



FIRST and ForMOST

February 2008

FROM THE PASTOR

Romans 7: 4-6: *"In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit."*

I recently purchased a wonderful book entitled, *"NO PERFECT PEOPLE ALLOWED: Creating a Come As You Are Culture in the Church,"* by Pastor John Burke. In this amazing book, Pastor Burke recounts how the Gateway Community Church in Austin, Texas, has grown from 8 members to 2000 members in just 5 years! **And, the reason for this growth is because his church has worked very, very hard to create a "Come As You Are" culture within their church.**

Here is an interesting quote from Pastor Burke's book:

"Inside the program that newcomers receive when they come to our church there is this message - 'Come as you are...'

You don't have to dress up. You don't have to be any particular age. We couldn't care less who you voted for in the last election. And please, don't feel the need to pretend about anything. Gateway Community Church is a place where God meets seeking people who are far from perfect. That means anyone is welcome, no matter where you are on your spiritual journey. So learn at your own pace. Ask questions. Seek. We believe you'll find what you're looking for here. You'll learn how to relate to God. You'll experience Christian community. And here's the big thing - you will change. Join us as we seek God together. Just come as you are."

What a great introductory message to receive as you enter God's church! When people read it, they will probably think to themselves, *"Maybe this is a place where I will be accepted for who I really am, rather than who I pretend to be."*

The whole concept of "church" has changed in America. We live in a post-Christian world where people are skeptical, afraid, wary, scared, and even bitter toward the established and traditional church. Those seeking a relationship with Christ don't want a relationship with the church because they believe that the two are completely different! **If you ask people on the street about the Church, you'll get responses that will absolutely shock you!** Hypocrites! Judgmental! Elite! Cliquish!

The fundamental question is this: **ARE THOSE WHO VIEW THE CHURCH AS BEING JUST A BUNCH OF JUDGMENTAL AND ELITIST HYPOCRITES RIGHT OR WRONG?**

Is it possible that we who have grown up in the Church are so used to the language, sayings, customs, habits, and symbols that we don't really know how to relate to those who have not grown up in the church?

Is it possible that we have become so used to the institutional church that we have become a sort of **"Christian Ghetto"**...a place in which only we feel comfortable, safe, and "at home"?

I know you...and you are the most loving congregation that I have ever had the privilege of serving as a pastor. However, as Pastor Burke points out in his amazing book, I'm not so sure that those on the **"outside"** really know who we and what we really are.

St. Paul writes that the law makes things worse in our lives, not better! He points out to us that no one can ever live up to the incredibly high standards of Biblical legalism. As a matter of fact, he writes that Biblical legalism will inevitably leave us hopeless.

We can only get better by surrendering to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In other words, our salvation comes when we receive God's grace and extend that same grace to others.

ARE WE A "COME AS YOU ARE" CHURCH? I believe that we are. But, then again, I'm on the inside. What about those who are on the outside?

You Friend and Pastor, *Chris*

SERMON SCHEDULE FOR FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 3, 2008: *THE CELEBRATION OF THE TRANFIGURATION OF OUR LORD
THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION*

SERMON: *"DON'T BE AFRAID"* -- *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 17: 1-9

FEBRUARY 6, 2008: 7:30 PM: *ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE*

Special Service of Wholeness and Healing with the Imposition of Ashes

FEBRUARY 10, 2008: WORSHIP SERVICE: *Preacher: Seminary Intern, Susan Ennis*

5:30-7:30 PM: *First Lenten Series Presentation*****

FEBRUARY 17, 2008:

Sermon: *"MY, HOW THINGS CHANGE!"* – *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

Scripture Lesson: John 4: 5-30

5:30-7:30 PM: *Second Lenten Series Presentation*****

FEBRUARY 24, 2008:

Sermon: *"OOPS, I DID IT AGAIN!"* – *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

Scripture Lesson: Genesis 3: 1-7

5:30-7:30 PM: *Third Series Presentation*****

THE SEASON OF LENT

On the 6th of February, Ash Wednesday will open the season of Lent, the time when we prepare for Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

Let's look into the background of Lent. The word "Lent" came from the Old English term "*lengten*," which in Middle English changed to *lenten*, originally meaning "*spring*" – the time when the days *lengthened*.

The arrival of spring, the season of beginning new life, was celebrated in ancient times – in Babylon honoring the god Marduk, in Egypt to celebrate Isis, the goddess of life. The Romans enjoyed Saturnalia with plenty of food and wine. It was the time of **Carnival**, the time of revelry. In southern Europe it lasts from Epiphany till Ash Wednesday, when people enjoy parties and masked balls. The word *carnival* comes from Italian *carnevale*, which originated in the Old Italian *carnelevare*, "putting

away of flesh.” Its equivalent in northern Europe is the cheerful merrymaking at **Shrove-tide** (Middle English *schroftide*) the last three days before Ash Wednesday. Shrove Tuesday is also known as *Fat Tuesday*, or *Mardi Gras* – who isn’t familiar with the big festival taking place in New Orleans. The original purpose of this feast in medieval Europe was to use up any rich food in the house before beginning the Lenten fast. It is frequently celebrated with a pancake supper. **Yes, we will have a Pancake Dinner on February 5th, at 6:30 PM at FPCA!**

What a contrast, when we start **Lent** on Ash Wednesday! Ashes have been a sign of mourning since Old Testament times. Early Christians mourned their sins and repented, showed their sincerity by having ashes put on their foreheads. Traditionally, we get the ashes by burning the palm leaves from the previous year’s Palm Sunday celebration. This day of repentance has to be a Wednesday, because it is 40 days before Easter, not counting Sundays. 40 is a symbolic number, standing for trial, testing, humiliation, desolation, and a period of purification under the law. Both in the Old and the New Testaments, 40 days of testing play an important role, including the 40 days Jesus fasted in the wilderness, and the 40 days that passed between his Resurrection and Ascension, a period of testing the faith and steadfastness of the disciples.

The time of Lent is upon us – the forty days of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, preparing the Christian worshipper for the sorrowful days of Holy Week, to achieve both spiritual and physical purification. It is the time of meditation to prepare us for the joyful feast of Easter. Rules of fasting may be very elaborate, depending on your denomination as well as the geographical area you live in. Since ancient times, fasting has meant one should abstain from eating meat and all the things that “come from flesh,” like milk, eggs, cheese, butter and other dairy products – in some areas this even includes fish. The Catholic Church used to have very strict rules, while Protestant denominations did not observe fasting, perhaps did not even pay much attention to Lent itself. Things have been changing in recent years. Catholics are less strict, and some Protestant denominations see an advantage in observing self-discipline by some fasting.

The Presbyterian Church USA makes the following statement: *“Since the days of the early church, in the decades and centuries after the death and Resurrection of Christ, Christians have regarded the period of Lent as a time for repentance and reflection. It is invariably marked by fasting (going without food and/or water for a period of time,) by giving up something during Lent (sweets, the sports page,) and by taking on such habits that will increase one’s devotion to Christ.”*

Yes, none of us should forget that the season of Lent has arrived. Let us prepare ourselves for the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, by observing better self-discipline, by helping our neighbor in need. Looking at the following books may help.

Benefits of His Passion, by C. H. Dodd. (232.96 D) – a book based on Philippians 2:8: *“... he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.”*

Come to Easter, by Anna Laura and Edward Gebhard. (242.34 G) – a family Lenten-Easter book of worship, activities, and customs.

The Cross Before Calvary, by Clovis G. Chappell. (242.34 C) – a message of hope, as we see the spirit of the Cross in the experience of Old Testament figures.

Key Words for Lent, by George W. Barrett. (242.34 B) – meditations that bring commitment and freedom, grace and suffering, repentance and obedience into our daily lives.

Kneeling in Jerusalem, by Ann Weems. (811 WEE) – poems of inspiration, providing a new insight into the Lenten Season.

Man from Cyrene, by Frans Venter. (F V) – a work of fiction, portraying Simon of Cyrene, whose life was changed when he carried the cross for Jesus.

They Met at Calvary – Were You There...? by W. E. Sangster. (232.96 S) – profiles of the people whose path converged at Calvary, whose common desire was the death of Jesus Christ

A Pilgrim's Way, by J. Barrie Shepherd. (242.34 S) – thought-provoking meditations for Lent and Easter, based on the Common Lectionary, the themes including suffering, repentance, and the joyful welcome of Christ's resurrection..

Our young people may want to look at the following:

A Donkey for the King, by John and Patricia Beatty. (J F B) – the story of a boy at the time of Christ's birth.

The Easter Story for Children, by Ralph W. Sockman. (J 242.34 S) – a message that the cross has become a thing of beauty, and God's love is with us always. *Marta Strada*

LENTEN SERIES FOR 2008

Starting on February 10, 2008, Dr. Chris Looker will be leading a wonderful Lenten Series entitled: **“DOING LIFE TOGETHER.”** This five-part DVD-based series is based on the core principles found in Pastor Rick Warren's book, **“THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE.”** The same basic Biblical themes form Vision and Mission of Saddleback Church, a 30,000 member megachurch in Lake Forest, California.

The 2008 FPCA Lenten Series will be held in room 105 and the FPCA Sanctuary from 5:30-7:30 PM on the following Sunday evenings: February 10th, 17th, 24th and March 2nd and 9th. There will be a light supper starting at 5:30 PM every Sunday evening, followed by presentations in the FPCA Sanctuary at 6:15 PM. The five presentations will be entitled: **“Connecting to God's Family,” “Growing to Be Like Christ,” “Serving Others,” “Sharing Our Life's Mission Every Day,”** and **“Surrendering Our Life for God's Pleasure.”**

Come and join us for this exciting and thought-provoking Lenten Series. As always, you will be most welcome. Thank you.

PANCAKE SUPPER

On Tuesday, February 5th, FPCA will be filled with music and laughter!

Join us for a mini **Mardi Gras parade** led by our king and queen, Larry and Margot Young. Wear a costume or just come as you are! Music will be provided by the FPCA Dixie Land Band.

Following the parade enjoy a delicious **pancake supper** and fellowship with members and friends. Please let us know you are coming by signing the poster at the back of the sanctuary or by calling the church office by Sunday, February 3rd.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



Nell Logwood ~ February 7
John Rockett ~ February 7
Elaine Marler ~ February 10
Wolfgang Schubert ~ February 26

Austin Johnson ~ February 17
Aggie Jo Millard ~ February 17
Dorothy Sheffert ~ February 26

STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM, by Dr. MARTIN LUTHER KING Jr.

Since 1966 our library has held a precious book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, the first book Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had written, published in 1958. It joined our library collection at the time it was first assembled. Its source is recorded as C A C – it is not listed as a gift, and its value is noted as \$3.50. What is so precious about it? When you open it there is an inscription by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. himself:

With Best Wishes

And great hope that Christians will unite to remove the cancer of segregation from every area of our nation,

Martin Luther King Jr.

This book is a treasure! We do not know how we got it, we do not know the circumstances under which Dr. King signed the book – but we do know that it is a document of his dream. As he said in his “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC : “... *when we allow freedom to ring ... we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children – black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants – will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, we are free at last.*”

Dr. King, the leader of the American civil rights movement, gave his life for his dream “to remove the cancer of segregation” when, on the evening of April 4, 1968, standing on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee, he was assassinated. His birthday on January 21 is now a national holiday. He deserved to be celebrated as a national hero. His precious book is still with us – kept in a safe place. It is no longer a library book, it is a treasure.

Your Librarian, *Marta Strada*

BOOK CLUB

The Book Club meets at 7:30 PM on February 11 in the church library. The book for discussion is *Waiting*, a novel by Ha Jin. Newcomers are always welcome.

Randy Meli

THANK YOU!

The **Congregational Life/New Member Commission** would like to thank members who have graciously contributed cookies and other goodies for the Sunday morning coffees. Sometimes they have been left in the kitchen without a name on them so we don't know who to thank. We do appreciate your donations. They have all been delicious and have been a nice addition to our usual fare. Many thanks!

NEW MEMBER CLASS

February 3, 2008

Do you have questions about FPCA or what it means to be a Presbyterian?

Are you interested in learning more about FPCA, or would you like to become a member?

If so, this class is for you!

It will be held Sunday, February 3, during the Church School hour, at 11:30 in Room 105

Join Dr. Looker and members of the Session to hear about what Presbyterians believe and learn about what FPCA members do to put their faith in action.

Those who wish to join, will be received into Active Membership on Sunday, February 10, 2008 at the 10:00 AM Worship Service.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

DECEMBER 19, 2007.

Session approved the use of office space for the Shepherd Center and Congo Education Council for 2008.

Members identified as persons who had not been active in the past year were put on the inactive rolls. After this action, there are 124 active members.

Elder Tyler Young has requested that more people attend the youth service at 12:30 Sundays. Susi Ennis has been asked to preach at the youth service on December 30, 2007

Rev. Looker reported that matters regarding Sleepy Hollow Preschool contract and Leadership Assignments for Elders, including Clerk will be the Order of the Day for the January meeting. This will give elders time to consider both.

He also indicated the Confirmation Class for FPCA and FKPCV youth will be March 31 through May 11. A joint meeting of the Board of Deacons and the Sessions of FPCA and FKPCA will be held on May 7, 2008 to examine the participants.

Elder Sandy Mori of the Worship Commission also asked that elders make an effort to attend the Youth Service at 12:30 each Sunday.

Elder Judi Reitman of Budget and Finance Commission presented the following budget for 2008:

2008 Budget

Income	
	2008 Anticipated Income
Pledges	\$153,438.00
Envelopes without Pledge	15,000.00
Per Capita	3,000.00
Loose Plate	17,486.00
Reimbursements	46,387.00
Savings	10,000.00
Total	245,311.00
Expenses	
	2008 Budgeted Expenses
Benevolences	\$ 12,300.00
Ministerial and Professional	115,691.00
Programs	9,660.00
Operations	107,660.00
Total	245,311.00

Elders Barb Matos and Jack Smith discussed the fact that we once again have ant and rat problems. Reminders that trash MUST be taken out by groups using the church will be posted in appropriate areas. The Commission is looking into work to be done with monies for particular projects.

Elder Marta Strada reported an autographed copy of Martin Luther King Jr.'s book *Stride Toward Freedom* was in the church's library. The book will be displayed after the church service on January 20, 2008.

Reporting for the New Member/Congregational Life Commission, Hugh Iwanicki indicated that January 19, 2008 will be a day of prayer for our church and encouraged people to sign up for half hour segments. He also announced a pancake dinner on Shrove Tuesday, February 5, 2008.

Elder John Metzel moved that the Mission Commission establish a website, separate from the FPCA website which will be devoted totally to Mission and will be updated by the Commission. He also reported on the partnership with Annandale High School/Alternative House to provide soccer-playing space. Additional requirements will be discussed with Annandale High School/Alternative House. Mission Commission gave \$1,200.00 to Dr. Sue Makin, an OB/Gyn doctor in Malawe. Red Feather, a non-profit working to build housing on American Indian Reservations, is being considered for a Mission Trip with older youth and adults.

As Chair of the Nominating Committee, Elder John Metzel moved that Nadine Louise Dingess be approved to be presented to congregation for election as Elder on January 13, 2008.

Margaret Anderson, Clerk of Session

NEWS FROM THE DEACONS

At the service of Ordination and Installation of church officers on Sunday, January 13, new members were added to the Board of Deacons. Miriam Houseworth, Tuula Jung and Randy Meli make up the class of 2010. In the class of 2008 Joan Johnson and Jane Rottier continue their service while Carroll Thompson was installed and is serving a one year term to fill out this class of three. Etha Cook, Isabelle Fennig and Patti Young remain to make up the class of 2009.

Many thank go out to the three devoted members of the class of 2007 for their service to the congregation: Marianne Artherholt, Betty Beal and Anne Manning.

Randy Meli

GREETINGS FROM VIRGINIA H. BENNETT

From a letter to Margaret Anderson:

First Presbyterian Church has always been good to me and I just had to take time to thank all of you for that. You've placed my name on the inactive list by now, and that's fine. My new home is very good to me and my son, daughter-in-law, and family live close by at Troutville. I'm still not able to get around much, but I love getting the Church letter and learn about all of the new things the church is doing. I'm enclosing a check to First Presbyterian Church of Annandale, am sure they can use it.

With my love and best wishes for this coming year,

Virginia H. Bennett

SHEPHERD'S CENTER ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Shepherd's Center of Annandale/Springfield is expanding its programs to include services to the community. In the plans are **Friendly Callers**, which provides volunteers with a home bound person to call and chat with periodically, and **Helping Hands** where volunteers do minor repair work for seniors. There are numerous opportunities for volunteers to provide much needed services to others in the community. Anyone interested in helping should call the SCAS office, **703-941-1419**.

Since the SCAS is growing there is a need for a paid **office manager**. The job requires office experience as well as experience working with volunteers. The person will be paid for 15 hours of work per week. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please have him/her send a resume to **SCAS Personnel Committee**, 7610 Newcastle Drive, Annandale, VA 22003. If you have a friend or a neighbor who might like a part time job, please pass this information to them.

LIFE LINE SCREENING

Life Line Screening performs ultrasound tests for stroke caused by carotid artery disease, abdominal aortic aneurysms and other vascular diseases.

Stroke is the number one cause of nursing home admission!

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States!

50% of stroke victims have no symptoms. Life Line Screening is very important to keep you and your loved ones healthy and independent. The tests are quick and painless. Sign up today, appointments are limited! Tell you neighbors and friends about it. You may just save a life.

Life Line Screening will take place at

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale on **Saturday, March 1, 2008.**

Call **1-800-679-5192** for an appointment (pre-registration is required)

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Habitat for Humanity was identified as a program suitable to the Mission Commission's interest in starting a building working group. FPCA and FKPCV formed the "core group" for a Habitat for Humanity build day on September 15, 2007 for the construction of a three-story, 12-unit condominium building at 11328 Westbrook

Mill Lane in Fairfax. The building will have four (4) two-bedroom units and eight (8) four-bedroom units. Together FPCA and FKPCV brought 27 volunteers and helped meet National Capital Presbytery's contingent.

Elder *John Metzger*, Mission Commission

YOUTH NEWS

The Souperbowl/Superbowl is coming up on February 3, 2008. After collecting donations of money and soup cans from church members on Sunday morning, a party will be held at the Looker's house starting at 6:00 p.m. so that we can chose which charity will receive the money raised.

Any instrument players wishing to play in FPCA'S Mardi Gras band at the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper on Tuesday, February 5th, please contact Betty Youmans or Genny Looker.

Danny DeVera will be participating in "Seussical the Musical" with the Springfield Community Theater the weekend of March 8-9th. Performances will be held at Annandale High School. Come see him as Horton (who heard a who)!

Susi Ennis will be leading a Youth Retreat at Camp Hanover near Richmond during the weekend of March 7-9th. All 5-12th graders are invited to participate in this fine and spirit-building event. Participants will leave Friday around 5 p.m. and return Sunday at 2 p.m. Sleeping bags, towels, toiletries, Bibles, extra shoes and socks, and warm clothing should be brought. *Genny Looker*

Acolyte Schedule

10-Feb

Tyler Young

24-Feb

Ben Looker

17-Feb

Mitchell Youmans

9-Mar

Garrett Youmans

NEW CHILDREN'S SERMONS SERIES

Come, see these wonderful pictures which change in front of your eyes, telling you biblical stories

February 10: NOAH BUILDS AN ARK (Genesis 6-9)

February 17: MOSES CROSSES THE RED SEA (Exodus 14)

February 24: JOSHUA CAPTURES JERICHO (Joshua 6)

March 9: DAVID BEATS A GIANT (1 Samuel 17)

March 16: DANIEL AND THE HUNGRY LIONS (David 6)

We will be using the book

Changing Picture Bible Stories by Tim Dowley

- ONE OF OUR NEW LIBRARY BOOKS (E Do) -

HARMONY

God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. (1 Corinthians 12:16, NKJ)

I was deeply moved as I listened to the choral group singing in unison. It seemed to be one powerful voice praising and glorifying God. Then on the chorus, the sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses sang their different parts, and the harmony was beautiful. It thrilled my soul and made their unison singing seem colorless by comparison.

Every follower of Christ “sings” a different part as together we work for the Lord. We come from various backgrounds and have different personalities and abilities. Even so, our labors together for Him can result in a beautiful harmony of service. Instead of appreciating the blend, however, some Christians demand conforming to their own methods and procedures. They want everyone to sing their way.

Although this kind of unity can produce limited results, nothing is quite as satisfying as to see different individuals, all with their own styles, talents, and identities, presenting in harmony the same theme – the love and salvation offered by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our services for Christ, let’s not worry if the people next to us aren’t singing our “note.” If they are in harmony with the Bible, we are in the same choir.

God calls His children to unity – not uniformity. *Richard De Haan*

[Contributed by *Isabelle Fennig*, from Our Daily Bread (www.rbc.org/odb)]



ATTENTION!

Deadline for the March issue of *FIRST and ForMOST* is February 15, 2008. 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.