



January 2008  
Volume 19, Issue 1

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**The Presbyterian Church of  
Plum Creek**

550 Center-New Texas Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15239  
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[www.plumcreekchurch.com](http://www.plumcreekchurch.com)

# The Caller

## January 2008 Worship Schedule

### *Standing before His Presence*

Text: Ex. 3:15

Dr. Lolla, preaching

8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

January 6, 2008

Epiphany Sunday

Sacrament of Communion

### *Re-Imagining God?*

Text: Acts 2:21

Dr. Lolla, preaching

8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

January 13, 2008

### *Is Atheism Possible?*

Text: Rom. 2:14

Dr. Lolla, preaching

8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

January 20, 2008

### *Superstition or Faith?*

Text: Rom. 1:20

Dr. Lolla, preaching

8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

January 27, 2008

The Presbyterian Church of Plum Creek publishes *The Caller* monthly (with the exception of July and August). If you have an item to contribute, please email it to [secretary@plumcreekchurch.com](mailto:secretary@plumcreekchurch.com) or place it in *The Caller* mailbox in the church office. To submit a newspaper or magazine article to be reprinted in *The Caller*, include the name and date of the newspaper or magazine where the article was originally published. To submit an editorial be sure to include your name. The deadline for all articles is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. **Please provide submissions in computer-ready (WORD 2002 or text) format when possible.** Thanks!

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**Church Address:** Presbyterian Church of Plum Creek  
550 Center-New Texas Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15239

**Office Phone Number:** (412) 793-4525

**E-mail Address:** [secretary@plumcreekchurch.com](mailto:secretary@plumcreekchurch.com)

**Office Hours:** Monday – Friday,  
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Minister:** Dr. John J. Lolla

**Praise & Worship Team Leader/  
Children's Choir Director:** Kathy Grabigel

**Youth Ministry Director:** Jonathan Curry

**Worship Services:** Sundays at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.

**Church School Classes:** Sundays 9:40 to 10:50 a.m.

## Letter from Reverend Lolla- January 2008

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we enter the New Year, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is facing a dilemma. Can we continue the confessional covenant that has united Presbyterianism since John Calvin wrote his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in the sixteenth century? Calvin's reformation theology professed a new view of Biblical authority that no longer accepted the sacrament of Holy Order's preservation of papal authority.

During Calvin's era, the reformers proposed the Bible ought to be available for personal interpretation – as a guard against the ecclesiastical misuse of authority by Church leaders. The papacy responded that individuals could misinterpret the Scriptures without the guide of the Church's tradition of interpretation – found in declarations by previous church councils, doctrinal statements proposed by theologians and the Early Church Fathers, and papal pronouncements. Rome claimed historic tradition of Biblical interpretation that was embodied in the Church can not be ignored without placing at risk the Church and its unity. Calvin, like other reformers, had read classical literature and found its support for freedom of conscience a means by which to challenge the Church's inquisitorial approach to Protestant dissent. The free conscience is not bound to the teachings of the Church, which can be in error.

The warnings made by Rome during the Reformation highlighted the problems of a conscience emancipated from Church authority, questioning whether a free conscience would allow any common ground for Christians to stand. To what degree is the individual conscience bound to the doctrinal teachings of the Church before the Church becomes perceived, on the one hand, as a tyrant, and, on the other hand, is regarded as conceding to the popular culture that is not Christian?

If the tradition of Biblical interpretation can no longer be relied upon for understanding how to apply the Bible's teachings in current times, then what is alternative preserves the Church's identity? Where Thomas Aquinas and papal pronouncements provided the framework for Church interpretation of the Bible before the Reformation, after the Reformation the confessions became substitutes for Protestants that retained the Church's tradition. The Scots Confession, Second Helvetic Confession, and later, the Westminster Confession, outlined a Presbyterian view of biblical living that was commonly accepted by Church members through the mid-1960s. Under the pressure of the civil rights movement, some American Presbyterians sought freedom from the confessions to interpret the Bible using new methodology – claiming their views represented the power of the Holy Spirit to “make all things new.” Invoking the Holy Spirit as a means to liberate Presbyterians from confessional authority has become popular among church members who want the freedom to cast the Scriptures in a “new light.”

If Biblical illiteracy has emboldened freedom of choice advocates to re-imagine the Gospel message, then confessional illiteracy has prevented sound Biblical scholars from defending the Church's tradition of Biblical interpretation.

The Second Helvetic Confession states, “the Holy Scriptures are not of private interpretation (II Pet. 1:20). Without knowledge of the confessional safeguards that have preserved Church unity for over 500 years, Presbyterians are free to interpret the Bible as their conscience dictates – which may and often is corrupted by sin.

Biblically-based congregations may help resolve some of the tensions that exist. But the larger debate across the Church demands more than Biblical knowledge. Even those whose interpretation of the Scriptures is re-casting Church life claim to be quoting the Bible. The problem lies in how a reader approaches the Bible, and whether the reader is instructed by the greater witness of the Church through time. Church leaders seeking to defend the Church's historic interpretation of the Bible need a willingness to learn the confessions so they can properly represent the Bible's teachings, in the Reformed tradition.

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Jack

## BIRTHDAYS

January 15      Helen Morrow  
January 20      Randy Redlich

If you know anyone who is 70 or older, please let the church office know. We do not want to miss anyone.

## DEATHS

Beverly Kurtik                      November 22 2007

## BAPTISMS

Madelyn Margaret Vernon      Dec. 9, 2007

## MEMORIALS

For Art Hopperstead  
Felix Cutruzzula, Jr. and Elizabeth L.  
Cutruzzula  
Ron and Laura "Betty" Pearson

CALLOR ARTICLE.

## ADULT RETREAT 2008

The annual adult retreat will be held at Camp Crestfield on February 8, 9, and 10. We are pleased that Brenda Barnes, who was one of our speakers in February 2006, at the adult retreat, will be our leader for this annual event. Brenda was very excited when we asked her to lead the retreat and she is looking forward to seeing all of you again.

Plan to join us this year at the retreat. Come and bring your thirst for the Lord and enjoy the discussions, fellowship and the chance to just get a way. It is sure to be a wonderful weekend! We have plenty of room for you in Scott Lodge and if you haven't gone before, this is the year to do it. Sign ups will start at the beginning of January. In the meantime, put God and your journey with Him first; and put February 8, 9, and 10 on your calendar.



## **PRAISE MOVES**

PraiseMoves will continue starting on February 13, 2008 at 7:30 following Oasis. We have beginner and intermediate working together. You can also do this sitting in a chair. We welcome all new students to exercise with the word of God. If you have any questions please call Alice Knopfel at 724-339-3281.

## **GROVE CITY TOURING CHOIR**

March 2, 2008 – 11:00 am

The Touring Choir from Grove City College is again scheduled to lead our 11:00 am worship service on Sunday, March 2. This group consists of 48 students who auditioned to be a part of the choir. The students in the choir come from all majors at Grove City and practice 4 times each week. They go on short trips throughout the school year and take a longer trip over the school's Easter break. Last year they traveled by bus to Chicago over the Easter break. This year they are heading to Florida.

The choir includes one of our own Grove City students, Katherine Kirk. This is Katherine's third year in the choir and she truly loves being a part of this wonderful choir.

Be sure to be at the 11:00 am service on March 2. It will be a blessing for our church and for all that attend.



## **WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY- THURSDAY AFTERNOONS @ 1:30**

We'll be completing our study on Mary in mid-January and our tentative study after that will be based on Beth Moore's study of the book of ROMANS. While we originally started a different study of Romans, the group decided that we preferred the additional insight provided by Beth Moore. As we have these resources available for study, the plan is to hand out the study guides for the chapter(s) being studied the previous week so these will be available to assist each woman in reading the appropriate chapter(s) in Romans. Please note the only "homework" involved will be a small amount of reading. The main part of the study will be the discussion we have on Thursdays. All women are welcome to join us. If you have any questions, contact Kathy or Carole.

## The Day Camp at Plum Creek Announces 2008 Schedule

John 1:14 *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

This scripture is the theme for the 2008 Day Camp at Plum Creek.

### **"Real"- "Real Friends, Real Bonds, Real Fun, Real Teamwork, Real Victory, Real Adventure, Real Faith"**

We are very excited to be planning our second summer for "The Day Camp at Plum Creek," a Christian summer Day Camp located on the grounds of the Presbyterian Church of Plum Creek.

The Day Camp is a Christian-based challenge camp for elementary children, which features a low-ropes course, a slip and slide, and mountain boarding with additional challenge elements being added in future years. Campers will participate in adventure elements as well as arts and crafts, team sports like volleyball and soccer, Bible study, drama, Praise and Worship, faith stories, nature education, and much more.

Last year, the Day Camp at Plum Creek operated for two one-week sessions in July/August, 2007. During that two-week period, God blessed the Day Camp with good weather, a faithful staff, and 82 girls and boys from 13 different zip codes. Last year's success was a testament to our mission of community outreach and we are so excited to expand that mission to four consecutive weeks as follows:

**July 7-11      July 14-18      July 21-25      July 28-August 1**

Just like last year, campers are asked to bring their lunch each day. Snacks will be provided by the Day Camp. Children can register for any or all weeks of the camp. The camp opens at 8:00 a.m. and closes at 4:00 p.m. with a firm pick-up by 4:30 p.m.

The Day Camp is open to any elementary aged child (grades 1-6) who would like to attend. Children must have completed first grade to be eligible to attend and children who have completed grade six are also eligible to attend.

Space is limited to no more than 50 campers per week and early registration is recommended. Early registration incentives are as follows:

<u>Registration Dates</u>	<u>Cost</u>
January 1, 2008-February 29, 2008	\$80/child per week
March 1, 2008 – April 30, 2008	\$90/child per week
May 1, 2008 – June 6, 2008	\$100/child per week

Last day to register is June 6, 2008. Envelopes must be postmarked by corresponding date listed above to receive discount.

Registration forms are also available at [www.daycampatplumcreek.org](http://www.daycampatplumcreek.org), in the Narthex, or by calling or stopping by the church office. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Jonathan Curry at 412-793-4525 ext. 14.

## "The Day Camp at Plum Creek" 2008 Registration Form



"The Day Camp at Plum Creek" is a Christian-based adventure camp for elementary aged children, which features challenge elements like a low-ropes course, a slip and slide, and mountain boarding, as well as arts and crafts, team sports, Bible study, drama, Praise and Worship, faith stories, nature education, and much more. The theme of this year's curriculum is "Real" - "Real friends, real bonds, real fun, real teamwork, real victory, real faith, real adventure." The theme emphasizes the scripture verse John 1:14 "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Final registration for the camp is due by June 6, 2008. The registration fee must be paid at the time of registration. The day camp is open to any elementary aged child (grade 1 - 6) who would like to attend. Young children must have completed first grade to be eligible to attend the Day Camp and children who have completed grade 6 are eligible to attend as well.

*Please use one form per child. Copies of this registration form are acceptable.*

**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Gender:** M / F

**Grade Completed as of June 2008:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Child's Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Numbers:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact (name & phone number):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent or Guardian Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent or Guardian's Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Register for one or more weeks:**

- July 7 - 11, 2008
- July 14 - 18, 2008
- July 21 - 25, 2008
- July 28 - August 1, 2008

**Deadlines and Costs:**

- January 1 - February 29, 2008 \$80 / child / week
- March 1 - April 30, 2008 \$90 / child / week
- May 1 - June 6, 2008 \$100 / child / week

***Envelope must be postmarked by cut-off date to receive corresponding price.***

**Registration Fee must accompany this registration form and is due by June 6, 2008.**

**No "walk-ins" will be accepted the weeks of camp.**

**Payment Method:** (Please make checks payable to: **Day Camp at Plum Creek** and mail to address on bottom of page.)

Check     Money Order    Total Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

**T-shirt Size:**  Child Small  Child Medium  Child Large     Adult Small     Adult Medium

**CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS**

- Cancellations occurring within 28 days of your session will result in forfeiture of 1/2 of the tuition fee.
- Cancellations occurring within 14 days of your session will result in forfeiture of the TOTAL tuition fee.

ERIK THOENNES

# Hour of Decision

*“How can I know I’m a Christian if I can’t remember when I first responded to the gospel?”*

**M**Y FAVORITE QUESTION to ask Christians is how they came to trust in Christ. The answers I’ve heard testify to the diverse experiences God uses to bring people into a relationship with himself. Most commonly, people say they trusted him as a child at camp or at Sunday school or while praying with a parent. They often follow with something like, “But my faith really became my own when I was a junior in high school.”

How are we to understand this variety of experiences and the apparent two-stage process many seem to undergo in arriving at saving faith?

The term *saved* is popularly used to refer to regeneration and justification. But when the Bible uses the word *salvation* in a spiritual sense, it describes the broad range of God’s activity in rescuing people from sin and restoring them to a right relationship with himself. Salvation in the Bible thus has past, present, and future tenses. A believer *has been* saved from the guilt of sin (justification, see Eph. 2:8), *is being* saved from the power of sin (sanctification, see 1 Cor. 1:18), and *will be* saved from the judgment and presence of sin (glorification, see Acts 15:11).

While the subjective experience of being saved may look very different from person to person, the objective state of being saved is definite and absolute. From God’s perspective, there is a definitive point in time when those who have trusted in Christ pass from death into life (1 John 3:14).

Whether or not one can remember the moment of spiritual rebirth, it is a miracle that initiates a number of new realities. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, the spiritually dead person is made alive in Christ (Titus 3:5). The convert’s filthy rags of self-righteousness have been traded for the perfect righteousness of Christ (Phil. 3:8–9). He or she can cease striving to be justified, resting instead in the fin-

ished work of Christ (Phil. 2:8–9). As Paul writes, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). The believer has “crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24), which means the person can “have confidence on the day of judgment” (1 John 4:17).

Much of American Protestantism has been influenced by revivalism, which places great emphasis on “making a decision for Christ” in a public, definitive way. These “moments of decision” often become the crucial evidence that one is saved. Other Protestant traditions, less influenced by revivalism (including some Reformed and Lutheran churches), may be content to leave the conversion experience unclearly identified, putting the focus on identification with the church. Both of these traditions have benefits, as well as potential problems.

The decision approach rightly emphasizes the need for a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and the idea that regeneration takes place at a specific time. The potential downside is that this view can lead to a simplistic, human-centered understanding of being saved, where one depends too heavily on the specific act of trusting Christ as the primary evidence of conversion. As a result, one can doubt the “decision” was real, leading to numerous journeys down the aisle (just in case). Also, one can depend on the walk down the aisle alone, even in the absence of spiritual fruit.

**The best evidence of salvation is not having raised a hand or prayed a prayer. [It is] the fruit of the Spirit.**

On the other hand, Reformed traditions appreciate the sovereignty of God and the role of the church in the salvation process. Yet they can leave conversion so vague that the need for personal trust in Christ and a changed life is neglected.

We must allow for the varied experiences God uses to bring people to himself. As C. H. Spurgeon said, “The Spirit calls men to Jesus in diverse ways. Some are drawn so gently that they scarcely know when the drawing began, and others are so suddenly affected that their conversion stands out with noonday clearness.”

For those who question their salvation, the best evidence is not the memory of having raised a hand or prayed a prayer. Nor is it having been baptized or christened. The true test of the authentic work of God in one’s life is growth in Christ-like character, increased love for God and other people, and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–25; James 2:18). A memorable conversion experience may serve as an important referent to God’s saving work in one’s life. But the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in making a person more like Jesus is the clearest indicator that one has been made a new creation in Christ. ☪

Erik Thoennes is associate professor of theology at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University.



*Reaching New Heights Through Christ*

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November 8, 2007

Plum Creek Presbyterian Church  
550 Center-New Texas Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15239

Dear Friends,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your financial support. Your recent gift dated October , 2007 of \$100.00. is very much appreciated. This contribution will assist in Crestfield's effort to provide an environment for disciple making and sanctuary.

We ask that you continue to pray for the Crestfield ministry. We are truly blessed by your commitment and support, and we promise to continually seek new and better ways to minister to all people served by the Presbytery's programs of outdoor ministry.

I would be more than delight to speak with your congregation during worship, the Sunday school hour, a mission committee meeting, or during a mid-week youth program, about the excitement that outdoor ministry at Crestfield is generating toward disciple making

Thank you again for your contribution and the faith in Jesus Christ that it demonstrates.

In Christ's Service,

Betty Angelini  
Executive Director

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Crestfield Camp & Conference Center of Pittsburgh Presbytery

195 Taggart Road, Slippery Rock, Pa. 16057 phone: 724-794-4022 fax: 724-794-1665 website: [www.crestfield.net](http://www.crestfield.net)

Fall Softball Summary



November 3-10, what an incredible week we had! The many who came to see softball competitions, also heard the Word of God. The Holy Spirit touched many hearts to accept Christ into their lives. What emotional and blessed scenes the ball parks were at the end of ball players and peers' testimonies besides the Word shared by the local pastors. It's impossible to describe and to do justice to these special moments.

Medical clinics were held before many games and God blessed as the first baseman, Dr. Bob Beasley, tended to many physical needs. However, the Great Physician was definitely recognized as each person that was examined, was prayed for and knows, without a shadow of doubt, the plan of salvation in Jesus Christ.



