



# FIRST and ForMOST

March 2008

## FROM THE PASTOR

*“The human mind plans the way, but the LORD directs the steps.” (Proverbs 16: 9)*

\*\*\*\*\*

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Study Catechism (1998), it states what the mission of the church is, *“To bear witness to God’s love for the world in Jesus Christ...The church is faithful to its mission when it extends mercy and forgiveness to the needy in ways that point finally and ultimately to Jesus Christ. For in the end it is always by Christ’s mercy that the needs of the needy are met.” (Q 63 & 64).*

The Catechism goes on to say, *“The hungry need bread, the homeless need shelter, the oppressed need justice, and the lonely need fellowship. At the same time – on another and deeper level – the hopeless need hope, sinners need forgiveness, and the world needs the gospel. On this level no one is excluded, and all the needy are one. Our mission as a church is to bring hope to a desperate world by declaring God’s undying love...” (Q 65).*

\*\*\*\*\*

I heard an older person the other day say, *“Church just isn’t what it used to be.”* I asked the person what he meant. And, he said to me that when he was a child, the church was the center of life in the community that he grew up in...and that Christ was the center of everything that went on in the church. He went on to say that he didn’t think that the church was as important to people today as it was to people in his childhood.

I guess I’m not old enough to know if he was right or wrong...or somewhere in between. But, I do know this. In order for something to truly be defined as a mission of Christ’s Church, it must: 1) *“Extend mercy and forgiveness to the needy in ways that point finally and ultimately to Jesus Christ,”* 2) *“Bring hope to a desperate world by declaring God’s undying love,”* and 3) *“Bear witness to God’s love for the world in Jesus Christ.”*

It has always been my belief that churches lose members and/or die when they stop being intentionally Christian about some or all of the things that they do or in which they believe. In other words, if what we believe or do *“does not ultimately and finally point to Jesus Christ,”* then it is not a true mission of the church. It may be a good thing, but it is not a mission of the church.

Another way of looking at this is to look to Jesus Christ. In His day, He was a radical. He was a totally new and different kind of *“rabbi.”* His ways were different from the ways of the world. His teachings were not politically correct. **He was different.**

Just like Jesus was different from the world, the church is also meant to be *“different”* from the world. And, that is precisely what people are craving in our fast-paced, multi-tasking, anxiety-ridden, and informationally overloaded society today: **SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD!**

The churches that are growing in the United States today are the churches that are adamant about doing whatever they do for the ultimate purpose of *“pointing people toward Christ.”* They are insistent that **any** activity, ministry, program, or business that they sponsor is uniquely, intentionally, and obviously Christian in every way, shape, and form. Whether it is a softball or soccer league, sewing classes, preschools or schools, or bridge or chess clubs, it isn’t a mission of the church if it is not being done for the explicit purpose of openly and honestly *“pointing people toward Christ.”*

As a matter of fact, it is Christ that makes the difference. There are thousands and thousands of softball or soccer leagues, sewing classes, preschools or schools, bridge and chess clubs in the world who do not *“point (people) finally and ultimately to Jesus Christ”* or *“bear witness to God’s love for the world in Jesus Christ.”* They are not hard to find. They may be excellent in what they do, but they are not part of the mission of the church.

As we celebrate the glorious resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, this coming Easter, let us dare to be different...just as Jesus Christ was different. Let us take a close look at all that we do here at FPCA and ask ourselves whether or not it meets the Biblically-based criteria found in our Presbyterian Catechism: 1) Does it *“point (people) finally and ultimately to Jesus Christ”*? 2) Does it *“bring hope to a desperate world by declaring God’s undying love”*? and, 3) Does it *“bear witness to God’s love for the world in Jesus Christ”*?  
Your Friend and Pastor, *Chris*

## EASTER

**A heavy cross, a crown of thorns**

**Our Christ is in agony**

**Yet**

**Take this cup from me**

**Only, your will not mine**

**Our Christ feels forsaken and thirsty**

**Yet**

**Your will not mine, Father**

**Although in pain, He hears a voice next to Him**

**And**

**“Today you will be in Paradise with me”**

**Finally, Christ says, “It is finished”**

**But**

**It is not really finished**

**On the third day, two Marys went to the tomb**

**When they arrived it was empty!**

**Christ had risen! Good News!**

**Good news indeed!**

**Christ has risen!**

**Christ has risen indeed!**

*Ruth Sutton*

**PREACHING SCHEDULE FOR MARCH**

**March 2, 2008** *Susi Ennis, Seminary Intern, Preaching*

**Scripture Lesson:** Ephesians 5:8-14.

**Sermon:** *"LIVING IN THE LIGHT"*

**March 9, 2008**

**Scripture Lessons:** Genesis 1: 1, 26-31  
John 1: 1-5

**Sermon:** *"THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE CHURCH"*

Special Presentation made by Dr. Looker revealing how similar the human life cycle is to that of a typical church.

**March 16, 2008** *Palm Sunday (Holy Week Begins)*

**Scripture Lesson:** Matthew 26: 14-16, 20-25, 47-50, and 27: 3-5

**Sermon:** *"JUDAS, BAD CHOICES, AND A LOVING GOD"*

**March 20, 2008** *Maundy Thursday Service (7:30 PM in the FPCA Sanctuary)*

**Scripture Lesson:** Selected Readings from John 13

**Meditation:** *"WHEN THE ROOSTER CROWS THRICE! NO WAY!"*

**March 21, 2008** *Good Friday : THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF CHRIST*

**Time:** 7:30 PM

**Place:** FPCA Sanctuary

**March 23, 2008** *Easter Sunrise Service*

**Time:** 6:30 AM

**Place:** Outside in front of the entrance to the FPCA Sanctuary

**March 23, 2008** *EASTER WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION!*

**Time:** 10:00 AM

**Place:** FPCA Sanctuary

**Scripture Lesson:** John 20: 1-18

**Sermon:** *"THERE IS NO RESURRECTION WITHOUT THE CROSS!"*

**March 30, 2008:** *Worship at 10:00 AM*

**Scripture Lesson:** John 20: 19-31

**Sermon:** *"THOMAS, THOMAS, THOMAS!"*

\*\*\*\*\* **CONFIRMATION CLASS BEGINS: (11:30 AM)** \*\*\*\*\*

## **"HE HAS RISEN!"**

(from *Matthew 28:6*)

### **The World Celebrates the Resurrection of the Lord**

#### **What does the world call the festival of Jesus Christ's Resurrection?**

The name of the festival of Jesus' Resurrection, **Easter**, appears only in English and German, where it is called Ostern. It derives most likely from the name of the Anglo-Saxon Goddess of Dawn or Spring, Eastre (also spelled Estre, Eostre, Ostara); the German **Ostern** dates back to the same Anglo-Saxon origin. In many languages the name of the Easter festival has derived from the Greek word **Pascha**, originating in the Hebrew word for Passover. We find this name in all romance languages, like the French **Paques** and the Italian **Pasque**, but also in other languages, like in the Germanic Danish: **Paske**, or the Slavic Polish: **Pache**, even the Gaelic **Caisc** in Ireland, and **Case** in Scotland, just to name a few. In other countries it is based on Resurrection, as in some Slavic languages it translates as **Uskrs**, or, in Korean, as **Buhwalchol**. It may stand for Great Day: as **Wielkanoc** in Polish, and **Velikden** in Bulgarian. Others see Easter as the time you take (or buy) meat after the long fasting during Lent: In Estonian this is expressed as **Lihavotted**, and in Hungarian as **Húsvét**.

#### **Why does the date we celebrate Easter vary? And why do our Orthodox friends sometimes celebrate it on the same day as we, while in other years they observe it on a different Sunday?**

This year March 23 will be the day of the biggest religious festival of the year, at least on our calendar. The Orthodox Church celebrates it much later, on April 27, while last year both, the Western and the Eastern churches, celebrated together on April 8. To set a date when all Christians could celebrate Easter together, the First Council of Nicaea determined in 325 AD that it should be done on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox, or after March 21 on our calendar. For us, the earliest Easter Sunday can be March 22, and the latest April 25, which corresponds to the Eastern Church's dates, April 4 and May 8. But, due to limited understanding in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Easter was still celebrated on different dates in different countries of the Christian world. When the Gregorian calendar was set up in 1582, much of the difficulties of fixing the date for Easter were eliminated, but, as the Eastern Church continued to use the Gregorian calendar, the dates of celebrating Easter differed again. They still do so today.

#### **What are some ways of celebrating Jesus' Resurrection?**

The **Easter Vigil** (or **Paschal Vigil**) is held in many Christian churches as the first celebration of the Resurrection. In the earliest days it was primarily the time to prepare converts for baptism, which was normally done on Easter Sunday. It is held in the hours of darkness, beginning at Sunset on Holy Saturday. It may begin in darkness, the worshipers lighting candles from a special Paschal candle, its flame representing resurrection as "the light of the world," accompanied by reading the Scripture and singing hymns. In the early church the Easter Vigil concluded with the baptism of the converts. Some churches, especially the Roman Catholic, may include the renewal of the Baptismal vows. The Orthodox churches also include the lighting of candles in their special Easter Vigil. In the Anglican Church they may celebrate Confirmation, if the bishop is present. The Lutheran church also may include Baptism and Confirmation, and end with the Service of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Remember, when we held Easter Vigil during the day before Easter, sitting at the entrance of our First Presbyterian Church of Annandale, praying and meditating? At many places, as in our church, Easter Sunday begins with a **Sunrise Service** held outdoors, an especially American Protestant tradition.

### **What does the Pascal Lamb symbolize?**

One of the most common symbols associated with Easter is the **Lamb of God**, or *Agnus Dei* in Latin. This symbol is related directly to the Jewish Passover when, in ancient times, Jews sacrificed lambs when celebrating their liberation from their bondage in Egypt. The early Christians associated the sacrifice of the lamb with Christ's sacrifice on the cross to liberate us from eternal death.

### **What is special about the Easter Eggs, and what does the Easter Bunny have to do with them?**

We all had fun with Easter eggs, ever since we were children, coloring them, searching for them, eating them. What do they have to do with Easter? The egg was honored during the Spring Festivals by the Romans, Gauls, Chinese, Egyptians and Persians. It represented the rebirth of the earth, just as new life bursts forth from the egg. At the Passover Seder held by the Jews, a hard-boiled egg dipped in salt water symbolizes both new life and the Passover sacrifice offered at the Temple in Jerusalem.

What better symbol to use by the Christians, likening it to the tomb from which Christ rose, bringing new life? Ever since the Middle Ages, it has been customary to decorate and color the eggs. In 1883 the Russian Czar, Alexander, commissioned goldsmith Peter Carl Faberge to make a special Easter egg for his wife. We just color the eggs – in plain colors, or with fancy designs, like the Ukrainian Easter eggs. Games using Easter eggs are always popular. Children love to hunt for hidden eggs, whether they are colored boiled eggs, plastic eggs filled with jelly beans, or chocolate eggs wrapped in foil. They all bring joy. In some countries games played with Easter eggs are very popular, like egg picking, in which the players knock or roll their eggs together, and the one whose egg shows the fewest cracks may claim both eggs. And who brings the eggs? Of course the Easter Bunny is another Easter tradition. In ancient times the hare, or rabbit, was seen as a symbol of fertility and new life. .

### **Why are so many sanctuaries decorated with Easter lilies?**

Those gorgeous white flowers have been a mark of purity and grace throughout the ages, and this regal white lily embodies joy, hope and life. It serves as a beautiful reminder that Easter is a time for rejoicing and celebration.

There are many ways of celebrating Easter all over the world, different countries having their own special customs. But, whatever denomination, whatever country we belong to, we all agree the Easter is a great and most meaningful holiday of Christianity, and we celebrate Jesus Christ's Resurrection with gratitude and joy.

*Marta Strada*

## **EASTER EGG HUNT FOR CHILDREN**

(Middle School and Under)

**Easter Sunday, after Worship Service at 11:30 AM**

**COME AND HAVE FUN!**

## **COME AND JOIN THE CONFIRMATION CLASS!**

Paragraph W.4-2.003 in the PC(USA) Book of Order begins with "The church nurtures those baptized as children and calls them to make public their profession of faith and their acceptance of responsibility in the life of the church." In order to fulfill this direction we will be holding a Confirmation Class for students in Middle School and High School. There will be 6 classes

beginning on March 30, 2008 at 11:30 am in room 209 and continuing each Sunday through May 4, 2008. Students from the First Presbyterian Church of Annandale, the First Korean Presbyterian Church of Virginia, and Emmanuel Indonesian Presbyterian Church will study topics on faith, the Scriptures, Prayer, Jesus, the Resurrection, and what it means to be a Presbyterian. Those who wish to make a public profession of faith will be presented to the three sessions at a dinner on May 7, 2008 and will be presented to the congregations at a joint service at FPCA at 10:00 AM on May 11, 2008. If you are a student in Middle School or High School, you are invited to join this class. Any questions may be directed to Dr. Looker or Susi Ennis.

Thank you,

*Dr. Chris Looker.*

### **ADULT CHURCH SCHOOL CLASS**

**8:45 AM: GOD, THE PEOPLE, AND THE COVENANT**, studying selections from 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel and Haggai. **March 2-June 1.**

**11:30 AM: CHRIST HAS CONQUERED EUROPE , Using Historical Events and Chosen People.**  
**March 30 – June 8.**

### **NO CHURCH SCHOOL ON EASTER SUNDAY!**

#### **WELCOME, NEW ACTIVE MEMBERS**

**. Your church family is happy you have joined us**

Roger Stevenson and Florentina Jimenez  
Diane and Paul Malone with daughter Sandra  
Susan Hanson

**Let us praise the Lord together!**



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**



**Emily Helm ~ March 2**  
**Andrew Lauler ~ March 3**  
**Ben Looker ~ March 11**  
**Lee Rodrigues ~ March 13**  
**Nathan Youmans ~ March 20**  
**Stephanie Berg ~ March 21**

**Pat Hickey ~ March 23**  
**Matthew Fuller ~ March 26**  
**Bill Jokela ~ March 26**  
**Etha Cook ~ March 28**  
**Randy Meli ~ March 29**

## **BOOK CLUB**

**Book Club meets on Monday, March 17 at 7:30 PM in the church library.  
We will discuss the novel Three Junes by Julia Glass.**

\* \* \* \* \*

**The things that will destroy us are politics without principle; pleasure without conscience; wealth without work; knowledge without character; business without morality; science without humanity; and worship without sacrifice.**

*Mahatma Mohandas K. Gandhi*

## **SESSION HIGHLIGHTS**

**JANUARY 16, 2008**

The Session discussed preliminary plans to plant a Memorial tree on the church grounds in memory of Elder William C. Johnson.

Elder Tyler Young reported that the youth of FPCA and FKPCV would jointly participate in two events and seek to coordinate additional events in the future.

Rev. Dr. Looker reported that a Confirmation Class for FPCA and FKPCV youth will be held March 31 through May 11. A joint meeting of the Board of Deacons and the Sessions of FPCA and FKPCV will be held on May 7, 2008 to examine the participants.

Commission and Committee liaison and leadership assignments for Elders were completed: Administration and Finance Commission: Elder Judi Reitman.

Buildings and Grounds Commission: Elders Barbara Matos and Jack Smith.

Christian Education Commission: Elders Marta Strada and Tyler Young.

Mission Commission: Elders John Metzler and Nadine Dingess.

New Members and Congregational Life Commission: Elder Hugh Iwanicki.

Worship Commission: Elder Sandi Mori.

Nominating Committee: Session member: Elder Sandy Mori; Elder Representative: Elder Nadine Dingess.

Personnel Committee: Elders Marta Strada and Ruth Sutton.

Stewardship Committee: Judi Reitman and Ruth Sutton.

President of the Corporation and Agent of the FPCA Corporation: Elder John Metzler.

Elder Judi Reitman was elected by the Session to serve as the FPCA Treasurer for a one-year term (2008). Elder Hugh Iwanicki was elected by the Session to serve as the FPCA Clerk of Session for a one-year term (2008).

The Session unanimously voted to establish a special commission to gather information specifically pertaining to the current contractual negotiations between FPCA and Sleepy Hollow Preschool (SHPS). Six active FPCA members were elected to serve on this commission. The Commission is to meet with representatives from SHPS and FKPCV, and report its findings back to the Session.

The Session approved the following motions presented by the Mission Commission Elders John Metzger and Nandine Dingess: 1) That FPCA support a 3<sup>rd</sup> annual mission trip to Cumberland, Maryland in partnership with FKPCV and NAILS. 2) That June 1-7, 2008 if the way be clear, be set aside for a Mission trip for participating members of FPCA with the Redfeather Development Group on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana.

Reporting for Building & Grounds Elders Barb Matos and Jack Smith discussed the fact that we once again have ant and rat problems and stressed that cookies and sweets need to be in plastic sealed containers.

Reporting for the New Member/Congregational Life Commission (NMCLC), Hugh Iwanicki indicated that January 19 was chosen as a day of prayer for our church and encouraged people to sign up for half hour segments.

Reporting for Administration and Finance Elder Judi Retiman said that giving was up during December 2007.

Based on the Minutes of the Session Meeting by *Hugh Iwanicki*, Clerk of Session

## **NOTE OF THANKS**

Thank you to all the members of FPCA for allowing Girl Scout Service Unit 55-4 use your Activities Building for our "lock-in." We had a great time and really appreciate it.

Sincerely, *Caroline Vale*, Girl Scout

Leader

### **BETHANY HOUSE THANKS YOU!**

*Sincere thanks to all who contributed to Bethany House of Northern VA (BHNV) during the past Christmas Season. Your generosity in providing gifts for the women and children served by BHNV required three deliveries and reflects the warm hearts and caring nature of FPCA members and friends! I'm sure many of you also sent monetary contributions or gift cards.*

*Please continue to fill the barrels with items that can be resold in Joseph's Coat Thrift Store, which supports the work of BHNV, and I will gladly deliver them for you.*

*Norma Muller*

***Love is indestructible.  
Its holy flame  
Forever burneth;  
From heaven it came,  
To heaven returneth.***

***Robert Southay  
(1774-1843)***

***He prayeth well, who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast,  
He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.***

***Samuel Taylor Coleridge  
(1772-1834)***

*Contributed by Punch Jackson*

### **ATTENTION!**

***Deadline for the April issue of FIRST and ForMOST is March 20, 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.***