

THE FIRST PRES

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November 2008

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It is hard to believe that my year with you has drawn to a close. I have been blessed and renewed by our time together. You have been a warm and welcoming congregation as we journeyed together in discerning God's call to Portsmouth First Presbyterian for the future. It was a joy for me to hear your stories as we celebrated Heritage Sunday and as we met in homes to answer the questions about where the church is now, how things can be done better, what challenges face the church in the future, and what are the characteristics and qualities that you desire in a new pastor. One person said that they wanted a financially independent pastor so the church wouldn't have to pay any salary.

The Aloha Mission Study Team is working to complete their Mission and Vision Statement to bring to the Session and then to presbytery before 2008 ends. They have spent many evenings discussing gathering and creating a final report to the Session. Some of the information they have gathered will be of help to the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) after it is elected. Please keep these folks in your prayers as they work together for the future of the church.

The Committee on Ministry of the presbytery has approved my remaining for six months as the Session requests. Hopefully by that time, the PNC will have completed with the Session, the Congregation Information Form (CIF) and be at work searching for a Called Pastor. As you may remember, the Book of Order limits an Intentional Interims Ministry to no more than two years. At the end of the next six months, the Session may extend my time with you to six months, but that is all. With God's blessing, hard work, faith and prayer, I trust at the end of 2009, you will be well on your way with the Holy Spirit's leading into a new relationship with a new Pastor.

Finally, let me encourage (yes, even urge) that you make a special effort to worship regularly during November, Advent and the Christmas season. These are special times in the life of the church and your presence will uplift spirits and encourage everyone toward the new year and the new ministry God has for this people of faith.

Peace,
George

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



TARA TAYLOR is experiencing health issues that may interfere with her rowing at the University of Tennessee. Please keep her in your prayers.

MALLORY JAMES has proved her value to the Volleyball Team at Randolph-Macon. The team is dominant with Mallory right in the thick of the action, as usual. We wish Mallory good luck and continued success.

PRAYER LIST: this month, the prayer list will be the same as in the bulletin. In future months, however, we will list here only the names that have been added, those for whom a situation is ongoing, or other news and notes as appropriate. We will list only the names and nothing about the reason for a name being on the list. If you have put someone on the prayer list, please keep the list current by making changes (new information, deletions from the list, etc.) as they occur.

Cathran Harrell, Mike and Dale Pendergraft, Pauline Council, Trey Rhodes (in Iraq), Elizabeth and Sylvia Stephenson, Dot Wyman, Mary Rice, Leon and Burma Smith, Ann Hagerty, Minnie Doleman, Rick Falls (friend of Duff Porter), Mildred Humphrey (Lane Pittman's mother), William Norton (friend of the Haltermans), Karen Elam & Terry Baker (sisters of Norma Halterman), Debbie Laughlin, Ned Lantz (Cameron Russell's uncle), Alice Davenport (Don Taylor's friend), Vernon Wright (Ann Hagerty's son), Ashley Outland (Rose Council's niece), Richard Kerr (Kelly's father), Phil Winkler (son-in-law of Bob and Judy Powell), Nancy Ruben (Jennifer Patgorski's friend), Karen Wood (Lane Pittman's niece), Sherwood Kressley, Christian Schmidt, 19 year old young man has cancer (Susan Fay's family member).

ENDOWMENT GIFTS

As the Advent and Christmas seasons approach, members are reminded that gifts can be given to the church endowment fund in honor or in memory of someone. For specific information on how to go about making such gifts to the Endowment, see Nan Jennings or Mike Broadhurst.

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.

GIFTS FROM THE BUMBU CHURCH



Some time ago, we sent a monetary gift to our sister church to help them buy musical instruments to accompany their singing and embellish their worship. The Bumbu church has now sent us two colorful paintings done in the style of local art. These paintings were

delivered to us by Etienne Bote-Tshiek, whom they call their “Living Letter” (Amen to that!) and will be temporarily displayed before going to their permanent home in our Choir Room. There will be museum-style plaques interpreting the paintings, provided by the folks in Bumbu. One shows a figure playing a horn (or cornet) “to announce the Good News and Justice of the Kingdom.” The other depicts “the instruments of music used to glorify the Lord in his churches” and in their joyous fellowship together.

Thanks to our friends in the Bumbu church and to God for their constant example of celebration in the face of hardship.

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: GOD LOVES THE WORLD

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. [New International Version]

The words of John 3:16 are well-known, and are as familiar to us Christians as any other verse in Scripture. We rely on the promise they contain, that whoever believes in God’s Son will live forever. We also need to

remember that these are not the words of John, but of Jesus himself spoken to Nicodemus. When we stop and think about that, these words have even more meaning.

However, do we stop to consider the implications of that opening phrase?

What does it mean that God loved the world? Does our interpretation of the verse change when we see the entire verse in light of that love? What about our love for the world? If God loved the world, shouldn’t we? This month, we shall contemplate these questions together.

God loves the world because God is love.

Although we have known the phrase “God is love” since we were children, it is not just a platitude. That wording appears in John’s first letter to the gentile churches [I John 4:16] and is based on all of scripture. It means that as God is eternal, so love is eternal. God created the world and everything in it out of love; the world didn’t do anything to deserve God’s love. In fact, God loved the world before it even existed. Think about that!

God’s love is the love of a Father who is perfect. Not perfect by earth’s standards – even the best human father is deeply, even fatally, flawed – but a heavenly Father who is actually and completely without flaw! When an earthly father disciplines his child, even though that father loves his child with all his heart, the discipline and the love are inevitably tempered by the father’s own flaws. Since God is love, and God is perfect – then his love is perfect, and when God disciplines us, his children, that discipline inevitably reflects God’s perfection.

How does God discipline us? Mainly through scripture, where he gives us instruction about how we are to act, speak, think, and live. We are to read and contemplate those instructions and apply them. He also disciplines us by giving us lessons through daily experiences and trials.

Troubles we encounter should not be looked at as punishment, but as discipline and lessons and tests given to us by God because he loves us. How we treat others when we are exposed to them out in the world is a test that shows how well we have learned and apply those instructions and lessons.

If God loves the world, then who are we to do differently? We are God's representatives to the world. Like it or not, we are the very face of God for some in the world. If we treat the world with hatred or disdain – with anything other than love – we are misrepresenting God. Remember that God loves us even though we don't deserve it. That and the humility that comes with it should determine how we treat the world.

In this time of giving thanks, let us thank God not only for his providence but also that he loves the world of which we are a part, and let us show our appreciation by showing God's love to the world.



Lane Pittman

NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS



In a duly-called Congregational Meeting on Sunday, September 14, 2008, the following officers were elected:

- Deacon, Class of 2011 – Beverley Byrd, Susan Fay, Charles Hudgins, Duff Porter, III.
- Deacon, Class of 2010 (2-year term) – Sue Parker will be unable to serve so

we will be electing another Deacon in the coming months.

- Elder, Class of 2011 – Karen Diggs, John Hackworth, Kay Kidd, Kendall Rhodes.
- Trustee, Class of 2011 – Earl Griffin.

Thanks to the Church Officer Nominating Committee, chaired by Mike Broadhurst, for their hard and faithful work.

NEWS FROM OUR SISTER CHURCH

The Cyber Café project continues to develop toward the benefit of the whole Kinshasa-Bumbu community. They will keep us posted through communication with Bote-Tshiek.

They have received our gifts of photos, letters, and bracelets made by our youth carried to them by our brother Tshiek, and they thank us for them.

They report that the socio-political situation remains unstable. War, poor harvests, poverty, and lack of security are breaking their hearts daily, and they seek our prayers, as much as they need moral and material assistance. Amid all our blessings, we need to remember these folks in our daily prayers

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.

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.

Preliminary estimates are that nearly \$6000 was raised. Once all expenses have been paid and final numbers tallied, an official total will be reported.

CHANGES TO PRAYER LIST

If you have submitted names for the Prayer List that's printed in the bulletin every Sunday, please help keep the list current by checking your submissions for accuracy and timeliness. If your items on the prayer request list need to be corrected, updated, or deleted for any reason, please make those changes with the church secretary, Mary Myers.

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



Many Thanks to CLARA SPANOS for chairing the event again this year. Thanks also to the many folks in our church family who helped Clara make the bazaar such a success.

SESSION ACTIONS

On Monday, October 20, 2008, the Session of FPC held a regular stated meeting with Interim Minister Dr. George Oehler as moderator and Deacon Penny Brangan representing the Diaconate. The meeting began with a Presbytery Steering Committee Listening Session. PEVA representatives led the elders in an exercise aimed at identifying specific things the Presbytery can do for churches. PEVA is conducting these Listening Sessions at each church. Following this exercise the elders continued with the Session meeting where the following actions were taken:

Referred several letters and other communications to committees for action/recommendation.

Approved a request from Karen Diggs for use of the church (sanctuary, social hall, and a classroom) on Saturday, July 18, 2009, for a gathering by the Emmaus Community group.

Approved the Minutes of the congregational meeting of September 14 and the stated Session meeting of September 15.

Approved recommendation from the Personnel Committee to hire Alvin Flynn as Custodian.

NEW CUSTODIAN

Alvin Flynn is our new custodian. If you haven't met Alvin yet, be sure to introduce yourself. He is a very friendly guy, and we are happy to welcome him to our church family.

Alvin's weekly hours will be:

Sunday 8:00 am - 1:00 pm

Tuesday thru Friday - 8:00 am - 12:00 pm
(On Wednesdays when we have a dinner he will work from 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm in lieu of 8:00 am – 12:00 pm).

Beyond that, he can work special functions (weddings, meetings, etc.) where his presence is required. For special functions an additional fee will be charged. These fees should be paid directly to Alvin by the one in charge of the function.

LETTER FOR TAX CREDIT

Have you ever paid "out of your own pocket" for something needed by a church committee or other church-sponsored entity? If so, your generosity is appreciated. Your contribution is valued. But, you might not realize that you can get a letter documenting the monetary value of your contribution for tax purposes. If you want to have such a letter, please contact the church Treasurer or the Stewardship and Finance Committee for the details.

WORSHIP WITH TRINITY

First Presbyterian will host our brothers and sisters from Trinity Episcopal for worship on Sunday, November 16, at 1100 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

November 19 – 28

- 19 Susan Fay
Bob Westbrook
Corbin Taylor
Jaynelle Oehler
- 20 Paul Butler
- 22 Dot Wyman
- 23 Diane Turner
Annabelle Hice
- 28 Hunter Webb, Jr.

December 2 – 12

- 2 Kathy Goolsby
Kaitlin Hackworth
- 3 Frances Spiers
- 6 Rose Council
- 9 Rebecca Porter
- 12 Margaret Glynn
Jay James
Viki Goolsby