



First Presbyterian Church

418 W. Coolidge
Borger, Texas 79007
~September 2006~



Announcements

Beginning this month, the Session will be meeting on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. The meetings will begin at 5:00, and be held in the church. The schedule is as follows: September 20th, October 18th, November 15th, and December 20th.



Women's Circle will begin September 7, 2006, at 10:00 am. The Bible study books on Genesis are available at the Church.

First Presbyterian Church

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Organist and Music Director- Pat Petty

Secretary- Dara Garlington

U Care of Members U

Please keep these members and friends in your prayers.

Louise Ausbrooks' Grandson

Scott Glenn

Bobbie Farrell



Session Actions

The Session took the following actions at its monthly meeting on August 20, 2006.

The Stated Session meeting was held in the Conference Room, starting shortly after morning worship in Huber Park. The following were present and constituted a quorum: Moderator the Rev. Georgia King and Elders Leah Buckland, H.W. Hebermehl, Hazel Howard and Jerry Pool. Treasurer Pam Nicholas was also present.

The monthly expense report was presented. High utility costs were questioned and ways to minimize these were discussed. Elder Pool noted that they were due mostly to water and electricity and that they will decline with cooler weather. The certificate of deposit at Wells Fargo bank will be up for renewal in January. This contract has a 30 day notification requirement; otherwise it will be renewed at whatever interest rate is in effect at that time. We will need to determine direction by December. This item will be placed on the November meeting agenda. The treasurer report was approved.

Non-member groups using our facilities were discussed at length due to the recent problem with the Crisis Center meeting which resulted in some young children being locked up in the building. AA uses part of the basement youth wing. They pay \$50 per month and also volunteer much appreciated assistance in maintaining the building. Exactly what happened with the Crisis Center meeting has not been determined. Elder Kasch is the contact, and we will permit her to make an inquiry. Aside from the people concerns, there is a potential of substantial legal liability if any major problem arose. Doors to the Educational wing at this time do not close tightly enough (and lock) so that it may be closed off from the remainder of the building. Changes needed to do this will be investigated. If this is done, groups using that area will need to be informed to provide their own cell phones. The church system does not extend to that area. The Manual of Operations does have a section covering non-member groups, however it was last revised in 1973. In light of our more recent activities this procedure will need some revision.

Rev. King has not heard from the Presbytery Administration Committee regarding our request for blanket approval to sell the manse; if the congregation so approves. Rev King would like to have communion scheduled monthly, plus "special" days. This is the province of the Worship Committee, and will be placed on the September agenda when Elder Kasch is present. A request was made to have Rev. King provide confirmation training for Justin and Shawna Lusk. We

will set up a method to contact members who have not been attending recently.

The parlor and main entrance ceilings will be repaired by the end of September. Sue Hooten will clean the kitchen. We discussed a "work day" for the church, with the possibility of getting outside assistance.

The Nominating Committee will be organizing and reviewing persons for Elder. Software has been added to the Secretary's computer which has overcome the communication problems. The machine is slow by current standards (450 MHz) but is OK otherwise. The sense of the Session is to replace it, particularly since prices for desktop machines have dropped recently. Wednesday night dinners will start September 6th, with dinner at 6 p.m. and choir at 7 p.m.

Minutes of several previous meetings were approved. The meeting was adjourned at 2:30. The next Stated Session will be Sep. 20th. Elder Hebermehl is Duty Elder for September.

The Treasurer reported the following figures for July:

Total Income	\$5,658
Total Expenses	<u>\$6,537</u>
Total	\$ (879)

Year to Date	
Total Income	\$53,361
Total Expenses	<u>\$41,812</u>
Total	\$11,549

Sunday in the Park

We would like to thank and commend all those who did all the work to plan and provide such a fine service and meal in the park. Everything was just great. Thank you, Larry and C.J.

A Continuing Review

The Small Membership Church;

Scenarios For Tomorrow

By Lyle E. Shaller

As I had noted in last month's Pastor's Pen, I am continuing to review the above mentioned book. I hope that as you read this month's review of Shaller's Chapter 1 "The Second Great Commandment" (love one another) that you will read in context of FPC with the goal of beginning to put an identity of who, what, when, where, why, and how we are. I have added in some of my observations and comments in italics.

Shaller defines three models of the small church. The first is the "family" church in which the church actually resembles an extended family. "In addition to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and administering the sacraments,

these small churches also take you in without question when you return from a long absence, they care for you when you are ill, and they mourn when you die.” (I think this church sounds a little familiar – don’t you?) “Like a good Christian home, these small churches welcome back former members without question or reservation. . . .(they) act out Robert Frost’s statement that ‘home is the place where they have to take you in.’”

The second model that Shaller describes is the “Cheers” type where “everybody is glad you came, everyone is known by name. It is important that the pastor know everyone by name and proves that the minister is “(a) willing to make the effort to earn a sense of acceptance, (b) knows what is important, and (c) understands that title and office no longer carry the weight they once did.” “The members of the small church share many things in common. By contrast, the generous collection of homogeneous groups, classes, cells, choirs, and circles. In the small church, people expect to find homogeneity within the membership. In the healthy, large, and heterogeneous congregation, the point of homogeneity is in the group life.” (I think, in other words, the small church within the larger congregation.)

“Perhaps the best perspective for understanding the distinctive identity of the healthy small church is found in an exceptionally wise book, *The Great Good Place*, by Ray Oldenburg. The author laments the disappearance of “the third place” from American culture. What is the third place? For generations most Americans lived at home (the first place in their world), journeyed to work (the second place, although for some workaholics this became their first place), and found a third place where they could relax and be identified for who they are as individuals. In the first place, we are identified by kinship roles, in the second place by our job, skill, position, or title. In that wonderful third place, our identity is in who we are as a person.”

“The best of today’s churches, regardless of size, affirm the value of the third place in people’s lives. For one soprano, the choir is her third place. For another member, it is an adult Sunday school class. For at least a few, the third place in their lives is the small Bible-study-prayer-mutual support group they joined seven years ago that continues to meet every Tuesday evening.” “One model of the healthy small church is when one-half to two-thirds of today’s members identify this as the number-one third place in their lives.”

“These three types of small churches display several common characteristics. One is that the healthy small church is not simply a small version of the large church.” *Small churches often want to do everything that the larger churches are doing but in reality the small church does not have staff, resources or membership to support the program of a larger church. It is important that small*

congregations celebrate their own-ness as just who they are. This is not to say that small churches cannot grow but it is to say that it is important that small churches celebrate who they are. That attitude of celebration and joy (the embracement of each other) is one of the qualities that will often bring new faces to worship and fellowship activities.

Shaller goes on to say that “a second common characteristic of small churches is that many of the statements about and admonitions directed to churches in general do not apply to small churches. “Every congregation should be a growing church” is one example. That may be good advice for churches averaging more than 160 in worship but it is irrelevant to the life and ministry of the congregation that has been averaging between 25 and 40 at worship for forty years.”

“A third common thread, is that all healthy small churches seek to live out the second of what Jesus defined as the two great commandments (Matthew 22:35-40). **The best small churches are organized primarily around the principle of loving your neighbor.**”

“For many people, the terms small and rural often are linked together when the discussion moves to the small church.” *This linking of terminology is frequently assumed to be negative but for a region such as the panhandle of Texas, it is just fact. Are we small – yes. Are we rural – well, sort-of. I think that as we look inside ourselves we would affirm that we are a small congregation living in a primarily rural area of the country – and that does not make us bad!*

In this first chapter of Shaller’s book, one of the most important statements that he makes is the following: “The social ties of the people in the small church often are reinforced by kinship ties, long-standing friendships, geographical proximity, nationality, race, social class, language, local traditions, intercessory prayer, adult study groups, shared experiences, common goals, caring for one another, dinners, working together on institutional survival goals such as putting a new roof on the building, marriage, coming together weekly for the common worship of God, and missions...While only four pastorates in twenty-five years is not the pattern for most small churches, that is not the crucial variable. In this the continuity is not the minister. It is in the people, in the sacred meeting place, in local traditions and shared experiences, in the caring, kinship and friendship ties, and in habit. The historical record suggests that the professional competence and the personality of the pastor have no more than a 25% impact, plus or minus, on the life of that small worshiping community.”

In the coming months we will continue to review Shaller’s book and use some of his insight for evaluation of our own condition at First Presbyterian Church. I look forward to your comments and discussions concerning these matters.

A Cry For Prayers of Peace *“Send prayers not bullets”*

In this time of war and violence around the world, it is a time in which we continue to ask many difficult questions such as “where is God in all this turmoil, violence, and death?” Throughout the centuries theologians have been asking that very same question without coming to a “right” or “complete” answer. It seems to me that there is only one answer and that is that in spite of all the horror, we are called together to be in reconciling, reassuring, and forgiving relationships in God’s name.

I recently received a communication from one of our parishioners who posed some thought provoking statements: *“Diplomacy has not solved the problem. Force has definitely not solved the problem. It seems to me the only workable solution we have is Christianity. If all people of whatever faith or persuasion would unite in regular sincere prayer for the leaders of all nations to advocate world-wide prayer days on a regular basis where all religious people of whatever faith would join together to pray for the resolution of this problem and the world-wide enduring peace it would provide . . .”*

This faithful parishioner asks us to begin this process of praying regularly for peace right here in our church. After talking with the letter writer, I asked if I could have a bit of time to research what is already being done denominationally to facilitate this process. I knew that we are approaching World Communion Sunday, Peacemaking Offering (October 1) and thought that would provide a beginning venue. I went immediately to our [www.pc\(usa\).org](http://www.pc(usa).org) web site and discovered that I was indeed correct about World Communion Sunday but what I did not know is that The World Council of Churches (of which the PC(USA) is a member) began a world prayer for peace program in 2001. This following is some of the information I found on the subject of peacemaking.

1. The following article was published on August 24, 2006 by the World Council of Churches:

On 21 September, churches around the world will pray and act for peace. “Praying for peace is an essential part of Christian worship and, indeed, of human existence,” says World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia about the International Day of Prayer for Peace, to be celebrated on 21 September 2006.

On that date or the closest Sunday to it, WCC member churches worldwide are invited to pray for peace. This WCC initiative saw the light two years ago within the framework of its Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV), and was welcomed by UN secretary-general Kofi Annan. Its celebration coincides with the UN International Day of Peace.

The theme for this year, “... and still we seek peace”, was chosen by churches from Latin America - the region of the DOV annual focus in 2006.

Churches are being asked “to be especially mindful of the violence in Latin America, but also of the suffering children, elderly, women and men in the Middle East”, and to pray for “cessation of all violence and for lasting peace,” says Kobia.

The International Day of Prayer for Peace is an opportunity for church communities in all places to pray and act together to nurture lasting peace in the hearts of people, their families, communities and societies.

Suggestions on how to observe the day include art contests, educational and cultural events, prayers and reflections on peace in the community, workplace, school or home, and prayer vigils with other faith communities.

2. **International Day of Prayer for Peace**

“**The International Day of Peace** (now on September 21) was established in 1981 by the United Nations and is being observed by members of the World Council of Churches for the first time this year through a world Day of Prayer.

How Can I Participate in the Decade to Overcome Violence?

1. Make peace a regular part of your prayer life.
2. Plan a time for confession, conversation, and reconciliation with those with whom you are in conflict.
3. Advocate for local and national policies that build a culture of peace.
4. Observe the International Day of Peace, see www.cyberschoolbus.org

Prayer is at the heart of the “Decade to Overcome Violence” (or DOV), 2001-2010.

A major program of the World Council of Churches, the DOV runs parallel with the United Nations “Decade for Peace,” through which the UN encourages countries, religious groups, organizations, and individuals to help “build a culture of peace and nonviolence for the children of the world.”

After reading and researching the possibility of what we as First Presbyterian Church of Borger might do in response to this call to prayer it seems to me to be a little late to plan for a prayer service on the 21st of September; but I do think that we can spend time on that day (and every day) in prayer individually, and as well devoting our worship on the 1st of October to that very idea/ideal – peace and peacemaking. As we celebrate World Communion together on October 1st, let us remember all our brothers and sisters around the world who live in places of much more danger and violence than we live in and let us pray together: ***Charge our lives and our churches with the power of your peace, O God. Overcome our fears and self-deceptions with the promise of your presence. Make us signs of your generosity and justice. Light us each day with hope, we pray, so that we may walk in your truth and be love in your Name. Amen.***

Grace and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Georgia

Dear Members of First Presbyterian Church:

I cannot begin to express to you all my heartfelt thanks for the last 35 years. The reception was lovely. I was totally shocked by the beautiful cross and plaque. The scrapbook with all your kind words and loving thoughts means more to me than I can express. I can only hope that the next 35 or so years will be as eventful and moving as the last 35 have been. With God's guiding hands and all you lovely people, they will be!

Thank you again for all your encouraging words and loving thoughts.

I appreciate you all, Pat Petty