

N e w s B r i e f

♥For the members and friends of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford ♥

January, 2003

From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

Owner's manuals are just too much trouble for most impatient consumers these days. On May 26, 2002 Caroline E. Mayer published a piece for *The Washington Post* entitled, "Why won't we read the manual?" As we approach a new year, writer King Duncan and I have been thinking about its implications.

So you got your children a Nintendo GameCube system for Christmas and you're glad that you are not going to hear, "Dad, will you help me set this up?" In such an unlikely event, you'd be rushing to the manual, which would do you no good whatsoever because you know that you'd have a better chance of understanding it if it were written in Mandarin Chinese. These children (or grandchildren), flesh of your flesh, bone of your bone, have no such problems. They crack no manual. They merely park themselves before the monitor and lapse into a semi-comatose state until called for dinner. This isn't unusual. Few people want to be bothered with weighty manuals.

Americans today are buying the most sophisticated electronics equipment . . . computers, cell phones, and handheld organizers. Who really has time to read the manuals on this stuff? Lee Battaglia of Vienna, Virginia, never reads directions for the computer and camera gear he buys. Never. "It's too time-consuming and I'm impatient," he says. "I'd rather watch someone else doing it, and then I can ask why."

Schoolteacher Pam Grainer says, "I'm a hands-on person; I learn by doing." Both would rather pay to take a course to learn how to use their new computers than do it on their own, from the detailed manual. Marketing experts, customer service consultants and corporate executives agree on the phenomenon. "There's no question that people are averse to reading the full instruction manuals," says a director of technical information at Canon, Inc. "That's a given these days."

Think about the implications of this trend. Now manufacturers have to provide toll-free help lines to provide answers. Have you ever gotten past the third set of electronic menus on one of those? Ever spoken to a human being? Had your questions answered, really? Like it or not, we know, deep down, that ignoring manuals can really become costly. Plugging things together in the wrong sequence can damage the circuitry.

Life is so busy these days. Who can be bothered to read manuals, let alone scripture? Who has time for God's manual? Sure, it has some good directions for things like:

- * What should I be doing with my life?
- * How can I make a fresh start?
- * Where's the guidance I need for happiness in my relationships?
- * What's the point of the day-to-day grind I'm experiencing?
- * How can I make the best use of the time and money and talents that I have?
- * Where's the evidence of God in this world?
- * Why do really nasty things happen to innocent people?
- * Is there more to this life than I can see?

Let's face it – the Bible is an enormous owner's manual. We need a user-friendly version. Certainly God knows that we don't have time to read through this thing.

Maybe that is why God sent Jesus. Jesus isn't just a Word to read. Jesus is a word we can watch and imitate and follow. No form of instruction could possibly be more user-friendly. To follow this Word-made-flesh is to accept that Jesus is at the heart of our interpretation of Scripture.

"Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets," says the writer of Hebrews. That was the age of instructions, the era of detailed how-to directories. But "in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word" (1:1-3).

- When we are searching for direction and guidance, he can lead us.
- When we are desperate for forgiveness and new life, he can fill us.
- When we are hungering for meaning and insight, he can satisfy us.
- When we are looking for holiness in the swirling chaos of current events, Jesus can reveal himself to us.

To all who receive him, according to the gospel of John, who believe in his name, he gives power to become children of God (1:12). Sure, reading the manual still works with Nintendo. But when the power disappears from day-to-day life, there's only one thing to try. Plug into Jesus. . .a good idea for 2003! A

Bruce



PRAYERFULLY

PONDERING...

Epiphany...

My sister gave Bill and me a crèche this year for Christmas – I was thrilled! I have fond memories of playing with my grandmother’s nativity set each Christmas underneath the tree. Grammy’s crèche had obviously been well loved because one of the angel’s wings was chipped, the straw was all crumpled, and a few of the barn animals were missing. But age and frequent handling did not diminish the splendor of the visiting wise men. Each figure was garbed in fine robes and carried either a chest or a pot with the gold, frankincense and myrrh. Does your crèche have wise men?

Our knowledge of the wise men, or *magi* in the Greek, is limited to what Matthew tells us in chapter two. Wise men came to Jerusalem from the East asking for “the child who has been born king of the Jews.” When Herod learned of their quest, he asked them to find the child on his behalf so that he might “pay him homage.” Herod’s “homage” was not helpful. When he later learned that the wise men had found Jesus and then returned home without telling him, Herod had all the boys in Bethlehem under two years of age murdered.

The wise men are meant to symbolize the first manifestation of Jesus to Gentiles (non-Jews). But there remains considerable controversy about when this occurred. The early church celebrated the birth of the Christ on December 25th and the arrival of the wise men in Bethlehem on January 6th.

This is the origin of Epiphany. In the Greek, epiphany means manifestation. Technically, I should not have been playing with the wise men until after Christmas, but it was much more fun to move them along their imaginary journey to worship Jesus.

My very real journey to worship Jesus was aided by an epiphany. You might recall my telling you in the September *Newsbrief* about the epiphany I had returning from a visit to Grammy’s a few years ago. That manifestation of God’s unconditional love for me was a turning point in my faith journey. Once I had experienced that overwhelming feeling of God’s presence, I was hungry for a deeper relationship with God.

There are many ways to come to know God. Since God knows each of us so intimately, God manifests God’s self to us in a way that will make sense to us. One way I found to understand God better was through daily Bible readings. As I read

scripture, the story of God’s love for humanity unfolded before me. And our humanity often shocked me – the Bible is the original soap opera, thriller, and mystery all wrapped in one! Shortly after beginning my daily readings, I remember camping with friends who told me to “hurry up” so we could hike. I was in the middle of the story about David and Bathsheba (2nd Samuel, chapter 11 – check it out) and told them I would catch up!

If you too are hungering for a closer walk with God, are curious about God’s word to us, or have always wanted to know the Bible better, I invite you to consider one of many daily reading plans. The major bookstores all sell “The Bible in a Year” with a daily reading from the Old Testament, the New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs. Or you can follow a more sequential plan with your own Bible and a reference pamphlet, “The Year of the Bible.” (See box insert for January’s readings.)

If reading the Bible in one year seems too daunting, consider reading most of it in three years. How? Follow the readings of the lectionary cycle upon which our weekly worship services are planned. Each Sunday, the lectionary readings are listed in the bulletin and the lectionary cycle repeats itself every three years. You will not only gain a deeper appreciation for each worship service, you will have read most of the Bible in a short time!

As we begin a New Year together, may you not only experience the wonder of Epiphany on January 6th, may God manifest God’s self to you on your own journey to be closer with God. A

JANUARY

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Gen. 1,2/Matt. 1 | 17 Gen. 34-36/Matt. 13 |
| 2 Gen. 3,4/Matt. 2 | 18 Gen. 37, 38/Ps/ 9 |
| 3 Gen. 5,6/Matt. 3 | 19 Gen. 39, 40/Matt. 14 |
| 4 Gen. 7, 8/Ps. 1, 2 | 20 Gen. 41, 42/Matt. 15 |
| 5 Gen. 9 - 11/Matt. 4 | 21 Gen. 43, 44/Ps. 10 |
| 6 Gen. 12, 13/Matt. 5 | 22 Gen. 45, 46/Matt. 16 |
| 7 Gen. 14, 15/Ps. 3, 4 | 23 Gen. 47, 48/Matt. 17 |
| 8 Gen. 16, 17/Matt. 6 | 24 Gen. 49, 50/Matt. 18 |
| 9 Gen. 18, 19/Matt. 7 | 25 Ex. 1, 2/Ps. 11, 12 |
| 10 Gen. 20, 21/Matt. 8 | 26 Ex. 3, 4/Matt. 19 |
| 11 Gen. 22, 23/Ps. 5, 6 | 27 Ex. 5, 6/Matt. 20 |
| 12 Gen. 24, 25/Matt. 9 | 28 Ex. 7, 8/Ps. 13, 14 |
| 13 Gen. 26, 27/Matt. 10 | 29 Ex. 9, 10/Matt. 21 |
| 14 Gen. 28, 29/Ps. 7, 8 | 30 Ex. 11, 12/Matt. 22 |
| 15 Gen. 30, 31/Matt. 11 | 31 Ex. 13, 14/Matt. 23 |
| 16 Gen. 32, 33/Matt. 12 | |

Dear Friends,

Imagine that it is your birthday. You arrive home to find the house in total disarray. There are balloons scattered everywhere, a giant half eaten cake in the corner and streamers dangling from the ceiling in almost every direction. It is evident that a party recently occurred with what must have been several hundreds of people. Empty soda cans, gift-wrap and paper plates litter the floors. A hired clown is sleeping on the couch.

Your spouse enters the room and you immediately begin to question the events leading up to this incredible mess. Your loved one has an embarrassed look on their face and sheepishly admits that they had a party while you were gone.

"A party?" you cry. "A party for *what?!?*"

Now your partner looks really embarrassed "For you", they stammer. "For your birthday".

Now you're perplexed. "My Birthday? But I wasn't even here!"

"I know, I'm sorry. We forgot to invite you."

Does this sound incredible? Could never happen, right? After talking with several teens, watching the specials on TV, listening to the radio and walking through the malls, I've come to the conclusion that is exactly what we have done with Christmas.

Christmas is supposed to be a celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is so easy to get caught up in shopping, sending out cards, attending get-togethers, etc., that we may very easily forget to invite Jesus to his own party!

One teenager recently asked me "how can Christ be introduced into our family setting this Christmas?" I was sad and excited at the same time. Sad that it is even an issue. Excited because this young person had a desire to do so. We brainstormed a few ideas.

Maybe these will be useful to you:

Sing Happy Birthday to Jesus on Christmas.

Start each meal with a prayer.

Read the account of the birth of Jesus in the scriptures. Attach your favorite verses to gifts that you give or cards that you send.

Spend much more time in prayer and worship.

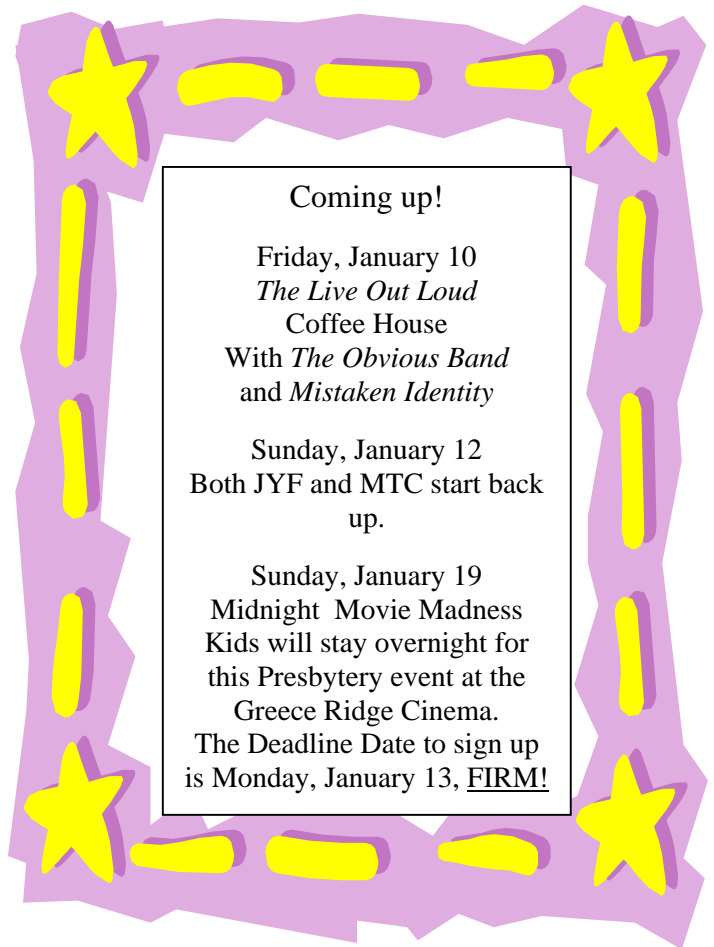
Share the true meaning of Christmas with those around you.

Be creative. There are several ways that you can remember to invite Jesus to the party.

Look up the spiritual meaning to some of our favorite Christmas symbols. The candy cane, the tree, and the wreath all have profound spiritual messages in them that most of us have never been taught.

Merry Christmas, and...Oh yeah, Happy Birthday to Jesus. A

In Christ,



Coming up!

Friday, January 10

The Live Out Loud

Coffee House

With *The Obvious Band*
and *Mistaken Identity*

Sunday, January 12

Both JYF and MTC start back
up.

Sunday, January 19

Midnight Movie Madness

Kids will stay overnight for
this Presbytery event at the
Greece Ridge Cinema.

The Deadline Date to sign up
is Monday, January 13, FIRM!

LOGOS

See you in January!

January 8 – Jumping in January

The word is renew

January 15 – Karate Night

The word is respect

January 22 – SURPRISE NIGHT

The word is excited

January 29 – Winter Escape

The word is crisp

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. A

Sylvia

WEB CLUB NEWS – Winter Schedule 2002-2003 ~ Gather at

7:00 PM for coffee and dessert.

Discussion begins at 7:30 PM.

Jan. 8 – “**Founding Brothers**” – Joseph Ellis *Home of Dianne Brown, 40 Copper Woods*

Feb. 5 – “**First Mothers: The Women Who Shaped the Presidents**” – Bonnie Angelo

Mar. 12 – “**Prodigal Summer**” – Barbara Kingsolver

ATTENTION ALL YOU LIFELONG LEARNERS! ~
Please continue to join us for Bible Study

Wednesdays, in Room 201 between 9:30 and 10:30 AM. We will resume our Wednesday morning Bible Study on January 8 with the book of Jonah. And remain alert for an evening Bible Study in the New Year! A

Presbyterian Women – Flowers

The Presbyterian Women thank all of you who have provided flowers for the altar this year. They have been lovely and much appreciated.

The sign-up sheet for flowers for 2003 is posted in the Narthex. If you have any questions please call:

Kay Saxum – 385-9807 or
Janette Henderson – 244-9386

NAOMI CIRCLE begins the new year with Ed Hediger's story of their trip to Egypt in the autumn of 2001. Monday, January 13 in Room 200 at 11:30 AM. Please bring your sandwich and a mug.

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MARY/WELLER CIRCLE'S meeting on Monday, January 13 in Fellowship Hall at 11:30 will feature our own members reminiscing about times past or present. If you are not a member and would like to attend, call Betty Hancock (473-3928), bring a sandwich and your Least Coin. A

LADIES! Make a resolution to join the women of the Evening Presbyterian Women Circle this month on Monday, January 27 between 7-8:30 PM in room 204 of the church. We will continue to share fellowship, study of the Bible, and local outreach opportunities. We look forward to seeing you there. Questions? Ask Martha Boak (383-8928) or Carrie Mitchell (586-5688). A



TO ALL THE SAINTS IN

PRAYER – "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing!" (1 Thess. 5:16). Join us for weekly prayer in the Library on Mondays between 4:30 and 5:30 PM. If you have a prayer concern or celebration you would

like lifted but cannot join us, feel free to give us a yellow prayer card in the weekly offering plate or in the church office. And feel free to pray for those we are lifting by taking a weekly blue sheet from the rack in the Narthex. The power of prayer is transformational and we welcome your participation. In Christ, the Monday Prayer Group. A



A BIG THANKS

From Tish Paddock and Greta Garman

The warm mittens, hats and scarves have reached their destinations. Chet Nothhard delivered the bag for Calvary Saint Andrews Nursery School on his regular Tuesday trip to entertain the children. The Saturday team for preparing food, at Cameron Community, delivered three shopping bags on their appointed round.

We are grateful to all who help by making the items and donating yarn, but we would like to know who our Christmas angels are, especially the member who made a lovely rose colored set, using a mitten pattern we haven't seen before, to Ernie for his help keeping our corner in order and Doris, who gets these messages to you. Thanks to you all! A

GOT THE URGE TO TRAVEL?

from Beverly Reeve

For those of you who have a hankering to do some world traveling, why not consider joining Ted Pollock, our worldwide missionary, on another of his mission trips next summer. Once again he and his volunteers will be church building – and this time in Ribaué, north central Mozambique. The trip is being scheduled for the month of August and you can choose to participate for all or part of the month. If you are interested enough to want the details as they become available, please email Ted's daughter, Penny, and get your name on the list. JMcFarland2@MSN.com. A

Report on 2003 Stewardship Campaign. As of December 9 and with most church members responding, we have received 382 pledges totaling \$551,000. This is about 90% of the needed amount, i.e. draft budget. The Stewardship Committee would like to thank everyone for their support. At the same time, we believe there are 20-30 pledges outstanding which could achieve 100% of the need. So if you have not done so, please return your Estimate of Giving card to the church office as soon as possible. A

Save now, tithe after ??

January 19, 2003
Estate Planning Seminar

REMINDER

When was the last time you reviewed your will? Do you have a will or have you entrusted New York State to handle your estate? Are you knowledgeable about the newest tax laws and the implications/opportunities these laws may or may not have for you?

Perhaps a review would be a good idea, or certainly attending a learning session on January 19, 2003. This session will be conducted by Dave Ferris, a member of our congregation, at 11:30 AM in the Session Room on the second floor of our church.

No one will be sold anything. The only purpose of the session is to **give you** information.

Please plan on joining us after the church service.

Doris is accepting reservations at 586-5688, so don't delay. Choice seating is available and there is a lot of room on the sign-up sheet. A

CONTINUING ELLIE MERRILL'S A.R.C. MINISTRY

Judy and Kathy called her, "Mama". Ellie Merrill was the frequent church chaperone of these Pittsford First Presbyterian Church *members* and next-door A.R.C. neighbors (Assoc. of Retarded Citizens).

Presently, three A.R.C. neighbors attend our church services 52 Sundays a year. They choose our 10 AM. Sunday service as their one elective community interaction per week. Ellie made certain, for years, that one or more chaperones were scheduled to take our A.R.C. neighbors to and from Sunday church, supervise them within church, and, after the service, help the neighbors enjoy coffee and treats in Fellowship Hall.

Before her passing, Ellie scheduled Sunday AM chaperones for many months in 2003. She needed, and we continue to need, additional monthly

chaperones. Available are suggestions (and help) for serving our A.R.C. neighbors on Sundays.

Too, we need monthly "Go-fors". "Go-fors" get the much-anticipated "seconds" – a tray of three decaf coffees with Sweet 'n Low and milk. Also needed at coffee time are male volunteers to accompany J.B. to the lavatory and directly back to his Fellowship Hall table. This allows the chaperone to remain with the A. R. C. neighbors, monitoring behavior.

To volunteer or inquire, please call: Diane Graziano, 586-4466. A

ATTENTION NEW OFFICERS! Please join us Saturday morning, January 4 between 9-10 AM to prepare for your service of ordination and installation in the following day's 10:00 worship service, January 5. A

Housekeepers needed at Advent House,

Especially for winter months. This involves light cleaning and vacuuming, approximately two hours a week at your preferred time in a beautiful house, meeting great people and supporting your local hospice. We also always need Resident Caregivers, Fundraisers, Event planners and Public Speakers. Excellent training and support are provided. Please call Suzanne Lasher for information (223-6112).

Thank you sincerely for your help.
Suzanne Lasher
Associate Director

WANTED: Single or couple to stay with senior man for Jan., Feb., Mar. 2003 in Florida. Phone 381-0222.

HOLIDAY HOURS

**Services: Sunday, Dec. 22, 8:30 Worship – FH
10:00 Choral Worship**

Christmas Eve Services

**6:00 PM ~ Children's Service
8:00 PM ~ Christmas Eve Worship
10:00 PM ~ Candle Light Service**

Holiday Office Hours:

The office will be closed December 24, 25, 31 and January 1, 2003. A