



THE *Good News* LETTER

FROM THE PASTOR

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means "God with us."

"God with us"—what a wonderful way to look at the miracle of Christmas! We have a God who has chosen to become one with us in the flesh and blood of humanity! That is the real miracle, that the God of the universe would care enough about us to want to leave the majesty of heaven to enter into our world, to experience what we experience, and become a part of us.

continued on page 2

Lessons Learned

I learned a lesson this past month by being on the Missions Committee. I was unable to attend the November meeting as it occurred on election day and I had a previous commitment at the polling place. A telephone call the next day informed me that I had been voted as the member to write the Missions letter for this issue. The lesson: Don't miss a Missions meeting!

In a way, however, it was a blessing, because I had to take a good look at the work of our committee since the beginning of the year and what we had accomplished. When I considered our mission support, both here in our own country and around the world, I discovered that we, as a congregation, support missionaries in 12 countries, including Zambia, Croatia, Bolivia, France, Guatemala, India, Pakistan, Togo, Senegal, Haiti, Portugal and the Philippines.

Locally, our Fort Square ministry reaches out to Day-break Pregnancy Center, Vision New England, four missions in Quincy, as well as extending the Gospel to local colleges through Campus Crusade and Emmanuel Gospel Center, Radio Bible Class

through their publication of Daily Bread (available monthly to the congregation), Presbyterians for Renewal, and, finally, supporting Presbyterians Pro-Life.

The key word is "supporting." This has been the lifeblood of our interest in missions for as long as I can remember. It has been an important point since I began attending Sunday School more years ago than I want to count.

Interest in missions has increased over the years even to the point that members of our church became missionaries in Africa and India. This continues today as church members have answered the call to ministry in Guatemala and Botswana. We have even had a former member

continued on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Lessons Learned	1
From the Pastor	1
Clothing Room Update	2
MOPS Report	4
Blessed Are Those Who Hunger	4
f ² Youth	5
Advent Schedule	6

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Sunday Schedule
8:30 am Contemporary service
9:30 am Sunday school
11 am Traditional service

*From the Pastor
continued from page 1*

In the last few months, we have gone through a lot as a congregation. Transitions are never easy, and certainly not under the circumstances we have faced. But as we come to this Christmas season, we can have confidence that our God knows all about what we are going through, because he is here with us as "Immanuel." We know that things are going to be fine, because God is walking with us each step of the way. Things will change, and there will be challenges ahead, but our God is faithful. He will provide everything we need as we face this uncertain time.

In the next few weeks, the session will be reviewing a list of candidates available to be the interim pastor and will be conducting interviews early on in the new year. We hope to be able to have a new interim in place before the start of Lent, which begins during the last week of February. In the meantime, the session will establish a mission study committee that will begin the process of thinking through the mission of Fort Square Presbyterian Church as it moves into the future. You will be invited to a series of meetings in which the congregation will help determine goals, hopes,

and dreams for the years ahead. While this is a difficult time in many ways, it is also a time of promise as you all now have an opportunity to shape what a new pastorate will look like.

The good news of Christmas is that no matter what we are facing in this life, we are not going through it alone. Jesus entered our earth to be one with us. He understands our struggles. He's faced them. He knows what it is like to experience physical hardship, to endure pain, to feel the anguish of betrayal. Every emotion we face, he's already faced, and so we have the assurance that in every circumstance Jesus can meet our need. How comforting it is to know that we have a Savior who can relate to us in every way.

And so this Christmas, may you find Christ's peace in the midst of the turmoil of uncertain times. He is the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Celebrate his coming! "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord!"

—Martha Spear

*"But you,
keep your head
in all situations,
endure hardship,
do the work
of an evangelist,
discharge all the duties
of your ministry."*

2 Timothy 4:5



Clothing Room Update

Do you know anyone in need of a good winter coat or jacket? Please have them come by our clothing room and get one soon. We had some winter coats, hats, and gloves left from last year, but a recent donation from the Weymouth Girl Scouts brought us ten large bags of great winter wear. Spread the word!

—Bob Knowlton

of our church, Reverend Dan Allen, establish the Haitian Mountain Ministry while he was still attending seminary between 2001 and 2003. This ministry continues to grow. And then there are the many young people from our congregation who have gone on church-sponsored mission trips and have thought about a future in the mission field.

This has been such a positive outlook for Fort Square as we have financially supported the Mission program that God has set before us. We as a congregation have continually met our budget and given to all those we have pledged to support. Sometimes we have had concerns right up to the end of the year, but the members of Fort Square have always come through and consistently funded our Mission programs each year.

However, as we met in early November, we addressed concerns about meeting the budget for this year and setting the budget for 2009. A budget figure of \$83,900 was approved by the congregation for 2008, and Dick MacLeod, Church Treasurer, informed the committee at our October meeting that we would need a large contribution in the fourth quarter if we are to meet that figure.

As a committee, we were even more concerned when Dick presented the monthly giving breakdown through the end of September and we continue to be concerned. We know that both the economy

and the Pastor's resignation are affecting giving. Because of this, the committee must decide whether or not to keep the same budget for 2009 or revise it lower. We must decide by December 14, 2008.

As far back as October, we sent a letter to all our missionaries, stating that "we have no idea as to the effect that this will have on our congregation's attendance or our level of giving....We will have to evaluate what takes place. Our present plan is to wait and then review the action we will take on our yearly budget as we complete this third quarter and then look ahead for the fourth quarter."

We explained to our missionaries that the selection of a new pastor will take some time. We added that "we are aware of your needs and your dependence on the prayerful giving to each of you, and we ask for

your patience, and again, your prayers for us as we continue to look to God for guidance in this difficult situation."

As a committee, we ask something similar of you: first that you pray about the continued giving to meet the budget of 2008, and second, that the committee might receive God's wisdom in setting the mission budget for 2009.

In the bulletin for Sunday, November 16, a Stewardship Report noted "The ministry of this church is dependent on our giving. With only eight weeks to go in the financial year we need to increase in any way we can what we give for this work. Please consider what you are able to do to help in this effort." The need still exists.

—*Len Harding*
for the Missions Committee



Dear Fort Square Family,

We would like to say thank you to all for your care and concern for Christina at the end of the summer when she had her tonsils and adenoids removed. We greatly appreciated all of your cards, thoughts, and prayers. and we are grateful for complete healing. God is good!

*Love, Christina
and Gert Sweeney*

My Progress and Your Prayers

It has been more than a year since my fall. I'm down to two days a week at physical therapy, but expect that to end very soon. Regaining muscle strength is still going to take a while, but, with God's help and that of my wife Carol as well as your continued prayers, I look forward to a full recovery soon.

Bob Knowlton

Simple Gifts

“The power of a simple gift”—this is the tag line for Samaritan’s Purse Operation Christmas Child ministry. Since this ministry began in 1993, more than 60 million shoebox-sized holiday gifts have been sent to needy children around the world. We can add our own 26 gifts to that number. With your help, our MOPS group prepared almost double the numbers of gifts we projected. Save your shoeboxes for our use next year—I can’t empty any more pairs of my shoes from their boxes without creating some serious “closet chaos!” We are particularly thankful to Debby Richie who spearheaded this ministry for us two years ago and continues to be very much involved. (Trust me, gift-wrapping shoebox lids requires much involvement.)

We are also thankful to Martha Spear, who donated precious office space to OCC donations. Martha also continues to advise the MOPS team as it moves from her leadership of the past two years toward a future with two actual mothers of preschoolers. Cathy Maxfield and I will co-direct the program.

Cathy and I met at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s 2000 trip to Israel, Egypt and Jordan. (Ask her about the “great price”...ahem...she received for an olivewood nativity set for her mother, purchased in Jerusalem.) Cathy has a decade of ministry experience with InterVarsity. Most recently, she was Park Street Church’s Direc-



tor of Graduate Student Ministries. She has three lovely girls (Jeanette, Helen, and Martha) and another bundle of “sugar and spice” is due in one month!

MOPS endeavors to provide the “simple gifts” of support, resources, care, and love to Moms in our community. We will only be “powerful” in doing this, however, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Please pray that our leadership team would grow in its passion for Jesus: the truest and best gift any child, any Mom—anyone—can receive.

*Your “other” MOPS Co-Director,
Cindy Comiso for the MOPS team
(Cathy, Jane, Kimberly,
June Newman, and Ana Varela)*

*“He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor,
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn will be lifted high in honor.” Psalm 112:9*

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

[Editor’s note: Bert Nogler continues his study of the Beatitudes, as begun in previous issues of The Good News Letter.]

This righteousness describes the inner condition of a follower of Jesus Christ in contrast to the characteristics of the Pharisees who were proud, thinking they had already attained righteousness. For there is no righteousness outside of the

righteousness of Jesus Christ being imputed to our account and confirmed by the faithfulness of God. Psalm 24:5: “He shall receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”

The whole man must be renewed in righteousness so as to become a new man and to bear the image of God. I do believe that God is looking for a new

man to be fit for His Kingdom rather than an old, patched-up version. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things shall have passed away; behold all things have become new (2 Cor 5:17).

The happiness of heaven will certainly fill the soul; their righteousness shall be complete. For they shall be filled.

—Bert Nogler

f² youth

by Jon Wilson

Things I thought while raking leaves:

- Wow, it is cold out!
- **God answers prayer.** At this time last year we had 3 or 4 students attending Oasis every Friday night. We prayed that the Lord would bring us more students. Now, we consistently have more than 20 each week. We have since stopped praying for more kids (just kidding).
- **God's Spirit is actively moving among us.** Literally. Every time I bag one pile of leaves, a huge wind blows a pile twice as big into the spot I just raked! Also, every other Wednesday night a half dozen high school teens who are so hungry for God's word willingly rearrange their schedules to attend a Bible Study. We have honest and deep conversations that are not possible in a regular youth group setting. Pray that this continues and that more teens feel the call to join us.
- **God is BIG.** We had a total of 21 teens attend the Oasis or Odyssey Fall retreats. The retreats were so successful in every way calculable that we have reserved 35 spots for Camp Berea, February 20–22. I expect there to be a waiting list due to such high excitement for that weekend.
- **God is welcoming.** Most of our youth who regularly attend our weekly meetings are not from

the church family. As they are becoming more comfortable in the youth group and developing a relationship with Jesus, they are warming to the idea of persuading their parents drive them to church on Sunday mornings. Be praying that their parents will do so. Oh, and although they might make a little more noise than we are used to during worship, they really just want to be accepted by the adults and would love it if you talked to them after church.

- Can't. Feel. My. Toes.
- **Jesus loves explosions.** That is, He seems to be embracing TNT because He is blessing that group in crazy ways. The third Sunday of every month (from 2pm–4pm) is so much fun for me because we have awesome volunteers (and desperately need more!) and a cool assortment of third to fifth graders that come from all over the area. It's up to you to invite every student in that grade range that you know because they won't want to miss a month once they start to come.
- **God has a sense of humor.** There are too many stories to explain why I know this is true. If you attend our church Christmas party on December 21, from 2pm–4pm, you will most definitely crack a few smiles. We hope you'll also laugh at the promo videos for this event that we will be showing soon in church.
- **God calls us to serve Him.** Our community service committee (that's right, we have developed

ministry-related committees in the youth group) has some great ideas for spring, and you are going to want to be a part of them from the start. Ask Danielle Baker how you can help. These kids have a heart for serving others, won't you join them?

- **God Rocks!** The restoration process has not been completed yet in Bay St. Louis, MS, and our teens have heard the call to return and continue the work they have been doing the last two summers. Planning is already underway—pray for how you can support our team, including donations to Rock for Restoration II.
- **God inspires.** At least, I hope He does, because I am in the pulpit on Dec. 28. Yikes!
- Why are there 3 different deposits of dog droppings on my lawn when I don't even own a dog? Fortunately, they are frozen and easy to rake.
- **Christmas is about Christ.** I can't wait to put thousands of little lights on my house and set up my miniature village collection, but really, I know I wouldn't have any of the pleasures of the season if Jesus hadn't come to this earth to die for my sins. I am so grateful. May we never forget that He is the reason for the season.

First Sunday of Advent

November 30: Guest preacher, the Rev. William Simmons will be preaching. Bill is a former youth leader at Fort Square and the son-in-law of Art and Martha Spear. Currently, he is pastor of the First Baptist Church of St. Albans, Vermont.

Second Sunday of Advent

December 7: One Service at 11 am. Christmas Cantata: *A Celebration of Christmas* with adult and children's choirs

Christmas Caroling for Shut-Ins: After the service, we will gather for a light chili lunch and then form groups to sing Christmas carols to those who cannot come out for worship. Everyone is invited! If possible, bring homemade cookies to share with our elderly members.

ADVENT SCHEDULE

Third Sunday of Advent

December 14: Communion at both the 8:30 am and 11:00am services. The angel tree Christmas party will be held in the afternoon.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21: Worship at 8:30 am and 11:00 am. Deacons offering to be received to help those in need.

Church Christmas Party, 2pm-4pm, Fellowship Hall. This will be a time to celebrate Christmas as a church family with games, cookie decorating, and a short time of meditation.

Christmas Eve Service

December 24, 7pm: A service of Lessons and Carols

December 28

Jon Wilson preaching

Church Office Closed

The church office will be closed from December 25, 2008-January 3, 2009. In case of emergency, please call the Clerk of Session, Cathy MacDougall at 781-337-5490 or another elder.

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