

The Messenger

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

May 2010

What We Remember

It was a very busy week recently as we had two long time church members die and held their memorial services. I spoke briefly about Mary Martha Bush and Beulah Doran last Sunday. Each of these women was a person of strong faith and great determination. Each was significant in her own way; in the life of her family, the church and the community. As a pastor, it is my special privilege to get to know people a little better than most. I am invited into people's lives and trusted with personal and historical information that helps me understand folks and the needs they may have at some particular time. I accept that trust with deep humility and do my very best to honor the wishes of those who place their trust in me. It always makes me feel good when someone speaks to me after a memorial service and says that I did a good job of representing the person they loved and respected.

On a larger scale, that is exactly what the church is all about: getting to know each other in a way that is more than simply superficial. We are all busy, and it is so easy to greet one another with a quick word and then move on to whatever is happening next in our own lives. When we do that, we miss out on a great opportunity to learn more about some fascinating people. We also miss out on building a caring community of folks who will be there to help us when we are in need ourselves.

Relationships are the things that really matter most in our lives. That was the clearest lesson I drew from the reading in Acts that described Tabitha/Dorcas and the women who surrounded her. She lived in a time when being a single, older woman was a very tenuous prospect. Without sons or husbands to take care of them, such women struggled just to stay alive. They understood very well how important it was to have a community of support. In our modern society, we sometimes downplay the need for that community of support. We think that we have everything we need without friends or good neighbors but we are wrong to believe that. Some of my saddest experiences have been spending time with people who have no family, friends or social resources. They suffer a deep loneliness that can't be overcome. I encourage all of us to spend a little more time getting to know the people around us, at church and in our community. I think you will find it very rewarding.

Another lesson I took from that text but didn't spend much time discussing was the importance of serving others. I did say that many of the women's circles in Presbyterian churches are named after Dorcas and her example of service and charity. I cannot emphasize strongly enough how true it is for me and many others, that service beyond our own needs gives great joy and meaning to our lives. Again, our society teaches us to find happiness by taking care of ourselves and putting ourselves first but I have found the opposite to be true. I am happier and more fulfilled when I know that I have helped people and made a difference in their lives.

I don't believe that God created poor people just so I could help them, or, visited some disaster on a family so that I could feel better about myself; but, I do believe that in every situation there is the opportunity to do something good and, that when we make the most of that opportunity, we enhance many lives, sometimes touching lives that we will never know. All the while, I think God smiles at our efforts. Of course, we will make mistakes, and, not every good deed results in a positive effect or lesson. Still, we can feel good about our attempts and know that we are leaving more good marks to be remembered.

I am renewed in my energy to find ways to make appositive difference in the lives of church members and the community we serve. I invite and encourage everyone to join me in this inspirational endeavor.

Peace, Pat H.

A Moment in History

(from Michael Birdwell's history of the church and region)

Major Rutledge Smith, a deacon in the First Presbyterian Church, was appointed to oversee the draft in the state of Tennessee (1917). His son, Albert, eagerly enlisted in the U.S. Army. [Shortly thereafter, his mother, Graeme McGregor Smith, sent Albert a letter] "I am sending to you by parcel post a box with a slice of every kind of cake that we had at the banquet we gave the soldier boys last night."

The occasion she referred to was a trainload of boys, embarking to training camps, which stopped briefly in Cookeville. This particular group, largely from the Upper Cumberland, made her aware of some things that disturbed her. Many conscripts, she observed to her amazement, had "never sat down at a table covered with a white cloth."

More shocking was the realization that many were unable to read or write. Her work with the Red Cross, home relief and other patriotic duties opened her eyes and made her painfully aware of the hardship the war caused everyone. "I tell you Albert, I am almost a socialist when it comes to the poor. I feel so sorry for them."

Financial Update

At the end of March, church finances remain strong and stable. Church income totaled over \$79,000, with expenses coming in at just under \$58,000. Thanks to several church members who make their complete pledge payments at the beginning of the year, we started the year in a strong position. This has allowed us to be very active in mission projects, with two trips to Tazewell, TN and our week long trip to Montgomery, WV. Another trip to Tazewell is expected in early May and then we hope to have trips to nearby Morgan County, which will stretch our mission money even further. Thanks to all for your generous support of church programs and mission.

Hold Those Dates!

Please mark on your calendar that Daily Vacation Bible School is scheduled for Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, June 6, 7, and 8, 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. A fun schedule is planned for all ages!

Worship on our Web Site

We have heard good reports from people who have listened to worship on the web site. If you miss Sunday worship or want to invite a friend to learn more about our church, go to our web site www.firstprescookeville.org. Once you are at the web site, click on the audio link. That will take you to a page listing Sunday services by date. Click on the date you want to hear and you will see a bulletin from that Sunday. Click on the portion of the service you are interested in, and it will begin to play. You can listen to the sermon, the anthem, the announcements, or the entire service. You are only a couple of clicks away. Thanks to the good work of Raj Kumar, each Sunday's service is generally available by Monday morning.

Read Anything Good Lately?

by Thelma Johnson

MY OWN COUNTRY by Abraham Verghese

A doctor, specializing in infectious diseases, is working in a hospital in Johnson City, Tennessee, at the time AIDS was first becoming known. How could an isolated area in East Tennessee, so far from New York and San Francisco, be affected by this strange and frightening disease? Dr. Verghese, himself a Christian of Indian parents but raised in Ethiopia, and living in what was to him a strange and sometimes frightening land, tells his story: how he encountered his first AIDS patient and became a physician as well as counselor to patients on the fringe of society, who had left home because of their homosexuality and then returned when there was no where else to go and no one else to turn to. He relates his own struggle to find ways of treatment when there was none, and his involvement in their lives as they tried to cope with the inevitable.

Dr. Verghese also tells of his love for the mountains, its people, and the acceptance of him as he discusses the unique problems of a foreign physician in an alien culture.

He is now at Stanford University, and is the best-selling author of a novel CUTTING FOR STONE.

Presbytery Meeting

As part of our 100th anniversary celebration, we will host the July 24th meeting of the Presbytery. It is a Saturday meeting, which generally begins at 8:00 a.m. and finishes up about 3:00 p.m. During the course of the day about 200 delegates from the various churches throughout middle Tennessee will be here to worship, hear reports, vote on motions, eat lunch and discuss the business of the Presbytery. We will need lots of help to make sure that everyone has a positive experience that day. From greeting people and helping them find their way around the building and grounds, to leading worship, to preparing and serving lunch, to cleaning up at the end of the day, it will take many hands to make the work go smoothly.

There will soon be signup sheets for people to help out with parking, set up, registration and directions in the early morning; lunch preparation, serving and cleanup; final cleanup and closing the building in the afternoon. The choir will be here for worship in the morning and will present some of our special anniversary music. It will certainly be a day to remember, and we want it to be a day that our friends from neighboring churches remember as well. Talk to Pat Handlson for more information.

Nursery Worker Needed

Rachel McCormick has taken on the duties of the nursery until she leaves for college at the end of summer. That means that we are once again on the lookout for a capable person to keep our children during Sunday school and worship. If you have suggestions, please contact Katie Kumar.

Clean Water Project

by Bill Swim

Our Tazewell work seems to be winding down now as several church teams from the East Tennessee area are picking up the work there. Our Church team will be making a service trip back to Tazewell soon to do some alteration and repairs to Patsy Arrington's system. A failure of the brine tank float valve caused an overflow in her cellar. Our service will be to clean up and to add an auxiliary pump to contain any future float valve problem. The team will also inspect the system installed at the Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church. No problems have been reported with the Church's system.

Our next test and installation work will likely be in Morgan County, near Wartburg, TN, about 50 miles East of Cookeville. Several homes there have been identified as needing help in treating their contaminated water supplies.

A renewed effort will be made this spring and summer to survey the Putnam County and surrounding area for water quality problems. Preliminary work indicates that there is significant need for clean, healthy water in our own backyard.

If you would like to participate in this mission project, you are invited to join our effort. Just let Ginny Langpap, Kaye & Charlie Craig, Diane or Sam Glasgow, or Bill Swim know. You could also express your interest to the Church office and we will add your name to our email list of meeting notes and notices.

They're Moving!

by Debbie Handlson

We are very pleased to announce that we have found a new home! Helping Hands of Putnam County will be moving to 421 East Broad Street on May 3 and will be closed for several days while we unpack boxes and try to make sure we are ready to serve our clients in a new and more efficient way. This is an exciting time for this organization. When I came to HHPC three years ago, the dream then was for us to move to a larger facility but the time was never right. Now that dream is coming true.

When asked why we're moving, it's very simple. There has been a great need for more intake space for clients. We have freezers and refrigerators in four different rooms. Food is stacked in the hallways. In 2007, HHPC averaged serving 230 families a month and this year we have averaged over 400 families a month! To serve clients well, our current location is not adequate.

First Presbyterian has been a great friend to HHPC. In fact, last year FPC gave more money than any other church - \$9491.83, not to mention the number of volunteer hours that church members gave. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the support. Thank you.

Dinner Out Group

Come join us on Saturday May 15, 5:00 p.m. at the White Plains Grill, 4000 Plantation Drive. White Plains Grill is located on the beautiful White Plains Golf Course. If the evening is nice we will be dining outside on the porch facing the golf course. Charlie and Kaye Craig have graciously opened their home for dessert and coffee after the dinner. Sign up sheets are at both doors of the sanctuary. Please indicate if you will be able to attend at the Craig's home. If you have any questions please call Kaye Craig at 537-3714.

BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Marie Overstreet
8 Rachel McCormick
9 Pat Handlson
9 Mary Ann Neil
11 John Grant
11 Gail Luna
11 Burl Smith
11 Emily Thurmond
13 Emily Hansen
15 Mike Pumar
17 Bill Klug
24 Jerry Overstreet
24 Nathaniel Harrison
25 Jessie Lee Lamb
27 Whit Whitaker

M
A
Y

ANNIVERSARIES

- 1 Krishna & Katie Kumar
15 Angelo & Jennette Volpe
23 Ernest & Lucille Robertson

In Our Prayers

PERSONS HOMEBOUND: Jessie Lee Lamb.

IN NURSING HOMES OR ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES: Patricia Elsensohn; Dorothy Grant, Edith Jared, and Frances Snyder.

KEEP IN PRAYER ALSO: Dick Armstrong; Mike Birdwell; Kat Bullard; Helen Copeland; Charlie Craig; Joyce DuBey; Myrna Estes; Dennis George; Lonnie Hester; Wayne Hogan; Linda Hurt; Don Medley; John Phillips; Hugh Piercey; Jennette Volpe's uncle, Turner Boyd; Grace Anna Sine's brother, Don Green; Jean Metz, and the people in the armed services especially Giles Evans, Lorelei Hammond and Josh McClellan (Afghanistan) (and his wife, Ashly).

The next newsletter deadline is
May 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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