



The Celtic Cross

Summer 2014

Letter from the Co-Pastors

We write you this month about two matters affecting our congregation, one of which we as a congregation can speak (or sing!) about with one voice, and one of which we cannot.

First, we are excited to share with you that Cindy Foust has agreed to serve as our new Music Director. Cindy brings a wealth of experience as the long-time head of choral music at Pottsgrove High School and as a member of our choir. We look forward to working with Cindy, who is part-time with us while she completes her last year with the school district, and we are grateful that she joins a tradition of strong music leadership in this congregation, as most recently exemplified by Diane.

The second matter that we write about is one where we know there are many perspectives and opinions in our congregation: gay marriage. As you know, gay marriage is now an option in Pennsylvania, and by action of the General Assembly this summer, it is left up to the conscience of each pastor and congregation about whether gay marriages will be performed by pastors and congregations in those states that permit it. On the one hand, we are to be guided not by shifting public opinion but by the unchanging Word of God as guided by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, there have been a number of issues in church history where the church's understanding of God's Word has changed, such as interest-bearing loans (aren't you sorry you missed those debates!) and celibacy of ministers in the 1500s, slavery in the 1800s, divorce and remarriage and women leaders in the past century. What is God calling us to do now?

On behalf of the Session, we invite you to an evening of prayerful conversation on Wednesday, August 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the church to consider the issue of gay marriage. This will not be a night of debate: no votes will be taken. Instead, it will be one of prayerful conversation as we listen to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, and each other. Please sign up or let us know you are coming so we can prepare where best to meet. If you are interested in the conversation but cannot come that night, or if you would prefer to talk about it one-on-one, just let us know.

In any case, on this and all issues, we strive to be a church family that chooses a way that is different from the polarized world around us. Instead of choosing sides, we have chosen each other, in love, as God has chosen us. We have sought to follow Christ, listen to one another, respect each other's faith, and live out the principle that our forebears articulated for the church when it deals with divisive issues: "*in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love.*"

In humility, in hope, and in love,
Carter and Kerry

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Worship Matters

Worship in the summer is at 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, August 3 — Service of the Lord's Day
Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Sunday, August 10 — Service of the Lord's Day

Sunday, August 17 — Service of the Lord's Day

Sunday, August 24 — Service of the Lord's Day
Blessing of the Backpacks

Sunday, August 31 — Service of the Lord's Day
Faith at Work

Service of Thanksgiving and Caring for Creation With a Blessing of the Animals Thursday, August 14, 7 p.m. in the Peace Garden

You don't need to bring an animal to come but all God's creatures, great and small, are welcome—as long as they are on a leash, or in a carrier. Bring a blanket or folding chair. Lemonade, cookie, and kibbles 'n bits, following. Families and friends welcome! **This is a *fair weather* event. In case of rain, check the website or call the church office.**

Blessing of the Backpacks, Sunday, August 24 in Worship

As we turn towards a new school year, we invite children to bring their backpacks to worship on August 24. We'll ask God's blessing upon those who carry them as they do the work of learning throughout the year.

Mission Mornings for Junior High Seekers, August 11-15

Those who have signed up should have received a mailing with all of the details. This year, our rising sixth, seventh, and eighth graders will work and serve, play and have fun together at five "mission sites:" Downtown Pottstown, the Mennonite Distribution Center in Ephrata, Pottstown Training Center, Camp Kirkwood, and our very own First Presbyterian Church. The whole week culminates with a pool party at the Samples'! The days start at 9 a.m. with pick up varying day by day. If you have not signed up yet, or need further information, contact Jeff Fox-Kline at (248) 953-4702 or jfoxkline@fpcpottstown.org.

Family Bible School: Backyard Blessings in August

All ages welcome!

Thursday, August 7: 6:30-8 p.m., Steel River Playhouse

Join Backyard Blessings at the Steel River Playhouse as we praise God through the arts! Meet at the playhouse at 6:30 to enjoy an intergenerational evening with our church family. Get a tour of the playhouse and see one of Pottstown's treasures

Friday, August 15th 5:30 PM—Saturday August 16th at 9:00 AM: Zoo Snooze at the Elmwood Park Zoo!

Camp out in a tent at the Elmwood Park Zoo! A flashlight tour of the zoo! A special feeding of the animals! S'mores and a movie! Don't miss this unique opportunity to spend the night with God's animals and God's family!

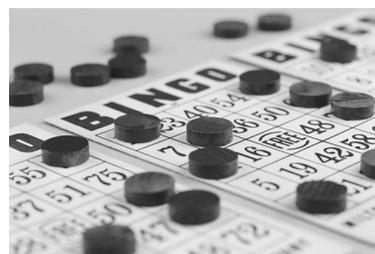
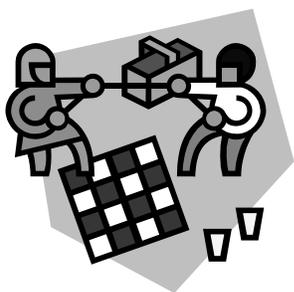
Annual Church Picnic

Sunday, September 7

4:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Don't Miss....

**Good friends and fellowship
Great food (and lots of it!)**



Games for all ages!

Please bring a side dish to serve 8 people. Deacons will supply chicken, dessert, and beverage. The picnic will take place rain or shine!

Women's Retreat, October 24-25

Our Women's Retreat will be held at Mariawald Renewal Center in Shillington on Friday, October 24 and Saturday, October 25. Amy Shutt will be leading this year's retreat entitled "Thinning the Veil". Details and registration will be available September 1.

Session Digest:

At its June meeting, the Session:

- Heard the joys and concerns of the congregation.
- Approved a commission to meet with Thomas Kisela on June 29 to hear his affirmation of faith and then approve his receipt as a member upon his profession of faith in worship on June 29.
- Discussed how best to proceed in listening to the congregation on the issue of gay marriage.
- Approved the hiring of Cindy Foust as new choir director.
- Reviewed the Treasurers' Report through May 31 and approved the monthly allocation to the Capital Improvement Fund.
- Approved the recommendations of the Porter-Broward Grant Taskforce (see below and insert).
- Approved \$500 for the refinishing of the "Sunday School" desk in the hall outside of the sanctuary from the Memorial Fund.
- Received written reports from the Administrative and Spiritual Formation Committees and the Deacons.
- Please keep in your prayers the following prayer requests:
Admin. Committee: for level sidewalks (being repaired)! Spiritual Formation: for Rally Day plans and Backyard Blessings; Worship: for our new choir director; Hospitality: that we might be an inviting congregation; Mission: for our youth in Mission Mornings and this summer's workcamp and thanksgiving for former youth participating in the Honduras mission trip.

Recommendations of the Porter-Broward Taskforce

Near the beginning of 2014, our congregation received an unsolicited grant from the Broward Community Foundation of Florida. The source of the grant was a bequest made to the Foundation by a former member of our congregation, Mary Porter. In January, the Session adopted guidelines for use of the grant. The guidelines stipulate that the money will be used for three general purposes over and above our regular budget:

- Enhancement of current ministries, including special one-time programs, training, etc., seed money for new ministries, or grant-based programs that will be supported by the grant and not the General Fund;
- Capital improvements to our facilities that serve to conserve energy consumption, reduce the environmental impact of our facilities and ministries, or increase safety or accessibility;
- Contribute to other ministries and non-profit organizations which address the needs of children and families, and/or the welfare and quality of life of the greater Pottstown area.

In March, the Session appointed a taskforce made up of nine people representing a broad cross-section of the congregation to listen to the congregation and community, and research options for use of the money. The Taskforce completed its work in time to make unanimous recommendations to the Session. In turn, those recommendations were unanimously approved by Session. The complete report of the Taskforce is included as an insert to this *Celtic Cross*.

With Joyful Hearts: First Presbyterian in Mission

2014 Barth Uniform Drive August through the end of September

Short or Long Sleeve Collared Shirts/Blouses, Sweaters,
Slacks, Shorts, Skirts, Jumpers
Sizes 6 – 14 (Students K thru Grade 4)

White, Light Blue, Navy, Khaki—Here are some examples:



Financial Report (through May 31)

Budgeted income for the year:	566,947
Budgeted income through May 31:	236,228
Actual income through May 31:	224,784
Income this time last year:	176,826
Budgeted expenses for the year:	589,270
Budgeted expenses through May 31:	245,529
Actual expenses through May 31:	229,256
Expenses this time last year:	154,546 (reflected vacant staff position)
Deficit after Mission and Cap. Improvement allocations paid:	(\$15,503)
Surplus this time last year:	\$16,257 (reflected staff vacancy)

Please remember the church with your giving this summer

We hope you have a wonderful and relaxing summer. Please remember the church this summer by keeping up your giving as you are able, because our expenses do not stop for this summer. You can make your contribution either on Sunday in the plate—or online (just go to the webpage and hit the “Donations” tab).

Lectionary Readings

July 27 to Aug. 3: Genesis 32: 22-31, Psalm 17: 1-7, Romans 9: 1-3, Matt. 14: 13-21

Aug. 4 to 10: Genesis 37: 1-4, Psalm 105: 1-6, Romans 10: 5-15, Matt. 14: 22-33

Aug. 11 to 17: Genesis 45: 1-15, Psalm 133, Romans 11: 1-2a, Matt. 15: 21-28

Aug. 18 to 24: Ezek. 1: 1-8, Psalm 124, Romans 12: 1-8, Matt. 16: 13-20

Aug. 25 to 31: Exodus 3: 1-15, Psalm 105: 1-6, Romans 12: 9-12, Matt. 16: 21-28

Church Family News

Please keep in your prayers the following people who have been ill, hospitalized or in special need of prayers recently: Peg Deegan, Faye Bush, Don Grim, Sara Grim, Debby Schonely, David Voytko, Tom Babbony, Jean Hollenbach, Ken Lee, Court Smith, and Maddie Macdonald.

We are grateful for our sanctuary volunteers who come in each week to “tidy up:” Kathy Benning, Jane Marshall, Barb Lisi, Jean Sweeney, Deb Schonely, Judy Babbony, and Suzanne Fritsch.

Condolences to the family of Lorraine Reidenouer who passed away in June.

We rejoice with Adrian and Josh Alderfer upon the birth of son, Carson.

Baptized recently was Grady Joseph Temple, child of God and son of Jeremy and Heather Babbony Temple and brother of Evan.

Counters Corner

Head Counter for August: 3 & 10: Fred Remelius, 17 & 31, Hank Phillips, 24: Bill Campbell

Counters for August: John Davis, Charlie Jenkins, 3 & 10: Gina James, 17, 24, 31: Amy Shutt

Is God calling you to serve in a new way in FPC’s ministry?

Is God calling you to help welcome visitors to our church or teach a children’s Sunday School class? Are you interested in becoming more involved with the mission efforts of the church, or with the ongoing need to manage our property and finances? Would you like to make a difference through the Worship Committee or by helping to plan fellowship events for our church family? If you are interested, or have questions, contact Carter, Kerry, or Jeff. August is a time for recruiting and replenishing some of the volunteer openings in the church. Gratefully, many serve and we are blessed that the work is shared. What is God calling you to do?

August 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>31 9:30 Worship</p>					<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>3 9:30 Worship- Communion</p>	<p>4 .</p>	<p>5 Miller- Keystone Bloodmobile 3:30-7 Walk-ins Welcome</p>	<p>6 Parish Nurse Meeting 2 p.m.</p>	<p>7 Community Meal 5 p.m. Backyard Blessings @ Steel River Playhouse 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>10 9:30 Worship</p>	<p>11 Mission Morn- ings to Down- town Pottstown</p>	<p>12 Mission Mornings. Mennonite Resource Cen- ter, Ephrata 7:30 Theology Reading Group @ Lesters</p>	<p>13 Mission Morn- ings to Potts- town Training Center Prayerful Con- versation 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>14 Mission Morn- ings to Kirk- wood Camp 5 p.m. Com- munity Meals Animal Bless- ing 7 p.m.</p>	<p>15 Mission Morn- ings here and swim party Zoo Snooze 5:30 p.m.</p>	<p>16 Young Chil- dren/ Worship Training 10:00-5:00</p>
<p>17 9:30 Worship Young Children & Worshp Training 11:00—3:00</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 5 p.m. Community Meals</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>
<p>24 9:30 Worship Blessing of Backpacks 11 a.m. SS Teacher Orientation</p>	<p>25 7 pm. SS Teacher Ori- entation</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28 5 p.m. Community Meal</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>

