

First Presbyterian Church

EPISTLE

Our vision: Seeking God first, who first loved us.

*Our Mission: Knowing & loving God; obeying & worshiping him together;
sharing Jesus & his love with everyone.*

November 2008

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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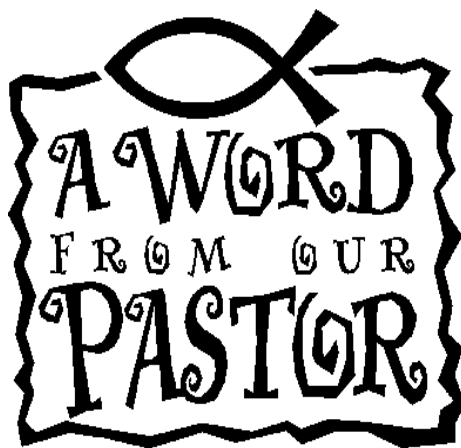
Sandy Gaskins,

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*"The Epistle" is a monthly
publication of
First Presbyterian Church,
Duncanville, Texas.*

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Have you ever considered the importance of vocabulary? Recently I was called for jury duty. The attorneys passed out a survey for the jury pool to complete. At the bottom of the page, potential jurors were asked to identify ourselves by the terms "conservative" or "liberal." Why would that matter, I thought, somewhat defensively? Choice of words can categorize us. And, if we happen to think about certain issues using a certain vocabulary, those words can capture the mindset.

Speaking of mindset, when it comes to stewardship, how does vocabulary affect us? Words like obligation or budget or responsibility classifies stewardship as having to do with the bills. Those words distort what stewardship is all about. They also quietly say the burden is on us, and it is a heavy one. If, however, we think about the real meaning of stewardship, then our vocabulary more appropriately reflects the blessing that stewardship is. Words might be generosity, sacrificial risk-taking, learning to be like God. Those words foster a mindset of learning to trust God; of taking a chance of faith. These words open up the opportunity of seeing what God might do. They are words that encourage our hearts instead of our minds to lead the way. They also open the way for God to generously bless us, which God promises to do.

Being a steward means we offer rather than pay; we share our bounty rather than give what the church needs, and we focus on our spiritual wellbeing rather than our financial portfolio. Gifts offered in this way acknowledge a mindset of God's faithfulness rather than an attitude of scarcity because economic times are bad. As you prayerfully consider your commitment for 2009, may you find the liberation of a vocabulary that truly reflects the wonderful meaning of stewardship. As we trust God together with our giving, may the excitement of expectation capture your mindset for the bountiful future that is to come.

Blessings, Ginger

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Worship Committee

SYMBOLS of our faith...Symbols of the Trinity



One of the most artistic symbols of the Trinity is the Fleur-de-lis. Its three distinct areas are individualistic but yet the design is one. The symbol of the fleur-de-lis had its origin in an ancient custom of France where royalty was designated by a lily or iris held in the hand as a scepter. This fleur-de-lis symbol was used in the banner of Jeanne d'Arc and is used also as a symbol for Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The Seasons of the Church Year

We keep track of time and seasons of the year by using calendars that provide us opportunities to observe, commemorate, and celebrate certain events or occasions. The changing seasons of the year also provide us with recurring opportunities to celebrate the Christian Faith in worship. The Christian church, following earlier Jewish tradition, has long used the seasons of the year as an opportunity for festivals and holidays, **sacred time** set aside to worship God as the Lord of life.

While Jewish celebration revolves around the Exodus from Egypt, the Christian Church year focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus. The sequence of festivals from Advent to Resurrection Sunday becomes an annual spiritual journey for worshippers as they kneel at the manger, listen on a hillside, walk the streets of Jerusalem, hear the roar of the mob, stand beneath the cross, and witness the resurrection! The rest of the church year provides opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the coming of Jesus and his commission to his people to be a light to the world.

Many churches in the Protestant tradition do not celebrate in any deliberate or sustained way the various seasons of the church year beyond Christmas and Easter. However, the observance of the seasons of the church year has a long history in the life of the Christian Faith. When most of the people in the church were poor and had no access to education, the church festivals and the cycle of the church year provided a vehicle for teaching the story of God and his actions in human history. Even in the Old Testament, the concept of sacred time became a vehicle for teaching the faith (for example, Exodus 12-13). Planned and purposeful observance of the Christian seasons and festivals can become an important tool for education and discipleship in the Faith, as well as a vehicle for spiritual growth and vitality.

As a congregation moves through the church calendar, they are presented in an organized way with the opportunity to talk about, reflect upon, and respond to the entire range of faith confessions that lie at the heart of the Christian Faith. This is important, not only for the vitality of the whole community, but especially for children to become aware in the context of community celebration those things that are important to their Faith (Deut 6:20-25).

The Christian calendar is organized around two major centers of Sacred Time: **Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany**; and **Lent, Holy Week, and Easter**, concluding at **Pentecost**. The rest of the year following Pentecost is known as Ordinary Time, from the word "ordinal," which simply means counted time (First Sunday after Pentecost, etc.). Ordinary Time is used to focus on various aspects of the Faith, especially the mission of the church in the world. Some church traditions break up ordinary time into a Pentecost Season, (Pentecost until the next to last Sunday of August) and Kingdomtide (last Sunday of August until the beginning of Advent).

Some Protestant churches also celebrate other days not specifically tied to these cycles, such as **Reformation Sunday** and **All Saints Sunday**. These are becoming increasingly popular ways to flesh out the themes of the Church in the World during Ordinary Time by focusing on heritage and the faithfulness of those in the past.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE Continued

Worship Committee
Continued

A few churches are beginning to observe some of the feast days for saints, such as the Sunday nearest October 4 for Francis of Assisi, in order to call attention to particular emphases throughout the year. It is an attempt to allow the Church and its history rather than secular culture to set the agenda for the Church's teaching and ministry.

Following the church year is more than simply marking time on a calendar or a note in the church bulletin. Every effort should be made to use the various aspects of the church year as an opportunity to tell the story of God's redemptive work in the world.

Many churches have relied almost solely on the spoken word to carry the burden of proclamation. However, even in the Old Testament the services of worship involved all of the senses: sight, smell, taste, touch, as well as hearing. Modern learning theory also indicates that the more senses are involved in an experience, the more impact it makes, especially for children.

One simple avenue that can assist in tracking the seasons of the church year for worshippers, as well as providing a visual context for worship, is the use of **Colors of the Church Year** in the sanctuary. Different colors are associated with different seasons, and the changing colors of communion table and pulpit coverings (called paraments), or wall banners, provide visual clues for the seasons.

The exact time of the seasons, and even some of the seasons themselves, differ within various traditions, especially in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. This is due both to various historical emphases, different ways of calculating the days, as well as using different calendars.

- Advent Nov 30 - Dec 24, 2008)
- Advent Season (Nov 30 - Dec 24, 2008)
- Christmas (Dec 25, 2008 - Jan 5, 2009)
- The Twelve Days of Christmas (Dec 25, 2008 - Jan 5, 2009)
- Epiphany (and Ordinary Time until Lent) (Jan 6 - Feb 24, 2009)
- Shrove Tuesday or Mardi Gras (Feb 24, 2009)
- Ash Wednesday (Feb 25, 2009)
- Lent (Mar 1 - April 11, 2009)
- Holy Week (March 5-11 (12), 2009)
- Maundy Thursday (April 9, 2009)
- Good Friday (April 10, 2009)
- Easter (April 12, 2009)
- Pentecost (May 31, 2009)
- Ordinary Time (June 1-Nov 28, 2009)

During this next year, more information about the specific seasons will be written about.
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Advent begins on Sunday, November 30th. We'll be setting up the tree and hanging the greens on Saturday, November 29th from 9:00 a.m.-Noon. We hope to see some familiar faces as well as some new faces to enjoy this special event together.



STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship

IT'S STEWARDSHIP TIME

Just what is stewardship? Before we answer that question it might be more appropriate to ask, what is a steward? Dictionary.com defines a steward as “a person who manages another's property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others.” When we think of that in terms of God, we realize that we have the great privilege of managing God’s property and financial affairs. We are God’s agent in the world.

If we see stewardship through the lens of God’s provision and care, we are in a position of great benefit because the burden of our needs is placed squarely on our loving Father in heaven. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount,

“You cannot serve both God and money. That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life-- whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need (Mt. 6:24b-33).

It takes faith, of course, to apply this Scripture. In fact, stewardship is not about budgets and the financial needs of the church but about trusting God and seeing God as our provider. Stewardship is ultimately about giving ourselves to God first because we can only trust God when God is front and center in our lives. Jesus tells us “serve God first; and then don’t worry.” Worry will take a back seat when we do put God first and seek Him above all else.

Then when we give, that gift will through the church stand as a beacon of light in the community for things like worshipping God instead of living secularly; it will stand for generosity toward our neighbors who might be needy; and it will stand as a witness that our own lives are about more than simply “eat, drink, and be merry.”

What is stewardship? It’s a chance to be a partner with God in God’s work in the world. Stewardship leads to friendship with God. Stewardship is the great blessing of the Christian who dares to be a disciple and participates in the lifestyle of God.

"steward." *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. 30 Oct. 2008. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/steward>>.

PROPERTY COMMITTEE NEWS



Please mark your calendars now for a **church-wide work and clean-up day** on Saturday November 8 from 9am to 12pm. We will have a list of jobs or projects which you can sign up to do on that day posted on the kiosk in the Narthex. A hot-dog lunch will be provided after the work is done, so please plan on coming out on Saturday, November 8. We need everyone to do his/her part in helping to maintain and improve our church property and facilities. If you are not able to come on that Saturday, please consider helping out on another day of your choice—just contact Helen Barton and let her know what you would like to do!!

Property
Committee
News

MISSIONS

Did you realize that when the value of the US dollar goes up or down in value relative to the EURO and some other currencies, it can affect the income of American missionaries working overseas? That includes the teams our church supports. The US dollar's value went down quite a lot for a long time, and it affected some of those families. So much so, that one family has not been able to return to their chosen country of assignment, as they seek to increase their income. Recently, however, the value of the dollar has been rising again, which has eased their situation somewhat. Anyway, we thought



Missions

PW
News

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN NEWS

We would love to have all women of the church attend a Circle, so please consider joining either the daytime Agape Circle or the evening Sarah Circle. Lois Harmon is the Circle leader for the Agape group and Joan Brown is the leader for the Sarah Circle.

The study for this year will be the PW Horizon's Bible Study taken from the Gospel of Luke:

Jubilee!
Luke's Gospel for the Poor
by Dale Lindsay Morgan

In the nine lessons of *Jubilee! Luke's Gospel for the Poor*, Dale Lindsay Morgan highlights Jesus' message of jubilee: ". . . he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. . . . to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free . . ." (*Luke 4:18*). Learn about the many ways that Christ's jubilee message turned the world upside down, exalting the poor and including outsiders, bringing the love of God to all.

Sarah Circle: Meeting Thursday, November 6 at 7:30 pm at the home of Jocelyn Bolles, 619 Athenia Way, Duncanville, 972-296-2715. Marna Bayless is co-hostess and Nancy Bergman leads the lesson.

Agape Circle: Meeting Friday, November 14 at 10:00 am at the home of Lois Harmon, 207 N. Venice Drive, Duncanville, 972-296-8224.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN NEWS continued

**PW
News
continued**

**Congo
Life**



**PW CHRISTMAS AUCTION AND
SPAGHETTI SUPPER
COMING SOON!!!**

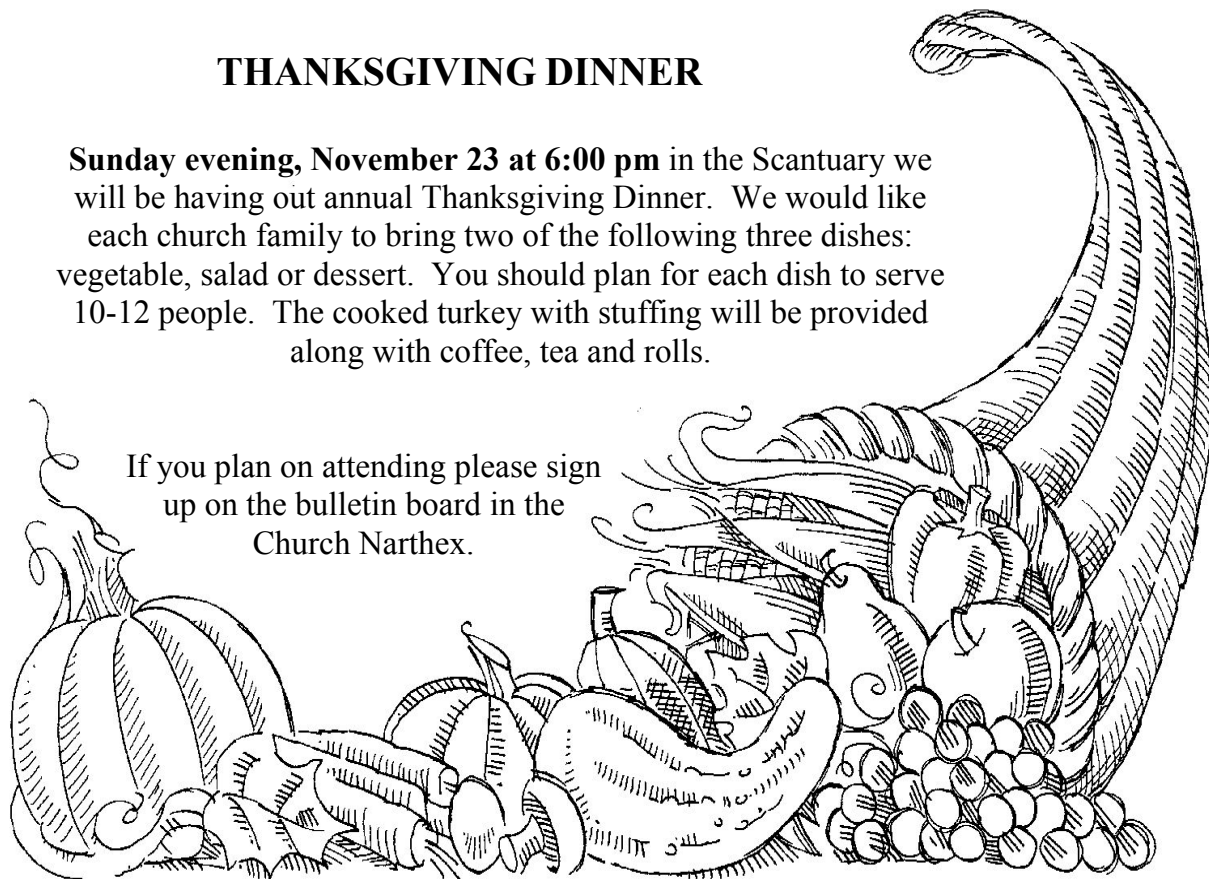
Christmas is just around the corner, so plan now to attend this fun event on **Saturday evening, December 6 at 6:00 pm** in the Fellowship Hall.

CONGO LIFE

THANKSGIVING DINNER

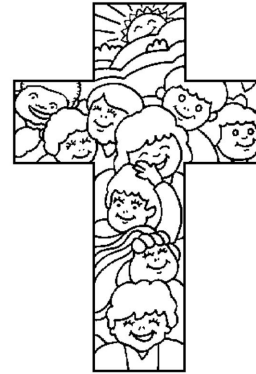
Sunday evening, November 23 at 6:00 pm in the Scantuary we will be having out annual Thanksgiving Dinner. We would like each church family to bring two of the following three dishes: vegetable, salad or dessert. You should plan for each dish to serve 10-12 people. The cooked turkey with stuffing will be provided along with coffee, tea and rolls.

If you plan on attending please sign up on the bulletin board in the Church Narthex.



CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL**CLASS REPORT**

During the last 4 Sundays the children's Sunday School class has been learning about God's protection of Moses, and the special plan God had for his life. The first Sunday the class planted seeds in soil around a container of water and then put a toy baby in the top part of a Bur Oak tree acorn to represent Moses in a basket in the Nile River. They learned the first verse of the song "Moses."



**Children's
Sunday
School**

"Moses boy, sleeping in the Nile
Moses boy, in a little while,
Pharaoh's daughter's coming. She'll take you home
God is watching over, you're not alone."

By the second Sunday, the seeds had grown to look like bulrushes. They reviewed the story and Bible verse and played a game. After watching a short movie about Baby Moses, they sang along with the song at the end of the movie, "How Awesome is Our God." They also learned to play the autoharp and tone bells with the Moses song.

On the third Sunday they watched another short movie about when God got Moses' attention by talking from a bush that was burning but not burning up. The memory verse was, "I Will Be With You." They made a picture of a burning bush from colored construction paper and they sang and played the second verse of the Moses song.

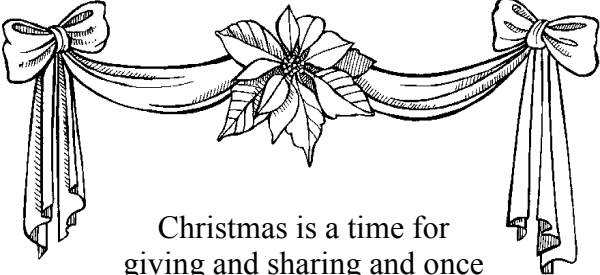
"Moses man, God is calling you
Moses man, here's what you must do
Lead your captive people out of that land.
Lead them home to Canaan, Moses man."

The fourth Sunday, was a review again of both parts of the story. We used a sticker book and talked about Moses making excuses to God and how we make excuse, too. Moses said he could not speak and didn't think Pharaoh would listen. God reassured him in several ways that He would be with him. The class members made canes out of clay and learned about when Moses threw down his cane in front of Pharaoh and how it turned into a snake. They briefly talked about the plagues that God sent to the Egyptians.

Our children are eager learners and really get involved with the Bible stories. What our children learn in Sunday School builds each week and through out the year. All experiences, VBS, children's moments, church family gatherings etc. add together through out the years to help form their belief systems.

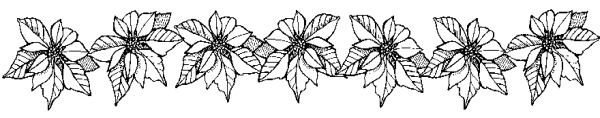
For more information check out the bulletin board.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE



Christmas is a time for giving and sharing and once again the Personnel Committee is asking that you consider a Special Holiday Gift offering for the paid staff of our church. These funds may be placed in the offering plates anytime between now and December 14th. They will be shared pro rata to the staff by Session representatives of the Christian Education, Finance and Worship committees. Your generosity is appreciated and I thank you for your consideration.

Darrell Ingram
Finance Committee



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

Dear Friends,

Beginning Sunday, November 9th, Sunday School class will begin a topical study on *What's So Amazing About Grace?* by Philip Yancey. This series is a very practical look at how the elements of grace and forgiveness can empower your life. Grace is not just a "fluffy concept," Philip Yancey writes, but a very precious and amazing gift. We will couple real-life experiences of people with the scriptures and see the power of radical, life-changing grace.

You don't want to miss it. 9:15 sharp!

"Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Revelation 7:12, NRSV

BIRTHDAYS!

If you think we might not have a record of your birthday and you would like us to include it in the "birthday" section of the newsletter, please contact the office (972) 298-3043. Thank you.



- Mary Huttar—11/3
- Albert Teel—11/3
- Tonya Jespersen—11/4
- Teresa Reed—11/6
- Dave Bolles—11/9
- Dub Guthrie—11/9
- Armelia Jimmerson—11/11
- Bill Farish—11/12
- Charlie Glover—11/15
- Robyn Reed—11/16
- Bob Moore—11/28

THE FUNNY SIDE OF PARENTING

Frustrated, I was hunting all over the house for my cordless phone. After several minutes of searching, my ten-year-old son said, "You know Mom, I've got an idea. We should invent a phone that stays connected to its base so it never gets lost."

ATTENDANCE

October 2007	October 2008
7–October–63	5–October–73
14–October–46	12–October–63
21–October–50	19–October–61
28–October–63	26–October–67

Bookkeeper's Report

August 2008	
Receipts	Expenditures
\$17,016	\$14,697

Personnel Committee

Adult Sunday School

Birthdays

The Funny Side of Parenting

Attendance

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Christian Education — 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service — 10:30 a.m.

WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

Youth Group — 7:30-9:30 p.m.