

News Brief

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

October, 2004

From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

There is an e-mail making the rounds that tells of a news commentator who says: "I understand that one university football team here in the Southeastern Conference is trying out the three-squad system this year. One will play offense. The second will play defense. And the third squad will attend class." When you have lived in the city where the National Football League Hall of Fame is located, you tend to gather in lots of football stories and use football metaphors.

At this time, we're not sure how to "call the plays" here in the office. The game seems to be changing a lot. First we're at Nazareth and then at Christ Clarion. Sometimes we're at the United Church of Pittsford and at other St. Louis Roman Catholic. It has been wonderful, really, but a little confusing and we sometimes do more Monday Morning Quarterbacking.

Alex Agase, a college football coach, once said, "If you really want to give me advice, do it on Saturday afternoon between one and four o'clock, when you've got twenty-five seconds to do it, between plays. Don't give me advice on Monday. I know the right thing to do on Monday."¹ "The word "genius" isn't applicable in football. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein."²

So, here we are during this football season, trying to figure out how to make the plays. We understand that we need offense and defense. We need to practice hard and to execute well. We need to have our objective in mind – which is something like "becoming more like Jesus." If you are like me, you'd like to perform better and find it frustrating when you don't achieve what you'd like. At the bare minimum we'd like to know how to tell right from wrong – a delicate thing during these days of grey motivations and grey intentions.

A long time ago the great preacher Harry Emerson Fosdick developed a formula that might help us today. He called it, "Six Ways to Tell Right from Wrong." He suggested we test our potential actions against these six criteria:

1. **The Common Sense Test.** Are you simply being foolish? How would you judge someone else if they did the same thing?
2. **The Sportsmanship Test.** Are you playing fair? How would you feel if someone else did the same thing to you? If it is not right for everyone, it is probably not right for anyone.
3. **The Best Self Test.** Are you trying to be the best you can be? Will it help you become a better person?
4. **The Publicity Test.** If everyone knew what you were doing, would you still do it? It is surprising how the light of public knowledge changes our perspective and our behavior.
5. **The Most Admired Person Test.** Would the person you most admire do it? If you told that person about it, would you feel proud or ashamed?
6. **The Foresight Test.** What can possibly go wrong? Could you live with those consequences? This isn't a complete proposal, but it might help us find our way through October a little better and give us something to ponder as we watch the Steelers, the Bills, the Eagles . . .

¹ John C. Maxwell, DEVELOPING THE LEADERS AROUND YOU (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, " Joe Theisman, NFL football quarterback & sports analyst.

Inc., Publishers), 1997, p. 7.

Prayerfully Pondering Forgiveness and Lifelong Learning...

Have you ever had the sense a daily devotion, a sermon or a pastor's article was written just for you? I know it has happened many times as I have reflected upon how I could have behaved differently. And this article may feel like that for many of us. Why? Because I want us to think about how we can learn to talk with one another about things we would rather not discuss.

I remember a cartoon in the New Yorker picturing an elegantly set dinner table surrounded by dignitaries eating in silence. One waiter whispers to another: "why is nobody talking?" and the other waiter replies "the safe topics were discussed over appetizers – they have nothing left to say."

It is natural for us to want to avoid controversial issues or conflict of any kind. Many of us might have heard of the animal kingdom's two options: fight or flight. Jesus proposes another way. Rather than avoid conflict or be adversarial, Jesus consistently encourages us to talk directly to one another about that which potentially divides us.

In Matthew 18:15-17a Jesus says, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you." Jesus tells us to talk with one another when we feel we have been hurt or if we sense conflict. We are to do that when we "are alone"; in other words, directly. We are not to denigrate the person to someone else and/or suppress the hurt or disagreement. We are meant to move through it. If we do speak directly to the person who has hurt us and feel we have mutually understood one another, Jesus says, "we have regained that one." In other words, our direct action has preserved that relationship and that person in Christ-like fellowship. By contrast, if the person with whom we disagree does not listen, we are to "take one or two others along with [us]." These "others" act as mediators.

I am convinced mediation is a spiritual gift. Anyone following the news can point to hotspots in the world which are in need of mediation: Russia/Chechnya, China/Taiwan, India/Pakistan, Palestine/Israel, Rwanda, Sudan, South Africa, Bosnia, Kosovo, Cyprus, and Ireland are just a few examples. The Presbyterian Church (USA) in partnership with this congregation have sponsored a mediation ministry for many years in Ireland. The pastor called to this important work, the Reverend Doug Baker, will

present our message on Peacemaking and World Communion Sunday October 3rd. Doug will share with us about the importance of forgiveness in mediation.

Learning forgiveness is like learning a second language: we learn first how to communicate with one another – in our first language – and then we must learn how to communicate when hurt has gotten in the way of our mutual understanding. But if we hurt one another, that "first language" becomes unintelligible. We mean to say something, but the person we hurt either misunderstands or cannot hear us. This is when we must learn a "second language" to help us get around the impasse and come to a mutual understanding.

Learning a second language – the language of forgiveness – requires practice and an openness to lifelong learning. The best textbook is scripture. Each of us has something more to learn from timeless stories heard anew by the power of the Holy Spirit in a community of similarly questioning disciples. As our kids have returned to school this fall with new supplies and a fresh smile, I encourage each one of us to become involved in a Bible Study of some kind.

Choose between one of the Presbyterian Women's circles (see the purple PW page), the 4:30 Monday Prayer Group, the Thursday breakfast bible study organized by John Messenger (john.messenger@paetec.com), the first Sunday of the month breakfast men's group, the Wednesday morning or evening lectionary group (see article below), the Highlands' Thursday 11am group convened by Allan Gardner (248-8875), the 9am Bible Basics class taught by Carol Tiemann (223-1466), or an existing covenant group with which Sandy or I can connect you. And if you seek something different, let Sandy, Bruce or me know! We would love to help you find a Bible Study that works for you.

When I counsel couples prior to officiating at their wedding worship ceremony, I often tell them the three most important words each can say to the other (besides "I love you") are "I forgive you." Forgiveness is the key to keeping lifelong conversations going. And just as forgiveness is key to marriages, it is key to all our human interactions, including being the church. As we continue to grow, change and make important decisions both as individuals and the church, may we all delight in the lifelong learning of acquiring a second language – the language of forgiveness.

Blessings, Carrie

Week of Oct. 3 – Lam. 1:1-6; Lam. 3:19-26 or Ps. 137
2 Tim. 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10

Week of Oct. 10 – Jer. 29:1, 4-7; Ps. 66:1-12
2 Tim. 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19

Week of Oct. 17 – Jer. 31:27-34; Ps. 119:97-104
2 Tim. 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8

Week of Oct. 24 – Joel 2:23; Ps. 65; 2 Tim. 4:6-8, 16-18
Luke 18:9-14

Week of Oct. 31 – Hab. 1:1-4; 2:1-4; Ps. 119:137-144
2 Thess. 1:1-4, 11-12; Luke 19:1-10

These are the lectionary texts for the month of October. We welcome you to study in advance of their being incorporated into the Sunday worship services. Beginning September 29th, please join us for Bible Study on Wednesdays in the Masonic Lodge at 9:30am and at 7:00pm in the Church library to discuss the upcoming Sunday's texts. No preparation is necessary – bring yourself, your Bible and your questions. Notice in the schedule below who is teaching and which weeks we are meeting.

Wednesday Bible Study Teacher Schedule:

9/29 Carrie Mitchell	12/8 Bruce Boak	3/9 Sandy Pacyga
10/6 Bruce Boak	12/15 Sandy Pacyga	3/16 Carrie Mitchell
10/13 Sandy Pacyga	1/5 Carrie Mitchell	3/23 Sandy Pacyga
10/20 Carrie Mitchell	1/12 Bruce Boak	3/30 Bruce Boak
10/27 Bruce Boak	1/19 Sandy Pacyga	4/6 Carrie Mitchell
11/3 Sandy Pacyga	1/26 Carrie Mitchell	4/13 Bruce Boak
11/10 Carrie Mitchell	2/2 Bruce Boak	4/20 Sandy Pacyga
11/17 Bruce Boak	2/9 Sandy Pacyga	4/27 Carrie Mitchell
11/24 Sandy Pacyga	2/16 Carrie Mitchell	5/4 Bruce Boak
12/1 Carrie Mitchell	3/2 Bruce Boak	5/11 Sandy Pacyga

CONFIRMATION – COME CLAIM THE CREED!

The Confirmation Class of 2004/2005 began this September with a wonderful parent/confirmand/mentor orientation night and confirmand retreat. We are now meeting weekly for Sunday School and the first Sunday evening of each month between 6:30 and 8 pm for mentor and confirmand night at Christ Clarion Presbyterian Church (415 Thornell Road midway between East Street and 64). The confirmands will together discern what they believe and share their faith with the congregation on Pentecost Sunday, May 15, 2005.

Prayer – which is conversing with God – is for everyone! The Monday Prayer Group has begun its third year of weekly praying for members and friends of the congregation, our church and our world. Should you have a prayer request, please fill out a prayer request in the bulletin and slip it in the offertory plate or call the Church Office and let us know. We welcome anyone who wishes to join us Mondays at 4:30 in the library. Come once or come often – God promises to meet us in our prayers and this group has witnessed the blessings. *The Monday Prayer Group*

LOGOS

from Sylvia Fix

Together we can -

Join us and have fun at St. Louis

September 29 - The word is sowing.

Plant Seeds - Grow in Christ

October 6 - The word is vibrant.

Natural Wonders

October 13 - Surprise - The word is bond

Wonder what we are doing???

October 20 - The word is building

Crazy Construction

October 27 - The word is appearance

Boo!! Bewitching Halloween Costumes

SAVE THE DATE! TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2004

FLOWER CITY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
20TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
ROCHESTER CLARION RIVERSIDE HOTEL
6:00 PM

One night, One house!

One night "on the town" provides a home for one family on one street. Your participation will enable FCHH to build their 20th Anniversary Habitat House.

To make your reservations and/or donate an auction item, please call 546-1470 x 305