



# Presbyterian Link



**FROM THE  
PASTOR'S  
DESK**

Recently, I have been reading Christopher Meehan's biography of John Calvin titled: **Pursued by God: The Amazing Life and Lasting Influence of John Calvin.** It is an exciting book to read. Only 144 pages long and written for the average

reader without sacrificing the essential truths of Calvinistic Theology, I recommend it to all those who want to understand the roots from which Presbyterianism emerged. It gives you a good look into the private life of Calvin as well as his attempts to establish the Kingdom of God in the city of Geneva. It is this last thing I want to concentrate on in this article.

Calvin was born in the little town of Noyon, France, 1509. Thus, we are celebrating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Calvin's birth this year. He was raised a good Catholic, and his mother taught him at a young age to pray. It had to be young, because she died when he was 5 years old. It was a time of ferment in the Catholic Church. Luther in Germany was beginning to challenge the old line Catholic dogma and practice, especially the practice of selling indulgences. The Roman Catholic theologian, Erasmus, published his own edition of the New Testament based on original readings of the Greek texts. Erasmus was a humanist (he wanted the teaching of the Church to reflect what was happening in the world of science and literature). Young Calvin adopted Erasmus as one of his heroes.

Young Calvin was headed toward a career in The Church, becoming a candidate for the Priesthood. Then off to Law School to become a lawyer. All the while, he was captivated by the reformed movement. In Paris, he studied under some of the most reformed thinking scholars of the day, and when the King of France and the Church started to crack down on dissenters, Calvin fled to Switzerland, stopping first in Geneva.

Calvin was also captivated by the early writings of Augustine, especially his work: *The City of God* in which Augustine suggested that the goal of The Church was to establish a community on earth that would mimic the heavenly kingdom. Calvin liked that. His hope was to establish a city state that was ruled by Christian Principles. Geneva seemed like a good city to start the process. Geneva was open to new ideas and one of the leading ministers in Geneva, Guillaume Farel, prevailed on Calvin to remain in Geneva and help with the process of remaking Geneva into The City of God. Needless to say, most of the street people of Geneva did not take kindly to the rules and regulations that Calvin and Farel laid down. Public drunkenness, adultery, theft, gambling and wild parties were the common behavior of the day.

Calvin and Farel laid the law down. If you plan to attend Church and partake of the Lord's Supper, you better change your ways. Before you can partake of the meal, you had to be approved by a group of Elders and Ministers. If they did not feel that your life was in keeping with the

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**REMINDERS FOR  
JULY**

- July 5 ~ Rev. Phipps Preaching
- July 6 ~ Church Office Closed
- July 7 ~ Men's Luncheon
- July 19 ~ Stated Session Meeting
- July 26 ~ Children's Church
- Choir discontinued for summer

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## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS JUNE 14, 2009 MEETING

### Altavista Presbyterian Church

- Agreed to host a lunch for Camp Elpis staff and campers, APC youth and interested members this summer to be funded by the MBC committee.
- Agreed to collect a love offering for Habitat for Humanity on August 16, 2009. This offering will NOT be matched with Act for Mission funds, but members will be encouraged to provide sweat equity during the blitz build.
- Established the travel rate of reimbursement for Pulpit Supply ministers at the IRS travel reimbursement rate.
- Reviewed the May, 2009 Financial Report.
- Agreed to spend \$334 from ACT for Mission funds to reimburse the parents of younger children going to camp so that their reimbursement would be equal to the reimbursement provided for the parents of the youth going to Montreat.
- Established the following vacation policy for Church Secretary, Choir Director, and Organist, effective immediately:
  - Secretary – 2 weeks awarded after one year of service; 3 weeks awarded after 10 years of service; and 4 weeks awarded after 15 years of service.
  - Choir Director – 2 weeks off during the year in addition to the July & August vacation.
  - Organist – 4 weeks off during the year.
- Approved minutes of the May 15 & 16, 2009 Stated Session Meeting & Session Retreat as presented.

### FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

	May 2009	YTD
<b>Pledges</b>	\$9,687.00	\$51,798.00
<b>Non-Pledges</b>	\$880.00	\$4,675.00
<b>Plate Offering</b>	\$135.00	\$1,881.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$9,941.56	\$53,536.10

Christian Gospel, you were barred from the Supper. Well, it only took a year of this and the city fathers on the town council banned Calvin and Farel from the city. But Calvin never gave up hope that Geneva could be turned into a City for God.

Off to Strasbourg went Calvin where his friend Martin Bucer was guiding the reform movement that Luther had begun in Germany. Bucer and several other German pastors prevailed on Calvin to become the pastor of a French speaking congregation in Strasbourg. Many French refugees were crossing the border and taking up residence in and around Strasbourg. Most of them were of the newly formed Reformed Tradition and were being hunted and killed by French Catholics. It is in Strasbourg that Calvin formulated the Reformed Liturgy for the worship of God. It is almost identical to the liturgy which we use here at Altavista Presbyterian, with a few exceptions. It was Calvin who authorized the singing of Psalms in the worship by the congregation. It was Calvin who established a catechism which people learned to become members of the reformed church.

Meanwhile, back in Geneva, things were falling apart. "Immorality was rampant. People fought in the streets. Drunks stumbled through town... Gambling had become popular again.... Robbers were afoot,... murders took place." Things got so bad that the ministers who followed Calvin in Geneva simply slipped quietly out of town one night and left the people to stew in their own juices. The good citizens of Geneva banded together with the city council and begged Calvin to return and restore order. He still held on to the dream of making Geneva the New Jerusalem.

We do not have the space to review all that Calvin faced on his second stay in Geneva. He made some progress, but he faced great opposition. As you read about his struggles to reform the city, you are struck with the realization that he was attempting to impose the religious ethic on the total population of the city, whether they believed or not. The hope was to have a city that was governed by the religious laws of the scriptures, a Holy City. But what happened was a religious dictatorship with the leading pastor (Calvin) calling the shots.

My mind flashed forward to the news this past week from Iran. Isn't that what exists in Iran. There is one chief

Ayatollah who has the final say in all elections, in all court cases, in all lawmaking. Even the President of the Country is subservient to this religious leader. We look at Islam and wonder how the people can submit themselves to some of the harsh rules, especially toward women and foreigners. We see the way that the press is snuffed and reporters are arrested simply for telling the truth. And we deplore that kind of religious incursion into the political life of the people. But isn't that what Calvin advocated? Isn't that what some in the far right radical Christian movement want?

How far we have moved from Calvin's original vision of the Holy City! We follow the Calvinistic Theology in our faith system, but reject the idea that Religion (Christian or otherwise) can order the state. If we could establish a "City of God" who would want to live in it? What God-given rights would you have to give up in order to be a citizen of such a city? I love the Christian Faith, but I do not want its leaders inspecting my private life. God and I can handle that between us. I love our Presbyterian Heritage, but I'm not ready to give up my freedom to make decisions to some rules passed down from The Elders.

It's been 500 years since Calvin was born and we have a lot of thanks to offer him for thinking through the early life of the reformed movement. But we must never forget that the motto of the Presbyterian Church is "Reformed, Constantly Reforming". And that includes reforming some of the original ideas that Calvin gave us. Thanks John Calvin!



# For Your Information

### APC Parents:

Please plan to attend a brief meeting in the Fellowship Hall on **Tuesday, July 7, at 7 pm** to discuss ideas for Youth Group and Children's Church for the upcoming school year.

*Next Committee Meeting Night*

*August 4*

### Children's Church Dates

July 26  
August 16

## Wanted



*The choir is on vacation for the summer. Volunteers with musical ability - vocal or instrumental - are wanted to help provide music for the summer Worship services. Please contact Stephanie Moehlenkamp if you can help.*



### Directory Photos

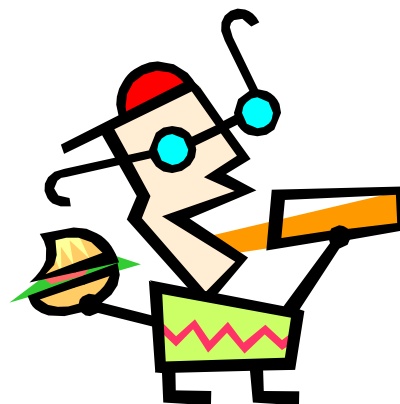
The Mission Within the Congregation committee is planning to update the APC directory of members and friends by the end of the year. New photos will be taken in September and October for those who want to update their photo or for those who have not had a photo taken.

Stay tuned for more information!

### Men's Luncheon

### Main Street Emporium

**Tuesday  
July 7,  
11:45 am**



# MARK YOUR CALENDAR

# JULY 2009

## JULY 1 WEDNESDAY

9:30 am Prayer Fellowship - Pastor's Study  
11-12:30 pm Second Helping Lunch

## JULY 4 SATURDAY

Independence Day



## JULY 5 SUNDAY

9 am Sunday School for Adults  
10 am Worship/ Communion  
Rev. William Phipps preaching  
Canned Food Sunday  
2 Cents-A-Meal Offering

## JULY 6 MONDAY

Church office closed

## JULY 7 TUESDAY

11:45 am Men's Luncheon - Main Street Emporium

## JULY 8 WEDNESDAY

9:30 am Prayer Fellowship - Pastor's Study  
11-12:30 pm Second Helping Lunch

## JULY 12 SUNDAY

9 am Sunday School for Adults  
10 am Worship

## JULY 15 WEDNESDAY

9:30 am Prayer Fellowship - Pastor's Study  
11-12:30 pm Second Helping Lunch

## JULY 19 SUNDAY

9 am Sunday School for Adults  
10 am Worship  
Stated Session Meeting  
immediately following Worship

## JULY 22 WEDNESDAY

9:30 am Prayer Fellowship - Pastor's Study  
11-12:30 pm Second Helping Lunch

## JULY 24 FRIDAY

August *Link* Deadline

## JULY 26 SUNDAY

9 am Sunday School for Adults  
10 am Worship/ Children's Church

## JULY 29 WEDNESDAY

9:30 am Prayer Fellowship - Pastor's Study  
11-12:30 pm Second Helping Lunch



**ALTAVISTA PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH**

707 Broad Street  
Altavista, VA 24517

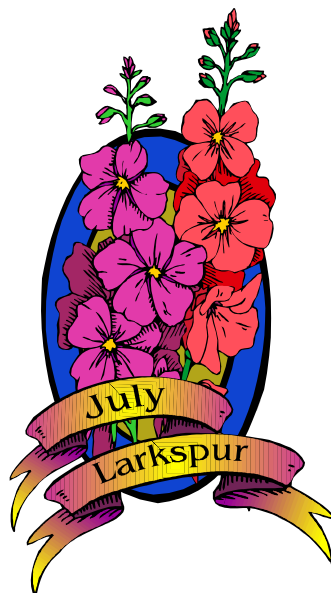
Phone: 369-5286  
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*Return service requested*

**PRESBYTERIAN LINK**

**July 2009**

***BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES***

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Rob Gilliam         | 14 Jerry & Janet Sodders |
| 7 Stephen Phillips    | 19 Lyn & Essie Moore     |
| 8 Heather Erb         | 31 David & Anne Mabry    |
| 9 Gary Alley          |                          |
| 10 Cynthia Erb        |                          |
| 14 Christine Oliver   |                          |
| 19 Anne Mabry         |                          |
| 21 Abby Bogert        |                          |
| 26 Essie Moore        |                          |
| 27 Beverly Eubank     |                          |
| 27 Dolores Drumheller |                          |
| 30 Gary Andrews       |                          |
| 30 Megen Blaesing     |                          |



**LINK STAFF**

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*Editor*

Ministry Within the  
Congregation Committee

*Previous Links can be found on the  
website  
[www.altapres.org](http://www.altapres.org)*