

First Presbyterian Church
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FIRST PRES

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August, 2010

Kerry-Gram

Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. ⁶The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. (Jonah 4:5-8)*

The last few weeks have been hotter than you-know-what. The heat has affected everything – the grass in the yard withered, tomato plants droop, the AC runs constantly, and I get a bit cranky – which puts me in mind of Jonah, pouting underneath the blazing sun, the sultry east wind drying up every last bit of moisture in his body.

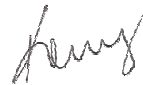
Even the morning walks Speedy the Lab and I take together have become an uncomfortable chore. The highlight of our day together is a necessary burden. All we really want is sofa-time underneath the ceiling fan.

At some time during the night last night, the temperature broke and something approximating rain fell. Not much, just enough to moisten the yard and cool the air. Speedy and I gratefully headed out on our walk, going the full mile – Speedy wagging his tail the whole way.

Did God give us the gift of better weather? Maybe. God did grant us the invitation to enjoy the change and I give God praise. I believe that's what God is about, granting those

invitations to enjoy the day, be present in the world, return to a loving relationship with the one who made us.

Speedy and I enjoyed our time with God this morning. Praying that you do the same.



Follow Pastor Kerry's blog on the Web at:
revkerry.blogspot.com



PASTOR KERRY & SPEEDY

THE BIBLE BEGINS

WITH GENESIS

BECAUSE

THAT'S WHERE ALL THINGS BEGIN.

MISSIONARIES' RETIREMENT VISIT

DAN & CAROL CHOU ADAMS, our missionaries in Korea for many years, paid First Presbyterian Church a visit on June 15th, while making their rounds of mission interpretation visits to churches on their retirement. Dan and Carol have many friends among our congregation. A "Southern-style" dinner was held for them at the church, with fried chicken provided and side-dishes and desserts contributed by members of our congregation. Gifts were presented to Dan and Carol by the congregation, along with good wishes and prayers for their retirement years.

Below is a photo taken when they were here in June.



GIVE/GET A RIDE

This program exists for members who need a ride or who are available to give a ride.

IF YOU NEED A RIDE, whether it's to the church, or to a medical appointment, please call Mary Myers at the church office, or call Agnes McFadden at 399-3190.

They will need 2 days' advance notice to make arrangements.

IF YOU CAN GIVE A RIDE TO SOMEONE WHO NEEDS ONE, please call Mary or Agnes to let them know of your willingness and availability.

ALSO, PLEASE PRAY FOR THIS PROGRAM and all those who participate in it.

NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS PLANNED

The Christian Education Committee announces the formation of a new class to begin in September. It is for younger adults who are not already members of a Sunday School class. The class will be led by three teachers-- Susan Fay, Paula Council Fuss, and Todd Taylor, who are hard at work researching needs and wants and coming up with plans for *more* than just a class that meets on Sunday mornings. So, if you are young (or not so young, just young at heart) and searching for a group where you fit in, we just may have the group for you, and it's *not your Mama's Sunday School class!!* More information will be coming your way soon.

OASIS

Serving a hot and nutritious breakfast to the folks at Oasis is one of the very important ministries of our church. Various church groups are scheduled to take turns performing this service.

Thanks to everyone who serves. On Monday, July 19, our youth served 98 hungry folks. Shannon Brown, Erin McCrary, and Matthew McCrary were assisted by Duff Porter, Laura McCrary, Jennifer Patgorski, and Pat Sparks. Thanks also to those who provided casseroles and other food.

There will be many future opportunities to serve. If you wish to take part, you can volunteer by calling the church office or by making it known next time your Sunday School class or other group is scheduled to serve. Also, please remember this ministry in your prayers.

SITUATION IN CONGO CHURCH NEEDS PRAYER

The Witness Committee asks that the congregation pray for a peaceful resolution for the CPK churches. As these brave Christian sisters and brothers continue their work, under difficult and often dangerous circumstances, they also experience a lack of unity among their own leaders. They need and request our prayers.

COURTYARD CONCERTS CONTINUE

FOR FIFTH YEAR

Our summer Courtyard Concerts continue in July. Each summer, the Music Ministries presents a series of eclectic performances in the Friendship Courtyard located on Court Street. These concerts are open at no cost to the public. While the performers are screened to eliminate inappropriate material, the performances are not necessarily religious in nature.



Each concert is preceded by a dinner in the church Social Hall for which reservations are required. If you would like to join us for dinner, please contact us at 757-397-3622 or Secretary@FPCPorts.org at least three days prior to the concert so we can prepare enough food for everyone. While the concerts are free, there is a minimal charge for the dinner. All dinners start at 6:00 PM. The concerts start at 7:00 PM and last about an hour.



This year's schedule includes:

- July 24 String Ties bluegrass
- August 4 Swing Time traditional jazz with Sandra Strenga
- August 12 Two for Fun 2 for Fun, Beach Music

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

We mourn the loss of ELIZABETH STEPHENSON, who died on June 29 after an extended illness. Elizabeth was a warm and loving person with a compassionate heart and an inner strength that came of her Christian faith. We shall miss her; and we extend our sympathies to her sister, Sylvia, and the rest of her family.

SESSION RETREAT

[A summary from Pastor Kerry.]

The retreat began with the Elders self-identifying with the six great ends of the church.* There was a good balance here, with each of the great ends being represented *except for* "the preservation of the truth." However, most agreed that there were people in the congregation for whom that was important. *[Proclamation of the Gospel; Shelter, Nurture, and Spiritual Fellowship of God's Children, Maintenance of Divine Worship, Preservation of the Truth, Promotion of Social Righteousness, and Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World.- Ed.]

We also engaged in an "Identifying Spiritual Types" – which I find useful in order to gauge what people observe about the congregation and what they believe about themselves. The harmony between the 4 spiritual types was evident in the personal responses. Interestingly, the session viewed the congregation as being heavily intellectual and tangible – that is God is revealed in ways that we can know intellectually and visibly. (My opinion is that this is a common view within the Presbyterian tradition and a kind of post-Enlightenment holdover. No value judgment, just an observation.)

It was evident in both exercises that there is present within the congregation a diversity of values and beliefs. It may be fruitful to articulate these further with the congregation and develop a plan of encouraging love and respect for the diversity present. It is a gift to be used in God's kingdom.

[Session Retreat, cont'd]

In smaller groups, the elders discussed 2 primary questions:

What is it that we (1st Pres) do best?

How do we let people know?

A third question was added:

How does what we do best reflect the presence of Christ?

Three general commonalities were expressed among the groups:

Creative and diverse music program

Warm, loving, caring community

Strong tradition of local service

Suggestions for how to get the word out:

Web page, blog

Signage

Visible worship in courtyard

Participation in community and interdenominational events

Fellowship opportunities

Newspapers, radio,

(Posters created by the Elders will be copied and archived for future reference.)

We discussed stewardship of financial resources and the campaign for this year. Noted was common wisdom that packaged stewardship programs, such as Consecration Sunday and others, are generally successful for 3 years. That result has occurred here.

There also was a moderate debate over using the term "pledge" vs. "estimate of giving" with some thinking "estimate" sounded more inviting and less harsh. Others said that "pledge" was our traditional language. There may be room for both terms.

I introduced targeting our congregation by generational values to encourage giving. This may be something to consider as we plan for stewardship this year.

We reviewed and discussed the "Long Range Planning" grid created in 1998. Most of the plan is still valid, except for in-home visits – which were not successful in the past (in line with current research). Updates will be needed, specifically noting which committee is accountable.

The Elders spontaneously agreed to creation of a "Welcome Host" (Kendall Rhodes) and a plan to welcome visitors with goodies from the church. Goodies might

include a tote bag with 1st Pres items inside (such as pens, pencils, magnets, or an updated brochure on our church).

I put forth a proposal to begin a local mission to school children, helping them with homework, mentoring them, and providing their families with hot meals. Several similar programs exist already – such as Portsmouth Reads. The details and logistics for such a program are many and great. Although I sensed support for this kind of mission, I also sensed reticence about embarking on so large a project. Perhaps it's appropriate to put this on the back burner (or even my desk drawer) for a while.

From my observation, the greatest enthusiasm came from re-igniting a formal program of welcoming visitors. This really captured the Elders' imaginations and is right in line with what they believe this church does best.

I propose that the Elders' hearts and minds get poured into this – such welcome is an example of the radical hospitality of Christ. May this be our compelling ministry.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

The leaders of the PW will lay plans for the coming year during a supper meeting at Penny Brangan's on Sunday August 29th.

The kick-off for the year, with all women gathering for a coffee, will be held at 1030am at the church on Saturday, September 11. That morning, Pastor Kerry will lead the first Bible study of the year, introducing the Horizon's Study on Revelation.

New officers for 2010-11 are:

Co-Moderators – Penny Brangan and Alice Butler;

Treasurer – Anne Porter;

Search Chairman – Cynthia Deller;

Family Outreach – Mike Taylor;

Missions Abroad – Pat Sparks;

Community Missions – Claudia Laughlin;

Circle One Chairman – Agnes McFadden

Circle Two Chairman – Clara Spanos.

The PW program year ended after the circle meetings in June and will resume in September.

MUSING: MISSION NOT IMPOSSIBLE

YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU ACCEPT IT, IS TO BE PERFECT. That's all; it's as simple as that: be perfect. Of course, we know that there is only one Man who truly was perfect, and the rest of us can only aspire to meet that standard. The perfection of God is beyond our puny human ability even to understand or describe – much less imitate.

YET THERE IT IS, IN JESUS' OWN WORDS as recorded in Matthew 5:48, right in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." What does he mean? Notice that he doesn't say, "Be perfect like I am." Jesus gives us not himself as the standard of perfection, but the "heavenly Father."

CAN ANY MERE MORTAL BE PERFECT? Is Jesus asking us to do the impossible? As with any statement taken out of context from a longer speech, the meaning can be misconstrued, misinterpreted, or just plain missed. It would be both fair and wise, therefore, to consider the context in which Jesus made this statement.

THERE IS THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT. Jesus has just been speaking about loving our enemies. One of the countless ways in which our heavenly Father is perfect is his perfect love. God, we are told, IS love [1 John 4:7-21, specifically verses 8 and 16]. He loves all his creatures, especially us humans – who are made in his image, and to whom he gave "the breath of life" [Genesis 2:7]. If God can love all people as his children – even those who don't believe in his existence – who are we not to love them, too?

JESUS MAKES THE POINT – as he usually does – with an analogy of inescapable clarity. If we love only those who love us or treat us well, he says, we haven't done anything special. Even the worst people we can think of will do that much. To do something really worthy of being called God's children, we must go beyond that and love everybody, like God does. There also is a note here that is particularly applicable to us in the modern Christian church: "And if you greet only your brothers [other Christians?], what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans [non-Christians?] do that?" [Matt. 5:47] We in the church today should take that as a caution not to be isolated or self-serving.

THEN THERE IS THE LARGER CONTEXT of the Sermon on the Mount itself. In that Sermon, Jesus tells us how to live in this world so we might secure eternal life in the next. There is much about how we should treat others and how we should conduct ourselves. It won't be easy. It wasn't meant to be. Everything Jesus teaches in this Sermon is clear – and clearly difficult. Living by the standard set for us by Jesus means that often we find ourselves fighting our own human natures. Perfection will be difficult, but it's worth the effort.

THERE IS ALSO THE CONTEXT of all the Scripture – the law and commandments and moral lessons that God has revealed to us through his word. The entire Bible is one long story – the sad and yet comforting and triumphantly hopeful epic of how we were cut off from God and how much he loves us and wants us back. Each book of the Bible has its own lesson to read and learn, but each one is an indispensable part of the overall story and leads us closer to God's intent for us.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT IN EVERY WAY. When Jesus says to be perfect as the Father is, he is encouraging us to be blameless as our Father in heaven is blameless – faultless – in our love and compassion for other humans, in our faithfulness and humility, in every aspect of our lives. Again, is Jesus asking the impossible? Sounds like that, but maybe he isn't. Humankind was created perfect – "in his image" – and we can be perfect again.

HOWEVER, PERFECTION FOR US IS IMPOSSIBLE if we try to achieve it on our own. God has told us what we need to do, and that he will help us if we call on him. He sent his Son to show us the Way, and he sends his Holy Spirit to give us strength and comfort and to help us. Through the Triune God, perfection is possible, even for us who are born into imperfection. Maybe we never will be perfect, but we know that we have a Savior who can complete what we lack.

WITH HIM, NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE.

Lane Pittman

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

SPECIAL NOTE: in the JULY newsletter, the Anniversary of FRANK AND LIZ JAMES was somehow omitted. Their 69th anniversary was on July 11th, and as always we wish the best to two dear people.

Birthdays

7	Makayla Winkler
10	Mike Taylor
11	Margaret smith Erin McRary
12	Nancy Mayo
14	Duff Porter III Yvonne Goolsby
15	Stephin Goolsby
16	Jason Turner Robert Norfleet, Jr. (Robby)
17	Carrie Griffin
19	Grady Fitzwater
20	Gus Spanos
21	Sylvia Stephenson
22	Emily Fay
23	Richard Griffin
27	Elizabeth Fitzwater
28	Linda Hackworth
29	Gwen Brown Alice Simpson
30	Cathran Harrell

Anniversaries

6	Carl & Kendall Rhodes
21	Paul & Alice Butler
29	David & Betsey Stuart

CHURCH SCHEDULE for AUGUST 2010

Sunday, August 1	9am	First Fellowship-A Moment Apart
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship (Communion)
Wednesday, August 4	6pm	Dinner
	7pm	Courtyard Concert
Sunday, August 8	9am	First Fellowship-A Moment Apart
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship
Sunday, August 15	9am	First Fellowship-A Moment Apart
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship
Wednesday, August 18	6pm	Dinner
	7pm	Courtyard Concert
Sunday, August 22	9am	First Fellowship-A Moment Apart
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship
Sunday, August 29	9am	First Fellowship-A Moment Apart
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship