



Presbyterian Web Sites:

Presbytery of the Peaks: www.peakspresbytery.org
Synod of the Mid-Atlantic: www.synatlantic.org
Presbyterian Church (USA): www.pcusa.org
Pby. Disaster Assistance: www.pcusa.org/pda/
Presbyterian Today: www.pcusa.org/pcusa/today
Pby. News Service: www.pcusa.org/pcusa/brief.hem



*Join us for a cup
of coffee every Sunday
morning in the kitchen
before Church School*

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S T E E P L E V I E W S



*Our Mission is to:
Share God's love, embrace our neighbors, nurture each other.*

STEEPLE VIEWS

First Presbyterian Church

December, 2009

Martinsville, Virginia

From My Perspective Within The Kingdom

As I write this article, the first Sunday of Advent is only a week and a half away and Christmas Eve is five weeks from tonight. Certain radio stations have begun playing Christmas songs this past week and, as usual, various stores have had Christmas decorations up since just after Halloween. So, already “it’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas!”

I’m sure you and your family have time-honored Christmas traditions, as does our family. Before Thanksgiving weekend is over, our Christmas tree, numerous nativities, and other decorations will be out of the boxes and on display. Between now and the end of the year, we will sit down and watch treasured movies like *It’s A Wonderful Life*, *A Christmas Carol* (with George C. Scott playing Scrooge), and *A Christmas Story* where the young boy Ralphie gets his tongue stuck on a frozen pole. Of course, there are the special Christmas programs and worship services here at the church.

Amidst all of the hustle and bustle of the season, there is something special I do for myself. I get out the book entitled Deliverance to the Captives by Karl Barth and I turn to one of his Christmas Eve sermons, “He Stands By Us,” that Dr. Barth preached in 1958 to prison inmates in Basel, Switzerland. This powerful sermon never fails to speak to me, and I want to share an excerpt with you as an early Christmas gift!

The place where the Savior enters in looks rather like the stable of Bethlehem. It is not beautiful, but quite ugly; not at all cozy, but really frightening; not at all decently human, but right beside the animals. You see, the proud or modest inns, and our behavior as their inhabitants, are but the surface of our lives. Beneath, there lurks the depth, even the abyss. Down below, we are only poor beggars, lost sinners, moaning creatures on the threshold of death, only people who have lost their way.

Down there Jesus Christ set up quarters. Even better, he has already done so! Yes, praise be to God for this dark place, for this manger, for this stable in our lives! There we need him, and there he can use each one of us. There he only waits that we see him, recognize him, believe in him, and love him. There he greets us. What else can we do but return his greeting and bid him welcome? Let us not be ashamed that the oxen and donkeys are close by. Precisely there he firmly stands by us all. In this dark place he will have Holy Communion with us. This is what we now shall have with him and with one another. Amen. (Pages 141-142)

I can only hope that that message speaks to you as it does to me. It’s good to be reminded that Christmas isn’t just about the bright lights and all of the festive decorations around the house. It’s also about the dark places within our souls and how Christ Jesus, the light of the world, has exposed the sinful darkness, defeated it on the cross, and set us free to live as the forgiven children of God, now and forever. May the story of his birth bring about a new birth within all of us. And then, it really and truly will be a merry Christmas!

In Christ’s love,
Randy



Happy Birthday in December to

- 1 Anne Vipperman
- 2 Margaret Hotchkiss, Erik Stegall
- 3 Dru Rothrock
- 4 Ashby Pritchett
- 5 Mary Mac Knighton
- 6 Wallace Haskins, Ken Wilson, Keith Sanders, Katherine Lester
- 8 Lyn Davis
- 9 Joan Montgomery, Chris Wingfield, Jack Adkins
- 10 Betsy Haskins, Marion Miller
- 11 John Kuhn
- 12 Brian Williams
- 14 Mervyn King
- 15 Kim Boyd
- 17 Matthew Mason
- 18 Bill Kirby, III
- 19 Beth Chapman
- 20 Claire Adkins
- 22 Jeb Bowles, Vera Jane Kuhn, Grayson Russell
- 24 Jackie McLachlan
- 26 Smith Chaney
- 27 Nancy Moore, Cathy Stone, Gael Chaney
- 28 Doc Altizer, Brenda Williams
- 29 Ken Smith, Denise Unterbrink, Lucy Wilson, Kimberly Toothman

And in January to

- 4 Marie Thompson, Melissa Seamon
- 5 Katherine Earles, Ashley Pruitt
- 6 Iliene Hite, John Chappell, Lea Washburn
- 7 Buck Flythe, Rob King
- 8 Stan Cobb
- 9 Jennifer Nease

Sympathy of the congregation is extended to Bill and Connie Garrett on the death of Bill's mother, Frances Garrett, on October 26, 2009, in Richmond, Virginia.

Sympathy of the congregation is extended to Joan Ragland on the death of her mother, Katherine Galipeau, on November 12, 2009, in Bridgeport, New York.

Congratulations to Troy and Gwyndolyn Imler on the birth of their son, William Stanley Imler, on November 16, 2009, in Mount Pleasant, SC. Patsy Stanley is the proud grandmother and Jennifer Stanley, proud aunt.

The Tempo "Our Musical Pulse"

Langley Winds In Concert

It was such a treat to have the Langley Winds in concert on November 13. The ensemble is made up of five excellent musicians who play well together. Their repertoire was superb. It is difficult to find music written and/or arranged for this combination of instruments but they found and played marvelous music. Their musicianship was obvious as they played Ravel to Sousa.

Our church was the second of their concerts on the current tour. They played in Roanoke on Thursday and in Rocky Mount on Saturday. These players represent the Air Force and the USA so very well. Good, young musicians would do well to consider a career in a service band.

Chancel Choir

The Chancel Choir continues to prepare music for the fall season and for the Lessons and Carols Service on December 20 at 7:00 p.m. This service will relate, in scripture and music, the story of Jesus, the Messiah, beginning with the Old Testament prophecy about His birth, continuing with the events of the Nativity, and concluding with the Incarnation and Simeon seeing Jesus in the Temple. All worshipers will join the choir in singing appropriate hymns and carols. Please remind your friends and neighbors about this service and invite them to join with us.

I appreciate a number of our members joining with singers from Forest Hills for the Presbytery meeting on October 29. Cynthia Dobrinski was the organist and accompanist for that service.

The Sanctuary Ringers

The Sanctuary Ringers rang in worship, for the second time this season, on November 15. Since one of our ringers was out that Sunday, Kimberly Seamon substituted for her. Thanks! Kimberly. I compliment the choir on a fine job as they rang two Thanksgiving hymn arrangements on the Sunday on which we designated as Laity Sunday.

Please keep in mind that we still have a couple of positions open for interested ringers



Children and Youth Music News

Angels Aware: December 6th at 7:00 PM!!!!!!

Please join all WAM, Kinder I and Kinder II singers, actors and actresses for a wonderful, heartwarming Pageant. We will tell the story behind the story -- how things went in Heaven before Jesus' birth!! The staging is going to be phenomenal with an all new set, and all new costumes, and beautiful music, and a wonderful story. Plus a reception to follow with great cookies and treats to celebrate the season with Fellowship and Joy!

A nursery will be provided for the youngest, but most children will enjoy the presentation.

It is always good to play to a full house, so please come out and lend our church's children and youth your warmest support. You will be glad that you did!

Kinder I and Kinder II are busy with Kinder work and prep for the play. It's good to teach multi-tasking early, right???

Music Together is finishing up the Fall quarter and will be looking forward to the winter material after Christmas.

All groups will celebrate our season with parties on December 7th or 8th. Should be a lot of fun!!

We will reconvene on Monday and Tuesday, January 4th and 5th!

Advent Workshop Wrap Up

Advent workshop was a blast this year!! The Fellowship Hall was filled with joy, laughter, good food and crafts to make the season bright.

How many years has Shane Pinkston, ably assisted by Ben and Max, been making chili for this occasion? Hm, I'm guessing 15? Thanks, Shane, Ben, Max and Heidi for handling the food prep. It was sooo good!

Fellowship Committee members, led by Paul Cannaday, were on hand to make sure all logistics were covered. They did their usual incredible job. This committee has its hands full and always comes through. We appreciate you!

Darla Main-Schneider and Joanne Sanders were responsible for supplying homemade sugar cookies to eat and decorate. Everyone had fun decorating and eating their creations!

Johnny Pinkard rolled in with kits for crèches that so many people enjoyed. We had folks say they are still enjoying the one they made with Johnny years ago. This deal takes a lot of prep work and Johnny, as usual, was grinning from ear to ear!!

Matthew Price taught Marian Campbell and others how to make the most wonderful boxes from Christmas cards. Boy, are they pretty! I even gave it a try, and Matthew was endlessly patient!

Gael Chaney led us in making boxes for Operation Christmas Child, and then she delivered them to the pick-up area. Thank you for fostering this wonderful project again this year!

I had a great time with Maddie Sayles, Madison Powell, and grandson Landon, making star boxes. They did a great job!

Now, about Bonnie Price -- She is the heart and soul of this endeavor. It is Bonnie who creates the new ideas each year. She is endlessly resourceful and talented even in the face of disaster. The Saturday before the workshop, I purchased more wax for our candle project, but I didn't know enough to get enough wicks. So on Sunday afternoon about 2:00, Bonnie heads to Danville to Hobby Lobby to get more only to find that it is closed on Sunday. Ever resourceful, Bonnie calls husband David to go to Roanoke to get more

wicks. In comes David right in the nick of time! Whew!!

It was a great night! If you see these folks, would you thank them for their great generosity in making Advent Workshop a time to remember!!

As I write this before Thanksgiving, I want to wish each of you the joy and fellowship of Thanksgiving and the glory which is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ as we all walk through Advent toward the manger. In Christ's love we behold the best that life has to offer us.

Betsy

Please note: the church office will be closed on Christmas Day and on **Monday, December 28.**

Christmas Cheer: Saturday, December 5, 2009, at 8:30 a.m. we will be meeting at the warehouse at 211 Doyle Street, which is behind the former Martinsville Henry County Rescue Squad building. Want to help needy families in our community? The Youth Group and members of the entire congregation are invited to join us in a community-wide endeavor to pack 1,000 boxes of food for hungry families in our community.

On Christmas Eve, we will have two worship services at 5:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The first service is a family service oriented especially toward the children. Besides the traditional Scripture lessons and Christmas carols, our children and youth will act out the events surrounding the birth of our Lord in the manger. The second service will also include Scripture lessons and Christmas carols. We hope you will come and make your Christmas experience both merry and meaningful.

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Editor: Patrice Newnam, Publisher: Sarah Altizer; Mailing Staff: volunteers

The Sunday after Christmas, December 27, there will **not** be an early worship service and there will **not** be any Sunday school classes. However, you are invited to come to the sanctuary at 10:00 a.m. for a congregational hymn sing. You will have the opportunity to ask for certain Christmas carols to be sung or any of your other favorite hymns. The 11:00 a.m. worship service will follow.

Advent: Advent is a period of prayer, reflection, and anticipation for the coming of the Christ child. It begins on Sunday, November 29, continuing until the Christmas Eve celebration. At a time when our attention can be focused on the gifts that we need to buy and wrap (and those gifts we hope to receive), the season of Advent provides us with a wonderful opportunity to prepare the way of the Lord in our own lives. The four Sundays of Advent are: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Calling All Angels!

Once again, it is time to call on the *ANGELS* in our church family to help spread the joy of Christmas to needy families in our community. On Sunday, November 22, 29, and December 6, the familiar *ANGEL TREES* will appear in the narthex and the Sunday School hallway with gift suggestions for boys and girls in six families. Always generous, the members of First Presbyterian Church will take the angels, purchase the gift, and



return it wrapped by December 13, for delivery on December 15. There will also be angels on the trees designating gifts of money which will be used to purchase and deliver boxes of food for each family. This is a favorite project of the Mission/Evangelism Committee and we appeal to our church membership once again to help make our 2009 Christmas Angel Tree event successful.

Christmas Share Project – 2009

This year we have an opportunity not only to benefit local charities, but also one that is new to our congregation. The Teamwork City of Hope is located in a remote corner of Tanzania. Check out the website – <http://www.teamworkcityofhope.com>. Love in Jesus –Chuck Marshall,MD (Ch'mn Medical Board)



There will be an **Advent**

breakfast in the fellowship hall on Sunday, December 6, at 9:30 a.m.

During this time we will decorate the Christmas tree with ornaments from past years and any new ones you wish to contribute. Sunday School will follow at 10:00 a.m.

Anyone who would like to have **offering envelopes** should call Nancy Erikson, (632-3431, Ext. 314) or fpc@kimbanet.org

If you wish to place flowers in the sanctuary during the year 2010, please call Nancy Betz (632-5439) or Patsy Stanley at 647-7611).

The annual JOY GIFT offering will be on Sunday, December 13, and Sunday, December 20. Special envelopes will be available in the pew racks. Those who benefit from this offering are retired church workers and students of our Presbyterian-related ethnic schools. Your gift will support these valuable ongoing ministries.

General Memorial Fund

Mrs. Lang Mauck – In Memory of Mr. Charles Roy
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Collins – In Memory of Mrs. Frances Garrett

Music Memorial Fund

Mr. and Mrs. Gary Collins – In Memory of Mrs. Frances Garrett

Pastors Discretionary Fund

Mrs. Linda A. Pickett

December Duties

Communion (Traditional)

Jim Baker, Captain
Victoria Esarey
Cindy Franck
David Garland
Darla Main-Schneider
Cathy Stone
Bill Garrett
Forrest Truitt
Vickie Wells

Gene and Betty Stanley (**Contemporary**)

Greeters (Contemporary)

6 David Garland
13 Ashby Pinkard
20 Nancy Davis
27 Johnny Pinkard

Greeters (Traditional)

6 Charles Toothman, David King
13 Ann Reaser, David Garland
20 Anne Vipperman, Victoria Esarey
27 Melissa Wingfield, Denise Unterbrink

Ushers

6 Ed Newman, Bob Davis, Steve DeBusk,
David Garland, Bill Manning, Shane
Pinkston, Dru Rothrock, Forrest Truitt, Kent
Williams.

13 Monty & Joan Montgomery, Milton &
Nancy Davis, Joe & Jeri DeVault, Buck &
Helen Flythe, Gary & Cathy Nelson, Tom &
Denise Unterbrink.

20 Neil Tatum, Clarence Benfield, Buck &
Helen Flythe, Richard Huff, Bill Kirby,
Lang Mauck, Jim Stegall, Bill Stone.

27 Ed Pace, Emily & Stuart Beard, Annie B.
Boyd, Alanna Ferguson, Libby Goldstein,
Caroline Harris, Michael Mason, Dyer Pace, Ben
Pinkston, Matthew Price, Will & Kimberly Sea-
mon, Jacob Wingfield.