

NewsBrief

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

January 07

From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

Tom Ervin, Professor of Music at the University of Arizona attended a conference for music teachers in New York. He purchased a talking metronome at the display area of the conference. (A metronome is a device for counting the beats in a song.) On the way home from LaGuardia Tom and his son hefted his carry-on bag onto the security-check conveyor belt.

The security guard's eyes widened as he watched the monitor and he asked Tom about the bag's contents. Then the guard slowly pulled out of the bag a strange looking device, a six-by-three-inch black box covered with dials and switches. Other travelers, sensing trouble, vacated the area.

"It's a metronome," Tom replied weakly. His son cringed in embarrassment. "It's a talking metronome," he insisted. "Look, I'll show you." He took the box and flipped a switch, realizing that he had no idea how it worked. "One . . . two . . . three . . . four," said the metronome in perfect time. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

As they gathered their belongings, Tom's son whispered, "Aren't you glad it didn't go 'four . . . three . . . two . . . one . . .'?" Throughout Advent we have been counting down the days until Christmas. Now we count the hours until the dawning of a New Year. But we need to linger with Mary and Joseph for a little while longer, because what happened immediately after Christmas is a stark reminder of the world in which we live.

Looking over the past year we have seen incredible sacrifice, faithfulness, and frustration. We have seen heroes and thugs and we have known hope and fear as news stories take hold in our lives. We who live in freedom and prosperity simply cannot understand the terror that was in Mary and Joseph's heart when soon after their baby was born they fled Herod and took Jesus to Egypt. Neither can we understand what it is to be a refugee in a strange land. But millions know what it's like. Mexicans, Asians, Nigerians, natives of the war-torn Balkans, and others from every part of our world have fled to our borders seeking refuge. Like Mary and Joseph some flee political persecution. Others come, much like our ancestors, seeking a better life.

Although the story of the birth and the shepherds is wonderful, the first months of Jesus' life, like the last hours, were filled with terror. Perhaps at the beginning of the year as painful as it is to ponder, we might face the reality that there is no promise in Scripture that things will always go our way just because we follow Jesus. There is no promise in Scripture that God's elect will always have a smooth road. This may seem obvious but not too long ago Bruce Wilkinson's book *The Prayer of Jabez* had hundreds believing that faithfulness would automatically lead to prosperity. That theology has faded into the past. The "prosperity gospel" is a fraud and a sham. There is no promise in Scripture that things will always go our way when we follow Jesus.

We are promised, though, that God will always be with us when we follow Jesus. Do you think Mary and Joseph were alone in Egypt? Not on your life. God's watchful eye was always upon them. God's hand was always beneath them. These were dark days, difficult days, but God had led them into Egypt and they knew that when it was time to leave Egypt, God would lead them out. And Mary and Joseph clung to that faith, just as they clung to one another and just as they clung to their tiny babe.

After an evening out, some parents came home to the children they had left in the care of a baby-sitter. They were pleased to find the kids fast asleep. As the baby-sitter was about to walk out the door, she said, "By the way, I promised Tommy that if he would stay in bed, you would buy him a pony in the morning."

There is a fine line sometime between a promise and a bribe. God does not step across that line. God does not bribe us to be Christians. God does not tell us that if we surrender our lives that our ways will be smooth. If God bribed us into being believers, we would not be walking by faith. We would simply be looking out for our best interest. No, God allows us to be tried, tested, and sometimes downright terrified. I can't tell you that the 2007 will be your best year ever. But I can tell you this: The same God who provided for Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus in Egypt is the God who watches over you and me. We are never alone, and the promises of God are sure.

Prayerfully Pondering Being and Doing...

Go ahead and groan. Somebody is bound to ask each of us our New Year's resolutions for 2007. What are we going to DO differently this year? My answer is, "I am not going to DO anything differently this year." Why?

Perhaps you have read Steven Dubner's *Freakonomics*, a masterful synthesis of consumer data which reveals fascinating snapshots of our behaviors. In the chapter entitled "What Makes A Perfect Parent", Dubner selects from the data sixteen family circumstances and shows a compelling correlation between eight of them and a child's school performance. The eight circumstances that correlate to school performance describe things that parents are, while those behaviors that do not correlate to school performance are things that parents do.

Dubner elaborates: "Parents who are well-educated, successful, and healthy tend to have children who test well in school; but it doesn't seem to much matter whether a child is trotted off to museums or spanked or sent to Head Start or frequently plopped in front of the television. But this is not to say that parents don't matter. Plainly they matter a great deal. Here is the conundrum: by the time most people pick up a parenting book, it is far too late. Most of the things that matter were decided long ago...it isn't so much a matter of what you *do* as a parent; it's who you are."¹

Who our parents *are* matters. As children of God, we have a common parent. God is the great "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). God IS gracious, merciful, forgiving, infinite, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, immutable, and loving. In fact, the New Testament tells us plainly, "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them" (1 John 4:16b). When we ARE God's children and when we abide in God's love, we are the loving people who make each new day, not just each new year, a brighter place to be.

Would you like some clues about how to BE in God's love? These are some ways four to eight-year olds describe what love IS:

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love." Rebecca- age 8

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth." Billy - age 4

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs." Chrissy - age 6

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired." Terri - age 4

"Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK." Danny - age 7

"Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My Mommy and Daddy are like that. They look gross when they kiss" Emily - age 8

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen." Bobby - age 7 (Wow!)

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate," Nikka - age 6 (We need a few million more Nikka's on this planet.)

"Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it everyday." Noelle - age 7

"Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford." Chris - age 7

"Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day." Mary Ann - age 4

And the final one -- Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child.

The winner was a four-year old child whose next-door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, "Nothing, I just helped him cry."

Happy New BEING Year!

Go With God and lots of love,

Carrie



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. 7 – Isa. 43:1-7; Ps. 29; Acts 8:14-17
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Week of Jan. 14 – Isa. 62:1-5; Ps. 36:5-10
1 Cor. 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

Week of Jan. 21 – Neh. 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Ps. 19
1 Cor. 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21

Week of Jan. 28 – Jer. 1:4-10; Ps. 71:1-6;
1 Cor. 13:1-13; Luke 4:21-30

¹ Dubner, Steven. *Freakonomics*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 175.

LOGOS – 2007
from Sylvia Fix
Putting God First!

January 3 – Dance Fever – Music/Disco Ball
– The word is *Expression*.

January 10 – Clothes/Toy Collection – Donation – The word is *Donate*.

January 17 – Plentiful Prayers – Prayer Partners. – The word is *Partners*.

January 24 – Have a Ball – Learn to roll with the punches. The word is *playful*.

January 31 – SURPRISE NIGHT – Take the plunge. The word is *Refresh*.



**CHURCH SCHOOL MISSION PROJECT
THE HEIFER FAIR IS COMING!**

The Heifer Fair will be held on Sunday, **February 11th, 2007** immediately following the 10:00 service. The Heifer Fair is part of our annual **Church School Mission Project** for the benefit of **Heifer Project International**, which provides income-producing animals, as well as trees and seedlings, training in animal husbandry and education in environmentally sound farming practices, to people in over 100 countries. Beginning in January, the children in our Church School will be working hard to support this mission.

Each Sunday School class in K through 6th grade select one or more animals that are provided by Heifer. Our Sunday School teachers use the Heifer Project's Bible based curriculum "Animal Crackers" to teach the children how these animals may provide food, clothing and income to a family in need. The children will make and sell animal-related crafts and plan games and activities for the Fair. And, of course, there will be ice cream. All proceeds will go to Heifer Project to help those in need around the world.

Please mark your calendars and plan to support our children's celebration of mission! And THANK YOU to all those who supported this mission at Christmas time by purchasing an "alternative gift" of a Heifer animal for friends or family.

**CONFIRMATION: COME CLAIM
THE CREED!**

The Confirmation Classes of 2006/2007 began in September with a great orientation and retreat. 8th grade confirmands and their mentors will continue meeting regularly the first Sunday afternoon of every month (1/7, 2/4, 3/4, 4/1) in the Youth Forum room between 11:30am and 1:00pm for faith-building exercises and fun! We look forward to a great class!



ENRICHMENT HOUR – Sunday January 14, 2007. Dr. Joan Miller, a member of First Presbyterian, and from 1998 to the present, director of Cardiac Rehabilitation and Noninvasive Cardiology for the Unity Health System. Joan is also a Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Rochester. She has been a speaker, particularly on women's heart disease, for 15 years – both locally and regionally. This will be a wonderful opportunity to hear this dynamic and knowledgeable professional. In the Chapel from 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM.



**WEDNESDAY EVENING BOOKCLUB
JAN. 10 7:30 PM**

"The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence of Belief" by Francis S. Collins

It is not too late to put this book on your Christmas wish list! This marvelous book combines a personal account of Collins's faith and experiences as a genetics researcher with discussions of more general topics of science and spirituality, especially centering on evolution. Join us even if you have not read the book for an evening of stimulating conversation on this engaging topic.

Bring a small snack to share.

Home of Nancy and Dick Sprenkle
103 Stuyvesant Road.

Membership & Evangelism

MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS

from Trudy Bartleson, M & E Committee

Joanne and David Churchill

What a pleasure it is to welcome Joanne and David Churchill, parents of our Niki Brodeur, head of the youth ministry. They also have a son, David Brodeur Jr. with an adventurous spirit they "have moved here from New Hampshire in June '06 for a change in life". David works at Addison Precision Manufacturing. Their interests include dog training, photography, hiking, bike riding, art and gardening. They live at 1031 Wegman road, Rochester, 14624 and their phone number is 413-4376.

Jed and Elizabeth Dodge

A warm welcome to Jed and Elizabeth Dodge who live at 77 South Main Street, Pittsford, 14534. Jed works at Kodak and Elizabeth at Xerox. They have a 3 ½ year old, Bobby, and Anne, a 3 weeks old. They love sailing at their Sodus summer home, where Jed grew up. As an accomplished sailor, he reports Elizabeth is his best crewmember! Their phone number is 586-0386.

Art & Nance Falter

We are very please to have Art & Nance Falter join our congregation. They had been members of Lakeside Presbyterian and are retired. They have four children; Eric, Sarah, Loraine and Kristen. Their interests and talents include Art's "supreme woodworking", cooking, baking, and reading. They reside at 123 Kilbourn Road, Rochester, 14618 and their phone is 381-0877.

Helen and Dick Harper

We are delighted to welcome Helen and Dick Harper into our church family. They met at Michigan State, and hail from Penfield where they lived for 50 years. More recently they now reside in Pittsford at 3 Stefenge Court. They have two sons and six grandchildren. Dick is CEO at Harper Homes, a 3-generation family business. They love traveling, gardening and Helen enjoys handbells in our services. Their phone is 381-3112.

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO PLAN FOR OUR NEXT HABITAT HOUSE

Our church is continuing the wonderful tradition in 2007 of working with a needy family to build a decent and affordable home. We are part of the Habitat Interfaith Partnership (HIP), which includes Temple B'rith Kodesh, the Islamic Center of Rochester, Mt. Olivet Baptist, St. Louis Catholic, Christ Episcopal and St. Paul's Lutheran, as well as Pittsford Rotary. We need your help starting this month to plan all of the events necessary to make this happen, and will have a meeting in January to get organized. Please contact Dianne Brown (398-7083, dibrown@rochester.rr.com), Dick Sprenkle (381-8990, rsprenl@rochester.rr.com), or Bob Shone (381-6133, rshone@rochester.rr.com) to get on the list to help, or if you need more information.



Go grocery shopping? Come and purchase a Tops Gift Card from us during Fellowship Hour and we receive 5% of the cost! This money will go to our youth mission trips for next summer to Ohio and Jamaica.



A SECOND "RUN FOR CARL": A REPEAT SUCCESS

Thank you to all those who turned out for the 2nd Annual RUN FOR CARL held on Friday, Nov. 24 at Mendon Ponds Park. Over 125 people were on hand for the event, which raised more than \$3800 in memory of Carl Lane Metzler. Carl was a 2000 graduate of Pittsford Sutherland High School who passed away suddenly of heart failure in June 2004 at the age of 22.

Participants, decked out in commemorative yellow bandanas provided by the Carl Lane Metzler Memorial Fund, either ran a 5K run or walked 2.5K in the park in beautiful weather.

Once again due to the generous donations, high school seniors who share some of Carl's most-loved characteristics of teamwork and passions for the outdoors will be presented with college-scholarships.

Lindsey Kurnath