

The Messenger

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

October 2009

Supporting the Church

The church has been very important to me. Ever since I made a decision to become active at Oak Grove Presbyterian Church in Bloomington, MN, I have felt the love and support of people around me as I have tried to walk faithfully with God. It hasn't always been easy. In fact, sometimes it has been quite difficult. The church can be very frustrating. Things can move so slowly that it feels like we're not making any progress. On the other hand, things can happen that I don't like or that make me uncomfortable and then I'm against change.

Each church is unique, made up of people who choose to associate with a particular group of people for their own reasons. Some people choose a church because of denomination; they've always been whatever they are or they are attracted to a particular set of beliefs. Others choose a church because of the style of worship; some like traditional others like contemporary. Some people want to be part of a big church, with lots of programs and activities; others want a small church, where they can get to know people better. Some people choose a church because of its location; close to home or family. Some people choose a church because of the pastor; they like the preaching. Others choose a church because it fills a particular need in their lives at that time. And, there are more reasons; perhaps as many as there are people in church.

Of course, with all those different people and their myriad of reasons for choosing a church, there is also great potential for tension between them. When I first became a church member I thought the church was wonderful and didn't have any idea that people squabbled at the church. When I became an elder, I began to see the cracks that form in a congregation and the tensions that can grow into divisions. Now that I am a pastor, I see the tensions and divisions even more clearly and spend a fair amount of my time trying to foresee difficulties or reconcile differences before they get out of hand and damage personal relationships, as well as threaten the unity of the congregation.

For these reasons, I understand when some people say that they've given up on the church. Many people decide that they would rather make their faith journeys outside the church than live through the pain and frustration of dealing with all the problems inside the church.

My response is that, while I understand those feelings, I disagree with the decision to leave the church. On a personal level I think we give up a lot of support when we pull away from the people at church. It always saddens me to see people going through difficult times without a strong support system, including prayer. Inside the church, it is ok to be mad at people and even to be mad at God for suffering we may have to endure. People struggle with illness, financial setbacks, broken relationships and more. Going through them alone seems like more than we can bear. And, it is certainly more than we have to bear alone. God is big enough to handle all of our anger, pain, despair and whatever else we might have to throw. I have always been grateful for the prayers and support of church members and friends when I have been going through difficult times.

On a community level, I also think it is best to stay inside the church and try to make a difference by working through the process. I think about this whenever I see the church responding to disasters and emergencies. We can do so much more when we work in groups. Things that individuals may want to do generally don't happen without some kind of institutional efforts. Throughout history, critics have complained that the church has done a lot of damage but I would argue that we have done even more good. What we can do as individuals is get involved and support the work of our local church. Become active in something that is bigger than yourself. In the end, I think you will see the benefits.

Peace, Pat H

Peacemaking Sunday

Sunday, October 4 has been designated Peacemaking Sunday within the Presbyterian Church. For several weeks we have heard stories about efforts at reconciliation, within families and communities. Each year a portion of the offering remains in our local community to serve such efforts here. This year, the session has decided to split our portion of the offering between the Genesis House, which helps women and children get out of abusive relationships and the new Rehabilitation farm operated by the Rescue mission, which helps men work through their problems of addiction. There is much that needs to be done when it comes to making peace.

Nominating Committee

The nominating committee has begun its work of identifying people who will accept leadership positions within the church. We need elders to make decisions regarding all aspects of the life of the church, and, deacons who will watch over the care of our church members and friends. Along with the pastor, these leaders are responsible for maintaining the church as a strong and caring congregation. Please look inside your heart and discover whether you might be ready to take on one of these important roles.

There will be a congregational meeting on Sunday, October 25 to hear the report of the nominating committee and vote on their recommendations.

Dinner Out Group

Come join the next Dinner Out Group on Saturday, October 17th at 5pm. We will be dining at Mama Rosa's Italian Restaurant, 200 South Lowe Avenue. Sign up sheets are available at both doors of the sanctuary. For more information please call Kaye Craig at 537-3714.

Amazing Acres

by Erin Angel

On Sunday, October 25th, immediately following worship, the children and youth of the church will be going to Amazing Acres for an afternoon together. We will enjoy hot dogs cooked over the fire pit, a hay ride, corn maze and pumpkin picking. Mark your calendars for this afternoon of fun and fellowship.

Hot Dog Day

Put the Handlson's Hot dog day on your calendar now. This year's party will be held on Saturday, October 10, from 2-5p.m. with grilled hot dogs and veggie dogs, all the fixings, lawn games, and an option of TV football. You don't want to miss it.

Financial Update

At the end of August, church finances remain relatively strong and stable. The 2009 budget calls for just over \$147,000 in income and spending for the first eight months. Actual income has been just over \$160,000, with actual spending just over \$142,000. The difference in income can be accounted for by several families who paid their annual pledges in advance, as well as mission giving above expectations and special gifts for the centennial music programs.

Several of the special projects that we hope to complete before we begin our 100th anniversary celebration are now underway. These include: an overhaul of the sound system, sealing and striping the parking lot, landscaping and grounds repair, new pew cushions, and, special music for the church. Special offerings for the Centennial Fund are much appreciated. Thanks to all for such generous support of church mission and ministry.

Host Family and International Students

by Peggy Kilgore

Thank you again, everyone, for your patience! I have been assured by Debbie Bernard that we should have our international student assignments by the time you read this newsletter. Some of us have just matched up with a student(s) through the Ice-cream Social and the Fall Fun Fest, which is fine too. To view pictures from both events just follow the links at the end of this article. Our next planned event will be the International Student church lunch on the second Sunday in October. Please invite your student and encourage them to bring friends. Some students will want to come to church, too, so be sure to extend a warm invitation (including the time that you will pick them up in front of Derryberry Hall). I'm sure that the students will enjoy spending time with our friendly church members and guests. Our lunch will be one more opportunity for First Presbyterian Church to reach out to some very young international students who are missing their families and homes. Links for pictures: <http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=101232&id=676454325&l=9d54c1b6c4>

Thanks for Helping Tech Students

Many thanks to all who brought in donations for the Tech students whose apartments were flooded in the latest storm. Two dozen students were relocated and refurbished with household supplies. Many of these students were music majors who also lost most of their sheet music. Jeremy Hansen is organizing a fund to help replace that lost music. Please contact him if you want to help.

Read Anything Good Lately?

by Thelma Johnson

THAT OLD CAPE MAGIC by Richard Russo.

Russo is one of the country's top writers, and this is his latest. Jack Griffin, college prof, is headed for Cape Cod and the wedding of a friend of his daughter. In the trunk of his car are the ashes of his father, which he plans to scatter in an appropriate place on the Cape. His rocky marriage, his tyrant mother, and other assorted crises make his journey full of surprises. The book spans a year and ends with his daughter's wedding when he reaches a kind of resolution to his problems. Although the story is light-hearted, a tragic thread runs through it that all of us who have gone through a mid-life crisis can identify with. One of his shorter books, Cape Magic is Russo's latest effort and one of the finest.

Organization of the Cookeville Church

by Michael E. Birdwell

The first church building erected in the relatively new town of Cookeville was built in 1857 and shared by all denominations. They even operated an ecumenical Union Sunday School, encouraging the children of Cookeville to come together each Sunday. Located on Dixie Avenue between Spring and Broad Streets, the frame structure was "taken over by the Methodists" in 1895 and replaced with a brick building. The second church located in Cookeville was built by the Disciples of Christ on Dixie Avenue in 1883.

In 1866 a number of people living in the relatively new town of Cookeville belonged to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in nearby counties of White, Overton, and Jackson, but lacked such a denomination in their new home. They met informally at different locations or traveled to existing churches in the region. Reverend Jesse Hickman of Cherry Creek in White County led a number of those services throughout the course of that year.

As a result of their interest and desire to worship, Reverend Hickman, with assistance of Reverend Stephen Davis of Putnam County, conducted a revival at Washington Academy on Broad Street in Cookeville in 1867. Among those who attended the meeting were Dr. Jefferson Franklin Dyer, Dr. J. Mack Goodpasture, Henry P. Davis, Jesse Pendergrass, K.K. Phillips, and Major Joseph C. Freeze of Cookeville. Eager for their own church, they petitioned the denomination to establish a congregation in Cookeville. The Cookeville Society of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was organized on August 20, 1867 and placed under the direction of the Sparta Presbytery. Jesse Pendergrass, formerly an elder in the Mount Zion Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and Dr. Goodpasture, who belonged to the Hilham Cumberland Presbyterian Church, acted as the Cookeville congregation's first two elders. Under that authority they contracted with Jesse Hickman to preach once every two months to the new church. Members initially met in the home of Dr. Goodpasture, but as the membership grew it met at Washington Academy on Broad Street until they constructed a church building on the northeast corner of Broad and Dixie.

In the early days of the church, Session meetings took place even more infrequently than worship. Session generally met only once or twice a year to receive new members and elect delegates to the Presbytery. Ministers must have been viewed with some suspicion, for session minutes rarely mention pastors by name. As Hall Barrett noted, "The Session was very cautious about employing preachers, for usually they were 'hired' for six months, but never more than a year at a time." On October 29, 1871 the Session moved to worship more frequently and made arrangements with Jesse E. Hickman and J.K. Landsden to share pastoral duties. The church began meeting the third Sunday of each month. The two ministers alternated their duties. In 1887 the Session increased the number of elders from two to four: Major Freeze, Jesse Arnold, Henry P. Davis and Dr. Jeff Dyer.

Having moved into their own church building, disaster struck on November 8, 1891 when fire broke out. The blaze began around one o'clock in the morning at the J.H. Capshaw house. Flames engulfed the home, and the wind swept embers across the street to Major J. C. Freeze and Dr. Whitley's livery stable. Hay erupted into a firestorm, feeding the growing flames. The fire soon engulfed the entire block, consuming a rental home owned by the Capshaws and spread to the northwest corner of the square. From there, Jacob Henry's barn, near the church, burst into flames. The night sky lit up as fire devoured the square. Windows in the courthouse exploded as fire shot out of them. "The wind was blowing a rapid gale from the south, and the whole town north of the Square seemed aflame from the flying coals. Burning embers flew in all directions; some landed on the roof of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and the cupola burst into flames." Citizens of Cookeville rushed to battle the blaze, establishing a bucket brigade at the Town Spring, but to no avail. One problem exacerbating the situation was that the volunteer firefighters had no ladders long enough to get water onto the burning roof of the church, and the entire structure was soon engulfed in flames. By morning the remnants of the building smoldered in ruins. Special collections were received to rebuild the church. Most of the people affected by the fire were faced with total loss, because they had no insurance. When investigating the source of the blaze it was deemed the result of "carelessness, probably starting from a discarded cigar stump."

In 1892, when the new church was half-built, a tremendous storm flattened the structure, completely demolishing it. A new edifice was finally completed and dedicated on June 3, 1894, by a former pastor, Dr. Thomas A. Wigginton of Oxford, Mississippi. The sanctuary was filled to capacity that morning, and many people were unable to find a seat and forced to stand outside to wait and see the finished structure.

You are cordially invited to attend the
First Presbyterian Church, USA at Cookeville's
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
Kick Off October 11, 2009

Events include:

Sunday School for everyone at 9:45

Special guest sermon by former pastor **G. David Campbell** at 11:00

*Communal Second Sunday Luncheon at 12:00

Kick Off Ceremonies at 1:00, including

Opening Prayer by **Rev. Charles McCaskey**

Communal Hymn

Introduction of **Special Guests**

Presentation of **Time Capsule** Contents

Overview of the Church's origins by **Dr. Michael Birdwell**

Closing Prayer by **Rev. Pat Handlson**

*If you plan to attend the luncheon please *R.S.V.P.* to the church office (931) 526-4424

*We expect to have a number of visitors and special guests for dinner after church on Sunday, October 11. We will need to make sure that we have plenty of food for the day.

Anyone who is willing to prepare an extra dish or see that we get extra food ordered in some way, please talk to Pat Handlson.

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BIRTHDAYS

- 1 — Kenneth Casey Price
- 1 — Paul Thurmond
- 3 — Peggy Rittenberry
- 4 — Chelsea Holland
- 15 — Katie Kumar
- 17 — Lois Burgess
- 22 — Ed Dixon
- 30 — Shannon Phillips
- 31 — Charlene Gregory
- 31 — Ron Ledbetter

ANNIVERSARIES

- 4— Mike & Judy Pulam
- 18 —Steve & Donna Simpson
- 24 —John & Annette Flanders
- 24 —Robert & Mary Dell Sommers

The next newsletter deadline is October 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).

In Our Prayers

PERSONS HOMEBOUND: Mary Martha Bush, Nancy Jarrell, and Jessie Lee Lamb.

IN NURSING HOMES OR ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES: Beulah Doran, Dorothy Grant, Edith Jared, and Frances Snyder.

KEEP IN PRAYER ALSO: Dick Armstrong; Paul Burgess; Helen Copeland; Charlie Craig; Nancy Dixon; Lonnie Hester; Don Medley; John Phillips; Anne Rose; Ted Hayes' mother, Ann Hayes; Eli Covington who is doing mission work in Nicaragua; Lauren, Joey and Ellia Pratt who are in Papua New Guinea; and the people in the armed services.

Church Office:

Mon.-Fri. 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
(931) 526-4424

(firstprescooke@frontiernet.net)

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