



# The PVEM Happenings



Volume 2, Issue 2

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## Getting to Know the Commissions

### Church Growth and Fellowship Commission

The Church Growth and fellowship Commission has as its mission: to provide for new member development and their involvement in Ministry life.

#### Chairperson: Colleen Newton

- It shall be responsible for recruiting and involving new members in the life of the Ministry. It shall be responsible for developing, conducting and maintaining a system for contacting new residents in the area; contacting un-churched residents in the area; maintaining a relationship with new member prospects once contact has been made.
- It shall develop and recommend to Council a procedure for receiving new members into the Congregation.
- It shall be responsible for a Ministry-wide fellowship program, which

Commissions

Continued on pg 2 column 1

## What's an Ecumenical?

Our church has the unique distinction of being an Ecumenical Ministry; therefore, we can and do seek members from all denominations. When our church was founded, it was given support from the Methodist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ and Episcopal Ministries. Also, the CEC (Covenant Ecumenical Congregation) was formed to include all denominations that were not part of the "four". This concept has flourished in Allamuchy and does include members from several surrounding communities and denominations.

Although there are other Ecumenical Ministries that have developed since then -- we were and are the leaders in several ways.

We do recognize that people have different ways of worship -- we embrace that difference in our services.

As part of that recognition, we actively seek input from members who are from the varied denominations to be part of the active commissions within the church.

In spite of the denominational differences, we accept the fact that we are one in Christ.

In this, we accept the commandment that we should take the Word into all the nations (and certainly all the denominations) and to all the people.

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## Golf Outing

The Stewardship Commission is planning a golf outing in the fall. It will be in late September or early October. If you enjoy golf, plan to be there. Following the golf game there will be a dinner that everyone may attend. Look for more info in future issues.

would include coffee hour, adult fellowship, picnics, and other functions this Commission feels would be helpful to strengthen Ministry bonds.

- It shall be responsible for greeters on Sunday morning and the maintenance of the guest book/attendance records and follow up contact for membership.

## More to Follow!

The Growth and Fellowship Commission will have more to say in the near future so, please watch the Happenings.

# Christian Outreach News:

## Upcoming event:

On February 6th we will be holding our annual Souper Bowl of Caring fundraiser. Fifteen years ago this event started down in North Carolina at a church as a way to raise funds to help feed the hungry. It became a nation-wide event in 1993 and 24 million has been raised since then. Each church involved directs the money collected to a charity of their choice. This year we will be giving the money to our Lord's Pantry and to the Christian Children's Fund. We are asking the congregation to make a donation as they leave the sanctuary and come downstairs and enjoy a bowl of homemade soup. Thank you for your support!

## Thank You Also:

We would like to thank everyone who helped make this Christmas a happier one for those

children at Camp Hope and the young men at the youth centers. We distributed gifts to 23 children at Camp Hope and they have sent lovely thank you cards. They are on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. 63 young men received sweatshirts and we provided homemade cookies for their Christmas Party. I would like to thank the Kids Care Club of Califon School for also providing cookies for the party.

Thank you also to everyone who continues to support the Lord's Pantry with donations. We finished 2004 with 115 pantry visits.

## Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday service will be held at PVEM on February 9. Everyone is invited to attend. There will be a soup supper beginning at 6:30, after which, we will have service in the sanctuary at 7:30. There will be a sign up sheet in the fellowship hall on Sunday to sign up for the soup supper. For more information please call the church at 908-852-5444.

## Please Honor the Happenings Deadline

Please submit all articles by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month for timely publication. It takes time to build the newsletter; however, if for some reason you don't have the information for the article that you know you will need space for, just let us know so we can reserve the space. We realize that sometimes events create the need for a last minute addition, so we will try to be understanding. Otherwise, any late submissions will be in the following issue. Thank you

## Are you interested in joining the Church?

Precovenant classes will be held in February for all people who wish to explore joining the church.

Meetings will be held Sunday Feb 13 and Sunday Feb 20 in the pastor's office at 11:30 a.m. Those who wish to unite with the church will be received into membership on Sunday, Feb. 27 during morning worship.

Anyone who is interested or has questions is welcome to call Rev. Howson. Those who are interested but have time conflicts, please contact the church office (908-852-5444).

We can frequently make adjustments to accommodate people.

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## Sunday School Update:

Our next rotation will begin on February 6, 2005 and it will be about Abraham & Sarah. The youth will learn about God's promise and God's faithfulness to that promise! We are looking for teachers and shepherds for this rotation. "Guest speakers" would also be a great addition. If you have a story of a journey you took or a story about a time you were scared and how you made it through, the children would love to hear it! Share some of your experiences with the children and get to know them. They are truly a wonderful group of kids!!

If you have any questions or suggestions, please let me know.

Thank you

Amy Testa

Superintendent

PS Remember, This is our church and these are our children. Let's teach the children!!

# Upcoming Events

## February

Feb 6 Souper Bowl Sunday (See Christian Outreach article, pg 2).

Begins new Sunday School rotation.

Feb 9 Ash Wednesday (See "Ash Wednesday article" pg 2).

Feb 13 and 20 Precovenant classes (See Precovenant Classes article pg 3).

## March

Mar 20 Palm Sunday.

Mar 24 Maundy Thursday

Mar 25 Good Friday

Mar 27 Sunrise Service

Mar 27 Easter Sunday

The March events will be explained better in the next issue of Happenings. Meanwhile, the Worship Commission will host a breakfast following the Easter Sunrise Service. If there is anyone who would like to help please contact Betty Schultheis or Ron Reece at: 908-850-0179. The experience has always been great and the Fellowship has been warm.

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## Confirmation News

The Confirmation class has begun to learn about worship. During the months of February and March they will be visiting other congregations and worshipping with them. If you would like to accompany them, please contact Dave Robinson who is coordinating this section of the program.



# FROM THE PASTOR

We have all been struck these last weeks by the immensity of the destruction and suffering caused by the tsunami in South Asia. The photographs haunt us and stay with us, forcing us to ask once again how Christians dare to speak of a loving God in the midst of such death and destruction.

A colleague of mine told me that he asked that question at his clergy group. One clergyman responded that since grace was a gift for believers, the suffering of Muslim nonbelievers wasn't really an issue. It's an answer I can't accept. It narrows God's love to the "in crowd" and that is simply not the God I have come to know in Christ.

Nevertheless the old answers do not offer very much comfort or insight. Those of us who desire intellectual certainty will be left with the same age-old logical conundrums:

1. Does God simply not care about human suffering?
2. Is God unable to prevent suffering and therefore limited in power?
3. Is God ignorant of such events and therefore incapable of preventing them?
4. Does God choose not to prevent such suffering?

This past week we received a pastoral letter from the Right Reverend John Croneberger, the bishop of Newark. He suggested that the task of providing intellectually satisfying answers for times such as these is misguided – "perhaps it is not our task to offer answers at all."

Our earliest remembrances of God's story involve some of God's creation seeking to have all the answers to life, seeking, in fact, to become like God . . . indeed

to become God. That didn't work then, and it doesn't work now.

Human intellect, try as it might, cannot plumb the heights and depths of God. And to be honest, reason cannot help such death make sense. Another approach is called for. But where do we look?

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, suggests that we are better served (and serve better) if we respond not from our heads but from the depths of our own faith experience of the living God:

That is also why the reaction of faith is or should be always one of passionate engagement with the lives that are left, a response that asks not for understanding but for ways of changing the situation in whatever – perhaps very small – ways that are open to us. The odd thing is that those who are most deeply involved – both as sufferers and as helpers – are so often the ones who spend least energy in raging over the lack of explanation. They are likely to shrug off, awkwardly and not very articulately, the great philosophical or religious questions we might want to press. Somehow, they are most aware of two things: a kind of strength and vision just to go on; and a sense of the imperative for practical service and love. Somehow in all of this, God simply emerges for them as a faithful presence. Arguments "for and against" have to be put in the context of that awkward, stubborn persistence.

What can be said with authority about these terrible matters can finally be said only by those closest to the cost. The rest of us need to listen; and then to work and – as best we can manage it – pray.

May your prayer open your hearts to that stubborn persistence in which God begins to become visible,

# Open Forum

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## What Is Lent?

Lent is a 40-day period before Easter. It begins on *Ash Wednesday*, February 9, 2005 and ends on *Holy Saturday*, March 26, 2005. Sundays are skipped when counting the 40 days, because Sundays commemorate the Resurrection.

The colors for Lent are purple or blue, royal colors to prepare for the King.

Lent is a season of soul-searching and repentance. It is a season for reflection and taking stock, a preparation for Easter. By observing the 40 days of Lent, we are imitating Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for 40 days.

The UCC web-site tells us that "Lent is a season of giving, embodied in the sacrificial giving of Christ. At Easter God transforms that giving into victory and joy. At Pentecost, God gives again-the Spirit comes. These holy days are invitations to join with Christ and to give and give, and joyously give again what God has given to us. We love, we give, because God first loved us, gave to us."

We will have the opportunity to participate in several "special" worship services during Lent: *Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday*. Don't miss the opportunity to enrich your Christian experience through attending these services.

A reminder, one of the wonderful things about living in today's world is the availability of the Internet. If you want to know the history of Lent and the customs throughout time practiced by different denominations during Lent, spend five minutes and check it out.

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## What are you looking for?

On January 16 as part of a sermon on Jesus' question, "What are you looking for?" was asked of the congregation. Those present at worship were invited to write down their own answer to that question. We received 58 responses. Rev. Howson has collated the responses and they are available in the narthex and at coffee hour on Sundays and in the office on week days. We invite you to pick up a copy and to ponder and reflect on what they might tell us about our congregation. How might they help us to develop a direction for the future? You are invited to share your thoughts and ideas with Rev. Howson or with any member of the Council, especially with Glenn Stevenson, chair of Council or Sylvester Fletcher, vice-chair of Council. We would really like to hear from you.

## Letters to the Editor

Happenings is always looking for informative articles or just letters about your point of view. We would like to hear from you, often.

## Church Directory

The Church Directory is presently in the process of being proofed. The final version will soon be available for members. Hopefully before the end of February. Thank you for your patience.

## Wisdom From Grandma

The bonds of matrimony are a good investment, only when the interest is kept up.

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## Lord's Auction May 21<sup>st</sup>

*By: Betty Schultheis*

Mark your calendar for Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup> and plan to participate in a day of fun for a good purpose.

Activities will begin at 10:00 am and last until 5:00 pm. There will be something for everyone of all ages.

There will be both a "live" and a "silent" auction held in Fellowship Hall so that they will be weatherproof.

The rest of the activities will be held outside. There will be food booths and activity booths. Each Commission will have the opportunity to

have an information booth. Commissions may incorporate games or other activities with their booth.

There will be music and entertainment available and lots of kids' activities.

We want everyone to participate in some way. If you haven't signed up for a committee, do it this Sunday.

There are 10 Committees and there is a description of the duties of each on the table in Fellowship Hall.

Next month we'll discuss how much money we want to raise and how it's going to be used.

