

NewsBrief

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

September, 2003

From the Pastor's Pen-Cell

Septembers brought anticipatory joys and jitters. As the school year revolved around the axis of an agrarian calendar, the first days of each grade brought the cautions of new teachers, new classmates, and new subjects. But, they also brought the comfort that on the 1st day of school; I had an "A." Retaining that grade was another matter all together. Hence the pendulum swings between the euphoria of seeing friends missed over the vacation months and the burden of "great potential." (Pogo used to say that there is no greater burden in life than having a great potential.)

At First Presbyterian Church we anticipate the beginning of LOGOS, the start of a new Sunday School and Confirmation Series, Bible Study on Wednesdays and opportunities for worship, ministry, fellowship and service. The Optimists will resume in the fall, the MTC (More Than Conquerors) for Senior Highs and the Junior High Fellowship will begin as well as music and choir programs. You will find pointers to these things in this month's NewsBrief. Please note on your calendar that on the last weekend in October we will have the visit of Charles Kimball, author of *When Religion Becomes Evil*. He was interviewed in both *Time* and *Newsweek* this summer. You will want to set aside some time on Saturday, October 25 and plan to be in worship on October 26 to have an encounter with him. Len Bjorkman will be with us at the beginning of the month and Dr. Richard Streeter will be coming to encourage our faithfulness in stewardship.

This has been a different summer for me with daughter Meredith's wedding over Labor Day weekend, a mission trip to Mozambique and the hubbub of the PGA in town. Meredith will be married at the Wells Memorial Presbyterian Church in Avalon, NJ where we have spent many summers on vacation. It should be a wonderful and meaningful time for the family.

My mind is still processing all that we experienced in Mozambique. Because of your generosity, people from Pittsford are helping the congregation in Pembe to build their church. Originally we intended to assist the congregation in Ribaue, west of Nampula. But, when we arrived, they did not have the sand, stone, or bricks that we had agreed they would provide. We made the painful decision to take the 35 ton truck with cement, steel, lime and lumber to Pembe along the coast to help the Presbyterian Church that had been praying for God to provide a miracle of help to assist them in the construction of their building. They were ready with the materials. God does indeed work in mysterious ways.

Those of us who went to Mozambique had the life changing experience of encountering a country with limited infrastructure, great poverty, and a life of trusting simplicity. We met hopeful, eager Christians and lives can never be the same when such a mission event happens in a personal way.

Perhaps the hardest part of the trip was taking the materials from Ribaue and saying good-bye to a disappointed fellowship. The women and children gathered as we loaded the truck, some of them nursing their babies. Elders came and watched. When the truck was full we prayed together, sang hymns and suggested that the broken bags of cement, lime and lumber be combined with their broken bricks to build a communion table and pulpit for their current church. It could stand of a reminder of how God mends broken lives and as a hope that we would return again to help them. Maybe this is something you would like to do in 2005?

The apostle Paul speaks of the church as a body and at other points says that we are like the bricks in a building with Jesus as the chief cornerstone. As we build for the future here in Pittsford, let us construct a solid foundation that we might be a blessing to the people God calls us to serve. Let it be a foundation rooted in prayer, nourished in the study of God's word, blessed by faithful worship, sustained by stewardship, and encouraged by fellowship . . . for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Bruce

Prayerfully Pondering Second Chances...

Do you remember the musical *Grease*? A summer romance blossoms between a naïve young woman,

Sandra Dee, and a street-wise greaser, Danny. When they return to high school that fall, they both undergo some changes to give their love a second chance. It wasn't an easy transition for either one of them to make, but make it they did - with a mix of laughter and tears along the way. The song that I often find myself singing is the choral ensemble of the girls asking Sandy about her summer and the guys asking Danny about his summer. Both the girls and the guys sing, "Tell me more, tell me more..." While the musical may seem idyllic to us because it's set in the 1950s – an era dripping with nostalgia – its musical numbers have great wisdom.

One of the books of wisdom in the Bible is Ecclesiastes. In Chapter 3, the teacher tells us "for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." We all face adjustments in our lives. Sometimes they are brought about by abrupt circumstances: death, divorce, disease, or displacement. Other times our adjustments are simply chronological, as the author of Ecclesiastes suggests: summer ends and fall begins.

Our congregation is facing a mix of those adjustments right now. We are moving into a new academic year and we are looking for a new Music Director. First Presbyterian Church is about to morph from the sleepy little congregation that continued some ministries and worshipped together one service on Sunday to the bustling congregation that sponsors Penny Pincher, Deacon Activities, Optimists, Mission Events, Bible Study, a theologian in residence, Sunday School, and much more in addition to its two Sunday worship services. Both of these adjusted circumstances mean that we need to be wise with one another. How can we do that?

First, we can learn well those three little words from *Grease*, "tell me more." When we invite people to tell us more, the person feels validated, heard, and valued. It also allows us to tune our ears to what the person is really trying to say. Many scheduling conflicts and misunderstandings can be averted with wise listening and seeking to understand, rather than to be understood (remember the prayer of St. Francis?).

Second, we can also remind ourselves that every person has a gift to share – our task is to help each person realize her gift and make it easier for the person to give it. Have you seen the movie, "Seabiscuit"? The movie masterfully retells the Depression-era story of an abused horse, a down-on-his-luck jockey, an eccentric trainer, and an owner carrying an age-old hurt. This unlikely foursome unwittingly join forces to heal not just one another, but to lift the spirits of an entire nation. Early in the movie, the owner meets the trainer and asks him why

he bothers nursing a lame horse of little monetary value. The trainer replies, "just because a life may be broken, it isn't worth discarding." His wisdom is Gospel truth. We are all broken, and all gifted with redemption through the body and blood of Jesus Christ. We can see that redeeming quality in the people around us by encouraging them to tell us more and by being open to extending second chances.

We can all think of people who generously gave us a second, third, and fourth chances. These are the pivotal people in our lives. I invite you to be a pivotal person in others' lives as we embark together on another wonderful year of ministry together. Carrie

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Reading the Bible reminds us how God offers us many second chances. Most of our readings in the Old Testament during September are in Isaiah. The prophet artfully intermingles God's mercy and justice. Prophetic writings can be difficult to follow because they are not chronologically correct narratives. Be aware that the first forty chapters are set in the later years of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, while the rest of the book refers to the period after the fall of the Kingdom and the exile of the people to Babylon. In the New Testament, we finish Paul's letters and focus on the letter to the Hebrews. Scholars believe the latter was written to a Jewish community tempted to return to Judaism. Hebrews demonstrates how Jesus is our great high priest who surpasses the priesthood of Israel. While Isaiah is known for his prophecies of the Messiah, Hebrews demonstrates their fulfillment and our faith in Christ.

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SEPTEMBER

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| 1. Song of Sol. 5, 6/1 Tim. 5 | 17. Isa. 33, 34/Heb. 2 |
| 2. Song of sol 7, 8/Ps. 99-101 | 18. Isa. 35, 36/Heb. 3 |
| 3. Isa. 1, 2/1 Tim. 6 | 19. Isa. 37, 38/Heb. 4 |
| 4. Isa. 3-5/2 Tim. 1 | 20. Isa. 39, 40/Ps. 106 |
| 5. Isa. 6, 7/2 Tim. 2 | 21. Isa. 41, 42/Heb. 5 |
| 6. Isa. 8, 9/Ps. 102 | 22. Isa. 43, 44/Heb. 6 |
| 7. Isa. 10-12/2 Tim. 3 | 23. Isa. 45, 46/Ps. 107 |
| 8. Isa. 13, 14/2 Tim. 4 | 24. Isa. 47, 48/Heb. 7 |
| 9. Isa. 15, 16/Ps. 103 | 25. Isa. 49, 50/Heb. 8 |
| 10. Isa. 17-20/Titus 1 | 26. Isa. 51, 52/Heb. 9 |
| 11. Isa. 21, 22/Titus 2 | 27. Isa. 53, 54/Ps. 108, 109 |
| 12. Isa. 23, 24/Titus 3 | 28. Isa. 55, 56/Heb. 10 |
| 13. Isa. 25, 26/Ps. 104 | 29. Isa. 57, 58/Heb. 11 |
| 14. Isa. 27, 28/Philem. | 30. Isa. 59, 60/Ps. 110, 111 |
| 15. Isa. 29, 30/Heb. 1 | |
| 16. Isa. 31, 32/Ps. 105 | |

LOGOS – Open Your Heart – 2003-2004
Come join us!!!

September 7 – Kick-off Sunday. Come see our Power Point presentation in the Fellowship Hall.

September 17 – Registration and Choir

September 24 – LOGOS begins. The word is *reunion*.

October 1 – The word is *Surprise* – Surprise Night.

Attention All You Lifelong Learners! (yes, that means you!) Our Adult Education Task Force wants to thank you for your participation in the Congregational Survey earlier this summer. We have your feedback and we're planning great things for the upcoming year. Should you care to be a part of the ongoing planning, we welcome your participation. Based upon your feedback, we offer the following three immediate opportunities with the promise of much more to come.

First, we will resume Wednesday Bible Study at 9:30am and again at 7pm with the lectionary cycle of readings being the focus of our study. Participating in the study will help make the worship service be more meaningful as we will jointly look at the passages from which the service will be based. Bruce Boak, Sandy Pacyga and Carrie Mitchell will share the attached rotating schedule. Join us for one or many in Room 201. And bring a friend.

Second, we will be offering a Forum most Sundays of the fall during which recipients of our Outreach funds will describe the ministries in which they are engaged. Come and learn how our dollars make a difference and how we can become even more involved. Planned dates are September 7, 14, 21; October 5, 12, 19; and November 16 and 23. Watch the Sunday bulletin for specifics.

Finally, we are enthused to bring a Spiritual Renewal Weekend to the congregation. The Session has decided to foster our spiritual growth through a Spiritual Renewal Weekend to be held January 22 – 25, 2004. This wonderful series of worship, educational, and fellowship opportunities will celebrate Christ and encourage us to make deeper commitments to God. Wherever we are in our spiritual journey, God will meet us. There is already a strong prayer team praying for this effort. If you feel called to help bring this Spiritual Renewal Weekend to fruition, please contact Dave Jenks, Jack Holzwarth, Carrie Mitchell or Sandy Pacyga. We anticipate the Renewal Weekend lighting a spiritual fire to warm us for seasons to come!

Wednesday Bible Study Teacher Schedule:

9/24	Carrie Mitchell	2/11	Carrie Mitchell
10/1	Bruce Boak	2/25	Bruce Boak
10/8	Sandy Pacyga	3/3	Sandy Pacyga
10/15	Carrie Mitchell	3/10	Carrie Mitchell
10/22	Bruce Boak	3/17	Bruce Boak
10/29	Sandy Pacyga	3/24	Sandy Pacyga
11/5	Carrie Mitchell	3/31	Carrie Mitchell
11/12	Bruce Boak	4/7	Bruce Boak
11/19	Sandy Pacyga	4/14	Sandy Pacyga
12/3	Carrie Mitchell	4/21	Carrie Mitchell
1/7/04	Bruce Boak	4/28	Bruce Boak
1/14	Sandy Pacyga	5/5	Sandy Pacyga
1/21	Carrie Mitchell	5/12	Carrie Mitchell
1/28	Bruce Boak	5/19	Bruce Boak
2/4	Sandy Pacyga	5/26	Sandy Pacyga

CONFIRMATION – COME CLAIM THE CREED!

The Confirmation Class of 2003/2004 begins this month with a joint parent/confirmand/mentor orientation night on Sunday, September 7 between 6:30 and 8:00pm in Fellowship Hall. All current eighth graders are invited to participate and select a mentor. If you have not yet selected a mentor, ask Janette Henderson or Carrie Mitchell for suggestions before that night.

Sunday School classes for Confirmation begin that same Sunday, September 7 and continue through Pentecost Sunday when the students are confirmed. Confirmands and mentors will also meet the first Sunday evening of every month (10/5, 11/2, 12/7, 1/4, 2/1, 3/7, 4/4, 5/2) between 6:30 and 8:00pm for faith-building exercises and fun! Since Pentecost is early this year (Memorial Day Weekend is May 30th), parents and Session members will be asked to join the mentors and confirmands on Sunday, May 16th for a celebratory dinner. Mark your calendars now!

From the Financial Secretary

If you are thinking of selling stock or mutual funds to pay your pledge, please call and let me know. With the current confidentiality rules, brokerage firms will not divulge the names of people initiating the transaction. Also, please try to sell the stock by the beginning of December, so it can be included for 2003.

Thank you, Janet Travis