

Tower Views

Volume 22. Issue 2

February 1-28, 2010

Returning Home

“So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.”

Luke 15: 20

We strive to be a vibrant Christian community that is loving, nurturing, open, sustainable and renewing, and one that inspires people of all ages to live in the Christian faith and serve the world.



Ash Wednesday

~ Imposition of Ashes ~

February 17

7:00 p.m.

Wednesday Evening

Services

February 24 - March 24

6:00 p.m.

Dinner served at 5:30 p.m. only on

February 24 and March 24



**LENTEN
SERVICE
SCHEDULE**

For Your Information

First Presbyterian Church

535 20th Avenue North
South St. Paul, MN 55075
651/451-6223
www.fpcssp.org

“All Are Welcome Here”

Office Hours:

Monday
Pastors day off
Monday through Friday
8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Email Addresses:

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Mary Love

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outside of office hours:

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Pastor Tom

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Staff Notes

The calendar turns to February and it is time to think about valentines. I love homemade valentines—cut from paper, pasted with doilies, covered in sequins or even glitter—there is nothing quite like a homemade valentine. Years ago I received a homemade valentine with an original poem on it. Recently I figured out how to make a valentine card that has the heart popping out when you open it, like a children’s pop-up book. I’ll start working on homemade valentines early in the month, and keep going long after February 14 has passed. I love valentines: getting them, giving them, making them, keeping them.

There is a nice little “valentine” exchange at the very end of John’s gospel, though we rarely think of it that way. There are no roses or chocolate mentioned, no hearts cut from silk or lip prints kissed onto paper, but it reads a lot like a valentine to me. Jesus has been crucified and resurrected, and he is appearing to his disciples in various places to instruct and reassure them before he ascends to heaven. In this particular scene, he is on the beach at the Sea of Tiberius with some of them. *When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord: you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to*

him, “Feed my sheep.” And of course we do not want to take any liberties with the Greek text here, but what if we imagined this ancient exchange in a more modern-day context, in the month of February in fact, and among friends who were accustomed to exchanging valentines? What if we read it that way? “Simon, will you be my valentine?”... “Jesus, you know everything. You know I want to be your valentine.”--!

But even if you can’t quite imagine that scene, I think we could say that Jesus speaks clearly to us, in this season of valentines and love, and asks us if we love him—if we will let him give us his unconditional love, accept his peace for our tired and worn selves, if we will receive his mercy and forgiveness, believe in his love when everyone or everything else has given up on us. And he asks if we will be generous enough to take his love to others when they need us—if we will be bread to the hungry, clothing to the needy, shelter to the homeless and hope to those who are desolate. He asks if we will love ourselves enough to believe in the gifts he’s given us, trust the care and the plans he has for us, and show his love in our everyday lives.

It’s a valentine, friends, for each one of us, a reminder that we are loved and a refresher on how to love others. We listen to the invitation and dig down deep within to find our own “yes” answers—“yes” because of beloved ones who have been valentines for us, who have graced our days with love and shown us how to love. There may not be doilies and sequins and poetry and perfume, but they are valentines to us nonetheless. They touch us to the goodness of God, mend the torn places in us, give us a place to rest and teach us to love unconditionally in return. Our family and friends can be homemade valentines for us, if we only see them that way.

~ Katie

Worship Schedule

February 7, 2010

Communion

8:30 a.m. Education For All
 10:00 a.m. Worship Celebration
 11:00 a.m. Coffee and Fellowship
*“Put Peace Into Each Others Hands” —
 Celebration Singers*

February 14, 2010

8:30 a.m. Education For All
 10:00 a.m. Worship Celebration
 11:00 a.m. Brunch
“A Beautiful Thing” — Chancel Choir

February 21, 2010

1st Sunday in Lent

8:30 a.m. Education For All
 10:00 a.m. Worship Celebration
 11:00 a.m. Coffee and Fellowship
“Blessed Be Your Name” — Celebration Singers

February 28, 2010

2nd Sunday in Lent

8:30 a.m. Education For All
 10:00 a.m. Worship Celebration
 11:00 a.m. Coffee and Fellowship
Special Music by Bells of Praise

Adult Education Opportunities

February 7: Bob Cross, Chair of the Presbytery Committee on Representation and FPC Elder Elizabeth Brazill, a member of the COR, return to complete our series on “New Conversations About Race and Racism.”

February 14: In this video, *Celebrate What’s Right With The World*, Dewitt Jones asks do we choose to see possibilities? Do we really believe they’re there? He assures us that we will see it only when we believe it. And when we believe it, we connect with a vision that opens us to possibilities and gives us the courage to soar. Stunning photography along with the seven key concepts help us see how we can approach our lives with celebration, confidence and grace.

Dewitt Jones is one of America’s top professional photographers. In his twenty-year career with National Geographic he lived the vision of “celebrating what’s right with the world” and found that the creative tools he employed as a photographer had an even deeper application when applied directly to his personal and professional life.

February 21: Local Christian Visual Artist DeAnne Parks will tell us about her process of creating art. First, she prays, asking for guidance; sometimes she dances. DeAnne will be, and is now, creating new art that may be part of her exhibit here at First Presbyterian from February 12 through April 5. Prior to beginning that new work, she visited FPC and spent some time reflecting on the space and feeling of the church. To read more, please read Arts Program Update in this issue of the *Tower Views*.



February 28: Many Church historians and scholars will tell you that 21st century Christians live, worship and serve during a time marked by the term Post-denominational. By this they mean that Christians don’t necessarily identify themselves as Presbyterian, Lutheran or Roman Catholic anymore as much as they do by the

labels Conservative or Liberal. You are much more likely to find similarities between conservative Methodist and Baptist congregations as you are a conservative Presbyterian congregation and a liberal Presbyterian congregation.

One response by Christians to this division has been a rapidly growing movement within the Church sometimes referred to as Progressive and other times as the Emerging Church. What does it mean to be a Progressive Christian? What do Progressive Christians believe? What are they emerging from and what are they emerging into?

Beginning on February 28 and continuing through Lent to Palm Sunday on March 28, Pastor Tom will lead us through the history, theology and practice of what it means to be a Progressive Christian and a Progressive congregation. Pastor Tom is currently preparing for his comprehensive exams that will take place during the month of April as he continues to work toward completing his dissertation and Ph.D. program at Luther Seminary in Systematic Theology.

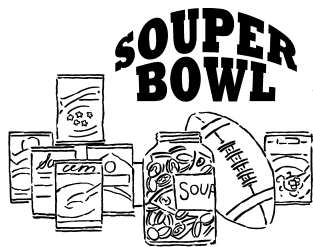
Senior High Youth Fellowship

Mark your calendars now! Sunday, February 7, is Souper Bowl Sunday. The Senior High Youth Group is asking anyone and everyone attending the worship service that morning to contribute \$1 for the Neighbor's Food Shelf as they are leaving the sanctuary. Members of the youth group will be there to collect your donation.

Along with collecting \$1 for the food shelf, the Senior High Youth Group event that day will be a Super Bowl party in the youth room. The party begins at 5:00 p.m.

After church on Sunday, February 21, you will have approximately 30 minutes to change into appropriate warm attire and then it will be off to Badlands Sno-Park in Hudson, WI

for snow-tubing. This year we will be bringing along our own first aid kit and perhaps even a licensed physician. Cost for snow-tubing is \$15/person. We will stop at one of the many elegant fast food restaurants along US94 for lunch on our way and plan to return back to the church by 3:00 p.m.



Group event that day will be a Super Bowl party in the youth

Upcoming Events



- March 7 at 8:00 p.m.— Vespers Service at Bethel University
- March 19—Lock-in

Make a Date To Skate

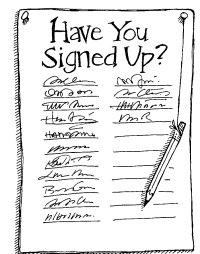
Children of all ages and their families are invited to this month's Kid's Club event: Ice skating at The Grove in Inver Grove Heights! Sunday February 21 from 3:30 to



5:00 p.m. is our scheduled time—please come join us. The rink is indoors, the snack bar is available, and we'll all fall down together!

Cost is \$4.00 per skater and \$2.00 to rent skates.

Please sign up on the kiosk to let us know you're coming. Call Kelly Luhrs or Pastor Katie for more information.



Middle School Youth Fellowship

The Middle Schoolers (6th-8th grades) will be going snow tubing this month at Badlands Sno-Park in Hudson, WI. on Sunday, February 14. Cost is \$15/person.

Following the worship service you are invited to share in the brunch prepared by the Deacons after which we will for our journey east down US94. We plan to return back to the church by 3:00 p.m. Please wear warm clothing even if it messes up your hair or doesn't match your outfit.

And ... mark your calendar for a Lock-in on March 12!



Summer Mission Trip Passport Information

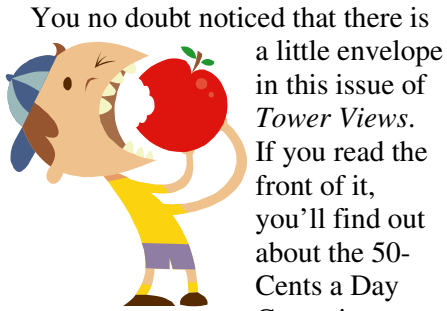
If you are going on the mission trip this summer you must get your passport application sent in as soon as possible. Check the website http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html for information and answers to your questions as well as the application forms. Here are some highlights you need to know:

- Apply in person at an acceptance facility (Dakota County Building on Mendota Road, City of South St. Paul, Eagan Community Center).
- Bring proof of citizenship (birth certificate), proof of identification (e.g. driver's license or social security card), and two 2" x 2" passport photos.

- Apply for a passport book (the passport card is for travel across the Canadian or Mexican borders).
- Cost is \$75 for adults (16 and over) with an additional \$25 execution fee or \$60 plus the \$25 execution fee for those under 16. Passports can be paid with cash, debit or credit cards, and checks.
- You can check on your passport status at the website.



50-Cents a Day Campaign



You no doubt noticed that there is a little envelope in this issue of *Tower Views*. If you read the front of it, you'll find out about the 50-Cents a Day Campaign to eliminate our projected 2010 deficit.

As Session and Committees worked hard this fall to reduce 2010 budgeted expenses by \$33,000 in order to present a balanced budget, the closest they could come was about \$16,000 short. With new revenue ideas being discussed, it was decided to budget additional revenue to make up that shortfall instead of making even deeper cuts. One Session member, doodling on a piece of paper suddenly announced, "That's 50-cents a day. If 100 giving units gave 50-cents a day, we'd raise over \$16,000."

He is right. If 100 families or individuals, just about half of our current giving units, give 50-cents a day or \$167 over and above their pledge for 2010, we'll erase our deficit. Some people might decide that a portion of their tax refund this year might go to that cause; others might feel led to take this extra step to ensure that we start the year strong and can move forward confidently with our ministry and mission plans for the year.

We'd like to receive contributions to this special fund by April 15, but if it's easier for your family to extend the program and literally set aside 50-cents a day through this year, you'll also be a great part of freeing us from deficit spending during 2010. Thank you for helping make this great idea a reality! Please remember to use the special envelope and write "50-Cents-A Day" in your check memo line to make sure your gift is credited to this special effort.

Lent 2010: Returning Home

The Lenten journey from the ashes of death to resurrected life begins on the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, signifying a time to repent, to change directions, to return home. No other parable of Jesus captures this idea of Returning Home as that of The Prodigal Son. Throughout Lent we will look and listen more deeply to this parable as it comes to us in Scripture, in Rembrandt's painting "The Return of the Prodigal Son" and the meditations of Henri Nouwen from his book of the same title. We will mark the beginning of the holy season of Lent with a traditional Ash Wednesday worship service, February 17, including the imposition of ashes at 7:00 p.m. in

the sanctuary. On subsequent Wednesdays in Lent, there will be a worship service at 6:00 p.m. in the Commons Area. On the nights of February 24 and March 24, dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m. The story of the Prodigal Son is not so much one of how far we have strayed from our relationship with God, but of God's relentless love for us and the desire to welcome us home. As we take the opportunity these Wednesday evenings to reflect on where we stand with God, may we move beyond any shame and guilt and find the faith and courage so that we might return to accept the extravagant love and inexpressible joy that waits to welcome us home.

Deacon Sunday and Brunch

Tertullian, in his 2nd century defense of Christians, remarks how Christian love attracted pagan notice: "What marks us in the eyes of our enemies is our loving kindness. 'Only look,' they say, 'look how they love one another.'" C. S. Lewis, in his book *The Four Loves*, used the Greek word *agape* to describe what he believed was the highest level of love known to humanity—a selfless love, a love that was passionately committed to the well-being of the other.

Of course we are called to love one another as God has loved us, but according to how we order ourselves as Presbyterians this caring and compassionate ministry is the primary work of the Board of Deacons. Thus, there seemed to be no better date than Sunday, February 14, to acknowledge and celebrate the work of these faithful and loving people in our midst.

In 2009, over \$4,500 was given to members of our congregation with unexpected financial needs through the Deacon's

Emergency Assistance Fund. We expect that in 2010 the need will be similar. So on this Sunday, the Deacons will be asking for your generous contributions so that they can

continue to make this resource available, as well as the other ministries carried out through the Deacon's Fund. Expecting that our love for one another will be reflected by our generosity, the Board of Deacons will be offering a brunch following the service to thank us, even though it should really be the other way around. Please show your gratitude and love by giving to the Deacon's Fund and thanking them for all that they do and all that they are.



Game Night

It's been a long winter so come out of hibernation and join us Friday, February 5, for an evening of games and fellowship at FPC. Bring your favorite game and a snack to share; the Deacons will provide beverages. The fun for all ages—children, youth, and adults—begins at 6:30 p.m. Let us know if you need a ride. Hope to see you there!



Book Club

Book club will meet February 13 at 8:30 a.m. in the Commons to discuss *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* by Michael Chabon. Please contact Julie Vigness-Pint with any questions. Books are due back in the church office on or before February 13.

This brilliant epic novel set in New York and Prague introduces us to two misfit young men who make it big by creating comic-book superheroes. Joe Kavalier, a young artist who has also been trained in the art of Houdiniesque escape, has just smuggled himself out of Nazi-invaded Prague and landed in New York City. His Brooklyn cousin Sammy Clay is looking for a partner to create heroes, stories, and art for the latest novelty to hit America, the comic book. Inspired by their own fears and dreams, Kavalier and Clay create the *Escapists*, *The Monitor*, and *Luna Moth*, inspired by the beautiful Rosa Saks, who will become linked by powerful ties to both men.

Helping Survivors in Haiti: End Hunger Now

In Port-Au-Prince, Church World Service's Don Tatlock describes "people sleeping outside in make-shift tents on street sides, parks, or any open area. You see signs written on sheets asking for water and food ... the situation is horrific."

Our *End Hunger Now* giving for February, plus what we have already given in January and what will be given in March, will support Church World Service (CWS) and their partners in meeting the emergency needs in the aftermath of the earthquake.

Church World Service staff and working partners have been serving in Haiti since 1960, so they know the areas first hand. The work

includes providing basic supplies (brought in over ground from the Dominican Republic) of water, food, temporary shelter and health assistance.

CWS is in Haiti for the long haul and will be there to support the work of rebuilding long after the first wave of emergency help is complete.

Your generous giving support is urgently needed. This is one way we can put our prayers for Haiti into action.



Souper Bowl Fundraiser



On Sunday, February 7, otherwise known as Super Bowl Sunday, senior high youth will be

collecting donations outside the sanctuary in large "soup bowls."

This is a yearly activity and part of the Souper Bowl of Caring national program. The suggested donation is \$1, but feel free to donate as much money as you would like. All donations from the Soup Bowls will go to Neighbors, Inc. to help fight hunger.



Mission Committee Update

During January, your Mission Committee was busy sending your contributions on their way to do the work for which they were given.

- The Joy Offering was \$1606.
- 4th quarter of the End Hunger Now funds totaled \$2,414.
- Alternative Christmas Market brought in \$2,732 and was dispersed to: Heifer, International \$1,810; education kits \$265; sewing machine project \$345; Feed My Starving Children \$312.

Thank you so much to all who give to one or more of your projects.



Arts Program Update

“First, I pray. I ask God to guide every brush stroke and use me according to his will. When I begin painting, I have no idea what the outcome will be. It’s like a spontaneous dance. I focus on texture, color and shapes, expressing my feelings at a given moment. In fact, I often dance while painting. Creating art is such a joyful experience that I can’t seem to stand still. Bright colors and thick paint are used to express themes related to spirituality and human relationships, especially those of community, hope and love.”

These are the words of Christian

Visual Artist DeAnne Parks whose work will be on exhibit at FPC from February 12 through April 5. Her work is a ministry where each of her works tells a faith story. Some works are deeply rooted in biblical stories, others are emotional journeys, but each work invites observers to engage with a story that has taken form. Her paintings and sculptures are in private and corporate collections and her work has been published on book and CD covers, most recently by the Presbyterian Church (USA) in the 2009-2010 *Horizons Bible Study*.

DeAnne is artist-in-residence at

Thomas Lake Elementary in Eagan; is a youth leader at her church and has a passion for homeless teens. A portion of her sales benefit Safezone, a resource center for homeless teens in St Paul. DeAnne has had a studio in Lowertown, St. Paul for eight years and lives in Rosemount with her husband and son.



Caring Hearts for the Homeless

Homeless? Not us, and thankfully, not our children. But Social Services here in the Twin Cities estimates that 1,500 young people between the ages of 16 and 21 are homeless, with fewer than 50 shelter beds to house them. Some may choose to be away from home, but some homes are not fit or safe places to live, we’re told. And adult shelters are not safe for the younger population where they can be taken advantage of.

In a very small way, we can be of some help. All through February, we will have a basket available for you to help HealthEast, as they minister to these homeless neighbors of ours

through their Caring Hearts for the Homeless project. Hygiene products, toothbrushes and toothpaste, shampoo, lip balm, cough drops, hats and gloves, white socks are just a few items that are needed. A complete list will be by the collection basket, which will be located in the South Commons.



Thanks so much for your help.

Many Thanks!

Recently over 100 caps for newborn infants have been delivered to HealthEast hospitals. Thank you so much to Doris Anderson, Bea Meers, Jean Hagerty, Elaine Heidenreich and Nancy Richter for helping with this project.

If you like to knit, here is a great way to use up scraps of yarn. All colors can be used. In fact, bright colors are preferred by some ethnic groups. Patterns are available for either 2 or 4 needles from the church office; variations in the patterns are acceptable as well. Finished caps can be left in the church.

Thank you so much for the Birthday and Christmas cards. I really appreciated them.



~ Virginia Strauch

Thank you for the prayers, thoughts, and cards during my recent illness.

~ Mary Lough



These members and friends of FPC have had surgery, been hospitalized or ill in recent weeks: Joel Bennett, Bill Beyer, Betty Bohmert, Jean Sites, Willard Lee, Jerry Olson, Mary Lough, MaryAnn Cheyne, Pete Veldman, and Carol Johnson.

The sympathy of the congregation is extended to Lois Nelsen on the death of her husband, John.

**First Presbyterian Church
of South St. Paul**

"All Are Welcome Here"

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Education For All at 8:30 a.m.

Worship Celebration at 10:00 a.m.

Coffee and Fellowship at 11:00 a.m.



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Tower Views

is a monthly publication of the
First Presbyterian Church, South St. Paul, MN

Rev. Katie Estes Collins

Rev. Tom Watson

Pastors

Mary Love

Administrative Assistant

Tower Views Deadline

February 15, 2010

For events taking place in March 2010

Campership Brunch
Sunday, March 7, 2010



French toast, pancakes, sausage, juice, milk & coffee

New this year: Silent auction featuring camp
necessities & niceties

DVD presentation of summer camp programs

Clearwater Forest staff present for
conversation/questions

*Your support will make it possible for ALL children & youth
to attend camp this summer!*