



# THE PIPER

Piping Along News of Interest



JANUARY 2018

Dear Church,

Each New Year I think it's a good habit to review what we're all about, and in the words of our first core value, we're all about "*willingly submitting to the Bible as God's Word.*" This is as good a foundation as you can find for life, let alone a church. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us point blank that whoever hears His words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house upon the rock. We will proudly say we are part of a Bible believing church. This is a good foundation but it isn't an easy one. I fairly regularly remind us of both the goodness, and the difficulty, of submitting to the Bible as God's word in areas like forgiving one another and loving our enemy, but lately I've been challenged in some areas – areas I thought I was good in.

**The session class of 2020 will be ordained and/or installed during worship on January 21st. Praise God for these servants who are willing to lead and shepherd the congregation!**

First is the area of *tithing*. While it took us a few years, Pam and I have worked hard to get to a full tithe. Recently I asked a group of pastors how they handle stewardship in the congregations they serve. This led to a broader conversation about tithes and offerings. I was suddenly challenged because looking at the scriptures it becomes clear that 100% of the tithe should go to the local church with no strings attached, but we can and should make "offerings" beyond the tithe to other ministries. Digging deeper I discovered that part of this is the Bible's call to tithe our control. You see, I like to "designate" my "tithe" and thus have a level of control over what ministries are advanced. Yet the teaching of scripture is that this isn't really a tithe. It is an offering, and it is entirely appropriate, but only after the full tithe is given to the church in a way where you released control. I found this challenging because, while Pam and I tithe 10%, 100% of the tithe doesn't come here. While the bulk comes here, some of it is spread to other ministries. So, if I'm going to willingly submit to the Bible as God's Word, I'm going to have to grow in the area of tithing, ideally without cutting back on offering. If you want to dig into this further, read the scriptures about tithes, offerings, and first fruits. Pay attention to the fact that, while there are blessings associated with tithing, there are curses associated with not doing so.

The second area I've been challenged in has been in my *concept of heaven*. We're starting a sermon series this month on heaven and I'm really excited about it. However, I've also been challenged in one of my concepts of heaven and found I need to submit my view to Scripture. I used to think that as soon as we die, we step out of time and are immediately at judgment day along with everyone else, because again, we have stepped outside of time. Yet the more I've dug into Scripture as it relates to heaven, the more I've realized there must be some sort of intermediate heaven and intermediate hell (purgatory?) between our death and Christ's return. It seems to be clear that the martyrs ask the Lord how long it will be till He avenges them. This isn't a bad thing by any means, but with much less cause than the martyrs, I'm impatient for eternal heaven. Submitting my view of heaven to the Bible will force me to think through things and make some tweaks to the way I minister to people facing death or the loss of a loved one.

In all of this, I see we all have room to grow when it comes to submitting to the Bible as God's Word, but it is good growth and I'm excited to do it with you in 2018! To God be the glory, *Jon*

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### *The 10th annual Community Christmas Celebration was a huge success!*

Just over 100 community members came to enjoy a warm meal and fellowship and over 40 volunteers helped to pull it all together.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to First Presbyterian Church for once again opening their doors and hosting the event. We would also like to extend a huge thank you to everyone that donated food, prepared food, donated gift cards, decorated Showker Hall and volunteered their time and talents on Christmas Day. We could not do it without you!

Best wishes for a happy and healthy 2018!

*Ted and Tammy Brown*



# My Cuba Adventure...

By Gannon Irons

The love of God, the grace of Jesus, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is alive and thriving in Cuba. My thoughts on what the Cuban people needed changed shortly after we arrived. After enjoying the beautiful scenery, colonial style buildings, and American cars from the 1950's, my focus shifted to the people of Cuba. While we had ideas about what they might need from us—clean water, or other life giving basics—what I learned is that they simply want relationships.

It felt like four separate trips. We spent time in Havana, Varadara, Mantazas, and finally to our destination, a small town in Eastern Cuba. God's presence was evident through the belief of the people we met. The depth of their faith is beyond what I have ever witnessed. Although the needs are many in Cuba, the people are loving, creative, peaceful, and simple.

I had several experiences when I witnessed the presence of God and His work. It started with the long 14 hour van ride from Mantanzas up into the mountains. Along with us, in the van, was a praise band and their pastor from a church in Havana. If they weren't eating or sleeping they were filling the van with songs of praise and worshiping the Lord. These people were filled with the Holy Spirit and it spilled over to the rest of us.

There is no question in my mind that God had a plan for Alex to be on this trip. Not only did he serve as a vital interpreter for us, but he also had an opportunity to meet his aunt and cousin for the first time. It was an emotional moment for all of us to witness. I was so happy for Alex. To see this family, that was ripped apart 40 years ago, reunite was amazing.

God's plans continued. Our plans of hiking through the beautiful mountain region were slightly changed. I thought we would be riding donkey's, hiking to remote locations, and sleeping at random house churches. Instead, we were connected with a pastor and his wife who care for a little church. Our time was spent at their church site at the top of a hill, protected by angels, with gorgeous views of the village. This was our home for the next few days.



The pastor and his wife are affiliated with one of Cuba's larger, growing denominations. I have never experienced a couple so filled with the Holy Spirit. I had never witnessed such intense prayer and belief. The church, or God's house as they referred to it, was their home and they are simply the caretakers. They are there to rebuild the church membership and profess the word of the Lord. Their testimony is an amazing story of leaving everything behind to do God's work. God had to convince them the hard way, to go with His plan.

What I noticed most about my time there was how faithful they are and how they have been provided with everything they need. They are not materialistic and they live a very simple life. We were blessed daily through meeting new people, eating delicious food, and professing the love of God.

I am so grateful to have this life changing experience and I could not have asked for two better guys to share it with. What I saw and experienced is forever imprinted on my heart. My hope is that the relationships we fostered continue. I look forward to my return trip to the beautiful country of Cuba.

## Small Group Project Supports Local Children

By Trish Ours

The Monday Night Small Group wanted to do something this year to help folks in our area, helping children came to mind. We decided that Mission Central might be just what we wanted to check into. They have a Clothes Closet housed in Cedar Grove United Methodist Church at 1722 Smithland Road in Harrisonburg. So, we contacted the director, Artie Frederick.

Artie let us know how we could help and we jump at the chance share our gifts with these little ones. We also invited the First Pres congregation to help. We delivered more than 50 coats and 25 outfits for little girls. Our group felt blessed as we shared love and prayers through this mission. Thanks to all for your help.

*Dear Ladies of the Monday Small Group, you have blessed others by the beautiful outfits and coats you have donated to Mission Central's Children's Coat Closet. They will be greatly appreciated by the families receiving them and bring joy to the children. It was a pleasure meeting all of you and having you visit the Clothes Closet. We pray that Mission Central will be a place where sisters and brothers in Christ will be able to pass on the spirit of Christ, through giving and receiving freely to those in need in our community. Sincerely, Ailen Frederick, Mission Central*



# JAM Midweek Ministry Celebration

By Betsy Dishman

What encourages children to want to come to church on Wednesday afternoons for JAM? Cool snacks? Fun games? Bible study? Music? Time with friends? Probably! But behind all the activity is an intentional plan to disciple young people, and to model Christ-like relationships.

JAM provides a structured arena for growing these relationships. The one rule of JAM is to "treat everyone as a child of God". JAM leaders are called to serve using these prioritized criteria 1) Love God; 2) Love children; 3) Have a gift to share. JAM is also a midweek bridge between Sunday morning worship gatherings, which gives Christian focus to everyday life during the week.

So why do we offer ministries like JAM? Because a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ is the most important thing in life, and nurturing people, especial children and youth, into this abundant, life-giving relationship with God through Jesus Christ is the most important thing the church ever does. And because it might be fun to turn yourself into a reindeer or a Christmas tree!



## Session Highlights, December 12, 2017

- A. Elder candidates, class of 2020, were examined, presented brief faith stories, and were warmly received into membership on the Session. They will be installed on January 21. The new elders are Ron Dunham, Lisa Grayson, Jim Krauss, Gloria Price, and Sue Smith. It was announced that Sue Smith will serve as Session Clerk.
- B. An additional cooling system for the kitchen has been installed using funds from a bequest from the estate of Elaine Joecks.
- C. Treasurer Nancy Nichols reviewed the budget as presented by committees and organizations within our church. A lengthy discussion ensued. The budget will be voted on by Session at the January 30 meeting.
- D. The Worship Committee is making plans for dealing with safety issues in the church in the event of a possible security threat. The current climate of our culture makes the existence of good planning necessary.
- E. Pastor Thayer presented a plan for setting up more small groups at the church. Leaders will be trained to be able to set up new small groups. The small group experience is vital to creating community, one of Session's identified goals.

*A complete set of minutes for the previous month's meeting is available at the Welcome Desk.*

## Kitchen Installation

A generous bequest was made by Elaine Joecks. Elaine's passion for serving her church was working in the kitchen, at Fellowship Dinners, Funeral Receptions, and Soup kitchen. We were able to have a separate heating/cooling system installed to better control the temperatures in the kitchen. We, the Congregational Care Committee and all those who work in the kitchen on a regular basis, appreciate this gift as it has made our work environment much more comfortable.

## Christmas Giving

We raised \$5,427.05 from the Christmas Eve offering which was split in the following ways: Salvation Army \$1,825.69, Roberta Webb Childcare Center \$1,800.68 and AVA Care \$1,800.68.





# JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Jan 1 – Ellen Campbell, Kevin Gorby, Sydney Barbato  
 Jan 2 – Betty Chappell, Cathy Phillips  
 Jan 3 – Kay Stilwell, David Larson  
 Jan 4 – Austin Grandstaff, Madelyn Suffecool  
 Jan 5 – Whit Krumm, Kristen Ramsey, Adam Berkey,  
 Lesley Barnes  
 Jan 6 – Dotty Anderson, Emma Brown  
 Jan 7 – R.J. Good  
 Jan 9 – Totsie Zirkle  
 Jan 11 – Alice Humes  
 Jan 12 – Hope Stoner, Holly Albrite, Kelly Callender,  
 Ashley Kubler  
 Jan 13 – Geri Barker, Isla Irons  
 Jan 14 – Jim Simmons, Jenna Smith, Malachi Street  
 Jan 15 – Crystal Blosser, Ann Pace, Melinda Beam,  
 Karen Earle, Jennifer Ford  
 Jan 16 – Rick Christensen, Peggy Kuehl, Becky Huffman,  
 Renee Mason, Shannon Kiser, Richard Weakley  
 Jan 17 – Adam Campillo  
 Jan 18 – Richard Parker, Beth Litten, Macie Clements  
 Jan 19 – Peggy Simmons, Elizabeth Kistler  
 Jan 20 – Hilary Irons  
 Jan 23 – Annabelle Larson  
 Jan 24 – Ronnie Landes, Sarah Ramsey, Zachary Kiser  
 Jan 25 – Nancy Werner, Jeff Lenhart  
 Jan 26 – Lyn Good  
 Jan 27 – Justin Corder, Mia Knestrick  
 Jan 28 – Ron Dunham, Gary Blosser, Wallace Flatgaard,  
 Liz Knicely, Madison O’Leary  
 Jan 29 – Charmaine Detrow, Ed Hughes, Dick Johnson,  
 Jim Henderson  
 Jan 30 – Anne Green  
 Jan 31 – Kitty Bennett, Janet Bechtel, Zanette Hahn,  
 John Barnes

## *A Praying Church*

We want to be a praying church. Your leaders recently identified deepening our prayer life as a priority during the coming year. We’ve identified 14 ways we can all be involved in that. Read more at [firstreshbg.org/want-praying-church/](http://firstreshbg.org/want-praying-church/).

**Tired of writing checks or forgetting your offering at home? Ask about electronic payments. The service is free! For information, contact Donna Meadows in the church office.**



# JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Jan 1 — Mike and Kim Brantley celebrate 37 years  
 Jan 25 — Terry and Mary Beth Rhodes celebrate 43 years

## *We Express our Sympathy to:*

Joy Strickland in the loss of her father, Richard Bernier, who passed away December 7, 2017.

Rick Wilson in the loss of his mother-in-law, Mary Margaret Newman, who passed away December 12, 2017.

Nell Davis in the loss of her son-in-law, and Gwen Sloop in the loss of her brother-in-law, George Naze, who passed away December 12, 2017.

John Leake in the loss of his brother, and Vic Smith in the loss of his uncle, Robert Leake, who passed away December 19, 2017.

Virginia Foltz in the loss of her son, Kay Mundy in the loss of her brother, and Tanya Thompson in the loss of her uncle, Lee Foltz, who passed away December 22, 2017.

The Kronk family in the passing of Bettie Ann Kronk, who passed away on December 25, 2017.

Dear Church Family, I am so honored to be chosen as the TLC person of the week! I was blessed to receive so many cards and sweet expressions of love. The flowers were lovely! Though I can no longer come to worship with you at First Church, I enjoy the weekly radio broadcasts and pray for you all everyday! *God bless you all, Nell*

Our family has been so blessed by First Presbyterian during the loss of our mother, Isabelle Bell. We deeply appreciate the many words and deeds of consolation. We thank Shannon Kiser and Karen Holl for the lovely music, and the Congregational Care Committee for the reception afterwards. We especially thank Pastor Jon for going far beyond the call of duty with his time and talent. Together, you all turned a difficult transition into a time that we could praise God for His timing, His body, and His promise of eternal life.

*Martha Graham, Libby Stevens, Frank Bell and all our family members*

***Thank you*** to those who contributed to the special offering for Bibles in the Farsi language for the growing house church movement in Iran. Thus far we’ve received \$5,100 which is enough for 850 Bibles and 1,700 New Testaments!