



FIRST and ForMOST

December 2007

FROM THE PASTOR

“For unto us a child is given, unto us a Son is given; all authority shall rest upon His shoulders; and He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace....” (Isaiah 9:6)

Not everyone who celebrates Christmas is celebrating the birth of Jesus. For many people, **CHRISTMAS** is simply another holiday. It is a time for parties and extravagant gift-giving and mushy feelings, but it has very little to do with Jesus' birth.

I heard of two women who were dressed in their finest clothes. They were having lunch together in a very exclusive restaurant. A friend saw them and came over to their table to greet them.

“What's the special occasion?” she asked.

One of the women said, *“We're having a birthday party for my little one. He's 2 years old today.”*

“But, where is the he?” the friend asked.

The child's mother answered, *“Oh, I dropped him off at my mother's house. She's taking care of him until the party's over. We wouldn't have had as much fun if he were here!”*

How ridiculous--a birthday celebration for a child who wasn't welcome at his own party! Yet, when we stop to think about it, isn't that what so many people are doing when they celebrate all the festivities of Christmas, without inviting Jesus to the party? After all, isn't it His birthday!

There's another old story about one of the shepherds who heard the proclamation of the angels about the birth of Jesus but did not bother to go to Bethlehem to see if the proclamation was true. Decades later, as he held his grandson on his knee, this same shepherd told the child the stirring story about Jesus and the angels.

“Is that all?” asked the boy. *“What did you do when you heard the good news? Was it true? Was the Christ child really born?”*

The old man replied, with some sadness, *“I never knew. Some say it was true; some say it was only a dream. I didn't take the trouble to go and see.”*

There are many people like that. They're not bad people. In fact, most of them are very nice people, but they just don't want to go to the trouble to see for themselves if the baby born in a stable two thousand years ago is really the Messiah--the Savior of the world.

If the truth be told, not everybody who celebrates Christmas cares about Jesus Christ. But, Jesus Christ cares about everybody.

Not everybody really believes that the “*child*” and “*Son*” Isaiah was writing about in 700 BC was going to end up being Jesus Christ. Not everybody really believes that the “*authority*” that Jesus was given by His Father in heaven was to conquer sin and death forever.

But, that’s who Jesus Christ was. That’s who the resurrected Jesus Christ is today. And, that’s who Jesus Christ will be forevermore.

Genny, Ben, Sam, and I wish to share our joy with all of you as we celebrate our second Christmas here at FPCA. We are so grateful to God for bringing us to a church where there is no doubt about the true meaning of Christmas...and where we feel so loved, appreciated, and accepted. Thank you!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!

Your Friend and Pastor, *Dr. Chris Looker*

MORINGA CHRISTMAS TREE

The Moringa (called the Miracle Tree); a drought-resistant, fast-growing tree that grows in most tropical countries is being used in many emerging nations. It is an important food source providing vitamins, minerals and protein to fight malnutrition and its associated diseases. Oil extracted from the seeds provides excellent edible vegetable oil. The remaining seed cake, after oil extraction, is completely biodegradable and used in water treatment. Other uses are being researched. Through PCUSA, we have an opportunity to help purchase seedlings and seeds that will be grown in areas where we are involved in mission.

This year, in addition to the mitten and glove tree, we will have a Moringa tree. You will be able to buy a bulb for chosen people – much like the “Christmas Lights of Love” – and put it on the tree and add their names to the card provided.

More information will be provided as the season progresses.

Margaret Anderson, Mission Commission

TWIG OF A MORINGA TREE

SERMON SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER

December 2, 2007:

The First Sunday of Advent

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 24: 37-44

Sermon: “*ARE YOU READY?*”

Holy Communion and Baptism of Jack Johnson

December 9, 2007:

The Second Sunday of Advent

Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 11: 1-10

Sermon: “*YOU CAN’T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT!*”

December 16, 2007:

The Third Sunday of Advent

Lessons and Carols Sunday

The choir will sing Christmas carols, the Bell Choir will play, the entire congregation will celebrate the Birthday of Jesus with joyful music.

December 23, 2007:

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Susan Ennis Preaching

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 1:18-25

December 24, 2007: **Joint Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

FPCA and FKPCV worshipping together, enhanced by our Youth Handbell Choir

December 30, 2007: **“WORSHIP LITE” SERVICE**

Theme: “The Greatest Gift of All”

This will be a “come-as-you-are”/“casual” worship service. Please bring one of your favorite Christmas gifts.

Or,

A story about a favorite Christmas gift you received. Dr. Looker will be asking members about their favorite Christmas gifts before delivering his message. Thank you.

CHRISTMAS CAROL

We all love the well known Christmas Carol, The First Nowel:

The first Nowel the angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,
In fields where they lay a-keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter’s night that was so deep.
*Nowel, Nowel, Nowel, Nowel,
Born is the King of Israel!*

Let us find out more about it by quoting from Christmas Songs and their Stories, by Herbert H. Wernecke, [1957]:

This English carol of the seventeenth century has been deservedly popular. It gives a purely narrative song on a level that children can comprehend. The word “carol” is derived from “carola,” a ring dance. Being denied the opportunity to sing in the churches, the people sang outside. While the people were dancing (caroling), tunes and words were made up by one or more bystanders from the Nativity incidents. This accounts for occasional inaccuracies like the shepherds seeing the star.

Authorities disagree as to whether this song comes from France or England. The French “Noel” (English “Nowel” or “Nowell”) may have some association with the Latin “novella” (new), but it more likely came from the Provençal “nadal,” a corruption of the Latin “Natalis” (birthday). While older versions exist, the form of our present text dates back to William Sandy’s *Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern*, 1833.

The *first* Nowel reminds us that carol singing is not a twentieth century innovation, or even a medieval custom, but goes all the way back to the Nativity itself. Immediately after the time of the New Testament, in 129, we read of Telesphorus, bishop of Rome, inaugurating the custom of celebrating the Nativity with the singing of carols. And in that connection we are told that a song never to be omitted was that of the angels, “Glory to God in the highest,” truly the very first Christmas song.

The “First Nowel” we have before us is in the form of a medieval shepherd song, noted for its simplicity. It has been called rhymed prose, carried along and made popular by the sweep of its music.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



Margaret Anderson ~ December 2
 Rose May Dodd ~ December 3
 Lynette Kwaku ~ December 3
 Betty Beal ~ December 4
 Bob Paukert ~ December 4
 Jane Rottier ~ December 4
 Lois Little ~ December 7

Sandy Mori ~ December 10
 Irma Jackson ~ December 14
 Elsie Salyer ~ December 17
 Art Gose ~ December 19
 Christina DeVera ~ Dec. 28
 Trilby Belz ~ December 24
 Tom Rockett ~ December 31

WANT TO BUY DELICIOUS COFFEE, TEA, CHOCOLATE?

The Presbyterian Coffee Project is a part of the PC (USA) Enough For Everyone program. Coffee, Tea and Chocolate Products are from Equal Exchange, a for-profit Fair Trade Company. Fair trade is about small farmers in the Developing World receiving a fair price for their labors.

Join the Youth in supporting the mission of Equal Exchange as they sell coffee, tea and chocolate to raise funds which will support upcoming mission trips. We will begin selling a selection of coffees, teas, hot chocolate mix and chocolate bars on November 25, 2007.

If you have any questions, please contact Nadine Dingess. nadine_louise_2005@yahoo.com or 703 256-5982.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR A BIG EVENT!

February may seem a long way off, but it is really just around the corner. The Congregational Life/New Member Commission is planning a pancake supper for Shrove Tuesday evening. Mark your calendars now and save that date. Do you remember the fun we had some years ago at a similar dinner? Plan to come and have another enjoyable evening with the FPCA family. Watch the **FIRST and ForMOST** for more details.

Congregational Life/New Member Commission

A NOTE OF THANKS

With special thanks for your kindness in allowing us to use your property for our Block Party this past June.

Thank you very much, Sincerely,

Claire Grumbly, Ravensworth Civic Assoc.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

OCTOBER 19, 2007.

Clerk of Session encouraged Elders and the members of their Commissions to attend the Presbytery training “Equipping Leaders for 21st Century Ministry” 10-27-07 at Falls Church Presbyterian Church, 9:30—3:30.

In November, Session will elect new officers and finish the Incorporation process.

A motion to transfer inactive member, Gail (Peterson) Hassmer, to the Orange Presbyterian Church of Orange, Virginia was passed.

Session members were encouraged to read the report regarding “The Form of Government Task Force”

County aging agencies have requested space for a program that helps older adults and adults with disabilities to prevent accidents and maintain independence. Building and Grounds will contact the County.

Elder Tyler Young, reporting for the youth, asked that more emphasis be placed on attendance at the 12:30 service.

The Report for the Pastor included the following:

- Rev. Chris Looker served Communion to Emily Helm on October 11, 2007 in her home. Elder Anne Manning and Seminary Student Susi Ennis accompanied him.
- Officiated at marriage of Christina Entsminger to Ronald Graham on October 6, 2007 at First Presbyterian Church of Annandale.
- Officiated at the marriage of Jacqueline Christine Rottier to James Phillip Daunt on October 13, 2007 at First Presbyterian Church of Annandale.
- Conducted funeral services for Elder William C. Johnson at First Presbyterian Church of Annandale on October 10, 2007.
- Visited members of the congregation who are in the hospital or homebound.

Deacon Randy Meli reported Deacons were offering support to the Johnson family.

They are working on a list of members to be contacted regarding being put on the inactive rolls.

Elder John Metzler, chair of Mission Commission, moved the following: First Presbyterian Church of Annandale, in addition to other special offerings, will participate in *Mission Challenge '07*. Motion carried.

The Worship Commission had two motions. Elder Sandy Mori moved the following:

1. First Presbyterian Church of Annandale look into replacing/reupholstering the pews and replacing the carpet in the sanctuary. Motion carried
2. First Presbyterian Church of Annandale look into replacing or repairing the multimedia system in the sanctuary. Motion carried

Elder Judi Reitman gave an update of the Stewardship plans. She also informed us of the financial effects of having the pre-school housed in the church, which were not as great as formerly thought.

Elder Jack Smith reporting for the Buildings and Grounds Commission thanked everyone who helped at the Fall Work Day. He informed us of some necessary capital improvement and how they can be funded.

Christian Education Commission moved that the church get involved in the Equal Exchange Project, involving our young people and raising money for church activities. Motion carried

Elder John Metzler, chair of the Nominating Committee, will have committee begin a search to fill current vacancies.

Margaret Anderson, Clerk of Session

YOUTH NEWS

Hey Everyone! **Laser Tag** is being held on Sunday, December 9th, from 3:00 p.m. to 5 p.m. Please invite a friend and come to the church to play and eat pizza. Cost is \$15.00. This was a blast last spring, and we hope you can make it.

FKPCV Youth have invited us to join them for a **Christmas Gift Exchange/Yankee Swap** on Sunday, December 23rd. Bring a gift that costs no more than \$20.00. Time will be announced in the bulletin.



The **Youth Handbell Choir** will be playing on Christmas Eve. Those who can make it, please come for rehearsals at 9:15 a.m. on December 9th and December 23rd. All those ages 7 and up are welcome!

Genny Looker

BLESSED CHRISTMAS TO ALL OF YOU, DEAR READERS

From your Editor,
Marta Strada

ATTENTION!

Deadline for the January issue of *FIRST and ForMOST* is December 14, 2007. Please e-mail your announcements and reports to Marta Strada, LUXI7777@aol.com, or put them in the *FIRST and ForMOST* drawer in the church office. Thank you.