resources that God has given us. At some point, caring for the environment rightly becomes an ethical issue – even a moral one – for each of us. We should look at the impact of our own personal habits and practices. We can all do better if we try.

**Who are we to waste God’s creation?** Who are we to curse or destroy what God has blessed? We worship not nature, but the God of nature; not the creature, but the Creator. Trees, cattle, birds, grasses, fish and flowers – all are our fellow creatures at one level, as we were all created by God. On another level, however, we are set apart because we are created in God’s image – with living souls. This position is not only one of privilege for us, but it is also one of responsibility and trust. Nature – the earth itself and all life on earth – has been entrusted to our keeping. Are we showing ourselves to be worthy of that trust?

**Environmentalism – being green – is an attitude and a way of life,** like Christianity. The God around whom Christian life is centered is also Creator of all things. Reverence and faithfulness to God includes being reverent and faithful stewards of His creation.



Lane Pittman

## **DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING NEWSLETTER ARTICLES**



The deadline for submitting information or articles for the newsletter each month will be the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month prior to the month you want the article to appear.

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.

Mailing address: Lane Pittman  
614 Chandler Harper Drive  
Portsmouth, VA 23701  
Telephone: (757) 405-3554  
E-mail: slp4149@aol.com

Everyone's cooperation on this will be greatly appreciated.

## **HELP SERVE AT OASIS**



Groups from our church serve breakfast at Oasis throughout the year. Our church groups serve at Oasis on the third Monday of every month. KAREN DIGGS coordinates the scheduling and is always looking for new people to help. Various groups from our congregation include Presbyterian Men, the Diaconate, the Choir, the Youth, the Session, Open Ends, the Service Committee, and the Mary Rice Class. A good, nutritious breakfast is served to the homeless and others in need.

Those who can help should contact Karen through the church office. Please consider volunteering—we always need people to make breakfast casseroles (baked at your home and can be frozen), 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**



**This year's bazaar is Saturday, October 18<sup>th</sup>.** The money raised will be used to repaint and do other things to spruce up all of the entrances to the church.

CLARA SPANOS is chairing the event again this year. She still needs people to help her move and arrange items dropped off at the church, and to help with the tables of items to be sold on the day of the bazaar, and other jobs.

Donors are asked to please bring bazaar items to the church, in boxes if possible, and to please place items in the Library Room. (The same room where items were collected for the last bazaar) Bulky items such as furniture will be picked up on one day the week before the bazaar. Arrangements for this should be made through Clara. Those folks who want to arrange delivery on their own may do so, of course; but such deliveries must be made to the church during the week before the bazaar. There is no space at the church to store furniture and other bulky items long-term.

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

A bazaar is a project that needs a lot of volunteers. We all know the saying that "The Lord will provide," but often, WE are what He provides! Please volunteer. We all need to do what we can, and what we can do often is more than we think it is.

## SERVICE COMMITTEE

### Operation Attack

From our budget in July we donated \$750.00 to Portsmouth Resources Coalition (PARC) and \$750.00 to Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless (PVL).

Due to lack of referrals, we haven't purchased many groceries, therefore \$1,000.00 from Operation Attack has been mailed to the Food Bank.

PARC no longer sends food referrals. We worked with PARC for years with referrals for food from our pantry. New ways to help the hungry are coming about in August – your donations for Operation Attack are greatly appreciated.

We can read in the paper every week about the working poor trying to make ends meet. PARC did call in June about a family like this – not eligible for government aid. We helped with food and Food Lion gift cards for meat, vegetables and fruit.

You will be informed after new changes are made. Thank you for your ongoing support!



At the June 16 stated meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Portsmouth, Virginia, the following actions were taken:

### **Evaluation of Intentional Interim**

**Minister:** PEVA Representatives, Dr. Richard Short and Elder David Collins, COM, were present and evaluated the first six

months of Dr. Oehler's term as our interim minister, based on a question and answer session with the Elders. All the Elders present had an opportunity to ask further questions and make comments, and the assessment proved to be very beneficial.

**Approved** request from the Presbytery Office that the Administrative Professionals use our facility for an event in June 2009 and that we cater one lunch and one dinner for them. Anne Porter will act as liaison to coordinate plans.

**Received Diaconate Report.** Cameron Russell reported that the Fellowship Committee is coordinating dinners in conjunction with the Courtyard Concerts this summer. The church picnic has been set for September 21 at Portsmouth City Park. She also reported that the Deacons had discussed how to more effectively assimilate new members into the life of the church.

**Approved** recommendation from the Christian Education Committee that the church pay the entire tuition for the three young people attending camps this summer. There have been donations designated for camp tuition as well as money in the CE Budget for that purpose. The payment of the entire tuition would apply to this year only

**Received** bid from Turn Key Construction for installing windows in the Pastor's and Secretary's offices - \$6500 each.

Michael Broadhurst also reported that the Choir Rail is now permanently installed as a removable fixture. As part of the installation, trim was installed on the front bottom of the rail.

Paint was repaired in the Choir loft and in the narthex.

**Approved** motion to give John Hackworth latitude to negotiate our copier contract, with costs not to exceed our current costs. John had presented a breakdown of our present

copier usage and the costs for a copier that would be able to do color.

Diane Griffin circulated the May 2008 Treasurer's Report and commented that the deficit has been reduced by about \$2000. Diane also reported that she is still getting information from insurance providers. The Session concurred in continuing to pursue alternative plans.

**Approved** permission for Todd Taylor to secure a supply minister on July 20 if needed.

**Approved** Todd Taylor as our Elder Commissioner to the Presbytery meeting on July 22 at Green Acres and Lane Pittman as his alternate.

The mission projects in Congo include the feeding program for the children, medical ministries, communications, construction projects, and travel both to and from Congo over the next two years. **THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE** contributions made through Presbyterian Women to the Feeding Program itself, or to the Bumbu Church (our sister church) or to the CPK Cyber-Café project.

Anyone who wants to make a personal donation should talk with Alice Butler about doing that. Contributions should be made payable to PEVA and designated for the "International Partnership Committee."

The need is great and any donation will be welcomed and appreciated.

## **SISTER CHURCH/CONGO PARTNERSHIP NEWS**

### **SPECIAL APPEAL**

**We have been advised that a budget shortfall for the International Congo Partnership Committee has created a crisis that threatens missions in Congo** at a time when things there are going well and church-to-church relations are stronger than they have in recent years.

Our Witness Committee will send \$400 to Congo to help with the administrative costs associated with mission projects our sister church is involved with, and the committee also plans to recommend added support at the July Session meeting. We already make contributions to support missions there, but those very missions need additional support right now in order to continue to function.

## **STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE**



While the financial footing of our church has improved, we are not where we need to be at this point in the budget year. Giving still is not as good as it needs to be.

A task force appointed by the Session is reviewing the overall finances of the church has already made some recommendations, and continues to work. Task Force members are Diane Griffin, Anne Porter, John Hackworth, Jim Plaatsman, and Michael Broadhurst. If you have suggestions, please contact one of the Task Force members.

Prayers for the work of the Task Force and for the finances of our church are requested.

[Editor's note: The life of this church depends on prayer, attendance at worship and volunteering to help with church activities.

These all are important; however, church missions and programs take money. Discussion of money might be distasteful, but the reality is that we can't do much without money. It is discussed at every Session meeting, and is always a subject of concern.]

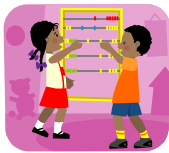


**BIRTHDAYS**

August

- 4 Player Butler
- 7 Makayla Winkler
- 10 Mike Taylor
- 11 Margaret Smith  
Erin McRary
- 12 Nancy Mayo
- 14 Diff Porter III  
Yvonne Goolsby
- 15 Stephin Goolsby
- 16 Jason Turner  
Robby Norfleet
- 19 Grady Fitzwater
- 21 Sylvia Stephenson
- 22 Laura Sammons  
Emily Fay
- 23 Richard H. Griffin
- 26 Warren Driskill
- 27 Elizabeth Fitzwater
- 28 Linda Hackworth  
Helen Mawhinney
- 29 Gwen Brown  
Alice Simpson
- 30 Cathran Harrell

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL**



Again this year our VBS was a joint effort, working well with the good folks of ST. John's Episcopal Church. It was a real success. About ten kids from our church attended.

CLARA SPANOS wants to say, “THANK YOU” from the bottom of her heart to Diana Taylor, Christie Wilson, Peggy Norfleet, Rose Council, Elizabeth Fitzwater, Penny Brangan, Mallory James and Trudy Webb for their work, time, and help with VBS. A special thanks goes to Gwen Brown who made the best cookies. All of these ladies cooked and served food, worked and led the groups of children with all of their activities. It was a wonderful experience that could not have happened without the help of all those good people who gave their time and love. We are truly blessed to have such great people serve the Lord.



September

- 2 Cameron Russell
- 8 Sonia Powell
- 10 Lillian Covert  
Collin Taylor
- 13 Dan Aston
- 15 Rudy Simpson