

The Messenger

First Presbyterian Church
Cookeville, TN 38501
www.firstprescookeville.org

January 2012

I Believe it's Getting Better

Debbie and I had a great time in Savannah, Georgia, last week. It is a wonderful city for walking around and soaking up history. The squares are fascinating, the architectural diversity is wonderful. The food choices are fabulous, and the people of the city are very glad to see and welcome visitors. We also took a side trip to Tybee Island and saw dolphins frolicking in the ocean near the pier. The whole experience was relaxing and refreshing.

Unfortunately, when we got home, we discovered that our refrigerator had developed a problem and much of the food inside was spoiled. I am still waiting to hear from the repair shop whether this refrigerator can be fixed or if we have to buy a new one. While I wait, workers are here at the church, replacing two of our furnaces. It is all a reminder that life is a mixed bag and we must take the bad along with the good.

The truly good news for me is that I believe the good in life far outweighs the bad. I don't mean to make light of our problems and our suffering. I know too well the pain that people endure. There is a great deal of sin and evil in the world. There are people who take pleasure in causing others pain. I think about the recent spree of arson in California. People also hurt one another in their relationships, resulting in divorce or alienation. There is also a lot of bad stuff that just happens; things like floods and tornadoes, illnesses, famine and accidents. Of course, there is no denying the many wars throughout the world and the devastation caused by hatred on a global scale. A quick perusal of the daily news will affirm the evil in the world

Despite recognizing the bad however, I believe there is still so much more that is positive. People around the world are living longer and healthier lives. Modern medicine and technology offer hope to people who surely would have died just a few years ago. Wars, which haven't ceased, are not as deadly as they were a generation ago. If the world can avoid a nuclear holocaust, hopefully, we can help bring peace to more people and nations. I am encouraged by the democracy movements in so many third world countries. People everywhere really do want to be free.

Modern technology has also reduced many of the burdens of hard labor that crushed body and spirit a generation ago. Of course, this means we must find new ways to educate people and help them find meaningful work. I believe our creative spirit will help us to do just that. There are so many jobs today that our parents never dreamed of, and I am convinced that will continue to be true over the coming years. I am also encouraged by the compassion of so many people I meet, including young people, who want to make a difference in the world and want to do it by helping others.

We in the church have a unique opportunity to assist in this process of making the world a better, more loving, more peaceful place. We can help to show people how to live in a way that brings about God's kingdom. We must avoid the temptation of rushing to judgment; of using our faith and values to condemn rather than encourage. We must offer people ways to put their creativity and compassion to use in service to God and their neighbors. The Apostle Paul encourages us to think about wonderful things, pure and honest things. I agree with him completely. There is no good reason to cry over spilt milk or spoiled meat. I know that there will always be pain and suffering in the world but I am confident that we are on a path to a better world. While politicians and news programs tell us how bad the world is, let us show one another how good the world can be.

Peace, Pat H

HISTORY ON THE WEBSITE

Check out the church's website for some of the early history of the church and the issues that helped make it happen. Our congregation has a fascinating beginning that involved a number of prominent families and finally made its way to the Tennessee Supreme Court and the US Supreme Court. Portions of the early chapters from Michael Birdwell's book on the history of the church will be available for reading prior to publication of the complete book sometime in the future. The web site is www.firstprescookeville.org and you can still listen to Sunday services as well as learning much more about the church.

PRESBYTERIAN NEWS FROM 2011

We all like to look back at the big stories of the past year, and in 2011 the PCUSA made several newsworthy decisions. Certainly the most talked about change was the passage of Amendment 10-A, which removed language from the constitution requiring ordained officers to practice fidelity in marriage or chastity in singleness.

The General Assembly also passed the New Form of Government, which gives more flexibility and authority to local churches. Although a sizeable majority of Presbyteries approved of the South African Belhar Confession (108-63), it failed to receive the required two thirds majority and so will not be included in the book of Confessions.

Perhaps more important than any of the constitutional issues were the demographic studies and their consequences. Not surprisingly, Presbyterian congregations are older and whiter than the rest of the population, and more than half of PCUSA churches have fewer than 100 members. Many of the small churches are in declining rural areas, where there is little hope of revitalization.

For the first time in over a generation, there are now more ministers than there are churches. Finally, more new churches are being started than in many years, though in a major change, the new churches are more likely to include immigrant and multi-cultural communities, more likely to be younger and less likely to be in suburban areas.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION

The annual meeting of the congregation will be held following worship on Sunday, February 26. There will be reports from the deacons and session committees, as well as a presentation of the session's 2012 budget. As always there will be opportunity for discussion of issues important to the members and friends of the congregation. Printed reports will be available by Sunday, February 19. Elders and deacons are reminded that reports need to be in the church office by Wednesday, February 8, in order to be included in the printed reports.

CONGREGATIONAL ASSESSMENT DISCUSSIONS

For the next several Wednesday night studies we will take a closer look at the congregational assessment done by Michael Davis of the Presbytery office. Summaries of that report are available in the church office and everyone is invited to be a part of the discussions on what this might mean for our ministry and mission going into the New Year. I have already heard several interesting ideas for ministry that demonstrate the creativity of people in the congregation. Our congregation is at a crossroads and we have the opportunity to be proactive in deciding what our future will be.

Bring a brown bag supper and be part of the discussion and the decision making process. Supper starts at 5:45 p.m., with discussion from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

At the time of this writing, the final figures for the year 2011 were not yet available. The session has set a 2012 budget of just over \$219,000, which is slightly less than the 2011 budget of \$233,000. The complete financial review of 2011 and the budget for 2012 will be available prior to the annual meeting in February. Thanks to all for your generous support of the church, and let's work to make 2012 an even better year for ministry and mission.

GENESIS HOUSE SAYS THANKS

We have received a nice thank you from the Genesis House in response to our mitten tree. Much more than a simple mitten tree, we gathered several hundred pairs of mittens and socks, along with hats and scarves, and a wide variety of toiletries and health care items. As colder winter weather makes its appearance, our gifts are very much appreciated. More than fifty families will be supported by our donations.

<i>DINNER OUT?</i>	Come join us on Saturday, January 21, 5:00 p.m. at Ruby Tuesdays, 1360 Interstate Drive, Cookeville. Sign-up sheets will be at both entrances to the sanctuary. All are welcome. Call Annette Flanders (516-3301) for more information or if you have signed up and need to cancel.
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LESS WAR; MORE LOVE

Everywhere a person turns these days, the language of warfare can be heard. We have long been fighting the war on poverty, the war on crime and the war on drugs. Now we have the war on families, the war on Christmas, the war on America, the war on immigrants, the war on teachers, the war on business, the war on the poor, the war on job creators, the war on religion, the war on marriage, the war on the elderly, the war on the middle class and class warfare in general. The list of wars seems endless.

Of course, most of this war imagery is meant to frighten people and incite them to action, which is most often self centered. Unfortunately, such rhetoric generally serves to create more barriers between people and decreases meaningful discussions that can lead to real solutions to problems we all face. Often, the purpose of such language is to paint honest people with differences of opinion as evil people intent on causing harm.

As we enter another election year, let's try to look past the labels and slurs, to see the people and issues that really matter. And, instead of falling into the language of war, let's try to use the language of love; for since God first loved us, we can love one another.

JOINT BOARD MEETING

Deacons and elders will meet together on Saturday, January 14, beginning at 9:30am. Each year, the boards come together to discuss the common concerns of the church and of each board. Following a time of joint meeting, the two boards will hold separate meetings and conclude by 12:00 noon. This will be the last official meeting for retiring officers and the first meeting for incoming officers. New officers will be ordained and installed during worship on Sunday, January 15.

WE CARE: CHILI SUPPER

The next meeting of We Care, the foster care support group, will be on Tuesday, January 17, beginning at 5:00 p.m. The menu for the evening will include chili. At 6:00 p.m., the group will divide into various age categories for discussion and activities. This group continues to grow and meet an important need for families to talk about their common issues. More help with food and supervision of young people is always welcome. Talk to Pat Handlson for more details on how to help.

SPRING BREAK MISSION TRIPS

There will be two opportunities for mission experiences over TTU's Spring break, March 4-11, 2012. The first will be helping with a food pantry and rebuilding homes which were destroyed by tornadoes last summer in Birmingham, Alabama.

The second trip will be to the Koinonia Farm, in southern Georgia. This farm has been an interracial, social justice experiment since the 1940's. More information about each of these trips will be available soon and we want people to get the dates on their calendars.

It is possible to spend half of the week in Birmingham and half in Georgia. The days are flexible, and one might come just part-time.

If you are interested in participating in either of these mission trips, contact Diane Glasgow, Pat Handlson or Andy Smith.

DINNER AT THE RESCUE MISSION

We will be serving dinner at the Rescue Mission on Thursday, January 12. We will prepare the meal and serve the residents that evening. There will also be a time of meditation and fellowship. Meet at the church at 4:45 or at the mission at 5 p.m. We begin serving at 5:30 and finish up by 7 p.m. Contact Pat Handlson or Dave Riddell for more information.

READ ANYTHING GOOD LATELY?

by Thelma Johnson

MY READING LIFE, by Pat Conroy

Pat Conroy, who has written many bestsellers, has given us a memoir. This is not a list of influential books, but rather an intimate view of how one's childhood environment, subsequent planned and unplanned events, and a determination to enjoy a fruitful life can work for a boy who went to military school in spite of a penchant for literary pursuits, taught school, survived an abusive father, and then became a writer whose books touch the fears and destroyed hopes of the human heart. This book is an easy read for times between watching football on TV and having the last cookouts of the season. It makes a person want to read through all his other books that have preceded this one.

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BIRTHDAYS

- 5 — Diane Glasgow
- 6 — Juanita Phillips
- 8 — Ethan Woods
- 14 — Judy Pumar
- 16 — Carolyn Stumpf
- 20 — HannahBeth Boles
- 22 — Laura Aitken Solomon
- 24 — Rachel Dollar
- 24 — Hannah Dollar
- 25 — Thelma Johnson
- 26 — Ted Hayes
- 28 — Matthew Wilhelm
- 31 — Steve Chapman
- 31 — Barbara Greeson

ANNIVERSARIES

- 5 — Jonathan & Chelsea Holland
- 11 — Chris & Annabelle McCormick

IN OUR PRAYERS

IN NURSING HOMES OR ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES:
Edith Jared, Joanne Miller, and Frances Snyder.

KEEP IN PRAYER ALSO: Mary Armstrong; Mike Birdwell; Cleao & Joyce DuBey; Sam Glasgow; Don & Judy Medley; Hugh Piercey; Eliseo Rios; Mary Smith; Grace Anna Sine's brother, Don Green; Linda Wilson's sister, Diane Roby; Barbara & Dave Riddell's daughter, Carrie Lee; Peggy Rittenberry's sister, Linda West; Robert See's & Ginny Langpap's sister, Shirley Nelson; Sharon Myers' niece, Barbara Powers; Andy Smith's father, Kenneth Smith and son of a friend, Arbor McRoberts; Jean Metz; Linda Furtsch; Cindy Dyer; Susan Dowland; Deryl Martin's nephew, Kyle Martin; the orphanage in Losotho, Africa; and the people in the armed services, especially Giles Evans, Capt. Josh & Ashley McClellan, Ty Langford and Cpl. Kevin L. Honaker.

The next **newsletter deadline** is
January 23.
Please send your information
to Debbie Handlson at (536-5486),
e-mail (phandlson@aol.com) or
Katie Kumar at (372-6197), e-mail
(kjkumar@tntech.edu)

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