



# FIRST and ForMOST

January 2010

## FROM YOUR PASTOR

St. John writes, ***“The Word of Life that gives life was from the beginning, and this is the One about whom we speak and write. Our ears have heard, our own eyes have seen, and our hands touched this Word of Life. Now we are telling you this so that you may share in this life with us. And we share in it with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. We are writing to tell you these things because this makes us truly happy.” (I John 1: 1-4)***

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As I begin my fifth year of ministry as your pastor, I am reminded of this passage from I John. I especially like the part where John writes, ***“We are writing to tell you these things because this makes us truly happy.”***

I am so very happy to be your pastor! I am overjoyed at what God has done in and through us over the past four years! And, I look forward to the coming year with great excitement!

I am particularly pleased to welcome our new Church Officers who will serve as pastors and leaders in 2010.

After 10 years of dedicated and honored service, Elders Judi and Jan Reitman will be retiring from their positions as Church Treasurers. To both of you I say, ***“Well done, good and faithful servants.”***

Betty Youmans has been unanimously elected by your Session to serve as the new Church Treasurer for 2010. I know that you will keep prayerfully supporting her as she begins her new duties, just as you have done for both Jan and Judi these past 10 years.

Your Session has also elected a new Clerk of Session for 2010, Elder Marta Strada. We welcome her to this highly honored position and look forward to her gifted leadership.

In addition, you have elected new Elders and Deacons to serve in leadership positions. They will be installed into office on Sunday, January 10, 2010. The new elders will be Thomas Martin (Class of 2012), Susan Hanson (Class of 2011), Oscar Alcantara and Kyle Hanson (Class of 2010). A new deacon will be joining our Diaconate in 2010. She is Florence Jimenez (Class of 2012). I know that all of you will pray without ceasing for these wonderful servants of the Lord. In addition and in compliance with the covenant vows that you will take on Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, I know that you will ***“abide by their decisions insofar as they lead us in the ways of Jesus Christ.”***

With the highly talented and gifted Elders and Deacons who will be serving us in 2010, I'm sure that you can understand why I'm so happy!

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2010 will be a major transition year for FPCA. You will be hearing much more about the hard work that your elected Decorating Committee, Buildings and Grounds Commission, and

Session have been doing to prepare for the renovation of our sanctuary. Regular announcements about our progress will begin this month from the pulpit, in this Newsletter, and weekly bulletins. In addition, opportunities for all Active Members to review each step of the progress that is being made will be encouraged and welcomed by the members of the Session. And, every opportunity and effort will be made to make sure that every single concern, idea, and suggestion made by you, our blessed Active Members, is given full consideration by the Session.

As the inventors of the representative form of church government (under the leadership of John Calvin in Geneva), Presbyterians vest the final authority in the Elders you have elected to represent you to make the final decisions concerning matters such as this. **However**, that does not, in any way, shape, or form, mean that your Elders wish to make **any** decisions, let alone decisions about how God’s sanctuary will be renovated, without the benefit of your prayers, input, ideas, financial support, and/or concerns. To put it more simply, we need you and we want to hear from you so that whatever the final decisions that are made are not only blessed by God (which is most important), but blessed by you, our cherished and blessed members.

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I am very, very happy! I’m happy that God has blessed us in the past, is blessing us in the present, and will bless us in the future. I’m happy because I don’t simply view our church as a collection of 140 individuals who happen to have a “membership card.” I view our church as family, united by the love of Jesus Christ. We are not a collection of individuals. We are One in Christ.

And, so I end this message with these words (also from I John 4), ***“My dear friends, let us love one another because love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God’s ways....God is love.”***

Your Friend and Pastor,

	2010	2011	2012
<b><u>ELDERS</u></b>	Oscar Alcantara Judi Reitman Ruth Sutton Kyle Hanson (Youth Elder)	Susan Hanson Cara Lauler Paul Malone	Thomas Martin Sandy Mori Marta Strada
<b><u>DEACONS</u></b>	Randy Meli (Chair) Miriam Houseworth Tuula Jung	Marianne Artherholt Diane Malone Carroll Thompson	Florence Jimenez Ruth Harman Patti Young

**SESSION LIAISON ASSIGNMENTS FOR 2010**

- Administration and Finance Commission:** Tom Martin
- Buildings and Grounds Commission:** Susan Hanson and Paul Malone
- Christian Education Commission:** Marta Strada
- Marketing and Stewardship Commission:** Ruth Sutton and Cara Lauler
- Mission Commission:** Judi Reitman and Oscar Alcantara
- New Member and Congregational Life Commission:** Cara Lauler and Kyle Hanson
- Worship Commission:** Sandy Mori

## PREACHING SCHEDULE for JANUARY, 2010

- January 3, 2010: Scripture Lesson: John 1: 1-18  
Sermon Title: **"THE BEGINNING...ALL OVER AGAIN!"**  
*Dr. Looker, Preaching*
- January 10, 2010; ***Baptism of Our Lord Sunday***  
Scripture Lesson: Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22  
Sermon Title: **"WHY DID THAT HAVE TO HAPPEN?"**  
*Dr. Looker, Preaching*
- January 17, 2010: Scripture Lesson: John 2: 1-11  
Sermon Title: **"IT SEEMS THAT EVERYTHING JESUS TOUCHES..."**  
*Dr. Looker, Preaching*
- January 24, 2010: Scripture Lessons: Luke 4: 14-21 and I Corinthians 12: 12-30  
Sermon Title: **"CAN WE SEE OUR TAIL?"**  
*Dr. Looker, Preaching*
- January 31, 2010: Scripture Lesson: Jeremiah 1:4-10  
Sermon Title: **"WHAT IS YOUR CALL?"**  
*Susan Ennis, Preaching*

### ATTENTION!

The dates of the Adult Church Class in January 2010 have been changed slightly:

### CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

#### Adult Church School Class

January 10, 17, 24, 31, February 7, at 11:30 in Room 105

#### **"Steadfast Hope"**

Held by Elder William Plitt, Trinity Presbyterian Church in Arlington, VA who is active in the Mission Project of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will conduct a presentation on the tense Palestinian/Jewish situation on DVD, followed by discussions.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



Pat Pascoe ~ January 1  
Joan Johnson ~ January 5  
Kyle Hanson ~ January 10  
Ruth Sutton ~ January 13  
Paula Santen ~ January 19

Pattie Young ~ January 23  
Katie Fuller ~ January 27  
Lois Nashorn ~ January 28  
Cara Lauler ~ January 30  
Leslie Whetzel ~ January 31

## **HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF YOU!**

The year 2010 has arrived! Will it bring us happiness? O, there are many ways we can make sure we are “lucky.”

A horseshoe may magically protect us. Many Europeans think so and send out New Year cards with the picture of a horseshoe on it, wishing good luck.

Or a little white pig may bring us a good 2010! Piggy wants to do so in Germany, Austria, England, Ireland, as well as among Anglo-Americans. It may even hold a clover leaf in its mouth for additional luck. There will be no lack for meat in the coming year – especially when little good luck pigs end up in the frying pan, as eating pork on New Year’s day also brings you luck, especially in Sweden, Germany, Italy and the United States.

Or do you prefer seafood? Go to Japan; there herring roe is consumed for fertility, shrimp for long life, and dried sardines for a good harvest.

How about going to Spain, Portugal or the former Spanish and Portuguese colonies such as Venezuela, Cuba, Mexico, Ecuador, and Peru, and eat grapes? One for each month, plus a 13<sup>th</sup> for good measure.

You want to have more money in the coming year? Have some legumes including beans, peas, and lentils, symbols of money due to their small seedlike appearance resembling coins. They swell when cooked so your finances will also increase, whether you are in Italy, Germany, Brazil, or Japan!

Yes, the year 2010 has arrived. Let us toast with a glass of champagne and wish all of us a HAPPY NEW YEAR! If we say it in German, “Glückliches Neujahr,” we wish one another even more than happiness. The word “glücklich” comes from “Glück,” meaning “luck”! Happiness and luck are combined into one word.

Is this correct? Can we be happy only when we are lucky? Is there such a thing as luck? And what is true happiness? Are we only happy when things go well? Every moment of our life is a gift from God. Knowing that God is with us and loves us can make us happy – no matter under what conditions we are spending our days. Yes. God is with us, supports us, loves us. That is a treasure – not luck!

**HAVE A HAPPY, BLESSED NEW YEAR WITH THE LORD ON YOUR SIDE!**

*Your Editor, Marta Strada*

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## **CHANGE IN YOUR DIRECTORY**

**Norma Muller’s correct e-mail address is: [nbaileymuller@aol.com](mailto:nbaileymuller@aol.com).**

**Please use that if you write to Norma! Some of her e-mail still goes to Ed.**



***Deadline for the February issue of FIRST and ForMOST is January 21, 2010. Please e-mail your announcements and reports to the Editor, Marta Strada, LUXI7777@aol.com, or put them in the FIRST and ForMOST drawer in the church office. Thank you.***

## **STEWARDSHIP IS MORE THAN MONEY**

Those of you at Church on December 13 heard Pastor Looker ask you to turn in your pledges. But as my title implies, there's more to stewardship than your pledge. Stewardship is also giving your time and talent – using your spiritual gifts – in service to the Church. While we need the money to keep the Church healthy, we also need your time to serve on Commissions and participate in things like singing in the choir. Can't read music? You can still sing in the choir. There are many members who can assist you. Have a different kind of musical ear? What about playing in the bell choir? Enjoy helping others? Join our Mission Commission. We need members on all of our Commissions as listed below. You would meet once a month to discuss what your Commission is planning. We need input from new people, who can give us new ideas. We have the following additional Commissions you may be interested in:

New Member and Congregational Life, Mission, Administration and Finance, Buildings and Grounds, Worship, Marketing and Stewardship, and Christian Education.

Although our Parenting Program is over for this year, it's an ongoing program. Put on your calendar for next September to find out how you can help setting up and serving the meal that is part of the program. I am aware that many of you are already assisting in various programs each week or month. For this we thank you.

For the rest of you, please consider the above.

## **PER CAPITA ASSESSMENT**

**The per capita assessment is money we send to the Presbytery, synod and General Assembly to fund the administrative costs of all levels of the Presbyterian Church. This year the assessment is \$31.00 per person which is the same amount as last year. Even in these tight economic times, that is still not a great deal of money. You probably spend this much any time you go shopping. You definitely spend this much every time you go to the grocery store. Our entire church's per capita assessment for 2009 is \$3968.00. Please consider paying your portion of the per capita assessment. You can put this in the offering plate and write per capita on the memo line. During the month of January we will have envelopes in the back of the pews for this purpose. By making this donation, you will free up our church to spend the \$3968. for a different purpose- our own administrative costs, church school materials or even missions. Thank you for your generosity.**

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

**November 18, 2009**

This time the meeting started an hour earlier, as we were about to receive our Confirmands, Sam Looker, Sarah Metzel, Elisha and Joshua Musih.. After a delicious dinner, the Confirmands made their excellent statements of faith, and gave very good answers to questions asked by the Session. Cara Lauler stressed that we, the Church, were always there for them. The meeting was closed with prayer, and after saying good bye to our new members , we started the regular session meeting.

Elder Ruth Sutton opened the meeting reading excerpts from *The God Hunt*, by Karen Mains.

After the minutes were approved, Youth Elder Taylor Young reported that plans were being made for Living Nativity on December 20 from 5:00 – 7:00 pm, and for Souper Bowl on February 7, 2010.

Assistant to the Pastor, Susan Ennis, reported that the Confirmation Class was a great success. and the confirmands will be received on Sunday, November 22, 2009. She also reported that the Session Retreat went well.

Next, the Session watched a video presentation on the Palestinian-Jewish situation, *Steadfast Hope*, planned as an Adult Sunday School class in January 2010. It will be conducted by Elder William Plitt of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Arlington, VA.

The Session had a long discussion regarding the Church Improvement Project. For the **Mission Commission** Elder Susan Ennis had sent a written report to the Session. Now she just emphasized that new volunteers should be involved in the Parenting Partnership, as the present helpers are getting older, don't drive in the evening, and have to be replaced. For the **Buildings and Grounds Commission** Elder Jack Smith reported that Sleepy Hollow is working on moving upstairs (due July 1, 2010), and putting the first floor rooms back in the shape they were in when they moved in, so they can be used as classrooms. FOCA has already cleaned up the bell tower room which is not used at present. Tom Martin got better lights for the parking lot. For the **Worship Commission** Elder Sandy Mori reported that the Commission is all set for the events that will take place during Advent; which will be enhanced by the new sound system.

For the **Marketing and Stewardship Commission** Elder Ruth Sutton reported that they have started working on a new flyer for the Living Nativity, and on cards listing the Christmas services. Elder Cara Lauler noted that Dec. 19 there will be caroling in the neighborhood, and flyers will be handed out. Chris Fuller was praised for the attractive new sign he put up on church property with his Eagle Scout troop.

For the **Christian Education Commission** Elder Marta Strada had e-mailed the Session her report. She emphasized that the Commission's main concern was to prepare for Living Nativity on December 20.

The Session had also received e-mailed reports from Elder Cara Lauler for the **New Member and Congregational Life Commission**.

For the **Nominating Committee** Elder Ruth Sutton made a motion to nominate Cara Lauler as co-chair. Session approved the motion.

# SESSISOSN HIGHLIGHTS

**December 16, 2009**

Cara Lauler opened the meeting with a devotion by stirring our imagination with a poetic, yet realistic description of how God stepped into humankind through the birth of Jesus Christ.

Clerk Barbara Matos reported that the annual report is being prepared and encouraged the session members to add their input.

Youth Elder Tyler Young reported that preparations for the Living Nativity, which will take place December 20, were making good progress. He also mentioned that there will be a Souperbowl get-together at the Looker home on February 7, 2010.

Dr. Looker thanked Tyler for his 3 years of devoted service as Youth Elder. He also thanked Elders Barbara Matos and Jack Smith for their dedicated service during the past 3 years.

After 10 years of loyal service, Elder Judi Reitman is discontinuing being FPCA's Treasurer. Her job will be taken over in 2010 by Betty Youmans.

Session approved of the officers elected for 2010; they will be ordained and installed on January 10, 2010. Dr. Looker shared with the Session who will be the Session Liaisons to the Commissions. (See Session Liaison Assignments For 2010, p. 2).

The Session set the date for the Congregational Meeting to review and approve the Pastor's Call for January 24, 2010.

For the **New Member and Congregational Life Commission**, Elder Cara Lauler had e-mailed her report to the Session. She pointed out that it would be great if more members joined the commissions. All potential members should be informed about what the commissions are doing, and they should personally be invited by the elder liaisons and commission chairs to join.

For the **Buildings and Grounds Commission**, Elders Barb Matos and Jack Smith stressed how important it was to keep the congregation informed about how the Church Improvement Project was progressing. Members should be invited to come up with suggestions; feedback will be helpful..

For the **Worship Commission**, Elder Sandy Mori reported how the preparation for Living Nativity was progressing.

For the **Marketing and Stewardship Commission**, Elder Ruth Sutton reported that flyers announcing the Living Nativity had been handed out. Also, 500 cards announcing the Christmas services had been mailed to FPCA's neighborhood, inviting people to the Christmas services.

For the **Christian Education Commission**, Elder Marta Strada had sent the report to the Session per e-mail.

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***"Gad is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine!***

***Ephesians***

**3:20**

## YOUTH NEWS!



The Souperbowl/Superbowl is coming up on February 7 2010. 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 choose which charity will receive the money raised.

### Acolyte Schedule

January 10 Elisha Musih  
January 17 Nathan Youmans

January 24 Andrew Laufer  
January 31 Sarah T. Javed

We are sorry to announce that  
DAVID W. MYERS  
beloved Son of Gary and Linda Myers  
passed away on November 21, 2009,  
one day after his 39<sup>th</sup> birthday  
*He has found eternal peace*

# A CLEAN GREEN SLATE IN 2010

by Norma Muller

By the time you read this, the holidays will be almost over, and if you are like me, you may be looking forward to putting away all the decorations, cards, presents, wrapping paper etc., and clearing the clutter from your home and your life. It can make us feel good to clean up, clear out, pare down, recycle or give away.

The beginning of a new year is a time to reflect on what we've accomplished (or not) during the past year, then put it behind us and start over with a clean slate. Whether we actually make New Year's Resolutions or not, most of us do try to commit ourselves to better habits, and will begin the year on a hopeful note.

As a member of FPCA's Green Team, I am happy to know that our church leaders are committed to Creation Care and that many of our Commissions are taking steps to reduce FPCA's environmental impact. And I am hopeful that we will all be trying to live greener lives in the coming year.

Our "carbon footprint" is a measure of the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases our actions generate, such as the emissions we produce when we drive or fly someplace or when trucks bring food across the country, or the smokestack pollution from manufacturing the products we use. More generally, it has become shorthand for the total negative impact that our lifestyle has on the environment. It is, of course, virtually impossible to live in the modern world

without affecting the environment in negative ways, but we can consider how to live more lightly on the earth and to preserve its beauty and resources for future generations.

Did you know that Americans use 50 billion plastic water bottles in a year? (Even if they were all recycled, there is an environmental cost to produce and distribute them.) That the average American uses 350 plastic bags per year? (Reusable shopping bags help solve that problem.) That one of the best things you can do for the planet is to give up meat one day a week? (We would also be a lot healthier with less meat in our diets.)

There are many tools available from organizations such as Washington Interfaith Power and Light to help us assess the size of our carbon footprint and I hope that we can pursue this exercise to establish a baseline against which to measure our progress, both as individuals or families and as a congregation. You will be hearing more about this early next year.

So, along with my usual resolutions to watch less TV and exercise more, I'm considering resolving to keep my tires full of air to save gas, and to start paying bills online to reduce paper. What will you be doing to have a greener 2010??? Why not resolve to join the Green Team, or one of our hardworking Commissions, and we'll work on it together!

Happy New Year!

*Norma Muller*

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**'Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.'** ( 2 Corinthians 9:7)

*Contributed by Punch Jackson*

# LIFE AT THE EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD

by Hugh Iwanicki

It was August 2009, and I was back in the 115-plus degree heat of Baghdad 's summer, with lows averaging 85-90 degrees.

The monotony and tension of life at the Embassy quickly re-asserted itself. I may not have adequately explained why this is so in previous emails, so let me describe it here:

The Embassy is a 104-acre compound that includes two camps for contractors at its east and west ends, leaving 67 acres for the main Embassy facilities. These facilities include fourteen main buildings: the Chancery, two office Annex buildings, residences for the Ambassador and DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), the Marine House for Marine Security Guard residents, six SDA (Senior Diplomat Accommodation) resident buildings, a gymnasium containing a full fitness facility and stress-relieving Olympic-size swimming pool, and the DFAC (Dining Facility), with hundreds of employees ready to serve over a thousand meals per sitting.

The Embassy is designed like a self-contained city, providing all municipal services, including a power generating station, water purification plant, sewage treatment plant, fire department, Embassy RSOs (Regional Security Officers), and thousands of Peruvian security contractors, all armed with machine guns, patrolling the Embassy perimeter and parts of the International Zone 24/7. The Embassy also has its own auto repair shop, a team of plumbers, electricians and other skilled labor contractors, and hundreds of cleaning personnel who live off site in CHUs (Containerized Housing Units).

For nighttime entertainment, the Embassy has one choice: the American Club. Affectionately known as Baghdaddys, it serves as the Embassy bar/disco on Thursday and Friday nights, and then transforms into a chapel for Saturday morning worship services. This may be the only place where I will ever see a church inside a bar, but I give the Embassy credit for efficiency, particularly regarding communion. This arrangement also offers safety benefits, because one may drink to excess and repent the next morning without ever having to drive a vehicle. In fact, I might suggest to my pastor that we rent out our church as a bar on Saturday nights to generate additional revenue while enlarging the congregation.

Actually, there's a very positive reason for the chapel's venue: It started in a conference room, but there were so many worshippers that they needed more space. Space is at a premium within the Embassy, so if worshippers want it, they have to share.

For my first six months, the Embassy had no landscaping whatsoever, only gray-brown sand-dirt. The property was once a beautiful date palm plantation, with thousands of mature trees gracing the banks of the Tigris River . It also held a lagoon where Saddam's sons water skied in a resort forbidden to all others. After the American liberation in 2003, some government officials applied their infinite wisdom and decided that it would be a good idea to knock down 99% of the palm trees and leave a barren moonscape.

One evening, as I prepared to take a shower, wearing only my underwear, I heard a gigantic BOOM! followed by the rush of pressurized water. The apartment's electricity died instantly and

we were plunged into blackness. I fumbled my way to the utility closet to locate the large flashlight provided by one of the many government vendors, only to discover that it didn't work.

My next thought was, "Oh No! We've been hit by a rocket and it blew up the water storage tanks on the roof!" This was not an unreasonable thought, because a rocket had landed right behind my apartment only a few days before. Thankfully, it didn't explode, because otherwise there would certainly have been casualties that could have included me. I managed to find some clothes in the darkness and opened the apartment door to see that there was light in the hallway. Then I pounded on my roommate's door. Miraculously, he had slept through the whole thing and was annoyed that someone would disrupt his peaceful slumber. But he quickly came to his senses, and we went back to the kitchen to find water pouring out of the cabinets below the sink. I told him we had to move his \$1200 Persian rug, lying on the living room floor, or else it would be ruined. Fortunately we got to it just in time. Then I rushed downstairs, thinking that a rocket had hit our building, and found three people in the hallway who asked what the boom was. I told them that I heard it too, and that the power in our apartment had gone out. We were all sure we had been attacked.

I ran outside across the common area to the housing office and excitedly explained to the night manager what had happened, speculating that we were hit by a rocket and asking him to call the Regional Security Officer. Next to me was a first-time visitor, checking in to the housing office and still dressed in his combat gear, gazing at everything happening around him. I paused to welcome him to Baghdad and ran back to my apartment.

When I got back to the room, there were over three inches of water in our living room. My own room, which faced the living room, had two inches of water in it. At this point I realized that I had thought about my roommate's rug but forgot about my own, two of which were completely soaked. I barely managed to get the third one off the ground before the swelling tide reached the back of my bedroom.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door as the RSO duty officer arrived with a pistol strapped to his side, wielding a large flashlight. He went right to the problem, opening the cabinets below the sink and declaring, "Your hose burst." He proceeded to turn off the water, and everything became quiet except for a mocking "drip, drip, drip." There was no rocket or bomb explosion, just a burst hose on a newly installed kitchen sink and pipes, courtesy of a Kuwaiti construction company. An hour later the clean-up crew from PAE arrived with their huge shop vacs to suck up the thousands of gallons that filled our apartment and spilled another 20 feet into the hallway.

When I told my tale to a plumber friend the next day, he informed me that the quality of plumbing supplies in the Middle East is shockingly bad, and hose-bursts were not uncommon in the brand-new Embassy. The perpetrator was the same construction company that had installed emergency sprinklers in the residence apartments for fire protection but omitted the water pipes. Apparently, the Kuwaiti owners believed that Allah would miraculously supply water to the sprinklers in case of fire, like the spring of Zam Zam or something. Either that or they were cutting corners recklessly and without care for the lives of their clients.\

