

News

from the

First Baptist Church

of Pittsburgh

November 2004

RANKIN CHRISTIAN CENTER – 100 YEARS OF SERVICE!

PASTOR GARY DENNING

Bill Brammer and his wife, Wanda have been worshipping with us for several months, since the close of his home church in Wilkinsburg. While Bill does not draw a lot of attention to himself, you should know that he has been a vital part of the 100-year ministry of Rankin Christian Center. Bill retired as Director in 1998, and Paul Sandusky became Director in September, 1998.

Founded in 1904 for the purpose of teaching English and educating Slovak peoples, the ministry offers a broad range of comprehensive services to the community today. The Rankin Christian Center provides tutoring services and a judicial system mentoring and intervention program for youth who are first time, non-violent offenders. Outreach to children includes after school and Head Start programs, as well as a summer day camp. A cooperative relationship with Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh brings parenting education and support to at risk families. Case management services for mentally retarded adults were added five years ago.

Rankin is one of 19 Neighborhood Action Centers in mission partnership with National Ministries, ABC USA.

Check out the building expansion, and let yourself be amazed at the ways God has blessed the people of Rankin through the volunteers and staff at the Center. Or, ask Rankin Mayor DeMont Coleman; he grew up at Rankin Christian Center.

<http://www.rankinchristiancenter.org/>

While our congregation includes Rankin Christian Center as part of our regular mission support, each year we call on you to donate to the Center’s Christmas toy and glove collection. You can donate toys, gloves and/or money to help purchase these gifts which will be given to Children in the Rankin area during the Christmas season.

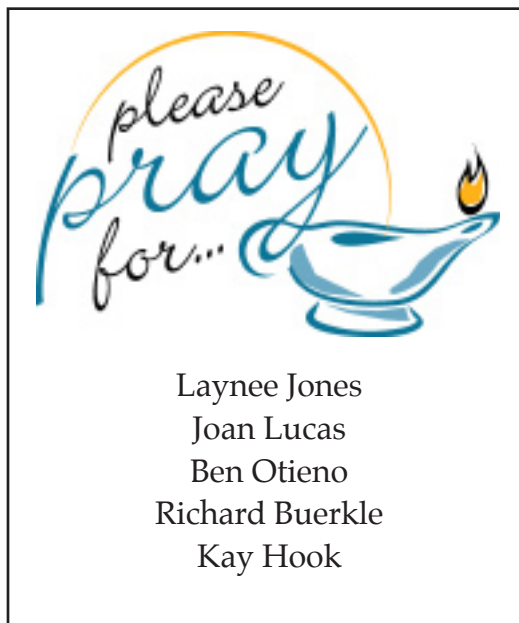
If you choose to give money, just make your check out to First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, and indicate the purpose of the check for Rankin toy & glove collection. We will send our donations at the end of November.

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PRAYER AND PRAISE NOVEMBER 20, 2004

We celebrated our 8th anniversary of the Third Saturday Prayer and Praise Service in September. Sister Lula Mae Butler came with a vision in 1996, and today people from a dozen Pittsburgh churches gather to worship in a relaxed atmosphere, share testimonies, ask for and offer prayer, and fellowship around the table feasting on the delights prepared by Mr. Butler. On November 20, we are pleased to host the Pittsburgh Gospel Envoys. Their music is sure to enrich our worship, and lift our hearts as we enter the Thanksgiving and Advent Seasons.



THANKSGIVING DINNER

Mark your calendar now!! Invite friends!

Our annual Thanksgiving Dinner will held after the worship service on November 21 downstairs in the church.

Al Johnson will be doing his usual excellent job of cooking turkeys. The rest of the meal will be pot-luck. Please bring a potato dish, vegetable, bread or dessert.



The Floyd family is growing!

Ed and Mary gained a son-in-law when Cathy married Rifat Quresh in August--and now are welcoming Hannah Mizve Floyd, first baby of Ted and Kei. Hannah arrived in Boulder, Colorado October 4, weighing 8 lbs., 1 oz.

Congratulations to Ted and Kei. Best wishes to Cathy and Rifat, may they have a long and happy married life.



Saturday October 9 Leanne Crosbie and Brad Lisien were married here at FBC. They have been worshipping with us about a year.

On Saturday October 16 Christopher Trout and Melissa Deigan were married. Chris has grown up at FBC.

We give both couples our best wishes and prayers for a long and happy married life.



CHURCH TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE: DISCUSSION WITH TOM GRIFFITH

(FROM DEACON CHAIR SEAN KING)

On September 30, 2004, a group of 5 members of First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh gathered in the church office for what would be a two-hour discussion with Tom Griffith, an associate of Dr. Stephen Macchia. For background, the Pittsburgh Baptist Association has contracted with Dr. Macchia's organization, Leadership Transformations, Inc., to consult with area churches about church growth and related issues. As part of that process church members and leaders completed surveys during the April congregation meeting. Thursday, September 30, was the night for discussing the results.

Those in attendance at the meeting were myself, Casey Gnage, Chad Zoll, Gary Denning, and David Crosbie. We were a group of somewhat diverse opinions but a common goal of wanting First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh to be viewed as a healthy church.

Tom Griffith is pastor of River of Life Church in the Jamaica Plain section of Boston, Massachusetts. Pastor Griffith began by asking each of us to say our name, our association with First Baptist, and what excites us about the church. The survey results indicated that our strongest areas were worship, learning and growing in community and loving/caring relationships. The challenging areas are outward focus, administration, and networking with other churches.

Even in our areas of strength Tom pointed out some dangers. Concerning worship the conversation touched on how empty the sanctuary may feel. Concerning learning and growing we talked about the need for more teachers to guide the learning. Concerning loving/caring relationships we discussed our willingness to involve new people into the environment.

About the challenging areas, under networking we talked about our Vacation Bible School in years past that involved several local ministries. We are not unique in having limited contact with other congregations. Administration is a tricky subject because we have a congregational governance system (a tradition in Baptist churches), which means input from as many people as possible is desired before decisions are made. Communication becomes the issue as we try to decide things together.

The main discussion concerned outward focus. With frequent reference to the Healthy Church Workbook, Tom suggested ways to assess the spiritual needs of the community we want to reach and the present spiritual state of the congregation. We talked about the websites and the concert series. We talked about vision statements and mission statements. (On October 30, 2004, Jeff Woods, former Ohio executive minister, will speak to PBA churches on the subject of developing a vision for your congregation.)

During the course of discussion Tom made some thought provoking comments about our identity, a name like First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh has a meaning. His church's name has a meaning. Our friends at St. George's Orthodox more easily can identify the meaning of their church's name.

On the next page is a newsletter Tom wrote for his church's newsletter, found online at their website

<http://www.rolcboston.org> .

Please see What is Your Real Name on the next page

What is Your Real Name? Oct 8, 2004 (River Life Church) Newsletter

Names are important; they carry meaning. When we name a pet, we usually try to capture its “personality” or some strong identifying trait or characteristic. In Bible times name giving was an important responsibility. People would pray and share insight in order to understand God’s intent for the new life God was creating. Have you ever realized that God invented you, planned you, created you and set you in this particular generation and location for His purposes? None of these things are happenstance. Whether your present “natural” name clearly reflects God’s purposes or not, God does have an intimate and purposeful name for you. (Revelation 2:17) Other people, and the structures of this world, have their names for you, too. Some of these labels may be harmful, while others might describe how you have been useful (or not) for their purposes. We must be careful, however, to not build our identity on the names/labels coming from others, but only on God’s care and creation of us personally. When Daniel was taken captive by an invading country, he was given a “new (Babylonian) name.” (Daniel 1:7) Daniel, however, never referred to himself by the Babylonian name, but only by His God-given name. (Daniel means God is judge.) This seems to be an indication that Daniel was willing to be “in” the Babylonian culture, but not willing to be “of” it. In John 17, Jesus makes it clear that we are to be in the world, but not of it. We are to participate in our culture, but not be owned or controlled by it.* Have you accepted any names/labels from others that you need to reject and remove from your identity? If so, simply pray about these labels, and declare in Jesus’ authority that you will not live under them any more/* Has God given you any clear names/labels or purposes that you need to embrace as part of your identity? If so, simply pray and receive these are part of your REAL identity. You may want to write them down somewhere and proclaim them over your life in prayer from time to time.

Receiving God’s identity with you, Pastor Tom

IS CHANGE THE ONLY CONSTANT AT FBC?

LESLIE SMEDLEY

CO-CHAIR, MUSIC AND CONCERT COMMITTEE

We human beings are often likely to bemoan change in our lives, only to be told that change is the only thing that is constant, and that we should take comfort in that. I have identified another constant in the life of First Baptist: Gene Boss. From my first visit up, Gene has been constantly and consistently warm, friendly and welcoming to anyone who walks through the doors at FBC. Gene doesn’t care how old you are, what color you are, what you are wearing, why you chose First Baptist, or for that matter who you are. His love for humankind is obvious and if we all followed Gene’s example, no visitor, friend or member would ever feel unwelcome. Thanks, Gene, for being such a great role model to us all and for blessing us with your constant presence.

Making Pancakes

Six -year-old Brandon decided one Saturday morning to fix his parents pancakes. He found a big bowl and spoon, pulled a chair to the counter, opened the cupboard and pulled out the heavy flour canister, spilling it on the floor.

He scooped some of the flour into the bowl with his hands, mixed in most of a cup of milk and added some sugar, leaving a floury trail on the floor which by now had a few tracks left by his kitten. Brandon was covered with flour and getting frustrated. He wanted this to be something very good for Mom and Dad, but it was getting very bad.

He didn't know what to do next, whether to put it all into the oven or on the stove and he didn't know how the stove worked! Suddenly he saw his kitten licking from the bowl of mix and reached to push her away, knocking the egg carton to the floor. Frantically he tried to clean up this monumental mess but slipped on the eggs, getting his pajamas white and sticky. And just then he saw Dad standing at the door. Big crocodile tears welled up in Brandon's eyes. All he'd wanted to do was something good, but he'd made a terrible mess. He was sure a scolding was coming, maybe even a spanking. But his father just watched him. Then, walking through the mess, he picked up his crying son, hugged him and loved him, getting his own pajamas white and sticky in the process.

That's how God deals with us. We try to do something good in life, but it turns into a mess. Our marriage gets all sticky or we insult a friend, or we can't stand our job, or our health goes sour. Sometimes we just stand there in tears because we can't think of anything else to do. That's when God picks us up and loves us and forgives us, even though some of our mess gets all over Him.

But just because we might mess up, we can't stop trying to "make pancakes" for God or for others. Sooner or later we'll get it right, and then they'll be glad we tried.

Please pass some of this love on to others....suppose one morning you were called to God; do all your friends know you love them? I was thinking... and I wondered if I had any wounds needing to be healed, friendships that need rekindling or three words needing to be said, sometimes, "I love you" can heal and bless! Remind every one of your friends that you love them. Even if you think they don't love back, you would be amazed at what those three little words, a smile, and a reminder like this can do.

Just in case I haven't told you lately... I LOVE YA!!!

Sent to me by Chad Zoll.



American University Chamber Singers

On a rainy, chilly, Monday evening in October an enthusiastic group of people enjoyed the American University Chamber Singers concert at FBC.

The next concert in the Sanctuary Concert Series will be the Aeolian Winds on Sunday November 7 at 3 pm.

December 5 at 7 pm the Pitt Womens Choral will present a concert here and on December 12 at 3 pm we will have *Strings and Voices: Music of the Italian Baroque*; The Sanctuary Festival Choir and Soloists with Richard Teaster, Director and Roger Zahab, violin. Works by Pergolesi, Durante, Corelli and Stravinsky.

Plan to attend these events to great music in the best place in the world to hear great music.



From the Editor

Deadine for December Newsletter
November 17



November 28

DECEMBER EVENTS

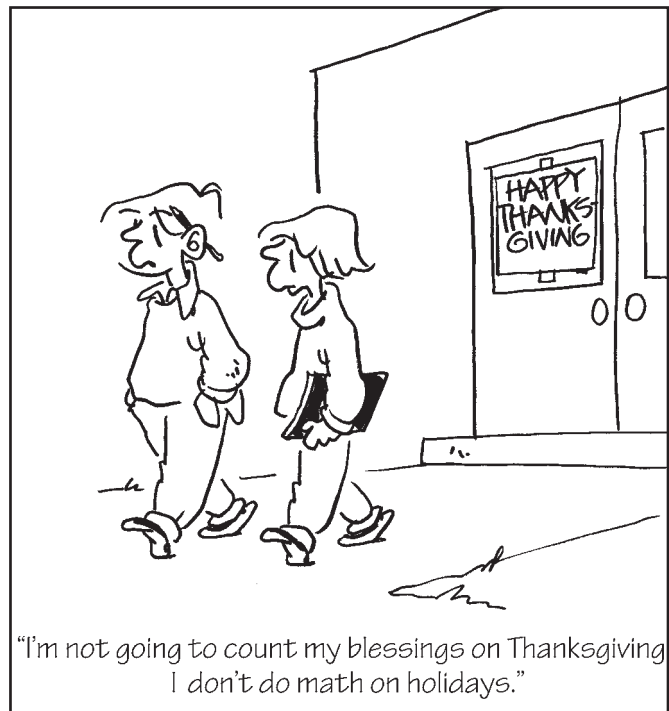
Yes, it is a little early to be thinking of December events. But we want to remind you now so that you can plan ahead.

The first Sunday in advent this year is November 28. The Church Christmas party will be December 19. Christmas is on Saturday this year.

Newsletter Schedule

The deadline for the December issue of the Newsletter will be November 17, but we will print December 1 (Wednesday).

We will try to print a January issue but dates will be decided later.





WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday: 10 a.m. Sunday School
Pastor's Bible Study, Library
Children, Downstairs
Young Adults, under the balcony
11 a.m. Worship
4 p.m. Pittsburgh Chinese Church

Mondays: 12 n, English class
3 p.m. Kumon School
7 p.m. Bridge, 1st & 3rd Mondays

Tuesdays: 7 p.m. English classes

Wednesdays: 6 pm Light meal, Alpha & Bible Study, Traits of Healthy Christian
Will not meet Wed, Nov. 24

Thursdays: Choir, 6 pm light meal, rehearsal at 7 pm

Fridays: 3 p.m. Kumon school
7 p.m. Chinese Students

MONTHLY EVENTS

Novemer 7, 12:30 Board of Deacons
November 14 : 12:30 p.m. Board of Trustees
Wednesday November 17: Newsletter deadline
Saturday November 20: Prayer & Praise
Wednesday December 1: Print Newsletter

SPECIAL EVENTS

Sunday November 7, 3 pm Aeolian Winds Concert
Sunday November 21, 12:30 pm Thanksgiving Dinner

...that you can get a preview of the Sunday Bible discussion and sermon? Go to the FBC website, first-baptist-pittsburgh.org, and look at "Questions We're Asking."

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF PITTSBURGH
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News for December issue due November 17

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