

First Presbyterian Church
515 Court St.
Portsmouth, VA 23704-3605

Pastor:
Rev. Kerry Knox Westerwick

FIRST PRES

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KERRY-GRAM

"...it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." Galatians 2:20

During our long snow event I caught up on reading for the classes I'll take next month at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. One of the books, The Crucifixion of Ministry by Andrew Purves gave me much food for thought. The title of the book makes ministry sound painful...and it is if we persist in thinking of "my" ministry or "our" ministry. Putting a personal claim on ministry pushes Christ aside, relegating him to an historical moral teacher rather than the living presence of God-with-us.

I confess to thinking of ministry as my own – *my* ministry is to visit the sick, preach the gospel, and teach the faith. While these are indeed tasks of the ministry I do, if I believe that Christ lives in me (and I do), then it is *Christ's* ministry I serve and *Christ* who invites me to share his ministry of grace and love.

What a revelation! What freedom and boldness of faith might be found when we accept Christ who lives in us, inviting and guiding *his* ministry through us? Christ bears the ministry, removing the burden of carrying the load alone. Christ alive in each of us sets us free to glorify God and enjoy God forever.

As we move into a new year of ministry together led by Christ, we move to reorienting the way we do "church." We move from the burdensome work of committees fraught with deadlines, finding volunteers, and doing it all by ourselves. With Christ alive in us, we move into a new year of joy. We all need more joy, don't we?

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel! It is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us!

PASTOR ON LEAVE

Pastor Kerry will be on study leave from January 24 – February 4. The Rev. Jeffrey Quinn will fill the pulpit on January 30. She goes on vacation February 17 – March 2. Filling the pulpit on February 20 is Elder Billy Ricketts, the commissioned lay pastor for 2nd Presbyterian in Norfolk. On February 27 the Rev. Brett Badorff of the ODU Baptist Campus Ministry will preach. The on-call pastors for these times is not yet determined.

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.

PREACH THE GOSPEL

AT ALL TIMES,

AND WHEN NECESSARY,

USE WORDS.

- **Attributed to Francis of Assisi**

STAMPS FOR MISSIONS

In December, Peggy Reinhold reported that the rebuilding of a Congolese church that was destroyed by a tornado in August is progressing well and damage to some classrooms from that same tornado has been repaired. Funding from the stamps program helped with those endeavors.

Mrs. Reinhold wrote that as of December 4, the Stamps for Missions program had raised "right at seven thousand dollars." Although the donation of the large collections is down from last year, she has been able to send checks for printing and distribution of books needed by the Congo church and for purchase and distribution of Bibles and needed medicines.

"Current" stamps are selling "at a good price," she writes. Current stamps include Art Impressions, Cowboys, Adopt-a-Shelter, Kate Smith, Monarch Butterflies, and other special series released for sale by the Post Office.

A more detailed report will be forthcoming once the calendar year ends. Please pray for the continued success of this important missions program.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Session has called the annual meeting of the congregation on January 23. The meeting will be conducted within the service of worship as our response to God's presence among us. The purpose of the meeting will be to receive annual reports, including the budget for 2011, and to review/approve the terms of call and compensation of the pastor.

Neither the Session nor the Diaconate met in December.

CHURCH OFFICE

As you may have heard, Mary Myers, our faithful church Secretary, fell on ice and suffered a broken leg. We pray for her quick recovery. Until she is able to return, there will be times when there is no one to answer the phone.

Please be understanding and leave a message if needed. Your cooperation and patience during this is appreciated.

A JOYFUL ADVENT

First Presbyterian celebrated Advent and Christmas 2010 with gatherings of the faithful, with specially made decorations, with Holy Communion, with delicious food, with readings from Scripture, and with the beautiful music of the season.

Thanks to Pastor Westerwick for her leadership and support, to Edna for preparing and directing our wonderful choir, youth and guest performers, and to those who worked "behind the scenes" to make it all possible.

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. During 1100 worship on Sunday, January 9, 2011, the students will present a Minute for Ministry.

After worship, they will host a luncheon for the congregation. The students welcome donations toward their spring mission trip to Honduras.

Please plan to join us for lunch and make a donation toward this worthy cause.

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 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.

NOTES ON WORSHIP

From Pastor Kerry

The Directory for Worship in the Book of Order notes (W-2.1005): "In the Old and New Testaments and through the ages, the people of God expressed prayer through actions as well as speech and song. So in worship today it is appropriate

To kneel, to bow, to stand, to lift hands in prayer,
To dance, to clap, to embrace in joy and praise,
To anoint and to lay hands in intercession and supplication, commissioning and ordination."

Over the last year, I have marveled at how this congregation responds to God. At times I've been reminded of David dancing before the ark or believed I was witnessing a living, breathing Psalm 150. I've seen some of you dance (you know who you are!), watched even more of you tap your hands and feet in time to the music, and listened to joyous applause, laughter, and whoops of praise. Surely, the presence of the Lord is in this place when we are at worship!

A word of caution, though – shouting for the sake of making noise is not the "amen" of the Spirit, neither is boisterous applause or enthusiastic toe-tapping if they are done just because the drum solo was fabulous or the children are really cute. Praise is for God who granted the gifts of talent and leadership. Praise God who invites each of us to respond in the ways we have been given.

I pray that we all grow in the Spirit as we worship. May we reflect the depth and breadth of the people of God as we kneel and bow and stand and clap and dance and sing!

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:

OASIS

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

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.

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.

MUSING: EMPATHY FOR MUSLIMS

MANY MUSLIMS, PARTICULARLY Muslim Americans, say that their faith, Islam, is a peace-loving faith. They say that they are taught to live in peace beside people of different faiths and beliefs. Islam, we are told, is a faith that teaches kindness and good will toward others, regardless of faith or race. Certainly, they say, they have never been taught hatred or violence, and they have been taught that murder is evil. They claim that their religion, Islam, has been “hijacked” by radicals who misinterpret the Koran for their own evil purposes, and misuse their religion to achieve their own political agendas.

REGARDLESS OF HOW you as an individual, or any other person, might choose to see claims that Islam is a religion of peace, there is at least one point on which we Christians can empathize with Muslims. Their claim that Islam has been “hijacked” is one that we, too, can make. Just as some commit violence and murder in the name of Mohammed and Islam, Christianity also has been given a bad name – hijacked, if you will – by people using the name of Christ and his church for unrighteous purposes and to further their own agendas.

THERE ARE THOSE who teach hatred in the name of Jesus, who taught love. There are some who promote violence and war in the name of the Prince of Peace. They use the name of our Lord to impose their will – not God’s will – on others. All Christians get “tarred with the same brush” when someone claims to be a Christian in order to justify words and actions that are clearly not Christian. When someone talking hatred and violence also is seen as representing the point of view of the Christian church, the damage is almost impossible to repair. And the damage is not merely to us in the church and to the rest of the world, but to the very name of the One we worship.

THIS IS NOT NEW. At various times for well over a thousand years the leaders of the Church waged war and committed torture and murder in Christ’s name. There is nothing in the teachings of Christ that would justify violence or war against anyone – no matter what religion they claim or what race they belong to. He did away with the use of retribution and vengeance as justification for hatred, violence and war [Matt. 5:38-42].

MUSLIMS – FOLLOWERS OF Mohammed – were victims of many of these appalling deeds perpetrated by – or in the name of – the “Christian Church.” That sad history often is cited as justification for recent violence by some Muslims. Claims that “America is a Christian nation” – accurate or not – justify the declaration of those Muslims that, therefore, all Americans are their enemies. The same is true for other nations – mostly Western – where Christianity is the predominant religion.

THERE IS AN ancient Arab proverb that Muslims often quote: The Friend of my Enemy is also my Enemy. Thus, we see violent acts perpetrated against the citizens of those nations who are seen as America’s friends. (Christ teaches that we should love even our enemies.) Understanding this rationale is not the same as saying that these Muslims are right in their thinking. Neither does recognizing the political aspects of this phenomenon mean that it is not also strongly related to basic differences between the two religions.

DANGER ASIDE, IT shouldn’t matter to us what Muslims are taught – or what the Koran says: we are followers of Christ, who says that we must not seek revenge. It doesn’t matter how history is interpreted – or misinterpreted: we are to be ambassadors for Christ. His teachings are the guide and rule for our lives. We are not to be guided by the actions of others or the teachings of Mohammed or any one else. We know what Christ teaches – and we may not base our actions on anything else, regardless of the reason, cause, or provocation. Self-defense and the protection of another’s life may be used by Christians to justify violence and killing – but vengeance may not be. Even when thus “justified,” the taking of another person’s life still is a sin.

CHRIST TEACHES PEACE and love among all people. This is what we must strive for. Some who invoke his name choose to ignore this. They do so at their own peril – at the peril of their eternal souls. If you believe in the life to come – and our faith says we do – then eternal joy and eternal agony are the only two options for how it will be spent. Our deeds – our words and thoughts, as well as our actions – tell God which option we have chosen. Others may not choose for us, neither may we blame them for the choice we make, no matter how much we share their feelings.

Lane Pittman

GIVING NOTIONS

Do you collect sample- or travel-size notions such as shampoo, soap, lotion, and such? Often, pharmacies will have these available. Or, they might come in the mail. Also, when you travel over the coming Christmas holiday, you may have a chance to pick up such items in hotels/ motels. Did you know that there are baskets at the church to collect these items for use at the P.A.R.C. shelter? The collection baskets are located in the Friendship Sunday School room and at the entrance to the Sanctuary in the Education Building.

This provides an inexpensive – often free – way to donate to a worthy cause.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Kendall Rhodes
- Jerry Askew
- 7 David Turner, Jr.
- 8 Megan Newsom
- 12 Kenny Hackworth
- 14 Caroline Newsom
- 15 Anne Porter
- 17 Carl Rhodes, Jr.
- 24 Pauline Council
- 125 Matthew Joyner
- 26 Barry Westerwick
- Sylvie Joyner
- 27 Kay Kidd
- 30 Alec Hackworth
- Kerry Westerwick
- 31 Bobby Powell
- Abbey Taylor

SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY 2011

Sunday, Jan 2	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship (Communion)
Wednesday, Jan 5	7pm	Choir Practice
Sunday, Jan 9	9am	First Fellowship
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship (followed by ODU luncheon)
Wednesday, Jan 12	7pm	Choir Practice
Sunday, Jan 16	9am	First Fellowship
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship (officers installed)
Monday, Jan 17	7pm	Session Mtg.
Tuesday, Jan 18	7pm	Diaconate Mtg.
Sunday, Jan 23	9am	First Fellowship
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship (Cong. Mtg.)
Wednesday, Jan 26	7pm	Choir Practice
Sunday, Jan 30	9am	First Fellowship
	10am	Sunday School
	11am	Worship

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:

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