



December

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ICHTHUS

December 2011

The Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church, Smithfield, North Carolina

Reflections in the Water – Christ our Morning Star, a Rose from Heaven



“When they stand under the Christian Cross, Hearts turn to Roses.”– from the seal of Martin Luther

“So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the **morning star** rises in your hearts.” — II Peter 1:19, NRSV

““It is I, Jesus . . . I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright **morning star**.”” — Revelation 22:16, NRSV

During my first few weeks at First Presbyterian Church, I conducted a class to survey the meaning of sacred space and the use of symbols in Christian tradition and practice. At the time I felt this was an important exercise as we envisioned and planned for our future. In the midst of those uncertain days of preparation, we prayed to create a new facility that reflected our mission and our mutual calling as the Church. Almost five years later, one of the key features that has emerged in our final design is that our building unfolds along the axis of a large cross and continues that cruciform theme in other areas. This pattern may go unnoticed to a casual observer, but the regular repetition of the design, even within smaller architectural details, proclaims to the community who we are in mission and to whom we belong in Jesus Christ. Such symbols play an important part in the expression of the sacred space and life of the Church. The table and font and pulpit are the powerful symbols of the Word and stand at the heart of Christian Reformed worship along with the cross. There are other ancient if less familiar symbols, such as the fish, the butterfly, the dove, and the burning bush, that appear in our regular worship and practice.

Recently, I came upon the use of one of these lesser known symbols, the five-petal rose which has been included as a common feature of church architecture and design for centuries. While the rose as a design element may be quite familiar to us, I was amazed to learn that the five petal design has an ancient and as well as ‘heavenly’ origin. At a time when the Earth was considered the center of the Universe, it was observed that the planet Venus or ‘Morning Star’ formed a ‘five petal rose’ in the course of its orbit over an eight year period as observed from our world. Venus as the Morning Star also has had a strong association with the mythical bird, the Phoenix which in Christian Egypt and the Coptic Church had a strong symbolic association with the theology of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The scriptural references to Christ as the Morning Star take on cosmological significance when expressed in the five petal rose design, an earthly floral pattern we accept as commonplace without even thinking to look heavenward.



The reformer Martin Luther superimposed the cross against the five petal rose or morning star as his personal monogram. For just as the cross speaks of redemption and salvation, the morning star also heralds the beginning of a new day. Putting these symbols together, Luther understood his own identity as a call to tell the story of Jesus Christ as a new day dawning for humanity. Through symbol, through word, through deed, we are called this Advent Season to welcome the Morning Star of Heaven into our lives and dispel our dark night. We invite the Messiah, who is the Light of the World to come into our hearts and extend to us the Hope of Salvation through the Glory of His Cross.

I wish you all a blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas,
Pastor Joe

Prayerful Support for



Mary Alice Thomas in Charlotte.
Marie Gupton and Nor Bell at Barbour Court.
Dorothy Onisko and Lib Walsh at Carolina House.

Clara Scouten who has been moved to Spring Arbor of Durham, 42223 Hope Valley Road, room 202, Durham, NC 27707.

Martha Rogers in Norfolk, VA.

John Shallcross and Shirley Wooten at Smithfield Manor.

Devon Pollard at home.

Congratulations to Meredith and Brandon Locklear on the birth of a daughter, Brooklyn Sage, on November 1, 2011. **Lucy and Neil Watson** are the proud grandparents; and to **Shelley and Chris Roberts** on the birth of a daughter, Eason Sloane, on November 11, 2011. **Sandy and Eddie Perkinson** are the proud grandparents.

From the Treasurer

As we get ready for the new year, I am preparing the 2012 giving envelopes. Everyone who has received envelopes in the past or has pledged will receive a box of these envelopes. Families who give through a bill pay type mechanism will be assigned a number but not be given a box. Please let me know if you want to make a change or if you haven't received envelopes in the past but would like to now. Also, you can request envelopes for your children to use. Please send your request to me as soon as possible at obdo@aol.com. Additional Capital Campaign giving envelopes can be picked up from the table in the parlor.



Thank you.

— Beth Osborne

First Presbyterian Church

presents

Cookies and a Picture

with Santa

December 11

3:00—5:00 p.m.

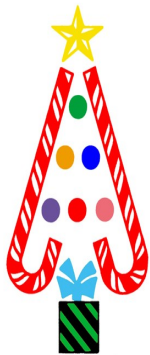
Lawrence Hall

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

All children, parents and

grandparents are welcome!

Proceeds go to the preschool.



Looking for a Christmas Gift?

The Christian Education Committee is reviewing and considering a new curriculum for 2012 called SPARK. The publisher offers story bibles for young children and NRSV Bibles for elementary children. In February we will present our fourth and fifth graders NRSV Bibles and then participate in a course called Learning for



Use My Bible. We get free shipping if we order by December 14. The cost is \$15.99 per bible. You may use an order form you will find on the table in the parlor, or you may contact Cameron Womack.



Adam Worley

Adam Worley, son of Paul and Tony Worley and grandson of Norwood and Jean Worley, earned his yellow belt in karate on November 10. Adam is a student at the Majestic Martial Arts School at Health Quest. In order to earn the yellow belt, Adam had to demonstrate proficiency in the various stances, blocks, kicks and katas.



Adam is a first grader at Neuse Charter School. He enjoys sports and participates in soccer, basketball and t-ball with Smithfield Parks and Recreation. He also enjoys playing computer games and working jigsaw puzzles. Adam especially likes listening to his iPod and watching and reading about Star Wars and superheroes.

Make sure to congratulate Adam when you see him.

(Editor's note: This spotlight feature is a new addition to our newsletter. Its goal is to share the contributions and accomplishments of our children and youth with the congregation. If you know of someone you would like to see spotlighted, please contact Cameron Womack.)



Greetings from First Presbyterian Preschool! November is such a special month at preschool as we are so thankful for our many blessings!

The children made Native American dresses and vests out of pillowcases. Leaves, stars, fish, trees, shells, and the sun were then painted on to complete our colorful outfits that were worn at our Thanksgiving Feast. We enjoyed chicken, corn, muffins, applesauce, pie, carrots, and juice. We made our butter by shaking whipping cream in a jar. Everything was delicious! What a joy to welcome many of our families as they joined us for wonderful fellowship and food at our feast.

Soon we will begin our Christmas activities! Our Christmas programs will be Tuesday, December 13, for our four year old children and Wednesday, December 14, for our two and three year old children. Please join us for these sweet programs at FPC.

We hope everyone at First Presbyterian Church has a blessed and wonderful Christmas!

— Melissa Pilkington

Relay for Life Changes Venues

For many years Johnston County's Relay for Life has been held at Johnston Community College. This year's Relay will be held at Smithfield-Selma High School the first weekend in June. Dr. Ed Croom, Johnston County Superintendent of Schools, will serve as our honorary Johnston County Relay Chair. This will be a 24-hour event beginning at 5:00 p.m. on Friday and ending at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. We will keep you posted as more details come forward about this important event in the fight against cancer.



If you would like to serve on our Relay Committee, please contact Joy Worsham.

—Joy Worsham

HIGHLIGHTS

from the November Stated Session Meeting

- Received new members Jayson Naylor, Bobbie Hartman, David Hartman, David Rice, and Kathy Rice by Reaffirmation of Faith.
- Received new member Rodney Wilson by Baptism and Profession of Faith.
- Received and approved a request from Ross and Pam Hailey to move their membership from First Presbyterian Church, Washington, NC, to First Presbyterian Church, Smithfield, NC.
- Approved an offsite meeting for the Middle School PYC to shop for Operation Christmas Child.
- Approved a recommendation from the Finance Committee to distribute a letter with an outline budget of committee requests prior to Stewardship Sunday.
- Approved the pastor's request for leave the first weekend in December to attend his installation ceremony as Grand Chaplain for the 2012 Grand Lodge of North Carolina. Cameron Womack will preach on Sunday, December 4, 2011.
- Approved moving communion to December 11, 2011.
- Approved scheduling the Joint Officer's Meeting and Retreat for January 6-7, 2012.
- Approved the recommendation from Finance to move the remaining funds from the Martin Youth Fund to the Youth Activities account to help fund the trip to the Faith in 3-D Conference in January.
- Approved holding the following events for the preschool: Preschool Sunday, October 14, 2012; Chick Filet Spirit Night, March 27, 2012; Preschool Fun Fair, April 21, 2012, and Cookies with Santa, December 11, 2011 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.
- Approved announcing the St. Paul's Greenery Fundraiser as information to the congregation.

If you have information you would like to see brought before Session, please contact Debbie Jacobs, Clerk.

— Debbie Jacobs

Did You Know . . .

Ann Ragland and Bob Worsham serve on the Smithfield Appearance Commission.

John Booker, Sr., Ann Huckenbeck and Myra Wallace are members of the Johnston County Heritage Commission Board of Directors.

Wayne Dockery's photograph, *Anonymous Tobacco*, took the first place award, color category, in the Triangle's largest open juried photography exhibition. The photo was taken in a field near Holt's Lake in 2010. The exhibition of 85 photographs selected from nearly 300 is at the Cary Senior Center, 120 Odell Place, until December 15.

Erin Marett is an ICU nurse at WakeMed Cary.

Walker and Helen Flint took a two-week trip to Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Now they are going through 2000 photos.

John and Sue Booker toured some of Italy and brought Olivia home for Thanksgiving. Olivia will return to Davidson College in January after spending the fall semester in Italy.

The first crossword puzzle was published on December 21, 1913 in *Fun*, the Sunday supplement of **New York World**. It was created by editor Arthur Wynne.

Musical notation was invented on December 30, 1070.

If you have items you would like to see in this column, please contact Mary Miller.



YOUTH GROUP

Our Youth Need You!

This is an exciting time in the life of First Presbyterian Church. We are gearing up for Advent and watching our building transform from inside out. Are we ready to serve those in our community in 2012? One important program in our church is the Presbyterian Youth Connection. SPRE has found this to be one of our top three priorities. These young people are looking for guidance in their lives and support from important adults. You can make a difference!

Come and see that PYC is all about. Join us for an important information session on Friday, January 6, at 6:30 p.m., and learn ways in which you can participate with these youth. We are looking for advisors, meal planners, drivers, and communication helpers. I hope you will join us.

— Cameron Womack

Presbyterian Women, Care Packages, Greenery and Cookies!

The Presbyterian Women thank you for your generous donation of \$360.00 for the care packages for college students. This year they sent 11 boxes for students to enjoy during exams. Our students always love and appreciate these boxes.



The Presbyterian Women also thank you for your donations to Christmas greenery. Our sanctuary looks lovely every year because of your gifts.

Remember to sign up to give cookies and refreshments for Christmas in a Barn. The sign up sheet is on the table in the parlor.

— Mary Miller

Make Your Preparations Advent—urous

Advent — the first season of the liturgical year — includes the four Sundays and weeks prior to December 25. Advent dates from the fourth century, when it lasted 40 days and included fasting and solemnity, much like Lent.

Advent is from *Adventus*, Latin for “coming,” referring to Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem and also his second coming. The traditional colors of Advent are purple for penitence or blue for hope.

Observing Advent is a meaningful, adventurous way to prepare for Christmas. Buy or make an Advent wreath and use candles of your choice: four blue, four purple, or three blue or purple and one pink. If you have a fifth spot, add one white Christ candle. During meals or devotions, light only one candle the first week. Add another for each new week (the pink candle traditionally marks the third week), concluding with the white candle, if you have one, on Christmas. The increasing light reminds us we’re getting closer to celebrating Christ’s light coming into the world.

— The Newsletter Newsletter



ADVENT



*Light a candle in memory of
all children who have died . . .
that their light may shine.*

National Children's Memorial Day
Sunday, December 11
7:00 p.m.
Wilson's Mills Christian Church
179 Fire Department Road
Wilson's Mills

Johnston County will celebrate the Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting Ceremony in honor of National Children's Memorial Day on Sunday, December 11, at 7:00 p.m. This is a world-wide observance for families and friends to remember those children who passed away before their time. As candles in one time zone are lit and then burned to completion, new candles are lit in the next time zone, creating a wave of light around the world. The memorial is open to all families and friends who wish to honor a child who has died, at any age and from any circumstance. The event will be held at Wilson's Mills Christian Church. You should plan to arrive by 6:45 p.m. to receive your candle and register to have your child's name acknowledged during the ceremony. If you wish you may bring a picture of your child to place on our memory table. A reception will follow the ceremony. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Sheree Murray at 553-6000 or send her an email at smurray1127@aol.com by November 28.

There is no cost for this event; it is open to all. Please feel free to invite friends and relatives to join you.

—Sheree Murray

Annual Reports Due to SPRE December 1

Committee and Ministry Chairs are reminded that 2011 Annual Reports are due electronically to Debbie Jacobs, Chair of SPRE, by December 1, 2011. The committee is continuing to work on compiling questions to be used on several church visits requested by Session. The committee is also discussing the current committee structure and formulating an instrument for committees to use to evaluate current and future programs and projects.



— Debbie Jacobs

What's on Your List?

A little smile, a word of cheer,
A bit of love from someone near,
A little gift from one held dear,
Best wishes for the coming year . . .
These make a Merry Christmas!

— John Greenleaf Whittier



What to Give?

To your enemy, forgiveness.
To an opponent, tolerance.
To a friend, your heart.
To a customer, service.
To all men, charity.
To every child, a good example.
To yourself, respect.

— Oren Arnold



Thanks to all
First Presbyterians
who donated shoe boxes
to
Operation Christmas Child,
a program of
Samaritans' Purse.
We collected 90 shoe boxes
for this most worthy cause.



for November
Memorial for Geraldine
Rutherford
Honorariums for Myra Wallace
and for Tom and Sandra

Johnson's 50th Anniversary

Given by John and Margaret Causey, John and
Maxine McFadyen, Frank and Betsy Olive



Sandy Perkinson for heading up the 2010 Advent Devotional Guide.

Nancy Lee, Benny Pope, and Hank Roberson for decorating the church for Advent and Christmas.

Eve Creech and Betsy Olive for spearheading Operation Christmas Child.

Camille Boone for making phone calls for the Advent Greenery drive

Debbie Jacobs for updating the computer calendar of events in the narthex each week.

Miriam Lore for heading up communion preparations each month.

Rich Huckenbeck for constructing a handicap rail in the restroom beside the church office.

Everyone who made Trunk or Treat such a success.

Christmas, children, is not a date. It is a state of mind.
— Mary Ellen Chase

Christmas in a Barn



Come celebrate with us at this year's Christmas in a Barn on December 19 at 5:30 p.m.

Ruth Bell will coordinate the program. If you are interested in either participating as a shepherd, angel, wise man, etc., or volunteering to help dress the characters, set up or clean up, please let Ruth know.

Brandy Holzshu is in charge of refreshments and needs your help. If you are willing to provide cookies, chips, popcorn, or other snacks, please contact her. She will supply the hot chocolate. These items should be at the church by end of worship on December 19. Please put your name on any serving pieces you want to be returned. You may pick them up on December 26 in the kitchen.

Christmas in a Barn is one of our most beloved traditions. Make plans now to attend.

— Ruth Bell

Christmas in a Barn
December 18
5:30 p.m.



A Service of Lessons and Carols
Christmas Eve
7:00 p.m.

Just a Note about Our Sanctuary Piano . . .

Dwight Dockery, Jimmy Hooks and Myra Wallace very intentionally placed our new sanctuary piano where it is on the day it was delivered. It was situated to make movement around the piano easy for the choir, the organist and the pastor. Its location also takes into account the dehumidifier that is installed under the soundboard; there is an outlet directly beneath it. And it was placed so that the accompanist has a direct view of the director.



Moving the piano potentially does several harmful things to its condition: it tends to cause damage to the tuning, it places stress on the legs of the piano which bear the weightiness of the instrument, and it could very easily dislodge the dehumidifier. Also, every time someone moves it, it has to be moved again to its original position, compounding the problem.

For the past three weeks, someone has moved the piano, either for the convenience of seating committees that are meeting in the chancel or to make way for other things. Please do not move the piano without the expression permission and oversight of Dwight Dockery or Myra Wallace. We want to keep the piano in the excellent condition it was in when we purchased it, and we're sure you do, too.

Christmas in a Barn History

One long tradition at our church is Christmas in a Barn. I was asked if we have a history of it, when and how it began. So I started asking those questions and here is what I've learned of the history. If you have more to add to this, please feel free to share it with me so that we will have a complete history.

It has been hard to pinpoint exactly when Christmas in a Barn began. Harold Langdon's sister-in-law, Peggy, remembers that it began the year after her husband was killed, making it 1981. But the Rev. Dr. Bill Leist thinks the first Christmas in a Barn was held in 1982 at Harold Langdon's farm and barn. Leist was pastor at First Presbyterian at that time, and I've spoken with and emailed him. He has shared his recollection of how Christmas in a Barn began. He preached a sermon titled "Immanuel — 1982" and it was this sermon that helped define what he had in mind when the Barn program first occurred to him and some other members of FPC, most notably Gladys Langdon who just happened to have that lovely barn and farm. The sermon was mailed to all the congregation as Dr. Leist's Christmas Greeting for that year. He revised the sermon for several years following this until he wore them down with the notion that, no matter what happened this year, still God is in the midst of it all.

The gist of the sermon was what if Jesus were born in Johnston County in 1982. He shared with us a short excerpt from the sermon:

and so it happened that December 24, 1982, a power-blue Volkswagen beetle slowed indecisively on the Inter-state before a sign that read "Smithfield-Selma: Next Four Exits." The line of traffic behind began to hump like an angered snake as the precocious little car dared to slow to the minimum speed of 45. Then there was that welcome white on blue sign, the one that said "Hospital," and the little car made a decisive swerve further toward the right. Their move toward the exit ramp was hastened by a mighty rush of wind from a McLean's truck whose driver had promised his children in Ludowici, Georgia, that he'd be home on Christmas Eve.

From this sermon, the idea for Christmas in a Barn was born. Over the years, many, many folks have helped make it a success each year. When it first began, Gladys Langdon and Linda Daniel were the planners. It was under the Women of the Church for many years and is now under the Worship and Fellowship Committee. Eventually Anita Liverman served as coordinator for several years. Two years ago she turned the program over to me.

Christmas in a Barn has been held every year at the Langdon farm except in 1996 when it was held at the church because of damage to the barn from Hurricane Fran.

Again, I know there is more to how this wonderful tradition began and who all were involved, so as I learn more, I'll update this history so we can share it each year with everyone.

And don't forget it continues this year on Sunday, December 18, at 5:30 p.m.

— Ruth Bell

Christmas waves a magic wand over this world and, behold, everything is softer and more beautiful.

— Norman Vincent Peale