

# **UNITED PARISH OF BOWIE**

## **Newsletter**

### **November-December 2006**



## **United in Christ**

### **Our Mission: To Serve**

*While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13: 2-3)*

Dear Friends,

As I write this I am now in my seventh week in Bowie. I want to begin by thanking all of you who have made my return to Maryland so smooth and comfortable. Many of you participated in setting up my apartment, and many more have been warm and welcoming in many less formal ways. To all of you, I say thank you.

For those of you who don't know me too well, I want to give a brief introduction to myself. I'm from Southern California, where I grew up, went to U.C.L.A., and then Fuller Theological Seminary. I lived in Maryland for ten years, from 1985 to 1995. For most of this time I was in graduate school at the University of Maryland, College Park. Around 1987 I joined the United Parish of Bowie, having found that I enjoyed Carl's sermons and the community of faith that gathered at the corner of Mitchellville and Mt. Oak Roads. I was ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament at the United Parish in July 1994.

In June 1995 I was called by the PCUSA to serve in Khartoum, Sudan, as a professor of church history at the Nile Theological College. I served

there for about five years, and then took some time off to do research for a book. About a year later, I returned to the mission field, studying French for a time in Burkina Faso, and then serving as a church history professor in Butare, Rwanda, at the *Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Butare*. Both schools where I served were nondenominational seminaries.

I'm going to miss living in Africa. The gentle people, the wild beauty of the land, the drums in the church services will always be with me. But at least for now, I think that God has called me to something new. I'm not entirely clear as to what this will be, but I'm open to many possibilities. In some ways, then, my situation and that of the United Parish are similar. We are both at a crossroads, at a point of new departure. We're not sure which way to turn, and we're not sure what lies ahead for us further down the road. We are both caught up in the past, and we are both anxious about the future.

In the overnight retreat for new PCUSA pastors that I attended in the last week of September, and in the interim training that I received in Pittsburgh in the first week of October, I have learned that those feelings on the part of the church are natural and to be expected. My ongoing interim training, my recent reading, and the support that I am receiving from UCC and PCUSA leaders have been reassuring and very helpful. Let me assure you that the path before us is clearly marked and well trod. In fact, I'm looking forward to walking that path with you.

I mentioned in a recent sermon that we are going on a journey together. During a worship service in Antioch at about the year 40, the church heard the call of the Holy Spirit to send Paul and Barnabas on a journey. This would be Paul's first missionary journey, which would set the church on an entirely new course. Paul and Barnabas

must have been anxious as well as excited, but they could draw comfort from the fact that they knew they were about God's business and were accompanied by his Spirit. They might also have been reassured in the knowledge that God had prepared them both for this very work. As a church we can take comfort from the same things: we are prepared and we are not alone. Let's move forward, then, with confidence, trusting ourselves as well as our Lord.

Yours in Christ,

Michael Parker

### **November – December Events**

**November 12:  
Consecration Sunday**

**November 17:  
Prism Brass Concert,  
7:30 PM**

**November 22:  
Thanksgiving Eve Worship  
Service, 7:30 PM**

**December 17:  
Christmas Children's  
Program, 12:30 PM**

**December 24:  
Christmas Eve Service,  
7:30 PM**

## **Church School Schedule Changes**



The **adult and youth classes will meet at 10 am** each Sunday, as before, but there has been a change in schedule for the younger children: those in **grades 1 through 5 are invited to arrive at the 11:00 worship service** and participate in the opening songs, the call to worship, the first hymn, the Lord's Prayer, Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon. Then, while music is played, these children will be excused to go to their classroom for a church school class, during the remainder of the worship service. (This schedule replaces "Activity Time," which previously began when the sermon was about to begin.) With this schedule, parents of younger children do not need to arrive at church until shortly before 11 am.

Since the class for young people in grades 6 through 12 will meet at 10:00, they will (as before) be able to participate in the entire worship service.

Church School classes for children began September 17. An adult church school class began September 24, led by Doug Snyder. The class is discussing pastoral transition, and reading the book "A Change of Pastors ... and How It Affects Change in the Congregation," by Loren Mead. The book is available in the narthex.

Charlotte Melichar



**F A L L**

**Men's Fellowship Group**

**You're invited to join the Men's Fellowship group and enjoy breakfast at the Bob Evans Restaurant (located on 301 in Bowie) any first and third Tuesday of the month. We meet for fellowship at 7:45 a.m. to discuss the world events. See you there anytime.**

**Herb Sheppard**

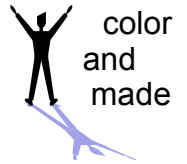


God is like Ford,  
He has a better idea.  
God is like Coke,  
He is the real thing.  
God is like Pan Am,  
He makes the going great.  
God is like Bayer Aspirin,  
He works wonders.  
God is like Ivory Soap,  
He is 100% pure.  
God is like General Electric,  
He lights your path.  
God is like Pepsi,  
He's got a lot to give.  
God is like VO5 hair spray,  
He holds through all kinds of  
weather.  
God is like a Mattel toy,  
You can tell He's swell.  
God is like Tide,  
He gets the dirt out that others leave  
behind.  
God is like American Oil,  
You can expect more from him and  
you get it.  
God is like Hallmark Cards,  
He cared enough to send the very  
best.

## A Grand Homecoming



When green lawns  
crunch into carpets of brown, football  
contests and  
homecoming celebrations  
the fantasies of many high school  
university coeds. Most of us have  
at least one trip back to the high  
school or university from which we  
graduated. We reserved that date, splurged, and  
primed to look our most attractive selves for our  
homecoming appearance. Even if we rounded  
up some of our favorite people, we probably  
came away from homecoming feeling we hadn't  
connected in the deep way we had anticipated.  
We could no longer intuit how the other persons  
were thinking, and some of their ideas were  
surprising if not shocking. We're glad we  
returned for that homecoming, but we probably  
won't be going back to our alma mater for the  
next homecoming. In a sense we had grown  
apart from one time everyday friends.



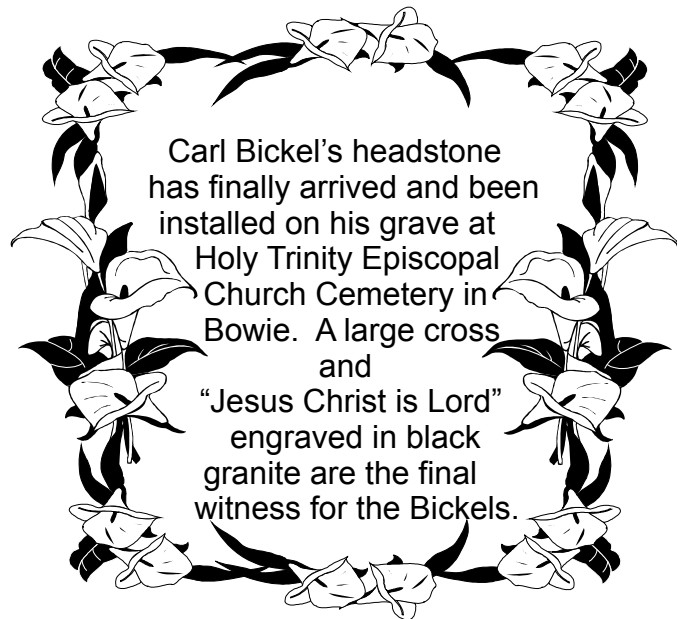
Some of us recall a different homecoming  
experience when we made that first trip home to  
see our families and introduce our newborn to  
their aunts and uncles. When our son was born  
in early February, snow and ice lined the streets  
of the Chicago suburb. My very protective  
pediatrician wouldn't let us take our baby to  
church or home to meet relatives until the  
weather had warmed. As we drove those two  
hundred and fifty miles across Indiana and Ohio,  
I became more eager with every passing mile.  
My husband said we needed to stop for refueling,  
but we were only about six miles from home, and  
I pleaded, "Don't stop. We'll make it." Much to  
my husband's chagrin, we ran out of gas about a  
hundred yards from my childhood home, and my  
brother had to bring us gas to finish our trip. It  
was a happy homecoming, but short-lived  
because we had to leave too soon for our trip  
home to Illinois, and we knew we wouldn't be  
seeing our relatives in the near future.

What kind of a homecoming could meet all of our  
expectations while promising us unending time  
with someone who really understands us and

wants our companionship forever? We don't need an escort or partner, a tuxedo or gown, a limo or a certain number on a sex-appeal scale to be invited. Any language is acceptable and every race is beautiful. If we're paralyzed or hyperactive, overweight or too thin, it doesn't matter. We can't purchase a ticket and we need no voter registration card. We're all invited.

This homecoming promises the joy of some day being with the one who fashioned us and knows us better than we know ourselves. This host died on the cross to forgive us of our sins. However, we do need to recognize our need to be forgiven. We are promised new spiritual bodies that will have none of the limitations of the physical bodies we now inhabit. Tight abs, tummy tucks, botox, beauty, and make-overs are not even noted. What would it be like to go home to our Creator, to feel completely loved, and never have to say goodbye? This would be the grandest of all homecomings, and I need time to prepare. My thoughts spiral towards God. I want to be ready when I'm called to meet the Father of all Homecomings."

Shirley Klotz Bickel. C. 2006



## FLOWER CHART

On Saturday, December 9, 2006, please join us as we decorate the church for the holiday season. We will meet at the church at 10:00 AM. If you have greens in your yard and are willing to share, please cut some to help us make our beautiful baskets for the windows. We will have some refreshments too! Get in the spirit of the season and have some fun too!!

For more information, call the church at 301-249-6411 or talk to Elise Blaker.

## Adult Education

The Adult Education Committee will be meeting in the near future to finalize plans for Winter-Spring 2007. Please call or e-mail Doug Snyder, Acting Chair, with any suggestions.

## A Word about The National Capital Presbytery

A National Capital Presbytery meeting was held last September 26. The main business of the day was approving the 2007 budget, which came to about \$2.5 million. New pastors in the Presbytery were also recognized, including Michael Parker who was our delegate to the meeting. This Presbytery includes 335 ministers, 36,048 members and 118 congregations. We recently received an award from the General Assembly council for being among the Top Ten Giving Presbyteries in the country.

## **Potomac Association of United Church of Christ (UCC)**

The Potomac Association, comprised of approximately forty churches, held its fall worship and meeting in Reston, VA. On October 21. Interim Pastor Michael Parker and lay delegate Doug Snyder attended. The annual budget of the Association was approved. Then The Reverend John Thomas, President of the United Church of Christ, addressed the group. Rev. Thomas talked about a number of issues facing the mainline churches. He paraphrased a statement made by a UCC pastor:

***It is better to stand for something and be divided, than to stand for nothing and be united.***

He emphasized that the guiding principles of the UCC are peace, justice, and mercy.

At the concluding luncheon, two delegates, who had just returned from spending time in southern Africa reminded the assembly of the growing AIDS crisis in many third-world countries and the plight of current and future orphans as millions of parents are dying. One delegate, The Reverend Cindy Shelkovsky, indicated she is available for congregational visits to share her experiences.

Doug Snyder

### **Tentative Senior High Youth Group Events**

Nov. 5	Meeting UPB 7-8:30 PM
12	Movie Night
19	Pancake Breakfast 9-11 AM
26	Off
Dec. 1	Meeting UPB 7-8:30 PM
8	Ice Skating 7-8:30 PM
17	Christmas Party
24	Off
31	Off

## **Consecration Sunday Is Coming**

Traditionally, congregations approach financial stewardship as a way of paying the bills. Members are encouraged to give "to balance the budget." The Christian approach to stewardship, however, is to see that financial contributions are a way to help people grow spiritually in their relationship to God by supporting their church's mission and ministry with a percentage of their incomes.

The United Parish of Bowie uses the Consecration Sunday Stewardship Program as a way to teach the biblical and spiritual principles of generous giving in our stewardship education emphasis.

The Consecration Sunday program recognizes that we, as Christians, need to make contributions of both our time and money as part of our spiritual development, instead of the immediate financial needs of the church. We are not members of a social club who should pay dues; rather, we want to act like followers of Jesus Christ who want to give unselfishly as an act of discipleship. Consecration Sunday asks us to consider, "What percentage of my income is God calling me to give?" in light of our Christian commitment to help others. During morning worship on Consecration Sunday we ask our attendees and members to make their financial commitments to our church's ministries in this community and around the world.

This commitment is entirely voluntary. After worship on Consecration Sunday every attendee and member will be given the opportunity to complete an Estimate of Giving Card. Even if you feel strongly opposed to completing a card, we encourage your attendance. The procedure is done in such a way that no one feels personal embarrassment if he or she chooses not to fill out a card. *We will do no home solicitation* to ask people to complete cards.

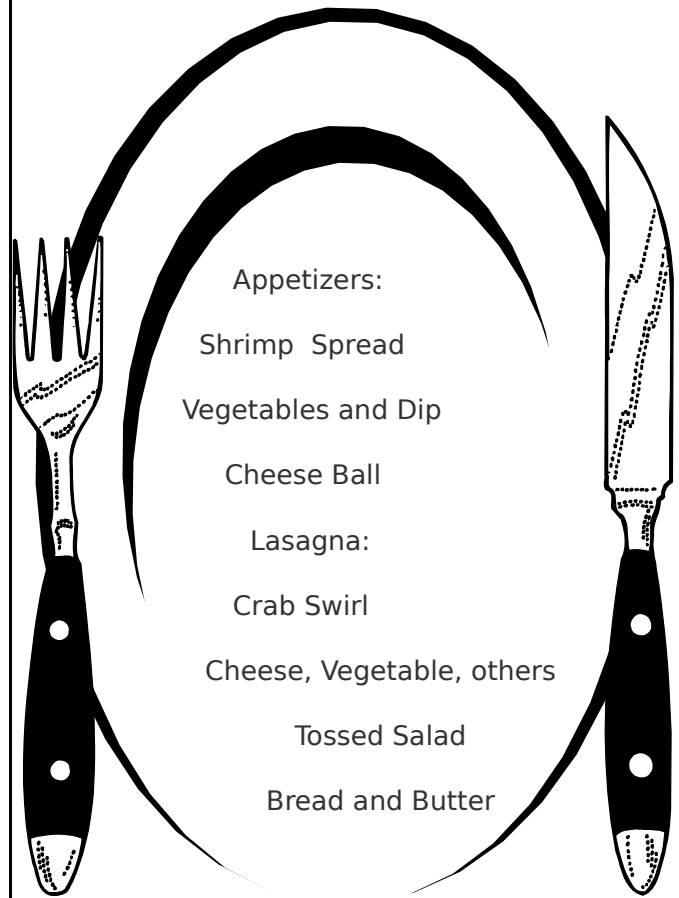
Since we will make no follow-up visits to ask people to complete their cards, we will make every effort to inspire and encourage participation in Consecration Sunday events.

Thanks in advance for your enthusiastic participation. We look forward to seeing you at Worship and at the Celebration Luncheon on November 12.

Michael Mehl

Stewardship Chairman

Menu for Consecration Dinner



Appetizers:

Shrimp Spread

Vegetables and Dip

Cheese Ball

Lasagna:

Crab Swirl

Cheese, Vegetable, others

Tossed Salad

Bread and Butter

Desserts: variety

Drinks: coffee, tea, lemonade, apple cider

BE SURE TO COME !!