



## Steeple News



First Presbyterian Church  
February 2012

### ***"If Our Church Disappeared Tomorrow, Would It Matter?"***

Back in August Linda and I (with our son Joshua) went to a Fellowship of Presbyterian's Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota . Nineteen hundred plus people (representing 850 plus Presbyterian congregations in 49 states) attended this conference to discuss options people in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) could consider in light of the approval of General Assembly Overture 10 A in May, which removed the requirement that Presbyterian Church Officers (ministers of Word and Sacrament, elders and deacons) be faithful in marriage or practice chastity in singleness". One of the results of the conference was the scheduling of a follow up conference to be held in January 2012 in Orlando, Florida. That conference was held the third week of January: 2,100 people attended including our son Joshua. Linda and I did not attend. One of the results of this following conference was the establishing of a new Presbyterian denomination called the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO); time will tell whether this new denomination will succeed in existing or not. Joshua was very impressed with how well the conference was run, the quality of the worship services and the plenary and workshop presentations.

Most of the information on the conference that I received (other than fist hand form Joshua and Roger Korsten, Pastor of the Highland Sixth Presbyterian Church in the Presbytery of the Western Reserve) was gleaned on line via several Presbyterian web sites. One thought provoking report I read was a summary of the sermon preached at the conference's opening worship service by the Rev. Hope Italiano Lee, Pastor of the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in Bradenton, Florida. Her sermon based on Nehemiah (chapter 1), was titled "If Your Church Disappeared, Would It Matter?"

Pastor Lee challenged the 2,100 people in attendance at the service: *"Think about your church, if your church disappeared tomorrow...honestly, would it really matter? Would it make a difference in your life, other than going to a different location on Sunday morning? Would it make a difference in your neighborhood?"* Lee said that her church was located in Bradenton, a town full of churches of all denominations and sizes. *"So on Sunday morning, then it should be a ghost town because everyone is in church", she said. But that isn't so, Instead she sees a line of people wrapped around Starbucks and a line of cars headed to the beach. Lee continued, "There are many churches all over this country are dying as well. Some of those have simply lost their way and a day of redemption will come. Others have given up and given in to what they may think is a more palatable world view. When we have the opportunity to share Christ and we walk away, we are effectively telling people to go to hell. And the troubling part about that is it doesn't seem to bother us a lot. Christians have been given an incredible gift, and we want to keep it under wraps."*

#### **Inside this issue:**

<i>Pastor's Letter con't</i>	2
<i>Prayer Recommendations</i>	3
<i>Prayer Chain</i>	4
<i>Birthdays &amp; Anniversaries</i>	4
<i>February Scriptures</i>	4
<i>For Your Information</i>	5
<i>What is Happening this month</i>	5
<i>Looking Ahead to March 2012</i>	6

Lee goes on to focus on Nehemiah and how he recognized his sinfulness and need to confess, repent and get serious about changing his ways to be more willing to reach out to people who are hurting, in pain, needing to hear good news and receive healing.

Lee concluded her sermon with these words, *"Are you willing to confront that brokenness?...Jesus came to bind up the broken hearted and to bring hope to the hopeless...Now many of you are here because you fell among the brokenhearted...I'm hoping your heart is broken for the kingdom. If you are really serious about changing the church - - and I believe that you are - - then you need to step back and take a kingdom view. Change the conversation, confess, repent, and get on with it."*

Pastor Lee's sermon caused me to wonder if our church (First Presbyterian Church of Ashtabula, Ohio, located on the corner of Park Avenue and West 43rd. Street) disappeared tomorrow, would it matter? What if the property belonging to First Presbyterian Church once again become Hall Smith's (Joseph Badger's son-in-law) corn field? Would it matter?

We need to ask ourselves some hard questions. When was the last time (if ever) that I invited someone to come with me to worship or Sunday School or Bible Study or youth club/youth fellowship? When was the last time (if ever) I shared with someone what having a relationship with Jesus Christ meant to me? When was the last time (if ever) I offered to pray for or with someone who was hurting, sick, grieving, etc.? When was the last time (if ever) I stood up and spoke out against something that is wrong in our community (being willing to take whatever flack, ridicule and/or persecution that might result). When was the last time (if ever) I shared the scripture's teachings with someone ignorant of the truth and good news of God's Word, the Bible? Praise the Lord! If we have not for some time or ever, why not?

As believers in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of the world and the only way for people to come to God (see John 14:6), the responsibility is ours to acknowledge our sinfulness, repent and then reach out in word and deed to others who do not personally and intimately know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. **2 Chronicles 7:14** states: **If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land."**

Think about it; pray about it; talk to me about it; resolve to do something about it and the in the power of God's Holy Spirit do that. "If our church disappeared tomorrow, would it matter?"

*Shalom!*

*Stephen*

## FEBRUARY PRAYER RECOMMENDATIONS

We will be praying for the Church Families, Church Officers, Ashtabula County Churches, Presbytery Churches, Ohio Counties, United States of America States and "10-40 Window" Countries for the weeks of February during the pastoral prayer recommendations.

### 1. Church Families of The Week:

Week of 2/05—2/11: Virginia Lyberger; the David McCoy family (David, Kim, Kyle & Addie); John & Donna McLean

Week of 2/12 - 2/18: Chuck & Gwen Meister; the Sue Melaragno family (Sue, Kyle & Sidney); the Fred Minor family (Fred, Reneé, Brittany, Brenden & Brady)

Week of 2/19— 2/25: Betty Morey; Greg & JoAnne Morris; Edna Morse

Week of 2/26—3/03: Roz Moulder, Jim & Vicki Moyer; Brenda Nevison

### 2. Church Officer of The Week:

Week of 2/05—2/11: Elder Viola Jones

Week of 2/12 - 2/18: Deacon Bob Barchanowicz

Week of 2/19— 2/25: Trustee Inez Gaumer

Week of 2/26—3/03: Elder Evelyn Pendleton



### 3. Ashtabula County Church of The Week:

Week of 2/05—2/11: First Congregational Church (Williamsfield)

Week of 2/12 - 2/18: First Congregational United Church of Christ (Jefferson)

Week of 2/19— 2/25: Austinburg United Church of Christ

Week of 2/26—3/03: Conneaut United Church of Christ

### 4. Presbytery Church of The Week:

Week of 2/05—2/11: Phoenix Project (New Church Development)

Week of 2/12 - 2/18: Pierpont Presbyterian Church

Week of 2/19— 2/25: Pioneer Memorial Presbyterian Church (Solon)

Week of 2/26—3/03: Puerta de Salvacion (Immigrant Fellowship in Lorain)

### 5. Ohio County of The Week:

Week of 2/05—2/11: Morgan County (S. E. Ohio)

Week of 2/12 - 2/18: Morrow County (Central Ohio)

Week of 2/19— 2/25: Muskingum County (S. E. Ohio)

Week of 2/26—3/03: Noble County (S. E. Ohio)

### 6. United States of America State of The Week:

Week of 2/05—2/11: Colorado

Week of 2/12 - 2/18: Connecticut

Week of 2/19— 2/25: Delaware

Week of 2/26—3/03: Florida

### 7. "10-40 Window" Country of The Week:

Week of 2/05—2/11: Nigeria (Western Africa)

Week of 2/12 - 2/18: Oman (Southwestern Asia)

Week of 2/19— 2/25: Pakistan (Southern Asia)

Week of 2/26—3/03: Qatar (Southwestern Asia)



**PLEASE KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR PRAYERS FOR THIS MONTH:** John Adams Ayden Aponte, Dorothy Branscome, Annie Colarini, Scott Colver, Will Colver, Coralyn, Bryonna Crockett, Harry & Audrey Dawsey, Grace Davis, Justin Eggleton, Duane Evans, Jane Flick, David Gildersleeve, Shirley Grippi, Jim Hall, Steve Hembree, Doris Higley, Barbara Homes, Gary Huffman, Patty Hughes, Emily Hunt, Benjamin Ingram, Ruth Jones, Viola Jones, Janice, Ella King, Louie & Cathy Laszlo, Nancy Lemievx, Mary Elisabeth Lodge, Brittany Minor, Olive Moorehart, Betty Morey, Ryan Musgrave, Terry & Gail Nevison, Mike Olsen, Sam Orlando, Forde Page, Nick Plotner, Pat Percello, Andras Ponti, Oliva Rice, Andrew Russell, Jordan Trewn, Myles Truesdell, Warren Truesdell, Morris Wasyslenki, Dr. Thomas Williams, Fran Wilson

**PLEASE REMEMBER THESE WITH ONGOING NEEDS:** Raymond Allds, Dorothy Anderson, Carl Ashley, Betty Braun, Brittany Blaszcak, Becky Brown, Jane Brown & family, Beth Carlisle, Barbara Cordell, Anna Dieteman, Bob Demay, David, Mary Fish, Viola Fischer, Roberta Fohl, Agnes Frye, Patricia Gianell, Jan Gillich, Jim Hakkarainen, Isabel Hamilton, Darrell & Sharon Hamilton, Gerri Hanna, Sonia Herzog, Tom Hoffacker, Luke Holko, Joyce Jack, Jack & Donna Juras, Robert Kapen, Jan Kent, Ruth Jensky, Donna Johnson, Sharon Lease, Arthur Lodge, John Lodge Virginia Lyberger, Ruth Mather, Jennifer Matthews, Chuck & Gwen Meister, Yvonne Miller, Marilyn Mobley, Edna Morse, Elizabeth Nordquest, Megan Nulan, Marilyn Oxley, Betty Phipps, Nola (Carle) Platano, Rob Poploski, Bob Potter, Richard, Brenden Rodriquez, Ben Rowe, Josephine Champine, Sally Sholtis, Evelyn Smith, Howard & Lucille Stanton, Eleanor Stevenson, David & Martha Strong, Francis Talcott, Kaylin Staffor, Anne Thome, Shirley Truesdell, Bob & Connie Williams, Imogene Van Allen, Arend van't Veer, Claire van't Veer

**PLEASE KEEP THE MEN AND WOMEN (AND THEIR FAMILIES) WHO ARE IN THE ARMED FORCES IN YOUR PRAYERS:**

Brittany Barchanowicz, Chris Barrickman, Antony Bernato, Charli Boyer, Mike Brennan, Matthew Corlew, Christopher Michael Elmore, Caitlyn Fasuk, Dustin Faulkner, Jeremy Hudson, Margot Fisher, William Foy, Col. Randy Hart, 1st Lt. Jennifer Marie Hergenroeder, Benjamin Hicks, Danny Juhola, Jack Juras, Gregory Jones, Andrew Katz, Major Brian Koch, Barry Lesnik, Kody Long, Keith Long, Amy Marshall, Saul Mindina, Richard Mehling, Adam Moyer, Justin Nevison, D.J. Peightal, Nathan Pendleton, Jason Potter, R. J. Rueckert, Christopher Robbins, Steve Simmons, Logan Vance, Colleen Wamsley, R.J. Wilkinso and Ferrone Williams

\*\*\*\*\*

*February Birthdays & Anniversaries:*

- |                                 |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 01 Fred Minor                   | 19 James Hanna              |
| Alex George                     | Jim & Patricia Younker Anv. |
| 04 Donna McLean                 | 20 Floyd Humes              |
| Brady Minor                     | Ken Hughes                  |
| 05 Naudean Amidon               | 22 Don Berg                 |
| 08 David & Natalie Volpone Anv. | 23 Ruth Jensky              |
| 12 Josephine Champine           | 26 Morris Wasyslenki        |
| Shirley Blair                   | 28 Amanda Addair            |
| 15 Tara Pozum                   |                             |
| 17 Jack & Donna Juras Anv.      |                             |



**FEBRUARY SCRIPTURES**

- |                          |                          |                            |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Ex. 15, 16/Ps. 15, 16 | 11. Ex. 35, 36/Ps. 19    | 21. Lev. 17, 18/Acts 10    |
| 2. Ex. 17, 18/Matt. 24   | 12. Ex. 37, 38/Acts 3    | 22. Lev. 19, 20/Ps. 23, 24 |
| 3. Ex. 19, 20/Matt. 25   | 13. Ex. 39, 40/Acts 4    | 23. Lev. 21, 22/Acts 11    |
| 4. Ex. 21, 22/Ps. 17     | 14. Lev. 1-3/Acts 5      | 24. Lev. 23, 24/Acts 12    |
| 5. Ex. 23, 24/Matt. 26   | 15. Lev. 4, 5/Ps. 20, 21 | 25. Lev. 25, 26/Ps. 25     |
| 6. Ex. 25, 26/Matt. 27   | 16. Lev. 6, 7/Acts 6     | 26. Lev. 27/Num. 1/Acts 13 |
| 7. Ex. 27, 28/Matt. 28   | 17. Lev. 8, 9/Acts 7     | 27. Num. 2, 3/Acts 14      |
| 8. Ex. 29, 30/Ps. 18     | 18. Lev. 10-12/Ps. 22    | 28. Num. 4, 5/Acts 15      |
| 9. Ex. 31, 32/Acts 1     | 19. Lev. 13, 14/Acts 8   |                            |
| 10. Ex. 33, 34/Acts 2    | 20. Lev. 15, 16/Acts 9   |                            |





## For Your Information:

**Sympathy** is extended to *Evelyn Smith* at the death of her husband *Leon Smith* in Ashtabula on January 2, 2012. Leon was 94 years old. Please keep Evelyn and family in your prayers.

**Sympathy** is extended to *Duane "Pete" Evans* at the death of his son, *Duane Evans, Jr.* on January 10, 2012. Please keep Pete and Connie and family in your prayers.

**Congratulations** to the following new board officers for First Presbyterian Church: Session: John McLean (Clerk of Session); Trustees: Adam Hodge (Chairman), Robert Williams (Vice Chairman), Lois Hanna (Secretary); Deacons: Ella Pizor (Moderator, Jim Pizor (Vice Moderator, Barb Fohl (Secretary); Foundation: John McLean (Chairman), Will Colver (Vice Chairman), Dominic Volpone (Secretary/Treasurer).

**Thanks** to the following who served as acolytes at Worship Services in January: *Jacob Edleman, Abbie Volpone, Nicole Pendleton, Alex George, Kyle Melaragano.*

**Thanks** to the following who served as Scripture Readers at Worship Services in January: *Stephen Long, Dominic Volpone, Gloria Kaull, Ella Pizor, Barb Fohl*

**Thanks** to the following who presented Children's Sermons at Worship Services in December: *Ella Pizor, Roz Moulder and Stephen Long*

**Thanks** to *Sarah George* for presenting a Minute For Mission at the January 29 worship Service on the "Souper Bowl of Caring" Special Offering to be received by the P.Y.F. on Super Bowl Sunday, February 5.

**Thanks** to Presbyterian Women for providing and serving the refreshments for the Cluster Church Officers Training Event held Sunday afternoon (January 22) in the Fellowship Hall. Thanks to *Gloria Kaull, Ella Pizor, Linda Long, Barb Fohl, Inez Gaumer & Charlotte Wilcom.*

**Thanks** to *Petr Wiese* for being the guest pianist at the New Year's Day Sunday Worship Service.

**Thanks** to *Nora Giangola* for serving as Organist and Chancel Choir Director January 8 through April 1 (Palm Sunday), while *Lyn Rocco* is away in Florida.

**Thanks** to *Bob Safcik, Pete Raffenaud, Sally Munger, Linda Long and Stephen Long* for taking down Christmas decorations after Epiphany Sunday in January.

**Thanks** to *Linda Long* for preparing lunch for the Session Retreat held on Saturday, January 21.

**Thanks** to *Bob Safcik* for taking down the 190th Anniversary Sign that was in front of the church.

Meet *Jim Weimer*, who is the substitute Custodian for January, February, March and early April, while Custodian *Pete Raffenaud* is away in Florida. *Jim Lives* in Ashtabula, is retired and serves as pastor of the Madison Church of God.



## What's Happening this Month:

- Thursday (2/2) - **Ground Hog Day & Coordinating Team Meeting** at 9:30 AM in Memorial Lounge
- Saturday (2/4) - Men's Prayer Breakfast at 9 AM in Fellowship Hall
- Sunday (2/5) - **Handbell Choir Practice** at 9 AM
- Sunday (2/5) - **Souper Bowl of Caring Special Offering** will be received
- Sunday (2/5) - **P. Y. F** at 12 Noon at First Presb Church
- Sunday (2/5) - **Deacons' Meeting** at 12 Noon in the Chancel Choir Loft of the Sanctuary
- Monday (2/6) - **Spiritual Growth Committee Meeting** at 4 PM in the Church Library
- Saturday (2/11) - **Young At Heart Fellowship Valentine's Day Dinner Out** at 6 PM (Place to be announced)
- Sunday (2/12) - **Deacons' Soup Lunch** at 12 Noon in Fellowship Hall.
- Monday (2/13) - **Trustees Meeting** at 7 PM in Memorial Lounge
- Sunday (2/19) - **PYF** at 12 Noon at First Presb. Church
- Monday (2/20) - **Session Meeting** at 7 PM in Memorial Lounge

Ash Wednesday: (February 22) - The Season of Lent begins. First Church will participate in two events that day to begin Lenten season in preparation for the Celebration of Jesus' Resurrection on Easter Sunday (April 8):

1) The Ashtabula Community Lenten Prayer Breakfast will take place in Fellowship Hall from 7:30 AM to 8:30 AM; this is the first of seven weekly Wednesday Prayer Breakfasts to be held in February 22 through April 4. Breakfast will be provided; the study theme for 2012 will be the Seven "I Am" Statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John.

2) The annual Cluster Ash Wednesday Communion Service will be held at 7 PM on February 22 at the Orwell North Presbyterian Church. Cluster clergy will be serving as worship leaders.

Dialog Sermons For Lent: Beginning the Sunday before Lent begins (February 19) and continuing for six Sundays Pastor Long and youth of the congregation (two each Sunday) will be presenting a series of Dialog Sermons on Jesus' "Seven Last Words" spoken from the cross.

Cluster Sunday Evening Lenten Services

Beginning Sunday (2/26) and continuing through April 1 (Palm Sunday) a weekly Sunday Evening (7 PM) Lenten Services will be held in one of the Ashtabula County Cluster's Churches. The schedule is as follows:

<u>Sunday Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
February 26	East Side Church
March 4	Trinity Church
March 11	North Kingsville Church
March 18	Kingsville Church
March 25	First Presbyterian
April 1	Rome Church

\*Also weekly events in February 2012

-Sunday School Classes for children, youth and adults at 9:30 AM

- Chancel Choir Practices at 10:20 AM in the Choir Rehearsal Room; Worship Services at 10:45 AM

-Wednesdays (2/1, 2/8, 2/15, 2/22, 2/29) PYC at 4:30 PM in the Christian Education Building.



**Looking Ahead to March** *The following church events are already scheduled for March 2012; mark your calendar now so you will not miss any of the following:*

>Thursday (3/1) - 6 PM—6 PM - Friday (3/2) - 26th Annual 24 Hour Prayer Vigil in observance of the World Day of Prayer.

>Saturday (3/3) - Men's Prayer Breakfast at 9 AM in Fellowship Hall.

>Sunday (3/4) - P.Y.F. at 12 Noon at East Side Presbyterian Church.

Sunday (3/11) - Time Change Sunday

"Jesus In The Passover" Lenten Service: On Sunday (March 25) a representative from "Jews For Jesus" will be making a very informative presentation at 7 PM in Fellowship Hall as a Christian Sear, pointing out how the traditional Jewish Passover Seder symbolically presents Jesus as the Messiah. This Cluster Sunday Lenten Service Event will be open to all who wish to attend from Cluster Churches, Ashtabula Community Churches and others of the Ashtabula

Community. A free will offering for "Jews For Jesus" will be received.

In addition to these special events in March the following weekly events will also take place:

Sunday School Classes	9:30 AM
Sunday Worship Service	10:45 AM
Sunday Evening Lenten Service	7 PM
Tuesday Morning Bible Study	10 AM
Wednesday Presbyterian Youth Club	4:30 - 6 PM

**Hear Ye! Hear Ye!**



The Tuesday Morning Bible Study is beginning a new study—the book of John. Come join us to prepare yourself for the Celebration of Easter. This discipline of study of God's word each Tuesday morning on the work of Jesus Christ will prepare us to rejoice in the Victory of Jesus over death and the grave.

**Frequently asked questions about Lenten Season:**

1. Why do we not celebrate Easter on the same day every year?  
Easter is the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox
2. What is Ash Wednesday and where does the ashes come from?  
Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. This is symbolized by the imposition of ashes. The ashes are the palm fronds from the previous year Palm Service celebration burnt and mixed with olive oil.
3. Why is Lent said to be a 40 Day period when you count the days from Ash Wednesday to Easter there are more than 40 days?  
When you count the days you do not include Sundays, Sunday is never a fast day but a day of celebrating Our Lord defeat of the cross and death.
4. Is there a right or wrong way to observe Lent?

No, Lent has been observed since at least the 4th Century (325 AD). The earlier days it was observed with a period of fasting—normally 2 or 3 days. Later a forty day fast was observed with one meal a day (with no flesh or fish eats). This period is also observed with almsgiving and devoting more time than usual to religious exercise.