



FIRST and ForMOST

July/August 2009

FROM YOUR PASTOR

“(Wanting to trap Jesus), the Pharisees’ followers asked Him, ‘Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?’ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, ‘Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the money for the tax.’ And they brought him a coin. And Jesus said to them, ‘Whose likeness and inscription is this?’ They said, ‘Caesar’s.’ Then He said to them. ‘Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.’ When they heard it, they marveled; and they left Him and went away.”
(Adapted from Matthew 22: 15-22, RSV)

On July 4, 2009, the United States will be celebrating our 233rd year as a nation. There will be much talk about “*freedom*” and “*liberty*” this year...just as there is every Independence Day weekend. We will look to our Declaration of Independence and celebrate those great words: “*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all (people) are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” And, in churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples throughout our country, people will bow their heads to thank God for blessing us with the precious gifts of “*freedom*” and “*liberty*.”*

Which got me to thinking: What exactly is “*freedom*”? What is “*liberty*”? We often say those words as if we know what they mean. We hear them spoken even more. But, what is “*freedom*”? What is “*liberty*”?

“*Freedom*” and “*liberty*” are almost always concepts that have meaning only when one takes into account the entity, government, power, or person(s) from which a person or persons wish to be liberated. “*Liberty*” has always been something that implies an escape from some form of tyranny or overbearing power. Hence, the “*freedom*” and/or “*liberty*” sought in the Declaration of Independence were from the government of Great Britain. This is clearly stated in the document: “*The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.*”

In the case of the Reformation, John Calvin sought “*freedom*” and “*liberty*” from a church institution that had become increasingly secularized, militarized, political, money-hungry, and tyrannical.

In John Calvin’s *Institutes*, he writes: “*The Church remains under a wicked tyranny...by sacrilegious impiety are profaned, by cruel domination are oppressed, by evil and deadly doctrines are poisoned, corrupted, and almost slain; churches where Christ lies half-buried, the Gospel is suppressed, piety is put to flight, and the worship of God almost abolished; where, in*

short, all things are in such disorder as to present the appearance of Babylon rather than the holy city of God."

Thus, the American Revolution and the Reformation are but two examples where those who had experienced *"a (long) history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having the direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny"* sought, fought, and died for the right and the privilege to be free.

When asked whether or not it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, He responded by making a comparison of Caesar to God. *"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."* By doing this, He forced those who were trying to trick Him into an inescapable trap. All Jews hated the fact that they were being occupied and ruled by Caesar and his Roman army. Under Caesar, the Jews had no rights. A Roman soldier could kill any Jew that he wanted to without any penalty whatsoever. To Caesar and the Roman military, the Jews were no more valuable than animals. And, to the Jews, Caesar was the ultimate tyrant.

However, all Jews knew that God had liberated them from slavery, captivity, bondage, and sin over and over and over again (as witnessed to in the Old Testament). The Jews owed their very being...their very existence...their whole identity as a people to God. No Jew would ever even contemplate, let alone say, that God could be a tyrant! To do such a thing would have been the ultimate form of blasphemy. That is why there was no response whatsoever to what Jesus had to say. What could they say? All that they could do was *"marvel"* at His incredible Wisdom and *"walk away"* in silence!

Here is the ultimate irony (and irresistible truth) of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: While history has shown that *"freedom"* and *"liberty"* are almost always concepts that have meaning only when one takes into account the entity, government, power, or person(s) from which a person or persons wish to be liberated or freed, the Gospel of Jesus Christ asserts boldly that *"freedom"* and *"liberty"* are realities that are most fully realized, enjoyed, and experienced by those who come to and place all their trust, hope, reverence, and obedience in a living, loving, and Creator God.

This is the message of Christ to all humanity (and I paraphrase): *"Go ahead, give to your leaders what they demand of you if that is what you want to do or must do. But, without God, you would have no coins or money to pay taxes...no leaders to lead you...no possessions to call your own...and no life to live. So, if you REALLY want to be free, then give to God what belongs to God, that is to say, give God your all."*

There is absolutely no comparison between God and any earthly powers or leaders who have ever lived or currently live on this earth. In fact, when, in uncertain times, we forget that true *"freedom"* and *"liberty"* come only from God and are realized most fully by those who worship and are obedient to God, it is then that we lose our *"freedom"* and *"liberty"* altogether.

I believe that St. Paul said it best when he wrote in Galatians 5: 1, *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."*

I am truly grateful to God that we live in a country that seeks as its goal to be *"one nation, under God."* I also recognize that our nation has yet to achieve (and may never achieve) that goal completely. Yet, it seems to me that it is still a good and noble (not to mention on Biblically sound) goal nonetheless.

Your Friend and Pastor, *Chris*

PREACHING SCHEDULE for JULY and AUGUST, 2009

- July 5, 2009:** Scripture Lesson: II Corinthians 12:7-10
Sermon Title: **“GOD’S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT!”**
Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching
- July 12, 2009:** Scripture Lesson: Ephesians 1: 3-14
Sermon Title: **“WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHOSEN?”**
Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching
- July 19, 2009:** Scripture Lesson: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Sermon Title: **“JESUS NEVER RESTS ”**

Susan Ennis, Preaching
- July 26, 2009:** Scripture Lesson: Ephesians 4:11-16

Sermon Title **“YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU DECIDE TO

ACCEPT IT”**

Susan Ennis, Preaching
- August 2, 2009:** The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
The Rev. William Jokela, Preaching
- August 9, 2009:** Scripture Lesson: Ephesians 4: 25 – 5:2
Sermon Title: **“HOW TO DEAL WITH ANGER”**
Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching
- August 16, 2009:** Scripture Lesson: Ephesians 5: 15-20
Sermon Title: **“BE CAREFUL HOW YOU LIVE”**
Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching
- August 23, 2009:** Scripture Lesson: John 6: 60-69
Sermon Title: **“WOULDN’T THINGS BE EASIER
WITHOUT JESUS?”**
Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching
- August 30, 2009:** Scripture: Lesson: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Sermon Title: **“SPEAL NO EVIL”**

Susan Ennis, Preaching

WHAT ARE YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,” (Ephesians 4:11-12)

We have been given much by our God as the people of God. As these two Scriptures indicate, we are given Spiritual Gifts in order that we do the work to which God has called us. When we recognize the gifts that we have received, it makes following God’s will more joyful. Sometimes we are eager to help the church and the ministry and say “yes” to whatever is asked of us, thinking that we must do all we can. But if we say “yes” and the task is not one that takes advantage of our Spiritual Gift, then we risk frustration and unhappiness. God calls us to discern what it is that is required of us. In order to do this, we should determine how God has gifted each one of us. Are you new to the church and don’t know how to find out where you fit in? Have you been in the church for a while and not yet had the opportunity to find your place? Have you been in the church for a while and feel that you have been out of place in the work you do? This summer you will have the chance to do something about that.

The Session, Deacons and members of Commissions have all taken part in a Spiritual Gifts Inventory in which they were able to identify where their gifts and talents lie. The Inventory has approximately 100 questions which guides each one to find their strengths. It is the desire of the session that as many people in our congregation take the Inventory to find out how God’s gifts are made manifest.

Susi Ennis and Ruth Sutton will be available on July 5 following the worship service in room 105 to talk about the Spiritual Gifts. What are they and what do they mean? How can you be of service in the church with your gifts? We will have copies of the Spiritual Gifts Inventory for you to take home and work through. Then on July 12 following worship they will be available to discuss the results with anyone who has questions or comments.

Susi Ennis



JULY

Todd Anderson ~ July 2
Gene Bedsole ~ July 3
Jo Hickey ~ July 7
Lauren Parker ~ July 9
Rob Parker ~ July 9
Dana Herr ~ July 12
Chris Looker ~ July 12
Virginia Bennett ~ July 14
Robert "Smitty" Little ~ July 14
Mitchell Youmans ~ July 16
Lois Tichenor ~ July 22
Miriam Houseworth ~ July 23
Charlotte Braly ~ July 24
Margaret Mistretta ~ July 30

AUGUST

Richard Graham ~ August 3
Nessell Beekman ~ August 6
Mariam Aster Tariq ~ August 6
Paul Malone ~ August 7
Tyler Young ~ August 9
Madeleine Anderson ~ August 10
Susi Ennis ~ August 10
Chuck Beekman ~ August 16
Carrie Rodrigues ~ August 18
Guy Hunter ~ August 19
Dennis Matos ~ August 19
Tom Martin ~ August 21
Mike Lauler ~ August 22
Diane Malone ~ August 22
Betty Youmans ~ August 24

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ANNANDALE, INC. ANNUAL MEETING

Our church, FPCA, now being incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia, held the required annual meeting on June 7, 2009. The congregation met to receive the annual report. The meeting was chaired by Elder John Metzger, President of the FPCA Corporation Board and Dr. Chris Looker served as Moderator. The 33 pages long Annual Report 2008 was distributed to the congregation. It is a very impressive report, describing the great progress FPCA has made during the past year, in partnership with the First Korean Presbyterian Church of Virginia, "jointly expressing our faith in action," as our Pastor stated in his message. The report states the achievements and future plans of our elders, deacons and various commissions, and gives an overlook of the financial situation of FPCA. Our church is looking towards the future, planning to improve its facilities, reaching out to visitors and potential new members, and expanding its mission focus towards regional, national and international partnerships.

SPECIAL REQUEST

The ACCOUNTING TEAMS have a few requests to help them reduce the time spent in counting and recording your donations on the FPCA record sheets.

1. If you use checks, please use a Separate Check for each donation, this will ensure that your wishes are properly recorded on the appropriate FPCA record sheet.
2. It will also be very helpful if you write the contribution amount, enclosed in the envelope, on the front of the envelope. The Team has to do this, if you have not, before the Accounting procedures can even start.
3. If you do not use an envelope, please write your contribution designation on the memo line of the check with your Envelope Number, if you have one. This will save the Team the extra time that it takes to look up and find your Envelope Number.

The Accounting Team will appreciate your help with these requests.

Thank you.

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*Accounting & Finance Commission*

## THANK YOU FROM JANE ROTTIER

FOR ONCE, THE TALKING MACHINE WAS QUIET! I WAS SO SHOCKED TO SEE SOME OF MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN THE BACK, THAT I DID NOT RESPOND TO THE SPECIAL HONOR OFFERED ME ON COMMUNION SUNDAY IN JUNE.

IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE TO BE A PART OF SUCH A CARING, LOVING CONGREGATION FOR FIFTY-PLUS YEARS. WHATEVER I DID WAS REFLECTING THAT LOVE.

THANKS FOR SELECTING ME TO RECEIVE THIS RECOGNITION. I SHALL TREASURE IT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFETIME.

*JANE ROTTIER*

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A minister waited in line to have his car filled with gas just before a long holiday weekend. The attendant worked quickly, but there were many cars ahead of him. Finally, the attendant motioned him toward a vacant pump. "Reverend," said the young man, "I'm so sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip." The minister chuckled, "I know what you mean. It's the same in my business."

*Contributed by Don Jackson.*

# FREEDOM MACHINE VIDEO MAGNIFIER

BY DIANE MALONE

The library now has a Freedom Machine video magnifier courtesy of the late Emily Helm. It will help those who have low vision to read books, write their own checks and look at photographs magnified to a comfortable size. It is a black and white video magnifier so any colors will be monochromatic but is an exceptional device for those whose vision is low. It magnifies up to 30 times the original print and has a movable slide to read books easily. This slide locks in place for the writing of letters and checks. Then, with the push of a switch your world becomes larger. You will be able to choose between different contrasts (black writing on a white background or white writing on a black background), whichever best suits your needs. You look straight at the screen to read your material while your material sits on the table at your fingertips with a stationary camera focused on it. That camera transfers it to the screen directly above the information you would like to see. It might take a little practice not looking down at the paper or at your hands but practice makes perfect! Our friendly librarian, Marta, can help in this regard. The magnifier is located in the church office. You will see it right after you enter the room. Stop by and welcome our newest church addition!



FPCA 's Freedom Machine

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

MAY 13, 2009

As introduction to the Session Meeting, Dr. Chris Looker referred to his article "From Your Pastor" in the June issue of FIRST and ForMOST, pointing out how important it was for the Session to work with the Commissions according to our New Mission Plan, following specific goals during the coming years.

Dr. Looker reported that during his vacation, July 13-31, Assistant to the Pastor, Susi Ennis, will be filling in for him in case of emergency. Also, Rev. Tariq Javed has been asked to make a presentation during one of the Sunday Worship Services. A joint dinner of the sessions of FPCA and FKPCV is being planned, to share plans for future activities.

Next, Dr. Looker introduced our new member, Rev. Tariq Javed, and asked him to tell the Session about his background. He was born a Presbyterian Christian, but, though he attended church in his youth, he was not very religious. He was born in Pakistan, where Christians were hated, and he decided to move to Kuwait. In Kuwait Rev. Tariq's life changed. He joined an interdenominational congregation speaking Urdu, with various visiting pastors. He was very impressed by one preacher who prayed over a woman who suffered from serious backache, and she was healed. This preacher influenced Rev. Tariq's thinking. He studied the Bible, and asked the Holy Spirit for guidance. Though originally Rev. Tariq wanted to be a journalist, he changed his mind and started to study the Word of God in the International School of Ministry. He is convinced that the way his life changed is a gift from God. He has been living in the United States since August 2008. One day he walked into our church, and was so impressed that he wanted to join FPCA to serve God with us.

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For the **Mission Commission**, Elder Nadine Dingess announced new plans regarding this year's mission trip. The Session approved the Commission's motion that this year the mission trip will not go to Cumberland, MD, as was decided earlier, but to the Paddy Run Presbyterian Church Camp near Strasburg, VA, in the Shenandoah Mountains. This will take place August 2-8, 2009. It is the official church camp of the Shenandoah Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Both the young people and the adults from FPCA and FKPCV are invited to participate in building of bridges, rebuilding an outdoor chapel, the Tent Camp area and do other missionary work to help those in need. There will also be daily worship services and fun activities like hiking, canoeing, even guitar playing in one of the Sunday Worship Services, and singing.

For **Building & Grounds Commission**, Dr. Looker reported for Elder Jack Smith, that bids for the boiler replacement had been received, and making the best choice is in process. It was decided that it was best to replace the boiler during the summer months.

Elder Sandy Mori had e-mailed the **Worship Commission's** report to the Session. She emphasized that the Commission suggested that recycling bins be placed in the back of the Sanctuary for the bulletins after the worship service. She also reported that, in cooperation with

the New Member Commission, they would like to design and construct banners to hang in the Sanctuary. They are encouraging artistic people to design them,

For the **Christian Education Commission**, Elder Marta Strada had e-mailed the report on the

Commission's activities to the Session members, to which she had added the article she had prepared for the June issue of FIRST and ForMOST, stating that a donation of \$ 250 will be sent to a reliable source in the Democratic Republic of the Congo so the poor children could purchase the needed school supplies. In addition, she had asked the congregation that if somebody wished to contribute to this special cause, it would be greatly appreciated.

For the **Congregational Life and New Member Commission**, Elder Cara Laufer had also sent her report by e-mail, including the following information: Norma Muller has prepared a draft proposal to form a Green Team, and is planning to present the proposal to the Session during the July meeting. -- The Commission is planning to submit biographies for our seven new members to be printed in the July 2009 issue of First and ForMOST. -- The Family Game Nights are successful evenings of fellowship and fun, and will continue on the third Friday of each month, even during the summer. -- This year's picnic will be on Sunday, June 21, following a special 11:00 am joint FPCA/FKPCV worship service. .

For the **Personnel Committee**, Session Liaison Sandy Mori handed out an information sheet and encouraged the Session that each member set up goals for the coming year, based on Book of Order, W-4.4003. Session members should think of themselves as the spiritual leaders of the church, and plan their goals accordingly. Elder Marta Strada added that Dr. Chris Looker has already written his goals, and the Committee is planning to discuss their fulfillment with him quarterly.

## HIKING TO MEET THE GREAT SPIRIT by Marta Strada

Have you ever been on Mount Washington, the impressive peak of the Presidential Range in New Hampshire? If you have, you may enjoy sharing my impressions; if you have not, here are the facts: Mount Washington is 6,288 feet high; it is famous for its erratic weather - with the highest winds measured on the earth's surface in 1934 at 231 mph. Mount Washington was known as the home of the "Great Spirit" before the settlers arrived. Yes, it is the most prominent peak in the Eastern United States. Derby Field claimed to have climbed it first in 1642, but not until 1819 was the first trail laid out as a bridle path, called the Crawford Path, which is the oldest mountain hiking trail in America. Since 1869 it has also been possible to get to the top of Mt. Washington by cog railway which is using a rack system - the first successful rack system in the United States. It carries the passengers over bridges across the steep, rocky side of the mountain, almost scary to some travelers. Today you can take a bus, or drive yourself the 8 miles uphill, starting at Pinkham Notch - but there is a rumor going around that your car is never the same after this long, steep climb, and its brakes may not enjoy the trip back down.

You may wonder what this article has to do in our church newsletter. Well, I wrote it with my hiker's mind. I have climbed this great mountain from all sides on most of its trails. Some trails are easier, others harder to climb, but all lead to the magnificent summit. I am not surprised the Indians have seen in it the place where the "Great Spirit" dwells.

Please join me as I recall hiking up Mount Washington with my late husband Frank to meet the Great Spirit. First we walk through lush woods, birds chirping above, sometimes a deer

looking at us, hiding behind the bushes. There may even be a bear wanting to meet you. As you progress, the trees become majestic pines, no bushes are obscuring the view, no grass is covering the soil, only pine needles. Slowly the trees become shorter and shorter, till they stop growing. We have reached timberline. When we take the Chandler Ridge Trail, we walk through the "Alpine Gardens" rich in mountain flowers, at least for a few weeks in summer. We begin to feel like walking into a sanctuary, built to be God's dwelling place. When we look back, the valleys seem so far below – the valleys of the secular world with human interests, business, worries and problems. It seems that every step brings us closer to the Lord who has created all this beauty around us. Not every step is easy. We climb over rocks, some steep, others unsteady under our feet --- nobody said our hike to find God would be smooth. Sometimes we have a hard time finding the safest path over the rocks, other times the fierce wind nearly blows us over. Here and there we see memorial markers where hikers have lost their lives due to accidents. Once we were hit by a fierce thunderstorm - heavy rain was soaking us, lightning was hitting again and again. We tried to make ourselves as small as possible to avoid being struck. Yes, we have to climb over difficult rocks, we have to face many threatening thunderstorms when hiking through our life, yet even under those conditions every step brings us closer to God.

Finally, we have arrived at the summit, the dwelling place of the Great Spirit. Today you can rest and buy refreshments at a snack bar, or enjoy the surrounding area from the lookout terrace, watching the time so you don't miss your bus or train taking you back. There is the weather station broadcasting the weather conditions all year round. But if you hike a little further, you may find yourself near the Great Spirit – so high above the living place of humankind. Sometimes the valleys are hidden by clouds only a mountain peak sticking out here and there – but above us is the open, blue sky. Yes, we do feel close to heaven. We may stay over night in the Lake of the Clouds hut situated in a spot over 5,000 feet high, and step outside during the darkness of the night. The stars seem to be so close that we want to stretch out our arms and touch them. Can we touch Heaven?

Yes, the summit of Mount Washington does look like the dwelling place of the Great Spirit. The worries and hardships of the valleys are far below, often covered by clouds – and you do feel close to God who is dwelling in Heaven, you do want to sing with the angels praising Him forever and ever.

*O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed;  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee, how great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

*When through the woods and forest glades I wander and hear the birds sing sweetly in the  
trees;  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze;  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee, how great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

(Carl Gustav Boberg, 1885)

(Hymn 467; Swedish folk melody)

(Based Psalm 96)

## YOUTH NEWS

### *Summer 2009*

THANK YOU to all the Youth of FPCA and FKPCV who participated in **Youth Sunday** on June 14, 2009. The youth led the congregation in a wonderful service, with music by the Youth Handbells, the FKPCV Praise Team, and Josh Musih on trumpet. Seniors Will Parker and Kyle Hanson spoke on their Christian journeys thus far, and we wish them well. Our best wishes also to Tracy Kim and Victor Njomo on their high school graduations, as well as to Matt Fuller for graduating from college.

Summer plans include the Mission Trip for Junior High through Adult at Paddy Run Presbyterian Camp in the Shenandoah's during the first week of August. Please see Nadine Dingess or Chris Looker if you are interested in attending. *Genny Looker*

### ACOLYTE SCHEDULE

July 12 – Sam Looker

July 19 – Garrett Youmans

July 26 – Sarah Metzel

August 9 – Margaret Njomo

August 16 – Mitchell Youmans

August 23 – Andrew Lauler

August 30 – Carrie Rodrigues



### ATTENTION!

**Deadline for the September issue of FIRST and ForMOST is August 20, 2009. 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.**