

From Pastor Steve's Desk...

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer! Welcome to *GraceNotes*, the newsletter of the Panama UMC. In these pages, you will find news and events of what God is doing through His people in Panama and around the world. Come serve, love, laugh, and experience at Panama UMC...

What to do with Ash Wednesday?

Martha Moore-Keish, writes this: Our culture does not know what to do with Ash Wednesday. We do a pretty good job with the feasting right before Ash Wednesday, mind you — more and more people even outside of New Orleans celebrate Mardi Gras with beads and floats, and more and more people devour pancakes and waffles at Shrove Tuesday celebrations. Any excuse for a feast is welcome! But what to do with the depressingly titled Ash Wednesday? A few years ago I saw a restaurant sign that summed up our cultural uncertainty about this date on the Christian calendar: “Ash Wednesday Seafood Buffet: All You Can Eat!”

The paradox of Ash Wednesday, and of Lent, is that we take on particular disciplines — fasting, prayer, service — in order to repent and conform ourselves more closely to the life and death of Christ, all the while recognizing that Christ has already come to us before we sought him. This is the paradox of the baptized life. We have been joined to Christ once, but we spend the rest of our lives trying to live into that union.

Turning to Christ means turning also to all our neighbors who suffer. According to Isaiah, fasting and praying that brings us to act on behalf of these neighbors is the fast that is acceptable to God. (in “Ash Wednesday — Is it Presbyterian?” Presbyterian Church (USA) Web Site, pcusa.org).

We have spent several weeks in worship exploring unity in Christ and Paul's imperative to live Christ every day. We are called to use our gifts to serve Christ through our service to others in our church, our families, our community, and our world.

As we enter into the season of Lent this month, what is it in your life that fasting and prayer will illumine for action? Are you courageous enough to spend time fasting and praying for the gifts that God has given you? And are you willing to accept that call and move out in faith?

(continued on p. 2)

CHURCH STAFF

Reverend Steven M. Taylor, Pastor
Kathy Peck, Program Coordinator/Secretary
Tory and Adam Irgang, Youth Leaders
Jody Marsh, Parish Nurse
Julie Nagel, Music Director/Accompanist
Krista Odell, Accompanist
Art Osborne, Custodian
Ben Taylor, Winter Sidewalk Snow Removal Safety Manager
Pat Sobolewski & Sandy Crossley, JOY Center
Bert and Roberta Anderson in Haiti
Dr. Mark and Diane Abbott in Spain
Reverend Peter Perry in Alaska

PASTOR'S OFFICE HOURS

Monday - 9 a.m. - noon
Tuesday - 9 a.m. - noon
Wednesday - 9 a.m. - noon
Wednesday Evening - 6 - 6:45 p.m.

(From Pastor Steve's Desk..., continued)

Ash Wednesday is a visible reminder of the sin on our lives. We all have fallen short of the glory of God because of our sin. But God doesn't want to leave us there...the church doesn't want to leave you there. You see, Lent is time to examine yourself so that when Easter comes, you'll be ready, with all the saints, to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You'll be ready to feast like never before. You'll be ready to live into the union with Christ that was started at your baptism.

All of this, just because you said "Yes" to Jesus. He has already said "Yes" to you. During Lent, I invite you to enter into fasting as a valuable discipline for your life. Enter into prayer more deeply and more regularly. Be in service to others as a spiritual discipline. If you need any guidance, please let me know...my door is always open...

Shalom,
Pastor Steve



Pastor Steve's March Calendar

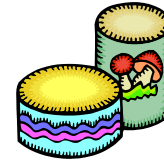
Due to technical difficulties, a copy of Pastor Steve's March daily calendar is not available for publication. It is, however, posted on both of his office doors.

Nursery Note...Just a reminder that there is nursery care available during Sunday morning worship for children up to kindergarten age. Two nursery helpers are available to care for your child/children so that you can get the most out of the worship experience.



If any adult or youth (7th grade and above) is interested in participating in this ministry, please let Tina Shaver know. Thanks!

Christian Ed Note - as noted later in this newsletter, there will also be nursery care available during the Sunday School hour, for newborns through age 3! See details on page 6.



FOOD PANTRY

Another donation of canned goods was made by students at PCS. This time, the grades 4-6 students had a movie night and their admission was a canned good. THANKS, KIDS!

DON'T FORGET RED RIBBON SUNDAY MISSION PROJECTS

CAMPBELL LABELS for the Red Bird Mission School in Kentucky (also look for labels on Swanson products, Pepperidge Farm, Prego, and V8). Those of you who take the time to cut just the UPC code and logo from the product for us, we thank you. Since we sent 1,200 labels last July, we now have 300 more to send - keep saving.

PENNIES for the Domestic Abuse Program offered by the Salvation Army in Jamestown. The WAM group has been promoting this program for a few years and usually have between \$75 and \$100 to send to them every March. As of now, we have about \$35 to send. If you have been saving your pennies (and other small change) please bring them in—do not roll the pennies. The bank would rather have them unrolled and we can just drop them in the coin counter.

NON-PERISHABLE ITEMS for the Food Pantry - things like toilet paper, soap (all kinds), toothpaste and brushes, shampoo, and anything else that you feel would help those that are having a difficult time making their money go further. The use of the Food Pantry is growing. Thanks for your help!



February 24, 2011

Dear Friends at Panama United Methodist Church,

We have been settling in to our new routine here at Village of Hope. We have co-hosted two teams with Debbie Berquist, Field Director, and hosted one on our own while Debbie returned to Canada for a family visit. We enjoyed having the teams here. It was like visiting another Methodist church—you're familiar with the service while meeting new people who share in Christ's love for us all.

This next week, February 28 – March 4, will be a busy one. The Board of Directors is coming here for a board meeting. We have met some of them and look forward to meeting the others. Most of the Board is very active in the projects here. Many come down on teams throughout the year.

While the Board is here, we will be signing the contract with the Haitian construction company for the health center. Actual work will begin two weeks after that. The construction company, ESCA Company, estimates that the building will be done in seven to eight months. We have participated in several meetings thus far and, like others at Village of Hope, we're anxious to see the construction begin.

We are now set up to receive our mail through Agape Flights. Part of the requirement for membership is that we work at the "post office," sorting mail, processing the packages. Roberta worked for the first time this past Wednesday. (Jarvis would have been proud of her!)

Our mailing address is:

Bert & Roberta Anderson
c/o Agape Flight PAP #26035
100 Airport Avenue
Venice, FL 34285

Blessings and thanksgiving to you,

Bert & Roberta

Sunday Morning Worship Team

March

Lay Readers

3/6 - Tabby Butler
3/13 - Debbie Loveless
3/20 - Cindy Furlow
3/27 - George Anderson

Ushers

Don and Tabby Butler
Jack and Linda Sturges

Nursery Helpers

3/6 - Yvonne Calcaterra and Alyssa Jaeger
3/13 - Barb and Lauren Tordella
3/20 - Carol Hay and Sarah Osborne
3/27 - Stacy and Abby Taylor

April

Lay Readers

4/3 - Howie Wheeler
4/10 - Sharon Passarelli
4/17 - Linda Sturges
4/24 - Paula Komarek

Ushers

George and Trudy Anderson
Mark and Karen Morton

Nursery Helpers

4/3 - Thea Kester and Corinne Edwards
4/10 - Karen Morton and Lauren Tordella
4/17 - Julia Nelson and Abby Taylor
4/24 - Kelly and Sarah Osborne

Tape Ministry

March 6

Gerrie Simmons LSS A116
Phyllis Patterson H Green 327
Kathy Smith TW 218
Van Luther TW 208

Julia Nelson
Trudy Anderson
Barbara Hart
Barbara Hart

March 13

Gerrie Simmons LSS A116
Phyllis Patterson H Green 327
Kathy Smith TW 218
Van Luther TW 208

Bill Peck
Jean Edwards
Lester & Wyona Wevers
Lester & Wyona Wevers

March 20

Gerrie Simmons LSS A116
Phyllis Patterson H Green 327
Kathy Smith TW 218
Van Luther TW 208

Jack & Linda Sturges
Diane Johnson
Thea Kester
Thea Kester

March 27

Gerrie Simmons LSS A116
Phyllis Patterson H Green 327
Kathy Smith TW 218
Van Luther TW 208

Sharon Passarelli
Rachel Reardon
Eloise Smith
Eloise Smith

No tapes for anyone - just a visit and a bulletin

Recipe from the Parish Nurse



POTATO SOUP

1 bag hash browns or diced potatoes
with onions and peppers
1 large container chicken broth
1 package chicken gravy mix

Spray pan with Pam. Sautee potatoes for 10 minutes, stirring gently.
Add broth and bring to a boil.
Prepare gravy mix according to directions.
Add to potatoes and broth.
Simmer 20-30 minutes.

Women and Missions (WAM)

The next meeting of *Women and Missions* is Monday, March 14, at 11:45 a.m. at the Rowdy Rooster. *WAM* is an opportunity for women to have lunch (we each pay for our own), reflect on a short devotion, and engage in conversation. On March 14, be part of the conversation about *Expanding Boundaries*; come to listen, learn, participate, and lend your wisdom! It's informal and fun and always uplifting to be with women who care about others. Please join us!



Grace Notes is GOING GREEN

We recently received a letter informing us that we no longer can do a bulk mailing from the Panama Post Office and it was "mandated" that we take our mailings to the Jamestown Office.

A discussion was held at Church Council and it was decided we would begin "going green" with Grace Notes at the PUMC. In an effort to save on publication costs (yearly postal permit, paper, ink, envelopes, stickers, etc.), we are asking that those of you who can, please use our website, www.panamaum.org, to access Grace Notes. This will begin with the April edition.

If you would like to continue receiving a copy of Grace Notes in the mail, please let Kathy know in the church office or email Pam at alamapi@yahoo.com. We'd like to hear from you regarding your mailing request by March 25 for the April edition. There will be copies available on the welcome table at church. If we don't hear from you, we will assume that you will be reading Grace Notes online.

If you have any comments or questions, please send your correspondence to Pam at her email listed above.

Hello, all!

I just came in from playing in the HUGE snowbanks outside Pastor Steve's and Kathy's offices. What fun that was but now I am so cold!

I was able to access the website at Kathy's desk and do you know what I found? Copies of Pastor Steve's sermons...as I read through the one from last Sunday, I thought how great it is to reinforce the words he spoke by reading it after having heard it. Check it out...especially if you have missed a Sunday.

Well, I'm off to find some hot chocolate. See you soon ...

Love,
Charlie



Prayer Chain

If you have a concern you would like others to pray for, please call Susie Davis (782-4611) or Jean Edwards (782-2800). Your prayer request will be passed down the chain to 20+ others who will pray, and continue to pray, about your situation.

Because of your faithfulness...

Because of your faithful giving, we have received a total of \$11,937.00 through February 20, 2011, for the general fund. Additional monies received were designated as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Plate cash and donations | 271.26 |
| Sunday School | 287.20 |
| Missions | 740.00 |
| JOY Center | 120.00 |
| Camping Scholarships | 35.00 |
| Food Pantry | 115.00 |
| White Gift | 416.00 |
| Music Ministry | 27.06 |
| Flowers | 27.00 |
| Initial offering envelopes | 10.00 |

Balance in Trustees' Capital Fund Account - \$12,027.15.

We thank you for your faithful giving in support of the ministries of the Panama United Methodist Church.

If you would like 2011 envelopes and you have not yet received them, please see Cindy Cartwright, or let Kathy know in the church office.



With Sympathy...

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the families of...

Pete Wilson - father of Carrie Edwards and grand-father of Bronson, Corinne and Alyson

Steve Shreve - father of Nicole Hess, Taylor and Michael Shreve

May our love and prayers continue to support you during this time of adjustment to lives without your loved ones.

Sunday School News...

Praise the Lord! Sunday School attendance is on an “*upswing*.” Our average attendance for the past month is 62! That’s exciting news and we hope that it will continue. As a team, we’re trying to offer the best Sunday School program possible and we’re pretty sure we have some very interesting “stuff.” For example, our adult classes are growing in grace by studying *Parables of the Back Side with a Twist* in Jack and Linda Sturges’ class; “Creation Truths” with Denny and Cindy Furlow; and “Plan B, what to do when God doesn’t show up the way you thought He would” with George and Trudy Anderson. We have Brynne Hinsdale and the young adults who are using an online Bible based curriculum. Stacy Taylor teaches our senior adult class, too! What a line up! We also have plenty of great Biblical truths and material for our children’s classes.

Here’s something new and exciting, too!

Beginning in March, we are going to offer nursery services for the Sunday School hour. We hope that many will feel comfortable and join a class if they have a safe and friendly place for their babies and toddlers. Carm Catanese and Karen Morton are going to make an excellent team to cover the nursery during this time. So if you have children from the age of newborn to age 3, please feel comfortable coming to a class because we have a safe, loving place for them.

Why not try Sunday School this week? We know that you will love it and you will learn something or be reminded of something in God’s word that He wanted you to hear. He has a way of honoring our efforts as we walk by His side. Please join us at 9 a.m. Our team is ready and waiting for you!



March SPOTLIGHT is on the **CHURCH COUNCIL**

The core leadership body of our local Congregation of the United Methodist Church is the CHURCH COUNCIL. The primary responsibility of the church council is to create and sustain the congregation’s plan for discipleship. The church council is responsible for envisioning, planning, implementing, and evaluating the mission and ministry of the church.

The make up of the Church Council includes the following: Pastor, Council Chairperson, Lay Leaders, church treasurer, finance chairman, financial secretary, church secretary, and leaders of the individual ministry teams of the church. Meeting are held once a month. Tena Dills is the council chairperson.

The council works with the pastor to build a shared vision. It plans ministries of nurture, outreach and witness. The council ensures that these ministries go along with the mission of disciple making. It allocates resources for the implementation of the plan. An administrative infrastructure is provided by the council, as well as evaluation of the plan. The council also acts as the administrative agency of the charge conference.

The council is a ministry team where each member brings gifts, and they serve in a particular role on the team. The team can accomplish much more than any individual, because they are knit together as Christian community and empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Future issues of Grace Notes...

Future issues of Grace Notes will highlight the various ministry teams that we have at the PUMC. The Nominations Team felt that it would be valuable for the congregation to know more about each team (responsibilities, makeup of the team, etc.). This information will be helpful when the Nominations Team is working to fill the open slots on ministry teams in the fall. If, during the year, you read about a team that you might like to be on, please let Pastor Steve know of your interest.

(Carol Hay - continued from p. 7)

We saw over 900 patients in the five days of clinics. The youngest child was just about a month old and the oldest man was 105 years old! Most patients were diagnosed and given medications. Many received immediate care of open wounds. There were a few patients that had to be sent to the hospital in Managua – a three-hour bus ride away. Some needed money to pay for the bus ride – our PUMC funds also helped with that expense. We left money with the Nicaraguan doctor who is the link between the Western Michigan Conference United Methodist Volunteers in Missions and Nicaragua. She will follow up with the critical cases to ensure they have their surgeries and get the necessary medical supplies.

Part of the intake procedure at each clinic is to ascertain if the patient has accepted Jesus as his/her Savior. People have the option to talk with members of the congregation about God while they wait for medical services. Four individuals who came to the clinics for medical help accepted Christ. Our team was part of an evening church service where one young man from the clinic that day went up for the altar call. It was very emotional – even if we didn't understand all that was said!

So how do I answer a simple question about our mission trip to Nicaragua? I have to say it was one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. It felt good to be part of a team helping people who needed and appreciated the medical services. Their obvious joy in living a life that we'd consider hard and simple reminded me of God's grace in my life. And the work we did could not have been completed without the help of you – the Panama United Methodist Church! Thank you

Nicaragua – Medical Mission Trip
Carol Hay

Since I've returned from Nicaragua, I'm often asked, "How did you like Nicaragua?" or "How was your mission trip?" I struggle with how to answer these questions. A short reply or short newsletter article just doesn't convey all that should be said; however, I'll save details for another time and give you a quick overview.

We flew into Managua, Nicaragua, about noon on Saturday. After a long, hot, and interesting van ride, we got to our accommodations in rural Nicaragua. I didn't see too many traffic signs, but my sense is the guy with the loudest horn has the right of way!

The pastor who made our living arrangements was proud that they had found mattresses for each of us – we shared them with tiny living creatures that bit! Water is a precious commodity, and clean water is even more rare; so, I'm glad I remembered how to bath and wash my hair using just enough rain water to fill a two quart bowl. As primitive as our accommodations were, they were still superior to how the people in that area live.

Each day a different church hosted the medical clinic – all in the rural areas around our base in Masachapa. Every morning, we loaded our supplies into the van, unloaded them at a church, set up our stations, and ran the clinic – usually from 9 to at least 4 p.m.. We arrived to long lines of people waiting for us and people continued coming throughout the day. There were no complaints about the hours of waiting and the smiles, hugs, and "gracias" flowed freely.

I worked in the "pharmacy" filling prescriptions written by the doctors as they saw patients. (We had two Nicaraguan doctors working with us each day in addition to our team doctor.) By Tuesday afternoon, we were running out of many of the drugs that had been purchased in the States for the five days of clinics. I found myself going to the doctors saying we don't have this drug – can you substitute a drug we still have and then we ran out of the substitutes!

It was decided by the team that we needed more drugs to continue to hold the scheduled clinics and treat patients; one of the doctors volunteered to go to the capital city to buy the drugs we needed. *And here is where Panama United Methodist Church comes in;* when I asked for money to help with the medical mission - WAM, the church Mission Team and individuals provided me with \$907 to take with me to Nicaragua. **Much of that money was used to buy the medicine we needed for the patients.** Without *your money*, we would not have had the medicines needed to help the patients. Thank you so much!!!!

(see Carol Hay - continued on p. 10)