



First Press

The First Presbyterian Church Newsletter

December 2005

Rev. Dr. Conrad Sharps - Senior Pastor
Rev. Hope Lee - Associate Pastor
Rev. Dr. John R. Harland - Parish Associate



Life's Journeys

In the small seaside town of Pampator, Venezuela, a very old statue of Christ resides in a beautiful little church called "The Church of Christ of Good Voyage" (or good travel). The history of the statue and the church are

inseparable. Apparently in the earliest days of colonial rule, a Spanish warship tried on at least two consecutive days to leave the harbor but couldn't because of high winds and waves. This uncommon occurrence, however, served to preserve the lives of both passengers and crew as within hours after the ship's second failed attempt to set sail, the entire area was devastated by a storm that was unusually strong for a location that far south.

The people thanked God for his mercy. Then, taking the statue of Christ from the ship, they built just outside the gates of the harbor fort The Church of Christ of Good Voyage. Down through the centuries, even until the present, travelers in the area have come to this sanctuary to thank God for safe voyage and to pray for God's continued mercy in travel.

No matter how far any of us ever travel from home, the reality is that life is a journey in which we should never under-estimate the importance of God. God is the only one who can grant safe passage. God has a destination chosen and a purpose designed for every human life.

We see this clearly in God's call of Abram in Genesis. *"The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will*

make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing" (Genesis 12:1-2).

God promised to be with Abram throughout his journey in life and to bless him. But God also insisted that Abram obey him – to go where God would lead him and do what God would command him. Through his obedience, humanity is still blessed this day as Jesus was born as one of his descendants to save all those who would turn to him.

As I prepare to leave this church which I have loved and served for seventeen and a half years I realize the often bitter-sweet emotions of following the call of God. You have been patient with me as I often rambled; you have loved me, challenged me and enriched my life. It is only the call of God that could move me from this wonderful church and community. I journey however not only to be blessed but to be a blessing through obedience to the will of God for my life. Obedience to this call (the will of Him who loves us) is what I also pray for you.

Indeed, where are you headed today? What is your destination? No matter where you are in your journey it is always wise to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. He desires to bless us upon our journey. May we recognize his presence today as we turn to him for safety, for wisdom, and for guidance.

May God bless you and keep you.

In Christ's Service,

Conrad

Please submit articles for the newsletter as early as possible, but no later than the 20th of each month.



The Christmas Season brings lots of special activities for our church family:

- * Advent began November 27th. On that Sunday and the next three plus Christmas Eve, we will have families light the Advent Wreath.
- * Wednesday noon Advent services begin December 7th and continue the 14th, and 21st. There will be communion by intinction at each service.
- * The cantata will be presented on December 11th at both services.
- * The Children's Christmas Pageant is on December 18th at 4 p.m.
- * On Christmas Eve, the traditional candle-light and communion service will be held at 11 p.m.
- * On Christmas Day, there will be an 11 a.m. worship service only, no Sunday School.

Christmas Pageant

This year's Children's Christmas Pageant will be held at 4 p.m. on December 18th in our Sanctuary. It will be a simple retelling of the Christmas story, interspersed with a few Christmas carols.

We will cast Mary, Joseph, the three wise men and hopefully a host of angels, shepherds and sheep. There will be two practices, one on Wednesday, December 14th from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. and one on Saturday, December 17th from 1 to 3 p.m.



More Adult Christians

After a wonderful Thanksgiving celebration, the MACS now look forward to a festive Christmas luncheon. The luncheon is Thursday, December 15th, at 11:30 a.m., in Jim Thomas Hall. There will be special entertainment and Christmas carol sing-along. The price is \$15 and is due in the church office before 5 p.m. on Thursday, December 8th. The extra \$5 is to purchase a gift certificate for Chef Donna. Look forward to seeing everyone together as we celebrate this very special season.



Out of the Saltshaker

On January 8th, the Saltshakers Adult Sunday School class begins a new study using the "Experiencing God" workbook. This is a life-changing study, and if you have not taken this course, you are encouraged to join us. If you are not currently attending Saltshakers, please let Sally Ericksen (261-2329) know of your interest so that enough workbooks can be ordered. Workbooks will be distributed in December so everyone can be prepared to start on January 8th.



We would like to thank all of the congregation and the Presbyterian women for all of the donations, wonderful goodies, helping with the workshops, and the other ways you helped with the bazaar. We made \$3,869.75 that will go to the various missions that the Presbyterian women support. It wouldn't have been possible without our help.

Presbyterian Women's News

The Presbyterian Women would like to thank everyone for sharing their time and talent in making our Craft Bazaar such a great success. And thanks to our church members and friends who supported this effort by attending the bazaar. All of the money that we raise is used to support our mission projects.



The date and location of the December circle meetings are as follows:

- * Elizabeth and Ruth Circles meet on December 8th at 10 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Covered dish luncheon. (Joint circle meeting.)
- * Esther Circle meets on December 8th at noon at the home of Trish Kenner at 1424 South Fletcher Avenue.
- * Hannah Circle meets on December 8th for Christmas dinner.
- * Lydia Circle meets on December 12th at 6:30 p.m. in the home of Joy Drewry at 5483 Florence Point Drive.
- * Martha Circle meets on December 7th at 10 a.m. in the home of Georgia Shuster at 264 Little Piney Island.

All women in our church are invited to visit any or all of the circles as we pray together, have Bible study, and social time. These small groups are an excellent way to meet other women in our church family. If you have any questions, call Diane Pasioka at 321-0601.

What's in a Name?

Jesus is such a special name that it's found some 909 times in the books of the New Testament. What does the name Jesus mean? It means Jehovah saves. Jehovah is an ancient Jewish name that refers to God. Christians believe that God saves us through Christ. It's important to know that Jesus' last name was not Christ. He was Jesus, son of Joseph, whom we believe was the Christ (the Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah). He was Jesus the Christ.



John and Cheryl Laskowski are recent new members to our church but they are not new to the area. They have been part-time residents on the island for seven years. The couple has two adult children, a boy and a girl, both of whom live in Atlanta. John and Cheryl are interested in beachcombing, golf, sports, and Europe. They retired after being employed by Bell South for 32 years.

Join Us in the Christmas Spirit

Our congregation supports "For the Love of Jesus," a mission in Callahan for homeless and men in recovery from drug and alcohol abuse. The mission committee is collecting toiletries, towel sets, after-shave, and cologne for Christmas gift baskets. Also, the men are in need of dress shoes for church services. Your gifts will bring delight and be very appreciated.

The baskets will be given to the gentlemen in Callahan and to their extended street mission in Jacksonville. Your mission committee will be receiving your gifts between services through December.

Have fun shopping, be joyfully generous sharing the Christmas spirit with "For the Love of Jesus." Call Peggy Smelt-Day for questions or pick up at 261-2065 or 556-6023.



Welcome Interim Pastor

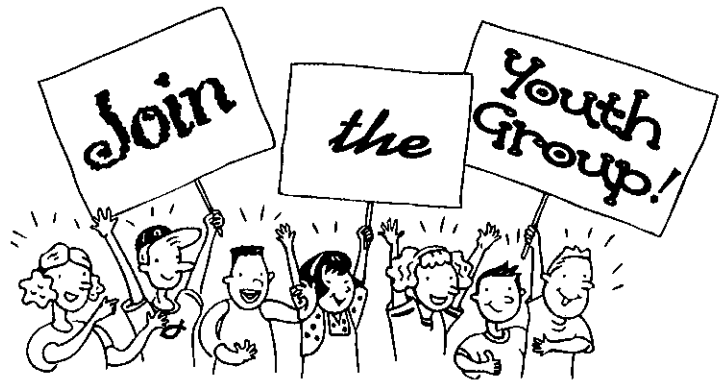
The session is pleased to announce that we have called Dr. Robert Smith to be our interim pastor. He will begin serving First Presbyterian Church on January 4th, 2006. We wholeheartedly believe that he has the ability and skills to be a wonderful asset to our church as interim pastor, advisor, administrator, shepherd, and friend.

Dr. Smith will be working closely with our pastor nominating committee. He looks forward to facilitating us during this transition period as we reflect and discern God's will for our church and prepare for our future. Please extend a warm Presbyterian welcome to Dr. Smith when he arrives in January.

A graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Law School, Bob enjoyed a successful legal practice in Jacksonville. He served in the U.S. Navy, in which he holds the rank of CDR, USNR (R). Sensing a call to the pastoral ministry, he entered Columbia Theological Seminary and was ordained as a Presbyterian Minister of Word and Sacrament. He received his Doctor of Ministry Degree from Lexington Seminary.

Bob has served pastorates in Georgia, Kentucky, and Florida. More recently he has served as Interim Pastor in several Florida churches. At the request of Columbia Seminary, he joined their faculty to organize and direct the Lay Institute of Faith and Life. He is the principal instructor of the national Bethel Bible program, teaching pastors from the United States and Canada in the annual Bethel Pastor's Clinic.

Bob is married to Dr. Phoebe Smith, a college professor of English Literature. They have three adult sons.



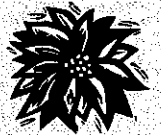
Thanks to all who participated in making the UN-traditional Thanksgiving Celebration a great time of fun and fellowship! Let's keep that "fire burning" as we head into Christmas. Weekly events will be posted in the bulletins each Sunday.

2006 summer trips are just around the corner. Reservation deadline for all trips is January 6th, 2006. Be sure to get your \$150 non-refundable deposit into the church office so you won't be left off the list.

- * Son Servant - June 15th - 25th High School Mission Trip to Logan, West Virginia.
- * Reach for the Beach - July 9th - 13th - Middle School/High School Fun-In-The-Son in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.
- * Great Escape - July 24th - 28th - Middle School trip to Ocala, Florida.

Flower Calendar

- * December 4th - Barbara and Dennis Kirkpatrick in honor of Conrad, Lauren, Daron and Madison for their 17 years of faithful service to God and First Presbyterian Church
- * December 11th - Poinsettias
- * December 18th - Jim Shaw in loving memory of his wife, Audrey Shaw.
- * December 25th - Poinsettias



Interim Pastor's Search Committee

The congregation extends its appreciation to the members of the Interim Pastor's Search Committee: Doc Burgess (chair), Todd Davis, John Drew, Jack Meeks, Shirley Owens, and Kasey Sapp.



LOGOS Calendar for December

- * December 7th - Winter Wonderland...use your creativity to dress-up for this theme.
- * Next LOGOS will be January 11th.

December Communion

Communion will be served at the Christmas Eve Service.



First Press is published monthly as part of the ministry of First Presbyterian Church.

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*"...you will find a child
wrapped in bands of cloth
and lying in a manger."*

Luke 2:12

Sunday Worship Hours: 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.
Sunday School: 9:50 a.m.
Thursday Morning Prayer Group: 8:00 a.m.