

NewsBrief

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

January 2006

From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

Kiritimati on the Christmas Islands enters the New Year first! Chatham Island outside New Zealand is second. That means that the last place to turn 2006 is probably Samoa (as I look at the globe). All along I've been thinking that the New Year got its start when the ball dropped in Time's Square. But, a different perspective, a different look at the globe can be helpful.

So, I think to myself, why make resolutions that are hard to keep? Let's take a new perspective on this year-end, optimistic ritual! Why not make resolutions that are easy to achieve? Here is a possible list:

1. Gain weight: at least 30 pounds
2. Stop exercising
3. Read less
4. Watch more TV
5. Procrastinate more (Don't put this off)

Don't you see how this could be a whole new approach to dreaded resolution making?

Even difficulty can give us a new perspective! We learned that this past year as we had the blessing of being able to use Linehan Chapel at Nazareth College for worship. Our sojourn away from the familiar made the return to our reconstructed worship space between Church Street and Locust Street ever so more glorious. We had a wonderful appreciation of those who had helped to make it possible (long ago and most recently). We discovered that our congregation's greatest asset is its Lord and its people. We learned that sacred spaces are where memories are made.

As we enter 2006 we will rededicate the church and anticipate the arrival of a new organ. However, we will be shifting our focus from reconstruction of the building, to recovering the mission to which God is calling us. We have been quite focused on rebuilding the building and now we shift perspective to our ministry, our spiritual growth, and God's desire to use us to make the world more like it was intended to be. Maybe even our prayers will be different.

With thanks to Tom Purcell, a freelance writer in Mt. Lebanon, PA perhaps a new approach to prayer could be helpful as we enter 2006. In Tom's spirit we offer this meager example:

Dear Lord,

In this New Year may we get a clean bill of health from our dentist, our psychiatrist, our ophthalmologist, our cardiologist, our gastroenterologist, our urologist, our gynecologist, our podiatrist, our plumber and the IRS.

May our hair, our teeth, our facelift, our abs, and our stocks not fall and may our blood pressure, our triglycerides, our cholesterol, our white blood count, our weight and our mortgage interest rates not rise.

May the telemarketers wait until after we finish dinner to call. May our checkbooks and budgets balance and may they include generous amounts for mission and charity.

May what we see in the mirror delight us and what others see in us, delight them. May someone, as well as you, O God, love us enough to forgive our faults, be blind to our blemishes and tell the world about our virtues.

And may presence of Christmas remain with us. May the humble manger images linger throughout the coming year. If our Christmas was not rooted in Your Holy Child and Messiah, may we live as if it was and anticipate a world at peace, with awareness of God's love in every baby's smile, lover's kiss, and every wonderful astonishing beat of our heart. May we smile and laugh throughout the year. Amen.

Bruce

Prayerfully Pondering Beginnings and Rededication...

Can you believe it's the beginning of the year - again - already? Each year we have this marvelous opportunity to wipe last year's slate clean and courageously commit to living out our convictions. And then January 2nd dawns. In the bright light of the next day, we have to decide if we are going to dedicate ourselves to these courageous convictions or simply let them slide for another year.

God faced a similar decision. Take a look at what happens to be our lectionary passage for January 8th, Genesis 1:1-5:

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

On the first day, God separated the light from the darkness and called it good. On the second day, God separated the dome of the earth from the dome of the sky. Again, God called it good. We know God continues God's courageous creating work the next four days, each day concluding with the benediction, "it was good."

God could have gotten frustrated, bored, tired or distracted along the way and given up. God could have procrastinated or rationalized away the need for bold action. Instead, God set a chain of events into motion that has led to our facing each new year with a choice: will we rededicate ourselves to being a creative force for positive change in God's world?

As you ponder this question, I invite you to use the stimulating visual tools of Kathleen Nicastro's new series of paintings, *Genesis 1* that hangs in our breezeway between the church offices and Fellowship Hall. Kathleen will offer an Adult Education class discussing her works Sunday morning, January 15th at 8:30am. Come and join other similarly courageous congregants and see what conviction God sparks in you.

Over the past nineteen months, God has sparked (pun intended) our entire congregation into different and dedicated work to return us to our church home. On Sunday morning, January 29th, we have the opportunity to celebrate the hard work that has brought our wilderness wandering to a close. Tell

your friends and neighbors about this special service of rededication and join us as we give thanks both to God and to the many hard-working individuals who continue to make our return possible.

One of the dictionary definitions of dedication is "selfless devotion." Members of our Steering Committee have epitomized that word and deserve both God's benediction, "it is good" and our deep gratitude.¹ Another dictionary definition of dedication is "a ceremony in which something is dedicated to some goal or purpose." We will be rededicating our building to the glory of God.

But this is a unique and wonderful opportunity for each one of us to rededicate ourselves to God's glory. As we begin the New Year, I invite us all to contemplate our own beginnings and rededicate ourselves to furthering God's good work and Good News in the world.

Go with God, *Carrie*

¹ The Steering Committee is chaired by George Foster and includes six subcommittees: Design Assessment with Evelyn Frazee, Bill Smith, Jim Weick, and Bob Huot; Communications with David Irwin;



These are the lectionary texts for the month of January. We welcome you to study in advance of their being incorporated into the Sunday worship services.

**Week of Jan 1 – Isa. 61:10; Ps. 148; Gal. 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40**

**Epiphany Jan 6 – Isa. 60:1-6; Ps. 72:1-7, 10-14
Eph. 3:1-12; Matt. 2:1-12**

**Week of Jan 8 – Gen. 1:1-5; Ps. 29; Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11**

**Week of Jan 15 – 1 Sam. 3:1-10 (11-20); Ps. 139:1-6,
13-18; 1 Cor. 6:12-20; John 1:43-51**

**Week of Jan 22 – Jon. 3:1-5,10; Ps. 62:5-12;
1 Cor. 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20**

**Week of Jan 29 – Deut. 18:15-20; Ps. 111; 1 Cor. 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28**

Christian Education Page

Five year study of 50 mainline, healthy Congregations concludes that the successful church

“...exhibit(s) Christian Authenticity.” A five year investigation of visiting 50 mainline churches all over the USA, by Diana Butler Bass, (in an article in this week’s Alban Institute WEEKLY issue #78), concluded that those actually “deepening in spirituality and growing in membership”, expressed a coherent faith and offered members ways to LIVE with passion and purpose.

Most striking in Bass’ findings, and that which caught my attention, were some traits that I also identify with 1st Presbyterian Church of Pittsford! Says this author and professor from Virginia Theological, “these churches exude a strong sense of mission and identity, which for many, (comes from a) great renewal following crisis...”

Needless to say, as the congregations she sites are a bit further along in their crisis recovery than we who have just now begun to resettle into our rebuilt facility, after having journeyed away for the better part of two years, it seems that her findings might just give us some possible directions to ponder as we now, with God’s help, shape our future and prepare to celebrate our past 200 years.

Bass quotes a member of a Presbyterian church in Pittsburgh who describes that church as “really trying to be a church that knows tradition and at the same time moves into the future.” Another described their church as “a God centered, prayer centered church as opposed to program and belief-centered...”

Each congregation describes some kind of a “faith journey” that they embarked on together. One Memphis Lutheran said they had learned that “the moment that we think we know, we’ve lost our perspective on wisdom.” That church found that their journey became working toward a point where there was peace with that which they did not understand and could do nothing about except to give it over to the Holy Spirit. They have become a community that is a place to ask life’s questions. And they are finding that asking those questions is sometimes more important than the answers.

Vital congregations says this investigator, practice faith in dynamic ways. They reconstruct tradition in terms of experience and wisdom rather than program and absolutes. Much of their vitality arises from and embraces what newcomers bring. “...new members conceive of Christianity as a journey or pilgrimage toward an authentic faith, one deepened by relationships with other such pilgrims and by engagement with the wisdom of those who have gone before”.

Diana Bass concludes her article this way: “I now believe that we are standing at the edge of a trend, one that is quietly changing religion in this country...If indeed a new/ renewed kind of Biblical faith is emerging, we may well have cause to rejoice.”

My prayer for us is that indeed we find our own path on that continuing pilgrimage to a Biblical faith and take our place in the forefront of the authentic Christians fashioning a dynamic spiritual future right here at First Pres., Pittsford. Anyone interested in reading this entire article may find a copy in my office. I also suggest two of this author’s books, THE PRACTICING CONGREGATION: Imagining a New Old Church and her newest, GOING TO CHURCH: Christianity for the Rest of Us. A more in-depth description of her study will appear in next month’s SOJOURNER’S magazine.

...from Sandy’s desk



The “Physical State” of Christian Education

This month of December, 2005 has flashed by the Christian Ed. Committee with breath-taking speed. This month’s meeting found us looking back and barely able to remember our temporary facility at Nazareth while we are agog at our progress and return to our home.

Classrooms are shaping up, PCNS is functioning very well and new interest from visitors during the Pittsford by Candlelight celebration bolstered spirits even further. Teachers, students and parents in our Church School and LOGOS programs are adapting very nicely and it is just so good to be home that small glitches aren’t even noticed.

There are changes and exciting upgrades to programs. Adult Ed. is adding yet another

offering in January which will have a current topic/guest speaker format. Watch for more info. Please take time to visit the Education Resource Room on the lower level, where the heart of all our education programs is housed. This space for the education teams of our congregation to plan, preview, create and be resourced is a core for education offerings of which we can truly be proud. Adult Ed. and confirmation materials will continue to be housed in the Education Office upstairs in the Administration Building and Youth materials are housed in the Youth Forum Room on the 2nd floor. But meeting and planning space as well as all education supplies can be found in our new Resource Room and one and all are welcome to visit. The lower elementary computer lab will be in place by January 1st. The 5th and 6th grade classes are already preparing to return to their curriculum formats, which use the computer lab on the second floor. There are plans to add a study/fellowship midweek opportunity for our teens in the senior high forum room with use of technology there in the form of interactive/computer and the use of power point and other projection programs with the new projection system in that room.

A team of four of our educators will be attending the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators conference this coming year in St. Louis, Missouri. Your prayer support is asked for Lucien Rouse, Niki and Sandy as staff, and Matt Wahl as they represent 1st Pres. there in early February. Plans for the Heifer Fair on February 12th, (see Marcia Watt or Roxanne Skuse about Heifer Shares prior to Christmas), possibilities for a Vacation Bible School based on NARNIA and our Children's Giving as Good Stewards programs are all moving forward. We are looking forward to our Senior High Worship Service in March and our Children's Worship Service in June. But most of all, we took time to THANK and PRAISE GOD for bringing us home! AMEN and ALLELUIA.



Confirmation: Come Claim the Creed! Just a reminder to our 8th Graders and their mentors that Confirmation/Mentor night will be moved in January from our normal 1st Sunday of the month to the 2nd Sunday of the month (January

8th) between 6:30-8pm. Enjoy the New Year's Day with your families!

ADULT Education – 8:30 AM January Sessions

Join us in a friendly, non-intimidating environment with coffee and tea – on the second floor in the West Wing Forum Room, the elevator is available – follow the signs. On 1/8 and 1/22 Lucien Rouse will present two sessions on Handel's MESSIAH using music and scriptural references. In between, on 1/15 Kathleen Nicastro returns to discuss interpretations of Genesis through her paintings. Several of these are on display in the office corridor. No class on New Year's Day 1/1 or on 1/29 when we rededicate our wonderfully restored building. We dismiss in plenty of time for the 10:00 AM Worship. Come and bring a friend.



LOGOS from Sylvia Fix Happy New Year!

January 4 – Paper Plane Night
The word is *soar*.

January 11 – Me and My Shadow – BRING A BUDDY
The word is *show*.

January 18 – SURPRISE NIGHT
The word is *wonder*.

January 25 – Ultimate Movie Making
The word is *original*.

February 1 – Heavenly Hero
The word is *repent*.

LIVING LOGOS – February 1 - Open Door Mission

See you there!



Aloha one and all!

This is Niki, your youth director here. It's been an exciting last few weeks and it will get even more exciting soon! We are now completely back into our church building, an event that has brought me (and everyone else of course) more joy than I thought possible. Having not been with this congregation when the fire first occurred, I had become used to Nazareth as being my church "home." However, being in the building on Church Street brings smiles to people's faces, and a general comfort that makes me truly feel at home.

Our youth program is going swimmingly these days. Being home again has brought a rise to attendance in most of our programs, as well as excitement among our students' at being home again. At press time our confirmation students are getting ready to serve in our upcoming Deacon Ham Supper and planning a Spaghetti Dinner to help raise funds for the organ. Our students are also looking toward the summer as we begin planning for our junior high and senior high mission trips in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. (If you are an adult who would like to consider joining us on one of our mission trips this summer, please let me know. I would LOVE to hear from you!) Keep an eye out for missions packets for those who wish to apply and upcoming fundraisers for our trips!

In the beginning of December, our junior high students had a fun filled overnigher with messy games, Sardines (a great hide and seek game), lots of food, and movies. There were 37 students in attendance!! Huge thanks to Maura Rouse, John Messenger, and James Messenger for staying for a large chunk (if not all) of the night to help out!! Ron Pollock has put out the challenge to our senior high students to meet or beat that number for their overnigher at the end of December. We'll see how it turns out! J

This weekend (at press time) will also play host to our two Christmas parties. Our senior highers will have a ball dressing up, having a great dinner, and playing some fun games together at the Wahl's home. The Werner's have decided to host the second annual SCROOGE Christmas party. Our junior high students gather canned goods from area neighborhoods for the Pittsford Food Cupboard, have a fantastic dinner, games, prizes and more! This is sure to be a busy

month and season ahead of us! Check your calendars to keep the dates below open! Please call the office or email Niki to sign up for an event!!! Thank you so much and have a blessed and safe January! J



Events

Dec. 28th- Bristol Ski Trip 8:30am-5:00pm (JYF and MTC): Meet at Locust Street lot

Dec. 30th- Sr. High Lock-In 8:00pm-8:00am: Youth Room...\$5

Jan. 15th- All Parent Meeting (for those who have 7th-12th graders) at 9:30am in the Chapel

Jan. 15th- Presbytery Movie Madness 11:00pm-8:00am (JYF and MTC): Meet at Locust Street lot...\$26.95 covers 3 movies and "Reel Meal."

Jan. 20th- MTC Hot Tub Night 6:00pm-8:00pm: Meet at Locust Street lot...\$2

Jan. 28th- Polarwave Snow Tubing in Batavia, NY 2:00pm-7:00pm (JYF and MTC): Meet at Locust Street lot...\$15

****Starting Jan. 8th, MTC will meet from 12:15pm-1:30pm on Sundays. JYF will meet from 6:00pm-7:30pm on Sundays (except on Mentor Night)****



HEIFER FAIR UPDATE

From Marcia Watt

The Heifer Fair has been scheduled for Sunday February 12, 2006. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this wonderful event in Fellowship Hall immediately following the 10:00 service and annual meeting. Our church school children will be selling animal-related crafts and hosting other fun activities to benefit Heifer Project International. Sunday School teachers will be contacted in early January regarding the Heifer curriculum and plans for this year's Heifer Fair. This annual church School Mission Project is already off to a great start through the sale of "Alternative Gifts" in December. Thank you to those who have already contributed, and we look forward to seeing everyone at the fair!

Mission Alert

Our church is being called again! This time, to reach out to those in need after the devastation of hurricane Katrina. In response to this calling we are assembling a team of high school students and adult volunteers to provide hurricane disaster relief for victims on the gulf coast of Mississippi. We are coordinating our efforts with Presbyterian Disaster Relief who have opened several work camps in the area. Our plan is to send a team of volunteers, age 15 and up, to complete emergency home repairs for needy families in Mississippi. This trip promises to be an incredible opportunity for teens and adults from Pittsford to provide aid and healing for those in need.

We have scheduled this trip for the school winter break, February 18th to the 25th. If you or your teenager would like to join us on this mission trip, please contact Dan Harrison/Janette Henderson (248-9386) or Ron/Bev Pollock (248-8096). If you would like to provide financial support to our youth mission work, please send your donations to Janet Travis in our Church office.



LIMITED OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE CASH CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEHEMIAH CAMPAIGN AND/OR THE ORGAN FUND ~ On September 23, 2005, President Bush signed the Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act of 2005, Public Law No. 109-73. The Act temporarily waives certain tax deduction limits on the charitable cash donations that individuals make between August 28, 2005 and December 31, 2005. The Act suspends the limitation for charitable contributions, which is normally 50% of adjusted gross income, made to organizations that are not private foundations. In this respect, it may be possible to make additional cash charitable contributions in 2005 and receive full tax deductibility on your 2005 federal income tax return. Cash contributions, which may qualify, are contributions to the Nehemiah Campaign and the Organ Fund. If you are contemplating taking advantage of this law change and considering making cash

contributions to the Nehemiah or the Organ Campaigns in 2005, we would recommend that you consult with your personal tax advisor to understand the full impact on your individual situation. If you have any questions please contact Andy Ashworth at 387-0361.



THE 2006 ENVELOPE BOXES ~ are available for pick-up in the Lobby. If you don't see a box with your name on it, sign the sheet and I will put out a box next week. Thank you, Janet Travis.



To the kind person who offered to have the Fellowship Hall curtains cleaned and stored! We are ready to hang them back up! Please contact Roxanne Skuse at 385-6737.



Presbytery-Sponsored Events

- 1. Resource Saturdays:** Resource Saturdays offer an opportunity to take a mini-course on a different topic (or topics) each month, and also the opportunity to visit and peruse the Resource Center. Classes run from 90-120 minutes. There is no registration fee, but we do request an RSVP so we can have enough coffee and goodies on hand for all.
- 2. Church Leader Development Day:** Includes courses of interest for officers and laity. Located at the Genesee Community College, this leadership day attracts more than 200 attendees each year!