



FIRST and ForMOST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

October 2009

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A "RE-FORMED" CHRISTIAN?

Dr. Chris Looker, Pastor

"...many wonders and signs were done through the apostles (after Pentecost). And all who believed in Christ were together and had all things in common; and they sold all their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need." (Acts 2: 43b-45)

I'll never forget when one of my parishioners in another church I served challenged me on the subject of tithing in the Bible. He said to me, *"Dr. Looker, I know that God asks us to tithe 10% of our earnings in the Old Testament. But, what about the New Testament? It's hardly mentioned there. Why do we Christians have to tithe? Shouldn't we be allowed to give less than a tithe if we want to?"*

Well, I had never been asked a question quite like that! But, I answered it the best I could. I responded: *"Fred you are right...to a point. The word "tithe" only appears seven times in the New Testament, in Matthew, Luke and Hebrews. In the Old Testament, the word 'Tithe' appears some 40 or 50 times. But, you have to remember that God's Chosen People lived under strict regulations and laws. They did things because they had to do them...or they would be physically or personally punished!"*

I continued, *"Because of the Good News of Jesus Christ, God's Chosen People started to live in response to God's grace and His free gift of faith. Whatever the first Christians did, they did because they were moved by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Good News of Jesus Christ, and His death and resurrection. Believe it or not, to the earliest Christians, giving EVERYTHING away...all their worldly possessions...was not even close to what they believed or thought they should be giving to God! They were so excited about Jesus Christ...they were so filled by the Holy Spirit...that they wanted to give away MORE than what they had! That's basically what Acts 2 is all about."*

He responded immediately, *"You don't mean to say that we Christians should give away all that we have to the Church?"*

I said, *"Absolutely not! But, what I am saying is that if you think of giving to God and His Church as merely a response to some rule or law, such as 'I have to give at least 10% to the Church,' then giving for you will be pure drudgery! It will be like paying taxes...and no one likes to pay taxes!"*

"But, on the other hand, if you think of giving to God and His Church purely as a response to your excitement over being saved by the amazing grace of God...by the promise that you will be given eternal life through Jesus Christ, our

Lord...and, by the incredible exhilaration and joy that you feel when you experience the power of the Holy Spirit...then you will become more like the first Christians. No amount of money or time or talent that you dedicate to God will ever be enough to repay Him for what He has given to you. As a matter of fact, you'll not only give more to God and His Church, you'll feel happier and more joyous than you ever felt when you do it!"

I finished by saying, **"You know, Fred. It really comes down to the difference between doing something because you HAVE to do it versus doing something because you WANT to do it."**

Somehow, I got the feeling that what I had said was not what Fred wanted to hear. But, just like the Rich Young Ruler in Matthew 19, he appeared as though he couldn't think of anything more to say to me. He just lowered his head, turned, and walked away.

Suffice it to say, I thought that I had just lost a parishioner...until I saw him in church the next Sunday!

I think that the discussion that I had with Fred demonstrates a much larger issue that the great Reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Phillip Melancthon, and John Knox emphasized when they sought to reform the Christian Church in the late 16th century. They all taught that what the Church needed at that time was to be re-formed, that is literally **"re"** (which means **"back to"**) plus **"form"** (which literally means **"the original essence of something"**). In other words, the Reformation occurred because the original essence of the Church had somehow been so badly corrupted that it didn't look anything like the original Church founded by Jesus Christ and His disciples. The Church of the 16th century and the Church so beautifully described in the Book of Acts were like night and day!

But, how could the Church be re-formed? The Re-Formers concluded that this could only be done by returning to the only known and authoritative record of that "original" Church, the Bible.

Thus, from their exhaustive review of the Scriptures, the Re-Formers came up with the five famous "SOLAS," which summarized what they had found to be the marks of the One True and Original Church: **"Sola Scriptura!"**, which in the Latin means, **"Only According to the Bible!"**; **"Sola Fide,"** meaning, **"(Saved) By Faith Alone"**; **"Sola Gratia,"** meaning **"(Saved) by Grace Alone"**; **"Solus Christus,"** meaning **"(Saved) by Christ Alone"**; and, **"Soli Deo Gloria,"** meaning **"Glory To God Alone."**

It is only when one looks to the Holy Scriptures that one can really see what the earliest Christians actually believed and did. Yes, they did give more to one another and to God in the New Testament than did the people of the Old Testament. But, they didn't do it because they had to! They didn't do it because it was the law! They did it because they were so excited about Jesus Christ and so filled with the power of the Holy Spirit that it was the **ONLY** thing that they could voluntarily think of doing! Amazing!

Indeed, the more that we, as modern Christians, can **"go back"** and understand the early Church, emulate what they did and believed, and literally **"re-form"** our current Church in the image of the earliest Christian Churches, the healthier and holier the Church will be today.

As Presbyterians, we are very much a part of the Reformed Christian Church Movement. And, this means that we are to believe that the Bible is the only reliable, infallible, and authoritative source of knowledge about how God led His Chosen People to grow in faith and knowledge; how God gave birth to the Christian Church; and what the earliest Christians believed and did.

It means that we believe that our worldly and eternal salvation is not earned by good works or thoughts. Rather, our salvation is freely and **graciously** given to us as a gift from God

in the form of **faith**. And, the good works or thoughts that we have are a result...a product...a response to our excitement over receiving that blessed and eternal gift.

It means that no pastor or saint can forgive our sins. Only **Jesus Christ** can forgive sins. As it states in I Timothy 2: 5, ***“There is only one God; there is also only one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus...who gave Himself as a ransom for all.”***

And, it means that we believe that every effort should be made by the Church to encourage believers to have a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is why we do not have many statues and icons in most Presbyterian and other Re-formed churches. It's not that they aren't beautiful or meaningful or even sacred. They are. It's just that Re-Formed Christians generally believe that **EVERYTHING** is secondary to our sole devotion to and personal relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. This is so because we feel that if everything but the Word of God, faith, grace, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the freedom to worship and glorify God were taken away from us, (as was the case with thousands of the earliest Christians), we would (like them) still be filled with indescribable happiness and joyfully sing hymns of praise to God until our dying breath.

Your Friend and Pastor, *Chris*

PREACHING SCHEDULE for OCTOBER, 2009

- October 4, 2009:** Sermon Title: ***“NO LONGER TWO, BUT ONE FLESH?”***
Scripture Lesson: Mark 10: 2-9 *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*
- October 11, 2009:** Sermon Title: ***“YOU CAN GET THERE FROM HERE”***
Scripture Lesson: Mark 10: 17-31 *Susan Ennis, Preaching*
- October 18, 2009:** Sermon Title: ***“WHO’S REALLY NUMBER ONE?”***
Scripture Lesson: Mark 10: 35-45
Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching
- October 25, 2009:** **REFORMATION SUNDAY:**
Including the playing of the Scottish Highland Bagpipes
Sermon Title: ***“SOLA FIDE!”***
Scripture Lesson: Mark 10: 46-52 *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Vivienne Norton ~ 10/01
Debra Sheffield ~ 10/02
Marta Strada ~ 10/07
Jabeen Ghulam ~ 10/08
Anne Manning ~ 10/09
Will Parker ~ 10/11
Alice Mohan Lal ~ 10/15
Margot Young ~ 10/16

Flor Jimenez ~ 10/17
Nancy DeVera ~ 10/18
Garrett Youmans ~ 10/26
Jashua R. Musih (Josh) ~ 10/27
Lee Fuller ~ 10/29
Betty McCown ~ 10/29
Bob Logwood ~ 10/31

WELCOME TO THE ALCANTARA FAMILY

Our newest member, Oscar Alcantara, is a man who says he likes to help others. We have already seen examples of that in the few months that Oscar and his family have been among us. Recently Oscar was in the group who returned to Camp Paddy Run to finish the bridge.

Oscar and his wife, Teresa, have two sons, both students at Annandale Terrace Elementary School. Oscar, Jr. is in 2nd grade and Eric started kindergarten this fall.

Oscar was born in Mexico City and developed his English skills through his job with an American company which enabled him to move to New York in 1989. After visiting Washington, D.C. he decided that this was the area for him.

It's a pleasure getting to know Oscar, Teresa, Oscar, Jr. and Eric.

DON JACKSON THANKS HIS CHURCH FAMILY

Dear Church Family,

I would like to thank you all for your prayers, cards, phone calls, and delicious gifts! But especially for your prayers. This knee replacement exercise has been a lot tougher than I expected. My hospital stay, 2 ½ days, was literally a piece of cake. I was up doing some speed walking a few hours after surgery and that evening with the nurses telling me to slow down. The rest of my hospital stay was the same as was the first 2 weeks of home nurse care. Since then I've had a couple of set-backs and some unplanned added antibiotics. It's been a little over 4 weeks since the knee replacement and the recovery seems to me to be taking forever but "this too will pass!" I'm sure your prayers will get me through!

Sincerest thanks to all of my church family and especially to Rev. Chris Looker, Susan Ennis, and Punch, my PN.

God Bless you one and all.

September 8, 2009

Don Jackson

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

AUGUST 19, 2009

Elder Barbara Matos opened the meeting with a devotion which encouraged all of us that God never sends us out alone, Goodness and Mercy are always with us.

Youth Elder Tyler Young reported that on this year's mission trip to Camp Paddy Run the participants enjoyed camping, and had much more fun than on last year's mission trip to Cumberland. Building the bridge was a big job.

Dr. Chris Looker shared his plans for elder training, which will take place this fall on November 1, 8, and 15. All session members, not only the elders elect, are being invited to participate.

Assistant to the Pastor, Susi Ennis, reported that, beginning at the opening of the fall semester, she will work as Teacher's Assistant in the Fairfax County Schools System. Consequently, her office hours at FPCA will be on Tuesday and Thursday from 3:00 - 5:00 pm.

Oscar Alcantara was introduced to the Session, as he and his family wished to join FPCA. He is interested in joining the Mission Commission. The Session approved the motion that Oscar and his family become members of FPCA, and welcomed him with joy.

Executive Assistant Susan Hanson shared with the Session a plan for a master calendar covering September 2009 through August 2010. She projected a month at a time on the screen and encouraged the members of the Session to give her dates and time of planned activities. The activities of all organizations, from FPCA, FKPCV, to outsiders like Parenting Partnership and Al-Anon should be included. The master calendar will be posted in the church office.

For the **Mission Commission**, Elder John Metzel reported on the mission trip to the wilderness retreat Paddy Run (P.C.U.S.A.) Camp on August 2 - 7, 2009. 16 young people and 15 adults from both FPCA and FKPCV participated. Their main tasks were: building a much needed bridge, reroofing part of the main storage building, rebuilding an outdoor chapel, and rebuilding a prayer and fellowship circle. A presentation of these successful undertakings will be made during the worship service on September 27.

For the **Building & Grounds Commission**, Elder Barb Matos reported on the status of the boiler replacement (which will take place during the week of August 24). She also gave the Session an update on the Church Improvement Program: the Commission is working on the plan to replace the outside benches in the sanctuary (not the inside benches); FKPCV is planning to help improving our sound system.

For the **Marketing and Stewardship Commission**, Elder Ruth Sutton reported that the Commission is working on cards which will be sent out to the neighborhood, announcing the church's activities. She encouraged the Elders to come up with campaign ideas and share them with Elders Ruth Sutton and Paul Malone.

For the **Christian Education Commission**, Elder Marta Strada had e-mailed to the Session the Commission's report on plans for the coming Church School schedule. (See Church School Plans for 2009/2010.)

For the **Congregational Life and New Member Commission**, Elder Cara Laufer reported on the Commission's plan to hand out invitation cards in the neighborhood, and on the plans to carry out New Member Assimilation, as it was described in the September issue of FIRST and ForMOST.

CHURCH SCHOOL PLANS FOR 2009/2010

The Fall Semester of our Church School has started on September 13, 2009, but it is not too late to join! You miss wonderful church school classes if you don't! Here is the schedule:

Children's Ministry:

Nursery: during Worship Service at 10:00 am in Room 109

Elementary Grades: 11:30 am, in Room 207: Genny Looker teaching

Youth Ministry

Boys in Middle and High School: 11:30 am, in Room 2200, led by Chris Moon, Aaron Lee.

Girls in Middle and High School: 11:30 am, in Room 202, led by Tammy Mun, Jane Lee

Confirmation Class: 11:30 am, led by Susi Ennis

Adult Ministry

Early Morning Class, 8:45 am, in Room 105, led by Marta Strada

September – November: Covenant Community (OT/NT Selections)

December – February: Christ the Fulfillment (Matthew)

March – June: Teachings on Community (OT/NT Selections)

Late Morning Class, 11:39 am in Room 105

Pastor's Class.. led by Dr. Chris Looker" October – December 2009

February – March, 2010

Class on Mission Work, led by Mission Commission: January 2010

Meet the Apostles, led by Marta Strada April – June 2010,

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE AND NEW MEMBER COMMISSION

Activities and Plans

CLNMC's continuing plans for attracting and engaging new members:

1. The commission followed up on our August discussion about attracting and engaging new members. **Background:** Our August report to the Session included a proposal that the session renew its emphasis on attracting an engaging new members. (This was published in the September "FIRST and ForMOST" as well.) We also proposed that each commission discuss and identify its roles in attracting and engaging new members and provide that information back to the session. In this way, the session will have a body of information on which to base a more deliberate strategy for attracting and engaging new members. At our September commission meeting, we decided to raise the issue again at the September Session meeting because due to a very full August Session docket, limited time had been allotted to this discussion at the August Session meeting - but even with the limited discussion, the session's positive response was very encouraging.

2. Our "**Neighborhood Invitational**" is scheduled for October 10th. We have invited the congregation of FKPCV to participate. We will have a sign up sheet available on 20 September.

As a reminder: Our plan is for participants to meet at the church for a word of prayer before walking out to deliver invitations to FPCA/FKPCV neighbors. After about an hour or so, we'll return to the church to talk about our experiences, pray for the neighbors, and have some cookies and hot chocolate together.

While the plan is simple - invite our neighbors to worship with us - it will be a wonderful step "into all the world" (from the great commission Mark 16:15) as together we 'joyfully and humbly obey God' (from FPCA mission statement.)

3. We requested that Chris ask the congregation to let him know when they have **visitors** at Sunday services. If the visitors are comfortable with it, Chris can make a brief, **welcoming**

acknowledgement that will help the rest of th congregation to **know who to go and meet at the after-service fellowship time.**

Ongoing Activities

- 1. Family Game Night** is the third Friday every month..
- 2. Soup Group** will resume the first Thursday every month, beginning in October.

25 November Community Thanksgiving Service at FPCA

Sometime in early November, the CLNMC will be soliciting help with the after-service fellowship. We'll be asking for food donations as well as set up and clean up help.

ACOLYTE SCHEDULE

October 11	Sandra Malone
October 18	Tyler Young
October 25	Mariam T. Javed

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD"

Mission Trip to Camp Paddy Run

Written by our Assistant to the Pastor, Susi Ennis.

Illustrated by our Pastor, Dr. Chris Looker

On August 9, 2009 there was a large group of family and friends present to see the Mission Team from First Presbyterian Church of Annandale/First Korean Presbyterian Church of Virginia off on their Fourth Annual Mission Trip. For the 7 Adults and 13 students, our destination this year was Camp Paddy Run, the outdoor camp and retreat ministry center for Shenandoah Presbytery. This experience would be different than the previous trips to Cumberland, MD because we would be at a camp in the woods and not in a church fellowship hall in a city. This trip would challenge us also because we would be undertaking our largest project over the four years; we would be replacing a 32 foot bridge over Paddy Run as well as replacing seating at two outdoor areas and fixing a roof.

When we arrived at camp we settled into the Lodge and our cabins. There is no electricity in the cabins so we made sure there were enough lanterns to provide light. After our dinner Amy Tubbs and Lori Orndorff welcomed us to the camp. They told us about the history of the camp. Amy and Lori told us that the camp had not be used for about seven years; they have been trying to revive outdoor programs there for the past two years. Our work was very valuable to them in their goal to get a camp program going again.

Bright and early Monday morning after breakfast the entire group went down to the bridge site. The morning was spent clearing out debris, taking down what was left of previous bridge and planning what to do. Following lunch that day the leaders scoped out what the week would look like work wise as we figured out the times when all workers were needed at the bridge. As the bridge work continued on Tuesday we received the first groups of daily visitors. Some men from FKPCV joined us for the day and as work on the bridge continued, we were also able to get a crew together to work on the seating at the Vespers area. A winter storm had caused a tree to fall on the seats and totally destroy some of them. A group of students and adults were able to remove the old seats and build new ones using logs from some downed tree found in the woods. Another group of youth and adults went over to the equipment garage and began working on the shed there. They were able to cut out the rotted wood, replace it and then re-shingle most of the roof, there would be a small portion to be completed later in the week. In addition to the men who came to do work, three ladies from First Korean Presbyterian Church of Virginia came out and fixed us a delicious Korean meal. We all went to our bunks happily well fed.

On Wednesday morning the concrete was dry on the footers and bridge foundations and so we prepared to put the first side of the bridge across the creek. Everyone went down to Paddy Run and got to work. However, when this first side was put across the creek, there were problems making it necessary to take it back down and rethink how it should be done. It was a disappointing morning, but the adults all kept at it and figured out a better way to do it. By evening, the side was reconstructed and put up over the creek with success. As we gathered at the campfire that evening we thanked God not only for our success, but also for teaching us how to persevere when things looked bleak.

We arose the next morning to rain which gave us the opportunity to relax over breakfast and get some of our strength back. When the skies cleared and we got to work, there were two crews. One went to the bridge site to continue working there while another group went around the camp gathering rocks to put in front of the lodge outlining the driveway and parking area. We were able to give the caretakers a start on their landscaping to beautify the area. This was another great fellowship day in that Tariq's family arrived for lunch to celebrate Miriam's birthday with us and a second group of ladies from FKPCV arrived to fix us our second Korean meal. WOW!

Sam Hwang joined us on Friday so that he could take a group of people to finish the roof on the equipment shed. The remainder of the group went to the bridge site to get as much accomplished as possible. By afternoon it was determined that this project would not be completed. Although this was disappointing news, we were happy to recognize that God had blessed us with allowing us to get as much done as we did. Except for Thursday morning, there was no rain and it really wasn't too hot under the shade of the trees down by Paddy Run. Plans were made to return.

Dr. Looker was happy to report to the worship service on September 13 that a group from both congregations had gone up to Paddy Run on Saturday, September 12. Everyone who went worked hard all day and at the end of the day, THE BRIDGE WAS FINISHED.

Those of us who went on this trip recognize that none of it would have been possible without the support financially and prayerfully of people from both First Presbyterian Church of Annandale and First Korean Presbyterian Church of Virginia. We also acknowledge that it was a success because we were doing all for the glory of God and we know that God has truly blessed our work.

WHY DO WE HAVE A CHOIR?

No, the choir is not there to entertain the congregation. Far from it, as we are told in the Old Testament, God's mandate to have singers and instrumentalists leading worship is as old as Judaism:

Now these are the singers, heads of fathers' households of the Levites, who lived in the chambers of the temple free from other service; for they were engaged in their work day and night. (1 Chronicles 9:33)

Then David spoke to the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their relatives the singers, with instruments of music, harps, lyres, loud-sounding cymbals, to raise sounds of joy. (1 Chronicles 15:16)

The importance of the musicians to the temple is clear. Their job was to practice their art, expenses paid by the community, "day and night," to lead the congregation in worship through song. The word *lead* is the key. For thousands of years, musicians who would lead the performance of music in temple and church have spent years in preparation. Some musicians perform their ministry as professionals on a salary. Some perform as amateurs for free, simply for love of God and a desire to minister in music to their religious community. Churches have all kinds of combinations of musicians leading worship – all-paid choirs, paid section leaders, all volunteer, or soloists only.

At FPCA, like the vast majority of US congregations, our choir is all volunteer. We have two members with enough training to be called 'professional,' Many of the others

have taken music lessons and have sung in choirs for years. Some have little experience but are willing to learn. All are devoted to the life of the Church and this congregation.

If you have any musical ability, a willingness to learn, and one free hour on Thursdays, you could be part of our musical leadership.

Come on, give it a try!
Music Director

Dr. Lawrence Young,

ACCA NEEDS YOUR HELP

At present the pantry is low on peanut butter, jelly, spaghetti sauce, canned fruit, crackers, tuna fish, canned meats, paper products, bars of soap and bags of rice.

The barrel inside the entrance to our Sanctuary is waiting for your generous donation!

THANK YOU!

LETTER FROM LUBONDAI

John Metzel wants to share the following hand-written message he received from Andre Muebelayi, the administrator of the hydroelectric project of the FPCA-Lubondai Presbyterian Church partnership,

Muambi Tshimanga, mioyo yenu buonso ne nzubu webe mujima ne bena eglise bonso. Tuakapeta dikuatshisha dia balongi bua kusumba cahier ne bics ne bintu bia classes. Nakapesha rapport mu Nzubu wa Nzambi bua makuta \$525. Bena Kuitabuja ba kasanka bikole ne bela tuasakidila wa bungu bua don ewu.

Translation:

Elder Tshimanga, life to you all (the traditional greeting ~ as in "Hello") and to your entire household and to all the members of the Church. We received the aid for the students to buy notebooks, pens and school supplies. I gave a report in the House of God (ie. during the Church service at Lubondai Presbyterian Church) about the \$525 contribution [from FPCA Christian Education Commission]. The Church members (literally "the people of faith") were exceedingly happy and send a great thank you for this gift.

Stay well,

Your brother in Christ,

Andre Muebelayi

REACHING OUT TO OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

FPCA and FKPCV are starting a new program on Tuesday, September 29th to provide an opportunity for friends and neighbors to make their lives easier by learning or improving their English skills. John Baer, a teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL), will be conducting a class in Room 105 for anyone who would like to learn to speak English. There will also be a class for those who have taken ESL classes and wish to practice. This is an opportunity to build vocabulary, improve grammar and learn idioms. Practice is the key to learning a language. There is no charge for either of the classes.

The classes will meet once a week on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm. If you have any friends or neighbors who would benefit from this program, please have them contact John Baer at 703- 323-6952 or jsbear@cox.net, or call the church office.

We admire the willingness and desire of people for whom English is not their native language to learn or want to improve their skills to be able to communicate better with all of us. We welcome this opportunity to help them accomplish this.

Your Librarian Marta Strada

ATTENTION

Deadline for the November issue of FIRST and ForMOST is October 16, 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.