



**Massanutten  
Presbyterian  
Church**

*'Our  
Journey'*

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

*Our Journey*  
Volume 2 Issue 2      Autumn 2008

**Christian Education** is one of the cornerstones of the Presbyterian walk with God. Massanutten has many opportunities for each of us to participate in the life-long pursuit of learning about our faith. There are Sunday School classes for all ages, Children's Church to instruct children in basic worship, classes for new members, extended classes like the Disciple series, small group ministries, training for officers, choirs, and more. Even "Our Journey" has a goal of raising topics of discussion to help us learn more about our common pilgrimage.

This issue contains several perspectives on Christian Education, as well as a list of opportunities that will resume in September. We invite you to read, enjoy and join with us as we continue our study...

Communications Ministry

**About Christian Education...**

"Christian Education is the process by which people of all ages and stages are empowered in and through the Holy Spirit to know, experience, and share the love of God through Jesus Christ." - Nancy Ruh

"In the educational process, the Holy Spirit encounters people of all ages so that they are nurtured in faith, grow in knowledge and experience, and are inspired and empowered to live as disciples of Jesus Christ." - Dick Miller

## Always learning...

One of the things I love about the Presbyterian Church is our unapologetic claim that Christians should never stop learning. From birth to death, Christians are to be nurtured in the faith. In other words, answering the call to the Christian life brings with it the expectation that you will continually seek to find ways to grow in your life of faith.

In fact, our *Book of Order* indicates that one of the responsibilities of our Session is to provide for the growth of its members so that we are equipped for the ministry we have been given in the waters of baptism. At the heart of this understanding is that God has indeed called us to be a community of priests, and, if we are to serve faithfully and well, we must constantly nurture one another in the faith.

As with all things, the beginning place for Presbyterians is with Scripture. In both our liturgical and educational life, we Presbyterians seek to place the Bible at the center of all that we do. If we want to know what the Christian life is like and how it is to be lived, we will find out in the pages of our Bibles. Because of that, we want to immerse ourselves deeply into the Bible's story of God's relationship to this world that God has created and loves.

But, as we approach the Scriptures, we don't simply want to go on a fact-finding mission, as if knowledge of the Bible were the end result. No, the Bible seeks to call together a community of people who will extend the love of God and neighbor in the world. Throughout its pages, the Scriptures announce that God continues to ask people: "I am *with* you in all the love and terror and pity and pain and wonder that is your life. I am *with* you. Are you willing to be *with* Me" (Richard J. Foster, *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Formation* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008), p. viii)?

We Christians, then, read the Bible not just to know more but to be more. We read so that we can be called out by God, to join together with sisters and brothers around the Word and embody that Word into the world. We are not reading or studying or participating in educational programs so that we can get more information, but rather so that we can undergo the transformation God wishes for our lives. Eugene Peterson gets at this same thing when he writes...

*"Christians feed on Scripture. Holy Scripture nurtures the holy community as food nurtures the human body. Christians don't simply learn or study or use Scripture; we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water, missions into all the world, healing and evangelism and justice in Jesus' name, hands raised in adoration of the Father, feet washed in company with the Son"* (Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), p. 18).

As I mentioned above, the Session has the responsibility to provide opportunities for growth in the life of faith. In addition to the other ways that the officers are serving among us, our deacons and elders and staff have broken into study groups to reflect together upon a resource by Richard Foster called *Living the Mission*. It is my hope that you will follow your officers' lead and renew your commitment to continued growth in the faith.

Grace and peace,

Pastor John

## On Adult Christian Education . . .

Christian education is at the very heart of God's Church. The education of God's people is one of the strong tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed by John Calvin and Martin Luther. In the educational process, the Holy Spirit encounters people of all ages so that they are nurtured in faith, grow in knowledge and experience, and are inspired and empowered to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. This call to discipleship compels us to share our faith and serve others in the home, community, and across God's entire world.

We practice true Christian education by learning together. The joy of learning with others of faith is one of the wonderful things that happens in Sunday School. We are all at different levels of spiritual maturity and understanding. Sunday school offers a great opportunity for personal growth with an emphasis on the practical application of our faith. We teach and we learn because God has commanded us to do so. He expects each of us to strive to please Him in our Christian endeavors and in our living for Him.

We observe the enthusiasm and the fervor with which the youngsters participate in the Faith Village program, and it's a bit harder for adults to emulate that zealotry. At MPC, there are good opportunities for learning in adult Sunday school classes, in DISCIPLE, and in small groups. Our goal is for each member of MPC to be participating in one of these areas. We take seriously the responsibility to teach adult students about faith in God, Jesus Christ, and the truth in God's Holy Scriptures. To that end, we ask you to support the adult Fall Sunday School program at MPC. When we take seriously the call of our Lord, we understand that faith is not stagnant and learning is not optional. You are invited to expand the horizons of your own faith by joining with us each Sunday morning in one of the adult classes. Come and study! Rich blessings await those who seek to know God, His Son, and His Word.

Dick Miller

<b>Sunday School Classes      9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.</b>				
<b>Class</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Topic (September)</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Location</b>
Pre-School	3 & 4 years	Gospel Light curriculum	Hunter Davis Nancy Davis	Pre-School, Lower Level
Faith Village	Kindergarten - 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Noah	Writing Team	Lower Level
Middle School	Youth	Professing Our Faith	TBA	Room 100
High School	Youth	The Thoughtful Christian	Jay Veenis	Room 103
Inquirers <i>(scheduled as needed)</i>	Adult	New Member orientation	Pastor Leggett	TBD
Covenant	Adult	Focus on Christ	Dick Miller	Room 119
Disciples	Adult	Congregational Song	John Irvine Mark Davis	Parlor
Connections	Adult	Topical/Seasonal studies	Pastor Leggett	Gathering Area
For Women	Adult (Women)	The Present Word	Sally Young	Room 114

## What We're About in Adult Sunday School

by Mark Davis and John Irvine

The Session's Communications Ministry has asked us to share our thoughts on what we're about as we co-teach the Disciples Class on Sunday mornings. Late summer is a good time to reflect on this as we are in vacation mode, yet already gearing up to start a new church school year the first Sunday in September.

Mark: Fifty years ago this September I began my career as a college English professor. During all those years I do not recall anyone asking me why I teach. I have been asked what, when, where, and how I teach, but until now, never why.

When you ask me why I teach, I think back upon the one writer I most enjoy teaching, Geoffrey Chaucer. (I can hear Kay now saying, "Don't get him started on Chaucer!") One line from the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales* best expresses why I teach. Chaucer writes in his description of the Clerk of Oxford "And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche." ("And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach.") I teach because I am curious and eager to learn. In preparing to teach I read the writings of others about the subject matter I'm to teach. I reflect on and probe the ideas I am to teach. I want to know what others think and what I think about what I am to teach.

And there is another facet of learning in the teaching process. Good students are also eager learners. They probe the teacher with questions and alternate ways of looking at the subject. I can recall a number of students who challenged me on my grading of their examination. "But, Dr. Davis, if you look at this character in another of the writer's works, you will see that my point is well taken." And sure enough, I had not thought about this other way of looking at the material. Good students gladly learn—and gladly *teach*.

Sometimes, after years of teaching, it is tempting to stop learning, to teach from old notes and to use old tests. When we reach that point, we no longer gladly learn and we *poorly* teach.

John: Mark and I have been co-teaching this class since 1998 and his gladness in both learning and teaching is visible to me every Sunday, still as strong as when we began—as I hope mine is. Frederick Buechner wrote "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." That is why I enter class with eagerness, regardless of which of us is teaching that day. God will be present among us and our horizons will be expanded. Both of us sense in ourselves, and in our students, a need to wrestle at some depth with subjects related to our faith as Christians. I take it as axiomatic that every follower of Christ is always being called by God, in one way or another, to answer the Holy Spirit's call to "come up higher." This could mean deepening or broadening our sensibilities, simply enlarging our awareness, or moving out from provincial or reductionist thinking into a greater maturity of both soul and mind. It often means having our comfort zone, our "ease in Zion," confronted and opposed. That advance in personal and collective faith, and its impact on our lives, is what adult Christian education at its best can foster. To read, raise questions about, and discuss high-quality materials in the light of our Christian faith opens doors and windows for the Holy Spirit to work in us. "Depth" is one consistent operative aim in the Disciples Adult Class. The hunger for it enables us, as a class, to undertake the study of a book on a long-term basis, sometimes as long as half a year or more.

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Our class took its name years ago, long before MPC engaged in the current Disciples Bible Study Program that meets at other times. Christ’s original disciples sought to follow him and they paid attention to the effect Jesus had on them and on their surroundings. In the same ways of paying attention, we continue to try to live up to their title. As teachers we read widely, always on the lookout for materials that treat a subject of contemporary interest showing how Christianity and the culture intersect today. Sometimes these are videos; more often they are a book by a gifted writer with expertise. For example: starting this September 7<sup>th</sup> we will begin an examination of the subject of **music sung in church**. The book we will study is Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song, by Brian Wren, one of the leading hymn writers in the English-speaking church today. (Our current hymnal contains no less than *eleven* hymns written by him!) British by birth and education, he has recently retired from the faculty of our Columbia Presbyterian Seminary in Decatur, GA. We are fortunate at MPC not to be fighting internal battles over the music used in our worship, but in a great many churches that subject is high voltage, so examining the subject is timely. If you would like to attend the class, it would help for you to order a copy of the book. Go online to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) to find various sources (and prices) and order one for yourself. Musical training is not a prerequisite for this course (though naturally it is a help).

Looking further ahead, here are some possible books the class members might choose to study in the future:

Evil and the Justice of God by N. T. Wright

Darwin, Divinity, and the Dance of the Cosmos by Bruce Sanguin



Extended Adult Studies and Small Group Ministries				
Class	Topic	Teacher	Time	Place
Disciple Bible Study	The Christian Believer (30 week study)	Patsy Bales Dick Forbes	Monday 9:00 a.m.	Parlor
	The Christian Believer (30 week study)	Ellen Blose Ann Pettit	Sunday 6:00 p.m.	Parlor
	An Invitation to Romans (8 week study)	TBD	Wednesday 6:30 p.m.	Parlor
Small Group/ Ministries	See accompanying article on page 8.			

## Faith Village

Children in elementary grades at Massanutten Presbyterian Church participate in a Sunday school program based on the Workshop Rotation Model, and we call it *Faith Village*. The Workshop Rotation Model (WoRM) for Sunday School began in 1990 when a Presbyterian church in Chicago decided it was time to reinvent Sunday School or close it down. By 1995 enough churches in the Chicago area had successfully adopted WoRM to call it a movement. As of 2005, it was estimated that over 8000 churches in the U.S. and

- Bored kids and teachers
- Declining attendance
- Lack of Bible literacy
- Drab and uninviting classrooms

The decline in Sunday School is one of the worst kept secrets in the Church. Some say "it's a sign of the times." Others of us wonder out loud whether the traditional model EVER worked. (Where are all those kids we had in our Sunday Schools back in the so-called "good old days" of the 50's and 60's? They're at home reading the Sunday paper.) WoRM developed as an answer to the problem of declining Sunday school attendance and as the way to keep up with new approaches in education based on research into learning styles/multiple intelligences.

Here's WoRM in a nutshell: Teach major Bible stories and concepts through kid-friendly multimedia workshops: an Art workshop, Drama, Music, Games, A-V, Puppets, Storytelling, Computers, and any other educational media available. Teach the same Bible story in all of the workshops for six weeks rotating the kids to a different workshop each week. And here comes the extremely teacher friendly part: Keep the same teacher in each workshop for all six weeks – teaching the same lesson *week after week* (with some age appropriate adjustments) to each new class coming in. The preparation is simpler, allowing for more enjoyment of the class and the children. And, teachers get better with each subsequent week of teaching the same story.

Here's why it works: WoRM concentrates on the major stories of the Bible over and over again. It eschews the popular but educationally unsound lectionary idea of changing the story each week. WoRM's philosophy recognizes that kids not only love repetition, but they need it to develop a lasting memory and understanding of content. The multiple intelligences (creative methods) approach in the model isn't a fad or merely kid-friendly; it is calculated to take advantage of our student's God-given abilities and gifts for learning. Traditional designs have attempted to teach through multimedia, but their lesson plans with six or more different steps, a game, a craft, Bible study and music all in 45 minutes left teachers breathless. And few had the gifts and interests to teach in each mode properly. MPC has a writing team that creates the lesson plans for the workshops. This allows the Sunday school experience here to be tailored to the needs of our learners and leaders. (An added bonus is that we no longer purchase expensive curriculum!) In the future we hope to adapt this model for use in our preschool Sunday school where the wee little ones really respond well to repetition!

## Musings on the *Disciple* Bible Study Series ...

As a new season of *Disciple* Bible Study is getting organized, I've been watching from a bit of a distance as our Christian Educator, *Nancy Ruh*, has researched and introduced some new opportunities for study in this series to the congregation. And I find myself intrigued by them – even tempted to close the distance and get involved in a study once again.

To be honest, however, it probably has less to do with the new studies themselves and more to do with the good feeling I have about the series as a whole and the lingering effects my year with the Tuesday Evening *Disciple One* class continues to have in my life. You see, there's hardly a week goes by that something doesn't remind me of the faithful gathering of disciple students. It might be the Scripture on which the sermon is based, the prayer of Confession or another part of the liturgy or just a glance into the congregation - that seems to bring those Tuesday evenings back to the forefront of my mind.

But I think I know what it is. We have traveled together through Scripture, in a committed and determined way. We've been to the Garden of Eden and Golgotha; to Egypt and Rome. We've entered the Promised Land as the children of Israel, and the Garden of Gethsemane as weary disciples. We've been there together and our journey connected us as life moved on with its joys and struggles while our study offered us a steady point of contact each week.

The *Disciple* journey is beginning again – or continuing for those who've traveled before. The new opportunities open to us roads yet untraveled by the MPC family - a chance explore together as we gather around Scripture discovering what God has in store for us in this new Christian Education year! It is indeed tempting...very tempting!



Pastor Ann

Additional Opportunities for Children and Youth					
Program	Age Group	Focus (September)	Leader	Time	Place
WOW	Children / Adult	Noah	Patti Hobbie Alicia Gutschow	Wednesday 5:00 p.m.	Fellowship Hall
Children's Church	Children 4 years to 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Understanding Worship	Barbara Palmer, coordinator	during Sunday morning worship	Room 108 (Marketplace)
Youth Groups	Middle School Grades 6-8	fellowship, missions study	Tim & Alana Miller Brian & Gina Phelps	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday 6:00 p.m.	Fellowship Hall Room 101
	High School Grades 9-12		Lewis & Emily Burkholder Nancy Ruh	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday 6:00 p.m.	Fellowship Hall Room 103

## Small Groups for the Fall

One of the joys of being a part of the Small Group Ministry of the Massanutten congregation is the development of relationships within the group and getting to know the congregation with whom we worship. As our church continues to grow it becomes more important that we create opportunities for fellowship with one another. Keeping this in mind, the Adult Education Ministry is delighted to announce the following groups starting up or continuing in the fall in an attempt to meet a variety of interests. Simply contact the church office at 434-6194 with your choice and we will be in touch with the details and answer any question you may have.

- ◆ A study of C.S. Lewis' book The Screwtape Letters — The group will meet once a month at MPC and will be led by Linda Knupp.
- ◆ A short term study of Jack Haberer's book Godviews—This is a 6 week study led by Pat Armstrong. There will be an open discussion on the book and a time to share praises and concerns with one another.
- ◆ Windcatchers: Awareness, Advocacy, Action—This group attempts to be sensitive to God's Spirit in identifying issues that we tend to overlook, but that have a negative impact, especially on the powerless/disadvantaged/overlooked segments of our society. We plan to raise awareness of these issues in our church publications, suggesting possible Christian responses. Will meet on an as needed basis (4-6 week intervals).
- ◆ Women's Bible Study and Prayer Group—Meets twice a month at Sunnyside to make it convenient for residents there to attend; however, women of all ages are welcome. Wright's guide to Acts is being considered as the fall study. A time to share prayer concerns begins that meetings and leadership of the Bible Study is shared by members of the group.
- ◆ Just for Fun—Social groups such as Dinner for Eight, Singles, Parents Night Out, etc. would be formed to share fellowship and a meal. This is a great way to share fun, food, and even discuss any of those problems we all seem to share. Each group would set their own schedule.

Vonnie West

*Baptism Promises...*

*Do you, as members of this congregation, in the name of the whole church of Christ, undertake with these parents the Christian nurture of their children so that, in due time, they may confess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?*

*Will you endeavor by your example and fellowship to strengthen their family ties with the household of God?*

*To these we answer... "I do," and "I will."*

## From our Director of Christian Education

When asked to write this article it was explained to me that this would be a way for folks to get to know me and my “take” on Christian Education. So, if I had to define Christian Education it would look something like this: *Christian Education is the process by which people of all ages and stages are empowered in and through the Holy Spirit to know, experience, and share the love of God through Jesus Christ.* My belief is that our faith is a gift from God, planted in our hearts and minds. Our responsibility as the people of God is to help each other draw that faith out into the light where we can acknowledge, accept, appreciate and act on it.

Christian education begins in the home. Scripture tells us, “Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds... Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deuteronomy 11:18-19) For the church, supporting families and individuals in passing on the faith to the next generations encompasses *all* we do within the community of faith to nurture spiritual formation throughout *all* ages and stages of life – worship, study, fellowship, mission, and service – and it includes all that we *are* within that community.

Christian education is also the responsibility of *all* Christians within the faith community. We see this in the promises we make at baptism. Within the life of the church Christian education occurs on 2 levels – formational and informational – informal and formal - or “caught” and “taught.” Formational Christian education is the unplanned learning that occurs as we live and work together in community. For example, our worship experiences help form and inform our faith through the hymns we sing, the words we hear, the prayers we share, and the offerings we make; through study (also the “taught” side of CE) we “catch” the faith through our relationships with fellow learners and our leaders; in fellowship we find welcome, support and encouragement, allowing us to “rub up against each other,” polishing our rough edges, much like stones are smoothed when they tumble over each other; and, mission and service open our eyes to the rest of the world, showing us where God lives and works, giving us a unique opportunity to partner with and for God and it opens our eyes to ourselves.

Turning to the other side of Christian Education, it is easy to recognize the informational aspects of Christian Education. Here at MPC our formal Christian education and nurture includes a wide variety of ministry programs such as Sunday School (which is for all ages!), Confirmation, Sunday evening Youth Group, W.O.W., Vacation Bible School, Adult Bible Study, and special events for children, youth and adults.

So, empowering families in passing on the faith directly and indirectly is a mission of the church. This takes many folks listening to God’s call and committing to being involved. I am reminded of the story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts. The Ethiopian was riding down the road, reading the prophet Isaiah. God’s Spirit told Philip to climb in the chariot with him. Philip asked the Ethiopian, “Do you understand what you’re reading?” He answered Philip, “*How can I without some help?*” After Philip had “*grabbed the chance*” to teach someone, the Ethiopian was baptized and Philip vanished. However, we are told that the Ethiopian did not mind Philip’s abrupt departure, for he had what he’d come for – someone to come along side of him for awhile and help him understand.

In both scriptures cited, we see that growth in our faith and growth in our relationship with God and others will not happen in isolation. So my question for all of us is: “What ‘*chance*’ will we ‘*grab*’ to help someone, including ourselves, understand the message of God’s love?” Let’s look for the answer together. I would love to have your company!



Nancy Ruh



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Permit #1

Your business tag line here.

**Christian Education activities and classes begin Sunday,  
September 7th at 9:00 am.**

**We hope to see you there!**

