



Stirling Stuff

Volume 54, No. 11

December 2010

Pastor's Letter

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "How much of human life is lost in waiting." It would seem that many today would agree with that sentiment. We want things now. We've lost the ability to wait with expectation. We are a lot like the man who said, "When I was a boy, I used to pray every night for a new bicycle. Then I realized that the Lord doesn't work that way, so I stole one and asked Him to forgive me." We want it now.



When we wait we also have the opportunity to get ready for whatever we are waiting for. It's like cleaning the room of a child who is coming home from college while you're waiting for them. Waiting helps us to reflect on the meaning of what we are waiting for.

Advent reminds us that waiting is a necessary and important part of human life. Each year it seems we are trying to get to Christmas faster and faster. I say that because the decorations, commercials, and holiday stuff to be sold start earlier and earlier. I realize that a lot of it is businesses trying to get themselves into the black again financially as quickly as possible. The businesses don't want to wait. We're trampling all over the important quiet waiting time. We can and we must reclaim waiting if we are to reclaim the season of Advent and that of Christmas. Following is a true account that I hope points up the absurdity of what we have done to this time.

A man and his wife love to go out early in the morning the day after Thanksgiving —to the point of even staying in a hotel close to the stores they want to go to. One year they got in line at 3 a.m., and this is part of what happened.

The man and a couple of other people in the line pointed out to the manager that people were forming their own line. They did so in the kindest manner possible, I assure you! When they felt that their complaint was not being addressed with as much zeal as it required, the man made it very clear how he felt about the slow-to-action store manager.

With his fist clinched high in the air he said, "You're stupid!" The store manager apologized to the unhappy patron of Toys 'R' Us, and the man again said in the same tone and again with his fist held high, "You're stupid!"

Another patron spoke up and assured the store manager that he was doing a good job. This displeased the man, and he once again told the store manager what kind of job he thought the manager was doing.

As all of this was going on, I was standing just a few feet away waiting to check out, enjoying the spectacle of it all.

*The woman standing between the man and myself said – very loudly –
“maybe some of us have forgotten why we are here at the toy store this morning!”*

The good news is that it all ended quietly and nothing serious occurred.

The lady was implying they were there because of Christmas – but if that was the case, then they needed to brush up on their waiting skills. Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote in her book, *Gifts from the Sea*, “The sea does not reward those who are too anxious, too greedy, or too impatient. One should lie empty, open, choice-less as a beach - waiting for a gift from the sea.”

This Advent, I hope you will be like a beach waiting for God to wash into your life the gifts of hope, peace, and love.

See you in church.

Tom



Adult Education

- Debra Sprague

Reclaiming Christmas: Seeking an Alternative

If you're like most Christians, the upcoming Christmas season will be a mixed blessing. Along with spending time with friends and family and at least some attempt to focus on “the reason for the season,” you will probably find yourself eating too much, drinking too much, spending too much, and experiencing too much stress about family gatherings and gift giving. Perhaps you have the nagging feeling that your experience of Christmas should somehow be different. But, what might an alternative Christmas look like for people of faith?



Join us on **Tuesday, November 30th at 7:30 p.m.**, when we will trace the history of Christmas, learn to recognize the secular elements of this Christian holiday, and consider ways in which the celebration of Christmas might be more spiritually meaningful.

Blue Christmas

On Sunday, **December 19th, at 5:00 p.m.**, we will offer our Blue Christmas service. This service is for those who are finding it difficult to get into the holiday spirit because of loss or suffering they have experienced in their lives. If you know of someone who is experiencing something like this, please invite them to this service and, as a friend, come with them so they can feel your support.

Taizé Service

There will be a Taizé Service on Sunday, **December 19th at 7:30 p.m.** The prayers and scripture readings will center of Advent/Christmas. This service is a wonderful opportunity to sit quietly and reflect on what the season is all about. I hope you will consider joining us for this peaceful service.

Worship Services and Scripture Passages for December

December 5, 2010

- *Second Sunday of Advent*
- *Sacrament of Holy Communion*
Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19;
Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12
There's Something Different in the Air

December 12, 2010

- *Third Sunday of Advent*
Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10;
Luke 1:46b-55; James 5:7-10;
Matthew 11:2-11
John's Scandal

December 19, 2010

- *Fourth Sunday of Advent*
Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19;
Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25
Children's Christmas Pageant
5:00 p.m. – Blue Christmas Service
The Real Christmas Spirit
7:30 p.m. – Taizé Service

*Worship begins at 10:00 a.m. on
Sunday mornings, followed by
coffee hour fellowship in Pollard Hall*

Child Care is provided in the Nursery.

*Children join their families
in church and then leave
for Christian Education classes
after the Children's Talk.*

December 24, 2010 - 8:00 p.m.

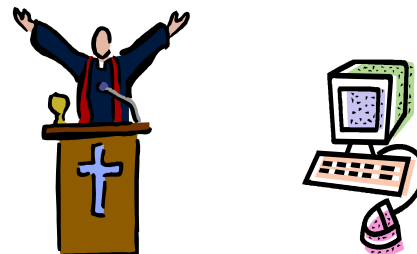
- *Christmas Eve*
- *Service of Lessons and Carols*
Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96;
Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20
When Eternity Invaded Time

December 26, 2010

- *First Sunday after Christmas*
Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148;
Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23
Carol Sing

Scriptures that are listed after the first Gospel reading are non-lectionary passages that will be used in the sermon. All the scriptures are provided here for any weekly Bible reading you may do.

Rev. Peters' sermons and the scripture readings are posted on the church website. Visit: www.fpcstirling.org, click on: "Sermon Archive," then select the Sermon date.



2011 Church Offering Envelopes

Reminder: The 2011 Church Envelopes have been prepared. The boxes are labeled and can be picked up in Pollard Hall beginning December 5th. Thank you!

Christian Education Committee**- Lore Pateman****Christmas Pageant**

This year's play will be an adaptation of "The Characters of Christmas," by Lois Sink. It will be presented by our Church School students on Sunday, December 19th during morning worship. We are blessed to have Beth Badilla leading the program again this year. Below is information regarding **required** participation dates:

Full Cast Rehearsals: Dec. 5th and Dec. 12th, 9:30 a.m.

Dress Rehearsal: Sat., Dec. 18th, 10:00 a.m.

Presentation: Dec. 19th; report at 9:00 a.m.

**Sunday School Snapshot****- Tom Parziale**

We spent part of two Sunday School sessions in October on **Tech Etiquette**. Using the guide from The Thoughtful Christian, we discussed the changes technology has made to the way people can communicate. Our discussion included such things as texting, Facebook, the Internet, and cell phones. The discussion was lively and revealing as we explored sending an email versus Facebook, texting versus using the phone, and more. We talked about the concepts of "where" and "when." We closed by focusing on how words sent via texting and computers can sometimes be misunderstood and how technology doesn't give us the right to be rude. We referenced Colossians 3:14, "Above all, clothe yourself with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

Workshop for Church School Teachers, Educators, and Pastors**- Lore Pateman**

On Saturday, January 22nd, 10:00 a.m., the Newton Presbytery RACE committee is offering a workshop entitled, *What do we teach the children about the Sacraments?* It will be held at the Presbytery Office. Please contact Lore if are interested in attending so you can car pool. There is a flyer on the CE bulletin board in Pollard Hall. Please forward this information to anyone else that you think may be interested. Thank you.

Contact Cathy Burrafato to register, at cathyb@newtonpresbytery.org or by calling 973-361-0084

Youth Council/Planning Committee**- Lore Pateman**

The Resource and Christian Education Committee of our Presbytery is making plans to start a new youth program and is looking for senior high youth to serve on the Youth Council/Planning Committee. Please talk to your senior highs and see if they are interested in participating. Adults are also welcome to be part of this program. The contact person is Rev. Sue Trigger, First Presbyterian Church, Rockaway, 973-627-1059, or at sue@fpcrockaway.org.

Fourth Sunday Focus

- Tom Parziale

Everyone is invited to join us at our next “Fourth Sunday Focus” gathering on **December 26th**. *Fourth Sundays* give us an opportunity to connect with other members of our church family in a relaxed atmosphere: a pot of tea, a Box o’ Joe, Munchkins . . . and conversation.

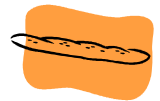
We start around **8:45 a.m.** and end by about **9:45 a.m.** --- but come and join us whenever you can. We meet in Pollard Hall. If you have a topic you’d like to discuss, please contact Tom Parziale.

**Breadstick Fundraiser**

- Jean Hoffman



Many thanks to Karen Peck for leading the project again this year and for the use of her wonderful kitchen. Thank you, also, to everyone who made a purchase. We made approximately 90 boxes of breadsticks, and the proceeds, over \$500, will go toward the Heating Loan. Our crew of volunteers put in a number of hours on the job, but we all agreed it was more fun than work.

**Mission Committee**

- Yvonne Fletcher

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program

- Jean Hoffman, Coordinator



Our final commitment date for 2010 for preparing **40** lunches is: **Friday, December 10th**, 9:30 a.m., in Pollard Hall. We welcome donations of bottled water, juice drinks, snacks, and fruit cups. You can drop them off in Pollard Hall on Sunday mornings. Looking ahead to 2011, upcoming dates are: Jan. 21, Feb. 11, and March 18. Thank you to all who have supported this program all year through donations and by helping to prepare the lunches!

Turkey Donations

We collected 10 turkeys this year—the most yet. Many thanks to all who participated and to Lynne and Bill Combs for delivering them to the Market Street Mission in Morristown for distribution. I’m sure the turkeys provided a good holiday for a lot of people!

**Worship Committee**

- Janet Parziale

The Season of Advent

Those who were in church on Sunday, November 28th may have noticed the Advent candle set up is a little different this year. Rev. Peters and the Worship Committee have been planning a different program for the Advent candle lighting and readings. Each color and item placed on the table during Advent has a specific meaning. The first week, the blue fabric and stars represent “Hope.” For each of the four Sundays in Advent, something will be added to the display. The themes are Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.



Rev. Peters' 20th Anniversary

On November 14th, the congregation honored Rev. Peters on the 20th anniversary of his ministry at the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling. Following worship, there was a special coffee hour, at which time Rev. Peters was presented with a pictorial album documenting his work at the church and in the community-at-large. Ellen Easty prepared a wonderful article for the newspaper regarding the event. (Since her article did not make it into the newspaper, I'm printing it for you here:

Rev. Thomas Peters celebrates 20 years as Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Stirling, NJ, on Sunday, November 14. The congregation is hosting a special luncheon immediately following worship that morning and invites all township residents to attend and share in this glorious occasion. Morning worship begins at 10:00 a.m.

Rev. Peters came to Stirling in October 1990 with his wife, Rev. Barbara Peters, their son, Trevor, and their daughter, Alison, from Corfu, NY, where he and his wife were co-pastors of the Corfu United Presbyterian Church.

He earned a Bachelor of Music Degree from Maryville College in Tennessee and then went to Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, where he received his Master of Divinity Degree in 1981. He was ordained by the Presbytery of Newton on November 18, 1990. In May 2006, Rev. Peters received his Doctor of Divinity Degree from Drew University School of Theology.

His wife, Rev. Barbara Peters, served as assistant pastor at Wilson Memorial Church in Watchung for several years and then assumed pastorate of the church in April 2006.

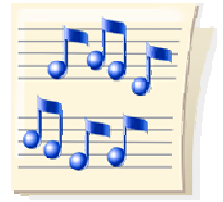
Many groups in the township and neighboring communities have benefitted from his care and concern for others. He served on the Board of Lounsberry Meadows, where he provided pastoral care and led ecumenical worship services. He now serves in the same capacity at the Watchung Ridge Assisted Living facility. Rev. Peters is a 20-year member of the Watchung Hills Ecumenical Clergy Association, a five-year member of the Long Hill Township Juvenile Offenders Committee, and takes part in the special township services held each year on Memorial Day.

In 1999 and 2000, Rev. Peters moderated the Presbytery of Newton, which is comprised of Presbyterian churches in four NJ counties. He has served on numerous Presbytery committees and represented two different Presbyteries at the national General Assembly of the USA. In 2006, he represented the Presbytery of Newton as liaison to the Presbyteries of north, central, and east Nairobi, spending two weeks in Africa.

Continuing his love of music, Rev. Peters has led the Travnicek Memorial Handbell Choir at the Church for several years. He also enjoys singing in the choir at the Chautauqua Institution Retreat in NY, which he attends each summer for two weeks. In his spare time, Rev. Peters enjoys woodworking and wood carving.

Survey of Musical Talent

In an effort to help our organist, Tatiana, better understand the musical talents we have in our congregation, the Personnel Committee has designed a short survey. Please take a moment to fill out the survey below, and send it to the church office, or give it to Tatiana on Sunday at worship. Thank you.



We all enjoy the music during worship and feel that it adds so much to our service. In an effort to utilize the talent we have in our church family, we are asking everyone to answer the following questions. If you play a musical instrument and are willing to play it on occasion during one of our worship services, we want to hear from you. If you are able to sing and would be willing to sing a solo or sing with a few other church members, we want to know that too.

Name _____

I play a musical instrument and would be willing to play it at a worship service.
The instrument I play is: _____.

Check which applies to you:

_____ I would be willing to sing a solo during one of our worship services.

_____ I would be willing to sing with a few other church members.

Thank you for volunteering to add something special musically to our worship services.



Please return this questionnaire to our organist, Tatiana, or to the Church office.

Personnel Committee**- Chris Scott****Staff Appraisals**

The committee has posted Staff Appraisal forms on the church website. These forms are very brief and take only a few minutes to complete. Your input regarding staff performance over the past year is very important to the annual review process. Please take some time to share your thoughts. If you do not have access to the church website, you can pick up a copy of the form in Pollard Hall. We greatly appreciate your participation in this annual survey.

Deacons Corner**- Matthew Gerecht****Christmas Poinsettias**

The Christmas season is upon us, and the Deacons request that those who wish to purchase poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary complete the form that will be available weekly in the church bulletin or contact Matthew Gerecht, Rene' Phelan, or the church office. This year, buying a poinsettia will help Camp Johnsonburg, our Presbytery Camp and Conference Center. A portion of the cost for each plant will go to Camp Johnsonburg, and they will deliver the plants to our church. The cost is \$14 each for a 7" red, white, or pink plant, and the **deadline to order is Sunday, December 12th**. After the Christmas Eve service, you may pick up your plant or designate that it can be donated.

**Church Flowers**

We are now ordering church flowers from Murphy Garden Center. If you would like to place flowers on the chancel for Sunday morning worship in honor or memory of someone, contact Matthew Gerecht. Allow enough lead time to have them ordered for the date you would like. The cost is \$30, and cash or checks (made payable to *Murphy Garden Center*) should be given to Rene' Phelan or Matthew ahead of time since we have to pay for the flowers when they are delivered. Thank you.

**Candle Lighting**

When you serve as an usher and light the candles on the Communion table, please remember to pull the wick in the candle lighter back down to extinguish the candle. **Then**, push the wick back up before it cools so that the wax does not harden inside the brass candle lighter. Once the wick dries and hardens, it sticks to the brass holder and has to be cleaned out before it can be used again. Thank you!

**Worship Help**

The Worship Help chart is posted in Pollard Hall. Please sign up for dates when you can help out as Liturgist, Usher, or host/donor of Coffee Hour. If you have questions about any of these duties, please speak with any Deacon. Thank you!

Water Available

There will now be a pitcher of water and cups available in the Church narthex in case you should need a drink during worship, especially during the winter months when the air is very dry. Please feel free to help yourself or signal an Usher to bring it to you.

Deacons Fund Envelopes

Please remember to continue to use the green Deacons Fund envelopes to help the Deacons purchase items. These envelopes are available in the pew racks or in the church office.

Congregational Meeting

At a congregational meeting held on Sunday, October 31st, the following members were elected to church office starting in January 2011. For Elder: Lore Pateman and John Chen; for Deacon: Mariann Powell and Israel Sierra, Jr. Also elected were members-at-large for the 2011 Nominating Committee: Beth Badilla, Lynn Blakeslee, Joyce Koenig, Jan Somers, and Ruth Young.

Interfaith Hospitality Network

- Phyllis Clemson

Following is a message I received from Joann Bjornson, Executive Director of the Interfaith Council for Homeless Families of Morris County, regarding the success of the **iGive** program:

*I am thrilled to report that Interfaith Council is on goal to reach \$750 in total donations from iGive by year end! For those of you who participate: **Thank you so much!!***

For those of you not familiar with iGive, it is a fabulous fundraising tool that costs YOU nothing but provides Interfaith with some much needed funds. AND, with the holidays right around the corner, NOW'S THE TIME TO PARTICIPATE!!

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Join [iGive.com](http://www.iGive.com) to support Interfaith Council for Homeless Families of Morris County. It's free, safe, and easy to join. Go to: <http://www.iGive.com/welcome/warmwelcome.cfm?c=55033&m=648671>

Don't feel like registering? Take [iSearchiGive.com](http://www.iSearchiGive.com) out for a spin and raise a penny (or more!) per search. Just visit <http://www.iSearchiGive.com> and type "Interfaith Council for Homeless Families of Morris County ..." in the "Select Your Cause" area.

2. Shop through [iGive.com](http://www.iGive.com)'s online mall ~ OR ~ Raise a penny search at [iSearchiGive.com](http://www.iSearchiGive.com).

The iGive Mall features over 700 trusted online retailers like Amazon.com, Staples, Nordstrom, JCPenney, eBay, Expedia.com, Barnes & Noble, QVC, and PET SMART, to name just a few! You'll NEVER pay more when you reach these stores through iGive.com. If you take advantage of the coupons and free shipping deals posted at iGive, you might even save a few bucks! And with [iSearchiGive.com](http://www.iSearchiGive.com), each qualified search earns a penny (or more!) for your cause.

Up to 26% of EACH purchase through iGive benefits your cause, along with a penny (or more!) per qualified search at [iSearchiGive.com](http://www.iSearchiGive.com). Make that first purchase within 45 days and get a bonus \$5 donation, too!

I hope you will consider joining the almost 40 folks who currently help to raise money for Interfaith Council!

Note: You will find 3 different Interfaith Council for Homeless Families of Morris County on iGive - you may join any of them - all proceeds come to us!

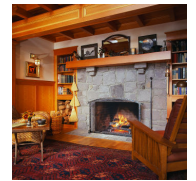
Information about this program is posted on the bulletin board in Pollard Hall.

Visitation Schedule**- Rev. Peters**

From time to time, there will be a poster board in Pollard Hall with dates and times when I will be available to make visitations. If you would like to have me visit you, please sign up for a time that is convenient. This does not affect emergency visitations, if you are in the hospital or at home ill. This is for general weekday visits. I hope this will facilitate my meeting with you to talk about life and faith and also give you the opportunity to ask questions or share thoughts you may have. If you do not have the opportunity to sign up in Pollard Hall, please contact me so that we can arrange a convenient time for a visit.

Winter Retreat**- Chrissie Parziale**

Once again, Kitchell Memorial Church (East Hanover) has invited our congregation to join them for their winter retreat. Those who attended in 2010 enjoyed a fun day of events including sledding, hiking, singing, a craft project, good food, worshiping, a scavenger hunt, a book chat, and, of course, good fellowship. The retreat will be on Saturday, February 12th, at Johnsonburg. We will also have access to the cozy fireplace in the dining hall throughout the day! Last year, the retreat fee was \$20 –\$30, depending on which meals you attended. Finalized prices will be available after January 1st. If you are interested in attending, please sign up at: <http://tinyurl.com/2d7mjlf> so we will have an idea of a head count to provide to Kitchell and Johnsonburg. We will begin



collecting checks in January. If you are concerned about the weather, I will help coordinate carpooling.



Watch for more information about the retreat in Stirling Stuff, the church Bulletin, and via email.

Birthday and Anniversary Cards**- Sue Sanders**

One of the duties entrusted to me as a Deacon is acknowledging birthdays and anniversaries of Church members by sending them a card from the Church. I apologize for neglecting that responsibility recently. As you may know, I lost my companion dog of 14 years and have been grieving that loss. Also, my mother has been ill, and I've been concerned about that. So, if I missed your birthday or anniversary, please accept my heartfelt apology and belated good wishes.

"Stirling Stuff Classified"**- Editor**

A few members have mentioned to me that they have items they would like to advertise to other members either to sell or donate. So, I'm trying a new feature in our newsletter that will allow you to reach others in the congregation. Contact me if you would like to advertise just a few items, and I will include them monthly, as space allows. Please send me any feedback you may have about this. Thanks.



Ruth Young has items to offer:

- ✓ 4-poster mahogany double bed, complete with box spring and mattress
- ✓ decorative metal hanging fireplace accessory that lights up imitation logs
- ✓ Victorian couch

All very reasonable; contact Ruth if interested.

Ongoing Mission Programs

Mile of Pennies

Change (and more) collected during coffee hour supports scholarships for Kenyan students. We're into our fourth year/mile now. Please help us reach our goal.

Food Pantry

Items can be left in baskets marked "Food Pantry Donations."

Toiletries

Full-sized bars of soap and "courtesy" sizes of soap, shampoo, conditioner, and shower caps are donated to various causes. Place on the table outside Pollard Hall.

Sneaker Project

Place used pairs of sneakers (any size) on the pew inside Pollard Hall. To date, we have collected **158** pairs, which are sent to the Somerset Food Bank for distribution.

Eyeglasses, Sunglasses, Cell Phones

Place used glasses and cell phones on the table outside Pollard Hall.

Yarn & Cotton Material

Yarn is used to make lap robes for wounded veterans; any color is acceptable. Fabric (with the exception of wool and stretchables) of about 1/2 yard is used to make small bears for children, totes for wheelchair patients, etc. Place on pew inside Pollard Hall.

Ongoing Fundraiser

Grocery Store Gift Cards

- ✓ No additional cost to you to use
- ✓ Church earns **5%**
- ✓ Denominations available:
 - **ShopRite** in \$20/\$50/\$100
 - **Pathmark** in \$25/\$50/\$100

Gift cards are available each week during coffee hour, or you can contact Jean Hoffman (908-756-1075).

*Please e-mail submissions for the
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jsomers17@hotmail.com
by December 23rd. Thank you!*



Stirling Stuff is the newsletter of the

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