

New Year Reminders

*Dear God, thank you for food in a world
 where many walk in hunger.*

*Dear God, thank you for faith in a world
 where many walk in fear.*

*Dear God, thank you for friends in a world
 where many walk alone.*

We give you thanks O Lord.

Quoted from the movie *Seven Days in Utopia*

2012 is a dozen years into the new millennium. May we all share a **"Baker's Dozen"** in response to God's generosity.

The **"Special Appeal"** continues as the books are closed for 2011 and a budget is established for 2012. Please consider giving an "extra mile gift" as the New Year begins.

All **"Pledges"** for 2012 are requested to be in the office by January 15 so the Session can have financial facts in planning 2012. As you might surmise, such planning is essential as the new Head of Staff will be chosen in the coming year.

"Installation and Ordination" will be celebrated on January 8, 2012. The new officers will be introduced at the end of the New Song service of worship and then the official ordination and installation will take place within the context of the eleven o'clock service of worship.

All officers are reminded of the **"Retreat"** scheduled for January 13 and 14. Friday night, a pot luck dinner will be enjoyed in our Fellowship Hall. Following the meal, all officers will view the DVD presentation by The Rev. Russell Crabtree. Russell will give his conclusions and suggestions for First Presbyterian of Sarasota related to the Holy Cow survey results.

On Saturday morning, January 14, all officers will arrive at Siesta Key Chapel by 9 o'clock for a light breakfast. The agenda will go until 2:30 p.m. with lunch provided.

A **"New Members"** class is scheduled for January 22 from 3:30 until 6:00 p.m. Anyone presently visiting in our services of worship is invited to call the church office or visit with one of the pastors regarding membership in our Christian fellowship.

"The Long Range Planning Committee" has scheduled a Town Hall Meeting at three different times for your convenience so that members may ask questions and share joys and concerns as this congregation moves into an historic year for this beloved Christian community. Scott Carter will moderate these gatherings. A 20 minute DVD will highlight the results from the Holy Cow survey. Then a general open forum will provide a time for members to ask questions and give their opinions about this interim year of transition.

The Town Meetings are scheduled as follows in Fellowship Hall:

Wednesday, January 21 at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 25 at 10:00 a.m. or
 12:00 noon

"The Pastor Nominating Committee" (PNC) has presented the CIF (The Church Information Form) to the Session, and it was approved with praise and gratitude to the committee. Now pending approval of the CIF by the Committee on Ministry of Peace River Presbytery, which will happen in early January, the committee can begin to receive resumes from around the country. Thus a new milestone for the committee will begin as direct contact with candidates and interviews will be scheduled.

Continue to pray for the pastors, the officers, the PNC Committee and the church of Jesus Christ called First Presbyterian of Sarasota.

In Christ's Love,



John Ross, Interim Head of Staff

Love Notes



Dear Presbyterian Women,

Since I did not have the opportunity to speak to you after the wonderful Christmas Program Gathering, I would like to thank you now for giving me your support during my year as your 2011 PW Moderator.

Without your support, my time spent as Moderator would not have been as enjoyable. Without your support, PW would not have been able to meet its goals for all the many missions we support. We have been able to do wonderful things with the talents we shared, the time we spent together and the money we gave to help those much less fortunate than ourselves. I commend you for your faithfulness to your Circles and this church.

My hope for all of you is that God will be gracious to you in this New Year and the years to come. May you be granted many blessings by our God, and may your lives bring Joy to you and to those you love and serve.

With a Grateful Heart,
Susan Beach-Carter

Dear Presbyterian Women

“Several Women’s Circles at First Presbyterian Church, through the work of Ms. Kitty Werner, generously gathered and donated both M&M candy treats as well as essential toothpastes and toothbrushes this year. The latter were distributed to the children at Emma Booker Elementary, and the M&M’s helped fill up small stockings for the 800 youth who attend Booker Middle School. Many of these children had never received a stocking ever before and their words of surprise and glee filled the classrooms and amazed the startled teachers. The stockings were distributed by not only school personnel but more importantly, by 12 young officers from the Sarasota Department of Police. What a wonderful moment for these youngsters to see and witness police officers as friends and benefactors.

Thank you to First Presbyterian Church for your generosity, kindness and caring. This is truly Christmas and “His wonderful works.”

Gratefully, Mrs. Dee Webber,
Church of the Palms member

Dear Presbyterian Women,

The church would like to thank all the Presbyterian Women for putting together an elegant reception for the Fee family. Your love, support and kind gestures are appreciated by everyone.

Preschool News

by Clare Carter, Director

Happy New Year to the First Presbyterian Family!

I need to begin the new year by rewinding just a little, in order to thank Pastor Clay for being a special part of our Christmas program. I didn’t think it was possible for him to top last year’s program, but boy, did he ever! This year’s program started with a surprise when a 6 foot angel (a/k/a Pastor Clay) belted out “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” from the balcony. You should have seen the kids looking for him! Next, he had the entire sanctuary singing along while he made his way to the chancel where he jumped on a trampoline before telling the Christmas story in a very special way. The highlight of the day, of course, was our precious preschool children singing Christmas carols and wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas.

We were so happy to see everyone return to school in good spirits and refreshed for the new year. January is always an exciting month at the preschool. It is amazing to see how much the children grow over the holidays.

With the new year upon us, we are gearing up for the Butterfly Ball. Please mark your calendars for this special family event. It will be held in the Fellowship Hall on Friday March 23.

Thank you for all you do to support the preschool. We appreciate each and everyone one of you and we wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Shelving for the New Library

In late December the church received a \$2,500 donation from friends of Jim and Natalie Smith given in their honor and designated toward the cost of shelving in the new library. The library is now located on the second floor above the church offices. The gift is one-third of the funds needed to complete the library renovation.

Members are invited to designate gifts for the shelving so the Cowden Library may be moved to this lovely new location.

Interim Pastor/Head of Staff: The Reverend Dr. John Ross

Associate Pastor: The Reverend Clayton Thomas
Director of Music Ministries: Jack M. Levick

Pastor for Spanish Ministries: The Reverend Julio Travieso
Intern for Youth & Families: Daniel McCurdy



PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN

February Gathering

**Family Promise: Sarasota
Communities Helping
Children & Families**

On Tuesday February 7 the Presbyterian Women will gather for their monthly meeting. Wendy Fitton, Network Manager of Family Promise, will be our guest speaker. She will share the many aspects of her work telling us what Family Promise does and how all that loving work is accomplished. Join us at 11:30 a.m. for punch while enjoying Dr. Tom Andrews' music. Bring a sandwich or salad for yourself, lunch begins at 12:00 p.m. Coffee tea, punch and dessert will be provided. The cost is \$2.00. The program will start at 1:00 p.m. Please make a reservation by calling the church office (955-8119) by noon on Monday, February 6. All members and guests are always welcome.

Announcing the 2012 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women!

Come experience enrichment, community, recreation and joy with women from across the country and the world!

**The Theme: River of Hope
(inspired by Psalm 46:4-5, NRSV)**

When: July 18-22, 2012

Where: Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center, Orlando, FL

Check for Gathering updates on programs and costs at www.presbyterianwomen.org/gathering. Some scholarships are available. For more information, call the Church Office at 955-8119.

Awesome, Stupendous, Colossal Yard Sale

March 16 & 17, 2012

(We've added another sale day!)

First Presbyterian Church

Please save items to donate. The good sellers are linens, glassware, pots and pans, dishes, kitchen appliances, furniture, lamps, toys, games, sporting goods, clocks, collectibles, books, jewelry and accessories, purses, costumes, holiday décor, pictures and artwork, tools, children's and teen clothing (no adult clothing, please). We'll need LOTS of help sorting and pricing on March 12-15. Guaranteed Fun!

Looking for Fun in the New Year?

Try Salt Shakers! Once a month from February through May a small group meets for dinner. Dinner is sometimes a potluck in someone's home, sometimes dinner at a restaurant. Sometimes we just have hors d'oeuvres or dessert and enjoy the company. Fill out the form below and bring it to the church office, or call Marti Clapp (359-0897) or Barb Anderson (809-1198), or visit the Salt Shakers table in the courtyard on January 22 or 29.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Willing to host the first Potluck and organize a date with your group? _____

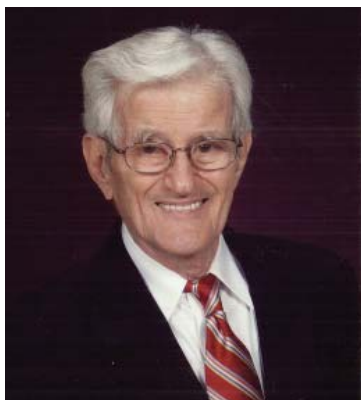
Willing to host a following Potluck? _____

Generosity Rooted in Gratitude

by Clay Thomas, Associate Pastor

During this year of transition, especially at this time of year celebrating the birth of our Lord, offering a gift beyond your regular giving is one way to help solve some of the challenges this interim time period presents.

One of our members, Elder Don Fleming, has chosen to do this in a wonderful way - memorializing his father, the successful patriarch of a very large family, who went home to the Lord in November. When Don received the Christmas special appeal letter, the Spirit moved him to respond immediately. He knew this is a very important time in the life of First Presbyterian Church. In true Christmas spirit, Don gave a gift of \$50,000 to First Presbyterian Church. The gift will be a lasting tribute to his father's legacy.



His father, Kenneth R. Fleming, passed away peacefully on Sunday, November 27, 2011, at the age of 99. His wife, Mary Chapman Fleming passed away June 10, 2002. The couple had been married for 71 years. They are survived by 2 children, 6 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren.

Donald Fleming said his father taught him three very important things:

Love your family and the Lord.

Watch your pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves.

Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today.

This philosophy worked very well for his father Kenneth who only went to school until the 8th grade, but became a very successful restaurateur and real estate investor.

In a letter for his grandchildren and great grandchildren, Ken reflected on his various entrepreneurial visions. Ken strongly believed success is a by product of vision. *Those without vision shall perish.* (Proverbs 14:6) Love of family always came first. Every Sunday the family gathered at the family farm. Don recalls fondly, children and grandchildren

horseback riding, boating, and swimming.

Mr. Fleming was a lifelong Presbyterian and served on the Board of Trustees and as a Deacon at Westminster Presbyterian Church in St. Louis. Since 1967, he was a member of Bonhomme Presbyterian Church. Don brought his father to worship at First Presbyterian Church in his last years.

Since many of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren live in southwest Florida, Donald Fleming has chosen to give his gift to First Presbyterian Church and have his father's name inscribed on the wall in the Memorial Garden.

Thank you, Donald Fleming!

Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)

The PNC has been meeting weekly and asks for your continued prayers. The Church Information Form has been completed and it was presented and approved at the December Session meeting. The next step is the approval by the Committee on Ministry at Peace River Presbytery.

Gloria! & Thank You

by Jack Levick, Music Director

A special thanks goes to ALL who made the December 16 Christmas Concert at our church a great success—the enthusiastic full house, the hardworking participants, the diligent organizers, and the generous sponsors! Not only was the house filled with church members but many community people as well; this was due in part to the outstanding newspaper coverage. The choir and guest soloists and instrumentalists put in countless hours of hard work and rehearsals. The reception was beautifully prepared. In addition to an anonymous donor, the evening was sponsored by the help of Bob & Marilyn Barkley, the Christian Builders Class, Howard & Jean Emery, Bill & Jean Fulton, Frances Gaston, Larry & Nance Guth, Judith Hart, Anne Jones, Char Kunkel, Drs. Jack & Susan McDonald, Ron & Jinny Miller, Nancy Phillips, the Presbyterian Women, Enoch & Annette Sherman, Elizabeth Stewart, Doris Van Nostrand, and William & Jo Weiss.

New Member Biographies

by Annette Sherman, Elder, Interlink Committee



Barbara Chase has lived in Sarasota since 1978. She has a daughter, Carla, who lives in New Hampshire along with Barbara's 19-year-old grandson Nick. Originally from NH, Barbara found that she couldn't stand the cold weather, so she opted for sunny Sarasota. "I love the beaches and all of God's creation," she

says. Barbara loves riding her bicycle because it gives her a chance to admire all of God's beauty surrounding her. She loves animals, and has two lovely Boston terriers that her late boyfriend rescued and left with her. He recently passed away after losing his struggle with cancer. Barbara also lost both her parents this year, but says God has provided her with so much strength and love. "I feel God guided me to your church, and hopefully I can serve Him well with you all. I would love to help out with the needy and give back to the community as much as possible," she says. Barbara tried looking for a church with no success in the past, but says she felt real warmth from the FPC congregation when she first attended in September. "Rev. Ross's wonderful sermon really hit home with me! And Rev. Thomas made me feel welcomed."



Anne Hathaway grew up in Massachusetts, and after marrying, lived in Connecticut, Maine, California and New Jersey. She has resided in Sarasota for 23 years. Anne's husband, a Chemical Engineer, passed away many years ago. She has three children and two grandchildren. Her daughter is a Research/Professor

in cell biology at the graduate school of the University of New Mexico. One son is a grant writer with a non-profit organization in Los Angeles, and the other son installs sun-roofs and other accessories in cars.

Before retiring, Anne was a Registered Dietitian. She attended college in Massachusetts and at the University of Michigan. Music of all kinds is her passion and interest. She has always sung in church choirs and choral groups. She loves to read and belongs to two book clubs. "My family has always had pets," says Anne. "Currently I have a rescue Maltese. He is great company."

Anne and her husband both grew up in the Congregational Church. Once they moved to California they became Presbyterians simply because they couldn't find a Congregational Church, and there was a wonderful Presbyterian Church right around the corner!

Anne says, "My friends June and Jean Raskin invited me to attend First Presbyterian Church with them, and I was sold! I find inspiration every Sunday, no matter who is in the pulpit. Rev. Ross, Rev. Clay Thomas or Daniel McCurdy--all are first rate! And of course the choir is wonderful." We are delighted that Anne has already joined the choir. You will find her singing in the alto section every Sunday morning.



Elayne and Larry Merla both hail from California where they lived until 3 years after college graduation. Larry grew up in the Napa Valley while Elayne grew up in Sacramento. Both are graduates of the University of California at Davis. Upon graduation, Larry began work at Beringer Winery, owned by Nestle at that time. He

worked for Nestle for 26 years in factory management. Elayne is a credentialed teacher and taught special education. While Larry worked for Nestle, the couple relocated every three years on average. They lived in Ohio, Connecticut, California (twice), Illinois, Switzerland, Tampa, New Jersey, New York and Orlando before moving to Sarasota in July 2011.

The Merlas have two daughters, one of whom is a molecular biologist living with her husband and 2 1/2 year old son in San Jose, California. The other lives in New Jersey with her two daughters, ages 5 and 8, and all three are dual French/American citizens. Their third daughter died at age 16 from leukemia. Last January Larry and Elayne rescued their large chartreux cat from the SPCA in Delaware.

The couple lives in a community that has a nice pool and tennis courts, so they are taking tennis lessons to be able to get needed exercise and enjoy the year round tennis weather.

Elayne grew up in the Presbyterian church and is an ordained deacon. Larry grew up in the Episcopal church, but has been a faithful Presbyterian for the past 40 years. He is an ordained elder and has served on a number of session and Presbytery committees.

The Merlas are experienced at "church shopping" as they have had to find a new church home several times. "First Pres. was the one for us," says Larry. "The service was familiar and while it is a fairly large congregation in

(continued page 6)

New Member Biographies (continued from page 5)
 comparison to all others we have belonged to, First Pres. has a visible openness to accepting newcomers, a strong youth presence, strong music program and history of service to the community. These are all things with which we are comfortable and look for when settling on where to worship. We enjoy the leadership of both John and Clay, and think that Dan is a treasure working with the youth. We are aware of the challenge of the pastoral search and call process, having gone through it ourselves with our congregation in Illinois. While it is a challenge, it can also be an exciting time. We are looking forward to being active members of the First Pres family.”



Hendrick (Hal) Serrie was born in Jersey City, grew up on a dairy farm in Schoharie County, New York, and returned to Jersey City to attend Dickinson High School. He majored in English Literature at Swarthmore College and completed his B.A. degree in Cultural Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. He went on for graduate degrees at Cornell University (M.A.) and Northwestern University (Ph.D.) and taught Anthropology at Beloit College, California State University at Northridge, Purdue University and New College. In 1978 he joined the faculty at Eckerd College. He taught there for 24 years, pioneering the field of Business Anthropology, and retired in 2002.

Hal has worked in Mexico, Syria, Taiwan, China and Japan. He has led college students on overseas programs in the Cayman Islands, the Netherlands, Kenya, Southeast Asia, Great Britain, Brazil and the Dominican Republic, and has led an Elderhostel group on a program in Iceland. He has directed two documentary films and written and edited four books.

Gretchen, Hal's wife of 52 years, was Executive Director of the Florida West Coast Symphony, now the Sarasota Orchestra, for 22 years. Now retired, she is an active civic volunteer. Son Jonathan is an Atlanta-based reporter for Fox Network News and son Keir is a graphic designer with Geodelic, a startup company in Los Angeles. Four delightful grandchildren complete the picture. One of Hal's favorite retirement activities is writing, editing and publishing *The Cute Cousins Chronicle*, which keeps four generations of extended family members, scattered across the country and the globe, in close touch.



Volunteering, Good for Your Body and Mind

by Cheryl Track, Parish Nurse

In today's busy society, it can be hard to think about finding time to volunteer. However, the benefits of volunteering are enormous, both to you, your family and the community. Here are some benefits I can personally vouch for as your volunteer Parish Nurse and as a volunteer at my kids' schools.

Volunteering connects you to others. One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to commit to a shared activity together. It also gives you the opportunity to practice and develop your social skills since you are meeting regularly with a group of people with common interests.

Volunteering is good for your mind and body. Volunteering can provide a healthy boost to your self-confidence, self-esteem and life satisfaction. Your role as a volunteer can also give you a sense of pride and identity. It also reduces the risk of depression. A key risk factor for depression is social isolation. Volunteering keeps you in regular contact with others and helps you develop a solid support system. It also helps you stay physically healthy. Studies have found that those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate than those who do not, even when considering factors like the health of the participants. Volunteering has also been shown to lessen symptoms of chronic pain or heart disease.

Volunteering can advance your career. Volunteering gives you the opportunity to practice important skills used in the workplace, such as teamwork, communication, problem solving, project planning, task management, and organization. Volunteering can also help you build upon skills you already have and use them to benefit the greater community.

Doing volunteer work you find meaningful and interesting can be a relaxing, energizing escape from your day-to-day routine of work, school, or family commitments. (Taken from Healthguide.org)

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10

There are many volunteer opportunities available at First Presbyterian Church. If you enjoy helping others, like to visit or call others, provide transportation or respite care, the Health and Wholeness Ministry is calling you! For more information, contact Cheryl Track, Parish Nurse, at 320-3828.



Birthdays

1	Ken Boring	11	Irene Callahan			
	Mike Holmes		Kristen Kelly			
2	Marilyn Bulkley		Emily Watrobsky			
	Pat Feeney		Bill Wishart			
	Owen Leonard	12	Jessica Burnham	20	Ryland Hager	26
	Melissa Lowery		Marti Cleland		Francesca Muir	
3	Beverley Lilly		Buck Fry		Bonnie Vuolo	
	Andrew Sabuda		Sally Furtick	21	Johnathan Bice	
4	Barbara Chase	13	Greg Courter		Sheridan Hager	
5	Rob Lindsley		Lorena Linhares		Chuck Hall, Jr	27
	Kay Mathers		Jeanne Stonex	22	Donna Ferguson	
	Jane Messimer		Keaton Van Nostrand		Tina Johns	
	Natalie Parr	14	Cynthia Adamson		Janet McClurkin	
6	Kyle Kellogg	15	Danielle Daly		Randy Muldoon	
	Merle Lilly		Michael Daly	23	Rob Day	
	Mary Ellen Miller		Laura Morris		Dylan Interval	28
	Cindy Murch		Delanie Stadelnikas		Tom Jirus	
7	Jean Emery		Simeon Wiehler		Doug Kerr	
	Sarah Moore		Allison Wright		Lynn Lewis	
	Jen Smith	16	Caroline Collins		Pat Martin	29
8	Jeannine Counts		Marion Glasgow	24	Amanda Morris	
	Alex Morrison	17	B. Bradford Nees	25	Jean Hall	
	Bob Rodriguez	18	Ulette Bonner		Phil Hohmann	30
9	Dick Fernstrum		Barby McKown		Steve Moore	
	Hollie Floyd		Tricia Thomas		Kayla Perez	
	Carolyn Jones	19	David Black		Ginnie Troyer	
	Deanna Land		Maxine Lambert		Melissa Watrobsky	
	Don Stahl		Dave Muir	26	Susan Boring	
	Barbara Woods		Lisa Saba		Betty Hastings	31
10	Vincent Becking		John Shelton		Jami Kellogg	
	Steve O'Rourke	20	Sara Boudarga		Drew Long	
					Alina McDonald	
					Cindy Millar	
					Lois Moebus	
					Jamily Vargas	
					Courtney Wilson	
					Michael Albano	
					Angie Hager	
					Daphne King	
					Bryan Lounsberry	
					Peter Theisen	
					Juliette Williams	
					Jill Fegan	
					Janice McLeod	
					Brittney Muldoon	
					Tyler Reasoner	
					Brett Catlin	
					Carrie Mills	
					Lynette Taylor	
					Adam Kenneth Fergeson	
					Victor Garraus	
					Sam Hall	
					Joann Kerekes	
					Nora Kerr	
					Leigh Ann Webb	
					Tom Andrews	
					Thomas Carter	
					Steve Knopik	

Anniversaries

1	Robert & Darcy Coccozza
3	Jeff & Debbie Wilson
	Bill & Sindy Burggraf
4	Jean-Fred & Kelly Monod
7	Paul & Julie Klick, III
8	Kim & Chris Whitford
11	Bill & Bonni Arbuckle, II
13	Tom & Velma Allen
18	Simeon Wiehler & Clementine Munezero
20	William & Bunny Dunlap
21	Chuck & Estelle Holmes
21	Jim & Elaine Jackson
23	Bill & Jean Fulton

Cross Connections is a monthly publication of First Presbyterian Church of Sarasota, Florida Volume 30 Issue #1. Please submit articles for the next issue by January 15, 2012.

Cross Connections
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Jazz to Give Back to FPC Preschool

Jazz Juvenocracy is a band of incredibly talented youth. These jazz musicians will perform a concert at First Presbyterian Church on January 21 at 3:00 p.m. Jazz Juvenocracy has had the honor of performing at the Clearwater Jazz Festival, the Suncoast Jazz Classic Festival, The Brienz Jazz Festival in Switzerland, L'Entrop Jazz Club in Paris, and at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, as well as performing every Sunday night at The Broadway Bar in Sarasota.

The Bass player from Jazz Juvenocracy is an *alumni from First Presbyterian Preschool*. When it came time to select an Eagle Scout project, he decided he wanted to give back to the school that had given him so much. His plan is to build a new and improved sandbox. He will add a bench and renovate the existing structure surrounding the tree to make it a level and safer structure. All event proceeds will go toward the playground renovation project.

Tickets can be purchased at First Presbyterian Church Office or the Preschool Office. Tickets purchased in advance are \$10.00 each. Tickets will be available the day

of the event at the door for \$15.00 each. For further information contact Rachel Martin in the church office at (941) 955-8119 or Olga Tucker at 4isgreat@comcast.net. For more information on Jazz Juvenocracy and their upcoming performances visit their website:
<http://www.jazzjuvenocracy.com/home.cfm>

We hope to see you there.

