



The Pastor's Page



The sounds of newborn cries echo through our home. My eyes open slowly like they are lifting by the power of some cosmic garage door opener. I want them to stay shut, but that delightful sound of life keeps going. My eyelids arrive in their fully open position and I note that it's 5:12 a.m. It's hard to know at first whether it's because of hunger, or a misplaced pacifier, or just because our son is well rested, and wants to do something other than lay by himself in his comfortable cozy crib.

I ponder the time of day as Ali goes to check on Anton. I think to myself as I drag my groggy body out of bed to let the cat out, **"not too bad, if I was a farmer, I'd be up for good by now."** However, my crops are limited to the orange tree in the back yard and the seasonally challenged tomato plant that is still producing in November with one lonely almost-ripe tomato. If I raised livestock, I'd be getting ready to tend for their care, the moon shines brightly, as the sun has not even begun to shine. However, I'm not a farmer and I am not a shepherd. At least not in the traditional way. I look at the clock again as I climb back into bed, trying to salvage **another hour of rest and think, "this is real."** This is what life is about—change and adjustments to change. We love every second of it.

The process of birth is amazing. As many of you have experienced in one way or another. Birth is really the epitome of change. Life has a definite pace filled with life altering events. Changes can be startling and then adjustments are made. We move from the phase of shock to normality and it simply is the way things are -- reality.

As I experience different events in my own life, there are parts of the Bible that become more vivid as well. They become real. Not in a sense that they were false before, but in the way that its meaning is deeper. When I hear that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, I understand that Jesus was human. As Eugene Peterson puts it, **"The Word moved into the neighborhood."** God is incredible. Adult Jesus carries enough significance of its own in our faith, but to consider the infant Jesus is really another rich layer.

When the gospel writer describes the birth of Jesus, I have a more complete picture. Childbirth is an accomplishment-- for both mother and baby. What an incredible journey the son of God made being born, instead of simply **"miraculously appearing."** The thoughts of Mary and Joseph as mother and father can only be

surmised. To be a new parent would cause enough fright **by itself.** Wondering, **"Why is he crying now?"**-- Hunger? Coldness? Too hot? Wet? Gassy?

If we allow the fullness of Jesus to be both divine and human, we understand that Jesus would have been **far removed from a "no crying he makes" baby.** It's healthy to cry. It's common to wet your diaper. It's human to fuss until a glorious resounding belch erupts from tiny lips. I'm continually amazed at the creation of our son.

One can only imagine the amazement that God has for the creation of the world and for the impact Jesus has in the world. Christmas is often portrayed as a child's holiday. People think of Rudolph and presents and Christmas pageants and cookies. It is deeper than that.

This will be my first Christmas to experience as a parent-- What a difference? I think I'll better understand God for it. And yet I pause and wonder how God could take such a large risk. As a new dad, I'm cautious about the germs in the cart at Target when we go shopping. It's hard to imagine intentionally planning for a son to be born without the assistance of medical staff, under questionable familial circumstances, in the middle east, in the first century, only to live and die before he reached his 40th birthday.

"Jesus is the reason for the season" may be overly cliché. However, the phrase draws attention to the significant way that God loves humanity. We are God's creation. Often, we think about how God loves his own son Jesus, in whom God is well pleased. The emphasis of the Gospel is really on how much God loves the world. God loves you more than any parent or person ever has. You are treasured and cared for. That is the Christmas story --the love God has for humanity. Treasure that knowledge in your heart as you muddle your way through the garland and the lights and the aisles of discounts and draw-ins.

Remember that the season of advent and Christmas is not about preparing your house for inspection by company. It's how not about the perfect gift or the perfect cheer. It's about preparing your life for God, who loves you without condition.

Merry Christmas,

Dus



Presbyterian Women

Bring three dozen Christmas cookies...go home with one dozen assorted cookies. (Not counting what you eat at the luncheon!) **Such a deal! I don't know** what I am more excited about—the cookies or the guest soloist flying in from Washington D.C.! Everyone is invited to our Christmas Luncheon! Even men! Tuesday, December 21, 2010 at 12:00. Reservations are suggested, but not mandatory. Sign up on the bulletin board by the kitchen, or call Carol Dietrich. We are getting ready for a crowd of Joy-Seekers. **We'll sing and read** and talk about the Reason for the Season! Cookies are optional. Bring a nativity scene if you would like to decorate a table. There will be no Coordinating Meeting that day to give the Team more time to bake and greet!

November's Luncheon was a Grateful Celebration. We collected \$395 for the Thank Offering. We are anxious to see what projects are chosen this year by Presbyterian Women. Reading the description of projects funded in 2010, we got some ideas about things we could do right here in our community. Rev. Nancy Clegg, our guest speaker, gave us a vision and many tips about doing mission and for having faith-centered holidays. We had several guests who all pledge to come back. Thank you to Mary Lou Hover and the Afternoon Circle for the festive, delicious lunch.

Of course the centerpiece of our organization this year is the Revelation Bible Study. Circle One will meet at the home of Helen Mar. Circle Two will meet at 11:30 **at church. That's on Tuesday, December 7. The Evening Circle, the revolutionaries, will be called for their meeting times. It's not really a secret—anyone can come...just call Cheryl Hunt for the time and place.**

From The Hunts: Peace Program Colombia

Thank you for your willingness to support us in our journey with the ministry of the Presbyterian Accompaniment Program in Colombia. Last month we shared a wonderful evening of culinary delights of Latin American and a lively discussion of the hopes and fears of our brothers and sisters in Colombia. If you were unable to attend, but would like to make a monetary contribution, there are forms on the bulletin board next to the kitchen. If you would like to attend the next Open House, speak to either Doug or Cheryl, and we will add your names to the list.



THE DEACONS ANGEL TREE!



The Deacon's Angel Tree is ready in the Westminster Hall. Please take an ornament (or more) and make a child's Christmas happier. Each ornament has the age and gender of one of the children at New Hope Family Shelter. Your unwrapped gifts can be placed by the tree December 5, 12, or 20. Suggestions include underwear, socks, pajamas, gloves, scarves, personal hygiene items, school supplies, and of course, toys. For teen girls, toys could also mean perfume or bath and body items. For teen boys, suggested toys include footballs, basketballs, bats/gloves, or video games. Thank you-the Deacons

"BRING A FRIEND" SUNDAY



December 12 has been designated "Bring a Friend" Sunday by the Session. As we approach the Christmas season, this is a wonderful time and opportunity to invite and bring a friend to First Pres.

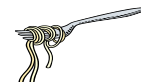
One of the easiest ways for us to make others **aware of God's wonderful deeds and the good news** is to invite a friend, neighbor, co-worker, someone new to the neighborhood to Church on December 12th.

That Sunday we will make the Church very "visitor friendly" - name tags and other modifications to the service. Special Christmas music and hymns that everyone enjoys singing. After worship there will be cider, Christmas cookies, and other holiday fare. (Remember to create some extra parking spaces in the lot for our guests by parking on the street if you are able)

"Bring a Friend" Sunday launches us into a series of seasonal celebrations and traditions: Fellowship Luncheon and Children's Christmas Pageant the following Sunday, December 19, and our Christmas Eve Service 5 days later on December 24. So this is a good time and opportunity to reach out to that friend, co-worker, or neighbor and share a time of worship, fellowship, and celebration.

Fellowship

For the month of December the fellowship committee will be hosting a spaghetti luncheon on Dec 19th to coincide with the Children's Christmas Pageant. There will be "spaghetti a plenty" so come enjoy a meal while we support the kids!



LET'S SING CHRISTMAS CAROLS



Do you like to sing Christmas carols?
Do you like to hear Christmas carols?
Then you won't want to miss out.
Beginning Sunday, November 28,
and continuing through all four Sun-
days in Advent there will be pre-
worship Christmas caroling. It all starts at 10:20 a.m.
So come a little early each Sunday and join in the fun.

C.E. News

The Christian Education committee would like to thank everyone who participated in the bake sale on November 7. There were lots of wonderful goodies to buy and the congregation was very generous. We made \$557! Thank you for supporting our youth and helping them go to camp this summer.



Christmas is coming and that means it is time for the annual Christmas Pageant. All the usual characters will be there, the cows, the sheep, the shepherds, the angel, the wise men, Mary and Joseph. We will

begin with a fellowship luncheon right after worship, then have the pageant and finish with a birthday cake for Jesus. You don't want to miss it. Please join us on December 19th for some food, fun, and fellowship.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

If any information is listed incorrectly or needs updating, PLEASE contact the church office!

Carol Baughman	12/08	Harry Hedburg	12/19
Donna Hammel	12/11	Scott Gibson	12/23
Aaron Roider	12/12	Elizabeth Yost	12/28
Trilby McCulloch	12/13	Marilyn Vaughn	12/30
Juanita Taylor	12/13		
Tola Eley	12/14		
Marilyn Franklin	12/16		



The office would like to correct the following birthday errors for November's newsletter:

- Michelle Holmes Burns, November 3
- Joseph Rokowzeski, November 21 (91 years old!)

Stewardship

Thank you for the individuals who provided and cooked Turkeys for the Stewardship luncheon: Kathy White, John and Marilyn Vaughn, Gail Herron, and Wendy Winnett (Marge Wall's daughter).

"I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the people; and I will sing praises to you among the nations, for your loving-kindness is great above the heavens; and your truth reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth."
-Psalm 108:3-5

Pledged for 2011: \$147,855.20

VS.

Pledged for 2010: \$172,218.00

Notes from Session

Clerk's Report: Member Wedding: Marian Stewart Ferguson and William Ryan McNally, October 16, 2010; Member Death: Charles O'Neil

Pastor's Report: Motion was passed that the Housing Allowance for 2011 be approved at the Congregational Meeting on November 21st.

Motion was passed to approve the Pastor's vacation from December 13th to 18th.

Nominating: A motion was passed that Session meet on Wednesday night for the year 2011.

Announcements: Annual Reports are due by the end of the year.

Next Session Meeting (NOV & DEC):

TUESDAY

DECEMBER 7, 2010 at 6:00 p.m.



ANOTHER "160 GIVING OPPORTUNITY..."

Contribute toward the cost of the new efficient kitchen freezer! -FB&G

Income	Actually	Budget
Oct. 2010	Received	
Pledged	\$14,738.25	\$14,333.33
Unpledged	\$1,570.85	\$1,000.00
Loose Offer.	\$194.11	\$183.33
TOTAL	\$16,503.21	\$15,516.66
Expense	Actually	Budget
Oct. 2010	Spent	
Expenses	\$18,394.19	\$17,905.85

The Window

Seasonal Services

November 28, 2010

"An Urgent Message" —Matthew 24:36-44

December 5, 2010 Communion

"Preparing The Way" —Matthew 3:1-2

December 12, 2010 Bring-a-Friend Sunday

"Joy Overflowing" —Isaiah 35:1-10

December 19, 2010 Communion, Luncheon & Pageant

"The LORD Saves" —Matthew 1:18-25

December 24, 2010 Christmas Eve Service 7 p.m.

"The Lord for All of Us" —Luke 2:1-14

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

As God's family, forgiven and freed through Jesus Christ, we seek

- We seek to know God through prayer, worship and Bible study.
- **To reflect God's love to each other and to the world.**
- To respond to the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- To spread the Gospel throughout our community

NEXT WINDOW DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2010

First Presbyterian Church
of Stockton

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Pastor's Email: gwright@fpcstockton.org

Website: www.fpcstockton.org

Business Office Hours:

Monday -Tuesday, Thursday- Friday: 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Wednesdays: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (Noon)

**Dated Material
Please RUSH**

stamp

Return Service Requested

PRAYER FOR UNITY

Now may the God of patience and comfort grant to be like minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus , that you may be with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus.

Romans 15:5-7