



# FIRST and ForMOST

March 2010

## FROM YOUR PASTOR

*“For now the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance.” (Song of Sol. 2:11-13)*

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In *THE SENSE OF WONDER*, Rachel Carson writes: *“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds, the ebb and flow of the tides, the folded bud ready for the spring. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.”*

I don't know about you, but when I was a youngster, my mother and father were religious about giving the house a good **“Spring Cleaning”** at the end of March each year. All of us boys (there were three of us: David, myself, and Stephen) would be given our assignments and we (along with my mother and father) would all proceed to basically turn the house upside down, throwing out the **“junk”** that had built up over the past year (s), cleaning the windows, taking everything out of our closets so that every inch could be cleaned with a sponge and Mr. Clean (my mom's cleaner of choice), scrubbing all of the floors, and repairing and/or replacing anything that had outlived its usefulness and/or beauty.

It was hard work! But, when we were all done, the house smelled, looked, and felt completely new and fresh. Sure, it was the same house, but somehow it felt roomier and delightfully different. And, despite all of us complaining and moaning to mom and dad about how hard it all was, even we boys noticed that the house was a much nicer place to live in after **“Spring Cleaning”** than it had been before.

Remembering all of this has caused me to think about what we might consider doing to give our lives a **“Spring Spiritual Cleaning”** during this Lenten season. We are taught all our lives that Lent is the time for self-reflection, penance, confession, sacrifice, and forgiveness. In other words, we've been taught that Lent is a time to clean out all of the sin and **“junk”** that is inside of us. But, how (other than giving up chocolates) do we actually do that?

Well, I have a few suggestions for all of us to consider about how we might really give ourselves a **“Spring Spiritual Cleaning”** during this Lenten season.

**1. CLEAN OUR HEARTS:** In Psalm 51, we read: ***“Create in me a clean heart O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”*** Also, in Hebrews 10: 22, we read: ***“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”***

The best “cleaning solution” for the heart is NOT Mr. Clean! It is God! The more we pray to God for forgiveness and cleansing from sin, the cleaner and purer our hearts will be. Cleansing the heart is achieved by spending time with God in prayer, worship, meditation, and Bible study.

**2. CLEAN OUT OUR MOUTHS:** In Luke 6: 45, we read: ***“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”***

Spiritual cleansing requires deep cleaning -- it is housekeeping that goes beyond what others see and hear. It's a cleansing from within -- inside and out. As your heart gets clean, your language should follow. This is not just talking about bad language, but also negative talk and pessimistic thoughts that contradict the Word of God and faith. This includes the challenge to stop complaining and gossiping (especially when it's behind another person's back).

**3. CLEAN OUT OUR MINDS:** In Romans 12: 2, we read: ***“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”***

This is one of the biggest areas of struggle for most of us -- removing the garbage from our minds. Garbage in equals garbage out. We must feed our minds and spirits with the Word of God instead of the garbage of this world.

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Yes, there really is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, spring comes after the winter, forgiveness comes after sin, and resurrection comes after death.

O, and by the way, all the best on the ***“Spring Cleaning”*** of both your house **AND** your soul this Lenten season!

Your Friend and Pastor,



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



Andrew Lauler	03/03	Matt Fuller	03/26
Benjamin Looker	03/11	Bill Jokela	03/26
Nathan Youmans	03/20	Etha Cook	03/28
Stephanie Berg	03/21	Randy Meli	03/29
Pat Hickey	03/23		

### PREACHING SCHEDULE for MARCH 2010

- March 7, 2010:     **CELEBRATE THE GIFT OF WOMEN SUNDAY**  
 Sermon Title:    **“REJOICE IN THE LORD”**  
 Scripture Lesson:  Philippians 4:1-9  
*Elder Susan Ennis, Preaching*
- March 14, 2010:   Sermon Title:   **“WHAT TO DO WITH A PROBLEM CHILD”**  
 Scripture Lesson:  Luke 15: 11-32  
*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*
- March 21, 2010:   Sermon Title:   **“TO GAIN OR LOSE: THAT IS THE QUESTION”**  
 Scripture Lesson:  Philippians 3: 7-16  
*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*
- March 28, 2010:   **PALM SUNDAY**  
 Sermon Title:    **“TRIUMPH OR TRAGEDY?”**  
 Scripture Lesson:  Luke 19: 28-40  
*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

### THANK YOU FROM LOIS LITTLE

My family and I are so grateful for all the love you have shown and all the help you have given us these past days. Your loving cards have helped bring us comfort. All who shared in the memorial service for Smitty, from the beautiful organ music to the scriptures, meditation and prayers, have helped sustain us. The delicious reception buffet where we had a chance to greet friends old and new lifted our spirits. We are so thankful to be part of such a wonderful church family.

With Love,  
 Lois Little

## **GOOD BYE, LARRY AND MARGOT**

Our beloved Music Director, Dr. Larry Young, retired on February 8, 2010. He had been with us for nearly 11 years, and we loved every moment of it. He was an unsurpassed organist, and he directed our choir with patience, understanding and love. He knew so many beautiful pieces that our group could manage. Occasionally, he even sang solo.

That his wife, Margot, a great soprano and soloist, directed the choir when Larry played the organ, could even fill in playing the piano or organ when needed, was a much appreciated benefit. We can only be grateful to God that he sent us Larry – it was a blessing that he was on our staff for so many years.

Thank you, Larry, for enhancing our worship services with your skills. We hope this is not a good bye, and we will meet again.....

*The Choir, as well as the entire Congregation of FPCA*

## **WELCOME, MARGARET!**

It is with great pleasure that I welcome Margaret Whitfield as our new Interim Organist and Choir Director. Margaret has a Bachelor of Music Degree from Western Maryland College and a Masters of Music, Organ, and Music Literature Degree from Eastman School of Music. She has additional credits in Strings Instruction from the University of Tennessee, University of Virginia, and Western Maryland College.

Margaret's ancestors include a Methodist Bishop, a Methodist pastor, and very devout parents. She has two children and seven grandchildren living in Connecticut and Texas. Her life-long ministry in the church and her family and friends are what she holds most dear to her heart.

Margaret has served as a Methodist Missionary to Japan, teaching organ, piano, choir, and English at Seiwa College and playing the organ in local churches in Nishinomiya, Japan. In addition, she has participated in International Christian Work Camps to Seoul, Korea, building a Social Center and volunteering to clear debris after a devastating typhoon.

In the area of performance, Margaret has played a Dedicatory Organ Recital at Kansei Gakuin College, a concert in Osaka Concert Hall, and at a Methodist sponsored college in Nagasaki. In addition, she has used her musical talents (piano) to give comfort to those suffering from Hansen's Disease at a center off of the Japanese mainland.

Other performances include playing the organ and piano concerti with the Western Maryland and Ithaca College Orchestras and accompanying Suzuki Festivals at the Kennedy Center and the Filene Center for the Performing Arts at Wolf Trap.

Margaret has served as the Organist, Choir, and Bell Choir Director in many Protestant churches in Maryland, New York, and Virginia. She has served as the Fairfax County Orchestra Director. And, one of her proudest moments was when she conducted her Langley High School Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, New York.

Margaret continues to privately teach organ, piano, and stringed instruments to students.

Margaret looks forward to continuing to serve God and making many new friends as she begins her work here at First Presbyterian Church. She was greatly moved by her first service with us and looks forward to many more inspiring moments in the future.

*Elder Paul Malone, Chair, FPCA Personnel Committee*

## WELCOME, JOYCE SIMMONS

Joyce Simmons is a lifelong resident of Northern Virginia and a lifelong Presbyterian. After her parents worshiped here as visitors a few years ago, her mother thought that FPCA was a church Joyce might enjoy visiting. Joyce followed her mother's suggestion, and we are happy that she has decided to become a member.

Joyce works in banking operations and has 37 years of experience in this field. Her husband is an engineer. On Valentine's Day Joyce and Craig celebrated their 23<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary. She enjoys crafts and spectator sports and likes to cook and bake. This Alexandria native's traditional dessert to celebrate Presidents' Day is cherry pie!

**We are happy to welcome our newest member, Joyce Simmons.**

*Randy Meli, Member of the Congregation Life/New Member Commission.*

## ACOLYTE SCHEDULE

14-Mar	Tyler Young
21-Mar	Mariam T. Javed
28-Mar	Mitchell Youmans

## BETHANY HOUSE DONATIONS

**Bethany House of Northern Virginia (BHNV) would like to thank everyone for their donations which helped make the holiday season brighter for the abused women and their children that BHNV serves. Your generous donations of used items for resale at Joseph's Coat Thrift Store are also much appreciated.**

**BHNV is always in need of cleaning supplies (detergent, paper towels, cleansers, etc.) for the client homes it operates. Please place these in the barrel off the kitchen, or at the back of the sanctuary, and they will be taken directly to the BHNV office.**

**Please note that donations of used toys and stuffed animals which could pose a hazard to young children are no longer being accepted at Joseph's Coat. However, new toys are fine. BHNV regrets this change in policy, but cannot risk the legal liability if something adverse should happen. If you have any questions, please contact Norma Muller.**

*Norma Muller*

## CHURCH WOMEN UNITED WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

**Church Women United (CWU) World Day of Prayer  
Friday March 5, 10:00 a.m. at Bush Hill Presbyterian Church  
4916 Franconia Rd, Alexandria, VA 22310, phone: 703-971-1171.**

This year the program was prepared by the World Day of Prayer Committee of CAMEROON and WDP USA Committee. The speaker is the Annandale/Fairfax/Franconia/Springfield CWU President, Myrna Meling. The theme,

"**Let everything that has breath praise God**" sets the stage for the worship service. It opens with the Cameroonian music of the theme's name. The Processional is the familiar *We Are Marching (Siyahamba/Caminando)* which is a rousing South African hymn guaranteed to get everyone up on their feet.

Lillian Rook, Bush Hill PW Moderator is excited about hosting this program and particularly because we have so many PW's in NCP from Cameroon We would love to see our Cameroonian sisters taking an active part in this program particularly lifting their voices in praise.

If you have questions, either email Lillian at [WDLCRVA@aol.com](mailto:WDLCRVA@aol.com)  
or phone her at 703-960-4777.

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

**January 20, 2010**

Elder Sandy Mori based the opening devotion on the book *Upside-Down-Seeing the Kingdom of God from the Bottom Up*, from the Network of Presbyterian Women in Leadership.

Elder Randy Meli reported that the deacons have taken over the telephone tree, and that Deacon Isabelle Fennig's group is being taken over by the new Deacon, Florence Jimenez.

The big event of this session meeting was the **Presentation by Architects Group Practice Ltd. (ArGP)**. After members of the FPCA Ad Hoc Decorating Committee had joined, Elder Paul Malone, Session Representative of the Buildings and Grounds Commission, welcomed Andrew E. Schiefer, President of ArGP, and his colleague, Garrett Nicholson. He highly recommended ArGP for being responsible for our church improvement project. ArGP has already inspected the Sanctuary, and has received readings from the sound engineers. The Session has received the proposal from Mr. Schiefer. If the Session approves, the contract with ArGP has to be signed by April 29, 2010. A meeting with ArGP is planned for every Wednesday evening.

President of ArGP, Andrew E. Schiefer, explained that the company's focus is on religious buildings. The company is going to work with a task list he has received from the Buildings and Grounds Commission, and is taking the church's needs and preferences into consideration. Mr. Schiefer went through the task list from lighting, sound system, stage and pulpit structure, to the color of the carpet, pews, painting, etc., and the advantages and difficulties of the various proposals. After Mr. Schiefer having answered questions from the Decorating Committee and Session members, and the Session having thanking ArGP for the Presentation, both the Decorating Committee members and the representatives from ArGP departed.

The Session approved the motion to hire ArGP unanimously, as well as the motion to turn the draft presented into an official contract.

Next, Elder Susan Hanson opened the discussion concerning the **Organ Protection during Sanctuary Refurbishment**. She referred to the proposal made by Lewis & Hitchcock, Inc. concerning the organ protection needed during the refurbishing of the sanctuary. Organ pipes will have to be removed and stored in a safe location, the main organ case will have to be wrapped to protect it from dust, and all pipes of the Antiphonal division of

the organ located on the balcony will also be removed and stored in a safe place. The work on the organ will start after Easter. The Session approved the motion that the contract be accepted.

After Dr. Looker, Susan Ennis, Executive Assistant Elder Susan Hanson and her son Youth Elder Kyle Hanson had left the room, Elder Sandy Mori, member of the Personnel Committee, presented the **Pastor's Call** for 2010, suggesting a 3% increase of the Salary and Housing Allowance. After a brief discussion it was approved unanimously.

Reporting for the **Missions Commission**, Elder Susan Ennis announced that the commission had made a motion to collect a special offering for the Haiti crisis, which the Session approved.

Reporting for **Administration and Finance Commission** Elder Judi Reitman reported that, due to the fact that the commission had reduced their anticipated expenses for 2010, plus a special donation, the proposed budget for 2010 was much closer to the pledged amount than was originally anticipated. The Session approved the Commission's motion to accept the proposed budget for 2010.

Reporting for the **Worship Commission**, Elder Sandy Mori reported that, as the Music Director Dr. Larry Young was leaving on February 8, 2010, a special reception was planned for that Sunday after worship service. At this time the Commission, together with the Personnel Committee, is looking for an interim organist to fill in during the weeks until the organ can't be used due to the refurbishing of the Sanctuary, most likely after Ester. Then members of the congregation can play the piano to accompany hymns, and the Bell Choir as well as the Praise Team can add special music.

Reporting for the **Marketing and Stewardship Commission**, Elder Ruth Sutton reported that cards announcing the Lenten Services are being ordered.

Reporting for the **Nominating Committee**, Elder Ruth Sutton reported that a search committee for hiring an Organist has been selected, consisting of four members: Betty Youmans, Bill Jokela, Randy Meli, and Miriam Houseworth.

*Marta Strada, Clerk of Session*

## **THINK ABOUT THE OTHER**

**By Mahmood Darwish**

**When you are making your breakfast, think about the other.**

**Don't forget the food for the doves.**

**When you are making your wars, think about the others.**

**Don't forget those who seek peace.**

**When you are paying your water bills, think about the others.**

**Don't forget those who drink from the clouds.**

**When you are returning to home, to your home, think about the others.**

**Don't forget those who live in tents.**

**When you are sleeping and counting the stars, think about the others.**

**There are some who can't find a place for sleep.**

**When you are given your spirit a space to fly, think about the others.  
Think about those who lost their right for words.  
When you are thinking about the others, the distant others,  
Think about yourself, and say, "I wish I were a candle in the dark."**

This poem was contributed by Elder **William Plitt** from Trinity Presbyterian Church in Arlington, who presented the January/February Adult Church School class at FPCA, dealing with the Israel/Palestine problems, stressing that the population on both sides want peace. The poet belongs to a group called Combatants for Peace. They travel in pairs, one former Israeli soldier and one Palestinian "soldier."

## **MAUNDY THURSDAY**

**by Marta Strada**

The day before our Lord Jesus Christ gave His life for us, He and His disciples gathered in the upper room for the Last Supper, and , *"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it, this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them. 'I tell you the truth. I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.'" (Mark 14:22-25)* And after the meal, *"Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him."* (John 13:3-5)

Today, almost 2000 years later, Christians all over the world are still celebrating this unforgettable day. This day is Maundy Thursday.

Where did this word "Maundy" come from? It is derived from the Latin word for "command," referring to Jesus saying: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."* (John 13:34)

But this day has other names too. In German it is called "Gründonnerstag," that is, "Green Thursday," Why green? Scholars think that it has nothing to do with the color green, but comes from "gronan" ("greinen," or "weinen," meaning "to cry"), probably referring to the tears of penitents. Interestingly, today people interpret Gründonnerstag more as "green" Thursday, and eat green food, spinach, or salad. Certain foods on Maundy Thursday are not limited to the green color. In Latin countries they prefer to eat Jordan almonds (confetti).

Certainly, traditions are not limited to food. On Maundy Thursday many churches stop ringing their bells, and won't ring them till Holy (or White) Saturday, because the bells have flown to Rome. Instead, wooden clappers are used. In some villages you may see children running around, making noise with these rattles, and people come out of their houses and give them money or candy. I remember a song my mother learned when she was a kid: "Heute ist Gründonnerstag, ich bin ein kleiner König. Gebts mir nicht zu wenig, lasst mich nicht zu lange stehn, ich muss a Häuserl weitergehn." [Today is Green Thursday. I am a little king. Give me

enough, don't let me stand there for too long, I have to go to the next house!] In some places the children even dress up as witches. Does this remind you of Halloween?

In Britain giving money on Maundy Thursday is a favorite custom. Even the monarch offers "alms" to deserving senior citizens (one man and one woman for each year of the sovereign's age). These coins are known as Maundy coins.

But celebrating Maundy Thursday can be very serious. In Malta, and other countries, they adhere to the ancient custom to visit seven churches on that day. In Kerala, a state in India, this Thursday is a state holiday. In the predominantly Catholic Philippines business is closed from Maundy Thursday to "Black" Saturday.

Yes, in many places Maundy Thursday is taken very seriously. Even the washing of feet is practiced by a number of denominations. We have a record that already in 694 AD Jesus' example was followed in Spain. We have records that it was practiced in Rome in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Jesus demonstrated that he wanted to serve – and believers have been following his example for centuries.

This year we will celebrate Maundy Thursday on the first day of April, with Holy Communion. Let us not confuse this day with Halloween, but follow Christ's command to love and serve one another and gather to celebrate this Holy Thursday together in the House of God.

## **MORE ADVENTURES LIVING AND WORKING IN IRAQ**

**by Hugh Iwanicki**

Over dinner one night, I had an opportunity to meet a Foreign Service Officer -- a delightful woman in her fifties who told me she had converted from Judaism to Christianity. She was someone who really loved people and had a special love for Muslims. She described how she had shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with them and had actually witnessed conversions to Christianity. "Wow," I thought, "I've only been able to share my faith with less than a handful of Muslims, and no one converted."

After dinner, we left the DFAC (cafeteria) and began walking toward our apartments. Suddenly we heard a strange sound -- a low pitched and very loud siren. Then an emergency system called "the Big Voice" blasted "INCOMING! INCOMING! INCOMING!" I thought to myself, "Oh No! Here I am, out in the open with no shelter nearby, and here come the rockets!"

We were trained to expect between 3 and 10 seconds to find cover; this time the only choices available were the bright yellow concrete bunkers strategically placed around the Embassy compound. I immediately shifted into high school track mode and raced to the nearest bunker, discovering that my dinner partner also had sprinting abilities.

Inside the bunker, we were joined by two other unfortunates who had been in the wrong place at the wrong time, and together we listened to the Big Voice repeat, “Incoming! Incoming! Incoming!”

We’d been trained to crouch low in these situations because the rocket blast wave goes up and out after impact. We were also instructed to keep our mouths open to avoid blowing our ear drums out during the pressure change.

Seconds later we heard a pop in the background as the rocket exploded. After that, we waited for what seemed like an eternity for the all-clear signal, exchanging glances as our gaping mouths and crouched legs grew stiff. Delays like this are common because the terrorists often launch rockets in succession.

For some reason we never heard the all-clear signal, but after we saw people milling about outside, we asked and were told that the all-clear had been given. This was my first and only time outside during an attack and I can assure you that it was not a pleasant experience. Going forward, I paid even closer attention to the placement of yellow bunkers on the Embassy compound.

Part of the surrealism of these rocket attacks was that, as soon as the all-clear was given, people would pop up and go back to business as usual, as if nothing had happened. Contractors would line up at bus stops, off-duty loungers would go back to their beers and cigars, and tennis players would resume their games.

There was also a distinct pattern of attack; the terrorists launched most of their rockets right after morning or evening prayers. Thus a wise person would keep track of the daily sunrise and sunset, and would be extra vigilant when going out during those times.

On another occasion, I had an opportunity to dine with one of the heads of Iraq’s Presbyterian Church, who shared with us the sad story of his cousin who once headed the Presbyterian Church in Mosul, but was kidnapped and murdered because he refused to listen to the terrorists who demanded that he leave everything he and his family had and flee the country.

Along with the usual stories of horrible persecutions, kidnappings, etc., this Elder said that jobs were difficult for members of his congregation to find. Most congregants who could have had already left the country. Those “left behind” had difficulty finding work because most good jobs were given to Shia Muslims whose coreligionists now controlled the government.

As dinner came to a close and we shook hands with our fellow Presbyterian, he asked for our prayers and also for us specifically to tell our churches and friends back home the very real suffering of Iraqi Christians in Iraq.



ADDITIONS TO YOUR DIRECTORY

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**ATTENTION!**

*Deadline for the April issue of FIRST and ForMOST is March 18, 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.*