



SteepleTalk

February 2009

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Member Care Volunteer

Judy Leonard

Deacon of Month/ Visiting Deacons

Hal Bone
Scott Harris

Steepletalk Deadline

February 20th

Circle Meeting

February 3rd at 9:45 a.m.

From the Pastor...

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, February 25, 2009. Therefore, I want to share some reflections about Lent.

“Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.” (Deuteronomy 26:11)

I suppose that celebration and Lent are two words that are seldom, if ever, found together. Lent equals penitence and sacrifice; celebration equals, well, fun and frolic. Yet, I want to suggest that celebration must be a part of Lent if Lent is to have its full power in our lives. I think the old book of Deuteronomy is helpful to make this connection.

When the Hebrews urged one another to bring their first-fruits to the sanctuary—the results of their hard labors for themselves, their families, and their communities—they demanded two things: memory and celebration. Memory was first, but not just any memory. Not the memory of the hard work they had done. Not the memory of their past successes or failures as workers, parents, citizens. The first declared memory was spoken to the priest in the sanctuary: ***“Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us”*** (Deuteronomy 26:3b). It is God’s actions that are first remembered and announced. One might say that the service begins with doxology; doxology does not follow the offering but precedes it.

That primary memory of God’s great gift of land is followed by the memory of God’s great work of salvation. The closest thing we find to an Israelite creed begins, “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor,” and continues with an account of God’s victory in Egypt and God’s gift of the land of promise. Interestingly, the word usually translated wandering, suggesting the nomadic origins of the Israelite forebears, can also be translated perishing or dying. This dual meaning is important. Israel remembers its past not simply as nomadic but also as perishing. Without God’s action, they would have died in their wandering; they would have found no final place of rest; they would have perished, forgotten and alone.

The ancient announcement places the emphasis squarely on God, who makes possible any actions on our part, actions that must always be seen as reactions to the prior actions of a God who loves us unreservedly. Earlier in Deuteronomy, we read that the choice of Israel in Egypt was made for one simple and incredible reason: ***“It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors”*** (Deuteronomy 7:7-8a). It is only God’s love for us that makes possible our love for one another. The first letter of John in the New Testament (see especially chapter 4) was hardly the first ancient writing to make that central claim of the gospel!

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From the Pastor continued.....

Yet, it is never enough merely to announce a memory. If a memory is to have present power, it must be shared. In short, it must be celebrated. After the gift has been presented in the sanctuary, after the memory of the great actions of God have been proclaimed, then it is time to party! Memory is made for celebration; memory means little unless it is re-presented in joyous celebration. But watch out! Not just any sort of party will do. Note carefully the guest list. ***“Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate.”*** Two groups are singled out for this celebratory party. Although there has been considerable discussion concerning the origins and work of the Levites, two things can safely be said. First, the Levites had no property of their own and were to remain landless. This requirement no doubt was a great hardship in a community that measured much of its wealth and power in terms of ancestral land. Second, most indications are that the Levites did the menial tasks in the worship of Israel. Perhaps we could say that they were the communion stewards, the candle wax cleaners, the light bulb changers of their day. In short, they were people with little power. Even their earlier teaching function was eventually usurped by the scribes. To invite a Levite to the party is to invite a marginalized person.

The second group who is to attend the party was the aliens. These were foreigners who were living in Israel for a certain period of time for any number of reasons; including employment, escape from persecutions in their homelands, and slavery that had turned to freedom. One could imagine many undocumented workers among this crowd, persons who did not quite sound, or look, or act like the Israelites we know.

The party to celebrate the memory of God is a decidedly odd one. “Custodians” and “wetbacks” head the list of guests! If that sounds peculiar, and certainly unlike the most recent parties I have attended, it is not strange at all in the world of Deuteronomy. After all, in Moses’ listing of the Ten Commandments in chapter 5, he says that we all should celebrate the Sabbath because of an important memory we all should have: ***“Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, . . . therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day”*** (Deuteronomy 5:15). Without the power of God’s gifts to us, we all are slaves and are doomed to remain enslaved forever.

Of course, Jesus knew the importance of the right guest list for giving a party. In Luke’s Gospel, when he noticed how guests at a party that he attended were elbowing one another to get to the best seats in the house, he suggested they think differently about their proper places. ***“When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed”*** (Luke 14:12-14a). The constant and clear memory of what God has done for you must lead to a new form of community wherein those on the margin are brought into the center of the circle with those who traditionally have the power. Why? Because, without the loving gifts of God, we are all on the margin.

Memory and celebration are the hallmarks of a proper Lenten observance. But only the right sort of memory and the right sort of celebration, with the right sort of guest list, will finally do in this new world of grace and gift, freely offered by the God who stands at the center of all of our lives.

Blessings,
Dr. Cheetham



I want to thank each member of the congregation for the wonderful gifts and cards received during this Christmas season. You are truly a blessing to me.
Gary

Wednesday Night Fellowship Dinners 6:00 p.m.

Adults \$6 Children under 10 years \$3.00
Under 5 years "Free"

Reservations must be made no later than noon on Tuesday. Programs are announced in the Sunday bulletin.

Deepest Sympathy

Deepest sympathy is extended to:

The family of Bill Howard who died on Saturday, January 17th. His funeral service was held January 20th.

Faye Brown upon the death of her nephew, Robert Brown, who died on Thursday, January 22nd.

Philip Barnes and family upon the death of his brother, C. W. Barnes, on January 25th.

New Members

We welcome Bob and Robin Orewiler as the newest members of our congregation. Bob and Robin were received by letter of transfer from Powell Presbyterian Church, Powell, TN on January 18th.

Congratulations:

To Hal and Tracey Bone upon the birth of Katherine Elizabeth Bone on January 25th. Gordon and Pat Bone are the proud grandparents.

To Rebecca and Darin Crew upon the birth of Eloise Jennings Crew on December 5th in Baltimore, MD. David and Barbara Howell are the proud grandparents.

From the Associate Pastor...

The Christmas Season is now past and with it the wonders and the busy life it brings have begun to fade away. Having had the month of January to rest from and reflect about the wonderful Season where we celebrate our Savior's birth, I have found myself thinking that there is something we all might be missing at the church and in our own lives sometimes, Spirituality. The church is a place that is for people to come and worship God and gather together to care about one another, but I believe sometimes in our hectic lives we forget that spiritual growth and discipline is an important aspect of being a Christian. Believe me, I am one to forget this as much as anyone else.

There is something about being spiritual through out your day that brings you more aware of your surroundings and the way God is moving through your life. There is a new energy that seems to burst within you when you find time for spiritual discernment and growth in your life. We all might have time where we pray to God alone, but how often do we do it in groups or in community? Spiritual growth is not something that will be accomplished by yourself but through the people who are there with you on your journey. People that you can pray with, pray for, read scripture with, who you can explore and talk about your faith.

Our hope at the church is to start being more intentional about gathering together in a time of prayer and communion. We will be starting soon a Prayer Breakfast on Saturday mornings. Our first one will be later this month on February 28th at 8:30 am. Our hope is also to start a bible study on Sunday Evenings. What are ideas that you have that we as a church can help each other explore the spiritual side of church more intently? We would love to hear some of your ideas, and some of your struggles and needs of spiritual growth. God has created the church so that we may bless, love, nurture, guide, and explore our lives and faith together as spiritual beings. A wise person told me once, "a spiritual church is a healthy church". Let us all try to experience new ways of spirituality at our church and in our lives.

Grace and Peace,
Nick

January Session Highlights

- Tracey Hay was re-elected Treasurer
- Mimi Hurd was elected Clerk
- Robin and Bob Orewiler were welcomed into membership at First Presbyterian Lebanon.
- The Session approved changing the Personnel Committee so that it consists of 5 members - 3 elders, 1 deacon and 1 member-at-large, rather than the previous combination of 7 members, all elders.
- The Session approved that selection of the member-at-large Personnel Committee candidate be made by the Nominating Committee, with approval by Session.
- Financial contributions for 2008 totaled \$254,841.29. The bank balance as of December 31, 2008 was \$17,362.92.
- J.R. Wauford presented the 2009 Budget, which was approved. The budget provides that \$81,285.00 of reserve funds be used to meet expenses.
- The Youth will participate in Souper Bowl Sunday with a goal to better the \$538 and 213 items from 2008. They will present a promotional video at both services on January 25th.
- The chairmanship of the Kitchen Committee has not been reassigned. It is a subcommittee of the Member Care Committee.
- Deborah Sanders has resigned as Sunday School Superintendent.
- Elders Kathy Adams and Terry McDonald will attend the Presbytery Meeting in February.

Committee Chairs for 2009 are as follows:

- Budget & Finance – J.R. Wauford
- Buildings & Grounds – Phillip Barnes
- Christian Education – Dot Jenkins
- Member Care – Richard Pellerin
- Outreach – Mark Sanders
- Worship – Richard Hartwell
- Personnel – Pat Bone
- Nominating – Mimi Hurd
- Kathy Adams volunteered to serve as Deacon Liaison

Most committees will meet on the first Monday of each month beginning at 5:30 p.m..

Ash Wednesday Service
February 25th
6:45 p.m.

Lectionary Readings

February 1	Deuteronomy 18: 15-20 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13 Mark 1: 21-28
February 8	Isaiah 40: 21-31 1 Corinthians 9: 16-23 Mark 1: 29-39
February 15	2 Kings 5: 1-14 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27 Mark 1: 40-45
February 22	2 Kings 2: 1-12 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 Mark 9: 2-9

Youth Activities

February 1st - Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday!

Come and join us after either worship services to collect food and money for people who are in need of food and don't even have a bowl of soup to eat on Super Bowl Sunday. For those who want to go with us, we will be taking our collections to the Community Help Center at 12:15 pm that afternoon, and should be back by 12:45 p.m.

February 8th & 15th- Regular Youth Activities

4:45 p.m.- Elementary Fellowship

5:45 p.m.- Elementary & Youth Dinner

6:15 p.m.- Youth Fellowship.

February 22nd - Game Night!- Bring a friend and your favorite game as we share in a time of fun and fellowship!

Deacon's Chili Meal

Time is near for the Annual Deacon's Chili Meal. This year our chili meal will be a week early, February 18th. Come join us for our great chili. Tickets are still \$5.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children under 12. See a Deacon for tickets. Carry-out boxes will also be available. For those who are unable to eat beef, there will also be vegetarian chili .



Patrons return year after year for the delicious chili and scrumptious homemade desserts. It takes a lot of desserts to feed 300 people. Please contact Linda Bramhall if you can provide any cakes, pies, or cookies for the Deacon's Chili Meal.

February 2009

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Communion Souper Bowl of Caring	9:30 am Morning Sewing Group 5:30 Building Com 6:00 Christian Ed. 6:00 Member Care 7:00 Outreach 7:00 Worship	9:00 am PreSchool 9:45 am Morning Circle 4:00 pm Knitting	6:00 Dinner 7:15 Choir	9:00 am Preschool 10:00 am Garden Club 6:30 pm Contemp		Presbytery Meeting
8 7:15 pm Session	9 9:30 am Morning Sewing Group 6:30 pm Southern Stars	10 9:00 am PreSchool 4:00 pm Knitting	11 6:00 Dinner 7:15 Choir	12 9:00 am Preschool 6:30 pm Contemp	13 11:30 am Wellness Class	14
15 5:00 pm Deacon's Meeting	16 9:30 am Morning Sewing Group 6:30 pm Fellowship in use	17 9:00 am PreSchool 4:00 pm Knitting	18 Deacon's Chili Meal	19 9:00 am Preschool 6:30 pm Contemp	20 11:30 am Wellness Class Steepletalk Deadline	21
22	23 9:30 am Morning Sewing Group	24 9:00 am PreSchool 4:00 pm Knitting	25 6:00 Dinner 7:15 Choir Ash Wednesday	26 9:00 am Preschool 6:30 pm Contemp	27	28
4 Cents a Meal						