

THE BEACON

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FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Back in the 18th century a man named William Paley posed an interesting argument for the existence of God. It ran something like this. He said, “What if I were walking down the beach and chanced to come upon three small boulders grouped together, leaning one against the other? I might rightly suppose that someone had been at the beach earlier and put those boulders together. But then again, I would have to admit that maybe that is not what happened at all. Maybe, by a strange confluence of wind and waves and weather and time, these small boulders had randomly rolled into close proximity to one another. No one had placed them the way I found them. And in any case, I would never know what the truth of the matter was. I could not logically insist that someone had been there before me.”

“But, he said, “what if I was walking down that same beach and came across a pocket watch? I could not rationally imagine that somehow, by a strange confluence of wind and waves and weather and time, that pocket watch just randomly came together. The logic implicit in the evidence at hand would force me to admit that someone of considerable intelligence had designed that watch. To deny that it must be so would be deliberately obtuse. It would be intellectually indefensible. It would be irrational.”

“Just so”, he concluded, “when one studies the intricate design of the human body, for instance, it’s astonishing harmonic functionality, the precisely calibrated systems of operation that check and balance one another in the only way that could make our continued living possible, it is at least highly rational, to posit the existence of an Intelligent Designer.”

Obviously, I’m not a scientist. Still, I have always found Paley’s argument at least compelling. My bare bones sense is that complex entities do not just fall together by accident. And among those entities, I would include the church. For all the things I don’t know about church history, I know it didn’t come together a few years before I was born. It wasn’t even birthed in the Reformation (i.e. Luther and Calvin didn’t invent it). It has been around for just shy of two thousand years. And the music we sing, the theology we teach, the form of our worship, and the creeds that keep us on course, have been shaped by the urgent impress of a hundred generations of men and women who thought passing all this on to us was worth dying for.

All that to say, I was delighted last year to read Gerald Sittser’s latest book, “Water From a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality From Early Martyrs To Modern Missionaries.” Sittser is a professor of theology at Whitworth University, in Spokane, WA. Whitworth, in my opinion, is one of our finest Presbyterian educational institutions, and Sittser is an elegant writer with a rock-solid Biblical foundation in all he writes. His books on grief (“A Grace Disguised”), the will of God (“The Will of God As a Way of Life”), and prayer (“When God Doesn’t Answer Your Prayers”), have been among the best books I have ever read on those subjects.

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So I would like to teach a class on this book. It would begin on Wednesday evening, January 6th at 7 P.M., and continue on consecutive Wednesdays through March 31st. Thus, it would be a twelve-week class, with the exception of Ash Wednesday, on February 17th. As usual, the class would run from 7 P.M. to 8:30 P.M., with coffee or tea provided by the church and snacks provided by members of the class. If you have childcare concerns, I believe arrangements could be made to provide it at the church. Let me know if that would be helpful.

Why might you want to attend? If you are like me, there are so many eras of the church's history about which I've had only the vaguest understanding, and Sittser is a wonderful tour guide. He introduces us to the early Christian martyrs, the earliest churches, the desert saints, the monastics, the sacraments, the Christian mystics, Francis of Assisi, the Reformers, the evangelicals, and the pioneer missionaries. These folks constitute our church family tree, the folks whose journey shaped ours. I hope you can join us.

~ Pastor Brent ~

The "1" Group

The "1" Group will meet on Tuesday, January 12, 5:30 p.m. at the Parkway Café on North Dirksen. No reservations required. If you are thinking about joining us, please take that first step and come on out. The "1" Group will gather on Feb. 9th at 5:30 at Bob Evans on Stevenson Drive. We really do have a good time together and would love to have you join us.

"Unhanging the Greens" On Sunday, January 10th, at 3 p.m. we are asking adults only to come help take down the greens and prepare for storing. Then you are invited to stay for a meal of chili, desert and drink. The more we have helping, the faster we are done and can enjoy fellowship as we eat.

Thank You

We send many thanks to our church friends for their thoughtfulness for the prayers, flowers, visits, and cards. The love so many of you show us is appreciated. You all are proof of God's love for all of us. God is good.

Paul & Dorothy Muir



Cookies— Thank you for those that provided cookies to Presbyterian Home in December. The L.L.L. Class is asked to provide cookies on January 17 and Christian Friends on February 21.

Offering Envelope Change

Next year our offering envelopes will not be mailed directly to us each month. Instead, all of those that use the offering envelopes will pick them up at church at the beginning of the year. Having them picked up will save the church \$400 in mailing expenses. In addition when someone changes their address we will not have to pay return postage as has often happened in the past. If you are unable to pick up your envelopes please contact the office and someone will deliver them to you.

Women's Retreat

Ladies, as you know we had to postpone our fall retreat to 2010. The dates are February 5/6 at the Chiara Center. Flyers are being sent out to past attendees, and are also available in the Narthex along with registration forms. The deadline for registration is Friday, January 29th. The theme for this year is "Being Molded by the Potter." As in the past, you will have free time to pray, visit, rest, take a walk (if the weather permits) or do absolutely nothing! I hope you will join us in February. We'll have a great time as we explore how each of us has been molded.

Best Wishes on your Retirement

Third Presbyterian Church congregants and staff want to thank Richard Miller for his long and faithful service as Sunday Caretaker. After 37 years of service, he will retire on Dec. 27, 2009. A little known fact is Richard replaced his father in this position. A family tradition is drawing to a close. May God bless you, Richard and Carol in this time of retirement.

Presbyterian Women

Ladies, come join us on Tuesday morning January 5 for our annual planning meeting. We will be planning the events for the year. Your suggestions and help is needed. In February we will meet at 9:30 A.M. on the 2nd, weather permitting.

Women of Faith Bible Study

January 14th, 9:30 a.m. the Women of Faith will begin a four week Bible Study entitled "Resting In Him: I need to slow down, but I can't!" Rest. Our souls crave it. Our bodies demand it. Our spirits are renewed through it. Yet rest is one of those treasures that we often don't take the time to enjoy in the busyness of life. The ultimate rest you will ever experience doesn't just take place during a nap or a lazy Sunday afternoon. Instead, it is found in God. Come discover real rest, and learn to relax in the arms of our Savior. Come join us – the coffee pot and hot water are always on!

Thursday, February 18th the Women of Faith will begin a 6 week Lenten Bible Study. We meet at 9:30 a.m. in the Hanahan room. Come join in.

PEP Club Capers

The PEP Club will meet Monday, January 18 at 11:30 A.M. for Lunch. Weather permitting. Bring you favorite mug with your name on it by January 17. The February meeting will be on Feb. 15. Watch the bulletin for more information.

Deacon Notes

During the last three months for our Feed the Hungry Mission, we have prepared and served meals

at Helping Hands. In October, Mary Bilyeu, Lucy Collebrusco, Mark Fay, Barbara Smith and Jan Steinhour served beef vegetable soup, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, apple cake and milk. In November, Carole Holladay, Darrell Holladay, Betty Howard, Linda Pease and Eddie Pease served chicken and homemade noodles, apple crisp, rolls and butter, and milk. In December, Elaine Crowell, Ruth Glasscock, Scott Henderson and Pat Miller served turkey and gravy, potatoes, mixed vegetables, cranberry jello salad, oranges and milk.

I want to thank the entire Board of Deacons for your dedication and service. Special thanks to the 2009 officers: Carole Holladay, Assistant Chief Deacon; Janet Kayma, Secretary; and Robert Kayma, Treasurer.

At our Transitional Dinner/Potluck in January, we will be installing the officers elected for 2010: Pat Miller, Chief Deacon; Elaine Crowell, Assistant Chief Deacon; Sheila Garfat, Secretary; and Sharon Miller, Treasurer. We also will be welcoming the following new members: Susan Basso, Diana Boone, Elaine Fay, Marilyn Houston, Joyce McAllister and Billy Moss. At the same time, we will be

acknowledging the deacons whose terms have expired: Janet Kayma, Robert Kayma, William Nerone and Pam Pendleton.

Respectfully submitted by
Judy Goin, Chief Deacon

Acolyte Schedule

Below is the acolytes' schedule. The acolytes are the youth that

participate in our worship services by leading the processional and lighting the candles to initiate the service and by extinguishing the candles during the closing hymn.

January 3	Caitlin Hubbard David Hartman
January 10	Luke Farley Nick Farley
January 17	Curtis Dyer Adam Prince
January 24	Scott Basso Tyler Basso
January 31	Megan Clanton Josie Garfat
February 7	Jeffery Clanton Mitchell McDevitt
February 14	Cheyenne Prieto Braden Prince
February 21	Caitlin Hubbard David Hartman
February 28	Curtis Dyer Adam Prince

Thank you! Thank You!

His Kids would like to thank all who helped to make their Shopping Sunday a huge success. The donations were over-whelming. Thank you to the many volunteers such as wrappers, Kids for Christ, High School Department. Thank you also the Chuck our custodian, who worked so hard to make sure our room was heated and tables were set up. Happy Holidays, In the Lord's Service.
Judy Moreland

February 5/6 Women's Retreat

Don't forget registration is due January 29th.

Change in staff position starting on January 3

With the retirement of Richard Miller as our Sunday Caretaker, the following plan to cover this staff opening has been approved by the Session.

The workweek of our church custodian will change to Monday through Friday. If there is a large scheduled Saturday event, the custodian will trade a regular workday for this Saturday event. Our present custodian has agreed to become the Sunday Caretaker. The caretaker will work one hour to open the church and one hour to close the church. The caretaker position will be a separate contractual position paying a set fee per Sunday. The custodial staff person will work 40 hours per week and the caretaker will work 2 hours each Sunday. These will be 2 separate paid positions with no overtime.

Ash Wednesday/Agape Meal

We will observe Ash Wednesday again this year on February 17 at 6 P.M. with an Agape meal and Communion Service. The meal that evening will be a simple one of soup and bread. Followed by Holy Communion. Join us for this meaningful start to the Lenten season. All are welcome.



Sympathies to the family of Allen Henrikson,

Thomas Baird

Special Prayer For:

Dorothy Allison
Betty Bambrough
Shirley Blackburn
Judy Brawner
Bob & Nita Brust
Dante Contri
Anna Cuiffetalli
Larry Davis
Ruth Ellington
Colson Fiore
Lucia Handshy

Gerry Havenar
Norma Henrikson
Lila Keiser
Elizabeth Lowe
Pauline Maton
Bessie McConaughay
Sharon Miller
Carol Mitchell
Dorothy Muir
Bill Nerone
Linda Overby
Sharon Riley
Lena Smith
Roy & Ruby Tilson
Don & Lillian West
Jodi Woodard
Sandi Woodard
Those in the Military

Carol's Corner

Like the turning to a clean, crisp page unmarked by pencil or pen, so the new year lies before us ... yet to be discovered, yet to be lived ... full of wonder, mystery and intrigue. And if we are honest with ourselves, a bit of fear nags at our hearts -- fear of the unknown. One does not have to live too many years to discover that there are many surprises along life's journey.

Yet, just as the winter encases us in its unpredictable weather, so, too, the new year looms before us with a limitation in scope for not much more beyond the here and now. We would like to be able to study our own individual "road map" for this new year; but if God allowed us this foresight, would we be willing to experience the daily moments of grace, or the usually-learned-the-hard-way life lessons, or the discovery about eternal truths that can take our breath away? Would we yearn for, and seek after, such longings as these if we could view it all in advance? Isn't it in the unknowing that we are constantly reminded to turn back to God -- to lean on Him and His understanding; to trust in His ability to navigate us through uncharted courses in our lives?

How easy it is for us to become side-tracked in our Christian journey -- ever wanting and attempting to be the one who is at the helm. But God so gently reminds us that we do not need to be the one in control. He who loves us and gave His very life for our redemption is the one upon whom we are to lean. Come what may, God is right by our side -- in sorrow and in joy -- being our constant companion during every season of life.

What resolutions are near to our hearts this year? What spiritual muscles do we wish to exercise? What new challenges beckon us to accept the risk? A new year invites us to evaluate where we have been after the year passes; where we are at the crossroads; and where we would like to venture in the new.

Trust in the Lord. Relax in His care. Give up anxieties to His concern for our well-being. He is our guide and our strength. Whom, or what, shall we fear?

~ Carol Hovland-Mitchell

Congregational Life

Thank you so much for the beautiful flowers you sent me on my 93rd Birthday. I enjoyed them so much and it was nicer to be remembered. God has blessed me to have such a long life. I will have been a member of 3rd Church since May 18, 1924, 86 years May 2010.

Happy Holidays & a Blessed Christmas to all: Catherine Frey

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Permit #102

Worship Service 9:15 A.M., Fellowship 10:30A.M., Sunday School 10:45 A.M..



Thanks to the following people for the Poinsettias this Christmas Season.

Frances Fenstermaker by Bill & May Weities
Glenn & Doris Holladay by Annize Flood, Nancy Flood, and
Darrell and Carole Holladay

Robert A. Miller by Thelma Miller
Daniel Mudd by Susan Mudd
Our Grandparents by Tracy, Jodi, and Chad Woodard
Our Loved Ones by the Hood Family
Noretta Lorene Sponsky by Francis Sponsky
George and Dorothy Turnbull by Tom and Pat Turnbull
Chance Watson by Tom and Pat Turnbull
Emelie Wieties by Bill and May Weities
Jim Woodard, by his loving family

Souper Bowl Sunday

Sunday, February 7 This is a date you don't want to forget. On that Sunday not only are we getting all geared up to watch the Super Bowl, we are gearing up to once again collect cans of soup for the local food pantries. Last year on Souper Bowl Sunday nationally \$10,304,000. was collected with over 13,776 churches participating. All soup and money collected stays in the community and given to our local mission supported pantries, those being Kumler Neighborhood Ministries, Grace Lutheran and First Presbyterian Church.

You may bring you soup on January 31st or February 7th. There are a lot of good sales on soup, chili, etc at a variety of stores. So when you do your weekly shopping remember those that need our help. As we are thankful for what we have, lets help those that are not as fortunate as we are. Your help is needed to make this a successful drive.