

First Press

News From First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham — A Home In The Heart of the City



March 2006

A Word from John *Reverend John C. Bush*

In my office I have a carving of the Last Supper. It was given to me by the staff at First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak, Michigan when I completed my interim work there. What makes it especially unique is that the piece is made of Olive wood from the West Bank, and was done by a Palestinian Christian artisan near Bethlehem.

Almost everyone who comes into the office stops to admire it. I usually give an explanation of where it came from, and a frequent reaction has been “Palestinian Christian? I didn’t know there were any.” I’ve heard that often enough now to indicate that I need to say more.

Historically, until quite recently about half the residents of that part of Palestine have been Christian, though they are now a beleaguered minority caught up by extremist forms of Islam and squeezed by conflict between the Shi’ite and Sunni “denominations”. Consequently, many Christians are fleeing the region and seeking safe haven elsewhere. That is unfortunate, because Christian roots run deep there. The Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem itself was built in 330 AD by the Emperor Constantine. The West Bank today, of course, is an occupied region under the control of

Israel, and all of its residents, both Christian and Muslim, are caught up in the conflicting power plays.

I learned a great deal about Arab Christians from my friend Fahed Abu-Akel, former moderator of our General Assembly. Fahed lives and works in the Atlanta area where he has a ministry with international students. There are about 15 million Arab Christians in the Middle East, and the largest group of Protestants among them is Presbyterian. There has been a Presbyterian presence there since 1823, with a missionary focus on evangelism, medical missions and education.

Today there are at least 500,000 Presbyterian Christians of Arab descent in the region. These are Christian sisters and brothers of whom most American Christians are essentially ignorant. They are courageous people of vibrant faith who need our prayerful support in times of considerable difficulty.

So, I invite you to stop in and see this interesting piece of art created by one of them, and join me in prayerful support and concern for them.

See you in church. —*J.C.B.*

SIGN UP FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY!

Not only can you be a part of General Assembly here at First Presbyterian Church through our ministry of hospitality, but you can also be an integral part of Sheppards and Lapsley Presbytery as host to GA! Go online to www.presbycola.org to the Volunteer section to find the service that’s right for you! Not computer-savvy? Just pick up a registration form at the church (in the Narthex and the Art Gallery), fill it out, and place it in Michelle’s box. We’ll fax it over to the COLA office!

— Michelle Freeman

PRESBYTERIAN HOME FOR CHILDREN Talladega, Alabama VOLUNTEER WORK DAY

Saturday, April 1, 2006
9:00 a.m. until after lunch
(lunch provided)

A chance to learn and serve
plus fun and fellowship

RSVP / info: (256) 362-2114

WEDNESDAY NIGHT DINNER/PROGRAM

03/01/2006

Program: Ash Wednesday with a service in the sanctuary beginning at 6:15 p.m. **Menu:** Baked lasagna, steamed squashes, Caesar salad with dressings, garlic bread, and banana pudding. Kids: Same as adults

03/08/2006

Program: A special Lenten service with John Bell from the Iona Community, Scotland

Menu: Baked ham with pineapple, macaroni and cheese, baby green peas, tossed salad with dressings, wheat rolls with butter, and chocolate pie. Kids: Same as adults

03/15/2006

Program: Lent Program

Menu: Greek style chicken quarters, corn on the cob, green bean casserole, pasta salad, yeast rolls, and lemon cake. Kids: Chicken fingers, corn on the cob

03/22/2006

Program: Lent Program

Menu: Chicken fettuccine alfredo with parmesan cheese, green beans, tossed salad with dressings, garlic bread and apple pie. Kids: Same as adults

03/29/2006

Program: Lent Program

Menu: London broil, wild rice, broccoli au gratin, fruit salad, yeast rolls with butter, and coconut pie. Kids: Same as adults

FIRST AT FIRST

Don't miss lunch-after-church on Sunday, March 5th. Bring your favorite dish and enjoy this potluck meal with your Church family in the fellowship hall immediately following worship.



Claire Fairley, seated, surrounded by nephews Arthur M. Fairley and James V. Fairley, Jr., Peggy Morgan, Will Holmes and Muriel Teague, at the Gala.

Report from the First Light Gala

The 8th annual First Light Gala was held Saturday, February 4th, at the Cahaba Grand Conference Center. Four hundred people attended and helped raise nearly \$100,000 to support the operating and programming expenses at First Light. The silent auction featured artwork, jewelry and other fun items, including artwork created by First Light guests in the Art Therapy Program led by Marilyn Gross. After dinner, the live auction, conducted by auctioneer Ken Jackson, featured pieces by Frank Fleming and many other local artists, including two beautiful paintings created by the late Vara Hinton, a long-time member of our church.

Two special individuals were honored. Mattie Johnson of St. Paul's Cathedral was named Volunteer of the Year. The evening itself was dedicated to our own Claire Fairley. In presenting the dedication, Weesa Matthews FPC member and member of the First Light Board of Directors, praised Claire for her unselfish and enduring generosity to First Light. She quoted Claire, who said, "my late husband Albert and I have been richly blessed and I wanted to share our blessings with the ladies of First Light for whom life has not been so kind." Thank you again, Claire, for your generous support, which has been so important to our mission center!

Dr. Rodney Van Dyke

Please extend a warm First Presbyterian welcome to Dr. Rodney Van Dyke, who is joining us as the church's first Business and Financial Manager. We are looking forward to his leadership in this vital area as the church moves into new opportunities.

Rodney and his wife, Mamie, come to us from St. Mary's On the Highland where he was Church Administrator. A graduate

of Samford, Rodney earned a Masters of Religious Education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Educational Ministry from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is also a Chaplain with Helping Hands Hospice.

His telephone extension at the church is 207. His e-mail address is rodneyvan@bellsouth.net.

Welcome to Rodney and Mamie!

A Meeting on the Steps Led to Many Things to Celebrate

Jeanne and John Plaxco first met as young people on the steps of First Presbyterian. John came to Birmingham from South Carolina for his first job after college, and Jeanne's family moved to Birmingham from Mississippi when she was in the seventh grade. "I was a 'young people' then," she says, recalling that the active young peoples' group had a choir which met at 4:00 p.m. to practice before singing at the Sunday evening service. John and Jeanne were married at her home shortly after World War II.

Jeanne remembers the post-war years as First Presbyterian's heyday. As a young married couple, Jeanne and John were part of the lively young adult supper club which met at the Fellowship Hall, and

enjoyed such activities as square dancing. Their children were baptized at First Presbyterian, and Jeanne and John were leaders of the young people's group when their children were in it. John has served as deacon and elder, and Jeanne was President of the Presbyterian Women during Dr. Hall's pastorate.

Jeanne remembers the celebration of the 75th, 100th, and 125th anniversaries of the church. The years brought many changes, and like many urban churches, First Church experienced a decline after the 1960s. But Jeanne and John have been part of the revitalization of First Presbyterian in recent years, and celebrate the new life they see emerging in the church as we enter our third century.

2,260 Americans and at least 30,000 Iraqis have died in the Iraq War.
On October 21, 2005 Staff Sgt. George T. Alexander Jr., 34, of
Clanton, Alabama, became the 2000th American casualty. How many more?

Staff Changes at First

There have been a number of staff changes at First Presbyterian Church recently. At the beginning of the year Margaret Maina left to accept a full-time job elsewhere. She has served us a receptionist and office assistance for over two years.

The Elizabeth Perry Rushton Child Development Center is also in a period of staff transitions. In unrelated developments both the director and assistant director resigned within a few weeks of each other. Director Robin Hollingsworth has accepted a position at UAB, and Assistant Director Randy East is now Director at Canterbury Church's preschool. The Board of Directors of the Rushton Center is in the process of making both interim and long-term staff arrangements for the center.

Seder Meal Volunteers

We really need your help with the Seder dinner on Wednesday, April 12th. No special skills are required, just a smile and willingness to help. Call Gary DeLamar (967-8939) to sign up.

Library News

Just a reminder: your library has many paperback books you can pick up. Some are in the main area on a shelf above the Classics. More can be found on a shelf in the work area of the Library. Please feel free to take one. I found this quote in the Library that I thought was interesting. "If you can read and do not. . .are you really any smarter than people who don't know how to read?" Think about it!

— *Bootsy Baumgartner*

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

- 3/6 10:30 am**
PW Council
- 3/18 Spring Gathering at Grace Presbyterian, Trussville**
9:30-10:00
Registration/Fellowship
10:00-Noon
Meeting & Worship
12:15 Lunch —\$5
(Reservation deadline 3/6)
Let's have a good group go and represent First Pres.
- 3/20 10:30 am**
Circle 1 — Marilyn Snow, Chairman; Library
Circle 2 — Weesa Matthews, Chairman; CLC Classroom
Circle 3 — Mary Frances Abbott, Chairman; Board Room
11:00 am Bible Study
Led by Drew Henry:
Lesson 7 — *Holy Week, and a Time to Refrain from Embracing Ecclesiastes 3:5b; Matthew 21:1-27:61; Mark 11:1-15:47; Luke 19:28-23:56; John 12:12-19:42*
12:00 noon Lunch
prepared by Circle 3.
- 3/27 10:00 am White Cross**
All women are welcome

THANK YOU NOTE

Thank you for the food, cards, visits, and prayers for Lillian Anne and me.
We appreciate our church family.
— Buddy and Lillian Anne Moses

MEN'S BREAKFAST AND BIBLE STUDY

Join us for a hearty breakfast, great fellowship and meaningful bible study on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 8 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
March 06	2nd and 4th Wednesday: Ruth and Naomi Senior Outreach Ministry (RNSO) Visits— 12:30 Elder Garden and 2:00 Oak Knoll.	Tuesdays: Ruth and Naomi Harp Circle at First Light – 3:30	1 9-11 CDC Dance 10:15 Staff 3:45 Handbells 4:00 Tutoring 5:00 1st Light Comm. 5:30 Dinner 6:15 Ash Wed. Comm. 7:00 Choir Rehears.	2 6:15 Women's Spirituality	3 Pastors' Day Off	4
5 LENT 1 9:30 Church School; Exploring Our Faith 10:30 Fellowship 10:40 Session Meet. 11:00 Communion 12:15 New Members (Chapel; Lunch 5:30 Youth	6 10:30 P.W. Council	7 Mobile Meals: Katherine Riddell 11:30 Prayer – Library 11:30-1 Caregivers Group – Youth Room	8 9-11 CDC Dance-Stg 10:15 Staff 3:45 Handbells 4:00 Tutoring 5:30 Dinner 6:15 Lenten Vesper Program: John Bell, Iona 7:00 Choir Rehears.	9 10:00-12:00 Liturgy Workshop with John Bell, Iona – Fellowship Hall 6:15 Women's Spirituality	10 Newsletter Deadline Pastors' Day Off Jr. High Spring Retreat – Gulfstream March 10-12	11 8:00-12:00 Jerry Abbott Meeting Fellowship Hall
12 LENT 2 8:00 Men's Breakf. 9:30 Church School 10:30 Fellowship 11:00 Worship 12:30-2:00 Raising the Roof Leadership Luncheon 5:30 Youth	13 5:45 Called Session	14 Mobile Meals: Katherine Riddell 11:30 Prayer Library	15 9-11 CDC Dance 10:15 Staff 3:45 Handbells 4:00 Tutoring 5:00 1st Light Comm. 5:30 Dinner/Prog. 7:00 Choir Rehears.	16 6:15 Women's Spirituality	17 Pastors' Day Off 5:00 Wedding Rehearsal	18 2:00 Mary Beth Teague's Wedding
19 LENT 3 9:30 Church School 10:30 Fellowship 11:00 Worship 5:30 Youth	20 10:30 Circles 11:00 Bible Study 12:00 Lunch Cir. 2	21 Mobile Meals: Katherine Riddell 11:30 Prayer Library	22 9-11 CDC Dance 10:15 Staff 3:45 Handbells No Tutoring 5:30 Dinner/Prog. 7:00 Choir Rehears.	23 6:15 Women's Spirituality Staff Prayer Day – Cullman	24 Pastors' Day Off	25 8:00-12:00 Jerry Abbott Meeting Fellowship Hall
26 LENT 4 8:00 Men's Breakf. 9:30 Church School 10:30 Fellowship 11:00 Worship 5:30 Youth	27 10:00 White Cross 5:45 Session Meet.	28 Mobile Meals: Katherine Riddell 11:30 Prayer Library	29 9-11 CDC Dance-Stg 10:15 All Staff 3:45 Handbells 4:00 Tutoring 5:00 1st Light Comm. 5:30 Dinner/Prog. 7:00 Choir Rehears.	30 6:15 Women's Spirituality	31 Pastors' Day Off	

MARCH SERVICE DATES

ON-CALL ELDERS

3-05 – 3-11 Gloria P. Watts-Jones
3-12 – 3-18 Vaughn Walker
3-19 – 3-25 Joan Witherspoon-Norris
3-26 – 4-01 Jan Bell, Julianna Bell

OPEN / NARTHEX OFFERING / LOCKUP

3-05 Marion Dick, Caroline Eady
3-12 Susan Holt, Jim Killebrew
3-19 Weesa Matthews, Leigh Ann Min
3-26 Carrie Ann Hare, Bill Phillips

JANUARY LITURGIST

Margaret Maina

BULLETIN STUFFERS

3-02 Christine Wilson
3-09 Frances Duncan
3-16 Anne Kanga
3-23 Aloha Patton
3-30 Christine Wilson

FELLOWSHIP HOUR

First Sunday CLC Class
Second Sunday Vanguard Class
Third Sunday Connections Class
Fourth Sunday Pastor's Class
Fifth Sunday Youth Class

ATTENDANCE: JANUARY 2006

January 1: 105
January 8: 147
January 15: 140
January 22: 163
January 29: 135
690

Average per Sunday 138

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2 LENT 5 9:30 Church School 10:30 Fellowship 10:40 Session Meet. 11:00 Communion 12:15 New Members (Chapel); Lunch 5:30 Youth Daylight Saving Begins	3 10:30 P.W. Council	4 Mobile Meals: Katherine Riddell 11:30 Prayer Library 11:30-1 Caregivers Group--Youth Room	5 9-11 CDC Dance-Stg 10:15 Staff 3:45 Handbells 4:00 Tutoring 5:30 Dinner/Prog. 7:00 Choir Rehears.	6 6:15 Women's Spirituality	7 Pastors' Day Off	1 10:00-4:00 Session Retreat 8
9 PALM SUNDAY 8:00 Men's Breakf. 9:30 Church School 10:30 Procession 11:00 Communion 5:30 Youth	10 Newsletter Deadline 10:30 Circles 11:00 Bible Study 12:00 Lunch Cir. 3	11 Mobile Meals: Katherine Riddell 11:30 Prayer Library	12 9-11 CDC Dance-Stg 10:15 Staff 3:45 Handbells 4:00 Tutoring 5:00 1st Light Comm. 5:30 Seder Dinner 7:00 Choir Rehears.	13 MAUNDY THURSDAY No Women's Spirituality Meeting 6:00 Communion Service	14 GOOD FRIDAY Offices Closed 6:00 Service 9:00 P.M. Prayer Vigil Begins	15 PRAYER VIGIL
16 EASTER Prayer Vigil Ends 9:30 Church School 10:30 Fellowship 11:00 Communion 5:30 Youth	17 EASTER MONDAY Offices Closed	18 Mobile Meals: Katherine Riddell 11:30 Prayer Library 5:30 CDC Board—Board Room	19 9-11 CDC Dance-Stg 10:15 Staff 3:45 Handbells 4:00 Tutoring 5:30 Dinner/Prog. 7:00 Choir Rehears.	20 6:15 Women's Spirituality	21 Pastors' Day Off	22
23 8:00 Men's Breakf. 9:30 Church School 10:30 Fellowship 11:00 Worship 5:30 Youth	24 10:00 White Cross 5:45 Session Meet.	25 Mobile Meals: Katherine Riddell 11:30 Prayer Library	26 9-11 CDC Dance-Stg 10:15 All Staff 3:45 Handbells 4:00 Tutoring 5:00 1st Light Comm. 5:30 Dinner/Prog. 7:00 Choir Rehears.	27 6:15 Women's Spirituality	28 Pastors' Day Off Sr. High Spring Retreat—Gulfreat April 28-30	29
30 9:30 Church School 10:30 Fellowship 11:00 Worship 5:30 Youth	2nd and 4th Wednesday: Ruth and Naomi Senior Outreach Ministry (RNSO) Visits—12:30 Elder Garden and 2:00 Oak Knoll.					April 06 (tentative)

MARCH BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- 3 Neema Kanga
- 4 Jim Fairley, Jr.
- 6 Allison Powell & Barry Marks
- 7 Lilli Harkins
- 8 John Bush
David Gauntt
Martha Jernigan
- 9 Margaret Moody
Barbara Randle
- 10 Willie Cox
Suong Duong
- 11 Josiah Bell
Clifton McRoy
- 13 Jeannine Pope & Wesley Carter
- 15 Claire I. Fairley
James Ryan Reardon
- 20 Mary Clyde Mayfield
Margo & Dennis Leach
- 21 Lucy & Dennis Victory
- 24 John Hathaway
Ben McCullough
- 25 Ann & Joe Thomason
- 26 Betty Jo Moore
- 28 George Edwards
- 29 Ray Cantley
- 30 John Cook
Mary Harkins
- 31 Bob Crutchfield
Caroline Eady