

THE FIRST PRES

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October 2008

From the Preacher's Desk

Dear Friends,

What a joy it was to return to my study this morning after a vacation week in the Great Smokey Mountains of North Carolina. Jaynelle and I had a wonderful time at Montreat enjoying the beauty of the mountains as we sat in rockers on the front porch of our cabin listening to the mountain creek sing to the glory of God as it rushed toward the ocean thousands of miles away. Our vacation gave Jaynelle's back a chance to rest. We are grateful for everyone's prayers and concerns. I am happy to report that her back and leg pain seems healed and she is again getting on our treadmill.

As I said, it is a joy for me to be back in my study to prepare for worship especially as we begin to move through October and our Stewardship season. The Session has set aside Sunday, October 26th as Consecration Sunday. Elder Diane Griffin, Chair person of Stewardship for the Session is busy working on our plans which include a meal together following the service. Please watch the church bulletin for more details.

As I reflect on the meaning of our Christian Stewardship, I am reminded of Paul's words to those new Christians at the First Presbyterian Church in Philippi. Paul wrote: "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your request known to God." In this time of great economic chaos, there is a great deal of anxiety about the future. It seems to me, that this is a time in which more than ever, we need to make strong prayers to God for wisdom, courage and faith.

The important phrase which Paul uses is one we all need to remember "...with thanksgiving make your request known to God." We need to take time during this Stewardship season to remember all the ways God has blessed us along our life's journey. As you begin to think and pray about your pledge of time, talents and treasures for the coming year, take time to give thanks; and then "with joy and gratitude", offer your best to God and the work of God's Kingdom through this community of the Body of Christ.

Peace,
George

Church Picnic

Our annual picnic took place at City Park in Portsmouth on Sunday, September 21. It was a great success, thanks to the work of **Cameron Russell** and her committee. Delicious food, lots of laughter and great fellowship, and beautiful weather all combined for a wonderful afternoon.

Our church does fellowship quite well and having fun just naturally seems to flow anytime we get together. If you missed it this year, please come next time.

Church Family News



Welcome to our family new member **Claudia Laughlin**.

Claudia comes to us by profession of faith, and we are happy to have her among us. Her address is 501 Westmoreland Avenue, Portsmouth 23707; her home phone number is 398-0699.

It is with regret that we note that **Theresa Askew** has transferred her membership from our congregation. Theresa has moved her church membership to Aldersgate United Methodist.



Our Sympathies and Condolences go to the families of:

Fred Culpepper - Fred was a loyal member with a simple faith. His friendliness and humility were well-known to all, and we will miss him.

Evalyn Rule - Evalyn was a woman of noted intelligence and wit, whose faith and

leadership skills were well-known among those who knew her.

Rusty Riley, loving and loved brother of Mike Taylor and son of Minnie Riley. His extensive family and friends in our church are saddened to learn of his untimely death.

William Moore - William served our church as custodian. He quickly won many friends among the congregation here and we mourn his sudden passing.



First Presbyterian Church Cookbook

Orders for the cookbook are being taken. The total cost of each book will be \$12.00. Please indicate how many books you want and put the correct amount in the offering plate on Sundays or mail to the church office. Checks should be made out to the church and marked for "Cookbook Purchase." The Cookbooks will be available before Christmas for gift-giving and holiday cooking or for keepsakes.

Thanks to those who contributed recipes. The Cookbook is a success because of all of you.

Thanks also to **Cameron Russell** for coordinating the project. Cameron may be contacted at 638-1075 if you have questions.

How Well Do You Like Good Singing?

- Submitted by Agnes McFadden

- Edited by Lane Pittman

Most of us like to sing, but how many of us really take note of the words of the hymns we sing in church on Sunday?

The story is told of a minister who stood up in the pulpit one Sunday and exclaimed to the stunned congregation that he would like to do away with hymn-singing in church. He said that the words of the hymns made liars out of all of them. The words spoke of hard work and sacrifice for the church in the Lord's name, but volunteers for projects around the church were hard if not impossible to find. The words of hymns spoke of helping others in need, yet nobody visited or comforted the sick and troubled without having to. Surrendering all to Christ was often the theme of hymns but when it came time to surrender, people held back more than they gave. The stubbornness and inactivity of the congregation gave the lie to the words of the very hymns they sang.

While we may not go so far as to stop singing hymns altogether, this minister has a good point. Next time you sing a hymn in church, take time to actually read the words. It would do all of us good to remember the words and try to live up to them.

Hurricane Relief



Hurricane Ike and other storms have brought destruction to communities in many presbyteries of the PCUSA. Presbyterian

Disaster Assistance (PDA) is coordinating different efforts to help the victims. Help is urgently needed. Join Presbyterians from all over the country in repairing property and resting lives. You can help in one or more of the following ways:

GIVING – donations will be used to provide an ongoing fund for the needs of victims:

Online at www.pcusa.org/pda

Phone at 1-800-872-3283

Mail Presbyterian Church (USA)
Individual Remittance Processing
P.O. Box 643700
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3578

Or through the local church office.

Checks should be made out to the PCUSA and marked for “2008 Hurricanes”

STAYING INFORMED by visiting the PDA website given above or by calling 1-800-872-3283.

PRAYING often for the safety, peace, and well-being of everyone impacted. Even when we can't help in other ways **prayer is always appropriate.**

Makemie Woods

Harold McKeithen, Chairman of the task force that oversees the Makemie Woods “Roots and Wings” capital funds campaign reports that “a little less than \$1.2 million” has been raised toward a \$6.3 million goal. Other factors, such as disaster relief and local church capital campaigns during the same time frame negatively impacted the Makemie Woods campaign. Constantly increasing construction costs also contributed to the difficulty.

In spite of these circumstances, a new maintenance building was constructed at Makemie Woods and the commitment to Stone House Presbyterian Church – which was included in the campaign – was fulfilled, and all costs for architectural and engineering plans and marketing materials. Mission priorities of local churches will be taken into account during planning and presentation of recommendations for Makemie Woods Camp and Conference Center.

Meals on Wheels



Volunteers are always needed and welcome for this important ministry. This requires spending a few hours with us on the third

Thursday morning of each month.

If you can volunteer, please contact the church office to offer your services. May God continue to bless all the folks who volunteer.

Musing: Christianity and Politics

Should Christians get involved in politics? Isn't politics dishonest and "dirty"? What is the appropriate connection between religion and government? IS there an appropriate connection? Isn't there a "wall of separation" between church and state? Does it really matter what religious beliefs are expressed by someone running for political office?

Politics isn't inherently dishonest or dirty.

Politics is only dirty when those who are involved in it choose to conduct it that way. Honesty and ethical conduct seldom lead to power, influence and success in politics, and therefore those traits don't seem to thrive in a political environment. Those who seek power and influence through politics often feel compelled to sacrifice truth and ethics to their ambitions. If a Christian wants to get involved in politics, there's no reason not to do so, but the believer must remain true to the teachings of Christ and continually refer to scripture as a guide.

The "wall of separation" between church and state – seeking to preclude any influence by either upon the other – is a myth.

The U. S. Constitution prohibits "the state" – that is, any level of government – from establishing an official "state church" and precludes the state from banning or prohibiting worship at certain churches or stopping its citizens from publicly declaring certain beliefs. This separation was never intended to preclude the citizen from freely practicing any religion or from making political decisions or choosing members of government consistent with that citizen's faith and beliefs.

Religious faith – especially for Christians – should enter into every aspect of life,

including politics – every decision made, every position taken. Christian values come from reading and studying the Scriptures and applying those teachings to our daily lives. Those values inevitably define us. They determine our attitudes, and our attitudes determine our actions and our choices. Using Scripture as a guide and background, Christians discern the moral and ethical merits of the words and actions of public figures such as politicians.

It is unrealistic to expect that citizens should decide what candidates or what ideas they will support without considering their religious

beliefs. If religious beliefs have any meaning at all, inevitably those beliefs should influence how we vote. The individual Christian must determine whether the words and actions of a politician are consistent with Christian faith. Such things as speeches, political party platforms, and the votes and positions of a particular candidate should be weighed in that light. It doesn't mean much for politicians to publicly declare themselves to be adherents of a particular church or religious faith unless their lives and priorities – the positions they take and the laws they advocate – reflect their declared beliefs.

However, no church, no preacher in a pulpit, should tell you what political party to belong to or which candidate to vote for in an election. Their responsibility in these matters is to tell you what Scripture says and to interpret it as needed. Likewise, neither these entities or any organization claiming church connections or other earthly authority should tell you that you should support or oppose any particular political or social cause or campaign. Every individual Christian must decide whether to become involved in such causes and the manner of that involvement.

Of course, we're all involved in politics at least to the extent that our lives are impacted by the laws and policies that are written and passed by our elected representatives. If we do nothing about laws and policies that are inconsistent with Christian teachings, we may have to live under them. It is up to us. God doesn't vote; we do. The least we can do is to vote consistently with our Christian beliefs.



Lane Pittman

Deadline for Submitting Newsletter Articles

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

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Everyone's cooperation on this will be greatly appreciated.

Service at Oasis

Groups from our church serve breakfast at Oasis on the third Monday of every month throughout the year. **Karen Diggs** coordinates the scheduling. A good, nutritious breakfast is served to the homeless and others in need.

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. Those who can help should contact Karen through the church office.

Octoberblest Bazaar

This year's bazaar has been expanded to take place on Friday, October 17th and Saturday, October 18th. 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.

Donors are asked to please bring bazaar items to the church, in boxes if possible, and to please place items in the room with the handicap bathroom (the last room on the left past the water fountain). We are running short on storage space, so please place items on the floor in that room. Please **DO NOT BRING CLOTHING** items for the bazaar.

There is no space at the church for long-term storage of furniture and other bulky items. Bulky items such as furniture will be picked up on one day the week of 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. Please advise Clara of these arrangements. Thanks to Laura McCrary, Linda Hackworth, and Diana Taylor, and to members of our Youth group for their help in unpacking and packing the rooms where bazaar items are stored.

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.

Our Courtyard Gets A Boost



Thanks to a recommendation by **Earl and Diane Griffin**, the Portsmouth Community Foundation has made a grant of \$5000 to our church designated for the Courtyard Fund. The

Clerk of Session has written letters of thanks to the Griffins and to the Portsmouth Community Foundation.

Prayer List



If you have submitted names for the Prayer List that's printed in the bulletin every Sunday, please check your submissions for accuracy and timeliness. If prayer requests need to be corrected, updated, or deleted for any reason, please make those changes with the church secretary, Mary Myers.

Beginning next month, the Prayer List and changes will also be published in this newsletter to inform those who do not get a copy of the bulletin.

Stamps for Mission



Peggy Reinhold reports that since January 2008 the project has received \$3986.72 from the sale of stamps. This money has been used so far this year to finish paying for the small printing press, pay for the printing of books needed by pastors, Presbyterian Women, and evangelists, and to help the seminary at Ndesha (Univ. of Shepherds and Lapsley) train pastors and leaders. The seminary there is having financial difficulties and may have to close its doors without help.

Ms. Reinhold also says that the Democratic Republic of Congo continues to be a poverty-stricken humanitarian disaster, despite its many natural resources. This is because of the instability brought about by constant war and disease. Those who are getting rich from

these conditions in that country are doing what they can to continue them.

In spite of all that is stacked against the folks in the Congo, the churches are overflowing with Congolese people singing praise to God and praying for their church and country. It seems that evidence of evil is abundant; we need to reflect on this situation and thank God for His protection and blessings.

Pray fervently for the people in the Congo and everywhere.

Walk for Hope



This event raises money to help alleviate hunger in Portsmouth. Members of our Youth group will be walking and are taking pledges to sponsor them in the walk. Please sponsor our young folks in this worthy effort.

Wedding in Our Church

The Session has approved a request from Ms. Linda Cain for the use of our church for her daughter's wedding on November 29, 2008. There is an established fee structure for such use, and the fee schedule has been sent to Ms. Cain. Dr. Oehler will be the contact person for this event.

Worship with Trinity

First Presbyterian will host our brothers and sisters from Trinity Episcopal for worship on

Sunday, November 16th at 11:00 am. Members of their choir will join ours and there will be a Hospitality Hour after worship that day. We hope to make worship together an annual event again. Please mark your calendars and make plans to attend.



Birthdays

October

3	Michele Graupmann Barbara Bond
4	Sharon Bailey
11	Robby Pond
21	Todd Taylor Gail Pittman
23	Paula Fuss Charles Hudgins
24	John Fay
25	Frances Hasty
30	Frank Jennings Tom Goolsby
31	Sue Clark

November

9	Graham Fitzwater
10	Frank James
12	John Hackworth
13	Tammy Taylor
15	Tanner Furman