



FIRST and ForMOST

June 2009

FROM YOUR PASTOR

“When the (disciples) had come together, they asked the (Risen Jesus), ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom of Israel?’ He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive the power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. When (Jesus) had said this, as they were watching, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight.”

(Acts 1: 6-9)

I have always wondered to myself what it must have been like to watch Jesus ascend into heaven. After all He had been through! After all the disciples had been through with Him!

Think about it: Jesus is there with them one minute and gone the next! Sure, it must have been an amazing and miraculous sight. The only thing that I could possibly imagine it would have been like (only much, much greater and more glorious) is the Space Shuttle blasting off at Cape Kennedy. At first, they must have been in awe. But then, as the seconds and minutes passed...and the reality of His not personally and physically being there with them anymore sunk in...don't you think that they started to ask each other the question: “WHAT DO WE DO NOW?”

What **DO** we do now?

This is a question that all churches have to ask (or should ask) when they are seeking to envision what the future will bring and where God is leading His people. At issue is whether a church will “wing it” and hope for the best. Or, whether the members of the church will use their God-given brains, talents, gifts, and resources to carefully, prayerfully, and faithfully plan out goals that will guide what the church does in the immediate future.

As you know, over the past year, the Session has worked hard on a NEW DESCRIPTION and MISSION STATEMENT.

Our new Description Statement is:

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

“An Internationally Welcoming Church and Mission Center”

Our new Mission Statement is:

“Our mission is to Worship, Love and Obey God; Nurture the Spiritual Gifts of God’s People; and, Serve Others in the Name of Jesus Christ.”

The next step in the process is to develop a NEW MISSION PLAN. Very shortly, I will be asking the FPCA Session to begin work on the development of a **New Mission Plan** that will include specific 1, 3, and 5 year goals for our church in the areas of (but not strictly limited to):

1. **Worship** (including Traditional, Contemporary, Healing and Wholeness, and other innovative worship services);
2. **Christian Education and Youth Fellowship Programs** (fulfilling the Baptismal vows that we all have taken in our lives);
3. **Mission Programs** (developing local, regional, national, and international Mission Service Opportunities and Programs);
4. **Evangelism and Outreach to the Community** (setting specific membership growth goals and sponsoring more Special Events open to members and the public);
5. **Buildings and Grounds** (especially focusing on our wonderful Church Improvement Program);
6. **Marketing** (developing ways to advertise and market our church using printed, radio, television, and internet media);
7. **Stewardship** (with a special emphasis on encouraging members to put FPCA in their Wills and making bequests and special gifts to FPCA that will help the church to grow and flourish long into the future);
8. **Personnel** (to continue to support and offer the best possible professional staff and services for our members and continue to be a “Teaching Church” for seminary students and other prospective pastors-in-training).

What do we do now?

What do we do next?

Here is what I would suggest.

The first thing that we can all do is begin praying that God will guide our Elders as they begin this important and essential process. Secondly, we can all ask God to reveal to us (as a church and individually) what **He** wants us to do, be, and become in the next five years. Thirdly, we can dream about what **we** would like FPCA to be like in the next five to ten years. Fourthly, we can share what God reveals to us in prayer with our Elders and Pastor(s) so that they may include all of our ideas and inspirations in the process of developing new Mission Goals. Finally, we can do everything we can **now** to ensure that FPCA's future will be one filled with growth, success, and (most importantly) glory to God. Thank you.

Your Friend and Pastor, *Chris*

PREACHING SCHEDULE for JUNE, 2009

June 7: TRINITY SUNDAY and HOLY COMMUNION

Scripture Lesson: Romans 8:12-17

Sermon Title: "FEAR NOT!"

Dr. Chris Looker

Preaching

June 14: YOUTH SUNDAY and GRADUATION CELEBRATION SUNDAY

June 21: CELEBRATION OF THE FAMILY SUNDAY ~ FATHER'S DAY

11:00 am Special Worship Service – FPCA/FKPCV

Followed by a Special Church and Neighborhood Picnic

June 28:

Scripture Lesson: Mark 5:21-43

Sermon Title: "HEALING TOUCH"

Elder Susi Ennis Preaching

  **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**  

Marcella Gooding ~ 06/01

Norma Muller ~ 06/02

Rosellen Simon ~ 06/02

Mary Helen Hester ~ 06/07

Jan Reitman ~ 06/14

Carroll Thompson ~ 06/17

Tuula Jung ~ 06/24

Betty DeAtley ~ 06/25

John "Jack" Belz ~ 06/26

Kay Bedsole ~ 06/27

Helen Sanders ~ 06/29

Ed Houseworth ~ 06/30

Theo Mulvey ~ 06/30

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Helen Sanders, a new member of our church, came to this area from Virginia Beach in 1969. She worked in the office of a construction company for 15 years. She is retired now and serves as the major caretaker of her mother, but goes back to her former job once a week. Other needleworkers will be interested in knowing that Helen likes to crochet. She has two sons and a grandson. In addition, she is very close to a young girl from a family that she and her late husband “adopted” when they were members of another church. Helen first met our pastor when he was associate pastor at Westminster Presbyterian in Alexandria, and we are happy that she has decided to join him and us at FPCA. **Welcome, Helen!**

* * * * *

We also welcome the **Rev. Tariq Javed** and his **Family!**
You’ll read more about them in the July issue of FIRST and ForMOST.

LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN IN PAKISTAN

by the Rev. Tariq Javed

In 1947, when the Sub-continent of India got its independence from Britain, a separate Islamic state was formed: Pakistan. Today Pakistan has about 5% (debatable) minorities which consist of Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Parsis. It is needless to say that the minorities in Pakistan suffer intolerable persecution in the hands of the Islamic Extremists.

I was born in 1963 to a Christian family that had converted to the faith before I was born. My father was in the British Navy in pre-independent India. As Christians are a minority, we are second-class citizens who don’t have equal rights and opportunities. We do not have an equal right to a good education. For example, in a college only 1% of seats are reserved for minorities. This has to be fought for by Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Parsis. Private school is out of the question as they are very expensive and the Christians cannot afford it. Parents suffer de facto persecution at the hands of their Muslim employers and colleagues, that is, if they are lucky enough to get a job. No matter how educated a Christian might be, a vacant job must be filled by a Muslim first; they are given a priority over all the Christians.

Even today, there are Christians who are beaten for “polluting” a glass in a local restaurant. They are considered as the lowest of the low and are associated with menial jobs. Christians are still lynched if it becomes known in the neighborhood that they are converts from Islam.

The passing of the Blasphemy Law does not help either. This law has quite literally hung a sword over every Christian’s head. President General Zia-ul-Haq passed this into law during his term. Since then many thousands of Christians have been persecuted and exiled because of this

law. All a Muslim needs to do in a disagreement, in order to win, is to threaten to report the Christian for supposedly blaspheming against Mohammed.

Despite the persecution, Christians are faithful to Jesus and they do not give in to the pressure they face to renounce Christ. They hope and believe that their brothers and sisters in the West will continue to pray for them, their safety and for the Muslims who persecute them.

ANNUAL YOUTH MISSION TRIP

Our annual youth mission trip starts August 2nd for a week of mission work. This year we will be going to **Camp Paddy Run**, the Shenandoah Presbyterian Camp, located about 1 1/2 hours drive from church. The camp is in need of 2 bridges and repairs. It offers an opportunity for the youth to experience the outdoors, wild life, canoeing, fellowship, swimming in the camp's pool, and, of course, the week of mission work.

Any adults that would like to join the fun, worship and fellowship with our youth are welcome to contact Nadine Dingess for information. All youth and college age kids are encouraged to be a part of our mission experience!

YOUTH SUNDAY

June 14, 2009 10:00 am Worship Service
Youth will lead us in Worship Service in all aspects!

A TRIBUTE TO MARGARET

We have all felt Margaret Anderson move us along like a quiet storm into a different existence. She is innovative, creative and persistent so she gets things done. She's held almost every position in PW and in her congregation and was even selected to go to GA last summer.

Her creativity knows no bounds as she throws pottery, paints, sings, gardens, designs websites, masters art work on the computer, puts together magnificent invitations and programs, with patterns to share so non-computerniks like myself can copy these and look respectable. She has a great sense of stick-to-it-ness, loves classical music and even plays Japanese drums on her CD when she's driving around in the car. All this and a devoted grandmother too!

Margaret loves to take the *road less traveled* just to see where it will go. Her wandering is purposeful for she picks up ideas and other more useful paths as she goes. You all have watched Margaret's work but I've viewed her soul. It pains me to see her move out of the moderator's slot because I've sort of grown accustomed to the number 2 chair. But she also knows that there is no success without a successor and she has prepared me every step of the way by sharing her work

and her life. And she has promised to stay on to make certain that we communicate the work of PW/NCP as it should be communicated and that she can help me along as a loving mentor can and should.

How can we say thanks enough for Margaret? For her work is legendary and her patience is phenomenal---We can only repay her partially by trying to do the best that we can. And I promise you today, Margaret, in the presence of all of my sisters that we will certainly try.

Margaret, from our love to you with love—an honorary pin in gold just because you are you—a golden jewel.

April 25, 2009

Margaret Washnitzer

COME, JOIN US!

June 21, 2009 at 11:00 am
Joint Worship Service -- FPCA & FKPCV
followed by
SPECIAL CHURCH NEIGHBORHOOD PICNIC

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL 15, 2009

Dr, Looker thanked our youth for participating in the egg-hunt that had taken place on Saturday, April 11. Visitors from the surrounding community had joined our young people from FKPCV and FPCA. It was a great way to bring people to the church, and for our two churches to work together.

In his Pastor's report, Dr, Looker mentioned that Rev. Bill Jokela would cover the Worship Service while the Looker family would be on vacation, July 13 through July 31. He also informed the Session that he had met with Rev. Tariq Javed, an ordained pastor from Pakistan, and Kuwait, who had expressed the desire to join our congregation together with his family. Our Pastor also shared the news that the work on the roof was finished, and it is looking beautiful.

Assistant to the Pastor, Susan Ennis, reported that she would be here and help our church during the summer.

Deacon Randy Meli told the Session that the Malone family truly appreciated Dr, Looker's and the congregation's support at the time Diane's mother, Emily Helm, passed away.

Youth Elder Tyler Young reported that a fossil hunt will take place in Maryland on April 25, and that Youth Sunday will be June 14.

For the **Worship Commission**, Elder Sandy Mori reported that a meeting with FKPCV was planned to discuss the possibility of a joint contemporary worship service.

For the **Mission Commission**, Elder Nadine Dingess reported on the Creation Festival that will take place in June, There will be inspirational worship in tents, seminars, activities for the youth. The Session passed a motion that FPCA participate in a mission trip to Cumberland, MD, this summer, working with Nails. The exact date has to be determined. This mission trip, on which some 33 young people are expected to participate, is another great opportunity to work together with the youth of FKPCV.

For the **Building & Grounds Commission**, Elder Barb Matos reported that the roofing is finished, and bids are in for the new boiler. The Clean-up Day was a success.

For the **Christian Education Commission**, Elder Marta Strada had e-mailed the report on the Commission's activities to the Session members. She emphasized that in May Susan Ennis will start a new Sunday School Class on Creeds and Confessions. Susan Ennis added that this would be combined with a presentation of the Spiritual Gifts Inventory, designed to help each member find how he/she could best serve the church using the spiritual gifts received from the Lord.

For the **Marketing and Stewardship Commission**, Elder Ruth Sutton reported that the Commission is planning to place a permanent sign on the lawn, displaying our mission statement, thus inviting passers-by to come to FPCA..

For the **Personnel Committee**, Session Liaison Sandy Mori reported that, after reviewing a variety of evaluation forms, the Committee decided to keep the forms already used for Pastor and Staff evaluations. It is being suggested that not only the Pastor, but also the Session should set up goals for the coming year.

CONTRACT WITH SLEEPY HOLLOW PRESCHOOL **RENEWED FOR TWO YEARS**

Ever since 1999, FPCA has been pleased to rent space to the Sleepy Hollow Preschool ("SHPS"). SHPS is a wonderful organization and has provided excellent care and educational training for preschoolers.

In the past three years, our church and the First Korean Presbyterian Church of Virginia ("FKPCV") have begun a Period of Revitalization by calling new pastors, developing a formal partnership, and writing new Mission and Vision Statements. The result of this process has been the realization that, in order to attract more new members **and** better minister to the current members, we need more space than is presently available.

SHPS is currently operating under a contract that was set up four years ago and officially expires on June 30, 2010. The current contract sets forth a process by which any new contracts should be negotiated, written, and finalized. In accordance with this process, in 2007, your Session formed the Special Sleepy Hollow Commission, which was commissioned to discern where God was leading us in terms of our partnership relationship with FKPCV and with our SHPS renters. Upon completion of their work, your Session set up the FPCA/SHPS Task Force early in 2008 to begin formal contract negotiations with SHPS. This process moved slowly, but finally led to a mutually agreeable conclusion.

The result is a two-year nonrenewable contract, commencing on July 1, 2010 and expiring on June 30, 2012. SHPS will move all of its operations up to the 2nd floor of our Christian Education Wing, leaving Rooms 200, 202, and the Resource Room exclusively available for FPCA and FKPCV use. The entire First Floor will thus be open for exclusive use by FPCA and FKPCV for continued and new outreach ministries and programs. The Choir Room will be relocated to the First Floor to enable easier access for our choir members. In addition, FPCA and FKPCV will have total access and use of the Activities Building with no sign of preschool presence, except during SHPS's school hours (it offers sheltered play area in bad weather, and an additional bathroom is available, as county regulations require), and for special request usage.

What is the benefit of this new two-year contract? SHPS has two more years to search for a new site from which to operate. FPCA and FKPCV can look forward to having more space available for church growth, ministries, and activities. For example, we will be able to plan more daytime activities for our older members who do not drive during the evening hours. The Activities Building will be able to be used for outreach and increased growth in our Youth Fellowship Program and increased space for the development of our Contemporary Worship Ministry.

Thus, with the Lord's guidance and careful planning by your Session, the increased space that is freed up for our church to use will result in the development of new Christian programs designed to attract more visitors to our church and increase our church's overall membership.

The Session and SHPS Task Force wishes to thank all of you for your continued prayerful and personal support throughout this process. Please continue to pray for our church to follow the Lord where He leads us as we work together to bring revitalization and renewal to God's Church. Thank you.

The FPCA/SHPS Task Force:

Elder Judi Reitman, Chair - Elder John Metzler - Elder Jack Smith - Elder Marta Strada

IN IRAQ WITH HUGH
by Hugh Iwanicki

We woke up early, had breakfast, and afterwards went to our rooms to put on our 40lb bullet proof vests and combat helmets and headed to the Embassy bus stop. Waiting for us was our armored car and driver to take us to the helicopter landing zone. Today we were on a trip to

see King Nebuchadnezzar's hometown (or at least nearby). We were off to Babylon, which is approximately 60 miles south of Baghdad . My two co-workers and I squeezed into a tiny blue helicopter along with other passengers for our 45-minute ride. For security reasons we flew very low above the ground. After seeing the usual bombed-out buildings and fields of garbage associated with the city, we got out into the countryside and saw a whole different kind of Iraq . There were miles of green irrigated farm fields and endless acres of date palm plantations. We were flying so low it felt as though we were going to land right into people's open-air living rooms. We saw many people having tea in their yards or herding their cows or goats, and they would stop to look and wave at us. I was used to seeing children doing this but was surprised to see adults as well. All women in the countryside were wearing the traditional black Abaya that would cover their entire body except for part of their face. I can only imagine how uncomfortable it must be to have that on during the 120+ degree summer heat. The copter made two quick landings at Forward Operating Bases (FOB) which consist of a circle of concrete T-Walls with barbed wire in a treeless desolate environment, completely isolated from the rest of the world. I realized how I lived in Disneyland compared to the soldiers in those FOBs. Forty-five minutes later a fellow passenger pointed out where Babylon was, and on top of a man-made hill was one of Saddam's giant palaces. A few minutes later we approach the city of Hillah and, like a castle in Crusader times, the Babylon Hotel appears surrounded by T-walls. The hotel is now a Regional Embassy Office (REO).

There is an interesting history behind the Babylon Hotel. It is the only major hotel in the province. It is also referred to by locals as the temporary marriage honeymoon hotel, as it is owned by a Shia Islam religious foundation. For those of you who may not be familiar with temporary marriage, please allow me to explain. In Shia Islam (the Sunnis do not support it) men are allowed to contract out a temporary wife for a fixed time marriage. The time period could be for one hour, six months or even 10 years. At the end of the contract the marriage ends and the temporary husband is required to give a specified payment to his temporary bride, such as a piece of clothing, money or a goat. Temporary marriage is a well-known and accepted practice for the Shiites of Iraq.

As the sun was dropping in the sky, after a day of meetings and a tour of the 24-acre compound, we stood waiting for over an hour and a half on the helicopter landing pad. Finally, and with great relief we heard the sound of the blue birds. We were relieved because people have been known to have been stranded for days at this REO with absolutely nothing to do, in very non-Ritz Carlton surroundings. Little did I know my trip to Hillah was to be the highlight of my time here for months to come.

The security situation in Iraq has improved. My colleagues here less than a year ago were experiencing multiple rockets attacks each day at the old Embassy. Just over a year ago my boss was having an outdoor meeting with his staff, as all the conference rooms were in use, when a rocket partially exploded in a tree above his head, sending shrapnel into his back and causing him to lose 1/3 of his hearing in his left ear. If the rocket had completely exploded, I would now have a different boss.

We still have to deal with the duck and cover alarms, but what is most common now is Iraqi on Iraqi bombings. On more than one occasion, as I was walking to the DFAC for lunch, I'd feel and hear the explosion of a car bomb across the river and the clatter of AK-47 gunfights. It always saddened me to know that innocent people were being blown up for no sane reason.

For months now, my routine consists of waking up, walking to work, walking to lunch, walking back to work, walking to dinner, walking to the apartment after dinner, and going to bed. I am blessed with some wonderful co-workers, but there is no opportunity to get out to explore the countryside, no hiking, no kayaking, no mountain biking, just the same 1200 people every day.

Think of it as being like a college campus, only the people are older and uglier. It is very easy to become depressed in this environment, for there is virtually nothing outside of work to do and you can never get away from work.

If I've had a stressful day, and I go to the DFAC for dinner, looking for solace, a senior management officer or former ambassador is sure to sit at my table and want to discuss the progress and results of my work. The isolation affects the people here in different ways. Some people take to drink, some people watch movies, some have temporary marriages, and some rely on their faith. I fall into the latter category, and have enjoyed the chapel services offered every Saturday.

Through my friends at the chapel I met someone who is leading a bilingual Arab-English Bible study for Iraqi Christians. Not just any kind of Christians, but MBBs or Muslim By Birth Christians. The kind that could easily and have been killed by Sharia-following Muslims, for Muhammad declared, "It is not permissible to take the life of a Muslim..., but in one of the three cases: [1] the married adulterer, [2] a life for life, and [3] the deserter of his Din (Islam), abandoning the [Islamic] community." (Sahih Muslim, Book 16, Number 4152)

I received an invitation to this Bible study and was excited because I had been looking forward to this opportunity for a long time. I arrived and saw a small group of nine people. One of the MBB women had brought an entire Iraqi meal for us to eat. The food was absolutely fabulous and consisted of freshly baked pita bread, chicken that had been alive only a few hours earlier, rice, eggplant, chick peas and just the right amount of curry, not the burn-a-hole-in-your-mouth Indian kind, and other sauces. We also had pickled mangos in Currie sauce, which was the only dish I didn't like. My friend and I ate so much food so quickly that I'm sure the Iraqi woman thought the Americans were starving us. After dinner we had the Bible study and sang songs. How beautiful it was to hear the Iraqis' praising God and singing songs in Arabic. The next day it was back to work and the endless monotony and boredom of life within the Embassy Compound. There was one interruption of my monotony, one weekend a couple friends and I went across the street from the Embassy to eat at the Iraqi Oasis Restaurant. I assumed (mistakenly) that since a lot of Americans eat here that the food must be safe and clean. Well, let's just say that for the next six days I had the most thorough cleansing of my intestinal tract I have ever had in my entire life and lost five pounds. For those of you who know me well those were five pounds I couldn't afford to lose.

More than three months have passed since I last saw my beautiful wife, which was more than three months too long. But now I was on my way back to Jordan, and this time somebody very special was going to be joining me there.

LET US HELP THE CHILDREN IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO ("DRC")

Just imagine: In the schools of Lubondai some 600 children go to school. 500 of them are in the Elementary School, but only 100 are able to attend either high school or the nursing school. The schools in Lubonda were founded by Presbyterian missionaries over 100 years ago and continue to be supported today by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Most of the children in Lubondai are so poor that they cannot afford more than one change of clothes, notebooks, pencils, and other needed school supplies. In fact, in the DRC, one out of every two children dies before they reach the age of five!

Think about that for a moment. Now, doesn't that cause you to thank God for how good most (if not all) of our children have it in the US?

After prayerful consideration, your FPCA Christian Education has worked to set aside \$250.00 to be sent to Lubondai so that the children there may be able to buy school supplies for the coming school year. This may not sound like much, but it will allow approximately 10% of the children and nursing students to purchase pencils, notebooks, and some textbooks for the coming school year. To buy supplies for each child is approximately \$10.00. Supplies for the nursing students cost approximately \$20.00.

If you wish to contribute to this specific cause, please make your check out to First Presbyterian Church of Annandale and write "*Lubondai Children's School Program*" in the memo line of the check. It is our hope and prayer to send the money to Lubondai by early August.

Thank you

Christian Education Commission

ACOLYTE SCHEDULE

June 14 – Tyler Young

July 12 – Sam Looker

June 21 – Mitchell Youmans

July 19 – Garrett Youmans

June 28 – Ben Looker

July 26 – Sarah Metzger

MEMO FROM GOD

To: YOU

Date: TODAY

From: THE BOSS

Subject: YOURSELF

References: LIFE

I am God. Today I will be handling all of your problems. Please remember that I do not need your help.

- If you find yourself stuck in traffic, don't despair. There are people in this world for whom driving is an unheard of privilege.
- Should you have a bad day at work, think of the man who has been out of work for years.
- Should you despair over a relationship gone bad, think of the person who has never known what it's like to love and be loved in return.
- Should you grieve the passing of another weekend, think of the woman in dire straits, working twelve hours a day, seven days a week to feed her children.
- Should your car break down, leaving you miles away from assistance, think of the paraplegic who would love the opportunity to take that walk.
- Should you notice a new gray hair in the mirror, think of the cancer patient in chemo who wishes she had hair to examine.
- Should you find yourself at a loss and pondering what is life all about, asking what is my purpose? Be thankful. There are those who didn't live long enough to get the opportunity.
- Should you find yourself the victim of other people's bitterness, ignorance, smallness or insecurity, remember, things could be worse. You could be one of them! (*Author unknown*)



ADDITIONS AND CHANGES IN YOUR DIRECTORY

Our Pastor, Dr. Chris Looker, has a new e-mail address: clooker@verizon.net

Please add: Hanson Susan & Kyle

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Unfortunately, Emily Helm is no longer with us.



Deadline for the July issue of FIRST and ForMOST is June 18, 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.