

Subj: **First Presbyterian Church News**  
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## The First Presbyterian Church News

501 N. East Street, Benton AR 72015

501-315-7737 [fpcos@sbcglobal.net](mailto:fpcos@sbcglobal.net)

The Reverend Richard "Dick" Knott, Temporary Pastor

### December, 2009

#### In This Issue

[Our Next Steps](#)  
[December Events & Activities](#)  
[Advent Adventures](#)  
[Notes from a Session Member](#)  
[Financial Corner](#)

#### OUR NEXT STEPS



Ron Sasfai, Stewardship & Building & Grounds Committee, will be presenting a report to the congregation on Sunday, December 6. You will learn about: The results, financially, of our stewardship campaign; Salary information on the Director of Children & Youth position currently being filled by

Welcome to the December issue of *First Presbyterian Church News*, our monthly online newsletter for all our members and friends.

Please contact Emily Laurel at [etlaurel@aol.com](mailto:etlaurel@aol.com) or 501-778-9564 or Cary Shillcutt at [cary.shillcutt@us.army.mil](mailto:cary.shillcutt@us.army.mil) or 501-315-2605 if you wish to make suggestions, write articles, or contribute in any way to making sure everyone stays well-informed.

#### December Events and Activities

December is full of exciting and memorable happenings at FPC-Benton. Please mark your calendar especially for some key days in December: Our annual Advent Garden celebration will be on Wednesday, December 9 at 6 PM; a Christmas Cantata will be offered Sunday morning, December 13; and we will have a candlelight service at 6 PM on Christmas Eve, December 24.

*Ladies Night Out* .....5:45 PM Tuesday, December 1  
*First Friday Fellowship* .....7:00 PM Friday, December 4  
*Communion Sunday* .....10:45 AM Sunday, December 6  
*Christ, Committees & Chow* ....6:00 PM Tuesday, December 8  
*Advent Garden*.....6:30 PM Wednesday, December 9  
*Thursday Fellowship Christmas Party*.12 PM Thursday, Dec 10  
*Sunday, Christmas Cantata*..... 10:45 AM December 13  
*Stated Session Meeting*..... 6:00 PM Tuesday, December 15  
*Christmas Candlelight Service*..... 6:00 PM December 24

The daughter of Jimmy and Rae Ann Fields, Kelsey R. Fields, will be graduating from Arkansas State University at Jonesboro with a BA in history on December 19, 2009 and will begin work on a master's degree in historical preservation at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, TN on January 10, 2010. Best wishes to Kelsey.

Maruka Reecer;  
Funding for staff  
personnel from the  
church's general fund;  
Clarification about  
financing the cost of  
new choir robes; and  
A last opportunity to  
offer your pledge before  
finalization of the  
church budget.  
Please be there if you  
can.

**Reminder:** The  
Reverend Dick Knott is  
providing pastoral care  
for our church family. If  
you need assistance with  
any pastoral concern,  
please contact Rev.  
Dick at home at 501-  
778-4366 or at 501-317-  
8448 (cell). You may  
also contact Marcia  
Snyder, head of the  
Board of Deacons, for  
assistance at 501-837-  
6211. In addition, you  
can contact any member  
of the session or call the  
church office at 315-  
7737 Monday-Wednesday  
from 9 AM - 1 PM.

Jimmy Fields reports  
that two PIFs (pastor  
information forms) have  
been received  
from persons interested  
in serving as our interim  
pastor; and he expects  
PIFs from at least two  
more persons. Say a  
prayer for Jimmy, Doyle  
Webb, and Cary Shillcutt  
as they follow the  
guidance of Holy Spirit  
to find our interim  
pastor.

Pray also for God's  
guidance for our  
nominating committee  
as they fulfill their  
responsibilities in

To view the complete calendar of activities for the church online, go  
to the FPC-Benton website ([www.fpcbenton.com](http://www.fpcbenton.com)).

### Advent Adventures

Here at FPC-Benton at this time of year we celebrate the sacred  
traditions of the Advent Season. We look toward Christmas --the  
fulfillment of God's love for all people. Through many generations  
we have had reminders of Jesus in the beautiful symbols of music,  
customs, and tradition so that we will not forget what our God has  
done.

On December 9 at 6 PM we will experience a very special worship  
service called the Advent Garden, a new tradition at First  
Presbyterian. The Advent Garden is an opportunity to worship God  
with all our senses. In this beautiful worship service we see children  
walk in the garden, symbolically carrying humanity's brokenness and  
fears to the light of Christ. We smell evergreens, representing the  
gift of eternal life that was lost through the sin of humankind. Join  
us if you can for this sacred time.

*Here is a special prayer for the Advent season.*

O God, this Advent season is a time when your light radiates through  
the world. In as much as we can, let us be bright for you. Shine  
your light through us as though we were pieces in a stained-glass  
window. Flow through us into others as the warm glow of colors  
seeps into a church. Fill us with your light as though we were  
lighthouses on the shore. Use us to guide others and to keep them  
from danger. Set us aflame with your light as though we were  
candles, even candles in a storm. Enable us to burn steadily with  
your fiery Spirit and to push aside all forms of darkness. Turn us on  
with your light though we were Christmas bulbs all connected to one  
another. Help us as a community of faith to celebrate the sparkling  
good news of your Son's coming birth. Be present with us, God,  
through out the Advent season as we live and worship in our wait for  
the One who is the world's light. Amen

### Notes from a Session Member

Our stated session meetings are generally pretty long and intense  
but are always very interesting. Somehow we thought the November  
meeting would be shorter, but that was not to be. Although there  
were few recommendations to consider, we discussed several  
important matters, led by Moderator Jim Miller in his gentle and  
careful way.

**Time and Talents.** Stewardship was one topic we discussed,  
especially stewardship of our time and talents. We have a number  
of people who work diligently to keep our church's doors open and  
our church inviting and orderly, our worship experience spiritually  
proper and nourishing, and our fellowship warm and welcoming for  
everyone. As anyone who has served as a deacon or elder can tell  
you, much happens behind the scenes that goes unnoticed by a  
casual visitor.

Without the unfailing service of individual contributors, you would  
notice quite a difference. **What if?** What if you came to church one  
Sunday and did not receive your church bulletin or the weekly

nominating the people who will form our pastor nominating committee (PNC).

### Common Sense H1N1 Virus Precautions for our Church Members

Please take the following precautions to slow or prevent the spread of the flu among persons attending church: If you are ill, stay home; sit at a social distance from others (3 feet apart recommended); You may wish to sit in a different row; wash hands frequently and use hand sanitizer or hand wipes as needed; during passing of the peace, simply smile and say the words, without hugs or handshakes. Use hand sanitizer or wipes after the passing of the peace if you choose to pass the peace as we traditionally do.

Please note that communion by intinction is practiced at First Presbyterian Church. It is the government-recommended form of communion. Elements are prepared in a sanitary fashion and kept covered until used.

#### Quick Links...

[Our Website](#)  
[Presbyterian Church](#)  
[\(U.S.A.\)](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

announcements? What if there were no bread for communion? What if we had no one to take the offering or light the candles? What if there were no electricity because no one paid the monthly bill? What if the doors were locked and you couldn't even enter your church? You see, someone is doing all of this for us--and much, much more!

*The Book of Order* tells us in Chapter V about the meaning of membership in the Presbyterian Church. "A faithful member accepts Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of his Church," which involves proclaiming the good news; taking part in the common life and worship of the church; praying and studying Scripture and the faith of the Christian Church; supporting the work of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents; participating in the governing responsibilities of the church; demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church; responding to God's activity in the world through service to others; living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life; and working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment.

Take time to consider your commitment to these elements of membership. If you are not serving on a committee or if you are able to do more than you are now doing, come to our second Tuesday committee meeting (on December 6 at 6 PM) which we call "Christ, Committees & Chow," have some supper with us, and offer to help in some way. You are needed!

**Our Visitors.** We also discussed what happens with our visitors after they come to church for the first time. We are evaluating how we might better welcome visitors to our church family, so stay tuned for more about our visitor ministry in the near future. Meanwhile, if you see an unfamiliar face, take the time to introduce yourself and welcome the person to our church.

**Caring for our Church Family.** Our task group on emergency preparedness is continuing its work. Winter flu season is now upon us with H1N1 virus (swine flu) as well as seasonal flu to contend with (see Common Sense Precautions in *Our Next Steps*). Winter weather is another issue that could confront us.

We are meeting with county officials, the American Red Cross, and the Presbytery's Disaster Preparedness and Response Committee as we prepare our plan for session review. Not only is planning for the well being and safety of everyone in our church family an important ministry; but also this is considered a mission activity in that we hope to be able to serve our community as well. Stay tuned for more!

**Back to Basics.** Remember, our theme for the year 2010 is PRAY, STUDY, WORSHIP, SERVE, GIVE, INVITE, ENCOURAGE; and it begins with prayer.

Please join with us in our prayer life. When you come to church, think about those who are not attending and say a little prayer for them. If you are not participating in the life of the church for some reason, pray for God's loving grace and guidance. If you are not

accustomed to praying, you could sing your prayers with simple songs from childhood. *Jesus Loves Me* is one song that comes to mind. Another way is to bring to mind someone you know and mentally say, "God Bless You. Amen."

### Financial Corner

At the November stated session meeting the church's financial situation was reported to be as follows (figures are as of October 31, 2009):

#### Operating Funds

Revenues	\$ 162,683
Expenditures	<u>165,083</u>
Over/(Under)	(2,400)

#### Capital Funds

Revenues	33,530
Expenditures	<u>15,095</u>
Over/(Under)	\$ 18,435*

\*Since this report was prepared, capital campaign revenues have been used to repay \$16,000 to our line of credit. Other capital revenue is available only for its designated purpose and cannot be used for any other reason.

Thank you for taking the time to read *The First Presbyterian Church News*. We hope you are finding it useful and interesting.

Please contact Emily at [etlaurel@aol.com](mailto:etlaurel@aol.com) or 502-778-9564 or Cary Shillcutt at [cary.shillcutt@us.army.mil](mailto:cary.shillcutt@us.army.mil) or 501-315-2605 with your comments, ideas, topic suggestions, and offers to volunteer.

Until next month,

Sincerely,

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