

CONCORD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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CONCORD GRAPEVINE

A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Rev. Jean Smith, Interim
January 2012

I have chosen to use my space in the January newsletter to pass along an article that articulates, far better than I could, the place we find ourselves in as evangelicals in the PCUSA denomination. This article appeared in the November 2011 issue of *Presbyterians For Renewal*. You may find other related articles at www.pfrenewal.org

Good Grief

Written by Paul Detterman

Friday, 18 November 2011 15:58

Editor's Note: PFR has been uncommonly quiet since the passage of Amendment 10-A in May. This is partly due to the amount of time and energy PFR has been investing in helping to promote and advance The Fellowship of Presbyterians, and partly due to the fact that when everyone else is talking it is often polite to wait your turn. Here is what I hope will be a helpful commentary as we come into the season of preparation we call Advent and, as evangelicals in the PC(USA), begin another type of preparation altogether on the threshold of 2012.

I'm blessed. I've never had to endure, in my immediate family, the kind of agony I have seen close friends and parishioners experience; misunderstandings that lead to anger, unresolved anger that leads to acrimony, and acrimony that ends in deep and prolonged bitterness and loss.

Like most adults, I know another kind of grief, however—the grief that comes with the experience of death and the re-ordering of life that includes closing a family home, sorting and disposing of family “things” (many of them with memories attached), and moving on. That grief not only includes lament over what has happened, but the homesickness that comes at the end of an era or the close of a relationship we cherished and thought we could count on.

In the days leading up to this season of Advent, innumerable evangelicals who have been part of the family of faith called the PC(USA) are grieving—a deep grief that has yet to be adequately named by those of us who are experiencing it, and will seemingly never be understood by those who are causing it. This is not the momentary sadness of watching your political party take a beating in an election or the frustration of seeing your favorite team lose in the playoffs. Nor does our grief find appropriate expression in anger, acrimony, or bitterness. We have witnessed something beautiful, meaningful, and central to our identity destroyed—an expression of the body of Christ that was our theological, sacramental, and communal home. Everyone who

has been around for the destruction has been permanently marred as well. At one level we are furious. But we are also hurting, heartbroken, and homesick.

In reality, the denomination we call the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is just a structure. The family of faith that gathered into it was like a beautiful tapestry. The structure has only existed since 1983, relatively young in “church-years.” The family was not invented 28 years ago out of freshly milled cloth. Threads from the past 2000 years of doctrine and teaching, mission and witness, sacrifice and service are woven into the tapestry, as well as emblems from the truly great confessional moments—the times in our ancestry of faith when the Church actually did take a Christ-honoring stand against the prevailing tides of human self-absorption, cultural/political power, popular opinion, or disposable theology.

This Presbyterian tapestry, our family home has had many functions. At times it was a parament that marked the place where intelligent, socially engaged, fearlessly biblical, orthodox preaching molded the lives of civic leaders and challenged new generations to attempt seemingly outrageous ministry in the name of Jesus Christ. At times this tapestry has marked the place where Christ-honoring worship is cherished and nurtured. In its early years the PC(USA) set the gold standard for worship renewal in the Reformed Tradition. The tapestry we inherited has at times been a reliable shelter for those who were truly marginalized, neglected, or abused, and a banner for the exhibition of God’s Kingdom and the courageous proclamation of the gospel in just about every corner of the world.

The fabric from which this tapestry was woven is tough and enduring, but it has undergone significant wear and tear. Forces have been at work throughout most of the 20th century, undermining the integrity of the fabric. Tensions have mounted over the authority and interpretation of Scripture. Increasingly, disagreement over the person and work of Jesus Christ has divided many and confused many more. Wildly differing interpretations of what the church is, how it is called to serve, and whether it can or should be engaged in any form of mission at all, have fostered timidity and worse; cultural deference.

Throughout the evolution of our most recent history, orthodox voices from within the PC(USA), many ecumenical partners, and the vast majority of the global church have pleaded persistently for this communal tug of war to stop, trying to help those who were straining our denominational fabric to understand that when (not if) the tapestry was torn the resulting destruction would be far worse than any of us could imagine. But these voices have seemingly fallen on deaf ears.

The final tug that destroyed the PC(USA) tapestry came when we capitulated to the current moral confusion championed by a relentless subset of western culture. The determination of some and the apathy of others finally allowed the PC(USA), as the late Tom Gillespie would say, “to condone what God can redeem.” And with that one final yank, the strained threads gave way and the marker of “church” for so many for so long, fell on the floor in shreds—the threads of historic integrity unharmed, but dis-united and functionally useless.

Some evangelicals believe the passage of amendment 10-A on its own was responsible for this destruction. In truth, however, we were well on our way long before May 10, 2011. What the neutering of ordination standards did was complete the job—tearing the last remnants of the once amazing tapestry into pieces in front of us.

There is no point in being angry. It will fix nothing. The destruction is done, and will not easily be undone in the foreseeable future. There is also no point in expecting those who see this destruction as progress to understand our sense of grief and loss. We see a mess of torn fabric scattered across the floor. They are now suggesting what we need to do is celebrate the diversity of the pretty patterns “God has created”—like there was still something to admire in the thing destroyed. They don’t understand our grief and, quite frankly, many who are involved at the heart of this destruction seemingly could not care less.

It is right for us to grieve—truly right and a good and faithful thing. Under the Presbyterian tapestry many of us have been nurtured and disciplined, credentialed, and deployed in mission and ministry. This tapestry was the banner of our tribe. Seeing what has become of it creates indescribable grief. It is heart wrenching to hear the core claims of the gospel of salvation minimized or denied altogether because others might think us foolish for holding those beliefs, or because people might be challenged in their stubbornness. Scripture has something to say about both scenarios. It is humbling to the point of tears to see the faithful and continuing witness of Jesus' followers around the world who are truly persecuted for their enduring faith, and then to realize that the family of faith in the PC(USA), the "mother church" to many, has now dismissed the transforming grace of Jesus by simple majority vote. Six months after that vote, the grief of many is very real. And we must deal with it before we can move on in any healthy way.

The question is, what do we do with our grief? Bitterness is not a biblical option. Scripture has much to say about the root of bitterness, and none of it good. Sustained anger is not a productive option either. We are called by the gospel we profess to repurpose anger into grace.

But it is also not an option for us to resign ourselves to our current situation and thank the destroyers of the once great denominational tapestry for the shreds of cloth they toss our way. God's people need to see a tapestry of faithfulness—a banner of joy and hope and resurrection power lifted over the chaos of our post-modern, self-motivated lives. We need to process our grief because God's mission has not changed and neither has his call upon us to be part of it. This does not mean pulling ourselves together and showing up at the next presbytery or General Assembly as though nothing has happened. It does mean taking serious stock of our current situation, dealing with any lingering debilitations, and moving into a future God is opening up to us.

We need to begin to reassemble a tapestry—utilizing the great theological threads and confessional emblems that are in our heritage, assessing the true needs of God's people and addressing the myths of our culture; creating something that will once again draw people to Jesus and deploy disciples in his name. For the moment at least, this can happen equally well in the life and ministry of those evangelicals who remain in the structure of the PC(USA) and of those for whom contextual integrity demands distance from a denomination that has been turned off course.

Ours is not the challenge of creating new and clever theological statements—at least not yet. We have everything we need for this moment in Scripture and the Confessions of our heritage. This is also not a challenge that will be solved completely by any restructuring of an existing denomination or the crafting of a new one. The challenge we face is radical discipleship—a challenge of biblical proportions; obedience, faithfulness, and passion for the Savior that must be kindled in every believing heart.

Our current challenge is voicing the yearning of the ancient hymn, "O come, O come Emmanuel ..." and believing the reality of the promise, "Rejoice! Emmanuel has come to you!" Our present-day angst is heard in the pain of the psalmists' laments and, like those, will be answered and transformed by God into praise. This moment is our opportunity to discover (or remember) that God's love took human form for a reason—and that Love cannot be voted off the island by all the presbyteries in the world.

So for now, as we who are grieving seek to recapture a like-mindedness with Christ and reclaim our identity in him, let's not be ashamed or embarrassed to cry together. We have endured a long and hideous season of misunderstanding, acrimony, bitterness, and loss. We must take the time to mourn the destruction of what once was in order to see what now can be.

And in reconnecting with the mind of Christ, let's take every opportunity God provides to pray together. We, and many of the congregations to which we are called, have experienced the death of something we held dear, and we need God's patient love and direction to close up the old, sort out the goods, and deal with a form of homesickness that is very real.

But as we are grieving the destruction of the tapestry of one fellowship and sorting out the pieces to begin forming another, we also need to intentionally seek God's grace to be able to move beyond this current season so that we can once again praise the living Lord with full voiced hope, and joy, and resurrection power, committed in new and deeper ways to celebrate and participate in what God is up to now!

* * End of Article * * *

For my study leave in January I will be attending the Fellowship of Presbyterians: Covenanting Conference in Orlando. I will be combining this trip with a week of vacation.

Please note that I will be away from January 9th through January 23rd.

The Rev. Bill Banks will be preaching on January 15th.

The Rev. Gary Weston will be preaching on January 22nd.

If you have need of pastoral care in my absence, the Rev. Deane Lavender will be available. His number is 724-776-8253.



MESSAGE FROM REV. JEAN SMITH

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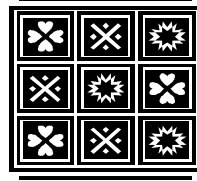
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THE CHURCH IN MISSION



Our sewing group gave away 121 blankets in December. The organizations receiving the blankets were Children's Hospital, The Ladle, Young Life, We Care Food Pantry, Economy Senior Citizens group, and a blanket for an infant baptism at our church. We would like to thank Terri Smokovich for delivering the blankets to Children's Hospital and to Pastor Jean for delivering blankets to the We Care Pantry. We have now given away a total of **2644** blankets.

We made 16 more pillowcases that were given to the 'Yellow Ribbon Girls' who sent them to the troops. We have sent 800 so far.

We will resume sewing every Wednesday afternoon 12:30 - 2:30 **weather permitting.**

Our thanks to all who continue to purchase items from us. All proceeds go towards purchasing sewing supplies.

The first Saturday in August promises to be a very special one at Westminster Highlands camp near Emlenton, PA. As it finishes up its 54th summer of offering Christian camping experiences to people of all ages, the camp is set to launch what is hoped to be the first of many music festivals at the site.



Dubbed, "Highlands Rocks", the festival will begin at **10 a.m. on August 4th**, having as its centerpiece a day-long series of concerts by Christian bands, both locally and nationally known. Bands to appear will be announced in the spring, along with the name of a powerful, Christian speaker, who will deliver an inspirational and motivational message during the festival.

The Camping Association (CAPNWP), the parent organization of Westminster Highlands, wants hundreds to attend the event in hopes of exposing more people to the beauty of the 640-acre site and all it has to offer.

Food will be available and local crafters and other vendors will be on hand to sell their wares. The camp's zip line will be running at an additional cost.

Reservation will be necessary to ride off a 40-foot high boulder into the woods below.

Overnight camping, by reservation only, will be offered on Saturday for those with tents, RVs and pop-up trailers.

Cost for entrance to the festival, including parking and access to all concerts, will be \$20/person. Fees for the zip line and camping will be set as the date draws closer.

Stay tuned to your Presbytery's electronic and print communications, as well as to The Camping Association's website at www.capnwp.org, for further details about "Highlands Rocks". Be sure to circle the date on your 2012 calendar.

This promises to be an exciting event; hope to see you there!

Monthly Prayer Schedule

Session continues to urge you to join us in prayer on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. If you feel out of your comfort zone by praying aloud, you are still welcome to join us and pray in silence. Take a half hour out of your busy life for Christ...isn't your eternal life worth it?



This list needs to be kept up-to-date, so if you have put someone's name on this list and it becomes no longer necessary for them to remain on the list, please notify Rhoda directly.

Prayer List

The people listed below are those with various ongoing needs for whom we are praying on a regular basis, including each week during worship. If you would like to include someone's name on this list, **please provide the pertinent information to Rhoda Grossman.**



THE CHURCH IN PRAYER

Prayer Chain

Alice/Jim Ward 724.266.6776 ↓
Pat Guthrie 724.869.2705 ↓
Robin/Dan Hall 724.869.0801 ↓
Bea Roby 724.869.9577 ↓
Eleanor Eisenbrown 724.774.1568 ↓
Shelda/Chuck Rudich 724.266.5403 ↓
Marie/Bob Dewar 724.869.5278 (leave message on Church machine 724.869.9135)

The Prayer Chain consists of those who are available for special prayer in time of emergency need. If there is a special need which needs immediate prayer, please call anyone on the prayer chain to activate the chain.

DAVE AMES – (member of Concord)
Heart-related issues

WINNIE BOWMAN – underwent back surgery

ANN BUFALINI – (Cindy Hartsell's friend)
Battling lupus and cancer

DEBBIE CROSBY – (Kathy Jones' sister)
Needs heart transplant

JOHN DEWAR – (Bob Dewar's brother)
Suffered stroke

MARIE DEWAR – (member of Concord) Job concerns

DORIS EASTERDAY - (member of Concord)

COLLIN FRITZLEY – (member of Concord)
Experiencing seizure-type convulsions

DALE GASS – (Greta Penn's father)

TAMMY GREEN – (Rhoda Grossman's co-worker in Arkansas) Battling breast cancer

EARL GREENWALD (member of Concord)
Recovering from knee replacement surgery

JOYCE GRIFFIN – (Jim/Karen Wylie’s daughter)
Continued prayers for good health

LINDA GROSSMAN – (Rhoda Grossman’s sister)
Prayers for health and well being in Portland, OR

CINDY HARTSELL – (member of Concord)

CHUCK HAWK – (Judy Hawk’s husband)
Tractor trailer accident in Ohio

BOB JOHNSON – (member of Concord)
Pneumonia, then colds, flue and weak health

MARIE JONES – (member of Concord)

PAUL JONES – (member of Concord)

RALPH JONES – (Janet Gilson’s father)

BETTY KARDASZ – (Virginia Kardasz’s mother-in-law)
Health problems

KENNEDY FAMILY – (Gilson family friends)

NATHAN DANIEL KUSTRA – (grandson of Fred Simonds’
friend) Born with spinal bifida

AGNESS LAUDENSLAGER – (John Laudenslager’s mother)
Fell and broke hip

JOYCE LINT – (Shelda Rudich’s mother)
Battling pneumonia and leg pain associated from a stroke

HUXLEY LIPSCOMB – (member of Concord)

JESSICA MARCHIONDA - (Linda Martin’s daughter)
Battling cancer

DEBBIE MCGILL – (member of Concord)
Diagnosed with Parkinson’s

JEFF NEELY – (member of Concord)
Suffered massive heart attack; recuperating after successful
bypass surgery

TODD NEELY – (member of Concord)
Serving in the Marines

JEANINE OWENS – (Dave Jones co-worker’s wife)

ANN PARKS – (Concord member)
Recovering from hip surgery

KAROL PONEVAC - (Pearl Dunlap’s friend)
Suffered a stroke

GLORIA PRIESTLEY – (member of Concord)

LINDA PROFOZICH – (Greta/Mike Penn’s close friend)
Recovering from breast cancer surgery along with potential
thyroid problems.

BEA ROBY – (Concord member)

SARAH RUDICH – (Daughter of Chuck/Shelda Rudich)
Spiritual well-being and Hannah’s health

AMY SCHNEIDER – (Dick Schneider’s daughter)
Battling MS and depression

JAYNE SCHNEIDER – (member of Concord)
Recovering from back surgery

CAROL SIMONDS - (member of Concord)
Health concerns

TOM SMITH – (Sue Laudenslager’s brother)
Suffers from a muscle deterioration condition

TIARA ANN - Battling cancer

CINDY WILLIS – (Karen Wylie’s friend)
Underwent recent breast cancer surgery

SHELLE WINTERHALTER – (Chele DiCioccio’s friend)
Undetermined health issues

JAMES YOUNG – (Doris Easterday’s co-worker)
Battling lung cancer again

CHURCH LIFE

Study Leave/Vacation Plans

Pastor Jean will be out of town on a study leave beginning **Monday, January 9th**. She'll be attending the Fellowship of Presbyterians: Covenanting Conference in Orlando. She will be combining this trip with a week of vacation. Please note that she will be away **through Monday, January 23rd**. The Rev. Bill Banks will be preaching on January 15th. The Rev. Gary Weston will be preaching on January 22nd.



From
the Pastors Desk

If you have need of pastoral care in her absence, the Rev. Deane Lavender will be available. His number is 724.776.8253.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Our Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 29th**, immediately following the worship service. All members should plan on attending. There will be no Sunday School that day. End of year reports should be submitted electronically to Lorrie Kuny no later than **Tuesday, January 10th**, so that they can be collated and printed for distribution by Sunday, January 15th.



Please be sure to reserve your annual report in the vestibule or phone Lorrie (412.741.6711) to let her know for copying purposes. Thank you!

ABOUT PEOPLE

ANNIVERSARIES

- 14 Pearl/Dale Dunlap
27 Patty/Keith Jones

BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Nathan Jones
9 John Jones
13 Jerry Chalupiak
16 Paul Jones
21 Linda Gliptis
25 Dawn Brendle
30 Adam Smokovich
30 Noah Smokovich

JANUARY WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP

- 1 - No coffee hour
8 - Riddle
15 - Gilson
22 - Pleslusky
29 - Schweikert

GREETERS

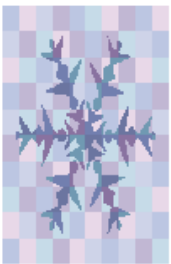
- 1 - Warrena Merryman
8 - Warrena Merryman
15 - Warrena Merryman
22 - Warrena Merryman
29 - Warrena Merryman

LITURGISTS

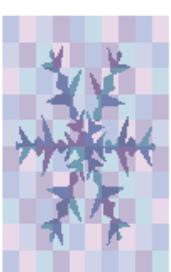
- 1 - Bill Himes
8 - Rhoda Grossman
15 - Bob Dewar
22 - Dan Hall
29 - Cathy Riddle

NURSERY ATTENDANTS

- 1 - Helen Ciani
8 - TBD
15 - Ed/Diane Eisenbrown
22 - Bob/Marie Dewar
29 - TBD



JANUARY 2012



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 HAPPY NEW YEAR! 10:00 Worship	2 6:30 Cub Scouts	3 6:30 Jr. Choir 7:00 Christian Education	4 12:30 Sewing Group 5:30 Cub Scouts 7:00 Prayer 7:30 Sr. Choir	5	6	7
8 8:30 Praise Team 9:00 Worship/Communion 10:00 Coffee Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School 11:30 Mission/Outreach	9	10 6:30 Jr. Choir 7:00 Congregational Care	11 12:30 Sewing Group 6:30 Worship Comm. 7:30 Sr. Choir	12	13	14
15 8:30 Praise Team 9:00 Worship 10:00 Coffee Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School 11:30 Administration	16 6:30 Cub Scouts	17 6:30 Jr. Choir	18 12:30 Sewing Group 5:30 Cub Scouts 7:00 Prayer 7:30 Sr. Choir	19	20	21
22 8:30 Praise Team 9:00 Worship 10:00 Coffee Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School	23	24 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 6:30 Jr. Choir	25 12:30 Sewing Group 7:00 Prayer 7:30 Sr. Choir	26	27	28
29 8:30 Praise Team 9:00 Worship 10:00 Coffee Fellowship 10:30 Sunday School 11:30 Trustees	30	31 6:30 Jr. Choir	FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 1.24.12			

