



Stirling Stuff

Volume 55, No. 11

December 2011

Pastor's Letter

I would venture to say that humanity is fast reaching that point of losing all perspective. In today's digital, technological world we are so intent on discovering every little truth about things people say and do and of why things happen the way they do. Humanity has reached the microscopic level of understanding how the world and people act, but we are forgetting to take our eyes away from the microscope and see the larger picture. We hear and react to every little political gaffe, every reason why a sports figure is off their game in one game, etc. We want to know the smallest details. And while there are times when it is important to know those details, more often than not it detracts for our human experience. Every person stumbles eventually under such close scrutiny. We see this most in our political election process. When we delve into the details, it is difficult to see the larger picture. I recall a comic phrase, attributed to President Reagan, that speaks to this.

When you're up to your armpits in alligators, it is hard to remember that your original intent was to drain the swamp.

This idea of losing perspective leads me to the season of Advent. Advent is a season, like Lent, that challenges us to reset, or regain, our perspective. Advent recognizes that our lives and the world are not what we want or know they should be. Advent also reminds us that God is in the world - God has come and is coming, and we can take our eyes off the problems and see the larger picture -- the world is still in the hands of God. The themes we will be using for the four Sundays of Advent are: longing, peace, hope, and joy. Those are expressions that can only come when we see the big picture of God in our midst. So I would encourage you to find times this Advent season when you can get away from the microscope of what has to be done, of tired aching spirits, and reflect on the big picture of God in the world. Recover your spiritual perspective for the season and beyond. I would also encourage you to join us on Friday nights to watch movies designed to lift up the four Advent themes and then join us in discussion of the movies.

See you in church!

Tom



Worship Services and Scripture Passages for December

December 4, 2011

- *Second Sunday of Advent*
- *Sacrament of Holy Communion*
Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13;
2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8
Finding the Messiah in Film Series
2. *Finding Angels in Life's Wars*

December 11, 2011

- *Third Sunday of Advent*
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126
I Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28
Luke 1:47-55
Finding the Messiah in Film Series
3. *Hope for When the Story is Not Easy to Tell*

December 18, 2011

- *Fourth Sunday of Advent*
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26;
Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38
Children's Pageant: *Christmas in Bethlehem*

Blue Christmas Service - 5:00 p.m.

- Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 22:1-11
Romans 8:35, 37-39; Luke 2:1-7
Finding Shelter in the Arms of God

NO 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, 2011

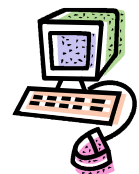
- *Christmas Eve – 8:00 p.m.*
Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96;
Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20
Taking Time to Ponder

December 25, 2011

- *Christmas Day*
Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98;
Hebrews 1:1-12; John 1:1-14
A Christmas Story

**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
and/or scripture reading date you would like.



2012 Church Offering Envelopes

The 2012 Church Envelopes have been prepared. The boxes are labeled and can be picked up in Pollard Hall beginning December 4th. Thank you!

Sacrament of Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism was celebrated on Sunday, Nov. 20th, for Madison Ann Thievon, daughter of Leslie Beechner and Paul Thievon. Madison's aunt, Dawn Beechner, was her sponsor.

Congregational Meeting

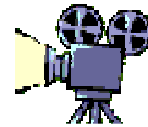
At the congregational meeting held on October 30th, the following members were elected to office:

<u>Elders:</u>	Chris Scott	<u>Deacons:</u>	Bruce Coultas	Beth Badilla
	Joyce Koenig		Ruth Young	Katherine Ihringer
	Madeline Hahl		Susan Gerecht	

Advent Movie Series

Our Advent movie series continues in December; we will look at the themes of Advent through the lens of the movie camera. The movies will lift up the themes of Advent and the Advent candles each week. The movies will be shown the Friday evening before the Sunday they will represent. The movies will begin at 7:00 pm, and there will be a discussion following the viewing. The dates, themes, and movies are:

Dec. 2 nd	Peace	<i>The War</i>
Dec. 9 th	Joy	<i>Life is Beautiful</i>
Dec. 16 th	Love	<i>Babette's Feast</i>



While I will not be preaching on Sunday, Dec. 18th (Children's Pageant), I want to show this movie—*Babette's Feast*-- (on Dec. 16th) as a wonderful non-Christmas expression of incarnational (God with us) love, and the discussion can be the sermon for this movie. As you can see, I'm staying away from the traditional Christmas movies because I'm sure you have them in your own movie collection, or you will be able to see them on TV. I hope this will also be a chance for you to get out of the Christmas season rush for some personal time.

Christian Education Committee

- Lore Pateman

Christmas Pageant

This year's play will be an adaptation of "Christmas in Bethlehem," by Jane Boldenow. It will be presented by our Church School students on **Sunday, December 18th**, during morning worship. Beth Badilla is once again leading this program, which is described as follows:

A traditional pageant of Christmas carols, Scripture readings, poetry, and drama. After the prophecies of the Old Testament are read, the Nativity Story, a Shepherd's Dialogue, and the Story of the Wise Men are dramatized between the singing of carols.

As usual, the play has been chosen to accentuate the strengths and desires of each participant. The script consists of a series of monologues strung together with music and accented with role play and preschoolers.

The schedule of **required** participation for cast members is as follows:

Full Cast Rehearsals: Dec. 4th, 9:30-11:00 a.m.
 Dec. 11th, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
 Dress Rehearsal: Sat., Dec. 17th, 10:00 a.m.
 Performance: Dec. 18th, report at 9:00 a.m.



Adult Education

- Rev. Peters

Monthly Book Study

The Monthly Book Study of Robert Morris' ***Wrestling with Grace*** will meet for their third session on **Wed., Dec. 14th, 7:30 p.m.**, at Chris Scotts' home in Millington. Please read Chapters 7-10 for discussion that evening. Even if you were unable to attend previous sessions, it's not too late to join the group. Please let Chris know if you will be attending and/or if you need directions to her home.

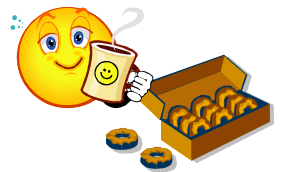
Blue Christmas

On Sunday, **Dec. 18th, 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.

Fourth Sunday Focus

- Tom Parziale

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 join us whenever you can. Please note: We will not be meeting in December. Our next "Fourth Sunday Focus" gathering will be on Sunday, **January 22nd**. If you have a topic you'd like to discuss, please contact Tom Parziale.



Interfaith Hospitality Network - 2012

- **Phyllis Clemson, Chris Scott**

The Interfaith Hospitality Network will be at the Shrine of St. Joseph in January. **Our church's responsibility will be Thurs., January 26th**, which will be upon us before we know it. We have decided on a menu of hearty soups, breads, and salad for the dinner meal. Please consider joining us as we carry on this most important mission project with our 23rd year of participation. Watch for a sign-up sheet in Pollard Hall or speak to Phyllis or Chris if you can help out.

Looking ahead to future 2012 dates: Thursday, March 1st
 Friday, Oct. 19th - Saturday Noon, October 20th

A special thanks to all who participated this past year.

Worship Committee**- Janet Parziale****Canned Food Collection, Dec. 4th**

On the first Sunday of each month, we collect donations of non-perishable food during the worship service. As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, it is appropriate to remember those who don't have enough food to put on their table. The food is donated to the township food pantry at St. Vincent Church. The offering is received during the *Children's Talk*, so please keep your food items with you for the children to collect.

We will continue to collect non-perishable food in the baskets located in the entry-ways to the church during the rest of the month.

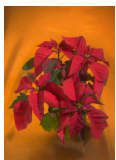
Sanctuary Decorating and Pot-Luck Lunch

Everyone is invited to come to the church on **Sat., Dec. 17th**, to help decorate the sanctuary---put up the Christmas tree, hang greens on the pews, install candle holders, etc.---and then join in a pot-luck lunch. The children will be rehearsing their Christmas pageant earlier that morning, so we plan to start around 11:30 a.m. We hope to have a big turnout for this wonderful time of holiday festivities, fellowship, and good food. Please join us and bring a pot-luck dish to share.

Taizé Service

Our Taizé service is held on the third Sunday of each month at 7:30 p.m. It is a service that helps people find peace and center their thoughts on God. The service is generally 45 minutes long.

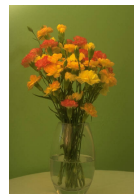
Please note: There will be no Taizé service in December. The next Taizé service will be held on Jan. 15th.

Deacons Corner**- Carolyn Malfatone****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 in the church bulletin or contact Israel Sierra or the church office. The cost is \$15 each for a red, white, or pink plant, and the **deadline to order is Sunday, December 11th**. After the Christmas morning service, you may pick up your plant or designate that it can be donated.

Church Flowers

Don't forget to sign-up on the Flower Chart in Pollard Hall if you would like to place flowers on the chancel for Sunday morning worship in honor or memory of someone. 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 Cash) should be given to Israel Sierra or Carolyn Malfatone. Thank you.



Vases: If you have any Church vases at home, please drop them off in the kitchen when you can. Or, if you have any to donate, we can always use more. We need short, wide vases that the flower arrangements can fit into. Thank you.

Worship Help

Please sign up for dates when you can help out as Liturgist, Usher, or host/sponsor of Coffee Hour. The Worship Help chart is posted in Pollard Hall, and **there are lots of openings**. If you would like to donate to a coffee hour and have someone else host it, please speak to Jan Somers. If you have questions about any of these duties, please speak with any Deacon. Thank you!

Usher/Building Use Responsibilities

You have probably noticed new signs posted on/near the exit doors of both the sanctuary and Pollard Hall. These are meant to be reminders of specific responsibilities for ushers and anyone who uses the church or Pollard Hall. They are: turn off lights, turn off fans, lock doors. We will be highlighting other duties in the future, but these are especially important to the safety and security of our facilities.

Deacons' Fund Envelopes

Please remember to use the green *Deacons' Fund* envelopes for donations to help the Deacons with their Mission work. These envelopes are available in the pew racks or in the church office and may be placed in the offering plate. Thank you!

**Mission Committee****- Yvonne Fletcher****Bridges Outreach Lunch Program****- Jean Hoffman, Coordinator**

Our next commitment date for preparing 40 lunches is: **Friday, Dec. 9th**, 9:30 a.m., in Pollard Hall. We can always use juice containers, bottled water, fruit cups, and packets of cookies or other snacks. You can drop these items off in Pollard Hall on Sunday mornings. To date, we have prepared over 200 lunches, and we are serving a great need. We appreciate all the support you have given to this program. Upcoming 2012 dates: Jan. 6th, Feb. 3rd, and March 9th

Thanksgiving Turkey Donations**- Jean Hoffman, Coordinator**

Thank you to all who participated in the turkey collection for Thanksgiving. Lynne Combs delivered **ten turkeys** to the Market Street Mission in Morristown. Our appreciation to Lynne and all who helped make Thanksgiving a little better for ten families.

**Fundraising Committee****- Jean Hoffman****On-Going Book Sale**

Please take a look at the "Book Table" in the hallway outside Pollard Hall. Proceeds from this sale so far are **\$84.70**, which will benefit the Kenya Scholarship Fund. For more information, please speak to Ellen Easty or Jean Hoffman.



Breadsticks

By my calculations, we made \$551 on the sale of breadsticks (\$24.50 of this amount was a donation from the Parziale's) and \$54 on the sale of Christmas wreaths, for a grand total of \$605, which will go toward the Church Heating Fund.

Our thanks to Karen Peck, once again, for donating two days of her professional time in leading this project. She makes the breadstick dough and donates all the ingredients. Thank you also to everyone who worked on this project and to those who supported it by purchasing breadsticks.

Winter Retreat**- Chrissie P**

The Kitchell Memorial Church (East Hanover) has invited our congregation to join them for their winter retreat for the third year running. Those who attended in the past have 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 11th, at Johnsonburg**. We will have access to the cozy fireplace in the dining hall throughout the day! The retreat fee is between \$20 –\$31, depending on which meals you decide to attend. Registration forms will be available 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.

Visitation Schedule**- Rev. Peters**

There is a sign-up sheet posted 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 to arrange a convenient time for a visit.

Box Tops for Education**- Jan Somers**

We see these little "Box Tops for Education" coupons on many products. They each have a point value, and the points are used by parent organizations to earn free educational/recreational items for schools. They are very useful in providing little extras for students and teachers.

If you do not use them elsewhere, I invite you to cut them out, and bring them to church. They will be donated to the schools where members of our church families attend. It's an easy way to get something for free that can be put to very good use! A collection canister will be available during coffee hour each Sunday. Thank you!

Personnel Committee

- Chris Scott

The Personnel Committee would like your thoughts on the overall performance of our staff members over the past year. This year we have tried to make the survey process easier than ever: the survey has just three questions. Please take a few minutes and share your thoughts by going to the following link and completing one survey for each staff member: www.fpcstirling.org/personnel2011.html. You can reach this link by going to the church web site. This form will be available until December 15th. If you prefer to use a paper form, they will be available in Pollard Hall, or you can print out the following survey in triplicate, completing one for each staff member. Please return the completed surveys to Chris Scott or put them in the *Personnel* mailbox outside the Church offices. Thank you for taking part in this evaluation process; your input is very much appreciated.

Personnel Performance Survey

First Presbyterian Church

November 2011

The Personnel Committee invites you to comment on the performance of our staff members over the past year. Please choose the staff member that you would like to address (circle) and answer the questions below. Please use a separate form for each staff member.

<u>Position:</u>	Pastor	Office Manager	Organist
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1. What has been noteworthy about this person’s performance over the past year?

2. In what ways do you feel this person could improve their performance over the upcoming year?

3. What issues or topics do you feel this person should focus on in the upcoming year?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey; your comments are appreciated. Please return your surveys to Chris Scott or place in Personnel mailbox outside the Church offices.

Prayer Concerns

Please continue to keep these members, friends, and loved ones in your prayers:



Mildred Hurlock
 Kamāi Church
 Anthony Norcia (*Lynn Blakeslee*)
 Georgeine Lorentzen
 Nanette (*Madeline Hahl*)
 Jackie McCurdy (*Madeline Hahl*)
 Virginia Norcia (*Lynn Blakeslee*)
 Joe Richardella (*Sue Sanders*)
 Coalition Troops in Iraq and Afghanistan
 Beth & Howard Blum (*Edna & Sue Sanders*)
 Rev. David Widmer & Family (*Newton Presbytery*)
 Rev. David Muyskens & Wife (*Newton Presbytery*)
 Mary (*Madeline Hahl*)
 Suzie Ruiz (*Israel Sierra & Evelyn Smith*)
 Kristin Hennessy (*Joyce Koenig*)

Diane (*The Hopcrafts*)
 Bill Richter (*Marie Darby*)
 Ted Moody, Jr.
 Jackie Dickson
 Jim Mussacchio
 Ryan Hudak (*Jan Somers*)
 Nina (*Tatiana Akhounzianova*)
 Bonnie Miller (*Edna & Sue Sanders*)
 Katie Morone (*Gary Jolliffe*)
 Virginia Marotte (*Carolyn Malfatone*)
 Rosita Lynch (*Phyllis Clemson*)
 Ted Peck
 Rev. Jeff Archer (*Newton Presbytery*)
 Rev. Jen VanZandt (*Newton Presbytery*)
 Mike Mascola (*Carolyn Malfatone*)

Should you be admitted to the hospital, please have someone contact the church office so that Rev. Peters may visit.

In remembrance. . .
 A memorial service was held in our sanctuary on November 14th for Rosie Andrus' mother, Ann Heffran, who passed away on November 8th. Please keep Rosie and other family members and friends in your thoughts and prayers.



Happy Birthday!

Joyce Koenig	15
Paul Desch	16
Jack Walsh	17
Dale Monetti	18
Bryan Hague	19
Rene' Phelan	19
Ted Peck	23
Art Fletcher	26
Eric Gargiulo	29



Ongoing Mission Programs

Mile of Pennies

Change (and more) collected during coffee hour supports scholarships for Kenyan students. Please help us reach our goal.

Food Pantry

Items can be left in baskets labeled "Food Pantry Donations" located in the Church narthex and on the table outside of Pollard Hall.

Toiletries

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

Sneaker Project

Place used pairs of sneakers (any size) on the pew inside Pollard Hall. To date, we have collected **178** pairs, which are sent to the Somerset Food Bank and other charities.

Eyeglasses, Sunglasses, Cell Phones

Place used glasses and cell phones on the pew inside 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

ShopRite Gift Cards

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

Gift cards are available each week during coffee hour.

*Please e-mail submissions for the
January issue of Stirling Stuff to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
by Dec. 22nd. Thank you!*

Why not invite a friend to church?



Stirling Stuff is the newsletter of the

First Presbyterian Church

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