

UNITED PARISH OF BOWIE

# Newsletter

SUMMER 2007

United in Christ  
Our Mission: To Serve

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## The Holy Spirit

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."  
(Galatians 5:25)

Dear Friends In Christ,

Some years ago I was in a meeting of Sunday school teachers. We had invited a speaker to come and talk about how to teach young people about God. The topic that day was the Holy Spirit, and the speaker challenged us by asking, "Can you explain who the Holy Spirit is without beginning the conversion by saying that He is the third person of the trinity?" There was silence in the room. Christians tend to know a great deal about God the Father and God the Son, but for many of us God the Holy Spirit remains a mystery. We know that He is the third person of the trinity, but beyond that we often hesitate and fall silent. Similarly, we're usually comfortable talking about morality, the Bible, and our church tradition, but we can become distinctly uncomfortable when asked to talk about our spiritual lives – our interaction with the Holy Spirit.

Yet our Christian lives, as the Apostle Paul suggests in Galatians 5:25, are all about living by and walking by God's Spirit. If we are not doing this, we sense that we are missing out on something important. To borrow an image from Isaac Newton, it is as if we stand on the great seashore of knowledge but shrink back from doing more than getting our toes wet. To a very large extent, I think that this state of things is entirely understandable. After all, there is much mystery here. Moreover, the church's teachings are often confusing and contradictory when it comes to the work of the Holy Spirit. Think of all the controversy surrounding the Holiness Movement and the modern Charismatic movement. Though much good has come from these movements, when thinking about them the first words that often come to many minds are *sensational, charlatan and gullibility*.

In the area of spiritual instruction, one of the more level-headed teachers of the past generation has been Richard Foster, who wrote *The Celebration of Discipline* (1978). He began his book with words that I still find moving:

Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.

As the title of his book implies, Foster was interested in reviving some of the spiritual disciplines that modern Protestants, in all their busyness and desire for "instant satisfaction," have largely forsaken. I agree with Foster's approach, but before pursuing it, I think that Christians today need to be reminded of some of the basic truths about the Holy Spirit. For this reason, I am going to be presenting a six-part sermon series on the Holy Spirit. This will begin on May 27, which very appropriately is Pentecost Sunday. Though this is still a work in progress and subject to change, my six sermon themes should be the following:

"Who is the Holy Spirit?" – May 27

"The Work of the Holy Spirit" – June 3

"The Fruit of the Holy Spirit" – June 10

"The Gifts of the Holy Spirit" – June 17

"Sanctification and Empowerment of the Holy Spirit" – June 24

"The Seal and Witness of the Holy Spirit" – July 1

The more we know, the better able we will be to live and walk by the Spirit.

The Rev. Dr. Michael Parker

## *Change of Address*

Be sure to let the church office know anytime you have a directory change. Send changes of address, e-mail, phone numbers, etc. to

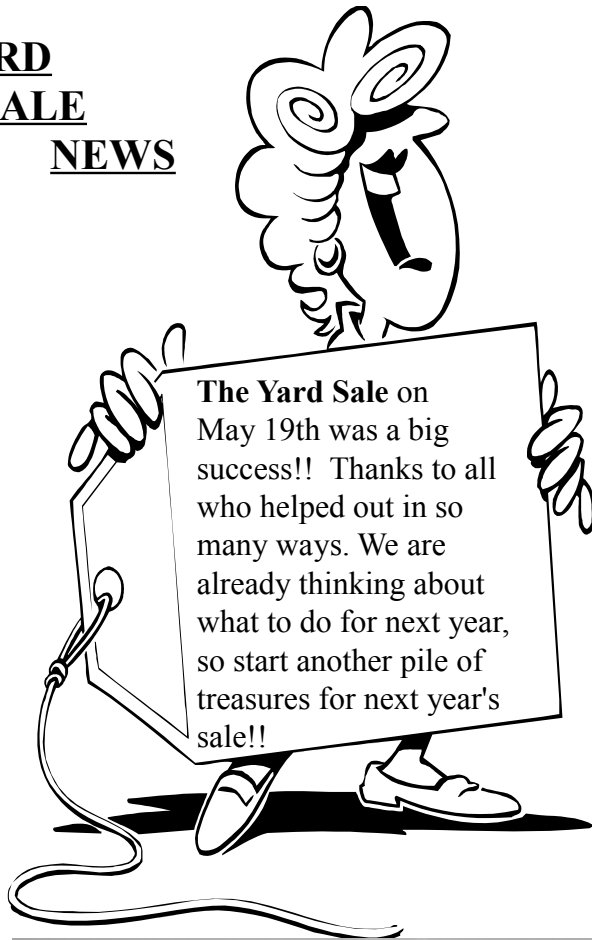
[upbannounce@gmail.com](mailto:upbannounce@gmail.com)

or call the church office at 301-249-6411.

## Pastor Nominating Committee

The Congregational Meeting of April 29 elected a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). The members are Gene Barbato, Kathy Busch, Tom Chin, Marva Connolly, Diane Eades, Sue Kennedy and Herb Sheppard. It also elected two alternates: Tanya Asman and Mike Mehl. The Presbytery liaison to the PNC is the Reverend Eunice Yang, the pastor of Adelphi Presbyterian Church. Eunice met with the PNC on May 17 at the committee's first official meeting. When its orientation is complete, the committee will elect its chair and then fill out the Church Information Form (CIF). The CIF will be placed on the Presbytery's and UCC's websites, where prospective pastors can view it and decide if they want to apply. When the PNC begins to review applications (Pastor Information Forms or PIFs), its work will be done entirely behind closed doors. The PNC will keep us all generally informed about its progress, but it will not reveal information about specific applicants. Also, Mike Parker, as the interim pastor, is not allowed to participate in the process.

## YARD SALE NEWS





## ADULT CHOIR

The Adult choir has completed its rehearsal schedule for the spring. Thank you, all the choir members, for your dedication. We will begin again on Wednesday, August 29, 2007 at 7:30 in the sanctuary. As always, we are looking for additional singers, so if you know of any one, bring him or her along in August.

Diane Eades



### FLOWERS

I would like to thank all of you for signing up for flowers on our chart next to the Library. There are still many Sundays left for the rest of the year. Please take a look at the chart and sign up for the Sunday of your choice. I thank you all for your faithfulness.

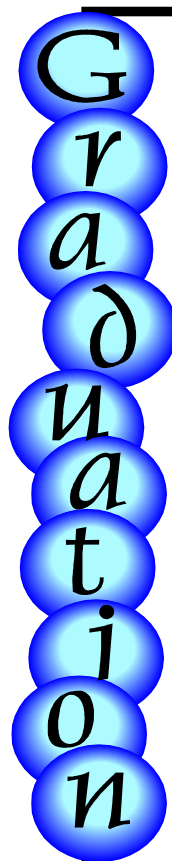
Elise Blaker



## Potomac Association Meeting (United Church of Christ)

At the recent spring meeting, United Parish received a commendation for our contribution to "Our Church's Wider Mission" (OCWM). Also, two resolutions were passed, in addition to the usual reports. The first resolution was based on a recommendation from the Justice and Witness Ministry singling out consequences of global warming as one of the most pressing problems facing humankind. The second resolution calls for a boycott of Smithfield meat products from its North Carolina plants (not its Virginia plant) because of unfair labor practices and dangerous working conditions.

Doug Snyder



### **Charissa Annette Bickel**

graduated from Towson University May 23, 2007, with a Bachelor's degree in psychology. She is pursuing a job in social work.

### **Nick Hathaway**

recently completed a Masters of Divinity degree at Covenant Theological Seminary. He will begin a new position in June as youth director at Liberty Reformed Presbyterian Church PCA in Owings Mills. He will also begin studying for his pastor ordination exams, to be held in 2008.

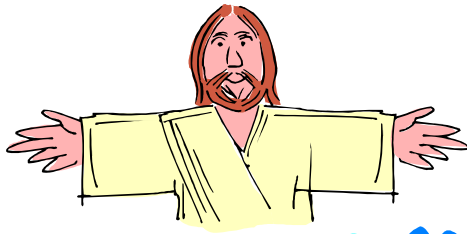
## Adult Education

Adult education has had a busy year, with courses ranging from transition and growth issues to the Protestant Reformation. The highest enrollment was for a course on Nutrition and Diet, taught by Merrill Hathaway and Patty Keys. A healthful breakfast set the stage for each of the sessions. Each participant was given a course notebook to contain weekly assignments and numerous handouts. Our textbook was "Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy," by W. C. Willett, M.D. Participants received diplomas upon the completion of the course.

One class remains for the school year: King David's story as told in the books of Samuel. The class, to be led by Mike Mehl, begins May 27 and continues through June 24.

Doug Snyder, Chair





# WELCOME

## Summertime Christian Education

The Women's Bible Study group will be sponsoring two classes this summer, both of which will be taught by Mike Parker for all members and friends of the church. The classes will focus on two of the *hot-button topics* of our times.

The first, to be held the Tuesday evenings of June 19 and 26 from 7:30 to 9:30 PM, is **Homosexuality and the Bible**. This will be an examination of the issues currently vexing our denominations regarding homosexuality. What does the Bible actually say about homosexuality? What are the arguments pro and con for accepting or rejecting homosexuals in the church? Why should we care? These are some of the topics that Mike will take up. The book to be used in the course will be *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (2003), by Dan O. Via and Robert A. J. Gagnon, leading spokesmen on either side of the debate.

The second class, to be held the Tuesday evenings of July 17 and 24 at 7:30 to 9:30, is **The Argument for Intelligent Design**. Did the universe happen by chance, or is it the product of intelligent design? Theologians and scientists have been debating this issue for years and, due to a number of modern discoveries and theories, the debate has never been more hot than it is at the moment. Mike will examine this debate using two books by Paul Davies: *The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World* (1992), and *Cosmic Jackpot: Why Our Universe is Just Right for Life* (2007).

Please sign-up at the narthex if you are interested in one or both classes. Refreshments will be served immediately after each class. Invite your friends and come for a meaningful and thought-provoking evening at the church.

## Church School Teacher Recognition Sunday - Coming Up June 10

At our worship service on June 10, we plan to celebrate all the people who have participated in leading our Christian Education Program for the past nine months. Church School classes for adults have been held most Sundays at 10:00. Children from first through fifth grades have been attending the beginning of our 11:00 worship service, and leaving for their classes just before the scripture reading. Youths from sixth through twelfth grades met at 10:00 Sunday morning for several months, and at the Sunday evening youth program through all nine months.

The following people led or assisted with Church School for children and young people this year: Rebecca Yates-Gregory, Tanya and Barry Asman, Mary & Will Busch, Matt Bickel, Shirley Bickel, Dina Bickel, and Delores Eastman.

Adult Church School classes were coordinated by Doug Snyder, and were led by Herb Sheppard, Bill Collins, Mike Parker, Merrill Hathaway, Patty Keys, and Mike Mehl.

People who served on the Christian Education Committee are: Shirley Bickel, Penny Simpson, Marva Connolly, Janice Sheppard, Mary Jo Munnely and Charlotte Melichar.

♥♥♥ Welcome to our Church! ♥♥♥

## IF LIFE SKIDS OUT OF CONTROL



We don't want to think about the limitless dire events that could happen to us – a tire could blow out in heavy traffic, and we'd need to maneuver the car with our family to a safe place; our kindergartner could slip away from us and decide to find her own way to McDonald's at the shopping mall; our son could sustain a serious head injury playing hockey; we could lose our job just after we've made a down payment on a new van; we could break a hip and not be able to live alone. We have thought flashes such as these, but we tell ourselves not to dwell on such disturbing possibilities.

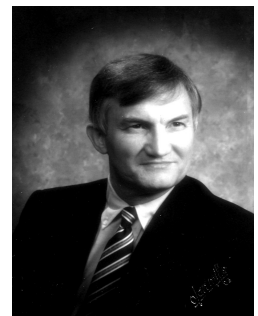
In light of all these terrible possibilities we can dread the unknown. Fearful about what trouble or tragedy could happen to us, we can withdraw and start saying "no" more often than we say "yes." Another retreating option is to undertake only those actions that we consider low-risk activities. However, low-risk activities can sometime result in serious pain. A woman steps off a curb and somehow suffers severe fractures in her ankle. A high school football player is tackled and paralyzed. A man trimming a tree, falls off of a ladder and breaks his rotator cuff. In order to avoid such painful consequences, should a person just retreat from any possible risk?

Of course, that's not the answer if we want to live fulfilling lives. The only way I can imagine that persons can expect satisfying lives in light of the possible tragedy or misfortune that may be on the other side of today is daily to trust God. Trust God to accompany us and to provide for our needs as they arrive. People who were driving the Bay Bridge recently did not expect a trailer to come unhitched from the vehicle pulling it and then cause several travelers to die. The solace for the believer is that whether we live or die we belong to the Lord (Romans 14:8).

Before returning home to heaven Jesus promised the eleven disciples, "remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20b). It's fairly easy to say we want to follow Jesus and be his disciples. However, we cannot be the disciples he needs us to be unless we trust ourselves to his care as we face an uncertain future. If we have fallen in the past we can visualize Jesus as the teaching parent beckoning us to take those steps necessary for us to manage today. Even closer and more constant than our earthly parents, Jesus will walk each venture with us.

Another relevant passage is found in Matthew when Jesus teaches the disciples how to pray. He instructs them and us to pray for our "daily bread." When we pray the Lord's Prayer, are we merely praying for food each day? I think not. Jesus wants us to put our trust in the source of our eternal nourishment, God himself. We need to rise and dress each day with a trusting attitude. We have no way of knowing all that we will encounter on any given day. But surely everyday belongs to God, and so do each of us. If we want to be in the circle of Jesus' disciples, we will move forward with purpose because we are God's representatives on earth. We may be shivering with fear, quivering in our stomachs, aching with pain, or crying our sadness, but we will greet each dawn with the trust that God will provide us with what we need *that day*.

Shirley Klotz Bickel



## Re-Chartering Day

Sunday, June 3, will be the thirtieth anniversary of the chartering of the United Parish of Bowie. Following the service, Eric Bickel will unveil a portrait of his father and our "organizing pastor," The Rev. Dr. Carl O. Bickel. Shirley Bickel and the Rev. Bob Bell will also be saying a few words about Carl's life and ministry. Afterwards, a light lunch will be served in the patio area.