

www.gspcmobile.org * (251)432-1749 * 300 Government Street, Mobile, Alabama 36602

“The Fast That I Choose...”

by Andy King, Seminary Intern

In the exhausted sigh that followed Mardi Gras, many of us gathered in the sanctuary for Ash Wednesday and heard these words from the prophet Isaiah:

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.” (Isaiah 58:6-9)

The start of the Lenten season brings so many thoughts about fasts and sacrifices to our minds. We give up our favorite vices and greatest temptations in an attempt to humble and discipline ourselves as Easter approaches. We plan how we will avoid our bad habits. The occasional ulterior motive mixes into our humility. Forty days without sweets or meat could help us lose a few pounds or inches. But then we hear Isaiah speaking to our attempts to be pious before God.

God’s thoughts on fasting, according to the prophet, are less about the individual than we have let Lent become. Certainly being a disciplined individual is important. But while giving up a part of our diet or a bad habit benefits us, it does not often benefit those around us who have little. God is calling Israel to observe another aspect of fasting, that of adding a good habit to their lives. By working to free the captives, feed the hungry, and house the homeless, Israel is called to see beyond their own interest and choose a fast that benefits others. This is the kind of fast that pleases God.

These same words from Isaiah are the focus of the Interfaith Hospitality Network. Through groups of local religious institutions, IHN strives to break the yoke of

homelessness by bringing the homeless into homes. It offers help to homeless families, parents with children under the age of 18, as they struggle to get on their feet. These families make up over a third of the homeless population in America, and that figure is growing. IHN host congregations open their Sunday school classrooms and fellowship halls to families as temporary homes while the IHN case workers help the parents find sustainable employment and affordable housing. Volunteers at the congregations provide food, supervision, and safety for parents and children who would otherwise be sleeping in cars or on the street.

In two weeks, we will offer the same services that 5,000 other churches, synagogues, and mosques provide nationwide. We will welcome parents and children into our church home. We will give them food, shelter, and other basic human necessities. We will volunteer our time and our talents for other members of our Mobile community. We will pray together that they will be strengthened with hope and love in the face of potential despair. By caring for brothers and sisters who have been created in the image of the same God that we are, we will choose a fast this Lent that pleases God.

If you are able to offer help with our IHN week, March 22-29, please contact Michon Trent at 432-4264 or the church office at 432-1749.

Volunteers are needed for:

- **Evening Hosts and**
- **Overnight Hosts**

There will be a volunteer in the Jackson Street entrance on Sunday mornings with a calendar for you to sign up.

IHN VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Noon—Sunday, **March 15th** after worship in Fellowship Hall. Join Michon and learn the particulars of the volunteer positions. Hope to see you there

World Mission Madagascar Update

26 February 2009

Dear Friends,

More tear gas today but apparently no major injuries. The African Union has been here and gone. The UN sent a mediator who helped get mediation going then left. Today a new mediator from the UN arrived and there is talk that the new mediator may stay here for an extended period to try to mediate negotiations. Andry Rajoelina has called his people back to the area of the stadium tomorrow for more trouble.

What determines the outcome is a mixture of the following:

the size and behavior of the crowds; the reaction of the government to the crowds; the negotiations; the allegiance of the armed forces; the arrest or lack of arrest of Andry and other leaders; the extent to which President Ravalo Manana makes amends for the shortcomings of his administration; the position of the 'international community of which the US and France are key players; and the ability of leaders of both sides to avoid assassination.

So you see, it is quite complicated and quite difficult to predict just what will happen. Thank you for your prayers.

Peace in Christ, Elizabeth and Dan Turk

GREEN NEWSLETTER OPTION NOW AVAILABLE!

The office staff of GSPC would like to offer an on-line version of this weekly newsletter to those of you who would prefer an e-mailed version instead of a paper copy. Please e-mail: laura@gspcmobile.org if you would like to make this change. Thank you!

Urban Ministry

“Dancing with the Clergy”

Friday, April 24 ~ Central Presbyterian Church
Pasta dinner, Dancing and Entertainment

IHN / Family Promise of Coastal Alabama is having a fundraiser to help provide much needed supplies for families in IHN care. This event will feature Clergy members within our network who will be the “stars” in a format similar to that of the television program “Dancing with the Stars.”

“Pasta Challenge”

to benefit “Dancing with the Clergy”

Each congregation is encouraged to participate in the “Pasta Challenge” by bringing a pasta dish (hot or cold) on April 24.

Interested participants from GSPC will decide on a favorite pasta dish from GSPC cookbook “Simply Divine...A Second Helping,” prepare the dish, and bring it to the fundraiser to share with everyone. The dishes will be voted on by “Dancing with the Clergy” attendees to determine the favorite. If you are interested in participating please **contact Michon Trent at (251) 432-4264 by March 19th.**

Christian Education

Kara Olson
Director of Youth & CE

- **Women's Tuesday morning Bible Study** will meet in the Parlor beginning Tuesday, March 17th. The time, 9:30 am, remains the same.
- **“Brain Fitness” ~ Sunday, March 15, 9:30 am, in Fellowship Hall** ~ Virginia Guy, Executive Director of the Drug Education Council, will present “Brain Fitness.” When does your brain stop growing and begin to deteriorate? How can you keep your brain fit as you age? Come to discuss brain exercises (not just crossword puzzles), and find out how alcohol and drugs affect the brain at different stages of life. Bring your teenagers and parents to hear Virginia.
- “Conversations with Jesus” a **Lenten Devotional** by Eugenia Gamble is available by the Jackson Street entrance. Pick one up to use on your Lenten Journey!
- Feeling beached? Sail Away with GSPC women the weekend of March 27th and 28th! Send your registrations for the **Women's Retreat** at Baytreat to the church office, attn: Kara Olson. Please **RSVP by March 15th.** (Checks made payable to GSPC.)

Amanda Murray
Director of Children's Ministries

- **CLUB 345**, a fellowship group for 3rd ~ 5th graders, will meet March 22 after worship for a picnic & fun in the park. The cost is \$5.00. Come and bring a friend.
- The children continue to support **Ministry of Hope Crisis Nursery** and have raised over \$600.00 so far.
- The children (ages 3 years old to 5th grade) are **combined for Sunday School** now through April 12th. We will explore Lent and Easter and everything in between.
- **Easter Egg Hunt:** Saturday, April 4th at 10:00 a.m. in Washington Square. For infants ~ 5th graders.
 - Food, fun, and fellowship and face painting by Holly Carrigan
 - Hosted by Brad & Laura Hassell
 - Please bring to the church a **dozen filled plastic eggs by April 3.** Label your child's name and age on the outside.
- **Vacation Bible School**
Crocodile Dock Where Fearless Kids Shine God's Light, ages 3 to 5th grade
June 8-12, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$5 registration fee, t-shirt included. Everyone, mark your calendars and tell your friends about this great week of fun!

Congregational Life

Farewell to two Good Friends

A farewell reception will be held in Fellowship Hall following worship on Sunday, March 29 to say goodbye to Gill and Martha Campbell. Everyone is invited for punch and cake.

GSPC Can Host A Meeting!

GSPC hosted the Presbytery Meeting February 27 & 28. Many thanks to all of the volunteers who gave of their time and energy to make our hosting weekend a great success. Dot White and M.R. Andrews, the meeting coordinators, with the Presbytery, organized the set-up, the flow, and the clean-up of the weekend's events for more than 100 attendees.

Small group Bible studies were comfortably situated making use of all of the Sunday school rooms. Registration tables were organized, displays were set-up, tables were dressed for 3 meals, flowers were ordered and arranged (thank you Charlotte Crockett for donating and arranging the gorgeous burnt-edged yellow roses), hotel accommodations were confirmed, guests were welcomed and pointed in the right direction, coffee and tea were served on the church's China – all with many smiles.

The two worship services welcomed a contemporary music assembly on Friday night, and a traditional massed choir was led by Terry Maddox on Saturday morning.

James Tamblyn and Brian Naylor made certain that the speakers, musicians, and instruments were properly amplified for clear sound and good recordings.

Linda Killilea and Shelia Smith provided wonderful meals with the taste and variety Linda unerringly selects, and infused with all of the home-made, special touches Shelia is famous for.

Thank you to Bobby and Ben Purifoy, who polished the Fellowship Hall floors, tidied up behind each event, provided security, moved furniture, and were on hand behind the scenes for dozens of requests.

It was a remarkable weekend made all the more special on Sunday with the Ordination of GSPC's new Associate Pastor, Reverend Ryan Jensen. Ryan went before the presbytery leaders on Saturday for his final examination, which he gracefully (and with flying colors) passed. Welcome Reverend Jensen! And again, a big thank you to all of you who helped make this terrific weekend happen.

Congratulations to George and Laurie Shorter on the birth of their grandson. Ezra Lee "Eazy" McCullers was born in Los Angeles to Sidney Shorter McCullers on February 26th (6 lbs, 16 oz).

Christian sympathy is extended to Dr. Mac McDaniel, family and friends on the death of Mac's wife, **Mary Pearl McDaniel**. Mary died Tuesday, March 10th. A memorial Service will be held at GSPC, Friday, March 13, at 11:00 am.

Presbyterian Women

Presbytery of South Alabama's 2009 Spring Gathering

Tuesday, March 19, 9 am - 2 pm/ Registration 9-9:30 am ~ \$12 (includes lunch)
First Presbyterian Church in Foley
Contact Beth Majure or Judy Wells for registration information.

GOVERNMENT STREET LUNCH FORUM

Thursdays Noon to 1 PM
in Fellowship Hall, Lunch—\$5

March 19: Teresa Ramsey
Director of Interfaith Hospitality
Network/Family Promise

Teresa Ramsey is a graduate of the University of Alabama where she received her BSW and MSW as well as a Master's Scholar Award from the University of Alabama School of Social Work. She has experience working with the Department of Human Resources in the foster care system and in working with the public school system in Alabama. She has participated in mission trips to Brazil and Russia, where she worked with impoverished communities and orphanages.

Teresa currently serves as a lay-speaker in the United Methodist Church and on the Board of Directors for the Pastoral Care, Counseling, and Training of the Alabama West-Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. She is a member of the National Association of Social Workers where she serves on the Political Action Committee (PACE) and as the co-chair of the Mobile unit of the Alabama National Association of Social Workers.

She is married to Rev. Michael Ramsey, and they have two daughters.

Next Thursday, March 26

Jimmy Lyons, Executive Director
Alabama State Docks

Cottage Hill Presbyterian Church

Cordially invites you to our Golden Jubilee Celebration
To celebrate Fifty Years 1959 – 2009

Saturday, March 21, 2009 3:00 pm
** Fellowship and Fish Fry **

Sunday, March 22, 2009 10:30 am
Worship, Reception following

4201 Cottage Hill Road, Mobile,
Alabama 36609 (251)661-9506

Please Join Us!



IN OUR PRAYERS AT NURSING HOMES AND IN THE HOSPITAL

Allen Memorial: Mary Marvin Anderson

Somerby of West. Mobile: Kitty Harris

Gordon Oaks: Thyrza Jones (room 239), Harriet Norville (room 241)

Cogburn (Dauphin Con.): Winnie Counts, and David and Betty Mechler

Mobile Infirmary West: Blair Newman

If you would like to be added or removed from this list please contact Denise Lamby at 432-1749 or denise@gspcmobile.org. Thank you!

Honor your loved one with a Sunday Sanctuary Flower arrangement. Contact Binky Oswald, 478-3087, to reserve a date. April 5, 19 and 26th are currently available.

Lectionary Readings for March 15:

Exod. 20:1-17; Ps. 19; 1 Cor. 1:18-25;
John 2:13-22

LILIES FOR EASTER

Lilies are \$9 each or 2 for \$16.50. (One lily per memorial or honorarium.)

Please complete *one form for each plant* and include payment with your order.

DEADLINE: Noon, Wednesday, April 8th

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

By: _____

