

First Presbyterian Church
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FIRST PRES

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November, 2010

Kerry-Gram

"To the angel of the church, write..." (From the Revelation to John, chapters 2 & 3)

Language is crucially important to the church. The written word recorded in Scripture reveals the person of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Again, by the power of the Spirit, the Word proclaimed is delivered in the language of the people to exhort, encourage, reprove, and sustain believers. The Word enacted by believers delivers the message of the gospel through ways and means that people understand.

Language is important – perhaps especially so in worship. Whether worshipers speak or sing, pray or keep silent or move – the *language* of worship is integral to communicating our faith. Recently, during our mid-week study, we discussed language – both spoken and embodied – that we use during worship. These are examples of our liturgical language:

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The authority of Scripture is absolute for our lives of faith. Everything sufficient for our instruction and formation is revealed in Scripture. When we read and hear the holy words, the reader declares, "This is the Word of the Lord." The congregation responds, "Thanks be to God," affirming the authority and authorship of Scripture. This call and response is a confession of faith.

The Call to Confession and the "Confession Sequence"

You may have noticed that I have begun asking the children to come forward to pour water into the font just before we pray the corporate prayer. I do this to remind the congregation that because of our baptism we may be confident in God's everlasting love and forgiveness. I may use words from Scripture or from one of the confessions of the church to encourage us to confess publicly. The

embodied language of church + font + water + words invokes an experience of worship that recalls our past *unredeemed* lives and our future as the redeemed of the Lord called to faith and witness. The assurance of pardon and the passing of Christ's peace at once acknowledges our understanding of forgiveness as well as our reconciliation won by Christ. Reconciliation empowers our discipleship in the world.

The Opening Prayer and Thanksgiving Sequence.

I strive to offer the prayer and invitation to thanksgiving from the Lord's table. We worship in Christ's name so it seems fitting to offer the opening prayer (or prayer of the day) from the place where our Lord is host. In the same way, the invitation to give gifts of self-sacrifice (offerings) is given in the Lord's name, received in his name, and spent for the sake of his name. Again, language of voice and place strengthens our witness to the gospel.

The Language of the Congregation

The people of God are not passive in worship; there is a clear expectation that the people be active. The people respond with ritual language ("thanks be to God"), their assent to prayer ("amen"), their joyful noise (singing, clapping, moving, laughing, crying, etc.), and physical movement in the sanctuary. Think on the life of Jesus and his movement – he walked, he welcomed, he touched, he wept, he enjoyed fellowship, he prayed. I suppose if Jesus could stand up, sit down, and walk around during worship then so can we.

Liturgical language is not my invention – the church has engaged in such embodied and spoken language since the first Pentecost. My own immediate resources are: The Companion to the Book of Common Worship, by Peter C. Bower; The Future of Protestant Worship, by Ronald P. Byars; and the Presbyterian Call to Worship, www.gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/calltoworship.

May your words and actions be richly blessed by our God.



LOOK BACK AND THANK GOD

LOOK FORWARD AND TRUST GOD

LOOK AROUND AND SERVE GOD

LOOK WITHIN AND FIND GOD

PEACE, LOVE, & A BAG OF CHIPS

A new Service Committee ministry, Operation Peace, Love, and a Bag of Chips started August 22 and continues through November 7. The purpose of this ministry is to help fill the gap during the Homeless Shelter off-season. Volunteers meet every Sunday after the 11:00am Worship to pack light evening meals that will be given out from our courtyard on Sunday evenings between 5 and 6 pm. It's part of an effort involving other downtown churches. If you would like to volunteer to pack the meals or hand them out, please contact Sue Fay.

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

We mourn the death of CATHRAN HARRELL who passed away on October 15. Cathran was a dear lady who inspired everyone with her strong faith, her sunny disposition and her ever-present smile. Even in the face of certain death, Cathran remained cheerful, displaying a positive outlook and approach to life. We extend our sympathy to Cathran's family. Always we will remember Cathran with love and pleasant thoughts.

Our heartfelt sympathy goes to SUSAN FAY and all her family on the death of Susan's mother, Beverly Dawson.

MARY RICE was a very special woman. She was a teacher and a missionary, a scholar and a faithful member of Christ's church. She was a saint, a pillar of strength, and a humble child of her Lord. Mary loved First

Presbyterian Church, Portsmouth, and all the people of our congregation – young and old, new or long-time member. On Thursday, October 21, we learned of Mary's death, after several years of steadily declining health. She hadn't been able to worship with us recently, but her name was mentioned often. Mary leaves a hole in the congregation and in the hearts of all who knew her. We shall miss her.

REMINDER FROM THE SHEPHERD COMMITTEE

If you are a Shepherd, and plan to be out of town, or otherwise unavailable for more than a couple of days, please contact Paul Butler, Shepherd Coordinator, at 393-1398, or butler.alicepaul@verizon.net, so that your Lambs can be contacted, should the Shepherd list be activated.

OCTOBER OFFERINGS AND ATTENDANCE

Week	Offering	Attendance		
		Moment Apart:	Worship:SS:	
10/3	\$5439	21	61	35
10/10	\$5074	17	49	39
10/17	\$3395	27	67	30
10/24	\$ 961	23	51	37

ODU CAMPUS MINISTRY MISSION TRIP

The Old Dominion University campus ministry is in the process of planning their International Spring Break Mission Trip to Roatan, Honduras. First Presbyterian, Portsmouth, has pledged to help them with a fundraiser.

On Sunday, January 9, 2011, after our 1100 worship, we will host a luncheon to raise money toward the cost of the trip. The ODU students will do all the work: set up, food prep, serving, and clean up. They will ask for donations at the lunch and give a short program during the lunch about what they will be doing on their trip.

CLEANING THE CHURCH

On Saturday, November 6, please come to the church and help clean the church for the holidays. The cleaning work is scheduled from 9:30 am – 12:00 pm and bagels, juice and coffee will be provided. You know it will be fun! A list of cleaning tasks is posted on the pastor's bulletin board – please sign up. Also, if other chores need to be done, please add them to the list.

CARE PACKAGES FOR OUR SERVICE MEMBERS

Kelly Kerr shared this email she received from Andy Foreman, a soldier who got one of our Care Packages:

For those who gave without knowing any of us here and those who know me, I would like to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. I work with a bunch of great guys that help to mentor and advise the communications officers at the Afghan National Army HQ here in Kabul. I can tell you that God has a hand in everything and that despite how difficult this is for me, Kelly and my kids God has given us a great task to give people a chance at a better life. As an example, one of the officers I mentor, COL Hazrat, said that he has been to the United States and saw how there are so many schools and hospitals and how people move around freely without fear of being killed. He said he knows how wonderful the US is and has great appreciation and admiration that we gave up a comfortable life to come help his country. He went on to say he hopes and prays that someday people from other countries can come and visit Afghanistan and travel around freely enjoying this country the way he enjoyed the US.

Thank you again. It always makes everyone feel closer to home when we get packages. No matter who sends them we all always share. We have a table that everything gets put on and people can take what they need or want. All of us here appreciate the time, effort and money spent to put this box together. Everything gets used. Even the newspaper for stuffing, we look through it for bits of home. I also would like to thank you all for your prayers of support and for a safe return. They are felt here and I know God hears each and every one of them. Thank you all and may God bless you with his Spirit and love. CW4 Andrew "Andy" Foreman, Kabul, Afghanistan

LEARNING THE PRACTICE OF WORSHIP

All children 7 years old and above are encouraged to remain in worship for the entire service. Worship is indispensable as part of our lives and the development of

young people as Christians. Thus, we all desire the children of our congregation to learn the practice of worship and become familiar and comfortable with the worship experience. This is difficult without being present during the service.

Children 6 and younger will continue to be welcome in the nursery. Also:

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR NURSERY

We need volunteers to attend to our littlest disciples. If you feel called to this ministry, please contact Laura McCrary at 484-7607.

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.

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. 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.

GUEST PREACHERS

Pastor Kerry will be on leave from 11/11 - 11/24. Guest preachers are Rev. Lauren Cogswell Ramseur on 11/14 and Elder Michael Broadhurst on 11/21.

CALENDAR of EVENTS for ADVENT and CHRISTMAS

These are the events planned so far. More may be added.

- 12/5: Churchwide Christmas Celebration [see details below]
- 12/7: PW decorates Chrismon tree.
- 12/11 PW Christmas luncheon.
- 12/15: Church Christmas Dinner, reservations requested.
- 12/24: Christmas Eve service with communion

CHURCHWIDE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

On Sunday, December 5, 2010, at 9 am, breakfast will be served, followed by the program. No early service or Sunday school class sessions on this date.

All classes will participate in a program of carol singing, prayer, and decorating the *live tree* in the social hall. Class members of all ages will come forward with ornaments that they have made (or purchased). The ornaments to be made will be symbolic of:

- The Jesse tree
- Animals that will live together in peace, [wolf & lamb, leopard & kid, calf & lion, cow & bear].
- Light – stars, candles, etc.
- Names of Jesus – Wonderful counselor, Prince of Peace, etc.
- Blooming desert – flower blossoms

Class members, from the youngest to the oldest, will come forward by class to place their ornaments on the tree. The crowning touch will be a garland made by the youth, after which the tree will be illuminated.

All ages are encouraged to participate. You don't have to be a member of a Sunday school class to take part—you just need to bring an ornament to hang on the tree!!

Sunday school teachers, please have your class make ornaments during the class sessions leading up to this Sunday, so that all will be able to take part.

MEALS ON WHEELS

This important mission to our community requires just a few hours each month. Meals are delivered by volunteers from the First Presbyterian Church family on the third Thursday. It means a lot both to the recipients of the meals and to the ones who deliver the meals. The Meals on Wheels program is always in need of volunteers. If you would like to volunteer, please contact the church office.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Led by Claudia Laughlin, supper was prepared for the 30 students who attend the Monday night Bible Study at the ODU Campus Ministry.

December 11 at 11 am, the PW will hold their Christmas celebration and luncheon. ALL women of the church are invited. The program around the Chrismon tree will include special music. The luncheon will feature soups and salads.

HOMELESS SHELTER

The Shelter at 1st Presbyterian for 2011 will start on Sunday, April 10, and run until Saturday, April 16. More details will be coming. Please put this on your calendar and plan to offer your help.

MUSING: COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

THERE'S AN OLD HYMN that urges us to count our "many blessings," and "name them one by one." If we do this, the hymn says, "...it will surprise [us] what the Lord has done." The hymn suggests that we pause and think in detail about God's goodness to us and we will find that we are more blessed than we realize. But—really now—how often do we actually do what the hymn suggests? We don't have time for such reflection—our lives are too complicated and the world is turning much too fast. The number of God's blessings may not surprise us as much as how seldom we thank him for them.

WHETHER THEY ARE material or intangible, all blessings come from God. Money and physical possessions measure only earthly wealth and not blessings, and wealth is relative. We can think of folks who have more than we have and, of course, there always are those who have less. Material wealth is only one way of measuring blessedness—and not a very reliable one, at that. We all know that it is possible to be greatly blessed while owning little in terms of material possessions; but we also know that it is easy to lose sight of that in this world.

ONE IMPORTANT WAY we show our gratitude for God's blessings is when we use those blessings to glorify God or to further his kingdom. However, more often than not we fail to do that, even when given the chance. Failing to use our blessings—or using them improperly—is a sin.

OFTEN, WE TAKE God's blessings for granted. Perhaps we think of them as "something we were born with" and maybe are even embarrassed to have, or they are to our credit—something we deserve due to practice or dedication. Or—even worse—we don't think about them on our own at all. Therefore, whenever we are reminded to be thankful, we may feel guilty—and we should. We know God blesses us, but we don't show him much gratitude. The credit—and the thanks—are his.

GOD DOESN'T WANT us to feel guilty for being ungrateful, and he certainly doesn't want us to offer thanks and praise to him just because the Order of Worship or the calendar calls for it. His blessings come to us every day because we are his children and he loves us and takes care of us. Our gratitude likewise should be offered to God every day out of our love for him and our heart-felt appreciation for his blessings.

YOU MIGHT SAY that gratitude is better late than never. Like so many other things we wish we had done, the expression of our thanks to God often gets pushed further and further away, replaced by "more urgent" things. Soon it is "off our screens" completely and we forget to express it at all until some tragedy—or some happy event—comes along that makes us stop and think. The event might even be a holiday, like Thanksgiving

Day or Christmas. Around this time of year such thoughts are common.

OUR NATIONAL OBSERVANCE of Thanksgiving Day began in 1789 when President George Washington declared a national day to give thanks to God for the blessings of peace and prosperity. Autumn was chosen because that is the traditional time for harvest festivals and such. In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln set the last Thursday in November as a national day of prayer and thanks to almighty God for his continued blessings, despite the Civil War, which Lincoln called "our national perverseness and disobedience." In 1941, Congress set the date for the holiday as the fourth Thursday in November. Thanksgiving is not about turkeys, football, or parades, or even family gatherings. It was—and remains—a day to count our blessings and to give thanks for them.

GOD DOESN'T BLESS US just so we can praise him and thank him; but we should do it anyway. When someone does something for us—whether it be a material gift, or help and comfort, or even just saying something nice—we have been taught to say, "Thank You." If we can thank a clerk in a store for helping us or a driver on the highway for letting us in, we can take the time to say "Thank You" to God for what he does. We can do this quietly wherever we are, at any time of day. We also can set aside a specific time for it each day. Our corporate worship includes giving thanks to God, and our private devotions should include it also.

IT'S NOT ONLY good manners to say, "Thank You," but "it is right to give our thanks and praise to God." He is the very Source of life itself, and it is his grace that saves us.

"LET US GIVE thanks to the Lord our God."

THANK YOU, GOD!! Even for blessings that go uncounted.

Lane Pittman

DEADLINE FOR NEWSLETTER

Articles or information to be published in the newsletter must be submitted to the Editor by the 25th of the previous month. Submissions should be sent to Lane Pittman:

Postal Mail: 614 Chandler Harper Drive
Portsmouth, VA 23701
Email: slp4149@aol.com
Phone: 757-405-3554

CHURCH SCHEDULE for NOVEMBER 2010

Sunday, Nov 7	9am	First Fellowship-A Moment Apart
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship (Communion)
Wednesday, Nov 10	6:15pm	Mid-Week Study
	7pm	Choir
Sunday, Nov 14	9am	First Fellowship-A Moment Apart
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship
Wednesday, Nov 17	6pm	Potluck Supper
	7pm	Choir
Sunday, Nov 21	9am	First Fellowship-A Moment Apart
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship
Monday, Nov 22	7pm	Session Meeting
Tuesday, Nov 23	7pm	Diaconate Meeting
Wednesday, Nov 24	7pm	Choir
Thursday, Nov 25		Thanksgiving Service
Sunday, Nov 28	9am	First Fellowship-A Moment Apart
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES***Birthdays**

9	Graham Fitzwater
10	Frank James
12	John Hackworth
13	Tammy Taylor
15	Tanner Furman
19	Susan Fay Bob Westbrook Corbin Taylor
20	Paul Butler
23	Diane Turner Annabelle Hice
28	Hunter Webb, Jr.

Anniversaries

17	Charles & Barbara Bond
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*** (IF YOUR BIRTHDAY OR ANNIVERSARY IS LEFT OFF THIS LIST** - first of all, I apologize; second, please send me an email or call me [if I don't answer the phone, leave me a message] and third, I'll fix it. – Editor)