



Our Journey

Volume 1 Issue 3

Fall/Holiday 2007

***Massanutten
Presbyterian
Church***

***'Our
Journey'***

***The
ever-
changing
fabric
of the
Massanutten
Presbyterian
church
family.***

As we put the finishing touches on this Fall/Holiday edition of *Our Journey*, it has become quite apparent to us, the communications ministry, that we are continually challenged to fit all the articles, stories, and contributions into the allotted space in each edition. This issue is no exception. One of the missions of *Our Journey* is to explore our Christian faith and some of the many traditions we engage in throughout the year. In the last issue, we explored Confirmation. This issue will explore Advent and some of the symbols associated with Advent and the Christmas season.

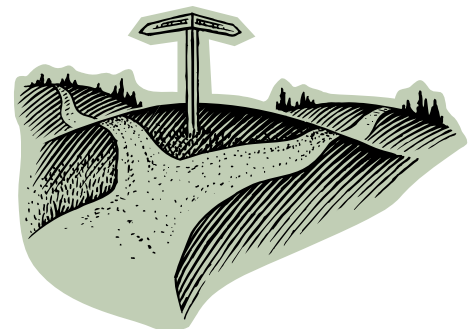
If you ever have asked yourself "should I applaud in church?", then you will find the article contributed by Collier Harvey to be very interesting. Another mission of *Our Journey* is to enlighten the church family to the 'goings on' in MPC. Included in this issue are two pieces from Pastor Ann on congregational care and Disciple Bible Study as well as an update on the Stewardship campaign from the Finance and Stewardship Ministry.

There are several other pieces of church activity as well. Our hope is that you find this publication to be informative, educational, enlightening, and just plain 'a good read'.

-The Communications Ministry

As you may have noticed on the weekly bulletin and other publications, Massanutten Presbyterian Church now has our very own distinct LOGO. In deciding on a logo for the church, three major components were taken into account. These 3 components are distinct to our church when placed together. The first is the beautiful wood cross that is suspended over the communion table in the sanctuary. The second is the historic 'Crossroads' that has been there since before the time of the 'little white church'. The third is Massanutten Mountain. These three 'gifts' are taken into account in our church mission statement that reads:

"At the crossroads of real life and abundant Grace
where God's Children are...
meeting Christ in each other,
praying earnestly,
listening carefully,
singing joyfully,
and joining boldly
with the Spirit's work in the world."





...Shout
Bravo to his
famous
name, lift
high an
offering...

I Chron.
16:29

The
Message

To Applaud or not to Applaud...

Applause is a subject that raises strong feelings in many congregations, including ours. The Worship Ministry and the Task Force on Music in Worship have considered our use of applause and recommend the following paper as an aid to our congregational understanding. This paper is revised and adapted from a report submitted by the Worship Committee and adopted by the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Roanoke, VA a number of years ago when the issue of applause was under discussion there. We are grateful to Collier Harvey for sharing the paper with us. As it is rather long, excerpts are presented here with the intention of encouraging our learning to worship with purpose instead of responding to offerings with uninformed activity. The entire article is posted on our website and is available in printed form on the table near the recent sermons. Ed.

From time to time in Massanutten Church those attending worship applaud during the worship service. Some members of our congregation have expressed concern and the opinion that applause is not appropriate during worship. A variety of viewpoints have been considered recently by a Task Force appointed by the Worship Ministry to deal with Music in Worship and also by the Worship Ministry.

We have guidance from the Bible and our Book of Order. Since applause almost always occurs in connection with music, instrumental or vocal, we should note that the Book of Order says, "In worship music is not to be for entertainment or artistic display." (W 2.1004)..... The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) acknowledges that all forms of worship are provisional and subject to reformation. In ordering worship the church is to seek openness to the creativity of the Holy Spirit, who guides the church toward worship which is orderly, yet spontaneous, consistent with God's Word and open toward the newness of God's future." (W 3.1002)

These references offer us the ideas that **worship is our response to what God has done for us.....** but that the way we worship should be orderly and not careless remembering that worship is directed to God. It is hardly possible to say that our constitution judges applause to be either right or wrong.

In I Corinthians 11:17-14:40, where Paul is speaking of conduct when the church gathers for worship, his main emphasis seems to be that (1) all that is done in worship be done in love that bears all things (4) worshipers were expected to respond to each other's offerings of prayers, songs or thanksgivings by an "Amen" to indicate their assent to what was said or sung; (5) though each activity was prompted by the Spirit, the human spirit maintained control. And if one prophet was speaking and another was moved to say something the first was responsible for controlling the exercise of his gift by "yielding the floor."

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From our study and reflection on this matter, we suggest the following guidelines and recommendations regarding applause in worship services:

1. We recognize that in our culture applause is a way of “encouraging” others and we recognize the validity of this motive as a desire born of the Spirit which needs to find some expression in our worship. We, therefore, cannot believe it right to categorically forbid applause in worship services.
2. We also recognize that applause may be offered, and is usually offered in our culture, not to God but to human beings, and not for the content of what is said or sung as frequently as for the “performance” of the saying or singing. In this sense, applause may be understood as catering to vanity, competitiveness, and a misunderstanding of worship.

We recommend that we make love our aim (I Cor. 14:1) in this matter:

That those inclined to applaud do so only when they feel led to do so by the Holy Spirit as a need to identify with truth set forth in words said or sung by others and to express to God their joy or enthusiasm derived from that truth.....

That those who are offended by applause because it seems to them worldly or out of place in worship trust their sisters and brothers not to express themselves in this manner unless they who applaud believe themselves to be genuinely led by the Spirit in so doing..... but not feel compelled to join in unless so moved..

That in the exercise of such “mutual forbearance in love” applause will neither be forbidden nor become so commonplace as to be expected and sought after by those leading in worship, and the Holy Spirit will guide us in “maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.”

Walk With Jesus

Thank you for your generous giving thus far in 2007. Through the first nine months of 2007 vs. 2006 giving has increased almost 7%. For 2007, we rolled the mortgage debt service (Building Fund) into the general operating budget and due to your faithful giving, we have made every mortgage payment without dipping into our reserves. If you have wondered why the weekly figures in the bulletin are showing a negative number in the year-to-date difference, it is because the session approved the budget last December, planning for \$60,000 to come from our reserve building fund to balance the budget. So far in 2007, we have not had to use any reserves. Additionally, special offerings have increased 14% so far in 2007. The Blanket Offering increased 6%, Pentecost Offering, 11%, four cents a meal offering, 15%, and One Great Hour of Sharing offering, 27%.

In 2007, in addition to the denominational special offerings and the four cents a meal offering, the Stewardship and Finance Ministry has developed more opportunities to give, and you have responded generously. In May, during the first ‘Ready to Respond’ offering campaign for missions, almost \$8,000 was received to support the mission work of our church. In September, the ‘Live into Hope’ staffing campaign was announced, and through October, 63 families have pledged over \$96,000 to support the staffing needs at Massanutten.

The gifts you give make our ministries possible, and we thank you for your continued support and ongoing faith as we respond to God’s call in our lives.

-The Stewardship and Finance Ministry

Advent:
The Season
before
Christmas
during
which
Christians
anticipate
the Coming
of the
Savior.



Advent: Come, Lord Jesus! Our Lord Has Come!

Advent is the first season in the Christian year. It is a time for waiting and hoping. Presbyterians have rightly understood the dual nature of this season, as it looks back to the Savior who has come, and forward to when he shall come again to judge the world in fulfillment of God's reign.

In Advent we expectantly wait for the One who has already come. We anticipate the promised justice of God's new world, yet we praise God who raised the "righteous branch" to rule with justice and righteousness.

Christ has come! Christ is risen! Christ will come again! In Advent, we are living between the first and the second coming of the Lord. We live between memory and hope, between past and future.

Waiting for the One Who Has Already Come

Though at Christmas we rightly retell the story of the babe in the manger nearly two thousand years ago, Christmas ultimately focuses on the mystery of Immanuel (God with us) breaking into our world. Though we paint pictures of the sweet baby in a manger "asleep on the hay," Christmas centers on the Christ who inaugurates God's realm of justice and peace. Though we sing of the baby with "no crib for His bed" and "no crying He makes," Christmas holds before us Jesus of Nazareth whose human life fulfills God's saving purpose by preaching, teaching, liberating, healing, and living according to the rule of God. On Christmas Day, we celebrate the mystery of the incarnation.

Advent, however, is the time to prepare for the One who is coming to us as our Judge and Redeemer. During these weeks, we anticipate the second coming of Christ, the coming peace and justice of the Lord. Our Advent call is, therefore, to prepare the world for Christ's coming now and in the end time.

Since we believe that the Christ is coming, Advent becomes a time for words and deeds that witness to Christ's new age. Our Advent witness to the coming of Christ requires caring about our world, our neighbors, our enemies—everyone. Advent is the time to care about peace and justice in the world.

Christmas is the time for celebration. "Joy to the world!" God has inaugurated a new realm in Jesus Christ. God has established the new age. The time of justice and peace has arrived. Clap your hands! Dance for joy! Sing a new song to the Lord, for the Lord has done marvelous things!

When the church embraces an Advent season of waiting, preparing, and serving in both its worship and mission, the joy of Christmas will naturally follow. By beginning and maintaining a tone of suspense, anticipation, and expectation regarding the coming Savior, the opportunity is present to sustain it through the four weeks and then build on it at Christmas.

During Advent, therefore, our eyes are focused on God's future promised in Jesus Christ. At Christmas, we rejoice that God's promised future has arrived.

Pastor John

Some Advent Terms and Symbols

Advent is the Latin word meaning a coming or arrival and refers to the arrival of our Lord at his birth, His coming to us today and His return.

Advent Wreath—one of the most familiar symbols of Advent is this wreath of candles, which represents the Light of the World who overcomes the darkness. The wreath is usually made from four candles, either all purple or three purple and one pink, with a single white candle (the Christ candle) in the center. These candles are lighted week by week, first one, then two, three and four until finally on Christmas Eve all the candles are lighted and the Christ Candle is also lighted as we celebrate the birth of the Christ-child.

Colors—the traditional color of advent is purple. This is the ancient color of royalty and signals the coming of the King, and it is the call to repentance emphasized by John the Baptist. Today, blue has also become an Advent color, symbolizing the joyful hope of the season as we look forward to the coming of Christ.

Chrismon Tree—Chrismon is a combination of two words **CHRIST** and **MONogram**. A Chrismon is a monogram of Christ. The Chrismon tree is decorated early in Advent with symbols of Christ's life, death, and resurrection to remind us of the whole story and significance of Christ. Chrismons are made in combinations of white and gold symbolizing our Lord's purity, majesty, and glory.

(Chi Rho--Two Greek letters which are the first letters in the Greek word for Christ.)

Welcoming New Members on Our Journey in Christ

- ◆ Rich and Pat Armstrong
- ◆ Jan Arnold
- ◆ Kristen Blye
- ◆ Ed and Heidi Clark (sons, Reid and Ben)
- ◆ Connie Driscoll
- ◆ Kathy Frakes
- ◆ Betsy Hay
- ◆ Deitrich and Audrey Maune (daughter, Gretchen)
- ◆ Dana Mather (husband, John and children, Grace, Connor and Grant)
- ◆ Peggy Reinhold
- ◆ Melva Restuccia
- ◆ William Vance (Bill) (wife, Suzanne)
- ◆ Glenn and Nancy Wayland (sons, Brock, David and Reece)
- ◆ Sally Young (daughter, Sally Stoddard)
- ◆ Brad and Angie Wheeler (children, Jamison and Barrett)

Shepherding Others with Love

Since joining the ministry of the Massanutten Presbyterian Church in February of 2006, it has been my privilege to spend time with many in the congregation who are unable to join us regularly in worship and fellowship due to life changes. These friends and members of our community of faith have wonderful things to share about their lives and experiences – I frequently walk away from my visits wiser than when I arrived. And while I thoroughly enjoy my other areas of involvement in this congregation, the experience of sharing time and faith with another, one-to-one, *makes my day*.

“I asked
God to help
me LOVE
others as
much as He
loves me.
God said...
Ahhh,
finally you
have the
idea.”

-unknown

One of the highlights of the past month for me has been the formation of a ministry team – a group of men and women from within the church who are committed to visiting these friends and members of the church. As we met together and talked about what we hoped this ministry would look like, it was clear that for many who gathered, these visits would provide opportunity to reconnect with old friends. At the same time, it was also clear that these visits would provide the opportunity to make and develop new friendships. Both of these are powerful experiences.

I look forward to hearing about the formation of these personal relationships. Yet, I am also looking forward to hearing about the deepening of the congregational relationship to friends and members in all seasons of life.

One of the challenges of congregational growth is continuing to be aware of the changes in people’s lives, despite our best efforts to do so. John Leggett and I know there are many ways individuals and groups reach out to others on a regular basis through prayer ministries, care groups, circles, friendships and more. Even so, as we have visited with people and worked within the congregation, it has become very clear that we needed to ‘resurrect’ the visitation ministry that was a part of the churches life a number of years ago, and invite others to become part of this rich opportunity. It was a true blessing and joy to see the enthusiasm and desire among the folks gathered together to explore this opportunity.

I am pleased to be sharing the joys and privileges of ministering to friends and members within this body of Christ.

Peace and Blessings –

Pastor Ann

Musings on the Disciple Bible Study Series

As a new season of *Disciple* Bible Study has moved forward, I have been a bit surprised by the feeling of ‘loss’ I’ve felt this fall. That weekly gathering with 9 other *Disciple* students had become a point of connection that I find myself missing. Yes, the preparation for each gathering was significant and yes, those ‘open’ Tuesday evenings have felt good. But still I miss that sacred space in which we came together each week with our questions and convictions and always left with a deeper sense of who we are as members of the body of Christ.

That small group experience is inherent to the *Disciple* Bible Study series. In a small group people gather together around a common purpose in order to deepen relationships and grow in faith. This is one of the elements of *Disciple* that has prompted so many to speak so well of their experience. As a result, I have been exploring with the Adult Education Ministry ways to increase small group opportunities at Massanutten. As congregations grow and change, a small group ministry within the church can help people find their place, and develop connections to the congregation that deepen over time. A few small groups do meet from within the MPC community, and have met for several years. These groups are a great testimony to the power of shared faith and fellowship. Over the next several months we will be lifting up opportunities for short-term small group formation. I invite you to consider how this might fit into your life here at Massanutten Church.

In the meantime, I hear from teachers and students alike that the journey for this year’s three *Disciple* study groups is going well. Relationships are forming and deepening; questions and convictions are being shared; teachers are rising to the good challenge of leadership. I am thankful for this good beginning – and look forward to hearing more from and about the experiences of all involved this year. And remember: it’s never too early to think ahead toward next fall, and begin clearing a space in your life for this excellent study and fellowship experience.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Ann

Christmas Begins...

When the song of the angels is still,
 When the star in the sky is gone,
 When the kings and princes are home,
 When the shepherds are back with their sheep,
 The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost, To heal the broken, To feed the hungry,
 To release the prisoner, To rebuild the nations,

To bring peace among people, To make music in the heart.

May God’s love make your Christmas bright and fill your home with cheer. May His love answer every need and give you a glad New Year!





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Sunday Worship—10:30 a.m.

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Permit #1

COVENANT CLASS SCHEDULE

Did you ever wonder about the beginnings of the Advent season or how and when and by whom the Christmas Carols were written. On Dec. 2nd, the Covenant Class will begin a 4 week ADVENT study on the topic: **REPEAT THE SOUNDING JOY – HOW THE CHRISTMAS CAROLS TEACH US THEOLOGY AND INSTRUCT OUR FAITH.**

Then.....

Is it Fate, Luck, or the Will of God? Just what is God's will? How should Christians pray for God's leading in all the circumstances of life? How are we able to discern the will of God? Can an evil event or tragedy ever be God's will?

Scripture has quite a bit to say about this subject and there is great wisdom in the teachings of Jesus on this subject.

God has a plan for each life; do you know His plan for you? If not, how should you go about seeking it? If you are interested in this topic, please come and join with the Covenant Class beginning on Jan. 13th, 2008, at 9AM as we begin a 3 week study on **HOW TO DETERMINE THE WILL OF GOD.**

Dick Miller - teacher