

NewsBrief

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

July/August 2006

FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN-CELL

The average mattress contains 2 million house dust mites.

The average talker sprays about 300 microscopic saliva droplets per minute, about 2.5 droplets per word.

The average human produces 25,000 quarts of spit in a lifetime, enough to fill two swimming pools. (Kind of gives a new definition to “trash talk.”)

The largest known kidney stone weighed 2.9 pounds (1.36kg).

These are just a few tidbits of information to ponder over the summer. For most of us the words Mozambique, Narnia, Kingdom Bound, Camp Whitman, 9:30am worship, and lemonade characterize 1st Presbyterian Church over the next two months. By the time this NewsBrief reaches you, the 217th Meeting of the General Assembly will have happened. Some issues won't be new. They will surely include:

- W Responses to the Peace, Purity, and Unity report of the Theological Task Force
- W Evaluation of investment strategy of the Presbyterian Church USA in the Middle East
- W Celebrating the ordination of women
- W Revising our Constitution
- W Fidelity in marriage, chastity in singleness as a provision for ordination
- W Budget and personnel reductions at the national level of the church

You can read about GA and get the most up-to-date information through <http://www.pcusa.org/ga217/index.htm> or <http://www.pres-outlook.com/>. There will be much interpretation and reflection on the perceptions of what will have happened. ½ of the delegates are laity, ½ are clergy. Debate is lively.

Perhaps this is not a good place to talk about General Assembly and garbage in the same sentence, but just reflecting on all of those dust mites has started me thinking about landfills, recycling centers, sewage treatment plants and toxic waste dumps – wherever I might want to dispose of a dust mite filled mattress. I don't know where to dump my mattress, but I do know

that I can dump 2 months worth of reflection in this 2 month column. So with the help of Timothy Merrill and Bob Kaylor's blogging I wonder – "Where does all our trash go, anyway?"

Well, navigate to the EPA Web site (epa.gov/superfund/) and you can follow the sludge. Or obtain a copy of Elizabeth Royte's book, *Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash*. It gives us insight into the elimination of our physical filth. This fascinating work is one woman's journey along the long and winding road of waste management, with visits to the final destinations of our old computers, soda bottles, leftover food scraps and bodily waste. It is not a pretty picture. It stinks.

Tagging along with anthropology students who are on a dig in a landfill, Royte finds that 40-year-old hot dogs look just like the ones you buy at the grocery store. Seventy-year-old newspapers can still be read. Even Cling Wrap still clings and wraps.

There *is* some humor to be found in all this. Apparently there are some courses now being offered for people who have a hard time getting rid of their garbage and junk:

Class 1. Refrigerator Forensics: Identifying and Removing the Dead.

Class 2. If It's Empty, You Can Throw It Away: Accepting Loss, Semester 1.

Class 3. If the Milk Expired Three Weeks Ago, Keeping It In the Refrigerator Won't Bring It Back: Accepting Loss, Semester 2.

We need a disposal system for our trash, be it spiritual or physical. The point of this is to say that as important as it is to deal with melon rinds and orange peels, we've also got to deal with the spiritual scrap that stacks up in our lives waiting to be removed and hauled away.

We are sinners, after all — releasing a steady stream of toxic stew. We don't release cyanide or cadmium or chromium, but we spew out gossip and insults, selfish manipulations and hurtful actions. Mix in anger and lust and greed, and you've got a serious iniquity management problem.

We become lost in lust, overcome by ambition, misdirected by the material, and drowned by destructive desires. We can understand why the Psalmist cried out "Lord, hear my voice! - If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, who could stand?" The writer of Psalm 130 turned to God, because it seemed to him that only God could dispose of the spiritual refuse within. Although the writer lived on the front side of the Resurrection he could see in hope that "as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us." God's sacred system of sin removal is at the cross where we are redeemed and restored for useful service.

So as we go through this summer, perhaps not only will we be refreshed with vacation and pattern change, but perhaps we can reflect on God's grace and prayer with St. Anselm (11th century).

O Lord our God, grant us grace to desire thee with our whole heart, that so desiring, we may seek and find thee, and so finding thee we may love thee, and loving thee we may hate those sins from which thou has redeemed us, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bruce

Prayerfully Pondering Promises...

Summer is finally here!!!!!!!!!!!!!! As we transition into this glorious season of warmer weather, beautiful gardens, and extended Sabbath time with our families, I cannot help but think about another one of life's transitions – marriage. I have the privilege of officiating several wedding ceremonies this summer and I delight in the opportunity it affords me to celebrate the love that brought together not just Bill and me, but the love God has for all of us that finds concrete expression in marriage between two people.

In preparation for the wedding worship service, I meet with couples to rejoice in the love they have found in one another, discuss their expectations of married life together, explore what it means to be married in a Christian context, and lay the groundwork for a life's worth of learning, loving and growing together with God's blessing. What could be more enjoyable than sitting with two people as they enthusiastically share all the reasons they know God put them in one another's lives!

As part of the preparation, I ask couples to choose the vows they will say to one another. Many choose the vows included in our Presbyterian Book of Common Worship:

I promise
Before God and these witnesses
To be your loving and faithful
husband/wife
In plenty and in want
In joy and in sorrow
In sickness and in health
As long as we both shall live.

When couples say these vows to one another, they promise one another a great deal. Not only do the couples promise to be loving and faithful, they promise to be so in all circumstances for all time! I applaud married couples making these vows to one another. But guess what? None of us lives up to them. Face it, when one of us has a bad day, we are less likely to be loving, much less joyful. We all fall short and this is where God's gift of forgiveness is so important. We are given the

grace to forgive ourselves, recognize our own humanity and forgive our spouses for theirs.

We may break the promises we make to one another in our marriage vows, but God does not break God's promises to humanity. From the beginning of time, God made a promise to be with us and for us. If we are willing to see it, God shows us time and again how much we are loved and considered uniquely precious in God's sight. If only we could see ourselves and those around us in half as good a light!

As Bill and I were getting married, we asked couples we admired what made their marriage work. The answers varied: "Never go to bed angry." "Laugh often." "Marry your best friend." "Have date nights." "Communicate well." "Have realistic expectations." "Make certain God is the third party in the relationship." "Forgive early and often." All their advice remains helpful.

I continue to look to couples in our own family of faith who have loving long-term marriages. Of the many examples I could highlight, I mention just a few: Merritt and Betty Sweet have been married 64 years; George and Peggy Foster just celebrated 50 years; and Greg and Kay Saxum will do so this summer. With God's grace, they have made, broken and re-made their promises to one another.

I believe God loves us beyond measure. From that full love, I believe God keeps trying to show us that love in many different and evolving ways. Among those expressions of God's love, I believe God blesses marriage between two people as a place in which we can practice this promise making, breaking and re-making. Marriage keeps us honest and humble and when we are both these things, we experience great happiness.

If you have the opportunity to attend a wedding this summer, I invite you to listen to the promises the couple exchanges with fresh ears. May the love they celebrate give us all the opportunity to rejoice in God's keeping God's promises and help one another do the same.

GWIG,
Carrie

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

Week of July 2 – 2 Sam. 1:1, 17-27; Ps. 130;
2 Cor. 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43

Week of July 9 – 2 Sam. 5:1-5, 9-10; Ps. 48
2 Cor. 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13

Week of July 16 – 2 Sam. 6:1-5, 12b-19; Ps. 24
Eph. 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

Week of July 23 – 2 Sam. 7:1-14a; Ps. 89:20-37
Eph. 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Week of July 30 – 2 Sam. 11:1-15; Ps. 14; Eph. 3:14-21
John 6:1-21

Week of Aug. 6 – 2 Sam. 11:26-12:13a; Ps. 51:1-12
Eph. 4:1-16; John 6:24-35

Week of Aug. 13 – 2 Sam. 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; Ps. 130
Eph. 4:25-5:2; John 6:35, 41-51

Week of Aug. 20 – 1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14; Ps. 111
Eph. 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

Week of Aug. 27 – 1 Kings 8: (1, 6, 10-11) 22-30, 41-43
Ps. 84; Eph. 6:10-20; John 6:56-69



"Your life is not going to be easy, and it should not be easy. It ought to be hard. It ought to be radical; it ought to lead you to places you'd rather not go." -Henri Nouwen

Normally I give an update on events and what's going on here with the youth ministry of First Presbyterian. This I will give you, but also with a brief "reflection." I guess it can start with the quote above. Henri Nouwen is an incredible author. One book in particular that I enjoyed was "In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership." However, the quote above is one that I found in a random search online and it really made me stop to ponder. "Why should life not be easy? Why can't things just go smoothly most of the time? I'm not asking for all the time, but even just most of the time would be fine."

I often talk to students about getting out of their comfort zone and doing something different. Mission trips are definitely one of those things that I push when it comes to that. Nothing like sleeping on a floor for a week with strangers, hoping you get a warm shower, getting dirty and covered in paint, talking your "spiritual life" (or even lack thereof.) By the end of the week, life feels awesome. Nothing can possibly go wrong. Then you come home and realize not everyone went on a mission trip, not every-one has a walk with God, and not everyone cares about your amazing

week. This is one of those times when life as a Christian can get hard. How do you maintain the awesome spiritual growth you just had and deal with the disappointments you're now facing?

Our youth have been preparing for their mission trips for the last 5 or 6 months. They will go and they will learn and they will change. How will they keep growing beyond those changes they made and steps they took? They will all do different things. Some will have prayer partners, some will journal, some will read their Bible every day for the whole school year, and some will go to church each Sunday. Whatever they do, it could be a big change for them.

Life is hard...it's full of compromise and sacrifice. It can lead us to places we'd rather not go. But it can also lead us to the places that truly matter and leave a mark on us forever. But that's the way that God tends to work. And now...my soapbox is done.

Summer is now upon us...and here at First Prez with our youth ministry, there's PLENTY going on! Be sure to check the dates below to see what's going on for your young person!

****Junior High Youth****

July 9th: JYF Get-together at the home of the Watt's...7:00-9:30pm...games/food/fun!...RSVP by June 30th to Niki

July 16th-22nd: Junior High Mission Trip to York, PA...PRAY FOR US!

August 16th: Digital Camera Scavenger Hunt/Gutter Sundae!!!...Bring a camera and a friend! ...6:00pm-8:00pm

August 20th: JYF Get-together at the home of the Leyland's...7:00-9:30pm...games/food/fun!... RSVP by August 15th

August 22nd: Day at Seabreeze...11am-6pm...\$25...RSVP by August 17th

****Senior High Youth****

June 29th: End of Year Pool Party at Herge's home...4pm-7pm...\$5...RSVP to Niki by June 26th

July 1st-9th: Senior High Mission Trip to Wilmington, NC...PRAY FOR US!

July 28th: Bigger & Better Lock-In...6:30pm-8:00pm...\$5...RSVP to Niki by July 24th

August 6th-10th: KINGDOM BOUND!...Sign up by July 30th...\$170

August 16th: Digital Camera Scavenger Hunt/Gutter Sundae!...Bring a camera and a friend! ...6:00pm-8:00pm

ORGAN NOTES



We hope those of you who came to some of the events that have been held in support of the organ fund have found them to be very enjoyable. The singers, dancers, pianists, and orchestras have been truly outstanding, not to mention the great spaghetti. As we have said, Outreach to our congregation and community seems to be every bit as much a part of these events as the fund raising itself. We expect to continue a program of events, one on a Friday night and one on a Sunday afternoon, each month, restarting this fall. Our next (delicious) spaghetti dinner is already on the calendar for Sept. 22. Don't miss it!

Our funding also continues to approach our goal. As we said in our previous Organ Notes, we couldn't be more grateful for the generosity of our congregation to this addition to our new church. We now project that we are about \$47,000 short of our target for the fully installed, two-manual organ. This includes our best estimate of all costs of transportation, installation, contingencies, inflation, etc., etc, as well as the \$550,000 for the organ itself. We are still working to raise this amount of money and would like to encourage those who would like to make a difference, to consider stepping up and making a pledge to help us get over the top. Please get in touch with Carol Ross or Bob Peet.

In that regard, we are quite aware that there have been several comments that our church has been doing a lot of requesting for money, lately - the yearly budget, the Nehemiah campaign, the organ fund, mission trips, Habitat for Humanity, etc., etc. When I was very recently cleaning some stuff out of a desk, I happened to come across a list of many differences between a dead church and an alive church. The list had too many items on it, but I would like to paraphrase just a few that I found intriguing for us.

One of them was that:

'Alive churches' expenses typically exceed their income

'Dead churches' are frozen by balanced budgets

I must admit I like a balanced personal budget. With a fixed retirement income, a daughter in college, and another coming to college age before too long, I need to be watchful. However, I realize we have a church that is active and alive

- trying to do a lot of good things. I would rather we stretch as much as we can to make a difference for our congregation, our community, and those whose needs are greater than ours (like those in Mississippi, Mozambique, downtown Rochester) than sit back and expect others to take up the slack. I think the fact that our church comes to our congregation with opportunities to contribute to projects and programs that provide for our and others' futures is a positive sign of an 'alive church'. I would feel very disappointed if we turned down a good project saying "we didn't have that budgeted".

A second item was that:

'Alive churches' are filled with creative, passionate people who don't always agree.

'Alive churches' know that conflict is a sign of life and learn to deal with it.

'Dead churches' don't have conflict, just division, broken relationships, and distrust. We have a lot of creative people who have lots of good ideas and want to proceed with them. Sure, ideas can come into conflict. Sure, a lot of these ideas compete for many of the same resources. An 'alive church' has to deal with the fact that there are a lot of opportunities where an 'alive church' can make a difference. We need to find ways to work through some of our conflicting demands, and continue to respect each other and each other's ideas.

The third item on the list was:

'Live churches' don't have "can't" in their vocabulary

'Dead churches' use "can't" in every other sentence.

So, yes, we are asking those interested to contribute to the final amount of money needed for the organ. So, yes, our church will continue to ask for more money for other projects. Keep in mind that you are members of an 'alive church'. Expenses in various areas keep growing because we are an 'alive church' trying to do what our Lord would have us do.

For the organ, itself, Taylor & Boody are keeping us up-to-date on the progress of building the new organ. T & B have now finished all the wind systems for the organ. They will be getting into the specific tonal qualities for the stops, shortly. If you would like to review the progress of the organ, make sure you visit the Taylor and Boody website at www.taylorandboody.com. We are Opus 57!

Talk with Dave Bruins. He will show you where the new organ is going to be located in the balcony.

Bob
James



A Great Way You Can Help A Hurting Friend

Do you have a friend, neighbor, coworker, or relative who is going through the difficult time? Here's a great way you can help them—tell them about our Stephen Ministry! Stephen Ministers are members of The First Presbyterian Church who have received special training to provide high quality, confidential, one-to-one, Christian care to people who are grieving the loss of a loved one, coping with a cancer diagnosis, going through a divorce or separation, battling a chronic illness (or caring for a spouse or parent who is chronically ill), experiencing a great deal of stress, facing the loss of a job – or encountering any of countless other life challenges.

Stephen Ministers meet weekly with their care receivers to listen, care, encourage, and provide emotional and spiritual support. (Males are matched with males, and females are matched with females.) The caring relationship lasts for as long as the person needs care. It's free, and it's a powerful way you can help a hurting friend.

To learn how to connect someone you know with a Stephen Minister, talk with one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders: *Jane Hunter, Alice O'Dwyer, Kay Saxum, Barbara Smith, Dick Sprenkle or Carol Tiemann.* **Our Stephen Ministers are there to care!**



IMPORTANT NOTICE FROM TRUSTEES

Sometime between now and September, the church building locks are going to be changed. This means that, after the switch is made, the old keys that many of us have currently will not work. The Trustees have adopted a key management policy which will be in effect after the locks have been changed. Keys will be distributed on an as needed basis for a limited amount of time. All staff, the chair of Deacons and all Trustees will have keys for the term of their employment or office. Committee chairs, wedding and funeral stewards, nursery school director and Boy Scout leaders may also have a key for the term of their "office".

Other keys may be issued as needed. All keys will be numbered and a record will be kept by trustees, of who has been issued what key. We felt this was an ideal time to accomplish something we have felt needed to be done for a long time. We have also been concerned recently with the number of outside vendors (contractors and such) who have had a key by necessity. If you would like a copy of the Key Management Policy or have questions, please contact Beth Collins at 288-0664 or Bob Huot at 248-2578. We would be happy to help you.



SUMMER CRAFT TIME WITH DEDE HOLMES

Proceeds to support Mozambique
Mission Trip:

- SHIBORI SILK SCARVES and BANDANAS (Shibori is a Japanese dying technique that creates unique patterns)
- SLATE PAINTING – Paint your own First Presbyterian Church or subject of your design.

Flexible scheduling. Costs will cover supplies and suggested donation. Look for the sign-up and more information in Fellowship Hall or e-mail me at dmh91654@aol.com.



Church Summer Hours:
June 25 – September 3
Church Worship: 9:30 AM
Fellowship following service in
Fellowship Hall

Church Office Hours:
June 19 – September 1
Monday through Thursday 8:30
AM – 3:30 PM
Friday 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM

