

Creating sanctuary
for all

First Light

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Vol. 11 Issue 12 News from the First Presbyterian Church, Marshall January 2010

A Minute in Ministry

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us ... full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

As the Bible story of salvation goes, God tries to communicate with people time and time again in many ways – through kings, prophets and all manner of other common people, even resorting to special signs on occasion! The way John expresses it in his gospel ... it's such a difficult task for God to get through to us that finally God came to be with us "in the flesh." God tries to help us live fully in love by giving us the way of Jesus.

I find this point so encouraging, not just because it's a few days before Christmas as I write. It gives me hope amid the realities of how difficult it remains for us humans to communicate with one another. Realities we see in dialogue among nations and even in our own Congress. Realities we feel at work and among civic organizations. Realities we face in our most intimate relations with those we love. They are realities, yes, even in our own church.

It's about criticism that feels as though our effort is totally unappreciated. It's about ideas or questions we express that get heard far differently than we intend. It's about helpful things we do that frustrate someone else's plans or confuse a well-established way.

Sometimes words are mean-spirited. And actions can be meant to injure or calculated to cost others for personal gain. They are not to be justified or defended.

But you know, what I hear and see through tears time and again is that the hurt felt, the offense taken, the conflict ensued, the separation caused is far from anything intended. In fact, it's often totally contrary to people's desire in the topic discussed or the activity undertaken. And I don't know about you, but that's what makes me saddest of all. That's what makes me frustrated ... especially when so much goodness is lost in the distance and pain created.

(Continue on next page)

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CHURCH**



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A Minute in Ministry (Continued)

Session will be meeting later today to discern our budget ... hmmm, not an easy conversation! Soon we'll be compiling our end of year reports and preparing for the annual meeting ... hmmm, important business we all share. Who knows? Even now we may be interrupted by someone calling, texting, or walking into the room seeking our attention.

We can surely learn something from the way the Word-made-flesh gave his attention to people. We can be inspired by Jesus' compassion and clear wisdom, even his anger at times; above all his unconditional and unending love for all people. Paul encourages early Christians to build up one another with Christ's love even amid their conflicts. And for what it's worth, here are a few more thoughts that come to my mind and heart:

- Communication begins with our assumptions and expectations – check our assumptions because often they're wrong, and be ready to accept when even rightly-held expectations are not met fully;
- Express ourselves with honesty and openness, patience and perseverance, trusting that a Spirit of grace and truth will free us all to fullness of life;
- Before we say anything first try to listen with sensitivity for how someone else may hear our words, for better or worse;
- Find / build relations with people from whom we can gain a little perspective, and guard against “mis-placing” our emotions by directing them toward others unconnected with our concern;
- When we feel it's necessary to criticize (yes, there are appropriate occasions), first check our love for the person / group who will receive it – and if we can't express our observations with loving respect and ultimately affirmation of some goodness, then maybe it's best to stay silent until we can;
- And please ... when we have a critical opinion to offer, express it in a timely fashion to the person(s) most affected – before it builds as resentment inside ourselves or further misunderstanding between us, and before sowing seeds of antipathy by complaining with others.

Truth is, a little extra effort with positive communication initially will limit frustrations and misunderstandings that could arise. And one of the hardest things to do in life is to receive communication that is insensitive or hurtful and still “hold on to what is good, returning no one evil for evil ...” trusting in God's redeeming grace.

Is there a reason I write this little article? Well, of course ... and you may just know a situation or two that fits our reflection, as well. I hold no naïve illusions that all disagreements will ever be able to be resolved completely. We are humans with all our limitations, after all. Still, I will give my heart, mind, soul and strength to all efforts to heal wounds caused by words; to bridge chasms caused by some action; to redeem conflict and build collaboration in the power of God's grace. I humbly and earnestly appeal for you to do the same.

Dear friends, is there a reason I write this? Well, yes ... because I have found James' warning to be true and fear when surely it will be again soon:

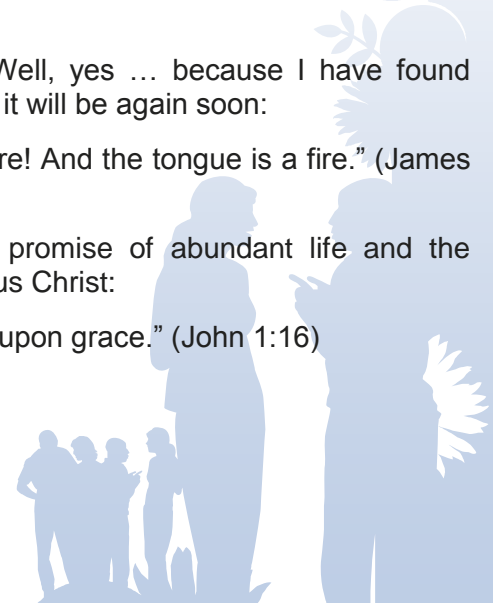
“How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire.” (James 3:5-6)

And ultimately I write filled with trust in the promise of abundant life and the challenge for everyday life John gives us in Jesus Christ:

“From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.” (John 1:16)

Grace and peace,

Seth



News from the PWA

PWA Woman of the Year

Every year, our Women's Association chooses a special woman among us who lives in grace and exemplifies the characteristics of strength, dedication, and a commitment to Christ and our Church. At a Sunday service in December, we were happy to announce that special woman among us was Whitney Jonas, our 2009 Presbyterian Woman of the Year. We marked the occasion by presenting Whitney with a certificate from the Presbyterian Church (USA) designating her as our Woman of the Year, along with the beautiful pewter PWA pin created especially for these women. Knowing how closely Whitney works with Seth, we asked him to put into words just what it is that makes Whitney so important to our church. Here is what he said:

Since joining our congregation, Whitney has given generously to our ministry and mission. She serves on Session, has led classes on prayer, and she leads our worship as liturgist. She has been a willing worker on so many occasions from hanging Christmas greens to hosting AWOL. Her generosity extends far beyond the confines of our congregation to active participation in other community organizations and support for social service agencies ... like Habitat for Humanity. Perhaps her impact is most noticeable in her diligent efforts in caring for our building and grounds. The realization that our building is so much more than just a structure compels her to foster a sanctuary for all who meet here, for whatever reason. She exudes indomitable energy, wise patience, and hopeful confidence that empower other people to use their gifts, as well. In and through ... above and undergirding all that she does ... Whitney holds a Spirit of trust inside her heart and mind ... Trust in God's presence in each of us and among us all in Christ. It is clear to her that Christ is the source of her life with all its goodness. And, through Whitney, God blesses us all richly with abundant gifts of grace.

We couldn't have said it better ourselves! So, Whitney, on behalf of the PWA and everyone in our church, we congratulate you and we thank you for all you have done and continue to do for our congregation!

PWA Survey

Included with the PWA Newsletter you received in the mail this fall was a Survey we would like all of our members to complete. We have received a few back, if you haven't done so yet, please complete your survey and return it to Lisa DeGraw as soon as possible. Or, if you have misplaced your survey, please just email Lisa at lisadegraw@yahoo.com and send along any comments you'd like to share. Thanks!

Church Kitchen Cleaning

Saturday, January 23 @ 9:00 AM: Your PWA Board will be in the kitchen at 9:00 on January 23, cleaning it from top to bottom. This is a big job, and we could use your help. Many hands make light work, so we hope to see you that day! We will be providing lunch.. Men are welcome to join in the fun!

PWA Annual Dues

As you know, the needs in our community and beyond are greater than ever, and much of the money we collect through fund raisers and annual dues goes to assist local charitable organizations. The dues we collected from our members in 2009 fell below our usual amounts, but we were able to distribute available funds as follows: \$200 to our Deacon's fund; \$300 to the Fountain Clinic; \$200 to Mobile Meals; \$200 to the Charitable Union; \$150 to the Salvation Army; and \$150 to the Calhoun County Humane Society. Our members also continue to contribute baby items to Oaklawn Hospital's "Baby Showers in a Bag" program. So, we hope that you will prayerfully consider helping us again in 2010 with any amount of money that your budget can support.

First Light





Volunteers

Liturgists

January 3

Creighton Sherman

January 10

Jack Vandy Bogurt

January 17

Becky Davis

January 24

Kat Whaley

January 31

Ken MacNevin

Greeters

January 3

Bruce & Arlene Smith

January 10

Pauline Reddick

January 17

TBD

January 24

TBD

January 31

TBD

Coffee Hour Hosts

January 3

Nancy Foust &
Melanie Snodgrass

January 10

Youth Group

January 17

Almaraz Family

January 24

TBD

January 31

TBD

News from Christian Education

Sunday School Open House and Mural Unveiling

Thank you to everyone for visiting during our open house day in December to see the new murals. Everyone made noises of joy and appreciation for them!

Mitten Tree

Thank you to everyone for your donations to our collection of mittens and gloves. We will continue to collect them through Epiphany Sunday on January 3, 2010. The youth will gather to put the donations in boxes and transport them to shelters in Battle Creek.

Coffee Hour Hosts

Attention Youth Group – don't forget that we are hosting coffee hour after morning worship on **Sunday, January 10**. Each person is encouraged to bring something to share, help serve coffee, and stay for clean up after we're done.

Happy New Year Youth Group!

We're looking forward to being together in the new year for more fellowship and mission. Here's a recap of our schedule for the next several months:

Sunday, Feb. 21, Fellowship Fun!

(games, snacks and poster-making for the Humane Society project), 2-4 p.m.

Saturday, Mar. 20, Humane Society Visit,

9:15 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sunday, April 18, Cleaning Day

(cleaning around the church and town), time TBA.

Sunday, May 23, Last Day of Church School Year!

(We'll celebrate together.....)

Fountain Clinic Project

The children and youth in Sunday school are collecting supplies for the Fountain Clinic. If you are able, please give the following items: Toothpaste, Mouthwash, Hand Lotion, Body Lotion, Deodorant, Soap, Shampoo, Paper Towels, Toilet Paper, Nail Brush, Nail Clippers, Chapped Lip Balm

Boxes are available in which to place your donations in Fellowship Hall, the Eagle Street entry, and the East Landing of the sanctuary. Thank you!

We've Noticed

Thank you to everyone who brought gift cards to our Christmas Tea. We collected gift cards in excess of \$400 and gave these to MACS to be disbursed to needy families at Christmas. – PWA Board

Thank you to all the well wishes and Birthday cards I received – Dorothy Gordon

Many thanks to Brad Whaley who has ended a term of faithful service on Session ... and to Shirley Clothier, Michael McNeil, Creighton Sherman, and Jim VanderWeg who have been elected to serve for the coming three year terms.

Thank you to Mark Gilbert who is ending a term of service on Deacons. And to Jean Cox (three years), Linda Daily (three yeas), Dorothy Gordon (one year) and Bea Shareghi (three years) who have elected to serve terms on the Board of Deacons.

Many thanks and expressions of deep appreciation for all those who donated gifts and food stuff, who sorted and coordinated, and those who delivered last Sunday afternoon to our six MACS Families!!!! – Mission and Outreach



Calendar Highlights

Sunday, January 3	Epiphany Communion Isaiah 60:1-6; Matthew 2:1-12
Monday, January 4	PWA Board Meeting, 7pm
Sunday, January 10	Baptism of the Lord Sunday Isaiah 43:1-3, 8-13; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22
Monday, January 11	Teams, 6:30/7pm
Tuesday, January 12	Mary Martha, 10am
Sunday, January 17	Second Sunday after Epiphany 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Luke 4:14-30
Monday, January 18	Deacons, 7pm
Tuesday, January 19	Esther Circle, 7pm
Thursday, January 21	PCFC Board Meeting, 6:15pm
Sunday, January 24	Third Sunday after Epiphany 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; John 2:1-11
Monday, January 25	Session, 6:30pm
Sunday, January 31	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany Jeremiah 1:4-10; Luke 5:1-11

AA meets each night of the week at 8:00pm.

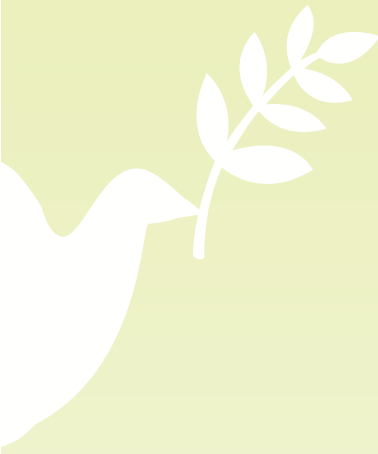
January Life at First Presbyterian Church						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 Painters 1pm	2
3 Worship 10:15am Communion	4 PWA 7pm	5 TOPS 8:30am	6 Choirs 6pm	7 Sip & Stitch 10am Prayer & Share 9am	8 Painters 1pm	9
10 Worship 10:15am	11 Teams 6:30/7pm	12 TOPS 8:30am Mary Martha 10am	13 Choirs 6pm	14 Sip & Stitch 10am Prayer & Share 9am	15 Painters 1pm	16
17 Worship 10:15am Music Sunday	18 Deacons 7pm	19 TOPS 8:30am Esther Circle 7pm	20 Choirs 6pm	21 Sip & Stitch 10am Prayer & Share 9am PCFC Board Mtg 6:15pm	22 Painters 1pm	23
24 Worship 10:15am	25 Session 6:30pm	26 TOPS 8:30am	27 Choirs 6pm	28 Sip & Stitch 10am Prayer & Share 9am	29 Painters 1pm	30
31 Worship 10:15am						

First Light

Birthdays

- January 1**
Barbara Maurer
Kurt Wigent
- January 4**
Daisy Widmayer
- January 8**
Nicholas Lillrose
- January 9**
Virginia Cairns
- January 11**
Tom Grigowski
- January 14**
Margaret Day
Tom Whitsell
- January 15**
Ralph Niehaus
- January 17**
Bonnie Wigent
- January 18**
Keira Morris
- January 20**
Richard Rabbideau
- January 22**
Stan Sinke
Julie Ballard
Nolan Levack
- January 23**
Sandra Buskirk
Samantha Daily
- January 24**
Freda Collins
Teresa MacNevin
Kolleen Daly
- January 26**
Caroline Collins
- January 28**
Andy Dale
Ben Altic
- January 29**
Steve Hanway
Kate Belew
- January 31**
Creighton Sherman





Adult Spiritual Development

We continue with two opportunities on Sunday. Before worship beginning at 8:45 we explore themes of the Bible to guide the heart of our faith. And on the first Sunday of the month we gather after worship and fellowship time (with lunch if you choose) for First Sunday Forum. On first Sundays of the month, both opportunities will be offered, before and after worship.

1) **Faith at 8:45 – An Altar in the World**

Barbara Brown Taylor has heard so often: “I am spiritual but not religious.” This book is a response to that statement based on the belief that “what is saving my life right now is the conviction that there is no spiritual treasure to be found apart from the bodily experiences of human life on earth.” In this book Taylor reflects with us on practices of daily life, such as vision, reference, groundedness, community, vocation and others. We will begin on January 3 with the introduction and chapter one for January 10. This series should take us through around Easter. Some copies of the book will be available at Fireside books. Contact Seth with any questions.

2) **First Sunday Forum—A Defense of the Family Farm – Sunday, January 10** **(*Please, note we will meet on the Second Sunday this month).**

In this essay, Wendell Berry reflects on how changes in farming practices have affected our whole society far beyond the food we eat. What are assumptions that undergird contemporary culture? How do we value systems of community life – combining independence and neighborliness – far beyond just the cost of the food we eat? Copies of Berry’s essay are available on a table in the Eagle Street entry. Hope to see you after worship / fellowship on January 10! And if you have ideas for future discussions, please contact Seth!

DVD Course: The Bible

We have DVDs of lectures on the Bible by well-known religious study professors we would like to share in a small group setting, probably in the lounge, after the first of the year.

The Old Testament is given by Amy-Jill Levine of Vanderbilt University, the New Testament .by Bart Ehrman of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

There are 48 lectures (24 for each testament) about ½ hour each. There will be time for discussion and still keep the sessions short.

They assume only a very basic knowledge of the Bible but will enrich your understanding of Scripture at any level of understanding. They don’t have to be followed with an open book, but there may be some suggested readings for each lecture that may aid in comprehension.

At this point we are planning on weekly sessions, the day and time are largely up to the participants. They can be in the evenings or on weekends. If you think you may be interested, please let John Cox or Suzanne Weeldreyer know and indicate the day or time you prefer.

Upcoming AWOLs

Mark your calendars with the upcoming dates for AWOL, details with be published in upcoming newsletters, bulletins and prayer chains:

January 22nd – Whitney Jonas

February 19th – Rich and Polly Healey

March 19th (St. Patty’s Day) – Michael McNeil and Phil Martin

April 16th – Mark and JoEllen Gilbert



Ushers Schedule

January 3

Head Usher – Alex Kowitz
Elevator – Maggie Barrett
Bulletins – Caroline Collins, Nathan Machalka
Acolytes – Allison Brownell, Riley Brownell

January 10

Head Usher – Nick Vetter
Elevator – Ben Lillrose
Bulletins – Alix Cornow, Madison Gilbertson
Acolytes – Lacey Almaraz, Nicole Almaraz

January 17

Head Usher – Abby Mershon
Elevator – Brooke Uzzle
Bulletins – Katie Howard, Ally Johnson
Acolytes – Jamie Daily, Nicholas Lillrose

If you cannot serve on your assigned Sunday, please arrange a trade or substitute, then notify Phil Mershon and the church office of your change - Thanks!

Session Action

At its regular December meeting, your Session did the following:

- Held its annual meeting with the Board of Deacons
- Heard a report from the delegates to the most recent meeting of Presbytery
- Approved Hayley Koenig as a new parent member on the Advisory Council of the Presbyterian Center for Children
- Approved a request from the Sunday School to request contributions of toiletry items for distribution at the Fountain Clinic
- Received the financial report for the church for the month of November
- Adopted a church operating budget for 2010
- Adopted the required IRS resolution concerning the pastor's housing allowance
- Set the Annual Meeting of the Congregation for Sunday, February 14, 2010
- Authorized the ordination and installation of Deacons and Elders on either January 10 or 17
- Set a Session planning retreat for January 10

Respectfully Submitted,
Phil Mershon, Session Clerk.

Stated Call

The 169th Annual Meeting of the Congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Marshall will be held in Fellowship Hall on Sunday February 14, 2010 beginning with a potluck dinner at 11:30 a.m. The purposes of this meeting will be to review annual reports of the organizations of the church for 2009, receive the financial budget for 2010, approve the Terms of Call for the pastor for 2010, elect four members-at-large to the Church Nominating Committee for one-year terms, and to transact any and all other business brought to the floor.

The 2009 Church Nominating Committee will present the following names for the 2010 Church Nominating Committee: Peg Esbaugh, Glenn Kowalske, Alan Mershon, and Phyllis Riley. Other persons may be nominated from the floor provided they have previously indicated a willingness to serve.

Attention to all church organization leaders: The annual report for your committee, mission team, or other organization is due to Leslie by no later than January 24. If possible, she would like them e-mailed to her in 12 point Roman. This will make it a lot easier for her to put the report together.

First Light

Teams

Administrative Ministry Team

Joelle Knoch, Treasurer

269.789.1339

Finance

Joelle Knoch

269.789.1339

Personnel

Jim VanderWeg

269.781.3432

Properties

Whitney Jonas

269.753.9951

Stewardship

Rich Healey

269.789.0665

Community Outreach

Ministry Team

Michael McNeil

269.789.0721

Mission

Denise Phillips

269.789.2780

Evangelism

Doug Gilbertson

269.781.3101

Spiritual Life Ministry Team

Diane Kowalske

269.781.8529

Worship

Ken MacNevin

269.781.3329

Christian Education

Steve Hanway

269.789.0827

Fellowship

Creighton Sherman

269.781.2267

Deacons

Karen Earl

269.781.3211

Women's Association

Lisa DeGraw

269.841.6787



Presbyterian Center for Children

Overwhelming Response

Little did I know that when PCFC started our Coupons for Troops program in June of this year, that we would have such an overwhelming response. The program here at the Center started merely by chance. We had several families bringing in baby item coupons to share amongst the families here – our own little coupon exchange. Then they started bringing them in for more items. The unfortunate thing was we were throwing away quite a few of them as no one needed certain coupons.

One day I was talking with my husband and telling him about our “coupon exchange” at the Center and how many coupons we were actually throwing away. He said that it was funny that I mentioned it because he had just read an article in the paper that day about a program called Coupons for Troops.

So like any other technology interested person, I went to my computer and “Googled” it. I found out that there are many different programs in many different cities across the United States. To learn more, I emailed the contact address on the web site. A gal named Leslie emailed me back right away and got me set up with a contact at the United States Air Force Base in Germany.

We sent our first package to Germany in July. In that first two packages we were able to send over \$6700.00 worth of coupons. That was after only collecting for two months! Our most recent package valued at over \$8000.00.

In addition to our coupon collection box at the Marshall District Library, we receive packages of coupons on a weekly basis from all over the US. We have received packages from Dorr, MI; Chicago, IL; Fenton, MO; Glen Gardner, NJ; Tucson, AZ; Houston, TX; and Marshall and Battle Creek. We have even sparked groups in Charlotte and Jackson, MI and Edon, OH to start their own Coupons for Troops programs!

Thank you for your help in making this such a great success!

First Light

Published Monthly



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