



Stirling Stuff

Volume 55, No. 1

January 2011

Pastor's Letter

The famous early 20th century novelist, Thomas Mann, once wrote that:

Time has no divisions to mark its passage; there is never a thunderstorm or blare of trumpets to announce the beginning of a new month or year. Even when a new century begins, it is only we mortals who ring bells and fire off pistols.

If we did not have a calendar, we would not even know that a year had taken place. In many ways, the idea of a year helps us to create boundaries so that we don't get that same chill we get when we look up into a clear night sky out in the country far from artificial light and see the millions of stars that remind us that the universe is infinite. The year helps us break up infinite time into blocks that we can handle. Granted, there is a cyclical nature to the movement of the sun, upon which our concept of the year is based. But, the concept of time and blocks of time such as days, months, years, etc. are human constructs to create a sense of order and stability in our lives.



A number of years ago, I shared with you about how after my dad died my mother, who had always enjoyed New Years' Eve, never liked it again. She said that there had always been the feeling that, "we made it through another year." But on New Years Eve 1982, she said, "we didn't make it this year." January 1 is a kind of mile marker in time. We look over the past and remember, but we also look ahead to the future and wonder what's coming. But we don't do this introspection in a vacuum. I recall the words of the writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews, who said,

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (13:8)

While time marches on, we are reminded that the Word that was at the beginning, and will be at the end, does not change. In a world where things change daily, even hourly, The Son is the one constant we can continue to count on. That is truly something to ring bells, shoot off fireworks, and drop lighted balls about.

In January, which is the beginning of the season of Epiphany, the scriptures all reflect on who Jesus is. They seek to help us discover who the one born in the manger is for the world and for us as individuals, and it begins with the words from heaven: *This is my Son with whom I am pleased.* And that has not changed from the beginning of time: God's time or our time.

See you in church!

Tom

Worship Services and Scripture Passages for January

January 2, 2011

- *Epiphany Sunday*
- *Sacrament of Holy Communion*
Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14;
Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12
What Are We Looking For?

January 9, 2011

- *Baptism of the Lord Sunday*
- *Renewal of Baptism*
- *Installation of Church Officers*
Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29;
Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17
The Gift of Baptism

January 16, 2011

- *Third Sunday after Epiphany*
Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11;
I Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42
Travnicek Memorial Ringers will be playing
Are You Willing to Claim and Share Your Identity?

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.*

January 23, 2011

- *Fourth Sunday after Epiphany*
- *Annual Meeting Sunday*
Isaiah 9:1-4; Psalm 27:1, 4-9;
I Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23
What is Your Portrait of Jesus?

January 30, 2011

- *Fifth Sunday after Epiphany*
Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15;
I Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12
Guest Preacher
-

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

If you have not yet picked up your 2011 Church Offering Envelopes, the boxes are labeled and are available in Pollard Hall. Thank you!

Per Capita Apportionment

 The **Per Capita Apportionment for 2011 is \$29** (no increase over 2010). This is the amount that the church is assessed per member to help defray the expenses of the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly for ecclesiastical purposes. Please use the Per Capita envelope in the front of your offering envelopes box to help the church in meeting this requirement. Thank you.

Ordination and Installation of Church Officers

On **Sunday, January 9th**, Church officers will be ordained and/or installed: for Elder -- Ed Gerecht, Lore Pateman, and John Chen; for Deacon -- Mariann Powell and Israel Sierra, Jr.

Annual Congregational Meeting

The Annual Congregational Meeting of the First Presbyterian Church of Stirling will be held in Pollard Hall on **Sunday, January 23rd**, following morning worship. The purpose of this meeting is to receive reports from Church committees, financial reports for 2010, and the proposed budget for 2011. Please plan to attend this important event in the life of our Church as we look back over the past year and look ahead to the future.

Christian Education Committee

- Lore Pateman

Workshop for Church School Teachers, Educators, and Pastors

On **Saturday, January 22nd**, at 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.

Christmas Pageant

This year's play was an adaptation of "The Characters of Christmas," by Lois Sink. It was presented by our Church School students on Sunday, December 19th, during morning worship. Many thanks to Beth Badilla for directing the play and to everyone who participated in this wonderful program.



Youth Council/Planning Committee

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.

Adult Education

- **Debra Sprague**

Fourth Sunday Focus

- Tom Parziale

Everyone is invited to join us at our next "Fourth Sunday Focus" gathering on **January 23rd**. *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.



Mission Committee

- **Yvonne Fletcher**

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program

- **Jean Hoffman, Coordinator**



Our first commitment date for 2011 for preparing 40 lunches is: **Friday, January 21st, 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. Upcoming dates are: Feb. 11 and March 18. Thank you to all who have supported this program through donations and by helping to prepare the lunches!

Winter Clothing Collection

Fifteen large bags of warm clothing were collected this year. Eleven coats/jackets were given to *NJ Care*, and the rest is slated for *St. Joseph's Social Services Center* in Elizabeth. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this project so successful.

Mile of Pennies

The total for the Mile of Pennies fund for 2010 is \$237.86; please help us reach our goal of \$884.40.

Worship Committee

- Janet Parziale

The Season of Advent



You may have noticed the Advent candle set up was different this year. Each Sunday during Advent, something new was added to the table, and each color and item placed on the table had a specific meaning. The blue fabric and stars represent Hope, the evergreens represent Peace, the doves represent Joy, and the people and animals represent Love. Please take a closer look at the display before it is disassembled, and think about the meaning of each theme.

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 to find peace and center their thoughts on God. The service is generally 45 minutes long. Our next Taizé service will be on **January 16th**.

Deacons Corner

- Matthew Gerecht

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.



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!

Coffee Hour

Several months ago, we started a *Coffee Hour Fund* that is used to provide refreshments on Sundays when no one has signed up as host. Jan Somers maintains the fund through donations. If you would like to contribute, please see Jan. Thank you!

**Water Available**

There will be a pitcher of water and cups available in the Church narthex in case you 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

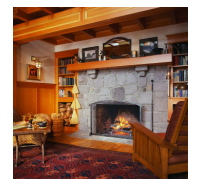
Please remember to use the green *Deacons' Fund* envelopes to help the Deacons purchase items. These envelopes are available in the pew racks or in the church office and may be placed in the offering plate.

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 P**

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, worshipping, 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.

Church Website

Reminder: Our Church website, www.fpcstirling.org, is your source for church news, the Church calendar, Stirling Stuff, upcoming events/programs, Pastor's sermons, Scripture readings, Church history, and more. Please make it a point to log on regularly and keep up-to-date with what's happening.

These Days

Our Church has a subscription for multiple copies of the devotional booklet, *These Days*. The new issue is available in the Church narthex.

"Stirling Stuff Classifieds"

- 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. Contact me if you would like to advertise just a few items, and I will include them monthly, as space allows.

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 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.

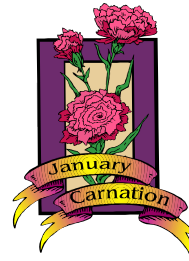
Ongoing Fundraiser

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
February issue of Stirling Stuff to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
by January 23rd. Thank you!***



Stirling Stuff is the newsletter of the

First Presbyterian Church

158 Central Avenue

Stirling, NJ 07980

Editor: Jan Somers

The Rev. Dr. Thomas T. Peters, Pastor
pastor@fpcstirling.org
 Paulette Irlander, Office Manager
Secretary@fpcstirling.org
 Church Office: 908-647-1033
 Website: www.fpcstirling.org