

The Messenger

October 2009 Volume 61, Number 10



Reformation Sunday

John Calvin's Worship Service

October 25, 2009

This year is the 500th Anniversary of John Calvin's birth. First Presbyterian Church of Flint is celebrating Calvin's birth by using his liturgy for our Reformation Sunday worship. Although their descendents have sometimes forgotten it, sixteenth-century reformers were deeply concerned about worship. They devoted an immense amount of time, thought, and care both to the theology and the practice of worship. Indeed, the primary purpose of much reform was to bring the church back to the right worship of God, according to God's will.

Calvin's liturgy was clearly shaped by certain biblical principles and influenced by what was known of the early church practice. Calvin believed that there are some elements which are necessary for a rightly formed liturgy, and he read Acts 2:42 as a summary of the first Christians' worship: "the teaching of the apostles, breaking of bread, fellowship/koinonia, and prayers." Calvin generally understood this biblical pattern to mean that liturgy should include the Word/Gospel purely preached, the sacraments rightly administered, prayer (both spoken and sung), and the expression of communal love through almsgiving and/or the kiss of peace.

For our worship on **October 25th**, we will use the service that Calvin used at Strassburg and Geneva. It will follow a familiar pattern of confession, scripture and preaching, communion, and thanksgiving with benediction. It will be unfamiliar without the use of organ and the songs will be all biblical, taken from Psalms, the Ten Commandments, and the Canticle of Simeon. The choir will be seated in the congregation leading everyone in song because the congregation is the choir.

Calvin returned the music and communion to the people. His first published work on worship was a Psalter. Calvin always preached for an hour. The sermon is entitled *Reformed Always Reformable*, but it will not be an hour long.

Following the service, Dr. Mark Husbands from Hope College will share with us the contributions of John Calvin. Dr. Husbands teaches a class entitled *Reformed Theology: John Calvin and Karl Barth*. Many seek out his classes because of Dr. Husbands' excellent presentations. Join with us as we celebrate the gifts of our tradition on Reformation Sunday.

Engaged by Christ's love to invite, worship, nurture, and serve.

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POINTS OF INTEREST

Worship: Sundays, 9:30am

Website: www.fpcf.org

Radio Broadcast: Sundays, 9:30am,
WSNL 600am

Deacon's Spaghetti Dinner

We will hold our annual Deacon's Spaghetti Dinner on **Wednesday, October 14th**, from 5:00-7:30pm in the Parish Hall. Adult dinners (including take out) are \$8.50. Children's dinners (under 12) are \$6.00. You may also purchase sauce for \$6.50. There will be free samples of sauce and tickets for sale at a table in the Narthex on **October 4th and 11th**. Tickets may also be purchased at the church office or from a deacon.

Church Register

Deaths

James Frances (brother of Jeannine Leighton) on August 3, 2009.

Ray Whiting (grandfather of Jennifer Williams) deceased on August 24, 2009.

John Brooks of Grand Blanc (grandfather of Doug Brooks) deceased on September 9, 2009.

Marleea Gerfen of San Diego, CA (granddaughter of Bruce and Connie Gillespie) deceased on September 13, 2009.

Kelsoe Schadle of Grand Blanc (husband of Diane) deceased on September 14, 2009.

Norm Hardenburg of Flint (husband of Barbara) deceased on September 18, 2009.

Nelda Rawlings of Flint (sister of Shar Rawlings and friend of Ruth Foster) deceased on September 23, 2009.

Samuel Jacob of Flint (husband of Virginia) deceased on September 28, 2009.

Hazel Swartzell (mother of Bobbi Schoolfield) deceased on September 28, 2009.

Weddings

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Kirk (Carley West) on September 26, 2009, in the Sanctuary.

Gifts

To the Memorial Fund in memory of Ruth Cordell by Ronald and Isabelle Kruchten, Evelyn Battiste, Robert and Helen Robison, Helen Millhouse, and Helene Streich; in memory of Constance Henry by Bill and Elaine Davis; in memory of M. Lee Davis by David and Deanna Janssen.

To the Deacon's Breakfast Fund in memory of Constance Henry by Ruth Gage Burns; in memory of Earl Berry by Evelyn Battiste.

To the Geholz Christian Counseling Ministry Fund in memory of Andy Avant by Kathleen Robinson.

To the Children's Music Enrichment Fund in memory of Ruth Cordell by Steven and Barbara Smith.

To the Congregational Care Fund in memory of Earl Berry by Kelly and Joyce Beardslee.

To the Bishop Class Stained Glass Window Fund in memory of Earl Berry by Tom and Jennifer Anderson and Raymond Percival; in memory of Raymond Whiting by the Bishop Class.

To the Music Fund in memory of Linda Hoffine from Kelly and Joyce Beardslee.

October Worship and Meetings

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Contemplative Service, Wednesdays, 6:30pm, Chapel
Sunday Family Worship, Sundays, 9:30am, Sanctuary

BIBLE STUDY/SMALL GROUP

Adult Church School, Sundays, 11:00am
Adult Church School, Mondays, 10:30am, RM 129
Bee Helpful Service Squad, Wednesdays, 6:15pm, Rm 312
College and Career, Mondays, 7:00pm, Pipe Green Room
Children's Education, Sundays, 10:45am, Rm 312
Men's Ministry Bible Study, Saturdays, 8:00am, Rm 129
Sarah Circle, Thursday, October 1, 12:00pm, Offsite
Women's Bible Study, Mondays, 7:00pm, Rm 129
Women's Bible Study, Wednesdays, 10:30am, Rm 129
Women's Bible Study, Thursdays, 9:15am, RM 211
Women's Bible Study, Thursdays, 9:45am, Rm 207
Youth Church School, Sundays, 10:45am, Pipe

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

Deacon's Spaghetti Dinner, Wednesday, October 14, 5:00pm, PH
Salem Housing, Saturday, October 10, 8:30am, Offsite
Women's Retreat, Saturday, October 24, 8:30am, Chapel

MEETINGS

Administration Team, Monday, October 19, 5:00pm, MP
Children's Ministry, Thursday, October 22, 6:00pm, CRR
Comm. Task Force, Monday, October 12 & 26, 4:00pm, OCR
Computer Tech Team, Monday, October 12, 5:00pm, OCR
Congregational Care, Tuesday, October 13, 4:00pm, OCR
Deacon's Team, Tuesday, October 13, 6:30pm, Rm 129
Feast of Carols Team, Monday, October 19, 7:00pm, OCR
Finance Team, Thursday, October 8, 5:00pm, MP
Gerholz Team, Wednesday, October 21, 6:00pm, OCR
Grief Support, Tuesday, October 13, 1:30pm, MP
Kitchen Task Force Team, Thursdays, October 1, 15 & 29 1:00pm, OCR
MFA Team, Tuesday, October 13, 4:30pm, MP
Session, Tuesday, October 27, 6:00pm, Rm 129
Shalom Team, Tuesday, October 6, 5:30pm, Rm 129
Trustee Board, Tuesday, October 20, 5:00pm, Rm 129
Trustee B & G, Tuesday, October 20, 5:30pm, Rm 129
Trustee Finance, Tuesday, October 20, 5:30pm, Rm 129
Women's Ministry Team, Tuesday, October 6, 6:30pm, MP
Women's Retreat Team, Monday, October 12, 6:00pm, MP
Youth Team, Sunday, October 25, 4:00pm, Pipe

Music and Fine Arts

Genesee Valley Youth Chorale

Sacred Music Shaping Lives

Thirty-eight singers from ten congregations were present for the launching of the Genesee Valley Youth Chorale at the UM-Flint campus! The Youth Chorale is an inter-church ensemble sponsored by our congregation. It strives to engage and nurture youth through the study and performance of sacred choral music. Centered at First Presbyterian Church, the Chorale will perform at churches throughout the region. In June, the Chorale will be representing Genesee Valley churches at the annual YouthCue Choir Conference at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. *It is not too late to join us!* We welcome new members into this exciting Christian youth ensemble.

Genesee Valley Youth Chorale meets Sundays in our Choir Room 5:30 – 6:45pm. Be a part of it! For more information contact us by emailing GVYC@fpcf.org or call Mark Riddles at the church.

Choir School Registration Continues

Our K–6th grade choir program meets on Wednesdays from 4:45 – 5:45pm throughout the school year. The FPC Choir School has offered distinguished, Christian music curriculum for almost a century. We welcome not only church members, but children from all over the region. For more information contact mfa@fpcf.org.



“Feast of Carols” 2008

Women’s Chorus

Ladies high school age and older are invited to sing with the Women’s Chorus. The Chorus will meet on **Thursday, October 15th** from 7:00 – 9:00pm in the Choir Room. We will then sing for Sunday worship service on **October 18th**. Join us for this limited-commitment opportunity!

Worship Mission

Sunday Morning Worship

October 4, 2009

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

World Communion

Job 1:1, 2:1-10; Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12; Mark 10:2-16

October 11, 2009

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Job 23:1-9, 16-17; Hebrews 4:12-16; Mark 10:17-31

“Choose Life”

October 18, 2009

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Job 38:1-7, 34-41; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10:35-45

“Putting Things in Perspective”

October 25, 2009

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reformation Sunday

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 3:19-28; John 8:31-36

World Communion Day

October 4

World Communion Sunday (originally called World Wide Communion Sunday) originated in the Presbyterian Church (USA). In 1936, for the first time, the first Sunday in October was celebrated in Presbyterian churches in the United States and overseas. From the beginning, it was planned so that other denominations could make use of it and, after a few years, the idea spread beyond the Presbyterian Church.

World Communion Sunday was started when the world was fractured with nationalism and financial failure. Presbyterians started the communion to declare that we are all under the same God and in need of a community without boundaries. Today the world is fractured with religious ideology and financial failure. We are still in need of God and community.

October Usher Team

Head Usher: Sally Jaeger; Usher Team: Pat Alexander, Martha Burr, Linda Charney, Bill Delaney, Mary Delaney, Matthew Downing, Esther Galuszka, Barbara Horcha, Pete Hutchison, Gail Hutchison, Jack Kallander, Tom King, Harry McFarlane, Joe Thrash, Ruth Thrash.

On **October 4th**, our communion table will be draped with cloth from Africa and covered with chalices from around the world. Our communion bread will be breads baked by our members from recipes from many ethnic groups from around the world. Christ is Lord of all calling us into a community of faith without earthly boundaries. Worship with us.

Worship Mission

Music and Fine Arts

Thoughts on the Ministry of Worship and Music

Something there is in us that wants to sing! Human beings, like most other creatures on this earth, (and several that swim in seas) make music. We sing!

Sometimes we sing to our selves, receiving encouragement, comfort, amusement or the sensory memory of a moment past. Sometimes we sing to another, an act of intimacy and love. Sometimes we sing for each other, at a funeral, for instance, when a friend's lips are held closed by grief. Sometimes we sing with each other, an act of community and common purpose.

ALWAYS we sing to God who created us musical beings and delights in a song sung in response to God's great love for us. In all the music of worship, congregational, choral and instrumental, we strive toward music's spiritual and sacred impulse and intent.

As you reflect on the movement and meaning of what we do in worship, you might consider three terms common to music that can help our understanding of worship: *practice*, *rehearsal*, *performance*.

1. A *practice* is an act of human community.
 - ♦ That can be taught and learned
 - ♦ That is coherent and yet complex enough that one has to try to learn how to do it
 - ♦ That has intrinsic goods and standards of excellence built into it.
 - ♦ Through which individuals within the community expand their ability to achieve the good and excellent
 - ♦ Through which the actual concept and understanding of what is good and excellent is extended

2. To *rehearse*: to enumerate and repeat

3. To *perform*: to do, fulfill, carry out, accomplish an action, obligation, etc.; to render, especially in front of an audience. As a religious community, we are called to *practices* that reveal the excellent and good contained in the scriptures we read, the prayers we voice and the hymns we sing. As a teaching community we are called to *rehearse* the story! We are to tell God's wondrous deeds and recount God's acts of infinite love and grace. As a Christian community, we are called to a *performance* of worship that engages us in adoration, prayer and worship of God. It is God, after all, who is the audience of our worship. Worship that teaches, informs, expands our ability, and extends our understanding requires thoughtful practices, faithful rehearsing and whole-hearted worship performance!

Nurture Mission

Marriage Enrichment Needs Consultants

Because of the increasing number of requests for our Hope Focused Marriage Enrichment Training, we are seeking more people to serve as "consultants" to couples who want to make good marriages better. Hope Focused Marriage Enrichment Training is a four-week program that has proven to be one of the most effective methods of strengthening marriages. Consultants are not counselors but are men and women who are specifically trained to be able to help couples improve their communication, enhance their intimacy and deepen their love for each other in ways that will last for the rest of their lives. If you think you might be interested, call the Gerholz Center at 810-234-0500.

Men's Bible Study

Twisting the Truth: a DVD series with Andy Stanley Coffee fellowship is from 8:00-8:30am and class is held at 8:30am in Room 129. Led by Steve Baillie.

Women's Fall Retreat

Please Join Us
Journeys, Detours and Grace
 Speaker: Marcy Lawless
 First Presbyterian Church of Flint
 Saturday, October 24th
 8:30am-3:30pm

The cost is \$30 (includes continental breakfast and lunch)
 To make your reservation, please call the church office at 810-234-8673 or email kskaff@fpcf.org.

Valet Parking

Hopefully you've noticed or have benefited from our Valet Service on Sunday mornings. We've been blessed by wonderful volunteers helping to park cars for those who have a difficult time walking across the parking lot. This service will be even more valuable when the dreaded snow comes. Some of our volunteers will be away for the winter months and so we could truly use some help. If you would like to help with this wonderful ministry, we invite you to call Steve at the church. Each volunteer works one Sunday every six weeks and you only have to come to church 20 minutes early and stay about 15 minutes later. Please consider helping our church family and guests in this way.

CDC Flu Update

Normally summers are “flu free”, but the novel H1N1 Flu, the “swine and human” influenza has continued to be a concern, causing illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths throughout this year’s summer season. The CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), is preparing for a voluntary H1N1 vaccination effort this Fall. Vaccines are the best tools we have to prevent influenza related complications. The H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and may be available in time for Fall’s vaccination schedule. The ACIP has recommended these groups be vaccinated:

- ♦ **Pregnant Women:** They are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to their infants who can’t be vaccinated.
- ♦ **Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 6 months.**
- ♦ **Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel:** Infections in healthcare workers are potential sources of infection for vulnerable patients.
- ♦ **All persons 6 months through 24 years of age:** This age group is often in group settings such as day care, school, and work that increase the chance of rapid spread of infection.
- ♦ **Persons age 25-64 who have health conditions especially those with higher risk of complications.**

As of the end of the first week of August, Michigan was still reporting a moderate level of Novel H1N1 Flu activity.

How you can help yourself:

- ♦ Stay informed. The CDC will issue updates as needed.
- ♦ Understand how flu spreads: Usually from person-to-person, through coughing and sneezing.
- ♦ Take everyday actions to stay healthy such as covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing; throw tissues in trash after each use; washing your hands with soap and water or alcohol sanitizers especially after coughing and sneezing; avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth; stay home if you are sick; follow public health advice regarding school closures and social distancing measures.

Call 1-800-CDC-INFO or GO TO FLU.GOV for checklists to help you plan and prepare. It is for individuals, families, workplaces, schools, healthcare providers, community organizations, state and local governments.

Seasonal Flu Vaccine Available

The seasonal flu vaccine will be available at First Presbyterian in the Narthex on **Sunday, November 1st from 8:30am-12:00pm.**

Congratulations and Thank You, Jim Hugan

Congratulations to Jim Hugan, the church’s Business Administrator since April of 1996. Jim was celebrated at the September Presbytery meeting, recognizing his earning the status of Fellow and certification by the Presbyterian Church Business Administrators’ Association (PCBAA).

The PCBAA certification requirements are:

- ♦ Attending a four week residency over a two year period at an accredited certification center (Jim attended Candler School of Theology at Emory in Atlanta, Georgia)
- ♦ Completion of a Presbyterian Polity course
- ♦ Completion of an approved research project in church administration (Jim’s project was “Cultivating and Investing Special Gifts”). The seminary and PCBAA evaluated the written project.
- ♦ Three years work experience as a church business administrator or an equivalent position related to finance and administration in a church board, agency or governing body
- ♦ Attendance at one National PCBAA conference
- ♦ Membership for two years in PCBAA and two reference letters on file regarding work and ability

Some key areas of study include:

- ♦ Information Systems
- ♦ Computers
- ♦ Stewardship
- ♦ Church History
- ♦ Theology of the Church
- ♦ Church Accounting
- ♦ Finance
- ♦ Investments
- ♦ Legal and Tax matters
- ♦ Administration as Ministry and Presbyterian Polity

Benefits of Certification are:

- ♦ Listing annually in formal minutes of the General Assembly
- ♦ Invitation to all presbytery meetings with privilege of the floor without vote
- ♦ Recognition to newly certified lay employees at presbytery meetings
- ♦ Closer communication with governing body decisions and policies through General Assembly
- ♦ Being an asset to administrators and pastors when they are changing positions and networking.

Thank you to Jim for the commitment toward furthering skills that benefit this church as we work together to invite, worship, nurture and serve in the name of Jesus Christ.

Youth Ministry

Sundays

Neighborhood Breakfast, 8:00am. Help serve the community on Sunday mornings.

Worship, 9:30am – Join our wonderful community of believers by worshipping with us each Sunday morning.

Good Morning Pipers! Join us at 10:45am in the Pipe. We will have music, videos, games and mixers.

Educational Hour will begin at 11:00am. Sr. High-Pipe Green Room; Jr. High-Pipe class room.

Sunday Night Pipe meets every Sunday from 7:00–8:30pm. We have worship, food, mixers and a challenging lesson each week. Join us for a great time in a safe atmosphere.

Midweek

Sr. High Ladies Small Group meets on Saturdays at 1:00pm at Borders with Kim Skaff.

Pipe Praise Band: Sr. High meets on Tuesdays in the Pipe at 6:15pm. Jr. High meets on Wednesdays at 5:30pm.

Jr. High Ladies Small Group meets on Wednesdays at 6:30pm in the Pipe Green Room with Janeen Reigle.

Youth Volunteer Meeting: October 4th, 5:30–6:30pm in the Pipe Green Room.

Youth Team Meeting: October 25th from 4:00–5:30pm in the Pipe Green Room.

Events

Salem Housing–Saturday, October 10th from 8:30am – 12:00pm. It is a great time to serve others by cleaning, painting or home repair. Join us!

D-Now Weekend

D-Now is a discipleship training weekend. You will go through a series of lessons on a particular subject throughout the weekend. The theme this year is “Celebrating the Journey”. We will meet and spend the night in homes for fun, food and fellowship. We will come together for meals and discussion. On Sat-

Adult Education

Sunday Mornings

Rescuing John Calvin

This year is the 500th birthday of John Calvin. Calvin, in many ways, is the father of Reformed Faith. His contribution to education, politics, economics, arts, and theology has greatly affected Western culture. John Calvin was responding to the Medieval Church. As with many initiators of new thought, the followers of John Calvin pushed some of his ideas to the extreme creating a misunderstanding of Calvin. This Sunday morning class will be led by John Musgrave, Paul Ytterrock, and Mark Riddles in the Chapel.

Who’s Who in Church History

This class is an expansion of the very popular class we had last year. This year, we will cover not only people of the Bible, but also those who have greatly influenced our faith since the scriptures were written. Each week we will learn about someone new with a different leader guiding the class. This makes each week new, fresh and interesting. It also allows you to feel comfortable to stop in even if you have not been able to come each week. Come and learn more about how so many lives have been guided by God and how God wants to guide you. Held in Room 211. Led by Steve Baillie.

Return to the Mount—Beginning October 4th

The Bishop Class will be continuing a study of the *Sermon on the Mount*. Having completed the inspirational Beatitudes in the spring, we will continue our study into what has been called an encapsulation of Jesus’ teachings. We will view these lessons through a 21st century lens in an effort to learn what it is that God is teaching His followers today. We will employ an interactive style in an effort to bring forth the best thinking of the entire class, while enjoying one another’s company. Held in Room 129. Led by Pete Hutchison.

Monday Mornings

The Psalms

The Psalms present God in the glory of His being, the sum total of His perfections, the majesty of His operations, and the principles and patterns of His dealings with man. They also present man, the patterns of his response to God and those of his interactions with his fellow man in a wide range of conditions, circumstances and experiences. Thus, the Psalms furnish the Church of Christ with a model as to how life can and should be lived under God, with God, and for God in trials and temptations, in war and in peace, in defeat and in victory, in times of

Children's Ministry

Important Dates for Children's Ministry:

Sunday October 4, 10:45am—Rotation Title:

The Ten Commandments

Sundays, November 1 & 8, 9:45am—Acolyte Training

Sunday, November 15, 22, 29, & December 6, 9:45am—3rd Grade Bible Education

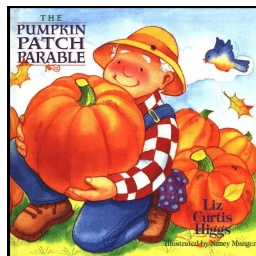
Having a Safe and Happy Halloween

- ♦ Rather than leave your house dark or pass out candy, give pencils printed with bible verses or other Christian gadgets!
- ♦ Have your children dress up as Biblical characters or heroes, making sure they know the story of their character!
- ♦ Visit a pumpkin patch and enjoy a hay ride together while picking out pumpkins. Bring the Pumpkin Patch Parable book along for the ride.
- ♦ Many community churches and centers have safe parties and celebrations you can attend with your children. Keep in mind to avoid scary costumes, haunted houses or fortune telling.
- ♦ If you do pass out something at your home, consider giving the adult visitors one of our brochures mentioning all our wonderful programs we offer here at First Presbyterian.
- ♦ Pray on Halloween and ask for God's protection in your community.
- ♦ Come to church for the All Saints Day service which honors those who have died.
- ♦ Have testimony time with your family and share stories of former church heroes. Don't forget the pizza, snacks and lots of laughter!

Whatever choice you make about Halloween, the real challenge is how creatively you can present that decision to your children, your friends and neighbors. In other words...try not to judge others or condemn, instead become an enthusiastic witness of God's miraculous love and grace. God bless you and your children.

The Pumpkin Patch Parable

The Pumpkin Patch Parable continues to touch young children's hearts as they see how faithfully the farmer plants seeds in the summer, then waits patiently until fall for harvest season. He chooses a pumpkin from the patch, washes it clean with fresh water, pierces its thick skin with a sharp knife, and cleans out all that squishy, stringy pulp inside...*yuck!* Giving his pumpkin a brand new face, the farmer then places



a candle inside, touches it with a flame and puts the smiling pumpkin out in a dark world to shine forth for him. Scripture verses appear at the bottom of many pages, guiding children along the path toward becoming a "new creation" in Christ.

The Pumpkin Patch Parable is not a celebration of Halloween...no ghosts, goblins, demons, witches, or monsters here! Instead, it is a positive alternative for parents and teachers to share with young ones each fall. Since the Lord himself created pumpkins, it seemed appropriate to redeem this familiar symbol of the harvest season for His good purpose. This autumn..."Let yourself glow!"

Pumpkin Blue Ribbon Bread

Filling:

- 2 (3 oz.) pkgs. cream cheese, softened
- 1/3 c. white sugar
- 1 tbsp. flour
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp. grated orange peel (optional)

Bread:

- 1 c. canned pumpkin
- 1/2 c. vegetable oil
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 c. sugar
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 2/3 c. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 c. chopped pecans (optional)

For filling: beat cream cheese, sugar, and flour together in small bowl. Add egg; mix to blend. Stir in orange peel; set aside.

For bread: combine pumpkin, oil, and eggs, in a large bowl. Add sugar, salt, cloves, cinnamon, flour, soda, and pecans. Mix to blend.

Pour 1/4 of batter into 2 greased and floured 7 1/2 x 3 1/2 x 3 loaf pans. Carefully spread cream cheese mixture over batter. Add remaining batter covering the filling and bake at 325 degrees for 1 1/2 hours or until bread tests done with toothpick. Cool 10 minutes before removing from pan. Store in the refrigerator. Enjoy!



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COMMUNITY MINISTRY: LISA HORNE

Rationalizing Behaviors

Two weeks ago, the telephone rang. My wife was on the other end of the line and relayed to me that a long time acquaintance, Jim Pollion, was dead. It seems that he was shot as he stood outside the entrance of Owosso High School displaying graphic images related to abortion. Later that day, I learned that an individual had been arrested for the shooting and, allegedly, had confessed. In his statement, the individual is said to have indicated that his decision to act was based on his desire to not have the young people at the high school traumatized by the scenes depicted on Jim's sign. Regardless of the position one takes regarding Jim's message or his methods, regardless of your position on the rights or limitations that should be placed on freedom of speech in public places, certainly it is interesting that an individual reportedly felt that the best way to protect youth from trauma was to repeatedly shoot an unarmed man in the presence of those same young people. How is it that we are able to rationalize behaviors that appear to others to be so inconsistent?

The ability to rationalize behavior is not new. Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden by convincing her that God's prohibition was not really in her best interest; that only when she became like God could she really understand the meaning of life. Eve tried to shift the responsibility of her actions; as did Adam when he chose to blame God for his choice (Genesis 3:12 "*The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.*").

Postmaster: Send Address Change to:
First Presbyterian Church of Flint
746 S. Saginaw St.
Flint, MI 48502

Does rationalizing play a big part in your life? All of us tend to do it at times. Rationalizing is how we justify our behaviors and choices. On the surface, our reasons sound logical and plausible—at least to us—but our friends and family may see through them as a sophisticated way of making excuses. If we're getting in our own way, this tactic seems to legitimize that. Jesus saw lots of rationalizing, even in His day, and took a dim view of it. That should tell us something about how we rationalize. If we're honest enough to admit that we do cause some of our own problems, then we need to see that rationalizing doesn't help us solve them. In fact, it leads us away from the true solution.

The great thing is that there is good news and it's called the Gospel. We do not have to rationalize our behaviors with God because He recognizes us for whom and what we are and loves us anyway. God does not expect us to get it right every time, nor does He expect us to solve all of the problems of the world. What He does expect is for us to be honest with others, but most importantly, with ourselves.

For me, the last few weeks have been filled with a variety of intense emotion and my thoughts have, at times, been less than positive towards God and others. Of course, it's not my fault, it's just the circumstances (rationalization is so easy). No, in this and every situation in my life I need to focus on my responsibility and trust God for the rest.

Jerry Walden, Staff Counselor

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