

THE FIRST PRES

First Presbyterian Church
515 Court Street
Portsmouth, VA 23704-3605
Info@FPCPorts.org



Lane Pittman, Editor
Email:Editor@FPCPorts.org
Phone:(757)397-3622
Fax (757)393-6610

April 2009

Dear Friends,

This Sunday we will celebrate Jesus' exciting entry into the capital city of Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday when crowds rejoiced in his arrival. Then on Thursday evening, we will eat together and observe Jesus' last meal with his disciples. The Thursday service will include Tenebrae, which is a service symbolizing the disciple's abandonment, Jesus suffering, but also that Jesus the Christ is the light of the world.

I am spending today attempting to get a permit from the city of Portsmouth. I forgot that we needed a permit for a parade. If the permit is obtained, we will be led on Sunday to the community Ecumenical Service in the Old Court Courtyard by Beatrice (a donkey friend of Russell Hackworth).

Why a donkey? As I have been preparing for Palm Sunday and studying the scripture text, I have been struck again by the many symbolic actions of Jesus to express the truth that in him we see revealed the love of God for all people. In Jesus' day, if a powerful foreign ruler entered a capital city, that ruler rode on a powerful stallion to show he was coming in power to destroy or take over the city. However, if a powerful foreign ruler rode in on a donkey that was a public sign that he came in humility and peace to visit the city. Jesus rode into the capital city on a donkey, as the Prince of Peace, to offer salvation not only to Jerusalem but also to all the world.

Also, I believe, we need to remember the culture and life style of those who lived in Jesus' days. There were no cars, no electric lights, no television coverage, no blue jeans to wear, no guns, no sunglasses, no airplanes, few could read, very little medicine---the list is endless. No one needed a parade permit---just a donkey!

However, I am continually amazed and encouraged that Jesus' words and redeeming love are just as powerful and life-giving today as they were over two thousand years ago. On Palm Sunday, the crowds proclaimed, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" On Maundy Thursday, the religious leaders prepared to arrest Jesus and have him executed, even as Jesus said "I give you a new commandment that you should love one another as I have loved you." Then on Good Friday, he prayed in pain, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." And the most amazing good news of all was that on Easter, Jesus proclaimed, "Peace!" to all those fearful disciples as they experienced his power resurrection and liberating presence.

May I invite everyone to join us for worship and bring a friend when you come.

Peace,
George

YOUTH BAKE SALES

Our youth plan to have Bake Sale tables set up at certain Wednesday night dinners once a month for the next few months to raise money for youth to attend Makemie Woods and Montreat. Indulge your sweet tooth and help send a kid to camp!

The next bake sale will be on Wednesday, April 1, accompanied by a "Silent Auction."

CHURCH WORKER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

When someone comes to work as a pastor or other worker in the Presbyterian Church, the church promises to provide for that person's welfare, and to "stand by" that person and share in that person's times of hardship as well as joy. The Board of Pensions of the PC (USA) has recently emphasized its Assistance Program and its funding as one way to keep that promise. Assistance from this program is available for pastors and other church workers when their needs exceed the bounds of the Benefits Plan, personal resources, and other means of support. The funding for the Assistance Program comes from donations, and the need for assistance continues to grow.

The yearly **Christmas Joy Offering** actually provides for less than half of current program expenses. The rest of the funding comes from other donations, bequests and income from endowments. The generosity of Presbyterians in PC (USA) congregations keeps this program going and is vital to its future. For further details about the Assistance Program, call the Board of Pensions at 800-773-7752 or visit their Web site, www.pensions.org.

Donations to the Assistance Program should be sent to The Board of Pensions, 2000 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103-3298.

CALENDAR NOTES FOR APRIL 2009

Wednesday, April 1st

5:00 am – Circle 1 leaves for DC
6:00 pm – Dinner, and
Youth Bake Sale/Silent Auction
7:00 pm – Service Committee Meeting
Adult Choir

Sunday, April 5th - Palm Sunday

8:55 am – First Fellowship
9:45 am - Sunday School shortened for
10:15 am – Gathering @ Courthouse
11:00 am – Classical Worship

Wednesday, April 8

7:00 pm – Adult Choir

Thursday, April 9 - Maundy Thursday

6:00 pm – Covered Dish Dinner
7:00 pm – Tenebrae Service

Sunday, April 12th - Easter

No First Fellowship
No Sunday School
10:00 am – Easter Worship
Egg hunt for kids/Refreshments
for adults to follow worship

Thursday, April 16th

Meals on Wheels

Monday, April 20th

Breakfast @ Oasis [Session]
7:00 pm – Session Meeting

Tuesday, April 21st

7:00 pm – Diaconate Meeting

Saturday, April 25th

Zuni Day in the Country

Sunday, April 26th

Shepherds meet after worship

Monday, April 27th

Deadline for May newsletter items

Sunday, May 3rd

8:55 am – First Fellowship
9:45 am – Sunday School
11:00 am – Classic Worship
7:00 pm – Homeless Shelter starts (runs
through May 9th)

Wednesday, May 6th

7:00 pm – Adult choir

Sunday, May 10th

No Hospitality Hour

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Our sympathies go to the **Culpepper Family** on the death of Fred Culpepper, Jr.

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

Ann Michaluk, Kendall Rhodes, Cathran Harrell, Pauline Council, Dale Pendergraft, Elizabeth and Sylvia Stephenson, Dot Wyman, Mary Rice, Minnie Doleman, Rick Falls, Ashley Outland, Phil Winkler, Christian Schmidt, Frank and Liz James, and Cathy Jordan.

PALM SUNDAY GATHERING



As in past years, we will meet with other down-town Portsmouth churches at the old Courthouse to commemorate Christ's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem. The observance will start at 10:30 Sunday, April 5 (leave FPC at 10:15), for a brief service, after which the different churches will return to their own respective sanctuaries for worship. Sunday School will be curtailed that day to accommodate this service. **At the 11:00 am worship service the choir will present their Cantata, *Journey to the Cross*.**

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE



A covered-dish dinner (meat provided; please bring side dishes or desserts) will start at 6:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall, followed by a Tenebrae Service and Communion in the Sanctuary. A musical offering will be presented by the choir as part of the worship.

EASTER SUNDAY WORSHIP

On Easter Sunday, April 12, there will be a combined worship service at 10:00. Those who usually attend either First Fellowship at 8:55 or the Classic Worship at 11:00 should make note of this change in our regular Sunday morning schedule. After worship, there will hot cross buns and warm drinks in the courtyard and an Easter-egg hunt for the kids. There will be **No Sunday School** that day.

PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In the history of First Presbyterian Church, Portsmouth, the search, selection, and calling of a permanent pastor is a vitally important period. The committee has asked that each member and friend of our congregation pray daily that the committee receive God's blessing and guidance for their work. It has been suggested that each of us set aside a particular time – such as lunch – for this prayer every day.

The committee consists of these members: **Paul Butler, (Chair), Elizabeth Fitzwater, Diane Griffin, John Hackworth, Jay James, Jennifer Patgorski, Alice Simpson.** A good committee that needs our prayer as they take on a difficult task.

MEALS ON WHEELS

This important ministry of our church to the community always welcomes new volunteers. It involves only a few hours on the third Thursday of each month and means a lot both to the recipients of the food and to those who deliver it. If you can volunteer, please contact the church office to offer your services.

May God continue to bless all the volunteers.

“AROUND THE WORLD” MISSION DINNER



On Wednesday, March 18, 2009, Rev. Linda Rainey, coordinator and administrator of the Presbyterian Campus Ministry program at ODU, displayed photographs taken by students on their spring break trip to El Salvador and also spoke of a trip to New Orleans. Both trips did mission support work and were remarkable experiences for all involved. Reverend Rainey was accompanied by one of the students. The Presbyterian Church continues its ministry around the world in exciting ways and this evening was a celebration of that work.

A gift of \$50 was given to the **ODU** Ministry by the Witness Committee.

Thanks to Gwen Brown for helping the Witness Committee with a delicious dinner. The tables were decorated to represent countries around the world. There were flags and yellow tablecloths. The Youth assisted in decorating the Fellowship Hall and also made placemats for the Mexico table.

Those who helped decorate included:

Rose Council	Holy Land
Burma Smith	Ireland
Kay Kidd	Congo
Alice Simpson	Korea, Japan, China
Elizabeth Fitzwater	France
Youth	Mexico
Clara	Greece
Alice Butler	Turkey
Mike Taylor	Island of Caribbean

The Witness Committee members are **Burma Smith, Gwen Brown, Kay Kidd, Lane Pittman, and Alice Butler.**

MUSINGS: WHAT ARE YOU GIVING UP FOR LENT?

Have you ever been asked that question? How did you answer? Some

folks give up chocolate or soft drinks, others light upon some habit of behavior or speech. Popular among those in certain groups this year was giving up using cell phones or sending text messages. Some things are relatively easy to give up, if only because of the prospect of taking them up again once Lent has passed. In terms of making a sacrifice, perhaps we should try permanently giving up something harder.

Not that it isn't significant to give up some bad habit or indulgence or vice, but if it's only "given up" for 40 or so days at Lent, what have we gained? I once knew someone who gave up smoking cigarettes for Lent – every year. When contemplating the season of Lent and the notion of "giving up" something, perhaps we should think about giving up a behavior or habit that is wrong, so the sacrifice would be more pleasing to God. Temporarily giving up something like chocolate or cigarettes or cell phones is not going to do it.

The Bible contains many teachings that point us to things we should give up. Reading Scripture on a regular basis reminds us of what is expected. From Genesis to Revelation – from the Ten Commandments to the letters of Paul and other Apostles – we are given admonition and encouragement to stop doing things we know to be wrong and evil, and to start doing things that God's inspired word tells us is right and righteous. It doesn't involve things we can't do – things that are too hard – but things that, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, we can accomplish if we want to.

Our own actions and words, our deeds and our beliefs, our prejudices and thoughts also are places to find things we should give up. If we stop and honestly examine them, we will find things about ourselves that we should change – things we would be better people without. Things that would make us not only better people, but also better Christians. Things that would change us and our lives so that

we become more pleasing to God. We all could name such things in our lives – it wouldn't require much thought.

Lent is almost over for this year, but it's never too late. We don't have to wait until next Lenten season. We can change ourselves and our lives at any time. In fact, God wants us to do it as soon as possible. That's why Jesus Christ – God in human flesh – came to earth. It's his resurrection that gives us that chance – that possibility. God is waiting for us to decide: what will we give up?

ZUNI "DAY IN THE COUNTRY"



On Saturday, April 25, the Presbyterian Group Home at Zuni will hold their "Day in the Country" event. This event at Zuni is a 35-year tradition, bringing together the residents at Zuni, their families, the local community, and church groups. There will be performances, hay rides, peanut roasting, and other kinds of fun. The residents at the home love this event and go all out to make everyone feel welcome. Come to Zuni and see the campus, meet the residents and staff, and enjoy some mighty fine down-home cooking! Flyers with more details are posted on bulletin boards around our church.

HOMELESS SHELTER

The Homeless Shelter at our church is scheduled for May 3-10. Food will be prepared and served from our kitchen by volunteers from Green Acres Presbyterian. Saint Paul's Catholic will provide a separate and secure sleeping space for the homeless women after they have eaten.

Volunteering for this shelter involves sleeping over one night at our church. If you can volunteer, please contact the Service Committee through the church office.

2009 MEN'S FELLOWSHIP/ CONFERENCE

On July 17-19, Friday through Sunday, at **Massanetta Springs Conference Center**, Presbyterian Men will meet for the 2009 Men's Fellowship and Conference. This yearly event is sponsored by the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic Men's Council. Prices for the Conference range from \$70 to \$294, depending on the package chosen. Also, there is an "Early Bird Discount" if you register by June 1. Additional "free-time" activities are available for varying fees.

Interested in going? Contact the church office for a detailed brochure.



BIRTHDAYS

April

2	Tara Taylor
4	Harvey Spiers, Jr. Julia Newsom
7	Emily Newsom
11	Norma Halterman
14	Lane Pittman
17	Betty Yarborough
18	A. T. Mayo
23	Carrie Norfleet
24	Phil Winkler Bill Westbrook
25	Ann Michaluk
26	Betsey Stuart
29	Alice Butler

May

1	Polly Moore
2	Sue Parker
8	David Culpepper
10	Marian Hudgins