

# News Brief

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

## November, 2004

### From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

VOTE! It is not our place to tell you which candidates for which to vote or how to make decisions on issues, but we can certainly indicate civic responsibility. It is very Presbyterian to vote. We do lots of voting in our tradition. This month we will not only choose a president, our congregation will elect elders, deacons, and trustees. They haven't been making campaign speeches or vague promises, but those who are nominated have agreed to be guided by the Holy Spirit in the decisions they will make on our behalf.

Yes, some congregations have a political system where the apex of decision-making resides in the hands of the pastor or some other clergy person. Presbyterians have an ecclesiastical system that is a representative democracy. In this form of church government decision making authority actually resides within groups, like the Session. Are elders always in agreement – perhaps not on all things except this – “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.”

As we close out October we will recall our Reformed heritage, especially that portion that has the skirl of the pipes. (You may want to wear your tartan on the 31<sup>st</sup>.) It is also our Consecration Sunday with luncheon and an offering of our intentions for 2005. We will move to All Saints Sunday (the first Sunday in November) as a time to remember all those who have entered the church triumphant from our fellowship. We will sing, “For All the Saints.” We proceed to Christ the King Sunday, the last Sunday in the church's calendar year. It is a theologically crowning event when we celebrate Christ our Lord, enthroned in glory having conquered sin and death. Christ reigns over the universe. It is a festival day in the church calendar. After our national holiday of Thanksgiving, we come to the First Sunday in Advent. The color changes to purple. This is a big season – ecclesiastically.

But, it is the civic that prompts my thinking this morning. First, Vote! Secondly, give thanks – for the freedom to vote and the gifts God gives. You might want to read Deuteronomy 26:1-11 around your dinner table of Psalm 100. I offer these suggestions in relationship to Deuteronomy 26. First, notice that God's first instruction to the Hebrew people was to give thanks - not for what God had done for them in the past, but what God would do for them in the future! In verse two of our passage, God instructs the Hebrew people to make an offering of the first fruits of their new land. The first harvest. This is an exercise in faith. What if there isn't a second harvest? What if drought or flood or pestilence comes along and destroys their crops? By requiring an offering of the Hebrews' first fruits, God is telling them to trust that He will provide for them in the future. True faith means telling God “Thank You!” first, then watching for His blessings to come later.

Then, God tells people to give thanks for divine goodness in the past. God's final instruction is to tell people to give thanks for the present – by rejoicing.

Did you know that President James Madison declared the celebration of Thanksgiving twice in the year 1815? I don't know why he chose to do this. Was he a devout man who wanted to honor God?

Or did he just like a good party? This much I do know, that to remember is to be thankful. And to be thankful is to taste joy twice.

## **Prayerfully Pondering Establishment and Elections...**

Can you believe MTV is 23 years old? I remember watching the first video broadcast in 1981 entitled *Video Killed the Radio Star*. MTV opened the door for a whole new dimension to the entertainment industry and continues to shape public opinion in the under-35 demographic. I applaud MTV's using that influence to collaborate with non-profit organizations seeking to register young voters and encourage civic participation.<sup>1</sup> During the last presidential elections, approximately 50% of our voting age population actually made a choice for a presidential candidate.<sup>2</sup> I suspect that was not what our ancestors envisioned for a healthy democracy.

When I was in the check out line at Wegman's this week, I asked the clerk if she had watched the Presidential debates. She grimaced and said, "I'm not voting. As a Christian, I don't believe I should get involved with something as messy as politics." Her exasperation is not isolated. Many Christians have mistakenly cited the principle of "separation of church and state" to justify disengagement with civil governance. Yet there have always been political, social and economic implications to the Gospel. When Moses went to Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go!", religion and politics were mixing.

John Witherspoon (1723-1794), the only clergyperson to sign the Declaration of Independence, was a Scottish Presbyterian pastor called to serve as president of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. During his time there, he became deeply involved in colonial politics and educational development teaching many of the participants in the Continental Congress. His Calvinistic leanings found their way into the Federalist Papers, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Indeed, Constitutional scholars commenting on the First Amendment's "establishment clause" have upheld the importance and legitimacy of individuals of faith participating in civil discourse.<sup>3</sup>

Witherspoon's emphasis on the need for persons of faith to be engaged in civil governance stems from a

<sup>1</sup> To see all of MTV's "Rock the Vote" campaign, check out <http://www.mtv.com/chooseorlose/>.

<sup>2</sup> According to state Census records and polling information, %51.3 of the Voting Age Population selected a presidential candidate.

<sup>3</sup> The First Amendment reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

long-affirmed Reformed Theological basis. The biblical basis is from Paul's letter to the Romans 13:1 "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God". The forms of government humans develop are seen as extensions of God's governance in this world. While the authority of government is derivative from that of God, it is still necessary. And Christians are called to participate in its shaping, selection, and accountability. Voting is a critical element of that participation. Our Confessions support this engagement with civil governance while adding a cautionary note. Decisions to support public policies or not must be weighed in light of ethical commitments drawn from our understanding of the biblical tradition.<sup>4</sup>

How might we discern the best course in this electoral season? The National Council of Churches, of which the PC(USA) is a member, has released "Christian Principles in an Election Year" – ten principles for evaluating candidates that apply well-established ecumenical stances to both domestic and foreign policy issues. The full text and study guide is available at <http://www.nccusa.org/electionyearprinciplesguide.pdf>.

May we each "rock the vote" in November and remind our governing authorities of God's authority.

Blessings, Carrie

Week of Nov. 7 – Hag. 1:1-15b—2:9; Ps. 145:1-5, 17-21 or Ps. 98; 2 Thess. 2:1-5, 13-17  
Luke 20:27-38

Week of Nov. 14 – Isa. 65:17-25; Isa. 12; 2 Thess. 3:6-13  
Luke 21:5-19

Week of Nov. 21 – Jer. 23:1-6; Luke 1:68-79; Col. 1:11-20  
Luke 23:33-43

Week of Nov. 28 – Isa. 2:1-5; Ps. 122; Rom. 13:11-14  
Matt. 24:36-44

These are the lectionary texts for the month of November. We welcome you to study in advance of their being incorporated into the Sunday worship services. Please join us for bible Study on Wednesdays in the Masonic Lodge at 9:30am or in the Library at 7:00pm to discuss the upcoming Sunday's texts. No preparation is necessary – bring yourself, your bible and your questions.

<sup>4</sup> What does the PCUSA have to say about the upcoming elections? Check out <http://www.pcusa.org/washington/christiancitizen/newstudyguide.pdf>

Please call Sandy Pacyga @ 586-5688 ext. 30 or email [sandy.pacyga@pittsfordpres.org](mailto:sandy.pacyga@pittsfordpres.org).

### Wednesday Bible Study Teacher Schedule:

11/3 Sandy Pacyga	1/19 Sandy Pacyga	3/30 Bruce Boak
11/10 Carrie Mitchell	1/26 Carrie Mitchell	4/6 Carrie Mitchell
11/17 Bruce Boak	2/2 Bruce Boak	4/13 Bruce Boak
11/24 Sandy Pacyga	2/9 Sandy Pacyga	4/20 Sandy Pacyga
12/1 Carrie Mitchell	2/16 Carrie Mitchell	4/27 Carrie Mitchell
12/8 Bruce Boak	3/2 Bruce Boak	5/4 Bruce Boak
12/15 Sandy Pacyga	3/9 Sandy Pacyga	5/11 Sandy Pacyga
1/5 Carrie Mitchell	3/16 Carrie Mitchell	
1/12 Bruce Boak	3/23 Sandy Pacyga	



### **An APCE Conference! What is it?!?! (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators)**

**Once a year, somewhere in the USA or Canada, a wonderful conference for all who participate in, promote and believe in Christian Education brings new life through new ideas to Presbyterians. This conference offers over 100 workshops touching all areas of church life. The opportunities to learn from gifted, experienced teachers, theologians and experts from within the Presbyterian Church USA abound.**

**Find out what new materials are available and how to get them. Find out what other individual churches are doing (What works? What doesn't?)**

This coming year, February 2-5, 2004, the conference "BE TRANSFORMED—GROW OUT IN FAITH" will be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

And again this year, we would like to put together a leadership team to attend. We have budgeted to send 5 volunteers and two staff. This team of people will bring back and in turn offer a mini-conference with the help of the C.E. committee right here, for our congregation. In past years, those participating returned with renewed energy, great ideas and we have benefited greatly with our own curriculum for church school, THE AMAZING and our current and ongoing Wednesday Bible Studies, our new Bible Basics series and much more. If you would like to find out more about the workshops offered, the plan for our return after the conference or the necessary arrangements to become an APCE representative from First Pres.

### From Sandy's Desk

The October Christian Education meeting was a shot in the arm for our hardworking core committee who has wondered ever since the end of May, how we were ever going to get through September. We pleasantly discovered that things are indeed going well. While many changes and adjustments have been made to accommodate our new facilities, we all feel so very blessed by our new Sunday morning 'digs'.

Sunday morning enrollment is just a bit over the numbers of children we served last September. Teachers have adjusted and are doing wonderfully well. We seem to have happy teachers, happy children, and happy parents.

Our Pittsford Cooperative Nursery School, also thrilled with their new classrooms, has 38 three-year olds, 44 four-year olds and an up and running music class. On October 17 we commissioned our PCNS Staff at our worship service. Please make it a point to stop by and welcome them. They also welcome visits by the congregation at their new facility in the First Baptist Church of Rochester, 175 Allens Creek Road.

Our youth minister search committee reports that they have processed over 20 applicants for the position and interviewed a candidate from Wisconsin on October 17. Meanwhile, with guidance from Bruce and Carrie, JYF and MTC as well as an October CoffeeHouse, with much help and energy from parents, is looking good, feeling strong and moving ahead.

LOGOS has had three successful LOGOS nights so far, much to everyone's delight. Registrations are up; volunteers, parents and children are off to a great start with much more fun and discipleship to come.

Adult Ed. Wednesday study groups have begun. The larger morning group meets next door to the church in the Masonic Temple. The evening group will be meeting in the Library. The study content is a more in depth look at the Scripture readings will hear in worship the following Sunday. The Bible Basics Course has had a terrific response and we look forward to this ongoing offering.

And finally, while we are still not sure about our annual ham dinner, we are going to have a PAGEANT!!! Much thanks to Dede Holmes who has agreed to direct one more "traditional" pageant, we

will be enjoying her gifted leadership and the talents of our elementary children on December 19, 2004!!!

LOGOS  
from Sylvia Fix

Together We Can -

We had fun last week at Stewart Lodge in Mendon Ponds Park

Halloween -

October 27 - Boo!! Bewitching Halloween Costumes.  
The word is appearance.

November 3 - Election by vote. The word is decision.

November 10 - Bring a Buddy Backwards Night. The word is routine.

November 17 - Motion Picture Plan -  
The word is creative.

November 24 - No LOGOS - Happy Thanksgiving



PAGEANT TIME IS COMING!....SAVE  
DECEMBER 19!!!

The beautiful Linehan Chapel is the perfect setting for the advent drama O Holy Night, a traditional telling of the Christmas Story with a Renaissance Flair.

Children from kindergarten through Senior High are invited to participate and adult help is essential!

Sign-up will take place during Fellowship Hour, November 20 and 28.

Check your closets for any velvet dresses, renaissance headpieces or jesters' hats.

Call or email me if you can help out. (please use my home email, printed here [dmh91654@aol.com](mailto:dmh91654@aol.com)).

On an additional note we will most likely be having the Pageant at an earlier time frame this year followed by cookies and fellowship. More details soon.

With advent anticipation,  
Dede Holmes

**WEB CLUB NEWS**

Wednesday Evening book Club  
Discussion begins at 7:30 PM

November 10 - "A Prayer for Owen Meaney" by John Irving. Home of Nancy Sprenkle, 103 Stuyvesant Rd. 381-8990

December 8 - "Eventide" by Ken Haruf. Home of Karin McNamara, 66 Stuyvesant Road. 381-5952

January 12 - "Lucy" by Ellen Feldman. Home of Dianne Brown, 40 Copper Woods. 381-4298



The OPTIMISTS will be meeting at 6:15 PM on Friday, November 5, at the United Church of Pittsford. (Corner of South Main Street and Sunset). In addition to your "dish to pass", we are asking you to bring cans of Chunky soup for the Pittsford food Cupboard. (Suggestion: look for coupons). If you have questions, or would like your name added to the calling list, please call Sue Suter, 381-5297.

On this 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Expedition, Rev. Bruce Boak will bring an illustrated program to the Optimists on the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804. rev. Boak has traveled and led two tours of the expedition route from St. Louis to Astoria, Oregon by keelboat, horseback, raft, and train. Join us for an entertaining and educational evening!



**REMINDER**

If you are going to sell stock to fulfill your pledge, please make sure it is to me or your broker by December 1. This way it can be included in 2004 donations.

Thank you,

Janet Travis,  
Financial Secretary