



The Happenings

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

TO SHARE THE LOVE OF GOD BY SERVING WITHIN OUR CHURCH, COMMUNITY AND BEYOND;
AND TO DEVELOP AND EMPOWER PASSIONATE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

VOLUME 33 ISSUE 25

DECEMBER #2 2009



Communion and Candlelight Christmas Eve Services

Dec 24

5:00pm & 7:30pm

A nursery will be available for both services for 2 years and under.

Looking Ahead

- Elementary Youth Cookie Exchange: Dec 19, 1:30pm
- SHARE Pick Up Day Dec 19, 9am
- Youth go Caroling Dec 20, 6:30pm
- Christmas Eve Services Dec 24, 5 & 7:30pm
- Blood Mobile: Jan 3, 8:30am
- Session Retreat: Jan 9, 8:30am at Cedarkirk
- Pancake Breakfast: Jan 10, 7:30-10:30am
- Children's Fellowship Movie Night: Jan 15 5:30pm

Christmas JOY Offering

Presbyterians have traditionally responded to the good news of Christmas by sharing our own gifts through the Christmas Joy Offering. For many years this Offering has supported racial ethnic education helping students develop their gifts and find their calling. It also helps to support unmet needs of current and retired church workers by providing funds to help them through difficult times. As we celebrate the good news of great joy that the angel announces—God's love in human form is now among us—may our gifts bear joyful witness to that uncontainable love.



The JOY Offering will be received at both services on December 24.

HEIFER

INTERNATIONAL

Through Dec 20th, before and after worship services, you can purchase a share of an animal in honor or memory of a friend or family member. A gift of your favorite Heifer animal goes to a needy family. Since 1944, Heifer International has helped millions of struggling families become more self-reliant. Each recipient promises to give the first female offspring to a neighboring family, building the economy and food supply not just for a single family, but for an entire village for generations to come.

A Christmas gift that keeps on giving!



Elders

*Judi Almand
Margaret Barlow
David Childs
David Dale
Shelby Dale
Nancy Donovan
Gil Evans
Michele Gates
Phoebe Orby
Christine Karow
Bonnie Laux
Mike McClelland
Jim McNeil
Everett Nolte
Peggy Nugent
Bill Ogden
Lori Lynen - Clerk
David Rogers
Dim Locken*

Rebekah's Remarks

Dear Fine People,

Recently we had a visitor to our church tell me that they couldn't come back because we observe the season of *Advent*. They stated that Advent is a Roman Catholic thing, and therefore it was against their religion to acknowledge Advent. It didn't matter when I told him that preparation for the coming of Jesus into the world wasn't exclusive to the Roman Catholic Church. It didn't matter when I shared how the season has been made more meaningful for our church because of the traditions and symbolism we enjoy (*like the Chrismon Tree; the banners in the sanctuary; the sacred music that emphasizes the Advent of Christ; Advent Adventures with the children and families; the adoption of Bethel families; going crazy over the gift of goats and pigs and heifers and bunny rabbits; etc...*); It didn't matter when I told him that our Roman Catholic friends welcome and worship the same Jesus. Then I said, "*Isn't it great that despite all our theological differences, Catholics and Protestants can agree that Jesus is the Savior of the world!*"

He did *not* think it was great. Bless his heart. Very sad. This whole thing speaks so loudly of the fractured nature of our world, where Christians can't even agree about an "*appropriate*" way to welcome Jesus... The Prince of *Peace*. We can't even agree on "peace". It always makes me grieve when I hear of people of faith putting one another down because of doctrine and discipline. If Christians can't even get along, why in the

world would non-believers want anything to do with us? And yet, during this time of year, we have more unchurched people come through our doors than any other time of year... even Easter. A new born baby is easier to approach, I think, than a man with stained blood on his hands and feet. For the novice seeker of faith, there is something that invites us closer to the Christ *child*... to see if he is real; if, in the midst of our war-torn world, he can bring us together again, despite our pre-conceived notions of how Christmas should, or shouldn't be observed. Perhaps, through this baby, our longing for something *more* than the way things have always been, can find a footing, and we can hobble into a different sort of reality... a renewed hope for the world.

Let us continue to celebrate this miracle gift of God to us with abundant joy and anticipation, without apology, or with rigid processes, knowing that through Christ there is always another chance for life and living. In the meantime, look around you and see who needs to come and meet Jesus this Christmas. Invite them to one of the Christmas Eve services of worship (5:00 and 7:30 p.m.), where we will light the way for the coming of Jesus into the world and into our lives, once again.

Lots of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love,

Rebekah

Your Good Samaritan Fund at Work....

The Good Samaritan Fund is an account that is used to help people, members and non-members, who find themselves in a crisis. Recently, a family of 6 needed help with their rent. When the check was delivered to the rental unit manager, a thank you note was waiting from the 8 year old family member:

"Thank you for all you did so we have a place to live, so we don't die. Thank you..."

If you would like to make a donation to this fund, make out your check to the church and earmark it "Good Samaritan Fund" and drop it in the offering plate.

Campaign Kick Off

Excitement is building as we move toward the kickoff of our Building for the Future Capital Campaign on Saturday, January 23. Our youth just made the first contribution, \$62.50 which is a tithe of the proceeds from the potato luncheon and have pledged 10% of any future fundraisers. Thanks for being our trailblazers. If you would like to make a contribution in 2009, just write Building for the Future in the memo section of your check or on the front of your envelope.



TOM'S TANGENTS

Dear Friends,

I am really enjoying Advent this year. Having two young children certainly changes your perspective. I have always reveled in this season, but with Micah (who doesn't really get the whole Christmas thing) and Liam (who is only worried about his next meal), the simplicity through which they look at things is both refreshing and challenging—for those of us who have complicated our lives with so much else. One of the significant differences is how much we worry, where little children just don't.

As we fret over bills, making sure our potluck dishes are ready for the next gathering, shopping for gifts, wrapping, decorating, making sure we have enough time, children just get to enjoy moving over to their next toy, or opening a book, or running up and down a flight of 3 stairs. And when it comes to Christmas, they can learn the basic of the story, and they can romanticize the coming of Santa, or is it Jesus? Children may also experience stress in this season, but it is stress of anticipation, not worry or care.

Over the past few years, I have found some moments of real peace during Advent. It usually happens when I put my list of things "to do" to the side. But recognizing the grace of this time of year is so important as we do all of our running around. This year, I'm putting a lot of time and energy into worship events, as is usually the case in December, but there's also time for celebrations and opportunities for folks to get together. Yet, the moments of solitude can be quite meaningful. We have devotionals, Advent Treasures, Derek Maul's book, "In My Heart I Carry a Star", and so many more opportunities for reflection.

We celebrate a different theme of Advent each Sunday, with testimonials about Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, and the powerful stories of faith that come through the members of our own community.

The entry of Jesus into the world is truly something to celebrate, and while this is such a gracious act of God, we still have difficulty following Jesus today. Even through all of our education, our practice, our worship and our mission, Jesus leaves much for us to do. Following his lifestyle, his teachings and his commandments doesn't come as second nature—it takes work. Like any other kind of relationship, the struggles of our faith and the trials of our discipleship come with consequences that often force us to make the decision for faith over self-reliance. As our body of disciples strives to reach new and exciting things in the coming year, we need to be continually reminded of the fact that we do what we do for Jesus.

I'm grateful for all of you here, for your journey of discipleship and the walk of faith that so many encounter each day. I'm thankful for a church home where I can raise my children, where baptismal vows are taken on by the whole congregation, and for the things that they are learning and will learn here. I'm joyful as we celebrate this season again this year, and for the anticipation of Christmas, a day that will be here very soon. Give thanks to God for all of the blessings you enjoy, for your friends and family, and for this most amazing gift that he has given us.

Peace, Love, Hope and Joy,
Tim

Pancake Breakfast

Jan 10 ☞ 7:30-10:30am

The youth are sponsoring a pancake breakfast, complete with sausage, juice and coffee. They will be attending the Montreat Youth Conference in June. Proceeds will help support their trip.

Adults & Youth:	\$5.00
Children 5-10 years	\$3.50
Children 4 & under	Free



Reminders for 2010

- Sign up for Sanctuary Flowers for 2010 on the calendar located on the bulletin board in the west narthex. Cost is \$25.
- Mission Devotional Books for 2010 will be available in the narthex by the end of this year.
- Blood Pressures will be taken on the **2nd Sunday of each month** for January—April.



"But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Matthew 6:33

Hello Church Family!

I hope you all enjoyed a great Thanksgiving Celebration. I want to thank you for your great support during this year's Financial Stewardship Emphasis. So far, we have received commitments from 191 members and friends amounting to over \$554,000. Forty percent of our gifts are for an increased amount over last year, which is a very positive message to the rest of the community! We are still hopeful to hear back from 35 members who pledged last year but have not yet returned a commitment card. If those members are able to continue or increase their commitment from last year, then that will amount to an additional \$66,000. Our commitments, plus unpledged and loose offerings will enable us to set a budget of approximately \$650,000 for 2010, when our session meets on Thursday, Dec 17th.

As of the end of November, we are tracking right on a \$650,000 budget for this year and continue to exceed our expenses by \$10,000 with one month remaining. Given these tough economic times, that is something we can all be very thankful for! In mid-December you will receive a Giving Statement current as of the end of November, allowing you to make any corrections before the end of the year. We will also include some helpful IRS information for your consideration.

I would like to invite you to use our electronic Giving and remind those that currently use E-Giving that they will need to set that feature up again through our church website (www.fpcbrandon.org), even if the fit amount remains the same. If you would like to give weekly, please set your quantity of gifts at 52 and if you are giving monthly, please enter 12 for the quantity. If you mistakenly leave the quantity at 1 (thinking 'once a week' or 'once a month'), then you gift will only come out the first week or month of 2010 and not again for the rest of the year. This system works very well for all of us and I encourage you to try it. Please let me know if you have any questions.

I hope you and your family enjoy a wonderful Christmas Season. Thank you for all that you do for First Presbyterian Church!

In Christ, David Dale

Plan for Year-End Giving

- ✓ All donations must be postmarked or received in the church office by December 31 in order to claim a charitable contribution deduction for 2009. Checks given on Sunday, Jan 3, 2010, can not be applied to 2009.
- ✓ Please do not file your 2009 income tax return until you have received your record of giving from the church. Some of your contributions may not be tax deductible if you file your return before receiving written acknowledgement. Year end giving records will be mailed by *January 31, 2010*.
- ✓ Make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church. Do not leave a blank space for the payee. A blank check may not be considered tax deductible by the IRS.
- ✓ If you are at least age 70 1/2, you are eligible to make a qualified charitable distribution which is a nontaxable distribution made directly by the trustee of your IRA to First Presbyterian Church. This distribution will count toward your minimum required distribution.
- ✓ If you marked your 2010 pledge card requesting offering envelopes for 2010, they will be available in the narthex near the end of 2009.
- ✓ The Building for the Future Capital Campaign will officially kick off in 2010, but the account is set up and ready for contributions now.

MINISTRY OF PRAYER

Friends of the Congregation

Tom & Chris LeFevre (Tom LeFevre's parents)	Marie Platts (Stowers' friend)
Michael Beddow (Gregos' grandson)	Bob & Deb Hanson (Christine Orlosky's friend)
Dick & Jane Wood (Jane Owens' friends)	Michael Chenoweth (Don Zegel's brother-in-law)
Jeff & Donna Dixon (Mary Ellen Dixon)	Judy Brown (Ogden's friend)
Jeff Crompton (Winnie Wilk's son)	Gene Waters (Fran Gregos' father)
Gladys Spakes (Janice Poindexter's sister)	Smith Family (McClellan's friends)
Charlene Canady (Suzanne Odomisi's friend)	Jill Jordan Ernst (Gil & Marianne Evans' niece)
Anitra Ruth (Suzanne Odomisi's friend)	Virginia Whitlatch (Friend of the congregation)
Spring Smiley (Merle Wooten's daughter)	Robin (Heather McClellan's sister)
Rosa Boeres (Merle Wooten's sister-in-law)	Bob Hutton (Laura Hogg's father)
Billy Vinson (Darrell Vinson's father)	Dennis Streng (Bj Herig's nephew)
Bonnie Moore (Randy Poindexter's sister)	Mitchell Dryer (Alicia Braddock's relative)
Wesley Henry (Crenshaw's grandson)	Betty Cromwick (Dan & Ruth Craft's friend)
Sharalyn Hogan (Laura Hogg's sister)	Karyn Miles (Mike & Linda Miles' daughter)
Bill Robinson (Carol Coopriider's brother-in-law)	Kelly Izzard (Sondra Cone's niece)
Amanda Hawkes (Garrison's granddaughter)	Mary Anne Hill (Amanda Trauger's cousin)
Brenda Chapman (Friend of the Congregation)	John & Peggy Nugent's grandsons in Iraq
Shane Long (Shelley Grable's cousin)	Tyler Kemp (Coldwell's grandson)
Sherry Daugherty (Lisa Paterson's mother)	Jesse Heath (Dave & Sondra Cone's grandson)
Dianne, Doug & Sara Seelbach (Sofarelli's relatives)	Keven Hamlet (Jackie William's friend)
Lucy Sahr (Sondra Cone's sister)	Marci Smith (Earl & Judy Smith's daughter-in-law)
Peter & Colleen Giamanco (DeVecchio's family)	Jason Conley (Sherry Skovgaard's nephew)
Margaret Miles (Mike Miles' mother)	Tim Slinkosky (Jean Emery's friend)
Edna Davies (Henrietta Zahrobsky's sister)	Marguerite Barnes (Marge Hubbard's friend)
Janice Bishop (David Bishop's stepmother)	Cali Moody (Priscilla Babas' friend)
Leonard Schregardus (Orthea VanVoorst's brother-in-law)	Keith Browning (Marcia Wiles' friend)
Gregory Johnston (Darwin & Pat Johnston's son)	Corey Robinson (Jackie Williams' grandson)
Kathy Welch (Sherry Skovgaard's cousin)	Sarah Hart (Amanda Trauger's grandmother)
Carol Jaegar (Suzanne Odomisi's daughter)	
Jesse Scott (Jane Scott's grandson)	

Please remove this page and incorporate it with your daily prayers. If you have a special request for family and friends to be added to this prayer list, contact the church office. We also look forward to hearing from you regarding your joys from answered prayer. The Covenant of Prayer list for church members can be found in the weekly bulletin.



Heirs to the Kingdom

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs...heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory."

Hunter Layne Harper was born October 29 to parents Abrad & Chrissie Harper. He weighed 4 lb 10 oz and measured 17 1/2 inches. His joyful grandparents are Everett & Brenda Nolte.



Evan David Shreve was born November 26 (Thanksgiving Day) to parents Joanne & Adam Shreve. He weighed 8 lb 9 oz and measured 22 inches. His joyful grandparents are David & Cheryl Rogers.

Baptism



Joseph Conrad Boettger

Born: March 5, 2009

Baptized: November 29, 2009

Parents: Matt & Karyna Boettger

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WORSHIP:

9:45am - Sunday School for all ages
8:30 & 11:00am - Worship Services

Church Office Hours:

Mon-Fri: 8:30am - 4:30pm

THANK YOU

❖... to all the wonderful families that made Thanksgiving Dinner possible for those less fortunate. There was a tremendous outpouring of support for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

— Diana Pollard SHARE Coordinator

❖... to those who helped with the last edition of *The Happenings*: Allison Elrod, Terrie Morrison, Suzanne Odomisi, Jane Scott, and Arlene Strehlau.

Please keep the coupons coming! Continue to donate unwanted coupons from your Sunday newspapers. Your coupons are saving money for the ministries we all support! The coupon basket is located by the double doors that lead into the church office from the narthex. Please contact David or Carrie Childs if you have any questions at 899-9677.

**FOOD DRIVE
FOR HONDURAS**

HERE (and now), Honduras Emergency Relief Effort is a ministry supported by the International Partnership Committee of the Tampa Bay Presbytery. On the third Sunday of every month (3 cents-a-meal offering day), please bring food items to the church.

corn flour, oatmeal, peanut butter, red or pinto beans (no black beans), rice, instant coffee, sugar, salt powdered milk, dried pasta, canned spaghetti, ramen noodles, other canned protein foods (no glass containers)

Foods will be shipped via container ship to the presbytery of Honduras for distribution by the pastors there. In Oct. we sent 300 lbs. of food!. The food drive will continue over the next several months with hopes and prayers that the Honduras political situation will improve. Please contact

Pastor

Rebekah A. Maul

Associate Pastor

Timothy J. Black

Director of Music and Organist

Mark A. Prater

Director of Praise Service

Bradley S. Turner

Director of Youth Ministries

Lynn Pabst

Director of the Preschool

Kathy Kranendonk

Facilities Manager

Brad Turner

Financial Manager

Marianne Evans

Administrative Assistant

Joyce Allen

Church Secretary

Kathy Kranendonk

Bookkeeper

Sue Scott

Custodian/Kitchen Coordinator

Debbie Billmaier

Nursery Coordinator

Brandi Hooper