



Caroling Party

Friday, December 21st . Meet at Lake Forest at 6:30 p.m. Gathering afterwards at the Voss's, 38 Hillcrest Avenue 9 to 11 p.m.



December 16th there will be ONE service only at 9:30 a.m. for our annual Christmas pageant!!!

Christmas Eve offering will go to support the construction of the new building for the Plattsburgh Interfaith Food shelf.



pulse

December 07

First Presbyterian Church
34 Brinkerhoff Street
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
518.561.3140

Pastor
Rev. Paul Heller
Jim Snook
Pulse Editor

Dear Friend in Christ,

Seventeen years ago, this coming January, you *called* me to be your full-time Pastor. Now I am asking you to *send* me (and Darlene) to be your full-time missionaries in Africa. As you know, we have accepted a call from the Malawi board of *Ministry of Hope*, to direct their newly established Crisis Nursery for abandoned and/or orphaned infants in the city of Mzuzu. We will serve a three year term as Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Mission Co-workers, beginning around the first of June (Lord willing!).

I suspect, that like any death, the ending of our pastoral relationship will be marked by different stages of grief, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. But right now, I find myself still in the initial state—"It can't be happening." Perhaps that's because we did not call them, they called (or rather e-mailed) us.

Of course, the Malawians captured our hearts during our very first visit. For Darlene that was 1999. For me it was during our two-month Sabbatical stay in 2002. Even then we dreamed of returning in 2006 to serve for one year as Mission Volunteers, while long term co-workers Frank and Nancy Dimmock were on home leave.

We did return for a visit in August of 2005. However the Dimmocks informed us they were being re-assigned to Lesoto and would not be replaced. Nevertheless, Nancy Dimmock suggested that perhaps I could serve as the English speaking pastor of a large congregation in Lilongwe (the capital) and Darlene would then be able to carry on the Dimmocks' ministry of hospitality, as well as volunteer at the Lilongwe Crisis Nursery.

In the spring of 2006, I was invited back, to lead a retreat for missionary personnel serving in Malawi and four surrounding countries. At the retreat I was introduced as "the new English speaking pastor for the Bwailia congregation in Lilongwe." This was news to us. It got worse. Following the retreat we were "wined" and dined by the congregation for two days. However, there was no foundation, no funding, and no follow up.

It seemed that our sense of call to serve in Malawi was evaporating. I made plans to attend "Career Counseling" in Boston this October. The idea was to focus on how I would spend the next three years doing my very best to "finish well" as your pastor, and then retire from here in 2011.

In the meantime, the recently established Crisis Nursery in Mzuzu was thrown into a crisis of its own. The founding directors from U.S.A. announced suddenly that they were leaving Malawi in early September. In mid-August we were forwarded a copy of an e-mail from our missionary friend Nancy Dimmock to an organization that was looking to fill the director position for the Mzuzu Nursery. (Continued on Page 7)



Stewardship

A Way of Life

The Stewardship Council would like to thank each member the congregation for their participation in the 2008 Stewardship Drive. If you have not sent or brought in your Pledge card and your Time & Talent Commitment form, then please respond. Your contributions, monetary, time-wise, and talent-wise collectively allow our church to properly plan for 2008.

Thank you,

Kathie Fuller, Stewardship Chairperson

Christmas Candlelight Concert Rehearsals:

Rehearsals for the Christmas Candlelight concert will begin on Thursday, November 1st from 8:00-9:00 p.m. Members of the congregation who would like to join us for this concert are welcome. The concert will be on Sunday, December 16th at 4:00 p.m. and will include sacred Christmas anthems and carols. For more information call Vicki Washburn at 563-3777.

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- *What will we do between the time when Rev. Heller departs and a new Pastor arrives?*

Most likely the church will hire an interim minister to provide pastoral leadership during this transition. "An interim pastor is a minister invited by the session of a church without an installed pastor to preach the Word, administer the Sacraments, and fulfill pastoral duties for a specified period not to exceed twelve months at a time. . . . An interim minister may not be called to be the next installed pastor." (Book of Order)

These are just some of the concerns that come to mind as we contemplate life without our pastor of 17 years. A process will look something like this:

- At the annual meeting of the congregation on February 3rd we vote to accept Rev. Heller's resignation and approve his terms of call (salary and benefits) for the first 6 months of 2008.
- Session meets with the Presbytery Committee on Ministry rep., the Rev. Joann White,
 - 1). to determine the format and duration for a mission study.
 - 2). to begin the process of searching for an interim minister to continue pastor service in the absence of an installed Minister of Word and Sacrament.
- Session secures the services of an interim minister.
- C.O.M. conducts exit interviews with Rev. Heller and Session.
- Goodbye to the Hellers
- Upon completion of the mission study, a congregational meeting is held to elect a pastor nominating committee.

NOW WHAT?

- *What are we going to do when Pastor Heller leaves?*
First Presbyterian Church will press on as we have for the past 207 years. We have one “pastor” and nearly 300 “ministers”. We will continue to worship and work together, trusting God who alone holds the future.
- *How will we know what to do?*
The Presbyterian Church is nothing if not organized. The church has the Book of Order, as well as detailed manuals on what to do when a pastor leaves. But perhaps most important we have a trained representative from the Presbytery’s Committee on ministry, The Rev. Joann White from Saranac Lake, who will be here to guide us through the process. We can also turn to Presbytery Dean ,The Rev. Bob Svenson from Peru, for guidance and support.
- *Who will be our minister?*
Our new minister will be whomever the congregation votes to call. The session will call a congregational meeting to elect a pulpit nominating committee, “*which shall be representative of the whole congregation. This committee’s duty shall be to nominate a minister to the congregation for election as pastor. The action of the congregation shall be presented to the presbytery for its concurrence.*” (Book of Order)
- *When do we begin looking?*
The congregation may not proceed to elect a pulpit nominating committee until “*after the effective date of the dissolutions of the pastoral relationship.*” (Book of Order) In other words, the congregation cannot begin to look for a new pastor until Rev. Heller leaves in June.

Outreach Christmas Tree Ornament Project

Once again our congregation is invited to provide Christmas gifts to children in Clinton County. The Outreach Council received a list of wishes/needs from the Department of Social Services staff for 6 children from three families ages 3 mos to 14 years. On Sunday, December 2nd each specific gift request will be written on a colored "ornament" and hung on a small tree in Fellowship Hall . The ornament message will include the gender, age, clothing size, first name of the recipient , and the item description. These tags will be in duplicate, the two parts tied together.

Congregation members, friends and families are encouraged to take the tags- both parts- off the tree and purchase the items that week. Please DO NOT WRAP THE GIFTS. Tape the double tag to the outside of the gift. If a clothing item is purchased, please include the store receipt, should an exchange be necessary.

If you select a more expensive gift tag, such as a winter jacket, several members might jointly purchase the item. There will be about 50 tags or "ornaments". Gifts are usually purchased at our larger stores where there may be a sale: Penny's, Sears, TJ Maxx, KMart or Walmart. Outreach Council members: Betsy Honor, Nancy Olsen. Rosemary Schaffer, Peg Shambo and Linda Tripp will gladly give advice or answer questions regarding these gifts. Please return the tagged, unwrapped gifts to the foot of the Christmas tree in Fellowship Hall on Sundays, December 9 or 16 or to the church office before noon on Dec. 17.

Outreach Council members will check the gifts against the master list and purchase gifts that have not been returned. When children receive gifts from us they are not served by the Christmas Bureau.

The Outreach Council thanks you for your continued participation in this true community spirit of Christmas giving.



Christian Education

The Spiritual Classics group is meeting according to our new schedule at 10:40 am following Fellowship time. We focus on a different writer each week and new participants are always welcome. The weekly readings are 4-5 pages of text by a religious or spiritual writer followed by 2 or 3 discussion questions. Nancy Groves will make 2 or 3 copies of the current selection and these may be picked up in the church office or at the class.. Additional books can be ordered for a nominal cost. Our current focus is on the outward discipline of Solitude.

November 26, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, “The Silent Beach, the Bowl of Stars.”

Advent series December 2nd - 23rd

January 4, Thomas A Kempis, “Solitude and Silence.”

January 11, John Main “The Meaning of Silence”

Future readings will include: Dorothy Day, Ignatius of Loyola, and Christina Rossetti. If one or more of these writers pique your interest please join us for a unique series of religious works. With the new worship format you may be able to fit this interesting study group into your spiritual life and our life together Please join with us on Sunday. Bring your coffee and a friend.



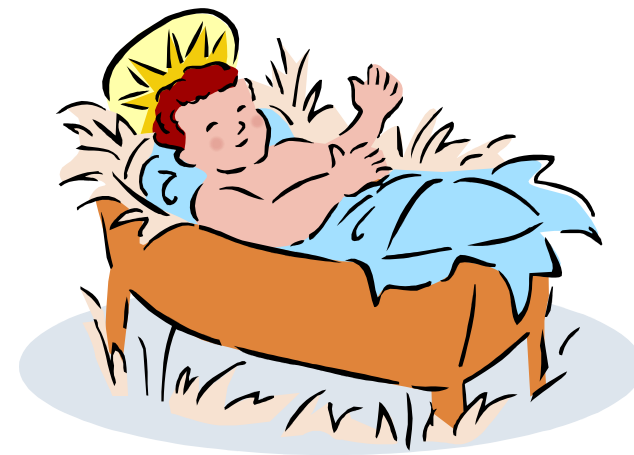
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Nancy wrote: *The Nursery in Mzuzu is going to need someone who knows babies and their health care and who is a manager and a community connectional type person. There is a couple in NY, Rev. Paul and Darlene Heller, who have also expressed an interest in working with the Nursery in Mzuzu...**(We talked about this casually when we were in Malawi in the spring of 2006, but had no communication since then.)** I personally think they wold be ideal for the Nursery. She is a public health nurse and he is a pastor (in the full sense of that word). Together they could meet the needs of the babies, and they could help to connect the Nursery to the larger ministry of the church in the Mzuzu area. I hope that they will be in touch with Ministry of Hope and with the CCAP-Synod (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian), and perhaps with Louisville (national offices of our Presbyterian Church USA) and with you. I am copying them on this email.*

Well, we were taken completely off guard. Our heads were spinning. Nevertheless, we decided to pursue what we now believe is a calling from the Lord. Over the past 3 months we have been in touch with all of the essential organizations, and have watched with awe as the Spirit worked—opening every door along the way.

That said, some days, “I still can’t believe its happening.”

Love & Peace,



Session Highlights

The Session and the Deacons met for their annual joint meeting on Monday, November 26 at 6 p.m. A pizza supper was shared, and then Pastor Heller read the letter that had been mailed to the congregation earlier in the day. The news of Paul's decision to accept a call from the Ministry of Hope in Malawi was received with many mixed emotions. The Rev. Joann White of Saranac Lake of the Presbytery Committee on Ministry was a guest at the meeting.

Immediately after the joint meeting, Paul met with the Deacons, and Joann met with the Session to review some of the steps of the search process and to give more information about the plans for the months ahead.

The Business of the Stated Session meeting included several action items:

- Sarah Deeb was granted support for participation in the Mission of Hope in Nicaragua.
- A donation of \$400 was made to the Ministry of Hope in Malawi, monies formerly designated to the Twinning Project.
- The Christmas Eve offering will be designated for the Interfaith Food Shelf.
- Donations, recommended by the Local Mission Council, formerly the Outreach Council, were approved. These include contributions to the Journey into Reading, Salvation Army, and the Red Cross Emergency Fuel Fund.

Marie Beemer submitted her resignation as Church Treasurer, effective December 31, 2007, having served 54 years in that capacity. Thank you, Marie, good and faithful servant! Carl Payne has been approved as Financial Secretary. Janora Stone and Jack Myers are sharing the work of the Stewardship Administrator. Elders agreed to continue the search for the Youth and Family Director, independent of a search for a new Pastor.

Wednesday afternoon services will be re-instituted for the seasons of Advent and Lent. There will be one single Sunday morning worship service on December 16, including the annual Christmas pageant and participation of the Praise Band.

Very sincere wishes to all for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from your Clerk of Session. It's been a year of many changes, with more ahead. I thank the congregation for their support and encouragement.

Christmas Candlelight Concert

Sunday, December 16th at 4:00 p.m.

The Adult choir is proud to present the annual Christmas Candlelight Concert on Sunday, December 16th 2007 at 4:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. The choir will sing a lovely selection of seasonal anthems which are sure to prepare your heart for the coming of the Messiah. We are also very pleased to have the "Key Winds Trio" join us this year. This trio includes Janice Kyle on oboe. Janine Scherline on Clarinet and our own David Carpenter on piano.

All are encouraged to attend, families, children, seniors, adults, and students. Please invite a friend or neighbor to come with you. We look forward to a full house. The concert will last about one hour and will have the traditional candles lit. There will be a reception in Fellowship Hall following the concert.

Won't you take time from your busy holiday schedule and join us for this special performance. You'll be glad you did!

ADVENT MIDWEEK SERVICE

During advent Contemplative communion service will be held on Wednesday afternoon at 4:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

(December 5, 12 & 19)