

# FIRST FOCUS

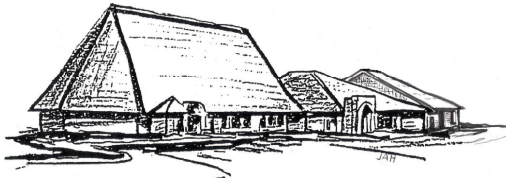
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**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IS A  
LIFELINE FOR EVERYDAY PEOPLE  
TO FIND, LOVE AND SERVE JESUS.**



## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

### **JANUARY 31**

Worship  
Noisy Offering  
8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.  
Church School - 9:45 a.m.

### **FEBRUARY 7**

Worship/Communion  
8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.  
Church School - 9:45 a.m.

### **FEBRUARY 14**

Worship  
8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.  
Church School - 9:45 a.m.

### **FEBRUARY 17**

**Ash Wednesday**  
Supper - 6:00 p.m.; Service - 6:45 p.m.

### **FEBRUARY 21**

**First Sunday in Lent**  
Worship/Communion  
8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.  
Church School - 9:45 a.m.

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**Dear Friends,**

One dubious advantage of living in the age of information is that each of us has a much wider and more immediate sense of the many disasters that befall humanity, not only in our neighborhood but around the world. We have recently witnessed a tsunami, deadly hurricanes, and most recently, an earthquake that collectively took the lives of thousands of people, destroyed towns, fractured families, and wiped out the livelihoods of survivors.

It is easy to list disasters, but it is much harder to find any obvious meaning in them. In order to bear these sufferings, we need to find meaning, and yet no edifying significance can be read off the face of a child raw with the loss of a parent. We want to flee suffering because it is unbearable to us, but the onslaught of commercialized media will not allow a respite. There are many voices offering their opinions of where God might be in the midst of these disasters, but many of their quick-fix answers offer neither peace to our hearts nor understanding to our minds.

For Christians, Christ himself is the great revelation of how God responds to evil: out of an intoxicating and apparently relentless love for humanity, God dwells with us in the midst of our suffering, bringing divine compassion into our midst as intimately as possible. There are many stories in the Gospels in which we can read about Jesus' compassionate responses to tragedy. And the Greek word for compassion is *splagchnizomai*, which literally means to have one's intestines moved. Jesus cared so deeply for the pain and suffering he encountered in the world that his entire insides were turned and wrenched in pain for and with those who hurt.

The teachings and actions of Christ give us a kind of template of where to look for God in disaster. When neighbors bring casseroles to the bereaved in the midst of grief, when strangers appear to pull the drowning from floodwaters or lift stones off those crushed

under an avalanche, when eyes warn against a tide of rising hostility and defuse the threat of violence, when tender hands comfort and open pockets contribute necessities, we can be aware of the blowing of the Holy Spirit.

We do not see in Scripture evidence that God removes the causes of suffering but rather that God comes to us, with perfect intimacy, in the midst of suffering. But when we practice compassion for one another, when we allow our insides to be moved, experiencing ourselves the pain of others, we bear witness to the deepest dimension of our faith: God is with us.

There are some concrete ways that we as a church can practice compassion for the people of Haiti as they seek to rebuild their lives after this month's devastating earthquake.

- **Pray.** When you feel helpless to do anything, you can turn to God, who is our powerful provider to be present in those places of suffering.
- **Donate money.** When you give to organizations like the Red Cross, World Vision, and the PCUSA, you can be assured that your money will be used to make a real difference in people's lives.
- **Donate goods.** Eastview Christian Church is collecting gifts-in-kind that they know will be helpful to the local people. Our youth will be collecting some of these goods in the next couple weeks. When you hear their requests, respond generously.
- **Pray even more.** Don't allow the compassion you feel to lead you to despair. Thank God for the pain you feel when you encounter real suffering, for in that moment, you are experiencing the very heart of God.

May the Peace of God be with you and with all God's children, even in the midst of these troubling times.

Pastor Becca Bruner

**WORSHIP ATTENDANCE**

01/17 – 283

01/24 - 337



**LEONARD GARDNER**  
May 21, 1934 – January 13, 2010

**WORSHIP BAGS (red & green)** are offered for children in worship and can be found in the main hallway desk.

**CHILDCARE** is available at worship services through kindergarten age.



**WINTER 2010**  
Sundays - 9:45 a.m.  
In progress – February 14

**Cross Training** – Great Hall  
**Quench Café** – downstairs kitchen  
**Strength Training** (through Feb. 7) – Lounge

Class detail brochures located in main hallway

**BOOK STUDY GROUP:**  
THURSDAYS - 9:00 A.M.

**MEN'S' BIBLE STUDY:**  
SATURDAYS - 8:00 A.M.  
COFFEEHOUSE  
UPTOWN NORMAL



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**Margaret Foster;**  
**Bruce LaDue**, cancer,  
son of Shirley; **Jackson  
Jones**, infant nephew of  
Faith Ten Haken, heart  
surgery; **Roger  
Benckendorf**, brother of  
Kurt; **Doug Miller**,  
cancer, brother of Faith  
Ten Haken; **Karen Lindquist**, lung cancer,  
sister of Julie Buckles; **Tammy**, friend of  
Karen Zappa, H1N1 complications; **Jenny &  
her family**, breast cancer, friend of Kathy &  
Terry Tosh; **Andy Sadoun**, deployed to Iraq,  
Kehl Family friend; **Judy Lindsay**, kidney  
transplant; **Shirley Aten**, knee surgery; **Paul  
& Annette Rutledge**, friends of Shelley  
Bruning; **The Family of Leonard Gardner;**  
**Stan & Sharon Heitz**, on the death of  
Stan's mother, Nola

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Please leave **NON-PERISHABLE** donations  
in the containers between the sets of  
double doors at either entrance  
of the building.

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**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN**



**FOR YOURSELF OR  
YOUR CHILD(REN),  
PLEASE CONTACT  
PASTORS GAYLORD OR BRUNER**



# Don't Miss

**THE DEADLINE  
FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER  
ARTICLES IS  
FEBRUARY 3**

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### **MEN'S PRAYER & SHARE GROUP**

**Monday, February 1**

**6:45 - 7:15 a.m.**

**Lounge**

This group is open to all men and will meet every two weeks at the above time to discuss various topics. Next meeting date: Feb.15

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Our daughter, Debbie Pauken, was on the church prayer list. She has recovered from a staph infection and surgery and is doing very well thanks to your support, words of comfort, and the strength of your prayers.

Thanks for being such a loving congregation!

Jo Ann & Bryan Freeman

## HAITI DISASTER ASSISTANCE



## KNITTING & CROCHETING MINISTRY

*"Properly practiced, knitting [and crocheting] soothes the troubled spirit, and it doesn't hurt the untroubled spirit, either!"*

Elizabeth Zimmerman

If you would like to contribute through the Presbyterian Church to the work of recovery in Haiti, you may do so in one of two ways:

1) Make your check to First Presbyterian Church, mark "for Haiti", and we will forward it to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance;

OR

2) Go to [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org). On the homepage of our denomination's website, you will see a place to click for Haiti relief. There you can donate online.



**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17**  
**SUPPER @ 6:00 p.m.**  
**SERVICE @ 6:45 p.m.**

**Cost for Dinner:**  
**\$5 per person**  
**\$15 max. per family**

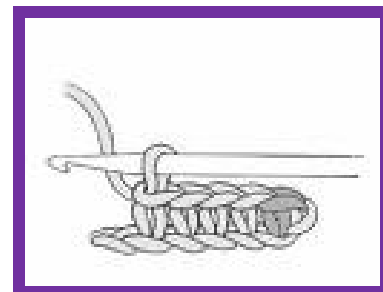
Please **RSVP** by signing up on the pew pads or by contacting the church office

Our ministry is growing and thriving and we are always open to others who want to join us in making prayer shawls and other homemade items to bless and share.

We gave away two baby sweaters and over 60 shawls in 2009 and 20 of those went to Neville House to share with victims of domestic violence. We will continue to do this in 2010 and also are making patchwork afghans out of knitted squares for Project Linus this year.

There are three things you can do to be part of this ministry: **1)** join us on the second Sunday of the month at 9:45 in the chapel and knit/crochet for an hour and be part of our blessing ceremony of any completed shawls; **2)** knit/crochet/pray at home and donate your finished product; **3)** let us know if you know someone who might benefit from receiving a prayer shawl, lap robe, or if you would like to give away one of our baby afghans.

Those of us involved are delighted that a skill we love can become a spiritual practice and one we can share with others. Please contact Becky Mentzer, if you have questions ([becky.mentzer@gmail.com](mailto:becky.mentzer@gmail.com) or 378-1481).





**Moms**  
**FIRST**  
PRESBYTERIAN

We moms all need a place to go to where we can put our relationships with God, our families, and each other FIRST!

Our second semester has just started...  
it's not too late to join us for  
fellowship and a casual book study!!

Meetings on Monday mornings or Wednesday evenings  
at First Presbyterian Church on College Ave. in Normal

Cost to join is \$25 per semester (this includes the cost of childcare and the book).

Please email your interest in joining MomsFIRST to:  
Christina at [babybugzemail@yahoo.com](mailto:babybugzemail@yahoo.com) (for the Monday morning group)  
Christy at [christy.bartel@gmail.com](mailto:christy.bartel@gmail.com) (for the Wednesday evening group)

*You're invited to an evening of  
Music, Desserts and Warmth !*

Hosted by the Senior High Youth Group

*First Pres. Cafe Night!  
Love is in the air and our hearts!*



*Friday, February 12*

*7:00 p.m.*

*Childcare will be provided*

*Sharing their talents with us:*

*Forrest Harris*

*ROCK Choir*

*Evelyn Young*

*Mike Waltenberger*

*GRL Choir*

*Dana Anderson*

Free Will Donations Accepted.

Please help support the Senior High Youth Group  
as they continue fundraising for their  
2010 Mission Trip to Mobile, AL!

