



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



STEEPLE VIEWS

First Presbyterian Church

January, 2009

Martinsville, Virginia

From My Perspective Within The Kingdom

Thirty-four years ago, in January of 1975, Monica and I were married in the same church we both grew up in – Oak Hill Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, MO. We have many shared memories of that place and the people there who nurtured us in the faith. We remember: the worship services and the different pastors; the Sunday School classes and teachers; the Sr. High youth group and the adult advisors; the various choirs for children, youth, and adults; church camp as both campers and counselors; fellowship opportunities – the list goes on. Going to church each Sunday was like attending a weekly family reunion.

Oak Hill Presbyterian Church, like our church here in Martinsville, celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of every month. And, when we were present in worship to receive the sacrament, we filled out a pew card indicating that we were there. It was understood that, if a person missed three communion Sundays in a row, unless that person was very ill or shut-in or had a good excuse (like being away from home for three or more months or away at college), the Session of the church might consider placing that person on the inactive membership list.

Now, I have to admit that, on the one hand, that seems pretty legalistic. It speaks of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" with very little grace, mercy or flexibility built in to the system. On the other hand, I also have to affirm that I liked that way of doing things. The Session made it very clear that it placed a high premium on our attendance at worship and active participation in the life of the church. The Session was holding us accountable to our vows of active membership within the faith community. As children and youth, we grew up knowing exactly what was expected of us - especially after we had been confirmed and commissioned, having professed our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The Session expected us to be active members, who were involved in the life of that congregation, and we were!

With that in mind, as we enter into this new year, I would like to propose that we all take seriously our call to follow Christ through the avenue of active membership in this church. I want to suggest that each and every one of us place a high priority on church participation within this year ahead. I hope you will be actively involved and engaged (if you are able to do so!) in this First Presbyterian Church of Martinsville, VA.

Here's what that would look like: There would be fewer empty spaces and more members in the sanctuary for both worship services at 8:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. The Sunday School classes would be filled with children, youth, and adults. The youth groups would fill their respective rooms to overflowing. Every Sunday would feel like Easter Sunday and, I hope, like a weekly family reunion. We would easily oversubscribe our 2009 budget; then, we would have the luxury of finding and funding other mission projects and supporting them with our ample human resources.

I hope you are willing to catch hold of my dream and commit yourself to a higher level of involvement in our congregation. Let us individually and collectively do our part to live out the mission of our church, which is to "Share God's love, embrace our neighbors, and nurture each other." May God bless us and use us to be a blessing to others in 2009!

In Christ's love,
Randy

A Word from the Associate Pastor:

I hope you and your family had a wonderful and Merry Christmas! December is perhaps my favorite month here at First Presbyterian Church because of all the special activities we have that help us catch the Christmas Spirit.

Since I work with the Mission and Evangelism Committee and community outreach ministry is near and dear to my heart, I want to thank all of you who gave to others this holiday season. First Presbyterian Church members were involved in many service projects over the course of the month. The first Saturday of December, around twenty-five youth and adults from our congregation volunteered at Christmas Cheer. If you have never seen the operation at Christmas Cheer before, it is very impressive. The volunteers form an assembly line where each person is responsible for placing a certain item, such as a blanket, a cereal box, or pasta, into a large box that is several feet tall. Our work at Christmas Cheer reminds me of the body of Christ. As the body of Christ, we all have our unique gifts and talents to offer. We can all do good things as individuals, but if we pull together, we can accomplish incredible things working on a common goal. Through good teamwork, we were able to pack a thousand boxes that have been distributed to the poor and hungry in our Martinsville and Henry County community.

Thanks to all who donated to Christmas Share. As of December 17, which is the day I wrote this article, we had already collected \$2,985 for the 22 agencies on our Christmas Share list. I expect more donations will continue to come in and we will give you the final total collected in next month's Steepleviews.

You, as a congregation, amaze me with your generosity each and every year with the Angel Trees. Most years, we have given out around 70 or 80 angels. This year, there were 105 angels and you took and returned every single angel. Thank you! I

was excited every time I walked past the session room and saw the gifts piling up, taking every inch of space on the tables.

I want to thank the fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in Youth Jam and all the adults who helped us deliver the gifts. At each house, the Youth Jam participants sang a Christmas carol to spread the holiday cheer. The families who received the gifts were awestruck. At least two of the mothers were so overwhelmed that they started to cry tears of joy. Several of the people we met insisted on hugging every single one of us before we left. Thank you to everyone who supported the Angel Trees and helped make those joyous Christmas moments possible.

As we move into 2009, it is clear that our county and our community are in the midst of a difficult financial recession. In the midst of the uncertainty, turmoil, and poverty, I hope our church can continue to be a voice that answers Jesus' call in Matthew 25 to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and visit the lonely.

Happy New Year!

Peace in Christ,

Jody Moore

To conserve energy and to be good stewards of our funds, thermostats in areas not used every day should be set at 60 degrees when the areas are unoccupied and increased to a range of 68 to 70 degrees so people can be comfortable during Sunday school, meetings, and other functions in the church. The last person to leave these rooms should be sure the thermostat is lowered to 60 degrees. Everyone's cooperation is greatly appreciated.

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

There will be a **Session committees' planning night** on Wednesday, January 7, 2009, from 5:30-7:00 p.m. The moderators and vice-moderators of the Session's seven committees and the pastors will meet to discuss effective committee work and to invite others to serve on these committees in order to involve more people in the decision-making and activities of the church.

Here is a proposed list for 2009 of the Session committees and the elders, who serve on them: Administration/Planning – Ann Reaser (chair), Charles Toothman (vice-chair), and Jim Baker; Congregational Care/Fellowship – Nancy Davis (chair), Paul Cannaday (vice-chair), Joan Montgomery, and Victoria Esarey; Christian Education – Gavin Russell (chair), Bill Peterson (vice-chair), and Emily Parker; Facilities – David King (chair), Manly Boyd (vice-chair), and Doug Walsh; Mission/Evangelism – Lang Mauck (chair), Cindy Franck (vice chair), and Bill Kirby; Stewardship/Visioning – Anne Vipperman (chair), Denise Unterbrink (vice-chair), and David Garland; Worship – Catherine Bridges (chair), Betty Stanley (vice-chair), Melissa Wingfield, and Darla Main-Schneider.

If you would like to serve on one of these committees, please contact the appropriate elder, who is the chair (or vice-chair) of the committee. Thanks to all, who serve within our congregation!



Grace Network has asked us to please supply both pasta and spaghetti sauce. Pasta should be 1-lb. boxes or bags

Here are the **Session highlights** from the November stated meeting:

- Approved the October 26, 2008 minutes of the Session's stated meeting
- Examined and approved the exam of the nine elders-elect (Class of 2011 – Jim Baker,

Manly Boyd, Catherine Bridges, Victoria Esarey, David Garland, Bill Kirby, Darla Main-Schneider, and Denise Unterbrink; Class of 2010 – Joan Montgomery) and set their ordination and/or installation for Sunday, January 11, 2009 at the 11:00 .m. worship service

- Approved the employment of Nancy Erikson as the church's bookkeeper
- Agreed to host the Presbytery of the Peaks meeting here at our church on Thursday, October 29, 2009
- Approved sending a letter to the members of the congregation regarding Cole Tatum's medical needs and inviting the members to give to a special fund to help with related expenses



Happy Birthday in January to

- | | |
|----|---|
| 4 | Marie Thompson, Melissa Seamon, Vicki Easley |
| 5 | Katherine Earles, Ashley Pruitt |
| 6 | Iliene Hite, John Chappell, Lea Washburn |
| 7 | Buck Flythe, Rob King |
| 8 | Stan Cobb |
| 9 | Jennifer Nease |
| 10 | Jim Beard |
| 11 | Debbie Youngman, Cathy Martin, Olivia Robertson |
| 12 | Betty Jane Simpson |
| 13 | Alex Lawson |
| 16 | Wendy Seamon, Joe Vipperman, Billy Kirby |
| 17 | Carolyn Franck, Carrie Sanders, Jake Sanders, Grace Anne Edgerton |
| 18 | Hilary Moore, Mary Pilson, Anne Carlyle |
| | Hurt |
| 19 | Helen Flythe, Jennifer Eden |
| 20 | Mary Brown |
| 21 | Mark Mason, Bonny Pace, Katie Haskins, Ruth Decker Chaney |
| 23 | Natalie Shoebridge, Milt Davis |
| 24 | Gary Hokanson, Greg Darnell |
| 26 | Chester Buffkin |
| 28 | David Garland |
| 29 | Rusty Reaser, Alan Ferguson |
| 30 | Pat Hokanson, Lanie Walsh |

31 Jim Haskins, Mattie Wingfield

and in February to

- 1 Carolyn Lackey, Logan Jennings
- 2 David Seamon
- 3 Andy DeVault, Harold Lamm, Jenny Pinkard, Lillie Willis, Doris Renno
- 5 Michael Mason
- 6 Caitlin Mahoney, Charlie Miller
- 7 Emily Goldstein
- 8 Frances Leavitt, Guy Stanley
- 9 Marshall Chaney, Hannah Fraser
- 11 Jo Dykes

SYMPATHY of the congregation is extended to Phil, Candace, and Annie Grace Payne on the death of Candace's grandmother, Irene Tuggle, December 14, 2008.

Elders from the Class of 2011 will be ordained and installed during the 11:00 a.m. worship service on Sunday, January 11, 2009. They are: Jim Baker, Manly Boyd, Catherine Bridges, Victoria Esarey, David Garland, Bill Kirby, Darla Main-Schneider, Joan Montgomery (Joan is filling an unexpired term for the Class of 2010), and Denise Unterbrink. Please be on hand on January 11th to support and pray for these new elders as they lead this congregation through their service on the Session.

The Tempo

"Our Musical Pulse"

Chancel Choir

For the Chancel Choir the Advent and Christmas seasons are close to being history. The Advent and Christmas Lessons in Scripture, Reading, and Music went very well and the assessment from those to whom I spoke was positive. Many mentioned that for them, the service was a worship experience. That service, as well as most of the 25 services we have presented since I came, are designed to be a worship experience in music.

I appreciate the work of the Chancel Choir,

three Sanctuary Ringers, Soloists, and our Organist and Accompanist, Cynthia Dobrinski. Please take time to express to these fellow members of FPC your thanks for their service and the hours and energy they contribute as worship leaders.

It was great to have the Roanoke Chamber Brass with us. Three of the members of that quintet have played in our church in many of our programs. They are fine, sensitive musicians who enjoy the opportunity to join with us. I hope that one season we can present them playing a complete program. Their repertoire is broad and certainly impressive. We appreciate the fact that Erik Stegall is a part of that group.

A new year is dawning and other challenges await us with the coming of Lent and Easter. We anticipate our next music service will be on April 26. The title will be "Darkness and Light", and will combine both the Passion Week themes with the Easter themes. As usual, we would invite persons to sing with us, either as full time members or to join with us in this April 26 service.

Wednesday evening rehearsals resume on January 7, at 7:00. May this be your year to include your voice in our ministry of music.

Sanctuary Ringers

The Sanctuary Ringers will resume their rehearsals on Wednesday, January 7, from 6:00-7:00 p.m. They expect to play in the morning service on January 25. Although we have no vacant positions, there is always a need for substitute ringers in rehearsals and for some worship services.

Children and Youth Music



Dear Friends, as I write this on Monday morning, December 22, Christmas is all around me. My heart is filled with the glory that is ours as we approach the manger.

The programs at our church have been a wonderful experience for me. *Operation Christmas Child*, held just a week ago, was an inspiring experience. With the help of many people, adults and teens, the children were led to do their best as we explored what Christmas is about--giving our

hearts and our treasures in Jesus' name. I must thank Amy Mason, Wendy Seamon, Meredith Seamon, Sam Smith, Carrie Bufkin and Emily Beard for doing so much for our group. You are the best! We will miss Carrie next year when she is at college or university.

The Chancel Choir program was last night and it was a wonderful worship experience. Bob put together a program that was meaningful, beautiful and a joy to be a part of. Thank you, Bob, for such great leadership.

The Christmas Eve services are in a few days and are always a joy to attend.

Christmas is going to be our family's best ever. With times as they are, we are not exchanging gifts as a family (except for Landon, of course!); not entertaining as we usually do, and we are giving these funds to needy people who are so diverse and all around us. It has reminded me what this thing we call "Christmas" is all about. Our family will be together and that is all I need or want. I am so blessed in ways I cannot begin to count.

I saw something the other day that I want to pass along. The noted philosopher, Carl Jung, had a wonderful sign over the door of his home in Switzerland and it is also on his grave. Here is what it says" "Bidden or unbidden, God is present." I recommend that to you as we begin a new year together.

I wish blessing, joy, grace and good health to each of you.

In Joy,
Betsy

GAUDETE performance in our sanctuary on January 4, 2009, at 4:00 p.m., There will be with a reception following in the Fellowship Hall. This is a free concert and an afternoon of a cappella choral music celebrating the Christmas festival and epiphany. Directed by O. Randolph Minter, GAUDETE is a vocal ensemble of 25 voices, including our own John Bowles and Mary Ann McConnell. For the last decade GAUDETE has presented free programs in Southside Virginia and North Carolina.

Stories of Faith

By A. C. Wilson, Jr.

At Christmas my mind drifts to the beautiful Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and a story my father, the late Alec Charles Wilson, used to tell me many times as a kid. I call it "The Apple Story."

Rachel Alda Balsley met Charles Henry Wilson in 1890 in Augusta County, Virginia and accepted his marriage proposal that same year. They were my grandparents.

Their families were children and grandchildren of immigrants who sailed the Atlantic in crowded, 40-foot wooden ships, most seeking relief from heavy taxes in the old country.

Rachel's family came from Germany. Charles' family came from Scotland. His grandmother sailed with her husband and 4 sons in tow. But when she arrived in the teaming port of Philadelphia, she counted 5 sons. One was born during the voyage.

Nearly a million of those immigrants fled over-crowded Philadelphia in the late 1700s and early 1800s. They traversed the Great Wagon Road, sometimes on foot, through western Pennsylvania. They made their way into Maryland and West Virginia before entering the rich farming lands of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

Rachel and Charles' ancestors settled on fertile farm lands near Churchville in Augusta County. After their marriage, Charles began farming but yearned for a better way to provide for his growing family. He took a job as a store manager in a West Virginia mining town. But a doctor advised the Wilson family to leave the damp hollows of West Virginia to protect the health of their frail daughter, little Rachel.

The family relocated to Sherando near Waynesboro, again in Augusta County. They settled in a white frame farmhouse at the foot of what was called "Humpback Mountain." Unbeknownst to them, that mountain would play a vital role in their survival.

Soon the family grew to 6 girls and 3 boys, my father the middle son. A widowed grandmother joined them and 4 adopted girls weaved themselves into the family over the years. To feed these hungry mouths, Charles wisely choose a crop with as much profit potential as possible. The steep slopes of Humpback Mountain behind the Wilson house became an orchard for Albemarle Pippin Apples.

Times were hard for farm families then. The entire family was involved with the success or failure of the apple crop. Money for shoes, coffee, sugar or seeds just wasn't available some years. A heavy storm, late frost or a disease called cedar rust could wipe out a whole year's crop.

Albemarle Pippins took extra care, but could demand a little extra money at market because of their flavor and hardiness. Many wealthy folks preferred only Pippins. The flow of the cool night air over Humpback Mountain provided the needed ingredients to sweeten the pippin apples to perfection.

Some of the family became expert pruners while some built wooden barrels to package apples. In the fall neighbors were hired to pick pippins. Young sons commanded the horse-drawn transport wagons, daughters polished each apple, and women provided mounds of food. Thirty or more workers had to be fed daily during harvest.

After a full season's work came the job of loading barrels of apples onto wagons destined for markets in Staunton and nearby towns. Some years most of the barrels would sell. It was hard work, but there was never any guarantee what buyers preferred.

One particular Sunday afternoon in November of 1916, the family stepped out on the front porch after lunch. It was their weekly custom, following a morning of riding horse and buggy 9 miles to the First Presbyterian Church in Waynesboro.

One of the sons spied a large dual-wheel truck slowly making its way through the wide creek and heading toward their house. Large trucks were a rare sight in those days, especially so far from town.

News of the truck spread quickly. Soon all of the curious family was on the front porch in time to see a stranger get out of the truck and walk toward the house. He identified himself and said that he wanted to buy their ENTIRE crop of pippin apples for his company in Norfolk. The company planned to ship them to England for the Queen.

Imagine that! Security for the year had just driven up to the Wilson farmhouse! No selling apples in town pound-for-pound, barrel-by-barrel. This was a chance to sell the whole season's crop at one time and avoid all the hard labor of marketing.

Excitement began to build. Minds raced at what extra cash could buy. They thought of buying new books, dresses from a ladies store, or just maybe a Model-T for the long drive to school and church. Or, even a generator to charge rows of giant glass batteries in the chicken house for electric lighting in their home. Excitement was at a fever pitch. And Christmas was just around the corner.

As the stranger talked, Charlie Wilson felt a tug on his arm. His petite wife, Rachel, not to compromise their principals even with this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, said in a firm voice, "Now Charlie, you know we don't do business on Sunday!"

The air suddenly turned into a long, painful moment of silence. Everyone's eyes flashed to see disappointment on the buyer's face.

After some awkward moments, my grandfather recovered and said to the apple buyer, "If you will have dinner and stay with us for the night, we can finish this deal in the morning."

There were a few more long seconds of silence. Then the buyer thrust out his hand, joined the family for dinner and spent the night in the Wilson farmhouse. The next day the deal was finalized. The Queen got her apples, the Wilsons honored the Sabbath, and no one could remember a better Christmas than 1916!

(A.C. Wilson, Jr., and his brother, Bobby, are retired owners of Wilson Quarries., (now Boxley), a firm started by their late father, Alec Charles Wilson, Jr. A.C. and his wife, Lucy, are lifelong members of First Presbyterian Church. Stories of Faith are written by members of First Presbyterian Church. You are invited to share your faith experience with Steepleviews readers by sending articles to jmstegall@comcast.net or leaving them with Sarah Altizer in the church office.)