

THE FIRST PRES

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January/February 2009

Dear Friends,

I would like to begin with a word of thanks to the **Aloha Mission Study Team** (Sue Fay, Paul Butler, Pat Sparks, Dan Swanson, Laura McRary, Hunter Webb, Debbie Hice, and Todd Taylor) for their hard work and patience during the past months as they brought us together to celebrate the past, consider the present and dream about the future of First Presbyterian Church. They presented to the Session a Vision Statement: **We see ourselves as the embracing arms of Jesus Christ, for each other, for the community, and for the world** and a Mission Statement: **To share the amazing love of God, to reflect the light of Jesus Christ, and to live and serve joyfully in the Spirit's power.** These were approved by the Session and forwarded to the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia Committee on Ministry.

The Committee on Ministry (COM) considered these statements and the booklet from the Aloha Mission Study Team and approved them. The Committee then gave their approval of the statements and approved the process for First Presbyterian to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee.

The Session elected the Officers nominating Committee for 2008 to be the Committee that would bring a slate of members for the Pastoral Nominating Committee to the February 1 Called Congregational Meeting for the Congregation to elect. The Officers nominating Committee has asked in worship and in a letter for your nominations for the Pastor Nominating Committee. I pray that you have submitted your nominees to a member of the Congregational Nominating Committee. This Sunday (January 25) the slate will be read. Then on Sunday, February 1, the Session has called a Congregational Meeting for the purpose of electing a Pastor Nominating Committee. They will present the slate of names to the congregation for your vote.

Once the Pastor Nominating Committee is in place, they will prepare a Church Information Form which the Session and Presbytery Committee on Ministry will approve; then comes the exciting part to begin the search for a new Called Pastor. The Search process will take some time; so may I ask you to be in **regular prayer** for the members of the Pastor nominating Committee as they go about their work. They will need your **strong prayers, your patience and your continuing financial support** as they seek to discover the person God has prepared to be the Pastor for this congregation.

I would like to thank everyone who has participated in this process with such commitment and enthusiasm. Now we await God's guiding love and light for the future of First Presbyterian Church.

Peace,
George

P.S. Also, I am deeply grateful for your generous financial support at the end of 2008. You have made me proud to be your Intentional Interim as you not only met your budget commitments but were able to pay **\$2,600.00** toward lyour debts incurred during the past chaos in the church. And, I would like to say, as did the Aloha Mission Study Team; **To God Be the Glory!**

ALOHA MISSION STUDY TEAM REPORT

At the joint meeting of the FPC Session and Diaconate on December 15th, a presentation from the Aloha Mission Study Team, including the team's written report and a slide show, was given by Susan Fay on behalf of the team. Aloha Mission Study Team members Paul Butler, Susan Fay, Debby Hice, Laura McCrary, Pat Sparks, Dan Swanson, Todd Taylor, and Hunter Webb, Jr., as well as Dr. George Oehler, Intentional Interim, as the Team leader. Also present was Elder David Collins representing the Presbytery Committee on the Ministry.

The Team had spent several months reviewing the history of our church and its place in the community. Town-hall style meetings and "living room listening events" were held to gather input from the congregation for historical focus as well as our mission and our vision. It is important for everyone to keep in mind that the report of the Aloha Team is not a conclusion but rather a beginning, as our church sets out on its journey in the next few months to several years to not only search for and choose a new permanent pastor but also to do our Lord's work.

Adopted by the Session are the following Vision and Mission Statements, as well as Goals for our church.

VISION – We see ourselves as the embracing arms of Jesus Christ, for each other, for the community, and for the world.

MISSION – To share the amazing love of God, to reflect the light of Jesus Christ, and to live and serve joyfully in the Spirit's power.

GOALS –

- Christian formation. To build up the body of Christ in our church, from our infants to our most senior members, through Biblically-focused programs and

services that will help us to mature spiritually and prepare us for service in our community and around the world.

- Community Outreach. To proclaim the Word of God to those who live in our city and to speak in a way that is discernable to the poor and disenfranchised around us as well as to those persons who are coming to a new, renovated downtown area to live and work.
- Witness To The World. To live as believers in the world and follow the urgings of the Spirit to bear witness "to the ends of the earth" through mission work and support.

Thanks to the Aloha Mission Study Team for their work. Those who wish to read the entire report may do so through the church office.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Once again, **Edna Broadhurst**, along with our wonderful choir, talented guest musicians and the children provided a beautiful musical setting for the Advent and Christmas season. Thanks to all who participated or who helped out in many ways. We were blessed by their contributions and the God-given gifts they shared with us.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

We hold in loving memory **Margaret Westbrook**. Margaret was a lovely and dignified lady who graced us with her presence over many years, and we will miss her kindness and quiet strength. Our sympathies go to Bill and the rest of her family.

Congratulations...

To **Ken and Paula (Council) Fuss** on the birth of Audrey Regan Fuss, born on December 5th.

To **Robby and Katie Pond**, and to proud grandmother Pat Sparks, on the birth of Brenna Elizabeth Pond, who was born December 28th.

To **Scott and Diana Taylor** on the birth of Ian Forbes Taylor, born December 30th;

PRAYER LIST

Please add to your daily prayers or continue to pray for the folks named below:

Cathran Harrell, Mike and Dale Pendergraft, Pauline Council, Elizabeth and Sylvia Stephenson, Dot Wyman, Mary Rice, Leon Smith, Ann Hagerty, Rick Falls, William Newton, Karen Elam, Jay Rogers, Terry Baker, Debbie Laughlin, Ned Lantz, Alice Davenport, Vernon Wright, Ashley Outland, Richard Kerr, Phil Winkler, Nancy Ruben, Sherwood Kressley, Christian Schmidt, Helen Dellinger, and Frank and Liz James.

Only names will be listed here, trusting that God knows the person's particular needs.

CHANGED DATES FOR HOMELESS SHELTER

Our dates for sheltering the homeless have changed! We will host the shelter from May 3-10. Please volunteer to help out as you are able. This service normally involves sleeping at our church over one night with the homeless folks.

Food will be provided and prepared by volunteers from Green Acres Presbyterian and then served in our social hall.

Saint Paul's Catholic will partner with us to provide a separate secure sleeping space for the homeless women after they have eaten.

If you can volunteer, please contact the Service Committee through the church office. Thanks!

JOINT MEETING OF SESSION AND DIACONATE

The annual joint meeting of the Diaconate and the Session of FPC was held in the Fellowship Hall on Monday, December 15th, 2008, with Interim Minister Dr. George Oehler as moderator of the Session..

Those elected to office in the church were examined. Dr. Oehler reported that he had conducted several officer training sessions, covering the Book of Confessions and the Book of Order, and that each newly-elected officer had been given a copy of each of those books.

As part of their examination, each officer-select was asked to share what had led him/her to become a Christian and why he/she was willing to accept office in the church at this time.

After each had responded to these questions, their examination was sustained and the newly-elected officers were approved by the Session for ordination/installation. By common consent, ordination/installation was scheduled for January 11, 2009, at the 1100 Worship Service.

Elders-elect are Karen Diggs, John Hackworth, Kay Kidd, and Kendall Rhodes.

Deacons-elect are Beverly Byrd, Susan Fay, Charles Hudgins, and Duff Porter.

The Joint Meeting was adjourned and closed with a prayer by Dr. Oehler.

MEALS ON WHEELS

If you can volunteer, please contact the church office to offer your services. Help is always welcome for this important ministry of our church. It involves a few hours on the third Thursday morning of each month.

May God continue to bless all the volunteers.

MUSING: THEY'LL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS BY OUR...

Probably All of Us Know the Song

suggested by this title, but what **are** we known for? Some possibilities are offered here, and while they aren't pleasant to think about, they depict a harsh reality for us and for the church these days. Christians are known today by our:

Self-Righteousness, Arrogance, Pride, – God, in his mercy, and through the sacrifice of the Son, has redeemed us from the punishment we deserve. We have nothing to brag about: salvation, forgiveness of our sins, success in life – even our faith and life itself – all come as gifts from God. Our self-righteousness, arrogance and pride are misplaced and are not becoming to us as Christians.

Hatred and Prejudice– As with arrogance and pride in our salvation, we have no cause for thinking ourselves better than anyone else. We are all made in God's image. Hatred or prejudice toward others – whether an individual or a group – is never justified, and is inconsistent with the teachings of Christ. We must avoid even thoughts of this nature.

Lack of Mercy, Indifference to Suffering,– As God has shown mercy and forgiveness to us, so we are to show mercy and forgiveness to other human beings. Christ by his teachings as well as by his example, teaches us

that we are to care for those we come upon who are suffering, whether from physical or emotional pain.

Friends, Political Affiliations

(Party/Issue/Candidate) Do our associations bring praise to Christ and the Christian faith? Both the friends we keep and the causes we support reflect our thoughts and our attitudes. For good or for ill, if we are also known as Christians, these things might also be seen as reflecting what the church teaches.

Values – Like friends and causes, the values we exhibit – for good or bad – define us and tell others who we are as people. In the eyes of the world, our values are seen as reflecting upon and defining the church, as well. Are selfishness and greed the values we would have define us or the church?

What Are Christian Values? For a good start on answering this, we can read Micah 6:8 and Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 5: verses 7, 9, 13-16, 43-48, Chapter 6: verses 3-4, 19-21, 31-34, and Chapter 7: verses 1-5.

While Ambition isn't Bad In Itself, success achieved at the expense of or without caring for others, is bad. Looking out for ourselves isn't wrong; however, when we put ourselves before our fellow strugglers in this world, it becomes wrong. Acquiring wealth or possessions isn't a sin; but if we focus on the amount we have or the power it gives us and not on doing good with our wealth, that makes it sinful. Likewise, if we worry excessively about NOT HAVING things, that worry takes the place of God in our lives and can become a sin.

Wanting Success and Better Financial Health for our Local Church

our denomination, or our faith isn't wrong either. However, we must be careful to ensure that this goal doesn't come at the expense of fellowship and cooperation with other congregations or reaching people outside the

Christian faith. We must remember that all Christian churches are part of Christ's body, and that God sent his Son into the world because he loves the world.

According to Christian Teaching, we must always care for the welfare of others, even the ones we don't like or don't even know. That is our purpose and our calling; it is our obligation. It's what sets us apart from other religions.

Jesus Says This is Love, the thing for which his followers are to be known. Everything we do as Christians must be done with that in mind.

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.

OASIS BREAKFAST SCHEDULE FOR 2009

January 19	Mary Rice Class
February 16	Youth Group
March 16	Diaconate
April 20	Session
May 18	Open Ends Class
June 15	Mary Rice Class
July 20	Youth Group
August 17	Karen Diggs et al.
September 21	Choir
October 19	Open Ends Class
November 16	Diaconate
December 21	Service Committee

OASIS MINISTRY-A NOTE FROM KAREN DIGGS

Serving breakfast at Oasis has been an important and successful ministry of First Church for many years. The need continues, and the opportunity for service is ever before us. We hope that all of the groups who so willingly helped in 2008 will be able to continue this ministry in 2009. The proposed schedule is attached, along with the guidelines. If there are any questions or problems, please feel free to contact me, (H) 839-8077 or (W) 393-8661. I am always willing to help where I am needed. Thank you all for your faithful service during 2008 in preparing and serving breakfast to the needy and hungry people of Portsmouth. Your willingness to help has made the job easier for me this past year, as well as, Pat for all the years she served as coordinator. Thank you so very much for your continuous support!

In Christian Love,
Karen Diggs

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink....I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

Matthew 25: 35,40

SESSION ACTIONS

On Monday, December 15, following the joint meeting with the Diaconate, the Session of FPC met with Dr. George Oehler present as moderator. At this meeting the Session took the following actions:

- Received as information an announcement from the Board of Trustees at Massanetta Springs, Inc., that the Trustees had decided to suspend programs at Massanetta Springs. This includes removal of camp staffing from the 2009 budget. The summer camp facilities will be reoriented to newly defined uses.
- Received as information a letter from Robert Norfleet stating that he had completed an audit of the FPC financial records for 2007 and found the financial activities for that year consistent with those of prior years.
- Approved the request of Margaret Belanus for transfer of her membership from FPC to The Consistory Christian Reformed Church in Washington, D.C., pending receipt of a request from The Consistory.
- Approved the request of Point Harbor Community Church in Chesapeake for transfer of membership of Robin Sherrill from FPC to Point Harbor.
- Approved a recommendation that First Fellowship be suspended for Sunday, December 28, 2008.
- Approved election of Alice Butler as Commissioner from FPC to the meeting of the Presbytery on January 24th.
- Approved the FPC budget for 2009.
- Approved a motion for the Financial Task Force to circulate to the various Sunday School classes a survey [conducted and prepared by the Building Committee] of

building repair needs to see whether Sunday School classes might be willing to help with the costs of those repairs.

- Approved a recommendation from the Financial Task Force that church members be enabled to make financial contributions to FPC on the internet via PayPal.
- Approved a motion that the existing Church Officer Nominating Committee (Michael Broadhurst, Karen Diggs, Diane Griffin, Gail Pittman, Pat Sparks, and Don Taylor) continue to serve at this time to nominate someone to serve a two-year term as Deacon, and to present a slate of nominees for the Pastor Nominating Committee.

Happy Birthday

January

25	Matthew Joyner
27	Kay Kidd
30	Alec Hackworth
31	Bobby Powell Abbey Taylor

February

1	Minnie Doleman
2	Charles Bond
3	Lauren Graupmann
6	Beverly Bain
7	Hank Goolsby
8	Donna Clark Brown
11	Dr. Oehler
15	Debbie Hice
16	Laura McRary Barbara Strickland
20	Suzanne Webb Diane P. Griffin
24	Judy Powell
27	Betty Bartlett Dotty Dray