



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF DEEP RUN

January 2010
Deep Runner



“Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” Hebrews 12:1-2

Some thoughts.....

I remember hearing my parents' stories of the dark days of the Great Depression. Bread and soup lines, massive unemployment, people losing their homes, just plain dark, dreary times. I remember thinking that can't happen now because we've learned so much about how to manage the economy. I thought there will be occasional bumps in the road, but we will avoid the economic darkness and despair my parents lived with.

I'm not sure just where we're headed economically, but I do know that my assumptions aren't nearly as solid as I thought they were. I've heard projections of 10% unemployment. There are lots of people who will be needing bread and soup. Lots of people have lost, or will lose, their homes. Maybe it's not as dark and dreary as the Great Depression, but this clearly isn't a time of brightness and light. It doesn't appear this will be a really bright and shining holiday shopping season for lots of people. Although there seems to be lots of excitement about the election of the first African American in our history, the mood of the whole world seems to be more dark than light. Everyone seems to understand there are huge economic and political issues that must be faced and resolved.

It strikes me that there is no better time for our message of Christmas. Light, hope, and peace are most appealing in the midst of darkness and despair. My experience is that good news is most attractive and appealing when we feel most stressed and depressed.

It is easy to be complacent about light and hope when things are going well in our lives. It is easy to take things for granted when all around us everything is positive. But good news is really attractive when things aren't going so well and we need some signs of hope and light.

All the images of Christmas are images of light and hope in the midst of darkness and despair. The star appears in the darkness of the night sky. The Gospel of John says the light shines on and will never be put out by the darkness. And right now I think our world needs all the light and hope it can find. Right now is a great time for us to live out our light and hope experience while the

world gets more and more worried about darkness and despair, because people around us are really looking for light right now.

In a sermon called “Light and Darkness,” Frederick Buechner writes, “On Christmas morning, as a child, you wake up as early as 4 AM maybe, and what sets your heart pounding and keeps you from going back to sleep is the almost unbearable hope that when day finally dawns, you will go downstairs, and there under the tree will be that one gift of all gifts that you have been waiting for for so long that you never believed you would ever get it. We are not children any more and the rubble of the years lies heavy on what was once our capacity for such wonder and excitement as that, but I suspect that deep down inside we go on watching and waiting that way even so. I suspect that may be the inner most truth about who we are as human beings is that even at our most jaded, even when we're least conscious of it, we wait and watch for the one gift of all gifts still. The Light of the World.”

I really believe that is true. There is nothing more important than the Light in the midst of the darkness.

I think it is important for us to remind ourselves, and each other, this year that no matter what happens to the economy; no matter what happens in the world, the Light will shine on and we will not have to live in darkness. It is important for us to live out of the reality of that Light.

Shalom,
Byron

Contacting Byron

If you need to contact Byron you can leave either voice mail on the church phone (215-249-3689) or email at byronatdeepnunpres@comcast.net. He will respond to those whenever he is in the office, which will be at least 4 days/week. In an emergency, Besse knows how to reach Byron.

The 2010 Directory will be available in time for the Congregational meeting on the 31st. Please notify the office of any changes.

Home Communion

As of January 1, 2010 Maggie Argue will be our new Shepherd for scheduling home communion. She will be contacting Elders and Deacons home communion teams in December 2009.



An Important New Part of Worship!

Members of three committees—Membership, Worship, and Communications—are proud to introduce to you the brand-new ACT OF FRIENDSHIP AND ATTENDANCE pads. These will be waiting for you in the pews, in their brand-new covers! Our design will specifically meet the needs of members of the Presbyterian Church of Deep Run.

We ask that you will take time to complete this information every week that you are attending a church service. Tracking attendance in this way is very important in the work and worship of our church. We depend on this information to keep our records correct.

If you have a visitor in your pew, please show him or her the attendance pad. Specific information is requested from our visitors, so that we can welcome them to worship and introduce them to our church life. As one recent visitor said, "This is a service like I remember when I was growing up, with great community."

- Valerie Smith, Membership

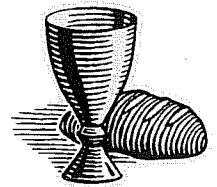
"My Covenant with God"

Have you thought recently what membership in the Presbyterian Church of Deep Run means to you? Your Membership Committee would like to help to reinforce that meaning by sharing with you "My Covenant with God."

This covenant represents input from several people. It is a short statement of the responsibilities and promises to which we committed when we joined this church. We plan to make it part of our 2010 Lenten study. In order to help us become familiar with the covenant, sermons will be preached on it on four Sundays in January and February.

We are very hopeful that this covenant will enrich our faith and fellowship and also our commitment to the Presbyterian Church of Deep Run. Watch for further information in the New Year!

Worship on the 3rd! 9 AM Come Let Us Adore Him!



As we begin the New Year we will gather for one worship service at 9 AM. Mindful that we are the family of God and beginning 2010, the Children's Ministry and Worship Committees thought it a great idea to have a church family service as we walk into the New Year.

As always, the first Sunday of the month will include communion. We will gather as the family of God and worship together. Although communion is a sacrament and an important part of our faith, it isn't often that our children are in worship to see or participate in this part of our worship. We want our children to learn on a personal level, with their parents and alongside their church family, the rituals and sacraments of our faith and how we worship. We want the entire congregation, including our children, to have the joy of being a gathered community.

On the 3rd we will talk about communion, learn, experience and participate in the Lord's Table mindful that it reminds us that communion is a mystery and that it is a sign and seal of the crucified and risen Lord. Just as Jesus shared the meal with his disciples, he calls us to share this sacrament. In the bread and the cup we remember what Christ did for us, that Christ is with us and that Christ will come again. In communion there is thanks given, grace received and we commit ourselves afresh to love and serve God, one another and our neighbors. We hope that you will be able to join us on the 3rd as we come to do just these things as God's people.

- Pastor Sharyl

Children's Ministries

Confirmation is Coming!!!

Anyone in 9th - 12th grade is welcome to join us to seriously think, study, talk, ask questions and pray about their personal relationships with Jesus Christ. It is a time to clarify what they have learned and experienced about God, about the church and about life. It's an opportunity to ask big questions and explore what it means for them to know God for themselves. This is an exciting and an important milestone in their journey of faith. And at the end, if they choose, it is a chance to affirm publicly the vows taken on their behalf as a child in baptism or be baptized.

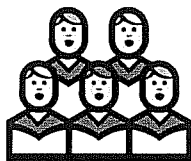
This year Confirmation will be offered as an extra Sunday School class with an extra half hour for our lessons. So we will be meeting on Sunday mornings in the library from 9:00 AM till 10:30 AM.

We will begin the 7th of February and run through May. If you or your daughter or son would like to be a part of the group or if you have questions about any of this, please feel free to talk with me. I'm really excited about this class. I have always loved teaching Confirmation and being apart of the conversation of what and how our faith is lived out in the midst of the big questions and every day life.

Thank you,
Pastor Sharyl

K-3rd Grade Kids Choirs back in the swing! January 13th

Calling all students K-3rd grades!! If your students have participated in the past - great! If not, we invite them to come Wednesday the 13th and see what all the fun is about! Students K – 3rd sing for joy from 5:00 to 5:30 each week. On the first and third Wednesday this group has Youth Group from 5:30-6:15 and then we have family dinners. We'd love others to join our fun. Come out and join in the fellowship!!!



Senior High Summer Trip Meeting January 10th, 10:17 in the library

Calling all 8th- 12th graders and parents!! Come get info so you can get on board!!!! Adults and students alike are welcome to get the information and start praying about being a part of the team.

Every three years, students, pastors, parents and other loving adults come from all over the country and a few corners of the world to Purdue University for a week called Triennium. Our students will be encouraged as young people of faith, challenged and blessed by times of small groups, worship, service and games. July 19- July 25th are our dates and West Lafayette, Indiana is our destination. It's powerful and life changing in so many ways. Come get the rest of the details and sign up!

Youth Groups

4th - 6th Grade Youth Group

In December, the youth met to discuss the subject of trusting God and also made gift bags for the Fellowship Committee. The bags were to be used for the Christmas caroling event that Fellowship had planned. Due to an unexpected snowfall, some of the Christmas caroling had to be cancelled. After a short break, we will resume our meetings in January. The only event on the calendar at this point is the Unbirthday Party, which our group will be attending. The date for the Unbirthday Party is January 10. Please note that this is the 2nd Sunday in January (which is not our usual meeting day). The normal meeting schedule of 1st and 3rd Sundays will resume in February. Please take a moment to also enjoy the following piece written by our youth about their experience at Mana on Main Street.

On Sunday, November 15th, the 4-6 grade youth group worked at a soup kitchen called *Manna on Main Street*. We served lunch from 12-1:30 and the menu included: taco soup, cheeseburgers, hamburgers, fruit and garden salads, and broccoli and cheese casserole.

There were 33 people that we served and the people there surprised us with their gratefulness and friendliness. We were also surprised that so many donations came in from the community.

We would definitely go back and do this again because it was a yummy, interesting and fun experience!

Respectfully submitted,

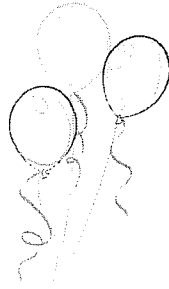
The kids of the 4-6th grade youth group

7th - 12th Grade Youth Group

UnBirthday Party!

Sunday, January 10 - 2:00 - 4:00 PM

Come join the fun as we celebrate everyone's birthday. There will be cakes and fun for all members of the congregation as we discover common threads of life and fun! Signup for which month you would like to make/get a cake for and head up the table decorations.



Kirkwood Retreat

Friday, January 29 - 6:00 PM - Sunday, January 31 - early afternoon

A weekend retreat including skiing/snow tubing! We will get settled in at Kirkwood on Friday evening, head to a ski hill for tubing, skiing or boarding on Saturday, and hold our own worship service on Sunday morning. The Gwynedd Square Presbyterian Church Youth group will be joining us!

COST: \$38-lift ticket; \$28-rental; \$20-tubing plus food items TBA. ***Sign up by January 15th a must!***

Adult Education

Teach Me Your Paths – Psalm 25:4

The PCDR choir sang four selections from Handel's *Messiah* in December. Each selection was from the first section which is about the prophecy from the Old Testament about the birth of Jesus Christ (the Nativity). They are straight from the Bible: *Comfort ye my people* (Isaiah 40:1), *Every valley shall be exalted* (Isaiah 40:4), *And the Glory of the Lord* (Isaiah 40:5), and *For unto us a child is born* (Isaiah 9:6). Jo Ann Beistline and I led an hour seminar on the life, times and music of Handel.

It is really quite an amazing story. To think Handel wrote the music in 24 days! The biblical texts were chosen by Charles Jennes. The first performance was April 13, 1742, in Dublin before a crowd of 700. The hall only fit 600 but women were encouraged not to wear hoops and men not to bring their swords. And so the lucky 700 sat down to watch Handel (who directed from his keyboard), the 35 musicians, 19-member chorus and five soloists begin this lovely and extraordinary oratorio. An oratorio is a dramatic choral work with instruments usually with a religious text. It is rather like an opera but without the costumes, scenery and actors.

Handel was born in 1685 and died in 1759. Three thousand attended his funeral at Westminster Abbey where his tomb is inscribed with these words from *Job*: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." He was a heavy man who ate quite a bit, was witty, impatient, never married, had lots of friends and could curse in five languages. But we know none of this. The only thing we know is the extraordinary music he wrote.

He was born in a century where people thought the earth was the center of the universe, where the authority of the Bible was absolute, and where the Inquisition meant prison, censure or death. If you were a scholar you studied the Bible. And then the renaissance and humanism challenged the authorities and the Bible. New lands and new inventions made science books top the bestseller list. People started collecting butterflies, prisms, plants and insects. Nature became a wonder in and of itself! The human body was more than the temple of the Holy Spirit. Our bodies were mechanical wonders and machines! And owning a telescope or microscope enabled you to see things you only imagined. This is the century in which Handel wrote and performed the *Messiah* (30 times).

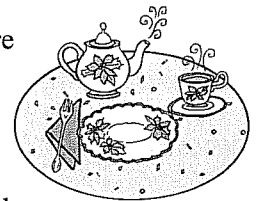
Handel was a Lutheran born in Germany but he lived in England for 47 years. He traveled, especially to Italy. He wrote for the nobles, for celebrations and coronations. Today his music stirs the hearts and souls of so many, rich or poor. People stand when the Hallelujah Chorus begins as did the King of England when he first heard it. It is the story of prophecy reminding us what God did for us one night so long ago in Bethlehem; His plan to redeem us by the coming of the Messiah. Hallelujah!

Women's Ministry

Tea, Talk and New Found Talent

The tables were decorated, the goodies were many and the teas were ready to be consumed. That was the background for the Annual Christmas Tea held on December 13th. The weather was uncooperative and was wet, cold and nasty BUT that didn't dampen the spirits of those who ignored the elements and gathered that afternoon in Hoopes Hall. The proof is in the pictures located on the website and on the bulletin board across from sign-up bulletin board along the hallway to Hoopes Hall.

There was plenty of warmth and it was shared during the time for visiting, the tasting the many treats that were brought in, and over the sampling of some



delicious and different teas. Joan Dahl carried the tradition, of at least ten years, when she presented her specially made, hand-painted Christmas ornaments to the babies born during 2009. This year we were blessed by three births!

- Shane Lee Williams, son of Sarah Williams, grandson of Deb & Ken Walters and great-grandson of Jean & Jim Pritchard.
- Allison Jane Beacham, daughter of Cheryl Beacham and granddaughter of Betty and John Trapp.
- Maxwell William Brannon, son of Samantha Brannon and grandson of Jennifer & Vern Spear.

In addition to the presentation of ornaments, Christmas Carols were sung and a special reading was shared with us by Carol Ramsey. New talent was discovered when two short presentations made by six of the tea attendees. *A Shepherd's Revelation* – with Joanna McCormick reflecting upon what she, as a shepherd had experienced on that special night. Then we heard *Christmas Voices* – with Valerie Smith, Jean Pritchard, Marje Beck, Jennifer Spear and Debbie Hahn telling the Christmas Story from the other principle characters of that ageless, wondrous story. The afternoon concluded with more tea and visitation and many “kitchen elves” staying afterwards for additional chatting time.

2009 was a good year for the Women's Ministry events and we look forward to what new opportunities 2010 will offer the women of our church family and friends.

- Carol Ramsey, Adult Education

Women's Bible Study

The Monday Night Bible Study will resume on Monday, January 11 at 7:00 PM in the library. We will begin studying the Gospel of Mark, believed to be the first Gospel written. We will use *Back to the Source* which goes directly to the Bible and asks these three questions:

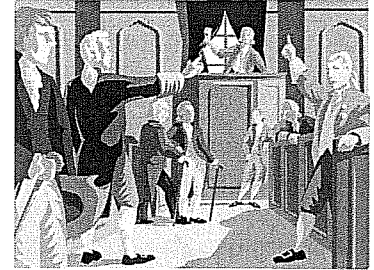
1. What does it say?
2. What does it mean?
3. How does it affect my life?

With the help of commentaries, we will examine God's words to us. If you have not studied the books of the Bible, this is a good place to start. No previous knowledge is needed. All women are invited to join us for fellowship and study.

Men's Ministry

The Men's Breakfast group met Saturday December 12th in Hoopes Hall. Some great Dunkin' Donuts coffee greeted all attendees in addition to breakfast sandwiches and munchkins! After a few minutes of fellowship and an opening prayer, we launched into the program, this month dealing with the people and events that took place in Pennsylvania during the American Revolution and the role the church played in that uprising. The follow-up discussion was

excellent as always. We hope to see you at the next meeting, where we will continue our discovery of Christianity's hand in our nation's development.



Our next meeting will be held in **Room 223** (a Missional Church meeting is being held in Hoopes Hall) on January 9th at 7:30 AM and the Men's Bible Study Group will meet at 6:30 each Monday morning at the Dublin Diner.

For more information contact Frank Blow about the Men's Breakfast Group and Glenn Argue about the Men's Bible Study Group.

- Frank Blow, Men's Ministry

SALT

Next Meeting: Thursday, January 14, 2010, Noon

Only 15 people attended our Seasoned Adults Learning Together gathering in December and the rest of you missed a wonderful concert presented by Bill Brosius and the ClariNetwork quartet. The four different clarinets played beautiful Christmas music which was enthusiastically enjoyed by all.

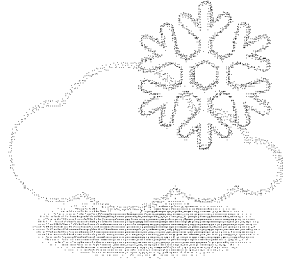
Tam Larson will be our guest speaker on January 14. She will educate us on the Significance of Quilts Throughout History. It promises to be interesting and informative. Before Tam's presentation we'll enjoy soup made by Mai Cole, Joan Dahl and Janet Pagenkemper. Doris Cairns and Pat Schuck will bring bread and Tam Larson and Eleanor Merbler will tempt us with desserts.

Brave the cold and come enjoy delicious homemade soups with a great group of seniors in our church. Don't forget to bring an item for FISH.

Communications Corner

Emergency Closings

Please note that we will no longer have the emergency phone chain. If you would like to know if the Church is closed for any reason please do one of the following:



- Call the church phone - 215-249-3689 - listen to normal message until it tells you to press 4 to hear any cancellations.
- Go to the web page - www.presbyterianchurchofdeeprun.org
- Check your personal email to see if an email message has been sent.

Pasta for the Presbytery and Calling all Crock pots!!

On January 8th and 9th Deep Run will be hosting the Presbytery Partner for the Missional Church Meetings. We would love to have you come and listen, participate and learn more about what God is doing as we move along in this process but we are also in need of some help with the hosting. Part of the weekend, Friday night 6-9 PM and Saturday 9:30 AM - 4:00 PM, meetings will include meals. As folks come to our church the last in the Presbytery we would like to be able to offer them the hospitality that we at Deep Run are so good at extending. There are sign-up sheets on the bulletin boards for the various places we need help hosting. If you are able to help with a meal, that's great. If you are interested in sitting in on the conversation, that would be great too, for all or just part of the weekend. We'd like to have crock pots of soup for Friday night's supper and some pasta for Saturday's lunch. Of course, bagels for breakfast, cookies, bread and chips would also be appreciated, but feel free to jump in and help as you feel able. These meetings are always a good time, encouraging and a great time of fellowship with the other churches from around the Presbytery. If you are able to help, please sign up or if you have questions please touch base with Pastor Sharyl.



Blood Drive Reminder

"January Is National Blood Donor Month"

We have a blood drive scheduled for Friday, January 8, 2010, 2:00 - 6:40 PM with Miller-Keystone Blood Center. A mobile unit will be used for the donations and will be located at the front of the church. Coffee and doughnuts will be provided.

Located on the bulletin board downstairs is the sign-up sheet with the time slots available.

- Eleanor Merbler, Deacon for Blood Drive

Daffodil Sunday

While winter is upon us, spring is right around the corner and the church will spring into the next season on Sunday, March 21st, when we have our annual Daffodil Sunday as we support the American Cancer Society.



The daffodil is one of the first flowers of the spring, and it signifies the hope of a new day, a new season, and a life free from cancer. Along with the Relay for Life, which is held each summer around Bucks County, the Daffodil sale is the largest fundraiser for the Cancer Society. Each bunch of ten daffodils costs \$10 and will be displayed in the church on March 21. After the services on that Sunday donors may take their daffodils.

A list of both donors and those being honored by the purchase of daffodils will be in the church bulletin on March 21. If you'd like to participate, you can do so by placing an order with Kathy Best or use the form that will appear in the bulletin in January and February and hand it as well as your check to Financial Secretary Evelyn Tregaskis.

All checks should be made out to the Presbyterian Church of Deep Run. **THE DEADLINE FOR ORDERS IS SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21.** Thanks for helping us brighten the sanctuary and support this cause.

Plan a special weekend for your family!

Kirkwood Family Camp 2010

January 15th-18th, 2010

May 28th-31st, 2010

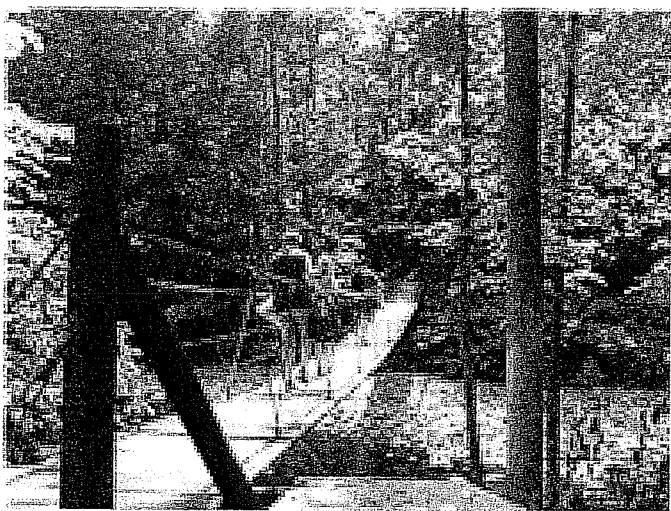
September 3rd-6th, 2010

October 8th-11th, 2010

Family Camps are the ideal opportunities for families to enjoy a get away, try something new, meet other families and savor a relaxed atmosphere. Spend your time swimming, boating, hiking, fishing or just relaxing. Your family may also choose to be creative in the arts and crafts cabin, try your hand at archery or just simply enjoy relaxing in a beautiful atmosphere. Kirkwood Camp and Conference Center is located on 270 acres of woods, streams, and ponds all teaming with wildlife. This is a great chance to bring your extended family together for a family reunion to spend quality time together in a beautiful natural setting.

Information on lodging accommodations, meals, and registration is available by following the link below to the registration form. Mark your calendars and plan to attend one of these exciting family weekends!

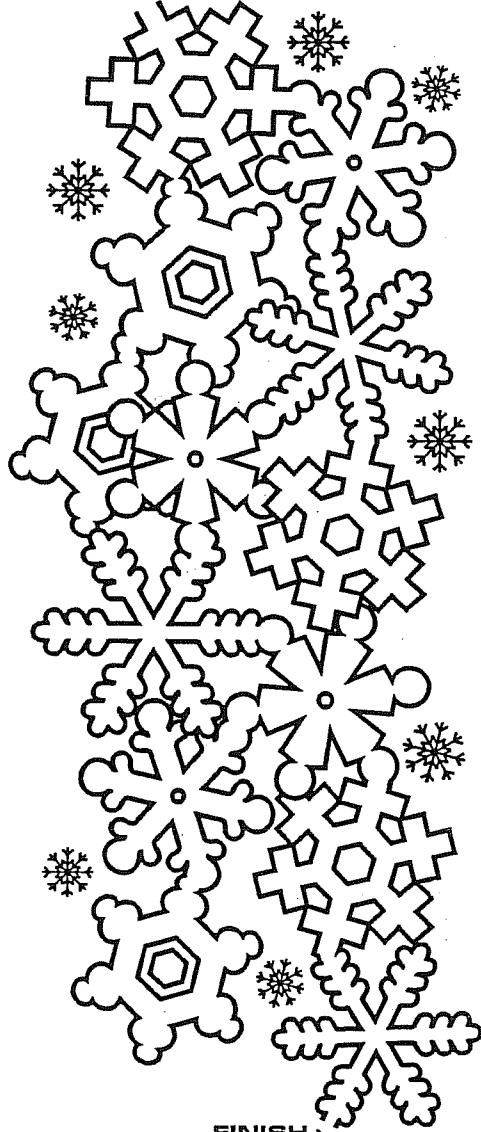
http://www.presbyphl.org/articles_view.asp?columnid=1934&articleid=60503



A WINTER WONDERMAZE

Find your way through the snowy maze.

START ↙



FINISH ↘

In response to God's grace, love and peace,
and inspired by the Holy Spirit,
The Presbyterian Church of Deep Run
has as its mission:

**To know Christ as our Lord and Savior
and to share Christ within this
congregation and throughout the world.**



BIBLE TRIVIA

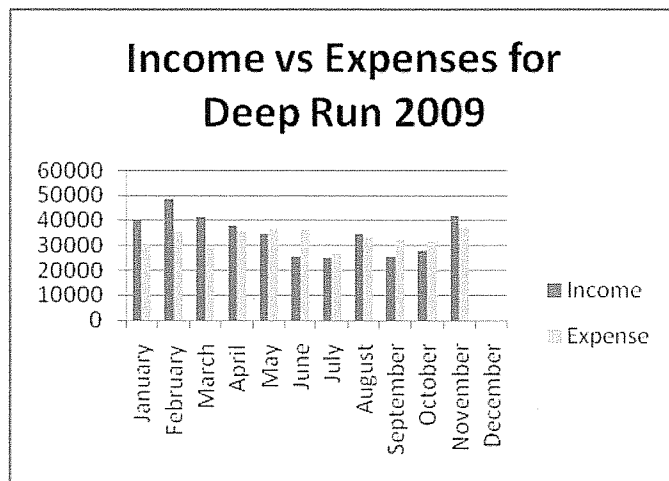
- Q. Who fought a lion on a snowy day?
A. Benaiah (2 Samuel 23:20)

Financial Secretary's Report

Custom Summary Report November 2009

Deep Run has been blessed this year with all you have done to support Christ's work at Deep Run. We are very grateful for the time and talents you have shared with our church community in 2009. We now must look forward to 2010 and we need everyone's support and prayers in order that this work can continue. The Lord needs each one of use to help with His work.

We have received pledges that total 50% of the monies needed to carry on our programs. The Lord has given us much so now we must say "Thank You" to him by making a gift to him that will enhance the work at Deep Run. Please return you pledge soon so our budget can be prepared.



	<u>Nov 09</u>
Income	
40000 · Offering	
40010 · Pledge cash/checks	30,729.00
40020 · Non-Pledge cash/checks	2,400.00
40030 · Plate cash/checks	804.83
40040 · Sunday School	260.42
Total 40000 · Offering	<u>34,194.25</u>
41000 · Special Offering	
41020 · Christmas Joy	36.00
Total 41000 · Special Offering	<u>36.00</u>
42000 · Rental Income	
42030 · Nursery school	3,000.00
42040 · Manse Rental	1,675.00
Total 42000 · Rental Income	<u>4,675.00</u>
43000 · Mission Offerings	
43030 · Mission Endowment	300.00
43060 · Calvin Presbyterian Church	150.00
43070 · Alternative Gift Giving	578.00
43103 · Mission Scholarship	100.00
43105 · Interfaith Fellowship	150.00
Total 43000 · Mission Offerings	<u>1,278.00</u>
44000 · Church Group Income	
44202 · Adult Ministry	15.50
Total 44000 · Church Group Income	<u>15.50</u>
49000 · Miscellaneous Income	
49001 · Altar Flower Income	689.00
49004 · Women's Group	140.00
49023 · Printing Bulletin	30.00
49000 · Miscellaneous Income - Other	800.00
Total 49000 · Miscellaneous Income	<u>1,659.00</u>
Total Income	41,857.75
Expense	0.00
Net Income	<u><u>41,857.75</u></u>

January through November 2009 Financial Income Report

	<u>Jan - Nov 09</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>\$ Over Budget</u>	<u>% of Budget</u>
Income				
40000 · Offering				
40010 · Pledge cash/checks	299,414.00	311,000.25	-11,586.25	96.28%
40020 · Non-Pledge cash/checks	25,782.00	18,333.37	7,448.63	140.63%
40030 · Plate cash/checks	9,888.93	22,916.63	-13,027.70	43.15%
40040 · Sunday School	2,146.45	1,375.00	771.45	156.11%
40050 · Initial Offering	622.00			
Total 40000 · Offering	<u>337,853.38</u>	<u>353,625.25</u>	<u>-15,771.87</u>	<u>95.54%</u>

Things for which the congregation has expressed gratitude:

(The Senior High Youth Group posted a "mural" of thanksgiving and invited additions.)

Jr. and Sr. High Youth	Home communion
Jesus prized processions	Music
Love	United States of America
God	4-6 grade youth group
Our Session	Wonderful grandsons
Mary	Art
Joseph	Food
Angels	The grace of God
My Family and Friends	Christmas
Durham/Nockamixon	My dog
For our church family friends	PNC and all their work
Clean water	Jesus, love, my friends and family, my job, plus this beautiful day
Gentle snowfalls	My girls plus husband
Friends	My soul
Birth Parents	Kids
Family	Abundance of food
Family, faith, friends	My friends
God's creation	People
Family	School
I am so thankful for my amazing family	Recovery, health, family, wealth, home
Kids laughing	Byron's continued faithfulness, compassion, and leadership
We are grateful Jo Ann asked Stephen to play his sax	Friends
My church family	God's grace and blessing
My Dog, Dad, Mom, and 2 brothers	Jessica and Jenine
Expression	Good things are happening
I am thankful for teachers	My friends, family, cousins
Love	My house
My wonderful friends	Me
Teachers! I love teachers!	I am thankful for my friends
Eating	My family
I am thankful for my dog and my cat	Family
Diet	My family
Our games	My friends and family
Eating	My family
Cindy	Family and friends
Bryce	People
Jessica (written so many times we lost count!)	God's grace and forgiveness
My health	My dog
Family	Family prayers answered
My Family	The colors of autumn
Family, doctors, scientist/researchers, friends, teachers	The grace of God and God loves me
My cat	Prayer
Peace	Angel - my dog
My dog and homies	

To you O God I am ever grateful when, from the beginning of time, you chose me to be your beloved child. To you, son of God, I am ever grateful. When, 2000 years ago, you gave up your life that I may live with you internally. To you, spirit of God, I am ever grateful. When, in the early 90's, you invited me to join you in an everlasting relationship. To you, O God, I am grateful.

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Coeditors: Herb Miller, Lyle E. Schaller, Cynthia Woolever - www.TheParishPaper.com

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Become Comfortable with Conflict: Step One to Moving Beyond It!

Internal conflict rattled Christianity during its early years of rapid expansion. Three pioneer leaders—Paul, Peter, and Barnabas—lived at the center of that conflict (Acts 15).

What can we learn from those disagreements?

• *Conflict does not mean we are not Christians.* The first apostles argued about what committed Christians often disagree on: goals and methods.

• *Conflict is normal.* When people work together on important projects—such as marriages, democracies, and churches—they often see things differently.

• *Conflict often produces positive results.* Without disagreements, Christianity might have mummified into a tiny Jewish sect that never made it to Spain or America.

Why, then, are disagreements so stressful?

• *We tend to react inappropriately to disagreements.* When we disagree, most of us either (a) withdraw into silence, (b) become hostile, or (c) try to placate.

• *We have low skill levels in resolving disagreements.* So we avoid face-to-face communication that might resolve the conflict.

• *We want to resolve disagreements instantly rather than in a lengthy process.* Disagreements stop when we stay in relationship with people long enough to find mutually agreeable resolution. That seldom happens in one conversation.

• *We see disagreements as a disaster rather than an opportunity.* Very often, new and better ideas result from discussing passionately held opposite opinions.

How can churches discover the key issues in a disagreement? Ask governing board members to complete this five-minute questionnaire at a regularly scheduled meeting: “My Personal Opinion Regarding Causes of Our Church’s Disagreements.” Ask people not to sign their names. Don’t let people take the sheets home with them. Don’t send the questionnaire out via E-mail, U.S. Mail, or the church newsletter: that *always* produces distorted data (more of the returned surveys come from unhappy people) and *increases* the conflict!

1. During past years, have we usually disagreed about the same issue each time, or a different issue each time? If same issue, what is that issue?

2. If you were forced to name *only one cause* behind our present disagreements, how would you describe that cause?

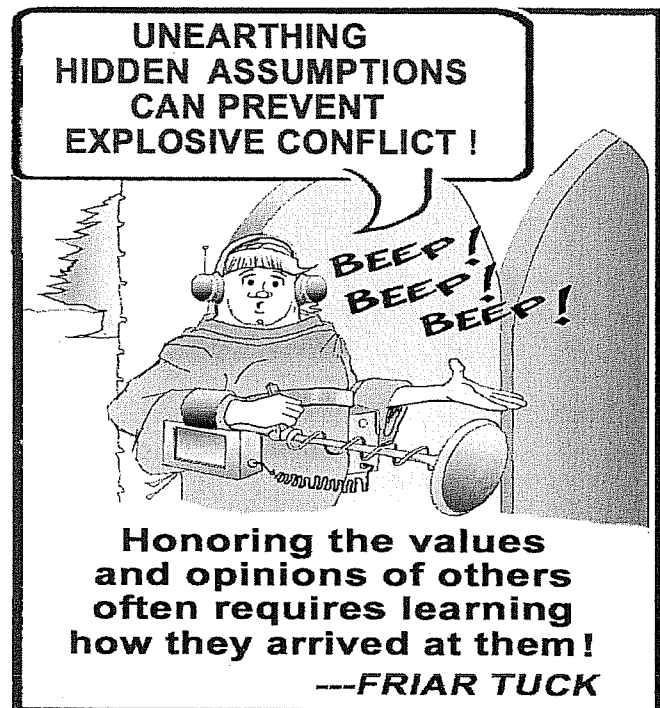
3. If you were asked to make a list of secondary causes, what would you put on that list?

4. Do you think a staff member or lay leader is doing something illegal or immoral?

5. Please state in one sentence what you specifically *want* to see happen?

At the next governing board meeting, pass the completed questionnaires around the circle. Ask each board member to silently read each sheet. Discuss. Develop appropriate action plans.

How can churches increase their effectiveness in handling disagreements? During a regularly scheduled meeting, ask governing board members to check items on the following list that they think would be helpful in our church. Title the list “Positive Thinking and Behavior Habits.” Ask people not to sign their names. Collect the sheets. Don’t let people take the sheets home with them. Don’t send the sheet out via E-mail, U.S. Mail, or



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1. Promote the philosophy that differences of opinion are acceptable in our congregation; the only unacceptable behavior is unwillingness to discuss the underlying causes.

2. Ask people to stop their fight-and-flight behaviors. We can't resolve problems that damage our church's fellowship and ministries by either skunk behavior or rabbit behavior. Skunks stand and fight in odorous ways that cause rabbit people to run away. Urge skunk-behavior people to stop their flow of negative comments about people with whom they disagree. Urge rabbit-behavior people to stay on the scene instead of getting so far away that no one can hear their concerns.

3. Do not attempt to rescue individuals who try to exert power and control by threatening to withhold financial giving or leave the church.

4. Believe that everyone is of value, but do not tolerate a "church bully" whose overbearing nature leaves no emotional room for other people to disagree.

5. Keep disagreements on the table. Some church leaders fear discussing things in a meeting, because it might create disunity or damage feelings. But when we do not discuss matters openly, conversations go underground—into the parking lot or onto the telephone circuits. This intensifies and lengthens the disagreement. When people say, "Discussing that in a meeting would make matters worse," tell them you feel strongly that the opposite is usually true—*not discussing the issue will make things worse*. Ask them, "Do we want to look back on this later and feel that we didn't try to do everything we could?"

6. Avoid pretending that you want to be "nice"—when you merely lack the courage and honesty to work out differences of opinion.

7. Refuse to substitute talking about one another for talking with one another.

8. Work toward increasing the ability to listen tolerantly to different opinions (loving your neighbor includes forgiving your neighbor for being different from you).

9. Urge people to say directly to each other what they mean; thus, avoiding destructive substitute behaviors such as character assassination, and generalizations.

10. Ask everyone to use *I* pronouns in sentences, such as, "I feel like...." or "It hurts me when...." Urge people to avoid using *you* pronouns in sentences, such as "You always...." Or "You *always* do that!" *I* pronouns accomplish better communication. *I* statements tell how you feel, and everyone is entitled to his or her feelings. Because *you* statements tell how you feel about someone else, *you* statements create anger.

11. Recognize that asserting your own right to an opinion is constructive but denying another person that same right is demeaning.

12. Speak only for yourself, not for others. Do not tolerate the phrase "people are saying." Insist on facts or

the citing of names if people say they are speaking for someone else.

13. What if someone complains about the pastor, a staff member, or a church leader but says, "Please don't use my name"? Advise him or her to communicate directly with that individual. He or she is far more likely to resolve the problem that way.

14. Ask for clarification on specific issues related to differences of opinion. Listen to understand an opinion, not to refute an opinion.

15. Do not interrupt people while they give you their opinion. Care enough to let them finish speaking before you respond.

16. After you listen to a viewpoint that you disagree with, try to paraphrase what you heard—so that the person knows you understand their opinion—before you respond with an opposing opinion.

17. Avoid generalized statements such as "We *always* make that mistake!"

18. Stay focused on specific issues by citing the basis for, or examples of, why you hold a particular viewpoint.

19. Avoid negative labeling of persons or groups with whom you disagree.

20. Permit no personal attacks on current or past congregational leaders or pastors.

21. Discuss differences of opinion, but don't discuss personal motives, intentions, or character.

22. Challenge others' perception of a situation, but don't challenge their motives for believing something.

23. Challenge others' behaviors and ideas, but not their unconscious motivations or worth as a person.

24. Disagree with people while showing courtesy and respect for them.

25. Clearly state the changes you want, rather than harping on what you don't like.

26. Ask leaders to avoid making unilateral decisions. Process all decisions through the committees and governing board.

Count the number of people who checked each of the twenty-six items. Publish your tabulation. This gives parishioners a mutually agreed on standard of behaviors for improving their ability to handle disagreements.

Publish this consensus annually for the governing board and the entire congregation.

The goal: When we become more comfortable with discussing differences of opinion, we find constructive ways to resolve them.