



The Celtic Cross

February 2011

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From the Co-Pastors

In Jesus' parables and teachings we learn what is important is not how much we have in the way of talents, money, or resources, but instead what we do with what we have. A widow who gives the smallest of coins is treasured more than those who give far more because their gifts are not nearly as dear as the widow's mite.

On the other hand, Jesus tells us: "to whom much is given, much is expected."

Last year at this time, we announced that the church had received a large bequest from a trust set up by a former church member, Martha Porter, who died more than 25 years ago. As we recognized then, the gift offers a great blessing, but it also offers a number of challenges. One challenge is concrete and immediate: while we gained the bequest, we lost the annual contributions of Martha's sister, Mary, for whom the trust was set up, and who died last year. As a result, while we have more endowment money coming into our budget, it is not enough to offset fully the loss of Mary's annual contribution.

But the greatest challenges, in many ways, are spiritual. Will we let Martha Porter's foresight and generosity impact our own generosity—giving less because she gave so much? We have seen endowed churches that lost that sense of shared sacrifice and became spiritually dead. Or, will we let her bequest make whatever gift we make seem insignificant and pointless because we do not have nearly so much to give? Mindful of Jesus' teachings, and with God's help, may our answer to both questions be a resounding "NO!"

One of the ways that our congregation has tried to follow Jesus' teachings and deal with these challenges is to "tithe" or give back to our community ten percent of the bequest (the other 90 percent has been invested in our Endowment Fund). This past year, the Session appointed a taskforce to determine where this \$263,000 might best be given away this year on a one-time basis. You can see the taskforce's recommendations, which were adopted by Session, in this newsletter, and hear a full report at our congregational meeting.

Because of Martha Porter's gift, and your willingness to tithe this gift, what an exciting and unique opportunity we have to make a major impact in our local community and in the lives of others! It is hard to convey to you the excitement of those who will put this money to work in our community. But you can hear from them for yourself in the Forum Class in February.

May the Porters' thoughtful generosity be an inspiration for us all! And may we recognize that all gifts are welcome and treasured in the body of Christ. "To whom much is given, much is expected" - thanks be to God!

See you Sunday,
Carter and Kerry

Worship Matters

Sunday Morning Schedule:

- 9:15 Sunday School for all ages
 10:30 Service of the Lord's Day
 11:30 Fellowship Time with Refreshments (*ordinarily in the Fellowship Hall*)

Upcoming in Worship

- February 6:** Service for the Lord's Day and Celebration of the Lord's Supper
 Congregational meeting following worship
- February 13:** Service for the Lord's Day
 Scout Sunday
 Cherub Choir Sings
- February 20:** Service for the Lord's Day
- February 27:** Service for the Lord's Day
 Celtic Choir sings
 Sacrament of Holy Baptism

Music Notes

What wondrous love is this? Yes, it's February and our hearts leap with affection for friends and family. The Chancel Choir will stir your emotions with Craig Courtney's stunning anthem, "The One," on February 6th. On the following Sunday, the 16th, the choir will introduce a new melody to the familiar words "Love, Divine, All Loves Excelling" by Mark Hayes. "Bless Now O God The Journey," a beautiful anthem incorporating the Welsh tune, *Llangoffan*, will be sung on the third Sunday. Don't miss the final Sunday in February when Scott Sample and Deb Voytko will play four-hand piano on Craig Courtney's arrangement of the Vaughn Williams' chestnut, "Let All The World In Every Corner Sing."

The Handbell Choir will play a more traditional rendition of "Love Divine All Loves Excelling," on February 27th. Listen for the challenging time changes throughout this charming piece.

Special thanks to Scott Sample for subbing for Deb in January and for playing tambourine along with the Handbell anthem, "Wade in the Water." And thanks to our Chancel and Handbell Choirs for showing up to practice during challenging weather. Spring must be around the corner!

—Diane Land, Music Director

"Inquirers' Class" for Prospective New Members in March

The next "Inquirers' Class" for those interested in exploring membership at First Presbyterian Church will begin in March. If you are interested or have questions, please talk to Carter or Kerry. More information will be in next month's *Celtic Cross*.

Upcoming Events

“Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner,” Saturday, February 26

Cast off the dreary, winter doldrums of February and enjoy the warmth of good friends and delicious food! Have fun breaking bread with friends from your church family—and get to know new people.

Saturday, February 26, 2011

5:30 – 6:30 ~ Hors d’oeuvres at the church

6:45 – 8:15 ~ Dinner at individual homes

8:30 - ? ~ Dessert & Coffee at the church

Don’t forget the white elephant gift exchange!

We are looking for volunteers to host dinners in their homes. If you have a table that seats at least six people, you qualify as a host home. The host home is asked to provide the main entrée for the guests coming to his or her home. One of the guests will provide a salad and bread to complete the meal. The remaining guests will provide hors d’oeuvres or dessert to share with the church family. The white elephant gift is something from your home that you no longer want or perhaps a yard sale item. Bring one wrapped gift per couple/person. Sign up on the bulletin insert, on the bulletin board or by calling the church office. The deadline is February 13.

Friendship Sunday, March 13, 2011

Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you. (Romans 15:7)

Did you know that 65-75% of visitors attend a worship service because of a friend’s invitation?

The Hospitality Committee is sponsoring Friendship Sunday on March 13. Please invite a friend to attend this special service and fellowship hour. Be a real friend to someone who does not have a church home. Invite a family member, neighbor, co-worker, friend, or fellow student. If you would like a printed invitation, you can pick one up in the church office or lobby beginning February 20th.

The three top reasons why a visitor returns on future Sundays:

- Warmth of the congregation—they were personally greeted when they visited.
- They have a friend in the congregation
- The worship service—particularly the sermon and music—were inspiring.

It all starts with an invitation! Be a real friend and invite someone to join you on March 13..

Gathering of Guys VI: Men’s Retreat, Mensch Mill Retreat Center, April 1-2

Come join Carter and the guys for our bi-annual men’s retreat at the beautiful Mensch Mill Retreat Center in nearby Barto. We begin on Friday night at 7:30 and we will finish up Saturday afternoon in time for you to be back home for dinner. This year’s theme is “Making a Life—and Not Just a Living.” We stay in a beautiful retreat center with bedrooms, meeting rooms, and dining room all in one building, and there will be plenty of free time to walk the beautiful grounds or just hang out. The cost is \$60 (checks payable to the church), and if the cost is the only thing keeping you from coming, let Carter know. Space is limited so please sign up through the bulletin inserts or by contacting the church office.

Christian Education Opportunities

Adult Education Opportunities

- **Forum Class and Faith and Relationships together (Community Room)**
February 6: C.S. Lewis: *The Great Divorce* (Heaven and Hell)
- **Forum (February 13, 20, and 27) “Making a Difference in Pottstown Through the Martha Porter Mission Tithes”**
 As reported more fully elsewhere in this newsletter, our church committed to give a Biblical tithe (ten percent) to address unmet needs in the greater Pottstown area. Come and hear the difference that our gifts totaling \$263,000 can make in our community.
February 13: Cluster Outreach Center
 Hear about the work of the Cluster Outreach Center and its long dreamed of new building.
February 20: Montgomery County Community College
 Our church has joined three other recipients of the Martha Porter bequest to fund two scholarships at our local community college.
February 27: Pottstown Regional Public Library
 Hear about the new program being started at the library through our gift.
- **Faith and Relationships Class (Library) (February 13, 20, and 27)**
Topic: “God in America: How Religious Liberty Shaped America”
 (a video and discussion series) Teachers: Sharon Trevoy, Debbie Remelius, and Rob Wade
- **Men’s Sunday Mornings (Pastor’s Conference Room). Teacher: Bernarr Rhoades**
Topic: “Jesus and the Neglected Faithful” (Feb. 6-13)
“What Good is God?” by Philip Yancey (Feb. 20-27)
- **Women’s Sunday Mornings (Mary Ann Yost Room—110).**
Topic: “Each One a Minister” Teacher: Amy Shutt

Weekday Opportunities

- **Thursday Ladies Bible Study:** Meets February 3 and 17 from 9:30–10:30. Teachers: Ron Gower and Max Creswell
- **“Sisters in the Way” Bible Study:** 9:15-10:45 a.m. every Thursday. Teacher: Kerry
- **Tuesday Evening Bible Study:** 7:30—8:30 PM on Tuesday, February 1 and 15.
 Teacher: Carter
- **Praying the Scriptures Group (Lectio Divina)** 7:30 to 8:30 p.m., February 8 and 15.
 Join Kerry and others for a quiet hour of praying the Scriptures.
- **Moms’ Time-Out:** Meets February 16, 9:30 to 11. Location T.B.D.—check with the church office. Discussion led by Kerry on the sin of the month: anger. Children welcome!
- **Theology Reading Group:** Meets Wednesday, February 23 at Carter’s house at 7 p.m.
 Join in the discussion of Tim Keller’s [A Reason for God](#).

Fellowship Opportunities

“Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner—Progressive Dinner, Sat. Feb. 26

See p. 3 for all of the details.

Prime Timers—next event, Potluck Dinner and Hymn Sing, Sun., March 20

More information will be given in the March *Celtic Cross*.

Men’s Breakfast—Saturday, February 13, 8 –9 a.m.

Join Carter and the guys for breakfast, fellowship, and fun. This month’s cook: Paul Leopard.

Young Adult Group—Saturday, February 19, 6 p.m.

We gather at Mike and Mindy Lipsky for dinner, fellowship, and a discussion of C.S. Lewis’ The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. If you can come or have questions, contact Mike and Mindy or Carter and Kerry.

Prayer Shawl Ministry—Tuesday, February 15, 7 p.m.

Expert knitters not required! Completed prayer shawls are shared with church members and friends facing difficult challenges so that they know they are wrapped in the love and prayers of their brothers and sisters in Christ. There are even shawls for new babies. If you have questions or would like to know more, contact Jane Barndt.

Church Family News

Please keep in your prayers the following members who have been ill, injured, or hospitalized lately: Bill Morris, Kathy Benning, Sara and Don Grim, Jodie Daniels, Kathi Lurie, Hank Phillips, Arnold Hatfield, Doreen Duncan, Bob Geyer and Nancy Knipe.

Please remember. The families of Tierra Dobry and Bill Morris. We also remember Kathy Hartzline and Bill Dupree, upon the loss of their mothers, and Andy Lane upon the loss of his father.

Baptized recently were: Santiago David Allen, Hawken Ronald Moyer, Levi Tuck Yinger, Travis Jackson and Evan Michael Thorum and Bailey Anne and Parker Gavin Radswillas.

Betty Rissell wishes to thank the congregation for your prayers, cards and acts of kindness during the hard days of Morris’ illness and also thank you to the ladies in the kitchen following the funeral.

We give thanks for the work of Mim DeRenzo, Marcia Zeigler, Bill Wilson and Herb and Jane Barndt for their work providing a big clean-up of the kitchen on Saturday, January 29. Thanks to Jim Burkhart, Bob Burkhart, Dave Duncan, Charlie Jenkins, Dave Kyler, and Dick Clark for replacing lights in the sanctuary. Thanks to Hank Phillips for his research and efforts to save the church on its phone bills.

Branches of the Vine—Lynchburg Mission Trip, March 19-26

We are through the holidays and getting down to business again, beginning to firm up plans for the Adult Mission Trip this spring. For those of you who missed the December 5 “interest” meeting, this is what we know to date. The trip will take place Saturday March 19 through March 26, 2011, in Lynchburg, Virginia. Optionally you can come on Sunday if you prefer. We will be staying at Presbyterian Homes, and we will be working for “Rebuilding Lynchburg”. While we don’t yet know the exact nature of the work, we will be doing projects that help low income families and elderly remain in their homes. This could be anything from drywall and painting to renovations and wheelchair ramps.

In the first two weeks of February, we will start the conversations with the folks in Lynchburg to develop possible projects based upon our numbers and skills. And as that information becomes available, we will update you. But in the meantime we need to get a better handle on who is or may be going. Cost is minimal. The Mission Committee is picking up the cost of travel, lodging, and most meals. Cost should not be a deterrent for anyone, and assistance can be made available.

If you are interested in going, even if you are not sure yet whether you can go, or if you have questions, please contact Tom Zeigler, Carter or Kerry so that we can have a better sense of the number going—and so you can be on the e-mail list for updated information.

Acorns of Faith



Members of the Endowment Committee: Dick Clark, Dave Duncan, Kurt Holloway, Patty Picardi, Chad Stacks (chair), Al Wrigley, and Barbara Winter.

Who are the “Acorns of Faith?” Anyone who has indicated that he or she plans to make a gift of any size to First Presbyterian’s Endowment Fund. Anyone can join! The “price” of membership is simply loving this church and its God-centered mission, along with a deep concern to provide for generations to come.

Prior to making any gift, you are encouraged to consult with your attorney or tax advisor and your loved ones. Members of the Endowment Committee are also willing to meet with you to answer any questions you might have. Let us hear from you!

I (we) are happy to participate in “Acorns of Faith” having included First Presbyterian Church of Pottstown in my (our) will, insurance policy, annuity, trust, or by an outright gift.

(Please circle method used)

I (we) wish to be anonymous and not be a named “Acorn of Faith”

I (we) would like to speak to someone to get further information about the Endowment Fund.

Name

Session Digest

At its January meeting, the Session:

- Elected Rob Wade to act as Clerk pro tem as Ron Gower was out of town.
- Shared joys and concerns and joined in intercessory prayer.
- Received the stewardship report that pledges that we received 175 pledges this year for a total of \$351,519, with one or two pledges pending.
- Received a report from the Endowment Committee that this year's 4% payout from the three-year average balance for the Endowment was \$69,425 to be allocated by Session among the General Fund, Mission, and Capital Improvement fund.
- Heard a presentation from Treasurer Michelle Thompson regarding the 2010 Treasurer's Report. After all commitments to Mission are honored we ended this year with approximately a \$13,000 deficit..
- Received the recommendations from the Personnel Committee regarding staff salaries.
- Approved the budget for 2011.
- Approved postponement of the congregational meeting to February 6.
- Elected Jane Barndt to serve as Clerk pro tem for the congregational meeting as Ron Gower will be out of town.
- Approved the baptism of Lillian Mae Alderfer, child of God and daughter of Joshua and Adrian Alderfer, to take place on February 27, 2011.
- Please keep in your prayers the following prayer requests from the committees:
 - Nominating: Thanksgiving for those who said "yes" to their call.
 - Administrative: Prayers that ongoing projects will be completed.
 - Spiritual Formation: Thanksgiving for our teachers and advisors who will be recognized in March at the annual breakfast.
 - Fun and Fellowship: That joy and happiness will accompany our winter events.
 - Hospitality: That our church will continue to grow and that people will respond to invitations to join us on Friendship Sunday.
 - Mission: Wisdom on how to best allocate mission dollars and for those who will travel to Lynchburg in March.

Deacons' Bench—Meal Ministry: The Option of Gift Cards

The Deacons coordinate a meal ministry for those who are sick or recovering from surgery. If you can help, please pick up a storage container at church and prepare and label your meal and place it in the church freezer. If you are not a cook but want to help, some individuals and families have found gift cards to local restaurants with take-out to be a much appreciated gift. If you can help with either meals or gift cards and have questions, contact Polly Gower or Kerry.

Martha Porter Mission Tithe Report (presented at Congregational Meeting)

In 2010, First Presbyterian Church received a bequest from the trust of former member, Martha Porter. In keeping with scripture, Session approved that 1/10 (a tithe) of the bequest be set aside to be given back to the local community, in Martha's memory, to serve others in need.

“...they did not do as expected but, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.” 2 Corinthians 8: 5

The Martha Porter Mission Tithe Taskforce (“Taskforce”) was approved by Session on March 17, 2010 and was made up of Dave Duncan and Patty Picardi, co-chairs, David Allebach, Bill Campbell, Jodie Daniels, Sharon Holloway, Barbara Longstreth, John McNey, and Marcia Zeigler. The Pastors also attended all meetings. The Taskforce, with Session approval, adopted three criteria for projects: (1) the recipients will be nonprofit organizations in the Greater Pottstown Area; (2) projects funded will be capital projects, seed money for new initiatives, or projects that are suitable for a one-time grant, rather than ongoing support; and, (3) project(s) will offer naming opportunities so that the Porters can have some form of lasting recognition.

The Taskforce felt it important to use an open process and sought input and inspiration from the congregation through a *Celtic Cross* article, inserts in the weekly bulletin and a “town meeting” that was held on June 27 following the worship service. The Taskforce also sought input from the community as members contacted a number of individuals and nonprofit organizations to get suggestions about projects and unmet needs in the community.

The Taskforce then met to review the suggestions and decided to seek proposals from several organizations including the Cluster, the Pottstown Public Library, and the Foundation for Pottstown Education. Between October 3 and December 10, 2010, the Taskforce reviewed the submitted proposals and agreed on recommendations below which the Session has adopted.

1. That \$25,000 be contributed to a \$100,000 endowed scholarship fund at Montgomery County Community College jointly supported by our church and three other recipients of the Martha Porter bequest (Brownbacks U.C.C. Church, the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, and the Pottstown YWCA). As has been worked out by the four organizations and the Community College, the scholarship(s) would be awarded to student(s) enrolling at the West Campus (Pottstown, PA) in an approved degree program in a medical and/or health related field. Preference should be to students who have unmet financial need and demonstrate merit. Special consideration would be given to female and minority candidates and graduates of Pottstown and Owen J. Roberts High Schools.

2. That \$100,000 be committed to the Cluster Outreach Center's capital campaign. The Cluster has long needed a new building for the Outreach Center. It has now obtained a building but the building had long been neglected so that the Cluster is currently undergoing a \$1 million capital campaign to renovate the building to prepare it to be a site for services. Although the church has previously committed \$20,000 to this campaign and the Cluster has made some progress towards its goal, the Cluster still has a long way to go and this gift will make a significant difference. The church and Martha Porter will be recognized with the naming of the waiting area in the new building (“To the Glory of God by the First Presbyterian Church in memory of Martha Porter:”). The church and two long-time church members and long-time Cluster volunteers, Harold and Hazel Nettles, will be recognized in the naming of the Cluster's food pantry. **(see p. 10)**

Dwelling in the Word

Readings for the Week of January 30-February 6:

Isaiah 58: 1-9
 Psalm 12: 1-9
 I Corinthians 2: 1-12
 Matthew 5: 13-20

Readings for the Week of February 6-13:

Deuteronomy 30: 15-20
 Psalm 119: 1-8
 I Corinthians 3: 1-9
 Matthew 5: 21-37

Readings for the Week of February 13-20:

Lev. 19: 1-2, 9-18
 Psalm 119: 33-40
 I Corinthians 3: 10-11
 Matthew 5: 38-48

Readings for the Week of February 20-27:

Isaiah 49: 8-16a,
 Psalm 131: 1
 I Corinthians 4: 1-5
 Matthew 6: 24-34

Martha Porter Mission Tithe Report (cont. from p. 9)

3. That \$100,000 be committed to the Pottstown Regional Public Library to renovate the Library's Community Room and to provide seed money to start an "out of school time" program for "tweens" aged 8 to 12. The Library will name both the Community Room and the program after Martha Porter ("The Martha Porter Community Room"). The Library finds that it is seeing more and more children without adult guidance coming to the library – and they are getting younger and younger. They are seeking a safe place in the library. The target population is not served by present library programs or school-based programs. The program would be open 3:30 to 5:30 every day with a Coordinator and assistant and would seek to be fun, attractive, and also teach life knowledge in such areas as literacy, health and nutrition, career possibilities, cultural diversity, interpersonal skills and childcare. Renovation of the Community Room would serve not only this program but other needs of the library. The Library is confident that they can obtain grants to sustain this program after it is started and has developed a track record thanks to our seed money.

4. That \$38,000 be committed to the Foundation for Pottstown Education to fund the school district's urgent need for library books. These funds will purchase new books which will be given in memory of Martha Porter and identified by bookplates in each book. The monies will be disbursed to the various schools as follows: \$13,000 to the high school, \$9,000 to the middle school, and \$3,200 to each of the elementary schools, as recommended by the three school librarians interviewed by members of the Task Force.

February 2011

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

		1	2	3	4	5
		Bible Study 7:30 p.m.	M/R 4:30 Prayer 7:15 Committees 7:30	Bible Studies, 9:15 & 9:30 Comm. Meal 5 Bells 6:30 Scouts 7 Choir 7:30	Girl Scout Sleepover 6 p.m.	2 p.m. William Morris Fu- neral
6 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Hoagie Sale Congregational Meeting. FPU 4 p.m.	7	8 Lectio 7:30 p.m.	9 M/R 4:30 Deacons 7:30	10 Bible Study 9:15 Comm. Meal 5 Bells 6:30	11 Cub Scouts Pine Wood Derby set up	12 Men's Break- fast 8 a.m. Pine Wood Derby
13 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship FPU 4 p.m. Sr. Seeker B.S. 4:30 5th Sunday Practice 5:30 Jr. Seekers 6:30	14 Church Office & HENS Closed Cub Scouts 7	15 Prayer Shawl Ministry 7 p.m. Bible Study 7:30	16 Moms' Time Out 9:30 a.m. M/R 4:30 Session 7:30	17 Bible Studies 9:15 & 9:30 Comm. Meal 5 Bells 6:30 Scouts 7:00 Choir 7:30	18	19
20 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship FPU 4 p.m. Sr. Seeker B.S. 4:30 5th Sunday Prac- tice 5:30 Jr. Seekers 6:00	21 Cub Scouts 7	22 Lectio 7:30	23 M/R 4:30 Compassion- ate Friends 7:30	24 Bible Study 9:15 Comm. Meal 5 Bells 6:30 Scouts 7 Choir 7:30	25	26 5:30 Progres- sive Dinner
27 Sunday School and Worship Sr. Seekers Ski- ing/Tubing after Church Sr. Seeker B.S. 4:30 p.m. 5th Sunday Prac- tice 5:30 p.m.	28 Cub Scouts 7 p.m.					

