



FIRST and ForMOST

September 2009

FROM YOUR PASTOR

"God's servants shall worship Him; they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; no one will need the light of a lamp or the sun, for the Lord God will be their light..." (Rev. 22: 3b-4)

The first signer of the Declaration of Independence, John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, said, when he wrote his name to the great historic document, *"They may not know who I am, but they will not forget my signature."* Then, with a flourish, he wrote his name at the head of the list with such bold and precise strokes that, from that time forward, the name of John Hancock has become synonymous with the word, *"signature."*

However, when we think of the word, *"signature,"* we are aware of more than mere penmanship. In John Hancock's case we are acutely aware of a man who had the courage of his convictions. By placing his name in large and bold letters on the Declaration of Independence, he declared that his heart and soul, his fortune and energy, his mind and devotion were behind the handwriting on the page. A signature becomes the personification of an individual. John Hancock believed in a cause, and to that end he signed his name to a document that contained the fundamentals of his faith.

When God created human beings, He created us *"in His own image."* Think about that for a second! WE ARE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD! His name...His special stamp of approval...is upon our foreheads. And, because God has created us in His own image, we are inextricably linked to God in ways that cause us to worship and adore Him...to praise Him...to sing for joy because we know that He loves us...to recognize that everything we are and everything that we have comes from God.

John Hancock publically signed his life over in faith to the promise of a new, free, and independent nation. He knew that by doing so, if independence was not won from the British, he and all the other signers of the Declaration of Independence would be put to death for treason. Thus, his big and bold signature represented his total allegiance to the formation of a new nation.

Likewise, when we joined this church as Active Members, we all stood before this congregation and publically stated that we commit our whole lives to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. In essence, like Hancock, we pledge our very lives to Jesus Christ. Now, joining a church or publically declaring our allegiance to Jesus Christ in the United States will probably not mean that we are putting our lives in danger (at least not yet). But, at the same time, in most of the rest of the world today, to publically declare oneself to be a Christian is a death sentence! In almost every part of the world, persecution against Christians is growing at an alarming rate.

So, what does it mean to be a *“Good Christian”*... an Active Member of Christ’s Church? Our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Order puts it very plainly. By publically declaring ourselves to belong wholly to Jesus Christ...by signing our lives over to God...we promised to: 1) Proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ; 2) Actively participate in the life and worship of our church; 3) Pray without ceasing; 4) Read and study the Scriptures regularly; 5) Support the work of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents; 6) Actively participate in the commissions, committees, functions, and government of the church; 7) Respond to God’s activity in the world by actively participating in Christian mission work and projects; 8) Act like Christians both **inside** and **outside** of the church, living responsibly and righteously in our personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships; and, 9) Always work for peace, justice, freedom, love, human fulfillment, and reconciliation. (G-5.0102)

This is what it means to be a *“good Christian”* and an Active Member of Christ’s Church. I believe that it’s good for all of us to be reminded of these basic truths as we begin and renew all of our church programs and ministries this September. If we all were to live our lives in accord with these nine basic truths, just think of how much more we could do for the Lord! Just think of how much greater our church would be!

So, how big and bold is your *“signature”* here at First Presbyterian Church? Is the first thing that comes to people’s minds when they meet you...when they see you: *“He’s/she’s a good Christian?”* Would you be willing to die for your faith in Jesus Christ?

May this coming church year be one during which all of our Christian *“signatures”* gets bigger and bolder with each passing day.

Your Friend and Pastor,

CHURCH SCHOOL STARTS SEPTEMBER 13!

We invite all children and youth to attend our joint FPCA/FKPCV Church School Classes on Sundays, at 11:30 am.

In October 4 - November 8 we will also have a Confirmation Class at 11:30 am.

For our adults, we offer the following:

In the 8:45 am Church School Class adults will study Covenant Communities, based on both O.T. and N.T. selections.

At 11:30 am Dr. Looker will lead the Pastor's Class, giving you a chance to discuss the sermons you have just listened to during the preceding worship service.

Come, join us!

PREACHING SCHEDULE for SEPTEMBER, 2009

- September 6, 2009: Sermon Title: **"WHAT DID YOU SAY?"**
Scripture Lesson: Mark 7: 31-37 *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*
- September 13, 2009: Sermon Title: **"ANYTHING YOU SURRENDER TO GO
WILL BE BLESSED"**
Scripture Lesson: Mark 8: 27-38 *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*
- September 20, 2009: Sermon Title: **"WHO'S NUMBER ONE?"**
Scripture Lesson: Mark 9: 30-37 *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*
- September 27, 2009: Special Mission Trip Presentation :
Paddy Run Presbyterian Church Camp, August 2-8, 2009;
"GOING TO ALL THE WORLD"
Scripture Lesson: Matthew 18: 19-20

THANK YOU NOTE from SARA SCHMOYER

Dear Christian Friends,

Thank you all so much for your kind and loving thoughts while I was ill. I truly appreciated the delicious fruit, the lovely flowers, the beautiful cards, the phone calls, visits, and especially the prayers. Knowing that friends are thinking about you and praying for you really means a lot. What a blessing to have such a caring and loving church family.

With much love and God's Blessings,

Sara Schmoyer



Don Jackson – September 10
John Anderson – September 14
Hugh Iwanicki - September 14
Barbara Matos – September 14
Elisha R Musih ~ September 16
Susan Hanson – September 17
Tariq Javad – September 20
Mary Krause – September 21
Roger Stevenson – September 21
Ed Muller – September 23
Laura Rodrigues - September 25
“Punch” Jackson – September 26
W.C. Hester – September 29

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

JUNE 17, 2009

Before the Session meeting was opened, we prayed for our new members, Rev. Tariq Javed and family, who were in the process of asking for asylum and immigration extension.

Dr. Chris Looker told the Session that he was arranging preaching schedule for the time while the Looker family will be on vacation: Susi Ennis on July 19 and 26, Rev. Bill Jokela on August 2, officiating the Lord’s Supper.

Assistant to the Pastor, Susan Ennis, suggested that elders and deacons should be trained in serving Communion and handed out a sheet of instructions.

Youth Elder Tyler Young reported that that Youth Sunday was a great success, and the young people are looking forward to the mission trip

The Session listened to a presentation by Norma Muller, “**Greening Our Church.**” She handed out a written statement and talked about a proposal that FPCA form a Green Team. She presented suggestions why we need it, who should participate, how the team would be organized, what it would do and how the various commissions could be involved. Norma shared with the Session a brainstorming list of 47 suggestions.

The Green Team will be open to everyone, and the youth should also be invited to participate. It should be advertised on our website. More clean-up days were suggested, and more participation encouraged. The Session approved the plan to form a Green Team at FPCA.

For the **Mission Commission**, Elder Nadine Dingess reported that preparation for the Mission Trip Paddy Run Presbyterian Church Camp was in progress.

When **Building & Grounds Commission** reported, Dr. Looker talked about the formation of a Decorating Committee, which had been approved by the Session some time ago. It was suggested that the Nominating Committee should be in charge of it. It should be announced in the bulletin, and members of the Congregation should be invited to give input, visit other churches to get ideas. In a presentation ideas could be shared with the congregation.

For the **Worship Commission**, Elder Sandy Mori proposed that the Lord's Supper be celebrated in a different style.

For the **Christian Education Commission**, Elder Marta Strada reported that the Commission had done much preparation for Youth Sunday.

For the **Congregational Life and New Member Commission**, Elder Cara Laufer presented a new proposal for inviting FPCA neighbors to our church, like personally handing out invitations in the neighborhood, starting in September. .

As Chairperson of the **Personnel Committee**, Elder Marta Strada informed the Session that the evaluation of our staff (Pastor, Music Director and Executive Assistant) would be done during the summer. The questions regarding the Pastor Evaluation would be e-mailed to the Session and Staff, and the rest to selected individuals whose church activities provide close contact with the staff.

Elder Sandy Mori reported that the **Nominating Committee** is working on the nomination of elders and deacons.

BROILER PROJECT

SPECIAL SESSION MEETING, JULY 8, 2009

The session held a special meeting on Wednesday, July 8 in order for the Building and Grounds Commission to present the proposals that have been received to replace the boiler. Building and Grounds had received proposals from 4 (four) different companies detailing the scope of work, equipment and costs associated with the project. Following discussion regarding the pros and cons of each of these proposals, the session approved awarding the contract to CFS Service Corporation. This project will entail the demolition and removal of the current boiler and then the installation of the replacement boiler system. The new system has many advantages over our 50-year-old boiler. The equipment has a smaller footprint, requiring less space. It has a more efficient way of load balancing heating needs dependent upon building usage. This will lead to more efficient use of gas thus using fewer natural resources (being more green) and also lowering our utility costs.

The session would like to thank Jack Smith and the Building and Grounds Commission for their work in gathering these bids and researching the equipment proposed by each company in order to make the best possible recommendation to session.

It is hoped that the work to remove the old boiler and install the new boiler can be accomplished in the month of August before our regular schedule of activities begins in September. The work will be done with no impact on the air conditioning system so that building use is still possible.

ATTRACTING AND ENGAGING NEW MEMBERS

Congregational Life and New Member Commission's Plans

The Congregational Life and New Member Commission (CLNMC) has been wrestling with the question of what to do to assimilate new members into the FPCA congregation. As chair of the CLNMC, I decided to research what other congregations are doing to glean some 'best practices' that might give us some insight. (From this point on, I'll use the word 'engagement' in place of 'assimilation.')

Just about every credible source I reviewed stresses the importance of three things in particular:

1. Having a deliberate strategy to attract and engage new members (something repeatable -- a living process -- as opposed to a one-time action).
2. Ensuring all commissions, ministries, and mission areas of the congregation have roles in the strategy.
And
3. Providing many ways (open doors) for new members to engage. (Small groups were repeatedly noted as very important, as were education and new-member participation in congregational worship.)

Last fall at the Session retreat, the issue of 'new membership' was singled out as the one area in which FPCA is not fully and adequately engaged. Since that time - and for good reason - the Session has been preoccupied with significant building maintenance and tenant issues. These are important issues, to be sure, but let us not be so distracted that we deny due diligence to our most important mission -- grow the church of Jesus Christ - not by serendipity, but because Jesus commanded that we do it deliberately.

Now, FPCA has already taken some very important steps both relevant and useful to member engagement. For example,

- We've developed a new motto: *"An internationally welcoming church and mission center"* to inform of our vision of being a diverse congregation. This a great reflection of our understanding of how we - a little congregation in Annandale - can "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15) -- Because we live in an area where people from "all the world" have come to us.
- We've developed a mission statement that reflects just how we intend to carry out Jesus' Great Commission.
Our Mission is to joyfully and humbly...
 - Worship, love, and obey God;
 - Nurture the Spiritual Gifts of God's People; and,
 - Serve others in the name of Jesus Christ.
- We have an ongoing effort to discover spiritual gifts throughout the congregation.
- We conducted a class ("Contagious Christians") that frees people to be themselves as they spread the gospel.
- We have reinvigorated the FPCA website - one of our public faces.
- We have formed a new commission to market FPCA.
- The CLNMC has sponsored a number of activities during the past year that reach

out - and is planning additional events, such as a "neighborhood invitational" this fall to invite neighbors to worship with us.

To be sure, FPCA is doing a lot of the right kinds of things relevant to attracting new members. But how are these individual efforts tied together? Are they part of a larger, deliberate strategy? We say we want to be a growing church - which we desire to enter a time of renewal. I have been in numerous conversations within FPCA where there is an acknowledged feeling that we are about to turn a corner - on the verge of something. But look closely at how ambiguously we talk about it and a fundamental job comes into specific relief. We haven't mapped it out. Jesus told us where to go, and we appear to be getting ready. We now must map out a strategy for getting there.

The research (at the beginning of this paper) reminds us of something we all know and would agree on -- that the job of developing this strategy must be a deliberate action for church leaders - the Session (not limited to one congregational commission -- even if it does have "new member" in its name).

Having discussed this, the Session is renewing its attention and priority to developing a deliberate, church-wide strategy to attract and engage new members: One that involves each Congregational Commission; is a repeatable, living process; and is consistent with our mission statement. With the mission statement as the main guidance that cascades down through the congregational hierarchy, each commission will identify its roles in attracting and engaging new members, and then report back to the Session, which will develop a church-wide strategy for Christian growth and renewal.

Submitted by *Cara*

Lauler

LET'S INVITE OUR NEIGHBORS!

The **Congregational Life and New Member Commission** is eager to invite our neighbors to come to our church.

We will make card stock invitations (postcard size) with a simple invitation/welcoming message. Then, on October 10th, the people of FPCA who will have signed up to participate will meet at the church for a word of prayer. We'll then walk out to "assigned" areas of the neighborhood and hand deliver invitations to FPCA neighbors. After a given time period, we'll return to the church to talk about our experiences, pray for the neighbors, and have some comfort food together.

Our plan is simply to invite our neighbors to FPCA. We are not planning to evangelize beyond this. Our first step will be a simple one for several reasons. First, this will be a new experience for many of us, and out of our comfort zone. We think that's a good thing - we'll stretch our outreach muscles - but we'll take it one step at a time. Second, we'd like to take a small, non-intrusive step into the neighborhood simply to invite them in -- All are welcome.. .no strings attached.

Fall is the best time to invite FPCA neighbors to church because all of our activities that had been suspended for the summer (Sunday school, circles, bible studies, choir practice, etc) will have resumed.

Congregational Life and New Member Commission

CONFIRMATION CLASS

Are you a student in grades 7 through 12 who has not yet had the opportunity to take a Confirmation Class? We will be holding our next Confirmation Class from October 4 through November 8, 2009. There will be 6 sessions (we are taking a break on October 11) and then have a dinner with the session on Wednesday, November 18 at 6:30 pm. The class will study what it means to be a Presbyterian Christian and what it means to be an active member of the church. At the end of the course students will be presented to session for membership in the church. Should you have any questions, please contact either Dr. Looker or Susi Ennis.

SUSI ENNIS' NEW OFFICE HOURS

Susi Ennis' office hours are **Tuesday and Thursday, 3:00 - 5:00 pm.**

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE GREEN?

by Norma Muller

Is it recycling bottles, cans and newspapers? Yes, of course. Is it replacing light bulbs and buying more energy-efficient appliances? Certainly. But it is also much more than that.

"Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" is the mantra of the Green Movement. But what does that really mean? Let's look at the many ways in which we put these ideas into practice.

- It is "green" to shop at the Farmers' Market for produce that is fresh, unprocessed and locally grown.
- It is "green" to open the windows and let the breeze blow through instead of turning on the air conditioner.
- It is "green" to plant a garden or grow your own tomatoes.
- It is "green" to keep your old furniture instead of tossing it out and buying new.
- It is "green" to take your grandchildren for a walk and point out the different birds and plants you see.
- It is "green" to reuse aluminum foil, to bring extra food home in a "doggie bag," and to reduce your consumption of meat and fast food.
- It is "green" to share magazines with your neighbor and to check out books from the library instead of buying them.
- It is "green" to hang your throw rugs outside to dry instead of tossing them in the dryer.
- It is "green" to donate your old clothes and knick-knacks to a thrift store.

Is this beginning to sound familiar? Do you recognize yourself? In many ways, our parents and grandparents were exceptionally “green” well before the concept existed. They were experts at making do with what they had, using things until they wore out, and leading a simpler, more self-sufficient life than is even possible today.

The move toward Greenness and the formation of a Green Team at FPCA stems from our desire, as Christians, to be worthy stewards of God’s Creation and to live in harmony with the Earth and all its creatures. We can all be “green,” and we are, just in different ways. None of us can do everything that we should, but we can all do something, and we can all be better stewards. We can be more mindful of the impact that our daily actions have on the environment and on those with whom we share precious and limited resources.

The FPCA Green Team will be composed of representatives from the various Commissions, as well as volunteers from the Congregation. We will have many opportunities in the months ahead to make wise and greener choices, particularly as we consider improvements to the Sanctuary. Please join us in this effort. Contact Norma Muller at 642-5772 or via email to nbaileymuller@aol.com to become a member and to pledge your support for Creation Care and the Greening of FPCA. Your participation will be vital to our success.

ALASKA REVISITED

by Marta Strada

Ten years have passed since I toured beautiful Alaska for the first time in the company of Ruth Sutton, Miriam and Ed Houseworht, on a tour led by Richard and Betty Ford. In 1999 we went by train all the way up to Fairbanks, with a side trip to *Denali National Park*, travelled south by bus to *Seward*, where the cruiser *Dawn Princess* was waiting for us, and finished our tour on board, and stood on deck admiring snow covered mountains and glaciers. The tour was very impressive, but I never expected to return to Alaska. What a surprise when my daughter, Margaret, asked me to join her on an Alaska cruise. Wow! I never hesitated to say YES, I come along

So, on the 3rd of July 2009, Margaret and I flew from mild Chicago to hot Seattle, and, after standing in line forever, checked in on the cruiser *Rhapsody of the Sea* run by the Royal Caribbean Company. We dumped our belongings in our stateroom, rushed to the evacuation drill, and finally, the fun began, slowly, but surely.

On Saturday we cruised in fog under grey clouds; there was not much to see. Yet, we were happy, because we knew that we were headed toward magnificent Alaska. The “highlight” of that day was the formal dinner in the impressive dining room. Some passengers wore elaborate dresses – but the meal tasted just as delicious when wearing business outfits, Margaret’s and my choice..

We cruised through the famous *Inside Passage* from the coastline of British Columbia northward – the famous, awe inspiring passage between some 1000 islands with snow covered mountain ranges, coves and bays. The Alaskan portion of it extends some 500 miles from south to north, and 100 miles from east to west. Due to the fog and clouds, we could not fully enjoy the beauty of the Inside Passage in the beginning. But the next day things changed dramatically.

On Sunday we docked in the port of *Juneau*, the capital of Alaska, founded in 1880 during the gold rush, but Margaret and I did not go on a city tour (I had been there in 1999, and Margaret was going to walk around in it on her own later that day.) We had signed up for a “**Photo Safari by Land and Sea**”, - a tour guided by an naturalist photographer sharing tips and techniques to enhance the skill of the participants interested

in photography. We walked through the rain forest rich in interesting trees and plants, until the *Mendenhall Glacier* appeared before our eyes. What a magnificent view! We felt like dwarfs looking up to the impressive glacier, little icebergs floating at its bottom. We returned to our bus by boat, looking for and taking pictures of whales, sea lions, and bald eagles. It was Sunday, the day we worship God. There was no church nearby - but, surrounded by the beauty of His creation, you worshiped Him in your heart.

Monday we spent at *Skagway*, a pretty tourist town. Here we climbed on a wide-windowed mini-bus and headed up the river valley, stopping along the way to enjoy the most beautiful scenery along the *Klondike Highway* on the original Gold Rush Trail of '98. Over the years this route has been used by dog teams, horses, wagons, narrow gauge railway trains. We marveled at the numerous glaciers, snow covered mountain peaks, waterfalls. Even a young bear crossed the highway right in front of us (of course, by the time I got my camera in position, the bear was gone.) At the top of the 3,292-foot high Pass, we stopped just beyond the US/Canadian border to view the boulder-strewn mountain moonscape in this wild land above timberline. We had our passports in hand when crossing the Canadian border - but nobody was interested. Isn't it nice to be trusted?

If we thought this gorgeous tour was the climax of our trip, we were mistaken. The following day we enjoyed the greatest, most picturesque scenery, right from the deck. The weather was 100% perfect. We did not have to walk, we did not have to take a bus, we just stood there for some 6 hours, cameras in hand, eyes wide open to be sure that we didn't miss any part of the magnificent scenery. We sailed through the *Tracy Arm Fjord*, one of the most dramatic locations in Alaska. Impressive mountain ridges, waterfall, sheer, glacier-carved walls around us, huge chunks of ice which had broken off and plunged into the frigid waters all around us. I suspect at other times these chunks of ice are even larger, because they told us that our ship had not been able to get as close to the huge glacier at the end of the fjord for many, many years. According to naturalist John Muir. the glacial-carved sheer granite cliffs were even more spectacular than the Yosemite Valley!

We finished our great excursion cruising under grey clouds. What an anti-climax! We slowly left Alaska, and returned to the shoreline of British Columbia, anchored in the harbor of *Victoria*, its capital, Margaret and I went on a fun Hop=On/Hop=Off round trip by bus, and got off to see totem poles, the Parliament building, even a small castle on top of a hill. We would have liked to see more, but ran out of time, as we had to return to the ship and start packing! The next morning we said good-bye to our cruiser in Seattle where we took a tour around the city. We flew back to Chicago in the evening of Friday, July 10. This wonderful week has ended - wonderful, because I not only visited parts of Alaska I had not seen before, but because I could spend a whole week with my daughter. And we came back loaded with great photos and wonderful memories.

Come, tour Alaska with us on Sunday, September 27.

It will be a show combining my two trips taken in 1999 and 2009. We will go by train all the way to Fairbanks, stopping in Denali National Park, having fun with huskies, meeting Chena Indians. We will enjoy the beauty of the Inside Passage, stop at Juneau, Skagway and Ketchikan, admire snow covered mountain ranges, glaciers, floating icebergs, and much more.

Strengthen yourself for this great trip during a
Potluck Dinner at 6:00 PM,
and off we go to BEAUTIFUL ALASKA!

ACOLYTE SCHEDULE

September 2009

September 13

Sarah T. Javed

September 20

Danny DeVera

September 27

Chris Fuller

ADDITIONS & CHANGES IN YOUR DIRECTORY

Under MALONE, Paul & Diane:

Email: Paul.Malone@ngc.com (Paul)

dhmalone@cox.net (Diane)

Pmalone1@cox.net (Paul)

Add:

ALCANTARA, Oscar & Maria

Oscar Jr. and Eric

7608 Allman Drive, Apt T-2

Cell: (202)464-5961

Under SMITH, Jack:

jacksmith@yahoo.com - not jacksmith@yoo.com



ATTENTION!

Deadline for the October issue of FIRST and ForMOST is September 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 y