

THE CHURCH'S LIFE
News of the First Presbyterian Church
Oregon, Wisconsin

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FEBRUARY 2009

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

TRANSITIONS!

As we flip over the calendar from one year to the next, it is with anticipation that we await the New Year. What will 2009 bring? What will be the same? What will be different?

As a nation we say "Thank you" to President and Mrs. Bush for their years of serving our country, and we pray for them as they make the transition from the White House to a quieter and less public life. We also welcome a new President of the United States, one who is breaking ground on many fronts. Let us pray for President and Mrs. Obama and for their family, that their years of service to our country will bring them joy, and an increase in peace and justice in the world.

As a congregation, the New Year has also quickly brought transitions. On January 11 we said "Thank you" to Karen Baker as we honored her retirement after 27 years of serving as our Music Director. Preston and Karen's regular participation at First Presbyterian Church will be missed, but we pray for a healthy, safe, and enjoyable retirement even as we look forward to their return so that we can hear about their traveling adventures. We also welcome Andrea Wiltzius and Jesslyn Roebuck as our new Choir Director and Organist, respectively. We look forward to getting to know both of them, to helping them feel at "home" at First Presbyterian Church, and to the sharing of their particular ministries among us.

What else will 2009 bring for First Presbyterian Church? At this point, it's too early to tell. But whatever it is, may our faith be strengthened, our love deepened, and our hope expanded.

God's blessings to each of you in the New Year!

Clara D. Thompson
Pastor

ASH WEDNESDAY SUPPER SERVICE

Wednesday, February 25 @ 6:00 PM

The Worship Committee is planning a very special Supper Service on February 25, Ash Wednesday, and would like to invite all members and friends to participate. A simple supper of soup and bread will be served in the church dining room, and a brief worship experience will be included. No child care will be provided, as we are planning this as a family event. The Committee is providing the meal, so you don't need to bring anything except an empty stomach and an open heart. The Ash Wednesday Supper Service has become a great way to begin Lent ... join us! You'll be glad you did!

PALM BRANCHES NEEDED!

Last Palm Sunday the congregation was invited to keep their palm branches and then return them to Pastor Clara Thompson before Lent of 2009. If you have saved your palm branch, please bring it to church by Sunday, February 15. Last year's palms will provide the ashes for our Ash Wednesday Supper Service on Wednesday, February 25. Thank you!

FELLOWSHIP AUCTION—

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21ST

11:30 Registration begins & lunch items for sale

1:00 Live auction begins!

The Fellowship Committee has asked you to think outside the box for our upcoming auction, and you have answered the call! The fellowship auction is just around the corner and you won't want to miss it. Many fun and fabulous "items" have been donated including: a bonfire with s'mores, a boat trip and picnic, free babysitting, fresh cinnamon roll delivery, fresh produce delivery, and a seaplane ride just to name a few.

AUCTION DONATIONS ARE STILL BEING ACCEPTED THROUGH FEBRUARY 8th

There is a collection box in the foyer. Remember that we are looking primarily for "items" that promote fellowship within our

congregation: events, services, hobbies or skills you are willing to share with others.

If all goes as planned, there will be a catalog of items for sale prior to the auction. If you are interested in viewing that catalog it would probably be easiest to e-mail the information to you. There will also be some paper copies available at church.

If you are unable to attend the auction but would like to bid on an item, you may enter a proxy bid prior to the auction. If you are interested in this option, please fill out a proxy bid form and return it in the collection box in the foyer.

The live auction will begin at 1:00, but many things will begin happening at 11:30. At that time, registration will begin and you can peruse the items for sale. Depending on the donations, there may be a silent auction portion that would begin at 11:30 as well. Lunch items (sloppy joes, hot dogs, etc.) will be available for sale starting at 11:30 too. The proceeds from the lunch concessions will benefit the Montreat Youth, while the proceeds from the entire auction will benefit the Senior Recognition Luncheon.

If you have any questions, donations or proxy bids that haven't made it to the collection box, or would like to receive the auction catalog via e-mail, please contact Renee Martell at mikeandrene@charter.net or 835-8557. Thank you all for your willingness to embrace this new event. Hope to see lots of you Feb. 21st!

AUCTION VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We are in need of several individuals to assist with some of the auction duties on the day of the auction. (Don't worry! We won't ask you to be the auctioneer!) If you are willing to help with a shift, there is a sign-up sheet in the lobby, or contact Renee Martell at 835-8557.

LIFE GOT YOU DOWN?

Gather with your church family and friends and we'll help lift your spirits!

Sunday mornings at 10:30 AM

Come and see what God can do!

INSTALLATION SUNDAY

Sunday, January 18, was a day of celebration as six people were ordained and four others were installed as church officers. Ted Belanus and Eva Meyer were ordained as elders on the Session, and Marge Beers, Deb Edgren, David Mares, and Katie McGuigan were ordained as deacons. Steve Jenson, Wendy Goist Jones, and Tom Niebauer were installed as elders on the Session, and Sue McGuigan was installed to active service on the Board of Deacons. We give thanks for the special ministries that these individuals will provide!

2009 SESSION COMMITTEES

Each January, as new elders are welcomed onto the Session, the committees of the church make some changes in personnel. The following people will be chairing Session committees during the coming year. Please feel free to contact them with any questions, ideas, or concerns that you might have.

Building Committee	Steve Jenson
Christian Education	Wendy Goist Jones
Fellowship	Eva Meyer and Deb Ray
Mission	Tom Niebauer
Personnel	Deb Ray
Property	Ted Belanus and Bob Johnston
Stewardship	Dave Hanson
Worship	Jo Gregory
Clerk of Session	Dorothy Davidson

DEACONS ELECT MODERATOR AND SECRETARY

At its first meeting of the new year the Board of Deacons elected Bev Meyer as its Moderator for the year and Sue Mielke as Secretary. Thank you Bev and Sue for stepping forward to serve in this important ministry.

WHO IS YOUR DEACON?

As new Deacons come "on board" every three years you might wonder "who is my deacon now?" If your deacon "retires" you will get a "new deacon" assigned to you and the new deacons will be letting you know who they are very soon. It gives everyone a chance to know someone

new that you might not have known very well before.

THANK YOU CHURCH OFFICERS

While we welcome new church officers in January, we also always say *THANK YOU* to those who have completed their terms on the Board of Deacons or the Session. Nancy Cox, Lisa Eyers, Kelly Holthaus, Rebekah Krenz, and Inez Toepfer have each completed terms on the Board of Deacons. All of them have served our congregation's families faithfully and well, with cards, phone calls, prayers, hugs, and offers of support and care whether it comes through a visit or a meal shared. The ministry of deacons is truly one of the things that makes our church unique, and we are sincerely grateful for all of the imagination, love, time and energy that the deacons give. To each of you we say, thank you!

Steve Johnson and John Thompson have both completed their terms on the Session and Preston Baker has resigned from the Session in order to spend quality travel time with Karen in their much deserved retirement. Steve has chaired our Christian Education Committee for the past two years. He was instrumental in helping the congregation take a good look at its Sunday morning schedule and seeing if there were some ways that it could be improved. John Co-Chaired the Mission Committee for two years, the first year under the tutelage of Steve Jenson, and the second year training Tom Niebauer. John was one of those on the Session who could listen to the various perspectives, summarize the viewpoints, and then help the group draw to a faithful conclusion. Preston Baker has chaired the Christian Education Committee a few years back, and most recently has chaired the Fellowship Committee. Among Preston's fortes was taking the Senior Recognition Dinner for our retirees to a whole new level, as well as offering valuable advice regarding renting versus selling the house on W. Netherwood Road. Thank you Steve, John and Preston for your faithful service on the Session!

WELCOME ANDREA!

Andrea Wiltzius is our new Choir Director, and we extend to her a very warm welcome! A soprano and a Kohler, Wisconsin native, Andrea has performed and lived in New York, Baltimore, Chicago, Vienna, and Toronto. She has sung with the Chicago Lyric Opera's Young Artist Program and was most recently a Young Artist with the Britten-Pears Programme in London. Andrea has been either directing or singing for many prestigious Church choirs and Synagogues across the U.S. and Canada. Her last position was with the Yorkminster Park Baptist Church in Toronto, Ontario where she was the Alto soloist and Assistant Conductor. Andrea and her husband currently reside in Madison, Wisconsin. They have 3 cats and volunteer for the Dane County Friends of Ferals as foster parents for adoptable kittens and cats.

WELCOME JESSLYN!

Jesslyn Roebuck is our new Church Organist, and we extend a very warm welcome to her. Jesslyn moved to Madison, Wisconsin from New York after graduating from college in 2006. Presently, Jesslyn works at the Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group. In the future, she hopes to enter graduate school for a doctorate in English Literature and Composition or Educational Policy. She is excited to serve as church organist of the faith-based community at Oregon Presbyterian.

MONTHLY FAST

If you would like to participate in the Monthly Fast that is being encouraged by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in order better to understand the global food crisis, the February Fast begins after supper on Friday, January 30 and concludes with the Sacrament of Holy Communion on Sunday, February 1. February's focus is Increased Demand on Food, and the country that is highlighted is India. For more information, check out the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) website at: www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

All adults are encouraged to check out the following "course offerings" for upcoming weeks, and then participate in as many of them as are of interest. The class meets in the lounge, adjacent to the sanctuary, from 9:15 – 10:00 AM each Sunday morning:

February 1 "Falls," led by Jane Mahoney
February 8 "Alzheimer's Disease: What do we know, what don't we know, and strategies for treating the disease," led by Dr. Craig Atwood
February 15 TBA
February 22 "Race," led by Jessica Barmack

ADULT CLASS

In preparation for the March 1st session of Adult Sunday School, you are invited to read the New York Times best seller The Shack, by William P. Young. In this work of fiction, a man is invited to spend a weekend with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. His notions of the Trinity and his preconceptions about religion and Christianity are challenged, and he begins the process of healing several traumatic wounds he has sustained in his life. Wendy McNall will be leading the discussion. All adults are welcome to the class, which meets from 9:15 – 10:00 on Sunday mornings, whether or not you've had a chance to read the book.

THANK YOU!

The Y.U.M.M.M. breakfast on December 7th was a big success! After the wonderful combined Cantata and Children's Christmas program, the dining room was full and the youth were busy serving, cooking and cleaning up. Your generous donations totaled \$679.00 and will be used to help with expenses for the trip to Montreat this summer.

ECUMENICAL THANKSGIVING OFFERING

\$925 was donated at the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve service for the Neighbors In Need of Assistance Fund. The N.I.N.A. Fund provides needed assistance to families with children in the Oregon School District. Joe Sullivan writes, "Thank you all and please pass along my thanks to your congregations and committees for their support of the NINA Fund. The fund this year has exceeded '07 disbursements by \$3,000. I expect next year assistance to exceed \$20,000 which would put the fund in the position of passing the \$100,000 mark since its inception." "Unbelievable" describes the generosity of this community!"

Thank you to all for your generous contributions!

JOY OFFERING RECEIVED

Thank you to all of you who made generous donations to the Christmas Joy Offering during the Christmas season. The total offering received was \$750.00. Our offering will join with that of Presbyterian churches across the country to help provide supplemental income for retired church workers and their surviving spouses, and will also support Presbyterian racial ethnic schools. Thank you for your generous gifts!

MEMORIALS RECEIVED

Generous memorials for the building fund have been received in memory of Keith Gerry. How very thoughtful to remember the church as part of remembering our loved ones. Thank you to all for their memorial gifts!

THOUGHTFUL DONATION

Thank you to the members of the Monday and Friday night Alcoholics Anonymous and the Monday night Al-Anon groups for their continued financial donations to the church ...how very thoughtful!

FROM OUR MAILBAG

Dear Clara and Church Family,

Where do I begin to thank you?

Thank you for visiting us in our home, thanks also for making my Retirement Sunday "normal"...mostly! The gifts and flowers are wonderful reminders of this amazing journey.

Thank you! We'll see you "in the spring."

Love, Karen and Preston

THANK YOU!

First Presbyterian Church has been involved with the Interfaith Hospitality Network for the last two year. This is a wonderful ministry in which we provide food and shelter to homeless families enrolled in the Road Home program. Most recently in January, a group of our members contributed time, food, and energy to four families in the program. Thank you to Jessica Barmack, Mark McNall, Bev & Dave Mares, Tasha Kirch, Char & Dave Hanson, Mike Fahey, Lindsay Arndt, Judy Belanus, Jerry & Jeanne Neath, Laura Cameron, and Tim & Sam Pavel for your time, talents, and generosity.

The next opportunity to volunteer for this ministry will be in May. If you would like more information on how to get involved, please contact Wendy McNall by email at wendy.mcnall@yahoo.com or by phone at 835-8049. Thank you for your support.

FOOD PANTRY

Your Food Pantry representatives are very grateful to everyone who helped out in any way at Food Pantry, whether it was providing food, sorting or giving out food. In December we successfully served 140 families = 462 persons, and we did not run out of food.

Again, thank you.

Nancy Nelson & Joyce Larson

PER CAPITA APPORTIONMENT

Every January our church joins with Presbyterian Churches across the country in paying our Per Capita Apportionment ... the per member assessment which helps to cover the necessary administrative costs of running our Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly. This year the per capita is \$26.45. Please bear in mind that this is *per confirmed member*, not per household! Our church's total per capita bill is based on the number of confirmed members times \$26.45. This year that bill is \$6,215.75. That's a lot of money. It's not a large sum for each individual to pay, but it's a big total for the church to pay. That is why traditionally the members of this church have paid their own per capita.

A per capita envelope was included in your December/January Newsletter. Many of you have returned the envelope with your per capita payment and we sincerely thank you! If you have not yet paid your per capita, please do so as soon as you can. You may make your check out to First Presbyterian Church and mail it to 172 N. Main St., Oregon, WI 53575.

If your regular pledge to the church is intended to include your per capita, or if you can not or do not wish to pay your own per capita, that is all right. The church will pay it for you. We are happy to have you as a member. We have on our rolls students and others who can not afford to pay their own per capita and we have members in nursing homes who may not be able to pay, or may not be able to remember to pay, their per capita and this church gladly pays the per capita for them. If you would like to contribute to per capita for others, you may make an additional payment.

However you consider it, per capita is a cost of being on the membership roll of this church and your per capita of \$26.45 will be paid either by you or by the church. We hope you will decide to pay your own per capita, helping the church budget tremendously! Thank you!

Per Capita bill: \$6,215.75

Received to date: \$1,505.60

MEMBERSHIP and WORSHIP Trends

Dorothy Davidson, our Clerk of Session for 2008, reports that our church's membership increased slightly in 2008, but due to a "Reconciliation of the Rolls" it looks as if we decreased membership by 7. Our membership on December 31, 2008 was 229 confirmed members. As a congregation we added 4 people through Letters of Transfer, 4 by Reaffirmation of Faith, 2 by Profession of Faith, and 1 by Baptism and Profession of Faith. We lost 7 members through Deaths and 3 by Letters of Transfer.

Sunday morning worship attendance averaged 88 in 2008, up from 79 in 2007.

While being a member of the church is important, being active in the worship life and service life of the church is of even greater importance. Worship is the central act of the people of God. All members and friends of the church are encouraged to be a part of the worshiping community ... ***every Sunday morning at 10:30 AM.*** You may be interested in which Sundays hold the records for "highs and lows" in 2008: From highest ...

191 on Christmas Eve (72 at the 4:30 service; 119 at the 7:30 service)

178 on Cantata and Children's Christmas Program Sunday

139 on Easter Sunday (41 at 8:00 AM service; 98 at 10:30 AM service)

127 on both Youth Sunday in March and Consecration Sunday in October to lowest ...

47 in worship on July 27.

Special thanks to Judy Belanus and Chris Weigt for being our "official counters" on Sunday mornings!

WORSHIP together!

Sunday mornings at 10:30 AM
Make regular participation in worship
a priority for 2009

Come and see what God can do!

And bring a friend!

MISSION COMMITTEE BEGINS SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROJECT IN COSTA RICA

Mission Committee is excited to announce a new project in collaboration with Dolly and Grace Ledin who are in Costa Rica for the school year. Dolly is the environmental education teacher at the Cloud Forest School and Grace is a student.

First Presbyterian Church is providing a grant to Dolly to cover the cost of purchasing equipment that will aid in sampling air, water and soil temperature. Dolly provided the following summary of the project... "This equipment will be used to set up weather stations at several elevations on the school property (106 acres). Our school is involved in a long term reforestation effort on the school property. Some of the land is in primary and secondary forest, however a portion of the land was cleared for pasture. We will take weather and soil measurements at regular intervals and also monitor the growth and survival of different types of trees at various elevations and in different soil types. There are tremendous differences in micro-climate because of the elevation differences and slope direction. The long term goal is to determine which species are best to plant in different areas to increase our survival rate. We will share this information with other organizations involved in reforestation in Costa Rica. Another goal is to help our students understand that they can have an impact on the future of their community. We are figuring some of this out as we go, but there is a researcher coming from the Univ. of Wash. to help us this month. She will be starting a research project and we will work together to involve our high school students. The research will be integrated into their math and science curriculum."

Mission Committee will also be sponsoring the Sunday Morning Coffee Bar each Sunday during February. Any profits from the coffee bar will be sent to Dolly. Come enjoy coffee, tea, and a small snack on Sunday's during February. We will also have additional information on

Dolly and Grace's activities in Costa Rica at each coffee bar.

EXTRA SPECIAL PRESCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN NEWS

We hope you all enjoyed the special Christmas program in December. It was a lot of fun and we especially liked the "real" candles on the tree and the "real" candles on Eva's crown! Since there were two weeks of no Sunday School, we had plenty to share when we returned. We all got great gifts and many had visitors or went visiting. One classmate celebrated a birthday and two got haircuts for the new year!

Epiphany Sunday was all about stars and some of us even got to help Clara carry in the special stars for worship. During Sunday School we listened to the story of the Wise Men following the star to find baby Jesus. We made stars from triangles and saw our teacher make a star from bent toothpicks and water – it was cool. Project time is a favorite and we are very good at coloring, but we like markers rather than crayons. We also rock at cutting, gluing and printing our names!

Until next time.....

HOSPITALIZED

Delores Struck, Connie Mitchell, Jimmy Hudson, Pat Mullarkey, and Jim Overton have been in the hospital recently. The church family is asked to keep them in its prayers.

SYMPATHY

The prayers and sympathy of the congregation are offered to the following people who have lost loved ones in recent weeks:

Krenz family, on the death of Nadine's aunt, and also on the death of an uncle of Nadine's;
Doris Gerry, Michael and Leanne Hake, and family on the death of Keith;
John and Suzanne Severson on the death of Harriet Schneider

UPDATE FROM SESSION

The following Financial Update was presented to the congregation during worship on December 21, 2008, by Elder Dave Hanson, Chair of the Stewardship Committee:

“Good morning. I’m Dave Hanson, chair of the Stewardship Committee, and am here today to give you a Financial Update from the Session.

The downturn in the U.S. economy has also affected the finances of First Presbyterian Church. The Church Treasurer is projecting that anticipated income for 2008 will be down \$13,500 from what was expected. This means we have a shortfall for the current year’s budget.

Additionally, in our recent Stewardship Campaign, the “estimate of giving” cards received for 2009 are nearly \$13,000 less than what were received for 2008.

Therefore, in response to the current and projected financial situation, the Session instituted a “spending freeze” for all non-essential expenditures which began in mid-November. In forming a budget for 2009, the Session has frozen salaries for all staff at 2008 levels, and has cut a total of 6% from 2008 budgeted amounts, in order to have a balanced budget for 2009. Money will be tight at church for the coming year, just as it most likely will be in our own homes.

Thank you for remembering the church and its programs in prayer, and in any way that you are able to financially, in these difficult times. Your support is truly appreciated.”

Pastor Clara Thompson then expressed her sincere appreciation to the Session for its faithful work in being responsible for the church’s finances. The Session has worked very hard in these difficult economic times, and the thanks of the congregation were then expressed by applause.

THESE DAYS Devotional Booklets

First Presbyterian Church is pleased to be able to provide our members and friends with the “*These Days*” Devotional Booklets. These quarterly booklets are available on the small table in the church’s foyer. The cost for each booklet, each quarter, is \$4.50 a piece. If you are able to help defray the cost of the booklets you take, please do so by writing a check to First Presbyterian Church and writing “*These Days*” on the memo line. Thank you so much!

NEW ADDRESS

Temporary address change

Jeff Friebert, Sally Kopecky, Amanda Quam
731 Edenberry Lane
Oregon, WI 53575

