

Panther Valley Ecumenical Church
Official Newsletter

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*"In our diversity we find
common ground in Christ"*

Visit us on the web at
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Saying "Thank You" as We Eat

By Pastor David

Our Care and Nurture Commission has been thinking about ways that we can acknowledge the abundance of generosity that our members show one another each week at Coffee Hour, and also to give thanks to God for the abundance that we have to be so generous towards each other every week.

So, in gratitude to the meals we share, if you would like to offer a token of your thanks, we will be leaving out a basket at coffee hour once a month to receive a benevolence gift as a way of showing our thanks. All of the gifts we receive each month at coffee hour will be designated exclusively for benevolences – when our church gives beyond its own walls – and not towards our operating expenses as a congregation.

Each month we will designate where that month's Thanksgiving Offering will go – to a church family in need, to The Lord's Pantry, to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, or to one of the community organizations that our church supports, like NORWESCAP, Carmen Ministries, the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Warren County, or denominational missions and emergency relief where our church is affiliated.

So look for a basket at our coffee house each 4th Sunday of the month beginning in September. And as we break bread together, let us give thanks for not only the abundance that we enjoy but also for the Giver, who has blessed us to bless others as well.

Please note that our Thanksgiving Offering at coffee hour each month will replace the 4th Sunday loose collection of-fering currently designated to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund.



PVEC Happenings



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"We're Looking For A Few Good (Wo)men..."

By Pastor David

We all hate solicitation calls. But when you see PVEC come up on your Caller ID this autumn, pick up and listen, because God might be there, calling you to greater things.

As the days grow shorter and the program calendar of our church year resumes, we're on the lookout for a few good leaders who will help guide our church in the year to come. Many of us, including myself, are still pretty new to our congregation, but it's never too soon to explore the ways God has gifted us to serve one another and our community.

Kathy Pflugfelder, our Council Member-at-Large, has agreed to be our 2010 Nominating Committee chair. With the help of Pastor David, her committee will be calling on members of our church to encourage our members to use their gifts and serve the needs of this church.

To give you an idea, we'll be looking for 2 new Council members, including a Vice President and a Member-at-Large, both to serve one-year terms. There is also a vacancy available for a Youth Representative.

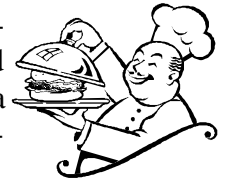
Additionally, our nominating committee helps all our members explore ways to serve by making aware leadership roles in the church of all aspects, including ushering, greeting, helping David lead worship, supporting our growing Sunday School, and or supporting the church through one of its five chaired commissions: Worship, Christian Education, Support Services, Care and Nurture, and Christian Outreach.

So when the phone rings from your church, take a deep breath, and, in the words of the prophet Eli, when he spoke to the boy Samuel in the temple, you can answer to God, "*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*"

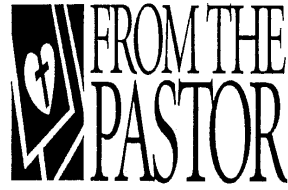
Moveable Feast

By Penny Newell

On July 31st, PVEC held a Moveable Feast progressive dinner. This was a wonderful opportunity for fellowship among PVEC families. Three gracious hosts for appetizers and fellowship, followed by three equally gracious hosts for sumptuous dinners made for a lovely evening. After dinner, everyone then came together at PVEC for dessert and coffee.



Special thanks to Janet DiCarlo, the Zinckgrafs, Pastor David and Kelsey, the Weinbergs, the Pelusos and Betty Schultheis & Ron Reece for opening their homes for this exciting and well-received time of fellowship



“Let Us Rebuild The Walls”

Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burnt. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace.” I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, “Let us start building!” So they committed themselves to the common good. (Nehemiah 2:17-19)

These words of the Nehemiah vividly capture the feeling I have when I think about our church entering this new season together. Folks, we’ve been through the worst. And we’ve survived. God has helped this congregation get through its seasons of questions and doubts and emerge in a place where we have gotten to see reward for our toil.

This summer was awesome. As a church you all really came together around causes of fellowship and hospitality. While summer is often a sleepy time for churches like ours, you all decided instead that this summer season of relaxation would be a great time for opening your homes to one another, to celebrate the kinship of this church, to learn together, and to give of your free time to support neighbors in need.

To me, the three milestones that captured the spirit of this summer the best were the week that a dozen of you dedicated your evenings to serving meals with Interfaith Hospitality Network, seeing the joy in your faces when we all came together to celebrate the 99th birthday of our oldest living founding member, Charlie Ort, and hearing from all 25 people who participated in “A Moveable Feast” that they went to the home of a member of a church that evening whom they had never visited before.

We’ve grown together in my first year with you all as Pastor and we’ve grown in our numbers. As newer and returning members reintegrate themselves into the life of our church, we welcome visitors every week.

So what’s next? My sense is that we’re entering a new season of this church, one that spiritually looks a lot like digging out a new foundation, and which literally may involve breaking new ground as well.

As Nehemiah’s words inspired the returned exiles of the Jewish nation, we now as a congregation face the task of laying a new foundation for our church to best serve the needs of both a growing and aging congregation.

Two clear places we need to focus our eyes right now are with our oldest and youngest members. As a growing number of children fill this church, we need to lay the foundation of a Sunday School program that will fill their educational needs, diversity of ages, and learning styles. Our One-Room Sunday School is one the verge of becoming a Two-Room Sunday School. And in years ahead, we may even require a three-room program.

And as the core of this congregation grows into their retirement years, we also need to lay a new physical foundation that will enable accessibility for all of its members and guests to fully participate in the worship and fellowship life of our church. But in doing so, we’re not just investing in a project that is strictly for older people – it’s also an investment made for ourselves. Just as age teaches many of us to reconsider our physical needs and abilities in our own homes, we want to make our church a place where stairs and icy steps will not

(Continued on page 3)

Unconventional Stories of Faith and Redemption

By Pastor David

Probably the most popular activity our church has participated in this summer was the first ever PVEC Summer Book Club, a wildly successful way many of us to shared fellowship together and dialogued in our faith.

We read three stories this summer that all fell under the topic of coming to faith, including the offbeat, humorous, self-satirical autobiography, *Traveling Mercies*, by Anne Lamott; words of wisdom from the Christian apologetics classic *Mere Christianity*, by C.S. Lewis; and the intriguing, ugly, and utterly fascinating depiction of faith and life in the rural south in Flannery O’Conner’s Southern Gothic novel, *Wise Blood*.

We shared fascinating discussions of faith values and experience that touched on many of our own personal stories, sharing perspectives across generations and lines of culture, class, and theological diversity.

But the best part of Book Club this summer, without question, was the way all of us welcomed one another as friends. A special thank you to our wonderful hosts, Terry and Pam Dougherty, who has us over to their house twice a month all summer, a dozen at a time. Thanks to Kathy Zinckgraf, who helped promote our club and make books available. Thanks also to the Dick and Gloria Kehler, for a chance to see you place



Pictured here from top left to bottom right: Pastor David, Arlene Bailey, Mitzi Yamawaki, Charlie Ort and Mary Zellars

Charlie Ort turned 99!

By Penny Newell

On July 11th, approximately 50 friends and family joined in a surprise celebration for Charlie Ort on the occasion of his 99th birthday. All of Charlie’s living relatives were there providing a wonderful opportunity to bring together both the Ort family as well as members of the founding family of PVEC.

Sunday School News

Our Sunday School season will begin on Sept. 12 with a few exciting changes. This year, as our group grows, the One room Sunday School will now become 2 rooms— one for younger children who don't read yet, and one for our accomplished readers. We have also added a short music program with Elisa Schaffer which all children will participate in before dividing up for their lessons. We are looking forward to an exciting upcoming year!



Now that our Sunday School group is growing, we are also in need of a few more good volunteers to teach on one Sunday per month. If you are interested in working with our children, or would like more information, please call Cylvia at 908-852-1482.

Christian Outreach

By Linda Trent



This summer Christian Outreach requested help from the congregation to provide school supplies for several students at Hackettstown Middle School. Thanks to the congregation's response, all the items on our lists were checked by the middle of the summer. The supplies will be distributed the week before school starts. We are very grateful for your help.

We have continued to help local families through the food pantry the last few months. We did not experience the slower summer seasons we have had in the past and continue to see a serious need in our area. Our pantry requests for September will be rice, instant potatoes, canned stew, and crackers, but of course all contributions are welcomed and appreciated.

Elevator Committee

By Maxine Romig Volger

There hasn't been much news coming from the Elevator Committee, true, but progress is being made. For many years PVEC has lacked a strategy for getting needed work done on our property. Now a plan has been formulated... a plan for changing our long-term goal to one that will make the necessary maintenance corrections and also allow everyone to have accessibility to all parts of our church. So our silence has been productive. We have not been idle.



Our goal remains to break ground for the new elevator in the first part of 2011. Do not give up. Let's keep our Elevator Fund pledges up-to-date and we can all look forward to the new year.

(Continued from page 2)

segregate our members by physical ability.

Laying a new foundation is always a matter of trust. We look at the assets and resources we have, and evaluating them, ask God, "How can we best invest ourselves to honor our church both tomorrow and today?" It's sweat and sacrifice. But it's also pouring out the love we share for one another in Christ to pledge that we will support this church as it rebuilds and grows.

So I invite you in this new season to look, listen, and survey, and even get your hands dirty as we dedicate ourselves to rebuilding the foundation of this wonderful fellowship and ministry to which we have been called. And as we work, know that the hand of God will guide us not to work in vain. -Pastor David

LIMITED BUT USEFUL

By Donna Weinberg

Suzanne Bloch, an immigrant from Germany, often played chamber music with Albert Einstein and other prominent scientists. She said that Einstein, though an accomplished violinist, irritated his fellow musicians by not coming in on the beat. "You see", Bloch explained "he couldn't count." Einstein could project revolutionary theories about the cosmos, but he had difficulty with rhythmic counting. Despite his limitation, he remained an enthusiastic musician.

Do we sometimes lament our limitations? We all have abilities, but we are also afflicted with inabilities. We may be tempted to use our limitations as an excuse for not doing the things God **has** enabled us to do. Just because we may not be gifted to speak in public or to sing in our choir doesn't mean that we can sit on the spiritual sidelines doing nothing.

When we realize that all of us have limitations, we can move forward by seeking God's guidance in using **our gifts**. Surely we can pray. Surely we can show kindness to others. We can help Penny Newell visit our elderly shut-ins. We can volunteer to help the Torlucci's minister through the Interfaith Housing Network (IHN). We can work with Cylvia Ultz to use our talents in our Sunday school program. We can help Ron Reece with "building and grounds" or assist Linda Trent with Christian outreach (food pantry, public school programs, Christmas angel gifts, etc.). **There is much to be done within our congregation and within our community!**

As Paul reminds us in Romans 12:6 – "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them". Pray with me:

Lord God, I humbly ask of You
The strength to do Your will:
I give to You my talents now
Your purpose to fulfill

Surely you have gifts to share – see me before or after worship and we can discuss where your gifts are most needed – or call me at home! (973-347-7113)